

# Monthly Update

March 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This edition of the “Monthly Update” contains information that is reflective of what is happening in our secular world, especially in Israel. At this time we face challenges that I venture to write have been unprecedented in the history of our country – with dangers not only from the external world but also from within the borders of our country.

We are leading off with Psalm 91. In past issues of the Update I have asked that you pray for our country. While there is nothing magic about reading a passage out of the Bible, I believe that there is good about reading something aloud as a prayer. That is what I ask that you do – in your time with the Lord, read Psalm 91 as a prayer and “hedge of protection” around our nation and of Israel.

Secondly, pray for revival in the United Methodist Church. It is not just about denominationalism but our heritage. Since the Wesleyan movement transformed British society, so could it bring about great good here. We first need to recognize that just as every human body needs oxygen to give it life, so every human soul needs the life that Jesus Christ gives. We desperately need the passion for saving the lost that they so desperately deserve. Everyone everywhere needs Jesus Christ! If somehow there were a move of the Holy Spirit and every single United Methodist knew that, had a life-changing “Damascus Road experience” and had a passion for telling people how Jesus had changed his life, then possibly fires of revival might be kindled in our United Methodist Church. Heart-conversion, prayer, Bible study, telling others – these are key!

Revival could start anywhere in the United Methodist Church. It could start with the bishops. If each of our active bishops in the United States could individually have an “on-fire, Damascus-Road experience” with Jesus Christ, their lives would be radically changed. If then they had a burning desire for their district superintendents – then their pastors – then all of the laity in their areas to have such an experience, and... if the people called “Methodist” were to seriously receive the life-changing power of Jesus Christ as John Wesley did, read the Bible like it contains the words of life, work as if it were all up to them but pray as if it were all up to God – then our church could be ignited with the fires of revival. We could then turn this country upside down! To do it again would be nothing new for us but a return to who we are as Methodists.

We need to offer up powerful prayers to Him who has called us – for revival and for us to ever be faithful as we “contend for the faith” as the Lord has entrusted to our care. Thank you for standing with us.

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

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## March 2015 Update

### **Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church**

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. – I Timothy 2:1-2

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### **The Good Stuff**

+ Psalm 91 has been called the “Soldier’s Psalm” since it offers comfort in the midst of stressful situations. Assuredly, combat is a time of danger and is stressful at times. It is good to include it here since we are in perilous times in our own country and in the world. Pray as if it is all up to God and get involved and make your influence known as if it is all up to you – because each of us has the responsibility to do all that we can.

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### **Psalm 91**

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High  
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.

For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from  
deadly disease. He will cover you with his feathers.  
He will shelter you with his wings.

His faithful promises are your armor and protection.  
Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies in the day.

Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,  
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch  
you.

Just open your eyes, and see how the wicked are punished.

If you make the Lord your refuge, if you make the Most High your shelter, no evil will conquer you;  
no plague will come near your home.

For he will order his angels to protect you wherever you go.

They will hold you up with their hands  
so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.  
You will trample upon lions and cobras;  
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!

The Lord says, “I will rescue those who love me.  
I will protect those who trust in my name.  
When they call on me, I will answer; I will be with them in trouble.  
I will rescue and honor them.  
I will reward them with a long life and give them my salvation.”

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**+ A Modern Day Miracle that Saved Tel Aviv.**

[Note: The following is narrated from a Messianic (i.e., Christian Jewish) and an Orthodox Jewish perspectives. Observant Jews do not pronounce nor write the full name of God but rather say and write it as “G-d” because they deem even the name too holy to communicate in its entirety. – AOM]

Every December the children of Israel remember the miracle of Hanukkah. Some 160 years before Messiah Yeshua was born, a tyrant king from Damascus ruled over the Jews and forced many to worship Greek gods. For three years a Jewish rebellion led by the Maccabees fought against this tyrant. They finally drove him out and then began the work of cleansing the Temple from all the abominations that had gone on there, including sacrifices of pigs to the god Zeus. To rededicate the Temple, the Jews needed to relight the Menorah and keep it filled with oil so that the light never went out. But among the rubble, they could only find a single container of oil left – enough for one day – that had been sanctified and sealed by the High Priest. According to tradition, they lit the Menorah and it miraculously burned for eight days – long enough to have new oil pressed and sanctified. Hanukkah is all about miracles. The very presence of the Spirit of God is represented in the anointing oil that lit the Menorah in the Holy Place of the Jewish Temple. The Maccabees had to fight the Syrian enemy for three years. The victory of the Jewish people over this vicious enemy was a great miracle.

