

# Shabbat Devarim

## July 25, 2009

### 4 Ab 5769

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## News

### DAY OF JOY IN ISRAEL

As we announced last week, Sabbath 18th of July was a Sabbath of Joy for the English speaking churches in Tel Aviv. We have two English speaking congregations in Tel Aviv, one composed of Ghanaian people and a second of Filipinos. They are very gentle and doing a very good job in Israel. They are well appreciated by their employers. After a few weeks of public meetings the pastor, Julio Mendez, had the joy of immersing nine people in the Jordan River. Here is one of the pictures of these people with Julio and Mila Mendez.



### ISRAEL FIELD'S SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

This next Sabbath will be another day of joy for the believers in Israel. Every year we organize at least two spiritual gatherings for the members of our congregations. The first is a spiritual assembly of one day and the second is the Sukkoth gathering lasting three or four days. The one-day spiritual assembly will be this coming Sabbath, the 25th of July. We have invited three main speakers, Dr Eugene Hsu, Vice-President of the General Conference, Dr John Graz, General Conference Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department Director, and Pastor Harald Wollan, Trans-European Division Secretary. This full day of spiritual assembly

will be in Jerusalem at the YMCA. We expect about 60% of our members to be present; that means about 600 people. I will give a report about this assembly next week.

### RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FESTIVAL

The next very exciting gathering we are organizing is for the day after the spiritual assembly, On Sunday July 26, we will have a Festival of Religious Freedom in Jerusalem. It is the first gathering of this kind in Jerusalem. We have publicized this event among the churches and some synagogues in Israel. We sent invitations to the radio, television and newspapers in Israel and we hope that many people will join us for this festival. Even though a synagogue and its rabbi have agreed to join us, we have noticed that it is very difficult to mobilize people on the topic of religious liberty. There are some who consider that their religious freedom is restricted and prefer not to participate. They don't want more restrictions so they prefer to be silent. For others who consider that they have full religious freedom in Israel, they don't see that it is an issue. They don't see why we have to celebrate this freedom. Still others are hostile to religious freedom, especially Muslims. They don't see why they would participate in a Festival of Religious Freedom. As usual, the Seventh-day Adventists are the champions of Religious Liberty, and have been champions since 1901, when they created their own non-profit organization. Seventh-day Adventists continue to promote and to defend religious freedom for everyone everywhere in the world. It is good for us to work with them. I ask you to pray for the success of this Festival. We expect 250 to 300 people to attend on Sunday at 5:30pm. From the media, we have been contacted by the French Edition of the Jerusalem Post (the editor is a personal friend). We gave them an interview and they promised to be in the festival and to give a report in the paper's edition next week. We have also received a promise from one of the journalists of the English Edition of the Jerusalem Post and we pray that many more representatives of the media will come.

# OVERVIEW

## DEVARIM

### DEUTERONOMY 1:1-3:22

**T**his *Parasha* begins the last of the Five Books of The *Torah*, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, “Repetition of the Torah” (hence the Greek/English title Deuteronomy). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told *Bnei Israel* during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan into *Eretz Israel*. Moshe reviews the *mitzvot*, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo: from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe’s guidance to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua’s leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. The *Parasha* opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they had not sinned by sending spies into *Eretz Israel*.

Hashem would have given them without a fight all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. He details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert; Moshe would not enter *Eretz Israel*. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem’s decree was to want to “go up and fight” to redress the sin. He recounts how they would not listen when he told them not to go, that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon these lands were not to be part of the map of *Eretz Israel* in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

## MISHNE TORAH

**S**ome scholars among Jews have asked this question: Why did Moshe find it necessary to review the Torah for the generation which was

about to go into the Promised Land? Some answered: the Book of Devarim is Moshe’s address to the generation which will be going into the land of Israel. These were the children of the people whom Moshe led out of Egypt. Most of this generation did not witness the Exodus, the Splitting of the Sea and the Giving of the Torah. Thus, in the book of Devarim, Moshe, before his passing, reviews the many miracles which G-d performed for their parents. He also tells them of the sins their parents transgressed and the punishments which G-d inflicted upon them. Moshe conveys to them the events of the past, so that when they enter the Promised Land, they would not repeat the mistakes of their parents.

In the “Mishne Torah” Moshe wants to impress upon the generation which will be entering the Promised Land the importance of observing the commandments. For only then will they be able to inherit and dwell in the land of Israel.

## HIDDEN MEANING

**T**he Torah states, “. . . on the other side of the Jordan, in the desert, in the Aravah Wilderness, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chazerot, and Di-zahav.” (Deut. 1:1)

Rabbi Chaim ben Attar z”l (1696-1743) observes that the name each of these places may allude to a character trait that Moshe wanted to teach. For example, “the desert” alludes to the trait of humility, as our Sages have said, “A person should always behave like a desert” [i.e., humbly, in contrast to a majestic mountain or a mighty river].

