

8 Cheshvan, 5775 (12/10/13) *Refocusing Our Vision 2 Cor. 5:16, 17* J. M. Terrett

Lech Lecha Go Forth Yourself Wondering or Just Wandering?

Torah: Gen. 12:1-17:27

(1) **12:2, 3** – our double mandate – to be and remain a great nation and to allow all nations to be blessed in us (in our Messiah). This is our calling as Jews and even as Gentiles. G-d wants to do great things through us in a world where we have little control over the circumstances which rush into our lives, but where we are always able to be in full control of the reactions we adopt in these circumstances. Nothing more, nothing less.

(2) **13:16**. After a needed side track into Egypt and a parting of ways with Lot, Abram receives an amazing blessing which is still operating today – his posterity will be as numerous as the grains of sand (infinitem) – and later he was told they would as numerous as the stars (infinity).

G-d has got both extremes covered and none of the little things or none of the big things will prevent His purposes from being fulfilled no matter who you are or where you are or what is going on in your life, He can reach out to you and give you both blessings and promises, not to take away from what He gave to Abraham, but because of what He promised to Abraham.

(3) **15:6**. He had faith in what G-d said and it was equivalent to righteousness, because we are not called to just be good for the sake of being good, we are called to be good because of our faith in G-d who is good and in the goodness of this faithful G-d. What is your faith equivalent to in your life?

(4) **17:1**. It was not just that Abraham went where he was supposed to go; it was also the way he lived that caused him to be blessed by the L-rd. How is your integrity doing?

Haftarah: Is. 40:27-41:16

(5) **40:31**. Is your strength being renewed? Are you taking flight like an eagle (or like a chicken or a turkey)? Are you tired when you run and worn out when you walk? Four reality checks which are also four promises.

(6) **41:10**. Look around and see His deliverance at every juncture of your life. He is there and is not absent and He is never prevented by anything or anyone at any time or anywhere from coming to our rescue. Quite the deal! Are you letting Him fulfill this in your life? Are you situating yourself in life so that His provision drives how you respond to life?

Brit Chadashah: Rom. 4:1-25

(7) **4:16, 17**. For some of us he is the father of our flesh, for all of us, he can be the father of our faith if we learn to believe and to walk in the steps he took. He remains a good example of a life which could have crashed and nearly did, but which got it back together and never lost sight of its calling, both in terms of direction and in terms of how it was to be lived – more about that in the sermon.

Ps. 110 (pp. 31, 33) **Jewish Hero: Lot (good guy with a bad bunch)**

So much of our faith has to do with how we look at things and with the direction and priorities of our lives and it is these three things which will often determine the health and reality of our spiritual lives. Let's look at our passage and then discuss how we look at things (perspective), direction and priorities.

“Therefore from now on, we will know no one according to the flesh, and even if we have known Messiah according to the flesh, we will no longer know Him in this manner. If anyone is in Messiah he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.”
2 Cor. 5:16, 17

As a very young believer I thought these verses meant that everything about my old life was gone and everything was new and this was both very true and not at all accurate. No I am not contradicting myself, because both statements are true.

When I came to faith, my physical appearance did not change, but my spiritual perspective was radically altered and how I viewed the world was completely turned upside down. Often our biggest struggle is to keep the way we view this twisted, confusing world, upside down, because that is really the only way to make sense of it.

Before he came to faith, Paul was hostile to our Messiah and sought to disrupt and destroy the Gospel and he made life very difficult for believers. I was also that way inclined because of all the rage and fear which swirled around inside that poor confused hippy from Africa. Once Paul came to face, the scales fell off his eyes and it was like he was seeing the world for the first time and I felt the same way.

The world had not changed, but I had been changed and it is this renewed perspective and this changed direction and these changed priorities which have made all the difference in the 43 years I have walked with the L-rd and I would not have it any other way.

You see, our biggest challenge in the world is not so much what we are able to achieve as much as it is our ability to keep on seeing everyone and everything from our renewed perspective and not according to the flesh. And it is believers who are sucked back into the flesh in one or more areas of their lives who both cause the most trouble in the body of our Messiah and who live the most miserable spiritual lives, bouncing back and forth between the flesh and the renewed perspective we are all called to embrace, defend and extend.

Let's briefly look at three characteristics of this renewed spirituality: perspective (how we look at things), direction and life priorities and I want to deal with life direction first.

It is true that old things have passed away because we are not going in the same direction anymore and all of our goals have been altered. We still want to be able to eat, to look after our families and own nice things and get our teeth worked on and even have the occasional night out, but the things which were once so important to us begin to fade into the background and lose their importance in light of our pilgrimage to our Father's home in glory, as we keep on discarding worthless things from our lives.

