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News

BAR MITZVA IN JERUSALEM

The Jerusalem congregation celebrated its first Bar-Mitsva on Shabbat July 17. It was not the first Adventist Bar Mitsva in Israel, since we started to celebrate Bar Mitsva about ten years ago in Ashkelon, in Haifa, in Ashdod... however, it was the first one in Jerusalem.



BETH BNEI ZION

This Bar Mitsva was the occasion for us to make the first meeting of the “Beth Bnei Tzion” in Jerusalem on Shabbat morning, before we only had kabbalat Shabbat on Fridays evenings. “Beth Bnei Tzion” is the name chosen for our network of Jewish Adventist congregations. All the Congregations of South America and Israel (Haifa and Jerusalem) have accepted this logo. Why this name? in fact this name was given to us at the first time by a Jewish meeting of Rabbis in Santiago in Chile when Rabbi Isaac Poseck wanted to start the first Jewish Adventist Congregation in 1998. We have accepted this name because it speaks about our very identity. Adventist Jews are proclaiming to the Jewish community the very soon coming of the Mashiach who came as Mashiach ben Yoseph 2,000 years ago and who will come back very

soon to establish the glorious kingdom of G-d. In the talmudic book Avodah Zara it is written “6000 years is the length of time of this earth, ... This is divided into ‘Two Thousand Years of Chaos’, ‘Two Thousand Years of Torah’, and ‘Two Thousand Years of the Days of Messiah’ ”. The two thousand years of chaos were from the creation to Abraham, there was no law and everyone did what he wanted. The two thousand years of Torah were from Abraham to Yeshua, we know that Abraham received the Torah (law) from G-d “Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Gen 26:5), that’s why the time of the Torah did not start with Moshe but with Abraham. and then the last period of the history of humanity are called in the Talmud “Two Thousand Years of the Days of Messiah” there are the days of Yeshua HaMashiach from his coming as “Son of Yoseph” and his coming back as “Son of David”. It is interesting to notice that in the Talmud it is also said that at the end of the six thousand years, the earth will rest for one thousand years. After this last thousand years, the true city of Zion will be established in its definitive location by G-d and his Mashiach “**And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from G-d out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of G-d is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and G-d himself shall be with them, and be their G-d.” (Rev. 21:2-3)** Those who will live in this holy city of Jerusalem or Zion are called *Bnei-Zion* “Chidren of Zion” (Joel 2:23; Psa. 149:2; Lam. 4:2), that’s why we call our house of prayer “*Beth Bnei Zion*”.

One of the sentence written on the curtain of our *Aron Hakodesh* is “**out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem” (Is. 2:3; Mic 4:2)**, One day G-d’s Word will come from Jerusalem, from “Beth Bnei Zion” to give the light of the Mashiach to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.



OVERVIEW

VAETCHANAN - וְאֶתְחַנֵּן DEUTERONOMY 3:23-7:11

Parasha

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Newsletter

Although Moshe is happy that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special *mitzvoth*. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds Israel of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words.

Moshe impresses on the people of Israel that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only Israel will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins Israel to “pass over” the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when the people of Israel dwell in Eretz Israel they will sin and be scattered among all the peoples. They will stay few in number but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three “refuge cities” to which an inadvertent killer may flee.

Moshe repeats the 10 Commandments and then teaches the *Shema Israel*, the central profession of faith of the *Tanach*, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism and thus forget their purpose as a spiritual nation.

The parasha ends with Moshe exhorting Israel not to intermarry when they enter the Land of Israel, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they will become indistinguishable from the other nations.

SHABBAT NACHAMU SHABBAT OF COMFORT

We always read Parashat Vetchanan on the Shabbat after the fast of the 9th of Av—a Shabbat known as Shabbat Nachamu, the “Shabbat of Comfort.” After the fast of Tisha BeAv we need to be comforted, that is why on this Shabbat we read the Haftarah from Isaiah (chapter 40) which is the source of its name: “Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God. Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and proclaim to her that her time has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has

been conciliated, for she has received from the hand of G-d double for all her sins.” (Isaiah 40:1-2)

This message of comfort is a prophecy concerning the redemption, and assures Israel that the destruction and their sufferings are merely temporary phenomena in the context of an eternal covenant. G-d is forgiving the sins of Israel.

Our Parasha offers comfort of a deeper sort, a comfort that is also based on the world of the present and does not have to await the coming of the Messiah. Let’s remember that there will be a time when the kingdom of G-d, coming from heaven will be established for eternity (Dan 2:44), but the kingdom of G-d can be experienced today. That is why Rabbi Shaul said “for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Rom 14:17).

On Tisha Beav, the Jewish people mourn the destruction of the Temple because it represents the departure of the Shechina, God’s Presence, from the world. But, in a way, God’s Presence is still among us through first by His Word, we know the will of G-d through his Word, and secondly by the *Ruach Hakodesh* (Spirit of Hashem) the true comforter offered by Yeshua. He promised “If you love me, keep my commandments. I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever,—the *Ruach of Emet* (Spirit of truth), whom the world can’t receive; for it doesn’t see him, neither knows him. You know him, for he lives with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans. I will come to you. (John 14:15-18).

