



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ט שבט תשע"ז – משפטים – 25th February 2017 - Volume 9 - Issue 30

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Mark Shapiro on the Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos of Aryeh. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after Davening in Moor Lane Shul hall.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs David Newman on the birth of a grandson to Mr and Mrs Chaim Haffner. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 20 Rutland Drive.

Mazel Tov to Mr and Mrs Moshe Dov Wittler on the birth of a baby girl, Leah Reina.

Morning Chabura

The Morning Chaburah Siyum on Gemarah Brachos will be take place this Sunday, Rosh Chodesh Adar at 9.00am, after Davening.

The Chaburah is starting Gemarah Sotah on Tuesday - Thursday, 8.00 - 10.00am, and continues to learn Gemarah Sukah every Sunday and Monday. For further details please contact Simon Grant.

Learning Torah, That Was Easy

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier (Torah.org)

"And these are the statutes that you shall place before them." Shemos 21:1

The Dos Zakainim teaches us that "before them" means before the Jews and not before the gentiles. The Torah is for the Jewish people exclusively.

He then brings an example of this concept. On the inside of almost every Chumash is the Targum written by Onkolus. While Onkolus became a profound talmid chacham, that wasn't his beginning. He was a gentile, the nephew of the Caesar Adrianna. He became aware of the truth and desired to convert to Judaism, but he was afraid of his uncle's reaction.

He approached his uncle and said, "I wish to engage in commerce." His uncle responded, "If you need money, my treasure house is open to you. Take whatever you need."

Onkolus responded, "It isn't money that I seek; it is knowledge. I wish to go out to discover the ways of the world. Please, my uncle, give me advice. Which type of merchandise do you recommend that I invest in?"

Adrianna responded, "Find a commodity that is depressed in value. The ways of the world are cyclic. What is low now will rise later, and you will ride the crest upwards and find your fortune."

With that, Onkolus left to Israel and approached the Chachamim, seeking to learn Torah. They told him, "The Torah cannot be absorbed by one who isn't Jewish." He converted, went to yeshiva to learn, and became a Torah scholar.

After he returned home, his uncle noticed that his appearance had changed. "Why do you look different?" he asked.

Onkolus responded, "Because I converted and have learned Torah." "Upon whose advice did you do this?"

"Yours, my uncle. Didn't you tell me to invest in merchandise which is currently depressed because surely it will rise? I searched and found no nation as downtrodden as the Jews. Yet in the World to Come, there is no people that will be as exalted."

His uncle was so impressed with this line of reasoning that he promptly smacked him across the face. "You could have learned Torah without converting!" he exclaimed.

Onkolus responded, "Torah cannot be learned by one who doesn't have a Bris Milah."

While this is a beautiful story, when we take into account two points, a powerful question emerges.

1. We are dealing with a man who is clearly brilliant. Once he converted, he became such a master of the Torah that he was able to distill all of its wisdom into a concise Targum that has become universally accepted throughout the generations. Obviously, he was of extraordinary intelligence.

2. We are dealing with an extremely motivated individual. He was living in the lap of luxury, enjoying great power and prestige, and had the entire world open to him. He was a favored nephew of the most powerful emperor of his time. When he approached his uncle for help, his immediate response was, "My treasure house is open to you." In simple terms, he had everything that a young man could dream of. Yet he was willing to give it all up, at risk of his position and maybe even his life, to go to a foreign land to learn Torah. Clearly he was a driven individual.

With all this, why couldn't he learn Torah without converting? The Chachamim didn't say to him, "You aren't allowed to learn." They didn't tell him that the halacha prohibits a gentile from studying Torah. They said it won't work. The question is, why not? Here we have a man who was so brilliant and dedicated that he was willing to give up everything to learn. Why would he be incapable of learning Torah if he wasn't Jewish?

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת משפטים

- Candle Lighting
- Mincha
- Shacharis
- סוף זמן ק"ש
- 1st Mincha
- Rov's Shiur
- 2nd Mincha
- Seuda Shlishis
- Maariv & Motzei Shabbos
- Ovos uBonim
- Sun - Rosh Chodesh
- Mon - Rosh Chodesh
- Tues / Wed / Fri
- Thurs
- Mincha & Maariv
- Late Maariv

פרשת שקלים, מברכין אדר

- 5.22pm
- 5.27pm
- 9.00am
- 9.43am
- 1.30pm
- 4.39pm
- 5.09pm
- Following
- 6.29pm
- 7.29pm
- 7.00am / 8.00am
- 6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
- 6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
- 6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
- 5.30pm
- 8.00pm

The answer to this lies in understanding the nature of Torah.

The Torah is pure wisdom from HASHEM. A Rashi on Chumash can be understood by an eight-year-old child. Yet that same Rashi contains worlds of depth and opens up to understandings that are infinite. The ability to delve into the depth of Torah is specifically what a gentile can't do. A gentile can study geometry, physics, or business law. Those studies are accessible to the mind of man. The Torah is different. It is the "word of HASHEM" and cannot be perceived by man.

However, HASHEM created the Jew with a Nishamah uniquely suited to learn Torah. Different than all of the nations of the world, the Jew alone has the ability to access the Torah, to be able to plumb its depths, and to reach the Divine wisdom contained in it. But more than simply the ability to learn Torah, we were given a tremendous receptivity to it.

This seems to be the answer to the question. As wise and as motivated as Onkolus was, had he remained a gentile, he could never have mastered the Torah. Torah is the exclusive heritage of the Jew. Only we have the right to it, but even more, only we have the inborn capacity to understand it and master it.

This concept is very relevant to us because the Torah contains all the wisdom of the world. There may be times when we feel overwhelmed by the challenge. But the understanding that the Torah is our exclusive heritage and that we are uniquely suited to learn it should be a motivating force to help us set goals of mastering our portion in Torah.

