

Prayer Update From Israel (December 30, 2015)



And he led the flock to the back of the desert . . .

Exodus 3:1

GIVEN THE IMMENSE SIGNIFICANCE FOR ISRAEL THEN AND NOW OF THE EVENTS RECORDED IN THE FIRST FIVE CHAPTERS OF THE BOOK OF EXODUS, WE HAVE THOUGHT IT GOOD TO CONFINE THIS WEEK'S UPDATE TO THE PARASHA—*SH'MOT*.

We would recommend prayerfully reading the Portion, asking the LORD to release revelation to today's descendants of the Children of Israel described therein—revelation of Himself of His nature, of His covenant love for them. Pray for a realization that this is the same God who is appeared to Moses in the Bush at Horev. He is remembering his chosen people today—and His promise to visit and dwell with them, to bring them out of bondage into freedom and a future in the land promised to their Fathers.

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. The Haftarah, unless otherwise noted, will be that read in Ashkenazy synagogues

around the world. The references for all texts are those found in English translations of the Scriptures.

The readings for this week 27 December 2015—2 January 2016 are called *Sh'mot*—“Names” (-of the sons of Israel who came to Egypt with Jacob)

TORAH: Exodus 1:1—6:1

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 27:6—28:13; 29:22-23

This week we travel forward 400 years and begin the story of the Exodus of Israel, now a great people, out of bondage in Egypt, into a relationship with the God of their fathers, and onto the road towards the land promised to Abraham more than 500 years before.

***Exodus 2:2.** *“So the woman conceived and bore a son. And when she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him three months.”* The Hebrew word for “beautiful” and “hid” are the same as the words for “goodness” and “stored up” in Psalm 31:19 (NIV)—*“How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which You bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you.”* Through the agency of a godly mother and the God-fearing midwives who had assisted her, this little “goodness” was hidden away—in fact, would be “stored up” in Egypt and Midian for the next 80 years—until being brought forth as leader on behalf of a mighty people who, under his leadership, would learn to fear and take refuge in their God.

PLEASE PRAY: *For protection of those “goodnesses” of God which are presently hidden away for a time of future release to the Body of Messiah in Israel. Pray for grace to trust that God is storing up goodness on our behalf as we love, fear and trust Him. Pray for courage and Heavenly guidance for believing families in Israel in storing away their children as much as possible in godly home environments before they are released into the near-paganism of many secular Israeli schools.*

***Exodus 2:3.** *“But when she could no longer hide him, she took an ark of bulrushes for him, daubed it with asphalt and pitch, put the child in it, and laid it in the reeds by the river’s bank.”* “Ark” is the Hebrew word *teva*, a box (A different word *aron*—“closet”, is used for the Ark of the Covenant). The same word *teva* is used for the ark which God commissioned Noah to build, in which he and all his household were saved. This second ark protected the future leader of a remnant-nation from which would come a deliverer for all people, Yeshua the Messiah.

***Exodus 2:25, 3:7-8a..** *“And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God acknowledged them (Hebrew: “and God knew.”); “And the LORD said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrows. So I have come down to deliver them...”* (Emphasis ours).

God still *knows* His people Israel, He *sees* oppression against them and *hears* the cry of their hearts. His knowledge of them includes a fellowship in their pain and sorrows. The Hebrew word here translated “sorrows” (3:7) is the same as that found twice in Isaiah 53:3-4: **“He is**

despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” He, who came down to deliver Israel from Egypt and to lead them “*up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey*” (vs. 8), would one day *come down* to provide deliverance for them—and all of Humankind—from their sin. And He who still *knows* and watches over Israel shall *come down* yet again on their behalf (Zechariah 8:3, 12:8, 14:4). By that day all of Israel shall *know* Him! “*No more shall every man teach his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more*” (Jeremiah 31:34).

PLEASE PRAY: *that both religious and secular Jews will come to realize that the same One who “knew” the sorrows of the people of Israel in the days of Moses and Pharaoh has known their griefs and sorrows throughout the ages since—in fact, has again “come down to deliver” by bearing those very griefs and sorrows—along with “the sin of many” (Isaiah 53:12) on the tree.*

***Exodus 3:5.** “*Then He said, ‘Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.’*”

The other place in Scripture where we find this expression “holy ground/earth/land” is Zechariah 2:12-13: “*And the LORD 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.*”

PLEASE PRAY: *for an awakened sense of the “Holy” in Israel—that we will abstain from “drawing near” carelessly and in the flesh—that we will be sensitive to the sanctity of the very EARTH where holy activity has taken place in the past, and which the Lord is repossessing for His glory today!*

