

Toldot Generations Faithful Obedience is the Way to Go

Torah: Gen. 25:19-28:9

(1) **26:4:** *I will multiply your posterity like the stairs of heaven, I will give to your posterity all these lands and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in your posterity.* The blessing of faithful Abraham was passed on from father to son three times before it became a national blessing – which it has always remained – the great nation which blesses all nations.

(2) **26:5:** *Because Abraham obeyed my voice and observed my orders, my commandments, my statutes and my laws.* Faithful obedience is the key to the generational blessing of Abraham because faith and obedience are the double mandate of believers, Jewish and Gentile. Fivefold obedience which had not yet been articulated as a national covenant, but which already understood to be an integrated obedience based on faith. We must obey what G-d says, what He has ordered (situation specific), what He has commanded (general principles), His statutes (situation specific decisions which have become general principles) and His Laws (specific applications of general principles).

His obedience was not just hit and miss, or make it up as you go along whenever you felt like it – it was a lifestyle which sought and succeeded in applying the implications of faith into every area of living. If you try and separate faith from obedience or if you try and exalt one above the other, you defame and destroy both. The only difference is faith precedes obedience, or said another way obedience must derive from faith so that you do not fall into the double error of too many – you should not try and demonstrate your faith by your obedience, nor should you try and demonstrate your obedience by your faith. They are not even twins, they are two sides of the same coin.

(3) **27:4:** *Prepare for me a dish such as I like and serve it to me so that I may eat it and that my soul will bless you before I die.* Later on we learn that Esau's vow to surrender his birthright was known because Esau freely admitted it to his father (unless in his distress he blurted it out and stunned his dad), but the blessing upon the eldest should not have been offered to Esau (Edom), because it belonged to Jacob as part of the rights of the first born.

Here we see that even though Isaac was the covenant bearer and had become extremely blessed by G-d, he was capable of making mistakes and allowing his preferences to take precedence over his obedience.

We cannot just assume when we are blessed of G-d that all of our choices will be blessed – we have to keep coming back to Him and making sure that our choices continue to reflect our personal faithful obedience – which is why prayer (and especially corporate prayer) is so important – prayer is the oil which greases the gears of G-d's blessing among His people.

Making right choices requires seeking the L-rd before we make them and making sure that prayer is always part of the decision making process in our lives.

(4) **28:4: *That He would give you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your posterity with you in order that you would possess in which you dwell as a stranger and that He gave to Abraham.*** Isaac passes on the covenant blessing to Jacob while he is still alive, because he is not sure that he will still be alive when Jacob returns. In this way he acknowledges G-d's selection of Jacob – which is actually also Jacob's selection of G-d.

Esau is a rash man who acts before he thinks and then uses a form of obedience to fix the disobedience he has already engaged in. **Obedience should be our first reaction and never an after thought.** Later we will see that **Esau is still blessed, but not as the generational covenant bearer. He shall still become a great nation, but not this nation shall not be a blessing to all nations.** Herod the great was an Edomite convert to Judaism.

But the blessing to all nations still came through the Jews (and Herod tried to kill the Messiah, in just the same way as Esau wanted to kill Jacob. More about the battle of the brothers in the next few portions. Faithful obedience which believes and obeys as a lifestyle is the calling which Abraham fulfilled and which all believers are called to adopt in our blessed Messiah.

Haftarah: Mal. 1:1-2:7

(5) **1:8: *When you offer a blind animal as a sacrifice, is it not wrong? When the offering is lame or crippled, is it not wrong? Try and offer it to your governor – will he receive it well, Will he be blessed with you says YHVH of Hosts.*** In the Torah portion, we saw that Esau gave his second best to G-d and G-d is never happy with our second best, because He always gives us His best – His beloved son, our Messiah and Saviour.

Unless He is the most important person in our lives and the one to whom we offer our first and best service, we are both cheating Him and ourselves, because we have caved in to the love of the world, the love of the flesh and even the love of the enemy – and made something less than Him our most important priority in life.

He wants us to give Him our best, so that we can be blessed with His best and not live lives filled with second class blessings. Follow the example of Jacob and not of Esau.

(6) **2:6: *The law of the truth was in his mouth and iniquity was never found on his lips. He walked with Me in peace and uprightness and he turned many man away from evil.*** In speaking of the mandate of the house of Levi (to be teachers of faithful righteousness), the L-rd rebukes His people for their rejection of correction and for cheating and for using the “yes, but” approach to allow them to avoid obedience and to practice unfaithfulness.

The serpent seduced Eve by asking her:”has the L-rd really said”, when what she should have been seeking for was what the L-rd has really said.

Our faith and our obedience needs to be filled with mercy and grace, but not so that we can escape from doing that which is right, but in order that we can learn to do that which is right until we get it right. We do not want to fill our lives with exceptions which allow us to sidestep the Word of the L-rd, instead we want to fill our lives with frequent repentance opportunities so that our life can stay in step with the Word of the L-rd. Whose life will you emulate, Esau's or Jacob's?

