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NEWS

FOUR NEW YEARS IN ISRAEL

In my last newsletter I said that Thursday January 20 was the New Year of the trees. In fact there are 4 New Years in the Jewish calendar. Rabbi Packouz reminds them to us, he said, "The first mishna - teaching - in the Talmudic tractate of Rosh Hashanah informs us of the 4 New Years:

1) The first of Nissan (April 5, 2011) is the New Year with regards to counting the years in the reign of the Kings of Israel.

2) The first of Elul (August 31, 2011) is the New Year with regards to tithing of the animals. (One out of ten animals born from the Hebrew month of Elul until the beginning of Elul the following year was given to the Temple.)

3) The first of Tishrei (September 29, 2011) is the New Year for the judgment of mankind - for life or death, rich or poor, sickness or health - as well as for counting the Sabbatical Year (Shmita) and the Jubilee year (Yovel) for the land of Israel; the counting of the first three years of a fruit tree when the fruit is not allowed to be eaten (Orlah), and calculating the tithes for grain and vegetables.

4) The 15th of Shevat (January 20, 2011) is the New Year for trees with reference to calculating tithes due to be given from fruit of trees in the time of the Temple in Jerusalem. Tu B'Shevat is a festive day in Israel. The Torah praises the Land of Israel with reference to the fruits of the trees and the produce of the soil: **"A land of wheat and barley and vines (grapes) and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and (date) honey. ...and you shall eat and**

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be satisfied, and bless the Lord your G-d for the good land which He has given you" (Deut 8:8-10). The Jewish people rejoice in the fruits, in the Land and in the Almighty Who has given them life."

BETH BNEI TZION ARGENTINA

There is a Jewish Adventist congregation called Beth Bnei Tzion in the campus of the Adventist Hospital close to the Adventist University de la Plata. This congregation has been meeting for more than 10 years, Ady Lascu sent us this news about its work: "About the BBT congregation over here, 2010 was a good year, many theological and medical students attend the meeting and are enthusiastic regarding this ministry. Some of them even express their interest to come to Israel. I have explained them how things work in Israel. I am happy to say that the Argentinean Union leaders and the theological faculty have a very positive understanding of our ministry. The Sanatorium has a new staff, we are intending to present a letter of congratulation, and to establish the basis for future collaboration. Pray for it please.

**JEWISH ADVENTIST MINISTRY
IN YOUR CITY**

Do you want to start a new Jewish ministry in your city, don't hesitate, contact us. We have some resources prepared for this ministry.

It is even possible for our team to visit your congregation and to train new leaders who are ready to invest time for this ministry. Speak with your pastor I am sure that he will support your ministry. We also are present on Internet to support your ministry, you can visit our website, our facebook, our twitter group and picasa where we publish pictures of our ministry.



OVERVIEW

YITRO

EXODUS 18:1-20:23

Hearing of the miracles G-d performed for Israel, Moshe's father-in-law Yitro arrives with Moshe's wife and sons, reuniting the family in the wilderness. Yitro is so impressed by Moshe's detailing of the Exodus from Egypt that he converts to Judaism. Seeing that the only judicial authority for the entire nation is Moshe himself, Yitro suggests that subsidiary judges be appointed to adjudicate smaller matters, leaving Moshe free to attend to larger issues. Moshe accepts his advice. Israel arrive at Mt. Sinai where G-d offers them the Torah. After they accept, G-d charges Moshe to instruct the people not to approach the mountain and to prepare for three days. On the third day, amidst thunder and lightning, G-d's voice emanates from the smoke-enshrouded mountain and He speaks to the Jewish People, giving them the Ten Commandments:

1. Believe in G-d
2. Don't worship other "gods"
3. Don't use G-d's name in vain
4. Observe Shabbat
5. Honor your parents
6. Don't murder
7. Don't commit adultery
8. Don't kidnap
9. Don't testify falsely
10. Don't covet.

G-d instructs Moshe to caution the People of Israel regarding their responsibility to be faithful to the One who spoke to them.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WERE GIVEN BY G-D

According to the Jewish tradition, after receiving the first two commandments, the People of Israel, overwhelmed by this experience of the Divine, request that Moshe relays G-d's word to them. That means Jews believe that G-d has only pronounced the first two commandments and the others were said to Moses and Moses gave them to Israel. However

there is no evidence of that in the Torah. In Exodus the Ten Commandments are introduced in this way, "And God spoke all these words" (Exodus 20:1) first, "All these words" means the full text of the Ten Commandments, secondly there is no interruption between the second and the third commandment. Thus we can believe that G-d has said in a loud voice before the people of Israel the text written from the verse 2 to 17. It was only after that G-d has given the full text of the Ten Commandments that the people of Israel said to Moses "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." (Exodus 20:19).

