



**1 1 1: Preprayer for the NEW YEAR**

**January 1, 2016**

*The unmistakable sound of the Shofar could be heard coming from the wall surrounding Jerusalem, echoing across the sun-scorched valley. The blowing of the trumpet heralded great public distress and was used to summon the people. It was the first century B.C. and a severe drought was threatening the very existence of the city. So the city elders called for the people to gather outside the city walls. Then they sent for Honi.*

*Honi was an old man who, after this day, became known as the Circle-Drawer. Because when he was summoned, the elders asked him, "Pray that rain may fall." Honi prayed, but nothing happened. So he drew a circle around himself in the dust of the ground, and prayed again, "O Lord of the world, Your children have turned their faces to me... I swear by Your great name that I will not stir from here until You have pity on Your children."*

*The rain began to fall, one large drop at a time. But Honi protested, "Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain that will fill the cisterns, pits, and caverns."*

*In answer to his prayer, the heavens opened and the waters descended in a violent gully-washer that threatened to flood the city. So once again, Honi pleaded, "Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain of goodwill, blessing and graciousness." It is said, and recorded by the Jewish historian, Josephus, that in*

*response to Honi's third prayer, a long, soaking rain began to fall that ended the three-year drought.* <sup>1</sup> *Honi had prevailed in prayer.*<sup>2</sup>

As I look ahead into 2016, I feel compelled to draw a circle around this city, this state, this nation... *and pray!* Until God answers. Do the same. *Please.* On this first day of the New Year, draw your own circle. Then pray for everything that's inside of it.

***...Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate... Who knows? He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing. Joel 2:13-14***

O God of creation. We bow before You acknowledging Your greatness and Your glory. No one compares to You. No one is Your equal. We look at Your creation and marvel at the infinite power and wisdom that are Yours. Nothing is beyond Your reach. "You bring out all the starry host one by one, and call them each by name. Because of Your great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing...You pitch a tent for the sun...It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat...Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from Your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there."<sup>3</sup> There is nowhere in all the Universe where You are not. Surely Your arm "...is not too short to save, nor [Your] ear too dull to hear."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *(Footnote revised 1/14/16)* The story I've shared about Honi is based on the writings of Josephus, a first-century scholar and very credible historian who was born in Jerusalem shortly after the first coming of Jesus Christ. His writings are held in high regard, and have been used by the secular world as the primary source for both Jewish and Christian history.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from *The Daniel Prayer*; Chapter 7; Anne Graham Lotz; by permission Zondervan Publishing; May 2016

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 40:25-26, Psalm 19:4, 6; 139:7-8

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 59:1

I acknowledge You as \_\_\_\_\_

Yet we honestly confess: when terrorists randomly kill; when women and children detonate themselves as suicide bombers; when innocent people are grabbed from behind and stabbed in the back; when floods, tornadoes, and storms ravage our land; when our national leaders don't lead; when our business leaders lie; when our political leaders put their own interests before the people's; when our spiritual leaders contradict Your Word; when our social leaders divide; when our allies become our enemies and our enemies become our allies...what's going on? *Where are You?*

We are tempted to think You are...

Distracted...disengaged...disinterested,  
Inattentive...inactive...impotent,  
Out-maneuvered...out-moded...out-classed,  
Unable...unaffected...and even unaware...

of our fear... our helplessness...our confusion...our outrage. Why do You seem so small while our problems, disasters, and enemies seem so large?

Why \_\_\_\_\_?

Help us to regain our focus.

God of our fathers. Lord of the nations. You are the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. No one can understand Your ways. But we turn to You. We return to You. Now. "Are You not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in Your hand, and no one can withstand You."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:6

Did we not establish our nation as one under God? Have we not pledged, “In God We Trust”? But now we find ourselves constantly bombarded with the shrill voices of those who demand we distance ourselves from You; that You are just one of many gods, if You are a god at all; that we cannot risk offending each other by calling on Your name. We hear the enemy insinuating that You are “not fixing this” because You *can't fix this*. Our faith is being assaulted.

