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NEWS

The news of this week is particularly long, that is why I have added one page of news at the end of this news letter. After reading the page 1, you can read the other news on page 6

SOUTH AMERICA

This week is a special week, as every year at this time the Global Mission Study Centers Directors have their annual meeting, to read reports and to make plans for the future. This meeting is held this year in Sao Paulo, Brazil. It was a good occasion to organize a meeting with the leaders and members of the Jewish Adventist Congregations (Beth Bnei Tsion) in South America.

Adventist Health Center next to the Sao Paulo University



I contacted the South America Division's director for the Jewish work, Reinaldo Siqueira, I said to him that I was coming to Sao Paulo and that it would be good to organize a Division meeting of all leaders and members of the Beth Bnei Tsion.

But I started my visit with the Sao Paulo Adventist University, where I presented a topic to the student of the seminary, specially the biblical reasons of our Jewish outreach ministry.

Then on Friday afternoon we travelled to the Training Center owned by the Sao Paulo Conference where were organized the meetings for the members of the Beth Bnei Tsion in SAD. We had a wonderful kabbalat Shabbat, where I preached on the conversion of Habakkuk, a prophet of the Bible who started his book expressing his doubt but ended it with a wonderful declaration of faith.

Sao Paulo's Conference Training Center



On Shabbat morning we had a time of Sabbath School led by Pastor Choque Global Mission director for the South America Division and then a time of worship. This worship was led partly by David Barzola and his team from Buenos Aires. David and his members did a wonderful work during the last eleven years to gather together a large number of songs and prayers with their music sheets to make a beautiful siddur for Shabbat and the feasts days. The second part of the service, from the host to Torah scroll to the kiddush and kaddish, was wonderfully led by the worship team of Sao Paulo BBT. At this worship I preached on the parasha of course, showing that the current understanding of Yaakov character, in the Christian world, is not really what the Bible says, Yaakov was a blameless man and a man of integrity.

On the afternoon we had the privilege to visit the new center, the Beth Bnei Tsion just bought in the heart of the Jewish quarter of Sao Paulo. An

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OVERVIEW

VAYETZE

Genesis 28:10-32:3

Fleeing from Esav, Yaakov leaves Beer Sheva and sets out for Charan, the home of his mother's family. Yaakov Arrives at *Bethel*, Hebrew word meaning *House of God*.

He sleeps there and dreams of angels going up and down a ladder between Heaven and earth. G-d promises him the Land of Israel, that he will found a great nation and that he will enjoy divine protection. Yaakov wakes and vows to build an altar there and tithe all that he will receive.

Then he travels to Charan and meets his cousin Rachel at the well. He arranges with her father, Lavan, to work seven years for her hand in marriage, but Lavan fools Yaakov, substituting Rachel's older sister, Leah. Yaakov commits himself to work another seven years in order to also marry Rachel. Leah bears four sons: Reuven, Shimon, Levi and Yehuda, the first Tribes of Israel. Rachel is barren, and in an attempt to give Yaakov children, she gives her handmaiden Bilhah to Yaakov as a wife. Bilhah bears Dan and Naftali. Leah also gives Yaakov her handmaiden Zilpah, who bears Gad and Asher. Leah then bears Yissachar, Zevulun, and a daughter, Dina. Hashem finally blesses Rachel with a son, Yosef. Yaakov decides to leave Lavan, but Lavan, aware of the wealth Yaakov has made for him, is reluctant to let him go, and concludes a contract of employment with him. Lavan tries to swindle Yaakov, but Yaakov becomes extremely wealthy. Six years later, Yaakov, aware that Lavan has become dangerously resentful of his wealth, flees with his family. Lavan pursues them but is warned by G-d not to harm them. Yaakov and Lavan agree to a covenant and Lavan returns home.

Yaakov continues on his way to face his brother Esav.

WHO IS THE

"TSELEM ELOHIM"?

