

Prayer Update From Israel (December 15, 2014)



1. HANUKKAH BEGINS TUESDAY EVENING.

Hanukkah is A Hebrew word meaning “dedication.” (It is used, for instance, in II Chron. 7:9 when Solomon dedicated the altar for the First Temple; it also occurs in the heading for Psalm 30, a dedication of a house.) The eight-day Jewish celebration bearing that name (it is also called the *Festival of Lights*) remembers the re-dedication of the “second” temple in Jerusalem after it had been recovered by the Jewish forces of Yehuda Maccabee in 164 BC. The Syrian king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (a forerunner of the Anti-Christ, and foretold in Daniel 11:21), seeking to coerce Jews into abandoning their religion and culture for that of Greece, had issued edicts forbidding circumcision, observance of Jewish Sabbaths and feast-days. He had defiled the Holy Temple by offering a sow on the altar and raising up in the Sanctuary a statue to the Greek god Zeus. As chronicled in the *First Book of Maccabees* (a respected historical account of Jewish history found in the Apocrypha), a revolt was launched by the priest Mattathias and later led by his son Yehuda (Judas) Maccabee. It resulted in the defeat of the Syrian forces, after which the defiled Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated.

Another account relates how during this cleansing there was only enough sanctified oil left to burn in the Temple menorah for one night—yet a miracle occurred and it continued burning for eight days. * The victorious warrior Yehuda ordained “*that the days of the dedication of the altar should be kept in their season from year to year by the space of eight days, from the five and twentieth day of the month of Kislev, with mirth and gladness*” (I Maccabees 4:59). The miracle has given rise to the tradition associating this holiday with oil and light (“Festival of Lights”)—from the eight-branched menorah (often fueled by oil), which has a new lamp ignited each evening of the festival, to the oil-fried jelly doughnuts available on every corner.

*[Within the Messianic community, some are skeptical as to the authenticity of the miracle story, many others assume it to be true.]

John records how Yeshua/Jesus was walking in the Temple on Solomon's Porch during the Festival of Hanukkah in Jerusalem (John 10:22). It was during this season that he chose to speak of himself as "*The Good Shepherd*" who "*lays down his life for the sheep.*" And, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one*" (John 10:27-30 ESV).

As mentioned earlier, part of the celebration includes the use of a special eight-branched menorah upon which a new oil lamp or candle is lit each evening. Each light is ignited from the flame of a separate "branch" called *shamash*—"servant". Remarkably, the Haftarah reading for this Saturday within Hanukkah, besides containing, as might be expected, a menorah (see Torah section below), also includes the following words, "*Behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.*" Although a different word for servant is used here, there is no doubt that it refers to the Servant-Messiah, sent by the Father—the Light Inextinguishable, who illumines all coming into the world (John 1:9).

Hanukkah—the Feast of Dedication—the Festival of Lights

is a season for

*Allowing the Holy Light of the Spirit to shine within ourselves, revealing any idolatry or uncleanness which may have defiled our bodies (which are the Temple of the Holy Spirit) and removing it. Of re-dedicating our bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

*Dedicating our ears to listen for the voice of our Shepherd (John 10 above).

*For surrendering ourselves anew to the infilling of the Holy Spirit whose anointing comes from an inexhaustible supply.

*For letting our "lights" shine brightly in the darkness—reaching out and joining with those of other believers.

A popular Israeli Hebrew Children's song for Hanukkah is called *Banu Hoshekh L'garesh* ("We have come to drive out darkness"):

*We have come to drive out darkness, in our hands light and fire:
Each of us is a small light, but together we are a strong, steady light.
Flee Darkness in the Blackness—Flee before the Light!*

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 14-20 December 2014 are called *MiKetz*—"At the End Of":

TORAH: Genesis 41:1—44:17

HAFTARAH (Hanukkah): Zechariah 2:10—4:7

(Years when Hanukkah does not fall on this Sabbath, the Haftarah is I Kings 3:15—4:1)

***Genesis 41:1; 15-16.** *"Then it came to pass, at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh had a dream...And Pharaoh said to Joseph, 'I have had a dream, and there is no one who can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that you can understand a dream, to interpret it.' So Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, 'It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh an answer of shalom.'"*

