

Prayer Update From Israel (July 14, 2015)



“Between the Straits”

A narrow gorge near SdeBoker in the Negev south of Beer Sheva.

1. ELAV

The 2015 *ELAV* conference in Jerusalem for youth and young adults has come to an end. We are so grateful for all who stood with us at any time during the months, the weeks—right up through the final days of its coming into being. We will plan to share more in coming Updates as the depths of what happened this week continue to be revealed. The Holy Spirit had truly gathered these Jewish and Arab youth and young adults—from within the recognized borders of Israel, from Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), from the Kingdom of Jordan and from Egypt. And His anointing was there!! There were times of powerful high praise—in Hebrew, Arabic, English—times of deep and intimate worship—and periods of wordless melody and new-song carried along by the breath of the Holy Spirit. There were arresting testimonies and challenging addresses by both young and older indigenous leaders in the land, and some from abroad. It was a time of refreshing and mutual encouragement. And there was the healing, delivering, equipping work of the Spirit. We have already heard testimonies of young people who literally felt spirits of bondage departing from them as they were released into a new freedom in the Lord.

Over the years there has been a notable progression in these gatherings. They are still unusual in Israel, with their emphasis on the formation of spiritual ties between young Jewish and Arab believers, a building up together through Yeshua/Yasua into “One New Man”. From the earliest days of simply “discovering” one another in the Lord (many Arab and Jewish young people had never worshipped or even visited with those across their racial barrier before), they progressed to times when a spirit of revelation and conviction was present, leading to mutual confession and renunciation of the divisions and distrust brought about by racial stereotypes which have stood as a wall for countless generations. They then moved into deeper Spirit-led acts of reconciliation

and mutual bonding, such as the time last year when young Arab and Jewish men and women washed each other's feet.

One thing the Spirit was emphasizing this year was the formation and strengthening of committed and fearless bonds of brother and sisterly love, which in the near future will prove necessary in standing against the threats and even persecutions of the enemy against and within our communities. An incredible work of the Lord occurred on Thursday evening when this young army held themselves up before God to be released from fear, especially the fear of death (which Jesus has conquered). Representative Arab and Jewish brothers and sisters raised prayers of commitment over each other, then everyone linked arms in a sign of covenant to stand with and open their very homes to each other when persecution for the name of Yeshua/Yasua arises. There was a sense of a baptizing of brother/sister love crossing these boundaries—and power, with young Jewish and Arab leaders calling for a release of the prophetic gifts which will be of such strategic importance in times ahead.

We know that persecution will come. As mentioned in a recent Update, only two weeks ago handbills were passed out on the Temple Mount (and left in other parts of “East Jerusalem”) warning Christians that they will be targets of destruction if they do not leave before the close of Ramadan (which ends this Thursday).

Nor will it only be from the Muslim religion. On the day before the start of Elav, a radical far-right ultra-Orthodox organization known for its sometimes violent activism against organizations and events they see as fostering Jew/Christian Jew/Arab assimilation or even co-existence, was featured in a popular Orthodox news daily, calling the *ELAV* gathering a “Massive Missionary Conference in the Heart of Jerusalem” and fervently encouraging “all those who care about the character of the Holy City” to join in a protest in front of the venue on opening night. They also called on Jerusalem's Mayor to call off the conference. In the event, about 50 activists demonstrated at the entrance gates the first night, chanting slogans, singing songs, giving speeches and spewing abuse at those going in or out. The police and Border Patrol had been alerted about the demonstration and were on hand to keep the demonstrators at bay. During the course of the evening one girl was thrown down, and two activists were arrested. There were no injuries. **We attribute to the prayers of God's people around the world that Elav was not cancelled, and that the demonstrators were not allowed to seriously disrupt the meetings.** In fact, an article on the altercation in a Jerusalem paper the next day, served more as an advertisement of the purposes and goals behind *Elav*, rather than giving credit to the organization which had attempted to thwart it.

