

ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

Glory of Zion International Ministries



The almond trees are bursting into bloom in Israel!

Since the almond is “awake” while other trees are still sleeping, the letters for the word for almond shaped form the root for another word meaning “to watch, guard, persevere, be awake”. Both are used in Jeremiah 1:11-12 where God asks the prophet what he sees, and he answers, “A branch of an almond tree.” The LORD responds, “You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it!”

1. FIRST MEETING BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER NETANYAHU AND U.S. PRESIDENT TRUMP ON WEDNESDAY.

Wednesday February 15th Israel’s PM Netanyahu will sit down with President Trump in Washington for their first meeting since the latter was sworn into office a little less than a month ago. Besides the desire for initiation of a warm and trusting relationship between the two leaders, the Prime Minister has sought to make clear that his highest priority is related to discussion of security concerns—especially the threat from Iran. But this first meeting between the super-power and the only Democracy in the Middle East will likely include many other issues. The highest priority demanded by Netanyahu’s right-wing coalition back home relates to the Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria. The very existence of these communities was a

thorn-in-the-side of the previous US administration, which last December chose to abstain rather than exercise its veto when the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2334, labeling the presence of such communities, or indeed any Israeli presence at all in the region, “illegal”. Until now, the new administration has remained relatively quiet regarding the settlement issue. It is known that Mr Trump’s choice for US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman is sympathetic towards them. When shortly after the inauguration, Netanyahu ok’d renewed construction in some of these areas, the usual rebuke from Washington failed to materialize. Sensing a change in the wind, strong forces in Israel’s conservative government have been clamoring for not only settlement growth, but immediate annexation by Israel of the larger settlement blocks—some even for all of the West Bank. Last week, the present Israeli government passed an extremely controversial bill into law, whereby settlements established unwittingly on areas later found to be private Palestinian land, would be declared legal—and their owners reimbursed with a price above that of the value of the land. Although this was greeted with a storm of criticism around the world, Washington again remained quiet, the word being that the President wished to consult with the Israeli Prime Minister before making comments or stating policy on these issues.

That the President should not be thought of as granting *carte blanche* in this matter came on February 3rd when Mr Trump’s press secretary stated that, although the administration does not believe the existence of settlements to be an impediment to peace, it considers that the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing ones beyond their borders “*may not be helpful.*” And on Friday, the President was quoted in an interview as saying that Israeli settlements in the West Bank “don’t help the process of reaching peace.”

PM Netanyahu has been trying to hold reins on his ministers who are intent on Wednesday’s meeting not only freeing Israel up regarding the settlements, but indeed putting a death-stroke to the concept of a “two-state solution.” In fact, Saturday night Education Minister Naftali Bennett, who chairs the Jewish Home party, called the coming meeting “the test of Netanyahu’s life”, which would determine Israel’s policy towards the Palestinians for years to come. He further issued a veiled warning that if the two men even mention “an obligation to establish Palestine or ‘two states’ ... it will be an earthquake.” (“Netanyahu chills right-wing ‘excitement’ over Trump meeting”: *The Times of Israel*, 12 Feb 20127; 1:09 p.m.).

During his trip, the Prime Minister plans to meet with Vice President Mike Pence, Sec. of State Rex Tillerson and various other leaders in the House and Senate. This morning (Monday) as he and his wife Sara boarded a plane, he said, “*President Trump and I see eye to eye on the dangers emanating from the region, and also on the opportunities, and we will talk about both and also upgrading the relationship between Israel and the United States.*”

We believe that God has brought about the recent shifts in governments, including that in the U.S. There seems to be a rapport between Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump, perhaps even the possibility of friendship, and a restoration of friendly high-level relations between the two countries. This meeting is not the “be all and end all” regarding these relations—but it is important.

PLEASE PRAY:

* For PM Netanyahu's and Pres. Trump's meeting on Wednesday. Pray that each will seek God's counsels and guidance.

* That the LORD upon whose shoulders is all government, will oversee this meeting--that His holy angels will be present, and any demonic powers assigned to sow confusion or to exert influence counter to the purposes of God will be bound and silenced in Jesus' name.

* That both leaders will realize that the "fear of the Lord" is an essential element in any dialogue regarding Israel.

* That neither Mr Trump nor Mr Netanyahu will embrace the concept of a "two state" solution, (which would countenance a permanent Islamic State in Judea and Samaria). Some years back Mr Netanyahu gave lip-service to such a solution under certain conditions. Up to this time, the new administration has not verbalised it.

