

LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

We pray every week for the Jewish Friendship Ministry and their partner. I suggest our friends to pray from February 28 through March 6, for Mark Hart, who is the leader of Jewish Adventist Friendship ministry in Baltimore, MD. As we know our ministry is not easy, especially in this time of pandemic, when travels are not allowed, that is why Mark Hart needs more than ever before our prayers.

NEWS

IMPORTANT NOTICE
THE LAST ISSUE OF THIS
NEWSLETTER WILL BE PUBLISHED
NEXT WEEK

We inform our readers that *Parashat Vayakhel-Pikudey*, which completes the book of Exodus/*Shemot* on March 13, will be the last newsletter produced and sent by the World Jewish Adventist Friendship Center.

We understand the frustration of our readers, particularly of the leaders of Jewish Adventist Congregations, however, 8 years of former issues of the newsletter can be found on our website:

<https://wjafc.globalmissioncenters.org/>

Just remember that to have access to the material published on this website you have to register and get permission to access it.

We are producing a set of books on the *Parashoth*, *Haftaroth* and Apostolic Writings, in order to replace the newsletter. *Genesis* and *Exodus* are already published, and we are working to publish *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy* as soon as possible.

NEXT JEWISH CELEBRATION

We know that exactly one month after Purim comes the feast of *Pesach* or Passover. This feast is the first one on the religious calendar of Israel, since the month of *Nisan* is the first month of the year. In fact, the first of *Nisan* is the starting point that fixes the dates of all the feasts of the year.

Pesach is not on the first of *Nisan*, but on the 15th of *Nisan*. The 14th *Nisan* is called *Erev Pesach* (eve of Passover). This year, 2021, *Erev Pesach* is scheduled for *Shabbat*, March 27, and Sunday March 28 will be the first day of the feast. This means that Jews will have two consecutive days of *Shabbat*.

For Orthodox Jews, the traditional celebration of Passover on *Erev Pesach* is divided into two parts: 1) service at the synagogue, and 2) celebrating the *Seder* at home. While this is true in normal times, this year many Jews will be limiting their celebration to their home with their family.

In the Jewish Adventist Friendship ministry, it is good to focus on the *Seder* celebrated at home. This year we have an opportunity to share our home

Seder experience virtually with our Jewish friends. Many synagogues organize a community *Seder* for the people who are alone at home, and for Jews who are not practicing and don't know how to celebrate the *Seder*. This celebration of the *Seder* can normally be a great opportunity to meet Jews or to invite Jews into our home or our building to celebrate the *Seder*.

We are just 3 weeks before Passover, and it is time to prepare a list of Jewish friends and a card of invitation to be ready to invite them to your *Seder* one week before the event. It is not necessary to invite people a long time before your event, because if you invite them right now, there is a good chance they might forget and not attend.

Thus, we suggest that you invite your Jewish friends one week before the event, then try to get their answer one or two days after giving them the invitation. In normal years, it would be important for each leader to know how many people will be attending. The organization of a *Seder* is expensive since it is the organization of a full meal, including the 4 servings of grape juice for each participant—so it is important to know how many people will come. Then the day before, call your guests to remind them about the great event of the *Seder* of Passover. Finding transportation for people who do not have their own car is also important. Often, you can arrange a ride for them with your members, to be sure that each guest will be able to come to the event. This year, the emphasis is on virtual access and set-up.

We would like to remind everyone that it is very appropriate to organize a *Seder* in our home or in our congregation. The *Seder* is a meal where Jews remember the biblical account of the Exodus, using symbolic food and drink to recall these events for everyone present. For example, to remember the bitterness of slavery, each person eats a small portion of a bitter herb. To remember the mortar they had to make, Jews prepare a fruit sauce called *Charoset* (go to the Internet for a recipe). Each step in the *Seder* is symbolic of a part of the Exodus story. We suggest each leader familiarize themselves with a *Seder* booklet (*Haggadah*) before Passover, there they will discover many links to the Messiah, where the *Seder* teaches the principles of salvation and recalls Yeshua and His ministry on earth and in heaven. Thus, it is the role of each leader to find ways to link the *Seder* to Yeshua in a way that is respectful to our Jewish friend and his faith.

