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HAPPY NEW YEAR 2012

Israel is a special country where the matter of calendars is not easy. All our calendars are organized according to the Jewish year (5772) and the common year (2012). For the religious Jews the new year is in September (Rosh Hashana) for the Christians the new year is in January.

That is why we have the privilege in Israel to wish twice to every one: Happy new year?

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2012 To Everybody In Israel and In Diaspora

NEW CONGREGATION IN PARIS

France is the third largest Jewish community in the world. about 650,000 Jews live in this country and half of them in Paris and suburb. That is why we have initiated a new Jewish Adventist congregation in Paris in order to reach the Jews who are living in this beautiful and romantic city.

The first worship was held on January 6, 2012 at 7:00 pm at the “Maison de l’Espérance”, 13, rue Gracieuse, Paris.

The Maison de l’Espérance which could be translated as the “House of Hope” is a new house where the Seventh-day Adventist are experimented new ways of worship. The main congregation which worships in this building on Shabbath is an experimental congregation for postmodern people. If there is a country where the word “postmodern” means something it is really France. After the French revolution in 1789, France became the pioneer of atheism. since the beginning of the 20th century France is officially a secular country and today we see that the postmodern ideas become more and more popular.

Thus this House of Hope is a good place for us to start our Jewish Adventist community, the building is not an official church, no sign says that it is a church, it is a house where there are various social and cultural activities every day.

The leaders of this new congregation met on the 6th of January at 4:30 pm to prepare this ministry. We fixed a new appointment when we will work on the mission statement and the vision of this ministry and congregation. We have also worked as a nominating committee and a great job has been done in choosing the leaders of this community.

We are very encouraged by the fact that 35 people have attended the first worship on the 6th of January. The next day of worship has been fixed on the 3rd February 2012.

OVERVIEW

SHEMOT

EXODUS 1:1 - 6:1

The Book of Shemot (Exodus) chronicles the creation of the nation of Israel from the descendants of Yaakov.

At the beginning of this week's Parasha, Pharaoh, fearing the population explosion of Jews, enslaves them. However, when their birthrate increases, he orders the Jewish midwives to kill all newborn males.

Yocheved gives birth to Moshe and hides him in the reeds by the Nile. Pharaoh's daughter finds and adopts him, although she knows he is probably a Hebrew. Miriam, Moshe's sister, offers to find a nursemaid for Moshe and arranges for his mother Yocheved to fulfill that role.

Years later, Moshe witnesses an Egyptian beating a Hebrew and Moshe kills the Egyptian.

Realizing his life is in danger, Moshe flees to Midian where he rescues Tziporah, whose father Yitro approves their subsequent marriage.

On Chorev (Mt. Sinai) Moshe witnesses the burning bush where G-d commands him to lead the Jewish People from Egypt to Eretz Yisrael, the land promised to their ancestors.

Moshe protests that the Jewish People will doubt his being G-d's agent, so G-d enables Moshe to perform three miraculous transformations to validate himself in the people's eyes: transforming his staff into a snake, his healthy hand into a leprous one, and water into blood.

When Moshe declares that he is not a good public speaker G-d tells him that his brother Aharon will be his spokesman.

Aharon greets Moshe on his return to Egypt and they petition Pharaoh to release the Jews.

Pharaoh responds with even harsher decrees, declaring that the Jews must produce the same quota of bricks as before but without being given supplies.

The people become dispirited, but G-d assures Moshe that He will force Pharaoh to let the Jews leave.

BIRTH OF MOSES

Moshe's parents, Amram and Yocheved, already had two children, Miriam and Aaron, before Moshe was born. When

Pharaoh ordered that every newborn boy be thrown into the river, According to the Jewish tradition, Amram didn't want to have anymore children and divorced his wife Yocheved. Other Jews followed his lead and also divorced their wives. Miriam said to her father, "Your decree is even harsher than Pharaoh's! His decree affects only boys. But by not having children you will be, in effect, preventing girls from living as well." Amram realized that his daughter was right. He remarried Yocheved. As a result of Miriam's intervention, Moshe was born.

