



Ohr Yerushalayim News

17th August 2013 - Volume 6 - Issue 8 – פרשת כי תצא – י"א אלול תשע"ג

F NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to the Rov & Rebbetzen on the engagement of their granddaughter, Yocheved Rivka Rubin (daughter of Rabbi & Mrs Rubin) to Yossi Kopolovitch of Israel.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Bernard Markovic on their grandson's (Motti) Bar Mitzva last Shabbos.

Seforim to Give Away

Various superfluous Seforim will be available in the foyer from Sunday. We kindly ask if you take any, to leave a donation to the Shul's Kinyan Seforim in the Tzedoko box provided.

Hashovas Aveido

Various personal effects eg coats etc have been left in the building over time. They are available to collect from the back of the mens cloakroom. Anything not collected by Friday 30th August, Erev Shabbos Nitzovim Vayeilech will be disposed of appropriately.

Gemara Chaburoh

R' Yehuda's Chabura restarts on Monday evening at 8.15pm learning Bava Basra Perek Aleph 'Hashutfin'.

F NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Alive With Spiritual Pleasure

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

This week's portion opens with a discussion of the laws pertaining to the Jewish soldier whose passions are aroused in battle, impelling him to take a non-Jewish woman from the conquered country as his wife. The Torah prescribes a detailed conversion process concluding with the provision that the captive woman must be granted a month-long bereavement period during which she can mourn for her parents and prepare for her conversion to Judaism.

This Torah portion is always read at the beginning of the month of Elul, the last month of the year during which we prepare for the onset of the new year. The commentaries find an allusion in the Torah reading to the month of Elul; just as the captive woman before conversion utilizes the month to close the books on her past life and idolatrous practices, we, too, in the month of Elul begin the process of introspection. We reflect on the lost opportunities and wayward leanings we succumbed to in the past year, making amends and preparing for a new year of spiritual renewal.

During the month of Elul, in the Yeshiva world, much emphasis is placed on the study of mussar and ethical works. Intense preparations are made for the Day of Judgment and the Days of Awe that follow it. I recall my Elul experiences in Yeshiva as being intense and challenging. The atmosphere was weighted with undercurrents of pressure and solemnity, and the seriousness of this month was felt by all the students.

As I grew older, I realized that much of the pent-up pressure that was applied in the month of Elul in a sense missed its mark. Indeed, Elul is devoted to preparing for the Days of Awe but the period of preparation can-and should be-experienced as an end in itself.

We generally approach Elul as a pathway to an important spiritual destination. If we do things right, we will be able to successfully transition into the new year in an ennobled, more spiritually integrated state. Yet rather than approach Elul as a medium in which we gruelingly take ourselves to task for our shortcomings and strive to improve to merit a favorable judgment on Rosh Hashana, the month of Elul should be experienced as a

wondrous period in its own right.

It is a time when we are granted rich opportunities to realign our relationship with Hashem, recognizing that as the Hebrew letters of Elul suggest, "ani l'dodi, v'dodi li, I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me," Sure, much of the focus in Elul needs to be devoted to addressing our foibles and past misdemeanors, but rather than self-flagellate over our lapses, the end purpose is better served when we emphasize not the reformation but the actual process of rekindling our relationship of intimacy with our Creator.

My revered Rebbe, the Slonimer Rebbe shlita, recently met with a great leader of the Lithuanian yeshiva world. The discussion evolved around the different emphasis in avodas Hashem, serving the Creator, in the Chassidic world vis-à-vis the Lithuanian approach.

The great Rosh Yeshiva mentioned the opening words of the Mesilas Yesharim where he famously states that this world is but an anti-chamber to the World to Come, which we are expected to use as a means of preparation to attain our destination in the World of Truth.

The Slonimer Rebbe responded by noting that among Chassidim the primary emphasis is not the World to Come, but this temporary and transient world in which we reside here and now. We were placed here to enjoy and celebrate our relationship with the Divine right now. What Hashem graces us with in the World to Come is not really the objective we should be focusing on.

The preparation itself-the means of getting from point A to point B while fulfilling the will of Hashem every step of the way, is an end goal unto itself. Traversing this world and navigating its challenges and reversals with a positive spirit, while embracing and accepting Hashem's will, is what really counts.

