## Elul: repent and rejoice! the King is in the field

Elul 3, B"H 5783

- The Hebrew month of Elul
- Elul, the High Holy Days, and the Coming of the Bridegroom
- Repentance and Holiness
- Teshuvah: Biblical Repentance
- 40 Days of Repentance: Elul or Lent?
- Cheshbon haNefesh: The accounting for the soul
- HaMelech ba'sadeh: The King is in the field
- Personal Prayer and Devotional Time during the month of Elul

#### The Hebrew month of Elul

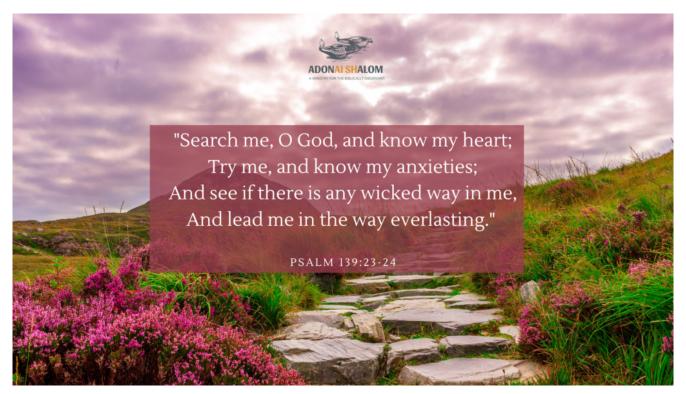
You may recall my <u>post</u> from July about <u>Tisha b'Av</u>. In that <u>post</u>, I introduced the Hebrew months of the year to help ubicate us in understanding the significance of certain dates on the Biblical calendar.

One of those months is called "Elul."

Elul (Heb.  $\square\square\square\square$ ) comes from the root word "to search."

This is the time of year when we are reminded that the LORD searches our hearts and knows us and we repent for those things which we continue to struggle with in our ongoing journey in holiness.

We are to search inside of ourselves and turn away from that which harms our relationship with the LORD Most High as we enter a new Biblical year.



Psalm 139:23-24

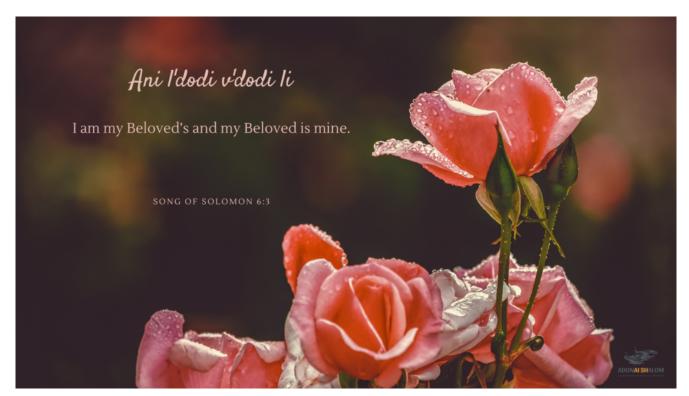
"Search me, O God, and know my heart;

Try me, and know my anxieties;

And see if there is any wicked way in me,

And lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24

Medieval Jewish sages realized that each letter of the word "Elul" in Hebrew can serve as an acronym for the well-known phrase from Song of Solomon 6:3 "Ani l'dodi, v'dodi li" (Hebrew for "I am my Beloved's and my Beloved is mine").



Song of Solomon 6:3

When we reflect on this time of preparation, we see that Elul is a time of preparation for the Bride, for truly the Bridegroom is coming. This is a time of self-examination as we prepare to meet our Coming King. He accepts us with the deepest of love when we come before Him with a pure and contrite heart, made beautiful by our relationship with Him.

