

Shabbat Pekudei

March 5, 2011

29 Adar I, 5771

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NEWS

PURIM

This year Purim will be from March 19 to 21st. It is very nice that it will occur on a Shabbat. It will give you a great opportunity to prepare a special program and to invite your Jewish friends. We



An Evening of Jewish-Christian Dialogue

WITH A SPECIAL GUEST
Richard Elofer, MA (ISRAEL)

THE REAL FREEDOM OF PURIM פורים

- The Book of Esther: attempted genocide and marvelous deliverance
- Traditions and history of Purim
- Why every Bible reader should know more about Purim?
- How to obtain real Bible freedom?

Come and listen to eloquent speaker who lives in Israel and is an expert of Jewish traditions

Classical and traditional Jewish music and singing presented by Beit Shalom SDA Congregation and Astoria SDA Church

Surprises are prepared for everyone

Saturday, March 26th • 5:00 pm

Astoria Seventh-day Adventist Church, 30-89 32nd Street, Astoria, NY 11102. For information: 718-932-5390

Direction: N, W train to 30 Ave station; On 32nd Street turn right; walk to 30-89 on the left

These lectures are free of charge ● Russian translation will be provided
Sponsored by Beit Shalom SDA Congregation and Astoria SDA Church

know that Purim is the celebration of God's victory over the enemy of God's people in the time of Esther.

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To remember the story it is good to read again the book of Esther in the Bible. It is good to read this book at least once a year, specially at the time of Purim.

I have been invited to give a lecture on Purim and the book of Esther in New York, but unfortunately I will not be able to be there on the Shabbat of Purim but the following Shabbath, March 26th. The Jewish adventist congregation there has prepared a leaflet for this occasion, if you have some friends in the area of New York do not hesitate to invite them.

PURIM CUSTOMS

The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman used to choose the date for the massacre.

The feast is preceded by the fast of Esther called in Hebrew "Ta'anit Esther". This fast occurs three days before the feast this year, it will be on Thursday March 17.

The first custom related to Purim is to hear the reading of the book of Esther, that is why I suggest that each congregation take the time to read the book of Esther on Friday evening 19 or during the Shabbat 20th of March. It is also a custom to boo, hiss, stamp feet and rattle any noise maker instrument whenever the name of Haman is mentioned in the service. The purpose of this custom is to "blot out the name of Haman."

Because this feast is a real celebration, it is customary to eat, drink and be happy, once a year Jews don't think very much about "diet" and "temperance" because God has been good and we must rejoice.

It is good also at this time to send out gifts of food or drink, and to make gifts to charity. The sending of gifts of food and drink is referred to as "Shalach manot" (send of gifts) (to be continued next week).



OVERVIEW

PEKUDEI

EXODUS 38:21-40:38

The Book of Shemot concludes with this Parsha. After finishing all the different parts, vessels and garments used in the Mishkan, Moshe gives a complete accounting and enumeration of all the contributions and of the various clothing and vessels which had been fashioned. Bnei Yisrael bring everything to Moshe.

He inspects the handiwork and notes that everything was made according to G-d's specifications.

Moshe blesses the people. G-d speaks to Moshe and tells him that the Mishkan should be set up on the first day of the first month, (Nissan). He also tells Moshe the order of assembly for the Mishkan and its vessels. Moshe does everything in the prescribed manner.

When the Mishkan is finally complete with every vessel in its place, a cloud descends upon it, indicating that G-d's glory was resting there. Whenever the cloud moved away from the Mishkan, Bnei Yisrael would follow it. At night the cloud was replaced by a pillar of fire

MOSHE PUT UP THE MISHKAN

The Torah States, "And they brought the Mishkan [Tabernacle] to Moshe, the tent and all its vessels, its clasps, its boards, its bars, its pillars, its sockets..." (Exodus 39:33.) The Torah tells us that Moshe put up the Mishkan all by himself! Considering how heavy the Mishkan was, Moshe's assembling it all by himself was a great miracle. Our sages explain that G-d wanted to reward Moshe with the special merit of erecting the Mishkan. Moshe said to G-d, "How can I erect the Mishkan all by myself?" G-d replied, "Just put your hands to it and it will stand up by itself." Rabbi Zalmen Marozov says "This teaches us a profound lesson. At times, we are faced with certain mitzvot which G-d demands of us, yet, we may be skeptical and wonder, 'How can I possibly accomplish this' all G-d wants and expects from us is that we try our best. G-d will do the rest!

