



I Will Lift Up My Eyes



By Slavik Miller

We are all living in challenging times, and yet God is with us throughout the journey. It is important to be aware of the circumstances around us, but to “manage our reality,” by trusting in God. We don't have direct control over what's happening in our nations and beyond, but we do have control over how we react, *what we focus on*, and how we guard our heart.

Our faith is tested when life is difficult, not when it's easy. Yet when the Lord is part of the picture, we can move from a state of survival to growth, from hopelessness to hope.

We must ask, “*What am I focusing on?*” and be open to changing our perspective. Am I seeing the challenge through God's eyes? If I am only aware of what is in front of me, I miss God. That's why it's important to “zoom out,” and see things from His point of view. The moment I choose to look to the God above me, more than the problem in front of me, I build my faith.

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1 NKJV)

We place at His feet the things that currently do not make sense, and the trials we don't want to pass through, knowing that He is in control.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” (Romans 8:28)

Elijah and David - Flesh and Blood Like Us

Let's learn how God helped two of our forefathers in the faith emerge victorious from great difficulties. After Elijah killed the prophets of the false god, Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him. In spite of the sweeping victory on Mt. Carmel, Elijah became filled with terror and fled south.

“... he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.’” (1 Kings 19:9-10)

- In spite of his recent success, Elijah allowed fear and emotions to dictate his path.
- He forgot God, forgot his call to serve, and ran away.
- Elijah felt abandoned and alone. Sometimes you and I may feel the same, longing to leave everything behind. Elijah hid himself in a cave. In our case, the cave might be an addiction, depression, or enforced isolation. In any case, God will ask, “What are you doing here?”
- With this question, God compelled Elijah to “zoom out,” return to his calling and fellowship.

Have you too felt alone with your difficulty – in spite of having family, friends, community? The lie of the enemy says that we are alone. God reminded Elijah that he was not alone. He told Elijah of seven thousand who had not bent the knee to false gods. There were and are other believers!

King David is another example of a man who learned to keep his eyes on the Lord and not on circumstances. It must have been an exciting surprise for David as a youth, when Samuel came to anoint him king of Israel. However the path to his coronation involved many trials and took many years.

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War and Lies



By Leon Mazin

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Israel remains embroiled in war. It affects everyone and everything.

Nerves are frayed. There are those who are unyielding, and others who are more pliable. We are unsure of our own capabilities and what we can endure. Sometimes, the outwardly strong need help, while those who appear delicate prove remarkably resilient. I must admit the atmosphere of war makes me feel stressed. Although 90% of Israelis live in areas untouched by rockets and bullets, the awareness of warfare fills the air.

This situation reflects the most profound spiritual confrontation. As a result, one may wake from a full night's sleep feeling already fatigued. It's not just me – many people share this same experience of morning weariness. Yet, we continue to navigate this reality, seeking God's guidance and understanding that, no matter the difficulty, God has created us for this day and has plans for us.

I ask you to pray for us, for me, and for our people to be filled with God's peace that surpasses all understanding. Please also pray for the end of the war and the restoration of peace in the land of Israel.

Summer brings the start of numerous projects, including the preparation for children's summer camps. It is a monumental task for the event planners to help our children experience God's Grace in the midst of war. We are planning on holding three camps for our children, some independently and others in partnership with friends.



Since 2015, Return to Zion has been running the **Eagle Project** for Messianic soldiers who have recently completed their service in the IDF. We usually take them to Norway, but this year we will be in Texas. The group is comprised of 30 soldiers, many of whom are dealing with trauma caused by their time in the military. Our aim is to provide them with rest, as well as physical, mental, and spiritual restoration. Your prayers are greatly needed!

In these times, the world seems filled with lies. Wars, disasters, or epidemics have existed throughout history. What most concerns me at present is the unprecedented proliferation of lies. They are everywhere – in politics, the news, medicine, statistics, and even the climate. Everything is saturated with manipulation and deception, and we must seek the Lord's discernment to evaluate everything in its true light. The Bible calls Satan the "Father of Lies." Revelation 20:7 states that Satan will deceive the nations. The abundance of lies and unprecedented manipulation and deception around us, lead to the logical conclusion that we may be living in the period of time referred to in that verse. We must endure, and then the Great Kingdom will come, and **EVERYTHING WILL BE HEALED AND RESTORED.**

In Matthew 24:13, we read that the one who endures to the end will be saved. The Bible repeatedly emphasizes this. In light of these reflections, I have a desire and prayer that we may have the Messiah's mind and eyes to discern the truth from the lies that are spreading rampantly in all spheres of life, and to stand firm in the truth and victory that Yeshua the Messiah has brought to us through His death and resurrection.

