

Written prayers

for Iraq, Syria and Israel

We've been spending a lot of time recently thinking about, and publishing resources on, the theme of persistent prayer – committing to ask and keep on asking for situations and places which seem hopeless, insurmountable or entrenched.

Sadly, this week's headlines have brought us back to this theme again, and specifically to three Middle East nations never far from our hearts. Join us as we pray for:

Iraq - following a wave of bombings which have killed 84 people, and injured more than 300 -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18420488#>

Syria - where reports of massacres, fighting and civil war continue, despite denial by the Government and militant forces, leaving the international community uncertain of what's really going on -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18420858>

Israel - where heart-breaking graffiti has defaced the Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem -

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-18394186>

We don't have many words, and most of them seem to come out as questions, but we've tried to turn our heart-cries to prayers.

A prayer for Iraq

How many years now Lord?

How many headlines?

How many dead?

Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down

With peace, and justice and a loud resounding

“NO MORE” shout

To sectarians, militants, politicians

And to me.

For I am one who sits by silent and passive,

Too faithless and tired to pray

Except on a day like today

When fresh violence explodes my apathy

And a nation I know is in turmoil most days

Captures my attention again.

Eleven years on Lord and I still haven't really caught your heart for Iraq;
A thousand headlines and I still haven't fully understood
That you watch and weep constantly with every widow and orphan.
And you, unlike me, have never been idle.
You are working, transforming – if only I would ask you to show me how.

How long till I have your vision for this nation?
How long till my heart is found in constant prayer?
How many times will I be moved only to then forget
Before I learn, and change, and act? – with you.

A prayer for Syria

God of justice, God of peace,
We find ourselves at your mercy seat again;
Pleading for a nation we don't really know
And interceding for a situation we don't really understand.

Some call it civil war,
Some deny it
But we, who have no definition for it
Are frightened it will have no end.

And you, who see so much more than
Cameras and headlines.
How much more will you allow?

Please reveal your perfect plan for Syria;
Deliver her from her conflict
Re-establish justice and peace
And protect her people.

Give us, like you, a burning fire
That will not leave our hearts
Until our prayers are answered
And Syria's conflict becomes history.

A prayer for Israel

Write a new word of hope over Israel tonight Lord
Even as hearts and minds echo once more
With others' carefully chosen cruelty
That gives the past new life in the present
And new power to scar and scar again
With fear, and loss, and so much pain.

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Could you erase more than graffiti in Israel tonight Lord?
So as well as a memorial being restored
These words of hatred might somehow be forgotten
Instead of resonating round and round
And growing and growing and growing fear
Like so many others that have been shouted, and written, before them.

For we know your heart is breaking for Israel again -
Because you don't see Zionist, Orthodox, or any other label.
You see a people and a nation who like so many times before
Need prophets to rise who speak of your mercy and your hope.
Send your faithful, constant love and comfort as they cry out in pain.
For like so many times before, you are listening, and you hear them.

Help us to hear their cry too Lord,
To fall to our knees in response
Begging you "enough, please enough"
For these people so close to your heart.
Let your perfect love cast out fear in every "side"
And unite Israel under a banner of acting justly,
Loving mercy
And walking humbly with you - their God.