



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

Apologies for the belated Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs David Steinberg on the occasion of their grandson, Rafi Issler's, Bar Mitzva last week

Kiddush לחיים ושלום

The Shul is holding a farewell Kiddush this Shabbos after Davenning where we wish לחיים ושלום to families Bernstein, Gatoff and Wacks who are making Aliya. We wish them all much Hatzlocho!

Parking Request

Please could all users of the Shul avoid parking too close to the driveway entrance of Eccleston Place (block of flats on the corner of Park Street and Bury New Road) as it creates difficulty with access for residents.

You are also reminded to avoid parking within two car lengths of the end of Park Street so as not to cause an obstruction to cars entering and exiting Park Street from Bury New Road (as per the Highway Code!)

Holiday Time!

As members exit town for sunnier (hopefully) climes, we ask those left behind to make an extra effort to support the daily Shul Minyanim for the next 2-3 weeks.

Poor Man Fled

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Listen Israel to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you, so you may do them and live and go in and possess the land which God, God of your fathers gives to you. (Devarim 4:1)

Tisha B'Av is now behind us. This does not mean though that the problems that led to it are also over. Quite the contrary. The world is where we left it just before entering Tisha B'Av, and perhaps worse. As one friend just wrote me, "The more I learn about the Iran deal, the more insane it is."

I do not know what is more insane, that the deal was proposed in the first place, or that the Western world hasn't been screaming it down since then. The fact that it has gone this far is evidence, to me at least, of the Divine Providence of it all, eerily reminiscent of how the world "slid" into World War II in spite of all the warning signs.

I know this is "Shabbos Nachamu," the first of seven of consolation. I could spend the rest of this essay ignoring the situation today and just say nice things. However, I read something on Tisha B'Av that is worth discussing, even though it can be connected to a verse in next week's parshah.

In order to prepare the approaching Jewish people for life in Eretz Yisroel, the Torah gives the following warning:

Be careful that you do not forget God, your God, and not keep His commandments, judgments, and ordinances, which I command you this day. Otherwise, once you have eaten and are satisfied, and have

built beautiful homes and occupy them; when your herds, your flocks, your silver, and your gold increase, and all that you have increases, then you will become very content, and will forget God, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, from the land of slavery. (Devarim 8:11-14)

Nevertheless, we did anyhow. We moved into the Land, conquered it (more or less) as commanded, divided it as instructed, and settled it as expected. Then we succeeded and forgot God, not all at one time and not altogether, but enough to lose the Temple, our lives, and then our land.

Thus the verse says in Eichah:

Yehudah went into exile because of affliction and great servitude. (Eichah 1:3)

The verse should say that the Jewish people went into exile for the sake of affliction, not because of affliction. This unusual wording compelled the Midrash to interpret the verse unusually, but quite insightfully.

As we know from Pesach, the Hebrew word "oni," which means "affliction," as in the "Bread of Affliction," can also mean "poverty." Hence, "Le-chem Oni," another name for matzah is also translated as, "Poor Man's Bread." This would mean, therefore, that the Jewish people were exiled because of their poverty.

This rendering of the verse does not help to answer the question. The Torah warned about Divine punishment for forgetting God because of success, not because of failure. If anything, poverty should have helped to atone for the sins of the Jewish people and protected them, not led to their exile.

Rabbi Levenstein in his sefer on the aggados of Eichah explains. The people of Yehudah were not poor, but actually well-to-do. This did

The Week Ahead

פרשת ואתחנן	שבת נחמו
Mincha	7.20pm
Candle Lighting	7.30 - 7.45pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.18am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.03pm
Rov's Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	10.08pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

not stop them from wanting more. The “great servitude” to which the verse refers is talking about all the time and work they put into increasing their material lot in life. They were not satisfied with their portion, against the advice of the rabbis (Pirkei Avos 4:1).

As if this wasn't bad enough, it stood in contradistinction to their attitude towards spiritual growth. If someone would have asked another just before the destruction of the First Temple, “Are you happy with your current level of spiritual growth?” the answer most certainly would have been, “Yes.” People did not feel the need to improve their spiritual portion as they did their material lot.

This explains everything. It also explains how backsliding became inevitable. It also reveals how enough cognitive dissonance could develop until the Jewish people could not see how their approach to life was really an approach to death. It explains how “Eichah” came into being.

“What was I thinking?” How many times has a person asked himself this question in life? How many times has a person had a chance to preempt a bad outcome, but didn't because it seemed, at the time, to cost too much time, money, or both?

How many times, after the fact, has a person kicked himself and asked, “Why was I so stingy?” once he realized how giving the time or giving the money was a lot easier to do than dealing with the crisis that resulted? How many times has choosing the “easier” path later resulted in a far more difficult one?

