

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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PSALM 46

The Quiet in the Quake

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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 king-
doms 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

The Quiet in the Quake



In the early 70s, my architect father was designing a school in a remote northern community. He occasionally had to go and inspect how the builders were progressing with its construction. The only way to get to this community was by floatplane during the summer and fall, or by ice road in the winter. During ice-out in the spring, the community was inaccessible.

One summer day, my dad and his pilot started their 400-mile journey north. At their first refueling point, they taxied into the fuel dock, but were told that payment had to be in cash; the place wasn't equipped to handle credit cards. The pilot only had a few dollars in his pocket and my dad had no cash with him at all.

Here they were, stranded in a remote community with no way to go forward or back. Not sure quite what to do about their predicament, Dad wandered down to the end of the dock. He looked down into the water, and noticed something riding on the top of a wave. He reached down and plucked it out of the water. It was a twenty-dollar bill.

He looked across the lake to see where it could have come from because the wind was blowing onshore. But the other shore was miles away. And there were no boats or other people in sight.

Dad took the money to the gas attendant and said, "Did anyone lose 20 bucks? I just found this in the lake." The attendant just shrugged, and said, "I guess it's yours now." With that \$20 and the few dollars the pilot had, they were able to buy enough fuel to reach the next refueling point, which accepted credit cards. Dad later told us that he hadn't consciously prayed about the situation, but both he and the pilot realized that this was not just a happy coincidence. God was obviously with them.

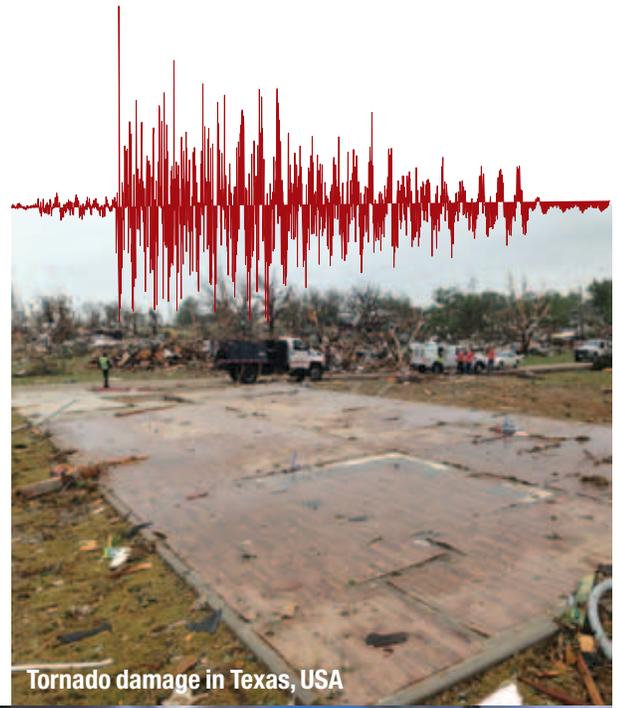
Now, that may seem like a fairly minor miracle—if there is such a thing! But in these dangerous times, we need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is with us—all the time.

The Whole World Quakes

In May of 2013, massive tornadoes hit Arkansas, Texas, and the whole Midwest—and didn't stop hitting. On the news, we saw people huddling in their storm shelters, emerging to find widespread devastation; their homes and often their whole communities wiped out. Recently, Colorado was ravaged by the worst firestorms in its history. And in Canada, my home nation, unprecedented flooding ravaged communities in the province of Alberta.

In November of 2012, some of us finally got a taste of what it was like to scramble to the safety of our bomb shelters, when Jerusalem was targeted by Hamas' long-range missiles.

And just over the border, Syria has been locked in an impossible deadlock between Assad and the rebel forces, and over 90,000 people are dead. Assad is threatening Israel with chemical weapons and has just taken delivery of Russian-supplied S-300 missiles. Iran is quickly developing nuclear capabilities. And Israel is stocking safe rooms, readying gas masks, and preparing for a possible pre-emptive strike on Iran.



Tornado damage in Texas, USA



Russian S-300 launcher



Flooding in Alberta, Canada

A Psalm of Confidence

So, what do we do as believers, when the world seems to be collapsing around us?

Psalm 46:1 says, “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*” This psalm is called “The Psalm of Confidence.” Four times in the psalm, we are reminded that the Lord Himself will help us in times of storm or danger. We can be *confident* that God is with us every moment and is ready and able to help.

