



Shabbat Bamidbar

May 23, 2009-29 Iyar 5769

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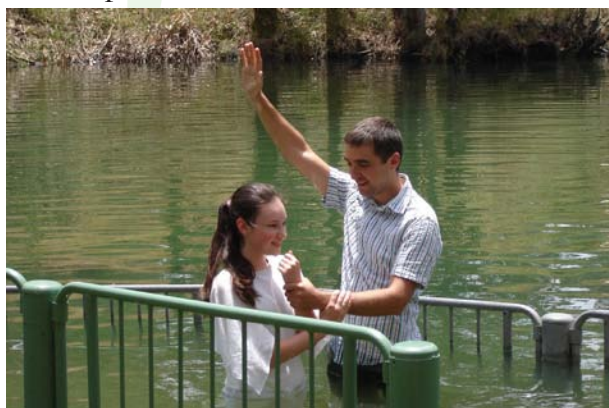
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DAY OF JOY IN ISRAEL

Sergey, the rabbi-pastor of our congregations in the south of Israel (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer Sheva, Arad etc...) sent us this report on his



special day of immersion service at the Jordan River. "I'm very glad to inform you that last Shabbat, May 16, was a beautiful Shabbat. The Kehilat of Ashdod went to Yardenit (Jordan River). It's one of the best and most important ministries. One young soul, Nadya, daughter of our Ashdod's Elder, dedicated her life to the Lord. We are so happy for this very important decision Nadia made. We believe that it is the beginning of the harvest of the young generation in our kehila. Immediately, four other young people were willing to have a similar experience in the future. We will organize bible Study classes for them and we will see how they progress with the Messiah. During the tevila service one lady came to me and asked if next time I could immerse her. God be praised! Baruch haShem!



SABBATH IN PALM SPRINGS

On Sabbath May 16 I had the pleasure of preaching in the Palm Springs SDA congregation in California. The response to my preaching was very positive and since many Jews are living in Palm Springs many members are in contact with them and were happy to hear what happens in our Jewish Ministry and also to have the opportunity to order the new book I have edited, "Comfort, my comfort my people...".



NEXT SABBATH IN THOUSAND OAKS

We have received this letter of invitation from Alan Reinach saying:

Congregation Beth Ohavey Torah, a ministry of the Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists invites you to worship with us on May 23rd. Celebrate Shavuot, the Feast of Weeks [in the Greek, "Pentecost"] 11:00 a.m. / picnic lunch / 3:00 p.m.

Thousand Oaks Seventh-day Adventist Church 480 Gainsborough Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360 Special Guest Speaker: Richard Elofer, President, Israel Field and Director, Jewish Study Centre General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

OVERVIEW



BAMIDBAR

NUMBERS 1:1 - 4:20

The Book of Bamidbar — “In the desert” — begins with G-d commanding Moshe to take a census of all men over age twenty — old enough for service. The count reveals just over 600,000. The levi'im are counted separately later because their service will be unique. They will be responsible for transporting the Mishkan (sanctuary) and its furnishings and assembling them when the nation encamps. The 12 Tribes of Israel, each with its banner, are arranged around the Mishkan in four sections: east, south, west and north. Since Levi is singled out, the tribe of Yosef is split into two tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, so there will be four groups of three. When the nation travels, they march in a formation similar to the way they camp. A formal transfer is made between the first-born and the levi'im, whereby the levi'im take over the role the first-born would have had serving in the Mishkan if not for the sin of the golden calf. The transfer is made using all the 22,000 surveyed levi'im from one month old and up. Only levi'im between 30 and 50 will work in the Mishkan. The remaining first-born sons are redeemed with silver, similar to the way Jews redeem their first-born today. The sons of Levi are divided in three main families, Gershon, Kehat and Merari (besides the kohanim — the special division from Kehat's family). The family of Kehat carried the menorah, the table, the altar and the holy ark. Because of their utmost sanctity, the ark and the altar are covered only by Aharon and his sons, before the levi'im prepare them for travel.

ONE WEEK BEFORE SHAVUOT

This Shabbat we read Parshat Bamidbar, which begins the fourth Book of the Torah. Parshat Bamidbar is read on the Shabbat before Shavuot (feast of the Weeks or Pentecost in Greek) the holiday in which we celebrate receiving the Torah. This year the

Jewish people will celebrate Shavuot on the 29 and 30 of May, but as everyone knows the celebration will start with the sunset on May 28. But remember that the Diaspora the holiday is observed two days, Friday (May 29) and Shabbat (May 30). In Israel the holiday is only one day, Friday (May 29).

Shavuot is the day that God spoke to the people of Israel and gave them the Ten Commandment on the Mount Sinai. That is why Israel make the emphasis during this feast on the giving of the Torah and to study it. On this matter, the Talmudic sage Rabbi Yitzchak says, “If a person tells you, I have made an effort in the study of Torah, but I have not succeeded, do not believe him. If a person tells you, I didn't make any effort and I have succeeded, do not believe him. When a person tells you, I have made an effort and I have succeeded, believe him!” To study the Bible take time and effort. But to succeed in your study pray Hashem to bless you with his Spirit and to help you to understand what you are studying. If the Almighty is the one who inspired the Bible to the prophets he will be able to inspire you to understand it.

