

Prayer Update From Israel (July 2, 2013)



Rushing stream at Tel Dan, Northern Israel

“For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the Source of living water, and they have hewed themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.” (Jeremiah 2:13, see Haftarah below)

1. NEXT MONDAY BEGINS THE HEBREW MONTH AV—AND THAT EVENING THE MUSLIM MONTH OF RAMADAN.

“From the straits I called to Yah. Yah answered me in a wide-open place. The LORD is for me, I shall not fear. What can humankind do to me...All the nations surrounded me. With the LORD’s name I cut them down. They swarmed round me, oh they surrounded me. With the LORD’s name I cut them down...You pushed me hard to knock me down, but the LORD helped me. My strength and my might [song] is Yah, and He has become my rescue [Hebrew: yeshuah/salvation]” (Psalm 118:5-14—Robert Alter translation).

Next Monday (starting at sundown the evening before) marks the beginning of the Fifth Month in the Hebrew calendar, the month of Av. The ninth of this month (July 16th this year) will be the “fast of the fifth month” (Zechariah 8:19) commemorating the burning of the First Temple in 586 BC. As we wrote at the beginning of *Tammuz*, the three weeks between the 17th of that month and the 9th of Av are known as *Bein haMetzarim* or the “Dire Straits” (Lamentations 1:3b)—an annual period within which much sorrow and calamity has historically come upon the Hebrew people. It is also a time, especially during the first nine days of Av, within which there is much superstition and, amongst certain religious streams of Judaism, many self-imposed strictures and austerity measures. “When Av comes in,” says the Talmud “joy is diminished”. Yet, we believe that Messiah Yeshua (Jesus) came that, even in hard times, our joy might be full! God longs for

His children to trust in Him, and even in tight places to be strengthened with His grace. *“When I call, answer me my Righteousness-God—In a narrow place you have made wideness for me. Grace me and hear my prayer!”* (Psalm 4:1). Salvation comes by grace through faith. This month is a time of exercising our faith by choosing to call out to Him.

PLEASE PRAY:

***That God’s protection, in particular through the first nine days of Av, be upon His people Israel. That their trust and faith be awakened to reach out to Him.**

***That light be revealed regarding the His Son Yeshua, in whom it is possible to rejoice, even though now for a little while, if need be, we are grieved by various trials (I Peter 1:6).**

***For Believers in Israel during this month—that vigilance, wisdom and faith attend our decisions. That we look forward to God’s redemptive purposes for this month in faith and great joy.**

AV—“FATHER”

Although Babylonian in origin, the month-name Av happens to be spelled and pronounced exactly as the Hebrew word for “Father”. There is a tradition amongst some religious Jews actually to refer to the month as *Menakhem Av*—“The Comfort of the Father”—looking to Zechariah 8:19 which promises that this fast will one day become “*joy, gladness, and goodly feasts for the house of Judah*”. For seven weeks after the 9th of Av, the readings from the prophets (*Haftarah*) will focus upon the God who comforts His people.

“Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’”

(Jeremiah 3:4; See *Haftarah* below).

“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Luke 10:22).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Messiah Yeshua, the Father of Mercies and God of all Comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

PLEASE PRAY: *That during this coming month the Holy Spirit reveal to Israel the Father. That there be revelation of the Father-Heart of Israel’s “Guide since her youth”* (See above)—*and of His Son, her Messiah and Savior.*

RAMADAN

This year the beginning of the Muslim month of *Ramadan* again coincides with the first day of *Av*, beginning in most countries on Monday evening as *Rosh Chodesh* is drawing to a close. *Ramadan* means “*intense scorching heat or dryness, especially as of the ground.*” Fasting during daylight hours (Including from both food and water) is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. The month migrates backwards through the seasons, coming each year about eleven days earlier than that previous. This means that this year it begins in the very heat of the fierce Middle Eastern summer, placing a frightfully difficult physical hardship on those Muslims living and working here. It is sometimes explained that *Ramadan* “scorches out sins with good deeds, even as the sun burns the ground.” Yet “*without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sins*” (Heb. 9:22)—Dependent only upon his own righteous works, man remains under a curse (Jeremiah 17:5-6) and only the dryness remains.

PLEASE PRAY:

***For mercy for the millions of Muslims who will be fasting each day of *Ramadan* and trying to do good deeds for cleansing from sin. That they will be freed from the bondage of the “scorching heat and dryness” of Islam, and will come to the Waters of *Yasua* (Hebrew: *Yeshua*/English: *Jesus*; Some believers coming out of Islam use the name *Issa*). Pray for miracles of illumination amongst Muslims—that those who are truly seeking Truth will find it and be set free.**

*** For the Body of Messiah in Israel and throughout the world to be awake and stand in vigilance and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit during this time when there are great stirrings and strivings in the heavenlies released from this time of fervent fasting and worshipping to another god.**

***For the sound of worship to the God of Israel break through the heavenlies during these days, supernaturally over-riding the sound emanating from the mosques.**

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 reading for this week 30 June—6 July 2013 is a “double reading”:

