

## *Prayer Update From Israel (June 12, 2012)*



*Young Gazelle in a field in Bethel  
(Taken with author's cell-phone camera 11 January 2012)*

### **1. THINGS ARE STIRRING IN BETHEL**

*“Answer me when I call, my righteousness-God! In a narrow place you have made wideness for me; grace me and hear my prayer!” (Psalm 4:1).*

Bethel (Modern Hebrew: *Beit-El* or *Bet-El*—“House of God”) is an Israeli community a few miles north of Jerusalem within the ancient territory of Benjamin. Re-established in 1977, ten years after the land was taken from the occupying Kingdom of Jordan in the Six Day War, it is now home to almost 6000 mostly Orthodox Jewish Israelis. As with other communities built on territory taken by Israel in 1967, the town’s existence is seen as illegal by the international community, which sees it as lying within assumed borders for a future (Muslim) Palestinian state.

The name Bethel appears at least 66 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is the place where Abraham removed to after first arriving at Shechem from Haran (Gen. 12:8). He built an altar there and called on the name of YHVH. He would return to worship at this altar, and many years later his grandson Jacob would arrive to find the heavens where his grandfather (and likely his father Isaac) had prayed still open (Gen 28:12). It was at this time that a Being stood above the ladder rising into heaven and said, ***“I am YHVH God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to***

*you and your descendants*” (Gen. 28:13). Years later in far away Haran, the LORD, referring to Himself as “*the God of Bethel*”, would again speak to Jacob, commanding him to return to Canaan (Gen. 31:13). Back in the Land, God commanded him, “*Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.*” Upon Jacob’s obedient return, God “*appeared to Jacob again*”, affirming once more *to whom* this land would be bequeathed: ‘*I am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body. The land which I gave Abraham and Isaac I give to you;’ and to your seed after you I give this land.*’ Then God went up from him in the place where He talked with him...And Jacob called the name of the place where God spoke to him, *Bethel—House of God*” (Genesis 35:9a, 11—15).

Hundreds of years later, when Israel, now a mighty nation, had returned from Egypt and conquered Canaan, Bethel would continue be a place of inquiring of God (Judges 20:18). Both Deborah and Samuel would make judgments in the area (Judges 4:5; I Sam. 7:16). Yet when the Kingdom was divided after the death of Solomon, Jeroboam defiled the Bethel by erecting a golden calf to be worshipped there in place of journeying to Jerusalem to worship YHVH. Yet even in the days of Elijah there remained a contingent of prophets of the LORD in Bethel (II Kings 2:3). Because of great wickedness, Hosea predicted divine judgment to take place at Bethel, when the king of Israel would be completely cut off (Hosea 10:15).

#### **A PLACE FOR LEARNING THE FEAR OF THE LORD**

After the Northern Kingdom was taken into exile by Assyria, foreigners were sent to inhabit Samaria. Their godless behavior resulted in the LORD sending lions among them. To teach the rituals of the “god of the land”, the Assyrian king sent a priest from the exiles back to Israel, who “*came and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear the LORD*” (II Kings 17:28). Bethel was a fitting place to be taught the fear of the Lord. Jacob, upon first awakening from his dream there had been filled with it: “*Surely YHVH is in this place, and I did not know.*’ And he was afraid and said, ‘*How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!*’” (Gen. 28:16-17)

#### **BETHEL IS RETURNING TO THE NEWS**

While traveling in the US earlier this month, we attended a number of meetings in which the word “house” or “Bethel, the House of God” were emphasized. Indeed, the present Hebrew year 5772 has been called the “Year of the House”. This is because the year ends in a “two”, and, as may be shown in any Hebrew dictionary, the Hebrew word-number for “two” is identical in spelling to the Hebrew word for “house”—*beit*. We returned to find the literal “Beit-El” north of Jerusalem at the center of our news. The Israeli Supreme Court had last month ruled that five apartment buildings of an outpost called Ulpana lying just outside Bethel’s limits had been built without proper permits on land privately owned by Palestinians. The court had ordered that the inhabitants be removed and the five buildings demolished by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The veracity of the allegations behind the court’s ruling has been questioned by many, and there is certainly little doubt

that the current inhabitants of the buildings were unaware that they had been illegally constructed when they moved in. A suggestion by Prime Minister Netanyahu that new buildings would be built for the inhabitants within Bethel's recognized limits was rejected by the settlers. The Prime Minister, who has great respect for the settlement cause, but who also feels obliged to uphold the rule of law in Israel's government then proceeded to block passage of legislation in the Knesset which sought to retroactively "legalize" the land to a time prior to the court's ruling.

