

Choel Ha Mo'ed(Intermediate Sabbath)**Our G-d Reigns from Eternity****Torah:** Ex. 33:12-34:26

(1) **32:15**: *Moses said to Him: if You, Yourself, do not walk with us, never make us leave here.* A spiritual walk devoid of the L-RD is not worth the walk – it should be a voyage of discovery of the L-RD and in the L-RD, whose is King from all eternity.

(2) **33:19**: *YHVH answered: I shall make all my goodness to pass before you and I will proclaim the name of YHVH before you; I will show grace to whom I will show grace and mercy to whom I will show mercy.* We do not only choose Him, He chooses us according to His criteria, and not according to ours - He does not always tell us why or how – He just continues to show mercy and grace, as He has done from all eternity.

(3) **34:24**: *You shall not bow down before another god, for YHVH carries the name of jealous – He is a jealous G-d.* There is no other concept of G-d exulted enough to be worthy of our worship – you become like the One you worship and there is only One worthy of worship – One Creator – don't ever settle for cheap imitations – worship[the One who reigns from all eternity.

(4) **34:23**: *Three times a year, all the men shall present themselves before the L-rd (Adonai), YHVH, the G-d (Elohim) of Israel. (vs. 20 – not empty handed- bring your tithes).* He wants to be the centre of our lives and years. Three times a year for the three names – never empty handed – He will always provide, we will celebrate His provision and make Him sovereign over all the aspects of our lives as we realize who He has been from all eternity.

Haftarah: Ezek. 38:18-39:16

(5) **39:7:** *I will make known my holy name in the midst of my people Israel and I will no longer permit my holy name to be profaned and the nations will know that I am YHVH, the Holy One of Israel.* How G-d deals with His people Israel is the key to understanding human history through the ages. He will never entirely abandon Israel and will cause His name to be glorified among both Israel and all the nations of the earth, because truly He has reigned from all eternity and one day eternity shall reign over us.

(6) **39:21:** *I will manifest my glory among the nations and all the nations shall see the judgments which I shall exercise and the chastisements with which my hands shall strike them.* He has never not been active among the nations and through the Messiah of Israel, He is calling all of them back to Him – He will only let things get bad to a certain point, as He has done throughout history and one of these days, His glory shall reign over all mankind, because, whether we acknowledge it or not and despite all the spiritual and religious confusion, He shall reign, as He has from all eternity.

Brit Chadashah: Rev. 19:1-16

(7) **19:6:** *I heard a voice like the sound of a great crowd, like the voice of mighty waters, like the sound of strong lightning bolts, saying Hallelujah, for the L-rd, our G-d, the Almighty, is entered into His reign.* There will never be a more glorious sound than on the day when history shall end and His eternal reign shall shatter the cosmos and shine forth forever more. We need to learn to live for the biggest picture. Eternity is coming – is it your destiny? – Your destination? Glory bound forever, hallelujah!

Ps. 34 (p. 33, 35 [B]) Jewish Hero: Shimon Ha Tzadik

We live in a conflicted world where there is so much wonder and so much stupidity – one of the messages of Sukkoth is that we should concentrate on the wonder and avoid being sucked in by the stupidity. To help us in this great spiritual, moral task, it is traditional to meditate on the flip side of the coin, as outlined in Ecclesiastes (Kohelet or the preacher in Hebrew), as we continue to have nothing but joy during the days of Sukkoth.

I do not claim to understand everything in Ecclesiastes or even all that the Bible teaches. My job is to know what it teaches and to let these words guide me, correct me and comfort me during my pilgrimage from conception to the grave. People who claim to have all the answers are generally trying to sell you something, and as those who know the final truth of the universe and who serve the One who is the answer, we have to be careful that we do not try to oversimplify some of the conundrums of life.

Life can be so confusing that it breaks your heart and at the same time it can be so wonderful you come close to bursting with joy and praise and gratitude. I would like to briefly examine seven conundrums from this amazing piece of literature which the L-RD inspired Solomon to taunt us with.

To make it easier to follow, I will do them in the order which they appear in the book and if I pay special attention to the seventh chapter, it does not mean that other chapters are less worthy of our study and I recommend them to you. Just before I gave my heart to the L-RD so long ago, I read two books of the Bible which impressed me to the depths of my being: I John (G-d is love) and Ecclesiastes (Life is not supposed to make sense).

As a believer, I know that things will not always go my way and if I think that my faith will ensure me a less bumpy ride, I have not understood what it means to walk with G-d. I need to rest in His love and rejoice in His presence, His provision and His protection and surrender to Him the things which do not seem to follow the rules and that try to make us stumble as we wander homeward – and as we learn to rejoice in Him, even when the ride gets bumpy.

