

I. Introduction:

- A. From Sunday, May 7 through Sunday, May 28 (Pentecost Sunday), the GPHOP is joining in heart with the **Isaiah 62 Fast** led by Mike Bickle, Lou Engle and many other prayer leaders and networks worldwide. This is a 21-day global prayer event focused specifically on Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people. There are estimates in the millions of Christians around the world who will participate in this historic event, and will culminate on Pentecost Sunday with well over 100 million Christians praying. Never before in world history, simply by virtue of global population levels, have this many Christians unified in focused intercessory prayer specifically for Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people.
- B. On a personal note, long before I heard of this fast, I had been contemplating a thought that I believe was inspired by the Holy Spirit. As I was meditating on Acts 1-2 a couple of months ago, and thinking about the power of the prayer gathering of “about a hundred and twenty” (Acts 1:15). After this prayer gathering of 120 for just a few days, the Holy Spirit came in a once-in-world-history kind of way leading to the revivals we read of in Acts. The church as we know it was born in a fiery and miraculous witness of the Spirit. The thought that came to me was, “If 120 believers praying resulted in that, what happens when 120 million pray?”
- C. God spoke to Isaiah about Him setting watchmen—which speaks of intercessors—who would not stop calling on God through prayer until the city of Jerusalem is among the praised cities in the world, and perhaps the most praised city in the world. In other words, the ministry of intercession will become dramatically more common and important as the conclusive eschatological time period unfolds prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ—Israel’s Messiah. The ministry of intercession specifically for Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people will reach levels that the global church likely cannot grasp, envision or imagine right now. There will be almost an obsession with prayer along these lines as the Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts, and the capacity of our minds, to perceive the central role of prayer, and the critical importance of doing so for the contemporary Jewish people.

Isaiah 62:6-7 | ⁶ I have set watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; They shall never hold their peace day or night. You who make mention of the Lord, do not keep silent, ⁷ And give Him no rest till He establishes And till He makes Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

II. Important historical facts and information about Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people:

1. The “birth,” or official recognition, of Israel as a modern nation-state was **May 14, 1948**. The Knesset, Israel's parliament, declared Jerusalem as the capital of Israel on **January 23, 1950**.
2. Jerusalem was reunified under Israeli rule in **1967** at the conclusion of the Six-Day War, which Israel won decisively.
3. The Jewish people are those with Jewish lineage. Many currently live in Israel, and many live around the world.
4. According to the CIA’s World Factbook, the estimated population of Israel is just over 9 million. Of those 9 million, just shy of 75 percent of those living in Israel are Jewish by ethnicity. This means there are about 7 million Jews currently living in Israel.
5. The Jewish Agency for Israel estimates the total number of Jews in the world to be around 15 million. This is 0.02 percent of the global population, which is currently estimated at roughly 8 billion.
6. Pew Research (2021) estimates the Jewish population in the United States to be about 7.5 million.
7. More Jews live in New York City (1.6 million) than any other city in the world. Three times as many Jews live in NYC than Jerusalem (550,000), the capital of Israel. There are also very large concentrations of Jews in other U.S. cities. In descending order they are, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Atlanta, Miami and San Diego. These are the top 10 cities in America with a Jewish population. **The Jewish population in central Illinois is estimated at more than a thousand.**
8. Approximately half the Jews who live in New York City live in Brooklyn. This has caused Brooklyn to be nicknamed “the most Jewish place on Earth.” More Jews live in Brooklyn than in Jerusalem or Tel Aviv.
9. The “Christianity in Israel” Wikipedia page shows that approximately 20,000 Jews living in Israel profess Christian faith. A Jewish Christian is also called a Messianic Jew (whether or not they live in Israel). The total number of ethnic Jews who identify as Christian (Messianic Jews) is hard to know, but older estimates are at 350,000 globally—the largest concentration (250,000) being in the United States. (See the Messianic Judaism Wikipedia page for more information on this.)
10. The largest percentage of Jews today are considered to be ideologically liberal and non-religious.
11. Some of the more noteworthy Jews in history: Albert Einstein (physicist), Sigmund Freud (psychologist), Elie Wiesel (Holocaust survivor and author). Abraham, Moses and Jesus would be considered the most noteworthy in ancient/biblical times.
12. **Aliyah** (“ascent”) refers to the phenomenon of mass immigration of Jews to Israel. This has happened a number of times in history and is actively encouraged today by the state of Israel.
13. According to FBI statistics, **hate crimes** toward Jews are rising. Most current U.S. data shows a 20 percent increase in 2021 compared to 2020 data.
14. The **Holocaust**, which took place under Nazi Germany during World War II, refers to the genocidal murder of six million European Jews primarily by mass shootings and gas chambers. From 1941-1944, two out of every three European Jews had been killed.
15. **Hebrew**, also referred to as modern Hebrew today, is the official language of Israel.

