

## *Prayer Update From Israel (January 13, 2014)*



Ariel Sharon's casket lying in state before the Knesset.

Sunday afternoon, January 12, 2014

### 1. THE LION SLEEPS TONIGHT

*“The entire previous night I had spent at our forward posts staring into a Starlight scope toward Ismailia, looking for signs of Egyptian movement. Now, despite the shelling, I couldn't keep my eyes open. Wrapping my coat around me, I lay down in the sand next to my command APC. Already half asleep, I felt someone pull a blanket over me. Nearby a voice was shouting something, and I heard a soldier whisper hoarsely, ‘Be quiet, Arik's tired. Let him sleep...I still [remember] the tenderness of that gesture. I had felt surrounded by warmth and security, by the protectiveness of a family.’” (A flashback to a battlefield scene during the Yom Kippur War, from the opening chapter of Ariel Sharon's 1989 autobiography, *Warrior*.)*

*On Saturday afternoon, 11 January, Israel lost one of its great warrior-leaders as Ariel Sharon at the age of 85 passed to his final “sleep”. His death came only a few days after the anniversary of a devastating stroke which sent him in 2006, while serving as Israel's 11<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister, into a coma. Many admired him, many hated him; he was a complex man and involved in controversy throughout most of the six decades he fought for Israel. As a military and civil leader, the choices he was required to make were sometimes seen as brilliantly successfully, sometimes as seriously flawed. But, as one respected military commentator put it, “his legacy is first the survival of the Jewish nation, of the Jewish people in their own homeland...everything was secondary or third rate to this consideration...The second item in his legacy is that if you say something you do it. He was a pragmatist and doer as both commander and politician” (“Sharon was no warmonger, he just put Israel first”—quoting Ron Ben Yishai: ynetnews.com, 01/12/14 00:43). Today much of the nation is in a kind of mourning. He was the last of the great warriors who fought and led Israel from her beginning. This nation tends to retain a tradition of sober respect at the passing of her*

fallen leaders, especially her military heroes, remembering their flashes of greatness, even when these may have been tarnished by later events (cf. David over Saul II Samuel 1). For one thing, there is a sense that this kind of valor, courage and decisiveness was *then*—that that too has departed with their deaths.

*Sharon was integrally involved in each of Israel's first five wars.* As a young officer in the 1948 war for independence, he was seriously wounded leading a platoon in the disastrous attack ordered by Ben Gurion on the Jordanian fortifications at Latrun. With communications destroyed, the Jewish forces in disarray, and his own platoon thought destroyed and left behind, he managed nevertheless arm in arm with a comrade equally wounded, to miraculously make it off the burning battlefield before passing out. During the rest of the war and during ensuing years, he came to be known as a fierce and feared warrior, albeit, one with a reputation for doing things his own way. By the 1956 Suez War, he had attained the rank of Major, and by 1967 he was a Major General. A brilliant strategist, in the Six-Day War he planned the IDF's first divisional battle completely on his own, a battle which to the present day is still taught in military academies across the world ("Israel's indomitable protector, Ariel Sharon emblemized military audacity, evolving politics" by Mitch Ginsburg: *The Times of Israel*, 11 January 2014, 2:35 p.m.). In the 1973 *Yom Kippur* War, General Sharon came out of the reserves to brilliantly oversee an operation of his 143<sup>rd</sup> Division which enabled Israeli forces to cross the Suez Canal and advance to within sixty miles of Cairo. A famous photograph shows Sharon, bloodied bandage on his head, in a swirling fog of fire and smoke physically directing battle machinery towards the bridge. For years after the war, his name was attended with an almost mythic fear in Egypt. Ben Gurion, who considered him his protégé, once referred to him as "the greatest field commander in the history of the IDF."

#### *A FIERCE BUT FLAWED WARRIOR*

His decisions nine years later as Israel's Minister of Defense in the First Lebanon War, would subject him to much criticism, some of it undoubtedly deserved—although they would result in the expulsion of Yassir Arafat and his PLO forces. A major blow came in 1983 when an official Israeli commission of inquiry found Sharon, in his role as Defense Minister responsible for the Israeli presence in Lebanon, "indirectly responsible" for the horrifying massacres by Lebanese Phalangist militiamen at the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps the previous year. This led ultimately to his being pressured into resigning his Cabinet position. In September 2000, after then Prime Minister Ehud Barak had indicated a willingness to release sovereignty of the Temple Mount to the Palestinians, Sharon made a historical visit to the Mount, declaring that it would remain under perpetual Israeli control. Yasser Arafat used this as a pretext for launching the bloody 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada, and in the midst of this conflict the following February Sharon was elected Prime Minister. As Prime Minister Sharon responded to the continued terrorist attacks by launching Operation Defensive Shield, an operation which, while resulting in the release of many wildly exaggerated media accounts of carnage and brutality, largely succeeded in its objectives of rooting out Palestinian terrorist cells in the Palestinian cities. This and the building of a security barrier (wall and fence) brought about a dramatic decline in the terrorist bombings.