This theme was further brought home to by one of my children with whom I was recently studying. We were discussing a verse at the beginning of Parshas Lech Lecha that describes how Abraham, heeding Hashem's command to leave his land, his relatives and his father's house, picked up and left Chorah for the land of Israel. The Torah makes a point of telling us further on that "They left to go to the land of Canaan, and they came to the

The Week Ahead

פרשת כי תצא

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	6.45 / 7.30pm
Candle Lighting	Not Before 7.03/7.37 - 7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.31am
Mincha 1st Minyan	6.00pm
Mincha 2nd Minyan	8.24pm
Followed by the Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	
Motzei Shabbos	9.29pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	6.30 / 7.15pm

land of Canaan". (Breishis 12:6)

My son asked why the Torah needs to make the point that "they left to go to the land of Canaan." Isn't it self-evident that if they came to this land, they certainly departed with the intention of getting there?

It occurred to me that the Torah is telling us that Avraham embraced the process of the journey itself, as a prime opportunity to carry out Hashem's will, with the same excitement and love that he experienced upon reaching the land of Canaan.

Applying this to our own life journey, it's undoubtedly important to focus on our ultimate destination in the Afterworld. Yet whether or not we will merit eternal bliss there is not as relevant as whether we live TODAY in spiritual bliss. We would do well to remember this message in the month of Elul. Rather than focusing exclusively on emerging from the Divine judgment triumphantly, let's also enjoy the purifying process that brings us to that point.

Enjoying that process means celebrating the special closeness to Hashem that is Elul's unique gift, and making the most of the month's rich opportunities for spiritual regeneration and realignment with our Divine Source.

Yefas Toar: Captivating Beauty

Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene (Torah.org)

The Mitzvah: The Jewish soldier who sees a beautiful gentile woman in war, and who desires to take this captive as a wife, is permitted to bring her into his home. But before making her into his wife, she must first cut her hair, clip her nails and don her clothing of captivity while bewailing her father and mother for one month (Deuteronomy 21:10-14).

A beautiful symbolical interpretation of this mitzvah, which is of universal relevance, is expounded by the Ohr HaChaim in his Torah commentary.

The going out to war is a reference to birth. Leaving the heavenly realm to descend into this world, a person readies himself to engage in warfare. His life is to be an on-going conflict wrestling with the Yetzer Hara, evil inclination. He is only strong if he is victorious – "Who is the strong one? One who subdues his inclinations" (Avos 4:1).

But this is not a typical or a conventional battle. It is an ongoing, never-ending assault. It is a relentless struggle against a ruthless antagonist who threatens to overwhelm the person. A person cannot afford to hesitate – even momentarily – or let go his guard fearful that the Yetzer Hara, evil inclination may get the better of him. It is a battle to the death. And the stakes are great.

Every person has a spiritual component, as symbolized by the Yefas Toar, "the beautiful woman". She makes or breaks the man. She is the love of his life insofar as spiritual pursuits are what make everything in life worthwhile. Intrinsically beautiful, the Yefas Toar is nevertheless held "captive" by the evil inclination.

But the soldier succeeds in capturing the Yefas Toar. He demonstrates a willingness to take whatever steps are necessary to "free" this spiritual spark. He wants to rescue this beautiful captive, win her over and incorporate this spiritual component into his divine worship.

Fighting the powerful influence of the evil inclination, he longs to bring her into his house.

However before her 100% integration, all alien ideologies must be eliminated. And for her beauty to shine, all the foreign external trappings must be discarded. This is alluded to in the instructions to cut her hair and clip her nails – a reference to the extraneous components of the human body.

There is therefore a call for Teshuvah, Repentance. The waiting time of a "month" before the soldier is allowed to take her as a wife is an allusion to Elul, the month designated for repentance and returning to G-d just before Rosh Hashanah. During that time the Yefas Toar is to mourn about her father and mother. This is the remorse felt for the spiritual component having departed from her "Heavenly Father" and from the mother- symbol of the "Congregation of Israel".

May each one of us succeed in rescuing our "captive" spiritual side and use the wonderful month of Elul to be victorious over our Yetzer Hara and achieve complete atonement by coming closer to our Master.

Tefillah Nuggets

Dani Epstein

שמונה עשרה - אבות: תפילה

והנורא

הגבור

הגדול

הא-ל

The awesome one

The strong one

The great one

The G-d

This section of the first ברכה in the Shemone Esrei presents a very difficult problem. We are supposed to praise Hashem in the first three ברכות. Surely in order to praise anyone or anything one first requires some kind of knowledge of that person or thing?

Imagine someone extolling the virtues of the Lamborghini Aventador without having the slightest idea of what makes the car so fascinating. Perhaps he seen a photo or two of the vehicle, and on that basis he claims that the Italian thoroughbred is the ultimate supercar. He has no clue as to how many cylinders the engine has, its displacement or compression ratio, what type of suspension the vehicle sports or even its performance figures. Who would take him seriously? Of what value is his opinion, based as it is on a skin-deep observation of the vehicle?

