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News

DAY OF JOY IN ISRAEL

The English speaking congregation in Tel Aviv held their public meeting this week. Five new people have decided to join this congregation through their immersion. This immersion service will be held in the Jordan River on Shabbat, July 18. Let's pray for this service and Julio Mendez their pastor.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FESTIVAL

Next week, Dr John Graz of the GC Religious Liberty Department, will be in Israel for a special visit. We will run a great spiritual assembly for all our congregations in Jerusalem on Shabbat 25th July and a Festival of Religious Freedom on Sunday 26th. It has been extremely difficult to organize the Festival of Religious Freedom because most of the Christian and Messianic communities in Jerusalem are not interested in celebrating religious freedom. At last, I can understand why it was the Seventh-day Adventists who organized the International Religious Liberty Association in the United States in the nineteenth century from where it has spread all over the world. Currently it seems to be only this church that is interested in religious freedom. It is also interesting to note that the really good contact I had when organizing this Festival of Religious Freedom was with the Jewish community. I am happy that Rabbi Yaacob Lebeau will be with us and will give a speech, "Religious Liberty in Israel". Praise the Lord for this opportunity we have to celebrate Religious Freedom with the Jewish community.

SHALOM'S GRADUATION

I am sure that many of you have heard about Shalom, one of our Israeli members who went to Newbold College to study theology and to come back to Israel as a pastor. Shalom graduated on the 5th of July and is coming back this summer.



His employment in Israel will start in September. One of his assignments will be to create a new Hebrew speaking congregation in Jerusalem. Let's pray for the success of his ministry. (Here is a picture on the day of his graduation)

AN INTERESTING STORY

Oleg, our pastor for the north of Israel, was called by a lady who requested a visit. He went to visit her with David Siguelnitsky who is on annual leave in Israel and they had a very rewarding time. Here is Oleg's report.

"I would like to inform you about my being in Tiberias, where I had a good meeting with a woman whose name is Adai.

She once phoned me and asked me to visit her at her home. I agreed to her request and I went with David. It was a great time that we spent together. Adai concluded that we were sent to her by God. I can say to you that she feels good when freely speaking of the Zohar book, Talmud, and many Jewish topics, including four levels of understanding of the Torah (peshat, remez, derasha, ve'sod). According to her words she has been studying Bible for thirty years, and came to the conclusion that even she believes in Jesus yet she needs to continue keeping Sabbath. It was a question raised by her. 'What is it about Sabbath? Why have Christians been keeping Sunday?'

At this moment of time she discovered that there is a group of people—Seventh-day Adventists—who is still keeping Sabbath even today. Looking at our name she understood that we are waiting (advent - to come) for Sabbath coming (gheula redemption). It was a reason why she invited me as an SDA pastor to visit her at her home. She was so amazed when she knew that we keep Sabbath not only in order to believe that Gheula is coming, but literally as God commanded us, even as we are Jesus' followers."

OVERVIEW

MATOT-MASEI

NUMBERS 30:2-36:13

Moshe teaches the rules and restrictions governing oaths and vows—especially the role of a husband or father in either upholding or annulling a vow. Bnei Yisrael wage war against Midian. They kill the five Midianite kings, all the males and Bilaam. Moshe is upset that women were taken captive. They were catalysts for the immoral behavior of the Jewish People. He rebukes the officers. The spoils of war are counted and apportioned. The commanding officers report to Moshe that there was not one casualty among Bnei Yisrael. They bring an offering that is taken by Moshe and Elazar and placed in the Ohel Mo'ed (Tent of Meeting). The Tribes of Gad and Reuven, who own large quantities of livestock, petition Moshe to allow them to remain east of the Jordan and not enter the Land of Israel. They explain that the land east of the Jordan is quite suitable grazing land for their livestock. Moshe's initial response is that this request will discourage the rest of Bnei Yisrael, and that it is akin to the sin of the spies. They assure Moshe that they will first help conquer Israel, and only then will they go back to their homes on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Moshe grants their request on condition that they uphold their part of the deal.

