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## TIFERET – NETZACH -- ENDURING AND ETERNAL COMPASSION

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Our Father in heaven infuse us with your Spirit, the Spirit of truth and dynamic power. Give us a sound mind with rational thinking with love for our neighbor and self-control. Above all, help us to love you with all our heart, with all our soul, with our entire mind and with all our strength. Bless the speaking, bless the hearing and help us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Help us to humble ourselves under your righteous, almighty hand, so that when the time has come you will lift us up. This is the day that you have made and we will rejoice and be glad in it. Honor and praises to your most holy name for the all the blessings that you bestow upon us each day. We ask these things in the name of your son Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Today is the third day and fourth week of the Omer count which is the eighteenth day of the Omer count. The new moon was sighted in Jerusalem on April 30, so today is Iyar 3 and the second Hebrew calendar month. The fixed Hebrew calendar and the visually sighted new moon calendar just happen to coincide this month. We do go by the visual sighting of the new moon crescent in Jerusalem which is the way God's calendar is based and was based in ancient times. This is the same calendar Abraham, Moses, Christ and his apostles used. The Jews throughout history used the same calendar until 357 A.D. when Rabbi Hillel II changed it to a mathematically based calendar that approximates the new moons. That means it approximates the months by using the 19 year astronomical year time cycles, but not sighting the visual crescent of the new moons. God wants us to be accurate in observing his appointed times, not approximately on time. There is no excuse today for not observing the true calendar of God. The world has substituted various calendars including the Roman calendar, Chinese, ect. – whatever calendar they have chosen. Brethren, we need to get back to observing God in everything including his true calendar. God's word needs to be the foundation of our lives. Pretending is not going to bring salvation. Satan is the great pretender and the world is full of false prophets including Catholicism and Islam.

Jude, the brother of Christ, was inspired to write “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation. I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to fight for the faith—to contend earnestly for God's word—which was once for all delivered to the saints” through Christ himself, his Old Testament prophets and apostles. **2 Timothy 3:15-17**— Paul said, know this: “from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation *through faith which is in Christ Jesus*. **All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,**<sup>17</sup> **that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**” Righteousness is right living according to God's commandments. The purpose is so that the man who serves and belongs to God may become perfect and totally equipped and prepared for every good work to honor and glorify our heavenly Father.

We are already eighteen days of the Omer count and mediation schedule preparing ourselves for the total count of 49 days to Pentecost. We are almost half-way. A few years ago I down-loaded the Omer meditation from [Aish.com](http://Aish.com) from which I am reading. The first week we were working on the attribute of *Chesed* which is loving kindness. So many of us fall so far short in loving our neighbor. They have relationships in which they cannot get along. Just look at the nations of the world today fighting and squabbling with WW III already in the works. Today there is an economic struggle between China, America, Russia and Europe which I call phase I. It starts out with parcels and packages (trade) and winds up with bombs and bullets. It is only a matter of time. The days are getting very dangerous. The world does not know or care about the meaning of love. There is little to no love lost between these countries who are jockeying for the position of “top dog” and are headed for complete system failure.

The second week we were working on *Gevurah* which is justice and discipline—learning to control self and direct our personal strength and power based upon a foundation of LOVE. We must be strong in that love, so we can channel that love where it will be the most helpful and more like God’s love.

The third week, this week, we are working on *Tiferet* which is harmony/ compassion. Today we are examining and working on *Netzach* of *Tiferet*: Endurance in Compassion. It means peace, harmony, unity and compassion in love. Everybody has problems in the world today. You have problems. I have problems (*or maybe I don’t – I used to have problems; Cappy knows I don’t have any problems*). No, in truth she knows I do have problems. We all have problems brethren. We have to admit we do, and look into our own heart and say to ourselves, “Yes Lord, Almighty God in heaven, I have problems. I am weak and I am incomplete. I can’t get along with some people—and it is their fault, not my fault.” This is incorrect thinking. It is our fault. People who can’t get along have a problem with their outlook of lack of love and respect for other people.

I can’t change anybody. If a turtle is frightened or disturbed, he retreats back into his shell. None of us can change our neighbor, but we can all work on changing ourselves and pray to God for his help so we can overcome and be generous toward others. We are to develop a generous, outgoing spirit with compassion, concern and love—nobility in love. This is a week of concentration and development of compassionate love. Harmony means unity which means together, not all going separate ways but being together. People who do not remain in harmony because they can’t stand having certain people around them are headed toward the lake of fire, unless they come to their senses and repent and become humble. It is a choice we choose. We can choose to be defiant and choose to go to hell.

