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JEWISH VOICE TODAY MAGAZINE

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SHALOM



Dear Partner in Ministry,

Shalom, my friend.

I have to share with you that, even in the midst of all the challenges we're all experiencing right now, my heart is filled with gratitude.

The work of Jewish Voice – meeting physical needs and sharing the hope of Yeshua (Jesus) with Jewish people worldwide – wouldn't be possible without you.

During the turmoil of these past several months, we have seen your generosity and felt your prayers. That's why this latest edition of *Jewish Voice Today* is focused on hope. Because of our Messiah, we have hope. And because of your ongoing support, hope is shared with Jewish people in need.

Throughout the first nine weeks of the coronavirus pandemic, a number of our staff members contributed to an online devotional series called *Hope in the Midst*. Now we have brought many of them together in this issue for you.

I pray God will use them to minister to your heart, and that as you read them you are encouraged and strengthened in your faith. And perhaps, after you've finished, you might consider sharing the magazine to encourage a friend or family member. We can all use a bit more hope right now.

In addition, I've written an article for you that brings together the topics of anti-Semitism and the upcoming U.S. election, including one of my own experiences with what I'm calling “The Oldest Hatred.”

A significant change I want to make you aware of for 2021 is the debut of an all-new, all-digital *Jewish Voice Magazine*. It will be filled with the relevant and meaningful articles you've come to expect to uplift, inform and inspire you. The enclosed *Jewish Voice Today* is our last printed issue of the magazine. You will be able to find the Jewish Voice Magazine on our website at www.jewishvoice.org/magazine.

Again, thank you for your partnership. May you be blessed and inspired as you read this issue we've prepared for you.

To the Jew first and also to the Nations,

Jonathan Bernis

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THE OLDEST HATRED

BY JONATHAN BERNIS



Six years ago, I traveled to Kiev, Ukraine, with a team of Jewish Voice staff, volunteers and artists for a *Hear O Israel!* Festival of Jewish Music & Dance. These Festivals are one of the many highlights of my ministry. I have the privilege to gather with teams of incredibly talented people – singers, dancers, choreographers, musicians and more – to share the love of Yeshua (Jesus) with Jewish people and others across the world. Traveling to Kiev in 2014 was especially meaningful. Ukraine is home to hundreds of thousands of Jewish people – including many Holocaust survivors. It was an honor to share my testimony with them and invite them into a relationship with our Savior.

During the days leading up to the Festival, my team and I took a break from our rehearsing to visit a sobering site: Babi Yar. Just a few miles outside downtown Kiev, it looks today like a peaceful ravine. There are a few sloping hills, hemmed in by a small forest. It was early autumn when we visited. It might even have *felt* peaceful – if we didn't know what had happened here 79 years ago.

This was where Nazi forces, just a few days after marching into Kiev in September 1941, herded nearly 34,000 Jewish people to their deaths. It's difficult, even now, to describe the scale and horror of what happened. Sadly, it's a scene that played out all over Europe during the Holocaust. SS troops marched the tens of thousands of Jewish people to the bottom of the ravine, forced them to remove their clothing, and then brutally shot them in cold blood. The Germans then buried the bodies in the soil of Babi Yar.

The day we visited this site in 2014, we were mostly quiet as our guide led us out of the ravine. But as we made our way back toward the city center, I saw something that stopped me cold in my tracks. On the concrete sculpture that serves as a memorial at Babi

Yar's entrance, someone had spray painted something. I inched closer. It was a swastika.

It seems nearly impossible that this kind of brute anti-Semitism is still active in our modern day. But, my friends, it is.

When U.S. President Donald Trump moved the American embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem in 2017, his administration reaffirmed Jerusalem's place as the true and historical capital of Israel. But did you notice the global response? Those who respect the Jewish people's right to exist rejoiced. Those who wish for their destruction were indignant. That anger has its root in the same age-old hatred that prompted a spray-painted swastika at Babi Yar in 2014: anti-Semitism.



Monument to the murdered ones in Babi Yar, Kiev

This is why elections matter. In this article, I want to focus our attention on the upcoming U.S. elections in less than 2 months.

What's the connection between the U.S. elections and anti-Semitism, you may ask? It's our great privilege as U.S. citizens to vote and to influence the direction our country takes – including whether or not we support the right of Jewish people across the world to not only exist, but live freely.

*My counsel to you is simple: this dangerous cultural stain of anti-Semitism, which persists to this day, should not intimidate us. But it should inform how we vote. Israel *does* matter, and each candidate's intent to strengthen or weaken U.S.-Israel relations should be a key factor as you cast your ballot a few weeks from now.*

ANTI-SEMITISM TODAY

Each year, we lose more and more Holocaust survivors. And each year, I become more concerned that we're losing our collective memory of what happened.

In 2018, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims

Against Germany administered a survey in which they asked Americans to name *just one* of the nearly two dozen concentration camps that Germany set up across Europe during World War II. The results were troubling, to say the least: researchers found that nearly half of those surveyed couldn't name a single one. Among millennials – people between the ages of 24 and 39 – that number was even higher.

Maybe this reprehensible “forgetting” bears part of the blame for the rise in anti-Semitism that we’re seeing now. Don’t get me wrong – anti-Semitism is a hatred as old as dirt. Tucked into the very first books of the Bible are stories of people stewing in hatred for God’s Chosen People. But consider some of the stories we’ve seen make headlines in just the past few years:

On October 27, 2018, a neo-Nazi with anti-Semitic views stormed into Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue and started shooting. He killed eleven people and wounded six more before a SWAT team cornered him, and he surrendered. That’s when he allegedly told police that he wanted “all Jews to die.” It was the deadliest attack on the Jewish Community in the history of the United States.

Meanwhile, just this past February, photos from Carnival parades in Spain and Belgium looked like something out of a Nazi propaganda brochure. In Spain, performers dressed up like Nazi soldiers or



Anti-Semitic figures at last year's Aalst carnival. AALST, BELGIUM, 2019

movement is *founded* on anti-Semitic ideals: that the Jewish nation of Israel has no right to sovereignty. And yet, at least two U.S. Congresswomen have publicly voiced support for this hateful campaign.

THE OLDEST HATRED

Yeshua (Jesus) promised His followers that “in the world you will have trouble” (John 16:33). Hatred for the Jewish people existed even before and during Jesus’ time on earth, and He knew it would continue. But I have to admit that the passion and strength of anti-Semitism in the world today often baffles me. At its core, it seems, well, *arbitrary*. Why would the world spend so much energy hating this one, relatively small, nation? The answer to that, I believe, is simple: it’s supernatural.

When God called Abraham, He declared that Israel would be His chosen nation. He chose to set the Jewish people apart to be a light to the rest of the world. He brought His law into the world through them, and then He saved the world through them by Yeshua’s death and rising again. It’s only logical, then, that Satan would nurse a special disdain for this holy people.

In the 12th chapter of Revelation, we read about a “dragon” who rages against all of mankind, but especially against the “woman who had given birth to the male child.” Read in context, it’s clear this “dragon” refers to Satan. The “male child” is Yeshua, the Messiah; and the woman? That’s God’s covenant people, Israel, through whom Yeshua came to the world.