### Elul, the High Holy Days, and the Coming of the Bridegroom



The month of Elul precedes what are known as the High Holy Days. These days include Yom Teruah (also known as Rosh Hashanah) and Yom Kippur. Yom Teruah occurs on the first day of the next month which is known as Tishrei. The High Holy Days are customarily a time of introspection as Yom Kippur serves as the yearly day of atonement. Israel pleads to be written in the Book of Life, and sealed for another year.

Now that our Messiah and Almighty Savior Yeshua (Jesus Christ) has come, those who have confessed Him as LORD and King have the assurance that the names of the saved are written in the Book of Life, never to be blotted out.

Elul is like the month before the wedding. Preparation is made because soon the Bridegroom will come. The Bride may prepare for the Coming Bridegroom with grace, dignity, and confidence because she has been set apart, consecrated, made ready for the moment when her King comes.

### Repentance and Holiness

As saved and sanctified children of God, we continue to pursue holiness and the path of righteousness.

Hebrews 12:14 exhorts us to "Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord."

Though we may not experience all that which tremendously occurred at Mount Sinai, we now spiritually experience the glory of Mount Zion.

The writer of Hebrews continues: "For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow."

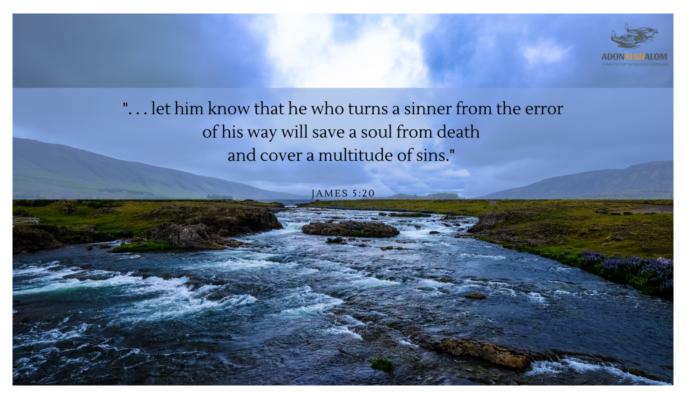
And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.")

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel."

We are to live our lives with quiet and holy fear (reverence).

To do this fully, a true believer and follower of the LORD will very obviously seek to live in humility, all too aware of our faults and failings, but awesomely and intimately aware that He is perfecting us each and every day. We live with an

attitude of repentance, thankful that His mercy blots out a multitude of sins. We do the work of ministry, always seeking to share the Word with those who do not yet know Him — not to gain a place in heaven, but to demonstrate our heavenly citizenship! The world glorifies sin. We glorify only Jesus (Yeshua), the One who died to take away our sins and the One who will return for us!



James 5:20

". . . let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." James 5:20

On the <u>Day of Shavu'ot (Pentecost)</u>, Peter urged his listeners to repent:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will

raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities." Acts 3:19-26.

#### Teshuvah: Biblical Repentance

The Jewish understanding of the concept of "teshuvah" is slightly different than the traditional Christian interpretation of repentance.

Standard Christian repentance is about simply turning away from sin. There is nothing wrong with that. But *teshuvah*, true Biblical repentance, goes deeper than that.

Teshuvah is a "return." More specifically, a return to our first love after being astray.

Inherent in teshuvah is the acknowledgement that we have sinned, but this is more about returning to the Way of the LORD than about guilt: it requires an action on our part to strive to right the wrong.

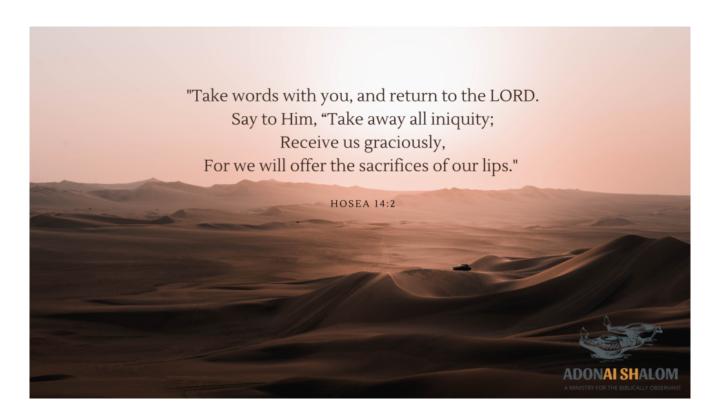
"Teshuvah" is seen as an action. It is often said one is "doing teshuvah."

