

Prayer Update From Israel (May 14, 2012)



Day 48

Counting the Omer
(Leviticus 23:15-16)

SHAVUOT

NOTICE: Since this festival centers round several key Scripture passages including those recounting the release of God's laws on Mount Sinai, we have decided to confine this week's prayer focuses to the Scriptures involved. Next week we will return the focus of our prayer points to include current events.

SHAVUOT (FEAST OF WEEKS, PENTECOST) BEGINS THIS YEAR AT SUNDOWN TUESDAY 14 MAY AND CONTINUES THROUGH THE FOLLOWING DAY MAY 15TH. SYNAGOGUES IN THE DIASPORA (i.e. OUTSIDE ISRAEL) WILL FOLLOW A RABBINIC TRADITION AND ADD A SECOND DAY 16 JUNE.

“You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes...” (Deuteronomy 16:9-12 NASB).

Seven weeks [Hebrew: *Shavuot*] from the day following Passover, when the Priest cut the first sheaf for the *Ceremony of Firstfruits*, comes the spring harvest festival of Shavuot (Greek: *Pentecost*, after the 50 days of Leviticus 23:16). On this same day, seven weeks after the risen Yeshua had presented Himself as a *firstfruits* to God from the dead, The Holy Spirit—*Ruach*

haKodesh—“*Holy Wind*”—was released from Heaven out onto His Body here on earth. Leviticus 23:17 tells of another “firstfruits” offering made on this day...but this time involving fresh bread baked *with leaven*. Some see here a picture of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing in a harvest in Messiah of One New Man, containing both Hebrews and those from the Nations! In the power of that Holy Wind, the *Mevaser*—*Gospel, Good Tidings*—quickly spread out, to the Jew first and from thence to all peoples, bringing harvest for Salvation, and victory from the slavery of sin.

There are three Biblical texts traditionally read on Shavuot. A prayerful perusal of these passages will assist us all in our celebration of this Feast of the LORD, and we believe will also provide us with guidance in our prayers over Israel at this time:

a. Exodus 19-20. Calculations made from ancient times concluded that the *Torah*—“Law” was released to Moses from the LORD at Mount Sinai on this day. This passage (Ch. 20) describes that releasing. It describes the tenderness with which Israel’s God has already “*borne them on eagles’ wings and brought them to Himself*” (19:4). It depicts the glory and power, the thunder and lightning and ever-increasing *shofar*-shout with which YHVH descended in fire onto the mountain (19:16-21). **PLEASE PRAY: For the Spirit of Truth to minister to Jews in Israel during this season...convicting of sin, righteousness and judgment; enlightening regarding the love that the Father has for them; awakening awareness that He is coming again in fire and the sound of the shofar; that those who will endure the Day of His coming will only be able to do so in the righteousness of the One of whom the Torah testified (Malachi 3:2; Luke 24:27).**

b. Ezekiel 1:1-28; 3:12. This “Haftarah” also describes a “coming” of the LORD in power and glory...but this time hundreds of years later in the land of Babylon, witnessed by the prophet Ezekiel in exile. Much speculation has been made over the centuries by Jewish religious, Jewish mystical, Christian and secular writers regarding this strange, awe-full and fascinating passage—over the nature of what the prophet called “*mar’ot Elohim*”—visions of God, and attempted to describe here. He himself dared not claim his descriptions as replicating *exactly* what he was vouchsafed to view—rather, all was “the appearance of” or “the likeness of”. In 1:26, he describes a Figure, seated high on a throne atop the holy *merkava* or chariot, “a figure with the appearance of a man [Hebrew: *adam*]”. **PLEASE PRAY: That the Spirit released on Pentecost would awaken Israel (now returned to her ancient land) to a new sense of Holiness and of the Fear of the LORD. Pray for ‘visions of God’ to those Hebrews still in the nations. Pray for revelation amongst Israelis of the Son of God, who is the “Second Adam”, who carries away the sin of the world, who is both *Son of Man* and *Son of God*.**

c. Book of Ruth. This beautiful book (still referred to as a ‘scroll’ in Hebrew) is always read at *Shavuot*. It takes place during the grain harvest. Ruth, a Gentile woman from Moab (now a portion of modern-day Jordan), comes with her Hebrew mother-in-law Naomi to Bethlehem (Hebrew: Bet-Lehem—House of Bread) in Judah at the beginning of the barley harvest. Her love for Naomi is expressed in the immortal words, “*Do not urge me to leave you or turn back from following you; for where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may the LORD do to me, and worse, if anything but death parts you and me*”

(1:16-17). We do not believe that in doing this, Ruth *became* a Hebrew (through ‘conversion’ as is taught by the Rabbis). She could not change her DNA to become the seed of Jacob...and she continued after her arrival to be referred to as “Ruth the Moabitess”. But through marriage to Boaz, God nevertheless brought her seed (4:12) into the house of Israel,—and the great-grandson of Naomi, borne in Ruth’s body, would be David the King. A thousand years later, through his line and in this same “house of bread”—Bethlehem, the *Bread of Life* would be born into the world.

We see in this marriage of Boaz and Ruth (along with the offering of bread made with yeast, mentioned above) a picture of the “One New Man” which would come forth in Messiah.

We and many others see also another picture—very relevant, in fact vital for our day. Naomi was old and broken, unable to conceive and bring forth life—yet Ruth young and strong offered her womb to bear the seed and bring forth life on behalf of Naomi, which would, as it were, *revive* her line to its place in God’s purposes. Today Israel, returned to her homeland, is for the most part old, exhausted, bitter and unable to reproduce. Yet, there is a way, as the “Body” of Messiah in the Nations loves Israel, her people and her God—enough to come alongside and offer herself as a “womb of intercession” in which to carry the burden which Israel herself is incapable of bearing, and to even endure travail on her behalf until new life comes forth and her line is restored. And what will this rebirth mean but “Life from the Dead”!

