

Prayer Update From Israel (November 16, 2015)



Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

The “former rains” have begun in Israel. During the past week the hill has begun to turn green!

Please pray that throughout this rainy season the showers of Heaven, both physical and spiritual, would fall abundantly upon this dry and thirsty land.

1. THE TERROR IN PARIS ... AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS FOR ISRAEL.

A. As we write, the world continues to reel from the horrific, unprecedented slaughter which took place in Paris this past Friday. We love France, our hearts go out to her, and we join many in the nations in grieving with her. We are currently traveling in South Africa. Yesterday morning we were witness to a solemn ceremony at the governmental buildings in Johannesburg—an honor-guard, South African flags interspersed with French flags. In Jerusalem, the blue, white and red colors of France’s flag were projected onto the Old City walls in memorial to her fallen and solidarity with her grief.

As Israelis, we join our prayers with the Body of Messiah in France:

PLEASE PRAY;

*** For God’s redemptive purposes for that land and people.**

*** For France’s leaders to seek God’s counsels—that they be guided in the ordinances and timings of the Lord on behalf of their nation.**

*** That powers of darkness seeking to bring about shifts and changes outside of God’s timing be bound from doing so.**

*** Standing with our brothers and sisters in France; that they will take courage and rise up united; That those who “know their God, will be strong, and *do* what needs to be done.” That those with insight will instruct and encourage many (Daniel 11:32-35; 12:3). We pray for courage and insight in the Body of Jesus in France.**

B. As we pray for France, we must ask and pray for God’s purposes for the Jewish people in that land. May there be a call beginning to sound for return to their ancient homeland? The anxiety in France’s 475,000 strong Jewish community will no-doubt accelerate after the terror attacks of the past week. Incidents of anti-Semitic persecution have burgeoned over the past several years, almost always involving Muslim protagonists. Some secular analysts have seen the murderous attack on a Jewish grocery on the outskirts of Paris last January as very likely marking a watershed for massive Jewish emigration from France to Israel. Already this year, more than 6000 Jews have “made *aliyah*.” (Some 46 Jews have landed in Israel as new immigrants in the four days since last Friday’s attacks.) But will Israel be able to absorb a truly enormous influx of immigrants?

And not only from France. Events similar to what occurred on Friday in Paris historically have often followed a perverse pattern of coming to be eventually blamed on the Jews. Sure enough, within two days of Friday’s massacres, the Foreign Minister of Sweden had already suggested a relationship between such attacks and the plight of Palestinians at the hands of Israel. Under increased threats, people become frightened and angry, and look for a scapegoat...someone to blame who can be easily punished or disposed of. It mightn’t take many high-level figures like the Minister from Sweden pointing accusing fingers at Israel to influence the masses that the real, primary root of all the violence is in fact Jews—and *their presence in Judea and Samaria*. And as attacks increase in other lands, the Jews in those lands may find themselves increasingly under angry scrutiny, because of their homeland’s alleged guilt. And in the danger of that mounting anger, they may hear the call to return ‘home’.

But we’ve known that the last battles will be fought over this particular stretch of land—and who will dwell there (Ezekiel 36, 38-39)—and over the Mountain in the center of that land, and Who shall be worshipped there (Psalm 2, Ezek. 20:40).

More groundwork for this “international accusing” regarding this land was laid this past week when the European Union on Wednesday approved guidelines whereby its member states would be required to label products made in Israeli establishments operating within lands taken by Israel from Jordan in 1967. These include the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria. The labels would point out that the product is made in an “Israeli settlement” (thereby encouraging its boycott). No matter that these “settlements” provide work and livelihood for over 15,000 Palestinian workers; no matter that there are over 200 disputed territories world-wide, yet Israel is the only nation being singled out thusly for such treatment. *We consider this not only unfair and discriminatory, but also very dangerous for the signatories of the “labeling.”* When nations take part in actively bringing a curse against Israel (in this case, enforcing a curse on the very fruit coming forth from the land which God promised them by Covenant), they place themselves in great danger (Genesis 12:3). The very protection placed over them by a gracious God who loves and has a good destiny for their land

and citizens—that protection may be breached, leaving them vulnerable to attacks by the enemy of that destiny.