Teshuvah means the individual identifies the wrongs they have committed and actively works toward a *behavioral change* "to right the wrong." The sinner confesses to God, but also goes back to the one he or she has wronged to ask for forgiveness and attempt to right the wrong.

Christians know that we cannot earn our salvation, so the concept of "teshuvah" gets a bit difficult for many Christians to understand. I have even found that some Christians simply do not want to understand because they would rather remain complacent. Some use texts about grace to shirk any semblance of responsibility, which is a truly irresponsible way to view YHVH's immense and perfect grace. I believe in grace. I also believe in doing what is right.

Teshuvah is something the Christian can do in gratitude for salvation. Any decent person of faith ought strive to right their wrongs, right? The difference is, we know that we will never be able to erase the evil we have done to another so we cannot completely right our wrongs and we know that. We trust in our Merciful LORD, the Righter of Wrongs to bring healing, restoration, and ultimately wholeness.

Elul is the time of year when *teshuvah* is emphasized. Hosea uses the term "teshuvah" in admonishing the people of Israel to return to the LORD.



Hosea 14:2

"Take words with you,

And return to the LORD.

Say to Him,

"Take away all iniquity;

Receive us graciously,

For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips." Hosea 14:2, emphasis added

Biblical repentance is about returning to the LORD with nothing hindering our relationship. We are cleansed and made new by the blood of the Lamb and we are victorious by the word of our testimony.

We are ready to meet our Beloved.

"Hatred stirs up strife,
But love covers all sins." Proverbs 10:12



Proverbs 10:12

### 40 Days of Repentance: Elul or Lent?

The time of repentance observed in the month of Elul is set by Biblical precedent.

It sounds very much like a Hebrew "Lent" for those familiar with Lenten practices.

I will be controversial here, but I'm not one to shy from that  $\hdots$  . . .

Lent is a manmade invention championed by the liturgical world. It is not Biblical.

Historically, significant efforts were made to distance the "church" from its Jewish (and Biblical, mind you) history. It is no secret that Catholic and Lutheran churches alike were plagued with antiSemitism for many many years.

Those who invented Lent took the concept of Elul (a 40 day time of prayer and fasting lasting from 1 Elul to 10 Tishrei) and "Christianized" it, citing a time to prepare to honor the death and resurrection of Christ. Sadly, the Western inventions of things like Advent and Lent have served to confuse the body of Christ and isolate us from the true Biblical feast days and their significance.

Elul is about returning. Let us return to the basic (Hebraic!) tenets of our faith — to seek to walk on the path of righteousness, guided by the LORD Himself as written in His Holy Word.

From Genesis to Revelation, the Word of God is available to us and if we are not spending time in the Word, that is another reason for repentance.

Collectively, we should repent that the church has strayed so far and has actually contributed to the unbelief of the Jewish people as they observe the glaring discrepancies of many unBiblical "Christian" practices.

May we return to the essence of Elul.

### Cheshbon haNefesh: The accounting for the soul

Cheshbon haNefesh is a Hebrew term used frequently throughout the month of Elul. "Cheshbon" is used in modern Hebrew to describe an invoice or bill, such as at a café. Cheshbon: what is owed, what must be paid, the account. Nefesh refers to the soul or what makes you you — it is a word that is also translated as "life" or "being." Nefesh is the life force within you.

During Elul, we are reminded of His gracious gift. We fall on our knees in the humblest of gratitude, thankful that Yeshua (Jesus) shed His precious blood in payment to redeem our souls.

