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## NEWS

### SCIENTIFIC LECTURES IN BUENOS AIRES

**R**ecently was published in the newsletter of the River Plate Adventist University a report on the visit of Dr. Biaggi, director of the Geoscience Research Institute, to our community.

The Adventist Jewish Community (Bet Bnei Tzion) in Buenos Aires, capital of Argentina, engage in a beautiful activity: the public reading of the Torah (by the way, an authentic Torah scroll inscribed about 250 years ago on a soft animal skin that shows the pass of time). These last few weeks they started from the beginning ("In the beginning...") with the Parasha Bereshit (Creation) and then they continued with the portion Noah (the Flood), the authentic stories about the beginnings of humanity and their relationship to their Creator.

The weekend of the October 28-29, Dr. Roberto E. Biaggi, director of the South-American Branch of the Geoscience Research Institute (GRI), and science professor at the Adventist University de la Plata (UAP), was invited to teach some seminars relating to these parashot of Genesis at the Adventist Synagogue. The following Friday night we had a wonderful service of praise and adoration, the attendance were taught on the evidence of living and fossil organisms, about characters and processes that suggest the intervention of an intelligent designer, about the origin of these features. We ended the evening with the Kiddush and then everyone shared and enjoyed a delicious supper.

Sabbath afternoon, two seminars were shared, one related to the origin of life, evidences were described that show the impossibility for a

naturalistic origin of living organisms, and after a questions / answer session, Dr. Biaggi presented the last conference that focused on the catastrophic nature of the fossil record. During this presentation many features of the geologic and paleontological record now commonly accepted were highlighted, they point out to regional and global catastrophic processes. These presentations harmonized in a very good way the scientific account and the biblical record.

### TED'S WINTER MEETING

**D**uring this last ten days I was in Montenegro for the last participation of the Israel Field to the Trans-European Division winter meeting. As I have already announced in this newsletter, the General Conference has decided at its annual council to realign the non European countries of the Trans-European and the Euro-Africa Divisions. The Arab countries of North Africa and of the Middle East have been combined to formed the Greater Middle East Union. This new Union is directly attached to the General Conference.

The Israel Field of course could not be attached to the Arab Unon, that is why the General Conference has decided to attach also the Israel Field as an independent field to the General Conference. It is a new picture of the General Conference, because for a long time there were no attached Union or Field to the General Conference. Only the sub-division of the General Conference which were called "Division" there are 13 Divisions in the world.

On the 1st of January 2012 The headquarters of the General Conference will have to take care of two new fields in addition to the 13 Divisions. During this meeting I thank very much the Division leaders for their 26 years of dedicated service to the Israel Field..

# OVERVIEW

## CHAYE-SARA

### Genesis 23:1-25:18

**S**arah, Mother of the Jewish People, passes on at age 127. After mourning and eulogizing her, Avraham seeks to bury her in the Cave of Machpela. As according to the tradition, this is the burial place of Adam and Chava, Avraham pays its owner, Ephron the Hittite, an exorbitant sum.

Avraham sends his faithful servant Eliezer to find a suitable wife for his son, Yitzchak, making him swear to choose a wife only from among Avrahams family.

Eliezer travels to Aram Naharaim and prays for a sign. Providentially, Rivka appears. Eliezer asks for water. Not only does she give him water, but she draws water for all 10 of his thirsty camels. (Some 140 gallons!)

This extreme kindness marks her as the right wife for Yitzchak and a suitable Mother of the Jewish People.

Negotiations with Rivka's father and her brother Lavan result in her leaving with Eliezer.

Yitzchak brings Rivka into his mother Sarah's tent, marries her and loves her.

He is then consoled for the loss of his mother.

Avraham remarries Hagar who is renamed Ketura to indicate her improved ways.

Six children are born to them. After giving them gifts, Avraham sends them to the East.

Avraham passes away at the age of 175 and is buried next to Sarah in the Cave of Machpela which is today in the city of Hebron.

