

Introduction

This Shabbat commemorates a very important turning point in the history of Judaism, and of Salvation. Right after the Fall, G-d set in motion His plan for the redemption of all the generations, nations and families of mankind. He promised our mother Eve that the Seed of Woman would crush the serpent (Gen. 3:15).

This cosmic spiritual battle for the souls of mankind would always have a human component in the struggle (Gen. 4:7). Sin crouches at all of our doors, and true spirituality celebrates our victory over this generational adversary.

The next stage in the war which is still going on through our lives, came when the L-rd selected Abraham to become a great nation and to be the source of blessing for all nations (Gen. 12:2, 3). He is the spiritual father of all believers, Jew and Gentile, and the physical ancestor of our Messiah, who was born of the House of David, out of the tribe of Judah.

This Shabbat, HaChodesh commemorates a turning point that is so startling that it is hard to grasp all at once. When promises become reality, a lot of effort and energy is expended on behalf of those who are on the receiving end of this intervention. That is why Rav Sh'aul can encourage us to stand firm in the glorious freedom we have received (I Cor. 7:23).

Pesach, which occurred over 3,000 years ago at this time of the year, set the celestial clock ticking and for us, as Messianic Jews and Gentiles, it has a double significance. It is both a celebration of the deliverance of the House of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, and of the deliverance of the children of Adam from the bondage of sin and death.

Today, by tradition, we begin to prepare our hearts and our homes for Pesach, cause there are only 16 more sleeps till the Seder. Besides spring cleaning, we get ready to remove all the leavening (**chametz**) from our houses, and we stock up on unleavened bread (**matzah**) for our annual observance of **Chag HaMotzot** (The week long feast of unleavened bread).

Also, as we see the first new moon of spring rise in the night sky this Tuesday, we should see our need to set our spiritual clocks to G-d's timetable, as we reaffirm our commitment to make Him the L-rd of our time, from the cradle to the grave. When we accept Him into our hearts and lives, we agree to worship and serve Him" daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and through all the transitions of our short lives, from the cradle to the grave.

The Temporal Imperative

The cycles of the moon are very important in Judaism, and it is something that Gentile Christians have never really understood. The new moon is a personal celestial symbol for every Jew which speaks of at least two things. It speaks of renewal (new beginnings and recovery) and it speaks of G-d's goodness (He is in Heaven, the universe is unfolding as it should and He knows who we are, where we are and what is going on in our lives).

It also speaks of Messiah. As the moon rises, it reflects the glory of the sun, in the depths of night. As it wanes (sets) in the night sky, the morning star rises to foretell the arrival of a new day. The morning star has risen in the hearts of all believers, Jew and Gentile (2 Peter 1:19), and the Day of His appearing in Glory is one day, one week, one month and, now, one year closer.

Has the morning star, Yeshua of Nazareth, risen in your hearts? Is your life running on celestial time, or are you still stumbling around in darkness? Each month, and once a year, at this special new moon, we need to examine our hearts, so that we commemorate Pesach free from the leavening of sin, which takes root and flourishes so easily in our hearts (I Cor. 5:6-8 and Heb. 12:1-3).

This does not mean that any struggles we are facing unsuccessfully will be able to block our participation in the Seder. The elders are not going to give you the Fifth Degree at the door, to make sure your souls

are squeaky clean. Our Seder celebrates the reality of our cleansing, when Yeshua voluntarily offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

It also celebrates the deliverance of Israel from the house of bondage, and our own deliverance, from what ever house or houses of bondage we wallowed in before we came to the L-rd – and for some of us, from the houses of bondage we have occasionally wallowed in, like the House of Jacob, after we were set free from bondage by the L-rd.

For a whole year, the L-rd took on the gods of the Egyptian calendar and smashed the spiritual oppression of Egypt. This month, our Deliverer was preparing to take on the last and greatest of the Egyptian deities, whose symbol, the ram, was also being prepared to be slaughtered as a double symbol. The false gods of Egypt were about to be shown up as powerless before the only true G-d, Creator of Heaven and Earth, and the Children of Israel were about to eat a lamb, an animal sacred to the Egyptians.