***Exodus 3:16b; 4:31.** “*...I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt.”...“So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped” (NKJV). Today the Hebrew verb *lipkod* usually means “to command”. It could in Biblical times, however, mean “to attend to/to care for” and often “to visit.” Thus, in Genesis 50:24, 25 (NKJV), Joseph promises that God “will surely visit” his brothers’ descendants in Egypt and bring them out of that land. Here, in Egypt 400 years later, we are told that the time of that “sure visitation” has come. In Psalm 8:4 (NKJV) David expresses awe at the amazing privilege of God’s visiting us, “*What is mortal man that You are mindful of him, and the son of Adam that You visit him?*” This visitation is life, salvation and blessing for those who love Him and are waiting for it. Job, even from the midst of painful affliction, echoes this: “*You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has guarded my spirit*” (Job 10:12).*

Yet God’s visitation does not come as a joy to those who are in rebellion against Him. In fact, in Isaiah 10:3 (NKJV, NAS) and many places in Jeremiah (8:12, 10:15, 11:23, etc.) this

same word, instead of a day of “*visitation*,” is rendered one of “*punishment*.” Luke 19:44 shows Yeshua weeping over Jerusalem. God had sent “*all the things which were needed for her peace*”—but they are “*hidden from her eyes*.” Consequently, warfare and destruction are looming, “*because she did not know the time of her visitation*.”

PLEASE PRAY: *For a powerful visitation of God in Jerusalem and throughout Israel. Pray for the Body of Messiah here to prepare and long for that visitation.* The Apostle Peter left us important instructions regarding this day: “*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation*” (I Peter 2:12).

***Exodus 3:14, 15.** “*And God said to Moses, ‘I AM THAT I AM... Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘YHVH, God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’”*”

English translations which read “The LORD God...” can be misleading. “Lord” is a *title of respect*, meaning “master”, not a name. The point was that this God had a NAME, one by which He had been known to Israel’s fathers 400 years before, but not in a personal intimate way. That name was YHVH (The letters *Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh* in the Hebrew). It was a personal name given to His people. It would become one of their most precious possessions, and countless psalms spoke of its beauty. But because of Israel’s sin, sometime after the Glory of God’s presence departed from the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:1-11:23), the correct pronunciation of the beloved Name was also lost. Today it is normally not attempted to be spoken in Israel; *Adonai* (a Hebrew name related to the word for “master”) is used in its place, or the words *Ha Shem*—“the Name”. Words such as *Yeho ’vah*, *Jehovah*, or *Yahweh*, sometimes utilized in the West, are at best educated guesses. In most English Bibles “LORD” (all caps) designates YHVH. “Lord” (only the beginning letter capitalized) designates Adonai/Master. In Matthew 23:39, Yeshua applied Psalm 118:26 to Himself, telling Jerusalem that she would not see Him again until she said, “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of YHVH*.” Yet the One who will again come “in that Name” actually already bears it within His own! The name *Yeshua* (Jesus) is a contracted form of the name YHVH and *yeshua*—“salvation”. “*And she shall bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Yeshua—for He (i.e. YHVH) will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21).

PLEASE PRAY: *For a spirit of grace and supplication to be poured out on the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—grace to look on the One who was pierced (Zech 12:10—14), and to realize that His holy name YESHUA bears within it the Name and Salvation of the God of their Fathers—that “All who call on the Name of the LORD shall be saved!”*

***Exodus 4:2; 19b.** “*So the LORD said to him (Moses), ‘What is that in your hand?’ He said, ‘A rod.’... “And Moses took the rod of God in his hand.”* God begins with us where we are and with what we have. When Moses in obedience yielded to God what he had, the simple rod became transformed into “*The Rod of God*”!

***Exodus 4:22-26.** *“And you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus said the LORD: My son, my firstborn, is Israel. And I said to you, Send off my son that he may worship Me, and you refused to send him off, and, look, I am about to kill your son, your firstborn.’ And it happened on the way at the night camp that the LORD encountered him and sought to put him to death. And Zipporah took a flint and cut off her son’s foreskin and touched it to his feet, and she said, ‘Yes, a bridegroom of blood you are to me.’ And He let him go. Then did she say, ‘A bridegroom of blood by the circumcising.’”* (Robert Alter: translation).

This dark and disturbing passage has perplexed readers over the centuries probably more than any other passage in Exodus. Scholars and theologians have wrestled with its meaning, its implications—What exactly happened? Why? Why is it inserted *here*? (The meeting of Aaron with Moses in the following verses seems to have taken place before the events of this passage). Are Zipporah’s words spoken in anger or submission; and what do they signify? We certainly do not presume to be able to plumb these depths. We would, however, submit for your consideration the following thoughts:

***In verse 22 a warning is made to Pharaoh in advance about the consequences of a refusal to release Israel;** the last plague would not come unannounced. God considers Israel His “son”, his “firstborn.” Not releasing him to his Call will result in the death of Pharaoh’s own eldest son.

