

## *Prayer Update From Israel (October 17, 2013)*



*10 Tishrei 5774*

**Bedouin tent and camels in the desert**

**(Photo taken from well at the site of ancient Beersheba)**

***“Thus they [Abraham and Abimelech] made a covenant at Beersheba...then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of YHVH, the Eternal God”***

**(Genesis 21:33; See Torah Reading below)**

### **1. ADDRESSING THE JEWISH IDENTITY**

Although a study just completed in the United States suggests that a majority of Jews there are proud of their Jewishness, it found that 32% of those surveyed identify themselves as Jews on the basis of ancestry, ethnicity or culture—not religion. (By contrast, in the last century, 93% of Jews born in 1914-27 identified their Jewishness on the basis of their faith.) The headline for this in the Israeli *ynetnews.com* read, **“US Jews losing their religion, survey finds”**; the *Times of Israel* heading: **“Rise of ‘Jews of no religion’ most significant find of Pew study....”** According to Greg Smith, the Director of US Religion Surveys at the Pew Research Center which conducted the study, when asked what their religion was, the 32% responded “atheists, agnostic or not particular to any religion.” Smith feels the percentage is large and growing. He also believes that the data suggests that “Jews of no religion are much less connected to the Jewish community, are much less engaged and involved in Jewish organizations and are much less likely to be raising their children Jewish as compared to Jews who describe themselves as Jews by religion” (“Rise of ‘Jews of no religion’ most significant find of Pew study, says director”: *The Times of Israel*, October 3, 3013, 2:25pm. See also “US Jews losing their religion, survey finds”: *ynetnews.com*, 01 Oct 13 15:07).

In Israel, many if not most of early Zionists were secular or even atheist, this in reaction to what they saw as the legalistic coercion of Orthodox Judaism. Today, a majority of Israelis are still

secular, not practicing their traditional religion except for the rites of circumcision, marriage and funerals, along with a cultural observance of the holidays on Feast days. Many of these would admit to agnosticism, even atheism if personally questioned, yet would probably still put “Jewish” down in the “Religion” section of a questionnaire.

The old question of what makes a Jew a Jew is still without a standard uniformly observed solution in Israel. Among many, there is a hesitance to equate Jewishness with “race”—one reason being because Hitler and countless other persecutors have done that. And so, for immigration purposes, Jewishness is based on “religion”. Put down “Jewish” in the religion box of the application papers, provide family documents and obtain a letter from a rabbi and you may come and be granted citizenship, whatever (Buddhist, New Age, atheist) you really do or don’t believe---unless it is discovered that you believe the Muslim faith (whose very holy books are hostile to Jews), or that you believe that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah and divine. Thanks to the influence of anti-Messiah Orthodox parties in the government, this last was made into law a few decades ago; if a Jew comes to believe in Jesus, he has changed his religion and is therefore no longer to be considered a Jew for immigration purposes.

Of course there is an irrational dichotomy here. Israel isn’t about to declare the millions of non-believing Jewish citizens already here Gentiles (although that might please the Orthodox)—nor can she kick out as non-Jews the growing numbers of Messianic Jews who were born here.

***We are dealing here with spiritual realities at war***—with deceptions of the enemy to keep the many prophecies of Jews’ return to her homeland (example: Ezekiel 36:24) from coming fully to pass. Or, when they do return, to keep them from awakening to a knowledge of the One “*Whom they pierced*” (Zechariah 12:10), of the New Covenant in His blood (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Luke 22:20), of the cleansing from sin and new hearts which will be granted at that awakening (Ezekiel 36:25-28; Zechariah 13:1)—and of Israel’s ultimate release into her end-time destiny which will signal “life from the dead” to the world!

**We find it very significant** that within the survey cited above it is cited that “*More than one-third of American Jews say believing Jesus is the Messiah is compatible with Judaism*”! (Ibid.) How did such a question even get onto this survey? It’s just not a question which is usually asked, nor an issue which is brought up! Yet we see a window here. In our last elections, the religious stronghold of ultra-Orthodox Judaism which has controlled and coerced the departments of the Israeli government related to religion and immigration for years, was broken off. When the strength of the anti-Messiah spirit behind that stronghold is disengaged...even for a season, there is an atmosphere in which the Holy Spirit may lead Jews to reason more clearly and ask such questions as, “Why should a belief in Jesus as Messiah be incompatible with Judaism?” And what affects Jews in Israel, affects their brothers and sisters around the world.

**PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*That the hearts of those of the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who are still abroad in the Nations will be warmed to the truth and significance of their heritage. That they will be supernaturally illumined to understand that their identity as Jews is indeed of extreme**

**importance; yet, its deepest meaning is not to be found in the teachings of rabbinic Judaism, nor in their ancestry, ethnicity or culture, as important as those may be. It is to be found in the God of their Fathers—who continues to love them with an everlasting love and to draw them with loving kindness (Jeremiah 31:3).**

**\*That American Jews would discover that *“believing in Jesus as Messiah”* is not only *“compatible with Judaism,”* it is essential to it. That Yeshua came to *His own*, and his own received Him not—yet, to as many as receive Him He gives the right to become children of God (John 1:11-12).**

**\*That the restrictions on allowing Messianic Jews to openly enter Israel to live will be overturned. That the Israeli Government will change the law to reflect the truth that *“believing Jesus is the Messiah is compatible with Judaism”*.**

## **2. DEATH OF OVADIA YOSEF**

Last Monday evening the leading Sephardic (Jews who came from Spain or North African or eastern countries) rabbi Ovadia Yosef died at age 93. He was a colorful personage, always recognizable by his dark glasses and ornate clothing, and known for his often controversial proclamations. He was the spiritual leader of the Sephardic *Shas* party since its inception in the 1980's. He had been ill, and towards the end it was evident that his days were drawing to an end. Yet few were prepared for the titanic outpouring of grief which attended his funeral Monday night in Jerusalem. Some papers called it the largest gathering of its kind in the modern history of the capital—over 750,000 black-coated ultra-Orthodox mourners filled the streets, far into the next morning. An enormous multi-story banner bearing the rabbi's picture with a request to pray for him which had been unfurled on a tall building at the entrance of Jerusalem was modified to read—*“We are here and there is no Father.”*

He was indeed considered a “father” to tens of thousands. Sadly, Ovadia Yosef (whose first name means “Servant of Yah”) ruled over a political party which has in recent years done more than any other to persecute Messianic Jews in Israel. It is a party which has continually sought the Ministry of the Interior position in the Cabinet so as to be able to guard who comes into the country, and to make sure that believers in Yeshua are not among them. We see it as a divine grace that they were not able to get a foothold in the present government. There is much occult practice within the religion of his followers. As spiritual leader, he wielded enormous power; his word was law. And those of his followers who held governmental positions thronged to kiss his hand and receive his blessing.

### **PLEASE PRAY:**

**\*That those who have been under the spiritual oversight of this man would be freed to realize that they do indeed have a Father, *“Doubtless You are our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O Yehovah, are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name”* (Isaiah 63:16). And pray for supernatural**

revelation that the Son, who in their zeal they have resisted, is the One who leads us to that Father.

\*That any curses or occult powers released in the streets of Jerusalem during the funeral last Monday night would be cleansed. ***“For there is no sorcery against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel.” (Numbers 23:23).***

### **3. “NETANYAHU TAKES A LONELY STANCE DENOUNCING IRAN”**

This was the title of an article in *The New York Times* this week. Two weeks ago when the Prime Minister travelled to America to warn against nations being misled by the change in tone of Iran’s emissaries to the west (in particular the new president Hassan Rouhani), we entitled the prayer point “ALLIANCES, APPEASEMENTS, AND A LONELY JOURNEY FOR NETANYAHU”. Two weeks later, his is still a lonely voice. As representatives of six world powers meet on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week to negotiate with Iran’s new leadership on the nuclear issue, the Prime Minister has continued to speak out a warning, this week over European media as he did last week in America. Yet, it must at times seem like he is speaking into the wind. The *Times* reporter Jodi Rudoren last Friday suggested that Netanyahu’s recent efforts have “sometimes come off sounding shrill,” that, as the powers are coming together to negotiate, “the Israeli leader risks seeming frozen in the past amid a shifting geopolitical landscape.” She quotes a political consultant as saying, “*The problem is, now he’s lost momentum. His message is clear, his message is the same, the situation is the same, but everyone else’s perspective has changed.*” The article closes by pointing out that although Mr. Netanyahu is not religious, “He does see himself as a leader of destiny: *‘We’re here for a purpose—I’m here for a purpose...which is to defend the future of the Jewish people, which means to defend the Jewish state; defending it from a nuclear Iran. I’m not going to let that happen, It’s not going to happen.’*” She mentions the framed photographs of Winston Churchill and Theodor Herzl which the Prime Minister keeps on a shelf behind his desk, men who he says saw “danger in time.” And he adds, “*They were alone a lot more than I am.*” (“Netanyahu Takes a Lonely Stance Denouncing Iran”: *The New York Times*, October 11, 2013). The mention of Churchill seems grimly apropos. During the years leading up to the Munich Conference in September 1938, when appeasement at any cost was in the air, “*Churchill, now on the backbenches, was a relatively lone voice for openly opposing Germany, later calling these the ‘years that the locust hath eaten’, But when he described Munich in the Commons as ‘a total and unmitigated defeat’, he was howled down*” (Jenkins, Simon: *A Short History of England*; London: Simon Jenkins, 1012, p. 241). Within six months Germany broke the treaty, and the machinations of the Second World War came into motion.

