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*Shabbat Naso*  
*June 6, 2009*  
*14 Sivan 5769*

## News

### CONCERT IN DNEPROPETROVSK

A very good Jewish ministry is going on in Ukraine, in the city of Dnepropetrovsk. We have just received this news from Maxim, one the leaders of this ministry over there. He says "I am happy to have an opportunity to write you about our life and our ministry in Dnepropetrovsk. We thank God for giving us the opportunity to organize some events around the celebrations of Shavuot. We organized a concert named "Jerusalem Gates". Many Adventists and people from other denominations were invited and involved. We had the pleasure to hear choirs singing guitar and other instruments playing and soloist singing.



We heard at the same meeting Jewish poetry written by a Jewish author, Faina Rodinovskaya and a Christian author Antonina Glushenko. The theme of our meditations were about the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem. We invited a



Jewish historian Ella Tahterina who gave us a lot of historical information about Jerusalem. Historical, Pastor Maxim Gordienko was in charge of sharing with the assembly the spiritual meaning of the city of Jerusalem. We are happy

that about 130 people came to the concert. Jews and Christian enjoyed this concert and the presentations.

### VISIT IN THOUSAND OAKS

I was very happy to celebrate the Shabbat 23th of May with the Adventist congregation in Thousand Oaks, California. It was important for me to be there in order to support the project of Alan Reinach to start a Jewish ministry in this part of California where so many Jews are living.

It was also a very special Shabbat, because it was the Shabbat which preceded the feast of Shavuot. To be in term with the Jewish people we decided to read the book of Ruth and to draw some lessons for us today. Of course the main lessons were about God's love for everybody. Ruth was a Moabite lady, we remember that these people were forbidden to be part of God's people. But God, in his grace, looked at the heart of this lady and gave her the opportunity not only to be part of God's people but also to be one of the ancestors of King David and the Messiah.

It was a good occasion also to speak with this congregation about the biblical feasts, do we have



to celebrate them today as they were celebrated in the time of the Bible by the Jewish people?

We had a very good time of questions and answers when everyone could ask questions about Israel, our ministry and many other points. This day was a successful day and in fact too short.

# OVERVIEW



## NASO

### NUMBERS 4:21 - 7:89

The Torah assigns the exact Mishkan-related tasks to be performed by the families of Gershon, Kehat, and Merari, the sons of Levi.

A census reveals that over 8,000 men are ready for such service.

All those ritually impure are to be sent out of the encampments.

If a person, after having sworn in court to the contrary, confesses that he wrongfully retained his neighbor's property, he has to pay an additional fifth of the base-price of the object and bring a guilt offering as atonement.

If the claimant has already passed away without heirs, the payments are made to a kohen.

In certain circumstances, a husband who suspects that his wife had been unfaithful brings her to the Temple. A kohen prepares a drink of water mixed with dust from the Temple floor and a special ink that was used for inscribing Hashem's Name on a piece of parchment. If she is innocent, the potion does not harm her; rather it brings a blessing of children. If she is guilty, she suffers a supernatural death.

A nazir is one who vows to dedicate himself to Hashem for a specific period of time. He must abstain from all grape products, grow his hair and avoid contact with corpses. At the end of this period he shaves his head and brings special offerings. The kohanim are commanded to bless the people.

The Mishkan is completed and dedicated on the first day of Nissan in the second year after the Exodus. The prince of each tribe makes a communal gift to help transport the Mishkan, as well as donating identical individual gifts of gold, silver, animal and meal offerings

## BIRKAT HACOCHANIM

This week's Parsha, Naso, is the first Parsha after the holiday of Shavuot, when we received the Torah. Naso is the longest

Parsha in the Torah. The number three is found in this Parsha, as well as in connection with the holiday of Shavuot which we just celebrated.

Shavuot and the number three is described by our sages as follows:

"The Torah which is comprised of three parts (Torah, Prophets and Scriptures) was given to the Jewish nation which is comprised of three (Kohen, Levi, Israel). It was given in the third month (Sivan) through Moshe who is the third in his family (Miriam, Aaron, and Moshe)."

In Parshat Naso we also find the significance of the number three when G-d commands the Kohanim (Priests) to bless the people of Israel with a "three-fold" blessing:

- 1) May the L-rd bless you and keep you;
- 2) May the L-rd make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you;
- 3) May the L-rd lift up His countenance unto you and give you peace."

This blessing is called "Birkat Kohanim" (priestly blessing). It is also called "Bracha Hamshuleshet" (three-fold blessing) because it contains three parts.

The number three reminds us the "Shema Israel" where the name of G-d is repeated three times:

- 1) Shema Israel, Adonai (the L-rd)
- 2) Elohenu (Our G-d)
- 3) Adonai (The L-rd) echad (is one)

For the Jewish people this "three-fold" blessing was given to the people of Israel in the merit of our three patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. but in the Zohar it is asked a question about the Shema Israel, "How three can be one?" could we have in these numbers three an allusion to our "triune" G-d: Father, Son, and Ruach Elohim?

