



10 Days AT 10 Gates

A Guide For Prayer During The 10 Days of Awe

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Gates are a common theme in Jewish Literature. In any Jewish bookstore you will find books with titles like “The Gates of Repentance”, “The Gates of Prayer”, or “The Gates of Joy”. We encounter walls and barriers everywhere we turn. They are a part of life. But if we can locate the gate, we can pass through into a new place—even a new dimension.

The ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are called The Ten Days of Awe. These ten days are a time for self-reflection, confession, repentance, paying debts, and making peace with others whom we have wronged—or who have wronged us. Since we have recently been studying the book of Nehemiah and Jerusalem’s ten gates, I thought it fitting to use these ten gates as a guide for prayer during the Ten Days of Awe.

Each of the gates in Nehemiah 3 has its own name, history, purpose and (to me, at least) personality. Jerusalem—the one place on earth that God has selected to record His Name—is the archetype for the World to Come. Our home. Though it resides in the spiritual realm for the time being, we can visit it spiritually. All it takes is time and stillness.

Nehemiah’s description of the gates begins with the Sheep Gate in the northeast corner of the city. From there, he works counterclockwise around the city walls, identifying the other nine gates as he goes. Though you could enter through any one of them to begin your exploration of the city, take them in order the first time round. Over the next ten days, you may discover that one gate speaks to your heart more than the others. If this is the case, return to that gate to begin the spiritual work you need to do in your life.

I pray that these ten gates speak to you as they have spoken to me as I explored and pondered them and wrote down these devotionals. I pray that after exploring the City of the Great King through its ten unique gates, that you will grow more familiar with—and more in love with—your future eternal home.

Happy exploring!

— *Grant*

Day 1: The Sheep Gate
שַׁעַר הַצֹּאֵן

This gate is the one through which people brought their sacrifices to the temple. It was also the gate through which Yeshua entered Jerusalem four days prior to His death on Passover. He rode in surrounded by thousands of lambs that had been born just down the road in Bethlehem for use in the Passover celebration. This is where our 10-day prayer journey begins—at the same gate Yeshua entered through to become “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”.¹ This gate is the ideal entrance for anyone who wants to begin their journey with God.

At the Sheep Gate there was a pool of water called Bethesda, which means “place of mercy”. John tells us that the pool was surrounded by five porches where there lay “a multitude of those who were weak, blind, lame, and withered”.² Does this describe you? Is some area of your life spiritually weak, blind, lame or withered? If so, then you are in the right place.

John tells us of a man who began his journey with God just inside this gate at the pool of Bethesda. When Yeshua saw this man, He realized that he had been there for a long time—38 years, to be precise. Do you recognize that number—38? This was also the exact number of years that it took for Israel to get to the Promised Land after they

¹ John 1:29

² John 5:3

left Mount Sinai.³

This is not a coincidence. Every person must go through the wilderness. There are no exceptions and no shortcuts, and very few people do well there. Likewise, this man had been in his own hopeless “wilderness”. He had been there so long, that he had given up—and that’s a good thing. Don’t get me wrong, we are not to be quitters. Faithful people do not quit! But this is a different kind of quitting. This is the kind of ‘giving up’ that is called death. We all must die to ourselves, to our own self-reliance, to our own pride and ego and to doing things our own way. This is a very painful yet necessary kind of death. Remember, this is the Sheep Gate where animals come to die.

Dying is what the wilderness experience is all about. The old generation that came out of Egypt were so steeped in their cynical faithlessness that they did not have what it took to go in and conquer the land of promise. The only thing to do was to let them die and allow their children—this new life—to grow up and take their place. The new generation would accomplish what the old generation could not.

Can you see the parallels to your own life? The ‘old you’ must go and the ‘new you’ must take its place. You must put off the old ways of thinking and behaving and put on the new life that God calls you to, and it takes a wilderness to accomplish this. Again, there are no exceptions and no shortcuts.

³ Deuteronomy 2:14

Day 2: The Fish Gate

שַׁעַר הַדָּגִים

If you find yourself looking back at your old way of life and experiencing moments when you desire to return to it, then you are like the Israelites who longed to return to their lives of slavery in Egypt. You need to do some more dying in the wilderness. Getting beat up by life and losing all confidence in your own strength and cleverness and ridding yourself of your appetite for an Egyptian diet is the entire purpose of your wilderness. And once you have reached this place, you are ready to walk with Yeshua, even if it takes 38 years to stand up with the strength that comes from Him.

So, how should *you* pray at the Sheep Gate? Do you still need to die to self—to become a living sacrifice? Though you may be out of Egypt, is Egypt out of you? Do you find yourself operating in the old ways of the flesh and human reasoning? Then you are in the right place. Spend as much time here as you need because you can only experience resurrection life once you are good and dead.

I exhort you, therefore, brothers, in view of God's mercies, to offer yourselves as a sacrifice, living and set apart for God. This will please Him. It is the logical "Temple worship" for you. In other words, do not let yourselves be conformed to the standards of the olam hazeh [this present world].

Instead, keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what He wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed.⁴

⁴ Romans 12:1-2 (CJB)

Technically, this gate should be called The Fishes Gate since the word is plural in Hebrew. This gate was so called because the fish merchants would bring their wares into the city from Galilee in the north. These fish would not, of course, be fresh, but salted and they were quite the delicacy. Fishermen and fishmongers were not poor, but very well to do during this time.

