

Tisha B'Av

Good Morning

This is the 3rd presentation on the Book of *Numbers*. As you might remember, the Hebrew title of the Book is *B'Midbar* – “*In the Wilderness*”.

Normally, we'd be looking at Chapter 4 today, talking about the Levite clans and their responsibilities. However, because my presentation was postponed several times, today – “just by chance” – happens to fall on a very significant day on the Jewish calendar. Today (July 29, 2012) is *Tisha B'Av*, or the ninth day of the month of Av.

➤ CLICK: *Tisha B'Av*

Now, most people have never heard of *Tisha B'Av*, or that it is a special day on the Jewish calendar, particularly for the orthodox Jewish community. *Tisha B'Av* is not one of the seven mandated feast days according to the Bible (Passover, Yom Kippur, Feast of Tabernacles, etc.) but a great many people do observe it. Its treated as a semi-holiday, like we observe Valentine's Day or Mother's Day.

Tisha B'Av is the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. It is a day of mourning that commemorates a series of heartbreaking events in Jewish history, the genesis of which

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occurred in an incident that is described in *Numbers* Chapters 13&14. The incident is a familiar story – that of the Israelites refusing to go into the Promised Land of Canaan because of their lack of trust in God. I think it appropriate that we jump ahead today to that incident.

Tisha B'Av started last night at 6:00 pm and it runs through to 6:00pm today. It is the last day of a Three Week period of mourning that began on June 7th this year, which is the 17th day of the Hebrew month of *Tammuz*. The 17th Day of Tammuz is the day when Moses broke the two tablets with the Ten Commandments because of the golden calf incident.

The final Nine Days of the Three Weeks are a time of intensified mourning. Starting on the first of Av (nine days ago), orthodox Jews refrain from eating meat or drinking wine, and from wearing freshly laundered clothes. There are only two twenty-four hour fasts in Judaism: *Tisha B'Av* is one of them, and *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement) is the other.) So, starting last night at 6:00 pm, observant Jews have fasted from sunset to sunset today.

During this time, the synagogues are dimly lit and the Book of Lamentations is read during the evening service.

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Observant Jews follow mourning customs similar to the *shiva* (the period following the death of a family member or a loved one), which includes sitting on low stools, refraining from work, and not greeting others.

However, in addition to being the saddest day of the year, remarkably the 9th of Av also is considered the beginning of the renewed hope for the coming of the Messiah. Isn't that remarkable – **how, over and over through much of Jewish history, tragedy leads to renewed hope in God's faithfulness to fulfill the covenant promises.**

OK – the Biblical event surrounding *Tisha B'Av*, the 9th of the month of Av, is one that you will remember – that of the Israelites refusing to go into the Canaan because of their lack of trust in God. Just like the incident that we saw where Aaron's two sons were killed for trying to offer fire with coals not from the altar of sacrifice, this incident likewise involves a great disrespect to God's holiness.

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God's Holiness

The problem we ALL have is that God is Holy and Perfect, and we're not. If you ask your neighbor or someone at work, "Are you perfect?," they'll probably say, "**Nobody's perfect.** Everybody has some flaws."

They might even say that we're all sinners.

– In some sense "**Nobody's perfect**" has become the philosophy of most people. But isn't it interesting that nobody's worried about it? We take that statement – "Nobody's perfect" – for granted, and we totally miss **the implications** that lie in that statement.

- Or – How often have you heard this? 'Everybody's entitled to one mistake.' Well – says who? Where did God ever say,
 - 'You can all have one mistake – one Mulligan, one do-over.
 - **One free sin.**
 - One free act of treason against God's authority.
 - One free insult to God's integrity.'

God never said that, did He? **But even if He did, how long ago did you and I use our "mulligan" up?"**

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There is not one person in a thousand who will claim to be perfect. And folks, there is not one person in a thousand who understands the SERIOUSNESS of not being perfect!

- Because the standard by which we will be judged, ultimately, will not be on a curve, or a scale seeing if our good deeds outweigh our bad, is not a curve. But it will be the standard of God's perfection. God is perfect, we're not.

