

Israel Prayer Letter

Summer 2014



ISRAEL AND THE GAZA CONFLICT

Hundreds of rockets have been fired in recent weeks from the Gaza strip into Israel. Since the start of Operation Protective Edge more than 1500 rockets have been. Hamas is claiming responsibility for all of these attacks. The residents of southern Israel are being forced to stay close to the bomb shelters. Summer camps for children in southern Israel have been closed by the Israeli army. Thousands of children are being evacuated to other parts of the country. The current IDF ground operation is intended inter alia to uncover and destroy tunnels coming into Israel from the Gaza strip. Hamas has on a number of occasions attempted to penetrate Israel through underground tunnels using them to instigate terror attacks; this is a major factor threatening Israel's security. Hamas is also using houses, schools, mosques, and hospitals to store and launch rockets into Israeli civilian areas. The IDF is making every effort to cause as little harm as possible to Palestinian civilians, but there are many casualties. This personal email received on Friday 18th July from Michael Freund, Chairman of Shavei Israel, gives an insight into the tensions caused by the current conflict:

"Last nite, at 10pm Israel time, thousands of Israeli troops entered Gaza to put an end to the ongoing Palestinian rocket attacks against the Jewish state. Among those brave young men and women is uniform is my oldest son, Gedaliah, who is a member of an elite special forces unit. Naturally, as a parent, this is a very tense and trying period. Sleep eludes me, it is difficult to concentrate, and I am glued to the news around the clock. The anxiety that I feel is exceeded only by my admiration for Gedaliah and all those in uniform who are putting their lives on the line to protect the people of Israel and G-d's Holy Land from our enemies.

As you know, I have always been a big believer in the power of prayer, in the gift that the Creator has given us to turn to Him, pour out our hearts and storm the Heavens with our pleas for Divine mercy. As a friend, and as someone I respect, I am therefore humbly asking that you please pray for the safety of Israel's soldiers, including my son Gedaliah Israel Freund, and ask G-d to protect them from all harm and injury, and have their enemies fall before them. In times such as these, the prayers and supplications offered by Jews and Christians can and do make a difference.

As the Torah says (Deuteronomy 20: 3-4): "Hear, O Israel, you draw near today to battle against your enemies; do not let not your heart grow faint; fear not, nor be alarmed, nor be frightened of them. For the L-rd your G-d is He that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." Thanks for your thoughts and prayers, and may we soon merit redemption. Michael Freund."

- Pray for the residents of southern Israel. The constant threat is causing great trauma and tension.
- Pray for the people of Gaza, who are being terrorized by Hamas.
- Pray for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the government of Israel – that they may have wisdom and discernment.
- Pray for the protection and safety of Israel's soldiers, including Gedaliah, the son of Michael Freund.
- Pray for Michael Freund, his family and all other parents and relatives of soldiers who face a very tense and trying period, knowing their loved ones are fighting the enemy.
- Pray that the eyes of the world may be opened to what is actually happening in Israel and the Middle East.
- Pray for honest reporting in the media.

ISRAEL'S NEIGHBOURS

On Friday 18 April Tova Richter from New York arrived to attend the funeral of her father in the Jewish graveyard on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. At a road crossing at the foot of the Mount of Olives her car was pelted with stones by ten young Arabs. The car crashed, but Tova fortunately survived the attack. But because of this she missed her father's burial. More and more often relatives of the deceased do not dare to visit this Jewish cemetery on the Mount of Olives, because their safety is not assured. The same is true in French Hill neighbourhood, on Mount Scopus near Hadassah hospital, near Temple Square, and in and around the Old City of Jerusalem. Fire-bombs, knife stabbings and intimidation are the order of day in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

- Pray for protection of Israel. Many Israelis feel more and more unsafe in their own country, in their own capital Jerusalem.
- Continue to pray for preservation of Biblical territory. That God's promises will become clear to both the Jewish people and the Arab peoples.

Over the last ten years many thousands of objects of great historical value to the Jewish people have been lost, among others by digging out 'Solomon's Stables' under Temple Square. The Palestinian Authority makes every effort to deny the Jewishness of the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem. Also the historical existence of the Temple is blotted out with all possible means. All these efforts are aimed at making this territory 'Judenrein'!

