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Shabbat Lech-Lecha

October 31, 2009

13 Cheshvan 5770

News

HAVE YOU EVER VISITED OUR FORUM OF DISCUSSION? ARE YOU MEMBER OF THIS FORUM?

Have you noticed in the top of this page that we have some Internet pages for you? Our web site, our picassa gallery of pictures and our forum of Discussion at <http://groups.google.com/group/jewish-adventists>. This forum is active and raises some interesting questions and answers. Not all the people who are participating to it believe what we believe and promote, However, it is the interest of this forum of discussion, it give us the opportunity to justify by the Bible and from time to time by the Jewish traditional writing (Talmud, Midrash, etc...) What we believe. Then if you want to be confronted to interesting and from time to time hard theological and biblical discussion this forum is for you.

NEWS FROM FLORIDA

We are happy when Jeff who is right now traveling in Israel send us some news about the people who visit his congregations: "A well dressed, sophisticated lady from England named Susan who came for the first time in our congregation was so touched by the service that she would not leave—she was the last one out the door. During some small talk in the lobby before the service she mentioned that earlier in the week she was at the funeral of her husband's brother and that her husband was in a nursing home in NY. Later on during the oneg (literally means joy. It is what we call the fellowship meal – oneg Shabbat, joy of the Sabbath) Susan told us that her first grandson, an infant named Joshua, was in All Children's Hospital in Syracuse NY in critical condition and was scheduled to go

in for surgery. We had prayer with her and she had tears in her eyes as Barbara gave her a hug. The next day she called us and left a voice message during a layover in Washington DC on her way up to Syracuse NY. She did not go into details of why she had to suddenly fly up and we have not been able to get in touch with her. Please pray for Susan and her grandson Joshua"

A SECOND NEWS FROM JEFF IN FLORIDA

Yesterday one of the people who attends services with us told us he was at work and two Chassidic Jewish men (one of the forms of Orthodox Judaism, one of the types that you see wearing black coats and hats) were walking around the office complex where he works asking if there were any Jewish people there. When they got to his office one of the employees said Bruce is Jewish. Bruce had some of our flyers with him since he had been distributing them to the other employees where he works. Bruce gave them each a flyer and they asked for an extra one. Bruce said they asked lots of questions about our services and that they had come down from NY. These young men are Jewish missionaries trying to find Jewish people and make them observant Chassidic (pious) Jews. They are of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement and are very missionary in one sense as they try to evangelize Jews yet they are also very anti-missionary as they are very opposed to what we are doing. Please pray that their presence in this area is not hurtful to God's work through us and that we will be able to have a positive impact for God upon them. Last year for a short time we had some young people from ASI assisting us—it would be wonderful to have more on a long term basis like these young men are for the Chabad movement. Please also join us in prayer for laborers.

Overview

Lech-Lecha

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Ten generations have passed since Noach. Man has descended spiritually. In the year 1948 from Creation, Avram is born. By observing the world, Avram comes to recognize G-d's existence, and thus merits that G-d appear to him.

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion G-d tells Avram to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house and travel to an unknown land where G-d will make him into a great nation.

Avram leaves, taking with him his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, their servants, and those whom they converted to faith in G-d. When they reach the land of Canaan, G-d appears to Avram and tells him that this is the land that He will give to his descendants.

A famine ensues and Avram is forced to relocate to Egypt to find food. Realizing that his wife's beauty would cause his death at the hand of the Egyptians, Avram asks her to say that she is his sister.

Sarai is taken to Pharaoh, but G-d afflicts Pharaoh and his court with severe plagues and she is released unmolested.

Avram returns to Eretz Yisrael (Canaan) with much wealth given to him by the Egyptians.

During a quarrel over grazing rights between their shepherds, Avram decides to part ways with his nephew Lot. Lot chooses to live in the rich but corrupt city of Sodom in the fertile plain of the Jordan.

A war breaks out between the kings of the region and Sodom is defeated. Lot is taken captive.

Together with a handful of his converts, Avram rescues Lot, miraculously overpowering vastly superior forces, but Avram demurs from accepting any of the spoils of the battle.

In a prophetic covenant, G-d reveals to Avram that his offspring will be exiled to a strange land where they will be oppressed for 400 years, after which they will emerge with great wealth

and return to Eretz Yisrael, their irrevocable inheritance.

Sarai is barren and gives Hagar, her Egyptian hand-maiden, to Avram in the hope that she will provide them with a child.

Hagar becomes arrogant when she discovers that she is pregnant. Sarai deals harshly with her, and Hagar flees. On the instruction of an angel Hagar returns to Avram, and gives birth to Yishmael.

The weekly portion concludes with G-d commanding Avram to circumcise himself and his offspring throughout the generations as a Divine covenant.