Introduction

Ok. Chapter 13 opens with the Israelites camped at the southern border of Canaan. The place is called Kadesh..... also called Kadesh-Barnea. They left Mt. Sinai about three weeks earlier. They're ready to enter the land that God had promised them, and they're just waiting for the word to go.

- Map

Back at Mt Sinai, God and the Israelites made a covenant, an agreement, a contract. God agreed to be their God and dwell in their midst and bless the nation, and the people agreed to live up to the principles specified in the Torah.

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During the year and a half period since they left Egypt, the nation has already tested God's patience 9 times. Here at Kadesh-Barnea will be the 10th time, and God will finally say "*Enough already.*"

The Scouts

READ: Numbers Chapter 13, starting at verse 1.

The LORD said to Moses, ² "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."

³ So at the LORD's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites. ⁴ These are their names:

from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zakkur;

⁵ from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori;

⁶ from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;

⁷ from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph;

⁸ from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun;

⁹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu;

¹⁰ from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi;

¹¹ from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi;

¹² from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli;

¹³ from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael;

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¹⁴ from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi;

¹⁵ from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki.

¹⁶ These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land." (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

... ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

SLIDE: WHO SENT SCOUTS?

Verse 1 sounds like it was God's idea to send the scouts ahead, but the Book of Deut. Makes it clear that the elders of the people asked Moses for permission to send scouts ahead

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to see what the lay of the land was. Moses was reluctant, but God here says they could have their wish.

So, Moses sends 12 scouts, one from each of the 12 tribes (not from the tribe of Levi, who as you will recall was now considered separately, God's tribe, so to speak.). The scouts were leaders in their respective clans – not the heads of the clans, but well respected men.

SLIDE – SCOUTS, NOT SPIES

Now, there's a difference between spying and scouting. Some bible versions say the 12 were scouting, others spying.

- It's a little like the difference between shoplifting and shopping.

They were instructed to go scout out and see the land in order to reassure the people. It was similar to checking out various communities when you're going to buy a house; this was not like the preliminary to a military operation. If it had been a military spying operation, most certainly the leaders of the tribes would not have gone, and they wouldn't have sent twelve; 2 or 3 would have been more appropriate because stealth would have been key; and later in the Bible when we

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see actual military "spying", it will indeed usually be 2 or 3 men at most.

JOSHUA'S NAME

In verse 16 we get this interesting little aside – that one of the tribal leaders eventually had his name changed by Moses: "Hoshea" son of Nun.

SLIDE WHAT'S IN A NAME

Hoshea became known as Joshua...or, more accurately in the Hebrew, *Yehoshua*. So what's the difference between Hoshea and *Yehoshua*? Well in some ways it is quite astounding.

Hoshea means "God saves". *Yehoshua* means "*Yehoveh will saves*". Hoshea is about 40 years old at this point in time. He was born in Egypt, obviously well before the Exodus. As you might remember, Moses had to ask God what His personal name was back at the burning bush. Up until then, all we had was God's titles, not His name.

God tells us that His personal name is YHWH- which we translate as *Yahweh*. The name Joshua, *Yehoshua*, could not

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have existed when Joshua was born in Egypt... because God's personal name wasn't known then. This name change is one of those little noticed verses that demonstrates the historicity of the Biblical narrative.

Now, the contracted form of Yehoshua is Yeshua. And, of course, you may recognize Yeshua as the Hebrew name of Jesus. Yes – it's the same name. Jesus' given Hebrew name was Yeshua, which is just a contraction of Yehoshua... 'Yehoveh saves'. Jesus, Joshua, Yehoshua, and Yeshua are all the same name, just in different dialects and languages, from different eras.

Slide

When *Yeshua* was translated from Hebrew into the Greek language, the name *Yeshua* becomes *lēsous*. The English spelling for *lēsous* is "*Jesus*."

- Jesus' Hebrew name is Yeshua – His mother Mary didn't call out "Jesus, come home – it's times for supper" – She would have called 'Yeshua – come home...'

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And looking ahead to the book of Joshua, it will be Yehoshua (Joshua) and NOT Moses that leads the people into the Promised Land. Moses leads them up to it, but not INTO it. In a direct parallel, The Torah of Moses leads people up to the ultimate Promised Land, but not INTO it... for that it took Yeshua, Jesus the Christ, to lead us into the promises of God.

