

Teaching *from* Zion

"...for out of Zion shall come forth Torah,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."
-Isaiah 2:3

BEAUTY FOR ASHES



Teaching *from* Zion

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Summer is traditionally a time of tragedy for the Jewish people, a season when "the hands of Esau are strengthened" and able to victimize many of God's chosen people. Jewish sources tell us of many terrible events that happened during the period known as the Three Weeks, which go from the 17th of Tamuz to the 9th of Av (this year from June 29th to July 20th). These 3 weeks are observed as a period of semi-mourning and culminate with 9 Av (Tisha b'Av), which is observed as a total 24 hour fast day. Tradition teaches that on this day the Israelites rebelled against God and refused to enter the promised land, both the First and Second Temples were destroyed, and 2 tragic endings to the Bar Kochba Revolt of the Jewish people against the Romans occurred. 9 Av in 1190 saw the massacre of the entire Jewish community of York, England. Additionally, one of the most awful events that happened on this day was when King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled all the Jews from Spain in 1492. More than 200,000 Jews were expelled from the land of their birth and scattered all over the world as refugees without property or civil rights of any kind. Many of them subsequently perished from hunger, exposure, and persecution, while those who remained were forced to convert to Christianity and live in terror of the Inquisition. World War I also began on this day in 1914, and on the 9 of Av in 1942, the Nazis began the mass deportation of the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto to the death camps. Creative modern minds have found many more tragedies associated with this day, but this is a long enough list to give anyone an idea of the horror and sadness of this day in Jewish history.

Although we are choosing to address many of these 9 Av tragedies in this *Teaching from Zion*, we also desire to look at the opposite side of the coin, which is the Restoration and Redemption that inevitably follows our devastation. God never abandons his people forever and, in fact, even uses the darkness we experience to refine us and make us ready for the morning of redemption that follows the night of tears. Just as the miraculously reborn State of Israel arose out of the ashes of the Holocaust and as happened in the book of Esther, *"On the very day when the enemies of the Jews hoped to gain the mastery over them, everything was turned upside down; the Jews gained mastery*

over those who hated them," (Esther 9:1), God will take our mourning and change it into everlasting joy.

Restoration can sometimes happen in an instant but more often takes many years of struggle and hard work to plant the necessary seeds before anyone sees the fruit. This work is not just physical, but also spiritual, as we strive to mend ourselves and make ourselves ready for Redemption. In a famous quote attributed to Rav Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, we learn, "Just as the Temple was destroyed through baseless hatred, it will only be rebuilt through baseless love." One of the primary goals of Netivyah is to help bring the Restoration of Israel through demonstrating the love of Yeshua to our people and preparing their hearts for Him as the Messianic drama continues to unfold.

This very year has witnessed a modern-day example of the sudden swelling of Restoration. When the Jordanians captured the Jewish Quarter of the Old City in 1948, they expelled all the Jews and razed the ancient Hurva Synagogue to the ground, leaving only a lone arch standing. Even after Israel recaptured the Old City in 1967, this arch stood alone in the sky of the Jewish Quarter as a silent testimony to the destruction and hatred of our enemies. For years it remained so, until suddenly last year, reconstruction began, and a building sprang out of the ground in seemingly no time at all. This spring this ancient synagogue was completely restored and reopened as a powerful symbol of Jewish rebirth in the land promised to our fathers through the gift and grace of God. Its white dome soars into the air sending a message of hope for our soon Restoration.

We invite you to embark upon this journey of Restoration with us as we travel back to witness and learn from the tragedies of summers past as well as examining our present and future hope as God turns transforms our defeats into victories, our mourning into dancing, and our Destruction into Restoration in front of our very eyes. We pray for this ancient prayer to come to pass in our day, "May our eyes witness your return to Zion in compassion. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who returns his Presence to Zion."

- The Editors



Photo by Wendell

From Destruction to Restoration

Joseph Shulam

The 9th of the Hebrew month Av is a date of distinction that falls during the summer in the land of Israel. Normally it falls sometime in the month of August, which also happened in 70 CE. It must have been a very hot day when the Roman soldiers burned the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, and it was probably just as hot in the year 586 BCE when the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple. It was hard work to destroy a massive stone structure with stones that weighed many tons. After a hard battle the Babylonians took the King Solomon's Temple apart stone by stone. These are but a few of the sad events that took place on 9 Av in Jewish history. Many other significant events happened to the Jewish people, and the one who pays attention begins to get the picture that Someone is orchestrating history. He makes these events fall on significant dates like 9 Av so that the Jewish nation and the world would be able to see clearly that our history is not a thing of chance but that there is a Master who organizes things.

Destruction, ashes, pain, suffering, and holocausts are not strange to us as Jews. No one group of people in the history of mankind has suffered so much at the hands of other human beings as Israel has. On the other hand, no one else has survived history for as long and has left such a wonderful legacy on the pages of history as the Jewish nation did. The small State of Israel has existed for 62 years, and during that time we have produced more Nobel prize winners than England, China, Russia, and of most other countries of the world. The recently reborn State of Israel has influenced the world of science, medicine, and agriculture far beyond its size, despite constantly living under the threat of destruction and annihilation by its neighbors. Israel's survival as a nation and the restoration of a Jewish State in the land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is nothing but phenomenal.

Yet none of these facts are worth much without the Biblical foundation of the Prophets of Israel. Consider this important passage from Isaiah. *"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to*

proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, **to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;** that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. . . . Instead of your shame you shall have double honor, and instead of confusion they shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be theirs. For I, the LORD, love justice; I hate robbery for burnt offering. I will direct their work in truth, and will make with them an everlasting covenant. Their descendants shall be known among the Gentiles and their offspring among the people. All who see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the posterity whom the LORD has blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall be joyful in my God. For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

These verses from Isaiah 61 are the same verses that Yeshua read in the synagogue of Nazareth one Sabbath morning after He returned from forty days of temptation in the Judean Desert: *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed..."*^I Yeshua actually starts his ministry with this text from Isaiah, and it is very interesting that this text was also a key passage for the vision and aspiration of the Qumran sect in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This chapter speaks of the salvation and redemption of both Israel and the nations. God promises a paradigm that goes from "ashes" to the "oil of joy" and that "the spirit of heaviness" will become a "garment of praise." This promise is a clearly visible reversal of status from bad to good, and from sadness to joy, which we all desire. Who would not like to see his problems released and his suffering become a source of happiness? We also need to note, however, that it is impossible to skip the stage of suffering, hard work, sorrow, ashes, and shame and just jump right into the joy, happiness, and double honor. Naturally, all of us would like to do this, since no one wants to suffer and be put to shame. For example, pregnancy brings labor and pain before the

I Isaiah 61:1-5, 7-10

II Luke 4:18

joy of having a baby becomes a reality. I would have liked it very much if Harvard University would have just given me a Ph.D. when they invited me to study there, but they do not simply give away doctorates without seeing the work and the many hours of research in the library. One has to first do the work, and then he receives the prize!

The Midrash on Psalm 21 makes this point: *"The whole of our history tends to show that when distress was at its greatest, God was nearest. Even when we well deserved God's punishment, as for the making of the golden calf for which our destruction was threatened, yet we find soon after, 'And the Lord repented of the evil which He thought to do unto his people' (Ex. 32). When in darkness the Lord hath become our light (Micah 7). In his anger God yet grants us his mercy (Hab. 2). The very time of trouble is transposed into a time of joy and help (Jer. 30), the estrangement to a bringing near (Hosea 2), the threat of annihilation into exaltation (Esther 4)."*

There are unavoidable cycles of life, and when they come upon us from nature, we understand them and accept them. When they come upon us from enemies and other sources like our own weaknesses, however, they are difficult for us to understand and accept. Israel's exile is one of these concepts that is difficult. We have a hard time accepting that the Diaspora is partially our own doing and our own responsibility. We tend to blame the nations into which we were exiled for the suffering and maltreatment that we received in their lands. Yet the One who had the power to predict the exile and to warn us is the same One who sent us to the exile and initiated our detachment from the land of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He, the Almighty One of Israel, actually shares some of that responsibility with us for all that the exile has meant to the Jewish people. We have responsibility for our sins, and He has the responsibility to fulfill his promises to Abraham and King David. We the people have to accept the responsibility for our own actions that are often the cause of our suffering.

This position might not be popular or politically correct today, especially after the Holocaust. Over 2,000 years ago the prophet Ezekiel wrote the following words: *"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward. The Gentiles shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity. Because they were unfaithful to Me, therefore I hid My face from them. I gave them into the hand of their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions, I have dealt with them and hidden My face from them. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Now I will bring back the captives of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name — after*

they have borne their shame, and all their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, when they dwelt safely in their own land and no one made them afraid. When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel,' says the Lord GOD."^{III}

The whole process of the fall, the exile, and the restoration back to the land is the work of God Almighty. Therefore, the formula of Destruction and Restoration fades in light of the prophetic promises given to Israel and all the nations. From our human eyes Restoration seems far away and perhaps impossible. The enemies of Israel are so many, their hatred is so deep, their determination endless, and their cruelty and terrorism comes from the pit of Hell. The chaos inside our nation and the political corruption in the Jewish State also add to the doubts that many rational people have for the completion of the Zionist dream of the restoration of the land and the people. Nevertheless, today we can see the wonderful transformation of the land from a desert wasteland to a garden flowing with milk and honey, the immigration of Jews from over 105 different countries, the export of fresh fruit to Europe and North America, and the making of wine on the slopes of the mountains of Galilee that can compete with the best wines of France and Italy. On the other hand, there are some details in the promises that God made to our prophets in the Eighth Century BCE that are still unfulfilled. In other words, there is a whole lot of work that still needs to be done for the Restoration to be complete. Here is a short list of a few promises that still need to happen in order to fulfill these promises of God to the Jewish people for the restoration process to be complete:

"The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations and rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears

III Ezekiel 39:22-39

into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore."^{IV}

"The LORD said to Israel, 'I will save you from afar, I shall not make a full end to you.'"^V

"'In those days and in that time,' says the LORD, 'The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found. For I will pardon those whom I preserve.'"^{VI}

"Thus says the Lord GOD: 'I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain. On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar. Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell.'"^{VII}

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn."^{VIII}

The cycle of destruction and restoration is analogous to the cycle of prophecy fulfillment. The words of the prophets are time-bound, and sometimes the prophecies are fulfilled in a very short period, such as Elisha's prophecy to the city of Samaria in 2 Kings 7, in which the whole prophetic cycle from start to finish lasts only 24 hours. Other prophecies are stretched over a period of thousands of years, such as the prophecies dealing with the salvation of Israel.