ELEVATED MOTIVATIONS

The Torah states: "And Moshe did all that the Almighty commanded him; that is what he did." (Exodus 40:16) Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the Netziv, comments: Moshe's motivation in all that he did for the Sanctuary was for the Almighty's honor. Even though he personally would gain from the construction of the Tabernacle, for the Almighty would communicate with him there, he was not motivated by thoughts of his own glory. Neither was he motivated by thoughts of the honor of his brother, Aharon, who was to be the High Priest. Moshe focused solely on doing the will of the Almighty.

Rabbi Yechezkail Abramsky told Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Shulsinger, "Every time I go to deliver a Torah lecture I have in mind that I am now going to serve the Almighty with the mitzvah of teaching Torah. At times, to sincerely think these thoughts is even more difficult than any other aspect of giving the lecture."

Rabbi Kalman Packouz says "It is a very difficult task to do something from which you will have great benefit and to still have pure motivations. However, the more sacred the work you are involved in, the greater the importance of having elevated thoughts and motivations."

AVOIDING ENVY

After being told to anoint his brother Aharon (Aaron), Moshe was told in reference to Aharon's sons, "And you shall anoint them as you anointed their father" (Exodus 40:15). Why did the Almighty give Moses this special instruction?

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen explains in his commentary Meshech khokhmah that when Moses was told to anoint his brother Aaron, he was able to do it with a complete heart. Moses, the younger brother, was the leader of the Israelites and was happy that his brother was the High Priest. However, in reference to Aaron's sons, the situation was different. Moses' own sons were not going to succeed him as leaders. So, when it came to anointing Aaron's sons, Moses might have felt envy. Therefore, the Almighty told Moses to anoint Aaron's sons with the same whole heart and joy with which he anointed their father. Rabbi Packouz says "If even a person as great as Moses needs to internalize attitudes to avoid envy,

all the more so do we! Also, it is possible to feel joy and enthusiasm for another person's success even if he has something that you do not.

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!

THE SHECHINA

The Book of Exodus comes to an end with the establishment of the Tabernacle in the desert. In a sense, the consecration of the Tabernacle, and especially the resting of the Shechina within its confines, is a sign of healing in the aftermath of the Golden Calf tragedy. The revelation at Sinai, which was a singular event, becomes institutionalized in the building of the Tabernacle. Nachmanides writes that the sublime secret of the Tabernacle is that the presence of God which hovered about Mount Sinai, now will be placed on “permanent display” in the Tabernacle. The Torah describes its completion with the following words: **“And he erected the court around the Tabernacle and the altar, and set up the screen of the court gate. So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud abode on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. And when the cloud was taken up from over the Tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the Tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.”** (Exodus 40:33-38)

Rabbi Ari Kahn concludes “The glory of God had entered the building. This was surely seen by the people as a sign of Divine benevolence. God was with the people, His Presence palpable.”

BE STRONG, BE STRONG...

Shabbat we read Parshat Pekudei, the final Parsha of the Book of Exodus (Shemot). When the Cantor concludes the reading of the Parsha the congregation rises and says, “*Chazak, Chazak, Venitchebazeik*” - “be strong, be strong and let us strengthen one another.” Then we are ready to continue our reading on the next week.

OUR TABERNACLE

The Tabernacle that we can build within ourselves, and within our homes. We may look at the amount that must be done, and conclude that it is impossible — that we lack the necessary skill. But it is those who push these thoughts aside, and move forward, who eventually succeed.

There is a well known story of a father, very concerned about his son's ability to learn Torah, who came to the Chazon Ish, Rabbi Avraham Y. Karelitz, one of the great Rabbis of the last generation. The father said that his son was unable to achieve any depth of understanding; that he wasn't very intelligent, and couldn't handle complex analysis of many concepts. The Rabbi responded: so let him learn quickly, aiming for a broad but more superficial understanding. The depth would come later.

When the young man was 30, he was still doing this, and apparently wasn't making much progress. But he plodded on. Some said about him, "no one learns the Talmud more, and knows it less."

The father in this story was an outstanding Torah leader a generation ago and his son is an outstanding scholar and leader today. The breadth and depth of his knowledge is unfathomable, and it all came from the Help of Heaven given to his sheer dedication and effort, rather than natural talent.

Let no one say it is impossible. If you want to build a Tabernacle, then G-d Himself will help, and make it possible!

FIRST PRAY AND THEN TRUST GOD

Rabbi Mordechai of Tchernobel asked one of his Chassidim, who had an inn, about his daily routine. The Chassid replied, "First thing in the morning I hurry out to the marketplace to get the best and freshest produce for my customers. Then I go and recite my morning prayers." Rabbi Mordechai said, "You should pray first then go about your business, not the other way around." "But if I wait until I finish my prayers, others will buy the better produce and there will not be any fresh fruits and vegetables left for my customers. My business will suffer."

