

Prayer Update From Israel (August 3, 2015)



Rushing stream at Tel Dan near Israel's northern border.

*“For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills...”
(Deuteronomy 8:7: See Torah Portion below)*

*“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness”
(Zechariah 13:1)*

1. SIN AND VIOLENCE FROM WITHIN.

“And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of YHVH and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God” (Numbers 15:39).

“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I YHVH search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways” (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

If ever the truth has been manifest that it is not due to Israel's righteousness that God has brought her into the land (see Deut. 9:5-6 in Torah Section below), that her heart and eyes still have an inclination towards unfaithfulness, that her heart is in fact, as with other children of Adam, deceitful and desperately sick (see above), such has been the case in the streets of Jerusalem and villages of Samaria during the past few days.

On Thursday a “Jerusalem March for Pride and Tolerance 2015” began winding its way along the streets of modern downtown Jerusalem. It followed a path which the city had a few evenings previous decorated with rainbow and other flags. Such “pride parades” have become an annual event here since the first took place in 2002. (Tel Aviv has held a much larger each year since the ‘90’s, with some 100,000 attending their march last month.) It remains still a more controversial event in the capital, with only between 3-4000 participating this year. A small group of religious Jews was granted a permit by police to stage a protest near the Great Synagogue, not far from where the march would pass.

Shortly after the parade was launched, an ultra-Orthodox man drew a knife, leapt amongst the revelers and began stabbing indiscriminately. Six marchers were wounded before he was wrestled to the ground by security guards. Among them was Shira Banki, a 16-year old girl, stabbed in the back. She died Sunday afternoon. A 26-year old man remains in hospital in stable condition; the other four are recovering from light-to-moderate wounds. The assailant, 50-year old Yishai Schlissel, had three weeks earlier been released from prison, where he had been serving time for a similar attack ten years ago in which he injured three marchers. When arraigned in a Jerusalem court he declared, “I do not accept this court’s authority. This court is part of the mechanism of evil. I have no interest in cooperating at all. I do not recognize any of the regime’s institutions.”

Meanwhile, some hours after the Jerusalem attack, in a totally unrelated event, two masked men entered the Palestinian village of Duma in Samaria, 25 kilometers southeast of ancient Shekhem (modern Nablus), broke windows and tossed fire-bombs into two homes. One was unoccupied, the other contained a family. In the following blaze, tiny 18-month-old baby Ali Saad Dawabsha was burned alive, and his parents and 4-year-old brother were critically injured. The nature of the attack, including Hebrew letters scrawled on the walls, pointed towards yet another “price tag” attack by near-by Jewish settlers. (*Price Tag* refers to revenge attacks taken out on Arab neighbors by Jewish settlers disgruntled with government actions by Israel. Israel’s destruction of what its courts had deemed two illegally-built apartment buildings in Bethel the previous week may have served as a catalyst for this horrifying incident.)

Israel found itself in shock at the murderous attacks within her midst. At a rally against violence on Saturday night, President Rivlin declared that the flames of hatred, violence and “false, distorted and twisted beliefs are spreading through the land,” warning that the nation can no longer afford to continue dismissing such attacks. “*These flames, which are consuming all of us, cannot be extinguished with weak condemnations [by politicians]...with solidarity rallies...with posts on Facebook and statements in the media...with repression, denial and disregard...laxity and arrogance of the heart cannot extinguish the fire, but only allow it to burn stronger, with fervor, to spread in all directions, and permeate all walks of life.*” (“Rivlin: Flames of hatred are spreading, consuming Israel”: *The Times of Israel*, 1 August 2015 10:25 p.m.) President Rivlin, who has a reputation for seeking to restore relations between disparate elements within the society, visited the families of those slain. Regarding the killing of the Arab child in the West Bank, he expressed shame that the killers came from “his own people.” For so doing, he has received both Jewish and Arabic posts of praise and respect on the internet—but he has also received angry threats, wishing him ill and calling him a traitor.

As we pray for Israel's protection from the outside, we must not neglect to intercede and stand against the powers working to weaken and sicken her from within. "Standing with Israel" does not mean turning a blind eye to her faults, her violations, her sins. For her to become truly strong, there is a cleansing and changing which must take place in her heart. In fact, God has said that she must and shall receive a new heart, and she must move in the power of a different Spirit in order righteously to dwell in the land to which He has returned her (Ezekiel 36:22-28). And she *must* embrace a New Covenant which God has provided, a Covenant which will result in His Torah being placed by God "*inside, written on her heart!*" (Jeremiah 31:31-33). That Covenant is in the Blood of her Messiah Yeshua. Without this, she remains at the mercy of her unredeemed identity degenerating into either one which embraces as normal compromised values which erode and weaken the wholeness of her life and soul, or an identity characterized by a "zeal not based on knowledge" (Romans 10:2-3) which can quickly slip into racism and murder. (It is interesting that the atrocities in the West Bank this week took place near Shechem, where Shimon and Levi became "instruments of violence (Hebrew: *hamas*), carried along by what their Father called a cursed kind of anger which was fierce and cruel (Genesis 49:5-7).)