THE EVIL REPORT

The scouts were in the land of Canaan for 40 days, and they came back with fairly accurate account of what they saw. I'll continue reading Numbers Chapter 3, starting at verse 26:

Numbers 3: ²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

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So, the scouts return and go straight to Moses and Aaron and report what they encountered. They first tell Moses what they saw, and then tell "the whole community" of Israel. This does NOT mean all of the Israelites. It just means the elders and leaders of Israel.

And we don't have to read too far before we get a little hint of the bent of these scouts because they say "we went to the land WHERE YOU SENT US". -- Not the land the Lord promised or the land that was sworn to Abraham. In other words, they began to disassociate themselves from the Promise, from the covenant, and from God. For them, this was a political/economic matter, not a religious one.

It's apparent that when the scouts mentioned the size of the people and the existence of fortified cities, it unsettled the elders, because in verse 30...

³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

SLIDE ANAKITES

Let's understand something: the scouts' assessment up to this point was well balanced and not exaggerated. They were

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telling the truth – the people were big, and archeology confirms that the fortified cities in Canaan had walls up to 30' high and 15' thick. This was scaring the daylights out of the leaders and elders of Israel who had gathered around them to hear the scouting report.

We can easily imagine the rising clatter of the people expressing anxiety and fear; a growing din of complaint and rebellion. Because verse 30 says, "Caleb *hushed* the people....." Caleb told them to quiet down and settle down. And Caleb says, OK, enough reality. We know what we're up against; now let's go and take the land because surely we'll overcome all of these obstacles. Verse 31...

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." ³²And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

Ten of the twelve scouts now go beyond mere reporting and start to give their own opinions. The people there are too numerous and powerful to conquer – that they were so huge in size that the scouts seemed as small as grasshoppers

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compared to them. We can confidently say “We’re Going to Die”. It will be suicide.

Now, Joshua and Caleb agreed with their assessment of the land and the size of the people, but they said it didn’t matter – God was bigger than any foe in the land.

- The leaders argued back. **Who cares about grapes the size of oranges, we want peace, man!**

The people were scared about fighting a group of nations whose people physically were significantly larger than them. Remember, Goliath was a descendent of one of these tribes. It’s understandable to be apprehensive; it’s human to be nervous in their situation. Here you have former slaves about to confront battle-hardened people in fortified cities.

But, here's the problem. God made definite promises & **God is Holy**. Remember several months ago, I mentioned that when we say God is Holy, we’re saying that He is different than us, that He must be treated differently.

- I can disregard elder Bill’s advice on occasion, I can go against my wife Donna’s advice on rare occasions (but I never do – right honey?), but I can never disregard God’s instructions. If I do, then I’m treating God no differently than I treat anyone else – that’s an attack against His

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Holiness, and He doesn't allow that. This is the 10th time since they had left Egypt that they questioned God's willingness and even His ability to fulfill His promises. God's Holiness was being challenged for the 10th time. And, there would be grave repercussions.

As word of the scouts' report circulated around the camp, the people began to panic; the camp wept all night.

SLIDE: THE REBELLION

It is difficult to understate the enormity of the rebellion against the Lord, and the catastrophe that is described here. What we witness here is nothing less than (if it were a novel) an event we could call The First Fall of Israel. What should have been a wonderful story about triumph and prosperity..... a tale of Israel inheriting the Land and all the goodness that the Lord had prepared for them... instead it turns into a tragic narrative about disbelief, failure, weakness, and a direct repudiation of God's grace.

Only days and weeks earlier, Israel had been consecrated by the Lord, given His Torah, and they were basking in the constant presence of Yehoveh – but now they throw it all away to obey their own fears and desires.

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- So please grasp that we are reading one of those history-changing moments in the story of mankind.

Israel trekked right up to the edge of fulfilling centuries of promise, and then they quit. Just as victory was in their grasp, they drew back in fear. They turned back and refused to enter into that promise.

- Like standing at THE BORDER OF TWO STATES – you can just step across into other state >– lifted up foot but didn't step...

Let's go on to Chapter 14

THE REBELLION

Chapter 14: That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ² All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴ And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

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⁵ Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶ Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷ and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸ If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹ Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them."

