



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ט מרחשון תשע"ה – פרשת תולדות – 21st November 2014 - Volume 7 - Issue 19

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Kiddish This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning this Shabbos in honour of Shabbos Mevorchin and the Shul's 16th anniversary.

Oneg Shabbos Starting Next Week

Ohr Yerushalayim is starting a Winter Oneg Shabbos which will take place every month around Shabbos Mevorchin. The first takes place next week - see back back for details.

Save The Date

Ohr Yerushalayim will be celebrating our 16th anniversary with a Melava d'Malka on Motzei Shabbos Parshas VaYishlach. Invitations will be sent out shortly with further detail.

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Corruption: Are You Floating or Drowning?

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Corruption. It seems to be just about everywhere and on almost every level of life. Even people who consider themselves to be honest more than likely are a little corrupt somewhere, while others are so corrupt they think that they are as honest as they need to be.

Some corruption is not that bad, the result of ignorance or a simple lack of appreciation of how bad it is. Other forms of corruption are purely evil, the result of malicious intentions or extreme greed, or both. Some people do more than capitulate to the whims of their yetzer hara; they ride it like bucking bronco to get what they want from life and people.

As the Talmud states, the "seal" of God is "Emes," or "Truth" (Yoma 69b), so falsehood is not just a bad trait, it is the worst trait. In fact, if you trace the worst of sins back to their origin you will find corruption at its source. Corruption, like an infection, can begin small and manageable. If left "untreated," it can and will grow until it becomes deadly, spiritually for sure and likely physically as well.

What is worse is that it can go undetected for quite a long time, and have a corrupting influence on other more innocent people as well. It can cause people like Ya'akov Avinu, whose central trait was "Emes," to act in corrupt ways, a real twist of fate. He was happiest sitting in the tents of Torah study living by the letter of God's law. He was forced to leave his learning, deceive his father, steal the blessing from Eisav, and live with Mt. Deceit himself, Lavan, for 20 years.

I recall how, decades ago, when buying something in a Jerusalem store the owner asked me if I minded paying without receiving a receipt. Detecting my discomfort he explained, "I tried doing everything the right way, the way I prefer," he said with a clear look of anguish in his face. "But the government makes it impossible for anyone to earn an honest living and survive, so I have to resort to doing some business in the black."

I know what he meant. Most of us know what he meant. For those who have not been fortunate enough to make enough money to not worry about paying the bills from month to month, every "dollar" counts. Even though we know that our tax dollars are necessary to provide the community services that we so enjoy, we also know that they come at the cost of other personal necessities. Even worse, something they are wasted on services for which we do not care or are the result of corruption.

The Talmud says that someone who wants 100 "dollars" will want \$200 once he gets the \$100, \$300 once he gets the \$200, and so on. This may

be human nature, but it is what makes corruption "natural." The rabbis have warned that the truly wealthy person is the one who is happy with his portion (Pirkei Avos 4:1), even though he may be far from being rich.

So central is the idea that it is the fundamental difference between Ya'akov Avinu and his twin brother and nemesis, Eisav HaRasha, "Eisav the Evil." In this week's parshah Ya'akov will avoid confrontation with his extremely corrupt and murderous sibling, but he won't be able to 34 years later in Parashas Vayishlach, when they will argue about the validity of this teaching:

Ya'akov looked up and saw Eisav coming with 400 men. He divided the children between Leah and Rachel, and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants and their children first, Leah and her children after them, and Rachel and Yosef last. He himself passed ahead of them and bowed to the ground seven times until he reached his brother. Eisav ran toward him and hugged him. He fell on his neck and kissed him; they wept. He looked up and he saw the women and the children, and said, "Who are they to you?"

He answered him, "They are children with whom God has favored your servant." The maidservants approached with their children, and bowed down. Leah and her children also approached and bowed down. Then Yosef and Rachel approached, and bowed down. He asked, "What is the meaning of the camp which I met?"

He answered [Eisav], "To gain favor in the eyes of my master." On the surface of it, what might have been a fight to the finish ended up being a peaceful reunion of two brothers. Somewhat below the surface a battle of ideologies took place:

I have all: All my necessities. Eisav, however, spoke haughtily, "I have plenty," [meaning] much more than I need (Tanchuma, Vayishlach 3). (Rashi, Bereishis 33:11)

One might ask, what's the big deal? Ya'akov tried to give Eisav a gift who turned it down because he didn't need it. He was already powerfully wealthy, so Ya'akov's gift may have seemed petty to him. Eisav may not have been polite but he had certainly been within his right when he told Ya'akov to keep his gift for himself.

In fact, judging by Ya'akov's answer, that he had all that he needed, it sounds

| The Week Ahead | |
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| פרשת תולדות | שבת מברכין כסלו |
| Candle Lighting | 3.48pm |
| Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos | 3.53pm |
| Seder HaLimud | 8.40am |
| Shacharis | 9.00am |
| סוף זמן ק"ש | 9.50am |
| 1st Mincha | 1.30pm |
| Rov's Hilchos Shabbos Shiur | 3.08pm |
| 2nd Mincha | 3.38pm |
| Seuda Shlishis | following |
| Motzei Shabbos | 4.58pm |
| Ovos uBonim | 6.13pm |
| Sunday Rosh Chodesh | 7.00am / 8.00am |
| Monday / Thursday | 6.45am / 7.10am |
| Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday | 6.45am / 7.20am |
| Mincha & Maariv | 3.45pm |
| Late Maariv | 8.00pm |

as if Eisav may have rejected the gift for Ya'akov's sake. Eisav might have thought that his less fortunate brother could use the gift more than he could. If so, then what a nice gesture on Eisav's part!

