



ShalomAZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption

"Burdened and Exhausted"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): *Is 43:22-25; Isaiah. 43:10; 1:11-14; Exodus. 1:13-14; 3:12; 4:23; 34:6-7; Micah 6:6-8; Psalm 50:7-17; 21; Matt. 16:24-26; Heb. 13:15; John 3:16*

There are days when faithfulness feels like pressure. You wake up, you're tired, and you can feel the weight of what's coming—responsibilities, commitments, the things you promised you'd do "unto the Lord." And the danger isn't that you stop doing the right things. The danger is subtler: that your serving Him becomes rote, disconnected from your heart—like a checklist you carry instead of a relationship you enjoy. You keep the rhythm, you keep the habit, you keep showing up... but somewhere along the way, awe leaks out of it.

That's why this passage matters. God starts by reminding Israel who they are: the people He formed and shaped *for Himself*—to declare His praise, to be His witnesses, to demonstrate and declare who He is. That's the "why" of their existence. But then the LORD speaks into their current spiritual condition, and He doesn't begin where they feel weak. He begins where they feel most confident—right in their expression of religious devotion. He goes straight for the place where they can point and say, "Look, we're doing the things." And He says, "I'm not after your performance. I'm after your heart."

1. You were formed for His praise—but you stopped calling on Him

The LORD says something piercing: "*Yet you have not called on Me, Jacob, for you have been weary of Me, Israel.*" (Isa. 43:22). Notice the emphasis: not that they didn't do religious things—He says they didn't call on *Him*. The tragedy isn't empty calendars; it's empty communion. They were formed for His "*tehillah*," for praise, for prayer, for that relational turning of the heart toward God—and yet they weren't calling on Him. And what's wild is that they probably still felt "busy with God." They were busy around Him without actually turning to Him.

And then He points to their heart accusation: "I'm exhausted." That's what they were carrying inside—weariness toward God Himself. And we need to be honest: sometimes the weariness isn't because obedience is so heavy; it's because we're trying to do the right things without the right love. When love drains out, everything becomes labor. When awe is gone, even holy rhythms can feel like bondage. ADONAI isn't scolding them for being tired; He's exposing what's underneath the tiredness: they've stopped calling on Him, and they've started treating Him like an obligation to manage instead of a Father to seek.

2. The LORD is not your Pharaoh—"Avodah" of Him is Worship, not Slavery

Then the LORD says something that sounds absurd on the surface: "*You have not brought Me sheep for your burnt offerings... I did not compel you to serve offerings, nor wearied you with incense.*" (Is. 43:23). "What do You mean we didn't bring them? We did! We brought sheep. We brought grain. We brought incense." Exactly—and that's the point. God is exposing the difference between outward activity and inward offering. It wasn't "for Me." It didn't come from a heart that was actually calling on Him. The rituals were happening, but the relationship was missing.

And in the middle of this, the LORD plays on two words: *aved/avodah* (serve/worship) and *yaga* (toil/weary). Israel was treating worship like slavery. And God brings Exodus into it: *“They worked (aved/avodah) them harshly... and made their lives bitter with hard labor (aved/avodah).”* (Ex. 1:13–14). That’s Pharaoh’s *avodah*. But then the LORD says, *“When you have brought the people out of Egypt: you will worship (avodah) God on this mountain.”* (Ex. 3:12). Same word—different Master. In Egypt they were **avadim** to Pharaoh. Leaving Egypt, they became **avadim** to the LORD. The massive difference is the change of Master. God is confronting the lie in their hearts: *“You’ve required this like Pharaoh.”* And the LORD answers, *“No. I didn’t enslave you. I didn’t set out to exhaust you. You’ve turned My worship into bondage because your heart isn’t with Me.”*

