

## Second Chanukah Meditation: A Time for Heroes

I have already spoken to you at length about the origin of this unique extra biblical feast and how it was altered and turned into a celebration of the generational Jewish battle against assimilating into the pagan nations among whom we live. Throughout our history there has been a constant cross pollination between Judaism and Christianity and to a lesser degree between Judaism and Islam, with people converting in and assimilating out in great numbers in every generation.

This has meant that our community has become quite self conscious about protecting our people from the ever present threat of assimilation. Today, we face an even greater threat of our younger generation being assimilated into the burgeoning international secular society which has turned its back on all things spiritual, forsaking not just what our Bible teaches, but also the spirituality and morality it requires from us as the only valid response to our faith. Have valid is your response?

The Maccabees had to deal with both a military onslaught which brought them under the control of a hostile foreign power and a wholesale adoption of Hellenistic religion and culture by a significant portion of the population. Backsliders have always been the bane of true believers. The Maccabees approach was firm and radical and they refused to accept any accommodation with the foreigners who wanted to destroy both the nation and the faith of Israel. How about you in the face of our modern world?

In every generation, since this time of great spiritual bravery, our people have celebrated our survival and continue to exercise due diligence in insuring that both our nation and our faith survives. Two passages I often refer to talk about our need not to open the door, even a crack, to the seductive intrusion of the world, the flesh and the enemy. I John says we are not to love the world, nor anything which is in the world.

This does not refer to the natural world with all of its amazing power and beauty, but to the world system which functions under the oppression of the enemy of our souls and his human henchmen. We are to avoid the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. We cannot walk with the L-rd if our heart and mind is encumbered with the things of this secular, pagan world. Is this world bogging you down spiritually?

In Luke, we are told that some of the seed of the Word is immediately eaten up by the birds of doubt, while another portion falls prey to the rock of temptation. Still another portion falls prey to the choking power of the cares, the riches and the pleasures of this life and never brings forth any fruit to maturity. What is growing in the garden of your life?

Is your house firmly founded on the rock of His Word and do you regularly cast down any fortresses which rise up in disobedience to G-d's Word and are you bringing every thought captive to the obedience of our Messiah? Or is the world holding part of you or all of you captive to its false ideology?

Now, I have met some pretty narrow-minded believers who have not taken the time to really examine their faith and they refuse to examine any challenges or enrichments which new perspectives could bring to them. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to prove all things and hold fast to the which is true, as we avoid every kind of evil (I Thess. 5:21,22).

Being openminded does not mean that we are indiscriminately open to all and any new trends or theological or societal fads which come our way. It means that we believe that our faith is reasonable as well as necessary, and while we refuse to engage in fruitless arguments with those who do not hold to our faith, we are not averse to giving to everyone who asks us a reason of the hope which is in us (I Peter 3:15).

We are not afraid of dialogue and while we are less friendly to debate, we love passionate discussions where the reasons behind our faith are expressed, discussed and defended. I have often said that if you persistently ask two questions in a discussion, you will eventually arrive at the truth: (1) What are you really saying (clarification)? and (2) How do you know this (verification)? Are you exploring the depths of your faith?

I am not a believer because I do not know any better, I am a believer because I have done my due diligence and am fully persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him until the day of His returning. I love engaging with sincere people in honest discussion and if the truth be told, in many discussions which I have on Facebook, I often get less flak from serious minded nonbelievers than I do from narrow minded, rigid believers. Riding weird hobby horses is not productive spirituality.

I want to be a spiritual Maccabean warrior, refusing to give an inch to this encroaching spiritual darkness which is wafting over our world once again. I want to address the issues which our world is struggling with and be salt and light so that they may abandon the fruitless folly of this age and embark with us on our joyful pilgrimage through this life to our Father's Home in Glory. What direction is your life headed in?

There are two main realms where the exercise of heroism is needed the most: in the realm of our theology and in the realm of our spiritual morality. I have recently heard that underage children are being transported to gay support meetings during school time, without the knowledge or permission of their parents. This is an outrage and parents need to yell and scream and demand our rights so that these politically correct terrorists do not tear apart the fabric of our families. They are kidnapping our kids.