Brit Chadashah: Rom. 9:1-13

(7) **9:8: *That is to say that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of G-d, but is the children of the promise who are considered as the posterity.*** One of the big tensions in the Messianic movement today is one that has prowled around the churches for many centuries and it is this – who are the true people of G-d? Abraham had many sons, only Isaac was blessed. Isaac had two sons, only Jacob was blessed – but all the sons of Jacob were blessed and the blessing of G-d still follows the sons and daughters of Jacob, because the covenant blessing was that there would be a great nation and also a blessing to all nations.

The great nation does not absorb the nations and the nations do not replace the great nation. The calling of G-d to the great nation and to all nations remains the same – faithful obedience, which makes us children of the promise, anything less relegates us to the status of children of the flesh.

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were given the mandate of teaching faithful obedience to their descendents and when the Jewish people follow this double mandate, they are blessed, and until they do, they are pursued – never destroyed, but called back to faithful obedience one generation at a time (and one Jew at a time).

Earlier the spiritual heritage of our people is outlined and the biggest one is that we are the Messiah givers – and yet in the Messiah, the call of G-d to the Jews and to the nations remains the same – faithful obedience (faith in the promises and obedience to the Word). Esau flunked, Jacob passed. Whose example will you follow?

Ps. 36 (Bernie, pp. 43,45)

Jewish Hero: Jacob (who listened to G-d and obeyed)

In this first winter series, I am talking to you about the building blocks of a healthy, successful community which is composed of healthy, successful believers.

When we understand that we are those who bear the redeemed image of G-d in our Messiah, then we can understand that our greatest challenge in this life is to let this redeemed image of G-d grow, flourish and fill our lives and our community, no matter what else is going on in our short pilgrimage from conception to the grave, on our way to our Father's home in glory.

We have all the resources we need to face everything and anything in this life because of the One whose Spirit dwells in our hearts and whose power is able to unlock our mighty spiritual potential, both individually and corporately – and this potential is none other than the faithful obedience I spoke with you about in the Torah meditation.

The nine fruit of the spirit outline the divinely empowered character potential which we all possess and which we have to let loose as the Kingdom of G-d's love grows in our hearts and lives, because it will always be what is going on on the inside which will be more important than that which is going on on the outside. How are your insides doing today? What is growing in your heart and feeding into your life? Are you filling up with the friendly bacteria of His kingdom, or the infectious bacteria of the world, the enemy and the flesh?

I want to look at peace as one of the top three of the nine. Love, joy and peace are the big three – not that the rest are unimportant, just that the first three are foundational for the rest. But what is so important about peace that makes it foundational?

Lets look at one verse, **John 14:27: *Peace I leave with you, peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, therefore do not let yours be troubled and do not become alarmed.***

Our L-rd lived a peaceful life in the midst of the greatest cosmic turbulence this world has ever known. If He had failed in His mission, all mankind would have been lost forever.

No pressure, right. From His birth, the devil was gunning for Him and He had so many obstacles to overcome in order to accomplish His mission, but through it all His life was imbued with a resilient and aggressive peace which made Him live and walk as if His life was a walk in the park. And this is how He wants to teach us to walk in the midst of whatever cosmic turbulence we encounter on our own walk in the park.

He was not unaware of the opposition which was always lining up against Him and He wasn't just trying to put on a brave, positive face as He fulfilled the most difficult task any man has ever undertaken – He was genuinely peaceful and this peacefulness was based on at least three aspects of peace I want to briefly share with you this morning.

His peace was based on knowing who He was. His peace was also based on knowing what His mission was. His peace was based on how He lived His life as He accomplished this mission. And even a fourth aspect of the peacefulness of our L-rd was the way He made peace with those who came into His life and spoke of peace to all those who came to listen to.

We are not told at what point our L-rd realized He was the Messiah, but at least by the time He was found discussing the Law among the sages in the temple, He knew what His mission was. You see, His divinity was hidden as He camped among us and whatever He learned, He had to learn as a human being, without ever letting His divinity help Him to cheat. He had to offer a perfect humanity on the cross, with no sinfulness and with no special privileges.

Once he knew who He was, as a Jew versed in the Scriptures, He knew what He had to do and He spent the rest of His earthly life doing it.

In the garden, while he was waiting to be tortured to death, He asked for this cup to be taken from Him (He was scared), but He did not back out and willingly went to the cross, knowing full well what was waiting for Him.

How about you? Do you know who you are in Him? Do you understand that you are heaven bound and that your only true home will be in the coming Kingdom? Do you understand that you are only a stranger and a pilgrim in this life? Do you understand that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that His presence dwells in the deepest part of your life?

Have you made peace with who you are in the Saviour? Let me put it another way – once you find out who you are in the Messiah, everything else pales in comparison to your eternal destiny and your life becomes a peaceful journey towards a wonderful destination in glory. Or yet again, until you find out who you are in the Messiah your life cannot become that peaceful journey towards a wonderful destination in glory and everything will regularly pile up against you, crumble, explode, wear out and unravel until you let the peaceful realization of your ultimate destiny make you put everything else in your life in the proper eternal perspective.

