

Prayer Update From Israel (April 27, 2015)



Counting the Omer
Day 23

1. THE “REAL FACE OF ISRAEL” IN KATHMANDU.

“...Be a blessing!...In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3).

As occurred with other crises in recent years (Haiti, the Philippines), from the moment the news of the catastrophe in Nepal began coming over the airwaves, Israel was already making preparations to send aid. This morning, the first of two large planes took off for Nepal. (A smaller plane landed yesterday.) These initial flights, which were supposed to leave late last night, but were delayed because of conditions of the airstrip at Kathmandu, are carrying 260 personnel and 95 tons of equipment. Their first priorities are search-and-rescue missions, and setting up a field hospital for treating the wounded. There is cutting equipment and electronic devices for finding those who are trapped. (Three IDF Oketz K9 dogs and their handlers are reportedly aboard one of the planes.) One priority is to locate and provide assistance for an estimated 600 Israelis believed to be presently in Nepal, of whom at least 150 are still unaccounted for.

But the operation goes far beyond this. In addition to teams and equipment for assisting the locals in rescue work, the team also includes doctors and medical professionals (some of whom have taken part in similar operations in the past), plus a massive amount of equipment for setting up a field hospital to assist the injured. Included in the hospital will be a ward for premature babies, a labor ward, x-ray machines, a hospitalization area, and lab and surgery zones. When operable, it will treat as many as 200 patients a day. (1)

Prime Minister Netanyahu, in sending off the teams, challenged the commander in charge, *“You are being sent to an important mission. This is the real face of Israel—a country which does all in its power in such moments. We put our trust in you.”*

And President Rivlin, addressing the Home Front Command preparing the delegation: *“My blessings go to all the team undertaking this brave and humanitarian mission. I am proud of*

you and your staff for their speedy and impressive enlistment at such a time of need. This delegation of ‘messenger angels’ represents the universal values, in the spirit of our people and our country, and through you, I wish to thank each and every one of them” (2)

PLEASE PRAY:

***That as they join the many other relief efforts pouring into Nepal from around the world, those from Israel will be directed safely to the places the Lord has appointed for them to bring life.**

***For order amongst the Israeli team in the midst of chaos. In I Samuel 17:45 David refers to the LORD of Armies as also being “The One who Puts Israel’s Armies into Order.” As quoted in Genesis 12:2 above, a part of the call on the Children of Abraham is that they will be a blessing to all families of the world. Pray that God activate this blessing in supernatural wisdom, mercy and compassion to those suffering in Nepal.**

***For divine guidance for these “messenger angels” from Israel (see President’s message above) in their efforts...and for Heavenly angels, ministering “on behalf of those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).**

1. “IDF search and rescue team, field hospital to depart for Nepal tonight”: *JPOST.com*, 04/26/2015 13:25.

2. “Netanyahu to Nepal rescue team: This is the real face of

2. JUSTICE AND A DESTINY FOR ARMENIA.

This past Friday commemorations were observed in many places around the world hearkening back to a time exactly 100 years ago in which a scourge was released upon the people of Armenia. Between the years 1915 and 1923, in a systematically planned act of ethnic cleansing, almost 1 ½ million Armenians died at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. Many were marched into the Syrian Desert with no food or water, where they died. Others were summarily executed; masses more escaped with their lives, but into exile. On Friday, tens of thousands of people marched in Los Angeles to commemorate this tragedy, and to pressure the US and Turkey towards formal recognition of it as having constituted genocide. *There were also special events in Jerusalem*, where there has been an Armenian presence since the 4th century, soon after Armenia converted as a nation to Christianity. The “Armenian Quarter” is situated in the southwestern corner of the Old City. With the persecution begun in 1915, thousands of fleeing Armenians began flooding into the city. After the capture of Jerusalem by the British in 1917, the numbers increased. Some estimate that during the Mandate period, their numbers reached as high as 20,000. Today only a tiny fraction remains. Yet Thursday evening, even as Israel’s Independence Day was drawing to a close, bells from 18 churches in the Old City began tolling—100 times in succession, one toll for each year since the beginning of a holocaust of which much of the world is unaware, and concerning which many of those who are aware refuse to acknowledge it for what it really was. Later, thousands of Armenians marched through its streets with torches.

