

PRAYER UPDATE FROM ISRAEL (January 10, 2011)



Fiery Cloud sweeps over Mount Zion

“And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them...”
(Exodus 14:19—From this week’s Torah Portion)

NOTICE: Because of the extended section on persecution and the very significant Torah Portion (The Crossing of the Red Sea) this Update is quite longer than usual. Next week we will attempt to bring it to a shorter more condensed format.

1. IS SUNDAY ARRIVING? PERSECUTION COMING INTO THE OPEN.

“After Saturday comes Sunday (Arabic: *ba’d as-sabt biji yom al-ahad*) is an Arabic phrase. Writers like Israel Amrani and Nissan Ratzlav-Katz attribute it to fundamentalist Muslims and interpret it to mean that after they finish dealing with the Jews (who celebrate Sabbath on Saturday), they will next deal with the Christians (who celebrate Sabbath on Sunday).”—Wikipedia.

The attribution of the above slogan to Muslim extremists has been debated, although its presence in so popular a resource as *Wikipedia* certainly suggests it to be an expression with which a large portion of the reading public is already aware. The slogan was also the title of a 2007 film documentary by Pierre Rehov (with interviews by Brigitte Gabriel, Bat Yeor and others) on the Islamization of Egypt and Lebanon, focusing on the consequent growth in persecution of the Christian believers in those and other Islamic countries of the world. A portion of that documentary specifically verbalized the intensity of persecution in Alexandria—and the virtual ignoring of it by Egyptian governmental and civil authorities. This was four years ago.

During the past four months, there can be no question that the Middle East is witnessing an increased number of systematic and focused attacks by Islamists on Christians, attacks which have received a disturbing lack of coverage by the local and International press. 52 people died in an attack on a Baghdad church October 31st. There followed early morning bombings of

Christian homes in the same city on November 10th. With attacks occurring almost daily, thousands of Iraqi Christians have reportedly given up and fled northward into the Kurdish region, where there is much more religious tolerance. The *New York Times* in December on 13 December ran a story which began, “A new wave of Iraqi Christians has fled to northern Iraq or abroad amid a campaign of violence against them and growing fear that the country’s security forces are unable or, more ominously, unwilling to protect them.” (“With New violence, More Christians are Fleeing Iraq”; Myers, Steven Lee, *The New York Times*, 13 December 2010). Four days later in *Breakpoint.org* Chuck Colson lauded the N.Y. Times for running the story. Calling it “as chilling as any I’ve read in recent memory”, Colson went on to accuse the U.S. government of playing a major role in the situation, “No doubt the [government] never intended to place Christians in the crosshairs of Islamist radicals, but the invasion of Iraq prepared the ground for ... a ‘ruthless cleansing campaign...’ What’s scandalous is that the U.S. has done precious little about it.” Colson suggests that were the U.S. Administration to threaten to cut off aid, the Iraqi government might be spurred to at least begin making honest efforts to stop the violence. He implies that his government’s negligence in taking such measures may have been merely in order to improve relations with the Muslim world; and he urges U.S. citizens to “tell the Administration and Congress that the U.S. government must not tolerate such blatant persecution” (“Persecution in Iraq: Intolerable Silence”: Colson, Chuck: *Breakpoint.org*, 17 Dec 2010). Because of the frequency of attacks, Christians remaining in Iraq were urged by their leaders to keep their Christmas celebrations low-key this year. The incidents, nevertheless, continued with another wave of bombings targeting Christians on 30 December.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, the continued harassment and attacks on Believers burst into the public eye with the New Year’s Day bombing of a Coptic church in Alexandria which left 21 Christians killed and at least 83 people wounded. Yet by January 3rd, in an article entitled “The Plight of the Middle East’s Christians,” *Atlantic* journalist Jeffrey Goldberg was already speaking of “the relative dearth of coverage” of “what seems to be the most important story coming out of the Middle East right now.” The Egyptian authorities have made vague statements, attributing the attack to unknown elements, perhaps El Qaida (President Mubarak said the attack bore the mark of “foreign hands” seeking to destabilize Egypt). However, the believers with whom we have contact know this not to be true. There had been threats for the past two months, and this was really only the latest and most blatant of a string of attacks over recent years, none of which has been satisfactorily dealt with by local authorities.

Although at present the non-Arab Body of Messiah in Israel enjoys relative freedom from Islam-related persecution, reports suggest that amongst the most persecuted believers in the Middle East are those Arabs who convert from Islam to Christianity and who live within the areas of Judea, Samaria and Gaza which the world demands to become a (Muslim) Palestinian State.

