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REFINE & FORGE:

Crises in the Book of Revelation

Page 2 & 7 | By Asher Intrater

Page 3 & 4 | By Eitan Shishkoff

A Tough Fight

Page 5 | By Leon Mazin

Praise Reports

Page 6 | By Guy Cohen

Name Written in Book of Life?

Page 8 | By Valerie Yannay

Discipleship Report



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Refine & Forge: Crises in the Book of Revelation



By Asher Intrater

Recently, we have reported on several urgent situations such as *forest fires* in the hills around Jerusalem near our base, and a surge in COVID 19 cases which continues to put pressure on Israeli citizens.

On the world-wide scene, the takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban has created a crisis - emboldening terrorist extremists all over the Middle East and beyond. Chaos and fear are swirling throughout the region. Believers are in real danger of persecution and in need of much prayer.

“The first angel sounded: hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown to the earth. A third of the trees were burned up...” (Revelation 8:7)

Obviously, we haven't reached the level of disasters as noted even in the first trumpet. However, we are moving in that direction. World disasters will become increasingly more intense, and war will kill one third of the world population.

“...were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was 200,000,000. I heard the number.” (Revelation 9:15-16)

A third of mankind would be more than two billion people. An army of two hundred million will attack. Numbers for an army that size and the numbers killed of that size could potentially be fulfilled by an Islamic Jihad war against India-China-South East Asia. (Interestingly, the passage speaks of the origin of the army in the Euphrates area - verse 14.)

“... I will protect you from the hour of trial which will come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. (Revelation 3:10)

This verse does not mean that God will remove us from the planet, but that He will protect us during trials and tribulations. There is a specific time coming of worldwide disaster. The word "hour" does not mean 60 minutes. I believe it *does* mean that the time will be relatively short, and it will be controlled and limited. Worldwide disaster is coming; it will be limited in time; God will protect us.

God's Hidden Purposes

God calls crises “testing.” Despite the hardship and suffering, there will be a hidden purpose of God. There is one purpose toward “non-believers” and another for “believers.” Although most unbelievers will not respond correctly, God's purpose is to convince them to repent of wickedness.

“...the rest of mankind did not repent ...” (Revelation 9:20)

“... they did not repent ...” (Revelation 9:21)

“... they did not repent ...” (Revelation 16:9)

God's purpose for the faithful believers is to *refine* them and *forge* them for their special destiny.

“You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation; and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” (Revelation - 5:9-10)

The scroll of God contains His plan. The seals mean that this plan is hidden to most people. Yeshua, who opens the seals, brings God's plan to pass. He reveals that plan to those who serve Him. This verse explains several key elements:

Continued on page 7 >

A Tough Fight



By Eitan Shishkoff

I'm now a COVID Survivor! How does it feel when this Coronavirus takes over your body? I can tell you from personal experience. It feels like you got hit by an 18-wheeler!

If anyone doubts the seriousness of this disease, let me tell you, it can pack a wallop. I was in isolation for 19 days, cared for hour after hour by my beyond-the-call-of-duty wife, Connie. Now, I'm experiencing life anew.

Tenderly Grateful for your Prayers!

May I take this opportunity to thank each of you who expressed concern, love, and the commitment to pray for me? I take none of this for granted. God raised me up, responding to your prayers.

I contracted Covid during the [Katzir](#) (Harvest) Summer Teen Conference. Some 72 others, youth, counselors, and senior advisors also tested positive. The majority had only light symptoms, and the bottom line was not the disease! The bottom line was that almost every young person at the conference experienced a deep encounter with the Living God.

Here is my *personal* list of conclusions after going through the tough fight and dark tunnel of Covid

- LOVE is the chief thing.
- There is nothing so dear as a selfless, caring spouse.
- Take PRAYER seriously—so many were praying. There was definite impact.

