

## Prayer Update From Israel (March 18, 2014)



### **SHEMINI—AND SHABBAT PARAH**

#### **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.

This week March 16-22 the readings are called Shemini--“Eighth” (day):

**Torah: Leviticus 9:1—11:47**

**Shabbat Parah : Numbers 19:1-22**

**Haftarah: Ezekiel 36:16-38**

(NOTE: This is one of two special Shabbats in preparation for Pesach/Passover which contain an additional Torah reading and a replacement for the usually-read Haftarah reading. This one is called Parah (Cow), and recalls the ritual involving the ashes of a red heifer for purification from defilement by death. The special Haftarah from Ezekiel 36 recounts God's judgment upon His people for their uncleanness, but also prophecies His

**return of them to their own Land, his sprinkling of clean water on them and giving them a new heart and new spirit.)**

**\*Leviticus 9:4, 6, 23b-24.** “...for today, the LORD will appear to you.” “...and the glory of the LORD will appear to you.” “Then the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people, and fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat on the altar. When all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.”

**It had been the LORD’s desire to dwell in the midst of His people, and, as we saw in Exodus 40:34, after they had prepared the way, the Glory of His presence came into and filled the mishkan (dwelling place, tabernacle).** But it was also His desire that his people be able to minister to Him personally through bringing their offerings, which would then be presented before Him by the priests—and that the glory of His presence and acceptance of these gifts and sacrifices be experienced by all the congregation. Here it finally takes place—and as the holy Fire appears and consumes the sacrifices, the people can only respond with a shout and with falling down under the weight of His Glory (Interestingly, the root for this Hebrew word “glory” kavod is also the root for the word “weight”). And it is intriguing that the word for the “shout” the people release is quite often in Scripture (Job 38:7, Prov. 29:6; Isa. 35:6, I Chron. 16:33...) translated “song”. When God’s glory falls on His people, they often can no longer remain standing—and sometimes its coming is accompanied by release of the Song of the Lord!

## HOLINESS

**This week’s readings center upon the Holiness of Israel’s LORD—including the consequences to his children, especially those who minister on His behalf before the people, of not honoring that holiness:**

**\*Leviticus 10:3b.** “By those who come near Me I will be treated as holy, and before all the people I will be honored.”

**\*Leviticus 11:44-45:** “For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean...For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God; thus you shall be holy, for I am holy.”

Aaron’s two eldest sons Nadav and Avihu had been granted a high and exalted “positioning” of ministry before the LORD, second only to Moses and to their father the High Priest. For them there was clothing and anointing (8:13,24, 30) providing them special protection to minister in ways not granted to the other Levites. However, they were not commanded nor were they clothed and anointed to draw near to God in that specific ministry assigned to their father Aaron the High Priest. Yet discontent with the appointed “place” God had chosen for them, they presumed to operate in the ministry of Aaron’s office rather than being faithful to that of their own—they offered “strange fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them.” In doing so, they dishonored God in the eyes of the people who looked up to and depended upon them. They also stepped into a place where the unique protection provided for their assignment of ministry was no longer effective, and the very fire from God’s presence which showed his

favor in devouring the sacrifices in 9:24, devours in judgment these two sons who had abandoned their appointed places (There is no reason to see this passage as depicting severe judgment upon those who are novices and have accidentally slipped and made a mistake while attempting something new. James 3:16 and 1:13-15 shows how “where envy and selfish ambition exist, there is confusion and every evil thing”, and how “each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed, Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” At this crucial time of testing, the darkness which had been growing in Nadav and Avihu was manifest and they were betrayed.

Today our Lord has provided a way for us also to come into His presence safely, through the finished work of Yeshua. But we are to do so in reverence, not in presumption or disobedience. **Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire** (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Malachi 3:2-3 says that the coming LORD “is like a refiner’s fire” and will “purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.”

