

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“Well, This Is a Problem. I Wonder WHO Will Solve It.”

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Is 51:17-23; Is. 40:1-3; Is. 51:1-3; Is. 51:9-23; Ezek. 34:11-15; Is. 59:16

Isaiah 51 brings us into a moment of deep tension. The Lord has already called His people to listen, to look with eyes of faith, and to remember that His salvation and righteousness are everlasting. He has told them not to fear what is temporary, and He has promised comfort for Zion. But as the chapter moves forward, the reality of Jerusalem's condition becomes impossible to ignore. The people are not standing in strength. They are staggering. They are not rejoicing yet. They are lying in the dust under the effects of divine judgment. That is why this passage feels so weighty. It is not merely describing hardship. It is describing a people who have drained the cup of God's wrath and have no strength in themselves to recover.

Yet this is exactly where the beauty of the passage begins to shine. The same God who tells them to awaken is the God who has already determined that their judgment will not be the end of their story. He does not minimize their sin, and He does not pretend their condition is better than it is. He tells the truth about why they are down. But then He speaks as the One who comforts, the One who defends, and the One who removes the cup from their hand. **This portion of Isaiah is preparing us to feel THE FULL WEIGHT OF THE PROBLEM so that we will recognize THE GREATNESS OF THE SOLUTION when the Servant is finally revealed.**

1. WAKE UP TO WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

The first thing the Lord says is, *“Awake, awake! Stand up, Jerusalem! From Adonai's hand you have drunk the cup of His fury, the chalice of reeling that you have drained to the dregs”* (Is. 51:17). That command is important, because the people had been crying out earlier for the *arm of the Lord* to awake, as though He were inactive or asleep. But now the Lord answers by telling *them* to wake themselves up. The problem was never that God had fallen asleep. The problem was that His people had not rightly understood their own condition. They had been looking at Babylon, Assyria, armies, politics, and pressure, but the Lord makes clear that the deeper issue was not ultimately geopolitical. Their staggering condition came *from HIS hand*. They were not merely victims of history. They were under the righteous discipline of God.

That is a hard word, but it is also a healing word. There is mercy in finally naming reality truthfully. Jerusalem is pictured like someone in a stunned, drunken stupor—not because of wine, but because of judgment. The Lord is saying, in effect, “Wake up and recognize why you are here.” This is not meant to crush them further; it is meant to bring them into clarity. As long as they think Babylon is the real master of their condition, they will stay hopeless. But once they understand that the One whose judgment knocked them down is now the One telling them to stand up, hope begins to appear. When God says it is time to rise, no Babylon can keep His people in the dust.

2. THERE IS NO MERELY HUMAN SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM

Once the Lord commands Jerusalem to stand, the next issue becomes painfully clear: who will lead her now? Isaiah says, *“There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne, nor is*

there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has raised" (Is. 51:18). This is one of the saddest lines in the passage. Jerusalem has had many sons, many leaders, many figures who should have been able to help—but none of them is sufficient. None can guide. None can steady her hand. None can move her forward. The kings could not do it. The prophets could not do it. The shepherds of Israel had failed. The people have been brought to a place where the emptiness of human ability is fully exposed.

That is not just a historical observation; it is a spiritual reality that still speaks. There are moments when the problem in front of us is so deep that no merely human strength can fix it. Isaiah describes devastation and destruction, famine and sword, total ruin from every angle. The sons of Zion themselves are collapsed at the street corners, *"like an antelope in a net"* (Is. 51:20). They are trapped, terrified, and unable to free themselves. This is why the Lord asks, in essence, "With whom shall I comfort you?" There is no one from among your own children who can bear this burden. The passage will later push us to the same conclusion found elsewhere: *"He saw that there was no one... Therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him"* (Is. 59:16). The problem is too great for man. If there is going to be comfort, God Himself must provide it.

3. THE LORD HIMSELF WILL REMOVE THE CUP

The turning point of the passage comes when the Lord speaks not merely as Judge, but as Defender. He says, *"Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine"* (Is. 51:21). Then comes this tender and powerful declaration: *"Thus says your Lord, Adonai, your God who defends His people: 'Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of reeling, the bowl of My wrath. You will never drink it again'"* (Is. 51:22). The same God who gave the cup now says He has taken it away. The wrath was deserved, the judgment was exact, and the discipline was real—but now He declares that it will not continue forever. His final word over Zion is not abandonment. It is restoration.

This is where the whole passage begins leaning forward into the mystery that Isaiah has not fully explained yet. God says He will remove the cup, but the question remains: **how?** On what basis does the holy God take away wrath without denying His own justice? Isaiah does not answer that in full here, but he makes us feel the question so that we will be ready for the answer when it comes. The Lord says the cup of wrath will be removed from His people and given instead to their tormentors. He will deal justly with those who oppressed them. He will defend His people, contend for them, and bring the season of wrath to an end. But the deeper resolution—the way wrath is truly and finally dealt with—waits just ahead, when the Lord tells us to behold His Servant. This passage teaches us that comfort is not found in denial, self-rescue, or human leadership. Comfort is found in the Lord who acts on behalf of His helpless people.

CONCLUSION

Isaiah 51:17–23 is a passage of awakening, but not merely in the sense of emotional encouragement. It is an awakening into truth. The people must wake up to the reality that their condition is the result of sin and divine judgment. They must also wake up to the reality that no human leader from among them can fix what is broken. But then, in the middle of all of that honesty, they are awakened to something even more glorious: the **Lord Himself** has stepped

forward as Comforter, Defender, and Redeemer. He is not looking around for someone else to solve the problem. He is making clear that He alone will do it.

There are seasons when we may feel like Jerusalem in this passage—knocked down, confused, overwhelmed, and unable to sort out whether what we are facing is pressure from the world, the consequences of our own choices, or the discipline of the Lord. This word invites us not to run from that moment, but to wake up in it. The Lord does not call His people to pretend. He calls them to stand before Him honestly. And when they do, they find that His purpose is not to destroy the repentant, but to bring them into comfort and restoration. He does not tell Zion to stand because she is strong. He tells her to stand because He has spoken.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why is it important that the Lord tells Jerusalem to “wake yourself” rather than simply answering their cry for His arm to awake?
2. What does this passage show us about the difference between visible circumstances and the deeper spiritual reality behind them?
3. Why does Isaiah emphasize that there was no one among Zion’s sons able to guide or strengthen her?
4. What stands out to you most about the Lord identifying Himself as Comforter, Defender, and the One who removes the cup?
5. How does this passage prepare our hearts to better understand the Servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12?

CLOSING PRAYER:

ADONAI, we thank You that You are truthful and merciful at the same time. You do not flatter us in our condition, and You do not leave us in our ruin. You awaken us to what is real, and then You speak comfort over those who turn to You. Thank You that when there was no one to guide, no one to strengthen, and no one to solve the problem, You did not abandon Your people. You declared that You Yourself would act.

Teach us to hear Your voice and to wake up where we have been numb, confused, or spiritually drowsy. Forgive us where we have blamed others while ignoring our own need for repentance. Help us to stop looking for human answers to what only You can heal. And fix our eyes on the Servant You reveal, the One through whom Your justice is satisfied and Your comfort reaches us fully.

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