

The Inner War



Introduction

Some of you know that I have a punk rock background, which embodied playing in a band and listening to some pretty "out-there" music. Punk is rebellious hard-edged music born out of the frustration at the modern world. One such band at the time, which I listened to was called Black Flag. They released a very telling album simply entitled, My War, which focused on gloom, depression, defeatism, and aggression. Some songs on the album were entitled "Nothing Left inside," "Can't Decide," "Scream" and the title track "My War." Some song lyrics consisted of lines such as, "I conceal my feelings / So I don't have to explain / What I can't explain anyway" and "Beat My Head Against the Wall." The whole album dealt with the dysfunction in relationships gone wrong and was my pillar of support before finding a definitively better way to handle the ups and downs of life decades later.



In 1984, punk rock band *Black Flag* released an album simply entitled, *My War*, which focused on gloom, depression, defeatism, and aggression. Some songs on the album were entitled "Nothing Left inside," "Can't Decide," "Scream," "Swinging Man," and the title track "My War." Some song lyrics consisted of lines such as, "I conceal my feelings / So I don't have to explain / What I can't explain anyway" and "Beat My Head Against the Wall." The whole album dealt with the dysfunction in relationships gone wrong and was my pillar of support before finding a definitively better way to handle the ups and downs of life decades later.

The funny thing is that most great albums could be given exactly the same name. Alanis Morissette's hit album "Jagged little Pill" could quite easily have been be entitled "My War." Pink Floyd's "Dark Side of the Moon" could have just as easily been called, "My War." Many Michal Jackson albums could have been entitled "My War." Same with Prince, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Johnny Cash, Sinéad O'Conner, Roy Orbison and Lenard Cohan. Many of their albums could have fit such a title. This also includes books, nearly every biography could be titled "My War." Indeed, Hitler's anti-semitic manifesto was entitled Mein Kamp ("My Struggle"), which is pretty close. The name Yisrael can be translated as "Men who struggle with Elohim."

Music and literature is an outlet, it's a form of expression and it enables artists and authors to exercise their demons, and more often than not, what they write and perform is autobiographical.

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Next time you want to judge a Punk Rocker. Remember this. They are essentially expressing themselves externally as they are internally. There is no conflict between internal or external. Many believers cannot make the same claim.

If you are alive, you are fighting a war. To be human, is to be fighting an ongoing war between the good you and the bad you. The mind and heart are constantly at odds, tugging in opposing directions. We have moments of peace and solitude, but inevitably the pounding starts again. Oh, I forgot to mention, it's a war that no-one sees. For the most part it's something you have to explain to someone if you want to get external help. Sometimes people will spot things, but generally people are experts at masking their issues.

Many people deal with their issues in a multitude of ways. Some listen to music and go to concerts, some administer retail therapy, go gambling, go drinking, do drugs, eat food, thrill seek, play video games, play sport, you name it. Some things are helpful, others are detrimental. Within a religious environment people are sometimes expected to not fall pray to the riggers and stresses of life like nonreligious people, much less be found dealing with them outside the prescribed manner of prayer, Torah study, charity, and doing good deeds.



Sometimes, if I'm alone in my car I'll put on a song from my punk days and sneak a listen to a song. While this might be seen as weakness or lack of faith, it's actually an act of spiritual decompressing from my former life, which is a process that can take years, even a lifetime to complete.

We work every day to move away from our former state and move closer to our Heavenly Father. But this is an ongoing process.

This is even more compounded with believers who suffer from mental illness, which is sometimes mishandled within religious institutions. We can often find it difficult and even frustrating at times handling people suffering from depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, eating disorders, schizophrenia and other mental health issues.

Mental illness in Hebrew is known as machalat hanefesh, which means "illness of the soul." Psychological suffering happens to each of us at some points in our life—just as we experience machalat haguf—"illness of the body." It can be hereditary, stem from a past trauma, a physical ailment or be completely spiritual.

Dr. Esther Altmann, a New York-based clinical psychologist, shared the following data on mental illness in any given year in the United States:

- Approximately one in five adults—20 percent—experiences some form of mental illness.
- Approximately 4 percent experience a serious mental illness that substantially interferes with or limits their functioning in one or more major life activities.
- 1 percent of adults live with schizophrenia.
- 2.6 percent of adults live with bipolar disorder.
- 7 percent of adults have had at least one major depressive episode in the past year.
- 6 percent of the adult population reported heavy drinking.
- Suicide is now the leading cause of death for young people ages 15–24.

