

Prayer Update From Israel (November 2, 2015)



Site of the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron today.

“After this, Abraham buried Sarah his wife in the cave of the field of Machpelah east of Mamre (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan. The field and the cave that is in it were made over to Abraham as property for a burying place by the Hittites”

(Genesis 23:18-19 below)

1. “DIVIDED HEBRON, WEST BANK LARGEST CITY, FOCUS OF VIOLENCE: After initially centering on Jerusalem, the current terror wave has shifted its focal point to Hebron.”

This was a headline in the English/Hebrew ynetnews.com online news service Saturday morning. The article (“Divided Hebron...”: ynetnews.com; 31 Oct 15, 9:42) points out how, while attacks have died down in Jerusalem, there are now near-daily attacks (most of them with knives) in the ancient city of Hebron lying 19 miles to the south. One third of the 58 Palestinian attackers killed by Israeli troops and police since mid-September were in Hebron (Ibid.).

We find it significant that this article came out on Saturday—the same day on which

**** in the morning the story of God’s meeting in Hebron with Abraham as a friend was being read in synagogues around the world, and***

**** in the afternoon Jews would begin reading the following week’s Parashah- (Chayeh Sara), in which Abraham purchases for 400 shekels of silver the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron.***

As we pray for the peace of Jerusalem—let us pray also for Hebron. We feel to here repeat a portion from last week’s Update regarding the history and significance of this holy city—and encourage you to read carefully from this week’s Torah Portion (see below) regarding the procurement of the cave by Abraham.

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 the likeness of a man, and Abraham ate and talked together as friends. (In Isaiah 41:8, the LORD will refer to him as “Abraham my friend”—or, more literally, “Abraham, my Beloved!”) The city would be a place of holy significance for the Hebrews from this time on. All of the Patriarchs and their wives would be buried there. During the 400 years that Israel was in Egypt, the evil one would try and take it over; its name would be changed to *Kiryat Arba*—“Village of the Four” (after a race of giants which lived there). But Caleb, who was of a “different spirit” would rip it away from those giants when he and Joshua finally brought their people into the land (Joshua 15:14). It would be here that David, at the instruction of the Lord, set up his kingdom for the first seven years of his reign (II Sam. 2:1). Jews continued to dwell in Hebron until modern times, when an uprising and massacre took place there in 1929 and they were driven out. In 1967 Hebron was taken by Israeli troops during the Six Day War 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 most of the city—except for those guarding an enclave of some 850 Jews who continue to live there, and those guarding the Tomb of the Patriarchs. From time to time, 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. A shrine in Hebron (see picture above) which Jews view as the Tomb of the Patriarchs and where Muslims honor only *Ibrahimi* (Abraham), has, since 1996, been divided into separate prayer areas for Jews and Muslims, the Muslims considering their portion to be a mosque. The previous year a radical religious Jewish man murdered 29 Muslims who were praying there.

The Muslim religion sees Hebron as the burial place of one of its founders. 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], not Isaac. And it is he alone who is buried in Hebron. Presently, like the giants of *Arbah* in ancient times, the violent spirit behind this religion holds Hebron in its grip. This spirit effects not only the Arab inhabitants. Some of the Jews living in and around Hebron, while showing great courage and devotion, at times manifest their zeal in a violence not far-removed from that of those they perceive as the 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”.**

***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.**

***Against the spiritual strongholds of cruel violence (Hebrew: *hamas*) which seek to hold both Jew and Arab captive in this city.**

***That national Israel will not come to despise her birthright, which includes this city of the burial place of her Fathers.**

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 1-7 November are called *Chayeh Sarah*—"Life of Sarah":

TORAH: Genesis 23:1—25:18

HAFTARAH: I Kings 1:1-31

***Genesis 23:1.** *"Sarah lived one hundred and twenty-seven years; these were the years of the life of Sarah."* Abraham was ten years older than Sarah—he was 137 years old at her death. Perhaps the supernatural rejuvenation granted Abraham enabling him to conceive Isaac remained in his body long afterwards. After the death of Sarah he was to live another 38 years and to have more children.

***Genesis 23:5-6 (NKJ).** *"And the sons of Heth answered Abraham, saying to him, 'Hear us, my lord: You are a mighty prince among us; bury your dead in the choicest of our burial places.'" The Hebrew words for "mighty prince" are *n'si elohim* which might more literally be translated "Prince of God." Abraham's relationship with this God, whom he had believed and worshipped, had developed into a friendship. The very city of Mamre where God confided in Abraham (Genesis 18) would come to be called *Hevron* (Hebron), related to the Hebrew word for "friend" or "associate". Centuries later, God would, in Isaiah 41:8, still refer to Abraham as "My beloved" or "My friend." Through this holy association the authority and splendor of God Himself rested in favor upon His servant, and the blessing promised in Abraham to all families of the world (Genesis 12:3) was already shining into the darkness of Canaan.*

***Genesis 23:12-18.** *"Then Abraham bowed himself down before the people of the land; and he spoke to Ephron in the hearing of the people of the land, saying, 'If you will give it, please hear me. I will give you money for the field; take it from me and I will bury my dead there.'...And Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out the silver for Ephron which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver,*

currency of the merchants. So the field of Ephron which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field and the cave which was in it, and all the trees that were in the field, which were within all the surrounding borders, were deeded to Abraham as a possession in the presence of the sons of Heth, before all who went in at the gate of his city.”