G-d changes Avram's name to Abraham, and Sarai's name to Sarah. Hashem promises Abraham a son, Yitzchak, despite Abraham being ninety-nine years old and Sarah ninety. On that day, Abraham circumcises himself, Yishmael and all his household.

Lech Lecha

The name of this week's Parasha is, Lech Lecha. G-d tells Abraham (his name was still Abram, before his name was changed to Abraham) to go to the land of Canaan.

Torah commentaries discuss the reason that the Torah uses the words "Lech Lecha" which literally means "go for you" when only the word "Lech" ("go") would have sufficed.

They explain that G-d is telling Abraham that although My commandment to leave your birthplace and your father's house may seem difficult at this time, it is in fact, "for your benefit and for your pleasure" ("Go to you").

Whatever G-d does and whatever He wants us to do is in truth for our benefit and if we accept it as such, it is also for our pleasure, whether we see it at the time or not.

A wise person once said, "The things in which people generally find pleasure in life are not necessarily for the person's benefit. But, the pleasure one derives by performing G-d's commandments are indeed for their benefit!"

"Lech Lecha" - "Go to you" also teaches us that G-d expects of each person to excel and achieve according to their ability. One must not become discouraged by the fact that others have the ability to accomplish more. Our sages tell us that all G-d

asks of each person is to do the best according to his or her ability.

Abraham a Light Among Men

Rabbi Avraham Bornstein, explained that Avraham's whole life was channeled toward developing not just his relationship with God, but to helping others appreciate the presence of God in their lives. He could only achieve this if he had some sort of relationship with those people whom he strove to draw near to his way of thinking. It was only possible for a contemporary of Avraham to be attracted to him if he felt that Avraham was in some way like him. And therein lay the test of circumcision.. Avraham was concerned that if he went ahead with the operation, he would lose touch with the common man. He would become so different, so exalted, that he would have no hope of reaching out and spreading the light of God to the uninitiated. Indeed, the slight traces of the mundane that still remained within Avraham would be expunged through the milah, leaving him bereft of his whole life's purpose. Avraham had to choose between fulfilling God's word and continuing to spread it. The Midrash tells us:

Avraham said, "While I was still uncircumcised, travelers came to me, but now that I am to be circumcised, are You to say they won't come to me anymore?" (Bereishis Rabbah 47:10)

For a man on the spiritual level of Avraham, this was a test of far greater magnitude than any previous one that he had encountered..

Abraham's Love for G-d

Avraham was motivated by love - not by justice, not by truth, nor by any other attribute through which God relates to the world. The prophets and other righteous martyrs were motivated by these other aspects of God's uniqueness; Avraham alone related to God purely through ahava (love) The love which Avraham discovers, the attribute of God as a loving and sustaining Creator, is manifest in God's attribute of hesed (love and kindness), and this becomes the defining attribute of Avraham's

relationship with God and with his fellow men for the rest of his life.

No Rewards For Doing What is Right

Avraham was the first, the prototypical seeker of truth. He sought out truth, and found that God, in His hesed, is the source of truth. He therefore sought to emulate God, not in the hope of any reward or advantage, but because he loved truth. This, according to the Rambam, is the highest level of service of God: to fulfill commandments and to live truth because it is truth.

The Netziv (Rabbi Naphtali Tzvi Judah Berlin) traces this train of thought in other episodes in the parasha: And only out of love do I serve, ... By acting thus, Avraham demonstrated that he served only out of love and not for any reward. So it was in his words to the King of Sodom, for he did not seek any reward from the Holy One Blessed be He. "If I take anything that is yours:" If I seek no reward from God, I certainly seek no reward from you.(Ha'amek Davar on Bereishit 14:23)

When Avraham declines the reward offered to him by the King of Sodom, it is not because this money is tainted, or because Avraham hopes to receive a much greater reward from God. Avraham seeks no reward for doing what is right, for championing justice. He acts as he does simply out of ahavat Hashem.

He Created us with Feelings

In his commentary on Lech Lecha (Genesis 12:6), Nachmanides says: "the events of the lives of the Patriarchs are the precursors of the events of Jewish history." We the Jewish people (and all believers) merely relive the experiences of the Patriarchs on a larger canvas; whatever did not happen to them cannot possibly happen to us.

The reason for devoting so much space to describing the lives of the Patriarchs is not connected to storytelling. It is important for us to be familiar with the details of their lives for two reasons: 1) to learn how we ourselves are expected to behave as believers, and 2) to anticipate and prepare ourselves for the events that history will throw at us.

