

Torah: Gen. 12:1-17:27

Haftarah: Is. 40:27-41:16

Brit Chadashah: Rom. 4:1-25

My series theme verse comes from today's Haftarah passage and as we enter our new Torah cycle for 5765, I wanted us to begin with waiting on G-d until we are sure we understand His agenda. Now I am not going to get all mystical and wander around muttering until I hear a revelation from G-d, because finding G-d's agenda is not really the problem – following it daily, weekly, monthly, yearly and in our generations has always been Israel's biggest spiritual weakness.

As I enter my sixth decade on this miserable planet, I am beginning to look at what I have done with my life and am seriously contemplating what I want to do with my last couple of decades before I get to go home and be with the L-rd. I have lived through some pretty amazing events and some would say that the changes which have occurred since WW II are greater than all the changes which occurred prior to this point in human history.

Well my overwhelming response to all of that is: "Big whop –there ain't nothing new under the sun, just new people messing around with new toys and weird ideas." Once there was a little Jewish girl who was talking to her sister about the stages of life. She said: first you are born, then you grow up, then you get married and become a mommy, then you grow old and become a grandma, then you start speaking Yiddish and you die."

We are all part of a generational saga which began with father Adam and mother Eve, and our time, our chapter in that saga is limited. Sure I believe we live in the last days, with events lining up for the end of the world and the return of our Glorious Messiah, but where do we all, as individuals and as a community fit into this agenda, in our own work a day world and in our own personal pilgrimage from the cradle to the grave.

Last Sunday I preached for Laurier Heights Baptist and I spoke about finding the will of G-d for our lives and I want to re-enforce some of that teaching here, as I begin my new series. G-d's will for our lives is not so much about the specifics of what we do, it is more about who we are on the inside and how we respond to the big bad world we live in.

It's not all about fame and fortune, you know: "Get all you can, can all you get and sit on the lid." The earth is the L-rd's and the fullness thereof. The very air we breathe and the cattle on a thousand hills, all of this belongs to our L-rd. He wants us to belong to Him to, but not in the things we possess, but in the depths of our hearts, where we make decisions, and choices and where we battle with our own little inner demons of lust, regret, ambition and all the other hopes and fears which no one else can see.

You see, our L-rd wants to reign over our private universe, over our invisible world, over the real inner person behind all the masks, and beyond all the roles and often despite all the circumstances which have happened to us in our lives. He wants His kingdom to be set up in the depths of our hearts and souls. In the Bible, according to Matt. 6:33, all the rest of the details are really and truly eternally inconsequential – they don't make no never mind.

How much of your life energy do you pour into things which are of no eternal consequence? Wars, famine, plagues, prosperity, progress and deeds of great pith and moment wax and wane, like distractions or scenery on our generational journey to our Father's home. In those chapters of Matthew which are called the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua outlines His spiritual agenda to wean the House of Israel away from the futility of the temporal agenda of the gentiles.

Power, money, pleasure, revenge, anger - all of this shall wither, fade and pass away, along with all of those who have given themselves over to fleeting glory of this temporary life. The only permanent possessions we can acquire in life are spiritual and we either store them up in the depths of our souls, or pour them out into our daily lives as we learn to wait on G-d and walk according to His agenda.

Jer. 9:23, 24 "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, nor let the strong man boast in his strength and let not rich man boast in his wealth. Let the one who wishes to boast, boast in this – that they have the understanding to know Me, that I am YHVH, who exercise mercy, righteousness and judgment on the earth, for in this do I take pleasure, says YHVH."

Micah 6:8 "He has made known to you, O man what is good and what YHVH requires of you, which is that you practice righteousness and love mercy and to walk humbly with your G-d."

Two groups of three imperatives, which are also reflected in Matt. 6:33, in the seeking of G-d's kingdom and His righteousness. This is the whole point of life. This is the whole meaning of life. Everything else is just hay and chaff, and should be used a fodder, as practical means to accomplish that which is the most important – the will of YHVH.

Is. 40:31 says that those who wait, or trust in the L-rd will find the inner renewal they need to soar through this life like an eagle. Let me deal with this image for a few moments. An eagle floats above the world, looking down, but only comes down when there is something worthy of its attention, and once its business is done, it takes flight again. The air is its real home and soaring is the means by which it accomplishes its purposes. It may perch and rest and it definitely feeds, but there is an inescapable urge to return to the air and soar among the air currents. That is how it keeps its perspective.

Today I want to talk to you about soaring like an eagle, which is what prayer is really all about. Prayer is where we are really at home, where we really see things, and where our perspective is renewed. I would add Bible Study to this soaring, because for me, when I study, it is a form of prayer and it helps me to soar above the weird and wonderful pains and pleasures of this orbiting madhouse we call earth.

Not everything in my life makes sense to me, but as I age my focus seems to be changing and I am not so worried about some things as I used to be. I kind of feel like that travel agent, you know: been there, done that and while I am still alive and kicking, ready for more adventures, I am beginning to sense that my chapter in this cosmic soap opera may be entering its final stages.

I have my share of regrets, of the shoulda oughta woulda kind. And I am not really at an easy, peaceful stage in my life. There are some things I want to see happen, and I know I need a break. I need new glasses too and I want to do some renovating in our little house. And I so want to go to Israel and hug the Western Wall. We all have dreams like this, and some of us may even have nightmares, about everything that could go wrong in our lives.

But there is a feature of all of this that it would be so easy for me to miss, for all of us to miss. It's not what we want to do, and it's not what is going on in our lives that really matters. G-d did not give us a life so we could determine the course of events which we would encounter during our tenure on this globe. He has an agenda, both for us and for this globe, and this agenda needs to be the focus of our lives.

My lovely children are at the stage of their lives where they are deciding what they want to do, and I remember the wonder and the terror I experienced at the same age. What can I tell them? I want them to walk with the L-rd and I am grateful that they are doing so. They are creative, talented, and temperamental, just like their mother, well at least in the creative and talented part. But they have not lived ordinary simple lives and I know they will never be satisfied unless they do some pretty exciting things with their lives.

But as an old battle scared wolf, who wouldn't mind seeing a little peace and quiet, I can neither promise them great success, nor great calm in their pilgrimage through life, and this is the most painful part of what it means to be a parent, because parents always want what's best for their children, or at least they should.

The other day, in between my many activities, I wandered into my daughter's room to wish her good night, and was able to share my heart with her, without turning it into one of daddy's little lectures – what? It's not like mommy doesn't try and give them too. I had been praying for her, and doing a little crying for her – daughters and sons have that effect on daddies. This is what I said and I want to close with it: "I don't really care what great or little things you do with your life, as long as you do G-d's will, from the depth of your heart, to the heights of your life" and I shared Phil. 2:13 "It is G-d who works in you to give you the ability and the desire according to His good pleasure."

As we learn to wait on G-d, which is what prayer is all about, we need to learn to aim for His good pleasure. Let me read Ps. 73 for you before we close, because it is the prayer of a troubled heart which finds rest and renewal by rediscovering G-d's agenda and what is really important in this life.

May this prayerful struggle be the reality check we rely on when we are distracted from our soaring, so that our hearts don't wallow in the mud of this age which is fading and passing away.

Let's pray