

Beha'alotcha In Your Making Go Up Peaceful Pilgrims on a Stormy Journey**Torah:** Num. 8:1-12:16

(1). 9:1. YHVH spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, the first month of the second year after their departure from Egypt. They were finally ready to get moving. Are you? Is your camp in order? Are you marching papers in order – do you know how to move in the L-RD?

(2). 9:22. If the cloud halted upon the tabernacle two days, or a month, or a year, the Children of Israel remained camped and did not depart and when the cloud lifted up, they left. Are you more concerned with where you are in the L-rd, than you are about where you are in your journey through this life? Are you camping in Him, or running around and not staying in the camp. Are you impatient and trying to run the show or are you content to wait upon the L-RD? The ups and downs of the journey they are about to undertake, were of their own making and not due to either the dangers or the terrain they were about to encounter. How about you? Are you blocked by terrain and enemies or are you camping in His shalom and rest?

(3). 10:11. The twentieth day of the second month of the second year, the cloud rose up above the tabernacle of witness. They knew who they were, where they were going and what G-d expected from them along the way. Do you know who you are? Do you know where you are going? Do you know what G-d expects from you? Do you know what you can expect from G-d?

(4). 11:30. Moses answered him: are you jealous for me? Would all the people of YHVH be composed of prophets at would YHVH put His Spirit on them. G-d does not limit the number of people who can serve Him and Moses was prepared to share the work – leadership is a position and never a possession. As we approach the fall and as we see new people come into our midst, we want to share the privilege of worship or the Torah and of Shabbat school, because we are not jealous of our position and want the L-RD to pour His Spirit on all the people. Do you know how to walk in the Spirit? Do you know what it means to be lead by the Spirit?

Haftarah: Zech. 2:10(*14)-4:7

(5). 4:6. Then he spoke again and said to me: this is the Word of YHVH addressed to Zorababel: It is not by might or by strength, but by my Spirit says YHVH of Hosts. It is not the one with the most talent or pull or aggression who will succeed in the kingdom, but the one who is filled with the Spirit. It is His strength and his might which will cause B'nai Chayim to grow and be strong. We have had some lean years, but we have never lost sight of the power and blessing of the L-RD and we want to open to His timing – especially as we come to our tenth anniversary and look ahead to what the next decade has in store for us. May we be found to walk like Zorababel and not be limited to our own strength or might.

(6). 4:7. Who are you great mountain before Zorababel? You shall be flattened. He shall lay the cornerstone in the midst of celebrations, proclaiming grace, grace upon it. When Israel came back from the Babylonian captivity, there was a lot of work to do and many obstacles – but in the L-rd it is never the number or the size of the obstacles which will determine the success of His purposes. Do you have any mountains standing in your way? In our way? As we walk in the power of His Spirit, we will see them flattened, so that the cornerstone of His purposes can be laid in our lives amidst joyful celebrations.

There is still a lot of hard work ahead of us as we see His congregation grow and strengthen, but it will never be a question of the size of the obstacles – it will always be a question of the size of our vision and of our faithfulness. Let us focus not on the mountains, but on the house we are building in Him.

Brit Chadashah: Rev, 11:1-19

(7). 11:15. The seventh angel sounded the trumpet and there were in the heavens a loud voice which said: the kingdoms of the world are given to our L-rd and to His Messiah and He shall reign forever and ever. In the Yeshiva, we are studying this amazing book, which lifts us above ourselves and above the global circumstances of our generation and helps us to see the final victory of G-d's kingdom against all and any adversaries which rise up against it. Our peaceful pilgrimage may be a stormy journey, but our camp and our confidence can be shelters where peace and rest reign, no matter what weather and what circumstances that we have to travel through on our way home.

Are you destination focused or are you more impacted by the grunts and groans of the journey? Who you are in Him and where you are in Him need to be the places of our constant abiding and will continue to be our theme for the next decade of our journey as peaceful children of life in Him and not as stormy children of strife in the world. How about you? How is your journey doing? Are you ready to walk peacefully, pilgrim, no matter what the weather or the terrain is like?

Psalm 68 **page 145** **Jewish Hero:** the young boy who reported to Moses

There are so many voices speaking out in our world these days and so many of them claim to speak the truth and yet many of them both sound and feel strange and they make us feel uncomfortable – not so much because of what they say but both because of how they say it and how they come across as people.

How do you recognize someone whose message has spiritual credibility so that they have earned the right for us to examine their content?

As we go into our short, sometimes rainy Canadian summer, I would like to define what spiritual credibility looks like, so that what we listen to and what we watch and receive, enriches us and does not pull us away from the simplicity of the Gospel of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob which we have received in our blessed Messiah. There are essentially five related characteristics of spiritual credibility which I want to talk to you about this morning.

