

ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

Glory of Zion International Ministries



PARASHAH – Va'era



1. PRAYING FOR RAIN...

“Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praises to our God on the lyre who covers the heavens with clouds, who provides rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow on the mountains...” (Psalm 147: 7-8).

On Thursday, December 28th, at the request of Israel’s Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel, several thousand Israelis gathered at the Western Wall in the Old City of Jerusalem for a special session of prayer. They were praying for rain.

The “former rains,” which normally begin in late September or October, still had not come; in fact, only one or two short days of rainfall had occurred since the previous April. The extended drought in Israel soon will be entering its fifth year. Hardest hit has been the Galilee, the fertile belt stretching from the Carmel mountain range on the coast eastward to the lake which bears its name, an area within which a majority of Israel’s crops are grown. Today the Sea of Galilee (or *Kinneret* as it is known in Israel) is at the lowest level on record. While by this time of year the lake’s level would normally have begun to rise, it has actually gone down. The streams which feed it are themselves dry. The Israel Water Authority recently cautioned farmers against planting new crops which will require as much water as they have been allowed in previous years, warning them, “We have no water left for you.” Israel’s immediate drinking-water needs are being met by the desalination centers which became operable a few years back, but they cannot produce nearly enough to cover the

irrigation required for crops.

And so, the nation's Agriculture Minister, who is an Orthodox Jew, sought to appeal to a Higher Power. ***"Israeli Minister turns to Prayer to help Relieve Drought"*** read a news story in Reuters the following day. Commentary in other papers was skeptical, criticizing the minister for not putting his efforts to more practical use. "Prayer is not a bad thing," observed one commentator, "but the minister has the ability to influence (matters) in slightly more earthly ways." A notorious atheist in the far-left paper *HaAretz* actually headed his article, "Anyone who prays for rain is an idiot." Yet four days later, the English edition of one of those papers was running the headline, *"Torrential downpour Leads to Floods in Multiple Regions."* Monday the first of January saw heavy rainfall in the north and central regions of Israel.

The following Wednesday afternoon, January 3rd, the Chief Rabbi led a group north to the Sea of Galilee. Due to the drought, little "islands" have appeared in the middle of the lake. The group, joined by the head of the Jordan Valley Regional Council and many farmers and students, made their way by boat to one of these islands. In the midst of it they stood and prayed corporately for rains to come to the Sea of Galilee.

On Thursday night the storms returned, this time dumping rain throughout the north, central and south, and heavy snow on Mount Hermon. Over 100 mm of rain fell in parts of the north, and in less than 24 hours the Sea of Galilee rose by three centimeters. The steady rains continued until late Saturday.

We have still a long way to go; Israel and our neighbor Jordan desperately need many days of rain. But we are grateful for what has come. And we are grateful for leaders in our government with the courage and humility to publically do as their Scriptures have taught them, and call on Heaven for mercy:

When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin when You afflict them; then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and Your people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. (II Chronicles 6:26-27)

PLEASE PRAY:

*** That God's mercies would rest on Israel this year—that there would be abundant rains throughout the nation.**

*** That there would be those within the land both within the government and among the people who will call out to Him for this mercy. That He will "teach them the good way in which they should walk."**

*** The "latter rains" usually come to an end in late April or early May. This year that will coincide with the time when Israel is celebrating 70 years as a reborn nation. The final paragraph of the Declaration of Independence signed on that day, 14 May 1948, begins, "Placing our trust in the 'Rock of Israel'..." Pray that in this special year, Israel will truly**

place her trust in that Rock, which followed her forefathers through the desert. In I Corinthians 10:4 Rav Shaul (Paul) clarifies for us—“they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Messiah!”

