

Newsletter for the Month of Tevet 5783 by Sherry Lush

Shalom Dear Friends,

Praying that this Chanukkah season has brought light and miracles to each of you. In these crazy and uncertain times, it is good to know that our G-d never changes, and that He is with us. **Hebrews 13:8** "Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday and today and forever." He is still the light of the world and miracles for good come through Him. Incredibly, He has trusted us to take His light into every place we go and into every relationship we have. **Matthew 5:14-16** "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." As we pray His Word, His power is released, and we see miracles. We can move forward with confidence and joy, as we know Him, and we know His faithfulness. Look up! We will see Him face to face soon!



We now depart the month of Kislev, but we take Chanukah into the month of Tevet for one more grand night. On Tevet the 1st, we celebrate the 8th, beautiful night of Chanukah, so the month begins with miraculous light. This light is an inspiration to us, for Tevet is overall a dark winter month.

Why is Tevet a dark month? It is the first of the dark months of winter, and it is also the month, when some 2,500 years ago, Nebuchadnezzar and his armies laid

siege to the city of Jerusalem. This act set off a series of events that led to the destruction of the Holy Temple and the 70 year exile of the Jewish people in Babylon. The siege began on the 10th of Tevet. We remember this day and mourn this siege by fasting.

In the following 30 months, from this siege in Tevet, the destruction of Jerusalem was complete. The Jewish people were exiled to Babylon for 70 years as predicted by Jeremiah the prophet. **Jeremiah 29:10** "For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."

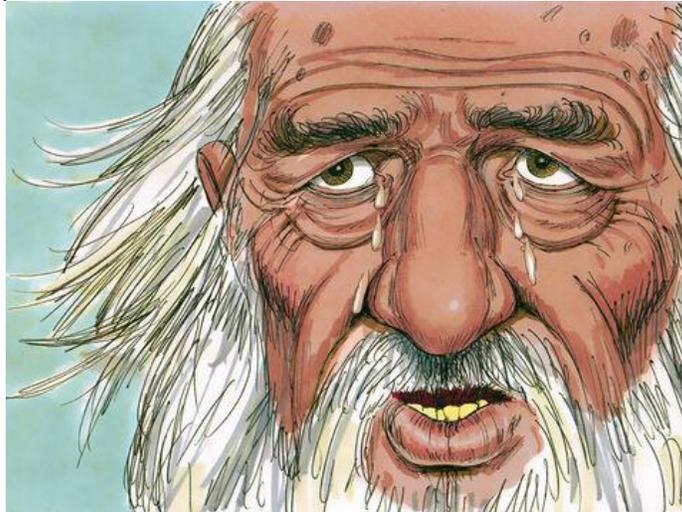
Whenever there is destruction, there has to be rebuilding. And rebuilding would begin at the end of 70 years when the return to Jerusalem would begin.

And the return happened in three phases beginning when King Cyrus of whom it is said: **Isaiah 44:28** "That saith of Cyrus, *He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, The foundation shall be laid.*" And this decree of King Cyrus launched the first return of people who desired to build the Temple. Zerubbabel led this group in 538 B.C. About 42,000 people returned at this time. Why wouldn't more have returned?

The Jewish people were not slaves in Babylon but were full and active members of the Babylonian society. Many were prosperous and had children and grand-children there. To return to Jerusalem which lay in ruins, there had to be a yearning in the heart, and a willingness to leave security behind.



These people returned with good intentions, leaving all the comforts of Babylon to accomplish this task, but right away the enemies of the project began to "trouble them." **Ezra 4:4,5a** "Then the people of the land tried to discourage the people of Judah. They troubled them in building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their purpose all the days of Cyrus"Then, Haggai and Zechariah came to Jerusalem and began to build with the people. God's people were discouraged. They needed encouragement to complete the job they had returned to do. The work probably looked overwhelming - just piles of rubble - and trouble everywhere. **Jeremiah 9:11** "I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals; and I will lay waste the towns of Judah so no one can live there." Despite turmoil from within and from without, the encouragement of the prophets helped push the job of rebuilding the temple over the line.



After 20 years, the Temple was finally completed. Haggai tells us of the mixed emotions that associated with this amazing accomplishment: **Ezra 3:11b-13** "And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy from the sound of weeping, because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away."

Even in our day people often judge the quality of a work of God based on its size or its grandeur. But we are warned by the Lord in **Zechariah 4:8** "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: **Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.** Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forth the capstone with shouts of Grace, grace to it. **For who has despised the day of small things?**"

Every one of us should be encouraged. Every good work counts in the Kingdom of our G-d. Only G-d knows the ripples that are created by a smile or a helping hand or a verse read to someone needing encouragement. Every good work counts. It is not my might nor by power that the Kingdom is built. It is not only the "superstars" who count. You count! Keep up all the good work - let your light shine. It is His Spirit that brings the increase. And He never fails. It is every believer working together with our G-d that brings the victories and grows His Kingdom.



The following is a brief timeline showing the progression of the rebuilding of the Temple and the walls of Jerusalem and the reinstating of the instructions of G-d:

538 BC - Cyrus gave the decree for the Jews to return to their land and build the Temple.

The first return is led by Zerubbabel.

536 BC - The rebuilding began.

516 BC - The Temple is complete.

457 BC - The Second return began with Ezra the priest and scribe.

Ezra led a spiritual shake-up, as common people and leaders were marrying foreign wives who brought in idol worship. Ezra reinforced how G-d's people had to be separate from all idol worship.

445 BC - Thirdly, King Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah letters and captains of the army to accompany him through enemy territory and granted him supplies he needed. Nehemiah and the people rebuilt the walls and the gates around Jerusalem in 52 days, all while contending with enemies who wanted to stop them. Nehemiah also dealt with the sins of the people and brought the proper honor of the Shabbat back. Nehemiah said: **Nehemiah 13:30** Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan.....

May we all be like Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah and never stop building as we all have something to add.

May His Kingdom come in our day!

Love and Shalom to All!