

## ***Prayer Update From Israel (October 29, 2012)***



**Bedouin tent and camels in the desert; photo taken from well at the site of ancient Beersheba.**

***“Thus they [Abraham and Abimelech] made a covenant at Beersheba...then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of YHVH, the Eternal God” (Genesis 21:33; See Torah Reading below)***

### **1. EID AL-ADHA.**

Early Thursday evening as we prepared to leave our apartment, we were arrested by the cadence of a drum beat outside. We suspected what it was—we live right on a line between Jewish and Muslim Israeli neighborhoods in Jerusalem. As we drove up the hill, we saw a little parade of Arab children in uniform; their parents were all out lining the road as they marched to the corner then doubled back into their street. They were celebrating the beginning of *Eid al-Adha*; the “Major Festival”—the “Feast of the Sacrifice.” The four-day holiday celebrates an event in Muslim lore when Ishmael agreed to be sacrificed. According to the tradition, *Ibrahim* (Abraham) left Canaan at Allah’s command, bringing his Egyptian wife Hagar and little son *Is’mail* (Ishmael) to the dry and barren valley of Mecca in Arabia. Then Abraham was called to return but to leave Hagar and Ishmael there. They soon ran out of food and water and were near death, but after Hagar prayed, a spring bubbled up out of the sand forming a well, what would become the source of the *ZamZam* river. Later Abraham returned to build a worship place (the *Kaaba*) alongside this well. Then, the story goes, when Ishmael was 13, Allah commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son. Before doing so, Abraham requested Ishmael’s consent—whereupon Ishmael said “*Father, do what you have been commanded. You will find me, Allah willing, to be very patient.*” Unwilling to witness the death of his only son, Abraham put a blindfold round his own eyes. But after cutting Ishmael’s throat, and removing the blindfold, he saw a ram lying there with its throat cut and Ishmael alive and well. As a reward for his faith, Abraham received word shortly thereafter of the birth of a second son, *Ishaaq/Isaac*. (See *Eid al-Adha* entry in *Wikipedia*). Today it is a festival highlighted by the slaughter of sheep, cows and goats. Muslim families, no matter how poor, will set aside money for months in order to have a part in the slaughter of an animal for the celebration.

In an unusual coincidence, the festival coincided this year with the days on which Jews read an account involving the same characters—but with a very different direction and outcome. Towards the end of last week’s Torah Portion (Gen. 17:15-23), God made it very clear to Abraham that, although

Ishmael and his descendants would be blessed, His *covenant* would be established with Isaac. Then in the reading for this week, Isaac is born, and rather than honoring God and his choice, Ishmael ridicules the child, and he and his mother are driven away. And later it is Isaac who is taken to Mount Moria to be sacrificed. For his faithful obedience, there is a reaffirmation to Abraham that *“in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice”* (Gen. 22:18).

*“In your seed”*—that is, in Isaac. Here we see the tragedy of *Eid al-Adha*. Our God is *Elohim-Haim*—“Life God”. He desires to release this Life into all the nations and peoples of the earth He created. An avenue through which He does this is through his *covenants*—*life-covenants* of the Life God. He who embraces them embraces Life. To embrace a different covenant—one purposely meant to be in opposition to that of the Life-God—can only be to embrace *death*. This was graphically pictured this week when a Palestinian man in Gaza was killed by a panicked cow he was attempting to slaughter for the feast. Health officials in the Strip reported at least 150 other people hospitalized there with wounds incurred attempting to kill animals for *Eid al-Adha*. It is, in the end, a cruel path leading to death. **Through Isaac was released the One who is *The Way, The Truth and The Life*--who would defeat death and make eternal Life available to all humankind. There is no other way.**

#### PLEASE PRAY:

**\*That even as the LORD “appeared” to Abram in a pagan land, Yeshua would today “appear” to Muslims, calling them, like Abraham, out of a covenant of death to a Way which He will show them.**

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## 2. “STORMY WIND--FULFILLING HIS WORD—WHETHER FOR CORRECTION, FOR HIS LAND, FOR MERCY...”

*“Fire and hail, snow and clouds; Stormy wind, fulfilling His word”* (Psalm 148:8).

*“From the chamber of the south comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds of the north...Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds. And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth. He causes it to come—whether for correction; whether for His land; whether for mercy”* (Job 37:9,11-13).

