



Trees Clap their Hands



God instructs Israel to rejoice before Him at the Festival of Tabernacles (Sukkot), celebrated this year from October 9th-16th. Why does this include *four kinds of trees* (Leviticus 23:33-43)?

For starters Isaiah 55:12 says the Creation itself will worship - sing and rejoice before God. **“...the trees of the field will clap their hands.”**

Secondly, these four trees have been compared to the organs of the human body:

The myrtle leaf is shaped like the eye, a symbol of *revelation*.

The willow leaf is shaped like the lips, instruments of *prayer and praise*.

The palm branch is shaped like a backbone, representing *uprightness*.

The *etrog* citrus fruit is shaped like the heart, the place of *true understanding and wisdom*.

Each is capable of being used to do wrong or right, but combined to serve and honor God, they have great redemptive power.

As Rav Shaul (Paul) tells us in Romans 6:12-13. **“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts. And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteous to God.”**

The branches and leaves are traditionally bound together as the “*lulav*” and waved before the Lord as an offering throughout the festival. These elements appear on ancient Israelite coins and decoration along with other well-known symbols like the menorah, the shofar and the Ark of the Covenant. According to Rabbi Maimonides, God chose these “four species,” as they are known, to symbolize Israel’s emergence from the wilderness into the land of plenty. They were easy to obtain in ancient Israel. Two of them have a pleasant smell, and they retain their freshness over the week more than most other plants.

Weighty Matters – the Etrog and the Horse

The *etrog*, especially, has been the focus of much attention and care. It was difficult to obtain in European Jewish communities from the Middle Ages almost up to modern times. Therefore, it was considered very precious. Sometimes entire communities had to share one *etrog*. Incredible care is taken in procuring an *etrog* and lulav without flaws. Here in Israel, prior to *Sukkot*, men with magnifying glasses can be seen examining the tips of the lulav for any defect or damage. The very scrupulous spend large sums of money to buy only the most perfect. With the tremendous emphasis placed on meticulous observance of the smallest detail, it is easy to lose sight of weightier matters of the Torah such as justice and the love of God (Luke 11:42). This was certainly not lost on the Rabbis as the following story relates:

In the latter years of the eighteenth century, Rabbi Mordechai of Neschitz was the leader of the Zlotzover Chassidim. It had been his custom to save money throughout the year, so that just prior to Sukkot he could purchase a magnificent *etrog*. Once during the ten ‘Days of Awe’ between *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* he traveled to another city in order to buy an *etrog*. Upon entering the town he came across a coachman, who stood weeping over the body of his fallen horse. Mordechai didn’t waste any time deliberating on the matter. He gave the coachman the money which he had saved for buying the *etrog*, in order that he might buy another horse. (This gives some idea of how expensive an *etrog* was.) Cheerfully he returned home where he was asked about the *etrog*. His response was amazing:

“In all the world our fellow Jews may recite the blessing over the *etrog*, but to me only has the privilege been granted to recite it over a horse.” ✨



By MOSHE MORRISON

CHILDREN OF WINTER '73

A window into the spiritual climate of Israel...

The Shock

On October 6, 1973 the Yom Kippur War broke out. It was a surprise attack led by Egypt and Syria to conquer the land of Israel, and it was one of the most difficult wars Israel has known. Military intelligence did not discern the immediate danger, and the government was not decisive.

Lightning victory in the Six Day War of 1967 had made Israel feel euphorically invincible and self-assured. A few years of this complacency laid the groundwork for the surprise attack. In the initial hours of fighting, the IDF failed as borders were overrun by attacking armies. The main two fronts were in the Sinai Peninsula in the south opposite Egypt, and the Golan Heights in the north facing Syria. Reliance on the Sinai defensive fortifications proved to be misplaced confidence, but miraculously the lethal onslaughts stalled. Israel reconquered the Golan Heights and Sinai.

Israeli losses: 2,688 soldiers killed; 5,596 wounded; 294 captured .

Attacking army losses: 20,000 soldiers killed; 35,000 soldiers wounded; 8,811 soldiers captured.

The Hope

The war left a stain and a deep wound, but eventually also led to hope in the form of a lasting peace agreement with Egypt, on the basis of "land for peace." Many songs were written about this war, the most direct and touching one being **Children of Winter '73**. The song was first performed in 1994 when the children born in 1973 were wearing army uniforms. The song lays claim to the promise of peace heralded by the dove in Genesis 8:11. Those babies – conceived, born and raised in the shadow of war – had come of age, forced to continue their parents' task of defending and guarding the Promised Land. *(Song written by Shmuel Hasphari; translated by Chana Shuvali.)*

The Song:

We are the children of winter 1973.
You dreamt us first by dawn at the end of the battles.
You were tired men who thanked their good luck.
You were worried young women,
and you wanted so much to love,
When you conceived us with love in the winter of 1973.
You wanted to fill your bodies with what the war had taken.
And we were born. The country was wounded and sad.
You looked at us. You hugged us. You were trying to find comfort.
When we were born the elders blessed with tears in their eyes.
They said: "May it be, that these children will not have to go to the army." ...
You promised to do everything for us,
To turn an enemy into a friend.
You promised a dove, an olive leaf.
You promised a peaceful home.
You promised spring and blossoms.
You promised to fulfill promises, you promised a dove.
We are the children of winter 1973.
We grew up. Now we are in the army,
with our weapon, and a helmet on our heads...
We also know how to love, to laugh, to weep...
We are men; we are women.
And we too dream of babies.
So we will not pressure you. We will not demand of you.
We will not threaten you.
When we were young you said promises need to be kept...
You promised a dove...

