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# *Shabbat Eikev*

## *August 8, 2009*

### *18 Ab 5769*

## **News**

### **NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION JEWISH ADVISORY**

This week is an American week for the Jewish ministry since two important meetings have taken place in Phoenix, Arizona.

The first meeting is a very important one for Jewish Ministries in the States. It is the NAD Jewish Advisory.

Jewish Ministries leaders met in Phoenix on the 4th and 5th of August in the Hyatt hotel near the convention center.

This meeting was chaired by elder Castillo, NAD Vice-President. Were present to this meeting Ralph Ringer the NAD Jewish Ministry director, Sasha Bolotnikov, Shalom Learning Center director, Jacques Doukhan, Editor of Shabbat Shalom magazine, Richard Elofer, General Conference Jewish Ministries director and representatives of Jewish ministries from Florida, California, Washington State, Illinois, Michigan, Oregon, Canada, a visitor from Ukraine.

The reports were very encouraging, there are today in the States 18 Jewish Adventist congregations which totalize about 500 members.

The prospects are very interesting since there are about 10 projects for new Jewish Adventist congregations, we can praise the Lord for this progress.

The only shadow in this very good report is that the North American division will cut the budget of the Jewish Ministry and Shabbat Shalom magazine because of the recession and financial struggle in the States. The Jewish ministry is not the only one to see his budget to be decreased but all the various ministries of the NAD are invited to reduce their expenses.

However the work of the Lord is not in the hand of men, it is in His hands and I have this confidence that the work will continue to grow even though the budget decrease and some projects which have to

be postponed will flourish again when the financial situation will be better.

However I really hope that when the financial situation of the Division will be better the Jewish ministry budget will come back at the level of 2008 and 2009.

Lets pray for our leaders to continue to be wise in the use of the finance of the Almighty.

### **ASI NATIONAL CONVENTION**

The second important event of this week in the National ASI convention. This convention is located in Phoenix, Arizona. This meeting is important because first it is a very high spiritual "camp" meeting. The speakers are very spiritual and give always very good presentations, lectures and seminars.

The second reason is because ASI means "Adventist Services and Industries", it is a lay people organization. Churches and church organization cannot be member of this organization, only business people who are ready to share the three angel's message in their market place. One of the goals of the national convention is to raise money for various projects in the world. And I can testify that these people are very generous for the cause of the Lord.

Each year an offering is collected during the Shabbat morning service (I know that for Jews to collect money on Shabbat is offending, but we have to remember that in the Torah we could not go to the temple to worship without an offering for the Lord, today offerings are done with money and this money is use for spiritual purpose and for the progress of G-d's work, that's why in our midst we accept to collect money on Shabbat morning.)

This offering gathers millions of dollars every year and all these money is distributed for the work on the field. One of the projects of this year is the opening of our Community Service Center in Jerusalem, ASI decided to donate for this project \$20,000. We can praise the Lord for the dedication of these business people.

I don't have space this week for pictures, I will put them on our Picassa web site and will publish some of them next week in this newsletter.

# OVERVIEW



## EIKEV

### DEUTERONOMY 7:12-11:25

If Bnei Yisrael carefully observe even those “minor” mitzvot that are usually “trampled” underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations of earth.

Moshe tells Bnei Yisrael that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little, so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before Bnei Yisrael are able to organize and settle the whole land.

After again warning Bnei Yisrael to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance.

Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey.

Moshe cautions Bnei Yisrael not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor; rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of Bnei Yisrael’s righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe.

Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments at Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon’s passing is recorded as is the elevation of the levi’im to Hashem’s ministers.

Moshe points out that the seventy people who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of the heaven in abundance.

After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe speaks the second paragraph of the Shema, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvot and the curse that results from non-observance.

## KEEPING THE MITZVOT

This week’s Parasha, Eikev, as the rest of the fifth book of the Torah, D’varim (Deuteronomy), records Moshe’s words to

the people of Israel before his death.

Knowing that he will not enter the promised land, Moshe spends his final days preparing the Jewish nation for the future. He cautions them to adhere to all the mitzvot (commandments) of G-d especially when they enter Israel; their physical and spiritual good and welfare depends on their actions.

He reminds them of the importance of keeping the mitzvot for which, in return, G-d too, will fulfill His promises to them; **“And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your body [children] and the fruit of your land...”** (Deut. 7:13). Moshe mentions the sin of the Golden Calf and warns Israel not to repeat their past mistakes.

## THERE IS NO “LIGHT” COMMANDMENT

The Parasha states **“And it shall be because (“Eikev”) you will listen to these ordinances and keep them that G-d will keep with you the covenant and mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you and bless you...”** (Deut 7:12) The name of the Parasha *Eikev* in this context means “because” (in the NIV it means “if”). The word *Eikev* also means literally “heel.” Our sages tell us that this teaches us that a person must be very careful to perform every *mitzvah*, even those that may seem insignificant (“*mitzvot* that one may step upon with their heel”). Our sages in Chapters of our Fathers (*Pirkei Avot*) tell us, “A person must be equally careful with a light *mitzvah* just as with a strict *mitzvah*”.

