

TAKE A LESSON FROM THE ANT

A Devotional on Repentance

There are some very small, even tiny things in life that can come out of nowhere, smack us broadside and knock us into a tailspin – like ants. I woke up one morning especially groggy. Seven days of stomach cramping diarrhea along with no food intake had left me feeling weak and light headed. But being the dutiful mother and aspiring Proverbs 31 woman, I woke at dawn and stumbled to the kitchen, fully intending on preparing breakfast for the six children (three mine, three not mine) waiting hungrily to be fed, like noisy baby birds in the nest. I staggered, however, at the gruesome site before my eyes – ants! Millions – no – bizillions of them – crawling over every countertop, into and out of every drawer, every cupboard, every crack and crevasse. An army of ants even marched across the walls and ceilings. AAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!! I screamed with the kind of scream that usually brings kids quickly, probably thinking something like, *‘Wow, Mom is really screaming loud this time – better go see what it’s about.’*

Breakfast was put on perpetual hold while we dealt with the ant crisis. All we could really do was crowd control. Our spray bottles bought us some casualties but the ants were still winning the battle by noon. It was then that the two year old began vomiting. Down my front; down my back, whatever went in came back out again (even water) – with force. I ran him to the bathroom toilet but missed – at least I got him to the sink. Darn! Plugged. Now I have a sink full of vomited pieces of watermelon and other unidentifiable stomach contents in the bathroom. By now the ants were also put on perpetual holding pattern while I tried to deal with the vomiting baby crisis – not to mention the mounting pile of stinking, vomit filled laundry that lay heaped in a corner due to the broken washing machine crisis.

“Move!”, I said to the mountain with faith as tiny as a mustard seed. Nothing moved.

My various emotions at this point ranged from panic to confusion to depression but settled unwaveringly upon one in particular – anger. And where could I direct my anger (since anger towards God for allowing all these things to come upon me at once is religiously unacceptable so it seems)? Ah yes, the old familiar target – my husband – a sitting duck. *“Why is he not helping me? Why is he so unsupportive? Can’t he see that I can’t cope with all of this alone all the time?...”* On and on played these negative, judgmental, destructive tapes in my head. I dunked my head in the kitchen sink, full of cold water (also plugged of course). You may have heard the expression, *“You can marry ‘em handsome or you can marry ‘em handy”* Well, it seems like I got handsome. ☺

My Jewish Mama’s advice in any emotional crisis was always this – *“Go rinse your face in cold water and you’ll feel better.”* Some of these childhood things just come back to us at these kinds of moments. Trouble was, it didn’t work. I didn’t feel better at all; I began to cry.

Another child from the neighborhood, an Israeli seven year old little girl named Ofek, came over to play. “Why not?”, I thought, “the more the merrier, right?” Ofek saw me

weeping over my kitchen sink and expressed her sincere concern. *“Why are you crying Mommy? Whatever is wrong?”* I couldn’t answer. I could only cry harder. *“Liat, Liat! Your Imah (mother) is crying! Come see.”*, she said as she pulled my daughter over to ‘see Mom cry’, clearly distressed at my distress.

It seemed easier to vent in Hebrew so I began to express how overwhelmed I felt and how lonely and alone. *“No one cares for my life”*, I said. *“I work all day from morning till night and no one sees.”* I was seriously getting into this pity party now. *“I take care of everyone else’s kids and no one ever thinks to take care of mine. I never have a break!”*

“What about your husband?”, Ofek inquires innocently.

“He doesn’t care about me either!”, I respond with a snuffle.

“Why not?”, she asks, in true feminine fashion.

“Oh, he cares only for himself. I have been sick and eaten nothing for a week and he doesn’t care at all. No one cares...”

Ofek is truly shocked. I can tell she cares. She may be only seven, but she is my friend now. *“Are you brogus?”*, Ofek asks.

When a Hebrew-speaking child says they are brogus with you, they mean they are no longer friends; they are mad at you and don’t want a relationship with you; friendship has been severed, whether temporarily or permanently. I think for a moment about how to respond. I know I really should say “no, we still love each other” – it would be the ‘Christian thing’ to say. But I am mad. And so I speak the unthinkable,

“Yes, I am brogus with him.” Silly to be having this heart to heart conversation with a little girl but she was there and she cared enough to ask.

