

## *Prayer Update From Israel (August 31, 2015)*



**Sunrise over Bethany and the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem**

*“Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of YHVH is risen upon you...the nations shall come to your light, and kings to the radiance of your dawning!”*

**(Isaiah 60: 1,3; See this week’s Haftarah below.)**

### **1. THE KURDS--AN ANCIENT (AND FUTURE) FRIEND TO THE “ELDER BROTHER”.**

The Kurds are an Indo-European people living primarily in a crescent-shaped area of land extending from eastern Turkey southeastward into part of northern Iraq and western Iran. Since WW I, “Kurdistan” has found itself lying within the borders of five sovereign states--about 43% within the border of Turkey, 31% within Iran, 18% in Iraq, and 6% in Syria. (There is also a smaller enclave further east, on the border between Iran and Turkmenistan.) They are the largest ethnically-distinct people group to have for centuries existed without their own sovereign homeland. Historians associate the Kurds with the ancient Medes who, allied with Persia, conquered the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC (See Daniel 5-6).

*An unique ancient relationship between Israel and the Kurds extends back at least 2,700 years.* When in 722 B.C. the Assyrians defeated Samaria, they took the ten northern Hebrew tribes away into exile as far as the “*cities of the Medes*” (II Kings 17:6). Two hundred years later, after the Babylon captivity of Judah, most of the Jews, now under Persian sovereignty, chose not to return to Israel; they spread out, many into areas occupied by the Medes. Although some consider the prophet Daniel to have been buried in Susa, Persia (modern-day Iran), equally credible tradition points towards his remains lying within the Kurdish area of northern Iraq, either in Kirkuk or Mosul. (Last year the so-called Islamic State, after capturing the town of Mosul, proceeded to blow up the tomb attributed to Daniel there.)

***The Jews for centuries flourished amongst the Medes.*** And with their presence, their religion had also a strong influence. Many believe that the “Magi” (Wise Men) who came to visit the baby Jesus, came from Media. Doubtless they took back their amazing story with them. On the Festival of Shavuot (Pentecost) recorded in Acts 2:9, among those visitors who heard the disciples speaking in their own tongues were Jews from the land of the Medes!

***And so a special deep relationship existed for centuries between these two peoples.*** The Kurds became familiar with the Hebrew God and way of worship—and to some degree even with the Messiah who had been prophesied by the Prophet Daniel, born in Bethlehem, lived and died and rose from the dead, and released His Spirit of Life onto the earth. With the coming of the Islamic hordes in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the Kurds were forcibly subjugated to that religion and have remained so until the present day. Yet, because of the testimony of the Jews who lived for so long among them, western missionaries working in Kurdistan during recent decades have discovered that the “vener” of Islam seems to be much thinner than that which cloaks their neighbors. In the early 1950’s almost all of the Jews in Iraq left to find a new life in the newly rebirthed State of Israel. But a cordial relationship has remained between the two peoples...in a sea of hostility towards the Jews and Israel, the Kurds have maintained an amicable view of both the Jewish people and their State.



***Kurdish Flag hanging on our balcony in Jerusalem  
With Mount of Olives in the Background***

***It is an ancient tactic among powers of evil to attempt and stamp out a people they sense are nearing a special redemptive destiny on behalf God’s covenants of life.*** For centuries the Kurds have been subject to persecution, uprooting, deportation. In the 1980’s Sadaam Hussein sought to annihilate those living in northern Iraq as a distinct people. Hundreds of thousands of men, women and children were systematically slain. With the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Gulf War, the United States imposed a no-fly zone over Iraqi Kurdistan to curb his returning to this fiendish plot, and the impoverished, decimated people began slowly to experience restoration. Even then, the Enemy did much to foment internal strife within this ancient warlike people. At the same time, there was an opening for the Gospel, and during the 90’s a light was awakened among the Kurds. Whereas, in many Muslim countries it could take decades for the people to open themselves to the truth in Jesus—in northern Iraq, within a short time Kurds were coming to believe in Him, to be empowered by His Spirit, to evangelize their own people—and even to

begin writing songs of praise and worship in their own dialects. In God's mercies a new prosperity came to this part of Kurdistan. Caught up in this new life, the early light of twenty years ago has dimmed—but seeds were sown, and the soil is still fertile.