With these premises we can look at cataclysmic events like the Holocaust and see them as part of the cycle of Destruction and Restoration. From the darkest hours of our history came the brightest joy of the restoration of a Jewish State back in the land of our forefathers. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham with these words: "And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him: 'Lift your eyes now and look from the place where you are — northward, southward, eastward, and westward; for all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever. And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered. Arise, walk in the land through its length and its width, for I give it to you.'"^{IX}

IV Isaiah 2:1-4

V Jeremiah 46:27-28

VI Jeremiah 50:20

VII Ezekiel 17:22-23

VIII Zechariah 12:10

IX Genesis 13:14-17

Here are some lessons we can learn from this cycle of Destruction and Restoration. First, when we are at the bottom of the cycle, we need not be discouraged because after descending, we will also ascend. Mark 10:31 says, *"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."* Similarly, Matthew 21:31 says, *"Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.'"* Conversely, when we are on top of the cycle and all is going well for us, we must not become too confident or proud. This is what 1 Corinthians 3:13-15 means when it says, *"Each one's work will become clear, for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

Second, there is a river of events in history that is directed by the finger of God Himself. From our perspective we seem to be floating on a raft without a sail or rudder, but in order to be able to stand we must flow with God's direction and guidance and not fight against the flow of his river that leads to life. On the other hand, we are partners

with God in the restoration and renewal of our days as of old.

Third, the restoration of our faith as Jewish disciples of Yeshua and our restoration in the land of Israel go hand in hand. It is not reasonable to believe that after two thousand years the return of the Jewish people back to the land will only be a physical return. Likewise the exilic Judaism with the Ultra-Orthodox all black clothing from Eastern Europe will not be the only kind of Judaism imported to the land of Abraham.

The chapter of Israel's destruction is closing, and the chapter of Israel's restoration is only now beginning to open. The vision of the Prophets was that the restoration of Israel would not be only a Jewish affair, but that the nations who know the God of Israel would partner together and help build Israel up physically and also provoke the Jewish people to jealousy so they would want to know the Messiah. It is time now to start that partnership together and to help restore the land, the people, and the faith of our fathers, which is the faith of Yeshua, the Son of David, the son of Abraham. The ashes are turning into joy in the long awaited Messiah!



Photo by Chany14

Relief from the First Century Arch of Titus in Rome commemorating the pillaging of the Temple.

Photo by Profzucker

9 Av: Past, Present, and Future:

What We Should Learn from the Past So We Can Have a Better Future

Elizabeth Wakefield

The Mishnah enumerates 5 tragedies that occurred to the Jewish people on Tisha B'Av (9 Av). "On the 9 of Av it was decreed that our ancestors should not enter the [Promised] Land, the Temple was destroyed the first and second time, Beitar was captured, and the City [Jerusalem] was ploughed up."¹ The first three items are self explanatory as events of great spiritual and physical devastation, but one should also know that Beitar was the scene of the final battle of the Second Jewish Revolt against the Romans in 135 CE. The massacre carried out at this battlefield was so great that the rest of the Jewish fighters melted away, leading to the total and final Roman domination of Israel. Rome then ploughed up the ruins of the Temple Mount to build a pagan temple to Jupiter on it in the midst of a new pagan city built on the ruins of Jerusalem, which they banned Jews from entering.

Before we examine the specific lessons we should learn from the history of 9 Av, let us address a few issues that may be rising in the minds of our readers at this moment. For those of us who tend to be skeptical academics, the first question that may arise is, "How can one be so naive

as to believe that all those things really occurred on one single day in the calendar?" To this question there are two answers. One is that in sacred history it is actually quite common for events of a similar nature to repeat themselves on the same days in history, which is precisely why Jews celebrate so many holidays. Yom Kippur happens every year on the tenth day of Tishrei, Passover falls on the fourteenth day of Nissan every year, etc., because sacred history works in patterns and spirals while still progressing towards a single goal: the complete redemption of the entire world. Not every cycle is exactly the same of course, but depending on what we have learned from the previous ones, there is still a distinguishable pattern. The point of these patterns and cycles is that we should be able to learn something from them and avoid repeating our previous mistakes. This leads us to the second answer, namely that it does not really matter if every single one of these events actually happened on 9 Av or not. The rabbis associate all these events with one day of the year because they all have a common thread of failure, disappointment, and tragedy, which will one day, Lord willing, lead us to complete joy and redemption when we have learned and internalized everything we need to make us ready and worthy for the Messiah's return.

¹ mTaanit 4.6

The second burning question that may be on the minds of our Christian readers is, "I'm not Jewish; what does any of this have to do with ME?" There are three answers to this question. One, since many of the more modern events of this day were carried out by "Christians" against Jews, this day has everything to do with Christians as well. Surely it is nearly as much a tragedy to remember that one's ancestors fell so low into the depths of hatred and xenophobia as to massacre and expel innocent people as it is to remember one's ancestors who were the murdered and expelled victims of these events. Christians have a great deal to repent of and learn from 9 Av in order to not repeat the same atrocities and fall into the same pits of sin, which is delaying the Messiah's return. Two, a true believer of Abrahamic faith who has been grafted into Israel (see Romans 10-11) needs to be like Ruth and cling to the Jewish people both in the times of happiness and tragedy, blessings and curses. One of the biggest errors of Replacement Theology is its readiness to acquire for Christians all the blessings the Bible lists for Israel but to take responsibility for none of the curses. Instead, the Christian needs to "rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep."^{II} This means standing in solidarity with the Jewish people in the bad times too, examining one's conscience, and repenting of the same sins that brought Israel to suffer on 9 Av.

Three, the destruction of the Temple had enormous spiritual consequences for the entire world, not just the Jewish people. One recent article on a popular Jewish website puts it this way. "We misrepresent the tragedy of the day by describing it as the destruction of the two Holy Temples, as if the catastrophe is the loss of a building.... Tisha B'Av is more like a death than a destruction, because on that day the world changed irrevocably. The world without the Holy Temple is not the same world minus one magnificent structure. The world without the Holy Temple is a totally different world. The Holy Temple was the mystical vortex between the higher, spiritual worlds and this gross, physical world. The Temple service was an elaborate mystical procedure that kept the aperture between the worlds open and functioning. The Divine Presence manifested itself in the Temple and through the Temple. When the Temple was destroyed, that palpable Divine Presence removed itself from our world. It was a loss as real and as searing as death... When the Temple was destroyed, the dogged illusion of Divine absence settled over our world like a perpetual fog. In this world where Divine hiddenness has replaced Divine revelation, we grope for proofs of God's existence, like fish debating about the existence of water.

II Rom. 12:15

We are relegated to 'believing' when once we simply knew. We struggle, through prayer and meditation, to experience a momentary inkling of the Divine Presence when once we simply basked in it. We are like amnesiacs who experience vague and fleeting memories of a different life, a truer identity, but the actual grasping of it eludes us. Tisha B'Av made orphans of us all."^{III}

Obviously the loss of the tangible presence of God in the Temple is a deeper loss for the unbeliever who does not have the Holy Spirit in his life to act as the Comforter until Yeshua's return and the full restoration of God's presence in the world. Yet to all of us who have ever had moments of desperation when it seems as though our prayers bounce back off the ceiling, who have wondered if God really notices how much we as a people, a nation, and as individuals suffer, or who have ever offered up a desperate, "God, are you even there? Why me?!" the loss of the Temple as a physical entity where one could meet God and daily experience his presence in the world in the plain sight of everyone, ought to mean something as well. Faith is always easier when one can physically see God's working in the world every day in an undeniable and irrefutable way, but believing in the unseen is a challenge for all Jews and Christians today in the absence of either the Temple or the Messiah ruling on the throne of David in Jerusalem. This does not mean we ought to try to rebuild it now without the Messiah, but it is still legitimate to mourn this enormous loss.

Stories of 9 Av in the Ancient Past

We now turn to examine some aggadot about 9 Av in Israel's ancient history, some of which describe the tragedies Israel experienced along with the reason they happened in order to teach the reader important lessons about how to conduct our lives in the present. Proceeding in a more or less chronological order, the first sad 9 Av occurred when the wilderness generation let fear overcome their courage and faith in God's power to help them conquer the Promised Land and refused to even attempt the invasion. This blatant rebellion against God and his will is the great sin which began this awful cycle. "And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. Rabbah said in the name of R. Johanan: 'That night was the night of the ninth of Av. The Holy One, blessed be

III Rigler, Sarah Yoheved. "Tisha B'Av: Waking up to a World without God's Presence." Article on www.aish.com found on May 30, 2010. www.aish.com/h/9av/ju/48969901.html.



