

ISRAEL Teaching Letter

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Vol. # 770906 • November 2018

How to PRAY for **ISRAEL** in Tough Times



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Bridges for Peace...Your Israel Connection®



Through the centuries, the Jewish people have endured persecution, danger and death. They have experienced unparalleled pain as a nation throughout the long years of their dispersion. Hundreds of years of persecution culminated in the Holocaust as Hitler and the Nazis systematically attempted to annihilate the Jewish people. Six million Jews were murdered.

Today the Jewish people continue to fight for their survival. They are surrounded by enemies, both within their borders and without. After months of violent demonstrations and terror arson, the Gaza border has erupted with near continuous rocket and mortar attacks launched by Hamas. War follows war as Israel strives simply to survive. With every ounce of their being, Israelis long for peace, but it remains illusive.

Hundreds of rockets have been fired into Israel, many being intercepted by the Iron Dome. However, there was one direct hit to a four-story apartment building which killed one man and wounded two women. An Egged bus, which miraculously had just been vacated by a group of soldiers, sustained a direct hit. Sadly, one of the soldiers was critically injured as he stood outside the bus. Hamas has threatened to target Ashdod and Beersheva and even increase the distance to target cities deeper into Israel itself. It is a fight for the very survival of the State of Israel.

During these times, we are called upon to pray for Israel. We pray for God's protection. We pray that the people will put their trust in God. We pray that God will comfort them in the midst of pain and mourning. We pray for God's deliverance. We pray for God's miraculous work. We pray for God to raise up true believers around the world who will be watchmen on the walls for Israel. *"I have set watchmen on your walls O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the LORD, do not keep silent. And give Him no rest till He establishes and till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth"* (Isa. 62:6–7).

God and War

As believers, we struggle with the idea of praying about war. Should we pray for a cease-fire and peace? Should we pray that Israel's enemies be squashed? How can we pray that Israel will succeed, when undoubtedly it will result in the deaths of many, including innocents? We are not the first to struggle with these questions.

Even as we read the Bible, we find seemingly opposing viewpoints. Jesus (*Yeshua*) lived at a time of political turmoil. The Jews were under the uncomfortable domination of Rome. Many of the Jews advocated revolt against the Romans. The Zealots were actively working to overthrow the government of the day. The disciples asked Jesus when He would bring about His kingdom. It is obvious that they expected Him to save the Jewish people from the domination of Rome. However, this was not Jesus's plan. Was Jesus a pacifist? There are many who would think so. Yet, He also picked up a whip and fought for the sanctity of the Temple. Many must have been shocked when He said, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword"* (Matt. 10:34). That certainly doesn't sound like a pacifist.

The Bible speaks of future events involving wars, in which God will deliver Israel. Indeed, historically, God has often involved Himself in the wars of Israel. Sometimes directing the operations, as in Gideon's battle (Judges 7); sometimes fighting the battle as in the time of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20); and sometimes allowing Israel to be defeated (Joshua 7). In Ecclesiastes, it says, *"To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace"* (Eccl. 3:1, 8).

Even though we serve the Prince of Peace, it is clear that He never intended for us to sit by and allow evil to triumph. We pray for the time of peace that He will bring, but in the meantime we live in a world that is far from peaceful. At times He calls us to fight for righteousness, and to battle against evil. We are living in one of those times, when Islamists would like to take over the world. We live in a time when evil is fighting for supremacy over good. We must determine what task God is calling us to do and faithfully stand with Him in this spiritual conflict that is being played out in the natural.

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Preparation for Prayer

How are we—as believers, intercessors and watchmen—to pray? It is important for us to discern the heart and voice of God for the tumultuous times we live in. Many are saying that these are the last days, and certainly the signs of the times seem to validate that opinion. We need to search the Word of God and pray the Scriptures. Now, more than ever, we need to commit ourselves to relationship with our God and seek His direction for our lives, our families, our



churches, our nations and our world. It is time we grow up spiritually and realize that there is a spiritual battle raging around us. The lines have been drawn up. God is calling us to stand with Him and join the fray against the forces of evil.

