



Watchman's Prayer Letter



For Inquiries contact: prayer@cfijerusalem.org CFI Website: www.cfijerusalem.org

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“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings...” Daniel 2:20b – 21a [NKJV]

On 27th October, Israelis will vote to elect the 26th Knesset, consisting of 120 Members, for the next four year term (unless it is dissolved prematurely, as usually happens in Israel). Unusually, the current 25th Knesset, is the first to run its full, four year term since 1988. Yet these have been no ordinary four years. Indeed, it is neither hyperbole nor contentious to say, that the past four years have been the most dramatic and difficult since the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948. The previous election took place on 1 November 2022, but we are not living in the same Israel that existed then. Israel has changed; Israelis have changed; the geo-political fabric of the Middle East has changed. The future of the Middle East continues to appear to hang in the balance and now, as much if not more than ever, the makeup of the 120 Members of the Knesset will play a crucial role in shaping that future. The exact weighting of the ingredients of the next Knesset; which parties are represented and by what proportions, will influence the coalition government that emerges. Now, in the period of introspection of Elul, leading up to the High Holidays, and through those High Holidays, it is time to hunker down in prayer and cry out to the Lord for mercy, and His will to be fulfilled regarding the next government of Israel, and the issues it will need to take forward. Let's consider what some of those key issues over the coming weeks and months will be and how we may direct our prayers in line with the will of Adonai .

PRIME MINISTER

Having served almost 19 years in total, Benjamin Netanyahu is Israel's longest serving Prime Minister by a country mile, with his first term in office beginning thirty years ago. Yet that longevity does not necessarily equate to affection and he continues to be a figure that divides and polarises opinion amongst Israelis. His Likud party has both ardent supporters and fierce foes and the question of him continuing in office is by no means certain. There is increasingly strong opposition from Gadi Eisenkot's new Yashar party, as well as from Naftali Bennett's Beyahad party, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party and The Democrats under Yair Golan. Yet in the Israeli political system, it is so often the minor parties that end up being the kingmakers in the coalition governments, generally wielding influence in excess of their support base.

- **PRAY for the Lord's choice of government and leadership to manifest for Israel in the next Knesset, especially for the office of Prime Minister.**

HAREDI CONSCRIPTION AND EQUALITY OF BURDEN

This perennial issue has now reached boiling point. What began as a temporary exemption by David Ben Gurion at the founding of the State in 1948 for several hundred ultra-orthodox, has morphed into a blanket exemption for tens of thousands of people belonging to a rapidly growing community which is projected to make up a quarter of Israel's population by 2050. In June 2024, the High Court of Justice ruled that the government must delay no more and proceed with the drafting of Haredi youngsters to military service. This resulted in mass protests and riots in Jerusalem, some with over 200,000 participants. In response, the government very recently passed a fresh law to exempt such young people from arrest for avoiding conscription, in order to avoid the dissolution of the coalition. This was instantly struck down by the High Court of Justice. A constitutional crisis looms.

- **BESEECH** the Father to send His Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding [Isaiah 11:2] upon the people of Israel, that they might recognise who the real enemies of Israel are, externally, rather than descending into literally fighting each other.
- **ASK** the Lord to place His shalom between the various different demographic and religious groups within Israel, not as the world gives, but as He imparts [John 14:27] because a house divided against itself cannot stand [Mark 3:25].

IRANIAN WAR

There remains a pervading sense that the war has reached an impasse rather than an end. The objectives of the war have not been achieved and the threat posed by Iran's possession of large quantities of near weapons-grade uranium remains. The IRGC regime remains thoroughly at the helm in Iran and with it, the existential threats against Israel. The composition of the next government will directly influence the direction and outcomes in the next stages of the conflict.

- **DECLARE** Numbers 10:35b: "Rise up, O Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate You flee before You."
- **PETITION** the Lord to send forth Archangel Michael and his heavenly army to contend with the Prince of Persia and fight on behalf of Israel, for the battle belongs to the Lord [Daniel 10:13,20; 1st Samuel 17:47].

COST OF LIVING CRISIS AND FAIRNESS ACROSS THE GENERATIONS

Beyond the immediate issues of war and conscription, the gnawing problems of poverty and social deprivation continue to deepen. According to Israel's National Insurance Institute's latest Poverty Report, approximately a fifth of Israelis live below the poverty line, with child poverty rates being even higher. Worse still, the poor are getting poorer, and the wealth gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. One of the main drivers for this is the cost of living in Israel, where general prices are 27% higher than other OECD nations, and leading to its ranking as being the 4th most expensive place to live out of those nations. Besides the warfare of the past few years, these financial realities are significant factors for the record-breaking levels of emigration away from Israel over the past few years, which last year was significantly more than the numbers of people immigrating into Israel.

- **CRY OUT** to the Lord to open up streams in the desert, and channels of blessing and provision for His people, to give them a hope and a future, so that they will not take the life-changing step of *yerida* (emigration). Call forth the fulfillment of Isaiah 35!
- **PROCLAIM** an exposure and crumbling of the cartels and structural inequalities prevalent in certain sectors that have contributed significantly to the cost of living crisis in Israel.
- **ASK** the Father to dispense justice for His people in His land, so that the younger generations will be able to make a viable life for themselves in Israel, without being squeezed out by poverty, debt and a basket of other burdens that many are finding too heavy to bear.

As the elections draw near, let us draw near to Father God, in the vein of Esther; coming before the King of Kings to ask for His justice, His shalom and His mercy, even when it may be undeserved. Let us continue to believe in the goodness of God!

Tristan Hall



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