However, Rabbi ben Attar continues, humility should not be taken to an extreme. For example, a person must not say, “Who am I to give rebuke to others?” Rather, one must be like the Aravah. The root “ayin-resh-vet” means pleasant. One must behave in a way that is pleasing to society. Also, it alludes to “areivut” “responsibility.” One must feel a responsibility for, and to, others. (Ohr Ha’chaim)

## JEWISH PEOPLE’S HONOR

**I**n *parasha Devarim* we see that Moses was concerned by Jewish people honor. He mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish

People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.

## GREAT KINDNESS

**T**he Torah states: “And I commanded your judges at that time saying, ‘Listen among your brothers.’ “

Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin writes that some judges may see themselves as elevated people and the litigants who come to them as wicked. Therefore, the Torah states, “Listen among your brothers.” That is, consider anyone who comes to you as a brother and treat him accordingly.

This concept applies to anyone in a position of authority. It is very easy to treat people as objects. However, our attitude towards others should be, “How would I feel, act and talk if this person were my brother?” This is especially important for anyone who is in a position where people in financial need or emotional pain come to him or her for assistance. The person you are talking with is suffering and often might feel embarrassed that he needs to come to someone for help. Be extremely sensitive to his feelings. If you are able to make him feel that you feel towards him as a close relative, it is a great kindness.

## A NEW NATION IS BORN

**T**he main achievements of the Jewish people in the Sinai were

- (1) The receiving of the Torah
  - (2) The building of the mishkan (sanctuary), all its vessels, and furnitures
  - (3) The appointing of a Sanhedrin
  - (4) The appointing of the officers
- They became a new nation in the wilderness.

## TISH'A BE'AV

**T**isha B'Av (July 30, 2009) is observed to mourn the loss of the Temples in Jerusalem. What was the great loss from the destruction of the Temples? It is the loss of feeling God's presence. The Temple was a place of prayer, spirituality, holiness, open miracles. It was the focal point for the Jewish people, the focal point of our Jewish identity. Three times a year (Passover, Shavuot, Sukkot) every Jew would ascend to the Temple. Its presence pervaded

every aspect of Jewish life - planning the year, where one faced while praying, where one would go for justice or to learn Torah, where one would bring certain tithes.

On this same day throughout history many tragedies befell the Jewish people, including:

1. The incident of the spies slandering the land of Israel with the subsequent decree to wander the desert for 40 years.
2. The destruction of the first Temple in Jerusalem by Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylon.
3. The destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE.
4. The fall of Betar and the end of the Bar Kochba revolt against the Romans 65 years later, 135 CE.
5. The Jews of England expelled in 1290.
6. Pope Urban II declared the First Crusade. Tens of thousands of Jews were killed, and many Jewish communities obliterated.
7. The Jews of Spain were expelled in 1492 .
8. World War I broke out on Tisha B'Av in 1914 when Russia declared war on Germany. German resentment from the war set the stage for the Holocaust.

9. On Tisha B'Av, deportation began of Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto.

Tisha B'Av is a fast day (like Yom Kippur, from sunset one evening until the stars come out the next evening) Like all fast days, the object is introspection, making a spiritual accounting and correcting our ways -what in Hebrew is called, *teshuva*, returning, to the path of good and righteousness—to the ways of the Torah.

*Teshuva* is a five part process:

- (1) We must recognize what we have done wrong and regret it.
- (2) We must stop doing the transgression and correct whatever damage that we can.
- (3) We must accept upon ourselves not to do it again.
- (4) We must verbally ask the Almighty to forgive us.
- (5) We must accept the forgiveness offered by G-d through the merits of the Mashiach.

On the night of Tisha B'Av we read in the synagogue Eicha, the book of Lamentations, written by the prophet Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah)

## A CHAIN OF EVENTS

The Talmud relates an episode in which one of the wealthy people of Jerusalem had a friend called Kamtza and a foe named Bar-Kamtza. He sent his servant to invite his friend Kamtza to a party, but the servant mistakenly invited his enemy, Bar-Kamtza. When the host noticed Bar Kamtza at the party he ordered him to leave. Bar Kamtza offered to pay for his share of the meal. When this didn't help, he offered to pay for half the party and then for the entire party, but was refused. He made him leave the party in full view of all who attended and with great embarrassment. The chain of events which resulted from this episode caused the destruction of the Second Temple. Thus, during the three weeks we have to go to great length in showing our care and love for others.

## MOSES A MAN OF WORDS

The Midrash asks, "How is it that here the Torah says, "These are the words that Moshe spoke," yet, in the Book of Exodus, when G-d tells Moshe to go speak to Pharaoh and to the Jewish people in Egypt, Moshe replies, "Oh G-d, I am not a man of words..." Moshe claims that he cannot speak!

