



And He will lift up a standard for the nations,
and will assemble the banished ones of Israel,
and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the
four corners of the earth. Isaiah 11:12

RESCUE | RETURN | RESTORE



October 2016

A Dialogue Through The Storm

By Rev. Gary Cristofaro

Hurricane Matthew recently sideswiped the east coast of Central Florida putting my friends and family in its path. By the grace of God Matthew stayed just far enough over the ocean and only caused minimal damage to our homes. But that night as the storm passed through I listened to the power of the wind and prayed to God for protection. It's times like this that we are reminded of in whom our security lies. Even our homes are often not a solid enough sanctuary to truly protect us from the storm.



An annual reminder of our total dependency was exactly what God had in mind when He gave Moses the instructions for the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles). He said: *You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 23:42-43)* These booths were to be flimsy structures that allowed His children to see the stars at night and be more exposed to the elements. Once they were in the land and living in permanent homes, God did not want His people to forget to whom they owed their deliverance and in whom they should place their trust.

Sukkot is also known as *Chag ha-Asif*, or The Feast of Ingathering because it foreshadows the joyous gathering together of the Jewish people from the nations of the earth, back to the land of Israel. *“Therefore, behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that they shall no longer say, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,’ but, ‘As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel from the north country and from all the countries where I had driven them.’ And they shall dwell in their own land.”* (Jeremiah 23:7-8)

“I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.” (Ezekiel 37:26-28)

Today, just as in the days when God delivered His children from Pharaoh, He is delivering them from the nations. Yet, even living in impoverished conditions often His people grow accustomed to their homes in the diaspora. Recently it has taken the storms of war and acts of Islamic terror to reignite the desire in Jewish people to return to the land of Israel. But I am fully convinced that the God who controls the wind and the waves is in full control in the midst of this man-made chaos.

For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. “They will come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they will be radiant over the bounty of the LORD—Over the grain and the new wine and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; And their life will be like a watered garden, and they will never languish again. “Then the virgin will rejoice in the dance, And the young men and the old, together, For I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and give them joy for their sorrow. I will fill the soul of the priests with abundance, And My people will be satisfied with My goodness,” declares the LORD”. (Jeremiah 31 11-14)

Abraham Joshua Heschel said; “Throughout history people have moved from one country to another, voluntarily or involuntarily. Finding a new land, they abandoned the memory of their former homes. The Jewish people, however, forced to leave their ancient country, has never abandoned, has never forsaken the Holy Land; the Jewish people has never ceased to be passionate about Zion. It has been always lived in a dialogue with the Holy Land.

Exile from the land was conceived as an interruption, as a prelude to return, never as an abandonment or detachment. Bonds of hope tied us to the land. To abandon these bonds was to deny our identity. Again and again our hearts turned to Zion and Jerusalem as the needle to the pole, as the dial to the sun.” (1)

The Feast of the Lord are wonderful reminders of the faithfulness of God to His promises. But His fidelity is on display every day for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. The ingathering of the Jewish people back to the land of Israel is an ongoing reminder that “He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (Psalm 121:4) The psalm concludes with the following promise; “The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore” (vs.8) In other words God foretold and would oversee the scattering of His people into the nations. But just as assuredly He is calling and keeping watch through the storm as they return back home to the land of promise.

(1) Israel An Echo of Eternity, Abraham Joshua Heschel, page 58-59