As Israel flourishes today as a nation of technological innovation, economic strength, and respect for human rights, it stands to reason that Satan would be angry. And as more and more of God’s covenant people turn back to Messiah, it stands to reason that Satan would be *enraged*: he rightly interprets this as a sign of his impending doom. God’s chosen instrument of salvation – Yeshua – Jesus came first through the Jewish people. And when He returns, we will see the hearts of the Jewish people turn to their Messiah, proclaiming “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:39 NKJV).



A memorial outside the Tree of Life Congregation Synagogue in Pittsburgh, October 30, 2018

Even in the United States Congress right now, we have leaders who explicitly support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. This is an effort by Palestinian and other anti-Israel activists to boycott products made by Israeli companies in an effort to hurt Israel’s economy. The BDS



Anti-Israel protest in Washington, D.C., Photo credit: Shutterstock.com

CALL TO ACTION

When we’re faced with rising anti-Semitism, we have a few options. We could despair. We could hide in fear, waiting behind closed doors for some relief. We could get angry. We could respond in kind – with hatred for those who hate the Jewish people. I have compassion for those who want to respond this way. I confess that I have at times felt despair and anger. But Yeshua simply doesn’t give us the option of settling there. Paul tells Timothy that “God has not given us a spirit of fear” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV). And in his letter to the Romans, he writes “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:21).

My friends, we have clear instructions and a clear hope. We must be clear about what we see: that anti-Semitism is perhaps as real today as it was 75 years ago (and for thousands of years before that). We must be clear that it has its roots in the devil’s hatred against Messiah, who came so that we might *all* have life. And we must pray for our earthly leaders, participate as we are called in our earthly governments (through voting and civic duty), and we must boldly declare our support for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel.

Until Yeshua (Jesus) returns, anti-Semitism will persevere. Jewish people will be mocked in parades. We will find swastikas on memorials. But as God’s Chosen People have done since God first called Abraham, they *too* will persevere until He returns to make all things new. Take heart! ☮

TAKING HOPE WITH US EVERY DAY

For nine weeks this past spring, as the coronavirus upended the world with fear, stay-at-home mandates, financial loss and isolation, we turned to Scripture for the hope we each need to endure rough times. The world is opening back up at last after the global pandemic. People are emerging to resume life, perhaps somewhat timidly, and wondering how we will fare as things work their way back to “normal” – whatever that will look like now. We still need God’s hope – every day.

Some common themes ran through these nine weekly devotional series, all written by different Jewish Voice staff members. Through these varied voices, God encouraged us to find hope amid trials by:

- Giving thanks, being grateful, and searching for joy
- Remembering our great salvation and the sacrifice of Yeshua (Jesus) for us
- Praising and worshiping God
- Fixing our eyes on Jesus and dwelling on the good
- Looking to the ultimate fulfillment of our hope – the great future that awaits us in heaven



- Lifting our eyes off ourselves and reaching out to serve others – by praying for others, extending grace and searching for ways to encourage and bless others.

All of these bring hope and joy into our experience. They lift our spirits and refocus our hearts on the good that is all around us, even in the midst of suffering, hardship or tedious waiting.

We learned a lot as each author presented devotions from different books of the Bible. Here's a brief review of some of the strength-giving, hope-inducing truths brought to light. The remaining pages of this magazine include a few of the many devotionals that were shared during that difficult time.

Hope from the book of Jeremiah

From Jeremiah, we saw that even when everything seems dark, asleep or dead, God is attentive and ready to accomplish His promises. We learned that we can cling to God's unchanging character even amid drastically changed circumstances. We found hope in the reassurance that God can and will visit us in our personal “prisons,” be they our homes, anxieties, loss or our awareness that we've been living far from Him.

Hope from the book of Exodus

Through Exodus, we learned that we can rest in the fact that even when we feel lost, God knows the way, and He offers guidance through difficult times. We take hope that, though we are susceptible to placing our hope in false things, God is faithful and continues to reveal Himself as worthy of our trust and hope. We saw that living with an intentional awareness of His presence brings us joy, hope and peace.

Hope from the book of Revelation

We found Revelation filled with hope for both our heavenly future and today. We saw that we need not fear because Jesus is our hope and encouragement, and He has already overcome. We overcome by His finished work on our behalf and proclaiming what He's done in our lives. We experience victory and lifted spirits when we worship God and hope when we fix our eyes on the fullness of Heaven awaiting us.

Hope from the book of James

James invited us to see trials and hardships as opportunities to grow closer to God. We were reminded that wisdom is ours for the asking and that patiently enduring trials produces blessing. We saw how a time like this can show us what is essential and to let those things push aside the non-essentials of life. We were encouraged to look for joy.

Hope from the book of Philippians

From Philippians, we learned that abiding in Messiah empowers us to experience the life-giving fruits of His Spirit in all situations. We saw that no circumstance can remove us from God's love and, in clinging to it, it is powerful enough to sustain us amid suffering. We find peace and joy in casting our concerns on God and dwelling on His good gifts, and we can rejoice that God uses even the most difficult times to advance His Good News.

Hope from the book of Isaiah

Looking at the book of Isaiah, we see that though God's timetable for resolving our trials may be different than ours, He is trustworthy. God promises to provide for us, guide and strengthen us. He uses the fires of purification to remove worthless

things from our lives to make room for the good He wants to bring. God invites us to rest in Him, recognizing that our deepest needs can only be satisfied in Him.

Hope from the book of Romans

Romans teaches us that God is a God of hope, able to fill us with all joy and peace as we believe and trust Him. Through Romans, we saw that God's hope sustains our faith by grace and despite our circumstances. We discovered that we can choose hope over despair because we serve a promise-keeping God. We learned that hope is even stronger when it is braided together with joy, patience and prayer.

Hope from the book of Ephesians

Ephesians reveals that God's deep love for us is the same amid difficulty as it is during ease. We see that His will is for us to rejoice, pray and give thanks. We were encouraged to clothe ourselves now with the Word and His spiritual armor in preparation for when unsuspected battles for our peace or focus come. We see that our worth is grounded in Jesus, who is the awesome, powerful ruler of all things.

Hope from the books of Ezra and Nehemiah

These books show that God has hope for us today, the near future and eternity. The strength of our hope rests in God's faithfulness, and even in seasons of waiting, we can live with expectant hope for the good future. He is even now working to produce. We were reminded that opposition will come, but as we build our lives on God, seek His Word and use the tools He's given us, we rest on an unshakeable Rock.

Taking hope with us every day

These truths are not just for times of world crisis. They will help us get through personal crises, both major and minor. The hope we discovered over these past weeks is hope that we can – and need to – carry with us into each day. The Scripture is full of God's hope, joy and peace. Stay in it. Go to it often, searching for Him and His goodness. As you do, you will discover deeper layers of His trustworthiness, His love and His power to see you through all things with joy. May you carry His unshakeable hope with you each and every day. ☘

HOPE from the book of Romans

Hope is a Process

And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

—Romans 5:3-4

Paul is explaining to the Romans that the development of hope in our lives is a process. There are four elements: tribulation, perseverance, character and hope. They work together in three steps:

1. Tribulation produces perseverance
2. Perseverance produces character
3. Character produces hope

Hope is developed in us by a process. Helping the Romans understand this process and how to anticipate and respond to it is the goal of Paul's encouragement.