PLEASE PRAY:

- * For Jews in France to be encouraged to seek the face of the God of their Fathers.
- * For them to hear His call...and respond in His timing to return to Israel.
- * For Israel to be given insight as to how to prepare for the return of Jews from France and other nations as God’s promises over that “return” come to be fulfilled.
- * For Jews to not be bound by fears and ‘mammon’ from returning to their homeland. That many will respond to the call of God’s ‘fishermen’—so as not to have to be among those who will be pursued in the time of the ‘hunters’ (Jeremiah 16:16), which is rapidly approaching.
- * That God’s “Kingdom Come” over Judea and Samaria. He has promised that that area will prepare the way for the return of the children of Jacob (Ezekiel 36:8).
- * That other European countries will, like Hungary this week, refuse to enter into the discriminatory “labeling” directive put out by the E.U.

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 15-21 November 2015 are called *VaYetze*—“And He Went Out”:

TORAH: Genesis 28:10—32:2

HAFTARAH: Hosea 12:12—14:9

THIS WEEK’S TORAH PORTION BEGINS WITH JACOB’S FLEEING FROM CANAAN. AND ENDS WITH HIS RETURN 20 YEARS LATER, A SOBERED AND

MUCH DIFFERENT MAN, FINALLY PREPARED FOR A CRITICAL MEETING (Next week's Portion) IN WHICH HE WILL BE BROUGHT FACE TO FACE WITH BOTH HIMSELF AND HIS GOD, AND COMMISSIONED WITH A NEW NAME INTO THE CALL OF HIS DESTINY.

***Genesis 28:10-12.** *“Now Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran. So he came to a certain place and stayed there all night...Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was positioned on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the messengers of God were ascending and descending on it.”*

It is remarkable that here in Genesis 32:11, as Jacob “comes to” a certain place where he will experience an incredible, unexpected encounter with God, the Hebrew root used for “coming to” is the same as that used for the word “intercession”. And as He sleeps in this place, a ladder appears “standing in the gap” between Heaven and Earth with heavenly messengers ascending and descending this connection “between time and space”. This same word will again be used when he encounters heavenly messengers upon his return from Haran (32:1).

The place where Jacob “comes to” is generally considered to be the same place where his grandfather Abraham, after leaving Shechem, had pitched his tent, built an altar to YHVH and called on His name. It appears probable that Abraham had returned repeatedly to Bethel over the years (Genesis 12:8; 13:3-4). We would suggest that Abraham’s worship and prayers, along with perhaps also those of his son Isaac, had here opened a passage into the heavens above the dark land of Canaan—a holy ‘portal’ still open (with angels ascending and descending) when Jacob arrived many years later. It was a place of meeting, of encounter, where *intercession* had been made. The word “intercede” means, “*to come between in time, space or action*” (OED). As pointed out by American author and teacher Dutch Sheets in his classic studies of intercession, the Hebrew root word is *paga*: “to meet”, “to encounter”, “to come across”, “to strike a mark”, “to light upon” (The original 1611 King James Bible reads here, “*And he lighted upon a certain place*”). All of these terms may apply to certain aspects of intercessory prayer; but there is a deeper application. In Isaiah 53:12 an “active” form of this word is applied to the suffering and anointed Messiah who “*bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*” Hebrews 7:25 further speaks of this One who “*always lives to make intercession for*” those who come to God through Him. The point here is not that He is ‘praying’ for us, but that He has bridged “time, space and action” (see above), establishing an eternal way for us to come ourselves into the presence of the Father.

***Genesis 28.13-15.** *“And behold, YHVH stood above it and said: ‘I am YHVH God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your seed. Also your seed shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread out (Hebrew: burst forth/break out) to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you.’”*

Bethel, the location where this meeting takes place and to which the LORD’s declaration immediately pertains lies just north of Jerusalem, in the heart of the area within which much of

the world is demanding establishment of a permanent Islamic state. The land which God has here specified He will give to Jacob's seed, the present Palestinian government claims as its own and has sworn will contain no Jews (i.e. Seed of Jacob) once it gains total sovereignty. We see such an arrangement as a violation and affront to the Word of the LORD spoken in verse 13. As such, it will never be allowed to prosper. Since this entire passage deals with the descendants (the "seed") of Jacob, we see verse 15 as referring not only to Jacob during his sojourn in Syria, but also prophetically to his future "seed." A people bearing his future name *Israel*, will be scattered around the world, but watched over by the LORD, and finally "*brought back to this land*"—a people whom He "*will not leave until He has done that which He spoke*" to Jacob on this site some 4000 years before.