* That God's sovereign purposes for Judea and Samaria will be fulfilled. How His holy covenant will be realized to accommodate and establish the Jews He has promised will dwell there, and the Arab peoples living there now—this is a dilemma with no easy, simple answer. Merely being "on the side of the settlers" is not the answer, if their "solution" goes contrary to the righteousness of the God who chose them.

We recommend prayerful readings of Ezekiel 36—which deals both with the land, and the hearts of those whom God has chosen to be its overseers.

2. "BEHOLD, THE MAN!"

The Israel Museum in Jerusalem has mounted a remarkable exhibit called "**Behold the Man: Jesus in Israeli Art.**" The exhibit, which opened in December and will continue until April 22nd, is made up of 150 works by 40 artists, and seeks to "explore the complex, evolving attitudes of Jewish, Zionist and Israeli artists toward the Christian savior" ("*The Times of Israel*"). We paid our first visit last week, and were struck by how popular it appears to be. Most of the visitors were Israelis, intrigued, perhaps, at the idea of a major exhibition portraying Jesus as viewed through the eyes of fellow Jewish artists. And it was moving to see how respectful, even sympathetic many of those "viewings" were. Some, such as Marc Chagall, used the crucifixion of this Jew as a symbol for the sufferings of the Jewish people as a whole down through history. For others, such as Israeli artist Reuven Rubin, his life serves as a metaphor for the rebirth of modern Israel in Zion. Yet in the work of Rubin and others, there appears to have been also a sense of deep respect, even reverence; as though they were brought drawn into a spiritual fascination with their subject. Of course, there are artists represented who have depicted Jesus in strongly negative ways, some for obvious anti-Christian agendas, some as a propaganda tool for various political or sociological "causes".

Yet, on the whole, we found it uplifting, affirming. Might this not be a means through which the Holy Spirit, who obviously inspired some of these artists, is releasing a ray of light into hearts of His people that are seeking—drawing them with lovingkindness to the One who has loved them with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3)? *For those who are being so drawn, even their Savior's*

true name may be found hidden in the exhibition. In the Hebrew title of the exhibit, the name *Yeshu* is used for Jesus, rather than His true name *Yeshu 'a* which means “YHVH (the LORD) is Savior.” Following is part of the note in English/Hebrew/Arabic set alongside a painting by Moshe Castel (1909-1991):

In the expressive style influenced by Chaim Soutine, and inspired by Marc Chagall’s crucifixions, Castel put himself on the cross. The face is a self-portrait, while above the figure a Hebrew inscription says “Castel the Jew” so that the artist’s intense outpouring of pain culminates in total identification with the suffering of the crucified Christ.

In two sketches from the same period, the Hebrew inscriptions above the figure [on the cross] read “Jesus” and “Jesus of Nazareth.” **They give the full name *Yeshu 'a* rather than the more common *Yeshu*, which was often read derisively by Jews as an acronym for a Hebrew phrase meaning “*may his name be obliterated.*”** The painter’s choice of name may indicate his rejection of this traditional revulsion and his own positive perception of Jesus (Emphases ours).

This we find remarkable! All Israeli schoolchildren are taught that Jesus’s name was *Yeshu*—yet the majority of Israelis have no idea at all that it is in fact a pejorative—a curse invented by anti-Messiah religious rabbis. (*Yeshu* actually means nothing in Hebrew. Since it doesn’t contain the last syllable *ayin*, the concept of “salvation” present in the name *Yeshu 'a* is totally absent.) Attendants overseeing the exhibit will only use *Yeshu* if asked questions. Yet here, not only did the artist know and use His real name—in the printed notes on the wall, the curators of the exhibit affirm this to be His real name and even (very unusual) explain the meaning of *Yeshu*.

PLEASE PRAY:

*** That the Holy Spirit of God would brood over this exhibition, awakening within those who visit it a curiosity, even a yearning, after the One who is being portrayed. That as they seek after that towards which they are yearning, they will *find*.**

*** That those attending “Behold the Man” will receive grace and revelation to “Behold the Lamb!”**

3. JACOB SHEEP ALIVE AND THRIVING.

In our Jan. 2 Update “The Return of Jacob’s Flock”, we wrote of how a Jewish couple Gil and Jenna Lewinsky had begun to realize a dream—of bringing a flock of the ancient “Jacob Sheep,” a species extinct in Israel since perhaps the time of the Patriarch, back to their land. The Lewinsky’s ran into some extremely severe difficulties during their first two months here, but now things are going well; they and their flock are settled in to a place west of Jerusalem. For an update on them, and a wonderful video of their flock (with Gil quoting over them from Ezekiel 34), please place the following in your browser.