However, I want to say first that spirituality is different than faith in that it represents the drive, the desire and the direction of our lives – the themes of our hearts and the questions we are looking to answer. Faith is the collection of answers and the lifestyle we have adopted in response to our spirituality. How is your faith doing? How is your spirituality doing? Is your faith spiritually driven or does it lag behind as it struggles with a spirituality of somewhat limited credibility?

If our spirituality is flawed (if it ain't pretty), then our faith will be flawed, even if it speaks the truth because it lacks one or more of the essential characteristics of spiritual credibility which I want to talk to you about this morning. Let's see what it looks like.

The first is honesty (you cannot know the truth unless you tell the truth). I know it may be hard to believe, but there are some who claim to be believers, but who are not always very truthful. They seem to want us to believe what they say and not look at the facts; they want us to trust them before they have earned our trust. Honesty doesn't always mean full disclosure, because some things are not other people's business, but we need to be sure that what we say is honest and truthful, because again, you cannot really preach the truth unless you first tell the truth.

The second is humility (there is no room for bullies in the Gospel). Now humility does not mean that we are a carpet for everyone to walk over and dust their feet on, as much as it is a recognition that we are limited people who do not know everything and who cannot fix everything – and that we are always prepared to learn and to listen as much as we are to speak and to teach.

As a rabbi entering his seventh decade, I want to be known as a master learner in pursuit of G-d's truth, rather than as a windy soul spouting all kinds of nonsense because I love to hear the sound of my own voice. I am not lacking in self confidence as much as I am lacking in the desire to push myself ahead as I push others aside, so I can always be the centre of attention (which is hard given the amount of beauty and charm I so evidently possess – lol). I do not want to become some kind of spiritual brat who is always saying look at me, listen to me, cause I'm the king of the castle – as too many infamous ministries are too prone to do.

The third is gentleness (grudges and chips on the shoulder hobble the effectiveness of our message and make it all about us and not about Him). I am not an angry person with an axe to grind and I am not trying to get even with all those who I believe have hurt me. I am a shepherd, not a hunter and I want to make people feel welcome and cherished – as well as challenged and driven, but not always to the point of exhaustion. Our L-rd was never a hard task master with the patriarchs, with His people or with His Gospel. His burden remains light and His yoke easy. He wants us to grow into our strength and not be pushed into a frenzy, like some trainers and coaches are prone to do with their teams who do not end up winning anyway.

When you believe in people and want to release them into their giftedness, they are not nervously looking over their shoulders for the next push or shove as much as they are looking ahead to the next challenge we believe that they are fully capable of. Gentleness trains winners and champions because they are not always pushing and pulling and goading. I believe in our ability and our potential as a shul and I believe we are going to be fully equipped with everything we need and with everyone we need, so I am not grumpy and we have nothing to prove.

We have an incredible Saviour and an awesome message and you ain't seen nothing yet – not because I am going to rant and rave at you until it happens, but because as we shoulder His yoke and take up His burden, we find pathways and opportunities open us before us. It is all about Him and not about us, so we don't have to push and push and rally to make it happen, we just have to follow Him and trust and obey and what it happen.

The fourth is friendliness (grumpy people want control and want to get even, rather than seek the L-rd and walk in love and peace), which means that we really like people, even the difficult troublesome ones. Here is a difference of perspective I want to illustrate. Mark Twain once said that the more he learned about

people, the better he liked his dog – Teddy Roosevelt said that he never met a man he did not like. I want people to know I like them – so that I can learn to trust them and they can learn to trust me.

What kind of people are we looking for in our shul? We are looking for people who like people and who want people to find their place in a community that walks peacefully and determinedly through the storms and doldrums of this life towards our glorious future in our Father's Kingdom. They don't all have to be like me (thankfully) and there is no one kind of personality we are looking for or that we are trying to exclude. We are looking for people who want to be part of a team which welcomes newcomers and wants to do learn to appreciate and to cherish a broad spectrum of people. I like people – don't always trust them, but I am never bored by them unless they are not friendly, then I don't have time for them. Mark Twain was a good writer, but not really such a nice person who had a lifelong lack of good judgment when it came to relationships.

I want to close with the fifth characteristic of spiritual credibility: perseverance (being convinced that the truth is out there and it is worth seeking, despite all the barriers, the enemies and all the setbacks – you cannot spend your life starting over all the time). It may take time for us to reach our full potential and recover from the lean years. We may encounter some more challenges and some more grumpy bullies who want to run our lives into the ground, but we will not give up – because G-d has never given up on us.

How is your honesty doing (our honesty)?

How is your humility doing (our humility)?

How is our gentleness doing (your gentleness)?

How is your friendliness doing (our friendliness)?

How is your perseverance doing (our perseverance)?

How much spiritual credibility do you possess? How much do the ones you listen to possess? May our next decade be marked with a marked increase in credibility, because our message is awesome and we want to earn the right for people to hear it. How about you?