

PRAYER UPDATE FROM ISRAEL (December 6, 2011)



Dawn over the Mount of Olives

1. RACHEL WEeping FOR HER CHILDREN

“A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more” (Jeremiah 31:15).

The recorded message on Norma’s cell phone yesterday morning began with music; then came the message in Hebrew: *“There is no one who understands us like our mama (Hebrew: eemah); she is the only one...no one else is like her; Only our mother understands. Come to Kever Rahel (Rachel’s tomb) on Thursday to visit the eemah and receive from her...”* (etc, etc, more music...fade.). Probably thousands of women received this anonymous message. There will be others, posted on the internet, on signs. And on Thursday tens of thousands of Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox women will journey to an ancient little building on the outskirts of Bethlehem...hoping for a miracle, in most cases that of being able to bear children. The occasion is that this weekend’s *Parasha* (see below) includes the account of the death of Rachel while giving birth to Benjamin (Genesis 35:16-20).

There is a great deception here, and our hearts are touched with compassion for the sheep flocking to this place. Although the website for “Rachel’s Tomb” claims that *“men and women go to Rachel’s Tomb to shed tears and beg “Mother Rachel” to intercede with G-d on their behalf”*, it is clear from the message quoted above that the masses are being encouraged to come and *“receive from her”*. A genuine longing for a supernatural touch among many Orthodox Jews (cf: Acts 23:7-9), they’re not being led by the *Holy* spirit of God, often leaves them prey to occult experiences provided by other, deceiving spirits. Each *Rosh Hashanah* thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews journey from Israel to the grave site of a revered rabbi in the Ukraine, to receive a “blessing” (anointing). Similarly, on the 33rd day of the “counting of the *omer*” in the Spring, tens of thousands visit the grave of a rabbi in the Galilee who is believed by many to have been a re-incarnation of Abraham himself. Make no mistake, an “experience” is provided at some of these places. We have spoken with a woman whose mother would lie on the grave in the hopes of gaining the ability to have more children; and her daughter (who

had become a believer in Yeshua) remembered the feeling of ecstatic well-being she received as a child when visiting with her family.

We see two great ironies in the commemorations at the tomb this week. Rachel was a mother in Israel—and her name with that of Leah became a blessing as “those who built the house of Israel” (Ruth 4:11). Yet she, no more than Miriam (Mary) the mother of Yeshua, was not infallible. Very much harm came on Jacob’s family from the breach in their protection caused by the idol’s Rachel had smuggled into Canaan (Genesis 31:19; 35:2-4). Indeed, if her motive in stealing them was that they might in some way serve to assist her in bearing a second child, this may have contributed to her vulnerability and death at the birth of Benjamin. Surely, having seen the consequences of idolatry during her physical life, it could cause her no pleasure now to see herself and this location being made objects of worship belonging only to the true and Most High God.

Secondly, the building in Bethlehem almost certainly has nothing to do with the place where Rachel was buried. There are no known sources linking the two before the 4th Century. The rabbis have gone to great lengths to explain why the Scriptures say (Genesis 35:16; 48:7 NASB) that while journeying from Bethel, Rachel died “*when there was still some distance to go to Ephrath [i.e. Bethlehem]*” — when this tomb-site is obviously right within the town itself. A little over 800 years after her death, it was evidently still “common knowledge” in Israel (in fact affirmed by the prophet), that Rachel’s tomb lay northward “*in the territory of Benjamin*” (I Samuel 10:2). A few hundred years later still, Jeremiah pinpoints that location as *Ramah*, a site about five miles north of Jerusalem (31:15, quoted above), one of the towns through which Jerusalem’s inhabitants would pass on their way to captivity in Babylonia. Bethlehem lies in Judah to the south.

