

*Aliyah*  
Building the  
Highway of  
Holiness

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*And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. (Is 35:8)*

Within the scriptures, there are items and even people that are considered to be holy, or separated unto the Lord Himself. Similarly, there is that which is considered to be most holy for the Lord, as a simple scan through any concordance will amply illustrate. The areas that are most holy to the Lord are life-endangering to individuals and third parties if touched with unclean hands and unclean motives. The Jewish people return to Israel on a highway built in prayer upon the foundations of the scriptures.

That which was classed as being holy was invariably anointed. In the scriptures, there are three categories of people who are anointed. It is probably easier to understand the term “anointing” as the outward sign of consecration, or being set apart to be holy unto the Lord. The categories of the anointed are prophets, priests, and kings, which are the offices and functions of the anointed one Himself, Yeshua (Jesus).

*“Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so that they may serve Me as priests. Say to the Israelites: This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. Do not pour it on man’s bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred and you are to consider it sacred. Whoever makes perfume like it, and **whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.**” (Ex 30:30-33).*

Those visiting Israel should be wary of buying reproductions of oils claiming to be of the same ingredients and mixture as the sacred anointing oil! Exodus 29 deals with the consecration of the priests. It is important to understand a little concerning this matter, as it is only the Lord who can command consecration. Only He can commission those called forth to carry out the external practice and minister to Him. The consecration of the priests was with the anointing oil and with blood (Ex 29:20-22). The points of anointing of Aaron and his sons were the lobes of the right ears, the thumbs of their right hands, and the big toes of their right feet. These location points were signifiers that they might hear the word of the Lord, rightly handle the word of the Lord, and walk in the way of the Lord.

Selfish ambitions, selfish motives, envy, any means of promoting oneself by “self-anointing,” or being driven by financial gain will cause disaster. To have an understanding of this matter is critical where aliyah ministry teams are involved, because the effects of such conditions of the heart will affect the whole team. Anyone who becomes involved in the ministry of *aliyah* just to enjoy the anointing, or to experience the thrill, or for any personal agenda, will be cut off from His people, a dire consequence. A similar warning is given concerning the incense:

***“Consider it holy to the Lord. Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from His people” (Ex 30:36).***

It could well be argued that the most holy thing of all is the Lord’s [Holy] Name. Names within the biblical context need to be understood not simply as voice tags but to be representative of the character, or the reputation of the individual. Ezekiel 36:16 and the following verses give a clear exposition of *aliyah*, and the overarching theme of the passage is the sanctification (“hallowing” in the King James Version) of God’s Holy Name or reputation. The sanctification only comes about when the Jewish people return to their ancient homeland and are returned not only to the land, but to their rightful relationship with the Lord. Therefore, *aliyah* is indeed most holy to the Lord as it is the means for the sanctification of the Holy name, an event that will be a banner to the nations for all mankind to witness (Isaiah 11:11-12).

Yeshua refers to this wonderful transaction in the first petition of what is generally known as the Lord’s Prayer, “*Hallowed [sanctified] be thy Name*” (Matt 6:9). An interesting aside to this prayer is its structure. In the streams of Judaism of the time there were prayers for emergencies that were constructed in a shorthand manner. The Lord’s Prayer is a typical model. It could be said that the introductory part of prayer covers the main aspects of the Messianic task, commencing with the sanctification of the Lord’s Name by the return of the Jewish people. The next petition, “your kingdom come,” echoes this sentiment. In the time of Yeshua, the emphasis was as much on the Messianic Kingdom as upon the person of the Messiah. The Messianic task was to establish the Kingdom, return the exiles, and rebuild the temple. The next portion of the prayer is a short form of seeking to be in the place of right relationship with

the Lord and others, and for provision.

It is important to recognize that those called to be involved in *aliyah*—which, in due course, will become the Second Exodus, prophesied to be greater than that of the exodus from Egypt (Jeremiah 16:14)—it will be as if they were on the front line of spiritual conflict. The scriptures illustrate that when the Jewish remnant return to the Land promised to their forefathers, the enemy's reign of terror will come to an end. The enemy will deploy all of his powers to disrupt, discourage, and destroy—particularly in the areas of family, health, finance, relationships, and personal reputation (John 10:10).

The most likely place of attack is in the weakest areas of one's life. The areas may be in the thought patterns or rigid opinions and ideas that govern one's individual, church, family, and community life within their home nation or in the country in which they reside. This is a major reason why one should not neglect to pray for the nation and the government of one's country of residence. These are vulnerable points where you are easily hurt. They are also known to your enemy, who is walking around (Job 1:7) trying to find out if there is any gap in the wall of protection in your life.