I was one of those babies born in 1973. I always dreamed of peace coming in my lifetime. Israeli children are taught to long for peace in kindergarten and school. The subject is accompanied by songs and learning to accept and honor people who are different than us, because each person and every nation is unique.

I was a boy in 1978 when the historic peace agreement with Egypt was made. I was a soldier in 1994 when the peace agreement with Jordan was made. The future appeared rosy. We thought the Middle East was becoming a place where men could rest their heads on their pillows without concern, honor each other, and raise children and grandchildren without the specter of war.

The Shattering

But soon afterward, the first Palestinian uprising erupted, then by turns negotiations, terror, negotiations, rockets, negotiations, and more rockets. Hopes were again shattered. To this day there is no peace agreement with Syria, Lebanon and most Arab nations. Israelis are already very skeptical that there will ever be true peace.

The trauma of fighting and the death of loved ones are discouraging after 66 years of statehood. Innumerable fighting incidents and wars sometimes cause Israelis to ask if there is *another* place where we might lay down and rest. But it seems there is no other place for the Jewish people. We suffered throughout history in exile.

At the same time, we thank God, the Holy One blessed be He, who watches over His people Israel. He does not break His covenant in spite of the people turning away from Him. He loves and protects.



Israeli tank on the Golan Heights (Photo - Flickr, CIA)

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures we also see nearly constant fighting in Israel with the peoples of the region. In the Books of Kings there were many peace agreements and cease fires, but always a new generation of enemies would arise with its own fighting ambitions. This is again the case in our day. Seemingly we must be prepared to cope with the future being similar to our recent past.

The Future

What is ahead? Will there ever be peace in the Middle East, and if so who could bring it? In the meantime, we see new extreme Islamic groups such as ISIS who call for the destruction of all who do not believe as they believe.

In my opinion we are near the end of the age, near the days of King Yeshua returning. Here are the Jewish people dwelling in Zion and expecting peace, but it seems no peace document or signature can bring it. In addition to the chaos of death and war, we already see plagues and other signs of the Messiah's return. But

before the Lord's return, an anti-messiah will arise. I believe we very well may live to see it happen. *The anti-messiah will - to all appearances - cause peace to come to the ends of the earth and to Israel . He will rebuild the temple for the Jewish people. Then he will declare himself king and god, and will want to put his throne in the temple. The Jewish people will not agree to it, and again chaos will return for three and a half years.*

True peace will come about only by changed, repentant hearts. Only when Yeshua reigns in the heart of a person, will the wolf dwell with the lamb (Isaiah 11:6).

My prayer is that the believers persevere and live in faith until the end without compromise. Then our eyes will see His return to Zion .

“Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye will see Him.” (Revelation 1:7) ✧



Egypt Israel Peace Treaty - Sadat Carter and Begin (Photo - Flickr, GPO)



By GUY COHEN

Artist Spreads Her Wings

Connie Kind Shishkoff loved to draw and paint from childhood and into her early 20's. Subsequently, however, full-time artistry took a back seat to raising 4 children and making aliyah to Israel in 1992.

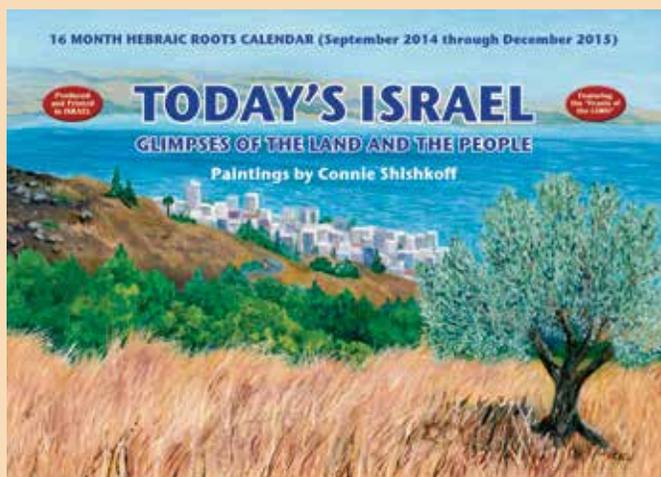


Connie

In 2009, shortly before her youngest child entered the Israeli Defense Forces, Connie finally felt released to passionately dive back into art. Since then she has been prolifically exploring the land and the people of Israel with brush and canvas.

If you want to connect with Connie, she can be reached at ckspaint@gmail.com. To enjoy more of Connie's artwork, visit her facebook page "Ckspaint."

Tents of Mercy Congregation salutes Connie's inspiration and creativity. We are so grateful for her encouraging presence. ✡



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