



Ohr Yerushalayim News

17th January 2016 - Volume 8 - Issue 26 – ארא – כ"ח טבת תשע"ו

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Powell on the Bar Mitzva of their son Itamar this Shabbos. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after Davenning in the hall.

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Wilks on the birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Gershon Wilks in Israel.

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Wolfson on the birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Ben Rapport in Israel.

Kiddush Invitation

Mr & Mrs Rafi Black invite the Kehilla to a Kiddush after Davenning at their home, 11 Vernon Road, to celebrate the recent birth of their daughter Tehilla Tsiporrah.

Rosh Chodesh - Earliest Time for Tefillin

Please note that on Monday Rosh Chodesh, the earliest time for Tefillin in 7.03am

Pharaoh Lives!

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Pharaoh turned and went home, and he paid no heed even to this. Shemos 7:23

ARROGANCE IS POWERFULLY DESTRUCTIVE. It is so incredibly blinding. It closes the door on objective thought until even simple, but humbler people can see reality more clearly than people twice the intelligence. How many tragic but "unforced errors" have occurred throughout history, forced only by people's oversized egos?

There are a lot of themes with respect to the story of the exodus from Egypt. At the center of all of them is a confrontation between the most arrogant man of his time, and the humblest. It was a war between arrogance and humility. It preceded the conflict in Egypt and has continued since then.

What makes this especially relevant is that Pharaoh still lives, including within all of us. There is a little bit of Pharaoh in all people, and in some, a lot. This might be new to many but that is only because he has gone by another name now for thousands of years: the yetzer hara.

This is why G-d turned Moshe's staff into a snake and then had him pick it up by the tail. Moshe had been afraid to confront Pharaoh, so G-d indicated to him that he would really be fighting against the yetzer hara, who is represented by the snake. Just as he could pick up the snake, that is, the "yetzer hara" by the "tail" and subdue it, likewise would he subdue Pharaoh in the end.

This is because arrogance is its own worst enemy. Without question it causes a lot of noise and can do a lot of damage in the meantime. With patience and trust in G-d though it will be its own undoing if only because it blinds the person to the pitfalls in life. The arrogant person thinks that he is free when in fact he is a slave to his yetzer hara.

Recently I had a guest at my Shabbos table who is not religious. I have my suspicions as to why he has a difficult time letting G-d into his life and opening up to Torah. I know better than to push the point, at least for now. Instead, we resort to a mutual respect to maintain the relationship in spite of our differences.

However, that Shabbos he entered the "demilitarized zone" with a "hostile" intent. He began to attack the Torah lifestyle and the people

who live it. It wasn't done with anger, but the intent was clear and I could not let it go unchecked.

It wasn't an issue of trying to prove him wrong and make him religious. Moshe and his miracles couldn't change Pharaoh, so what hope to I have with someone who is just as obstinate? In the end, it was G-d who "convinced" Pharaoh to change, and in the end it will G-d who will have to open the heart of my friend and allow him to see his folly.

The only point I wanted to make had more to do with perspective. I just wanted him to realize what he was saying and what it meant, especially in terms of what he knew and his level of authority. He was speaking as if he was an expert on Judaism though he is far from it.

The interesting thing is, as a business man, he would never act the same way with respect to an investment or a deal. Money is unforgiving. It is also extremely valuable and once lost it is hard to get back. People are afraid to lose money so they are careful with what they do with it.

Likewise, if a person wanted to convince his employer that he was a worthy investment, hopes and words would not be enough. The greater the required investment, the greater the need to be able to prove on paper why the investment should work. The Board wants to know the risk involved in allocating their funds, and are not satisfied until they are convinced that the person making the presentation has been thorough and that the plan has been well thought out.

Yet the same CEO will mock G-d and religion out of ignorance. It doesn't make sense to him, so it can't be true. He doesn't even take the time to check out what it is he is rejecting, to see which poses the greater risk: living with Torah or without it.

This is because, unlike money, G-d is forgiving. Unlike in the business world, G-d is patient. If G-d ran his world the way business people run theirs, there'd be lightning striking people every second until people woke up and went with G-d. Instead, G-d lets an atheist happily pursue his course of spiritual self destruction as if He doesn't really mind at all.

So, I told my friend, "Look, if you don't want to be religious that is your free will choice. It is also between you and G-d. You don't have to

The Week Ahead

פרשת וארא	שבת מברכין שבת
Candle Lighting	3.53pm
Mincha	3.58pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.18am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	3.18pm
2nd Mincha	3.48pm
סעודה שלישית	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	5.08pm
Ovos uBonim	6.23pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
ראש חודש	6.45am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	4.00pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

answer to me or anyone at this table. We can even enjoy this Shabbos meal together. If you're going to attack Judaism," I told him, "and the people who live it, then at least do it from a position of intelligence. Let's look at the sources together, and see if they are credible or not. But please," I continued, "do not do the arrogant thing and argue about something you know little about."

Of course, he didn't buy it. He ranted about believing in stories that have been passed down from generation to generation and about not being there first hand. He did not however talk about how he has done the same thing in his life, relying on a "tradition" that is not well founded. Judaism, if true, makes some serious demands on a person. Western society doesn't, so who cares if it is baseless?

In fact, if we take a look at who goes out of their way to reject religion, invariably it is someone who has something to lose if it is true. The Mixed Multitude rejected Torah at the base of Mt. Sinai because they wanted to live a licentious life. Their desire to satisfy base desires overpowered their intellect and they lost perspective until Moshe Rabbeinu restored it.

Amazingly, there are scientists who claim that their theories better explain the origin of the universe than the Bible even though they have never taken the time to learn it in the original Hebrew. They are prepared to put theory up against an accepted tradition that includes areas of learning they don't even know exist. Is that reasonable?

