

Shabbat Ki-Tavo

August 28, 2010

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News

IMMERSION IN ISRAEL

Last Shabbat was a new day of joy in Israel for the congregation of Ashdod and Bat-Yam. New people gave their lives to G-d and decided to be immersed in the Jordan River.



It was the last Shabbat also for Sergey in these congregations since the executive committee asked him to move to the North and to take care of the congregations of Haifa, Nazareth, Kiryat Yam etc...

We thank very much Sergey for his ministry in the South and send him our best wishes for his new ministry. As we say in Hebrew, Beatslacha.

IMMERSION IN THE NORTH

Oleg, who will start his new ministry in the South on the first of September will lead an immersion service in the Jordan River for people who are ready to give their heart to the Mashiach. I thank him also for his good work

in the North and wish all the blessings from G-d in his new assignment in the South.

ROSH HASHANA IS NEAR

Time is running very fast, the Jewish New Year is very close. It is time to think about what we are going to do to keep good contact with our Jewish friends. Your congregation can organize a special event and invite the Rabbi and dignitaries of the Jewish community. You can invite the Rabbi to give a lecture in your congregation on the meaning of Rosh Hashana, or on Yom Kippur or on Succoth or on the meaning of the Autumn feasts globally. You can prepare a special Shabbat to draw the attention of your members on the significance of the three autumn feasts. Let's remember that these feasts are at the heart of the Adventist core beliefs. We believe that Yeshua started the last part of his ministry on the 22nd of October 1844, which correspond to the last Yom Kippur of the prophecy (Daniel 8:14) We believe that prophetically we are living in this day of Yom Kippur and as soon as Yeshua will conclude his service in the heavenly sanctuary he will come back exactly like the High priest of the Leviticus came out from the Holy of Holy to the court.

One of the Jewish tradition for the meal of the Rosh Hashana evening is to dip Challah and apple in honey to share them with the people who are present. We want to express in this way that on Rosh Hashana night we evoke G-d's mercy? G-d's Judgment starts on Rosh hashana and ends on the night of Yom Kippur.

Let's do some Gematria: Honey in Hebrew is *dvash*. The numerical value of *dvash* is 306 (4+2+300=306), which is the same numerical value as the words *Av HaRachamim* (1+2+5+200+8+40+10+40=306), which means "Merciful Father."



OVERVIEW

KI-TAVO - כִּי-תָבוֹא

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-29:8

When the people of Israel dwells in the Land of Israel, its first fruits are to be taken to the Temple and given to the Kohen in a ceremony expressing recognition that it is G-d who guides the history of the Jewish People throughout all ages.

This passage forms one of the central parts of the Haggadah that we read at the Passover Seder. On the last day of Pesach of the fourth and seventh years of the seven-year shemitta cycle, a person must recite a disclosure stating that he has indeed distributed the tithes to the appropriate people in the prescribed manner. With this mitzvah Moshe concludes the commandments that G-d has told him to give to the Jewish People.

Moshe exhorts them to walk in G-d's ways, because they are set aside as a treasured people to G-d. When Israel crosses the Jordan River they are to make a new commitment to the Torah. Huge stones are to be erected and the Torah is to be written on them in the world's seventy primary languages, after which they are to be covered over with a thin layer of plaster. Half the tribes will stand on Mount Gerizim, and half on Mount Eval, and the levi'im will stand in a valley between the two mountains. There the levi'im will recite 12 commandments and all the people will answer "amen" to the blessings and the curses. Moshe then details the blessings that will be bestowed upon Israel. These blessings are both physical and spiritual. However if the Jewish People do not keep the Torah, Moshe details a chilling picture of destruction, resulting in exile and wandering among the nations.

DON'T ONLY THINK, SAY IT...

The opening passage of Parshat Ki Tavo describes the commandment for a farmer in Israel to bring his first fruits to the Temple and say, "I declare today before God that I have come to the land that God swore to our forefathers to give us" (Deut 26:3). The farmer then continues to recite a special formulation thanking God for His goodness.

We understand the special formulation and offering of thanks but why must the farmer preface with stating clearly exactly why he is there? Rashi explains that the purpose of this declaration is to show that the farmer is not unappreciative for the land of Israel.

Expressing gratitude through speech is very different than merely feeling or thinking it. This is because although what we think about shapes who we are to a certain extent, what we say forms our identities much more.