<http://www.timesofisrael.com/after-bleating-a-path-to-israel-jacobs-sheep-frolic-in-new-home/>

Let's continue to pray for this family and their sheep—that all which God is accomplishing (and picturing) in this will come to fruition!

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 12-18 February 2017 are called *Yitro*—“Jethro”.

TORAH: Exodus 18:1-20:26

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 6:1—7:6; 9:6-7

We focus this week upon one of the most powerful Torah Portions of the Year, centered around the descent of the LORD onto Mount Sinai and the release through His Living Word of the Ten Commandments to His people. Israel has just been given judges, but now they are given God's standard by which they can judge what is GOOD. This event changed the direction of history for Israel and the world, and continues to instruct of His nature and ways today.

***Exodus 18:21-22:** *“Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders...let them judge the people at all times...”*

Moses is counseled by his father-in-law to set up a system of “judges” amongst the people. Yet the word for “select” here is not the same as that for “chose” in verse 25. Rather it is Hebrew “hazeh”—to watch, envision, *see prophetically*, to foresee. It is of critical importance for the Body of Messiah in Israel that the choosing of leaders of godly fear, truth and honesty be done with supernatural vision and prophetic insight.

***Exodus 19:1-2.** *“On the third new moon (Rosh Chodesh—“head of the month”) of the setting out of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt, on that day they came into the desert of Sinai” ...there Israel encamped before the mountain, while Moses went up to God” (Exodus 19: 1-2).*

The “mountain” is *Horeb*, the Mountain of God, where Moses had first encountered the LORD in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-2). The Hebrew for “bush” in that passage is *sneh*. Some scholars believe that the name by which this mountain would be most often remembered in Israel’s future *Sinai*, was itself taken from *sneh*, which in the Hebrew it very much resembles. In that case, Mount Sinai would be the mountain of the bush out of which the LORD had spoken to Moses, and the mountain out of which He would now speak in the hearing of all Israel. Today, its location is not certain. Although traditionally assumed to lie either in the center or south-central of the Sinai Peninsula, in recent years strong reasons have been advanced for suspecting that the “far side of the desert” (Exodus 3:1; Midian straddled both sides of the Gulf of Aqaba) referred in fact to the north-western corner of the Arabian Peninsula—in which case the crossing of the Red Sea might have taken place at the southern end of the Gulf.

The arrival of Moses with the Children of Israel at Mt. Sinai where they would remain for a year ministering to YHVH (rather than to the Pharaohs as they had done for the previous 400 years) began the fulfillment of God’s promise to Moses in Exodus 3:12, “*I will certainly be with you. And this shall be a sign to you that I have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve Elohim on this mountain.*”

***Exodus 19:4b.** “*...I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Myself.*” Compare Deuteronomy 32:10-12, “*He found him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness; He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovers over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings, so YHVH (the LORD) alone led him, and there was no foreign god with him.*”

***Exodus 19:5.** “*And now, if you will truly heed My voice and guard My covenant, you will become for Me a treasure among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.*” Compare Psalm 25:10, “*All the paths of the LORD are grace and truth (Heb: chesed and emet), to such as guard His covenant and His testimonies.*”

PLEASE PRAY: For Israelis to realize that God still longs to “bring her to Himself”, that He has released a New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-33) in the blood of His Son Yeshua, in whom “grace and truth are realized” (John 1:17); that as she embraces that Covenant, she will find that He is still speaking, and as she hears and responds to His voice, she will find again the treasured place in His heart.

***Exodus 19:6, 10.** “*You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation... ‘Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes.’”* In Revelation 1:5-6 this call, made first to Israel, is now extended to all those children of Adam who receive the love of Yeshua by being washed from their sins in His blood. In this washing, they enter their destiny, being made into “*a kingdom of priests to His God and Father.*”

***Exodus 19:16-20.** “*Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thundering and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the shofar was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled...Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because YHVH descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the shofar*

sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and Elohim answered him by voice. Then YHVH came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And YHVH called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.”