#### **PLEASE PRAY:**

\*That anything hidden will be brought to light as the negotiations with Iran begin on Tuesday.

\*For Prime Minister Netanyahu to be encouraged and to seek strength and insight from God. That when his message is true, the LORD will ***“make his face strong against their faces, and his forehead strong against their foreheads. Like adamant stone, harder than flint, He***

*will make his forehead; that he will not be afraid of them, nor dismayed at their looks”*  
(Ezekiel 3:8-9).

\*That God protect Israel’s borders, that He equip her armies, both spiritual and physical. In I Samuel 17:45 He is called *Yehovah of Armies, God of the Arraying of Israel*. In last week’s Torah Portion he called Himself Abram’s *“shield and exceedingly great reward.”*

\*That the Most High will bring down the strongholds of evil and violence over Iran, and reveal Himself to the Iran people as a God who loves them and has redemptive purposes for their nation awaiting fulfillment.

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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 13-19 October 2013 are called *VaYera*—“Was Seen”

**TORAH:** Genesis 18:1—22:24

**HAFTARAH:** II Kings 4:1-37

**\*Genesis 18:1, 3.** *“Then the LORD appeared to him [Abraham] by the terebinth trees of Mamre [Hebron], as he was sitting in the tent door...Three men were standing by him...he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, ‘My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.”* [John 8:56, 58. YESHUA (JESUS): *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad...Before Abraham was, I AM.”*]

**\*There is no clearer example in the Hebrew Scriptures of God taking on human form; He “appeared” to Abraham.** When Abraham sees Him and runs to greet Him, it is to Someone he recognizes (Remember, God had “appeared” to Him at least three times before—Acts 7:2; Gen. 12:7; 17:1). By this time he had also certainly come to recognize the sound of the *“Word of the LORD”* coming to him (Gen. 13:14; 15:1). Abraham approaches the three men, but to One he says, *“My Lord...”* But, instead of using the normal Hebrew word *Adoni* (Lord/Master/Sir), the vowel points of the text show that he used the word *Adonai*—a pronunciation used only for *Deity!* And in the ensuing conversation, both with Abraham and with Sarah, it is made

abundantly clear that it is the LORD with whom they are speaking (The other two ‘men’ are obviously angels, who will soon release destruction on Sodom and Gomorrah). **PLEASE PRAY for believers in Israel that, from “inclining our ears to His voice” and “seeking His face”, we become so familiar with our Lord and His messengers that we recognize their presence when they move among us. Pray for us that in our busy-ness we “not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels”** (Hebrews 13:2).

**\*The LORD appears to him by the terebinth trees at Mamre—which is Hebron.** Hebron is related to the word for “friendship” or “companionship”—implying a close association. Some see Hebron, not Jerusalem, as being the true place of Hebrew “identity.” It was here that the LORD in human appearance and Abraham ate and talked together as friends. The city would have holy significance for the Hebrews from this time on. All of the Patriarchs would be buried there. During the 400 years that Israel was in Egypt, the evil one would try and take it over; but Caleb would rip it away from those giants when he and Joshua finally brought their people into the land. It would be here that David, at the instruction of the Lord, set up his kingdom for the first seven years of his reign. Jews continued to dwell in Hebron until modern times, when an uprising and massacre took place there in 1929. In 1967 Hebron was taken by Israeli troops without firing a shot. Sometime later, a contingent of brave Jewish women marched in and occupied a place inside of the city; another Jewish settlement was built outside. In 1997, in obeisance to the Oslo “accord,” occupying Israeli troops finally pulled out of the city (some continue to be stationed there to guard the tiny enclave of Jews and to insure access to the Tomb of the Patriarchs). Liberal Israeli governments have pushed for Israel to simply yield up the city and pull out of it altogether; until now, that has not happened.

