



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ו טבת תשע"ח – ארא – 13th January 2017 - Volume 10 - Issue 25

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Michael Wilks on the occasion of the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson Simcha Zeidman from Edgware this Shabbos.

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Shabbos Mevorchin Kiddush this Shabbos after Davenning which is part sponsored by Eric Sievers on the occasion of his birthday. If you would like to sponsor the other half please contact Avi Stern.

Lesson of the Snow

Rabbi Eliyahu Hoffmann (Torah.org)

Snow. For local readers, it requires no introduction. For those reading this abroad, suffice it to say, we here in Toronto (and in much of the Northern Hemisphere) have had lots of it lately. It's on our minds and on our tongues (that is, we can't stop talking about it). Too often, it is also inside our boots.

Just yesterday, upon coming to Beis HaMedrash (synagogue) in the midst of our latest blizzard, and being welcomed-in by the hustle and bustle of each and all kibbutzing about the latest weather forecast, and how much snow might and might not fall, I remarked to a friend, "You know, there is nothing quite like snow – Something that can so disrupt our lives, yet bring simcha to one-and-all!" There's no doubting it: Snow has a special way of bringing simcha in its path.

One must acknowledge, a friend once remarked, the incredible kindness that the Ribbono Shel Olam has done with us by making snow white. Imagine if snow was black! Everything would become dark and gloomy. But how does snow relate to Moshe and Pharaoh and this week's sidrah? Snow, in Lashon ha-Kodesh, is "sheleg." The three Hebrew letters that make up the word sheleg are shin – lamed – gimel. The Midrash asks: What caused Esther to invite Haman to join her with king Achashveirosh at her feast? She said (Mishlei 16:18): "Greatness comes before a fall (Lifnei Shever Gaon)." Simply, this means that at times, Hashem grants greatness to the wicked only to make their ultimate downfall that much harder to bear. One who falls from a low place to an even lower place will likely be injured. But one who falls from a high peak to a deep canyon will be mortally wounded. Esther saw the downfall of Haman drawing near, and, in order to make his downfall all the more painful, she granted him an exclusive invitation to her feast.

There is, however, explains the previous Bobover Rebbe zt"l a deeper explanation of this concept of "Lifnei shever gaon/The greatness before the fall." The Gemara (Berachos 9b) quotes in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, "One should always run to greet a king. Not just a Jewish king, but even a gentile king. In order that, if he will merit (to see the coming of Mashiach and the renewal of the kingship of the House of David), he will be able to appreciate the difference between "our" kings and "their" kings." Jewish leaders have always been the epitome of humility. They never sought out positions of leadership, and only consented to take such positions after much communal pressure. How different is this from the many wicked dictators of world history who actively pursued their positions of power, and, having attained their goal, abused their positions to the denigration of those beneath them, and displayed unspoken arrogance and self-admiration.

Contrast, for example, Moshe Rabbeinu with Pharaoh. Moshe, even after being told by Hashem to go and lead the Jewish nation, said (Shemos

לעלו נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

More On Kiddush

One should make an effort to fulfil the mitzvah in the best possible manner, by making kiddush over a superior quality wine. Nevertheless, it is preferable to buy a wine which is to one's taste and to which one is accustomed so that one can perform the mitzvah wholeheartedly.

3:11), "Who am I to go before Pharaoh and to take the Jews out of Mitzrayim?" He found himself totally unworthy of the task. Pharaoh, on the other hand, took his power so sincerely that he set out to convince his nation that he himself was a god, as it is written (Yechezkel 29:3), "That he (Pharaoh) has said, 'My river (the Nile) is my own; I have made it for myself.'"

Greatness, like many things in life, is really a test of one's character. Will he attribute his power and his accomplishments to his own strength and talents, or will he recognize that whatever greatness he has, has been given to him by Hashem, Who is the source of all blessing and power. One who attributes his successes to Hashem is indeed worthy of greatness. He need not fear from the "greatness before the fall." But one who fails the test, who's successes cause him to indulge himself in smug self-admiration and self-glorification, rest assured that his greatness will be no more than a prelude to the bone-jolting fall that looms in the distance.

