

Prayer Update From Israel (May 9, 2016)



9 May is Day #16 of “*Counting the Omer*” to Pentecost.

This Wednesday Israel remembers and mourns its fallen soldiers, and victims of terror. Then on Wednesday evening, she begins celebration of 68 years as an independent modern nation.

“It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them”

(Psalm 44:3)

1. A COURAGEOUS AND HIGH-RANKING CALL TO SOUL-SEARCHING AS A NATION.

In his address at Tel Yitzhak at the beginning of Holocaust Remembrance Day last Wednesday evening, Israeli army’s deputy chief of staff Maj. Gen Yair Golan used the occasion to deliver a remarkable, timely, sobering call and admonition to Israelis today. Although he was in many quarters immediately challenged and criticized for a sentence supposedly likening modern-day Israel to 1930s Germany (an intention he was afterwards quickly to deny), what he was really doing was issuing a warning against a slackening of moral vigilance in our nation, against a sanctimonious presumption that we in Israel are ourselves somehow immune, if we let our guard down, to the same corrupting influences which opened a path to moral degradation and inhumanity in other nations 80 years ago.

We find the General’s words—rare indeed issuing forth from so high-ranking a leader—to be pertinent, profound, heartening. In some ways, they call to our minds the words of another Israeli general from ancient times—Joshua, as he addressed the people near the close of his life (Joshua 23-24). We reprint here a complete article on the speech as it appeared in the *Jerusalem*

Post immediately following Golan's address. (All highlighting and underlining of his words are our own.)

PLEASE READ IT PRAYERFULLY:

*** Ask God to release His Spirit in Israel to convict and guide us in the "soul-searching" the General so rightly senses we are in need of; divinely guiding us to the place, as he concludes, "that we are to realize our purpose as a light unto the nations..."**

*** Thank God for leadership in Israel who will take a courageous stand for integrity and moral truth. Pray that words of truth and integrity will resonate in the hearts of young men and women under their charge. Pray that the spirit of "The God who Arrays Israel's Armies" (I Sam. 17:45) will rest upon new leaders whom He has chosen, who fear the LORD, and who will serve as role-models to those who are under their charge.**

IDF general in bombshell speech: Israel today shows signs of 1930s Germany

By JPOST.COM STAFF

Wed, 04 May 2016, 09:44 PM

The Israeli army's deputy chief of staff ignited controversy late Wednesday evening with his remarks which seemed to suggest a parallel between present-day Israel and 1930s Germany.

Maj. Gen. Yair Golan made the comments during a Holocaust Remembrance Day address at Tel Yitzhak. "It's scary to see horrifying developments that took place in Europe begin to unfold here," the officer said. The comments unleashed a torrent of criticism against Golan on social media, with Twitter users accusing the deputy chief of staff of "forgetting the lessons of the Holocaust."

"The Holocaust should bring us to ponder our public lives and, furthermore, it must lead anyone who is capable of taking public responsibility to do so," Golan said. "Because if there is one thing that is scary in remembering the Holocaust, it is noticing horrific processes which developed in Europe – particularly in Germany – 70, 80, and 90 years ago, and finding remnants of that here among us in the year 2016."

Education Minister Naftali Bennett was in the audience during the remarks, according to Hebrew-language media.

"The Holocaust, in my view, must lead us to deep soul-searching about the nature of man," Golan said. "It must bring us to conduct some soul-searching as to the responsibility of leadership and the quality of our society. It must lead us to fundamentally rethink how we, here and now, behave towards the other."

"There is nothing easier and simpler than in changing the other," the officer said. "There is nothing easier and simpler than fear-mongering and threatening. There is nothing easier and simpler than in behaving like beasts, becoming morally corrupt, and sanctimoniousness."

"On Holocaust Remembrance Day, it is worthwhile to ponder our capacity to uproot the first signs of intolerance, violence, and self-destruction that arise on the path to moral degradation," Golan said.

"For all intents and purposes, Holocaust Remembrance Day is an opportunity for soul-searching," he said. "If Yom Kippur is the day of individual soul-searching, then it is imperative that Holocaust Remembrance Day be a day of national soul-searching, and this national soul-searching should include phenomena that are disruptive."

Golan made reference to the Hebron incident in which an IDF infantryman was filmed shooting dead a Palestinian assailant who was on the ground and subdued. The soldier, Sgt. Elor Azaria, is being tried by a military tribunal on charges of manslaughter. The arrest and court martial have been met with fierce criticism from nationalist Jews who say that the soldier acted properly. **"Improper use of weapons and violating the sanctity of arms have taken place since the IDF's founding," Golan said. "The IDF should be proud that throughout its history it has had the ability to investigate severe incidents without hesitation. It should be proud that it has probed problematic behavior with courage and that it has taken responsibility not just for the good, but also for the bad and the inappropriate."**

"We didn't try to justify ourselves, we didn't cover anything up, we didn't whitewash, we didn't make excuses, and we didn't equivocate," the officer said. "Our path was – and will be – one of truth and shouldering responsibility, even if the truth is difficult and the burden of responsibility is a heavy one."

"We very much believe in the justice of our cause, but not everything we do is just," Golan said. "We are certain of the high level of morality in the IDF as an organization, and we do not ignore exceptions by individuals. We demand from our soldiers the same that we demand of ourselves, and we insist that upstanding behavior and setting an example for everyone become second nature for every commander."

"On Holocaust Remembrance Day, as we remember the six million of our people who were slaughtered in Europe, it is incumbent upon us to remember the 6.5 million, those living now, and to ask ourselves what is the purpose of our return to our land, what is appropriate to sanctify and what is not, what is proper to praise and what is not," the officer said.

"Most of all, we should ask how it is that we are to realize our purpose as a light unto the nations and a model society," he said. "Only this kind of remembrance can serve as a living and breathing monument for our people – a worthy monument, a monument of truth."

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.

NOTE: Below are the texts for the Parashah read in *Jerusalem*. Because in the *Diaspora* (i.e. communities of Jews outside of Israel) an extra day is celebrated at Passover (and this year, that day came on a Sabbath), the readings read outside of Israel are now behind one week from those read here. On August 6th, through the use of a special "double reading" covering the final chapters of the *Book of Numbers*, the readings both inside and outside of Israel will once again coincide.

The Parasha for this week 8-14 May 2016 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.

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 16th 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 16th 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. A 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.



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[The Parashah for next week 15-21 May is called *BeHar*—“On the Mount”. TORAH: Leviticus 25:1—26:2; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 32:6-27.]

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