Also, the new symbolism of the Lamb of G-d was set in motion, so that when Yeshua sat down to a Seder with His disciples, all of the symbols of the Seder had their fulfilment in what He was about to do.

Where does that leave us as Messianic believers, Jew and Gentile? The L-rd of time, whose agenda can never be derailed, and which is unfolding as it should, wants to be the L-rd of our time. This is the temporal imperative. Daily, weekly, monthly, and now yearly, how have you been spending your time? What has been the focus of your attention since we last sat down to a Seder together?

Are you a wise virgin, or has your foolishness prevented you from having any oil in the lamp of your life? Tempus Fugit, mishpocah, carpe diem, l'olam va'ed (time flies, beloved, seize the day forever). The shape of this old world is passing away, year by year, civilization by civilization, life by life, and in His mercy our King who is not willing that any should perish, is giving us another year to get it right. Do you get it? Do you get the purpose of your life?

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Catholic Catechism both identify the double purpose of our lives: to love G-d and to serve Him, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Nothing else really matters, for G-d shall one day soon judge all the secret actions and intents of every human heart (Eccl. 12:14; Romans 2:16 and I Cor. 4:5).

And if judgment shall begin with the House of G-d, what shall be the end for those who do not obey the Gospel of G-d (I Peter 4:17, 18)? Let me conclude this section by teaching you a South African word which expresses the reaction that we, as believers should have, as we consider our eternal destiny and the daily spiritual realities which will have a significant impact on that final state: **Kow-Lay-Zah**.

I have a recording of Miriam Makeba, who sings many Bantu songs and one of them speaks about life in the townships, under Apartheid. The police would come and raid the homes of suspected supporters of the ANC, or the homes of anyone whom the government felt was making trouble for their racist policies. Miriam Makeba says the children would sing, as they saw the police cars coming: **Kow-Lay-zah** mama (hide mama, don't let them catch you and take you away, hide).

Mishpocah, the Righteous Judge is coming, and He is at the door, ready. He has defeated all the gods of Egypt and His Son has paid the price for the salvation of all mankind. Is the blood covering the doorframe of your hearts? Is there sin which is choking your spiritual life and health? **Koy-Lay-Zah** mishpocah – run and hide- take refuge under the wings of the Almighty, today, and every day, until the moment when I true liberation from this world will set us free forever. Which leads me into my final point and to my conclusion: how ready are you to go?

Packing Is Such a Bother

You all know I am visiting with our sister Ava Simmons who is battling terminal cancer. Three times a week, I pray with her, sing and chant for her, encourage her and, surprisingly, struggle with a tinge of envy. Years ago, when I was burning out in ministry in Quebec, a friend of mine was dying of cancer and I spent some time with him at a leadership conference. As we shared, I started crying and said it was not fair that he got to go home and I had to stay and fight this losing battle with burnout that was breaking my heart.

He laid hands on me and prayed for me and went home a few months later. I burned out, came back to Alberta and put my life back together, sort of. I am still fighting, and I don't always win. How can I say this, as your spiritual leader and you example? Well, if I said anything else, I would be lying. We all have inner baggage and life baggage and spiritual challenges which keep getting in our faces, because dealing with these treasures is the whole duty of man.

No, I am not insane, mostly. G-d wants us to become faithful pilgrims and strangers in this world, until our whole lives become a journey homeward to His Coming Kingdom. And, with Bilbo Baggins, I concur, packing is such a bother. At the end of the Lord of the Rings, he is preparing to go to Western Lands beyond the sea, sort of a Heaven for heroes. And he doesn't know what to pack. Let me conclude by asking you a question, which is the whole point of this special Shabbat, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

As we prepare to meet the King, how is your packing going? What are you preparing to take with? What is filling up in your heart? It is the heart contents of our hearts where true spiritual packing occurs, and it is such a bother. My next series, this summer will be about the fruit of the spirit, the only true contents which G-d wants us to pack into the life suitcase of our hearts. Packing our hearts with spiritual beliefs, values and reactions is the will of G-d for each and every one of us.

