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RICHARD ELOFER'S VISIT TO CALIFORNIA

It is with great pleasure that I will be visiting some of our congregations in California during the month of May to promote our Ministry there. California has one of the largest populations of Jews in the United States and training people in that area is very important. I will be visiting these congregations with Alan Reinach, one of the leaders of the Pacific Union Conference. On May 9 I will be with the SDA congregation of Malibu.

3062 Winter Canyon Road
Malibu CA 90265
Contact: Judith Miranda
Tel. 818.458.8884

PESACH IN MINNESOTA

We have recently received news from Valeri Ruchko, leader of our Jewish Adventist congregation in Minneapolis and Twin Cities in Minnesota. He wrote:

“For the first time in Twin Cities, the Shalom Center, Jewish ministry of Minnetonka SDA congregation, marked Pesach on April 10, 2009. This event attracted about 106 visitors from congregations and the community, people who had never before had an opportunity to see how Jews celebrate their feasts.

The Shalom Center intends to conduct outreach programs connected with five Jewish holidays this year. Pastor Alex Schlussler from the Florida conference, a congregational leader of Beth Tehillah Vetikva Adventist Jewish congregation, has been invited for the Shavuot celebration on June 5 and 6.

Please, continue to pray for the growth of this ministry and its success in reaching people for G-d.”

HEALTH TRAINING IN TEL AVIV AND HEALTH EXPO IN HAIFA

During the month of April we had a very special training program in Tel Aviv led by some physicians from Israel, the USA and Romania. This month of training was organized by the Health Department of the Israel Field for every member who wanted to be involved in health ministry in Israel. About thirty people participated. They learned natural remedies, techniques of massage, the beneficial effects of air, sun, rest, water etc...



The training program was held at Ramat Gan, a suburb of Tel Aviv and was very well supported by John Lascu, pastor of the congregation of this city. What the people have learned is being put into practice right now in a Health Expo in Haifa.

The Health Expo was held on Mount Carmel from the 3rd to the 7th of May. The first day was Sunday May 3. More than 150 people came to get more information on health and to get a free medical examination supervised by three physicians.

This Health Expo will be followed up by the organization of a health club which will hold health meetings every week. We hope that the Jewish people of Haifa will be open to this ministry and will open their mind for spiritual things. I will give a full report on my next newsletter.

OVERVIEW



EMOR

LEVITICUS 21:1 - 24:22

The kohanim are commanded to avoid contact with corpses in order to maintain a high standard of ritual purity. They may attend the funeral of only their seven closest relatives: father, mother, wife, son, daughter, brother, and unmarried sister.

The kohen gadol (High Priest) may not attend the funeral of even his closest relatives. Certain marital restrictions are placed on the kohanim.

The nation is required to honor the kohanim.

The physical irregularities that invalidate a kohen from serving in the Temple are listed.

Terumah, a produce tithe given to the kohanim, may be eaten only by kohanim and their household.

An animal may be sacrificed in the Temple after it is eight days old, and is free from any physical defects.

The nation is commanded to sanctify the Name of G-d by insuring that their behavior is always exemplary, and by being prepared to surrender their lives rather than murder, engage in licentious relations or worship idols.

The special characteristics of the holidays are described, and the nation is reminded not to do certain types of creative work during these holidays.

New grain may not be eaten until the omer of barley is offered in the Temple.

The Parsha explains the laws of preparing the oil for the menorah and baking the lechem hapanim in the Temple.

A man blasphemes G-d and is executed as prescribed in the Torah.

TITHES

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov teaches that according to the Torah, when we give tithe, we don't give of ours, but we give back to G-d what is His. For whatever we own

belongs to G-d. In the Torah, Tithes is connected with, the words "I am the L-rd your G-d." As the Mishna puts it, "Give to Him of what is His, for you and whatever is yours are His."

TITHES IS A FENCE

Rabbi Akiva says, "Tithes is a fence for riches." Although it may seem that withholding charity will bring one more personal wealth, according to the Torah, the opposite is true.

In fact, our sages explain that the Hebrew word "Venatnu" (spelled: vav, nun, tav, nun, vav) - "and they shall give" which is mentioned in connection with the contributions for the Temple, can be read the same forward and backward. This teaches us that giving is an investment with great return.

G-D EXTENDS HIS HAND

Our sages tell us that G-d's relation to us mirrors our action to Him. When one stretches forth a hand toward the mirror, the hand in the mirror extends toward the person. But when one brings their hand toward themselves, the hand in the mirror will also withdraw. Thus, when we stretch out our hand and give to the needy, G-d extends His hand toward us.

CHALOT IN THE TEMPLE

In this Parsha we read about the twelve "Chalot" (breads) which were placed in the Holy Temple every Shabbat. The Chalot would stay there for the entire week, until the following Shabbat, when they were replaced.