We owe everything to our Savior yet we know our account has been paid in full.

Elul is a time to reflect on how we are using our nefesh — how are we using the life that is within us to advance the Kingdom of God? It is a time to take ourselves to account.

This is a time to realize where we truly fall short in our relationship with our Creator. In what ways do we fail to love? Do we truly love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind?

#### HaMelech ba'sadeh: The King is in

#### the field

It is often said during Elul that "the King is in the field."

The King of all kings, who may seem unapproachable, who is far in His heavenly palace seated on His throne is the same King who reaches out His scepter even when we are unworthy of His mercy. The King of all kings is the same King who comes to our level — He humbled Himself and walked in those fields ripe for harvest.

The Chassidic interpretation is that the King comes when the laborers are in the field — meeting His workers where they are. Surprising them with His presence. Demonstrating kindness.

The King is coming.

The King is in the field.

The King of all kings is approachable and He loves you.

You can go to Him and He will receive you with open arms.

And you will be raptured away in love together.



### HaMelech ba'sadeh: The King is in the field



### Personal Prayer and Devotional Time during the month of Elul

It is traditional to read  $\frac{Psalm}{27}$  daily during the month of Elul.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
Whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the strength of my life;
Of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked came against me
To eat up my flesh,
My enemies and foes,
They stumbled and fell.
Though an army may encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear;
Though war may rise against me,
In this I will be confident.

One thing I have desired of the LORD,
That will I seek:

That I may dwell in the house of the LORD

All the days of my life,

To behold the beauty of the LORD,

And to inquire in His temple.

For in the time of trouble

He shall hide me in His pavilion;

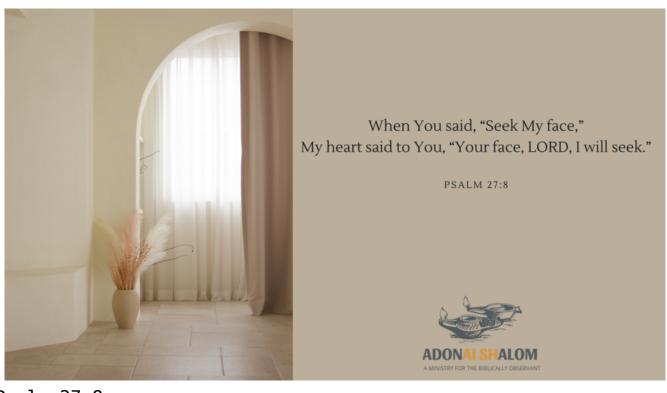
<u>In the secret place of His tabernacle</u>

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;

<u>Therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tabernacle;</u> <u>I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD</u>.



Psalm 27:8

Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice!

Have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

When You said, "Seek My face,"

My heart said to You, "Your face, LORD, I will seek."

Do not hide Your face from me;

Do not turn Your servant away in anger;

You have been my help;

Do not leave me nor forsake me,

O God of my salvation.

When my father and my mother forsake me,

Then the LORD will take care of me.

Teach me Your way, O LORD,

And lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies.

Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries;

For false witnesses have risen against me,

And such as breathe out violence.

I would have lost heart, unless I had believed

That I would see the goodness of the LORD

In the land of the living.

Wait on the LORD;

Be of good courage,

And He shall strengthen your heart;

Wait, I say, on the Lord!

Perhaps you would like to reflect on this passage during this time, as well. This <u>Psalm</u> truly speaks to the relationship aspect of our faith: that we call upon Him and He answers and we are to seek His face.

The King is in the field and the harvest is ready but the workers are few.

Will you meet Him in the field?

Will you share the Good News that the King is coming back again!?

Repent and Rejoice!

Our King is coming for us!

Please comment below! I'd love to hear your thoughts about the month of Elul and the coming of our Almighty King!

