

Prayer Update From Israel (January 24, 2011)



In Jerusalem the Almond trees are blossoming!

“And I said, ‘I see a branch of an almond tree.’ Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have seen well, I am watching over my word to perform it!’” (Jeremiah 1:11-12)

WAKEFULNESS

In Biblical Hebrew the word shaqad is related etymologically to sha'qed—almond. Since the almond blossoms in Israel break open in January while other flowers (and even the leaves of its own trees) still slumber, they are seen as being “awake” while others sleep. Therefore, shaqad in the Bible means to be alert—a “watchman”. There are other Hebrew words for “watching” (shomer, tzophe, natzar...)—but this one bears in particular the concept of “to be wakeful over”. Thus, God uses the imagery of almond branches to remind Jeremiah that He is alert over His holy Word to bring it to pass. Perhaps this is one of the things signified by the almond blossom decorations on the Menorah in the Tabernacle, positioned as it was to continually shine down upon the Bread of the Presence (Exodus 25:33, 30). Or they may signify the God continually watching over Israel “Who neither slumbers nor sleeps” (Psalm 121), whose eyes are “always on the Land for which He cares... from the beginning of the year to the very end” (Deuteronomy 11:12). Psalm 127:1 states that “Unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman (shomer) stays awake (shaqad) in vain.” And in Jeremiah 31:28 the LORD, who has “watched over” Israel to pluck up, break down, throw down, destroy and to afflict, will now “watch over them (shaqad) to build and to plant.”

Not only do we trust in the wakeful, watchfulness of our God over His promises, as His people are also called to be awake. Shaqad is used in Proverbs 8:34 for the man “watching” daily at the gates of Wisdom; and in the New Covenant believers are warned to “not sleep, as others, but let us watch and be sober!” (I Thessalonians 5:6).

PLEASE PRAY:

*For a solid grounding of the Israeli Body of Messiah in the written word of God, that there will be an awareness of the good promises He has made regarding us, as well as a strong confidence in His alert watchfulness over every detail of those promises that they come to fruition.

*For a similar grounding taught to the Church in the Nations, including those aspects of the Word over which God is watching which pertain to Israel.

*For a “wakefulness” in Believers in Israel, to “watch with God” over His written Word—and also over the living rhema words which His Spirit releases for those “with an ear to hear”.

*Alertness for Intercessors standing with Israel around the world, that they be “instant, in season and out of season”, able to hear with “revealed ears” (Hebrew: I Samuel 9:15; Job 33:16) those words which the Lord wishes released over and on behalf of His people and land “on earth as it is in Heaven.”

PERSEVERANCE

In a Modern Hebrew-English dictionary, the word sha'qad will often be translated “to persevere.” Any concordance will disclose different ways in which we as Believers are called, encouraged and admonished to persevere. We would focus here on those in the Middle East who are being currently called to persevere under trial for their Faith.

“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him” (James 1:12).

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” ([Revelation 1:9](#)) .

“Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure” ([2 Thessalonians 1:4](#)).

“Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” ([Romans 8:35](#)).

“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)” ([Revelation 2:9](#)).

Today the Jerusalem Post ran an article entitled “Christians in Iran, Syria face rising persecution” (Note: as of this writing, the article may be accessed by typing the title into Google). It addresses a “wave of violence targeting Iranian and Syrian Christians over the past month.” It mentions Iranian Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani, on death row since 2010 for trying to register a house-church—how he has reportedly rejected an offer to be released if he will only acknowledge Mohammed as “a messenger sent by God.” The article cites a Pakistan Christian

Post report that “the Christian community in Syria has been hit by a series of kidnappings and brutal murders”; it is estimated that at least 100 Christians have been killed in the unrest, including many children. Giulio Meotti, a respected Italian journalist and author, in an e-mail published in the Post article writes, “After the ethnic cleansing of Jews in 1948 from the Arab countries, Islamic fundamentalism is now trying to push away the Christians from the region. They want to establish a pure Islamic environment and the mass exodus already began under our noses.” Meotti speculates that “In Syria Christians will be persecuted after Assad’s eventual fall, since they were the most loyal allies of the Baathist regime. Christians will be slaughtered or squeezed.” He darkly concludes, “From Cairo to Damascus, Arab Christian is near to its end everywhere” (“Christians in Iran, Syria face rising persecution” (by Benjamin Weinthal):The Jerusalem Post (JPOST.com): 23/01/2012, Monday 28: 8:02 IST). Meanwhile, persecution continues against Arab believers in Palestinian-held areas of the Holy Land itself. It is estimated that since 1994 the population of Christians in Bethlehem has dropped from 80% to 20% with Muslims persecuting the believers by taking away jobs as well as by physical attacks.