When I came to Israel, one of the first Hebrew words I learned, other than *shalom* (peace) was *balagan*. It means chaos. God is all we need in the midst of *balagan*—when the days get dark, the storm clouds descend, and when all is chaos, He is our *Shalom*. Operation Pillar of Defense, a military operation by the Israel Defense Forces into the Gaza Strip in November 2012, referred to the pillar of cloud that hovered over the children

of Israel in their escape from Egypt. God's help is *not just* for thousands of years ago. Israel knows that today, God is still their *very present help* in times of trouble.

The Hebrew word for refuge is *chasah*—to take shelter in, to flee to a place of safety, like a high tower, a fortress, or a bomb shelter. The Hebrew word for present is *matsa'* and it can mean to be found, to be discovered, to be found sufficient, or to be enough. God has proven Himself to be sufficient in times of trouble. The word “very” emphasizes that He is *more* than enough. The Hebrew words, in fact, are very emphatic: *ezerah betsaroth nimtsa meod*, “He is found an exceeding or superlative help in difficulties.”

GOD is our REFUGE and STRENGTH,
a very present HELP in trouble. Psalm 46:1



Tabernacle in the wilderness

www.bibleplaces.com/Todd Bolen

Jewish sages say that “*HaShem* (literally the Name) not only defends us but also strengthens us during battle. He is our *refuge* when He protects us from the enemy’s onslaught. Then He is our *strength* when we counter-attack and destroy the foe...Since He saves tiny, weak Israel from the threat posed by many mighty nations, God’s help is indeed great.”

When God instructed Moses to build the Tabernacle, it was intended to be the place where God would dwell with the children of Israel. The Hebrew word for tabernacle is *mishkan* and it is used 139 times in the Old Testament. That word is mentioned more than any other object; and the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says: “The Word of God is essentially about God dwelling with man, until man, who chooses to receive the gift of His Son’s sacrifice, dwells with Him”. That’s the theme of the whole Bible: God dwelling with us, so we can dwell with Him.



Therefore
WE WILL
NOT FEAR...

...even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Psalm 46:2

God Will Deliver His People

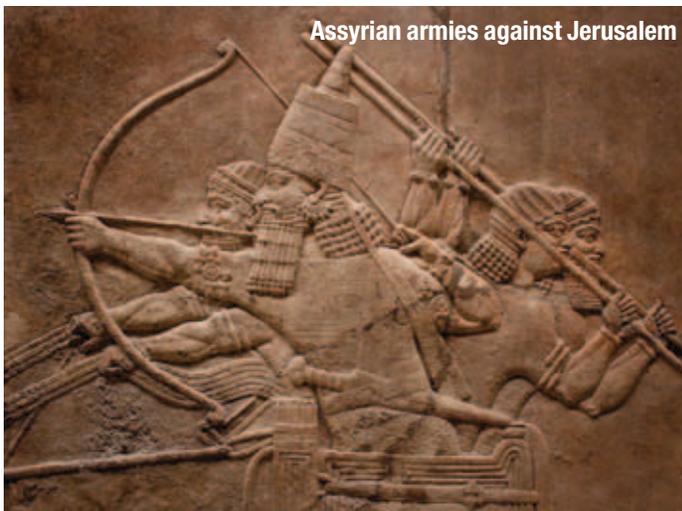
So what should be our response when we know that God is with us? Verse 2 in Psalm 46 says: “*Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.*” What is being described here is a natural disaster of catastrophic proportions. Mountains topple into the sea, and the earth is removed.

Psalm 46 has a notation at the beginning: “*for the sons of Korah.*” The Korahites were the descendants of Levi, and in the priestly line. In Numbers 16, we read that Korah rebelled against Moses and Aaron in the desert, and God in His anger, opened up the earth, and it swallowed Korah and all those with him. But there was a godly remnant of the Korahites who survived and who became temple musicians dedicated to the worship of the Lord in song. If the sons of Korah wrote this psalm, they must have been remembering that tragic family story passed down from generation to generation when the earth was literally removed!

Even as they looked back to that event, the sons of Korah also looked toward future events when Israel would be threatened by armies and cataclysmic eruptions, strong enough to affect the entire world. One such event occurred when the Sennecherib, the king of Assyria, came up against Jerusalem in 701 BC.