- **Pray for the future: for the status of Jerusalem and the situation in Judea and Samaria. It is in this very city and these very regions that the history of the Jewish people and the salvation history of the Lord Jesus took place.**
- **Pray that East-Jerusalem, with the 'Western Wall', will be preserved in the hands of Israel. Also the Temple Mount, Judea and Samaria, the Jordan Valley...**
- **Pray for Israel on the basis of Zechariah 12. Verse 2 and 3 mention a severe judgment. It is good to remind God even of this: "I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves."**
- **Pray for the people surrounding Israel on the basis of Psalm 83. Everywhere there is chaos, anger of the people, civil war and terror. Verse 16 says: "Cover their faces with shame, Lord, so that they will seek your name."**

In April the Nusra Front, Al-Qaida's branch in Syria, published a video showing the taking of Tal ah-Ahmar, the so-called Red Hill. This is a Syrian army post on the Golan heights on the border of Israel. Never before had terrorists come that close. In Syria anarchy reigns. All Israel's borders are heavily protected. Everywhere terrorists of different terrorist organizations are ready to kill Jews.

- **Pray for Israel, not only for the preservation of Biblical territory, but also for protection against death and terror on the borders with neighboring countries.**
- **Pray for the soldiers who serve at the border posts, that they may have open eyes and open ears, vigilance and commitment.**
- **Thank God for Israel on the basis of Psalm 91. Verse 9 so beautifully concludes the first section of this Psalm: "For You, O LORD, are my refuge."**
- **Thank God for His numerous promises to Israel, about restoration of the land, return of the people and a safe future with Him.**

ALIYAH

One of the clearest and most remarkable scriptures in the Bible book of Ezekiel is verse 24 of chapter 36: "For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land." This verse is preceded by the sanctification of God's great name. Then follows the cleansing of the Jewish people of all their false gods. When we read this passage carefully, we see that it is the Return that sets it all going: Aliyah! For all nations to see, God is doing three remarkable things: He sanctifies His name, He brings His people back to their own land, and He cleanses His people. After that, all the things that we read from verse 25 onwards take place.

- **Pray for the Aliyah on the basis of the scripture mentioned. For Aliyah is not a self-contained fact. God has His purposes with it. For the nations, for the Jewish people and for us as the Church of Christ.**
- **Continue to pray for the safety of over 300,000 Jews still living in Ukraine. Pray for protection from intimidation, lies and attacks.**
- **Continue to pray for the work of Koen Carlier and his team, in collaboration with the organizations Ebenezer and Ezra and the Jewish Agency.**
- **Give thanks for the assistance that these organizations can offer Ukrainian Jews, obtaining the right documents for them and arranging transport to the airports.**
- **Pray that the Jews in Ukraine will take to heart the word from Zechariah 2:6: "Come! Come! Flee from the land of the north! declares the Lord."**
- **Continue to pray that the powers of anti-Semitism and nationalism in Ukraine and Russia will be broken.**
- **Pray that the Ministry of Absorption and other agencies in Israel will mobilize sufficient means for handling the coming stream of Jews from Ukraine and former Soviet Union.**
- **Pray for the Chinese Jews in Kaifeng, China. If all permissions will be granted, for the first time since 2009 Chinese Jews will be making Aliyah.**
- **Pray for the Subotnik Jews, living in Russia, Ukraine and other former USSR-states. Their return got stalled in 2005, but there is favorable news that this Aliyah will pick up next year.**
- **Thank God for the B'nei Menashe in India. This Summer 250 Jews belonging to the tribe of Menashe will make Aliyah to Israel. Give thanks, that this Aliyah continues unabated. Pray for Michael Freund and his organization Shavei Israel which is responsible for transportation and housing the Jews from India.**
- **Continue to pray for the return of the Jews from the East and West, from the North and South. May they continue to come from all corners of the earth, including Canada and the United States, France and South-Africa, Netherlands and Australia.**
- **Continue to pray for our ongoing campaign 'Bring the Jews home', but also be generous in giving for Aliyah. Through prayer and giving we can be an instrument in God's hand.**

THE NATIONS

Here are four scripture passages which can serve as an inspiration for prayer for Israel and the Nations. For more clarity you are advised to read the full chapters.

- David's prayer of thanksgiving after the promise concerning the building of the Temple by Salomon (1 Chronicles 17:21-22).
- The Hebrew Bible, Tanakh, ends with a wonderful commission and promise (2 Chronicles 36:22-23).
- The restoration and reunification of Israel and Judah (Ezekiel 37:20-28).
- After world-wide chaos among the nations the God of Israel will intervene (Ezekiel 39:25-29).
- **Pray for preachers, pastors, Church councils and elders – that from the Bible they will be able to see and proclaim God's ways with Israel.**
- **Pray also that Christians will have the courage to resist negative communication about the Jewish State and stand for solidarity with Israel.**
- **Pray for your own preacher or pastor, but also for yourself and your own Church or congregation. That we will speak up and not be silent.**

The discussions about 'BDS' (boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel) continue. Movements for delegitimizing and finally dismantling Israel are active world-wide.

