

DEVOTED
TO
ISRAEL

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INTRODUCTION

The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to speak in several thousand churches around the world, including England, Israel, South Africa, Canada, and every one of the 48 contiguous United States. When speaking, I have also had the blessing of sharing my testimony—how God revealed the Messiah Jesus to me as a Jewish college student in Chapel Hill, NC, through the Old Testament prophecies. In sharing my story, I also have helped others understand the significant place that my Jewish people have in God’s heart and plan, and our need to take Jesus back to them. I also have been honored to be a part of seeing many Jewish people receive Jesus as their Messiah. I personally have known Jesus for nearly 33 years.

My great grandparents on my father’s side came to the United States from Russia in 1904. My grandparents on my mother’s side came from Germany in the 1920s. They were all Jewish. I was raised in a religious Jewish home and instilled with a deep love for my heritage. I have always loved my culture, my people, and my land. Yet when God revealed Himself to me in college, and I gave my life to Him, I experienced the pain of realizing that my parents and most of my family did not understand, and also the pain of seeing most of them reject the Messiah I knew to be true. The Jewish community, for the most part, rejects Jesus as Messiah. I have spent 28 years taking the message of Jesus back to the people whom I love so dearly.

Wherever I speak I experience wonderful people who love and care deeply about the Jewish community, about Israel, and are fascinated with the Jewish roots of our faith. Of this I am grateful. Many Christians, including Christian leaders, are getting involved in a growing movement to support Israel. Of that I am also grateful. We must strongly stand in support of the Jewish homeland. In the process, however, we must also keep perspective. The proclamation of the gospel must come first—in tandem, with our support of Israel—because peace won’t come until Jesus reigns in individual hearts and returns to establish His Kingdom.

Most Christians are aware of the passages in Scripture that say, “I will bless

those who bless you” (Gen. 12:3), and “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6). However, most Christians know very little about the land and the people who are so deeply loved by God. We are interested but neglect to pray. We also neglect to share the good news. Our limited knowledge can only take us so far. We have to allow our heart to be knitted together with God’s. He has a special love for Israel, for Jerusalem, and for my Jewish people. Our hearts need to turn in that direction as well.

I have written this devotional because of my love for my people, and because I know that prayer is effective. I believe that God wants the Christian community to pray for Israel and for the Jewish community. Understanding more about Israel, the Jewish people, and our Jewish roots should place a burden on our hearts—a burden to pray AND to take the incredible message of Jesus back to them.

It is my hope and prayer that this devotional will inspire and encourage more Christians to pray for the people who have that special place in God’s heart and plan. I am hoping that more prayers will go up to God for the peace of Jerusalem. And, in the process, it is my hope that you will learn more about the city that Jesus wept over and the people whom He desires to gather together under His wings. Please take your time with this book. Do not rush through it. It is not meant to be read through from beginning to end in a day, or even a few days. Ponder the message of each devotion and let it speak to you personally. Extend each prayer. Pray each one asking God to do a work in your heart. It is my sincere hope that He will do just that.

As I have written this devotional, I have often spoken in the first person. The Jewish people are literally “my people.” I have not stopped being Jewish. I am one of them, and I love them. I cry out along with my brother, the apostle Paul: “My heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved” (Rom. 10:1). My people need the Messiah—they need Jesus. He has come.

May the church’s burden be to take the message of hope and peace in our Messiah back to the community who gave us our Messiah, and may that burden continually grow. I hope this devotional helps you along your journey, as you love Israel and my Jewish people.

For the sake of Israel,

MURRAY TILLES



DEVOTED TO ISRAEL

WITH PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING THEY
SANG TO THE LORD:

“HE IS GOOD; HIS LOVE TO ISRAEL
ENDURES FOREVER.”

EZRA 3:1 1

Most people know Jesus was Jewish and lived a Jewish life. A majority of Christians also know that Israel is an important place. From the time we are children we hear about the Israelites as we learn the Bible stories—stories all set in and around the land of Israel. Christians often say, “We are indebted to the Jewish people,” and, “They are God’s chosen ones.” Anyone who really knows Jesus deeply and intimately has a place in their heart for the Jewish people. If you love Jesus, you have to love the Jewish community, for He was one of them.

