

# Newsletter for the Month of Av by Sherry Lush

Greetings to All,

The month of Av is a full of tragic and repeating events. It points out to all of us how critical it is to be in unity and loving our fellow believers. We want you all to know that you are greatly loved by us at Alpha and Omega Ministries, and so joyful that you are with us. We serve such an awesome God, whose blood unites and strengthens all of us. His promises to us are far better than gold, for we can trust Him and His Word in this world where trust seems to be outdated. There is not G-d like our G-d, and we can rejoice and hope in Him, always. Now is the time to help one another and remind each other of His greatness and of His goodness to us. He is a good, good Father, and we want to spread His love. May our love for him overflow to everyone we encounter every day!



And now we come to the month of Av and the ominous day, the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. Have you ever wondered why this day is so dark? Amazingly, it all began with unbelief! It started when 12 spies decided that G-d was not able to help Israel defeat the "giants" in the land that He was giving them. You have to wonder if this was not a test as it actually was G-d, Himself who told Moses to send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. And we see that these were not just any men, they were leaders! **Numbers 13:2b** tells us who the spies

were:...from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.

These leaders returned from the land with a bad report saying, \*Numbers 13:31-33 "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And telling the Israelites that the land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people who new saw in it are men of great stature. We were like grasshoppers in their sight." Pretty scary and depressing words to the Children of Israel who heard them. They contradicted G-d.

Bad reports are discouraging and contradict the strength of the G-d they served - the very G-d they had just seen split the sea open for them while they all walked across it on dry land. G-d was not happy. He remembered this report they had given on this day - the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av. And on this very day in history so many terrible things have happened to remind us of what the ten spies' lack of faith in G-d started. The folling list highlights some of these events:

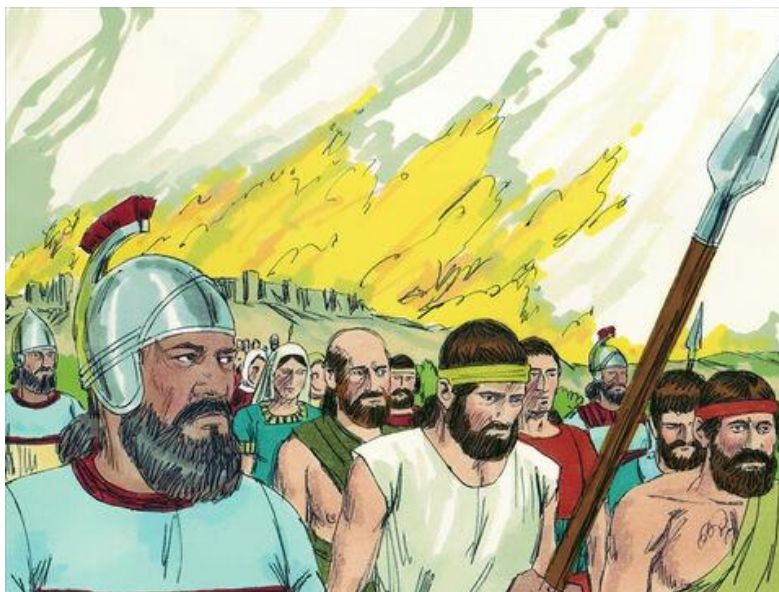
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 587BC Armies of Babylon destroyed Solomon's temple.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 70 AD Roman armies destroyed the second temple.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 135 AD The day Jerusalem is destroyed.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 1095 AD The first crusaders kill thousands.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of AV 1290 AD All Jews were expelled from England.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of AV 1492 AD Jews were expelled from Spain.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 1914 AD Germany entered World War I.
- 9<sup>th</sup> of Av 2005 AD Jewish expulsion from Gaza began.

Let's look at some of the circumstances around just one of these events, the destruction of the second temple, to see how truly devastating the entire event was.



At the time when the second temple was destroyed, Rome ruled Israel. These were times of political chaos, and corruption of temple priests and other rulers. You might say, they were times that could be compared with our day. Political corruption and a push to eliminate truth raged.

Between the years 37-41, Caligula ruled. Among the many adjectives that have been used to describe him are: cruel, extravagant, extreme, perverted and insane. He actually had a golden statue of himself created, and He sent his general to Syria to lead an army into Judea to force the Jews to have this statue erected in the temple. The Jews were getting ready to resist what was about to be imposed on them, but he was assassinated before he could carry this out.



And pressure continued to mount from 63 BC on as Roman rule increased difficulties for the Jewish people. Not only were taxes increased, but the tax collectors could raise the amount that had to be paid and pocket the surplus, at will. There was no legal recourse for these exorbitant taxes nor for the extortioners who collected them.

Rome also took over the authority of appointing the priests and the high priest in the temple, giving Rome huge influence over the people who were religious overseers in the Jewish community. Those appointed were expected to cooperate with the Roman government, and they were paid for their cooperation. The corruption was extensive. And when Nero came on the scene, he revoked the Jews' status as citizens leaving them without protection in their own land.

In the midst of all this was a group known as Zealots who wanted to regain political and religious freedom, and they were willing to fight for it. The Great Revolt began in 66BC, when Florus, a Roman governor stole huge amounts of silver from the temple. Rioting Jews defeated both the Roman soldiers in Jerusalem and a contingent sent in from Syria. These victories gave the Zealots new hope of being able to win this war.

Pressure on the Jewish people from outside sources was severe. But there was something even worse than the pressure coming from the government.

The infighting among the Jews became the turning point in this war. In the Galilee area, more than 100,000 Jewish people were either killed or sold into slavery. Those who managed to escape and fled to Jerusalem were questioned by the Zealots. If any Jew did not fully support the efforts of the Zealots, they were promptly killed. Horrifyingly, Jews were burning the food supplies of other Jews who saw things differently than they did. All of this internal strife gave the Romans the advantage over the divided Jewish people. Hunger among the Jewish people became so great that Jeremiah's words came to pass: **\*Jeremiah 19:9 And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and everyone shall eat the flesh of his friend in the siege and in the desperation with which their enemies and those who seek their lives shall drive them to despair.**



The internal fighting was extreme. Baseless hatred ruled the day. The Talmud states the following:

"...why was the Second Temple destroyed? It was destroyed due to the fact that there was wanton hatred during that period. This comes to teach you that the sin of wanton hatred is equivalent to the three severe transgressions: idol worship, forbidden sexual relations and bloodshed.

Baseless hatred is destructive. It can lead to death. The Jewish historians writing about the awful destruction of the temple blamed the Jews themselves for it, because of their baseless hatred.

It is worth our time to ask ourselves if we baseless hatred exists among us or anything else the Lord hates, especially in the time in which we live. G-d is clear about what He hates: \***Proverbs 6:16-19** These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.

These abominations that G-d hates all create division, and G-d wants us unified.

In these days, when the Lord is at the door, the world's philosophy and the world's powers will turn against the truth of G-d and try to silence us and divide us and

attempt to make life miserable for us. If ever there was a time when we cannot allow division in the body, it is now!!! What are each of us doing to bring unity and love to those we fellowship with?

**John 13:35 Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.**

**Psalms 133:1 How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!**

**IT IS OUR TIME TO SHINE HIS LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS BY LOVING!**



**MAY YOU ALL BE BLESSED AS YOU ARE LIGHT AND LOVE TO THOSE AROUND YOU!**