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Where is Justice?

Israeli political spectrum comes together against a congregation



By Gil Afriat & Moti Cohen

On October 26, the Knesset Finance Committee, chaired by ultra-Orthodox Knesset member, Moshe Gafni, unanimously denied our petition to receive tax-deductible status as guaranteed by law for our congregation, Tiferet Yeshua, in Tel Aviv.

For years now, we have been in the process of petitioning for tax-deductible donation status (article 46) for our members who subsidize the congregation with their monthly tithes. This is a right promised to all religious organizations in Israel, whether they be synagogues, churches, mosques, or Buddhist temples. Tiferet Yeshua's request went through the proper channels of the Tax Authority which granted us "Proper Standing" status. According to the law, "Proper Standing" entitles us to this tax status.

However, from the moment our petition arrived at the Finance Committee, it was put in limbo because, according Moshe Gafni (Finance Committee Chair), Tiferet Yeshua would receive the tax status "over my dead body."

The Supreme Court and the Tax Authority have repeatedly sent our case back to the Finance Committee for re-evaluation, where it has each time been denied. The reason? We are Messianic Jews. If we were willing to register our non-profit as a Christian church, no one would bat an eye. However, because we *dare to continue calling ourselves Jews*, as Jewish followers of a Jewish Messiah, we are denied this right under the law.

We were not surprised by the response of ultra-Orthodox parliament member Gafni, who has *made it his mission to discriminate against us on religious grounds*. Gafni influenced the committee members to vote against us, despite the Tax Authority's positive recommendation.

The flash-point issue that unified the committee against us was the "conversion of minors" law. *Spurious allegations were made that we aim to convert minors, which is against the law in Israel. Tiferet Yeshua completely abides by the law of minors and the prohibition of financial inducement to faith, and the committee produced no concrete evidence to the contrary.*

What did surprise us was the fact that all the Finance Committee members, from the left and the right of the political spectrum, joined together to *unanimously vote against us*. We fully expect to be labeled "dangerous missionaries" by the ultra-Orthodox, but it was a shock for us to hear liberal politician Yair Lapid, a well-known critic of the ultra-Orthodox, label us "a danger to Israeli society." Tiferet Yeshua members are law-abiding Israeli citizens who love their country and their people, who fulfill their civic duty by serving in the military and paying taxes. This is something that cannot be said of the ultra-Orthodox, most of whom do not serve in the military but rather spend their time in state-funded religious schools.

Overt religious persecution is relatively rare here in Israel, and we are thankful to be living in the only real democracy in the Middle East. However, this vote in the Finance Committee against our congregation reminds us that religious discrimination is alive and well in Israel, even beyond what we imagined.

Our calling is to bring glory and honor to our Lord Yeshua, which is of far greater importance to us than being granted article 46 taxation status for our members. God is sovereign and will take care of all our needs, as we faithfully follow Him in love. We will continue to petition for our rights and would appreciate your prayers for us in those efforts.

Congregation Tiferet Yeshua (the Glory of Yeshua)

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Anchor in the Storm



By Eitan Shishkoff

We find ourselves in a time of isolation and ruptured routine. The world health crisis has affected every one of us. Consequently, *something at the core of my being is searching for solid ground.* Life's circumstances have changed radically, in a way that threatens my inner security. Without knowing the ultimate purpose of my life, I can begin drowning in the waves of Corona.

The Pandemic and the Soul

Mental health statistics provide a sobering picture of the situation. Calls to suicide hotlines are spiking. With the headline *"Pandemic of loneliness, anxiety: Crisis hotline says suicide calls have doubled,"* *The Times of Israel*, on October 30, 2020, reported *"an unprecedented level of suicide calls — and many of them are from people who did not have previously diagnosed mental health issues before the pandemic started."*

The Covid-19 Alert website states that "Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or exacerbating existing ones...(leading to) increased levels of alcohol and drug use, insomnia, and anxiety."

This brings us back to the question of life's purpose. Is life random? If my body is subject to the whims of a runaway virus, where can I find an anchor in this uncontrollable storm? Why am I here?

