



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush this Shabbos after Davenning sponsored this week by Mr & Mrs Les Issler in honour of their daughter, Rikki's Bas Mitzva - Mazel Tov!

Clocks Changing

A reminder that the clocks go forward an hour on Motzei Shabbos.

Ladies Questions

Questions relating to Pesach should be handed to the Rov ahead of the pre-Pessach ladies Shiurim.

Hatzlocho

We wish Hatzlocho Rabo to Mrs June Fletcher who is making Aliya. We wish her all the best for her move.

Resensitization

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

G-d spoke to Moshe, saying, "Command Aharon and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering. . ." Vayikra 1:1

THERE IS A STORY in the Talmud about Rebi Yehudah HaNasi, the redactor of the Mishnah, that goes like this:

A calf was being taken to the slaughter when it broke away, hid his head under Rebi's cloak, and lowed [in terror].

"Go," he said, "it was for this that you were created."

Consequently, they said [in Heaven], "Since he has no pity, let us bring suffering upon him." (Bava Metzia 85a)

And suffer he did, terribly, for 13 years. His screams of pain could be heard for miles around, and this continued until the following incident:

One day Rebi's maidservant was sweeping the house. [Seeing] some young weasels lying there, she went to sweep them away.

"Let them be," he told her. "It is written, 'and His mercies are over all his works' (Tehillim 145:9)."

They said [in Heaven], "Since he is compassionate, let us be compassionate to him." (Bava Metzia 85a)

And his suffering went away, just like that.

This is one of those stories that at first seem so simple, albeit a little strange, but which becomes less simple and more strange as you think about it. After all, we're talking about the great Rebi Yehudah HaNasi, one of the greatest leaders of the Jewish people ever. More than likely, he had been quite a compassionate person as well.

Not only this, but he had spoken truth. It was for slaughter, among some other purposes, that the calf was made. A central part of the service in the Temple, as these parshios discuss, was the slaughtering of animals. When an animal was killed as a sacrifice, it was elevated, and the world as a result. It is likewise when an animal is slaughtered according to halachah, even if only to eat.

Then what did Rebi do wrong, and why did it take him 13 years to rectify his mistake? From the story itself it doesn't even seem as if his tikun

was a conscious one. And, in lieu of this week's parshah, which is all about animal sacrifices, it would seem that Rebi was right.

Furthermore, the punishment does not seem to have fit the crime. Why should Rebi have suffered so much for a single act of indifference? Even if someone as great as Rebi had erred in his approach to a relatively common situation, unbearable pain for 13 years seems hardly fitting a Divine response.

Another example of this seemingly unfair Divine treatment of human error is from last week's Haftarah for Parashas Zachor. True, G-d told the Jewish people not to show any mercy to Amalek when going to war against them. Yes, Shaul HaMelech seemingly ignored the Divine directive and let Agag, king of Amalek, live a little longer. Why though should he lose the kingship if it was more a delay of execution than a stay of execution?

The answer in each case is that it is not the punishment that we do not appreciate, but the crime itself. When the punishment seems to be far more severe than we think it should be, there are two possible explanations. Either the one doing the punishing is overdoing it, or the seriousness of the crime needs to be better understood.

When it comes to a human disciplinarian, either answer can be correct, depending upon the circumstances. When it comes to G-d, there is only one correct answer: we do not understand the seriousness of the crime. If we did, we'd agree that the Divine response fits it exactly.

The truth is, we suffer from this problem everyday. Today, if a person accidentally violates any of 365 negative mitzvos from the Torah, he merely does teshuvah. If he sins willfully, then he also does teshuvah, albeit a little more intensely. Today, we think, it is not so hard to fix a sin.

In Temple times it was different, VERY different. If a person sinned and committed a forbidden act without intention, he had to bring a sacrifice to the Temple. It was expensive, a hassle, and a frightening experience. You had to buy the animal with your own money, bring it to the Temple yourself, and then watch it slaughtered because you accidentally sinned.

The Week Ahead

פרשת צו

Candle Lighting	6.17pm
Mincha	6.22pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.05am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	5.34pm
2nd Mincha	6.04pm
סעודה שלישית	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	7.24pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon Bank Holiday	7.10am / 8.10am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

If the person did the same kind of sin with intention, then teshuvah was far more complicated, and a lot more painful, 39 stinging lashes more painful. In fact, these lashes were so severe that they could kill the person. If a person survived them, more than likely he was far more careful about correctly fulfilling the mitzvos in the future.

It makes sinning a lot easier. We may feel fortunate because we can escape punishment, but in the end, we are the losers, for two reasons. Firstly, we become spiritually desensitized to the importance of observing the mitzvos, and therefore fail to do them as zealously as we should. This will cost us later in the World-to-Come.

The second reason is because we only think that we escape punishment. The actual reality is much different, as the Talmud explains:

Did not Rav Yosef say and Rebi Chiya teach: "Since the day of the destruction of the Temple, although the Sanhedrin ceased, the four forms of capital punishment have not ceased? They have not ceased! Certainly they have ceased! Rather, the judgment of the four forms of capital punishment has not ceased. Someone who would have been sentenced to stoning either falls down from the roof or a wild beast treads him down. He who would have been sentenced to burning, either falls into a fire or a serpent bites him. A person who would have been sentenced to decapitation is either delivered to the government or robbers come upon him. The one who would have been sentenced to strangulation is either drowned in the river or dies from suffocation." (Kesuvos 30a)

In other words, though man has lost the ability to punish a Torah offense as is fitting, Heaven has not. We may take mitzvos and sins less seriously in post-Temple times, but G-d does not. It's the effect of the punishment that counts, not the one who carries it out or the means he uses.

This may be one of the reasons why illnesses and accidents that some say once did not affect the Jewish people as they did the gentile, now does. In fact, this may be one of the reasons for anti-Semitism over the

ages and some of its torturous results. In times of hester panim, when the face of G-d is hidden and His hand works behind the scenes, it is the way Divine justice is served.

The point is, the stories about Rebi and Shaul HaMelech serve to remind us just how important our approach to Creation and one another make a difference to Creation, and therefore to G-d.

The higher up one is on the spiritual ladder, the more this is true. Thus, Yosef, for merely relying on the Egyptian wine steward for redemption ended up spending two more years in Egyptian prison. Trust in G-d, especially for someone on Yosef's level, was, is, that important to personal and world rectification.

Though it is true that we have an easier go of it, having to rely mostly on ourselves to adhere to Torah and avoid sin, we are the losers in the end. The person who was inflicted with tzara'as from speaking loshon hara learned his lesson and avoided speaking it in the future. His portion in the World-to-Come greatly increased as a result, as did the quality of his life in this world.

We, on the other hand, seem to be able to speak loshon hara with impunity. What's the worst that can happen? Someone hears you and says, "Hey, that's loshon hara!" and causes us a little embarrassment? Instead, we speak it and again, whittling away our quality of character and greatly reducing our portion in eternity. The short-term gain we think we enjoy comes at great cost to eternal pleasure.

This too is part of the Purim message. As the Talmud points out, even the students of Rebi Shimon bar Yochai had a difficult time figuring out why Haman was able to rule over the Jewish people of his time (Megillah 12a). It didn't seem to them that the punishment fit the crime.

The answer was that it did, which became clear once it was understood how serious their crime was from G-d's perspective. As history once again becomes unstable, and Jewish security is threatened by modern day Hamans, we would be wise to consider the message, its historical impact, and learn from it for our future.

