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## News

### NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION JEWISH ADVISORY

It is always a privilege to participate to the North American Jewish Advisory. This year we have been blessed by the presence of Williams Costa, new Director of the Communications Department at the General Conference. Ganoune Diop, Director of the Global Mission Study Centers, and Dragan Stojanovic, President of the Quebec Conference. Elder Costa attended our meetings to assure us that he is very mission oriented and support especially Jewish Ministries. He introduced to us Leonardo Gonçalves who is a professional singer in Brazil and who has just recorded a professional CD in Hebrew which can be a wonderful tool in our relationship with the Jewish people.



**Decisions and recommendations:** The magazine Shabbat Shalom was not published this year, since Dr Jacques Doukhan resigned as the editor of the magazine. A new concept was presented by Ralph Ringer, NAD Jewish ministry Director, which will be in fact three publications. 1) a newsletter published on Internet. 2) a magazine to reach regular Jews 3) an academic journal for scholar and religious people. We hope that this new concept of Jewish Ministry Publications will succeed and will give spiritual food to everyone.

Another decision was to support the singing ministry of Leonardo Gonçalves and to promote a large distribution of his Hebrew CD to the Jewish population of the world.

#### **Recommendations voted and sent to the North American Division Administrative Committee.**

1. Recommend to NAD Administration that the Jewish Advisory become the Jewish Committee of the NAD, with clearly defined authority.

2. Recognize the unique biblical and prophetic mission to the Jews:

a. Adopt policies to be added to the NAD Working Policy regarding contextualized Jewish worship.

b. Establish position of Director of Jewish Ministry at the Division, and at each Union Conference and local Conference within the Division.

c. Develop a new approach to funding to facilitate planting of contextualized Jewish Adventist congregations.

#### **Initiatives and Goals for the next quinquennium:**

1. Congregational: a) To plant 5 new congregations and to develop the existing congregations. b) to implement a system of accountability in order to evaluate progress in Jewish ministry.

2. Leadership Development: a) Train and equip people for the ministry. b) Recruit support from laity by communicating the biblical significance of our ministry. c) Establish an effective relationship with Administrations within the NAD. d) Shalom Learning Center: To integrate curriculum and instruction into Adventist colleges and universities.

3. Development of Ministry Resources: Implement and promote the revised publishing plan for Shabbat Shalom.

# OVERVIEW

## RE'EH - רֵאָה

### DEUTERONOMY 11:26-16:17

**M**oshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem.

When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there; not to a private altar.

Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be slaughtered anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of food that may only be eaten in Jerusalem.

He warns the nation against copying ways of the other nations.

Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added or subtracted from it. If a “prophet” tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed.

It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot.

Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor.

The people of Israel are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted—Hashem will bless the person in all ways.

A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an

awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee year.

The Parasha ends with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

## WHICH G-D DO WE WORSHIP?

**T**he Torah states, “You are children of the Lord your G-d. Do not slash yourselves nor make a bald patch between your eyes for the dead. For you are a holy people to the Lord your G-d. And the L-RD has chosen you to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth. (Deut 14:1-2). Rambam says, “For you are a holy people.” My view is that “a holy people” means a promise of eternity with G-d. The verse says that since you are a holy people and the treasure of G-d, and G-d does not take away his children, it is not appropriate for you to slash yourselves or to make yourselves bald over the deceased, even if he dies young” (Ramban, Devarim 14:2). To understand what Rambam says, we have to remember that death is not the end. There is a resurrection for every child of G-d. The thirteen principles of Maimonides affirms the resurrection of the dead saying, “I believe with complete faith that there will be a revival of the dead at the time when it shall please the Creator, Blessed be His name, and His name shall be exalted for ever and ever. Amen.” The resurrection is confirmed by an angel to the prophet Daniel. “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (12:2), and he promised to Daniel, “But go your way until the end be; for you shall rest, and shall stand in your lot, at the end of days” (12:13). The angel promised Daniel that he would stand up at the end of days, meaning when the Messiah comes. That’s why Rabbi Shaul asks, “How do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith also is in vain” (1Cor. 15:12-14). The resurrection is so crucial to our faith, that Shaul says if we don’t believe in the resurrection, then our faith is vain, there is no hope. Our only hope is not to believe in the immortality of the soul, because only God is immortal. “(G-d) alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and eternal power. Amen” (1Tim. 6:16). Our hope is

in the resurrection of the dead, when Mashiach comes “at the end of days.” Rabbi Shaul received a vision of the resurrection in a special revelation and he described what he saw, how the resurrection would take place. **“For the L-rd (Mashiach) himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with G-d’s trumpet. The dead in Mashiach will rise first...”** (1 Thess 4:16).

