

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION

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The Destruction of the Temple & The Pain in the Heart of God



By Asher Intrater

In the Hebrew calendar, the ninth day of the month of Av (*tisha b'Av*) is the date of the destruction of both the first and second Temples, as well as numerous other disasters in Jewish history. (The date appears in Jeremiah 39:2; 52:6; II Kings 25:3.)

Traditionally the book of Lamentations is read on this day. People fast, weep, and mourn. This year in Jerusalem, the Ninth of Av felt particularly somber – like the Day of Atonement. Everything was closed. The fear of the Lord was in the air.

Lamentations is a profound book, although not easy to read. It is written in ancient poetic form with the verses arranged in an alphabetic acrostic. How could a beautiful song be written by Jeremiah in the midst of this disaster? That is part of the point. The pain and disaster flowed from his heart as prophetic poetry.

The voice of Jerusalem cries out to God in the poem. It's like the voice of a woman crying out to her husband or father. She says, *We have sinned. You have punished us. We are destroyed. Everything is burned to ashes. Yet have mercy. Remember that we are your beloved people, in your beloved city.* **“The crown on our heads has fallen down. O woe unto us for we have sinned”** (Lamentations 5:16).

The prophetic voice in Lamentations weaves together the feelings of the prophet Jeremiah, of the spirit of the city, of the people, of God, of the Messiah. The interplay of the perspectives is reminiscent of the Song of Solomon, but in an opposite parallel theme. Lamentations is more likened to a broken relationship, while Song of Solomon to a romance.

Of course, Lamentations, as a book of faith, contains the constant element of hope and future restoration. Yet, the majority of the book expresses the pain and shock at the tremendous punishment and righteous judgment of God. The pain and the love are mixed together.

“My eye flows down rivers of water over the breaking of the daughter of my people.” (Lamentations 3:48)

I feel this pain. Perhaps we all do. It is a godly pain, not self-pity. It is feeling the destruction of what was once good, holy and precious. It is the pain in the heart of God. It does not deny future hope and restoration but feels the pain of the process. It is like Yeshua weeping over Lazarus' death, even though he was soon to be raised (John 11:35).

So much destruction and pain has happened this year in our nations, families, congregations, and prayer houses; war, terrorism, Jihadism, lies in social media, antisemitism and anti-Zionism, sexual sin, gender confusion, diplomatic injustice, academic reverse-think, and perhaps above all, people just hating one another.

According to Jewish tradition, the destruction of the first Temple was due to the three worst sins of the Torah: bloodshed, sexual immorality, and idolatry. The reason for the destruction of the second Temple was *hating without a cause* (“*Sin'at Khinam*”). That sin is considered to be the root of the other sins as well. [Actually, the Bible says, **“They hated Me without cause”** – see Psalm 35:19; 38:19; 69:4 and John 15:25. It is a prophecy of unmerited hatred toward Yeshua.]

My heart is broken with all the pain and destruction. God Himself experiences incomprehensible pain because of our selfishness and sin. Let's join our hearts together for this holy, grieving spirit, even as we believe for the final future redemption.

“Return us unto Yourself, O Lord, and we will return. Renew our days as before.” (Lamentations 5:21)





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Covered by God



By Guy Cohen

Why was Moab's King Balak so afraid that he sent for Balaam to come and curse the Israelites – this powerless people who had been wandering in the desert?

Did he understand that all his military might and past victories would not be enough to succeed against them?

Was it obvious that God was with these people who had been cared for throughout their desert journeys, provided with food, led by a pillar of fire at night and covered by a cloud during the day?

As told in Numbers 22-24, Balak felt he had no other alternative but to turn to idols, witchcraft and a non-Israelite prophet and diviner known for his success in cursing. Soon Balak would wish he had known of God's promise to Abraham, **"I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"** (Genesis 12:3). Even today, many have forgotten these words, whether in neighboring Muslim lands or far away in bastions of so-called progressiveness.

King Balak was prepared to give Balaam position, wealth, and honor just to get rid of the Israelites. Even though Balaam said he could not curse the Israelites, for the next three chapters we read how Balak and Balaam moved from one mountain lookout to another, all around the Israelite camp; but each time Balaam opened his mouth it was to bless Israel.

Balaam went on to prophesy about the coming King Messiah in the last part of Numbers 24. What a peculiar spot and an odd spokesman to give a *bona fide* Messianic prophecy! Then in chapter 25 we read how the Israelites prostituted themselves with the Moabite and Midianite women and their idols. God and sin cannot abide in the same place. In the end, what Balaam could not do by cursing the Israelites, the nation brought upon themselves. The Israelites didn't come to this situation entirely on their own; nor was Balaam as God-fearing as he seemed; nor did he go unpunished. We gain a better understanding of the sin in the camp and the price paid in Numbers 31:16, Joshua 13:22, and Revelation 2:14.

Israel Then and Now?

I can't help but ask the question, *"What's the difference between Israel then and now?"* Israel, at the moment when Balaam was called to curse them, was living in holiness and under God's protection.

Israel of today is still chosen, though not living in holiness; and Israel has still experienced much of the *covering* God promises! We (and our modern day enemies) would do well to ponder Balaam's words.

