

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"I Didn't Mean to Order That, but I'm Glad I Did"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Ps 80, 50 *Is. 5:1–7; Mic. 6:6–8; Ps. 20*

Introduction: When the Answer Isn't What We Expected

Years ago, at an Indian restaurant, I ordered lamb saag. I liked lamb, and I liked spinach, so it seemed like a safe choice. But when the food arrived, it looked like a bowl of green goop. It looked nothing like what I had imagined ordering, and I wasn't excited about trying it. Then I took a bite. It was wonderful! I hadn't expected what arrived at the table, but I was so glad it did. Sometimes we discover that what we receive, though different from what we anticipated, is exactly what we needed.

We do something similar when we pray for revival. We ask the LORD to come, to reveal His glory, to make His face shine upon us. We imagine the joy of His presence, the comfort of His nearness, the beauty of being refreshed. And yes, we need all of that. But when the LORD answers, His presence may bring something we didn't expect: correction, conviction, a purifying rebuke. Psalms 80 and 50, both psalms of Asaph, help us see why. In Psalm 80, God's people cry out for His face to shine. In Psalm 50, He shines forth—and begins dealing with the people who asked Him to come.

1. CRY OUT FOR HIS FACE TO SHINE (Ps. 80:1–8)

Psalm 80 begins with a desperate appeal: *"Give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock"* (Ps. 80:2). The One enthroned upon the cheruvim is asked to shine forth, to stir up His might, and to come save His people. They know who He is. He is their Shepherd, the One who led them, protected them, and brought them this far. Yet now they are eating the bread of tears, surrounded by enemies, wondering why the God who once led them seems distant. Their cry is not simply for improved circumstances. They need Him. They need His presence, His favor, His face.

Three times the psalm returns to this appeal: *"Restore us. Make Your face shine, and we will be saved"* (see Ps. 80:4, 8, 20). That word *restore* carries the idea of turning back. They are asking God to turn them back to Himself, to bring them into right relationship again. And notice that they cannot accomplish this simply by trying harder. They need the LORD to act. How often do we ask Him to fix the circumstances around us when our deepest need is for Him to deal with what is happening within us? Genuine revival begins with this confession: LORD, we need You. Turn us back. Make us live again.

2. ASK HIM TO ATTEND TO THE VINE—EVEN WHEN IT MEANS CORRECTION (Ps. 80:9–20; 50:1–7). The picture changes from a flock to a vine. God brought this vine out of Egypt, cleared the ground, planted it, and caused it to take deep root. It flourished and spread its branches. But now its fences are broken, and anything passing through can

ravage it. The psalmist asks, in effect, LORD, You did all this work! Why would You allow the vineyard You planted to be destroyed? *“Elohei-Tzva’ot, please return! Look down from heaven and see!”* (Ps. 80:15). He pleads for God to attend to His vine, to come and meet with His people. He wants a visitation, a restoring touch, life breathed into what has been devastated.

But Is. 5 shows us another side of this vineyard. The LORD had given His people everything they needed to bear good fruit, yet He found injustice where there should have been justice and cries of suffering where there should have been righteousness. Now read Psalm 50 alongside Psalm 80. *“Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth”* (Ps. 50:2). Here He comes! But He does not come silently. Fire goes before Him, and He summons heaven and earth as witnesses as He judges His own covenant people. We asked Him to attend to the vine, and He has come to do precisely that. Sometimes the light of His face exposes what we would rather leave hidden. His correction is not the opposite of the answer we needed; it may be the very means by which He restores us.

3. LEAVE EMPTY RELIGION BEHIND AND REFLECT HIS CHARACTER (Ps. 50:8–23)

The LORD's rebuke in Psalm 50 is striking because the people are still bringing sacrifices. Their religious activity has not stopped. Yet God says He does not need their bulls or goats; every creature already belongs to Him. They have confused the offering with the heart that ought to be behind it. He calls for *todah*—thanksgiving, gratitude, praise, an acknowledgment of who He is—and for faithfulness in what they have promised. Then He addresses those who recite His instructions but despise correction, who admire dishonesty, deceive with their tongues, and speak against their own brothers. They know the right words, but what is the fruit of their lives? They are giving outward offerings while living in ways that contradict the One they claim to worship.

Then comes the piercing diagnosis: *“You thought I was just like you”* (Ps. 50:21). We can become so comfortable with our own ways that we begin imagining God in our image instead of allowing Him to form us into His likeness. We assume that because something impresses us, it must impress Him. We celebrate the traditions, sing the songs, recite the Scriptures, and perhaps even ask for revival—while resisting the very instruction He gives us. But He wants more than empty observance. As Mic. 6:8 reminds us, He calls us to practice justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him. Psalm 50 closes with a promise: to the one who orders his way rightly, God will show His salvation (Ps. 50:23). He calls us to receive His correction, reset our way, and live as people whose character reflects His own.

CONCLUSION: Welcome the Light That Makes Us Like Him

There is a difference between wanting God to be like us and longing to become like Him. The LORD doesn't come merely to tell us what we want to hear. He comes in truth and love to tell us what we need to hear. That can be uncomfortable. Something that began as genuine worship can, over time, become an empty routine if we stop approaching Him with tender, humble hearts. Even our beautiful traditions can become a substitute for

knowing Him if we simply go through the motions. We need to keep bringing our hearts before Him, asking Him to search us, cleanse us, and make us alive in Him.

Today, don't withdraw when His light exposes something in you. Come to Him. If you have been asking for renewal, be willing to receive the purifying work that renewal may require. If you have been offering Him words without obedience, confess it. If you have been excusing attitudes, speech, or practices that don't reflect His character, lay them down before Him. Call upon Him in your day of trouble, trusting His goodness and His power to rescue. As Psalm 20 reminds us, our confidence is not in chariots or horses, but in the name of ADONAI our God. Let this become the cry of your heart: LORD, I want Your presence, even when it corrects me. Restore me. Give me life. Make me more like Yeshua. Shine Your face upon us, and we will be saved.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the repeated prayer for restoration in Ps. 80 reveal about Israel's deepest need?
2. How does the vineyard imagery in Ps. 80 and Is. 5 help explain why God's people experienced His correction?
3. When you pray for revival or God's presence today, are you willing to welcome an answer that exposes something needing to change in your life?
4. Are there habits of worship, traditions, or ministry activities in your life that have become routine while your heart has grown less attentive to the LORD?
5. What is one concrete way you can practice justice, love mercy, or walk more humbly with God this week, so that your character reflects His?

CLOSING PRAYER

ADONAI, our Shepherd, restore us. Make Your face shine upon us and give us life. We need Your presence, not simply the feeling of Your presence, but the truth and light that come when You draw near. Search our hearts. Show us where we have settled for empty religion, where our words and our lives are not in agreement, and where we have tried to make You into our image instead of being formed into Yours. Give us humble, teachable hearts that do not run from correction. Let even the uncomfortable work of Your purifying fire produce the good fruit You created us to bear. Teach us to offer You genuine thanksgiving, to love what You love, and to walk in Your ways. Make us increasingly like Yeshua, and let Your life be seen in us. In Yeshua's name, Amen.

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