



PURIM CONSEQUENCES & OPPOSITION

By Moshe Morrison

The biblical feast of Purim, commanded in the book of Esther, is celebrated this year on March 15th and 16th. There are many facets of the story that could be emphasized, but if we ask the Lord He will pinpoint not only that which is universal but that which is pertinent to each of our lives as well.

I became very familiar with Purim while writing and performing multiple Purim dramas over the years as part of congregational celebrations. This year, as I have sought to see the story with fresh eyes, I am drawn to the issue of *consequences*. There are circumstances which require us to take some sort of action, and there are often *consequences* if we fail to take that action.

In the story of Esther, the existence of the Jewish people (dispersed in Babylon and Persia) was threatened because of the hatred and arrogance of *one man*. This man, *Haman*, was only alive as a *consequence* of the failure of Israel's king to do what God had commanded many years before. Allow me to explain.

King Saul failed to obey God when he did not kill *Agag* of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). Haman was a descendant of *Agag* (Esther 3:1). Therefore Haman's plot to destroy the remnant of Israel was a *consequence* of King Saul's disobedience.

Opposition in Every Generation

We may ask whether or not another Amalekite would have arisen to threaten God's people even if Saul *had* killed *Agag*. The answer is: if it had not been him or another Amalekite it would have been *someone else*. Israel has never lacked for enemies. The Passover liturgy says, "It is this that has stood by our ancestors and us: **It is not only one that has risen up against us to destroy us; rather, in every generation, they rise against us to annihilate us. But the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand.**" Inevitably there will always be opposition to those who belong to God and are called to be His representatives here on earth, especially in Israel. As the old Yiddish proverb goes, "If God lived on earth people would throw rocks at His windows." Or as Yeshua put it, "**If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you**" (John 15:18-19). It seems that these dynamics will continue - because of the conflict existing since the fall of Satan - until the restoration of all things in the coming kingdom.

Even in the midst of opposition, like Esther and Mordechai, we are all called to do what is right and stand against evil regardless of its source. We stand by the grace of God that is given to us. Their stand led to a great triumph. Ours can too.

"And Mordecai told them to answer Esther: 'Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews. For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?'" (Esther 4:13,14) ✨

TENTS OF MERCY NETWORK

The lake was serene. Water slowly lapped against the gently rocking boat. Sun-rays streamed down, warming us in their Mediterranean glow. Only an occasional cool breeze reminded us that it was still winter. Sea gulls lazily flirted with the wind, drawing our eyes to the lovely shoreline. It was hard to imagine that same placid “sea,” raging in storm; yet it does. The Sea of Galilee can be calm and benign or wild and occasionally dangerous. Yeshua calmed this same sea with just a word. He also guided Simon Peter to throw his net on the other side of the boat, bringing *abundance and provision* where there had been nothing.

We were fifty couples on the boat that day, enjoying the afternoon activity as part of the Tents of Mercy Network Marriage Retreat. This event, drawing participants from all five network congregations, was the first of its kind. After a morning of teaching and exhortation about marriage and the roles of men and women from a Biblical perspective, the ride on the boat was a highlight and an apt metaphor for the teaching matter.

Marriage can be calm and comforting. It can also be stormy and dangerous. Yeshua is the one we should look to when the storm rages (and even when it doesn't).

Marriage can also be compared to a fishing net that comes up feeling empty. Sometimes we work hard trying to get what we need, but we are doing it the wrong way - like Simon Peter who fished all night but caught nothing. As we seek God's wisdom and learn from one another - we will be able to gather new *abundance and provision* in our marriages.

Testimonies from participants:

“Couples were challenged to talk with each other about things that they had been afraid of talking about. We had an opportunity to take a close look at our marriage - to repair things, to see how we could renew and bring variety into our marriage. The initial falling in love phase was really cool, but after passing through some time of marriage relationship it was clear that we needed some new perspective. I guess this is true both for us, who have only been married for a year or two, and also for those who have already “clocked in” many decades.”
(Newlyweds)

“We learned new things about how to be transformed. It will now take time to apply it all.

Even if it is hard, we need to do good to our spouse. Even if it is tough, we need to succeed in overcoming our weaknesses and self-centeredness. One of the “biggies” for me is patience with my wife and children. It was also a great feeling to be together with other believers and know that you can talk about anything together, especially something of such significant and spiritual content.”
(Married a decade)

“I wish we had been able to be part of an event like this a few decades ago. The conference had a very encouraging atmosphere - both the seminars and the free time which we used to help build and deepen our marriage relationships.”
(Married over 30 years)

“Particularly for the Russian speaking participants - it seems to be hard to find time in our weekly schedule between work and kids, to devote to building the marriage relationship. Here we all had the opportunity to devote time to this. The teaching was healthy and effective in a variety of different areas - marriage relationship, children and intimate relations. Many couples had questions answered that they had been grappling with in various areas. Things came up that we had forgotten or had become taboo, and suddenly we were able to put them out in plain view in our relationship together as husband and wife.”
(Married almost 15 years)

