

# ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

Glory of Zion International Ministries



## 1. PLEASE PRAY FOR ANDREW BRUNSON.

*“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) ...Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested...’ (Revelation 2:8-10)*

*“For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD” (Psalm 102:19-21).*

***Andrew Brunson is an American minister who has worked for 23 years as a missionary in Turkey, where he is current pastor of a congregation in Izmir (ancient Smyrna). For some time Succat Hallel (a 24/7 prayer and intercession ministry in Jerusalem of which the writers are a part) has been in association with a house of prayer in that city which is sponsored by Pastor Brunson’s church. Teams from Jerusalem, including leaders and musicians have visited this house of prayer, networking with the brothers and sisters there, teaching, taking part in seminars on the setting up of houses of prayer in the region. At one point the Jerusalem leaders sensed the Lord leading them to transfer the menorah from the House of Prayer at Succat Hallel to the House in Izmir (There have been a number of separate prophetic words to the effect that the Lord was restoring a Lampstand in Izmir (Smyrna) which will shine into that part of Turkey and throughout the Middle East region). Several of the leaders from Succat Hallel have become warmly acquainted with Pastor Andrew and his wife Norine.***

*Last October 7<sup>th</sup> Pastor Andrew was summoned to the police station in Izmir.* He went, anticipating that he might finally be receiving a long-awaited “permanent residence” status in the land. Instead, he was told that he was being deported because of being a “threat to national security.” Yet instead of deportation, he was held in detention for 63 days (part of the time in solitary confinement), his cell phone, glasses, Bible and watch were confiscated, and he was granted no access to his Turkish attorney. On December 8<sup>th</sup> in the middle of the night he was taken to a counter terrorism center, and from there on to a court where he was charged with “membership in a terrorist organization.” It seems significant that the very charging documents themselves state that no evidence has been gathered against him. Pastor Andrew has remained incarcerated ever since.

Almost immediately, voices began being raised on his behalf. In late December, Oklahoma Senator James Lankford traveled to Ankara to inquire into the situation, where, as reported to Fox News, he was met by Turkish authorities who claimed Brunson assisted Kurdish refugees and falsely claimed he had attended a conference in America by Islamic leader Fethullah Gulen. The Turkish government accuses Gulen of having been behind last year’s coup attempt. Some have speculated whether Turkey may be holding the pastor for use as a bargaining chip to try and coerce the United States into deporting Gulen.

There have been other attempts to bring Brunson’s plight before the public. The American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) launched a “Free Pastor Andrew” petition on their website, which as of this writing has reached 262,254 signatures. It concludes,

Turkey—our NATO ally, has begun increased crackdowns on Christians. If convicted, Pastor Andrew could face years in prison based on extremely serious—and false—charges.

At the ACLJ, we’re representing the family, mobilizing our international resources—including our offices in the region—demanding Pastor Andrew’s freedom. Take action with us before it’s too late.

(If you would like to add your name to the petition, you may do so at the site: <https://aclj.org/> )

Three weeks ago (March 28<sup>th</sup>), Pastor Andrew submitted an appeal through the U.S. Embassy in Turkey to President Trump:

Will the Turkish government face no consequence for stubbornly continuing to hold an American citizen as a political prisoner? Even though I have a long public track record as a church pastor, they falsely accuse me of being a member of an Islamist terrorist group. I have been imprisoned since October 7, 2016. During this time the Turkish government has produced no proof and has rebuffed numerous attempts by the American government to secure my return to the United States. In fact, they are treating the U.S. government with contempt and paying no price for it.

I plead with my government—with the Trump Administration—to fight for me. I ask the State Department to impose sanctions. I appeal to President Trump: please help me. Let the Turkish

government know that you will not cooperate with them in any way until they release me. Please do not leave me here in prison.

*Yesterday, in a highly-contested referendum, Turkey passed legislation by all appearances designed to grant unprecedented powers to its President Recep Erdogan.* This morning President Trump called Erdogan, considered a US ally, who strongly supported the President's recent strike on a Syrian airfield from which poison gas attacks had been launched, congratulating him on his victory. Let us hope and pray that this "friendly" position between the two leaders will allow an appeal on behalf of the innocent American citizen the Islamist regime currently holds captive

*Meanwhile, Pastor Andrew remains in jail.* We have received word that at times his cell is occupied by 15 other inmates in a space meant to accommodate four. His cellmates are Muslim who are constantly attempting to convert him to their faith. He is being prayed for by many around the world—in our own Prayer Room in Jerusalem we have seen times of corporate intercession intensify during the past week.

