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Special GC News

SABBATH OF DEDICATION FOR THE NEW LEADERS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

On Sabbath 26th of June the new leaders of the General Conference, Ted Wilson, G.T. Ng, and Bob Lemon were introduced to the 30,000 people present in Atlanta for the first Sabbath of the GC session.

Three special prayers were pronounced in order to ask G-d to bless our new leaders, and it was an emotional moment of dedication of the leaders and every member present at that time.



ELECTION OF THE VICE- PRESIDENTS OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

On June 27, the nominating committee of the General Conference has elected 9 vice-presidents for the General Conference. They are

Lowell Cooper, reelected
Michael Ryan, reelected
Ella Simmons, reelected
Armando Miranda, reelected
Pardon Mwansa, reelected

Jeffrey Bwansa, elected
Delbert, elected
Benjamin Schoun, elected
Arthur Steele, elected

ELECTION OF THE DIVISIONS' OFFICERS

On June 28, the nominating committee has proposed the name of the officers of the Divisions. Since I don't have too much space here I am just writing the names for the Division where a Jewish ministry is active.

North American Division,

President: Dan Jackson
Secretary: Alexander G. Bryant
Treasurer: Thomas G. Evans

Inter-American Division

President: Israel Leito
Secretary: Elie Henry
Treasurer: Filiberto M. Verduzco

South American Division

President: Erton Kholer
Secretary: Magdiel Perez
Treasurer: Marlon Lopez

Trans-European Division

President: Bertil Wiklander
Secretary: Audrey Andersson
Treasurer: Johann Johannsson

Euro-Africa Division

President: Bruno Vertallier
Secretary: Gabriel Maurer
Treasurer: Norbert Zens

Euro-Asia Division

President: Guillermo Biaggi
Secretary: Vladimir Krupski
Treasurer:

South Pacific Division

President: Barry D. Oliver
Secretary: Lawrence P. Tanabose
Treasurer: Rodney G. Brady

OVERVIEW

PINCHAS

NUMBERS 25:10-30:1

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action—executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe.

The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to Bnei Yisrael. The number of the Levites' families is recorded.

Tzlofchad's daughters file a claim with Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just.

The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter.

Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation.

The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

COMMITMENT TO G-D'S HONOR

The end of Parasha Balak describes how Bilam managed to lure some among the people of Israel into inappropriate relationships with Moabite women and ultimately into idolatry. One man, Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, brazenly conducted a sexual liaison with Kazbi, a Moabite princess. To the dismay of many of the communal leaders, Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, took a spear and executed both of the culprits. The sidrah opens with the conclusion of this story, in which Pinchas is praised for his zeal, and he is promised that he and his descendants will be kohanim for all time:

"It shall be for him and his seed after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood, for he was zealous for his God and he made atonement for the Children of Yisrael." (Deuteronomy 25:13). Rabbi Zvi Belovski says "it is significant that Pinchas did not act in response to a command from God, but took his own initiative. This was a further indication that his zeal was genuine and God-oriented, for no one in klal Yisrael, nor even God himself, could have obliged him to act. When he did so, he demonstrated a deep personal commitment to God's honor and image in the world."

SHALOM - PEACE

God is saying to Moshe, "Tell Pinchas that his zealousness is peace." Peace does not mean a passive lack of war. If peace is a passive lack of war there is no way that through Pinchas' violent act of killing he achieves peace. Peace is a state of being in which there is a closeness, a relationship, a way of dealing with each other. It isn't just that I don't bother you and you don't bother me; that's not peace. It's that we live together and work together and have a unity, a commonality that all of us are part of a whole.

Rabbi Baruch Leff affirms that "In Hebrew, the word for peace, *shalom*, is derived from the root *shalem*, which means whole or complete. Peace is a cooperative, symbiotic relationship, where both parties care for each other, help each other, and ultimately perfect each other. Two people who hate each other and never speak to each other, but never fight either, cannot be said to be at peace with each other. Marital harmony and domestic tranquility does not mean the simple lack of screaming and yelling in the house. It is a state of being in which your spouse genuinely shares in your triumphs, strengthens you when you are down, loves, adores, and cherishes you."

ARE YOU RELATED TO G-D?

