

28 Tammuz, 5774 (26/7/14) **Cornered and Crumbling – Fighting in the Streets** J. M. Terrett

Masei **Journeys** **Issue Need to Be Dealt With**

Torah: Numbers 33:1-36:13

(1) 33:2

(2) 33:55, 56 (52)

(3) 35:33

(4) 36:9 The inheritance shall not pass from one tribe to another, so the covenant shall not pass from Israel to the church – we share it as equals, it can neither be replaced nor transferred.

Haftarah: Jeremiah 2:4-28; 4:1, 2

(5) 2:5 (11)

(6) 2:13 (17, 19 (20)

Brit Chadashah: James 4:1-12

(7) 2:7, 8

(Patti, pp. 111, 113) **Ps. 49** **Jewish Hero: IDF soldiers looking for Hamas tunnels**

As we join the worldwide Jewish community in commemorating the second Shabbat of Affliction, I would like to give you a perspective on why the L-rd allowed this catastrophe to occur. Once the walls were breached, it took three weeks for the Babylonians to overcome the stubborn Jewish resistance and reach the Holy Temple which Solomon built and which was intended to stand until the Messianic kingdom was established over all the nations and generations of mankind.

It was a futile struggle because it was aimed at resisting the consequences of rebellion and was not based on repentance and a desire to repair the spiritual damage which triggered the conflict in the first place.

You see, after the grievous defeat of King Josiah at the hands of the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco, The Egyptians set up a client king over Judah s they retreated back into Egypt once they were defeated in their attempts to help the dying Assyrian kingdom avoid destruction. Once they had dealt the final death blow to the Assyrians, the Babylonians arrived in Judah and set up their own client king over Judah and returned home to stabilize their new empire. They made Zedekiah, the last king of Judah swear an oath of allegiance (obedience) to them before the L-RD.

He remained loyal for eleven years and then joined an Egyptian sponsored rebellion against his covenant overlord. It was not an action which the L-rd called for nor one which the L-rd would support. He was breaking his word (oath) to the L-rd and was in fact rebelling against the L-rd.

We shall see later, after the temple and Jerusalem were destroyed, that the Babylonians were not interested in destroying the Kingdom of Judah. Under the leadership of Gadaliah, they set up a new regime which motivated thousands of Jewish refugees to return to the land and harvest the crops sown by those who went into captivity.

The prophet Jeremiah encouraged them to build houses and to engage in commerce and to serve the Babylonians for the duration of the captivity so that the land would not be desolate when the captives were allowed to return.

If the rebels had surrendered before the walls were breached only the leaders of the rebellion would have been punished. If they had surrendered after the walls had been breached, the Holy Temple would have been spared. But the rebels stubbornly clung to the hope that G-d would intervene to save His holy city because He had promised that it would stand forever as a beacon to the nations.

As it slipped more and more into criminal idolatry and as the righteous core shrunk into a smaller and smaller minority His blessing and protection was removed from this generation of His people. His blessing over Israel will never be removed, not today and not ever, but it can be removed from specific generations which turn their backs on His Word and His ways.

This has happened tragically twice and it is telling that both Solomon's temple and Herod's temple were destroyed on the same day on the Jewish calendar. It is also telling that those killed and enslaved during the destruction of the second temple numbered in their millions and Judaism went from being the fastest growing religion in the ancient world to a smaller and smaller persecuted minority.

At one point, up to 10% of the Roman empire had converted to Judaism, and this was not counting the numbers of Jews and their converts that stretched across the Fertile Crescent and along the trade routes all the way south into Africa and east into India and China.

In this first dispersion and captivity the desperate fighting was a futile effort to deal with a problem which was of the people's own making. We know from history and the later accounts of Scripture that many of the people surrendered themselves to the Babylonians or took refuge in neighboring countries and thus avoided being killed or taken into captivity needlessly.

The great tragedy of the destruction of the first and second temples is that neither loss had to occur and could have been averted if only the people had heeded the voice of the L-rd. A close study of the history of Israel and Judah reveals that Jerusalem had often been on the brink of destruction and had been spared either when the people had turned to G-d or when G-d had taken pity on His people and had not allowed the city to be completely overthrown. As the people were being pushed through the streets towards the temple during these horrible three weeks of relentless combat many of them may have been calling upon the L-rd for His help, but they had crossed a line and part of their repentance would have required their surrender to the Babylonians. It was their pride and stubbornness which caused them to keep on fighting because they falsely assumed that if they fought hard enough, G-d would be obliged to come to their aid and save the Holy Temple.