It is significant that the locations of three carefully recorded transactions involving the purchase of land by two Patriarchs and a great King of Israel today encompass the most hotly contested area (both physically and spiritually) on earth:

* A field and cave in Hebron (which Abraham purchased for 400 shekels of silver) Genesis 23

* A parcel of land in Shechem (modern-day Nablus) where Joseph would be buried (which Jacob purchased for 100 pieces of money) Joshua 24:32

* The top of Mount Moriah, what would become the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (which David purchased for 50 shekels of silver) II Samuel 24:24; II Chronicles 3:1

These three locations today comprise the length of the so-called “West Bank” upon which a permanent Muslim Palestinian state is being demanded: To the north, Samaria (Shechem/Nablus), In the center, Jerusalem (The Temple Mount), To the south, Judea (Hebron—the Cave of the Patriarchs). Each of these locations were legally purchased by Hebrews in ancient times, and all fall within an area God would repeatedly promise to give as an inheritance to the physical seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob forever.

***Genesis 24:3:** *“And I will make you swear by YHVH, Elohei-haShamayim (“The Heavens-God”) v’Elohei-haAretz (and “The Land-God”).”* As often happens in the Torah, new aspects and attributes of this YHVH (Yehovah), who had first appeared to Abraham in Ur, are revealed to us through the new Names given to Him by the Patriarchs.

***Genesis 24:5-6.** *“And the servant said to him, ‘Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land. Must I take your son back to the land from which you came?’ But Abraham said to him, ‘Beware! that you do not take my son back there. YHVH God of Heaven, who took me from my father’s house and from the land of my family, and who spoke to me and swore to me, saying, ‘To your descendants I give this land,’ He will send His angel before you, , and you shall take a wife for my son from there”* (Emphases ours).

Abraham continued to *Believe YHVH* his God (Gen. 15:6). “Believing God” meant *not looking back*—Hebrews 11:15 makes clear that *“truly if they (Abraham and the other Patriarchs) had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.”*

Please Pray: for immigrants whom God brings back to Israel. It can be frighteningly hard, especially for the older ones who will have difficulty mastering the language (if at all); who likely will not be able to get a job related to what they’ve done all their lives before immigrating. Pray that they will not listen to the temptations to “go back to America” or to “go back to Russia”. Pray for grace and mercy for absorption into the society in the land of their

Fathers...but more importantly, into the God of their Fathers. *Pray for the Body of Messiah here—that it also will not look back, but rather fare forward into “a better, that is, a heavenly country.”*

***Genesis 24:12.** *“Then he [Abraham’s servant] said, ‘O YHVH God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show loving kindness with my master Abraham.’”*

The literal Hebrew of the second phrase reads, *“Please make it happen before me today!”*

***Genesis 24:27.** *“And he said, ‘Blessed be the YHVH God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His loving kindness (Hebrew: *hesed*) and His truth (Hebrew: *emet*) toward my master.’”*

Hesed and Emet

Hesed (the beginning letter pronounced with a slight rasp in the throat) is one of the most precious words in the Hebrew language. It is difficult to translate exactly into English—*loving kindness, mercy, goodness, steadfast love*. It is a wonderful attribute of God which He desires to see operating in his children. *Hesed* appears over 245 times in the Hebrew Bible. On certain special occasions it is found together with the word *emet* which means *truth* (*Gen. 24:27, Exodus 34:6, II Sam. 2:6; 15:20, Micah 7:20, and Psalms 25:10; 26:3; 40:10-11; 57:3; 61:7; 85:1; 86:15; 89:14; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2*). The Modern Hebrew translation of John 1:17 says, *“For the Torah (Law) was given through Moses; and the hesed and the emet(i.e. lovingkindness and truth) came through Yeshua the Messiah!”*

***Genesis 24:31.** *“And he [i.e. Laban, Rebekah’s brother] said, ‘Come in, O blessed of YHVH!’”* During the long years between YHVH’s call to Abram and the death of his father in far-away Haran, his testimony of this new and wonderful God whose name was YHVH had obviously born lasting fruit. At least some knowledge of YHVH had lingered in Haran through the many years after Abram had moved on to Canaan, so that when his servant arrives, he finds that Abraham’s brother’s son and grandchildren are still very knowledgeable of this God (24:31, 50).

