

19 Sivan, 5772 (9/06/12)

Owning Unfinished, Ongoing Issues

J.

M. Terrett

Heart's Baggage. Pilgrim's Progress

Beha'alotcha In Your Making Go Up Head 'em Up, Move ,em Out

Torah: Num. 8:1-12:16

(1A) 8:4. The Menorah was made of beaten gold; Moses made the Menorah according to the model that the L-RD had shown him. (He had it made – he did not do it himself)

(1B) 8:7. Behold how you shall purify them (Levites), sprinkle on them the water of atoning (purification), and let them shave all the body and wash their clothes and they shall be pure. (water made from ashes of the red heifer, in chapter 19 – not all material is strictly chronological – 8:11, Levites were to be an offering from the children of Israel to Aaron, we, as Levitical servants of the High Priest need to offer ourselves as living sacrifices)

(2A) 9:8 (concerning those who were not pure for the first memorial Passover) Moses said to them, what until I know what the L-RD shall ordain for you (the application of the principles of His righteousness and spirituality is both the greatest privilege and the greatest obligation of believers).

(2B) 9:21 If the cloud stopped from the evening till the morning, the lifted in the morning, they departed. If the cloud lifted after a day and a night, they departed (sometimes they were to set up camp and stay awhile, sometimes they were just to rest for a night or for a night and a day – This is the purpose of the Sabbath, a weekly camping ritual, where we are to rest, because the cloud always stops and hovers over us on the Sabbath)

(3A) 10:11 The twentieth day of second month of the second year, the cloud lifted from above the arc of the covenant. (Ex. 40:17, the first day of the first month of the second year, the tabernacle was set up and the cloud hovered – the first hovering lasting 18 days!! – when things are ready in Him, it is time to move – two thoughts. Are things in Him in your life getting ready? When they are, are you ready to move?)

(3B) 10:17 (after the banner of Judah, Gershonites and Merarites, who carried the tabernacle set out); 10:21 (after the banner of Reuben, the Kohatites who carried the sanctuary set out) (the ark was out front with the Aaronites, who sounded the trumpets, the rest of the Levites were after position three and six. When they paused for a night or a night and a day, was the tabernacle set up – I think not, and the Ark would not have been left out in the open – wonder whose tent it rested in – probably Moses', because the presence was housed there, once already when the people were disobedient).

(4A) 11:20. But for an entire month until it (the meat) comes out of your noses and you are fed up with it, because you have rejected the L-RD who is in the midst of you, and because you cried before Him saying, why therefore did we come out of Egypt. (we must learn the difference between weeping before Him and whining because we do not like what He has brought our way. They had already been given meat before this – Ex. 16:13, but at their first camping spot, they were out of meat and repeated their first whine – why did we bother leaving Egypt – they had seen the Exodus, they had seen the glory and they should have known better. Once you've learned to trust Him and have seen His hand, we can still weep but we should learn not to whine (11:34 – the whiners who coveted the meat and who despised the presence, are smitten down).

(4B) 12:11 (Aaron was not smitten with leprosy, even though he had joined his sister in criticizing Moses because they did not like what he had done, even though it had not violated any of the principles of G-d's Word – he had offended their preferences, not G-d's principles – as the high priest he was needed for service, smiting Miriam sent out a clear message – there is no place for a critical spirit in the camp.

Haftarah: Zach. 2:10(14)-4:7

(5) 2:11 Many nations shall attach themselves to the L-RD on that day and shall become my people (when He comes to dwell among us – John 1:14 – He tabernacled among us. As the ark was set up in the midst of the people so our Messiah was set up in the midst of His people and behold, many nations have become attached to Him)

(6) 4:10. Those who despise the day of feeble beginnings will rejoice when they see the level in the hand of Zorababel, for the seven eyes of the L-RD run over all the earth.(G-d's will, will be done. Look at the effect the descendents of one old man have had on the planet? Even in our small community, you ain't seen nothing yet!