Twenty-five miles from the ancient hometown of the Maccabees is the city of Tel Aviv. Last summer during the war with Gaza, a story was broadcast on Israeli TV and appeared in numerous newspapers and blogs with the headline, “‘Their God changes the path of our rockets in mid-air,’ said a terrorist.” At the time, I thought the story was fascinating, but because I did not see any thing written about an eye witness account, I didn’t repeat the story. But not long ago, I was at a Messianic function where I visited with an old acquaintance. She began to tell me that her daughter – whom I shall call Shelly – was stationed in the Kiriya military headquarters in downtown Tel Aviv – the equivalent of the Pentagon. The Kiriya is located a few meters next to our iconic three Azrieli towers which include a mammoth mall. My friend said that on July 17, Shelly was working in the Kiriya when the sirens went off and every one quickly headed for the bomb shelters. The siren alerts throughout Tel Aviv had become quite common last summer. But usually, after a minute or so, the all-clear signal would sound; people would climb out of the bomb shelters and return to their work. But this time Shelly remarked about how the sirens at the Kiriya continued for “a very long time,” with the loud speaker repeating, “Incoming Rocket. Incoming Rocket.” Finally, the all-clear sign was given. But the soldiers, including Shelly, didn’t know at the time what was going on. Shortly after that a Rabbi of a yeshiva [Talmudic school – and whose name I will leave anonymous] sent this email out which was received by the father of the soldier: “One of my students whom I haven’t heard from in many years contacted me today to ask where I teach Torah. I was surprised by his question, since I know for sure that he is not observing Torah and mitzvot [commandments]. So, I asked him why he wanted to know, and this was his response:”

Azrieli Towers, Tel Aviv: “‘I observed the hand of G-d today with my own eyes. Now I know FOR SURE that there is a G-d!! No one told it to me...I didn’t hear it from someone else...I saw this happen with my own eyes. ‘I am an integral part of the iron dome operation. What we do here is an exact science and I cannot give many details of what we do. The other day we knew that a missile was headed directly for Tel Aviv...aimed at one of the three big [Azrieli] towers. We sent up one missile to intercept it, and we missed. We sent a second one, and we missed. We sent a third one to intercept...and we missed. ‘Something like this has only happened one other time ever. We are very exact and very good at what we do. We do not miss. So to miss three times is not possible.

“‘By this time, disaster was imminent. Their missile was only seconds from detonation. We began the procedure of sending off one final missile to try and intercept it just before it came down, but we knew that casualties would still be imminent. Now, you must understand, our calculations based on physics and

aerodynamics and weather (wind, atmosphere, humidity) are complete...there is NOTHING we don't take into account. This is how [the Iron Dome] is able to work so precisely.

“But all of a sudden, as we were scrambling to do anything and everything we could to save Tel Aviv, all of a sudden OUT OF NOWHERE came up a huge wind... one that was not on the radar...one that DID NOT EXIST before...and blew the missile from over Tel Aviv all the way into the sea and dropped it off exactly safely into the water where no one was injured!!! You must understand...there was NO WIND...and then there was A HUGE WIND. This is not a couple of inches of a “move” that any gentle breeze could influence...this is MILES. It was nothing other than the hand of G-d!! I saw it with my very own eyes!!! The wind was not there before and it was not there after. It didn't come from somewhere, it came from NOWHERE. And after it moved the missile to the sea, the wind disappeared! So, after seeing this, I can no longer deny the existence of G-d. I took upon myself to keep Shabbat. Yesterday was my first Shabbat to keep and it was the best Shabbat of my life.”

So that's the story. Such a hit would have been catastrophic beyond imagination for the state of Israel. Shelly's father wrote me the following: “I didn't know that our daughter was in the area that the missile was heading toward! I began to share the Rabbi's email at our family Shabbat dinner. Since our daughter was at the table (I hadn't a chance to talk to her much since she arrived home that afternoon from the army), I asked her if she knew about this and did it really happen. It was at that point that she said, “Yes, it did happen.” But she hadn't heard how the missile was deflected. She only knew that she was in the safe area of the building, waiting for the sirens to stop. It lasted a long time, and then ended. Our daughter never heard what happened until then at our dinner.” The father continued, “I was so thrilled to hear how God was protecting our daughter, even when I didn't know about it. (I was also glad I didn't know about it until after it was over!) When I was back in the U.S. this summer I met with a lot of groups that love Israel and pray for Israel and our family. I know many people were excited to hear how their prayers are making a difference here on the ground in Israel. It really was a great miracle; that event could have been the Israeli equivalent to 9/11 in the U.S. We can say with grateful hearts, the famous Hanukkah blessing: ‘A Great Miracle Happened Here!’”