Extreme forms of mourning such as self-mutilation, demonstrate a profound problem with one’s worldview. It is fundamental to biblical thought that while life does end with death, there will be a resurrection. Self-mutilation reveals a level of grief which indicates that one feels that the deceased is completely gone and that no trace of him remains at any level. This, however, promotes another problem. It is clear that anyone who believes that there is no resurrection of the body at the coming of the Mashiach is regarded as severely mistaken. We must understand what the Bible says about the soul, the body and the spirit. The creation of man is described in **Genesis 2:7: “The L-rd God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”** Let’s explain. G-d formed man (the body) from the dust (afar) of the ground (Ha’adama). That’s why he is called “Adam”, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Nishmat Haim), and man became a living soul (Nefesh Hayah). Thus in this account of the creation we have three elements: the body + Nishmat Haim (the breath of life) in the Jewish tradition, the “Neshama,” and the result of this connexion between the “body” and the “spirit” is the living soul (Nefesh Hayah). The soul or Nefesh cannot exist without the body. That is why, when Shlomo Hamelech wanted to explain what happens when we die, he said, **“And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it”** (Eccl. 12:7). He says nothing about the “Nefesh” or “soul” because when there is separation between the “body” and the “spirit” (breath of life) no existence is possible. That is why the resurrection is crucial to the point that Rabbi Shaul says that if we don’t believe in the resurrection, our faith is vain. The resurrection is a re-connexion between the “body” and the “spirit”, which comes from G-d. This spirit which returns to G-d is kept in the memory of G-d until the day of the resurrection when each one of us will experience the resurrection. It will be “me” with my personality, and “you” with your personality who will

be resurrected. That’s why, when the Mashiach comes back, we will be able to recognize one another.

Some could doubt the resurrection of the body when everything disappeared in the ground, or had been destroyed in the deep sea, or even had been burned as at Auschwitz...

To believe that G-d can re-create our body from nothing, we must first believe that G-d has created man from nothing. Anyone who doesn’t believe in the Creator G-d cannot believe in the resurrection. That is why today’s “creation-evolution” debate is very important. G-d calls us today to believe in the creation when it is written, **“I saw an angel flying in mid heaven, having an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, tribe, language, and people. He said with a loud voice, ‘Fear the Lord, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the springs of waters!’”** (Rev. 14:6-7). We are to worship G-d but not any G-d, we are to worship the Creator, the one **“who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and the springs of waters!”** It is this Creator G-d who has been revealed in the Bible to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moshe, David, Yeshua, and Shaul... That is why these people of faith persevered all their life having hope in the resurrection: **“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and embraced them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking after a country of their own** (Heb. 11:13-14). They have not received the promises, not yet, because G-d is a wonderful G-d who wants us to receive the promise at the same time as our spiritual ancestors, **“These all, having had testimony given to them through their faith, didn’t receive the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, so that apart from us they should not be made perfect”** (Heb 11:39-40). Then Jochanan can affirm **“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the L-rd from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”** (Rev 14:13). They are blessed not because they already are in heaven, but because their work follow them, and they will be rewarded with Mashiach comes.

## ETERNAL LIFE BY FAITH

A poor man bought a lottery ticket and won a huge sum of money. Upon realizing that he won, he ran home and told his family. Their excitement and rejoicing was heard in the street for a distance away. When people came and inquired about the celebration, the poor man told them of his good fortune. “Now I am the wealthiest person in town!” he said.

“But you haven’t collected the money yet! You have to travel to the big city to get it. In the meantime, you are still poor and do not have a penny more now than you had yesterday, so why are you joyous now?”

“You speak like fools,” responded the poor man. “True, I do not have the money yet, but the very fact that I won the lottery and the money is waiting for me, makes me feel as if I already have it in my pocket!”

The same is true with the reward for mitzvot. Our belief that G-d will reward us for mitzvot must be so strong that they should be fixed in our minds as if we see them. We must know, without any doubt, that G-d will ultimately grant us our reward, it is a matter of faith. I will not get eternal life, I am already in my eternal life.

