

19 Nisan (30/3/13) *The Song of Solomon: Driven By Holy Passion* J. M. Terrett

Pesach V **Are You Letting the Winner Win in Your Life?**

Torah: Ex. 13:15-15:26

(1) 13:16 – as a sign on your hand and as frontlets between your eyes for by His powerful hand, the L-Rd took us out of Egypt. The meaning of symbolism, not the symbol is important.

(2) 14:14. The L-RD shall fight for you and you keep silent. We have to learn to follow and to trust, not to fret and always scatter, chatter and head for the hills

(3) 15:11. Who is like you oh YHVH among the gods, magnificent in holiness? He is unique among all the gods and among all the deficient views of G-d (deviations from the Judeo-Christian understanding).

(4) 15:25, 26 (gave His laws and statues and said if you listen ,none of these diseases will come upon you –they knew the kind of complete submission and service which He was calling them to and what He was capable of, both in blessing and in retribution – do You?)

Haftarah: 2 Sam. 22:1-51

(5) 2, 3 – He is my shield and my rock. He is my fortress and my liberator, my high retreat and my refuge – bigger and mightier than any possible scenario which could ever come against me).

(6) 24. I kept myself on guard against my iniquity and was without reproach before Him (how is your battle with your dark side doing?)

Brit Chadashah: Rev. 15:1-14

(7) 3. They sang the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb – and extolled His great deliverance which is eternal.

Song of Songs **Yizkor** **Jewish Hero: Becka (helpful, friendly)**
Psalm 136 (Julia: pp. 100, 103)

This piece of Scripture is traditionally read on the Sabbath of Passover to remind us of the passionate love which the L-rd has for us and of the passionate love we are called to have for Him. It is written in the form of a reading/chanting play, where there are three main actors: Solomon, the Shulamite and the Daughters of Jerusalem. It is both a voyage of discovery and of desire and records the encounters between Solomon and the Shulamite where they detail their love for each other and the near panic and determination they experience when they seek for each other when they are apart.

It has a strange ending where the Shulamite recruits other women for Solomon, including the little sister who is not yet quite ready and calls upon the beloved to flee or seek for the object of this love upon the mountains of aromatic spices. This is both kind of an inconclusive ending and also an indication that it is an ongoing story which is meant to continue beyond its original setting.

The descriptions are beautiful and sensual, without ever being graphic or vulgar and the desire is portrayed as both positive and persistent. There is no competition for the object of either lover's affection and their desire is both unsettling and yet very fulfilling.

One Jewish commentator felt that the whole story was an allegory with no intended sexual overtones that symbolically tells the story of Israel throughout the ages and many commentators over the years have tried to come to terms with the sensual nature of the song – which is called the Song of Songs – or the best song ever written.

Let me first say that the Song is written as a passionate love song, because our relationship with the L-rd needs to be based on passionate love and the special union between a man and a woman is the closest comparison between the spiritual connection which needs to exist between each believer and the L-rd.

Next let me firmly say that the sexual overtones of the book are never to be taken literally, as if we are called to somehow have a physical relationship with the L-rd or engage in sexual behaviour as part of our worship of the Holy G-d. The comparison between sexual love and spiritual love is made with a distinct purpose in mind and it is triple. First we need to allow our passion for the L-rd rule our lives and allow His passion for us to fill our lives.

Secondly, the bond between us is powerful and is one where we are called to go on a journey of discovery where we discover personally how wonderful our L-rd is and how wonderful He finds us – even though we are imperfect sinners full of flaws and foolishness. Third, the mutual passion between Solomon and the Shulamite is never fully consummated and is a life long journey where the complete and final love cannot be fully experienced in this life.

There is a fourth point and maybe a fifth. We are to actively recruit other “lovers” for our King and we are to care for those who may not be ready, until their desire for Him causes them to want to seek for Him with the same passion and drive which compels our hearts and lives. This is not some kind of call for sexual behaviour which violates the scriptural teachings against adultery and fornication and this is where the Song becomes a symbolic reference to His divine love which wants to embrace all mankind, beginning with Israel (the Shulamite).

In a very real sense, the L-rd wants to love each of us as if we were the only object of His love and all of us without favoritism or competition. Throughout the Scriptures, Israel is referred to as a bride or a fiancé and though Israel will always be His first love, from the onset, His love for the nations is never diminished and never takes second place. In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, we have a similar reference to the divine passion we are called to maintain as believers and I want to diverge a little this morning into that parable, before returning to the Song of Songs and my conclusion.

This parable has ten virgins who are waiting for the groom to come so that they might enter the bridal chamber with Him and become His brides. In a very real sense, we are called to join the heavenly harem of G-d – which is neither a call for polygamy among us on earth, nor an introduction to some kind of heavenly sex we will experience in the Kingdom. His love for us is pure and not sensual and our lives for Him must also be pure and non sensual – yet the passion which drives lovers is the closest comparison with our spirituality which we can use to explain the kind of drive which our spirituality wants to activate within us, personally and corporately.

There is no room for harem intrigues or competition – we will all have equal, full, personal and corporate access to Him forever in a way which eye has not seen, nor ear has not heard in a great mystery which neither our hearts nor minds can fully grasp. It shares some characteristics with sexual love, but it is not

sexual and we should not take the symbolism as literal or we will miss the whole point of His holy love and of His holy passion.