The Hebrew Prophets warned Israel that the First Temple would be destroyed because of a lack of justice and mercy toward the downtrodden and the presence of idolatry and violence. They also said the exile was a punishment for not keeping the Seventh Year, during which it was forbidden to plant and grow crops in the land of Israel in order to give the land a "Sabbath" and to teach the people how to rely on God's miraculous provision during those years. Similarly, the Midrash names these causes for the destruction of the First Temple: taking the collateral of a poor man overnight, not paying servants on time, eating tithe food that should have gone to the poor, idolatry, and not releasing Hebrew slaves at the end of the maximum 7 year period.^{VII} Additionally, the Talmud says the First Temple was destroyed because the people did not keep the Sabbaths and the Sabbath years.^{VIII}

Several pieces of rabbinic literature include this gory aggada about the heavenly vengeance exacted by an unknowing Nebuchadnezzar^{IX} during his destruction of the First Temple for the murder of the prophet Zechariah in the Temple^X (not the same one who wrote the book in the Bible). This aggada centers around the legend that during the years between his murder and the destruction of the First Temple, Zechariah's blood continued to bubble up in the Temple courts as a testimony for his innocence and against the wicked men who killed him there. Here is one version of the story. "An old man from the inhabitants of Jerusalem told me that in this valley Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard killed 211 myriads, and in Jerusalem he killed 94 myriads on one stone, until their blood went and joined that of Zechariah, to fulfil the words, 'Blood toucheth blood!' He noticed the blood of Zechariah bubbling up warm, and asked what it was. They said: 'It is the blood of the sacrifices which has been poured there!' He had some blood brought, but it was different from the other. He then said to them: 'If you tell me [the truth], well and good, but if not, I will tear your flesh with combs of iron.' They said: 'What can we say to you? There was a prophet among us who used to reprove us for our irreligion, and we rose up against him and killed him, and for many years his blood has not rested!' He said to them: 'I will appease him!' He brought the great Sanhedrin and the small Sanhedrin and killed them over him, but the blood did not cease. He then slaughtered young men and women, but the blood did not cease. He brought school-children and slaughtered them

VII Eikah Rabbah on Eikah 1.3

VIII yTa'anit 4.5

IX Nebuchadnezzar= Nebuzaradan in Jewish texts

X 2 Chronicles 24:20-22

He, said to them: "You have wept without cause, therefore I will set [this day] aside for a weeping throughout the generations to come."^{IV} The punishment decreed in the Torah for this ultimate rebellion was the death of the entire adult population with two exceptions over the next 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.^V The rabbis were not satisfied with this vague description of the death of that generation and wrote this aggada to explain how exactly the deaths of the adults happened once a year. "And said R. Levi, 'On the eve of every 9 of Av, Moses would circulate a proclamation throughout the camp saying, "Go forth to dig graves," and the people would go forth and dig graves and lie down and sleep in them. The next day he would circulate a proclamation saying, "Rise up and separate the dead from the living." So they would get up and find themselves 15,000 fewer than the original 600,000..."^{VI}

IV bTa'anit 29a

V Num. 14:22-24

VI Eikah Rabbah Petihta 33

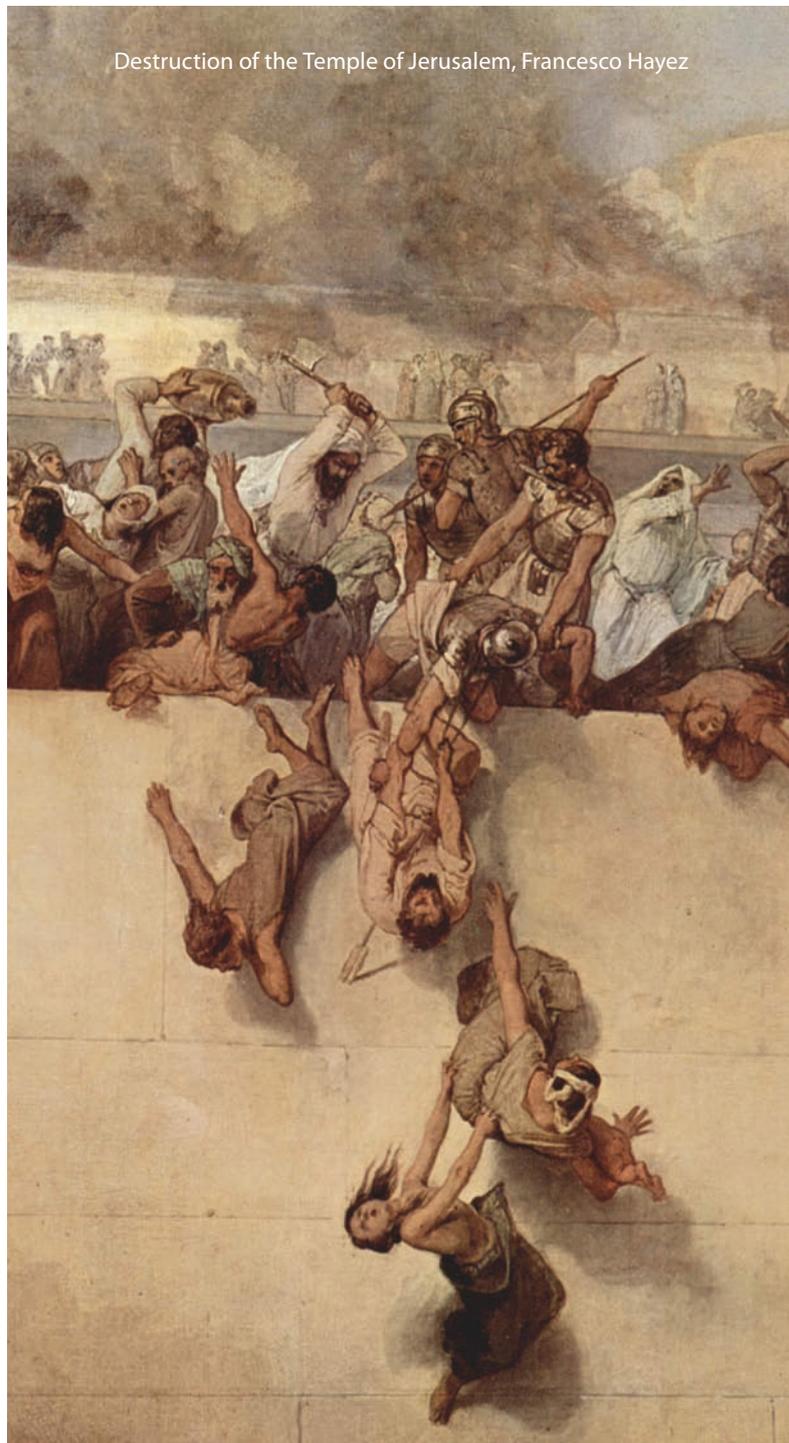
over it, but the blood did not cease. So he said, 'Zechariah, Zechariah. I have slain the best of them; do you want me to destroy them all?' When he said this to him, it stopped. Straightway Nebuzaradan felt remorse. He said to himself: 'If such is the penalty for slaying one soul, what will happen to me who has slain such multitudes?'"^{XI}

Obviously, the numbers and facts are exaggerated in this story, but the point is to show the seriousness of the sins of violence and most particularly the rejection and murder of God's anointed prophets. Yeshua Himself referenced this legend and the important lesson that should have been learned from it (but clearly had not been learned even until his own day) in a very critical speech in Luke 11:47-51. *"Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that the blood of all the prophets shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the sanctuary."^{XII} Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation."* This concept is also the background behind what Yeshua said in his mourning over the city, *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to you! How often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"^{XIII}*

There is another aggada about what happened during the First Temple's destruction which teaches us why God allowed it and the importance of stewardship. "When the First Temple was about to be destroyed, many bands of young priests with the keys of the Temple in their hands assembled and mounted the roof of the Temple and exclaimed, 'Master of the Universe, as we did not have the merit to be faithful treasurers, these keys are handed back into Thy keeping.' They then threw the keys up towards heaven, and there emerged the figure of a hand and received the keys from them. Whereupon they jumped and fell into the fire."^{XIV} This story blames the destruction on improper stewardship over the gifts God grants us and emphasizes that the ultimate decisions about when the

buildings and destructions of the Temple take place lie entirely in God's hands.

Here is another interesting rabbinic text that links the two destructions together. "Said R. Simeon b. Laqish, "Ah! Those who add house to house and join field to field, [til there is room for none but you to dwell in the land]"- You have adjoined the destruction of the first temple to the destruction of the second. Just as in the case of the destruction of the first temple, "Zion shall be plowed as a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins and the Temple Mount a shrine in the woods" (Jer 26:18), so the case of the



Destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, Francesco Hayez

XI bGittin 55b-57b

XII The discussion of where exactly Zechariah died in the Temple was a matter of great discussion for the early rabbis, which accompanies the aggada about Nebuchadnezzar trying to appease Zechariah's blood in almost every version.

XIII Luke 14:34

XIV bTaanit 29a

second, "Zion shall be plowed as a field," til there is room [for none but you to dwell in the land]. What is it that caused the place to be destroyed? It is because they left no place in which they had not worshipped idolatry..."^{XV} This text blames both greedy land owners for their injustice toward the poor and those who practiced idolatry as the causes for the destructions of both Temples by placing these two sins in parallel. Most people would not consider robbing the poor to be on the same level as idolatry, but this text does so by making it a common thread that linked both Temples' destructions.

Similarly, this Talmudic passage compares the two destructions and draws the very convicting conclusion that hatred is even worse than the three cardinal sins.^{XVI} "We have found that the First Temple was destroyed because of idolatry, incest, and murder. But we know that in the Second Temple they were occupying themselves with the Torah and were careful with the commandments and tithes,^{XVII} and every good custom was in them, [so why was it destroyed?] Because they loved money and hated one another with baseless hatred. Baseless hatred is weightier than idolatry, incest, and murder."^{XVIII} This passage says that in God's eyes hatred outweighs all our good deeds of obeying the Torah, tithing, and giving charity. This text is similar to Yeshua's words in Luke 11:42, which uphold the importance of being careful with these "minor" commandments, but exhort us to be zealous for the weightier matters of the law like love, justice, and mercy toward one another. *"But woe to you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every kind of herb, but you neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others!"*

The rabbis describe what kind of baseless hatred ruled Jerusalem in the time of the Second Temple with this story. "The destruction of Jerusalem came through a Kamza and a Bar Kamza in this way. A certain man had a friend Kamza and an enemy Bar Kamza. He once made a party and said to his servant, 'Go and bring Kamza.' But the man went and brought Bar Kamza. When the host found him there he said, 'See, you tell tales about me; what are you doing here? Get out!' Said the other: 'Since I am here, let me stay, and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink.' The host said, 'I won't.' 'Then let me give you half the cost of the party,' he replied. 'No,' said the host. 'Then let me pay for the whole party,' he pleaded. But he still said, 'No,' and he took him by

XV Eikah Rabbah Petihta 22

XVI The parallel passage in bYoma 9b says hatred is even worse than the three cardinal sins put together.

XVII The parallel passage in the Bavli adds 'charity.'

XVIII yYoma 4b

the hand and put him out. Said the other, 'Since the Rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and inform against them, to the Government.'"^{XIX} The rest of the story goes on to tell how Bar Kamza in his anger exploited a minor difference between Jewish and Roman standards for sacrifices on the altar in order to make the Emperor believe the Jews were rebelling, leading the Romans to brutally squelch the Jews and the Temple. Although we know that this aggada is not historically accurate, since Josephus writes that the Zealots in their hatred for the Romans forced the priests to stop offering sacrifices for the well-being of the Emperor, which led to the Romans brutal war against the Jews,^{XX} it still has an important point to make. It shows that hatred can be deadly when it causes people to be rude and inhospitable, to offend one another, and to seek vengeance for past grievances.

