Oasis

A Publication of Tents of Mercy Congregation (Ohalei Rachamim) ~ Volume 11, Issue 4

AWAKENING

By Eitan Shishkoff

The Hebrew word for revival is "awakening." As a community, we recently set aside five days to fast and pray for spiritual awakening. Sensing a dryness of routine, longing for more of Messiah's resurrection life, feeling too distant from our fellow Israelis - the Tents of Mercy elders decided it was time take action.

Each day we gathered morning and evening to seek the face of God, to renew our passion for Yeshua. The experience of His presence was our reward. Cleansing, clarity, inspiration, heavenly perspective and a fresh burden for our neighbors - all of these came to us as we waited on the Lord (Isaiah 40:31). We began each session with praise and worship to fulfill our priestly calling to minister to the Lord, to bless Him day and night. Fittingly, the Torah portion that week pictured Israel's priests, washed, anointed and dressed in regal colors.

FASTING: PUNISHMENT OR GATEWAY?

Fasting is a funny thing. At first it seems like such outright self-punishment. But when the body adjusts, and when we build this phenomenal spiritual tool into our physiological memory, it becomes an amazing gateway to rediscover the wonders of knowing our God. In the Scriptures, corporate fasts released dramatic deliverance, repentance, revelation and revival in the times of Jehoshaphat, Jonah, Esther, Ezra, Nehemiah, Paul and others. The prophet Joel, specifically addressing the end times, says **"Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord…for the day of the Lord is at hand…Let the priests who minister to the Lord weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say 'Spare your people, O Lord.'"** (Joel 1:14; 2:17)

The prophet tells us not to fear, but to be glad and rejoice for the Lord has done marvelous things (2:21). He envisions a time of the Spirit being poured out and a bountiful harvest. And this is in the midst of the last days' shakings! I hear Joel telling us, that to prepare ourselves for the coming catastrophes and unprecedented opportunities we must gather together as God's people, offering

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ourselves to Him with fasting and prayer, worship and waiting. This is not to minimize humanitarian aid, discipling or evangelism. Those must continue to increase as we approach Yeshua's return. But the readying of our spirits requires this emptying of our own strength and receiving His. When we fast there is literally less of us and more of Him.

REND THE HEAVENS!

From day to day the word of God became more precious, more alive. Our devotion increased and a tenderness of heart set in. Tears were not unusual as the Spirit dealt with our hardness of heart and self-centeredness. Then He broke us with His burden for the lost, diseased, raped, oppressed, and the dying all around us. Certain themes and areas of intercession gripped us. We are only beginning to learn the "dance" of the Lord. Slowing down to allow Him to impart more of His heart in a specific district of prayer. At other times the crescendo of spiritual warfare rises and He wants to catch us up in His fervor against the enemy - contending for those who are bound, clearing obstacles to genuine revival.

"Rend the heavens and come down!" from Isaiah 64:1 was the cry of our heart heading into the five days. We called on the Lord to revive us (Habakkuk 3:2; Isaiah 57:15; Psalm 89:6-9). We interceded for healing in our families and especially for our men to take their places of compassionate spiritual leadership (out of this is coming a fresh season of ministry to men in our congregation). Raising up the next generation of Israeli disciples was another intercessory focus - to see our youth and young adults liberated to love and live for Yeshua whole-heartedly. Concerned for our brothers and sisters in Arad and Ashkelon, who are buffeted by persecution with public demonstrations against their Messianic faith, we brought them before the Throne of Grace. Though the earthquake and Tsunami had not yet hit Japan, the streets of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Bahrain and Yemen were shaking with protesting citizens. We asked God for protection on the believers and freedom for the gospel in these insecure places.

CHALLENGES

This all sounds good, but there are challenges along the way. Though our congregation is a Hebrew-speaking assembly, we are multi-lingual congregation. In order to understand what someone is praying, their prayer must be translated into at least two other languages. This can make it mighty hard to keep a flow of anointed prayer going. We are also multi-generational. We took one night to incorporate the young people; they led the worship and prayer. But in order to hear their earnest prayers we had to ask the older folks to ease off and give the kids a chance. I sometimes think that corporate prayer is both the most difficult facet of spiritual community to pull off and the most rewarding.