I love hope! It makes it easy for me to find joy. When I am hopeful, I often am able to be excited and even giddy. But what produces hope – the parts of the process – those words make me feel something different. Perhaps words like “tribulation” or “perseverance” create the same internal or emotional response for you...

“...tribulation produces perseverance...”

My approach to life is generally one that seeks to avoid tribulation. But Paul is encouraging the community of Believers in Rome to approach tribulation by expecting it be productive in our lives. He is in some ways saying, “as Believers in Jesus, let’s view tribulation as an opportunity. Tribulation will produce perseverance, that is patience, in you.” What a different point of view! What if we were to let our internal response to tribulation be, “I can’t wait to see how much patience this is going to produce in me!”? And as perseverance is developed in response to tribulation, our mindset might just change in response to trials and troubles in our lives. May it be so!

“...perseverance produces character...”

If we can adjust our view on tribulation and see patience and perseverance be our response, Paul assures us that character follows. Character is our whole person – the way we think, feel and behave. If we allow troubles to produce patience, our character is formed, our whole person is bettered because of patience because of challenges in life. Perseverance in the face of tribulation produces a character in us that emanates and radiates the qualities of the LORD we serve. He was patient in the face of trouble and even death. And He endured it all for our sake. May we be the same way! Let us allow His character to be produced in us when we face challenges in the world and in our lives.

“...character produces hope...”

With our moral and mental attributes in the likeness of the Messiah, hope is the expected outcome. With our character fully formed and established, our disposition becomes one that is predisposed to hope. Even when things are hard. Even when everyone else around us is hopeless. Hope is an outcome of tribulation – a stunning thought and a brilliant insight. And an unusual approach.

If we go back to the beginning of this verse, I think Paul shows us a key to how the hope process works. He describes a “pre-condition” or “pre-disposition” that activates the process that leads to hope. He says, “we also glory in tribulations” as the pre-amble to the process. Our assumption related to trouble and challenges must be that we are going to “glory” in them. Excuse me? Can you say that again? I think I misunderstood you? We GLORY in tribulation. Why? Because our expectation is that hope will be the outcome. May it be so with us and with you. Today, in this season and always!

ACTIVATION:

1. Are you facing opportunities for perseverance in your life in this season? What are they?
2. Is patience your expected outcome of trouble?
3. In what ways is the LORD challenging your character in this season?

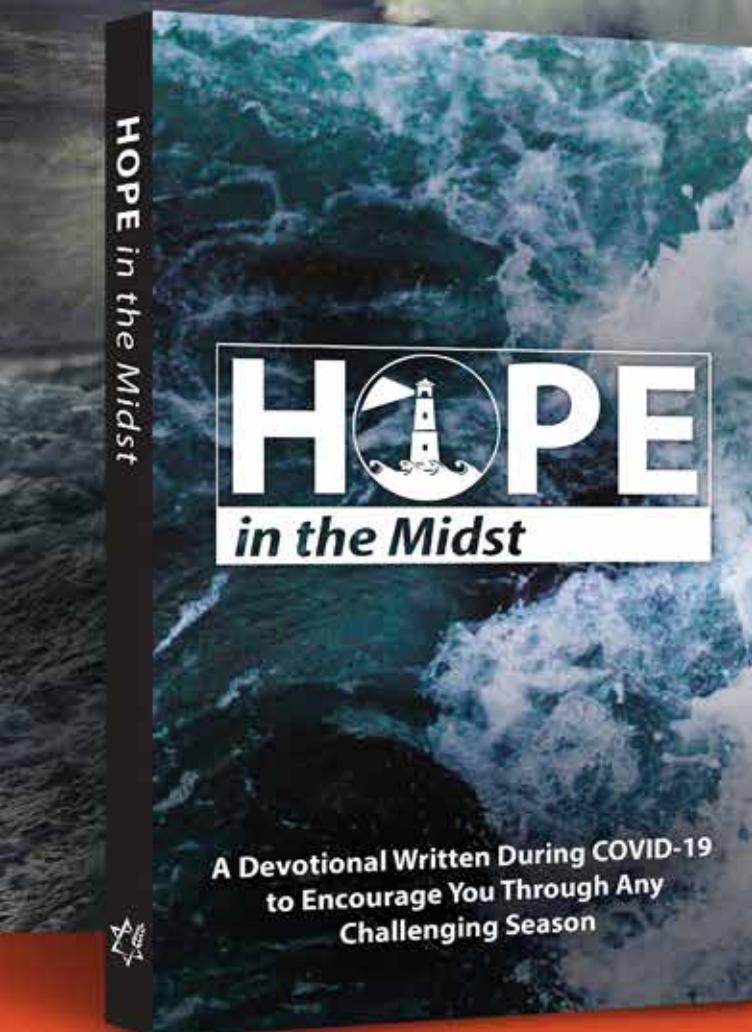
Are you inclined to hope? What is your expectation of troubles in life?

NOW AVAILABLE - the complete set of devotionals!

HOPE IN THE MIDST

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and shalom in trusting, so you may overflow with hope in the power of the Ruach ha-Kodesh.”

— ROMANS 15:13



Hope in the Midst is a BRAND-NEW collection of nine separate devotional series, each seven days long and authored by Jewish Voice staff members during a particularly difficult time. Each devotional, focused on a different book of the Bible, will bring you hope in the midst of any trial you face.

No matter what is going on in the world, this devotional book will lift your spirits and focus your heart on God’s hope that is always in our midst.

Receive your copy of *Hope in the Midst* as our way of saying “thank you” for your gift of support of \$30 or more for the global outreach of Jewish Voice Ministries.

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HOPE from the book of James

Draw Near to God in this Season

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

—James 4:8

This season that we find ourselves in is very hard to comprehend. It doesn't make sense; we don't understand it and we didn't expect it. Luckily for us, it's not a surprise to the Lord and we can take confidence in the fact that despite our circumstances, He doesn't change, and His promises are still true. Hold to that thought when you feel discouraged!

One of those promises is in James 4:8. As we draw near to the Lord, He draws near to us. This is so comforting. God is not hidden from us during this time. In fact, He is near to us. He is our comforter and He will never leave us. Although you may feel alone, take heart that the Lord is near. Use this time to draw near to Him in ways you never have before and I pray you experience His presence as a result.

Like many of you, I find myself having a lot of time on my hands. Now that we are in quarantine, there are not as many activities to fill our time. There is more isolation, more silence, and more time for reflection. Use this opportunity to draw near to the Lord. Think about some of the ways you used to spend your time and if it was fruitful. Instead, are there practices you can put in place that allow you to draw near to the Lord?

Perhaps you can re-energize your quiet time, reading your Bible or journaling. Listen to an encouraging podcast or sermon. Play worship music and fix your thoughts on Him. Pray for your family, friends and neighbors. Sit quietly and listen for the Lord to speak to you. Take a walk and look for the Lord's presence in nature. Praise Him and thank Him for all of the blessings you have.

