

Prayer Update From Israel (December 8, 2015)



1. THE SIGNET OF A GODLY KING.

This past week it was devulged that a tiny clay seal, unearthed six years ago by archaeologists working in an area separating the Temple Mount from the ancient City of David, has been discovered to be in fact, the personal seal of the Biblical King of Judah Hezekiah. According to Dr. Eilat Mazar, an internationally recognized archaeologist overseeing the excavations going on in this area, *“This is the first time that a seal impression of an Israelite or Judean king has ever come to light in a scientific archaeological excavation.”* (1) In ancient Hebrew script, the inscription reads *“Belonging to Hezekiah [son of] Ahaz king of Judah.”* Initially, the last three words were thought to comprise one Hebrew name, *Melkiyahu* (“Yah is my King”); but earlier this year miniscule, previously unnoticed punctuation marks were detected in the midst of the word, separating it into a title, *King of Judah*. This tiny mark was evidently made by an impression of the King’s own signet ring into the clay sealing a document (marks from the strings binding the scroll are visible on the reverse of the seal). Dr. Mazar calls the artifact, *“the closest as ever that we can get to something that was most likely held by King Hezekiah himself.”*

Present in the center are a depiction of a winged sun-disk with Egyptian *ankh* symbols of ‘life’ on either side. According to Mazar, such symbols, by this time, were used throughout the Middle East, and had long-since lost their Egyptian significance. The “winged scarab” beetle denoting power and rule had been changed to a winged sun proclaiming God’s protection. But Hezekiah had gone further, bowing the wings, *“Ancient Judeans employed the sun disk to denote the Almighty, and its bowed wings may connote Hezekiah’s expression that ‘my power is thanks to God’s protection.’”* (2) Some are speculating that this particular seal may actually be a modification of an earlier one, with the “life” symbols added late in the King’s life, after he had been granted fifteen more years to live (II Kings 20). Hezekiah was a good King who reigned

between 727-269 BCE. It is he who commissioned the building of a long tunnel through solid rock, bringing waters from the Gichon Springs outside the walls into the city in case of siege by enemies (The tunnel is a marvel of engineering and may still be traversed today).

Might there be something which the Holy Spirit is seeking to bring into focus in Israel, that the first-ever discovery of an Israeli monarch's seal would be regarding a king about whom the Scriptures state:

“He trusted in YHVH, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.”

(II Kings 18:5)

We would recommend examining the life of this great king (II Kings 18:1-20:23; Isaiah 36:2—39:8; II Chronicles 28:27—32:33) and asking the Holy Spirit to show us ways in which it may guide us in praying for our present land and leaders. Following are a few of our own observations:

* II King 18:3. “He did what was right [yashar—“straight and unwavering”] in the sight of YHVH, according to all that his father David had done.”

Pray for leaders of integrity and uprightness in Israel—both governmental, civil, and within the Body of Messiah. Hezekiah's ancestor David (to whom he is here compared) prayed, “*let integrity and uprightness (a form of yashar) preserve me as I hope in You*” (Psalm 25:21). The New Covenant writer Yakov (James) writes of the nature of God, that in Him “there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). His *word* is “yashar” and all that it accomplishes is done in faithfulness (Psalm 33:4).

* II Kings 18:4. “He...broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it...”

Pray for Jews to be freed from religious bondage to symbols of worship which God used in the past, but which have been superceded with the true reality! “*For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:14-16).

Pray for the Body of Messiah in Israel—that when the Spirit is moving on to new forms of worship or ministry, believers would not stay behind, holding onto old forms to the point of deifying them.

* II Kings 18:6. “For he held fast to YHVH; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which YHVH had commanded Moses. YHVH was with him; he prospered wherever he went.”

The words “held fast to” are from the same Hebrew word as that used in God’s declaration regarding the binding together of a husband and wife in Genesis 2:24. Deuteronomy 10:20, Moses admonishes Israel, “*You shall revere YHVH your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast...He is your praise and He is your God.*” In the New Covenant we are called to “*Abhor what is evil; Cling to what is good.*” And Hebrews 10:23, “*Let us hold unswervingly to the Hope we profess!*” And Hebrews 3:6... “*hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end!*”

PLEASE PRAY: For believers in Israel to *hold fast* to the truth regarding their God...the God revealed in Scripture, and His Son (not a false, watered-down deity with the same name arising in this day of deception). That we come to “cling to”—to “be married to”—the Truth, “*holding fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end*” (Hebrews 3:6).