According to the Jewish tradition, "Yaakov is the second edition of Adam. After Adam's fall, it was not till Yaakov came along that any human managed to regain the splendor, glory and

beauty of being the perfect 'Tzelem Elohim', image of God. The celebration of the re-acquisition of this divine image by a living human being was the central prophetic message delivered by Yaakov's vision of the 'ladder.'" (Rabbi Noson Weisz)

The true second Adam is not Yaakov, even though Yaakov was "Tam" blameless man, he was not the Mashiach who had to come. Because according to the promised made to Adam and Eve, the second Adam had to defeat the devil. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." (Gen 3:15). Man has been made "Tselem Elohim", Image of God (Gen 1:27). But this image of God has been lost at the first act of disobedience of Adam and Eve. Mashiach has to come to restore this "image of God" in humanity.

However, how do we know who is the one who defeated the serpent or devil (Gen 3:15)? He was "bruised" by the serpent that means that through his victory, he had to die himself. But he also is the one who will defeat death, because Satan has the power of the death, one of the role of Mashiach is to defeat his power "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — (Heb 2:14). That is why Rabbi Shaul said "Mashiach has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man [Adam], the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [Yeshua]. For as in Adam all die, so in Mashiach all will be made alive. (1Cor. 15:20-22). In this same chapter Shaul give us a great lesson he said. "The first man [Adam] was of the dust of the earth [Gen 2:7], the second man [Yeshua HaMashiach] from heaven [John 1:1-14]. (15:47). And because Mashiach came from heaven he is the true "Tselem Elohim" the "Image of God" (2 Cor 4:4) and since God has no image, Rabbi Shaul confirmed "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15) a God we cannot see. Then what lesson G-d gave to Yaakov with the vision of the ladder, right after leaving Beer Sheva? I address this question in the Brith Hachadasha portion, on page 5.

YAAKOV'S DIFFICULT LIFE

Yaakov led a life of fear and drudgery. Nothing came easily to him. First he contended with Esau and had to flee, then he contended with Lavan and also had to flee, then again with Esau on the way back. His only

daughter was raped, his favorite son was sold into slavery, and he ended his life in exile. And yet, Yaakov was the greatest of our forefathers. Then we understand why G-d gave him this wonderful vision of the ladder. “When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” (Gen 28 11-12) He was afraid to leave the land of his father and grand-father. This dream meant a lot to him, G-d will be with him. The angels of heaven are there to help him to stay connected to heaven. Then he received for himself the blessings which have been given to Abraham and Isaac. “There above it stood the L-rd, and he said: ‘I am the L-rd, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’ When Yaakov awoke from his sleep, he thought, ‘Surely the L-rd is in this place, and I was not aware of it.’ He was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.’ (Gen 28 13-17).

Yaakov had a difficult life but he had the exactly correct sort of difficult life for him. Rabbi Shaul said “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.” (1 Cor 10:13) that is why we can be sure that Yaakov was tested, God gave me the strength and abilities to overcome them. He lost a wife but never a child. He didn’t suffer from illness or old age; he didn’t have any retarded children and so on. God made sure to inflict him with exactly the sort of difficulties and tests that he needed to achieve help him to grow spiritually and to be able to communicate to his 13 children what he received from G-d.

RACHEL AND LEAH IN THE JEWISH TRADITION

It is interesting to know what the Jewish tradition says about the stories of the parasha in order to address these points.

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig says that according to the Talmud, Yaakov gave Rachel a secret message that would identify her on their marriage night. He did this in order to prevent Lavan from substituting Leah for Rachel. When Rachel realized that Leah would be publicly humiliated if she could not give Yaakov the message, Rachel revealed the secret words to her. [1] The Daas Zekainim cites a Midrash which says that in the morning, when Yaakov realized that the woman with him was Leah and not Rachel, he asked her, “Why have you tricked me into believing that you were Rachel?” Leah responded, “It is from you that I learned to do so. Did you not pose as your brother in order to receive the blessings?”

