

Heart's Baggage. Pilgrim's Progress

13 Iyar, 5772 (05/05/12) *Learning the Jettison Process* J. M. Terrett

Acharie Mot/Kedoshim After the Death/Holy Ones Choices for Life

Torah: Lev. 16:1-18:30; 19:1-20:27

(1) **17:7.** So that they no longer offer their sacrifices to goats, to whom they prostitute themselves. This shall be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.

(2) **18:3.** You shall not do that which is done in the country of Egypt where you have lived, and you shall not do that which is done in the country of Canaan, where I am taking you; you shall not follow their practices.

(3) **18:28.** Otherwise the land will vomit you out for defiling it, as it vomited out the nations which were before you.

(4) **19:15.** You shall not render an unjust judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great; you shall judge your neighbour with justice (fairly).

Haftarah: Amos 9:7-15; Ezek. 22:1-16

(5) **Ezek 22:5.** Those who are near to you and who are far from you will mock you who are soiled by reputation and full of trouble.

(6) **Ezek. 22:7.** In the midst of you the father and the mother are despised and the stranger is mistreated and the orphan and the widow are oppressed.

Brit Chadashah: I Cor 6:9-20; Matt. 5:43-48

(7) **I Cor. 6:19.** Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and whom you have received from G-d and that you do not belong to yourselves?

Psalms 26/15 Jewish Hero: Patti

One of the sad facts about life is that it tends to get **cluttered** if you let it – another is that **issues** (problems) do not resolve themselves and are always waiting there for you (lurking in the shadows, or blowing up continually in our faces, depending). That is why the Scriptures encourage us to go through **regular inventory checks**, like communion, so that we do not get spiritually clogged or so choked up that we are unable to function (like a pair of worn out brakes or a suspension which has outlived its shocks).

I want to talk to you briefly this morning about the **jettison process**, so that when it comes time to downsize, you do not **cling** to things which will continue to cause you pain and prevent you from functioning with any degree of spiritual success, while you **neglect** to acquire things which you will need to continue to have a successful pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave.

Now we first have to understand that things will keep coming into our lives and will keep going out of our lives, so there will always need to be a degree of reorganizing when changes come, but if we know what changes there are which the L-rd wants us to make, this process of reorganization can bring us spiritual benefit and not cause us to hold onto to things we should be throwing out and will keep us from throwing things out we should be holding on to.

1 John 2:15, 16. Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world, for the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life are not from the Father, but from the world.

2 Timothy 2:20, 21. In a large house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some for special uses, some for ordinary uses. All cleanse themselves of the things which I have mentioned will become special vessels, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work.

1 Cor. 11:31. But if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastised by the L-rd so that we would not be condemned with the world.

2 Cor. 7:11. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what zeal, what punishment! At every point, you have proved yourself guiltless in the matter.

1 Tim. 6:5. Of course there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment.

I want to talk to you about three tendencies in what I would call false jettisoning, as we talk about what it is that we need to jettison and how we go about it. Now I want you to understand that tav L-rd wants us to live fulfilling, meaningful lives where we spend our small time as we travel through this life, stocking our hearts with spiritual treasures (reactions, habits and attitudes) which will be useful for us in the next life.

Someone once asked me why I was not out making a million bucks (given I am so smart and incredibly charming) and I told them that I did not have time and also that it was not important enough to me. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with wealth, with health or with power, it is just a question of two things – what to do you have to do to get it and is it really your calling, or the product of envy or obligation or fear? (Jer. 9:23, 24).

When I am not being perfumed or messed around by the sling and arrows of outrageous fortune, even though my portfolio of personal wealth may not impress Wall Street (and even though I may never drive the dream car or live in the dream home), I am pretty happy with my life (not always with what has happened to me in my life, but generally in the way I am leading it – being a rabbi in Edmonton with the most amazing grandkids in the world and some pretty amazing friendships and my bike, is pretty cool). How about you?