3. Empty Worship Burdens God—But His Mercy Blots Out Rebellion

The LORD keeps going, and it gets even more personal: *“You have not spent money buying Me aromatic cane... nor have you satisfied Me with the fat of your sacrifices. Rather you burdened Me with your sins, wearied Me with your iniquities.”* (Is. 43:24). The language is intense—but intentionally so. He says, *“You didn’t bring Me the ‘for Me’ part. You didn’t bring Me the best with a heart that actually touches Me. Instead, what you truly offered—was sin. Twistings. Iniquity.”* That’s why Isaiah 1 hits so hard: *“Bring no more worthless offerings! Incense is an abomination to Me... They are a burden to Me. I am weary to bear them.”* (Is. 1:13–14). Not because God hates the *moadim* – the holy convocations, or the sacrifices in themselves—but because they were emptied of reality. Much religious fervor, no relational reality.

And then—here’s the holy shock—the LORD simply says: *“I, I am the One who blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.”* (Isa. 43:25). **Anoki, Anoki.** Just Me. Not because you earned it. Not because your sacrifices impressed Me. Not because your checklist finally got clean. For My own sake—because this is who I am. He is holy, and He must deal with sin, and yet His nature is mercy—*chesed*—overflowing covenant love that runs toward genuine repentance. The God who is wearied by empty worship is the same God who wipes the record clean when you truly turn and call on Him.

CONCLUSION:

So “what now?” If you hear this passage honestly, it asks a question that’s uncomfortable because it’s so practical: are you bringing Him “sheep,” but not actually bringing *yourself*? Are you doing the right things, but inside you’re quietly accusing God—*“You’ve wearied me, You’ve demanded too much”*—while your heart is distant, your prayer life thin, your worship mostly about what it does for you? The LORD is not after religious motion; He’s after relational devotion. He wants what Micah describes: *“Only to practice justice, to love mercy (chesed), and to walk humbly with your God.”* (Mic. 6:8). He wants the offering Psalm 50 calls for: *“Offer God a sacrifice of thank offerings... Call upon Me in the day of trouble. When I rescue you, you will honor Me.”* (Ps. 50:14–15). That’s real. That’s living. That’s “for Me.”

And the hope is not that you’ll try harder—it’s that you’ll come home. The God who confronts empty worship is the God who says, *“I, I am the One who blots out your transgressions... and will not remember your sins.”* (Isa. 43:25). There’s no performance ladder here. There’s a turning of the heart. There’s a call to stop treating the Holy One like a taskmaster and start calling on Him like the Savior He is. And when that shift happens—when you come with a genuine heart—

worship stops being slavery and becomes love again. The Master you serve is not Pharaoh. He's the Redeemer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you most often feel confident spiritually—your “religious devotion” areas—and how might God be challenging you there?
2. What does it look like, practically, to “call on” the LORD (Isa. 43:22) in a way that's relational and not just routine?
3. In what ways have you ever treated worship/obedience like **avodah** under Pharaoh—bondage—rather than service to a new Master (Ex. 3:12)?
4. The LORD says their offerings didn't “satisfy” Him, but their sins “burdened” Him (Isa. 43:24). What kinds of “empty offerings” do we bring Him sometimes?
5. Why is “*for My own sake*” (Isa. 43:25) such a powerful foundation for forgiveness—and how does it change the way you repent?

CLOSING PRAYER:

Avinu Malkenu, Our Father, Our King, we come to You in honesty. We confess how easily our devotion can become routine, how easily we can keep the motions while losing the heart. Forgive us for the times we have not called on You, for the times we've accused You in our hearts and treated Your worship like slavery. Recenter us in awe—restore the joy of serving You as our true Master and Redeemer.

Adonai, cleanse us where we've been twisting things, where we've covered sin with activity, where our offerings have been empty. Thank You that You have spoken mercy over Your people: “*I, I am the One who blots out your transgressions... and will not remember your sins.*” Draw us into genuine repentance and real relationship. Let our worship touch You—let it be “for You”—and let our lives become a testimony that declares Your praise.

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