

"Let us die in honor"



Flags all over the place

For a week or two the country is filled with Israeli flags. The media plays songs that focus on the Land and our battle to hold on to it (my favorite playlists)

What a graphic proof to God's faithfulness to His Word

In the two weeks immediately following Passover, the state of Israel commemorates three important days. I find these to be the most touching days of the Jewish calendar as they are connected to the modern history of Israel and to the history of my own family.

The Israeli flag and those of the IDF are raised on top of homes, cars, and in the streets. All that is because in two days we will celebrate the fact that 67 years ago, God had fulfilled one of His major promises to my people. For the third time in history we again became a sovereign state. Indeed a reason for celebration.

Last Thursday was Holocaust Memorial Day. Tomorrow evening Israel's Fallen Memorial Day (commemorating the memory of Israel's soldiers and terror victims) will commence, and in conjunction to it, the moment Memorial Day will be over on the following evening, our Independence Day celebrations will begin. A mixture of joy and sadness, suffering and bravery - so typical to the narrative of the Israeli people.

Holocaust Survivors - a Grim Picture

But there is another side to our might and courage and victory, and not something we should be proud of. About 189,000 holocaust survivors reside in Israel today; To our horror, 45,000 of them live beneath the poverty line, finding it difficult to buy food and medication, heat their homes in the cold of winter and cool it some during the scorching days of the long Israeli summer. About 1,200 survivors pass away every month and in less than 20 years, all of them will be gone.

There are more numbers: 73% of these survivors living in Israel are sick, 45% feel lonely, and 46% believe that their children and grandchildren will no longer remember the holocaust once they are gone. Hard to fathom!

Despite some new bills that were passed, benefiting holocaust survivors, and in spite of the new plan implemented by the government a year ago to improve their state, thousands of survivors are still finding it difficult to afford their basic necessities. The main reasons: red tape, improper budgeting, lack of coordination and lack of man power. The budget was approved, but to our dismay, it is not reaching them.

A memorial at Westerbork camp in Holland

This Dutch camp is the only one I ever visited, and even this was only recently. I just could not stomach those sights, so I avoided going to these places, or even watching Holocaust films or reading books about it

Anyway, this memorial is quite impressive. The message is clear, and thousands of these little structures cover a whole field in the camp, one for each Jew who has passed through this camp



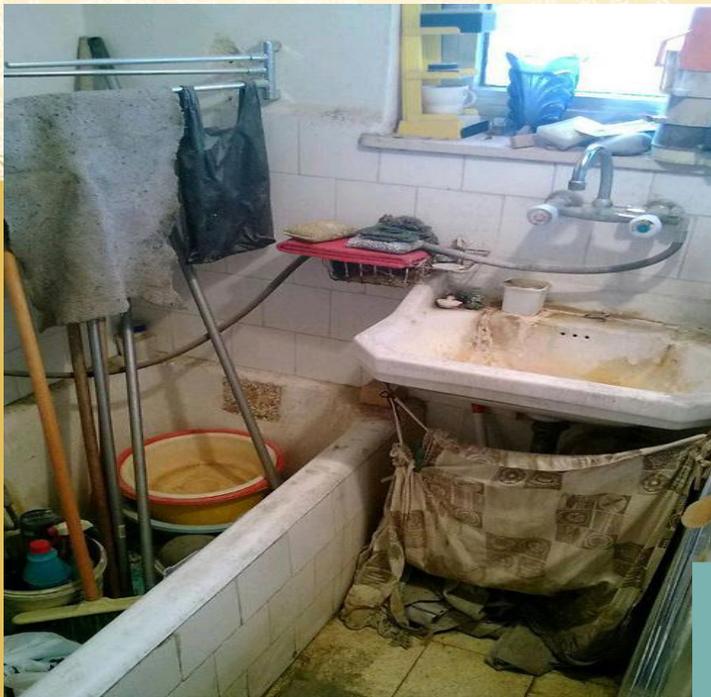
In an article published this week someone a survivor yelled, “let us die in honor”. Yes, for holocaust survivors even honorable death is considered a gain. But should they only die an honorable death? What about “live in honor”?