PLEASE PRAY:

*** For Israel as she is faced with manifestations of violence within herself, that in her soul-searching she will reach out for the One who can guide, guard and heal our souls (Psalm 25:1, 20).**

*** For the families of those in Jerusalem and Samaria who were stricken with violence and death last week, that they will be attended by the Holy Spirit of the One who is the "*Father of mercies and the God of all true comfort*" (II Corinthians 1:3).**

*** That those who are responsible for the attack in Samaria will be brought to justice.**

*** For courage, guidance and revelation for those "settlers" who are genuinely seeking God's ways. Certainly all do not fall into the "lawless" category of the ones who perpetrated last week's attack.**

*** For a realization among the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox, that without the Spirit of Truth—the Spirit of Yeshua whom they reject (but who was in the camp with Israel during their journey in the desert), they are not equipped to move in the zeal of Phinehas in seeking to turn back evil (Numbers 25:10-13). The anger of man does not work the righteousness of God. One needs the guidance of God when it becomes necessary to resist civil authority, but a wholesale despising and resisting of it can bring God's judgment (Romans 13:1-4).**

***For Israel's leaders, for the knowledge and resolve necessary to deal quickly and fairly with acts of lawlessness in all the areas placed under their oversight.**

“Good and upright is the LORD, Therefore He instructs sinners in the way. Guides the humble in judgment, Teaches the humble His way” (Psalm 25:8-9).

The battle for Israel’s soul extends of course into the areas of sexuality. Early Zionists, in resistance to what they perceived as legalistic and coercive demands of Orthodox Judaism, were often atheist, abandoning Biblical standards of morality adhered to by their forefathers. Sexual promiscuity permeated the Kibbutz culture. Today thousands of Israelis find themselves caught in confusion, deception and bondage in this area, extending beyond areas of sexual conduct into those of sexual identity. God’s everlasting love which draws Israel in kindness (Jeremiah 31:3) extends to these people as much as to all the others in the Land. It is that “kindness”, that “goodness” which leads all of us, when necessary, to a change of direction (Romans 2:4). Yet one thing with which God will never work in any of us is *Pride*. He is by nature “*opposed to the proud*” (James 4:6; Psalm 138:6)—“*but He gives grace to the humble!*” The truths in the passage from Psalm 25 quoted above are of central importance here: **1) The LORD is good** and there is nothing crooked or ‘un-right’ about Him. **2) It is out of this good-ness and uprightness that sees those tangled in sin and desires to instruct them in the way of life.** This requires sinners acknowledging that they are such and in need of instruction. **3) He guides the humble in judgment.** This involves humility to receive His good judgment as to what is good and what is harmful or bad--and to allow this to affect our own judgements. **4) He teaches those who will humble themselves His Way.** Those who will respond in humility to God’s goodness and guidance will come to know the One who is the *Way, Truth, Life* (John 14:6). It is He who guides them into relationship with the Father who loves them.

PLEASE PRAY:

*** For Israelis who are caught and bound in different forms of sexual sin—that they will come to see the ultimate emptiness of that which is false, and call out to God for deliverance and guidance into the freedom of that which is true.**

*** For grace to seek Him in a way of humility rather than “pride”.**

*** For discovery and embracing of the true identity which they (and we all) were born to live and celebrate in the truth and freedom of our Savior Yeshua.**

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 2-8 August 2015 is called *Ekev*—“In Consequence of...”:

TORAH: Deuteronomy 7:12—11:25

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 49:14—51:3

***Deut. 7:16.** *“Also you shall devour all the peoples whom the LORD your God delivers over to you; your eye shall not pity them...”* It is instructive to compare this “devouring” with that mentioned in the evil report of the ten spies 40 years earlier, *“The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants”* (Num. 13:32), and with the ‘bread’ in Caleb’s good report at the same time, *“The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land...Do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them”* (Num. 14:7-9).

