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News

I would like to apologize because my news about Sao Paulo was not complete.

NEWS FROM SAO PAULO

We have received some news from Reinaldo Siqueira who is the leader of the Jewish Ministry in Brazil. After buying a property in Sao Paulo he shares this news with us.

A NEW LEARNING CENTER IN SAO PAULO

Right now, we are in the process of reforming the house we bought, in order to adequate it for the usage of our Beth Bnei Tzion and to use it as an academic and research center, with the name of Shorashim (Roots). This center will be connected with our university, and will offer classes and accredited programs in areas of common interest for Jewish and Christians, such as: Jewish and Christians historical origins in the First Century C.E.; Anti-Semitism and its history; Holocaust etc. We will have Adventists and invited Jewish professor giving these classes. We are quite excited with the possibilities that are opening up for this center, including some study programs in conjunction with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

LEONARDO GONÇALVES, A SUCCESSFUL JEWISH ADVENTIST SINGER

Those of us who attended the NAD Jewish Advisory remember of Leonardo Gonçalves who was introduced to us and who recorded a beautiful CD of Hebrew Songs

Shabbat Vayechi
December 18, 2010
11 Tevet 5771

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called "Avinu Malkenu". Reinaldo Siqueira says about Leonardo: "We are having some good immediate result from this CD, specially a very sympathetic opening with the Brazilian Jewish community. In the public program of presentation of the CD, in São Paulo, Fortuna, (a Sephardic Jewish lady, and the most famous Brazilian Jewish singer) attended the event, and asked us if Leonardo could sing the song "Avinu Malkenu" in her show. Of course Leo accepted the invitation. Many Jewish people and authorities attended the event that took place on the 29th of September. Two interviews of Leonardo were published in Brazilian Jewish newspapers and magazines. They can be seen at http://www.jornalalef.com.br/ESPECIAL_1711_leonardo.htm.

CONCERT IN BUENOS AIRES

Concierto de
Clarinete y Piano
Uriel Sejtman (clarinete)
Cynthia Wainz (piano)

Obras de
 Schumann (1810-1856)
 Villani Cortes (1978)

11 de
 diciembre
 de 2010

20:00 hs.

Frias 275

Bs. As.
 Argentina

**Bet
 Bnei
 Tzion**



OVERVIEW

VAYECHI וַיַּעֲכִי

GENESIS 47:28-50:26

After 17 years in Egypt, Jacob senses his days drawing to a close and summons Joseph. He has Joseph swear to bury him in the Machpela Cave, the burial place of Adam and Eve (Jewish tradition), Abraham and Sara, Isaac and Rivka.

Jacob falls ill and Joseph brings to him his two sons, Ephraim and Menashe. Jacob elevates Ephraim and Menashe to the status of his own sons, thus giving Joseph a double portion that removes the status of firstborn from Reuven. As Jacob is blind from old age, Joseph leads his sons close to their grandfather. Jacob kisses and hugs them. He had not thought to see his son Joseph again, let alone Joseph's children.

Jacob begins to bless them, giving precedence to Ephraim, the younger, but Joseph interrupts him and indicates that Menashe is the elder. Jacob explains that he intends to bless Ephraim with his strong hand because Joshua will descend from him, and Joshua will be both the conqueror of Eretz Israel and the teacher of Torah to the Jewish People. Jacob summons the rest of his sons in order to bless them as well.

Jacob's blessing reflects the unique character and ability of each tribe, directing each one in its unique mission in serving G-d. Jacob passes from this world at age 147.

A tremendous procession accompanies his funeral cortege up from Egypt to his resting place in the Cave of Machpela in Chevron.

After Jacob's passing, the brothers are concerned that Joseph will now take revenge on them. Joseph reassures them, even promising to support them and their families.

Joseph lives out the rest of his years in Egypt, seeing Ephraim's great-grandchildren. Before his death, Joseph foretells to his brothers that G-d will redeem them from Egypt. He makes them swear to bring his bones out of Egypt with them at that time. Joseph passes away at the age of 110 and is embalmed. Thus ends Sefer Bereshit, the first of the five Books of the Torah. Chazak!

JOSEPH AND JACOB

Vayechi, is the final Parasha in the Book of Bereshit, the first of the Five Books of the Torah. Jews like very much to play with numerical values, that is why they said that The numerical value of the name of the Parasha, Vayechi, is 34. It is interesting to read in the Parasha Vayechi that it is about the final seventeen years of Jacob's life, which he spent with Joseph. Joseph was seventeen when he was sold into slavery. Thus, Jacob and Joseph were together for a total of thirty four years; the first seventeen years of Yosef's life and the last seventeen of Jacob's life.

“MAY G-D MAKE YOU AS EPHRAIM AND MENASHE”

Rabbi Zalmen Marozov reflects on the special place Joseph children had in the heart of Jacob and why they became head of tribes in Israel. He said that Jacob's fondness and admiration for these two grandchildren is clearly seen in the Parasha. In addition to giving Menashe and Ephraim special blessings, Jacob appoints each as the head of a tribe in Israel. Thus, they are the only grandchildren to merit becoming tribes.

