

Shabbat Vayera

October 23, 2010

15 Cheshvan 5771

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News

GOOD NEWS FROM MINNESOTA

During the month of September, Shalom Minnesota, an Adventist Jewish Congregation that operates in the Twin Cities in Minnesota conducted a series of outreach events. These programs concluded with the baptism of six people. Here are some exiting stories.



Boris was a sports professional and defended cycling team of the USSR on different international competitions, however anti-semitic policies of the Soviet government did not allow him to compete in the foreign countries. In the beginning of the 90th Boris moved first to New York and then to Minneapolis. He and his wife Irene accepted Y'shua as their Jewish Messiah and were immersed in the waters confessing Him as their Lord and Savior.

Helena's family suffered for many decades of the last century. Several generations of her ancestors including her own parents and grandparents perished during Stalin's cleanings in 1937 and in the Hitler's gas chambers. All her

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life Helene suffered from the painful memories of her childhood. Two years ago her daughter Daniella, medical doctor, found her Messiah through the ministry of the Shalom Minnesota congregation. God answered Daniella's prayers; Helena, her mother found peace in Y'shua. Daniella, who now resides in San Jose, CA flew across the country in order to be present at her mother's baptism.

Please, pray for the success of the Lord work in Minneapolis.

BAR AND BATH-MITZVA IN BEER SHEVA

Beer Sheva is the city of Abraham, but it is also a modern city, capital of the Negev in the South of Israel. It is a city where many Jews worship G-d and believe in Yeshua the Mashiach. We are happy that there is a nice Adventist congregation in Beer Sheva.

On Shabbat October 16, we celebrated the 90th birthday of a lady who was immersed in the name of Yeshua few years ago. And we celebrated also the *Bath-Mitzva* of Dara and the *Bar Mitsva* of David, two young people attending this congregation.

It was a day of Joy for all the congregation, knowing that this celebration is a great step for these young people who are dedicated to the L-rd, who are able to read the Bible in Hebrew from the Torah' scroll and to present a *drasha* (sermon) to the congregation. Their parents, the pastor and the congregation were really proud of Dara and David, *Mazal Tov* Dara and David, May our G-d and His Mashiach bless your life through His Ruach Hakodesh.



OVERVIEW

VAYERA

GENESIS 18:1-22:24

Three days after performing brit mila on himself, Avraham is visited by G-d. When three angels appear in human form, Avraham rushes to show them hospitality by bringing them into his tent, despite this being the most painful time after the operation.

Sarah laughs when she hears from them that she will bear a son next year.

G-d reveals to Avraham that He will destroy Sodom, and Avraham pleads for Sodom to be spared. G-d agrees that if there are fifty righteous people in Sodom He will not destroy it. Avraham “bargains” G-d down to ten righteous people.

However, not even ten can be found. Lot, his wife and two daughters are rescued just before sulfur and fire rain down on Sodom and her sister cities.

Lots wife looks back and is turned into a pillar of salt. Lots daughters fear that as a result of the destruction there will be no husbands for them. They decide to get their father drunk and through him to perpetuate the human race.

From the elder daughter, Moav is born, and from the younger, Ammon.

Avraham moves to Gerar where Avimelech abducts Sarah. After G-d appears to Avimelech in a dream, he releases Sarah and appeases Avraham.

As promised, a son, Yitzchak, is born to Sarah and Avraham. On the eighth day after the birth, Avraham circumcises him as commanded. Avraham makes a feast the day Yitzchak is weaned.

Sarah tells Avraham to banish Hagar and Hagar’s son Yishmael. Avraham is distressed at the prospect of banishing his son, but G-d tells him to listen to whatever Sarah tells him to do.

After nearly dying of thirst in the desert, Yishmael is rescued by an angel and G-d promises that he will be the progenitor of a mighty nation.

Avimelech enters into an alliance with Avraham when he sees that G-d is with him.

