



Ohr Yerushalayim News

9th May 2015 - Volume 7 - Issue 43 פרשת אמור - כ אייר תשע"ה

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Lance Bookatz on the birth of a son. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 1 Old Hall Road.

Lag B'Omer BBQ

Many thanks to all those involved in organising, preparing, catering and tidying up the Lag B'Omer BBQ. Thanks to Mr & Mrs Chizky Salomon for the use of their garden. Special thanks to Andrew Addleman for the fireworks display. A special perseverance award goes to Dani Epstein for getting the generator working!

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

In for a penny, in for a pounding

Dani Epstein

I am in the very fortunate position of considering some of our local Talmidei Chachomim personal friends, the fringe benefits being that I can invite them over for the occasional meal and bask in their Torah. Inevitably, given my unusual weltanschauung (read: rabidly controversial opinions) we get stuck right into a thoroughly enjoyable argy-bargy over one topic or another at short notice.

A couple of weeks ago was no different. One of my pet beefs (I have many, almost countless beefs; of which only a small percentage are "pet" beefs, only around 50% or so) is the modern-day practice of trotting out maamorei Chazal – canonical statements from our Sages – left, right and centre without the slightest care or concern for the actual meaning.

The thrust of my argument with my distinguished guest was that many maamorei Chazal are either distorted or misunderstood. Point in case. We have two statements from Chazal:

- 1) הכל בידי שמים חוץ מיראת שמים – everything is in the hands of heaven except for the fear of heaven
- 2) הכל בידי שמים חוץ מצינים פחים – everything is in the hands of heaven except for "hot and cold", i.e. things that we can prevent easily like catching a cold or getting heatstroke.

Now we have two atomic statements; that is to say that each statement excludes absolutely everything else except for itself. For instance, one could say: "Every car in the world is of mediocre quality, except for the Buggatti Veyron". Now, you can't come along five minutes later and say: "Every car in the world is of mediocre quality, except for the Lada Granta". There are two reasons for this:

- 1) You have just declared the Buggatti the supreme leader to the exclusion of all other cars. You cannot create a second statement that says exactly the same thing, just changing the vehicle, since you have now contradicted yourself. Either the first statement is true, or the second, but they cannot both be true simultaneously.
- 2) The second statement is absurd. Ladas? Really?!?

So how do we deal with such a dichotomy? Chazal have clearly contradicted themselves in that either fear of heaven or **צינים פחים** are the only thing that we have control of, but not both. Those two statements are mutually exclusive! One of them has to be wrong.

The answer to this is really quite simple. Chazal employ many forms of hyperbole to get their point home. Sometimes they exaggerate to

absurd levels; it is quite clear that they are trying to convey a unusually large figure, and extend the concept ad absurdum in order to reinforce the point. One is not expected or even allowed to take such exaggeration literally, even though I have seen many people doing just that. Some of them were my rebbes. This despite the frequency of the rider in the gemoroh: **גוזמא בעלמא הוא** – "it is merely an exaggeration".

In our case, it is simply an exaggeration in order to reinforce a point. Very few things are in our control. In fact, really only two. Chazal do not contradict themselves. Exaggeration, nu, that's something else, although I've said a million times one shouldn't exaggerate.

The other maamar Chazal was one which we are familiar with: **ותלמוד כולם** – and learning Torah is "opposite" them all.

Conventionally we take this to mean that Talmud Torah, learning Torah, is greater than all the other mitzvos combined.

My question is this: if Chazal meant to say that Talmud Torah is really greater than all the other mitzvos, why use the word **כנגד** instead of **גדולה** which surely would mean "greater"? The fact is that Chazal were very careful in employing this word, because they were trying to convey a specific message.

Is Torah learning the greatest mitzvoh? Let's see. Supposing one is learning and the time for reading the Shema comes around. What does one do? Does one continue learning – if the mitzvoh of Torah learning is the greatest, or does one stop for Shema? The answer is that one stops for Shema. There is of course an exception in the case of **תורתו ומנותו**, but that's not quite as clear-cut as it sounds.