The Torah names all 42 encampments of Bnei Yisrael on their 40-year journey from the Exodus until the crossing of the Jordan River into Eretz Yisrael. G-d commands Bnei Yisrael to drive out the Canaanites from Eretz Yisrael and to demolish every vestige of their idolatry.

Bnei Yisrael are warned that if they fail to rid the land completely of the Canaanites, those who remain will be “pins in their eyes and thorns in their sides.” The boundaries of the Land of Israel are defined, and the tribes are commanded to set aside 48 cities for the levi'im, who do not receive a regular portion in the division of the Land. Cities of refuge are to be established: Someone who murders unintentionally may flee there. The daughters of Tzelafchad marry members of their tribe so that their inheritance will stay in their own tribe. Thus ends the Book of Bamidbar/Numbers, the fourth of the Books of The Torah.

NEDARIM OR LAWS OF VOWS

Parashat Matot begins with the laws of vows (Nedarim); “And Moshe spoke to the heads of the tribes of the children of Israel, saying, ‘This is what the L-rd has commanded; When a man makes a vow to the L-rd or swears an oath to bind his soul with a bind, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all which came out of his mouth.’” The general law of vows also applies to women.

“He shall not break his word; he shall do according to all which came out of his mouth.” However, when one vowed to transgress a commandment of the Torah he or she are prohibited to fulfill the vow. A personal vow cannot override G-d's commandment. We have already vowed at Mount Sinai to keep and observe all the Commandments.

LET YOUR WORD BE YES, YES OR NO, NO

This Parasha also teaches us the significance and implications of words we speak. Indeed, the third commandment of the Ten Commandments, “Do not utter the name of the L-rd your G-d in vain,” is a prohibition which is associated totally to what we say.

Words and speech are a very powerful tool. In fact, the creation of the universe, as told in the beginning of the Torah, came about through G-d's words!

G-d's “sayings” are not in any way related to our form of speech. Yet, the fact that the Torah relates that the world was created by G-d's “sayings” tells us how important words are—they can have the power to build or to destroy.

This is why we will use the term “Bli Neder”; which means “without a vow” when making a commitment. For, even with the best intentions, one never knows if they will be able to honor their commitment. Thus, when making a pledge or commitment whether in business or otherwise it is always best to say “Bli Neder”—i.e., “without a vow.”

We must especially be very careful to avoid using the expression “I swear.” Swearing, even when one is 100% sure about the accuracy of the subject, is not proper. How much more so when people use the expression without thinking about whether the statement they are “swearing to” is true.

This recommendation from the midrash fit very well what Yeshua said to his disciples and reported by Mattatyahu, “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one. (Matt. 5:33-37).

The Talmidim of Yeshua understand that they must not swear. They have to say the truth at any time and the people around them will trust them knowing that as believer in Yeshua their words is true and deserve trust without requesting any swear.

EAST BANK OF JORDAN RIVER

In Parashat Matot the Torah relates that the tribes of Reuben and Gad had a great multitude of cattle. They came to Moshe and requested to inherit land on the eastern side of the Jordan River, rather than settling on the other side together with the rest of the people of Israel.

Moshe rebukes them; “Shall your brethren go to war and you will sit here? You will turn away the hearts of the children of Israel from going into the land which the L-rd has given them.”

Moshe reminds them what happened when the ten spies came back and convinced the people not to go to the promised land. This resulted in their staying in the desert an additional forty years.

The tribes of Reuben and Gad replied, “We will build fences to secure our cattle and cities for our little ones. We ourselves will be ready and go armed before the children of Israel. . . . we will not return to our houses until the children of Israel have inherited every man his inheritance.”

Moshe was satisfied that they would do their share in fighting for the land. He said to them, “If you will do this thing and go to war. . . . until the land will be conquered before the L-rd. . . . then this land shall be to you for a possession before the L-rd.”

Then Moshe instructs them, “Build for you cities for your little ones and folds for your sheep and do that which has proceeded out of your mouth (i.e. make sure to keep your promise).”