In a tenth and final test, G-d instructs Avraham to take Yitzchak, who is now, according to the Jewish tradition, 37, and to offer him as a sacrifice. Avraham does this, in spite of ostensibly aborting Jewish nationhood and contradicting his life-long preaching against human sacrifice. At the last moment, G-d sends an angel to stop Avraham. Because of Avraham’s unquestioning obedience, G-d promises him that even if God’s people sin, they will never be completely dominated by their foes. The parasha ends with the genealogy and birth of Rivka.

ACT OF KINDNESS

The Torah states: “**And (Avraham) lifted up his eyes and he saw. And behold three men were standing near him and he saw and he ran to greet them from the entrance of the tent**” (Genesis 18:2).

From verse 2 until verse 8, the Torah details each specific act of Avraham’s hospitality towards his guests - “he lifted up his eyes,” “he saw,” “he ran to greet them.” Why does the Torah spend seven verses describing the details of Avraham’s kindness?

Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz commented on this with an analogy. When a person inherits a house, he will usually just say, “I have a house.” He will not elaborate on all of the details since he received everything at one time. However, a person who builds a house for himself will talk about every detail from the beginning until the end. He will describe how he purchased the land for the site of the house, how he bought the material that went into building the house, and so on. Each aspect is very dear to him. The more effort he put into the house, the more he will talk about it.

Similarly, said Rav Yeruchem, the actions and behavior of the righteous are like a building. With each action, a righteous person is building a great edifice. For this reason, the Torah tells us about each detail of Avraham’s chesed (kindness). Every movement was another stage in the building of a righteous person.

When you view yourself as building a great person (you!), every detail of what you do is invested with meaning and importance. Every positive action you do is creating a great human being. Keep this in mind when you do an act of kindness for others.

Every movement you make is a necessary part of the entire construction. Don't wait for the end to appreciate what you are doing. Rather, feel the joy of growth in even the smallest act of kindness that you do.

OFFERING HOSPITALITY

The Torah describes in great detail how Abraham himself, although he had many servants, attended to his guests; **“Let now be fetched a little water to wash your feet and recline under the tree... And I will fetch bread... And Abraham hastened into the tent... He tells Sarah to bake bread, while he runs to prepare a cow for their meal.”** (Gen 18:)

All this took place on the third day after Abraham was circumcised at the age of 99. G-d visited Abraham that day because Abraham was ill due to his circumcision. G-d performed the mitzvah of visiting the sick. G-d also made it unbearably hot so that no one would travel and bother Abraham. However, Abraham sat at the door of his tent looking for someone who needs help and hospitality, in order to perform this great mitzvah. When G-d saw Abraham's desire to perform this mitzvah, He sent three angels disguised as people to visit Abraham.

Although G-d was with Abraham, yet, as soon as the three travelers appeared, Abraham leaves G-d and runs toward the three strangers to invite them into his tent.

Based on this episode, the Talmud tells us that, “Offering hospitality to guests is greater than being in the Divine Presence.”

ABRAHAM AND WINE

Being aware that wine carries misfortune in its trail, as it is written, for instance, in the case of Noah (Genesis 9) and Aaron's sons (Leviticus 10), one might indulge in the hope of finding a pleasant exception in the wine that Melchizedek brought out to Abraham (Genesis 14).

But not so, the Midrash says that almost immediately after this act of mere courtesy Abraham had to face unpleasant tidings when he was told that his offspring would be slaves and afflicted for four hundred years in a land not their own.

HAGAR

According to the Jewish tradition, Hagar was the daughter of the Pharaoh who captured Sarah, and on restoring her to Abraham he presented Sarah with Hagar as her maid.

CONTEXTUALIZATION

Jews understand well contextualization, since the Midrash says that “if you are in Rome, do as the Romans do.” And to support this idea, they remind us that when Moses spent forty days and forty nights on the mount Sinai, he was in the presence of God, he was in fact like in heaven in the presence of angels, where there is neither eating nor drinking, Moses fasted he didn't eat nor drink. Paradoxically, when the angels visited Abraham, they partook—or pretended to partake—of the meat and drink which were prepared for them.

WHO IS IN CONTROL?

