

V'ZOT HAB'RACHAH

Written by Rabbi Philip Hammond. Posted in Reconciliation Parashah
RECONCILIATION TEACHINGS FROM THE WEEKLY PARASHAH.

Our next teaching comes from parashah **V'ZOT HAB'RACHAH – AND THE BLESSING.**
Devarim/Deuteronomy 33:1-34:12; Yehoshua/Joshua 1:1-18.

As we close off this set of teachings, where we focused on the reconciliation of the “Two Houses”, what can we take with us? These last words Moshe spoke to the Children of Israel were vital. Moshe was praying that the whole House of Israel would listen to his words, hoping to impress upon them the need to follow the Torah in order to receive blessings from above.

So I encourage us to view our present situation as one similar to this historical event. This being the case what can we learn from the following closing words of Moshe?

“And this is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, bestowed upon the Children of Israel before his death. He said: ‘HASHEM came from Sinai – having shone forth to them from Seir, having appeared from mount Paran, and then approached with some of the holy myriads – from His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them. Indeed, You loved the tribes greatly, all its holy ones were in Your hands; for they planted themselves at Your feet, bearing [the yoke] of Your utterances; The Torah that Moses commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Jacob. He became King over Jeshrun when the numbers of the nation gathered – the tribes of Israel in unity.’” Deuteronomy 33:1-5 [AST]

For the purpose of our topic [reconciliation] there are a number of “headings” that stand out. These headings are: HASHEM, Torah, Right hand, Love and Tribes of Israel.

For the Children of Israel HaShem needs no introduction. He is Who He is- Creator of Heaven and earth – The Holy One of Israel. Yet despite saying He needs no introduction, do we understand Him and His relationship with His Children? Have we actually lost sight of Who He is? Have we lost sight of what He requires from His Children? Are we ready to enter the Promised Land?

I will answer these questions in reverse order. I do not believe we are ready to enter the Promised Land as a nation. We have lost sight of what HaShem requires of us, because we have lost sight of Who He is. Sadly we do not “understand” Him and the relationship He wants with His Children.

If this is true then we have some serious issues that need our immediate attention. There are some fascinating dynamics that relate to all these issues and we cannot hope to address them here today. However, one would hope we can address some areas that would stimulate some serious thought and actions within the Children of Israel.

I am going to assume the position that HaShem wants an intimate relationship with the Children of Israel, and the Children of Israel want an intimate relationship with HaShem. I am also going to assume the position that HaShem knows how to have an intimate relationship with His children. Therefore, that needs no further expansion. What does need addressing and expanding is our knowledge of having an intimate relationship with our heavenly Father. As we briefly address this issue let us be reminded HaShem is the Master, we are the servants. We are required to form this relationship according to His instructions. This is not some ego trip for Hashem, but it is the best outcome for us. If we form relationships according to our own thoughts and wisdom, then these relationships will lead to destruction. We witness this destruction every day in our communities and societies.

Any intimate relationship must have LOVE as its foundation. We are told to love HaShem.

"You shall love HASHEM, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources." Deuteronomy 6:5 [AST]

"Only be very careful to fulfil the commandment and the Torah that Moses, the servant of HASHEM, commanded you: to love HASHEM, your God, and to walk in all His ways and to observe his commandments and to cling to Him and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." Joshua 22:5 [AST]

"Now, O Israel, what does HASHEM, your God, ask of you? Only to fear HASHEM, your God, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve HASHEM, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, to observe the commandments of HASHEM and His decrees, which I command you today, for your benefit." Deuteronomy 10:12-13 [AST]

The Hebrew word for love [Ahab/Ahav] according to the Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew means: **To devote completely to another!** This is well described in the above texts. How are we doing when tested against these explanations of love? Before we answer this question let us view the evidence that God the Father loves His Children. Love usually results in the giving of precious gifts. HaShem has given His children precious gifts and continues to do so. He does this because He is love.

*"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, **for God is love.**" 1John 4:7-8 [NASB]*

*"And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love,** and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." 1John 4:16 [NASB]*

The Queen of Sheba knew HaShem loves Israel.

*"May HASHEM, your God, be blessed, Who has chosen you, to place you upon the throne of Israel; in **HASHEM'S everlasting love for Israel** He has established you as king, to do justice and righteousness." 1Kings 10:9 [AST]*

How can we love God? Have we an example to follow that will take the focus away from ourselves and force us to look longingly into His "face" with loving eyes?

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." 1John 4:10-11 [KJV]

HaShem has given us the perfect example to follow and we are told that *"We love, because He first loved us."* 1John 10:19 [NASB].

The Master Himself told us what devoted love is:

"Greater love has no one than this, that one lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends....."

We know that Yeshua laid down His life for His friends, becoming the propitiation for the sin of the Children of Israel. He did this because of His obedience to do the will of the Father, a Father who loved, loves and will forever love the Children of Israel. This is of course "Good News". This news should be celebrated. However, before one begins to celebrate, I want us to inspect the last few words I deliberately left out in the above quote.

*"Greater love has no one than this, that one lays down his life for his friends. You are My friends **if you do what I command you.**" John 15:13-14 [NASB]*

The words highlighted above are critical to understand. To know how to love HaShem in a true biblical manner is the foundation for true biblical faith and faithfulness. If you love the Holy One of Israel you will

love as He would have you love. You can be absolutely sure that if we as a nation, as a people love HaShem then we will have love for our neighbours. The words of Yeshua come to mind:

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this; You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” Mark 12:30-31 [NASB]

Who is our neighbour? Well one neighbour is no doubt our brothers and sisters in each “House” of Israel. Both Houses are to offer love to the other in a Godly manner. This is a commandment, yet we struggle to fulfil our obligations. Is this because we do not actually love HaShem with all that we have? Our actions suggest that we don't. Both Houses are in serious need of some biblical counselling. The best counselling we can have is from mature members within our family. Mature “elders” who respect the position of each House of Israel. This doesn't mean placating the other at all costs. It means working through the issues and challenges with compassion, respect, honesty and understanding in an effort to have all grow in their love of HaShem. Growing in love for others is hard work. There is a stumbling block that we are constantly facing; the stumbling block of pride. Pride can prevent us from drawing close to our heavenly Father, as it holds back the process of Teshuvah.