But where does this war stem from? How does it manifest?

Like I said, it can be hereditary, from a trauma, a physical illness that affects the mind.

Stress is often seen as a key factor. But, surprisingly some stress actually preserves health and prolongs life.

The pressure and stress of life is something that has accompanied mankind since his expulsion

from Gan Edan. "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) Building a livelihood has always been a requirement of man. "Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house." (Proverbs 24:27) "Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense." (Proverbs 12:11) So too has the obligation to support one's family. "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5:8)

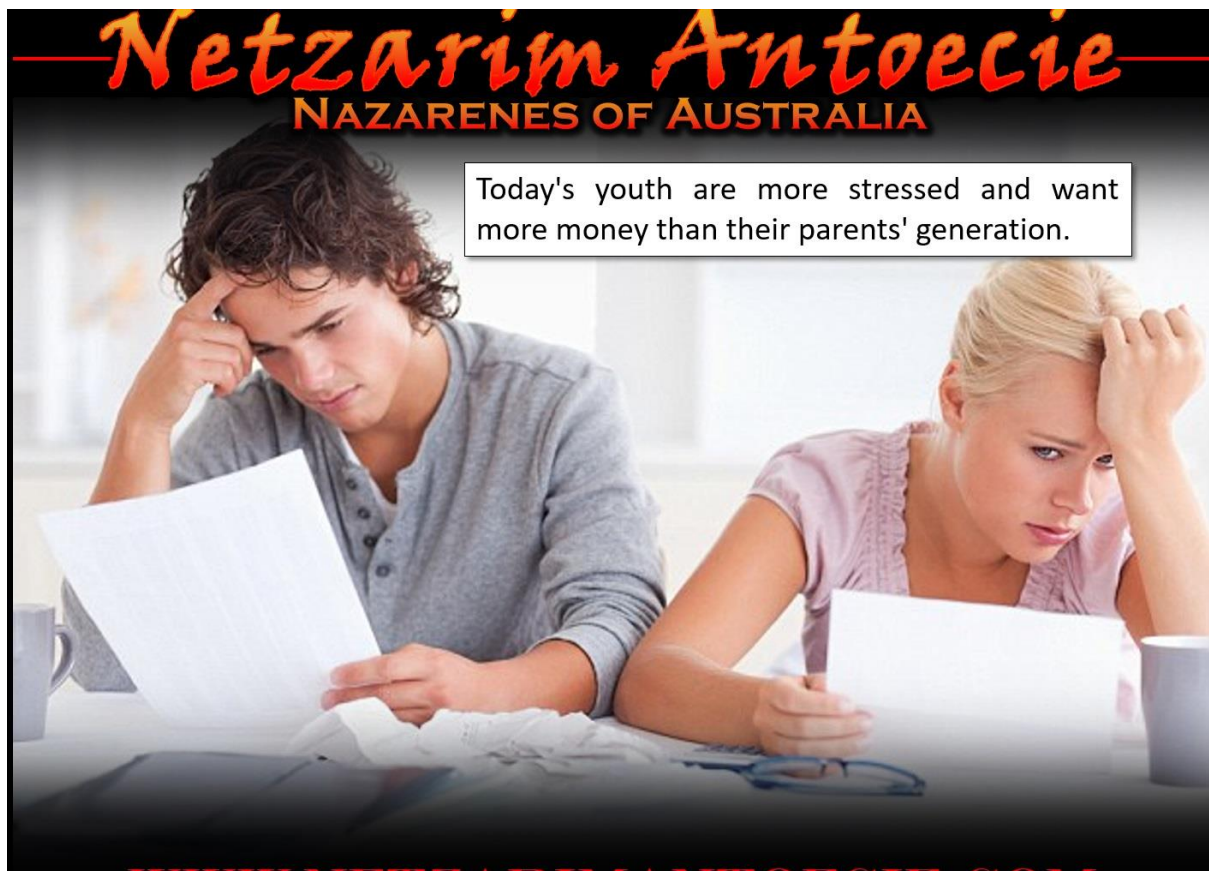
But as man has advanced, not just technologically, but also allegedly philosophically, life has not gotten easier, it's actually gotten progressively harder.