### **851 FOR ONE**

The Prime Minister then released the astonishing news that, while enforcing the court's ruling against the Ulpana settlement and relocating its inhabitants, his government is also authorizing 300 new housing units to be built within Bethel itself as well as 551 units in five other Jewish communities within the contested West Bank—851 new building permits in all! (Of course, within hours the expected response arrived from the US State Department, "*Continued Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank undermines peace efforts and contradicts Israeli commitments and obligations including the 2003 road map. The US position on Israeli settlements is clear. We do not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlement activity. We also oppose any effort to legalize settlement outposts.*"). Almost as astonishing as Prime Minister Netanyahu's announcement about building up Bethel was a statement made this week by Israel's Defense Minister Ehud Barak. This is the same Barak who as Prime Minister in the Camp David talks with Yasser Arafat in 2000 was willing to give up almost all of Judea and Samaria (including of course Bethel) and half of Jerusalem. On Tuesday Barak said that the communities of Bethel and Ofra would be annexed to Israel under any final-status agreement, adding, "*I think there are things that must be done to strengthen Beit El (Bethel). It's a very important community, Beit El. I have no doubt about the future of Beit El.*"

### **WE MUST PRAY**

We sense the stirrings awakening at this time in and regarding this ancient holy site to be of extreme significance. We must seek to know what the Spirit of the "God of Bethel" is saying. What is the significance of what is happening and how should we pray? It is important to realize that there is a battle already going on over this territory. God is beginning to move, and He obviously has a plan. But when He begins to move, it is essential that all flesh be hushed before Him (Zechariah 2:13); nor will "*the anger of man work the righteousness of God.*" The actions of Israeli settlers who feel they are being wronged are not made "righteous" simply because they are committed by zealous Jews. Lawlessness is lawlessness and cruel violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) is demonic, whoever comes under its control. In the past two days far-right Jewish activists have vandalized two Arab communities, puncturing holes in tires and spray-painting "Death to Arabs", "Vengeance for Ulpana" and "Price Tag" on property of innocent Arab citizens who had nothing to do with the rulings of the Israeli government. A similar spirit of vengeful violence had been unleashed by Jacob's sons on Shechem when God commanded Jacob to return to Bethel. But first, "*Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel, and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone*" (Gen 35: 2-3).

**PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*That God’s Kingdom come and His will be done in Bethel.**

**\*Against the courageous Jewish settlers in Bethel and Ulpana submitting themselves to spirits of lawlessness and violence. Pray that those presently living in Ulpana will submit to a governing authority and not have to be forcibly removed.**

**\*For revelation among the Jews in Bethel regarding the righteousness which exalts a nation—a righteousness not of the Law, but of the Holy One.**

**\*For understanding amongst Believers in Israel regarding what the Spirit is saying to the Congregations through what is happening in Bethel—and for instructions as to what to do and pray.**

**\*That the wells of worship and praise would be reopened in Bethel, that an “open heaven” would be granted there once again; that both the fear and fellowship of the Lord experienced by the Patriarchs would be taught anew to those God gathers in that city.**

**\*“Answer me when I call, my righteousness-God! In a narrow place you have made wideness for me; grace me and hear my prayer” (Psalm 4:1).** If the Prime Minister’s plan goes into effect, the inhabitants of Bethel will soon find their narrowness “made wide” within them—with the addition of 300 buildings. Pray that they will come to know the “*Righteousness-God*” who accomplishes this, who is also the “God of Bethel” who answers when they call!

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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 reading for this week 10-16 June 2012 is *Sh’lach L’cha*—“Sent for Yourself” (--men that may scout out the land of Canaan).**

**TORAH: Numbers 13:1—15:41**

**HAFTARAH: Joshua 2:1-24**

This week’s reading focuses on the 12 spies sent out by Moses at the command of the LORD to spy out the land of Canaan soon after Israel left Mt Sinai. It relates the differing reports which were brought back and the spirit behind those reports—and the judgment released over the entire adult generation of those who followed the spirit of fear

and unbelief. In the *Haftarah*, it is almost 40 years later and spies are once again being dispatched, this time from the next generation and from a different border.

