

PRAYER UPDATE FROM ISRAEL (December 28, 2010)



Yours is the day, Yours also is the night; You have prepared the light and the sun. You positioned all the boundaries of the earth; You have formed both summer and winter (Psalm 74:16-17).

1. Rain

We mentioned a heavy rain which fell at last on Israel on December 10th-13th. However, despite several forecasts which seemed to point towards more, there has been none in the two weeks which followed...and there is none forecast today. This, after historically severe storms filled with precipitation have brought Europe to a standstill; yet as they move eastward and are forecast to hit us, they seem to continue to veer away before arriving. Friday's *Jerusalem Post* headlined, "Kinneret (Sea of Galilee) Set to hit Black 'Danger' line this Summer." The "black line" is a marker below which there is a strong risk of irreversible damage to the eco-system of the lake and to the quality of the water. We are grateful for what fell in mid December...yet that only made up for what had been used since October. A year ago, the lake had begun rising by October 29th; the first significant rise this year came on December 10th. **PLEASE PRAY: *that the Lord of Harvest will send abundant rains on Israel during the coming months. Pray that we will not become paralyzed by "scientific" predictions...but remember that "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he earnestly prayed...and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."* (James 5:17-18).**

2. FORMAL DECLARATIONS

This past Wednesday Bolivia joined Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela in formally recognizing Palestine as an independent and sovereign state within the 1967 borders. Chile, which has a large Palestinian community of more than 300,000 people, is under pressure to do the same and Uruguay has reportedly promised to do so next year. Earlier in the week former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, who rarely passes up an opportunity to voice his contempt for Israel and her policies, lauded Brazil for her declaration, suggesting she would be a better leader in the peace process than America, since "We cannot count on the US to bring peace, since it agrees with almost everything Israel does."

What would happen were the Palestinian Authority to make its own such declaration is unknown. At present it is feeling the waters, contacting individual states for support in

such a move. The EU has reportedly decided to “wait until appropriate” for any such declaration. Of course, unknown to most readers, the increasingly verbalized demand to return to the “1967 borders”, in reality relates to the 1949 Armistice Line drawn up with Jordan at the end of Israel’s war of self defense after having been attacked by seven Arab armies the day following formal recognition as a sovereign state by the United Nations. Israel will certainly not agree to returning to those boundaries. But were the United Nations itself to demand it, the confrontation would be grim. Meanwhile, Israel was encouraged with the news that this week the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously approved a resolution *opposing* any unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state.

Virtually unnoticed in the general press has been a recent op-ed in Great Britain’s *The Guardian* in which Saeb Erekat, Chief Negotiator of the Palestinian Authority, declared that any peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians which does not allow 7 million foreign Arabs to immigrate to Israel will be “completely untenable.” Which is another way of saying that, as Caroline Glick pointed out in a recent *Jerusalem Post* editorial, “A peace deal in which Israel cedes Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem to the Palestinians...will not be sufficient for the Palestinians. Unless Israel also agrees to commit national suicide by accepting 7 million foreign Arabs as citizens, the Palestinians will continue to wage their war.” (Glick, Caroline B. “Column One: Bringing Down Bibi”, *The Jerusalem Post*, 17 December 2010).

PLEASE PRAY:

***That Israel will be sustained as more and more nations of the world come into alignment in opposition to what the God of the whole earth has declared regarding this land and the people to whom He has ceded it by an eternal covenant.**

*** Humility on the part of Prime Minister Netanyahu to seek mercy and counsel from the God of his Fathers in leading this nation at this time.**

***For whatever is necessary to take place to insure a strong unified government as Israel finds herself under increasing attack from Gaza, threat from Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Turkey, and alienation from nations of the world.**

***Strength, courage and guidance for Palestinian Christians in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip. Encouragement that in Jesus there is hope and a future for them and their families.**

***That the ‘soil’ of the hearts of secular and religious Jews and Muslim Arabs in the Holy Land be softened and prepared—and that the Lord of the Harvest send out laborers...specially equipped in the Holy Spirit to minister grace and life to each of these peoples.**

3. A TESTIMONY IN HER PASSING

This past Thursday over 100 people gathered in Christ Church in Jerusalem’s Old City for a memorial service for Kristine Luken, a visiting American citizen who was murdered in a wooded area outside Jerusalem the previous Saturday. Kristine’s friend, Kay Wilson, an Israeli citizen, was also seriously injured and left for dead by the two Palestinian youths in what is presumed to have been a terrorist attack. In the

newspaper's report on the service, the subtitle quoted a friend, "I can imagine her, in her last breath, saying 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" The article called the meeting "a moving ceremony that reaffirmed American Kristine Luken's deep love for Israel and God." Kristine had sold her belongings to follow her dream of working with CMJ, a Church of England ministry among Jewish peoples. A letter from her family read at the meeting said, "She went boldly where she believed God wanted her to go, and was not deterred in her dogged pursuit despite questioning and ridicule from others. While we may never understand why she lost her life in this senseless tragedy, we must not lose sight of her example." The friend quoted in the subtitle wrote, "She lived simply, intensely, with purpose. I can imagine her, in her last breath, saying [like Jesus], 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' After all, Jesus knew what it was like to be stripped and abandoned, to be alone and bleeding on a Jerusalem hillside." **PLEASE CONTINUE TO PRAY for Kristine's family and loved ones; for the strengthening and complete restoration of Kay Wilson; that the attackers would be captured and justice served; for a sobered awareness among Believers in Israel of the battle we are in...and an overcoming love for Yeshua which will drive out fear and lead us forward in His pathway.**

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 *Va'era* ("I appeared"—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *El Shaddai*").