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 reading for this week May 12-18 is *Naso*: “Raise up” (heads, i.e. “take a census”)

TORAH: Numbers 4:21—7:89

HAFTARAH: Judges 13:2-25

Numbers 4:4-6, 15. *“This is the work of the descendants of Kohath in the tent of meeting, concerning the most holy things. When the camp sets out, Aaron and his sons shall go in and they shall take down the veil of the screen and cover the ark of the testimony with it; and they shall lay a covering of porpoise skin on it, and shall spread over it a cloth of pure blue, and shall*

insert its poles... When Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy objects and all the furnishings of the sanctuary, when the camp is to set out, after that the sons of Kohath shall come to carry them, so that they will not touch the holy objects and dies. These are the things in the tent of meeting which the sons of Kohath are to carry.”

It is strange the pictures and figurines one may see in souvenir shop windows in Jerusalem depicting Levites carrying the golden Ark of the Covenant, with the *aron*—“chest” and its Cherubim plainly visible. As this and other passages make clear, no one *ever* was allowed to look upon the holy Ark, except the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (and then amidst clouds of incense). On the road, it was not paraded out for everyone to gaze upon. Before leaving, the Aaronic priests (not the other Levites) came in, took down the veil and it appears moved forward with it before them to cover the holy object. Then other coverings were piled upon it (upon this holy chest upon which *kippur* (another word for ‘covering’) was made in blood once a year on behalf of the people’s sin). But the Ark of the Presence was Holy...and touching it or even looking upon it was more than even the especially set-apart priests were allowed to do. Each person involved must see the special of his or her office—and not seek another. The Levites cared for the outer courts; within the Levites, the sons of Kohath would be the ‘carriers’ of the Ark; within the Levites, only the descendants of Aaron could approach the Holy Chamber and the dismantle the Holy of Holies, and within the descendants of Aaron—only he and his successor could actually come within the veil—and that once a year when he served as an *intermediary* or *intercessor* between God and His people.

***Numbers 6:22-27.** *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, “This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:*

***‘YHVH bless you and guard you
YHVH make His face shine upon you and grace you
YHVH lift up His face to you and give you Shalom.’***

“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

With this blessing the LORD’s holy name YHVH was placed over the Israelites by the priests as a covering and protection. No other name would have true power to bless them, to be their guard and keeper, to release grace upon them, or to guard their hearts and minds with true *shalom*. Twice this blessing refers to the LORD’s *face*. The absolute necessity of being in the light of that face permeates the Hebrew Bible from beginning to end. Without God’s face (sometimes in English translated ‘presence’) Moses prayed to God not to bring himself and the people up to the Promised Land (Exodus 33:14-15). Three times in Psalm 80 the minstrel Asaph equates God’s causing His face to shine on Israel with “salvation”, while in Psalm 44:3 the sons of Korah attribute Israel’s winning of the Land to YHVH’s “right hand, His arm, and the light of His face, because he loved them”. There is a voice, sang David, crying out within every man, “Seek My face”...and his response, whenever He recognized it, would be “Your face, LORD, I will seek...do not hide Your face from me” (Psalm 27:8).

So this was the blessing which would attend the Children of Israel when the LORD placed His name YHVH over them. Today Israel has lost the pronunciation of that Name; when the

blessing is recited, it is replaced by *Adonai* (lord/master). However, it is hidden within the original Hebrew name for Jesus. *Yeshua*, a contraction for *Yehoshua*, means *YHVH Saves!* *He* is “*the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word*” (Hebrews 1:3). *He* is *Sar Shalom*...the Prince of Peace. **As members of a Holy Priesthood (Rev. 1:6), we would encourage you to pray this blessing over the Jewish people, placing *The Name* conjoined with *Salvation*—Yeshua—over them. Pray for the veil to be removed from Jewish eyes through the power of the Holy Spirit that they may know their LORD face-to-face. “*And I will not hide my face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out my Spirit on the house of Israel,’ says Adonai YHVH—the Lord GOD*” (Ezekiel 39:29).**

Judges 13:6. “A man of God came to me, and his appearance was like the appearance of the angel of God, very awesome...”** In this recounting of the coming of the angel/messenger of God to Manoah’s wife to herald the conception of Samson, at least five times he is referred to as a ‘*man*’. Two of those times he is called a “Man of God”...which, interestingly, could just as easily be translated from the Hebrew “The God-Man” (*Ish ha-Elohim*). Later in the story he refuses to give his name, since it is ‘wonderful’—and at the end Manoah is convinced that he and his wife must die, “*because we have seen God.*” Of course, at this time Yeshua/Jesus had not yet taken on human flesh. But it appears, nonetheless, to be an instance of a pre-incarnate manifestation of the One who was to come. **PLEASE PRAY for the understanding of Jews who read or hear these words next weekend to be opened, that they may comprehend the identity of the *One* who came to Manoah and his wife and ascended in the flame—of the *One* who was seated on the throne of the chariot in the Ezekiel passage—of the *One* who came down in flame onto the mountain in Exodus 19 (Luke 24:44-45)—of the *One* who has come in the flesh once before, and *Who is coming again!



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 19-25 May will be *B’ha’alotcha*—“When you Light Up” (the lamps): TORAH: 8:1—12:16; HAFTARAH: Zechariah 2:10—4:7.]

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