



Ohr Yerushalayim News

25th January 2014 - Volume 6 - Issue 28 – פרשת משפטים – כ"ד שבט תשע"ד

THE NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Avi Stern on the birth of a boy. The Sholom Zochor takes place at their home, 40 Singleton Road. Mazel Tov also to grandparents Mr & Mrs Michael Brandeis.

Mazel Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the wedding in Glasgow last week of their granddaughter.

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Leon Bernstein on the recent wedding of their daughter in Israel.

Mazel Tov to Rabbi & Mrs Braunold on the recent birth and Bris of their grandson in London.

Mr & Mrs Nat Davidson invite the Kehilla to a Kiddush this Shabbos at their home, 35 Salisbury Drive, to mark the recent birth of their daughter.

חיים ארוכים

We wish **חיים ארוכים** to Mrs Esme Bookman on the Petirah of her late brother, Mr Alan Links ע"ה

Shul Melava Malka

Ohr Yerushalayim's special 15th anniversary Melava Malka takes place next Motzai Shabbos Parshas Teruma, 1st Feb. It's certain to be an exciting evening of harmony infused with entertainment. Not to be missed!

If you haven't yet, please confirm your attendance to Avi Stern or Yitzchok Steinhau.

THE NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Nestled in the foothills of the Nepalese Himalayas, on a rocky outcrop, sits an ancient monastery. There is nothing unusual about that; in this part of the world, monasteries are more common than bus stops. What is unique about this one is that every day the monks troop out and exchange their saffron bedsheets for t-shirts, shorts and trainers and go for a rather long run.

Equally noteworthy is just how fast they run. Even to the untrained eye, these shaven-headed ascetics move at an incredible speeds. The extremely high altitude and their daily routine has forged their bodies into veritable running machines, powering them across the arid, stony ground at velocities that would have them instantly pulled out of a race for drug testing.

Much to the stunned amazement of anthropologists who have timed some of these runs with radar guns, some of these monks can run a mile in under three minutes fifteen seconds. To put this into perspective, the current International Association of Athletics Federations record for the mile run is held by Hicham El Guerrouj from Morocco, at a mere 3 minutes 43.13 seconds. Sports medics estimate that at sea level, given much richer oxygen saturation levels, these blokes could leg it in approximately two minutes forty-five seconds, almost a full minute less than the current record holder.

This is not to say that all the monks can run like the devil is chasing them, but a significant proportion can outrun any current record holder by a

superhuman margin - at a staggering 14,000 feet above sea level.

You might ask a rather obvious question. If they can really run that fast, how come we never see them at the Olympics?

The answer to that is quite simple: they are a figment of my rather overworked imagination.

But imagine if such a group of almost superhuman athletes did exist? Imagine what a terrible dilemma the International Olympics Committee would have. On the one hand, these monks would be perfectly entitled to enter the running races. On the other hand, what would be the point of any other nation sending in runners when they simply would not stand a chance? They might as well hand over the gold medals to the monks without having them race.

One can quite easily imagine the sort of admiration and respect they would earn within athletic circles. After all, here are a group of superhuman athletes who have achieved incredible results without doping themselves, just through sheer willpower, elbow grease and clean living at 14,000 feet above sea level.

Could such a group of individuals exist in real life? A group whose collective efforts stand head and shoulders above the rest of the world?

The brief answer is yes: the Jewish nation.

In every field of endeavour (except for sport for some inexplicable reason) we have outshone any other social, political, religious or economic to a degree that is excessively disproportionate to our numbers.

One indicator is a medal that stands at the pinnacle of all prizes: the Nobel Prize. It is awarded for scientific or cultural advances in literature, medicine, physics, chemistry, peace, and economics. When one considers that a peace prize was awarded to arch-terrorist Yassir

The Week Ahead

פרשת משפטים	שבת מברכין אדר א'
Candle Lighting	4.21pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.26pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.12am
Mincha 1st Minyan	1.30pm
Rov's Pirkei Ovos Shiur	3.42pm
Mincha 2nd Minyan	4.12pm
Motzei Shabbos	5.32pm
Ovos uBonim	6.47pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday	6.45am / 7.20am
ראש חודש	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	4.30pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	4.39pm (Shabbos 4.34pm)

Arafat, it is safe to say that whoever is on that sub-committee is clearly smoking something illegal. The literature prizes are only slightly less dubious. Yet when it comes to the rest - medicine, physics, chemistry, and economics – there is no fooling around. These fields require years of study, endeavour and original thinking to make any kind of mark and every award is scrutinised by jealous academics around the world who are only too happy to slag off any awardee with a well-aimed quadratic equation or two.

Let's pause briefly to consider a few simple figures. The world's population stands at around 7 billion, having grown from 2 billion at around 1930. During all that time, the Jewish nation has never comprised even 1% of the world's population. Even today we form perhaps 0.2% of the populace, although the actual figure appears to be considerably lower than that.