As mankind rockets toward the seventh millennium that will usher in the Age of Redemption, the Devil knows that he has but a short time, so gradually he has perverted governments and economies across the globe to erode the normalcy of life and to inject instability, unrest and eventual chaos within the structure of ordered humanity.

HaSatan is the major influence on the ideals, opinions, goals, hopes and views of the majority of people. His influence also encompasses the world's philosophies, education, and commerce. The thoughts, ideas, speculations and false religions of the world are under his guidance. "The El of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the message that illuminates the glory of Moshiach, who is the image of Elohim." (2 Corinthians 4:4) HaSatan already did the same thing before the Flood and with the Tower of Babel, and he's been at it with a slow deliberation for a third time lucky ever since.

The world is quickly becoming a place where the majority of people cannot survive, not just in the third world, but the first world as well.

Which Generation Had It Harder?



An April 12th 2018 Daily Mail article stated that, "Life is harder today than 40 years ago ... and it's not just the twenty-somethings saying that, their parents agree."

It went onto say that though the older generations have loved to "grumble about how they were raised on rationing and under the spectre of a nuclear war" in contrast to grumble the easy ride

enjoyed by youngsters today at one point or another, it seems “that despite the improved working conditions, freedom and vast array of ways to splash the cash, life for young people has never been tougher. A surprising study of 4,000 people across two generations found that not only does the current younger generation think their parents had it easy, the over-50's agree.

Despite the consumer revolution in personal technology, comparatively bigger salaries and better working conditions, those in their twenties say they face a more significant range of threats to happiness and contentment.

Better job security, comfortable pensions and a clock-on, clock-off approach to the world of work made life easier 40 years ago, as did a better housing market and the absence of high interest loans and credit cards.

'The results are surprising and reveal that young men and women in their twenties are planning for the future, investing time and effort in maintaining health and fitness, and fretting over their finances – rather than hedonists living for the day,' said the LSE sociologist, Dr Catherine Hakim.

'Perhaps this is a response to the current tough economic climate.'

Stress is a huge problem for today's twenty-somethings, with 41 per cent saying they experience regular or constant stress. Just 15 per cent said the same 40 years ago, with half saying they never got stressed at all.”

The Fast and the Furious



The world has become far faster-paced than it once was. Go out to the country for a few days on a farm (if possible) and then head back into the inner city and you'll notice the difference. Food is fast, transportation is fast, news is fast, communication is fast, education is fast, entertainment is fast, dating is fast, getting married is even fast with Las Vegas having “drive-thru-weddings,” you name it, it's fast. The rush, rush has infiltrated the home, with fewer families actually sitting down together at the table for meals, most critical conversation take place in the family car on the way to somewhere.

Why are we so preoccupied with rushing? The quicker we can do something, the more time a person has for recreation right? Wrong! The quicker something is down, the quicker we do something else that is also quick. And this is progress?

Mobile phones and computers never stay the same, ATMs and Electronic Fund Transfer at Point of Sale never stays the same, even amenities in public toilets are changing so fast that most people don't even know how to get into or out of a toilet, much less know how to get running water out of a tap to wash their hands.

Martin Jacques wrote in an article entitled, *The Death of Intimacy* (Published in the Guardian 2004) that, "It has become almost an article of faith in our society that change is synonymous with progress. Change is not always good, in fact if we hadn't changed at all since the first humans, we'd be fine today. Recent surveys indicating that we are less happy than we used to be suggest a profound sickness at the heart of western society and modern notions of progress. The findings are not surprising. The very idea of what it means to be human - and the necessary conditions for human qualities to thrive - are being eroded. The reason we no longer feel as happy as we once did is that the intimacy on which our sense of well-being rests - a product of our closest, most intimate relationships, above all in the family - is in decline. In this context, three trends are profoundly changing the nature of our society. First, the rise of individualism, initially evident in the 1960s, has made self the dominant interest, the universal reference point and one's own needs as the ultimate justification of everything. We live in the age of selfishness. Second, there has been the relentless spread of the market into every part of society. The marketisation of everything has made society, and each of us, more competitive. The logic of the market has now become universal, the ideology not just of neoliberals, but of us all, the criterion we use not just about our job or when shopping, but about our innermost selves, and our most intimate relationships...But this most precious of all human relationships is being amended and undermined. As women have been drawn into the labour market on the same scale as men, they are now subject to growing time-scarcity, with profound consequences for the family, and especially children. The birth rate has fallen to historic new lows. That most fundamental of human functions, reproduction, is beleaguered by the values of the ego-market society. Couples are increasingly reluctant to make the inevitable "sacrifices" - cut in income, loss of time, greater pressure - that parenthood involves.