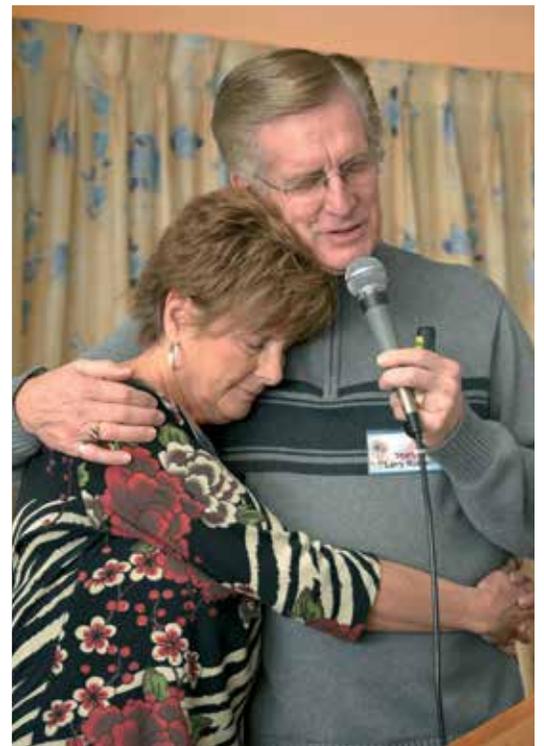
“The idea for this marriage retreat had been incubating in our hearts for a long time. We are so blessed that by God's grace we were able to conduct such a meaningful weekend for the couples that came. We are especially appreciative to our guest speakers Larry and Lorrie Russell of Shepherd's Heart Ministry, who brought a fresh and simple, Biblically sound, but practically applicable message. It is our prayer that this will turn into an annual event, bringing change and renewal to strengthen the couples and families of our communities!”
(One of the leadership couples) ✨

MARRIAGE RETREAT

By Hannah



Collage of wedding photographs of participants





Return to Zion Messianic Congregation and Ministry Center

Restoring faith in Yeshua in Israel in our days

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Tents of Mercy Network

LOVE, HOPE AND FAITH

By Leon Mazin

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, *Rav Shaul* (Apostle Paul) describes the true meaning of love. In thirteen short verses, he sets a whole new standard for real love. This “love letter” was sent to the church in Corinth, which consisted of Jewish believers in Yeshua from Corinth, Ephesus and the surrounding regions, as well as Gentiles who were drawn to faith through God’s signs and wonders.

LOVE

Rav Shaul’s perspective on true love is a far cry from what Hollywood movies portray. It is sacrificial, for the benefit of one’s fellow man. The kind of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13 does not come naturally to man’s carnal nature. At the same time that we tend to complain about our *own* circumstances, we have a tendency to overlook the misfortune of *others*. If we see someone else suffering, we may even console ourselves and think, “I’m not doing so badly after all,” rather than help the brother in his distress. These attitudes are not of God; they are based on a humanistic viewpoint.

The Apostle *Shaul’s* words strongly contradict our carnal understanding of love. He wants us to experience a love that does not seek its own benefit, but rather sacrifices for the sake of others. Humanly speaking we cannot attain such love. Yet with God’s help, it is possible to show love and mercy to others. In God’s eyes, the power of such love surpasses the power of miracles, charisma and supernatural wonders.

HOPE

How can we understand the full meaning of hope? Seeking the deeper meaning of the word “hope” strangely led me to study the history of one of Israel’s towns—not Jerusalem or Tel Aviv, but *Petach Tikvah* (“Doorway of Hope”).

Petach Tikvah was established in 1878 by a handful of religious Zionists from Europe. Life on the small *moshav* (cooperative agricultural community) was extremely challenging—the residents were afflicted by sickness and surrounded by hostile enemies under the rule of the Muslim Ottoman Empire. In spite of hardships, they gave their newly established village a symbolic name which spoke of their hope for a brighter future. The community established an agricultural school, created industrial institutions, and helped pave the way for the Israeli Defense Force.

With God’s help, the humble beginnings of Petach Tikvah greatly influenced and inspired future Israeli cities. Though many of them didn’t have a strong faith in God, they hoped for a better future, oriented themselves towards that goal, and God Himself blessed their efforts. **“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment?”** (Isaiah 66:8a)



Early settlers in Petach Tikvah - “Doorway of Hope”

We, as Messianic Jews in modern Israel, are often viewed as pioneers as well. The foundations we are building are spiritual. The small things we are constructing will be needed when **“all Israel shall be saved.”** The foundations the pioneers of Petach Tikvah built some 130 years ago still stand today as a firm infrastructure in modern Israel. The foundations that we as Messianic believers are building are spiritual, educational and social. Our efforts may seem meager, but we have hope that one day our service will grow into its full capacity, and as believers in Yeshua we will shout, **“Baruch Haba B’shem Adonai”** (Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord).

FAITH

I don’t believe faith amounts to standing in front of a mirror and repeating to one’s self, “I am strong, I am strong...” or saying to someone, “Be healed, be healed...” This can be the case if God instructs a person to do so, but in most cases faith is receiving our daily encouragement from the Word of God and working towards things that we have been hoping for, regardless of opposition (Hebrews 11:1).

Our faith is based on the *Tanach* (Old Testament) and the *Brit Hadasha* (New Testament), which encourages our Messianic community to share the Good News of Yeshua with our fellow Jews. It inspires us to reveal the true face of Yeshua to His people, even in times of opposition. We seek to reach the “Jew first,” as did the early apostles, *through His love, hope and faith.* ✨

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Our Vision:

Tents of Mercy - to participate in today’s historic exodus by assisting Israel’s returning exiles.

No spectators in the Kingdom - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

Come back Yeshua - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.