

Your Way? God's Way? Your Choice!

The one major issue which puzzles me greatly is how believers express their reliance on Adonai Elohim and then go about their lives doing things their way and not God's way. Invariably, when asked why and how they got themselves in some forms of mess, their response is, I don't know; I thought I was following God's plan. Case in point: a pastor of a medium-sized congregation in the United States, preached to his flock the coming of Messiah in December, 2012. He was so convincing, many of his congregation sold their belongings, including their homes, and settled themselves in a secure, isolated area in Nevada, waiting for the inevitable destruction of the earth. They waited until the end of December, 2012 and finally realized the full cost of their decision to follow the plans of their pastor. The newspapers of the time recorded a few committed suicide, when they realized how foolish they had been.

Reading this week's parashah, I wonder how Moshe ever put up with his people. There was so much complaining, as they made their way across the wilderness, and nothing God or Moshe did seemed to please either the Israelites or the Mixed Multitude. The final straw, it seems, brought their rebellion to a new low or high, depending on your perspective, when they demanded and received permission to send spies into Cana'an, prior to crossing the Jordan. We know what happened, when the spies returned.

No wonder Adonai Elohim called the Israelites a hard-hearted and stiff-necked people. Listen to His decision to deal with them, when they were about to stone Moses, Aharon and Joshua, *How much longer is this people going to treat me with contempt? How much longer will they not trust me, especially considering all the signs I have performed among them? I am going to strike them with sickness,*

destroy them and make from you a nation greater and stronger than they are.

(Numbers 14:11,12) Only Moshe's intervention saved them from annihilation.

And then, what did they do? Ignoring Adonai's command to carry on into the wilderness and not cross the Jordan River, an army of Israelites and the mixed multitude defied God and attempted to make things right by invading the land they would eventually conquer. What were they thinking? Like most of us who follow our own plans, I suspect they believed they could show the Ruler of the universe they could reverse the sin they committed by committing another. Isn't that a typical human approach?

Why is it we often fear following God's plans for our lives? One possible explanation lies in the direction our civilization has been heading for the past fifty years; we have become a people who is so used to instant gratification, that is getting things we want, when we want them, we have lost the ability to wait for God's plan to unfold. This impatience or intolerance for waiting leads us to trusting our own ways of doing things, rather than God's. When did we lose the understanding God doesn't jump to our timetable?

Unfortunately, as a result of the push in the 80s and early 90s for parents to be 'friends' with their children, many families developed a very interesting dynamic. We are seeing the results of that skewed family configuration today, where many of the families decisions are made by the children, based on their 'wants', rather than the family's needs. The dangerous aspect of this push for 'children's rights' emerges quite clearly, as we are witnessing parents who are afraid to discipline their children. Most of this fear is not physical, although some aspect of that exists; the vast amount of fear is emotional, wherein mothers and fathers are afraid to appropriately discipline their children for fear they will stop

loving them and stop being their friends, leading to the devastating aspect of rejection. Thus many parents have abandoned their role as parents, putting aside Adonai's call for their roles as leaders and allowing the enemy to work through their children. How sad – how devastating this is for our society. The impact of parents abrogating their responsibilities is and will be several generations of adults who will be unable to meet the challenges and struggles put before them in order to build resilience, stamina and emotional strength. In other words, we will see many generations of either insecure, fragile and vulnerable victims or generations of physical, emotional or psychological bullies. Today's Facebook generation is adequate testament to both these. It is important to realize God's word to us in Exodus 34, *causing the negative effects of the parents' offenses to be experienced by their children and grandchildren, and even by the third and fourth generations.* (Exodus 34:7) Well based sociological research has shown the behaviours of parents, if not checked, will create cycles of similar behaviours within their children. Only when the children consciously break the cycle of dysfunctional behaviour, will the curse be lifted.

It is sad many parents have not accepted Adonai's plan for parenthood, as found in Proverbs. For example, in Proverbs 13 we read, *A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren.* (Proverbs 13:22) The inheritance left by a good man for his children and, hence, his grandchildren, is not wealth as the world knows it but strong character, rich in integrity, resilience, emotional stamina and the knowledge of Adonai's word in their hearts.

Proverbs 22 contains an often misunderstood message. Reading this piece of wisdom at the literal level we find, *Train a child in the way he [should] go; and, even when old, he will not swerve from it.* (Proverbs 22:6) On the surface, this

passage is often written as, train a child to be Tzadik, righteous, and he will remain Tzadik, righteous, all his life. Although to some extent this is a truth, there is another message, a deeper message, which deals with how the child is to be trained and is to be found in the phrase, *in the way he [should] go*. Adonai Elohim knows about free will and knows what will motivate His children to learn effectively. It was God who created learning and motivation styles and He also created learning modes; tapping into these understandings will allow a child to be directed into a way of being righteous which is not onerous, boring nor does it lead to rebellion. Forcing a child to be what Adonai did not make him to be will result in rebellion and rejection. And we are seeing the fruits of that today.

