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BETWEEN VISITATION & JUDGMENT

Abraham's Intercession and the Cry of Sodom

Page 02-06 | By Ariel Blumenthal

JULY '26

How Does GPS Show Us at
the Beirut Airport?!

03 | Hannah Tekle

Carrying the Light of
Pentecost/Shavuot into the Summer

04 | Leon Mazin

"Who has Despised the Day
of Small Beginnings?"

05 | Guy Cohen

Revelation of Love

07 | Deborah Luquer

God Gives the Growth

08 | Revive Israel

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BETWEEN VISITATION & JUDGMENT:

Abraham's Intercession and the Cry of Sodom



By **Ariel Blumenthal**

On May 19, several local leaders and intercessors traveled to pray at *Ein Bokek*, a resort area on the Dead Sea, because of the massive LGBT+ festival scheduled for July. It is being promoted as the largest such event in the Middle East – by our own government's Ministry of Tourism. The location is strikingly ironic: not in Tel Aviv, one of the “gay capitals” of the world, but adjacent to ancient Sodom and Gomorrah!

As we prayed, I found myself drawn to Genesis 18-19. What impressed me was not only the judgment of Sodom, but the larger context surrounding it: the visitation of YHVH to Abraham, the revelation of God's heart, and Abraham's remarkable role as an intercessor standing between mercy and judgment.

YHVH Incarnate

Genesis 18 opens with one of the most extraordinary scenes in Scripture. Abraham is sitting by the oaks of Mamre when three “men” appear in verse 2. Abraham apparently recognizes at least one of them, and shows them great honor and hospitality. As the chapter unfolds, we realize that these “men” are not ordinary visitors. Two are angels, but the third is YHVH Himself appearing in human form. The text follows their exchanges until finally, in verse 22, Abraham is left standing alone before YHVH.

This is an astonishing moment. God comes personally to the covenant family. He walks among men, receives hospitality, washes His feet, eats at Abraham and Sarah's table, and converses openly with them. The scene is deeply relational and deeply human. Sarah laughs inwardly at the promise that she will bear a son in old age, and the Lord responds almost playfully: “*Why did Sarah laugh?*” When she denies it, He gently answers, “*No, but you did laugh.*” In many ways, Genesis 18 becomes an early “type” of the ultimate incarnation of the Son of God – who finally and fully enters humanity through the promised seed, through Abraham's own line, through David, through Miriam's womb. But the timing of this visitation is not accidental.

The Outcry of/from Sodom and Gomorrah

As the meal concludes and the visitors rise to leave, the focus shifts toward Sodom. Suddenly we learn why heaven has drawn near: “*The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave*” (Genesis 18:20).

Every Canaanite town and village was steeped in pagan idolatry. But there was something uniquely evil taking place in these cities in the Dead Sea Valley, that caused an awful “outcry” to rise all the way to God's throne in heaven – accumulated violence, corruption, oppression, and moral rebellion reaching a point that demanded divine intervention. Genesis 19 then reveals the depth of the city's depravity as the men of Sodom surround Lot's house and attempt to homosexually violate the angelic visitors. The city's sin was not “merely” private immorality, but a complete collapse of moral order, hospitality, restraint, and the sanctity of human relationships.

You know the rest of the story: the angels strike the men of the city with blindness. At dawn, Lot and his family are ordered to flee so that the judgement can begin – fire and brimstone raining from heaven. Yet the center of the story is not ultimately the wickedness of Sodom. The center is the Abrahamic family.