PLEASE PRAY:

* That this Thursday women travelling to “Rachel’s Tomb” in Bethlehem would receive revelation that there is “*one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Messiah Yeshua—who was Himself born in Bethlehem and “ever lives to Himself make intercession for” those who place their trust in Him.*”

*That the anti-Messiah (i.e. Anti-Christ) spirit which binds many Orthodox Jewish hearts would itself be bound; that the veil would be removed and they would recognize the one who is truly their healer. “*And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD*” (Ezekiel 39:29).

*That evil religious spirits inhabiting revered “sites” of Judaism, Christianity and Islam would be exposed. That those genuinely seeking will be guided into the “ancient, eternal paths where the good way is, walk in it and find rest for their souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

2. THE WAVE IS SPREADING

On Wednesday Prime Minister Netanyahu leveled a strong word towards politicians in Israel and the world who have hailed the “Arab Spring” as being a move forward for the Middle East. “*In February, when millions of Egyptians thronged to the streets in Cairo, commentators and quite a few Israeli members of the opposition said that we’re facing a new era of liberalism and progress...they said I was trying to scare the public and was on the wrong side of history and don’t see where things are heading.*” Netanyahu claimed that time has proven him right, including his forecast that the Arab Spring would become an “*Islamic, anti-Western, anti-liberal, anti-Israeli and anti-democratic*

wave.” (“Netanyahu: Arab Spring pushing Mideast backward, not forward”: By Barak Ravid, *HAARETZ.com*; 00:04 24.11.11.).

The wave is certainly gaining impetus. Tunisia, Morocco and soon Libya have found a freedom into which Islam has flooded into control. Syria presently hangs in the balance, with a strongly religious Sunni majority positioning itself for the fall of the Alawite-controlled government of Bashar al-Assad. In Egypt, last week’s first-of-three elections showed the Islamic Brotherhood winning 40% and the ultra-conservative Salafist groups coming in second with at least 20%. “Israel biggest loser from Muslim Brotherhood win in Egypt” read a *Jerusalem Post* headline; “Egypt’s Unstoppable Islamists: Op-ed: Election results show that Egypt’s future rests solely in hands of conservative Islam” read an Opinion headline in the Hebrew/English *Ynet.news.com*.

PLEASE PRAY:

***For Houses of Prayer and Worship in the Islamic countries in the Middle East. This week the Iranian Christian News Agency *Mohabat News* reported that the Minister of Intelligence had made a declaration that “House Churches are a Threat to Youth”...in effect declaring a renewed thrust of persecution against Iranians attending such places of worship. We have heard estimates at upwards of 25,000 house churches in Iran. Pray that those leading and attending these houses would be encouraged, protected and grow and mature in their faith.**

***That God would grant that believers in the countries coming under Islamist governments would a “with all boldness speak His word, that He would stretch out His hand to heal, and that signs and wonders might be done through the name of His holy Servant Yeshua/Jesus” (Acts 4:29).**

***That God would grant great revelation in strategic spiritual warfare necessary to fight against the darkness...and strategies for releasing the Gospel in the midst of persecution, that “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).**

***That Israel will be under God’s protection and instruction as those who follow a religion seeking her destruction increase around her. That God’s light will shine brighter and brighter as believers rise into their places throughout her society.**

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 are called *VaYishlach*—“And (Jacob) Sent”

TORAH: Genesis 32:3—36:43

HAFTARAH : Obadiah 1:1-21

***Genesis 32:3.** *“Then Jacob sent messengers before him to Esau his brother in the land of Seir, the country of Edom.”* The word translated “messengers” is the same as that translated “angels” two verses earlier. Angels is an English word used to designate “heavenly” messengers; these are messengers of Jacob.

***Genesis 32:9-10.** *“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the LORD [YHVH]...I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies.”* As we have often mentioned, “Lovingkindness and Truth” (Hebrew: *chesid* and *emet*) form a pairing of divine attributes and blessings which appear many times throughout the Hebrew Scriptures. A Modern Hebrew translation of John 1:17 reads (English paraphrase), *“For the Torah was given through Moshe, chesid and emet [lovingkindness and truth] came through Yeshua the Messiah.”* Please pray for discovery, revelation and understanding among the Jewish people of the presence of Yeshua (Jesus) throughout their holy writings (Luke 24:44-45)—a recognition that He was Himself present with the Patriarchs and throughout all of the history of the Hebrews! Nor will He ever leave them nor forsake them (I Corinthians 10:1-4; Hebrews 13:5).

