



When Violence Fills the World God Sends a Flood

By Daniel Gwertzman

"The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." (Genesis 6:11)

This is the week in which we read the Torah portion devoted to Noah (Saturday, October 21, 2023). Israel is at war with Hamas in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The Hebrew term Hamas which appears in the Bible in a number of places means in English violence. However, the Bible, whose events took place long before this conflict emerged, tells us that we live in the days of Noah and Lot.

"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:27-29)

We are now in the Hebrew month of Cheshvan, which is linked to the Prophet Joel. His name means: "May the Lord consent to save me." This was the month when King Solomon completed the construction of the First Temple.

"And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul, (Cheshvan) which is the eighth month, was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it. So was he seven years in building it." (I Kings 6:38)

According to the Jewish tradition, the third Temple is also supposed to be dedicated in that month.

It is in the month of Cheshvan that we ask for rain. On the seventh of the month, which is fifteen days after the Festival of Succoth (the Festival of Tabernacles). This allows for the last of the Pilgrims in Israel to make their way back to the Euphrates in Babylon before the rain begins. It is a month devoid of festivals. It is a month of the rain called Yoreh (the shooting rain) which falls in great quantities. This is the rain meant to cause the growth of grain, vegetables, and fruit. It is these material blessings, which come from the last day of the Great Feast, which is a spiritual outpouring. It is when the Prayer for Rain is first recited.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." (John 7:37)

Rain is considered a synonym for the Spirit.

The last day of the Great Feast was October 7, 2023. This year it marked the holiday of Simchat Torah (the Rejoicing of the Torah). It is when we finish the reading of the Torah and start over again. It marks a new beginning. This year it was disrupted by a massacre. This was not just a physical attack, but a spiritual attack.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12)

The central prophecy of the first half of the book of Joel concerns a plague of many kinds of locusts. The Rabbinic Commentator Abarbanel explains this is a metaphor for the enemies of Israel, who will invade Israel and cause destruction, like the devastation caused by locusts. The connection between Cheshvan and the Book of Joel is that the way to prevent physical destruction is by strengthening spirituality. Thus, the Jewish people must unify around the "King of Kings". Salvation will come when we successfully connect the Spiritual with the Material. Only when the Material and Spiritual are properly combined, will the Holy Spirit and God's abundant blessings rest upon the People of God.

Only by understanding the sin of Sodom can one understand what brings about destruction in the world.

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good." (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

This is the judgment which shall come upon Israel's enemies.

The prophecy concerning Israel is not of destruction, but of salvation and praise.

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isaiah 60:19-21)

**Dear Friends,**

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." (Psalms 121:1-2)

Many thanks for your prayers and support! We all have been so blessed by the many replies to my last letter. They are such an encouragement to us as we are involved in a struggle between good and evil. So many people in the world are demonstrating for Hamas, calling for death to the Jews and to gas the Jews. Anti-Semitism has risen its head again in the guise of anti-Zionism.

"Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright." (Psalms 11:6-7)

Here in Israel people from all over the political spectrum have come together to volunteer and help wherever necessary, including the Ultra-Orthodox. People are making sandwiches for our soldiers. They are volunteering to harvest crops at the kibbutzim that were attacked along the border with Gaza, on October 7, 2023.

The people who were living along the border with Gaza, and along the Lebanese border, have been evacuated to hotels all over Israel. People are sending us donations to help those in need and our own AMI Choir is going out to sing to the evacuees in the hotels who are in great need of spiritual uplift. There are even Christians who are volunteering to come to Israel and help in any way they can.

Cardinal Pierbattista, Pizzaballa the Patriarch of Jerusalem, said he was willing to exchange himself for Israeli children taken hostage by Hamas and held in Gaza. Christian lawmakers in more than 30 countries declared their support for Israel. They are part of the Israel Allies Caucuses. Shlomo Hizak, whose Memorial service was on Sunday October 22, 2023, would have been proud of these Christian leaders coming forward to bless Israel and offer their assistance at this difficult time. Shlomo's grandson, Ben Hizak, has collected funds to purchase ceramic bullet proof vests for Israeli soldiers serving in Gaza and along the Lebanon border. We need your prayers and support more than ever at this time and are asking you all to pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee." (Psalms 122:6-8)

Israel is fighting for the sake of civilization lest the same problems come to your lands. May the Lord watch over all His children.