PLEASE PRAY:

*** Thanksgiving with us that *Elav* was able to be mounted and held in the place and at the time which God ordained, and that the forces of darkness were unable to prevent it!**

*** That the truth's which the Holy Spirit released into young Hebrew and Arab hearts at the conference would germinate and grow! *“For straight is the Word of the LORD, and everything it accomplishes is done in Faithfulness”* (Psalm 33:4).**

*** That the bonds of the Spirit which have been made between the young people who attended will be strengthened in Love—that these brothers & sisters-in arms will be strengthened in zeal and resolve to run the race before them!**

*** For strengthening and restoration for those who have poured out so much in preparation and mounting of this conference. Pray a ‘rear guard’ over all who were involved and participated.**

*** For members of the religious organization which mounted the demonstration—and others in the Orthodox community, that their zeal would come to be based on knowledge (Romans 10:2) of the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Pray that the veil will fall from their eyes—that the very Spirit of Truth who was present at the conference would awaken in them a hunger for a Love which transcends their religious fervor.**

***That the Body of Messiah in Israel become equipped to stand in the spiritual warfare which is ahead—including when it might involve persecution.**

***PRAY THAT THE LORD, WHO IS AWARE OF THE THREATS OF THE ENEMY REGARDING THE ENDING OF RAMADAN IN JERUSALEM, WOULD PROTECT HIS PEOPLE—AND THAT ANY PLOTS THE ENEMY HAS PREPARED FOR THEIR HARM WILL BE EXPOSED.**

2. FRIDAY 17 JULY BEGINS THE HEBREW MONTH OF “AV”.

Friday will be *Rosh Hodesh*, the “head” of the Fifth Month in the Hebrew Biblical calendar. Since the return from Captivity in Babylon, the month has been called by the Babylonian name, *Av*.

This day is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible as that of the death of Aaron the High Priest. Aaron had not been without serious failings—the incident of the golden calf; that with his brother Moses in striking the rock after God had commanded them to speak to it. But he had also fallen on his face with Moses in intercession to God when the people sinned, and for decades he had “borne iniquity” on behalf of all of the house of Israel (Numbers 18:1) as he went about his duties as High Priest in the Tabernacle. Now his mantle had been passed on to the next generation; they would likewise be fallible, they also must one day die. This passing of that first High Priest, from whom the “Aaronic” priesthood would take its name, reminds us of a “greater” priesthood, that of *Malki-tzedek*—“King of Righteousness”, and of the still greater Priest of that order who would take Aaron’s place as an intercessor between the Father and all Humankind.

“There were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:23-25).

Av in Hebrew means “father”. Although the name used for this fifth month is of Babylonian origin, its spelling happens to be identical with that of the Hebrew word. As we pray over our

land and people at the beginning of this new month, we recall a verse from what would normally be the closing of last week's *Haftarah* portion, Jeremiah 3:4: ***“Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’*** And as we continue through this season during which Darkness has repeatedly sought to take occasion for evil against the covenant land and people, we find it a time for especial watchfulness over Israel and Jews throughout the world, holding them up before the ***“Father of Lights”*** (James 1:17).

It happens that as with last year, the arrival of this day this year coincides with the conclusion of the Muslim fast month of *Ramadan*. “Ramadan” comes from an Arabic root related to “intense heat, scorched ground and shortness of rations.” The concept of the Fatherhood of God is foreign to that religion.

PLEASE PRAY:

*** For the Body of Messiah in Israel to come into a deeper awareness of the work of Yeshua (Jesus) as our High Priest. A few years ago the Bible Society in Israel released a small booklet containing an annotated Hebrew language printing of the *Book of Hebrews*. Please pray that this wonderful Book centered on the Priesthood of Messiah, written specifically to First Century Messianic Jews, would be rediscovered by Israeli Jews in the 20th Century!**

*** For an awakened longing for “fatherhood in Israel”—for an awareness that the God of Israel’s “fathers”—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—is in fact, the One from whom all fatherhood gets its name (Ephesians 3:14-15). That Yeshua the Messiah has opened a way to bring us all, Jew and Gentile, as fellow sons and daughters to His Father!**

