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NEWS

CHANUKA

Chanukah is coming very soon, it will be from 21 to 28 December. It is right on the time of “Christmas”, it is a wonderful opportunity to give a great lesson when we are lighting the candles to teach who is the right light of the world. Yeshua said “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12.) But we mustn’t forget another teaching of Yeshua, reminded to us by Mattatyahu : teaching his talmidim he said to them: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matt 5:14-16).

GC - GLOBAL MISSION DIRECTORS MEETING

Last week I was in Brazil, not only to visit the Beth Bnei Tzions we have in South America but also to attend a very important General Conference meeting organized by the Office of Adventist Mission, specifically the Director of the Study Centers of this office, Dr Rick McEdward. It was the first time that he organized this meeting for us, because he just replace Dr Ganoune Diop, who was elected as the Director assistant of John Graz at the Religious Liberty department.

This meeting is considered so important for the General Conference that you will recognize in the picture, among the attendees, from the General Conference: Mike Ryan, Vice President,

Dr Gt Ng, Executive Secretary, Myron Iseminger, Under-Secretary, Gary Krause, Office of Adventist Mission Director and Delbert Pearman, Strategy Planning Director for Adventist Mission. Homer Trecartin, newly elected as the President of the new Great Middle East Union, and many others you will recognize in this picture.

Every year this committee meets to discuss the progress of the 5 study Centers operated by the Office of Adventist Mission: This study centers are dedicated to work among the Jews, the Muslims, the Hindus, the Buddhists and the post-modern people. Each year the meeting is specifically organized around one of the study center, and we meet in an area where one of the study center is working. This years Kleber Gonçalves invited us to meet in Sao Paulo, where he has his own congregation. A post-modern congregation, started few years ago from nothing and who has today a membership of three hundred people, but an attendance every Shabbat of about one thousand people. Kleber who is the World director for the work among the post-modern is really doing a wonderful work and in my opinion every pastor who is planting a church or working among the post-modern people should visit his congregation and speaks with him. Of course Kleber is available to visit your congregation if you need him.



OVERVIEW

VAYISHLACH

Genesis 32:4 - 36:43

Returning home, Yaakov sends angelic messengers to appease his brother Esau. The messengers return, telling Yaakov that Esau is approaching with an army of 400.

Yaakov takes the strategic precautions of dividing the camps, praying for assistance, and sending tribute to mollify Esau.

That night Yaakov is left alone and wrestles with the Angel of Esau. Yaakov emerges victorious but is left with an injured sinew in his thigh (which is the reason why it is forbidden to eat the sciatic nerve of a kosher animal). The angel tells him that his name in the future will be Yisrael, signifying that he has prevailed against man (Lavan) and the supernatural (the angel).

Yaakov and Esau meet and are reconciled, but Yaakov, still fearful of his brother, rejects Esau's offer that they should dwell together.

Sh'chem, a Caananite prince, abducts and violates Dina, Yaakov's daughter.

In return for Dina's hand in marriage, the prince and his father suggest that Yaakov and his family intermarry and enjoy the fruits of Caananite prosperity.

Yaakov's sons trick Sh'chem and his father by feigning agreement; however, they stipulate that all the males of the city must undergo brit mila. Shimon and Levi, two of Dina's brothers, enter the town and execute all the males who were weakened by the circumcision.

This action is justified by the city's tacit complicity in the abduction of their sister.

G-d commands Yaakov to go to Beit-El and build an altar.

His mother Rivka's nurse, Devorah, dies and is buried below Beit-El.

G-d appears again to Yaakov, blesses him and changes his name to Yisrael.

While traveling, Rachel goes into labor and gives birth to Binyamin, the twelfth of the tribes of Israel. She dies in childbirth and is buried on the Beitlechem road. Yaakov builds a monument to her.

Yitzchak passes away at the age of 180 and is buried

by his sons. The Parasha concludes by listing Esav's descendants.

DO WE NEED MORE?