The advice for parents in Proverbs 22 is complemented in Proverbs 13. Listen to this message, *He who fails to use a stick hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.* (Proverbs 13:24) The stick, to which this passage is referring, is a shepherd's staff. Look at the example on the screen and you will see how this creates a metaphor for parenting. The long part of the staff is used to guide the sheep along a path or in a particular direction, while the crook in the staff will turn the sheep from a dangerous path. Parenting is very much like this. Parents are to guide and counsel their children along the right path, the path Adonai has chosen for them? How do we know what that path is? When children respond well to the direction being given by their parents, they are on the right path. If they do not respond well and parents are sincerely confident they are leading and guiding, not cajoling and coercing, their children, then they must provide discipline to change the direction their children are going. Here it is vital for parents to be tuned to the leadership of the Holy Spirit, who will, in turn, lead

and guide parents on their path. What does not work is bullying or bribing children, two extremes often used by frustrated or incompetent parents.

Now, what of the plans of adults? Proverbs 19 clearly states, *One can devise many plans in one's mind, but ADONAI's plan will prevail.* (Proverbs 19:21) Adonai Elohim knew from before the beginning of time there was a plan for all of human kind and for each of us; clearly, Rav Sha'ul realized this, when he wrote, in Ephesians 1, *In the Messiah he chose us in love before the creation of the universe to be holy and without defect in his presence.* (Ephesians 1:4) and in 1 Timothy 1, *Have them stop devoting their attention to myths and never-ending genealogies; these divert people to speculating instead of doing God's work, which requires trust.* (1 Timothy 1:4) When He chose us, in Love, Abba had a very clear purpose for all of us, that being to be kadosh, holy, set-apart for Him to show others what it means to be Adonai's children. And, being God's children, we are to keep our focus on Him, trusting Him to show us, in His time, what He wishes us to do for Him.

God's plans for His children, you and I, are everlasting. This is reinforced in Scripture many times, for example, in Psalm 33 we read, *ADONAI brings to nothing the plans of nations, He foils the plans of the peoples. But the counsel of ADONAI stands forever, His heart's plans are for all generations.* (Psalm 33:10,11) When have we seen the plans of man last for as long as Adonai's plans for His people?

Rav Sha'ul has shared with us in Ephesians 1, the first level of God's plan for us: *In the Messiah he chose us in love before the creation of the universe to be holy and without defect in his presence.* (Ephesians 1:4) At the surface level, this

passage has a clear meaning – no one with a physical or psychological defect may be in the presence of Adonai. However, if we read this only at the literal level, then we would be interpreting in a very narrow and possibly pejorative way. We, believers in Adonai Yeshua, have been set-apart for service to Him. As we are believers, we are no longer sinners, thus without defect. As we know, sinners may not be in the presence of Adonai Elohim, thus we believers have been brought into His presence and have been given our marching orders to share our faith through our actions and through our interactions, with everyone we meet. This is our primary call. This is His primary plan for us!

A friend of mine recently sent me the following cartoon. Doesn't this speak volumes of our trust? In order for me to rely on Adonai's plans for my life, I must trust Him. We've spoken of trust many times in Kehilah Haverim Mashiach and, yet, time and time again in individual conversation with many of you, I only hear of trusting either ourselves or other human beings, not God. I'm beginning to think trusting in God is something like a flag waving at a football game – only when there is a crisis or challenge is trusting God brought out for display, and then when the challenge is over, the flag. i.e. trust, is put back into the storage locker. Is this really how we want to trust our supreme King and the Lover of our Souls? Trust for me is a commodity which develops slowly; however, when I finally realize I am being loved unconditionally, then my trust is given freely.

Yochanan, the Apostle John, spoke of this in his first epistle, chapter 4, when he wrote, *here is no fear in love. On the contrary, love that has achieved its goal gets rid of fear, because fear has to do with punishment; the person who keeps fearing has not been brought to maturity in regard to love.* (1 John 4:18) Research has clearly shown people are unable to trust because they fear. Fear and trust

cannot co-exist. When we experience unconditional love from Adonai Elohim, we are set free to trust unconditionally and to never again fear, no matter what the circumstances facing us. When we rely on our own plans, we are led down an ingenuous path, leading to disaster, as we read in Proverbs 14, *There can be a way which seems right to a person, but at its end are the ways of death.* (Proverbs 14:12) Frankly, I am baffled with people, mainly by believers, who from pride, arrogance or whatever reason, prefer to trust themselves than to trust God, even though they profess trust in Him! Their words are contradicted by their actions. This, beloved, is the definition of hypocrisy.