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION:

From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (Parasha) 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 Parasha for this week 12-18 July 2015 contains a “double reading”:

I. *Matot*—“Tribes”

TORAH: Numbers 30:1—32:42

II. *Massei*—“Journeys of...”

TORAH: Numbers 33:1—36:13

HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 2:4-28, 3:4, 4:1-2 (“Haftarah of Affliction II”)

We are still “between the straits” (see last week’s Update), and for this second week, the usual Haftarah is once again replaced by a “Haftarah of Affliction/Admonition”, calling Israel to a place of humble sobriety before his God.

I. *Matot*—“Tribes”

Numbers 30.** Vows and oaths to the LORD are extremely serious transactions in God’s eyes; such words, coming out of the mouth of a person and binding his or her very soul must be taken seriously and honored by all humankind who are made in God’s own image (vss. 2, 6). Vows and oaths were binding absolutely on all males (30:2). Yet within the authority structure God had set up, there were certain circumstances in which the positioning of a human father or husband could (as with the divine Father/Husband of which they are a reflection) allow release of a special grace to cover the guilt of a young daughter living at home, or of a wife (the protection and oversight of both for which God held the father or husband ultimately responsible). Thus, if a father, on the day he heard of a vow his daughter had made deemed it unwise, he could overrule her vow and the LORD would forgive her (30:5). Similarly, on the day a husband became aware of a vow made by his wife, he might, if he believed it unwise, choose to “overrule” (NKJV; Hebrew verb: *lehani*) and “make void” (NKJV; Hebrew verb: *lehaphir*) the vow which she had made —“and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound her soul, and the LORD will forgive her.***” It is interesting that both of these Hebrew verbs are used in Psalm 33:10, “***The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing*** (Hebrew: *lehaphir*); ***He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect***” (Hebrew: *lehani*). **Here also, faulty counsel is cancelled out by a greater authority in an ultimate mercy.**

Numbers 30:15.** “But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her iniquity***”. In a holy sanctuary built and maintained by fallen man, the House of Levi were called to “***bear the iniquity***” of that sanctuary. (Numbers 18:1, 23), while Aaron and his descendants would “***bear the iniquity***” of his priesthood. There was a special grace given to those in these positions—but if the rest of the Israelites came near to the tabernacle of meeting, they would “***bear their sin and die.***” Likewise, it appears here that a measure of this same grace was given to a man in his role as “priest” or “Levite” over his home. Ultimately, just as one goat was slain for sin on the Day of Atonement, but another was necessary to be taken into the wilderness to “***bear on itself all their iniquities...***” (Leviticus 16:22), so would come Another who would not only offer Himself a sacrifice for sin—but as ***the Lamb of God, bear away the sin of the world.***

Numbers 31:1-2.** “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.’***”

It is important in reading the grim even shocking events of the first half of this chapter, to realize *Who* had issued the order. In Psalm 94:1 the LORD (YHVH) is twice called *El-Nekamot*—literally, “**Vengeances-God**.” Isaiah 61:2 speaks of the Spirit’s anointing One to proclaim “*the day of the vengeance of our God*” (as well as to “*comfort all who mourn*”). II Thessalonians 1:8 prophecies a Day when Yeshua will be revealed from Heaven with mighty angels “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah*.” Romans 12:17-20 cautions against believers taking their own revenge for perceived offenses and quotes Deuteronomy 32:35, “**‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the YHVH**”. Hebrews 10:30 quotes this same verse from the Torah as relevant to those who “know Him” today. Vengeance is His and not ours, yet Psalm 149:7 makes clear that “Saints” will on occasion be used to “*execute [His] vengeance on the nations*.”

It is obviously this, the righteous vengeance of God, which is being released through His people in Numbers 31. “*It is appointed for [all] men to die once...*” (Hebrews 9:27). The time was at hand for these Midianites, including the women who had “*caused the children of Israel (even as they were poised to cross into the Promised Land) to trespass against the LORD*” (Numbers 31:1).