***Genesis 24:55-56, 62-64.** *“But her (i.e. Rebekah’s) brother and her mother said, ‘Let the young woman stay with us a few days, at least ten; after that she may go.’ And he (i.e. Abraham’s servant) said to them, ‘Do not hinder me, since the LORD has prospered my way; send me away so that I may go to my master.’...Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi (i.e. “Well of the Living One who Sees Me”), for he dwelt in the South. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field towards evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming. Then Rebekah lifted her eyes, and when she saw Isaac she dismounted from her camel...”*

Being in the timings of the LORD is essential in entering into destiny—or even assisting those to whom we minister in entering into theirs. Ecclesiastes 3:11 teaches that God makes everything beautiful *in its time* (It does *not* teach that He does so if something is *out* of its season). If the servant had waited—even another hour—the perfect *kairos* meeting God had arranged for

Rebekah and Isaac would have been compromised—which could have affected the very course of God’s redemptive plan for all humankind. *“Now Isaac came from the way of Beer Lahai Roi (i.e. “Well of the Living One who Sees Me”), for he dwelt in the South. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field towards evening; and he lifted his eyes and looked, and there, the camels were coming.”* Dwelling and meditating in the Presence (before the face) of the *“One who sees us”*, prepares and times us to lift our own eyes for to see and recognize when provision for our destiny is approaching.

***Genesis 24:59.** *“So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham’s servant had his men...”* This nurse (whose name was Deborah) must have been a holy woman—obviously she had a very special significance in the life of Rebekah. Might she have been one on whom the “light” of the testimony of Abraham decades before had most truly “caught” and continued to glow? May she have been learning to walk with this wonderful God in Haran and to know His ways, even as Abraham was undergoing the same schooling in far-away Canaan? Besides being a blessing from childhood to Rebekah, she must have had an equally strong influence upon Jacob, both as a child and as a young adult. Perhaps she accompanied him during his sojourn to her former homeland in Aram. If not, he must have contacted her shortly after his return to Canaan, for she is apparently with him when he returns to Bethel to build an altar to the God Who had appeared to him years before whilst running from Esau. It was here that she died and was buried, obviously greatly loved; the tree beneath which she was buried was named, “The Oak of Weeping” (Gen. 35:8).

***Genesis 24:65.** *“Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”*

In 24:32, we see that Rebekah had lived with her family in a “house” in Haran. Her great-uncle Abraham had himself once lived there—but God had moved him on—into a destiny in which he and his immediate sons and grandchildren lived in tents as “strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13-16). By moving in obedience to the word of YHVH to leave, as had Abraham (Gen. 12:1), Rebekah demonstrated herself possessed of that same faith:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God!”

Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Hebrews 11:8-10, 16b)

***Genesis 25:1-5.** *“Abraham again took a wife (or “woman”), and her name was Keturah. And she bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah...And the sons of Midian were Ephah, Eopher, Hanoah, Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac. But Abraham gave gifts to the sons of the concubines which Abraham had; and while he was still living he sent them eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east.”*

This passage and I Chronicles 1:32-33 are the only places where Keturah and other possible wives or concubines of Abraham (apart from Sarah and Hagar) are mentioned. After Isaac and the death of Sarah, a renewed and strengthened Abraham lived on for 38 years. God gave him other children whom he loved. Yet the Covenant was to be established through Isaac (17:21). And this covenant involved first of all, who would be granted stewardship of the physical *land* of Canaan (12:7; 15:18; 17:7-8). God would bless these other children of Abraham—but their ultimate inheritances would have to be outside of the land of covenant.

According to the NASB English translation of Genesis 16:12 (a sentence of difficult certain meaning in the Hebrew), the Angel of YHVH prophesied over Hagar concerning Ishmael that, ***“he shall live to the east of all his brothers.”*** Here (25:5) we see that Abraham eventually felt led to send his other sons *“eastward, away from Isaac his son, to the country of the east”* (after giving them each special gifts to sustain them on their way). There is no indication in the Scriptural account that there was any sort of cruel “banishment” involved here. By this time Abraham’s sons were probably grown and had families of their own (The phrase, “while he was still living” implies that Abraham was nearing the end of his life at the time, 38 years after the death of Sarah). Perhaps they had grown up knowing that Canaan would not always be their home. It appears that just as Ishmael was sent away at God’s command (Gen. 21:12), so too were the children of Keturah; and as He had done with Ishmael so would God also bless and care for them. Through Abraham’s obedience, there would remain within the covenant land none of his lineage to contest the inheritance which God had decreed must go through his Isaac (their inheritance would be elsewhere). Through Isaac’s lineage would come a Savior, not only for the Jews, but for all humankind—One who will one day reign from a throne in the center of that same land over the entire world.



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[The readings for next week 9-14 November are called *Toldot*—“Generations”: TORAH: Genesis 25:19—28:9; HAFTARAH: Malachi 1:1—2:7]

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