To get an idea of what 0.2% means in tangible numbers, supposing one had £100 and lost 0.2% of it, you would be short of just 20p, which means you would still have £99.80 left. Do that with £1000. That's £998. Do that with £1,000,000. That's £998,000. Now supposing you somehow or another came across £7 billion, and had to pay 0.2% of that out as an administration fee. What would that leave you with? Well done if you did that without a calculator: £6,986,000,000.

Let's take this idea a little further. Supposing we filled one room with 7 billion pound coins, and another room with 6,986,000,000 pound coins. Would you be able to tell the difference between the two? If you were allowed to pick one room or another to keep, would it really bother you if you selected the one with the smaller amount of coins? I would hardly think so! With a sum like £6,986,000,000 would £14,000,000 really make the blindest bit of difference? If you actually had £6,986,000,000 would you refer to your fortune as £6,986,000,000 or £7 billion?

This is the numeric impact we have on the world – it is practically negligible. If we were to disappear overnight, numerically speaking no-one would notice.

When it comes to Nobel prizes, however, Jews have won 26% of all prizes and account for 41% of the awards for economics, 28% for medicine, 26% for physics, 19% for chemistry, yada yada yada. Now these are truly staggering figures. Were Nobel prizes distributed per capita, of the 863 awarded since its inception we would be entitled to approximately 1½. That's all. Yet look at what percentages we represent for these most sought-after and prestigious prizes.

In fact in every area of endeavour Jews have contributed in an inordinate proportion, whether it is in science, medicine, business or the humanities.

Let's not stop there. In the history of mankind no nation has successfully returned to its shores after being ousted. No nation has yet to succeed in reviving a dead language. Other than Jews of course, who have done both.

The list of Jewish accomplishment goes on and on ad nauseam, and yet given these facts it would seem quite logical that every Fortune 500 company should wander into the kehillos across the world and hire ten Jews at random on the off-chance that one of them will be an out-and-out genius. The fact that this does not happen is really quite a mystery. Surely with our level of success we should be the most admired and celebrated group of people in the world?

Despite all this, we are nonetheless the most despised, reviled and hated nation in the world. The Gypsies fare better than we do. Even Hizbollah gets a better press than Israel does.

Why is this? How is it possible that the most successful nation in mankind's history – pro capita – are such pariahs? It defies logic. It is in fact anti-logic.

The answer to this perplexing question lies in this week's sedrah. Or at least a significant part of the answer.

We read about numerous laws in Mishpotim that range from dealing with slaves to murder, kidnapping, theft, loans and so on. Many of the laws, or at least their principles, exist in other legal systems. There are

some exceptions though, which we refer to as חקים. These are laws for which have no rational explanation, and have no parallel outside of the Torah.

It is the combination of these types of Mitzvos that are a potent antidote to the anti-Semitism that our nation has never been free from.

This is summarised in בני ישראל, where Moshe is speaking to the בני ישראל. “Now listen Israel, listen to the חקים and משפטים - laws, which I teach you...” He then goes on to explain that if they do so, they will live to inherit the promised land, and he reminds them of what they witnessed at בעל פעור. Then he moves on to make a crucial point.

How can the בני ישראל possibly earn the respect of the nations of the world? Will it be through the discovery of wonder drugs or vaccines? Will we earn respect through conquering the business world? Creating fabulous sculptures? Writing heavenly music?

Nope. There is only one way to earn the respect and admiration of the world: כי הוא חכם מתקם ובינתקם, לעיני העמים

– לעיני העמים for it [the Torah] is your wisdom and intelligence in the eyes of the nations. And he does not stop there. Oh no.

What will their reaction be? What will their reaction be? – הגוי הגדול הזה they will say this is simply a wise and intelligent people, this great nation.

This is the message that lies at the heart of Mishpotim, buried amongst the numerous and complex laws. There is only one way to achieve the respect and admiration of the nations. As we have seen quite practically, despite our phenomenal success in every area of worthwhile endeavour, we have not earned a commensurate respect and admiration.

If we, as a nation, wish to change our seemingly inexorable fate we actually do have a solution. Don't simply walk into the UN and flash an Artscroll chumash in Achmedinnerjacket's face. First study the laws. Practise them. We need to learn to admire these laws ourselves as well, and that can only be done by learning them thoroughly, day in day out.

Once we are all practising, we are in a position to change the world's perception of the Jewish nation. This does, however, require the entire nation to sing from the same hymn sheet. So we need not only to change ourselves, we also need to change our world.



Ohr Yerushalayim
invites all members:
men, ladies
& high school age + to its
15th Anniversary
Melava Malka

•
Guest Speaker
R' David Eisenberg

•

Relaxing & entertainment packed evening

Matzei Shabbos Parshas Terumah
1st February 2014
at Beis Menachem Hall
8.15pm

suggested donation
£18pp minimum *usup: 07973 631 610*