I spoke with Shelly who affirmed the story of the unusually long sirens in the Kiriyah beside the towers. Because as a Messianic believer she is still serving in a responsible position, and because of the sensitivity of the Iron Dome system, she must remain an anonymous source. But from all the information I have received, this is a true story and a true miracle. The God of Israel has not forgotten His chosen people. I truly believe that as Israelis become increasingly aware of the mortal danger facing the Jewish state, they will call out to the God of Israel. And since the Scriptures foretell that as Israelis open their hearts to God, they will meet “Him whom they pierced.” The day is near when the Scripture will be fulfilled: “It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; And while they are still speaking, I will answer.” (Isaiah 65:24)

– “A Modern Day Miracle THAT SAVED TEL AVIV” by Shira Sorko-Ram; Monthly Report: December 2014 ( according to the Jewish calendar: Kislev – Tevet 5775). Original article which appeared in the British newspaper, *The Jewish Telegraph*; reported a miracle of a rocket which changed direction. E-mail received from one of our associates in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

**Of Interest. *World Malaria Report.*** The World Malaria Report, produced yearly by the World Health Organization, assesses global and regional malaria trends, highlights progress toward global targets, and describes opportunities and challenges in controlling and eliminating the disease. This year's report is evidence of the exceptional progress that has been made against malaria since 2000, in no small part due to the efforts of Imagine No Malaria. The report indicates that a record number of bed nets were distributed and used in the last two years, which is helping to save lives. An estimated 670 million fewer malaria cases and 4.3 million fewer malaria deaths occurred between 2001 and 2013, and children under the age of five in sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 3.9 million (92%) of these averted deaths.

Imagine No Malaria (INM) recently released a new informational video that demonstrates the impact of the church's work to help end deaths from malaria. It is available for download and viewing. Find other INM resources online.

– Newscope, UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 02 / January 14, 2015

**(UM) Bishops. Council of Bishops to Take Up Global Nature of Church.**

[Note: I would be very suspicious of anything the Council of Bishops will propose in this area. – AOM] When the Council of Bishops meets in Berlin in May, one topic of conversation likely will be the Global Book of Discipline, being developed at the request of the 2012 General Conference. The council's executive committee got a preview of this and other church issues when it met Jan. 13–14 in Dallas.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 05 / February 4, 2015

**Homosexuality.**

**+ *Connectional Table Considers Third Way on Homosexuality.***

[Note: This is a smoke screen. This is, in reality, “the camel getting its nose under the tent” as a first step to distract those who support traditional morality in the UMC from the real plan – which is to ultimately normalize homosexual practice in our denomination. Make no mistake about it, this “Third Way” would serve as a gateway for this to be permitted and then to be spread throughout the church. I would predict that within three years this would become so widespread and supported by our leadership that any UM pastor who stood for traditional morality would be considered as “outside of the mainstream” of United Methodist thinking. Make no mistake about this – it is a subtle way to lose this war. – AOM]

“Connectional Table Considers Third Way on Homosexuality” the article reads. The UMC could have openly gay clergy and clergy could officiate at same-sex marriages if a proposal affirmed by a denomination-wide leadership body prevails. The Connectional Table (CT) plans to draft legislation that members hope can be a third way in the church's long debate over homosexuality. During its Feb. meeting in Mozambique, the CT overwhelmingly affirmed a proposal to remove prohibitive language that makes it a chargeable offense under church law for clergy to be self-avowed practicing homosexuals or to officiate at same-sex weddings. The action was not a formal vote, but the reported results of two hours of small-group discussions. The CT will take up proposed legislative language for an actual vote when it meets in May in Nashville. The approach would leave the question of whether to perform a same-sex marriage up to individual clergy, just as the Book of Discipline now allows clergy to decide which couples to wed. Clergy would not be required to bless same-sex unions. Conferences also would continue to determine whom to ordain as authorized by the denomination's constitution, but would have the option of ordaining openly gay individuals. At the same time, the proposal notes that the denomination historically has not condoned the practice of homosexuality and has considered the practice incompatible with Christian teaching. It also retains the denomination's ban on using church funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. If this proposal prevails, clergy would not risk church trials or the loss of their credentials for officiating at same-gender weddings or coming out as being gay. [Note: Emphasis added.]

The Rev. Kennetha J. Bigham-Tsai, who serves on the CT's legislative writing team, described the approach as a possible third way that can help the church end its impasse on human sexuality and focus more on mission. She is a district superintendent in the West Michigan Conference. “We've tried to allow some exercise of conscience, to allow for varying beliefs, to allow for varying practices within different contexts, and to open a space for grace where people can live together in unity with their different beliefs,” she said.

Any legislation adopted by the CT would go to the 2016 General Conference for action.

