

## *Prayer Update From Israel (August 11, 2014)*



*“A land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey*

*...a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which YHVH your God care; the eyes of YHVH your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”*

**(Deut. 8:7-10; 11:11-12—See Torah Portion below)**

### **1. IRAQI KURDISTAN...ISIS ADVANCES**

Most will be aware of the lightening advances in recent months of the Sunni Jihadi force “ISIS” (or “ISIL”; it now terms itself “Islamic State”, or “IS”)—of its sweep out of Syria and across northwestern Iraq; of the ruthless, bloody means by which it terrifies all it deems impediments to its goal of establishing a Caliphate, at first only over Syria and the Lavant, now the entire Muslim world. In recent weeks it has narrowed the choices granted to those it captures: deny and renounce any previous religion held and embrace ISIS’s own brand of Islam—or die.

We wrote recently of the Kurds, a people thought to be descended from the ancient Medes who presently occupy a crescent of land extending from eastern Turkey, down through part of northern Syria into northeastern Iraq and northwestern Iran. We addressed specifically the situation of those Kurds living in Iraq—of their traditional friendship with the Jewish people; of their longing for an independent nation of their own; of the possibility of close relations between Israel and Iraqi Kurdistan once that independence becomes a reality. And we spoke of the connections already taking place between believers in Israel and houses of prayer in Kurdistan.

In their rush towards Baghdad, ISIS chose to skirt the Kurdish enclave in the north. But this week, the Jihadi group began advancing towards the Kurdish capital of Erbil, having uprooted tens of thousands of Christians and Yezidis before its vanguard. ***We present for your prayerful attention an assessment of what is taking place***, written this past Saturday by our friend Michael Kerem, who has journeyed many times between Israel and Kurdistan. As we write, the CBN

reporter mentioned in the below (also a dear friend) is on the ground in Kurdistan; please cover him for divine guidance and safety:

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***While the rest of the world has been focused on Gaza and the war there, ISIS has been making advanced on three fronts, in Syria, Lebanon and most notably Iraq.*** For us personally this has been particularly concerning because of our relationship with the believing Kurdish community in N. Iraq. We are in contact on a daily basis with friends there and ISIS' advance from Mosul northwards has taken many by surprise. **The last week has seen them take over large sections of territory around Mosul close to the border with Iraqi Kurdistan that was once held by the Peshmerga (The Kurdish Army of N. Iraq).** This land is heavily populated by Christians (Assyrian, Armenian and other ancient Christian communities), as well as home to the Yezidis (Kurds who follow a form of Zoroastrianism). For a more detailed assessment on this turn of events, please read Jonathan Spye's analysis from Behind the Lines: <http://www.jpost.com/Features/Front-Lines/Behind-the-Lines-Islamic-States-explosive-advance-370439>.

As a result, Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan has been flooded with refugees as ISIS is now sitting just 25 kms south of the border there. Dohuk, in Northwest Iraqi Kurdistan is also under the same threat from ISIS, with refugees (mostly Christians) from the Ninevah plain filling their streets as well. From those serving on the ground, they say that over a million refugees have flooded into Erbil and the surrounding area. According to various news reports, the ISIS advance has been partly due to the heavy weaponry they took from the fleeing Iraqi army, and, with the U.S. up until now reluctant to arm the Kurds, the Peshmerga has had to pull back from Christian cities it was protecting.

In a special interview with the BBC Friday night, **Canon Andrew White, the 'Vicar of Baghdad,' a friend and colleague...reporting from Iraqi Kurdistan spoke candidly about the situation right now in Iraq.** He focused specifically on what the ISIS advance had done to Christian Communities in N. Iraq. Please take time to watch this short interview and to read through the article. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28700210>

The big question for the Kurds of Northern Iraq, at this point in addition is: "Will the U.S. aid us in our struggle to protect our people and our homeland? Or will we have to go it alone?" While the Peshmerga is an experienced fighting force with the support of the population, it's clear that ISIS possesses some fairly advanced weaponry and some rather gruesome tactics that have so far been successful in striking fear and terror into their enemies. The Kurds, like the Israelis, are used to going it alone, and from history should have learned to be wary of relying on the U.S. to come to their aid. However, it looks like the State Department decided that without some sort of intervention, the Yezidi Community (which numbers more than 200,000) as well as the remaining Christians could be subjected to a Genocide if they didn't act quickly. Yesterday, we were relieved to hear of Aid being dropped by US. Planes, and of ISIS positions being bombed by U.S. Air Force planes. For more on this, go to this article by the BBC that includes some very good maps: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-28709530> and then a second one by

Reuters: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/08/08/us-iraq-security-idUSKBN0G70LO20140808>

Last night for *Erev-Shabbat*, we hosted our good friend, Chris Mitchell who reports for CBN in Jerusalem and the Middle East. He will be traveling to Erbil today with his cameraman to report on the situation from the ground. He will be met and guided around while there by one of our main partners...with whom we are in regular contact, and who leads one of the Kurdish fellowships in Erbil.