We read about the birth of our patriarch, Yitzchak (Isaac), who was named Yitzchak which comes from the word *Tzchok*, meaning laughter. The reason for his name Yitzchak is found in last week's Parasha, Lech Lecha. G-d told Abraham that his wife Sarah will give birth to a son. Upon hearing this, **“Abraham fell upon his face and laughed.”** Abraham's laughter was an expression of happiness and joy for this great miracle. G-d then told Abraham to name the child Yitzchak, which is laughter. Yitzchak was circumcised on the eighth day and that Abraham named him Yitzchak.

Yitzchak was born to his parents, Abraham and Sarah, when Sarah was 90 and Abraham 100. One can imagine what great joy and laughter his birth brought them.

Yitzchak was the only one of our patriarchs to have his original name chosen by G-d. While Abraham and Yaakov's original names were later changed by G-d, as told in the Torah, Yitzchak's name was never changed. Yitzchak was the name given by G-d and a name which reminds us of happiness.

The scriptures tell us that it is a mitzvah to serve G-d with happiness. The service in the Holy Temple was performed with all kinds of musical instruments and song. One of the sages said, “While joy and happiness may not in itself be a mitzvah, it can bring a person to such great heights where nothing else can.”

STORIES FROM THE MIDRASH

Terah, the father of Abraham and Haran, was a dealer in images as well as a worshiper of them. Once when he was away he gave Abraham his stock of graven images to sell in his absence.

In the course of the day an elderly man came to make a purchase. Abraham asked him his age, and the man gave it as between fifty and sixty years. Abraham taunted him with want of sound sense in calling the work of another man's hand, produced perhaps in a few hours, his god; the man laid the words of Abraham to heart and gave up idol-worship.

Again, a woman came with a handful of fine flour to offer to Terah's idols, which were now in charge of Abraham. He took a stick and broke all the images except the largest one, in the hand of which he placed the stick which had worked this wholesale destruction. When his father returned and saw the havoc committed on his "gods" and property he demanded an explanation from his son whom he had left in charge. Abraham mockingly explained that when an offering of fine flour was brought to these divinities they quarreled with one another as to who should be the recipient, when at last the biggest of them, being angry at the altercation, took up a stick to chastise the offenders, and in so doing broke them all up.

Terah, so far from being satisfied with this explanation, understood it as a piece of mockery, and when he learned also of the customers whom Abraham had lost him during his management he became very incensed, and drove Abraham out of his house and handed him over to Nimrod.

Nimrod suggested to Abraham that, since he had refused to worship his father's idols because of their want of power, he should worship fire, which is very powerful.

Abraham pointed out that water has power over fire. "Well," said Nimrod, "let us declare water god." "But," replied Abraham, "the clouds absorb the water; and even they are dispersed by the wind." "Then let us declare the wind our god." "Bear in mind," continued Abraham, "that man is stronger than wind, and can resist it and stand against it."

Nimrod, becoming weary of arguing with

Abraham, decided to cast him before his god—fire—and challenged Abraham's deliverance by the God of Abraham, but God saved him out of the fiery furnace.

Haran, too, was challenged to declare his god, but halted between two opinions, and delayed his answer until he saw the result of Abraham's fate.

When he saw the latter saved he declared himself on the side of Abraham's God, thinking that he too, having now become an adherent of that God, would be saved by the same miracle. But since his faith was not real, but depended on a miracle, he perished in the fire, into which, like Abraham, he was cast by Nimrod. (see Gen 11:28).

HAFTARA

2Kings 4:1-37

This chapter of the Second book of Kings tells us about the Ministry of Elisha and Gehazi his servant to an unnamed lady called the Shunamith, that means a native of Shunem, a place belonging to the tribe of Issachar. This place lies in a very rich section of Israel a short distance north of Jezreel at the foot of "Little Hermon."

The rabbis have certainly read this Haftara in connection with the Parasha Vayera because of their evident parallels.

PARASHA: The angel who visited Abraham said: "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son." (Genesis 18:10). It is a promise to Sarah that she will have a son.

