

Heart's Baggage. Pilgrim's Progress

20 Iyar, 5772 (12/05/12) *Integrating Life Transitions Wisely* J. M. Terrett

Emor Say Holiness brings order; order brings holiness

Torah: Lev. 21:1-24:23

(1) 21:12. He shall not leave the sanctuary and shall not profane the sanctuary of his G-d; for the oil of anointing of His G-d is a crown upon him. I am the L-RD.

(2) 22:22. Anything blind or injured, or maimed or having a discharge or an itch or scabs – these you shall not offer to the L-rd or put any of them on the altar as offerings by fire to the L-rd.

(3) 23:3. You shall work six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath, the day of rest: there shall be a holy gathering. You shall do no work: it is the Sabbath of the L-rd in all your dwellings.

(4) 24:22. You shall have the same law for the stranger as for the native born, for I am the L-RD your G-d.

Haftarah: Ezek. 44:15-31

(5) 44:23. "They shall teach the people to distinguish between that which is holy and that which is common, and they shall make them to know the difference between that which is impure and that which is pure."

(6) 44:24. They shall be judges in all disputes and they shall judge according to my laws. They shall observe all my laws and statues in all my feasts and they shall sanctify my Sabbaths.

Brit Chadashah: Luke 14:12-24

(7) 14:14. And you shall be blessed because they cannot repay you, for shall be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.

Ps. 42

Jewish Hero: Mother's Day

Passages:

Ps. 37:25. I was young and now am old; I have never seen the righteous abandoned nor his descendents begging for their bread. (we are not promised an easy road, but a successful journey, generationally)

Eccl. 12:1. Young man, rejoice in your youth and give your heart over to joy during the days of your joy, and walk in the ways of your heart and according to the sight of your eyes; but know that for all of that G-d will call you into judgment. (Have to pursue your dreams, as long as they do not turn your later years into a nightmare).

Gal. 6:7. Do not be deceived – G-d is not mocked, that which a man shall have sown, that also he shall reap. (life never stands still, we need to learn to rest in Him and know the seasons of our lives).

Eccl. 3:1. To everything there is a season, a season for everything under the heavens (often the only sense we can make out of life is the sense we bring to the things which happen to us as we trust in His superintendence).

I Cor. 13:11. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned as a child would; when I became a man, I made that which was childish disappear. (I love kids, but not childish adults who have not grown through what was given to them and become intentional by doing their heart homework).

I have been talking a lot about **heart homework** and about that fact that our lives are a **pilgrimage** where we are being directed and guided more by how we respond to the events of our lives than by the **actual events** of our lives – principally because, truly **the level of control we exercise over these events is determined by how we relate to them**. Some people seem determined to see the downside of every situation, others are determined to see things in a positive light (never mind, we'll put the kettle on and have a nice cup of tea).

I want to say at least three or four things to you this morning about **wisely integrating life's transitions** and the first two are obvious and a bit of review. When I was teaching secondary school where all the hormones and the restlessness roamed the halls avoiding as much education and responsibility as possible, I often said: **where you are, I once was and where I am you will also be** (not quite as handsome or as smart lol). In other words, **do not get stuck on any one stage of your life** – we are all growing older and dying at the same rate. **There will always be as much life over the hill as there was climbing up.** Life is not over until you die.

Also, and it will sound cutesy – **qué sera, sera.** And ya never know what is going to happen and **the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglay.** Do your best, cast your bread upon the waters, but learn to live with the happenstances of life (**Aladdin's Lamp**) without losing your **soul** or your **way** – and without becoming embittered, envious (conflicted or compromised) by how your life is turning out (If).

At the end of your life, **where you have been will pale in comparison to who you have become and what you have stored up in your heart will take over your life more and more,** until that which is on the inside takes over and your life becomes a metaphor for the core values you have allowed to take root in your heart. Who you are in your heart is who you are, no matter how many disguises you wear.

What does this mean? Principally, the whole duty of man is **to come to biblical, spiritual terms** with what has happened and what is happening in our lives and learning to see them as **opportunities** both to express our **faith** and **obedience** and also as merely **raw materials** we can either use to build with gold silver and precious jewels into our hearts, or clutter our hearts and lives with hay, wood and stubble.