¹⁰ But the whole assembly talked about stoning them. Then the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹ The LORD said to Moses, "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the signs I have performed among them? ¹² I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they."

All Israel is united against Moses and Aaron... and God

- "Why, GOD?" did you do this to us? Just to KILL us!

Verse 1 sums it all up well: the whole community broke into loud cries, and the people wept that night. That is, the elders and leaders started yelling and screaming and bickering, and the people seeing what was happening, broke down into

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one giant panic attack. The community of Israel was united against Moses and Aaron and therefore against God. Note to the wise: you can't be against God's mediator on the one hand and on the other say, you're for God.

Then the blasphemy that was in their hearts came pouring out of their mouths: "if **ONLY** we had stayed in Egypt". Translation: we prefer slavery to our former evil taskmasters than redemption from the Lord because the slavery was more comfortable and familiar and did seem to have its perks.

Why God, they ask, did you bring us here to be slaughtered by the Canaanites? They accuse *God* of not having their best interests at heart; rather **this whole exodus thing is just some cruel hoax being played on helpless folk.** Do you HATE us?

- Our wives and little ones would become plunder. If it was only us men, we'd go in (that's a crock!) And, I won't take my kids in there and get them all killed off just because of some stupid word from God!
- The complaint, the whine of unbelief. **This was a very definite choice – they chose to believe the scouts rather than to believe God.**

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THE CONSEQUENCES

Verse 5 says that Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before the congregation. They weren't submitting to the elders; they hit the dirt for several reasons: (a) they DUCKED! They were expecting a VERY severe reaction from God. and (b) the people were going to stone them. That, and they were in utter disbelief at what was happening before their eyes, such that their knees grew weak and they fell to the ground in utter despair. But, now enter Joshua and Caleb.

It is interesting that up to now Joshua apparently had been silent. It was actually a sign of mature leadership that he had let the others have their say, because he was already Moses' assistant and protégé, so the people knew where he stood. Caleb had stated his position well, and Joshua had no reason to simply repeat it.

But, now, as a team, Joshua and Caleb urge the people to reconsider. They remind them how wonderful the land is; that if Israel will but obey God, trust Him, He will deliver the land over to them.

Joshua says that because the Lord has "**removed the protection**" from the Canaanites, that they are now "our prey". Pretty bold. His response to the people, and his siding with Moses and Aaron, brought the people's anxieties and rage to

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the boiling point. And, they threatened to stone Joshua and Caleb. The people had made up their minds, and they really didn't want to hear any more sermons to the contrary.

The Lord Himself now comes to the rescue by His presence coming down upon the Tent of Meeting, so that all Israel could see it. This seems to have put a stop to the mob's murderous intentions.

God was really “ticked off”, so to speak. The words of the scouts said they seemed like grasshoppers compared to the Canaanites, and so they couldn't possibly win. God says, “*Who gave you the right to say ‘I can't’?*”

- *“I say you can, and you are contradicting Me? Who gave you that authority?”*

The Lord then says to Moses: *“**that does it.** I'm going to wipe them all out, and start all over again with you. From you, Moses, I'll create a people of faith. In fact, the nation I make out of you will be even larger than the 3 million Israelites here.....but who will be dead at My hand in about 5 minutes.”*

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- OK – that’s what happened. So, why is this particular incident the known as the 1st *Tisha B'Av*?

SLIDE: THAT NIGHT ‘TISHA b’AV’

The name comes from verse one of Numbers Chapter 14: it says: *“That night, all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, ‘If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert!’”*

- “that night” – that night was Tisha B'Av -> *9th of Month of Av*
- That’s the 1st Tisha B'Av.
- To orthodox Jews, it’s like when we Americans might say ‘9-11’ or ‘December 7th’ – it recalls a day when tragedy struck.
- *Tisha B'Av* has been called the "saddest day in Jewish history".

God said to the Israelites: You want to cry because you lack the faith to go into battle when the outcome is

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guaranteed? To cry over nothing? False tears... I'll give you something to cry about.

Chapter 14 goes on to describe how Moses' interceded with God not to wipe them out. God agrees, but there are consequences for the rebellion. Continuing in Numbers Chapter 14, verse 21, Yehovah says:

²¹ Nevertheless, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth, ²² not one of those who saw my glory and the signs I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times²³ - not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their ancestors. No one who has treated me with contempt will ever see it.