***Genesis 29:31.** "*When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.*" The Hebrew word for "unloved" is literally *hated*. It is the LORD who sees this hatred and moves to bless Leah (29:31). The names given to the children born to Leah or to her and Rachel's maids mostly reflect different aspects of the alienation and rivalry brought about through the deception of Laban in forcing Leah on Jacob before Rachel. It is significant that in naming her fourth child, Leah chooses not to continue focusing on her plight, but rather on "Praising the LORD" who is obviously showing to her the love her husband seems incapable of giving. "Judah" (Hebrew: *Yehudah*) means "praise" and has as a root the word *yad*—referring to arms or hands, which from ancient times were raised as a gesture of praise, thanksgiving, confession to the Most High. It is noteworthy that towards the end of Jacob's days, one senses a deep affection had finally awakened towards Leah, as he demands that he be buried alongside her in the Cave of Machpelah (Genesis 49:31). By the time of the Judges, both Leah and Rachel would be honored with a blessing, one still spoken over daughters on the eve of the Sabbath in many Jewish households: "*The LORD make [you] like Rachel and Leah, the two who built the house of Israel*" (Ruth 4:11b).

***Genesis 30:27 (NASB).** "*But Laban said to him, 'If now it pleases you, stay with me; I have divined that the LORD has blessed me on your account.'*" The fact that Laban uses this word "divined"—a verb form of the Hebrew word *nakhash*, translated "serpent" in Genesis 3:1—may suggest that he regularly resorted to occult practices when seeking guidance or making decisions. Both the NKJV and NIV translate *nakhash* "sorcery" in Numbers 23:23: "*For there is no sorcery against [or "in"] Jacob.*" The pagan occult gods stolen (Genesis 31:19) by Rachel from her father (perhaps brought from Ur by Nahor) will prove a snare and breach in the protection of the family when they arrive in Canaan. Yet there is not to be "sorcery/divination in Jacob"; and already Jacob is learning to listen to the God of His fathers for guidance (including even the unusual way in which he causes Laban's flocks to reproduce to his favor. Genesis 31:10-13). And He hears when the LORD says to him, "*Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you*" (31:3). 20 years before, this YHVH had promised a much less-mature Jacob, "*I am with you and will guard you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land.*" Now, as a humbled and wiser Jacob faces the Land with mixed emotions, YHVH promises for this next part of his journey, "*I will be with you.*"

***Genesis 31:42, 53.** "*Unless the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had been with me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night*" "*And Jacob swore*

*by the **Fear of his father Isaac***” (Emphasis ours). Although not nearly so much is recorded regarding the life of Isaac as of the other Patriarchs, these two verses suggest that this one who had allowed himself to be laid by his father on the altar at Moriah, who had loved to “meditate in the field” near the “*Well of the Living One Who Sees Me*” (Genesis 24:62-63), this “quiet” patriarch had learned and lived the “fear of the LORD”. And his doing so obviously had had an influence on the spirit of his less-than-upright son Jacob. Even at the beginning of his flight from home, Jacob had exhibited at least some capacity to sense and respond to the *numinous*—the presence of the *Holy*: “*And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!’*” (Genesis 28:17).

***Genesis 32:1.** “*So Jacob went on his way, and the messengers of God met him. When Jacob saw them, he said, ‘This is God’s camp.’ And he called the name of that place ‘Mahanaim’.*” In English, we use the word “angels” to refer to *heavenly* messengers. In Hebrew the words for these “messengers of God” and for the human “messengers” whom Jacob will send to meet Esau in 32:3 are the same, *mal’akhim*. *Mahanaim* means “two camps”. Perhaps it was because here there was a coming together of a human and a heavenly camp. As mentioned earlier, the word for the “meeting” of Jacob with the heavenly messengers bears a root which is the same as that of “intercession.” Even as at his setting out he arrived unwittingly at a place of intercession between heaven and earth, here, on his return he once again has a meeting with heavenly beings. Unbeknownst to him, he will very soon find himself wrestling through the night towards a “break through” with God, not only on behalf of his own future, but on behalf of a people and nation through whom will come blessing for the entire world.

***Hosea 14:1-2; 4-7 (ESV).** “*Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take with you words and return to the LORD; say to him, ‘Take away all iniquity; accept what is good...’ ‘I will heal their apostasy; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he shall blossom like the lily; he shall take root like the trees of Lebanon; his shoots shall spread out; his beauty shall be like the olive, and his fragrance like Lebanon. They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow; they shall flourish like the grain; they shall blossom like the vine; their fame shall be like the wine of Lebanon.’*”



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[The readings for next week (22-28 November 2015) are called *VaYishlach*—“And He Sent”: TORAH: Genesis 32:3—36:43; HAFTARAH: Obadiah 1:1-21]

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