The numerical value of the first letters of the three words in the first part of the blessing, "Yevarechecha Hashem V'yishmerecha" (May the L-rd bless you and guard you) (Yud, Yud, Vav), add up to 26, which corresponds to the numerical value of G-d's name.

When the Kohanim (priests) bless the congregation they raise their hands pointing upwards leaving spaces between their fingers. Our sages explain this custom as follows:

When the people of Israel heard that G-d commanded the Kohanim to bless them, they complained, "Why should we be blessed through an

intermediary. We want to be blessed directly from You!”

To this G-d replied, “I will be present when the Kohanim recite the blessings and I will bless you!”

The Kohanim’s pointing upward and spacing their fingers apart alludes to the fact that it is G-d’s blessings coming through them.

## FULLFILLING THE MITZVOT WITH PURE INTENTIONS

**D**uring the twelve days of the dedication of the Tabernacle the heads of the twelve tribes each brought an offering. Although the offerings of the leaders were the same, the Torah repeats each gift with all of its details. The Torah never uses an extra word or letter unless it is coming to teach us a lesson about life. What lesson can we learn here?

The Ralbag, a 14th century French Biblical commentator, informs us that the lesson for us to learn is that we should not try to out do another person in order to boast or feel superior to him. We should keep our focus on the accomplishment, not on our egos.

Rabbi Zelig Pliskin said, “the goal in spiritual matters is to serve the Almighty, to grow as a person and not to seek honor or to compete with anyone else. Competition has its motivating factor, but one up manship has no place in fulfilling Torah principles. One should fulfill mitzvot with pure intentions.

## WHAT IS A COHEN?

**W**hen the Torah is read in the synagogue on Shabbat, a Cohen is called to make the blessings over reading the first portion. Then a Levite is called for the second portion. A Israelite may then be called for the remaining portions to be read. A Cohen is usually accorded greater honor or precedence before a Levite or an Israel. What do these titles mean and how did they come about?

Jewish history starts with our forefather, Abraham. His son Isaac continued the traditions and passed them on to his son, Jacob. Twelve sons were born to Jacob: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Zevulon, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph and

Binyamin. These were the original 12 tribes of Israel. Because of a special blessing from Jacob to Joseph, his portion was given to his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe, who were then elevated to equal status with Yosef’s brothers—so there were really 13 tribes!

Until the transgression of the Golden Calf, the firstborn sons were the ones who were designated to do the holy service in the Mishkan, the Portable Sanctuary, in the Desert. According to the Jewish tradition, no one from the tribe of Levi worshipped the Golden Calf and, therefore, the Almighty replaced the firstborn with the tribe of Levi to serve in the sanctuary (Numbers 3:11-12). Levi had three sons: Gershon, Kehath and Merari. The work of the Sanctuary—erecting, dismantling, carrying, singing, assisting the Cohanim—was divided amongst the three families.

Moses and Aaron were brothers—descended from Amram the son of Kehath. While Moses was the leader of the Jewish people in the desert, the Almighty designated Aaron as the Cohen Gadol (High Priest). For all time, Aaron and his descendants would be Cohanim. The Cohanim were the priests who performed the actual service in the Mishkan and later in the Temple in Jerusalem.

## SHALOM

**T**his week we also recite the first chapter of Pirkei Avot (Maxims of our Fathers). The blessing of Shalom-peace is found in the Parsha and in the Pirkei Avot of this week.

Hillel said: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace (Shalom), loving your fellow creatures and bringing them close to the Torah.

Our sages tell us that one of G-d’s many names is “Shalom.” Our sages state, “There is no greater vessel to contain G-d’s blessings than Shalom!” This applies to the individual, the home and the community.

The first chapter of Pirkei Avot ends with, “Raban Shimon ben Gamliel said: “The world is established on three principles; truth (Emet), justice (Din) and peace (Shalom).”

## A LEGEND ABOUT SOLOMON

There was a period of time in which King Solomon was deposed from his throne by Ashmedai, king of the demons. During this time, Solomon wandered through the country penniless and homeless and like other beggars had to rely on the generosity and kindness of people who were willing to help him with food and lodging.

People didn't believe his claim that he was King Solomon, yet, once in a while Solomon would encounter people who did believe him. One such person invited him to his home where he prepared a banquet and a meal fit for a king. However, throughout the meal the host kept reminding Solomon of his past - of the gander and luxury he once had in the palace. Listening to his host made Solomon so sad that he wept throughout the meal. He had no appetite for the food and left the home in great distress.

The next day Solomon met another person who recognized him. He too invited Solomon to his home. "I am a poor man," said the host. I cannot offer you a sumptuous meal like the other person yesterday. But I can give you a simple meal of vegetables. Please come to my home."

King Solomon accepted the offer. The host served Solomon vegetables, but throughout the meal he spoke words of encouragement and comfort. He reminded Solomon, "G-d promised your father, David, that the throne of kingdom will belong to his children forever. He encouraged Solomon that G-d tests only those whom He loves. "You are experiencing G-d's test which is a sign that G-d loves you! I'm sure that He will very soon restore you to being King again."