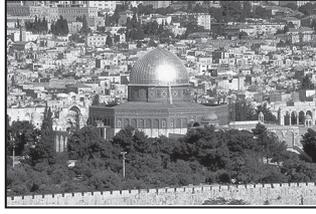
Unfortunately, for nearly 2000 years, one of the reasons the Jewish people have not come to know Jesus is that many who say they love Him have also hated them. A reality of our misguided church history is that the church has not, for the most part, shown love for Jewish people or Israel. My people have died at the hands of “Crusaders for Christ,” saying they wanted to rid the world of the Jews so that the purity of “Christianity” could prevail. And yet, Jesus was Jewish, Paul was Jewish, and the New Testament itself was written by Jewish authors.

Today, however, there is a movement within evangelical Christianity to turn back the clock. More and more Christians are showing their love and devotion to the Jewish community and to Israel. Some even say we should repent for the past sins of the church. Yet this movement can be misguided as well, for it is a movement that oftentimes expresses love for Israel and the Jewish people, while neglecting or resisting to share Jesus with them. We cannot truly love the Jewish people and Israel without bringing them the gospel message of Jesus. To be fully devoted to Israel means to stand with Israel the nation, to love the Jewish people, but most importantly, to bring the message of Jesus back to those who brought Him to us. If we are devoted to Israel, we will tell them about Jesus. Devotion to the land and the people without devotion to the message of the gospel and the gift of salvation in Messiah Jesus—“to the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16, KJV)—is not devotion at all.

PRAYER

God of Israel, help me to know what loving Israel truly means. Help me to love them with Your love. Help me to see them through Your eyes. Open my heart and my mind to understand Your deep devotion to Israel so I may love them the way You do. Your love for Israel endures forever. Give me a burden to not only love them, but also to show them love by bringing them the gospel and helping them to see Jesus through my love. In Messiah's Name, Amen.





ONLY ONE CITY

PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM: MAY THOSE
WHO LOVE YOU BE SECURE.

PSALM 122:6

There is only one city that the Bible says to pray for: Jerusalem. In fact, an entire Psalm is devoted to the city of Jerusalem. It is the city whose gates are to be praised, and is the city where the tribes of Israel would go up to worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. King David made it the capital of the united kingdom of Israel 1000 years before Jesus. It is the city God chose for His home, and His house—the temple—was built on its highest hill.

God loves Jerusalem, and the prayer of the Psalmist is that God's people who also truly love Jerusalem may dwell in security. It should be a city of peace, but unfortunately, it has been a city surrounded by conflict for thousands of years. The Babylonians, Syrians, and Romans, just to name a few, have invaded it and laid claim to it. Today the world waits in anticipation, wondering what is going to happen to the city in the future.

Jerusalem has been a center of conflict because it is in the center of God's plan. Because it plays a significant role in God's future revelation of His glory and kingdom, Jerusalem attracts the attention of the Enemy who wants to thwart His plan. But those of us who know Messiah Jesus know He is going to return to Jerusalem to establish His kingdom of peace. He wept over the city of Jerusalem, left from the city of Jerusalem,

and is going to return to the city of Jerusalem to rule and reign. One day, peace will come to it in the form of a person—the Messiah Jesus. There will not be any peace there until He returns to establish His kingdom. So we pray that peace will come and that people will receive the true peace of God, which can be found in the person of Jesus—and in Him alone.

— P R A Y E R —

Lord God in heaven, I “pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” You love that city. It is Yours, and it is special. Please protect Your city and the people who dwell there. Help those who do not yet know You, to come to know You. Messiah Jesus, open the eyes of those who need to see. Bring peace to Your city. “Come quickly” (Rev. 22:20, KJV), Lord Jesus, and establish your kingdom. In Messiah’s Name, Amen.





PAUL'S HEART FOR HIS PEOPLE

BROTHERS, MY HEART'S DESIRE AND PRAYER TO
GOD FOR THE ISRAELITES IS THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED.

