

Thoughts about Bar Mitzvah

(Letter from Racham)

Dear ha-emeq,

Shalom. I have been thinking almost continuously about what you have asked me to do. I pray that we will come up with something that brings grace to the parents and allows them to bring the right spirit to their children. One of the things I have noticed – I have been to four Bar Mitzvah's now, is that the revelation the children have had has been in proportion to how closely they have bonded to their parents growing up. This is also how righteous they are as well. I don't suppose these are universally true statements, but so far they have held pretty well.

Thus far I have been looking at the teachings I have on my computer which relate to Bar Mitzvah.¹ This is mostly old material, but I noticed some things looking at the material from Zakar's Bar Mitzvah (960607Z1 through 960607Z7). First of all I noticed some things which have not been incorporated into the Bar Mitzvah in Yehudah. (The large print centered on the page is from 960607Z6 – The Order of Events. I think having an order of events might be good for us as well.)

Introduction

Nun introduces his son to the Body
He speaks of his son's life and character
Judith speaks about her son

- a) Judith spoke as well when Zakar was presented to the Body. In Yehudah, it has only been the father, or if a one parent family (they are all where the abba has left the community, at least so far), the imma has spoken. I think it would be good if the imma spoke her heart as well then. She, too, is well pleased to be able to present her child, and her labor has been great in bringing her child to this

¹ I now have the complete current booklet as a Word file, and I will use it to enhance the "books" Miriam and I are making the Bar Mitzvahs we have attended. I am thinking about providing illustrations where I can get artists to provide them. Also, what do you think of having the child's picture at the front of the book, like Yochannan ben Haggai had? Was it nice or too much? I kind of liked it myself.

point. This is what the Introduction (960607Z5 – The Introduction) says about it:
Judith followed shortly after Nun to speak also of her son's childhood, his training and the vision and purpose they desire for his life.

- b) Also in 960607Z2, Nun prefaced his questioning of Zakar by giving the Body there freedom to speak at any time if they had a revelation, and even the freedom to direct questions to Zakar at any time. You were there, so you know if anyone did, but Nun's offer alone includes the Body more in the presentation. Even in the case of a righteous child like Zakar, the Body has had a great part in his upbringing. In the case of the needier parents, the Body has often played an indispensable role in helping the abba and imma turn their hearts to their children. So, again, I think it would be good to incorporate Nun's offer of freedom of speech into our Bar Mitzvahs.

Zakar presents what he has learned

- A. Abraham's Calling and Chosenness
The Abrahamic Covenant of Circumcision
 - B. The Old Covenant — The Law {10 commandments}
 - C. The Prophets and their Prophecies yet to be fulfilled by the Twelve Tribes
 - D. The New Covenant — The Breaking of Bread & The Sacrifice of Yahshua
 - E. The Male Child, The Twelve Tribes and the Holy City
- a) Sections A-E – As you know from the Bar Mitzvah of Lydia, Asaph, and Asher, the children of Yehudah have not covered the same ground as Zakar did. They have focused extensively on Adam and Eve, and A, B, and C, above. They have done very little on D, and a little more on E; mostly on the Male Child with the Twelve Tribes being covered mainly by memorizing Isa 49:6.² I have seen the notes of the Island Pond Bar Mitzvah of Yadel, Yehudah, and Manoah, and while they were admittedly sketchy, they covered no more ground, and seemingly less,

² This might seem like they are covering nearly the same amount of material as Zakar, but I think your impression of the notes I sent you from Boston's first Bar Mitzvah was correct, that the children of Yehudah are not doing that much of the booklet in their presentation. Of course, some children have done more, some less.

than the three children in Boston did. In Boston's second Bar Mitzvah, Hannah Sabra came close to doing what Zakar did. I have not been able to type up the notes from that Bar Mitzvah yet. What I am seeing is that the Island Pond Bar Mitzvah set a precedent for Yehudah, and while parents have been faithful to go over the entire booklet with the children, they had not had the mind to question their child from all of it. I know I didn't. I presumed Yoceph's questioning of Asher was faithful to what he had seen in Island Pond, and it was after him that I tried to pattern what I asked of Yedidiah.³

- b) I think this could be addressed in a letter to the parents, or in the new booklet itself. I am feeling that a booklet just for the parents, and one for the parent and child to work together from, would be good. Different things could be explained to the parent in their booklet, like that letter of yours about how to encourage your children in preparation for the Bar Mitzvah (which contained a detailed run-down of how Friday afternoon and evening should go). I will have to find my copy of that; it certainly needs to be included in the new booklet.⁴

