

March 2007

Beth-El, Gilgal, Mizpeh and Ramah

"Now Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he used to go annually on circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and he judged Israel in all these places. Then his return was to Ramah for his house was there, and there he judged Israel; and he built there an altar to the Lord."

1 Samuel 7:15-17



By God's grace, I want to call your attention to the significance of the Hebrew names of the places which Samuel visited on his annual circuit to judge Israel.

In this profound passage, we have a prophetic message from God to those who have ears to hear, giving us insight into His heart, His character and the way He calls us to live and prepare ourselves for the soon-coming **Day of Judgment**.

The first place on Samuel's circuit is called Bethel (Beth-El), which means "house of God". The name was given to this place by Jacob, because there he received his first revelation of God. (Genesis 28:10-22)

With his realization of the reality of God, he also received promises. God renewed with Jacob the covenant, which He had made with Abraham his grandfather, first of the Promised Land, and second, that through Jacob and his descendants, all the families of the earth would be blessed.

Furthermore, God declared: *"Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."* (Genesis 28:15)
There is no greater promise than this!

Our great and awesome God first and foremost invites men to Himself, to His house, to Beth-El, to His everlasting Kingdom. You are in this world but you are no longer of this world. God is with you to keep you; never will He leave you nor forsake you until He has accomplished all that He promised you. He has promised to bring you to the very place which He has prepared for you, so that you also may be where He is. (John 14:1-3)

Beth-El refers to His invitation to the people of Israel and to all people, to come to His house, His promised Kingdom.

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to me. Listen, that you may live and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David." (Isaiah 55:1-3)

The very same call to Israel, as well as to all people, is voiced also in the words of our Lord Yeshua: *"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28)

God's first invitation is to Beth-El. Yeshua, by His life and teaching, shows us what the true house of God that He invites us to enter is all about and what true worship should be like. All who truly come to Him enter into an everlasting covenant with God according to the faithful mercies shown to David, receiving forgiveness, release and rest from the burden of sin.

As we respond to God's invitation we shall hear: *"My name is El Shaddai."* (Shaddai is from the word "shedai'im", the breast of a woman). Just as a baby comes into the world and cannot survive without his mother's breast, so we who enter God's Kingdom cannot live the life of Messiah if we don't abide in Him! God the Father is meeting our every need in the Messiah (not all our wishes).

Listen to the Word of El Shaddai to you, my beloved: *"I know your sorrows, disappointments, loneliness, anguish and every tear; I know your fear and all your doubts, your weaknesses and all your failures; I know your confidence, successes, joy and strength; I know all your activities in the light and I am well aware of you in darkness, your walk in truth and your walk in hypocrisy, in love and unity or in jealousy and competition; I know it all, I number the hairs of your head. I love you just as you are, let us walk this earth together, let me complete you; just as I am you shall be also: **"Therefore be perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."*** (Matthew 5:48)

God explicitly displayed His love and faithfulness to His chosen people, giving them the Torah (law) only after delivering them out of slavery, only after leading them into freedom. He then continued to provide them with fire by night for warmth, cloud by day for shade and guidance, manna from heaven and water from the rock, and He preserved their clothes and shoes from wearing out. He took good care of them: in the desert they could be at rest in their simple succoth (little booths), while Beth-El - the house of God or tabernacle - was in their midst. Through the gaps between the palm branches forming the roof of their succoth, they could see the stars of heaven, to remind them that they were only passing through this world.

Similarly, we should not be anxious about this world, but secure, content and at rest in our God, who invites us to Beth-El and gives us the Holy Spirit as a seal for the day of redemption so we will have the assurance that we also may be where He is. May we ever remember that while we who are born of God's Spirit have the assurance of God's salvation, most of the Jewish people still remain with only the shadow of the tabernacle.

When we understand the finished work of God for us in Yeshua, we rejoice with singing and dancing in ***Beth-El***, but then we realize that our God is in need of us. He is calling us to move on to ***Gilgal***, then to ***Mizpeh*** and finally to ***Ramah***.

