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# Bridges for Peace Israel Teaching Letter

Vol. #770107

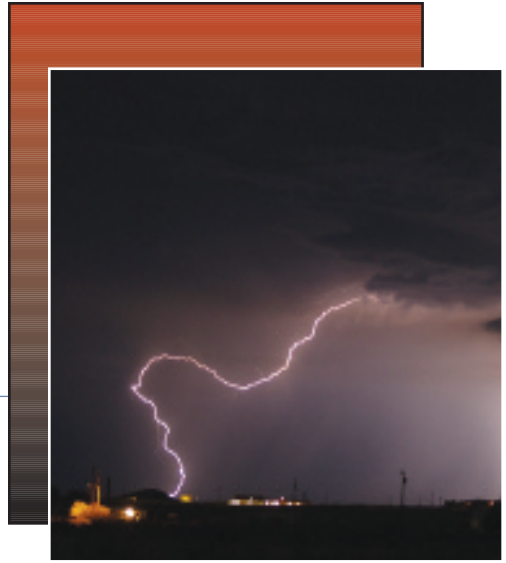
January 2007



## *A Study of Psalm 46* **God Is with Us**

"Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge."  
Psalm 46:10-11

# *A Study of Psalm 46* **God Is with Us**



storm is coming. Any political analyst will tell you so. In fact, anyone who follows the news even occasionally would agree. It is no doubt a storm, the proportions of which, most of us underestimate. *“Behold evil is going forth from nation to nation, and a great storm is being stirred up from the remotest parts of the earth. Those slain by the LORD on that day will be from one end of the earth to the other”* (Jer. 25:32–33a, NASB).

Living here in Israel, surrounded by Arab Islamic nations, prospects of such a “storm” take on a more intense reality, and it feels much closer than when I am in my US mountaintop home surrounded by the golden aspens of Colorado. When I try to picture what the storm will be like, I know I really cannot grasp its enormity. I often wonder if I am ready to face it.

Recently, when a storm began to brew in or around Israel, many pointed to Psalm 83, as it describes a battle that Israel will have with most of its surrounding neighbors. David Dolan, a Jerusalem-based Christian author and journalist, has said that such a battle with the alliance of nations or regions, as mentioned in that psalm, has never happened before. Many of them did come together against Israel in 1967 and 1973, but Egypt was part of those coalitions, and Egypt is not listed in Psalm 83. So, it’s no wonder that people focus on it when the heat in this region gets hotter.



But I would like us to look at Psalm 46. I call it an end-time psalm, because its language is the same as that spoken by the prophets, the Apostle John in the book of Revelation, and Yeshua when He described the last days. I like Psalm 46, not just because it is prophetic, but because it has such a victorious theme. Four times in this short psalm, we are reminded that God is with us in the worst of times.

I believe God wants to prepare us for the storm(s) ahead by reminding us that He is in the midst of the storm. We do not need just a reminder of this wonderful truth; we need the truth of His Word to sink deep inside us, so that we will be able to stand during uncertain and fearful times. Let’s read it.

# Psalm 46

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.
- 2 Therefore we will not fear,  
Even though the earth be removed,  
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
- 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with its swelling. *Selah*
- 4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,  
The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.
- 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;  
God shall help her; just at the break of dawn.
- 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;  
He uttered His voice, the earth melted.
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*
- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,  
Who has made desolations in the earth.
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;  
He burns the chariot in the fire.
- 10 Be still, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!
- 11 The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*



GOD  
*is in the*  
midst



# The Storm—A Time of Trouble

This is not an ordinary storm that the psalmist describes. It is an extraordinary, frightening time of trouble. He is describing what could be the worst of times. It is easy to picture earthquakes and tidal waves. Yeshua's (Jesus's) words come to mind: *"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring"* (Luke 21:25). In Matthew 24:7, He speaks of earthquakes, as does John in Revelation 6:12. When the psalmist says the earth melts, we can picture volcanoes or even nuclear warfare erupting.

But that is not the only kind of trouble described. Verse six outlines the shaking of the political realm of this earth as well. This can entail economic collapse, leadership changes, and war. The psalmist speaks of nations and *"desolations in the earth"* (vs. 8), so it has a worldwide scope. The prophet Haggai described such a time of shaking: *"For thus says the LORD of hosts: 'Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations'"* (2:6–7a).