Since the first century, the fish has been a symbol for followers of Yeshua. This is because the Greek word for 'fish'—ΙΧΘΥΣ (*ichthus*)—is an anagram for *Yeseus Christos Theu Uios Soter*, or "Jesus Christ Son of God Savior". It symbolizes the simple statement of truth summed up in these five simple words. (And this is what your fish bumper sticker stands for.)

Yeshua told His disciples that He would make them fishers of men, meaning that they, like fishermen, were to draw souls out of the depths of darkness and into the light. Not so they could sell them! But that they might be transformed into fishers of men themselves. Just as Yeshua sought out the man lying *beside* the water inside the Sheep Gate, the Master sends us out to seek men who are *in* the water all around us. We are to be *fishers* of men, but all too frequently well-meaning believers have become hunters and stalkers of men instead. That is not the Master's method for bringing souls into His Kingdom.

In ancient times, men would fish in boats using nets. They would cast the nets out around their boat, then wait. And wait. And wait some more. Pushing their boats out into the sea was their responsibility. The condition of their nets was their responsibility. Casting their nets out from the boat was their responsibility. Maintaining their grip on the nets was their responsibility. But what swam into their nets was completely out of their hands. This is the way we are also meant to fish for souls.

“But what *is* my net?” you ask. That’s an easy one. **Your life is your net.**

You do not know what influence your life may have on the souls all around you—and you may never know until the day your life is played back for all the rest of us to see.

Sound scary? Well, here are some things to ponder so that you do not have to be ashamed when Messiah appears.

Ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ Do I keep my boat safely in the harbor? Or, do I take the risk to launch out into unknown waters?
- ▶ Do I keep my net safely stowed in the boat? Or, do I release it into the world for others to encounter?
- ▶ Do I keep my net mended? Or, is it full of holes? Do others just swim through it without my having any impact on their lives?
- ▶ Do I maintain control of my net? Or, do I allow it to be swept away with the current of emotion or popular trends?

The Fish Gate is where the fishermen brought the results of their work into the city. Do you, as a faithful fisherman, have souls to bring into the City of God?

One last thing. Fishermen did their fishing at night—in the darkness. Well, the world is a pretty dark place right now, so it must be fishing time. But the morning is coming when it will be time to draw our nets in and go home. What do you expect to find in yours? These are things to ponder and pray about at The Fish Gate.

Day 3: The Old Gate
שַׁעַר הַיְשָׁנָה

Translators are a bit puzzled at exactly how to translate the name of this gate. In Hebrew, its name is *ha’yashanah*, everyone agrees on that; but that’s where the agreement begins and ends. I won’t bore you with an explanation of why there is so much disagreement on how to translate this word, but most translators simply translate it as I do here—*The Old Gate*.

But isn’t that the way it usually is with old things, especially old people? People don’t often understand old people. We just don’t quite know what to make of them. Like the Hebrew name of this gate, they kind of defy definition, so we just call them ‘old’.

I have observed that young people think they understand old people. (But they don’t.) And old people claim to *not* understand young people. (But they do.)

The reason for these disparate views is that old people have a much broader context by which to view the world. They were once young, so they understand young people and what makes them tick. But young people have never been old, so old people are a bit of a mystery to them. So, I guess ‘Old Gate’ is a pretty good way to translate this name. After all, just like an old person it is hard for a young person to figure out.

But this gate is also believed to be the “Corner Gate” (*Sha’ar ha’Pinah*) mentioned in 2 Chronicles 26:9. Did you notice that word *pinah*? *Pinah* means ‘corner’, as in *Rosh Pinah*—the “head of the corner” or “cornerstone”. As the psalmist writes: “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the *rosh pinah*—the chief corner stone.”⁵

This brings us to an important insight. If this gate does indeed have two names—“The Old Gate” and “The Corner Gate”—then this implies a connection between age and strength. In a culture where youth and physical strength are prized, in God’s Kingdom it is spiritual strength and the wisdom that comes with age that are admired.

*You shall arise before the white-haired and honor the aged, and you shall revere your God. I am Adonai.*⁶

*Wisdom is with aged men, with long life is understanding.*⁷

⁵ Psalm 118:22

⁶ Leviticus 19:32

⁷ Job 12:12

But, I think that in addition to honoring those who are older and wiser, God is also calling us to venerate what is ancient. I leave you with one more passage:

*Thus says Adonai, “Stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” But they said, “We will not walk in it.”*⁸

At the Old Gate, let us each repent for underappreciating the old and over valuing the new, trendy, and chic. Remember, aged wine is better—and stronger.

Day 4: The Valley Gate שַׁעַר הַגִּיּוֹן

When Nehemiah made his nighttime inspection of the walls and gates of Jerusalem, he left through the Valley Gate, made his inspection, and then returned by the same way. The Valley Gate was located near the southern end of the City of David and faced westward, overlooking the convergence of the Tyropean and Hinnom Valleys. So, which of these two valleys is in view from the Valley Gate? Since the middle valley was the shallowest of Jerusalem’s three valleys⁹ and is not named or referred to in the Bible, I will address my remarks to the much larger valley—*Gei-Hinnom*. This

⁸ Jeremiah 6:16

⁹ Hundreds of years later, the historian Josephus named it the Tyropean Valley, though by that time the valley had mostly been filled in with rubbish or building projects or both.

is derived from the Hebrew word for ‘valley’—which is *gei* (גַּי)—thus the name Gei-Hinnom, or Gehenna.