ROMANS 10:1

The apostle Paul came from a very religious Jewish background. Before becoming a believer in Jesus he persecuted Christians, having them put to death. However, God got to Paul's heart. Jesus revealed Himself to him, and his life was changed forever. He became the greatest voice of the truth of Jesus in all of history. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote much of the New Testament.

The apostle Paul was Jewish, and yet he was called by God to be an apostle to the Gentiles. His main ministry was as a church planter in Asia Minor, an area in which he naturally would meet and reach mostly non-Jewish people. Paul spent his time walking the streets, traveling from place to place, proclaiming the message of salvation in Jesus, reaching people for the Lord, making disciples of new believers, and raising up leadership for new churches. He was very successful, and in large part, the church began as a result of the apostle Paul's ministry. And, again, the primary group he was called to reach were Gentiles.

However, Paul's unceasing burden for his kinsmen is evident in his life and ministry as well. It is an area of his ministry that often is overlooked

by many, and yet, it is an area that should be understood by the church today. Paul's heart for the Jewish people and the special place they had in his life, is also a reflection of God's love for the Jewish people. The Jews had a special place in Paul's heart, they have a special place in God's heart, and they need to have a special place in our hearts as well.

As we watch Paul's ministry develop through the book of Acts, he makes his love for his Jewish people quite evident. Though called as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul makes it a point to go to the synagogue first in every city he visited (see Acts 17:2). There, in the synagogue, he would present the truth of Jesus to the Jewish community. He looked for those Jewish people whose hearts were receptive to the message of the Messiah. Paul spent a lot of his time in the synagogue, but once he had proclaimed the message of Jesus to his people, he would then proclaim Messiah to the Gentiles, believing that one day they would take Jesus back to the Jews. Though many, if not most, of his kinsmen often rejected him, Paul did not give up on them. Neither does God.

— P R A Y E R —

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, You do not give up on those whom You love. I believe that Your Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of many Jewish people because You love them so dearly. I thank You for Your love for Israel and the Jewish community. As the apostle Paul prayed, I pray, that my "heart's desire and prayer" for Israel "is that they may be saved." Please make it happen, even today. In Your mighty Name, Amen.





LOVING ISRAEL THE BIBLICAL WAY

YOU WHO BRING GOOD TIDINGS TO ZION, GO UP
ON A HIGH MOUNTAIN. YOU WHO BRING GOOD
TIDINGS TO JERUSALEM, LIFT UP YOUR VOICE WITH
A SHOUT, LIFT IT UP, DO NOT BE AFRAID; SAY TO THE
TOWNS OF JUDAH, “HERE IS YOUR GOD!”

ISAIAH 40:9

Israel—its land and its people—is one of the smallest countries of the world, and yet it is in the news every day. The name *Israel* is used nearly 2000 times in the Bible, while *Jerusalem* is mentioned 760 times. The world has its eyes focused on Israel. Some love her. Some hate her. Israel—the Jewish homeland.

It is very popular in evangelical Christian circles to communicate one’s love for Israel and the Jewish community. Pastors and Christian groups jump on the “love Israel” bandwagon. Loving Israel is important, but it cannot come at the expense of the proclamation of the gospel to Israel. Too often we substitute what feels good for what is right. We gravitate toward what is accepted rather than toward what is commanded.

There is a danger in loving Israel if we are misguided, misdirected, or don’t understand what truly loving Israel and the Jewish people means. Building bridges of understanding often comes with strings attached.

Most Christians focus more on loving the Jewish people and Israel, while neglecting to communicate the gospel to the Jewish people.

It is much easier to show love and friendship, because it feels good. It is applauded. Telling someone they need Jesus and are risking eternal separation from God if they do not consider His claims is difficult, uncomfortable, and frightening to do. Therefore, individuals and groups often placate their own feelings by substituting their kind of love for the kind of love we are commanded to show.

Remember—we are commanded to take the Good News of Messiah Jesus to everyone. We are not given another option. Everyone needs to hear, but do not forget: “to the Jew first” (Rom. 1:16, ESV).