Parents are now spending less time with their babies and toddlers. The effects are already evident in schools. In a study published by the government's Basic Skills Agency last year, teachers claim that half of all children now start school unable to speak audibly and be understood by others, to respond to simple instructions, recognise their own names or even count to five. In order to attend to our own needs, our children are neglected, our time substituted by paying for that of others, videos and computer games deployed as a means of distraction."

As a result, of the many pressures of modern day life and the encroachment of the market on the family unit, most marriages are failing, usually resulting in the children understandably remaining in the care of the mother and the father being removed, ranging from 50% custody to minimal or no contact with his children whatsoever. Therefore, the modern male is struggling to even find a purchase to be able to stand upright.

The Disappearing Man

A report by the mental health charity CALM has found that men are struggling to cope with the pressures and expectations of their personal and professional lives.

There is a crisis in modern masculinity, with men struggling to deal with pressures in their personal and professional lives, according to a report by the mental health charity CALM (the Campaign Against Living Miserably).

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Suicide is now the single biggest cause of death in men aged 20–49 in England and Wales

The Telegraph - Monday 09 April 2018



The report, published to coincide with International Men's Day (November 19), seeks to address the reasons why male suicide rates in Britain are at a 15-year high (around 4,500 last year). Suicide is now the single biggest cause of death in men aged 20-49 in England and Wales, with males accounting for 78 per cent of all suicides in the UK...The CALM report, *A Crisis in Modern Masculinity: Understanding the Causes of Male Suicide*, analysed the pressures and expectations that men and women face in their daily lives, and concluded that men are failing to cope, as well as keeping their problems hidden from others.

Roughly half of all the 1,000 men and women surveyed said they had experienced some form of depression, yet women were much more likely to seek help or confide in a friend. 74pc of women who had suffered depression said they had spoken to someone about it, while only 53pc of males had done so. 69pc of men who had suffered depression said they preferred to deal with the problem themselves.

When it came to work, 42pc of men said they felt pressure to be the main breadwinner in the family, compared to just 13pc of females. Of those surveyed, men were much more likely to have lost their jobs previously (54pc compared to 35pc of females) and to have lost their job more than once (25 pc compared to 10pc of women). 29pc of men believed their partner would think they were "less of a man" if they lost their job.

When asked about relationships, around three in 10 men felt that they personally lacked qualities and abilities that sexual or romantic partners look for in a man.

Men were also much more likely than women to have indulged in risky behaviour in the past three months - 73pc compared to 58pc of women.

Men also felt additional pressure to remain strong during times of crisis. Around 42pc of male respondents said they believe a man is "mostly responsible" for being emotionally strong and taking charge in a crisis, compared to around 17pc of women.

Speaking of the findings, CALM's chief executive Jane Powell said: "The research underlines that so often their own worst enemies, men need new rules for survival. Outmoded, incorrect and misplaced male self-beliefs are proving lethal and the traditional strong, silent response to adversity is increasingly failing to protect men from themselves.

"Men need to talk before they hit a wall in a crisis or feel they are at the end of the road," she added. "The normality of women freely discussing their troubles is undoubtedly a factor in declining rates of female suicide and underlines the need for a gender-based strategy in suicide prevention. So far, Government and society has failed to act on this self-inflicted yet preventable slaughter of our husbands, partners, brothers and sons."

Many of us don't know what to think theologically when someone takes their own life. We think the best, but for years we hear unsubstantiated rumours about our Heavenly Father's view on suicide.