The incident is recorded in Isaiah 36 and 37. The Assyrians had just finished demolishing Lachish, and turned their attention to Jerusalem. They taunted the Jews on the wall with the boast that one Assyrian could defeat 2,000 Jews. But then King Hezekiah pleaded for God’s deliverance, and the angel of the Lord went out and killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers during the night. The Jews sat on the wall and watched God deliver them without having to lift a finger in their own defense.

The Jewish sages believe that the other cataclysmic event which the sons of Korah foresaw in Psalm 46 was the coming War of Gog and Magog, when the armies of the earth would surround God’s Holy City and wage war against Jerusalem, an event which must precede the coming of Messiah. As in His victory over the Assyrians, God will show the nations that He is Creator and Judge of the universe, and will rescue His Chosen People from their powerful enemies.



Assyrian armies against Jerusalem

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Shaking Kingdoms

In biblical symbolism, mountains often refer to kingdoms. Scripture tells us that earthly kingdoms will be shaken. We've seen that happen, especially over the last two years in the Middle East with the Arab Spring. Kingdoms have been shaken, are still being shaken, and many have toppled. Verse 3 of Psalm 46 says, *"Though the mountains shake with its swelling."* Here, the word "swelling" implies arrogance and pride. God will bring the kingdoms low that are filled with their own arrogance and pride. We can all think of nations that are full of arrogance, and the future doesn't bode well for them, just as it did not for Sennecharib's powerful and boastful empire.

A Flowing River

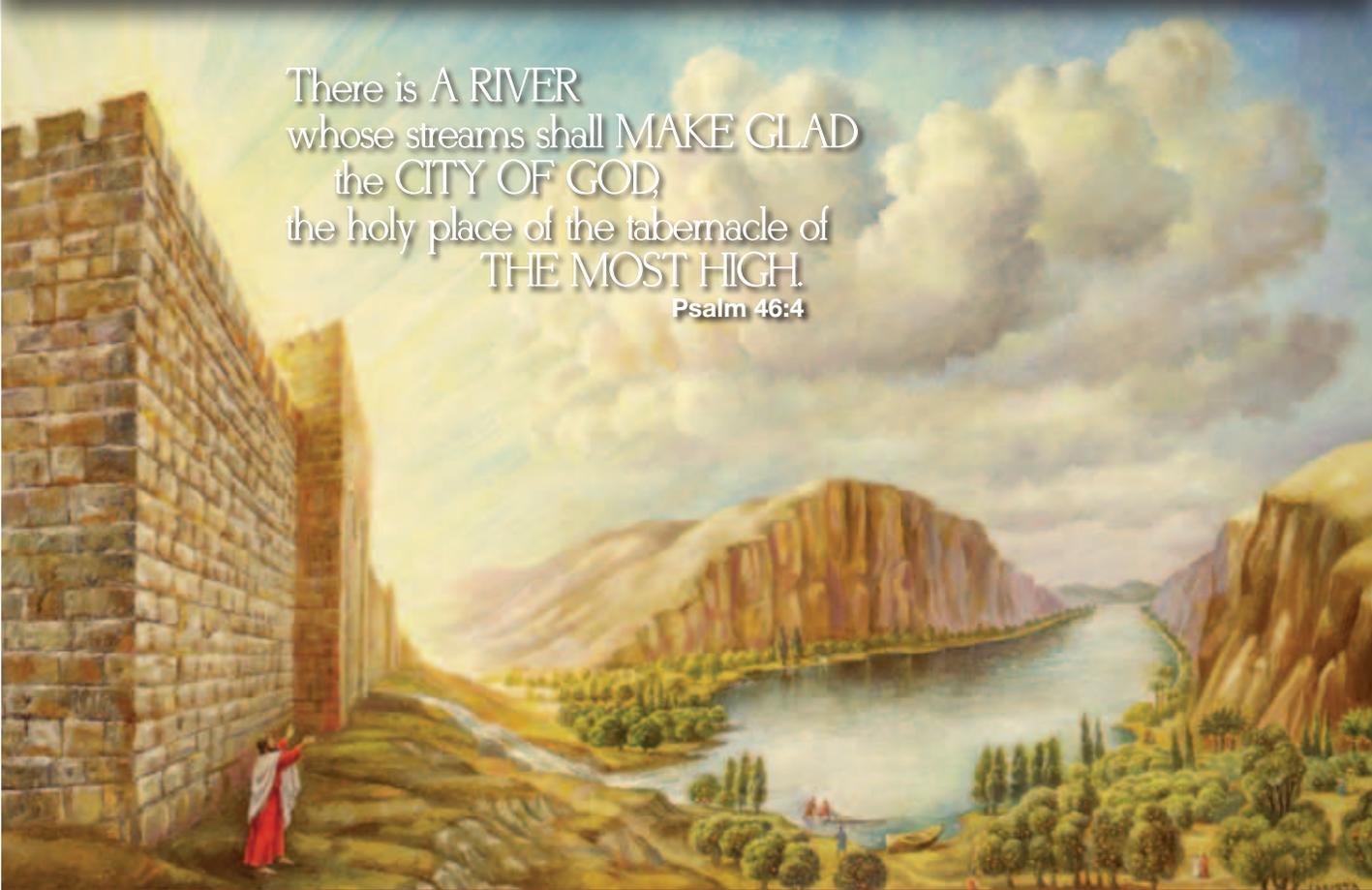
Psalm 46:4 may well be Messianic in character. We go from a raging sea and horrific natural forces to a peaceful river. *"There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High."*

