

22 Cheshvan, 5772 (19/11/11) *In The Fullness of Time, Right on Schedule* J. M. Terrett
Focusing on the Promises

Chayei Sara The Life of Sarah Round and round the mulberry bush

Torah: Gen. 23:1-25:18 (23:15) (24:1) (24:47) (25:8)

Haftarah: I Kings 1:1-31 (1:6) (1:29)

Brit Chadashah: Matt. 1: 1-17 (1:1)

The snow is finally here and winter is in full swing, whether you welcome its coming or whether you were hoping it would hold off a little longer. Some of us we ready, others of us had to scramble to face in the inevitable. It is a little like that with the things of G-d and of His coming kingdom.

Getting ready for the kingdom does not involve figuring out the date – it does not even mean figuring out the major players in the final act of G-d, because this is G-d's business and it is not something we can influence or even control. The best we can hope for is to live under His control and to keep our lives free from the traps and snares that this world and our enemy (and indeed our own flesh) set for us on a far too regular basis.

How do you live under His control and escape the snares which are waiting patiently to trip us up and pull us away from the purpose and the promises of G-d. You guessed it – there are three ways for us to be able to recognize that G-d's purposes will always be accomplished in the fullness of time and right on schedule and this week, I want to roughly base them on one passage: Matt. 13:52:

And He said unto them: this is why every scribe who is instructed concerning the kingdom of the Heavens is like the master of a house who brings forth from his treasures both new things and old things”.

First of all we have to be instructed concerning the Kingdom of the heavens – learning what the Bible says and unlearning what the world and the current brood of Chicken Little's say.

Next we have to work at keeping our own, inner house in order, so that there is no confusion of either loyalty or of lifestyle and life objectives.

Lastly we have to be focused on His promises which He has making and confirming from the time He gave the first promise of our Messiah to our great, great, great, great, great grandmother Eve and from the time He promised our great, great, great, great, great grandfather Noah that the world had been given one more generational sequence to get it right before the end of the age.

Well, let's talk about the first one – being instructed concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens. What does that mean? It means understanding that every day we are living on the edge of eternity, and yet that the end of the world will only come when all things are set in place and when the L-rd is good and ready to bring all things to their final conclusion.

Too many people focus on the events of the world and try and correlate them with what the Bible says about the end of the age and they miss the whole point.

Two weeks ago, the Torah portion talked about the promise which G-d made to Abraham, which would take more than four hundred years to be fulfilled – and it was this bigger picture which allowed Abraham and his descendents to keep things in their proper kingdom perspective.

We all need to know that all mankind will one day stand before the king and be judged, one life at a time, whether or not they are alive when the end comes – whether or not they are called to the harvest in the morning or just before the end of the work day.

In other words, we are all bound for the kingdom – for eternity, whether or not we are judged to be citizens or whether our applications are rejected – and this, not the stock market, the latest gadgets or the latest fashions, whether we are talking about clothing or the latest wild, silly speculations of secular, evolutionary pseudo-science.

You see, unless you see the biggest big picture, then nothing else really makes enough sense to build a life on. You have often heard me say that we are all on a pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave and you have to understand that this is not a morbid thought from an aging man who is fascinated by his own death – rather it is the joyful anticipation of a believer who finds peace at every stage of the journey because he is aware of the final destination.

Not even the best rest stop this life has to offer can ever compare with the glory of our celestial city where we will forever bathe in the glorious light of His matchless presence. Every other aspect of whatever portfolio we are handed in this life pales and dwindles in importance when we come to this peaceful realization. We are kingdom bound pilgrims, engaged in a struggle with the distractions and sidetracks and pitfalls of this life, because we know that they are only temporary stopping places on our journey to a much better place.

We can draw strength from our Heavenly home, because it is the only permanent possession we own and it is the only inevitable destination we are all heading for. When the boat sinks or when the flames of the fire engulf us or when Delilah wants to change our hair style, we can look through the best and the worst of this life to the next life and understand that it is the invisible, wither proof reality of this life that drive this universe and not the temporary, aging glory of this age which is already passing away.

Our calling is not the same as the world, our lifestyle is not the same as the world, and our hope and joy are not derived from the same things as this world, because every day and in every way we are on a personal journey to our Father's Home and He is in charge of both the destination all the ups and downs and twists and turns we will encounter along the way.

If ever you lose track of your personal vision of the kingdom where we are all headed, you life ceases to have meaning and your life begins to plug up and become overburdened with hay, straw and chaff – which brings to me to my next point – keeping our personal, spiritual house in order.

Life can get ever so complicated and it is indeed a minefield of possibilities. Solomon said that we cannot always tell what will succeed because the race is not always to the swift, nor bread to wise and it is too easy for us to become inward looking at the events of own lives and confuse them with the weightier, eternal issues we are called to cherish and to be carrying on our shoulders – instead of the carnal hopes and senseless fears of all the years which those whose only hope is in this life are stuck with.

Paul rightly said that if we only have hope in this life, we are the most miserable of men – not because our lives are miserable, but because we were promised something so much better. Let me say this backwards, before I move on to my last point and to our Kiddish - If we have no hope in the life which is to come and if all we are stuck with is our hope in this life (with the wisdom, riches and power of this age), then, along with too much of mankind, of all the generations and nations of mankind from the beginning, we are truly the most miserable.

In other words because we know the kingdom is coming, when we look at the new arenas rich and powerful people are building and when we look at all the little tricks which technology wants us to play with (I-phones, I-pads and other useless I-tems) and when we look at all the promises of beauty, strength, popularity and recognition which so many are selling their souls to acquire, we understand that without the Lord and without an active kingdom consciousness, those fascinated with this age are the most miserable men – entertaining themselves to death, instead of experiencing true life – which brings me to my third point.

When we look back at how history has unfolded, we can see how His hand has kept mankind from self destructing so many times it is mind boggling. So instead of trying to figure out how he is going to engineer the end of the ages and the fulfillment of all His promises, we need to look at those promises and live our lives patiently waiting for that which we know for absolute sure it coming.

So it really doesn't matter what is going on, on the outside in our lives – it really doesn't matter what is going on, on the outside, all around the world – whether we see another worldwide economic collapse and whether or not they really find a cure for baldness and bad breath – and who cares if we are able to afford the latest gadgets, the newest fashions or even any of the other useless “best which this world has to offer”, we are kingdom bound, and so is this miserable, carnal, lost world.

If we focus on the Kingdom in our daily lives and if we pack for the kingdom in our inner lives and if we understand that all the events of the world are under the final control of the One who will bring the kingdom to earth in His time, then we are able to live satisfying lives full of meaning at every stage of our own pilgrimage, confident that, indeed, He is able to keep that which we have committed to him, until that day.

So we can truly say: bring it on, give me your best shot, hoot and holler and plot and scheme and mock and do your best to snare us and drag us away from our kingdom confidence, because, no matter what the kingdom is coming (just like we knew the winter was coming), whether you believe it or not – whether you are ready for it or not.

What are you focused on this morning? As we sally forth once again towards the season of Chanukah and Christmas, what are you waiting for in your life? What are you building in your life? What treasures are you storing up in your heart (on your inside) and what treasures are you focused on and bringing forth from the treasures of your heart – to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

Let's pray.