As for the last two tragic events of 9 Av that the Talmud mentions, namely the falling of Beitar and the plowing up of the Temple Mount, we will not recount here all the long horrifying stories that the Midrash associates with these events. Eikah Rabbah 1.16 especially tells a number of stories about the horrors inflicted on the Jews by the Roman destructions of 63 BCE, 70 CE, and 135 CE and the martyrdom of many of those who were taken captive. The common thread that unites these stories is that they all portray God weeping, both for the sins of his people and because of the awful punishments we received for them. Perhaps a weeping God may seem disturbing to people with a certain type of view of God's transcendence, but to those who lived through these awful tragedies, perhaps the only real comfort (besides the hope of resurrection) is to know that God is with us in our suffering. He weeps alongside of us because He would much rather see the wicked repent than to have to punish his creatures. This is what Ezekiel 18:23 means, which states, *"Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked; declares the Lord God, 'and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?'"*

The Prophets portrayed not only God as mourning when Israel suffers, but also the righteous patriarchs and matriarchs. *"Thus says the Lord, 'A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.'"*^{XXI} Even these heavenly tears will one day be wiped away, however, when the full restoration of Israel takes place and the exiles return to complete redemption.

XIX bGittin 55b-56a

XX War II, 408-410

XXI Jer 31:15

"Thus says the Lord, 'Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward for your work,' declares the Lord, 'and they come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future,' declares the Lord, 'and your children shall come back to their own country. I have heard Ephraim grieving, "You have disciplined me, and I was disciplined like an untrained calf; bring me back that I may be restored, for you are the Lord my God."^{XXII} Even Jeremiah "the weeping prophet" could encourage Israel to preserve hope for the end of our tears in the joyous time of both physical and spiritual redemption.

9 Av in the Present

After examining these ancient stories about 9 Av, here are a few key things we can learn from them. First, God takes sin seriously, especially sins like rebelling against his calling in our lives, lack of faith, idolatry, murder, sexual immorality, breaking the Sabbath, planting crops in Israel in the Seventh Year, hatred, and the oppression of the poor and the disenfranchised. He punishes us when we commit these sins, so we must strive to eliminate them in our own lives and in the lives of our people and nation. Second, even when God must punish us, He still mourns and sympathizes with us in our sufferings and perhaps even weeps along with us. Third, the loss of the Temple was a genuine tragedy for all the people of God because we now must stumble blindly and work hard to experience the presence of God in the darkness of our world. Lastly, we need to learn the lessons of our past so we can change ourselves and our society today in order to make ourselves worthy of complete redemption in the future. Last summer a major Palestinian official stood on the Temple Mount and proclaimed to thousands of cheering Muslims, "Tisha b'Av will last forever!" Unfortunately, this mean-spirited speech is all too likely to come true if we do not change ourselves today and free ourselves of the sin, hatred, and disunity that plagues each of our hearts and communities.

These days in Jerusalem a large crowd gathers in the square of the municipality next to the walls of the Old City to hear several men chant the Book of Lamentations aloud in the evening of 9 Av. The haunting melody and the tragic feelings contained within its masterful poetry float through the night air and cause us to reflect on what brought our downfall in the past and to ponder what lessons we need to learn and put into practice in our present so as to bring our restoration in the future.

XXII Jer. 31:16-18

9 Av in the Future

We are blessed to know that God will not abandon us to our own sin and punishment forever. The day will come when Yeshua will return to reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem, and all of our mourning will be changed into joy. Jewish tradition states that in the Messianic Era 9 Av will become a day of rejoicing and a holiday when we experience total redemption and restoration. This idea is based on Zechariah 8:19-23, which states, "Thus says the Lord of Hosts: 'the fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth [9 Av] and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace!' Thus says the Lord of Hosts, 'People shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go up to another saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord and to seek the Lord of Hosts; I myself am going." Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord!' Thus says the Lord of Hosts, 'In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."^{XXII} May we merit to see our desolation turned into joy and restoration soon and in our day!

Ordeal

Elhanan ben Avraham

Remember what was shown in the darkest night,
Secrets of a painful universe
Left unseen in the morning's light:
Visions of one self in the naked starlight
With curtains drawn on the flowery lands of sun
And countless days like webs of the spider spun,
Expanses empty, filled by a word of the silent speech,
The ocean's treasures washed up
And left on the lonely beach,
Lest tides return to draw them back to the churning deep,
And make to forget
The tears that the night had caused to weep;
Then enter mercy's light of another day,
Weighed with the salty treasures
Of gold to the grateful heart,
And send it beating forth on the untread way.



The Birth of the Messiah on the Day of Destruction:

A Jewish-Christian Leitmotif

Udi Zofef

It is commonly thought that when religious Jewish literature relates to Jesus or to Christianity, it is usually, if not always, with a negative and polemical intent. Modern research into ancient Jewish sources, however, often presents some surprisingly different attitudes, to the point that some of the most sacred texts of Jewish liturgy are suspected to originate in the circles of the early followers of Jesus of Nazareth.

Even when this is not the case, we may still find many similarities and parallel ways of interpreting the biblical text and the Messianic theme in early Christian and Jewish sources. One example of this common interpretive thread lies in the classic Rabbinic legend that suggests that the redeemer was born on the day that the Temple was destroyed.

This legend appears in two slightly different versions, one in the Jerusalem Talmud and another in the compilation of midrashim *Eikah Rabati*, which is dedicated to the scroll of Eikah (Lamentations) with its central theme of the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The following text is the one from the Jerusalem Talmud, which is considered to be the earlier and therefore the more original content and intent. It comes in the context of a discussion about the Messiah's name, in this case to explain the name Menachem that is attributed to him:

"A Jew was plowing his field when his cow lowed. An Arab passing by heard her voice and said to him: 'O Jew, release your cow and untie your plow, for the Temple has been destroyed!' The cow lowed a second time. He said to him: 'O Jew, bind your cow and your plow, for the king Messiah was born.' He said unto him, 'What is his name?'

[The Arab] said to him, 'Menachem.' [The Jew] asked him, 'And what is his father's name?' He said unto him 'Hizkiyyah.' [The Jew] asked him: 'And where is he from?' He said unto him: 'From the royal capital of Beit Lechem [Bethlehem] of Judea.' The Jew sold his cow and his plow and became a merchant of diapers for babies. He moved from town to town until he came to that town [Bethlehem]. All the women bought from him, but the mother of Menachem did not buy. He heard the women call, 'Menachem's mother, Menachem's mother, come and buy for your son!' She said, 'May the enemies of Israel choke to death, for on the day on which he was born the Temple was destroyed!' He said to her: 'And why should he care? Come and buy for him; if you have no money today, I shall return in due time and take.' Some time later he came to that same town where he had been. He said unto her: 'How is the baby doing?' She said, 'Since that time you saw me, stormy winds came and snatched him from my hands!'"

Hillel Newman from Bar Ilan University analyzes this midrash in an attempt to identify the historical "Menachem, the son of Hezekiah." According to his view, it is not possible to firmly establish whether this midrash refers to the destruction of the First or Second Temples. This text may have been written three to four hundred years after the Bar-Kochba revolt. Newman's article challenges the commonly accepted identification of this Messianic figure with Menachem, the son of Yehuda (whose father was called Hezekiah), one of the Galilean zealots involved in the violent revolt against the Roman occupation (see Acts 5:34-37). One reason for doubting this option is the fact that some sources link this legend to the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians. Another reason is the fact that the Talmudic sources usually reflect the traditions of the Pharisees, and it is very unlikely for them to relate to this type of zealot as a true Messianic figure. It is indeed important to note that the Pharisees, just like the followers of Jesus, objected the idea of ending the Roman occupation by violence. Once he eliminates the possibility of associating any "Menachem, son of Hezekiah" with either of the two Temple's destructions, Newman then suggests that both parts of this title, "Menachem" and "Hezekiah" are symbolic. "Menachem," which means "comforter," is a very meaningful Messianic title, as we learn from Eikah Rabbati's interpretation of the following verse from Lamentations:

I *Jerusalem Talmud*, Berachot 82.

II Newman, Hillel. "The Birth of the Messiah on the Day of Destruction: Historical and Anti-Historical Notes." *For Uriel: Researches in the Ancient History of Israel*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2006 (In Hebrew).

*"For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the **comforter** that should relieve my soul is far from me"* (Lamentations 1:16). The midrash says that the comforter ("Menachem") here is the Redeemer.

Comfort is an important foundation of Messianic prophecy. Here are some very familiar examples: "**Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,' says your God"** (Isaiah 40:1), in the opening of the second part of the book of Isaiah, which contains the heaviest Messianic content of all prophetic literature. Later on in the same section, we find another familiar expression of comfort: *"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to **comfort** all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes"* (Isaiah 61:1-3). Yeshua quoted this passage in his sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth and claimed to be the one fulfilling this prophecy (Luke 16-22), thus identifying Himself as the Comforter. Yeshua relates to the same verses again in the opening of his Sermon on the Mount: *"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"* (Matt. 5:4).

It is also said about Simeon the Righteous who blessed the infant Yeshua in the Temple in Jerusalem that he *"was waiting for the consolation [in other words "comforting"] of Israel"* (Luke 2:25). As far as the writer of the Gospel is concerned, "comfort" equals salvation. After blessing the baby Yeshua, Simeon the Righteous says, *"For my eyes have seen thy salvation"* (verse 30). This is the comfort he was waiting for. Furthermore, when Yeshua says in John 14:16 that he would plead with the Father, *"And he shall give you another comforter"* ("paraklitos" in Greek), some interpreters presume that he used the Hebrew word "menachem."

This meaningful appearance of different variations of "comfort" in the New Testament is not surprising, of course, since this text itself can and should be taken as one form of "midrash" on the biblical text, in which many variations of "comfort" surround the Messianic theme on every side. Yet this alone is not the key factor in drawing parallel lines between this Talmudic legend and the Messianic view of the New Testament. There are other elements in this legend that are more specific and meaningful in that respect, and maybe the most striking one is the location of the story in "the Royal Capital – Bethlehem." Bethlehem is indeed the Royal Capital, the birthplace of King David, the cornerstone of the Davidic lineage that leads down the line to the King Messiah. Micah 5:1 mentions it as the birthplace of the



Redeemer. Consequently, the New Testament, especially in the Gospel of Matthew, which is a unique source of the story of Herod's massacre of the babies in Bethlehem, takes up this theme as well. This story itself has a strong flavor of "midrash" relating to the parallel event of Pharaoh's decree to kill all the male, newborn Israelites in order to try to prevent the salvation of Israel because he knew that one of them would be his greatest enemy.