A flowing river will make the people of Jerusalem glad. The river the psalmist is referring to may be the Gihon Spring which Hezekiah diverted into the city by tunnel. It was life-giving water to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in case of siege.

The significance here is that the city of God, Jerusalem, will be a place of peace and tranquility in the midst of turmoil happening in the nations surrounding Israel. Jerusalem is the place where God dwells, and where He is worshipped. One Jewish commentator says, "Although the entire land of Israel is God's dwelling place, the holiest place of all (where His spirit rests with the greatest intensity) is Jerusalem and the Holy Temple."

The river may also refer to the coming prophetic river in Revelation 22:1-2 *"and he showed me a pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."*

At the Feast of Tabernacles, there was a priestly tradition that vessels of water would be carried up from the Pool of Siloam (Hebrew Shiloah) to the Temple. And the water represented God-given life. Jesus was at the Temple on the last day of the Feast, and shouted in a loud voice, *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me...out of his heart will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37-38).



There is A RIVER
whose streams shall MAKE GLAD
the CITY OF GOD,
the holy place of the tabernacle of
THE MOST HIGH.
Psalm 46:4

Destruction of Jerusalem



Security in His Presence

History has shown us that walls and fortresses did not save Jerusalem. Her walls fell many times through the centuries. When archaeologists first began excavating the city, they discovered numerous layers of rubble and debris, some more than 60 feet (18 m) deep, indicating that parts of Jerusalem had been destroyed many times. Down through its history, Jerusalem was captured at least 40 times and besieged at least 23 times.

Jerusalem was completely destroyed at least twice, once by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8-10) and again by the Romans under Titus in AD 70, and those falls were catastrophic.

Walls did not save Jerusalem and will not save the city now, but what *will* make a difference is the presence of God (YHWH)* *within* the walls of the city. Psalm 46 looks forward to a time when the city will never be attacked or destroyed again—when foreign armies will never again lay siege to her walls. When the Lion of Judah lifts His voice, and the earth melts, Jerusalem will find her security in His presence—while the nations around her are reeling.

If the earth literally does melt when He lifts His voice, then the end for those nations is catastrophic indeed, and graphically foretold in Zechariah 14:12: “*And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.*”

God is in Our Midst

“*God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.*” (Ps. 46:5)

God has a long history of being “in the midst” in Scripture. He was in the midst when Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were thrown into the fiery furnace, cloaking them in the power and protection of His living presence. And when they came out of the furnace, their clothes didn’t even smell like smoke.

God wants us to know that wherever we are in the seasons of our life, He is with us. Some are dealing with debilitating loneliness; some are in financial difficulty; dealing with betrayal, or rejection; or a serious illness; or in a place of sorrow. God wants us to know He is in the midst of all these times with us. And when we emerge from the flames of these trials, our deliverance will be so complete, we will not even have the smell of smoke on us.

One evening, we attended a music recital at the Yuval School of Music in Jerusalem. The Yuval students proudly got up on stage and displayed their newfound musical talent.

At one point, four tiny violinists confidently went on stage with their miniature violins, obviously excited about performing. But one little girl, about four years old, was struck with such stage fright that she burst into tears. Our hearts were wrung by her distress. No one seemed to know quite what to do.

