

Heart's Baggage. Pilgrim's Progress

27 Iyar, 5772 (19/5/12) *Recovering from Setbacks Joyfully* J. M. Terrett

Behar/Bechukotai One The Mountain/In My Statutes Rest is Not Optional

Torah: **Lev. 25:1-26:2. Lev. 26:3-27:2**

(1) **25:6**. That which the earth shall produce during its Sabbath shall serve as your food, to you, to your servant to your female servant, to your hired servant, to the stranger who dwells with you, to you cattle, and to the animals which are in your country (sevenfold). (**25:12**) For it is the Jubilee; you shall regard it as a holy thing. You shall eat the products of your fields. (**25:21**) [for the fiftieth year, on the 48th year] I will grant you my blessing the sixth year and it shall give you produce for three years.

(2) **25:9**. The tenth day of the seventh month, you shall sound forth the trumpets loudly; the Day of Atonement, you shall sound the shofar in your country. (**25:23**). The lands shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, and with Me, you are as strangers and tenants. (**25:55**) For the children of Israel are my slaves, they are slaves unto Me that I have made to come out of the land of Egypt, I am YHVH your G-d.

(3) **26:6**. I will make peace in the country and no one will disturb your sleep. I will make the savage beasts depart from the country and the sword shall not pass through your land – or – (**26:19**) I will break the arrogance of your strength and I shall render your sky like iron and your earth like bronze. (**26:29**) You shall eat the flesh of your sons and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. (**26:32**) I will devastate the country and your enemies who live there will be stupefied.

(4) **26:41**. Because of these sins, I will resist them and lead them into the country of their enemies, and then their uncircumcised heart will be humbled and they will pay the debt of their iniquities. (**26:44**). But when they shall be in the land of their enemies, I will none the less, not reject them entirely and I will not abhor them so as to destroy them, to the point of breaking my covenant with them. I am YHVH, their G-d. (**27:34**) These are the commandments which the L-RD gave to Moses for the children of Israel on Mount Sinai.

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

(5) **32:15**. For this is what the L-RD of Hosts says, the G-d of Israel: people will again purchase houses, fields and vineyards in this country. (**32:24**) Behold entrenchments shall be raised against the city and threaten it and the city shall be delivered into the hands of the Chaldeans, vanquished by the sword, by famine and by pestilence.

(6) **16:19**. The L-RD is my strength and my support and my refuge in the day of distress! Nations will come to me from the extremities of the earth and they will say: our fathers have inherited nothing but lies, vain idols that are useful for nothing. (**17:5**) Cursed be the man who trusts in man, who takes flesh as his support and turns his heart away from the L-RD. (**17:9, 10**) The heart is devious above all things and wicked; who can know it? I the L-RD search the heart to render to each according to their ways, according to the fruit of their works. (**17:12**). There is a throne of glory, exalted from the beginning, which is the place of our sanctuary.

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

(7) **Luke 4:21**. Then He began to say to them (about the passages referring to the year of Jubilee): today this word of the Scriptures which you have just heard is fulfilled. (**Matt. 22:14**). For there are many called, but few are chosen.

Chazak, Chazak, v'Nitchazek

Passages for the Message:

Rom. 8:28. For we know that all things work together for good for those who love G-d, who are called according to His purpose.

Phil. 4:12, 13. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

Romans 8: 35-39. What will separate us from the love of Messiah? Will hardship or distress or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword **[sevenfold]**? As it is written, for Your sake we are being killed all day long; we are counted as sheep to be slaughtered. No in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation **[tenfold]**, shall be able to separate us from the love of G-d in Messiah Yeshua our L-rd.

When we talk about recovering joyfully from setbacks, we need to understand that this is not something out of the ordinary, which only **deficient** or **weaker** believers encounter because they have somehow blown it and not followed or understood the will of G-d. Setbacks are the **static** and the **resistance** of life (of the flesh, the enemy and the world), which we will all encounter and from which we all have to recover **if we want to succeed in life and in the L-rd.**

When we encounter setbacks we have only **three choices**. We can either **give up** and quit (go back to Egypt, to the world) or run away and hide (withdraw from walking with G-d and put their spiritual life on hold); that is one choice I have known believers to take. We can also **compromise** (join the enemies camp) and live a life where we adopt the choices and values of the world (cheat, lie, steal, do what we have to get ahead and protect ourselves); I have also known believers to adopt this option. Or we can **recover** from these setbacks and learn how to express our faith in the midst of loss, pain and even betrayal.

Let me just review for you some of the many examples of setbacks from which believers in the Bible recovered from:

Abraham: he lived through famine, the detour with Hagar and Ishmael, the capture and rescue of Lot.

Isaac. He lived through the persecution of his enemies and had to retreat till it was safe.

Jacob. He survived his brother's lie and hatred and his father-in-law's deceit.

Joseph. He survived being sold into slavery, being falsely accused and forgotten in prison.

Moses. Survived nearly being killed at birth, having to run and hide in the wilderness and the year long fight with Pharaoh and countless instances of opposition and betrayal and rebellion by the people.

David. He survived numerous attempts to murder him and betrayals and rebellions by his children and his own fall into sexual immorality and murder.

The Captivity. The entire nation survived a four stage captivity where they lost everything and came back reduced in number to a land filled with their enemies.

Daniel. Survived the lion's den and the three Hebrew children survived the fiery furnace.

Ezra. He survived numerous plots to prevent the rebuilding of the walls and the temple.

Peter. He survived his own threefold betrayal of the L-rd.

Paul. He survived being struck blind because of his spiritual blindness and 28 different kinds of tribulations which surely must qualify him for some kind of Guinness recognition.

There were also many ladies of the faith who suffered setbacks and who recovered.

