



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Michael Brandeis on the occasion of the Bar Mitzva of their grandson.

Minyanim Reminder

As members exit town for sunnier (hopefully) climates, we ask those left behind to make an extra effort to support the daily Shul Minyanim.

Married To G-d

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

And it will be, because you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform, that G-d, your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. (Devarim 7:12)

I had an interesting conversation with a friend of mine. We were talking about the impact that childhood events have on adult life, sometimes in an obvious way, most of the time on a subconscious level. A person just finds himself overreacting to a situation that he knows is not as serious as his gut feeling tells him it is.

"The past is the past," he told me. "You can't go back and rewrite it. Whatever happened to me then," he said, "was out of my control. It doesn't mean I can't use the experience to become a stronger and better person now." I agreed.

As we spoke it occurred to me that even the traumas we experienced as children were also Divine Providence. G-d arranged them, and only He knows why. "You know," I said to him, "even those lousy experiences we had as children were all from G-d. He set them up. He made them happen."

My friend thought about this for a moment. "I guess you're right," he finally said. "I never looked at those experiences in that way, even though today I see everything as a function of Hashgochah Pratis. I guess those rotten childhood experiences would have to have been as well."

"I guess so," I confirmed, as we both began to consider the implications of this realization.

"So, they weren't really random then?" my friend asked.

"Nope."

"They were deliberate, at least as far as G-d was concerned."

"They would have to have been," I agreed.

We both thought some more.

"Why would He do it?" my friend asked. "I mean, why put people through traumatic experiences as children and basically ruin their lives, or least part of them?"

I thought about the question and then answered the only logical thing I could think of. "All those traumas? They're custom-designed crises put into us at an early age for us to later overcome and become great people."

"You mean that G-d built these problems into people so that they would have to struggle with them later and through them become

better people?"

"Makes sense to me," I said. "I may not like it, but it does make sense to me."

This time he agreed with me. He also said that this was a whole new take on his childhood hangups for which he no longer felt resentment. All of a sudden what he had thought were only emotional handicaps became challenges to be overcome and used to achieve personal completion. More importantly, they were "homing devices."

As my friend explained to me, he was raised secular. He did not "return" to Judaism until his late teens, and even then he had not been looking to become even slightly more religious. On the contrary, until that time, he was looking to become as irreligious as possible. Until he "discovered" Torah Judaism, he wanted what most kids his age in his society dream of: financial security and a fun life.

Though he did not, and could not know it at the time, his defining experiences as a child would one day lead him to a Torah lifestyle. A lot of water would have to pass under the bridge and he would first go in the opposite direction, but some of his earliest negative experiences would sensitize him in ways that would one day keep him open to ideas that, in the end, would lead him to G-d and Torah.

Even one year before the change, he had no inkling that this was where he was going. Why this had to be his path "home" he may never know until he goes to the next world. Why is one person born religious and given Torah on a silver platter, and another is born secular and has to fight his way through the Torah door? Does anyone really know?

What we do know is that all adversity can be used to achieve some level of greatness. In many instances, a person's life may come down to a single moment of greatness, achieved as a result of dealing with

The Week Ahead

פרשת עקב	שבת מברכין אלול
1st Mincha	7.05pm
Candle Lighting	Not before 7.19pm
2nd Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.30 - 7.45pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.24am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.47pm
Rov's Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	9.52pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

personal adversity.

Recently I went to comfort the parents of a young boy who died at the age of 21 from the worst brain cancer possible. He had been a normal healthy young man until about four years ago, previously oblivious to the cancer attached to his brain stem. They did not become aware of the illness until it finally began to seriously affect his physical health.

The doctors at that time gave him two months to live. He survived for four years. They were not easy years, and the stories of what the boy and the family had to do from day-to-day just to survive all of it is difficult to fathom. The father to us spoke for 30 minutes straight and I could not find any words to say. I was completely overtaken by the stories.

One of the stories was that, in the beginning, the young man had hoped to be alive long enough to at least marry. When he realized that this was not going to be possible, he focussed on being “married” to G-d instead. As he did, he even became grateful for his illness because it allowed him to develop a relationship with G-d he would not have otherwise developed.

As I drove away from the Shiva house and thought about this, I recalled that “marrying” G-d is something all of us are supposed to do everyday. In fact, the last thing men say when putting on Tefillin, when wrapping the strap around the “ring finger,” is:

I will betroth you to Me forever. And I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness, and mercy. I will betroth you to Me with fidelity, and you shall know G-d.

As I drove, ready to burst out crying, I thought to myself, “Wow, four years of suffering and imminent death to become real with these words.”

How many times have I said these words? How many times I have said them slow enough to mean them? How often does my daily lifestyle reflect the truth of them? When a person gets married his or her life changes. Where as before he or she was more “open” to the rest of the world, after marriage it becomes more a function of the following verse:

I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me. (Shir HaShirim 6:3)

As a person once said, “Thank G-d, G-d is so forgiving. If I was as disloyal to my spouse as I am to G-d, she would have divorced a long time ago.”

