

Parasha Behar/Bechukotai On the Mountain/In My Statutes Free at Last

Torah: **Lev. 25:1-27:54**

**Leadership Training:** perpetuating the generational holiness – counting down to the kingdom. Sabbatical and Jubilee Years (four categories of the L-rd's temporal imperative: daily, weekly/festival, decadal, generational) (the people, the Land and their time belong to the L-rd and must always be in His constant service and at His constant disposal – ownership is only a generational stewardship and functions on two levels: spiritual/moral **devotion** and practical/material **behaviour**).

Four verses from the Torah: (1) **25:9, Jubilee Year** began on Yom Kippur in order to reset the sabbatical cycles for the next generation (42 years of service with seven years of rest and one of return equals a fifty year cycle). (2) **25:18** The big "if" precedes the inevitable "then" – dwelling in security does not mean the **absence of foul weather**, but the presence of **stability** (Rom. 8:37) (3) **25:23** (cf. Ps. 24:1; 1 P. 2:11) All of us receive a personal, generational and community **mandate** for which and by which we shall be judged – how's yours (ours) doing? (4) **27:33** When we feel what we have tithed to the L-rd is not good enough, we do not take it back to give Him our best, both our **first** (tithe) and our **best** (offering) belong to Him.

- (1) How are your generational cycles (daily, festival, decadal, Jubilee) doing (Ps. 37:25; Is. 46:4)?
- (2) How weather proof is your life (our congregation)?
- (3) Is your spiritual rent (personal, generational, community mandate) in arrears, or paid up?
- (4) Is your self esteem based on **self hatred** or **self fulfilment** – is your "good" good enough?

Haftarah: **Jer. 16:19-17:14/32:6-27**

Two Verses from the Prophets: (5) **17:9**. What is the difference between **evil inclination** and **doing evil**? Renewal does not diminish evil inclinations, it develops self control, so instead of wasting our time trying to **feel good**, we learn to **do good** (Gen. 4:7). (6) **17:10** G-d sounds out our heart motivations and rewards us according to our **choices**, not according to our **feelings**.

- (5) How well do you know your heart? You do not have to let its wickedness flow into your life.
- (6) Live under G-d's scrutiny, **Judgment Day does not have to be a disaster** (Heb. 4:12).

Brit Chadashah: **Mat. 22:1-14/Luke 4:16-21**

One verse from the Brit Chadashah: (7) **4:18** [Eng.] 19 [Fr.] Are you a blind, oppressed captive or is your life living out the cycles of His freedom? He has declared your personal Jubilee, are you letting Him set you free in every area, cycle, trial, accomplishment of your life?

Chazak, Chazak, V'Nitchazek

This morning, in my sermon, I want to bring you the Second Quarter Mishpocah Meeting Ministry Reports. What an exciting title! As the second half of our fifth year draws to a close, we are still here after having endured some **substantial weather** (both good and foul). I will not bore you with all of the details of this ongoing accomplishment, because this year we will be doing our meeting differently. I will be speaking briefly to all aspects of our congregational ministry as my sermon and the Financial Report will be given as part of our monthly nosh, after the service. Four aspects of our mandate are experiencing renewal (**communications, hospitality, worship** and **leadership**) and three aspects of our ministry are facing challenges (**eldership, Shabbat School** and **pastoral care**).

The current mix we are dealing with will always be shifting so that, at various times as we **integrate** our vision and **fulfill** our mandate on all of its levels, different areas of our ministry will always be changing places, moving both from challenge to renewal and from renewal to challenge. People will come (by birth, by transfer and by conversion) and people will go (by death, by transfer and by reversion), but **our version of the generational community of believers will remain the focus of the redemptive purposes of G-d.**

Our modern society is in **spiritual, moral, social and environmental crisis** and in the midst of this turmoil, G-d has called B'nai Chayim into existence and He has called each one of us to consider how we can be fully **participating stake holders in this corporate spiritual reality.** So, as we move from pillar to post, learning to walk in the **cycles of the L-rd** through all the weather the seasons of the Spirit moves us, let us consider how well our inner, our community and our public lives are doing.

I want to depart from my usual three point sermons and challenge you to examine how well you are doing, and how we are doing in the seven aspects of the will of G-d and it will be based on one passage of Scripture which you can cross reference from Genesis to Revelation, since it is a **primary themes of biblical spirituality and authentic religious devotion:** Jer. 9:23, 24.

Here are the seven aspects of G-d's will, which I want us to consider.

(1) The **Salvation** will of G-d (Ezek 33:11 and 2 P. 3:9). Do you have life in the Son, above and beyond all else that is happening in your life?

