



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ז אב תשע"ד – פרשת ראה – 23rd August 2014 - Volume 7 - Issue 7

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST NEWS

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Marcel Marks on the Bar Mitzva this Shabbos of their son, Gavriel. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after Davenning at their home, 6 Lancaster Drive.

## T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST NEWS

### Every Soldier Has His Own Job **Rabbi Pinchas Avruch (Torah.org)**

Anyone who has suffered the loss of a dear friend or relative understands the need to cry, to have an avenue of expressing the anguish of that tragic moment. This reality is addressed by the Jewish rites of mourning, which start with the most intense expressions of sorrow during seven day period of "shiva" and are followed by a graduated system which relax the observances over the course of the first year. Nevertheless, just as we are mandated to observe particular rites of mourning, the Torah forbids others. This week's Torah portion dictates (Devarim 14:1) "You are children to Hashem your G-d, you shall not cut yourself...for a dead person," prohibiting certain forms of grief induced self-mutilation, a practice common amongst the Amorites. Nachmanides explains that nature compels us to cry at these times, but the Torah enjoins us to remember that all that our Father in heaven does is for the greater good, and just as a young child does not understand the deeds of his father, so, too, we do not understand the rationale of all of G-d's decisions, but in our appreciation of His great love for us and our understanding of our holy status as His children, we do not allow ourselves such drastic expressions of our pain.

But the word for self inflicted mutilation, "sisgodedu", is written in a way that allows for two interpretations, a sign that it is one of the keys to the Oral Torah which was concurrently presented to Moshe at Sinai 3313 years ago. The Talmud in Yevamos (14a) explains the second understanding of the word "sisgodedu" is factions; the Torah is warning us not to allow the Jewish nation to develop numerous factions within a community in its understanding of Torah law, lest it appear that there are two versions of the Torah. This concept is carefully balanced with the Talmudic principle of "ailu v'ailu divrei Elokim chayim", this (Torah opinion) and this (Torah opinion) are both the sentiment of the living G-d. The Torah understands that different Rabbinical courts may offer different rulings on the same issue; as long as both are well legally grounded in Torah law, then this result is acceptable. But to have contradictory practices within one community, as legitimate as the two rulings may be, diminishes the glory of the Torah, and that is unacceptable.

The Chofetz Chaim was asked, "Why is the Jewish community of Europe divided into so many different factions, some are misnagdim while others are chassidim, and even amongst the chassidim there are those who give priority to Torah study over prayer, there are others who are more dedicated to prayer than Torah study, there are yet others who toil in music and song while still others are involved in festive dance. Would the world be lacking if there were only one Torah lifestyle, a people who all share the same liturgy and the same traditions down to the smallest detail, all "carrying one banner"? The saintly Chofetz Chaim

elucidated, "Before you ask me about the Jewish people, please approach the Czar and ask him why he has so many different forces within the army: infantry, cavalry, artillery, air force and navy. Would the world really be lacking if there were only one fighting force with only one weapons system with one general leading them all? Rather, the purpose of an army is to defeat the enemy; therefore, numerous tactics and resources must be available, since each one has strengths the other does not. Infantry excels at hand to hand combat while the cavalry has speed and induces fear and the artillery can accomplish its goals from a distance. Even the military musicians inspire the troops and lift morale so they can fight on. Similarly in our fight against the yetzer hara, our evil inclination, every group of misnagdim and chassidim are soldiers in G-d's corps, each group using it's own "weapon system" to fight the enemy, this one with Torah study and this one with prayer, this one with song and this with the blast of the shofar, as long as they are focused on fortifying the system of Torah."

With next week's start of the Jewish month of Elul, we start the countdown toward Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. We start the process of introspection, taking personal inventory of which "weapon systems" are operational and which need repair or replacement. Let us be inspired and invigorated to appreciate our wealth of assets, including our own personal strengths, the inspiration we can draw from our peers with different but complimentary strengths, and the leadership of our mentors who guide us in our growth in Torah.

### Walk Behind Me **Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)**

How far back is "behind"? In Hebrew, there are different words for "behind" that address this question. The word achar indicates a short distance behind, while the word acharei indicates a long distance behind.

If the Almighty invites us to walk "behind" him, it would seem to be a positive thing, an expression of divine favor drawing us near into a close relationship with Him. If so, He would want us to walk close behind Him, so to speak. Strangely, however, when Moses exhorts the Jewish people to walk "behind the Lord," he uses the word acharei, which

## The Week Ahead

פרשת ראה	שבת מברכין אלול
Mincha	6.35pm / 7.15pm
Candle Lighting	Not before 6.53pm / 7.26-7.40
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.35am
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.09pm
Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	following
Motzei Shabbos	9.14pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday Bank Holiday	7.10am / 8.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am
Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	6.20 / 7.30pm

means far behind. How do we account for this anomaly?

The commentators explain that Moses actually intended the word *acharei* to be a source of hope and encouragement for the Jewish people. Sometimes, a person may become so wrapped up in his own little world that he loses sight of the big picture. Instead of making good use of his youth, health and vigor to grow in a spiritual sense and come close to the Almighty, he focuses primarily on material acquisitions and status symbols.

The years fly by. One day, he takes stock of his life and comes to the shocking realization that he has frittered away his best and most vigorous years on matters of little consequence. He suddenly perceives how far he has drifted away from the Almighty, and he is discouraged. Where can he begin? How can he ever make up all that ground he has lost? How can he ever hope to achieve the closeness with the Almighty that derives from lifetime of spiritual exertions.

Do not be discouraged, says Moses. Walk behind the Lord even if it is *acharei*, even if following behind from a very great distance. The Almighty values highly a "walking behind" motivated by a desperate awareness of the gulf that needs to be traversed. Take one step at a time. One step will lead to the next and bring you ever closer. Do not lose hope.