**Pastor M. told us yesterday that while some are already leaving Erbil for the mountains, the pastors in the city met for prayer and decided they would remain in the city until the last Christian leaves.** Most North American and European carriers have suspended flights into Iraq, but Chris is flying via Istanbul today and if prevented from flying in, he will attempt to go overland from SE Turkey into N. Iraq...**Be praying for this trip for supernatural protection for Chris, for divine favor wisdom and discernment to get the story out so believers around the world can pray and help the Kurdish people at this time.**

**STANDING IN THE GAP...How can you pray...**

**(“I sought for a man who would stand in the gap...” Ezekiel 22:30)**

**\*Be praying for the leadership of N. Iraqi Kurdistan—specifically Masoud Barzani. He has had numerous contacts with Christians over the years. That God would give him wisdom on how to lead his people at this time.**

**\*Pray for the Christian leaders in the entire country, that they would stand boldly, with love, with wisdom and truth to confront the lies and fear that are prevalent in times of war, especially when dealing with the Jihadist forces of ISIS.**

**\*Pray that Christians around the world would not only pray, but give and speak out about the situation. If a genocide occurs in this area, let it not be because the Christian Community around the world was guilty of ‘by-stander indifference’, a fact that has been present in many genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.**

**\*While many of the foreign Christian organizations serving in Iraq have directed their people to leave N. Iraq, pray that God would mobilize his servants to go and stand with the Kurdish people at this time. Be praying for us personally, if we are to travel to the region at this time. Thank You.**

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## **2. THE WAR IN GAZA**

*As we write, Israel is again in a three-day truce with the Hamas forces in Gaza.* The cease-fire went into effect at midnight Sunday night. A similar truce occurred a week ago; whether or not its tenets bore any true legitimacy, it afforded a few days of welcome respite from the draining

tensions, strain and heaviness of continued attack and battle. Yet, although Israel offered to extend the truce, the 72 hours were not over before rockets were again falling. Israel, so eager, after destruction of the tunnels, to avoid a long house-to-house ground war, had not assessed the lull correctly, unwisely inviting those in the target areas close to the Gaza Strip to return to their homes, as though the danger were past. This has severely angered and demoralized many of those people, calling into question the integrity of their leaders, who until now have had received remarkable cross-the-board support from most Israelis for the way they had conducted the war. Today, after refusing to enter negotiations “under fire”, Israel has sent a delegation to Cairo to discuss how to extend the truce. Hamas considers itself still in control of the Strip—it still has several thousand unfired rockets. Its leaders are still holed up beneath a hospital in the midst of Gaza City. Until they are exposed and neutralized, the germ-cell of the violence remains. In a statement released on Saturday, Finance Minister Yair Lapid vowed, “To [Muhammad] Deif and his gang, I want to say clearly: Just as the United States did not rest until it found [Osama] Bin Laden and eliminated him, we will find you and bring you to justice for what you have done to the children of Israel and Gaza” (“We will hunt down Hamas terror chief Deif, vows Lapid”: *The Times of Israel*, 10/08/2014, 8:48 pm). At the beginning of his weekly Cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Netanyahu declared that Operation Protective Edge continues; that “we have not, at any point, said it ended and it will continue until it has achieved its goals. This will take time. Israel will not conduct negotiations under fire and will work to change to reality to return security to its citizens.”

#### **PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*That “He who makes wars cease” (Ps. 46:9), would release guidance to Prime Minister Netanyahu, Chief of Staff Benny Gantz, and Israel’s other leaders. That this war will come to an end in the timing of the Lord. Pray for Prime Minister Netanyahu, that “the enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him...that Israel’s foes will be beaten down before his face” (Psalm 89:22-23).**

**\*That the roots of the spirit of hamas (Hebrew: “cruel violence”) reigning in Gaza, would be exposed and pulled up. That the protective shield around Muhammad Deif and other key leaders of Hamas will abandon them, that they will be exposed and their power broken—that “Gaza shall lose her king” (Zechariah 9:5).**

**\*That as Gaza, under the betrayal of its evil leaders and false god, “writhes in agony” (Zech. 9:5 NIV), the God of Life (*Elohim Haim*) will be revealed to her—His Son, who is the *Way, the Truth, and the Life.*”**

**\*For believing soldiers in the Israeli military—that they be encouraged in their faith, guided and granted divine favor and leadership; that they be a testimony of life to their fellows—and when possible, to the enemy they are sent to contain.**

