

Prayer Update From Israel (July 14, 2014)



1. **DAY 7 OF “OPERATION DEFENSIVE EDGE”—The Rockets are Still Falling.**
2. **STAYING INFORMED DURING TIME OF WAR IN ISRAEL.**
3. **A *GIBOR*—“HEROIC WARRIOR”— IN THE ARMY OF HIS GOD!**

1. DAY 7 OF “OPERATION DEFENSIVE EDGE”—The Rockets are Still Falling.

“Let them be put to shame and confounded together who seek and require my life to destroy it; let them be driven backward and brought to dishonor who wish me evil and delight in my hurt. Let them be desolate by reason of their shame who say to me, Aha, aha!” (Ps.40: 14-15 Amp.).

On Sunday morning the writer was heading home from the bank when through the harp and flute concerto on the car radio came a female voice, “*Azakah, Azakah l'Be'er Sheva*”. Not loud, not the least bit dramatic—just matter-of-fact, “*Alarm, Alarm to Beersheba*”—a rocket from Gaza was on its way there, and anyone hearing in that area had perhaps 20 seconds to seek shelter. This sort of thing is taking place throughout the day here in Israel. Many of us have acquired an “App” for our phones which alerts us when a rocket has been launched and the direction it is going in case we are out of our homes or even traveling between cities. It is a time of staying on the alert—but is draining and wearying, especially for those closer to Gaza who are receiving the alarms almost continually.

“Monday dawned Day 7 of Operation “Protective Edge”. During this week over 940 rockets have been fired towards Israel. Of these, 187 were determined to be headed for populated areas and intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system. 740 landed and detonated in more sparsely populated areas. But not all—an 80-year old lady’s house received a direct hit, a service station was set alight, a shed was struck killing over half-a-dozen milk-cows, wounding many others. Last night a teen was critically wounded by shrapnel from a blast in Ashkelon. Over 130 rockets were fired on Sunday, one landing near Haifa, around 150 km away. Three times the alarm has gone off in Jerusalem. After a short lull during the night, the barrages resumed. During the past two hours the phone-app has gone off about ten times.

Meanwhile, Israel's air force and navy has targeted over 1, 425 terror targets in the Strip. Between Saturday and Sunday morning, the Israeli military struck 200 targets in Gaza, including 53 underground rocket launchers, 11 rocket production and storage centers, and nine Hamas command and control centers, and five training camps. Because the majority of rockets appear to be being launched from the northern Strip, Israel decided to bring heavy fire-power to bear on that sector—but first, throughout Sunday morning they dropped thousands of leaflets in Arabic warning citizens to move away from Hamas terrorists and command centers ("IDF strikes 200 Gaza targets in past 24 hours": JPost.com, 7/13/2014 07:52). By yesterday afternoon thousands had heeded the warning and fled the area.

This illustrates a difference between the two sides in this conflict. Israel is doing all it can to only strike militant strongholds—but the rockets emanating from Gaza are intended to kill or maim as many civilians as possible. During a segment of the US "Face the Nation" on Sunday, a film was played showing how even after a target is in the sights of its aircraft, Israeli forces will often be pulled back from firing when remote analysts of the targeting ascertain that there are civilians or children nearby—this is something the Israeli Ambassador claimed takes place over and over each day. As of today, Israel has done all it could to avoid a ground incursion—which no doubt would result in a much higher death toll. Nevertheless, Palestinian sources claim that over 160 Palestinians have been killed in these attacks—as of this writing, no Israelis have yet succumbed to injuries from the Gazan rockets. ***The disparity between fatalities is immediately taken by critics around the world as indicative of Israel's brutal heavy-handedness.*** A popular commentator to Britain's *The Guardian*, likened the conflict to "Mike Tyson punching a toddler", and opined, "*The media coverage hardly reflects the reality. A military superpower armed with F-156 fighter jets, AH-64 Apache helicopters, Delilah missiles, IAI Heron-1 drones and Jericho II missiles (and nuclear bombs, for that matter), versus what David Cameron describes as a 'prison camp' firing almost entirely ineffective missiles*" ("Gaza war seen rather differently in US, UK newspapers": *The Times of Israel*, 11 July 2014 9:34 am). This is of course a cynically biased caricature of the truth. Israel has used none of these armaments to initiate violence on Gaza. Such "commentary" is not unlike sympathizing with a gang of hoodlums because they have less advanced armament than the law & order authorities. Nor are the missiles raining on Israel "almost entirely ineffective"—as mentioned above, over 187 of them would have struck highly populated areas had not Israel been able to take them down.