The Torah states: "But Esau said, 'I already have plenty, my brother. Keep what you have for yourself.'" "No, please!" said Yaakov. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably. Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need." And because Yaakov insisted, Esau accepted it. "(Genesis 33:9,10,11) Rabbi Packouz asks the question: "Which of the two brothers is richer?" The Chofetz Chaim commented that with these two remarks we see the difference between the world views of Yaakov and Esau. Esau said that he had a lot. Even though he had a large amount, he would still want more, for "whoever has a hundred wants two hundred." Yaakov, however, said, "I have everything." I am not missing anything at all. Esau constantly wanted more, while Yaakov felt great satisfaction in what he had.

Rabbi Pakouz in the name of Rabbi Zelig Pliskin says: Regardless of how much you have, there is always much more that you want. Having the attitude that you never really have enough will cause you constant frustration. If you focus on what you lack or think you lack, your life will be filled with anxiety and suffering. The choice is yours to be truly rich or to be "poor" with many possessions!

Internalize the attitude of Yaakov: "**I have everything that I need.**" Pirke Avot teaches us, "Who is the rich person? He who is happy with his portion." If you focus on what you have, you will be happy. (4:1)

Of course, you have a right to try to acquire more. However, if you are unable to, you will feel calm and serene. If you do acquire more, very good. If not, it is a sign that for your best interests you do not really need any more.

YAAKOV DIDN'T WANT VIOLENCE

The Sages teach us that Yaakov did three things to prepare for the confrontation with his brother:

- He sent Esau a very lavish bribe.
- He prayed to G-d for assistance.
- He prepared himself to wage war as a last resort.

When he finally approached Esau, the Torah tells us: “And he bowed down to the ground seven times until he reached his brother. And Esau ran to greet him, hugged him, fell on his neck and kissed him. And they cried.” (Genesis 33:3-4) Why was Esau so moved that he no longer desired to kill his brother?

Rashi comments that when Esau saw how Yaakov bowed down to him so many times, his feelings of compassion were aroused and he hugged and kissed Yaakov.

Yaakov had great physical strength and was prepared to fight against Esau, but he still wanted to avoid violence if at all possible.

YAAKOV STRUGGLED WITH G.

The Torah describes a battle between Yaakov and “a man” which our sages say was Esau’s guardian angel. Although the angel couldn’t defeat Yaakov, he “strained” Yaakov’s thigh. As a result, believers are prohibited to eat the “sinew (sciatic nerve) of the thigh vein” and it must be removed before the meat is made kosher.

G-d tells Yaakov, “Your name shall not be called any more Yaakov but Israel should be your name.” According to the tradition The name Yaakov was given him at birth because he was holding onto the heel of his brother Esau. Yaakov means “heel” and represents a lower level. “Israel” means leadership. (there are many meanings of this name)

Yaakov is the only one of our forefathers who has two names. At times, the Torah calls him Yaakov and at times, Israel. The two names represent two stages of G-d’s people. “Israel” represents the times of greatness and glory. “Yaakov” relates to times of suffering and exile.

Who was this man? All the commentators agree that he was no ordinary mortal, no armed brigand waylaying a harmless traveller. The text itself bears ample witness to this. Who introduced him into the intimate counsels of the Almighty, so that he knew what message he intended to transmit to Yaakov? “Your name shall not be called any more Yaakov but Israel should be your name.” Moreover, Yaakov said, after all that had happened to him: “It is because I saw G-d face to face, and yet my life was spared.” (Gen 32:30) Evidently then, the wrestler was no ordinary man.

In the book of the prophet Hosea we have confirmation that this man was an angel “The L-rd has a charge to bring

against Judah; he will punish Yaakov according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds. In the womb he grasped his brother’s heel; as a man he struggled with G-d. 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” (Hos. 12:2-4)

But this man is not only an angel, it is also G-d, Hosea said “He struggled with G-d”. That is the mystery of the full Bible. The only angel who could be associated with G-d is the angel “Michael” the one “Who” (Mi) “like” (cha) “G-d” (El).