**\*For the believers in Gaza...who have withstood much persecution; that they be protected, filled and guided in the Holy Spirit, moving amongst the destruction in the Love, Power and Miracles of the Life of the Son.**

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## THIS WEEK'S PARASHA:

The reading for this week 10-16 August 2014 is called *Ekev*—"In consequence of..." (the Children of Israel heeding God's judgments):

**TORAH: Deuteronomy 7:12—11:25**

**HAFTARAH: Isaiah 49:14—51:3**

### TORAH

**\*Deuteronomy 7:16.** *"Also you shall devour all the peoples whom YHVH your God delivers to you; your eye shall not pity them..."* **It is instructive to compare this 'devouring' with that mentioned in the evil report of the ten spies 40 years earlier, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants" (Numbers 13:32), and with the 'bread' in Caleb's "good report" at the same time, "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land...Do not rebel against YHVH, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and YHVH is with us. Do not fear them" (Numbers 14:7-9).**

**\*Deuteronomy 8:3.** *"He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna...that he might make you know that mankind shall not live by bread alone; but by every utterance of YHVH's mouth does the human live."*

**\*Deuteronomy 8:5.** *"And you knew in your heart that as a man chastises his son YHVH your God chastises you."* **cf. Hebrews 12:7-11:** *"If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten...Shall we not uh more readily be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. Now no chastening seems to be joyful or the present but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."*

**\*Deuteronomy 8:7-10.** *"For YHVH your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you can dig copper. When you have eaten and are full then you shall les YHVH your God for the good land which he has given you."*

**\*Deuteronomy 8:16.** *"...that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end."*

**\*Deuteronomy 9:5-6.** *"It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that YHVH your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which YHVH swore*

to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that YHVH your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

**\*Deuteronomy 9:21.** “Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.” **In the original account (Exodus 32:20) no mention is made of where this brook comes from. In the previous chapter (Deut. 8:15), YHVH is the One who brought forth water for Israel “out of the flinty rock in a thirsty land where there was no water.” I Corinthians 10:4 reveals “They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Messiah.” Ezekiel 47:1- and Zechariah 14:4,8 speak of a future time when living water will tumble forth out from another mountain, this time the Mountain of YHVH in Jerusalem, bringing healing wherever it flows....**

**\*Deuteronomy 9:26-29.** “Thus I prostrated myself before YHVH...I kept prostrating myself, because the YHVH had said He would destroy you. Therefore I prayed to YHVH, and said: O Adonai YHVH, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, ‘Because YHVH was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the desert.’ Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.”

**\*Deuteronomy 10:12-13. Fear! Walk Love! Serve! Guard!** “And now, Israel, what does YHVH your God require of you, but to **fear** YHVH your God, to **walk** in all His ways and to **love** Him, to **serve** YHVH your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to **guard** the commandments of YHVH and His statutes which I command you today for your good?”

**\*Deuteronomy 10:16-17, 21a.** “Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer. For YHVH your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome...He is your praise...”

**\*Deuteronomy 11:11-12.** “But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which YHVH your God cares; the eyes of YHVH your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year.”

## **HAFTARAH**

**“Comfort ye...”**

**As mentioned last week, we have entered a seven-week season in which the *Haftarah* readings are taken from the prophet Isaiah, and continue to speak words of *comfort* to Zion. PLEASE PRAY that the Holy Spirit would release revelation in Jewish hearts, that Israel recognize her Comforter as these passages are read this weekend.**

**\*Isaiah 49:15-16.** *“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; Your walls are continually before Me.”*

**\*Isaiah 49:25b-26.** *“For I will contend with him who contends with you, and I will save your children. I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know that I, YHVH, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.”*

**\*Isaiah 50:4.** *“Adonai YHVH has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens me morning by morning. He awakens my ear to listen as a disciple.”*

**\*Isaiah 50:6-7.** *“I gave my back to those who strike me, and my cheeks to those who pluck out the beard; I did not cover my face from humiliation and spitting. For Adonai YHVH helps me, therefore, I am not disgraced; therefore, I have set my face like flint, and I know that I will not be ashamed.”*

**\*Isaiah 51:1-2.** *“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek YHVH: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him” (NASB).*

**\*Isaiah 51:3.** *“For YHVH will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places. He will make her desert like Eden, and her arava like the garden of YHVH; Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of melody!”*



*Martin and Norma Sarvis*  
*Jerusalem*

**[The Parasha for next week 17-23 August is called *R'eh*—“See!” (“...I put before you today a blessing and a curse”): TORAH: Deuteronomy 11:26—16:17; HAFTARAH: Isaiah 54:11—55:5]**

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