

## Gone, Completely Gone

You may not be interested in the words of a heart-broken old man, but this is a story that MUST be told. My grandson, my beautiful Ethan, my strength and my joy. Gone. Completely gone. No funeral. No place of mourning. No grave. How can I cry without a grave?

I am outraged at Ethan's mother. Hers are the hands that killed him. But my son, Shamiah, also bears the guilt. How can my family be guilty of such a heinous thing? Oh Ethan, my grandson, by strength and my joy. Gone. Completely gone.

This tragedy must have started soon after my son was married. We live a few kilometers west of Jerusalem and I have always taken my family to the Temple. We are Jews and follow the laws of Moses. I was married in the courtyard outside the Temple and so was my son.

Within the first two years I saw my son and his wife having problems. Every new couple has some fights, but I kept hearing bits and pieces of their arguments. During one fight I heard her talking about the spread of diseases. He shouted back about being free to worship however he wanted. I did not know what was going on.

These were hard times for us all. We live in a very dry climate and depend on the few rains when they come, because we all farm and raise animals.

During another fight, I heard her say the forbidden words, "Asherah" and "prostitute." I heard him answer back with words like "famine", "need her help", and "rain." Now I understood at least part of the problem.

East of the Holy City, there is a temple dedicated to the goddess Ashtoreth. It was built by King Solomon over 300 years ago.<sup>1</sup> No good Jew would go there, but my son must be going regularly now. You see, the temple is a brothel full of prostitutes. Men go there, do all sorts of lewd things, and walk out saying that they pleased Asherah and now it might rain.<sup>2</sup>

This despicable temple was closed down when King Manasseh returned from his short exile in Babylon. But when he died nearly two years ago, the new king, King Amon, proudly cut the ribbon at its Grand Re-opening. My son has become a willing patron of this vile place.

Their fighting got worse and worse. My son would not listen to her pleadings and threats. Nor did any good come of my son's idolatrous sins. There still was no rain.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 11:7-8; 2 Kings 23:13.

<sup>2</sup> Unger's Bible Dictionary, *GODS, FALSE, Ashtoreth*, pp 412-413.

However, only a great prophet could have known the evil plan she invented and actually carried out. We had no warning.

My two granddaughters came running and screaming to my house. They were so upset that it took many minutes to get the story out of them.

Their mother had locked them in their room and threatened them with the worst beating of their life if they made any noise. She then took Ethan and left.

Hours later, she returned in a hysterical state. She knocked the girls around, screamed at them to leave, then locked herself in while she wailed and screamed and bashed up the house.

Upon hearing their story, I was gripped with sheer panic. Where is my Ethan? What terrible thing has happened?

I asked around and followed the steps of where she had taken him. The people led me to the southeast of Jerusalem, to where I had never set foot before in my life. I was led to the valley of Ben-Hinnom. My panic, and now my grief, multiplied with every step.

I don't have words to say it. I will have nightmares for the rest of my life.

Ethan's mother brought him here, to the altar of Topheth, and handed him over to the murderous priests of Molech.<sup>3</sup> They took him to the altar, tied him down, and . . . . .

Ashes. Nothing but ashes. Mixed with the ashes of hundreds of other victims of the so-called "protecting father."<sup>4</sup>

My beloved Ethan, my grandson, my strength and my joy. Gone. Completely gone. No funeral. No place of mourning. No grave. How will I cry for you?

It is true that child sacrifice to false gods was practiced just outside of Jerusalem. God was abhorred at such a thing. This is what he said about it: "They have built pagan shrines at Topheth . . . and there they burn their sons and daughters in the fire. I have never commanded such a horrible deed; it never even crossed my mind to command such a thing!" Jer. 7:31. **It took a man of Josiah's caliber to deal with this abomination.**

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<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 20:2-5.

<sup>4</sup> Unger's Bible Dictionary, *GODS, FALSE, Molech*, P. 416.