



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ז"ו שבט תשע"ז – בשלה – 11th February 2017 - Volume 9 - Issue 28

News This Week

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davening in the Shul hall sponsored by Dr and Mrs Brian Benatar on the occasion of their emigration to South Africa.

On behalf of the Rov, Trustees and Committee and the whole Kehilla we wish them all the best with much Hatzlocho for the future.

Mazel Tov also on the forthcoming wedding of Aron to Tam Fox in Cape Town.

Everyone Needs Attention Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The pasuk [verse] at the beginning of the parsha says, "Vayehi b'Shalach Pharaoh es ha'am" – "and it was when Pharaoh sent out the nation". The Medrash Rabbah comments on the word "Vayehi" – "and it was". The Medrash says that the expression "vayehi" is related to the word "vai" (as in 'oy vai'), which means to cry out. The Medrash asks, "Who cried out?" The Medrash answers that Pharaoh screamed in anguish when he had to send the Jewish people out.

What did Pharaoh cry about? The Medrash relates a parable. A King had a son who travelled away from home. The prince spent some time at the house of a wealthy person. When the King heard where the prince was staying, he corresponded with this person and asked him to send the prince home. The wealthy person ignored the letter. The King sent more letters, all of which were ignored. Finally the King went to the house of this person to take his son home himself.

When the King finally took his son home, the wealthy person started to cry out. The neighbors asked him, "Why are you crying?" He responded, "I had a great honor in hosting the prince in my home. The King corresponded with me and took an intense interest in what was happening in my home. Now, I no longer have the prince in my home, so the King will have no interest in me whatsoever. That is why I cry out."

That is how Pharaoh felt. As long as the Jews were in Egypt, G-d kept sending him messages. Now that the Jews left, Pharaoh would no longer have a 'correspondence' with the Master of the World. "Woe to me" (vai), says Pharaoh, "that I sent the Jews out and lost my dialog with G-d". That is why the pasuk begins "VAY-ehi b'Shalach..."

What conclusion must we arrive at from this Medrash? Was Pharaoh a masochist? Did he miss the 'correspondence' that G-d was sending to him: Blood, Frogs, Lice, etc., etc. Did he love getting beaten up. Why did he cry out when he was no longer 'hearing' from G-d in this fashion?

Pharaoh may have had deep psychological problems, but masochism was not one of them. Pharaoh was a very real human being. Human beings need to feel wanted. They need to feel "I am somebody. Somebody notices me." When a person is no longer noticed, he feels like less of a person.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe (one of the premier personalities in the mussar movement today, residing in Jerusalem) mentions in one of his books that a certain young man once stopped coming to prayer services at a Yeshiva. A friend asked him, "What happened? Don't you daven

anymore?" The young man responded, "Heaven forbid, I daven at another minyan now. There is no shortage of minyanim in Jerusalem." His friend asked him, "Why don't you daven in the Yeshiva anymore?" The young man responded, "This way maybe the mashgiach [spiritual mentor of the students] will notice me."

This is an example of the fact that negative notice is better than no notice. "I want somebody to know that I exist." Apathy is worse than punishment.

Small children sometimes 'act out'. (Sometimes they don't have to be so small.) We may ask, "Why are they acting out? Why can't they behave? Why can't they just sit quietly at the Shabbos table? Why do they act out, only to be sent away to their rooms in the middle of the meal?"

The answer is that they, in fact, want to be sent away because that way they are at least noticed. We all have a choice. We can either give our children or our spouses positive attention or we might have to give them negative attention. But we will need to give them attention, one way or another.

This is the lesson of the Medrash. Pharaoh would rather be beaten over the head and worse, than not be noticed by G-d at all. The worst thing for Pharaoh was the realization that after sending out the nation, G-d would become oblivious to him. Everyone needs attention.

Eleventh Hour Reprieves, and Beyond

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

If you listen diligently to the voice of Hashem...then any of the diseases that I placed in Egypt, I will not place upon you, for I am Hashem your healer. They arrived at Eilim. There, there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms.

Diseases? Finding themselves in a wilderness with limited food supply and no water, the Bnei Yisrael were in need of a supermarket, not a medical clinic. Disappointed by the bitter waters at Marah, HKBH had bailed them out with a bottom-of-the-ninth miraculous save. They must have been very relieved, and very appreciative.

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת בשלה

ט"ו בשבט

Candle Lighting	4.54pm
Mincha	4.59pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.59am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	4.13pm
2nd Mincha	4.43pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	6.03pm
Ovos uBonim	7.18pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	5.05pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

Why, thought, did Hashem's retrospective on Marah speak about preventing disease, rather than finding a square meal?

The quality of our pamasah is predicated upon avodah, period. Our material needs are dependant upon our service of Hashem through korbanos, and by extension, through prayer.

Marah was not the place to teach the Bnei Yisrael about the place and function of everyday avodah. They were many years away from establishing the early precursors of the Batei Mikdosh in Shiloh, Nov, and Gilgal. There, after the mon that sustained them for the decades in the wilderness became just a distant memory, Klal Yisrael would practice in earnest the art of avodah linked to their material well-being.

A different educational goal was in reach, and HKBH focused on that, rather than on avodah. Torah study brings with it its own promise: security. This is the reason that Torah is called a mishmeres/guarding. Torah guards and protects against any harm that might befall us. Often, however, it doesn't show its protective properties until our backs are against the wall.