**\*Numbers 13:16:** *“These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.”*

*Hoshea* means “Salvation”. *Joshua* (in Hebrew pronounced *YehoSHUah*), means “**The LORD SAVES**”. Thus, over 1500 years later a shortened form of that name *Yeshua*, would be given by the angel to Joseph (and in Luke 1:31 to *Miriam* (English: Mary) his wife, “...and you shall call His name *Yeshua*, for He **will save** His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

**\*Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9:** *“Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it....Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh...spoke to all the congregation of Israel, saying: ‘The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the LORD is with us. Do not fear them.’”*

It is remarkable that in Hebrew the root for the word “War” and that for “Bread” are identical (The two-edged sword in the hands of God’s warriors (Psalm 149:6) is literally a “*many mouthed*” sword to devour His enemies—while the mouths of the warriors themselves are filled with His praise!

**\*Numbers 14:24** *“But my servant Caleb, because he has **a different spirit** in him and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land where he went, and his descendants shall inherit it.”*

**Pray against Israelis responding to the giants we face in a spirit of fear...that we realize that if we trust in God, he will not allow the land to devour us. Pray against cynical conversation amongst older believers in the Land about the land devouring those within it; this only serves to discourage and dishearten the generation God wishes to raise up for strength, victory and governance here. Please pray that men and women of “a different spirit” would rise up in Israel, not focusing on the giants but trusting in the God who made the heavens and who has promised to give us a land flowing with milk and honey in which righteousness dwells.**

**\*Numbers 15:38-40:** *“Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God.”*

The “blue” thread in these tassels or fringes (Hebrew: *tzitzit*) was “**tehellet**”, a **sky-blue** dye thought to have been made from a particular species of snail (For centuries this creature was assumed to be extinct and consequently the colored thread was not placed in the fringes of observant Jews. In the past decade the crustacean is believed to have been rediscovered in the Gulf of Aqaba; now many are again wearing the “sky blue” thread in their “*tzitzit*”). Much of the specific significance for the fringes and the colored thread remains uncertain—some have suggested that they served as a reminder that because of the “harlotry to which our hearts and our own eyes are inclined” victory in overcoming these inclinations can only be obtained by calling on the Holy One who dwells in the heavenlies (sky-blue). It was these ‘fringes’ on the garment of Yeshua which the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25, Luke 8:43) touched and “power went out of Him” and healed her. **Please Pray that Israelis would be convicted of their need to obey God, but also aware of their “inclination” against doing so. Pray that they would seek salvation in the One out of whom comes power to be Children of God (John 1:12), to please and draw near to the Father.**

**\*Joshua 2:12; 2:18: RAHAB:** *“Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father’s house, and give me a true token.” SPIES:* *“We will be blameless of this oath of yours which you have made us swear, unless, when we come into the land, you bind this line of scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and unless you bring your father, your mother, your brothers, and all your father’s household to your own home.”*

There is a wonderful picture here. Rahab requests that the spies show her and her family Lovingkindness (Hebrew: *hesid*) and give her a token of Truth (Hebrew: *emet*). The token of Lovingkindness and Truth (*hesid* and *emet*) is a scarlet thread which, when seen, will protect them from a destruction of judgment soon coming upon all of her wicked nation. When the Father sent His Light into the world, we are told that although the Torah had been given through Moses, “*Lovingkindness and Truth* (Hebrew translation: *hesid* and *emet*) *came through Yeshua the Messiah*” (John 1:17)—“*in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of God’s Lovingkindness* (Hebrew: *hesid*) (Ephesians 1:7). **Please pray for revelation in Israel regarding the urgent necessity of being saved from the wrath to come—and of the *Lovingkindness* and *Truth* which are offered to those who will put their trust in the finished work of the Messiah!**



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**[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week 17-23 June will be *Korach*—  
“Korah”: TORAH: Numbers 16:1—18:32; HAFTARAH: I Samuel 11:14—12:22]**

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