A further suggestion that forces within Islam are beginning more publically to show their hand against Christians as well as Jews—even as we were preparing to finish this Prayer Update a related news story from another part of the world came in through Reuters—“Governor’s murder deepens fears of Pakistani Christians.” It concerns the story of a Christian Pakistani mother of four who was sentenced to hang in November for allegedly insulting Mohammad; last week an outspoken Pakistani politician was killed by his own bodyguard for campaigning for

her release. The self-confessed assassin has reportedly been showered with rose petals following his court appearances. The article claims that this incident has struck “more fear than ever” into the Catholic and Protestant Christian community which makes up around 2% of Pakistan’s 170 million population.

PLEASE JOIN WITH US IN PRAYING FOR OUR BELIEVING BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN MESSIAH WHO ARE BEING REQUIRED TO SUFFER FOR THEIR FAITH AT THE HANDS OF A RELIGION WHICH IS COMING EVER MORE BRAZENLY TO “DEFY THE ARMIES OF THE LIVING GOD.”

We would share here some prayer points which a friend of ours in Jerusalem received from a Church leader in Alexandria after the recent bombing. We believe it to be applicable to other regions of persecution as well:

“Most people I’ve talked to are confused. They don’t know what to think or how to act. As I prayed into the matter, I felt to proclaim Jesus as the King of Kings; the victorious eternal King.

Prayer Points (as I see it):

- *Wisdom among Church leadership and laity.**
- *People who stand in the counsel of the Lord to hear what He wants to say; how He feels and how to pray.**
- *Insight to Church leaders to address the enraged and hurt young people who are reacting vigorously, and blindly attacking people (who are just faces) while the fact is, it’s a fueling spirit as Ephesians 6:12 explains.**
- *Peace and comfort to those who suffered loss**
- *Light and truth to shine into the whole situation on all levels**
- *Expansion of God’s kingdom...in wrath remember mercy.**
- *Seeing Him as the King on the throne, having ALL under His control**

2. MARKED INCREASE IN PROVOCATIVE FIRING FROM GAZA.

With the second anniversary of Israel’s “Operation Cast Lead” into Gaza two years ago, forces within the Strip seem intent, for propaganda purposes, on sparking yet another Israeli incursion. During the past three weeks, missiles have been raining down with increased frequency into southern Israel. Within the first week of 2011 ten rockets were fired into our southern communities. On Saturday four mortar shells exploded in a residential area of a kibbutz wounding three Thai agricultural workers. Later that evening, at least three Kassam rockets were fired, wounding a truck driver. In response to the attacks, the Israeli Air Force has targeted what it takes to be weapon manufacturing facilities, and tunnels where weapons are being smuggled in. It is estimated that during the year 2010, over 235 Grad missiles, Kassam rockets and mortar shells were fired from Gaza into Israeli territory. If this keeps up, it is only a matter of time before another incursion into the Strip is required—something doubtless desired by some of the factions, since it cannot but result in death and woundings of non-combatants in the heavily populated area, and destruction of homes. Israel has already been held up by much

of the world (in particular Turkey) as being a ruthless, murdering invader for what transpired during “Cast Lead”.

PLEASE PRAY:

***For the wisdom, courage, guidance and timing of the Lord (Who is “Elohei-Ma’archot”—God of the Armies of Israel) in Israel’s governmental and military leaders in how to respond to these violent and taunting provocations.**

***For the reigning “kingship” of violence and lawlessness in Gaza set against God’s Covenant to be broken and come down (Zechariah 9:5).**

*** “Remember this, that the enemy has reproached, O LORD, and that a foolish people has blasphemed Your name. O, do not deliver the life of Your turtledove to the wild beast! Do not forget the life of Your poor forever. Consider the Covenant; for the dark places of the earth are full of the haunts of cruelty [Hebrew: hamas] (Psalm 74:18-20).**

***For the small body of believing Arabs living in the Gaza Strip—that they be sustained, and nurtured in the Holy Spirit...that they receive revelation and truth which leads to maturity. That they grow in spirit and in truth...and be given songs of deliverance in the night.**

3. ARIEL SHARON, FIVE YEARS AFTER.

This past week marked five years since the great Israeli general, who commanded key operations resulting in Israel’s victory over Egypt during the Yom Kippur War was struck down by a massive stroke; He has lain in a comatose state ever since. Although officially his state is considered unchanged, his personal doctor did disclose this week that Sharon responds to pinches and opens his eyes when spoken to.

PLEASE PRAY:

*** For Ariel Sharon...that the LORD’s *hesid* (lovingkindness), which is everlasting will attend His spirit. For administering of God’s kindness which leads to repentance. Jonah Prayed, “*Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and You heard my voice...The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O YHVH, my God.*”**

***That Sharon will not fall finally asleep until he has completely “served the purpose of God in his own generation” (Acts 13:36).**

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. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.

The readings for this week are called *B'Shalach* (“In the sending away”—by Pharaoh of the people).

