

Nasso **Elevate**
Torah: Numbers 4:21-7:89
Haftarah: Judges 13:2-25
Brit Chadashah: John 12:20-36

I can't believe that the Fall Feasts are just around the corner. I have prepared a schedule which we will continue to put on the back table as a reminder for all of us to make our lives revolve around the Festivals of YHVH. We will also get back to how things were done before Covid. We need to have a quarterly meeting and an annual meeting. I miss the dancing and Kiddush but things will go back to normal slowly, so that we do not drop the ball. Even with the incredibly high fuel costs, I trust all of you are planning to get away for some down time. Patti and I may just do day trips to keep an eye on her mom.

As we move into the Book of Numbers, we see a transition between teaching the basics of the Law to getting the people ready for their next big adventure. The memory of the Exodus was fading and after a whole year of camping around the mountain, the people were beginning to think about their journey to the Promised Land.

Parts of Exodus, all of Leviticus and parts of Numbers deals with various instructions which were first given at the mountain. The people were becoming the Hosts of YHVH in fact and not just in theory. They had been given instructions concerning sacrifices and what I call spiritual morality and they were now ready to do something which they had never done before. They were going to set out for the first time as the Hosts of YHVH and they were no longer overshadowed by the memory of their Egyptian slavery.

After the tabernacle and the tent of meeting were set up, they had to learn how to take it apart and carry it properly until the day when it would have a more permanent location, once they entered the Promised Land. A census of the people had been taken and their marching positions behind one of the four banners was established. There is never any room among the hosts of YHVH for any confusion or disorder because He always wants to show us what needs to be done and how it is to be done.

In the midst of travelling instructions, elements of practical spirituality continue to be given, so in this portion we will learn about how to deal with jealous suspicions and how the Nazarite vow was to be undertaken. The people are reminded that not only does the camp have to be well organized and maintained, but it must remain free of any contagious diseases which often ravaged whole communities in the Ancient World.

The ones whose conditions could be contagious, were removed from the camp. They were still fed and their other practical needs were met, but they dwelt apart, outside the camp. Defilement needs to be dealt with so that there is nothing which could negatively impact the people's ability to walk with YHVH in purity and holiness. No matter what we are going through and no matter where we are, YHVH wants us to lead pure, holy lives so that He can speak to us and reach out to our darkening world through us.

What kind of shape are each of us in? What kind of shape is our dynamic community in? How aware are we of what the L-RD is doing around the world?

I enjoy reading about both how the elements of the Tabernacle were put together and how it was to be dismantled, every time the people were called on to move out and travel to their next camping spot. The various symbolic elements of the Tabernacle and the tent of meeting, were fashioned and assembled according to precise divine instructions and the finished product was incredibly beautiful, but they were not meant to settle down permanently around the Holy Mountain. So how were these works of art to be disassembled and who was to carry what?

Now I want to be a little creative as I describe how everything was disassembled and packed up to move. It is my understanding that the ark and all the other sacred objects were wrapped up first so the people would not gaze upon things they were no longer supposed to see. Once these objects were wrapped up, and placed on the shoulders of various Aaronites, the tent of meeting and the various parts of the courtyard were taken down and gotten ready to move.

The people would then assemble behind their banners, with the packed up ark in the middle and as the cloud began to move, the people followed it. They came to the mountain as disorganized refugees, but they left it as the newly formed hosts of YHVH which were aimed at the Promised Land. What is your life aimed at? What is our congregational life aimed at?

Just before the special offerings of the twelve princes were given according to their marching order behind the four banners, two special situations are discussed. First you have the procedures to follow when a jealous husband suspected his wife of secretly being unfaithful to him. Marital harmony is essential to a positive family environment and every couple needs good conflict resolution strategies. Next comes the various procedures to follow when a person, male or female, made a nazarite vow.

In the first case, the woman is taken before the priests and we have one of the first mentions of the holy water which was to be prepared from the ashes of the Red Heifer. A curse was written out and washed away with holy water. The water was then mixed in a bowl with some dirt from the tabernacle and the woman was made to drink it. If she was found not guilty, her shame was also taken away, but her suspicious husband was made to look like a fool.

