Oasis
From the **Tents of Mercy Network** of Congregations and Humanitarian Aid

Hope and the Hyacinth

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently" (Romans 8:22-25).

As parents and amateur gardeners, we often see parallels between the development and needs of our children and the nurture, care and pruning required in tending a domesticated garden. The demands of feeding, providing, training and attention are great and sometimes in the interim one sees little fruit. In fact, during the

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winter season, many of the plants in our garden appear downright dead. There are days when it feels that all the care and instruction to our children has gone into one ear and out the other. And then a new bud appears on the branch. Or we hear our children having a rare moment of calm conversation between them, or with someone else - and some nugget of wisdom that we have taught them comes sweetly out of their mouths in their own delightful paraphrase. And just when we've all but lost hope – our faith is reborn.

Last year one of the plants we bought was a little purple hyacinth. Such a funny name for a lovely rather simple and straightforward flower! It had three flower clusters and we enjoyed them until all the flowers died. I (Hannah) put the flowerless bulbs outside on the porch to deal with them later and forgot about them. In the fall, just before the hard winter arrived, we were cleaning away some of the garden debris so that we wouldn't have to deal with it after the rains – dry junk is so much easier to deal with than wet junk. I was about to toss the dead bulbs into the trash bin when I thought to peel some of the outer layer off of one of the bulbs. To my delight, inside I found a tiny green sprout, which would not have surprised me if I was a more experienced gardener. I felt as though I had just discovered a treasure. I proceeded to peel away at the others and discovered numerous little hyacinth "babies." I planted them in an available flower box, and have been watching them all winter. A few weeks ago, I noticed that they have all shot out of the bulbs and the bashful light green leaves are reaching eagerly towards the light. The purple flower clusters have yet to appear, but I am hopeful.

Hope is the fuel which propels us forward on our journey in life, on our journey in faith. We see in the scriptures that Creation itself is waiting for us to be revealed as the sons (and daughters) of God (Romans 8:19), for our adoption into sonship and for the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23). This is the process we are in. This is the journey we are on. As Jewish believers who live in the land of Israel we are poignantly aware of that groaning of Creation for our fellow Israelis to enter into the redemption that Yeshua's sacrifice has bought for us.

For us as a community at Tents of Mercy, it has been a season of pruning and growth, death and new-life. As 2018 began we pointed ourselves towards the goals of discipleship, healthy spiritual growth, and breakthrough into new spiritual ground. This process involves various challenges, but we stand assured that He who began a good work in us is faithful to complete it. Resting in that hope, we are entering into a new season. God's timing and season always amaze me. Even though I am a late learner, in hindsight, what I have always found to be true is that He has made all things beautiful in their time. As such, when He brought our people out of Egypt to birth us through the split waters of the Red Sea; He knew spring was the best season for that. Passover is a holiday of hope coming into fulfillment.

In light of that hope, as Passover draws close – we increase our prayers for the spiritual rebirth of our nation. We nurture the hope within us that our unsaved family members, friends, neighbors and communities will come to know the saving grace of the Messiah. In addition to prayer, as a congregation we are also getting ready to do some practical tending of the needs around us. This year, as every year, we will be giving out holiday food baskets before Passover to new immigrants, Holocaust survivors and needy families in the city. This spring we will be packing and distributing 850 baskets! This is especially exciting for us as we do it in partnership with all of you who support us and it is a physical manifestation of the hope of which we speak.

People need hope; it is one of the commodities so lacking in the world today. We have that hope. We are like that seasoned gardener who could have told me exactly what would happen to the hyacinth and what care it needed. We who know of the hope to which we are called (Ephesians 1:18), should be God's gardeners on earth – watering, fertilizing and tending His harvest and pointing the way to the Son.

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THE HEART OF A GIVER

"Is this not the fast that I have chosen;
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him…?"
(Isaiah 58:7)

This verse describes a fast which is pleasing in the eyes of the Lord. What is the connection between fasting and these other actions?

The connection is the condition of the heart.

In Matthew 25:35-40 Yeshua speaks about those who will inherit the Kingdom of God. They will be the ones who fed Him when He was hungry, gave him something to drink when He was thirsty and clothed Him when He was naked. Yeshua goes on to say that those who did *not* do these things for Him will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Understandably, the "nations" in verse 32 and 37 will ask Yeshua when they had done all these things. His answer: **"Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me."**

God's desire is that we would open our hearts to the widows, orphans and needy, before we come to Him with our needs and requests.

When Paul met with the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20, he knew that he would not see them again. At that last meeting, he gave the elders tools for maintaining the congregation. In verse 35 Paul ended by telling them to remember the words of the Lord Yeshua, **"It is more blessed to give than to receive."** As believers in Yeshua we need to have the heart of givers, helping the needy who are all around us.

In 2 Corinthians 9:6, 9-10 we are taught that what we sow, we will also reap. One conclusion from these verses, is that when we give to the poor we give to the Lord. When we have a heart for the broken, we are not giving to the broken but to the Lord. When we give to the Lord He will multiply it, and it will bring God glory, as both the giver and the receiver give thanks to Him.

Recently the Lord touched my heart to motivate the *Harvest of Asher Congregation,* to reach out as individuals to the surrounding community. Each family can choose up to three families in need and give them food baskets. The members of the congregation are donating food, and from the ministry budget we will then add to what the congregants bring, to prepare food baskets. The members will then personally deliver these baskets to people who are in need, in order to be a blessing and to minister to them.

Our hope is that this will help the congregation mature as both givers and receivers. We ask that you join us in praying for God's anointing presence to fill the homes of those who receive the baskets.

GUY COHEN

Shalom, dear brothers and sisters!

Peace and blessings to you from Nazareth!

We are grateful to the Lord for His ability to unite all of us into one body that serves one Creator and accomplishes one over-arching goal, glorifying His Name. We are doing this together! We thank God for your faithfulness in your prayers and support of this ministry! It is not in vain. Fruit is coming forth.

Last July, together with brothers and sisters from Spokane (USA), we organized a children's camp in our congregation. For eight days, forty children from ages 7 to 14 enjoyed fellowship with each other, learned to help others and to overcome difficulties. We were inspired by heroes of the Faith and each day the children heard about Yeshua (Jesus) and what He did for all of mankind.

It was a joy to see Arab, Hebrew and Russian speaking children unified during those days and how sad they were to part from each other.

On the last evening, the children sang songs for their parents and showed sketches from the Bible. In the hall among the parents there was an Arab Muslim woman and a religious Jewish woman. I was astonished that both women were sitting with tears in their eyes. Through the Holy Spirit, the God of Israel touched these two mothers as they watched their daughters! Later, in August, the religious Jewish woman was immersed (baptized), along with four other sisters from our congregation. Thus, the Lord made his Covenant with five daughters! Dear ones, this is also the result of your work; thank you for this!

May the abundance of God's blessings be upon you and your families! If you are traveling in Israel, we warmly invite you to visit our community in Nazareth to have fellowship and pray together with us.

Vakif Khasanov, *"Branch of Galilee" Congregation, a ministry of Shavei Tzion*