The good news for Israel is found in Isaiah 54:9–10 (NASB): *"For this is like the days of Noah to Me, when I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again; so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you. For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken," says the LORD who has compassion on you.*

Yet, who wouldn't be afraid in such a time as this? How do we handle such fear? Is it possible to face such times without fear? I do not believe that the storm just ahead will be of the magnitude described in Psalm 46, but neither will it be an ordinary storm. It will no doubt come in stages, increasing in strength and ferocity. Whatever the magnitude, we have never faced anything like it. Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently spoke of the coming conflict with Iran and likened our day to the days of 1938, when the Nazi regime intensified its ugly threats. The difference, he said, is that today's enemy will soon have nuclear capability. Can we face it without fear?

earthquakes



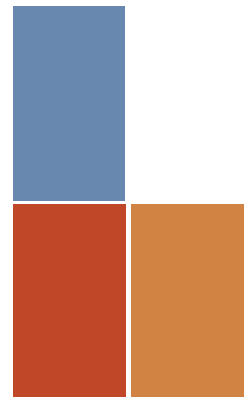
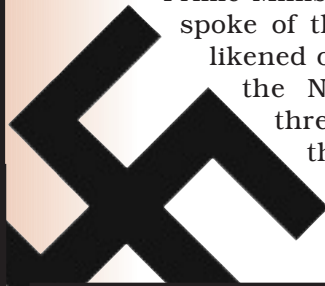
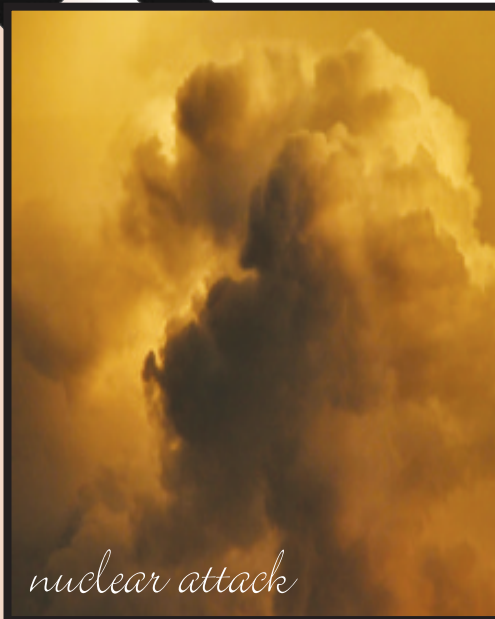
economic collapse



leadership changes



nuclear attack



# “The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm.” (Nahum 1:3)

One answer is in knowing that God is the Lord of the Storm. *“The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm”* (Nahum 1:3). He controls what He created. Although events may look totally chaotic to us, nothing is out of God’s control. He uses the storm for His purposes. Sometimes He uses it for punishment or judgment: *“You will be punished by the LORD of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire”* (Isa. 29:6). This is how Psalm 46 speaks of the storm as well. But God can also calm it whenever He wishes: *“Then they cry out to the LORD in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses. He calms the storm, so that its waves are still”* (Ps. 107:28–29).

Remember, this is not His first storm. *“The LORD sat enthroned at the Flood, and the LORD sits as King forever. The LORD will give strength to His people; the LORD will bless His people with peace”* (Ps. 29:10–11).

## A Very Present Help

Another answer to fear is having confidence in the God who is present. He is a *“very present help in trouble.”* The Hebrew word for “present” (Strong’s #4672) can mean to be found, to be encountered, to be discovered, detected, recognized, to prove to be, to be found sufficient, or to be enough. All of that is what God will be in the time of trouble. He will prove Himself sufficient, more than enough. We will know His presence as we have never known it before. He will be found in the darkest of times, because *“the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You”* (Ps. 139:12). We may not have known Him to be so present before, because we have not ever been in such a dark place before, but He will “prove” it to us.

In end-time language, the psalmist describes Jerusalem as a city under siege and surrounded. Zechariah forecasts that event: *“It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem”* (12:9). Yet, *“God shall help her.”* Isaiah’s words echo the same promise: *“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand’...Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing. For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’ ‘Fear not, you worm Jacob, you men of Israel! I will help you,’ says the LORD and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel”* (41:10, 12b–14).



