

## *Prayer Update From Israel (February 14, 2014)*



### **1. FOUR PILLARS RISE NEAR THE RESTING-PLACE OF THE ARK: THE NEW MOSQUE IN ABU GHOSH.**

A little over six miles west of Jerusalem lies the village of Abu Ghosh. Home to some 6000 Israeli Arabs, the town is nestled in a woodsy part of the hills surrounding the Israeli capital. In fact, it was very near to here in Kiryat Ye'arim (English Bibles: Kirjath Jearim—"town of forests") that the Ark of the Covenant once rested for over 20 years (I Samuel 7:2). Today there is a monastery on the hill overlooking the town, whose church's marvelous acoustics are exploited by a classical choral festival held there twice a year. There is also a large community of ultra-Orthodox Jews nearby. The Arab community in Abu Ghosh has long been noted for its especial friendliness to Israeli Jews. This goes back to early Zionist times, and continued during the Israeli War of Independence, when Abu Ghosh is said to have been the only one of 36 Muslim-Arab villages in the area to maintain a position of neutrality. The friendly relations have continued down to the present. Today the restaurants in the village are flooded each weekend with Jewish Jerusalemites, enjoying the friendly atmosphere as they sample the famous *humous* and other *mizrachi* cousine. We say *mizrachi* (Eastern)—but there is a strong tradition that the ancient ancestors of the majority of the inhabitants of Abu Ghosh did not come from Arab nations to the east, that they in fact arrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as Circassian units of the Ottoman Empire, who hailed from what is today called Chechnya. The religion of Chechnya is Sunni Muslim, strengthened according to one theory, as a "religion of liberation" from a continual oppression by Russia. For years, Abu Ghosh's Muslims have worshipped in a small village mosque holding around 150. But that is all about to change.

During the past year (it has actually been under construction for over two years) a structure suddenly began capturing the attention of motorists passing by on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway. Unlike anything seen in Israel before, its four golden pointed turrets might at first call to mind a Disney fairy-tale castle. It is, in fact, a vast new mosque. Second in size throughout

Israel to only the Al Aqsa itself on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, this mosque is expected when completed to host as many as 3,000 worshippers.

***The mosque is being funded primarily by the Islamic Republic of Chechnya.*** The cost (which also includes reconstruction of streets leading to the mosque) is thought to be somewhere between 5.5 and 10 million dollars. The official story is that Abu Ghosh residents began raising money to build a new mosque, but when they were unable to get enough, the Chechnyn government stepped in and provided funds which, together with those of private Chechnyn Muslim donors, formed a fund which has provided the vast majority of the monies. The fund was named after Akhmad Kadyrov, a former Chechnyn President who was assassinated in 2004 and is considered a hero in Chechnya. It is now reported that the mosque will itself be named for Kadyrov.

***His son, Ramzan Kadyrov is the republic's current president*** and has stated in *Russia Today* that he plans to come to Israel for the mosque's inauguration. He has seen that it is decorated in the Chechen tradition, and plans that when finished it will offer Chechen language and culture courses. Of the Abu Ghosh citizens he states, "*These people emigrated to the Middle East five centuries ago. They want to preserve their national identity and cultural identity. This is worthy of deep respect*" ("This mosque is for Allah...": *The Times of Israel*, May 21, 2013). The locals are of course, excited about their new center for worship. Abu Ghosh Mayor Salim Jaber comments, "*This mosque is for Allah. It will be neither fanatic, nor inciting. I want to invite all the people of Israel to the opening: rabbis, priests, sheikhs. Anyone who loves Abu Ghosh.*" (Ibid.).

**Yet we find something deeply disturbing in the appearance of this ornate structure in Abu Ghosh.** For all the mayor's assurances, the Islam emanating from Chechnya is hardly what one might call moderate (witness the brothers Tsarnaev who perpetrated the Boston Marathon attacks last year). What might this mean in Abu Ghosh? As one reporter put it, "*Somehow, Islam was always a footnote in the village's public image. But that may change soon*" (Ibid.). And this is not just any mosque—it is ***the largest built in Israel in over a thousand years.*** The only one larger is located where the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD God of Israel came finally to rest—Jerusalem. Now the second-largest is being built where the Ark rested before being brought there. ***And it has four minarets instead of the normal one or two.*** Said to be a uniquely Chechnyn phenomenon, this is presently the only 4-towered mosque in Israel.

