

18 Adar 1, 5776 (27/2/16) **Membership: Plugged into Spiritual Intimacy** J. M. Terrett

**Ki Tisa**                      **When You Elevate**  
**Torah:**                      Exodus 30:11-34:35  
**Haftarah:**                  I King 18:1-39  
**Brit Chadashah:**        2 Cor. 3:1-18

(Teresa pp. 43, 45) **Ps. 75**

Jewish Hero: David.

Torah provider and carrier: Aaron

AGM and Nosh after service

### **Plugged Into Spiritual Intimacy: I Cor 15:3-9**

***Before all else, I have taught you what I have received, that Messiah died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; He was buried and He resurrected the third day, according to the Scriptures; and He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the twelve. Then He appeared to more than 500 brethren at once, most of whom are still living, and some of whom have died. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles. After all of them, He appeared also to me, as to one untimely born; for I am the least of the apostles, and I am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I have persecuted the church of G-d.***

As we come to our annual general meeting, I want to talk to you about spiritual intimacy, which should be the bond which binds any healthy, dynamic congregation together. As long as we dwell on earth in our flesh, no community is perfect and every congregation of believers will have its tensions and challenges and will also encounter disagreements and have problems to solve, but this should not have the potential to isolate us from each other.

However, as long as the community dynamic, the spiritual intimacy is intact and operative, the kehillah (called out and redeemed group of disciples) will move past just surviving and enter into thriving. There is no other collective goal for any spiritual community and at B'nai Chayim we will strive to remain plugged into spiritual intimacy as the community dynamic which will continue to cause us to thrive and not just survive, pulling together and not apart.

I selected the passage in Corinthians because it talks about different groupings of people to whom the resurrected Messiah appeared and I want to use it to illustrate for you an approach to spiritual intimacy which will allow us to bond together and bond with newcomers and returning disciples who are in search of an authentic, dynamic community of believers.

First, let me define spiritual intimacy as I understand it from the scriptures. Once we have had an authentic encounter with the L-rd, whether it was a noisy mountain top encounter with all the bells and whistles and trumpets, whirlwinds, fire and earthquakes or just with the gentle, still small voice, a change occurs in our spiritual make up at our most basic cellular level. We move from being a free radical spiritual molecule to become a polymer, which is a cohesive grouping of molecules which are bonded together.

Now a polymer can be composed of any number of molecules and receive any number of

molecules and this conglomerate of molecules can be changing, but it will always be composed of group seeking molecules which want to bond together and not just float around being perpetually disruptive. Spiritual intimacy is born of this essential change from being a free radical to become a polymer seeking molecule with an innate drive to hook up and bond with a community. In Messiah we are sheep who are always seeking to hook up with a flock.

Spiritual intimacy is also the understanding that we are not just born again into the L-rd, we are born again into the body or redeemed community (kehillah) of the Messiah and it is that drive which seeks to find and to maintain its place in peace and harmony, and be firmly connected to other former free radicals who have been transformed into molecules which now join spiritual polymers. We become community oriented individuals.

It also means that our primary group identity, beyond our family, is now with our spiritual community where we will always be able to find a home. The same drive which causes us to seek to know the L-rd and to grow in His grace and knowledge also causes us to want to bond and grow together in a redemptive community and learn to live in a flock.

Now I have mentioned that no community on earth is perfect, just as no person who is in the flesh is perfect, but spiritual intimacy is also a drive to be a conflict resolution driven sort of spiritual antioxidant. Instead of finding reasons to pull apart and expand weaknesses and flaws, it seeks to pull together and repair damage and strengthen the community.

In a real sense membership is a commitment to spiritual intimacy and an admission that the free radical has joined the polymer and wants to act as positive antioxidant even in a community which will never be perfect and which will always have challenges and tensions.

As I was preparing this message, I considered using other passages which referred to the bickering among the apostles and even to the disagreements they had with the L-rd which were eventually worked out. I selected the I Corinthians 15 passage because it mentioned the glorious contact with the crucified and resurrected Messiah which bonded a diverse group of people together around a shared, common experience.

This cohesive bonding together of a diverse group of people around a shared, common experience is also what spiritual intimacy means. We will have our disagreements and we will have our tensions and our challenges, but we will continue to determine to work them out so that our mutual bond together in the L-rd is strengthened and not weakened and is certainly never dissolved or disrupted.

However, we will have different levels of bonding with different people in a community and I want to use a description of the levels of intimacy which the L-rd practised during His time on earth as a sort of guide to positive community dynamics which will help us refresh and strengthen the bonds of our spiritual intimacy and avoid any free radical behaviour which will threaten the stability of our local polymer which we have named B'nai Chayim Children of Life Fellowship of Alberta. Free radicals of the world unite into radical polymers in the L-rd!