Listen once more to Rav Sha'ul, as he writes in 1 Corinthians 1, *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, this same Messiah is God's power and God's wisdom! For God's "nonsense" is wiser than humanity's "wisdom." And God's "weakness" is stronger than humanity's "strength."* (1 Corinthians 1:24,25) How foolish of human beings to even contemplate our plans are greater than are God's. What this does show, very clearly, is our level of pride. Pride is the killer of faith, trust, love and grace within our lives.

I'm firmly convinced many believers are unaware they are rejecting Adonai's plans and superimposing theirs. Why would this be? Although many would not admit this even to themselves, there is still within our human natures the arrogance of supremacy. We have made decisions all our lives and nothing really, for the most part, has gone wrong. It is not until we mess up and one of our choices, small or large, leads us into trouble do we recognize we should have waited for God's timing. By then, of course, it is usually too late. If this happens time and time again, as it does with many professed believers, I wonder why they

don't get the message. How far down do they need to go before they let go of their own flawed egos and allow God to lead them?

Another fault, which impedes our allowing God to lead us, is impatience. As I mentioned earlier, we live in an ego-centric, instant gratification demanding world and if something doesn't happen, when we want it to happen, then we make it happen – hang the consequences.

There is a tension existing between man's decisiveness and God's unfolding plans. There are those amongst us who claim unless we make our decisions firmly and quickly, we are not making Godly use of the resources He gave us. I must admit this logic is appealing but it is flawed. To address this issue, let us go to Isaiah chapters 29 to 32. In these passages we find a divine strategy for creating plans ruled by God's hand, rather than ours.

First, we need to discover His plans for us. Isaiah 29 leads us to the following understanding: *Is the potter not better than the clay . . . ?* (Isaiah 29:16) Humility before Adonai is crucial when seeking His plan for our lives. If we demand His plans when we want them, we are anything but humble. We must come before Him in the appearance of a servant, in submission and humility, before He will share anything with us: *happy are all who wait for him.* (Isaiah 30:18)

Once He has shared a plan with us, we must accept it. This advice comes to us from Isaiah 30, *ADONAI is just waiting to show you favor, he will have pity on you from on high . . . With your ears you will hear a word from behind you: "This is the way; stay on it, whether you go to the right or the left." Then you will treat as unclean your silver-covered idols.* (Isaiah 30:18, 21, 22) Often His desires come to us in small voices of Ruach HaKadosh, the Holy Spirit of God, which, for the undiscerning, are indistinguishable from all the other voices rattling around in our

heads. If we have not earnestly been still and listened for His voice, how will we ever recognize it when it comes? The phrase, *Then you will treat as unclean your silver-covered idols*, refers to our plans and our desires, which, when hearing His, we will abandon.

Embedded within Isaiah 31 is the understanding we must see through the garbage thrown at us, designed by the enemy to draw us away from seeing His plans. What form might this garbage take? Let's look at verses 4 – 9: *As a lion or lion cub growls at its prey and isn't frightened away by the shouts of hordes of shepherds called out against him -- their voices do not upset him.* (Isaiah 39:4) Upon hearing God's plan for our lives, we must ignore all those who criticize us or find us foolish or who believe we are putting ourselves in danger. Chantal and I faced all of that, when we decided to heed His call for our lives and move here, to Winnipeg. This requires trust He is the best One to make decisions for our lives. There is a resolve in standing firm in His decisions which comes from Him and will bolster us, when facing opposition from those who do not believe.

Beloved, we must avoid the temptation to rush into decisions and create our own plans, instead of waiting for Adonai Elohim Tzivaot, the Ruler of the universe and the Lover of our souls, to set His plans before us. We must be still, waiting patiently for His call, which will come in His time and not ours. The Prophet Samuel waited thirteen years, several years after Adonai first spoke to Him. Adonai Yeshua waited thirty years before He began His ministry. Are we too proud to wait for His call, even though it might not come, when we expect or desire it to come to us? If you have an important decision to make, pray to the One who will guide you securely; pray authentically, with depth of heart, and wait patiently for Him to answer you. And He will answer you; however, He may test

your faith, your trust and wait until the last second before providing you with the direction He wants for you. Do you have that degree of strength?

Pray for strength of resolve, for humility and, most of all for patience, as we wait for His calls for our lives.