



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ה אדר א' תשע"ו – ויקהל – 27th February 2016 - Volume 8 - Issue 34

News This Week

מזל טוב

- Mazel Tov to Mr and Mrs Nat Davidson on the birth of a baby girl.
- Mazel Tov to Mr and Mrs Robert Berman on the birth of a granddaughter born to Mr & Mrs Refoel Berman.
- Mazel Tov to Mr and Mrs Bernard Levey on the birth of a grandson to Mr and Mrs Joshua Levey in Israel.

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning this Shabbos in honour of Shabbos Mevorchin which is, as yet, un-sponsored. If you are interested in sponsoring the Kiddush please contact Oshi.

Vayakhel and Self-Worth Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Moshe called the entire community of the Children of Israel to assemble ... Shemos 35:1

NOW THAT ADAR RISHON IS coming to an end, b"H, Purim is officially on its way. This week's parshah is last week's parshah, that is, the Maftir is the first of the four special ones for this time of year: Parashas Shekalim. And, being a Jewish leap, Vayakhel gets to have the Shabbos all to itself. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh asks why it was necessary to specify that Moshe gathered together the Jewish people to hear what he had to teach. It had become common practice already, so why mention it here specifically?

He is not the only one to ask this question, and he provides some answers. One answer in particular of interest has to do with the end of last week's parshah, which says:

It happened that when Moshe descended from Mount Sinai, and the two tablets of the testimony were in Moshe's hand when he descended from the mountain, Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant while [G-d] had spoken with him. Aharon and all the Children of Israel saw Moshe and behold, the skin of his face had become radiant, and they were afraid to come near him. (Shemos 34:29-30)

The Moshe that came down the mountain was not exactly the same Moshe who had ascended. He was certainly the same person as he was before, with the addition of a certain spiritual glow that, apparently, was not only perceivable by others, but even frightening to them.

This is why the Ohr HaChaim explains, the Torah states that Moshe Rabbeinu gathered the people together to hear him speak. He had to, since many were afraid to be in his presence.

The question is, should Moshe's new found radiance have been so frightening to them? Not really, as Rashi explains:

And they were afraid to come near him: Come and see how great the power of sin is! Before they sinned [with the golden calf], what does it say? "And the appearance of the glory of G-d was like a consuming fire on top of the mountain, before the eyes of the Children of Israel" (Shemos 24:17), and they were neither frightened nor did they shake. Since they had made the calf, they recoiled and shook even from Moshe's rays of splendor. (Rashi, Shemos 34:30)

It has to do with the impact of sin on a person's sense of self-worth. Worthy people do not fear. Instead, they trust in G-d and rely on His

help. They don't worry about being tricked, or taken advantage of, or being abused in any way. They trust that G-d looks out for them, and take comfort in the fact.

Sin makes a person feel guilty. Even sinful people feel guilty because of their sins. It's just that rather than feel remorse, beat themselves up, and then do teshuvah, they just get angry. Instead of blame themselves for their behavior, and therefore empower themselves to do teshuvah, they blame everyone else. Anyone who makes them feel worse about themselves becomes a target.

Everyone needs to feel worthy. Self-worth is what gets us out of bed in the morning, and it inspires us to do something meaningful with our days. It keeps us in check and promotes friendly behavior and nice traits such as humility, sensitivity to others, etc. We're literally nothing without it, which is why some people who do not feel it tragically and prematurely end their lives.

Where does the need for self-worth come from? It doesn't come from the physical part of us, because we see how low a person can stoop when physically desperate. In fact, it is often the antics of the body that erode a person's sense of worth.

That leaves the soul. The soul is a piece of the Divine. It can never lack self-worth because it is part of G-d. As such, it is committed to doing only those things that maintain self-worth:

Antoninus said to Rebi: "The body and the soul can both free themselves from judgment. The body can plead: 'The soul has sinned, [the proof being] that from the day it left me I lie like a dumb stone in the grave [powerless to do anything].' The soul can say: 'The body has sinned, [the proof being] that from the day I departed from it I fly about in the air like a bird [and commit no sin]'. " (Sanhedrin 91a)

The trouble is that until the soul is able to influence the body sufficiently to live meaningfully, it is forced to become involved in all kinds of meaningless, and sometimes even immoral, activities. When a person is only a baby, it is powerless to do much about the situation. In an adolescent, it struggles just to make the body aware of the right thing.