Compare Hebrews 12:18-29, *“For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a shofar and the voice...But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn registered in Heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Yeshua the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks...Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE.”*

***Exodus 19:20; 20:1-**. *“Then YHVH came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain...And Elohim spoke all these words, saying...”* The Scriptures testify that just as God Himself was present in the burning bush (Ex. 3:4), so was He present at Mount Sinai—He *“came down”* (19:11, 20) and *“spoke all these words”* (the Ten Commandments). It is difficult for religious Jews to grasp the concept of God taking a literal form, of coming physically into our experience (If they allowed such a possibility, they might then be compelled to consider the claims of His having taken on human form in the person of Yeshua/Jesus!) To explain away the Scriptural implications, they have contrived many complex theories regarding such manifestations, whether to Abraham at Hebron, or to the other Patriarchs, or His appearance to Moses in the bush and here at Mt. Sinai. John 1 speaks powerfully of the *“Living Word”* which was *with* God and which *was* God, and which was made flesh and came into the world in the form of Yeshua the Messiah. **PLEASE PRAY:** for revelation that this same WORD/TORAH which came down and was released at Sinai in the hearing of all Israel, is that Word which took on flesh and came to bear away Her sin—and will return to rule and reign over a Kingdom of Peace. It is traditionally held that this giving of the Torah took place on what would later be celebrated as the Feast of Shavuot (Weeks, Pentecost). **PLEASE PRAY:** that this *Holy Spirit*, which breathed forth the Torah and all of the Scriptures and was released on Pentecost, would awaken revelation within Jewish hearts regarding the Living Word of God which has come down to Earth.

***Exodus 20:4.** *“You shall not make for yourself a carved image...you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I am YHVH your God, a Jealous god...”* This word for “Jealous” (*kana*) is used in its noun form in the last sentence of this week’s Reading from the Prophets, Isaiah 9:7. However, there it is translated “zeal” (through which the LORD will establish the government of His SON forever). Righteous jealousy or zeal is always released on behalf of someone or something which is intensely loved. However, when activated in the flesh for selfish motives, the same word is translated “envy”.

***Exodus 20:13.** *“You shall not murder.”* In some older English translations, the word “kill” was used. But the word for kill and that for murder are different words in the Hebrew.

***Exodus 20:21.** *“So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick cloud where God was.”* This “thick cloud” (*araphel*) is translated “deep darkness” in Isaiah 60:2. But that darkness is over the “peoples”, and will be dispelled by the rising of the LORD, when His glory shall be “seen.” Today in Modern Hebrew *araphel* means “fog”—and Israel for the most part is “in a fog” regarding finding her God. **PLEASE PRAY:** For the veil to be removed from the eyes of God’s ancient people—that a light rise in their hearts and God’s glory will be seen—that they will be drawn into the “Cloud of Unknowing” to discover the One who has known them from afar and drawn them in lovingkindness.

***Exodus 20:26.** *“Nor shall you go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.”* It was God who first provided suitable clothing for hiding that which had awakened shame in Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:21). It would only be through the work of the Son that all humankind could again find themselves clothed, in His righteousness, and their shame taken away. *“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Yeshua Messiah, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature”* (Romans 13:14).

Haftarah

Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:6-7

The readings from the Prophets for this week (Isaiah 6:1-7:6) contain, in parallel to the manifestation of the LORD’s presence in power on Mount Sinai, the awesome revelation of Holiness made to the prophet Isaiah. Before the holy presence of the LORD “high and lifted up”—the seraphim, the Voice, the shaking and smoke, Isaiah sees himself as unclean and his lips as unclean. Yet as he humbles himself and confesses his uncleanness and inadequacy, his lips are touched with the coal, his iniquity taken away, his sin purged. And he is given a message for his people—a message describing a “veil” which would settle upon the House of Israel (and which continues until the present day) ...and the promise of a remnant. After a shorter message of instruction related to current events, the reading incredibly leaps two chapters to Isaiah 9:6-7, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of HOSTS will perform this!”*

PLEASE PRAY: For divine revelation of the Holiness of the LORD to accompany this reading—and of His Zeal and Jealousy which has already seen the birth of the “Child”—who will soon be released to return and rule over His kingdom *in judgment and justice forever!*



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[The readings for next week (19-25 February 2017) are called *Mishpatim*—“Judgments”. TORAH: Exodus 21:1—24:18; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26. The day for traditionally honoring the giving of a “Shekel Tax” for the Tabernacle/Temple falls this year on the Sabbath preceding the 1st of Adar, an additional Torah portion Exodus 30:11-16 and a different *Haftarah* which mentions “each man’s census money” (II Kings 12:4) will be read in many synagogues.]

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