It is one thing to receive freedom, rest and relief from the burden of sin when we allow Yeshua, who has come to save rather than judge, to enter our life and bring us to Beth-El, but it is a different thing altogether when we reach Gilgal, as Samuel did. In Gilgal, unlike Beth-El, we no longer own our life and claim our rights. In Gilgal, we realize and acknowledge before the Lord that we have nothing we can call our own, for ***"with your blood you purchased men for God."*** (Revelation 5:9)

Gilgal is where the Israelites established their camp soon after crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land (Joshua 4). Here they discovered there was no more manna. The time to fight for their Promised Land and work for their survival had come. In Gilgal, Joshua made knives out of flint and circumcised the sons of Israel - a shadow of the promised circumcision of the heart in our promised Yeshua (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

"Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you, so the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day.'" (Joshua 5:9) Likewise, we no longer need to live in condemnation, for God has removed -or rolled away - our guilt through the blood of Yeshua that we might be slaves of righteousness and not of sin. Praise be to God for the freedom to be holy to His glory!

After receiving freedom, Gilgal became the Israelites' base of operation, from where they went out time and again to fight their enemies and take over the Promised Land (Joshua 10). ***"For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities..."*** (Ephesians 6:12)

We live in a lifelong battle.

- Gilgal is where the inhabitants of Gibeon came to deceive Joshua. (Joshua 9)
- Gilgal is where Saul's kingdom was renewed. All the men of Israel rejoiced greatly. (1 Samuel 11:14-16)
- Gilgal was the very place where King Saul lost his throne to David because of his disobedience to the Lord. (1. Samuel 13)
- In Gilgal Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the Lord. (1 Samuel 15)

Having received Yeshua's awesome love and forgiveness, providing us with peace and the assurance of eternal life, we find rest, joy, satisfaction and delight in the goodness of our God in Beth-El, but that is only the beginning of our journey. The Holy Spirit continues to work in our lives in order to bring us, as willing vessels, to Gilgal.

When we allow the Holy Spirit to move us from Beth-El to Gilgal, He convicts us with the realization of our deep indebtedness to our Lord. In Gilgal, we cannot help but give up all our rights and the ownership of our lives; we move on from drinking milk at Beth-El to fighting the good fight in Gilgal. As we respond to God's love and proceed to Gilgal, we hear Yeshua calling each of us personally: **"Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men."**(Matthew 4:19)

In Gilgal, our battle to advance our Lord's kingdom may be fierce and our struggle intense, nevertheless, Yeshua desires that all those who are born of God's Spirit enroll as quickly as possible into the army of His true disciples and move from Beth-El to Gilgal. Daily taking up our cross and dying to our flesh, daily walking in the footsteps of our Lord and Master, daily living in the knowledge that we have been **"freed from sin and enslaved to God"** (Romans 6:22) - this is our way of life in Gilgal.

"If they have called the head of the house Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:25) In Gilgal, we **"do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather we fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). In Beth-El the Lord conquered our hearts with His love which has been poured out within our hearts (Romans 5:5) but as we move on to Gilgal we are willing to **"face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered."** (Romans 8:36)

By the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit, in Gilgal we are no longer focused on ourselves, nor do we allow our hearts to be divided. We neither fear men nor look for the approval of men; the things of the world will not distract us for the kingdom of God has entered our lives to give us focus and endurance.

In Gilgal, we want to do our Lord's work, feed the poor and hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and the prisoners, and look after orphans and widows. In Gilgal, we are called to bring the Gospel of the Lord's deliverance to the lost world, for **"the Lord has anointed me to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners."** (Isaiah 61:1)

In Gilgal, we are not ashamed of the Gospel, but openly confess Christ before the world. There will be ups and downs in our lives as soldiers of God, but the beauty of Christ will grow and manifest in us. Yes, it is a continuous process, year after year, just as Samuel made his circuit not once or twice but annually.