As we write, the eyes of the world—and Israel—are on the bazaar and frightening scenario as Hurricane Sandy churns from the south towards the U.S. coast for a rendezvous with a massive cold front from the north. The consequences of their meeting are still uncertain, but have awakened alarming warnings of possibly days of unprecedented disastrous flooding and power outages. At one point yesterday the hurricane was heading towards the U.S.’s easternmost border while at the same time an earthquake tsunami was reported racing towards Hawaii, her furthestmost border to the west. In the end the tsunami damage did not prove serious, but that momentary situation released within us a sobering urgency to be **holding our brothers and sisters in America before the One who “commands” the swirling clouds; that what His people there need to know (and pray) right now, they will know so that “His word will be fulfilled” along the path of the storm, “whether for correction, --for His land, --for Mercy.”**

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## 3. THUNDER IN SUDAN—AND IRAN WILL BE WATCHING

***“But You, O LORD, are a shield for me, my glory and the One who lifts up my head...Arise, O LORD; Save me, O my God! For You have struck all my enemies on the cheekbone; You have broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongs to the LORD. Your blessing is upon Your people” (Psalm 3:3, 7-8).***

***“It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. You are my King, and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever.” Selah (Psalm 44:3-8 NIV).***

Wednesday a weapons factory near Khartoum exploded. Israel has been accused of sending four aircraft to bomb it, although there has been no absolute proof that she manned the planes and Israel has had ‘no comment’ on the incident. The plant was built about four years ago with Iran’s assistance. It has been no secret that hundreds of short-range rockets, mortar shells, anti-tank missiles and vast quantities of explosives have been brought up the Red Sea from Sudan and smuggled to Hezbollah in the north and through the Sinai Peninsula into Gaza and the hands of *Hamas* in the south. It is likely that most if not all of the dozens of rockets and mortars which rained down upon Israeli communities during the past week were transported from this site. Before the attack, there were around 40 shipping containers positioned outside the factory. After the attack there were no shipping containers and the factory was 60% destroyed (yet a nearby fuel depot was untouched). If it was Israeli planes (and not missiles, or some sort of ‘work accident’), besides slowing the supply to Gaza, the attack also sends an important message to Iran. It took place around 1600 kilometers from Israel—roughly the same distance as from the center of Israel to two of the nuclear enrichment plants in Iran. Also, the planes weren’t attacking a coastal site, they were hitting a target deep within Sudanese territory, yet they somehow managed to evade the many radar facilities surrounding Khartoum, not to mention the air defenses about the country (See “Khartoum flames seen in Iran” by Ben-Yishai, “Israel Opinion” *YNET*, 10/27/12/14:21). The plant is located in a densely populated section of Khartoum—so if it was an Israeli strike, it also demonstrated the Israeli’s ability to carry out a highly surgical strike so as to avoid as much as possible loss of human life.

**PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*That God will reach out on Israel’s behalf to defend her from her enemies—that if necessary He will enable her to reach as far as is needed to stop those who seek her destruction.**

**\*That a growing remnant in the Israeli government and military who trust in Israel’s God will rise in favor and influence.**

**\*That it will be demonstrated and acknowledged in Israel that her victories come not in her weapons and armament and her expertise in using them, but in the favor and presence of her God who exercises His right arm on her behalf—because He loves her.**

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**THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION:**

***From ancient times there has been a weekly portion (Parasha) 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 *VaYera*—"Was Seen"):

**TORAH: Genesis 18:1—22:24**

**HAFTARAH : II Kings 4:1-37**

**\*Genesis 18:1, 3.** *"Then the LORD appeared to him [Abraham] by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door...Three men were standing by him...he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, 'My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.'" [John 8:56, 58. YESHUA (JESUS): "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad...Before Abraham was, I AM."]*

**\*There is no clearer example in the Hebrew Scriptures of God taking on human form; He "appeared" to Abraham.** When Abraham sees Him and runs to greet Him, it is to Someone he recognizes (Remember, God had "appeared" to Him at least three times before—Acts 7:2; Gen. 12:7; 17:1). By this time he had also certainly come to recognize the sound of the *"Word of the LORD"* coming to him (Gen. 13:14; 15:1). Abraham approaches the three men, but to One he says, *"My Lord..."* But, instead of using the normal Hebrew word *Adoni* (Lord/Master/Sir), the vowel points of the text show that he used the word *Adonai*—a pronunciation used only *for Deity!* And in the ensuing conversation, both with Abraham and with Sarah, it is made abundantly clear that it is the LORD with whom they are speaking (The other two 'men' are obviously angels, who will soon release destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah). **PLEASE PRAY for believers in Israel that, from "inclining our ears to His voice" and "seeking His face", we become so familiar with our Lord and His messengers that we recognize their presence when they move among us. Pray for us that in our busy-ness we "not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels"** (Hebrews 13:2).