***Deut. 8: 3.** *“He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna...that he might make you know that mankind shall not live by bread alone; but by every utterance of the LORD’s mouth does the human live.”*

***Deut. 8:5.** *“And you knew in your heart that as a man chastises his son the LORD your God chastises you.”* Cff: **Heb 12:7-11:** *“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten...Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

***Deut. 8:6-10.** *“Therefore you shall guard the commandments of YHVH your God, to walk in His ways and to revere Him. For YHVH your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.”*

***Deut. 8:16.** *“...that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end---“*

***Deut. 9:5-6.** *“It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the LORD your God is*

not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

At least eleven times in this Torah Reading (7:12, 7:13; 8:1, 8:18; 9:5-6, 9:27-28; 10:11, 10:15-16, 10:22; 11:8-9, 11:18-21) the LORD through Moses calls to Israel’s attention His ***oath to their Fathers—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—regarding the land*** which He would soon be dispossessing for them and granting as an eternal heritage (“*like the days of the heavens above the earth*”—11:21). It was an oath of *covenant and kindness* (Hebrew: *hesed*) from God (7:12). He “*set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day*” (10:15). But this was manifestly *not* because of any special, inherent goodness or righteousness in Israel (7:12). Her part was to realize this, to receive this kindness in humility and obedience, to acknowledge that she was stiff-necked and stubborn, and to circumcise the “foreskin” of her heart (10:16). She must embrace as essential the words the LORD had released to her, applying them throughout each day to every area of her existence (11:18-21).

Unlike any other people on earth, Israel and her place in the Holy Land bear a distinct relation to an unfailing Word of God over her fore-fathers (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)—a Word which is still in effect, now that she has been returned to that Land. “*Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers*” (Romans 11:28). “*Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek YHVH: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him*” (Isaiah 51:1-2; From this week’s *Haftarah*). ***God’s covenant with the Fathers regarding their descendants and the Land still remains.*** But the righteousness required of those descendants is still, as with Abraham their father, a righteousness which comes through faith in God (Romans 4:20-22) and His promised Lamb, whose day Abraham rejoiced to see and was glad! (Genesis 22:8; John 8:56)

***Deut. 9:21.** “*Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.*” No mention is made of where the brook comes from in the original account of Exodus 32:20. In the previous chapter 8:15, the LORD is the One who brought forth water for Israel “*out of the flinty rock in a thirsty land where there was no water*”. I Corinthians 10:4 reveals that “*they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Messiah.*” Ezekiel 47:1- and Zechariah 14:4,8 speak of a future time when living water will tumble forth out from another mountain, this time the Mountain of the Lord in Jerusalem, bringing healing wherever it flows.

***Deut. 9:26-29.** “*Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD...I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: ‘O Lord YHVH, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, “Because YHVH was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated*

them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.” Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.’

***Deut 10:12-13.** ***Fear, Walk, Love, Serve, Guard!** “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to **fear** the Lord your God, to **walk** in all His ways and to **love** Him, to **serve** the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to **guard** the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”*

***Deut. 10:16-17, 21a.** *“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome...He is your praise...”*

***Deut. 11:11-12.** *“But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, **a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.**”*

HAFTARAH

“Comfort ye...”

AS MENTIONED LAST WEEK, we have entered a seven-week season (Until the Feast of Trumpets) in which the *Haftarah* readings are taken from the prophet Isaiah, and continue to speak words of *comfort* to Zion. The passages below are only some drawn from this week’s portion which may be used powerfully in praying for Israel to recognize her Comforter—and for the Body of Messiah to walk, as He walked, before her fellows in the land.

***Isaiah 49:15-16.** *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”*

***Isaiah 49:25b-26.** *“For I will contend with him who contends with you, **and I will save your children.** I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

***Isaiah 50:4.** *“The Lord YHVH has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens me morning by morning. He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple.”*

***Isaiah 50:6-7.** *“I gave my back to those who strike me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting. For the Lord YHVH helps me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set my face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.”*

***Isaiah 51:1-2.** *"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek YHVH: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him"* (NASB).

***Isaiah 51:3.** *"For YHVH will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places. He will make her desert like Eden, and her arava like the garden of YHVH; Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody!"*



*Martin and Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The *Parashah* for next week 9-15 August 2015 is called *R'eh*—
“See!”. TORAH: Deuteronomy 11:26—16:17: HAFTARAH: Isaiah 54:11—
55:5. Because *Rosh Chodesh* for the Sixth Month—*Elul* falls on Saturday or Sunday
August 15/16, some synagogues will end their services with Isaiah 66:1,23 and/or I Samuel
20:18, 42.]

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