

Prayer Update From Israel (January 18, 2011)

“For You light up my lamp, O LORD, my God illumines my darkness.”

(Psalm 18:28, Trans: Robert Alter)



Photo by: Israel Antiquities Authority

Ceramic seal impressed with menorah. The 1500 year-old seal, discovered recently by archaeologists near Acre, is thought to have been a “bread stamp” used by a Jewish baker to certify his bread as kosher.

“Then Yeshua said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’”

John 6:32-33 (NKJV)

1. LIGHT UNTO THE NATIONS

“You are My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified...It is too small a thing that you should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel: I will also give you as a light to the Nations, that you should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 49:3, 6)

A YNET news story entitled “Light to the Nations” describes how a delegation of Israeli doctors has set up eye surgery camps in Nepal, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Cambodia, the Maldives and Ethiopia—seven developing countries—in which 2,000 people have had their eyesight restored! Israel sent teams of ophthalmologists who for two weeks performed cataract, oculoplastics and sight-restoring surgical operations. They also provided professional training for local ophthalmological teams. (“Israelis restore 2,-000 people’s eyesight”: Activism; ynetnews.com; 01/12/12/08:25).

PLEASE PRAY:

*Thanksgiving for and blessing on the ways in which God is using Israel to be a blessing to the Nations.

*For the veil to come off Israeli eyes—that in His Light, she will see light—and be able to fulfill her call to be a light to the world.

2. TEL AVIV: “BEST” ___ CITY OF 2011

In a recent international American Airlines competition purportedly selecting the most popular destinations among LGTB (i.e. lesbian, homosexual, trans-gender, bi-sexual) tourists, Tel Aviv was named “Best Gay City of 2011”. Israel received 43% of the votes; New York City was second with only 14%. During the competition, Tel Aviv was described as “the gay capital of the Middle East.” This is only the most recent in attempts to highlight homosexual activity in the city as a drawing card for tourism. In 2010 a campaign was launched in England and Germany to label Tel Aviv an official “gay destination”. Also in 2010, a 144-page Chinese travel guide calling Tel Aviv a “paradise for members of the gay and lesbian community” was published. It was a “joint initiative by Israel’s Foreign Ministry mission in Taiwan’s capital Taipei and a Taiwanese publishing firm specializing in gay literature” and was entirely devoted to homosexual attractions in Tel Aviv (“Chinese travel guide dubs Tel Aviv ‘gay paradise’: by Boaz Arad; Travel; ynetnews.com; 07/26/10; 15:40). Tel Aviv applied to host this summer’s “World Pride 2012” parade, but London won out. Israel’s Tourism Ministry responded positively to such initiatives, reporting that it supports targeted marketing campaigns likely to increase tourism to Israel.

I. “As I live,” says the Lord GOD, “neither your sister Sodom nor her daughters have done as you and your daughters have done. Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride...they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.” (Ezekiel 16:48-50).

II. “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God. I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses...” (Ezekiel 36:24-29 NKJV).

III. “For Zion’s sake I will not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, Until her righteousness goes forth as a brightness, and her salvation as a torch that burns” (Isaiah 62:1).

IV. In that day the LORD of hosts will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people, for a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate” (Isaiah 28:5-6).

The Bible does clearly teach that participation in physical homosexual activity is sin. As such, it falls within many “uncleannesses” (II. above) from which God has promised to cleanse His people after bringing them back to the Land. Yet sexual perversity was not the first great sin of Sodom leading to her destruction (See I. above), but rather “pride” and “haughtiness” in her sin. A flaunting, defiant celebration of any sin invites the severe discipline of Israel’s God on behalf of the destiny of the people whom He loves.

It is not unusual for us to hear Christians from the nations responding with shock when told of certain sins being rampant in our land. “I just can’t believe that would happen in Israel!” is a typical response—as though returned Israel were expected to be automatically shining in righteousness simply because she is “Israel”. We believe that that will someday be the case, but not yet. The Evil One is aware that his time is short, that Israel’s coming back, not only into her land, but into Covenant with her God will mean “life from the dead” for many nations. So even as he musters enemies from outside her borders, he positions others to work from within to keep her in darkness, to confuse and debase and pollute. Yet the Spirit of God is also at work within her to “convict of sin and righteousness and judgment” (She will remember her evil ways and her deeds which were not good; she will come to loathe herself in her own sight, for her iniquities and her abominations—Ezekiel 36:31). In the meanwhile, Isaiah 62:1 (“III” above) shows that another catalyst for her igniting into a torch of righteousness will be the fervent intercession of those who see her need and allow that Spirit to awaken in them the Father’s love and compassion for her, even in her sickness.

PLEASE PRAY:

*For Israelis who are bound in sexual sin to be set free.

*For a holy Light to shine this year, clarifying and defining in holiness and truth areas in which the enemy has blurred and confused identity and gender.

*For the Body of Messiah in Tel Aviv to be strengthened and granted strategy from the Holy Spirit in bringing down strongholds of sexual sin and perversion, and providing a way into wholeness. Many, many Israelis are from broken or dysfunctional homes which have left them confused and helpless.

*For Jerusalem to arise in her redemptive destiny, that her righteousness would go forth as a blazing torch—first in bringing illumination to the other cities within Israel. That the awakened remnant would receive insight and strength in the Holy Spirit so as to “turn back the battle at the gate”—including the gateway of Tel Aviv.

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION:

From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (Parashah) from the first five books of Moses (The Torah) and an ending (Haftarah) from the Prophets read on the Sabbath in synagogues around the world. This portion is given a Hebrew name drawn from the opening

words of the Torah passage. An illustration of this practice appears to have been recorded in Luke 4:16 where Yeshua (Jesus) arrived in the synagogue in Nazareth and was asked to read the portion (Isaiah 61) from the Prophets. We have found that in perusing these weekly readings, not only are we provided opportunity to identify in the context of God's Word with millions of Jewish people around the world, but very often the Holy Spirit will illumine specific passages pertinent that week in our intercession for the Land and people of Israel. All texts are those of English translations of the Scriptures.

