

Prayer Update From Israel (July 5, 2016)



***A heart-shaped field on Mount Zion across from the writers' balcony.
¾ of the field has been scorched with fire since the beginning of Ramadan.***

It was with deep emotion that we received the news of the death Saturday of Elie Wiesel. For us, his book *Night*—an account of his boyhood experience in Auschwitz—stands as a necessary doorway through which we were granted a tiny glimpse into the black horror which was the Jewish experience of the Holocaust. The Forward to that book by his Christian friend Francois Mauriac offered a glimpse of the presence of redemptive Love in the midst of and sharing such suffering—and *The Hiding Place* by Corrie Ten Boom portrayed that Love lived out through two Christian Gentile sisters who were bound with their Jewish brothers and sisters in their suffering. But *Night* was still necessary. Elie Wiesel was a gentle man—yet in his convictions heroically strong. His beautiful memoirs “*All Rivers Run to the Sea / And the Sea is Never Full*” glows with wisdom and humanity. We are grateful for the window granted us in his vision.

The Islamic month of Ramadan draws to an end this week, probably on Thursday. It has been a grim season. Militants had called for violence against “infidels” throughout the month, and violent it has been—from the 49 killed in the Orlando attack (with 53 injured), to the 42 dead (239 wounded) in the Istanbul airport bombings, to the 20 gruesomely slaughtered in a Dhaka, Bangladesh restaurant last week (already as we write disappearing from the news to make way for headlines of over 120 slain in bombings in Bagdad). Long-since forgotten, when even mentioned, was an attack on the Christian village of Qaa, Lebanon last Monday—when eight suicide bombers killed five and wounding dozens more. The first wave of attacks took place in mid-afternoon, other bombers were waiting the arrival of helpers before detonating themselves—still later that evening four others lit themselves off outside the church where the funerals were

being held. After the attack, the Lebanese health minister told Reuters, “*It is clear from the pace of explosions that we have entered an episode from hell.*” (“Eight suicide bombers target Lebanese Christian village”: *Reuters*, 27 Jun 2016, 5:13 pm).

And what of Israel during this time? Following the June 9th attack in an outdoor Tel Aviv shopping mall (four killed), there have been continued “episodes from hell”, especially during the past few days. Thursday morning in the West Bank Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba tiny 13-year-old Hallel Yaffa Ariel was sleeping late after performing in a dance recital in Jerusalem the evening before. A Palestinian from a nearby village was caught on security-cameras scaling the wall of the compound—he then entered the house through a window and proceeded to stab the girl repeatedly until security personnel arrived whom he also attacked before being killed. The night before the murderer, 17-year old Muhammed Taraireh, had placed on Facebook his desire to “be a martyr”. Later, outside his mourning tent, his mother stoutly proclaimed that his heroism in slashing to death a sleeping child had granted him that desire. ***Later the same day*** two Israelis were seriously injured in a stabbing attack outside the Mediterranean city of Netanya. ***On Friday***, an Arab lady attempted unsuccessfully to stab a soldier at the Tomb of the Patriarchs. A few hours later, a vehicle pulled up long side the car driven by Michael Marc, a 40-year-old father of ten from Otniel, south of Hebron. The terrorists in the vehicle emptied over 20 cartridges through Marc’s car window—killing him, seriously injuring his wife Hava and two of their children. Mark was principal of a yeshiva in Otniel, a greatly-loved long-time pillar in the community.

The horrific deaths of both Hallel and Michael went mostly unnoticed in the media outside of Israel. *We have come to expect this—the sentiment of much of the world being, “Well, they shouldn’t be there (i.e. in the “contested territories” of Judea and Samaria) anyway.”* ***But God notices***—it is His people whom He has returned to the land promised to their forefathers and their seed forever. It is a land of Covenant.

And covenant is really what the battle is about, both in Israel and abroad. Our God is a God of LIFE (*El Hai*—Hosea 1:10). His covenants are covenants of life on behalf of all Humankind which He has made in His image. Any covenant coming against His life-covenants are by definition covenants of death. As pointed out in a recent Update, the powers set against God’s covenant are epitomized in Scripture by the people called *Amalek* (Exodus 17:8-16). God has sworn to be at war with this covenant-hating spirit “*from generation to generation*” until its very memory is destroyed. The religious system of Islam teaches that the covenant of its god came through Ishmael (celebrated during the festival of *Eid al-Adha* next September 10th). This is in direct opposition to what is revealed in Genesis 17:18-22—that the covenant of Elohim must come through Isaac. In the spiritual battle raging against both God’s covenant with Israel and the New Covenant for all children of Adam in the blood of Yeshua (Jesus), our Banner is the LORD’s promise that we are not alone, but *He* “will have war against Amalek from generation to generation—until its memory is utterly blotted out from under heaven.

