



Ohr Yerushalayim News

11th July 2015 - Volume 8 - Issue 1 – פרשת פינחס – כ"ד תמוז תשע"ה

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Stephen Weider and Mr & Mrs Meir Possenheimer on the birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Yoni Possenheimer. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 8 Parksway, Prestwich

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Jonny Berkowitz on the birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Aharon Kahn. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 4 Pearl Avenue.

Kiddushim

The Shabbos Mevorchin Kiddush takes place after Davenning this Shabbos and is, as yet, unsponsored.

Mr & Mrs Simon Wanderer invite the Kehilla to a Kiddush after Davenning at their home, 52 Upper Park Road, to celebrate the recent birth of their daughter, Elisheva.

A Great Dictation

Dani Epstein

The memory of the destructive power precipitated by one dictator – Hitler – ימש"ו is still within our living memory. We still have survivors who witnessed the horrors he cast upon the surface of the earth, and drew the entire world into a war that culminated in the deaths of tens of millions of innocents in a fury of destruction never witnessed before. That particular saga in the planet's history drew to end with the unimaginable obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and their populace in the blink of an eye.

This is the potential power of the dictator, the supreme leader, the prophet. Call him what you will, if he (it is almost always a he) is sufficiently charismatic and can whip up the crowds to a high-pitched fervour, who knows what kind of death and destruction will ensue.

In this juncture of our calendar, we look back at the annihilation of our brethren over some 2,000 years much of which took place or originated at this time of the year; much of which was usually steered by one Great Leader. Moreover, we only have to look at that charismatic yet elusive fellow, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for another example. Come on, of course you know who he is. Scratching your head? Heard of him before but not quite sure if he's the interior decorator you neighbours used last year, or if he is the "bimkoim" of Osama bin Ladin?

I have to confess that after a second's consideration I was forced to turn to my dear friend Google and search for "who is the caliph of ISIS". This man is responsible for horrific acts of such vomitous brutality that even Hezbollah think he is crazy. Gevalt! Hezbollah, mass murdering child-killers who quite happily shell men women and children think ISIS are behemas!

This is the power that one person can have. In his attempts to quell the the promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility in the First Vatican Council, Lord Acton wrote a letter to his colleague Mandell Creighton in which he coined the now-famous famous axiom: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

With some hindsight, it seems quite plausible, correct, just and laudable to hold a default opinion that anyone with absolute power is a de-facto criminal and mass-murderer. After all, a brief look at recent history offers

us numerous examples: Hitler, Stalin, Mao and more recently Kim Il Ding-A-Ling and that lovely fellow we mentioned a moment ago, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

This should make us a little uncomfortable, however, when we observe the apparent nepotism of Moshe who appointed his brother to the second-highest ranking position in Klal Yisroel, his sons and nephews as Kohanim and then raised his faithful shammes from the position of Rebbe's gabbe to Supreme Leader prior to his death.

A fundamental creed of the Yiddishkeit I was taught as a lad was "men fregt nisht ken kashes – we don't ask questions." That meant that if you harboured thoughts of parallels between Moshe, and - lehavdil elef alfei havdolos - the pope, you were automatically an apikores and needed a thorough beating to realign your thinking. Boruch Hashem I survived, and discovered that the Rishonim actually harbour similar thoughts and examine these issues to a great extent and in great depth.

Let's deal with the basic premise of a Supreme Leader. Surely we have Lord Acton's axiom that should prevent anything resembling a position of absolute power ever coming into being? Did that not apply to Moshe somehow? How could Hashem allow such a precipitous situation come around?

In order to understand this we need to turn to Hilchos Yesodey Hatorah chapter 7, in which the Rambam writes the following:

מיסודי הדת, לידע שהאל מנבא את בני האדם; ואין הנבואה חלה אלא על חכם גדול בחכמה, גיבור במידותיו, ולא יהיה יצרו מתגבר עליו בדבר בעולם אלא הוא מתגבר בדעתו על יצרו תמיד, בעל דעה רחבה נכונה עד מאוד.

"Of the founding principles of our religion is to know (not believe – to know, i.e. as a fact) that G-d prophesies to Man; and prophecy does not apply except to a wise person who is great in wisdom, mighty in his character traits, and his inclination does not rule him in any matter in the world, only he conquers with his mind his inclinations constantly, [he] has very wide knowledge which is exceedingly correct."

