

## Ezekiel 20

This chapter is about how the people of Judah looked to God to get them out of this jam. Israel and Judah rejected God; until he proved that their decisions and idols were of no help. This is neither reconsideration nor repentance. This is called running out of options. Historically, God did deliver them repeatedly; and they turned on him and ignored him as soon as that need was taken care of. Many times we too talk about how *we came to God* for help. Frequently, it is after we have tried everything else.

### Tisha B' Av

**Read Ezekiel 20:1-4:** It can be helpful to pay attention to the day that things happen in the bible. This chapter takes place on 10<sup>th</sup> day of their 5<sup>th</sup> month (Av). This date throughout history has become a repeating day of judgement to the Jews. The children of Israel have this infamous date on the calendar known as Tisha B' Av (the 10<sup>th</sup> of Av). It is the saddest date on their calendar. This has been a very tragic day throughout their history. The first and second temples were destroyed on Tish B' Av (586 BC, and 70 AD).

Tish B' Av is the day that the 10 evil spies argued with Joshua and Caleb about the giants and dangers in the land of Canaan. They ditched Moses as their leader, looked to their other gods, and made plans to head back to Egypt. God came close to destroying the entire nation.

*And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature.<sup>33</sup> There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” (Numbers 13)*

This fateful day was a reason why 2 million Hebrews died in the desert, without seeing the land of Canaan. It is also the reason that they wandered in the desert for 40 years.

*So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night.<sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!<sup>3</sup> Why has the LORD brought us to this land*

*to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" 4 So they said to one another, "Let us select a leader and return to Egypt." 5 Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the children of Israel. 6 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; 7 and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' 9 Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them." 10 And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel. 11 Then the LORD said to Moses: "How long will these people reject Me? And how long will they not believe Me, with all the signs which I have performed among them? 12 I will strike them with the pestilence and disinherit them, and I will make of you a nation greater and mightier than they." 13 And Moses said to the LORD: "Then the Egyptians will hear it, for by Your might You brought these people up from among them, 14 and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, LORD, are among these people; that You, LORD, are seen face to face and Your cloud stands above them, and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 15 Now if You kill these people as one man, then the nations which have heard of Your fame will speak, saying, 16 'Because the LORD was not able to bring this people to the land which He swore to give them, therefore He killed them in the wilderness.' 17 And now, I pray, let the power of my Lord be great, just as You have spoken, saying, 18 'The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation.' 19 Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray, according to the greatness of Your mercy, just as You have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." 20 Then the LORD said: "I have pardoned, according to your word; 21 but truly, as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD—22 because all these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have put Me to the test now these ten times, and have not heeded My voice, 23 they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it. 24 But My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it. 25 Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwell in the valley; tomorrow turn and move out into the wilderness by the Way of the Red Sea." 26 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, 27 "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation*

*who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me. <sup>28</sup> Say to them, ‘As I live,’ says the LORD, ‘just as you have spoken in My hearing, so I will do to you: <sup>29</sup> The carcasses of you who have complained against Me shall fall in this wilderness, all of you who were numbered, according to your entire number, from twenty years old and above. <sup>30</sup> Except for Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun, you shall by no means enter the land which I swore I would make you dwell in. <sup>31</sup> But your little ones, whom you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised. <sup>32</sup> But as for you, your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness. <sup>33</sup> And your sons shall be shepherds in the wilderness forty years, and bear the brunt of your infidelity, until your carcasses are consumed in the wilderness. <sup>34</sup> According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, for each day you shall bear your guilt one year, namely forty years, and you shall know My rejection. <sup>35</sup> I the LORD have spoken this. I will surely do so to all this evil congregation who are gathered together against Me. In this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there they shall die.’ ” <sup>36</sup> Now the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land, who returned and made all the congregation complain against him by bringing a bad report of the land, <sup>37</sup> those very men who brought the evil report about the land, died by the plague before the LORD. <sup>38</sup> But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh remained alive, of the men who went to spy out the land. (Numbers 14)*

These dates of national tragedy continued on through history:

**Bar Kochba Revolt**, 135 AD: Simon Bar Kochba led a short-term revolt to re-establish Israeli independence from Rome. **580,000 Jews died** in this unsuccessful uprising.