The consequence for the rebellion is that the unbelieving people won't enter the land – they will wander in the desert and die off over the next 38+ years.

SLIDE : The **Book of Hebrews**, Chapter 4, references this specific incident and the result of the rebellion...

God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger,
'They shall never enter my rest.' "

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Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts."

Rest doesn't mean "lack of conflict" – the Israelites would still have to fight to take the land, but **Rest means that the outcome was guaranteed** – you don't have to worry how it turns out. That's why you can rest. You rest in Him and go forward.

OK. Tisha B'Av – was a major event in world history. But, there were many sad event in Jewish History – why mourn this one, since the children eventually did get into the land. The reason is that a pattern was set up. The pattern is this – destruction and death will always follow unfaithfulness to Him, because that's still a part of the covenant the Israelites made with Yehovah.

Do you believe in coincidences? The Jewish calendar is a **lunar calendar (30 days)**, so *Tisha B'Av* doesn't fall on the same date every year on our calendar. This year it's July 29th, last year it was August 9, next year it is on July 16th. Many major catastrophes that would fall upon the Jews throughout history

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due to their unfaithfulness would also occur on this same date
– the 9th of Av!

CLICKS

- Destruction of 1st Temple (Solomon's Temple) by Babylonians
– stood for 410 years – 586BC
- Destruction of 2nd Temple 655 years later in 70AD by the Romans because of a Jewish rebellion – this had been prophesized by Jesus.(high priest throws keys up to God)
- Sixty years later, the Jews rebelled again, following a man named Simon Bar Kokhba, who claimed to be the Messiah. He was given the surname Bar Kokhba (Son of a star) which referred to the prophesied star mentioned in Numbers 24 that pointed to the Messiah – we refer to that star as the Star of Bethlehem. The last stronghold of the rebellion was the fortress of Betar, and it fell to the Romans on the 9th of Av in 133 AD after three-year siege. 580,000 Jews died by starvation or the sword.
- July 25, 1290, expulsion of Jews from England
- July 31, 1492 – EXPULSION OF Jews from Spain – Columbus!!

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- The 9th of Av, 1941, SS commander Heinrich Himmler formally presented his plan to the Nazi Party on the Final Solution.
- One year later, to the day, the plan was formally implemented. On *Tisha B'Av* in 1942, July 23rd, the first trainload of Jews arrived at their destination, Treblinka, and sent to the gas chambers.

Tragic events in Jewish history, all which occurred on *Tisha B'Av*. Coincidences – I think **Not**.

SLIDE: FACE TO FACE

Now, part of Chapter 14 relates how Moses mediated with God not to wipe out the whole bunch of disbelievers in His promises. Time doesn't permit going into that today. But, I'd like to address something that was mentioned several months ago as a puzzle: The Biblical statement that Moses and God spoke face to face as friends. But, how can anyone see the face of God and live?

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In Exodus Chapter 32, it says that the LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. But then, in the very next chapter of Exodus (33:20), God tells Moses:

"You cannot not see my face: (FOR NO MAN SHALL SEE ME, AND LIVE.)"

We see this little phrase "face to face" many times in the Torah.....and several of those times it's referring to God speaking to Moses. God says in one place that He and Moses talked face-to-face, and in another He said that no one can do that and live. How do we deal with this seeming contradiction?

CLICK:

According to Jewish scholars, the Hebrew word used here, "paniyim", can mean either "face" or "presence". What the scripture is saying with the expression "face to face" is that Moses spoke to God "presence"... It was Moses' face, God's presence. That is, God's spirit was present right there in a visible way. It was near.....versus far away – and God and Moses talked as friends talk.

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SLIDE USED IN REFERENCE TO THE Table of Shewbread -> Bread of THE Presence or *Bread of the Face* ?

The main point of the phrase is to indicate the manner in which the conversation between God and Moses was held. Moses' conversation with Yehoveh was different from everyone else; everyone else prayed to God Who was up in heaven; to everyone else, God was far away, up there somewhere. But with Moses, God's Presence was right there in front of him. It's the difference of having a conversation with your friend who is sitting with you in your living room verses talking to your friend over the telephone. Moses' conversations with God were special. That's what the phrase meant.