The real target in this mess, in my humble opinion, are the young people who are uncertain about their sexuality and who need serious dialogue, and not to be aggressively evangelized by the gay community to adopt a lifestyle that they are not really looking for. There are instructors and bureaucrats who both hate our biblical faith, both Jewish and Gentile, and who want to promote homosexuality as almost a sacred calling that all people should examine. This is criminal activity where broken people are breaking people.

Before I throw up, let me ask them a question. Isn't heterosexuality a sacred, genetic calling which they should examine so that they can be healed from their sexual brokenness and perversion? Aren't they really repressed heterosexuals?

Yes, most of them may just be suppressed heterosexuals, wallowing in loneliness and woundedness and despite all the protection they receive from persecution of any kind, gays hold the record in at least two dubious realms. They have the highest rate of sexually transmitted diseases and the highest suicide rate, not to mention a host of other social and personal instabilities which characterize their twisted so-called community.

This is just one example of the world trying to make that which is bitter, sweet and that which is sweet, bitter and we need to fight against it with tooth and nail. We can no longer claim that Canada is a country which was founded on Christian principles, because that ship has already sailed. But we remain a country which protects minorities and does not allow them to suffer either social or economic disabilities just because of the group to which they belong. Their politically correct agenda is oppressing us.

We are a spiritual minority, both as Jews and Gentiles and we should demand that our constitutional rights to practice our faith and to raise our children up in that faith, are fully guaranteed by the laws of our nation. Stop trying to steal our kids.

When Quebec led the nation is enshrining gay rights into provincial law and threatened jail to anyone who openly criticized homosexuality in public, I held several long conversations with provincial bureaucrats and I got them to admit a very interesting principle. Sexual orientation is a religious conviction and as such we have the right to both promote heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexual expression and to criticize any form of homosexuality as a departure from the moral and spiritual dictates of our biblical faith. Believing that it is wrong is a protected constitutional right.

We would never advocate violence against anyone who does not accept our religious perspective, including homosexuals, but we proclaim that our right to practice our spiritual morality is enshrined in the constitution and we intend so see this provision enforced to the full force of the law in every area of our society.

No one has the right to teach our children that our position is wrong or that homosexuality is an acceptable lifestyle. I have heard of believers and pastors who have had to deal with children who have adopted this lifestyle and instead of rejecting them and cutting off all contact with them, they have agreed to disagree and have given them the support they would give to anyone else suffering from any form of brokenness. You love them.

There is a considerable body of good scientific research about homosexuality and how to successfully treat this condition and there are any number of groups of former homosexuals who have found freedom and release – but they are ignored and even demonized. The gay community feels that if they scream loud enough and long enough, they can drown out the voice of reason and push their point of view like so many social Nazis. Don't let them scream at you or drown out the voice of G-d's Word.

Mishpocah, the devil, the world and the flesh have been waging a generational war against our faith and in these latter days they have been making great gains, mainly at the expense of the mainline churches and synagogues which stand nearly empty every week. Evolution has captured the popular mind of our culture, even though it is more a myth than a theory and has been disproved more than it has been proved.

What has captured your popular mind? I see nothing wrong with listening to all kinds of music and attending many kinds of social functions. I am on Facebook, but not twitter and I am not a blogger. This is because it is the quality of communication which I value, more than the ease and access that so much of the internet provides.

There is so much which is drivel and baseless nonsense, where foolish and pernicious men and women thunder out on line to get your money and rob you of your faith. Too many say that their church or shul is on line, as they dine on spiritual junk food and slip into all kinds of spiritual dysfunction and foolishness. Do we have any flat earthers in our midst? I will listen to them when I hear the trees clapping their hands and the mountains skipping like rams. We need to avoid all forms of spiritual foolishness.

This Chanukah, let us reaffirm our commitment to the basic fundamentals of our faith and determine to maintain a balanced biblical diet and stay in shape physically and spiritually.

