

# Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



**"If Only We had the Wisdom to Listen. Starting now"**

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## **Devotion and Discussion Questions**

**Key Texts (TLV): Psalms 81, 51, 141, 111; 2 Samuel 12:1-13**

There are moments in life when we look at the consequences of our own decisions and think, "If only I had listened." Perhaps someone warned us, or the Lord had already made His ways clear, but we trusted our own instincts instead. And often we don't recognize our foolishness until the pain hits. The regret is real, because some of that pain was unnecessary. Yet yesterday cannot be undone. The question is what we will do today. Will we allow regret to lead us to repentance, or will we simply wait until the discomfort passes and return to our old ways?

That is the heart of these four Psalms. In Ps. 81 we hear the aching heart of the Father: "*Oh that My people would listen to Me*" (Ps. 81:14). In Ps. 51, David shows us what it looks like to acknowledge our sin and ask God to change us inwardly. In Ps. 141, he pleads for a guarded mouth and a heart that welcomes correction. And Ps. 111 reminds us why we can trust ADONAI: His works are righteous, His ways are dependable, and reverence for Him is the beginning of wisdom. So from this day forward—starting now—may we not merely hear His voice, but respond.

### **1. LISTEN TO THE ONE WHO RESCUED YOU (Ps. 81)**

Psalm 81 begins with rejoicing: singing, tambourines, harps, and the sounding of the shofar. Israel's festivals were never intended to be mindless religion. They called God's people to remember where He had brought them from and how He had cared for them. At Passover, remember His deliverance from Egypt. At Shavuot, remember His instruction. At Sukkot, remember His provision through the wilderness, where there were no protective walls or locked doors, only fragile shelters—and yet He Himself was their refuge. Day after day, He provided manna and led them by cloud and fire. Then the voice of the LORD breaks into the celebration, reminding them that He removed the burden from their shoulders and rescued them when they cried out. The One calling them to listen is the One who already loved and delivered them.

But the LORD says His people would not listen. They were unwilling to be His, so He gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, to walk in their own counsel (Ps. 81:12-13). Notice that He still calls them *My people*. This is not the voice of a God who wants to control them; it is the grief of a Father who knows what they are throwing away. He says, "*Open your mouth wide and I will fill it*" (Ps. 81:11). He would satisfy them with the finest wheat and honey from the rock—even sweetness where nothing good seemed possible. But they preferred their own plans. Like the father of the prodigal son, He allows them to go, while His heart calls them home. Will we listen only when life hurts, or will we keep listening when everything feels normal again?

## **2. ASK HIM FOR TRUTH AND WISDOM IN THE INWARD PLACE (PS. 51)**

David knew the painful reality of having disregarded what he already knew was right. After taking Bathsheba and arranging Uriah's death, he was confronted by Nathan the prophet. Nathan told him about a rich man who took a poor man's one beloved lamb, and David immediately recognized the injustice. Then came the words that exposed his own heart: *"You are the man!"* (2 Sam. 12:7). David could clearly see the evil in someone else while failing to face the wickedness in himself. But when the truth reached him, he did not defend or excuse his actions. He acknowledged, *"I have sinned against ADONAI"* (2 Sam. 12:13). He could not undo what he had done, but he could turn toward the God whose covenant love and compassion are greater than his rebellion.

In Ps. 51 David asks for more than relief from the consequences. He wants his innermost being changed. *"Surely You desire truth in the inner being. Make me know wisdom inwardly"* (Ps. 51:8). David knows there is something twisted in his heart; he does not merely need better appearances or more religious activity. He cries, *"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me"* (Ps. 51:12). Restore the joy of Your salvation. Sustain me with a willing spirit. Then, he says, he will teach transgressors God's ways so others may return to Him. Even what has brought destruction can become a testimony of His mercy. The offering God does not despise is a broken and contrite heart. Repentance is not simply feeling terrible about yesterday; it is surrendering our hearts to Him so that, starting now, we walk differently.

**3. WELCOME CORRECTION AND WALK IN HIS WISDOM (Ps. 141; 111)** In Ps. 141 David urgently cries out to ADONAI. His prayer rises like incense, and his lifted hands are like the evening sacrifice. But what is he pleading for? *"Set a guard, ADONAI, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips"* (Ps. 141:3). Normally a watchman guards a doorway against danger coming in. David is concerned about what might come out. The danger is not simply somewhere outside of him; it is the inclination of his own heart. He asks the LORD not to let his heart turn toward evil or be drawn to the seemingly sweet delicacies of wickedness. Those things may look enticing, even normal, until truth awakens us. So he prays, *"Let the righteous strike me—it is kindness"* (Ps. 141:5). Correction can feel painful, but faithful rebuke is an expression of *chesed*—steadfast, covenant love. David would rather receive the truth that heals than the flattering words that leave him trapped.

And this leads beautifully into Ps. 111. The psalm remembers the great works of ADONAI, His compassion, His provision, His covenant faithfulness, and the trustworthiness of His instructions. His character is our reason to listen. He is not calling us into something cruel or empty. His works are truth and justice; His ways are dependable. *"The fear of ADONAI is the beginning of wisdom. All who follow His precepts have good understanding"* (Ps. 111:10). This fear is awe, reverence, and the recognition that He is holy—there is none like Him. Wisdom begins when we see who He is and who we are, and stop treating our own counsel as though it were greater than His. Then our words,

flowing from hearts corrected by Him, can become truly sweet rather than reflecting the enticing sweetness of wickedness.

### **CONCLUSION: STARTING NOW**

We cannot go back and rewrite yesterday. We cannot erase every consequence of a foolish choice. But we do not have to keep repeating it. The painful “*if only*” can become the beginning of wisdom when it brings us to the Lord in repentance. The same God who cried, “*Oh that My people would listen to Me*” is the God who rescued His people, fed them in the wilderness, and continued calling them His own. He desires truth in our inward places, not a religious performance that hides a resistant heart. His correction is kindness, and His instructions lead us toward life.

If you have been walking in your own counsel, acknowledge it without excuses. If you have been resisting His correction, stop defending what He is asking you to surrender. Bring Him your broken and contrite heart, and ask Him to create something clean and steadfast within you. Ask Him to guard your lips, expose the hidden cravings of your heart, and teach you to delight in His ways. Do not wait for another painful lesson to make you listen. Fix your eyes on Him, trust His character, and choose to follow His voice—from this day forward, starting now.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What do the festivals and the wilderness memories in Ps. 81 reveal about the heart of ADONAI toward His people?
2. Where are you most tempted to return to your own counsel once the discomfort of a difficult season has passed?
3. Why did David ask for truth and wisdom in his inward being rather than merely asking God to remove the consequences of his sin?
4. How do your conversations, online responses, or reactions at home reveal what is happening within your heart? Is there correction you need to welcome?
5. How does remembering God’s character in Ps. 111 help you trust and obey Him in a decision you are facing today?

### **CLOSING PRAYER**

ADONAI, thank You for loving us enough to call us back when we have chosen our own ways. Forgive us for the times we have heard Your voice but refused to listen. We cannot undo yesterday, but we offer You our hearts today. Create in us clean hearts, and renew steadfast, willing spirits within us. Let Your truth reach our innermost places. Set a guard over our mouths, and do not let our hearts be drawn away by what only seems sweet. Give us humility to receive correction as kindness. Open our eyes to Your faithfulness, compassion, and trustworthy ways. May we fear You, love You, and walk in Your wisdom—not merely when life is painful, but every day. From this day forward, starting now, may our lives declare Your praise.

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