The Torah addresses here those who had just slaked their thirst through the miraculous waters of Marah. It does not tell them that water, as well as all else they needed, would come to them in the merit of their korbanos and davening. The full meaning of that lesson would be deferred for a few generations. At the time of our parshah, the exhortations they needed to hear concerned Torah study, and its attendant promise of protection – including last-minute protection. The waters of Marah remained bitter till the eleventh hour, even after the Bnei Yisrael justifiably clamored for their sustenance. They were saved only after going the distance, after waiting to the very end. Hashem's assistance came, but not immediately. As so often happens, His protective salvation comes precisely when people give up all ordinary hope.

The water that was given to them was not water they merited through their daily avodah. It was not part of a pamasah-provision plan, but part of a medical package. Life-threatening thirst and famine are also "diseases." Moreover, they are diseases that had been visited upon the Egyptians. After the plague of blood, the Egyptians grew deathly ill from lack of water; they suffered the symptoms of food deprivation after the makah of borod destroyed their food supply. Hashem promises the Bnei Yisrael that even if they lacked pamasah, He would extricate them from the illness of deprivation, although often only at the last moment, if they applied themselves to limud Torah.

Another message, a corollary of the first, came folded into the lesson of Marah. The water they wanted did not come at the time and in the manner the Bnei Yisrael would have wanted. They first had to endure some privation, some doing without. This is included in the mishnah's description of Torah: "You will eat bread with salt. The water you drink will be measured. You will sleep on the ground... This is the way of Torah." In other words, the life of learning demands sacrifice – but it comes with a security not enjoyed by others. To those willing to forego comfort and luxury, it will provide a liveable sustenance – plus Divine intercession to prevent disaster.

Neither the story nor the lesson ends here. The very next stop in Bnei Yisrael's journey took them to Eilim, described as a place of twelve springs and seventy date-palms. While potable water had to be miraculously wrung out of Marah, at Eilim it was available in abundance and luxury.

This is the other side of the coin. It is simply not true that the Torah life-style demands poverty. It is only the "derech/way, path of Torah" that requires simplicity and self-denial. To gain access to Torah, people must be willing and able to give up other wishes and desires.

Once Torah becomes part of a person, the Torah wishes for him to enjoy abundance and blessing. To the Torah personality, these gifts will not mire him in materialism, adding drag to his further progress. To the contrary, they broaden his mind and deepen his understanding, allowing more insight into the beauty of the Torah and the beauty of Hashem's creation.

Bnei Yisrael, still weeks away from kabbolas ha-Torah, had to be

taught that Torah demands sacrifice. Thus, the lesson of Marah was truly bittersweet. Almost immediately, however, Hashem followed up with a diametrically opposed lesson.

On the horizon beyond Sinai was Hashem's approval of blessing and abundance, which would come to a nation steeped in Torah, provided in the merit of its twelve shevatim and seventy elders.

These ideas were crucial in molding the thinking of the new nation, and Hashem lost no time in conveying them. Their relevance, however, is for all times.

Was It Really Fair-oh?

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

I shall strengthen the heart of Pharaoh and he will pursue them . . . (Shemos 14:4)

History seems to repeat itself, sometimes in extremely obvious ways. However, the cycle is usually a lot longer than ten years, and rarely are the similarities so stark. In this case, the only thing missing is Saddam Hussein, JR., to fight George Bush, JR. Instead, history seems to be satisfied with the original Hussein for a repeat performance of "Operation Desert Storm."

Whether or not this thing actually ends up in war, G-d forbid, remains to be seen. According to logic, it should not result in war. Ideally, Iraq should back down, humbled by the mounting international opposition to its policy of producing weapons of mass destruction, though they deny having such a program today.

There is a Hebrew word for this, one so accurate in meaning and sound that it has even made its way into the English lexicon. It is called, "chutzpah." Chutzpah is a word that we use, like "arrogance," to define a person's disproportionate attitude towards his position in life.

As Shlomo HaMelech taught in "Koheles," there is a time for everything. There are even times for bravado, stubbornness, even for giving others the impression that you are smarter than you really are. At the right time, they are calculated and heroic risks. At the wrong time, they are simply chutzpah, which is also a level insanity.

For example, in this week's parshah, Pharaoh, and what is left of his army machine, takes up the chase of the fleeing Jewish people. A few months ago, this might have been understandable. However, since then, Egypt has been systematically destroyed by the weakest nation on earth at the time, without them having to lift a finger. And, as the Egyptian magicians had been forced to admit quite early in the process, it wasn't simply a matter of good luck either.

It wasn't the Jewish people Pharaoh was chasing, and in his heart of hearts, he probably knew that.

Had he been simply a megalomaniac? The rabbis warn us that pride is one of those things that take us out of reality; had Pharaoh's pride denied him an honest vision of what was happening to him and to his people, to the extent that he could have put so much on the line? Had there been room to be convinced that he could successfully return the Jewish people to their status as Egyptian slaves without getting annihilated along the way by their Protector?

The Torah says:

It was told to the king of Egypt that the people had fled; and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants became transformed regarding the people, and they said, "What is this that we have done that we have sent away Israel from serving us?" (Shemos 14:5)

What do you mean, "What is this that we have done?" Remember Moshe, and his miraculous staff? Remember how he brought about ten plagues on behalf of G-d that obliterated Egypt, all because you WOULDN'T let his people go? Oh, yet forget? THEN JUST LOOK OUT YOUR WINDOW AND SEE HOW LITTLE REMAINS BEHIND OF YOUR EMPIRE AS A RESULT OF YOUR OWN STUBBORNNESS! THAT is why you have done what you did!

Instead, however:

He harnessed his chariot and took his people with him. (Shemos 14:6).

What is it that blinds leaders so, that they run towards their own doom, and tragically, take a lot of nice people out of the world with them along their path to self-destruction?