

Behar/Bechukotai On the Mount/In My Statutes

Torah: **Lev. 25:1-27:34**

Haftarah: **Jer. 16:19-17:14**

Brit Chadashah: **Luke 4:16-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18(L) Matt. 22:1-14 (F)**

**Chazak, Chazak, v'Nitchazek**

Introduction

As we proceed through this series, I want us to look at the **fruit of the spirit** and the **works of the flesh** from a variety of different angles, to gain as broad a perspective of them as possible. The two sets of three categories are really just **two sets of spiritual potential which each of us possess**. Let's review. I've shifted envy from a connection to a resource manager.

**(I) the Power Pack: Heart Themes: The Inner Spiritual Reality**

(5) sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry & witchcraft versus  
(3) love, joy, peace

**(II) The Connection: Community Chaos or Redemptive Harmony**

(7) rivalries, quarrels, jealousies, animosities, disputes, divisions, factions versus  
(5) patience goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness

**(III) The Resource Manager: Spiritual Integrity or Auto Destruct Mode**

(4) envy, drunkenness, gluttony, and the like versus  
(1) self-control

Today I want to look at peace from two main passages as we look at our spiritual capacity to grow in peace.

**Numbers 6:24, 25:** "The L-RD bless you and guard you, the L-RD make His face to shine upon you, and grant you grace, the L-RD turn His face towards you and give you peace."

In the Bible, peace is sort of *a package deal which flows out of G-d's continual intervention at crisis moments in our lives*. This passage occurs just as the newly reorganized camps of the L-rd were getting ready to: "head 'em up and move 'em out". The House of Jacob has spent over a year camping around the mountain, and now the presence had come down the mountain and taken up residence in the golden box in their midst.

The ragged motley crew of escaped slaves had become the finely tuned hosts of the L-rd, poised behind their banners, irresistible, unstoppable, the most awesome, dangerous fighting force on the planet. Empowered, instructed, and organized, they had become the L-rd's shock troops, ready to follow the presence wherever it lead and whatever they encountered.

Why? Moshe's prayer had been answered (Ex. 33:15: "If you do not yourself walk with us, then never make us leave here"), G-d Himself was walking with them and they were leaving and going home. They may have thought they were carrying the L-rd on the shoulders of the priests, but it was really the L-rd who was carrying them on the wings of the eagle and flying them on a one-way ticket home.

**Peace means we know that the L-rd has called us to Himself forever and that we are convinced He will be with us every step of the way to our Forever Home.** Billy Graham wrote a book called *Peace With G-d*, in which he teaches people how to accept the L-rd, so that His presence can take up its rightful place in the golden tabernacle of the believer's heart.

Let me ask you the obvious question – do you have peace with G-d? Have you asked Him into your heart and has He taken up residence in the deepest inner sanctum of your being? *As we build our community of Jews and Gentiles, it is not a time for uncertainty concerning our standing with the L-rd.* We will either spin our wheels as a rag tag rabble which cannot really get it together spiritually, or we will line up behind the presence, banners unfurled, trumpets blaring – look out Edmonton, look out world, ready or not, here we come. Charge! Damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!

Can you say that this morning? Do you know the L-rd? Is He dwelling deep in your spirit? **Is He the deepest and most sure theme of you heart and life?** We will still have problems and run into lots of Canaanites and other kinds of "ites" (and we all know how much that bites), but if G-d be for us who can really be against us (Rom. 8:31-39).

Well guess what, if G-d is for us, then everybody and everything will line up against us to shipwreck our soul on its way home. Peace accepts the Good News and the Bad News. They come together in the L-rd (John 16:33: "I have had said these things to you in order that you may have peace in Me. You shall have in the world, but be encouraged, I have overcome the world."). Which leads me into my second passage, and to my conclusion.

John 14:27: "I leave you peace, I leave you My peace, I do not give it to you as the world gives it. Do not let your heart be troubled and never become alarmed". Israel was changed while the House of Jacob camped around the mountain, and when they moved from there, G-d made sure that nothing happened to them which could do them serious damage, beyond the occasional "Amalekite" or "Golden Calf".

Once we have accepted the L-rd and are confident of His ability to cause all things to work together for our good, then peace can flow freely from the depths of our soul, into every "ouwie" which may bruise or abuse us on our pilgrimage to our Father's House. **Do you have peace with G-d, no really;** do you have peace with G-d? Do you trust Him to not only be with you through all the twists and turns of this life, but also to use all the garbage and pain in your life **AND recycle it into a spiritual treasure beyond measure?**

There is no junk in the Kingdom of the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. His cosmic recycler is never jammed, full or unable to absorb any mess, from the smallest stubbing of a baby's toe to the inconceivable horrors of the Holocaust. *We are the ones who get stuck, and our hearts and lives can get clogged with undigested trauma which rots and drags us back down into the works of the flesh.*

That hurt, but it's true and this will always be the greatest struggle of a believer's life. It is not sin which can stop us. Not even the devil nor the greatest tribulation in a life which regularly gets smashed into a million pieces of excruciating agony. It's the lack of peace that is truly our only mortal enemy. I call it being under the oppression of the morbid eventuality, looking into the Palantir and only being able to see what the eye of Sauron chooses to let us see.