Fortunately G-d, until a spouse, is all-seeing. This means that He knows that as “disloyal” as we act we really mean to be better. As the Talmud states, we’d rather serve G-d all the time and would, if not for the yetzer hara within us (Brochos 17a).

“Cheating” on G-d means doing something that is contrary to Torah. Being disloyal means sharing your heart with something else of which G-d does not approve. It means learning Torah for the wrong reasons, performing mitzvos insincerely, saying blessings without intention, and profaning His Name, especially in public. It also means acting in a way that suggests, on any level, that He is not behind all that exists and all that occurs.

This is one of the main themes of this week’s parsha, which begins by saying:

And it will be, because you will heed these ordinances and keep them and perform, that G-d, your G-d, will keep for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. (Devarim 7:12)

And it will be, because you will heed: lit. “heel.” If you will heed the minor commandments which one [usually] tramples with his heels [i.e., which a person treats as being of minor importance]. (Rashi)

The meaning is obvious. There are mitzvos that people do not take seriously, and this is wrong. Instead, a person should take every mitzvah seriously and perform it as if it was the most important mitzvah of all, which it is at the moment. Just as G-d is “in the details,” our heart is in the way we carry them out. This is what reveals the extent to which we

consider ourselves “married” to G-d.

This is the time of year to think about this. The month of Elul will begin a week from this Shabbos, b”H. It is the month in advance of Rosh Hashanah, and its letters are said to spell the Hebrew words of the verse from Shir HaShirim quoted above. This is the time of year that our level of devotion, our loyalty to G-d, is evaluated. This is the time of year our monogamy with respect G-d is examined.

In fact the entire relationship between G-d and the Jewish is viewed this way:

And G-d said to Moshe: “Hew for yourself two stone tablets like the first ones. And I will inscribe upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke.” (Shemos 34:1)

Hew for yourself: You broke the first ones. You hew others for yourself. This can be compared to a king who went abroad and left his betrothed with the maidservants. Because of the immoral behavior of the maidservants, she acquired a bad reputation. Her bridesman [the person appointed to defend the bride should any problems arise] arose and tore up her marriage contract. He said, “If the king decides to kill her, I will say to him, ‘She is not yet your wife.’” The king investigated and discovered that only the maidservants were guilty of immoral behavior. He [therefore] became appeased to her. So her bridesman said to him, “Write her another marriage contract because the first one was torn up.” The king replied to him, “You tore it up. You buy yourself another [sheet of] paper, and I will write to her with my [personal] hand [writing].” Likewise, the king represents The Holy One, Blessed is He. The maidservants represent the Mixed Multitude. The bridesman is Moshe, and the betrothed of The Holy One, Blessed is He, is the Jewish people. (Rashi)

Everything is from G-d. Everything is for G-d. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu tried to instill within the Jewish people on his last day of life. This is what the young man who died from cancer learned in his last year of life. This is how we’re supposed to live, all the years of our lives.

Rewards

Shlomo Katz (Torah.org)

This week’s parashah speaks extensively of the praises of Eretz Yisrael. R’ Chaim Palagi z”l (1788-1868; chief rabbi of Izmir, Turkey) writes: The sefer Reishit Chochmah [quoting the midrash Kohelet Rabbah] notes that Tanach uses similar terminology to describe the human body and the earth. This is because, just as a person’s limbs and organs differ in their qualities, so do various parts of the world differ in their qualities. Some produce iron, some copper, some silver, some gold, and some produce gems. In contrast, Eretz Yisrael’s worth is not determined by the minerals it produces, but rather by the fact that it is infused with the Shechinah, which is more precious than gems.

Why then, asks R’ Palagi, does our parashah (8:9) seem to praise Eretz Yisrael as: “A Land whose stones are iron and from whose mountains you will mine copper”? He answers: The correct interpretation of this verse is that, after the Torah praises the Land, it adds that if we do not observe the mitzvot, the Land will not produce fruits, as if it was made of iron or copper. The reason for this is that Eretz Yisrael does not produce fruits naturally, as do other lands. Rather, as we read later in the parashah (11:13-14), “It will be that if you listen to My commandments . . . then I shall provide rain for your Land in its proper time, the early and the late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil.”

R’ Palagi adds in the name of his son, R’ Yitzchak Palagi [z”l]: In the verse quoted above, the Hebrew word “avanehah” / “its stones” has the same letters as the Hebrew word “bana’eha” / “its builders.” The initial letters of the Hebrew phrase, “Avanehah barzel u’mei’hararehah tachtzov” / “its stones are iron and from its mountains you will mine [copper]” spells “Avot” / the Patriarchs. And, “barzel” / “iron” is the initial letters of Yaakov Avinu’s four wives: Bilhah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Leah. This teaches that Eretz Yisrael is built on the merits of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs. (Artzot Ha’chaim p.26)