There is nothing of "automatic pilot" in leading these meetings. It requires a discerning, Spirit-filled leader, capable of drawing out participation, staying on topic and coordinating with the worship team. I especially enjoyed sharing this duty with Avishalom, our local pastor and Andrey, our youth pastor. Meeting with God for the seemingly simple purpose of worship and prayer, harps and bowls, involves a battle for unity, Holy Spirit flow, relevance and hearing from God.

WE ARE HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS!

On the last day of our fasting season, we were met by a stirring emphasis from the Lord. During the mornings and evenings of worship and prayer we had been drawn to the phenomenal truth that He has adopted us as His sons and daughters **"who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."** (John 1:13) It felt as if we were discovering this most basic aspect of our relationship with the Father for the first time. We realized that it changes everything. If we are sons and daughters of the Ruler of the universe, what do we lack? What can we not accomplish when walking in His will? We need never be alone, rejected, fearful, defeated, robbed. In contrast to an "orphan spirit" that always expects to be exploited, passed by and left without - the spirit of adoption cries **"Abba, Father...and if children, then heirs with Messiah"** (Romans 8:15,17 [WOW!])

Twenty years ago Robin Williams and Robert DeNiro starred in a film called "Awakenings." It was based on a true story of a doctor who brought his patient out of a catatonic state. The patient awoke with such exquisite sensitivity to the beauty and the joys of life that he transformed those who met him. That is what God intends for us. He wants to awaken us to the intensely blessed state of our redemption in Messiah. Daily we have an opportunity, as the result of Yeshua's atoning agony on the cross and power over death, to live on a level of creativity, wisdom, authority over evil and pure love. Of course we fall short. Of course these ideals often seem beyond our condition. But we can ask the Lord for more of His life, for a cleansing from the filth of this world and for a fresh infilling from Heaven. These are all amplified when we fast, worship and pray with each other. It is His preparation for what is to come. ✡

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Tents of Mercy אוהלי רחמים

Our Vision:

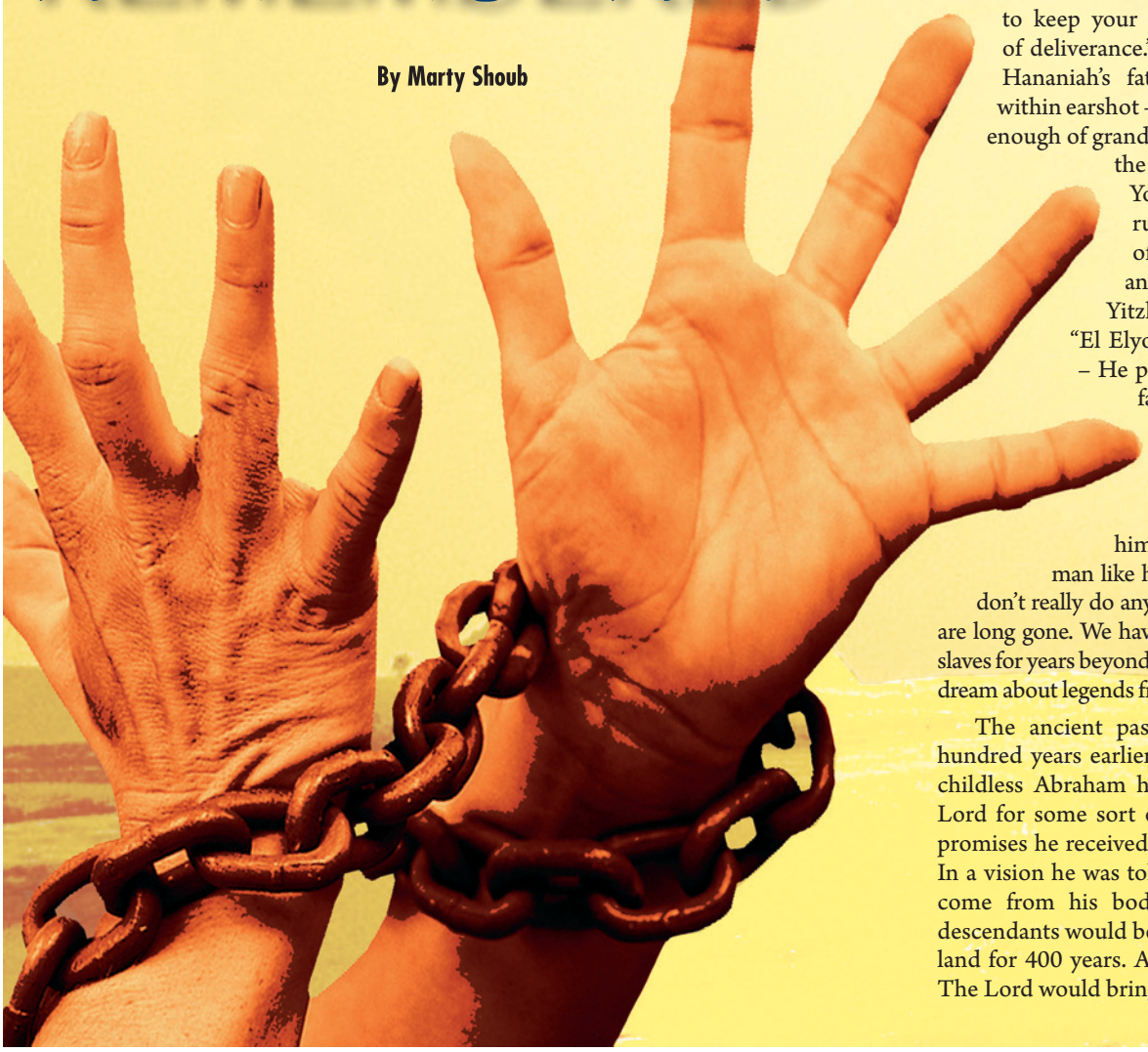
Tents of Mercy - to participate in today's historic exodus by assisting Israel's returning exiles.

