

# ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

*Glory of Zion International Ministries*



*9 May is Day #27 of “Counting the Omer” to Pentecost*

## **1. A GESTURE OF FAVOR AND BLESSING...AND A TRIP TO JERUSALEM.**

*We believe Tuesday, May 2, to have been a day of historic significance and spiritual import in Washington D.C. as some 100 leaders were invited to the White House to take part in a special event commemorating Israel Independence Day.* A first of its kind, the ceremony was hosted by Vice President Mike Pence. Attending were many key governmental leaders, including Ambassador to the US Ron Dermer, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, and senators and representatives from both parties. Also invited were a number of highly respected religious voices “who trumpet the cause of Israel.” One of these was our friend Chuck Pierce, who called the meeting an “amazing breakthrough at the White House for Israel,” and said *“In this time of nations realigning, let’s give thanks for this official recognition of Israel’s independence.”*

In His address, the Vice President mentioned having telephoned Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu earlier in the day to wish him and Israel a Happy Independence Day, calling Israel’s birth in 1948 “nothing short of a miracle.” Pence spoke of how *“The people of Israel have turned hope into a future of security and prosperity.”* Regarding how the present administration views its relation to and responsibilities towards that nation, he made the following remarkable, covenantal statement, *“Under President Donald Trump, let me assure you this, if the world knows nothing else, the world will know this—America stands with Israel. Her cause is our cause. Her values are our values. Her fight is our fight.”* Mr. Pence spoke of the “deep

alliance” existing between the two countries, of how the U.S. President “stands without apology for Israel,” adding his belief that, “*the best days for Israel and for America are yet to come.*”

In introducing Mr. Pence, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman spoke of the Vice President as being “*a beacon of moral clarity, and a shining example of honor and decency—a champion of Israel, who has shown friendship to Israel “throughout his public life.”*” And he thanked the vice president and the president for “*this profound expression of friendship.*” (1)

*A week from this Friday, May 19th, President Trump will depart on his first trip abroad as president, a three-city trip of which a visit to Jerusalem will be the center.* Seen as an “appeal for religious tolerance and unity against a scourge of radicalization,” the president will travel first to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; thence to Jerusalem, and lastly to the Vatican in Rome. Mr. Trump is expected to arrive in Israel on Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, departing the following day. Wednesday the 24<sup>th</sup> is “Jerusalem Day”, the 28<sup>th</sup> of Iyar on Jewish Calendars—the day on which, 50 years ago, Israel took the Old City of Jerusalem from the Kingdom of Jordan and the city became united under Jewish rule for the first time in over 2400 years. The US administration obviously feels that to arrive on that day would be seen as making a statement at odds with its purposes for this particular trip. While here, Mr. Trump has expressed a desire to make a statement from the ancient fortress of Masada. There is hope in the air regarding his visit and what it says about warmed and renewed relations between the two countries. *President Barak Obama was in the fifth year of his presidency when he finally visited Israel. President Trump will be arriving in his fifth month.*

So, on May 21st begins an emotionally charged week in Israel. Security challenges for the country in general, not to mention for a visiting US president will be enormous. As Israel moves from receiving an encouragingly affirming gesture of friendship by leaders in America towards preparation to receive a visit from their supreme leader,

#### **PLEASE PRAY:**

\* Thanksgiving for the openness in Washington to bless Israel on the 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her existence as an independent nation.

\* **We are so grateful for the presence of Christian leaders present at the commemoration last week;** we know personally several of them and are thankful for what we know was released through them by their very presence, and what God showed them at that time. **Please pray for protection for them**—for illumination and guidance to understand and have deep insight into what happened and what God showed them while they were there. That they will also know how to share with those whom they influence as how best to pray for both America’s president and vice president, and for Israel.

\* That *Elohei-Yisrael*—the God of Israel—will watch over and guide Mr. Trump in preparation for his trip to the Middle East and Rome. That he will seek counsels from Above regarding this trip. That great wisdom would be released to Mr. Pence and other godly leaders regarding this trip—and that Mr. Trump would heed their counsel.

\* That Trump’s trip to Jerusalem would be protected by the Angels of God. That his mind would be protected—that he will speak and listen in integrity in Riyadh, Jerusalem and Rome.

\* That the President would receive the honor in Israel which he extended to P.M. Netanyahu in Washington shortly after taking office. More importantly, that he would experience a meeting with the God of Israel while he is here.

\* That President Trump will allow himself to be humbled where necessary—that he will not presume himself capable of alone “solving” the difficult, complex difficulties in Israel, Judea and Samaria. Pray that he will allow God to use him and the country he represents in *His* way in bringing peace to the Middle East.

(1) (“Pence: Trump giving ‘serious consideration’ to embassy move”: *The Times of Israel*, 3 May 2017, 12:57 am).

## **2. A YEAR OF DROUGHT.**

*“Ask YHVH for rain in the time of the latter rain. YHVH will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone.”* (Zechariah 10:1).