**The expulsion of Jews from England in 1290**: The **Edict of Expulsion** was a royal decree expelling all **Jews** from the **Kingdom of England** that was issued by **Edward I** on 18 July 1290; it was the first time a European state is known to have permanently banned their presence. The date of issuance was most likely chosen because it was a Jewish holy day, the **ninth of Ab**, which commemorates the destruction of Jerusalem and other disasters the Jewish people have experienced. Edward told the **sheriffs** of all counties he wanted all Jews expelled before **All Saints' Day (1 November)** that year. Jews were allowed to leave England with cash and personal possessions but outstanding debts, homes, and other buildings—including synagogues and cemeteries—were forfeit to the king.

**The expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492**: On July 31, 1492 (the 9th of Av that year), practicing Jews living in Spain had to make their final decision: Convert to

Christianity or leave the country. If conversos – converted Jews – stayed and continued to keep their faith in secret, but were found out by members of the Inquisition or exposed by neighbors, they would be tortured brutally into admitting their “sin” and later be burned, all of which was ordered by the Church.

### **World War 1 Begins:**

#### **Treblinka Death Camp Begins (Holocaust):**

God is telling Ezekiel that these elders really have no business looking for help from God, while they are firmly entrenched in their idolatry. We recently read how God saw these men behind closed doors. He showed Ezekiel their dirty and corrupt minds, which are full of lust and violence. God told us back in that chapter that he has no interest in having *a fake conversation* with these terrible national leaders. I can relate to dealing with treasonous national leaders who would stand by and let our nation go down in flames.

*Then He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Turn again, you will see greater abominations than these.”<sup>16</sup> So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east.<sup>17</sup> And He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose.<sup>18</sup> Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.” (Ezekiel 8)*

**Read Ezekiel 20:5-24:** God is rehearsing how the children of Israel have repeatedly abandoned him as their God...even in the face of extreme and ongoing miracles. The first Tisha B' Av event did not happen in a vacuum. There were unending events in the desert that Required God to turn his face away from. So, he set Moses up with rules to live by; so God did not have to cut their lives short. The Law of Moses was like a fence at the edge of a canyon. In the end, he let the desert kill off that generation over 40 years. Then he is told their kids (Deuteronomy) not to make the same fatal mistakes their parents made. He allowed that generation to enter Canaan; but they went off the rails as soon as they defeated most of the Canaanites.

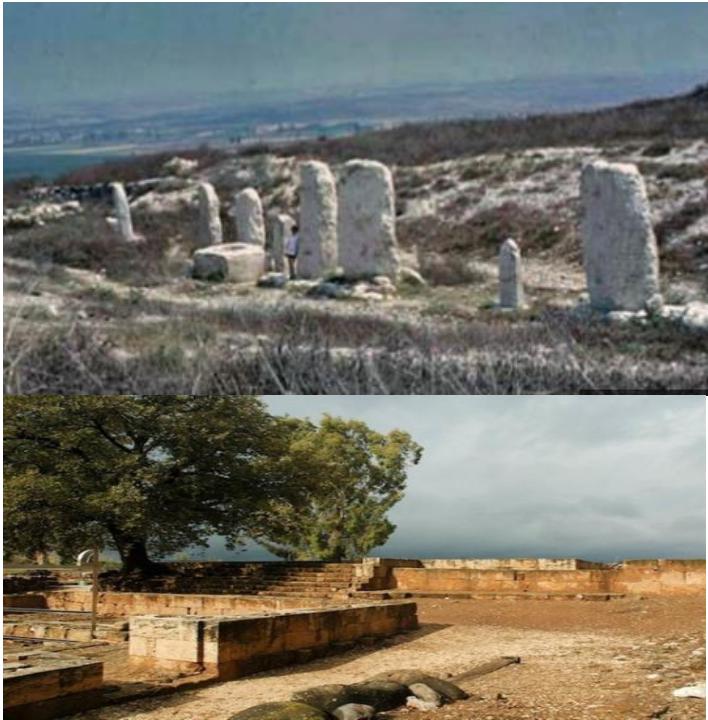
<sup>38</sup> “This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, <sup>39</sup> whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, <sup>40</sup> saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ <sup>41</sup> And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. <sup>42</sup> Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? <sup>43</sup> You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’ (Acts 7)

