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Shabbat Toldot

November 21, 2009

4 Kisleṽ 5770

News

MEETINGS IN MONTENEGRO

After a blessed week in Serbia, I am still in one the former Yougoslavia countries. Montenegro to be precised. A beautiful country at the border of the Adriatic sea, at the feet of the Balkan Mountains and close to Italy and Greece. I have been in Montenegro for about 10 days for the Winter Meetings of my Division (TED). It is always good to be there, to give report on the work in Israel and to feel the support of the Administrators and all other members of this meeting. It is good to meet people from many countries and from the GC there. This year we had the privilege to have the presence of Dr Jan Paulsen, GC's President. He gave the sermon on Shabbat and I had the privilege to speak with Dr Paulsen about the Jewish ministry in the world.

We can praise the Lord for the leadership Seventh-day Adventists have in the Headquarter.

JOY IN ISRAEL

I had the pleasure to meet Jeff, Barbara and their group when they were in Israel few weeks ago, they even had a good contact with an Israeli and gave us this contact. Right now the group is back to the States and I received this news from Jeff and Barbara.



“We got back yesterday from another wonderful experience in Israel. I hope other people can join us for our next trip in the spring of 2011. Let us know if you would like to come. Put aside money every month between now and then this experience will be possible.

Don't wait until you are too old and out of shape. It is mostly ancient sites with rock, dirt paths. And even on the paved paths there is a lot of walking. We walked from the top of the Mt. of Olives as seen in the above picture down to where the bus is at the bottom of the hill. It is much more than a vacation, it is a Bible experience that you will relive over and over again the rest of your life.

NEXT VISITS TEL AVIV

I have been invited by our new pastor Shalom David, to be with him in his Hebrew speaking congregation in Tel Aviv on Sabbath 21 to have a special communion service. Shalom is very motivated by contextualization, and he said to me that he would like for this sabbath a special communion service, a contextualized one for the Jewish people. I said to him, OK, we will try... We remember that the main points of the communion service have been instituted at the last seder of Passover by Jesus, and in fact Jews are celebrating the Shabbat every week with the kiddush and the Motse, then I am sure that there is a way for us to celebrate the death and resurrection of the Mashiach in a Jewish way.

SEATTLE

Next week I will have the privilege to visit the Jewish Adventist group in Seattle in the States. We have a group which started there few months ago under the initiative of Vitali Oliinik, assisted by Sasha Bolotnikov. If you want to join us for the worship on Friday evening, our location will be

Eastgate Congregational Church
15318 SE Newport Way,
Bellevue, WA 98006

Overview



Toldot

Genesis 25:19-28:9

After 20 years of marriage, Yitzchak's prayers are answered and Rivka conceives twins. The pregnancy is extremely painful. G-d reveals to Rivka that the suffering is a microcosmic prelude to the worldwide conflict that will rage between the two great nations descended from these twins, Rome and Israel.

Esav is born, and then Yaakov, holding onto Esav's heel. They grow and Esav becomes a hunter, a man of the physical world, whereas Yaakov sits in the tents of Torah developing his spiritual knowledge of God.

On the day of their grandfather Avraham's funeral, Yaakov is cooking lentils, the traditional mourner's meal. Esav rushes in, ravenous from a hard days hunting, and sells his birthright (and its concomitant spiritual responsibilities) for a bowl of lentils, demonstrating his unworthiness for the position of firstborn.

A famine strikes Canaan and Yitzchak thinks of escaping to Egypt, but G-d tells him that because he was bound as a sacrifice, he has become holy and must remain in the Holy Land. He relocates to Gerar in the land of the Philistines, where, to protect Rivka, he has to say she is his sister.

The Philistines grow jealous of Yitzchak when he becomes immensely wealthy, and Avimelech the king asks him to leave.

Yitzchak re-digs three wells dug by his father, prophetically alluding to the three future Temples. Avimelech, seeing that Yitzchak is blessed by G-d, makes a treaty with him. When Yitzchak senses his end approaching, he summons Esav to give him his blessings.