The oral roots of this legend about the Messiah being born on the day of the destruction of the Temple may go back as far as the time of the of the First Temple, but the written text surely is dated to post-Second Temple period. This is an important point because once the Christian era was well underway, it is very unlikely, given the strongly polemical, anti-Christian atmosphere that existed then, that a Jewish text would confirm in any way a claim made by the Church about the identity of the Messiah. In fact, many interpretations of the pre-Christian era that somehow fit with the Christian reading of the biblical text were mostly "swept under the carpet" by the Jewish sages in order to avoid any form of confirmation of Christian claims. What is remarkable about this legend is that it not only sets the story in Bethlehem, but that it also goes

further to tell about the mother of the Messiah, which is significant, considering the key role of Miriam in the New Testament narrative, and even gives a role to the babies of Bethlehem. These multiple ties with the Gospel text should not be taken lightly, especially not with the bottom line of the story, having the baby Messiah disappear, taken away, or up to heaven, by storm.

Apart from such similarities of detail, there is also an overall Messianic attitude here that strikes an even larger similarity between the Gospel and this Talmudic legend, and that is the mere idea of something positive of a great magnitude sprouting out of a catastrophic event. Most Jews were devastated after the destruction of the Temple, which was not just a matter of a beautiful building being torn down, but also an end to the Jewish people's religious ritual life as well as their national existence. It would have been very difficult for the Jews scattered all over the Diaspora to see any Messianic hope in those days. Nevertheless, as Yeshua said, in order for God's kingdom to grow big, the little seed has to sacrifice its existence and die. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you: Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"* (John 12:24). The destruction or the death of the old is a necessary step that cannot be skipped on the way to creating the new.

When the vessels of God seem to be broken and useless, there comes the opportunity for God's power to be made manifest. The history of the nation of Israel has always been the best example of this principle and has most clearly displayed, on a national scale, this Messianic principle, which is also manifested in Yeshua's personal biography. Most Christians saw the exile of Israel as an approval for their view that God had forsaken Israel as punishment for their denial of the Messiah, but one needs to see the other side of this story in order to understand its true meaning. Our nation was scattered all over the four corners of the earth with no homeland, no political leadership, and no military power to defend itself against its enemies and persecutors, indeed a sheep among wolves. By purely natural ways a nation in this state of affairs had no chance to survive. Yet it did survive, while empires of great might collapsed and perished. The "only" power the Jewish people had at any given time was the word of God and his promises that kept the nation going even through the worst of hardships. This hindsight view of Jewish history, leading to the current rebirth of the nation and its sacred language in its ancient homeland, may give a fresh perspective to linking the motif of the destruction of the old with the birth of the new, as seen in this ancient Talmudic legend.

The broad wall built by Hezekiah in the 8th Century BCE.

Photo by Ian W Scott



The Stones Will Cry Out

Hannah Kovner ¹

Walking in the Old City of Jerusalem brings overwhelming feelings of deep connection to the long history of our people, a connection that is at times almost physical. Ancient walls lie underneath modern pavements and streets, and the echoes of our past mix with the joyful noises of children. These sights and sounds are intricately bound up both in our destruction and in our restoration back to our land and destiny. Every corner, street, and square is a lesson from our history about the relationship between the Jewish people and our God, who brought us to this land thousands of years ago and gave it to us as an inheritance because of the faithfulness of one man – Abraham. God warned us, and when we did not listen, He took us away to the exile twice. Yet after two thousand years, He brought us back to the land to restore Israel in 1948. He gave us the chance to restore what we lost and to resettle the land of our forefathers. I find myself asking

as I walk through the streets of the Jewish Quarter, "When we will learn, change, find our true destiny as a nation, and find the way, the truth, and the life?"

On June 8, 1967, during the Six Day War, the paratrooper units of the IDF breached the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem, and in a few hours the entire Old City was in Israeli hands. After almost twenty years of absence when we returned to the Jewish Quarter, we found it all in ruins and mostly abandoned because Jordan's King Hussein had evacuated its population in order to rebuild and remodel the old houses. This fact gave archaeologists the amazing opportunity to dig freely and to look for what was left of our past, hidden deep under the surface. Intensive archaeological excavations that took place in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem at that time revealed the remains of the walls, houses, and streets from both the First and Second Temple periods.

One of my favorite places in the Old City is the broad city wall from the Eighth Century BCE. Right above it stands a colorful playground, which is always full of joyful and noisy children. When I lead tour groups in the Old City, I always

¹ Partially based on *The Jerusalem Archaeological Park* by Ronny Reich.

have to speak in a loud voice to be heard over the other sounds, but I do not mind because it is a great illustration of what revival is about, what hope is, and how faithful our God is. *"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.'" (Zech. 8:5)*

This broad wall used to be almost 8 meters (24 feet) high and about 2 meters (6 feet) wide. King Hezekiah built it on the eve of Sennacherib's Assyrian siege against Jerusalem in 722 BCE after the conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and most of the towns in Judea. During the period of Hezekiah's intensive building projects, the city of Jerusalem had expanded, and the growing population of the new neighborhoods to the west of the City of David was left unprotected. Hezekiah built the wall to surround the new neighborhoods and also built a new water tunnel, known today as Hezekiah's tunnel. 2 Chronicles 32:5 describes it in great detail. *"And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come, and that his purpose was to make war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his leaders and commanders to stop the water from the springs which were outside the city; and they helped him. . . . And he strengthened himself, built up all the wall that was broken, raised it up to the towers, and built another wall outside; also he repaired the Millo in the City of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance."* Archaeologists discovered an ancient Hebrew inscription in the tunnel that describes how the workers started hewing away at the rock from either end of the tunnel and met remarkably close to one another in the middle by following the sounds of each group's axes. This was quite an architectural feat in those times.

The remains of a tower from the same period are visible in the small museum next to Hezekiah's wall. The king's architectural efforts paid off, and Sennacherib was unable to conquer Jerusalem, according to God's promise to Isaiah. The city of Jerusalem remained independent for another 150 years.

Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, destroyed both Jerusalem and the First Temple in the year 586 BCE, and the Jews were exiled for 70 years before they returned under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah and rebuilt the city. The book of Nehemiah recounts the restoration of the old walls of the city and mentions Hezekiah's broad wall. *"And they fortified Jerusalem as far as the broad wall."* (Neh. 3:8)

Over the next 500 years, Jerusalem lay under Persian, Greek, and finally Roman dominance. Jerusalem continued to grow, and by the First Century BCE during King Herod's rule, it became one of the Mediterranean world's most

distinctive and famous cities, which could easily compete with the best architecture of Greece and Rome.

Not far from Hezekiah's wall, just across the central square of the Jewish Quarter, stands the Wahl museum, which allows today's tourist to go back nearly 2000 years in history by descending only eight steps. Underneath the modern houses of the Jewish Quarter lie remains of several luxury mansions destroyed by the Romans on 8 Elul, one month before the fall of the Second Temple. Only parts of the ground floors and water cisterns survived the destruction. The fancy mosaic floors and decorated marble furniture show the great luxury in which the residents of the Upper City lived. The burned wooden beam that once held the ceiling of the elegant reception hall of one Upper City mansion in the First Century CE recalls the destruction that the Temple and the city suffered at the hands of the Romans. Several handles of clay jars that contained tithes for the Temple have been found with inscriptions saying, "For Jerusalem," which witness to the days when Jews from all over the world worshipped in the Jerusalem Temple.

From the houses of Upper Jerusalem, one walks down to the southwestern corner of the Temple Mount to the place where the main street of Jerusalem in Herod's time ran along the Western Wall of the Temple Mount. The street is paved with large stones, some of which are more than 2-3 meters (6-9 feet) long. The series of shops along the street served as a local market and for offices for money changers. Here pilgrims to Jerusalem could acquire everything they needed to buy, both for ritual purposes and for everyday life. This main market street ran along the entire Western Wall of the Temple Mount and then continued down and south to the Pool of Siloam. Archaeologists in the City of David only recently discovered the actual pool, which bears typical Herodian characteristics. The huge set of steps next to what is known today as Robinson's Arch led up from the paved street to the Temple Plaza and the Royal Portico at the southern side of the Temple Mount. Josephus writes, "In the Western Part of the court [of the Temple], there were four gates. The first led to the palace by a passage over the intervening ravine, two others led to the suburb, and the last led to the other part of the city, from which it was separated by many steps going down to the ravine and from here up again to the hill."¹¹ The arch and the shops were the first part of the Temple compound to be ruined when the Romans, who after burning the Temple building itself on 9 Av in the year 70 CE, began deliberately destroying the Temple compound and the surrounding areas. No one can stay indifferent before the piles of stones that were

¹¹ Flavius, Josephus. *Antiquities* XV, 11.5



Photo by See The Holy Land

thrown from the Temple Mount during its destruction. One of them, which was once part of the southwestern corner of the Temple, bears the Hebrew inscription, "To the house of the Trumpet," which evokes the sound of shofar proclaiming the coming of the Sabbath or the Biblical Feasts.

Our Rabbis say that the First Temple was destroyed because of the sin of idolatry, but the Second was destroyed due to hatred towards one another. The Gospel of Luke describes Yeshua weeping over the walls of Jerusalem on the day of his triumphal entrance to the city, *"If you would only know on this day what would bring you peace, but it is hidden how from your eyes... The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you, and encircle you and hem you on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone upon another..."* (Luke 19:41-46). These stones are still piled in the sunlight as silent witnesses of these words. Yet the foundations of the Temple Mount, put together by the Herod's engineering genius can still be seen, hidden deep under the ground, if one walks through

the Western Wall tunnel under the homes of the Old City's Muslim Quarter. The largest of the stones of the retainer wall built by King Herod in order to enlarge the area on the top of the Temple Mount weighs over 570 cubic tons, (almost 610 American tons), and to this day with all our modern technology, we cannot figure out how this was done or how to repeat it.

