

September 2006

Where do we put our focus?

*Beloved friends,
Precious brothers and sisters, Shalom!*

*"But the LORD abides forever;
He has established His throne for judgment.
And He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.
The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble;
And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; for You, the LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You. Sing praises to the LORD, who dwells in Zion; declare among the peoples His deeds."*
Psalm 9:7-11



After this awful war - or is this a break only? - we come before our wonderful and Almighty God, who kept us safe and performed so many miracles in these last weeks of war in the north of Israel.

Yes, again Israel is experiencing a war. There are people who say that we have been in constant war since 1948 as the Muslims surrounding us want to get rid of us. We are a nation whose mere existence brings shame to 'Allah', the god of Islam. All those who fight for his cause want to push us into the sea in order to win back 'his' land and to prove that he is the real god.
What shall we write about today?

Shall we write about the horrible suffering on both sides? About the people who had to run to their shelters every 30 minutes (if their buildings even have them), the refugees in Lebanon and Israel who had to leave their homes as they were under constant bombardment, and who were forced to wander around just to find a place to lay their heads for a few hours of peace without the noise of sirens.

Shall we write about the children who are frightened now even when a balloon explodes?
Shall we write about all the families in Israel and Lebanon, who mourn over their beloved ones, who will never come back, shall we share with you their personal stories? When we read them we cannot help crying - the pain of a mother you cannot grasp.

Shall we write about the thousands of miracles, when almost 4,000 Katyusha rockets fell - hundreds every day - and so many times not one person was harmed?

Shall we discuss the reasons for this war, the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers, the constant threat for our whole nation, shall we talk about politics?

Shall we write about the mistakes that were done in this war, about the big disappointment of the Israeli people and get involved in the discussion that is going on in Israel: ethics in war?

Shall we show the manipulation of the media in these last weeks, the pictures that were manipulated, the reports which were not honest?

We do not want to do all that!

Instead we would like to do what we as children of God have the privilege of doing: we want to look up to the Lord, where our help comes from.

Isn't it an interesting observation that focusing on our problems and difficult circumstances in our daily lives only makes them worse, draws us deeper into our pit of pain, suffering, hopelessness and fear?! In every direction we look we see the work of the prince of this earth, the enemy of God. He fights in whatever form he can against the Kingdom of Light, he invests all his energy into destroying God's wonderful creation, His work in our lives and His salvation plan.

We could pray now that God takes us out of this world, but this is not what He wants.

Let us listen to what Yeshua prayed before He left this world:

***"I do not ask You to take them out of the world,
but for You to keep them from the evil one.***

They are not of the world even as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth Your Word is truth.

***I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who shall believe on Me through their word,
that they all may be one, even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us,
so that the world may believe that You sent Me."*** John 17:15-17; 20-21

We have a choice to make today:

Do we look to ourselves, will we investigate the situation, our problems and difficulties and thus allow them to draw us deeper into depression and fear or will we look up to the Lord - the only place help can ever come from?

I don't mean to say we should ignore our problems, wars, or catastrophes in this world, but we want to learn from King David. Many were the problems he had in life! Sometimes he had them because of his sin but most of the time because of others.

Did you realize that he wrote the most powerful Psalms while in his deepest valleys? We sometimes see him arguing and discussing with his soul. Have a look at Psalm 42 and 43. David is in total desperation, downcast, his tears have been his food day and night and he suffers much from those around him, who keep laughing at and mocking: *"So, where is your God now?"* He remembers the joyful past and this makes him even more desperate.

He pours out his heart before God, he does not play any religious games with his Father in heaven -he is honest with his pain and desperation. But he does not stay there. He does not allow his soul to remain in the place of despair, and he commands several times:

***"Why are you cast down,
O my soul, and moan within me? Hope in God;
for I shall praise Him for the salvation of His face."*** (Psalm 42:5)

He is talking to his own soul - again and again, three times in these two psalms - until his soul, he himself, understands and believes again that there is hope and in the end he will see God's victory and salvation.

I believe this is one of the mysteries in the life of a believer: worship.

I am not talking about half an hour in church once or twice a week, or about the singing of a few songs while I step out of my daily life for a few minutes.

I speak about the lifestyle of a person who is willing to focus on the Lord, who in a sense puts on blinkers and in this way helps himself look up to the Lord, where help comes from. I talk about a person who commands his own soul to rest in God, who is always praising God for who He is and what He does - even if it takes more time for his soul to understand this fully.

The better we know Him and His Word, the better and more joyful will be our worship. (Surely this attitude of heart should never hinder us from giving our best to change situations, to bring help - but this needs to be done with a sure certainty of God's omnipotence in our hearts and the right perspective.) Besides the fact that this is the only way to survive in this world, which is indeed a shadow of death, we have quite a few positive 'side effects' that come with worship:

- When we turn our face to the Almighty God, whose character is holiness and love, who created heaven and earth and has won the victory, who has this world in His hand; when we watch Him, get to know His character and worship Him all the days of our life, we will become more like Him every day.

Did you realize that children who grow up in a healthy and clean environment have so much more chance of becoming stable members of society than those children who see crime, murder and adultery all the time?

Focusing on our Lord instead of our problems and the dirt of this world, makes us become more like Him!

When we focus on the Lord in all circumstances, the wonderful ways of the Lord become so much more alive and real for us than the problems. Every minute we know how wonderful our good Father in heaven is. The world cannot draw us down any more and He lifts our spirits up!

In seeing Him in everything and worshipping Him, the victory is already ours as it was in the time of Jehoshaphat:

"When he had consulted with the people, he appointed those who sang to the LORD and those who praised Him in holy attire, as they went out before the army and said, Give thanks to the LORD, for His lovingkindness is everlasting. And when they began singing and praising, the LORD set ambushes against the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah. And they were routed." 2 Chronicles 20:21-22

I believe that this is a truth we can also apply in our own lives. Satan has to flee when we worship God, when we focus on Him and His glory, when we give Him the honor that belongs to Him.

There is no place for satan, when we are deeply in love with our God and when we see everything that is happening around us with His eyes and with the sure knowledge that our Almighty God is mighty to help!

And one more thing: when we focus on the Lord and rejoice in Him and His might, we become like children, who are carefree, happy because they know their father is close. The world will look at us and our friends will want to know where our joy comes from. The joy in our hearts and eyes is the best evangelism tool we can ever obtain!

Beloved friends, we pray with all our heart that Almighty God, who created heaven and earth and still keeps it, will richly bless you as you focus on Him. May your service in His kingdom be joyful and bring forth much fruit.

*With much love,
Elisheva Damkani*

PS: In case you ask me now if I always succeed in this and if it is as easy in my life as it sounds, I need to honestly say: no. But I am in a learning process and every time I do manage to focus only on Him, I feel so good and everything is great! That's the reason I want to go on, learn more and also invite you to do so - it's worth it!