Balaam said:

**"How shall I curse whom God has not cursed?
And how shall I denounce whom the Lord has not denounced?"**

**For from the top of the rocks I see him,
And from the hills I behold him;
There! A people dwelling alone,
Not reckoning itself among the nations.**

**"Who can count the dust of Jacob,
Or number one-fourth of Israel?
Let me die the death of the righteous,
And let my end be like his!**

**"...God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
Behold, I have received a command to bless;
He has blessed, and I cannot reverse it.**

**"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob,
Nor has He seen wickedness in Israel.
The Lord his God is with him,
And the shout of a King is among them."
(Numbers 25 NKJV, emphasis mine)**



God's Good Work!



By Hannah Tekle

Many Israeli congregations are located in unsavory industrial areas. Compared to the polished expansive church campuses in some countries and often-elegant synagogue buildings in Israel, these run-down neighborhoods, with their outwardly utilitarian buildings, definitely leave something to be desired.

Tents of Mercy is housed in a cinderblock structure facing a parking lot shared by a meat factory, a factory for aluminum siding, and a fruit and vegetable warehouse. This makes for interesting curbside “appeal” alongside the entrance to our spiritual home. We often wish we had outside accommodations especially for the kids and youth – a playground, a basketball court or a picnic area for congregational lunches.

Despite our drab surroundings, we have gradually transformed the interior into a serviceable and welcoming space. We are so grateful for the roomy warehouse turned ministry center that allows us to reach out successfully to the surrounding community with humanitarian aid and congregational events. In fact, it recently occurred to me that spiritual communities being housed in industrial areas is a perfect metaphor for the real work that is happening in peoples' hearts and minds – a spiritual factory of sorts:

“Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:4)

“He who has begun a good work in you will accomplish it until the day of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah.” (Philippians 1:6)

Kids' Camp: Praise the LORD, O My Soul!

Perhaps because we have no attractive outdoor leisure space, our annual summer activities are particularly precious to us – the week long kids' camp and our congregational picnic/water outing. They give us the opportunity to fellowship in different surroundings, away from industrial complexes and small apartments.

This summer we are more aware than ever of the need for recreation. A year of never-ending war, tragedy and insecurity has left us tired and drained. We still try and live life as normally as possible, making plans for personal and ministry activities, yet all the while there is the knowledge that a ground war could open up on the northern front as well. So even as we prepared for our annual summer camp, we weren't actually certain it would happen.

BUT – we did it! 85 kids from over 10 different congregations, 25 volunteers, 18 counsellors, 4 staff members, and 1 glorious Heavenly Father came together for 6 anointed days. In His great mercy, that week in July became an eternally marked moment in time – when kids, youth and adults alike, paused to focus on God's goodness and faithfulness.

Our camp theme was inspired by the life of David the shepherd king. David modeled a life of praise – through loneliness and obscurity, through delayed promise, through war, through friendship and betrayal, through persecution and attack, through success and stardom, through grief and devastation, through sin and repentance.

We are so thankful for the unexpected gift of a successful week of camp in the midst of war – a week of summer fun, of bonding, of learning from the scriptures, and most of all, praising the Lord together in this season of crisis just like our beloved King David.

During camp we sang the Hebrew version* of “Praise” by Elevation Worship – so fitting for this season!

Praise

*Blessed be the Lord, blessed be His Holy Name.
Praise I will sing Him, on the mountain or in the valley.
Praise I will sing Him, whether it's easy or hard.
Praise I will sing Him, alone or together.
Praise is like water, drowning every fear.*

*As long as my soul is within me,
Bless the Lord oh my soul and His Holy Name.
Blessed be the Lord, blessed be His Holy Name.*

*Praise I will sing Him, if I feel good or feel bad.
Praise I will sing Him because You are in control.
Praise is a weapon and not just words.
Praise we will sing and strongholds will fall.*

*I will not be quiet, my God you are alive,
How can I not proclaim your name?*

“Praise the LORD, O my soul. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.” (Psalm 146:1-2)

*SOLU, a local Israeli praise group, translated the song into Hebrew and their recording can be found on YouTube under **Praise (Elevation Worship) Hebrew**.

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Sep'24
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Armor of God



By Leon Mazin

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” (Ephesians 6:10-17)

These verses are very popular. When I was a new believer, I often heard statements like, *“Devil, you’ve been thrown down; we triumph over you!”* However, the Scriptures don’t encourage us to “pick a fight” with the devil. He acts based on the Creator’s permission to test us, and sometimes attacks us when we brazenly disobey God and open ourselves for temptation, being deceived by our own sins (James 1:13-14). Without the armor of God we cannot stand against the devil. The Lord’s mercy and Yeshua’s finished work empower us with protection against the enemy’s schemes. **“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).**

James 4:7 speaks of the authoritative resistance to external demonic/satanic attacks and opposition to the *“lusts”* inside us: **“... stand against the adversary, and he will flee from you.”** The power of the Name of Yeshua guarantees this and allows us to stand in His freedom and victory.

