



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ו ניסן תשע"ז - 22nd April 2017 - Volume 9 - Issue 38

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the recent birth of a grandson to Mr & Mrs Naftoli Cohen in Ramat Bet Shemesh.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Avrohom Moische Begal on the recent birth of a daughter, Aviva Rochel. Mazel Tov also to grandparents Mr & Mrs Frenchie Freedman.

### Siyum Mishnayos

Once again we will have a Siyum the Shabbos after Shavuot of Mishnayos learned together as a Kehilla. This year we will be learning Sedorim Nezikin and Kodshin. Members are encouraged to learn Mishnayos individually or Bechavrusa, the list is on the notice wall in the foyer.

### Forthcoming AGM

Members are reminded that nominations for the election of committee positions must be provided no later than 24th April 2017, by sending to office@ohryerushalayim.org.uk or by mailing to the Shul.

If you wish to propose a resolution at the AGM, you must provide the content of the proposed resolution in writing no later than 28th April 2017, to office@ohryerushalayim.org.uk or by mailing to the Shul. It must be endorsed by at least three other Voting Members.

## A Leopard Can't Change its Spots, But a Man Can...

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier (Torah.org)

The Sefer Ha'Chinuch explains that HASHEM separated the Jewish people from all the nations. We were given a distinct role in this world. Our lives and everything that we do must be different than any other people.

To remind us of this, HASHEM gave us a sign, a permanent reminder of our uniqueness – the mitzvah of milah. The change in our bodies shows that just as the body of the Jew is different than that of a gentile, so too is our soul.

By all rights, the Jewish baby boy should have been born already circumcised, as this would have more clearly shown that the Jew is unique amongst the peoples. However, there is a second lesson that HASHEM wanted to impart to us. Just like a person can take his body and permanently change it, so too, a person can change his very essence – his nishoma. Therefore, rather than creating the Jew circumcised at birth, HASHEM gave us this mitzvah to perform.

This explanation of the Sefer Ha'Chinuch is difficult to understand. Since HASHEM wanted us to know that we are a nation apart from any other nation, then surely as he said, the Jew should have been born circumcised. Wouldn't that difference have been more clearly shown had the very genetic material of the Jewish person been different? The Chinese are clearly distinct from the Occidental. The skin colors of various peoples show them as distinct races. Had the Jew been born without a foreskin, the entire world would have known that this people is set apart. Throughout the millennium, every person would have clearly seen that the Jews are unique. From birth they

were different, so their very essence is different. Yet that difference has now been lost. Any human can circumcise himself; in fact, many non-Jews do. Wouldn't it have been a far more powerful lesson for us as a nation to know that we are different because we were born that way?

The answer to this question is based on one of the greatest shortcomings of man – self-limiting beliefs. Often, a person will find himself thinking, "I am what I am. This is my nature, and there is nothing that I can do about it. Granted, I may not be happy with the way that I act, granted I may wish that I were different, but what can I do? This is who I am."

Such thoughts become self-fulfilling. If I sincerely believe I can't change, then, in fact, I will not be able to. I won't seek out the methods of change, I won't find the necessary motivation, and the reality will be that I cannot change.

This single concept can be the most damaging idea that ever crosses a person's mind.

The Gra writes, "If not for changing one's character traits, what is the purpose of life?"

Change isn't part of the Torah – it is the focal point of all of our avodas Hashem. The reason we were put on this planet is to grow. All of the mitzvahs focus on growth. But growth means taking who I am now and changing it, taking myself from where I am, and willfully, purposefully changing me. Whether it is in character traits, beliefs, trust, or honesty, whether it is in seeing HASHEM more clearly or in treating people with greater respect, every part of what the Torah demands of me is about change.

If a person were locked into the idea that he cannot change, then in fact he won't be able to. To such a person, the Torah has no relevance.

