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NEWS
UKRAINE

As I started to say in my last newsletter this last week I was in Ukraine to speak with the Adventist leaders of the conferences and the Union. After being in Kiev for almost four days, training, worshipping with our members, we left the capital for the city of Dniepropetrovsky on Friday morning by car. We were six people leaders of the Union and Conferences. It was a long trim of 450 km (280 miles). Upon arriving the Conference Executive Committee were waiting for us. It was very important to meet these people to clarify our position and why our Jewish believers want to worship in a contextualized way or in the context of their Jewish culture. After this meeting, we invited a delegation of 10 people to join the Excom and to explain also that even though they are faithful to Yeshua they want to keep intact their culture.

Following these two meetings, I was invited to preach in the main congregation of this city. After that, I met the Jewish Adventist congregation who were happy to meet me, but still had a lot of questions about our ministry. This group needs our prayers. Then I was invited by the leaders to share a meal with them. After the meal I wanted to visit the synagogue of the city, a very famous one. This synagogue was built in 1776 and miraculously is still their. The suffering of the Jewish people was very hard during the Nazi time. Before the WWII there were 146 synagogues, today only 3. All these synagogues have been burnt and destroyed by the Nazi. We arrived in front of the synagogue at about 11:00pm. Of course the door were closed.

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However there was a guard at the door. We asked him to open the synagogue for us, he saw that we were Jews with kippa, I said to him that I was there just for two days, and I was very surprised that he accepted. It was a great pleasure for our group of Jewish adventist leader to have a private visit of this synagogue. (pictures are available on Picasa).



Then the day after, I was asked again the preach two times in the main congregation of the city at 11:00 am and at 2:00 pm.

At 4:30 pm. we took back the way to Kiev but it was a great adventure, since we faced a snow storm for about 350 km (320 miles). I arrived in my hotel in Kiev at about midnight, exhausted but happy having worked for the L-rd during these last days.

PARIS, FRANCE

We are still building a team of witnesses for the Jewish ministry in Paris (France), that is why I will be in Paris this next weekend (on my way to the TED PARL Advisory). We have to continue to pray for this ministry in Paris. The Conference is taking some important decisions about the pastor(s) who will take care of this ministry. The group of people who would like to be involved is very small 5 or 6 individuals, but I am sure that the L-rd can make miracles with motivated people. We have found a place for the meetings in the heart of the Jewish quarter of Paris.



OVERVIEW

KI TISA

EXODUS 30:11-33:45

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over.

Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal.

The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons.

G-d selects Bezalel and Oholiav as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels.

The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world.

Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments.

The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them. G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threatening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe. When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf. The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men.

Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer.

Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request.

G-d tells Moshe to hew new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy.

Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited. The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught.

When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

G-D SAVES

One of the themes of this parasha is that "God's salvation comes in the blink of an eye" (Midrash - Yalkut Shemoni, Netzavim #960). We see from this extreme example (the worship of the eigel hazahav (golden calf) that, no matter how far we have fallen or how impure we feel we have become, there is always a second chance. God can save people at a moment's notice. Thus, we have no reason ever to despair or be distraught, since salvation is right around the corner. That is the lesson of the cleansing water of the copper basin described at the beginning of the parasha.

The torah states: Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. (Ex. 30:17-19.) The Slonimer Rebbe compares water to teshuva, based on the verse, "I will sprinkle upon them purifying waters" (Ezekiel 36:25). Water is often associated with purity, and the ability to be cleansed from past mistakes. That is why Yeshua recommended the *mikve* (immersion) to everyone who accept him as the Messiah.

LOVE FOR G-D'S PEOPLE

The Torah states, "Now, if you would, please forgive their sin. If not, You can blot me out from the book that you have written." (Exodus 32:32) Moses' name is not mentioned explicitly in the previous Parasha Tetsave. He is referred to only with the pronoun "you." After the sin of the Golden Calf, when the Jewish people was in danger of being destroyed, Moses begged G-d to forgive the people's sins and if not, to blot his name out of the Torah. Even though G-d forgave them, still Moses' words were fulfilled and his name was erased from one portion in the Torah. Moses has shown a great love for G-d and his people. Let's remember in all these events which occur in the desert, Israel was in the middle of a cosmic conflict, the Great Controversy between the Messiah and Satan. Our Love for G-d is demonstrated when we are able to love his people in any circumstance. Indeed, in this way we recognize that G-d is Love and compassionate for his people, "The enemy of G-d's people upon the earth had not, however, taken fully into account the compassionate nature of Him who **'will by no means clear the guilty,'** yet whose glory it is to be **'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness**

and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.' (Exodus 34:6, 7) Despite the efforts of Satan to thwart G-d's purpose for Israel, nevertheless even in some of the darkest hours of their history, when it seemed as if the forces of evil were about to gain the victory, the Lord graciously revealed Himself." (PK296.)