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PARASHA FOR THIS WEEK

KI TISSA

כִּי תִּשָּׂא

PARASHA OVERVIEW: EXODUS 30:11 - 34:35

Moshe conducts a census by counting each silver half-shekel donated by all men age twenty and over.

Moshe is commanded to make a copper laver for the Mishkan. The women donate the necessary metal.

The formula of the anointing oil is specified, and G-d instructs Moshe to use this oil only for dedicating the Mishkan, its vessels, Aharon and his sons.

G-d selects Bezalel and Oholiab as master craftsmen for the Mishkan and its vessels.

The Jewish People are commanded to keep the Sabbath as an eternal sign that G-d made the world.

Moshe receives the two Tablets of Testimony on which are written the Ten Commandments.

The mixed multitude who left Egypt with the Jewish People panic when Moshe's descent seems delayed, and force Aharon to make a golden calf for them to worship. Aharon stalls, trying to delay them.

G-d tells Moshe to return to the people immediately, threat-

ening to destroy everyone and build a new nation from Moshe.

When Moshe sees the camp of idol-worship he smashes the tablets and destroys the golden calf.

The sons of Levi volunteer to punish the transgressors, executing 3,000 men.

Moshe ascends the mountain to pray for forgiveness for the people, and G-d accepts his prayer.

Moshe sets up the Mishkan and G-d's cloud of glory returns. Moshe asks G-d to show him the rules by which he conducts the world, but is granted only a small portion of this request.

G-d tells Moshe to make new tablets and reveals to him the text of the prayer that will invoke Divine mercy.

Idol worship, intermarriage and the combination of milk and meat are prohibited.

The laws of Pesach, the first-born, the first-fruits, Shabbat, Shavuot and Succot are taught.

When Moshe descends with the second set of tablets, his face is luminous as a result of contact with the Divine.

COUNTING OR NOT COUNTING?

Parashat Ki-Tissa starts by these words: "Then ADONAI spoke to Moses saying, 'When you tally the sum [ki-tissa] of Bnei-Yisrael by numbering them, then every man must pay a ransom for his soul to ADONAI when you count them, so that no plague will fall on them. Everyone among them who crosses over must give half a shekel according to the Sanctuary shekel (which is 20 gerahs): half a shekel as an offering to ADONAI.'" (Exodus 30:11-13). This donation of half Shekel was used to count the people of Israel. What was the value of this donation? A *gerah* is a currency weight of 0.568 grams. If the *Shekel* is 20 *gerah*, that means a *Shekel* weighed about 11.36 grams which is 0.40 oz. Thus, the half-*shekel* requested by God was 5.68 grams or 0.20 oz. The quantity is so small that we understand this offering was not of significant monetary value and was therefore symbolic. Then the people of Israel understood that it is forbidden to count God's people. As we love statistics, numbers and counting how many we are in a specific country or in the world, God forbid Israel to count themselves, and to be proud of their numerical growth. As an illustration of this, we have the story of David taking a census of his people in 2 Samuel 24, he was punished by a plague that broke out, causing many deaths. David then repented and was forgiven for the sin of counting his people, and the plague stopped. Since that time it is difficult to know how many Jews are living in each country and in the World. The only exception of this counting today is in Israel, since the country must regulate his population providing national statistics.

ATONEMENT OFFERING

Verse 14 begins a discussion about yearly support for the sanctuary: "Everyone [*Kol*] who crosses over among them who is counted, from 20 years old and upward, is to give the offering to *Hashem*" (Exodus 30:14). This offering is not to be confused with the Half-Shekel donation. The Torah calls it "atonement offering." The Torah states: "You are to take the atonement money from *Bnei-Yisrael* and give it for the service of the Tent of Meeting, so that it may be a memorial for *Bnei-Yisrael* before *HASHEM*, to make atonement for your souls" (Ex. 30:16). That is to say, it is a contribution toward the *Kaparah* of the community, not the *Kaparah* of the individual giver—this is not a contribution on *Yom Kippur* when the atonement is for each individual. That is also why this offering is not a donation made only during the time of the census, but is an offering made every year. Rabbi Hirsch says: "Each person is obligated to make an annual contribution of half a *shekel* for the purpose of defraying the cost of providing the communal offerings."