Next, when a person wanted to separate themselves from the business of living to spend time with the L-RD in contemplation, this had to be taken very seriously. They were to abstain from any alcohol and they were not to cut their hair or shave. During this special time they were also not allowed to go into mourning and if they did inadvertently came into contact with a corpse, they had to start again from scratch because nothing was allowed to interrupt this special time. There is no mention of how long this period of time was to last.

When their special time was over, the one performing the Nazarite vow, presented themselves at the entrance of the holy place and shaved off all their body hair (without at any point becoming naked in public). The hair was collected and offered up in the fire of the incense altar. In a very real way, the person became a living sacrifice totally given over to serving YHVH with no distractions.

In the New Testament, Paul encourages us to also offer ourselves as a living sacrifice and to make sure that nothing could ever come between us and our walk with YHVH. This should be our ultimate goal in every way and in every day until the Kingdom comes.

Sermon: Do You Listen to Rumours or Are You Focused on Reality?

Just before His betrayal and execution, our Messiah wanted His followers never to slip into spiritual panic of any kind. Much of the distress and confusion each generation of believers encounter, both Jewish and Gentile, should never be allowed to cause us to run around as if the sky was indeed falling and the Kingdom was about to be set up any second. After waiting for the Kingdom for over two thousand years, you'd think believers would have more patience and not allow distress of any kind to disrupt our peaceful confidence in the Messiah.

Now, please understand that I believe more in the coming of the Kingdom than I do in the daily rising and setting of the sun. Walking with Him according to his Word as we sail through the Festival Cycle, should be what we are mainly concerned about in our world which continues to make less and less sense as spiritual darkness is once again beginning to blanket our sorry excuse for a planet.

When Patti was carrying our son, we understood that towards the end of her pregnancy, she would encounter false alarm contractions which are called Braxton Hicks. It is the uterus practising for the big day and they should not be taken as signs that birth is imminent. The Apostle Paul talked about birth pangs which our world is experiencing as all of creation prepares for the arrival of Messiah's Kingdom. They are just planetary Braxton Hicks.

Earthquakes, floods and strange weather are not a sign the world will soon be ending. Global warming is going to happen, whether we are worried about it or not. Also, there has never been a time in human history when there wasn't a war happening somewhere in the world. So rumours of war, and famine – and even global pandemics, should not be taken as signs of the coming kingdom.

G-d has a specific agenda which must be accomplished so that, in the fullness of time, when everything is set in place, what is coming as a thief in the night will noisily explode and consume this vale of tears. Personally, I say the sooner the better, but pouting and holding your spiritual breath will not make it come any sooner.

Some believers and some big time preachers and evangelists, both Jewish and Gentile, consider every major world crisis as a sign of the end of the world. They even look at various celestial events as clear signs of the coming kingdom.

As a young believer, I fell into the trap of seeing everything as a sign of the return. At one point, the group of believers I hung out with would say silly things like: "I'll see you on Monday, if the Kingdom hasn't come before then." I was led to faith by people who were strongly dispensational and believed in a literal seven year great tribulation, to be followed by a literal thousand year reign of peace before the final end of the world. In this way of thinking, Messiah comes back three times.

First, He comes back to rapture (snatch) all believers out of their bodies and to secretly raise all dead believers out of their graves, so they could hover with the Saviour in the clouds until the Great Tribulation was over. This snatching up is said to occur either, before, during or after the seven years tribulation. Different verses are used to describe this supposed sequence of events and some people believe that when the going gets really tough, believers are pulled out of it, while great wrath is poured out on unbelievers in the world.

Then there is a first battle of Armageddon, where the beast and the false prophet are defeated and cast into the lake of fire. Then comes a peaceful thousand year reign of the Messiah and

His resurrected saints. The actual details of what is supposed to happen during this mysterious period of time, varies between people with vivid and fanciful imaginations.

Then the Messiah somehow leaves and comes again for a third time for a second great, final battle and this time the world actually ends and the devil and his angels are finally thrown into the lake of fire and the golden bride of the Lamb descends from Heaven and is set up on the new earth. Obscure verses from the Old Testament prophets are said to have a second fulfillment, with little or no connection to their original context. Verses that were addressed to Israel are said to also be speaking to the nations.

