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NEWS

ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERY IN JERUSALEM IN CONNECTION WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT

Israeli scholars have confirmed the authenticity of a 2,000-year-old burial box that appears to bear the name of a relative of the high priest Caiaphas mentioned in the New Testament, the Israel Antiquities Authority said Wednesday. The find offers support for the existence of the biblical Caiaphas, who appears in the New Testament as a temple priest and an adversary of Jesus who played a key role in his crucifixion.

The ossuary – a stone chest used to store bones – is decorated with the stylized shapes of flowers and bears an inscription with the name "Miriam daughter of Yeshua son of Caiaphas, priest of Maaziah from Beth Imri."

The tests, which used powerful microscopes to inspect layers of buildup on the box and inscription, were carried out by two scholars, one from Tel Aviv University and the other from Bar Ilan University, the statement said. The research indicated that the inscription is "genuine and ancient."

Careful tests were necessary because forgery is common in the world of biblical artifacts, where a brisk black market exists and where antiquities linked in some way to the Bible can fetch millions of dollars.

The scholars believe the Miriam ossuary was plundered from a tomb in the Valley of Elah, southwest of Jerusalem. The word "maaziah" on the inscription refers to a subset of the priestly caste. Scholars believe "Beth Imri" refers either to a priestly family or to the family's village of origin.

Parashat Balak, Shabbat 9 July 2011 7 Tamuz 5771

NEXT IMMERSIONS SERVICES

Our next immersion services in the Jordan River will be this Sabbath, on July 9th. We will have two services one for our congregations of the North at 10:00 and the second one for our congregations of Tel Aviv at 11:00. If some readers are visiting Israel and would like to join us, come to Yardenit at 11:00 am.

NEW SONG CONCERT IN BUENOS AIRES

David Barzola continues to attract people in his kehila by various activities. A new song (cancion) concert is schedule for July 9 at the Jewish Adventist congregation (Beth Bnei Tzion) located Frias St. 275. at 7:30 pm. I pray that many people will visit them and will enjoy the concert.

Canciones con Mensaje de Superación

Alejandro Simonovich

9 de julio de 2011
19:30 hs.
Frias 275

Comunidad Hebrea Adventista
Bet Bnei Tzion

Entrada libre y gratuita

OVERVIEW

BALAK

Numbers 22:2-25:9

Balak, king of Moav, is in morbid fear of Bnei Yisrael. He summons a renowned sorcerer named Bilaam to curse them. First, G-d speaks to Bilaam and forbids him to go. But, because Bilaam is so insistent, G-d appears to him a second time and permits him to go.

While en route, a malach (emissary from G-d) blocks Bilaam's donkey's path. Unable to contain his frustration, Bilaam strikes the donkey each time it stops or tries to detour.

Miraculously, the donkey speaks, asking Bilaam why he is hitting her. The malach instructs Bilaam regarding what he is permitted to say and what he is forbidden to say regarding the Jewish People.

When Bilaam arrives, King Balak makes elaborate preparations, hoping that Bilaam will succeed in the curse. Three times Bilaam attempts to curse and three times blessings issue instead.

Balak, seeing that Bilaam has failed, sends him home in disgrace.

Bnei Yisrael begin sinning with the Moabite women and worshipping the Moabite idols, and they are punished with a plague.

One of the Jewish leaders brazenly brings a Midianite princess into his tent, in full view of Moshe and the people.

Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon, grabs a spear and kills both evildoers. This halts the plague, but not before 24,000 have died.

OUR SPIRITUAL DESTINY

Rashi quotes a Midrash regarding the verse, "**Bilaam arose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey.**" (Numbers 22:21) The Midrash says that G-d spoke concerning Bilaam: "**Wicked one! Their forefather Avraham preceded you, as it says 'And Avraham arose early in the morning, and saddled his donkey.'**" (Genesis 22:3)

These two acts of saddling donkeys could hardly have been more different. Bilaam arose early in order to run after his desires for wealth

and glory, and his donkey was a tool to help him realize those desires. Avraham, on the other hand, arose early in order to sacrifice that which he held most dear.

For those who know Hebrew, the word for "saddled", *yachvosh*, sounds much like the verb "to conquer". The word for "donkey" used in Breishis regarding Avraham is *chamor*, which is related to the word for the physical—*chomer*. Avraham arose early, and conquered his desires in service of G-d—conquering those same desires which Bilaam arose early in order to satisfy.

The Jewish Nation described in the Bible is not one that desires to rule the world, or to take that which is not theirs. Those who look only at the cases where G-d commanded conquest and use them to accuse Israel of being itself a militaristic nation, ignore the many cases where G-d ordered Israel to live in peace and not attack another nation—even though it was clearly within their power to do so.