PRAYER

Lord, help me to love others by showing them Your truth. I know that to truly show our love, I must lay aside my fears and my insecurities to share Your Good News. Please help me to look for opportunities and please open doors into the lives of those I love who do not yet know You. Help me to do what is right, not expedient. You showed Your love for Israel by giving Your life for them. Help me to take that message to them. In Messiah's Name. Amen.





GIVING TO ISRAEL THE BIBLICAL WAY

I WILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU.

GENESIS 1 2:3

Not only are we commanded to pray for the Jewish people, but also we are given instruction to share our material blessings with the Jewish community. The apostle Paul had been to Macedonia and Achaia where he received a love offering for “the saints in Jerusalem” (Rom. 15:26). These saints primarily consisted of Jewish people who had accepted the Lord and were a part of the church in Jerusalem. Though the offering that he had taken was going to Jewish believers in Jesus, the principle of giving to the needs of any Jewish person is made clear.

Paul wrote, “Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.” Romans 15:26-27

The church has received many blessings from the Jewish people. They gave us the Bible, and it is through Jesus—the Jewish Messiah—that God brought salvation to the world. The very first missionaries were Jewish. The sacred acts of communion and baptism come from

Jewish traditions. The church began as a Jewish movement. The Jews have blessed us beyond comprehension with "spiritual blessings." We owe it to them, according to Scripture, to share our "material blessings."

There are many ways to share blessings with the Jewish people. There are Jews in need around the world, and there are special ministries devoted to helping them. However, if you support a ministry doing benevolent work among the Jewish people, please make sure they are a Christian ministry and believe in sharing the gospel as well. If you have a Jewish friend, whether they are in material need or not, look for opportunities to bless them. Birthday? Anniversary? Special holiday? When they ask why you are reaching out, tell them because you have received many great gifts from their community. Tell them, in fact, that if it were not for the Jewish people, you would not have Jesus.

— P R A Y E R —

Dear Lord, Messiah came through the Jewish people and ministered in Israel. Please bless and protect them. I ask that You would help me to know how I can help them in a material way. I pray for the poor among them in Israel and around the world. I thank You that through them You have given me so much. Help me to know how to give back. In Your Name, Amen.





LOVING ISRAEL IN THE GREATEST WAY

HOW, THEN, CAN THEY CALL ON THE ONE THEY HAVE NOT BELIEVED IN? AND HOW CAN THEY BELIEVE IN THE ONE OF WHOM THEY HAVE NOT HEARD? AND HOW CAN THEY HEAR WITHOUT SOMEONE PREACHING TO THEM?

ROMANS 10:14

The greatest way we can show love for Israel and the Jewish community is by sharing the message of Jesus with them. He is the greatest gift they gave us, and it is our responsibility to take Jesus back to them.

Unfortunately this command has been, and continues to be, sorely neglected by the church. Church history is littered with instances of Jewish people being persecuted in the name of Jesus, rather than being wooed to the One who wept over Jerusalem and loved His people so much. It is much easier to “pray for the peace of Jerusalem” (Ps. 122:6), than it is to proclaim the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6) to Jerusalem. It is much easier to share material blessings with Jewish people, thinking that material blessings will suffice, than it is to share the gift of the gospel—the blessing of knowing Messiah Jesus personally.

Yet the apostle Paul’s heart was broken when he said, “I speak the truth in Christ—I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy

Spirit—I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel” (Rom. 9:1-4). Paul’s heart was for his Jewish people first, and Jesus Himself wept over Jerusalem and sent his disciples out beginning in Jerusalem because of the enormous responsibility to take the gospel to the Jewish community.

The Jewish people and Israel need our prayers, our blessings, and most importantly, our Jesus. The Bible commands us to give them all three. However, without sharing Jesus with them, ultimately our prayers for their peace and our gifts of love will be meaningless. In the end, it is only the gift of Jesus that will bring lasting joy and peace into their lives.

PRAYER

God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, please open Jewish hearts and minds to Jesus today. I ask that the church would rise up and take the message of Messiah back to the special people through whom He came. Please give the church a passion to take Him to the Jewish people in Israel and around the world. May my heart be broken over those whom He loved so much. In Your Name, Amen.