Samuel continued to Mizpeh after visiting Gilgal. **Mizpeh** brings us to the following significant words in Hebrew: **"mazpen"**, **"mazpun"**, **"zafun"** and **"zofeh"**.

"Mazpen" in English means **"compass"**.

This shows us our direction, thus guiding us to our destiny. As believers, our true destiny is to glorify God and our **"mazpen"**, or compass, for direction in life is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

"Mazpun" in English is **"conscience"**.

As believers, we must be attentive to our compass so that we can discern and obey God's will. Beloved of God, one of the most important matters in our lives is to keep our conscience pure, holy and clear before God.

"Zafun" in English means **"hidden"**.

It is when we follow the leading of our **"mazpen"**, (compass) and when our **"mazpun"** (conscience) is true to Christ in the Holy Spirit that we are dead, and our life is **"zafun"** (hidden) with Christ in God.

"Zofeh" in English is a **"watchman"**.

This word connects us to mizpeh, which is the place from which the **"zofeh"**, or watchman, can see most clearly. It is a tower, which offers the best possible position for the **"zofeh"** to watch over any valuable place that needs protection, such as a city, a fortress, or a vineyard.

Beloved of God, I speak the truth in the Holy Spirit; the time has come for many of you to become a "zofeh" to the house of Israel. ***"I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them warning from Me."*** (Ezekiel 33:7)

From the "**mizpeh**", or **tower**, the "**zofeh**" (**watchman**) gets into position to warn the king or people of any danger. In order for the "zofeh" to see clearly, the qualities of the good Shepherd, who is the master "zofeh", must be apparent in his life. Above all, the "zofeh" must realize his need for God's forgiveness and must learn to forgive, be merciful, live a holy life, keep a clear conscience and be bold in the Lord.

Daniel, Mordecai and Esther prayed and interceded on behalf of Israel, but they did not warn or preach, because during their lifetime Israel was under the chastisement of God in Babylon and Persia, and did not need any more warning or preaching. Therefore their task was only prayer and intercession. Like Daniel, Esther and Mordecai, who only prayed and interceded, until today orthodox Jews earnestly pray three times a day and most of them don't go out preaching and warning people, because they have neither heard the message nor do they know the King who has left us with a great commission.

Beloved of God, we must live in the light of the complete counsel and truth of God. Although we are called to pray and intercede and be effective "zofim", we must ask ourselves: what is the measure of our devotion to our Lord? The mark of a disciple is to say, "*Your will be done*", but the mark of a **mature** disciple is to say, "*Your will I love*".

This reminds me of the farmer who prayed earnestly for rain, but did not go out to sow the seeds, therefore there was no harvest. It is not enough to pray and cry out to God for the salvation of people; we must also present the Gospel to them, for ***"faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ."*** (Romans 10:17) Paul prayed: ***"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation,"*** (Romans 10:1) but as a true "zofeh", not only did he pray, but he also proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom wherever he went. Yeshua, the prophets and all the Apostles prayed and interceded, but they did not stop there: they also preached and warned the people.

Mizpeh is the place where Israel was delivered from the Philistines. After Samuel had cried out to the Lord on Israel's behalf, ***"the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day against the Philistines and confused them, so that they were routed before Israel"*** (1 Samuel 7:10). Through God's intervention, the Philistines were subdued. Similarly, we are called to live in Mizpeh, in the place of victory that Yeshua has won for us against the world, the flesh and the devil, for ***"it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me"***. (Galatians 2:20)

Now that world events are escalating and Jerusalem is awaiting the Day of the Lord, you may be sure that our almighty God, who sees the end from the beginning, has prepared a mizpeh for you with Trumpet of Salvation to Israel.

I am convinced that the Lord gave birth to Trumpet of Salvation to Israel, in 1984, in view of the need for mizpeh, that the "zofim" (plural of "zofeh") of the nations might come to pray, intercede, warn and present the kingdom of our God to the Jewish people who have no clue about the things that are coming upon them and the whole world.