Returning to our Origin

At the outset of the Genesis account, we are given a simple yet profound answer.

"Then God said, *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;* let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth

and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' *So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.* Then God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it'" (Genesis 1:26-28, emphasis added).

Clearly, inventing us was not some afterthought. Slow down and absorb: The eternal Maker of Heaven and Earth—who has just finished spreading out the universe—is now describing human beings as carrying His image! Two words are used here in the Hebrew text. One is *tzelem/צלם* from which we get the modern Hebrew word for camera. We are not God. But just as a photograph reflects the image of its subject, we reflect the original content of the picture. The other word is *d'mute/דמות*, variously translated as likeness, resemblance, or pattern.

So, I am fashioned to reflect the nature of God. Wow. Sobering. Phenomenal. If I allow this fact to penetrate my mental/emotional framework, I emerge from the threats of depression, anxiety, fear, and confusion with new clarity.

Flourishing in His Image

What is the measure of my life? Of yours? It is that we are made in the image of God. The Apostle Peter says we are "partakers in the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). *My anchor in the storm is that I am in a cooperative relationship with God, participating in His eternal enterprise.* This fact supersedes the unpredictable circumstances around me.

May the same Spirit, by which man was originally created, impart a fuller grasp of who we are, that we may not only survive, but flourish in these times.

Back to the Future

A look at 1920, 2020 and 2120



By **Guy Cohen**

Have you ever seen a movie about travelling backward or forward through time to visit the same place in which you currently live?

Now imagine you are standing here in Israel today, looking back one hundred years. What would you see? You would see British policemen and the British army, sovereign over this land. What would you tell the people living in the land in 1920 while the British were in power? How do you think they would react if you told them that by 1948 the Jewish people would have their own sovereign country after nearly 2000 years?

The first wave of modern immigration (“Aliyah”) to Israel took place from 1882-1903. Twenty-five thousand people arrived from Romania, Poland, Russia and other parts of Eastern Europe, as well as from Yemen. Many were educated idealists who found themselves attempting to build new lives in an extremely inhospitable environment. Only five thousand remained from that first Aliyah! Eighty percent returned to their places of origin or moved to other countries.

Looking at this through physical eyes, would you say it was a success or a failure?

I consider it a success! They came as pioneers and they left their mark on the land. Their arrival opened doors for the second Aliyah. Fast forward to the present and we see a beautiful country with 9 million citizens. Israel is a modern state enjoying advanced science, medicine, and technology. Yet, despite accomplishments in the physical realm, we find ourselves a poor and barren place in the spiritual realm.

We, as Messianic believers, are pioneers of Israel’s growth and development in the spiritual realm. In Ezekiel 37:14, the

chapter on the dry bones, we see that God promises to bring the nation of Israel back to the land. Today we face many challenges in the Messianic body—including how to gather together as a congregation for weekly services, prayer meetings, home groups and the like. Due to Covid restrictions, everything is conducted online. The lack of human contact puts us in the dangerous position of becoming isolated and separated.

Beyond this there is the physical, spiritual, religious and governmental resistance to the Messianic Body in the land, which contributes to the challenge of the body not growing or, in some cases, diminishing. However, let us not despise the day of small beginnings (Zechariah 4:10). We are in a birthing process.

What do I see in Israel 100 years from now (if Yeshua has not yet returned)? I see countless Messianic communities throughout the land.

And now, what if we were to ask a believer from our Akko congregation, living one hundred years in the future, his or her perspective regarding 2020? What would they say to us?

I believe in spite of the trials, the small number of believers in the land and all that is being done to stop our growth; the “visitor” from the future would say, ***“Do not be dismayed. Continue to stand and be faithful in what God has called you to do; good fruit will come of it.”***

Dear friends from the nations, we could not stand and do the work here in the land without your support through prayer and intercession. Thank you. You are our midwife, our birthing coach.