We arrived home this week to see that Muslim children had lit fire to the side of the valley opposite our home (see picture at beginning of this Update). As mentioned, this Thursday the Islamic month of Ramadan comes to an end. The name means “*intense scorching heat or dryness, especially as of the ground.*” Muslims hope by fasting and good deeds during this

month that their sins will be scorched out, “even as the sun burns the ground”. We see this burning pictured in the photograph at the beginning of this Update. But it is the burning mentioned in Jeremiah 17:5-6, “*Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land where no one lives.*” **Yet it is God’s desire that those bound in this system will come out and place their trust in Him—that they will become** “*like a tree planted by the waters...not fearing when heat comes, its leaf green, not anxious in the year of drought, nor ceasing from yielding fruit*” (Jeremiah 17:7-). As we looked closely at the charred valley, we noticed several places which appeared actually to be springs of water in the midst of the burning. Although here only an illusion—we believe it pictures the heart of the Lord for those caught in the “burning”:



As this Ramadan draws to a close,

PLEASE PRAY:

* That out of the heat and dryness of a false religious system which runs counter to God’s covenants of Life, many would become aware of the futility of that way, that like Hagar (Genesis 21:19), their eyes will be opened by the God of Israel to see wells of living water to be released in the trust of His covenant Son Yasua/Jesus.

* That many of those throughout the world and in Israel, who are grieving from loss in recent weeks will find solace and hope in the “Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (I Corinthians 1:3).

* That the Body of Messiah would become aware of *Yehovah Nissi*—“The LORD My Banner”—who has promised to be at war with Amalek until his memory is destroyed.

* That God will redeem Israel out of all his troubles (Psalm 25:22)...that He will counsel and direct our leaders in how best to oversee His people, that He may make peace in our borders (Psalm 147:13).

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. The Haftarah, unless otherwise noted, will be that read in Ashkenazy synagogues around the world. The references for all texts are those found in English translations of the Scriptures.

NOTE: Below are the texts for the Parasha read in *Jerusalem*. Because in the *Diaspora* (i.e. communities of Jews outside of Israel) an extra day is celebrated at Passover (and this year, that day came on a Sabbath), the readings read outside of Israel are now behind one week from those read here. On August 6th, through the use of a special “double reading” covering the final chapters of the *Book of Numbers*, the readings both inside and outside of Israel will once again coincide.

The *Parashah* for this week 3-9 July 2016 is called *Chukat*—“Ordinance OF” (i.e. the “Red Heifer”)

TORAH: Numbers 19:1—22:1

HAFTARAH: Judges 11:1-33

40 YEARS IN THE DESERT

Because of the dead who would be constantly in Israel's midst as an entire generation passed away, Chapter 19 deals with a special 'decontamination' procedure with which to cleanse away the defilement released into the camp by death. Then 38 years pass silently by—there is very little that the Holy Spirit chose to pass on to us regarding that rebellious generation "with whom He was angry for 40 years, whose corpses fell in the desert" (Hebrews 3:17). With the death of Miriam at the beginning of Chapter 20, those years are already drawing near to their close. In this week's reading Moses and Aaron themselves enter into a rebellion which will bar them from entering the Land, and, after the passing of his mantle to his son Eleazar, Aaron dies on Mount Hor. Shortly thereafter a further remnant from the "complaining generation" are slain by serpents—but the younger, second generation begins to move into warfare and to prevail against those giants still barring the pathway towards their inheritance.

***Numbers 19: Ordinance of the Red Heifer.** With the death of those offering incense in Korah's rebellion, the 14,700 who died by plague in the uprising shortly thereafter, and the prospect of hundreds of thousands more passing away in the desert wanderings ahead, the stigma and defilement of *Death* hung over the camp continuously. There was need for an especial

cleansing for those who came in contact with one who had died. *"The wages of sin is death."* In Hebrew the very word for "purification" or "decontamination" (vs. 12) bears within itself the word for sin *chet*. A red cow (there is actually nothing in the Hebrew to denote "heifer" or young female), perfect and never yoked, was burned in totality outside the camp, with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet fed into the burning. Then the ashes were stored, also outside the camp. When needed, these were to be mixed with "living water" (vs17, Hebrew: *mayim haim*) and used as a decontaminant (literally, "water kept apart to expel, serving as a sin offering", vs 9b) for those who had come into contact with death.

PLEASE PRAY: from Hebrews 9:13-14, a letter in the New Covenant written specifically to Messianic Jews of the First century: *"For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the Living God?"*.

