

Shabbat Mishpatim

February 13, 2010

29 Shevat 5770

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News

Training in Copenhagen

Here is the last email I received from David Barzola who completed the training we gave in Copenhagen, during the last two weeks. "I want to share a wonderful experience that we are living in Denmark. For six days we have had meetings in Copenhagen and Vejle fjord churches, colleges also Vejle fjord and Langeline (a public school in Copenhagen). During the presentations in churches and classrooms there was much interest and much participation by asking questions.



Some Jewish friends of the Adventist Church attended the meetings in Copenhagen and wanted to know more about Jewish communities Adventists. Rachel Hyman sang in Hebrew during meetings on Wednesday and shared his experience of life in relation to Adventism and their Jewish identity.

The headmaster of the school Vejle fjord asked me to give a history lesson on the separation of Christianity from Judaism. It was very interesting to discuss this topic with students of different religions. Among them I remember with joy a Muslim girl who attended the dialogue forward."



Pictures and Parashot on Websites

We all are dependant on technology for our communication. And from time to time technology is not very reliable, that's why some of our friends have not received the newsletter/parasha last week. The server which host our list of diffusion was not working (and it is still not working) and we even could not go in it to get the address of our list, but this week we were able to get the list, that's why I send this newsletter in a direct way and not through the list.

I would like just to remind you that we have some web-sites working even if the list does not work. The site Jewishadventist.org is available and every Friday our newsletter is posted on it. And in this newsletter I don't have to much space to publish all the pictures I received, that's why if you want to look at more pictures on our ministry or even to download them, you are welcome to our picassa web which is: <http://picasaweb.google.com/jewishadventist>.

Overview

Mishpatim Exodus 21:1-24:18

The Jewish People receive a series of laws concerning social justice. Topics include: Proper treatment of Jewish servants; a husband's obligations to his wife; penalties for hitting people and for cursing parents, judges and leaders; financial responsibilities for damaging people or their property, either by oneself or by one's animate or inanimate property, or by pitfalls that one created; payments for theft; not returning an object that one accepted responsibility to guard; the right to self-defense of a person being robbed.

Other topics include: Prohibitions against seduction; witchcraft, bestiality and sacrifices to idols. The Torah warns us to treat the convert, widow and orphan with dignity, and to avoid lying. Usury is forbidden and the rights over collateral are limited. Payment of obligations to the Temple should not be delayed, and the Jewish People must be holy, even concerning food. The Torah teaches the proper conduct for judges in court proceedings. The commandments of Shabbat and the Sabbatical year are outlined. Three times a year — Pesach, Shavuot and Succot — we are to come to the Temple. The Torah concludes this listing of laws with a law of kashrut — not to mix milk and meat.

G-d promises that He will lead the Jewish People to the Land of Israel, helping them conquer its inhabitants, and tells them that by fulfilling His commandments they will bring blessings to their nation. The people promise to do and listen to everything that G-d says. Moshe writes the Book of the Covenant, and reads it to the people. Moshe ascends the mountain to remain there for 40 days in order to receive the two Tablets of the Covenant.

Naaseh VeNishma

Towards the end of Parashat Mishpatim, the story of the events surrounding the Sinai Revelation is told. The Torah records the famous response of the Jewish People to G-d's offering of the Torah to them:

“Everything that G-d says, we will do and we will hear (Na'aseh VeNishma)!” (Exodus 24:7).

This statement is deemed so significant that the Talmud (Shabbat 88a) states that when the Jewish Nation said 'Na'aseh VeNishma,' 600,000 angels descended from heaven to place two crowns, one for Na'aseh and one for Nishma, upon the head of each Jew. G-d proclaimed, “Who revealed this secret to my children! This is the secret of the heavenly ministering angels!”

We have been called the Chosen People since time immemorial. But what exactly happened to grant us this exalted title? The answer lies in a profound understanding of the famous Jewish retort to an anti-Semitic remark.

The anti-Semite said, “How odd of G-d to choose the Jews!”

Answered the Jew, “Not so odd, the Jews chose G-d!”

G-d Gives us Power and Strength

The Torah states: **“Everything that G-d says, we will do and we will hear (Na'aseh VeNishma)!” (Exodus 24:7).** This type of trust in G-d was necessary at the time of the Giving of the Torah at Sinai. But it is also needed today for all of us.

There are many times when we feel that we are incapable of fulfilling the Torah's demands. It is just too difficult for us. But if we would realize that G-d, the One who knows our strengths and weaknesses personally is doing the asking, we would understand that we must have the ability to accomplish what G-d wants of us. It may take time until we master a particular spiritual area and we should always work on things slowly and gradually, but all along we must trust in G-d and His demands of us. We can do it, if G-d is telling us we can. It is exactly what Shaul the Shaliach of Mashiach said in his letter to the believers who were in Thessalonica in Greece: **“May the G-d of shalom make you completely holy — may your entire spirit, soul and body be kept blameless for the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah. The one calling you is faithful, and he will do it. (1Th. 5:23,24).**

The same is true regarding life struggles and tests. The key to passing these life challenges intact is the realization that if G-d has placed me in my predicament, I must be able to pass the test. This is the beginning of the kind of acceptance of a challenge that is necessary in order to survive spiritually. Once again Shaul said, **“No**

temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and G-d is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it." (1Cor. 10:13)

What is the Priority: To Load or To Unload a Donkey?

