

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG48- The Fulfillment Of Tisha B'Av

Just ahead of us on the Hebrew calendar is Tisha B'Av. This is a time of fasting. Tisha B'Av refers to the ninth day of the month of Av on the Hebrew calendar. In Judaism, it is a day of fasting. It is considered the saddest day of the Hebrew year, because on the ninth of Av, several disastrous events happened in Jewish history, the worst of which are the destruction of Solomon's Temple by the Babylonians in 423 BCE and the destruction of the second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Other events include the defeat of the Bar Kokhba revolt, and the expulsion of the Jews from England in 1290 and from Spain in 1492. So there are many disastrous events that are remembered on this day of the ninth of Av, which creates this time of a declared fast before the Lord. But by far, the destruction of the Temple is the most painful, and it exists as a visual reminder. Even today as we go to Jerusalem, we see the Temple Mount with the Temple having been razed and is now laying in rubble on the streets below.

If you would study further and like to find out more about the celebration of or the fast of Tisha B'Av, I would recommend that you go to chabad.org. That is spelled C-H-A-B-A-D.org. You will find there the significance and practices for Tisha B'Av; and I think it would be enlightening and interesting for many of you to look into it and see really how the Jewish people relate to it. We are going to talk about the time of Tisha B'Av, but we are also going to speak about, as Christians, what we can do and what we should do in recognizing this as a significant time of the year for us.

The first question that I usually ask when researching religious practice is, do you find this event or this practice in the Scriptures? In the case of Tisha B'Av, the answer to that question is yes. And so we are going to read out of Zechariah the seventh chapter, from verse 2 to 14. "Now the town of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men to seek the favor of the Lord, speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, 'Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?'"

What we see happening here is the town of Bethel actually sent these representatives to find out, "Should we continue fasting and mourning during this fifth month of the year?" The fifth month is the month of Av, and so they are referring directly to Tisha B'Av in this Scripture. They are wanting to know, "Do we continue to see this as a time of mourning, as a time of fasting and weeping before God during this day?"

At verse four it says, "Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 'Say to all the people of the land'" – don't just answer Bethel, but talk to all of Israel, speak to all the people of the land – "'and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves? Are not these the words which the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with its cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?'"

This is during the time when the people have been removed from Israel. The land has been left desolate because of God's anger against them; and so He responds back to this question, saying, "When you

fasted in the past, were you doing this for Me or were you doing it for yourself?" And that is a great question that we begin to ask ourselves as we come before the Lord during this time: are we seeking the Lord because we are really seeking Him and we are looking to find out His will and His ways? Or are we doing this for ourselves as a religious observance, so that we seem more righteous and more religious in our own eyes or in the eyes of people? So God comes back with this question to all of Israel.

In verse nine it goes on to say, "'Thus has the Lord of hosts said, 'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother.'"' I find this interesting because in God's response, He doesn't tell them to do some big religious act. He tells them to change their way of relating to one another. These acts are not really seen as religious acts; they are more seen as social acts that He is wanting them to do. "'Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.'" But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing. They made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets; therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts. And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen,' says the Lord of hosts; 'but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known. Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate.'"

Herein we see in the Lord's response. He is saying, "You would not listen when I called to you. Now I am not going to listen when you call to Me." This is very disturbing to me personally, because we come to a point where in our rebellion, in our lack of responding to God in His voice to us, in the lack of noticing the circumstances around us, that God Himself does not listen to our prayer. And as we approach this time of Tisha B'Av, I have this question in my heart: Is God hearing us? Is God hearing the church as we pray? We see that this is part of His response. He said, "I called to you all this time and you would not listen to Me. Now you are calling to Me, I am not listening to you."

This fast of the fifth month was definitely something that we see was followed in biblical times. It was a time of mourning over what God said were the consequences of their actions in not following the voice of God. As we will see when we read on in Zechariah, when they repented and changed their actions, becoming obedient to God's voice, the days of fasting were turned into days of joy and blessing. So I want us to recognize that it starts out with a very negative thing. What is it saying that this time of Tisha B'Av is about? Well, it's about looking at our circumstances. You see, they were looking at the desolation that they were in because of their actions; and in studying their desolation and studying the circumstances of their rebellion, God was trying to give them a clue. God was speaking to them in very natural ways as the Master of their circumstances; and in that He was expecting them to recognize their disobedience to Him, disobedience to His voice, and to recognize also, "You guys are praying, but I am not hearing you. I am not listening to what you are saying because you need to change your actions, your responses to Me. You need to seek Me and come to Me and fast for Me, until there is a change in you that I can respond to."

What we do to finish this story out of the Hebrew Scriptures is to go to Zechariah the eighth chapter, starting at verse 13 and reading down through verse 23. "'It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you that you may become a blessing. Do not fear; let your hands be strong.' For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and I have not relented, so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!

These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates. Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the Lord.

"Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah; so love truth and peace." Thus says the Lord of hosts, "It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, 'Let us go at once to entreat favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go.' So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord." Thus says the Lord of hosts, "In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'"

What a blessed Scripture! One thing it points to is the fact that we should have faith that at some time, even though we are seeing a great resurgence of antisemitism in the day that we are living in, at some point there is going to be an entering into the fasting and crying out to God during this Tisha B'Av – I believe within the church – that is going to bring a reversal to the antisemitism to the point where people are going lay hold of the garments of a Jew, not to persecute them, not to destroy them, but to say, "Take us with you up to the house of God. We heard that God is with you and we want to go to Jerusalem and seek God." Lord, bring about the fulfillment of these days. We believe for it.

And we believe for all these other blessings that He was declaring in these Scriptures. He said these days of fasting – and He names the months during which the fasts of the Jews take place, which includes Tisha B'Av during the fifth month of the Hebrew calendar – these times of fasting and mourning are going to be turned by God into times of joy, gladness, and cheerful feasting for the house of Judah and for Israel. So there is a faith that we have as we enter into the fasting and mourning of Tisha B'Av in this day. We enter in with a faith knowing that the promise of God is that the Lord will hear us if we turn our hearts to Him, and He will reverse these days of fasting and mourning into days of feasting and joy. This is what we believe for.

We understand that we should look upon our circumstances and enter into a time of repentance and fasting. So how do we as Christians today participate in Tisha B'Av? Is this just something on the Jewish calendar for the Jewish people? I think not. I think when we find things like this in the Hebrew Scriptures, knowing that we as believers in Yeshua, Jesus, have been grafted in to the great covenants and promises of the Hebrew Scriptures, we see that this Tisha B'Av has a fulfillment and a participation for us. Personally I find it as a time to evaluate my personal circumstances. Has what I built been burned down like the Temple, and torn down? Am I losing the battles that I am fighting? Am I living with disastrous circumstances in my life? Maybe these are outward signs and consequences that God is using to get my attention and to lead me into a time of fasting and prayer.

That is what we see as the trigger in Tisha B'Av. It is all about looking at the circumstances that surround you which are consequences of our lack of serving God as He is desiring. If you doubt the fact that God is the Master of your circumstances, I encourage you to read Leviticus 26:14-46. It is important to read this, so please do. Read it and then recognize that God is the Master of your circumstances, and God will use your circumstances as the consequence for sin and disobedience. It is the way God can speak to us. We are not spiritual beings in the way the angels are. We are natural beings. We are humans. We live in a natural realm, and therefore God in His grace uses the natural surroundings of our lives, our

circumstances, as the consequences when we become rebellious, just as He did for the Jewish people. They recognized it, and therefore they look at the Temple and they go, "This happened for a reason. The reason wasn't because the Romans were just trying to destroy us. The reason was our relationship with God and what had happened and transpired because of our disobedience and because of our sinful nature. And now we turn to Him as a way of changing all of that."

God uses our personal circumstances. God brings about consequences in our life through those circumstances to speak to us and tell us, "You are not seeking Me. You are not pleasing Me. Now go into a time of repentance. Go into a time of seeking Me." And that is what we should do. God tells us very clearly in the Scriptures that He is going to bring consequences because of our sin. One of the examples of this we find in 2 Chronicles 7:11-14. This is after the dedication of the Temple of Solomon, which of course Tisha B'Av is recognizing that it was torn down. And it says, "Thus Solomon finished the house of the Lord and the king's palace, and successfully completed all that he had planned on doing in the house of the Lord and in his palace. Then the Lord appeared to Solomon at night and said to him, 'I have heard your prayer and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people, and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.'"

We see that God tells Solomon very clearly, "Listen, when I am not pleased with you, I am going to use natural consequences, circumstances that surround you. I am going to shut up the heavens so there is no rain. You will be living in a drought." What does that mean? There is no food. The animals are perishing because of lack of water. "I will send the locusts to devour the land. I will send pestilence or sickness," which is interesting because we find ourselves in a global pestilence right now with COVID-19 surrounding us and having to deal with that. We have to ask ourselves, it should be one of the consequences of which we say, "Lord, is this a natural consequence to the way we are walking with You and how we are not seeking You and pleasing You?" Maybe it is, maybe it isn't. That is for us to seek Him and find out.

He goes on and gives very clear instruction: "When you find yourself in these circumstances, then you are to humble yourself. You are to pray, to seek My face, to turn from your wicked ways. Then I will hear, forgive your sin and heal your land." The Lord gives detailed instructions of how we are to respond to the circumstances and the consequences that are born from our sin and our lack of following His instructions.

God instructs us also in Isaiah about how to fast. This is a time of fasting. And if you are going to enter into a fast, it is important that you fast for Him in the way He outlines for us to fast. Isaiah 58:6-12 gives His instruction for fasting: "Is this not the fast which I would choose?" Again, what was His question back to them in the beginning of this podcast? It was, "When you eat and drink, don't you eat and drink for yourself? You are not eating and drinking for Me. You are not fasting for Me." So if we want to fast, let's fast according to His instruction. "Is this not the fast which I choose, to loosen the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke? Is it not to divide your bread with the hungry and to bring the homeless poor into the house; when you see the naked, to cover him; and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" Don't lie to yourself about where you are at in your relationship with Him. "Then your light will break out like the dawn, and your recovery will speedily spring forth; and your righteousness will go before you; the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.'"