MOSHE DID NOT ENTER THE LAND OF ISRAEL

Moshe prayed to be permitted to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land: “And I pleaded with God at that time, saying, Almighty God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness, and Your mighty hand; for what god is there in heaven or earth, that can do Your works or has Your might? I beg You, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that goodly mountain region, and the Lebanon.” (Devarim 3:23-25)

But Moshe was rebuffed, his plea was not accepted. “But God was angry with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and God said to me, Let it suffice you;

“speak no more to me of this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah, and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with your eyes; for you shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Yehoshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you shall see. So we remained in the valley opposite Beit-Peor.” (Devarim 3:26-29)

What would have happened if Moshe entered the Land of Canaan? The Jewish tradition has several opinions of this matter.

First, Rabbi Ari Khan reminds us that the Ohr HaChaim (Devarim 1:37) affirmed: “Had Moshe entered the Land, the Temple would have been built—and could never have been destroyed; such was the spiritual power of Moshe. (Based on Talmud Bavli Sotah 9a) Had the Jews sinned despite this spiritual center, G-d would have destroyed the people, while the building would have remained standing, intact.

G-d did not allow Moshe to enter the Land so that He could take out his “anger” on the building, on the stone and mortar of the Beit haMikdash, rather than on the people who had transgressed. The people would be exiled, not annihilated. Thus, Moshe rightly explains, his own punishment was “for your sakes.” (Rav Yonatan Eybshitz, Ahavat Yehonatan, Devarim 3:26)

Secondly, the Malbim said, “Had Moshe led the people into the Land of Israel, he would have ushered in the final redemption, the culmination of human history—the ‘End of Days.’ All of humankind would have been impacted by the enlightenment of the Messianic Age that would have ensued. Apparently, G-d knew then what we know only in hindsight: neither the Jews nor the pagans were ready. Our spiritual development was still in its infancy.” (Torah Ohr Bamidbar 14)

Why Moshe did not enter the Land of Canaan? the most given reason is because of what happened in the place called “waters of Meribah” (waters of contention). “And Moshe and Aharon gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said to them, Hear now, you rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moshe lifted up his hand, and with his rod he struck the rock twice; and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also. And G-d said to Moshe and Aharon, Because you did not believe me to sanctify me in the eyes of the People of Israel,

therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.” (Bamidbar 20:10-12).

However there is another point, Moshe was the leader of the generation that left Egypt. The entire generation arrived at the cusp, stood poised on the border, but did not cross over. We remember what G-d said to the generation who left Egypt and refused to trust Him and did not cross the border, “Because all those men who have seen my glory, and my signs, which I worked in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have tempted me these ten times, and have not listened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore to their fathers, neither shall any of those who despised me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and has followed me fully, him will I bring into the land into which he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Bamidbar 14:22-24). Only Caleb and Yehoshua received the promise to enter the land of Canaan. The leaders Aaron and Myriam died in the wilderness and ultimately, Moshe who was part of that generation died. If his flock remained behind, Moshe, too, must remain with them.

Now as we have read he did not enter also because he “did not sanctify G-d in the eyes of the people of Israel” at the waters of Meribah, some could think that the punishment is beyond normal proportion, but I have read a comment which is very true, “Hashem had forgiven the people greater transgressions, but He could not deal with sin in the leaders as in those who were led. He had honored Moses above every other man upon the earth. . . . The fact that Moses had enjoyed so great light and knowledge made his sin more grievous. Past faithfulness will not atone for one wrong act. The greater the light and privileges granted to man, the greater is his responsibility, the more aggravated his failure, and the heavier his punishment” (EGW in CC 110).

There is another point that very few people are aware, is that Moshe had a very special privilege. According to the Tanach no one who died is enjoying the presence of G-d, everyone is in a state like sleeping, waiting for the resurrection of the dead when the Mashiach will come (see Daniel 12:1-3; 13). But Moshe had the privilege to be resurrected immediately after his death and went to heaven to join those who never died as Enoch or Eliyahu Hanavi “But Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil and arguing about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him an abusive condemnation, but said, “May the Lord rebuke you!” (Jude 9)

SHABBAT CANDLES

The story is told of a husband and wife who always quarreled when it came to lighting the Shabbat candles. He wanted her to use olive oil, like his mother did, and she wanted to use candles, which were used by her mother. They finally came to Rabbi Chaim of Tzanz for his decision. The rabbi told them, "Our sages instituted the lighting of the Shabbat candles in order to bring peace into the Jewish home, so how can you be fighting over the Shabbat candles?"

He then turned to the husband and said, "Our sages gave the mitzvah of lighting the Shabbat candles to the women and it is her choice to use whatever lights she wants."