#### ***And what of these minarets?***

Practically-speaking, they are edifices upon which is supported a small balcony where a Muslim holy man emerges five times a day to lead the surrounding neighborhood in prayers (almost exclusively executed electronic amplification in modern times). In Israel one may immediately identify a village as Muslim Arab by observing the presence of these erections projecting up into the heavens. **And what of their spiritual significance?** The Hebrews were instructed that upon entering Canaan they were to not bow down to the gods which were worshipped there. They were to "*utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars*". (Exodus 23:24 NKJ). The word here translated "sacred pillar" is *matzevah* (Strongs/Brown-Driver-Briggs 4676,4678). It comes from a word meaning to "take a stand or position", to "set oneself" (See

Exodus 17:9; Habakkuk 2:1). So, such a pillar “stood” for something. Not all were evil. It might be a stone “set up and anointed as a memorial of divine appearance”, as occurred with Jacob in Gen. 28:18, 22; 31:13. Moses erected 12 of these in conjunction with an altar at the foot of Mount Sinai as a sign of covenant between the 12 tribes and the LORD (Exodus 24:4). Yet, when a *matzevah* is set up on behalf of another god, jutting, as it were, brazenly into the face of the God of Israel, “taking its stand” on behalf of falsehood and death, it is a thing which He hates. They were to be “completely broken down”. *“Take heed to yourself, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be a snare in your midst. But you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images (for you shall worship no other god, for YHVH whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God), lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land...and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice”* (Exodus 34: 12-15. See also II Kings 10:27; I Kings 14:22-23; II Kings 23:14). In Micah 5:12-13, God speaks of a day when ***“I will cut off sorceries from your (i.e. the remnant of Jacob’s) hand, and you shall have no soothsayers. Your carved images I will also cut off, and your sacred pillars from your midst...”***

***We are not here suggesting that Islamic minarets in Israel should be cut down.*** But we are saying that their prevalence in a place strengthens the power of the spirits they represent. We believe this to be the real reason that there is such a push for their proliferation in countries where their masters seek to gain control. The author remembers being told, while in Istanbul 20 years ago, that there was literally a push to have a minaret raised on every city block in the city. That nation is now under its first Islamist leader in almost a century. ***We suspect this to be the real reason why the Kingdom of Jordan periodically seeks to gain Israeli approval for a “fifth” minaret to be raised over the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (reportedly over the Eastern Gate).*** There would then be over the most holy place on earth, a network of minarets representatives of the “Five Pillars of Islam”. The breach in the heavenlies were this to happen is difficult to imagine.

***We believe that the raising of this enormous 4-towered mosque in Abu Ghosh may represent a spiritual conspiracy for the establishment of a new key stronghold of darkness in the “mountains surrounding Jerusalem.”*** In 1948, the Abu Ghosh citizens are said to have shown mercy to the trucks trying to make it through the pass to bring nourishment to the starving Jews in Jerusalem. (All other villages along the passage through the mountains sought only to attack and pillage the caravans.) When the this mosque becomes activated, might the city’s present-day citizens find themselves being influenced to behave in an exactly opposite way? In addition to all of this, there are disturbing reports which suggest that the motive of the whole enterprise may not be so much the blessing of the Abu Ghosh citizens with a rich reflection of their heritage as has been broadcast. One Russian paper quoted Chechnya President Ramzan Kadyrov as saying, ***“The idea for the construction of the new mosque is to strengthen the relationship between Israel and Russia.”*** (“*Ramzan Kadyrov is Preparing a Gift to Muslims in Israel*”: islam.ru; 09 Dec 2013).



### EAGLES AND ALMOND BLOSSOMS

*The almond blossoms present in our photograph at the top of this Update were not included merely as decoration.* As we wrote in a recent issue, Biblically these early flowers betoken the need to be awake and alert, watchmen on the wall, even as those all around are still sleeping. We sense that Abu Ghosh and beyond may be coming into a great danger. *We love the citizens of Abu Ghosh and want to watch over them in our attention and prayers.* We are grateful for their continued friendship to their Jewish neighbors and to the government of Israel. We long for the blessing of those which bless the seed of Abraham to continue to rest upon them—and further, for them to come into the life, freedom and joy of the One whose day Abraham himself rejoiced to see! (John 8:56). As we were taking pictures of the mosque last Wednesday morning, an eagle flew by (picture above) and began circling the valley in which it is situated. Its presence there brings several Scriptures to mind, *“For the LORD’s portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance...As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so the LORD alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him”* (Deuteronomy 32:9, 11-12 Emphases ours). But also this, from Obadiah 1:4 (we have previously written of the link between the spirit of Edom and that of Islam): *“Though you [Edom] ascend as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,’ says YHVH.”*

#### PLEASE PRAY:

**\*That “He Who Watches over Israel” will bring to light anything lying in darkness (Daniel 2:22) in Abu Ghosh with purposes for harm to His purposes in His land.**

**\*That the Body of Messiah in Israel will be awake, and hear what the Spirit is saying regarding the establishment of this new hall of Islamic worship west of Jerusalem. Pray for God’s strategy for countering any move of the enemy against His purposes for the people in Abu Ghosh whom He loves, and for Israel and Jerusalem itself.**

**\*For Abu Ghosh Mayor Salim Jaber, that he will lead his city wisely—that he will receive supernatural revelation of El Elyon, the Most High God and of His Son. Mr Jaber reportedly said that he was unconcerned that Chechnya would try to impose its flavor of Islam in Abu Ghosh, “They will not intervene, because there are borders. Their practices**

are different than ours...” (Ibid: *The Times of Israel*). Pray that he will be protected from any such influences.

