

ISRAEL PRAYER UPDATE

Glory of Zion International Ministries



PARASHAH – LEKH-LEKHA



*And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed YHVH and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
(Genesis 15:5-6. Painting by Israeli artist Zvi Leonhard *)*

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 22-28 October 2017 are called *Lekh Lekha*— “Go Forth, Yourself”:

TORAH: Genesis 12:1—17:27

HAFTARAH: Isaiah 40:27—41:16

This week's portion begins with a hearkening-back to the call of Abram in Ur, and ends with the promise of Isaac, and with Abram (his name now changed to “Abraham”) entering into the Covenant of Circumcision with his household. In the course of these chapters he will travel from Ur and Haran (12:4) to Canaan, passing through the land to Shechem, Bethel, the Negev (dry southland), Egypt, back to the Negev, back to Bethel, walking the land “northward, southward, eastward, and westward (13:14), to Hebron, to war north of Damascus, back to Hebron. We cannot hope here to discuss all that takes place in the course of these travels; but ask the LORD to attend you as you travel through these pages with the Father of our Faith,

“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from which you were hewn and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; When he was but one I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.’ Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places...”

(Isaiah 51:1-3a).

***Genesis 12:1-** *“Now the LORD said to Abram: ‘Go you forth out of your country, from your family and from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great. Be a Blessing! I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”*

a. **“Now the LORD said to Abram: ‘Go you forth out of your country...”**

Some rabbinic traditions hold that this command was given in Haran (in modern-day S/E Turkey) where Abram’s father Terah had taken Abram, his wife Sarai and Terah’s grandson Lot (Genesis 11:31). But at least one passage in the New Covenant asserts that this is not true:

Acts 7:2-4: Stephen is preaching to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem: *“Brothers and sisters, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia [the city of Ur was in this region], before he lived in Haran, and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this*

land in which you are now living.” There is nothing in the account to suggest that the religious Jewish leaders to whom Stephen was preaching, were in disagreement with this.

***From this passage we see that God appeared to Abraham, and again in Genesis 12:7 below.** One of the difficulties for many Jews in believing in the deity of Yeshua/Jesus is the insistence of their teachers that God would never take on a human form and be seen. Yet these passages show us that God is capable of taking on just such a form—he “appeared to” Abraham. We will see this “appearing” occurring again at the beginning of next week’s *Parashah*, and indeed throughout the Torah.

***He appeared while Abraham was still in Ur and commanded him to leave his family and follow Him.** This was a new experience for Abraham. There were many ‘gods’ worshipped in Ur. Now he, like all of us today, would have to learn to know and trust this new God. He would make mistakes, but he would nevertheless exercise faith in trusting through the light he had. We have no way of knowing for certain if he erred in telling his father what God had commanded, rather than just obeying and going, but evidently he did tell his father—who then decided to go along. Terah in fact took control—and led them as far as Haran. In doing so, Terah probably took along his own house-hold gods. As we shall see, these would reappear years later (Genesis 31:19), creating big problems for Abraham’s descendants. For now, God allowed Terah to go along, though not to the ultimate destination. And so they waited in Haran until Abraham’s father died—then God moved Abram, his wife and Lot on to Canaan.

***Genesis 12:2a. “I will make you a great nation...and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”** Hebrew for “nation” is *goy*; “great nation” is *goy gadol*. In Modern Hebrew slang, *goy* and *goyim* (plural) are often used in reference to individuals or peoples who are non-Jews (Gentiles). Scripture most often uses *goyim* to refer to nations other than Israel. However, here God is speaking to an individual human being drawn from one of the nations, who in his descendants would become a *great nation* in which *families* throughout the earth would be blessed. It may be significant that “earth” here is *adamah*—soil. Adam was formed from *adamah*. Today, all his descendants are in Hebrew called *bnei-adam*—“children of Adam”. God saw and continues to see the physical seed of Abraham (Israel) as an individual nation before him ...and his blessing through them is on behalf of all of Adam’s children.