The Midrash says, “All are blind until God opens their eyes” (Bereishis Rabba 53). When we view the world through our own eyes we are subject to our material desires and the distorting effects of passion and bias. Only when we let the Torah mold our thought processes can we view the world in its true perspective.

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

Shavuot is when Israel became completely God's people, it is like the birthday of Israel. It is at Mount Sinai when our ancestors accepted the Torah, that G-d proclaimed, “You will be unto Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation!” It is due to our accepting the Torah that G-d promised to never exchange us for any other nation.

SHAVUOT READING

On Friday, May 29, All the Jews of the earth who will go to their synagogue will read the “Ten Commandments” during the morning service. It is very important that each Jew attends and listen to the reading of the Ten Commandments.

COUNTING G-D'S GOODNESS

In this Parasha, G-d tells Moshe that he and Aaron shall count the people of Israel, “**from twenty years old and up, all those who are able to go forth in war...**”. The Torah gives an exact accounting of each tribe and the total sum of all twelve tribes. They totaled 603,550. The tribe of Levi was counted separately and their count—from a month old and up - was 22,000.

This census is the fourth in the Torah. The first time occurred when Yaakov and his family came to Egypt. They totaled seventy people.

Two hundred and ten years later, at the time of the Exodus, the Torah tells us that they were “**about six hundred thousand men, besides children.**” After the sin of the Golden Calf when many died, the Jewish people were counted again; for a total of 603, 550 (Num. 38:26). Now in Parashat Bamidbar, they were counted according to each tribe. Although this counting took place, according to the Jewish tradition, about seven months after the last census, yet it came up with the amount of 603,550, the exact number as before!

Beyond the Levite circle, the twelve tribes camped in four groups of three tribes each. To the east were Judah (pop. 74,600), Issachar (54,400) and Zebulun (57,400); to the south, Reuben (46,500), Simeon (59,300) and Gad (45,650); to the west, Ephraim (40,500), Menasseh (32,200) and Benjamin (35,400); and to the north, Dan (62,700), Asher (41,500) and Naphtali (53,400). This formation was kept also while traveling. Each tribe had its own nassi (prince or leader), and its own flag with its tribal color and emblem.

Our sages explain the reason for counting them was to express G-d's love for the people of Israel. Just as a person continuously counts something which is very valuable, so too, counting the Jewish people expressed G-d's love for them.

LEVY—A SPECIAL TRIBE

The Torah states, “**But you shall not number the tribe of Levi, nor take the sum of them amongst the Children of Israel**” (Numbers 1:49). Why was the Tribe of Levi excluded from the census of the whole Jewish people? Rabbi Zelig Pliskin reminds us that Rashi, citing the Midrash says, “The Levites should not be counted among

the others in order not to be included with them (every male over 20 years of age who would die during the 40 years traveling in the Desert after leaving Egypt). They are Mine since they did not transgress in the sin of the Golden Calf.”

A poignant question arises: The decree of dying in the wilderness for every male over 20 was for the transgression of accepting the negative report about the Land of Israel from the spies. Rashi should have said that the Levites did not transgress in the episode of the spies rather than saying that they did not transgress by worshipping the Golden Calf! (By the way, none of the women listened to the spies nor worshipped the Calf!)

The Sifsai Chachomim, a commentary on Rashi, explains that the decree upon the generation was for those who both listened to the spies and were guilty in the sin of the Golden Calf. The Levites had listened to the spies and accepted the negative report about the Land of Israel. However, not only did they not err with the Golden Calf, they immediately came to Moses' side to stop the transgression. Our lesson: It pays to minimize one's transgressions!

When the people broke camp, the three Levite clans dismantled and transported the Sanctuary, and reassembled it at the center of the next encampment. They then erected their own tents around it: the Kehatites, who carried the Sanctuary's vessels (the ark, menorah, etc.) in their specially designed coverings on their shoulders, camped to its south; the Gershonites, in charge of its tapestries and roof coverings, to its west; and the families of Merrari, who transported its wall panels and pillars, to its north. Before the Sanctuary's entranceway to its east were the tents of Moses, Aaron and Aaron's sons.

The Mishnah says: “This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, and live a life of deprivation - but toil in the Torah! If you do this, ‘You are praiseworthy and all is well with you.’ You are ‘praiseworthy’ in this world, ‘and all is well with you’—in the World to Come.” (Avot 6:4)

READING THE TORAH

In order to serve on the Sanhedrin, one had to be able to prove that a sheretz (species of reptile) does not cause ritual impurity, even though the Torah explicitly says that it does. The judges had to recognize that with their own great mental acuity they could convince themselves of almost anything, and therefore needed to subject their own thinking to that of the Torah.

The Rogachover Gaon once gave a lecture to his students in which he proved that chametz is permitted on Passover. He then asked his students to refute his proof. They tried in vain to do so. When they gave up, the Rogachover opened the Bible and read them: “Do not eat chametz” (Exodus 13:3). That, he said, is the only refutation necessary. All the intellectual gymnastics in the world cannot alter one sentence in the Torah.