*** Is it possible that within this warning to Pharaoh lay also a sober warning to Moses?** Circumcision had been solemnly commanded Abraham (Genesis 17:9-14) as a sign of God’s covenant with him and his seed regarding their eternal connection to the Land where it was given. All males in his household and all of their descendants were to be circumcised (17:9). The Hebrew for circumcision means “cut off”; if the foreskin of a son were not cut away, God’s covenant had been broken, and the very soul (Hebrew: *nefesh*) of that son would be cut off from the holy purposes destined for this people in the promised land (17:14). Moses had himself evidently been circumcised (Exodus 2:6); but he had grown up in an Egyptian court and then married a Midianite maiden. Whether at the hesitation of Tziporah or of himself, Gershom, his own firstborn had not been circumcised. Perhaps it went against his Egyptian or her Midianite cultures which they had grown up with. Perhaps it seemed cruel, not the humanitarian thing to do. Certainly neither parent at this time realized the spiritual warfare which was going on behind the scenes. Here was the man chosen by the God of Heaven to fulfill His promise to Abraham—to bring His people of Covenant back to Canaan (Gen 15:13-16). Now Moses, the leader and model, the figurehead, was about to be responsible for causing the covenant to be broken in his own family before even getting started on his mission! It was a terrible but essential lesson to be learned. Even as Pharaoh’s refusal to release God’s Firstborn (Israel) into its Covenant purposes would necessitate the sacrifice of Pharaoh’s own eldest, so Moses’ refusal to release Gershom into *his* Covenant purposes through circumcision would necessitate that firstborn also being “cut off”.

***It is a difficult thing for any father to submit his son to the pain and bloodshed of being cut—although in reality, this was a relatively minor wounding symbolic of something far greater.** Ultimately, the Heavenly-Father would send His one and only—His “Firstborn” Son—to be “cut off” (Isaiah 3:8; Daniel 9:26). In his wounding would come redemptive healing for all humankind, the putting to death of sinful flesh, and a New Covenant initiated in His blood. In

this would also be cleansing for the Land, and eventual restoration of God's covenant between Man and all the earth He created (Romans 8:19-22).

PLEASE PRAY: *For realization amongst Jews that they are still a Covenant People whom God loves and is drawing in lovingkindness. For revelation that a New Covenant of Life has been made for them in the Blood of the Messiah Yeshua.*

***ISAIAH 28:7.** *“But they also have erred through wine, and through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment.”*

Wine was given as that which might be a joy and a blessing for man in the presence of God (Deuteronomy 14:26, Psalm 104:15). Outside of the light of that Presence, it becomes a mocker and “*whoever is led astray by it is not wise*” (Proverbs 20:1). I Peter 4:7 and 5:8 speaks of being “*serious and watchful in your prayers*” —of being “sober and vigilant” because of our adversary, “*as the end of all things is at hand.*” Prophesying regarding the dark days in Israel during the “time of the end”, Daniel (11:33, 35; 12: 3) stresses the key positioning of those who at that time must have clarity and control of their mental faculties (Hebrew: *sekhel*) so as to instruct and lead many to righteousness. And, as mentioned above, Zechariah 2:13 warns to command “*Hush!*” to the flesh in that day when the LORD “*is aroused from His holy habitation.*”

PLEASE PRAY: *For clear and accurate vision and judgment among Israel's spiritual leaders. That they will walk in the power and self-control of the Holy Spirit. That they will not fall into self-deception regarding their appetites—that whatever (and however much) they eat and drink, it will be done to the Glory of God—that they will be not drunk with wine but filled with the Spirit of God! (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18).*

“But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all children of light—children of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation (I Thessalonians 5:4-8).

***ISAIAH 28:5-6.** *“In that day the LORD of Armies will be for a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant of His people, for a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate.”*

PLEASE PRAY: *For the “remnant of His people” who have returned to the Land of Israel, that there awaken within them a longing for the One who rules in glorious majesty and the beauty of holiness. Pray for Justice fueled by the Holy Spirit to characterize Israel's civil government...and courage and strength her military. Pray for the “remnant-within-a-remnant” of the Body of Messiah in Israel—the Messianic Jewish and Christian Arab community, that it become recognized for its fairness and righteous judgment—and that it become tempered and prepared in the weapons of its warfare in the Holy Spirit, so as to recognize its enemy and turn back the battle at the gates!*



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 3-9 January 2016: *Va'era*—“And I Appeared” (--to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *El Shaddai*): TORAH: Exodus: 6:2—9:35; HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 28:25—29:21]

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