Wishing you many blessings,

Daniel Gwertzman

**Orthodox Jews and Religious Christians are Coming Together**

By Daniel Gwertzman

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1)

There have been times in the past when Jews and Christians came together which were periods of what we call Philo-Semitism, rooted in understanding the Bible. There were also periods of persecution what we call anti-Judaism and what was termed anti-Semitism. This is a nineteenth century term from 1873 in Germany, which in the 20th century and now in the 21st century is anti-Zionism.

If we go back to the roots of Christianity, Jesus and His first followers were Jews. He taught in the Temple and the synagogues of his day, preaching based on Biblical teachings and rabbinic teachings. The New Testament, as we know it today, had not been codified in His time. What

He stressed for His followers was the centrality of Jerusalem.

"And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24:49)

After He ascended to heaven, His followers did not leave the Temple, nor did they separate from the Jews.

"And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke 24:53)

The importance of the land of Israel, the Word of God, and Jerusalem never ceased.

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion." (Psalms 134:2-3)



Religious Jews and Christians need to join together to preserve and strengthen common Biblical values against the onslaught of secularism. This is undermining modern society in the age of Post Modernism, which does not recognize truth but rather narratives.

As a sign of the times Yeshiva University in New York, an Orthodox Institution, has opened its doors to Christian students. It has created a two-year Hebraic studies program for Christian students with courses on Jewish History, Biblical Hebrew, Post-Biblical Literature and more. This is a sign of a growing bond between Orthodox Jews and religious Christians who have found ties based on Biblical values, conservative domestic politics, and support for Israel.

Within the last 50 years among Protestants, and especially Evangelicals, there has been an intense interest in the Jewish context of the New Testament and particularly in Second Temple Judaism. A historian of American Religion, Daniel Hummel, has written a book about this subject called, "Covenant Brothers: Evangelicals, Jews and U.S. – Israel Relations". Christians come to Jews to learn about their beliefs and to use that knowledge to study New Testament texts. This goes both ways. In 2018, David Nekrutman became the first Orthodox Jew to graduate from Oral Roberts University, a private evangelical university. He graduated with a Masters Degree in Christian Studies.

The pilot group of eight Christian graduate students entering Yeshiva University come from a mix of Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Baptist backgrounds. They come from California, Texas, Nebraska, Virginia, and Mozambique. What they hope to achieve is a deeper understanding of the Jewish roots of Christianity. This is a way for them to deepen their faith and understanding of the Word.

A religious scholar of Rabbinic Judaism at Ben Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, Michal Bar-Asher Siegel, has joined forces with a zoologist from Tel Aviv

University, Yossi Yovel, to revolutionize the field of Jewish Christian Studies. What has been done is to make use of network analysis. This is a mathematical field used to visualize data to map the connections of Rabbis of the Talmud who were writing and teaching with Christians who were writing and teaching at the same time. It will provide new insights into how the literature of Christian monks made its way into Jewish thought and will show Jews and Christians interacting with one another over many decades and thousands of kilometers in various ways. Their article about this is in the May 2023 issue of Human and Social Science Communications. This approach rejects an outdated theory that Jews and Christians parted ways in the early centuries of the Common Era and had limited contact.

Bar-Asher Siegel gathered Rabbinic Texts that seemed to have some knowledge of Christian sources and mapped the relationships between them. The results show how one rabbinic source might be familiar with many other Christian traditions, or how many rabbinic traditions show familiarity with one Christian source. For example, it demonstrates the extent to which the "Sayings of the Desert Fathers", a 5th century collection of monastic literary traditions, appear in multiple rabbinic passages making it possible to identify the most influential texts and showing the importance of certain traditions for both communities. It leads to important questions about what was shared by both Judaism and Christianity and why certain texts, and not others, were shared. It also illustrates what they knew and how they reacted to this information. Thus, there were disputes but also shared theological concepts. These connections will help us understand our common theological roots and deepen our relationship.

"Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee."
(Psalms 143:8)



Letter from Jerusalem

By Meron Medzini (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

This letter is written on day 13 of the current Israel-Hamas War, a day after the most moving and emotional visit to beleaguered Israel by President Joe Biden and before the onset of the IDF ground operation aimed at eliminating Hamas' military capability in the Gaza Strip. However, already now a number of lessons can be drawn, some positive and many negative.

Among the positive is Israel's ability to swiftly recover from the devastating blow, regroup, gain the military advantage, and rid the country of thousands of murderous barbarians from Hamas and other hostile elements. We are taking the initiative, to destroy much of Hamas military infrastructure and kill many of its leaders.

This was done while maintaining the overt support of the United States that was demonstrated by a massive airlift of much needed equipment, and by the stream of major world leaders who came to Israel to demonstrate their support. Among them apart from Biden were the German Chancellor, the British Prime Minister, the foreign ministers of Germany, France, Italy and other nations. Scores of governments issued statements of support. America also vetoed a Brazilian proposal for an immediate cease-fire..



The true spirit of Israel, a country beset by internal strife and dissent, once again rose above the domestic turmoil, united to form an emergency war cabinet. It was demonstrated and even more so by the voluntary efforts of tens of thousands of Israelis and Jews from other countries who streamed to help the totally or partially stricken settlements and border towns, destroyed by Hamas rockets and mortar fire and by sheer barbarity.

There are many stories of heroic feats as Israelis flocked to the stricken communities on October 7 to rescue their besieged brethren, repelled the Hamas terrorists and rescued many trapped Israelis. Among those who rushed to the front line were elderly Israelis, veterans of previous wars, who often fought alongside their children and even grandchildren. Many were volunteers from abroad who rushed to Israel at its time of solitude and extreme peril.

For the time being Hezbollah in Lebanon was deterred from embarking on a major attack on Israel's northern border. It was deterred by the United States, by fear of massive Israeli retaliation and thus, for the time being, saved Israel from the need to fight simultaneously on two fronts.

But we cannot conceal the harsh reality. Israel was dealt a massive blow, probably the worst disaster experienced by the Jewish state in its seventy-five years of existence. The number of dead now stands at 1400 and rising, Thousands were wounded, many seriously. Hundreds of the victims were young Israelis attending a nature festival who were gunned down by Hamas terrorists. Some two hundred Israelis are now being held as hostages captured by Hamas on October 7, the majority are civilians including elderly, women, children and even babies.

The economic costs are horrendous. Tourism has all but stopped, many foreign airlines suspended their flights to Israel. Israeli hotels now house Israelis evacuated from border zones paid for by the government. Many small businesses report vast losses. Schools have been closed for days as over 5000 rockets were fired by Hamas at Israel from Gaza, some hitting homes even in the greater Tel Aviv and Jerusalem areas.

Some 360,000 reserve soldiers have been called up adding to the country's economic woes. But above all, many Israelis are still stunned over the intelligence failure, the slow response to the attack, and the very slow pace of the government's response to the new economic reality. There are also serious questions asked about the capability of the civilian and even military leadership and calls abound to form, at the right time, a commission of inquiry to determine the causes of this national setback.

International public opinion is also beginning to wane. Questions are now being asked about "proportionality", meaning why is Israel destroying significant parts of the Gaza Strip, why are so many Palestinians suffering misery, hunger and thirst. Questions are also being asked why are the Arab states ignoring the plight of many Palestinian civilians and are denying them access to their safer territories.

It is also not clear how this war is going to affect the budding relations between Israel and the Gulf states of Bahrein and the United Arab Emirates, as well as talks for normalizing ties between Israel and Saudi Arabia. Clearly the entire Middle East region is reeling from this war. At this point in time, Israel has vaguely stated its war aims: to eliminate the capacity of Hamas to continuously threaten Israel's southern region. But is this enough, how long will it take, what will be the costs and who will foot the bill?

Until such time, Israelis are focusing their attention on the coming military operations, and gearing themselves for a long ordeal. They are beginning to structure their institutions to deal properly with the new, unprecedented, emergency that it seems will last much longer than anticipated.

The perils ahead do not deter Israelis. They only serve to strengthen their resolve knowing they are supported by millions of Israel's friends overseas, many of them among the readers of this Letter from Jerusalem.



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