Another explanation is that “heel” represents the simple person, just as the heel is the lowest level of one’s body. In this context, the Torah is telling us that the performance of *mitzvot* of every believer matters. Each believer, no matter at what spiritual level he may be, contributes to G-d’s blessings for the entire people of G-d.

The Baal Shem Tov used to spend many hours in prayer. His disciples would finish their prayer earlier and then wait for their Rebbe. Only then would they go home and have their Shabbat meal.

One Shabbat, the disciples decided to go home, have their meal and return to synagogue before their Rebbe finished his prayers. However, to their amazement, when they returned, the Baal Shem Tov had already finished his prayers and was waiting for them.

They asked the Baal Shem Tov, “Why did the Rebbe finish his prayers so much earlier this Shabbat?”

The Baal Shem Tov replied, “I will explain this with the following parable. Many people were standing near a tree, on the top of which there was a beautiful bird. In order to catch the bird, they decided that each person will stand on the other’s shoulder, until the one on top will reach the bird and catch it.”

“The same is with us,” said the Baal Shem Tov. “The only way I can reach to the higher spiritual spheres is when I place each one of you one on top of the other (in a spiritual sense) and thus, with your help, I could get to where I want to reach. However, when you all left, I lost your support and thus the ability to reach the spiritual heights.”

The name of this Parasha, *Eikev*, teaches us the above lessons: That every *mitzvah* is important - Even the seemingly not-so-important *mitzvot*. It also tells us that every believer’s action and performance of *mitzvot* is very important. Each person has a specific G-dly function in this world, which together contributes to the well-being of the entire G-d’s people.

## G-D’S FORGIVENESS

**T**he Torah states, “And now, Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you, but that you fear Hashem your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him...?” (Deut. 10:12). In the Talmud, our Sages ask, “is fear of Heaven such a small thing?” And their answer is, yes, to Moshe it was a small matter. They use a parable: if your friend asks to borrow a large amount of money, and you have it, then it seems like a little thing—whereas if someone asks you for even a small amount, but you don’t have it, then to you it seems large.

“However,” the Oznam Letorah asks, “Moshe gave the Torah to us! If it isn’t a small thing to us, then how can Moshe speak to us as if it is?”

Rabbi Yaakov Menken says that there is another way to look at this passage. Moshe has just described how the Nation of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, causing the destruction of the First Tablets and—had Moshe not intervened—their own destruction as well. Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, a French Scholar of the Middle Age, says that this verse is coming to teach us that “even though you have done all this, His mercy and His love are still upon you, and with all of the sins which you have done before Him, this is all He asks.”

According to the Midrash, the language of “and now” is used to denote returning to G-d. The Oznam LeTorah explains that “What happened, happened. ‘And now’ let us start anew, like a newborn child—and that which you sinned before, let it not be remembered or considered, or even come to mind, if from this day forward you will fear Hashem your G-d, to go in his ways and to love him.”

Sometimes we do bad things. Things we really and truly regret—and we feel guilty. Sometimes, we even feel worthless. We wonder, “how can I go to pray? Will He listen to me? Who am I to ask for my needs?” The verse is telling us that this is not what G-d wants! He wants us to admit our errors, “mend our ways,” and go forward. When a person sins against his neighbor, he must return anything he stole, and ask forgiveness from that person. And when a person sins against G-d, he must ask His forgiveness. But then, it is also important to be able to move on, and not to become burdened by one’s own inadequacy to the point where one is unable to continue working on living a G-dly life. It is crucial for our spiritual life to accept G-d’s forgiveness.

## HAUGHTINESS

**T**he Torah states, “Guard yourself, lest you forget Hashem your G-d, not to keep his commandments, judgements, and enactments... and you become haughty, and forget Hashem your G-d...” (Deut.. 8:11-12, 14). The Talmud [Tractate Sotah 5a] says that there is a Commandment not to be haughty. Any time the Torah employs the phrase “guard yourself, lest...,” explains Rebbe Ila’a, the Torah is warning us to not violate a Law—in this case, not to forget G-d. And when the Torah continues “... and you become haughty, and forget Hashem your G-d...,” G-d is telling us that the one inevitably leads to the other: if you become haughty, the end result will be that you will forget G-d.

Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch takes this concept a step further, saying that arrogance is, in and of itself, the beginning of forgetfulness of G-d. The Talmud Sotah also records (in the name of either Rav Chisda or Mar Ukva) that G-d says concerning anyone with the trait of haughtiness, “he and I cannot coexist in this world.” Why? Because the arrogant individual is so full of himself that he loses his recognition of all higher authority—including The Higher Authority.

## SEARCHING G-D'S WILL

A man walking on a dark street lost a bag of small change. He knew that if he asked people to provide light and help him search for his small change, they would decline. They would consider it a waste of their time.

What did he do? He took a golden coin and placed it on the ground. He then begged the people around him for light to help him find his lost golden coin. When the passers by heard that he lost a golden coin they stopped with their lanterns to help. Now, while the street was lit, in addition to the golden coin, he also collected the smaller coins.

