

4 Adar 1, 5776 (13/02/16) **Membership: The Worldwide Body of Messiah** J. M. Terrett

**Terumah Offerings A Glorious Dwelling Place in Our Midst**

**Torah:** Exod. 25:1-27:19  
**Haftarah:** I Kings 5:12-6:13  
**Brit Chadashah:** 2 Corinthians 9:1-15

(Ton pp. 31, 33) **Ps. 26** Jewish Hero: Elijah Torah: Marie (replacement)

When our people came out of Egypt, they brought with them a considerable amount of treasure in the form of gold, silver and ritual clothing which the Egyptians had given them as a sort of wergild (old Germanic "man price" where an offender paid the family for damages or death) and it is said that they despoiled the Egyptians. This treasure was actually given to compensate the Jewish people for their mistreatment by the Egyptians and so that no further claims against the Egyptians could be levied.

The treasure belonged to the people and it is from this treasure that the ark, the tabernacle and the priestly garments were made, but the offerings had to be made willingly, from a good heart. When we walk with the L-rd, He requires that we do it willingly. Every part of the tabernacle had a symbolic meaning related to both the wonderful "otherness" of G-d which was taking up permanent residence in their midst and it also related to the necessary rituals which would allow the people to have access to the presence of G-d.

The Ark of the Covenant had a lid called the kaporot (place of atonement or mercy seat), which was kind of like a throne between two cherubim, covered by their wings. It was this place where G-d said He would meet with the people and give them all of His orders for the children of Israel. There was part of an inner structure, accessible only to the priests and an innermost structure only accessible annually by the high priest.

The entire structure was to be 100 cubits (metres) long and 50 cubits (metres wide) and it was to be the beating heart of the camp and the focal point of the people's attention. Everything was to revolve around encountering the King and walking according to His Word. It was to be a place of continuous worship and it was actually through this worship that the presence of G-d was willing to dwell in their midst.

Solomon's temple was not as long as the tent of meeting (60 cubits [metres]) nor was it as wide (20 cubits [metres]), but it was 30 cubits (metres) high and the inner part of the temple was surrounded by a three story series of rooms.

While the tent of meeting, the tabernacle and the ark were constructed to be mobile, the temple was built as a permanent place of meeting with the same G-d who's Word they were to continue to follow as they made Him the centre of their lives through both worship and obedience.

All the treasures which went into making the temple (around the same value as Canada's GDP) were provided by King David from his wars with the Gentile nations and he offered all of it, along with the plan for the building, as a voluntary offering to G-d. All the ritual furnishings from the tent of meeting and the tabernacle, including the Ark of the Covenant, were placed in the temple so that the L-rd could continue to dwell in the midst of the praises of His people and be

the singular focus of their lives and the beating heart of their national community.

Both structures were incredibly beautiful and had a single purpose – to provide the people with continual access to G-d through worship and through their obedience to whatever His voice commanded them to obey. Both were kind of like portals between heaven and earth to ensure that this vital contact between G-d and His people was never severed.

The tragedy of the temple and of its successor, was that the L-rd promised the people peace and plenty and rest from their enemies as long as they obeyed His voice and made their lives revolve around regular worship, daily, weekly, monthly and annually (and every seven years and every 50 years). Neither dispersion (diaspora) was necessary, but even today we need to learn that we reap what we sow. What are you sowing? What are you reaping?

The New Testament portion deals with voluntary offerings which were being made on behalf of the Jerusalem church which was going through a difficult time of famine. Just as the tabernacle and the temple were built with offerings acquired from the nations, Paul is calling for the believers among the nations to contribute to the well-being of the Jerusalem church. Also, in a very real sense every local assembly of believers is also intended to be a place of encounter, so that the glorious presence can also dwell in our midst as we are fitted together by His Spirit to be a house of praise.

Each community is called a house of praise and all communities of believers form an international house of praise, which I will talk more about in my message. Each individual believer's body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and when we come together in community, this coming together is also a collective house of praise, sustained by two principles in order to fulfil a double function. We must be a voluntary gathering of people who bring their treasures to offer for the maintenance of the community, both locally and internationally. We do this in order to participate in corporate worship, driven by the annual festival cycle and in order to receive instruction (encouragement, correction, admonition) so that we can walk with the King in every area of our lives.

We come together to worship and experience His glorious presence in our midst and to hear His Word, so that we can walk with this presence, both as we gather and as we go about our work a day lives, from conception to the grave, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

This week's portion was called Terumah (offerings). May we remember to bring our offerings and also to make our lives an offering so that the treasure of our hearts and lives sustains His presence in our midst as we walk with Him through the generations on our way to our true home in glory. Are you making your life an offering? Are you bringing your treasures to build up our house of praise? You have to do it willingly for it to be valid. Are you willing?