Later in the parasha, Reuvein, Leah’s eldest son brings her Duda’im, a plant that, according to some commentaries, increases the chances of conception. Rachel asks Leah to give her the Duda’im, to which Leah retorts, “Is it not enough that you took my husband? Now you want to take my son’s Duda’im?” How could Leah make such a statement when the only reason that she was married to Yaakov was Rachel’s kindness toward her?

Rashi teaches that Leah was originally destined to marry Eisav, and Rachel, Yaakov.[5] When Leah saw that Yaakov took over the mantle of Eisav, Leah realized that Yaakov became her soul mate. This is what she alluded to when she told Yaakov, “It is from you I learned”; since you substituted for Eisav, taking his blessings and birthright, you have become my soul mate. Leah argued that her marriage to Yaakov was not due to Rachel’s kindness; it was Leah’s right once Yaakov had assumed Eisav’s role. Therefore, Leah felt justified in criticizing Rachel for having taken away her husband.

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 Genesis). By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair from Ohr Somayach, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky. and Rabbi Zalmen Marozov.

LESSON OF LOVE

Rabbi Aharon Kotler was legendary for his devotion to studying and teaching Torah. Once, shortly after leaving his home on his way to yeshiva, he asked his driver to turn around and return to his house. His driver couldn't imagine what he had forgotten that could possibly be so critical, but he immediately returned to Rav Aharon's home.

The driver offered to run inside to fetch whatever was forgotten, but Rav Aharon insisted that he would go to the house himself.

The curious driver followed to observe what was so important and was astonished to observe Rav Aharon tell his wife "Goodbye, and have a wonderful day," and return to the car.

Rav Aharon explained that every day he bid farewell to his wife before leaving. That day he had accidentally forgotten, and he didn't want to hurt his wife's feelings. Only after expending the time to return home and personally say goodbye was he able to proceed to the yeshiva to give his lecture.

Rabbi Ozer Alport says that "although Yaakov wasn't legally required to work for Leah (he said on the first time that he will work for Rachel not for Leah), had he in fact departed prematurely, Leah would have been devastated. She would have felt that her husband viewed his beloved Rachel as being worth seven years of work, but not her. Even though the extra seven years of work came at the expense of Yaakov's ability to study Torah, (let's remember that he like to stay among the tents) and to escape the evil influences of Lavan, it was worth seven full years of spiritual sacrifice to avoid hurting the feelings of his wife Leah." What a great lesson for each one of us who is married.

ARE WE WEAK OR STRONG

A young man came to study in the academy of a great sage. He listened to the sage expound his thoughts and was amazed at their profound wisdom. He bent over the revered texts and pored over every single words in awe. A feeling of humility swept through his soul.

"Oh, what a nothing I am," he muttered under his breath. "What a miserable ignorant nothing."

The sage overheard his words and called him closer.

"Young man," he said, "why do you consider yourself a nothing?"

"Because I am weak, a slave to my physical needs and desires." "I see. And why did you come here?"

"To learn from you."

"If you wish to stay here and be successful," said the sage, "then you cannot consider yourself a nothing. After all, if you are truly nothing, how can you possibly retain wisdom? No, my young friend. Humility is a very good trait, but know your own worth. Know the sublimity of your soul and give it what it deserves."

Rabbi Naftali Reich draw a lesson saying in our own lives, we sometimes fall asleep on hallowed ground. Driven down by the pressures of everyday life, we can easily fall into the trap of deprecating our own worth.