Our sages explain that Ephraim and Menashe were Jacob's only grandchildren who were born and raised away from their grandfather. All Jacob's other grandchildren were raised under his guidance. This naturally instilled in them their spiritual heritage and love of G-d. But, Ephraim and Menashe were born and raised in Egypt.

Yet, Ephraim and Menashe were not swayed by the Egyptian culture. Instead, they conducted their lives as befitting grandchildren of Jacob, thus bringing the greatest pleasure to their grandfather. Menashe and Ephraim proved to Jacob that the education their father, Joseph, received during his youth remained with him and enabled him to transmit the same values to his children even in such an alien environment.

This is what Jacob means, **“By you shall Israel bless saying, ‘May G-d make you as Ephraim and as Menashe.’” (Gen 48:20)** This is a blessing to Jewish children throughout the generations to withstand all tests and pressures and stay loyal to our heritage, just as Menashe and Ephraim did.

SWORD AND BOW

Jacob tells his son Joseph, “Behold, I am about to die, but G-d will be with you and bring you back unto the land of your fathers. And I have given to you Shchem which I took from the hands of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow.” (Gen 28:21-22)

Jacob gave Joseph the city of Shchem (in the Hebrew text the city is named) as a reward for promising that after his passing he will take him out of Egypt to be buried in Israel. The “sword and bow,” with which Jacob says he has taken the city of Shchem, refers to his prayers which protected his sons Shimon and Levi when they conquered Shchem. A Rabbi asks “Why does Jacob compare “prayer” to a “sword and bow?” Our sages explain that prayer is like a battle. During prayers a person’s wants to connect to G-d and must fight to overcome the earthly inclinations of the body. In this sense, prayer represents a battle of spirituality over physical and light over darkness.

Rabbi Mendel of Kotsk explained more specifically why Jacob compared prayer to the bow and arrow.

In order for the bow to shoot the arrow, the archer has to pull the string of the bow toward himself. The more he will pull the bow to himself, the further the arrow will travel. So too it is with prayer. For prayers to be effective, one must “pull” it toward themselves.

Prayer has to affect the person to the depth of one’s heart. The closer one pulls the string of the bow, i.e. the more intention (kavana) they put into their prayer, the “higher” it flies, and the greater the effect of the prayer will be.

JOSEPH’S BROTHERS REPENTANCE

Rabbi Zev Leff from Aish.com says that Joseph’s brother did not repent yet when they came to Egypt to get food and they as long as the brothers failed to recognize their error in selling Joseph, they could not repent for their deed. Rabbi Leff continues saying that: Joseph devised a plan to bring them to acknowledge their mistake and atone for it.

First, he presented them with a situation in which they could observe another person acting as they had, and thereby obtain an objective perspective on their own behavior. He showed them how circumstantial evidence could be misconstrued to make them appear to be spies, though there was not a shred of truth in the

accusation. In this way they would realize that their assessment of his motives in reporting to their father and relating his dreams was wrong.

Second, he put them into a situation in which their brother Binyamin endangered them both personally and their future role in the people of Israel, just as they had perceived Joseph as doing. The only difference between the two circumstances was the absence of jealousy in the latter case. . . . Their concern for their father Jacob’s feelings and their own love for Binyamin, which played such a large role in their thoughts at that moment, would also have been present with Joseph had it not been for their jealousy.

Third, he sought to fulfill the dreams in their entirety so that they could recognize clearly that those dreams were of a prophetic nature, and not, as they suspected, reflections of Joseph’s subconscious designs.

Fifth, Joseph sought to provide them with the opportunity to receive repentance with suffering and tribulation, to compensate and offset the pain they had wrongly caused him. He threw them into the pit of prison so that they could personally know how he felt when they threw him into a pit. Then he removed them and left Shimon alone, so that they could grieve for a brother left in a pit, as they had failed to grieve for him. He then returned their money to their sacks, which they construed as the payment for Shimon’s enslavement. The repugnance of such money reminded them of taking money for selling Joseph as a slave.

Finally, Joseph sought to put his brothers in a similar situation to the one in which they wronged him, to see if their repentance was complete. The ultimate test of the ba’al teshuva is being placed in the same situation and not repeating the sin. Thus, Joseph gave Binyamin extra provisions to arouse any jealousy they might feel for the remaining son of Jacob’s favorite wife, Rachel.

The whole charade came to a dramatic climax when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. At that moment the intense truth of his innocence and their sin was so clear that it served as the most powerful and effective rebuke. The inability of the brothers to respond foreshadow our own stunned silence on the Day of Judgment when we will be confronted with our sins, and all our petty justifications will melt away. That is why we are happy to stand on the merit of Yeshua. **“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!”** (Rom 5:9)

BIKKUR CHOLIM

The Talmud relates that one of Rabbi Akiva's students once became very ill and no one visited him. Rabbi Akiva went to visit him and, realizing that no one was attending to him, he cleaned and washed his room. Because of Rabbi Akiva's care the student eventually became well. Rabbi Akiva then told his students that not visiting one who is sick is "like spilling his blood!" In other words, it is everyone's responsibility to make sure the sick person's needs are met.