You might be thinking, “Why does Jerusalem have a ‘Hell Gate?’” But that is not what *Gehenna* actually means.

When the ancients thought of Gehenna, they did not think of hell. They thought about the shameful practices their forefathers had committed in this valley. Many of them had passed their newborn infants through the fire to Molech and Baal. They destroyed the things God holds most precious. They had also performed horribly disgraceful acts of idolatry and immorality in this valley. Gehenna was a place of embarrassment and shame that, over the years, evolved into a smoldering garbage dump.

If you think about it, each one of us has a smoldering garbage dump in our life. It’s where we, too, discard shameful memories. It is the place where we banish old and embarrassing conversations, but whose stubborn stench never quite fades away. Gehenna is where the worms of humiliating deeds refuse to die. Oh, how we would love to skip this gate!

But the gate to Gehenna is where Nehemiah—whose name means “Adonai comforts”—begins his inspection. Occasionally, we, too, must inspect this gate—but not in a spirit of defeat! When we look through this gate, not only do we glimpse our past failures, but also, if we have eyes to see, how God is using them to grow us into the people He wants us to be.

God uses our past failures to teach us:

- ▶ **Humility**—without which, wisdom finds no toehold
- ▶ **Empathy**—to extend understanding and tenderness to other damaged souls
- ▶ **Reliance on God**—because our self-sufficiency has been knocked out of us
- ▶ **Brokenness**—the welcome mat for God’s spirit

Take time at this gate to thank God for His kindness, patience, and faithfulness to you. Recognize that He was by your side throughout your journey thus far ... even through the dark times. And the shameful times. He has seen it all. Nonetheless, He has glorious and eternal plans for you and is determined to bring you to completion.

There will be no shame then!

Day 5: The Dung Gate שַׁעַר הָאֲשָׁפוֹת

The name of this gate might more properly be called the Ash Heap or Ash Pit Gate. (Its name in Hebrew is *ash-pot* and sounds a bit like ‘ash pit’.) Unlike the previous gate that led to the Hinnom Valley where things were destroyed that shouldn’t have been destroyed, this gate leads to a place where things are destroyed that should be destroyed.

Sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference. Just as our bodies produce things that

need to be cast away, buried, and put out of sight (i.e. flushed), so our souls do likewise. Our souls produce thoughts, sights, words, and attitudes that must be jettisoned or they will produce great discomfort and damage to our spiritual health.

The question here is, what damaging things are you retaining that need to be discarded from your life? Do you have an unhealthy and poisonous attitude that needs to go? You may not even realize that you have such an attitude if you don't take the time to honestly investigate. Likewise, are you harboring unforgiveness toward someone? How about jealousy? Or its opposite, arrogance?

What thoughts have you picked up from the music you listen to? Or from programs that you watch? Or sermons that promote hatred, fear or pride?

We are constantly taking in things from the culture around us and digesting them. But how healthy is your spiritual digestive system? Are you eliminating the things that can, and will, become poisonous? So many people have no idea that they are filled with poisonous thoughts and attitudes. Their spiritual ill health is so commonplace to them that they think it's normal. They can't imagine people who are free of such things.

On the other hand, many people are troubled by their own thoughts and attitudes but don't know how to eliminate them properly. So, they just purge their spiritual waste on those around them. They talk about things that are inappropriate to

share. They spew their hateful attitudes on others and vent their poisonous words to anyone who will listen. But, as the Master said, it is the things that come out of a person that defile him.

Imagine a home without a toilet, and the occupants just ... well, you get the picture. (This reminds me of a song: Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo roam, and I'll show you a house full of mud.) Truth be told, all of us have been in such homes that are filled with the stench of defilement. The spiritual atmosphere reeks of harsh, selfish and hurtful words between family members.

We each need a Dung Gate in our lives where we can go and privately confess and eliminate from our lives those things that don't belong. A place where we can be quiet and alone and free ourselves of the things that will destroy us if we keep them in.

The Torah commanded the Israelites to practice good hygiene as they traveled through the wilderness. Among its instructions was this: "And you shall have a tent peg among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement."¹⁰ If they must deal properly with their excrement while in the wilderness, how much more so when living in the Holy City!

Some people live in such a way that the dung heap is their home. They think that their life among spiritual waste matter is normal. Serious states of depression can

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 23:13

make anyone think the dung heap is where they belong. Just ask Job! God knows this, and even in depths of uncleanness He still holds out hope. Consider this: “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap (ash-pool), to make them sit with princes, with the princes of His people.”¹¹

The Dung Gate is mentioned again in Nehemiah. Near the end of chapter 12 we read about the dedication of Jerusalem’s rebuilt walls and gates. Nehemiah calls all the Levites from the land of Israel, along with the leaders of Judah, to come to Jerusalem for the sacred celebration. You can read the entire account for yourself, but look at how the celebration begins: “*Then I had the leaders of Judah come up on top of the wall, and I appointed two great choirs, the first proceeding to the right on top of the wall toward the Dung Gate.*”¹²

Doesn’t this seem like an unusual place to begin such a celebration? When you give someone a tour of your home, you don’t begin with the bathroom! But if you think about it, is there any room in your house that provides a clearer picture of your hygiene than the bathroom?

