

The place of rest

The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he enables me to go on the heights. (Habakkuk 3:19)

It is with a light spirit that we can best face the future, which is why God wants to guide us even more deeply into his rest. Often our life is obsessed by a heavy spirit - by worries and troubles - together with the notion that we must work hard for everything and that nothing comes for free. Effort and performance form part of our identity and our attitude towards life.

And now Jesus stands before us to draw us into his rest. The Lord of the Sabbath invites us to experience an important aspect of His nature and a certain place in His kingdom: **the place of rest**. Hebrews 4:9-10 speaks of the Sabbath rest which we enter when we "also rest from our own work, just as God did from his". It is like a mighty sigh – taking a deep breath as we consider what God has created and perfected, His wisdom, His thoughts and His plans. This rest will fill us in a new way. Entering the Sabbath rest means that one stage of life (in six days) has come to an end and a new day (the seventh day) has begun. In a similar way as in the transition from Moses to Joshua, a new era in our lives requires new resources and a different way of life.

The place of rest is not only about receiving blessings and new strength, but also about an awareness of being "interwoven" with Jesus. He not only blesses us, no, he literally lives within us. We become "like him" (Colossians 2:7; Romans 6:5; 1 John 3:2). The same power that raised Christ from the dead dwells in us (Romans 8:11). None other. We become one with him, because he fills us with his whole being. *Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal over your arm. (Song of Songs 8:6)*. This experience will significantly change our approach to life, because we are becoming more and more "divinely united" with Jesus, in that we no longer do anything apart from him, but everything only together with him!

For the next stage of our lives on the heights with its challenges, we now get the feet of the ibex and the chamois – we feel at ease with a deep calm. We cannot take on the land before us in our old strength. We must face the future in a life sustained by the breath of God. We breathe in God's breath and then we breathe out our own power and strength. Let us take in a deep fresh breath from God as intercessors in "The Call of the Watchmen". Together we want to put our hands on our hearts, breathe in and out calmly and say: *Jesus (breathe in), I receive your peace (breathe out)! Jesus (breathe in), we do everything together (breathe out)!*

Alexander Schlüter

Self-Determination of Gender Law and Reform of Family Law

This year, the federal government plans to pass two laws that will have a major impact on children and families. How can we pray? The Father invites us to come and sit by his side. We want to lay everything in his mighty hands and let him guide us in prayer.

(a) Law for Self-Determination of Gender

The "Self-Determination Law" aims to make the changing of the gender entry in a state register much easier and is planned to be passed in parliament before the 2023 summer break.

In the future, people who consider themselves to be transgender will be able to have the gender entry in their passport changed by making a simple declaration at the registry office. For minors up to the age of 14, those with legal custody should submit the declaration of gender change to the registry office. Young people from the age of 14 can submit the declaration themselves with the consent of their parents. Up until now, a court has had to rule on the recognition of gender change, based on the submission of two expert-psychiatric reports.

The approvals for an identity as transgender have sky-rocketed in recent years, particularly among minors. The draft law has met with much criticism, as the approval of other matters related to the justification for transgender identity are not addressed - from the administration of medication (hormones) to prevent puberty to the performance of surgery so as to align the body with the desired change of gender (such as breast removal). The legal age limit of 18 years for any surgical action in connection with some clear transsexual development is already not being observed. The youngest of the surgically treated patients in Germany have been approaching their 16th birthday.

In countries like Sweden, England and Finland, the treatment of children with hormones has been drastically reduced and they are increasingly turning to psychotherapy once again. They are saying that there are insufficient reports of success with such treatment. The affected adolescents are often suffering from anxiety, depression and eating disorders and, because of this, are not able to be fully aware the possible consequences of a gender change. A ban on so-called "conversion therapy" also makes it very difficult for psychotherapists to approve or question the self-diagnosis of young people as being transgender. What is the Father telling us about how to pray for this law on self-determination of gender and for the young generation?

(b) Reform of Family Law

The federal government intends to finalise its announced "Family Law" reform by the middle of the electoral period. The plans agreed in the coalition agreement are intended, among other things, to give new legal options to unmarried couples, homosexual married couples with children and people who just want to live together like a family but without a sexual relationship and commitment as in marriage. There is talk of a project of historical dimensions, because, according to the Minister of Justice, the proposed reform will bring about fundamental changes.

The right to be included in the line of descent within the family is particularly affected. With the introduction of a "multi-parenthood" in which there may be up to four parents involved, of "co-motherhood" where a child is born to one of two women who are married to each other, and by the formation of a new legal institution for determining "collective responsibility", the special protection, which the Basic Law currently guarantees for marriage and family, is further undermined. After "marriage for all", the requirement for "family for all" naturally follows.

The legalisation of embryo or egg cell donation is therefore also now open for discussion.

With the reforms there comes a redefinition of family, which is no longer derived from biological procreation and descent, but which makes the formation of family relationships a declaration of intent. Up until now, biological descent has formed the basis of legislation. There is a real risk that parenthood will gradually become a legal construct and the state will determine who the parents of a child are. Marriage and family are fundamental to God's order of creation and are the foundation of every society. Here, too, let us hear from the Father how we should to pray.

