



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"א תמוז תשע"ד – פרשת מטות – 19th July 2014 - Volume 7 - Issue 2

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Ladies Shiur

The Rov's ladies Shiur takes place on Tuesday night at 8.45pm at his home, 48 Waterpark Road. This week's Shiur will look at the Halachos of the 9 days.

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

One Nation Under G-d

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

This week's Torah portion begins with Hashem's command to "Oppress the Midianites and smite them". We are instructed to exact justice for the way they cunningly enticed the Jewish people to worship their idol, Peor, and seduced the Israelite nation into promiscuity.

The Midianites' scheme to defeat the Jewish people by dispatching their daughters to lure Jewish men into sinning succeeded in ensnaring thousands. Those Jews who succumbed were punished by a deadly plague. There is obvious justice in Hashem's command to the Jewish nation to retaliate against the Midianites for their evil-minded plot. But the commentaries teach that the hostility toward Midian did not end with the desert battle. The Jewish people were commanded to harbor enmity toward the Midianites for all future generations. Why? Why punish the offspring with lasting rejection?

Perhaps a closer look at the heartbreaking events that took place in Brooklyn last week can provide insight into the roots of this command. The savage, degenerate attack on a defenseless Jewish child by another Jew must be probed for its searing commentary on features of our own community and lifestyle.

The incident appalled and horrified us. Our shared grief brought a renewed awareness of the depth of our solidarity with one another. We witnessed how all segments of the community rallied as soon as Leib's disappearance became public. It galvanized all segments of the community, as Jews (and local neighbors) of all stripes and backgrounds frantically searched for him. Now that the details of his brutal murder have surfaced, the public's attention has turned to ensuring that the perpetrator is brought to justice.

Much of the focus has also been channeled towards preventing the recurrence of violent and tragic events of this nature; toward educating the public about safety guidelines to protect our children and communities from perverts and predators.

As observant Jews we understand that everything that transpires in life carries a deeper personal message to us, and it is important that we try to ascertain what positive aspects of growth we can harness from this dreadful episode. How can we decipher the hidden message that lies beneath such a repulsive crime?

Our forebearers have taught us that we must examine our past to chart a pathway to our future, and thus our first frame of reference needs to be the Tanach itself. One finds a parallel to the depraved violence committed last week by one Jew against another in the story of Pilegash B'giva, Shoftim chapter 19. A brief outline of the events surrounding this

shocking narrative is in order.

The scriptures tell us how an unidentified Levite, who married a woman from Bais Lechem Yehuda, experienced marital strife with his concubine. She had abruptly left him to return to her father's home. With the aim of restoring family harmony, he went to his father in law's home to induce her to return. Upon their journey home, they traveled through the tribe of Benjamin's territory and sought overnight accommodations in the town of Givah. As they waited in the town square, they realized that no one was willing to provide them with lodging. They soon realized that the people of Givah were inhospitable and were callously ignoring them.

An elderly man saw their plight and with genuine warmth, welcomed them to his home, offering them a lavish feast and overnight accommodations. Before long, a mob descended on his home and what followed was eerily similar to the tragic events related in Parshas Vayeira when the malachim visited Lot in Sodom. The mob demanded that the guests be delivered into their hands so that they could get to know them and 'sodomize' them. The host, seeing how events were spiraling out of control, beseeched the rabble not to molest his guests. Finally, in order to save their lives, they delivered the guest's concubine to the wild crowd, who indulged their savage lust by violating her throughout the night.

In the morning, the woman lay dead at the door of her host. Her husband lifted her dead body onto his mule and took her home. Rather than bury her, he cut her up into twelve parts and sent her limbs to the twelve tribes to alert them to the catastrophe that had taken place. The commentaries explain he wanted to shock people into an awareness of the cancerous malaise that had eaten into the fabric of the nation.

Although the Jewish people are comprised of twelve individual tribes, we are all one body beating with one heart and throbbing with one soul. Abhorrent behavior exhibited by one tribe highlights the spiritual stagnation and apathy that can disconnect the nation as a whole from

The Week Ahead

פרשת מטות

Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.45 - 7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.08am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.30pm
Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	10.35pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.25pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	7.30pm

their life source, Hashem.

The entire Jewish population, shaken to the core, rallied to this startling message. The verses go on to describe the tribe of Benjamin's refusal to punish the perpetrators appropriately. To protest their passive tolerance of the unspeakable crimes committed, the tribes waged a civil war against the tribe of Benjamin, almost completely decimating it. Only six hundred young men from Benjamin managed to miraculously flee the carnage of battle. With the aid of the entire Jewish people, the survivors rebuilt their tribe. They were assisted in their quest to remarry and rebuild their decimated population.

The newly formed and purified tribe of Benjamin was replanted and its rise to prominence was once again assured.

The harrowing story of Pilegsh BeGivah is difficult to read and comprehend. The episode happened shortly after the death of Joshua among a people that had just settled into their portion of the Holy land. How could the people of Givah have been so depraved and carnal? The verses give us a definitive answer. These people had absorbed the Sodomite philosophy of neighboring cultures that encouraged uninhibited gratification of one's lusts without regard to others' feelings and rights. Everything was rationalized in the name of "if I want it, I deserve it; it's my right and nothing else matters."