***The time of the “latter rains” is drawing to a close...and there have been hardly any rains at all in Israel this spring.*** This past week Israel proclaimed it a “drought year”—the fourth in a row in the north. Presently, the Water Authority has halted almost all drawing of water from the Sea of Galilee. The lake, once Israel’s primary source of water, is lower now than it has ever been. As it gets lower, there is an increase of salt levels in the water, which could eventually lead to its becoming unusable for irrigation. We are not yet in a disaster. Because of the building of desalination facilities in recent years, there is enough water to drink and much for use in agriculture. But desalinated water does not contain many of the important minerals present in naturally-provided water. Israel—and Jordan our neighbor—desperately need rain.

Ten years ago—on Israel’s 40th “Jerusalem Day”, long after rain was considered to have halted for the summer, a sudden violent storm erupted over Jerusalem. Pavilions were blown down, parades and other festivities were halted. And there was flooding—unusual for this city—*serious* flooding with water up to the middle of cars! Then it was gone. In just over two weeks, Israel will celebrate her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday as a united city.

**PLEASE PRAY:**

\* That God would awaken us to seek Him...and reveal to us why there is the drought over Israel. That He will lead us in understanding, and how we must pray.

\* That He will send the rains and water the land which He loves and upon which His eyes always rest, from the beginning of the year to the very end (Deuteronomy 11:12).

\* That He will prepare us for what He wants to say and do as modern united Jerusalem turns 50 in two weeks!

### **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 Parashah for this week 30 April—6 May 2017 is called *Emor*— “Say!”**

**TORAH: Leviticus 21:1—24:23**

**HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 44:15-31**

### **Torah Portion**

**This week's portion focuses first upon the importance of priests being set apart, clean in their service to the LORD and in the picture they present before the people. In their work on behalf of life and wholeness, they are not to defile themselves with that which is dead or deformed or impure. As those representing man made in the image of God, the priests are themselves not to bear any outward marks, natural or inflicted, of that image having been marred. In every way these priests (though themselves sinners), were called to represent outwardly the perfection of Yeshua, the Great Priest who was to come,**

*“For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens...Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty*

*in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man” (Hebrews 7:26, 8:1-2).*

**\* Leviticus 21:4 (ESV). “*He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself.*”**

This is a difficult sentence to translate in the Hebrew. However, coupled with verses 7, 13-14, it seems to extend the picture of wholeness represented by the High Priest to include the “oneness” realized in his marital union as well.

**\* Leviticus 21:5. “*They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.*”**

These were all pagan rites of mourning—but again, the Priest, as representative of humankind, was not to mar his body made in the image of God.

**\* Leviticus 21:8. “*Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the LORD (YHVH), who sanctify you, am holy.”***

The English words “consecrate” and “sanctify” both bear within them the Hebrew root for “holy”. The people are to set apart the priest as holy, and he must reflect holiness before them—but this is the testimony of his outward appearance and behavior. Ultimate sanctification (being made holy) requires a gracious, deeper work of the LORD Himself. At least six times in these two chapters the LORD reminds the priests that “*It is I who sanctify*”—both the people (21:8,15; 22:9,16,32), and the holy places they have constructed in which to honor Him (21:23).

**\*Leviticus 21:21. “*No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries (i.e. holy places); for I the LORD sanctify them.*”**

Those of the House of Aaron who were outwardly defective could partake of the offerings brought by the people to God—but they could not “draw near” to present them to God. Drawing near requires that which is perfect, which the priests reflected, and the Holy Priest *Yeshua* would fulfill. This “drawing near” was a special and wonderful privilege. However, it could be lost by failing to adhere to the LORD’s directions, as may be seen in Ezekiel 44:10-14 (immediately preceding this week’s *Haftarah*), where the priests who had gone astray could still execute certain responsibilities before the LORD, but the privilege of drawing near to Him in the special way of their original call was forfeited.

## **Chapter 23 “Appointed Times of YHVH”**

This chapter presents in detail the Holy Convocations, the LORD's "appointed times" (many English translations, *feasts*) to be observed by His people Israel (They are also enumerated in Deuteronomy 16). It should be noted, however, that these are not described as "Hebrew" appointed times or feasts, but as "The appointed times of YHVH" (23:2, 4, 37). They begin with the weekly *Shabbat*(Sabbath) (vs 3)—then in the Spring: *Pesach*— "Passover" (vs 5), the Week of *Matzot*— "Unleavened Bread" (vss 6-8), with the presenting of *First Fruits* (vss 10-14). Fifty days later comes *Shavuot*— "Feast of Weeks" / "Pentecost" (vss 16-21). In the Autumn come: *Yom Teruah*— "Day of Shofar Blasts" (vss 23-25), *Yom Kippur*— "Day of Atonement" (vss 26-32) and *Succot*— "Feast of Tabernacles" (vss 33-43). Since we will deal more-extensively with these festivals as they occur throughout the year, we will limit our comments here to the following:

**\*Leviticus 23:3.** *"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation, you shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings."*

This is eluded to each Friday evening before meals when a prayer is said which includes, "*and caused us to inherit his holy Sabbath in love and favor, as a memorial of the work of creation; for that day ranks first amongst the holy convocations...*" The actual Festivals of the Lord, convocations which are to be proclaimed at their appointed times throughout the year, follow. But first it was necessary to reaffirm the weekly observance of Shabbat.

