



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

ז' שבט תשע"ז - בא - 4th February 2017 - Volume 9 - Issue 27

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr and Mrs Daniel Gordon on the birth of a son. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 41 Cavendish Road. The Bris will take place א"י"ה on Shabbos morning after Lehening (10.30 approx) followed by a Kiddush after Davening in the Shul hall.

### Children's Group This Shabbos

The children's group for years 2-4 takes place this Shabbos from 10.00am.

### Leaving Mitzrayim

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

We are, once again, at Parashas Bo and the redemption from Egypt. Personally, every time I get to this point in the story, I feel excitement. I just find that the redemption from Egypt never gets old.

And it shouldn't, because it never does get old, not on a personal level or on a national level. Redemption from Egypt has been taking place since then, and will continue to do so until Yemos HaMoshiach. On a national level, "Mitzrayim" is more a concept than a place. Kabbalah explains that the word is comprised of two smaller words, "meitzer," which means "boundary," and "yum," which means "sea." "Yum" has a gematria of 50, an allusion to the "Fifty Gates of Understanding," the basis of Torah and true wisdom.

Mitzrayim, therefore, is any society that constricts the light of G-d. In Ya'akov's time through Moshe's time, it was Egypt. Since then, it has been any people who has adopted a similar approach to life. A society, even if Jewish, that lives contrary to Torah values is a "Mitzrayim" in its time.

On a personal level, leaving Mitzrayim means managing one's own personal klipah, or yetzer hara. On a national level, Pharaoh WAS the yetzer hara. In the individual, the yetzer hara is the person's Pharaoh. It says in Sha'ar HaGilgulim that when Adam HaRishon sinned, all souls that were a part of his soul fell off into the Klipos, the realm of spiritual impurity. Even though a soul leaves the Klipos when migrating to a body, one specific klipah remains with it all of his lives. This klipah is like spiritual clothing for his soul, and it is the source of a person's spiritual weakness, creating challenges and tests throughout life.

If a person overcomes his yetzer hara at a time of test, then he has temporarily left his personal Mitzrayim for the moment. If he overcomes a particular yetzer hara for the rest of his life, then he has left "Mitzrayim" for good, with respect to that particular evil inclination. If a person remains "enslaved" to his yetzer hara, then he remains in his own personal version of Mitzrayim.

How does one go about freeing himself from Mitzrayim? That's where these parshios come in, especially this week's. There are two ways in which this week's parsha can be learned. As a history lesson about events long over, or as a manual to personal freedom. The first approach prolongs exile, the second liberates.

The first lesson is, to not be afraid of the yetzer hara. G-d didn't just send Moshe and Aharon to Pharaoh, He told them to "come" to him.

The difference? When someone goes TO something, it is as a stranger from the outside. When a person COMES somewhere, it implies a

sense of familiarity, of comfort. G-d was telling Moshe and Aharon: "You are the 'ba'alei battim' now. Pharaoh has become YOUR servant." That's how we should feel about our yetzer hara. The yetzer hara uses fear tactics to get us to do things we'd rather not do, and to not do things we ought to do. "If you don't have that fattening desert, you will truly miss out on an important part of life," the master of temptation tells us. "Eat it now before it is too late."

As my Rosh HaYeshivah used to say, "Do what you WANT to do, not what you FEEL like doing." We WANT to do the right thing, he told us. We just don't always FEEL like doing it. Knowing this alone is a great weapon in fighting for spiritual survival.

Next came the Korban Pesach. It is amazing how many people say they want to change for the better, but upon arriving at the threshold of transformation, back down and capitulate to their old and erring ways. A form of psychological addiction, they have a tough time making the break from past bad habits.

This is why the Jewish people brought a Korban Pesach. It could have been any kind of kosher animal, but G-d made it the one that the Egyptians worshipped. Redemption was only possible if the person was willing to make a complete break with the past, in this case, their Egyptian past.

One might have thought that such a break would have already occurred as a result of the slavery. It wasn't as if the Jewish people had assimilated into Egyptian culture as Jews have today into Western society. They weren't in positions of government, running major business and earning big bucks, and enjoying the perks that come with success in a gentile world. They were rejected by the Egyptians, so how could they have remained attached to their way of life?

Au contraire. We tend to want the most the things we can't have. People pine for acceptance in the places they are the most rejected. In fact, four-fifths of the Jewish people died in the Plague of Darkness because they could finally enjoy the Egypt they helped to build. Given the choice of a Jewish lifestyle in a Jewish land or an Egyptian one in an Egyptian land, four-fifths—FOUR-FIFTHS!!—of the Jewish people

## The Week Ahead

### שבת פרשת בא

Candle Lighting	4.40pm
Mincha	4.45pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.05am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	4.00pm
2nd Mincha	4.40pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	5.50pm
Ovos uBonim	7.05pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	4.50pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

chose the latter. They were deemed beyond spiritual recognition, beyond redemption.

It has always amazed me how different groups of Jews over the centuries have picked up customs from their host cultures which were not friendly to their Jewish populations. Poland, for example, was heavily anti-Semitic. Yet, many Jewish groups absorbed some of their clothing traditions. In other places, eating habits were adopted. It can be for a number of reasons. If hostages can, over time, come to sympathize with their captors, or worse, then certainly slaves can come to identify with their masters. Freedom, for many, has meant finally being able to do that which they could only watch their enslavers do.

Some of the adopted habits can be useful. Some are not useful, but they are not harmful either. In many cases, the assimilated ways can actually hinder spiritual growth, water down a Torah lifestyle or even warp it. There's a lot of that in the Jewish people, as there has been in many generations in the past.