### ABRAHAM'S PERCEPTIVENESS

**E**fron the Hittite agreed to sell Avraham the Cave of Machpela in Hebron as a burial place for Sarah, after several exchanges regarding the sale. The Torah then relates that "No, my lord," he said. "Listen to me; I give you the field, and I give you the cave that is in it. I give it to you in the presence of my people. Bury your dead." . . . Abraham agreed to Ephron's terms and weighed out for him the price he had named

in the hearing of the Hittites: four hundred shekels of silver, according to the weight current among the merchants." (Gen. 23: 11 & 16).

Rabbi Packouz says that "Efron spoke as if he were a generous man. He spoke to Avraham with the greatest respect. He ostensibly offered him the burial site free of charge. He mentioned, however, in passing, "The four hundred shekels that one might usually pay for this is nothing between friends. Your friendship is more precious than money. Take it without payment."

Avraham took the hint. He was perceptive and realized that Efron did not really want to give the land for nothing. It might seem to a naive bystander that Efron only mentioned the sum of money as an aside, that it was just a passing remark of no significance. However, Avraham "heard", and with his well-developed intuition understood Efron's real intentions. He responded to Efron's inner wishes and not to his superficial words.

This ability to differentiate between what someone says and what he really means is an attribute that we must develop. For many areas of spiritual growth it is essential.

Another example: You may ask someone if he needs your help. He replies, "No, I can do it myself. It's not so difficult." Taking the words at their face value you might just walk away. However, if you are perceptive, you will know that he really needs your help. Perhaps he is either too shy or too embarrassed to ask for your help. Learn to be perceptive to realize when your help is needed and really welcomed.

By gaining this sensitivity and perceptiveness, you will be able to reach greater heights in the mitzvah of "Loving your fellow man."

## A GUEMATRIA OR JEWISH USE OF NUMBER

**R**abbi Zalmen Marozov said "The Parasha begins with 'Vayihyu Chayei Sarah...' — 'And the life of Sarah was...' Our rabbis point out that the numerical value of the first word of the Parasha, 'Vayihyu,' is 37 (6+10+5+10+6=37). What is the significance of number 37 in Sarah's life?

Sarah was 90 when she gave birth to Yitzchak (Isaac). When she passed away at age 127, Yitzchak was 37 years old. Thus, the first three words of the Parasha can be understood as, 'Vayihyu' — the 37 years in which she

lived to raise and be with her son, Isaac, was the true 'life of Sarah.'

## A LEGEND ABOUT THE CAVE OF MACHPEILA

If we ask, why did Abraham choose the "Cave of Machpeila" to bury Sarah? there is a legend (some Jews believe that it is a true story), which say:

In the beginning of last week's Parasha, Vayeira, the Torah describes Abraham's hospitality to the three angels who came to him. When Abraham went to fetch the calf, the Torah uses the expression, "Abraham ran to [fetch] the calf..." The calf ran away and Abraham ran after it. Then the calf ran into a cave and Abraham followed. In the cave he saw Adam and Eve buried and the most wonderful fragrance from Gan Eden (garden of Eden) was present. As a result, Abraham chose this cave to bury Sarah..

## ABRAHAM'S LOVE

The Torah commentator Ohr Hachayim says that Sarah's death at 127 resulted from her great shock when she heard that G-d commanded Abraham to bring their son Yitzchak as a sacrifice. Compared to Abraham who lived 175 years, it seems that Sarah died before her time and if not for the "Akeida" — the "binding" of Yitzchak, she would have lived longer.

For this reason, says the Ohr Hachayim, the Torah adds, "These were the years of the life of Sarah." Although it may seem that she didn't live as long as she could have, the Torah tells us that, in truth, these were the years that were allocated to her in the first place.

There is an important lesson here. When a loved one, G-d forbid, passes away, the reaction of the family may be, "Had we seen another doctor or done something else, it wouldn't have happened." There is a feeling that perhaps they could have changed the results. Or in the case of an accident, G-d forbid, where one may think that had they chosen to be elsewhere, they would not have been affected. The Torah teaches us that although Sarah's passing came about as a result of the "Akeida," it was not a mere accident. Rather, it was G-d's intention that her passing come about this way, but she did live a full amount of years. So too, one should accept G-d's ways without thinking that they could have made things happen differently.