#### **PLEASE PRAY:**

\* **That Pastor Andrew be strengthened and sustained in spirit and body by the presence of His Lord Jesus**—the One sent to set captives free—until his release; and that that release may come soon. *"I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house"* (Isaiah 42:6-7).

\* **That Andrew's plight will be brought before the American President,** and his release will become a priority.

\* **That his wife Norine be strengthened and sustained,** and given wisdom and words from God with which to encourage and strengthen her husband during the times she is allowed limited access to visit him.

\* **That Pastor Andrew be protected from depression and despair.** Remember the 'wearing down' which occurred even to John the Baptizer (Matthew 11:2-3), who had announced the coming of the "Lamb of God who carries away the sin of the world!" That, as with Peter (Acts 12) and Paul and Silas (Acts 16), he would be granted Angel visitations and heavenly songs in the midst of the darkness.

\* **For physical and mental protection in his cell from physical violence and demonic assault.** *"Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the souls of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence. What would have been my plight—unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living! Wait in Hope on the LORD, Be Strong--and He will infuse courage into your heart, Wait, I say, on the LORD"* (Psalm 27 11-14).

**\* That the Church and Prayer Room in Izmir over which Andrew is Pastor will be strengthened and unified in a deep way during this experience.** That they—and all of us—will receive unction and insight from the Holy Spirit as to how to intercede on Andrew’s behalf.

(A portion of the material on background of Pastor Brunson’s incarceration drawn from: “American Pastor Jailed in Turkey Turns to President Trump for Help”: *Breitbart News*, 30 Mar, 2017)

### **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 18-22 April 2017 are called *Shemini*— “Eighth Day”:

**TORAH:** Leviticus 9:1—11:47

**HAFTARAH:** II Samuel 6:1—7:17

**\*Leviticus 9:4, 6, 23b-24.** “...for today, the LORD will appear to you.” “...and the glory of the LORD will appear to you.” “Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”

*It had been the LORD’s desire to dwell in the midst of His people, and, as we saw in Exodus 40:34, after they had done their part in preparing the way, the Glory of His presence came into and filled the mishkan (dwelling place, tabernacle). But it was also His desire that his people be able to minister to Him personally through bringing their offerings, which would then be presented before Him by the priests—and that the glory of His presence and acceptance of these gifts and sacrifices be witnessed and experienced by all the congregation. Here it finally takes place—and as the holy Fire appears and consumes the sacrifices, the people can only respond with a shout and with falling down under the weight of His Glory (Interestingly, the root for this Hebrew word “glory” *kavod* is also the root for the word “weight”). And it is intriguing that the word for the “shout” the people release is quite often in Scripture (Job 38:7, Prov. 29:6; Isa. 35:6, I Chron 16:33...) translated “song”. When God’s glory falls on His people, they often can no*

longer remain standing—and sometimes it's coming is accompanied by release of the *Song of the Lord!*

## HOLINESS

*This week's readings center upon the Holiness of Israel's LORD—including the consequences to his children, especially those who minister on His behalf before the people, of not honoring that holiness:*

**\*Leviticus 10:3b.** *“By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.”*

**\*Leviticus 11:44-45:** *“For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean...For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.”*

Aaron's two eldest sons Nadav and Avihu had been granted a high and exalted “positioning” of ministry before the LORD, second only to Moses and to their father the High Priest. For them there was clothing and anointing (8:13, 24, 30) providing them special protection to minister in ways not granted to the other Levites. However, they were not commanded nor were they clothed and anointed to draw near to God in that specific ministry assigned to their father Aaron the High Priest.

Yet, discontent with the appointed “place” God had chosen for them, they presumed to operate in the ministry of their father's office rather than being faithful to that of their own—they offered “*strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.*” In doing so, they dishonored God in the eyes of the people who looked up to and depended upon them. They also stepped into a place where the unique protection provided for their assignment of ministry was no longer effective, and the very fire from God's presence which showed his favor in devouring the sacrifices in 9:24, devours in judgment these two sons who had abandoned their appointed places. There is no reason to see in this passage a portrayal of severe judgment upon those who are novices and have accidentally slipped and made a mistake while attempting something new. James 3:16 and 1:13-15 shows how “*where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is confusion and every evil thing*”, and how “*each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed, then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*” At this crucial time of testing, the darkness which had been growing in Nadav and Avihu was manifest and they were betrayed.