According to the Jewish tradition one of the miracles in the Temple was that when the twelve breads were removed from the table after a full week, they were as fresh as when they were placed there.

SHABBAT

In this week's Parsha, Emor, the Torah tells us about the observance of the holidays, "And the L-rd spoke to Moshe, saying: speak to the children of Israel and say to them: The appointed seasons of the L-rd you shall proclaim to be holy

convocations, these are My appointed festivals.” The first celebration is the observance of Shabbat; “On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a sabbath of the LORD throughout your settlements.” (Lev. 23:3)

Rabbi Kalman Packouz tells us how a Shabbat observer starts the Shabbat All week long it's work hard, run around, accomplish... but in the back of one's mind it's 4 days to Shabbat, it's 3 days to Shabbat, it's 2 days to Shabbat, tomorrow's Shabbat! And then on Friday, it's preparation to finish off the day's work in time to come home in time to shower, change into Shabbat clothes and help with the last minute preparations.

Eighteen minutes before sunset, the candles are lit and if it's a mother who is lighting them she will say a special prayer and then give each of her children a blessing. A sense of peace spreads over the household. A special quiet. A spiritual warmth. That's it; the work week is over. Whatever was supposed to be accomplished was accomplished. What didn't get accomplished will just have to wait until Shabbat is over.

Shabbat has been called an Island in Time peace and tranquillity, a time for family and friends. A time which puts life in perspective. The Friday night meal starts with Kiddush prayer said over wine or grape juice. Then comes the motse, the blessing for bread over the 2 Challot (2 to remember the double portion of manna). The meal may go on for 2 to 3 hours starting with questions for the kids on the week's Torah portion, special Shabbat songs, words of Torah giving insights into life and talking and being with the ones you love! And all of that punctuated by delicious courses of food—soup, fish, salad, chicken or beef, drinks, desserts. Shabbat is special and every effort goes into making it special, particularly the food.

Want to bring Shabbat into your life? The easiest way is to find a Shabbat observant friend and ask him if you could come for a meal. Don't be hesitant. He will be thrilled that you ask! Avraham our forefather had a tent with 4 doors open to all directions so that passersby could come for a meal. He instilled the value of kindness and hospitality

into our Jewish nature. Probably if a friend asked if he could come to your home for a meal with your family, you would be happy; don't think your friend's reaction would be any less than yours! As you see how different families celebrate the Shabbat, you can incorporate into your own Shabbat celebration the foods, customs and even songs.

KINDNESS TOWARDS ANIMALS

One of the mitzvot in this week's Parsha, Emor, the Torah forbids us from slaughtering a cow and her calf on the same day. This holds true whether one wants to slaughter the animals for eating purposes or to bring as sacrifices during the days of the Temple.

One might think that this is due to the Torah prohibition not to cause suffering to any animal and having the calf killed together with the mother in a great torture for the animal.

However, the mitzvah forbidding a mother and her calf to be slaughtered on the same day applies even when the calf is not slaughtered in front of its mother.

According to the Zohar, the reason for this prohibition is so that we ourselves should not become insensitive and develop bad character traits.

Our sages tell us that one of the character traits in which the Jewish people excel is mercy (“Rachmanut”). The Talmud says that one can identify a descendant of the Patriarch Abraham by the fact that he or she is merciful to others.

The Torah prohibition of “Tzaar Baalei Chayim”—“Not to bring suffering to animals” is very strict. The Torah commands us that when one sees someone's animal weighed down under a heavy load, the person must help to ease the animal's burden.

- According to Jewish law, one is not permitted to eat before feeding their animals.

- Our sages also say, “Whoever shows mercy for G-d's creatures will in turn cause heavenly mercy upon themselves.”

- Similarly, Rabbi Chayim Palagi says that when a person is in distress or when someone is sick in the home, he or she should make it a point to be kind to animals. They should give food to birds or other animals and thus their mercy on the animals will invoke G-d's mercy upon them.

PERFORMING MITZVOT

Rabbi Yoel Sirkus (1560-1640; author of the famous Halachic work “Bach”) had a wealthy disciple, whom we shall call Moshe, who was very generous and supported his rabbi’s many charitable activities.

One day, a man from a nearby village, came to Rabbi Sirkus crying: “For many years I have been making a nice living from the tavern that I rent from the land owner. However, recently someone offered the landowner much more rent and as a result my source of income will be completely gone. Rabbi you must help me,” wailed the man. “If I lose the tavern I will not be able to feed my wife and children.”

Rabbi Sirkus had great pity on the man. He said to him, “Go to my disciple, Moshe, he has business dealings with the land owner and ask him in my name to speak to him on your behalf.”

Assured that help was on the way, he immediately made his way to Moshe. He told Moshe of his dire situation and that Rabbi Sirkus advised him to seek Moshe’s help to intervene with the landowner.