LESSON OF ORDER

“...every man at his camp and every man at his banner...” (1:52)

As a small boy, I remember the first time I saw a concert pianist in action. I was fascinated how his hands could caress the most sublime sounds from a few dozen ivory sticks. Being a persuasive sort, I managed to talk my parents into buying a piano so that I could perform the same trick. When the piano arrived, I positioned myself carefully on the piano stool. (Had I been wearing tails, I would, no doubt, have given them a nonchalant flick as I seated myself.) I opened the lid, rubbed my hands to warm them, and held them poised over the center of the keyboard just like I had seen the maestro do.

My hands plunged into the unfortunate keys with a loud and highly unmusical ‘splang’. This was followed by several more ‘splangs’, a few ‘splongs’ rounded off with a ‘grong-granggrong’ and a long ‘frannnnngggggggggg’ down to the nether depths of the keyboard.

This was not the magic that I had hoped for. My mother arranged for me to have lessons.

“Now,” said Mr. Szförtzo, my new piano teacher, “... the first thing we need to learn is order...”

“But I want to be a child prodigy,” I protested. Realizing the sort of a pupil with whom he had been blessed, Mr. Szförtzo rolled his eyes heavenward. After a few seconds of contemplation, he began to speak. “To achieve anything, a person must have order. Music is all about order. One note has to follow the other in the correct order. One movement must follow the next in the correct order. In order to get anywhere in music – sorry no pun intended — (he grinned), you must order your day so that every day you will be able to sit down and practice your scales, the basic order of music. You can’t just pick up your hands and expect them to produce Rachmaninoff.” Of this last fact, I was already painfully aware. “Order, Order, Order.”

“...every man at his camp and every man at his banner...” (1:52)

The whole Torah is based on order: A split-second divides Shabbat from the weekdays. A hairsbreadth between kosher and treif; one drop of water divides a kosher mikve from one that is unfit; a millimeter separates the camp of the Kohanim from that of the Levi’im; a Levi must not do the service of a kohen and vice versa, nor may a Levi do the service of his fellow. With “every man at his camp and every man at his banner,” the Jewish People are able to give a flawless performance of our Sonata of life – the Holy Torah.

Story given by

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HAFTARA

Hosea 2:1 - 22

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 3:31-4:9

HAFTARA: Hosea is a man who loves his people and his wife. His wife is unfaithful as the people of Israel is. Speaking to his children, he said to them: "Plead with your mother, plead—for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband—that she put away her whoring from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts," (Hos. 2:2). His wife become an illustration of the unfaithfulness of Israel. Hosea says to his wife the words G-d addresses to Israel, "Now I will uncover her shame in the sight of her lovers, and no one shall rescue her out of my hand. I will put an end to all her mirth, her festivals, her new moons, her sabbaths, and all her appointed festivals." (Hos. 2:10-11).

What a wonderful love. In spite of her unfaithfulness he wants to love her, "Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her." (Hos. 2:14). The Bible is also a romantic book. "From there I will give her her vineyards, and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.." (Hos. 2:15).

It is clear that Hosea's wife represents Israel. "There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt." (Hos. 2:15).

Then the prophet plays with Hebrew words, the Hebrew word *Baal* means "husband" or "master" and it is also the name of an idol worshiped by Canaanite people. "On that day, says the LORD, you will call me, "My husband," and no longer will you call me, "My Baal." (Hos. 2:16). All idols will be removed. "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more." (Hos. 2:17). And will make a covenant with Israel. "I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety." (Hos. 2:18). What a wonderful promise for Israel in this text. "And I will take you for my wife forever; I will take you for my wife in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love, and in mercy. I will take you for my wife in faithfulness; and you shall know the LORD. (Hos. 2:20-21).

PARASHA: At the beginning of the book of Numbers, Moses counts the people of Israel and organizes the tribes for their setting around the sanctuary and for their march. "Take a census of the whole congregation of Israelites, in their clans, by ancestral houses, according to the number of names, every male individually; from twenty years old and upward, everyone in Israel able to go to war." (Numbers 1:3).

BESORAH: Yeshua says who are members of his family and his people. "Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" (Mark 3:31-34).

However Yeshua says who are his brothers: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:16-19). Yeshua was a faithful Jew, he fulfilled all the prophecies and performed all the mitzvot of the Torah, then everyone who wants to be his brother has to follow also God's will.

Yeshua like Moses was a great teacher "Again he began to teach beside the sea. Such a very large crowd gathered around him" (Mark 4:1). Yeshua knows how to adapt his teaching to his listeners, he is in the country side, near the sea. Many people in the crowd are farmers who work every day on agriculture and farming, that's why Yeshua uses a terminology they can understand... "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and it sprang up quickly, since it had no depth of soil... Everyone is invited to continue this reading by his own. The lesson of this portion of the text, is that Yeshua gives us an example of preaching. To preach in parable (rabbinic way to preach) and to let each one to understand by his own, that's why he ends his teaching by the words "Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" (Mark 4:9)