About forty-five years ago when I was a college student I gave a speech in Ambassador Club based on Elijah’s confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him. But the people answered him not a word.” Elijah said to the priests of Baal and all the multitude of people, Israelites and others assembled at the foot of the mountain: “I alone am left a prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men” (1 Kings 18:21-37). The prophets of Baal prepared the bull given them and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon saying, “O Baal, hear us!” But no one answered. They leaped about the altar they had made crying aloud and cut themselves as was their custom with

knives and lances until the blood gushed out on them until the time of the evening sacrifice. There still was no answer. Then Elijah called all the people to come near him. He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down, taking 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." He repaired the altar in the name of the Lord, made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. The wood was placed on the altar, the prepared bull for a burnt sacrifice, placed the pieces on top of the wood, had four water-pots of water poured on the wood and sacrifice three different times so the water ran all around the altar and filled the trench with water. Water does not burn, but puts out fires. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah said, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word."<sup>37</sup> Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are the Lord God, and that you have turned their hearts back to you again." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.<sup>39</sup> Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!"

**Joshua 24:15-26**—When Joshua returned from Canaan, he said: "if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, **choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve**, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people said, "The Lord our God we will serve and his voice we will obey!" Joshua replied, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him." Thus, my audience was challenged to "*choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. Serve the Lord or serve Baal and go to hell.*"

When in the Letter Answering Department, I received a half-page letter from Egypt from a Muslim, as far as I know it was the first one ever received. The question was, "Will Muslims go to hell?" My answer was basically, "Yes. Unless, they repent and worship the one true God they will go to hell." The most interesting letters of the week were given to the ministry to be read and shared during Friday night Bible study with the congregation. This letter was one of those sent to them. After reading it aloud, Garner Ted wondered what answer was given this man. So my boss, a dutiful loyal obedient servant sent my answer to Ted with his own written comment: "I have censored him." In the meantime, Dr. Zimmerman called me to his desk to tell me he had sent my answer to GTA who replied, "Did he get the point?" So he asked me, if I got the point and that I had been too direct and blunt even though I told it like it is. Allah is the moon god—a modern day equivalent of Molech of the Ammonites, not the one true God. What "religion" today is most political and blood thirsty commanding everyone has to convert or jihad and decapitates those who refuse. It is a false religion and it is not possible to coexist with it. God says fear Him. **Acts 4:10-12**—"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men (the name of Jesus Christ) by which we must be saved."

So I got into trouble for being truthful. That was par for the course in those days, because I was always getting into trouble for something I wrote or something I said, until God released me from captivity and I became free to publish the truth of God without stint or favor, crying aloud –

sparing not the truth. That is what I am trying to do today fearlessly with all my energy and strength, brethren. I'm walking through every door that has opened as long as God leads, guides, and directs and not holding back. **Luke 12:4-5**—"Christ said to his disciples, 'I say to you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. <sup>5</sup> But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, **fear Him!**' " The world is full of compromises, because the world has rejected God who is love. Just like in the days of Noah, the world is full of hatred and violence and men's hearts continually set on evil.

Use these days of the Omer count to evaluate, analyze and examine carefully faults and shortcomings on a one to one basis before God, and where we have problems, we need to repent and reconcile with our brother or sister in the love of Christ or we do not have the love of Christ. We are kidding ourselves if we do not repent. **Hebrews 12:28-29**—"Since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire." We dare not trample the blood of Christ under our feet. We should be willing to die for one another.

This week we are to examine the emotional attribute of **Tiferet**: Harmony, Compassion. It is a blending and bringing together in unity the free outpouring love of *Chesed* (loving kindness) with the quality of *Gevurah* (justice and discipline) to give you *Tiferet*. Tiferet blends and harmonizes the outpouring love of Chesed with the discipline of Gevurah. Tiferet possesses this power by introducing a third dimension — the dimension of truth, which is neither love nor discipline and therefore can integrate the two. Truth is accessed through selflessness: rising above your ego and your predispositions, enabling you to realize truth. This is getting rid of self-promotion. Truth gives you a clear and objective picture of yours and others' needs. This quality gives *Tiferet* its name, which means beauty: it blends the differing colors of love and discipline, and this harmony makes it beautiful. Truth isn't always pleasant. Sometimes it is unpalatable—something that you don't want to have to face. *Tiferet* in Hebrew means beauty—this blending together makes real compassion beautiful.

**Day 15 — Chesed of Tiferet: Loving-kindness in Compassion.** Examine the love aspect of compassion. Ask yourself: Is my compassion tender and loving or does it come across as pity? Is my sympathy condescending and patronizing? Even if my intention is otherwise, do others perceive it as such? Does my compassion overflow with love and warmth; is it expressed with enthusiasm, or is it static and lifeless?