**Read Ezekiel 20:25-30:** The first desert generation perished while practicing Egyptian idolatry. The second generation took up the even worse rituals of the Canaanites. Their unwanted pregnancies resulted in making their children walk through fire. One thing that both generations had in common was known as the high places or (Bamah). Bamah means high place for idolatry worship.

### High Places

The open-air altar shrine, called a *bamah* is known through several books of the Biblical canon. Often referred to as “high places” in translations of the Bible, *bamot* were worship sites that usually contained an altar. The idea which the word expresses, therefore, is something which stands out in relief from its background, but the idea of a mountain or hill is not contained in the word itself.” The Akkadian can also mean land that is elevated.<sup>5</sup> Ezra 6:3 says they were in the ravines and valleys. The position of a *bamah* in the valley can also be seen in Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35.

These shrines often included an altar and a sacred object such as a stone pillar or wooden pole in various shapes identified with the object of worship (animals, constellations, goddesses, and fertility deities). It seems that, at times, high places were set up in a spot that had been artificially elevated; 2 Kings 16:4 seems to differentiate the “high places” from the “hills.”



The Israelites, forever turning away from God, practiced Molech worship and built high places for Baal ([Jeremiah 32:35](#)). Although Solomon built the temple of God in Jerusalem, he later established idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem and worshiped with them, causing him the loss of the kingdom ([1 Kings 11:11](#)). The people were still sacrificing at the pagan high places before the temple was built, and Solomon joined them. After the Lord appeared to him in a dream at Gibeon, the king returned to Jerusalem and sacrificed offerings; however, he continued to waver between the two places of worship. How do you lead people who are unapologetically chasing their passions with full gusto? The Babylonian siege is really in a continuum of the desert wanderings.

*And it shall be, that just as the LORD rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you, so the LORD will rejoice over you to destroy you and bring you to nothing; and you shall be plucked from off the land which you go to possess. <sup>64</sup> “Then the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods, which neither you nor your fathers have known—wood and stone. <sup>65</sup> And among those nations you shall find no rest, nor shall the sole of your foot have a resting place; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and anguish of soul. <sup>66</sup> Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life. <sup>67</sup> In the morning you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were evening!’ And at evening you shall say, ‘Oh, that it were morning!’ because of the fear which terrifies your heart, and because of the sight which your eyes see. <sup>68</sup> “And the LORD will take you back to Egypt in ships,*

*by the way of which I said to you, ‘You shall never see it again.’ And there you shall be offered for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.” (Deuteronomy 28)*

### False Inquiries for Help

Any kind of sinner can ask God for relief. Pharaoh asked Moses to stop the plagues multiple times. Asking God to stop the judgement is not seeking to know God or even commit to yield to him. Even Gavin Newsome can pretend to be President Trump’s friend if he has 43 billion dollars to give him.

There seems to be a new phenomenon taking place in social media today. Many more influencers are sympathetic to Christians. I listen to Wess Huff, who is an expert biblical historian. He refutes all kinds of biblical heresy with details and evidences of scripture. I am seeing an increase of heretical interviewees posing as people wanting to discover the truth. They are luring him into lawsuits and traps. God does not take every interview, Trump does not take every interview, and we should not either.