**\*For a testimony of Yasuah (Yeshua/Jesus) to be awakened among the Arab Muslim citizens of Abu Ghosh. Pray for dreams and visions from Heaven. Pray against any entrance of spiritual powers from abroad into this region.**

**\*There are several growing communities of Messianic Jews which God has been raising up within only a few miles of the place where this mosque has been built. One in particular is in close alliance with Arab believers in Jerusalem. Pray for prophetic insight and revelation from the Holy Spirit in these communities. Pray for high praise and worship in spirit and in truth to be released; Pray for strategic strategies from on High!**

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### **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 9-15 February 2014 are called *Ki Tisa*—“When You Raise Up”

**TORAH: Exodus 30:11—34:35**

**HAFTARAH: I Kings 18:1-39**

**\*Exodus 30:11-12.** *“Then YHVH spoke to Moses, saying: ‘When you take the census of the children of Israel for their number...”* “Take the Census” is “to raise up (*Ki Tisa*) the heads”, in some ways similar to our English expression “to take a head-count.” This was to be accompanied by a ransom, shekel tax, being paid by everyone counted, otherwise the people would find protection lifted and themselves opened to plague (vs 12). Perhaps it was through neglect of these instructions that King David would bring plague upon his own people in II Samuel 24.

**\*Exodus 31:2-5.** *“See, I have called by name Betzalel...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom in intelligence, in knowledge, and in all craftsmanship, to design artistic works...and I, indeed I, have appointed with him Aholiav...and in the heart of all gifted artisans [Heb: wise-hearts] I have put wisdom to make all I have commanded.”*

**The name *Betzalel* means, “In the shadow of God.” *Aholiav* means, “Father is my tent.”** The safe place for all creative beings is under the shadow of the Almighty (Psalm 91:1)—within the tent of our Father (Psalm 27:5). It is He who desires to fill artists (there are many artistic skills mentioned here) with His Spirit to “*make all that He commands.*” Tragically, at the very time these instructions were being given to Moses on the mountain, Aaron (most certainly not moving under “the shadow of God”), was being coerced by the desires of those around him to use his creative gifts in fashioning an idol (Ex. 32:4). Rather than being used by the Holy Spirit to aid the people in worshipping the true God, the creative fashioning of his hands would itself be worshipped.

**PLEASE PRAY:** for godly “Betzalels” and “Aholiavs” to be nurtured and brought forth in Israel today, that they will move in a humble awareness that their creative gifts, wisdom, intelligence, knowledge and craftsmanship are from God, to fulfill a work for His glory—His is their high destiny. Pray that they seek to be filled by His spirit—and resist the spirit of the world which seeks to divert the creativity of man (who was made in the Image of a creative God) away from honoring his Maker. Pray that they realize that He knows them and (as with Betzalel) calls them by name!

**\*Exodus 31:17.** *“It [i.e. the Sabbath] is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days YHVH made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He ceased work and was refreshed.”* We should be cautious about saying things like “Although God ceased work on the seventh day, it wasn’t because he was tired and in need of a rest, etc.” Of course there are mysteries here deeper than we can understand; nevertheless, this passage states clearly that on the seventh day God “ceased work and was refreshed.” The word for “refreshed” literally could be rendered “*was souled*”. So David could confidently speak of the LORD as One who intimately understands his weary servant’s needs so as to “*restore my soul!*” (Psalm 23:3).