I wish you health and blessings in Yeshua. I kindly ask you to pray for Return to Zion and Israel, for the IDF and the government, and for God's truth to be established in our hearts.

Return to Zion Congregation

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From the North



By **Guy Cohen**

Since the October 7th attack on our Southern border, much prayer has been focused towards Gaza. At the same time, Hezbollah has launched thousands of rockets against the Galilee. Therefore, we have also been praying for Northern Israel.

Yet beyond these current attacks from Lebanon, we anticipate the situation escalating and becoming much more intense. Over twenty Israeli villages and towns bordering Lebanon have been evacuated since the beginning of the war. These 100,000 Israelis are internally displaced refugees, waiting and hoping that the IDF can make it safe for them to return to their homes before the school year begins. This may require an IDF ground invasion, in response to which Hezbollah would send tens of thousands of rockets to rain down on Israeli cities in the north and throughout Israel.

In early summer, I met together with Israeli pastors from congregations in the North. We attempted to estimate the possible damage to civilian areas where our congregants live. Even though we have supplied each family with an emergency medical kit and instructions for what food and supplies they should have on hand, it still doesn't seem enough.

In addition to physical preparation, we must invest in emotional and spiritual preparations. Drawing close to the Lord is our greatest defense. We pray that when the hour of our testing comes, each one of us, both here and around the world, will put our trust in God. May the following words of Isaiah regarding Yeshua our Messiah-Teacher guide, strengthen and encourage us:

Although the Lord has given you bread of deprivation and water of oppression, He, your Teacher, will no longer hide Himself, but your eyes will see your Teacher. Your ears will hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it." (Isaiah 30:20-21)

Again, thank you for your prayers and intercession; they are needed now more than ever.



Who Do You Trust?

Even though these are painful and frustrating times, this not a new scenario for Israel. The Bible tells of challenges and wars throughout our history. Reading Isaiah 31, I can see many parallels from the time of the prophets, the same threats and the same tendency to seek help from other nations (for example Egypt).

The prophets urged Israel to lean on God and not on allies. When the Lord fights for you, all the world's powers are inferior. When I look at Israel today, I see disagreement over critical decisions. Media and public opinion sway to and fro, while our soldiers are giving their lives. In the midst of it all, there is one thing Israel is forgetting – the God who chose Israel. He is the One who brought us back to the land, and He is the One who will save us.

When I look toward Jerusalem, I pray that my government will have wisdom, unity and guidance from the Lord. When the enemies of Israel rise up to kill, steal and destroy; we must remember that the arm of flesh will fail. We must put our trust in the One who cannot fail, the One who can fight for us with His outstretched arm!

*"Give us help from trouble,
For the help of man is useless.
Through God we will do valiantly,
For it is He who shall tread down our enemies."
(Psalm 60:11-12 NKJV)*



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- Time is a tool in God's hands; God is in no hurry, and so this is not wasted time. In David's life, God used those years to further shape and build his character.
- David's confidence came to be in God and not in circumstances.
- David had to change his focus from what was in front of his eyes, to what God had promised; reminding himself that God fulfills His promises. Throughout rejection, loss and tragedy, David poured all that he learned and experienced into the psalms that have inspired generations and still encourage us today.

Where do you find yourself in this story? Can you proclaim with me now, what David proclaimed in a challenging time?

"I would surely have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living... Hope in the Lord! Be strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in the Lord!"

(Psalm 27:13-14)

Let's apply this message in our lives.

How can we lift our eyes to the Lord in the present reality?

1. Spend time in His Word to remember His promises. David was almost killed multiple times, but he knew that his life was in God's hands (Luke 12:7).
2. Spend time in prayer before God. Surrender to Him all that burdens your heart (Philippians 4:6).
3. Be locally connected to other believers in a faith community. Realizing that he was not alone helped Elijah through his crisis.
4. Encourage others by sharing what God has done in your life. Remind yourself. He was faithful in the past and will continue to be.

By the Lord's grace I encourage us to focus on Him. Continue running the race. Even if we stumble and fail, let's not run and hide in a cave, but help each other onward towards all that He has promised.

"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