Suicide in The Bible

While there is no explicit biblical prohibition on suicide, later rabbinic authorities derived a prohibition from the verse in Genesis 9:5, "And for your lifeblood I will surely demand an accounting. I will demand an accounting from every animal. And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being." Rashi and other early rabbinic authorities understood the verse as a prohibition against taking one's own life.

Preserving human life is among the highest duties in the Torah, and suicide is seen as counter to this fundamental value. Human beings are barred even from harming themselves — let alone ending their own lives. The only exception is in cases of martyrdom, where Jews are traditionally obliged to sacrifice their lives rather than violate the three cardinal sins of idolatry, murder and sexual immorality.

Many who wrestle with suicidal thoughts and tendencies often feel all alone in their struggle. But the truth is, it's more common than we may even be aware of. And it's not a new problem. It's been an issue for many years, even in Biblical times.

The Suicide of Saul and His Armour Bearer

The first King of Yisrael took his own life. King Saul was defeated by the enemy and great fear after being wounded, Saul chose to end his life, rather than face abuse by his captors. When his armour-bearer refused to kill him at his request, he took his own life by falling on his sword. Out of hopelessness and terror after seeing that Saul was dead, this assistant to the king impulsively took his life as well. "The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armour-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armour-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him." (1 Samuel 31:3-5)

The Suicide of Sampson

In his great drive for revenge, Samson was willing to die when he killed the Philistines in a crowded temple. Braced between two pillars, he used his final strength to push them down, and take his own life along with his enemies. "While they were in high spirits, they shouted, 'Bring out Samson to entertain us.' So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. When they stood him among the pillars, Samson said to the servant who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.' Samson said to the servant who held his hand, 'Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them.' Then Samson prayed to Yahweh, 'Sovereign Yahweh, remember me. Please, Elohim, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes.' Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing himself against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, Samson said, 'Let me die with the Philistines!' Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived." (Judges 16:25-30)

The Suicide of Avimelech

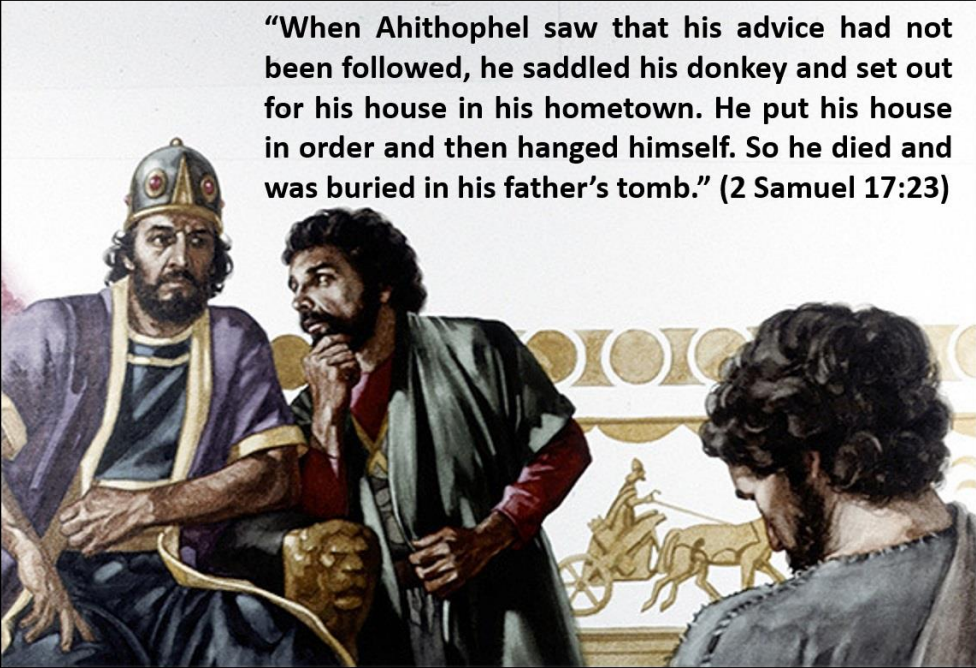
Then there was Avimelech, who was a ruthless king over Yisrael. His evil knew no limits, and after killing many people, and even taking the lives of 69 of his 70 half-brothers, Elohim allowed one woman to stop him. After she dropped a millstone on his head, he was so injured that his

pride led him to take his own life. So that no one could “say a woman killed him.” (Judges 9:50-55)