- LIFE is a deposit from God for His gain. He's entrusted me with days on the earth to use/live for His pleasure.
- Cherish every DAY. Develop a SLOWER "speed" in my internal "mental-emotional" clock.
- Be more PATIENT. Some things just take time. Besides all the meds and steam inhalation and rest, I could not speed up the healing process.
- The BODY is fragile—very fragile. Handle with care.
- Keep life SIMPLE.
- PERSEVERANCE - Don't give up!

How can we *all* prepare for the days ahead?

Flat on my back with Covid for over two weeks, I had plenty of time to consider life's fundamental question: What, in addition to basic physical existence, is truly important? After being handed back my health, what am I now to be doing with the days I've been granted? Indeed what will we *all* do with the remaining days we've been granted.

Among the crucial pursuits, I believe we should dedicate ourselves to **preparing for the coming of our King...**

Continued on page 4 >

“Prepare the Way of the Lord!”

This biblical imperative appears in Isaiah 40:3. The prophet is speaking of the ultimate arrival of the Redeemer, who will bring the glory of God to the whole earth. It's a moving passage that brims with hope and expectation. But what does it mean for us? As we are seemingly caught in a roller coaster of:

- hellish Islamic holy war,
- a virus that has “gone viral,” and
- widespread economic woes?

How can one prepare for an uncertain and threatening future? Is there additional instruction beyond Isaiah's poetic passage? Importantly, yes! The theme of preparation for the return of the King can be easily traced through the Scriptures. God is not leaving us unprepared. He will equip us and guide us through to Yeshua's final victory over all evil.

I. Stay Close to the Lord: *Inner Preparation of the Heart*

As always, God gives priority to our inner reality, the condition of our heart. Knowing that these times will be fearful, He exhorts us to place our confidence solidly in Him and in the soon coming of our King.

“Abide in Him, that when He appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” (1 John 2:28)

“Therefore be patient, brethren until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and the latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” (James 5:7-8)

II. Be Watchful in Prayer: *Going Deeper in Intercession*

The place of true prayer, sometimes pushed to the side in our busy lives, becomes front and center as the curtain opens on history's final act.

“The end of all things is at hand, therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7-8)

“Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to come through all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” (Luke 21:36)

III. Share your Faith Lovingly and Boldly, in the Power of the Spirit: *End of the Age Harvest*

What is the Father's burden as we approach the Day of the Lord? It is to gather in every one of His human children who will repent and become His daughter or son. And we are His messengers, to carry His heart everywhere we go!

“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)

“On my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days...before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” (Joel 2:29-32)

In light of the increasing urgency of the circumstances around us, the focus He is calling us to, is to *prepare for the coming of the Lord. May His grace and peace empower us.*



Praise Reports

By Leon Mazin

August 2nd

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Since March 2020, when Covid first came to Israel, our congregants had not gotten sick. This was remarkable considering that hundreds of people pass through our facility every week - for congregational events, the music school, humanitarian aid, etc. However, on July 23, 2021, by some unknown means, Covid broke into the congregation.

Everyone was affected in one way or another. I was in the hospital for 10 days in intensive care, though I was able to understand everything that was happening around me. I received God's grace and the many sincere prayers of friends. A strange feeling occurred when my oxygen level dropped. There was no fear of death, even though death was near.

In all probability, for everyone, there comes a time of lowered resistance, opening us up for the moment of **meeting with our Maker**. God determined that my moment had not yet come. Now I am back at home with my family, and we are all recovering together. Even our 3-month-old grandson got ill, along with eighty people in the congregation. Covid infected both the vaccinated, and the un-vaccinated. August, instead of being a time for summer vacation, turned into a month of illness and recovery!

God is the one who helped us get through all of this. He is faithful!

