



THE GIFT OF RELEASE

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LIVING YOUR CALLING



This year's conference key verse is:

Deuteronomy 15:1 "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release."

- ❖ We speak of a release,
- ❖ We cry out for release,
- ❖ We long for the benefits of the "Shemitah" - the rest and release that comes with the 7-year rest.

Sometimes we veer off from the path that God lays out for us:

- ✦ On the one side:
- ✦ We get involved in all sorts of legalistic ritual, which literally makes God sick and on the other side:
- ✦ We get involved in all sorts of lawlessness - while we proclaim to be worshipping God, we justify any actions that we take,
- ✦ We also can get to that point where we fail to recognize God's Hand in our lives at all and turn to all sorts of pagan worship



SOME BIBLICAL HISTORY

We start off at the Exodus, walk through the years of the wilderness, eventually with the help of Joshua, we "take" the Land.

There are a number of relapses, all described in the Book of Judges, and then we get to king David, his son Solomon, and things go rapidly downhill from here.

- ✦ Years, later The children of Israel have once again turned away from the path of God,
- ✦ Notwithstanding a number of intervention's that would remind them of the commitment that they made at Mount Sinai, to become the Bride, they regularly turn to other foreign idols,
- ✦ At a point in time God judges this state of their hearts,
- ✦ And sends them into exile in Babylon,
- ✦ It's here that they will remain for the next 70 years.

Do you see the significance of this time frame?

Ten (10) periods of seven (7) years ... in other words, 10 Shemitah's.

THE FULL CONTEXT TO THE SHEMITAH

In Deuteronomy, we see that we should be reading a bit further than just the opening verse that we chose for this conference.

Let us do that now:

Deuteronomy 15.2 - 6 *“And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD’s release has been proclaimed. 3Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. 4But there will be no poor among you; for the LORD will bless you in the Land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— if only you will strictly obey the Voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all this Commandment that I command you today. 6For the LORD your God will bless you, as He promised you, and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow, and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you.”*

We note that here is a process of:

1. Releasing each other of debts

This does not mean:

- ✦ that you can lend money, hang on for dear life until the Shemitah year, and claim relief,
- ✦ nor does it mean that you can go to the shop to buy things and then refuse to pay for it,
- ✦ nor does it mean that you can expect a labourer to work and then not pay a fair wage.



This context of a release of debt “money” within the Biblical community was meant to be a means to eradicate poverty while at the same time a beacon of righteous governance that would radiate outwards to all other countries and people groups.

2. FORGIVENESS of your neighbour

Although the verse reads in the context of debt, the spiritual idea contained in that action is forgiveness—of loving your neighbour, of being the Glory Light of God in your community. While money alleviates poverty, it is not the only action that places bondages on a community.

CONTEXT OF THE SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE

- ✦ Paul talks to us in the Book of Corinthians and teaches us that we must walk in the natural / physical “first” so that we can understand the spiritual reality,
- ✦ He goes on to tell us that we will be priests,
- ✦ Peter tells us that we are “Living Stones” in a Heavenly Tabernacle.

Every action that I make in the natural has the potential to reflect as a spiritual manifestation in the spiritual domain.

1 Corinthians 15.45 – 49 “... if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being” the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the Second Man is from Heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the Man of Heaven, so also are those who are of Heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the Image of the Man of Heaven.”

****NUGGET**** Living the essence of the 7-year release (Shemitah), by walking in forgiveness becomes an act of worship in the Living Stone Tabernacle.

THE RETURN

We read in the Book of Nehemiah the wonderful story of the return of the children of Israel to the Land of Promise.

This is of course a reflection of their action of Shemitah ... after 10 times 7 years.

Remember, this action is CRITICAL in the release that they would experience - you will recall.



“For the LORD will bless you IN THE LAND that the LORD your God gave you as an inheritance”

PAUL’S NATURAL / SPIRITUAL BODY

I defined Paul’s principle above.

Let us just clarify the concept of “land”.

In time of the Israelites that Land was physical Israel.

Today, in our time, that “land” represents that place where you have been called to serve in the Body of Messiah - utilising the variety of gifts that God placed inside of you from your birth.

- ◆ Are you a **foot** → start walking in peace,
- ◆ Are you a **hand** → start giving in love,
- ◆ Are you a **heart** → start showing some compassion.

And so on ...

Back to Nehemiah



The sad reality is that this story teaches us a reality that is somewhat difficult to accept.

You see, millions of the children of Israel are taken captive [all people]:

- who understood the WORD of God,
- who knew what it meant to WORSHIP God,
- who had witnessed the miracles from the Hand of God,
- who would recount the story of the Exodus every single time that they celebrated PASSOVER,

... and yet they exercised their freedom of choice **not** to RETURN to the Land of Promise.

When we read this account of the return, we will find that a small number - just over 40,000 choose to return.