TORAH: Exodus 6:2—9:35

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 28:25—29:21

***Exodus 7:1.** "So the LORD said to Moses: 'See, I have made you *Elohim* (Hebrew) to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'" The word "as" before "Elohim" is not in the Hebrew. In a very real way, we *are* His body through whom He looses His will "on earth as it is in Heaven."

***Exodus 7:9-10.** *“When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves.’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent’...and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent”* (NKJV). The Hebrew word here translated “serpent” is a different word and may designate a different creature than that used for the snake from which Moses fled (mentioned in 4:3 and 7:15). There the word was *nakhash*, the common Hebrew word for snake, such as that which tempted Eve in Eden. Here the word is *tanin*, used in modern Hebrew for crocodile or alligator. The Nile crocodile has been feared from ancient times for its propensity (more than any other of the species) to prey upon humans. In Genesis 1:21 *tanin* is a “great sea creature” *created by God*. But this creature is often used as a metaphor for spiritual or physical powers, often in opposition to God. In Ezekiel 29:3 (Part of this week’s Haftarah), this word *tanin* is translated “monster” (NKJV), and depicts another Pharaoh (or the spiritual power controlling him), *“Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster (tanin) who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, ‘My River is my own; I have made it for myself.’ But I will put hooks in your jaws...”* (The word is also translated “monster” in Jeremiah 51:34 where it pictures Nebuchadnezzar swallowing up sinful Israel “like a *tanin*.”). In Psalm 74:13 it is depicted as a many headed “sea monster” (NASB) whose heads God can break in delivering those who trust in him; and in Isaiah 27:1 the NASB reads, *“And He will kill the dragon (tanin) who lives in the sea.”*

In the Modern Hebrew translation of the New Testament Scriptures, the “great, fiery red dragon having seven heads” of Revelation 12:3, who stands before the woman clothed with the sun to devour her baby, is called a *tanin*...and in 12:9 both *tanin* (dragon) and *nakhash* (serpent) are equated with “the Devil and Satan.” Lastly, in Psalm 91:13 (NASB,margin) *tanin* is ***the dragon which those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, will trample underfoot!***

And so, the rod which had become a serpent *nakhash* (Exodus 7:15), through obedient faith, became in Moses’ and Aaron’s hands “*the rod of God*” (4:20), which could become a different fearful creature (*tanin*) which swallowed up other fearful creatures (7:12), or it could become a scepter of authority which could turn the waters of the Nile, over which the Pharaoh’s claimed sovereignty (Ezek 29:3 above), into blood (7:17). In short, it became the symbol of authority through which Moses would *be* God to Pharaoh (7:1), through whom God would manifest Himself as the supreme spiritual Power who would defeat, subdue and swallow up all other opposing spiritual powers.

***Exodus 7:14.** *“So the LORD said to Moses: ‘Pharaoh’s heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.’*” The LORD knew that Pharaoh’s heart was hard (Two words are used for “hard” or “hardened” in these passages, one meaning “heavy” or “settled”, the other “tightened”, “strengthened” or “fortified”. Through the early signs, wonders and plagues, we see Pharaoh’s heart growing hard according to its own nature (7:13, 22), or his actively hardening his own heart (8:15). In 8:29, 32, after the plague of flies, Moses especially warns him against continuing to do this, *“But Pharaoh made his heart heavy and insensitive this time also.”* Finally, in 9:12 it is specifically stated that *“the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh.”* We have here depicted both the choice and

responsibility of man—and the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God. After Moses prays that the rain, hail and thunder cease, Pharaoh “*sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard.*”

***Exodus 8:23.** “*And I shall set a ransom between My people [in Goshen] and your people.*” (Robert Alter Translation; see also NASB margin). The word “ransom” is often translated here as “difference”—but everywhere else in the Bible the root means “to ransom, to redeem, to rescue from danger”. It is in the last sentence of Psalm 25... “Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.” Israel would learn that God was already redeeming her out of his troubles...and, through the work of her Messiah would eventually redeem not only Israel but all peoples from the bondage of sin.

***Ezekiel 28:25.** “*Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am YHVH their God.’*” In praying for Israel’s restoration, it is important not to merely pray for her return to the Land—rather that within the Land the God of her Fathers will come to be hallowed in her midst. Nowhere is Israel promised safety for herself or her roots in the Land just because she has been returned here. We pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in awakening awareness of sin and uncleanness and a longing for cleansing, holiness and restoration—for removal of the veil over Jewish hearts, and illumination of the truth of the love and life of Israel’s God and Saviour. Zion will always be a “signpost” to the nations (that is what the root of the word means)...but it is God’s heart and desire that she will be a signal in the eyes of the world of a place where HE is hallowed! He has promised a day when He will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem (Zechariah 2:5) and her glory within!

We want to thank you for standing with us in 2010. We are grateful for your prayers, your emails, your financial gifts and your encouragement. We pray God richly bless you more than you can ask or imagine in the year 2011.



***Martin & Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem***

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 2-8 January 2011 Bo (“Come”—in to Pharaoh) will be, TORAH: Exodus 10:1-13:16; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 46:13-28.]