Spiritual disciplines are an important part of our walk with the Lord and they allow us to draw near to Him. You may have great spiritual rhythms already or you may feel like you are lacking in this area. Take some time to look at your daily, weekly, monthly, or even annual spiritual rhythms and determine if there is something you need to implement that will allow you to be closer to Him. Try something new in this season! May the Lord surprise You as He draws near to you.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY: Conduct an inventory of your spiritual disciplines and draw near to the Lord in new ways.

Speaking Life in Difficult Times

Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

—James 1:19

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

—James 3:9-12

Brothers and sisters, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against a brother or sister or judges them speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

—James 4:11-12

During this season of social/physical distancing, it's important that we are still engaging with others in a biblical way. We shouldn't let the distancing make us draw away from others. I was taking a walk recently and I noticed every time I saw a person on the sidewalk, I was paying so much attention to making sure I was 6 feet away from them.

Thoughts crossed my mind like, should I cross the street, should I walk into the dirt, should I look away when they pass? I used to smile and wave at people I would walk by and even say hello. I don't want this season of distancing to turn into a season of avoidance or frustration with others. While we are stressed and have heavy

burdens, we should make sure we are displaying an attitude that reflects Jesus to others.

James gives us great instructions on how we should use our words and our actions to bless others. He gives three simple reminders: be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry. In this season, everyone is going through something. There is some kind of anxiety, something that is causing difficulty so it's especially important that we take the time to listen to each other. Allow yourself to be curious with your friends and family and hear how they are processing. Then respond slowly and intentionally. Be encouraging.

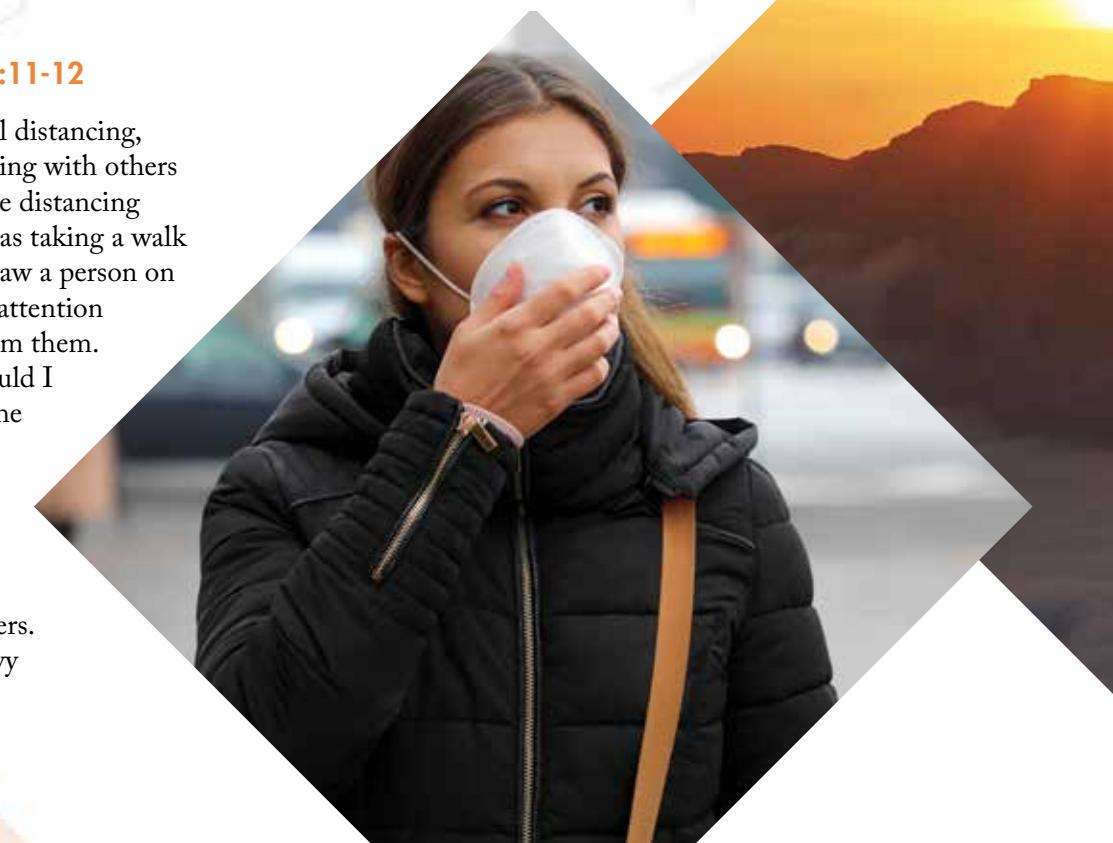
In addition, it may be frustrating that others are not dealing with COVID-19 the same way you are. Maybe they live in a different state and have different lockdown requirements. Remember James' words to be slow to become angry. Take this time to be patient with others. Show Jesus' love and patience to those around you, Believers and nonbelievers. Pray for them and remind them God is still in control.

James details and reminds us of the power we have in what comes out of our mouths. It may be easy to judge and talk about others, but we shouldn't criticize or slander our neighbor. We have an

incredible opportunity and the power to speak life-giving words to others in a very difficult season. Use this time to reach out to those around you; maybe send them a text or email, write them a note, or call them. Everyone could use some encouragement and you will most likely be blessed as well as you are able to bless others.

I encourage you to think about those you are interacting with, whether it's your friends, family or coworkers. Take stock of how you can be a voice of encouragement in their lives. Write down their names and determine steps on how you can reach out and listen to what they're going through, and share a Scripture or other words of affirmation that bless them.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAY:
Make a list of others you are interacting with and determine steps to bless them through your words.



HOPE from the book of Revelation

He is our Hope and Overcomer

Yeshua declares He is our Hope and has Overcome.

"The revelation of Yeshua the Messiah, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place."

—Revelation 1:1

In Revelation chapter 1, we find that God is revealing and has revealed Yeshua as our salvation, but he wants us to see Yeshua as not just the suffering servant, but also as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Look how John describes Yeshua and how Yeshua reveals himself to John in this chapter.

John says...

"...Messiah Yeshua, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the Earth. To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, kohanim (priest) to His God and Father—to Him be glory and power forever! Amen!"

—Revelation 1:5-6

Yeshua then reveals Himself as...

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says Adonai Elohim, "Who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty!"

—Revelation 1:8

Next, John begins to describe the revealing of the glorified Messiah...

"I saw One like a Son of Man, clothed in a robe down to His feet, with a golden belt wrapped around His chest. His head and His hair were white like wool, white like snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire. His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of rushing waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came forth a sharp, two-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining at full strength."

—Revelation 1:13-16



John is stunned and even says that he wants to fall down like a dead man, but Yeshua gives John hope, encouragement and inspiration to overcome! Look at what Yeshua says...

"Do not be afraid! I am the First and the Last, and the One who lives. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever! Moreover, I hold the keys of death and Sheol (Hell)."

—Revelation 1:17b-18

WOW! Look at how Yeshua teaches us:

- Don't Be Afraid!
- He Lives Forever!
- He holds the keys of death and Sheol!

