

22 Cheshvan, 5778 (11/11/17) **The Sky is Falling: The Seven Signs** J. M. Terrett
Worldwide Apostasy (The Days of Noah)

Chayei Sara **The Life of Sarah** **The Succession is Secured**

Torah: Genesis 23:1-25:18

Haftarah: I Kings 1:1-31

Brit Chadashah: Matthew 1:1-17

Reading: Juli (Hanna) pages 171, 173 (Ohr Chadash) Psalm 45. Jewish hero: John the Baptist (Yochanan ha Matbil). Torah carrier: Mike Taber

Once Abraham has buried Sarah, he wants to find a wife for Isaac, who is nearly 40 years old. He does not want to become part of the Hittite culture, so he purchases the burial place for his wife, instead of accepting it as a gift. He does not want his son to marry a Canaanite, because Isaac is the heir to the promises and is destined to become a great nation and not join any of the nations among whom he is dwelling.

To accomplish the succession, Abraham sends his servant back to Charan to find a wife among the children of Nachor, his brother. He makes the servant swear not to take his son back to Charan and a fairly substantial caravan sets out on the mission. He is not going to buy a wife for Isaac, but to negotiate an arranged marriage, which was a common custom in that time.

Eliezer knows that the mission has the blessing of G-d but he wants to make sure that his selection of a wife for Isaac also has G-d's blessing so he makes a fairly specific prayer, which is neither presumptuous nor foolish. He wants a woman of good character but he does not want to take the time to interview a number of potential candidates. So he asks the L-rd for a woman who will not only offer him a drink, but will also agree to water his camels and give water to the ones who have come with him.

We are not told how many of Abraham's household came with Eliezer for the journey, but it had to be a number which would have been substantial enough to convince Rebecca's family that Isaac had enough resources to make it an acceptable match. Once Rebecca has proven that she is the one chosen by G-d, Eliezer begins to give the dowry to her and to her family.

The group sent by Abraham is welcomed by Rebecca's family and the negotiations begin. We are not told how large a dowry the family accepted, but rather than prolong the proceedings, Eliezer asks to leave right away, possibly to avoid paying more than was initially agreed. He would have been obliged to make daily gifts if he stayed any longer and in accordance with local customs, the girl gives her consent and prepares to set out to meet the man she has agreed to marry.

No details are given about the actual marriage ceremony, but Isaac accepts her and takes her into his mother's tent and two things happen. He loves her and he is comforted about the loss of his mother. He is the only one of the patriarchs who was monogamous and once his son's future is settled, Abraham takes a new concubine and fathers six more sons. He sends them

away from Isaac, so there will be no competition for the blessing and lives long enough to see his two grandsons born.

When he dies, Isaac and Ishmael bury him in Sarah's tomb, which is a demonstration that there was no hostility between them. We are not told how long Ishmael's Egyptian mother, Hagar lived or where she was buried, but we are given a brief genealogy of Ishmael's twelve sons, along with his age when he died (137). This would indicate that there was friendly contact between the two brothers and none of the hostility which some have falsely claimed.

There is no textual or historical indication that the Arab people descend from Ishmael and it is one of the theological myths which Mohamed used to try and highjack the blessings which were passed on to Isaac and not to Ishmael. The historical Ishmael obviously accepted that the double blessing was passed on through Isaac and he made no attempt to either challenge it or usurp it. He has a special status as a son of Abraham, but not one as the covenant bearer, because that role and legacy belongs to Isaac and to his descendants.

It is interesting to note that the blessing not only passes through Isaac, but also through the woman whom G-d selected to be his bride. The accomplishment of the blessing starts slowly and will only build momentum under Jacob and Joseph, but Isaac and Rebecca remain the keys to it and not any of the other of Abraham's children.

The Haftarah portion deals with Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne because he is apparently the eldest of David's surviving sons. We are not told what happened to David's third son, Kileab, who was also called Daniel, but he either predeceased his father or did not participate in Adonijah's attempted coup.

The Bible reports that David had many sons and though the heir to the throne, by custom, should have been his eldest son, he had sworn an oath to Bathsheba that her son, Solomon would be the heir. The attempted coup is thwarted and David confirms Solomon as his designated heir, even though there are many older sons of David who are being overlooked.

The Brit Chadashah portion deals with the royal genealogy of our Messiah and mentions four Gentile woman who are His ancestors. We understand that this is the genealogy of Joseph and that Mary's genealogy is different. She descends from Nathan, the younger brother of Solomon and thus our Messiah avoids the curse that was put on Solomon's heirs just before our people went into captivity.

Matthew wants to show that our Messiah came at the appointed time and uses groups of fourteen ancestors to make this point, but Luke gives us Mary's genealogy, because like her husband, Joseph, she is also a descendant of David.

The succession to the promises of Abraham was established through Isaac and the royal lineage of David was established through Solomon and when this house was cursed, our Messiah inherits the Davidic succession through his mother. Despite attempted coups and other heirs who could have laid a claim to the promises, it was secured and our Messiah became the blessing to all nations when He died on the cross for the sins of the world.