This is why the midrash becomes necessary, even for Pshat, the simple explanation, which is why Rashi mentions it. Apparently Eisav did not have his brother in mind when he chose not to accept the gift at first. Rather, he turned down the gift to make a show of his own wealth, as if to make his brother feel even less fortunate. "I do not only have what I need," Eisav indicated to Ya'akov, "I've got far beyond that, and I'm still building!" How does that expression go, "Absolute power corrupts absolutely." And just as absolute power corrupts absolutely, a little less than absolute power corrupts just a little less than absolutely. Eisav had been an extremely powerful man, and as a result, an extremely corrupt one as well.

In truth, the midrash also tells us that even before birth Eisav showed signs of such corruption. Apparently every time Rivkah, while pregnant, used to be in the vicinity of a place of idol worship Eisav would position himself in her womb as if trying to go in its direction. There is no greater corruption in life than idol worship, which is basically religion made in the image of man for the sake.

In fact, the Arizal revealed: When Ya'akov and Eisav, who were on the level of Kayin and Hevel, were born, it then writes, "And his hand was holding the heel of Eisav" (Bereishis 25:26). This means that the choicest part of the good that was in Kayin was mixed together with evil as mentioned. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 36)

You can't find someone more corrupt than one who murders his own brother, which is what Kayin did not too long after being exiled from the Garden of Eden. Fresh out of Paradise with a whole world before him Kayin instead resorted to taking away life, not building it. Mankind was off to a bad start.

Then again, he had an example in his own father. God had commanded Adam HaRishon to not eat from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra—the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Within hours of receiving the command, however, he actually went and violated it, corrupting himself, his wife, and all of Creation. As if to make matters worse, mankind absorbed the very source of corruption in Creation, the yetzer hara. In the beginning, before Adam HaRishon sinned the yetzer hara was outside of man, in the form of the snake. After the sin, the yetzer hara moved into man making it far more difficult to distinguish its presence and involvement in our decision process, as the Torah states:

The inclinations of the heart of man are evil from his youth. (Bereishis 8:21)

Ya'akov Avinu understood the problem and therefore he also understood the solution, as the Talmud says: If this evil force contacts you, bring it to the Torah study hall. (Succah 52b)

Therefore, when the Torah first introduces Ya'akov as a young adult to the world it refers to him as a person who is uncorrupted and sitting in the tents of Torah study. It was the former that led him to the latter and the latter that helped him to maintain the former.

So much so, in fact, that even when he ripped from his tents of Torah study and thrown into the world to confront the most deceitful people of his time, Eisav, Lavan, and eventually Shechem, he was able to maintain his incorruptibility even when he was forced to act in deceitful ways himself. He came into this world as Ish Emes—Man of Truth—and he left this world as Ish Emes, no small feat given his life and its challenges.

To be incorruptible, truly incorruptible, especially in this world at this time of history is exceedingly difficult. Integrity is still an important value but one that is not practiced, at least not to the extent that it should be. It is difficult to be honest when people with so much wealth and power abuse the system so thoroughly while the guy in the street has to work so hard just to make an honest living.

At this time it is a very confusing world as well. Apparently it was in the 1990s that right wing politicians came up with the idea of "Political Correctness" as a way to ensure the rights of minorities. Noble as it may have been at the time of its origin, it has since been used in so many different ways that have literally undermined the very foundations of society. Like a lot of "loopholes" created for the benefit of those who deserve them, it has since been used to the advantage of those who do not deserve the benefits they provide.

Living in today's modern society is like Ya'akov moving in with Lavan. The difference is though, and it is a huge difference, that Ya'akov had already made himself into a man of integrity and had concretized his foundation of truth. When deceit tried to shake that foundation he withstood the pressure to crack and crumble, and emerged as a true "Yisroel." He saw the face of the enemy (when he fought the angel of Eisav), saw that it was in him (his own yetzer hara), and tamed it to do his bidding.

It is not a lesson that one can afford to take for granted. We can fool ourselves some of the time, most of the people most of the time, but God none of the time. Noach survived the Flood because his integrity allowed him to "float" above the rest of his extremely corrupted generation, but only barely. Taking a good hard look at ourselves, where do we hold? Are we floating or drowning?

Ohr Yerushalayim launches the Winter עונג שבת
 which will take place monthly around **Shabbos Mevorchin**
 Starting next Friday night, Parshas Vayeitzei, at the home of **Dr & Mrs Leon Bernstein** in honour of the Yahrzeit of his mother, 69 Singleton Road from 7.30pm
 Anyone interested in hosting an Oneg is asked to contact one of the committee

עונג שבת

Ohr Yerushalayim takes great pleasure in inviting all members to our 16th anniversary celebratory Melava Malka on Motzei Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach, 6th December 2014 In the Shul Hall 8.15pm (To finish by 10.30pm)
 Suggested donation £20 per person
 RSVP to 07779 681 354 or office@ohryerushalayim.org.uk