

24 Tishrei, 5774 (28/9/13) *Simchat Torah Bereshit Service* J. M. Terrett

Torah: Gen. 1:1-6:8
Haftarah: Is. 42:5-43:10
Brit Chadashah: Rev. 22:6-21

Today we are observing Simchat Torah as we begin another Torah reading cycle and it is a way to make sure that His Word stays at the centre of our lives and that its truths continue to drill down into our hearts and lives.

The Bible is a unique spiritual diary of all that G-d taught His people and how they responded to His call in their lives over thousands of years of history. The spiritual success and reality of our lives will depend on how well we both become familiar with the contents of this amazing book and on how well we put its teachings into practice in our lives.

It is not a complicated operation, but it is an operation that far too many believers neglect and stall until they adopt a lifestyle which does not reflect any of the priorities which this document requires from those who sincerely want to know the L-rd and walk with Him.

As we rewind the scroll and read from the beginning and ending passages of our scroll and our Bibles, we can rejoice for at least four reasons:

First of all that we have the Torah and the Bible and that we know who G-d is and what He is like. It has come to us unchanged and intact (nothing added and nothing taken away).

How about you? In your life and devotion, do you add or take away from what the Bible says?

Second of all, we can rejoice that we belong to a generational community of believers who have been studying the Torah and the Bible for thousands of years without interruption.

How about you? Have you been studying the Bible without interruption in your life or do you need to rejoin the community of Bible studiers?

Thirdly, we can rejoice because the message of the Bible is one of love and of judgment – we do not live alone in a world where we are left to our devices, without hope and without purpose.

How about you? Are you living under His love or are you falling under His judgment? Are you allowing yourself to be left to your own devices? Do you have hope and purpose in your life?

Fourthly, we rejoice because G-d calls His people back to Him when they have wandered and is able to deliver them from all of their sin and folly, time and time again.

How about you? Is He calling you back to Him? Are you letting Him deliver you from your sin and folly? Are you letting the victory of Calvary break the power of sin in your life time and time again?

We have three main joyful tasks to perform this morning in our special service.

First of all, we need to assign readers and read from the first and last verses of both part of our Bible.

Second of all, we need to rewind our scroll and prep it for another year of study.

Thirdly, we need to dance it around the congregation while we take turns carrying it, because we need to make the commitment to carry it around in our lives for another year.

But before we begin the liturgy for Simchat Torah, we need to look at this week's Torah portion.

The portion takes us from creation through to just before the flood and it is roughly divided into three sections.

Chapters one and two speak of the creation of the physical universe in a seven day presentation, followed by a powerful description of gender and the wonder of oneness that it enriches us with,

Chapter three speaks of the seduction of our first ancestors and our redemptive exclusion from the Garden of Eden – so that we could wander through the generations and nations keeping one step ahead of sin until we find our release in the kingdom of our beloved Messiah.

Chapters four, five and the beginning of six, speak of the progress of sin as our first ancestors spread over the face of our planet for the first time and we see righteousness fighting a rear guard action as it slowly loses ground to the pervading sinfulness which first filled our planet with darkness before the great flood.

We are not given a great deal of detail about what life was like before the flood or how our people lived, once they were excluded from the garden, but what we are told is that we are constantly brought to a place of choice in our lives and how we choose will determine the progress or the regress of our spiritual lives.

Gen. 3:15 speaks of the final victory of the seed of women over the serpent and his cronies. How is this victory doing in your life? Are you bruising your heel in our L-rd or

are you losing your head to the serpent – how much of it will be crushed when you stand before Him?

Gen. 4:7 speaks of the crouching sin which wants to be invited in so it can wreck havoc in our lives. However there is a big difference between fighting and losing and giving up the fight.

If we learn from our defeats and discover the power of His victory (I Cor. 10:13 and Heb. 12:15), then our countenance can be lifted up and not be cast down.

Gen. 5:32 comes at the end of a long list of the children of Seth who called upon the name of the L-RD and who fought a long battle against sin – it took the enemy more than a thousand years to wrest control of the planet from the children of light.

He is engaging us in the same battle and our world is again filling up with darkness. How is your world doing?

Which team are you fighting for? How is your battle doing?

Is your light shining, flickering or is it in danger of being extinguished?

Gen. 6:8 says that Noah found grace with the L-rd. In a word which screams against the truth of G-d and which floods our society with darkness, it is possible for us to find grace with the L-rd in our backsliding world.

There is an old Gospel hymn which says that if none go with Him, still I will follow. Is that your commitment or are you a crowd groupie?

May we find grace and rest in our walk with our king as we cycle through the Torah in 5774

The Haftarah portion is one of hope in the face of impending pain

Is. 43:3 means that we are sink proof and fire proof when we walk with Him. It was written to a people going into captivity who were about to lose everything except their faith in G-d and in His Word.

If you lose everything but your faith and His Word, you have really not lost anything, but you have everything you need. What will you give in exchange for your soul?

Is. 43:10 is the passage the JW's get their name from, but when you read it in context, it has nothing to do with them, but it has everything to do with us and with all sincere believers.

We were chosen by Him to witness to what He has done in our lives and in the lives of those we study about in His Word and who have arrived at an amazing understanding.

In our world of constant change we serve a G-d who is perfect and changeless and who wants to change us. Does your concept of G-d need to be changed? Do you realize that His changelessness is not stagnant, but dynamic and powerful for us?

Rev. 22:20. The New Testament portion brings us to the end of human history and the final victory of the Lamb who is the alpha and the omega.

It says He comes quickly, but that does not mean that He is in a hurry. He wants us to see the whole picture so we can find our place in His purposes.

I have no doubt that the end of the age is upon us, but rather than get caught up guessing and making false predictions, I want to live ready for His return.

How much of your life and our lives is ready for His return.

Once He returns and once this portion of our lives is over, there is no going back to fix or to change or to enrich – the only time we have is now and in 5774, it is my prayer that BNC will have a year of fixing, changing and enriching as that glorious day approaches.

He is the beginning. He is the middle and He is the end. Is He your beginning, your middle and your end?

Let's pray and then we will go through the joyful liturgy.

Where are my readers? Give ear to the passages as we gather round the scroll and roll it back.

Put on your dancing shoes as we dance and walk our scroll and wind up our congregation in the Word for another year.

Then we will dive into the chocolate and slowly recover during our nosh.

Shalom.