

ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

Glory of Zion International Ministries



This week we focus on a phenomenon (relating to a passage from this week's Torah Portion) in which something considered precious and most holy from ancient times is, after almost 2000 years, reappearing in modern Israel. *

THE RETURN OF TEKHELET

“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.” (Numbers 15:38-40; FROM THIS WEEK'S “TORAH PORTION”)

The “blue” thread in these tassels or fringes (Hebrew: tzitzit) was not mere coloring, but tekhelet—a sky-blue pigment derived from the secretions of a particular species of snail. This rare and costly dye was among the treasures given to the children of Israel when they left Egypt. When the LORD gave building instructions for the *mishkan* (tabernacle) in which He would dwell (Exodus 25:4), this was among the offerings received from the people for its preparation. *Tekhelet* was to be woven skillfully into the curtains, the screen and the veil (Ch. 26), and into the holy garments of the High Priest who ministered before it (28:5, 15, 28, 31, 33, 37).

When the camp moved out, the Table of Showbread, the Menorah, and the Golden Altar of the Holy Place were covered first in a cloth dyed with *tekhelet*, then lastly with skins before being carried away (Numbers 4:7-11). But the *Ark of the Covenant*—where YHVH dwelt between the

Cherubim—was covered by Aaron and his sons, first with the veil, then with a covering of skins and lastly, with **“a cloth entirely of tekhelet”** (Numbers 4:5-6). When the Israel was on the move, what was visible out front on the shoulders of the priests was not the Ark with the Cherubim (*no one* was allowed to see that; even the High Priest filled the Holy of Holies with smoke when he visited behind the veil once a year on Yom Kippur). ***As Israel marched across the desert, what was visible, proclaiming the dwelling among men of the Presence of YHVH, was the “form” of the Holy Ark beneath a covering of sky-blue.***

So why were the sons of Israel commanded to wear fringes on the corners of their garments, with a thread of tekhelet among them? We cannot say with certainty; the Scriptures are silent. The context here seems to be the human dilemma of an inherited nature to sin, the *“harlotry to which our hearts and our own eyes are inclined”* (15:39). Might the sky blue thread among the fringes point to our inability, even with our best efforts to overcome that nature on our own? Might looking at this thread have served as a reminder of man’s need to look beyond to the Presence (signified here by the *techelet-covered Mercy Seat*) for victory? Perhaps even the sky-blue of the color itself pointed towards the habitat of the One whose mercies are in the heavens where He has placed His throne (Psalm 36:5; 57:10; 103:19).

“Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens!” (Psalm 123:1). Yeshua Himself, whose eyes were continually upon the Father and who only did what His Father told him, chose obediently to wear the fringes during His time on earth. It was these *tzitzit* which the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25, Luke 8:43) touched and *“power went out of Him”* and healed her.

For many centuries the exact identity of the crustacean from which this dye was made has been lost; by some it was even thought to have become extinct. For this reason religious Jews long ago ceased placing a blue thread among the fringes which they wear. ***But with the returning of Israel to Zion, it has been re-discovered!*** Around 100 years ago, scientific research began pointing towards a probable identity for the creature which had been used, but there were complications in producing the color. Later discoveries appear to have now made that identity certain—it is the *Murex trunculus* snail. Large mounds of these snails have been discovered by archaeologists at ancient dying sites on Israel’s northeast coast. Another discovery was made: cloth treated with the dye taken directly from the Murex snail will be dark and not possess a uniformity of color. *The only way for it to become “sky blue” is for the wool, after it has been dyed, to be exposed to ultra-violet rays, especially of sunlight!* In 2013 a 2000-year-old fragment of cloth, which had been discovered over 50 years earlier in a cave near the Dead Sea, was confirmed in laboratory tests to bear within it traces of the dye from this snail. This fragment was also the first discovered to bear the true sky-blue color required.

Today, many religious Jews, believing this at last to be the genuine *tekhelet*, have begun wearing it in their *tzitzit* again. Over the past 25 years, it has become available to purchase. Although the

snails for making it have been discovered in Israel, the species is now protected, and quantities necessary for making the dye are being imported from Greece, Croatia, and Spain.