We have a natural affinity for learning Torah; while we may have to strain our minds and exert ourselves, we are naturally suited to it, so it settles into our soul easily. We are like a musically gifted child sitting down to play the violin – it is in our blood.

Shabbos As Liberator

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

The symbolism seems fitting, but the timing is all wrong. The Jewish servant who declines the offer of freedom after six years of service must submit to an unusual practice. He is made to stand against a doorpost, and his earlobe is bored through with an awl. The statement we make is a striking denunciation of his moral obtuseness. His ear heard clearly the words thundered at Sinai, "Do not steal," but paid them no heed. He stole nonetheless, and was subsequently sold into servitude. That unhearing ear is punished through the pain and mark of shame of this ceremony.

So taught R. Yochanan ben Zakai. But if this were correct, why wait six years? The errant ear should be punished for its failure at the beginning of his term of service, just after his commission of the crime – not at the end!

Our parshah, like so many other parshios, can be examined on different planes, one of them being instruction in our personal avodah. Taken this way, the eved ivri is a symbol of the Jew who has fallen from his previous, loftier spiritual level. (Note that he is called eved ivri, not eved yehudi or eved yisrael. Prior to the exodus, the Jews were often called ivri'im; they earned the other, more exalted designations only upon their liberation. We refer to our eved here as ivri as a throwback to the earlier period of spiritual ignominy. Having stooped to the level of thief, he does not deserve the title of yehudi hashalem, the complete Jew.)

This is the reason why he – in contradistinction to other Jews – is permitted to consort with a non-Jewish slave woman. Plainly put, he has squandered some of the kedushah that others have, and can therefore be in a relationship that is less than holy, unbecoming the expected station of a Jewish citizen.

HKBH wishes that no soul ever be left behind. What, then, is the tikun for this fallen individual?

"Six years he shall toil; in the seventh, he goes out free." Within the precious "seventh," even this seemingly lost soul can regain his former spiritual brilliance and luster. The light of Shabbos penetrates even

to the darkest cellars of spiritual mediocrity. It can raise up a Jew from the lowliest of conditions. "The earth shall observe a Shabbos for Hashem." Even the person who has lost himself in complete earthliness can still sense the kedushah of Shabbos.

Shabbos comes in several varieties, arranged hierarchically. For some, Shabbos comes once a week. On the other hand, the genuine talmid chacham turns his entire week into a kind of Shabbos. The fallen eved of our parshah feels Shabbos only after seven long years. Some people can go year after year, cycle after cycle, and still feel nothing of Shabbos' kedushah. After most of their allotted years have past without ever having felt the magic touch of Shabbos, there is still ample opportunity. Yovel, which comes only once every fifty years, holds out the promise that even a person who has not utilized Shabbos for so many decades can still find in it a remedy to his spiritual malaise.

For every mitzvah, every aspect of kedushah, there is some special device that facilitates achieving it in its fullness. For Shabbos, that device is ahavah. We serve Hashem on Shabbos with the midah of ahavas Hashem; ahavah is the very essence of the day. To feel the kedushah of Shabbos properly, a Jew must assign all of his ahavah to Hashem. So long as his ahavah remains invested in the base desires of the material world, he cannot properly receive the ohr of Shabbos.

This, then, is why we do not bore the ear of the eved at the beginning of his term, rather than when he spurns the opportunity to savor his freedom. "When you acquire a Jewish eved, he will toil for six years, and go out free in the seventh." Through the effect of the seventh, through the redemptive power of Shabbos, the eved can escape his limitations. (The verse stresses that he goes out "free," which alludes to isra'usa d'le'eyla, to an arousal and inspiration initiated Above, coming as it were in the form of a free gift.) If, however, he is unaffected by that element of seven, if he fails to fail the kedushah of even the Shabbos that comes after six years, then we take greater note of his original failure. We bore through the ear that ignored the prohibition of theft it heard at Sinai, and that ignored every opportunity to remedy the damage.

The pasuk continues with the reason for his moral blindness. "If the eved will say, 'I love my master, my wife, my children...'" In other words, if the eved will proclaim, "I love the Master of the Universe, but I love my wife and children." Essentially, he has ample room in his heart to serve two masters, to even place them on a common plane: yotzro v'yitzro, his Creator on the one hand, but his evil inclination on the other. "I will not go out free!" he tells us. He is not ready to divest himself of his longings and desires. Having refused the cure of Shabbos that is made available to him, he deserves to be shamed.

We hold out hope, though, even for him. "He shall serve him forever," says the Torah, but Chazal take forever as a figure of speech, rather than in its conventional sense. Even such an eved gains his freedom after the seeming eternity of an entire yovel period. As the Bais Avraham taught, even within the evil person there is a bit of him that is not evil. There is always the possibility of redemption. If this is true of the evil person, it is certainly true of the fence-sitter, the not-so-evil person who nonetheless serves two masters. He can still repair his damaged self through the mega-Shabbos of yovel, the sensitivity to kedushah that some people must wait decades to experience.

HKBH created all things so that they would never be completely lost. Every creature has its tikun in the end. The ultimate tikun of Creation as a whole comes in the days of Moshiach. The robust belief in the final, complete redemption is central enough to our belief to rank as one of the fundamentals of faith. One who rejects it is a heretic.

We must realize, however, that the coming of Moshiach is simply the universal idea of tikun applied to all of existence. This idea of tikun applies to every individual as well. A Jew must have utter confidence in his own tikun, which is helped along by Shabbos. Each Shabbos has the power to liberate a Jew from all the factors that hold him back from basking in the light of Hashem.