– Heather Hahn, UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 07 / February 18, 2015

**+ *New strategies to gain power.*** The Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) is a well-funded organization known for its strident protests and any-means-necessary tactics in demanding the United

Methodist Church abandon biblical teaching against homosexual practice. As we have documented, RMN's agenda also includes church acceptance of multiple sexual partners and of ministers cohabiting with their romantic partners outside of marriage! It is important to note that others are targeting these equalization lay member slots. And for the sake of advancing its agenda, RMN has been urging its supporters to target these equalization member slots. In one conference, I have learned that an extraordinary large number of equalization lay members were recently registered from a single RMN-allied congregation. Should our commitment to defending biblical faith and values within our own beloved church be any less than the tragically misguided commitment of others to tearing them down? Are you ready to not just feel upset about the challenges facing our beloved denomination but now to take concrete action to actually make a difference where United Methodism needs you at this critical hour? Then won't you please prayerfully commit [to oppose it], along with like-minded United Methodists in your congregation or area? – Together for the Gospel, John Lomperis, M.Div., UMAAction Director. Received by e-mail.

**(UM) Judicial Council.** *Judicial Council Sets Docket for April Meeting.* The Judicial Council has posted a seven-item docket for its Apr. 15–18 spring meeting at the Hyatt Regency Columbus, Ohio. The council's meetings are closed except for oral hearings. No decisions have been announced yet regarding possible hearings in April.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 04 / January 28, 2015

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Life is too short to wake up with regrets.

### Global Outlook

Freedom prospers when religion is vibrant and the rule of law under God is acknowledged. – Ronald Reagan

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**Afghanistan.** *Preaching in Taliban territory.* Passing out Bibles under ISIS' nose. Sharing Jesus one on one in Saudi Arabia. You and I can't go there, but they can. Throughout nations hostile to the gospel, God has raised up men and women willing to share His name despite the risks involved. The Voice of the Martyrs invites people to "adopt" one of these front-line workers and commit to pray for him or her for one year. They also invite you to help equip these front-line workers with the tools they need to advance the kingdom. These tools include Bibles and Christian literature for training and distribution as well as bicycles, motorcycles and even horses for transportation – anything that will help the front-line workers share Christ's love in hostile and restricted nations.

– E-mail received from "The Voice of the Martyrs" subject: They Are Talking About Jesus in Afghanistan; 17 Feb 2015

### Islam.

+ *JNN News Update February 14 2015*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Rom 8:22*

Jerusalem, Israel, from the Jewish Network News Service (JNN):

+ *Iran marks revolution anniversary with calls of 'Death to America, Israel':* On Wednesday, Iran marked the 36th anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution with massive rallies at which many participants chanted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans, calling for their downfall. Millions gathered in Tehran, Iran's capital, and other cities, as the call "Down with America" and "Death to Israel" were heard everywhere. The negotiations between Iran and the US regarding Iran's nuclear aspirations were

also highlighted at the events. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, addressing a crowd of thousands in Tehran's Azadi (Freedom) Square, pledged to "spare no effort" to protect the Islamic Republic's assumed rights to nuclear power in the negotiations with the P5+1 powers. "The sanctions have not forced Iran to enter the talks," Rouhani boasted. "The impracticality of the all-out pressures on Iran and the significant advancements in Iran's peaceful nuclear program made the United States come to the negotiation table. Iran is seeking a 'win-win' outcome in the nuclear talks with world powers," Rouhani said. A woman who attended the rally said the nuclear talks have likely inspired Iranians to take part in commemorations. "This year, we have turned out bigger than before because of the ongoing nuclear talks, to make America understand it cannot achieve its goals in these talks." (United With Israel) Iran is the main supporter of Hezbollah and Palestinian terror groups that constantly add to their advanced weapons arsenals and plan attacks against Israel. Iran (less than a 1000 miles away from Jerusalem), continues its lawless advancement towards obtaining nuclear arms with an eye towards annihilating the Jewish state. Urgent is the need for intercession that Israel will know what to do - and at what point in time - in order to protect itself against the Islamic Republic.

+ ***Nobel winner Elie Wiesel lends support for Netanyahu's Congress speech:*** Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel is lending his support to Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu's March 3 speech to Congress on the dangers of Iran's nuclear program - an address that has antagonized the White House. An outspoken New Jersey Orthodox rabbi, Shmuley Boteach, said on Thursday he is placing full-page advertisements in two of the leading US newspapers, The New York Times and The Washington Post, featuring Wiesel's endorsement of Netanyahu's speech. The advertisement quotes Wiesel as saying he plans to attend Netanyahu's address "on the catastrophic danger of a nuclear Iran." Awarded the Nobel in 1986, Wiesel asks Obama and others in the ad: "Will you join me in hearing the case for keeping weapons from those who preach death to Israel and America?" Boteach said: "There's no personality more respected in the global Jewish community and few in the wider world than Elie Wiesel. He is a living prince of the Jewish people. He is the face of the murdered 6 million (Jews killed in the Holocaust). So I think that his view on the prime minister's speech sounding the alarm as to the Iranian nuclear program carries a unique authority that transcends some of the political circus that has affected the speech," Boteach said. Blindsided by the invitation that Republicans in Congress extended to Netanyahu, President

Barack Obama has declined to meet the Israeli leader, citing what he has said is US protocol not to meet world leaders before national elections, due to take place in Israel on March 17. (Jerusalem Post) Pray earnestly that PM Netanyahu's contested speech to Congress on March 3 will make an impact in terms of derailing Iran's nuclear weapons development ambitions and averting a bad deal between the P5+1 and the war mongering, terrorist supporting, Islamic Republic.