The Muslim religion looks at Hebron as the burial place of one of its leaders. It has sought to resolve discrepancies between its teachings and those of the Bible by holding that the Hebrew Scriptures alter the ancient accounts, that in fact Ibrahim [Abraham] was the first Muslim, and Allah’s covenant came through Isma’il [Ishmael; See Above]. Presently the spirit behind this religion, like the giants of *Arbah* in ancient times, holds Hebron in its grip. And the Jews living in and around Hebron, although showing great courage and devotion, at times manifest their zeal in a violence not far-removed from that of those they perceive as their enemies surrounding them.

**PLEASE PRAY: that the timings and purposes of the LORD will be released in Hebron “on earth as they are in Heaven”.** Pray for a Great Light to illumine both Arab and Jew in their communities in Hebron, the light of the Most High God who desires to have a friendship with all the sons of Adam. Pray against the spiritual strongholds of cruel violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) which seek to hold both Jew and Arab captive in this city. Pray that national Israel will not come to despise her birthright, which includes this city of the burial place of her Fathers.

**\*Genesis 18:14.** *“Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son.”* [c.f. Jeremiah 32:17-18. *“Ah, Lord YHVH! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great Power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too wonderful for you...the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is YHVH of Armies.”*]

**\*Genesis 18:19.** *“For I have known him [i.e. Abraham], in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.”*

**\*Genesis 20:6-7.** *“And God said to him [Abimelech] in a dream, ‘Yes, I know that you did this in the integrity of your heart. For I also withheld you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her. Now therefore, restore the man’s wife; for he is a prophet, and he will pray for you and you shall live....’* PLEASE PRAY: that although surrounded by peoples who are often hostile to us, we would make allowance in our hearts for the grace and loving kindness of our God on behalf of all men and women of every nation, remembering that He is not willing that any should perish. Pray that we will not stereotype those in the peoples and nations around us, but be sensitive and ready to pray restoration and prosperity for those upon whom God through us may choose to rest His grace and mercy.

**\*Genesis 22:7-8.** *“Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am, my son.’ And he said, ‘Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?’ Abraham said, ‘God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.’ So the two of them walked on together.”* Genesis 22:14. *“And Abraham called the name of the place “YHVH will Provide...In the Mount of YHVH it will be Provided.”*

In ancient Hebrew the word *yireh* could idiomatically carry with it an idea of “provision”. Yet literally it was then, as today, a form of the verb “To See”. “God will see for Himself the Lamb” (22:8); “YHVH will see; as it is said to this day, ‘In the Mount of YHVH it will be seen’” (22:14). God’s “seeing”, and our being “in His sight” is so important! We believe this to be a reason so much emphasis is placed throughout Scripture on the importance of dwelling “in the light of His face” (Psalm 44:3; 80:19)—“seeking His face” (Psalm 27:8-9)—“finding grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Genesis 6:8). If there is nothing coming between us and His face (the place of His “seeing”), all the *provision* for our journey will be there. Lastly, God had indeed “seen/provided the *Lamb*”. Isaiah 53:11 uses the same word— “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”

**\*Genesis 22:13.** *“Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horn.”* We believe that here lies an important part of the significance of the *shofar* or rams’ horn. Here, caught by its horn, was the symbol of God’s Provision for all humankind--the ‘*Lamb of God which carries away the sin of the world*’. The sound of the *shofar* is a sound of the redemptive work and victory of the Lamb. When it is blown in the timing and authority of the *Ruah haKodesh* (Holy Spirit/Wind)...demons tremble, and the hearts of God’s army are strengthened and renewed with courage and joy!



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*Jerusalem*

**[The readings for next week (20-26 October 2013) is called *Chayei Sarah*—“Sarah’s Life”: TORAH: Genesis 23:1—25:18; HAFTARAH: I Kings 1:1-31]**

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