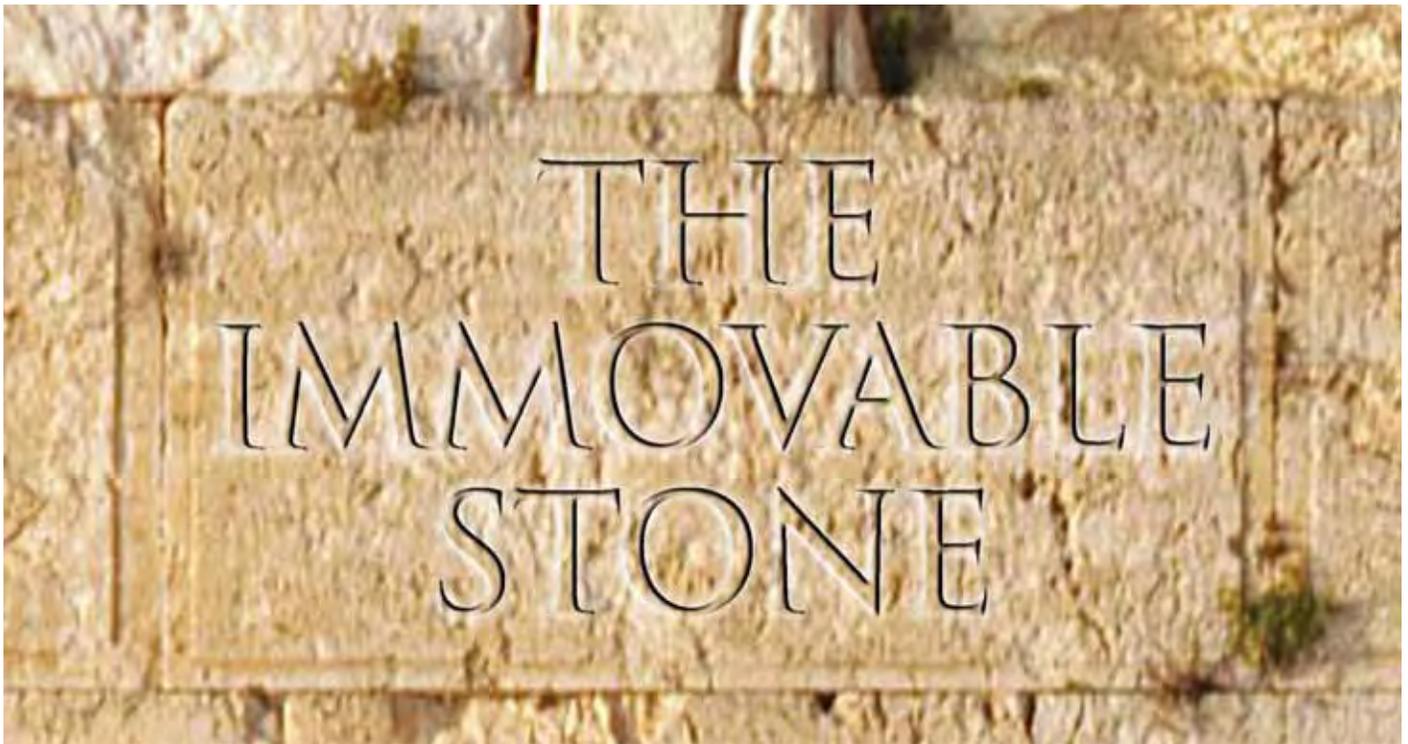




Oasis

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REFLECTIONS ON THE 14TH OF ADAR

By Marty Shoub

I can well remember the first thuds of the Katyushas on July 16, 2006. This was the first day that Haifa and the surrounding area came under sustained rocket attack. I had the door open and was ready to leave for the Tents of Mercy building when I heard an unfamiliar sound – Katyusha rockets exploding all around me. I was stunned. As a new immigrant to Israel I never had to process this sort of information before. It slowly dawned on me, “Someone is trying to kill us.”

To add to my perplexity I also had to figure out the preponderance of condemnation I was hearing on the only English radio station in range, the venerable BBC. We had been attacked, 8 of our soldiers were dead, 2 wounded and 2 more kidnapped. (Later

we learned they too died shortly after the Hezbollah raid.) Israel responded and the world’s opinion soon castigated Israel as the aggressor and Lebanon as the victim. I am from a peaceful country and had never had to seriously deal with the issues of war. It seemed clear to me that Israel was the victim of Hezbollah aggression but the vast majority of the public opinion on the BBC radio was sharply negative towards Israel – much of it seethingly so. It slowly dawned on me, “Most people hate us!”