Essentially, the criterion and qualifications for prophethood being laid out here eliminates almost everyone one could imagine; only a few

The Week Ahead

פרשת פינחס	שבת מברכין אב
Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.52 - 8.00pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.03am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.43pm
Rov's Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	10.48pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tuesday / Wednesday	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Friday ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv (excl. Sunday)	10.35pm

people in a given generation can one imagine would remotely fit such a narrow specification.

The Ramban goes on further to narrow down even this small group of people with further criterion.

אדם שהוא ממולא בכל המידות האלו, שלם בגופו, כשייכנס לפרדס ויימשך באותן העניינות הגדולים הרחוקים, ותהיה לו דעת נכונה להבין ולהשיג, והוא מתקדש והולך פורש מדרכי כלל העם ההולכים במחשכי הזמן, והולך מזרז עצמו ומלמד נפשו שלא תהיה לו מחשבה כלל באחד מדברים בטילים, ולא מהבלי הזמן ותחבולותיו, אלא דעתו תמיד פנויה למעלה, קשורה תחת הכיסא, להבין באותן הצורות הקדושות הטהורות, ומסתכל בחכמתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא כולה מצורה ראשונה עד טבור הארץ, ויודע מהם גודלו--מיד רוח הקודש שורה עליו.

“A person who is filled with all these character traits, is complete in his body, when he enters to the Pardes (I'm deliberately not translating that word) and is drawn by those great and distant matters, and he has correct knowledge to understand and achieve and he sanctifies himself and separates himself from the ways of ordinary people who travel in the darkness of the times and he makes himself zealous and teaches his soul not to have any thought of pointless matters, and not of the empty things of his times and related matters, but his mind is constantly engaged with the Above, tied below the throne, in order to understand those sacred and holy images, and he gazes at the wisdom of the Holy One Blessed be He, right from the first image until the (centre?) of the earth and he knows from them His greatness, then instantly Ruach Hakodesh (I'm not translating this either) rest upon him.”

So that rules me out then.

So imagine this: Moshe turns up to Egypt, pulls off all these miracles. I think most people would say: “Well, ten plagues that brought a superpower to its knees, gotta be worth something, no?” After all, every time he predicted something, Moshe delivered on time, exactly what he said and nothing more or less.

When people spoke to Moshe, as I'm sure they did, and asked him how he did this, as I'm pretty sure a large group of Jews will have one or two nudniks wanting to know how all of this was happening, did Moshe say that he did it all himself? Hardly. He told Pharaoh to his face that he, Moshe, was just a messenger from Hashem.

Did Moshe fit all the above criterion? Well, we have to assume that without doubt he did. Did the Bnei Yisroel in Mitzrayim know this? Did they have any method of evaluating Moshe? I don't know. Would we have believed Moshe to be the real thing? That's an interesting question.

Supposing someone turned up today and said: “Tomorrow the Channel will split in two.” What would be our reaction? Would we rush out and buy shares in Eurostar? I know I wouldn't.

But supposing the next day the Channel actually does split exactly where he said it would, and then he goes on to say: “Next week Monday, all the share indexes will fall but Tesco shares will finish at 1000 points above their opening price.” Would you go out and buy their shares? I think I would. I think I would sell everything I had in order to buy Tesco shares.

So did the Bnei Yisroel believe Moshe was The Man?

Writes the Rambam: משה רבנו לא האמינו בו ישראל, מפני האותות שעשה - “Moshe our Teacher was not believed by Yisroel just because of the miracles he did.”

Why? This seems beyond ridiculous. שהאמין על פי האותות--יש בליבו. - “Because someone who believes [a prophet] because of miracles [that he performed] has a doubt in his heart, perhaps he performs a sign with incantations and kishuf.”

So what does it take to believe in Moshe, or more accurately to believe that Moshe is the true prophet of Hashem?

ובמה האמינו בו, במעמד הר סיני: שעיינו ראו, ולא זר, ואוזנינו שמעו, ולא אחר--האש והקולות והלפידים. והוא ניגש אל הערפל, והקול מדבר אליו; ואנו שומעים: משה, משה--לך אמור להם כך וכך. וכן הוא אומר “פנים בפנים, דיבר ה' עימכם” (דברים ה, ד), ונאמר “לא את אבותינו, כרת ה' את הברית הזאת” (דברים ה, ג).

