

Office for prayer in connection with the Jewish people

Thursday, April 04, 2024

Extract from the book: "The Heart of the Torah".

"The Heart of Torah" is a collection of essays by New York rabbi Shai Held. Shai Held, theologian and co-founder of the Hadar Institute in New York, in which he comments on the weekly Torah readings.

The beginning of the book of Be-midbar (the beginning of the Book of Numbers) is not particularly fascinating. God orders Moses to take a census of the people, and Moses sets to work. The results of the census are then presented in exceptional detail. (...)

Why such a slow, creeping pace? Why this apparently arduous procession through the tribes? Many Jewish interpreters have suggested that, although the first chapter of Be-midbar may seem dull at first glance, it actually conveys one of the fundamental truths of Jewish theology and ethics: individuals matter.

One of the most fundamental affirmations of Jewish theology is the belief that God loves us (...) God does not love us because of our actions, but simply because we are what we are: human beings created in the image of God.

Judaism, however, goes much further: the Jewish sources firmly affirm that God loves human beings, not as anonymous members of a privileged species, but as individuals. God loves us in our individuality and uniqueness. The Mishnah teaches: "Adam was created individually...to proclaim the greatness of the Blessed One of the Holy One, because man marks many pieces with one seal and they are all alike, but the King of kings, the Blessed One of the Holy One, marked all mankind with the seal of the first man, and yet none is like the other" (Sanhedrin 4:5).

The message of the Mishna is astonishing: never before in the history of the cosmos has there been a human being like you, and never again in the history of the cosmos will there be a human being like you. This astonishing fact contributes to divine glory.

**Rabbi Shai Held , Le coeur de la Torah, Volume 2 : Essais sur la semaine
de la Torah : Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy (Volume 2), Jewish
Publicaton Society, Sep 1, 2017**

INTERCESSIONS

R. Amen, amen, blessed be the God of Israel!

Or another refrain.

1. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who mourned the violence between Cain and Abel, we pray to you for peace in the Middle East, we pray to you for all the peoples who inhabit this land where you have chosen to join us in our humanity.
2. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who made reconciliation possible between Joseph and his brothers, forgive us for all our contempt for your people Israel. (As a sign of penitence, we remain silent for a few moments). We ask you, Father, to make brotherhood grow between the Jewish people and the nations.
3. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who brought Israel out of Egypt and set them free, give your joy to the Jewish people and keep them faithful to your Covenant.
4. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who united the twelve tribes of Israel around the Torah, give peace to Jewish believers in Jesus.
5. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who sent your Son Jesus to save us, rest your blessing on Christians of Jewish origin.

6. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Father of Jesus Christ, you who gave your beloved Son so that all might be one, bring together in unity all the Christian Churches.

7. Most loving Father, God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you who promised the Jewish people the coming of the Messiah, you who promised the Church the return of your son. We praise you and we say in the Holy Spirit: "Maranatha, come Lord".