**\*The LORD appears to him by the terebinth trees at Mamre—which is Hebron.** Hebron is related to the word for "friendship" or "companionship"—implying a close association. Some see Hebron, not Jerusalem, as being the true place of Hebrew "identity." It was here that the LORD in human appearance and Abraham ate and talked together as friends. The city would have holy significance for the Hebrews from this time on. All of the Patriarchs would be buried there. During the 400 years that Israel was in Egypt, the evil one would try and take it over; but Caleb would rip it away from those giants when he and Joshua finally brought their people into the land. It would be here that David, at the instruction of the Lord, set up his kingdom for the first seven years of his reign. Jews continued to dwell in Hebron until modern times, when an uprising and massacre took place there in 1929. In 1967 Hebron was taken by Israeli troops without firing a shot. Sometime later, a contingent of brave Jewish women marched in and occupied a place inside of the city; another Jewish settlement was built outside. In 1997, in obeisance to the Oslo "accord," occupying Israeli troops finally pulled out of the city (some continue to be stationed there to guard the tiny enclave of Jews and to insure access to the Tomb of the Patriarchs). Liberal Israeli governments have pushed for Israel to simply yield up the city and pull out of it altogether; until now, that has not happened.

The Muslim religion looks at Hebron as the birthplace of one of its leaders. It has sought to resolve discrepancies between its teachings and those of the Bible by holding that the Hebrew Scriptures alter the ancient accounts, that in fact Ibrahim [Abraham] was the first Muslim, and Allah's covenant came through Isma'il [Ishmael; See Above]. Presently the spirit behind this religion, like the giants of Arbah in ancient times, holds Hebron in its grip. And the Jews living in and around Hebron, although showing great courage and devotion, at times manifest their zeal in a violence not far-removed from that of those they perceive as their enemies surrounding them.

**PLEASE PRAY:** *that the timings and purposes of the LORD will be released in Hebron "on earth as they are in Heaven".* Pray for a Great Light to illumine both Arab and Jew in their communities in Hebron, the light of the Most High God who desires to have a friendship with all the sons of Adam. Pray against the spiritual strongholds of cruel violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) which seek to hold both Jew and Arab captive in this city. Pray that national Israel will not come to despise her birthright, which includes this city of the burial place of her Fathers.

**\*Genesis 18:14.** *"Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."* [c.f. *Jeremiah 32:17-18.* "Ah, Lord YHVH! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great Power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too wonderful for you...the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is YHVH of Armies."]

**\*Genesis 18:19.** *"For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."*

**\*Genesis 20:6-7.** *"And God said to him [Abimelech] in a dream, 'Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live....'"* **PLEASE PRAY:** that although surrounded by peoples who are often hostile to us, we would make allowance in our hearts for the grace and lovingkindness of our God on behalf of all men and women of every nation, remembering that He is not willing that any should perish. Pray that we will not stereotype those in the peoples and nations around us, but be sensitive and ready to pray restoration and prosperity for those upon whom God through us may choose to rest His grace and mercy.

**\*Genesis 22:7-8.** *"Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, 'My father!' And he said, 'Here I am, my son.' And he said, 'Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' So the two of them walked on together."* *Genesis 22:14.* *"And Abraham called the name of the place "YHVH will Provide...In the Mount of YHVH it will be Provided."*

In ancient Hebrew the word *yireh* could idiomatically carry with it an idea of "provision". Yet literally it was then, as today, a form of the verb "To See". "God will see for Himself the Lamb" (22:8); "YHVH will see; as it is said to this day, 'In the Mount of YHVH it will be seen'" (22:14). God's "seeing", and our being "in His sight" is so important! We believe this to be a reason so much emphasis is placed throughout Scripture on the importance of dwelling "in the light of His face" (Psalm 44:3; 80:19)—"seeking His face" (Psalm 27:8-9)—"finding grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). If there is nothing coming between us and His face (the place of His

“seeing”), all the *provision* for our journey will be there. Lastly, God had indeed “seen/provided the *Lamb*”. Isaiah 53:11 uses the same word— “*He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.*”

**\*Genesis 22:13.** “*Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horn.*” We believe that here lies an important part of the significance of the *shofar* or rams’ horn. Here, caught by its horn, was the symbol of God’s Provision for all humankind—the ‘*Lamb of God which carries away the sin of the world*’. The sound of the *shofar* is a sound of the redemptive work and victory of the Lamb. When it is blown in the timing and authority of the *Ruah haKodesh* (Holy Spirit/Wind)...demons tremble, and the hearts of God’s army are strengthened and renewed with courage and joy!



*Martin & Norma Sarvis  
Jerusalem*

[The readings for next week (4-10 November 2012) are called *Chayeh Sarah*—“Sarah Lived”. TORAH: Genesis 23:1—25:18; HAFTARAH: I Kings 1:1-31 ]

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