“Yet Yaakov’s history is an assurance that G-d will not cast off those who have been betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. It was by self-surrender and confiding faith that Yaakov gained what he had failed to gain by conflict in his own strength. G-d thus taught His servant that divine power and grace alone could give him the blessing he craved.” (PP203)

YAAKOV’S PRAYER

Our sages in Pirkei Avot state, “The world stands on three things;

1. On the Torah;
2. On the service of G-d
3. On deeds of kindness.”

Service of G-d refers to the daily prayers. According to the Jewish tradition The three daily prayers were established by Abraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov;

1. Abraham set the morning prayer,
2. Yitzchak the afternoon prayer and
3. Yaakov is associated with the evening prayer.

The Hebrew word for prayer is *Tefilah*. One interpretation of *Tefilah* is “connection.” Our prayers connect us to G-d. Praying each day is not to make G-d aware of our needs, but rather to make us aware that whatever we need comes from G-d and thus we become connected to G-d.

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.

JEW, THE TORAH AND G-D

Many years ago, a 15 year old yeshiva boy sits in an Israeli hospital waiting room while his mother is having an operation. As is customary amongst Jews throughout history, he recites Tehillim (Psalms) The book of Psalms is very important for prayers and as a source of comfort. In reading the Tehillim, this boy was praying for his mother and giving calm to his own worried soul.

In walks an old kibbutznik (a member of pioneering, largely anti-religious, collectives which helped settle and conquer the Land of Israel "Kibbutz") — wearing his "kova tembel" (kibbutz hat), blue shirt, work shorts, sandals — and a sun wrinkled face adorned by a big bushy handlebar mustache.

The kibbutznik walks straight to the yeshiva boy and asks accusingly, "What are you doing?" The yeshiva boy is shocked and scared... and answers, "I am saying the Tehillim — my mother is having an operation."

The kibbutznik then berates the boy, "Tehillim? Is that why we fought for this country? So that a young fellow like you could continue these medieval practices? You need to get rid of your superstitions! Live in the real world. Take that book and throw it out the window!"

The boy is stunned. Finally, he decides to change the focus of the conversation and asks, "What are you doing here?"

The kibbutznik replies, "I've come to take home the body of my son. The doctors are operating, but they have no hope. He's going to die!"

The boy is incredulous, "Are you crazy? Take this Tehillim! Pray!" And the kibbutznik responds, "Keep that superstitious, medieval book away from me!" and then went to the far end of the room to sit by himself.

An hour later, the doctor comes out of the operating room and says to the kibbutznik, "The operation was a success. Your son will live!"

What does the old kibbutznik do? He stands up, reaches his hands towards heaven and cries

out, "*Shema Yisrael, A-donai E-loheinu, A-donai Echad*" (Hear O Israel, the L-rd our G-d, the L-rd is One).

What possibly possessed the kibbutznik to cry out the watchword of the Jewish people, the proclamation of the Jewish people's belief in G-d from the time of our patriarchs? We know the answer — "*ma'aminim, b'nei ma'aminim*" — (believers are the children of believers).

You can take the Jew out of the Torah ... but you can't take the belief in G-d out of the Jew.

HAFTARA

Obadiah 1:1 - 1:21

The book of Obadiah is about the Edomites and the Israelites. The Edomites and the Israelites have been in conflict since they were conceived in their mother's womb "**The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" (Ge 25:21-23).**" The L-rd is very strong against Edom and their ancestor Esau. "**On that day, says the L-rd, I will destroy the wise out of Edom, and understanding out of Mount Esau. Your warriors shall be shattered, O Teman, so that everyone from Mount Esau will be cut off." (Obadiah 8,9).**" Some people can think that it is not fair, but we have to remember what happened in history.