Now, some of the amazing promises made to Israel, before and after the captivity, were not fulfilled because Israel did not always heed the words of the prophets. Instead of stealing these promises and expecting that Ezekiel's incredible temple is still going to be built, we need to use unfulfilled prophecy as a warning, because unless we repent and learn to walk in faithful obedience, His Word and His promises will remain unfulfilled in our lives as well.

When Israel returned to the land, it took several generations for the nation to recover, but they were given a marvellous promise, which still makes me weep. They were told that they would never have to go into captivity again and that their land would never be ravaged again. Several attempts to rebuild the temple were only partially successful until King Herod pulled out all the stops and built a structure which dwarfed Solomon's temple and was one of the biggest buildings in the ancient world.

When Israel defeated those Jews who had assimilated into the Greek culture and religion, they began a program of converting Gentiles which left Judaism with a bigger population than we have today. The land grew rich and the people prospered. There were still fanatics and unbalanced people prowling round the people, but it looked like Israel was poised to convert the Roman world a few generations before Christianity set about the same task.

Scholars and practising Jews knew that the conditions were ripe for the appearance of Messiah and many were convinced that the end of the world was near because Messiah was going to set up His everlasting Kingdom over all the nations and generations of mankind. Like some modern orthodox Jews they were convinced that if they wanted the Messianic Kingdom badly enough, it would come in their lifetime. But they forgot that Messianic expectation should be firmly based on the Scriptures and not on the enthusiasm of believers, no matter how well meaning.

Israel did not fulfill the conditions which were necessary for them to never have to go into captivity again and after the second big revolt against Rome, the Jewish world collapsed and the survivors of our people have been wandering generationally among the nations who mistreated them and who were convinced that G-d had abandoned them. The various segments of the early church, abandoned any connection to Israel and the Jews and a new hybrid version of biblical Judaism appeared – the Gentile Church which claimed that they replaced Israel. They claimed that all the promises made to Israel now belonged to them and they now studied prophecies out of their original context. Most of them remain spiritually confused and so much of the teaching about the End of the world is as confused as they are.

Now, the secret things belong to G-d and not everything in the Bible applies to everyone who reads it. Israel has not been replaced and the Sabbath has not been cancelled. All the

promises given to Israel, still belong to us, but there are enough left over for all the other nations of the world.

Dispensationalism is a collection of theological and biblical errors because the end of the world will not happen until the entire agenda of G-d is completed.

I have prepared a brochure which outlines some of these principles which I acquired slowly and painfully. So many evangelicals and even Messianic Jews are wallowing in the quicksand of the dispensational error and even though they have no real clear idea of where they need to go spiritually, they speed up and want to get there as fast as they can. They read the Bible as a newspaper and try and understand the Revelation as if it were not carefully written in symbols that were never meant to be taken literally.

Because I do not believe the Messiah will return by the stages they have constructed, I am considered to be a heretic, even though I give biblical answers to the silly questions they are asking. You see, there are only seven biblical signs of the return of Messiah and most of the rest is carnal speculation based on misreading the Bible and trying to put its teaching into neat little boxes which have got nothing to do with what the Scriptures actually teach about the End of the World.

You see the end times actually began when Messiah arose and ascended back into Heaven. His resurrection and ascension may have occurred almost secretly, but His return will happen with much noise as the universe explodes and all of its folly is consumed in the judgment which will soon be upon us.

You see, salvation is only possible as long as Messiah dwells in the true Holy of Holies. The instant He steps out of that marvellous place, the whole of creation will be instantly blown up and be melted down. There has always been great tribulation for believers, as the enemy of our souls makes relentless war upon us and upon the message of G-d's love, which is at the core of the Gospel.

The myth of a seven year Great Tribulation which we will escape from, if we are good little boys and girls, is nowhere taught in the Bible. The millennium is used in several places in the Scriptures as a symbolic number to speak of the grace and patience of G-d as He holds back His judgment until all of His purposes are fulfilled. The Revelation is the best Greek in the New Testament and is built on a series of symbols, taken from the Old Testament to describe the clockwork of G-d. There are three beautiful portrayals of believers which should give us chills because He loves us so much. The body of Messiah on earth is composed of a group that is twelve times twelve times, a thousand. It is not a literal number but is used to describe the amazing potential and beauty that we possess as we complete our generational pilgrimage through this darkness and pain of this life.