Titus destroyed the Second Temple in 70 CE after squashing the First Jewish Revolt. Nearly seventy years later, after the second Jewish uprising, known as the Bar Kochba Revolt, the Romans expelled all the Jews from Judea, and changed the name of the province to Palestine, in honor of the worst enemies of the Israelites of the Bible—the Philistines. This action had only one goal, which was to mock and anger the Jews. The Roman Emperor Hadrian destroyed Jerusalem to its very foundations and built a new pagan city named Aelia Capitolina on its ruins. The main street of this city, the Cardo, is still visible today in the heart of the Jewish Quarter as the only remainder of Hadrian's desire to wipe the Jewish people and Jerusalem from the face of the earth.

From Jerusalem and Judea the Jews spread to the Galilee, the Golan, Babylon, and later to the four corners of the earth. Although we were separated from our home and Jerusalem for 1800 years, we never forgot it and never lost hope to return to the Promised Land from which we came and in which our future lies. *"If I forget you O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!"* (Psalm 137:5). We repeat these words even during our most joyful events like weddings, and Ashkenazi Jews still end the Passover Seder with the phrase, "Next year in Jerusalem!" The restoration of Jewish State in 1948 and the liberation of Jerusalem in 1967 were some of the greatest miracles of God that we witnessed in Twentieth Century.

Today the ancient stones are hidden under modern houses built over the remains of ancient Jerusalem. They lie silently, reminding us of our past days of glory as well as of our mistakes, sins, and transgressions. For those who are willing to hear the voices of the past, they cry out, trying to warn us and prevent the repetition of history. On the surface, today as always, Jerusalem is colorful, rich, and full of diversity. Its streets are full of living stones- Jews, Arabs, Christians, pilgrims, and tourists, who all come to connect to their roots. The children of today play next to the ancient ruins, giving us hope that the final redemption of Israel is at hand and that the Spirit of God will fill the dry bones of our people, giving an everlasting home to our nation and to all of humanity.



Photo by Avital Pinnick

Mourning our Unwillingness to Mourn

Shmuel Rabinowitz

The period in the Jewish calendar referred to as the "Three Weeks" is a unique time of mourning and repentance, which is marked at each end by a fast. The first fast occurs on the 17th of the month of Tammuz and the last one on the 9th day of the month of Av. This three week period is also known as the period of "between the straights" because of the multitude of catastrophic events that have occurred on these two fast days. The 17th of Tammuz commemorates the sin of the golden calf and the breaking of the first set of the Ten Commandments, the point when no more sacrifices were available to be offered during the siege of the First Temple, and when the city was set ablaze during the siege of the Second Temple. 9 Av was the day when the spies returned with an evil report about the land of Israel – leading to Israel's continued wandering in the desert, the destruction of both Temples, the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and many other devastating events.

During the Three Weeks there are three phases of mourning customs. Initially, the mourning customs involve refraining from haircuts or shaving, listening to music or dancing, and the prohibition of either getting married or

even participating in a wedding. For Ashkenazi Jews, the next phase begins on the first day of the month of Av in which the customs of mourning are intensified with the addition of a few more prohibitions. It is prohibited to eat meat or drink wine, recreationally bathe (i.e. go swimming) or even shower in hot water, and to wear freshly laundered clothing. For Sefardi Jews these types of restrictions generally begin on the Sunday of the week in which 9 Av falls. The third phase of mourning centers on the fast of the 9 Av itself. On this fast day the highest level of fasting and mourning customs goes into effect. Not only is it prohibited to eat or drink, but one also may not wear leather (in belts or shoes for example), wash or bathe, have marital relations, or put on perfume and the like. Torah learning (except for a few specific passages) is even prohibited on this day, as it is considered a joyful activity, and tefillin are not worn until midday. Generally, those fasting are seated on the floor or low stools as well.

This period of mourning is meant to primarily do two things. Firstly, we are supposed to remember what we are missing and not take this loss lightly. Secondly, we should use this recognition of what we are missing or of the disciplining actions of God towards us and seek to turn in

repentance. The mourning practices are especially useful in this regard, as one can quickly pass over the message inherent in this period of time. To counter this, these customs serve to work from the outside inward to remind us of what we may have never really realized we were missing or doing wrong.

Unfortunately, Yeshua's followers are often guilty of a certain arrogance when approaching mourning or fasting practices in Judaism. The general assumption is that we have already reached the goal and are above the need for such practices. One might assume that this is because Yeshua and his followers were known for not fasting in contrast to other Jewish groups of his day. Yet this was only because Yeshua was still with us then, and He did say that once the bridegroom is gone we would fast (Mat. 9:15).

Inherent in this outlook is a "sloppy" outlook on grace and the Gospel, in which little is done to produce fruits of faith(fulness). One who declares he has no sin and has no need to repent or to be deeply concerned about his sinful behavior has a very shallow understanding of Yeshua's message and unfortunately presents a poor image of our Messiah. We can fixate so much on the glorious promises in store for us one day that we lose focus of where we are now and what God would have us do. A regular period of repentance such as the Three Weeks is capable of helping us be more conformed to Yeshua's image. One who only looks at his goal but does not take account of his starting

point has no clear idea of the remaining distance or how to get there.

Another element that unconsciously lies beneath much denigration of these practices is the influence of Supersessionism in our outlook. Anti-Semitic Christians have long pounced on the destruction of the Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people as "proof" of the superiority of the Gospel and that God has abandoned the Jewish people and the Torah covenant He made with them. Most of us may not describe the situation quite like this, but we are still operating under a related theology. Usually, these sentiments are hidden behind the more acceptable view that the Temple service has been replaced in Yeshua. If our response to a fast such as 9 Av is still as an outsider or as one who no longer needs such things, however, such a crooked theology could still be in play. If anything, the conscious or subconscious presence of anti-Jewish theology among the followers of Yeshua is cause for great mourning and repentance. This hatred embedded in Christian theology has been around almost as long as the current Jewish exile and has probably led to even more loss of Jewish life than what occurred in 70 CE. We, of all people, should mourn and cry out for deliverance from its continued influence in our lives. Let us pray not only for a day when all of our people will believe in Yeshua but for a time when the world has removed the hatred that causes them to refuse to serve a Jewish king and savior.

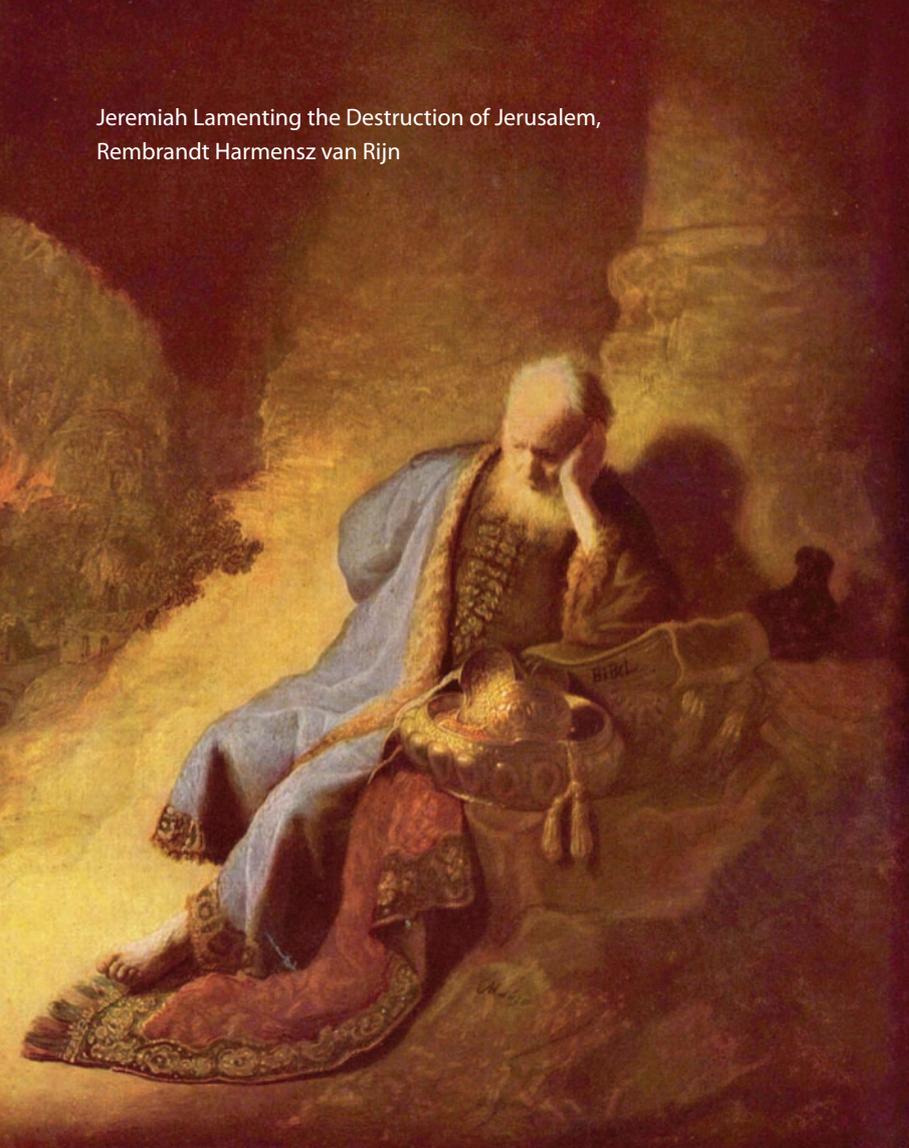
The Book of Lamentations

Amikam Tavor

The book of Eikah or Lamentations is the third in the list of five books, which appear together in the Hebrew Tanakh and are commonly known as "the five scrolls." These books, according to Jewish tradition, are read at the various feasts. We read Song of Songs on Pesach, the feast of the awakening spring. We read Ruth on Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks, which is the traditional birthday and the date of death of King David because this book describes his family background. The fourth scroll is Kohelet or Ecclesiastics which is read on Sukkot, the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, also called the Feast of Ingathering. It describes the realistic and sober worldview of a person in his later years. The fifth scroll, the book of Esther, is read on Purim, supplying the "historical" background for this merry feast.

In almost every Christian Bible, the book of Eikah immediately follows Jeremiah because an ancient Jewish tradition ascribes it to that "weeping Prophet," even though Eikah does not mention his name even once. The name Eikah comes from the fact that the first word of chapter 1 in Hebrew is "eikah," which means "how?" Its foreign name – "Lamentations" – has to do with its contents because the entire book contains bitter lamentations over the violent and cruel destruction of Jerusalem, the brutal massacre of many of her inhabitants, and the exile of the rest of them to Babylon.