Based on the reaction against Israel in the Second Lebanon War, I expected an outcry of condemnation against Israel in response to the recent Gaza offensive, “Operation Cast Lead.” To be sure the mood in Israel was, “Well it is about time the IDF finally

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The New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3)

took action.” The protests quickly organized around the world. Negative opinion is one thing but the calls for Israel’s destruction, the comparison of Israel to the Nazis and the offensive in Gaza to the Holocaust were so over the top, it was hard for me to grasp exactly what spring of bitterness was pooling up this flood of anger and hatred.

As a child I was always struck by the line in the Passover Haggadah that states, **“In every generation there are those who rise up to destroy us, but the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand.”** As a teenager, typically self absorbed and with little interest in my heritage I wondered if my forebears had some sort of twisted victim complex. This month we celebrate Purim (the 14th of Adar in the Jewish calendar), the deliverance from Haman the Agagite who rose up in Mordechai and Esther’s gen-

eration to destroy our people – *But the Holy One, blessed be He, saved us from his hand.*

This Purim, the angry cries from protesters around the world to rid the earth of the Jewish people move the story from history to present reality. The prophet Zechariah predicted, **“And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.”** (Zech. 12:3)

As we move rapidly towards “that day” I am reminded of the writer of Hebrews exhortation, **“Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard...”** (Heb. 2:1) Now is the time to pay attention. In hindsight, the Jewish people

understand that our passive response to the Nazi regime was a terrible mistake. Because our people were unable to conceive of the extent of depravity a “civilized” society such as modern Germany was capable of, we were unprepared for action. Mordechai knew better – he didn’t organize a partisan resistance, but guided by the wisdom of God he served as a wise counselor to exhort Queen Esther to action. He understood that if Esther took a passive role, she and her household would perish (Esther 4:14). Today, we desperately need the wisdom of God to discern the signs of the times and even more so to be like those wise men of Issachar who knew **“what Israel ought to do.”** (I Chron. 12:32)

But despite the threats surrounding us (I am not just referring to the threats

against the Jewish people – the enemy of our souls seeks to devour all people of faith), we are not to fear. Try as they might, the stone is just too heavy for the nations to heave out of the way. Purim demonstrates that the unseen hand ultimately hangs the enemy on the gallows he had made. **“He who sits in the heavens shall laugh...”** (Ps. 2:4) Purim is the time to join with our Heavenly Father in the laugh that dismisses fear and sees beyond the raging of the nations to the joyful outcome.

One day, the immovable stone will be transformed into the most glorious and awesome stonework that the divine mind can conceive. The city that all nations will try in vain to remove will one day be the dwelling place of God and man together.

Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God...And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. (Rev. 21:3, 10)

The Book of Revelation tells us that the kings of the nations will come into this lavish stone city to present the glory of their nations before the King of all nations – the Kings of Kings (see Rev. 21:26). As they do so, they will pass through the gates that bear inscribed over their doors the names of the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12); a reminder to all of God’s sovereign choice to use Israel to test the nations and ultimately through the King of Israel to save them. ✡

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Our Vision:

Tents of Mercy - to participate in today’s historic exodus by assisting Israel’s returning exiles.

No spectators in the Kingdom - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

Come back Yeshua - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.



By Eitan Shishkoff

I SRAEL is experiencing a severe drought. On a recent visit to the Sea of Galilee (Hebrew: Kinneret), I was shocked to see dry land that for all of our years in Israel had been covered with water. Statistics charting the water level of the Kinneret are carefully kept, because it is the country's primary reservoir. This scenic fresh water lake is currently below the "red line"- the point at which it is ecologically inadvisable to draw water. We are now heading toward the "black line"- at which point the weight of the lake's total mass will not be sufficient to hold enough back pressure on the salt springs under the lake-bed. If the salt springs are released Kinneret's waters would become permanently brackish.

In the national press, pundits analyze the available technological solutions to our intense lack of water. Buying water was once thought a viable supplement, but our deal with Turkey fell through. We are one of the world's major builders of desalination systems, yet here at home

we have failed to utilize our own cutting edge technology. Another plan involves bringing water from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea. This radical redirection of sea water to the Salt Sea could produce 1.3 billion cubic meters of desalinated water annually as well as 2500 megawatt of hydroelectric peak-load power.