REJOICE BEFORE THE L-RD

In this parasha it is instructed—even commanded—to experience joy, to take pleasure in the L-rd, "And now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the land, which You, O God, have given me.' And you shall set it down before the Almighty your God, and bow down before the Almighty your God. And you, and the Levite, and the stranger in your midst, shall rejoice in all the good which the Almighty your God has given to you and to your family." (Deut. 26:10-11). Even more, we can be cursed if we don't serve the L-rd with joy, "[These curses] shall be a sign and for a proof to you and your descendents forever; because you did not serve the Almighty your God with joy and gladness of heart when you enjoyed an abundance of all things." (Deut 28:45-48). This emotional commandment appears three times in the parasha, and apparently the commandments are geared toward creating joy; when the commandment to rejoice is ignored, terrible things happen. Most of the time we don't rejoice in performing the mitzvot because we don't understand the nature of the commandments of G-d. G-d gave his commandments to a people of slaves who were just liberated from slavery and had to learn to live free from any master. When they received commands from their Egyptian masters they were not happy, they wanted to rebel against them. Now they have a new master, this master is the Creator, the almighty, how do they have to react towards this new master? Not as in Egypt towards Egyptian master. When G-d gives his commandments it is for the wellbeing of his people. Since G-d is the creator he knows everything about us and knows what is good for us and what is not good. That's why when we perform the mitzvot we have to perform them with *kavanah* (intentionally) and with joy, because it is the Lord, the Creator who gave them for the happiness of his people.

WRITE ON THE STONES...

The Torah states: “And you shall write on the stones all the words of this Torah very clearly...” (Deut 27:8) According to the Jewish tradition each one should write one sepher torah during his life. Some people who have the capacity to do it, do it by themselves, others pay a scribe to do it for them. The purpose of this mitzvah or advice is to impress our heart and to remember what is written in the Bible.

In the book of Proverbs it is written “write them upon the table of thine heart.” Prov 3:3 and in the book of Jeremiah it is spoken about the new covenant, and one of the result of the new covenant is that G-d writes his law on our hearts “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. (Jer. 31:31;33)

Maybe we should follow this advice and write for ourselves one copy of the bible in our life time, it will be one of the best way for G-d to write it in our hearts.

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

Our Parashat begins with the commandment of *Bikurim* which obligates a landholder to bring the first of his crop of the seven species to the Temple in Jerusalem in a special basket, recite the speech of thanksgiving, and then present the basket of fruit to the officiating Kohen.

Parashat Ki Tavo ends with the recitation of the curses bringing the total number of curses in the Torah to 98. Can we see connection between the beginning and the end of the parasha?

Yet the commandment of *Bikurim* enjoins the smallest landholder with an olive tree growing in his backyard to tie a band around the first few olives that appear on his tree each season and bring those olives to the temple upon reaching maturation and recite a speech of gratitude which clearly implies that the great events of the Exodus, which took place thousands of years in the past are in some way directly related to him. The believer speaks of the land that “You have given me”. The earth belongs to G-d where ever I am living, each piece of land which belongs to me has been given to me

and I have to be ready to give thanks for each blessing I receive in this piece of land.

A person can only be truly happy if he appreciates what Hashem has given him. However, if a person is egocentric, considering himself deserved of all that he has, he will not be content by that which is already his; rather, he will be focused on those things which are not yet his, but to which he feels entitled. If a person goes through life with the attitude that everyone owes him, he will constantly be miserable, never satisfied with what he has. According to Rabbi Noson Weisz “Internalizing the message of Parashat Ki Tavo teaches a double lesson. As long as we are on a legitimate path of expression of our spiritual potential, the entire immensity of the revelations of the Exodus and its aftermath is ours to draw upon. But when we veer past the limits of legitimate expression we hit the brick wall of the curses. These are the outer limits of every Jew’s fate. We all live in the space between the blessings of *Bikurim* and the 98 curses.”

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Immediately following the “good news”, “If you will keep all my commandments then you will have abundant blessing...” (Deut 28:1-14) the Torah launches into a description of what will happen “If we do not listen to the commandments of the L-rd our G-d...” The curses contain the mirror image of the blessings. Rather than being “blessed in the city and blessed in the country, blessed in our coming in and blessed in our going out” we will be “cursed in the city and cursed in the country, cursed in our going in and cursed in our going out”.

The Targum Yonasan Ben Uziel translates the pasuk (verse) “Cursed will you be when you come in and cursed will you be when you go out” (28:19) as follows: “You will be cursed when you come in” means “you will be cursed when you come into the theaters and when you come into the circuses” because you wasted your time on frivolous entertainment rather than spending it learning Torah.” “You will be cursed when you go out” as “you will be cursed when you go out to make a living”. Rav Pam asks, what is wrong with making a living? A believer needs to support his family and earn a living. A person must earn a living. However, he must have the attitude that whenever he has the opportunity to do so, he wants to use his time wisely from a spiritual perspective studying the Bible.

SPRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Rav Henkin, zt"l, once met the Chazon Ish when they were both yet in Europe. At the time, he did not even know the Chazon Ish and he certainly did not realize his greatness. They were both coincidentally in the parlor of a certain Rabbi, waiting to see the Rav and began talking with one another. Rav Henkin asked the Chazon Ish "What's your name?" and he replied "My name is Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz." "What do you do?" inquired Rav Henkin. "I own a store", replied Rav Karelitz. (This was true because the Chazon Ish's wife ran a store and that is how he earned a living.) Rav Henkin then asked, "Do you set aside fixed times for learning Torah daily?" The Chazon Ish responded, "When I have time I learn."

