

Prayer Update From Israel (November 14, 2016)



*“So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away...Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven.”
(Genesis 21:14,17; See Torah Portion below.)*

(Photo by author of embossing on doors of a 1796 cabinet owned by Tom and Kathy Miller, Atlanta.)

SO MANY THANKS TO THOSE OF YOU WHO PRAYED FOR THE *GLOBAL GATHERING* IN JERUSALEM THIS PAST WEEK. SO MUCH WAS POWERFULLY RELEASED; WE PLAN TO SHARE WITH YOU IN FUTURE UPDATES AS WE GAIN PERSPECTIVE ON SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH GOD RELEASED HIS BLESSING!

1. IN PRAYING FOR *ALIYAH*, IT IS IMPORTANT TO PRAY ALSO FOR ABSORPTION...AND FOR SPACE.

As we have shared over the past few years, we believe we have moved into a season in which it is extremely important to pray for Jews to make aliyah (“immigrate”) to Israel. God is calling His people back to the land promised to them through the Fathers (see Genesis 12:7, from last week’s Torah Portion). At present, it is still possible for Jews to come with many of the “possessions that they have gathered” (Gen 12:5). But the forces of anti-Semitic persecution are rising. For those who do not choose to come now, the time may soon arrive when they will find themselves fortunate to be able to do so with much more than the clothes on their backs (Jeremiah 16:16).

Yet, many do not realize how important it is to pray for Israel to become ready for them, and for their “absorption” into the society after they get here. The joy of arriving in the Promised Land can soon be drained away as immigrants begin seeking to put their feet down here. There is presently no great surplus of jobs in Israel. Most of those arriving here have little or no Hebrew; it will take several years to begin to gain any kind of fluency. For someone 35 or older, the changes of soon getting into a job corresponding to the one left behind is almost nil. The Ministry of Absorption offers benefits to try and make the change easier—three months of free Hebrew lessons, some economic benefits for a while, some early tax breaks. But no matter—it is difficult, extremely difficult. During the first great Russian aliyah of 30 years ago, within a few years depression, despondency, alcoholism was rife. Many simply couldn’t find work. Those *olim* who rise to the top are usually the next generation, the children, who quickly pick up the culture and language. Those from countries where the difficulties were severe, for the most part stay. Where things were more bearable, there can be great temptation after a few years to return. ***This was exemplified in a short article published this week in ynetnews.com. It describes how the aliyah from France appears to be experiencing a decline.*** Only about 4,500 Jews have immigrated so far in 2016, compared to 8000 last year. Although around 43% of France’s 500/600,000 Jews have expressed a desire to immigrate to Israel, yet “their poor employment prospects in Israel and the country’s grinding bureaucracy are deterring most of them from making the move” (“Sharp decline in French Immigration to Israel”: *ynetnews.com* (Jewish World), 13 Nov 16, 12:43). Although Israeli authorities have promised to make changes to the situation, really, very little has been done. There is an awakening concern that if things do not change soon, many of the French *olim* already in Israel may eventually despair of the country and return to France (Ibid.).

But jobs and absorption into the societal system already here is not the only thing—Israel is very crowded already. There is simply not space within the borders of the land currently recognized as Israel to accommodate the millions still to come. Any minute expansion of Jewish communities in lands taken from Jordan in 1967 is immediately greeted with angry condemnation from an international community, which for the most part strongly questions Israel’s right to have any presence in that land in the first place. ***In Ezekiel 36 of the Hebrew Scriptures***, the LORD had the prophet speak to the “mountains of Israel” (i.e. current “West Bank”) which had come under the claimed possession of other nations (vs 3), prophesying over that area, that it would “*shoot forth its branches, yielding fruit for His people, who are about to come*” (vs 8)—“*Yes, I will cause men to walk on you, My people Israel; they shall take possession of you, and you shall be their inheritance; no more shall you bereave them of children*” (vs 12). ***Through the prophet Zechariah***, God declared, “*Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west; I will bring them back, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem* (8:7-8). And in Zechariah 10:10, He promises that after they return, he will bring them “*into the land of Gilead* (current Kingdom of Jordan, formerly territories of the Hebrew tribes of Reuven and Gad), and Lebanon (The territories of the tribes of Asher and Naphtali once extended up into modern-day south-western Lebanon to the Litani River north of Tyre).

And so, it would seem, the territory—the “space” to accommodate returning Jews—will eventually include Jerusalem, all of Judea and Samaria (the “West Bank”), and portions of the present-day Kingdom of Jordan and south-western Lebanon. This can only be accomplished

by the *Lord of the Whole Earth!* How He will do it, and exactly when, we do not know. What we do know is that He has, in accordance with His Word, begun during the past 120 or so years, bringing the Hebrew seed of Abraham back to the Land—and once started that Word will not return to Him until it has accomplished all for which He sent it forth. Our part is to pray—that His will, His desire, will be realized on earth – as it is in Heaven!

