

Prayer Update From Israel (November 20, 2012)



AMUD ANAN—“PILLAR OF CLOUD”

“And the angel of God, who had been traveling in front of Israel’s army, withdrew and went behind them. The pillar of cloud also moved from in front and stood behind them, coming between the armies of Egypt and Israel (Exodus 14:19-20).”

“So it was, when the cloud remained only from evening until morning: when the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they would journey; whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud was taken up, they would journey...At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the watch of the LORD...” (Numbers 9:21, 23).

1. MIV’TZA AMUD ANAN—OPERATION “PILLAR OF CLOUD”

*“For look! The wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow on the string, that they may shoot secretly at the upright in heart...The LORD tests the righteous, but the wicked and the one who loves violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) His soul hates. Upon the wicked He will rain coals; fire and brimstone and a burning wind shall be the portion of their cup” (Psalm 11:2, 5-6).*

*“The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell. Though an army may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; Though war may rise against me, In this I will be confident—Teach me Your way, O LORD, and lead me in a smooth path, because of my enemies. Do not deliver me to the will of my adversaries, For false witnesses have risen against me, and such as breathe out violence [Hebrew: *hamas*]. If I had not believed that I would see the goodness of YHVH in the land of the living! Hope in the LORD, Be STRONG and He will release Courage into your Heart—Hope in the LORD!” (Psalm 27:1-3; 11-14).*

Last Wednesday Israel finally decided to take decisive measures to bring a halt to the constant unprovoked mortar and rocket attacks being made against its citizens from Islamic militants in the Gaza Strip. That afternoon Israel located and killed the commander of Hamas' military wing Ahmed al-Jabari, at the same time launching a fierce aerial attack on a number of targets, including twenty locations housing long-range rockets. Israel labeled this new offensive "*Amud Anan*"—"Pillar of Cloud" (English news services use the name "Pillar of Defense"). Hamas responded with massive barrages of rockets, which soon began making direct hits on homes and businesses. On Thursday morning a rocket slammed into an apartment building in the town of Kiryat Malachi, killing two men and a woman, and wounding several others including small children. As attacks from both sides intensified, Hamas began drawing out still-operable longer-range rockets. For the first time since the '67 War, air-raid sirens sounded in Tel Aviv; and on Friday evening, shortly after the long signal announcing "Shabbat", Jerusalemites were startled to hear the long wavering wail of air-raid sirens. The two long-range rockets from Gaza landed just south of the city. On Thursday, the cabinet approved if necessary the calling-up of up to 30,000 reservists for a possible ground incursion into the Gaza Strip; by Friday evening the number had been raised to 75,000. Lines of armored vehicles began to assemble at the point from which the ground operation may be launched.

Saturday saw 31 rockets fired against Beer Sheba (16 were reported shot down by Iron Dome batteries), and others reached Rishon Etzion, a large city not far from Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. That afternoon, a rocket launched at Tel Aviv was brought down by an Iron Dome battery, only hours after it had been installed. Yesterday (Sunday) saw the launching of over 120 rockets, with specific cities receiving salvos of five to ten rockets at once. Ashdod was targeted by seven Grad rockets. Six were shot down; one got through and hit a residence, injuring two. Rockets also showered down on Ashkelon, scoring four direct hits on buildings. And Sunday evening two more Fajr-5 missiles were brought down over Tel Aviv. Paramedics treated 40 wounded in the Sunday attacks.

Meanwhile, over 90 Gazans have been reported killed since the operation began. The majority of these have been militants—but yesterday, the inevitable happened and eight members of a family, including four children were reported killed in an airstrike. Israel has gone out of its way to keep civilian casualties to a minimum—even distributing leaflets in Arabic from the air over areas where known terrorists or missile crews are holed up, warning civilians to get away. IDF spokesman Brig-Gen. Yoav Mordechai reported, "*Hamas is using the Palestinian population as a human shield. We have released footage of rocket fire from a mosque courtyard, prayer houses, public places and homes. Many of their [own] rockets are falling inside the Gaza Strip*" ("Four Gazan rockets fired at Ashkelon in morning barrage": *JPOST.com*, November 19, 2012:11:59 IST).