The Torah states, "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him." (Exodus 23:5). If two people need help at the same time, one to load a donkey, and the other to unload a donkey, unloading takes precedence. The reasoning is straightforward: the donkey that has completed its work should be unburdened immediately; every additional second that it stands with the load on its back will constitute unnecessary pain. The Talmud's reasoning in this matter establishes a Torah mandate against causing pain to animals.

According to Torah law, man is permitted to ride on an animal or use it to carry a weight, but only if there is a justifiable human need. Once the animal has completed its task, it would be a mitzvah to help the owner unload the animal's burden. On the other hand, loading the burden on the donkey's back would also be a good deed; this helps the owner start his task. The principle that is established is that unloading takes precedence over loading, because the pain of the animal tips the scales in favor of unloading the donkey. Our verse, which commands us to help even an enemy unload his donkey, is thus taken to mean that even when there is a justified reason to dislike a fellow believer, there is no reason for an innocent animal to suffer due to its owner's indiscretions

Honesty and Truth

What are honesty and truth, and what other basis than truth can there be to measure the standard of ethical behavior?

The Chazon Ish says, The believer who devotes his life to the service of G-d maintains the conviction that everything he has in life was given to him by G-d as an intrinsic part of his belief system. Nor is this conviction simply a matter of dogma. It is a crucial aspect of life for anyone aspiring to be G-d's servant.

A good way to illustrate its necessity is the following story concerning the Chofetz Chaim. The Chofetz

Chaim once came to the synagogue very early one Yom Kippur morning. Generally, at this hour one only found the very poor and otherwise afflicted present, as such people customarily stay up Yom Kippur night reciting the Psalms and pouring their hearts out to G-d pleading for relief from their tribulations in the coming year. Much to his surprise, the Chofetz Chaim found one of the wealthiest, most fortunate people in town among the company.

He went over to this person and asked him why he had joined the company of the destitute. The rich man answered that he felt he should attempt to change his life and serve G-d with greater devotion.

The Chofetz Chaim then told him the following parable: The king has a large army. In this army, there are ordinary soldiers, officers and generals. There is an armored division, and a quartermaster corps, an air force, an intelligence unit etc. In order for the army to be victorious, everyone has to do his own job particularly well. If the pilot decided to drive a tank, or if the general decided to try life as an ordinary infantryman, no matter the amount of zeal and enthusiasm he'd devote to these tasks the army would surely be defeated. The key to victory is for everyone to do his own job to his utmost capacity.

The Chofetz Chaim then explained the parable to the rich man: "The fact that G-d showered you with wealth and good fortune indicates that your allotted responsibility is to devote yourself to dispensing charity to the less fortunate. If you take up a life of devotion and the reciting of Psalms you will soon come to feel that this aspect of your life is the most important part of your Divine service. You will soon begin to downgrade your devotion to charity, as listening to people's financial problems seems on the surface to be far less spiritual than acts of simple devotion.

"But your place in G-d's army is to be the charity dispenser, not the reciter of Psalms. The purpose of your life, and your most important Divine service, is to do your job faithfully and well.

The performance of one's Divinely assigned task is the only way to assure oneself of a favorable edict on the Day of Judgment. If you have carried out your charitable duties faithfully, you will have no need to recite Psalms in the middle of the night, and if you have not, such recitation cannot help you. Go home and go to bed."

NEARER TO LIFE

At the appointed time of the month in the springtime, for at that time you left Egypt..." (Exodus 23:15)

The man stood at the front desk of the inn after a long and tiring journey. Despite his fatigue, or maybe because of it, he had the disquieting feeling that something was out of place in this inn. But what was it... what was it? As he finished checking in he suddenly became aware of a sound; a sound as familiar as it was out of place. Tick, tock, tick, tock. That was it! The watch! The innkeeper's watch! "That watch..." he said to the innkeeper. That watch is my rabbi's watch!"

"How do you know?" said the innkeeper.

"Because my rabbi's watch is different than any other watch in the world."

"How so?" "With each tick, every watch in the world says, 'One more second of your life gone. Tick! One step nearer to death, Tock! Nearer to death, tick! Nearer to death, tock!...' Every watch in the world is like that except for my rabbi's watch; his watch says, 'One second closer to the Geula (redemption), tick! One step closer to the World of Truth, tock! One step nearer to eternal life, tick! Nearer to life, tick! Nearer to life, tock...' I have no doubt that that watch is my rabbi's watch."