Rivka, acting on a prophetic command that the blessings must go to Yaakov, arranges for Yaakov to impersonate Esav and receive the blessings. When Esav in frustration reveals to his father that Yaakov has bought the birthright, Yitzchak realizes that the birthright has been bestowed correctly on Yaakov and confirms the blessings he has given Yaakov. Esav vows to kill Yaakov, so Rivka sends Yaakov to her brother Lavan where he may find a suitable wife.

Yitzchak is Concerned by the Loneliness of Avraham

The Torah states: "And Yitzchak (Isaac) was on his way, coming from Be'er L'Chai Ro'i (literally, 'Well of the Living One, my Beholder'); and he is dwelling in the Negev" (Genesis 24:62). We have noticed last week that Yitzchak seemed to be absent at his mother funeral service, then here we find Yitzchak comforted after the death of his mother by his wife Rivka. So apparently he had been mourning. But where was he? The particular destination of his travels is instructive — Be'er L'chai Ro'i. We have heard of this place before. Hagar gave this place its name when she ran away from her mistress Sarah. Rashi notes Yitzchak's choice of destination, and finds within it an indication of the very tender relationship between Avraham and Yitzchak: Yitzchak travelled to Be'er L'chai Ro'i to fetch Hagar, Avraham's estranged wife. Avraham is worried about his son, and arranges to bring an appropriate wife for him, while at the same time Yitzchak is concerned about his father's loneliness and brings him a familiar companion. That's why in fact the Jewish tradition identifies Ketura to Hagar.

Be'er L'chai Ro'i, A Place of Revelation

The Torah states: "And it came to pass after the death of Avraham, that God blessed Yitzchak his son; and Yitzchak dwelled by Be'er L'chai Ro'i." (Genesis 25:11). The Ramban focuses on the spiritual qualities of Be'er L'chai Ro'i. Based on the language, he understands that this is a place that Yitzchak frequents.¹⁰ This is his designated place of prayer, for this is a place of revelation. An angel appeared to Hagar here; this is a place of prophecy. Given the proximity to his home, he chooses this as his spiritual sanctuary, his refuge of solitude. The Seforno¹¹ even posits that Yitzchak was praying for a bride, and as he utters his prayer - The mission of his father's servant is successfully completed miles away.

The text makes it clear that this trip to Be'er L'chai Ro'i is not an isolated visit. We find that this place later becomes Yitzchak's home. After the death of Avraham, Be'er L'chai Ro'i becomes the place that Yitzchak settles.

Yitzchak Blessings

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov asks the question: Why in the blessing to Yaakov Yitzchak mentions heaven first, and to Esau he mentions earth first?

He answers: Our sages explain that the blessing to Yaakov and through him to his descendants - the Jewish people, was that to them heavenly and spiritually matters should come first. In other words, the performance of Mitzvot (“heaven”) should be the goal and objective of a Jew. Earthly matters should be only a means to an end. Thus, the physical and spiritual are constantly connected.

Rabbi Meir of Premishlan, who was a holy man, would take a shortcut, which took him up and down a hill, in order to get to the Mikvah (ritual bath). He would take this shortcut even during the winter, when the mountain was icy. Others who tried to do the same, failed. They slid on the ice and were bruised. When asked how he walks up and down the hill on the ice, he replied, “When one is connected to above, one doesn’t fall down below!”

Yitzchak blessed Yaakov that heavenly matters (Torah and Mitzvot) be his guideline, even when dealing with worldly matters. A constant connection to G-d is our safety net from the pitfalls which earthly matters can cause.

Rivka and Yitzchak Encounter

At the end of Parashat Toldot, Avraham’s faithful servant completes his mission: He declines Lavan’s extended hospitality and brings their “negotiation” to a successful conclusion. Rivka herself has no small part in this conclusion. She is unequivocal; her choice is clear: And they called for Rivka and said to her, “Will you go with this man?” And she said, “I will go.” (Genesis 24:58). When Rivka said “I will go” she effectively divorces herself from an immoral pagan society at the earliest possible opportunity. The midrashic teachings regarding her home in Padan Aram leave no room for doubt: Rivka’s father Betuel was at the apex of this corrupt society; he was the most immoral person in Padan Aram.

