



FEBRUARY 2016 NEWS BULLETIN No. 7

Ki mit Zion tetzeh Torah Ud'var Adonai mi Yerushalaim

MAUREENA'S VISIT TO INDIA:

At the invitation of Sr. Joan Chunkapura, Prof. Sr. Maureena Fritz went to India from December 7-14th. The journey there took 24 hours: Tel Aviv to Mumbai, then by bus to the national airport in Mumbai followed by a flight to Kochi where she was met by Joan. After a 4-hour car ride they arrived at the Medical Mission Sisters' Center in Ayushya, Changanacherry, Kerela. Maureena said she didn't mind the trip—Bat Kol alums also travelled distances by train, by bus and on foot. The topic of the workshop was "A living Reality," a topic most fitting, Maureena said, to the Indian soul that seems so attuned to the divine presence and which has given the world poets like Tagore who wrote, "Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and every age, every day and every night, he comes, comes, ever comes."



The gathered participants



Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, malekh ha'olam hamesev lanu oneg midei shavua be'or nerot hashabat.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, malekh ha'olam hamotzi lechem min ha'aretz

The workshop ended with a Shabbath meal with discussion on the Torah portion and the commentary written by alumna Dr. Anne Martin, Toronto. After discussion and dessert different alums entertained the group with songs, midrash, riddles and dance.

Maureena wants to give a special thank you to Joan who organized the workshop, to the participants, to the Medical Mission sisters for their warm hospitality and to those who introduced her to the surrounding towns (with cars coming from all directions), the people (even the poorest women looked like queens in their sarees) and their tasty foods (delightfully spicy). Of special delight was the boat ride on Vembanad Lake at Kumarakom, with blooming water lilies floating far and wide on its expansive waters.

It was a joy for Maureena to revisit so many alums and to hear of their dedication to the Bat Kol mission and its members.



RESPONSE TO MAUREENA'S VISIT TO INDIA FROM SR DR JOAN CHUNKAPURA, MMS:

We are profoundly grateful to Bat Kol for sponsoring the workshop on Torah specially focusing on interpreting and re-interpreting scripture according to the context and time. It really enlightened us to re-learn some of the concepts in a new perspective such as heaven and the presence of God, time and imperfection of human being however Holy they may be and also the power of the WORD. Sr. Maureena really made us participate intensely through reflection and discussion by breaking us into groups of five as we were altogether around 28 participants. This paradigm shift really made us read Bible in applicable realistic way helping us to be transformed.

We have three Bat Kol centers who are very active in Sabbath celebration and Torah study. One in Munnar where Fr. Chackochen Kalappura will be conducting monthly Parashat and another at Adimali, Fr. Paul Mailackachalil's place and the third one at Ayushya, Changanacherry, Kottayam District. We make it a point to follow the calendar for readings and take print of the Parashat readings.

I will be going to Munnar next month as we agreed to meet every fourth month in either of these places rotating our Sabbath celebration and Havrutah sharing. We feel connected, enlightened and supported by relating with Sr. Maureena, her visit, enlightening classes and the process of celebrating Sabbath in a grand way while she was with us. We appreciate these rare moments of strengthening relationships by sharing the wisdom of eminent personalities like Sr. Maureena from Bat Kol. This also got the Bat Kol Alumns together after a long break of six years and also gave new enthusiasm to continue with Parashat studies and Sabbath celebrations.

Thanking you once again for sponsoring this workshop,

Sr. Dr. Joan Chunkapura, MMS

Bat Kol Cell, Kerala

READINGS FOR LENT:



1. Pope Francis: the Church must be an oasis of mercy. See:

Misericordiae Vultus https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

Practicing the Year of Mercy at home <http://thetablet.org/practicing-the-year-of-mercy-at-home/>

2. Pope Francis and the Environment: The Environment: Mother earth, our common home, is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. See: *"Laudato si' (24 May 2015) | Francis - La Santa Sede*

<http://thetablet.org/laudato-si-a-study-guide-and-summary/>

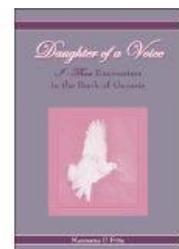
3. A Lenten Retreat:

Daughter of a Voice: I-Thou Encounters in the Book of Genesis by Maureena Fritz. Available at:

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=searchalias%3Daps&fieldkeywords=Daughter+of+a+Voice+by+Maureena+Fritz&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3ADaughter+of+a+Voice+by+Maureena+Fritz

And at: <http://bookstore.trafford.com/Products/SKU-000168407/Daughter-Of-A-Voice.aspx>

Daughter of a Voice is a book on I-Thou and I-It encounters in the Book of Genesis. Using Martin Buber's Philosophy of I-Thou and Jewish Midrash, the author reflects on the biblical personalities as a means of teaching the art of living in relationship with the world, with humanity, and with God. The reader is invited to see that all encounters are rooted in the eternal Thou. All real living is meeting. Each of the chapters concludes with questions that challenge the reader to encounter life in all of its tragic and exhilarating moments.



NOVEMBER 2015 TESHUVA PROGRAM INSPIRES A LENT PROGRAM IN THE USA BY MARJAN SAENEN, BAT KOL ALUM 1999-2000, 2002, 2010, FALL 2015:

Lent is a special time of prayer and penitence for Christians' preparation for Holy Week, the Triduum and the joy and hope of Easter. But this year, 2016, Lent will never be the same for me.