The Midrash replies: "Rabbi Tanchuma said, This is compared to a peddler who was going around selling material. Wherever he went he would call out, 'I have special wool to sell.'"

Once he passed by the palace. The king called him over and asked him, "What are you selling?"

The peddler replied, "I have nothing to sell."

"But I just heard you announce that you have special wool to sell," asked the king.

Said the peddler to the king: "It is true that I announced I have good wool to sell. But this is for the ordinary person. For you, my king, who is so mighty and who has the most expensive materials that can be found, for you I have nothing to sell and nothing that you would buy!"

The same says Rabbi Tanchuma was with Moshe. In the presence of G-d, who created a person's mouth, Moshe claimed that he was not a man of words.

But now in front of the Jewish people, he was indeed a man of words. Thus, the Torah says, "These are the words which Moshe spoke to all of Israel."

## HOW MUCH DO WE LOVE?

About 150 years ago, rabbis and Russian government officials met to try to nullify some of the harsh decrees of the Russian Czar against Jews, which deprived Jews from earning a decent and respectable livelihood.

During the meeting, Rabbi Menachem Mendel (known by his writings as the Tzemach Tzedek), spoke out strongly against the Czar for his heartless treatment of Russian Jews.

One of the rabbis turned to Rabbi Menachem Mendel and said, "You very well know that for this kind of talk you place your life in danger and our sages say, "One who willingly places his life in danger will lose his share in the World-to-Come!"

Rabbi Menachem Mendel, whose love for his people was boundless, replied, "If my fellow Jews cannot have their share in this world, of what value is to me my share in the World-to-Come!"

## BE SENSITIVE TO OTHERS

Rabbi Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz was once invited to be the guest of a certain individual for the Friday night meal. Arriving home with his host, it was immediately obvious that the hostess had fallen asleep from an exhausting Erev Shabbos and had failed to awaken on time to put the finishing touches to the table. Her embarrassed husband berated her for her failure to cover the challahs.

Rabbi Shraga Feivel thought to himself how absurd it was for the man to humiliate his wife for not having covered the challahs—a custom designed to keep the challahs from being "embarrassed" during Kiddush and to teach us how sensitive we must be to another's honor. The host, in his concern for the custom, had completely ignored its implications.

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### Isaiah 1:1 - 1:27

**T**his Shabbat, the Shabbat before the fast of Tisha B'Av, is called Shabbat "Chazon," because the Haftarah of this Shabbat begins with the word "Chazon."

**HAFTARA:** The Haftara continue to give the reasons of the destruction of Jerusalem. "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people do not understand" (Isaiah 1:3). The L-rd is so upset with Israel that he call her Gomorrah "Listen to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah!" (10) The Almighty said to Israel that he did not like their sacrifices "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the L-RD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats" (11). If the L-rd does not like anymore Israel' sacrifice, it is not because G-d is against sacrifices but just because Israel's ceremonies have lost their significance for Israel and became just rituals. That's why the Lord does not like not only sacrifice but also Sabbath and feasts "bringing offerings is futile; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity. Your new moons and your appointed festivals my soul hates; " (13-14). The L-rd never lose hope, his people is still his people, "Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil," (16). It is a call to repentance "Come now" (18). The Lord is a God full of forgiveness and love for his people "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be like snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land" (19-20). Whatever Israel done in the past, G-d is willing to forgive. However, if the people don't want to repent and to ask forgiveness, the L-rd will not be able to bless them and they will fall under the rules of other power as Babylon and many others. The text ends with a positive statement, "I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness" (26-27).

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 6:28-40

**T**he text of the parasha *Devarim* is a synopsis of what took place with the Jewish people during their 40 years in the desert. In this book Moshe has compassion on Israel and repeat the law of God for the second time.

**BESORAH:** The disciples were tired, they worked very hard with Yeshua but they also were full of enthusiasm "The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught" (Mark 6:30). Yeshua saw that they were tired and decided to send them in a quiet place to take some rest "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while" (31). However the crowds followed them and Yeshua had compassion for these people. They were under the rule of a very rude king—who just killed John the Baptist—and without spiritual shepherd "he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd (34). Yeshua taught the crowds, many hours, the sun was already down, the disciples were afraid that these people would not find any food, and they said to Yeshua "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat" (35-36). Yeshua gives them a very strange order "You give them something to eat" (37a). How could it be possible for the disciples to give food to five thousand people? "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" (37b) The disciples are ready to take all the responsibility, even though they don't know how to do it. However Yeshua will show them that it is impossible to do this task without help from above. Yeshua ask a simple question "How many loaves have you? Go and see." When they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish" (38). They had only five leaves and two fish, that is nothing to feed five thousand people. But Yeshua did the miracle and they were able to feed all this people. this miracle was possible because the disciples were obedient. Are we obedient in order to let Yeshua to perform miracles in our life?