**\*Leviticus 23:24-25.** *"In the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing, a holy convocation."*

The word for "blowing" is *t'ruah*—which may be a shout or a trumpet blast. From earliest times its occurrence here has been interpreted to refer to the sounding of the *shofar*— "ram's horn". It is interesting that the "redemption" which took the place of Isaac was a "ram caught by its horn in a thicket". The shout of the shofar is a redemptive call to attention, to taking account before the days of awe leading to Yom Kippur. There is a rabbinic tradition, adhered to in most of Judaism today, which calls for postponing the blowing of the shofar on *Yom T'ruah* when the first of the seventh month falls on Shabbat ("Carrying a shofar to synagogue" is considered a violation of Shabbat!). But Scripture makes no such exception, it clearly states that these convocations are to be carried out "at their appointed times" (vs 4). In fact, verse 38 also implies that observance of these festivals is to take precedence over the regular weekly Sabbaths themselves.

**\*Leviticus 23:15-16.** *"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."*

There has been a controversy in Judaism regarding when "Firstfruits" and the "Counting of the Omer" were to begin. The Pharisees understood "day after the Sabbath" to refer to the day following the "day of rest" begun on Seder night. So *Firstfruits* and the beginning of *Counting of*

*the Omer* always begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the First Hebrew month. The Sadducees took the “Sabbath” in this passage to refer to the first “Saturday Sabbath” following Passover (therefore, Firstfruits and Counting the Omer would always begin on a Sunday). Another sect of Jews, the Ka’arites, have yet another way of determining when to count. The tradition of the Pharisees (which sees the seven Sabbaths as weeks rather than Saturdays, and counts 50 days beginning with the 16<sup>th</sup> of Aviv/Nisan) is what appears to have been in place during the time of Yeshua, and is the system followed by most Jews today.

**\*Leviticus 24:2-4.** *“Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually: it shall be a statue forever in your generations. He shall be in charge of the lamps of the pure gold menorah before the LORD continually.”*

The light of the Menorah was positioned to shine across onto the table bearing the 12 cakes of Bread of the Presence described in vss 5-9 (one cake for each of the Tribes of Israel). Another translation is *“Bread of the Face”*. Many times in Scripture Israel’s salvation is described as coming through the shining of God’s face upon His people. *“For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light”* (Psalm 36:9. See also Psalm 31:16; 44:3; 80:3, 7, 19). And through that Light, there is a lamp which He has himself kindled and maintains within our hearts, *“You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light”* (Psalm 18:28)!

**\*Leviticus 24:11, 15-16.** *“And the Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the name and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses.” “Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of YHVH shall surely be put to death...When he blasphemes the name, he shall be put to death.”*

Here, twice the word *shem* (name) is used in place of the name of God (YHVH). As mentioned last week, today it is common among religious Jews when reading aloud or referring to YHVH (the LORD) to use this expression *ha Shem* – “the Name”, rather than attempt to pronounce the covenant name. I very common reply to the query, *“Ma-shlomkha?”* (How is your shalom?—How are You?) is simply, *“Baruch HaShem!”* (Blessed be The NAME.—Thank you, I am fine).

**\*Leviticus 24:19.** *“If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man (Hebrew: adam), so shall it be done to him.”*

Disfigurement of a fellow human being (Hebrew: “Son of Adam”) is an extremely serious crime, marring that which of all creation was crafted by God in His own image.

### **Haftarah**

**\*Ezekiel 44:15.** *“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me...They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall guard My charge.”*

We who have come to the Father through His Son *Yeshua* are part of a “Kingdom of Priests” (Revelation 1:6). “Drawing near” in ministry to Him is one of the most precious privileges we have, but we must guard His charge, and hold fast to what is good (I Thess. 5:21; Heb. 4:14; Rev. 2:25; 3:11). Not to treasure and guard this gift can lead to tragic consequences. As mentioned earlier, verses 10-14 tell of those who chose to abandon their charge, who “*went far from Him...strayed away from Him*”. These found place for repentance, and were given ways to minister to their Lord—but the intimacy of their first positioning was forfeited forever, “*they shall not come near Me to minister*” as they had in the past.

**\*Ezekiel 44:23.** “*And they (God’s priests) shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*”

**PLEASE PRAY:** For the Body of Messiah in Israel, that the Lord raise up and sustain faithful leaders who will command authority by their example, integrity and adherence to the truth—including their regular “drawing near” to God to minister only to Him. Pray that they will be able to teach the people holiness, cleanness, and discernment in a day of growing confusion and deception regarding what is holy and what is clean before God.



*Martin & Norma Sarvis  
Jerusalem*

[The Parashah for next week 14-20 May 2017 is a “double reading”: I. *Emor*—“Say!”: TORAH: Leviticus 25:1—26:2; II. *B’Chukotai*—“In My Statutes”: TORAH: Leviticus 26:3—27:34; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 16:19—17:14]

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