Rabbi Mordechai said, "Let me tell you a story. A Jew was returning home after making his fortune in a far away city. He had with him twenty sacks of gold and silver coins. On the way he had to stay over Shabbat in an inn. Not having any choice he asked the innkeeper, who looked like a respectable person, to safeguard his 20 sacks of gold. In addition to the gold he also had a copper penny which he placed in one of the sacks.

All day the man worried over whether he would get back his gold and silver back. He counted the minutes until Shabbat was over and immediately he asked the innkeeper for the money. The innkeeper was an honest man and returned it. As soon as the businessman came into his room, he began frantically to count the gold and silver coins to make sure that the innkeeper didn't help himself. Finally, he ended counting and was relieved that he indeed had every coin.

Then he remembered that he also placed the copper penny in the sack. He frantically searched again and found that coin too.

"Wasn't the man acting foolishly worrying about the penny?" asked Rabbi Mordechai. "Didn't the innkeeper prove himself that he was an honest person when he gave back the gold? Why would he steal the copper penny?"

"Your behavior is exactly the same!" G-d gives you back your Neshamah (Breath of Life) intact every morning healthy and refreshed after you entrusted it to Him each night, tired and exhausted. He also gives your wife and children life and health! Why would you doubt that He would provide you with livelihood? Rather, you should first pray and trust G-d to provide your other needs even if you reach the market a little late!"

EDITOR

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

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HAFTARA

1 Kings 7:51-8:21

PARASHA: It is very interesting to study the structure of the parasha of this week. When we study it we see that three men are glorified in this text, first Moses, his name is given 26 times in this short text of two chapters. But also **Ithamar son of the priest Aaron and Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah.** Even though their names are only at the beginning of our parasha it is repeated 19 times that they have done everything **“as the LORD had commanded Moses” (Exodus 38:21-40:25).**

HAFTARA: In the Haftara, the one who is on the top for what he has done is **‘King Solomon’** His name is given 7 (perfect number) times in this short text. (1Kings 7:51 - 8:12).

Other parallels between the Parasha and the Haftara are that in the parasha it is written, **So Moses FINISHED the work. (Exodus 40:33)** and in the haftara it is written, **Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the LORD was FINISHED. (1Kings 7:51).** Both of them have finished the work.

What Moses did after finishing the work, **“When Moses saw that they had done all the work just as the LORD had commanded, he blessed them” (Exodus. 39:43).** And What Solomon did after finishing the work, he blessed twice, first the assembly and second the lord, **“Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. He said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,” (1Kings 8:14-15)**

Then if we continue to read together the parasha and the haftara, we notice that the Lord was satisfied, He blessed the sanctuary and the Temple by his presence. At the time of Moses, **“Then THE CLOUD covered the tent of meeting, and THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED the tabernacle.” (Exodus 40:34).** At the time of Solomon, **“So that the priests could not stand to minister because of THE CLOUD; for THE GLORY OF THE LORD FILLED the house of the LORD.” (1Kings 8:11).** Then we understand why the Rabbis have chosen this text of the first book of Kings to be read in connection with the Parasha. Moses and Solomon are both working for the Lord and according to His Spirit.

BRIT HACHADASHA

John 14:15-26

The Jewish tradition has made a parallel between the creation when the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters of the earth and the cloud covered the Tent of the Meeting in the Sanctuary. **“Then a cloud covered the Tent of Meeting” (Ex 40:34a)** and **“the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.” (Gen 1:2)** They have also made a parallel between the glory of the Lord filling the tabernacle and the creation of light on the first day of the creation. **“and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” (Ex 40:34b)** and **“God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” (Gen 1:3)** The presence of the Shehina or the “Glory of the Lord” is the presence of God. Rabbi Ari Kahn says **“Nachmanides writes that the sublime secret of the Tabernacle is that the presence of God which hovered about Mount Sinai, now will be placed on ‘permanent display’ in the Tabernacle.”** He used exactly the same word as the Bible who says that **“the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters”.**

We know that God wanted to dwell with man, that was the purpose of the sanctuary (Ex 25:8). And we know that through the Mashiach God dwelled among us (John 1:14). How God dwelled among us after the ascension of the Mashiach? Yeshua said to us **“If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17).** The presence of God today is through the Holy Spirit, that is the holy Shehina of today. The Jewish tradition has also seen parallel between the Shehina and the Holy Spirit. Rabbi Ari Khan says **“The Holy Spirit had thus sole sway over the world, as Scripture says: Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting.”** The purpose of the new covenant Shehina is to teach us and to remind us what Yeshua taught to his talmidim **“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” John 14:26)** even more Yeshua said that **“he will testify about me.” (John 15:26.)** The sanctuary was filled with the Shehina, today we have to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