This mindset had infiltrated the town of Givah, whose inhabitants should have been duly punished for their crimes, and the behavior they exhibited totally uprooted. But this did not happen. The horrific crimes committed against a helpless woman failed to trigger in the tribe of Binyamin a level of public outrage that would testify to the moral fiber of the general population. In place of revulsion and fury, there was apathy, indifference. The failure to respond appropriately signaled that a malignant philosophy had taken root, one that threatened the entire Jewish people.

That moral rot had to be painfully expunged before its toxic effects could infect the nation.

Our generation too, faces a tsunami of Sodomite culture and philosophy. The child killer surely watched and absorbed the ubiquitous images flaunting violence and immorality that abound in the media and in movies. During questioning he freely admitted what prompted him to cruelly asphyxiate the victim. "I saw posters with my video image on them and I panicked!" He abandoned all rational thinking to protect his own skin and to secure his petty self interest. Boundaries of decency and personal dignity have been crushed in the headlong rush to license the expression of every carnal instinct. Narcissism and excessive self indulgence are chalked up to freedom of choice and individual lifestyle. The pursuit of my happiness has become the end goal itself.

Deep down, we cannot escape the reality that any individual's act carries repercussions that affects us all. We are one people spiritually and organically bonded with one collective soul. When a noxious toxin infects one part of our body, it can soon threaten and poison the spiritual health of our nation as a whole. This was the message that the Levite in the Pilegsh B'givah narrative imparted by dismembering his wife and dispatching her body parts to all the tribes.

It is a message that perhaps we would do well to ponder.

We are all aware of the dangerous predators and pedophiles that lurk in the shadows of our communities, waiting to prey upon innocent children. We take appropriate measures to protect ourselves, our families and our communities from their perilous reach. But we must also safeguard ourselves from an equally insidious danger posed by the Sodomite culture of our times: the steady bombardment in every media outlet of provocative images that excite our basest instincts.

The prevailing culture of permissiveness has sanctioned 'alternative lifestyles' to the point of embracing decadent behavior. We are fast losing our sense of revulsion towards moral degeneracy. We no longer have an acute sense of its corrosive effect on the kedusha and purity of the Jewish people.

In a spectacular display of achdus and unity, we shared the collective grief of Leiby's abduction and brutal killing. We acted similar to the people in Biblical times who rallied as one man to the Benjamite border to determine what had happened. Now we too, like our forebearers, must ensure that such a display of animal savagery will never recur in our community. We too must now seek to implement the necessary steps to ensure that last week's atrocity will never be repeated.

But while focusing on the practical side of such a campaign, we must also protect ourselves and our families from the invisible but toxic effects of the degenerate culture surrounding us that surely contributed to it'shappening. Tzror es hamidyanim vehiksem osem! -retaliate and smite the Midianites, says the Torah, not for who they are but for what they represent!

As a consequence of our taking the necessary precautions to shield the purity of our minds and bodies, we too will surely be united as one nation under one G-d.

Tefilloh Nuggets

Dani Epstein

שמונה עשרה – אבות: עוזר ומושיע ומגן

He helps, saves and shields

These three terms – עוזר ומושיע ומגן – are explained by the Vilna Gaon to represent three specific types of salvation.

Supposing someone wanders down a dark alleyway one night and much to his astonishment is attacked by someone who wishes to relieve them of their worldly possessions. Rather than meekly submit to his attacker, he fights back valiantly. But his attacker is bigger, stronger and perhaps carefully inebriated; sufficiently so to act as a partial anaesthesia and render him immune to the victim's struggles but not enough to render him legless. The poor victim is making little headway until a passer by, hearing his cries, comes to assist him in his struggle and they finally overcome the would-be mugger.

This class of saviour is referred to as an עוזר "assistant", since the success was achieved through the combined efforts of the erstwhile victim and his rescuer.

Were this same scenario to play out but this time the rescuer subdues the villain without any assistance from the victim at all, then he is classified as a מושיע, a "saviour".

The final category would, to complete the parable, consist of the rescuer apprehending the mugger before he even enters the alleyway, preventing him from approaching the victim in the first place; this category of rescuer is referred to as a מגן a "shield".

Right now we can unfortunately see how our brethren in Eretz Yisroel desperately require all three categories of salvation. Here in the UK we no doubt enjoy the מגן shield – aspect of Hashem's protection, since who knows what plots are destroyed allowing us to live in comparative safety and quiet.

But we have other struggles as well. What conflicts do we contend with on a daily basis? By far and wide, our greatest and continuous conflict is that with the Yetzer Horaa. In this battle, as in any confrontation, we require suitable weapons by which we will wage war.

Through employing this phrase of עוזר ומושיע ומגן, we acknowledge that Hashem has armed us with appropriate weapons to afford us victory in this conflict.

The עוזר category represents the מצות עשה – which assist us in resisting the Yetzer Horaa.

The מושיע category represents the מצות לא תעשה – which likewise assist us in resisting the Yetzer Horaa from the opposite polarity.

The מגן category is represented by the Torah, of which Hashem said "בראתי יצר הרע בראתי לו תורה תבלין" – "I have created a Yetzer Horaa, and I have created the Torah as an antidote to him".