Rivka and her entourage set out, and Avraham’s servant leads the way to his master’s house. As they approach, they come upon Yitzchak, who is out in the field, immersed in prayer. When she sees him,

Rivka’s reaction is powerful: “And Yitzchak went out to meditate (or converse) in the field at the evening time; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, camels were coming. And Rivka lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Yitzchak, she fell (or, dismounted) off the camel.” (Genesis 24:63-64). The scene is striking, dramatic—but Rivka’s reaction is given to various interpretations.

According to Rabbi Ari Kahn: When she sees Yitzchak in the field, without even knowing who he is, she either falls off or dismounts from her camel. While some midrashim “blame” Yitzchak’s physical beauty, others teach that Rivka reacted as she did because she alone was able to discern Yitzchak’s other-worldly characteristics. The Alshech (a sixteenth century rabbi, son of Chayyim Alshech. He was a disciple of R. Joseph Caro, author of the “Shulchan Aruch”) explains that she was in awe when she saw his holiness, while other commentaries say that she was frightened when she saw him. Other sources point to Rivka’s own innocence and inexperience as the source of panic and confusion that caused her to fall. These sources seem to fit into a larger theme found in the midrash which we may call “the preservation of Rivka’s innocence”: Rabbinic sources contain a wealth of comments and midrashim that stress the depravity of the home which Rivka left behind, the corrupt world of Betuel and Lavan that Rivka rejected without a moment’s hesitation. In fact, as we shall see, the biographical details revealed—and concealed—in the text of the Torah may be part and parcel of this issue.

The Torah

“The Torah is not a storybook. The Midrash tells us that the word Torah in Hebrew derives from the word “Hora’ah,” meaning to point the way; the Torah was given to us by God to guide us through life. In general, it is downright stingy with words and avoids details with a passion.”

GOD'S DAUGHTER, SISTER...

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai asked Rabbi Eliezer bar Rabbi Yosi: “Did you possibly hear an explanation of the following verse from your father? Go forth and gaze daughters of Zion at King Solomon, adorned by the crown that his mother fashioned for him on his wedding day, the day of the rejoicing of his heart. (Song of Songs 3:11)”

He said yes —He told him [that his father] explained it in terms of the following parable: “The king had an only daughter that he loved more than was proper and he called her ‘my daughter.’ He loved her even more and he called her ‘my sister.’ His love did not waver until he finally called her ‘my mother.’”

“Similarly at first God loved Israel and called Israel ‘My daughter,’ as it is written, Hear O daughter and see and incline your ears. (Psalms 45:11) God did not waver till He described Israel as His sister, as it is written, The voice of my beloved knocking on my door, ‘Open up my sister, my beloved.’ (Song of Songs 5:1) God was steadfast in His love for Israel till He called it ‘my mother,’ as it is written, Pay attention to me My people, My mother ... (Isaiah 51:4)”

Rabbi Shimon rose and kissed him on the top of his head. He told him, “If I had come to earth only to hear these words it would have been worthwhile.” (Shir Hashirim Rabba 3,21)

Let us try and bring these lofty ideas down to earth in steps. What does it mean that Israel is described as God’s daughter, or sister, or mother?.

HOW LONG DO WE PRAY?

The Talmud says that the pious men of former years would spend three hours for each of the three daily prayers. They would meditate one hour before prayer, then pray for an hour and again meditate an hour after prayer. Thus, spending nine hours each day in prayer.

The Talmudic sage Rabbi Yochanan says, “Why did our sages institute that the prayers be recited in a whisper? In order not to embarrass the sinners who confess their sins.”

The Talmudic sage Rosh Lokish says, “Whoever has a house of prayer in his city and does not go there to pray is called a bad neighbor.”

Rabbi Yekusiel Lepler, a Chassid of the Baal Hatanya, would at times spend so many hours in prayers that when he finished the morning prayer he would immediately have to begin the afternoon

prayer and right after go into the evening prayer. In other words, he would spend the entire day praying.”