I am persuaded both current Houses of Israel are in need of Teshuvah. Whilst one would be forgiven to reason that Teshuvah should be an easy process, it appears to be a process we find difficult to complete. Needless to say, if there is need to return [Teshuvah] then we must be travelling in a wrong direction. As far as the “Two Houses” are concerned I believe it is fair to say we need to return to becoming one whole House under the instructions and directions of HaShem. This entails biblical Teshuvah! Engaging in Teshuvah may be difficult but it is truly soothing for the soul. Not only that but it is very pleasing to HaShem, the Holy One of Israel, blessed be He. When undergoing Teshuvah, it is very advisable to be honest before HaShem. You have absolutely nothing to lose, but everything to gain by honesty before HaShem. You may be able to fool others, even yourself, but you will never ever fool HaShem. It is best to lay all before Him. Both Houses have enough issues that qualify for the need to do Teshuvah. We have a need to return to the ways of our Father.

We should follow the lead of King David when he was confronted by the prophet Nathan. King David had committed a sin with Bathsheba and when confronted by Nathan had to make a decision as to his response. It is intriguing to note that in the Hebrew text there is a gap before King David confesses his sin. Rabbi Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman Kremer [who was called the Vilna Gaon; as he was born in Vilna 1721] explained that the reason for the gap was due to a moment of silence before David admitted to his sin as he was undergoing an inner struggle after his confrontation with Nathan. He had to decide whether to justify his actions or seek forgiveness from HaShem for his sin.

I am persuaded that the Houses of Israel are in a similar position, as each has committed the sin of adultery, by having relationships with others over HaShem. I realise this is a big accusation, but the evidence is stacked up against us. If we were following our Master, as we have been commanded and ordained to do, then we would all be living in Eretz Yisrael under the protective wings of HaShem.

This is a plea to ‘family members’ of Israel, to take a moment and decide on your response to our present situation. Do you/we justify our past and present actions and risk the wrath of HaShem, or do we respond as David and say, *“I have sinned against HaShem.”* I strongly suggest we do as the Torah tells us regarding our sins, and that is confess and repent. If we want to receive a blessing from HaShem then we need to be obedient children. If we want the strife between the family members to evaporate, then we need to be obedient to the instructions of our Father. If we want protection from our enemies then we need to be obedient to our Fathers instructions. If we want to dwell in the Promised Land then we have no choice but to confess our sin, and return to the Father, following the footsteps of our Moshiach Yeshua.

At this time of the year as we finish the last Parashah there is much talk about new beginnings etc. There is celebration in the fact we have read and studied the Torah for another year and we look forward to repeating the action. Yet do we want to repeat our actions? Yes we need to read and study the Torah, but do we want to continue with the same actions that have kept us out of the Promised Land and had us commit adulterous acts with others? No, our actions must change. Our behaviour needs to commit to the instructions as outlined in the Torah. Somehow we must have a “re-birth” from above, as all good

things come from above. There is a process whereby we can begin the “re-birth” experience. The outlines below are very basic but I pray they may stimulate us to rethink our present positions.

Firstly we need to acknowledge that we are in a position of hopelessness, unless we change. We are in this position due to our rebellion and sin. This rebellion and sin constitutes our rejection of Biblical Torah, in favour of our own rules and regulations, often embracing other gods and deities. We must see our true position as a “bride” and as such be willing to undergo the obligations of biblical love. We must follow in the footsteps of the Master, waiting with anticipation for His beloved instructions, instructions if followed that forge a covenant that cannot and will not be broken. We must embrace the Moshiach of our nation Israel, [whom we at JSI believe to be Yeshua], and walk in His footsteps, footsteps that pave the way back to the Father via the pathway of Torah. It is only the Living Word that can change our hearts into becoming fully circumcised. It is HaMoshiach Yeshua Who has given us the perfect example of how to allow our hearts to be circumcised. His love for the Father was and is perfect. He followed the Father’s instructions with full obedience. His death was the result of unconditional love. This love was on display for all to see and witness through His resolve in following the Father’s instructions at all costs. Without LOVE [Complete devotion to another] firstly for HaShem, for Torah, for HaMoshiach, for Eretz Yisrael and for one another, we will never achieve reconciliation. This love must be a love that has a biblical foundation, based on the instructions and example shown by HaShem and Moshiach Yeshua. This is a love the “world” cannot understand or grasp. It is a love reserved for the Citizens of Biblical Israel. It is a love that can only be fully experienced in the Promised Land. It is a love that stems from the mercy and grace of our heavenly Father.

For reconciliation between the House of Judah and the House of Ephraim to take place, both Houses must understand biblical love. To understand biblical love, we need to understand the biblical love story between HaShem and Israel. I am hoping those reading these articles have some understanding of this, as there is no hope without such love.

I finish on the following.

“May HaShem bless you and safe guard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem turn His countenance to you and establish for you peace” Numbers 6:24-26

We serve a wonderful God, as there is no God like the God of Israel, and no nation like the nation of Israel, and no land like Eretz Yisrael.

Blessings to all citizens of biblical Israel,
Rabbi Philip Hammond.