The return gets kicked off into action when one man receives a report back from someone [Hanani] who had recently been in the city of Jerusalem.

Nehemiah 1:2-3 "... that Hanani, one of my brothers, came with certain men from Judah. And I asked them concerning the Jews who escaped, who had survived the exile, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, "The remnant there in the province who had survived the exile is in great trouble and shame. **The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates are destroyed by fire.**"

When Nehemiah hears about the "condition" of this spiritual city of God, he wept.

Nehemiah 1:4 "As soon as I heard these words **I sat down and wept** and mourned for days, and I continued fasting and praying before the God of heaven."

- ✦ Do you weep when you look at the condition of the Body of Messiah?
- ✦ Do you fast and pray for many days when you look at the condition of the Body of Messiah?
- ✦ Nehemiah acknowledges God's faithfulness,
- ✦ He makes a prophetic declaration that we all should repeat often.

'God - You who KEEP Your Covenant'

- ✦ Do we believe this with all of our hearts?
- ✦ Do we proclaim this regularly?

Nehemiah continues with his declaration:

'God – You who have MERCY with those who love You and keep Your Commandments'

The essence of this proclamation...

- ✦ God is faithful,
- ✦ God is merciful,
- ✦ On those who return to the Land!!!

Nehemiah 1:5 "And I said, "O LORD God of Heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps Covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His Commandments,"

Nehemiah intercedes for his people.

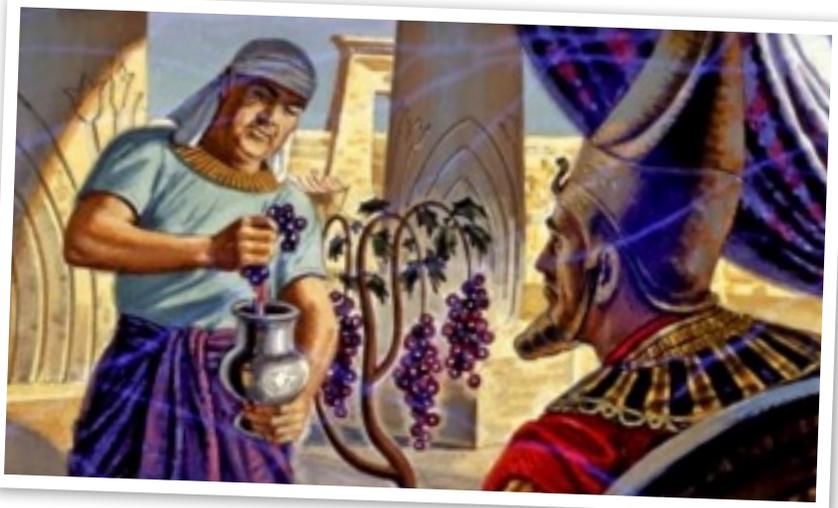
- ✦ He acknowledges their sinfulness,[he repents on behalf of all of the community]
- ✦ **He reminds God of His promise to bless them IF they RETURN to the land.**

Nehemiah 1:6-11 *“Let Your Ear be attentive and Your Eyes open, to hear the prayer of Your servant that I now pray before You day and night for the people of Israel Your servants, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, which we have sinned against You. Even I and my father’s house have sinned. We have acted very corruptly against You and have not kept the Commandments, the statutes, and the rules that You Commanded Your servant Moses. Remember the Word that You Commanded Your servant Moses, saying, ‘If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples,⁹ but if you return to Me and keep My Commandments and do them, though your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place that I have chosen, to make My Name dwell there.’ They are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power and by Your Strong Hand. O Lord, let Your Ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who delight to fear Your Name, and give success to Your servant today, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.”*

Nehemiah ends with these words; “For I was cupbearer to the king.”

Nehemiah would like to be back in Jerusalem, but he is still in captivity.

Many of the believers today look at their circumstances and then fall into depression / a lack of hope / a lack of vision.



Nehemiah reveals another spirit. He is a true servant-leader. He takes stock of the position of power that he has in this world system

—after all he is the cupbearer to the king—the king trusts him because he has been faithful in the tasks that he has been given.

Nehemiah now works with this goodwill / trust / respect that has been built up over the years of good service and he approaches the king.

Just as in the story of Esther, this king will raise his sceptre towards Nehemiah and grant him his desire.

****NUGGET**** Have you ever considered standing in the GAP since you, as legitimate sons/daughters of Abraham, through adoption by the Blood of the Lamb, are “cupbearers” of the King and can go before the rulers / kingdoms of this earthly world and petition for the right to return?

RETURNING IS NOT ENOUGH (you have to rebuild the city wall)

It is an imperative that we must make a conscious decision to leave the place that we find ourselves, and return to the land that we have been given.

Nehemiah does not tell us much about his journey.