Sometimes life is going to suck so bad and so often that we all become Hamlet on steroids, dogging the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and trying to decide whether to take up arms against them or to cap ourselves. Been there, wanted to "done that". And it ain't over yet, there is still more crap to come, ever more intensely and inconveniently every day and in every way, until the day of His appearing – or – and here I get excited – until He allows us to shake off this mortal coil and we get to sleep with the fathers and mothers and snore in heaven till the end – tis a consummation devotedly to be wished.

Peace means that Heaven has taken up residence in our psyche and is ready to pour out eternity into every pore of our being as long as we keep our eyes focused on home and as long as we keep walking, following the box (the pillar of fire and the covering of cloud), right through the valley of the shadow of death. Never taking flight in panic, and running helter skelter pursued by every fear and convinced that all is lost and there is no hope – just like those stupid chickens freaking out, so convinced the sky is falling that they run right into the foxes den to be eaten by the enemy whose lying voice destroyed their ability to see the truth.

Life may suck, and pain and fear may overflow our lives in the personal ghettos and traumas we each have to endure, but **unless and until we let His overcoming peace penetrate our panic and cause our inner hearts to penetrate the enemies smoke screen and to calmly sit at the Saviour's feet, our flesh will work our spirit to death and the inner haemorrhaging of our soul will be a greater tragedy than anything this foolish life can throw our way.** Been there, done that. Sometimes I live there, too.

You see this last week I had a series of sever panic attacks – yes, rabbis get them too, and no, this does not happen every time my wife goes away. I was worse off than Hamlet, cause I was caught between the desire to run away, to burn down the whole world, or just to roll up into a little ball and die, kvetching (spiritual retching) to the end. So what did I do?

I'm still here, and so is the world. I raged and if I ever find the moron who said: "it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness", you know what I'm a gonna do with his candle? Well, eventually I lit the stupid thing. As a matter of fact, last night I lit two of them. Was it a massive spiritual assault on your fearless leader that I wrestled with and valiantly bled fighting, until I saw the light. Wanna buy a bridge?

You see, I know how to deal with these spiritual lapses and what I want more than anything else in this sorry world is to let His peace flow through every pore and sore of my dysfunction and He's getting pretty good at it.

Let me close with two verses. First, I Cor. 10:13, the part of the verse I hate the most. "G-d, who is faithful, who never let you be tempted beyond your ability to endure, but in everything, He always provide a way of escape, so you may endure through it." Come on G-d, get me outta here, don't teach me how to endure, I've had enough and I just want out, now, right now. Are we there yet?

But, every time, He never listens, or perhaps He listens too well and He leads me into the depths of my soul, into His "time out" place and then I start repenting, again and letting Him hold me and soothe my soul – my life will still suck and nothing else changes. Why? **Cause nothing else matters. The soothed soul, filled with peace is a treasure beyond price and is the storm shelter where I want to learn to abide until I get to go home.**

I want to close with a second passage: Psalm 73:21-28: " While my soul was filling with rotten bitterness and I felt pierced all over and cut to ribbons, suddenly I realized that I was so stupid and had no real understanding. I was like the stupid beasts. Nevertheless, I am still with You and You seize my right hand and You lead me by your counsel, then You receive me into glory.

Who else do I have in Heaven but You? And on the earth I take no pleasure except in you. My flesh and my heart can be consumed. G-d will always be the rock of my heart and my portion. For behold, all those who stray from You shall perish and You render silent all those who are unfaithful to You. As for me, drawing close to Elohim (G-d) is good for me and I place my refuge in Adonai YHVH (the L-rd Jehovah), in order to speak of your marvellous works."

Do you have peace with G-d? Does His presence dwell in the deepest, most sacred part of your being? Are you walking with Him, and following His lead? **Are you bringing all your Hamlet issues to Him so His cosmic recycler can churn all your pain into glory?** If not, silly person, learn to run and hide in His "Time out" room. Day by day, trial by trial, victory by victory. ***When Peace like a River overflows my soul, my inner laughter drowns out the sound exploding bombs and the odour of His presence drives the smell of burning flesh from the nostrils of my soul.*** And I start to feel good, inside where it counts.

What was I so worried about? You know, I'm not so sure I remember anymore, except for two things. I will worry again, and He will keep pulling me back into His presence until I learn to live there. That's how His peace works. May He ever cause it to flourish in you and among us. Let's pray.