As a student of history, I understand, with Solomon that all too frequently **it is all a matter of circumstances,** and not a question of **fairness** or **talent** – but often being wise in the choice of our parents or being at the **wrong place at the right time.** I react strongly **against** those teachers of supposed faith who falsely proclaim that when you have enough faith and learn to **take authority,** you can write your own ticket with G-d and be in charge of your own destiny. What they are really saying is that if you know a few tricks, you can **oblige** G-d to manipulate events in the world and in your own life to give you a **permanent edge,** because we all know that **spirituality will always equal success** – and if you were really spiritual, you would succeed in everything. This is nothing but subtle, pernicious nonsense (heart rot).

This is such a trap for believers in our **instant gratification, materialist world** where things and power and appearances are the most important things in life – even though the Bible warns us that, that which is exalted among men is an **abomination** before G-d and many who are **first** will be **last** and that unless we are living for the world to come, when this life is over, the **folly** of our wasted time and wrong decisions will **drown out** and **consume** whatever satisfaction and pride we have taken in this life, as you watch what you have given your life to wither, crumble and burn, because **it never really belonged to you.**

The only thing you can really own in this life is the **contents of your heart** – the habits and attitudes of your inner life – over all the rest we are just **stewards** – passengers – pilgrims, who are just passing through this life in stages – either storing up **treasure** or preparing for a **bonfire** of all the vanity that clutters our hearts.

Our job is to understand that our life is a series of **stages** we are all going to be passing through, no matter how hard we try to avoid or to prolong a certain stage of our lives (anti-aging cream is about as helpful as most pimple creams and wrinkles and grey hair will also one day happen to every strutting heart throb).

When we see things this way, and we encounter success and failure, and all the other changes, we need to learn to seek the L-rd until we have a truly spiritual (biblical) understanding of how we should view and come to terms with our lives - the shoulda, oughta, coulda's as well as the Praise the L-rd I didn't and Praise the L-rd it didn't. Do you see your life His way? It's not how things turn out – how will you turn out?

Two more things. In our personal lives, we need to seek to understand our **duty**, be it general or specific and part of this is to understand how to **wrestle with our memories** until we remember things, not the way they happened as much as the way the L-rd wants us to remember them so they make us **stronger, more peaceful and not cringing or seething on the inside**.

Object relations is a way of dealing with inner issues I encountered when Patti was doing psychology and I want to close with this. We remember things more in terms of **emotional impact** than we do in terms of **actual details** or sequence of events and **memories are important ways of organizing our understanding of who we are** and they can actual become **windows** through which we see the world.

When something painful or confusing or even exciting and incredible happens, we need to first **survive** the actual event and then turn it into a song, a hymn or a dirge, so that its **permanent impact** enriches us and doesn't cause us to be haunted by the past so much we lose sight of the present and are not prepared for the future – and **our future is the most important thing for us as believers**.

We know that eternity is our real home. We know that we are only passing through this life. We know that G-d is in final control, both over our lives and over life. We know that He sees into our hearts (our **life situation processors**) and it is in there (our own personal holy of holies) that He desires to dwell.

Life may come in storms, we may also wallow through doldrums, but **we should never allow life to teach us about life** (that's what His Word and prayer are for) and we should never expect that our lives will unfold in an orderly or even predictable manner – if we do, our lives will become a series of sand castles we are building on the shore, only to be swept away again and again by the tides of life.

Being a man is learning to **respond from the heart** and to digest everything (eventually) so that our object relations are **peaceful** and **the things we know are really important have been allowed to set us free from those which have no real value for eternity**.

How are you **integrating** your life experiences? What are you **sowing**? What are you **reaping**? Are you learning to put away **childish things** (speech and reasoning)? Is your hearts a **treasure trove of spiritual object relations** or do you have **spiritual heartburn** where undigested bits of trauma, anger, lust, regret are floating around, causing you to trip and stumble and repeat past mistakes over and over?

How we integrate life's experiences is more important than any of life's experiences, especially for us as believers who understand the **temporary nature** of this passing world and the enduring nature of the one to come – and the **inevitability of the coming judgment**.

That day can either be a glorious day – a version of a **personal academy awards**, or a day of shame where the **judicial inquiry** begins the process of pay back where we lose the treasure of our lives **because we have not integrate what He brought into our lives the way He wanted us to**.

The choice is ours. Let's pray.