UNIVERSALITY OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Since this parasha encompasses the Ten Commandments, it is one of the most important parasha of the whole Torah. It is the only time in history that G-d has spoken to the whole people of G-d gathered in one place and at one time.

It is interesting to notice that this parasha is one of the rare parasha which is named after the name of a man, among the 54 parashot of the Torah, only five of them are called after the name of a person, Noa'h, Yitro, Kora'h, Balak, Pin'has.

Yitro, was Moses' father-in-law, we know the story, Yitro was not an Israelite, he was a Midianite living in the Sinai, and according to the Bible he was "Priest of Midian", not a biblical priest, but a "pagan" or Gentile (Goy) priest, it is significant that Yitro did not stay and was not incorporated to the people of Israel, at the end of the chapter 18, he went back to his own worship and god(s). We can consider therefore that if the divine providence has given to this parasha of the Ten Commandment the name of a Goy priest it is also to tell us that the Ten Commandments are universal, for every man/woman living on the earth, not only for the Jewish people. .

LEADERSHIP'S HONOR

Moshe was advised by Yitro to appoint leaders: "And you shall seek from amongst all of the people, capable men who fear the Almighty - men of truth, who hate injustice. And

you shall appoint them to be officers over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, and officers over tens” (Exodus 18:21). How many people left Egypt, the Bible says 603,550 men above 20. Even though in most society there are more women than men if we consider the same number of women, they were at least more than 1,2 Million. Adding to this number the old people and the children, we have at least a population of 2 Million people. They have appointed leader of a thousand = 2,000. Leaders of a hundred = 20,000. Leaders for fifty = 40,000, and at the end they have appointed leaders of ten, they were at least 200,000 leaders. All together the people of Israel who were at least 2 Millions people in the desert of Sinai have organized themselves with a team of 262,000 leaders. The lesson here is that we don’t have to be afraid to appoint a great number of leaders in our congregations. The more we share the responsibilities, the more we delegate the leadership and the better it is for the community. However when you look for the leaders of your community appoint people who are men/women of truth.

A LARGE NUMBER OF LEADERS

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of leaders in our congregations. More we share the responsibilities, more we delegate the leadership and better it is for the community. However when you look for the leaders of your community appoint people who are men/women of truth.

YOU SHALL NOT MURDER

On the last weeks and days we have seen desperate people in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and even France committing suicide by burning themselves. It is time to remind what is the meaning of the 6th Commandment which is the prohibition of murder. “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13) The sages say that this commandment includes the prohibition against killing oneself (Psikta Rabati Parsha 25). Additionally, the Torah states that “I will seek out your blood for your souls, I will seek it out from every living creature and from the hand of man” (Genesis 9:5). This is understood as prohibiting not only killing another, but also taking one’s own life.

Rabbi Y. M. Tucazinsky makes some very pertinent points about suicide: ‘It may be even a greater sin to commit suicide than to murder someone else for several reasons. First by killing himself, a person removes all possibility of repentance. Secondly, why Judaism abhors suicide is that the person who takes his own life asserts by this act that he denies the Divine Mastery and ownership of his life, his body and soul and spirit. The wilful suicide further denies his Divine Creation. Our sages compare death to a Sefer Torah (Torah Scroll) which has been consumed by fire. Thus, a person who commits suicide can be likened to one who burns a Sefer Torah.’

“Of course it is painful to see others suffering and it is for this reason that amongst the core Torah principles are that of compassion and helping our fellow man. The proponents of assisted dying and euthanasia deem their acts as ‘mercy-killing’ rather than murder. However, the term ‘mercy-killing’ cannot detract from the fact that such an act undermines the very principle that we do not own our own bodies and that purity of motive in terminating a life to relieve suffering does not make it acceptable.”. Rabbi Shaul says “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor 6:19).

SPIRITUAL HEALING

A king had a son who was sick for a lengthy time. When the young prince finally felt a bit better, his teacher asked the king to send the boy back to school. But the king replied, "My son has not yet fully recovered. The next few months let him eat and drink and after, when he is completely recovered, I will send him to school. Similarly, G-d said, My children have just come out of Egypt where they were enslaved and tortured. How can I give them the Torah so soon? Let them enjoy the Manna, the water of the well. Once they are completely healed, then I will give them the Torah."

WE PRESERVE THE UNIVERSE

Our Talmudic sages tell us that G-d created the world with "ten" sayings. The Ten Commandments correspond to the ten sayings with which G-d created the world. "This," say our sages, "teaches us that through keeping the Ten Commandments, one preserves the universe!"

