

Prayer Update From Israel (January 3, 2011)



Site of the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.

**Here are buried Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah
(See Genesis 49:29-32; 50: 12-13 in Torah section below)**

1. SIX YEARS: THE LION CONTINUES TO SLEEP

“Will you work wonders for the dead? Shall the shades arise and praise you? Selah. Shall Your lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in the place of destruction? Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? (Psalm 88:11-12).

“For Messiah also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient...” (I Peter 3:18-20a).

It was exactly six years ago this Wednesday, January 4th 2006, that Israel’s 11th Prime Minister Ariel Sharon (his first name means “Lion of God”) was stricken with a massive stroke. Since that time he has lain in a virtual vegetative state, both in the hospital and at home on his ranch. Although his sons Omri and Gilad have claimed to at times notice signs of cognizance—a finger movement in response to a question, flickers of understanding in his eyes—there appears as of yet to have been no substantive proof of such hopeful gestures. Sharon was the last of modern Israel’s warrior leaders (his autobiography of 1989 was entitled *Warrior*). He served as a commander in the Israel Defense Force from its birth in 1948 through the 1973 Yom Kippur War, when he came out of retirement to be the signal leader in Israel’s crossing of the Suez Canal. In 2005, a poll by an Israeli news website found him voted eighth in the general public’s choices of the 200 greatest (modern) Israelis of all time.

His career was never without controversy, however. This continued through the year before his stroke when, as Prime Minister, he orchestrated and oversaw the Disengagement of Jewish settlements from Gaza (the military had already redeployed from the Strip years earlier under the

so-called “Oslo Agreement”). The enactment of Disengagement was an agonizing experience for all Jewish Israelis. Among Messianic Body of believers in the land, this was compounded by strong disagreement over the rightness of Sharon’s actions—there were those who felt that in the matter he was making rightly, however painful, a sincerely-felt strategic decision as a military leader (Luke 14:31-32); others believed him to be betraying his trust, participating in “dividing up the land”, and that his fall was a stroke of divine judgment. The truth was probably deeper than both sides.

Yet, in a profound and astounding mystery, Ariel Sharon after six years is in some sense still considered to be alive. We do not know how or ‘where’ his soul is...but we believe that so long as he clinically lives, humility, compassion and mercy require that we pray for him. It is known that Sharon kept a well-thumbed Hebrew Bible by his bed. And he was exposed to the Good News and the prayers of thousands of believers over the years.

PLEASE PRAY:

*That God’s will be done in Ariel Sharon’s life; that all ordained for his life will be fulfilled.

*That the hesid—the loving-kindness of the LORD—which endures forever would minister into his spirit-man; that he would be granted grace to know the Truth and to believe in and receive the work of His Messiah and sin-bearer Yeshua.

*That grace will reach to his two sons Omri and Gilad.

*That revelation and interpretation would be given to the Body of Messiah in Israel as to what the Spirit is saying to the Congregations through the phenomenon, perhaps “sign”, of Sharon’s endurance after these six years.

*That if there be one destined to receive the mantle of this warrior in Israel, he or she be preserved and raised up to catch it before his passing.

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 VaYechi—“and [Jacob] lived”)

TORAH: Genesis 47:28—50:26

HAFTARAH: I Kings 2:1-12

***Genesis 48:3-4** (Translation: Robert Alter). . “And Jacob said to Joseph, ‘El Shaddai appeared to me at Luz [i.e. Bethel, see 28:19] in the land of Canaan and blessed me, and said to me, “I am about to make you fruitful and multiply you and make you an assembly of peoples, and I will give this land to your seed after you as an everlasting holding.”” Bethel or Beit-El (House of God) lies just north of Jerusalem within the ancient borders of the tribe of Benjamin. Although God has, from the time of the Judges, allowed other peoples to take control of lands promised to Israel, it has always been a temporary situation in response to the seed of Jacob turning away from his God. Yet, the Divine promises continue ultimately to stand. The word here translated “holding” (NKJV: possession) is actually part of a compound noun *ahuzat-olam* – “holding for the ages” (Everett Fox). At its heart it has to do with that which is “seized, grasped, possessed, and held onto for eternity”. This explains why the current internationally demanded “two-state” solution for peace between Israelis and Palestinian Arabs will ultimately not work. The very establishment of a sovereign state implies permanence, and God Almighty (see El Shaddai above) has decreed that permanence here is to the seed of Jacob—Israel. We see it as significant that Ariel Sharon (see above), even when wavering under pressure to give up Israeli rule over Gaza and parts of Judea and Samaria, affirmed a commitment in 2003 that Bethel and Shilo would remain a home for Jews under Israeli sovereignty.