One of the attributes that made Moshe so special was his love for his people. When the children of Israel sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe said to G-d, "If you don't forgive the people of Israel, then erase me from the book that you wrote." G-d forgave the Jewish people, but also listened to Moshe's request. So while Moshe's name appears in every other Parasha from the beginning of the Book of Exodus until the Book of Deuteronomy, it does not appear in the Parasha, Tet-zaveh.

LEADERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

This week's Torah portion describes the infamous experience of the construction of the *eigel hazavahav* (golden calf). Perhaps the most famous episode of the post-Exodus story. When Moses prays to God to forgive the Jewish people for this incident, he pleads, "Blot me out of Your Book" (Exodus 32:32). According to the Baal Shem Tov, whenever Moses saw the Jewish people behaving inappropriately, he blamed himself. He assumed that his own failings were the most probable cause of the people's misbehavior.

The Mekor Mayim Chaim writes that this effect can be compared to a person holding a long piece of string, with the top end between his fingers and the bottom lying on the ground. If the person moves the top of the string even slightly, the bottom will move as well. The top of the string - the "head" - symbolizes the "leader". Just as the head of the string causes the bottom to move, so too does the leader impact those who are at the lower level.

On a practical level, we can understand Moses's behavior as covering for the Jewish people. He took responsibility for their mistake because of his intense commitment to leading them. It is as if Moses said, "Had I been a better leader, they would have been better people." He saw their mistake as a reflection on his failure to guide them properly.

In fact, this was not the case, as we see in God's subsequent statement, "The one who really sinned to me I will blot out of My Book" (Exodus 32:33). Moses was completely guiltless in this situation. Yet we see

that Moses was nevertheless prepared to cover for the people by taking the blame himself.

May we learn to love each other to the degree where we can point the accusatory finger at ourselves instead of at others.

MOSES BROKE THE TABLETS

The Torah states: "And when (Moshe) got close to the camp he saw the calf and the dancing; Moshe became angry and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them beneath the mountain" (Exodus 32:19).

Rabbi Packouz asks: What angered Moshe and caused him to break the tablets? Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky comments when Moshe heard that they had made the idol, he thought that they felt stranded in the wilderness without a leader and intermediary to the Almighty - and concluded that they had made the idol out of desperation. However, when he saw them dancing, he understood that they were not reluctant, but were enjoying their worship of the idol. That is why he became angry and broke the tablets.

AARON WAS REWARDED

According to the Jewish interpretation of the *eigel hazavahav*, not only was Aharon not criticized for his role in the *eigel*, but he was actually rewarded, for he only got involved to delay them until Moshe came back. God said to him, "Aharon, I know your true intention. By your life, I shall set none other than you over the offerings of My children..." (Shemos Rabbah 37:2.) Hillel said, "Be one of the pupils of Aharon HaKohen - loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and drawing them near to Torah." (Avos 1:12) Aharon's role in the golden-calf episode was rather like that of an expert doctor, who, when attempting to heal a patient, looks at the cause of the illness and cures that. The symptoms will automatically disappear once the treatment has been successful.

So we see that as a reward for his good intent Aharon was given the service in the Mishkan (sanctuary) and, eventually, the Beit-HaMikdash (temple). The task of the kohen gadol, Aharon's eventual role, is to unify the hearts and minds of klal Yisrael (assembly of Israel) in their worship of God. Of course, this is just what he intended to achieve through his involvement in the *eigel*, for which God justly rewarded him for eternity. (*Shem MiShmuel* by the Sochatchover Rebbe, published by Targum Press)

GIVING? STUDYING...?

Rabbi Yitschak Elchanan Spector, Rabbi of Kovno, was once collecting charity to provide food and wood for heating for the poor. He came to the home of one of the wealthy people in his community, who was also a Torah scholar. Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan told him the reason for his coming and asked for his contribution. The wealthy man gave a small donation.

When the rabbi remarked how small the sum was compared to what he could afford to give, the wealthy man replied, "As you know I spent much of my time studying Torah. My Torah study is my contribution to our community.

Let other wealthy people, who don't study Torah, help fulfill this community mitzvah."

Rabbi Yitschak Elchanan, showing his disappointment, replied, "Your answer reminds me of the following story; During the Russian-Japanese war, every Russian citizen was called to contribute a minimum of ten rubles to the war chest. Officers of the Czar came to collect money from the citizens of one of the villages. Everyone gathered in the town hall and the officers told them how important it was to take part and contribute a minimum of ten rubles.

One after the other the peasants announced their contributions of ten rubles. One poor peasant, however, got up and announced that he is giving 100 rubles!

Everyone was shocked. "How can you manage to give such a large sum?" they asked.

