Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"Emerging From the Darkest Night"
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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Ps. 137; Ps. 77; Ps. 17

There are nights when the darkness seems overwhelming. Perhaps you have laid awake replaying a conversation, grieving what you have lost, or wondering how something that once seemed so certain could have fallen apart. You remember what life was like before the trouble came. You remember the joy, the worship, the confidence. And now even remembering hurts. How do you sing when everything around you seems to contradict the song? How do you pray when your heart is so troubled that words barely come?

The Psalms do not pretend these nights are easy. Psalms 137, 77, and 17 take us into the prayerful wrestling of people pursuing righteousness in the face of overwhelming trials. We meet exiles who cannot sing, a worshiper who cannot sleep, and David, who is being pressed by enemies yet refuses to surrender his integrity. Their circumstances are different, but their cry is remarkably similar: "I need YOU to handle this, Lord." These psalms teach us to bring the grief, the questions, and even our desire for justice into the presence of ADONAI. And they give us a greater hope: that when we awaken from the nightmare, from the smelting, from the fire, we will awaken more like Him.

1. WHEN YOU CANNOT SING, DO NOT FORGET *WHOSE* YOU ARE (PS. 137)
"By the rivers of Babylon, we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion" (Ps. 137:1). Israel has been carried into exile. Jerusalem has fallen, and the people are sitting beside the waters of Babylon with their harps hanging on the willows. Their captors mock them, demanding songs of Zion, as though the worship that once brought joy should now become entertainment for those who destroyed their home. *"How can we sing a song of ADONAI in a foreign land?"* (Ps. 137:4). This is not simply homesickness. The memories of Zion, the worship, the beauty, and the strength, now pierce hearts overwhelmed by grief. Yet even in their pain, they refuse to forget Jerusalem or their God.

The psalm ends with words that are difficult and disturbing, calling for Babylon to receive what it inflicted upon others. We should not make those words comfortable, or turn them into permission to take revenge ourselves. They reveal the terrible wound that violence leaves behind and the desperate desire for things to be made right. The psalmist brings even that cry before ADONAI. Rather than pretending the hurt is small or allowing vengeance to govern his own hands, he lays the demand for justice before the One who judges rightly. There may be seasons when your harp, too, hangs silent. You may not be able to sing yet. But do not forget the Lord, and do not let the cruelty done to you determine who you become. Bring the whole burden to Him.

2. WHEN YOU CANNOT SEE HIS HAND, REMEMBER HIS WONDERS (PS. 77)

In Psalm 77, Asaph knows what it is to spend the night reaching for God. *"In the day of my trouble I seek my Lord. At night my hand stretches out untiringly. My soul refuses to be comforted"* (Ps. 77:3). He is restless, searching, remembering, even unable to speak. The questions keep coming: Has the Lord rejected me forever? Has His mercy vanished? Has He forgotten to be gracious? It is not a tidy prayer. It is the sound of a soul wrestling in the darkness, trying to understand why the God he knows seems so far away. There are times when our feelings insist that something about ADONAI must have changed, even though His character has not.

Then comes a deliberate turning point: *"I will remember the deeds of ADONAI. Yes, I will muse about Your wonders of old"* (Ps. 77:12). Asaph begins to speak to his own soul: Remember! Meditate! Consider! He recalls the God who redeemed His people through the sea, whose might made the waters tremble. And then comes this astonishing observation: *"Your way was in the sea, and Your path in the mighty waters, but Your footprints were not seen"* (Ps. 77:20). ADONAI was making a way even when His footprints could not be traced. That is the encouragement for our sleepless nights. We do not need to pretend we understand everything; we need to remember who He has shown Himself to be. The path may be hidden from our sight, but it is not hidden from Him. He knows how to lead His people through.

3. WHEN THE FIRE TESTS YOU, HOLD FAST TO HIS PATH (PS. 17)

David's prayer begins with a plea for righteous judgment: *"Hear, ADONAI, a just plea, listen to my cry"* (Ps. 17:1). He knows that God sees what is right. He knows, too, that the Lord has examined his heart, visited him in the night, and tested him as metal is tested in the fire. Think of that progression: examined closely, visited personally, then exposed to the heat that reveals what is hidden within. David is not merely asking God to remove his enemies; he is submitting himself to the Lord's searching gaze. He has resolved that his mouth will not sin, that his feet will grip the Lord's paths, and that he will not wander into the ways of the violent. Even when wronged, he refuses to become like those pursuing him.

So where does he turn? Not to revenge, but to the strength of ADONAI. *"Be wonderful with Your lovingkindness, O Savior of those taking refuge at Your right hand"* (Ps. 17:7). In other words, Lord, show the extraordinary wonders of Your *chesed*, Your covenant love. Do what You do! Protect me as the pupil of Your eye; hide me in the shadow of Your wings. David asks God to arise and deal decisively with evil, but he reserves his deepest longing for something greater than relief. *"I in righteousness will behold Your face! When I awake, I will be satisfied with Your likeness"* (Ps. 17:15). What a desire! When the night is over, David wants to awaken not simply safe, but faithful; not merely delivered from the fire, but bearing the likeness of the One who brought him through.

CONCLUSION

These three psalms give us a path through the darkest night. Psalm 137 tells us that grief can be brought honestly to ADONAI, including the wounds that leave us longing for justice. Psalm 77 teaches us to remember His deeds when we cannot understand His ways. Psalm 17 calls us to keep our words, our hearts, and our feet faithful while we wait for Him to act. Sometimes the Lord does not immediately change the circumstances. Sometimes we still sit by the river, stretch our hands into the night, or stand inside the heat of testing. But the darkness does not mean He has abandoned us. His footprints may be unseen, yet He is still the One who leads His people.

So bring Him the night you are walking through right now. Bring Him the memory that still hurts, the question that keeps returning, the anger you have been tempted to carry, and the place where your integrity is being tested. Don't just ask Him to make the trouble disappear. Ask Him to examine your heart, to purify what needs purifying, to keep your feet gripping His path, and to show the wonders of His love. If you have wandered into bitterness, retaliation, or unbelief, return to Him today. Let Him fight your battles. And make this your prayer: Lord, when I awaken from this darkness, let me be satisfied not only because the nightmare has ended, but because I have become more like You.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Psalm 137, why did remembering Zion deepen the exiles' grief, and what does their refusal to forget reveal about faithfulness?
2. What does Psalm 137 teach us about bringing our desire for justice to ADONAI rather than taking revenge into our own hands?
3. When have you experienced a season in which God's "footprints" seemed invisible? Which of His past acts of faithfulness can you intentionally remember today?
4. In a current conflict or disappointment, are your words, attitudes, or actions beginning to resemble the very things that have wounded you? What would it mean to grip the Lord's path instead?
5. David longed to awaken satisfied with God's likeness. How would your prayers change if becoming more like Him mattered as much as getting out of the trial?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, You know the nights that seem never to end. You see our grief, our unanswered questions, and the wounds we struggle to release. When we cannot sing, keep us from forgetting You. When we cannot see Your footprints, remind us of Your wonders and Your faithfulness. When the fire tests our hearts, examine us, visit us, and purify us. Keep deceit from our lips, bitterness from our hearts, and violence from our paths. Show us the extraordinary wonders of Your love. Hide us beneath the shadow of Your wings and teach us to trust Your strength rather than our own. Through Yeshua, lead us out of the darkness; and when morning comes, let us awaken more like You.

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