

Notes: January 18, 2020

Start: 10 AM

**Order of service:**

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Jeri - Drash
8. Praise and Worship Songs
9. Message
10. Aaronic Blessing
11. Kiddush
12. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: Revealing The Mission – Part 1

Over the past two Shabbats I have shared with you your purpose as believers. You are to be messengers and when required warriors.

In addition, I conveyed to you, being the work of the Potter, an image and likeness of the Potter and as such, possessing the qualities of the Creator.

In establishing who you are and what your mission is, it is time to unpack the details of that mission. To start with I will reveal the first aspect of this mission and next Shabbat will expand and share the second aspect.

The primary passage of Scripture comes from Yechezk'el (Ezekiel)

Yechezk'el (Ezekiel) ministers for twenty-two years, during the most stressful time of the Babylonian invasions and deportations of Y'hudah (Judah). God uses Ashur (Assyria) and Bavel (Babylon) as instruments of his judgment against the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, respectively (see the "Introduction to Isaiah"). In Bavel's second invasion (598–597 b.c.e.), N'vukhadretzar takes ten thousand prisoners—including Yechezk'el—and treasures from the Temple in Yerushalayim to Bavel. Five years after deportation (593 b.c.e.), Yechezk'el receives his call from God, just five years before N'vukhadretzar's final assault on Yerushalayim. Although Yechezk'el's ministry is directed to the exiles, his prophecies concern events continuing to take place in Yerushalayim.

Imagine if you were called by God after the travesty. It would like being called in the midst of the Holocaust. The only difference here is one was orchestrated by the Adversary while one was orchestrated by Adonai. The captivity was a judgment imposed by Adonai whereby he calls Ezekiel, his messenger, with the mission of reassuring His people of the reasons why they are where they are.

**Eze 3:1** He said to me, "Human being, eat what you see in front of you; eat this scroll. Then go and speak to the house of Isra'el."

**Eze 3:2** So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat,

**Eze 3:3** as he said, "Human being, eat this scroll I am giving you; fill your insides with it." When I ate it, it tasted as sweet as honey.

The scroll...represents the Word of Adonai, tasting as sweet as honey...is the means by which the nation will be able to return. It is through rebellion, disobedience that both Kingdoms were taken away. One of the two will be restored...but with warnings, against a repeat of what has already transpired.

**Eze 3:4** "Human being," he said to me, "go to the house of Isra'el, and speak my words to them.

**Eze 3:5** For you are not being sent to a people with a difficult language and unintelligible speech, but to the house of Isra'el —

**Eze 3:6** not to many peoples with difficult languages and unintelligible speech, whose words you can't understand when you hear them. Without doubt, if I sent you to them, they would listen to you.

Ezekiel is not being sent to the nations with foreign tongues. He isn't going to a place where they will have difficulty understanding him or even the message he is sharing.

**Eze 3:7** But the house of Isra'el will not be willing to listen to you, because they aren't willing to listen to me; since all the house of Isra'el are obstinate and hardhearted.

Ezekiel is being called to his own people. They will have no problem understanding what he is saying, yet will they understand what he is saying?

He is being told up front. The mission I have given you will be more than challenging. Adonai is saying to him they won't listen to you. They won't listen to you because they haven't listened to Me. How would you like to take on that mission, knowing in advance the message you are bringing from the one who has sent you will fall upon deaf ears, ignored or even subordinated for the wisdom of the people's leaders.

**Eze 3:8** However, I am making you as defiant and obstinate as they are.

**Eze 3:9** Yes, I am making your resoluteness harder than flint, as hard as a diamond. So don't be afraid of them or depressed by how they look at you, because they are a rebellious house."

**Eze 3:10** Then he said to me, "Human being, receive in your heart and hear with your ears all my words that I speak to you.

**Eze 3:11** Then go to the exiles, to your countrymen; and speak to them. Tell them, 'Here is what Adonai Elohim, says,' whether they listen or not."

I share this with you because of my interaction with the Jewish Community Alliance this past week in response to my seeking to rent space for an upcoming presentation for Passover.

Their initial response to me was "Space at the JCA will not be available for the program you propose."

To which I interpreted as regardless of space being available, under no circumstances would we be afforded the accommodation of rental.

To which my response was rather lengthy and conveyed the drawing of lines.