Ark of God



By Leon Mazin

"Shalom! I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." (3 John 2 NIV)

The Torah portion of Noah tells of a righteous man who looked to God, while the whole world looked to their own personal interests and drowned in sins.

And the message to the Hebrews says: **"By faith Noah, being warned by God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith"** (Hebrews 11:7).

Today is filled with anxiety and uncertainty. There is still very little clarity regarding Covid-19, and the numbers of those infected and dying continue to rise. The Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict is heating up and could lead to the confrontation and participation of many larger countries! Seemingly local conflict can sometimes ignite larger destruction as in World War I. Political leaders seem to think more of their own personal agendas than of the countries they serve.

But the righteous, the believers of our generation, can, through prayer and testimony, either change the situation or lead others into "the Ark of God." Don't miss the opportunity to be a part of God's plan!



A few short news items and prayer requests from Shavei Tzion.

1. Six years ago, we started a program that serves soldiers who have finished their compulsory army service. It continues to function, but due to the lockdown, we have moved to reaching out via Zoom. We have been holding meetings to encourage, pray, develop friendships and study the Word of God. Over the past six months, we have never stopped. This program is for these young men and women because we want to continue to support them as they mature in their faith.

2. Through Zoom and YouTube, we continue meeting with the congregational home groups for adults and holding children's meetings, as well! Our audience is growing and there are new opportunities to proclaim the Word. My personal weekly home group today includes more than 100 people. Face-to-face gatherings are still forbidden, but on Zoom, it's OK!

3. The humanitarian aid project, Olim (New Immigrants), and Soup Kitchen Ministry have had only about a week off during this chaos. We have been reaching out non-stop during these past six months and have helped hundreds of families during both quarantine/lock-downs. We ask you to "hold up our arms" in prayer. And we invite your contributions in this time of our great need.

With respect and love,
Leon and Nina Mazin

Return to Zion Congregation

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The Call for Grace



By Avi Tekle

“Do not be overly righteous nor overly wise—why confound yourself?

Do not be overly wicked and do not be a fool—why die before your time?

It is good to grasp the one and not withdraw your hand from the other.

For the one who fears God will escape both extremes.”
(Ecclesiastes 7:16-18 TLV, emphasis added)

Another epidemic that accompanied the Coronavirus is the epidemic of loneliness and weakened mental health. As social creatures, we were created with the need to connect with others. At times we are rescued by people, and at times we need to be rescued from people. In any case, we all need interactions with family and friends to maintain a spiritually healthy life.

Our dealings with people can trigger *intimacy or estrangement*. When we interact, we discover two things about ourselves: who we are and who we are not. When we find common ground with others, we rejoice; and contrarily when we realize our differences, unpleasant conflicts can arise.

Are we called to walk only with those who look and think like us?

The differences we have with one another are the meeting points for God's grace. It's only through grace that we, in our sins, were connected with heaven, and it is only by grace that we can survive our differences.

Living in diverse harmony has always been my passion. Growing up in tribal Africa, my parents instilled a great sense of pride in our diverse but united identity. My mom and dad came from different tribes, spoke different languages and were raised in different cultures. In fact, I was born when a civil war broke out between their two tribes. On the day I was born, the name given to me by my community and family was “Father of Peace.” Growing up as a mischievous middle child, the calling to father peace was far from my mind, but I always aspired to find the beauty in diverse unity. On the grand scale, the whole world is one community.

A prime enemy of this God-given grace in our lives is extremism. From the above verse, we see that extremism blinds us from seeing ourselves and forces us to focus on blaming others. Hence our extreme thoughts and attitudes become a cause for conflict and unrest. Extremism is not passion. *The fire of passion is in love, while the force of extremism is in self-righteousness.* Yes, we are called to live passionately, but not in extremism.

In the story of the woman who was surrounded by extreme men ready to stone her for adultery, *Yeshua came into the picture and He had a different message*—the message of grace. Grace opens our eyes to look at ourselves and remain humble regarding the unknown. Yeshua gracefully reminded that zealous mob that they, too, needed grace. The tumultuous days we live in call for an extra measure of grace to endure and live in unity.