Setbacks can either be **physical, financial, personal** (loss of loved ones) or **spiritual** and can include **betrayal, misunderstandings, and any number of events which stop us in our tracks and cause us to suffer some kind of loss from which we must recover if we are to keep on walking with the L-rd.**

How do we recover? What I am about to share may both be a review and also somewhat surprising, because **learning to recover is as important for us in our pilgrimage as learning to succeed** – because **you cannot do the one without the other.**

First of all you look for G-d's provision – for His way of escape which will help you survive (I Cor. 10:13) and rather than outline what this will look like, I want you to know **that it will always be there in every circumstance and situation** and it is up to us to find it and to take it, in **whatever shape it takes.** We have to do this repeatedly (look at David and Paul) and **it may not be easy or painless** – but just as surely as G-d is with us in the **successful** moments of our lives, He is also with us when our lives are **crumbling** around us – and when we bend down and begin that long and arduous process of putting them back together. **This recovery process is the will of G-d we will be able to understand when collapse happens** – we may not understand the collapse, but He will make sure we understand how to recover – may He always teach us to see this.

Second of all, we need to pour out our grief and anger and frustration before Him and not allow our troubles to separate us from our **faith** and **trust** in Him – Job came close when he **wallowed in self pity** and **thought that his faith would exclude him from suffering.** We need to learn not to be eaten up by **fear** and **worry**, but to work it through until His peace keeps both our hearts and minds in Messiah (Phil. 4:6, 7). This is not as easy as it seems, but we need to work through our hearts and our heads – until **how we feel** and **how we understand** give us both the courage and the wisdom to keep on trusting Him and the resolve to do whatever we are able to, in order to recover, even if it means just hanging on so the next generation can do what we were unable to do.

Thirdly, we need to learn not to fixate on what we cannot fix and not to drive ourselves crazy with all the injustice and foolishness that happens in our lives and around the world and for which people are not punished for in this life. That is just the point – **in this life.** We need to learn to leave things for the next life, for the day of judgement and to keep our **noses clean** and our own **hearts pure** – I Cor. 4:5. **It is not our business to envy other people or to be broken by pity for them when there is nothing we can do for them. It is up to us to do our best and to leave the rest to Him.**

We may have to repeat one or all of these stages more than once and they should become **life habits, life skills** that we engage whenever we encounter loss or setbacks, knowing that it is not so important what happens to us in this life – it is more important how we react and what we store up in our hearts for the next life – **this eternal, spiritual perspective** is the most important thing about our lives and maintaining this perspective is the most important thing we will ever be able to do with our lives.

This does not mean we just smile in the face of horror or pain and wait for heaven passively. It means we engage whatever means we have to do the best we can with what we have and that while we are doing this, we do not lose sight of that which is the most important thing in this life – **our faith and our walk with Him.** We need to get our eyes off the sinking ship as our **primary focus** and in every situation we can always rejoice in Him, in His Word, in His coming Kingdom and in His provision, in whatever form that takes.

Recovery means being able to rejoice and to see things His way and to do things His way as we trudge along through the whatever's of this life towards our true and permanent home.

Setbacks may be allowed to complicate our lives, but we need to learn not to let them set us back spiritually and if this should happen, we need to focus **primarily** on our spiritual recovery, because in the final analysis it is our spirituality which really matters in the long term – and it is this the enemy, the flesh and the world will concentrate on **dismantling**, time and time again, either by the setbacks we encounter or by the successes we achieve.

Anything and **everything** which would distract us from our walking through journey in the way He wants us to walk and anything which would distract us from focusing on our final home as the primary focus of our lives is a **setback** – so sometimes wealth, fame, and great personal achievements can also be spiritual setbacks. Well what do you do when you have lost your spiritual perspective?

I have already said you look for His **way of escape** and you **pour out** the poison and the pain in your heart until you see things His way and learn to do things His way again and also that you need to **not fixate** on what you cannot fix and leave those things to Him and to the great judgment.

But let's say you blow it and have **fallen away from the recovery process** and you want to get back on track, how do you do that?

Well, briefly, you first **return** and ask for **forgiveness and mercy** and then you seek **comfort** in knowing He has not rejected you, nor will He reject anyone who comes to Him (2 Cor. 1:3,4). Here is a side note – when we encounter people who struggling or who want to get back on board and learn to joyfully recover from setbacks, are we **comfort** givers or **discouragement** givers?

You next need to **get mercy** and work through all the **pain** and the **stain** and let Him clean you up **inside** and **outside**, however long that takes (Lam. 3:23, 24). **Our personal grasp of His mercy for our lives can sometimes be our strongest link to Him and to His promises.** And the mercy we show is often the measure of the mercy we are shown.

Finally, we need to get and to rebuild our **spiritual life perspective**. No matter what, the whole point is to live for Him and to react and to respond to every new stage of our lives and to every new challenge (and to the old ones which keep coming back), so that **when we stand before Him we are not ashamed**, but that He is glorified in our lives and bodies and in our responses – both the **success** ones and the **recovery** ones – for indeed when we walk with Him in the valleys or on the mountains, we need to reach that **wonderfully freeing realization** that for us to live is Messiah and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20, 21).

Are you in **recovery mode**? Do you need to move into **recovery mode**? I am talking about spiritual recovery on two levels. **Primary recovery** (taking His way of escape, pouring out your heart till His peace is restored and letting go of what we cannot fix) and **secondary recovery** (returning to find His comfort, His mercy and His perspective).

May our recover from setbacks be joyful. **Setbacks will come, recovery is optional** – may we always joyfully exercise this recovery option, time and time again until our pilgrimage is over and we are at rest in him at the end of our journey.

Next week I want to develop this a bit more and talk about what it means to recognize that all things turn out for our good, because this is not always an easy concept to grasp. Let's pray.