

29 Tishrei, 5764 (Oct. 25, 2003) Bereshit: **Transitions and New Beginnings** J. M. Terrett

As we come to our last service at Fellowship Baptist, I want to dedicate this service to our friends here who provided us with a safe place to worship while we re-organized our community. We have been here for eight months, and in our eighth month, we are ready to move ahead and face the challenges of our unique calling as an integrated congregation of Jews and Gentiles exploring the fulfilment of Torah in a Jewish lifestyle that acknowledges David's Greater Son. May the Holy One of Israel bless this service, and this transition. Let us sing: **Hine Ma Tov** together. Let me bless you as we bid farewell to this marvellous facility by reciting **Shehecheyanu**. Now we are ready for the **shofar** and for **Hatikvah**.

Torah Meditation and Sermon:

I want to do things differently this morning, since our Torah service begins with the first passage in the Torah and ends with the last passage in the Brit Chadashah. I want to use the Torah portion as my sermon. Beginning next month, we will return to our regular schedule of Siddur Leaders and Torah Readers. When we get settled, I want to take this participation one step further and once a month, we will have a guest preacher from among our own ranks. We are maturing as a Messianic Jewish community, and using a guest preacher will fulfill two objectives.

First of all, it will provide a balance to a steady diet of my meaty offerings, and second of all, it will allow us to continue to train up new leadership. This sharing of responsibility will also serve a third purpose. I need to take more regular breaks, and learn to sit back and rest and be fed. Currently, I have identified at least eight people who are capable of preaching, either by training, or by experience – or by both. I will provide guidelines for each guest speaker, just like I did for the Torah Readers.

I am very excited about this new aspect of our ministry, not just because of the shared workload – it also will give us a pool of qualified speakers, ready to share from a Messianic Jewish perspective, cause your rebbi can only be in one place at a time. We are mishpocah, a body of variously talented people, capable of not only owning our ministry, but of growing in ministry, in all of its various facets – from the preaching through the various aspects of our communal life, which we will have to redesign as we get adjusted to a new facility.

Please pray for B'nai Chayim during the move and the transition. Get the word out that we will have a new location. You will notice from the November calendar that Yeshivas will be held at our home – this will be for the first three months, so that we can slowly and gradually fit into Laurier Height's busy schedule. There are still many spaces on the Havdalah schedule, and I want to share two things before we get into the Torah Sermon.

We have moved to home observance of Havdalah both to accommodate young families who would find it difficult to come out to shul on a Saturday evening, and to do some teaching on how to say farewell to the Sabbath, as we make the transition back to the work week. Secondly, not everyone can make it out to our weekly Yeshiva, and as part of the Havdalah ritual, we will have a mini-Yeshiva, to discuss the sermon, the weekly Torah portion, and to teach the principles of effective Bible Study from a Messianic Jewish perspective.

B'nai Chayim is a dynamic Messianic Jewish congregation, moving ahead into the New Year with **purpose**, with **power** and with exciting **plans** for the future. I had to get three "p"s –

apparently it is the Baptist thing to do! May you continue to consider your role in what the L-rd is doing in our midst. Let's get into the Torah portion for this Shabbat.

Rather than taking the seven sections of this week's portion and chanting them, along with the Haftarah portion, I have selected seven verses: four from the Torah, two from the Haftarah, and one from the Brit Chadashah. I will weave these into a meditation, which I have entitled:

Beginnings, a Time of Transition or Here we Go Round the Burning Bush

Bereshit In the Beginning

Torah: **Gen. 1:1-6:8**

(1) 1:1. Let's look at the parallel with John 1:1-3 and Hebrews 1:1-3. Out of nothing, G-d created everything through our Messiah. Before the beginning, there was nothing but G-d, then He breathed His Spirit and stretched out His Right Hand (our Messiah) to create everything. At Yeshiva Matt made me admit that I do not understand the Trinity, and I don't – I just see it from Gen. 1:1 to Rev. 22:21 and it remains a mystery, too big for our feeble minds to grasp, but clear enough for our hearts to embrace. G-d is One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning and before the beginning and ever more shall be.

