

Israel Prayer Letter

January / February 2012

Dear Israel friends,

As a preparation to writing this first Prayer letter of 2012, I reread all Letters of 2011. Part of the April/May prayer letter I want to repeat here, because it is a word that many intercessors see as a commissioning: Vigilance. “Be on guard! Be alert!” (Mark 13:33) “What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13:37) These things Jesus tells us in the ‘discourse on the end of the age’.

Thinking about this, I was reminded of yet more warning words from Jesus: “For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many.” (Matthew 24:5) All other themes in the discourse on the end of the age are mentioned only once, but this word of warning is repeated another two times. Verse 11: “and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.” And in verse 24: “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

So vigilance continues to be necessary, to understand ‘true from false’ in this confusing time. God bless you in your intercession,

Pieter Bénard, prayer coordinator.

ALIYAH

“How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him! The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the exiles of Israel.” (Psalm 147:1-2)

- Pray for the 4000 Falashmura about to make Aliyah; pray for their safety during the time they will still be in Ethiopia.

- Thank God, that through intercession and financial offerings we can be involved in this return, together with ‘Keren Hayesod’.

On page 4 of this prayer letter I will show you some photographs of the Jewish community in Ethiopia.

“The Sovereign LORD declares— he who gathers the exiles of Israel: ‘I will gather still others to them, besides those already gathered.’” (Isaiah 56:8)

- Pray for the B’nei Menasheh from Northern India. Many of the 6,000 Jews living there are hoping to make Aliyah in 2012.

- Thank God, that through intercession and financial offerings we can be involved in this return, together with Michael Freund’s organization ‘Shavei Israel’.

“‘I will be found by you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you,’ declares the LORD, ‘and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.’” (Jeremiah 29:14)

- Pray and give thanks for the Jews who are returning from Western countries, from Canada and the United States, from France and the Netherlands. And for Jews who are returning from Russia, Ukraine, South-Africa and Argentine.

“When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, I will be proved holy through them in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind.” (Ezekiel 39:27-28).

- Thank God for the fulfillment of His prophetic Word, for the return of those who are scattered, for the restoration of the State of Israel.

THE NATIONS / EUROPE

During the programme for the festive conclusion of restoration works and (re)opening of the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam, Holland, on 20 December of last year, the prayer 'Hanoten Teshuah' was said. I pass unto you the concluding part of this prayer, because it can also be applied to the (other) nations in relation to the people of Israel.

"The King of all kings in His mercy, may He inspire their hearts and the hearts of all their advisors to treat us and all our brothers in Israel with benevolence. May Judah be helped and Israel dwell safely in their days, and may the Deliverer come for Zion. Let it thus be pleasing unto Him. And let us all say to this: Amen." (*own translation*)

Israel is very actively pursuing more intensive relationships with several countries. This in order to compensate the victory and growth of Islam in countries in the surrounding region. The recent popular uprisings have caused many regimes to fall already. Both Turkey and Iran are eagerly watching how they can turn this into political profit at the expense of Israel. Israel speaks of three groups of countries, into which they invest for alliances. Pray for these countries.

- Pray with us for the first group of countries, consisting of Greece, Cyprus, Rumania and Bulgaria. Historically they are Turkey's rivals, and they are very concerned about the growing influence of Ankara.

- Pray also for the second group of countries, to the south of the Sahara: Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria and Southern Sudan. In these countries there is growing concern about increasing Muslim terror.

- The third group of countries are situated in the region, but cannot be mentioned by name. There is little doubt that these are the countries around the Persian Gulf, who are very much afraid of the military aspirations of the Iranian regime. Pray with us, that Israel will also be blessed by these countries.

- Pray that the countries mentioned above will become an instrument to 'help Judah and make Israel dwell in safety'. This will bring redemption closer for Zion. And not for Zion alone, but redemption for all nations. Provided they choose their path through Jerusalem, not through New York or whichever other city.

- Pray on the basis of Isaiah ch.2, 11 and 12; Isaiah ch. 25, 26 and 27; Isaiah 40 and 41; Isaiah 60, 61 and 62. Though Isaiah 24 is today's reality as well, just like revelation 18 and 19. Considering this, we may thank God in Christ that we are still alive today!

"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." (Lamentations 3:22-23)

JERUSALEM / ISRAEL

At the beginning of this new year it makes sense to have a look at several matters that threaten (the continued existence of) the State of Israel. They are especially themes from God's Word and from current actuality, highlighted here for our intercession. Praying to our heavenly Father in the name of Jesus on behalf of the people of Israel makes a good start of the year 2012. May the Lord bless you in this, throughout the year.