WISDOM — A SPIRITUAL GIFT

Several topics are included in chapter 31 of Exodus. First we are given a wonderful indication of *Hashem's* action in our world: He knows everyone by name: "Then *HASHEM* spoke to Moshe,



saying, 'See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah'" (Exodus 31:1-2). Not only does *Hashem* know each person by his name, but He also takes care of His people for the sake of His work and kingdom. *Hashem* knew Bezalel, and He gave him spiritual gifts that enabled him to build, to draw, and to do all the beautiful artistic work needed for the Sanctuary: "I have filled him with the Spirit of *Hashem*, with wisdom, understanding and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship, to make ingenious designs, to forge with gold, silver, and bronze, as well as cutting stones for setting and carving wood, to work in all manner of craftsmanship" (Exodus 31:3-5). The name Bezalel means "in the shadow of the Lord" and it seems particularly appropriate for the man who built the *Mishkan*. The Midrash teaches us that on the day that Moses completed the *Mishkan* he said, using the words of Psalm 91: "He who sits alone most high, shall abide in the shadow of *Shaddai*." (*Shavuot* 15b, *Bamidbar Rabbah* 12:3, *Shmot Rabah* 34:1) [The Jewish tradition says that Moshe wrote eleven Psalms from 90 to 100 (*Numbers Rabbah* 12:9)]. The *Mishkan* itself may be considered the "shadow of the Lord," for its purpose was to allow the Presence or Shadow of God into this world. It is our belief that a person's name reflects their inner self; in this case, the quality reflected in the name Bezalel is the very same quality as is possessed by the *Mishkan* itself. Perhaps this is the reason that he was chosen. There is another aspect of Bezalel which has eluded us. The Torah records that Bezalel also built the Aron, the "ark" which contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments. Rashi explains why Bezalel's name is mentioned specifically in connection with the ark, while in the case of all the other utensils, the text simply states that they were completed. Bezalel made (the ark); since he displayed more self-sacrifice than the other sages, the ark was called by his name. [Rashi 37:1] Rashi's statement is based on a source in a *Midrash* which recounts a dialogue between Moses and Bezalel: At the time that God told Moses to make the *Mishkan*, he (Moses) came and told Bezalel, he (Bezalel) said, "What is the purpose of the *Mishkan*?" He (Moses) answered, "That God may allow His Presence to rest within it, and thereby teach Torah to Yisrael." Bezalel said to him, "Where will the Torah be placed?" He answered, "After we build the *Mishkan* we will build the *Aron*." He said, "Moses, our master, this is not honor for the Torah, rather first we should make the *Aron* and then make the *Mishkan*. Therefore the *Aron* was called in his name." [*Shmot*

They have been quick to leave the way that I ordered them to follow, and they have made themselves a cast-metal calf. They have bowed down and offered sacrifice to it, exclaiming, 'This, Israel, is your god, who brought you out of Egypt.' (Exodus 32:8)

Rabbah 50:2]. (Rabbi Ari Kahn, "The Architect," aish.com)

Bezalel was not alone in doing all this work—he was helped by Oholiab: "Also look, I Myself have appointed with him Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Within the hearts of all who are wise-hearted I have placed skill, so that they may make everything that I have commanded you" (Exodus 31:6). These men were craftsmen, and it is interesting to see the gifts *Hashem* gave to these men through the *Ruach HaKodesh*: *Chochmah* (Wisdom), *Binah* (Intelligence), and *Da'at* (Knowledge)—these gifts are spiritual abilities to be used in *Hashem's* service. These men were not ministers, preachers, teachers or priests—they were craftsmen called by *Hashem* to do artistic work in the Sanctuary. To do this work in harmony with the *Ruach Elohim*, they needed to be filled with many spiritual gifts and abilities. It is certainly a lesson for us today: the choice of congregational leadership for any responsibility should be made carefully and with prayer. Only men and women blessed with spiritual gifts should be chosen, so their work can be blessed by God.

