



# ShalomAZ Ministries

*In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption*

## “IF ONLY You had listened... IF ONLY You WILL”

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### Devotion and Discussion Questions

**Key Texts (TLV):** Is 48:17-22; Is. 48:1-16; 7:9; 30:15-16; 39; Lev. 25:47-55; Num. 35:9-35; Ps. 127:3-5; Gen. 15:5; Gen. 22:17; Rev. 18:2-5

There's a kind of grief that comes with the words *if only*. *If only I had listened. If only I had responded.* That phrase carries the weight of a missed moment—what could have been if I had trusted what the Lord said *instead of* trusting my own instincts, my own eyes, my own heart, my own “I've got this.” And yet, Isaiah 48 doesn't leave us trapped in regret. It holds *if only* in both hands: **the pain of yesterday's wasted opportunity, and the mercy of today's open door.** As long as it's still called “today,” there is still a chance to choose life—still a chance to learn from what was and step into what can be.

All through Isaiah, the Lord keeps pressing this question: will you trust Him—even when you don't understand the details? He calls out the things we lean on that can't hold us up: alliances, horses, idols, our own “wisdom,” the comfort of what seems stable. He says to Ahaz, “*If you do not trust, surely you will not stand*” (Is. 7:9). He tells a frightened people, “*In quietness and trust is your strength*” (Is. 30:15). The Lord's trustworthiness has been demonstrated again and again, but the issue is always the same: will we respond with action? When He says, “Go,” will we go?

#### 1. THE LORD REMINDS YOU WHO HE IS TO YOU (Is. 48:17)

The Lord reiterates identity—His identity toward His people: “*Thus says ADONAI, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: 'I am ADONAI your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go'*” (Is. 48:17). He is not introducing Himself as distant Judge first, but rather as **Go'el**—Redeemer, kinsman-redeemer. In the Torah's picture of redemption (Lev. 25:47–55; Num. 35:9–35), the *go'el* is the one who steps in when you cannot rescue yourself—when the debt is too deep, when the situation has become bigger than your ability. To qualify, the redeemer had to be a blood relative, able to pay the price, and willing to pay the price. The Lord says, in effect: “**THAT** is who I am to you. You are Mine, and I will not abandon what belongs to Me.”

And He is **the Holy One of Israel**—not merely “holy” in an abstract sense, but utterly unique, in a category all His own. Israel's uniqueness is not rooted in Israel's people; it is rooted in Israel's God. HE is their holiness. He is also their **Teacher**—One whose instruction is for benefit, for life, for “profit” in the truest sense: not exploitation, but wisdom that leads to flourishing. Unlike idols that “*do not profit*” (Is. 44:9–10), the Lord teaches what actually leads to wholeness. And He is **Guide**—the One who not only tells you the way, but then walks it before you. The Exodus pattern is underneath the whole thing: Redeemer with mighty hand, Holy One who claims a people, Teacher who gives clear instruction, Guide who goes before in cloud and fire.

#### 2. “IF ONLY” REVEALS WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN—AND WHAT STILL CAN BE (Is. 48:18–19)

Then comes the ache: “*If only you had listened to My commandments! Then your peace would be like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea*” (Is. 48:18). This is not the Lord being petty. This is the grief of a Father showing His children what they forfeited by refusing

to **shema**—to hear and heed. *Shalom* was never meant to be a rare event—like a seasonal stream that appears after a storm and disappears again. God intended peace to be like a river: steady, living, continuing. And righteousness—rightness, integrity, just dealings, right motives—was meant to be like the waves: consistent, powerful, returning again and again. This is what life under God’s reign looks like. *Shalom* is not merely the absence of hostility; it is wholeness, healing, wellness, completeness. And righteousness is not image-management; it is truth from the inside out.

And the promise continues: *“Your seed would have been like sand... Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before Me”* (Is. 48:19). In the ancient world, abundance of descendants signaled covenant blessing and stability (cf. Ps. 127:3–5; Gen. 15:5; 22:17). In a culture where survival felt fragile and legacy mattered, this promise carried weight. Yet even here, the Lord is doing more than talking about family size—He is describing a world where *shalom* and rightness create an environment where life can actually thrive. And the warning behind it is sobering: rebellion doesn’t just cost peace; it can cost identity. Peoples can be swallowed into empires and disappear. But the Lord is saying: “You don’t have to fear that prospect—if you will listen.”

