

3RD BNEY YOSEF NATIONAL CONGRESS REPORT

The concluding session of the 3rd Bney Yosef National Congress brought us tearfully ever closer to Bney Yehuda. Following a sequel of divine arrangements, we watched a video clip with an accompanying song about (mostly orphaned) Jewish children who after the 2nd World War were discovered hidden in Christian institutions. A young rabbi who was on a quest to find them did so by singing out loud the Shma. When the children heard the familiar sounds they came scurrying out of their rooms, making their way back to their identity and freedom. The recently emerging Ephraimites, who are leaving organized religious institutes, are also being identified by their response to the call “Hear Oh Israel”. Thus the video clip made for a symbolic and significant conclusion to the four day gathering on the hills of Ephraim at the Eshel HaShomron hotel. (Link to the said clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKGyI88ZkS8>).

The stage for this momentous finale was already set on the previous day when we heard from an observant young Jewish woman, who is the editor for Rabbi Harry Rozenberg, who was scheduled to speak that afternoon. Shira, came with the Rabbi in hopes of meeting someone she had encountered a few days before in a taxi ride to Jerusalem. The woman that she met impacted her so much so that, she made the trip to Ariel, where she did in fact meet her. At the same time Shira did not know what to expect and who exactly would be the Rabbi’s audience. About an hour into Rabbi Rozenberg’s presentation Ephraim stood up and motioned to him to take an interlude, as something was about “to happen”. This made Shira very nervous. It was 3PM (time of the daily sacrifice in former days), and the one hundred strong group stood up facing Jerusalem and sang the Shma to Shira’s utter amazement. With tears streaming down her face she related that her mentor, Rebbitzin Esther Jugreis had told her about rabbis who after the second world went looking for the Jewish children who were hidden in Christian institutions by sounding the Shma. As she continued, she shared that she was impacted not only by the singing of the Shma, but also by singing *out loud* the last line (“blessed be the glorious name of His kingdom forever” – literal translation), which traditionally is done only at the end of Yom Kippur. Hence, the fact that we sang it as we did signified to her “Redemption” (the **completion of atonement**). Little did she know how applicable that observation was to the ‘orphans’ of Ephraim, who had been hidden in the Church! During the interlude that followed, the atmosphere

continued to be charged with excitement and a sense of a breakthrough. Aside from several women surrounding Shira, and some of the men around Rabbi Harry, the rest were also engaging enthusiastically with each other, as suddenly the whole room was abuzz with bubbling excitement. This spontaneous joy reminded us of a wedding celebration.

Rabbi Harry Rozenberg laid out his broad view on the emergence of Israelites all over the world, in what he sees as a “global Israel” to ultimately fill up the whole world. *“Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit”* (Isaiah 27:6b). Other Israeli speakers, who well represented and presented Jewish response to the Torah awakening and rediscovered identity, were Hanoah Young and Dr. Rivka Lambert Adler. Hanoah emphasized the importance of Ephraimites connecting to the land by coming and also by bringing others so that the land can connect to them. Dr. Rivka spoke about the Jews’ responsibility to help educate those in the nations who are experiencing the Torah awaking, and for this to take place in a spirit of mutual respect. She also highlighted the need to understand how the Jewish people relate to the Torah and how they give it expression in everyday life. Ephraim interjected with a visual demonstration of the two sticks in the hand of the prophet, that when stretched out to the side cannot see one another as the head is in the way, but when each arm moves forward slightly they begin to get a glimpse of one another over the vast chasm of time and history that has been separating the two families.

As a prelude to the Congress about 45 of us went on a prayer-intercession tour along the border fences in the Jordan Valley and the Golan Heights. We purposed to proclaim and pray for the lands yet to be liberated which right now are under the Jordanian, Syrian and Lebanese regimes, namely Gilead, Bashan and Lebanon. At each stop, where we blew Shofars, prayed and read appropriate scriptures, we felt the anointing going out with the Word over the mountains, hills, ravines and valleys of that particular portion of the land. One of the highlights of the trip was the connection made to the Covenant of The Cut Pieces, when Abram cut asunder several animals while YHVH Himself walked between the parts. As we drove up through the deep cut in the earth, that divides western Israel from its eastern part, we felt as if YHVH Himself was walking with us between the divided territories of His land, reinforcing the ancient covenant with our forefather Abraham.