Let's pray that each of us learns to pack for our departure from the Egypt of this world, and as we prepare to enter the eternal city, with the restored Garden of Eden in the midst.

Torah Meditation:

As a Messianic Jewish congregation, instead of chanting all seven portions of the Torah Portion, and those of the Haftarah, we select four verses from the Torah, two from the Haftarah, and one from the Brit Chadashah and we weave them into a single meditation. Here is my meditation.

Vayakhel - Pekudei And He Assembled - Accountings of It's Time To Get It Together

Torah: Exod. 35:1-40:38 – Maftir (conclusion) Ex. 12:1-20

(1) **35:2:** First things first. You must rest in what the L-rd has done and learn to rest in the L-rd. The Sabbath is not just a symbol, it needs to be a weekly reality – cause when we rest in Him and learn to see things from His perspective, we are ready to face life. Getting it together spiritually is the most important aspect of our lives (Matt. 11:28-30 – His yoke heals and strengthens – are you wearing it?)

(2) **35:21:** You have to be willing and learn to respond to the urgings He has placed in your heart (Phil. 2:13). Are you willing to get it together spiritually? I mean, really? Then it's gonna hit the fan till it's all gone. And the sooner the better, I say (then I duck).

(3) **39:32** Ritual observance is stage one in our faith and our obedience. We need to fill our hearts and our lives with His symbols (pictures of redemption and holiness) and then learn how to integrate and apply them in our lives. How observant are you? Both Ritually and practically? Cause they go hand in hand.

(4) **40:17** Exactly one year after their departure from Egypt, the tabernacle was finished and they were ready for the next stage in their spiritual pilgrimage. Are you ready for the next stage in yours? What is G-d doing in your life? There are four stages He wants us to go through: Deliverance, Desert, Conquest and Kingdom. Deliverance is His job. He wants us to wander in the desert, until we are ready to conquer all the fortresses of sin in our lives. This conquest needs to occur, in order for His Kingdom to be set up in our hearts and in our lives, while we wait for His Eternal Kingdom. It's time to get it together and to move on. How's it going with your stages?

Haftarah: Ez. 45:16-15 (Seph.); 45:16-18 (Ash.)

(5) **46:1** G-d's House is open for His business, when we rest in Him. Our lives are a series of stages and events, which we need to bring and offer to Him daily, weekly, monthly and yearly. Are you resting in Him? What are you offering to Him? Money is fine, but heart offerings, of which our handling of money is one, are better. Is your heart (your life) open for business today?

(6) **46:18** Our growth in the L-rd and our spirituality are not a competition, where we take from each other to get the biggest piece of the pie in the L-rd. In Him, there is enough for us and for our children. We have a personal and a community walk with the L-rd. How's your community walk with the L-rd doing?

Brit Chadashah: Heb. 8:1-12 (F) Heb. 9:1-11; I Cor. 9:6-11; 2 Cor. 3:7-18 (L)

(7) **8:6** Yeshua is the real thing, the real McCoy. All the symbols and celebrations have in Him their perfect fulfillment. He wants to fulfill the reality of His love in our lives, both as individuals and as a community. He wants reality. Symbols are the pictures. This Shabbat is a picture of the kind of heart preparations we need to make as we prepare to leave this world, and as we prepare to live in this world, while we wait for that glorious day. Are you waiting? Are you preparing?

Kiddush Levanah Nisan (Art Scroll, pp. 288-293)

(1) Ps. 148:1-6. (2) The Voice of My Beloved (with note). (3) May it Be Your Will (with note)

Chazak, Chazak, v'Nitchazek **(Be strong, be strong, and may you be strengthened)**
Amen.