So, the question is: What is the state of spiritual hygiene in your home? Spend some time asking yourself what are the things you are tolerating in your home that should be thrown out the Dung Gate? How clean are the programs you watch? The books you

¹¹ Psalm 113:7-8

¹² Nehemiah 12:31

read? The music you listen to? How clean is the language you use when no one is around? What are the things you are hiding that, if revealed to your faith community, would bring you shame? There is just one thing you can do: Don’t forget to flush!

Day 6: The Spring Gate

שַׁעַר הָעַיִן

The Spring Gate in Hebrew is Shaar Ha’ayin. Ayin, sometimes pronounced ein or just en, is part of the names of such places as Engedi, Eneglaim, Endor, and many other towns and places throughout Israel that were named after their springs. In the Middle East water is life, and the life of a town was its spring. No spring, no town.

I must mention here that the next gate in our list will be the Water Gate, and it is very likely that its water came from the same spring for which the Spring Gate is named. A spring is where water hidden beneath the surface of the ground breaks through and makes itself accessible. One could say that a spring is where the life in the depths reveals itself on the surface and freely provides life to plants, animals and people.

This gate could just as easily have been called the Eye Gate since the Hebrew word for ‘spring’ (עַיִן, ayin) is exactly the same as ‘eye’. But this is not so surprising when we think about it. Just as a spring reveals the life beneath the surface, so the eye reveals the life beneath the surface. The eye is called

the window of the soul for good reason. Likewise, just as a spring produces water, so can the eyes. I don't think it is a coincidence that the first time we encounter the word ayin (אֵינַן) translated 'spring' in the Bible, we find it twice: "Now the angel of Adonai found [Hagar] by a spring (ayin) of water in the wilderness, by the spring (ayin) on the way to Shur."¹³ One could almost say that Hagar was discovered by a pair of 'eyes'.

The first time that God's eyes are mentioned is in Deut. 11:12. Here, Moses describes the promised land to the children of Israel. Moses tells them that it is: "a land for which Adonai your God cares. The eyes of Adonai your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year." God's eyes (ayin) are always on the Land of Israel—likewise, His 'springs' (ayin) are also scattered throughout the land.

But what is the message that this gate holds for us? And how should we incorporate it into our prayers? The key, once again, is to see the similarity between an eye and a spring. Just as a spring continuously gives its water to all who come to it in need, so we are to cast generous eyes on all who come to us in need.

Consider Solomon's words: "He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."¹⁴ A person who "shuts his eyes" to the poor is like a spring that closes itself to the thirsty. Why would a spring ever do that? First, it

wouldn't because it can't. Second, if it did, it would be defying its purpose for existence. In the same way, if you close your eye to the poor, you are behaving as unnaturally as a spring that withholds its water. Additionally, you are defying your purpose for existence. "Freely you have received, so freely give."¹⁵

I have never met a selfish person who is happy, and I have never met a generous person who is depressed. If we hold onto our lives, we lose them. But if we release our lives, we find them.¹⁶

Take time today to meditate on the following words from Yeshua's sermon:

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."¹⁷

Think about your eye as if it were a spring of water. If it is good, then you are filled with light because you are behaving toward others as does God. You are a giver, a lover, a source of life. But if your spring is bad, it withholds its water from the thirsty. What darkness dwells in the heart of such a one!

Do you realize that you can be a devout believer and yet be greedy and full of

¹³ Genesis 16:7

¹⁴ Proverbs 28:27

¹⁵ Matthew 10:8

¹⁶ Matthew 16:25

¹⁷ Matthew 6:22-24

darkness? Think about it. It's true ... and should come as no surprise. We have all met people who have plenty, but still take free handouts whenever they have the opportunity. Such are people who will receive from God anything He offers them. After all, it's free, isn't it? Doesn't that make them a 'believer'?

But until we do freely give, what kind of believer are we? We are the kind that will take what is offered but will never reflect the character of God. Our lives are darkness, like a black hole.

Seriously reflect on this and ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Do I tend to avoid people who I think may ask me for something?
- ▶ Am I generous with my time but not my money and possessions?
- ▶ Am I generous with my money and possessions but not my time?
- ▶ Do I tend to first calculate how much a generous act will cost me?
- ▶ Am I more generous to outsiders than I am to my own family?
- ▶ Do I enjoy knowing that other people owe me?
- ▶ Am I resentful when my generosity is not repaid?

We could add many more questions to this list, but these should suffice to provide a mirror of your generosity ...or lack of it.

But be sure to remember the following wise observation by King Solomon: *"Every*

*man's way is right in his own eyes, but Adonai weighs the hearts."*¹⁸ So maybe you should write down your answers to these questions and then ask someone else to grade your paper.

Revisit the Spring Gate often to drink your fill. Develop a generous eye and *be* a spring to the thirsty around you.