*In mid-2005 that Sharon engineered his most controversial operation, one which would be seen as a frightfully foolish betrayal by many, as a courageous change of course by others. It would result in a traumatic rent in the fabric of the society, a painful wound which continues to have grim repercussions eight years later. Between 16 and 30 August, at Sharon's command 9,480 Jewish settlers from 21 settlements in Gaza, and four settlements in northern Samaria were uprooted. In fairness, it should be said that the real "disengagement" had begun in the mid-90's when, under the Cairo and Oslo agreements, Israel had withdrawn the vast majority of her troops deployed in Gaza since the Strip was taken from Egypt in 1967. Evidently, Sharon saw the continued protection of 7000 settlers from the surrounding 1.5 million Palestinians as militarily unfeasible (cf. Luke 14:31: "What King, going to war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand. Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace."). Theoretically, with the Jews completely out, there would be no-holds-barred for Israel in executing retribution should violence continue to emanate from the Strip. But that was if Sharon continued to be in control. Within six months he would be struck down, and replaced with probably the weakest Prime Minister in Israel's history. There have since been thousands of missiles fired into sovereign Israeli territory and the strip continues to build up its armament, as does Hezbollah to the north.*

*His name "Ariel" meant "Lion of God". He was indeed a Lion—but he had another side. By all reputable reports, he was a family man. He knew domestic tragedy, experiencing the death of his first wife and eldest son. Unlike many of Israel's famous leaders, he was not a womanizer—but respected women, reportedly, always choosing to rise to his feet when a lady entered the room, and remaining faithful to his beloved wife Lili for the 37 years of their life. He often quoted from the Scriptures, and a well-thumbed Hebrew Bible lay beside his bed. And he had a deep love for the Land, returning to his ranch (where he will be buried this Monday) at every opportunity. In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly a few months before his devastating stroke, he spoke of how, "I was born in the Land of Israel, the son of pioneers—people who tilled the land and sought no fights—who did not come to Israel to dispossess its residents. If the circumstances had not demanded it, I would not have become a soldier, but rather a farmer and agriculturist. My first love was, and remains, manual labor; sowing and harvesting, the pastures, the flock and the cattle"*

As Ariel Sharon is laid to rest this Monday, here are some ways we are moved to pray:

\*A friend in America has suggested that with the death of Ariel Sharon, "this representative of the generation that established natural Israel, the phase of Ezekiel's vision (Ezekiel 37) where the Spirit comes into the spiritually Dry Bones accelerates. Natural Israel is already breathing, but the Breath of the Holy Spirit will breathe a different kind of Life into Israel—the life of the spiritual *Lion of God*, Yeshua" (Donna Diorio <http://israelprayerdotcom.blogspot.com>). PLEASE PRAY: That the Breath of God will come from the Four Winds and breathe on the men and women of Israel—which will catch the mantle and stand to their feet, a mighty army led by the Spirit of God.

**\*Many prayers have gone up on behalf Ariel Sharon as he has lain in a coma for these eight years. The LORD “knows what lies in darkness and light dwells with Him” (Daniel 2:22). We have prayed that his spirit was visited by that Light during these years. PLEASE PRAY for his sons Omri and Gilad and his older sister Dita, that they also experience the Light which shines in darkness and illumines all who come into the world.**

**\*ARIEL is also used several times in the Scriptures as a name for Jerusalem. Isaiah 29:7, after speaking of a humbling which will come to that city, addresses all those “who fight against Ariel and distress her... “the multitude of all nations...who fight against Mount Zion—that they will be stricken with “the spirit of deep sleep.” PLEASE PRAY: That even as Ariel Sharon has come finally to the end of his comatose state—*so Jerusalem will awaken from her stupor into Life and Awareness and the Light of Truth!!***

**\*Ariel Sharon’s original last name was *Scheinerman*. (He was encouraged by Ben-Gurion to exchange it for a Biblical name in 1953.) One possible meaning for this name is *“one with a radiant face or personality.”* Psalm 44:3-8 (NIV): *“It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob. Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. I do not trust in my bow, my sword does not bring me victory; but you give us victory over our enemies, you put our adversaries to shame. In God we make our boast all day long, and we will praise your name forever. Selah”* (Emphases ours). PLEASE PRAY: For awakening in Israel of a new breed of warriors who put their trust in the Light of the Face of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...shining through the presence of His Son Yeshua.**

**\* The Torah readings for the new week usually begin to be read on Saturday afternoons—the time of Sharon’s death. We were struck by a passage near the beginning of this week’s Parasha, Exodus 18:21. Jethro is advising his son-in-law Moses to not try and do all the work of adjudicating disputes by himself. A very literal translation of this verse might go something like this, *“And you shall search out with prophetic insight from the people men of valor, who fear God, are men of truth who hate greed; and place them over the people as captains/officials/princes of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens...and let them judge the people at all times.”* PLEASE PRAY: FOR RELEASE OF PROPHETIC INSIGHT IN ISRAEL—EVEN IN THE ARRAYING OF HER MILITARY AS WELL AS HER GOVERNMENTAL AND CIVIL INSTITUTIONS.**

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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 readings for this week 12-18 January 2014 are called *Yitro*—"Jethro":

**TORAH:** Exodus 18:1—20:26

**HAFTARAH:** Isaiah 6:1—7:6; 9:6-7

**\*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*, 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 19:4b.** *"...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.'" Revelation 1:5-6 teaches that becoming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation comes about through the love of Yeshua and the washing away of sins by His blood.*

**\*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 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 can again find themselves clothed, in His righteousness, and our 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).

### **An exceptionally powerful 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 his lips are touched with the coal, his iniquity taken away, and 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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Jerusalem***

**[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (19-25 January 2014) are called *Mishpatim*—"Judgments": TORAH: Exodus 21:1—24:18; HAFTARAH: Jeremiah 34:8-22; 33:25-26]**

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