PLEASE PRAY:

- * That God’s preserving mercies will be over all those Jews He has brought back and is bringing back into His land. That He will release courage, strength, resolve into them—and lead them into a way in which they and their children will prosper in the land.**
- * That there will be a spirit of brother-hood released in Israel—to receive and assist and nurture these kindred coming in from the outside. That grace would counter selfishness. That God will give strategies for accommodating those making Aliyah.**
- * That those who have come and are coming will stay—and not be deceived into thinking that a better life awaits them in the land from which they came. Hebrews 12 says of Abraham himself that, “If he had called to mind that country from which he had come out, he would have had opportunity to return.” But that returning would have been at the expense of the very life and destiny for which God had first called him out.**
- * That God “make beautiful in its time” (Ecclesiastes 3:11) the fulfillment of His promises connecting His people Israel to the territories He destined to accommodate them and to reside under their oversight. These will include Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, parts of western Jordan and southern Lebanon.**
- * That President-Elect Trump will move in the reverent fear and wisdom of the LORD in his dealings with Israel as regards these territories. For the past eight years the policies of his predecessor have been a great distress on Israel. There is great hope in our present government that relations between the US and Israel will move into a new place of friendship and cooperation.**

2. STAYING INFORMED: NEWS SOURCES FOR ISRAEL.

NOTE

Each year we desire to put before you some of the resources in the media which will assist you acquiring information which will assist you in praying for Israel and “asking after the peace of Jerusalem” (Psalm 122:6)

“The reports on Israel in our media are so brief (or biased) that we don’t really know what’s going on over there!” We hear this often as we travel outside of the country. It does not really fall within the scope of our Prayer Updates to provide our readers with a “news service” from

Israel. We attempt, rather, to focus each week on one or two issues which we sense to be of timely importance for intercession. And we would stress that we are only one of a number of ministries in the Land which seek to share with you specific issues on their hearts for the purpose of prayer.

Of course all “media” is not bad; we are grateful for the reputable News sources presently available in Israel to help us know what is going on. It is important to stay informed, and we try periodically to share with you several resources we have found useful in doing so.

The News services and Ministries listed below will certainly grant to our readers a much clearer picture of what is occurring in Israel “on the ground” than they are likely to find in the services available on T.V., radio and in newspapers and magazines available in their own cities and countries. We would advise you to place several of them in an Israel folder in your “Favorites”. Day by day—but especially during times of crisis in Israel, they may then be opened with a click to see up-to-the-minute reports in English of what is occurring throughout the Land and in Jerusalem. Besides frequently updated news-stories, analyses and commentaries, there is present in each a constantly scrolling synthesis of “breaking news.”

Of course, the presentation on each news-source will to some degree be influenced by the “bent” of the editors of that particular source. We find it valuable to be exposed to each of these slants. The point of view of writers and editors of a more rabbinically “religious” paper will be sometimes at variance with those of a secular, more ‘left-of-center’ news source. Yet, both will at times report stories which would not find their ways into the other’s paper. Being exposed to varying viewpoints is important if we wish to understand and be praying for all of Israel.

The main “news stories” of each of these sources we have found generally to be sound.

There are a few on-line news-services in Israel whose journalism has, in our opinion, gone so far to the left (or right) that they have become pernicious—often placing biased editorials long-side their main news stories in such a way as to intimate equal weight in the eyes of the viewer. For our purposes here, we have chosen not to include those in the list below.

We would caution you, that it is the LORD who “*knows what lies in darkness and Light dwells with Him*” (Daniel 2:20-22). We must ask His Spirit to guide us in discernment and counsel regarding what we see in all human news services. Nor are we to become fixated only upon the news stories coming continually into our computers. The Hebrew of Psalm 122:6 says literally, “*Ask after the peace of Jerusalem*”. We see the following as resources from which the Spirit may choose to answer that request, so that we may pray knowledgably for Jerusalem’s and Israel’s Peace.

A. Israel News Services Available on the Internet.

The following four English news services provide a spectrum of political and ideological perspective. Each now provide running up-to-the-minute 24/7 news bulletins.

***The Jerusalem Post** (Internet Edition)

<http://www.jpost.com/>

This English paper considers itself an heir of the Palestine Post of British Mandate days. Center to right of center politically.

***The Times of Israel**

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/>

Founded by a former editor of the Jerusalem Post, the *Times* is also “right of center”.

We consider both the *Post* and the *Times* to be probably the best all-round sources for up-to-the-minute English news reports on Israel for those in the nations.

***YNET News**

www.ynetnews.com

Owned and operated by *Yediot Aharnot*, the largest-circulation Hebrew newspaper. YNET is certainly “left of center—left wing” politically speaking—although not so much as *HaAretz*. For quick and sound coverage of breaking news-stories, it is excellent. And some of its editorial analyses are very good.

***Arutz Sheva**

<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/>

English-language new service from an Orthodox Jewish perspective.

CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES WITH NEWS UPDATES OPERATING IN ISRAEL.

These services, besides having many helpful and informative resources available on their regular web sites, have either daily or weekly news summaries which may be subscribed to for free and will appear in your e-mail box. We would emphasize that these are only two of several ministries which have begun releasing similar services in more recent years.

