

Prayer Update From Israel (March 21, 2016)



200-year old Megilat-Esther (Scroll of Esther) on Parchment, passed down from Norma Sarvis's ancestors in Belarus.

This coming Thursday (beginning sundown Wednesday evening) is Purim—the day Jews celebrate their remarkable deliverance in Persia in 483 B.C. from a plot to annihilate them as a people. In most of the Jewish world, *Purim* is celebrated on the 14th of *Adar* (24 March this year). In Jerusalem, Jaffa and other ‘walled cities’, it is celebrated, as in ancient Susa (Hebrew: *Shushan*). See Esther 9:18-19), on the day following,

It is a joyous occasion. The *Scroll of Esther* will be read. This is the only book of the Hebrew Bible which has from ancient times been copied out onto small parchment scrolls for use in the Jewish home (see picture above). There will be *Purim* plays and costume parties; special pastries (*Oznei-Hamaan*—“Haman’s Ears”, small tri-folded butter cookies with sweet fillings), desserts and wine.

Although these are days for rejoicing and feasting (Esther 9:18-19)—for the observant, they are preceded by days of soberness of spirit and fasting. Esther 9:31 relates how, following the great deliverance, Mordechai and Queen Esther prescribed annual times for fasting and lamentation, in remembrance of those which the Queen had called for her Jewish subjects as she was preparing herself to go in and seek the favor of the King.

The “Esther Fast” for this year will be from dawn to sundown Wednesday March 23rd.

Purim is a season when we are made especially aware of the Spirit of Amalek. Last week we focused on the continual warfare being waged between that spirit and God's covenant-people the Jews. We pointed out how this spirit is behind forces arising in our own day, forces which, like Haman of old (himself a descendant of Amalek), desire that God's covenants of Life be broken, and their followers annihilated. Yet, even as in Esther's day, *YHVH-NISSI*—the LORD's Banner-Promise is flying over us—a promise that we are not alone; that, in fact, ***HE is Himself*** at war with Amalek until its very memory is finally blotted out from under heaven! (Exodus 17:14-16).

It is unfortunate that Purim has come to be generally regarded in Israel as a minor holiday for children. We bless the children, certainly—but for their very sake we believe it important that we take seriously all of the message of this season. We encourage you to join with us in doing so! Read through the Book of Esther. Ask the Lord to illumine its message for us today. Perhaps He will lead you to join together with us in the fast. And then rejoice and celebrate the God who watches over all who care for and guard His covenants—to guide them in the way of His kindness and truth (Psalm 25:10).

As we approach this time of Purim, we see the Spirit of Amalek again stirring in the world (including ancient Persia where these events took place).

ONLY THIS PAST SATURDAY—a suicide bomber blew himself up in Istanbul, killing five people and injuring 36. Three of those slain were Israelis, one 40, one 60, one 69. Eleven other Jews were among the wounded. News sources are today reporting that a Turkish national member of ISIS waited outside the hotel where the 15 Israelis, on a culinary tour of Turkey, were staying, then followed them down the street before detonating his explosive device in their midst. **PLEASE PRAY: *that Jews around the world would come under the protection of the banner and promise of their God!***

We find the following prayer points, written during this season by our friend Rick Ridings two years ago, to be still timely and applicable today:

PLEASE PRAY:

- 1. That the Mordecais and Esthers of our time will hear the call of the Holy Spirit concerning the urgency of the hour, and will not be distracted or lulled into slumber by a false sense of security.**
- 2. For continued success of the covert war against Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon. Let us believe for much confusion and division upon the demonic powers bent on destroying Israel (2 Chron. 20:1-30).**
- 3. For a clear understanding to come to the decision-makers in Jerusalem and Washington, DC to do the right thing at the right time. (Esther 7:3-6)**
- 4. Let us proclaim a reversal of every satanic decree to destroy Israel, and that “Haman” will be hung upon his own gallows. (Esther 7:9-10; Ps. 33:10-12)**

5. For Iran (Persia), let us pray for the Lord to bring shame upon His enemies in such a way that they will begin to seek the Name of the Lord, to know Who is the True and Living God (See Psalm 83, especially verse 16).

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. The Haftarah, unless otherwise noted, will be that read in Ashkenazy synagogues around the world. The references for all texts are those found in English translations of the Scriptures.

The readings for this week 20-26 March 2016 are called *Tsav*—"Command!"

TORAH

Leviticus 6:8—8:36

In this week's readings, Moses is told to command Aaron and his sons concerning the offerings they will shortly begin making before God. Careful instruction is made concerning each of these—with emphasis on the holiness of the priest's activities. Then Aaron and his sons are then consecrated, clothed in their holy garments and anointed, and atonement is made for them before they begin their duties on behalf of the people.