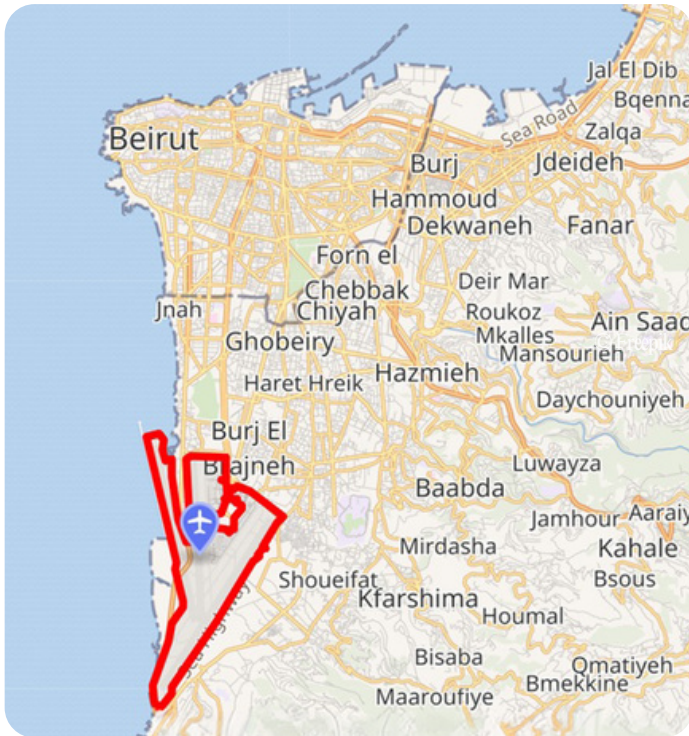
Continued on page 6 ➔



HOW DOES GPS SHOW US AT THE BEIRUT AIRPORT?!



By **Hannah Tekle**



One small hardship Northern Israel has experienced in these *years of war* is that the IDF often electronically jams the GPS navigation systems we use to drive from place to place.

The first time we noticed, it was surprising indeed. You know how sometimes, instead of calling or texting to ask where your teenager is, or calling again to ask whether your spouse will be home soon – you can look at the “find my people” app and see just where they are? Well, I checked the app to see the location of a family member and it showed they were *at the Beirut airport*! I was confused, shocked, and worried that somehow their phone had gotten stolen and smuggled into Lebanon!

After nearly three years of this craziness, we now know that if the app glitches – it is the IDF electronic defense systems working to protect us, even at the cost of the inconvenience of debilitated navigation and location apps. It is then that we, the older generation, can smugly try to find our way using old-fashioned map-navigating.

I remember as a child the thick collection of atlases and driving maps my dad had. I remember the silly frustration of not being able to fold a large map back up into its tidy rectangle, and I remember the thrill of looking up the number and letter coordinates of a place and finding it on the matching page. Today, we have become addicted to the ease of navigating by GPS. Its sudden disappearance is inconvenient, frustrating, disconcerting and even dangerous. At the height of the conflict, we had *ambulances stopping* to ask the way to a street!

Speaking of technological challenges, the radio in our car recently stopped working. Usually, I would catch news on the radio when driving kids here or there. So now, a few days can go by in which I am not exposed to every recent turn of events. When I turn the news on or search on the computer/phone for a news update, I am inundated with information. And if you switch the channel or website, you get exposed to a completely different narrative. That’s when I say: “...but I just want to know the **truth** about what is actually happening.”

John 14:6 records Yeshua’s words: “***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***”

This verse strikes me in a new manner these days. We are so busy looking to technology for the “way” (GPS navigation), the “truth” (AI explanations), and the “life” (social media). They are such a part of our routine, that we rarely stop to think about how dependent we have grown on these all-knowing, all-showing digital tools. When there is no signal because we are in a valley hidden from the antenna towers, or when our battery runs out, or when the systems are blocked for our military safety – then we have the frustrating but beautiful opportunity to disconnect from the exhausting omniscience at our fingertips.

What a reminder to return to the fundamentals of faith in Yeshua. He is The Way, The Truth, and The Life – exactly the anchor we need in this ocean of knowledge, and in this chaos of war.

Prayer Request:

Our annual kids’ summer camp will be held the last week of July. Please pray for all involved for protection, and for God to move in the hearts of all participants.



CARRYING THE LIGHT OF PENTECOST/SHAVUOT INTO THE SUMMER



By **Leon Mazin**

Thank you in the name of Yeshua for your prayers, kind wishes, and for standing by us both spiritually and practically as we carry out our work in Eretz Israel.

Just before Shavuot (Pentecost), we had an amazing opportunity to minister to non-believers. We put together a program with great food, entertainment, warm fellowship, and a message sharing the significance of Shavuot. We are now building similar programs for each of God's appointed times. Our prayer is that our team, the hospitality, and the fellowship will always be excellent, allowing us to be a light to those who haven't yet found the Way, the Truth, and the Life.



Former Holocaust Survivors

Their numbers are declining rapidly. We have been ministering to survivors since 2008 – nearly 20 years now. Over this time, we've become close friends with many of them, though many are no longer with us. They went through "hell" back then, and it is devastating to realize that such persecution could happen again. We often talk with them about October 7th, the war with Iran, World War II, and the wisdom of God. It's hard to find the right words and hard to have all the right answers in these discussions, but we can always lean on the Word of God and accept the Lord's will. We are truly grateful for your prayers for these dear people, asking for the Creator's mercy in their lives.



