

Echoing through the Ages By Pat Frame

The *Amidah*, or *Shemoneh Esrei*, in the Jewish Prayer Book (the Siddur), stands at the centre of Jewish liturgy. It simply means 'eighteen' as the original version consisted of 18 blessings. It is believed that the prayer in unwritten form dates from before the destruction of the temple in 70CE but the written form was prepared by R Shmuel h'Katan on behalf of the academy of Rabban Gamaliel II at Yavneh, which had replaced Jerusalem as the seat of Jewish authority following the fall of the temple in 70 CE, around 100CE.

Amidah means 'standing' as the prayer is said while standing. This prayer is prayed by Jews around the world. What we call 'The Lord's Prayer' appears to be a summary of the main elements of the *Amidah* and is cast in the form of prayer for emergency.

The 10th of the 18 blessings is the *Ingathering of the Exiles*.

According to Jewish tradition the ram that Abraham sacrificed in place of Isaac had two horns. The smaller left horn was sounded at Mount Sinai while the larger right horn will be sounded by God to call the Jewish people in exile back to Israel. See Isaiah 27:13:

*So it shall be in that day; the **great trumpet** will be blown; they will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria, and they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem.*

This blessing calling the Jewish people home reads:

Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are You, HASHEM, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel.

In Jeremiah 31:10 the nations (Gentiles) are told to HEAR the word of the Lord and to DECLARE it in the isles afar off, saying "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock".

Our first response as Gentiles is to HEAR the word of the Lord— and hearing does not just mean listening. The idea is not only to hear, but to act on what God is saying. But our responsibility does not finish there; we then have to DECLARE that the One who scattered Israel WILL gather them again.

In other words, we are encouraged to join our prayer to the prayer that the Jewish people themselves have been praying through the ages, that God will gather them again from the four corners of the earth (Isaiah 11:12). Let us do just that!

You might like to declare that God will gather the Jewish people from a specific country - yours or another - city or region, such as 'Lord, You scattered the Jewish people [here - or to the UK/USA/Germany etc] will You gather them again according to Your word and watch over them in Israel like a shepherd does his flock.' (Jeremiah 31:10).

Jewish people are scattered in most countries of the world and some we can only 'reach' by prayer. We are not able to 'fish' them—talk to them about the possibilities of making *aliyah*. One example is the Jewish community in Iran who have been there since the times of the Babylonian exile. There are believed to be around 26,000 of them, many of them very poor. As they hear all the propaganda against that Land, they find it hard to believe that Israel wants them to come. It is difficult and dangerous for them to show any interest in leaving and, those that do leave must leave everything behind. We cannot easily get to them but God, by

His Holy Spirit, can as we can declare that the One who scattered them to Iran, will gather them again.

The Jewish people in Turkey have had a safe haven in that land since they were expelled from Spain in 1492. In fact, the Chief Rabbi in Turkey holds the family records of all these families right back to that time. At the time of writing the situation between Turkey and Israel is deteriorating and it is possible that Turkey is no the safe haven it once was. Again we can pray and declare that these scattered ones can be returned.

Other Jewish communities face danger—in Cuba, Venezuela, Yemen and so on. God knows exactly where and who they are and He will bring them home in His season. He does, however, ask for our cooperation in prayer and often also in action.

Another important scripture talking of Gentile involvement, also ties in with this prayer. In Isaiah 49:22, we read “This is what the Sovereign LORD says: ‘*See I will beckon to the nations, I will lift up my banner to the peoples, they will bring your sons in their arms and carry your daughters on their hips.*’” God is also lifting that banner up to the Gentile believers calling them to be a part of bringing His sons and daughters home to the Land of Israel from where they have been scattered. In this current wave of *aliyah* a significant feature has been, and continues to be, the involvement of Christian ministries in helping the Jewish people return by providing transport, helping with documentation, practical matters concerning their settling in the land and many other practical things. This is a tremendous testimony to the Jewish people and so unlike the treatment they have experienced at the hand of ‘Christians’ throughout the centuries.

Pray that:

- The Jewish people scattered worldwide would hear the shofar calling them home.
- Gentile believers will hear the word of the Lord and declare this along with their Jewish brethren.
- More gentile believers will hear God’s call and become involved in carrying their Jewish brethren ‘home’.
- The Lord will raise His banner to gather the exiles of Israel.
- God will gather Israel from every place to which they have been scattered.

The above is an extract from Pat’s book “Intercession and Aliyah” available soon.