HAFTARAH Hosea 11:7-14:10

God reminds to Israel the life of Yaakov, especially the struggle with the angel and the dream of Bethel "He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor. He found him at Bethel and talked with him there — the LORD God Almighty, the LORD is his name of renown! (Hosea 12:4-5). In this chapters the prophets says to Ephraim (North kingdom of Israel) their disobedience and sins. What G-d could do that he has not done. These chapters is a resume of Israel history. "Jacob fled to the country of Aram; Israel served to get a wife, and to pay for her he tended sheep." (12:12) That is a reminder of the stay of Yaakov to married Rachel and

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Leah, and then the Lord switched to the Egyptian slavery “The LORD used a prophet to bring Israel up from Egypt, by a prophet he cared for him.” (12:13). We have learn by these miracles that G-d is with Yaakov and through Yaakov with Israel. But Israel is far from being faithful. Hosea is the one who has experimented the unfaithfulness of Israel in his flesh, because his wife was not faithful, she prostituted herself, but G-d took her as an example to say, look how I love my people, they are unfaithful but I will take them back, that is why I ask you to go and to tack back your wife.

“You are destroyed, O Israel, because you are against me, against your helper.” (13:9) But G-d is never satisfied by this situation and continue to call his people to repentance. “Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. Your sins have been your downfall!” (14:1). Then G-d repeat his blessings and his promises to the repentant Israel who will be a remnant.

“I will heal their waywardness and love them freely, for my anger has turned away from them. I will be like the dew to Israel; he will blossom like a lily. Like a cedar of Lebanon he will send down his roots; his young shoots will grow. His splendor will be like an olive tree, his fragrance like a cedar of Lebanon. Men will dwell again in his shade. He will flourish like the grain. He will blossom like a vine, and his fame will be like the wine from Lebanon. O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; your fruitfulness comes from me.” Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them. (14:4-9)

BRIT HACHADASHA

John 1:45-51

This text of the Brith Hachadasha is in direct connection with the parasha vayetze. In the parasha Yaakov has a dream “He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” (Gen 28:12) and Yeshua in brit Hachadasha said “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:51). In this text Yeshua speaks to a group of Jews who don't believe that he is the Mashiach, not yet. This group of people were Andrew, Simon, Philip and Nathanael. It is their first encounter with Yeshua. Andrew

met Yeshua the first, he was with John the Matbil when the later pointed Yeshua as the Mashiach. Then he followed him. Just after that he met his brother, Simon and said to him ““We have found the Messiah”. We don't know exactly what was his conception of the Messiah, but he believed the word of John. The next day, Yeshua met Philip, called him to follow him and Philip met Nathanael and spoke to him about Yeshua, but it was clear that Philip did not know exactly who was Yeshua, because he said to Nathanael ““We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Thora, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Yeshua of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (John 1:45). They did not know yet that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem, he was the guy from Nazareth. Nazareth was a very small village in the middle of nowhere. A small village which has not a good name nor a good reputation. I don't know exactly what the people of Nazareth have done or not done, but the answer of Nathanael was radical “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” (John 1:46) Yeshua had no argument, he just said to Nathanael “Come and see” There is nothing better than our own experience. Nobody can know the Messiah for someone else, it should be a personal encounter. it is in following Yeshua; devoting ourselves to him, and treading in his steps that we will discover who he is really. The objection Nathanael made shows us that he was full of prejudice. Most of the time we cannot see the truth because our heart and our mind are full of prejudices. Yeshua revealed something very personal to Nathanael, thus he really believed “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” (John 1:49). Then Yeshua speaking to all the people who were there said “I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (1:51). He is the one who helps us to be connected to heaven. He is the ladder of Yaakov, he is the one who is between the earth and the heaven. He is the intermediary between man and God and we know that the angels are “ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation” (Heb 1:14). They are serving us on earth, but to connect earth and heaven they have to go up and down through Yeshua the Mashiach.

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expensive building (US\$900,000) of 500 m², but which needs refurbishment in order to be effective. The plan is to make this building a place of worship and a center of Jewish-Christian Studies linked to the Sao Paulo University in order to make a difference in this Jewish neighborhood. The refurbishment will cost a lot of money and the Beth Bnei Tzion have not yet all the money for it. But they are full of faith and sure that the Lord will answer their prayers and the renovation will be finished at the end of 2012, in order to start to worship on the new building at the beginning of 2013.