2. THE UPRISING IN IRAN.

On December 28th, for the first time since 2009, Iranians took to the streets in large protests. Although the unrest was at first widely reported as being directed primarily against economic hardships, it soon became clear that the primary focus was against the present fundamentalist Islamic government. Unlike previous times of unrest, these demonstrations were not restricted to large cities (where demonstrators might more easily escape recognition in the crowds), but quickly spread out into small towns and burroughs. As we write, the Iranian government is claiming that the rioting has been contained and is dieing out. With the restrictions on communications systems such as e-mail, Facebook and Twitter, there is no way of knowing for sure. Public news media in the West appear for the most part to have now left it behind. After the outbreak of protests, the silence of governments in the free world in offering support for the protestors was deafening. US President Donald Trump was an exception, repeatedly tweeting support and encouragement to those rising up on behalf of freedom. And in Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a short video with the following message:

I heard today Iran’s President Rouhani’s claim that Israel is behind the protests in Iran. It’s not only false, it’s laughable. And unlike Rouhani, I will not insult the Iranian people. They deserve better. Brave Iranians are pouring into the streets. They seek freedom. They seek justice. They seek the basic liberties that have been denied to them for decades. Iran’s cruel regime wastes tens of billions of dollars spreading hate. This money could have built schools and hospitals. No wonder mothers and fathers are marching in the streets. The regime is terrified of them, of their own people. That’s why they jail students. That’s why they ban social media. But I’m sure that fear will not triumph, because the Iranian people are smart; they are sophisticated; they are proud. Today they risk everything for freedom. Sadly, many European governments watch in silence, as heroic young Iranians are beaten in the streets. That’s just not right. And I for one will not stay silent. This regime tries desperately to sow hate between us, but they won’t succeed. And when this regime finally falls, and one day it will, Iranians and Israelis will be great friends once again. I wish the Iranian people success in their noble quest for freedom.

The video quickly went viral. The Prime Minister’s office reports that it is already the most widely-watched video he has ever posted on Twitter, receiving more than two million views.

1) There have reportedly been thousands of responses, many of them in Farsi (the language spoken in Iran), and many friendly towards the Prime Minister and towards Israel. Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, himself a former human rights activist and prisoner under an authoritarian regime, explained in a *Jerusalem Post* interview why he believes it so crucial for the international community to speak out in support of an uprising such as this:

In authoritarian regimes, like the one in Iran, there are three classes of people... There are the “true believers”—those who buy into the ideology of the regime. There are those whom [he] dubbed

“double-thinkers”—those who don’t believe in the regime’s ideology, or are skeptical about it, but who are afraid to speak out. And then there is a very small group of dissidents who speak up publicly. “The stronger and more frightening the regime, the longer the regime lasts, the number of the double-thinkers grow,” Sharansky said. But being a double-thinker is an uncomfortable duality in which to live...“People are skeptical of the regime but afraid to speak, and they live an uncomfortable double life.” Revolutions take place...when masses cross the line from double-thinkers to dissidents, when somehow they think that it is less risky to take to the streets, or because they feel comfortable enough to do so because they are part of a huge crowd and a larger movement. This, he said, is the revolutionary moment currently taking place in Iran: People are making the decision whether it is time to jump off the fence from double-thinkers to dissidents. And it is exactly at this junction, when that decision is being made, that support from the free world is so critical.

2) *We believe it to be equally critical that at this juncture believers from free nations be joining with the millions of believers in Iran in praying in agreement for the release of God’s redemptive purposes over that land and people.* We agree with Mr. Netanyahu that the current hateful and genocidal regime will finally fall, and that there will be a day when Iranians and Israelis will be “friends again.” As Israel moves into her 70th year as a nation, we remember that in ancient times, it was after 70 years in captivity that God, through His people’s intercession, brought down an evil principality over Persia (ancient Iran), friendship was restored, and He used that nation to restore His Israel to their land (Daniel 10:12-14; II Chronicles 36:22-23).