Right after mentioning us symbolically as 144,000 who have been sealed by the Spirit of G-d, the vision moves to Heaven where the myriads of all the generations of believers shines brightly as we worship G-d and wait for the Kingdom to come. Sinners bear the mark of the beast which is the searing of their souls, while believers carry the seal of G-d which causes our light to shine brightly in this darkening world.

There is a third amazing description where the bride of the Lamb is symbolically described as the Heavenly Jerusalem. The city is built on the foundation of both the prophets and the apostles and is surrounded by a great wall with twelve gates. It is made of solid gold and is adorned as a bride coming down to wed the Messiah. It is a beautiful picture of our heavenly beauty which we will possess even as we pass through this veil of tears and suffer greatly because of our faith and our spiritual morality.

It is a beautiful description of the eternal weight of glory which is reserved for us in Heaven. Together we are each the only temple which G-d will acknowledge and our calling is to become wise virgins whose lamps are trimmed and full of oil.

More and more believers will flounder and become ensnared by the evil works of the flesh and become enemies of G-d who want to overthrow His Word and defile the righteousness we are called to practise. This is apparently pride month where we should only consider ourselves to be descent people if we are supporters of the LGBT agenda. The preborn continue to be slaughtered in their millions, as the false Gospel of Evolution continues to blind people to both the G-d of Creation and to the Word which we have been given.

Don't get me wrong, the pace of the return is picking up momentum because this is what the Bible prophesied and not because of the foolish teachings of those who claim to be Bible believing champions of the Gospel.

Well, what are the seven signs which must all be fulfilled simultaneously before the Kingdom bursts forth upon us? Worldwide hatred of the Jews is on the rise again, even as more and more Arab nations normalize relations with Israel. Worldwide iniquity is gaining momentum across our darkening globe. When our entire race is wallowing in sin and no one is seeking for the truth of G-d and His righteousness, then this old world will have no good reason to go on existing and the end will come.

So Many mainline churches and synagogues are abandoning any shred of biblical faith that we are watching the great apostasy rising up in our time. Historical religious faith is on a steep decline among all the major religions of the world. Sophisticated modern people are breaking free from all forms of traditional religion and are actively seeking all the forbidden pleasures that brought the wrath of G-d down on our world in Noah's Days.

On a more positive note, the Gospel is being preached in every corner of our globe and people around the world are still coming to faith in growing numbers. Many former believers are losing their faith in even greater numbers, but our depleted ranks are still being filled by members of the righteous core that continue to seek for truth and meaning.

Now all of these signs have to be fulfilled at once, so until the final worldwide Antichrist is revealed, the kingdom will not break forth and consume him (or her) by the fiery wrath of our G-d and Saviour. Historically, many Antichrists have risen up, but none has been able to take full possession of the entire planet and gain total domination over all mankind. Hitler, Stalin and Mao were evil people who did much damage, but there is still one to come whose evil will eclipse anything that has been done by evil doers of the past.

Happily, Jerusalem is no longer being trodden underfoot by the nations and more and more Jewish people are expressing an interest in the Gospel and the Messiah, but until believing Jews are once again in the majority among our people, the end is not yet.

Where should this leave us? We should be allowing the 23rd Psalm to be the spiritual reality we are living as we study to show ourselves approved unto G-d by rightly discerning the truths of His Word. There will always be enough for us to do without trying to figure out the exact time when the Kingdom will come.

So, instead of floundering around trying to make the Bible say things it never has, we should be firmly and humbly digging deeper into the Tree of Life and allowing it to both become the solid rock our faith is built on and the garden where the fruit of the Spirit are flourishing.

Too many believers are engaged in biting and devouring each other and right wing conspiracy theorists are giving conservative people a bad name. Whoever is able to be elected will have my prayerful support, even if I disagree with most or all of their political platforms. I want to stop listening to rumours of war. I want to stop seeing all the floods, the climate changes and worldwide pandemics as signs of the inevitable coming Kingdom.

I want to be a light dweller who shines forth with salty light and dialogues with anyone who will listen about the Saviour I serve and the Kingdom I am a citizen of – and especially about His Word which has all the true answers to the real questions of life.

Shabbat Shalom, campers.