Day 7: The Water Gate שער המים

Yesterday, we discussed the Spring Gate which was located near one of Jerusalem's water sources. But here at the Water Gate, we encounter the pool that was generated by that spring.

Though there were several springs and pools in Jerusalem, this one (near the southeast corner of the city) is believed to be the Pool of Siloam. During Sukkot, the high priest would descend to this pool each morning and fill a golden pitcher from its waters in what was called the water drawing ceremony. He would then reverse course and make his way back up to the Temple where he would pour the water on the corner of the altar.

The high priest's morning visits to the Pool of Siloam were accompanied by a parade of people singing, playing instruments, and dancing. It was quite a festive celebration. Why all the exuberance? The water drawing ceremony was a joyful

¹⁸ Proverbs 21:2

expression of gratitude for God’s provision of rain. And when the high priest poured out the water on the corner of the altar, it was a visual representation of Israel’s prayer that God would send the rains once again. Springs provided water from below, but God also provided water from above. Normally, these early rains would begin right after the week of Sukkot, and as we learned yesterday, water is life. With the new rainfall, crops could grow and life would continue for another year.

The last day of Sukkot is called *Hoshanah Rabbah*, or “The Great Hosanna”. On that evening, huge menorahs atop 85-foot-tall columns would be lit in the temple courtyard. Their enormous flames would illuminate the entire city of Jerusalem. It was during this *Hoshanah Rabbah* celebration that Yeshua proclaimed Himself as the living water. John records it like this:

*Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’”*¹⁹

Here again we find the themes of sight and water—the enormous menorahs illuminating Jerusalem while at the same time Yeshua proclaims Himself the source of living water.

We find these two themes again in one of Yeshua’s best known miracles—the healing of a man born blind. Yeshua healed the

blind man in a most unusual way. He made mud from His saliva, applied it to the blind man’s eyes, then told him:

*“Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which is translated, “Sent”). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.*²⁰

Here inside the Water Gate, this man who was born blind saw light for the first time at the Pool of Siloam. Again, as with the Spring Gate the themes of water and light are found side by side.

But this was not the first time someone had regained their vision at the Water Gate. Also inside the Water Gate was a large courtyard. It was in this courtyard that Ezra read from the Torah so many years earlier. This reading of the Torah had a profound impact upon the Israelites who had returned from Babylon.²¹ Similar to the blind man, they regained vision—spiritual vision—near the same pool. The reading of the Torah opened their eyes to their own sins, as well as the sins and rebellions of their forefathers. It was such a powerful experience that they repented in tears and made a renewed covenant with God.

The Tabernacle also illustrates the connection between vision and washing in water. Directly in front of the entrance to the Tabernacle stood a large bronze laver at which the priests would wash as they performed their duties. Do you remember where the bronze for the laver came from? The Torah tells us that women contributed

¹⁹ John 7:37-38

²⁰ John 9:7

²¹ Nehemiah 8:1-3

their bronze mirrors for its construction.²² What was once used for vision is now used for water.

Though the world says that seeing is believing, in God's economy believing is seeing, and the Master tells us that those who believe without first seeing are especially blessed.²³ Yet I am amazed at how many 'believers' still do not see though they claim to believe. We walk by faith and not by sight, thus faith *is* our spiritual ability to see.

The question is, how good is your vision?

Imagine yourself at the eye doctor's office and he administers a vision test. But this is not an ordinary eye doctor. This unusual ophthalmologist tests spiritual eyesight! So, he stands you across from an eye chart on the wall which has a large image at the top, and rows of progressively smaller images below. Then he asks you, "What is the image at the top of the chart?" You stare and squint and then say, "That one shows that God is my Creator."

"Very good! Most of my clients can't even see that one even though it is so huge", says the doctor. "Okay, go down to the second line and tell me what you see."

These images are a bit smaller and there are three of them on this line. So once again you squint your eyes and try to make them out. Though this line proves difficult, you say, "The first one is God's provision in my life. The second is God's protection. And the third, I think, is God's blessings."

"Excellent!" declares the doctor. "You are

²² Exodus 38:8

²³ John 20:29

doing very well—better than average." (You start feeling pretty good about yourself, but immediately notice that this has the effect of fogging your vision.) "Okay, let's move down to the third line. Tell me what you see."

You do your best, but these images are just too blurry. Your eyes are too weak to even begin to form guesses. Though there are still several lines below this one, they are impossible for you to read. You then admit to the doctor, "This is the best I can do. I can tell there are more lines, but I have no idea what they are."

The doctor nods his head, gives a one-sided smile and says, "You have done better than most who visit my office. Some people are so blind they can't even find my office! Even so, your vision is still profoundly weak and you are failing to see most of reality. And what you fail to see, you are filling in with your imagination. This is most dangerous since your imagination will play tricks on you. To be safe in this world, you must see things as they truly are."

"So, what can I do, doctor?"

He leans against his desk and says, "There is only one remedy for your condition, and you must follow it exactly if you want normal vision. You must hike down to the Water Gate which is at the bottom of the town and there you will find a pool of water. Wash your eyes in it, and even drink some of it. But know that this is not a permanent solution. You will need to repeat this procedure every morning. For best results, repeat it again in the evening. Then come back here in a week and have another go at the eye chart."