PLEASE PRAY:

- * That God release His spirit of Freedom and Truth over Iran.**
- * That sparks of revolution and change which have been ignited by God will not go out, but burn brighter. That “double-thinkers” will see a direction which is right, get off the fence, and move that way.**
- * That, as in Daniel’s day, angelic forces will be released to war over God’s redemptive purposes for that region. That the present leadership system of Iran which, by continually cursing Israel, has brought the land and people under a curse, would be thrown off.**
- * That the underground Church in Iran would be strengthened, encouraged, and granted spiritual insight into what is happening and what they are to do (Daniel 11:33; 12:3, 10 NASB) . That our brothers and sisters in Persia/Iran will “*speak God’s Word with confidence while He extends His hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of His holy servant Jesus.*”**
- * For faithfulness in the Body in Israel in praying for and blessing this “arch-enemy” which was once a friend—that a way for friendship be restored, and a way of blessing (Gen. 12:2).**

1) The video may be watched by Googling, “Netanyahu’s video in support of Iranian protesters is his most viral yet The Jerusalem Post”

2) “Sharansky: Vocal Western support critical to Iranian protesters”: *The Jerusalem Post*, 01/05/2018.

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 7-13 January 2018 are called *Va’Era*—“And I Appeared” (--to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *El Shaddai*):

TORAH: Exodus 6:2—9:35

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 28:25—29:21

***Exodus 6:26b; 7:4.** “*These are the same Aaron and Moses to whom YHWH said, ‘Bring out the children of Israel from the land of Egypt according to their armies.’*” (NKJV)... “*And Pharaoh will not heed you, and I shall set my hand against Egypt and I shall bring out my battalions[or, “armies”], My people the Israelites, from the land of Egypt with great retributions, that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD [YHVH], when I stretch out My hand over Egypt and bring out the Israelites from their midst.*” (Alter).

YHWH (The LORD) is Sovereign over many “armies.” This is first shown in **Genesis 2:1** when “*The heavens and the earth, and all the armies/hosts (Hebrew: tzevaoth) of them, were finished.*” In **Joshua 5:14**, a Being appears before Joshua who is “*Captain of the Armies of YHVH*”. From **I Samuel 1:3** onwards, the name **YHVH-Tzevaot** (Yehovah of Armies/LORD of Hosts) will be used over two hundred-fifty times in the Hebrew Bible. As we have often pointed out, when David meets Goliath in battle, he testifies his trust in this Name: “*I come to you in the name of YHVH of Armies...*” —but he also adds another, “*Elohei—Ma’arkhot Yisrael*”—**God of Israel’s Arraying.**” The masses of Israelites in Egypt had no idea that they were already an army—yet, as the above verses show, in God’s eyes, they were. Indeed, we shall see in **Exodus 12:41** how “*all the armies of YHVH*” would go forth from the land of Egypt, and, as **Exodus 13:18** (NAS) adds, they would do so in “*martial array!*” When we come into the Kingdom, we enter (or become aware of) a war which is already raging. Yet, not to be bewildered or afraid! Our Captain already has a “positioning” for us in which to begin, and He will oversee our advancement!

PLEASE PRAY: *That the latter-day Army of the Lord in Israel will have confidence in its*

Captain, and come into array at His command!

***Exodus 7:1.** “So the LORD said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you *Elohim* (literal Hebrew) to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.” In a very real way, we are God’s body through whom He looses His will “on earth as it is in Heaven.”

THE SNAKE AND THE DRAGON

***Exodus 7:9-10.** “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Show a miracle for yourselves.’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent’...and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent” (NKJV).

The Hebrew here translated “serpent” is a different word and may designate a different creature than that used for the snake from which Moses fled (Exodus 4:3 and 7:15). There the word was *nakhash*, the common Hebrew word for snake (such as that which tempted Eve in Eden). Here the word is *tanin*, used in modern Hebrew for “crocodile” or “alligator” (The Nile Crocodile has been feared from ancient times for its propensity, more than any other of the species, to prey upon humans). In Genesis 1:21 *tanin* is a “great sea creature” created by God. But this creature is also often used as a metaphor for spiritual or physical powers in opposition to God. In Ezekiel 29:3 (Part of this week’s Haftarah), this word *tanin* is translated “monster” (NKJV), and depicts another Pharaoh (or the spiritual power controlling him), “Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster (*tanin*) who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, ‘My River is my own; I have made it for myself.’ But I will put hooks in your jaws...” (The word is also translated “monster” in Jeremiah 51:34 where it pictures Nebuchadnezzar swallowing up sinful Israel “like a *tannin*.”). In Psalm 74:13 it is depicted as a many headed “sea monster” (NASB) whose heads God can crush in delivering those who trust in him. And in Isaiah 27:1 the NASB reads, “And He will kill the dragon (*tanin*) who lives in the sea.”