Right out of the gate, we need to be sure that we are investing our lives in directions and in priorities that suit our temperament and our calling/abilities/situation and potential, otherwise we are wasting our lives. There may always be a degree of waste in our lives, but if we get in the habit of taking out the trash whenever it starts to smell, then eventually, we will do ok (just like His Jewish people have done over the centuries, despite all the tsouris which has tried to consume us).

Now onto my three points.

Some people fall into the hoarding trap while others fall into the dumping trap. Sometimes we get rid of things which are useful or innocuous and even beautiful because we think that if we throw enough things away (and give up enough things), we will stop having problems and be able to walk with the Lord like so many spiritual minimalists – enter the iconoclasts.

Just around the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation, Christian people began to feel that statues and icons were evil and had to be smashed, burned and thrown down. Now I have nothing against getting rid of tacky religious art and idols, but some of the things they destroyed were great works of art (like the Buddhist statues in Afghanistan which the Taliban destroyed).

If God is telling you to throw away your TV, your computer or any other things which is out of control, do it – but not just cause it is out of control – with some things, He wants us to learn control and or avoidance and not just thinking that getting rid of things which cause us problems will help us to get rid of our problems. If your first reaction is to ditch a problem, whether it be a person, place or thing, you will either live a life of perpetual spiritual and emotional poverty (grumpy and paranoid) or will spend your time replacing things you threw away once you found out how much you needed them.

Now there are three problems we will never be free from in this life and I ain't talking about taxes, politicians or mosquitoes – but that terrible trio which pesters all of us – the flesh, the world and the enemy. If you would be free of them, die (or live in denial). Origen thought that his problems with sexuality would be solved if he chopped them off – he didn't have kids and it didn't really help, though he could hit those high notes easily. Jettisoning is not the same as crucifying.

Anything which you cannot beat or which causes you problems – and we are all so temperamentally different, and which you can get rid of needs to be chucked, no matter how many times it tries to come back. But the flesh needs to be crucified, the world needs to be unplugged (we need to be carnal nonconformists) and the enemy needs to be resisted. If jettisoning is part of the process, great, but you will never be able to jettison this trio – they have to be lived with and endured (actually lived without and ignored).

One final thought this morning. Do not confuse frantic activity with skillful jettisoning. Tapes and seminars and infomercials which would have you rearrange your inner pathways to frantically conform to new goals which you have not thought through is a waste of time and energy. Before you buy into something (there are financial and emotional cults too), think it through and make sure you are not just being kept busy instead of making progress.

Spiritual insanity could be defined as doing something over and over that doesn't work, convinced that it will eventually work, or when you do not know where you are going, speeding up so that you get there faster. And marketers feed on our fears and insecurities – the spiritual ones too and we need to be careful that we are not ignoring the elephant in the room (or swallowing the camel) while we try and thread a pin or confuse silence with calm.

Iconoclasts and bulls in china shops are not the direction to take as part of good jettisoning. Whatever is not useful in your heart and life for the next life or for healthy spirituality in this life needs to be chucked, but only the bath water, never the babies as we condemn innocent people cause we think being mean and tough is being spiritual.

The flesh is where we live and we have to learn to live spiritually with the horrible threesome – for this is the will of G-d, our victory, however long it takes. Crucify the flesh, jettison whatever gives it power in your life and keep on doing this on a regular basis, but learn the difference.

Don't run out and throw everything you own on the lawn and break off all the friendships with people you cannot stand as you look for the magic formula which work in every situation. Jettisoning out of insecurity will ensnare you and cause you to live with tacky spiritual minimalism – work on the camels and elephants under His direction.

Now I have not given you much practical jettisoning advice, because this is a personal, family discipline we need to learn for ourselves as we come to know the L-rd and His Word (and His community). It is an essential process for all of us to go through regularly.

How is your process doing?

What do you need to jettison?

Are you a grumpy, mean iconoclast?

Are you trying to cast yourself out of your own life?

Are you running around trying new special techniques for jettisoning, instead of dealing with your elephants and camels – cause you know that neither of them is kosher.

Let's pray.