Ministry to children of economically challenged families

In our Music and Art School, after a challenging school year, we arranged a final concert on July 8th. At times the children had to learn online using Zoom and Skype, before returning to

in-person lessons. The students performed exceptionally well; the parents were overwhelmed with joy; and the teachers were bursting with pride. We are so grateful to God for His mercy and grace with so many difficulties during the past year. This ministry helps children from low-income families develop their talents in music and arts, and learn about the beauty of God through creativity. Presently, we mentor about 90 children from the neighboring areas of our community

Holocaust survivors

On July 13th, we had the privilege of organizing a festive dinner and concert in our building for those who went through the horrors of the Holocaust. We expected 50 people, but due to the heat, about 40 people attended the event. We were moved by how God touched them. They enjoyed delicious food and listened with admiration as children from our music school performed their pieces and shared what they had learned throughout the year. Many of these elderly people are over 85 and have gone through “hell on earth.” We seek to minister to them through prayer and to bring some healing for their inner wounds by giving them love and attention.

Baptism

In mid-June a dozen people were ready to be baptized, thanks in part, to the fellowship and patient discipling of our elders and leaders. Even while following governmental policies of social distancing, the Lord continues to add those being saved! These people join home groups and are growing spiritually. We humbly listened to their wonderful testimonies during our Shabbat service on July 23rd.

We appreciate your prayer, partnership and friendship. Thanks to you, we can minister effectively.



Name Written in Book of Life?



By Guy Cohen

The Hebrew month of “Elul” comes in late summer and is a *month of repentance* leading up to the *Feast of Trumpets* (Rosh Hashanah; See Leviticus 23) and the solemn Holy Days at the start of the following month (Tishrei).

According to Jewish tradition, God opens the Book of Life and judges the world during this season. That’s why it’s taken as a time for repentance; during which time additional prayers are offered.

This year I visited Jerusalem in late summer and heard Orthodox Jews rising early to pray and then continuing through the night, trying to prepare their hearts. From the Day of Trumpets until the tenth of the month, Orthodox prayers grow in intensity during the ten “days of awe” until they reach a climax on Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). On that day, according to Jewish tradition, the Book of Life is closed for the year (Leviticus 23:27). It’s customary to greet one another with the saying *G’mar Chatimah Tovah* - “*May you be inscribed (in the Book of Life) for good.*” *The expanded meaning is, “May God look at your heart and find you to be truly repentant and changed. May He grant you this coming year and seal you in the Book of Life.”*

Let’s see the progressive understanding of the Book of Life throughout the Word:

Moses in Exodus 32:32-33 said, “Alas, this people has committed a great sin, and they have made a god of gold for themselves. But now, if You will, forgive their sin—and if not, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!” The Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book.”

“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is *found written in the book*, will be rescued.” (Daniel 12:1)

“Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord gave attention and heard it, and a *book of remembrance* was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who esteem His name.” (Malachi 3:16)

Yeshua in Luke 10:20 says, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are *recorded in heaven.*”

“But you have come to Mount Zion... the heavenly Jerusalem... and church of the firstborn who are *enrolled* in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect.” (Hebrews 12:22-23)

“He who overcomes... I will not erase his name from the *book of life*, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

“And if anyone’s name was not found written in the *book of life*, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:15)

“... and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the *Lamb’s book of life.*” (Revelation 21:27)

I am compelled to come before God in intercession on behalf of my people asking that their eyes be opened to the One who has already made provision for their eternal salvation; that they may be sealed, written in the Lamb’s book of life.

God has a plan. Things are not “going out of control.” God’s plan is not a spontaneous reaction to circumstances, but one that is prepared beforehand. The plan is so concrete that it is written down.

Yeshua is the victor. He opens the seals. He conquers sin and Satan; death and hell. He is the leader of the kingdom. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (verse 5).

We have a destiny. *God is using the end times difficulties to purify and strengthen the heart of the righteous to be a special people, as priests and kings (spiritual and government leaders).*

We will reign with Him. Our destiny is to rule in the world-to-come, together with Yeshua. It is difficult now, but it will be worth it in the end.

Our destiny as a special chosen people to rule in the world-to-come, together with Yeshua is repeated:

“... They lived and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4)

We will face times of increasing tribulation. Those tribulations are a judgment against the world; a purification of the Church; a preparation of a special people for God; and a warning for people of every nation to repent. The tribulations of the end times culminate in a massive world war in which all the nations attack Israel (Zechariah 14). At that time Yeshua will return as the head of the Church, the king of Israel, and the commander of Heaven’s army.