The Gemara then relates that when Moshe was born, the house filled with light. Amram kissed Miriam on the forehead and told her "Your prophecy has been fulfilled." However, when Moshe was thrown into the Nile (to hide him from the Egyptians), Amram went over to Miriam and slapped her on the forehead and asked, "Now what happened to your 'great prophecy'?"

Rabbi Yissocher Frand says that it is in this context that we begin to understand the meaning of the pasuk "And his sister stood away from him at a distance." (Ex 2:4) The reward that Miriam later received was not just for standing at the Nile for a few moments, it was for being the heroine of the whole story of Amram and all the Jews taking back their wives. It was for being responsible for the birth of the person who became the leader of the Jewish nation. She saved her brother and in effect the entire nation because she refused to give up hope.

Miriam taught us the timeless lesson of not giving up hope when things look bleak. This valuable lesson, symbolized by her waiting to see what would happen to Moshe in the Nile, is certainly worthy of the payback of waiting for Miriam when she was not able to travel.

THE SAVING OF MOSES

When Moshe was born, his mother, Yocheved, hid him for three months from the Egyptians, who decreed that every male child be drowned in the Nile River. After three months, when she could no longer hide her son, Yocheved placed him in a basket and set it along the banks of the Nile River.

Afraid of Pharaoh's decree, she hid Moshe for three months. After three months she had to find a way to save him. The Torah tells us that she placed the child in a basket and put it by the river. Moshe's sister, Miriam, stood from afar to see what would happen to her little brother.

Pharaoh's daughter, Bitya, came to bathe in the river and saw the basket. Although the basket was far from her, she asked one of her servant to get the basket to see what

was inside. When she opened the basket she found a baby crying. She said, **“It must be from the Hebrew babies.”** (Ex 2:6) Pharaoh’s daughter called the baby, Moshe (“to pull out”), for “from the water I have pulled him out.”

Now Bitya needed someone to nurse the baby. The Torah relates how Miriam approached her and offered to find a nursing mother. When Bitya agreed, Miriam brought Moshe’s mother, Yocheved, to nurse her own baby. Thus, Moshe was reunited with his mother during the feeding period.

ENSLAVEMENT OF THE HEBREWS

Parashat Shemot tells about the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, which began only after Yaakov and his sons passed away.

As long as Joseph ruled the country, Yaakov and his family lived in the province of Goshen and enjoyed the “best of the land.” After Yaakov and his children passed away, the Egyptians enslaved Yaakov’s descendants.

The Torah tells us, **“And there arose a new king over Egypt, who didn’t know Joseph.”** Pharaoh and the Egyptians chose to forget all the good Joseph did for them. They chose to forget that Joseph saved their country from the famine. They chose to forget that with Yaakov’s coming to Egypt, the famine stopped, although it was supposed to last another five years. Instead of paying back good for good they enslaved Yaakov’s descendants

As mentioned many times, the stories in the Torah, although they happened many thousands of years ago, are lessons for us today. It is also what Rabbi Shaul said, **“These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.”** (1 Cor 10:11) This is especially true with the story of the enslavement and Exodus from Egypt. The Torah commands us, “You shall remember the day of your Exodus from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.”

THE SHEPHERDS

What is the connection between Moshe being a shepherd and G-d choosing him to lead the people of Israel? The Midrash explains that both Moshe and King David were shepherds. They showed extra devotion and care to the individual needs of the sheep in their flocks. G-d said, “If they are so devoted to their sheep, they will certainly care for the individual needs of My people!”

UNPREPARED TO RECOGNIZE THE SAVIOR

Most of the time we are not prepared to recognize the savior of Israel when he appears it was the case in the person of Moses and it was the case of Yeshua two thousand years ago.

We are told how Moses was miraculously saved from the crocodiles of the Nile by the daughter of the Pharaoh and raised in the royal court. He sympathizes with the brutalized Jewish slaves, defends them, and is forced to flee from Egypt.