To find out more about this wisdom, let's read verse 6 literally: "And in the heart of each person who had a wise heart I have given wisdom" (Exodus 31:6 Jewish literal translation). Why does the Torah make having a wise heart a prerequisite for the Almighty granting wisdom? Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz teaches from this text that we see a person needs wisdom to merit acquiring wisdom (aish.com). What is this wisdom? It is the heartfelt desire for more wisdom! A person who has a deep love of wisdom feels a strong yearning toward any wisdom he is missing. When a person has this love of wisdom, the Almighty will grant greater wisdom. Rabbi Hirsch reminds us of the text of Daniel, saying: "God grants wisdom only to those in whom wisdom is already innate, as it says: 'He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning' (Daniel 2:21). God gives of His wisdom only to one who is already endowed with, and has already developed within himself, the gift of natural human wisdom. Authentic Jewish thought knows nothing of that Divine

He said to them: 'This is what G-d, Lord of Israel, says: Let each man put on his sword, and go from one gate to the other in the camp. Let each one kill [involved in idolatry], even his own brother, close friend, or relative.' The Levites did as Moses had ordered, and approximately 3000 people were killed that day. (Exodus 32:27,28)

miracle, as it were, that suddenly transforms yesterday's simpleton into today's wise and inspired man of God."

HOLINESS OF SHABBAT

Exodus 31 reminds us of the necessity of celebrating *Shabbat*: "Then *HASHEM* spoke to Moshe saying, 'Speak now to *Bnei Yisrael* saying, 'Surely you must keep My *Shabbatot*, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am *HASHEM* who sanctifies you'" (Exodus 31:12-13). How is *Shabbat* a sign of the relationship between the Almighty and His people?

Ahad Ha'am, a Hebrew writer, said: "More than the Jewish people have kept *Shabbat*, *Shabbat* has kept the Jewish people." Throughout the ages, *Shabbat* has been a focal point for the Jewish families and community. *Shabbat* should be high on our list as an investment in the spiritual future of our family.

The Torah continues: "Therefore you are to keep the *Shabbat*, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it will die, for whoever does any work during *Shabbat*, that soul will be cut off from the midst of his people. Work is to be done for six days, but on the seventh day is a *Shabbat* of complete rest, holy to *HASHEM*. Whoever does any work on the *Shabbat* will surely be put to death" (Exodus 31:14-15). Rashi, the great French commentator, tells us that rest on *Shabbat* should be a permanent rest and not merely a temporary or casual rest (Rashi on Shemot 31:15). Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz of the *Mir Yeshiva* explains that a temporary rest means that a person has not really changed his inner traits, but he merely controls them on *Shabbat*. He still has a bad temper and has a tendency to engage in quarrels, but because of the elevation of *Shabbat*, he has the self-discipline not to manifest these traits (aish.com). The ultimate in *Shabbat* observance is that a person should uproot those negative traits that are contradictory to peace of mind on *Shabbat*. One needs to uproot traits such as anger and the tendency to quarrel with others. Only then is your rest on *Shabbat* a complete rest.

It is not sufficient for a person just to refrain from the formal categories of creative acts on *Shabbat*. *Shabbat* is the gift of peace of mind. This is not considered self-righteousness, but an essential aspect of *Shabbat*. Only by being a master over your negative emotions can you have true peace of mind—and elevate yourself spiritually! It is because of this very high spiritual understanding of *Shabbat* that the text speaks about dying if not keeping the *Shabbat*. In fact, there is no evidence that anyone was put to death because he did not keep the *Shabbat* after entering Canaan. We can be physically alive and spiritually dead at the same time



APOSTOLIC WRITINGS

ROMANS 12:3–8

The Parashah continues to list Hashem's instruction for the building of the Sanctuary, the Tabernacle. It was certainly not easy to build such a building in the desert after more than two centuries of slavery. While Yisrael, as slaves in Egypt, helped to build the pyramids and some other great monuments of the Egyptian civilization, building a portable sanctuary in the desert was not the same. In addition to God's instructions, those who constructed this Tabernacle also needed wisdom and gifts from the *Ruach HaKodesh* or the Spirit of God to make this building and all its furniture as beautiful as possible to reflect the glory of God. These gifts that were supplied by the Holy Spirit and needed for the construction of the sanctuary are called "Spiritual Gifts."