+ ***Isis fighters seize Iraqi town near base holding US Marines:*** Islamic State fighters reportedly seized most of a western Iraqi town on Thursday, in fighting taking place mere miles from an air base where hundreds of US Marines are training Iraqis. According to military sources, eight suicide bombers managed Friday to get onto a sprawling Iraqi military base where the Marines are training their Iraqi counterparts, but were killed by an ISF counter attack almost immediately. Sources confirmed the attackers made it onto the secluded base but made it "nowhere near" the American forces on the site before they were killed. The Al Asad air base where 320 US Marines are stationed training Iraqi forces, is a mere 13-minute drive from al-Baghdadi. Terrorists attacked the town of Al-Baghdadi from two directions before advancing inward. The development comes as the US-led coalition continues to launch airstrikes against ISIS, with Jordan taking on a greater role following the brutal execution of a captured Jordanian pilot at ISIS' hands. American aid worker Kayla Mueller's death - which was blamed on ISIS - also was confirmed earlier this week. Citing the deaths of Mueller and other American captives, President Obama on Wednesday asked Congress to give formal approval to use military force against ISIS. Obama said the group poses a "grave threat" and could threaten the US homeland if left "unchecked." (White House/Fox/CBS)

+ **20,000 Foreign fighters flock to Syria, Iraq to join terrorists:** Foreign fighters are streaming into Syria and Iraq in unprecedented numbers to join the Islamic State or Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or other extremist groups. The numbers include at least 3,400 from Western nations among 20,000 from around the world, US intelligence officials say in an updated estimate of a top terrorism concern. Intelligence agencies now believe that as many as 150 Americans have succeeded in reaching in the Syrian war zone. Nick Rasmussen, chief of the National Counterterrorism Center, said the rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria is without precedent, far exceeding the rate of foreigners who went to wage jihad at any other point in the past 20 years. US officials fear that some of the foreign fighters, who come from 90 countries, will return undetected to their homes in Europe or the US to mount terrorist attacks. Rep. Michael McCaul, the Texas Republican who chairs the committee, said that the Syrian war had created "the largest convergence of Islamist terrorists in world history." Sustained bombing by a US-led coalition has not stopped the inflow, he noted. "I am worried about our ability to combat this threat abroad, but also here at home," McCaul said. (CBS)

But mark this: *There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.* 2 Tim 3: 1-4

+ **Islamic State has grown to size of Belgium:** The House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee Chairman, Michael McCaul, said Wednesday the Islamic State "now controls territory the size of Belgium, governs millions of people, draws on billions of dollars in revenue and commands tens of thousands of foot soldiers. Through Hollywood-like propaganda videos and social media, Islamist terror groups are inciting their followers and potential recruits to wage war at home. Both ISIS, and Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have called for Westerners, including Americans, to wage individual jihad in their home countries, and it's working." (Washington Times)

+ **Jordan moves thousands of troops to Iraq border:** Jordan has deployed "thousands" of troops at its border with Iraq to prevent the infiltration of ISIS fighters, two Jordanian government officials said this week. Jordan's deployment appeared to be "an intensification of ongoing efforts to secure the border to stop movement of men and weapons," according [to] an analyst at Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Center in London. Jordanian air force jets bombed Islamic State terrorists' hideouts on Thursday, resuming the intensified raids that ended at the weekend after three days. The raids are the first the Jordanian military have announced since three straight days of aerial bombing that ended on Saturday in retaliation for the brutal ISIS execution of a Jordanian pilot. (NBC/J. Post)

+ **US Intelligence surprised by collapse of Yemen government:** The Obama administration's senior counterterrorism official acknowledged Thursday that the US intelligence community was surprised by the collapse of the US-backed government in Yemen. Nick Rasmussen, who directs the National Counterterrorism Center, said that Yemen's American-funded army failed to oppose advancing Houthi rebels in the same way the US-supported Iraqi military refused to fight Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorists last year. What happened in Iraq with the onslaught of ISIS "happened in Yemen" on "a somewhat smaller scale," he said. Sen. Roy Blunt noted that President Obama recently touted Yemen as a success. Now, it's a "total disaster," Blunt said. Rasmussen also noted that extremists in Libya, Afghanistan, Egypt and Algeria had pledged allegiance to ISIS, suggesting a growing influence of that al Qaeda rival. ISIS is now the dominant extremist group in the Libyan cities of Derna and Benghazi, where a 2012 attack killed four Americans including US Ambassador Chris Stevens, he said. He acknowledged that efforts against al Qaeda's Yemen affiliate, considered one of the most dangerous to Americans, had been significantly diminished by the collapse of the government and this week's evacuation of the US Embassy. (CBS)

