



Ohr Yerushalayim News

2nd November 2013 - Volume 6 - Issue 17 – פרשת תולדות – כ"ט מרחשון תשע"ד

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Ohr Yerushalayim on the occasion of our 15th anniversary. Join us for a Kiddush after Davenning.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Joseph Rosenhead on the birth of their daughter Shulamis Ahuva.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Bernard Markovic on the occasion of the bris of their grandson.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Michael Epstein on the recent Bar Mitzva of their grandson, son of Rabbi & Mrs Barry Lerer in London.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Michael Epstein on the birth of a granddaughter, born to Mr & Mrs Yakov Goldstein.

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Leon Bernstein on the engagement of their daughter, Devora in Eretz Yisroel.

Ovos uBonim

It's back! The new Ovos uBonim season starts this Motzei Shabbos at 6.41pm, an hour and 15 minutes after Shabbos.

Rov's Ladies Shiur

The Rov's fortnightly ladies Shiur on Hilchos Bishul starts on Tuesday evening at 8.30pm at his home, 48 Waterpark Road.

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

No Bones of Contention

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

In this week's Torah portion, we read of the interaction between Yitzchok and the Philistine king, Avimelech. After abducting Rivka, Avimelech and his entire household were stricken with Divine retribution in the form of a painful illness. Avimelech reacted by immediately restoring Rivka to Yitzchok, while proclaiming his innocence and issuing them a royal decree of protection. The declaration was of little lasting value as the Philistine people grew jealous of Yitzchok's financial success and retaliated by plugging up the wells his servants had dug, and driving him out of the land.

Yitzchok resettled in the neighboring land of Canaan and flourished, while the Pelishtim experienced one setback after another. With their wells drying up and their trees becoming barren, they began to suspect a connection between these misfortunes and their persecution of Yitzchok. In desperation, Avimelech came to reestablish the old pact of friendship that he had made with Avrohom.

Upon his arrival, Yitzchok asked him, "Why have you come to me? You hate me. You've driven me out of your midst!" Avimelech responds with unabashed impudence: "What do you mean? Just as we have not molested you and have in fact treated you well and sent you away in peace, you ought now to respond likewise and give us Hashem's blessing!"

How could Avimelech be so shameless as to contend that he had acted graciously with Yitzchok when, with his approval, his servants had stopped up Yitzchok's wells and chased him from their land?

The persecution of Yitzchok and his expulsion, followed by Avimelech's renewing a pact of friendship with him, is a narrative that has echoed and re-echoed throughout Jewish history. Jews have been expelled from one country after another by hostile and jealous populations only to be invited back decades later, when the host country needed Jewish financial and entrepreneurial skills to give their economy a boost.

The Midrash, in highlighting the self-serving nature of Avimelech's solicitation of friendship, offers a beautiful parable (chapter 64/10).

The lion, the king of the beasts, pawed the floor of his forest lair in pain and frustration. The bone of an animal that he had devoured had become firmly lodged in his throat. Unable to speak, he beckoned to the animals of the forest to help him, intimating that whoever could extract the bone would be honored with lavish gifts.

Cautiously, a stork approached. The lion opened its mouth wide while the stork inserted his long beak inside and gently and carefully extracted the bone. The stork then stood by, waiting for her just reward. The lion glared at the stork and barked, "Your reward is that after putting your beak in my throat, you have emerged unscathed. What living thing could expect to keep its head after sticking it in a lion's mouth?"

It is startling to see how history continually repeats itself. Israel is surrounded by Arab governments that would benefit greatly by recognizing the Jewish state and establishing a peace treaty with it. Yet the level of hatred and jealousy toward Israel is so great that it blocks all efforts to achieve peace. The most Israel has been able to win from its enemies are short-lived "truces." As for real peace and the recognition of Israel's statehood? Sadly (but predictably), the message is, "Be grateful that we haven't shoved you into the ocean-yet."

How does one respond to this skewed thinking? Let us consider

The Week Ahead

פרשת תולדות

פרשת תולדות	שבת מברכין כסלו
Candle Lighting	4.21pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.26pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.17am
Mincha 1st Minyan	1.30pm
Rov's Pirkei Ovos Shiur	3.36pm
Mincha 2nd Minyan	4.06pm
Motzei Shabbos	5.26pm
Ovos uBonim	6.41pm
Sunday ראש חודש	7.00am / 8.00am
Monday ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Mincha & Maariv	4.15pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	4.13pm (Shabbos 4.08pm)

Yitzchok's response to Avimelech's audacious behavior. Yitzchok listens to Avimelech's rant and instead of retorting, prepares a feast for the king's entourage. Without challenging Avimelech's assertions, he establishes the pact the king proposed and sends him away in peace.