Just as Samuel progressed from Beth-El to Ramah, so God calls us to make the same kind of progression in our walk with Him. When we respond to His initial call to enter Beth-El, the love of God is poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit and our lives start to bloom like a flower. A flower is nourished by the earth, receives oxygen from its surroundings and sunshine from above, it neither toils nor weaves but is dressed in all beauty. So it is with us when we first enter Beth-El, God's kingdom.

In the light of Christ's beauty and bountiful blessing, with a heart full of joy and thankfulness, we want to repay our debt to our God, who opened the door for us into Beth-El. His interest and the intention of His heart become ours, and as Yeshua was about His Father's business, so also must we. ***"Yet not as I will, but as You will,"*** becomes the cry and longing of our heart.

Thus we must move on to Gilgal, not the Gilgal of Joshua, the son of Nun, but of Yeshua, the Son of God; not conquering the Promised Land, but proclaiming the promised kingdom, as our Lord did. We cannot be any use as a "zofeh" in God's Mizpeh, if we have not proceeded from Beth-El to Gilgal.

As the power of the Holy Spirit transformed the lives of the Apostles, so God enables us to live in that same power in Gilgal. Having circumcised our hearts, He leads us into the battlefield, where He tests, prunes and refines us so that our lives can bring more glory to Him. We are to serve and to watch, ever vigilant and ready with a constant supply of oil in our lamps. It is when we live our lives in Gilgal and Mizpeh that we are able to fulfill the will of God on earth. To my sorrow, many of God's children remain in Beth-El and never move on to Gilgal. As a result, they never progress in their faith, since it is only after a time in Gilgal that we can continue on to Mizpeh, from where we may clearly see and know the guidance of God as true "zofim".

Finally, having completed his ***"circuit to Bethel, Gilgal and Mizpeh, judging Israel in all these places, Samuel returned to his home in Ramah."*** Ramah is a high place, or a mountain top. For us, it represents our heavenly home, our eternal destiny.

Beloved of God, dear friends, how boring our lives would be on this earth, how unsatisfying and lacking in fulfillment if we had no meaningful, eternal purpose and therefore no fruit to glorify God. What a privilege and joy it is to be used as a vessel by our almighty Creator to advance His kingdom in this world!

There is no joy greater than sharing the Gospel with others and seeing our Lord bring about the miracle of new birth. How would it be if we entered Ramah empty handed, realizing that we had taken no more than the first step in responding to our Lord's love! ***"Faith without works is dead."*** (James 2:26)

All who come to Beth-El and move on to Gilgal and Mizpeh are building their life on the rock not on sand. ***"Though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death they fear no evil"***. (Psalm 23:4)
They are like ***"a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season"***. (Psalm 1:3)

"Father God, You know so well each and every child born of your Spirit; You even number the hairs of our head; just as You promised Jacob you promise us: "Behold I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

Lord, would You please touch, anoint, convict each of us, and release by the power of your Holy Spirit, a true sincere desire and determination in all of our lives to move on from Beth-El to Gilgal and Mizpeh.

Some of us are in Beth-El for much too long, others have moved into Gilgal, yet others are already in Mizpeh. One thing is sure, wherever we are in our journey we can all deepen our relationship with You, Lord, and with one another. Thank you so much for enduring all the pain and suffering for the sake of our salvation. Lord, keep on purifying our love for You that we may bring You joy and no pain.

Now all together we want to praise You and give You all the glory and honor. With your faithfulness You have brought us this far. Please whisper, speak, blow the trumpet into the hearts of Your children to come from the four corners of the earth to Tel Aviv. Father God, since You prospered my way this far with the work of evangelism in Israel, calling me to bring the Gospel to the Jewish people in its Jewish context - please do not delay - send all the living stones that we may fulfill the desire of Your heart and be watchmen for the house of Israel, giving them warning as well as presenting to them the Gospel of the kingdom at this hour of their history."

***We are sincerely looking forward to seeing you!
With much love, prayer and a thankful heart,
Jacob and Elisheva Damkani***