(2) The **Holiness** will of G-d (1 P. 1:15, 16; 1 John 2:15, 16). How many areas or issues in your life measure up to the **redemptive, kosher standards of G-d's Word?**

(3) The **Devotional** will of G-d (2 Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11; Phil. 4:6, 7). Are you developing and maintaining a **vital, autonomous spiritual relationship with G-d** in order to make your life turn around His eternal purposes and not your personal, temporal agenda – unless you have a life in Him, you better get a life.

(4) The **Community** will of G-d (Heb. 10:24, 25; Eph. 4:1-6). We all belong to a race, a culture and a generation which came to us through our community of origin – just as Abraham was called out to form a **generational community of faith**, each of us must find our place in the body of our Messiah, despite the heartbreaking stupidity and hypocrisy of the rabble which never becomes part of the **righteous core** to which we are all called (Gal. 5:13-15). We belong to a migratory society of church shoppers looking for the best deal in the midst of any number of local congregations of bullies, brats and saints. If BNC is not your place, go find it, if BNC is to be your spiritual home, learn to become an integral part of the **solution** and not part of the **problem**.

(5) The **Directional** will of G-d (Matt. 6:33; Eph. 2:10 and Phil. 2:10). Are you doing what you understand to be what G-d's will is for your life? This is not always rushing off to the ends of the earth, or giving all your money to various ministries, or going to as many spiritual enrichment seminars, conferences as you can, it is making sure all you do and all your encounter is an expression of your commitment to His eternal purposes.

Abraham lived a fairly peaceful life, as did Isaac and even Jacob. Joseph, David, Elijah and the Apostle Paul had special callings which pursued them clearly and persistently. **If you know you are supposed to be somewhere, get there, if not, stay in Charan or Tarsis – G-d knows where to find you when He is ready and when you are ready.**

(6) The **Practical** will of G-d (1 Thess. 4:11, 12; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Gal. 6:2-5). The UN declared that everyone has the right to adequate food, clothing, shelter and freedom. In the L-rd, there is no provision for a free ride, each of us must pull as much of our weight as we can until we go to our eternal rest.

(7) **Outreach** will of G-d (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19, 20). Recently I was falsely accused of being affiliated with Jews for Jesus. As a congregation, we take a firm stand against any form of ***intrusive proselytization, not because we do not want to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth, but because we understand the nature of how we are to share it*** (Matt. 5:16 and I P. 3:15). I will share my faith with anyone who will listen; I will share my spirituality with everybody – how about you?

Our **constitution** and our **vision statement** call for a high degree of maintained spiritual accountability and spiritual integrity. In our particular "temporal" context, it is from this perspective of accountability and integrity that we want to face the three congregational challenges I mentioned earlier (eldership, Shabbat School and pastoral care). We also want to build on the progress we are making in the four areas where we are currently experiencing success and renewal (communications, hospitality, worship and leadership).

One of the joys of a **smaller assembly** is that you get to know everyone and it is like being part of an extended family. One of the challenges of belonging to a smaller assembly is that there is only a **limited pool of volunteers** to draw from and there is a constant battle not to become a closed community which does not welcome new comers, and is not prepared to make the necessary changes that it takes to meet everyone's spiritual needs.

Let me conclude by making a surprising statement. I do not believe that BNC is called to remain a small assembly for **three reasons**. First of all, we live in an **urban setting** with slightly more than a million people, so our **demographic growth potential is not limited**. Second of all, we are meeting a need which not many other ministries are meeting – we are **rebuilding the Messianic Jewish contingent** of the greater Edmonton community of believers as a witness of G-d's faithfulness to both the Gentile and the Jewish communities in our fair city.

The third and final reason is that our Vision Statement is a **prophetic call to discipleship, celebration and healing**, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile and as such is not restricted to only one people group, age group, or cultural context. We have **no natural boundaries** and, while our ministry is not for everyone, **we have a place for anyone and everyone whom the L-rd is calling to this exciting, potential filled ministry context**, if and only if those He calls (individually or in groups) are prepared to join with us **as we pursue the fulfilment of the sevenfold will of G-d in our midst.**

Many of our seven categories of ministry are at a crossroads mainly because many of us are facing incredible challenges and cannot give more of our time and energy until some more of it is freed up. This means that the growth we are seeking may not come quickly or easily and that perhaps we may see yet another shift in the composition of our community. Two things and I will close. First of all, **we will not change the ministry priorities of our constitution and our vision statements until we are told to do so**. Second of all, **we will make all the changes and modifications to how we fulfill this dynamic mandate, and so continue to sow persistently and wisely until we reap the Harvest we believe we have been promised**.

We need your help. We need your prayers. We need your ideas. We need your tithes. We need you to stay on board and work with us through all the weather we encounter, even if it takes more than one generation to see our community reach its mature, optimum size, strength and impact.

Let's pray.