# 7 Biblical responses for when your child experiences racism for the first time

- Our family bubble
- The enemy wants to burst your bubble
- When loving thy neighbor is put to the test
- Perceived Racism
- Addressing Fear
- <u>So how do you help a child who has encountered real</u> racism OR perceived racism for the first time?
  - 1. Remind your child that all of us were created in the image of God. Race is a social construct and racism is sin.
  - 2. If your child has accepted the free gift of salvation that is given to us by putting our faith and trust in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ), he or she is part of a holy, set apart and chosen generation and God calls us "special." We don't need to rely on anyone else to validate our existence or our skin color.
  - 3. Encourage your child to turn to the LORD when feeling scared, discriminated against, alone, or unsafe. He is our Stronghold, our Fortress, and our Deliverer.
  - <u>4. Emphasize the Biblical mandate to remain peaceful. Always seek shalom: wholeness and peace.</u>
  - <u>5. Hear out your child. Allow him or her to</u> express their emotions about racism.
  - <u>6. Exhort your child to be an overcomer despite</u> any circumstance.

- 7. Pray together in the Spirit.
- Walk in Faith, no matter what and refuse to be intimidated

#### Our family bubble

I like my faith-filled bubble.

Our family prays together and we read the LORD's Word together and we worship together.

We love to share our faith with those who do not know the LORD and all of us are pretty resilient in the face of argumentation and those who refuse to accept the Truth.

My children are homeschooled and sometimes I forget that we live in this joyful little bubble!

### The enemy wants to burst your bubble

And I was taken off guard yesterday.

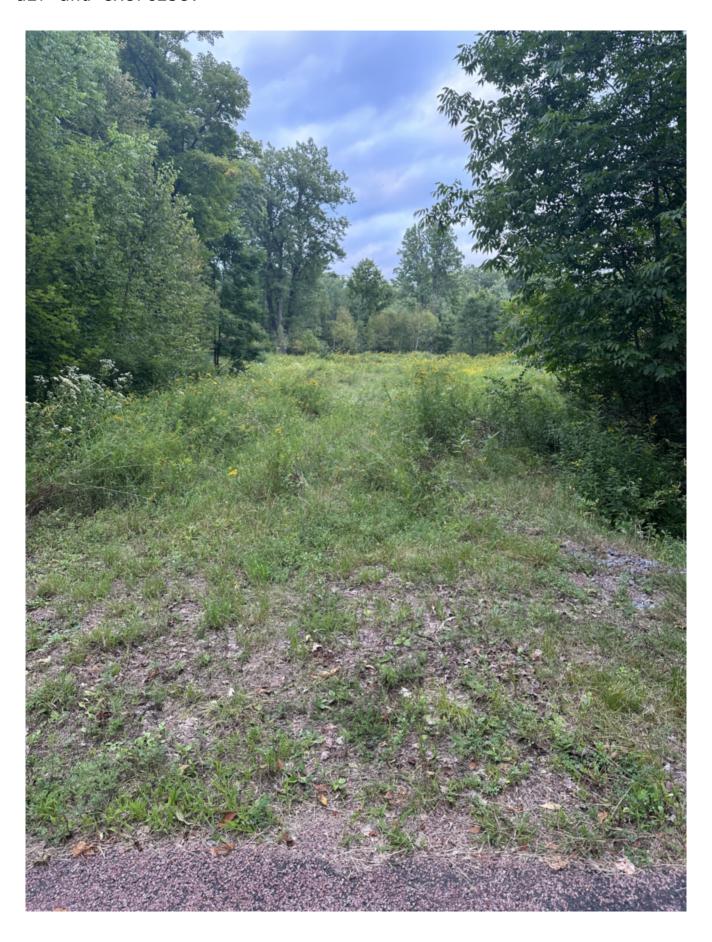
My son had gone outside to walk our German Shepherd, Canelo, on a small dead-end road that borders one edge of our corner lot house. Our family has walked that way many times because there is rarely a car and we often see beautiful wildlife including deer and sandhill cranes. I often try to get a close-up picture, but the creatures prove elusive.