**Please Pray—for a sense of the ‘holy’ in the Body of Messiah in Israel—that we will not be presumptuous in our worship and will not covet positions which God has granted to others, but be humbly thankful for the special responsibilities He chooses for us. Pray that we will at the same time yield ourselves to the refining purifying fire of God’s Spirit; and that the offerings which we offer up will be done in righteousness, in spirit and in truth.**

**\*Leviticus 10:8-12.** “Then the LORD spoke to Aaron, saying: ‘Do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generations, that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.’”

Perhaps intoxication was also a factor in the presumptuous sin of Nadav and Avihu. Although the Bible makes clear that God sanctions the drinking of wine or strong drink by His children (“before the LORD your God”— Deut. 14:22-26), Isaiah 28:7 just as clearly condemns its misuse, which can spoil our ministry, resulting in “erring in vision and stumbling in judgment”, not only in ourselves, but also in those who are looking up to us in seeking to follow His ways.

**\*Leviticus 10:10.** “...that you may distinguish between holy and unholy.” An even better translation would be “distinguish between the holy and the common.” The opposite of “holiness” is not necessarily “sinful”. That which is holy is first of all that which is “set-apart from the ordinary.” So for the priests, certain things (such as drinking wine) which might be acceptable under ordinary circumstances were not allowed when they went into the Tent of Meeting to perform their duties there before the Lord.

**Chapter Eleven lists ways in which the Hebrews were to be “holy” or “set apart” from other peoples by their diet.**

**\*Leviticus 11:4, 46-47.** “Nevertheless, these you shall not eat among those that chew the cud or that have cloven hooves... This is the law of the animals and the birds and every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth, to distinguish between the unclean and the clean, and between the animal that may be eaten and the animal that may not be eaten” The Israelites were forbidden to eat these animals, not from “touching” them. As with Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:3), there would be those who might add such restrictions, but the LORD’s restrictions regarding touch were related to the carcasses of dead animals (11:8). **The additional Torah reading from Numbers 19 deals with the contamination taking place when one comes into contact with a dead human body. For cleansing, a red cow was burned and its ashes mixed with living (flowing) water which was then sprinkled upon the contaminated one, making him or her clean. Yeshua came be a holy sacrifice, and to in His own body defeat Death, cleansing us with a far holier sprinkling,** “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (**Hebrews 9:13-14**).

### **THIS WEEK’S SPECIAL HAFTARAH, EZEKIEL 36:16-38, DEALS WITH THIS SAME HOLY SPRINKLING!**

**We find it especially useful in helping us to pray for Israel as regards the contested “territories” of Judea and Samaria, which she is being pressured to release to be converted permanently into a Muslim state in which no Jews would be allowed to dwell.**

**All of the prophecies in this reading are centered on an area called “The Mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 36:1), which exactly constitute this contested area.**

#### **PLEASE PRAY**

**FOR THOSE JEWISH SETTLERS CURRENTLY LIVING IN THESE AREAS, THAT THEY BE GRANTED REVELATION OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH COMES IN MESSIAH YESHUA. THIS PASSAGE STRONGLY IMPLIES THAT IT IS ONLY WHEN THEY RECEIVE THE CLEANSING WHICH HE OFFERS THAT THEY WILL BE ENABLED PERMANENTLY TO “DWELL IN THE LAND.”**

**Ezekiel 36:24.** “For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God.”

**Ezekiel 36:31.** “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your

abominations...Thus says Adonai YHVH: ‘On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities, I will also enable you to dwell in the cities, and the ruins shall be rebuilt.’”

**Ezekiel 36:37.** “Thus says Adonai YHVH: ‘I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am YHVH.’” **PLEASE PRAY: For grace for Israelis to come to a place that they desire and enquire to be a healthy and increasing “flock” of God. That they will long for “the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Yeshua from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant (Hebrews 13:20). That they will come to know that Yeshua is the LORD (Yehovah)—that He and His Father are One.**



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 23-29 March 2014 are called Thazria—“Quicken with Seed/Conceive: TORAH: Leviticus 12:1—13:59; Shabbat haChodesh: Exodus 12:1-20; HAFTARAH: Ezekiel 45:16—46:18.]

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