The readings for this week are called Va'era—"And I Appeared"—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai)

TORAH: Exodus 6:2—9:35

HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 28:25—29:21

***Exodus 7:1.** "So the LORD said to Moses: 'See, I have made you Elohim (Literal Hebrew) to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'" The word "as" before "Elohim" is not in the Hebrew. In a very real way, we are His body through whom He looses His will "on earth as it is in Heaven."

***Exodus 7:9-10.** "When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, 'Show a miracle for yourselves.' then you shall say to Aaron, 'Take your rod and cast it before Pharaoh, and let it become a serpent'... and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent" (NKJV). The Hebrew word here translated "serpent" is a different word and may designate a different creature than that used for the snake from which Moses fled (mentioned in 4:3 and 7:15). There the word was nakhsh, the common Hebrew word for snake, such as that which tempted Eve in Eden. Here the word is tanin, used in modern Hebrew for crocodile or alligator. The Nile crocodile has been feared from ancient times for its propensity (more than any other of the species) to prey upon humans. In Genesis 1:21 tanin is a "great sea creature" created by God. But this creature is often used as a metaphor for spiritual or physical powers in opposition to God. In Ezekiel 29:3 (Part of this week's Haftarah), this word tanin is translated "monster" (NKJV), and depicts another Pharaoh (or the spiritual power controlling him), "Behold, I am against you, O Pharaoh king of Egypt, O great monster (tanin) who lies in the midst of his rivers, who has said, 'My River is my own; I have made it for myself.' But I will put hooks in your jaws..." (The word is also translated "monster" in Jeremiah 51:34 where it pictures Nebuchadnezzar swallowing up sinful Israel "like a tanin."). In Psalm 74:13 it is depicted as a many headed "sea monster" (NASB) whose heads God can break in delivering those who trust in him; and in Isaiah 27:1 the NASB reads, "And He will kill the dragon (tanin) who lives in the sea."

In the Modern Hebrew translation of the New Testament Scriptures, the "great, fiery red dragon having seven heads" of Revelation 12:3, who stands before the woman clothed with the sun to devour her baby, is called a tanin... and in 12:9 both tanin (dragon) and nakhsh (serpent) are equated with "the Devil and Satan." Lastly, in Psalm 91:13 (NASB, margin) tanin is the dragon which those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, will trample underfoot!

And so, the rod which had become a serpent nakhsh (Exodus 7:15), through Moses' obedient faith became in his and Aaron's hands "the rod of God" (4:20), which could become a different fearful creature (tanin) which swallowed up other fearful creatures (7:12), or it could become a scepter of authority which could turn the waters of the Nile, over which the Pharaoh's claimed sovereignty (Ezek 29:3 above), into blood (7:17). In short, it became the symbol of authority through which Moses would be God to Pharaoh (7:1), through whom God would manifest Himself as the supreme spiritual Power who would defeat, subdue and swallow up all other opposing spiritual powers.

***Exodus 7:14.** "So the LORD said to Moses: 'Pharaoh's heart is hard; he refuses to let the people go.'" The LORD knew that Pharaoh's heart was hard (Two words are used for "hard" or "hardened" in these passages, one meaning "heavy" or "settled", the other "tightened", "strengthened" or "fortified". Through the early signs, wonders and plagues, we see Pharaoh's heart growing hard according to its own nature (7:13, 22), or his actively hardening his own heart (8:15). In 8:29, 32, after the plague of flies, Moses especially warns him against continuing to do this, "But Pharaoh made his heart heavy and insensitive this time also." Finally, in 9:12 it is specifically stated that "the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh." We have here depicted both the choice and responsibility of man—and the foreknowledge and sovereignty of God. After Moses prays that the rain, hail and thunder cease, Pharaoh "sinned yet more; and he hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hard."

***Exodus 8:23.** "And I shall set a ransom between My people [in Goshen] and your people." (Robert Alter Translation; see also NASB margin). The word "ransom" is often translated here as "difference"—but everywhere else in the Bible the root means "to ransom, to redeem, to rescue from danger". It is in the last sentence of Psalm 25—"Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles." Israel would learn that God was already redeeming her out of his troubles... and, through the work of her Messiah would eventually redeem not only Israel but all peoples from the bondage of sin.

***Ezekiel 28:25.** "Thus says the Lord GOD: 'When I have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered, and am hallowed in them in the sight of the Gentiles, then they will dwell in their own land which I gave to My servant Jacob. And they will dwell safely there, build houses, and plant vineyards; yes, they will dwell securely, when I execute judgments on all those around them who despise them. Then they shall know that I am YHVH their God.'" In praying for Israel's restoration, it is important not to merely pray for her return to the Land—rather that within the Land the God of her Fathers will come to be hallowed in her midst. Nowhere is Israel promised safety for herself or her roots in the Land just because she has been returned here. We pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in awakening awareness of sin and uncleanness and a longing for cleansing, holiness and restoration—for removal of the veil over Jewish hearts, and illumination of the truth of the love and life of Israel's God and Saviour. Zion will always be a "signpost" to the nations (that is what the root of the word means)...but it is God's heart and desire that she will be a signal in the eyes of the world of a place where HE is hallowed! He has promised a day when He will be a wall of fire around Jerusalem (Zechariah 2:5) and her glory within!



Martin & Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week, Bo (“Come”—in to Pharaoh) will be: TORAH: Exodus 10:1—13:16; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 46:13-28]

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