III. Biblical passages that underscore the special nature of God's love for the Jewish people:

A. Israel is close to God's heart.

Psalm 148:14 (NIV) | And he has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord.

- Reading this passage lately has really moved me. God says that the Israelites are dear to Him. The NKJV translates this as “a people near to Him.” There is a tender place in the heart of God for the Israelites. They are near and dear to Him.
- **Try to think for a moment of someone who is truly dear to you.** Maybe a baby you cried out to God for after a long season of infertility. Perhaps a child you adopted that took much longer than expected due to many unforeseen obstacles in the process. It could be someone who inspired you at a key moment in life, or someone who saved your life. It could be a family member or friend you are especially fond of for one reason or another. These examples all touch on the idea of someone who is dear, and this is how God feels about Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people around the world today. God has a special place in His heart for them. He felt this way toward ancient Israel, and He feels this way toward contemporary Israel. In His heart and mind, they are the same Israel.
- **The pressing question is this: do we feel this way?** At the end of the day, we want the heart of God. If the heart of God has a special place of love for the Jewish people, then as we grow in spiritual maturity we will too. We cannot say we have the heart of God and remain indifferent, unloving or—God forbid—hateful toward the Jewish people. We will grow in love for Israel as we grow in love for the God of Israel. Furthermore, Jesus is Jewish by ethnicity, and will be so forever. He is not American or European. If we love Jesus, then we will love the Jews. They are likened to the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8).

B. God treasures Israel.

Psalm 135:4 (NIV) | For the Lord has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession.

- Similar to the idea of being dear to God, we see here that God treasures the Jewish people.
- **Think of your most treasured possession in life.** Taking it further, imagine some of the most treasured possessions in the history of the world. Every once in awhile we'll hear on the news about some artifact, work of art or sports memorabilia that sold for millions of dollars. Someone wanted that possession more than anyone else and paid dearly for it. This is how God sees and feels about the Jewish people. They are likened unto a treasure that He wants, and He was willing to send His very Son to die for them. Jesus purchased them and wants them to receive Him as their Lord and Savior just as He does everyone else in the world.
- There will come a day when all Jewish people will receive Christ (Jeremiah 31:1, Romans 11:26). This will be among the most significant miracles ever, and will precede the second coming of Christ. Thus, God will have Israel as a possession and they truly will belong to Him in Christ. Throughout the millennium and on into eternity, we Gentiles will likely hear often of the Lord's great love for Israel.
- The reference to “Jacob” here as synonymous with Israel could be understood as a “term of endearment.” God is saying, in essence, “I remember when the whole nation of Israel was the man Jacob. We wrestled together because I knew what it would produce—a whole people group that I would love with a special love” (See Genesis 32:22-32). Also, the more we learn of how God views and loves the Jewish people, even in all the very dark seasons, the more confident we grow in His love for us as Gentile Christians. Simply put, He is incredibly committed to loving us through it all—back to Himself time and time again.
- God has a long history with the Jewish people. He remembers all the ups and downs throughout the millennia. He has stuck with this people through it all, and will continue to. No other people group has the history with God like the Jewish people. The Bible refers to Gentile Christians as those “grafted in” (Romans 11:17) to this people as part of God's grand plan to save both Jew and Gentile in Christ. In other words, they were chosen first, and Gentile Christians have been included in that.
- **Think about the people you have a long history with.** Those you just met recently can mean a lot to you, but there isn't the same history as those you've known your whole life. Similarly, those of us who are not Jewish have a difficult time understanding that we are more or less the new friend. We are those who have most recently come into relationship with God. The Jewish people, though most still needing salvation in Christ, have been under the special covenant love of God for thousands of years.