II Kings 18:13—19:37. In these chapters, Sennacherib king of Assyria, comes up against Israel, taking the fortified cities of Judah and sending his generals to conquer Jerusalem. They come first mocking Hezekiah’s trust in *Yehovah*—speaking deceptive, “reasonable” words, not only to the leaders but to the common people on the walls in their own language,

Thus says the King, “Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from my hand,; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in Yehovah, saying ‘Yehovah will surely deliver us...’ Make peace with me by a present and come out to me; and every one of you eat from his own vine and every one from his own fig tree, and every one of you drink the waters of his own cistern; until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive groves and honey, that you may live and not die. But do not listen to Hezekiah, lest he persuade you, saying, ‘Yehovah will deliver us.’ (II Kings 18:29-32).

These promises are lies, but the people have been trained and disciplined under their King for whom they have respect and honor. They do not, nor does he enter into “negotiating” in areas which they know their God holds to be non-negotiable. For His part, King Hezekiah takes the “nations” taunts in and spreads them out before the Lord, humbling himself and praying:

O Yehovah, God of Israel, Who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Inclind Your ear, Yehovah, and hear; open your eyes, Yehovah, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. Truly Yehovah, the kings o Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men’s hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them. Now therefore, Yehovah, our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you are Yehovah Elohim, You alone.” (II Kings 19:14-19)

God loved this prayer from the one who “*clung fast to him*”, and responded with a release of heavenly warfare on his behalf (19:20, 35).

A promise on behalf of His people:

“And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, An those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of Yehovah of Armies will do this” (II Kings 19:30-31);

And Jerusalem:

“For I will defend this city, to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake” (II Kings 19:34)

AS OTHER “SENACHARIB’S” HAVE ARISEN THEATENING TO WREST THE HOLY CITY AND ZION FOR THEIR GOD’S:

PLEASE PRAY:

- * For a generation to arise in Israel with God’s zeal for His purposes and for His Jerusalem.**
- * They they will not fall for the coming deceptions** (Daniel 8:25; Matthew 24:4; II Peter 2, 3).
- * For grace amongst God’s people in Israel not to listen to reasonings which are set against the purposes of the Most High.**
- * For leaders to arise in Israel with godliness and humility; they will not trust upon their own prowess and intelligence, but will, like Hezekiah, lay it all before the Lord.**

“Give ear to my words O LORD, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, My King and my God, for to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, LORD; In the morning I will lay it out before you, and wait expectantly” (Psalm 5:1-3).

Photo courtesy of Eilat Mazar, photo by Ouria Tadmor

(1) “First ever seal impression of an Israelite or Juidean king exposed near Temple Mount”:jpost.com; 2 December 2015, 16:15 IST

(2) “Seal bearing name of Judean king found in Jerusalem”: The Times of Israel, Dec. 2, 2015; 11:28 IST.

2. HANUKKAH BEGAN SUNDAY 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 in Israel, 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 6-12 December are called *MiKetz*—“At the End of”:

TORAH: Genesis 41:1—44:17

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

(NOTE: Years when Hanukkah does not fall on this Sabbath, the Haftarah is I Kings 3:15—4:1. Because the Head of the Month (*Rosh Hodesh*) for the 10th month falls this year on either Saturday or Sunday, many Synagogues will also read the following passages: Isaiah 66:1-24, 25; I Samuel 20:18-42).

***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 godly ones 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 show the way for our Prime Minister and other leaders to “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 tells the brothers that he “practices divination”—rather, he presents them with two questions, *“Is this not the one...with which he indeed practices divination?”* and *“Didn’t you know that such a man as I can certainly practice divination?”*. He is still allowing his brothers to assume him to be a native Egyptian ruler, who normally would be expected to do such things. Numbers 23:23 uses the same Hebrew word translated here “divination” (*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—*Yehovah*) who in vs. 10 and again in vs. 11 says He is “coming to dwell in Zion’s midst” is not the same “One” who continues, *“Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to*

you.” We see this “knowing” as the same “recognition” taking place 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 Israel’s 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 UN vote on Palestinian statehood which took place three years ago, essentially proclaiming all of the area mentioned in this verse—this *adamat-hakodesh*, (literally “holy earth”), which the LORD (*Yehovah*) says *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 (Interestingly, the day of that November 29, 2012 vote fell in the Hebrew calendar on the 15th of *Kislev*, the same day as the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation mentioned in I Maccabees 1:54). 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 emblazoned in Hebrew 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



Jerusalem

[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (13-19 December 2015: *Vayiggash*—“And He [Judah] Drew Near”) will be: TORAH: Genesis 44:18—47:27; HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 37:15-28]

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