## ETERNAL LIFE BY FAITH

Hillel taught (Avos 2:5): “Do not separate yourself from the community.” The Mishnah then continues with what seems on the surface to be additional, unrelated teachings of Hillel. However, a deeper study of the Mishnah reveals that they are in fact the rebuttal of various arguments for cutting oneself off from the community.

“Do not believe in yourself until the day you die.” Do not think that you are strong enough spiritually to function on your own without the supportive community. Do not rely on your apparent spiritual security, for it is never guaranteed.

“Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place.” In your criticism of the other members of the community, don’t convince yourself that you would be better off separated from them. Rather, judge them favorably and

understand the circumstances that generate those actions which offend you. See their good points. Avoid what is negative without separating yourself entirely.

“Do not make a statement that cannot be easily understood on the ground that it will be understood eventually.” People are sometimes frustrated that their views and opinions are not accepted by the community, but one must realize that the fault may lie in his views and not in the community. Perhaps his opinions are not fit to be heard and accepted.

And finally, “Do not say, ‘when I have time I will learn,’ for perhaps you will never have time.” There are those who feel that communal responsibilities infringe too greatly on their time and potential for personal development. They therefore conclude that disassociating themselves from communal involvement will give them more time to learn. Never reckon that time can be generated by avoiding a mitzvah. That time might never materialize. God will not permit one to benefit by neglecting his communal responsibilities.

## CREATION OF MAN

God gave us intelligence and also gave us the Torah. And God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, in Our likeness.” (Genesis 1:25) Rashi tells us that “in our likeness” means “with intelligence.”

## EDITOR

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## HAFTARA

### Isaiah 54:11-55:5

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

**HAFTARA:** The text of Isaiah continues to comfort Israel. It is not the time to make Israel feel guilty, but to build her up with the most precious stones. “O afflicted one, storm-tossed, and not comforted, I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones” (Is. 54:11-12). A wonderful promise is made when G-d says that he will teach the children of Israel himself. “All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children” (13). This text reminds me of the promise made in Zechariah. “And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn” (Zech 12:10). G-d will pour out his Spirit on Israel and will teach them about the Messiah who has been pierced.

Israel has suffered. She has been persecuted by those who should be the first to show them love. In order not to feel guilty, they say that all these sufferings came from G-d because of Israel's rejection of the Messiah. But the Lord said “If anyone stirs up strife, it is not from me; whoever stirs up strife with you shall fall because of you” (15). It is not from the Lord. That is a great comfort for Israel. It is better to be on the side of God. That is why it is better not to curse Israel, and not to build any weapon against her. “No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, says the LORD” (17).

The next chapter is a new call from the Lord to Israel. “Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David” (Is. 53:3). Paul confirms this with “as regards election they are beloved” (Rom 11:28).

## BESORAT YESHUA

### Mark 6:53-7:8

**A**s I wrote in the Haftara text, we are in a special period called “Seven weeks of comfort.”

**BESORAH:** In our text of the Besorah, Yeshua continues to comfort those who need to be comforted. After comforting Israel and his disciples he crossed over to the other side of the sea of Galilee. The text states, “They came to land at Gennesaret” (Mark 6:53). They arrived in a non-Jewish land. Yeshua wants to give the disciples the opportunity of seeing the big harvest among pagans. “When they got out of the boat, people at once recognized him, and rushed about that whole region and began to bring the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was” (Mark 6:54-55). Yeshua concentrated his ministry among Jews and would give the ministry to non-Jews to the disciples after this ascension. Yeshua wanted to comfort these people. “And wherever he went, into villages or cities or farms, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed” (Mark 6:54-55). There are still people who are not happy to see the Jewish G-d shared with non-Jews. In the Bible it was already the experience of the prophet Jonas. The leaders of the time of Yeshua had not learned the lesson from Jonas. They came to meet Yeshua and to see what he was doing. “Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them” (Mark 7:1-2). They could not accuse Yeshua of being unfaithful to G-d through his teaching, so they tried to find failures in the lives of the disciples. But Yeshua understood their purpose and rebuked them strongly, saying “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me” (Mark 7:6). Yeshua loved the leaders of Israel. That is why he was so strong in his words, to win them for heaven.

