

Bereshit **In The Beginning** **There Was No Mistake- don't make one**

Torah: Gen. 1:1-6:8

(1) 1:1, 2. ***In the beginning G-d created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and empty and there was darkness upon the face of the earth and the Spirit of G-d moved upon the surface of the waters.*** Genesis 1-11 is a poetic account of both the origin of the universe and of the human race. Not much detail is given, because not much detail is needed to understand the major events that transpired. There is a silly theory called the Gap Theory (which does not even deal with jeans) which says that a cosmic catastrophe occurred between verses one and two, where the devil messed up the first creation and G-d had to remake everything. This is nonsense for three reasons. First, verse one is the introduction and verse two begins the description. Second, the enemy was never that powerful and third, there was no indication of evil in verse one that had to be corrected in verse two. G-d is the only deity in the religions of the world that proceeded chaos and the indication is that He brought forth energy and matter and then shaped the cosmos into the ordered wonder we live in today. Nothing more, nothing less.

(2) 2:3. ***G-d blessed the seventh day and He sanctified it, because in that day He rested from all His work that He had done in creating.*** Chapters and verses were added later to divide the text of the Bible into readable sections. The account of chapter one actually finishes at verse three of chapter two with the seventh day. The Sabbath will always be a cosmic day of rest so that we can stop all our labour (and all of our fussing) and consider G-d and rest in the finished work of creation (and for us, of redemption). How good are you at resting in what He has done in the cosmos and what He is doing in your life?

(3) 4:6, 7. ***And G-d said to Cain: Why are you irritated and why is your face cast down? Certainly if you do well, you shall lift up your face, but if you do that which is wrong, sin is crouching at the door and its desires are towards you, but you are to dominate over it.*** Sin was not an inescapable glitch in G-d's plans for the cosmos or for mankind. In order for us to have authentic free will, we had to have an authentic evil choice to reject and, despite what many silly theologians suppose, sin remains crouching at our door and has to be invited in or kept out, based on our choices.

It is not an easy conflict, but a lifelong series of skirmishes where how we choose determines our spiritual destiny, infinitely more than any of the happenstances of our lives or even the major and minor events which are unfolding in our world around us. Is sin crouching at your door or reclining in the couch of your heart? Are you dominating over it or are you subjugated by it? The choice is yours.

(4) 6:8. ***But Noah found grace in the eyes of the L-rd.*** The 120 years that the L-rd gave humanity to repent, must have been a very horrible time where the battle between evil and good was lost until there was only one family left which had not succumbed to the crouching sin – not because of any deficiency in their makeup and not because of any deficiency in how G-d was relating to them. We are not told how many righteous people lived and died before the final assault overcame our ancestors and left only one family of eight in possession of the faithful righteousness which caused Noah to find grace in the eyes of the L-rd. Three things. It is still possible to find grace in the eyes of the L-rd.

The final onslaught against mankind has begun again and we are in a second 120 year period (symbolic number). Lastly, the whole point of our lives is not to figure out the depths of Satan or to decode the timing of this struggle – the whole point for us and for our families is to find grace in the eyes of the L-rd and to take sanctuary in that grace as the world darkens around us. Have you found grace in His eyes and where are you taking sanctuary?

Haftarah: Is. 42:5-43:10

(5) 42:6. ***I, the L-RD have called you for salvation and I will take you by the hand. I will protect you and I will establish you in order to negotiate a covenant with the people, so that they will be the light of the nations.*** Israel has always been chosen by G-d to be a light to the nations, both in how we live and in how G-d treats us. He will never play games with us or with His people. The big question is whether you will play games with Him or walk with Him and be His light.

(6) 43:10. ***You are my witnesses, says YHVH, you and my servant whom I have chosen, in order that you would know and that you would believe and understand that it is I, before me there was no G-d formed and after me there shall not be any formed.*** The L-rd chose us and His servant (our Messiah) so that we would understand that our Creator never changes and will always remain flawless. There are no mistakes or flaws in Him and we are called to witness to this reality, even when people do not want to hear it, because although people's concepts of reality may change, what is finally real will never change.

Brit Chadashah: Rev. 22:6-21

(7) 22:10. ***And he said to me: do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*** The Revelation of John gives us an overview of the clockwork of G-d's purposes and explains how vicious and how violent the spiritual struggle of the ages will always be. He won and wants us to be on the winning side. This was the message from the beginning and this spiritual conflict which we are to face and to win is the whole purpose of life – in fact it is the only purpose of life. How much of your life reflects this purpose?

Psalms 139

Jewish Hero: Enoch

Second Yizkor

Philippians is an interesting letter where Paul shares some of the passion he has for the believers who he has led to faith. He also shares some principles of spiritual warfare and spiritual health and in 2:13, 14 he talks about what G-d is doing inside our spirit and how we should respond to this growth and this stirring.

For it is G-d who is at work in you in order to give you the desire and the ability, according to His good pleasure. Therefore do everything without arguing and complaining.