PLEASE PRAY:

*That Believing Iranians and Arabs in Muslim-dominated countries in the Middle East will be granted grace to persevere under trial. That they will find courage and reservoirs of faith, hope and love within them so as not to deny their faith in Jesus. That the comfort and counsel of the Holy Spirit will attend them during their distress.

*For strategies for Believers in these countries to stay networked with other believers.

*For supernatural demonstrations of the love and power of the Holy Spirit which will undo the works of the Enemy, pull down ancient strongholds of hate, fear and despair.

*That Believers throughout the Middle East, including Israel, will not fear persecution but acquire compassion, vision, and faith that the darkness will be displaced by Truth and Light, whatever the cost!

70 YEARS LATER: CLOSING AND GUARDING THE GATES

Seventy years ago this past weekend on 20 January 1942, Nazi officials gathered at the Berlin suburb of Wannsee to be informed of Adolf Hitler’s “Final Solution of the Jewish Question”. Essentially the meeting concerned the logistics of how most efficiently to exterminate 11 million Jews remaining in Europe and northwest Africa. The cooperation of the 15 ministry officials present would be essential. Although there had already been mass killings of Jews as the Nazi’s overran the Ukraine and parts of Russia and other nations, this conference stood as a turning point in unleashing the unspeakable horrors which would take place in the death-camps over the following three years.

To mark the 70th anniversary of this council, a delegation of 70 prominent German and Austrian Christian leaders, under the auspices of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, gathered at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. All Protestant and Evangelical movements in Germany and Austria (Lutherans, Pentecostals, Charismatics, Baptists,

Methodists, Mennonites, Pietists, Adventists) were represented. Dr Juergen Buehler, Executive Director of ICEJ said, “We came here to continue the repentance of our nation for the enormous crime of mass murder of Jews committed in the name of a wicked ideology. The Church in Germany still has so much more to do to amend for our deafening silence in those dark days.” Other leaders voiced similar words. During the two-day gathering, the delegation also visited the Knesset, met with Israel’s Chief Rabbi, and held a prayer service at the Western Wall. A sizable donation was made to Yad Vashem for its Holocaust studies and education center on behalf of sponsoring special seminars to train Christian leaders in teaching regarding the Holocaust. Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress Dan Diker responded by expressing gratitude for the Christian support given Jewish people and Israel. He added, “Today’s ceremonies at Yad Vashem are the answer to Wannsee. The lesson is to be vigilant. This is about preventing the next Wannsee, which is already here in the Iranian threat to eradicate Israel. Yet we hear once again the silence of the international community. Who will demonstrate? Who will speak out? I believe you will!” (“German Christians mark Wannsee anniversary”: ICEJ News, International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, 20/01/2012/5:40p.m.)

Meanwhile in Berlin, in a speech given by Professor Gert Weisskirchen, he stated, “70 years ago the gates of hell were opened in Berlin; We are now called to close those gates and to guard them”. We are aware of a group of believers from Europe who met onsite at the Wannsee Museum itself to pray that a new gate of blessing would be opened over the Jewish people.

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION:

From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (Parashah) from the first five books of Moses (The Torah) and an ending (Haftarah) from the Prophets read on the Sabbath in synagogues around the world. This portion is given a Hebrew name drawn from the opening words of the Torah passage. An illustration of this practice appears to have been recorded in Luke 4:16 where Yeshua (Jesus) arrived in the synagogue in Nazareth and was asked to read the portion (Isaiah 61) from the Prophets. We have found that in perusing these weekly readings, not only are we provided opportunity to identify in the context of God’s Word with millions of Jewish people around the world, but very often the Holy Spirit will illumine specific passages pertinent that week in our intercession for the Land and people of Israel. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.

