



Let me conclude with my third part. One aspect of spiritual warfare which is not always understood or accessed is praise (Col. 3:19, Eph. 5:19 and I Thess. 5:18). We praise G-d because we know Him and we know that His is active in our lives and that we shall dwell with Him forever. We praise Him because He can use everything and anything (Rom. 8:18 and 28) in our lives – even our mistakes and our stupidity to cause His purposes to be fulfilled – as long as we turn them over to Him and never lose sight of Him and never stop praising Him.

Praise is not a mindless thanking G-d for everything in an attempt to force G-d to bless us. It is not thanking G-d for all the pain and suffering in the world. It is thanking Him for who He is and what He is doing and where we are going AND where we shall spend eternity. Shavuot is principally a festival of praise for both the perspective (the Ten) and the power The Holy Spirit. It is a positive tension where we learn to keep our focus and use our gifting and our power for the fulfillment of His purposes – and never for the accomplishment of personal goals (riches, power and personal advantage).

This brings us to our final observance on this Shabbat Shavuot: the L-rd's Table. Turn with me to I Cor. 11:23-34. We need to give short accounts with G-d. This week I had some marvellous victories and some pretty stupid defeats. I am still battling with some persistent personal disobedience and some persistent personal pouting. I am both impatient and easily distracted and I have to learn to take up my cross daily (Luke 9:23), and learn to walk with Him when I am feeling on top of the world, and when I am tired, angry and even sick.

How about you? I Cor. 10:13 and Heb. 12:13 need to stay focused on Matt. 6:33, because we all have our dark side and our mouldy baggage and it is our spirituality which needs to be cherished above all things (Prov. 4:23), no matter what else is going on in our lives.

The L-rd's table is a monthly opportunity to refocus and to re-establish spiritual priorities and is also like a mini, personal Yom Kippur, where we come to the mercy seat (kaperot – Heb. 4:15, 16) and establish spiritual order in our hearts (spirits) so that it can flow freely again into every are of our lives (John 7:38). I would like to spend my life on the mountain top (like Joshua, hang around the tent, and like David want to dwell as a door keeper in the House of the L-rd my whole life), but G-d is as real and present in the valleys as He is on the Mountain and in the Upper Room.

In a very real sense, Shabbat is a mountain Top, because we go from His presence into the world and face the same old same old, with all the new challenges, and it would be nice if we just beamed up like Elijah and could leave the foolishness of the world behind. Well, mishpocah, there is only one way to leave the foolishness of the world behind, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, and it is right here at the L-rd's Table. We remind ourselves who died for us and who is coming back one day, and we remind ourselves of our need to die with Him to the triple folly of this life (the flesh, the world and the adversary). Then having received forgiveness (atonement), we go back to the battle (the inner one and the outer one) and keep moving and growing and healing and repenting – so that our perspective and our power brings praise to the King.

Amen. Let's partake of the L-rd's Table.