

I. Praying for Israel from the Bible

“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not remain quiet, till her vindication shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch...I have posted watchmen on your walls, Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth.” (Is. 62:1,6-7)

A. We have a Biblical mandate to pray for Israel:

1. Ps. 122:6 – we are to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.
2. Gen. 12:3 – *“I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you”*.
3. Is. 40:1 – a call to comfort “My people”, to speak kindly to the heart of Jerusalem.
4. Is. 61:2-3 – to comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion.

B. The Bible even tells us *what* to pray:

*“There will be a day when the watchmen will cry out on the hills of Ephraim, ‘Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations. Make your praises heard, and **say**, ‘LORD, save your people, the remnant of Israel.’” (Jer. 31:6-7)*

1. “Watchmen” – *notzrim* (Hebrew) is closely linked to “Nazareth”; many Messianic teachers link “watchmen” to “those who follow the One from Nazareth” (Yeshua; therefore, referring to Christians). In other words, we who follow Jesus from the nations, will be crying out for the salvation of the chief of the nations.
2. Hosanna (*hoseana*) – “to save, avenge, spare, rescue, redeem, keep safe, protect, preserve, gain victory, bring salvation”.

II. “For Such a Time as This”

A. A commonly used phrase in the Church today, which we get from the story of Esther. The recently celebrated Festival of Purim (or “Festival of Lots”) commemorates God’s salvation of the Jewish people from an evil decree.

1. Celebrates a victory of light over darkness, mourning turned to gladness, sadness turned to joy.
2. God turned a **SAD** decree (slaughter, annihilation, and destruction; Est. 3:13) to a **GLAD** decree (“God Loves Abraham’s Descendants”).

- B. The decree called for the destruction of all Jews in the “then known world”, covering 127 provinces. The decree went out from ancient Persia, which is modern-day Iran.
- C. This story is eerily similar to what is happening today: the same threats of annihilation are being made by Iran, and they are actively backing and funding a number of terrorist organizations, which are combining to attack Israel from 7 fronts (including Hamas in Gaza, and Hezbollah in Lebanon).
- D. It is important for the Church to recognize these similarities and rise up in prayer for the Jewish people (in the spirit of Jer. 31:6-7).

“The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (Jas. 5:16)

- 1. This is even more important as we see many of Israel’s allies in the nations beginning to waver in their support of Israel, drawing moral equivalencies between the state of Israel and the acknowledged terrorist group of Hamas. Israel’s enemies are being given political permission to pursue their stated goals.
- 2. Antisemitism is rising at an alarming rate, reaching all-time highs in Canada and the nations. But intercession can make the difference!

III. God’s Heart for Israel and the Nations

- A. **God loves all people!** His heart is for all nations and all peoples. He has plans and purposes for all nations, this is the Good News.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (Jn. 3:16)

“The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you [Israel] with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.’” (Jer. 31:3)

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession [“segula”]. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex. 19:4-6)

“But you [those who are in Christ] are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession [referencing “segula”], that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9)

- B. When was this Good News, the Gospel, first preached? You may be surprised to know it came long before Jesus’ incarnation.

“And the Scripture, having foreseen that God justifies the Gentiles by faith, foretold the gospel to Abraham: ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’” (Gal. 3:8)

“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you; and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you.” (Gen. 12:2-3)

- C. The prominent idea at the end of God’s promise to Abraham is that of Him blessing those who bless Israel, and cursing those who curse Israel. There is something important to see in these words.
1. Bless = *barak*, which comes from the root word *berekh* (“knee”) – to bless, to serve, to honour, to give, to come to the same level for the purpose of mutual blessing.
 - a. Picture of a Father stooping, kneeling to get on the same level as a son to connect with him and bless him (Ps. 18:35, “*you stoop down to make me great*”).
 2. “Whoever curses [*qalal*] you, I will curse [*arar*]”.
 - a. *Qalal* – to despise, to hate, be aggressive, persecute; to make light of, to lightly esteem, be indifferent, be distant, stand on the other side.
 - b. *Arar* – to curse, bitterly curse, denounce, detest, withhold blessings.
 - i. There is no middle ground with Israel: to be indifferent toward Israel is to curse [*qalal*] Israel and invite a curse [*arar*]. That includes missing out on blessings that are intended to be ours.
 - c. In the story of Ruth (Ruth 1:16-17), we see the two Moabite daughters-in-law of Naomi (an Israelite) have two different responses to Naomi’s intention to return to her homeland. Ruth (“friendly, clinging”) went with Naomi, while Orpah (“stiff-necked”) turned her back on Naomi.
 - i. Does our intercession for Israel more closely mirror Ruth’s heart, or Orpah’s?
 - d. History is full of examples of people (both individuals and nations) who have blessed Israel and were subsequently blessed by God. It is also full of examples of those who have cursed Israel and invited the curse of God onto themselves, in some cases ceasing to exist.
 - e. Obadiah was sent to prophesy to the Edomites (descendants of Esau). A curse came upon them.

“On the day [of Israel’s trouble] you stood aloof [some translations say “stood on the other side”, similar to qalal]...the day of the Lord is near. As you have done to Israel, it shall be done unto you. Your deeds will return upon your own head.” (Obd. vv.11,15)

- i. They should have come to the aid of their ancestral brothers, but they stood at a distance and let them suffer, even gloating in their calamity. We cannot make the same mistake.
- ii. God promised to restore Israel to their land in His decree to the Edomites.

IV. Significance of the Land of Israel

- A. As we have seen in earlier sessions, the land of Israel is deeply embedded in God’s covenant with the people of Israel; they are inseparable.
 1. 170+ Scriptures indicate who owns the land. God swore an oath concerning the land 55 times; 12 of these instances are referred to as “an everlasting ordinance”.
 2. Jerusalem is mentioned 806 times in the Bible, clearly prominent as God’s favoured city (see Ps. 132:13-14; 2 Chr. 6:6; 2 Chr. 7:17; Ps. 76:1-2).
 - a. Interesting to note that Jerusalem is not mentioned once in the Quran, though Muslims claim it as a holy site.
- B. God has promised to deal with all nations for how they have dealt with Israel.

“I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.” (Joel 3:2)

“I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move its boundaries will injure themselves.” (Zech. 12:3)

“I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you...” (Gen. 12:3)

V. Conclusion

- A. Do not be weary in well-doing, as far as praying for Israel. Continue praying for and blessing the people of Israel. Pray for our nation of Canada, that we would agree with God’s statements concerning the land and people of Israel.