TORAH: Exodus 13:17—17:16

HAFTARAH: Judges 4:4—5:31

***Exodus 13:18b.** *“And the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt”* (NASB). There was, as of yet, no military experience or discipline in this people (see verse 17), and a furious battle with the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-16) awaited them just a little way down the road. Yet, somehow, they left Egypt armed and in orderly array. In I Samuel 17:45, David goes out to meet Goliath *“in the name of the LORD of Hosts, God of the Battle-Arraying of Israel (YHVH Tzeva’ot Elohei-Ma’arkhot-Yisrael)”*. It is YHVH of Armies who ultimately brings Israel into array both physically and spiritually to face her enemies. **PLEASE PRAY:** **For the armies of Israel to come into array under the LORD of Hosts. Pray for the Messianic Believers in the Israeli Defense Force; they have organized, and many get together regularly on weekends for praise, worship and prayer. Favourable articles have appeared in Israeli newspapers in the past two years about the Messianic presence in Israel’s military. Many of these soldiers have excelled some gaining rank and favour, and now themselves in positions of command. We know of cases in which some of these commanders have been actually encouraged by their superiors to share their faith with the others in their company. At present it is estimated that there are at least 300 Messianic believing soldiers in the Israeli military! But the battle against them by the Enemy is fierce. Please pray courage, integrity, cleanness, and close fellowship for these young men and women both with their LORD and each other—and that they be a light of Truth and Life to their comrades.**

***Exodus 13:21-22; 14:19-20.** *“And YHVH went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.” “And the Angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud went from before them and stood behind them. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night.”* **PLEASE PRAY:** for Israel to be aware that God’s presence is with her to lead and give light. For believers to apprehend His Presence...for an awareness of the presence of God’s angels in the heavenlies round about us to lead, encourage and protect!

***Exodus 14:8b.** *“And the children of Israel went out with boldness.” “Boldness” is literally “with a high hand.” Prophetically, the Hebrew letter for this “ayin” decade symbolizes a hand reaching high to GOD—and His sword coming down on its behalf to grant Victory!*

***Exodus 14:13-14.** *“SET YOURSELF and SEE...” “And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not be afraid! Stand still (NKJV)/Set Yourself (NASB)/Take Your Station (Robert Alter), and see*

the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall not continue to see forever and ever. The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Remember, we are in a decade of “ayin”—the eye—seeing [The Hebrew year 5771 is spelt *tav-shin-ayin-aleph*] In these verses, in order to conquer fear and be equipped against it for the future there were three *seeings*—Israel was admonished to **1. SEE the LORD’s SALVATION** (Hebrew: *Re’u Yeshuat-YHVH*); **2. SEE her enemies**, and **3. To realize by faith that she would “NOT CONTINUE TO SEE” them forever and ever** (although they would certainly like for her to think that she would).

We would observe regarding the first part of Moses’ admonition “*Stand Still*”, that this is far from an indolent ‘standing to the side’—rather, it is exactly the same word used by the Watchman standing his post in Habakkuk 2:1, “*I will...set myself—NKJV (station myself—NASB) on the rampart, and watch to see...*” As we are watchful at our stations, the LORD will be working his salvation on the battlefield. At the end of these readings Moses’ station is on the hill with his hands raised as Joshua (meaning “The LORD’s Salvation”) is prevailing in physical combat on the plain below.

Significantly, after the victory there comes an important place for “seeing” in the past-- “...and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the LORD had done in Egypt; so the people feared the LORD, and believed the LORD and His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:30b-31).

Shirat haYam—The Song of the Sea

Exodus 15:1-18 contains one of the most exalted, beautiful and truth-filled victory songs in any language.

***15:2.** “*My strength and song is YAH; and He is become to me Salvation (Yeshuah); He is my God, and I will adorn Him with praises.*” **PLEASE PRAY:** That present-day Israel will recognize that the LORD is indeed become her Salvation (The name Yeshua (Jesus) is a contraction combining the name of the LORD YHVH with the root of the word for Salvation Yeshuah).

***15:3.** “*YHVH (the LORD) is a man of war; YHVH is His name.*” This verse literally calls the LORD a “man”. We do not believe this to be merely metaphorical—How could the Most High call Himself a man (Ish)—unless He would actually become one? **PLEASE PRAY:** That the Holy Spirit will shine divine illumination onto his written Word—that minds will be opened to comprehend what is written about Yeshua (Jesus) in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Luke 24:44-45).

***15:11.** “*Who is like You, YHVH, among the gods? Who is like You, sublime in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*” **PLEASE PRAY:** that these wonderful attributes of the LORD will be released in new understanding in the congregation throughout the world—**1. Sublime Holiness; 2. Praises in spirit and truth which nurture godly fear in His servants, terror in His enemies. 3. A release of signs and wonders in the name of His “holy servant Yeshua”** (Acts 4:30).