The Torah tells us that our ultimate goals must not be material wealth, glory or honor - and certainly not ill-gotten gain. Rather, we are asked to deliberately put aside our own desires, in order to better pursue our spiritual destiny.

DON'T JUDGE

Bilam, who hated the Jewish people, and in addition also tempted by Balak's promises of wealth and honor, very much wanted to go and curse the Jewish people. But, he was warned by G-d, many times, not to curse them.

Instead of cursing them G-d placed words of blessing in Bilam's mouth and each time he ended up blessing them. The specific blessings are recorded in this Parsha.

One passage of Bilam's blessing to the Jewish people is, "**He [G-d] has not beheld sin in Jacob, nor has He seen perverseness in Israel. The L-rd his G-d is with him.**"

Rashi explains this to mean that even when the people of Israel sin, G-d is not very strict with them and does not abandon them. He is always with them.

Many of Israel's great sages and righteous leaders of Israel have always tried to find the good in another person. They were able to look beyond the person's external acts and see into their *nefesh* (soul). As a result, rather than judging their brethren for their shortcomings as acts of sin, they were able to find the good and positive hidden within that act or the conditions in which they were performed.

This reminds us the word of Yeshua who said: **"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."** (Matthew. 7:1-2).

HONOR-SEEKER

The Torah states: **"And Bilaam said to the donkey, 'Because you have mocked me, if I were to have a sword in my hand right now, I would kill you.'"** (Numbers 22:29) Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik commented that usually a person hits a donkey because he wants it to go faster so that he can get to where he is going sooner. However, Bilaam was a pursuer of honor. Therefore, when the donkey caused him irritation he considered it a slight to his honor and wanted to kill it.

According to Rabbi Pakouz, When a person seeks honor, he doesn't realize how ridiculous he is and how he hurts himself. Bilaam said that he wanted to kill the donkey immediately. He should have said that he would wait until he reached his destination and only then would he kill it. His seeking honor prevented him from thinking straight.

Moreover, the donkey started speaking. This was a miraculous event and Bilaam should have been overwhelmed with amazement. However, what does Bilaam focus on? Only one thing - his honor! And not only that, where is he looking for honor? From a donkey!

Every honor-seeker has aspects of this same craziness in his personality. Therefore, because of the negativity of this trait one must do all that he can to overcome the desire for honor.

The Chofetz Chaim used to say that true honor is when one seeks wisdom. Gaining more wisdom is honorable in itself and when one seeks it one will free oneself from seeking superficial signs of honor that are only illusions.

A PEOPLE APART OF ALL

Balaam says in his prophecy inspired by G-d, **"How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel! (Numbers 24:5)**, it is a text which is recited by the Jewish people every week. In Hebrew this text contains the following words, **"Ma-Tovu Ohalecha Yaakov Mishkenotecha Israel"**. The biblical prophets have a very different vision of the people of Israel. Most of the commentators remind the bad side of Israel, being a rebellious people, who was not faithful to God and finally was rejected by G-d and replaced by the church.

It is not the vision of G-d upon his people. Even if G-d's people is not obedient every day, the Torah says **"How can I curse those whom God has not cursed? How can I denounce those whom the LORD has not denounced?" (23:8)**. How can we curse Israel? How can we take the risk to denounce Israel and to be against the word of God?

The Torah continues saying **"I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations."** (23:9). Israel has always been a people apart of all the nations. They have always been aware of their mission in this world. It is because they are apart of all the nations that they have raised opposition against them.

It is a great lesson for us, most of the time we don't like to be a people apart of all the nations, but this is really the vocation of G-d's people, Yeshua said to us, **"My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. (John 17:15, 16, 18)** Yeshua sent us into the world but we are not of the world, the people of God has to be apart of the world. It is important that the world see a difference between G-d's people and the world. If we are exactly as the world is, there is no reason to be a believer, Of course it is not easy to be apart, to be different, Israel has paid her difference by a lot of persecution during 4,000 years, but maybe we are not ready to suffer for the glory of the name of G-d.

WHO IS THE KING?

And I will walk among you, and I will be your G-d and you shall be My people. This is indeed a special blessing to recognize that G-d walks among us and that He is our G-d and we His people.

A king and his entourage went out hunting in the forest. All day they chased after the animals. The king was so engrossed in the sport that he didn't notice that he became separated from the rest of his people.

Toward evening he realized that he was alone in the forest and he didn't know the way out. Just then a farmer came by carrying a pile of wood on his shoulder.

The king asked him for the way out of the forest. The farmer said, "I will show you the way out of here, but I want to ask you for a favor. I heard that the king is in the area hunting. I never saw the king and you must be one of his entourage. When I lead you to the main road, could you show me the king."

The king said, "Sure I will show you the king."

"But how will I know he is the king? Will he be wearing different clothes than everyone else?"