Mankind could not look on God's face. And, it was only Moses and Jesus that had the privilege of speaking in a face-to-face manner with the Father. Even the high priest, who entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle blood on the Mercy seat, he was required to take burning incense with him so as to obscure a clear vision of the Ark when God was Present.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3: 12-18

¹² *Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.*

¹³ *We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance*

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was fading away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.¹⁵ Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Paul makes a bold claim here. He says that because of Jesus, we are bold enough to remove the veil and enter into a new kind of intimacy with the Almighty. But how is this new intimacy possible? Remember the veil in the temple which separated God's presence in the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. This veil was four inches thick, and as Josephus writes, it was so sturdy it could not be torn apart by horses tied to it, pulling in opposite directions! The people of God were separated from God's presence by the veil, and *only once per year* would the high priest be allowed to even enter therein. But all that changed when Jesus died.

⁵⁰ *And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.*

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⁵¹ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. - Matthew 27:50-51

What Jesus did on the cross, by paying for our sins, allows a new intimacy both with God and other people! Now the veil has been taken away. No longer do we worship with veiled faces; our veil has been removed and now when we worship God (who is Spirit) we come face to face with Him.

SLIDE LONGING FOR THE MESSIAH

Tisha B'Av, the 19th of Av, is the saddest day of the Jewish year. However, in keeping with God's pattern of restoration, the month of Av has two wonderful concepts.

First, concerning this day – the 9th Av, **Jewish sages** always expected that "the *Mashiach* – the hope for the coming of the Messiah – will be born on the 9th of Av." The Destruction of the Temple in 70 AD marked the beginning again in earnest for the coming of the Messiah (even though the veil was on their eyes when Jesus the Messiah was in their midst). The Jews had come to take the Temple – God dwelling in their midst – for granted, and then it was gone. Only the Messiah can restore it.

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Orthodox Jews still have this intense longing – AND IT'S COMPARED TO THE LONGING OF A BRIDE FOR THE RETURN OF THE GROOM

Was Jesus born on the 9th AV (July or August?)? – Scripture doesn't say in Scripture what day he was born on, but who knows?

DEPRESSION

To commemorate Tisha B'Av, the most tragic and destructive day for the Jewish people, they spend the day in mourning, and fasting; they don't greet others, they sit low to the floor and we hurt. They must feel the pain and experience the sadness. But only for a specific amount of time. Then they get up, recognize what they endured and move forward

But even more so, it is because of the destruction that they will rebuild, and when they do, they will not be destroyed again. This is one of the reasons that they are taught that Tisha B'Av is the birthday of Moshiach, for hidden within tragedy is the seed of redemption. When Moshiach comes, Tisha B'Av won't go away; it will rather become a day of celebration. Because they don't ignore what they have been through; it is not about denial, but about taking what was and transforming it.

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Like the motto of a young woman I read about, who has struggled tremendously throughout her life: “In the end, everything will be okay. If it’s not okay . . . it’s not the end!”

SLIDE: THE 15TH OF AV

While today is a low point in the Jewish calendar, next Saturday is the happiest day on the Jewish calendar. Next Saturday (the 15th of Av) is *Tu B'Av*, the day that Scripture says that marked the end of the dying in the desert, the day that the last of that the rebellious generation of Israelites that left Egypt died off.

Yom Kippur is a day of celebration, because it symbolizes the atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. *Tu B'Av* also is a day of celebration because it signifies the atonement for the sin of the Spies, where ten came bearing such negative reports which reduced the entire nation to panic. Now, Israel could enter Canaan and claim God’s promise according to His covenant with Abraham.

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This is a marriage-themed holiday; in ancient times, this was a day devoted to matchmaking. This is because marriage represents the bounce back from the greatest tragedies which

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occurred on *Tisha B'Av*. In modern Israel, the day has become somewhat of an analog to Valentine's Day. On these days the daughters of Jerusalem would go out to the vineyards and dance." (there are no happier days for Israel than the 15th of *Av* and *Yom Kippur*") -- the day of finding one's predestined soul-mate).

Of all Jewish celebrations, none equal the joy of a wedding. Of all Jewish holidays, none equal the joy of the 15th of *Av*.