## MATCHES ARE MADE IN HEAVEN

According to Jewish tradition, matches are made in heaven. Our sages say, "Forty days before the formation of a child it is announced in heaven that the daughter of this one will marry this one."

The first mention of a matchmaker in the Torah is found in this week's Parasha, Chayei Sarah. The Torah describes how Abraham sent his trusted servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for Yitzchak. "Abraham said to his servant... go to my country and to my family and take a wife for my son Yitzchak." Eliezer devised a test to determine which girl would be suitable for Yitzchak and prayed to G-d for success. "I will stand by the well... Let it come to pass that the girl to whom I say, 'Let down your pitcher so that I may drink' and she will answer, 'Drink and I will give your camels to drink too,' she will be the one You have chosen for Yitzchak."

**When Rivka passed Eliezer's test and he knew that she had a good and kind heart, he was sure that she possessed all the other qualities required to be the spouse of Itschak.**

**Sources:** These comments of the parasha are based on comments published by Rabbi Zalmen Pakouz, Rabbi Zelig Pliskin, Rabbi Ozer Alport, Rabbi Ari Kahn, Rabbi Noson Weisz, and Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek, from Aish HaTorah (Aish.com). By Rabbi Naftali Reich, Rabbi Berel Wein and Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Torah.org (Project Genenis). By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair from Ohr Somayach, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky, and Rabbi Zalmen Marozov.

## VALUE OF GROUND

**R**abbi Nachum, one of the Talmudic sages, was known as Nachum Ish Gam Zu, for no matter what happened to him, Rabbi Nachum would say, “Gam Zu L’Tovah” - “This too is for the good”.

Once, the Romans made a harsh decree against the Jews in Israel. It was decided to send Rabbi Nachum to plead with the king, because “He is used to having miracles performed for him!” Rabbi Nachum went to Rome with a box full of gold and precious stones as a gift to the king. On the way, he stopped overnight at an inn. While Rabbi Nachum was asleep, the innkeeper stole the valuables and filled the box with earth instead.

In the morning, when Rabbi Nachum opened the box and saw the earth, he was puzzled, but said, “Gam Zu L’Tovah - this is also for the good.” He took the box and continued on to Rome.

At the palace, Rabbi Nachum presented the king with the box, “This is a gift from the Jews,” he told the king. When the king opened the box, he became very angry. “The Jews are mocking me! I will kill them all!” he cried. Rabbi Nachum didn’t become frightened and said, “This is also for the good!”

Hashem then sent Eliyahu Hanavi (Elijah the prophet) or angel disguised as one of the king’s advisers. He said to the king, “The Jews wouldn’t make fun of you. This earth must be special. I have heard that when their forefather Abraham fought against the mighty army of the four kings, he threw sand at them and G-d transformed the sand into arrows and therefore he won the war!

Maybe this earth is the same.” The king, who was at war with a neighboring country, tested it and G-d made a miracle and transformed the earth into arrows.

Not only did the king nullify his evil decree, he also had the box filled with precious stones and sent it back with Rabbi Nachum as a gift to the Jewish people.

On the way home, Rabbi Nachum stayed over at the same inn. When the innkeeper

heard what happened, he said, “I had no idea that my earth was so valuable. I will fill a whole carriage full of earth and bring it to the king. He will surely reward me handsomely!” The innkeeper came to the king with his load of earth claiming that it was the same earth as the one Rabbi Nachum brought. The king tested it, but nothing happened. The innkeeper, naturally, was punished.

## TO BE FAITHFUL

**T**he Midrash gives a parable, “Said Rabbi Levi to what is this compared, to a King who hired workers to do work for him. While they were working, the king came by and called one of the workers to walk with him.