The Suicide of Ahithophel

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“When Ahithophel saw that his advice had not been followed, he saddled his donkey and set out for his house in his hometown. He put his house in order and then hanged himself. So he died and was buried in his father’s tomb.” (2 Samuel 17:23)

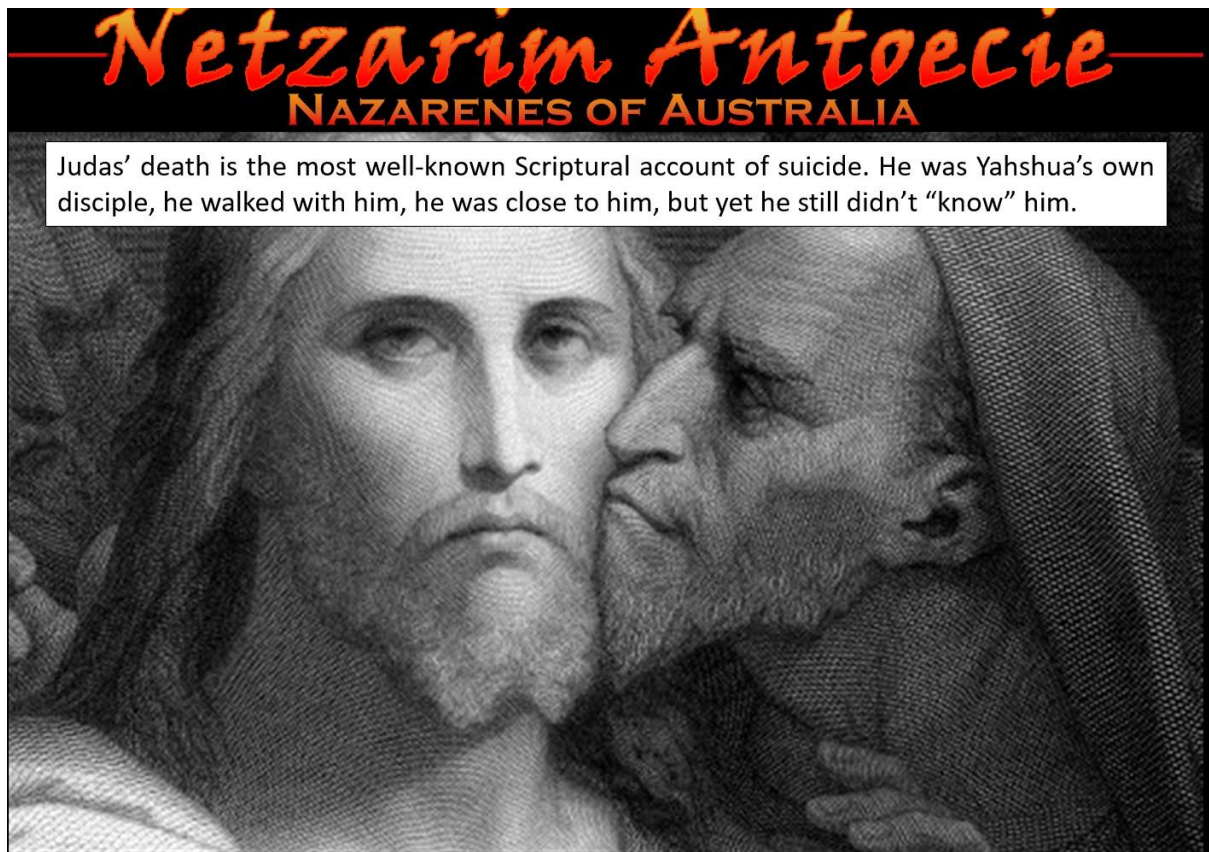


A one-time close companion of David, Ahithophel, the grandfather of Bathsheba eventually took up the cause of Avshalom’s rise against him. But when he noticed that his advice had not been taken to lead to final defeat over David’s army, out of possible fear, rejection, or complete hopelessness, he chose to go home, “put his house in order, and then hanged himself.” (2 Samuel 17:23)

The Suicide of Zimri

Zimri was an evil king of Yisrael and facing utter defeat, he saw no way out, except to take his own life. He set the palace on fire and died in it, rather than choose to face his enemy. (1 Kings 16:15-20)

The Suicide of Judas



In great despair and guilt after betraying Moshiah, Judas choose suicide. His story is the most well-known Scriptural account of suicide. He was Yahshua's own disciple, he walked with him, he was close to him, but yet he still didn't "know" him. (Matthew 27:3-4)

Elijah Asked to Die

Believe it or not, the prophet Elijah felt suicidal. "While he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Yahweh," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." (1 Kings 19:4)

How Should We View Suicide?