There is, however, another group which needs to know these weakest areas, and that is the intercessors. When they pray for someone involved with *aliyah*, they pray not only for plans and strategies, but they must also be finely tuned in to the Lord's voice to hear about any vulnerabilities in your life so they can stand in the gap (Ezekiel 22:30) and be your bulwark. The intercessors are the greatest single asset to *aliyah*, and they need to keep their prayer groups well disciplined, well taught, and they must be in unity. The group also must have the right motivations for their role as intercessors.

Prayer meetings can be exciting places to be, because we get to know the news before it comes out and, in addition, you can receive information you can't read in the newspapers. People get excited and they don't want to miss the next prayer meeting. Sadly, some are there as spectators, because they get the news in advance, and when good reports come in from the field they get swept up in a cloud of euphoria. It is a dangerous place to be in this environment as a spectator, being there for a feel-good factor only. Not only does it endanger the individual, but it also endangers the group. The

purpose of the prayer group is to enter into holy areas and to serve the Lord.

The greatest covering comes from the Lord Himself when we are in right relationship with Him. It is absolutely essential to be in relationship with the Lord, rather than be in relationship with an idea about the Lord. The relationship can only arise by gaining an understanding of character. This is where a good working knowledge of the scriptures is of paramount importance. We can only offer praise, worship, thanksgiving, and intercession to a God we know; otherwise, we are praying to an idol in the imagination.

A wonderful example of the Lord's leading and covering is found in the passage of scripture where Moses visits his father-in law, Jethro, seeking permission to travel to Egypt to see if any of his people were still alive in that land. The Lord had spoken to Moses in Midian saying "*Go back to Egypt for all the men who wanted to kill you are dead.*" Confident in the Lord, he departed with his family. The Lord was protecting Moses by letting him know that this was now the right time to proceed; there were no restraints due to personal safety, because those who had sought his destruction and death were now all dead themselves (Exodus 4:18).

The challenge we face when the Lord says that it is time to undertake a commission is to be properly prepared spiritually and to make sure that there is nothing outstanding, or things left undone. Personal relationships must be in good order in all categories— the Lord, family members, church members, and leadership, including former churches, because any weak areas can be potential landmines along the route. The accuser will be quick to seize on these areas to cause disruption (Zechariah 3). Everything needs to be covered by the blood of Yeshua, but remember that the blood of Yeshua does not cover unconfessed sins that have not been dealt with. There cannot be any covering for anything that is held back and not given to Him.

The Lord had instructed Moses that when he reached the courts of the Pharaoh, he was to demonstrate what today we term "signs and wonders." The plain fact was that Moses would enter into a time of intense spiritual warfare (Exodus 4:14-17) where the Lord would judge Pharaoh and the national institutions and gods of that

mighty nation. One should always remember that spiritual gifts are gifts from the Lord. They are given not simply to demonstrate His personal power, or His power in the life of the believer, but to illustrate His character, particularly to non-believers. In addition, after some 400 years of the Israelites' sojourn in Egypt, the Lord was about to fulfill the prophecy He made to Abraham and as recounted by Stephen at his trial in the days of the early church (Genesis 15:13-16; Acts 7:6f).

As Moses set out for Egypt, he found himself in a most unexpected predicament; the Lord had told him that his enemies in Egypt were dead, yet suddenly the Lord Himself wants to destroy Moses for not circumcising his son in accordance with the Lord's commands concerning circumcision, an essential element of the covenant.

*“At the lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him, but Zipporah, took a flint knife, cut off his son’s foreskin, and touched Moses’ feet with it: ‘Surely you are a bridegroom of blood to me’, she said. So the Lord let him alone at that time” (Ex 4:24-26).*

Moses' life was saved by his wife Zipporah's prompt action. Praise the Lord—he had an intercessor who was well informed. Many times wives are the best ones to pray for their husbands because they know the weaknesses that are not obvious to others. Zipporah stood between God, who was ready to kill, and her husband, and she dealt with this most vulnerable area by circumcising the child herself. In this way she saved Moses' life. It is unclear why Moses had not circumcised his son. He himself had been brought up in the royal household of Egypt and may have had misgivings. Zipporah, whose father was a non-Jewish priest, undoubtedly would not have been familiar with all aspects of Jewish religious instruction. Nevertheless, she knew what to do from the Lord, not only to save Moses' life, but also to rescue his assignment to return the people to their homeland. In Jewish tradition, Zipporah is considered amongst the great Jewish women and is said to be buried in the tomb of the patriarchs.

There is also another range of things that are holy to the Lord, and we will term these things as being sacrificial. A vow (sometimes termed an oath) in Tanakh times held the same value as a votive

sacrifice and as such, once uttered, becomes the sovereign property of the Lord. There was no way an individual could be released from the vow until it was fulfilled. Vows may be either to perform an action as with Jacob's vow (Genesis 28:20), or to abstain from an action as in the psalmist's recollection of King David's vow to abstain from sleep until a resting place was found for the Lord's presence (Psalm 132:3-5). The Book of Proverbs counsels us not to be hasty in making vows (Proverbs 20:25), because such vows may have grave consequences as in the case of Jephthah's vow concerning his daughter (Judges 11:29f) and the case of the unnamed prophet of 1 Kings 13.

The case of the unnamed prophet is pertinent because it carries an interesting warning. It was another unnamed elderly prophet who deceived him into breaking his vow "*not [to] eat bread or drink water there [Bethel] or return by the way you came.*" The old prophet claimed that he had received divine revelation from an angel who brought a word of the Lord to him that it was all right for the younger prophet to take refreshment, in direct violation of his vow (v 18). The act of vow-breaking led to the unnamed prophet's death by being attacked by a lion (v23). The old prophet who deceived him is next seen in the ironic context of standing next to the donkey and the lion, declaring that the death of the unnamed prophet was due to his defying the word of the Lord (v 26b).

There is another salutary warning in this story. The commission is not completed until after it is completed. Notice the word usage in the last sentence: not "*when it is completed*" but "*after it is completed.*" When a commission is completed, there is a tendency to relax and drop one's guard. As this is a time of super-vulnerability, often due to fatigue caused by the intensity of the event, there is a tendency to become casual, over-relaxed, and even undisciplined, leaving the door wide open for attack.

Vows were important during the Crusades, as crusaders vowed to worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Any crusader not fulfilling this vow either because the church was not in the crusaders' hands, or because they ran out of enthusiasm or finances, returned home to Europe in disgrace.

As Rabbinic Judaism began to take shape, provision was made for

the release from unfulfilled vows. The highlight during the service of Yom Kippur is the singing of the beautiful *Kol Nidre*, where release from unfulfilled vows is requested. It is valuable to note that no such provision exists in most Christian liturgies as the concept of the holiness of vows has faded almost into oblivion.

A further dimension to sacrificial elements concerning things that are set apart or holy to the Lord comes under the rulings of *cherem*.

### **Cherem**

*“You must not let anything [in a captured town within Israel’s promised territory] that breathes remain alive. Completely destroy them” (Deuteronomy 20.16b-17a).*

**Cherem** is a term sometimes translated as “the [sacrificial] ban.” In real terms, it meant the total destruction of defeated things including both human and animal life as well as goods and chattels. That *cherem*, without the sacrificial element, was practiced in ancient Israel and its importance as a cleansing tool is illustrated in the story of the five kings of the southern coalition that Joshua captured and killed in Joshua 10:25-28. King Saul, who not only usurped the priesthood but also failed to enact the *cherem* by allowing King Agag of the Amalekites to live (1 Samuel 15), led to both his condemnation and his unfortunate end. An illustration of the ban on retaining goods rather than their destruction is illustrated in the story of Achen, who held back goods that were part of the *cherem* (Joshua 7:1, 22:20). Another aspect of the *cherem* was that the wars fought by the Israelites were in fact the wars of the Lord and, as such, no human had the right to the spoils.

The *cherem* seems to have declined somewhat when Israel’s monarchy became established. It is important to know that Israel never fought wars of expansion and does not seem to have entertained territorial ambitions outside of the land grant (Psalm 105). Today Israel is not an expansionist nation and has consistently been willing to renegotiate land. The fact that this never happens is considered to illustrate the truth of the God-land-people trichotomy that dominates the works of the prophets. Biblical Israel’s borders have not been reached and anything further than this has not been aspired to in the modern state.

The lesson here is that the battle belongs to the Lord; the victories gained in intercession, prophetic actions, prayer journeys, and spiritual warfare are all for the furtherance of the Kingdom and the return of the Lord. They are Holy to Him. The *aliyah* leading to Exodus is the building of holy highways and opening gates. Each new highway is the property of the Lord, for His people on their way to His land, and the glory goes to Him alone. He will not share His glory with another. With each victory we give Him all that is gained and, in addition, we are to offer a sacrifice of praise which is our rightful service.

*Aliyah* is most holy to the Lord in all of its aspects and central to the return of the Messiah and the realization of the Kingdom of God.

## **About the Author**

Dr. Frederick Wright and his wife, Maria, have worked with the Jewish people, with emphasis on the return, for 26 years in the former Soviet Union, former Soviet satellites, Ethiopia, and Israel. Author of a number of books and numerous academic articles on Jewish related matters, Fred is considered a pioneer and leading authority in the study of Christian anti-Semitism and post-Auschwitz theology.

## **About Ezra International**

Since its founding in 1995, Ezra International has assisted more than 70,000 Jewish people from across the globe return to Israel, the land of their forefathers. Ezra International representatives work in Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Kazakhstan, and other countries of the former Soviet Union, South America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States.

Ezra International remains committed to assisting the Jewish people in agreement with the promises and prophecies of the Scriptures (Isaiah 49:22, Jeremiah 30:3, Isaiah 14:1, Jeremiah 3:18, Ezekiel 28:25, Ezekiel 37:21).

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