+ **Iraqi terrorists destroy synagogue, take over Ezra's tomb:** Terrorists in Iraq have seized a major synagogue and holy site in Amara, the Elder of Zion blog reported Wednesday – and have already destroyed much of it. According to the Iraqi media site quoted by the blog, the synagogue will become



the new southern headquarters of the terrorists, whose name and affiliation are unspecified. The media site also added that Ezra's tomb in the Amara area has also been stripped of its Jewish identity, and may possibly have been destroyed. The move is yet another blow to Iraq's Jewish community, which the blog notes is down to a mere ten Jews – despite 2,500 years of Jewish life which began with the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. While both reports decline to specify the name of the terror group, news of the demolition follows multiple reports that Islamic State (ISIS) has systemically destroyed multiple Jewish holy sites in Iraq. Last July, ISIS destroyed the tombs of both the prophet Daniel and Jonah in Mosul, claiming that the graves represent "idolatry." In addition, the Iraqi government itself has de-Judaized several sites throughout Iraq, including Ezekiel's Tomb and the tomb of Joshua the High Priest near Baghdad. (Arutz-7)

+ ***UN moves to choke off Islamic State's cash:*** The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously tightened sanctions on Islamic State terrorists in an effort to block the revenue they derive from smuggling oil, antiquities and ransoms from kidnapping. US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power told the council that the resolution was "part of a comprehensive strategy to degrade and ultimately destroy" the group. (Wall St. Journal)

– Barry Segal, JNN News Update February 14<sup>th</sup> 2015. The suggestions, opinions and scripture references made by JNN writers and editors are based on the best information received. E-mail, received from one of our associates in the Virginia Annual Conference; dated February 15, 2015.

+ ***Faith Groups Condemn Massacre in Nigeria.*** The general boards of Global Ministries (GBGM) and Church and Society (GBCS), the World Methodist Council and World Council of Churches (WCC) are among the faith groups condemning a recent massacre by the Boko Haram in Baga, a small town in Borno State, Nigeria. "We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who are building peace in the face of atrocity," said Thomas Kemper, head of [the] GBGM.

– UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 03 / January 21, 2015

+ ***Promoting Interreligious Dialogue.***

[Note: This is curious in view of the ongoing violence against Christians in other countries, and the inequality in the treatment of Muslims and Christians in the public sphere in our country. With all of the clamor by some Muslims about equality in the United States, why is there not an outcry over how Christians are treated in other countries? One teaching in Islam instructs adherents to pretend to want to reach an accord with other faiths, and to pretend cooperation while continuing to work for "jihad" in the spread of Sharia Law. One of the books I had authored examines the history of this ideology – and since the time of Mohammad it has shown a predictable pattern of no meaningful compromise and ongoing violence. In the article below the mosque leader pointed out that "cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed are painful and offensive to all Muslims." I suspect the deaths of the people killed by Muslim terrorists was painful to the victims in both a psychological and a physical way. We are in a war with this ideology – whether we realize it or not. – AOM]

The month before the deadly attacks on a Paris magazine office and a Jewish market, a small group of UM and Muslim young adults in Norway discovered they had more in common than they realized. Interaction with representatives of the Tauheed Mosque in Oslo was a key part of the first UM Ecumenical and Interreligious Training event in Europe. Sheikh Mahmoud, the mosque's leader, and Bishop Christian Alsted of the Baltic and Nordic Area [of the Methodist Church] began by stressing the need for interreligious dialogue, for a peaceful society and respect for all. Then, two young leaders from both faith traditions—Shaheer Ghulam Nabi and the Rev. Frøydis Grinna—spoke about their experience of being a religious minority in a society where secularism is on the rise. Eventually, all participants had a chance to talk together.

The Rev. Stephen J. Sidorak, top executive for the Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relations of the Council of Bishops, said he was heartened by "the feeling there's hope for a younger

generation to get together.” Building interreligious relations, he added, is one of the main ingredients for a healthy society. The Rev. Ivan Abrahams, a South African who serves as top executive of the World Methodist Council, called for a “fresh commitment” to work for a just peace after the [Paris] attacks. “This violence serves as an affront to freedom, human rights and the security of all people,” he said. Karl Anders Ellingsen, a communicator and editor for The UMC in Norway, said in an email that he had spoken with several participants from the December training after the attacks in Paris. “We all agree that this only strengthens our resolve to carry on this path of dialogue and meetings that we have taken the first steps on,” he wrote. “For us, it deepens our understanding of Muslims and their life in our society, making it easier to interact in a positive and respectful way.” Ellingsen noted that Mahmoud, the mosque leader, “took a firm position” in the local media condemning the attacks and killings in the name of Islam in Paris. But Mahmoud also pointed out that cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed are painful and offensive to all Muslims.