Moshe replied, “I’m sure I can take care of the matter. However, I don’t have the time right now, for I have to travel to the fair and don’t have the time to speak to the land owner right now. When I return from the fair in a few days, I will take care of the matter and I’m sure you will continue renting the tavern.

The man was not satisfied, “Who knows if by the time you return the tavern will not be rented already to someone else?” He pleaded. This is too serious a matter to be pushed off.” However, all his pleading was to no avail. Moshe said that the matter would have to wait and he was sure it would be settled favorably. The next few days were very stressful for the poor family.

When Moshe returned, he immediately spoke to the land owner and the tavern was again rented to the previous renter.

Many years passed and Moshe passed away. Everyone came to pay last respects to Moshe

for all his good deeds and generosity. Rabbi Sirkus gave a very emotional eulogy praising Moshe’s many charitable activities and acts of kindness.

A week later, rabbi Sirkus had a dream about Moshe who told him, “When I came up to the gates of heaven, they found me righteous and ordered me to be led to paradise. But when I came to the gates of paradise, an angel stood in my way and wouldn’t let me in. “Who are you? Why don’t you let me in?” I asked. He replied, “I am the angel who was created from the mitzvah which you performed by helping the person get back his tavern.”

“So why would you block my entry to paradise?” I asked. “Doesn’t performing a mitzvah deserve the reward in paradise?”

“True, for the mitzvah you deserve a reward. However, the mitzvah was not fulfilled properly. Instead of speaking to the land owner immediately, you attended to your business first. As a result, the family suffered those few days, not knowing what their fate will be. For that, you too, will have to suffer and wait with your reward the same amount of time that you made them wait!”

Rabbi Sirkus then told this story to the congregation and reminded them to always be very careful to perform a mitzvah right away, especially when the matter concerns helping others.

This is why, in Parshat Emor, right after the mitzvah of not leaving over the sacrifice for the next day, the Torah tells us, “You shall keep My commandments and observe them...” For a mitzvah too has to be performed the same day and not pushed away for later!

EDITOR

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Richard-Amram Elofer
4, Abraham Lincoln
94186 Jerusalem
Israel

Tel. +972 504 535 121
Fax +972 2625 1319
email: richard@elofers.com
web: jewishadventist.org



HAFTARA

Ezekiel 44:15-31

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 2:18-28

HAFTARA: Although God has said often enough that Israel is not faithful, in this Hafttara we learn that God still has some men and women among his people who remain faithful to him. Among them is the family of the high priest. **“But the priests, who are Levites and descendants of Zadok and who faithfully carried out the duties of my sanctuary when the Israelites went astray from me...”** (Ez. 44:15).

It was a great privilege for this family to receive such great approval from God, **“They alone are to enter my sanctuary; they alone are to come near my table to minister before me and perform my service”** (Ez. 44:16).

Then the text reminds of the Priesthood rules:

- No priest shall drink wine when he enters the inner court.
- They shall not marry a widow, or a divorced woman, but only a virgin.
- They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the common.
- They shall show them how to distinguish between the unclean and the clean.
- In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall decide it according to my judgments.
- This shall be their inheritance: I am their inheritance; and you shall give them no holding in Israel; I am their holding.
- Etc...

PARASHA: In the text of the parasha we have chapter 23 of Leviticus which presents the Sabbath and holy days of Israel, among them Yom Kippur, **“The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: Now, the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement; it shall be a holy convocation for you... (Lev. 23:27).**

HAFTARA: The haftara speaks that way about the priest family because it is a reminder of the various rules and laws given to the priests and of course the rules about Yom Kippur. **“On the day he goes into the inner court of the sanctuary to minister in the sanctuary, he is to offer a sin offering for himself...”** (Ez. 44:27).

PARASHA: The text of the parasha includes chapter 23 of Leviticus which again presents the Shabbat and the feasts of the Lord. **“Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work: it is a sabbath to the LORD throughout your settlements.”** (Leviticus 23:3).

BESORAH: An important part of the text is about Yeshua and the Shabbat. Many people think that Yeshua was not faithful to the Shabbat, but that is not true. Yeshua re-focused the Shabbat to his real purpose. It was to be a blessing for all humanity.

“One sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?” And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food? He entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions.” Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.” (Mark 2:23-28).

The Shabbat is to be a blessing for all human beings not only Jews, that’s why the Shabbat is inscribed in the creation story. We have evidence that the Shabbat was always present on the earth. The Patriarchs were faithful to the Shabbat, but also Israel, Yeshua, the disciples of Yeshua and a small group of believers throughout history called the remnant.

It is what Yeshua wants to remind us of in this text when he says, **“The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”** (Mark 2:28). He is the Master, the Lord of the Shabbat. If we recognize Yeshua as our Master and Lord, then we must follow his example.