No, arrogant. It comes not from the intellect but from a sense of superiority, from a bloated personality. There are people who have half their IQ and yet have a better understanding of life. Obviously it is not because they are more intelligent, though they are certainly intelligent enough. It is simply because they are humble enough to admit that truth is bigger than they are, and that they have to be subservient to it, even if it is uncomfortable to be so.

It has to be understood that there is arrogance and there is arrogance. There's the kind that is so obvious and so obnoxious, the Pharaoh kind of arrogance. It causes people to say incredible things that defy the imagination of humbler people, in an uncomplimentary way. Korach was also a good example of this, and many politicians past and present as well.

There is also a more subtle form of arrogance, which makes it more dangerous. It also results in remarkable statements and acts, performed though in such a way as to almost seem justifiable. Unless people really think about what is being said or done, they can come to be fooled into believing that they are a lot more reasonable than they really are. The average person when he hears an intelligent individual making a bold statement, does not realize that, as bright and educated as the person making the statement is, he is out of his league.

This is how Korach was able to draw so many followers. He had credentials, but not enough to challenge Moshe Rabbeinu. He had a point, but not one as great as he made it out to be. He was way out of his league, but his followers did not realize just how much until the earth opened up below them and swallowed them. They pushed up against G-d, so He lowered them to the depths of the earth.

The problem is two-fold though. Arrogant people cannot get followers unless they too have some measure of arrogance. The people Korach attracted had to think highly of themselves already, and worthy of whatever it was that Korach promised them. Humble people would have rejected Korach if only because he challenged Moshe Rabbeinu, and demanded a higher position.

This is different than self-confidence, which is necessary to succeed in life. Self-confidence just means that a person believes that he is capable of succeeding at what he must do, or at least that he can successfully make a concerted effort to succeed. The only expectations a self-confident person has is of himself, that he will try the best he can to do what must be done.

The ultimate source of self-confidence is the belief that G-d helps us succeed. When we make a blessing after using the bathroom we list some of the main miracles that keep us functioning. Essentially, they make it clear that daily life is a miracle, which means that everything we do is because of G-d.

My Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Noach Weinberg, zt"l, used to chide us for saying "I can't" to anything we had to do. He was of the opinion that such

a belief was not the result of humility, but of idol worship and arrogance. It said that we are the ones who make us succeed or fail, not G-d, which is why we are limited and have to sometimes say, "I can't."

The correct belief he said was that everything is possible because it all comes from G-d. Maybe He will make us successful, maybe He won't. Human success depends upon many factors, many of which we may not even be aware. As far as we should be concerned though, we should just try our best to get the job done and leave the rest to G-d.

Even humble people have their arrogant moments, though they may not be so obvious to others. We all assume too much about ourselves at some point in our lives. Nobody is perfect, and no one is 100 percent humble 100 percent of the time. Even Moshe Rabbeinu had his moments, brief as they may have been.

G-d can handle those brief moments. They are brief because the person usually wants to do right by G-d most of the time. We are the product of many factors in life, all of which have had an impact on our emotional disposition. We all have our "hot buttons," and life has a way of pressing them from time-to-time. Divine Providence sees to it.

This is in order to alert us to our "pockets" of arrogance, or potential arrogance. G-d will create scenarios that push us emotionally so that we can respond arrogantly, and catch it in the act. Then we can work to fix the spiritual breach and become even more rectified.

In other cases, such as those of the Pharaohs of history, Divine Providence will also push such people to points of arrogance, but not for the sake of rectification. Rather, it is for the sake of self-destruction, to give the arrogant person the opportunity to be "hung" by his own arrogance. That is when such people seem to implode, and even if they survive they are never the same again. Pharaoh repented and became the king of Nineveh in the story of Yonah.

It is crucial to never be a "Pharaoh" in any situation in life. The trick is to make sure that even our subtler versions of him are eliminated before they have the opportunity to become all-consuming.

A Privilege to Serve

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig (Torah.org)

And Elazar son of Aharon took from the daughters of Putiel as a wife (6:25)

The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 7:5) observes that the plural "daughters" indicates that she came from two families; she was the daughter of Yosef's family and a daughter of Yisro's family. While it is true that all the forefathers married women from families of avowed idol worshippers, the Torah always gave them their own identity and indicated how righteous they were. Yet here, the only information we have is on the families, we don't even have the name of Elazar's wife.

Clearly the Torah is informing us that the reason he married her was because of the qualities in these two families. Yosef's strength of character is obviously a virtue. But why did Elazar seek to marry someone whose father fattened calves for idol worship?

The first family disagreement in the Torah is about how to serve HaShem. Kayin initiates the concept of giving back to HaShem by offering some of his crops. Unfortunately, he chose from the lowest quality.

Hevel, who really was only inspired to give by his brother Kayin, also brings a gift to HaShem but he chooses from the best of his animals. HaShem chooses to accept Hevel's offering while rejecting Kayin's.

The difference between the two perspectives is significant: Kayin feels that he owes HaShem and wants to pay off his obligation. Since the intention is to pay off an obligation the quality doesn't make a difference as long as the obligation is now resolved. On the other hand, Hevel understands that HaShem isn't looking to be paid off, rather HaShem desires a relationship. He gives his best to show that he wants to be close to HaShem and considers it a privilege to serve.

Maimonides (Hilchos Issurei Mizbeach 7:11) says that when one is serving Hashem, one should always strive to bring the best or build the highest quality available, and he points out that we learn this approach from Hevel

Ultimately, Elazar married a woman who learned self-control from both sides of the family. He admired and even wished to incorporate the innate respect that Yisro had, that of serving a deity with the best that you have, because of the indication that service is a privilege.