What are the basic fundamentals of our faith? Again, there are five of them:

- (1) The Bible is the Word of G-d
- (2) Yeshua is the Son of G-d (G-d the Son)
- (3) He was born of a virgin (without the help of a man)
- (4) He died on the cross for the sins of mankind
- (5) He rose, ascended and will one day return

There is a sixth: There are two forms of equally valid biblical spirituality, one Jewish and the other Gentile

Let us endeavour to take full responsibility for our spirituality and make the principles of G-d's Kingdom the core values of our lives. Regular fellowship and worship are two social essentials which will prevent us from being isolated or bushwhacked and dragged away by the spiritual pirates and terrorists who will keep circling our shul family, looking for those to devour. The sheepfold is the only safe haven in this life.

Being regular in shul, will increase your spiritual health and being regular in prayer and Bible Study will boost your spiritual immune system. How is yours doing?

We have come to celebrate the heroism of our ancestors. May we manifest equal or greater heroism as we get ever nearer to the end of the age and coming of G-d's Kingdom in our Messiah. May our light shine more brightly, even as our world grows darker.

We need to keep on taking a stand, daily, weekly and yearly, our entire lives, so that we do not stray from the truth which has been passed down to us from the prophets and the apostles.

As we chow down on lakes and spin our dreidels, may we rejoice that we belong to a community of like-minded believers who are joining hands with all previous generations of believers to make sure that the light of G-d's Word still shines for us, for our children and for our grandchildren – and that until the kingdom comes.

Are you a well equipped and well-trained warrior or have you begun to slip back into the world? Are the weapons of your warfare spiritual, and mighty to cast down fortresses which the world is trying to build into your heart and life? How good are you becoming at waging successful spiritual warfare in your pilgrimage through this life?

The Maccabees had more setbacks than breaks and they were often defeated and had to skedaddle back into the hills. Our movement and our community have had its shares of defeats and setbacks, but we need to follow the example of the Maccabees who kept on coming back until they defeated their enemies.

They also learned from their mistakes and were not afraid to try new things and adopt new strategies. Wars are lost when armies cease to adapt their tactics and cease to learn from their mistakes. We are going to get our prayer meeting and our Yeshiva Bible Study figured out. I am going to get the administrative help I need and the assistant I want to train. I want to see our turnover rate diminish and our financial viability increase.

I am still struggling with the scent allergy and it handicaps me considerably, but it also does wonders for my prayer life (and the prayer life of those of you who prayer for me). I am on line daily and on Facebook almost daily. I stay informed about our local Jewish community, even if I have to get the Jewish News under an assumed name.

We are building the CMJC (Council of Messianic Jewish congregations) into a world class fellowship which will train up the next generation of leaders and provide healthy leadership and vision for our movement across the nation and around the world. Israel is a big part of my daily prayers, along with the worldwide Jewish community. I also pray for the worldwide progress of the Gospel among the nations.

I never want to quit learning and I want to successfully adapt to all the changes our fast paced, media driven world is conjuring up at an accelerating rate. At the Same time I have to remind myself that there is nothing new under the sun, just newer versions of the same old same old.

May Chanukah be for all of us a joyful time of reflection, because when all is said and done, we are on the winning team and nothing can stop or slow down the arrival of His coming Kingdom. The heathen may rage and world may grow darker and noisier, but He is still the L-rd of L-rds and the King of Kings and our adversary remains the prince of the power of hot air – don't let Him blow your house of faith down. Build it on the rock and not with straw and wood. We may be knocked down, but we are never out. We will overcome when we learn to do things His way, according to His Word. Is this how you are living? Be blessed, my fellow Maccabees and may your menorah never grow dim.

Shabbat Shalom and Shavua Tov

30 Kislev, 5779 (08/12/18) **Torah Portion #10: Their chickens Come Home to Roost** J. M. Terrett

**Miketz** At the End Of

**Torah:** Genesis 41:1-44:17

**Haftarah:** Zechariah 2:14-4:7 (Heavenly Menorah, two olive trees)

**Brit Chadashah:** Matthew 27:15-46 (trial and crucifixion)

This week's Torah portion begins with the cranky Pharaoh having two very troubling dreams. None of the magicians or wise men of Egypt are willing to share the fate of the baker and risk giving Pharaoh an interpretation which could cost them their lives. The cupbearer remembers Joseph who gave him a valid interpretation for his dream. He is cleaned up, which is a fancy way of saying he is dressed up as an Egyptian, and is presented to Pharaoh.