***Numbers 20:10, 24:** MOSES: *"Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?"* YHVH: *"...because you both (i.e. Moses and Aaron) rebelled against My word at the water of Meribah."* A great leader of courage, compassion and humility, Moses nevertheless appears to have had a 'blind spot' regarding anger. One sees it quietly mentioned or alluded to in the Scriptures throughout his life (Exodus 2:12, 11:8, 32:19, Lev 10:16, Numbers 11:10, 16:15). Titus 1:7 speaks of the necessity that God's stewards be "not quick-tempered". Although there is a place for anger, if it is released "in the flesh" or outside of God's timing, it will *"not produce the righteousness of God"* (James 1:19). In the end, it betrayed Moses into the very rebellion against God's command which he accused the people of when he shouted at *them* (20:10) rather than speaking to the Rock.

PLEASE PRAY: *For leaders in the Body of Messiah in Israel to be trained by the Holy Spirit in self-control. Pray that we will deal with personal issues which the Holy Spirit discloses, which might otherwise cause us, in critical moments of decision under pressure, to operate out of our emotions or woundings rather than in the integrity of the Spirit.*

***Numbers 21:9** (Alter): *"And Moses made a serpent of bronze and put it on a standard, and so then, if the serpent bit a man, he looked on the serpent of bronze and lived."* The word *ness* here translated "standard" or "flag pole" happens also to have evolved into a modern Hebrew word for "miracle". **John 3:14-15:** *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* **II Corinthians 5:21:** *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

***Numbers 21:34-35:** *"Do not fear him (i.e. Og, King of Bashan), for I have delivered him into your hand, with all his people and his land. So they defeated him, his sons, and all his people, until there was no survivor left him; and they took possession of his land."* **Deuteronomy 3:11:** *"For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the giants."* As Israel arrives 38 years later at the border of Canaan, only one of the fabled "giants" which had terrified their fathers remains. God gives them exactly the same directive he'd given their fathers; this time they take Him at His word and destroy the giant. The significance of defeating this "Og" was

huge—he will be mentioned many times in Deuteronomy, Joshua, I Kings, Nehemiah and the Psalms.

The territory which this text says God Himself "delivered into Israel's hand" would eventually become part of the territory allotted to the tribe of Manasseh. It is this same area, today known as the "Golan Heights", which modern Israel took from Syria in the 1967 War. The territory southward to the Arnon River was taken from King Sihon of the Amorites and eventually became territory of the tribes Reuben and Gad. This area is presently occupied by the north-western part of the Kingdom of Jordan. **PLEASE PRAY: *That the "different spirit" of Caleb and Joshua which motivated this younger generation of Israelites would awaken again in Israel—that we would come to trust God for defeat of the many giants which have arisen again in the land to which we have returned.***

Judges 11:23-24: *"And now YHVH Elohei-Yisrael (Yehovah, the Israel God) has dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel; should you then possess it? Will you not possess whatever Chemosh your god gives you to possess? So whatever the YHVH our God takes possession of before us, we will possess!"

Jephthah (Hebrew pronunciation: *Yiphtakh*) has come today to be often dismissed due to of an unfortunate vow he made regarding his daughter. This is regrettable, and has not always been the case. The Bible remembers Jephthah as a **heroic warrior** (*gibor-hayil*) who, although born of a harlot, despised and dispossessed by the rest of his family, rose nevertheless to command the respect of both friends and enemies. He was **a leader who trusted in the LORD for victory (vs 9)**; a **wise judge who made his agreements and pacts in the Presence of the LORD (vs 12)**. As with any skilled military strategist, **he was intimately acquainted with the history of his land (vss. 14-29)**, acknowledging the LORD's hand in that history, and bringing it to bear in reasoning with his enemies so as to avoid if possible conflict if. For Jephthah, **judgment rested with the LORD**. So highly respected was this man before both God and man, that he is included in the chapter of Heroes of Faith in Hebrews 11.

PLEASE PRAY: *For warriors like Jephthah to be raised up in Israel in the Last Days. Pray for God's oversight of those from broken families (there are so many), or no families at all—that seeds of grace and faith will be sown which will catch and germinate in fertile soil!*

Pray for God's Kingdom to come in Gilead, that section of land in which the action of this chapter took place and which today is a part of the western territory of the Kingdom of Jordan. It was from this land that the Prophet Elijah "who is coming first and will restore all things" (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:11) came forth—and to which he returned before being taken up into Heaven. Under the power of the Spirit of God, the prophet Zechariah foretold a day (Zech. 10:10) in which Gilead would be among the areas to which Jews from the houses of Judah and Joseph would be eventually returned. This has yet to be fulfilled.



Martin & Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (10-16 July 2016) are called *Balak*. TORAH: Numbers 22:2—25:9; HAFTARAH: Micah 5:7—6:8]

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