

Rosh HaShanah (Yom Teruah)
begins the evening of September 17.

Shalom at the dawn of 5762!

Birthpangs Of Messiah

As we approach Yom Teruah, the Day of the Blowing of the Shofar, also known as Rosh HaShana, the Head of the Year, we are sober, watchful, and prayerful. We'll still dip apples in honey and wish each other a sweet new year, but our joy will be tempered by deep concern for God's favorite city, Jerusalem, and His ancient covenant people, the Jews.

Israel and her people are hurting. There is much pain in the Holy Land. Those who do not know Messiah live in great fear and insecurity. The most popular song in Israel today is: "When will it all end?" They have no answers, and they are more spiritually open than ever before.

Yesterday we talked with Dr. Randy Smith, our good friend and tour guide, at his home in Jerusalem. We discussed the situation in Israel and our proposed trip in May, 2002. We concluded our lengthy conversation by praying for God to protect Randy and his family and to continue to use them at this crucial time for His glory.

Today we received an e-mail from Randy. It's subject proclaimed: "Prayers are stronger than bullets!" Randy and his wife Dottie awoke at 5:30am to the loud blasts of gunfire. Since it had been hot outside, the windows in their home that face Bet Jala and Bethlehem had been left open, with fans stuck in part of the opening. A couple of stray bullets entered their bedroom, breaking in two and ricocheting into the wall just above their headboard. No one was hurt.

The Smiths are celebrating the GOODNESS OF GOD who is their Shield and their Defense. The e-mail ended with: "We are so thankful for the prayers of our friends. We are COUNTING on them! Please don't leave us here uncovered. Keep Jerusalem in your prayers! God will bless you for it."

All Israel is reeling under the constant terrorist aggression. Some have died. Many have been wounded. Almost all are suffering. A traditional Jewish book called **Mashiach: Who? What? Why? How? Where? and When?** by Chaim Kramer addresses the concept of the birthpangs of Messiah (*Mashiach*) in its section on When? by quoting Isaiah 26:17: "*As a woman with child who draws near to the time of her delivery, suffers and cries out in pain; so have we been before You, God.*"

Kramer states that just as a child comes into the world only through birthpangs, so too, comes redemption. He quotes the sufferings that the Jews have endured prior to each of their salvations. This was the case in Egypt, in Babylon, in Persia and under the rule of the Greek Empire. Prior to each "salvation," the Jews experienced unbearable suffering. "But they waited, and each exile brought 'its own child,' its own salvation – the Exodus, Purim, Hanukkah, etc."

Could the bullets and the bombs exploding throughout Israel today be "contractions" that will result in the birth of the Messianic Era, the revealing of Israel's Messiah to her people? Will this

pain finally culminate in joy? We pray for that – for God's salvation (Yeshua) to spring forth quickly. May the shofar be heard announcing the arrival of the King of Kings! (P.S. Yeshua also spoke of this traditional Jewish concept of "birthpangs." Matthew 24:4-13)

Weep With Those Who Weep

Thursday, August 9, 2001 (Av 20, 5761) was unfortunately a fairly typical day in Israel of late. The headlines of the Arutz daily newspaper read: "Arab Slaughters 18 in the Holy City." An Arab suicide bomber entered the Sbarro Pizzeria in the center of Jerusalem shortly before 2:00pm, positioned himself in the center of a crowd, and then detonated a powerful charge leaving 18 dead and approximately 80 injured. Among the dead were seven small children and babies. The powerful blast showered the area with shards of glass, and metallic fragments. The sound of the explosion was ear piercing. The restaurant on the corner of Jaffa Road and King George Street was totally destroyed in the explosion. The scene was one of panic and horror with bodies, and parts of bodies strewn all over. No one could reach their loved ones as phone systems crashed due to the sudden demand. Imagine wondering if **your** child had stopped for pizza at Sbarro's after school?

On the same day, Aug. 9, 2001, terrorists fired mortar shells on Jewish homes in Kfar Azza, northeast of Beer Sheva and a bomb was safely dismantled in the residential neighborhood of Oranit, east of Petah Tikva. There were no injuries. (Someone was praying!)

We are reminded of the verse that mentions "*Rachel weeping for her children...*" (Matthew 2:18) Rachel is still weeping for her children. The battle has never changed. It is a **spiritual battle**. A suicide terrorist in a cafe (Aug. 13, 2001) shouted "Allah Akbar (God is great)" before he blew himself up and injured twenty-one innocent people. **Who is greater**, Allah or the God of Israel, the God of the Bible? **This is the issue**. If the radical Muslims can wipe Israel off the map, they will have proved that the God of Israel is a liar. Make no mistake: the goal of the P.A. is to **replace "Israel"** with "Palestine." "Hammas" literally means "violence," and violence is a legitimate way to achieve their goals. Martyrdom is an honor. Children are taught to hate Jews. Satan has blinded the minds and hearts of many of the Palestinians. Pray that they might meet their Messiah and be set free!