- The nuclear threat from Iran
- Threat of terror from Southern Lebanon (Hezbollah)
- Threat of terror from Gaza (Hamas)
- Strife between ultra-orthodox and non-religious in Israel
- Serious water shortage
- The gap between rich and poor is widening
- Secularization, the wish to be like any other nation

- Diplomatic trouble with Turkey and Egypt
- Stigmatizing of Israel in the news media, in theology and politics
- Contempt for Israel by the peoples of the world in the United Nations
- The sins of the West: 'Sex, Drugs and Rock & Roll'
- The sins of the East: idolatry, occultism and magic
- Increase of child abuse, crime and traffic accidents
- 'Yerida', the term for Israeli citizens who leave the country anew (for above mentioned reasons, among others)

Fortunately, there are also many reasons for thanksgiving, looking back on the year behind us:

- In spring a second Gaza Flotilla turned into a resounding failure.
- The discovery of readily exploitable gas and oil fields.
- Israel's economy is developing very favorably.
- 2011 was a top year for tourism: about 3.5 million tourists visited Israel.
- Also more than 20,000 Jews made Aliyah.
- The number of Israelis visiting a synagogue and/or yeshiva is growing continually.
- Also there is a healthy – though limited – growth of Messianic congregations.
- Archeological finds that confirm the Bible made it into the news.
- Israeli Dan Schechtman received the Nobel prize for chemistry. This was the 10th Nobel prize for the State of Israel!
- In 2011 Israel was an oasis of quiet amidst the popular uprisings in the whole region.
- Many volunteers are ready to help new immigrants.
- Special units of Magen David Adom (the 'Israeli Red Cross') were employed in calamity relieve all over the world and gained respect, even in Turkey.
- As compared to previous years, there was little terrorism, no war was started, peace remained!

PRAYER / CHURCH OF CHRIST

"Praying is asking God to interfere in our lives." It is an activity in which man rises above himself. "Prayer will not save us, but it makes us worthy of being saved." (Rabbi Abraham Yoshua Heschel)

This exceptional rabbi also stated: "I plead for a prominent place of prayer in our inner experience, because a soul without prayer is a soul without a house." And: "I pray because I am still able to pray."

- Let us ask God that our prayers will shape us after the image of His Son.

- Let us pray like Jesus taught us: *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*

A slogan often used by Islamic terror groups is: "First the Saturday people, then the Sunday people." The meaning is clear, making the Middle East 'Judenfrei' will not stop at the 'Saturday people', the 'Sunday people' must disappear as well. In Gaza and in Afghanistan not a single church is open anymore, more and more Christians are leaving. Just like in Bethlehem and in Iraq and in many other Arab-Islamic towns and countries.

- Pray with a spirit of humbling for these brothers and sisters; they often feel forgotten by us, the Church in the free West.

- Pray for those who are under heavy pressure to convert to Islam.

In Pakistan a two-year-old girl was raped, because her parents refused to have her registered as a Muslim. The parents are terrified and do not know what to do. In Norway boiling hot water was poured on an asylum seeker in a reception centre, because he had converted to Christianity. "We will kill you if you do not return to Islam," he was told. In Egypt and Indonesia many times churches are set on fire and believers are attacked. In Iran Bibles are burnt, in Ivory Coast

Christians are crucified. In Saudi-Arabia a Church leader was arrested and transferred to Ethiopia, where a death penalty is awaiting him. In Uzbekistan Christians are beaten up. The list of serious incidents is long and grows longer day by day.

Maybe you wonder, whether these subjects should have a place in an Israel Prayer Letter? I think they should. A Christian who did not fully get the idea of the slogan about 'Saturday and Sunday people' was told by an Israeli: "Take care, we are the appetizer, you are the main dish."

On the basis of this humbling, for the suffering inflicted on Jews and Christians, we may pray about these things. God bless you in this.

Ethiopian Jews long for Israel



Synagogue service in Gondar, Ethiopia. The synagogue is a large room, partially covered with corrugated iron. In the front behind the curtain is the 'Aron Kodesh' (Holy Ark), in which the Torah is kept. Many Jews in Ethiopia are waiting for the moment when they will be given the chance to fulfill their dream, cherished through generation: to be able to return to Jerusalem. Some of them have been waiting for twelve years or more. *(Photo: Christians for Israel)*



This photo was taken in Woteka Falashah Village, a small village in Ethiopia where until twenty years ago only Jews used to live. Now there are no Jews living there anymore (because all of them have moved to Israel over the years). The Jewish symbols are still clearly present. At the moment about four thousand Jews are still living in Ethiopia, who are to move to Israel over the coming three years. *(Photo: Tal Bar-Lev)*

Prayer for the soldiers of Israel:

- Pray for the Israeli soldiers on the basis of the following scriptures, as they put into words some questions that are on their minds:

Psalm 102:2

"Do not hide your face from me when I am in distress. Turn your ear to me; when I call, answer me quickly."

Psalm 109:21-22

"But you, Sovereign LORD, help me for your name's sake; out of the goodness of your love, deliver me. For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me."

Psalm 119:25-26

"I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word. I gave an account of my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees."

Psalm 119:169-170

"May my cry come before you, LORD; give me understanding according to your word. May my supplication come before you; deliver me according to your promise."

- Pray for the Israeli soldiers on the basis of the following scriptures, and thank God for His tender answers:

Psalm 121:7-8

"The LORD will keep you from all harm - he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

Psalm 131:2

"But I have calmed and quieted myself, I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content."

Psalm 139:17-18

"How precious to me are your thoughts, o God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand - when I awake, I am still with you."

Psalm 147:10-11

"His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love."