

Malvern Mashal 52  
Nuach can also mean . . .



We saw in Mashal 49 that unlike *ruach*, which is a noun, *nuach* is a verb, which means ‘to soothe’ or ‘to rest’. There is nothing more wonderful than those moments when His sweetness and His stillness steal over us. Tension is dispelled, wisdom and direction flow, and we are able to get so much done in the *restful* Spirit of counsel and understanding that comes upon us.

I had a day like that yesterday. After many days of wrestling against invisible powers that were seeking to oppose our house move, the Lord suddenly swept a bizarre obstacle aside, and an invigorating spirit of peace and joy flooded through my soul. What a joy!

Nuach does, however, have other meanings too. It can mean to ‘place’, and to ‘withhold’ or ‘leave’. Look at this verse from Ezekiel 37:14 for example:

*I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place (nuach) you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord.”*

What this is pointing to is the fact that it is the *Lord* who takes the initiative to *nuach* (place) us in both the location and the calling of His choosing.

Think about how He has led you in this respect. It is easy to see how this operates when all is fast flowing and exciting, but the Lord is still at work when He places us in quieter places. Does He not have the right to put us in out of the way places if He so chooses?

The emphasis in that verse from Ezekiel is on God taking the initiative. There are other times, however, when we must be proactive if we are to experience God's *nuach* – not least because one of the unexpected meanings of the word is 'to withhold'. It appears in this splendid encouragement in Ecclesiastes 11:6:

*In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.*

Rest is wonderful, but sometimes it is not the right response. In Isaiah 62:1 the prophet declares that for Jerusalem's sake He will *not* rest, but will rather press on in prayer for God's promises to be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

*For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,  
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,  
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,  
and her salvation as a burning torch.*

Is there anything the Lord would have you take action on in the very near future?

Remember the initiative to pray for five people for five minutes a day, for five days a week for five weeks!

On many occasions in Scripture, *nuach* can best be translated 'to leave'. The following verse may seem rather random, but it points us to an important principle: that there are some duties that we need to attend to now, and not put off to another day.

*The meat of the peace offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the same day it is offered. None of it may be saved for the next morning.* Leviticus 7:15.

When you manage to avoid leaving things till tomorrow that you know are best done today – rejoice! At the same time, resolve to take action on anything you know you are in danger of putting off.

We may often find ourselves praying along the lines the Psalmist does in the following verse for the Lord's help to be very present

*I have done what is just and right;  
do not leave (nuach) me to my oppressors.* Psalm 119:121

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<sup>1</sup> Scripture uses another word for rest here: *shaqat*.

There are many occasions when it is entirely right to cry out to the Lord to arise and act:

*Why should You be like a man confused,  
like a mighty warrior who cannot save?  
Yet You, O Lord, are in the midst of us,  
and we are called by Your name;  
do not leave (nuach) us."* Jeremiah 14:9

There are times, however, when the Lord *nuachs* us (leaves us) to face particular challenges, because He knows that this is the best way to stretch our faith and dependency. Rather like Paul's thorn in the flesh, can you discern how God has left certain 'things' in your life to keep you from complacency and to make you more dependent on God?

*So the Lord left those nations, not driving them out quickly, and He did not give them into the hand of Joshua. Judges 2:23  
Now these are the nations that the Lord left, to test Israel by them, that is, all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. Judges 3:1*

The way we handle these challenges is very important. As the following verse indicates, our actions affect far more than just ourselves. To be *nuached* then is more like being nuked!

*If you turn away from following Him, He will again leave all these people in the desert, and you will be the cause of their destruction." Num 32:15*

### A 'Nuach' Welcome

Few things touch us more in life than being warmly welcomed. We were ministering to a wonderful community recently who do a wonderful job of making people feel warm and welcome. This sometimes unspeaking role can bring so much reassurance and bear far greater fruit than is generally realized. People judge a place (or a church) long before they hear a word being spoken; the atmosphere we create goes a long way to prepare the way for the Lord's presence to come – and the ability to do that depends on the state of our hearts. Pray to be able to give people a warm loving *nuach* welcome!

### The Lord's Refreshing

After Elijah had been through a painful and protracted time of turmoil, first by the brook Cherith, and then at Zarephath, the Lord granted him a further period in the wilderness. Why? To help him recover from his intense ordeal! If we knew how long these periods were going to be, when little outwardly appears to be happening, we would be able to enjoy them. We usually don't, of course, which makes it easy to waste these enforced times of rest by wondering whether

something has gone wrong for us, or the situation. But the Lord may simply have been wanting us to rest and recharge our batteries.

### Stay or Go?

There are times when we are entirely wise to abandon a project or place, but other times when fear or impatience makes us quit too soon. There can never be a blanket answer to the question 'should I stay or go when I am in a place of danger or intimidation?' but humility and yielding can do wonders to prevent anger developing in you or others. It also makes room for the nuach of God to come. There is a great verse about this in Ecclesiastes 10:4: *If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave (nuach) your place, for calmness [literally healing] will lay great offenses to rest.*

Never despair of finding help and mercy from God! Reread the example of Elijah running away, and see if the Lord has anything to say to you on this subject.

*Then Elijah was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left (nuach) his servant there. 1 Kings 19:3*

When the battery of our old camcorder ran out, it needed to be fully discharged, a stage that is technically known as 'refreshing'. Only when this process was complete does the actual process of recharging begin. There are parallels here in the way the Lord refreshes us beside still waters. At the end of the forty days in the wilderness, however, Elijah was 'discharged' rather than 'recharged'. We find him curling up in a cave – a fitting place, one feels, for a man who had wanted to escape from everything and everyone.

For us, too, the Lord may permit all manner of obstacles to come our way before His work is complete and refreshing comes. When He resolves them, in His own inimitable way, we have the joy of knowing that only the Lord could have brought about this wonderful victory of faith.

May the Lord give us peace and 'nuach' (soothe) us therefore, even in the midst of many pressing difficulties. The Lord will solve each one in turn, provided we do not allow fear to fill our minds and blunt our faith. We are so quick to assume the worst, and to suppose that the Lord has deserted us. The reality is quite different.

Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.  
1 Corinthians 15:58