By the time the doctor finishes his instructions, you are eager to get started. You follow his instructions exactly and notice immediate results that continue to improve over time. A week later, you revisit his office.

“Welcome back!”, he says. “Are you ready see what you couldn’t see before?” You nod and he points to the eye chart. “She’s all yours”, he says.

You start at the top as you did before, but this time you don’t have to squint. You see the large image at the top and describe the images in each line as you work your way down. To your surprise, the further down the chart you go and the smaller the images get, the clearer and more beautiful they become. As you progress deeper into the chart, you see clearly that every painful episode in your life had purpose. You see an image that shows all the bad things that could have happened but didn’t because God’s protective hands were guarding you. You see that your family tree, stretching back for generations, was precisely arranged to bring you into the world at the specific time and place of your birth. You see that your parents were hand selected by God.

As you continue down the chart, you grow more and more amazed at God’s involvement in your life. “How could I have failed to see this? It’s so obvious!”, you exclaim. You sense the doctor nodding his head knowingly. But it is the last line—the one at the very bottom of the chart—that captivates you. The entire line consists of

the same image repeated over and over again. You ask the doctor about this. And he explains that this is the most important of all the lines, and that it is at the bottom because it holds up all the rest. This bottom line is the foundation for the entire chart.

You read the last line again. It says: God loves you. God loves you.

Today, ask yourself these questions:

- Just how well do I see reality?
- How much do I allow my own imagination to fill in my blindness with falsehoods?
- What do I need to do to improve my spiritual blindness?

Throughout God’s Word, truth equals light. Light equals truth.

What is your source for each?

Day 8: The Horse Gate

שַׁעַר הַסּוּסִים

This gate is more accurately named the Horses Gate, since ‘horse’ is plural here. The Hebrew word for ‘horse’ is *seuss*—yep, just like Doctor Seuss. (Maybe he was Jewish? That would explain why he wouldn’t eat green eggs and ham.) Anyway, *seuss* (סוס) means ‘horse’, and *seussim* (סוסים) means

'horses'. Hence, *Shaar Haseussim*—"Gate of the Horses".

The Horse Gate was on the east side of the city very close to the king's palace. It overlooked the Kidron Valley which divides Mount Zion from the Mount of Olives. There were stables located near this gate where the king's horses were housed and tended to. But when you think of the Horse Gate, don't think joy riding. Think warfare. It was through this gate that the cavalry went forth to do battle.

Battle is a part of everyone's reality. No one goes through this world without a fight. As long as falsehood and unrighteousness are on the attack, we must be on the alert and ready to engage. It is only through victory that peace is achieved, so it is imperative that you keep your own horse gate in good working order, your horses fed and trained, and your watchmen on alert.

Paul compares the disciple to a farmer and to a soldier. The first is invested in life by growing food, while the latter is trained in dealing death—learning to kill that which would kill. Though we all love to see repentance, deliverance and restoration take place in lives, these are usually achieved only after a time of spiritual conflict. Therefore, Paul counsels us to put on "the full armor of God".²⁴ He calls it 'the armor of God' because this is the armor that God Himself wears.

What? You didn't know that God wears armor? The Torah tells us, "*Adonai is a man*

²⁴ Ephesians 6:13

of war. Adonai is His name."²⁵ And like all warriors, God wears armor. Isaiah tells us, "*He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head...*"²⁶

The breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation are two pieces of God's armor which He shares with us and if God dons them to do battle, how much more must we! Here is the entire checklist of our spiritual armor:

- Belt of Truth
- Breastplate of Righteousness
- Shoes of the Gospel of Peace
- Shield of Faith
- Helmet of Salvation
- Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God

Do you understand what these pieces of armor are and how to use them? Check the boxes of the pieces of armor you know you are wearing right now. Go ahead, think about each one and check the appropriate boxes. Each one of these items is necessary for victory in our daily warfare. None are optional. If you think they are optional, then you're not wearing the belt of truth.

But always keep in mind that our conflict is a spiritual one and it is fought in the mind. The weapons we have been given are divinely powerful for destroying the enemies that lurk in our mental fortresses. These enemies include (a) speculations, (b) proud things that compete with the knowledge of God, and (c) thoughts of

²⁵ Exodus 15:3

²⁶ Isaiah 59:17

disobedience.²⁷ Have you ever wrestled with any of those? Of course you have—and lost. Again, take time to don God’s own armor. It is infused with His divine power.

The Horse Gate is mentioned only rarely in the Bible, but there is one story for which it provides the setting. It is the story of the wicked Athaliah—daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was a nasty piece of work! After her parents’ deaths, she tried to outdo them in wickedness. When her son Ahaziah was coronated as king of Judah, she became his “counselor in acting wickedly”.²⁸ But after her son’s death, she had all other legitimate heirs executed and made herself queen.

Unbeknownst to Athaliah, one young heir, Joash, had been hidden away and protected from her murderous schemes.