These words uplifted King Solomon's spirits. In contrast to the previous meal, Solomon left satisfied and in great spirit.

When King Solomon was reinstated as king, he wrote about his experiences in Proverbs, "Better a meal of vegetables with love than a fatted cow with hatred." (Prov. 15:17) Thus, the priestly blessing is that when G-d blesses us with wealth He will make "His countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you."

## MY FATHER WAS A COHEN

The story is told of a man who came to his rabbi with a request, "Make me a Cohen!" The rabbi was puzzled because a person acquires the designation of Cohen through heredity and only if his father was a Cohen. He replied to the man, "I am sorry; I can't make you a Cohen." Before the rabbi could explain, the man insisted, "You have got to make me a Cohen; I'll give you \$10,000!" The rabbi again apologized that he couldn't help him and started to explain, but the man interrupted again to raise the offer \$25,000. In exasperation the rabbi asks, "Why is it so important for you to be a Cohen?" The man replies, "Because my father was a Cohen, his father was a Cohen and my great-grandfather was a Cohen!"

## A JEWISH PRAYER

I asked for strength, and  
God gave difficulties to make me strong.  
I asked for wisdom, and  
God gave me problems to solve.  
I asked for prosperity, and  
God gave me brawn and brain to work.  
I asked for courage, and  
God gave me dangers to overcome.  
I asked for love, and  
God gave me troubled people to help.  
I asked for favors, and  
God gave me opportunities.  
I received nothing I wanted.  
I received everything I needed.  
My prayers were answered

## 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

## Judges 13:2 - 25

**PARASHA:** In our text we have a long description of the Nazir: “The L-RD spoke to Moses, saying: ... When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to the L-RD, they shall separate themselves from wine and strong drink; they shall drink no wine vinegar or other vinegar, and shall not drink any grape juice or eat grapes, fresh or dried. ... All the days of their nazirite vow no razor shall come upon the head; until the time is completed for which they separate themselves to the L-RD, they shall be holy...” (Num. 6:2,3,6).

**HAFTARA:** Our Haftara gives us an example of a Nazir, who did not decide to be a Nazir but who has been chosen by G-d to be a Nazir. It is the story of Samson. The text of the Haftara is about the announcement of his birth. “the angel of the L-RD appeared to the woman and said to her, “Although you are barren, having borne no children, you shall conceive and bear a son. Now be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, or to eat anything unclean, for you shall conceive and bear a son. No razor is to come on his head, for the boy shall be a nazirite to G-d from birth” (Judges 13:3-5).

A beautiful story, because in fact it is not one of the angels of the L-rd who appeared to Samson's mother, but the angel of the L-rd, that means a very special angel who is very close to the L-rd. This angel appeared to Abraham before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and in the text he is called in Hebrew “Adonai” (Genesis 18:1-3). This special angel was also the protector of Israel in the wilderness and had the power to forgive their sins (Exodus 23:20-22). This angel is called in the book of Daniel, Michael (Daniel 12:1) in Hebrew Mi-Ka-EL means the one “who (Mi) is like (Ka) G-d (EL)” and many theologians have seen in this angel the appearance of the Mashiach, the one who protects and saves Israel. “At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise... at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Dan. 12:1,2)

# BESORAT YESHUA

## Mark 4:10-20

**PARASHA:** This text is about nazirites. “The L-RD spoke to Moses, saying: ...When either men or women make a special vow, the vow of a nazirite, to separate themselves to the L-RD...” (Numbers 6:2).

**HAFTARAH:** Is about the birth of the Nazir Samson. “for the boy shall be a nazirite to G-d from birth” (Judges 13:5).

**BESORAH:** I think that we can make a strong parallel between the text of the Haftarah and this passage of the Besorah, because in the Haftarah the father of Samson, does not believe very much (Judges. 13:8), maybe he believes, but is skeptical. And then the angel appeared for a second time, not to the father, but again to the mother and she had to run to call her husband to be sure that he will see by himself and will believe. In the **BESORAH**, Yeshua, interpreting the parable of the sower, says that the sow fell in different part of the field and is received in different manner, some believe, some doubt, and some don't believe.

In this text of the **BESORAH** we see also a parallel with the character of Samson. Indeed, it is not because Samson was chosen by G-d, before he was born that he cannot make his own and personal choices. Samson knew exactly what the angel said to his mother before he was born, his mother follow all the order of the angel, he was a nazir in his way of life. He knew that he was chosen to lead Israel to victory against the Philistines. But he choose the world and the love of a non believer woman. What Yeshua said: “**And others are those sown among the thorns: these are the ones who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the lure of wealth, and the desire for other things come in and choke the word, and it yields nothing.**” (Mark 4:18-20).

It is exactly the story of Samson, he received the sow by his mother, but his heart was like the thorns, it could not grow in a good manner and he was attracted by a beautiful woman who was a member of the enemy of God's people, and of course when Delilah had to make a choice, she choose her own people.