Don't worry about the Land of Israel. She will remain. God promised that in Jeremiah 31:35-36.

Prayer: The Greatest Weapon

In the section of Kramer's book entitled "What is Mashiach?" there is a discussion about "Mashiach's weapons." The author states that prayer symbolizes humility, an important trait of the Messiah and concludes with: "The very essence of Mashiach is prayer. Each person utilizes some tool or 'weapon' to which he has a close affinity in accomplishing his goals. Mashiach's main weapon, with which he will conquer the world, will be prayer... He will make known the use of prayer as the means of communication with God. Prayer and praise to God will be the staple of life in the Days of Mashiach, as is evident in the books of the Prophets. Mashiach will develop every person's sense of prayer in order to fully bring forth its power." How's that for an unsaved Jewish understanding of prayer? Those of us who know that Mashiach has already come and His name is Yeshua (Jesus) must pray now more than ever!! **PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM. THEY WILL PROSPER THAT LOVE THEE** (Psalm 122:6).

Let us be more than conquerors through Him that loved us and gave Himself for us: **PRAY!** As Jewish people around the world recite the following verses from the Avinu Malkenu (Our Father,

Our King) prayer, we ask that you pray with them **and** for them.

Jewish people pray:

Our Father, Our King, annul all evil decrees against your people Israel.

Intercessors pray:

Our Father, Our King, annul all evil decrees against your people Israel. Confuse and confound the enemies of ALL your covenant people. Have mercy on your people. Send your Malachim (Angels) to watch over Israel and deliver her. Silence Israel's foes and have compassion on her children.

See Yeshua in Israel's Suffering

How does God want believers in Yeshua to respond in the light of Israel's suffering? A powerful, yet somewhat unique perspective is offered to us in a book written by Dr. Michael Brown, a Messianic Jewish Bible scholar. **Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus** is a must for all those who love Jesus and all believers who have a burden for the salvation of the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel.

Dr. Brown sees a parallel between Israel's suffering in the Holocaust and the suffering of Yeshua on the cross. His concluding statement sums up the relationship: "He (Yeshua) is one of us. And when you see a photograph of a Jewish child being led naked to the crematorium, I want you to look again; Jesus is standing there, too."

Dr. Brown includes a quote from Basilea Schlink, a precious German saint of God and lover of Israel. She said: "The sight of Jews as an oppressed and afflicted people crossing the face of the earth, despised and rejected, should make us think of those words of Jesus about the destitute and the needy: *'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'* (Matthew 25:40) In speaking of *'my brethren,'* He was speaking of His people Israel. Who has suffered so much contempt from all nations down through the ages? Who has been so rejected? From whom did men turn away their faces? Who has been persecuted and tormented with such burning hatred? Who has been wounded and tortured to death so often as this His People? Here, indeed, are the brethren of our Lord Jesus."

Can you see our crucified Messiah in the horrible deaths faced by Israelis at this very moment? Do you feel their pain as the brethren of Yeshua? Can you see how comforting them would be comforting Yeshua in His suffering?

How to Comfort Israel?

Our hearts tell us that we must go to Israel in her time of sorrow to comfort God's people and share in their pain. They need to see that there is a hidden treasure in their suffering if it draws them closer to their God and **Messiah**. (A common Orthodox Jewish belief is that suffering is God calling His people upward, an "elevation in status" with God). When we hurt, we are closest to His heart.

What about May 2002 and our Shavuot trip to the Land? Dr. Smith said that if our group was coming for a holiday to see Israel, to enjoy her and see all there is to see in the Land, this not the time to come. If, however, a group felt led to come to comfort, minister and bring physical relief to

the Israeli people, there would be no better time than this.

After much prayer, we feel the Lord saying: **Put the Shavuot tour on hold. Go there and touch my people for me.** This wouldn't be a tour at all, but a mission of mercy, fulfilling the admonition of Isaiah 40:1-2 *"Comfort yes, comfort My people, says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned..."*

Do you feel led to join us? Intercessors, especially, would be welcome, but **Love** is the main requirement. We would ask those of you who had set money aside for the tour in May 2002 to prayerfully consider sending an "I have not forgotten Jerusalem" gift of \$500 or more with us so that we can distribute it to the families of terrorist victims, Israelis who are out of work due to the drop off in tourism, thousands of children living on the poverty level...etc etc.

Come Join Us As We Celebrate Sukkot

We will be speaking at Congregation Shores David [(813)831-5673] in Tampa, Florida on September 28. We will then join Paul Wilbur in a public Sukkot outreach at Lowry Park on September 29. We hope those in the Tampa area will come out and join us!

Our prayer for each of you, as the shofar sounds, is that any suffering in your life will cause you to turn to God (not away from Him) and receive the love and comfort that He longs to give to you!