The scroll is composed of five chapters, each of which is a complete lament in and of itself. As mentioned above, chapter 1 begins with the word "eikah." This word occurs 18 times in the Hebrew Bible, mostly as a poetic form of "how," but in 7 of those times, it is a word of lament, with 4 of them appearing in this book alone. In Judges 20:3, the children



of Israel ask regarding the horrible rape of the concubine in Giv'ah: **"How was this wickedness?"** Isaiah mourns for sinful Jerusalem in Isaiah 1:21 saying, *"How is the faithful city become a harlot?! It was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers!"* Jeremiah 38:17 describes the international grief over the destruction of Moab, crying out: **"How was the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod?!"** The last four references are all found in the book of Lamentations: **"How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people?! How is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!"** (1:1), **"How hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!"** (2:1), **"How is the gold become dim! How is the most fine gold changed! The stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street. The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter?"** (4:1-2).

Chapters 1, 2, and 4 of Eikah have 22 verses each, arranged in alphabetical order according to the Hebrew alphabet. Chapter 3 has 66 verses and is also arranged by a threefold alphabetical order, namely that every 3 verses begin with the same letter in successive order. Chapter 5 also has 22 verses but is not arranged according to the Hebrew alphabet. All the chapters of this book are written in a poetical elegiac style known as lament poems.

This scroll is ascribed to Jeremiah because he was rightfully referred to as "the prophet of the Destruction." God compelled him to utter prophecies of wrath and condemnation upon his beloved people and to warn them against the soon coming catastrophe. *"Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes - a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"* (Jer. 9:1). He warned the Kings of Judah about the siege which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, would lay against Jerusalem. Jeremiah had to suffer much abuse from his opponents, both from the royal court as well as from the self-appointed prophets that officiated in the court in those days. He was beaten, imprisoned, and even thrown into a pit full of clay as a penalty for his prophecies of wrath because he did not "tow the political line" that was popular in

his day. He even advised his people to surrender to and cooperate with the king of Babylon, which caused them to accuse him of treason and punish him accordingly. He was present in the city during the siege, and when the enemy penetrated the walls, he witnessed the Temple set on fire with his own eyes. He also saw the mass suicide of the priests, who threw themselves alive into the flames, as well as the horrible massacre of his people. We read about it in Psalm 137, which bemoans the destruction of the Temple and the exile to Babylon. *"O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones!"* (Psalm 137:8-9)

There is one Jewish legend that says, "As Jeremiah the prophet went forth from Anatot to Jerusalem, he lifted up his eyes and saw the smoke of the Temple rising up high. He said to himself, 'Is it possible that the children of Israel made penitence and are offering the sacrifices? Isn't it the smoke of the frankincense rising up?' So he came nearer and stood on the wall. Seeing the Temple made heaps of

stones and the wall of Jerusalem broken down, he started screaming and saying, *'Thou hast tempted me, O Lord, and I was tempted!'* He went on his way, screaming out, 'What way did those sinners go? Which road did the lost ones take? Let me also go and get lost with them!' He went on and saw the road soaked with blood and the land stained with the blood of her killed ones on both sides. He looked down to the ground and saw the footsteps of suckling babes and infants taken in exile, so he bent down to earth and kissed them. As he came to the Diaspora, he hugged and kissed them. As he saw a group of young men locked up in fetters, he joined his head to them, but Nebuchadnezzar came and removed him from them. He returned and saw a group of old people in chains and put his head in their midst, but Nebuchadnezzar came and took him away. He wept towards them and they towards him. As he came to the river Euphrates, Nebuchadnezzar turned and said to him, 'If it pleaseth thee, come with me to Babylon!' So Jeremiah thought to himself, 'If I follow them to Babylon, there will remain no one to comfort the remnant left in Jerusalem!' So he departed from them. As the exiles raised their eyes and saw Jeremiah leaving them, they cried out aloud and said, 'Our father Jeremiah, are you leaving us alone? As it is written, *"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."* Jeremiah answered and said to them, 'I call heaven and earth to be my witnesses, that if you had wept only once when you were still in Jerusalem, you would not be exiled!'"

All the verses of Eikah mourn for the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile and describe the atrocities that were committed in the city during the siege as well as the writer's emotions and laments about those atrocities. They bemoan the corpses of the victims lying unburied in the streets, the women and young virgins brutally violated, and the innocent children and infants who were slain. Yet all throughout this book, we witness more grief for the severe punishment that befell the Israelites and far less sincere repentance for the sins which brought about that penalty. Here and there we do find several verses which call to true repentance, such as the following precious pearls: *"Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned!"* (3:40-43) as well as the closing verse of the scroll, reminding us of the age old supplication: *"Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old!"* (5:21).

I Psikta Rabbati 26, Amanita 29; Ptichta Eichah Rabba.

It is customary to have a partial mourning period on the three weeks preceding 9 Av (from the 17 of Tammuz to 9 Av), commonly known as the days of *"beyn haM'tzarim"* (between the straits), based on this verse: *"Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwells among the heathen, she finds no rest: all her persecutors overtook her **between the straits.**"* (Lam.1:3) On those days we neither shave nor cut our hair, as well as abstaining from eating meat and drinking wine. On 9 Av it is customary to mourn and fast from morning to evening; we sit on the floor in socks or even barefooted, reading special lamentations written for that particular day, mourning for the destructions of both Temples.

Still it is necessary to remember that there is a spot of light even in this dire day because of the knowledge that if God fulfills his negative promises, He will also fulfill the positive ones, as this Rabbinic legend teaches: "Rabban Gamliel, R. El'azar, R. Yehoshua, and R. Akiva were walking on the way... ascending up to Jerusalem. As they reached Mount Scopus, they rent their clothes, and as they drew near the Temple mount, they saw a fox coming out of the place where the Holy of Holies used to stand. So they began to weep, but R. Akiva started laughing. 'Why do you laugh?' they asked him, and he answered back, 'Why are you weeping?' So they said to him, 'The place of which it has been written, *"...The stranger that comes near shall be put to death"* (Num 1:51) is now trodden by foxes, shall we not weep?' Then he answered them, 'This is exactly why I laugh! For it is said, *"And I took unto me faithful witnesses to record, even Uriah the priest and Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah"* (Isaiah 8:2). What do Uriah and Zechariah have in common? Uriah lived during the First Temple period and Zechariah during the days of the Second Temple! But the Scriptures have connected Zechariah's prophecy with that of Uriah. Uriah has said, *"Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest"* (Micah 3:12), while in Zechariah it is written, *"There shall yet dwell old men and old women in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age."* (Zech. 8:4). As long as Uriah's prophecy was not fulfilled, I was afraid that Zechariah's prophecy would not be fulfilled either. But now that Uriah's prophecy has come to pass, I am convinced that Zechariah's prophecy will be fulfilled as well! So they answered him saying, 'Akiva, you have comforted us...'"

May it be God's will that our sadness will soon turn into joy, and our Tisha b'Av mourning into gladness!

II Makkot 24; Sifre, Ekev.



Pillars of Zion - David Bar Meir

and there were some famous rabbis in my family line. My grandmother was from the Jungreiss family, which even today has several very renowned rabbis in it. I was one of four brothers, and we had three sisters too. I received a cheder education with the rabbi from the village. At home we spoke mostly Hungarian, though we also knew Yiddish.

Hungary had a lot of people with strong Anti-Semitic sentiment, but I never saw it go beyond hatred and threats until the Holocaust. My mother was always a Zionist and thought we should move to Israel, but my father was not willing. She convinced some people in our family to move to Israel before World War 2, but we did not go. In 1932 she convinced my father to go to Israel for a short visit to see about the possibility of us moving there. When he came back, he said that it would be all right to move there eventually but that we still had plenty of time before it became necessary. He thought the situation in Europe was not yet so bad as to justify such an extreme move. My mother disagreed, but then in 1936 when I was 10, she died, and my father re-married someone who was content to stay in Hungary.

My older brother Yosef had moved to Israel in 1934, but after my mother died, my sister asked him to come back to Hungary to help with my father's general store. This was a huge mistake to ask him to come back because there was a law at that time in Hungary that all the adult men had to serve in the Hungarian army. Most Jews found ways not to do this because it was a very bad place for Jews to be, and my brother also did not want to serve in the army. Yet when he came back into Hungary, they caught him at the border and forced him to go into the army. He suffered a lot there and spent a lot of his service time sitting in a military prison. While he was in that prison, he met some other prisoners who were from a pacifist Christian sectarian group in Hungary, which loved Jews and kept Saturday as the Sabbath. When my brother saw how they studied the Bible and were not anti-Semites and loved Israel, he was very impressed with them. When the army finally freed him from jail and let him go home, these pacifist prisoners gave him a parting gift of a Bible that also contained a New Testament. It was in Hungarian, not Hebrew, which was just as well because we did not know Hebrew very well then.

After reading the New Testament, Yosef started believing in Yeshua and convinced me that I should also. We both were adamant that we wanted to remain Orthodox

Elizabeth Wakefield

David Wactor, also known as David Bar Meir, is a well-known figure in Jerusalem. He can always be seen in town collecting leftover food from soup kitchens to give to poor elderly people, hanging up posters calling for repentance even in the Orthodox neighborhoods, and walking around with a pace that is unusual for anyone who is 84 years old. A man of a still bright mind, he always has a witty remark or a quote from the Torah or a rabbi to say to anyone he meets. He has the remarkable distinction to be one of a very few men of his generation who both is a believer in Yeshua and an Orthodox Jew, and he is a fixture at Netivyah. Although he is a Holocaust survivor, he has been in Israel since before it was founded as a state, so it is easy to forget that there was ever a time when he lived somewhere else. When one stops to ask him about his life, however, it is clear that he has lived through many interesting experiences and done many things in his life in order to gain the wisdom and humor that he displays. Here is the story of his early life as he told us.

I was born in a small village called Apz in Hungary in 1926. It was a mostly Catholic village, although there were 32 Jewish families who lived there too. Some of the Jews were Orthodox, and some were not. We were Orthodox,

Jews no matter what though. When my father caught me reading the New Testament, he was very worried and asked the village rabbi to try to talk me out of it. When my father and the rabbi asked me why I was reading that book, I told them that Yosef and I had no intention of becoming Christians, so after that they just left us alone and let us think whatever we wanted.