**Day 16 — Gevurah of Tiferet: Discipline in Compassion.** For compassion to be effective and healthy it needs to be disciplined and focused. It requires discretion both to whom you express compassion, and in the measure of the compassion itself. It is recognizing when compassion should be expressed and when it should be withheld or limited. Discipline in compassion is knowing that being truly compassionate sometimes requires withholding compassion. Because compassion is not an expression of the bestower's needs but a response to the recipient's needs.

Some years ago, I wrote an article on overcoming alcoholism and mentioned the Twelve-step program which is a set of guiding principles outlining a course of action for recovery from addiction, compulsion or other behavioral problems. Since that time the method was then adapted and became the foundation of other twelve-step programs. The process involves the following:

- admitting that one cannot control one's addiction or compulsion;
- recognizing a higher power that can give strength;
- examining past errors with the help of a sponsor (experienced member);
- making amends for these errors;
- learning to live a new life with a new code of behavior;
- helping others who suffer from the same addictions or compulsions.

I interviewed the chairman of National Council on Alcoholism in Pasadena, California. Recovery is sought in several areas: physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. They teach *tough love* in dealing with an alcoholic husband, wife or child. You need to express what is called *tough love* and withhold from them certain things and not be an “enabler”. Tough love does not give in to their wishes that enable them to continue the behavior. Discipline and compassion has to be used in dealing with them.

**Day 17**, yesterday, we were to examine the emotional attribute of **Tiferet of Tiferet: Compassion in Compassion**. True compassion is limitless. It is giving from the heart generously. It is not an extension of your needs and defined by your *limited perspective*. Compassion for another is achieved by having a selfless attitude, rising above yourself and placing yourself in the other person's situation and experience. We are to be concerned about our brothers, sisters, neighbors and family with this limitless love and compassion. How would you act if you have been through what they have been through? Ask yourself am I prepared and able to do that? If not, why? Do I express and actualize the compassion and empathy in my heart? What blocks me from expressing it? Is my compassion compassionate or self-serving? Genuine love is not motivated by self and personal agendas. Is it compassion that comes out of guilt rather than genuine empathy? How does that affect and distort my compassion? We can be stubborn and stand in the way of admitting our own error. Test yourself by seeing if you express compassion even when you don't feel guilty.

Welcome to the “club”, I’ve been stomped on by the best, even though I could not understand it. But I put up with it and said to God, “I am your servant, I am in your hands. I pray this will pass, but if not—here I am. Do what you will with me.” In the Garden of Gethsemane Christ fell on His face and prayed, “O My Father, *if it is possible*, let this cup pass from me (all that death and crucifixion entailed); nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will (Matthew 36:29).” Just perhaps another way could be found to achieve bringing all these men and women into the kingdom of God, but if not possible it is **THY WILL BE DONE**. God knows what is right and has perfect compassion and loving kindness.

We must become that way. That is why we are doing the Omer count. I think the rabbis of the Jewish people have come to see the purpose behind the Omer count is the typology of Jewish

people coming out of Egypt and leaving the slavery of Pharaoh behind. Then they were delivered miraculously at the Red Sea, going through the trials and tests of needing water and food which God provided for them. They were attacked by the Amalakitites and God gave Israel the victory, but when they arrived at the borders of Canaan/the Promised Land they refused to go in after an evil report from the spies who scouted out the land. They lost their faith for salvation and to be in the kingdom of God, Land of Promise and they blew it.

Hebrews 3:7--Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says:

“Today, if you will hear His voice,  
<sup>8</sup> Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,  
In the day of trial in the wilderness,  
<sup>9</sup> Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me,  
And saw My works forty years.  
<sup>10</sup> Therefore I was angry with that generation,  
And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart,  
And they have not known My ways.’  
<sup>11</sup> So I swore in My wrath,  
‘They shall not enter My rest.’”

**Joshua 5:6**—“For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people who were men of war, who came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord—to whom the Lord swore that He would not show them the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers that He would give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

<sup>12</sup> “**Beware, brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil **heart of unbelief in departing from the living God**; <sup>13</sup> but **exhort (encourage) one another daily**, *while it is called ‘Today,’* lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. <sup>14</sup> For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, <sup>15</sup> while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’” Sin is so deceitful. It will give things a different coloring and make you think you are right and that the real truth is wrong.