II. *Massei*—“Journeys of...”

TORAH: Numbers 33:1—36:13

CHAPTER 33

“Now at the end of the long chain of Wilderness stories that began in Exodus, as the Israelites are poised to cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, we get a grand recapitulation of the whole narrative in the form of an itinerary of all the way stations in the Wilderness march” (Alter, Robert: *The Five Books of Moses*, W.W.Norton & Co: New York, London, 2004 (p. 852, n 1).

***Numbers 33:1.** “*These are the journeys of the children of Israel, who went out of the land of Egypt by their armies under the hand of Moses and Aaron.* (Emphases ours)

As noted when this ‘going forth’ from Egypt was first recorded in Exodus 12:41, 51; 13:18, although the Children of Israel may not have been yet fully aware that they were an “army” (with each member assigned his/her positioning in its arraying), *YHVH Tz’vaot, Elohei Ma’arkhot Yisrael* (“Yehovah of Armies, God of the Arraying of Israel”—I Samuel 17:45) was well aware! *When people are brought out of the slave-house of sin into the Kingdom of Heaven, they soon discover that they are in a war—but also that they have a place especially reserved in the army of the Captain of the Hosts of the LORD!*

***Numbers 33:2.** “*And Moses wrote down their departure points for their journeying by the word of the LORD, and these are their journeying by their departure points*” (Robert Alter, trans).

“Departure points” (Hebrew: *motz’a*) is also sometimes translated into English as “starting points” or “places of origin”. All have validity, albeit resulting in slightly different perspectives. In fact, this word is related to that used of God in the traditional Hebrew blessing over meals, *Ha’motzi lechem min haAretz*—“Who **brings forth** bread from the earth”. So the passage might even be interpreted to read, “*Moses wrote down **those places from which they were brought forth for their journey***”. An old Jewish proverb goes something like this, “*You can’t know where you’re going ‘til you know where you came from.*” It was important that the Hebrews keep a record of these starting/departure points from which they had been continually drawn forth in the timings of the LORD—back into the path of their journeying (Numbers 9:18).

***Numbers 36:7.** “*And an estate of the Israelites shall not turn round from tribe to tribe, but the Israelites shall cling each man to the estate of the tribe of his fathers*” (Robert Alter, trans.).

“Cling” comes from the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:24 regarding a man and his wife. It was this charge as related to inherited land which likely fueled Naboth’s response to Ahab in I Kings 21:3, “*YHVH Forbid! That I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!*”

It is important to pray for Israelis returning to the Land of their Fathers—that they will receive from the Lord a fierce, strong zeal after that land—a holy jealousy in valuing this inheritance passed down from the Fathers, who received it as an eternal *Covenant* from the God who chose them and met with them here!

***After Numbers 36:13. *KhaZAK! KhaZAK! V’Nit’khaZEK!*—“Be Strong! Be Strong! And we Shall Become Stronger!!**

It is traditional to chant this admonishment after reaching the end of each of the Five Books of Moses.

HAFTARAH:

(“Haftarah of Affliction/Admonition”): **Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4; 4:1-2**

***Jeremiah 2:13.** “*For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the Source of living water, and they have hewed themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.*”

***Jeremiah 3:4 (NKJV).** “*Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’”*

***Jeremiah 4:1-2 (NASB).** “*‘If you will return, O Israel,’ declares the LORD, ‘then you should return to me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, and will not waver, and you will swear ‘As the LORD lives’ in truth, in justice and in righteousness; then the nations will bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will glory.’*”

It has always been God's plan that as Israel comes into a right relationship with her God repercussions will be felt throughout the world, and the nations will come into a new revelation of His Glory, and "*bless themselves in Him!*"



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[The *Parashah* for next week 19-25 July 2015 is a called *D'varim*—"Words": TORAH: Deuteronomy 1:1—3:22; HAFTARAH: Isaiah 1:1-27 (*Shabbat Chazon*—"Sabbath of Vision")]

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