PLEASE PRAY: *That the LORD release dreams into our secular leaders—which can only be interpreted by those whom He has prepared. Pray that the Lord raise up young men and women who will be filled with His Spirit, and who will be able supernaturally (in this rationalistic age) to give our Prime Minister and other leaders "an answer of Shalom."*

***Genesis 44:5, 15:** *"Get up, follow the men; and when you overtake them, say to them, 'Why have you repaid evil for good? Is not this the one from which my lord drinks, and with which he indeed practices divination? You have done evil in so doing.'" "Did you not know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?"*

Joseph never actually says he "practices divination"—rather, *"Is this not the one...with which he indeed practices divination?"* and *"Such a man as I can certainly practice divination"*. He is still allowing his brothers to think him an Egyptian ruler, who normally would be expected to do such things. Numbers 23:23 uses the same Hebrew word (*nakhash*) in asserting that *"there is no sorcery in Jacob"*. As we have already seen (Genesis 40:8; 41:16), Joseph was always open in attributing his powers not to himself or his expertise, but to God.

***Zechariah 2:10-11.** *"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion! For behold, I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," says the LORD. "Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and they shall become My people. And I will dwell in your midst. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you."*

There is nothing in the Hebrew of this passage to suggest that the One (i.e. the LORD) who says He is "coming to dwell in Zion's midst" in vs. 10 (and again in vs. 11) is not the same "One"

who continues “Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.” We see this as the same “recognition” as that in Zechariah 12:10, when “they will look on Me whom they pierced.” **PLEASE PRAY: For revelation in Israel to understand and believe that The LORD of Hosts who promised to “dwell in her midst” and the One sent to her “whom she pierced” are ONE (John 10:30).**

***Zechariah 2:12-13.** “And the LORD (Yehovah) will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem. Hush! all flesh, before the LORD, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!”

With the passage of the Nov. 29th UN vote on Palestinian statehood a year ago, which would attempt to place all of the area mentioned in this verse—this *adamat-hakodesh* (literally “holy earth”) which the LORD (Yehovah) has said He will “take possession of” as His “inheritance”—under the sovereignty of a different deity, things are coming into position for a clash of unprecedented proportions. To survive and see our way—to see His way—in the coming storm, it will be of paramount importance that we “walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit,” that we “set our minds on the things of the Spirit” and “by the Spirit put to death the deeds of the body, that we may live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Romans 8:4,5,13-14). **PLEASE PRAY: that the Body of Messiah in Israel move into a deep understanding and practice of what it means to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25 NIV), to say “Hush!” to our flesh before our LORD, as He is aroused from His holy habitation!**

***Zechariah 3:2.** “And the LORD said to Satan, ‘The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’”

Revelation 12:11 points to a time when the Accuser will be overcome “by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.” We infer from this Zechariah passage that part of that “word of testimony” may include a linking of the name of the LORD/YHVH with *his choosing of Jerusalem*. This will be the place of His throne! (Psalm 2). **An acknowledgment and confession of the LORD’s covenant link with Jerusalem will release a power to silence the Accuser in the last days!**

***Zechariah 3:8.** “Behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.”

As mentioned above, part of the Hanukkah celebration includes use of a special eight-branched menorah (*hanukki’ah*) upon which a new oil lamp or candle is lit each evening. Each light is ignited from the flame of a separate “branch” called *shamash*—“servant”. Remarkably, the *Haftarah* reading for this Saturday within Hanukkah, besides containing, as might be expected, a menorah (Zechariah 4:2-3), also includes these words, “Behold, I am bringing forth **My Servant the BRANCH.**” Although a different Hebrew word for “servant” is used here, there is no doubt that it refers to the Servant-Messiah, sent by the Father—the *Light Inextinguishable*, who illumines all coming into the world (John 1:9)!

Zechariah 4:6. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ Says the LORD of hosts.”

These words are blazoned across the bottom of the outer branches of the menorah which stands before the Knesset in Jerusalem (below). ***PLEASE PRAY: that the Holy Spirit of God invade the halls of government in Israel. That Spirit-filled believers rise into the higher echelons of government, displacing the powers of darkness there and influencing the leadership for righteousness!***



***Martin & Norma Sarvis
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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (21-27 December 2014: *Vayiggash*—“And He [Judah] Drew Near”) will be: TORAH: Genesis 44:18—47:27; HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 37:15-28]

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