Later, when Rav Henkin got in to see the Rav who he was waiting to talk to, the Rabbi told him that he was about to leave his position for several months and travel to Russia. He was planning on leaving his community in the interim with the gentleman in the parlor named Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, who was proficient in all areas of Torah." What the Chazon Ish told Rav Henkin was absolutely true. Whenever he had time, he learned! That is why he became the Chazon Ish.

GIVING CHARITY

There was a poor Jew who labored in the field. One day, the prophet Elijah appeared to him and said, "You are destined to be blessed with six years of extraordinary wealth. You have the choice whether to have them now or the last six years of your life?"

Confused, the man said, "Let me go home and consult my wife." Elijah agreed. When he told his wife about the strange offer, she said, "Ask for the six years to begin now." The next day he again met Elijah in the field and told him of his wife's decision to begin the years of wealth immediately. Elijah agreed and said, "Go home. Before you arrive home your wealth will already have arrived!"

As the man was talking to Elijah, his children, who were playing in the yard, found a great treasure. When the man returned home he was greeted by his wife and children who excitedly told him of the great fortune that they found.

They all gave thanks to G-d for the wonderful gift. The wife then said, "Since G-d has been so good to us and blessed us with six years of wealth, we must be extremely kind and generous. We must take advantage of our good fortune and use our wealth properly, to give lots of charity and help others."

They excelled in giving charity during these six years and kept a detailed ledger of the charity they distributed.

Six years later, Elijah the prophet appeared to the man and told him that it was time to return the fortune. The man responded, "Six years ago, when you offered me the fortune, I didn't make any decision before asking my wife. Now too, I want to consult with my wife first." Elijah agreed. He went home and told his wife that Elijah has come back to claim their fortune.

His wife replied, "Go and tell Elijah that if he found someone more trustworthy than us, we will gladly give it back.

After examining their charitable records for the past six years, it was decreed in heaven that the fortune should stay with them for the rest of their lives. Thus, the Torah commands us to pursue the mitzvah of giving charity ("Tzedek Tzedek Tirdof") for in the end it is especially beneficial to the one who gives.

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

Isaiah 60:1-22

This Shabbat is the sixth Shabbat after Tisha B'Av. We are in a period called *Shiva D'nechemta*—“Seven weeks of comfort.” The seven Haftaras 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: This text of comfort reminds us the mission of Israel. “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the L-RD has risen upon you.” (Is. 60:1). G-d's people has to shine and to reflect the glory of the L-rd, which is His character. Her testimony will bring nations and kings to her and through her to G-d. “Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (Is. 60:3). However, to see people coming to her she must lift up her eyes and accepts evidences given by the L-rd “Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you;” (Is 60:4). She will shine even more to be “radiant” “Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.” (Is 60:5) Even the Arabic world will come to Israel: “A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come.” (Is 60:6a) It will bring wealth to her “They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.” (Is 60:6b). To comfort Israel, G-d promises to her that she will see her children who are in exile come back home, “For the coastlands shall wait for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from far away, their silver and gold with them” (Is 60:9a). That will come from the L-rd “for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you.” (Is 60:9b). Israel will live in peace without fearing the nations and invaders “Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not be shut, so that nations shall bring you their wealth, with their kings led in procession.” (Is 60:11). Blessings will be always there for her “Your sun shall no more go down, or your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. . . the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will accomplish it quickly. (Is. 60:20-22).

BESORAT YESHUA

Mark 8:1-13

One of the themes of the parasha is the joy of bringing to the L-rd the first fruits of the harvest “And you shall rejoice in all the good which the L-rd your G-d has given you and to your household.” (Deuteronomy 26:11)

BESORAH: In the text of the besorah, Yeshua wants to give joy to people who have no joy. In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, he called his disciples and said to them, “I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat.” (Mark 8:1-2). Yeshua is the one who has compassion for the crowd who is thirsty and hungry.

Yeshua asks his disciples to give food to the crowd, but they don't know how to do it. “How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?” (Mark 8:4). Yeshua knows exactly how to do it. He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?” They said, “Seven.” “ (5). It is important for the disciples to discover their own incapacities to feed the crowd, that's why Yeshua asks them to be aware of what they have of their asset, “7 loaves”. For Yeshua it is enough, he gives them an order. “Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground” (6). Obedience is important, if the crowd or the disciples did not accept full obedience, the miracle could not be done. “he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd” (7). The crowd was a big crowd, “They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away” (8-9). For the pharisees it was not enough, Yeshua fed 4,000 people with 7 loaves and a few fishes, but they want more signs “The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him” (11). Yeshua did not satisfy their curiosity, they had more than enough signs. “And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side” (13).