At that time the dead will be raised; the devil will be incarcerated; and the kingdom of God set up on earth for a thousand years, with its capital in Jerusalem. After that there will come an even better world, the New Creation and New Jerusalem.

“The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them... God will wipe away every tear... There will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying.” (Revelation 21:3-4)

There will be a perfect world for eternity. The Garden of Eden will be restored. There will be no more pain or evil. *Tribulation is temporary; while paradise is permanent. Let’s be strong in our faith and endure to end.*



Discipleship Report

– Intensive “IDF-Style-Commander-Course” Session

By Valerie Yannay



In August we had an intensive 2 week session of discipleship for leadership candidates, roughly modeled after an IDF “commanders course.” Six young Israeli women signed up. The three ladies on the staff were able to interact with them very closely. Each day a different student led the daily devotional and had the responsibility of taking care of administrative details. There were some who succeeded easily, and others for whom taking a turn as “commander,” was more difficult. Each young leader in her turn had to organize food and practical things like arranging transportation to the ministry time on the streets of south Tel Aviv. We also visited Tiferet Yeshua Congregation where the young women led a session of ministering to the children. It was really good. They taught the kids about what the Lord had laid on their hearts.

Morning Work

Daily one of the young ladies would wake up with me at 5:30 to milk the goats, and the others would serve in the field tending the growing vegetables and preparing new ground, removing older plants and harvesting. God spoke to them through His creation.

Midday Worship

After the morning fieldwork, we met for worship. Each day, the worship was very strong. God worked in each of us as we experienced healing and rededicated our lives; and as we prayed for our congregations, families and towns. We also had open worship nights - including a visitor from the rehab center with whom we had shared when he was still on the street many months ago.

One of the ladies shared how God healed her heart to be able to love others. Another one of the ladies is an Israeli Arab believer from a Muslim background. She had struggled with her identity. One Friday I had no one to help me make the Sabbath challah bread, and so I asked her to do it. At first, it was hard for her because Sabbath bread seems like a Jewish thing and she is Arab, but she told me later that night that suddenly this simple act brought her *healing*. It helped her understand that she belongs to the God of Israel, and that she is now connected to the people of Israel, similar to how Biblical Ruth felt - like family. Others experienced healing of being able to receive the father-love of God.

We also had a joyful open day on the farm with fellowship, where we invited neighbors and heard positive reports from others who live nearby regarding the combination of agriculture and discipleship.

Please pray for the October-November 2021 Discipleship session. Thank you!





Jerusalem Mayor Takes Notice of Messianic Efforts to Help the Poor in Jerusalem

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Ahavat Yeshua is focused on reaching, discipling, and sending out native Israelis. We are so excited to share that one of the pastors in our congregation has begun to do fabulous work in a low-income Jerusalem neighborhood, so much so that the mayor of Jerusalem, Moshe Lion, visited the work to see how they were accomplishing such amazing cooperation. While I cannot share names because of sensitivities of the individuals involved, dozens of youth have been impacted, families have been fed, and the name of Yeshua has been lifted up.

The local believers are sharing their time and resources with the local community center to help the troubled youth find their path. Social workers are working with retired police officers to work out how to resolve cases that may have gotten overlooked and troubled kids are truly turning their lives around. This level of cooperation hasn't been common in Israel but especially not in the Ethiopian Israeli community.

The neighborhood Ahavat Yeshua is "adopting" is one that has a large Ethiopian Jewish population. Our congregation has significant presence in this neighborhood. One of our pastors, previously mentioned, has made his home there. It is so exciting to see a young man raised in a fairly poor family in a low-income area make a career for himself in the Israeli army, and then come out of the army a huge success, and serve God as a pastor at Ahavat Yeshua and serve the same community he grew up in.