I was very fortunate to attend the 2015 fall session on Teshuva/Repentance. I learned so much that my traditional understanding of Lent has changed, is enhanced, magnified and particularly enriched for me. My new and deeper understanding of a Jewish view of repentance and Pope Francis's call for a Year of Mercy, are the basis of the study session/mini retreat that I hope to offer to my parish and community on March 15th. We are calling it "A Path Closer to God". I hope to incorporate the Jewish understanding and practice of Teshuva/Repentance that includes the three R's of recognition, repentance, resolve. While forgiveness and mercy are emphasized in both Jewish and Christian faith, there is a stronger emphasis on personal responsibility in Jewish practice. While Pope Francis emphasizes God's first attribute of Mercy, we will look at the creation story and emphasize the goodness of creation. We will

read and examine the 13 attributes of God as revealed to Moses. We will incorporate prayers from the Mishkan Yom Kippur and end with the song "And Holy is his Name", based on Mary's canticle.

I feel very grateful to have been in Jerusalem for the November session. I am a happier and better person because of it. It is with joy that I am preparing "A Path Closer to God", as an example of the importance of the Bat Kol experience.

THE FIRST TWO SUNDAYS OF LENT: A COMMENTARY AND A PRAYER BY ANNE KELLEHER, BAT KOL ALUM 2013.

I loved Mark Walsh's commentary for the first Sunday of Lent, and that of Clare Jardin, for the second Sunday of Lent (www.batkol.info). Thank you both. You have posed many questions and challenges for us to ponder, in particular the extent to which we, as Christians, are guided by the Torah in shaping and fashioning our lives. I want to add a prayer to what you have written. As is my weekly custom I draw this prayer from the siddur, *Mishkan T'filah*, a gift from Bat Kol to our group in July 2013.

*"When justice burns within us
Like a flaming fire,
When love evokes willing sacrifice from us,
When, to the last full measure of selfless devotion,
We demonstrate our belief in the ultimate triumph
Of truth and righteousness,
Then Your goodness enters our lives
And we can begin to change the world.
And then You live in our hearts,
And we, through righteousness, behold Your Presence."
(The Mishkan Siddur, p. 67).*



FROM SOUTH AFRICA, SR MARIE ANDRE MITCHELL WRITES

Fr Chris Schonenberger (Bat Kol alumnus 2008) founded the Ha-Phororo Empophomeni Youth Centre that lies at the foothills of the ancient Magaliesberg mountains overlooking the picturesque Hartbeespoort dam about 50 kms west of Pretoria in South Africa. The name "Ha Phororo" (in Sotho) and "Empophomeni" (in Zulu) means "The Place of the Waterfall". In dream language the symbol of the Waterfall is often associated with the search for meaning. The name indicates willingness to remain open to the presence of the One who called us into life and continues to be with us wherever our life path leads.

The first words of the Book of Genesis are written in Hebrew over the entrance to the Chapel which has seven small stain glass windows representing the days of creation.

Fr Chris with his team of interns offers many programs. One is a Leadership workshop for learners in school. The prefects from St Peter Claver's Kroonstad attended one such weekend. It starts on Friday evening with the opening of Shabbat. This is preceded by an explanation of the meaning of Shabbat. On Saturday evening there is the closing of Shabbat followed by the Opening of Sunday. Fr Chris introduced this following his participation in a Bat Kol program in Jerusalem in 2008.

Elaine (Wee) Villaneuva (Bat Kol Alum 2010) writes "We have to celebrate Shabbat incorporated as our Friday evening liturgy here in Kulaman. It is but recently that we have had access to internet so it is great to be able to receive the weekly commentaries again and be able to study and take part of "dialogue and discussion" of the weekly parashat." Wee is one of the writers of the weekly parashat hashavuah.

PIA SISON, BAT KOL ALUM 2012, 2015, WRITES FROM THE PHILIPPINES:

I am a passionate student of the Jewish background of Scripture and the Jewishness of Jesus. These passions were deepened and reinforced by my studies at Bat Kol Institute. Consequently, I have been a very passionate teacher of the Jewish roots of our faith and would always echo St. John Paul II's words, "Whoever meets Jesus Christ meets Judaism." That statement has been an effective take-off point in stirring up my students' interest in Christianity's Jewish roots. In fact, the highlight of my syllabus is a visit to the only synagogue in the Philippines, Synagogue Beth Yaacov, to learn the basics about Judaism from the only Rabbi in the country. In a sense, the activity is an ongoing inter-religious dialogue which has been taking place for almost five years now. Recently, a challenge was posed by radical Jewish liberation theologian Marc Ellis who came to the country to give a series of lectures: to include in our discussions the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to not forget the plight of Palestinian refugees, and to seriously consider "solidarity" rather than just "dialogue".

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The Book of Genesis: A Book of Encounters

Bat Kol Institute, Jerusalem, Israel

July 4-24, 2016

The Bible (a book composed of many books) has one basic theme that unites all the stories and songs, sayings and prophecies contained within it. The theme is the encounter between God and a people. We will focus on God's encounter with Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Abraham and Sarah and Hagar, Judah and Tamar, etc. Major topics to be covered are:

Interpretation: how to read the Bible. We understand God's revelation by *correlating* it with our ongoing experience, with what the movement of history, science, and the arts tell us about the human condition. New discoveries and new happenings bring new questions. We explore these new questions in the light of the scriptures, and we also explore the biblical witness in the light of our new questions.

Encounter with God: direct and indirect. Two ancient schools of thought exist, that of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Akiva argued for the possibility of a direct relationship with God while Rabbi Ishmael claimed that direct encounter with God was not possible. Both schools of thought were developed and preserved. The question is still of great importance.

The Book, the Land and the People: In Jerusalem, you meet all three. A majority of Jewish professors are your teachers in response to the Church's insistence that the Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional and marginal place in catechesis: their presence there is essential and should be organically integrated" (Notes '85, I.2). Accompanying classroom lectures are study tours in Jerusalem, the Negev desert and Galilee.



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