Canelo

An evening walk has become a new summertime routine for my son. He started taking the dog all by himself about a week or two ago and I believe it is a quiet time for him. I have

noticed an improvement in his snarky-young-teenager remarks and so I was very happy that he had learned to get some fresh air and exercise.



The road seems like a peaceful one, with just four houses on the short northwoods street.





The end of the road

Last year, the houses on that road held a little community rummage sale, so we stopped by and met the neighbors. They were all fairly friendly, but the couple living at one of the houses seemed less so . . . and overly interested in detailing the alcohol flask collection they were trying to sell.

We assumed from their demeanor and manner of conversation that they perhaps struggle with drinking. I hadn't seen or heard from them since.

Until last night.

My son came home and he had a look of disbelief on his face.

I asked him what had happened.

### When loving thy neighbor is put to the test

"The neighbor lady yelled at me."

I couldn't imagine this, so I asked for details.

He recounted: "She came out on her porch and yelled out, '. . You need to go use a different path. Can't you see you're making my dog bark? Go on.' Then she just stood there and stared at me until I left."

I asked him if he replied to her spitefully (which would not have necessarily surprised me).

He said, "No, I just said 'Ok, I'm sorry' and came home. I had a million bad things I wanted to say to her, but I didn't because I know I'm supposed to be Christian."

Well, there's a proud mom moment. My child is trying to act like a follower of our Messiah ought to act.

Trying to give the neighbor lady the benefit of the doubt, I asked if she perhaps was kidding? Maybe she had a twinge of humor, "look, kid, you make my dog bark and it drives me crazy..."

"No. She was not joking one bit."

So the mama bear in me was incensed that our very neighbor could be so mean to a child! Especially my child! My son's mere presence in the road in front of her house caused her an

issue? Our dog wasn't barking at her dog. I have heard her dog on other occasions. I believe he looks out their front window and barks every time a dog passes. But that is her issue, not mine. And most certainly not my son's issue.

I want to tell her that the road is public land and my child has the right to walk his doggie wherever he so pleases. And I want to shout right back at her. How dare she hurt my son's feelings! But alas. I am a Christian. I am a pastor! I have to be "Midwest nice" at the least, right? I have to love my neighbor!?

Ugh. No one said following Yeshua (Jesus) would be easy.

#### Perceived Racism

But there was something else that my son said that really hurt my mama heart. He said that the woman had muttered something before yelling and he thought it sounded like "you ill . . . "

I said maybe she meant, "you ill-mannered...."

I asked if he did anything that seemed disrespectful, such as allowing the dog onto her grass.

He said, "no, more like 'you illegal' . . . "

I paused and took a deep breath.

My husband is a legal U.S. citizen. But that doesn't mean everyone knows or believes that about him. Quite honestly, I wish it didn't matter. My husband is caramel-skinned and was born in Mexico. My son is handsomely half Hispanic with beautiful tan skin, mocha eyes, and dark curly hair.

Whether or not my neighbor said something that horrible or not, my son perceived it that way.

My son **felt** like a target of racism.

This sweet boy who has grown up fairly sheltered from the ugliness of the world's ways says he no longer feels safe walking down this small countryish road right next to our own house.

#### Addressing Fear

He told me not to worry, that he would use the other roads in front of the house instead.

But you see, that requires crossing a much busier road. And it is not fair that my son would have to change where he enjoys walking in nature just to please an angry (and possibly inebriated) lady who isn't interested in dealing with her own dog.

I have never felt unwelcome or unsafe in this community. But then again, I am white and I grew up just over an hour from where we currently live.

My son said he observed that the woman's garage was open with two rifles on display.

Now, my son *is* known to have an active imagination, so I do not know if this is true or not, though it would not surprise me. It doesn't help that we just watched the movie "Till" the night before.