There is another reason for the disparity in casualties—YHVH-Yisrael—Israel's Lord and the Great God over All the World has ordained, "You shall not curse this people, for they are blessed"; He has Himself ordained a curse on those who attempt to do so (Numbers 21:12; 24:9). Interestingly, two rockets aimed at Jerusalem yesterday, ended up falling in Bethlehem and Hebron—two towns within which contain Hamas strongholds. And a Hamas rocket severed a power line, putting thousands of Gazans out of electricity.

But most of the world will not see this. There have been huge demonstrations in London, Paris and Berlin against the "Israeli aggression". Meanwhile, during the past day-and-a-half, there have been three "sympathy" rocket attacks out of Lebanon and one out of Syria into Israeli territory.

The call-up of 40,000 reserves to prepare the way for active troops to enter Gaza, has been completed (more are expected to follow). Monday morning the area just north of the Strip was declared a closed military zone. It is an agonizing decision—we know that going in on the ground will almost certainly mean many dead and injured, including civilians. Hamas has many of its strongholds surrounded by “human shields”. But if Israel holds to the old equation of “quiet will be met with quiet” and fails to adequately deal with the problem, it effectively allows Hamas to call the shots in attacks upon our sovereignty, and to once again dictate when the next round will place. And in any event, the rockets are still falling.

We are grateful and encouraged for the prayers being lifted up around the world on Israel’s behalf, also for the many words of encouragement.

We repeat here prayer points drawn from our last Update:

***Psalm 91 over Israel. That she will be saved from the “arrow that flies by day” and night. That God would give His angels charge over her to protect her—and minister on behalf of those who will inherit salvation.**

***For divine counsel over Israel’s governmental and military leaders as how to proceed with the war against Hamas. Pray that Israel will not flinch from continuing in Operation “Protective Edge” until all is done that needs to be done to put an end to these attacks upon her sovereignty—that if a ground incursion is necessary, it will be accomplished in God’s timing, with clean surgical operations with the least possible loss of life.**

***Protection over the soldiers being mustered for possible entry into a military incursion into the Strip. Pray for the many believing soldiers both with active service and those who have been called up from Reserves.**

***For courage and integrity, and well executed and effective action for the soldiers—Pray for mercy and grace where it is possible to be shown.**

***For courage and grace over the parents and families of those sent into battle.**

***That Israel become aware, during this tense time, of areas where she has become vulnerable through her own pride and sin—For conviction by the Holy Spirit and grace to turn in repentance to her God.**

***That if there should be any evil weapons of mass destruction hidden in Hamas’s armory, they would be supernaturally bound from being used against Israel—that they would be uncovered and neutralized.**

***That the light of Salvation shine—That Jewish and Arab believers would be able to lead many to the Lord during these dark days.**

2. STAYING INFORMED DURING TIME OF WAR IN ISRAEL.

We often hear from readers who feel that they are not able to get sufficient trustworthy coverage over radio, television or newspapers of what is going on during times of crisis, in Israel. By far the best sources are some of the online newspapers presently available on the Internet. By going to these sites and saving them to your “favorites”, you may open them at any time and get ‘up to the minute’ English coverage of what is going on. We recommend the following sites. Besides having in-depth headlines throughout the day and night, there is also a running line of “breaking news” on each. Of course, news stories must still be read with prayer for discernment as to what to focus on and how to pray. As we have mentioned before, the well-known verse in Psalm 122:6, in the Hebrew actually says, “*Ask after the peace of Jerusalem...*” We believe that God is pleased to share His priorities for each of his children at any one time regarding their intercession for His holy city, people and land.