Yeshua gives us the ultimate way to find hope, encouragement, and the path to overcoming by revealing to us that He lives forever and has all authority in Heaven and on Earth. Yeshua shepherds our lives and hearts by encouraging us to look at His overcoming work! My encouragement to you is, "Don't be Afraid!" We are in uncharted times in history right now, but that doesn't mean we need to be fearful or that we do not have a hope; our hope is in Him...He has overcome!

Now take some time to carefully reflect on the questions below and journal your answers.

1. What is God saying through His Word?
2. What is God saying to me?
3. How should/can I respond?

Finding Hope and Overcoming through Worship

Here in chapter 15 we get another view into a future scene of Heaven. John says he saw another "great and wonderful sign in Heaven," and this is the sign:

"And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had overcome the beast and his image and the number of his name standing by the sea of glass, holding the harps of God. And they are singing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying,

'Great and wonderful are Your deeds, Adonai Elohei-Tzva'ot! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the nations!'

'Who shall not fear and glorify Your name, O Lord? For You alone are Holy. All the nations shall come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed!'

—Revelation 15:2-4 TLV

John sees another scene of worship in Heaven (note there are a lot of these in Revelation) and again he says the context of this worship scene are those who have overcome.

John says there are those who have overcome the beast and his image and are now standing on the sea of glass worshiping with singing and instruments! They are singing after victory!

I hope you are beginning to see some of the pattern in the book of Revelation that a key element of Heaven and a key element of those who overcome difficulties on Earth both employ worship. If you are finding yourself struggling to overcome difficulties in your life or face the current situation we find ourselves in around the world, might I encourage to use the key element of worship to lift your life and find victory. Join all of Heaven and worship!

Now take some time to carefully reflect on the questions below and journal your answers.

1. What is God saying through His Word?
2. What is God saying to me?
3. How should/can I respond?



You Can Leave a Legacy!

Simple, flexible gifting to the Jewish Voice Ministries Abraham Promise Fund is one of the easiest ways you can care for the Jewish people long into the future.

Create your legacy! Contact us for more information about our partnership with the estate planners at **Financial Planning Ministry**.

* Financial Planning Ministry services available in the United States only.

Visit jewishvoice.org/apf or call 1-855-550-1455 for more information.



OUTREACH REPORT

MEETING URGENT NEEDS IN ISRAEL AMIDST A GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Adonai gives strength to His people. Adonai blesses His people with shalom. (Psalm 29:11).

As the world adjusts to the new normal this global pandemic has forced upon us all, Jewish Voice's mission continues: *proclaiming the Gospel to the Jew first, growing the Messianic Jewish community, and engaging the Church concerning Israel and the Jewish people.*

For many of us, the coronavirus pandemic and all the changes it has brought to our lives is one of the most difficult experiences we've ever had. But imagine the struggle for those most vulnerable.

For months now, Jewish Voice has been receiving urgent requests for emergency support from our more than 80 partner organizations on the ground in Israel. We are working closely with our partners where there is critical need, especially among the nation's poor, disabled, single parents and the elderly – and many of the approximately 180,000 Holocaust survivors have significant needs and depend on the visits and practical help of our partner organizations.

"I am hard-pressed to recall a time where the people of Israel were in such need of hope as they are now," one of our partners on the ground shares. "Even the many wars Israel has fought cannot match the level of desperation that many families in Israel are experiencing, and it is felt on so many levels – economically, emotionally, spiritually, and physically – as the Coronavirus continues to take its toll on all parts of society here."

Unemployment numbers have swelled, especially among those who live paycheck to paycheck. Many



individuals and families in Israel are in desperate need. Thanks to the support of friends like you, working with and through our partners, Jewish Voice has been able to assist many households with grocery packages and grocery vouchers.

One recipient was a single mother, Alma, who worked in the same building as an organization we partner with in Jerusalem. Laid off as a result of COVID-19, she was left with few options to provide for her children. She was so grateful for a grocery voucher, and deeply touched that *someone cared enough to help her family* in their hour of tremendous need. "No one else has reached out to help," she said, "even though they know the situation we are in."

Your support of JVMI is helping to bring much more than groceries. You're offering hope to Israel, calling to her, "O Israel, wait for Adonai. For with Adonai there is lovingkindness, and with Him is full redemption" (Psalm 130:7). This lasting hope is only found in the living God.

Several holidays and anniversaries were marked this year during the pandemic lockdown. Passover, Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) in remembrance of the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, Yom HaZikaron (Memorial Day) remembering the 23,816 fallen soldiers and 4,166 terror victims in the modern State of Israel, and Yom Ha'atzmaut

(Independence Day) the celebration of Israel's 72nd year of Independence Day were all observed under a shroud of restrictions.

"This year, there was a somberness to all these days of remembrance," said another of our partners. "God has brought us all to a halt, and given us precious time to reassess our lives, to reset our priorities and to know that He is God. It is also a time to remember all that God has done in the past. One day this pandemic will also pass into our collective memory and become part of our history, but until then, we can choose to make the most of this opportunity to pause and draw nearer to our God and to exalt Him among the nations."

Like much of the rest of the world, concern over a second wave of the novel coronavirus has the Israeli government monitoring things carefully – perhaps necessitating new restrictions and the return of others that had started to ease. Prime Minister Netanyahu

warned that the government will have to reimpose the lockdown if other preventive measures aren't working and numbers continue to rise.

In the midst of all this, we are most grateful for your partnership with us. We are all feeling the impact of this global pandemic and the stranglehold it has on our economies and livelihoods. For many in Israel, the situation is dire. In your compassion, in your praying and giving, you're ministering care in the name of Yeshua, who said, "I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40).

We're also grateful to know God is in control. None of this takes Him by surprise. We pray for strength and peace and that the Lord will supply our need – and we pray the same for you, your family, friends, neighbors – and an extra measure for Israel and the Jewish people.

NONE OF THIS WOULD BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT YOU!

With your help, over the years, we've poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into serving the Jewish and Arab communities in Israel. As needs have been mounting through this crisis, *we must respond*.

Your gift will help people in need today, and help us be ready to meet needs tomorrow as this struggle continues to unfold. After this extended time of social

isolation, we anticipate the Jewish people will be more open to hearing about the love and hope of our Messiah.

As one of our faithful partners, you have a strong desire to help Jewish people and stand with Israel. Please give generously so we can be ready to come to their aid, meeting urgent physical needs, and also deep spiritual needs. *None of this would be possible without you.*

This is what it's all about – building God's Kingdom and taking part in the work He is doing to draw His people to Himself. **Will you help us?**

THANK YOU for helping us deliver compassionate care and the Good News of Yeshua to every precious Jewish person within our reach!

As you stand with us in this important work, we'd like to show our appreciation for your generosity. See next page.



WE'D LIKE TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE for your commitment in helping us reach everyone who comes to this important ministry we share together. Please accept these special gifts as sincere tokens of our immense appreciation for your incredible generosity.

Your support declares the Good News that Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, has come!