– Linda Bloom, UMNS, as reported in UMNewscope; Vol. 43, Issue 03 / January 21, 2015.

### **Israel. Israeli Elections Issue**

#### **Sound of the Shofar #98: Elections: March 17, 2015**

*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.*

*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* – 1 Timothy 2:1-4

It is clear that praying for government is not an option. It should be a priority for God's people. The scriptures also make it clear that the principle of government is from God. However many believers throughout the ages have interpreted that to mean that all government is from God and thus must be blindly obeyed and honored. That is not a biblical principle. 1 Timothy 2 states that the purpose of government is to give us a life that is quiet and peaceable with godliness and reverence – an atmosphere that will be conducive for the Gospel to go forth and for men to be saved. Romans 13:3-4 gives us the godly standard for government: one, which rewards good and punishes evil. A government that rewards evil and punishes good is not a government that meets God's standards.

#### **In the Middle of a Minefield**

Events in the last month have placed Prime Minister Netanyahu in the middle of a political minefield. It started when John Boehner the Speaker of the US House of Representatives invited the P.M. to address a joint session of the US Congress. While this was a breaking of diplomatic protocol (normally the US President is consulted first), it was in no way outside of Boehner's authority. (As Speaker of the House, Boehner is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person in the chain of succession should the President die or become unable to function in his office.) While it is certainly true that there is a big political fight between the Democratic (Party) President Obama and the now Republican (Party) controlled American Congress there is a valid reason to invite P.M. Netanyahu to address the Congress concerning the Iranian nuclear program. P.M. Netanyahu has been warning the world about Iran's quest for a nuclear weapon for more than 20 years. He is considered the politician who is most expert on this subject. With the Congress wanting to pass a new, tougher sanctions bill, (that would only come into effect if the P5+1 negotiations with Iran fail) and the President promising to veto such legislation, Boehner is hoping that the P.M.'s speech would sway enough Democrats to overrule the President's veto.

Of course the P.M. is in the midst of a difficult (and very dirty) election campaign and naturally it would be very hard to give up such an international platform as addressing a joint session of Congress. This will be Netanyahu's third address to the Congress and Winston Churchill is the only foreign leader

who has ever done that until now. Netanyahu's political opposition continues to accuse the P.M. of destroying the close relationship between Israel and the USA. Certainly the relationship between Netanyahu and [our current president] is very bad – many consider it the worst ever between an American President and an Israeli Prime Minister.

An anointed speech by Netanyahu with many standing ovations (last time he received 29), would show the Israeli people that while he doesn't get along with the US President (whom 75% of Israelis consider "not a friend of Israel"), he does have much influence and respect from many in the USA. While there are many pressure points influencing this election and military or terrorist activity between now and 17 March will influence things greatly, this speech could make or break the election for Netanyahu.

Netanyahu's political opposition on the left is majoring on what I consider a major sin and weakness of the Israeli people – trusting more in the USA than in God. We have prayed consistently for Israel to be weaned from a dependence on America and to begin to look to God for help and protection.

P.M. Netanyahu addressed the question of disagreement with the USA the other day as reported in the Israel *Hayom* website on 11 February 2015. The P.M. said. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, declared Israel's independence in the face of strong opposition from U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall. Likewise, Prime Minister [Levi] Eshkol's decisions at the start of the Six-Day War, Prime Minister [Menachem] Begin's decision regarding the nuclear reactor in Iraq, and Prime Minister [Ariel] Sharon's decisions to press ahead with Operation Defensive Shield; these were all strongly opposed at the time by American administrations. Disagreements over Israel's security have occurred between prime ministers in Israel from the Left and from the Right and American presidents from both parties. None of these disagreements led to a rupture in the relationship between Israel and the United States. In fact, over time, our relationship grew stronger.

But we do have today a profound disagreement with [the United States]...and the rest of the P5+1 over the offer that has been made to Iran. This offer would enable Iran to threaten Israel's survival. This is a regime, Iran, that is openly committed to Israel's destruction. It would be able, under this deal, to break out to a nuclear weapon in a short time, and within a few years, to have the industrial capability to produce many nuclear bombs for the goal of our [that is to say, Israel's] destruction.