C. God is described as the Shepherd of Israel, and His love toward Israel as unfailing.

Psalm 80:1-3 | Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who dwell between the cherubim, shine forth! ² Before Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, Stir up Your strength, And come and save us! ³ Restore us, O God; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!

Psalm 130:7 (NIV) | Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.

- Many places in the Old Testament describe God as a loving shepherd to His people Israel. The idea is that He is committed to them and leading them. Many verses, particularly in the Psalms, describe the love of God as unfailing, or without fail. Human love, even when maturing, can be mixed with unhealthy emotions and commitments. In contrast, God's perfect love never ceases or stops (1 Corinthians 13:8). He just keeps loving no matter what the other party behaves like. Knowing this love is what transforms us, and what will transform the Jewish people. During the ministry of Christ, He came out and said, in essence, "I am that good Shepherd (John 10:11) that the psalmists spoke of, and My love for them will never stop. I am faithfully leading them to Myself."

D. Jesus wept over Jerusalem.

Luke 19:41-44 | ⁴¹ Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, ⁴² saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. ⁴³ For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, ⁴⁴ and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

- Just seeing the city of Jerusalem made Jesus weep. Can you imagine that level of love for your own city?
- Doctrinally speaking, Jesus knew far, far better than any theologian in history what would transpire not only in His generation, but in every generation all the way up to His second coming. He did not view Jerusalem, Israel or the Jewish people as like a bunch of facts to know, which is often where this subject goes. Simply put, Jesus profoundly loved (and loves) this people. He weeps with great emotion as evidence of this love. Do we weep for Jerusalem like Jesus does? Do we care on a deep level about the plight of Israel and the Jewish people, or is it merely a collection of theological factoids to us that we pull out from time to time to sound deep and eschatologically savvy? This is something every student of the subject must honestly face. We must love the people, not just the facts about the people. If we do, we will stand with them when nobody else in the world does.

E. Paul desired and prayed for all Israel to be saved.

Romans 9:1-5 | I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, ² that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴ who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵ of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

Romans 10:1 | Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.

- Paul says something absolutely staggering here. He essentially says that if him being unsaved meant Israel being saved, he would do it. He truthfully meant it. He had this Spirit-born desire that manifested as prayer for the Jewish people to be saved.
- **The question I have is this:** do we have these feelings, desires and prayers? Is our heart in any way touched by the apostolic burden that Paul expresses in these verses? There was such a godly concern for Jewish people in the heart of this former persecutor. By the way, what a testimony of grace—that a man so far from the heart of God can be this deeply connected to the heart of God in short order.

IV. Concluding thoughts:

- Israel is near and dear to God's heart.
- God treasures Israel.
- God is the Shepherd of Israel, and His love toward them is unfailing.
- God the Son wept over Jerusalem.
- Apostle Paul desired and prayed for Israel's salvation.
- **Prayer:** *God of Israel, grow in my heart a love for Jerusalem, Israel and the Jewish people. Jesus, fill me with Your love. Amen.*

Help me improve my notes! The first person to point out a legitimate mistake/typo on this document (during service) gets \$1/a gift.

Greater Peoria House of Prayer Announcements for May 12, 2023.