***15:17.** *“You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O YHVH, which You have made for Your own dwelling, the sanctuary, YHVH, which Your hands have established. YHVH shall reign forever and ever.”* This is a prophecy regarding what, hundreds of years later, came to be called the “Temple Mount” in Jerusalem. Since 1967, Israel has claimed sovereignty over this mountain. Yet non-Muslims are only allowed to ascend for a few specified hours on certain days of the week. It has been said that the “Last Battle” will be fought over “who will be worshipped on this mountain.” Over the interior doors of the Dome of the Rock is a passage from the Muslim holy book proclaiming that that religion’s deity “has no son”. The Second Psalm of the Hebrew Bible says that the LORD not only has a Son, that Son will reign as King on that Mountain. In Ezekiel 20:40 the Lord GOD (Adonai YHVH) declares that *“On My holy mountain, on the mountain height of Israel, there all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, shall serve Me; there I will accept them...”* At that time, it will truly be said that Israel has been *“brought in and planted in the mountain”*. But at present, she is only a wary custodian of a highly disputed area inhabited by structures of desolation. **PLEASE PRAY:** that God’s Kingdom come and His will be done on the “mountain of His inheritance” in Jerusalem. We know teams of believers who ascend the mountain weekly to walk round it, praying this. Also, please pray for divine wisdom and guidance over our nation’s leaders in how best to administer Israel’s present governance of this holy site.

***Exodus 15:26b.** *“For I am YHVH (The LORD) who heals you.”* **PLEASE PRAY:** For release, revelation and progression concerning the healing gifts in the Body of Messiah in Israel.

***Exodus 16:8b.** *“Your complaints are not against us but against the LORD.”* A similar warning is echoed in the New Covenant in Acts 5:4, *“You have not lied to men but to God.”* **PLEASE PRAY:** That the fear of the Lord would be on the Body of Messiah in Israel regarding their honour and conduct towards God’s appointed leaders.

***Exodus 16:29.** *“See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath...”* *Elohim blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Gen. 2:3a).* Yeshua taught that *“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath”* (Mark 2:27-28). **PLEASE PRAY:** For Israel to be freed from the legalistic structures of man, and enter into the true Rest given by God. Pray especially for leaders in the Body of Messiah to not ignore the necessity of availing themselves of the rests God has ordained for His children.

***Exodus 17:15-16.** *“And Moses built an altar and called its name, THE LORD IS MY BANNER; for he said, ‘Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.’”*

The Hebrew for “banner” is “nes” (“my banner”—“nissi”). Nes is also the word for “miracle”. The Amalekites were a real people—who throughout the Scriptures epitomize and symbolize a spirit of anti-Semitism. They were Israel’s first enemies after leaving Egypt. They preyed on her, picking off the weak straggling in the rear (Deut. 25:17-19). God grants “no quarter” to those who threaten His Covenant purposes; their remembrance was to be “blotted out from

under heaven.” When King Saul failed to do this, it was an Amalekite who in the end claimed to have killed him. Centuries later, it would be Haman, a descendant of Agag (an Amalekite whom Saul also spared) who, as recorded in the Book of Esther, sought to ignite the first Holocaust. With the hatred Satan has for Israel and her redemptive call, it is indeed a Divine Miracle flying over her which has sustained her and brought her, still an entity and with her ancient language restored, back to her native Land. **PLEASE PRAY: For revelation in Israel that it is only the Banner of YHVH (The LORD) flying over her which will protect her from annihilation...that the LORD is fighting for her...that His Banner over her is LOVE.**

***Judges 4:8.** *“And Barak said unto her [Deborah]: ‘If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.’”* We would suggest that Barak’s error here was not merely fear or cowardice (He is listed in Hebrews 7 among the heroes of faith). In fact Moses had said something very similar to the LORD in Exodus 33:15, “If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here”. But there, Moses was dismayed because He longed for the LORD’s presence (face), and God had threatened to send an angel instead. In this Judges passage, Deborah, who held the Office of Prophetic Judge over Israel had released God’s Word of command over the warrior—yet Barak seems not to have realized that in God’s Word of command would be God’s presence and authority for the battle. He seems to have identified the divine power and authority with the vessel releasing the Word, rather than the Word itself, and thus felt it safer to have the prophetess as well as the Word (It is significant that when Deborah later released a further command—he corrected his error and without hesitation went like lightning (Hebrew: *barak*) down the mountain (4:14). **PLEASE PRAY: For a maturing in Israel of the Body of Messiah to the “prophetic.” For re-establishment by the Holy Spirit of the Office of Prophet. For discernment and respect among believers for God’s Word and how it relates to His government. For realization that on the Battlefield, instantaneous obedience to God-ordained authority structures is critical.**



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 16-22 January *Yitro* (And “Jethro”— the Priest of Midian) will be, TORAH: Exodus 18:1—20:26; HAFTARAH: Isaiah 6:1—7:6; 9:6-7]