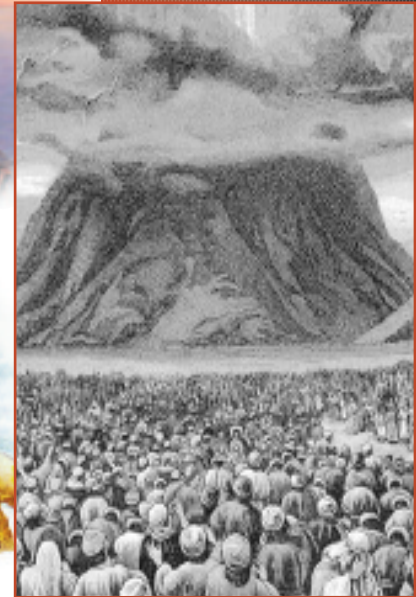


# God Is in the Midst

Verse five says, “*God is in the midst...*” God loves being in the middle of things. From the beginning, His tree of life was in the midst of the garden. He appeared to Moses in the midst of the burning bush. He overthrew Pharaoh in the midst of the sea. His tabernacle was in the midst of the camp, and He walked in the midst of the camp (Deut. 23:14). He spoke to them from the midst of the fire at Mount Sinai. He placed Israel in the middle of the earth. He was the fourth man in the midst of the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Dan. 3:25).

He is in the midst when two or three are gathered in His name (Matt. 18:20). Even at Yeshua’s death, he was in between two others. After His death, when the disciples were shut up indoors because of fear, He appeared in their midst (John 20:19). John sees Him standing in the midst of the seven churches (Rev. 1:13) and finally in the center of the throne in heaven (7:17).

As is repeated twice in Psalm 46, “*The LORD of hosts is with us!*” God is WITH us! As believers, we can say, “God is in me. I will not be moved!” What a comfort! If we let that sink deep into our spirits, fear has to flee.



## God’s Purpose

So, why all the calamity? In Psalm 46, I see a threefold purpose. First, God is judging the world. We usually think of judgment as a terrible thing, but in verse eight, we are invited to come and behold His desolations, and we are to be joyful! Psalm 96 gives us this perspective: “*He shall judge the peoples righteously. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and all its fullness; let the field be joyful, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the LORD. For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with His truth*” (10b–13). Can we imagine a world where justice reigns? How wonderful that will be! It is a good reason to be joyful, even in a time of judgment.

Second, “*He makes wars cease to the end of the earth*” (vs. 9). Although the earth has to go through hell first, we will see peace on earth one day.

Third, “*I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth*” (vs. 10). This is repeated numerous times throughout Scripture. In whatever

“I will be exalted  
among the nations,  
I will be exalted  
in the earth.”  
Psalm 46:10

He does, His goal is that the people He created know Him. Sometimes it is Israel that He has to discipline in order that they know Him, as is stated by Ezekiel: *“And I will bring you out of its midst, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and execute judgments on you. You shall fall by the sword. I will judge you at the border of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD”* (11:9–10).

Other times the Lord does a good thing for His people in order to reveal Himself to them: *“I will accept you as a sweet aroma when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will be hallowed in you before the Gentiles. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers”* (Ezek. 20:41–42).

As God fulfills His promises to Israel, He uses those fulfillments to reveal Himself to the nations as well: *“And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD,” says the Lord GOD, ‘when I am hallowed in you before their eyes.’”* (Ezek. 36:23). Whether in acts of judgment, discipline, or favor, God’s purpose is to be exalted in all the earth.

God is judging the world!



## Our Response

As stated earlier, we are to rejoice in the face of calamity, because we know the outcome. This should be our response in any time of trouble. God always has a purpose for the good of all involved, even if it is masked in “desolations.”

In Psalm 46, the psalmist’s first response is *“Therefore we will not fear.”* It sounds so simple. But we all know it is not that easy. Most of us have not been in the kind of circumstances David was in. We don’t know when he wrote this psalm, but he was speaking with the confidence of someone who had experienced God’s presence in times of trouble: in the face of a bear or lion, standing before Goliath, running for his life from Saul and even one of his sons, and facing the enemy numerous times in battle. Although we may not have been in an earthquake or a tidal wave, we can count on David’s testimony. God will be there, and He will be our refuge and strength.