What saddens me is that my son is now scared.

He said he's seen the videos where angry people shoot kids who just ring a doorbell or just because of the shade of their suntan.

I told him that he cannot live in fear. We will still walk on that road with our heads held high. I am blessed because my son knows much of the Word of God, so I reminded him of  $\frac{2}{100}$  Timothy 1:7:

"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

I guess I knew we would confront issues of race eventually, but it was so unexpected, right here just a few houses up the road.

That said, I do want to be clear. My neighbor may *not* have said anything racially charged at all. I am focused on what my child *perceived*. Racially-motivated or not, the outburst was still unprovoked and unsettling.

# So how do you help a child who has encountered real racism OR perceived racism for the first time?

I'm not sure I have all the answers to that one, but I do know that we should turn to the Word of God.

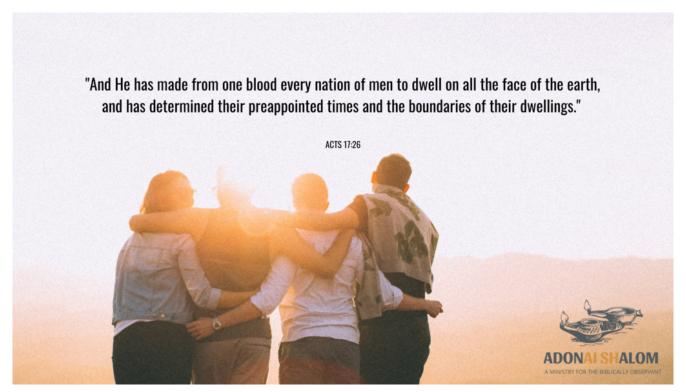
He comforts us because our identity is found in Him alone, not in what the world has to say. I am writing this because it is therapeutic to me today.

I am searching the Scriptures, too, to be able to minister to my son's little heart and I am hopeful this can help someone else somewhere, too, because our world is full of division and unkindness.

## 1. Remind your child that all of us were created in the image of God. Race is a social construct and racism is sin.

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Genesis 1:27

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings." Acts 17:26



Acts 17:26

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

There is no place for racism when living in holiness.

2. If your child has accepted the free gift of salvation that is given to us by putting our faith and trust in Messiah Yeshua (Jesus Christ), he or she is part of a holy, set apart and chosen generation and God calls us "special." We don't need to rely on anyone else to

#### validate our existence or our skin color.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." 1 Peter 2:9

3. Encourage your child to turn to the LORD when feeling scared, discriminated against, alone, or unsafe. He is our Stronghold, our Fortress, and our Deliverer.

"I will love You, O LORD, my strength.

The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer;

My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised;

So shall I be saved from my enemies." Psalm 18:1-3

4. Emphasize the Biblical mandate to remain peaceful. Always seek shalom: wholeness and peace.

"Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9



Matthew 5:9

### 5. Hear out your child. Allow him or her to express their emotions about racism.

I sat down with my son and I commended his recent progress on working hard and improving his early teenage years attitude. (We had some rough moments a few months ago with this too-bigfor-his-britches young fellow!) He acknowledged his improvements, but also admitted having some pretty ugly thoughts about the neighbor. I believe it is so important to allow my son to have space to talk about how he was feeling and even explore this early introduction to racism. He knew that he could trust me to support him and love him through this. I'm grateful he has time to work through this as he matures and potentially encounters something far more direct or offensive.

I told him: you are acting like a child of God.

You have a tender heart and you are seeking to do what is right.