A king was seeking a suitable husband for his daughter. He wanted a man of stout heart and strong character, and he devised a contest to find such a man. He placed a long ladder, whose rungs were slippery and rickety, against an extremely high wall. The ladder reached to the roof.

"The first young man that reaches the roof," declared the king, "will have won the hand of the royal princess in marriage. But anyone who attempts the climb and fails will be sent to the dungeon."

A few athletic young men, experienced mountain climbers, rose to challenge, but when they were no more than halfway up the ladder they could no longer maintain their grip on the slippery and unstable rungs. They fell to the ground and were immediately dragged off to the dungeon for wasting the king's time. Witnessing their failure, no other young men dared make the attempt.

Presently, one fellow stepped forward and offered to make the climb. Halfway up, he too began to lose his grip. He looked up at the long distance remaining and could not imagine how he would ever reach the top, but he refused to give up. Tenaciously, he continued to climb, hand over hand, rung by painful rung. All of a sudden, he found himself on the roof. He had activated a hidden spring that catapulted him all the way to the top.

"You have won my daughter's hand," said the king. "But how did you know about the hidden spring?"

"I didn't," said the young man. "But I knew that the king's offer was not frivolous. If the king laid down the challenge, it must be somehow possible to accomplish it. So I refused to give up, no matter what."

In our own lives, we sometimes look at a distant spiritual goal and think it is way beyond our grasp, and so we become discouraged and give up. But we can never know how things will develop. If we keep trying tenaciously without becoming discouraged, it is always possible that the Almighty will send us unexpected break that will catapult us all the way to that elusive goal. Whether it is in prayer, study or some other spiritual endeavor, we may think we are on such an elementary level that there is no hope for us. Never give up hope. One day, everything may just fall into place so that we suddenly find ourselves making great strides we never thought possible.

## The Street

Rabbi Yaakov Menken (Torah.org)

"After HaShem your G-d you will go, Him you shall fear, His Commandments you will guard, to His voice you will listen, Him you will serve, and to Him you will cleave." [13:5]

In this week's reading, we find three separate sections which discuss various influences which prevail upon a person to abandon G-d and His Mitzvos in order to serve a false god. And as we learn from the verse quoted above, to follow G-d means to cleave to Him and listen to His voice. Any ideology which draws us away from Judaism and the

performance of distinctly Jewish Mitzvos -- however positive it might seem -- has all of the same impact as bowing to a clay idol.

The Avnei Ezel explains that we learn about "real-world" influences from these three sections, and thus we learn to be on guard against each one.

The first section discusses the "false prophet," who produces signs or wonders that actually come about as predicted. In our own era, says the Avnei Ezel, this corresponds to a convincing, charismatic leader. A guru comes to town, sets up shop, and proceeds to convince you how your life will be filled with meaning and happiness if you will only give yourself and all of your money to his church. It sounds ridiculous, but as we all know cults have proven extremely successful at doing exactly this -- and, of course, that young Jews without a solid Jewish education have proven especially susceptible to their influences, promises and sheer charisma.

The second reading discusses persuasion by "friends and family." Again it is trivial to find a modern expression of the Torah's warning: peer pressure. Today, we are less susceptible to the influences of our parents and close relatives (the loss of respect for authority and love of family being another topic), but the same cannot be said for our closest friends. If a few of our friends end up in Scientology, G-d forbid, then we're likely to find ourselves with free gifts -- like books with L. Ron Hubbard's name on the cover. Again the Torah warns us with clarity of vision and perception of human nature: be on guard! The same person who proves resistant to the charismatic leader may be all too dependent upon his or her closest friends and relations, and may find it extremely difficult to resist their entreaties.

And the third and final influence discussed by the Torah is the idolatrous city -- otherwise known as "the street." You go outside, and this is what "normal" people are doing. This is what newspapers, radio and television, public officials and general public behavior indicate is normative and appropriate. You don't do this? You don't believe this? Then you are discriminatory, you are divisive, you are a "throwback to the Middle Ages."

While the behavior of some of our contemporaries may be a throwback to Sodom and Gemorrah, leaving the "Middle Ages" two millennia more advanced, that's not an issue. In recent news, the New Jersey Supreme Court redefined the Boy Scouts of America, a private membership organization, as a "public accommodation," no different than a theater or restaurant, simply because it is large. Even more, the Court claimed that it knew better than the Boy Scouts themselves how to interpret the Boy Scout Oath! The end result? According to the Court, a large membership organization cannot set a moral or faith Code for its members, unless it is clearly defined as a religious organization *per se*. Yes, of course I'm opinionated about this and very non-PC, but I don't think you need to agree with me about the particular issue in order to acknowledge that the government shouldn't be forcing upon us its own definition of appropriate friends and associates.

In other news, an Air Force Officer was recently demoted for refusing to serve a 24 hour shift in isolation, manning a missile silo together with a female soldier. The officer is a devout Catholic, and his interpretation of his religious beliefs (quite similar, in fact, to the laws of "yichud" in Judaism) prevented him from being alone with a woman for an extended period for fear of what might transpire. For this belief, for his desire to avoid the sort of circumstances which invite misbehavior, he was punished.

I don't think we need to make a value judgment in order to recognize an infringement upon the right of individuals to free association and their religious principles, allegedly protected by the Constitution. This is the pressure of the street that the Torah is talking about. This is what bears down upon any person who attempts to follow the path and precepts of the Torah instead of the whims of modern society.

This is why the Torah reminds us who we are, and what we must do. "After HaShem your G-d you will go, Him you shall fear, His Commandments you will guard, to His voice you will listen, Him you will serve, and to Him you will cleave."