In the modern Hebrew translation of the New Covenant Scriptures, the “great, fiery red dragon having seven heads” of Revelation 12:3, who stands before the woman clothed with the sun to devour her baby, is call a *tanin*...and in 12:9 both *tanin* (dragon) and *nakhash* (serpent) are equated with “the Devil and Satan.” Lastly, in Psalm 91:13 (NASB, margin) “*tanin*” is ***the dragon which those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, will trample underfoot!***

And so, the rod which had become a serpent (*nakhash* Exodus 7:15), through Moses’ obedient faith became in his and Aaron’s hands “*the rod of God*” (4:20), which could become a different fearful creature (*tanin*) which swallowed up other fearful creatures (7:12), or it could become a scepter of authority which could turn the waters of the Nile, over which the Pharaohs claimed sovereignty (Ezek 29:3 above), into blood (7:17).

The rod became the symbol of authority through which Moses would “be God” to Pharaoh (7:1), through whom YHVH would manifest Himself as the supreme spiritual Power who would defeat, subdue and swallow up all other opposing spiritual powers.

***Exodus 7:14.** *“So the LORD said to Moses: ‘Pharaoh’s heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.’* The LORD knew that Pharaoh’s heart was hard (Two words are used for “hard” or “hardened” in these passages, one meaning “heavy” or “settled”, the other “tightened”, “strengthened” or “fortified”). Through the early signs, wonders and plagues, we see Pharaoh’s heart growing hard according to its own nature (7:13, 22), or his actively hardening his own heart (8:15). In 8:29, 32, after the plague of flies, Moses specifically warns him against continuing to do this, but *“Pharaoh made his heart heavy and insensitive this time also.”* Finally, in 9:12 it is specifically stated that *“the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh.”* We have here depicted both the choice and responsibility of man, and the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God. After Moses prays that the rain, hail and thunder cease, Pharaoh *“sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard.”*

***Exodus 8:23.** *“And I shall set a ransom between My people [in Goshen] and your people.”* (Robert Alter Translation; see also NASB margin). The word “ransom” is often translated here as “difference”—but everywhere else in the Bible the root means “to ransom, to redeem, to rescue from danger”. It is in the last sentence of Psalm 25— *“Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.”* Israel would here come to see that his God was already redeeming him out of his troubles. Through the work of his Messiah, the LORD would eventually redeem not only Israel but all peoples from the bondage of sin.

***Ezekiel 28:25-26.** *“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am YHVH their God.’”*

In praying for Israel’s restoration, it is important that we not only pray for her return to the Land, but that afterward, *within that Land*, the God of her Fathers will come to be hallowed in her midst. Nowhere is Israel promised safety for herself or her roots in the Land just because she has been returned there. We pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in awakening awareness of sin and uncleanness, and a longing for cleansing, holiness and restoration. We pray for removal of the veil over Jewish hearts, and illumination of the truth of the love and life of Israel’s God and Savior. Zion continues to serve as a “signpost” to the nations (that is what the root of the word probably means). But it is also God’s heart and purpose that she will be a signal in the eyes of the world of a *place where HE is hallowed!* He has promised a day when He will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem (Zechariah 2:5) *and her glory within!*



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[The readings for next week (14-20 January 2018) are called *Bo*—“*Come*”. TORAH: Exodus 10:1—13:16; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 46:13-28.]

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