The innate nature of all living things is to survive. Most animals will always flee from danger. Even an animal that has lost the entire lower portion of its body, will still try and crawl away to safety.

Make no mistake, suicide is a very serious offense in Islam, Christianity and Judaism. It is no different in the Messianic faith. The Talmud says, "For him who takes his own life with full knowledge of his action [the Hebrew word is b'daat] no rites are to be observed. . . There is to be no rending of clothes and no eulogy. But people should line up for him [at the end of the burial ceremony] and the mourner's blessing should be recited [as the family passes through] out of respect for the living. The general rule is: Whatever rites are [normally] performed for the benefit of the survivors should be observed; whatever is [normally] done out of respect for the dead should not be observed."

However, all suicides are not in the same category. One category of suicide, as stated above, includes those who are in full possession of their physical and mental facilities (b'daat) when they take their lives. They do it out of spite, to harm their family and friends or a community.

The second category includes those who act on impulse or who are under severe mental strain or physical pain when committing suicide. Jewish law speaks of an individual in this second category of being an anuss, meaning a "person under compulsion," and hence not responsible for his actions. All burial and mourning rites are observed for him.

The first anuss in Hebrew history was King Saul, who, after being defeated by the Philistines on Mount Gilboa, realized what would have happened to him if he were taken alive. He therefore impaled himself as stated earlier. This action gave rise to the expression anuss K'Shau, meaning "as distressed as Saul."

Achi anuss K'Shau.

Our brother was as distressed as Sha'ul.

Consequently, Joseph Caro in his "Code of Jewish Law" (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 345:3) and most authorities of subsequent generations have ruled that the majority of suicides are to be considered as distressed as Saul and as having acted under compulsion when taking their own lives. As such, they are not responsible for their actions and are to be accorded the same courtesies and privileges granted every believer who has met a natural death.

Most suicides are a result of mental illness, or an actual spirit of suicide.

Many things proceed the ultimate state of "Suicide Ideation," which is when a person actively thinks about ending his life. Depression goes forth first, usually a spirit, and then if this spirit is not overturned, the person is handpassed onto a more lethal spirit. So early detection is the best prevention. "If there is concern in a man's heart, let him cast it down, and a good word will make it cheerful." (Proverbs 12:25)

Depression is a soulish weight that enters in by a distorted view of one's own self-worth. Low self-esteem and not understanding one's assignment is the catalyst and beginning of depression. The Nazarene faith is principally about assigning a person with a purpose driven life that plays a cohesive role within the wider body of Messiah. Sometimes people embrace this faith and float around. One thing I've noticed, is that when people within this faith take on crucial roles within their local fellowship, they are busy with something. They are responsible for doing something that other people rely on.

The Torah does give a person a tremendous amount of strength to keep him intact during a myriad of unfortunate things that can happen in life. Don't ever doubt this fact.

Get Help – Don't Delay


I'm aware that there may be people reading or listening to this lecture who may require help. If this is the case contact your pastor, Rabbi, leader or a friend as soon as possible and arrange a discussion. Sometimes it is hard to approach friends and family about certain issues. If this is you then you can contact the suicide prevention hotline, Lifeline or Beyondblue.

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/suicide-prevention>

<https://www.suicidepreventionaust.org/>

<https://www.lifeline.org.au/>

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What kept me alive

"He was just there for me when I needed him to be."

"She kept in contact everyday."

"They just sat and listened, didn't pretend to understand..."

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Suicide

Suicide is the leading cause of death for Australians aged between 15 and 44, with around 3,000 people dying by suicide every year. That's an average of eight people every day.¹ For every suicide, there are tragic ripple effects for friends, families, colleagues and the broader community.

If someone you know seems to be struggling, reach out and connect with them. Showing that you care could make a huge difference. If you find