The Messiah had one best friend and three close friends in a group of twelve friends. They were really study and prayer associates who became shaliach (emissaries to teach about the Messiah). He formed a further group of seventy, whom He sent two by two as part of a community ministry and He also related to a support group of 120 people and He had 500

people with whom He was affiliated and to whom He appeared after His resurrection and before His ascension. He was hooked into dynamic spiritual intimacy wherever He went.

It looked like this: 1, 3, 12, 70, 120, and 500. As we grow together, we will also develop similar kinds of bonds among ourselves and even if our spiritual polymer experiences changes from time to time as new molecules are added and as older molecules move on, we will remain a cohesive, bonded group of believers growing together in the L-rd. You see we need to make positive, dynamic spiritual intimacy decisions which will keep us united around our common experience of the Messiah, wherever we go and whatever else is happening in our lives.

We will encounter and become involved with any number of people throughout our lives and we need to determine to make authentic spiritual intimacy our primary community dynamic. Early on in my walk with the L-rd, I determined that my best friend would always be a believer, so that I could not be pulled away from my faith by someone or some group with a different set of spiritual priorities. We need to learn to be friendly with any number of people in our lives and the people with whom we are friendly will keep changing as people come in and out of our lives. But being friendly and being spiritually intimate is not the same thing.

We have a unique approach to problem solving and to decision making which involves seeking the L-rd. I have known believers who have wandered away from spiritual problem solving and spiritual decision making because their primary associations were not with believers and their best friends pulled them away from the L-rd. If our spirituality ever takes second or third place in our lives in terms of our involvement with people, we are in danger of once again becoming free radicals which detach themselves from a healthy spiritual polymer and cease to be spiritually healthy. Spiritual health is both an individual and a community dynamic.

Now, apart from having a best friend, the L-rd had three good friends who were usually always with Him and with whom He shared the goals and objectives of His calling and ministry. Our primary decision making and problem solving also needs to occur within the bounds of our spiritual intimacy. There may be frequent misunderstandings and occasionally major disputes, but they are just the challenges which we can face to build us up together and not to tear us apart. Problems have the potential to draw us closer as we resolve them.

The twelve were His associates of study and prayer and they would examine the Bible together and discuss what major passages and major themes really meant and even though they did not always agree and did not always get along all the time, they eventually developed a common, Bible based understanding of who the Messiah was and what He came to accomplish. Once they worked this out, they became the shaliachs or emissaries who helped early believers understand their encounters with the L-rd and make the transition from being spiritual free radicals to becoming bonded with their local spiritual polymer, in order to have a dynamic personal and social relationship with the L-rd. This is also our objective.

As He travelled throughout the Holy Land, the Messiah had a group of followers who also gathered in the Upper Room for the feast of Pentecost – the 120. These included the members of his family, such as His mother and his brothers and probably His sisters. They formed an extended community of support and became the core of the early church which eventually spread around the ancient world. This core is what spiritual intimacy means.

Beyond this, there was also a group of 500 believers situated throughout the Holy Land who

did not come to Jerusalem for Pentecost, but to whom He appeared before He ascended. They were like a community of affiliation or an extended support network so that the polymer was not just at Jerusalem, but would form wherever believers gathered.

I know the 1-3-12-70-120-500 is a little arbitrary but it shows that our Messiah built community wherever He ministered and this spiritual support network is what we need to build and maintain as we learn to walk with the L-rd and as we understand His purposes both for us as individuals and as communities of individuals. Spiritual intimacy is the primary purpose.

We live in a mobile world where families are unravelling and people are less and less connected with any kind of cohesive social community. We need to form villages in the midst of this chaos so that the pull of the world does not unravel our community problem solving and decision making as part of a cohesive local polymer and reduce it to a scattered, unconnected bunch of free radicals, living in a permanent state of partial and practical assimilation with little or no access to the dynamics of authentic spiritual intimacy.

We want to strengthen our bonds and increase our ability to bond with those who come into our midst. We want to make our community of faith our primary social group, and have believers as our best friends and as our study and prayer partners. We need to belong to a community of ministry where we find support as part of a series of spiritual polymers which extends over the globe and with which we remain in active, dynamic affiliation.

We may move from the local community where we now live, but we should never move out of community because this is the only place where we will find both the support and the accountability we need to make sure that our problem solving and decision making are made according to biblical principles. There is so much spiritual deception and spiritual compromise erupting more frequently each year throughout our world. The only viable solution to this challenge is to remain bonded in a local spiritual polymer and not let the world cause us to revert to our former state of a spiritually unconnected free radical.

Membership is a commitment to this dynamic kind of community and to the kind of spiritual intimacy that will help us to grow and to heal no matter what else is swirling around us on our pilgrimage through this life. As we come to our AGM we have a choice to make - free radical or cohesive, bonded, well connected spiritual polymer. Free radical believers are the sheep that are setting themselves up to be the mutton which is served on the regular menu of the world and the enemy of our souls. Are you hooked into spiritual intimacy as part of our cohesive polymer? Healthy, dynamic community spirituality is the will of G-d for every individual believer, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, from conception to the grave.