

# Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



## “Whose Thoughts Guide My Ways?”

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### Devotion and Discussion Questions

**Key Texts (TLV):** Isaiah 56:1-2; Is. 40:31; 41:1; 46:12-13; 50:10; 51:1, 5; 55:1-13

Isaiah 56 opens a new section in the book, and it does so by asking an important question: what does the life of a redeemed people actually look like? Isaiah 1-39 showed again and again that Judah struggled to trust the Lord. Ahaz wanted Assyria. Hezekiah, even with moments of real dependence on God, still leaned toward Egypt and Babylon. The pattern was clear: God's people were called to trust the Lord and be a light to the nations, but instead they kept being tempted to lean on the nations. That first section leaves us with two pressing questions: Is Babylon the end of God's people, and is their sin beyond the Lord's power and willingness to redeem?

Isaiah 40-55 answers both questions with hope. The Lord declares that He is Lord over history and Lord over salvation. He will bring His people out of captivity through Cyrus, and He will deal with their deeper problem through His Servant, who bears iniquity, transgression, and sin. By the end of Isaiah 55, it almost feels like nothing more needs to be said. The invitation has gone out: *“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the water... Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, so that your soul may live”* (Is. 55:1, 3). But chapters 56-66 now answer the next question: once God has redeemed a people, what marks their lives? What are the characteristics of a people who are truly waiting for the salvation of God?

#### **1. WAITING PEOPLE LIVE IN RESPONSE TO SALVATION, NOT IN ORDER TO EARN IT**

Isaiah 56 does not begin by undoing grace. It begins by showing what grace produces. *“Thus says Adonai: ‘Preserve justice and do righteousness. For My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed’”* (Is. 56:1). **The order matters.** The Suffering Servant has acted. The invitation to “all who are thirsty” has been delivered. The Lord does not say, “Earn My salvation by being righteous enough.” He says that because His salvation is near, His people are now called to preserve justice and do righteousness. Obedience is not the purchase price of redemption; it is the response to redemption. The God who has acted to save also calls His people to reflect His character.

This is one of the great themes of Isaiah. The righteousness God's people could not produce in chapters 1-39 is the very righteousness God reveals and provides in ch. 40-55. That means the call to righteousness in Isaiah 56 is not cruel or impossible. It is hopeful. What once could not be done in the stubbornness of self can now begin to be lived out by those who have turned to the Lord. Waiting on Him is not passive. It is not spiritual idleness. It is a life of trust that begins to take shape in concrete obedience. Waiting people are people who believe that God's salvation is so real, so near, and so powerful that it must begin to show up in the way they live.

#### **2. WAITING PEOPLE LEARN TO REFLECT GOD'S JUSTICE & RIGHTEOUSNESS IN REAL LIFE**

Isaiah places two words right at the center of this opening call: *mishpat* and *tzedakah*, justice and righteousness. These are not side issues in the heart of God. They are foundational to His rule. Throughout Isaiah, the coming King, the Servant, and the reign of God are all described in terms of justice and righteousness. *“Of the increase of His government and shalom there will be*

*no end... to establish it and uphold it through justice and righteousness from now until forevermore*"(Is. 9:6). So when the Lord tells His people to preserve justice and do righteousness, He is calling them to live in a way that reflects His own heart. These are not abstract religious ideals. They are the shape of covenant faithfulness in daily life.

This also means that waiting for the Lord cannot be reduced to religious language, emotional moments, or theological agreement. The people who wait for Adonai are the same people who begin to walk in His ways. Isaiah had already said, *"But they who wait for Adonai will renew their strength"* (Is. 40:31). That renewed strength is not given so we can keep living in the same old patterns. It is given so we can walk with Him. The Lord's salvation creates a people who increasingly pursue what is right, who seek justice in how they deal with others, and who refuse to separate worship from life. A waiting people is not merely hoping for a future rescue. A waiting people is **already** being reshaped by the character of the God they trust.

**3. WAITING PEOPLE REORDER THEIR LIVES AROUND GOD & GUARD THEIR HANDS FROM EVIL.** Isaiah 56:2 makes the call wonderfully concrete: *"Blessed is the one who does this, the son of man who takes hold of it, who keeps from profaning Shabbat, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."* To some, that pairing can seem surprising at first. One command is very specific: keep from profaning Shabbat. The other is very broad: keep your hand from doing any evil. But together they show both the form and the content of covenant life. **Shabbat is the positive reordering of life around ADONAI.** Refusing evil is the negative restraint of life from what opposes His goodness. Together they say that real devotion is not empty ritual, and real morality is not self-defined. Both flow from belonging to the Lord.

Shabbat especially matters here because it was a visible declaration of trust. For Israel, Shabbat was an organizing of life around ceasing from labor one day in seven so that even ordinary people, servants, and those under their care could rest. Shabbat declared that God is Creator, God is Provider, and God's people do not live by endless striving. It was a covenant-shaped act of trust. At the same time, keeping Shabbat was never meant to become hollow formalism. The Lord is not pleased by outward religious observance that ignores mercy, justice, or love. That is why the one who guards Shabbat must also guard his hand from evil. True worship must shape life. Waiting people do not merely perform devotion; they become people whose whole way of life is being ordered by the Lord.

## **CONCLUSION**

Isaiah 56 begins this final section of the book by reminding us that redemption is meant to lead somewhere. God does not simply rescue His people from the consequences of sin; He also begins to form His character in them. The people who have been comforted, redeemed, and restored are now called to live as those who belong to Him. That is the heart of this passage. Waiting for God is not simply looking ahead to what He will do someday. It is clinging to Him now, taking hold of His ways now, and learning to live as people whose strength comes from Him and not from themselves. That is why Isaiah can speak of the blessed person as the one who keeps doing this and keeps holding fast. This is a persevering life of trust.

Are we still leaning on our own thoughts, our own instincts, and our own ways, or have we turned to Him? Have we received His salvation but resisted His rule? Have we wanted His

comfort without His character? Today, since His salvation has drawn near, then let your life draw near too. Surrender the places where you have been leaning on yourself, reorder your life around His presence, and ask Him to form in you what you cannot produce on your own. The God who redeems is also the God who enables. So come to Him again, hold fast to Him, and ask Him to make you one of His waiting people.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why is it important that Isaiah 56:1 calls us to do righteousness **because** God's salvation is near, rather than to earn it?
2. Where are people most tempted today to lean on "the nations" or worldly strength instead of trusting the Lord?
3. What do justice and righteousness look like in ordinary daily life, not just in religious settings?
4. How does Shabbat help show what it means to organize life around trust in God rather than endless striving?
5. What is one practical area of your life where the Lord may be calling you to "take hold" of His ways more firmly?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Avinu Malkhenu*, Our Father, Our King, thank You that You are not only the God who calls us, but the God who redeems us, comforts us, and gives us strength to walk in Your ways. Thank You that Your salvation comes near to people who could never save themselves. Thank You for Your Servant, through whom You have made a way for forgiveness, restoration, and righteousness. Teach us not to receive Your grace lightly, but to respond to it with lives that reflect Your heart.

Make us a waiting people, Lord. Teach us to preserve justice, to do righteousness, to order our lives around Your presence, and to guard our hands from evil. Where we have leaned on ourselves, turn us back to You. Where we have settled for outward religion without inward surrender, have mercy on us and renew us. By Your Spirit, form in us the character that pleases You, so that our lives would bear witness to Your goodness before the nations.

*B'Shem Yeshua*, In the name of Yeshua, amen.