In the parable, five of the virgins (or fiancés) are wise and five are not wise and many is the sermon which has been preached on the meaning of the oil, but the point is quite simple. They were not told when the Groom would be coming, at noon or in the middle of the night, so they were warned to be ready and told to wait. What a beautiful description of the double spiritual priorities believers should maintain: readiness and waiting. Oil for their lamps simply means that they would be ready day or night.

All of them slept, not just the foolish ones, for He gives to His beloved as much as they sleep (Ps. 127:1, 2), so the foolishness was not related to a lack of watchfulness, but only to a lack of preparedness. We need to be ready 24/7 for His return and make sure our lives do not become so crowded with the things of this life that we are not primarily connected to the things of the next life. We are to be wise fiancés and make our peaceful impatience the driving force in our lives, so that when He comes we are not caught off guard in a life which takes some fixing up before we are ready for Him.

Finally the ten has not got anything to do with the commandments, since five were flawed and only five were valid – be careful about reading too much into the symbolism of the Scriptures. The ten received the same call and they were all waiting for the same Groom. They were all asleep, but only five had taken care of their spiritual preparedness before they went to sleep.

In other words the point of the parable is that spiritual preparedness needs to be most important feature of our lifestyle, without making us so nervous and paranoid that we are afraid that the slightest infraction means that we will be excluded from His presence when He comes. He wants us to get our sleep and conduct our affairs, and even if His return catches us on a bad day, as long as our hearts and lives make spiritual readiness that which defines how we live, we will do just fine.

Now back to the Song. There are some powerful descriptions of both masculine and feminine beauty which are as innocent as they are sensual and no act of copulation occurs overtly in any of the descriptions. This may have frustrated Solomon as He was guided to write it, but despite his own sexual hang-ups, I believe he understood what he was describing – the love between a believer and the L-rd. The Shulamite cannot understand why Solomon should find her so attractive and for the life of me I cannot understand what the L-rd finds in me other than a colossal waste of time, full of junk and darkness – but this is where we need to allow the symbolism of love heal us from the well deserved self loathing we would be stuck with if His love did not see the inner beauty we are capable of.

Ezekiel chapter sixteen speaks of this beauty which goes wrong when Israel becomes unfaithful and seeks the company of other gods and when the L-rd speaks of us as His children, His parental love also sees that we have the potential to grow into good children or those who become prodigals and who wander away from Him. In all three cases (the Song, Ezekiel and in the passages where G-d is the grieving parent), His love is never diminished for us and we are always welcome back. However, the tragedy is not the condition we find ourselves in when we wander away, but in the state where too many of us fail to abandon our foolishness and return to throw ourselves on the mercy of our gracious Father.

Despite all the opposition and problems which believers can encounter and have encountered over the centuries, there is a wonderful, joyful and passionate intimacy which can overcome all the obstacles which confront our faith and our obedience and which can keep us flying into the mountains in a lifetime pursuit of the incredible intimacy which we are called to have with the L-rd as we learn to seek Him in every circumstance and at every stage of our lives through the valleys and over the mountains – but which our

passionate love turns into the mountains of spices – because we know three things and I will close with this.

First of all we know that He is available, but sometimes we may lose track of Him and have to go hunting until we re-establish contact, whenever we feel that we are losing contact with Him. Secondly, we will never have full, complete and permanent contact with Him in this life, because it will always be a journey where we have to learn to encounter Him along the way - to hunt Him down and find Him, because we know that He will always be there. And finally, as we recruit others for this amazing adventure, we understand that one day our journey will be over, and the door will open and the Groom will invite us in and we will share spend eternity with Him, beginning with the most amazing Passover Seder imaginable.

We shall all be seated beside the cool waters of the river of life and be eating the succulent, healing leaves of the tree of life – as we are transformed into His image, because we finally see Him as He is – and we realize that everything we have known about Him and everything we have seen of Him in this life was only a teaser, a foretaste of the reality He wants us to keep heading for, because it shall most certainly be beyond all we can think or ask and then some.

Chag Pesach Samaech, l'olam va'ed (Happy Holy Passover, forever more)

Before we pray and bring this service to a conclusion – and in presence of these witnesses who have preceded us, let's look at some of my favorite passages in this Song, now that we know what it is about.

1:2 (your love is better than wine)

1:3 (Your name is a perfume that that spreads forth and attracts other young girls)

2:4 (His banner over me is passionate love – not burning anger or resentment)

2:12 (the time for singing has arrived – spring time – He wants us to fall in love with Him again and again)

4:7 (You are completely lovely my friend and there is no flaw in you – this is how G-d sees us)

5:1 (eat, my friend and drink and become drunk with love – there is an overpowering satisfaction waiting for each of us in Him)

6:5 (quit looking at me because I can't take your beauty – this is the depth of His love for us)

6:10 (beautiful as the dawn and the moon, pure as the sun and terrible as a troop with banners – this is a picture of the glorified body of Messiah, the New Jerusalem, beautiful beyond description)

8:6 (put Me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm, for love is as strong as death and jealousy as inflexible as the dwelling place of the dead, its desires are as ardent as fire, a flame of YHVH – here we see that it is not about sex but about spirituality and holy passion, which is stronger than both life and death, and the L-RD's name is mentioned here and He can be identified as the lover).

8:7 (great waters cannot extinguish love and the floods cannot submerge it, should a man offer all his goods and his house to get love, he will only end up being put to shame- here again we see the song has an application that is not physical, but both indestructible and priceless).

There are other references which may either charm you or trouble you, study them and lets examine them at Yeshiva.

Now, let's pray.