The differences we have with one another are the meeting points for God's grace.

Surprising Psalms



By Ariel Blumenthal

Beginnings are important. They are foundational. In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit was poured out on Shavuot/Pentecost and the church was born. Over the next 2.5 chapters, the disciples (mostly Peter) proclaim the Gospel, several times, to all the Jewish people gathered in Jerusalem. As Jews preaching to Jews, they needed to build their case for Yeshua's right to be called the Messiah by quoting from and interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures that prophesied of Him. There was no New Testament to quote from, only the "Old" Testament (OT, *Tenach*, Hebrew Scriptures), and the words of Jesus that they had heard directly from Him.

In these earliest gospel proclamations, I count nine direct quotes from the OT. *Amazingly*, six of them—two-thirds—are from the Book of Psalms: Not from the Torah (the five Books of Moses), and not from the so-called prophetic books; but from the Psalms, a collection of devotional prayer and songs of worship to God.

We find the same thing in the Book of Hebrews. This epistle contains about 30-35 direct quotes of the OT, and, by my count, 14 of them are from the Psalms! Think about it: we are so used to assuming the foundational nature of the Torah and Prophets, and so they are. But when it came to proclaiming the *Gospel and teaching the earliest Jewish believers, it's the book of Psalms that takes first place!*

Thinking of the Psalms in a third "catch all" category of "the writings" camouflages all the amazing Messianic prophecies that are to be found within it—more than in the Torah or books of the prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. Yeshua, on the other hand, kept them all on equal footing:

Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**" (Luke 24:44, emphasis added)

What can all this teach us? First, we must study the whole OT, equally and in its entirety, and not become overly focused on the Torah (first five books) as in Judaism and some Jewish roots movements. Second, it points to the organic connection between praise, worship and prophecy. Most of the Psalms quoted by the disciples—and in the book of Hebrews—are songs of prayer and worship to God; and then quite suddenly, the psalmist begins to prophecy, and many times God even speaks through the psalmist's voice and pen in the first person! (For example, Psalm 16:8-11; 132:11-12; 110:1-4; 118:22-23; 2:1-2; 2:7; 45:6-7; 8:4-6; 22:2; 95:7-11; 40:6-8...)

It is a simple formula: when God's people—both individually and corporately—devote their hearts to Him, sing and make music to Him and about Him, then the fire of the Holy Spirit comes to "consume" the sacrifice of praise. His people are filled with the Spirit, and they begin to prophesy the things of God with power and "anointing." This formula was valid not only in Biblical times; it is just as true today as it was then. Every believer must dedicate himself to such regular times—alone, in families, and as congregations, houses of prayer, etc.—and expect the Holy Spirit to fill us with dreams, visions, words, Scriptures, insights, words of knowledge, etc. All of this is the spirit of prophecy that testifies of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua the Messiah (Revelation 19:10).

How I Came to Faith



By Youval Yanay

I was born in Israel into a secular Jewish family with roots in the Land stretching back generations. My great grandfather was a pioneer farmer in the Galilee. My father was a commander in the Palmach naval fighting units, starting before the Israeli War of Independence. But I always felt different, as if I didn't belong. I had to search for a reason to wake up each morning. This brought me to rebellion and some very strange places – Eastern Religion, religiosity, workaholism, illegal drugs, alcohol and other dark places. I suffered much, wounded others and was wounded. I was an angry person – lacking self-confidence, closed and confused. I was looking for the secret that would give me freedom and happiness, but had lost almost all hope.

There was a point when everything around me began to collapse. The restaurants I owned and managed in Tel Aviv ceased to be viable. I lost my money. I had to sell most of my possessions and lawyers took the rest. I couldn't find a job and felt more humiliated than ever. I left the luxury apartment I was renting and moved back in with my parents. I didn't even have money for food or bus fare, and began to contemplate death.

I sank lower and lower, until one day, on a vacation in Cyprus that my parents paid for, I was offered a job as a scuba diving instructor, something I had always dreamed of doing. I felt that a door was opening in my life, letting in a ray of light.