HAFTARAH

Jeremiah 7:21—8:36; 9:23-24

***Jeremiah 7:29b-34** (Emphases ours). " 'For the children of Judah have done evil in My sight,' says the LORD. 'They have set their abominations in the house which is called by My name, to pollute it. *And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, nor did it come into My heart. Therefore behold, the days are coming,*' says YHVH, '*when it will no more be called Tophet, or the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, but the Valley of Slaughter; for they will bury in Tophet until there is no room...* then I will cause to cease from the cities of Judah and from the streets of Jerusalem the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride. For the land shall be desolate'"

The Ben Hinnom Valley—The Curse and the Blessing

The Ben Hinnom [i.e. “Son of Hinnom”] **valley is first mentioned in Scripture in Joshua 15:8** where it formed part of the northern border for the tribe of Judah. The valley slopes eastward to where it joins with the Kidron Valley just south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It was almost certainly through this valley that the Ark of the Covenant was carried during David’s time, to be placed in a tent near the Gihon Springs at the foot of Mount Zion. There it rested for over 30 years before being carried higher still to a place prepared for it in the Temple built by Solomon on Mount Moriah. Yet, in his old age Solomon was lured away from his God, and set up high places for the gods of his wives. One of these gods was *Molekh*—“*the abomination of the people of Ammon*” (I Kings 11:7)—and its center of worship became the Ben Hinnom valley. 200 years later, King Ahaz “*burned incense in the Valley of Ben-Hinnom and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom YHVH had driven out before the sons of Israel*” (II Chronicles 28:3). This evil deity demanded the sacrifice of children, and thousands were burned to death in this valley. It is thought that these dreadful rites were accompanied by the sound of drums. The drum (Hebrew: *toph*) is one of the musical instruments blessed by God; Psalm 150:4 names it as among those to be used for releasing high praise! But Satan had misappropriated its sound for evil, so that the Ben Hinnom valley came to be known by another name—*Tophet*, probably from the thunder of drums as babies were being slaughtered here. By the time of the prophet Jeremiah, God had had enough—and as seen in our reading, today, placed a curse over the valley—it would no longer be called *Tophet*--but the “Valley of Slaughter”—or “The Valley of Dead Bodies.” A place for graves. By the time of Yeshua/Jesus, the name “Valley of Hinnom” (*Gey-Hinnom*) had been returned to it, but in a Greek form, *Gehenna*. It was now a place of burning the city’s rubbish—and the name became a euphemism for Hell—a place of torment. (It was this word which is used by Yeshua in such passages as Mark 9:42-48).



Muslim cemetery on northern slope of Ben Hinnom Valley beneath the Temple Mount.

BUT GOD!

Yet “the Earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof!”—The blood of Yeshua redeems the earth (*adamah*) as well as human-kind (*adam*) from the curse! In the last verse of Jeremiah 31, the same chapter which speaks of a *New Covenant*, God promises that “*the whole valley of the*

*dead bodies and of the ashes” will someday be “**HOLY TO THE LORD**”!* And in Zechariah 2:12, He states that this valley falls within an area of which He will again take possession as His inheritance in the Holy earth (*adamah*)!

We believe that our present generation may be witnesses to this promise beginning to come to life!

During the past 16 years, believers from both Israel and nations around the world have come to pray in the valley, confessing sin—the murder of infants in the past, and those slain each year in the present through abortion. There has been prayer for the cleansing of the land. There have been “worship watches” with little children in the valley. **During this time, a 24/7 room for worship and intercession has been raised up on the edge of the valley (the northern border of Judah—*praise!*). The drums have been redeemed!! And for over ten years they have joined with other instruments and many voices in releasing praise into the atmosphere to prepare the way for the coming King. A community of believers has also come into being on the edge of the valley. This year a cd of worship and praise in both Hebrew and Arabic written and performed by young Israelis is being prepared in the place where music was once forced into the service of hell. Meanwhile, the city has come in and cleaned up the rubbish which once filled parts of the valley; they have landscaped the area and installed a scenic promenade. Change is coming in this place in Jerusalem which God has promised will again be *set apart to the LORD!***

Please pray that God’s Kingdom Come, His will be done in the Valley of Hinnom in Jerusalem!



***Rainbow over the valley which will become
Holy to the LORD***



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 27 March—2 April 2016 are called : *Shemini*--“Eighth Day”: TORAH: Leviticus 9:1—11:47; + *Shabbat Parah* : Numbers 19:1-22. HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 36:16-38]

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