Alexander Schlüter

You shall not kill

Violent crimes of unprecedented proportions, one after another, are shaking Germany. People are stabbed with a knife or shot with a hand-gun almost every day. Up until now, it was thought that it was only possible on other continents that a gunman would kill anyone attending a Bible study evening such as the one that is held regularly by Jehovah's Witnesses. The murder of a friend by two girls, only 12 and 13-year-old, however, goes way beyond what we could imagine. The question goes even deeper as to what drives teenagers to do something like this. In dismay and utter bewilderment, our picture of seemingly good people is shattered, in seeing what such people from a harmonious, solid, just, peaceful and tolerant society can do by their own will.

Human pride and the façade of humanism are showing cracks and are falling apart. Most people are still aware that they may not kill or injure anyone else. The boundaries between fictional representations of life in the social media and reality are however becoming increasingly blurred, particularly among children and young people. There is in addition inner confusion, where they no longer judge the good and the bad according to known objective criteria, but according to their own needs and feelings. Let us come under the cross of Jesus and ask for forgiveness that our country has fallen away from God and His commandments. May dismay and uncertainty lead Germany to confession of guilt and repentance (Luke 13:1-5). Let us thank Jesus for His suffering and death for us, that we may live. He offers His forgiveness to all those who do wrong and to each one of us. And so we now pray in the name of Christ: Let us be reconciled to God!

(2 Corinthians 5:20)

Karin Heepen

Muslims in Germany

A large proportion of the approximately 1.9 billion Muslims worldwide take part in the fasting in the month of Ramadan (March 23 - April 21, 2023) - and so do a large proportion of the 5.5 million Muslims in Germany. Ramadan is considered to be a particularly holy and blessed month in Islam, in which the "gates of heaven are opened and the gates of hell fire are closed".

Devotion to the creator is paramount during this time. The focus is on fasting, reciting the Koran, supplication in prayer, and good deeds towards fellow human beings. For devout Muslims, fasting involves more than just abstaining from food. It serves to purify body and soul and to keep one away from quarrels and bad talk. According to Islamic teachings, by accepting fasting, God forgives the sins of the people. According to several traditions, Ramadan is divided into three phases, each of 10 days: mercy - forgiveness - protection from punishment.

A special meaning is given to the Night of Power (Laylatul Quadr), which falls in the third phase and at which time the destiny of the people for the next year is determined.

We recognise in all of this an earnest search for God the Creator and a yearning for redemption and salvation for which we as Christians know that God sent His own Son Jesus the Messiah! Jesus is named as Messiah (Isa Al-Masih) in the Koran, and yet He is not known by Muslims as the Saviour.

Prayer:

- **For the Muslims in Germany: that in their fasting they will receive a revelation from Isa Al-Masih and come to know his mercy, forgiveness and salvation. (1 Timothy 2:3-6)**
- **For harvest workers among Muslims in Germany and in Europe. (Luke 10:2)**
- **For us Christians, that we too will be seized by renewed sincerity and zeal in our devotion to God. (Romans 12:11)**

Tanja Frank

The Foundations of the State of Israel are being shaken

The protests in Israel that are against the judicial reforms being proposed by the Netanyahu government continue. Reform is overdue to limit the power of the self-appointed Supreme Court over the democratically elected government and to enable the government to implement its policies as announced before the election. The majority of Israelis support the need for reforms, but there are opponents even within the army and police. The opposition are rejecting the reforms across the board, as well as negotiations to make the current situation more democratic. In essence, the primarily secular opponents are intent on making the elected right-wing religious government coalition fall apart. President Itzhak Herzog is warning of a constitutional and social collapse in the country and has presented compromise proposals for judicial reform. The governing coalition rejects these as one-sided and ineffective to basically change the existing situation.

Already 45 people have been murdered since the start of the new wave of Islamist terror a year ago. 240 Palestinians have been killed in raids by the Israeli security forces against terrorist groups in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria). Ramadan began on March 22 and an increase in attacks are feared and the police presence has been increased, especially in Jerusalem. Added to this is the threat posed by Iran's growing nuclear weapons capability.

Prayer:

- **Thanks for 75 years of the restored State of Israel on May 14, and for the calling of Israel in God's plan of salvation for the world. (Genesis 28:13f)**
- **Passover begins on April 5: pray for a way out of the seemingly hopeless social and political unrest in Israel* and for the Prince of Peace to be revealed. (Zechariah 12:10)**
- **After 5 elections in 3 years: pray for the government and PM Netanyahu - for protection, humility, wisdom and courage. (1 Kings 3:5-12)**

Karin Heepen

God's blessings on your prayer times!

Alexander Schlüter and team

English translation by Phil and Margaret Daniell

** Since the issue of this letter in German, the judicial reforms have been put on hold until after the Jewish Passover holidays. The prayer for a way out of the unrest is already being answered! Praise the LORD!*