This, according to our sages, was the case with Moshe and the people of Israel whom he took out of Egypt. The generation who left Egypt had committed many sins (Golden Calf, rebelling against G-d, sending the spies etc.). As a result, they may not have merited to be resurrected at the time of Mashiach..

Yeshua gave a similar parable: **“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”** (Luke 15:10) It is our duty to search for God’s will as a hidden and precious treasure and to keep it in our heart.

## PROOF OF G-D'S LOVE

A father who wishes to teach his child to walk, in the beginning he will walk together with the child and hold his hand. Then he will move away from the child, leaving the child on his own. The child will then take a step toward his father and the father will retreat a bit further so that the child will take a few more steps on his own. The father will repeat this process in order to get the child to walk greater and greater distances.

To the child it may seem that the father is moving away and ignoring him, yet the father

does this out of love and care for he knows that the child’s growth and development depends on this.

The same is with the righteous people. At times it may seem that G-d is ignoring them, yet, in truth as they come closer to G-d He will move away so that the righteous person will continuously move closer to him. Through this process, the righteous person ascends higher and higher spiritually.

This is what the Torah means with, **“Bear in mind that the LORD your God disciplines you just as a man disciplines his son.”** (Deut. 8:5). A person will seldom reprimand someone else’s child. The reason and purpose a father disciplines his child is out of love for the child for the sake of setting him in the right path and for his spiritual growth.

So too, the tests which G-d gives us should be taken as proof that He cares for us and considers us His children and His responsibility.

## IT WAS MY FATHER

In a small village in Russia there lived a Jewish farmer. One day the farmer received a letter written in Hebrew. Not being able to read the letter himself he went to the rabbi so that he tell him the contents of the letter. The rabbi read the letter to himself and then told the farmer that the letter was a notification from the rabbi of the city where the farmer’s father lived that his father had passed away. As soon as the farmer heard this he fainted.

Someone asked the farmer, “How come the rabbi didn’t faint, yet, when you heard it from him you fainted?”

“What a silly question,” replied the farmer. “it’s not the rabbi’s father who died... it was MY father!”

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### Isaiah 49:14-51:3

**T**his Shabbat is the second Shabbat after *Tisha B'Av*. This period is called, *Shiva D'nechemta*—“Seven weeks of comfort.” The seven Haftarot of the week between *Tish'a B'av* and *Rosh Hashana* are prophecies of comfort and hope for Israel and God's people at large.

**HAFTARA:** The text of Isaiah continues to comfort Israel. From time to time Israel can contemplate, “**The LORD has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me**” (Is. 49:14). The L-rd answers, “**Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you**” (15). We already said that the L-rd loves his people with an everlasting love. He will never forget his people. “**See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me**” (16).

Some people think that there is no connection between what happens to Israel today and the prophecies, but it is difficult to believe that. If it is so, how can we understand the prophecies? How can we understand that G-d continues to love Israel, although the prophecies are not about Israel in our days? “**Thus says the Lord G-D: I will soon lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders**” (22). It is clear that this text can be applied to the return of Israel from the Babylonian Exile, but why not a double application with modern times? It is impossible to read part of the text as applying to Israel, “**See, I have inscribed you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me**” (16), and not applying another part of the text to the same people. “**I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob**” (26). Of course, Israel is not without sin, but the L-rd continues to be with them, calling them to repentance. “**Why was no one there when I came? Why did no one answer when I called?**” (Is. 50:2). There is a beautiful structure of the text “**The Lord G-d helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced**” (7) in parallel with “**It is the Lord G-d who helps me; who will declare me guilty?**” (9). I would not personally take the risk of declaring Israel guilty when G-d provides forgiveness to her.

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 6:41-52

**A**s I wrote in the Haftara text, we are in a special period called “Seven weeks of comfort.” This week the Brit Hachadasha text is the same of the text of last week, since on regular years the two parashot are read on the same Shabbat.

**BESORAH:** In our text of the Besorah, Yeshua not only taught the crowds and worked as a prophet, but he comforted the people by providing food. “**Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all**” (Mark 6:41). Yeshua is the new Moses, the one who was announced by Moses. Exactly as Moses gave bread from heaven, Yeshua also gave bread, but in addition to bread, Yeshua also shared fish among all these people who numbered about 5,000 people. They were all filled which means there was more food than was needed, and the rest, twelve baskets full which could be used later, was collected. This number is a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel who were fed by Moses and G-d and also to the twelve talmidim of Yeshua who also were fed and became instruments of G-d for giving more spiritual food to the people of Israel. We remember that Moses said, “**In order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that the LORD decrees**” (Deut 8:3 JPS). Yeshua did one more thing; he saw the condition of his talmidim. Working days and nights with the Mashiach, they were tired from all the work, that is why Yeshua wanted to comfort them, “*Nachmu Nachmu Ami*”. “**Immediately, He made his disciples get into the boat and go...**” (Mark 6:46). Yeshua cares for his people; he comforts and helps them to get rest. Only after all this work did he decide to have a close relationship with our father in heaven, His Father. “**After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray**” (47). The disciples did not get rest though; they were on the sea and once again Yeshua went to comfort them. (cf. 47-52)