***Genesis 32:24, 28.** *“Then Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of day...So he said to him, ‘What is your name?’ He said, ‘Jacob’ And he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”* There are no upper/lower cases in Hebrew, so “man” and “he” are not capitalized as they appear in many Christian Bibles. This Genesis passage says that Jacob struggled with a “man” (Heb: *ish*). The Hosea passage printed below calls the being an “angel” (*mal’akh*). But remember, *mal’akh* means “messenger” and does not always refer to a created heavenly being. Since verse 24 can be interpreted to mean that this particular struggle took place with God (*Elohim*), the Church has traditionally held that Jacob was here struggling with a pre-incarnate form of the God-Man *Yeshua* (Jesus)—a Messenger from the Father. “Israel” here means *“He struggles with God”*—while “Jacob” is related to struggle with man. The names are used interchangeably throughout the rest of the Hebrew Bible—and Israel and his seed have continued to struggle, both with God and man. Yet when Jacob was allowed to *“prevail with God”* it was not on behalf of his old desires, but for the favour of sanctification which would change what he could not change himself. In using this incident as an aid to prayer for Israel today, we would encourage you to use the following related passage from Hosea 12:3-6:

“He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and in his strength he struggled with God. Yes, he struggled with the angel and prevailed; He wept, and sought favour from him. He found him in Bethel, and there He spoke to us—that is, the LORD God of armies. YHVH is His memorable name. So you, by the help of your God, return; observe mercy and justice, and wait on your God continually.”

***Genesis 33:18-19.** *“And Jacob came safely (Hebrew: “whole”) to the city of Shechem...and he pitched his tent before the city. And he bought the parcel of land, where he had pitched his tent, from the children of Hamor, Shechem’s father, for one hundred pieces of money.”* As we mentioned a few weeks ago, those places where the Patriarchs and David purchased land tend to be

centers of fierce spiritual contention to this day. From the rape of Dinah in the following chapter and the bloody massacre which follows, through the dreadful events of Judges 9, to King Rehoboam's decision there to discipline his subjects "with scorpions" (I Kings 12:14 NASB), to the days of Hosea (Hosea 6:9: "As bands of robbers lie in wait for a man, so the company of priests murder on the way to Shechem; surely they commit lewdness"), the city of Shechem (modern-day Nablus) has long been associated with violence. In very recent years it has been a hot-bed for terrorism against Israel. Yet it is also the first place where Abraham is recorded as having stopped after arriving in Canaan (Genesis 12:6). The LORD (YHVH) appeared to him there and promised the land to his seed, "and there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him." It would be the location where Joseph's bones would be brought and buried (Joshua 24:32); and where Yeshua Himself would have a meeting with a woman at a well Jacob had dug there (John 4). Presently it is a Palestinian city (Nablus) with several Jewish settlements nearby. In the early days of the 2nd *Intifada*, Jews were driven out of the site of Joseph's Tomb, which was desecrated and burned. Almost certainly this city and the settlements will be a big issue in any proposed peace settlement in the future. **PLEASE PRAY: That the power of violence be broken over Shechem/Nablus—and its inhabitants brought into the Kingdom of the Prince of Peace. Pray that the altars of Abraham and Jacob to the LORD be restored there—and that the wells of living water that Yeshua spoke of there would spring up to Arab and Jew alike. Psalm 60:6 and 108:7 prophecy "God has spoken in His holiness; 'I will exult, I will portion out Shechem . . .'"**