The point is, that if Torah learning was truly greater than all the other mitzvos, one would be absolved of performing any mitzvoh while learning Torah, and we know that this is not the case. My guest argued that there is a special clause in the mitzvoh of Torah learning, and that this is why one has to stop, but it's difficult to carry this argument since this special clause is merely speculative. There is no source (to my knowledge – please correct me) within Chazal that would confirm the

The Week Ahead

פרשת אמור

1st Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.00pm / Not before 7.14pm
2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.30pm / 7.51 - 7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.12am
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
1st Mincha	6.00pm
2nd Mincha	8.49pm
Rov's Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	9.54pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

existence of this clause.

You might ask, in that case what do Chazal mean with the word “kneqged”?

The following gemoroh will shed some light on this matter (Kiddushin 40b):

וכבר היה רבי טרפון זקנים מסובין בעלית בית נתזה בלוד נשאלה שאילה זו בפניהם תלמוד גדול או מעשה גדול נענה רבי טרפון ואמר מעשה גדול נענה ר"ע ואמר תלמוד גדול נענו כולם ואמרו תלמוד גדול שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה

Rabbi Tarfon and the Elders were once reclining in the upper storey of Nitza's house, in Lydda,

when the following question was raised before them: Is learning greater, or practice? R. Tarfon answered, saying: “Practice is greater.” R. Akiba answered, saying: “Learning is greater.” Then they all answered and said: “Learning is greater, for it leads to practice.”

This short passage bears some examination. It opens with an argument; well, nothing new there, the gemoroh is full of that. Then it closes with everyone agreeing that learning is greater. So, did Rabbi Tarfon agree at the end that learning is greater?

Leaving that aside, the answer itself is difficult to understand. Surely if the time for Tefillin comes by when one is learning, one is required to stop and fulfil it? What is the answer saying then?

In order to understand this gemoroh, we need to examine the gemoroh in Moed Koton (9ab) which discusses the contradiction between two verses in Mishlei.

1) פֶּלֶס מֵעַל רַגְלְךָ וְכָל דְרָכֶיךָ יִכְנוּ - Weigh the path of your feet, and all your ways will be established. (h. 5 v26) i.e. weigh up everything before you do it

2) “אֲרַח חַיִּים פֶּן תִּפְלֹס נְעוּ מֵעֲגֻלְתֶּיךָ לֹא יָדָע” - The ways of life in case you weigh them up, her paths have wandered and you shall not know. (Ch.5 v.6) – that is to say, the Torah obscures the value of a mitzvoh in order to prevent you weighing up one mitzvoh versus the other.

One verse says “weigh things up” and other one says “don't weigh things up”. What does this mean?

Rashi explains that there are occasions when one has to weigh up the value of one mitzvoh versus the other, and occasions when one should not, and the gemoro explains that : **יכאן במצוה שאפשר לעשותה ע** - one verse refers to a mitzvoh that can be performed through others, and the other refers to mitzvos that cannot be fulfilled through others.

When presented with two mitzvos that either you or your friend can carry out, you perform the greater one and let your friend perform the minor one. But otherwise do not weigh up the value of a mitzvoh; when presented with a mitzvoh only you can do, whether small or large, just get on with it.

The gemoroh raises another contradiction:

1) יִקְרָה הִיא מִפְּנִינִים וְכָל חִפְצֶיךָ לֹא יִשׁוּ בָּהּ - It (the Torah) is more precious than pearls, and all your desirable things cannot be compared to it

2) כִּי טוֹבָה חֻכְמָה מִפְּנִינִים וְכָל חִפְצִים לֹא יִשׁוּ בָּהּ - For wisdom is better than pearls; all desirable things cannot be compared to it

Asks the gemoroh, the first verse implies that one's personal “desirable things” cannot compare to the Torah, but the “desirable things of Heaven” (i.e. mitzvos) can. The second verse implies that not even the “desirable things of Heaven”, i.e. mitzvos, cannot compare to the Torah. Rashi explains this as follows: the first verse means “You should abandon mitzvos learning for Torah”, and verse two as “If you can perform a mitzvoh, abandon your Torah learning and undertake the mitzvoh”.