Somehow, this terrible, horrible, no-good, awful day mercifully passed. My friend, Vickie came by. A woman with an answer for everything, she simply would not accept my pitiful whining that I can’t take it anymore. *“Oh don’t you say that girl! Yes you can, girl!”*. She kept at me like a cheerleader to a flagging team, and held Avi so that I could at least shower off the vomit and put on clean, dry clothes. I felt embarrassed that she, not being a Believer in Yeshua, should see someone who is in such a helpless and overwhelmed state. How could I continue to witness to her after this? Where was my walking in victory and triumph in Yeshua? But she had helped me and I was grateful.

The next morning, I awoke to a new dawn, remembering that His mercies are new every morning therefore we are not consumed. But then I saw them – ants! Swarming hordes of the little black demons, they seized upon any tiny crumb that had fallen on the floor or been left on the countertop overnight. It took me awhile, but I finally managed to get the ants (and the vomit) cleaned up once Vicki revealed the secret ingredient to keep ants away.¹ But it took me a lot longer to clean up after my angry and self-pitying tirade. More tears, more time and a few good, hot cups of tea helped. Listening to a beautiful music CD² that ministered in a very real way to my soul helped, as did reading a truly

¹ Boric acid powder

² Songs of Ministry by Dennis Jernigan

honest book that spoke to my heart as a woman.³ I got honest with the Lord and He eventually revealed to me the lesson He wanted me to learn from the ant invasion. This is basically what He said,

“Hannah, these ants you see represent the demonic realm. Just as the ants are attracted to any crumb of food, so are the demons attracted to even the smallest and most insignificant of sins. Even a crumb of sin will draw hordes and hordes of demons!”

Just as we had to sweep the ants out the door and then wash every vulnerable surface with bleach, so too do we need to deal with our sins and the demons that are attracted to them in a similar way. We sweep them out the door by repenting of our sins and then do a total cleanse by washing, not with bleach, but with the powerful and precious blood of Yeshua (Jesus). We cannot afford to be casual anymore about our sins if we want to keep the demonic realm off our back and out of our homes and families. Remember, even the smallest sins will draw hordes of demons just as the smallest crumb draws an army of ants! Every sin that the Holy Spirit and the Word reveals must be dealt with, and ASAP!

I began to understand that if I didn't want to wake up to the gross sight of ants swarming all over my kitchen in the morning, I needed to clean up after supper a lot better than I had been doing in the past. I tend to be 'casual' about my housekeeping (a nice way of saying I can be messy). My son's first attempt at composing a song contained the words, "Help me Lord, I have a pig-sty for a home...." Imagine that! Kids say the funniest things, don't they? ☺ It may not actually have been a pig sty, but maintaining my kitchen at this scrupulously level of cleanliness stretched me way beyond my comfort zone and meant I had to forgo a lot of other things I'd much rather be doing than cleaning. I had to make sure that not even one crumb of food was left on any countertop. Every dish had to be washed. All floors had to be not only swept but also wet mopped with bleach in the water. Often it took me until after midnight to clean up – but it was worth it to wake up and find my kitchen clean, free of pests and ready to cook in.

The Holy Spirit then showed me that in a similar way, the worst manifestation of a demonic invasion happens when the sin is left undealt with overnight. The Word says, **“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil...”** (Ephesians 4:26) I was finally 'getting it'. I can go to bed angry, saying, *“Ah, forget it; it's not worth the effort to get this all cleaned up...and anyways, it wasn't really so bad – what's one little crumb of bitterness and resentment? Where's the harm in a few unkind words spoken?”* The price we pay is way too high for this kind of casual attitude towards our sin, especially anger but also pride, rebellion, or any other sin. When we allow that anger to remain overnight, not dealing with it through repentance and the cleansing of the blood of the Lamb, we have just invited hordes of demons to take up residence with us. And then we wonder why things are not working out in our lives?!

Today I got mad at my husband again and called him a few choice names under my breath. After all, why should today be different than any other day? My husband seems to have the unique ability, of all the people in the world, to provoke me to absolute wrath-

³ Captivating by Stasi & John Eldredge

induced insanity. But today was indeed different. Because before I went to sleep, I thought about ants - lots of them – and I repented for my anger and lack of respect asked my husband’s forgiveness. I also asked the Lord’s forgiveness - that His blood would cleanse me of this grievous sin. I then was able to sleep soundly with complete peace of mind. And I woke up the next day to a clean kitchen – no ants whatsoever – until I noticed the black pile swarming all over the laundry room...oye!

“Take a lesson from the ant, you sluggard...” (Proverbs 6:6)

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Messiah forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

“Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm.” (Psalm 37:8)

Written by Hannah Neshar

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