We become like the children of Israel who grabbed what they could as they fled from Egypt in the middle of the night and must have kept on dropping junk they took for whatever reason, but found no use for on their pilgrimage to the Promised Land. How much Egyptian junk is clogging your life as you stumble along towards the coming kingdom?

Here is the principle – we are headed in one direction and everything and everyone and everywhere which does not provide us with a clearer, more useful journey towards the light of His kingdom, must be as swiftly discarded and considered as junk by any pilgrim who does not want to stumble under a load of baggage which is bent on getting in the way of the only reason we have for living in this shadowy, deceitful world – aiming at the kingdom, which is both our only home and our only ultimate destiny.

Does the windshield of your life need scrapping, washing or repairing – how well do you see your final destination as you cycle through the various stages of your life? Does your life have a clear kingdom direction or is it full of carnal detours, carnal stalls and carnal junk that keep getting in the way of your pilgrimage?

And this brings me to my next point – life priorities. The Ten Commandments outline ten principles upon which a believer's life needs to be built and form a response grid from which we need to examine how we respond and what we choose to do in our lives in the L-rd. I have already mentioned the amazing array of tasks we need to confront as we go about the business of living in our increasingly complex and confusing life, but we need to distinguish between building a solid orderly life on board the ship of our faith and loading our lives up with things that are not kingdom friendly.

We will all go through stormy periods, dry periods, periods of illness, sadness and even sometimes of despair, but we need to know that He will make sure we do not lose our way, as long as we keep coming back to Him and doing a regular, aggressive triage of the priorities of our lives. Most of us shop weekly for groceries and less regularly for other supplies we need to keep our homes running and our lives moving. However, the kind of supplies we shop for is determined by the kind of life we want to live. What supplies are you shopping for in your life?

We do not want to stock up on anything which is not kingdom friendly or not kingdom directed. This is why we encourage prayer and Bible Study so much, so we do not become confused or influenced away from living a life where the old things have passed away and where we no longer know anyone or anything according to the flesh.

As you pass through the “whatever’s” we all have to go through on our journey home, how much of your life is kingdom friendly? Do you let these “whatever’s” determine where your life is going and how it is being lived or do you access the “all things have become new” perspective and integrate kingdom values into every stage and circumstance of your life?

This leads me to my final point and to my conclusion – let me speak to you for a few moments about perspective. I am on line with a broad spectrum of people who come at things from many different points of view and one of the purposes I remain on line and do not disconnect from this source of constant silliness is that I challenge people’s perspective and try to call them into account for the weird and wonderful divergent perspectives they fall prey to and are stuck with.

It has been said that there are none so blind as those who refuse to see and again some do actually say not to confuse them with the facts because they already have their mind made up (oops did I just slip in a dig about the upcoming municipal elections – don’t forget to examine your candidates platforms and vote accordingly).

We should never become like this in our spiritual lives or the carnal things which we have been released from will come charging back into our lives and change both the direction and the priorities of our pilgrimage – and may even try and get us off our pilgrimage and back into the world.

How do you view the world? What is your perspective on events in the world and in your own life? I am not saying we need to develop sophisticated faith based perspectives on every issue in the world, but I am saying that we need to maintain firm and solid faith based perspectives on everything in our lives.

Do you remember the catchy little phrase: what would Jesus do? It is not a bad way of looking at things if you do so from a carefully maintained biblical perspective that wants to keep our eyes focused on the kingdom we are wandering towards.

How do you look at all the business of living which you engage in as you live your life? Are the details of this living seen as opportunities for you to express your faith and your kingdom priorities or are they going to allow your life to become clogged with a lot of carnal junk that a pilgrim really has no use for?

As we progress through the fall and winter of another year in the L-rd, may we cease to look at anything and at anyone from a carnal perspective (lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life where we want to indulge the flesh, the world or the enemy).

May we retain our “all things have become new” perspective as we digest our experiences and refuse to become burdened with Egyptian junk as we plod along steadily towards the only destination that makes sense in this life.

What perspective do you live by? How do you look at things?

What priorities do you maintain in your life – are you building for the kingdom on the rock or messing about on the sand?

Finally, what direction do you have in your life? Said in another way, how much of your life is pointed in the direction of the coming kingdom?

We do not need to micro manage our reactions to speak of the kingdom or of the L-rd every minute of every day, but just like those who are walking in the woods need to keep their eyes both on the path and their feet moving towards their destination, so believers also need to understand that life is also a journey, whether you see as such or not. Are you keeping your eyes on the path and your feet moving towards our kingdom destination?

You will either become and remain a good traveller, or live a confused and lost life going in circles as the your time and energy run out, not because of all the junk you have had to deal with, but because of the perspective you refused to maintain.

Perspective, priorities and direction are the keys to refocusing our vision. Let’s pray.