When we stand in Yeshua we understand what the Lord has done for us. When we witness about Him to non-believers; when we confront evil thoughts and attacks of this world or of the evil spirits on our mind; when we rely on the truth of God’s Word and live all these things out in our life; then, the Lord allows us to “occupy this position.” From this stance, we exemplify, pure and righteous way of life – praising the Creator and abounding in the fruit of Messiah’s works.

We may look strange to others when we shout about our spiritual victories and authority, especially since such declarations are sometimes groundless. Therefore, our true and correct position, our calling and our inheritance is neither shouting nor stamping feet (though, it can be quite acceptable if the Holy Spirit leads us in this way), but rather a strong position of trust in God’s righteousness, given to us through the Messiah’s absolute sacrifice. It is our victory and demonstration of the fruit of Yeshua’s work as it is written in the Book of Isaiah 53:11: **“He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.”**

May God help us all!

Thank you again for supporting Shavei Tzion.

Return to Zion Congregation

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06



A Role Model for Times of Epic Challenge



By Yonas Belay

Many congregation members and friends are asking how to deal with fear, anxiety and worry. While reflecting on the current situation in Israel; the challenges, the war and the uncertainty, my thoughts were directed toward the confidence and faith of King David. Even at a young age, God gave David courage, strength and faith to face great challenges. We can learn much from him.

David faced Goliath, a frightening figure everyone feared. Unlike others, David was not afraid because his confidence was in God. He said, **“You come against me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel!”** (I Samuel 17:45).

David wrote, **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me,”** showing us how to cling to God, even when the situation seems hopeless (Psalm 23:4).

Fear is a survival mechanism; but if it controls us, it becomes a negative force with heavy consequences. Unlike faith, hope, and trust; fear generates anxiety, worry, panic, stress, and insecurity. We must identify these and act according to God’s Word before they take over our thoughts. Faith, hope, and trust are the seeds that lead to victory. This should be our guiding principle in this period. No matter where we are in the world, we must cling to our God. In Him, we have the power to overcome.

There is always a struggle between fear and faith, with the underlying question, *“In what or whom is our confidence?”* As faith grows, we subdue fear and embrace true confidence.

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.”
(1 John 4:18)

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

Thank you for your support and commitment in prayer. Together we can navigate this season with strength and faith. With one heart and one spirit as one body around the globe, we can win on the spiritual front.

I pray that we will discover the power of faith in our lives, bringing the light of God to Israel and wherever we are. By the grace of the Lord, may we find courage and comfort in knowing that we are never alone. God is always with us, holding us in His arms and His eternal love.



A Call to Prayer



By Youval Yanay

As a Messianic Jewish believer living in Israel, I deeply feel the urgency of the times that we are living in. Our beloved country is under significant threat from multiple fronts, most notably from Iran and its proxies. Israel remains on high alert, with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) preparing for yet more conflicts that could further engulf the region.

In light of these developments, I urge our community and believers worldwide to increase your prayers for Israel. The situation is tense, with more rocket attacks from Gaza and Lebanon, and the threat of direct conflict with Iran. The international community, including the United States, has reiterated its support for Israel's right to defend itself, but the situation remains volatile and unpredictable.

Biblical Mandate to Pray for Israel

Scripture calls us to be vigilant and persistent in our prayers for Israel. Isaiah 62:6 speaks directly to our responsibility:

“On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the Lord in remembrance, take no rest.”

This verse reminds us that we are to be the watchmen, continually interceding for Jerusalem and Israel, not just in times of peace, but especially in times of threat.

Furthermore, Psalm 122:6 encourages us to:

“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they be secure who love you!’”

Our prayers are not just about seeking peace, but about securing the safety and well-being of those who dwell in this land, encompassing Jews, Arabs, and all who call Israel home.

The Power of Prayer

Prayer is our direct line to God, a powerful tool that can bring about divine intervention and protection. Paul writes in Romans 12:12:

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

This constancy is vital, especially now. Philippians 4:6-7 further encourages us:

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

In these tough times, our prayers can bring God's peace to us and our nation. We need to stay strong in our faith, trusting that God hears us and is at work.

Intercession for Israel

Let's focus on these key areas:

- 1. Protection and Peace:** Pray for God's supernatural protection over Israel's borders, cities, and people. Ask for peace to reign in Jerusalem and throughout the land.
- 2. Wisdom for Leaders:** Pray for Israel's leaders to have divine wisdom and discernment as they navigate these complex and dangerous times. Pray for unity and strength among Israel's decision-makers.
- 3. Support from Allies:** Pray for strong international support, particularly from key allies like the United States, to bolster Israel's defense and diplomatic efforts.
- 4. Divine Intervention:** Pray for God's intervention to thwart the plans of those who seek to harm Israel. Ask for miraculous signs and wonders that demonstrate His power and protection.
- 5. Local Messianic Believers:** Pray for local believers to be strong witnesses and testimonies of Yeshua's love and grace. Ask that they be bold in their faith, providing hope and encouragement to those around them during these turbulent times.

Let us come together as a community of believers around the globe and in Israel, answering the call to be watchful for Jerusalem. Let our prayers be constant and full of faith, trusting that God is powerful to save.