WHERE ARE OUR POSSESSIONS?

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch succeeded the Baal Shem Tov as leader of the Chassidic movement. Before becoming leader, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritch was a teacher. Living in poverty, he didn’t even have the barest necessities of a decent table, chairs and bed.

Once the Baal Shem Tov asked a visitor to stop in Mezritch on his way home and give regards to Rabbi Dov Ber. When the person came to Rabbi Dov Ber’s house, he couldn’t believe its dilapidated state. When he went inside, he was even more shocked at the poverty which he found.

After giving regards from the Baal Shem Tov, the man said; “Rabbi, I am not a wealthy man, yet, at home, I have a decent table, chairs and beds. How can you live like this?”

Rabbi Dov Ber looked at him, smiled and replied, “You said, ‘at home you have everything you need’. Sure, at home one should have all the necessities... I too, have at home all that I need!”

Rabbi Dov Ber was implying that he didn’t view this world as his “home”. To Rabbi Dov Ber, this world was only *Ohalecha* “your tents”, a temporary place to prepare for his real “home” in the World-to-Come.

Thus, we recite each morning, “How good are your tents, O Jacob.” This serves as a reminder that this world is *Ohalecha*—your tents—that all material possessions are only temporary.

A believer’s true possession and everlasting real estate are the Word of God and spiritual life one strengthen in this world.

EDITOR

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Haftara

Malachi 1: 1 - 2:7

PARASHA: This week's Parasha is about Yaakov and Esau. "The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them." (Genesis 25-26).

HAFTARAH: The Haftarah is also about Yaakov and Esau. "I have loved you, says the LORD. But you say, "How have you loved us?" Is not Esau Jacob's brother? says the LORD. Yet I have loved Jacob" (Malachi 1:1)

BESORAH: In this Besorah, the priests and the leaders deserved the reproaches of G-d: "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching." (Mark 11:17-18). That's why they wanted to kill Yeshua.

HAFTARAH: The priests and the leaders deserved the reproaches of G-d "O priests, who despise my name. You say, "How have we despised your name?" By offering polluted food on my altar. And you say, "How have we polluted it?" By thinking that the LORD'S table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not wrong? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not wrong? Try presenting that to your governor; will he be pleased with you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 1:6-8).

BESORAH: Yeshua entered the temple and was not happy: "And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves" (Mark 11:15).

HAFTARAH: The Prophet Malachi is the voice of G-d and says that G-d is not happy with what happens in the temple. "Oh, that someone among you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not kindle fire on my altar in vain!" (Mal. 1:10). But there is hope: For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 2:7).

Besorat Yeshua

Mark 11: 15-25

PARASHA: Yaakov is shocked by the behavior of Esau He knows that he is not spiritual and does not deserve the firstborn's rights

BESORAH: Yeshua entered the temple and is shocked by what he sees: "Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold dove" (Mark 11:15).

PARASHA: Yaakov had a similar character as Yeshua, he was a spiritual man who liked to meditate and to pray. "while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents." (Genesis 25:27).

BESORAH: Yeshua reminds Israel the first purpose of the Temple is to be a house of prayer for all nations. "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'" (Mark 11:17)

PARASHA: Rivka is a great lady, full of faith. She knows the promise G-d gave to Abraham and Yitzhak. She has faith in the future of her son Yaakov, because she knows he is the more spiritual of her sons. That is why she was prepared to do everything for Yaakov. She knew that he was the man who was to receive the promises and the blessings. "Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you." (Gen. 27:8) .

BESORAH: Yeshua on the earth was a man of faith, a man who knew what would be in the future and who invited his disciples to have faith. "Yeshua answered them, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22).

PARASHA: Esau is not happy, For him what happened was not fair and wanted to kill his brother. "Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said ... I will kill my brother Jacob." (Gen. 27:41).

BESORAH: The leaders of G-d's people wanted to kill Yeshua. "And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him" (Mark 11:18).