For your gift of support of \$30 or more,

we'd like to send you a token of our appreciation—

Confessing the Hebrew Scriptures: A 90-Day Devotional

Take a deeper look into some of the encouraging verses contained in the first six volumes of Jonathan Bernis' Confessing the Hebrew Scriptures series. You'll read inspiring insights about the Lord Almighty and God as your Healer, Peace, Provider, Righteousness and Shepherd. Each devotion includes a verse written in English, Hebrew and the Hebrew-to-English transliteration. This daily devotional will transform your life, helping you proclaim and stand on the truth of God's Word. It is sure to bless you for years to come.



8725

For your gift of support of \$80 or more,

we'd like to send you a package that includes the devotional mentioned above, plus—

Hope in the Midst: A Devotional for Difficult Times

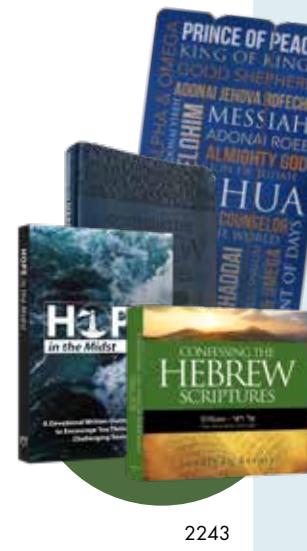
Hope in the Midst is a collection of nine separate devotional series, each seven days long, authored by various Jewish Voice staff members during a particularly hard time in the world. Each one focuses on a different book of the Bible, and together they create a resource to find hope in the midst of any trial you face. Hope in the Midst is a book that can be revisited during periods of difficulty, suffering or uncertainty, waiting to lift your spirits and refocus your heart on God's hope that is always in our midst.



2242

—and— **Confessing the Hebrew Scriptures: El Roee, The God Who Sees Me**

This eighth volume in the Confessing the Hebrew Scriptures series, El Roee is filled with beautiful photographs and encouraging verses to help you discover the power of meditating on God's Word and speaking its promises. It contains Old and New Testament Scriptures written in English, Hebrew, and the transliteration from Hebrew. A CD includes Scriptures spoken in Hebrew, enabling you to learn pronunciation and begin confessing these uplifting verses for yourself. Take hold of the promises made by the God who sees you, and watch your faith grow as you confess His word in the "Lashon HaKodesh," the Holy language of Hebrew.



2243

If you're able to send a gift of support of \$150 or more,

we'd like to send you all of the items mentioned above, plus—**Names of God Plaque**

You'll be encouraged every time you look at this Names of God plaque! It contains 23 different biblical references for God's names artistically arranged on a pallet-style background of three wooden boards. From King of Kings to Abba, every name will inspire you and draw you closer to our Lamb of God and Everlasting Father. This wall art measures 23" H x 11.5" W and has a keyhole-style hanging design on the back.

HOPE from the book of Exodus

HOPE in Knowing He Hears Our Cry

I have heard their cry . . .

—Exodus 3:7

There's a popular worship song that is encouraging so many of us with reminders that God is the One who makes a way as He works miracles and keeps His promises. One of my favorite lines in the song underscores that this is happening even when I am not aware of it.

The song could have been written as an encouragement to the children of Israel in captivity. They were crying out to the Lord for deliverance, even when they had no evidence that He was hearing their cries in the very hardest of times. Still they kept faith, even though they couldn't see that He was preparing to deliver them, and preparing His human instrument, Moses, whom He would use to do it. The Lord was listening and ready to move on their behalf in response to their cries. What an attentive and gracious Deliverer! He is attentive to your cries too.

Where in the Word: Exodus 3:7–10

Finding Hope:

- **Ponder:** What do I read about God in this passage that gives me hope?
- **Pray:** How can this recharge my prayers as I call on the God who hears the cries of His people? Pray now . . .
- **Respond:** Moses had to act in ways that were outside his expectations and comfort zone. How might God be calling me to participate in what He is doing in my life and world? Include prayers and acts of service for others who are crying out at this time.

Something more to think about with God:
Romans 8:24–27

A Timely Note: In this season of self-isolation, what are you doing if you have extra time on your hands? How can you be sure that some of that time is intentionally invested in your relationship with God, so you can experience rest and renewal and not just distraction?

HOPE in God Who Provides Me with Rest

"My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest," He answered.

—Exodus 33:14 (TLV)

When the children of Israel were slaves of Pharaoh, there was no rest. However, the Lord graciously brought His people into the practice of Shabbat, and even prioritized it as one of the Ten Words (Ten Commandments). It was a day of sabbath rest to remind them He, as Creator of the world, rested after His work. Because He delivered them and provided for them, they were now able to trust and honor Him with their day off. It was to be a special sign between them and Adonai that they were dependent on Him, set apart for Him, and could rest in Him.

The sacred rhythm of Shabbat calls across the centuries, inviting us to remember and honor our Creator and look forward to the full realization of the Messianic Kingdom. Observing a time of rest and restoration each week is an act of faith, an admittance that our own efforts will never be enough. Shabbat is a weekly re-set that reorients our perspective and reminds us He is the center of our stories and the source of our hope.

Where in the Word: Exodus 16:29–30; 20:8–11

Finding Hope:

- **Ponder:** What is draining you in this season? Take time to journal and process. Do you have a weekly rhythm of rest that honors God as Creator and enables you to experience renewal?
- **Pray:** Spend some time with God, not asking, not telling, but just being with Him and enjoying Him. What might this time reveal to you about rest; and about your need for rest?
- **Respond:** From a place of trust and gratitude, block out a weekly "date" with God to enjoy spending time with Him in fellowship and re-creation.

Some more to talk with God about: Mark 6:31; Mark 2:27; Matthew 11:28

HOPE from the book of Exodus & Philippians

HOPE in God's Purposes Even in Hard Times

So Adonai said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he said.

—Exodus 4:2 (TLV)

Shiphra and Puah were Hebrew midwives who defied a cruel and powerful despot out of fear of God and avoided a genocide of Hebrew babies. Bezalel and Oholiab were called out of their usual work into leadership and execution of God's blueprint for the tabernacle. And Moses was drawn out of the water and into the palace; banished to the desert; and then raised up to lead the people of God. Exodus 4:2 and the subsequent accounts of miracles show how God started with Moses where he was and with what he had. Exodus has amazing accounts of ordinary people in their everyday lives being singled out for the purposes of God.

Each of these individuals and others suffered hardships and obstacles in order to live out their God-given destiny for His glory and the benefit of others. We may not be convicted to take on a risk as dangerous as the two brave midwives, a project as immense as the tabernacle, nor a stewardship as vast as Moses'. But we too are called to God's purposes in hard times and challenging assignments. The same God who protected baby Moses, invited mortals to prepare a dwelling place for His Presence, and led His people through dreary days and awe-inspiring miracles has made you for His purposes today. The way that we listen, respond moment by moment, lay aside our own agendas and place our hope in Him is what will determine our partnership with Him and His purposes, both in this time and over our lifetime.

Where in the Word: Exodus 1:15–21; 31:1–6; 4:1–5

Finding Hope:

- **Ponder:** Moses was called to the desert for 40 years to herd sheep, which turned out to be excellent preparation for leading God's people through the wilderness! How may God be using the things in your life right now to develop your character and calling? Be specific; and thank Him.
- **Pray:** Acknowledge and offer to the Lord

any questions, discouragement or uncertainty you may have about where you are in your life circumstances right now. Allow Him to renew your hope in Him and the things you can't yet see.