- **Pray that the boycott campaigns will prove counter-productive.**
- **Pray that the news media in your country give a fair and unprejudiced coverage of the situation in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.**
- **Also pray for your government.**
- **Pray for your nation's policy and voting in the United Nations concerning Israel.**
- **Pray that our politicians will not be carried away with any anti-Israel sentiments. Pray that they will have the courage to stand with the land and the people of Israel.**

CHRISTIANS FOR ISRAEL INTERNATIONAL

In this summer period the work of 'Christians for Israel' continues without delay. We all enjoy our holidays. Nevertheless things are organized in such a way, that Israel will never stand alone. Therefore I request your continuous prayer for the work that is being done in your name by the Christians for Israel teams in many countries.

- **Pray and give thanks for the thousands of copies of the books 'Why Israel?' and 'Why End Times?'; written by Rev. Willem J.J. Glashouwer, that are being sold all over the world in many languages. But also for the study books and DVD materials about Israel that are used in conferences, Bible schools and seminaries.**
- **From 11 through 25 August Rev. Glashouwer will speak at conferences in Brazil and Paraguay. Pray that the Portuguese translation of 'Why Israel?' will be available in time.**

Pastors will receive instruction to enable them to teach in their own congregations. Many of these pastors are connected with the Mennonite brethren in Germany. Now they will receive additional teaching about God's plan with Israel.

- **Pray that they will follow up all that they hear at this conference by reading the Bible, and will become more aware of the serious time we are living in.**
- **Thank God for the great amount of work that is done by 'Christians for Israel International'. Pray for Chairman Harald Eckert, who is travelling to several countries in the summer period. Pray for protection of Harald during his intense travelling.**

PRAYER

We can learn a lot from wisdom in the Jewish tradition: during prayer always connect with those present and say: "Our God, lead us". **(Abbaye)**

Rather than Israel keeping Shabbat, it is Shabbat that protected Israel. **(Ahad Ha'am)**

There is no contradiction between the truth of God and the redemption of Israel. **(Martin Buber)**

During these Summer months we ought to continue to stand in the gap for Israel. Especially in Jerusalem, Christian groups are continually interceding, inspiring others. More information can be found here:

Bart & Joke Repko:	www.neverbesilent.org
King of Kings congregation:	www.kkcj.org
Israel and the nations:	www.jhopfan.org
Intercessors for Israel:	www.ifi.org.il

"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching." (John 14:23a) In your times of intercession pronounce Scripture passages and in this way keep God's word and grow in His love. It is very human to respond primarily to the circumstances around us. However understandable this is, as Christians we ought primarily to respond on the basis of God's Word. Are our thinking and acts Biblical or Babylonian?

- **Pray against the spirits of deception that go out over the earth. A boycott of Israeli products is called an 'awareness campaign'. Anti-Semitism is craftily clad in the term 'anti-Zionism'. The political term 'West Bank' veils the Biblical names of Judea**

and Samaria. Negation of the Holocaust is still on the increase and in some systems of education has already become a fact. 'Jesus was the first Palestinian, Jerusalem never was Jewish and the Temple has never existed'. The Palestinian Authority is crying this out, and the Churches in the West remain silent!

A few years ago at a conference in Jerusalem the following was said about the Church of Christ in Europe and USA: "The Church needs to wake up before it is too late. As believers we need the 'gift of provocation' to rouse the Church from its sleep." The phrase 'gift of provocation' has a touch of irony, but carries a strong undertone of seriousness. We must speak out wherever possible. We must be vigilant, be watchmen, and not sleep!

At the beginning of May, preceding the celebration of the 66th anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel, those who fell in Israel's wars and the victims of terror were commemorated. Here are a few quotations that say a lot about the situation in Israel – may they inspire us to intercede for the land and the people.

Former Israeli President Shimon Peres: "We are still living by the sword, but we long for peace with all our hearts. The battle is not over yet, we still have not reached our goal."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: "We would not be here today without the sacrifice of the many who fell. During the years of exile we were simply slaughtered. The great difference that has been there since Israel exists, is that our sons and daughters defend us, even though this brings with it an unspeakable amount of unbearable pain."

Chief of Staff of the Israeli defense Force Benny Gantz: "During this painful period we remember those who have given their all for our country. Those who fell in Israel's wars and those who were murdered in acts of terrorism. Their image, but also their absence, are there with every step that we take and with every decision we are confronted with." Next Gantz warned of the relative quiet at the land's frontiers during recent years. It is a deceptive illusion.

I want to conclude this Prayer Letter with an encouraging scripture for Israel from Psalm 27:3.

"Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident."