

Shabbat Vayakhel

February 26, 2011

22 Adar I, 5771

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NEWS

PARIS, FRANCE

I would like to praise the Lord for the working meeting we had last Sunday (February 20) in Paris for the organization of the Jewish ministry there. The Jewish community in France is the third in the world just after the States and Israel, about 700,000 people and almost half of them are living in the large Paris metropolitan area.

There was a great interest because we met with Union and Conference representatives but also four pastors who joined us. They were not mandated to come, but they came for a full Sunday afternoon meeting just because they were interested and motivated for this ministry. We were about twelve people (good number), we took time to introduced each one of us, to know one another, what are our gifts and talents. I asked each one "In which way can you be involved in this ministry? what can you do"? I was encouraged by this preparatory meeting. We shared together a spiritual reflection on "Discontinuity and Continuity between Israel and the Church". We also started a reflection on the writing of a mission statement for this new ministry, then we ended the meeting with a long description of what everyone has to do to prepare himself for such a ministry. We have fixed out next meeting for the 23rd of March. Please pray for this ministry in Paris and more generally in France where there are so many Jews who do not know who is Jesus.

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NEW YORK, USA

When Paul Lippi left New York for California, Maxim Gordienko was called as a pastor of the Jewish Adventist congregation in New York. He was happy to welcome Alexander Bolotnikov for a special event, here is his report of that visit:

"We are glad to inform you that Alexander Bolotnikov conducted a program "Jewish Gospel".

This program was conducted in February, 11-13, in Queens, New York. The program was organized by Beit Shalom, the Jewish Seventh-day Adventist Congregation and the Astoria Seventh-day Adventist Church.

During these three evenings Alexander was answering following questions: 1. Is the New Testament only for Christians? 2. Was Jesus a Jewish Pharisee? 3. Did the Jews crucify Jesus? Over 70 persons have visited this program. Visitors enjoyed the music and songs, which were presented by Edino and Svetlana Biagi.

The organizers of this event are happy to announce that new events of Jewish-Christian dialogue (Merric, Long Island), Purim evening (Astoria, Queens), concerts and meetings will be conducted soon. Please support us, praying for our ministry in New York.

PURIM

What are you doing to prepare the event of Purim in your congregation. The day of Purim is the 14th of Adar, but this year is a leap year, we have a second month of Adar, called Adar2 and because the feast of Purim is one month before, it is celebrated on the 14th of the second month of Adar. This year it is the 20th of March, and in fact the three days of the feast are from 19th to 21st of March



OVERVIEW

VAYAKHEL

EXODUS 35:1-38:20

Moshe Rabbeinu exhorts Bnei Yisrael (children of Israel) to keep Shabbat, and requests donations for the materials for making the Mishkan (sanctuary). He collects gold, silver, precious stones, skins and yarn, as well as incense and olive oil for the menorah and for anointing. The princes of each tribe bring the precious stones for the Kohen Gadol (High Priest)'s breastplate and ephod. G-d appoints Betzalel and Oholiav as the master craftsmen. Bnei Yisrael contribute so much that Moshe begins to refuse donations. Special curtains with two different covers were designed for the Mishkan's roof and door. Gold-covered boards in silver bases were connected, forming the Mishkan's walls. Betzalel made the Holy Ark (which contained the Tablets) from wood covered with gold. On the Ark's cover were two figures facing each other. The menorah and the table with the show-breads were also of gold. Two altars were made, a small incense altar of wood overlaid with gold, and a larger altar for sacrifices made of wood covered with copper.

SABBATH AND SANCTUARY

The Parasha begins, "And Moshe assembled the entire congregation of the children of Israel, and he said unto them: These are the words which the L-rd has commanded that you shall do; Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a Shabbat of solemn rest to the L-rd. whoever does *melacha* (work) shall be put to death. Do not burn fire in all your habitations on the Shabbat day" (Exodus 35:1-2)

We may reduce these verses to two central ideas:

1. a prohibition against a certain type of work, called *melacha*, and
2. a prohibition against the use of fire. Some questions arise immediately: What is "*melacha*"? Why is fire excluded from the category of "*melacha*" and mentioned separately?

These questions are treated extensively in the Talmud. The general framework of this section is built upon placing it into the context of the building of the Mishkan, the Tabernacle. The word *melacha* is the key to the section describing the work for the Mishkan [for example 35:21, 35:31, 35:33, 35:35, 36:1, 36:2, 36:3, 36:4, 36:5, 36:6, 36:7, 36:8], as well as the key to our Torah portion, where Moses teaches the laws of Shabbat observance.

Our Sages therefore deduce that the types of work described in the instructions for building the Mishkan are the same types of work prohibited where the Torah prohibits *melacha* on the Seventh Day. In a word, the *melacha* prohibited on Shabbat is the very same *melacha* used in constructing the Mishkan.

Here Moshe emphasizes that even when building the Mishkan—a House for G-d, one cannot desecrate the Shabbat for the construction of the Mishkan.

The purpose of the Mishkan was to build a sanctuary and dwelling place for G-d. Similarly, observing Shabbat within our home makes our home a sanctuary and dwelling place for G-d, which brings spirituality and G-dliness into our home.