The gemoroh explains this dichotomy in the same way as before: **כאן ע** - one verse refers to a mitzvoh that can be performed through others, and the other refers to mitzvos that cannot be fulfilled through others. That is to say, only leave your Torah learning if the mitzvoh can only be performed by you.

Now, bearing this in mind, Torah surely is a mitzvoh that can only be performed oneself; no-one can learn Torah for you. Why does the gemoro say: “abandon your Torah learning and undertake the

mitzvoh”? Surely while one is learning, the mitzvoh of Torah overrides any other mitzvoh because it is a **מצוה שא**?

To answer this, I suggest something simple. Look carefully at the maamar Chazal I started off with: **ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם** - learning Torah is “opposite” everything else. Chazal also all agreed that learning is greater since it brings one to performing the mitzvos. So the purpose of learning Torah is in order to be able to perform the mitzvos; without learning how to perform the mitzvos it is impossible to know exactly how to perform them! Therefore, learning Torah is a unique mitzvoh, since it enables the performance of every mitzvoh; every mitzvoh depends on it; because of this unique element it stands “opposite” every mitzvoh, as opposed to being “greater” than any mitzvoh.

Now this maamar Chazal is simple enough to understand, and their choice of the word **כנגד** is abundantly clear.

Count Up

Rabbi Raymond Beyda (Torah.org)

“Seven weeks you shall count – seven perfect weeks they shall be”

The holy books write that the days of the counting of the Omer are days of preparation for the receiving of the Torah on the Holy Day of Shabuot. We are required, therefore, to use each day to internalize one of the traits needed for learning the Torah. When one adds a day to his count he should consider “What have I accomplished in the previous days and what should I do in the days ahead?”

In the parashah – Hashem commands that these weeks be “Temimot” – perfect and complete. We interpret this to mean that one should not miss even one days count and one should count early on in the night so that each day is also as complete as is possible. Rabbi Hiya said – “When are they perfect? When Israel does the will of Hashem.” What is the connection between a perfect count and doing the will of the Creator? When we study the end of the lives of our Patriarchs we see that there lives are considered a collection of days. “And Abraham was old – he came with his days”, “And the days of Yaakov's death neared.” It says “days” not “The day” – How many days of death does one person have? Rather the intention is that the greats who lived perfect lives of devotion to Hashem came before Him at the end of their lives with all of their days. That is to say their days were days of accomplishment. This is what Rabbi Hiya meant to infer. When one does the will of G-d, one is improving oneself and growing into a more perfect individual – one more suited to accept Torah. When one misses even one day of the count to perfection, one leaves a gap in the “Temimoot” of the Omer. So as we count towards the 49th day, we should work on ourselves to improve daily in character traits crucial to becoming a perfect human being – the one Hashem gave each of us the potential to become.

Growth Period

Rabbi Yaakov Menken (Torah.org)

“And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when the Omer was brought, seven complete weeks will they be.” [23:15]

Our Sages tell us that the period of counting between Pesach and Shavuot came to separate the Exodus from Egypt and acceptance of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The Jews in Egypt were stuck at a very base, non-spiritual level, and they needed this time period in order to grow and develop spiritually in order to be prepared for the reception of the ultimate spirituality, G-d's blueprint for Creation, the Torah. Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin, author of Ozneim L'Torah, writes that the Omer remains relevant every year. We say this about all holidays - that in Judaism they are not merely commemorations, but an opportunity to relive the events. As the Haggadah says, “in every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he left Egypt.”

Regarding the Omer, Rabbi Sorotzkin tells us that it has always been known to G-d that Israel - as a nation and as individuals - will fall from their spiritual heights. Therefore, he says, G-d set aside this time for us to work on spiritual growth each and every year. This period was sanctified for all time as conducive to self-purification and development.

There are several such time periods during the year, times when we can grow and accomplish more and more. The holidays form a natural spiral, leading us ever upwards in a lifetime of spiritual growth. Just... take advantage of it!