Patterns – remember when I started this series several months ago how patterns keep popping up in the Bible? I see a definite pattern here with the two days of commemoration falling six days apart:

Book of Genesis: In the Beginning, the earth was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep – this speaks of desolation. But, God creates mankind on the 6th day, destined to be the Bride of Christ.

Tisha B'Av, 9th Av, we see the beginning of the desolations the Jews will experience because of turning away from God, and six days later, there's a celebration of marriage – particularly by the idea of the coming marriage between the Messiah and His bride – the people of God.

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MESSIAH = GROOM

- old Jewish Wedding
- marriage contract (covenant)
- price set
- "I go to prepare a place" at father's house (room)
- Father determines when room is ready (not a bachelor pad)
- when is the big day? Only the father knows
- Bride does a lot of waiting
- completely by surprise
- shout
- son relies on father's advice regarding Price
- Garden - if it is your will, let this cup pass.. but your will, not mine, be done

ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING

Wrapping up, I want to briefly explore this Jewish hope of Marriage, with the Messiah being the groom.

Our Lord was Jewish and He did things like a Jew. So often, if we consult the Jewish law and custom, we find many of the motivations for particular actions of our Lord.

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Consider the Jewish custom of matrimony. We should appreciate that the Jews had no dating or courtship as we now think of those things. Marriage to them was a practical legal matter, established by contract and carried through by exacting procedure. These customs exist in a form today in the Jewish wedding ceremony, and in Jesus' time they were most fascinating and complex.

When the young man of Israel in Jesus' time saw the girl he wanted (or the girl his father said he wanted), he would approach her with a marriage contract. He would come to her house with a covenant – a true legal agreement – giving the terms by which he would propose marriage. The most important consideration in the contract was the price the bridegroom would be willing to pay to marry this particular bride.

Then the groom would pay the price. It should be said that this **price was no modest token but was set so that the new bride would be a costly item – that was the idea**. The young man had no delusions that he was getting something for nothing. He would pay dearly to marry the girl of his choice.

When that matter was settled the groom would depart. He would make a little speech to his bride, saying, "I go to prepare

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a place for you,” and he would return to his father’s house. Back at his father’s house, he would build her a bridal chamber, a little mansion, in which they would have their future honeymoon.

We should appreciate that this was a complex undertaking for the bridegroom. He would actually build a separate building on his father’s house. The bridal chamber had to be beautiful –one doesn’t honeymoon just anywhere; and it had to be stocked with provisions since the bride and groom were going to remain inside for seven. This construction project would take the better part of a year, ordinarily, and the father of the groom would be the judge of when it was finished. (We can see the logic there – obviously, if it were up to the young man, he would throw up some kind of modest structure and go get the girl!). But the father of the groom who had been through this previously and was less excited, would be the final judge on when the chamber was ready and when the young man would go to claim his bride.

The bride, for her part, was obliged to do a lot of waiting. She would take the time to gather her trousseau and be ready when her bridegroom came. Custom provided that she had to have an oil lamp ready in case he came late at night in the darkness, because she had to be ready to travel at a moment’s notice. During this long period of waiting, she was referred to

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as “consecrated”, “set apart”, “bought with a price”. She was truly a lady-in-waiting, but there was no doubt that her groom would return.

The bride would wear her veil whenever she stepped out of her house so that other young men would realize she was spoken for and would not try to approach her with another contract. As the year went on, the bride would assemble her sisters and bridesmaids and whoever would go with her to the wedding when the bridegroom came, and they would each have their oil lamps ready. They would wait at her house every night on the chance that the groom would come, along with his groomsmen, and sweep them all away to a joyous and sudden wedding ceremony.

Meanwhile, the bridegroom would be building and decorating with all that he had. His father would inspect the chamber from time to time to see if it were ready. If we came along the road at this point and saw the young man working on his bridal chamber, we might well ask, “When’s the big day?” But the bridegroom would answer, “Only my father knows that”.