According to the Jewish tradition God has thirteen attributes of mercy are to be viewed as outward manifestations of the Divine character traits. The prophet Micha understands the thirteen attributes in terms of character traits of God, "Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, And passes over the disobedience of the remnant of his heritage? He doesn't retain his anger forever, Because he delights in

loving kindness. He will again have compassion on us. He will tread our iniquities under foot; And you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micha 7:18-19). Thus the thirteen attributes of mercy described in the Book of Exodus Yahweh passed by before him, and proclaimed, “Yahweh! Yahweh, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children’s children, on the third and on the fourth generation.” (34:6-7) are to be viewed as forms of behavior that are outward manifestations of the Divine character traits. The teaching of Micha is that God’s practice of mercy is to be regarded as the outgrowth of what we humans would consider “emotion.” According to the prophet Micha, the fourth attribute mentioned in Exodus, God’s grace, is an expression of the fact that God feels related to the Jewish people. In the words of the prophet He relates to Israel as the “remnant of His inheritance.” The Tomer Devora explains the relevance of this character trait to practicing mercy in the following way: As God considers His people, His close relatives, His bride. When they do something that merits retribution He says to Himself, “How can I punish my people? If I punish them I also suffer, so I am really punishing myself!”

But in what way are God and His people so closely related? In the same way that a husband and wife are considered emergent parts of a single entity by the Torah—where the wife was separated from the body of the husband as described in Genesis 2— This creation act is an Illustration of the relationship that exists between God and his people. It is like Israel is a separate entity from God.

Rabbi Noson Weisz says that “this idea serves as the theme of King Solomon’s masterpiece, the Song of Songs. The entire work describes the relationship that binds God to Israel in terms of a love story about a great king and his bride who consummated their intense and abiding love, but became estranged following their wedding through a series of misunderstandings. The entire work is a description of the intensity of their longing for each other and their determination to resume their relationship. The Torah describes husbands and wives as remnants of each other’s flesh (Leviticus 21:2), and this is the foundation on which Micha’s description of Israel as God’s remnant.”

KORACH NEGLETED TORAH EDUCATION

The Torah states: “Korach, the leader of the rebellion against Moses, and his co-conspirators were swallowed up by an earthquake, but the children of Korach did not die” (Numbers 26:11) Korach was a very learned person. He sincerely believed that he was right in challenging Moses, and he convinced many of the elders to join him. The Midrash states that Korach’s children were in a quandary. On one hand, they did not wish to challenge Moses, but on the other hand, how could they defy their father? Initially they supported their father, but at the last moment, they deserted him and supported Moses and were spared from death.

The Midrash asks, inasmuch as Korach was so highly learned and was one of the select few to carry the Holy Ark, how could he be so foolish as to challenge Moses? The Midrash answers that Korach’s prophetic vision showed him the greatness of his descendants. He reasoned that he must be right, because if he were wrong in opposing Moses, he could not possibly merit having such great offspring. His mistake was that he did not consider that his children might do teshuvah —repent—and achieve greatness in their own right.

Rabbi Kalman Packouz says in the name of Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski “Korach’s failure to consider that his children might do *teshuvah* caused him to expose his children to death. This was not because he did not love his children, but because he did not consider that he may be wrong.

This strikes a familiar note. Some parents do not give their children a basic Biblical education. “We don’t want them to be influenced. Let them make up their own minds when they grow up.” How distorted an argument! A secular education is not a neutral education which will allow them to freely choose their way of life. A secular education today essentially rejects any absolute moral standards. Neglecting Torah education and practices puts the child at risk of being torn from G-d’s people. Parents should realize that to lose one’s identity as a believer is not in their best interest nor in the best interest of their child.

Korach’s self-righteousness nearly proved fatal for his children. Parents should avoid this tragic error.”

BELIEVERS, CHILDREN OF BELIEVERS

Many years ago, a 15 year old yeshiva boy sits in an Israeli hospital waiting room while his mother is having an operation.

As is customary amongst Jews throughout history, he recites Tehillim (Psalms) as a source of comfort and prayer for the healing of his mother and to give calm to his own concern. In walks an old kibbutznik (a member of pioneering, largely anti-religious) wearing his kova tembel (kibbutz hat), blue shirt, work shorts, sandals, and a sun wrinkled face adorned by a big bushy handlebar mustache.

The kibbutznik walks straight to the yeshiva boy and asks accusingly, "What are you doing?" The yeshiva boy is shocked and scared ... and answers, "I am saying Tehillim—my mother is having an operation."

The kibbutznik then berates the boy, "Tehillim? Is that why we fought for this country? So that a young fellow like you could continue these medieval practices? You need to get rid of your superstitions! Live in the real world. Take that book and throw it out the window!"

The boy is stunned. Finally, he decides to change the focus of the conversation and asks, "What are you doing here?"

The kibbutznik replies, "I've come to take home the body of my son. The doctors are operating, but they have no hope. He's going to die!"