The peasant explained, "A while ago I was brought before the judge and fined ten rubles. When I told the judge that I didn't have the money, he sentenced me to a month in jail. Now, I figured if a month in jail is worth 10 rubles, then 10 months in jail should be worth 100 rubles! I'm ready to sit 10 months in jail. This will be my 100 rubles contribution to the Russian army!"

"The same is with you", concluded Rabbi Yitzchak Elchanan. "Your studying Torah will help feed or keep warm the poor of our city like that peasant's sitting in jail will help the Russian army! "This is also the lesson from our Parsha," continued the rabbi. "When it came to count the Jewish people G-d told them to give a half-Shekel.

Studying Torah is very important, but it will not make one needy person less hungry or warmer in the winter. One cannot excuse himself from giving charity by opening the Talmud. One must "open" their pockets and give!"

HE WAS NOT ONE OF US

The rabbi listened to the young boy intently. The other children were puzzled: they did not remember this boy from their *cheder* (class), yet they were amazed at the remarkable fluency he displayed in reciting his piece. Rav Chaim was not impressed at all. He turned to the young man and said, "please tell your father that there are better ways to earn a few coins!" With that he dismissed the child.

The students were shocked. "How did the Rabbi know?" Their curiosity forced them to approach Rav Chaim. He smiled as he answered them. "There are two ways to say the Gemarah. One is filled with spirituality. The child's body is swaying and filled with the emotion of Torah. The other is just repetitive rote. This young man lacked the fire and the true joy that the Jewish children have when learning Torah. I knew he was not one of us."

HAFTARA

1 Kings 18:1 - 39

PARASHA: Israel experienced a great apostasy in the time of Moses. "Ex. 32:4 He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt." (Exodus 32:4).

EDITOR

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HAFTARA: Israel Experienced a great apostasy In the time of the prophet Elijah: **‘So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “O Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.” (1Kings 18:26)**

The people of Israel is under the domination of Jezebel, an evil queen and Ahab, a weak king. Jezebel kills many prophets of God while some of them are protected by Obadiah the governor.

Elijah decides to challenge the king Ahab: **Elijah said, “As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today.” (1Kings 18:15).**

What is strange in this story is that the one who is faithful, Elijah, is accused by the king to make trouble in Israel: **“When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?” (1Kings 18:17)**

Ahab is the one who brought idolatry to Israel, but he is so blind that he does not see anymore where is the problem. Elijah does not hesitate to say the truth to the king **“But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals.” (1Kings 18:17)**

Elijah is a courageous man, even if later he will be afraid to be killed by Jezebel, it is this sort of man and woman the world needs. “Would that every minister (Pastor or Rabbi) might realize the sacredness of his office and the holiness of his work, and show the courage that Elijah showed! As divinely appointed messengers, ministers are in a position of awful responsibility.” (PK 149).

BRIT HACHADASHA

John 13:1-17

Our parasha describes the “bronze basin”. “Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. (Ex 30:18). This bronze basin was used for the purification of the priest. “Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it.” as it is clearly said in the bible that the water served as a tool of purification “I will sprinkle upon them purifying waters” (Ezekiel 36:25). The priest washed their hands and feet before starting their ministry in the tabernacle.

In our text of the brit Hachadasha Yeshua used also a

basin of water to wash the feet of his talmidim. This act of humility was performed just at the beginning of his last seder.

The day after, Yeshua would give his life for Israel and for the world. But just before dying he wanted to purify his talmidim for their ministry. In fact Yeshua is the “high priest” according to Melkizedek as we have already seen (Ps 110). He made his talmidim a kingdom of priests (Rev 1:5) We could consider that their ministry started as soon as Yeshua died. Exactly as the priests were first ordained by a complete washing (last parasha) they just needed to wash their hands and their feet in the basin when they performed subsequently their ministry. The talmidim of Yeshua were completely washed (by the immersion of their baptism) and they just needed to wash their hands and their feet in the basin in order to be completely purified and cleansed from any sin. That is why in this text when Peter did not understand what Yeshua was doing he said: “A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean.” (John 13:10). This act of washing the feet is so important that when Peter refused this act of humility from his master and Mashiach, Yeshua said to him “Unless I wash you, you have no part with me.” (John 13:8). Then he invited his talmidim (and with them everyone who would become his talmid in the following years) to renew this act of humility and purification “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” John 13:17. We are blessed if we do what Yeshua has taught us. Then we can conclude that among all the denominations which claim to be the true talmidim of Yeshua, the only one who can be considered as an authentic one is the one who practice this act of purification which is the washing of the feet of the talmidim. Of course it is not the only characteristic of the true kehilah of Yeshua, but it is one of them. Let me ask you a question: Does your kehila practice what Yeshua recommended in this matter?