“Through what did they believe him: the assembly at Mount Sinai. Because our eyes saw, not a stranger's, our ears heard, not someone else - the fire, the noise and the lightning. And he approached the mist and the Voice spoke to him. And we heard: 'Moshe, Moshe, go and tell them so and so'. And so it says “Face to face Hashem spoke with you”. And it

says: “Not with our fathers did Hashem make this covenant”.

This was a unique experience in mankind's history: the one-time mass revelation to a vast group of people. This is to say that every single person got what they wanted, a hechsher for Moshe Rabeinu straight from Hashem. After the Sinaitic Revelation there was no arguing Moshe was the genuine article.

This gave him a unique status, in that whatever he claimed was direct from Hashem is assumed to be the case. Note the rather wishy-washy terminology there: “claimed” and “assumed”. Why am I employing such terms? Surely one should say that “anything Moshe said we know came directly from Hashem”.

This is because of paragraph 6 in chapter 8:

נמצאת אומר, שכל נביא שיעמוד אחר משה רבנו, אין אנו מאמינים בו מפני האות לבדו - “This comes to tell us that every prophet that arises after Moshe our teacher we do not believe in him simply because of the miracle”.

The Rambam employed razor-sharp terminology in order to express the fundamentals of Judaism, and this is very much one of them. What he is saying is that even after the prophet “proves” himself through a miracle, we still do not accept as a fact that he is actually a prophet! What we do is we assume this to be the case, and that's really as far as it goes.

In which case why do we assume a prophet is really a prophet altogether?

“Only because of the commandment that Moshe commanded us in the Torah” (Devorim 18:15).

From all this we know something important, i.e. that even though Moshe had absolute power, if the slightest thought of corruption would have entered his heart he would have lost the job on the spot. Before he dies, in fact, he challenges anyone to step forward and claim that he, Moshe, was corrupt in any way at all. Of course no-one does.

More importantly, though, we know without out any doubt at all that Moshe was the prophet of Hashem, and remained so until his very last breath. In this way he is unique, in that Moshe is the only person ever to be sanctioned by Hashem, and therefore the only prophet of which we have absolutely no doubt at all. Arguably, the mitzvoh of אליו תשמעון did not apply to him, since he had received the imprimatur from Hashem.

So, supposing Moshe came along and pointed at someone and said: “He is a novi”. What would that say about that person? Would we accept that person as a novi? Of course we would; after all, Moshe is a certified, proven novi, and therefore any statement he makes in the name of Hashem is essentially absolutely true and correct (that's about as close as we get to infallibility; I added the word “essentially” because Moshe could have, and did, make mistakes). If that includes appointing someone as a novi then we accept that statement as being true.

So we now have two ways a person can become a novi. Either they are self-proving with a miracle or two, or they have the hechsher of a previously accepted novi.

Even given all this, other than Moshe himself who we know without doubt was a novi, everyone else is assumed – only assumed – to be a novi.

All this comes for one purpose only: to explain why such a public ceremony was organised for Yehoshua upon his appointment as the Great Leader. Moshe was well aware that absolute power corrupts absolutely, but unable as he was to read a person's heart proposed a simple criterion for leader:

אָנְשֵׁר יֵצֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם וְאָנְשֵׁר יָבֵא לְפָנֵיהֶם וְאָנְשֵׁר יוֹצֵאֵם וְאָנְשֵׁר יָבֵאֵם – that he will go out before them and return before them and that he shall bring them out and in.” Moshe was proposing to find someone who said “follow me” in battle, but who also was great enough to rouse everyone's avodas Hashem so they should all have the merit to return from battle as well.

Hashem told him to appoint Yehoshua in public, because the only thing the Bnei Yisroel knew of Yehoshua was that he was the Rebbe's gabbe. What did he know about fighting? Politics? Economics?

So Hashem, said to Moshe, appoint Yehoshua “right before their eyes”. In this way they will know that Yehoshua is the real McCoy, and they do not have to fear, among other things, him becoming a Great Dictator.