Brit Chadashah: Rev. 11:1-19

(7) 11:3. I shall give to my two witnesses the power to testify (two witnesses, two olive trees who stand before the L-rd of the earth – a heavenly version of an earthly reality – the great nation and the blessed among all nations have an earthly contingent and a heavenly home, cause when you belong to the first, you become part of the second forever).

Ps. 68 Jewish Hero: Soldiers of 67 War

Sermon:

When we come to the L-rd, we are like the children of Israel, who have not had the time to go through their hearts and lives and ***junk all the junk*** they brought with them out of Egypt – and one of the features of walking with Him is to both ***learn not to pick up new junk along the way and also to learn to junk any, if you should acquire it.***

You see, one of the features of our life that is inescapable is that we are on a personal, generational journey from the cradle to the grave and from the garden to the heavenly city and next to our faith and our righteousness/obedience, we have to learn to ***constantly be repacking our hearts and our lives*** – mainly at every camping site – which is why Sabbath attendance is so important, because when we stop and take a look around, we notice things we do not have time to notice in the “busyness” of life.

There are a couple of things I want to say about this ***camping*** and this ***repacking*** process, this morning. The first is kind of a sad reality which I hope all of us learn to be spared from and I want to call it ***growing stale as we grow old*** – in other words when we ***cease to grow*** and ***cease to examine ourselves*** and when who we are at one particular stage of our lives becomes who we are for the rest of our lives – and this should never happen before we go through that wonder final transformation at the resurrection of our bodies.

You see, all of us have ***ongoing issues we struggle with and unfinished business***, we either carry with us for years or which we encounter at various stages of our lives as we journey through this life. I was a really cute little kid and kind of a sad adolescent. I was a fiery young man who settled down a little bit when I got some experience under my belt. I was a tired, increasingly sick, tired, mature adult until I began to profit from my detox. I was getting ready to depart this stinky world!

Now that I am getting better, I intend to be a **fiery, settled old man** until it is my turn to sleep with the ancestors (cause I haven't nearly caused enough trouble in this life yet). If you took any stage of my life only so far and made it permanent, it would have been sad, because, even though my **temperament** (my potential with its limits) cannot change, within those limits, **I want to keep on changing** (packing, unpacking and repacking), **so that who I am never grows stale** (turns sour or gets moldy) and becomes irrelevant and out of touch with the spiritual realities which this world is struggling with and to which I want to respond, until I get to my rest and pass this torch to the next generation of **divinely inspired spiritual troublemakers**.

This cannot happen if I do not **continually challenge myself in my actions and my attitudes** (in my reactions and my objectives). I know that as I near sixty, I will be more and more of what they call "old school" in the way I dress and in the way I talk, but **I never want to become isolated from the spiritual warfare which is swirling around me and to which all of us are called both as pilgrims and as soldiers**.

The part of that battle which will have the most extensive impact on our ability to succeed and accomplish things for the kingdom will be the **inner battles** which we fight with our own flesh as we **acquire** and as we **jettison** baggage (issues) along the way. This does not mean that major events will not also have a major impact on our lives, but it will always be **how we respond** to these events which will always be **more important than the actual events themselves**. **Some people repeatedly succeed in the midst of failure, while others fail repeatedly in the midst of success.**

This occurs mainly with those who have adopted a set of attitudes and habits and confused this **baggage** with their **temperament** and who do not apply the **unpacking and repacking process** to certain issues in their lives, because, even though they have not been resolved according to the stipulations of G-d's Word, **they have been resolved in unfortunate ways which have unfortunately become permanent, stale, and even moldy** (and sometimes family relationships and even work relationships are the worst victims of this rotting process).

How do we remedy this **tragedy**? My second thought relates to **positive self examination** in light of the Scriptures and in light of a body of mature, redemptive believers who can help us distinguish between **temperamental imperatives** which must be harnessed and **carnal preferences** which must be modified. Over the years people have tried to make me into a handy man that handles machines well and can fix things with a tool box.

I have a tool box and I can do some fixing, but I am not temperamentally suited for this kind of work. I do have some **bad relational habits** which are always under scrutiny and which I am always trying to **unpack, jettison and repack**, and as such I want to remain a dynamic disciple of the King until I gratefully draw my last breath. How about you?

