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Shabbat Vayetse *November 28, 2009* *11 Kislev 5770*

News

SABBATH IN SEATTLE AREA

As I have announced it last week I am this Shabbat in Seattle, WA, to support our ministry there. That is one of the reasons for being late to send this parasha/Newsletter. The trip was long more than 24 hours, and then I had to prepare it.

I will preach in Seattle on Friday November 27 evening and Sabbath 28, morning. I hope that if you have friends who are living in this part of the States you will invite them to join us to celebrate the L-rd on His special day of Shabbat. The address of the congregation where I will be is:

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

STUDY CENTERS MEETING IN VANCOUVER

My travel to the North-West of the States this weekend, is also because there is an important meeting next week in Vancouver, BC. The Study Centers' Directors of the Office of Adventist Mission will meet there for their annual meeting.

It is one of my favorite meetings every year. As you know it the office of Global Mission we have five study centers, dealing with unreached people, among them Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Induists, and Post Modern.

During this meeting we present what has been done during the previous year and we prepare some plans for the next year. We share together ideas for our respective ministry.

This meeting is special because the new director for the Muslim Study Center will be introduce to us.

Thanks to pray for this meeting.

CHANUKA IS COMING SOON

December is the month of the feast of Chanuka, it is time to think about your special activities for this special week.

This year Chanuka will be from December 12 to 19. It is not every year that the beginning and the end of the feast occurred on Shabbat.

That means if you cannot meet every day in your congregation, you can at least mark the first and the last day of the feast.

In Israel, we have scheduled to have our week of prayer during this special week.

It is a good time to remind what is the meaning of this celebration. This feast is not very well known, because it is not one of the feasts given by Moses in the Torah.

But Chanuka is also an important moment to remind that this feast is crucial for the fulfillment of the Ministry of the Messiah.

We remember that in the second century BCE, The Greeks have profaned the Temple and then it was forbidden for the Jewish people to practice their religion. The Jewish people did not accept this fact, organized a resistance under the leadership of the Hasmonean family and succeeded to reorganized the worship of the true G-d in Jerusalem. An official dedication of the Temple was made, and the miracle of the light (candle which burned for eight days without enough oil) occurred.

If the Temple would not have been purified and dedicated before the coming of the Messiah, Yeshua could not fulfilled completely his ministry. That is why Chanuka was important for Yeshua. Even though it was not easy to travel from Capernahum to Jerusalem on Winter time, he did it, to celebrate this feast. We read in the book of Yochanan:

"At that time the Feast of the Dedication (Chanuka) took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon." (Yochanan 10:22-23)

Overview

Vayetse

Genesis 28:10-32:3

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Be'er Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family.

After three days of walk he arrives in a certain place, Mount Moriah, the place where his father Yitzchak was brought as an offering. He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between heaven and earth.

G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation, and that he will enjoy Divine protection.

Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and to give tithes on all that he will receive. Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well.

He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah.

Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel.

Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife.

Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina.

Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef.

Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him.

Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy.

Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home.

Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

Bethel

The Torah states: "And Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set;" (Genesis 28:10-11).

This place is called in the Bible "Bethel" which means "House of G-d". For Christians this place is a town called until today Bethel in the North of Jerusalem. However for the Jewish tradition Bethel, the House of G-d is Jerusalem and specially the Mount Moriah where Abraham had to offer Isaac in sacrifice. The Jewish tradition says that after leaving Be'er Sheva, Yaakov, following the example of Yitzchak his father, went to the Torah Academy that was in Jerusalem, he spent there fourteen years, and then he resumes his journey and comes first to Mount Moriah, the future site of the Beit Hamikdash (Temple). He sleeps there and received the dream of angels going up and down a ladder between heaven and earth.

Two Brothers and Two Sisters

The Torah states: **Jacob loved Rachel; so he answered, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel."** (Genesis 29:18). Since the first day Yaakov saw Rachel at the well, he loved her and wanted to marry her. A deal was done, he will work seven years for her, and then he will marry her.

However, the day after the wedding, Yaakov discovered that he was cheated and instead of Rachel, Lavan gave to him Leah the oldest sister.

I cannot read this story without making a parallel with the story we have in the previous parasha, Toldot, where we have two brothers and where Esav felt so bad when he discovered that his father gave the blessing he had for the first born to Yaakov.

In Toldot we have two brothers. And it is told how the youngest cheated the oldest (in taking his appearance or aspect) in order to get the special blessing promised by G-d to Abraham and Yitzchak. Saying that I don't condemn Yaakov, because I believe that Rivka who organized this event was right, she felt correctly the character of her two sons.