The Week Ahead

פרשת כי תשא	פ' שקלים, מברכין אדר ב'
Candle Lighting	5.38pm
Mincha	5.43pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.33am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	4.54pm
2nd Mincha	5.24pm
סעודה שלישית	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	6.44pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs / Fri ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	5.45pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

When the person becomes a teenager, it is constantly at war with the body, and depending upon the circumstances, not always victorious.

Adulthood offers hope, but that too depends upon the level of spiritual maturity of the person, that is, how far the body has spiritually come since it was first born. It also depends upon the world in which a person lives. If the world “talks” to the body, the soul will struggle. If the environment is spiritual, then the soul will have support.

If a person’s soul has to make too many sacrifices along the way, it will complain. It will make life uncomfortable for the body, especially since it knows it will also have to answer for the sins performed with the body:

The Holy One, Blessed is He, will bring the soul, [re]place it in the body, and judge them together. (Sanhedrin 91b)

The guilt that a person feels? The lack of self-worth driving us crazy? That’s the soul talking, giving a person a choice to shape up or ship out. The former means getting one’s spiritual act together, the reward being greatness in this world and incredible eternal pleasure in the World-to-Come. The latter means blaming G-d and the world for your problems, and sinking deeper into despair.

The good news is that it is rarely too late to get it right. This is what “vayakhel” is also saying: “You allowed the golden calf to be built and worshipped, a tremendous offense against Me, G-d said. Nevertheless, if you’re ready to return to Me, I am ready to gather you in.”

This is also part of the message of Machtzis HaShekel as well. As long as you are still ready and able to contribute your half-shekel to the nation, you are still part of it. To sin is human, to repent is Divine, because it means you are listening to your soul.

One of the sad ironies of life is that everyone craves self-worth. We’re supposed to. It is what fuels us to live meaningful existences. We crave it so much that some people cheat and try to get it illicitly. They do things to draw attention to themselves, physical things, not spiritual things. They may entertain people, but they don’t necessarily contribute all that much to the betterment of mankind.

When they do, and some make great effort to do so, they are truly admired and for the right reasons. Natural talent is not something we get to choose. Using it for selfless reasons is, and when people do, they are respected for their contributions to the welfare of others.

More than likely, such acts of selflessness go a lot farther to provide such people with a sense of self-worth than what they might get paid hundreds of millions of dollars to do. The soul knows what truly counts in life and what is secondary, if that. All the accolades in the world cannot create self-worth from anything except that which casts us in a Divine light.

The Megillah says that Haman tried to buy the right to exterminate the Jews in his time. The Talmud tells us that, in anticipation of this, G-d had the Jewish people give the half-shekel in Moshe’s time. Our giving of money for the right reasons was supposed to counteract his giving of money for the wrong reasons.

Any tzedakah could have done that. If the point was merely the act of charity, why not focus on all the hospitality Jews have offered others over the generations? Surely that has amounted to all lot more value than the half-shekels of the nation in the desert.

Thus, it was about more than the charity itself. It was specifically about the half-shekel, and all it represented. The half-shekel was more than a contribution to buy sacrifices for the Temple service. It was the purchase of the right to be a part of a whole, not just a Jew, but a member of “Klal Yisroel.”

This is what renders Amalek powerless, which is why Haman complained about the way the Jews stick to themselves and refuse to integrate. If 10 Jews doven separately, it is merely the prayer of 10 individual Jews. If they come together in a minyan, it becomes a far more powerful prayer than 10 individuals could ever generate.

The same thing is true of the nation in general. Functioning only as individuals, we are a small nation and vulnerable to attack, even destruction. As a unified people, especially under the banner of Torah, our energy is far greater than our numbers would suggest. The parshah,

the Maftir, and Purim teach this as well.