Despite manifest historical evidence that the slaughter constituted “genocide”, Turkey has continually denied this to have been the case, and maintained a hostile stance towards any country which dares to suggest that it occurred and that the early Turkish government bore responsibility. Only last week Turkey’s ambassador to the Vatican was angrily recalled after Pope Francis spoke of the mass killings as constituting “the first genocide of the 20th century”. Similarly, the ambassador to Austria was recalled after a group of lawmakers in Vienna made recent use of the “G” word in relation to what happened to the Armenians.

Although many regional and local governments have formally recognized the genocide (including 44 individual US States), many countries, including the United States and Israel, still have not. For the US, Turkey is seen as a moderate Muslim ally in the region and a member of NATO; and there is a reticence to awaken offense over the use of a word. And Israel is hesitant further to damage relations with Turkey, with whom once-friendly connections have significantly soured with the rise of the current Islamist President. Nor does Israel wish to endanger her strengthening economic ties with neighboring Azerbaijan (an enemy of Armenia), from whom she also currently receives around 40 % of her oil. ***Yet there are strong voices in Israel, from both the left and right, calling for the nation to place historical truth and moral considerations over political expediency***—for Israel, who was herself reborn out of the ashes of a Holocaust, to officially recognize a similar catastrophe which decimated the citizens of this tiny country, which has itself had a special connection with Jerusalem for over a 1500 years. (“Why Israel still refuses to recognize a century-old genocide”: *The Times of Israel*, 24 April 2015 5:07 a.m.).

Meanwhile, it was deeply encouraging to hear reports of a gathering in Armenia last week, attended by, among others, Israeli, Kurdish, Turkish and Armenian believers—in which the Holy Spirit moved Turkish and Kurdish brothers to ask their Armenian counterparts for forgiveness for the sins and atrocities of their fathers against them, followed by declarations of forgiveness, prayers for healing of the lands and the coming in of a great harvest of souls for the Kingdom, and worship together in three different languages. For over two decades we have been aware of Words of the Holy Spirit released around the Middle East related to a special end-time work of harvest which will be coming among Turkish, Arab and Iranian Muslims through the agency of the Armenian and Kurdish peoples. Both of these ancient groups have undergone terrible persecutions—both have been sought by the enemy for extermination, usually a sign that manifestation of a high calling regarding the Kingdom of God is on the horizon!

PLEASE PRAY:

***For the people of Armenia to awaken and rise up into their ancient call as heralds of the Kingdom in their land and in Jerusalem.**

***For Israel to come forward and stand beside this country—honestly acknowledging what has occurred there (She already has done so in all but usage of the word ‘genocide’).**

***That Israel will realize that her end-time destiny is bound up with this tiny country—and not bring offense to Armenia (and shame upon herself) by favoring her neighbors merely for economical or political gains.**

***For Believers in Armenia and Kurdistan to grow and mature in the Faith; being freed from ancient “religious” constraints, and growing up in those “things which become sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), and the love and power of the risen Lord.**

3. ONE WEEK BEFORE DEADLINE FOR FINALIZING ISRAEL’S NEXT GOVERNMENT.

A week from this Wednesday May 6th is the deadline for Mr. Netanyahu to have formed a coalition from the new government—else the responsibility for doing so may be given to another. Please continue to call out to God that His hand be over the formation of this government. At this time, it appears that the ultra-Orthodox *Shas* party might be given both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, which could result in severe repercussions for believers in this country (and entering the country) for years to come. Pray that the formation of any government which would hinder the work of the gospel of Truth amongst Israelis will not be allowed to come into place. Pray for the Lord to release upheaval into the plans of the enemy, break the powers of witchcraft (the religious party mentioned has deep roots in the occult), and that Mr. Netanyahu, if he is truly God’s Israeli leader for this hour, will find himself head over a Knesset and Cabinet of God’s choosing!

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, and follow the texts read in Ashkenazy Jewish synagogues.

The Parasha for this week 26 April—2 May 2015 is called *Emor*—“Say!”

TORAH: Leviticus 21:1—24:23

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 44:15-31

NOTE: Above are the texts for the Parasha read in Jerusalem. Because in the *Diaspora* (communities of Jews outside of Israel) an extra day is celebrated at Passover (and this year, that day came on a Sabbath), the readings there became “off” a week from those read

here. Through the use of special “double readings”, with the beginning of the Book of Numbers on May 23rd, the readings in the Diaspora and in Israel will again coincide.