And so our spirits rise up within us and throw off the smothering cloak of spiritual oppression and political correctness. We shout Your Name. You are Yahweh. Jehovah--the personal God. The great I AM--the eternal God. The All-mighty--the Powerful God. You are Jesus. Savior. Immanuel. God with us, never to leave or forsake us. Your power has not been diluted or depleted over the ages. You are just as powerful...just as much in authority...as You were in Creation; in the deliverance of Your people from Egypt and in the parting of the Red Sea. You are the One who sends down the fire.<sup>6</sup> Who fells the giants.<sup>7</sup> Who makes wars to cease.<sup>8</sup> *Who raises the dead!*<sup>9</sup>

I shout Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

As we look ahead into the New Year, we choose to place our trust in You. If “...the kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord,”<sup>10</sup> we trust in You. If “...the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging,”<sup>11</sup> we trust in You. Though ...”nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall...,”<sup>12</sup> we trust in You. When ...”the wicked draw the sword and bend the bow

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<sup>6</sup> 2 Chronicles 7:1

<sup>7</sup> 1 Samuel 17:1-50

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 46:9

<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings 4:1-37; Luke 7:11-16; 8:40-42, 49-56; Ephesians 1:17-21

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 2:2

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 46:2-3

<sup>12</sup> Psalm 46:6

to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright...,<sup>13</sup> we trust in You. We trust You. *We trust You!*

I trust You when \_\_\_\_\_

I trust You for \_\_\_\_\_

We are told that we can worship You in our own churches, but we cannot bring You into the marketplace or the workplace; into the State House or the school house; onto the battlefield or the football field; into the courtroom or the back room or the bedroom. As though the God of gods can be contained, boxed in, restricted, bound, hidden. We laugh at such foolishness and exalt You as the Most High God who strides the winds of the earth. The clouds are the dust of Your feet.<sup>14</sup> The heavens, even the highest heavens, cannot contain You.<sup>15</sup> How much less any local church building. We invite You to have Your way in our lives. In our state. In our nation. Within our circle.

I invite You into my \_\_\_\_\_

Now arise, O Lord God. Look on us, Your people who are called by Your name. Listen to us, as we cry out to You on behalf of our nation. Do not reject us. Have pity on us.

We feel the encroaching evil. Darkness and gloom are descending. Those who hate us are infiltrating us. Those who are dedicated to destroying us are all around us. Are You at the head of this army? Is this the beginning of the Day of the Lord? Have we tried Your patience and crossed the line into Your judgment? Are You holding us accountable for our sin and rebellion and defiance, for our

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 37:14

<sup>14</sup> Nahum 1:3

<sup>15</sup> 2 Chronicles 6:18

profanity and blasphemy and idolatry? “You alone are to be feared. Who can stand before You when You are angry?”<sup>16</sup> *Are You?*

Most Holy God. As we draw a circle around ourselves, we want to make everything right with You within that circle. So we confess our sin. You are righteous. We are not. You always do the right thing. We have done wrong. We are covered with shame because we know better. We have had generations of blessing and prosperity, yet we have refused to thank You, and instead give ourselves credit for what has come from Your hand. We have agreed with those who contradict Your Word. We have turned away from Your truth, and believed lies. We have treated life casually. We have destroyed our environment selfishly. We have passed by the needy uncaringly. We have demanded entitlements defiantly. We have not listened to those who have warned us of the consequences of drifting from You.

I confess my sin of \_\_\_\_\_

I will stop \_\_\_\_\_

I will turn away from \_\_\_\_\_

Thank You for forgiving and cleansing me of \_\_\_\_\_

And now, as we look into 2016, we come face to face with a mess. What can be done to save us from ourselves? Even as the question reverberates in our minds, the answer is given: the solution to our spiritual and moral meltdown—to the restoration of the crumbling foundation of our nation—is not politics, nor the economy, nor health care, nor welfare or immigration reforms, nor free higher education, nor the court system, nor corporate or Wall Street regulation. You are the Answer. You are the Solution. Yet instead of turning to You, we seem to be turning farther and farther away from You. *But not now.* Now we turn back. We turn around. We re-turn to You. We run to You. We cling to You. We plead with You...

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<sup>16</sup> Psalm 76:7

*Turn to us! Draw near to us!*<sup>17</sup> If You do not help us, we will be defenseless. If You do not protect us, we will be exposed to danger. If You do not deliver us from evil, we will be overcome by it. If You do not have plans to give us hope and a future, we will slide into the past tense as a nation.<sup>18</sup> Into oblivion.

Father of all mercies. You have said that our land is a land that You, the Lord our God, cares for; that Your eyes are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.<sup>19</sup> As You look on our nation from this day forward, from January 1st to December 31st, 2016, we ask for what we know we don't deserve. We ask for Your blessing. *Please...*

- Bless our national and local elections. Raise up men and women who will lead us back to you. Raise up another Asa, who was fully committed to the Lord all his life.<sup>20</sup> Raise up another Jehoshaphat who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.<sup>21</sup> Raise up another Josiah who renewed the covenant of his people with You—"to follow the Lord and keep His commands."<sup>22</sup> Raise up leaders of moral and spiritual integrity who have a strong faith and a healthy reverence for You and therefore the wisdom to make right decisions. Put Your choice in the Oval Office.
- Bless our homeland security teams. Give them eyes to see the bad guys, ears to hear the evil chatter, minds to understand the tweets and codes, and the will to act before the enemy does. Protect us from evil.
- Bless our policemen and firemen, our armed forces and border patrol—all those who risk their lives to keep us safe. Restore to them the respect they deserve. Protect their lives and their families. Bring to the light of