It has been heartening, the support Israel's stand has received this week from both Europe and America. On Friday the European Union foreign policy chief **Catherine Ashton** said, "*The rocket attacks by Hamas and other factions in Gaza, which began this current crisis are totally unacceptable for any government and must stop...Israel has the right to protect its population from these kind of attacks.*" A spokesman for **German Chancellor Merkel** agreed: "*Hamas in Gaza is responsible for the outbreak of violence. There is no justification for the shooting of rockets at Israel, which has led to massive suffering of the civilian population. The Chancellor urges those responsible in the Gaza Strip to immediately stop firing on Israel.*" Israel has the "*right and obligation*" to protect its population ("Ashton, Merkel say Israel has right to defend itself": *JPOST.com*; 19 Nov 2012 13:49IST). In America, the **United States Senate** on Thursday passed the following resolution:

“As a bipartisan group of Senators committed to Israel’s security, we express our solidarity with Israel during this deeply challenging period and denounce the reprehensible and indiscriminate rocket attacks launched by Hamas and Islamic Jihad against innocent Israeli citizens. These statements demonstrate that America continues to firmly stand with Israel and her right to defend herself. No nation can tolerate constant barrages of rockets against its civilian population.” (“US Senate expresses firm support of Israel”:ynetnews.com, 16/11/2012).

And **President Obama** has continually affirmed Israel’s right to defend itself, *“There’s no country on earth that would tolerate missiles raining down on its citizens from outside its borders. We are fully supportive of Israel’s right to defend itself.”*

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? Israel’s leaders are in great need of wisdom and counsel and courage. Rumors continue to flow regarding a possible cease-fire...but as of this writing (Monday afternoon), rockets have continued falling all day (over 60); eight hitting Ashkelon within the past hour. A ground offensive will be costly. Israel is aware that not only missiles have been smuggled into the Strip, but vast amounts of weaponry for use against troops and tanks. And as casualties mount, some of the support granted Israel from outside will no doubt drain away. Yet, having come this far, how wise would it be to, as in the past, simply draw back at Hamas’ first call for a cease fire, having done nothing substantial to insure that it will not happen all over again within a few months? This afternoon it was announced that preparations by the army for a ground offensive have been completed. Armored vehicles are massed at the entrance to the Strip, emergency training is done. They are awaiting a word to enter.



Photo: Kobi Gideon/GPO/Flash90

(Left to Right) Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak, military Chief of Staff Benny Gantz and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu confer before Sunday morning’s weekly cabinet meeting.

PLEASE PRAY:

***For Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, and military Chief of Staff Benny Gantz that they hear and be influenced by the counsels of YHVH Tzevaot, the LORD of Armies—who guards over Israel and neither slumbers nor sleeps.**

***That even as the “Pillar of Cloud” for which this operation is named would lead ancient Israel in knowing when to move, where, when to stop, when to press forward—God will grant divine grace to our leaders to progress in His timing.**

***That He who “knows deep and hidden things, Who sees what lies in darkness and light dwells with Him” (Daniel 2:22) will keep Israel from being led into death traps of the enemy.**

*That if it is within God’s counsel for Israel to go in on the ground, the operation will be done with courage and strength—yet also with mercy.

*That angelic powers will be released before and around and behind the military to war against spiritual powers. Pray that Israel’s forces will have those amongst them with a sensitivity to the cadence of the Armies of Heaven—to *hear and be in step with the “sound of the marching in the tops of the mull-berry trees”* (II Samuel 5:22-25). That the angels of God will minister to both Jew and Arab “on behalf of those who will inherit Salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

*That Israel and her armies be powerfully moved upon by the Holy Spirit to lift up their souls to God and trust in Him, to realize and acknowledge that Victory comes from Him.

*That those in Gaza who have said, “*Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more*” (A virtual paraphrase of lines and sentiments verbalized in the Hamas Charter) will be defeated—That God will “*frighten them with [His] storm...Fill their faces with shame—that they may seek Your name, O LORD!*” (Psalm 83:4, 15-16).

II. PRAY FOR THE BELIEVING SOLDIERS!



Photo Courtesy IDF

**Israeli military Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz with his generals.
The Hebrew on the wall over the war room is a quotation from Psalm 27:**

“MY HEART WILL NOT FEAR IF WAR RISE UP AGAINST ME”

Never has it been more urgent to pray for the believing men and women in the Israeli Defense Force! There are estimated to be at least 400 Messianic (Christian) soldiers on active duty at any time—and there are many who will be joining them from the Reserves. Only last Wednesday evening the writers hosted a young man in our home who, after having himself served with distinction in the military, now leads a fellowship for believing soldiers from across Israel. Two days later he received his own ‘call-up’, as did other reservists we know (Israeli male soldiers are in reserve status until the age of 45).