The letters of sheleg: Shin – Lamed – Gimel, comprise the first three letters of the pasuk, "Lifnei Shever Gaon/Greatness comes before the fall." Perhaps, like the snow, the "great" people of the world are at first elevated to the heavens, where they are admired and idolized. They are like the beautiful snowflake in its cloud, which, in its heavenly abode, thinks the world of itself. Soon, though, it will be rudely tossed to the earth, where it will be trampled, turn to slush, melt and dissolve away. Regarding the humble leaders of our nation, however, Shlomo haMelech says (Mishlei 31:21), "Her house does not fear from sheleg." Those who

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת וארא

Candle Lighting
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos
Seder HaLimud
Shacharis
סוף זמן ק"ש
1st Mincha
Rov's Shiur
2nd Mincha
Shalosh Seudas
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos
Ovos uBonim
Sun
Mon / Thurs
Tues / Fri
ראש חודש
Mincha & Maariv
Late Maariv

שבת מברכין שבט

4.00pm
4.05pm
8.40am
9.00am
10.18am
1.30pm
3.07pm
3.54pm
Following
5.14pm
6.14pm
7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
6.40am / 7.00am / 8.00am
4.00pm
8.00pm

accept their greatness with humility and modesty need not fear from “Lifnei Shever Gaon.”

So, as we put on our boots and galoshes, and traipse through the latest snowfall, we would be well-served to remind ourselves of the “Lesson of the Snow” – Namely, those who recognize that all they have is from Hashem, will enjoy continued success, while those who don’t, won’t.

And the Egyptians Shall Know Rabbi Jeff Kirshblum (Torah.org)

It is puzzling why the ten miraculous plagues were needed in order to free the Children of Israel. G-d could have caused Pharaoh to free them immediately without all these dramatic events.

Moshe and Aharon had a dual mission. Not only were they to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, they were to introduce the concept of a monotheistic G-d to the Egyptians. The Egyptians believed in a whole collection of gods, goddesses, major and minor gods, along with god consorts. The main temple of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus was in the city of Heliopolis. There, the nine supreme gods were worshipped. In addition to the nine gods of Heliopolis, of course there was the pharaoh himself who believed that he too was a god. He was the tenth god.

When Moshe and Aharon informed Pharaoh, “So said YHVH, the G-d of the Israelites, ‘Send forth My people...’” (5:1) Pharaoh responded, “Who is YHVH that I should hearken unto His voice and send forth the Israelites? I do not know of YHVH...” (5:2). Pharaoh was telling Moshe and Aharon that the G-d of the Israelites was not a member of his group of gods and therefore he is not obliged to listen to Him.

Perhaps each of the ten plagues was presented to demonstrate the ineffectiveness of each of the Egyptian ten god’s. Osiris was the Egyptian god of the Nile. The Egyptians believed that Osiris gave life and sustenance to the people because the Nile itself was the vital life-source of ancient Egypt. The first plague was Blood. The waters of the Nile turned to the symbol of death, blood. That was a sign of G-d’s superiority over Osiris. The second plague is called Frogs. The famous commentator of the Mishna, Rabbenu Ovadiah Bartenurah, tells us that the plague was not really frogs. It was Crocodiles! (Bartenurah’s Memoirs of His Travels) That certainly adds a new dimension of terror to the plague. The crocodile god Sobek was the earthly representative of his mother, Nut, the goddess of virility. The Medrash (Shmos Rabah 10:3) tells us that the crocodiles bit the Egyptian males at the “normally covered parts of the body” and deprived them of their virility. This plague showed that G-d was superior to virility- goddess, Nut, and her crocodile son, Sobek.

The famous sun-god, Ra, was lord over the earth. The Egyptians thought he reigned supreme over the whole earth giving it life. Aharon hit the earth and then the dirt and dust turned into a massive swarm of lice. Ra was powerless to stop the plague.

The forth plague was an invasion of swarming creatures, scorpions and venomous snakes. (Rashi 8:17) The Egyptian god of destruction was the serpent-god Set. Yet he was helpless, unable to destroy the plague that afflicted his Egyptian people.

The fifth plague was a Pestilence that afflicted the cattle of the Egyptians. The horned-goddess, Isis, was the goddess of fertility, nurture, and protection especially over the cattle. Yet she had to stand by idly as her cattle died by the tens of thousands.

The sixth plague was Boils. The Medrash (Shmos Rabah 11:6) says that the Egyptians were afflicted with leprosy that causes the flesh to decay. This plague was to show the ineffectiveness of Nephthys, the mother-goddess of embalming, the preservation of the flesh.

The seventh plague was a destructive Hail-storm. The deity, Tefnut, was supposed to be the beneficent rain-goddess. The Egyptians prayed to her to stop the devastating hail. The Egyptians quickly learned that she had no power over the G-d of Israel.

The eighth plague was Locusts. The swarm of locust blocked out the sun and feverishly devoured the crops of Egypt. The god of vegetation, Geb, was rendered impotent.