After talking about desolations, wars, bows, spears, and chariots, God says, *“Be still and know that I am God.”* The Hebrew word for “be still” (Strong’s #7503) does not just mean to be quiet. It means to let drop, abandon, relax, forsake, or to let go. Some translations say “cease striving.”

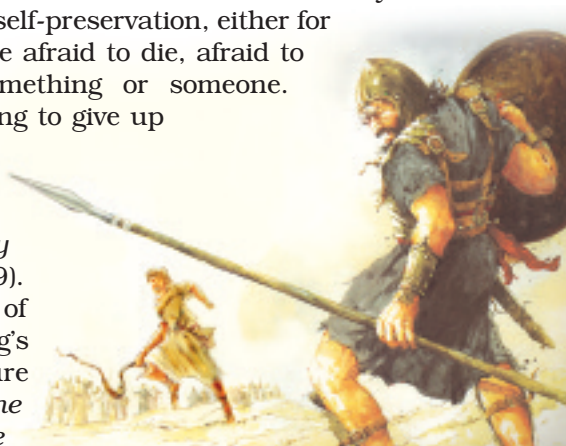
When fearful, we are anything but relaxed; we are tense. Why?

Because we are holding on to self-preservation, either for ourselves or for others. We are afraid to die, afraid to get hurt, afraid to lose something or someone.

Ultimately, we should be willing to give up our lives if He requires it.

Yeshua put it this way: *“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it”* (Matt. 10:39).

Let go, God says, the God of Jacob is your “refuge” (Strong’s #7682), your high place, secure height, or retreat. *“For in the time of trouble He shall hide me*



do not fear

“for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.”  
Isaiah 43:1b–2

be still

let drop  
abandon  
relax  
forsake  
let go

let go of self-preservation

“...he who loses his life for My sake will find it.”  
Matthew 10:39b

memorize

Psalm 46  
Psalm 27  
Psalm 91  
Isaiah 43:1–12



in His pavilion; in the secret place of His tabernacle He shall hide me; He shall set me high upon a rock. And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me" (Ps. 27:5-6a).

It is God's Word that relaxes us. All of us have experienced that. If, when we are distressed, we take the time to read the Word, we find the stress level decreases almost immediately. It is the key to the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

As a child who attended years of Vacation Bible School, I memorized many verses of Scripture, but not many since then. For a long time, I have wanted to regain that discipline. A few months ago, I woke up one morning and suddenly, I just knew it was time to try again. I have had such joy in hiding the Word in my heart. The memorized Word comes alive in a whole different way from just reading it. Let me encourage you to do that. Ask the Lord for the grace needed for this discipline. Then when tough times come, you will have the Word ready, established in your heart, for the time of trouble. Psalm 46 is a good one to start on.

## In Conclusion

In our study of Psalm 46, we have looked at the storm and at the Lord of the Storm, who is in total control of events and is very present with us. He likes being "in the midst," especially in stormy times. What about us? Where does He want us? He wants us "in the midst" too. Even though the God of Jacob is our refuge and a safe place to run to, He is a refuge IN the storm. Think about it. When times are tough and the storm is at its fiercest, where is the greatest need? It is in the midst of the chaos. And who can be the best help? Those who do not let fear paralyze them.

We saw this evidenced here in Israel during last summer's war with Hizbullah. Calls for help came in from places Bridges for Peace had never touched, and our regular recipients called for more than the usual amounts. They did not need the supplies when the situation quieted down. They needed food and supplies during the rocket barrages. Many of our staff traveled north amidst the danger, not knowing where or when another rocket would fall. Because we were not afraid to be "in the midst," we were able to help 23,000 people during and after the war!

God wants us in the midst of the chaos with Him. It is there He is best seen, and His presence in us is best realized. May the Lord prepare us for the days ahead, that we may be ready and able to meet the need of the hour.

By Charleeda Sprinkle  
Assistant Editor  
International Publications



SECOND LEBANON WAR, 2006:  
Top: IDF tanks on the border  
Middle: Kiryat Shemona  
Bottom: Bridges for Peace in action

All Scripture is from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and lay people have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