In the evening when all the workers came to claim their pay, the king gave each one, also the person who walked with him, a day’s pay. Can the king say, “I won’t give you a day’s work, for you haven’t worked as much as them? He can say to the king, ‘it was you who kept me from my work.’”

The same is when a person is faithful to G-d for the duration of his life, even if his life was short, they will get the same reward for they can say, “If not for the fact that G-d called me away from this world, I would have continued to be faithful as much as the one who lived long.”

## EDITOR

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# HAFTARA

## 1Kings 1: 1-31

**O**verview: In 1 Kings 1:1-3 King David is very old and always cold, it is difficult for him to warm himself. That is why the Haftarah of this week begins with the story of King David being warmed by a beautiful young woman named Avishag.

Avishag was employed just to keep him warm and did not become his wife. This young woman is presented as being a Shunammite, that means from the city of Shunem, the very same origin of the widow Elisha will minister to and resurrect her son later (cf. Haftara of last week or 2 Kings 4). A tradition says that they are the same lady, young and old, but this could be difficult since the death of David was approximately on 965-967 BC and Elisha ministry was on 847 BC that means she should be about 100 years old.

**1:4-9** One of King David's sons Adoniyahu proclaims himself king.

**1:10** However Solomon, Adoniyahu's younger brother was to become the next king of Israel.

**1:11** One of the wives of King David, Queen Bathsheva, mother of Solomon, and the Prophet Nathan, talk together regarding Adoniyahu's will to become king. They decide to report this matter to King David's attention.

**1:12-16** Nathan confirms to David the news that Bathsheva has told King David about his son Adoniyahu having seized the throne from David.

**1:17-21** Bathsheva pleads with David to fulfill his promise of her son Solomon becoming the next king of Israel.

**1:22-27** The prophet Nathan confirms again her words.

**1:28-31** King David promises Bathsheva to rectify the situation. He takes action by instating Solomon as the next King of Israel.

**Parasha:** Abraham is getting old, he prepares his succession as "Patriarch and Chief of the Hebrew Clan" by getting a wife, Rivka, for his son Itzchak.

**Haftarah:** David is getting old. He prepares his succession on the throne of Israel and stop Adonijah's plan to become king. To avoid any difficulty he decides to put his son Solomon on the throne of Israel before his death.

# BRIT HACHADASHA

## Rom 9:1-10

**O**ur parasha is focusing on the life of Abraham's family and the marriage of Itschak, his son. The stories of Abraham and his sons are the "tapestry" of the Brit Hachadasha showing that the stories of the two parts of the Bible are the continuing stories. There is no replacement of one "old" story by a "new" story. That is why in the text of Roman 9, Rabbi Shaul tells us about his love for Israel his people who is the people of god (Rom 11:1) but Shaul let us know also his sorrow that this people have not fully accepted Yeshua as the Mashiach.

In Romans 9 it is clear that even though Abraham has two sons, the son of the promise is Itschak, "It is through Itschak that your offspring will be reckoned." (7) Then Itschak becomes a key character in the story of the book of Genesis. What Shaul would like to say is that it is not enough to be a natural child of Abraham to be "son of the promise" Ishmael was a natural son of Abraham, but God Itzchak chose who was more spiritual and who choose the way of his father Abraham. And Shaul gives one more example with the family of Itschak, because Esau and Yaakov were sons of the same father and the same mother, but they were not both of them sons of the promise, only Yaakov.

It is very important for us to understand this point. Not all the descendants of Abraham, Itschak and Yaakov are the children of the promise. But only those who grasp the promises in their hands and implement them in their daily life would really be the sons of the promises.

However we don't have to forget the beginning of this text of Rom 9, because everyone who is son of the promise has to remember about his older brother, the people of Israel who have yet to recognize Yeshua as the Mashiach. When Shaul said "I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (Rom 9:2) Saying that, Paul was praying for this people and our right attitude now, as sons of the promise is to pray for the natural descendants of Abraham, Itzchak and Yaakov, the people of Israel.