ABRAHAM AND HIS FATHER'S IDOLS

R. Hiyya said: Terah was a manufacturer of idols. He once went away somewhere and left Abraham to sell them in his place. A man came and wished to buy one. 'How old are you?' Abraham asked him. 'Fifty years,' was the reply. 'Woe to such a man!' he exclaimed, 'you are fifty years old and would worship a day-old object!' At this he became ashamed and departed. On another occasion a woman came with a plateful of flour and requested him, 'Take this and offer it to them.' So he took a stick, broke them, and put the stick in the hand of the largest. When his father returned he {Gen. 310} demanded, 'What have you done to them?' 'I cannot conceal it from you,' he rejoined. 'A woman came with a plateful of fine meal and requested me to offer it to them. One claimed, "I must eat first," while another claimed, "I must eat first." Thereupon the largest arose, took the stick, and broke them.' 'Why do you make sport of me,' he cried out; 'have they then any knowledge?' 'Should not your ears listen to what your mouth is saying,' he retorted.

ABRAHAM'S KINDNESS

According to the Jewish tradition Avraham established an inn where he cared for his guests in every conceivable way. He influenced the world to believe in G-d, not by logical proofs or lectures but by demonstrating through his own example that G-d's kindness extends down through all the worlds to this, the lowliest.

The Talmud relates that when giving charity, the sages would make great effort that the poor should not know who their benefactor is in order that they should not be embarrassed.

Yeshua said, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. "When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. "But when you give alms, do not let your

left hand know what your right hand is doing that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you." Mat. 6:1-4

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR BUSINESS?

The story is told by Rabbi Yisroel Reissman of a man in a small Russian village observing the sale of a horse for the unbelievably cheap price of 500 rubles. After the conclusion of the deal, the man approaches the seller and asks, "That horse was worth at least 2,500 rubles! How could you possibly sell it for so little?" The seller sneered, "You idiot! That horse is so lame that in 2 blocks he'll have to carry it home on his shoulders!"

The man runs to the buyer and breathlessly asks him, "Do you realize that the horse you bought is lame?" The buyer guffaws, "Fool! Of course I know he's lame! He has a nail in his hoof. As soon as I get it out, I'll have a perfectly good horse for only 500 rubles!"

Running back to the seller, the man exclaims, "The horse has a nail in his hoof! Once he takes it out it will be perfectly fine." The seller laughs, "You're a bigger idiot than I thought! No one is going to buy a lame horse. I put the nail in the hoof to trick the buyer!"

Huffing and puffing back to the buyer, "You've been swindled! He put the nail in the hoof to deceive you!" The buyer shrugs and throws up his hands, "It doesn't matter. The rubles are counterfeit anyway!"

What does the Torah say about deceiving or cheating someone in a business deal?

"And if you sell anything to your fellow or buy anything from the hand of your fellow, you shall not wrong one another" (Leviticus 25:14) "

EDITOR

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Haftara

Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16

The book of Isaiah is a very beautiful text. the prophet Isaiah was a real poet and our text of this week is a wonderful poem.

“Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The L-RD is the everlasting G-d,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
(Isaiah 40:28).

The G-d of Israel is an everlasting G-d with an everlasting love for his children. He call Israel his servant, the chosen, He called Abraham his friend.

Here we have the link between the Parasha and this Haftarah, both of them are about Abraham who left his home to respond to the calling of God.

But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, “You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off”;
do not fear, for I am with you,
do not be afraid, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.
(Isaiah 41:8-9)

G-d is our protection, there is nothing to fear when we are with the Almighty. Abraham left his home, and was protected during all his life even if he was travelling to an unknown country.

Fear not,
for I am with you,
Be not frightened,
for I am your God;
I strengthen you and I help you,
I uphold you with My victorious right hand.
(Isaiah 41:10)

Besorat Yeshua

Mark 10:28-40

PARASHA: God appeared to Abraham and ask him to leave the house of his father, mother and ancestor to go to a country that he never saw and never heard about. “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1)

BESORAH: In this portion of the Besorat Shim'on-Peter presents his request to Yeshua and said to him. “We have left everything to follow you!” (Mark 10:28).

PARASHA: Following Yeshua the Mashiach or a call from God the Father is always risky. We cannot expect anything in return, of course the parahsa said to us that Abraham will be bless by his obedience and renouncement, “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed (Genesis 12:2-3) But I am sure that he would be ready to go even without any of these promises.

BESORAH: When The talmidim of Yeshua followed leaving everything behind them, a great promise was given to them: Yeshua says “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields — and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30).

PARASHA: Abraham had to fight powerful kings, he came back victorius and was blessed by King Melchisedek “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, maker of heaven and earth; .” (Genesis 14:18-19)

BESORAH: The disciples did not understand that in the new kingdom, the power is not necessary, they addressed to Yeshua a special request: “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.” Mark 10:37). They still have many things to learn.