In the *Tanach*, not all members of Hashem's people received this manifestation of the *Ruach HaKodesh*—only a few people are mentioned as being recipients. In our Parashah, we have the example of Bezalel and Oholiab who were gifted by God with the receipt of some special spiritual gifts (Exodus 31:3–5).

With the coming of the *Mashiach*, the *Ruach HaKodesh* is available to everyone. Every believer receives spiritual gifts. This general availability was prophesied by the prophets: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28–29 NRSV). This was fulfilled through the revelation of the *Ruach HaKodesh* at the feast of *Shavuot* of the year 31 CE as reported in Acts 2: "When the day of *Shavuot* arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire *oikos* (house, temple) where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1–4 ESV). They were prophesying, just as Joel had foretold.

It is said that each believer receives a gift from God, "But to each person is given the manifestation of the *Ruach* for the benefit of all" (1 Corinthians 12:7). This is certainly a great difference between the four thousand years prior to the expected arrival of the Messiah—the time of the *Tanach*—and the time of *Mashiach* which began two thousand years ago, exactly on time (Daniel 9:24–27). This fulfillment of prophecy is expressed by Rabbi Shaul in this way: "But when the fullness of time came, God sent out His Son, born of a woman and born under law" (Galatians 4:4).

Rabbi Shaul also explains the necessity of the spiritual gifts. In his letter to the Romans, he makes a comparison between the human body and God's people: "For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in *Mashiach*, and individually members one of another" (Romans 12:4–5 NRSV). Then he explains the function of the spiritual gifts in God's people "Having gifts ... let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6–8 NRSV). These listed gifts are particularly for the proclamation of the presence of *Mashiach* (gifts of prophecy, teaching, exhortation...) and the building up of God's people (gifts of service, generosity, leadership, mercy...); but in fact, Shaul in his letters describes many more gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, distinguishing between spirits, tongues and their interpretation (see 1 Corinthians 12:8–11). These gifts and more are given by God to His people as they are needed by the body of *Mashiach*, the community of believers. Through the *Ruach Elohim*, each believer in Yeshua receives gifts of the Spirit, and is guided by God to do the work he has been called to do. It is our privilege to aspire to these spiritual gifts, as Shaul wrote: "Pursue love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 14:1). This means we should ask God to bless us through His Spirit, help us discover the spiritual gifts He imparts to us, and pray that our fellow brothers and sisters will also receive the Holy Spirit: "They came down and prayed for them to receive the *Ruach HaKodesh*" (Acts 8:15).

The entire book of Acts of the Apostles is full of these manifestations of the *Ruach HaKodesh* upon the believers. The *Ruach Elohim* is so present in this book—revealing truths to the disciples, guiding for the ministry, leading the leaders of the new community of believers in Yeshua, healing those who are sick or demoniac, doing miracles such as releasing believers from prison, inspiring the apostles in their preaching, resurrecting the dead—that many scholars have suggested this book should not be called "The Acts of the Apostles," but "The Acts of the Holy Spirit."

Let's remember the promise and the conditions to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The key text to understand this is chapter 2 of Acts, when the disciples received this gift while meeting all together in one place. The Jews who were present in Jerusalem for *Shavuot* were surprised to see this manifestation. *Shavuot* is the feast

that commemorates the receiving of the gift of the Torah at Mount Sinai—Yisrael received the Torah from God on the day of *Shavuot*. Now, on the day of *Shavuot*, in the Temple at Jerusalem, they hear and see this great manifestation of the Spirit, and they witness the *talmidim* of Yeshua manifest many miraculous gifts such as speaking the many languages of those present. They were astonished by this event and wanted to participate in it—they listened to what the *talmidim* were saying through the power of the Holy Spirit, and they were touched: "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the emissaries [*talmidim*], 'Fellow brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:37). Shim'on-Peter answered: "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Messiah Yeshua for the removal of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*" (Acts 2:38).