The ninth plague was Darkness. Rashi (10:21-22) tells us that the air became thick and black. It was so thick that the Egyptians were trapped in the very position they had assumed when the plague struck. They were unable to move. This plague was to demonstrate that the Egyptian god of air, Shu, was no match for the G-d of Israel.

The tenth plague was the Death of the Firstborn. Pharaoh believed that he too was a god. Yet, he had to plead with Moshe to spare his own life.

Some god!

G-d had told Moshe, “And the Egyptians shall know that I am G-d” (7:5). After the tenth plague, Pharaoh and all of Egypt knew this to be true. The baseless faith in the Egyptian pantheon had been duly demonstrated.

It is interesting to note that according to the ancient Egyptian historian, Manetho, and the Jewish historian, Josephus Flavius, the name of the Pharaoh at the time of the Exodus was Amenophis, more commonly called Amenhotep. His son and successor, Akenaten, did away with the Egyptian collection of gods and taught a monotheistic religion throughout the land. However, he also taught that he was godlike since he was god’s conduit to earth. Some habits are hard to give up.

But What About Our Appliances and What About Our Mortgages?

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The verse says “...And you will know that I am the L-rd who brings you out from under the sufferings of Egypt” [Shmos 6:7].

The Chidushei HaRim and the Kotzker Rebbe both say a very interesting thought. The words of the verse mean something else. ‘Sivlos’ doesn’t mean suffering, rather it comes from the expression “I can be ‘sovel’ this”, meaning I can take it. (I have the patience.)

The Chidushei HaRim says that the first step of redemption is for the people to say, “I can’t take it any more.” As long as one can be complacent in the Exile, redemption can never occur.

“I bring you out from the ‘sivlos’ Mitzraim” means that G-d implanted in the Jews the concept of “No more! We have had enough of this rotten Galus!” Up until this point they were ‘sovel’ it. They bore the burden; they felt they could take it. The Geulah doesn’t come to one who can take it.

Our Sages say, “no slave ever fled Egypt” The simple interpretation is that Egypt had a great security system — guards, walls, and dogs — all the things that ensure no slave could get out. Rav Gedaliah Schorr quotes a different interpretation from one of the Chassideshe Rebbeim: No slave ever left Egypt, because they had a great propaganda machine. Each slave thought — this is okay, there is nothing better on the outside world. When people have such a slave mentality, that it is not so bad and they can take it, Geulah will never come. Geulah can only come when one gets fed up with the Galus. This has to be the first stage of the Geulah.

I saw a Chassideshe story about Reb Nochum Chernobler. Reb Nochum was once in an inn and he arose at midnight to say Tikun Chatzos. The innkeeper, a very simple Jew, heard Reb Nochum reciting Psalms in the middle of the night and went down to him and asked him “What are you saying?”

Reb Nochum explained, “I am saying Tikun Chatzos that the Master of the World should end our bitter Galus and that we should all go to Eretz Yisroel, and it should be finally over”.

The innkeeper was impressed. He went back upstairs, woke up his wife and told her, “You know, there is a Jew downstairs who is praying that the Galus should end and that we should all go to Eretz Yisrael.” His wife turned over and said, “Go to Eretz Yisrael? What is going to be with the farm? What is going to be with the cows? What is going to be with the horses?”

The innkeeper was bothered by his wife’s questions. He went back to Reb Nochum and said, “But Reb Nachum — what will be with the farm and the cows and the horses?” Reb Nachum said to him “You’re worried about the cows and the house and the barn? — And when the Cossacks come and the Tartars come and they pillage and plunder — then you’re happy? Is that what you want? G-d will take us to Eretz Yisrael — no more Cossacks, no more Tartars!” Again the innkeeper was impressed. He ran back upstairs and related Reb Nachum’s response to his wife. The wife said “Go tell Reb Nachum that G-d should take all the Cossacks and all the Tartars to Eretz Yisroel and we’ll stay here with the farm and the cows and the horses!”

This is what it means — “One is ‘sovel’ the Galus”. If one doesn’t leave the ‘sivlos’ of Egypt — if one can still tolerate it — then Redemption is still far away.

Today we may not have barns and cows and horses. But we do ask — what’s going to be with our appliances, and what’s going to be with our mortgages, and what’s going to be with the great life that we have. If we are still attached to all this, the Geulah will not come for us. We have to reach the level of saying, “We’ve had it! No more bitter Galus!”

When that is how we feel, then the Geulah will come, may it be speedily in our day.