THE CRUCIFIXION PSALM

MY GOD, MY GOD WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

PSALM 22:1

When Jesus was on the cross He quoted Scripture, and not just some random Scripture. As He hung from the cross, with His hands and feet nailed to it, a crown of thorns on His head, and His joints stretched from their sockets, these words came from His lips: “My God, my god, why have you forsaken me?” In great agony, He asked His Father why He felt so distant—so far away. In His humanity, the Messiah cried out to God the Father as He took our sins upon Himself. There were then—and still are today—some Jewish leaders who questioned that cry of Jesus from the cross. Perhaps worse, the Roman soldiers standing nearby mocked and laughed.

Yet if He truly was the Messiah, why did He cry out in that way? Previously Jesus had said, “I have the authority to lay [My life] down and authority to take it up again” (John 10:18), so if He indeed was that powerful, why didn’t He just come down from the cross? This powerful King—mocked and ridiculed—chose to remain on the cross. Certainly, He could have come down from there, and with one wave of His hand could have slain them all. But He stayed there, surely dying with great sadness in His eyes, even asking His Father to forgive them (see Luke 23:34).

Through this brief cry from the cross, Jesus, in the most magnificent of ways, was highlighting the remainder of Psalm 22. It was a cry for

those who could see—to indeed see—for He was pointing to Himself. “I am poured out like water, and all of my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me” (Ps. 22:14-17).

As Jesus was dying, He knew exactly what to say. This messianic Psalm of David was His words and thoughts of His death, written long before it ever happened—long before crucifixion became a method of capital punishment. And, crucifixion was never a form of Jewish capital punishment. Yet He died on a cross just as the Psalmist predicted.

— P R A Y E R —

Messiah, thank You that You hung on a tree for me. Thank You, Father, that through Your Word and infinite wisdom You gave us a picture of Messiah's death, long before it ever happened. You are an amazing God! Help me to remember what Your Son did for me that day. And thank You, Jesus, that You cried out to show me who You are. In Your Name, Amen.





PASSOVER FREEDOM

THE LORD'S PASSOVER BEGINS AT TWILIGHT ON
THE FOURTEENTH DAY OF THE FIRST MONTH.

LEVITICUS 23:5

If there is one holiday celebrated by all Jewish people it is Passover. Like our American Thanksgiving, Passover is the holiday that brings the Jewish family together. I remember celebrating Passover with my family, when thirty of us would gather at my aunt and uncle's house. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins from around the country would come to celebrate. When the table was set, we would read from the ancient Hagaddah, the telling of the story of the Exodus, and enjoy a huge meal together.

Just as most Americans do not see God in Thanksgiving, most Jewish people do not see the God of Israel in the Passover. And in the same way that Christmas has become a secular holiday for those who are simply cultural "Christians," Passover has become a secular holiday for most Jewish people, who are secular, non-religious Jews. It is not unusual for Jewish family members to sit at the Passover table and celebrate the holiday, not believing in the God of the Bible or the story of the Exodus itself. In a similar way, many around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus without truly believing in the God of the Bible, or in the birth of His Son. Churches are filled to overflowing on Easter with many denying the truth of the resurrection.

However, for the religious Jewish person, Passover is a night to remember the “mighty hand” of God who redeemed my people from slavery and bondage to Egyptian oppression. Yes, “The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” (Deut. 26:8). It is about freedom and redemption, for the Passover message of redemption is found in the way He did redeem His people—through the blood of the Lamb.

Just as Americans should be thankful at Thanksgiving for being free from British rule, all believers in Jesus—whether Jewish or Gentile—should be thankful at Passover, and always, not simply for freedom from bondage to Egyptian rule, but for the spiritual freedom we have in the Passover Lamb.

— P R A Y E R —

God of freedom, I thank You for the hope I have through my Messiah, the Passover Lamb. I thank You for the story of freedom and redemption that can only be mine through Your act of strength. You battled for me and personally freed me from oppression. Thank You for Your “mighty hand and ... outstretched arm.” In Your Mighty Name, Amen.