I can only imagine that it was a long trip, that there were dangers on the way—that there were mountains and valleys to overcome, but when we get there we find that the city walls are broken down.

Nehemiah inspects the city at night, when the enemy cannot see what he is doing.

Nehemiah 2:12-15 *“Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode. I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King’s Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass. Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned.”*

- ✦ Have you walked around your city at night?
- ✦ Have you identified the
 - (i) broken down walls and the
 - (ii) fallen gates?

What are these?

If these Biblical principles are missing in your city, then you have some rebuilding to do...

Proverbs 25:28 *“A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.”*

The walls represent the stones / pillars of the Covenant.

Concepts such as:

- ✦ Worship God alone,
- ✦ Love your neighbour,
- ✦ Honour your parents,
- ✦ Do not steal ...
- ✦ ... and many more.

The gates represent the authority figures that sit in the gates of the city.

Concepts such as:

- ✦ Leadership as servants to the people,
- ✦ Righteous judgments,
- ✦ Placing watchmen on the wall,
- ✦ Looking after the community and many more.

(a) You must call the Body together to build:

Nehemiah 2:16-18 *“And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work. ¹⁷Then I said to them, “You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.” ¹⁸And I told them of the Hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.”*

God as Judge

(b) You must do spiritual warfare to deal with the legal case which is brought against you, those who do not want you to prosper



In this case we find the names of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem. These 3 represent DIFFERENT voices from the kingdom of darkness that will raise up a wall of opposition against that which you want to do.

Take note: they want to go before the king with a legal case—they want to be able to say that Nehemiah broke the king's laws.

Nehemiah 18: 1-8 “Now Jesus was telling the disciples a parable to make the point that at all times they ought to pray and not give up and lose heart, ²saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and had no respect for man. ³There was a [desperate] widow in that city and she kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice and legal protection from my adversary.’ ⁴For a time he would not; but later he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, ⁵yet because this widow continues to bother me, I will give her justice and legal protection; otherwise [a]by continually coming she [will be an intolerable annoyance and she] will wear me out.’” ⁶Then the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says! ⁷And will not [our just] God defend and avenge His elect [His chosen ones] who cry out to Him day and night? Will He delay [in providing justice] on their behalf? ⁸I tell you that He will defend and avenge them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find [this kind of persistent] faith on the earth?”

Nehemiah answered them: “I have been into the Heavenly court room—with the GOD of Heaven Himself—and HE has declared that we will prosper.”

The case has been thrown out.

Nehemiah **makes a profound declaration**—

You (the enemy of God’s Kingdom) have NO right or heritage to anything from this City!

AND

God WILL prosper us when we arise and build.

Nehemiah 2:19-20 “But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?” ²⁰Then I replied to them, “**The God of Heaven will make us prosper, and we His servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.**”

****Nugget**** Have you made a prophetic action recently, that declares that the enemy of the Body of Messiah has been disinherited? Have you issued eviction papers to those staying illegally? (Those who pretend that they have rights because you have not taken up your rightful ownership on your property.)

(c) You must devise a strategy to build the walls:

Nehemiah ...

- ✦ Allocates each family to a portion of the wall,
- ✦ Arranges for men to work and keep watch with the sword,
- ✦ Arranges for a man to be ready to blow the trumpet to call for war.

Nehemiah 4:16-20 “From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, ¹⁷who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that **each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other.** ¹⁸And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. ¹⁹And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. ²⁰In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us.”

And

- ✦ the question could be asked: what was the final part of his strategy??
- ✦ After all the remnant had returned.

He calls the nobles together and asks them to respect the Covenant Promise of return.

He asks them to RESTORE the lands, vineyards, olive groves, and houses to those who would live in the land:

Nehemiah 5:11-12 “Return to them this very day their fields, their vineyards, their olive orchards, and their houses, and the percentage of money, grain, wine, and oil that you have been exacting from them.” ¹²Then they said, “We will restore these and require nothing from them. We will do as you say.” And I called the priests and made them swear to do as they had promised.”

A final thought

Jesus comes to restore.

Isaiah 58:12 “And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in.”

More importantly Jesus tells us that He has placed a wall and a tower in the field, which belongs to Him.

He has 'LEASED' this field to you and I - those who are called to be shepherds looking after His flock.

We should be the first, to be ready to bring a first-fruits offering to the King.

Do you have such an offering of a **restored wall** of Covenant principles and a **gate** of servant leadership?



Matthew 21:33 *"Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a **fence** around it and dug a winepress in it and built a **tower** and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit."*

PRAYER

Dear God

Please give us the courage to return to our land.

Please help us to reveal our brokenness.

Please help us see the potential in the rubble at our place in the Body of Messiah,

Please help us to pick up the Covenantal Stones that must make up our wall.

Please restore our gates of authority.

Please help us to stand and take courage.

AMEN