During the past century, as prophesied, the LORD has begun returning descendants of His chosen Hebrew people to their ancient homeland. With this return, other restorations have also taken place—the ancient long-dead spoken language has come back to life; among some Israeli farmers, the ancient practice of *shmita* (allowing land to go fallow on the seventh year) is being restored. And so, as we see also the return of *tekhelet* and of its use on the fringes of garments, we cannot but wonder, what does this mean? What may it signify? All is not yet clear. We must ask the *Father of Lights* for illumination (James 1:17, 5).

One thing we observe and find remarkable, the re-discovery of tekhelet and the re-introduction of its use on the tassels of the garments seem to coincide with the re-awakening of a Messianic Body within Israel!

Even as the sky-blue thread of Numbers 15:38-40 pointed a young Israel towards the Presence of God in her midst, might not the return of that thread in our own day point towards that same Presence, dwelling this time, not separately in a tent, but *within* His people themselves, to grant them victory in defeating the inclination of their hearts and eyes towards sin! That Body of Messianic Jews is still only a small thread in Israel (even as are the relatively few Jews who have begun to wear *tekhelet*)—but that remnant thread is growing!

PLEASE PRAY: That Israelis would be convicted of their need to obey God, but also by the Holy Spirit become aware of their natural “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 their Father. Pray for revelation that, as with *tekhelet*, His heavenly Presence can be only clearly revealed in the light of the Son!

“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”

(Ezekiel 36:25-27).

*This is a revised and updated article which appeared in the June 20 *Update* 2015.

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 Parashah for this week 11-17 June 2017 is called Sh'lach L'kha— “Send for Yourself”

TORAH: Numbers 13:1—15:41

HAFTARAH: Joshua 2:1-24

This week's reading focuses on the 12 scouts 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 spirits behind those reports. It then recounts the judgment released over the entire adult generation of those who followed the spirit of fear and unbelief released by ten of the spies. 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*), is a contraction meaning “**YEHOVAH SAVES.**” By the time of the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon some 900 years later, his name had been shortened to *Yeshua* (Hebrew: Nehemiah 8:17. Other men with this name (spelled “Jeshua” in most English translations) appear some 25 times in 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah). Still 600 years later, an angel would appear to Joseph in Galilee (Matthew 1:21, and in Luke 1:31 to *Miriam*— “Mary”, his wife) with the promise of a son, “...and you shall call His name *Yeshua*, for He will save His people from their sins.”

***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 the Hebrew 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 13:33.** *“There we saw the nephilim—the sons of Anak came from the nephilim—and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”*

Nephilim are mentioned by name only one other place in the Bible, Genesis 6:4. It is by no means certain that the spies saw *nephilim*—nor in fact that these fearful beings have ever existed on earth since the Flood. II Peter 2:4 appears to be referring to them as having been cast into a place “below the earth” where they were delivered “*into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment.*” The “parentheses” placed around the statement “*the sons of Anak [giants] came from the nephilim*” in many English translations are not in the Hebrew. We believe it likely that this statement was itself a spur-of-the-moment amplification made by the terrified spies, allowing stories from antiquity about the monstrous pre-Flood beings to color their perception of the large people they had actually seen. The author of the Biblical narrative itself only mentions the “children of Anak” (13:22) as had the spies themselves earlier (13:28).

***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.”*

PLEASE 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”, who “know their God” and have heavenly insight (Daniel 11:32) 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 15:37-40:** *“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... [See beginning of Update]*

***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 "loving kindness" (Hebrew: *hesed*) and give her a token of "truth" (Hebrew: *emet*). The token of loving kindness and truth (*hesed* and *emet*) is a scarlet thread which, when seen, will protect them from a destruction of judgment soon to come upon all of her wicked nation. When God the Father sent His Light into the world, we are told that although the Torah had been given through Moses, "*Loving kindness and Truth* (Hebrew translation: *hesed 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 Loving kindness* (Hebrew: *hesed*) (Ephesians 1:7). **Please pray for revelation in Israel regarding the urgent necessity of being saved from the wrath to come—and of the loving kindness and Truth which are offered to those who will put their trust in the finished work of the Messiah! Psalm 33:18-19 says that "the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him and whose yearning hope is in His hesed—to deliver them from death and to keep them alive in famine!"**



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[The Parashah for next week 18-24 June 2017 is called *Korach*— "Korah." TORAH: Numbers 16:1—18:32; HAFTARAH: I Samuel 11:14—12:22.]

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