HAFTARA: Elisha plays the role of the angel in this text. He said to the Shunamith: "At this season, in due time, you shall embrace a son." She replied, "No, my lord, O man of God; do not deceive your servant." The

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A newsletter published by the
World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center
Under the umbrella of the
General Conference —Global Mission Office

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woman conceived and bore a son at that season, in due time, as Elisha had declared to her.” (2Kings 4:16,17)

The next point about this Haftara is that this story is special for its length and complexity. usually the miracle in the Tanach are short and rare, but this text is an exception. Elisha wants to reward the Shunamith for her kindness to him and not only he promised to her that she will have a son, but later when this son died, he raised him.

PARASHA: In the parasha we have also a complex text with many miracle, it seems to us that the life of Abraham was a succession of miracles. In Genesis 18 to 22 we see: **1st miracle**, he is practicing on himself circumcision and survived to it. **2nd miracle**: Three angels appeared to Abraham. **3rd miracle**: they announced to Sarah that she will have a boy and that happened the next year **4th miracle**: G-d announced to Abraham the destruction of Sodom, that happened but Lot and his daughters are miraculously saved. **5th miracle**: G-d appeared to Abimelech in order to save Sarah from dishonor. **6th miracle**: An Angel saves Hagar and Ishmael from death in the desert. **7th miracle**: G-d saves Itzchak from being sacrifice by his father by stopping the hand of the killer and providing a ram to be sacrificed instead of the son.

BRIT HACHADASHA

Matthew 1:1-17

Matthew starts his book giving the Genealogy of Yeshua HaMashiach. In this genealogy the name of Abraham is mentioned three times.

Verse 1: “**The book of the generation of Yeshua HaMashiach, the son of David, the son of Abraham**” three stages of Jewish history (Abraham, David, Mashiach). The Mashiach is a Jewish Mashiach, he will be a descendant of Jewish people’s father, Abraham, and he will be a descendant of David, that means he can claim the throne of David and to be the King of Israel.

However, it is interesting to notice that the first verse starts with Yeshua and finishes with Abraham, strange! A genealogy in the Bible starts with the oldest character and finishes with the most recent—it will be the order of the next verses—a genealogy always gives the climax at the end of its list, in the verse one the climax is not Yeshua but Abraham. Abraham is an important character of the verse one. Why, because Matthew has written his book

for the Jewish people, and it was important to demonstrate to the Jewish people that Yeshua’s genealogy goes back to Abraham Avinu, the father of the Jewish people. There is no doubt that Yeshua is Jewish, he was born as a Jew and died as a Jew as prophesied in Isaiah 53.

Then from the verse 2 we have the beginning of the genealogy and now it started with Abraham.

Matthew wrote it, first not as a history, but as a midrash. When we read a midrash we don’t ask the historicity of the event, we try to understand the lesson the author gives us. The great lesson of this text is that Yeshua is the Jewish Mashiach, the king of Israel.

The third mention of Abraham is in the verse 17, where Matthew made a very interesting statement: “**So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Mashiach are fourteen generations.**” It is clear that Matthew is not doing a work of historian, because if we compare this genealogy with the genealogy of the Tanach or of the book of Luke we will discover that these 14 generations are not historical. Matthew is a Jew who wrote for Jews. one of the Jewish hermeneutic principles is called *Guematria*. It is an interpretation of the Bible through numbers; changing Hebrew letters by their numerical values. Thus 14 is the numerical value of King David, *David* in Hebrew is written that way DWD (daleth, way, daleth) daleth = 4 + wav = 6 + Daleth = 6, all together equal 14, then 14, number of David, is the numerical symbol of kingship in Israel. When Matthew affirms that there are 14 generations between the three great events of Abraham, David, Yeshua, Matthew says that Yeshua is “king” (14) of the patriarchal period, Yeshua is king (14) of the royal period, and Yeshua is king (14) of the priesthood period. Three times 14 (David) that means three times kings. Strong affirmation saying that Mashiach is the king of Israel.