The Women's Retreat

The women of Shavei Zion eagerly looked forward to this event. It wasn't easy to plan. Nina had to work closely with guides, agents, and hotels, but the trip turned out beautifully – a true blessing from above. The group of 43 women had an amazing time visiting Qasr al-Yahud (the site where Yeshua was immersed), hiking along the Ein Bokek stream by the Dead Sea, enjoying a wonderful stay at the Arad Hotel, and diving into the Word of God, which was even continued on the way back from the Dead Sea. It was a time filled with fellowship, prayer, great food, and so many wonderful memories.



Eagle Project

Our youth will "mount up with wings like eagles." That's the vision behind Project Neshar (eagle). We are currently preparing 24 young people for a trip to Norway focused on camp activities, studies, hiking, prayer, and strengthening their faith. This project holds immense importance and incredible potential. Since 2016 it has born much fruit. It also represents a covenant between Israel and the nations, united by faith in Yeshua. It's a project for future leaders who can serve together and stand side by side as fellow laborers in the days ahead – to build up congregations, share the Gospel, and proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. If this project resonates with your heart and you would like to partner with us through prayer or financial support, we would be incredibly grateful!

We are tired of wars and rumors of wars, and we look to the Lord for His help. I want to close this update by proclaiming the words of the prophet Jeremiah:

"But fear not, O Jacob my servant, nor be dismayed, O Israel, for behold, I will save you from far away, and your offspring from the land of their captivity. Jacob shall return and have quiet and ease, and none shall make him afraid."
(Jeremiah 46:27)

Return to Zion Network of Congregations and Humanitarian Aid

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© Little David with his brothers - painting by Tissot - public domain

“WHO HAS DESPISED THE DAY OF SMALL BEGINNINGS?”



By **Guy Cohen**

This verse in Zechariah 4:10 teaches us a profound truth about the way people see others compared to the way God sees them. We tend to be impressed by status, power, wealth, and outward appearance, or we become so occupied with our own lives that we fail to notice the “least of these” around us. God, however, repeatedly chooses those who are rejected, overlooked, or considered insignificant.

He often accomplishes His purposes through those whom society ignores. This was true of King David. When Samuel came to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel, all of David’s older and more impressive brothers were present. David was not even invited. He remained in the field tending the sheep. In his father’s eyes, he was not a candidate for kingship. Only after Samuel asked whether there was another son, was David brought in. David wrote, **“Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me”** (Psalm 27:10). He understood what it meant to feel overlooked.

Gideon also considered himself insignificant. But God saw him as a mighty warrior and a leader.

Isaiah 53 describes the Messiah who would be **“despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief... we esteemed Him not.”** Even Yeshua’s own brothers did not believe in Him at first. They did not understand His mission and viewed Him with skepticism. Yet after His resurrection, a remarkable transformation took place. James, the brother of Yeshua, became a leader in the congregation in Jerusalem.

The parable of the Good Samaritan also teaches us about the danger of failing to see others. The wounded man was invisible to the priest and the Levite, but precious and worthy of compassion in the eyes of the Samaritan.

You and I are surrounded by people who can become invisible in our eyes: children longing for attention, young people struggling with loneliness, elderly ones who need someone to listen, the poor, the sick, those facing emotional or mental challenges, ordinary workers whose contributions go unnoticed, and people living on the margins of society. It’s easy to pass them by while we are consumed with our own concerns, to fail to notice the person sitting right beside us, and the newcomer who comes into the congregation and leaves without anyone greeting them. There are people who smile on the outside while inwardly battling loneliness, fear, and despair.

Sometimes the person who needs us is not looking for a grand solution but merely a glance, a listening ear, a visit, a prayer, a phone call, or a single word of encouragement. Yeshua saw those whom others overlooked. He stopped for the blind man sitting by the roadside. He touched lepers whom no one else would approach. He welcomed children.

If we desire to walk in His footsteps, we must ask God for eyes that truly see and a heart that truly notices. The person who appears small in the eyes of the world is deeply precious in the eyes of God. Often it’s through such people that He teaches us love, compassion, and grace.

God frequently works through what appears small, weak, and insignificant in human eyes.

Don’t despise the day of small things. Don’t belittle the little people. Don’t ignore them. Whoever despises the small things may discover that he has despised something that God Himself is doing. But whoever learns to see the world through God’s eyes will discover that every person carries value, hope, and purpose, even when no one else notices.