It has been said that love makes people stupid. Even truer is how “stupid” people have been because of their love of money. This lesson is even in the Torah:

But he delayed, and the men took hold of his hand and his wife's hand, and the hand of his two daughters, out of God's pity for him, and they took him out and placed him outside the city. (Bereishis 19:16)

But he delayed: in order to save his possessions. (Rashi)

This is talking about Lot and his family as they escaped the fate of Sdom. There was an angel leading him, so he knew the threat to Sdom was real. He knew that within a very short time, Sdom and everything within would be obliterated.

Yet he delayed. He stopped fleeing. He could not get himself to continue on with his escape and save his family. Even the note cantillated when reading the Hebrew word for “delayed,” which is “vayismamah,” expresses his indecisiveness.

If we watched a movie of Lot's escape, we would probably think to ourselves, maybe even say, “GET GOING NOW! . . . LOT, MOVE IT! IT'S ALL GOING TO BE DESTROYED SOON AND YOU WITH IT! JUST LEAVE IT ALL BEHIND AND RUN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! ARE YOU CRAZY! IT'S ONLY PROPERTY!”

If Lot, instead of escaping, was caught up in the destruction of Sdom, we would be shocked. We would probably wonder how anyone could be so obsessed with material possessions as to risk his life, and lose it, especially when he had a chance to get out. We would probably think, “Had it been me, I would have just left it all behind and run for my life!”

I have been told that Vietnamese eat monkeys. I have also been told that one of the ways they catch monkeys is by carving a hole in a tree just large enough for a monkey to put an empty hand into. After leaving nuts on the inside as part of the trap, the monkey later reaches into the hole and take the nuts, which they love. The monkey then tries to remove his hand which, full of nuts, is larger than the hole, effectively trapping the monkey.

The trapped monkey tries constantly to remove his hand and regain his freedom, a simple matter of relinquishing his hold on the nuts and reducing the size of his hand. Refusing to give up his stash, the monkey remains trapped in the tree long enough for a hunter to come and

capture him.

Before we laugh at the monkey, or at least wonder about his “stupidity,” we should instead ask ourselves how we tend to mock his behavior in our own way. We should ponder the many times we have allowed our desire for materialism, either to attain it or to protect it, interfere with more important priorities, such as our lives. Even if no incidents come to mind, we'll been shown plenty on our final day of judgment, and then we'll very likely ask ourselves, “What was I thinking?”

The Maharal says this is the reason why matzah is on our Seder Table each year. We may dress and eat like royalty on Leil Seder, but the center piece of the evening is “Poor Man's Bread.” This is to remind us that no matter how successful we become materially we must always remain detached from our physical possessions. Enjoy them, the Maharal says, but never become dependent on them, or they'll trap us as they have so many times throughout history.

The Talmud gives its own warning:

Rebi Elazar became ill and Rebi Yochanan went in to visit him. He noticed that he was lying in a dark room and he bared his arm and light radiated from it. He saw that Rebi Elazar was crying, and asked him, “Why do you cry? Is it because you did not study enough Torah? We have learned, ‘Whether a lot or a little, as long as the heart is directed to heaven’. Perhaps it is a lack of sustenance? Not everyone is privileged to two tables.” (Brochos 5b)

The “two tables” to which Rebi Yochanan refers is the material “table” and the spiritual one. People will insist that financial success does not interfere with spiritual growth, and cite examples of those who have succeeded to “eat” from both.

The Talmud never said that it is impossible to eat from both tables. It only said that it is a privilege, and not one shared by a lot of people. There are lots of people who have tried but they have also failed. They did not call it failure, but simply gave up. Some went back to the Bais Midrash and applied themselves spiritually and have struggled financially ever since. I'm not sure, but it could be that more never returned to the Bais Midrash and became overly involved in the financial world instead.

There are rationalizations and justifications for both approaches. There are also halachos that govern each as well. And opinions? Let's just say that the topic has been the source of many heated debates, and will be until it becomes time to get their hands out of the tree. Some people will not have many “nuts” and will be free to go. Some people will have the proper spiritual attitude to their material possession, and will know when to let go of them and run.

It's the last group that always gets stuck in exile. They're the ones who hang onto their material comforts for dear life, and often at the cost of exactly this. In advance, they thought they knew what to think and felt clear about their choices. As danger approached, they held onto their opinions, thinking that hope of a safe outcome was as reliable as the facts around them. Only after crisis has enveloped them do they ask themselves, “What was I thinking?”

Consolation? It is not the fact that we are still in exile and the situation is becoming increasingly crazy and dangerous. It is not the way that the Jewish people are becoming more isolated, and that many are throwing their lot in with the non-Jewish world instead. It is certainly not the way many economists are predicting unprecedented economical upheaval in the short run.

Consolation instead comes from the place it always has. It comes from knowing that, as mad as the world gets it still belongs to God, and that He still runs the show. Consolation comes from knowing that we get personal chances to open our hands in order to let go of that which traps us so that we flee to safer places. This is true even if we don't ask for Divine help, then how much more so if we do.