

Had a very vivid dream that I was having a discussion with an orthodox Jewish man on the subject of the Holocaust, the Messiah, and Israel. And the Lord sort of directed me to Jeremiah chapter 30, and I felt that as Wednesday was Holocaust Memorial Day, just to share some thoughts coming out of this passage in relation to that event and to Jewish people. So perhaps we can turn to Jeremiah 30. Let's have a word of prayer as we read the word of God. Lord we thank you for your word. Pray you bless the reading and the preaching of your word, and that you'll lead us into all truth. And we pray Lord that you bless those who are here, and may your word go out and accomplish your purposes. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, ² "Thus speaks the Lord God of Israel, saying: 'Write in a book for yourself all the words that I have spoken to you. ³ For behold, the days are coming,' says the Lord, 'that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,' says the Lord. 'And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.'" ⁴ Now these are the words that the Lord spoke concerning Israel and Judah. ⁵ "For thus says the Lord: 'We have heard a voice of trembling, Of fear, and not of peace. ⁶ Ask now, and see, Whether a man is ever in labour with child? So why do I see every man with his hands on his loins Like a woman in labour, And all faces turned pale? ⁷ Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob's trouble, But he shall be saved out of it. ⁸ 'For it shall come to pass in that day,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'That I will break his yoke from your neck, And will burst your bonds; Foreigners shall no more enslave them. ⁹ But they shall serve the Lord their God, And David their king, Whom I will raise up for them. ¹⁰ 'Therefore do not fear, O My servant Jacob,' says the Lord, 'Nor be dismayed, O Israel; For behold, I will save you from afar, And your seed from the land of their captivity. Jeremiah 30.1-10

January the 27th, Holocaust Day. Memorial of the liberation of Auschwitz. Day when people remember the terrible events of the Holocaust the murder of six million Jews and millions of others in the terrible events of the Nazi Holocaust. An event which was actually without any precedent in history. There have been pogroms, they've been slaughters of Jews before, but never such a systematic attempt to annihilate the entire Jewish people. As a demon-possessed leader, Adolf Hitler, put out his aim which was "die Vernichtung der jüdischen Rasse in Europa" 'the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe'. He didn't succeed but he came pretty close. I remember we went with my first wife Nikki to Terezin concentration camp near Prague in Czechoslovakia and we went round it and with us were a whole group of Israelis and when they came to the end of it, the Israelis started singing: "Chaim Israel Chaim **םייה לארשי םייה**", which means 'the people of Israel live'. And it's like a statement that, despite all of the horror that was brought upon the Jewish people, the Jewish people live and have come through, and are again back in their land. And again, a people to be recognized. But here they came pretty close. Six million Jews killed, a terrible event which took place. It has led some to ask: where was God? Was there a God? How could God have allowed such a terrible thing to happen? A man called Elie Wiesel, who was a survivor of the camps, he was taken as a child to the camp. He wrote a book called Night in which he describes his first impression on arriving at Buchenwald, the reception centre for Auschwitz.

I don't know that I can read this without crying: "*The flames were leaping from the ditch; gigantic flames. They were burning something. A lorry drew up at the pit and delivered its load. Little children, babies, yes! I saw it! I saw it with my own eyes! Those little children in the flames. Is it surprising I couldn't sleep after that? Sleep has fled from my eyes. Never shall I forget that night. The first night in the camp which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath the silent blue sky. Never shall I forget those flames which consume my faith forever. Never shall I forget that eternal silence which deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget those things even if I'm condemned to live as long as God himself. Never!*"

And he goes on to describe the pious Jews in the camp who were holding services to worship God on the Jewish holy days and says:

"Thousands of voices repeated the benediction thousands of men prostrated themselves like trees before a tempest. Blessed be the name of the eternal. Why? But why should I bless him? In every fibre I rebelled because He had thousands of children burned in his pits, because he had kept the crematoria working day and night, on Sundays and on feast days. Because in his great might, He created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many factories of death." **Elie Wiesel - Night**