### **3. REDEMPTION REQUIRES A RESPONSE—COME OUT, DON’T HESITATE (Is. 48:20–22)**

After “if only,” the Lord gives a clear command: *“Get out of Babylon... flee from Chaldea! With a shout of joy, proclaim this... say: ‘ADONAI has redeemed His servant Jacob!’”* (Is. 48:20). The deliverance is declared as an accomplished reality—**it is done**—and now the people must respond to that truth. What’s striking is the tone: they are not sneaking out as fugitives, escaping the clutches of Babylon. “Proceed. Go forth. Don’t hesitate.” When God opens a door, delay becomes its own form of unbelief. And historically speaking, even when the opportunity came for the Babylonian exiles to literally depart from Babylon, only a fraction returned—many had become comfortable in Babylon, and the call to rebuild felt costly. Yet the smallness of human response does not shrink the greatness of God’s act. The Lord still showed the world that He directs empires, fulfills what He foretells, and cares for His unworthy people.

Isaiah then echoes the Exodus: *“They did not thirst when He led them through the deserts... He split the rock also, and the waters gushed out”* (Is. 48:21). In other words: “The same God who carried your ancestors will carry you. The same God who provided then will provide now.” And Isaiah closes with a line that refuses cheap comfort: *“There is no shalom... for the wicked”* (Is. 48:22). The issue of peace is not geography. It’s not “If I can just get out of this place, I’ll be fine.” Wherever you go, you bring you. *Shalom* like a river is not produced by a new location—it is produced by a surrendered heart that hears and heeds God. Babylon can be a city, but it can also be a system, a comfort, a compromise. The call is the same: come out, so you don’t participate in her wickedness (cf. Rev. 18:2, 4–5).

### **CONCLUSION**

This passage leaves us with a holy tension: regret and invitation. The Lord is honest about what could have been. He doesn’t minimize the cost of not listening. But He also refuses to let “if only” become the last word. He reveals Himself again as Redeemer, Holy One, Teacher, and Guide—and then He calls His people forward into a new act of deliverance. The point is not that God is waiting to scold; the point is that God is still speaking, still leading, still redeeming, still opening

the way. And the question is not whether He is trustworthy—the question is whether we will finally respond to His trustworthiness. Will we repent of what led to the “if-only” regret – our hesitation to trust the Trustworthy One—or are we going to repeat it, setting up more regrets for tomorrow?

Where have you been living on *if only I had*—and where is the Lord inviting you into *if only you will*? If you know you’ve been leaning on your own understanding, trusting your instincts over His instruction, choosing comfort over obedience, staying in “Babylon” because it feels familiar—today is the day to return. Ask the Lord for a listening heart—the kind of heart that doesn’t just hear, but heeds. And if you’re ready, tell Him plainly: “Redeem me where I cannot rescue myself. Teach me what leads to life. Lead me in the way I should go.” The river of shalom is not a fantasy; it’s what God intends to flow from a life aligned with Him.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Where do you feel the weight of “if only” right now—and what do you sense the Lord might be inviting you to learn from it?
2. In practical terms, what does it look like for you to **shema**—to hear *and* heed—rather than merely agree?
3. Which of the Lord’s identities in Is. 48:17 (Redeemer, Holy One, Teacher, Guide) is most difficult for you to trust, and why?
4. What might “Babylon” represent in your life—not just a place, but a comfort, system, habit, or compromise that keeps you from obedience?
5. Isaiah links peace to walking in God’s ways (Is. 48:18, 22). How have you seen the difference between “peace as a feeling” and *shalom as wholeness*?

### **CLOSING PRAYER:**

*Avinu Malkhenu, Our Father, Our King*, we confess that we have often trusted our own hearts, leaned on our own understanding, and given You more lip service than surrender. Forgive us for the wasted opportunities—times when Your voice was clear and we chose comfort, fear, or pride instead of obedience. Thank You that You do not abandon us to regret, but call us again to draw near and listen.

ADONAI, You are our Redeemer, our Holy One, our Teacher, and our Guide. Give us hearts that **shema**—that hear and heed. Lead us out of every “Babylon” we’ve grown comfortable in. Let Your shalom become steady in us like a river, and form righteousness in us that is consistent and strong like the waves of the sea. And thank You for the One You sent—Yeshua—who embodied what true obedience, true humanity, and true trust look like. We choose today to listen.

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