Before responding, I revisited the JCA calendar to confirm there were no new events scheduled for the date I had requested. As of today, the calendar has not changed. So, as I have absorbed the words of your email - "Space at the

JCA will not be available for the program you propose." appears to be rather clear that we are being denied access, regardless of availability in that we did not specify the room capacity needed.

I find it interesting at the line you have drawn. I will address where the line is being drawn in a moment. For now, I would like to address the fact that you are drawing a line with a member of the JCA. We (My wife and I) joined the JCA at the end of July 2019, for which were conveyed aspects of membership that included the privilege of renting space in the facility. And yet, as members, we are being denied this privilege. **The Jewish Community Alliance has chosen to discriminate against one of its own members.** Rights afforded to other members yet denied to a specific member is discrimination plain and simple.

The line...

Now, on to the matter of where the line has been drawn. Our request to rent space is to hold an event based on sharing more about Passover, a very prominent aspect of Jewish life and culture. A time so profound that each year we open the door for Eliyahu ha Navi with the hope and expectation of Mashiach and our closing proclamation "Next Year in Jerusalem" conveying if not this year then next year it will happen. Our message is to the Jewish community, not to "convert them into christians" for which we are accused of being a church. NO!!! Our purpose and intent is to convey the Jewish hope of Passover to anyone interested, Jew and non-Jew. Just because we don't fit into the mold of today's defining categories (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox) doesn't mean we are any less a Jewish synagogue. I am no less Jewish than anyone else in the Jewish community, even after having accepted that Yeshua is Mashiach. Our intent for joining the JCA was (and is) to be part of this community. Whether accepted or not, does not change our intent or who we are. Regardless of how we are defined by others.

So, back to the line drawn by you. A denial of a time so inherently Jewish in contrast to an event that smacks Adonai in the face of rebellion. I am speaking to your recent event on January 11th "Sparkle Havdalah - A Drag Queen Story Hour". How is this even remotely promoting Jewish lifestyle? As a people, we are defined and set apart by Adonai through Torah. This event neither elevates Jewish lifestyle or conveys glory to Adonai. When Torah conveys...

Deu 22:5 "A woman is not to wear men's clothing, and a man is not to put on women's clothing, for whoever does these things is detestable to Adonai your God.

This event flies directly in the face of all things Jewish. I don't know what was a more disturbing representation from the Jewish community, this event or the apathy of the Rabbi's I had contacted months prior regarding the support of the JCA for such an event and in direct contrast to what Torah prescribes. My response from them...silence. Based on their non-response, which was the greater catalyst for not responding? Their objection to whom was raising the issue or that they truly see no problem with the event. If it was the latter, then they are doing an enormous disservice to the Jewish community as teachers of Torah.

There was a second event that I addressed as well, occurring in June...

Not to outdo yourself, but the event scheduled for June 18th - "The Soul of a Stranger - Reading God and Torah from a "Transgender Perspective" is crossing a line that is equally offensive and like the previous event not even remotely supported by Torah.

Including Scripture as part of my response...

Deuteronomy 6:4 – 12

And the following response prior to including Isaiah 29:9 – 14 - It appears that the message of the Prophets spoken to our ancestors has fallen upon deaf ears. You proclaim T'shuvah on Yom Kippur yet there has been no transformation. The culture of today has consumed the Jewish Community just as the nations had consumed Isra'el, leading them away from Adonai and into a position similar to that of Ari'el...

Isa 29:9 If you make yourselves stupid, you will stay stupid! If you blind yourselves, you will stay blind! You are

drunk, but not from wine; you are staggering, but not from strong liquor.

Isa 29:10 For Adonai has poured over you a spirit of lethargy; he has closed your eyes (that is, the prophets) and covered your heads (that is, the seers).

Isa 29:11 For you this whole prophetic vision has become like the message in a sealed-up scroll. When one gives it to someone who can read and says, "Please read this," he answers, "I can't, because it's sealed."

Isa 29:12 If the scroll is given to someone who can't read with the request, "Please read this," he says, "I can't read."

Isa 29:13 Then Adonai said: **"Because these people approach me with empty words, and the honor they bestow on me is mere lip-service; while in fact they have distanced their hearts from me, and their 'fear of me' is just a mitzvah of human origin —**

**Isa 29:14 therefore, I will have to keep shocking these people with astounding and amazing things, until the 'wisdom' of their 'wise ones' vanishes, and the 'discernment' of their 'discerning ones' is hidden away."**

After this lengthy response I received the following...