We hear nothing regarding Moses for the next forty years until he reemerges as a shepherd in Midian, married to the daughter of Yitro. Where did his holiness and greatness stem from, how was it developed, who were his mentors and what were his experiences over those long decades of separation from his people? The Torah gives us no clue or answer to these questions. It was the case of Yeshua, we know what happened at his birth, we know the circumstances of his Bar Mitsva, but we know nothing about the next eighteen years. Since his birth was very special we are sure that his holiness came from God who was with him from the first to the last day of his human life. His mentors were first his father and his mother, and he even learned from the Rabbis of his synagogue in Nazareth; However we know that Nazareth was not a good city from where good things or good people come from. We remember the sentence pronounced by Nathanael **“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?”** (John 1:46). It effectively points out that greatness oftentimes comes from unexpected sources and from people and leaders who operate outside of the usual establishment circles.

All of life is a mystery and certainly the Jewish story remains in its base an inexplicable one. This therefore sets the stage for everything else that will now follow in the Torah. It is why the Jewish people, when accepting the Torah pledged to God that “we will do and then perhaps try to understand,” if we wish to understand first we will never come to do. The Divine hand guides us but it is never subject to our rational thoughts and explanations.

MOSES' SPEECH IMPEDIMENT

One day when Moshe was three years old, he removed Pharaoh's crown and placed it on his own head. One of Pharaoh's advisors said, "This is a sign that this boy will take away your kingdom. I advise you to have him killed." But the other advisors said, "He is only a child, it's just child's play." So they decided to test Moshe as follows:

A tray containing a glowing coal and a shiny gold object was brought before Moshe. If he takes the gold this will prove that he is intelligent and intentionally removed Pharaoh's crown and placed it on himself and should be put to death. But, if he takes the burning coal, then removing Pharaoh's crown was only a childish act.

The tray was placed before Moshe. Moshe looked at both items and began moving his hand toward the gold. This would have meant a certain death sentence for Moshe. At that moment, G-d send an angel who pushed Moshe's hand toward the burning coal. Moshe grabbed it and instantly put it to his mouth, as is customary with children. The hot coal burned his lips and tongue. As a result, Moshe developed a speech impediment, which actually saved his life.

From this story we see that what may at times seem as an adverse situation may in fact be a life saving one.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE SURVIVED

Why did G-d choose to be revealed to Moshe through a burning bush that was not consumed? No other nation has experienced the sufferings, persecutions and executions over the years as the Jewish people. Yet, through it all, we survived as a people with a unique identity.

No other nation has spent more years in exile than in their own homeland, yet, we have kept the same laws and traditions for over three thousand years. No other nation found its culture, learning and educational system under such attack as did the Jewish people. Yet, we have not only survived but flourished.

Rabbi Meir Shapiro was a member in the Polish Seim (parliament). A member of the Seim once asked him, "Why do Jews place a hard boiled egg on the Seder Plate?"

Rabbi Meir replied, "Other foods, the longer they are cooked, the softer they become. But the longer you cook eggs, the harder they get. The egg at the Seder symbolizes the Jewish people. Just like the egg, the sufferings and pain inflicted on the Jewish people have not broken us. Rather, they have made us harder and stronger.

With the burning bush G-d showed Moshe that, just as the bush burned yet was not consumed, so too, the Jewish people, will endure adversity, but will never be destroyed. Over three thousand years have passed and it is indeed one of the great miracles of all times that the Jewish people survived and are strong and vibrant."

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 Genenisis). By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair from Ohr Somayach, by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky..

HAFTARAH

Jeremiah 1:1 - 2:3

Jeremiah is a special prophet in the Tanach, one who was very close to Moses, because like Moses Jeremiah came from a background which was not destined to lead the people of Israel. Moses was raised in the family of Pharaoh, as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He left Egypt

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when he was 40 and nobody heard about him for the next 40 years. And when he received his calling from G-d he was not ready to go and to serve the L-rd. He used many excuses to refuse the calling **“What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you?’”** (Ex 4:1) **“O Lord, I have never been eloquent”** (Ex 4:10.) **“O Lord, please send someone else to do it.”** (Ex 4:13.)