***Genesis 33:20.** *"Then he erected an altar there and called it El Elohei Yisrael."* We have found many names of God revealed thus far in Canaan—*El Elyon* (God Most High), *El Shaddai* (God Almighty), *El Roi* (The God who Sees), *Elohei-Avraham* (the Abraham-God). But this name...*Elohei-Yisrael*, the "Israel-God" is the one which will be used most hereafter. God Himself has chosen sovereignly to identify His name with Israel (Jacob) and his descendants. Muslims identify their deity with Ishmael, thus cutting themselves off from the Covenant which the Most High God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel). He is the LORD (YHVH) God of Israel, and it is to Him that all of us, whatever our lineage must come. **PLEASE PRAY: grace for revelation and humility among both Jews and Muslims in Israel to bow to the one true God, who has Himself chosen to be identified with Israel (Jacob) and his seed.**

***Genesis 35:2, 5.** *"And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, 'Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments...And they journeyed, and the terror of God was upon the cities that were all around them, and they did not pursue the sons of Jacob.'"*

Jacob came "in wholeness"—a new man with a new name, to Shechem (see Gen. 13:18-19 above)...but his "house" was not whole...there were hidden gods smuggled from Aram (perhaps brought originally by Abram's father from Ur?), and obviously various other gods used as jewelry. The presence of these idols had caused a great breach in the protection of the family, occasioning violation (Dina), cruel and senseless violence (Shimon and Levi) and perhaps even eventually resulting in death (Rachel). For the "Family" of Israel to be made "whole"—for the family's *armor* to be made sound, all of this had to be dealt with. Only God had been a shield for Abraham in this spiritually dark and violent land (Genesis 15:1)—and only the same God would be protection for Israel and his seed. The same holds true today. **PLEASE PRAY: For the conviction of the Holy Spirit in Israel to turn from idols and turn to the Living God for cleansing and**

clothing in righteousness. Pray especially for holiness in leadership in the Body of Messiah here—Clothed in that, the Terror of God will cause darkness to flee as they advance through the Land!

***Genesis 36:12.** *“Now Timna was the concubine of Eliphaz, Esau’s son, and she bore Amalek to Eliphaz. These were the sons of Adah, Esau’s wife.”* Chapter 36 is dedicated to the genealogy of Esau, “*father of the Edomites*” (vs. 9). Central in that race would be the descendants of *Amalek*. As has been mentioned, Amalek in Scripture typifies a *Covenant-hating spirit which is the root of anti-Semitism*. It would be “Amalek” who would first attack Israel after she came forth out of the Red Sea (Exodus 17:8), and against whom God would swear continual war until he was blotted out from under heaven (17:14); it would be Amalek who would pick off stragglers in Israel’s rear when they were tired and weary (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). When Saul refused to follow God’s commandment and spared the Amalekite Agag (I Samuel 15:9), he would be severely rebuked by Samuel, lose his Kingship, and eventually according to one report, be killed by an Amalekite (II Samuel 1:8, 13). And in the book of Esther, we see that the architect of a proposed Holocaust of the Jews in the Persian kingdom was Haman, the Agagite, a descendant of Amalek. The *Haftarah* reading for this week is the Book of Obadiah... a grim prophecy of judgment on Edom, “for violence against your brother Jacob.” God is not willing that any should perish. But He stands forever against that which opposes his covenant with Jacob/Israel—because that Covenant is ultimately a covenant of life for all Humankind. He cannot grant quarter to death, because he is *Elohim Haim*—the Life God! Because Islam claims that its god chose Ishmael, thereby choosing for itself a different covenant than the Life-Covenant which God gave through Isaac, the spirit behind that religion proves itself a Covenant-hating spirit, bringing all in its bondage under the judgment of the God of Life. God forever hates the power behind Amalek...but He loves those captured within that system; to those who will come out of that darkness, He offers life, hope and a future.



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[The Torah and Haftarah portions for next week (11-17 December: *VaYeshev*—“and [Jacob] dwelt”) will be: TORAH: Genesis 37:1—40:23; HAFTARAH: Amos 2:6—3:8]

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