***And the ancient connection with Israel has not vanished.***

Today Iraqi Kurdistan is virtually autonomous. For many, the ancient dream of independence and statehood seems at last to be a not too-distant possibility. Bagdad is of course against this, and because of its power with oil, other countries including the U.S., are presently against Kurdish independence. Turkey also is wary of it, for fear of what effect a Kurdish state in present-day northern Iraq would have on its own 1/5<sup>th</sup> Kurdish population, most of which covers eastern Turkey, across the border from the Iraqi Kurds.

**Yet God continues to bless the Kurds.** When the so-called Islamic State poured across the Syrian border into Iraq, they at first avoided the Kurdish territory. Later they were able to take certain portions of it. But the Kurds have regrouped, and now begun to retake those areas. Last week *Peshmerga* (Kurdish military) forces attacked Islamic State insurgents in the northern province of Kirkuk, aimed at securing territory they have gained since last summer. By the end, they had taken back ten villages formerly held by IS. (“Kurds launch new assault...”:Reuters, 26 Aug 2015). Meanwhile, the Kurds control a number of oilfields from which they have begun (against strong protest from Bagdad) to export. The crude is transferred by pipeline through the Turkish port of Ceyhan, where it is put on ships. So as not to offend Bagdad, many countries have boycotted use of this oil—but not Israel. ***This week it was reported that Israel is presently importing up to 77% of its oil from Iraqi Kurdistan, buying 19 million barrels within recent months, thereby supplying that embattled enclave with funding for its fight against the Islamic State!*** (“Report: Israel imports 77% of its oil from Iraqi Kurdistan”: ynetnews.com, 08 24 15 9:36).

**A 25 August headline in *The Jerusalem Post* reads, “Israel ‘very interested’ in strengthening relations with Kurds”.** As it becomes clear that Israel and the Kurds of Northern Iraq are currently in the process of developing stronger physical bonds of alliance in this part of the world, we would add that spiritual bonds are also coming into place! We are aware of a number of trips which have been made by in recent months by Israeli believers (one including both a young Jewish and Arab believer) into Irbil and other Kurdish areas of northern Iraq. Some of these Believers are connecting with houses of prayer which have been planted there; others have visited Christian-sponsored humanitarian outreaches, ministering to the needs of the many refugees flooding in from the outrages of ISIS has committed just outside the Kurdish territories. And Kurdish believers have come for visits with their counterparts in Jerusalem. We are also aware of Believers going in in their professional capacities to begin interrelation with these people.

**PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*For the small but growing Body of Messiah amongst the Kurds. That seeds which have been planted will germinate in a new generation of Kurdish believers.**

**\*Encouragement and growth among Kurdish Believers—for leaders to rise into places of maturity.**

**\*For their work to be testified to by the presence of works of power in the Holy Spirit among their people. Pray that the Lord “grant to His servants that with all boldness they may speak His word, by stretching out His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of His holy servant Issa (Jesus/Yeshua).**

**\*That Israel and Kurdish Iraq grow in an alliance of faithfulness, integrity and trust.**

**\*For strength, encouragement, and vision for the believers manning the Houses of Prayer in Kurdistan. For growth of a strong bond between the Believers in Israel and those amongst the Kurds.**

**\*That the Kurds come into their redemptive destiny. Many believe that their unique ancient connection and relationship with Israel and her God have prepared a way for them in these last days to come quickly into the Kingdom—and to become a strong voice for that Kingdom to their Arab, Turkik, and Iranian Muslim neighbors.**

**\*That the Kurds will not be intoxicated by their new-found wealth—but, as occurred in ancient times, they will become “stirred up” in the power of God’s prophetic plan to be used in breaking the spirit of Babylon in their region during this present age...and in ushering in the Spirit of the Most High.**

***“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, who will not regard silver; and as for gold, they will not delight in it...And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms...will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. (Isaiah 13:17-19).***

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## **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 30 August—5 September 2015 is called *Ki-Tavo*—“When You Come Into”:**

**TORAH: Deuteronomy 26:1—29:9**

**HAFTARAH: Isaiah 60:1-22**

### **TORAH**

**\*Deuteronomy 26:1-11. Principal of “First Fruits”** *“And it shall be, when you come into the land which YHVH your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, that you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the soil, which you shall bring from your land that YHVH your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where YHVH your God chooses to make His name abide... ‘I declare today to YHVH your God that I have come to the country which YHVH swore to our fathers to give us...and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the soil which you, O YHVH have given to me.’ Then you shall set it before YHVH your God, and worship before YHVH your God. So you shall rejoice in every good thing which YHVH your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you.”*