The dedication of the high priest in that week’s Parashat Tzav opened up Dr. John Conrad’s Shabbat address on the contemporary function of the Levites;

a very eye opening message indeed which was illustrated by a very accurate anatomical analogy. Many commented afterward that they recognized some of the traits and functions of the Levites in their own lives. On Sunday morning Pete Rambo presented an essential message which concluded with prayer, taking us all the way back to one of the defining eras in the relationships of the House of Judah to the rest of Israel's tribes. Solomon's grandiose building projects were largely carried out and financed by those tribes at a very high cost of life, labor, and time. That deep wound requires healing by means of recognition, repentance and forgiveness. May Abba direct many in the Ephraimite camp to take notice of this important requirement, if relationships between the two houses are ever to be healed and restored! Saying this, it may be added that for the full restoration to happen, there is also a need to look back at sibling rivalries between individuals as well as whole tribes, as recorded in Scripture.

As in past congresses, so too in this one there were a number of round table discussions, following specific presentations. It seems that with each congress these discussions become more focused, clearer and engaging. Thus identity issues were well articulated by Tzefanyah Pappas and stimulated lively discussions. The discussion that followed Mark Engel's presentation on realities of the State of Israel, centered on possible Ephraimite responses to the discovery of *their* national identity and nationhood. On a personal note, we both missed Tzefanyah's presentation, and Ephraim was not there for Pete's, Tzefanyah's *or* Mark's. As our vehicle was stolen from the hotel's parking lot the previous night, Ephraim had to take care of other matters, while Rimona too had to deal with several issues related to this incident. This unfortunate circumstance, however, did not disrupt the flow of the Spirit's anointing on the presenters nor the round table discussions.

For the first time we also had a discussion that "plunged" us directly into the topic at hand, and that was on the subject of the Biblical Portrait of Woman, during which time we covered an extensive amount of material aiming at re-visiting the more traditional and prevailing stance. Additionally, this material was also meant to project on the identity of Israel as the Bride of Messiah. Ephraim as a budding people group and nation, with his unique history as "not my people" and having obtained "no mercy", is waking to the realization that the indwelling Spirit of YHVH's kingdom *will* blossom within its ranks into a multifaceted cultural expression. One of those areas is

the proper place and function of both males and females in the redeemed community.

The love of Abba certainly graced us by the presence of His Spirit, and that was especially evident during the early morning prayer gatherings. We were carried by the momentum of months of dedicated prayer undertaken by a team, and individuals. Especially moving was the session of praise and worship in front of the Mishkan (full size tabernacle) led by Solomon Lopez. Solomon was the music coordinator together with Pieter and Andrea Hoogendoorn, Barry Philips, Rene Bronco Svetina, Heinz Suter, Albert Schuler, Silas Rambo, and Ed Boring, all of whom made up the worship group. As a special bonus, James and Liz Block came for a quick visit on Shabbat to meet Solomon with whom they had had a working relationship for years, but had never met face to face. The anointing upon each of them blended together, leading to a special worship time, honoring the Father and Yeshua.

We were greatly encouraged by a short teaching on the “boomerang” that was composed by Kate Snyder who was not able to attend, and was therefore presented by our non-tiring moderator, Ed Boring. The boomerang’s two specifically designed wings work in tandem. When at the point of turning back, these wings build up accelerated energy for the return flight. Hence the boomerang’s characteristics provided a very interesting and intriguing imagery of Israel’s two houses journey home.

It was no coincidence that the Congress took place just before Pesach – the time of the nation’s formation, an occasion that is still very much alive and in focus in the memory and tradition of the Jewish people. Mike Clayton gave us a poignant reminder of this feast’s significance and its ramifications on Ephraim’s relationship with Judah. Thus, the many who stayed in Jerusalem after the Congress celebrated the seder with each other, with other Ephraimites or with Jewish folk. During the intermediary days they availed themselves of the many activities in the city and continued to cultivate relationships with local people, as well as with each other, and even formulated plans for the future.

We want to thank all of you who participated in the 3rd Bney Yosef National Congress, and also the many who prayed and encouraged us over the time of preparation and during the Congress itself.

As we count our way to Shavuot, may the Elohim of Avraham, Yitzchak,
and Ya'acov bless you in all your ways to the glory of His kingdom and His
Messiah.

Ephraim and Rimona