When the war with Hezbollah broke out, my husband Tom and I were in Taiwan where I was teaching seminars. In Hsinchu City, I was scheduled to speak on “The Hebraic Roots of Christianity,” but I felt the Lord say, “This is not the time for business as usual.” I spent the afternoon praying and

felt the Lord telling me that He would use the praise, worship and prayers of the Taiwanese Christians to be like the worshippers who went before the army in Jehoshaphat’s time. That night we had a powerful time of prayer, praise and worship, which I believe God used to go before the army of Israel. Later Tom said, “That may be the reason God wanted us to go to Taiwan.”

I know that prayer is not just a spiritual exercise. It is a powerful tool that God has given us to effect change in our hearts and in our world. When I was a child, my family had a plaque on the wall, which said, “Prayer changes things.” The Bible is full of incidents when people prayed and it changed things. Elijah prayed, and it didn’t rain for three years. He prayed again, and it rained. He prayed for fire to come from heaven to consume the sacrifice in the challenge with the priests of Baal, and it did. Elisha prayed for the Shunammite widow’s son, and he was raised from the dead.

Let’s take this powerful tool of prayer, and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us how to use it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. The following prayer points may prove helpful.

Protection for Israel

Israel is a small nation, only the size of the state of New Jersey, with a mere 8.5 million in population. During the 2006 Lebanon war, 157 Israelis (civilians, both Arabs and Jews, and military) lost their lives. Compared to the size of Israel's population, this is huge. In the United States, it would be like losing 6,691 within 33 days. What a painful blow to the people of Israel! Everyone knows someone who has died or been wounded. Virtually all 18 to 21-year-olds are involved in the battle. When I look at them, many with smooth cheeks because they can't grow a beard yet, my heart weeps for the youth of Israel, who are paying a heavy cost to provide protection for their families and nation.

Call on the Lord to protect the children of Israel: *"I lift my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—He who watches over you will not slumber: indeed, He who watches over Israel will neither slumber or sleep"* (Ps. 121:1–4, NIV).

Funerals of those killed in acts of terror have been too frequent



Comfort

"Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned" (Isa. 40:1–2).

"Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted" (Isa. 49:13).

Israel is filled with heartbroken people who mourn for their lost loved ones. Funerals of those killed in the conflict have been a daily event. The attacks do not just target soldiers but include children, grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and young people. No one is immune. Often wage-earners are cut off in their prime, leaving their families vulnerable to financial woes. Those who lost parents or grandparents in the Holocaust and have grown up in homes shadowed by loss are now facing the loss of their own children to the fires of war. Pray for God to minister to their needs and to use us here in the Land when possible.

Trust in the Lord

Pray that the people of Israel will turn to God and put their trust in Him. Often I hear people say that Israel is mostly a secular state. I think it is important to define the terms. When I, as an American, hear the word “secular,” I think of people who have no real interest in God. There is an element in Israel who have no regard or interest in God, but I believe it is much smaller than many say. I find the people of Israel to be a spiritual people. Even those who define themselves as “not religious,” often are people who believe in God.

A poll was published by the Central Bureau of Statistics about the religious adherence of Israelis. They found that Orthodox and traditional Jews comprise a majority of Israel’s Jewish population. Only 18% said they were “not religious at all.” However, at Passover time, a friend, who would consider himself “not religious,” told me that he felt that redemption was near, meaning the coming of Messiah. In fact, I hear people talking about the coming of Messiah frequently.



At the same time, Israel is governed by a mostly secular group of people. While many of them believe in God, they are more heavily influenced by the thinking of modern society. They are putting their trust in men rather than in God.

We are praying that the people of Israel—from the smallest child to the soldier fighting to protect Israel, to the politician in power, to the old people sitting on park benches—will be filled with a desire to know their God.

“We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help

and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May Your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, even as we put our hope in You” (Ps. 33:20–22, NIV).

“Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the Name of the Lord our God” (Ps. 20:7, NIV).

Just as God is fulfilling the Scriptures about the return of the Jewish people (Jer. 33:7–9), I know He will fulfill the rest as well. Let’s pray the Scriptural promises for Israel’s salvation and redemption: *“I am bringing My righteousness near, it is not far away: and My salvation will not be delayed. I will grant salvation to Zion, My splendor to Israel” (Isa. 46:13, NIV).*

Deliverance

God has promised the Jewish people that He will be with them in their times of trouble. As we pray, we can remind the Lord of His promises and entreat Him to answer speedily.

“But you, Israel are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham, My friend. You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest regions, and said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and have not cast you away. Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ Behold, all those who were incensed against you shall be ashamed and disgraced; they shall be as nothing, and those who strive with you shall perish. You shall seek them and not find them—those who contended with you. Those who war against you shall be as nothing, as a nonexistent thing. For I the Lord your God will hold your right hand, saying to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you’” (Isa. 41:8–13).

From this Scripture, we pray that the people will remember their God, who has been faithful to them in times past. We pray that they will not walk in fear, but instead will be strong and courageous. We pray that their enemies, who are really the enemies of God and His ways, will be put to shame. We pray that God will reach down with His righteous right arm and help the people of Israel in their times of distress.



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Divine Intervention

In every war that Israel has fought, stories come out about miraculous protection and divine intervention, which cannot be explained by natural reasoning. We have been praying for His intervention to bring about His purposes in the midst of these difficult times.

We know that the struggle with Hamas is just birth pangs for the battles to come. There may be a cessation of violence for a time, but further wars will come. Ezekiel 38 and 39 speak of a coming conflict with Gog of the land of Magog (identified by scholars as Russia and her confederates). Ezekiel 38:5 identifies some of Magog's allies. The first one mentioned is Persia, which is modern-day Iran.

Today Iran is rattling her swords, figuratively and literally. She has troops on the ground in neighboring Syria, a direct threat to the security of Israel. Analysts say it is only a matter of time until Iran has nuclear capability. Iran's Grand Ayatollah has made it very clear that he wants to see the destruction of Israel, the United States, and all of western democratic society, in his desire to see the supremacy of Islam. As I read daily of the increasing threats facing Israel, I feel a dread. The consequences are severe. Since I live in Jerusalem, I wonder what will happen in my neighborhood. But, as I read of God's plan to deal with the war, I lift my eyes to heaven and put my trust in the Lord God of Israel.

God says: *"For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath, I have spoken, 'Surely in that day there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel, so that the fish of the sea, the birds of the heavens, the beasts of the field, all*

creeping things on the earth, and all men who are on the face of the earth shall shake at My presence. The mountains shall be thrown down, the steep places shall fall and every wall shall fall to the ground. I will call for a sword against Gog throughout all My mountains,' says the Lord God...And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the Lord" (Eze. 38:19–21a, 22–23).

There is no doubt in our minds that Israel will see divine intervention now and in the future. This doesn't mean that they will avoid all trouble. As the Ezekiel passage shows, tumultuous days are prophesied for the future. Pray with us that Israel will see God's hand at work and put their trust in Him.

Economic Infrastructure

The current conflict with Hamas has the potential to wreak havoc on Israel's economy. Tourism, a financial mainstay, is always one of the first areas generally affected during war and terror. Israel recently celebrated a record month of visitors to the Land. The year 2018 has seen more tourists than in years past. However, with the eruption of violence, will visitors cancel their plans to come?

Pray with us that God will bring in a miracle of provision. Many Christians around the world are already sending contributions to Bridges for Peace and other organizations to help meet the needs.

"Sing to the Lord! Praise the Lord! For He has delivered the life of the poor from the hands of evildoers" (Jer. 20:13).

"You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come...For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer" (Ps. 102:13, 16–17).



Raise Up Intercessors

We rejoice that God has raised up so many believers who are interceding for Israel. Pray that many more will feel the call for end-time intercession. Pray that God will implant His love for Israel in His Church.