This is especially so for those who have grown up as a full-fledged member of secular society, only to leave it later to live a Torah life. Some weren't overly attached to the secular world while a part of it, and have little difficulty leaving it behind. Others enjoyed themselves while secular, and find it more difficult to move on when their past crosses paths with their present. The result can be a compromise that stunts their transition from the way of man to the way of G-d.

The Korban Pesach was a sacrifice. G-d is saying that He knows that leaving one's past in the past is also a sacrifice. It is one however that has to be made with a complete heart, if a person is going to cross the threshold into a holy and far more spiritually productive lifestyle. The alternative might look like fun for now, but it will prove itself at some time in the future to be darkness. It is a darkness that is the very opposite of personal and national redemption.

## **I'm Never Wrong**

**Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier (Torah.org)**

After a "Natural" disaster people speak with much greater reverence. Even normally arrogant people, after living through a hurricane, tidal wave, or earthquake, have a very real sense of humility and reverence—their reality has been changed, and they view life differently. Yet that wasn't the reaction of Pharaoh and Mitzraim to the Maakos.

The Egyptians lived through the most powerful manifestation of HASHEM's might ever shown to man. For months they were afflicted while HASHEM "played with Mitzraim". Two powerful points were made clear: HASHEM is the Master of creation, and Moshe was the messenger of HASHEM. Everything that he said would happen, happened—with precision and exactness.

Now, HASHEM told Moshe that the final, and most potent Makkah, would come. "Tell Pharaoh that exactly at midnight, every first born in Mitzraim will die."

Yet, when Moshe approached Pharaoh, he changed the message; he said at "approximately" midnight the first born will die.

Rashi is bothered by the question: why did Moshe change from the words that HASHEM used. He answers that Moshe was afraid that Pharaoh's astrologers would make a grave error. They would be watching the clock to see if Moshe was accurate. Even though the first born would die exactly at the stroke of midnight, the astrologers might have the wrong time, and mistakenly assume that it wasn't midnight. They would then accuse Moshe of being a liar. To prevent this from happening, Moshe said, approximately at midnight.

This Rashi is very difficult to understand when we take into account the historical reality.

Today, we live with a great awareness of time. We have clocks all around us: in every room and in every car; on pens, microwaves, computers and cell phones. We can't buy groceries, or go to the bank without a date and time stamp adorning our receipt. We are constantly reminded of our point in time. And our chronometers are precise: down to the nano-second. For under a hundred dollars you can purchase a radio synchronized, atomic clock that guarantees to be accurate to within a second every two thousand years! In short we have good reason to assume that our sense of timekeeping is

accurate.

However, that wasn't the way it was in the ancient world. The way that they kept time was quite different. During the day, they used a sun dial, which might have been somewhat close to almost accurate—sort of. At night the only way to tell time was by gazing at the stars. Without out aid of computers and optics, measuring objects light years away was a highly inaccurate science.

This last Makkah was to begin at night. Even if the Egyptians prided themselves on ingenuity and advancements, they had to know that they were mostly likely wrong when it came to accurately knowing when midnight was. If so why would the Mitzrim assume that they were right and Moshe was wrong? If everything he has said up until now had been true, and they didn't have a reliable way to know what time it was, why should they assume they were right and he was wrong?

The answer to this question is based on a quirk in human nature: we assume that we are right—and we don't like to hear otherwise. The ironic part of is that we assume we are right whether we are justified or not. We assume we are right; whether we really thought out our position, or not. We assume we are right; whether we really have evidence to the facts, or it just happens to be the first thing that came to our mind. We assume that the starting position that we have is correct—that's just a given. And it is very difficult to get us to change our mind. Facts aren't that influential. Reality isn't that convincing. Once we have made up our mind that is the way it is. We are heedless in the formation of our opinions, but once they are formed we defend them as if our very life depended upon it.

The root cause of this is arrogance. An arrogant person is not open to change. An arrogant person is not open to hearing that he isn't right. And an arrogant person has great difficulty learning—because he already knows everything there is to know.

The Mitzrim are a fantastic illustration of this concept. Moshe was afraid that if there was a discrepancy between his time and theirs—they would assume they were right and he was wrong. Even though he had proven himself again and again, even though every other part about the first born dying was completely correct, there wouldn't have even been a question in their minds. It was now precisely 11:45—fifteen minutes before the prescribed time. If the first born started dying now, clearly Moshe is a liar. Because of this, Moshe used the expression approximately, so that they shouldn't come to this mistake.

This concept has great relevance to us on two levels. The first is when we set out to influence others. If I view things differently than another person and my goal is to move him over to my way of thinking, I have to be sensitive the nature of changing another person's opinion. I have to help him see things in a new light. What will allow him to see things from my perspective isn't simply the facts, and it often isn't even the clarity with which I present my case. If his ego get's in the way- there will be no communication. Regardless of how correct I am – I will be speaking to deaf ears. For that reason it is imperative for me to allow the other person to gracefully maintain their position, while gently moving them along, allowing them to presume this was the way they thought all along. Only then will I be able to convey to them a different approach.

The second area is in regards to myself. What happens when someone points out to me that I was wrong? What about when I know that they are correct? What about when I know that they are only saying it for my good? How open am I to hearing this? Am I able to deal with the concept that maybe I was wrong? Part of becoming a bigger person, is the ability to be teachable, to be big enough to understand that not everything I thought of is right. And not everything that someone else says is automatically wrong- because it isn't my way. Some of the most critical words for growth are: Maybe I'm wrong. I have been wrong before. Let me see.

When a person opens themselves up to the idea that I may have erred; they become far more pleasant, far more agreeable and are now on the path to true growth.