The opposition to Netanyahu's speech is not only in Israel but among some of American Jewry too. Again quoting from Israel *Hayom* of 11 February 2015: "The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) issued on Tuesday a harsh condemnation of American Jewish leaders who have objected to Netanyahu's upcoming address: Anti-Defamation League (ADL) leader Abe Foxman and Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) President Rick Jacobs' shameful condemnation of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for accepting the invitation to speak to a joint session of Congress about the Iranian nuclear threat to Jews and the United States is reminiscent of establishment Jewish leader' condemnation of Peter Bergson and Ben Hecht for trying to speak to Congress in the 1930s-1940s about the Nazi threat to Europe's Jews, the ZOA statement said. The most prominent Jewish leader of the WWII era, Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and his colleagues urged the Roosevelt administration and Congress not to listen to brave Jewish leaders such as distinguished

screenwriter Ben Hecht and Irgun leader Peter Bergson (aka Hillel Kook) and their Bergson group, who were trying to publicize and stop the Nazi massacres of European Jews. Rabbi Wise demonized Bergson and Hecht, demanded that they stop their activities on behalf of European Jews, demanded that Jews should not make an issue out of the Nazi massacres. Rabbi Wise and Nahum Goldmann stated that the Bergson group 'did not represent the Jews' and told the U.S. State Department that Bergson and Hecht were as big a threat as Hitler to the well-being of American Jewry. The parallels to certain Jewish leaders' statements today in the face of the Iranian nuclear threat are downright eerie.

Prime Minister Netanyahu will be addressing Congress about the serious, frightening imminent danger of Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities -- which threaten Israel with extermination and endanger much of the rest of the world. This is such an urgent and life-threatening issue -- to both Israel and America -- that every Jewish leader should be urging all members of Congress to attend the Israeli prime minister's

speech. "ZOA President Morton Klein said, "We cannot afford to again act like the Jewish leaders of the 1930s-1940s who opposed lifesaving efforts to save their European brothers and sisters from extermination. The ZOA begs fellow Jewish leaders to join with the ZOA in a unified effort to support Prime Minister Netanyahu's address before Congress, and to support ensuing efforts to impose sanctions and all other necessary steps to stop the existential threat to Israel, America, and the entire world posed by Iranian nuclear weapons."

It seems that the Zionist Organization of America has learned some of the lessons of history and that many both in the American Jewish community and in Israel continue to ignore those lessons. Netanyahu quotes scripture when he speaks and while this in itself is not a clear indication of a belief in God, he has had some bible studies at his home. When it comes to the question of Aliyah he and Avigdor Lieberman are the only ones who are calling for all Jewish people to come home. This has actually become another point of attack by rival politicians. They only want positive (I'm a Zionist and want to live in Israel) Aliyah while the Lord says He will use the hunters to bring His people home.

*Therefore behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that it shall no more be said, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of Egypt,' but, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had driven them. ' For I will bring them back into their land which I gave to their fathers. "Behold, I will send for many fishermen," says the Lord, "and they shall fish them; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain and every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks.*

– Jeremiah 16:14-16

Who is running? In Israel we do not vote for an individual we vote for party lists. The number one on that list is that party's candidate for Prime Minister. We have never had a government that is controlled by only one party. All our governments have been coalition governments. It's one reason it is often hard for the government to make difficult decisions. After the election the President of Israel meets with all the party heads and asks them who they would want to lead the next government. Coalition politics starts as soon as the votes are counted.

[It is now a very dangerous time in the history of Israel. – AOM] Hezbollah now has an estimated 100,000 - 150,000 rockets many of which can hit anywhere in Israel. This is a larger rocket arsenal than most of the European nations combined. It is quite apparent that the U.N. forces are both incompetent and also very afraid of Hezbollah.

Pray for: Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud party to be the largest party in the coming Knesset and that they get the mandate to form the next government. I and many of my colleagues believe that he is still the man that the Lord has called to lead Israel at this critical time despite his weaknesses and faults. Many years ago the Lord called us to pray for Netanyahu to become the P.M. Through all these years the Lord has not changed our focus to another, though we are often before Him, asking Him if it is now the time for another to lead this nation. In the absence of a clear word from the Lord to pray and vote for another we continue to stand before Him praying that His favor (and the favor of the people of Israel) would be upon Netanyahu to grant him another term as Prime Minister. We operate on the principle that God does not have to confirm a direction daily but we continue to pray as He has called us until He changes the direction of our prayers. Pray for his speech in the US Congress, that he would be anointed by God in all he says and the way he says it. May his speech be a wakeup call to many around the world. If I look at the situation with my human eyes and mind I do not see another viable candidate for P.M. If you feel you cannot pray for any individual then please pray that the candidate who will bring the Lord the most glory will be elected.

*The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.* – Numbers 6:24-26

– Eliyahu Ben-Haim, Jerusalem, Intercessors for Israel, P.O. Box 28368, Jerusalem 91281, Israel

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A true friend will make the time to listen! – As sent in by Mr. Jack Ramsey.