Some commentaries highlight the juxtaposition of this teaching with the sin of the golden calf. The golden calf was surely idolatry on some level. Shabbat, as testimony to God's having created the world in six days, serves as a spiritual antidote to idolatry in the future.

How so? If we say that the golden calf was an attempt to "know God," Shabbat is offered by Moses as the correct method to achieve this goal. If you seek God and wish to know Him, observe Shabbat. This is the proper way to experience the Divine.

DID THE TORAH CHANGE YOU?

The Torah states: "And the entire congregation of the Children of Israel went out from the presence of Moshe." (Exodus 35:20) Why does the Torah point this out to us? What can we learn from these words?

Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian commented on this verse that it was noticeable that they were in the presence of Moshe as they were parting from him. If you see someone who was at a bar, it will be noticeable in the way he talks and walks. One can easily perceive that someone is drunk from his actions and speech.

Similarly, when someone seriously studies Torah, it should be noticeable from the way he behaves that he has been studying Torah. Torah is meant to change a person, to impact his being as well as his behavior. This is what the verse expresses: everyone could tell from the elevated manner in which the people behaved that they had just come from Moshe.

Whenever you learn Torah or when you have been in a Torah environment, it should be noticeable from your deeds and traits that you have been in a spiritual environment.

OFFERINGS FOR THE SANCTUARY

The Torah tells us about the merit of the women who contributed to the construction of the Mishkan. Moshe lists the materials needed for the Mishkan and its contents. He encourages the people to come forward and donate them. The people didn't hesitate and immediately brought their contributions, as the Torah tells us, **"And every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing brought their offering for the construction of the Mishkan, for all its service and for the holy garments."** (Exodus 35:21) Both men and women contributed for the construction of the Mishkan, however, the Torah adds, "And the men came with the women". According to our sages, this implies that the women gave faster than the men. The generosity of the Jewish people toward the building of the Mishkan was so great that they gave much more than was needed. As a result, Moshe announced, "No man or woman shall make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary." The Torah tells us that after this announcement, "the people restrained from bringing."

The building of the Mishkan came after G-d forgave the Jewish people for the sin of the Golden Calf. By contributing so quickly and diligently for the construction of the Mishkan, they proved their loyalty to G-d.

TITHES AND OFFERINGS

The Jewish people contributed so generously that the craftsmen said to Moshe, **"The people are bringing much more than is needed."** (Exodus 36:5) As a result, only three days after Moshe told them what to donate for the Mishkan, he had an announcement made that, **"No man or**

woman shall make any more work for the sanctuary." (Exodus 36:6) Giving Tzedakah (tithes and offerings) is one of the greatest mitzvot. In essence every good deed we do is a charitable act, for every mitzvah brings G-d's blessings not only to the individual who performs the mitzvah, but also to the entire Jewish nation and the world.

Our sages teach us that if one lacks the financial means to help others, they should nevertheless help by volunteering to collect money for a charitable cause. Even one who gives charity himself should encourage others to give as well. The Talmud tells us that, "Greater is the one who influences others to give than the one who gives."

DON'T CAUSE DISAPPOINTMENT

"And Moshe commanded, and (the wise men in charge of the Sanctuary's construction) **caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp saying: No man or woman shall do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary"** (Exodus 36:6).

They were asked to contribute the material necessary of the building of the Sanctuary. With great enthusiasm, they responded with the various items that were needed. When the men in charge of the collection reported to Moshe that they were receiving an abundance of material, Moshe commanded the people to suspend further work on their offers. Sforno notes that Moshe did not instruct that the people should not bring any more items, but that they should discontinue doing additional work.

Rabbi Packouz says that some of the people had already completed doing work for the Sanctuary and had they been told not to bring what they had already prepared, they would have been most disappointed. Moshe, therefore worded his announcement in a manner that would not cause them anguish.

If someone does something for you which ultimately proves to have been superfluous, be considerate of his feelings. Do not tell him that his efforts were not actually needed, since this will cause him needless disappointment. Likewise, if you have heard a joke before, listen with rapt attention as if it is the first time and laugh heartily. The teller will feel better ... and so will you!

HE WHO SAVES ONE SOUL...

The Talmud tells the following story about Binyamin the Righteous who supervised the charity fund. One day, during a year of scarcity, a woman came to him and said, "Master, provide sustenance for me." Binyamin replied, "There is no money left in the charity fund." She pleaded, "Master, if you do not provide for me, a woman and her seven children will perish." He provided for her out of his own pocket.

Sometime afterwards he became very ill and he was at the point of death.

The angels above said to G-d: "Master of the universe, You have said that he who saves even one soul is considered as if he had saved the entire world. Shall Binyamin the righteous, who saved the lives of a woman and her seven children, die at such a young age?"

The Talmud concludes that, as a result, twenty two years were added to his life!

OUR MOTIVATIONS?

Our sages in Pirkei Avot (Chapters of our Fathers) taught us the following directive, "Don't be like servants who serve their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve their master without the expectation of receiving a reward." Thus, while G-d did promise reward for performing mitzvot, this should not be the motivating factor. Our motivation for performing mitzvot and good deeds should be the very fact that we are fulfilling G-d's will. Having the ability to serve G-d is the greatest honor and privilege.