We stand firm on what the Bible teaches, Tenach (what some call the Old Testament) and Brit Chadashah (what some call the New Testament). G-d has not changed from the beginning, and will always be the same. Our faith in Him as One is both the beginning and the fulfilment of our spirituality. He is Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Immutable. He wants to change us, to give us a new beginning, because the same G-d who shone out of the Burning Bush, is the same G-d who created the Heavens and the Earth, and whose presence we enter, every time we gather in the name of our beloved Messiah.

(2) 1:27. When you actually read the Bible for yourself, you discover some amazing things. Mankind was created in chapter one – both males and females. Chapter two is a hymn to gender, and deals with the wonder and the mystery of the two who become one. The same mystery is used to describe the union of G-d with Israel, and the marriage between Messiah and His Bride, the church (to the Jew first and also to the Gentile).

I understand the mystery of gender a little bit better than I do the mystery of the trinity, but not much better. Testosterone and estrogen are those mysterious hormones which provide for the survival of the species – we will never get along, but we are so fascinated by each other, that we can't really get along without each other. Gender is a gift, not a disability and when we misinterpret New Testament portions to limit certain aspects of ministry to the male gender, we break the unity of our diversity, which both grieves and quenches the Spirit.

There is so much unbiblical teaching circulating in churches which claim to teach the Bible, that I encourage each of you to heed the advice of those Jews from Berea (Acts 17:11), and to look at three more exhortations (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Tim. 2:15; and 2 Cor. 2:17. Let's really be biblical. Do you know why the church turned on the Jews and turned our Messiah in a blond haired blue eyed man with long hair? Because they did not read the Bible they claimed to believe in. At this time of transition, let us avoid the same kinds of error. Let's actually study the Bible.

(3) 2:4 Which brings me to my third verse. A literal six day creation does not fully take into account the truth which chapter one is trying to teach. He is the creator and the L-rd of time, who created everything and set up orderly principles by which the whole cosmos functions. He

created time and six days and the seventh day are symbols we are to integrate into our lives, so that our time belongs to Creator of all time.

The Bible tells us the "who" and the "why", not the "how" or the "when" – not even the nonsense which purports to be scientific comes close to understanding the how and the when. Eccl. 3:11 and Ps. 19:1 speak of the wonder and folly of trying to decode the **mysteries of Creation** – add Deut. 29:29 to the mix, along with our failed attempts with the **mystery of the Trinity** and the **mystery of Gender**, and we are ready to move on what this Burning Bush wants from us – to take up the true cosmic struggle of the ages!

(4) 4:7 Sin. Each of us must face the sin which crouches at our door, and overcome it. This is a personal spiritual struggle which the Burning Bush wishes us to win.

Haftarah: **I Sam. 20:18-42**

(5) 20:23 At the New Moon, we read the traditional portion, where David and Jonathon pledge true friendship. May we also pledge to each other the same, and renew our friendship today, this week, this month, this year, until the L-rd returns – John 13:34, 35, the Bush burns out when friendships falter.

(6) 20:34 We should never let our priorities get confused, nor let our loyalties clash. Saul was angry with his son for befriending David, and tried to kill Jonathon. The reasoning is so illogical: as long as David lives, he is a threat to Jonathon's life, so in his anger Saul tries to kill Jonathon. Jonathon refused to allow his loyalty to his father to compromise his conscience. He refused to harm a good friend who meant him no harm.

Brit Chadashah: **Rev. 22:6-21**

(7) 22:17 Did you know you are in the Book of the Revelation? It says: "Let the one who hears say come." That's you and me. We are also the solid gold bride of the Lamb, built in the same proportions as the camp which surrounded the tabernacle in the wilderness. With twelve doors and twelve foundations, in our very centre is the Lamb and it is never night. When we who hear say come, what are we saying? Let the one who is thirsty come and drink freely of the water of life. Are you thirsty? What does your life say when people hear or read you?

Let's pray, finish the Torah blessings, and celebrate our last Kiddush in this location. Amen.