Knowing yourself means knowing your **upside** and your **downside** and knowing what you can **change** and what you have to **compensate** for and part of this is to identify **unfinished business** and **ongoing issues** and I want to finish with this. Every relationship we have in this live will always have both **unfinished business** (because we are always encountering new challenges and the return of old challenges) and **ongoing issues** because how we relate to everything in our lives remains a choice that **we will either make for our good or have to unmake for our healing.**

Unless we have grown stale and grumpy and carnal, our reactions will never be **automatic** (except those which are temperamentally geared) and how we react will be the stuff of the unfinished business and ongoing issues which will either make us or break us as we travel through this life.

Unfinished business refers to things we have not been able to **fully deal with** and may have to wait for a long time to resolve. This may include family issues, business ventures and all the things we are working on, but which we may not have time to finish before our pilgrimage is over.

Ongoing issues are a combination of temperament, experience and our attitudes and habits – kind of like **knives** that will always need sharpening and **grass** that will always need cutting (snow which will always need shoveling) and the **life maintenance** we must perform regularly on every area of our lives over both the long and the short term.

Things wear out. **Friendships** can begin to drift apart. **Houses** and **cars** need repairs. **Clothes** need mending. **Shul** needs attending and **Bibles** need reading (and **prayers** need to be said) and the list goes on and this is one of principle reasons for the Sabbath.

You see, **spiritual issues** should always be the ones which we give our **first** and our **best** effort to, because their impact is not only for this life, but for the one which is to come. Even more, **the spiritual impact of every issue we face is more important than the temporal impact it has in our lives.** As strangers and pilgrims on this earth, we understand that how we live, needs to be part of the studying (and sometimes the cramming) we are doing for the life which is to come.

We need to acknowledge that we have **ongoing issues** (Please **Be Patient With Me, G-d Is Not Finished With Me Yet – PBPWM, GINFWMY**) and we need to acknowledge that we have **unfinished business**, but most of all, we need to acknowledge that our packing process for the next life is not over – but that it could be over at any second, for not for a whole lifetime.

When I look into my grandchildren's eyes I see a lifetime which I will only be able to share a portion of with them and it does not make me too sad, because I will never be separated from them permanently and I also see myself at the same age and I think the only thing Adam and Eve regretted about their entrance into this life, was that they were not given the chance to grow up through childhood, but that's a topic for Yeshiva.

We need to be ***constantly unpacking and repacking*** as part of our Shabbat observance, both at shul and at home – and as part of the ***festival cycle*** we go through and as part of each of our own ***personal cycles*** which we will all go through. ***Never stop repacking, never grow stale or moldy.*** And learn to distinguish between issues you can solve quickly and those which will remain ***ongoing*** and ***unfinished*** and do not despise them because they seem to slow you down or embarrass you.

Part of my role as a spiritual leader is to admit that I have clay feet – and that I have problems I am working on as well. I never want to stand on a pedestal, I want to sit in a chair and adopt a mandate and part of that mandate needs to be **an unswerving commitment to positive change** where all the events of my life are brought before the stipulations of His Word and are related to accordingly according to their place in one of the four categories of baggage we need to stay on top of if we want to have a successful journey and not one which will cause us eternal damage.

(1) ***reactions(habits) and attitudes*** which we must constantly pack and repack, (2) attitudes and reactions (habits) we ***jettison*** and never let become a permanent part of our lives (3) reactions (habits) and attitudes which are ***ongoing*** and which we constantly revisit, repair and re-sharpen and finally (4) attitudes and reactions (habits) which are ***unfinished*** and which we will get to when and if the opportunity presents itself.

Relating to the last two categories: ***ongoing and unfinished issues*** is often the hardest thing we will have to deal with and the hardest to admit to.

May you be blessed in all four categories of unpacking and repacking, as we relate to our heart's baggage as pilgrims who want to make progress, and may this especially be true in the last two, my fellow travelers, campers and soldiers.

Let's pray.