Seven years passed. Then Jehoiada the high priest took Joash to the Temple and there, surrounded by the Levites and leaders of the land, crowned him king. The people were thrilled and showed it. They praised God, cheered and sang. When Athaliah heard the commotion and discovered what had just occurred, she came to the Temple mad as a hornet. She screamed, “Treason! Treason!” But Jehoiada and the soldiers were ready for her. They grabbed her, marched her out of the temple courtyard, took her to the Horse Gate, and that is where she came to a sticky end.²⁹

What I want to draw your attention

²⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

²⁸ 2 Chronicles 22:3

²⁹ 2 Chronicles 23:15

to here is that though the Horse Gate is a symbol of warfare, the only conflict with which it is associated in Scripture is an internal one. The cavalry did not go charging out of the Horse Gate to attack an external enemy. Instead, an internal enemy who had set herself up as queen was executed within the Horse Gate. Such are our own spiritual battles.

We have all had usurpers in the form of thoughts, emotions, and opinions that try to assert themselves in our minds and take control of our decisions and attitudes. But there is only one way to deal with them. You first must coronate truth, and then dethrone and execute the falsehood without mercy.

The name ‘Athaliah’ means ‘removed by Adonai’. Likewise, so many of the thoughts that we are instructed to take captive must be removed by Adonai. This can only be done by using Adonai’s weapons.

So, the questions for today are these:

- ▶ What wicked thoughts have usurped your mind?
- ▶ What ideas do you hold that you suspect may be falsehoods?
- ▶ Are you too proud to change your mind? To confess that you have been wrong?
- ▶ What is the daughter of Jezebel that you need to drag to the Horse Gate for execution?
- ▶ Is your loyalty to truth unconditional?

You are called to be a warrior, so don't hesitate to do what needs to be done. Learn to use the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God, and deal death against the spiritual enemies that dwell within the gates of your mind.

Do you want peace in your soul? Then remember—peace is achieved only through victory.

Day 9: The East Gate שַׁעַר הַמִּזְרָח

The East Gate was used primarily by people who wished to ascend to the temple to worship and offer sacrifices. It was located directly east of the temple where the 'Golden Gate' can be seen today. Since the East Gate is located directly across the Kidron valley from the Mount of Olives, it is through this gate that Yeshua also will enter Jerusalem when He returns.

Zechariah prophesied:

"In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south."³⁰

When this prophecy is fulfilled, a valley will be created that runs east and west directly through the Mount of Olives. It is as if God wants open and unhindered access

to the temple for everyone. This will begin a period joyously described by Isaiah:

"Also the foreigners who join themselves to Adonai, to minister to Him and to love the name of Adonai, to be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant, even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar. For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."³¹

The Eastern Gate is going to experience some heavy traffic in the future. No wonder God excavates a new highway through the Mount of Olives.

The name of this gate in Hebrew is *sha'ar ha-mizrach*, or 'Gate of the East'. The word for 'east'—*mizrach* (מִזְרָח)—comes from the root זָרַח (*zerach*) which means 'dawning', 'shining' or 'brightness'. This is because *mizrach* faces the sunrise. One day each year when the sun would rise over the Mount of Olives, its rays would align perfectly with the axis of the temple so as to illuminate the veil of the Holy of Holies. People would vie to find a place to stand and behold this amazing annual phenomenon.

Zerach is also the name of one of Judah's twin sons by Tamar. (Remember the story?) He was the brother who was born with the scarlet thread tied around his wrist.³² It was a very strange birth. First, one of the twins

³⁰ Zechariah 14:4

³¹ Isaiah 56:6-7

³² Genesis 38

(Zerach) extends his hand and the midwife ties on a scarlet thread. Then he withdraws his hand and his brother, Perez, is born. After Perez' birth, Zerach emerges completely from the womb sporting his scarlet thread.

What is this strange story supposed to teach us? Zerach ('brightness') with his scarlet thread is a picture of Messiah. Like Zerach, Messiah came into the world temporarily and then withdrew. But, like Zerach, when Yeshua reenters the world, he will come to stay. The proof of his identity, like Zerach's scarlet thread, will be the scars in His hands and feet.

As we said, when Yeshua returns He will do so through the *Sha'ar Mizrach*—the East Gate. The Muslims knew this prophecy, so they walled up the East Gate to bar Messiah's entrance. Somehow, I don't think a stonemason like Yeshua will have any trouble making His way through.

Considering all the above, we can begin to form an impression of what the East Gate is illustrating for us. Everything about this gate conjures an image of coming into God's house directly through the front door. It inspires a sense of beauty, brightness, Messiah's return, and the welcoming of the nations into God's presence. This gate seems to glow with the promise of a glorious future with the King of Kings. I don't know about you, but I can't think about the East Gate without feeling a glowing, growing hope and anticipation.

As wonderful as the life is that God give us, the best is yet to come. Remember,

Messiah serves the best wine last. And like the Woman of Valor, we too can laugh at the future.³³

Today, take time to do just that.

Day 10: *The Inspection Gate* שער המפקד

The Inspection Gate was located near the northeast corner of the city, very close to the Sheep Gate. It was through the Inspection Gate that strangers to Jerusalem would enter for the first time. The judges of the city sat within its entrance in order to interrogate people who wished to enter within the city walls. Not everyone was granted entrance.

A newcomer would be asked such questions as: Who are you and where are you from? What is your business in Jerusalem and how long do you plan to stay? Who do you know who lives here? Where will you be staying? What god do you worship?

And so it went.