The Proverbs — Conducted by Israel

- F. Zakar is examined on his understanding of certain scriptures and Proverbs
 {This is done in relation to his own life}
 G. Zakar Vows His Loyalty and Service to his Parents
 for the next seven years or until marriage

- a) Section F – Proverbs has been done here like in Asher, from what I can tell. It has been a solid part of the evening. (What the parents have done has been very good too, in this letter I am just pointing out the differences between Asher

³ I was somewhat disappointed with how Yedidiah's came out. Probably part of it was in comparison to how outstanding Hannah's was, and part of it was due to all the meetings and other demands on me in the last week – it was incredible. I saw it as a reflection of our relationship in a larger sense, and I entered into the whole period of preparation with a great deal of hope for what could happen, having witnessed what had happened with Asher and Asaph, but I knew the years of neglect and wrong thinking and wrong reactions on my part could not be undone in a few weeks. He did very well on his proverbs and his vows. I was thankful.

⁴ It is letters like this, which give the parent clear direction, which make me think maybe a booklet for them would be helpful, with all the material which would be in the children's booklet, as well as special matter for them.

and Yehudah. By so doing, I am also hoping for your feedback on both what to include in the new booklets, and how detailed to make them. I think it would be good to be fairly specific about the order of events, etc. There is still abundant room for revelation and the touching parent and child interactions which move people to tears, quickening something in you that we are in fact God's people and the spirit of Eliyah is in our midst.

- b) Section G – In Yehudah been done as part of the parent and child time of vows. I kind of like how Zakar did it separately, because in a sense it stands distinct from entering the New Covenant. I don't know if I can quite explain what I am feeling about that right now.

Conclusion

G. In Summary: Circumcision
 Zakar speaks of the Sacrifice of Yahshua
 His own Faith and desire to be saved
 His need to cut off the iniquities of his father
 H. Response from the Body

Wisdom, exhortation, prophecy and admonishment

- a) Section G – Circumcision – Most of the children have spoken of circumcision, usually with considerable understanding, but it has only a couple of times been stated at the vows, and only once (by Asher ben Yoceph) with anything approaching the clarity of the statement from Zakar's Bar Mitzvah quoted below:

Conclusion

In Summary: Circumcision

On the eighth day of my life, my Abba circumcised me *according to the faith of Abraham* – Rom 4:11. My parents have faithfully trained me in the way of YHWH for 12 years of my life – Eph 6:1-4; 2 Tim 3:14-17. They have disciplined me diligently with the rod and reproof, instruction and encouragement. They have done so in order that I could judge everything which would keep me from accomplishing the very purpose I was created.

That purpose is to *serve the God of my Father* – the same God as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Today I give myself with a *whole heart* and a *willing mind* to the God of Israel in order that the

circumcision my Abba began on the 8th day could be completed *in my spirit*.

What is needed to complete my circumcision is **faith**: (the above was included in the booklet on page 80, the following, understandably enough, was not):

(Then Speak Personally)

(As an example) "I want to say that I have faith and the same desire to follow Yahshua in baptism as my parents. I want my flesh to be completely cut off in my life. I need to be forgiven from all the sins ***I've committed*** and be saved from the **sins** of my ***Father's house***."

****Quote Mt 1:21 – ...He came to save His people (Israel) from their sins... and explain what those sins are you want to cut off).***

I vow my loyalty to Yahshua. I want Him to be my Master ...

- a) Section G – continued I think it would be good for parents to focus their instruction to their child about the act of asking for salvation before the Body on circumcision as Nun did. This is deep. I think the lack of parents doing so can perhaps be ascribed to the lack of clarity they have had in knowing how to use the booklet. This has been something I have heard from many parents. I went over this page with Yedidiah, but it did not occur to me to teach him in depth about how circumcision related to baptism, to immersion. Another factor has been, in Boston anyway, the rabbis were given charge to help their children with their vows to their parents. They looked on their role as to help the child express the personal things that were on their heart to their parents. This naturally carried over to helping them express their hearts to be saved. I think this could be readily clarified for the Body if it were spelled out more clearly, or if greater detail were provided about Zakar's Bar Mitzvah.
- b) *His need to cut off the iniquities of his father* – Some children have spoken with great revelation – like Malachi's daughter Hayeh, about cutting off her father's iniquities. She was the one who said she wanted to be like Shem and cover her father. She would do this by cutting off his iniquities so her life in the Body would

not expose them to the world and the Edah. Naharah spoke of how iniquities are passed on through just reacting naturally to situations. I mention these things, because I was wondering if we might want to include some examples of things children have said throughout the booklet. Also, this has not been a regular (or expected) thing, but what each child has come up with. I am not looking for programmed responses, just to encourage the parents and children to include all the things that are important.