As I was getting settled in my new job, my roommate invited me to go with him to church. I don't know why, but I went. I entered the church building several minutes late when all of a sudden the Holy Spirit presence of God, came

down upon me – without me understanding what was happening. I felt a huge love; I saw a *great light*. I thought that an optical trick had been played on me in the church building. In a moment of grace, I was able to see for the first time with the eyes of my spirit. His love has not left me to this day.

I received a Bible and began to read the words of God. I felt as if my eyes were opened and suddenly I could see. The life story of Yeshua made me fall in love with Him, and even the Hebrew Scriptures seemed completely new. At a certain moment the week after, I suddenly discovered that I believed every word of the Bible was literally true.

Since then many wonderful things have happened to me. Yeshua is with me always. He guides me, comforts me, teaches me, gives me wonderful gifts, and, most especially, He promises me that His love is constant and that He will never leave me.

After this wonderful transformation in my life began, I was blessed to have the opportunity to grow in the Gateways Beyond discipleship community on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. It was there where I first heard Asher Intrater teach. It was also there where I met my Swiss-born wife, Valerie.

Fast-forward 15 years. We now have six wonderful children. Valerie and I continue to develop the vision of a family-based, daily-interacting faith community as a place for growth and healing. We are privileged and excited to lead the *Revive Israel discipling community and farm center* – a new platform for evangelism and discipleship in the Judean Hills, just west of Jerusalem.



I AM WITH ISRAEL

Strengthening Our Frontlines for 2021

www.iamwithisrael.net

Dear Friends,

What a year we have been through together! The world has been crippled by a deadly pandemic, but Tikkun Global partners have adapted to the urgent needs in front of us.

In March, our partners were struggling to put food on their table because of the pandemic. I could not imagine asking people to give any additional donations at that time but the Lord nudged me differently. I called the team and said, “We are going to continue to be a blessing to the people of Israel during this crisis, and invite our partners to do it with us.”

“COVID-18” was launched that day, and you rose to the challenge beautifully. **Why 18? Because 18 in Hebrew is the number for life.**

COVID-19 stood for death, but together we gave a testimony of LIFE in the midst of it. You sent in gifts of \$18.00—or multiples of 18. During this pandemic, there is power in continuing to give. Just like the widow in the Bible who took care of Elijah during the famine—and God then provided all her needs—He provides for those who give. Many testimonies arose of those who sowed into Israel and found the favor of God on their lives.

Your gifts have an important impact—here are a few highlights:

- Many of our congregations worked with their local municipalities to help citizens in their community—what an amazing testimony for Yeshua!
- You provided much-needed fruit to a few thousand Holocaust survivors.
- In Tel Aviv, you sent our team to the streets to feed the homeless—even when all government-sponsored programs were frozen because of the virus. I remember seeing pictures of pastor Moti Cohen wearing not only a mask but ski goggles as he handed out sandwiches to the hungry!
- You helped provide for families whose small businesses shut down.

As the end of 2020 approaches, your partnership with Tikkun Global comes at another pivotal time—in all honesty, we need you to stand with us again. Because of the focus on helping suffering Israelis, Tikkun Global became underfunded in other important areas:

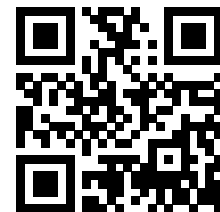
- Local evangelism in Hebrew
- Congregational planting
- Leadership training
- Supporting Shelanu TV, the new Hebrew language Gospel channel, to reach Israelis
- Intensive discipleship of young Israelis

Your generous year-end gift to Tikkun Global to help meet this \$120,000 shortfall means that we can continue to reach the people of Israel with the love of Messiah Yeshua!

In this challenging year, God has given us all grace to step up to the challenge and be an expression of Yeshua to the people of Israel. The Tikkun Global team is so honored to be working with you in this—you are family. Let’s continue strong together!

I am with Israel — and I know you are too.

Ron Cantor
CEO of Tikkun International



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