Abraham, the First Intercessor

Before the judgment begins, YHVH-God pauses and says, ***“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”*** (Genesis 18:17). This extraordinary statement reveals that God, the Creator and Judge of all, seeks covenantal partners to rule and judge with Him. Ezekiel 22:30 says that the Lord looks for those willing to build a spiritual wall, and stand in the “breach” on behalf of the Land and its people.

In response, Abraham stands before YHVH and appeals to His character: ***“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked.”*** Abraham knows the God standing before him. He understands that divine justice is not arbitrary wrath; that in the heart of God, mercy triumphs over judgement (James 2:13). And so, he begins to intercede: What if there are fifty righteous? Forty-five? Forty? Thirty? Twenty? Ten?

This becomes a biblical model for all intercession. *Abraham stands between visitation and judgment*; having experienced YHVH as a “friend” to his own family, he longs to extend, to share, this blessing with others – at least with his nephew. But that can’t happen if they are all destroyed because of God’s righteous judgement. Abraham does not deny the reality of sin. He does not celebrate evil. But neither does he respond with cold detachment. He pleads for mercy. He appeals to God’s covenant faithfulness and righteousness.

Our Present Situation in Israel

As we prayed near the Dead Sea, this became deeply personal. Israel is still at war. Soldiers are still fighting and dying in Gaza and on the northern front. Iran and its proxies continue to threaten. Yet at the same time, our government is sponsoring a festival, “proudly” celebrating values that directly contradict the Torah and the biblical vision of humanity!

Genesis 1:26–28 declares that humanity was created in God’s image: ***“male and female He created them.”*** Then God blesses them and commands them to ***“be fruitful and multiply”*** to fill and subdue the earth. The biblical vision of humanity is inseparable from covenant family, male and female union, fruitfulness, and the multiplication of life. In Scripture the family is central to God’s design for creation and redemption.

The juxtaposition of chapters 18 and 19 is not coincidence. On the one hand, YHVH-God comes to confirm the promise of a biological son to the aged couple. The “holy family” begins 2000 years before Joseph and Mary: God is covenanting to place His son Yeshua in the DNA, the family line of Abraham and Sarah – simple “wandering Arameans” (Deuteronomy 26:5), a husband and wife seeking progeny, a family according to God’s normative order as laid out in Genesis 1; a couple made “holy” by divine election.

On the other hand, is Sodom and Gomorrah. Do we need to state the obvious? The LGBT+ lifestyle and agenda completely aborts the Creator’s plan for the human family. It is the fullest expression of human idolatry, depravity and rebellion against God, our Father. “No,” it screams, “we will lay with one another, refusing the male/female image, and refusing to be fruitful and multiply” (Romans 1:18-32).

All of this creates a painful tension for believers in the land. How can we ask God for mercy, protection, and victory while openly celebrating what Scripture calls sin? We supposedly have the most conservative, “right-wing” government in our modern history. The governing coalition is full of ultra-Orthodox and national religious leaders who regularly study Torah. Why is no one speaking out?

And what about us – the remnant of faith in the Land and those who stand with us from the nations? *Are we willing to stand in the gap like Abraham?* Are we willing to cry out for mercy, conviction and repentance – so that our cry will be louder in heaven than the outcry against the abomination of this festival? Like Abraham, how many of us have family and friends caught in the bondage of “sodomy?”

Will we stand in the gap between judgment and redemption? Yes, we pray for revival, for visitation; but like Genesis 18 - 19, this can be often be accompanied by terrifying judgement, death, and destruction.

At the conclusion of our gathering, we shared the Lord’s Supper together. We asked one young family to stand behind the communion table holding their baby, alongside several older couples. Holy Communion is not merely about individual salvation. Through Messiah’s death and resurrection, God is restoring humanity itself. He is restoring the divine image. He is restoring covenant family. He is restoring what was broken from the beginning.





REVELATION OF LOVE



By Deborah Luquer

Secret believer in Yeshua from an ultra-Orthodox Jewish background

Hadas came from an ultra-Orthodox background and was an isolated, “secret” believer in Yeshua for years.

Then she met us. Moti suggested that he and I spend time with Hadas to become better acquainted and study the Word together.

Growing up, Hadas was surrounded by words and customs that spoke of and honored God. She wanted to know God, and she felt deeply that He was good, but she did not feel any connection to Him. She began asking her family the reasons for the laws and traditions they observed. To her surprise, they could not give her any answer beyond, *“This is what the rabbis teach us to do.”* She realized they were following men and not God.