In Vayetse we have two sisters. And it is told how the oldest cheated the youngest (in taking her

appearance or aspect) in order to married Yaakov and to get the special blessing promised by God to Abraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. However in Vayetse it is the father who is the instrument of this event. It is like a chiasitic parallel.

- a. Esav the oldest is cheated by
- b. Yaakov the youngest
- c. Rivka the mother is the middlewoman
- c' Lavan make a deal with Yaakov (middleman)
- b' Rachel the youngest is cheated by
- a' Lea the oldest cheat the youngest

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig cites a Midrash which says that in the morning, when Yaakov realized that the woman with him was Leah and not Rachel, he asked her, "Why have you tricked me into believing that you were Rachel?" Leah responded, "It is from you that I learned to do so. Did you not pose as your brother in order to receive the blessings?"

Thanksgiving

It is interesting that the Jewish people read this parasha in the same time that Americans celebrate thanksgiving. This parasha is really a thanks giving from Yaakov, Leah and Rachel.

In this short parasha Yaakov and his wives give birth to 12 children, 11 boys and 1 girl. Only Benyamin was born in Eretz Israel.

One of these boys is named in order give thanks to the Lord. The Torah tells us that the reason for this name is, because, "she said, 'This time, I will thank G-d,' therefore she named him Yehudah." The name, Yehuda comes from the verb "Leodot" or "Odeh" which means to give thanks. We have the same root in the song "Odu Ladonai Ki tov", Give thanks to the Lord, For he is Good.

However, Yehuda was not the first born of Leah but the fourth one. The Rabbis asked the question, "Why did Leah give special thanks only when she had her fourth son?" Rabbi Marozov says, "Our sages explain that the matriarchs were prophetesses. Leah knew that Yaakov was to have twelve sons. She figured that each of Yaakov's four wives would have three sons. But with the birth of her fourth son, she realized that G-d gave her more than she could have hoped for. Thus, she gave special thanks to G-d and incorporated her thanks by naming him Yehudah."

Rachel's Suffering

The Torah states: "And when Rachel saw that she did not bear children to Jacob, Rachel envied her sister. And she said to Jacob: 'Give me children, if not I am as a dead woman.' And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel; and he said, 'Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?'" (Genesis 30:1,2). Why did Jacob grow angry at Rachel?

Rabbi Yeruchom Levovitz cites the Sforno, who explains that Jacob grew angry at Rachel because she said, "Give me," implying that her bearing a child was dependent on Jacob, rather than on God's will. His anger was for the Almighty's honor and this took precedence even over his love for Rachel. Nevertheless, we find in the Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah 71:7) that Jacob should have controlled his anger. Despite the justice of his rebuke, he should have appreciated the immensity of Rachel's suffering and not have spoken so sharply.

The Dream of the Ladder

In the beginning of this week's Parasha, Vayetse, the Torah tells about Yaakov's famous dream. In his dream he saw, "a ladder stood upon the earth and the top of the ladder reached into heaven and G-d's angels ascended and descended upon it. G-d was standing over him and said, 'I am G-d, the G-d of Abraham your father, and the G-d of Yitzchak. I will give to you and to your descendants the land on which you are lying'" (Gen 28:12-13). According to our sages, the ladder represents our prayers through which we connect to G-d. Through the ladder of prayer we connect to G-d.

It is also clear for us that our connection to G-d is through the Messiah. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life!" ... "Without me, no one can go to the Father." (Yochanan 14:6). We also have an interesting encounter of Yeshua with Phillip and Natanael in this same book of Yochanan. In his dialogue with them, Yeshua mentioned the ladder of Yaakov, showing that the ladder of Yaakov represented the Messiah (The Son of Man), through whom we can connect to G-d. "I tell you for certain that you will see heaven open and God's angels going up and coming down on the Son of Man" (Yochanan 1:51).

PROHIBITION OF VEXING ANYONE

The Chofetz Chaim's son wrote that his father was particularly careful not to hurt the feelings of beggars, although sometimes these unfortunate people say things that could arouse one's anger. The Sages comment in the Mechilta on Mishpatim that the prohibition against vexing a widow or an orphan includes anyone who suffers. Causing such a person even a slight discomfort is forbidden.

YAAKOV'S LIFE

The Jewish tradition is very precise about the life of Yaakov, it is said, "Yaakov was 63 years old when he left his parents' home. On the way he stopped at the Yeshiva (place of study) of Shem and Aiver, where he spent 14 years. When he came to Lavan he was 77. He worked seven years and was married at the age of 84".