1. **Welcome** to the Greater Peoria House of Prayer... we're glad you're here and blessed to be worshipping God with you! Be sure to pick up any of the **free** materials at the back table in the prayer room or the desk near the front of the Gathering Grounds area downstairs, which includes teaching notes, stickers, pens, prayer cards and more. **Daily schedule:** We currently host evening prayer from 7-8 p.m. seven nights a week. Our **Friday Encounter Night** is from 7-9 p.m. and is our main corporate gathering each week featuring live worship and a teaching to inspire love for Jesus and prayer.
2. **Upcoming events:** Kids Camp 2023 is July 17-21 from 3:30-5 p.m. Be on the lookout for more information!
3. **Prayer room ministry opportunities:** If you are interested in leading or ministering during a live worship set by singing, playing an instrument, prayer leading or on the sound board, please contact us at info@gphop.org. We'd love to have you serve on one of our teams! **Team ministry opportunities:** If you feel the Lord has gifted you in the prophetic (or would like to grow in this gifting) and would consider helping on a prophetic team, send an email to info@gphop.org. Contact Mandy Kistner at mandy@gphop.org if you would like to schedule a future healing ministry appointment or help out on the healing team.
4. **Missions:** Please keep the following missionary friends in prayer as well as be considerate of their financial needs: **Ashley Bucknam** (YWAM, Nepal); **Phil Kellenberger** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO) **Babett Mueller** (111 Global; Kansas City, MO); **Kerusso Perhay** (Pioneer 61; Mozambique); **Eric and Erin Simmons** (Bethany Global University; Bloomington, MN); **Alicia Wright** (ACTS, India); **Austin and Amy Zhu** (International House of Prayer; Kansas City, MO).
5. **Military:** Please keep the following members of our military in prayer as they valiantly serve the United States of America: **Jake Gerst**, stationed in Grafenwoehr/Grafenwöhr, Germany. **Kyle Nix**, stationed in Fairchild Air Force Base in Spokane County, Washington.
6. **Social media:** Follow us on Facebook (Greater Peoria House of Prayer - GPHOP), Twitter (@GPHOPrayer), Instagram (@GPHOPrayer), TikTok, Vimeo and YouTube for regular updates and inspiration. Use these social media sites to get the word out, share pictures, quotes you heard, etc. Contact Derek at derek@gphop.org if you're interested in helping with GPHOP's social media.
7. **Haven ministries:** Do you need space to pray? Maybe your Christian group needs a place to meet every once in awhile. We're making available the upper Prayer Room and lower-level Gathering Grounds for rent by donation. Email info@gphop.org if interested.
8. We provide **free Wi-Fi** to everyone here! The password for the **GPHOP** router is on the chalkboard in the downstairs fellowship area. You can also connect to Xfinity if you have a personal Comcast account.
9. **Prayer requests:** If you would like our community to pray for someone or something specific, please submit it to info@gphop.org.
10. **Giving:** If you have been blessed by the GPHOP and would like sow financially into the ministry, we would be more than blessed. You can give in cash, but if you would like to give to GPHOP with a check, please make it out to "Greater Peoria House of Prayer" or "GPHOP"—your gift is tax deductible. Thank you for your generosity! It's helping make day and night prayer with worship possible in central Illinois. You can place your gift in the Friday night offering during the 7 p.m. teaching or drop it in either of the two black donation boxes. Donations can also be mailed to our physical address at 117 East Washington Street, East Peoria, IL 61611. Donors can also use PayPal or our website (gphop.org/donate) to give electronically.
 - **Spring '23 fundraiser:** We have just launched our spring fundraiser campaign. Please pray and consider supporting the GPHOP!

*Thank you for helping to **keep this prayer room sacred** by ensuring conversations with others are brief and kindly reminding others to do the same. Use the large Gathering Grounds fellowship area downstairs if you would like to chat at length.*