Sermon: The Worldwide Body of our Messiah

Passage: "***G-d, without taking into account the former times of ignorance, announces now to all men (and women) in every place, that they have to repent, because He has fixed a day when He shall judge the world according to righteousness by the Man whom He designated, and of which He gave a certain proof in resurrecting Him from the dead.***" (Acts 17:30,31)

When Paul went to Athens, a city with over 4,000 different temples, he spoke out from Mars Hill and announced a new reality which we are still experiencing today. In the lead up to our AGM and the reactivation of our membership, we have been talking about various aspects of what membership in the body of our Messiah means, both individually, locally, and generationally. This week I want to talk to you about another feature of this privilege – our international membership in the worldwide body of our Messiah.

Paul was travelling around the world as he knew it then to establish generational communities of believers who could take this new reality – the international, worldwide body of our Messiah to the ends of the earth, generation by generation, nation by nation and person by person. We belong to an international conspiracy which does not seek to subvert the nations and governments of the world, but which seeks to establish the kingdom of G-d and His kingship among all the nations and generations of our world.

As we speak, around our globe, there are believers of every stripe, both representing and misrepresenting the most amazing global enterprise ever to be set in motion in our world. As individual believers form communities and associations, this global enterprise is called to be salt and light to a dark, flavourless world and to teach the power of positive repentance, so that local camps of worshippers could be established across the globe to grow in both faith and obedience as we rescue forlorn darkness dwellers and guide them into fellowship with us as we walk in the light.

At the conclusion of our service today, we will perform one of the essential rituals of contact with our King as we celebrate the L-rd's Table, so that our light will not dim and our salt will not lose its flavour. This morning, I want to talk to you about three features or challenges which this international global enterprise faces and outline how our particular community of believers relates to this worldwide entity, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.

I want to talk first about the nature of our global enterprise, then I want to talk about the authenticity challenge each community faces as it grows or flounders in the pursuit of preserving the presence through worship and adherence to His unchanging Word. I want to finish by speaking about our clay feet and how we should deal with our imperfections so that we remain a dynamic, cohesive community of former darkness dwellers who are now steadily walking in the Light, and being cleansed by His blood and renewed by His Spirit in the process.

Let's first discuss the nature of our amazing global enterprise of which we are but a chapter. In 1974, a conference on world evangelism was held in Lausanne, Switzerland and representatives from various Christian denominations participated. It is called the Lausanne Congress and it brought together believers from all over the world in order to coordinate worldwide evangelism cooperatively. The Congress identified over 4,000 different groups (denominations) who practice an acceptable "kosher" form of the faith. Beyond these there are also other groups with varying degrees of spiritual, biblical validity as they draw close to the truth of G-d's Word or veer away from it into an almost endless maize of Clint Eastwood spirituality (you know, The Good, The Bad and the Ugly).

This was not always so and by the third and fourth centuries of the common era there were five recognized spiritual authorities or patriarchs and the international enterprise held several councils (called the ecumenical councils) to settle matters of faith and practice. Despite turning

on Jewish believers and calling us names (Ebionites or poor men, and other Judaistic heretics), there was a sense of unity between believers which lasted until the great schism in the eleventh century. This was followed by the protestant reformation and the evangelical movement and we are now seeing the latest and maybe greatest of these revival movements – the Messianic Movement.

Why don't we all just get together and form a single entity? In our spiritually darkening world, we realize that there are authentic believers in so many different denominations, so that as the world turns on us, they cannot find us all. Believers had to go underground in China and during the long Soviet oppression and should we have to do this again, the lack of a single, central authority will be to our advantage. In reality we do indeed have a single, central authority; it is just that different groups adhere more or less to the central guiding document of our global enterprise – the Bible.

There are five fundamental truths which define our movement and we can have fellowship and work cooperatively with any believer or group of believers which adheres to these central truths. Here they are again: (1) the Bible is the Word of G-d. (2) Yeshua (Jesus) is G-d the Son. (3) He was born of a virgin. (4) He died on the cross for the sins of the world. (5) He rose, ascended and will one day return.

We can have fellowship with anyone or any group which agrees with these principles without adding to them or diluting them, which brings me to my second point as we discuss the amazing global enterprise to which we belong. From the time of Simon the magician, in every generation of believers there have been detractors who tried to pull believers away from the central teachings of the Gospel and the Torah. They have done this by adding weird and wonderful beliefs and practices which they claim to have received from angels and visions and they claim to correct or enrich a biblical message which needs no correcting or enriching.

Others have tried to reduce our message and prevent it from saying what it effectively teaches. Some challenge the truth of the Bible or the divinity of the Messiah of promise or even attack the wonder of the cross, the resurrection, the ascension or the return. It would seem that our singular global enterprise hemorrhages both false beliefs and weird believers in every generation since our L-rd appeared. So where does this challenge leave us?