As one letter to the editor in the Jerusalem Post Magazine, pointed out "It has been known for at least 3,000 years that this region has a problem with water. After all, Abraham went down to Egypt because of a drought." So why has it been so tough for the governments of the last 25-30 years to take action? According to Arnon Sofer, a professor at Haifa University's Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, "Had the Water Authority's minimal desalination plan of 2002 been implemented, there would be no crisis now." Israel's failure to have ample desalination facilities on stream by now is largely the result of a parsimonious Finance Ministry. Treasury bureaucrats

stymied cabinet decisions, leaving us in the absurd position of providing cutting-edge water technology assistance to other countries, while at home this enviable know-how was not being put to ample use." (Jerusalem Post, January 22, 2009 "Drought and the Treasury")

In another article entitled "Water Authority experts plumb for solutions to bone-dry winter. January rainfall worst in recorded Israeli history," Ehud Zion Waldoks concludes that "In spite of a successful conservation campaign among the public, cutting 100 million cubic meters (MCM) from agriculture's allocation, reducing gardening to the bare minimum and desalinating water, the paucity of rainfall this year has Water Authority forecasters predicting a shortage."

From 1980 to 2007 the median rainfall in Lake Kinneret was 328 MCM per year. By last year's winter it had dropped to 82 MCM! "Current drought predictions far exceed those the authority had included in its emergency plan" Waldoks cautions. This is truly a national crisis.

SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS OF DROUGHT

Rain, in the history of God's dealings with Israel, has long been a tool in the hand of the Almighty - a tool to get our attention. The lack of it ultimately creates famine. Its abundance ensures lush fields and bumper crops. The Lord is not even subtle about His policy of withholding rain as a disciplinary device.

God immediately reveals Himself in Genesis as the Sender of rain. In creation, the flood and Egypt's plagues, rain comes at Heaven's command. Likewise, the lack of rain is His purview. In Torah (Levit. 26:4-20; Deut. 11:13-17; 28:12-24) rain is His promise to those who walk in covenant obedience and drought is forecast for those who turn to idols.

Israel's prophets left no doubt about drought as an expression of God's disfavor. Through Isaiah the Lord said that he could find no justice in Israel or in Judah, therefore **"I will command the clouds that they rain no rain on it."** (Isa. 5:6) Jeremiah also links drought with judgment:

"Judah mourns, and her gates languish; they mourn for the land, and the cry of Jerusalem has gone up. Their nobles have sent their lads for water, they went to the cisterns and found no water. They returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded...because the ground is parched. For there was no rain in the land..." (Jer. 14:2-4)

OUR INTERCESSORY ROLE IN BRINGING RAIN

But the situation is not hopeless, as we see in Joel's writings. He unhesitatingly



A Galilee valley lush from winter rains

connects the arrival of physical rain AND the rain of Israel's end-time revival with weeping intercession.

"Let the priests, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar. Let them say 'Spare your people, O Lord'...And He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors will be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil...And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions...I will pour out my Spirit in those days." (Joel 2:23-24, 28-29)

The Bible is equally clear in assigning us the faith task of releasing rain and revival through repentance and prayer. In dedicating the Temple, King Solomon understood the place of intercession in changing drought to showers.

"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, when they pray toward this place and confess your name, and turn from their sin because you afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, that you may teach them the good way in which they should walk, and send rain on your land which you have given to your people as an inheritance." (1Kings 8:35-36)

This inspired prayer directs today's intercessors how to respond to drought. The prophet Elijah is singled out in the New Covenant as an inspiration to all of us who think our prayers are of little effect - and the specific example? Rain:

"...The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven

gave rain, and the earth produced fruit." (James 5:16-18)

RAIN DANCES?

In the great Southwest of the United States, where we enjoyed our formative years as a family, the Pueblo, Hopi and Zuni Indian traditions all include elaborate prayer-dance ceremonies to call upon the Great Spirit for rain. Though I no longer refer to God as the Great Spirit, I can admire their focused intensity in praying for the blessing of rain from heaven. I'm not suggesting that we "dance for rain" but the biblical mandate of fasting, repentance, worship and prayer is most certainly called for. Is this desperate need for rain in Israel



The bone-dry southern desert

a signal from the Almighty to increase our dependence upon Him and turn us back to a faith-based life? I believe it is. Learning radical dependence on our God will be essential in the climactic days to come.

When I started this article, it began raining! It rained on and off all day. It was certainly not enough, and the weather predictors called for dry days ahead, but it was a breakthrough. I'll take it. It's time to take up our positions before the mercy seat of God. King Solomon instructs us to PRAY, CONFESS HIS NAME and TURN FROM OUR SIN. Then God will FORGIVE OUR SIN, TEACH US THE GOOD WAY, and SEND RAIN ON OUR LAND. Israel's drought mirrors our spiritually dry condition. We thirst for Living Water. ✡