"No. He won't be wearing different clothes. But here is how you will know who he is. When we get to the road, you will see that all the king's people will remove their hats and bow their heads. The person who doesn't take off his hat and doesn't bow is the king!"

In a little while they reached the edge of the forest. When they saw the king they all took off their hats and bowed their heads.

"Now can you identify who is the king?" asked the king of the farmer.

The farmer looked around and finally replied, "I'm not sure. According to the sign you gave me, the two of us are wearing our hats and didn't bow, so it's either you or me!"

Many times, we too find ourselves in the shoes of the foolish farmer. Often we don't recognize that it is G-d who is "walking amongst us" and fail to give Him the credit for everything we have.

"And I will walk among you, and I will be your G-d and you shall be My people" - Recognizing that G-d is amongst us and that He is our G-d and that we are His people... is indeed a great blessing and security."

MEETING ELIJAH

A country bumpkin once asked a great sage how to go about meeting Eliyahu Hanavi. "According to a Kabbalistic teaching," said the sage, "if you remain silent for forty days you merit meeting the prophet." The man clamped his mouth shut, and for the next forty days, to the immense frustration of his family, he went about his everyday business without uttering a word. The forty days passed, however, without any supernatural visitations, and the man complained to the sage.

"And what did you do during these forty days besides being silent?" asked the sage. "Did you study Torah? Did you devote time to prayer and introspection?" The man squinted at the sage and shook his head. "I did what I always do," he said. "Look out there," said the sage, pointing to the window. "Do you see that donkey? He hasn't spoken a word for forty days either."

PRAY FOR YOUR ENEMY

The non-Jews in the city of Telshe greatly respected Rabbi Eliezer Gordon, the Rabbi of Telshe and founder of its yeshiva, and many of them would ask him to pray for their welfare. Once a non-Jewish farmer came to Rabbi Gordon and asked him to pray that his enemy should die. Rabbi Gordon explained to him that the proper thing for him to do was not to curse his enemy, but to pray that his enemy should become his friend.

EDITOR

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Richard-Amram Elofer
4, Abraham Lincoln
94186 Jerusalem
Israel

Tel. +972 2625 1547
Fax +972 2625 1319
email: richard@elofer.com
web: jewishadventist.org

HAFTARA

Judges 11:1-33

The Parasha is about Balak who called Bilaam to curse Israel. "Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ... He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is on the Euphrates, in the land of Amaw, to summon him, saying, "A people has come out of Egypt; they have spread over the face of the earth, and they have settled next to me. Come now, curse this people for me," (Num. 22:2-6).

HAFTARA: The haftara reminds us the story of Balak and Bilaam "O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him," (Mic. 6:5).

PARASHA: the parasha gives us one of the most beautiful poem about Israel "Ma Tovu". "How fair are your tents, O Jacob, Your dwellings, O Israel! Like palm-groves that stretch out, Like gardens beside a river, Like aloes planted by the LORD, Like cedars beside the water; Their boughs drip with moisture, Their roots have abundant water. ... " (Num. 24:6). **HAFTARA:** The Poem of Micah 6 in an appeal to repentance, a call to come back to God. **Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. (Mic 6:1-2)** the Lord is ready to listen to Israel, he asks them to plead with him, the Lord has a reproach to present to Israel. He reminds them what he has done for them , "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam." (Mic 6:3,4). The prophet speaks on behalf of Israel and says. "Mic. 6:6 "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? (Mic. 6:6). What can we do, to please the Lord? the answer comes from above. "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Mic 6:8). God is always the same, he wants from us **Justice, Love, Kindness and to walk humbly.**

BRIT HACHADASHA

2 Peter 2:1-16

Balaam is remembered in all the biblical tradition as the false prophet "par excellence". This text of the Brit Hachadasha starts saying "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you." (2 Peter 2:1). and the verse 15 refers to Balaam saying "They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness." (15).

This text would like to address the difficult topic of false prophets within God's people. It is not a specificity of the brit hachadasha or the kehilah but it is also a problem which was present in the time of the Tanach. We remember the false prophets in the time of Jeremiah. "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD." (Jeremiah 23:1) and even "Concerning the prophets: My heart is broken within me" (Jeremiah 23:9).

It is therefore very important to be aware of this possibility, there could be false prophets like Balaam in the kehila of the Mashiach. That is why the Brit Hachadasha gives us the special characteristics of the kehila. It is said that they are "...those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (Revelation 12:17). There are people, many churches who say that they are the people of G-d, but very few obey God's commandments (the ten commandments and not only nine) because most of the churches do not accept the commandment of the Shabbat.

And Yeshua was very clear also in Besorat Matatyahu (Matthew) he said "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?' Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity.' this last greek word used, "anomia" means "without the law"