

13 Shevat, 5776 (23/01/16) **Shabbat Shirah: Something To Sing About** J. M. Terrett

Beshalach

When He Let Go

Greater Is He That Is In You

Torah:

Exodus 13:17-17:16

Taking Joseph's bones. The pillar of cloud and of fire. Hey, they are not coming back, let's go get them! Impetuous easterly wind blows all night and piles up the sea and dries a path. Pillar of cloud and fire keeps the two camps separate and disorganizes the Egyptian pursuers. In the morning, waters drown the Egyptians. The commemorative song. Mara, first stop (seventh day) and bitter sweet waters. Elim and Sin, 15th day of second month (15 Iyar). Manna and quail for the first official Shabbat. Third round of complaints at Massa (temptation) and Meriba (quarrel). Amalek and YHVH Nissi (He is not limited to one deliverance).

Haftarah:

Judges 4:4-5:31

Fourth deliverance, second commemorative song. Devorah and Barack (Naphtali). 10,000 foot soldiers against 900 elite chariots (and a large group of other foot soldiers) meet in the wadi Kishon (river that only ran during the rainy season). Chariots bog down and Sisera (war leader for King Jabin) flees on foot. Is killed by Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite (from Moses father-in-law) and Israel destroys the enemy kingdom. Two mighty lady warriors!

Brit Chadashah:

Revelation 19:1-20:6

The victorious return of Messiah and the final defeat of the adversary. The marriage supper of the Lamb (the Seder He mentioned to His disciples), where all His saints are clothed in wedding garments (good works). Massive defeat of the forces of darkness. Reference to the millennium, a figurative reference to the reign of the saints who have not received the mark of the beast and who have experienced the first resurrection (salvation) and over whom the second death will have no power. Passage is followed by a second reference to the final battle and the final defeat of the devil. Greater is He who is in us than all those who rise up in opposition under the twisted leadership of the adversary.

As He delivered our people, so He will one day deliver all peoples so that the generational righteous core may one day rule and reign with Him in the New Creation. Because this is our destiny, how then should we live, no matter what is happening in our lives around us?

Our people languished in Egypt for a long time before they were delivered. Our people languished in Canaan for a long time, until they were delivered. Many generations of believers, Jewish and Gentile have languished for a long time, but we will always be delivered as we wait for our final deliverance. In the interim, we need to walk clothed (good works) and spiritually victorious, testifying to our personal victory (faith) in the coming Messiah.

(Jack page 175) **Ps.66** Jewish hero: Eleazar. Torah carrier: Denysia

Sermon: Shabbat Shirah: Something to Sing About

Passage: *Miriam the prophetess, sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand and all the women came after her with tambourines and dances. Miriam responded to the children of Israel: sing unto YHVH, for He has caused His glory to burst forth; He has cast the horse and his rider into the sea.* (Exodus 15:20, 21)

We are a festival driven shul and today marks the first of five special Shabbats that lead us in our annual countdown to Passover. There are seven biblical festivals and two extra celebrations, Chanukah and Purim. Purim always occurs at the last full moon of winter and Passover always occurs at the first full moon of spring.

In order to keep the Hebrew lunar calendar in line with the sun, seven times every nineteen years, we add an extra month of Adar, as we have done this year. This will mean that Passover occurs about a month after Easter and that Purim will occur about the same time as Easter. Before I go into my sermon about having something to sing about, let me make a comment about the historical timing of Easter and its relationship to Passover.

The early church used to celebrate Easter in conjunction with Jewish Passover, which was the correct thing to do, even if the date on the Gentile calendar varied from year to year. In the year when our L-rd died and rose, the resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, which we call Sunday. It was a third day resurrection and it was the resurrection which was important and it occurred three days after Passover. There is no indication in the Scriptures that these two events, Passover and the Resurrection, should ever not be connected.

When the troubles of the Jewish people began and the Gentile church began its long, wrong persecution of Israel, instead of calculating Easter in conjunction with Passover, they took the first day of the week when it happened and made Sunday their annual commemoration of the resurrection, even when it was not the third day from Passover.

We will always celebrate both our people's deliverance from Egypt at Passover and from the Egypt of this world, when our Messiah suffered, died and resurrected, three days after Passover. This does not mean that we are hostile to the Gentile celebration of the Resurrection; it just means we will always celebrate the Resurrection in conjunction with Passover.

It may seem strange to our Gentile brethren that we will be celebrating Purim on Easter Saturday, but it should also seem strange to us that they are not celebrating Easter in conjunction with Passover. Instead of observing Lent as the lead up to Easter, as a festival driven shul of Messianic Jews and Gentiles, we will observe the five special Shabbats and Purim as our lead up to our double celebration – of Passover and of the Resurrection.

Today I want to talk to you about the first of these special Shabbats, which is appropriately called Shabbat Shirah and it the first of ten songs which the rabbis say are so powerful that when you read (sing) them it is as if you were there for the original events.