Yitzchok recognized that negotiating and rationalizing with someone committed to a warped philosophy is futile. He understood, as we must, that in exile one must be grateful for whatever good one can obtain—even if it falls short of true justice and fairness.

This is an important message. Instead of asserting our rights and maintaining a dominant profile, we need to recognize that we are in galus and should be grateful that we can maintain our tradition in a benevolent environment. We need to be thankful for the liberties and freedoms that are extended to us. In the face of growing anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish sentiments worldwide, our response need not be to champion our rights and demonstrate our superior virtue. We should rather maintain a low profile and appreciate that the wrath of our enemies is directed more at our "wells" and wealth, than against us in person.

A Present From The Past

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig (Torah.org)

Because Avraham obeyed My voice"(26:5)

The Rambam teaches that Avraham was forty years old when he became aware of his Creator. From the age of forty and on, he began preaching to the world about monotheism, amassing tens of thousands of students, until he reached Eretz Yisroel. There he continued to proclaim the name of Hashem to the entire world.

The Raavad cites a conflicting Chazal that states the following: The numerical value of the letters of the word "eikev" is equivalent to one hundred seventy-two, for the one hundred seventy-two years of Avraham's life during which he obeyed the voice of Hashem. Avraham died at the age of one hundred seventy-five. Therefore, concludes the Raavad, Avraham became aware of his Creator at the age of three. Additionally, the Raavad asks why there is no account of Shem and Ever, who ran academies of learning in Eretz Yisroel, protesting against idol worship and preaching monotheism as Avraham did.

The Kesef Mishna attempts to answer the Raavad's first question in the following manner: Although Avraham began accepting Hashem at the age of three, the process was complete at the age of forty. However, the Rambam states that Avraham served idols from the time he was weaned, the third year of his life, until he was forty. Therefore, it appears that Avraham did not begin accepting Hashem before the age of forty.

The Talmud teaches that a Baal Teshuva, a penitent, is on a greater level than one who has always been righteous. This is derived from the verse "shalom, shalom larachok v'lakarov" - "Hashem greets those who were distant from Him prior to those who were always close." It is difficult to understand why the Torah describes a Baal Teshuva as a "rachok", one



**Ovos uBonim restarts
this Motzei Shabbos
at 6.41pm**

Looking forward to seeing you!

who is distant from Hashem. Even if we interpret the term as the Talmud does, to mean someone who "was", but is no longer distant, it would still seem deprecating to associate him with having been distant from Hashem in the past. The Talmud must be teaching us that his distance in the past is what makes him greater.

Very often we find that a person who has reformed from a certain behavior will act as a crusader against others who exhibit the same behavior. For example, the person who will be most vocal about someone in his vicinity smoking is a reformed smoker. This can happen with Baalei Teshuva as well. Sometimes we find that Baalei Teshuva can be the most intolerant of others who are in the same position that they were once. The psychology behind this behavior is as follows: A reformed smoker may still have an urge to smoke, and the way he represses his own feelings is to attempt to repress them in everyone else. However, a Baal Teshuva should not attempt to disassociate himself from his past and repress everything that he has experienced. He is in a position to identify with people who are going through the same things that he went through, and therefore, he is better equipped to help extricate them from their situations. A Baal Teshuva is more capable of being "megaleh kavod shamayim" - "revealing the glory of Hashem to the world", for he can connect more effectively to those who are distant from Hashem. Therefore, the Torah refers to the Baal Teshuva as one who was "rachok", for this is precisely what gives him the opportunity to be greater than someone who was always a Tzaddik.

It is because Avraham grew up in an environment of idol worship, and was even involved in it, that he is able to impact upon the world more effectively than Shem, who grew up in the house of a Tzaddik. The Talmud does not say that Avraham served Hashem from the age of three, rather it says that for the last one hundred seventy-two years of his life, he served Hashem. Once he perfected himself, Avraham put all of his previous experiences to use in a positive way. This changed all of his past experiences to mitzvos. The Talmud refers to this concept as "zedonos na'asos lo k'zechuyos" - "rebellious sins are transformed into mitzvos".

It is important that we do not view our pasts as wasted time, for every experience that a person has can be utilized in a positive manner. We can help others who are in the same position that we were in. This outlook allows a person to feel more positive about who he is now, for what he was can be used to make him a better person.