At B'nai Chayim, we will continue to hold to the basics of our biblical faith and will work with anyone who also holds to an acceptable version of them. Even in our midst we will have those who will try and introduce teachings which are not supported by the biblical record and who will even challenge this record and end up taking their toys home and refusing to play with us.

Now, we understand that there is room to disagree about some of the secondary features of our faith – women in ministry, the true date of Christmas and other details which we can wrangle over within the circle of authentic faith. Our challenge is to both protect our version of this global enterprise and to work with any group which wishes to do so with us.

I do not like to use the pulpit or the Yeshiva to bash particular groups or ministries, but we need to retain a firm grip on biblical truth and realize that at times a line has to be drawn in the sand as we let the heretics of our generation go and spread their foolishness elsewhere until the work of G-d in them causes them to quit opposing the truth and escape out of the snares of the enemy who has lead them captive away from the truth.

Various stripes of so called liberal Christianity and various cults who teach another Jesus or another version of the Gospel fall into this category and are used by the adversary as he roars and prowls our world seeking for more souls to devour, pervert and subvert.

How do we relate to this potential for spiritual disaster? First we cling to the essential truths which have come down to us, and then we learn to make our lives revolve around faithful obedient worship to prevent us from withering or choking or being eaten by the birds. Next we realize that none of us is perfect in this life and that we need to trust the L-rd to deal with those elements of our global enterprise which fall into error, which brings me to my last point before we celebrate the L-rd's Table.

All of us have clay feet and as we get to know each of us, we will see that although we are all incredibly gifted, we are also all incredibly flawed and it is only as we come together as a redemptive community that we can deal with both our gifting's and our flaws and prevent them from infecting us or pulling us away from the foundation of our Messiah and His Holy Word.

We are indeed a flock and our mutual contact as we cycle through the festivals will sharpen us (correct us, heal us, inspire us and guide us) and truly the Spirit of G-d will both speak to us as individuals and as a community and we will grow in grace and truth (and love, peace and joy) as we listen to this voice.

We are part of a global enterprise with over 4,000 chapters. We live in the midst of a darkening world which will try and unravel the Gospel in our midst. We live as imperfect members of this perfect enterprise and it is when we remain in fellowship with our King and with each other that we will be able to rise above the spiritual opposition (friction) and carry the light and the salt through our particular valleys and pass the torch on to the next generation of believers, both personally, locally and globally.

Next week, I want to talk about what local membership looks like and on the 27th I want to talk to you about understanding social intimacy based on a biblical model so that we do not become isolated or manipulated as we learn to live together according to His Word.

I am often saddened and amused by how fractured the body of our Messiah is globally, but I see the hand of the L-rd bringing revival and roping in the various fractious factions of this global enterprise and returning them to a more authentic expression of their faith, both corporately and individually.

I am often troubled by the number of cults and sects which swirl around the edges of this global enterprise like so many flies and hornets who are attracted to the light, but who do not want to come into the light. Rather they seek to either drag believers away from the light or do their best to extinguish the light and this vicious spiritual endeavour is the only true international conspiracy which we have to worry about and learn to deal with.

We have to balance standing on the true with not biting and devouring each other. The L-rd put it two ways when His disciples dealt with possible detractors to the first version of our global enterprise. He said that the one who does not walk with us scatters us. He also said that the one who is not against us is for us. Sometimes we will encounter sincere people with honest

questions who appear to be trying to pull us down, but as we deal with their questions and their issues, they either find their place among us or head over the hill until they find a place where they can belong.

Sometimes others will appear to want to uphold biblical truth and authentic spirituality, but their real purpose is to divide and conquer in our midst with gossip and the "yes, but" approach, which is really just a power play to pull us in a direction other than the one we have received from the L-rd. Our movement has sometimes been called the "Messy antic" movement and we need to handle all opposition and friction firmly and gracefully.

None of us is perfect and our main goal is to realize that we belong to the most amazing global enterprise our world has ever seen and we need to both acknowledge the moving hand of G-d throughout our world and allow this hand to guide us as we build our local chapter of the international body of our blessed Messiah – but more about this next week.

We are about to celebrate the L-rd's Table, which is a celebration of peace and reconciliation which should unite all believers around the power of repentance and forgiveness as we allow His Spirit to bring us back when we wander and to heal us when we are hurt. He will also cause us to grow together in Him as we ask for forgiveness and use our clay feet and weaknesses to pull us together as a team and not pull us apart.

His hand is active in our world. We belong to the biggest international consortium this world has ever seen. It may appear to be fractured and may at times unravel and hemorrhage, but it can never be totally overthrown. May our contingent of this wonderful enterprise be strong, sweet and function as both a fortress and a refuge because it is an exciting and amazing privilege to belong to the worldwide body of our blessed Messiah. Let's pray.