In 1938 when I was 12, I stole the afikomen at our family's Seder for Passover so I could ask a special request. It is traditional in Ashkenazi families that the child who finds the afikomen (the middle piece of broken matza that the father hides during the Seder) can ask his parents for anything to "redeem" the afikomen back, so the Seder can be finished. When my father asked me what I wanted in return for it, I told him I wanted to make aliyah. He asked what I would do there alone as a 12 year old, and I said that I would do whatever every other Israeli child does. He did not let me go, of course, but in 1939 when the war broke out, my brother Yaakov moved to Israel. Another one of my brothers tried to go to Israel too, but there were not enough places in the ship, so he tried to come back home. On his way home, the Russians or the Nazis caught him and sent him to a work camp in the Ukraine from which he never returned. Someone later told us that he froze to death there.

Hungary did not start sending its Jews to the concentration camps until 1944. They sent my brother Yosef to a work camp in Ukraine also, but he survived. I was taken to a work camp in a small village in Hungary to build a German air force base. Sadly, all the women and the elderly were deported to Auschwitz and killed in the gas chambers. My father, his second wife, and my sisters were taken to Aushwitz and died there. The Germans told us they would come back after the war, but it was a lie. We only found out after the war that they had been killed there. I know it was a huge mistake that we did not move to Israel when we had a chance. They would have lived through the war if we had.

Since my brother Yaakov had moved to Israel, which at that time was ruled by England, he volunteered to join the British army during the war. He even fought in Germany and fortunately was never captured. After the war he worked in an office that searched for missing persons, and so he was able to find Yosef and me. His office was close to the concentration camp of Bergen-Belson, so when we went to reunite with him in Germany, we got to see the camp. It was a terrible sight.

I was really not surprised that the Holocaust happened. I saw the prophecies in the Tanakh that Israel would undergo

suffering if we did not follow the Torah, and I knew that we had been disobedient. I did not fall into despair after the Holocaust because I knew that it had all been written in the Bible in advance and had simply come true according to God's words. I knew that He would keep his positive promises too someday when we deserved them, so I kept living in that hope and knowledge.

After the war Yaakov said he could send us to Israel without having to go through all the normal bureaucratic procedures of getting immigration certificates because he was in the British army. We were stubborn though and wanted to do things the hard way. This was probably a mistake because I had to take a long roundabout trip through Italy where I boarded an illegal ship for Israel in 1946. I was only 20 years old. At that time, the British only allowed 1,500 Jews to enter Israel every month because the Arabs did not want any more Jews to move there. Many ships tried to run the blockade and enter Israel illegally with the Jews who survived the Holocaust and just wanted to find a safe place to live. Some of the ships made it, and others did not. The British navy caught the ship I was on and sent all of us passengers to a refugee camp in Cyprus. I had to stay there 5 months to wait my turn to be part of the monthly quota. Yosef only was able to come 2 years later.

When I arrived in Israel, I "Hebraicized" my last name to Bar Meir. I spent my first year in Israel unsuccessfully looking for a job, but then the War of Independence broke out. Plenty of soldiers were needed, so I volunteered for the Palmach. Most of the soldiers in the Palmach were secular Jews from kibbutzim who hated God and Orthodox Jews. There were only 100 of us who were religious, and we formed a separate company and made our own kosher kitchen so we would be able to eat. The secular soldiers used to make fun of us a lot and treat us badly. Not many of the soldiers in the Palmach had any experience in fighting, so they gave us a crash course in how to use our weapons and sent us out to the battlefield in hopes for a miracle. We fought in many bloody battles in the War for Independence. I fought in Lud, Ramle, and the villages around Latrun in the Jerusalem area. Once that area was secured, they sent us to the battles up in the Galilee, so we fought around Tzfat and even in Lebanon. We did not have much training and were not such great soldiers, but in truth God was fighting the battles for us. He frightened the Arabs so much during these battles that they even started seeing Jewish soldiers instead of trees and ran away in terror. Finally we won the war, and Israel became a free and independent Jewish state.

To be continued...



Castelo de Vide

News from Netivyah

Joseph Shulam

The political news from Israel is very tumultuous these days, but we will leave this type of news to the world media frenzy and instead update our readers on what is happening at Netivyah. One very important tool for bringing the blessings of God on our world is to stand with what God is doing in Israel. Israel is a key for understanding God and his revelation through the Prophets and the seed of the Patriarchs, Yeshua the son of David.

We recently had an interesting seminar at Netivyah with one of Israel's top botanists, Avinoam Danin of the Hebrew University, who presented his research on the botany of the Shroud of Turin, the possible burial cloth of Jesus of Nazareth. The shroud shows the image of a crucified man on both its front and back. The details of the crucifixion on it are remarkably like those described in First Century accounts, including the crown of thorns, the spear wound

and other human blood stains, the marks of lashing with a Roman scourge, and the herbs placed on the dead body. The lecture was well attended, even by a number of professors and scholars from local academic institutions. One of the very fascinating things presented is that three of the flowers found on the shroud could only be found in the Jerusalem area during the months of March and April, around Passover. One special thing Netivyah does is to connect the academic community of Jerusalem, which is a rich source of knowledge, with the disciples of Yeshua who are thirsty for more understanding of God's Word.

Since our last *Teaching from Zion* in English, Netivyah has published a Hebrew magazine called *Davar Acher*, which means "something else" in English. This Hebrew magazine is special because there is not much local Hebrew literature that speaks of Yeshua our Messiah in a Jewish context. Most of the Hebrew Messianic literature in Israel is actually a translation of out-of-date Christian books that are not even popular any longer in the traditional Christian denominations. If you have enjoyed this magazine, you know why Israeli disciples of Yeshua will enjoy *Davar Acher*. Several months ago we also published a revised translation in Hebrew of our book *Hidden Treasures*, a book on the hermeneutics of the New Testament from a First Century Jewish background. The English version has also been translated into German, Russian, Portuguese, and Korean. We have received many good reviews on this book from people who believe that it is a must-have for all those who want to understand the mechanics of the New Testament.

Our court battle for Netivyah's building continues, as we wait for a hearing in the High Court of the State of Israel this fall. The judge in the District Court gave a very balanced and just judgment to allow us to enlarge our auditorium and build an additional floor and a shelter, but the Orthodox Jewish organizations that oppose us appealed the decision to the High Court. This is a monumental challenge because the High Court is the last legal station to which citizens of this country can appeal. We need for the disciples of Yeshua worldwide to stand with us and help us with prayer and finances so that we can win this case and build. If God does not help us, no disciples of Yeshua will be able to build or buy property in this land for a long time. Netivyah is a flag-ship ministry of teaching God's Word, research, and humanitarian aid for the poor of Jerusalem. Please pray for us and help us win this important battle for the Kingdom of God.

Kol HaYeshuah Radio continues to present an hour of Hebrew Bible study and a variety of programs that enrich Hebrew and Russian language listeners all around the

Middle East every night. It is wonderful to see many younger people eager to participate and produce programs of the Good News in Hebrew now.

Netivyah's food distribution program just keeps growing. We have made some changes to accommodate more people, and now we are feeding well over 150 families, which translates into about 500 individuals. We have capped the budget at \$26,000 per month, which includes the salaries of three workers. Although we have had to again stop accepting new people into the program, we have more people calling us and knocking on our door every day to request our aid. Our hearts break every time we have to say no to poor people who need food and tell stories of empty cupboards, so we are trying to feed as many of them as possible.

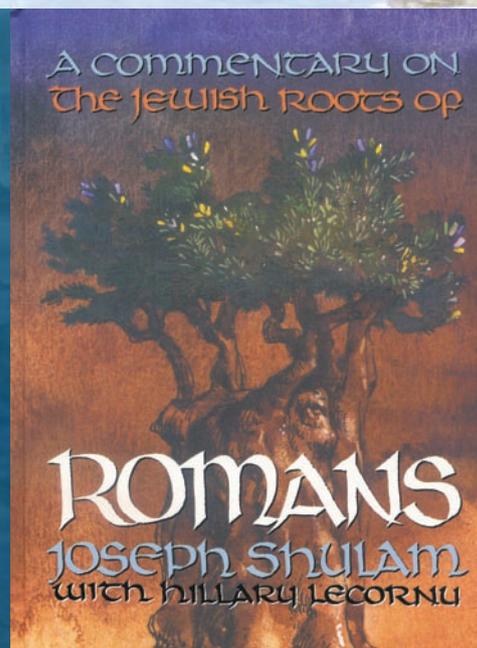
Netivyah is now organizing the first International Conference on Restoring the Lost Heritage of the Marrano (Anussim) Jews of Portugal. The conference will be held in Castelo de Vide, Portugal, on December 3-6, 2010 and will host some of the top scholars in the world who are mobilizing for the sake of these lost Jews who have been living under the shadow of the Inquisition for more than 500 years. Castelo de Vide is one of places where the Jews from Spain crossed to Portugal to escape the persecution of the Spanish Inquisition, but these same Jews were forcibly converted just 3 years later. This city is once again opening its doors to welcome the Jewish people and to help bring understanding to the world about the suffering of these Anussim and their desire to return to their Jewish identity and have a relationship with the Jewish community and Israel. We, together with Castelo de Vide and Abrajin in Brazil, are planning this conference for scholars and for everyone who loves Israel and the Jewish people and believes in the Restoration of both Israel and the Church. Leaders from all over the world will participate in this conference to show their stand with the Jewish people and call for justice, repentance, and reconciliation with these millions of people who still hold their true identity in secret. Both Jews and Christians must unite to lift the deep fear the Inquisition has built into their souls.

I would like to invite you to pray for Netivyah and for fruition and success for these many great opportunities that the Lord has put on our plate. You can join us both in prayer and support as you partner with us to do these great things that will change the map of the Middle East and simultaneously bring glory to God and Yeshua our Messiah.

A Commentary on the Jewish Roots of Romans

By Joseph Shulam with Hilary LeCornu

Numerous references to the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and Rabbinic literature make this commentary a great tool for all who wish to inquire into the meaning of this crucial New Testament book. This work will prove an indispensable resource for all scholars interested in the early Jewish context of Romans and the Jewishness of the faith of First Century believers in Jesus.



Limited Stock - \$125

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