***International Christian Embassy Jerusalem**

www.icej.org

ICEJ Daily News Service (News and Analysis)

Subscribe by going to www.icej.org, opening “ICEJ Publications” and clicking “NEWS” at the very top. Then under “Ways to get ICEJ News” click either “Free daily ICEJ News email”

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“Free ICEJ News App for Apple & Android”

This is, in our opinion, one of the very best daily syntheses of News in Israel.

***Bridges For Peace Weekly “Israel Current News Update and Prayer Focus”**

Web Site: <http://www.bridgesforpeace.com>

News stories are available at the Website.

To receive a weekly Israel Prayer Update in your e-mail, visit the Web site, scroll down and click on the “Israel Update with Prayer” icon, and fill out the information.

Each news item on this Update is followed by a Prayer Focus and an applicable Scripture reference.

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 13-19 November 2016 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 [Hebron], 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.’ [“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad...Before Abraham was, I AM.” Yeshua speaking: John 8:56, 58.]*

There is no clearer example in the Hebrew Scriptures of God taking on human form to meet with His children—He “appeared” to Abraham. When Abraham sees Him and runs to greet Him, it is to Someone he recognizes (Remember, God had already “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...” Now, 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 burial place 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], not Isaac. Presently, like the giants of *Arbah* in ancient times, the spirit behind this religion 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.”* [cf: 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.”*]. Many translations read “too difficult” or “too hard” for “wonderful”. This is partly correct, but Hebrew *peleh* means “that which is so extraordinary or unusual as to awaken wonder”. This is the same word as that used in Exodus 15:11— *“You are awesome in praise, doing wonders O LORD.”* Our God is a God of Wonders—executing extraordinary acts beyond our abilities to comprehend. Yet, nothing challenges *His* comprehension!

***Genesis 18:19.** *“For I [YHVH] have known him [Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of YHVH, to do righteousness and justice, that YHVH may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”* Psalm 71:18 picks up on this crucial responsibility which accompanies the intimacy which God desires to have with us—that of passing it on to those who follow after us, *“Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come.”*

***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 though surrounded by peoples who are often hostile to us, we would make allowance in our hearts for the grace and loving kindness which goes forth from our God on behalf of all men and women of every nation. He is not willing that any should perish. Pray that we will not stereotype and dismiss the peoples and nations around us, but be sensitive and ready to pray restoration and prosperity upon those whom God may choose through us to rest His grace and mercy.

***Genesis 21:9-12.** *“And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. Therefore she said to Abraham, ‘Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my sons, with Isaac.’”* And the matter was very displeasing to Abraham’s sight because of his son. But God said to Abraham, *‘Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called. Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed.’”*

We find teachings seeking to attribute the conflict in the Middle East to a “rejection spirit” occasioned by Abraham’s wrongfully sending Ishmael away, to be misguided, because 1) both this passage and Galatians 4:28-31 make clear that Abraham was obeying God in honoring Sarah’s demand to send Ishmael away, and 2) those who teach this usually do so from a viewpoint that all Arab peoples are descended from Ishmael, a stance for which there is no Biblical or historically verifiable support (such a view disregards the presence and descendants of the millions who lived in what are today considered “Arab” countries long before Ishmael or Isaac were even born). The ridiculing of Isaac by Ishmael may imply that Hagar had not fully obeyed the Angel of the LORD in “submitting herself to Sarah and her hand” after she returned

the first time from the desert (16:9). In all events, God loved Hagar and Ishmael and watched over them—eventually Ishmael became the “father” of twelve princes (Gen. 12:20; 25:16).

***Genesis 21:33.** *“Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of YHVH, the Everlasting God.”* As we have mentioned, as we progress with the Patriarchs through Genesis, we see YHVH who appeared to Abram in Ur, continually revealing new attributes of His nature and character—showing how *this* “El” (God) differs from all the other “el’s” worshipped by the Canaanites in the land. These attributes are reflected in the new names by which He is called. Here Abraham coins just such a new name, *YHVH El Olam*—**“Yehovah, the God who is Eternal.”**

***Genesis 22:2.** *“Then He said, ‘Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go forth, yourself (Hebrew: Lekh-lekha!) to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you.’* The last time God used the words *Lekh-lekha!* (literally “Begin walking, yourself!”), was in Ur (Gen. 12:1). It was up to Abraham himself to begin moving—and then God guided him ‘in his going’, bringing him against all hope eventually into the far-away land of Canaan. Now Abraham is much older, and has walked with this God for many years and communed with him as a Friend. This is even more an obedience against hope—but by now this Man of Faith (who rejoiced to see Yeshua’s day! John 8:56) had come to believe in this God as the very “Resurrection and the Life.” In 22:5, he doggedly assures the young men with him that *“the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and WE will come back to you.”*

“By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, of whom it was said, ‘Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.’ He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.” (Hebrews 11:17-19).

***Genesis 22:7-8, 14.** *“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...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 and Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The readings for next week (20-26 November 2016) are called *Chayeh Sarah*— “Sarah Lived”. TORAH: Genesis 23:1—25:18; HAFTARAH: I Kings 1:1-31]

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