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.

"I HAVE HEARD THE GROANING AND I HAVE REMEMBERED"

By Marty Shoub



HAS HE FORGOTTEN US?

Hananiah struggled under the loaded pallet of bricks. All day, every day in the oppressive heat of the Egyptian sun he trudged the well-worn path from the kiln to the building site, loaded up with yet another burden of newly baked bricks. He was 14 and had been wearily following the same path, with the same load for years now. Exhausted at the end of the day, he staggered back to his family's hut and sought the comfort of the reed mat unfurled on the cool dirt floor. Cross-legged in the corner sat old grandfather Natanel – old beyond reckoning; he had somehow managed to survive the toil of the Egyptian taskmasters beyond his utility. His reward was to finally sit in restful contemplation and mutter to anyone within earshot about the stories remembered from his boyhood.

"Rest now Hananiah, you need to keep your strength for the day of deliverance." It was a good thing Hananiah's father, Uriel was not within earshot – the family had heard enough of grandfather's ravings about the good old days when Yoseph the magnificent ruled over all of Egypt, of Yoseph's father Yacov and his great forbears, Yitzhak and Avraham. "El Elyon will surely visit us – He promised to make our father Avraham a great nation, the day will come when we will be free!" Hananiah could not bring himself to berate the old man like his father, "His ravings don't really do any harm, but those days are long gone. We have been the Egyptians' slaves for years beyond count… it is useless to dream about legends from the ancient past..."

The ancient past – more than 600 hundred years earlier[i] an exasperated and childless Abraham had pleaded with the Lord for some sort of assurance that the promises he received would come to pass. In a vision he was told that an heir would come from his body but also that his descendants would be afflicted in a strange land for 400 years. At the appointed time The Lord would bring them out with great

possessions and give them the land of Canaan. Abraham had to wait 25 years for the promise of an heir to be realized. That is a long time, and we applaud Abraham for his faith. Abraham's descendants had to wait over 600 years, 400 of them in servile bondage.