***Genesis 48:5**. “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.” In fact, because of Reuben’s sin, his birthright was transferred to the sons of Joseph, the first-born of Rachel (see I Chronicles 5:1-2). “Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph’s”.

***Genesis 48:20**. “By you Israel will bless, saying, ‘May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!’” In many Hebrew households, this blessing is still used on Friday evenings by a father over his sons.

***Genesis 49:2-27**. This remarkable poem in which prophetic words, judgments and pronouncements are spoken by Jacob over his sons is generally conceded by scholars to be “one of the oldest extended texts in the Bible” (which of course need not in any way imply that its content and positioning in the author’s final narrative was not inspired by the Holy Spirit). It contains many rare or unique Hebrew words and poetical terms, archaic grammatical forms and unusual syntax; consequently, there are quite a few places where the exact meaning is uncertain—and when this is not the case, its exact applicability to the son or tribe can be perplexing. Yet, it is the Holy Spirit who breathed these words who reveals mysteries and in their time will bring “dark sayings” to light (Psalm 78:2). Words sent forth from God do not return until they have accomplished all of the purposes for which they were sent—we believe that words from this poem are still working their way out in and through the descendants of Jacob...and suspect that in God’s timing there will be yet revelation to clarify those workings as

is necessary in days to come. After all, Jacob preceded his prophecy by stating that it consisted of “what shall befall you in the last days” (Genesis 49:1).

***Genesis 49:5.** “Simeon and Levi are brothers; instruments of cruel violence (Hebrew: hamas) their trade. Let my soul not enter into their secret council, their assembly my presence shun. For in their fury they slaughtered men, at their pleasure they tore down ramparts. Cursed be their fury so fierce, and their wrath so remorseless!” The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20). During the past year, and increasingly within recent months, Israeli Jewish settlers in both the vicinity of Shechem (where the violent attack of Simeon and Levi took place) and near Bethel and Shilo have resorted to violence against their Palestinian Arab neighbors. Many of these acts have not been in self defense, or even in retribution for offenses against them; rather, they have resorted to taking out their anger at the Israeli government for perceived offenses against them by taking it out on the Arabs. A number of mosques have been vandalized and burned, with the slogan “Price Tag” painted on the walls— i.e. When the government destroys illegally-built structures near the settlements, the “price” exacted by the settlers will be violence against their Arab neighbors. There have also been repeated outbreaks of vandalism on Arab olive groves, and occasional beatings of Arabs and scrawling of racist threats (“Death to Arabs”, etc.). While actions such as these do not epitomize those of all Jewish settlers in the contested territories, they do tend to surface disturbingly often.

PLEASE PRAY: against the spirit of wrath which characterized Simeon and Levi – especially in those Jews who are heroically seeking to work the land of their inheritance in Judea and Samaria. The Evil One does not want the Word over this region to be fulfilled (see last week’s Haftarah: Ezekiel 37:21-23). Many lies are spread about these settlers; whether through hatred and falsehoods, or through capitalization upon weaknesses of character and sinfulness within their midst, he will do what he can to blight their reputation and credibility. Pray for revelation of God and of His Messiah to the settlers which will bring cleansing and righteousness and godly direction—and with it, a capacity to live permanently in the land and to inhabit its cities (Ezekiel 36: 27-28; 33-35).

***Genesis 49:10-11.** “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes.” There have historically been great mysteries surrounding this passage, some of them related to what exactly is meant by the Hebrew translated “Shiloh”. However, there is little questioning that it speaks of one who would come to whom the “scepter” would truly belong, and who would be worthy of “the obedience of the people.” And there are further hints in the New Testament: Matthew 21:2-7 refers to a donkey and its colt upon which Yeshua would enter Jerusalem, and Revelation 7:14 speaks of those whose garments will have been “washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.”

***Genesis 49:20.** “Bread from Asher shall be rich, and he shall yield royal dainties.” It is interesting that “rich” here is a word which has shemen—“oil” as its root. In a similar prophetic word from Moses over 400 years later, Asher will be portrayed as “most blessed of sons... favored by his brothers”, and as “dipping his feet in oil” (Deuteronomy 33:24). Recently vast deposits of petroleum, natural gas and probably oil, have continued to be discovered in

fields off the north-western coast of Israel—territory included within the ancient boundaries of the tribe of Asher!



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (8-14 January 2012: Sh'mot—"Names") will be: TORAH: Exodus 1:1—6:1; HAFTARAH: Isaiah 27:6—28:13; 29:22-23]

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