

What the World Can Learn from Jews About Comforting Mourners

When you lose someone or when your heart is broken and sorrowful, you obviously don't feel happy about it.

But Yeshua teaches us "happy are those who mourn." In what way should a mourner feel happy, and when will mourners find this promised consolation?

Yeshua says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). The English language provides no adequate word to translate the original Hebrew expression behind Yeshua's beatitudes. Various English translations render it as "fortunate," "joyful," "blessed" or even "happy." The Hebrew implies something closer to "deeply contented."

In what way are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the downtrodden and the persecuted to be understood as glad and deeply contented? The seeming contradiction emphasizes Yeshua's central message of good news: "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10b).

That is to say, "Their hope is in the messianic era." Such men and women cannot base their happiness or sense of contentment on temporal circumstances. Instead, they must rely on God and His promises about the kingdom, and because they rely on God and look to the kingdom instead of this present world, they find inner peace.

The Master says, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh" (Luke 6:21b). The Bible says in the kingdom of heaven, "Our mouth was filled with laughter ... Those who sow in tears shall leap with joyful shouting" (Psalm 126:2a, 5). The kingdom offers hope of consolation for the brokenhearted and

bereaved. This explains why Jewish tradition prescribes greeting mourners with the words "May you be comforted along with the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

The Master contrasted those who mourn for Zion against the powerful and elite of society such as the Romans, Herodians and Sadducees. He said, "Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6:25b). When the kingdom comes, those who have loved this present world and its deceits will suffer loss, but those who mourn over the exile and yearn for Zion's redemption will find their consolation. "They will be comforted" because Yeshua fulfills the messianic mission "to preach good news to the poor ... to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound ... to comfort all who mourn, to preserve those who mourn in Zion ... the oil of joy for mourning" (Is. 61:1-3).

In this way, the beatitudes of Yeshua bring good news to the lowly and downtrodden, as the prophet Isaiah says: "Strengthen the weak hands, and support the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not. Your God will come ... even God with a recompense ... He will come and save you'" (Isaiah 35:3-4). {eo}

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