- **Respond** Read the three Scripture accounts above. Which do you relate to most? Journal how the Lord might be asking you to respond in your own life.

Some more to talk about with God: Philippians 2:1–18

From the Beginning until Completion

"I am SURE of this very thing – that He who began a GOOD work in you WILL carry it on to COMPLETION until the Day of Messiah Yeshua"

—Philippians 1:6

It is easy for the human heart to get discouraged during times of trial, and to feel as though the difficult circumstances surrounding us are somehow hindering the work of God in our lives. However, the Scriptures paint a different reality in that, despite these circumstances, God is there completing the good work He has faithfully started in our lives. We may not understand how these trials can possibly fit into God's plans, or how this is part of Him completing the good work He began in us, but we can rest assured that what is written in His Word is true and reliable.

God promises us that "*all things work together for the good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes*" (Romans 8:28). God also promises us in Proverbs 16:9 that "*the heart of man plans his course, but Adonai directs his steps.*" These Scriptures should awaken in us an incredible sense of assurance in God's faithfulness towards us who believe and bring a certain level of hope and encouragement to our hearts. He is the good and faithful Shepherd of our lives, He will never leave us nor forsake us, can be trusted throughout every circumstance, and is the one who began the good work in us and will carry it on to completion.

Yes, even now in the midst of this trial, He is completing the work He has started in us all.

The Word of God is alive and active, speaking truth into our lives, helping us establish a firm foundation to stand on while we go through life on this side of eternity. Please take some time to quietly meditate on the passages above and ask yourself these three questions.

1: What truth is being spoken in these passages?

2: What does this mean for me?

3: How should I respond?

The Lord's Great and Unfailing Love

"Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the Good News of the Messiah. Then, whether I come and see you or I am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit – striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the Good News, and not being frightened in anyway by your opponents. For them, this is a sign of destruction, but for you salvation – and that from God. For to you was granted for Messiah's sake not only to trust in Him, but also to suffer for His sake – experiencing the same struggle you saw in me and now you are hearing in me."

—Philippians 1:27–30

Fear is a powerful aspect of life that can render the strongest of individuals helpless. But as God's children, holy and dearly loved, we have the amazing gift of God's love that removes all fear! For the Scriptures say that "*There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear*" (1 John 4:18).

Praise the Lord! This empowers us to live our "*lives in a manner worthy of the Good News of the Messiah*" even amid suffering and trials. This love is so great, so tangibly powerful and effective, that Paul can confidently say that, "**For to you was**

granted for Messiah's sake not only to trust in Him, but also to suffer for His sake" because he knows that God's love is sufficient to sustain us in the midst of suffering and that our lives, being lived out in a manner worthy of the Lord in the midst of trials, is a powerful and effective sign and witness! Hallelujah! A sign and a witness to whom? Well, a sign and a witness to those who don't belong to the Lord and a sign and witness of salvation to all those that do belong.

Therefore, since it has been granted to us as Believers to not only trust in this great Messiah but also to suffer under various trials and tribulations in this life, let us cling to His great, unfailing love and live our lives in a manner that is worthy of the Good News of Messiah in the midst of today's trying circumstances in order to be the sign and witnesses He has called us and graced us to be.

The Word of God is alive and active, speaking truth into our lives, helping us establish a firm foundation to stand on while we go through life on this side of eternity. Please take some time to quietly meditate on the passages above and ask yourself these three questions.

1: What truth is being spoken in these passages?

2: What does this mean for me?

3: How should I respond?



HOPE from the books of Isaiah & Nehemiah

Rest & Living Water

Isaiah reminds us that his greatest hope for Israel was that they would repent and turn to faithfully worship the LORD. He longed to see the New Jerusalem where the LORD's kingdom would be restored through the future Messiah who would then bring all nations together in peace. He warned Israel that those who thirst and depended on their own strength to earn righteousness would never find rest, they would never be satisfied.

The work of righteousness will be peace, And the service of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever.

—Isaiah 32:17 (NASB)

The cost of this offering is too high a thing for most of us to grasp but we are not helpless nor hopeless. We have choices every day to part with sin and recognize our need for Him to fill our hearts with a hope that can be only satisfied in Him. We each long for deep peace that brings rest to our souls. Before we can receive salvation, we must see our need for it.

Remember, it's the LORD's supernatural work of righteousness alone that brings true peace – freedom from the guilt and weight of sin.

COMING IN 2021!



NEW The Jewish Voice Digital Magazine!

**Now, better than ever with
more of what matters to you!**

- More Timely Articles
- Fresh Content
- New Features

As such, this current edition will be **the last printed issue** of JVT.

Watch your mail for a postcard telling you how to access the new Magazine online!

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

—Isaiah 55:7 (NASB)

Reflection:

When is the last time you stopped and took a deep breath? Try this centering prayer: As you inhale say, 'Abba' and upon exhaling say, 'I belong to you.' Repeat as needed and enter into His rest.

Are there areas in your life that need living waters? Share those longing and needs in prayer as you reflect now.

What is the role of repentance in your life? How might repentance help you receive greater peace and hope from the LORD today?

A Prepared Heart

"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Torah of Adonai (the Law of the Lord) and to do it, and to teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel"

—Ezra 7:10

Ezra prepared His heart to seek God's Word, to do it and to teach it. Notice what this Scripture doesn't say. It doesn't say: "Ezra prepared his heart to be the leader of a great revival." Or, "Ezra prepared his heart to be well-known and respected enough for kings and people in places of authority to know and call on him for great and noble tasks."

Nope. Only, "Ezra prepared his heart to seek God's Word, to do it and to teach it."

Observe what else it doesn't say:

- Ezra prepared his heart to seek God's gifts or treasures on earth
- Ezra prepared his heart to seek God's blessings
- Ezra prepared his heart to seek God's favor

Nope. Again, "Ezra prepared his heart to seek God's Word, to do it and to teach it."

The amazing thing about it is that Ezra *did* in fact lead a great revival (see Nehemiah 8-10) and he was called on by a king to take up a great and noble task (Ezra 7:11-28). He was also entrusted with the treasures of God's Temple and received favor and blessing (Ezra 7), but it wasn't because he was seeking any of these things.

As I read this Scripture, I am reminded of Yeshua's words "...seek His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you" (Luke 12:31).

Ezra, as a member of the kohanim (priests) was not even seeking to be established as a priest in Israel. Remember, at this time there was no Temple. He didn't set his heart on the future of what he could become, he simply did in the present what he knew to do. He sought first God's kingdom and all these things were added to him.

Why is it important for us to seek to learn God's Word and to do and teach it? It's important because:

- When we seek His Word, we are seeking Him (John 1:1)
- His Word is exalted even above His name (Psalm 138:2)
- There is great reward in keeping His Word (Psalm 19:10-12)

- It is truth (John 17:17)
- His Word is our comfort in affliction and keeps us alive (Psalm 119:50)
- It keeps our way pure (Psalm 119:9)
- When we seek Him and His Kingdom, everything else we need will be added to us (Luke 12:31)
- Those who do His Word are blessed (Psalm 1:1-3; Luke 11:28)
- Those who do His Word are like those who build their house upon the Rock and they will not be shaken (Luke 6:46-48)

Once we learn His Word, He'll empower us to do His Word. Once we do His Word, we'll be able to teach it, and by the very act of teaching His Word we'll learn more about His Word and how to do it. This is a cycle worth repeating!