**\*Deuteronomy 26:12-15.** *“When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase...and have given it to the Levite, the wayfarer in you land, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled... ‘I have obeyed the voice of YHVH my God, and have done according to all that You have commanded. Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel and the Land which You have given us....”*

For Israelis, part of the “holy tithe” of their fruitfulness was to be yielded up as provision for those who were ministering full-time to God on their behalf, the Levites. But not all—part of the tithe was to assist those whom God would send to live alongside His designated stewards of the land (Israel); as it were, a kind of offering of hospitality. And also, a portion was to go to those in their midst who had no means of supporting themselves, the fatherless and widows (James 1:27 in the New Covenant makes clear that this last continues to please the Father today). As Israelis were faithful and obedient to graciously see to the needs of all within the areas they had been entrusted to inhabit, they could then call upon YHVH their God to notice from His “*holy habitation in heaven*” (26:15), and to release His heavenly blessing over the people and the land.

### **Deuteronomy 27-28**

In these chapters Israel is given further instructions to those of Deuteronomy 11:29-32. Upon entering the land, she must travel to the two mountains outside Shechem (Modern-day *Nablus*). This was near to the place where God appeared to and spoke with Abram when first he entered Canaan (Genesis 12:7). Israel must now return there and verbalize what actions will bring Israel blessing in the Land—and those which will result in curses. Curses for specific sins are listed in 27:14-26. Then come the promises of blessings for obedience to God’s commandments in 28:1-15. The curses for disobedience begin in 28:15 and continue through verse 68. This is one of the most terrifying passages in the Bible; by choosing to be outside of God’s protection, one opens one’s self to horrors—“***Because you did not serve the LORD your***

***God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything, therefore you shall serve your enemies...” (vs 47).***

Tragically, much of the history of Israel may be traced in her choosing to walk out from beneath the “joy and gladness and abundance” offered her (eventually turning down the epitome and very source of these Blessings in the rejection of her Messiah), and wandering for centuries in the nations. Yet, even as she labored under that curse, there is an “everlasting love” which has “kept watch” through her long centuries of wanderings, continuing ever to “draw her in loving kindness” (Jer. 31:3). We believe there are many signs that those years are drawing to an end. **This week’s Haftarah from Isaiah 60 portends her awakening, an awakening which heralds light and hope to the gentile nations as well!**

**\*Deuteronomy 27:15-26.** “*And all the people shall answer and say, ‘AMEN!’*”

Twelve times the people are called to say this word. Its meaning is much deeper than a mere ‘period’ at the end of a prayer? In Hebrew, *amen* is made up of three letters which also form the root for the words *faith*, *faithfulness*, *belief*, and *to believe*. To say “Amen!” means, **“I have faith in this”; “I believe this to be true”** (*Emet*, the word for “truth” is itself etymologically related to this root). Believing God’s pronouncements regarding the sins listed in these verses, and affirming them to be true would bring life to those who obediently spoke them out. “*For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (Romans 10:10).

### **HAFTARAH**

**\*Isaiah 60:14.** “*Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; And they shall call you The City of YHVH, Zion of the Holy One of Israel*” (Emphases ours).

It is significant that the most virulent of Israel’s present enemies refuse to utilize the name “Israel,” a name given by God to Jacob (the offspring of Abraham’s covenant-son Isaac) and his descendants. Rather than *Israel*, they choose to utilize in a derisive way the name *Zion* (“the Zionist entity”). Neither will the deity they serve allow them to call on the name of the LORD (YHVH, *Yehovah*). This passage reveals that one day they will have discerned the light of Truth—and bow to the Holy One over all the earth, who chose to eternally associate himself with the three names they despised—*Yehovah*, *Zion* and *Israel*.

**\*Isaiah 60:18-20.** “*Violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) shall no longer be heard in your land, neither wasting nor destruction within your borders; but you shall call your walls *Yeshu’ah* (Salvation) and your gates *Tehi’lah* (Praise). *The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; but the LORD will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself; For the LORD will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended.*”*

**“‘For I,’ says the LORD, ‘will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst’” (Zechariah 2:5).**

**\*Isaiah 60:21.** *“Also your people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified.”*

It is righteousness that exalts a nation. The final securing of Israel’s inheritance back in the Land is their coming into that righteousness.

***“He made Him who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (II Cor 5:21).***



***Martin and Norma Sarvis  
Jerusalem***

**[The *Parashah* for next week 6-12 September 2015 is called *Nitsavi*—“You are Stationed”. TORAH: Deuteronomy 29:10—30:20: HAFTARAH: Isaiah 61:10—63:9]**

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