In the Haftarah (**II Samuel 6:1—7:17**) it appears not to have been a “growing darkness” in King David's character which is manifest, but rather what had become a “blind spot” in his discernment after presuming to rate certain of God's words as worthy of more respect than others. He deeply loved the Torah (instruction) of the LORD, declaring it perfect, capable of “converting the soul” (Psalm 19:7). Yet when it came time to bring the ark of God into Jerusalem (the incredible holiness of such an endeavor is emphasized in the text, “*the ark of God, whose name is called by the Name—YHVH of Hosts, who dwells between the cherubim*” (II Sam. 6:2)), he evidently allowed his logic to preempt the LORD's repeated instructions in the

Torah that it was to be transferred by the use of poles on the shoulders of the priests (Exodus 25:12-15, and other places). After all, that was almost 500 years ago; a cart with wheels was more modern and took fewer men (even the Philistines had realized that), and it *was* a “new” cart. His negligence in treating God’s whole Word as holy resulted in disaster, in this case to others. Whether or not Uza volunteered for guiding the cart, he was not protected as the priests would have been—he had been placed in a role which was not God’s “positioning,” and when he spontaneously touched the ark to keep it from falling, like Nadav and Avihu, he was slain.

Today our Lord has provided a way for us also to come into His presence safely, through the finished work of Yeshua. But we are to do so in reverence, not in presumption or disobedience. ***Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire***” (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Malachi 3:2-3 says that the coming LORD “*is like a refiner’s fire*” and will “*purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.*”

**PLEASE PRAY:** *for a sense of the ‘holy’ in the Body of Messiah in Israel—that we will not be presumptuous in our worship and will not covet positions which God has granted to others, but be humbly thankful for the special responsibilities He chooses for us. Pray that we will at the same time yield ourselves to the refining purifying fire of God’s Spirit; and that the offerings which we offer up will be done in righteousness, in spirit and in truth.*

**\*Leviticus 10:8-12.** “*Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: ‘Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.’*”

Perhaps intoxication was also a factor in the presumptuous sin of Nadav and Avihu. Although the Bible makes clear that God sanctions the drinking of wine or strong drink by His children (“before the LORD your God”—Deut. 14:22-26), Isaiah 28:7 just as clearly condemns its misuse, which can spoil our ministry, resulting in “*erring in vision and stumbling in judgment*”, not only in ourselves, but also in those who are looking up to us in seeking to follow His ways.

**\*Leviticus 10:10.** “*...that you may distinguish between holy and unholy.*” An even better translation would be “*distinguish between the holy and the common.*” The opposite of “holiness” is not necessarily “sinful.” That which is holy is first of all that which is “set-apart from the ordinary.” So for the priests, certain things (such as drinking wine) which might be acceptable under ordinary circumstances were not allowed when they went into the Tent of Meeting to perform their duties there before the Lord.

**Chapter Eleven lists ways in which the Hebrews were to be “holy” or “set apart” from other peoples by their diet.**

**\*Leviticus 11:4, 46-47.** *“Nevertheless, these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or that have cloven hooves... This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten.”* The Israelites were forbidden to *eat* these animals, not from “touching” them. As with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:3), there would be those who might add such restrictions, but the LORD’s restrictions regarding touch were related to the carcasses of dead animals (11:8). ***These were dietary guidelines for Israel—for the Hebrew race, which God chose to set apart in this way. There is nothing in Scripture to imply that God desires or requires all people to follow these guidelines.*** Following the Flood, when Noah and his family came forth from the Ark, God released a special blessing, ***“Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs”*** (Genesis 9:3; Emphasis ours.). All humankind were (and still are, Genesis 9:4; Acts 15:29) forbidden to eat blood. But Biblical restrictions regarding particular creatures applied only to the Hebrews.



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**[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 23-29 April are a “double reading”: I. *Thazria* —“Quicken with Seed”, “Conceive”: TORAH: Leviticus 12:1—13:59. II. *Metsora*— “Skin disease, leprosy”: TORAH: Leviticus 14:1—15:33; HAFTARAH: II Kings 7:3-20]**

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