- c) Section H – Response from the Body – This has been only the resounding “Amen” of the Body in all the Bar Mitzvahs I have witnessed. There has been no wisdom, exhortation, prophecy, and admonishment. I think this might be a response to what we heard that on that day there should be no questions for the candidate, only a resounding amen. (Also, these notes of the Bar Mitzvah in Asher were not distributed in Yehudah, only the booklet. I think this is one of the things either a program, which is what “The Order of Events” seems to be, or a new booklet to the parents, could take care.)

Shabbat

A. Children's Picnic and Activities

{Recapping the previous days events and instruction, particularly the Proverbs with discussion among all the children and a specially prepared concise story of "Shemuel and Hannah"

B. Breaking of Bread:

Zakar is inaugurated into the New Covenant

- a) The focus on the Proverbs of the night before has been entirely lacking in the children's special childcare. I see this as something that would really add to this time, and draw the children into what happened the night before. At best it has been like a celebration, with specially selected adults and music and dancing. Something different – I don't know whether to call this “at worst” before the

matter has been judged properly⁵ - was the lengthy pinatta (forgive my Spanish spelling) in Hyannis this last weekend.⁶

- b) There have been no stories to give focus to the gathering. But in light of C, they would make the time too long. Giving gifts can take a long time.
- c) The giving of gifts is not mentioned in the order of events in Asher, but it has come to be a significant thing here. There was something said in passing at a worker's meeting about that one parent making a walnut dresser for their daughter and her new husband. Daniel or Yoneq said it was the wrong direction we want to take with our children and our weddings – the making of such nice gifts, that, among other things, you wouldn't want to leave behind for sentimental reasons and because of its great value. This has not been communicated to most of the communities in a way that would help people judge what kind of gifts to make or give the young Bar Mitzvah's. Deborah Lamb's comment was, "My daughter never had any possessions until she became a disciple." Bellows Falls seems to have heard something about cards being nice, that we don't want to buy gifts for the children, that things should be simple and from the heart. The pattern in Boston was to give nice gifts, for the needs person to save up money to get nice shoes, nice sweatshirts, etc. At the time I didn't see anything wrong with it, and I am sure that parents and communities just need to hear the right mind to take it on.
- d) The Breaking of Bread has been wonderful here as well.

First Day

A. Three Morning Teachings pertinent to Bar Mitzvah, starting at 9:00 a.m.

Midday Lamb Roast — Meal together with Invited Guests

1. Music and Dancing

⁵ but it certainly seemed like something not in our national heritage

⁶ The children had a stick – they weren't blindfolded however – and they tried to break this very sturdily made, brightly colored pinatta. I don't know what was inside, as I didn't attend that childcare as I was both tired and needing to spend some time in preparation to teach the following day.

2. Special Songs Presented

B. 3:00 p.m. — Final Conclusion to the three-day festivities with Prayer, Prophecy, and Thanksgiving.

- a) We have only had one teaching. I tend to think this is good, especially if it is one the children and youth can respond to. The midday meal has seldom been anything close to midday, and even then, it has almost always been late. Bellows Falls in their Bar Mitzvah for Avraham Kharash, was both prompt and very considerate of the travel time of their guests once the Bar Mitzvah was over.
- b) There haven't really been special songs presented.
- c) An addition in Ruben and Yehudah (since it couldn't come in with Zakar, has been the vows of the older children to their parents. This has usually taken place on First Day.

Well, I hope this has not been too long. I am also sending along the “notes” of the things Zakar said. I think including them in the new booklet to the parents, or in the children's as well (maybe we don't need two separate booklets, that is a way I tend to think), would give the parents the right idea of all the things they are to cover and prepare for. The parents who have covered more ground have, I think, done so intuitively. I am writing in the hopes of eliciting a response, some direction to guide me in the way I should go here. I am very honored you have asked me to do this. I know that each day I am asking for the grace to raise my children, have something for them, and learn to judge and rule over the natural reactions which have passed on my fallen ways. So, if you can answer any of the questions or comment on any of the suggestions I have made in this letter, I would greatly appreciate it. When I get back to Boston I am going to try to collect other material we may have on the Bar Mitzvah, as well as communicate with David and Zerubbabel about it. I very much appreciate you, and pray that our Father will help us in this wonderful project.