I HAVE REMEMBERED MY COVENANT

Imagine the scene when Moses showed up to proclaim God had heard their groaning and had come to deliver them. What would young Hananiah have been thinking? "Maybe, Grandpa was right all along!" I am not sure Hananiah's father, Uriel would have been convinced, but what happened when Moses met with Pharaoh would have put him over the top: "**So the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people and their officers, saying, "You shall no longer give the people straw to make brick as before. Let them go and gather straw for themselves. And you shall lay on them the quota of bricks which they made before. You shall not reduce it. For they are idle; therefore they cry out, saying, "Let us go and sacrifice to our God.'"** (Exodus 5:1–8)

"Not only is Abba driving me crazy with his pipedreams – now we have this meshugenah, Moshe making matters worse." Moses agreed, **"Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have you delivered Your people at all."** (Exodus 5: 22, 23) Adonai had made a tremendous declaration – now was the time to activate the promise He had made by covenant to Abraham. He had told him his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years and the fullness of time had come. Moses and Uriah need not have worried; 600 years is a long time but no amount of time can erode the power of God's covenant. To a perplexed Moses the Lord replies, **"I have also heard the groaning of the children of Israel whom the Egyptians keep in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Therefore say to the children of Israel: "I am the LORD; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."** (Exodus 6:5,6)

When Abraham asked how he would know he would inherit these things, the Lord not only informed him of what the future held, He **"passed between those pieces,"** The Maker of heaven and earth bound Himself by imprecation, symbolically declaring, "may it be to me as these dismembered offerings should I fail to honor the terms of this covenant"[ii] – no amount of time, no power of any earthly king, not even the weakness of a beaten down population of slaves, nothing and no one could stop the Word of the Lord from coming to pass – He had remembered His covenant.

With an outstretched arm and mighty judgments the Lord fulfilled His promise, **"And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years[iii]—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt."** (Exodus 12:41)

HE WILL REMEMBER

Covenant promises are like that, sometimes they take a while but they always come to pass. What of Anna and Simeon? They too waited and waited **"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."** (Galatians 4:4–5) **"For while we were still helpless, at the right time, the Messiah died on behalf of ungodly people."** (Romans 5:6 CJB)

Noted American Rabbi, Irving Greenberg commented, "The freeing of slaves testified that human beings are meant to be free."[iv] The liberation of slaves is a powerful prophetic sign. Passover began a liberation that through liberated Israel has now extended to all people, those **"still helpless,"** set free by Yeshua's death and resurrection. There remains a further liberation to come, not all bondages are yet broken. All creation is waiting for our deliverance **"into the glorious liberty of the children of God."** (Romans 8:21) The whole of creation still groans under bondage longing to be free.

We have been waiting now, not 600 hundred, but 2000 years for this promise to be fulfilled. From our perspective, 2000 years is a long time, but the promise of Yeshua's liberating return is sure. If Adonai bound Himself by imprecation to fulfill His covenant promise to Abraham to bring out his descendants from bondage, how much surer is the promise guaranteed by Him who became **"a curse for us"?** (Galatians 3:13) The children of Israel had been slaves for generations; the promises to their forefathers were distant memories that appeared to have no bearing on their present slavery or their future prospects for freedom. In the fullness of time, at the right time, according to the purposes of heaven, Adonai **"remembered the covenant"** and sent Moses to be their deliverer. 2000 years? It may seem that the **"the promise of His coming"** is no closer than it was since **"the fathers fell asleep"** but as Peter reminded us, **"The Lord is not slack concerning His promises."** (See, II Peter 3:3-10)

This Passover, after we rehearse the exploits of our deliverance from Egypt, as the Seder draws to a close we will drink the 4th cup. Before we do so, we recite the Haggadah's familiar words, "Our redemption is not yet complete." As you take the cup, remember, just as sure as Adonai heard the children of Israel's groanings and kept His promise to Abraham to bring his descendants out of Egypt, so He hears the groans of creation together with the groanings of the Holy Spirit's intercession on our behalf (Romans 8:22-26). He will remember His covenant; the deliverer is coming to bring us into **"the glorious liberty of the children of God."** ✡

i Abraham received the vision of what was to come (Ge. 15:13), sometime before his 86th birthday, Jacob would have been born at least 75 years later. Jacob was 130 years old when he went down to Egypt - a total of at least 205 years since Genesis 15. Israel remained in Egypt 430 years to the day since they arrived (Ex 12:41). From Genesis 15:13 to Exodus 12:41 was a span of at least 635 years.

ii See, Jeremiah 34:18

iii According to Genesis 15:13, the first 30 years would have been years of blessing and favor.

iv Greenberg, Irving. The Jewish Way (NY, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1988) p.35