The Sky is Falling: Seven biblical signs of the end of the world. Number four: Worldwide Apostasy (The Days of Noah)

Passage: “Let no one deceive (seduce) you in any manner, because the apostasy must happen beforehand and the man of sin must be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3) “as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” (Matt. 24:37).

Far too many people are focused on the timing of the return of the L-rd and fail to see that just as He was born among us at the appointed time, when all conditions were set in place, so He will return at the appointed time, when all conditions are set in place. Both Rav Sh'aul (Paul) and our Messiah warn us not to be deceived and it does not appear that too many people are taking this exhortation as seriously as they should.

In Matthew 24 we have our L-rd answering three separate questions and His answer is pretty thorough. He was asked when the temple would be destroyed, when Messiah's kingdom would come and when the world would end (Matt. 24:3). A close reading of the passage reveals that the return of our Messiah and the end of the world will occur at the same time, but that certain conditions must be in place before this blessed event occurs.

Two related events which we will be discussing today are the Days of Noah and the advent of the final apostasy (rebellion). The Greek word *apostasia* is often translated as rebellion and Strong's defines it as a falling away from truth. I connect the concept with the Days of Noah, because the later generations of the children of Adam and Eve fell further and further away from the truth until the days of Noah when violence and darkness covered the globe.

Yeshua talked about the worldwide spiritual apathy that occurred in the days of Noah and Paul indicates that this must happen again, on the same scale, before the return of the L-rd. Our passage in Matthew indicates that this will occur on two levels, both among the nations and peoples of the earth and among believers who will stop living lives worthy of their calling in the L-rd.

The term falling away is not just applied to believers who know the L-rd and who are familiar with the Bible, but should also be applied across the board to all of mankind, which is what the term Days of Noah implies. We will deal with the identity of the man of sin (the final antichrist) in a later sermon, but today we want to examine worldwide apostasy as it applies to the days of Noah.

Worldwide iniquity implies that people will be espousing lawlessness across the globe and a very potent for of this lawlessness this falling away which Paul points out. What are people falling away from? Are we to understand Paul to say that one day the entire world will come to faith and then fall away from that faith?

If this were true, the return of the L-rd is along way off since the whole world has not yet come to faith and false religions like Islam are gaining ground as more and more mainline Christians are abandoning their biblical faith for the potage of liberalism.

We are not told what the people in the days of Noah believed, but we are told that their hearts turned exclusively towards iniquity as they filled the world with violence. We know that the children of Adam and Eve quickly divided into two groups (lineages) – the sons of G-d, those who descended from Seth and the daughters of men, those who descended from the children of Cain. When these two groups began to intermarry, the sons of G-d progressively abandoned their walk with G-d until the only ones who were not consumed by the darkness were Noah and his family, a total of only eight people.

The flood was a global punitive act by G-d to free the world from the darkness which had nearly engulfed it. In our days this darkness is rising again and is slowly engulfing our world, but with a difference. It is now also affecting believers who have come to the light and who should know better. We are rightfully called servants of the L-rd and we should be about the business of reaching out and feeding His sheep and not fall away into violence and associations with evil doers, just because the return of the L-rd is slow in coming.

So not only will the world fill up with darkness and violence once again, but it will also pull away those who have come to the light and plunge them back into the darkness they were once delivered from. So it will be a double falling away, by both all the inhabitants of the earth and by believers whose lives have ceased to be kingdom centred.

There are many ways of describing who the elect of G-d are, both among believers and among unbelievers, but a good working definition would be to describe them as both light seekers and light dwellers. Another way would be to describe them as those who are seeking for spiritual truth as part of their search for meaning and purpose. In his sermon on Mars Hill, Paul pointed out that people of this calibre have risen up even among the pagan nations of the earth and the writer of Proverbs says the Spirit of G-d stands at the entrance of the noisy places and calls out for sinners to abandon their folly and come to the light.

In the days of Noah, this righteous core had shrunk down to eight people and this process of shrinking away from righteousness is gaining momentum across the globe. Many Christian groups are engaging in active missionary outreach, looking to hook the world's light seekers up with our Messiah, who is the Light of world. This is a positive undertaking and we will talk more about it in a later sermon, but even though millions of new believers are coming to faith across the globe, violence and darkness are also on the rise.

They are infecting churches and synagogues with a specialized double form of paganism: religious liberalism and evolutionary humanism. Too many professing Christians and practising Jews no longer accept the truth of G-d's Word and have adopted evolution as the basis of their religious faith.

In the 1800's and earlier there was a mighty missionary outreach that spread out across the globe and now this is slowing down as more and more churches have effectively abandoned

the faith they were once so eager to share. This falling away is also occurring outside the faith as more and more people in the world succumb to the folly of evolutionary humanism and abandon any belief in the supernatural. At one point before the two world wars, it looked like the world was becoming engulfed by Christianity as hundreds of millions of people came into contact with various forms of faith in our Messiah and Saviour.

It is estimated that missions is still being carried on around the world by tens of thousands of sincere missionaries and their number has never been so large, but with all the gains the Gospel is making around the world it is quickly losing ground in countries which used to be strongholds of the Christian faith.