Anyone who wants to receive the Holy Spirit as experienced by these first believers in Yeshua must accept the two conditions given by Peter: 1. "Repent," and 2. "let each of you be immersed in the name of Messiah Yeshua for the removal of your sins." Repentance, called *Teshuvah* in Hebrew; and immersion in the *Mikveh* of Yeshua, called *Tevilah* in Hebrew, are the two necessary conditions to be blessed by the *Ruach HaKodesh*. As soon as we have fulfilled these two conditions, we receive two gifts: 1. "the removal of your sins," and, 2. "you will receive the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*" (Acts 2:38).

1. "The removal of your sins" means the forgiveness of all our sins—the past is forgiven and forgotten. It is like a new birth, starting out without any sin, without our record of the past showing any sins. 2. "You will receive the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh*." The second promise is the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* and all His spiritual gifts. We do not think these gifts were only for the time of the Apostles. Peter is indeed very clear: "For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away—as many as *HASHEM* our God calls to Himself" (Acts 2:39). The promises of forgiveness and the gift of the *Ruach HaKodesh* are linked together. If we have received the forgiveness of our sins, there is no reason why we would have not received the gift of the *Ruach*—one goes with the other. We cannot say, "I received the forgiveness of my sins, but not the gifts of the *Ruach*."

These promises are still valid for each one of us today. We just need to turn to God, make *Teshuvah*, accept Yeshua and be immersed for the forgiveness of our sins. Let's receive this wonderful experience of being born again.

STORIES AND TRADITIONS

had decided that his prayers would be more meaningful if he were alone and undisturbed. The Rabbi did not respond, but stared at the fireplace, which was filled with glowing coals. Then he rose from his seat, removed one coal from the fire with the tongs, and placed it on the floor in front of the fireplace, saying: "I hope to see you back in *shul* shortly."

At first, the man was puzzled by his Rabbi's actions, but soon the meaning became clear to him: The Rabbi was showing him that in

unity there is strength. When coals are together, one keeps the other glowing. When one coal is taken out and separated from the others, it quickly becomes extinguished.

The Torah is alluding to this notion. When a believer is united with the community, he partakes of a collective identify which prevents him from violating the will of Hashem. If the person wants to be alone and solitary then it is very possible that he will, G-d forbid, violate the Torah

HAFTARAH

1 Kings 18:1-39

At the beginning of this chapter 18 Hashem asks Elijah to appear to Ahab. The text describes the atmosphere and difficulties Israel met at that time. There was no rain, and we all know that without rain nothing grows in the land, that is why the text says: "Now the famine was severe in Samaria." (1 Kings 18:2). At that time, King Ahab had a superintendent who was in charge of his household, he was Obadiah, we have already met Obadiah and his wife who saved hundreds of prophets to save their life. Obadiah was a prophet, we have his book in the Bible, and in fact Obadiah was not originally an Israelite, he was a descendant of Esau and converted to the God of Israel, that is why the text said about him that he feared Hashem greatly. The Sage of Israel compare this fearing of Obadiah to other gentiles who understood all the blessings they received under the influence of God's people. Laban had his flock multiplied by the presence of Jacob. The house of Potifar prospered under the hand of Joseph, and we would give many other examples. Then being a gentile, he decided to convert and to participate to the blessings of God's people. In the same way, since Ahab saw how pious was Obadiah, very faithful to the Torah, he hired him and put him in charge of his household thinking that he will be bless as Laban, Potifar, or Pharaoh were blessed through God's servants, but that did not happened. Ahab though that this man only pretended to be faithful to the Torah but in fact was not, that is why the Bible found necessary to precise "Now Obadiah feared Hashem greatly" (1 Kings 18:3). Then, the text shows that he was risking his life to shelter and feed one hundred prophets of God.—Let's remember that the gift of prophecy was not rare in the time of the *Tanach*, God called thousand of people to be prophets throughout the 4000 years of Israel's history.—Without Obadiah and his courageous wife, these one hundred prophets would have been executed by Queen Jezebel. If this couple would have lived in the 20th century, during the *Shoah* they would have saved hundreds of Jews and would have been called by the *Yad-Vashem*, "righteous among the nations."