Here they are in summary:

1:9 – there is nothing new under the sun (technology – the discovery of new techniques and science which discovers the endless wonder which our G-d built into the cosmos from infinitum to infinity)

3:11 – You have put the thought of eternity in their hearts without them being able to fathom it (we know intuitively that there is more and are fascinated by it – but while we can conceive of the concept, we cannot fully understand the reality of eternity – except when we encounter the L-RD of eternity – how big is your concept of G-d?)

7:6 (9:17) – Noise is not wisdom. People today make a lot of noise about all the discoveries and ideas and gadgets, but noise and volume and popular opinion is not wisdom – you cannot drown out the L-rd – for very long – Prov. 1:20-23. Is your life filling up with noise or are you making room for wisdom?

7:16 – do not be overly righteous – choose your battles. If we try to fix every problem and if we try to redress every wrong, we will exhaust ourselves – leaving unfinished business in the L-rd's hands is both a way to relieve stress and also to practically acknowledge His lordship. He is L-RD not us and we need to let Him deal with the things we cannot deal with.

7:20 & 29 – there is none righteous, we are sinners by choice. The church's traditional view of human as morally depraved by nature is not scriptural.

We are sinners by choice and the world we live in is brimming with the infection of sin – but it is an infection we succumb to and have to fight against, it is not something we are born with – Gen. 4:7.

It is always crouching at the door and needs an invite to come in and trash our lives. Are you in touch with your inner righteousness (innocence) or are you allowing the infection of sin to putrefy your soul and life? The choice is ours.

7:21, 22 – do not pay attention to all you hear (sometimes people just vent). Sometimes people say the meanest things and the silliest things. Not taking rants seriously and giving people a chance to un-vent, means we take seriously what we know people really mean, not the stuff which comes out without thought.

At school when students said things that could get them into trouble, I used to say: excuse me – and when they repeated their folly, I said that I was giving them a chance to back down or face punishment – most of the time they backed down. Gossip can be toxic (have I just defined Hollywood, Ballywood and the lives of the rich and feckless?)

9:11 – the race is not to the swift, all depends on time and circumstances (can G-d depend on you?). Sometimes good ideas are squashed and stupid ideas are followed up on (oops, have I just described the decision to close the municipal airport?)

History is a series of events where last minute events and circumstances have defined the course of human events as much as any mythical idea of progress. Being in power, being famous, being rich or receiving recognition is really meaningless in terms of truth and actual value.

But, Mishpocah the lesson I want to learn from this is that only rats run in the rat race, and I am a sheep who marches to the beat of a different drum (don't you love mixed metaphors).

Life is beyond anyone's ability to fully understand. We can either give in to the corruption and the political games and generational vendettas which run rampant in every generation and gain the whole world at the price of our souls, or we can decide that we are called to walk straight paths of righteousness faith and mercy, which have a triple reward, and I want to close with this.

The first reward is the satisfaction which comes from knowing that we live by a higher standard.

This should not fill us with arrogance, but it should build a hedge around our lives which we will not violate and this is one of greatest testimonies.

Secondly, learning to take pleasure in things which are pleasant and right and true prevents us from being sucked into the riotousness which drains our pockets, pollutes our lives and leaves us sad, wrinkled and lonely cause outside of the righteousness of G-d, truly: "we can't get no satisfaction".

All the noise, all the power and glamour really just sucks our souls dry and leaves us empty, shaking and weeping and groaning at our end. Not for me. Not for us. Not worth the damage it does.

Lastly, we have a reward which is waiting for us after G-d has revealed the dark secrets of all mankind's hearts and has removed the veiled wickedness of those who used murder, deceit and hatred to get ahead – and we shall be among those who will get ahead forever. Stop and think of two thoughts, one wonderful and one horrible beyond description.

In glory we shall spend eternity in bliss, exploring our L-rd and His new creation as we are healed, and so full of live and joy and love and peace that our lives on this dismal planet will only be a bad dream which will dissipate in the morning of eternity. Forever more is where all mankind is headed forever!

Now the horror - there is a darkness which is coming, where the inner darkness of men's hearts and actions will engulf them and chain them to their own folly so they can spend eternity regretting the idiotic, cruel and ugly decisions they have made – gnashing their teeth and groaning in the outer darkness where even the flames give no light – and where each of them is left alone without even the possibility of release by death – stuck forever in the temporary folly they gave their lives to.

Which eternity are you heading for? In our Saviour and Messiah, our destiny is glory and all the darkness and fear and pain which we cannot deal with in this life will burn before our eyes in that day and what is left, we will take with us into the glorious kingdom of His endless love and joy and pleasure.

As we celebrate this festival of joy, let me ask you how much of your heart and life will burn and how much of it will follow you into glory. Glory starts right now, even if we wander through pain and confusion and hurt. Ignominy also starts now as we store up a treasure of wrath which will chain us forever in a darkness of our own making.

The choice is yours. The choice is ours. Choose life. Choose faith based righteousness which is upheld by His grace and love. May you be blown away by His gracious love and peaceful care and His joyful provision as we wander through one more year on our journey home to our forever home in glory.

Let's pray.