I must ask myself then, what things am I seeking? Am I seeking to be known or approved by others? Am I seeking to do something great for God or to have an abundance of gifts, blessing and favor? Am I seeking earthly treasures instead of heavenly ones? If I answer honestly, the answer is often yes. But it doesn't have to be. In this season more than ever, in order to have a sure hope, we must seek His Word. In it is life and all that we need.

Lord, I want to prepare my heart to seek your Word. You said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34). Please help me, by Your Spirit, to clear out of the way anything that is taking first place in my life and heart above Your Word. Make learning and doing your Word my highest goal so that I may be truly blessed and be able to teach others about You.

Reflection:

Take inventory of your heart today and ask God for a heart to seek Him and His Word, to do it and to teach it.

You will be blessed and be a blessing.

HOPE from the book of Ephesians



Hope in His Calling

If you're like me, you love reminders. I have reminders everywhere; my workspace is full of sticky notes reminding me of tasks. My phone is set to remind me of birthdays, anniversaries and when to pay bills. I even have a reminder to check my reminders. Chapter 1 of Ephesians serves as our reminder of who we are in Messiah and how Mighty our God is! The Apostle Paul reminds followers of Yeshua of two foundational truths.

First, our value is grounded in Messiah:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah. He chose us in the Messiah before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless before Him in love.

He predestined us for adoption as sons through Messiah Yeshua, in keeping with the good pleasure of His will- to the glorious praise of His grace, with which He favored us through the One He loves!

—Ephesians 1:3-6

The second reminder has to do with Yeshua's (Jesus') status and position, and who our Messiah really is (Ephesians 1:15-23). He is the Son of God. He is seated at the right hand of the Father. He is above any ruler, authority, power, leader and every other name that is named! All things have been placed under His feet and He has been appointed head over all things for His community. In a nut shell, I'm reminded that no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in, we serve an awesome God and, through His Son, we are highly favored, blessed, adopted into His family, and have the Holy Spirit as a down payment of our promised inheritance as sons and daughters.

- Do you need reminding of who you are in Messiah?
- Is there anyone in your life that you can encourage with this identity reminder?
- Can you receive the identity the Lord has given you? What is hindering you from receiving this truth?

Fill Me Up Please

Ephesians chapter 3 has one of the most beautiful illustrations of the love of God in the entire Bible. First, I have to preface that statement with the fact that I'm a former supply chain manager who was tasked with scheduling truckloads of food for delivery to restaurants. Space was always at a premium and I was always finding new ways to maximize the space I was given. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul gives an invitation to pray for the strength to understand the size and depth of the love of Yeshua.

"I pray that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to grasp with all the kedoshim [saints] what is the width and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Messiah which surpasses knowledge, so you

may be filled up with all the fullness of God."

—Ephesians 3:17b-19

In challenging times like we find ourselves in right now, the one comfort we can have is that God loves us the same as He did when things were "normal." I know from my shipping days that the capacity of a container is not going to change. I can only fit more of something by emptying the container of something else. We learn from Scripture that God's love is vast and limitless:

The Width of His forgiveness is "as far as the east is from the west, so far He removed our transgressions from us"

—Psalm 103:12

The Length of His sacrifice encompasses the whole world: "He is the atonement for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world"

—1 John 2:2

The Height of His mercy is limitless: "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy for those who fear Him"

—Psalm 103:11

Simply, the Depth of His love can't be contained! "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"

—John 3:16

Today, we need as much of the Lord's love as possible to strengthen us! His love has no limits, so the question is, how much room have we given Him?

- Do you need a refill today of God's love?
- Prayer: "Lord, fill me with more of You! Show me things in my life that are taking up space so I can remove them and be filled with more of You."



HOPE from the book of Jeremiah

Taking Hold of Hope During Darkest Times

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you see, Jeremiah?"

"I see the branch of an almond tree," I replied.

The Lord said to me, "You have seen correctly, for I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled."

— Jeremiah 1:11-12 (NIV)

The prophet Jeremiah bore the heavy burden of delivering messages from Heaven to the kings, priests, and people of Israel about the pending judgment for their sin, the destruction of Jerusalem for her idolatry, and coming captivity of the Jewish people into foreign lands. Despite the difficulty of his role and the darkness of the season he would have to walk through with his fellow Jewish people, Jeremiah would have found comfort in knowing from the beginning of his ministry that God had hand-picked him for this task even before he was formed in his mother's womb (Jeremiah 1:5).

God knew Jeremiah from before he existed, set him apart for his unique prophetic ministry, and came

time and again to Jeremiah at critical moments to remind him that—even when difficulty abounded, when his message was ill-received, and when despair loomed all around, his destiny and calling were secure because the heart and the promises of God were sure.

In the first chapter of Jeremiah, only a few verses after understanding that he had been brought into existence for the purposes of delivering God's messages to Israel and to the nations, the Lord shows Jeremiah the blossom on an almond tree. And, through this blossom, He confirms that the words God has spoken and the promises He has made shall surely come to pass. For the Lord is 'watching over' or 'intently hastening' to accomplish them.

Interestingly, the almond tree (*shakéd* in Hebrew), was one of the first trees in Israel to put forth its blossoms at the end of winter. The tree was likely named based on the root Hebrew word which means 'hastening' or 'on the watch' to be the first to spring into action. While all other trees were sleeping, and before any other trees sprouted their leaves, the *shakéd* would spring into bloom around January. Still late winter! But it was a sign that other things were about to awaken. That spring – a new season – was on its way. The Lord affirms Jeremiah's

observation of the *shakéd*, and says, '...for I am watching over (*shoked*) My word to perform it.' The same root Hebrew word! In this case, assuring Jeremiah that God is 'hastening' or keeping watch to seize the first opportunity to accomplish what He has promised.

Jeremiah understood, and we can join our confidence with his, that God, like the almond tree is ready to spring into action FIRST to speedily accomplish His promises, even when everything else around seems to be dark, asleep, or even dead.

Jeremiah did not see all of what God spoke through him come to pass in his lifetime, but he did see most. Because God hastened to accomplish it according to His promise. God has made many promises to us – in His word, and to us personally in our lives. And in this season, as we have seen fear, uncertainty, darkness, and even a 'shadow of death' spring up so quickly around the world, we can and must fix our hope on the reality that – even more than the trouble around us – God's word, His promises, are waiting and hastening to spring into action... undelayed and undiluted



by the trouble and slumber around us. By His grace and in full assurance of faith, let's guard against 'falling asleep' or succumbing to the 'winter' of dread or despair.

**Let's remain alert and full of hope,
watching for the promises
of God to come quickly to life
in this season for God is
hastening to see that they do!**

Spring is here!

**May His promises spring
to life in us and through
us as we wait expectantly
upon Him.**

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