While I am not prepared to embrace many of the traditional versions of Christianity (and Judaism) which were taking their message to the ends of the earth, I am saddened by the amount of ground the gospel has lost on its former home turf. Liberal Christianity and liberal Judaism is nothing more than a cloned form of paganism and its darkness is rising globally.

Instead of taking a stand for righteousness and fighting off unrighteous, liberal Christians are defending what they once forbade and are allowing both theological and practical paganism to dominate where G-d's Word was once preached. Churches and synagogues are emptying as attendance at services continues to plummet and people are more and more turning to other sources to find meaning and purpose for their lives.

The global darkness which once engulfed the world is back with a vengeance and it has been attacking religious faith on two fronts. Evolution is the basis for the new religion as what the Bible teaches is no longer accepted around the world. Evolutionary morality, or more properly, evolutionary immorality has changed what is considered to be right and wrong and instead of looking at those who have solid religious faith in the Bible as champions of the fight for righteousness in the battle against injustice and sin, we are now considered its enemies.

Religious fundamentalism is attacked and defamed and fewer and fewer people are prepared to take a stand and embrace what the Bible teaches. Newer and more pernicious versions of "has G-d really said" are popping up as more and more people doubt the existence of G-d and do not believe in His ability to speak. If they believe He were able to speak, they also believe He would not say anything that He has supposedly said in the Bible and more and more mainline churches and synagogues are falling for this apostasy.

The end of the world is not just the end of a particular civilization or the disappearance of one nation or racial group. The end of the world will be like the days of Noah where people refused to listen to the warnings of Noah and were convinced that no cataclysmic judgment would descend upon them. The righteous core kept on shrinking as the descendants of Seth and the other patriarchs jumped ship and joined the ranks of the burgeoning violent darkness.

In today's world this darkness is stretching forth to embrace the whole world for a second time and those who believe in the coming Kingdom are abandoning their faith in this blessed event and are jumping ship back into the world.

It is not a finished catastrophe, but it is a growing menace that is gaining momentum globally.

Our faith and our righteousness are not yet illegal, as they were under the great Roman oppression, but as more and more people are sucked into evolutionary humanism, we are being increasingly marginalized and may soon be violently penalized for our belief in the coming kingdom.

So instead of trying to figure out precisely when the kingdom will come and saying that some of the prophecies about the end of the world will only be fulfilled in a mythical great tribulation or a literal millennium, we have to take the triple advice of the Lord and His apostles and I want to close with this. First we have to be careful not to be deceived or seduced by false prophets and charlatans who will keep on yelling: “the sky is falling, the sky is falling” until no one takes them seriously and they self destruct when they are tricked into taking refuge in the foxes cave.

What we believe about the end of the world must be clearly defined by the what the Bible teaches and not be derived by fancy, false systems of interpretation that are more based on speculation than they are upon the truth of the Bible. False Christs will arise and deceive many – like those who are trapped in Islam, and any number of modern cults which also radically depart from the truth of G-d's Word. Evolution is probably the most pernicious and effective attack on the Bible and don't let yourself be deceived by the lies it teaches.

Secondly we must remain kingdom centered and not lose our faith in this glorious future event. It continues to be slow in coming because G-d has not yet brought all the light seekers into His fold, but once the number of His elect has been reached, it will come as surely and finally as the flood came in the days of Noah. We need to continue to live as strangers and pilgrims who are just passing through this world on our way home to our true home. We must become attached to this world in anyway – avoiding the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life as well as the birds, rocks and weeds which want to shipwreck our faith.

We are in a generational war with the forces of darkness and immorality and we are both the stewards and the guardians of G-d's commandments and the faith which His word outlines. If ever we stop seeing ourselves as citizens of the coming kingdom and if we ever stop seeking this kingdom and its righteousness, we have begun to succumb to darkness, both in what we believe and in how we live.

The third piece of advice the Lord gives is to remain on the lookout for light seekers, members of the righteous core He is calling to Himself as they cry out for meaning and for purpose. There will be some startling surprises for many on the Day of Judgment, but those of us who remain light dwellers may suffer as we lose whatever threads of darkness that are still clinging to us, but the fire will only cleanse us and not consume us.

The days of Noah are upon us more and more with each passing year. More and more believers will keep on jumping ship and embracing the growing darkness of evolutionary humanism and its pernicious immorality. This is the great apostasy and the final rebellion which we are warned about in the Scriptures and as we see the seven biblical signs of the end lining up, we should make sure our lives line up with G-d's Word. We need to remain strangers and pilgrims in this world because our true life is still hidden with our Messiah in Heaven and we will only really come into our own when He returns.

I am never tired of walking with Him and I am not losing patience with the time it is taking for the kingdom to come because we will be rewarded for walking by faith and not by sight, even if

the price for this privilege keeps on rising faster than the price of gas at the pumps. Faith and godliness are the two singularly greatest treasures we can acquire on our journey through this life – don't leave home without them. Shabbat shalom.