The answer to the question on the Sefer Ha'Chinuch seems to be that this concept of man's ability to change is so central to being Jewish that it warranted giving up another essential lesson. It is true that had Jews been born circumcised, it would have taught us that just as our body is different, so too is our soul. That concept would have aided

## The Week Ahead

### שבת פרשת שמיני

- 1st Mincha / Candle Lighting
- 2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting
- Shacharis
- סוף זמן ק"ש
- 1st Mincha
- 2nd Mincha
- 3rd Mincha
- Rov's Shiur
- Maariv & Motzei Shabbos
- Sun
- Mon
- Tues / Fri
- Wed / Thurs ראש חודש
- Mincha & Maariv
- Late Maariv

### מברכין אייר

- 6.30pm / Not before 6.52pm
- 7.15pm / 7.25-7.35pm
- 9.00am
- 9.30am
- 2.00pm
- 6.00pm
- 8.13pm
- Following
- 9.18pm
- 7.15am / 8.20am
- 6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
- 6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
- 6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
- 7.45pm
- 10.00pm

us in recognizing our mission in Creation. However, the concept that “I can change the essence of who I am” is far more central to being a practicing Jew, and therefore, it came at the expense of the weakening the first lesson.

This idea has great relevance to everything that we do. We often find ourselves mired in thoughts that limit our ability to grow. “That’s just the way I am. What can I do? I didn’t choose to be born stubborn, hot-tempered, selfish, and arrogant. Ask my Creator why He made me this way.”

While it is true that each individual was created with a different nature and temperament, and it may well be that one person has a greater tendency towards anger, jealousy, or arrogance than another, the entire focus of our lives is supposed to be towards changing our natures. However, to do that, we must clearly see change as possible, as something within our capacity. For that reason, HASHEM gave us the mitzvah of milah so that we can have a permanent reminder of our ability to change.

### **The Costs of Not Consulting** Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

On the eighth day, Moshe called to Aharon and his sons and to the elders of Israel. He said to Aharon, “Take a young bull for a chatas... And speak to the Bnei Yisrael, saying, “Take a he-goat as a chatas, and a calf and sheep in their first year – unblemished – as an olah.”

Be'er Yosef: We face multiple questions in encountering these pesukim. 1) What are the zekeinim, the elders doing here? They don’t participate in any of the instructions or their implementation that would make it worthwhile to mention them. (Rashi writes that it was important to include them, so that they could testify that Aharon did not act on his own, but had been instructed to serve as the kohein gadol by Divine instruction. This seems difficult. This point had been made once before. Why should the Bnei Yisrael need to be taught this a second time? A midrash on our pesukim likens the Bnei Yisrael to a bird, which cannot possibly fly without wings. Similarly, taught R. Akiva, Bnei Yisrael cannot do anything without the guidance of its zekeinim. Here again we must question how this thought is germane to our pesukim. The instructions here come directly from HKBH; there is simply no room for the guidance of the zekeinim.) 2) Typically, Moshe commands the people himself. Why does the Torah order that Aharon be the one to convey this mitzvah to the people? 3) The Sifra takes note of the different requirements demanded of Aharon and the people. The people are commanded to bring more offerings than Aharon. The Sifra explains that while Aharon needed to expiate the sin of the Golden Calf, others additionally required kaparah for the sin of selling Yosef into slavery, at which time they slaughtered a goat, whose blood was used to encourage Yaakov to conclude that Yosef had been attacked by a wild animal. But why would Aharon not require a piece of that kaparah? He was descended, after all, from Levi, who was one of the chief architects of the plot against Yosef! 4) The calf matches the sin to which it was linked. But why choose a goat to point to the sale of Yosef? The goat was peripheral to the sale of Yosef. It only figured in the cover-up after the fact, when its blood was used to suggest to Yaakov that Yosef had been mortally wounded by some wild beast. It doesn’t speak to the sale itself.

Let’s examine the sin of the Golden Calf. Our rishonim caution that it was not an instance of mass defection of the people to idolatry. Rather, the people sought to invite an indwelling of the Shechinah in some object that would serve as a tangible and palpable reminder of a Divine presence in their midst. Alternatively, this object would replace Moshe as the unifying figure that held the people together as a group.