**\*Exodus 32:1-5, 19.** The children of Israel were a people sovereignly chosen and set-apart by God. Last week we saw how from among these people Aaron and his house were themselves chosen to minister before the LORD as His priests (Exodus 28:1). And of course, Moses was raised up from birth to oversee and lead the people. Yet it will become abundantly clear in this reading that none of these callings, choosings and positionings were because of the righteousness of the people; alas, all are under sin (Romans 3:9). That will have to be faced, acknowledged and dealt with. The people, who, a short time before, had “with one voice” twice promised, even in the context of covenant, that “*All the words which YHVH has said we will do...we will be obedient*” (Exodus 24:3, 7), this people, after Moses is gone for less than a month, abandon their promise and demand of Aaron to make new gods to go before them (32:1). Aaron, who had been warned against giving in to “mob rule” (23:2), under the first pressure does so—in so doing breaking the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments. He then breaks God’s command (20:23) not to “make anything to *be with Me*” by proclaiming a feast to YHVH along with the worship of the idol he has just fashioned. And Moses, to whom God had *given* the tablets of stone, Commandments which would be the basis for all other Law, tablets which *God had written*, to be used by Moses in teaching the people (24:12)—tablets which were themselves the “work of God” upon which was engraved the “writing of God” written with “the finger of God” (32:16; 31:18)—Moses, in a fit of anger, paid no attention to all of that and smashed them to pieces.

**\*Exodus 32:11-13.** *“Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God [Hebrew: ‘yearned after the face of YHVH his God’] and said, ‘LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people... Turn from Your fierce wrath and relent from this harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, “I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your seed, and they shall inherit it forever.”’”* In Exodus 32:32 Moses continues to stand in the gap, pleading that they be forgiven for their sin.

**PLEASE PRAY:** for spiritual leaders to have the zeal, unction, love and grace to seek the face of God on behalf of errant Israel; to prevail in intercession to turn away His just wrath that His eternal will for her will be fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven.

**\*Exodus 32:19.** *“So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses’ anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.”*

**PLEASE PRAY:** for the souls (Psalm 25:1, 20) of Israeli spiritual leaders—that they not be controlled by their emotions—that they allow the Holy Spirit to work His self-control. There is a place for godly zeal, but the *“anger of man does not work the righteousness of God”* (James 1:20). It would be an eruption of this same anger some time later which would in the end bar Moses from entering the Promised Land.

**\*Exodus 33:7-11.** *“Moses took his tent and pitched it outside the camp, far from the camp, and called it the ‘tent of meeting’. And it came to pass that everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp... And it came to pass, when Moses entered the tent, that the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent, and talked with Moses... So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent.”*

In Exodus 25:22, the LORD had given instructions regarding the disposition of the *Mishkan* (Dwelling Place/Tabernacle) so that He might meet at appointed times with a representative of His people. But here, Moses prepares a place so that he *or anyone else* might choose to make his own appointed meetings with God—and God honored those times with His presence. Although His face would not be seen (vs 20), He nevertheless met face to face with those who chose to draw near. Alas, besides Moses, only Joshua (who would one day be prepared to lead Israel into Canaan) appears to have taken advantage of this wonderful opportunity.

**PLEASE PRAY:** For Israeli believers, in all the rush and hurry, to go beyond ‘head knowledge’ of the Law and the Prophets and the Gospel—and avail themselves of the privilege of setting aside a ‘place’ for private, intimate times Face to Face with God!

**\*Exodus 33:15.** *“Then he said to Him, ‘If Your Presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here...’”* Here the word “presence” is literally “Face”. Psalm 44:3 says, *“It was not by our sword that we took the land, nor did our arm bring us the victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the Light of Your Face, for You loved us!”*

**\*Exodus 33:13, 18.** *“Now therefore, I pray, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people....Please, show me Your glory.”*

**PLEASE PRAY:** for leaders in Israel (both believers and those still secular), to like Moses be moved to call on the LORD for guidance to be shown His way. Pray that we find grace in His sight, that our leadership will be fueled and heartened by longings after his Glory and glimpses of His Beauty (Psalm 27:4).

**\*Exodus 33:21-22.** *“And the LORD said, ‘Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and will cover you with My hand while I pass by.’”* Centuries later, the prophet Elijah fleeing from the wrath of Jezebel would come to this same mountain, and the Hebrew of I Kings 19:9 says He went into *the* cave to spend the night—and there the Word of the LORD came to him. Jewish teachers have traditionally identified this cave with that same “cleft” in which Moses had been placed by God.

**\*Exodus 34:6-7.** *“YHVH, YHVH-Elohim, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in loving kindness and truth (Hebrew: chesed v’emet), keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin...”* The Hebrew word used here for “forgiving” is *nasah* (That for “pardon” in vs 9 is a different word). *Nasah* has to do with “lifting, carrying, bearing away”—something which only God Himself would be able to do for the “iniquity, transgression and sin of thousands”. This is the word used in Hebrew translations of John 1:29 when John announces the Son of God, *“Behold! The Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world!”*



*Martin & Norma Sarvis  
Jerusalem*

**[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 16-22 February 2014 are called *VaYakhel*—“And He Assembled”: TORAH: Exodus 35:1—38:20; HAFTARAH: I Kings 7:13-26 (Sephardic Synagogues); I Kings 7:40-50 (Ashkenazy Synagogues)]**

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