Then her father ran from the audience, gathered her into his arms, and placed her in the back row behind the other children. He knelt down beside her with his arm around her, and held the little violin to her chin. Even though I didn’t see her play a single note during the whole performance, it was probably the most memorable moment of the evening for me. When the young violinists had finished their piece, this wise, loving father gathered his daughter into his arms and carried her off the stage.

It was a beautiful picture of our heavenly *Abba*, who embraces us in our time of distress. He doesn’t help us because we give a great performance; He helps us because of who we are—His children. And He’s ready to leap to our defense when we’re overwhelmed. Like this young girl’s father who wisely decided not to take her off the stage immediately but stayed with her during the entire performance, our *Abba* may not remove us from the situation we’re in, but He is always right beside us—He’s in our midst.



Pavel L. Photo and Video/Shutterstock.com

*YHWH is sometimes pronounced *Yahweh* or *Jehovah* by Christians, but regarded as unpronounceable by the Jewish world who substitutes LORD or HaShem.

GOD is in the MIDST of her,
she shall NOT BE MOVED... Psalm 46:5a

In Israel's Midst

Recently, I googled “Miracles in Israel” and spent a fascinating afternoon watching stories of supernatural miracles, most of which happened during Israel’s darkest hours—when surrounding Arab nations threatened to wipe Israel off the face of the map as a nation and a people. Rather than annihilation, hundreds of miracles happened instead. God was in the midst of His people and intervened on their behalf.

After the miraculous victory Israel had in the Six Day War, Moshe Dayan’s generalship was lauded by the secular media as one of the reasons Israel won the war. But General Dayan knew

who was really behind Israel’s victory. He scribbled a note at the Western Wall and placed it in a crevice. On it he’d written a line from Psalm 118, “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes.”

The Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Nazis, and numerous others—all have made war against God’s people, and then disappeared. There will come a time when God says, enough! All wars will cease forever. He will break the bow, cut the spear in two, and jam the world’s modern hand-held weapon of choice—the AK47—all 75 million of them.



Photo by Eddeleene Marrais

Treasuries of Hail and Snow

In December of 2012, Rick Ridings, the director of Succat Hallel, one of the Houses of Prayer in Jerusalem, had a vision where Israel was protected by angelic beings that moved around the borders of Israel like flames atop the seven branches of a *menorah*. Then the Lord placed four huge angels in position. Two of them were at the southern border of Syria, and two were at the southern border of Lebanon. These angels had winds and weather patterns at their disposal to release at specific moments.

He said, “On January 8, a news report was released that the Syrians had begun mixing chemicals together for weapons. The intelligence reports said that if these chemicals were put into a missile or airplane to deliver them, they could be used within two or three hours.” This report obviously caused Israel to heighten their security.

The next day, on January 9, a major snowstorm hit Jerusalem. The media called it the fiercest storm in 20 years. All across Israel there were heavy winds and rain, and in Jerusalem, heavy snowfall.

“When there are heavy winds or heavy rains, security experts say that chemical weapons either don’t work, or can be blown back in the direction from which they come. No one can say for sure what Assad was doing at the time, but the severe weather did come the day after the reports of Syria’s preparation to use chemical weapons.”

Job 38:22–23 says, “Have you entered the treasury of snow or have you seen the treasury of hail, which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?”

Many of us were wondering why Jerusalem had been experiencing such unusually frequent and heavy winds throughout the first half of 2013. Could it be that the Lord was protecting Israel with His storehouses of wind, hail, rain, and snow?

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BE STILL,
and know that
I AM GOD;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!
Ps. 46:10

Ps. 46:10

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“Be still” doesn’t just mean be quiet—it is the Hebrew word *raphah* which means to cast down; to let fall, as in drop your hands. It means to let go, and remain calm in light of who we know our God to be.

Rashi, one of the foremost Jewish commentators on the *Tanach* (Gen.–Mal.) goes a step farther. He believes that here God is speaking to the nations. When God says “Be still,” He means “Desist! Desist from your assault on Jerusalem.” Drop your weapons! This is God’s warning to the nations before He breaks their bows and spears in two.

God has intervened down through the ages to protect His people when they were surrounded by danger, and He is intervening today in miraculous ways. He intends to intervene in Israel’s time of trouble so that the world will know there is a God in Israel who will be exalted, and His name is *Adonai Tzva’ot*, the One who commands the vast armies of heaven! Regardless of what the world does, He *will* right all wrongs, He *will* save His people, and He *will* be exalted.

By Kathy DeGagné, BFP Staff Writer

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

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