After the havdala of Sabbath evening, we started a time of report where the World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center presented its report but also each Beth Bnei Tzion congregation. If fact the report were so interesting and long that we stop the meeting at about 10:00 pm, and we resumed the meeting on Sunday morning from 9:30 to 12:30 am. Each congregation gave not only a report but also a video, which helped us to see what they were doing in their cities.



The Curitiba BBT have just finished to pay the last payment of their mortgage, the new building now belongs fully to them. But they still own their own building and they plan to open a Museum of Jewish Christian relationship in that building, This museum will be full of new technology, and the visit will be assisted by an Application for Iphone and Ipad, where for every visitor will be in the museum, the Ipad will replace the guide.



The Sao Paulo BBT is going to open a Jewish-Christian Study Center, and are building very strong ties with the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem in order to fight Anti-Semitism and to teach about the holocaust. Trips will be organized every year to Israel to teach to Brazilians about anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. The pastor/Rabbi of the BBT of Sao Paulo gave us a great lesson of relationships with the Jewish community when he said "It is important to see what are the Jewish interest in the city where we are working in order to be relevant for them, to bring them our message as a real Good News".

The Rio de Janeiro BBT and the BBT located close to the Adventist University de la Plata in Argentina are working with the Adventist medical

Centers where their worship places are located to share the Bible with the Jewish people who are around them.



In Uruguay, our Beth Bnei Tzion of Montevideo has also a very special project. They have received as donations from different people full libraries about Jewish and Christian history, about Anti-semitism and the Holocaust. God has shown them what to do for the Jewish people of Montevideo, they are going to open a specialized library

on Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, in this way many Jews will come to our Beth Bnei Tzion to make studies on these topics and will know the Adventists as friends of the Jewish community.



The next report came from **Campinas, a very courageous BBT**, since there are only 501 Jews in the city, Yes it is strange but they are 500 + 1 Jews in the city. There are also two synagogues who have great difficulties to get minyan (quorum for religious service) on Shabbat. The BBT meet every Shabbat with an attendance of about 40 people. Their special projects are Hebrew courses, Beth Midrash for children, and social activities for the community.

The last report and last video came from **the youngest Beth Bnei Tzion in South America, the one of Manaus**, which started in January 2011. Manaus is the capital of Amazon. A wonderful place where is a big Jewish community. The specificity of these Jews is that most of them are originally from Morocco.

In the 19th century, when Brazil got his independence from the very Catholic Portugal, they opened their doors for Non-Catholic new immigrants; a great community of Moroccan Jews who left Morocco and immigrated to Brazil. I remember my father telling me the story of the Jewish people in Morocco, he said to me that in the 19th century was a great persecution of the Jews in Morocco by the Muslims and my own family was touched by this difficult time. The parents of my great-grand mother moved to Egypt and my great-grand mother was born in Alexandria. After a while, when the situation became better and France took over Morocco (which became a French protectorate) my ancestors came back to Morocco. But the Jews who went to Brazil stayed over there and are today a prosperous community.

A very dedicated group of members supported by Reinaldo Siquiera and the president of the Conference started the Adventist synagogue in Manaus in January 2011. The President of the Amazon Conference was with us in our meeting, and shared with us his conviction about the Jewish Adventist ministry and assured us that he will do all he can to help this congregation to grow. His wife is the Conference Director's Women Ministries, he asked her to make her best in order to train the women of the BBT for women ministry.



When the Executive Committee had to look for a new pastor for this congregation, but it was very difficult to find one. So the Conference's President asked the Executive Committee to appoint him as the pastor of this community. They understood that it would be difficult for him to work fully for the Conference and for the BBT. That is why recently the Executive Committee called the pastor of Campinas to come to Amazon and to serve this new synagogue. Their projects are to buy a new property, to start a kindergarten for the BBT and the Jewish community, to open a study center, a social and cultural center and to be an open center for any need of the community. In conclusion of this meeting, Dr Siquiera gave appointment to every one for 2013.