The sources we recommend are:

The Jerusalem Post: <http://www.jpost.com/>
Ynet News (English): <http://www.ynetnews.com/>
The Times of Israel: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/>

3. A *GIBOR*—“HEROIC WARRIOR”— IN THE ARMY OF HIS GOD!

As Israeli troops prepared for a likely ground incursion into Gaza, one brigade commander **Colonel Ofer Winter** recently composed a remarkable letter to his subordinate officers. Included in the letter was the following:

"History has chosen us to spearhead the fighting (against) the terrorist 'Gazan' enemy which abuses, blasphemes and curses the God of Israel's (defense) forces... We have planned and prepared for this moment and we take the mission upon ourselves out of commitment, complete humility, and because we are prepared to endanger ourselves and lay down our lives in order to protect our families, our people and our homeland." Col. Winter then invoked the *Shema* ("Hear O Israel, YHVH is our God, YHVH One, Blessed be the glorious name of His Kingdom forever."), and called upon "**the God of Israel**" to "**make our path successful as we go and stand to fight for the sake of your people of Israel against a foe which curses your Name.**" ("IDF commander seeks God's help to fight 'blasphemous' Gazans": *The Times of Israel*, 12 July 2014, 1:41 p.m. Emphases ours).

This noble letter has drawn criticism. Warning of an "**a growing phenomenon of religious terminology entering the military...** an extremely dangerous trend", the executive director of one Israeli organization promoting religious freedom labeled the letter "outrageous", accusing the officer of turning the conflict from one against terror into "a religious war on any resident of Gaza." He declared further, "*I would expect IDF (Israel Defense Force) commanders to remember that the IDF is the army of the people and not a religious militia.*" The head of another similar organization condemned Winter's "*unacceptable and most problematic intermingling of religion with the army.*" And an Israeli Reform Rabbi admonished Winter's superiors to make clear to him the difference between raising the morale of the troops and invoking a religious war against Hamas, that they remind Winter of "*the required separation of religious faith and military duties.*" (Ibid.).

All warfare in Israel involves the spiritual ("religious"). God gives grace to those who come in "complete humility", who call upon His name to make their way successful...in fact, "All who call on the name of YHVH will be saved!"

PLEASE PRAY:

*** For Col. Winter, that he would find favor with his fellow officers and those under his authority who received his letter. That many would be influenced by his stand.**

*** That YHVH Tzevaot –"Yehovah of Armies" (one of the most frequently used names of God in the Hebrew Bible) would encourage him and grant him more revelation in His ways.**

*** That he would not be swayed by the foolish criticisms of ungodly (including religious) men, but stand like Joshua, who fell on his face before *Sar-Tzevah-YHVH*—"Commander of the Army of the LORD" and worshiped, and asked, "What does my Lord say to His servant; like Jephthah, who "spoke all his words before the LORD", who knew his military history and believed that "whatever YHVH our God takes possession of before us, we will possess"; like David who came against his enemy "in the name of YHVH of Armies, God of the Arraying of Israel, whom you have defied!", who knew deep within himself that "the battle is the LORD's!" (Joshua 5:14; Judges 11:11, 14-24; I Samuel 17:45, 47).**

THIS WEEKEND'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. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.

The reading for this week 13-19 July is called *Matot*—"Tribes":

TORAH: Numbers 30:1—32:42

HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 1:1—2:3 ("Haftarah of Affliction/Admonition"):

During the three-week period "between the straits", 17th of Tammuz—9th of Av (This year 15 July-5 August) the *Haftarah* portions focus on calling Israel to sober contemplation of her sin, of her deserving of severe judgment, yet of the Love of her God which is still calling her to repent and return to Him.

Numbers 30.** Vows and oaths to the LORD were 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 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), and 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 would 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 men to die once...”*** (Hebrews 9:27). The time was at hand for

these Midianites. This included 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).

***Jeremiah 2:1-3 (ESV):** “*The word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the LORD,*

‘I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to the LORD, the firstfruits of his harvest. All who ate of it incurred guilt; disaster came upon them, declares the LORD.’”



*Martin and Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The *Parashah* for next week 20-26 July 2014 is called *Mas’ei*—“Journeys Of...”: TORAH: Numbers 33:1—36:P13; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 2:4-28]

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