SHALOM HALEICHEM

Once while travelling in a Russian taxi, the driver furtively glanced around and then looked at them in his mirror and cheerfully declared, "Alleh Yidden zennen brider! All Jews are brothers." The Shapiros were afraid to respond. Perhaps he was an innocent Jew trying to reach out for a morsel of hope from a brother and sister from a free land. Perhaps, however, this man was a plant of the secret Police who was charged to expose unsuspecting American Jews who were coming to spread their religious propaganda and misinformation. Maybe he was waiting to arrest them at the first sign of friendship and "malicious propaganda."

Again, the man tried to engage them. With a huge smile he again declared, "Alleh Yidden zennen brider!" Again the Shapiros resisted their tremendous urge to respond in kind with a warm "Shalom Aleichem!"

The scene repeated itself a number of times—the Yiddish greeting followed by total silence, ignoring the man who was trying to reach out. Finally they arrived back at the Government-monitored Intourist Hotel. When Rabbi Shapiro finally entered his room he began to cry. "I feel like Yoseph," he explained, "wanting so much to hug my brother and talk to him; yet I knew I could not."

MAR UKVA AND HIS CHARITY

The Talmud tells the following story. Mar Ukva's neighbor was a poor person. Each day, Mar

Ukva threw the sum of four zuzim through a hole in his neighbor's door so that he would not know his identity.

One day, Mar Ukva and his wife stopped by the neighbor's house to drop in the four zuzim. But as they did, the poor man opened the door. Afraid that he would be embarrassed seeing his benefactor, Mar Ukva and his wife ran and hid in a large oven used for baking bread. The coals in the oven were still hot and Mar Ukva burnt his feet. However, his wife's feet were not affected at all. She suggested that he place his feet on hers to avoid further pain.

"We both give charity, so why is it that my feet burnt while yours didn't?" asked Mar Ukva.

His wife replied: "The reason is that you perform the mitzvah of charity by giving money to the poor. But they cannot benefit from this immediately for they must buy food. But, I am in the house and when a poor person comes for help, I give them food which they eat right away and benefit immediately!"

Mar Ukva's charity was legendary. Every Erev Yom Kippur, he would send a poor person a certain amount of money. Once, he sent the money with his son, but the boy returned with it. He told his father, "The person doesn't need your money! When I came to his house, I saw him eating a festive meal and drinking good wine!"

"I didn't realize what this man's needs were," Mar Ukva said to his son. "Obviously he needs more than what I gave him." Mar Ukva immediately doubled the amount and told his son to bring it to the person!

Before Mar Ukva passed away he asked that an accounting of all the money he distributed for charity be brought before him. It amounted to a very large sum. Yet, Mar Ukva wasn't satisfied. "I'm taking too little with me for such a long journey!" he stated. He then took half of his possessions and distributed it to charity.

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

Isaiah 40:1-20

This Shabbat is the first Shabbat after Tisha B'Av. It is called, "Shabbat Nachmu" ("Shabbat of comfort"), as the Haftarah of this week begins with the words "Nachmu Nachmu Ami" - "Comfort, comfort, my people." There are seven weeks from Tisha B'Av until Rosh Hashana. This period is called, "Shiva D'nechemta"—"Seven weeks of comfort." These seven Haftarot are prophesies of comfort and hope for Israel and God's people at large.

Haftara: The root of the Hebrew word for comfort "Nachem", nun-chet-mem can refer to comforting the nation as well as to comforting an individual after the death of a loved one.

If the people of Israel are to be comforted, it is because the Lord is coming very soon. The text says, A voice rings out: "Clear in the desert a road for the LORD! Level in the wilderness a highway for our God! Let every valley be raised, every hill and mount made low. Let the rugged ground become level and the ridges become a plain. The Presence of the LORD shall appear, and all flesh, as one, shall behold — For the LORD Himself has spoken" (Is. 40:3-5 JPS).

It is interesting to notice that the Brit Hachadasha, which is an interpretation made 2000 years ago applied this text to the coming of the Mashiach. "This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight'" (Matt. 3:3). Matatyahu spoke about Yochanan HaMatbil who prepared the way of Yeshua in the desert near Jericho. What is interesting is that the brit Hachadasha did not apply verse 5, "The Presence of the LORD shall appear, And all flesh, as one, shall behold," (JPS) to Yochanan because this part of the verse will be applicable only at the end of time for the definitive presence or coming of the Mashiach, what we call the Second Coming of the Mashiach. Then all flesh (from everywhere in the world) shall behold.

Then we will see the real comfort and consolation of Israel. As it is written, "That her iniquity is expiated; for she has received at the hand of the LORD double for all her sins" (Is. 40:2). They have been pardoned for all their sins and they will enjoy eternal rest. Our mission today is to comfort Israel and to prepare Jerusalem for that great day, "Nachmu Nachmu Ami" - "Comfort, comfort, my people." (Isaie 40:1)

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 6:41-52

As I wrote in the Haftara text, we are in a special period called "Shabbat Nachmu Shabbat of Comfort". This week the Brit Hachadasha text is about comfort, the comfort of the Mashiach who came as "the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25).

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)