Finally, the chamber would be ready and the bridegroom would assemble his young friends to accompany him on the exciting trip to claim his bride. The big moment had arrived

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and the bridegroom was more than ready, we can be sure. He and his young men would set out in the night, making every attempt to **completely surprise the bride.**

And that's the romantic part – **all the Jewish brides were “stolen”**. The Jews had a special understanding of a woman's heart. What a thrill for her, to be “abducted” and carried off into the night, not by a stranger but by one who loved her so much that he had paid a high price for her

Over at the bride's house, things had better be ready! To be sure, the bride would be surprised since the groom would try to come at midnight while she was sleeping. But the oil lamps were ready and the bride had her veil. And while she might be sleeping in her wedding dress, she was definitely surprised. It's a wonder she would sleep at all as the year went on!

Now there were rules to be observed in consideration of a woman's feelings. The groom couldn't just rush in on her. After all, her hair might be in rollers! Actually, as the excited party of young men would get close to her house, they were obliged to give her a warning. Someone in the wedding party would shout.

When the bride heard that shout, she knew her young man would be there momentarily. She had only time to light her lamp, grab her honeymoon clothing and go. Her sisters

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and bridesmaids who wanted to attend also had to have their lamps trimmed and ready, of course. No one would try to walk through ancient Israel, with its rocky terrain, in the dark of night without carrying a lamp.

And so the groom and his men would charge in, grab the girls and make off with them! The father of the bride and her brothers would look the other way – perhaps just making one quick check to see that this was the young man with the contract – and the wedding party would be off.

People in the village might be awakened from their sleep by the happy voices of the young people carrying the oil lamps through the streets, and that's how they knew a wedding was going on. Today, we hear car horns – back then, they saw the lamps late at night. Those looking on would not know who the bride was because she was still wearing a veil, of course. But she would be returning through these same streets a week later with her groom and then her veil would be off. At the return of the bride with her bridegroom, all the people would know just who got married and they would realize the total significance of this wedding.

At the end of the week, the bride and groom would make their long awaited appearance to the cheers of the crowd. There would then be a joyous meal – a marriage supper, which we might refer to as the wedding reception – to honor the new couple. At this point, the bride would have discarded her veil,

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since she was now a married woman, and all would see exactly who it was the bridegroom had chosen. The new couple and the guests would enjoy a magnificent feast to conclude the entire matrimonial week.

After the marriage supper, the bride and groom would depart, not remaining any longer at the home of the groom's father. They would go instead to their own house, which had been prepared by the bridegroom.

How much did Christ, our Bridegroom, pay? We all realize that our Lord went to the cross for us and that this was painful, humiliating and so insulting to the Son of God.

Well, after finishing the Passover Meal at the Last Supper, He to the Mount of Olives. And when He was at the place, He said to his disciples, 'Pray that you do not enter into temptation'. And He withdrew from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed.

Saying, Father, "if Thou are willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done (Luke 22:39-42).

He told His disciples, "Pray that you do not enter into temptation", which any bridegroom might well have said to his

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bride. “*Be sure you wait for me, I’ll be back before you know it. Don’t get tempted!*” many young bridegrooms must have told their betrothed as they departed.

Then Jesus held a private conversation with His Father, saying, “If Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me.” This must also have happened from time to time in the old Jewish wedding custom. Many a bridegroom probably returned to his father after learning the price for a particular bride and asked his advice on whether he should pay it. “Do you realize how much they want for her?” must have been a question repeated often in the old tradition. The Jewish bridegroom was wise enough to know that his father’s judgments in these matters were trustworthy, and he would consult his father about the amount to be paid.

And here we see Jesus clearly expressing that if His Father were willing; the cup should be removed from Him. Of course, like the respectful Jewish bridegroom of old, He trusts His Father’s judgment and said, “Nevertheless, not My will but Thine, be done.”

The Father evidently thought we were worth it. Why? I don’t know. But the Cross is the dowry given by Christ. And

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He's coming back at any moment. But, of course, as in any marriage, first you have to say "I do".

"When the High Priest saw that the Holy Temple was in flames and about to be destroyed by the Romans, he climbed up to the roof of the Sanctuary together with groups of the young priests. They held the keys to the Temple in their hands and spoke before the Holy One, Blessed be He: *'Master of the Universe! It appears that we were not worthy of being trusted officers for You – take back the keys to Your house!'* and with that, they threw the keys upwards.

Revelation Rev 1:

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! **And I hold the keys of death and Hades.**