"A few year's ago," said the innkeeper, "there was a rabbi staying here at the inn. When he came to pay the check he realized he didn't have enough money to pay, so instead he gave me this watch."

In Hebrew, the word for time is *zman*. The root of *zman* is the same as *bazmana*, which can mean "preparation", or "invitation." When G-d took the Jewish People out of Egypt, they left a world of time which leads nowhere except to the grave, and entered a system of time where every second is a preparation, an invitation to something beyond time.

VALUE OF STUDYING THE TORAH

Rabbi Yochanan, one of the leading Talmudic sages, lived about 1700 years ago. Once he traveled from Tiberias to Sephoris accompanied by his disciple Rabbi Chiya bar Abba.

As they passed a field, Rabbi Yochanan told Rabbi Chiya bar Abba: "This field used to be mine, but I sold it to devote all my time to Torah study."

Later, they passed an olive orchard. "This, too, was mine," said Rabbi Yochanan, "but I sold it to learn Torah."

Then they passed a vineyard. "This was mine also," Rabbi Yochanan told Rabbi Chiya, "but, like the others, I sold it so that I could study Torah."

Rabbi Chiya's eyes filled with tears.

"Why are you crying?" Rabbi Yochanan asked.

"You've left nothing to support yourself in your old age," wept Rabbi Chiya.

"My dear Chiya, don't you realize what a good deal I made? I sold something created in only six days for something that took 40 days to acquire. The world was created in just six days, whereas the Torah was given in 40 days!"

G-D'S BLESSINGS

Rabbi Schneur Zalmen often sent representatives to the cities and villages where his *Chasidim* lived. The representatives would collect money to support the needy in Israel. One *Chasid* earned his livelihood by peddling his wares throughout the area. Whenever he earned extra money, he would attribute it to the fact that there was a special need for charity. "I'm sure," he would say, "that when I come home one of the Rebbe's collectors will be waiting for me!"

This story too teaches us a lesson! The money we earn comes through G-d's blessings. Therefore, we must remember the poor and needy for whom G-d intended a share of what He gave us.

EDITOR

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Haftara

Jeremiah 33:25 - 34:22

HAFTARAH: The prophecy given to Jeremiah was when the Babylonians wanted to destroy Jerusalem and to deport its inhabitants: “The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, when King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon and all his army and all the kingdoms of the earth and all the peoples under his dominion were fighting against Jerusalem and all its cities:” (Jeremiah 33:26).

G-d said to the King of Judah that Babylon will have victory over Israel and the King will be deported too. “Thus says the L-RD, the G-d of Israel: Go and speak to King Zedekiah of Judah and say to him: Thus says the L-RD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire. And you yourself shall not escape from his hand, but shall surely be captured and handed over to him;” (Jeremiah 34:2-3).

G-d said to Jeremiah that one of the reasons of the deportation was because Israel did not accept to observe the sabbatical year “The word of the L-RD came to Jeremiah from the L-RD: Thus says the L-RD, the G-d of Israel: I myself made a covenant with your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, saying, “Every seventh year each of you must set free any Hebrews who have been sold to you and have served you six years; you must set them free from your service.” But your ancestors did not listen to me or incline their ears to me. ” (Jeremiah 34:12-14).

However, the L-rd loves his people and will continue to love him, the deportation is a way G-d used to help Israel to understand their mission towards the nations, to be a light to the nations and to help each individual to believe in the only one G-d. Thus before giving the reasons of this defeat, G-d assured Israel that he will bring them back to their country: **Thus says the L-RD: Only if I had not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth, would I reject the offspring of Jacob and of my servant David and not choose any of his descendants as rulers over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy upon them.** (Jeremiah 33:25-26)

Besorat Yeshua

Mark 14:60-72

BESORAH: Yeshua is on trial, the Cohen Gadol asks him a crucial question: “Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (Mark 14:61)

The Cohen Gadol or High Priest and the Sanhedrin, judge Yeshua for all the good deeds he accomplished among his people during his ministry.

Yeshua gives an clear and unambiguous answer to the Cohen Gadol: “I am; and ‘you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven.” (Mark 14:62).

PARASHA: The Torah states, “You shall not curse a judge, and a ruler among your people you shall not curse.” (Exodus 22:27).

BESORAH: Yeshua was respectful. he knew what the Torah said and did not want to curse the judge or even to speak badly about him.

Let’s remember that the Jewish tradition says: even though you might think that a judge has erred in rendering a decision against you, you are forbidden to curse him. “But Jesus made no further reply.” (Mark 15:5).

During his trial Yeshua was that lamb described by the prophet Isaiah some eight hundred years before.

“He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.” (Isaiah 53:3)

In our text of the Besorat-Yeshua Peter denied his master saying: “I do not know or understand what you are talking about.” (Mark 14:68).

The prophet announced also this denial: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way,

(Isaiah 53:6)

