

*"In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Romans 11:5)*

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# For Zion's sake I will not keep silent (Isaiah 62:1)

## A Believer's Guide for Praying For Israel

by Galen Peterson

Two men were having a conversation in a restaurant, discussing religion. One of them, who was especially loud in expressing his opinion, was very critical of Jews. At one point he declared, "The one place on the entire planet that causes the most problems is Jerusalem. They ought to level that place and just start over without all the religious stuff."

A rabbi happened to be sitting at the next table, and he couldn't help but overhear these brash comments. Quietly the rabbi rose from his seat and approached the man and introduced himself. The rabbi asked the man if he would humor him for a moment. The man replied, "OK, what do you have in mind?"

The rabbi said, "Could you please take your right hand and shake it all around in the air, and then with your mouth see if you can make some clicking sounds."

Thinking it was a silly demonstration of coordination like rubbing your belly while patting your head, the man showed his bravado by doing exactly as the rabbi requested.

"Now," observed the rabbi, "You have fulfilled what was written in the Bible—*'If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget her skill. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.'*" (Psalm 137:5,6)

Without a doubt, many people in our world feel like most of our conflicts would go away if it weren't for Jerusalem and Israel. May Christians share in that sentiment. Israel is often seen as godless maverick nation without any place in God's plan for this world. Unfortunately this outlook leads the reader of the Bible to neglect a significant portion of

Scripture or to reinterpret passages so that the content is said to mean something different than what the author intended.

While space does not permit a complete exposition on biblical interpretation, this article is based on a simple premise—whatever God says in the Bible is true; its message can be understood; and it calls for responses by the reader. These are principles that apply to salvation, to godly living, to ministry and the functioning of the Church, and to God's place for Israel in the big picture. So what, then, does He have to say regarding the responsibility Christians have toward Israel?

### Reasons to pray for Israel

**God blesses people who pray for Israel**

*"I will bless those who bless you." (Gen. 12:3)*

## **God instructs us to pray for Israel**

*“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: ‘May they prosper who love you.’ ” (Ps. 122:6)*

## **God is blessed when we pray for Israel**

*“He that touches you [Israel] touches the apple of God’s eye.” (Zech. 2:8)*

## **We share the same desire as the Apostle Paul when we pray for Israel**

*“Brethren, my heart’s desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.” (Rom. 10:1)*

## **We demonstrate our understanding of God’s plan when we pray for Israel**

*“I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! . . . God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.” (Rom. 11:1,2)*

## **We show our appreciation for what we have inherited as Christians when we pray for Israel**

*“For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever.” (Rom. 9:3-5)*

Many more passages could be

cited that exhort Christians to have a heart for the Jewish people and to reflect that compassion by praying for them. The question then becomes, *how* should we do it?

## **How to pray for Israel**

One chapter that stands out for the way that it shows the role of various kinds of people who have a relationship with Israel is Isaiah 62. It serves as an outline for what God expects of us when it comes to Israel. It is a call to proactive prayer.

### **Pray regularly for Israel**

*“For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,  
And for Jerusalem’s sake I will not keep quiet,  
Until her righteousness goes forth like brightness,  
And her salvation like a torch that is burning.” (Is. 62:1)*

This is a picture of someone who just doesn’t give up. Got a lot going on? Can’t find the time to pray? It’s not politically correct to have a heart for Israel? God exhorts us to pray for them anyway.

The latest crisis averted? Just a few missiles flying into the country each day? There is no reason to stop praying now.

I will not keep silent.

Christians should be praying personally for Israel and the Jewish people. And we should be doing so in small groups and from the pulpit. It’s a calling that should go forth until there is no longer a need—until “her salvation is like a torch that is burning.”

### **Pray that more people in the world will have a biblical perspective on Israel**

*“And the nations will see your righteousness...” (Is. 62:2)*

Isaiah shows that there is a relationship between the righteousness of Israel and that of the nations—a national testimony. So our prayers for the salvation of Israel serve as an indirect prayer for the salvation of people from around the world.

Moreover, Christians from every nation benefit from having a proper understanding of Israel’s place within God’s grand plan for this world.

So we should be praying for a revival of sorts within churches worldwide to gain a biblical understanding of their heritage—grafted in to the olive tree of Israel (Rom. 11:17) and sharing in the blessings that they have been given through the Jewish people (Rom. 9:3-5). Pray also for those who are teaching in our seminaries to maintain this same understanding, instead of teaching that God has rejected and replaced Israel forever.

### **Pray that leaders in our world will deal fairly with Israel**

*“...and all kings your glory.” (Is. 62:2)*

God has ordained the role of authorities in our world and we are exhorted to pray for them (Rom. 13:1; 1 Tim. 2:1,2). This is especially important in our current day in which the nations of the world continually line up against Israel.

Pray for wisdom and courage for our president and the members of congress who establish policy for Israel. Pray that the eyes of leaders of many nations will be opened to consider God’s message regarding Israel. Pray that the plans of those who fervently seek

Israel's destruction, such as President Ahmadinejad of Iran, will come to naught.

We should be claiming God's authority over every leader (Dan. 2:21). We should further claim the promises of His Word regarding the direct connection between the way people treat Israel and the way God treats them (Gen. 12:3; Joel 3:2).