Jeremiah chapter 31 is a great chapter, telling of God's plan for Israel in the last days. The chapter starts with the statement, "*At that time...*" Well, when I see something like that, I look up previous verses to see what it is referring to. Remember, when the Bible was written, it didn't have the chapter breaks that we use today. So, I read the last verse of chapter 30. It ends with the statement, "*in the latter days you will understand this.*" Hebrew for "latter days" is *b'acharit ha'yamin* and literally means "in the very last days." So, I understand that this passage is written about the end-times.

I encourage you to read the whole chapter, but let's look at verse seven: "*For thus says the Lord, 'Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise and say, "Oh Lord, save Your people, the remnant of Israel!"'"*" (Jer. 31:7, NASB). I believe this is directed at you and me, Gentile believers. In the Scripture, when you see the name "Jacob," it either refers to the man Jacob, the son of Isaac, or it refers to the Jewish people. Nowhere in the Scripture does it refer to the "adopted sons of Abraham," i.e. the Church.

So, God is telling someone else who believes in Him to do things for Jacob, the Jewish people.

- **Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob.** I believe this is an instruction to rejoice in what God is doing in Israel and for the Jewish people.
- **Shout among the chief of the nations.** Speak out on Israel's behalf to those who have influence. Certainly this refers to our leaders, but I think it also could include the media of today, who are influencing world opinions.
- **Proclaim.** Tell your friends, neighbors, family and acquaintances about what God is doing in Israel to fulfill Bible prophecy.
- **Give praise.** Thank God for being a faithful, covenant-keeping God. Thank Him for blessing and caring for Israel.
- **And say, O LORD, save Your people.** Intercede for the redemption of Israel.



That the Nations Will Know God

War is never our choice for conflict resolution. People are killed, often innocent bystanders. It is one of the sad facts of history in every war. We pray that God will protect the innocents on all sides. Even though we hate war, we also recognize that it is not God's plan that evil triumph.

There is a conflict between God and Satan, which has been ongoing since the time of the fall of Lucifer. That conflict has often centered on the Jewish people and Israel, since God chose to reveal Himself to the world through this people. Satan is resolved to destroy God and His plans, but he will not win. God will be victorious. Eventually Satan will be overthrown forever. While some details of the future are predestined and written down in the Book, many of the details of how we will get there, what our conditions will be, the safety of God's people, etc, are variable. They will be determined by our actions and prayer.

As the conflict with Hamas in Gaza, the uncertain situation on Israel's northern border and other conflicts to follow play out, the world will see and recognize God, as He becomes involved in the affairs of Israel in the end-times. *"When I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and I am hallowed in them in the sight of many nations, then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their own land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," says the Lord God*" (Ezek. 39:27–29).

This song from Psalm 61: is so appropriate for the times Israel is facing.

*Hear my cry, O God;
Attend unto my prayer.
From the ends of the earth
Will I cry out to You.*

*For thou has been
A shelter unto me
And a strong tower
From the enemy.*

*And when my heart is overwhelmed,
Lead me to the rock
That is higher than I,
That is higher than I.*

We know what it means to be overwhelmed. But, we also know the One who is our Rock and who is higher than any of our circumstances. He is our strong tower, who will deliver us from the enemy.





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Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

TERMINOLOGY:

Many of our readers are seasoned supporters of Israel while others are just beginning to understand the importance of standing with God's chosen nation; some prefer the use of Hebrew names and terms, while others are comfortable with more traditional Christian terminology. Because we want to show respect to all of our readers while providing an enjoyable educational experience, we are making every effort to use both terms whenever possible. The following are some of the most common examples:

- Jesus (Yeshua)
- *Tanakh* (Old Testament or OT) – *Tanakh* is an acronym used in Judaism which stands for *Torah*, *Neviim* or Prophets and *Ketuvim* or Writings.
- Writings of the Apostles (New Testament or NT)
- *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.)

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