When the Talmudic sage, Rava, fell ill, he would ask that on the first day his sickness not be made known. After that, he would say, "Go out to the marketplace and announce that Rava has fallen ill." Rava explained how this would help him, "My enemies will rejoice" and it is said, "Rejoice not when your enemy falls... lest G-d will see it and it will displease Him and He will turn away His wrath from him. As for those who care for me when they will hear of my illness, they will pray on my behalf." (Proverbs 24:17)

MORE SENSITIVE TO OTHERS

Rabbi Paysach Krohn loves to tell the beautifully haunting story of the woman who left Rusk Institute with her child who was in a wheelchair. It was a wintry day and the chill that pervaded the young boy's fragile bones declared its chilling presence with the icy frosting it left on the exposed metal of his wheelchair.

Waiting at the bus stop on the corner of 34th and 2nd Avenue, three large city busses whizzed by, unable to accommodate the mother and the child and his special chair. It was only after a half-hour wait that the mother flagged down a bus and insisted to the driver that he allow them to board.

As the poor woman struggled to lift the wheelchair into the narrowly impatient doors that waited to slam like the jaws of a tiger,

the driver shouted at her, "Lady you'll have to wait for a bus with a lift! I gotta go!" Immediately a few passengers jumped to her defense! "It's freezing out there. We will wait!"

Embarrassed into submission, the driver acquiesced. As the mother and child settled in their place on the bus, one said to her, "Your child is not handicapped. It only seems that way. In truth it is the driver that has a handicapped mind!"

The Torah is telling us an important foundation in negativity. When one seemingly has a blemish or sees a blemish in his own home, he has no right to declare it as such. He may have a problem but should never declare it until seeking spiritual confirmation. One may think it is a blemish, it may even appear as a blemish yet until confirmed by the compassionate kohen, it is only like a blemish. However, until confirmed with counsel, it is not.

If one goes to the kohen and learns to utilize the impairing experience to grow, to become more patient, more understanding, and perhaps more sensitive to others, then the hindrances that he or she experience may be troublesome, they may even be disheartening, they may even be like a handicap -- but they are truly not. Because the handicap is only in the mind; and what is on the body is only like a blemish that can fade away like the whiz of a speeding bus on 34th Street.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Consider three things, and you will not come to sin. Know from where you came, to where you go, and before Whom you will eventually give an accounting for all you have done. (Pirke Avot 3:1)

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

1Kings 2: 1-12

PARASHA: Jacob is dying and give his last instructions to Yosef and other sons: [Jacob] blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all harm, bless the boys; and in them let my name be perpetuated, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude on the earth.” (Gen. 48:15-16)

HAFTARAH: The Jewish tradition has made a parallel between Jacob dying and King David dying and giving instruction to Solomon his son: “When David’s time to die drew near, he charged his son Solomon, saying: “I am about to go the way of all the earth. Be strong, be courageous, and keep the charge of the L-RD your God, walking in his ways and keeping his statutes, his commandments, his ordinances, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn. Then the L-RD will establish his word that he spoke concerning me: ‘If your heirs take heed to their way, to walk before me in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail you a successor on the throne of Israel.’ “Moreover you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet. Act therefore according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to Sheol in peace. Deal loyally, however, with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for with such loyalty they met me when I fled from your brother Absalom. ... I swore to him by the LORD, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword.’ Therefore do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man; you will know what you ought to do to him, and you must bring his gray head down with blood to Sheol.” Then David slept with his ancestors, and was buried in the city of David. David was really concerned that his son and his descendants will continue to be faithful to G-d.

BRIT HACHADASHA

John 1:14-17

The text of our parasha is about Joseph and Jacob, their last days and the end of the book of Genesis. In this parasha Jacob asks Joseph to make a promise. Jacob asks Joseph to be “kind” and “faithful” in Hebrew “Chesed VeEmet” two words which can be translated by “Grace and Truth”. These were the qualities of Joseph who demonstrated grace and truth for his brothers, his family, his father. In this way Joseph was a Messiah for his people. That is why the Jewish tradition calls the Messiah, Mashiach ben Yoseph. The Messiah, according to the Jewish tradition, must be like Joseph, a righteous, full of grace and truth.

In the Besorat Yochanan, Yeshua is presented as an incarnation of the almighty (John 1:1; 14). “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” the same words, Chesed VeEmet are applied to Yeshua haMashiach. That’s why we can be sure that Yeshua was considered as the Mashiach. John testifies concerning him (John 1:15).

Yochanan who has written this Besorah, has been with Yeshua for three years, he has heard his teaching. That is why he can testify that Yeshua was full of grace. “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.” (John 1:16).

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses announced that one day a prophet like him would come on the earth to complete his work. “The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.” (Deut. 18:15). It was an announcement of the Messiah. Yochanan recognized him and said “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Yeshua HaMashiach.” (John 1:17). Again we have here the two words Chesed VeEmet, Jacob gave to Joseph. Yochanan not only meant that Yeshua was the prophet announced by Moses, but he was also the Mashiach Ben Yoseph Jews were waiting for. Furthermore, Yeshua’s father name was Yoseph.