EMOR

This week’s portion focuses first upon the importance of priests in being set apart, clean in their service to the LORD and in the picture they present before the people. In their work on behalf of life and wholeness, they are not to defile themselves with that which is dead or deformed or impure. As those representing man made in the image of God, the priests are themselves not to bear any outward marks, natural or inflicted, of that image having been marred. In every way these priests (though themselves sinners), were called to represent outwardly the perfection of Yeshua, the Great Priest who was come, “*For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens...Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the holy places, in the true tent that the Lord set up, not man*” (Hebrews 7:26, 8:1-2).

* **Leviticus 21:4 (ESV).** “*He shall not make himself unclean as a husband among his people and so profane himself.*” This is a difficult sentence to translate in the Hebrew; however, coupled with verses 7, 13-14, it seems to extend the picture of wholeness represented by the High Priest to include the “oneness” realized in his marital union as well.

* **Leviticus 21:5.** “*They shall not make any bald place on their heads, nor shall they shave the edges of their beards nor make any cuttings in their flesh.*” These are all pagan rites of mourning—but again, the Priest, as representative of humankind, was not to mar his body made in the image of God.

* **Leviticus 21:8.** “*Therefore you shall consecrate him, for he offers the bread of your God. He shall be holy to you, for I the LORD, who sanctify you, am holy.*” The English words “consecrate” and “sanctify” both bear within them the Hebrew root for “holy”. The people are to set apart the priest as holy, and he must reflect holiness before them—but this is the testimony of his outward appearance and behavior. Ultimate sanctification (being made holy) requires a gracious deeper work of the LORD Himself. At least six times in these two chapters the LORD reminds the priests that “*It is I who sanctify*”—both the people (21:8,15; 22:9,16,32), and the holy places they have constructed in which to honor Him (21:23).

* **Leviticus 21:21.** “*No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries (i.e. holy places); for I the LORD sanctify them.*” Those of the House of Aaron who were outwardly defective could partake of the offerings brought by the people to God—but they could not “draw near” to present them to God. Drawing near requires that which is perfect, which the priests reflected, and the Holy Priest Yeshua would fulfill. This “drawing near” was a special and wonderful privilege. However, it could be lost by failing to adhere to the LORD’s directions, as is seen in Ezekiel 44:10-14 (immediately preceding this

week's *Haftarah*), where the priests who had gone astray could still execute certain responsibilities before the LORD, but the privilege of drawing near to Him in the special way of their original call was forfeited.

Chapter 23

This chapter presents in detail the Holy Convocations, the LORD's "appointed times" for His people Israel (They are also enumerated in Deuteronomy 16). However, it should be noted that they are not described as "Hebrew Feasts" but as "The Feasts of the LORD" (23:2, 4, 37). These begin with the weekly *Shabbat* (Sabbath) (vs 3)—then in the Spring: *Pesach*—"Passover" (vs 5), the Week of *Matzot*—"Unleavened Bread" (vss 6-8), with the presenting of *First Fruits* (vss 10-14). 49 days later comes *Shavuot*—"Feast of Weeks" / "Pentecost" (vss 16-21). In the Autumn come: *Yom Teruah*—"Day of Shofar Blasts" (vss 23-25), *Yom Kippur*—"Day of Atonement" (vss 26-32) and *Succot*—"Feast of Tabernacles" (vss 33-43). Since we deal more-extensively with these festivals as they occur within the year, we will limit our comments here to the following:

***Leviticus 23:3.** *"Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation, You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings."* This is alluded to each Friday evening before meals when a prayer is said which includes, *"and caused us to inherit his holy Sabbath in love and favor as a memorial of the work of creation; for that day ranks first amongst the holy convocations..."* The actual Festivals of the Lord, convocations which are to be proclaimed at their appointed times throughout the year, follow. But first it was necessary to reaffirm the weekly observance of Shabbat.

***Leviticus 23:24-25.** *"In the seventh month, on the first of the month, you shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing, a holy convocation."* The word for "blowing" is *t'ruah*—which may be a shout or a trumpet blast. From earliest times this has been interpreted to refer here to the blowing of the *shofar*—"ram's horn". It is interesting that the "redemption" which took the place of Isaac was a "ram, caught by its horn in a thicket". The shout of the shofar is a redemptive call to attention, to taking account before the days of awe leading to Yom Kippur. There is a rabbinic tradition which is followed in most of Judaism which postpones the blowing of the shofar on this day when the first of the seventh month falls on Shabbat ("Carrying a shofar to synagogue" is considered a violation of Shabbat!). But Scripture makes no such exception, it clearly states that these convocations are to be carried out "at their appointed times" (vs 4). In fact, verse 38 also implies that observances of these festivals are to take precedence over the regular Sabbaths themselves.