I. *Matot*—“Tribes”

TORAH: Numbers 30:1-32:42

II. *Massei*—“Journeys”

TORAH: Numbers 33:1-36:1

HAFTARAH (2nd “Haftarah of Affliction”): Jeremiah 2:4-28; 3:4; 4:1-2

**WITH THESE READINGS WE DRAW TO THE END OF THE BOOK OF NUMBERS
(Hebrew: *B’MIDBAR*—“IN THE DESERT”).**

***Numbers 30.** Vows and oaths to the LORD were extremely serious transactions in God’s eyes; such words, coming out of the mouth of a person and binding his or her very soul must be taken seriously and honored by all humankind who are made in God’s own image (vss. 2, 6). Vows and oaths were binding absolutely on all males (30:2). Yet within the authority structure God had set up, there were certain circumstances in which the positioning of a human father or husband could (as with the divine Father/Husband of which they are a reflection) allow release of a special grace to cover the guilt of a young daughter living at home, or of a wife—the protection and oversight of both for which God held the father or husband ultimately responsible. Thus, if a father, on the day he heard of a vow his daughter had made, deemed it unwise, he could overrule her and the LORD would forgive her (30:5). Similarly, on the day a husband became aware of a vow made by his wife, he might, if he believed it unwise, choose to overrule (NKJV: Hebrew verb: *lehani*) and make void (NKJV: Hebrew verb: *lehaphir*) the vow which she had made **“and what she uttered with her lips, by which she bound her soul, and the LORD will forgive her.”** It is interesting that both of these Hebrew verbs are used in Psalm 33:10, **“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing** (Hebrew: *lehaphir*); **He makes the plans of the peoples of no effect**” (Hebrew: *lehani*). **Here also, faulty counsel is cancelled out by a greater authority in an ultimate mercy.**

“But if he does make them void after he has heard them, then he shall bear her iniquity” (30:15). In a holy sanctuary built and maintained by fallen man, the House of Levi were called to **“bear the iniquity”** of that sanctuary. (Numbers 18:1, 23), and Aaron and his descendants would **“bear the iniquity”** of his priesthood. There was a special grace given to those in these positions—but if the rest of the Israelites came near to the tabernacle of meeting, they would **“bear their sin and die.”** Likewise, it appears here that a measure of this same grace was given to a man in his role as “priest” or “Levite” over his home. Ultimately, just as one goat was slain for sin on the Day of Atonement, but another was necessary to be taken into the wilderness to **“bear on itself all their iniquities...”** (Leviticus 16:22), so would come Another who would not only offer Himself a sacrifice for sin—but as **the Lamb of God would bear away the sin of the world.**

***Numbers 31:1-2.** **“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Take vengeance on the Midianites for the children of Israel. Afterward you shall be gathered to your people.’”**

It is important in reading the grim even shocking events of the first half of this chapter, to realize *Who* had issued the order. In Psalm 94:1 the LORD (YHVH) is twice called *El-Nekamot*—literally, “**Vengeances-God**.” Isaiah 61:2 speaks of the Spirit’s anointing One to proclaim “*the day of the vengeance of our God*” (as well as to “*comfort all who mourn*”). II Thessalonians 1:8 prophecies a Day when Yeshua will be revealed from Heaven with mighty angels “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord, Yeshua the Messiah*.” Romans 12:17-20 cautions against believers taking their own revenge for perceived offenses and quotes Deuteronomy 32:35, “ ‘*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the YHVH*’”. Hebrews 10:30 quotes this same verse from the Torah as relevant to those who “know Him” today. Vengeance is His and not ours, yet Psalm 149:7 makes clear that “Saints” will on occasion be used to “*execute [His] vengeance on the nations*.” It is obviously this, the righteous vengeance of God which is being released through His people in Numbers 31. “*It is appointed for men to die once...*” (Hebrews 9:27). The time was at hand for these Midianites. This included the women who had “*caused the children of Israel (even as they were poised to cross into the Promised Land) to trespass against the LORD*” (Numbers 31:1).

***CHAPTER 33**. “Now at the end of the long chain of Wilderness stories that began in Exodus, as the Israelites are poised to cross the Jordan into the land of Canaan, we get a grand recapitulation of the whole narrative in the form of an itinerary of all the way stations in the Wilderness march” (Alter, Robert: *The Five Books of Moses*, W.W.Norton & Co: New York, London, 2004 (p. 852, n 1).

***Numbers 33:2**. “*And Moses wrote down their departure points for their journeying by the word of the LORD, and these are their journeying by their departure points*” (Robert Alter, trans).

“Departure points” is also sometimes translated “Starting points”. Both have validity, albeit with slightly different perspectives. The literal Hebrew word is closely related to one used in blessing bread, “*Ha motzei lechem min haAretz*”—“Who **brings forth** bread from the earth.” Yet another perspective might be, “*those places from which they were brought forth for their journey*”. An old Jewish proverb goes something like this, “*You can’t know where you’re going ‘til you know where you came from*.” Writing down these starting/departure points from which they had been drawn forth back into their journeying had been commanded by the LORD.

***Numbers 36:7**. “*And an estate of the Israelites shall not turn round from tribe to tribe, but the Israelites shall cling each man to the estate of the tribe of his fathers*” (Robert Alter, trans.).

“Cling” comes from the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 2:24 regarding a man and his wife. It was this charge as related to inherited land which likely fueled Naboth’s response to Ahab in I Kings 21:3, “*YHVH Forbid! That I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!*”

***Jeremiah 2:13**. “*For my people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the Source of living water, and they have hewed themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water.*”

***Jeremiah 3:4 (NKJV).** *“Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’”*

***Jeremiah 4:1-2 (NASB).** *“ ‘If you will return, O Israel,’ declares the LORD, ‘then you should return to me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, and will not waver, and you will swear ‘As the LORD lives’ in truth, in justice and in righteousness; then the nations will bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will glory.”*

It has always been God’s plan that as Israel comes into a right relationship with her God repercussions will be felt throughout the world, and the nations will come into a new revelation of His Glory, and *“bless themselves in Him.”*



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 7-13 July 2013 will be *D’varim* (“Words”): TORAH: Deuteronomy 1:1—3:22; HAFTARAH: Isaiah 1:1-27.]

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