The judges of the city took their job seriously since they were trusted with protecting their citizens from dangerous, ungodly and impure influences. The watchmen on the walls protected the city from invading armies, but the judges protected from invading ideas, values, and dangers in disguise. These men were men of wisdom, discernment and good judgement. They needed to be because Jerusalem was

³³ Proverbs 31:25

the Holy City, and its spiritual integrity rested on their shoulders. Hence, they were called judges and they judged everyone trying to gain entrance into Jerusalem.

One might wonder why the Inspection Gate is not called the Gate of the Judges. The reason for this is that the gate is named not for *who* sits there, but *what is done* there. We can see this in the Hebrew word that gives this gate its name. In Hebrew, this gate is called *Sha'ar Hamiphkod*, from the root *pakad* (פקד). This is one of those unusual Hebrew words that has a host of meanings and applications. Here are just a few: “mandate” (or “command”), “appoint”, “valuing”, “remembering”, “deposit” and “appointed place”. (Believe it or not, there are even more definitions for *pakad*.)

Taken together, all the definitions of *pakad* relate to evaluation and judgment. Considering the work of the judges, this gate could easily have been named the Judgment Gate.

Its sounds ominous, I know, but there is no dodging judgment in this life. Everything in life is a test, and tests get graded.

Remember test days at school? If you had prepared and studied, you probably felt pretty good after the test and looked forward to seeing what grade you earned. For you, ‘judgement’ was something to look forward to. But if you had not prepared for the test, well—you get the picture.

We will *all* be judged by God. Paul assures “*we must all stand before the judgment seat of*

God.”³⁴ This should be common knowledge. But some who claim to be believers live as if they are unaware of this. But if you are like me, you want to live your life as one who has studied for the test, and not to live as one who dreads the Inspection Gate.

We have two options. The first, we can prepare for entering this gate: we can surrender our lives to God in service to Him, become disciples of Messiah and walk out this life (however imperfectly) as a friend of the King. Imagine approaching the Inspection Gate to be interrogated by the judges. When they ask their questions, you tell them, “I am a friend of the King. He is expecting me.”

But the second option is to do nothing. Just carry on as you are. After all, what’s the worst that could happen? I’m saved by grace, and that’s all that really matters!

Yeshua provided several parables that apply to the danger of such thinking. I think the one about the ten virgins is particularly apt.³⁵ One night, ten young ladies were awaiting the arrival of a long-anticipated wedding party. All ten of them were slated for the banquet, but when the wedding party arrived, only half of them made it into the banquet hall. The rest were left outside looking in through the windows, sad and angry. Why? Five of the young ladies were prepared, and five were not.

Don’t misunderstand this parable. It pictures the arrival of God’s Kingdom and

³⁴ Romans 14:10

³⁵ Matthew 25:1-13

the celebration that will be enjoyed for all those who serve God in wisdom and truth. This parable does not describe a salvation issue, but a rewards issue. Though we are all saved by God's grace, our rewards are based entirely upon our works, and God loves to reward those who serve Him.

Consider Paul's words on this subject:

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Yeshua the Messiah. Some will use gold, silver or precious stones in building on this foundation, while others will use wood, grass or straw. But each one's work will be shown for what it is—the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire. The fire will test the quality of each one's work. If the work someone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If it is burned up, he will have to bear the loss. He will still escape with his life, but it will be like escaping through a fire.³⁶

I also love the words Yeshua spoke about one's treasure and heart. Though Matthew's version is the most familiar, read Luke's version:

Have no fear, little flock, for your Father has resolved to give you the Kingdom! Sell what you own and do tzedakah—make for yourselves purses that don't wear out, riches in heaven that never fail, where no burglar comes near, where no moth destroys. For where your wealth is, there your heart will be also. Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit...³⁷

³⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:11-15

³⁷ Luke 12:32-35

The question is: where is your treasure? If it is in God's Kingdom, you have no worries. Your heart is in the right place! So when the day comes that it is your turn to step up to the Inspection Gate and the judges ask you what right you have to enter the city, you can tell them with a smile, "I own property here."

If you aren't ready to enter this gate, may I suggest that you just keep walking along the wall? The Sheep Gate is only a short distance away and there is someone there you need to get reacquainted with. Remember, the Sheep Gate is where the sacrifices enter, and the best way to become acquainted with the Lamb of God is to become a living sacrifice yourself.

Here are some questions to ponder and pray over at the Inspection Gate:

- ▶ If I were to die today, am I ready to face God's final inspection?
- ▶ Have I been building my life on a foundation other than Messiah?
- ▶ Have I invested my strength, time and energies in work that will endure? (i.e. silver, gold, precious stones)
- ▶ Or, have I been investing my strength, time and energies in work that means nothing for eternity? (hay, wood, stubble)
- ▶ Do I anticipate hearing God say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master."?
- ▶ Am I truly a living sacrifice?

This may be the most important list of questions that I have posed over these ten days. Yom Kippur has arrived and it is the perfect time to make a course correction in your life. God is extending this opportunity to you today. Are you going to take advantage of His gift?

A student asked his rabbi, "Teacher, when is the best time to repent?"

The rabbi looked thoughtful for a few moments and then answered, "The best time to repent is one day before you die."

"But, Rabbi" the student exclaimed, "No one knows the day of his death!"

The rabbi smiled and said, "Then one should repent every day."