Today's Torah portion is paired with the Song of Deborah, the fourth of these ten special songs (Moses will sing two more at the end of Deuteronomy) and it is exciting to be able to read through both of these songs as we keep pace with the annual Torah cycle. I want to share three things with you this morning as we realize that we always have something to sing about.

First of all, the L-rd always knows where we are and what we are going through. Secondly, His intervention will always occur in conjunction with His deliverance purposes. Lastly, He wants us to live lives focused on celebration, because in Him we always have something to sing about.

When our people settled into Egypt during the time of Joseph, things did not immediately go wrong for them and in our lives, things will not always be going wrong when we come to the L-rd. Whether we are part of the fourth generation which saw the oppression of our people intensify, or whether we are part of the first three generations who had a good time in Egypt, G-d knows where we are and what is going on in our lives.

If we move ahead to our people's time in Canaan before the time of the Kings, there were twelve periods of oppression over a period of four hundred years and our people spent just over half their time living at peace and in security and slightly less than half their time being oppressed by various enemies whom the L-rd allowed to come against them when they wandered far from His Word. So, some of the people had a fairly good, peaceful time, while others struggled with the oppression which came their way when they did not make their lives revolve around His Word.

This does not mean to say that everyone walked with the L-rd during the times of peace, nor does it mean that everybody abandoned the L-rd during the times of oppression. Throughout history, there has always been a stable righteous core of believers through whom the L-rd works to accomplish His purposes and even when this core has to encounter troubled times it will always be this spiritual stability which the L-rd will call all believers to seek for and maintain.

Instead of fussing and asking why things are happening to us, like the children of Israel did at various times, we need to ask the bigger question, which is how does the L-rd want us to relate to what is happening to us? Our spiritual stability is always more important than the temporary valleys we stumble through or the glorious mountains which we sometimes scale. He always knows where we are and what is happening to us and never forgets about us. Our job is to remember to walk with Him according to His Word because it will always be His will for us to remain part of the stable spiritual core whose lives are driven by faith and obedience, no matter what else is going on in our lives.

Now there are some movements which preach that it is always G-d's will for us to be rich, to be healed and never to encounter the turmoil which often swirls its way through our world, generation by generation. They seem to feel that our G-d is more like our sugar daddy in the sky, who has promised us a rose garden as we effortlessly float through life on our way to glory, leaping tall buildings at a single leap and always accomplishing the impossible.

Now I do not feel that suffering is the only option for believers, and it is certainly my prayer for all of you to live long and prosper, but this is a secondary issue because our primary concern

should always be focusing on the eternal purposes of G-d. His deliverance will always be in conjunction with His final deliverance and this will always give us something to sing about, whether we live through a time of great deliverance or have to struggle through a time of great oppression.

Our lives should always revolve around His Word and turn around His festivals, because at best we are only a tiny chapter in a larger story and His redemptive purposes are part of that larger story. Sometimes we fall into the trap of wondering why G-d allows the wicked to prosper and the righteous to suffer and may even wonder if G-d really even cares about us when our hearts are breaking and our worlds are falling apart. We must never confuse our lives and our story with the one which is driven by His redemptive purposes which He first expressed to Eve and to Noah and to our father Abraham.

He wants to unite the scattered peoples and generations of our world into the one new man He is building both among our Jewish people and among all the peoples of the world. His calling will bring all those who choose faith and obedience into a relationship with Him as part of the righteous core, whether we live in moments of great peace or in moments of great trials. Instead of thinking that our faith will give us an edge so that we can live the best of all possible lives and remain untouched by the trials and torments which come into our world, we need to see ourselves as shining lights who are salty, as we tell His story and invite people to flee from the wrath which is to come.

As a student of history, I am often surprised that our race has survived the ravages of evil, greedy people who live lives focused on greed and selfish ambition so that they can get all they can and can all they get and sit on the lid! It would seem that all too frequently, just in the nick of time the final victory of evil over good has once more been averted and humanity's righteous core has survived to live another day, which always gives us something to sing about.

There is a book of Jewish history since the destruction of the second temple which is called the valley of tears, but no matter where our people have wandered, they have always had something to sing about, both because of the many deliverances we have experienced and because the festival cycle keeps us focused on the final deliverance which we know is the one great, inescapable spiritual reality we can always sing about.

Trials may come and trials may go and sometimes we will live through great distress. At other times, we will live gratefully at peace and in abundance. As we begin our annual countdown to Passover and to our celebration of the Resurrection, we have a lot to sing about because His kingdom is coming and the kingdoms of this world are passing away. He knows where we are and what we are going through and He is working all things together so that His final and inevitable redemptive purposes will be fulfilled. Isn't it wonderful that we can be part of this process, when we walk in faith and obedience and sing and celebrate the coming of the Kingdom of which we are citizens and whose glories we will never cease to sing about.