I want to share three things with you briefly this morning, based on this passage. First of all G-d is at work in each of us to both give us the desire or drive to walk with Him according to His word and also the ability to fulfill His word (and fulfill the deepest desires of our spirit in Him). Secondly His good pleasure means that He takes pleasure in us and in the spiritual growth that is taking root in our hearts and lives – He is the cosmic parent who watches His born again children grow from babes into spiritual adults.

And like any good parent, He rejoices in us just because of who we are and takes great pride in us when we do what we were created to do. Lastly, He wants us to channel our spiritual energy into the directions which He is causing to well up inside us and He does not want us to squander our energy and our time into the carnal wranglings which would prevent us from living a life where His depths power us and drive our hearts and lives.

As I watch my grandchildren grow and as I remember how my children grew, I am amazed at the stages of development which they go through as if they had a program inside which moved them along on their way to adulthood. I know it is called genetics and nurture and that is also what is happening when we come to the L-rd. We have spiritual genes which are geared towards faith and obedience and in the midst of all the evil influences we can encounter (the flesh, the world and the enemy), the stronger and the deeper drives can override these influences if we give them full sway and add nurture to them.

What kind of nurture? A baby needs food and care – so does a baby spirit. Prayer, Bible study, fellowship, sharing our faith and worship are the five essentials that will allow His desires and abilities to grow in us and not be choked out or distracted by the evil influences which surround us.

Which are you listening to and giving full sway in your life – the evil influences or the desires and abilities of G-d? Do you even understand your spiritual abilities? Too many believers concentrate on their sinful tendencies and do not allow the great welling spiritual drives G-d planted in us to grow and strengthen so that we can overcome the crouching sin and walk with the resurrected King, which leads me to my second point.

Sometimes people may feel that their lives have little meaning and that they do not matter to G-d because they are not running for office, preaching from a pulpit or fighting the forces of evil around the globe. You see, our personal spiritual growth and struggles are important to G-d and our walk with Him in our personal world is the most important thing about our lives, whether we are great warriors or just a door keeper in the L-rd's house. David did not see himself as a mighty warrior because of all the military battles he fought and won, but because of the personal battles he fought and won.

You do not have to go to the ends of the earth to find spiritual battles to fight and you do not have to climb to the highest mountain in order to please G-d. You just have to walk with Him in the daily, personal battles which you encounter in your own pilgrimage from conception to the grave. As long as this spiritual reality is your primary concern, everything else will fall into place. Said another way, until this spiritual reality becomes your primary concern, nothing else will fall into place in G-d's economy.

He wants to accomplish His personal spiritual agenda in your life, before He worries about anything else, which brings me to my final point – what are you focusing your spiritual energy on?

Spiritual communities are unfortunately known for their bickering and fighting and this is due not just to the amount of spiritual opposition which we encounter, but also to a misunderstanding about the nature of spiritual combat. We are never to look at our fellow believers as the enemy, even when they may act like that and present us with massive, active resistance. Our spiritual energy needs to be directed towards our double task – to know G-d through His Saviour and to make Him known through His Saviour in us.

Arguments and complaints are only ever at best distractions and one of the most successful weapons of the enemy, because even though we are to identify and condemn sin, when it crosses over into condemning sinners, we begin to slip into the place of judgment, instead of remaining in the place of advocacy.

We are called to plead for the souls of a lost mankind and also to plead for the souls of those who have joined us in our great task. Too many spiritual casualties litter the battle field and unfortunately too many of them have been destroyed by the “friendly fire” of other believer’s condemnations .

I am not afraid to condemn sin in believer’s lives as readily as I am to condemn sin in the life of our darkening world, but I want to do so, in order that both believers and nonbelievers realize that I am on their team, pulling for them and for their best in this life and in the life which is to come. Seven times seventy times a day is the slack we need to cut believers, without for one second indulging sin or compromise.

Next to our own battle with sinfulness, the battle we have with the tendency to be judgmental and critical will be the greatest challenge we face.

How do we overcome in both battles?

First we realize that it is G-d who is at work in our lives in order to give us the desire and the ability and we focus our primary energy on discovering these desires and abilities and on letting them be the power which drives our lives.

Next we focus on helping others to find out what desires and abilities G-d wants to plant and develop in their lives. Whenever we encounter believers and nonbelievers who do not want to join us on this quest, we first do not let them distract us from this quest, by being drawn into fighting and arguing and then we move on and prayerfully wait for them to come to their senses.

Have you come to your senses?

What desires drive you life?

What spiritual abilities define your life?

How much arguing and complaining clutters your life?

In 5773 as we move towards a stable, sustained growth as a spiritual community of spiritually driven and spiritually gifted warriors, may we wean ourselves away from the distractions of this world (the flesh and the enemy) and may we allow our spiritual genes to produce all the desires and abilities which G-d has planted in our lives – and may we never become distracted or judgmental.

Who we are spiritually and what is going on in our lives spiritually is the most important thing about us.

What is the most important thing about you? The choice is really up to us.

Let’s pray.