

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH

What does the Valley of the shadow and death mean to us? Surely that it does not sound inviting in its adjectives of the shadow of death. We find this term in Psalm 23:4: "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." These are words of trust and confidence in the shepherd. Although, the Hebrew word for "shadow of death" means darkness, the root word for both shadow and death is the same. YAHSHUA, as our Shepherd, knows the way out of a valley, as well as the dangers of it. He stands tall to protect His own from the danger found in the valley of the shadow of death.

A **valley** is an elongated low area often running between [hills](#) or [mountains](#), which will typically contain a [river](#) or [stream](#) running from one end to the other. Most valleys are formed by [erosion](#) of the land surface by rivers or streams over a very long period. Some valleys are formed through erosion by [glacial ice](#). These glaciers may remain present in valleys in high mountains or polar areas shield. (Wikipedia)

Valleys display beautiful surroundings in spite of its dangers. The valleys we go through are difficult and challenging, for they are the valleys of life. It is the place where we feel alone in our trials; as YAHSHUA experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane. Not one of the disciples would pray with Him. He promised that He will be with us always to the end of time. The Bible says that He fills the entire world. There is no place where He is not. "Where could I go from Your Spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence? If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol behold, You are there; if I take the wings of the morning or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:7-10). And, "Am I a God at hand, says the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? Says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Says the Lord?" (Jer. 23:23-24). While we walk the valley of suffering, even though overwhelmed by the feeling of loneliness and depression, it is good to draw near to the Lord. Sometimes, it seems He is far away and is not hearing our voice; and that's when doubts take our mind; we suffer anguish and torment of the soul.

The Psalmist Asaph once said, "Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Have His mercy and loving-kindness ceased forever? Have His promises ended for all time? Has God abandoned or forgotten His graciousness? Has He in anger shut up His compassion?" (Ps. 77:7-9). YAHSHUA, in the valley of abandonment from His Father cried, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1). Alone in the valley of suffering, separated from His heavenly Father for the first time, YAHSHUA carried the sins of the world, which darkened the way to the Father. That was the valley of death of hell. God's presence will never be there. But YAHSHUA had to go through to pull us out of it, in order to rescue us from the power of eternal death and Satan. Every time, we go through the valley of suffering, let's remember that we are not alone. We may feel that way, which is normal for humans to feel in the presence of hopeless

situations, since we are flesh and demand to see things that we can touch. However, faith mingled with hope opens our spiritual eyes and there in the midst of sufferings, we feel peace. It is the peace that comes from the presence of the Lord standing there with us.

Job, in his valley of the shadow of death, cried: "Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat! I would lay my cause before Him and fill my mouth with arguments... But He knows the way that I take. When He has tried me, I shall come forth as refined gold... for He performs for me, and of many such matters He is mindful" (Job 23:3-4,10); "Know that God has overthrown and put me in the wrong and has closed His net about me. Behold, I cry out, Violence! But I am not heard; I cry aloud for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and I am gone; my hope has He pulled up like a tree" (19:6-8). Haven't we felt like Job in our valley of suffering to the point of giving up? The Bible says that "no temptation has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man. But God is faithful and He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will also provide the way out that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently" (I Cor. 10:13).

The psalmist in his trials, directed this question to his soul: "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why should you moan over me and be disquieted within me? Hope in God and wait expectantly for Him, for I shall yet praise Him, my help and my God" (Ps. 42:5). "Yet, the Lord will command His loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me, a prayer to the God of my life" (vs.8). YAHSHUA assured the disciples that tribulation was coming their way, but to be of good courage, for He has overcome the world (John 16:33). He has not left us to suffer alone in the valley of darkness; Acknowledging His presence, believing His word, we lose focus of our pains while in the valley. The words from the chorus, by Helen H. Lemmel, "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace," leads us to "reflect the Lord's glory, being transformed into His likeness" (2 Cor. 3:18). There is no better place than in the valley of sufferings of the shadow of death to experience His glory, when we are in tune with His words and with His presence. Life is not roses without the thorns; it bears many of them, showing the reality we must face growing up. Born to die because of sin, we are destined to suffer. The difference life makes however, is when we are "born again; born of Spirit; born anew from above." But we still have to confront the ups and downs of life and yes, the final valley of death which we all must pass through to eternity. However, for the believer, there is joy passing through that valley, for our hope of eternal salvation is beyond that. Death is for the believer, just a transfer from earth to heaven. At that time, the presence of our Shepherd comforts and guides us. There is no need to fear with Him by our side. We will not walk alone, but He will walk with us to our heavenly destination. Psalm 116: 15 says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." He wants us to be with Him, and the only way is through death. Many saints have gone through the literal "valley of the shadow of death" when they took their last breath. David said in his psalm 17:15: "As for me, I will continue beholding Your face in righteousness; I shall be fully satisfied, when I awake [to find myself] beholding Your form [and having sweet communion with You]." Paul expresses his yearning to be with the Lord, saying,

“But I am hard pressed between the two. My yearning desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far, far better.” (Phil. 1:23).

We read in the Bible that only two people did not experience death: Enoch and Elijah. They did not have to go through “the valley of the shadow of death.” They were taken to heaven alive; Moses died in the presence of the Lord. He went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah that is opposite Jericho and the Lord showed him all the land- from Gilead to Dan... “So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord; and He buried him in the valley of the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor, but no man knows where his tomb is to this day.” (Deut. 34:1,5-6) Many of us may not experience physical death, if the rapture happens in our time. The transformation that will take place in our body when YAHSHUA calls us up will be glorious. We will be as He is when we see Him as He is; and everyone who has this hope in Him cleanses himself just as He is pure (1 John 3:2-3). Do you have this hope, my friend? Blessed are you.