

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"WHO are You Inviting to Dine?"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Isaiah 56:8-12; Is. 55:1-2; Is. 45:21; Is. 49:21-22; Ezek. 34:1-16; Matt. 9:36-38; Luke 10:1-2; Luke 14:13-23

Isaiah 56 closes with a startling picture of the heart of God. The passage begins by reminding us that Adonai is not merely making an offer here and there, but revealing something essential about His own character. He is the Sovereign Lord who gathers the dispersed of Israel, and then He says, *"I will gather still others to him, to those already gathered"* (Is. 56:8). That is not a minor detail. That is who He is. He is the Gatherer. He is the One who rescues, who harvests, who brings in those who have been scattered, forgotten, misled, or written off. The Lord does not define Himself by exclusion, but by holy, purposeful gathering.

And if this is who HE is, then what kind of heart are *we* reflecting? The chapter has already made room for the foreigner, the eunuch, and the outsider who once assumed there was no place for them in the household of God. Now the invitation widens even more. The Lord calls the living ones of the field and forest to come and eat. He is not celebrating confusion or lawlessness, but inviting the wandering into His leadership, His covenant, and His table. It's a passage that asks us to slow down and let that question search us: when it comes to the banquet of the Lord, who do we imagine belongs there, and who do we struggle to welcome?

1. THE LORD'S HEART IS TO GATHER, NOT EXCLUDE

Isaiah opens this section with unusual force: *"Thus says Adonai Elohim, who gathers the dispersed of Israel: 'I will gather still others to him, to those already gathered'"* (Is. 56:8). The emphasis is strong because the Lord wants His people to see His heart clearly. He is not reluctant in mercy. He is not hesitant in redemption. He is the God who gathers. Just as He says elsewhere, *"There is no other God beside Me—a righteous God and a Savior—there is none besides Me!"* (Is. 45:21), so here He identifies Himself as the One who gathers the scattered. He created Israel, redeemed Israel, and intends to gather Israel. And His redemptive purpose was never meant to stop there.

This is why the inclusion of outsiders in Isaiah 56 is NOT a concession to changing times. It is the fulfillment of God's purpose all along. The Lord promised Abraham that through him all the families of the earth would be blessed, and Isaiah shows that promise still unfolding. Even the image in Is. 49 points in this same direction, where the people are left wondering, *"Who has borne these for me?"* (Is. 49:21), as the nations begin to bring sons and daughters home. God is still gathering. He is still bringing in those who seemed far away. The question is not whether His table has room. The question is whether we have learned to love the wideness of His mercy without compromising the holiness of His call.

2. MANY WHO WANDER HAVE BEEN FAILED BY BLIND AND CORRUPT SHEPHERDS

When the Lord says, *"All you beasts of the field, come to eat, all you beasts in the forest"* (Is. 56:9), the language in the translation can sound harsh at first. But in the flow of the passage, it is not a word of condemnation. "Beasts" is the translation of the word "chayah" (חַיָּה), "living ones." It

is a summons to the wandering, the untended, the shepherdless. These are the “living ones” of the field and forest—those without guidance, those outside the fold, those who have been left vulnerable. And immediately the passage turns to their leaders: *“His watchmen are all blind. All of them know nothing. All of them are mute dogs unable to bark”* (Is. 56:10). The problem is not simply that the people are wandering. The problem is that those assigned to watch, warn, and care have failed them.

The Lord describes these leaders as blind, asleep, greedy, and without discernment. They do not know what to look for. They do not know how to sound the alarm. They do not know satisfaction, so they cannot lead anyone into what truly satisfies. Instead of guarding the flock, they feed themselves. Instead of helping the lost, they numb themselves and promise that tomorrow will simply continue like today, only better. This is why Ezekiel 34 echoes so powerfully here: *“They were scattered for lack of a shepherd. They became food for all the beasts of the field as they were scattered”* (Ezek. 34:5). Sometimes the people we are tempted to dismiss as unruly, worldly, or wild are in that condition because no one ever truly shepherded them in the ways of God.

3. THE INVITATION FOR ALL IS TO COME AND EAT AT THE LORD’S TABLE

What makes this passage so beautiful is that the Lord does not stop at exposing failed leadership. He extends an invitation. The same God who says, *“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the water, and you who have no money, come, buy and eat”* (Is. 55:1), now calls the wandering to come and dine. This is not an invitation into chaos, but into covenant. It is not a celebration of being lost, but a call to no longer be lost, but to come under the care of the true Shepherd. The Lord invites those who have been misled all their lives to step into His order, His righteousness, His peace, and His satisfaction. He calls them out of false leadership and into His banquet.

Yeshua carries this same heart in Luke 14 when He says, *“When you host a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind”* (Luke 14:13). And when the originally invited guests refuse to come, the master says, *“Go out into the thoroughfares and fenced areas, and press them to come in so my home may be filled”* (Luke 14:23). That sounds very much like Isaiah 56. The Lord sees the ones others have ignored, and He tells them there is still room. He does not lower His standards; He gathers people into His ways. He does not call them to stay wild; He calls them to sit at His table and be shepherded by truth. The invitation is open, but it is also transforming.

CONCLUSION

This passage leaves us with both comfort and conviction. Comfort, because the Lord is still the Gatherer. He still seeks the scattered, the wounded, the overlooked, and the poorly led. As Yeshua looked on the crowds and felt compassion for them because they were *“harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd”* (Matt. 9:36), so the heart of God still moves toward those who have been wandering without care. But there is also conviction here, because we can so easily inherit the posture of those who question the guest list. We may not say it out loud, but sometimes we quietly decide who seems too broken, too foreign, too confused, too damaged, or too far gone to belong at the Lord’s table.

Today, if you have been wandering, thirsty, badly led, or convinced there is no place for you in the house of God, hear the voice of the Shepherd today: come and eat. Come under His leadership. Come into His covenant ways. Come and be gathered by the One who rescues and restores. And if you are one whose heart has become selective, suspicious, or narrow toward

those the Lord is calling in, repent and ask Him to make your heart more like His. Ask Him to teach you how to welcome whom He welcomes, to love what He loves, and to participate in His gathering work with humility, holiness, and joy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What stands out to you most about God revealing Himself in Is. 56:8 as the One who gathers?
2. Why do you think it matters that the passage exposes the failure of the watchmen and shepherds?
3. In what ways do people today still live like “sheep without a shepherd”?
4. Are there any kinds of people you find yourself assuming would be unlikely guests at the Lord’s table?
5. What would it look like for you this week to reflect the heart of the Gatherer more faithfully?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Adonai, thank You that You are the One who gathers. Thank You that Your heart is not to cast away, but to call near; not to leave the scattered in their wandering, but to bring them into Your house, Your covenant, and Your peace. Thank You that in Yeshua, the invitation still goes out to the thirsty, the broken, the overlooked, and the badly led. Thank You that there is still room at Your table.

Search our hearts and correct us where we have not reflected Your heart well. Forgive us for the ways we have excluded whom You were calling, or judged those who have simply been wandering without a shepherd. Teach us to walk in Your righteousness, to love Your ways, and to welcome others with truth and compassion. Gather the lost, strengthen the weak, and make us useful in Your harvest.

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