But whether that woman knows it or not, she is serving the

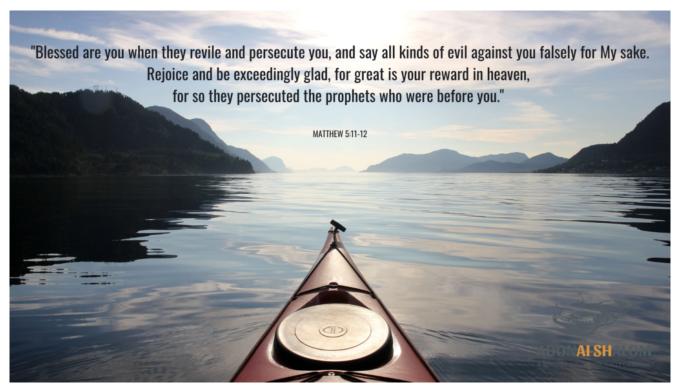
devil. As harsh as this sounds, that makes her a child of the devil.

And the devil uses people like that to try to unnerve the children of God.

I told him, clearly, son, you're doing something right if the devil has to take the time to come out and bother you like that using a daughter of the devil.

The best thing we can do is pray for her to come to understanding and repent and that she would, by God's grace and abundant mercy, become a daughter of God one day.

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." Matthew 5:11-12



Our Savior told us to rejoice and not just be glad: "be exceedingly glad!"

We can confront anything with exceeding gladness because we

know our journey doesn't end here. One day we will rejoice in heaven, rewarded for remaining faithful to our LORD.

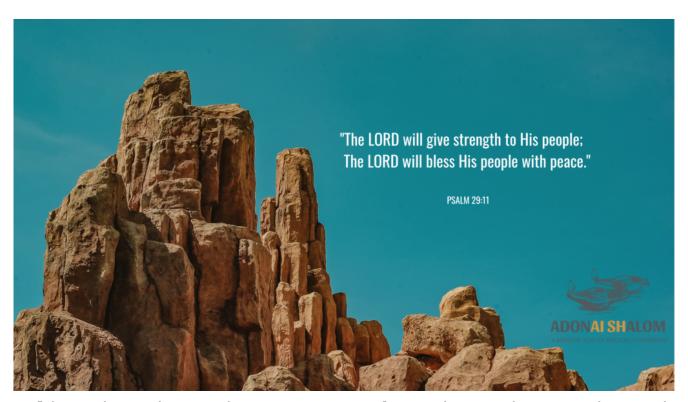
### 6. Exhort your child to be an overcomer despite any circumstance.

I told my son that while you pray for those who persecute you or revile you, your duty is to guard your heart and your mind with the Word of God.

"Keep your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23

He is your Protector and Defender, and you shall not fear walking down the road.

"The LORD will give strength to His people;
The LORD will bless His people with peace." Psalm 29:11



Realize that the Scriptures serve for exhortation: we know who God is and we know that He cares for us, therefore we make a conscious choice. We will not fear.

This coming from someone who battles anxiety! But I know deep

in my heart the Truth that whenever I, with faith and conviction, truly hold onto the hem of His garment, my fear is lost and He makes me brave. I seek to instill this understanding in my children so they, too, will always rely on our Father's goodness, provision, and security.

Whether confronting racism, sexism, religious discrimination, anti-Semitism, classism, or any other -ism, if we remember that the LORD is on our side, we can and will walk in victory.

#### 7. Pray together in the Spirit.

There is no substitute for prayer.

Pray with your child.

Model a life of faith for your child.

And pray for your neighbors and anyone else who would cause you distress.

Trust that the LORD will work everything out.

Remind your child to wear the armor that God has provided and pray together with your child in the Spirit.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." Ephesians 6:17-18

### Walk in Faith, no matter what and refuse to be intimidated

This afternoon, my husband and I told our son we were all going to take a family walk.

He looked panicked.

"Can I stay home?"

My husband gently told him in Spanish: "no, m'ijo, pero estaremos contigo."

"No, my son, but we will be with you."

Just like the LORD is always with us.

We had our son grab a hold of Canelo's leash and walk him just like he had the night before. On the very same path.

He learned one step at a time not to be afraid.

Because children of the Most High God shall refuse to be intimidated.