I don't want to waste your time reviewing discussions you have already had; I know that you have spent significant time with Jewish communal leaders locally on this issue, and that you are aware of national and international Jewish organizational commitments and perspectives regarding the relationship between Jewish organizations and those that proselytize. As a JCC and Federation, the JCA explores opportunities for interfaith interaction exclusively with organizations that do not engage in proselytizing Jews.

My response generated the following response from the Executive Director of the JCA...

I don't want to waste your time reviewing discussions you have already had; I know that you have spent significant time with Jewish communal leaders locally on this issue, and that you are aware of national and international Jewish organizational commitments and perspectives regarding the relationship between Jewish organizations and those that proselytize. As a JCC and Federation, the JCA explores opportunities for interfaith interaction exclusively with organizations that do not engage in proselytizing Jews.

Your feedback regarding our programming has been received and will be shared with our programming committee. The "Sparkle Havdalah" event was co-sponsored by Congregation Bet Ha'am and Temple Beth El. Professor Joy Ladin, who will speak at the J in the spring, is the first openly transgender professor at an Orthodox institution (Yeshiva University). It is said that Torah has 70 faces, and the JCA is a place where we explore and celebrate many different aspects of our tradition and contemporary Jewish practices.

Anyone who studies from a Rabbinic Bible, such as the *Mikraot Gedolot*, is struck by the number of different commentaries surrounding the few lines of biblical text on each page. Most religions that possess a sacred scripture have editions with a commentary attached. Sometimes they have two commentaries, but I am aware of no other religion that has editions of scripture surrounded by five to ten or more different commentaries. All of this traces back to a verse in the Book of Psalms: *One thing God has spoken; two things have I heard* (Ps. 62:12) and its gloss in the Talmud, "One biblical verse may convey several teachings . . . In R. Ishmael's School it was taught: *And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces* (Jer. 23:29), i.e., just as [the rock] is split into many splinters, so also may one biblical verse convey many teachings" (TB *Sanhedrin* 34a).

**In other words, multiple interpretations of each verse of Scripture can be correct, even if they contradict one another.**

The term for this concept of pluralistic interpretation is *Shivim panim la-Torah* (each verse of Torah has 70 different faces/facets).

This concept is new to me in that during my 53 years of life I have never been confronted with such a concept.

Imagine this – multiple interpretations can be correct, even if they contradict one another.

Here is the history of this concept...

The earliest source for the term *Shivim panim la-Torah* is Numbers Rabbah 13:15-16, customarily dated to the twelfth century. The concept, though not the exact wording, also appears in another post-talmudic midrash, *Otiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva*, as *Torah nilmedah be-shiv'im panim* – "Torah is learned through 70 faces/facets." The term was used by the rationalist Abraham Ibn Ezra (d. 1167) in the introduction to his Torah commentary, and a century later by the mystic Nahmanides (d. 1270) in his commentary on Genesis 8:4.

This concept was used both by rationalist and mystical Torah exegetes indicates how fundamental it is to understanding the meaning of Divine revelation. The figure 70 is used in rabbinic literature to indicate a large number, e.g., seventy nations or seventy languages, and here too it reflects the idea that there are many different ways to interpret a biblical verse.

Here is the example the author conveys regarding this multiple interpretation perspective whereby all can be right even if they contradict. Genesis 1:31 is the example used.

For example, *God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good* (Gen. 1:31) has more than a dozen interpretations in classical rabbinic literature. The main question regarding this verse is that on the other days of Creation, God saw that what He made was "good"; only on the sixth day is the term "very good" used. What did God create on the sixth day that was so special as to make that day *very good*? I will categorize some of the classical interpretations in three groups, adding some of my own as well. Most of these interpretations are taken from Genesis Rabbah chapter 9, a collection of glosses on the phrase "very good."

I am going to go out on a limb here and state that the perspectives embraced do not include that of our perspective. So a passage such as Isaiah 53 and our understanding of it pointing to Yeshua would not be accepted. Yet, for such aspects in today's Jewish community, such a mindset used to support divergent and antithetical in relation to Torah is most dangerous.

Their response concluded with the following...

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Our Challenges as a congregation....