For Jezebel the only way to end the Jewish loyalty to the Torah was to eradicate its inspiring teachers and leaders who were called at that time "prophets." Let's remember that a prophet is not automatically one man who preach about the future. Etymologically, the prophet of God is the one who speaks on behalf of God, under the inspiration of God. In this sense a teacher who pray earnestly to be inspired by God as he deliver God's Word, could be considered as a prophet. Obadiah

was so courageous and faithful to the Lord that he received the gift of prophecy.

God has chosen this time to ask his great prophet Elijah to speak to the king and to stop this apostasy, and to put an end to the drought. Obadiah was chosen to introduce Elijah to the king, and they met: "As Obadiah was on the road, all of a sudden, Elijah met him. When he recognized him, he fell on his face" (1 Kings 18:7a) Obadiah recognized him, because he knew him, Elijah was his master, his teacher, and with a lot of reverence he welcomed him but with surprise: "and said, 'Is it you, my lord Elijah?'" (1 Kings 18:7b). How Elijah who had been in hiding for several years dares to come and to appear to the king? Obadiah did not want, or was reluctant to introduce Elijah to Ahab, "How have I sinned," he replied, "that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death?" (1 Kings 18:9). Obadiah knew exactly what kind of relationships Elijah had with God, he said: "But as soon as I leave you, the *Ruach Hashem* [literally a "wind of God" which is an established expression in the *Tanach* to designate *the spirit of God*] in the verse 13, Obadiah said to Elijah that, just because he saved one hundred prophets and fed them, he deserves to be saved and not to introduce Elijah to Jezebel, the cruel queen. The fact that in the verse 13 it is specifically said that "Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of Hashem" is a prove that Jezebel killed the prophets and not Ahab, thus, only Jezebel was guilty (Malbim). There is a commentary which says that if God wanted to bring rain in the land to end the drought, it was because not only seven thousand (1 Kings 19:18; Rom 11:4) who have not bowed to Baal, but also many others who realized that the famine and lack of rain were because of their sins, thus, they repented (Radak).

Before challenging the priests of Baal, Elijah announced to the king that the drought is going to stop. In no way, the king would believe that this rain was not the result of natural cause but coming from God, that is why Elijah announced it a few days before.

The blindness of the king is very strong, Elijah is the faithful, and he is accused of being the trouble maker "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" (1Kings 18:17) Ahab is the one who brought idolatry to Israel, but he is so blind that he does not see anymore where is the problem. Elijah does not hesitate to say the truth to the king "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned Hashem commands and have followed the Baals." (1Kings 18:18). Elijah is a courageous man, even though later he will be afraid to be killed by Jezebel, it is this sort of man and woman the world needs today, let's be the Elijah of the modern time.

All the people were to cooperate in the preparation and furnishing of the sanctuary. There was work for brain and hand. A great variety of material was required, and all were invited to contribute. Thus they were taught to cooperate with God and with one another. And they were to cooperate also in the preparation of the spiritual building—God's temple in the soul. (TEd 26.2)

BEING ALONE

Once a Rabbi noticed that a person who attended the Synagogue regularly was absent for a few weeks, so he decided to pay him a visit. Entering the living room, he noticed the man sitting by the fireplace, seemingly in good health, and sat down next to him. The Rabbi politely inquired as to the reason for his recent absence and the man replied that the shut was crowded and noisy. He

They quickly turned aside from the path that I commanded for them. They have made a molten calf, worshipped it, and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' (Exodus 32:8)