Together on Shabbat

Shlomo Katz (Torah.org)

This week’s parashah opens with the mitzvah of Shabbat. “On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem; whoever does work on it shall be put to death.” R’ Yaakov Sakly z”l writes: On Shabbat, the souls of living people enjoy the “sweet light” that souls will enjoy in the World-to-Come. This is what the Gemara (Beitzah 16a) means when it says that Hashem gives a person a “neshamah yeteirah” / “extra soul” on Erev Shabbat. Our Sages also say that Shabbat is one-sixtieth of Gan Eden. On Shabbat, a person has added strength, and his neshamah had added intellect.

Therefore, R’ Sakly continues, a person must practice oneg Shabbat / making Shabbat pleasurable, as an allusion to Olam Ha’ba, as Rabbi Yochanan said (Shabbat 118a), “If one practices oneg Shabbat, he merits a boundless inheritance.” This refers to Olam Ha’ba, which has no boundaries or limits. Rabbi Yehuda says about one who practices oneg Shabbat (ibid), “All his hearts desires are fulfilled.” How does one do this? With fish and vegetables [i.e., extra courses in the meal]. Rabbi Chiya bar Ashi says, “Even if one added only a small course, but he did so in honor of Shabbat, that is oneg Shabbat.”

R’ Sakly continues: Just as the reward of one who practices oneg Shabbat is very great, so the reward of one who honors Shabbat is very great. Honoring Shabbat means wearing clean clothes on Shabbat and dressing differently than one dresses during the week.

R’ Sakly concludes: If you wish to know how great Shabbat observance is, take note that even the mishkan may not be built on Shabbat. (Torat Ha’minchah, no. 31)

“On six days, work may be done, but the seventh day shall be holy for you, a day of complete rest for Hashem.” (35:2)

Our Sages teach that a person should repent every day. Seemingly, this includes Shabbat. Indeed, some mussar works state that Shabbat is a particularly auspicious time for teshuvah.

Yet, this presents a difficulty, for teshuvah is referred to in verses (for example, Hoshea 14:5) and other sources (for example, Yoma 86a) as a refuah / healing process. The halachah states that refuah is prohibited on Shabbat, except for critical illnesses.

R’ Menachem Simcha Katz shlita explains that teshuvah is permitted on Shabbat because failure to repent is a critical, indeed life-threatening, condition. Specifically, the midrash teaches that, were it not for the gift of teshuvah, every sin would deserve the death penalty.

Yet the question remains: An inherent part of heartfelt teshuvah is crying. Is this, too, permitted on Shabbat? R’ Katz explains that crying on Shabbat is permitted when it eventually leads to joy. Since teshuvah leads to joy, tears of regret and repentance are permitted even on Shabbat. (Simcha L’ish p.24)

“You shall not kindle fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.” (Shmot 35:3)

We learn in the mishnah (Shabbat 44a), “One may move a new [oil] lamp on Shabbat but not an old one [because it is sullied and therefore disgusts a person]. The sage Rabbi Shimon says, ‘All lamps may be moved except one that was alight during Shabbat.’”

R’ Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov z”l observes: The halachic dispute in the mishnah may be interpreted allegorically in light of the verse (Mishlei 20:27), “A man’s soul is the lamp of Hashem.” We are taught that all souls are permitted to leave Gehinnom on Shabbat except those souls that are the most sullied with sin. Paraphrasing the mishnah: those lamps (souls) that are like new may be moved (from Gehinnom) while those lamps (souls) that have become habituated (“nityashnu” – the same root as “old”) with sin, may not be moved.

However, the Zohar, which was authored by the same Rabbi Shimon who is quoted in the mishnah, teaches that all souls may leave Gehinnom on Shabbat except those who transgressed Shabbat. Again, paraphrasing the mishnah: All lamps (souls) may be moved (from Gehinnom) except those that were alight on Shabbat, i.e., which transgressed the laws of Shabbat. (Ba’al Shem Tov Al Ha’Torah)