We have the same kind of reaction from Jeremiah when he was called by G-d. First we have to remember that Jeremiah was descendent from a family of Cohanim (Priest) **“The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin.”** (Jer 1:1.) However when we look at the life of Jeremiah we don't see him performing the duty of a priest. He never was in the temple to work in the altar or in any other part of the holy service. The reason of this anomaly is because he was one of the priests living in Anathoth. This city was in the territory of Benjamin, close to Jerusalem, but a city of cursed priests who had no right to perform anymore the ministry of priest in Israel. Anathoth was the city where Abiathar was sent by the king Solomon. In the book of Kings we read **“To Abiathar the priest the king said, ‘Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD before my father David and shared all my father's hardships.’”** (1Kings 2:26.) Since that time Abiathar and his descendent were not allowed to perform the service in the temple. Jeremiah was one of them.

Thus we understand that when G-d called him, he was not ready to go. He said to the L-rd **“Ah, Sovereign LORD,” I said, “I do not know how to speak; I am only a child.”** (Jer 1:6.) Even worse, the people who were living in Anathoth knew who they were, they did not like that someone from their city would put the light on their city. How a prophet could come from Anathoth and these curse people. That is why when they saw that Jeremiah started to prophesy they said to him **“Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD or you will die by our hands”** (Jer 11:21.) that was the difficult life of Moses and Jeremiah.

BRIT HACHADASHA

John 8:58

In the text of our parasha Shemot we have a very important text about G-d. It is when G-d called Moses to be the savior of Israel, the one who will free them from the bondage of Egypt. Moses was very reluctant to accept God's calling, he did not want to go back to Egypt. However when he accepted to be the liberator he said to G-d **“Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The G-d of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’**

Then what shall I tell them?” G-d said to Moses, **“I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”** (Ex 3:13-14)

G-d is revealing his name for the first time in this parasha to a human being. G-d is the great I AM g-d, the Eternal G-d. He is not in time as us, that is why in Isaiah **“This is what the L-rd says — Israel's King and Redeemer, the L-rd Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no G-d.”** (Is 44:6) Because G-d is the eternal I AM, he is also the first and the last, there is no other who can be considered as G-d, as eternal.

When we come back to the brit Hachadasha we discover that Yeshua used the same title as G-d in the Tanach. Yeshua is the incarnation of the great I AM. We have to be clear on the fact that polytheism is condemned by the Bible, there is no two or three G-d, but only one G-d, it is exactly what he said in the book of Isaiah **“apart from me there is no G-d”**, thus, when Yeshua said that he is the **“I AM”** we have to understand that he is the only one I AM who came in human form on the earth. We have the same phenomenon with the angels, they are spiritual beings, but when it is necessary they come to the earth in human form (cf. the three visitors Abraham received in Gen 18).

Listen what Yeshua said to the Pharisees of his time **“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”** (John 8:58). What a strange way of speaking!, normally he has to say **“Before Abraham was born, I was”**, but he used the present form **“I AM”** Yeshua is the eternal **“I AM”**. Of course it is difficult to understand this truth without a revelation from G-d. That is why if anyone has some difficulties to understand the true nature of Yeshua, I invite him to pray and to ask G-d to give him a conviction about Yeshua. We have many statement of Yeshua which go in the same direction **“While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”** (John 9:5.) The Pharisees who listened to him understood very well what he wanted to say because right after saying that he is the **“I AM”**, they wanted to stone him, he asked them; why? They answered **“because you, a mere man, claim to be G-d.”** (John 10:31). Yeshua made clear statement that he was one with G-d, he was G-d. That is why also in the book of revelation he applied G-d's title **“I am the First and the Last.”** (Rev 1:17) to himself.