***Genesis 12:2. “I will make a great nation of you and will give-you-blessing and will make your name great. Be a blessing!”** (Everett Fox translation; emphases ours). In the Hebrew, the last three words are clearly a *command/imperative form of the verb*. God isn’t saying here that Abraham and his seed “will be” or “become” a blessing; rather, he is speaking a command into that seed, “**BE!**” A blessing to all the children of Adam through that seed would indeed be released in the person of the Savior, Yeshua Messiah. But this holy command has never been annulled! The workings of God for all humankind continue to be mirrored in his workings in this People. For those with eyes to see and ears to hear, Israel continues to “Be a Blessing”. And as Israel, through recognizing and receiving her Messiah, returns to her fullness, her acceptance will be “*life from the dead!*” (Romans 11:15).

***Genesis 12:7-8. “Then YHVH (The LORD) appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your seed I will give this land.’ And there he built [there in Shechem] an altar to YHVH, who had appeared to him. And he moved/shifted from there to the mountain east of Bethel, and he pitched his**

tent...where he built an altar to YHVH and called on the name of YHVH.”

Wonderful things happened in Shechem (modern-day Nablus). The God of Glory, Who had appeared to him while still in Ur, now, after a long and arduous journey, *appeared* to Abram again! Look once more at the verse 7. Shechem certainly appeared to be:

- A legitimate destination of God’s leading.
- A place of God’s revealed Presence.
- A place of the releasing of God’s prophetic Word.
- A place of *established worship* to “the One who reveals Himself.”

The ideal place to settle down!

Yet one verse later Abraham moves to Bethel. The word translated “moved” also means to “take a shift” (Robert Alter translates it “*pulled up his stakes*”). As we saw during the recent *Sukkot* festival, God “makes everything beautiful *in its time or season* (Ecclesiastes 3:11). But, he is under no obligation to beautify if, after the season for our being in a certain place has passed, we insist on staying there. Abram took his “*shift*,” and a much greater blessing awaited him at Bethel, a place he would return to time and time again...and to which his grandson Jacob many years later would return to find an open heavens with the angels still ascending and descending.

***Genesis 14:5.** “*In the fourteenth year Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him came and attacked the Rephaim in Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim, and the Horites in their mountain of seir, as far as El Paran, which is by the wilderness...And the king of Sodom went out to meet him [i.e. Abraham] after his striking down Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him...”.*

Abraham pursued and struck down this king who himself had defeated the *Rephaim, Zuzim, Emim, and the Horites*. It is fascinating to discover how almost 500 years later, descendants of each of these peoples (Deuteronomy 2:10, 12, 20, 22; 3:11), whose height and cruel renown had paralyzed with fear their parents 40 years previously, are dispatched quickly by the young new generation of Israelis shortly before their advancement into Canaan.

Perhaps Joshua and Caleb had been taught from childhood how the God of their father Abraham had given him easy victory over a Chedorlaomer, who had himself subdued all of these feared peoples. In faith, after being sent in to spy out the land, they brought back a good report.

***Genesis 14:19.** “*Then Melchizedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of El Elyon (God Most-High).* Just as English *god* comes from an old Anglo-Saxon expression for deity, the Canaanites word for god was *el*, and they had many *elelim*. Soon after Abram entered Canaan, the One who had appeared to him in Ur and Shechem began to reveal aspects of His nature which made clear how *this “El”* differed from all the other “el’s” crowding the land. His attributes are reflected in a number of descriptive *names* which began to be used by Abraham and his descendants...*El Elyon* is the *El* (or God) who is “most High”—*El Roi* (16:13) is *El* who “Sees”—*El Shaddai* (17:1) is *El* who is “Almighty and sustains all life”. By verse 22, Abram realizes that the God who had appeared to him as YHVH in Ur and Shechem (12:1; 12:7-8) and this *El Elyon* are One

and the same, “I raise my hand to YHVH El Elyon, the possessor of Heaven and earth...”

***Genesis 15:6. “And he believed in YHVH, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.”**

***Genesis 15:12. “Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. God said to Abram, ‘Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.’**

It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold—a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day YHVH made a covenant with Abram, saying, ‘To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates...’

“By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God—all these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed, if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:8—16).