1. Edom's refusal to allow Israel to pass through their territory on the way to Canaan. (**Nu 20:14-21**)

2. Doeg, the Edomite's conspiracy against David before Saul who was on a mission to destroy him. (**1Sam 21; 22**)

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3. The confederacy of Edomites and the Ishmaelites against Israel (**Ps 83**)

4. The confederacy of Edom, Moab and Ammon against King Jehoshaphat and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (**2Chr 20**)

5. The attack on Judah by the Edomites during the reign of King Ahaz. (**2Ch 28:17**)

6. The desecration of Jerusalem (and the inhabitants thereof) by the Edomites as Jerusalem was being leveled by the Chaldeans. (**Ob 1:10-16**);

7. A near obliteration of the Jews in exile at the hands of Haman who was an Agagite. (**Est 3:5-6**);

8. The destruction of Bethlehemite male children two years old and under by Herod the Great (who was partly Edomite). (**Mt 2:16**).

The text of this haftarah in Obadiah ends with the good news of the restoration of Israel in their promised Land. **“This company of Israelite exiles who are in Canaan will possess [the land] as far as Zarephath; the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negev. (20)** It is interesting to realize that the Sepharad (Jews from the Arab and Mediterranean countries) who are the descendants of the Jews deported from Jerusalem are coming back to Israel. These Sephardi who were in Spain (Sepharad in Hebrew) and from where they were expelled in the 15th century, went to North Africa, Turkey, Bulgaria, The Netherlands, France, South America. When these Jews came back to Israel, they were installed in the Negev (Dimonah, Beer Sheva, Arad, Eilat etc.) My own uncle, who came back to Israel when he was 13 years-old, from Morocco was installed in Dimona and now lives in Beer Sheva. The prophecy said “the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad will possess the towns of the Negev.” (20).

BRIT HACHADASHA

Matt 22:32

The parasha for this week speaks about the return of Yaakov in his home land, the house of his fathers Abraham and Isaac. I tried to show in my the last weeks commentaries that Yaakov was not the bad guy that the Christian tradition tries to depict. Yaakov was one of the patriarchs, he was

presented in the book of Genesis as a blameless character (**Gen 27:25**). Oh! of course when we read his story we can see some mistakes, but these mistakes were motivated by love. Love for G-d, that is why he was sure that the promises given to Abraham and Isaac were for him, and did whatever he could to get the birthright to be the beneficiary the promises. That is why he studied in the tents (certainly the tents of Abraham). Let’s remember that when Abraham got Isaac he was 100 years-old. When Isaac got Yaakov he was 60 years-old and Abraham died when he was 175 years-old, that means Yaakov was 15 when Abraham died. According to the Jewish tradition a boy has to start to learn Hebrew at 3 and must start to study the Torah when he is 5 years-old. Then Yaakov had an occasion to study the Torah with Abraham (what Abraham received from G-d) for about 10 years. Esav, did not “dwell among the tents” like Yaakov, that means he was not taught by Abraham as Yaakov was, so he did not know the real value of the birthright and the value of the promises given to Abraham.

Later, it was also motivated by love that he did some educational mistakes, preferring Joseph and loving him more than his other sons and daughter. However, all the mistakes of Yaakov were covered by G-d’s love. I believe strongly in justification by grace and by faith, not by work. This way of salvation did not start with Yeshua, but with Adam and Eve. The first act of G-d after the sin of Adam and Eve, was an act of salvation by grace. G-d sacrificed the first animal, made garments from it for Adam and Eve and covered their nude bodies, by this act, G-d showed to Adam and Eve that their sin (act of disobedience) was covered, but they must suffer the consequence of it, but one day the Messiah will come to save all humanity. This grace of G-d was available to Abraham, Isaac and Yaakov. That is why each one of them received this salvation by grace in spite of their sins and that is why G-d is proud to be called the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Yaakov **“I am the G-d of Abraham, the G-d of Isaac, and the G-d of Yaakov”? He is not the G-d of the dead but of the living.” (Matt 22:32)**