

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR
LESSON THIRTEEN: JEHOVAH SHAMMAH

by Sandy Harber

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." Deuteronomy 31:6

Numerous Scripture verses and passages on fear remind us that God is present with us everywhere we go 24/7. If God is there (and He is) fear is not a rational reaction. Regardless of the circumstances God is present. Focus on that. Fear has nothing to sustain it in the presence of the Almighty.

The final chapters of the book of Ezekiel record his visions of the Millennial Temple as well as prophecies concerning Israel's future. One exciting feature of the future is that God will dwell with His people. The last verse in Ezekiel tells us that the city of Jerusalem will be renamed "Jehovah Shammah." Our King James Version translates the Hebrew so that it reads, "the Lord is there." One of the problems with reading Scripture in a language other than the original is that we miss some of the significance. The name of the city is actually one of God's compound names. The point, of course, is that God will be living with mankind on earth. The good news is that we don't have to wait until the return of Jesus and the temple is built to experience God's presence. Right here and now, wherever you are, He is with you.

Before he died, Moses prepared the people to enter the Promised Land. He gave a series of five lectures reminding them of what God had already done for them in the past and what He would do for them in the future if they obeyed His Word. But the people had to conquer the land through force. They had to engage the enemies occupying the land in battle and prevail. God did not just give them the land, they had to work for it. In Deuteronomy 31:6, Moses encourages the people to: 1) be strong; 2) be of good courage; 3) fear not; and, 4) don't be afraid.

The Hebrew word translated "strong" means "to stand your ground like a good soldier." The word translated "courage" means "to be alert, brave, steadfastly minded, and ready for battle." Both of these commands are positive: be strong and be courageous. Stand fast, be watchful, focus on winning, and be ready to fight bravely. This is the ticket for conquering their enemies.

Two negative commands follow: fear not and don't be afraid. The Hebrew word translated "fear" means "afraid, frightened, dread." The word translated "afraid" means "be affrighted; shake terribly." This is an extreme reaction to a fearful situation that affects the body. These negative responses to facing down the enemy can result in losses on the battlefield. Moses warns them not to be frightened and lose control so that they shake and tremble. Don't let fear cloud their minds or rule their bodies.

Why? Because God is with them in this situation. Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is present. And He gives them two promises: I will not fail you and I will not forsake you. To "fail" means to "abate, cease, leave, faint, leave alone, be weak." The Hebrew word translated "forsake" means to "relinquish, fail, refuse." God will never stop fighting for them. He will never desert them and leave them on their own.

We can apply this to our own fearful situations. On the positive side, God wants us to be courageous. His negative command is "don't fear." Why? Because He is there with us wherever we are. He's got our back. When fear takes hold remember that God is present and He is on your side. Nothing and no one can conquer the team of God-and-me.

"The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" Psalm 118:6