A SHARP VISION

A mother returned home with her son from a visit to the optician. The boy wore a new pair of glasses with shiny, stylish gold frames, which he proudly showed off to all his siblings. A short while later, the mother found once her younger sons sulking in his room. "What's the matter?" she asked. "Why are you so glum? Has anyone done anything to hurt you?" "Yes," the boy declared. "You did! You bought him glasses, but you didn't buy any for me."

The mother was taken aback for a moment, then she gather her little boy in her arms. "Do you know why he got glasses?" she said. "Because he doesn't see well. Without those glasses, he can't see the blackboard. But you are so lucky. You have such sharp vision, you can read the smallest letters from far away. Why would I get you glasses?"

Rabbi Naftali Reich says "In our own lives, we are all too familiar with the pressures of living in a materialistic society where the quality of life

is often measured by the possessions we accumulate. The tenth commandment offers us the means by which to rise above this myopic vision. If we connect to the universal will of the Creator and direct ourselves towards the accomplishment of our mission in life, we will find a serenity and fulfillment that will enrich us far more than the gratification of any of our covetous desires."

LIGHT AMONG US

A Jew emigrated to the U.S. from a small town in Poland and became very wealthy. In the beginning he would still send some money to his family back home in Poland, but in time he became so involved in his business dealings that he completely forgot about his poor family in Poland. Years later his brother also immigrated to the U.S. He went to see his brother to ask for his help, but the rich man denied that he had a brother.

"You must be making a mistake... I have no brothers." But the newcomer was sure it was his brother. Yet, no matter how much he tried, the rich man refused, saying that he had no brother. Finally, he decided to try one more time. When the rich man opened the door his brother said to him, "I came to inform you that you better write a will as soon as possible, for you will soon die!"

"How dare you say this... I just had my yearly check up and the doctor proclaimed me to be in good health!"

"Let me tell you how I know this. You see, I may not be a doctor, but back home in our little village when one couldn't recognize his own brother, we knew that he was extremely sick and his days were numbered..."

The Torah says, "To all children of Israel there was light in their dwelling places." Indeed, we have to make sure that there is light amongst us. That we see and feel the needs of others and do our utmost to help.

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

Isaiah 6:1 - 7:6; 9:5-6

HAFTARAH: The text of the Haftara is a revelation of God to the prophet Isaiah and his calling for the ministry: “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!” (Isaiah 6:8).

PARASHA: In the parasha God revealed himself to the people of Israel: Then the LORD said to Moses, “I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you and so trust you ever after.” (Exodus 19:9). Miriam was the first prophetess of Israel. God uses men and women to reveal his will to the humanity.

HAFTARAH: The vision of Isaiah was extraordinary with wonderful and great manifestation of the Lord “I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew.

And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.” (Isaiah 6:1-4).

PARASHA: When the Lord appeared to Israel on the Mount Sinai it was also an extraordinary appearance and with wonderful manifestation: On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of a trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled. ... Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. (Exodus 19:16; 18, 19)

Are we ready to receive a revelation from G-d who would like to send us to the world as he sent Isaiah and so many other prophets? If yest we have to be ready to say to the Lord with Isaiah “Here am I; send me!” (Isaiah 6:8).

BRIT HACHADASHA

Romans 3:10-31

Living a long and strong life as a rav, Rabbi Shaul saw how it could be easy to relate wrongly to the Torah, the law and the Ten Commandments. That’s why he started this text telling that nobody is a righteous, we are born in a sinful nature and it is not our keeping of the law that will change our nature “There is no one righteous, not even one” (10). Tehilim (Psalms) are full with the same ideas. Some are tempted to find righteousness through their observation of the law, but Shaul says “Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.” (20) The law, and even the Ten Commandments have not been given for the righteousness of man but to discover what is the meaning of “sin” and to discover our need of the Mashiach. Yeshua developed this idea when he said “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” (Matt 5:21-22). Nobody can say that he is ok with the law of God, we are all sinners and we all need a savior. Our sins have to be atoned by the savior or Mashiach. “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5). Rabbi Shaul continues his reflection saying that our righteousness comes from G-d, “This righteousness from G-d comes through faith in Yeshua HaMashiach to all who believe.” If we believe in Yeshua we will get this righteousness as a free gift from G-d. However some thought that in this way we don’t need to keep the Ten Commandments, they were only valid during the time of the Tanach, they say that if we believe in Yeshua we don’t need them. That is very wrong, the Ten Commandments are universal laws valid for all the time, from Adam to the second coming of the Mashiach. The words of Yeshua about murder are a very strong evidence of his care for the Ten Commandments. Shaul concludes this part of his speech saying “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.” (Rom 3:31).