If all you have got to look forward to is a bumpy road heading in an uncertain direction, then you cannot be peaceful, only anxious and perpetually on guard. With His peace, we are still on guard, but not for the same reason and we become more like tourists enjoying the bumps and the twists and turns because we know where we are headed and we are able to trust Him as the driver who will make sure we make it there.

Now lets talk about our mission. It is both very simple and sometimes not so simple. We are to know Him (and His Word) and to make Him known by how we live according to His Word. Whatever else we do in life needs to be an expression of this mission.

Our career, our spouse, our hopes and fears and all the uncertainties and certainties of our lifestyle choices and challenges, should never become our primary objectives – they should remain vehicles for us to express and to live out our primary objective – our spiritual prime directive.

Said another way, if you understand that your life is to be an expression of your faith to lead others to faith, then you are less concerned with the actual details you wander through and are able to make decision based on faith and not based on fear or uncertainty. There are things in life which matter, but if you make the thing in life which matters the most, matter the most to you, then you will have peace in all the other decisions you are making.

Peace comes both from knowing who you are in the L-rd and from knowing what you are called to do in the L-rd and it can also come from the way you live the life you are called to and whether you are a peacemaker or a trouble maker in how you approach your life and your mission in life.

Yeshua spoke peacefully and even in His heated discussions with various religious authorities in His life, He did not sow dissension or become caught in endless disputations or allow anything or anyone to distract Him from His mission and this was His greatest challenge as He lived among us.

He did not stumble into any rabbit trails- which was what the three temptations were in the wilderness. Are you letting things derail you or are you letting Him teach you how to take them in stride?

Peace is both who we are and also what we do – and it is also how we do what we do. Peacefulness is kind of like a stabilizer in an ocean liner, which allows the shock of the waves to go through the ship and not cause it to bounce around, tip over or sink. How is your peace stabilizer doing in your life?

Peace is never the absence of trouble, it is the absence of fear and worry. While our L-rd was hanging on the cross, the centurion looked at the man who not only spoke peace to the thieves on either side of Him, but also took care of His mother – and just before He died, He took a drink, not to ease His thirst, but to be able to say the thing He most wanted to say through the ordeal – it is finished. As a professional executioner who had seen everything, or so he thought, he saw something he had never seen before – a man dying peacefully in the midst of the torture of the cross.

How about you? Is peace something you bring to the crosses you are called to bear? Is peace your objective in how you relate to people? I added a fourth aspect of peace, which is actually an extension of the third, but it is important. Are you a peacemaker, a peace speaker or are you in danger of becoming a freak-a-holic, or a pessimist or a defeatist – or worse are you in danger of becoming a possibility thinker who is always trying to make a deal or is always out to make the big buck?

Somebody once asked me why such a smart guy like me is not out there making a million (after all my brother is worth millions) and my simple answer was that I do not have time – it is not important enough for me. Now, don't get me wrong, I want to make a decent living and I am planning for my eventual retirement and I want to continue to provide for my family (and especially my darling grandchildren), but that is an extension of both my understanding of my peaceful mission and how I am fulfilling that mission.

You all know that ten years ago there was a big dispute with the leadership of Beit Mashiach which resulted in a split which is only now beginning to heal. Yesterday, I went to the funeral of one of the people who was involved in planning the split, but with whom I had made peace before she died.

I was deeply hurt and it took a very long time for me to get my bearings in the L-rd, but I never wanted to indulge in a war of character defamation to get revenge for those who did me wrong. It just wasn't that important and it still isn't.

As I sat through the service and looked around at some of the major players in all the trouble which was caused, I was more concerned with not getting perfumed than I was in coming up with the perfect putdown or sticking in a knife and twisting it. They are forgiven and I will continue to get on with my life and with my mission and even when I think of the hundreds of people who have wandered through our ministry and who have soldiered on to cause trouble for other communities, I do not lose time plotting their demise and I really do not have a collection of voodoo dolls with all your names on them.

Our L-rd made peace with who He was and with his unique mission in life and He allowed this peace to peculate into how He filled His mission and in how He spoke to people and related to them. Even when He knew what Judas was going to do, He did not slam Him or rail on Him – He may have been giving him a final chance to repent and yet He determined not to let this ultimate betrayal alter how He would fulfil His mission.

May the peace of the L-rd grow in your heart and life as you follow in the footsteps of faithful obedience which our L-rd the Messiah took as He fulfilled His mission in our midst. May you find peace with who you are in the L-rd. May you find peace with your calling (our calling) in the L-rd. May you find peace with how you relate this calling to every other secondary detail in your life.

May you find peace with how you speak and relate to the people who wander through your life – both the emotional and spiritual terrorists and the friends and helpers we sometimes encounter.

Peace He leaves with us and peace He gives us, not as the world gives, but as a life journey stabilizer which will make sure your ship neither sinks nor bounces around, whether you wallow in a lap of luxury or whether you find yourself hanging on a cross, either physically or emotionally, as you wander through this life on your way home.

May you have great peace and if it sometimes takes time, come back next week when i shall be taking about patience.

Lets pray.