### **Pray for spiritual revival in Israel**

*"It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,'  
Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate,'  
But you will be called, 'My delight is in her,'  
And your land, 'Married';  
For the LORD delights in you,  
And to Him your land will be married.  
For as a young man marries a virgin,  
So your sons will marry you;  
And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,  
So your God will rejoice over you." (Is. 62:4,5)*

Clearly Israel has not reached the place where God's "delight is in her." The believing remnant is still small and often persecuted by religious zealots who do not believe in Jesus as Messiah. Israel is now encountering the moral downside of democracy with the growth of prostitution and the first gay pride parade in the city of Jerusalem, in spite of the opposition of Orthodox groups.

Pray for God to breathe His Spirit into the lives of the people of Israel, just as He foretold in the prophecy of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37. He has already brought the dead bones of the nation back to life, but not yet the totality of His spiritual revival (Ezek. 37:14). Ask God to work

in the hearts of all people in the land—Jews, Arabs, Druse, and others. Pray for those who work as missionaries among each of these groups, that their testimonies might be heard by very needy audiences.

The metaphor of God as the bridegroom being married to Israel the bride is echoed in the New Testament (Rev. 19:7) where the union is based on belief in Jesus as Messiah. This kind of union is already taking place on a smaller scale in Israel through the growth of Messianic congregations. It is a community that is growing day by day and gaining greater acceptance and interest among the general population. But it is still a remnant (a faithful minority).

However it is important to keep in mind that this has always been the case. Paul wrote, "all Israel is not Israel" (Rom. 9:6) and "there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice" (Rom. 11:5). It is through the remnant that God is able to keep His covenant promises. We are also given a depiction of the remnant growing to its maximum proportion in a time of unprecedented revival, or, as the Apostle Paul puts it, until "all Israel is saved" (Rom. 11:26).

In that day, according to Isaiah, God will be completely delighted and rejoicing. So until the day comes we need to be praying for the believing community of Israel as it exists today.

Pray for unity among the leaders of the Messianic congregations. Ask God to give them wisdom and vision for outreach to other Israelis. Pray for the needs of the congregations and the spiritual growth of believers. Pray especially for the community ministries that bring together Jews

and Arabs who share a common faith in Jesus, so that they might be a testimony to those outside the body of Messiah.

### **Pray for God's protection of Israel**

*"On your walls, O Jerusalem,  
I have appointed watchmen;  
All day and all night they will  
never keep silent." (Is. 62:6)*

In ancient times, the watchman had the responsibility of warning people of an impending attack on a city. At that point it would be up to the people to mobilize in defense of their city. But if the watchman saw an attack coming and failed to warn the people, he would be held responsible for the death and destruction that followed.

God used this metaphor to express the responsibility that Christians have toward Israel. We have the understanding of what threats exist today against the Jewish people. We have the attention of God who is able to mobilize in their defense. We have the ability to follow through on our calling and to avoid the condemnation that goes with ignorance or rejection of that calling.

God is calling us to be intercessors for Israel. Pray that the missiles launched against Israel will not bring harm against civilians. Pray that suicide bombers will be stopped before they can carry out their mission of terror. Pray for God's hand to hold back the groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah who have dedicated their purpose to the eradication of Israel as a nation.

### **Pray for God's will do be accomplished through Israel**

*"You who remind the LORD,*

*take no rest for yourselves;  
And give Him no rest until He  
establishes  
And makes Jerusalem a praise  
in the earth.” (Is. 62:7)*

It seems a bit peculiar, but God says He is fine with us “bothering” Him. He wants us to keep poking Him in the side, saying “Hey, don’t forget your covenant promises to Israel. You promised to preserve them (Jer. 31:35-37), so make sure that happens. And one more thing, I’ll be back tomorrow with another friendly reminder.”

Don’t worry, He says it’s OK.

We just have a golden opportunity to be part of God’s

great plan. He will indeed keep His promises. Israel will one day turn to Him as a nation in repentance and faith (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:26). In that day Jerusalem will no longer be the subject of criticism. It will be a city that will bring praise to God in a way never before seen. And we can have a part in that plan by agreeing with God in prayer for the city and for the people of Israel today.

Let us, then, be known not only as people who believe in Jesus and remain faithful to the Word of God. Let us also be people of prayer.



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## **PRAYING FOR THE REMNANT NEARBY**

Here are some ways that we can be praying for the part of Israel that lives right here with us...

- Pray for a clear vision of ministry. The Jewish community of America has undergone significant changes in recent decades, so a ministry such as ours has to be able to address a people group that is increasingly open to alternative spirituality, such as New Age and Buddhism, but also Messianic.
- Pray for our ministry to holocaust survivors. God continues to bring them into our lives and we have developed an effective approach for reaching them with the Good News.
- Pray for our formal outreach programs.
- Pray for our discipleship of believers.
- Pray for the Jewish people who visit our website to learn about the Messianic faith, and for those who read our literature.
- Pray for the Christians with whom we are partnering in reaching their Jewish neighbors.
- Pray for God to meet the financial and material needs of our mission.
- Pray for our missionary family and those who work with us in ministry.

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