In his book *From Iraq to Armageddon* Messianic leader Asher Intrater writes:

A special link between the angelic armies and the earthly armies is the young Messianic Jewish men and women who are serving in the Israeli army today. Not only are they soldiers in the

IDF (Israeli Defense Forces), but they also have a spiritual connection with the heavenly armies through prayer and faith...While the number of Messianic soldiers is still comparatively small, many of them serve in significant roles in battle units, fighting against terrorism. These Messianic soldiers form a living bridge between the two aspects of the second coming of Yeshua. In them, the heavenly side and the Israeli side become one. Yeshua is their ultimate commander, both in the military sense and in the spiritual sense. They are an important link to Yeshua as He prepares to return to earth to destroy the forces of evil, both angelic and human.” (From Iraq to Armageddon: The Final Showdown Approaches: by Keith [Asher] Intrater, Destiny Image, Shippensburg, PA © 2003, pp. 20,21).

A name for God used by David when he faced Goliath is *Elohei-Mar’ar’khot Yisrael*—“God who Arrays the Army of Israel”. He is the one who puts each in their place. A few hundred may not sound like many—but it is more than have been in Israel’s military since she became a modern nation—and many of them are now networked with other believers, both in the military and out, who can pray and support them. Remember, God only chose a remnant of 300 with which to stand with Gideon and defeat the Midianites in Judges 7!

PLEASE PRAY:

***Courage and wisdom and deep trust in God among the Messianic soldiers in the Army of Israel, both those on active duty and those in the Reserves.**

***That these believing soldiers be ‘for signs and wonders’ among their peers. That they shine like lights and draw many of their fellows into a place of hope and trust in the LORD.**

***That the “prophetic” operate strongly (I Corinthians 14:1) in these young men and women. That they find favor and success as they discern what the Spirit is saying or revealing in various situations. Remember Elisha, whose Word released strategy for Israel during a time of war because “*Elisha the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you [the king of Syria] speak in your bedroom.*” (II Kings 6:12).**

III. STAYING INFORMED AS YOU PRAY

We encourage you to keep informed with us as to what is going on in Israel. Ask the Lord to guide you in discernment regarding the media. Often news services in the nations will have only brief articles on Israel, stimulated by exceptional occurrences, which may not accurately reflect the larger picture. We recommend the following sites which may be placed in the “Favorites” of your computer. They are in our opinion among the most reliable for receiving moment-by-moment English news updates of the situation here:

***www.jpost.com**

***www.ynetnews.com**

***www.timesofisrael.com**

PLEASE PRAY: for civilian believers in Israel that we will move in the self-control and direction of the Holy Spirit—staying informed, but at the same time, being about God’s priorities for us; not running compulsively to the computer throughout the day to keep our eyes “glued” to the latest news!

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 18-24 November are called *VaYetze*—[And Jacob “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. IT 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.”* 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 is a place to which it seems probable he had returned repeatedly over the years (Genesis 12:8; 13:3-4). Is it possible that Abraham's prayers, and perhaps those of his son Isaac, had opened a passage into the heavens above that dark land, a holy ‘portal’ still open when Jacob arrived so many years later...because here, in fact, a place of meeting, of encounter, of “*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 root Hebrew word is *paga*: *to meet, encounter, to come across; to strike a mark; to light upon*. All of these terms may be applied to intercessory prayer. But there is a deeper application. In Isaiah 54:12 an “active” form of *paga* 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 ourselves to come into the presence of the Father.

It is interesting that as here in Genesis 32:11 Jacob “comes to” a certain place where he will experience an incredible unexpected encounter with God...the Hebrew root for “coming to” is *paga*. 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 again encounters heavenly messengers upon his return from Haran (32:1).

***Genesis 28.13-15.** 13. *“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. 14. 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. 15. 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 and thanksgiving to the Most High. The most-used Hebrew words for “thanksgiving” or “giving thanks” also have this as their root. 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 name used of the Serpent (*nakhash*) in Genesis 3:1—might suggest that he regularly resorted to occult practices when seeking guidance or making decisions. Both the NKJV and NIV translate *nachash* “sorcery” in Numbers 23:23: *“For there is no sorcery against [or “in”] Jacob.”* The pagan occult gods stolen 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).

***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*: “*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 ‘Mahainaim’.”* In English, we use the word “angels” to refer to *heavenly* messengers. In Hebrew the word for these “messengers of God” and for the human “messengers” whom Jacob will send to meet Esau in 32:3 are the same, *malakhim*. *Mahainaim* 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.”*



*Martin & Norma Sarvis
Jerusalem*

[The readings for next week (25 November—1 December) will be called *VaYishlach*—“And [Jacob] Sent”. TORAH: Genesis 32:3—36:43; HAFTARAH: Obadiah 1:1-21]

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