A PRECISION IS NECESSARY HERE: The tribes of Reuben and Gad told Moshe, “We will build fences to secure our cattle and cities for our little ones.” First they mentioned securing their cattle and then their children. Our sages tell us that Moshe rebuked the people of the two tribes for speaking of the safety of their cattle before their children. Thus, he instructed them to go about this in the proper order; “Build cities for your little ones and stables for your sheep.”

As with every part of the Torah, there is an important lesson here, especially in our time when so much emphasis is placed on material success, even at the expense of our children.

The lesson from this story in the Torah is that we must place much greater priority and emphasis on protecting our children. Monetary and social success may be very important, but they should only be secondary to the spiritual, moral and emotional well being of our children.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

This week’s second Parasha, Masei, concludes the fourth Book of the Torah - *Bamidbar* (Numbers). Our sages teach us that not only the contents of a Parasha, but also the name of the Parasha contains a lesson. The name of this week’s Parasha, Masei, means “Journey.” In this Parasha the Torah records all the 42 places where the Jewish people camped during their forty year “journey” in the Sinai desert.

The main emphasis of the Parasha is upon the places they “rested” and what events occurred in some of these places. Yet, the Parasha is called “Masei” which signifies the fact that “they traveled” rather than “they camped.”

The Baal Shem Tov explains that according to the Kaballah the 42 stops which the Jewish people made from the Exodus until they came to the promised land represent the travels and resting places that every Jewish person experiences when coming to this world until his death.

The name of the Parasha, Masei, teaches us the main focus of our journey through life. A believer should never be satisfied with the accomplishments of today, but always strive for higher. This concept is represented in the name of the Parasha, Masei. For instead of focusing on our achievements and resting places, we must continuously strive to go forward. Even the “stops” and “resting places” in life are for the purpose to gain strength to continue journeying forward and to go from strength to strength in our spiritual journey through life.

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOUR NEIGHBOR SUFFER?

An elderly sage brought his wife to the doctor. What seems to be the problem? asked the doctor.

Well, said the sage, whenever we walk more than a short distance we feel very tired and often experience shortness of breath.

Indeed? said the doctor. Are you telling me that both of you have the same symptoms?

Oh no, said the sage. I feel perfectly fine. It is my wife who is ill. But when she becomes tired and out of breath, I feel as if I am suffering as well.

LIVE IN PEACE

Almost seventy years ago, a young yeshiva student who had escaped from Nazi Europe with the Mir Yeshiva was walking through the streets of Shanghai. He was stopped in his tracks by hysterical ranting coming from a radio in an upstairs apartment. The voice sounded like a wild animal. And then he realized he could understand what was being said:

The voice was shrieking in German, "Come, let us obliterate from the world that nation that will not let us live in peace!" A sea of voices swelled behind him chanting, "Seig Heil! Seig Heil!"

The young man was shaken to the depths of his soul; he had never heard such a statement. He ran immediately to the mashgiach (spiritual mentor) of the Mir Yeshiva, Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, zatzal, and repeated what he had heard.

"For once," responded the mashgiach, "for once, he's telling the truth."

The Jewish People will not let the world live in peace. The Jewish People proclaim to the world, by our very existence, that many things the world holds extremely dear are, in fact, worthless. When Haman looks at Mordechai he sees someone to whom all his power and money and status is a joke — Mordechai negates his entire existence.

For this, the Jewish People have been hated down throughout the generations.

RETURNING TO GOD

A couple of months ago a young lady lost a wallet containing a large sum of money in

Jerusalem. She realized that the wallet was gone when she tried to pay the taxi that brought her home. Her mother went back with her and retraced her steps, but to no avail. The wallet was gone. They called around to all the shops she had gone to. Nothing. After a couple of days we thought we'd seen the last of the wallet.

About a month later a man telephoned their house and spoke to the mother. He said he had seen the wallet in the street and picked it up. He was a poor person, struggling to keep his head above an ever-rising tide of bills and debts. The sight of such a large sum of money overwhelmed him. His son's school had told him that unless he paid the previous term's tuition, his son would not be able to return at the end of the summer. He looked down at that full wallet and the temptation was too much for him; he took half of the money and paid for his son's tuition.

