

# Pray for Israel.....

*"...whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head"* Ezek.33:4.

*'O LORD, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear? Even cry out to You, "Violence!" and You will not save. Why do You show me iniquity, and cause me to see trouble? For plundering and violence are before me...'* Habakkuk 1:2-3

December 2009

## Hanukah...

*"Now it was the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, and it was winter..."* John 10:22

The narrative goes on to tell us that Yeshua (Jesus) went for a walk in Solomon's porch in the temple grounds, where he was confronted by people pressing him to tell them 'plainly' whether he was the Messiah (v.23-24). Why were they linking the possibility of Yeshua being the Messiah and this *Feast of Dedication*?

The *Feast of Dedication*, referred to in the Gospel of John, is the festival of **Hanukah**. It is celebrated on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev and symbolizes the Jewish struggle to retain their unique identity and the victory of the Maccabees over the Seleucid king Antiochus in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. However, it was not just a case of merely assimilating with the Greek Culture of the day, rather a total surrender to the pagan ways of the Greeks and the worship of their idols. So, when Yeshua was rumored to be the long awaited Messiah, or deliverer, his presence at this Festival could have been ominous for many and fuelled their hope of deliverance from the Romans!

In our last WPL we spoke about the loneliness of Israel's existence *'among the bulls of Bashan'* (i.e. the nations of the world). The Jewish people are as much a thorn in the side of the nations today as they were 2000 years ago and thus under constant pressure to forgo their Jewishness even in their own country. During the time of the Seleucids a very high number of Jewish people supported the 'Hellenization' process and worked effectively with their Greek-aligned overlords in implementing change. Today we see a similar process taking place through the influence of a powerful 'left wing' Jewry, both in Israel and the Diaspora. This left wing in Israel is promoting a 'new' form of Hellenism expressed in humanistic thinking by using politics to try and prevent Israel being formed into a truly unique Jewish State.

The **Jewish Festival of Hanukah** is a wonderful time for Christians to contemplate the remarkable history of the Jewish people, God's faithfulness to them and their survival against all odds! It is significant therefore for Christians in that Yeshua himself endorsed its relevance for us today through his presence at the feast. It implies that Christians need to find ways of supporting the survival of the Jewish people in their own land.

**Hanukah** occurs this year between **December 12-18** and you may wish to meditate on the significance of this festival by lighting a new, additional candle for each day, as you pray, until there are eight burning on the last day to symbolize the miracle of the oil. Tradition says that one cruse of oil – sufficient usually only for one day - lasted for eight days when the Maccabees re-dedicated and themselves and the Temple to God in 164 B.C.E.

### **Strategic Prayer points:**

- Pray that God will open Jewish eyes to see that assimilation with the world IS NOT THE ANSWER. Although often difficult for them to fathom, they are God's special treasure; Psalm 135:4
- Please pray that God will strengthen those among the Jewish people who are calling for repentance – for a wholehearted return of their people to the God of Israel. Deuteronomy 30:1-10
- Intercede for church leaders throughout the world that God may open their eyes to -- the need for the church to reconnect with her Hebrew roots; Romans 11:17-25
- Pray for the unification of the different Jewish sects; that they may find ways of relating with grace to the secular population of Israel.

### **The Pressure of Territory**

Territorial pressures on Israel continue unabated. As Arutz Sheva and the Jerusalem Post report on November 17, the Arab world together with the PA are now pushing in the UN for a unilateral declaration/recognition of a 23<sup>rd</sup> Arab State in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

We must never forget that 'Land' has never been the true issue in the struggle between Israel and the PA. The Palestinians could have had a State in 1948 alongside Israel, but Jordan and Egypt deemed otherwise by keeping the Palestinians under occupation for 19 years and oppressed them until Israel took the disputed territories off the occupiers.

Yasir Arafat could have called out a Palestinian State when he founded his Jihadist organization, the PLO, in 1964 – three years before Israel re-conquered Jerusalem; he did

not! Arafat could have had his Palestinian Nation at Camp David when Ehud Barak offered him 97% of the Judea and Samaria, as well as East Jerusalem – he rejected it!

Currently the US and the EU are opposed to such a move, but who can tell what the future may bring in this regard.

We believe that this issue is a crucial one for the church. The question, however, is not whether Israel has a military, legal or moral right to exist in that part of the Middle East, but whether the promises of God are true!

The Scripture teaches that Israel would experience two Exiles; one in Babylon and a second one in the **‘wilderness of the people’** (Ezekiel 20:35-36). It is in the context of this second Exile that the prophet also speaks concerning Israel’s restoration.

The apostle Paul is unequivocal in his statement in Ephesians 2, when he says that the believer in Yeshua has become a fellow citizen in the Commonwealth of Israel with the saints and members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:12-19).

Who are these ‘saints’? God’s ancient people no doubt!

### **Strategic Prayer points:**

- Please pray for the teachers of God’s people, both Jewish and Gentile, that they may be inspired with wisdom from on high to guide them into all truth; Proverbs 8:21-25
- Pray that God would grant us to understand the true meaning of ‘being grafted in’ - that we may also know how to claim our incredible heritage in and through Yeshua
- Please intercede with God that he may stir the Jewish people of the Diaspora to return to their ancient homeland and to reclaim their inheritance

### **The New Anti-Semitism**

Although Austria has every reason to avoid even shades of anti-Semitism, the following clearly shows that old habits are hard to break. Young female athletes from Israel's fencing team swept top medals at a 28-nation European tournament held in Mödling, Austria last week. However, they faced an additional challenge when they stood on the winners' podium to receive their medals: the organizers did not play a recording of the Israeli national anthem; so... the team had to sing the anthem *a cappella*.

The Israeli national team's coach, Yaakov Friedman, told *Arutz Sheva* that the Israeli team faces constant political challenges on the international circuit.

At a tournament in Göteborg, Sweden, in January this year, Israel won the silver medal and when the medalists were already on the podium the organizers informed Friedman that they do not have a recording of the Israeli anthem.

In the Mödling incident, Friedman said, the organizers approached him when the winners were already on the podium and told him that “*we do not have a recording of the new Israeli anthem, just the old one.*” Friedman informed them that to the best of his knowledge, Israel has only had one anthem – HaTikvah – since it was founded.

Due to the concentrated attention on Arab ‘anti-Semitism’ it is easy to overlook the fact that the hatred of Israel and everything Jewish is very much alive in the world.

### **Strategic Prayer points:**

- Please pray for the nations of the world that God would soften their hearts toward Israel.
- Please pray that our Heavenly father would grant discernment to the church concerning anti-Semitism within the wider community
- Pray for boldness to speak out against the injustices perpetrated on an ongoing basis against Israel.
- Pray for those who are suffering persecution by Christians for taking a stand for Israel.
- Let us pray that God may cleanse the church of any latent anti-Semitism
- Pray that God may take the lid off any underground anti-Semitism throughout the world so that the praying church may be made aware of this evil.
- Pray for supporters of Israel in Gabon, France, in their stand against anti-Semitism in the face of a steadily increasing Islamization of their country

**Request:** *If you know of any specific issues, e.g. anti-Semitism, concerning the Jewish people and/or Israel in the area in which you live, please email us at [info@theolivetreeconnection.com](mailto:info@theolivetreeconnection.com) so that we may include them in the next Watchman Prayerletter – perhaps as a special ALERT!*

In Messiah

*Frank & Karen Selch*