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<sup>17</sup> James 4:8

<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah 29:11-13

<sup>19</sup> Deuteronomy 11:11

<sup>20</sup> 2 Chronicles 15:1-17

<sup>21</sup> 2 Chronicles 19:4-20:32

<sup>22</sup> 2 Chronicles 34:1-33

justice any corruption and abuse so that we can trust those in uniform.  
Guard those who guard us.

- Bless our judges and prosecutors. Cause them to serve faithfully and wholeheartedly, remembering that they are accountable to You.<sup>23</sup> Punish those who do wrong. Encourage those who do right.
- Bless my\_\_\_\_\_

You are the Fountainhead from whom all blessings flow. The list of our needs and our requests is endless. *Please*. Bless our doctors. Our lawyers. Our bankers. Our teachers. Our commissioners. Our farmers.

- Bless our preachers, Bible teachers, and seminary professors. Like Ezra of old, stir their hearts to be devoted to You first, then to the study and the preaching of Your Word.<sup>24</sup> When they preach or teach, compel them to preach the Word, not books about the Word. Motivate them with holy fear of standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account for the way they have impacted others by their words and by their deeds. Remove those whose lives are out of sync with their lips. Raise up a generation of spiritual leaders that You approve of as workmen who do not need to be ashamed because they correctly handle the word of truth.<sup>25</sup> Fill them to overflowing with Your Spirit.
- Bless our families. The unloving spirits of infidelity, dishonesty, treachery, hypocrisy, immorality, pornography, and adultery are sweeping through our homes. The enemy seems to be attacking us on every level, on every front. A vast army of evil seems to have been unleashed against the home. Especially the homes and families of Christ-followers. “We have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to

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<sup>23</sup> 2 Chronicles 19:8-11

<sup>24</sup> Ezra 7:10

<sup>25</sup> 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:1-2

do, but our eyes are upon You.”<sup>26</sup> We plead for Your divine protection. We plead for Your divine wisdom to counter the attacks so that our families are strengthened in their relationship with You. Be the center of our homes.

- Lord of love, we pray for You to bless our enemies. Yes, we do. Open their ears to the Truth. Open their minds to understand the Gospel. Open their hearts to long for Your love. Draw them to Yourself as moths are drawn to a flame. Your Light is stronger than their darkness. Bring them into the Light. Save them for all eternity. BUT if they reject You, we ask that You turn them on each other. Distract them. Destroy them. Prevent them from continuing to attack and persecute the righteous.
- Lastly, O God our Father, bless us. Bless me. Make me into a vessel of honor, an instrument “...for noble purposes, made holy, useful to our Master and prepared to do any good work.”<sup>27</sup> I know the night is coming when work for You will cease.<sup>28</sup> Help me to redeem the time. Use me now for Your Kingdom and Your glory. Open my lips to boldly and fearlessly make known the Gospel:<sup>29</sup> the Good News of redemption for the past...hope for the future... joy for the present regardless of circumstances... love that is unconditional, boundless, and eternal<sup>30</sup>...found at the Cross. Open my lips to just give Jesus to a world that is increasingly desperate. Use me as an ambassador of peace on earth by first leading people into a right relationship with You, then with each other. When the world around me unravels, help me to stand strong on my faith in You. And when people see me standing strong, help them to see You.

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Chronicles 20:12

<sup>27</sup> 2 Timothy 2:21

<sup>28</sup> John 9:4

<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 6:19

<sup>30</sup> Ephesians 3:14-19

Bless me.

- Make me into \_\_\_\_\_
- Help me to \_\_\_\_\_
- Use me for \_\_\_\_\_

And now, God of grace, as we pray for the New Year, we ask bottom-line that You fill our circles with Your glory. Send down Your Holy Spirit in fullness. Ignite the fire of revival in our own hearts. Protect us. Defend us. Comfort us. Empower us. Equip us as we put on the full armor of God so that we can stand against the devil's schemes...so that when the day of evil comes, we may be able to stand our ground...taking up the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God...and pray. With this in mind, we remain self-controlled and alert while we keep on praying until we prevail in prayer.<sup>31</sup> And we keep on watching expectantly. Is 2016 the year of Your return? We hope so! *Come Lord Jesus!*<sup>32</sup>

**For the glory of Your name...**

***Amen***

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<sup>31</sup> Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 4:7

<sup>32</sup> Revelation 22:20