Two days before Tisha b'Av, he called the ladies: "How can I fast on Tisha B'Av with this on my mind?" he asked. He promised to pay us back as soon as possible. In any event, he wanted to return the rest of the money together with the wallet. The mother said to him, "Don't worry! Pay us back when you can! Thank you so much for calling!" She suggested he leave the wallet in a nearby store to avoid embarrassment. Where do you find people like true believers in the entire world? "...and you will return to the L-rd, your G-d, and listen to His voice..."

This verse is both a command and a prediction: The command to return, to mend what we have marred, is written not in the command form, but in the plain future tense. This means that it's also a prediction. G-d tells us that, whether we want to or not, eventually we must return to Him.

EDITOR

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HAFTARA Jeremiah 1:1 - 3:4

We are in the Jewish month of Tamuz and very soon we will start the month of Av, which includes the fast of Tish'a Be'av. Not a very joyful month for the Jewish people because many disasters just happened on the month of Av.

HAFTARA: It seems that the parasha is in connection with the disaster of the destruction of Jerusalem. First the haftarah is about the calling of Jeremiah, a priest from Anathoth "of the priests who were in Anathoth in the land of Benjamin" (Jer 1:1) who had no function in the temple and suddenly is called to be a prophet "I appointed you a prophet to the nations." (Jer 1:5). He does not like that, he refuses first "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." (Jer. 1:6), but when G-d is calling who can really refuse?

Then Jeremiah began to receive visions from G-d

1. "I see a branch of an almond tree." The L-rd explains: "You have seen well, for I am watching over my word to perform it." (Jer 1:11-12).

2. "I see a boiling pot, tilted away from the north." (Jer 1:13). G-d explains again, "Out of the north disaster shall break out on all the inhabitants of the land." (Jer 1:14) The message is clear, great disasters will happen if nothing changes. What the L-rd is waiting for is the coming back of His people: repentance, that's why He calls them to come to the gates of Jerusalem (place of judgment) "For now I am calling all the tribes of the kingdoms of the north, says the LORD; and they shall come and all of them shall set their thrones at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all its surrounding walls and against all the cities of Judah." (Jer 1:15). However it is not a popular message. People like to hear good news, not bad news. That is why G-d says to Jeremiah that his message will not be popular, he will have difficult times and will not be listened to. "They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you, for I am with you, says the LORD, to deliver you" (Jer 1:19).

In the chapter 2, God announces the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem "disaster came upon them, says the LORD." (Jer 2:3) It is not the city, the stones who are important but the people who are living there: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, . . . Israel was holy to the L-rd" (Jer 2:2-3). Israel is loved by G-d who see her as "holy."

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 6:14 - 27

HAFTARA: The destruction of Jerusalem is coming soon, why? because the people of G-d is not listening to G-d and His prophet. Jeremiah will be in jail and persecuted as many other prophets.

BESORAH: The time of Yeshua was not different, our text of the besorah describes the death of one of the greatest prophets after Moshe. This prophet is Yochanan Ha Matbil (John the Baptist). Yeshua, speaking about Yochanan said one day to his talmidim "What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (Matt 11:9). He was more than a prophet. Why? we discover it in Matatyahu where yeshua speaking once more to his talmidim says, "but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but they did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man is about to suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist." (Matt. 17:12-13) Elijah (Eliyahu HaNavi) should come before the coming of the Messiah, every rabbi will confirm this truth, and right now Yeshua reveals to us that the Elijah who has to come, came, he was this John the Baptist who prepared the way for yeshua.

BESORAH: In the text of our Besorah the king of the Jewish people, Herod, was so perverted that he did not recognize that Yochanan was a prophet sent by G-d, even more than a prophet, he was the Elijah who had to come.

Herod played with his daughter, "When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." (Mark 6:22). This word was risky, she could ask half of the kingdom or of king's richness, but she was perverse, she was not happy that the prophet of G-d says to her what was wrong in her life, then she asks, "She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." (Mark 6:24). one of the greatest prophets sent to Israel was killed for one dance, by sensuality and depravation. What a pity for God's people!