***Leviticus 23:15-16.** *"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD."* There has been a controversy in Judaism regarding when "Firstfruits" and the "Counting of the Omer" were to begin. The Pharisees read "day after the Sabbath" to refer to the day following the "Sabbath" of Passover itself (the day following observance of Passover is to be a day of rest). So Firstfruits and the beginning of Counting of the Omer always begin on the 16th of the First Hebrew month. The Sadducees took the

“Sabbath” in the passage to refer to the first “Saturday Sabbath” following Passover (therefore, Firstfruits and Counting the Omer would always begin on Sunday). Another sect of Jews, the Ka’arites, has yet another way of determining when to count. The tradition of the Pharisees (which sees the seven Sabbaths as weeks rather than Saturdays, and counts 50 days beginning with the 16th of Aviv/Nisan) is what appears to have been in place during the time of Yeshua, and is the system followed by most Jews today.

***Leviticus 24:2-4.** *“Command the children of Israel that they bring to you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to make the lamps burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the tabernacle of meeting, Aaron shall be in charge of it from evening until morning before the LORD continually: it shall be a statue forever in your generations. He shall be in charge of the lamps of the pure gold menorah before the LORD continually.”* The light of the Menorah was positioned to shine across onto the table bearing the 12 cakes of Bread of the Presence (One for each of the Tribes of Israel) described in vss 5-9. Another translation is “Bread of the Face”. Many times in the Scriptures Israel’s salvation is described as coming through the shining of God’s face upon them. *“For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light”* (Psalm 36:9). And for the light which God has kindled in our own hearts,

“You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalm 18:28)!

***Leviticus 24:11, 15-16.** *“And the Israelite woman’s son blasphemed the name and cursed; and so they brought him to Moses.” “Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. And whoever blasphemes the name of YHVH shall surely be put to death...When he blasphemes the name, he shall be put to death.”* Here, twice the word *shem* (name) is used in place of the name of God (YHVH). As mentioned last week, today it is common among religious Jews when reading aloud or referring to YHVH (the LORD) to use this expression *ha Shem* –“the Name”, rather than attempt to pronounce the covenant name. I very common reply to the query, “*Ma-shlomkha?*” (How is your shalom?—How are You?) is simply, “*Baruch HaShem!*” (Blessed be The NAME.—Thank you, I am fine).

***Leviticus 24:19.** *“If a man causes disfigurement of his neighbor, as he has done, so shall it be done to him—fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he has caused disfigurement of a man (Hebrew: adam), so shall it be done to him.”* Disfigurement of a fellow human being (Hebrew: “Son of Adam”) is an extremely serious crime, marring that which of all creation was crafted by God in His very image.

***Ezekiel 44:15.** *“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from Me, they shall come near Me to minister to Me...They shall enter My sanctuary, and they shall come near My table to minister to Me, and they shall guard My charge.”* We who have come to the Father through His Son Yeshua are part of a “Kingdom of Priests” (Revelation 1:6). “Drawing near in ministry to Him” is one of the most precious privileges we have, but we must guard His charge, and hold fast to what is good (I Thess. 5:21; Heb. 4:14; Rev. 2:25; 3:11). Not to treasure and guard this gift can lead to tragic consequences. As mentioned earlier, verses 10-14 tell of those who chose to abandon their charge, who “*went far from Him...strayed away from Him*”. These found place for repentance, and were given ways to minister to their Lord—but the intimacy of their first

positioning was forfeited forever, “*they shall not come near Me to minister*” as they had in the past.

***Ezekiel 44:23.** “*And they (God’s priests) shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.*” **PLEASE PRAY:** For the Body of Messiah in Israel, that the Lord raise up and sustain faithful leaders who will command authority by their example, integrity and adherence to the truth—and by their regular “drawing near” to God to minister only to Him. Pray that they will be able to teach the people holiness, cleanness, and discernment in a day of growing confusion and deception regarding what is holy and what is clean before God.



*Martin and Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (3-9 May 2015) are called *BeHar*—“On the Mountain”: TORAH: Leviticus 25:1—26:2; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 32:6-27]

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