At around age 16, Hadas found herself falling into a deep, dark depression: she felt lost, alone, and suicidal. Something had to change or she would end it all. One night she sat on a park bench near her family’s home and cried out, *“If there is anything out there, any source of power, something that created all of this, please, show me who you are!”*

At that moment, looking up into the sky through her teary eyes, a brightness appeared above her; and in it she saw a man smiling at her. She knew at once it was Yeshua! Growing up, Hadas had heard very negative things about the *“Christian God, Yeshu”*. When she saw Him that dark night, it was the opposite of what she had been told. Gazing at Him, she was overwhelmed. *“The warmth of God’s love was filling my heart with this amazing joy and comfort.”*

When Yeshua appeared to her, she simply knew He was real and He was alive. That encounter shattered her depression. Without

telling anyone, she began searching the internet to learn more about Yeshua. Secretly, she gave her life to Him. For four years, Hadas kept her growing faith a secret hidden in her heart, like a treasure.

It’s special to disciple someone like Hadas, who came to us with an already deep faith and love for Yeshua. With most seekers, we study the prophecies to make the case that He is the Messiah. Hadas had already accepted Him as Lord and experienced His healing love in her heart. Moti and I were astounded by the insights and revelations she had about biblical truths. Discovering Yeshua in the Hebrew Bible, Hadas realized He was the answer to all the questions she had asked growing up.

While reading the account of Yeshua calling His first disciples, tears began streaming down her face. The passage describes Simon’s reaction to Yeshua’s miracle of providing abundant fish: **“When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees. ‘Go away from me, Lord,’ he said, ‘for I am a sinful man’”** (Luke 5:8). Hadas said, *“Sometimes I feel just like that... like I’m just so messed up.”* And she understood that the Lord’s love and mercy toward Simon in that moment are the same love and mercy He has for her now in her weakness. In December, we had the honor of immersing Hadas as a declaration of her faith in Yeshua and commitment to follow Him.

“And now says the LORD, who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, that Israel might be gathered to Him... to restore the protected ones of Israel... I will also make You a light for the nations, to bring My salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:5-6)



GOD GIVES THE GROWTH



By **Revive Israel**



Students from *Makor HaTikvah* school often join us for a day of work and learning in the field. It is a joy to have them with us. Recently, one day, as they planted tomatoes together and worked alongside our team, Youval asked a simple question: *“How long does it take for a tomato plant to bear fruit?”*

The answer – it would take months for those plants to produce a harvest. After the students learned about the Parable of the Sower, we continued with the next question: *“What happens after the seed has already been planted in the ground?”*

Yeshua describes in Mark 4:26–29 growth that happens little by little: ***“First the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.”***

The same is true of the Word of God within us. We do not always see change immediately, but when the heart is open and we give the Word of God room to work, it begins to take root, grow, and bear fruit in its time. We talked about the fact that you cannot force a plant to grow. If we try to pull it upward to make it grow faster, we will not help it; we will damage it. So what can we do? We can prepare the soil, provide water, remove weeds, protect the plant, and give it time. Likewise, we can give God room to do His work in us.

We brought the students practical examples from their own lives.

When someone hurts me or makes fun of me, growth may look like a moment when I choose not to react immediately out of pain, but instead allow Yeshua to help me respond differently.

When I am alone with my phone, growth may look like setting a small and healthy boundary: putting the phone aside before bed, turning away from content that leaves me spiritually dry, or choosing something that nourishes my heart instead.

When I have made a mistake and feel ashamed, growth may begin when I stop running from the truth and instead bring it before God and, if needed, before the person I have hurt.

The concluding message was simple: do not despise small growth. A small desire to pray, a conscience that is awakening, a small choice not to react out of hurt, or a moment of honesty before God can all be like the grain beginning to form in the head. It is not yet a full harvest, but it is already evidence that God is at work.

We also gathered as a team to reflect on the recent 40-day discipleship program. Together we reviewed what worked well and what could be improved for the next session in October. We are grateful for all that the Lord did during those days and are already looking ahead with expectation.

Preparations for France are being finalized. Twenty-nine Israeli teenagers will be joining us for a week of discipleship and fellowship in the south of France. We are trusting the Lord to use this time to draw these young people closer to Him and strengthen them in their faith. If this trip is on your heart, we invite you to join us in prayer and consider sowing into this journey so these young people can take part in what God is doing.

Thank you for standing with us in prayer. Please pray that the Word of God would continue to take deep root and grow in the hearts of the young people we serve.