The boy is incredulous, "Are you crazy? Take this Tehillim! Pray!" And the kibbutznik responds, "Keep that superstitious, medieval book away from me!" and then went to the far end of the room to sit by himself.

An hour later, the doctor comes out of the operating room and says to the kibbutznik, "The operation was a success. Your son will live!"

What does the old kibbutznik do? He stands up, reaches his hands towards heaven and cries out, "Shema Israel, A-donay E-loheinu, A-donay Echad!"—"Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One!"

What possibly possessed the kibbutznik to cry out the watchword of the people of Israel, the proclamation of the Jewish people's belief in G-d from the time of our patriarchs? We know the

answer—"ma'aminim, b'nei ma'aminim" – believers, children of believers.

Rabbi Packouz says "You can take the Jew out of the Torah ... but you can't take the belief in G-d out of the Jew!"

PHYSICAL NEEDS

A revolutionary general was trying to revive the fighting spirit of his trapped and starving guerillas. "If we can fight our way out of this corner," he announced, "I will issue a large bonus to each man. You will have enough money to buy all the bread and meat and fruits and vegetables you need to recover your strength."

The guerillas responded to the promise. They fought like tigers and were able to break out and get away. As soon as they got to safer territory, the general, true to his word, awarded each man his bonus.

The next day, the one of the general's aides stormed into his tent. "Sir, a whole group of the men took their bonus money and wasted it!"

"Indeed?" said the general. "And what did they do?"

"Instead of buying food to rebuild their strength," the aide said furiously, "they spent all their money on tiny tins of caviar!"

The general stroked his chin thoughtfully for a few moments. "Thank you for telling me this," he said to his aide. "It is important information. This caviar must have been very important to them if they would spend all their money on it even when they are starving and exhausted. Apparently, the men need occasional splurges of luxury to help them deal with the tensions of battle. I will make sure to provide it for them in the future."

EDITOR

A newsletter published by the
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HAFTARA

1Kings 18:46 - 19:21

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 6:2 - 13

PARASHA: The Parasha is about Pinchas who killed Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. **“The name of the slain Israelite man, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri son of Salu, head of an ancestral house belonging to the Simeonites. The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur, who was the head of a clan, an ancestral house in Midian.”** (Num. 25:14-15). G-d congratulated Pinchas for his action. **The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Phinehas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the Israelites... Therefore say, ‘I hereby grant him my covenant of peace. (Num. 25:10-12).**

HAFTARA: The haftara reminds us of the story of Elijah who did great deeds as Pinchas did. Elijah killed the priests of Baal. **“But the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and ran in front of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. (1Kings 18:46-19:1).** However, the leadership of Israel at the time of Elijah was not faithful to G-d. The queen wanted to kill Elijah, not reward him. **“Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” (1Kings 19:2).** No Moses was there to protect Elijah and he was afraid of the reaction of Jezebel, the cruel queen. Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, ... he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: **“It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” (1Kings 19:3-4)** Elijah was a great man. He was one who had the privilege of going to heaven without first dying, but he was a human being and became depressed. He slept and during his sleep God spoke to him through an angel: **“Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.”” (1Kings 19:5).** What a great encouragement for us; the Lord is taking care of us too. From time to time we might think that we alone are faithful to G-d. Elijah had the same feeling, but G-d told him that there was a remnant of 7,000 who also were faithful.

PARASHA: The Parasha is about Pinchas who had no leadership position among the people of God; he was not even a priest. Yet the people of Israel were astonished at the courage and speech of this ‘nobody’.

BESORAH: Similarly, the Besorah shows us a man, Yeshua, who also was a ‘nobody’. He was not a priest, he was not a leader, he was not a Pharisee, but the people were astonished to hear him teaching with such great authority. **“On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! (Mark 6:2).**

HAFTARA Elijah was not understood. His courageous action was not accepted by the leaders of Israel: **“Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.” (1Kings 19:2).**

BESORAH: In the same way in the Besorah, Yeshua was not accepted by the leaders of Israel of his time. **“And they took offense at him. Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” ” (Mark 6:3-4).**). It is difficult to be a prophet in one’s own country. Most of the prophets of the Bible experienced these same difficulties, but the opposition from the leaders against Yeshua was so strong that he could not pour God’s blessing upon them **“And he could do no deed of power there, ...And he was amazed at their unbelief” (Mark 6:5-6).** It is not very often that the level of unbelief of some people astonished or amazed Yeshua, but this time, he was. Week after week we read these comments on the Parasha, the Haftara, and the Besorah. Are we still unbelievers? There is an absolute continuity between the Torah, the Nevi’im (prophets) and the Besorah (gospel). But if we don’t want to believe, nobody can force us.