Now I want you all to understand that G-d will never turn His back on any of the promises

which he made to His people and no matter who occupies Jerusalem, it will always be the city of the Great King. Our Messiah said that it would be trodden under foot of the nations until the time of the nations is over and part of the reason there is so much conflict in the region there is so much confusion and turmoil in the region is due to the satanic opposition to the fulfillment of this great promise.

For the first time in nearly 2,000 years, Jerusalem is in Jewish hands again, even though there was never a time in history when Jerusalem did not have a significant Jewish population. Let us read the two passages which I have selected to deal with our people being cornered and crumbling as they fought a losing battle in the streets. Both of these warnings were made before the first temple was destroyed.

Listen My people and I will warn you; Israel oh that you could hear Me. Let there be no strange god in your midst and do not bow down before strange gods. I am the L-RD your G-d who made you to come up out of Egypt; open your mouth and I will fill it. But my people did not listen to My voice, Israel did not obey Me. Therefore, I delivered them up to their stubborn hearts and they followed their own counsel. Oh if My people had listened to Me, if Israel had walked in my ways! In an instant I would confound their enemies, I would turn My hand against their adversaries. Ps. 81:9-15

For thus says, the L-rd YHVH, the Holy One of Israel: it is in tranquillity and rest that you will find salvation, it is in calm and confidence you will find strength, but you did not want it. You have said: no, we will flee upon horses, therefore you shall flee. And we will ride upon swift steeds, therefore you pursuers shall be swift. A thousand shall flee at the threat of one and at the threat of five you shall flee until you are left as a signal at the summit of the mountain, as a standard upon the hill. Is. 30:15-17

We all face various kinds of struggles in our lives – some of them come on us unfairly, while others are of our own making. The key to victory is not how hard we fight nor how fast we run but is in how thoroughly we repent and accept responsibility for our actions. In other words, the best way to recover from bad decisions is to make good ones and to keep on going until our lives are no longer defined by the negative consequences of our past wrong decisions, but are defined by the good ones we are making.

I still regard the destruction of both temples with great sadness and I still mourn the death of so many who fought bravely against those who came twice to destroy the city, but my greatest sadness will always be that the horrible price did not have to be paid.

We need to learn to walk with the L-rd and live in calm and confidence and tranquillity and rest. Instead of turning our back on the L-rd, we need to turn back to the L-rd and watch how He turns our lives around. It may be sometime before things turn around, but all and any beginnings which are based in repentance, in returning to the L-rd will eventually bear the peaceful fruit of righteousness and prevent any further unnecessary damage from ravaging our lives.

When we fix what we have broken and speak the truth and call upon the L-rd we suddenly become part of the solution and are no longer part of the problem. We may still face opposition in our lives and we may still have to fight and chase some Greeks from our lives, but our lives will not be filled with the worship of false gods or with the broken promises which

caused Jerusalem to be utterly destroyed twice.

When we are cornered we need to return to Him. When we are crumbling, we need to aggressively seek His face. We need to be sure that we are fighting the right battle in the streets of our lives and not just delaying the inevitable because of our stubborn resistance and foolish pride.

We need to choose our battles and fight only those which will bring us back to the L-rd's agenda and free our lives to serve Him, whether we do it as exiles in Babylon like Daniel and Esther or whether we are rebuilding the ruins like Ezra and Nehemiah – or even if we are chasing out the Greeks like the Maccabees.

The only battles which matter are those which are fought in the pursuit of righteousness and faith and repentance. As we prepare for Tisha B'Av next week and as we climb back out of the pit towards Rosh Hashanah, may we follow the counsel of the Jeremiahs and Ezekiels in our midst and not persist in the errors of the Zedekiahs in our midst.

Disobedience and compromising the Word will never do us any good in the short term or the long term. G-d is never our true enemy- may we always engage His help against the influences and the people who are in fact our true enemies.

Lets pray.