Remember, that was part of the consequence. He said, "You are not listening to Me; I am not going to hear your prayer." So this is a tremendous response the Lord is giving. If we fast according to His fasting, the way He chooses for us to fast, He promises He will hear us. And we want Him to hear us.

Verse nine again, "Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you remove the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell." And that is what we are looking for in these days – the restoration of the life and the blessings of God that have been so lost to the church and lost to the society and the world that surrounds us.

Also as Christians, we must understand that we have the Holy Spirit to assist us in this process of seeking Him and praying and fasting. Our spirits, guided by the Holy Spirit, are able to search our own hearts and make us aware of the areas of disobedience in our lives. We do not have to be blind to our problems. We do not have to be ignorant of our sins, and we should not be. We have the light of the Holy Spirit to shine within our hearts, within our beings, to show us what the need is.

With this understanding then, we are able to cry out to God for a godly sorrow that works true repentance and turn from our wicked ways. When we do, the blood of Yeshua, Jesus, is able to cleanse us and transform us into His very likeness, allowing us to walk in newness of life in Christ. Some Scriptures regarding this are 1 Corinthians 2:10-11: "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?" You see, you don't have to be ignorant. Your spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit, knows your thoughts, knows what is really going on in your heart, in your mind, in your soul. "Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God."

You can go on and read down through verse 16. It is very helpful in this process, because we should not only know our own mind, but according to verse 16, we should also know the mind of Christ in this process of the Holy Spirit and our spirit searching. Remember, "Search me O God, know my ways"; and we should search our own hearts. Romans 8 also deals with this, starting at verses 26-28. It says, "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose."

So we should be in a process, once we evaluate these circumstances around us, and say, "I know there is something wrong, because things are not as they should be. I am not living in the Presence of the Lord as I should. I am not surrounded by the blessings of God as I should be." We know that God is speaking to us, calling to us, and we use our spirits as Spirit-filled believers to help us in the search of our hearts and in finding what God is looking for us to change in our lives.

We know that God will shake us, and He is going to shake the world around us. He is using many events and circumstances to bring our focus back to Him. But we have an opportunity in Tisha B'Av. It is one of many opportunities, but this is a timeframe where we can begin to turn to look and behold these times of shaking and shattering that have taken place in our lives, and ask Him to bring His grace and forgiveness and to restore us to our first love and relationship with Him. Remember, the Lord is always looking in a process of making all things work together for good if we are seeking Him and loving Him.

I want to read one more Scripture out of Haggai, because it is, again, part of the promise of the blessing. Remember how the Scriptures end, speaking about this time of Tisha B'Av – it turns it from mourning and fasting into a time of blessing, into a time of feasting. And Haggai is also talking about this in chapter two, starting at verses 5-7. It says, "'As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!' For thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea also and the dry land. I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord of hosts."

So He promises that once again, as does Hebrews promise. Hebrews 12:26 promises there will be once again a shaking; and we are coming in to that time when He is going to shake all things. These times of shaking, these times of circumstance that surround us, are a signal to us to turn our hearts to the Lord. And we see that in Haggai; even the nations respond by bringing to the Lord the gold and the silver. They come to sacrifice and worship before Him. He says in verses 8-9, "'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord of hosts. 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says the Lord of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace,' declares the Lord of hosts."

The latter glory of what God is bringing forth in your life will always be greater than the former glory of that which God was allowing to be shaken down and destroyed, seemingly, surrounding you. So don't take it as a negative thing. Don't feel like God is against you. He is not. God is in the process of blessing you and bringing you into the fulfillment of all that He has for you in His life.

Let's remember a few things from this podcast, as we draw to a close. Number one, God is the Master of your circumstances. So honestly, objectively, study your circumstances as of place and a point of repentance. You can find it if you look hard enough. Also, God will turn the negative events and circumstances in our lives to good if we love Him and seek Him with honest repentance. He will bless us. Also, if we all seem to be ruined and destroyed, like the Temple in Jerusalem is today, through repentance and seeking the Lord He will make your latter house, the process, what you are building today, to be greater than the former house. Anything that you have seen to accomplish, there is something greater that God has for you. And as He shakes you and brings you into a time of repentance, it is because He is looking to bring a greater blessing.

The last point I would make is the Lord has told us exactly what He wants us to do. He wants us to humble ourselves. He wants us to pray. He wants us to seek His face and turn from our wicked ways. And so we respond with this prayer: Father, by faith we cry to You, in the name of Yeshua, cleanse us of our sin, and help us to turn from the wickedness that has brought us into the destructive circumstances that are consuming our lives. Make all aspects of our lives work together for good, and pour out Your abundant grace that we might experience a future filled with Your Presence and Your glory. Amen.