We are hoping to grow this work even more. Currently, the pastor is working only 80% of full-time because we simply don't have the funds. And yet, he is doing 130% of the work. He and his wife both work full-time and use the remaining time to pour into their three children. We want to help this family and the work they are doing in the community.

The plans we have for this community include the following:

1. Regular food distribution.
2. Hebrew language instruction for Ethiopians who don't speak Hebrew yet.
3. Basic assistance for single mothers.
4. Personal counseling for adults and couples.
5. Expanding the program for troubled youth.

Please consider "adopting" the neighborhood with us. We see the beginning of the fruit already but want to see the name of Yeshua truly exalted in this special area. We believe that the love of Yeshua (that is what "Ahavat Yeshua" means in Hebrew) will spread from here into other neighborhoods of Jerusalem until one day, the cry will rise into heaven... "Baruch Haba B'Shem Adonai" - Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

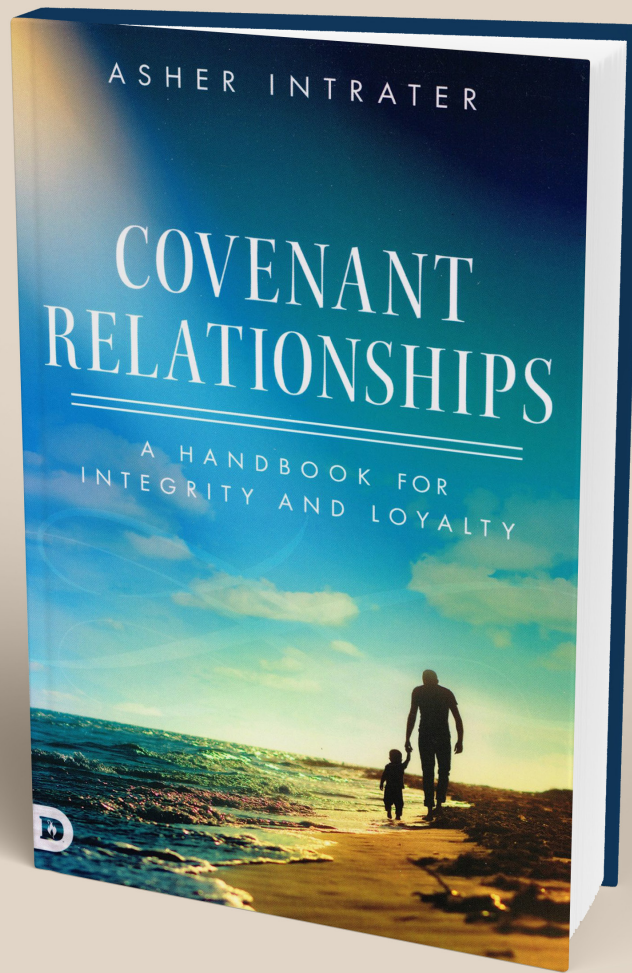
Will you partner with us in reaching youth, couples, families and the entire neighborhood? The Mayor of Jerusalem is watching and we want to make these nearly 20,000 residents a light on a hill. May the true Ahavat Yeshua be known in this city and around the world - from Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth!

Blow the Shofar this holiday season and see a breakthrough of the kingdom! We appreciate your partnering with us both in prayer and in donations. We can't do this without you!

Ron Cantor
Director, #IamwithIsrael
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Even though the topic of relationships is very popular, few individuals ever reach the point of building deep, lasting, and meaningful bonds with others. Why do our connections with other people seem to stay superficial and never go beyond the surface-level? Because we've drifted away from the Biblical blueprint of what covenant relationships are intended to look like.

In this revised and updated edition of Asher Intrater's classic, *Covenant Relationships*, you will receive time-tested practical keys that show you how to build relationships that:

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It's time to move past the popular "take-it or leave-it" approach and build deep connections based on loyalty, authenticity and covenant.

For God's people to rise up and walk in new dimensions of love and effectiveness, we must be knit together in covenant relationships!

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