The readings for this week are called Bo (“Come—to Pharaoh! For I have made his heart and the heart of his servants heavy-with-stubbornness...”—Everett Fox: translation).

TORAH: Exodus 10:1—13:16

HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 46:13-28

***Exodus 10:3.** “Thus says YHVH Elohei-ha’Ivrim (Yehovah the Hebrews-God): ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me? Send My people that they may serve Me.’”

As in Ex. 9:1, the LORD here identifies his Name YHVH and godhead Elohim with the Hebrews as a race—a people extending back many generations before the fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with whom He had identified Himself to Moses in the Burning Bush. He is thus also the God of the race which Pharaoh's father had tried to exterminate 80 years previously (Ex 1:16). PLEASE PRAY: for an awakened awareness in Israel that it is this same God who identified Himself by Name with the Hebrew race to Pharaoh...who has miraculously kept it in existence for over 4000 years—and who still chooses to identify Himself with this race for good and not evil.

***Exodus 10:28-29.** “Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!’” So Moses said, ‘You have spoken well. I will never see your face again.’”

In Ex 7:1, the LORD says, “See, I have made you Elohim to Pharaoh...” The concept of finding light, victory and salvation in the LORD's face runs throughout the Hebrew Scriptures (See Psalms 44:3, 80:3,7,19). Often, the word “face” is synonymous with the word “presence”. In Psalm 27:8-9, David's response to the admonition “Bakshu-Phanai!—Seek My Face!” is a heartfelt, “Your face O LORD will I seek...Do not hide your face from me...” By rejecting Moses' face, Pharaoh was rejecting the presence and life and hope of Moses' God...and eventually God allowed him to be granted his request. PLEASE PRAY: For secular, religious, Orthodox, and ultra-Orthodox Jews to hear and respond to the call which God places in the hearts of all men, “Bakshu-Phanai!—Seek my Face!”

***Exodus 10:21-23.** “Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, darkness which may even be felt...and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.’”

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it...That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world” (John 1:4-5,9). PLEASE PRAY: that the darkness will be felt and hated—and that the true Light will shine into both Egypt and Israel, bringing illumination, hope and security to the inner dwellings of both of these peoples.

***Exodus 12:2.** “This month shall be your beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

The “number” of the year in the Hebrew calendar (This year 5772) comes with the Feast of Trumpets in the Fall and is traditionally related to the season associated with the creation of the world. However, this month of “Aviv” (Deut. 16:1; also called “Nisan”) marks the “Beginning of Months” on the Hebrew religious calendar. This year it will begin on 24 March.

***Exodus 12:12-13.** “For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt...and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment; I am YHVH. Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see

the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.”

At the very beginning (see Ex. 4:22-23) YHVH had warned Pharaoh that refusal to release His “firstborn” Israel to serve Him, would result in the killing of his own firstborn. It was the LORD, not a mere ‘angel’, Who would pass through (Heb: avar) the land executing judgment; however, the word translated “pass over” in verse 13 (pasach) means to “skip” or “step over”—thus sparing them the judgment coming on all the other firstborn. PLEASE PRAY: That this weekend when this passage will be read in synagogues—and at the Seder tables in April when it is read again in homes—that the message of the BLOOD of the Lamb which covers and diverts judgment would be imbued with supernatural revelation to Jews around the world. Pray that the Holy Spirit would move hearts to recognize the “Lamb of God, who carries away the sin of the world”—the Pesach Lamb who was “stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted...He was wounded for our transgressions...and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

***Jeremiah 47:27.** ““But do not fear, O My servant Jacob, and do not be dismayed, O Israel! For behold, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity; Jacob shall return, have rest and be at ease; No one shall make him afraid. Do not fear, O Jacob My servant,’ says the LORD, ‘For I am with you...””



*Martin & Norma Sarvis
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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 29 January—4 February B’Shalach (“In the sending away”—of the people by Pharaoh) will be, TORAH: Exodus 13:17—17:16; HAFTARAH: Judges 4:4—5:31]

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