



Atonement, The Ingathering and Choice

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

The eve of Yom Kippur or The Day of Atonement is called Kol Nidre in Hebrew. On this day every Jewish person prepares for the most solemn and most holy day of the year. On this day Psalm 126 is read.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."



The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad. (Psalm 126: 1-3)

During the last two thousand years of dispersion the Jewish people have faced enormous persecution. Many were forced on the threat of death to take an oath declaring faith in the Jesus of the church. Since this Jesus bore very little resemblance to the Messiah of the Torah and the prophets, this was considered an oath not taken in faith. Thus Kol Nidre, which is a prayer annulling vows made before God, was a time to receive forgiveness before the Day of Atonement. The faithful take quite seriously the word of God and the words they speak. But of course anti-Semites claim this ceremony is proof of their allegations that Jewish people are untrustworthy.

Having completed the period of introspection, repentance and forgiveness, the Jewish people then prepare for the most joyous of all the feasts, the Feast of Tabernacles. Notably, one of the other names for The Feast of Tabernacles is Chag Ha'asif or the Holiday of Ingathering. The re-birth of the modern state of Israel has made it possible for Jewish people from all over the world to be re-gathered and reunited in the land of their fathers. Thus living in the land they are no longer forced to take false oaths.

However, concurrently with the return, all the evil forces of the world are attempting to gather together against those who are rebuilding their ancient homeland. *They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more." For they have consulted together with one consent; they form a confederacy against You (Psalm 83:4-5)*

Thus the Holiday of Ingathering highlights a choice that confronts all of mankind. Tragically for nearly two thousand years far too many Christians have been on the wrong side of that choice. Often they chose to persecute, expel and even murder the Jewish people in the name of God.

Fortunately, even as anti-Semitism and anti-Israel sentiments grow worse around the globe, there is a growing number of Christians who choose to love and support the Jewish people. Many even make pilgrimages to Israel for the Fall Feasts, recognizing the “Ingathering” of the nations as prophesized by Zechariah.

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed wrote, “The attitude towards the Jews and the Torah is the litmus test”. He went on to say: “The most serious problem we have with Christianity is its denial of God’s choice of the Jewish people and of the eternal relevance of the Torah.” So what can possibly make a difference in Jewish Christian relations? It is the Christians who choose to recognize the eternal relevance of the Torah and the words of the prophets and they are attempting to walk in humble obedience to them. And it is this sincere humility that has been received by some of the leaders in the Jewish world today.

At Ezra International we work alongside the Jewish Agency and are about God’s work of the “Ingathering”. It’s our desire to be His humble servants in this enormous task. Our mandate and particular focus is to help the Jewish people who are too poor to help themselves.

So the message of the “Ingathering” is to both the nations of the world and the Jewish people. *Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I will lift My hand in an oath to the nations, And set up My standard for the peoples; They shall bring your sons in their arms, And your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders (Isaiah 49:22)*

He will set up a standard for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12)

Then the nations, which are left all around you, shall know that I, the Lord, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted what was desolate. I, the Lord, have spoken it, and I will do it.” (Ezekiel 36:36)

Today anti-Semitism, war, Islamic terror and economic uncertainty are among the factors that are driving so many Jewish people to desire to return to Israel. For many in the Diaspora the choice has already been made, yet due to poverty they face great challenges in making it a reality. Thus the message of the “Ingathering” also places a choice before those of us from the nations. We can repeat the mistake of the last two centuries and turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the needs of our Jewish brothers and sisters, thus adding to the sins of the church. Or we can make atonement for the past by proving our love and obedience to the Word of The Holy One of Israel and help carry their burdens. The choice is clear!