***Genesis 16:4b-5a. “And when she [Hagar] saw that she had conceived, her mistress [Sarai] became despised in her eyes. Then Sarai said to Abram, ‘May the wrong done me be upon you!’”**

We must realize that the struggle reflected in Hagar’s actions and Sarai’s response is over an issue of far greater magnitude than either of these women could have been aware. Far from being merely a domestic squabble (although, so it may have seemed to them), *a cosmic spiritual battle was raging over God’s covenant on behalf not only of Abraham’s descendants but of the whole Human Race!* When Sarai speaks wildly to Abram of the “wrong” being done her, she uses the word *hamas*—a word used other places in the Hebrew Bible for “cruel violence” (Genesis 49:5; Psalm 25:19; 27:12). A great Enemy was seeking to divert the line of Covenant which God had determined to come through Sarai’s womb (Genesis 17:21); this covenant-hating Power of “cruel violence” was trying to tear her apart. ***This same battle is still raging!*** The Muslim religion teaches that a divine covenant went through Ishmael, not Isaac. The power behind this falsehood hates Life, and the God of Life, and rules those presently under its dominion through cruel violence, *hamas* (a word which coincidentally is spelled and pronounced the same as the acronym for the present-day terrorist Islamic Resistant Movement). **PLEASE PRAY: That Muslims will be freed from a power of violence which has sought to keep them outside the covenant of God Most High. Pray for**

dreams and visions...for a powerful working of the Holy Spirit of God, to shed abroad in hearts the Love that the Father has for them. Pray that perfect love from the Most High God will be discovered to come through knowledge of Jesus...and that that perfect Love will cast out fear.

Genesis 17:4-12. *“As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations...I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your seed after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God...This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations....”*

It is significant that the first two locations where God promised to give “this land” to Abraham’s seed **Shechem** (modern day Nablus), Genesis 12:7; **Bethel**, Genesis 13:14-15 (and probably **Hebron**, Genesis 15:18, 17:1-14) are located in the area of the “Mountains of Israel”, currently known to much of the world as the “West Bank”. It is this same area which Israel is being constantly pressured to surrender for establishment of a permanent Muslim Palestinian state. We also find it significant that in recent years, *circumcision* has come under fire in a number of places in the west—including certain areas of the United States and Europe. It must be remembered that although these efforts to ban circumcision are being made under the guise of protecting the rights of children, the ritual was given by God to the Hebrews as sign of a covenant, eternally binding the physical seed of Abraham to the land once called “Canaan” (which includes, of course, the furiously contested modern-day areas of Judea, Samaria and all of Jerusalem).

Genesis 17:18-22. *“And Abraham said to God, ‘Oh that Ishmael might live before You!’ Then God said, But Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year.’ Then he finished talking with him, and God went up from Abraham.”*

After Abraham asks God that Ishmael may “live before Him”, God does not answer “No” (as many English versions translate), nor “Yes” (as the NIV translates). The Hebrew simply says, “**But, Sarah your wife shall bear you a son...**” Ishmael will indeed live before Him, becoming a nation with “twelve princes” (a prophecy which is shown fulfilled in Genesis 25:16). But the important word here is “covenant” (vs. 19, 21). God’s covenants are covenants of *life* for all humankind—and this one must come through Isaac. Here we see a parting of ways between Judaism and Christianity and Islam. As mentioned above, Islam teaches that Ishmael was the chosen vessel, not Isaac—that it was he who yielded himself to sacrifice. Any covenant which is in opposition to God’s covenant *cannot* be a covenant of Life. **Please Pray** for revelation amongst Muslims, that God’s covenant through Isaac led to the birth of Yeshua (Arabic: *Yasua*) who is the *Way*, the *Truth* and the *Life* for all

children of Adam!

****Isaiah 41:8-13. “But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, Descendant of Abraham My beloved...You whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called from its remotest parts and said to you, ‘You are My servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you. Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’ Behold, all those who are angered at you will be shamed and dishonored; Those who contend with you will be as nothing and will perish. You will seek those who quarrel with you, but will not find them, those who war with you will be as nothing and non-existent. For I am the YHVH your God, who upholds your right hand, Who says to you, ‘Do not fear, I will help you.’”***



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*Painting by Israeli artist Zvi Leonhard. Prints are available at www.zviandariane.com

[The readings for next week (29 October—4 November 2017) are called *VaYera*— “And [The LORD] Appeared to Him”. TORAH: Genesis 18:1—22:24; HAFTARAH: II Kings 4:1-37.]

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