What began as poor thinking ended in the avodah zarah of a small part of the population who turned a bad idea into something much worse. Probing further, we soon realize that the Golden Calf never would have become a reality, had the people consulted with the proper authorities, rather than acting on their own. (In fact, they scorned the advice of their elders. When Chur admonished them, they killed him. Aharon, now fearing that they would kill him as well, desperately wished to save the people from the terrible implications

of the pasuk, “If you will slay in Hashem’s mikdash both kohein and prophet,” as explained by the gemara.

The sale of Yosef occurred similarly. It was not the consequence of the jealous rage of the shevatim, but entirely justified in their minds on strong legal principle. The pattern of Yosef’s behavior in his reporting their supposed misdeeds to their father convinced them all that Yosef intended to continue the pattern that had begun two generations earlier. Avraham had effectively disinherited Yishmael, appointing Yitzchok as his sole successor; Yitzchok in turn had moved his brother Esav out of the running for even a share of the spiritual legacy of their father. The shevatim believed that Yosef was attempting the same, reaching for exclusive rights to spiritual succession – and prepared to stop at nothing to gain it. (Alternatively, they believed that Yosef rejected a pillar of both succession and faith – the kingship of Dovid, following from Yehudah.

Here as well, disaster would have been precluded had they not acted on their own, but consulted with their father. (If they thought that they could not discuss their findings with him, they could have gone to the beis din of Shem and Eiver.) Rather than seeking the oversight of their father, they hid their actions from him by slaughtering a goat, and using its blood to conceal the deed from Yaakov. Hiding their decision from their father was not at all peripheral to their sin; it was at its very core.

With the Bnei Yisrael poised to inaugurate the mishkan with an offering that would atone for the chet ha-egel, the earlier sin of mechiras Yosef jumped into focus. It was at that point that the sin of failing to consult with proper authorities first figured in our nation’s history. The Golden Calf was but a replay of that first, fatal error. As the Sifra says, they had in hand a failing “both at the beginning and at the end.”

Aharon, however, was an exception. His part in the chet had nothing to do with failing to consult. He acted to save the nation from a double murder. While he shared some of the guilt – he was, in the final analysis, party to a terrible stain of the record of the people – that guilt had nothing to do with the sale of Yosef. Hence, his kaparah involved only a calf. The goat – relating to Yosef’s sale – was irrelevant to him.

Including the zekeinim in our pesukim therefore makes perfect sense, even if they played no discernible role in the implementation of the parshah. The Torah wishes to underscore that it was the sidestepping of the authority of the elders of the generation that was common to both the chet ha-egel and the sale of Yosef.

We understand as well why Aharon was to convey our parshah to the people. The chet came about because the people did not seek out the guidance of Aharon, but rather forced his hand. The antidote to their sin required that they now submit to Aharon’s instruction.

R. Akiva’s teaching now comes into even sharper focus. Klal Yisrael is likened to a bird that attempts to soar higher and higher. When we try to elevate ourselves further and conjure up new ideas to achieve this aliyah, precisely then do we need to realize that the zekeinim are our wings. Without them, our plans will make us plummet, not soar.

We recall that when the moment to act on our parshah arrived, it was marred by the deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Moshe consoled his brother on his loss, by telling him that Hashem had earlier indicated that He would be sanctified by those close to Him. This does not tell us everything we would like to know. Why, in fact, did Hashem choose this moment to demonstrate the exactitude of His judgment, even with those close to him?

Nadav and Avihu saw a fire descend from Heaven. Their souls were set aflame with love of Hashem. They sought to draw closer to Him by bringing their own flame. They consulted no one – not their father, not Moshe. Ironically, at the very moment Hashem chose for the tikkun of the chet of the egel, Nadav and Avihu committed a similar aveirah. Their immediate punishment brought home to the Bnei Yisrael the importance of seeking out the guidance of the zekeinim of every generation. This was demanded even of great people like Nadav and Avihu. Without their guidance and approval, nothing positive can come from even the good intentions of the rest of the nation.