What does God think about this generation? Some are going to depart. Because of departing from the living God this generation is headed for judgment and condemnation, except for those who repent. **1 John 2:19** —“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.” Sometimes they start their own church and do their own thing and lift up themselves by their boot-straps as a preadonna minister of a preadonna church and they are kidding themselves. **1 John 4:14-21**—<sup>14</sup>“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he

who fears has not been made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup> We love him because he first loved us and God in him. <sup>20</sup> If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from him: that he who loves God must love his brother also."

**Hebrews 4:2-10**—"For indeed the gospel was **preached to us as well as to them**; but the word which they heard did not profit them **not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.**" They were not united by faith with those who heeded it. They were a disparate mixed generation. <sup>3</sup>"For we who have believed do enter that rest, as he has said. So I swore in my wrath, 'they shall not enter my rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup> For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; <sup>5</sup> and again in this place: 'They shall not enter my rest.' [They were not united by faith.] <sup>6</sup> Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached **did not enter because of disobedience,** <sup>7</sup> again he designates a certain day, saying in David, 'Today,' after such a long time, as it has been said: 'Today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.' <sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest then he would not afterward have spoken of another day."

<sup>9</sup> **"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.** <sup>10</sup> For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from his." We have to be full of faith and steadfast to the end. God gave Israel manna daily during the week, but he commanded them not to go out on the Sabbath day, but to gather twice as much on Friday preparatory to the Sabbath day of rest. God then performed a miracle so that if a person gathered more than they needed on a week day the leftover stank, but the double portion gathered on Friday did not spoil and was good on Sabbath. This was two miracles, and a third miracle was a double portion available on Friday.

The Good News: the land of Canaan, the land of Promise—the Kingdom of God is our calling. **Hebrews 4:11**—"Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience." God's kingdom is pictured here as a Sabbath rest. Israel lacked faith gave up and decided they had had enough and were not going to go into the Promised Land. They were tired of Moses and Aaron, the wilderness, sick of manna and disobedient to God. Frankly, brethren, Israel was sick and tired of God—his law and commandments—interfering in their lives. They wanted "freedom"! God's covenant (law) was true freedom. However, "*freedom*" *their way* isn't really freedom, but just another form of slavery—catering to their own lusts of the flesh. That generation was known as the generation of rebellion and failure who wanted what belonged to their neighbor. They didn't want to rest on the Sabbath day. They wanted their idols and the attractions of this world, instead of putting God and his kingdom first.

The same words can be written about our modern generation. We are like them in every way, except those whom God is calling who respond to him, given their lives to Christ and with whom he is working. These are the ones seeking to grow and obey Him. We must be diligent, lest we fail. <sup>12</sup> **"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of soul and spirit, and of joints and**

**marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.** <sup>13</sup> And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him **to whom we must give account.** <sup>14</sup> Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” God knows our every thought. This is why we need to center our day, first thing each day, in the Bible (his inspired word) and inquire of the Lord as it applies to us individually. We need to study his word and apply it to ourselves with an open heart and to keep our eyes open in order to walk humbly with Christ. We must continually pray to God asking Him to help us do his will blamelessly, so that when he returns, he will say to you and to me —“Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Don’t you want to hear Christ say to you at his return—“Well done, you have done a good job, enter into my joy?” That will be such a great and wonderful thing to hear someday soon.

Paul says we don’t have just a high priest, but we have a compassionate —“**great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God let us hold fast our confession.** <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**”

The original mercy seat is God’s throne in heaven—it is a *throne of mercy*. **Exodus 25:17-22**—“God instructed Moses to make a mercy seat of pure gold and place it on top of the ark of the Testimony given by God to Israel and there God met with Moses and spoke to him about everything given in commandment to the children of Israel, from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim whose faces were toward the mercy seat facing each other with outstretched wings that covered the mercy seat on the ark of the Testimony.”

Most of God’s thirteen attributes which we often recite in the month of Elul, deal with mercy. He is a God of mercy who forgives the sinner who sins unknowingly, the sinner who sins impudently but repents, he forgives the one who sins stubbornly but who comes to his senses and changes. God is merciful, gracious, loving and forgiving. But he will by no means forgive the one who does not repent, but persists in rebellion.

What is it in our own character that blocks us from expressing love, brethren? What is it in our own character that we need to get rid of that will make us more genuine and humble? Expressing love is giving and an example of humility. You can express love when you are humble and willing to give of yourself without expecting anything back. It is not a trade where you get something back. Try giving a smile, a warm hello from the heart with genuine and unfeigned love to those who cross your path without pretense. If someone sins against you and hurts your feelings, or says something bad about you, or takes something away from you that doesn’t belong to them or diminishes you, your family or your reputation — forgive them if they come to you and say they are sorry and ask you to forgive them—forgive them. They must repent and express their sorrow, then in that case you are called upon to forgive them. Judgment is held in abeyance and Christ will judge them when he comes. If they do not repent until he comes, then it is an unrequited sin.