We are in much the same position as our erstwhile motor critic when it comes to praising Hashem. In order for us to praise Hashem, we require knowledge of Him. On what knowledge is our praise predicated?

The problem deepens when we consider the position of the Rambam, the Ramchal and others who observe that we have no direct knowledge of Hashem at all. We cannot say "Hashem is x", since that would imply that we have a definitive knowledge of x which is an implausible claim in itself, and would limit Hashem to our knowledge of x as well, which is simply absurd.

We could say, for example, that Hashem is just. In order for this to be absolutely true – a basic requirement if we are to apply this characteristic to Hashem – we would have to be able to define "just" for every possible value of "just". Since this is impossible to do, and some definitions could be inherently conflicting, our definition is going to fall short of the target. It follows that there are few – if any – statements about Him that we would be able to claim as definitive, and therefore we can conclude that our knowledge of Him is inherently imperfect, ergo we cannot assume any direct knowledge of Hashem.

The only way we can attempt to define Hashem, therefore, is by observing His actions, and forming a statement based on those actions – an indirect form of knowing Him.

For example, we could say of someone that "he is wealthy", or we could say "he drives a Bentley". The difference between the two statements is quite simply this: by saying he drives a luxury car, we imply that he is wealthy, but it is not a definitive statement about the individual's fortune or lack thereof. It is possible, for example, that this person works for a luxury car firm, and the vehicle belongs to the firm and not to him. If we say that "he is wealthy" then not only is this not an inference, it is quite definitive. There is no room for a second possibility.

This is the essential difference between making direct and indirect statements about Hashem.

In which case, how are we supposed to formulate any praise of Hashem? Surely anything we will say will simply be inadequate or wildly off the mark?

This idea is reflected in an incident recorded in ברכות לג: in which the chazzan in Rabbi Chanina's shul went beyond הגדול הגבור והנורא to list several additional attributes: "הוא החזק והאמיץ והודאי והנכבד" – "the powerful, the glorious, the potent, the feared, the strong, the powerful, the certain, and the esteemed".

When he had finished, Rabbi Chaninah turned to him and remarked rather pithily: "Have you completed all the praises of your master?"

This incident highlights the necessity of having a formula that is at the very least acceptable even if it will not cover all the bases.

Where exactly can we find a suitable formula? The aforementioned incident ends with Rabbi Chaninah making a fundamental statement.

"The three [praises] that we do say, if משה our teacher had not said them in the תורה, and the אנשי כנסת הגדולה would not have incorporated them in our liturgy, we would be unable to say them".

And here I paraphrase Rabbi Chaninah's analogy which follows the observation, in order to convey it in the modern idiom. To use only three terms of praise - הגדול הגבור והנורא - is rather like standing in a billionaire's garage, casting one's eye's over his collection of Aston Martins, McLarens, Bugattis, Paganis and Lotuses and then saying: "Is that a Morris Traveller you have over there in the corner?"

The implication of this incident and the observation of Rabbi Chaninah is that we require two elements to allow us to employ this expression of praise. Firstly, that we have an impeccable source for it, i.e. משה our teacher, and secondly that the אנשי כנסת הגדולה sanctioned its usage as well.

If we take the time to examine our תפילות we will note that direct statements – such as "great", "mighty" and "awesome" are few and far between. We mention many other expressions of praise, such as "גומל חסדים" he grants kindnesses", which are an indirect form; i.e. we observe his actions and base our praise on that.

This explains the formulaic nature of our תפילות. For requests that we make we can employ all manner of terminologies; in fact we are encouraged to include in our תפילות personal requests that we express in our native tongue, such as English, and that we compose ourselves, either through careful meditation prior to our תפילה or on the spur of the moment. That's fine for requests.

To speak praise of Hashem, the situation is quite different.

The potential pitfalls of going freestyle are noted in ברכות פרק ה' משנה ג' where the האומר על קן צפור יגיעו רחמיך... משתקין אותו. Someone who says "To the nest of a bird does Your compassion reach...we silence him."

Precisely what this means is subject to dispute, but my son Boruch Zadok observed on the second opinion of the גמרא that the implication is Hashem "does not outsource his החמנות".

What we can conclude from all this is that for praising Hashem we must take care to only employ terms which, even if not definitive or comprehensive, have an impeccable source that we can rely on to deem them – at the very least – as acceptable.