What does Scripture have to say about it?

Throughout the Bible God warned the people against exploitation and abuse of those who live in the margins: the foreigner, the orphan, the widows and the poor. He made it clear that if we do not treat them with righteousness and equality, He will punish us with sword and banishment.

Psalms 72 teaches us how a state (and even a church) should be run. The Israeli government will succeed in its external and defense policies only if it will properly and justly care for the welfare of its entire people. If we grant just judgment to the poor, even the mountains will bring us peace (v. 2-3, 7). Our boundaries will be enlarged (v. 8) and our enemies will bow before us (v. 9-11). Why?

For He will deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him who has no helper. He will spare the poor and needy, and will save the souls of the needy. He will redeem their life from oppression and violence; and precious shall be their blood in His sight (12-14).



My father's family - our personal story

My father's oldest sister, Dina (sitting in the middle) was murdered by the Nazis. My grandma and the other four children were sent to a labor camp (my father stands on the right side, up front)

To the best of our knowledge, this is probably the only family picture that survived the Holocaust

Almost every one of the Bible’s prophets saw a strong connection between peace around our borders to our treatment of the needy among us, and especially that of the leadership towards those who live in the margins of society.

You see, issues of security and terror are not the root of the problem. Our little state has always been surrounded with enemies. It has been like that since the days of Joshua and the judges, the prophets and the kings. The unrest in our borders is not necessarily a proof that Islam is growing stronger or that terror has found itself some more sophisticated ways to lash out its ugliness. Unrest around our borders, missiles shot from Gaza or Lebanon, and a nuclear threat from Iran are all God’s ways to make it clear to His children that He is upset with us, that He finds it necessary to rebuke and chastise us for two major sins: idolatry and a failing internal policy.

Broken, old, dirty bathroom

The picture (one of many like it) was taken by an organization that assists the victims

If we will take proper care of the needy in our midst, He will remove our enemies from us, and we will enjoy peace near our borders, regardless of the schemes of those who surround us or of radical Islam.

Israel indeed has a very moving narrative which these three feasts commemorate. On one hand we remember those who paid with their very lives so that we may live here, and on the other we celebrate the independence and strength God has given us, the IDF's might and the wisdom of its commanders. We wave our flags and are filled with pride for the fact that against all odds, the few against the many, we have fought and prevailed.

But when the nations of the world voted for us in that very famous vote of November 29, 1947, it was mainly due to the horrific images coming from the ghettos, of those survivors, wearing striped pajamas, with their hollowed eyes and a hunger that no meal could satisfy. Some of them, actually 189,000 in number, are still in our midst. And they need your prayers. They, as well as the rest of us.

Prayer Points

- ❖ For our leadership: Benjamin Netanyahu and the Ministers he is choosing these days for his new government. Ask God to soften their hearts, to fill them with compassion and make them feel they are on a mission to bring historical justice by allowing these people not only to die with honor but to live in honor as well in the short time they still have.



*Unbelievable
Shame, sickness,
poverty, loneliness. This
is the lot of many
Holocaust survivors,
due to a mismanagement
of funds that are
available and rightly
belong to them*

- ❖ For the survivors: salvation, of course, as well as healing.

Bracha and Shulah are two of my mother's best friends. *Bracha* took care of me when I was a baby. My mom met *Shulah* when they served in the army together over 60 years ago, and they remained best friends ever since. *Shulah* is one of the twins upon which Dr. Mengele performed his horrific tests in the camps. *Bracha* and *Shulah* both are finding it so very hard to see God's face in Yeshua. When we talk to them about Him, they quickly change the subject. And they are only two of the tens of thousands of survivors still living in our midst that lived through the hell and torment of WWII. I find it extremely hard to think that some of them might actually find themselves in eternal hell.

- ❖ For the entire nation: we are not quick to make the connection between our security battle and our walk, or lack of it, in God's ways. Pray that God will open our eyes and help us understand that He insists we act justly if we seek true peace.

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