The Jews hold a Kol Nidre night in the synagogue before sunset on the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, where the whole congregation as a community asks of God the following: "May all the people of Israel be forgiven, including all the strangers who live in their midst, for all the people are in fault (Numbers 15:26)." Then the leader says: "O pardon the iniquities of this people, according to Thy abundant mercy, just as Thou forgave this people ever since they left Egypt." It is good to remember that we have a lot of sins to repent of as a community and as a nation that we have been involved in personally. Look up and read the prayers given of the prophets Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah for Israel in the Old Testament.

God saves the Harsh retribution for the wicked until the Day of Judgment. God, today, is not judging and condemning the world. He is pleading with the world to return to him. He has sent his prophets time and time again to call upon the people pleading with them to repent for their own well-being so they can escape the Great Tribulation, and the condemnation that is coming on the world. Christ says those that believe and follow him are the children of light. We are children of the day—we see these things coming and know to watch for the things that Christ told his disciples would happen in the future at the end of the age just before his return. We know that we need God's protection from the coming holocaust.

**Acts 20:4-35**—Paul said the elders of the Ephesus church, "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,<sup>20</sup> how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,<sup>21</sup> testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me. Take heed to yourselves and to the entire flock which the Holy Spirit has made you his overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with his own blood. After my departure, savage wolves, will come among you, and men among you will rise up not sparing the flock, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves.<sup>22</sup> For three years I did not cease to teach the whole counsel of God to testify to the gospel of the grace of God which I received from the Lord Jesus and preached the kingdom of God with joy day and night supporting myself and those who were with me, serving the Lord with all *humility*, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews. Therefore, watch and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

**2 Corinthians 9:5**—Paul said to the church at Corinth, "I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as **a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation.**" The Greek words used here, literally mean *covetousness*. How can you give a gift and feel covetous? It is because you want something in return for yourself—giving in order to get. The King James translates the Greek words as "a grudging obligation." Paul continued:<sup>6</sup> "**He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**"<sup>7</sup> So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."

Both of us have been busy planting our garden with a variety of vegetables now that the rototilling, composting, manure, plowing and water system have been done. I love gardening and

seeing the miracle of growth, and the beauty of maturing produce , fruits and flowers. I look forward to seeing an abundant harvest and know there will weeding to be done on a regular basis and we must watch carefully to handle any problems that may occur. Our strawberries are now transplanted to a new area where they can thrive. The work has just begun and the summer will be full.

Do you remember the story of *The Little Red Hen* popularized by Little Golden Books? The story emphasizes a clear moral and is applied in teaching children the virtues of the work ethic and personal initiative. The little red hen finds some grains of wheat in the barnyard and says, "I think I'll plant these grains and grow some wheat." She asks her barnyard friends, "Who will help me plant these seeds?" The cow is too busy, the pig has to hurry off, and the lamb has just too many things to do. So the little Red Hen said then "*I will do it by myself.*" With each successive stage (harvest, threshing, milling the wheat into flour, and baking the flour into bread), the hen again asks for help from all the other animals, but again she gets excuses and no assistance. Finally, the hen has completed her task, the loaf is baked and as the good smell of fresh bread fills the air throughout the barnyard all the animals that had been asked for help but refused, showed up. She then asked, "Who will help me eat this bread?" This time, all the previous non-participating barnyard animals eagerly offered to help her eat the loaf of bread. The little Red Hen replied, "No one helped me plant the seeds and grind the flour in the preparation for making this loaf of bread. No one aided me in baking it. I did all the work by myself. I will eat this bread by myself." And she did!

Today is the fourth day of the third week and **Day 18 — Netzach of Tiferet: Endurance in Compassion**. Is my compassion enduring and consistent? Is it reliable or whimsical? Does it prevail among other forces in my life? Do I have the capacity to be compassionate even when I'm busy with other activities or only when it's comfortable for me? Am I ready to stand up and fight for another? In the middle of your busy day take a moment and call someone who needs a compassionate word. Defend someone who is in need of sympathy even if it's not a popular position.

The nation of Israel needs our prayers and I pray for them and Jerusalem my compassion goes out to them. The Omer count is an important day by day exercise in returning to God, working on our character in a systematic way. Thanks be to the Lord our God who has told us to count the Omer this time of year. Blessed are you O Lord our God, king of the universe. Baruch ata Adonai Eloheinu melech ah olam. Amen!