Yet, we find a wonderful story in the Talmud, that in the merit of being so diligent in the observance of Shabbat a Jew by the name, Yosef Mokir Shabbat, was rewarded for his efforts on behalf of Shabbat.

Once there was a man who earned the title, "Yosef Mokir Shabbat" (Yosef who honors the Shabbat). He was called so because no matter how meager his earnings, he would always honor the Shabbat with all types of delicacies, notably when it came to buying the finest fish for Shabbat.

Where he lived, there also lived a gentile who was very wealthy. One day he was told that all his

wealth will end up with Yosef Mokir Shabbat.

In order to avoid something like this from happening, he went and sold all his property and purchased a precious stone, which he sowed into his hat.

One day as he was crossing a bridge, a powerful wind blew off his hat and cast it into the river, where a fish swallowed up the diamond. This very same fish was later hauled up by a fisherman and brought to the market just before Shabbat.

"Who will purchase it now?" they asked anxiously, as Shabbat was soon approaching and most people had already bought and cooked their Shabbat meals. "Go and take it to Yosef Mokir Shabbat," they were told by fellow shopkeepers. So they took it to him and he purchased it. Upon opening the fish, his wife found the valuable jewel and they sold it after Shabbat for an enormous sum. (Shabbos 119a).

A GOOD NAME

According to the Midrash, the Torah tells us why G-d appointed Betzalel to head the construction of the Mishkan. It was because of the "good name" which he had earned through the many good deeds which he performed "The fragrance of good oil can only spread its aroma a short distance, while a good name carries from one end of the world to the other. A fragrant oil lasts only for a while, but a good name lasts for generations. Good oil can be acquired only by the rich, while a good name can be earned by everyone. Good oil can only benefit one who is alive, but a good name is beneficial even after a person leaves this world. Good oil can be destroyed by the elements, while a good name is indestructible."

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

1 Kings 7:13 - 51

PARASHA: God asks Israel to continue to build the sanctuary, Moses choose Betzalel for all artistic work because he was skilled. **“Then Moses said to the Israelites: See, the LORD has called by name Betzalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; he has filled him with divine spirit, with skill, intelligence, and knowledge in every kind of craft, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze...”** (Exodus 35:30-3).

HAFTARA: About four hundred year later Solomon choose Hiram from Tyre for artistic work because he was a skilled man: **“King Solomon sent for Hiram and brought him down from Tyre. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a Tyrian, a coppersmith. He was endowed with skill, ability, and talent for executing all work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and executed all his work.”** (1Kings 7:13-14)

All the text of the parasha is about Hiram and how he made all the beautiful furniture of the sanctuary.

The great lesson of this haftara is that when we want to do or to build something for the L-rd we have to do our best, to select the best material for Him.

Before dying, David gave to Solomon all instruction about the temple and commanded his son to build the House of the L-rd. He prepared everything and gave a lot of treasure for that house. Solomon followed the instruction given by David and when everything was finished he put all the treasure David gave him in the temple. **“When all the work that King Solomon had done in the House of the L-RD was completed, Solomon brought in the sacred donations of his father David — the silver, the gold, and the vessels — and deposited them in the treasury of the House of the L-RD”** (1Kings 7:51). Doing this donation, David followed the command of Moses who said to Israel to make donation for the sanctuary. What a great lesson for each one of us. Most of the time when the L-rd asks from us offerings and donations for his work, we keep the best part for us and give only our surplus to Him.

BRIT HACHADASHA

Matthew 12:1-13

The beginning of the parasha is a reminder of the Shabbat by Moses, saying that we have 6 days to make our work *melacha* (see parasha comment) and to rest on the Seventh-day, which is the Shabbat of the Lord. It is interesting to see that during his life Yeshua kept the Shabbat even though he was not understood by his contemporaries. In the text of Matthew the Pharisees reproach to Yeshua two things about the Shabbat, 1) **“His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them.”** (Matthew 12:1) and 2) Yeshua healed a sick man in the synagogue. However it is clear that Yeshua did not want to break the law of God, we remember that Yeshua said in his famous sermon on the mount **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** (Matt. 5:17-18). Yeshua was faithful to the Torah, we have many testimonies saying that every Shabbat he went to the synagogue (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:16) and he even prayed that the end will not occur a Shabbat (Mat 24:20). Thus in the two cases reproached to the disciples and to him, we can say first that it was not a work (*melacha*) as mentioned in the book of Exodus in connection with one of the work done to build the sanctuary. The Jewish people insists on that point, the works forbidden on Shabbat is one of the works that was necessary to build the sanctuary. Secondly to reproach to Yeshua of healing was really Hippocratic, even today every Jew knows that it is permitted to heal a person on Shabbat, that is why Jesus ask the pharisees if it is permitted to heal or not on Shabbat. They could not say no, and they were angry. We don't have to be troubled by this text, Yeshua did what is right, and taught everyone about the right way to keep the Shabbat, which has been made for men, that means also for their happiness.