THE ORANGE

The Torah said that, after receiving G-d's vision of the ladder and G-d's blessing, Yaakov said, "Jacob solemnly promised God, "If you go with me and watch over me as I travel, and if you give me food and clothes" (Gen 28:20). There is a Yiddish story written solely about an orange. It is called The Morantz, "The Orange." The orange was received as a present on Purim in Russia. Oranges in that part of the world were rare in the 1800's. The first day people from all over town came to look at it. Wow! What an unbelievable sight!

The second day they came to smell it - an incredible aroma. The next day they peeled it, saving each piece of peel with care in order to make marmalade. Then they divided the sections of the orange and crushed it in their mouths, feeling the delicious juices. An incredible experience.

And then they had the marmalade that lasted for weeks. A memory for a lifetime - the Orange.

Most of the time, we hardly stop to even notice the blessing and the pleasurable taste of the food we are eating. Oftentimes, before we realize it, we are finished eating without having focused on an appreciation for the pleasure that God has given us.

Stop. Eat. Think. Appreciate. Thank God for His blessings. Even the ones we think are small and simple. That is the path of real holiness.

DEVELOPPING OUR TALENTS AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The Bar Mitzvah boy sat behind the head table, his face shining beneath the brim of his new Borsalino, beaming with the excitement of the big day.

His proud father asked his Rabbi if he would like to hear the drasha (exegesis on a Torah theme) that his son had prepared.

"Does he know it well?" asked the Rabbi.

"Yes." Replied the proud father.

"I don't mean does he know it parrot-fashion, I mean does he understand it."

"Yes, he does." Replied the even prouder father.

"Okay" said the Rabbi.

The father led his Rabbi to sit with his son at the top table and left his son to expound the intricate piece of halachic logic that he had so carefully prepared.

After the bar mitzvah was over, the father asked his son what his Rabbi had said to him.

"After I finished the derasha, he asked me a few questions and then he said that if I learn, I will be a Gadol (great Torah scholar)."

"And what did you say to that?" asked the father.

"I said, 'Amen!' Then he said to me, 'It's not a beracha' — it's a metziut (reality)'."

The gap between potential and actuality is called hard work. Many of us are born with gifts, talents and abilities that are given to but a few. Fewer of us, however, develop those talents into real achievement.

EDITOR

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Haftara

Hosea 11:7-14:10

PARASHA: This week's Parasha tells us that Yaakov left his home to go to his Uncle Lavan's house. On the way he slept in Bethel and had a dream – the dream of the ladder. “He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring;.” (Genesis 28:11-13).

HAFTARAH: Hosea reminds us of Yaakov's dream saying. “he met him at Bethel, and there he spoke with him. The LORD the God of hosts, the LORD is his name!” (Hosea 12:4,5). It is interesting that Hosea said that Yaakov met the Lord and spoke to him while Yochanan said it was Yeshua, “The Son of Man,” the title of the Mashiach in Daniel 7.

PARASHA: God spoke directly to Yaakov . “Then the LORD said to Yaakov, “Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.” (Genesis 31:3).

HAFTARAH: Hosea reminds us that Yaakov was guarded by God. No prophet spoke to Yaakov. God spoke directly to him, not like when the people of Israel left Egypt. “Yaakov fled to the land of Aram, there Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he guarded sheep. By a prophet the LORD brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded. (Hosea 12:12-13).

PARASHA: God will be with Yaakov. “I am the God of Bethel, ... Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.” ” (Genesis 31:13).

HAFTARAH: Hosea said that the return of Yaakov to his land will also be a return to God, Yaakov is the representative of God's people who are to return to God. “Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God” (Hosea 14:1).

Besorat Yeshua

Mark 11:27-12:6

PARASHA: Yaakov is sleeping in a certain place, “He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set.” (Genesis 28:11). The Jewish people identified this “certain place” as Jerusalem. The Bethel, the House of God, is there.

BESORAH: Yeshua is in Jerusalem too. “Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple,” (Mark 11:27)

PARASHA: Yaakov's authority was questioned by Esau. Esau disagreed with Yaakov and wanted to cancel their deal about the firstborn's rights “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. .” (Gen. 27:42)

BESORAH: The scribes and elders questioned Yeshua's authority. “the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, “By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?” ” (Mark 11:27-28).

PARASHA: Esau's opposition to his brother Yaakov has become the type of all opposition to God's people.

BESORAH: Yeshua applied this opposition to his own person. He explained it by a parable. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat over the head and insulted. Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’” (Mark 12:1-6). Some people have taught that Yeshua wanted to teach the rejection of Israel through this parable, but that is not the case. In this parable Yeshua said to the pharisees that he knew their reaction, and the rejection of Yeshua as a Messiah was known.