He does not claim special ability and gives G-d all the glory – a wise choice which more believers should heed. Joseph sees the dreams as a warning from G-d to prepare Egypt for a massive seven-year famine which will follow seven years of great abundance. The blessing of G-d on Joseph extends to the whole kingdom of Egypt as he collects 20% of all the harvests during the years of abundance.

He has so much grain that the Egyptian system of counting runs out of numbers. They had no zero and like most ancient people, they could not count to infinity. He has established grain storehouses throughout the land and during this time of abundance two sons are born to him: Manasseh and Ephraim.

As the famine intensifies, the grain supplies of most nations in the region become depleted and people start coming to Egypt to buy grain. Ten of Joseph's brothers come to Egypt for this purpose and bow down before an Egyptian noble who is really their brother. Why did he play an extended game of deceit with them? It was not just payback time, he wanted to save his family intact and if he had revealed himself too soon, they may have run away and scattered to the wind. He also wanted them to come clean, both with him and with their father.

He plays his first ruse and keeps Simeon as a hostage until Benjamin is brought to him. He chose the second son for perhaps two reasons. First, Reuben was still acting in a leadership position, though it was declining and being assumed by Judah. Secondly, he wanted to be heard and that is what Simeon's name means. He is kept under a kind of house arrest and is not thrown into a dungeon.

When they open their bags at their first camping site and see their money returned, they ask themselves what it is that G-d is doing to them. Joseph does not want to sell grain to his family, he wants to rescue them and also wants to show them that the sovereignty of G-d is on his side, as it has always been from the beginning.

Jacob considers Simeon lost and refuses to send Benjamin into Egypt. Reuben exercises his last leadership role, when he says his father can kill his two sons if he does not bring Benjamin back. As if a grandfather would find such a stupid offer, acceptable.

Judah pledges to be forever guilty if he does not bring his youngest brother back to his father and Jacob reluctantly agrees because he and his sons have come to trust in the leadership of Judah.

They bring the original silver back and are taken into Joseph's house to eat. They become frightened when Joseph seats them on their birth order and when Benjamin is given a massive helping. Joseph sends them on their way once his servants puts his personal cup into Benjamin's sacks.

I am troubled that it is called his divining cup, like the one modern tea readers use, but this is either a bad habit he picked up in Egypt or this is just an assumption the Egyptians made about the cup and he let them think what they wanted. When they are overtaken and accused, the foolishly promise death to the one on whom it is found and pledge the rest of them to slavery. They are not innocent of stealing Joseph, but they claim to be innocent of stealing his cup.

Upon returning, Judah offers himself up as a slave, saying that the L-rd has found iniquity in his servants. He is prepared to admit what they did to their brother, not realizing they are about to do it in front of the brother they betrayed. Joseph refuses Judah's offer and the portion ends with Joseph instructing them to return home without Benjamin, which we learn later, is something which they are unwilling to do.

They are afraid of causing their father great heartache, but they were not afraid of this when they kidnapped Joseph and convinced their father that he was dead. He wants them to feel the grief over Benjamin which they did not feel for him and he also wants to teach them a valuable lesson about the sovereignty of G-d.

Human folly never trumps the sovereignty of G-d, even when His people have suffered incredibly at the hands of their enemies, both ancient and modern. The Holocaust and the massive slaughter of our people at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D. (when the second temple was burned) and 136 A.D. (when the last major Jewish rebellion was crushed), were satanic attempts to exterminate the people of G-d. Though there was great loss of life, neither attempt succeeded and no matter how hard any of our enemies try to destroy us, they will never succeed.

Anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are powerful vehicles of hatred against a people which has always stood for mercy and righteousness, and has believed and put into action our calling to practice Tikkun Olam (the healing of the world).

As we celebrate Chanukah, may we purpose in our hearts and lives to avoid any kind of assimilation and use the wisdom and courage of Joseph to foil our enemies and protect our people. We need to learn to trust the sovereignty of G-d, rather than the unreliability of our current circumstances, be they ever so good or ever so bad.

We need more Joseph's in our midst and more Maccabees. It takes great spiritual courage and lots of perseverance to walk with the L-rd. This is our calling – are you willing to make it yours? It is time for spiritual heroes to stand up and be counted!