



Dry Bones and Dry Wineskins



By Hannah Tekle

Israelis are taught from a young age to acknowledge and remember the great tragedy our people suffered over 80 years ago. As a result, Holocaust Remembrance Day is a big deal in Israel. It's not a half-hearted, nod your hat to it, kind of holiday. On the evening before, shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues close early. Television shows on all the major stations run pieces on Holocaust survivors and personal interest stories from the time of the Holocaust. Schools and military bases hold solemn ceremonies, often attended by Holocaust survivors. Then at 10:00 in the morning a siren goes off for 2 minutes while the whole country stops and stands at attention in remembrance.

Each year, there are fewer living survivors. It is painfully obvious that soon there will be no eyewitnesses among us to testify of those long-ago atrocities. This year, for the first time, Holocaust remembrance is overshadowed by (or at least joined with) the new and devastating stories of those whose lives *were brutally taken on October 7th* and those who survived.

Even more poignant are the stories of the Holocaust survivors themselves, founding members of many Southern kibbutzim and towns, who experienced the devastation of being hunted as Jews yet again. Approximately 2,500 Holocaust survivors were impacted directly by the attack on October 7th. Some were in their homes and neighborhoods as they were invaded by terrorists and others were evacuated from towns in the danger zone.

The feeling on the street as people go about their regular lives is one of being tired, overwhelmed, and burned-out. Passover and Israeli Independence Day celebrations were understated. Memorial Day for the fallen soldiers and terror victims was heartbreaking. At all times our hearts and minds were weighed down by the constant reality of war, the tragic loss of life and the hostages yet to be released. There is some comfort in going back to the consistency of daily routine after the holidays, but that is tempered by the sudden realization that there is only a month left before summer vacation! Among other things, the war has literally swallowed up the school year.

One Holocaust survivor who also survived the attack on October 7th, pointed out that during the Holocaust there was no State of Israel. When she came with her mother as a young child to a land that was not yet an independent state, her mother told her they were coming "to build up and to be built up." The tired and traumatized survivors who arrived, came to *build up*, literally transformed from being prisoners in concentration camps to serving as soldiers in military camps, defending their infant country, and making up half of the fighting force. A quick search into the numbers and facts reveals their many contributions to the building up of communities, settlements, social, political, and educational systems in young Israel.

The idea that the survivors also came to *be built up* is a harder thing to explain. In the years immediately following WWII and the Holocaust, the need to study and treat emotional and psychological trauma was not understood and accepted like it is today. From what we know now, the ramifications of the trauma sustained by those who lived through these horrible experiences, were deep and wide, impacting even generations to come.



Continued on page 6





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A parable that Yeshua taught comes to mind – the new and old **wineskins**. Our lives can be compared to wineskins. We carry in ourselves, body, soul and spirit, the things we experience in life. As we process and respond to the “cup” we have been poured, it is our challenge to flex and accommodate the contents so that we don’t crack and break.

Newer generations respond differently than older generations, and thankfully many resources are available today that weren’t available in the past. Yet, the Holocaust survivors and others who escaped to Israel from Europe and the Middle East, were amazingly resilient. Somehow they managed to piece together new lives and a new country, even without the counseling and emotional support that is helping this current generation process the ongoing tragedy of October 7th.

And with the end of the war not yet in sight, Israelis are desperately asking questions: “*What will happen now? Where do we go from here?*” Even God asked a similar question: “*Son of Man, can these bones [Israel] live?*”

One thing remains clear. The same Breath that breathed life into the **Dry Bones** in Ezekiel 37, the same Yeshua Who coached His listeners to broaden and flex their understanding like a new wineskin, the same Everlasting Father who orchestrated the establishment of Modern Israel 76 years ago – that same Sovereign One is keeping watch over this impossible situation. He will not rest “*till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the Earth*” (Isaiah 62:7).

***“Comfort, O comfort My people,”
says your God.***

***“Speak kindly to Jerusalem;
And call out to her,
that her warfare has ended,
That her iniquity has been removed,
That she has received of the Lord’s hand
Double for all her sins.”***

***A voice is calling,
“Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness;
Make smooth in the desert
a highway for our God.
Let every valley be lifted up,
And every mountain and hill be made low;
And let the rough ground become a plain,
And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed,
And all flesh will see it together;
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”***

(Isaiah 40:1-5 NASB)

