



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ח אייר תש"פ – אחרי קדושים – 2nd May 2020 - Volume 12 - Issue 38

News This Week

מדל טוב

Mazel Tov to Danny and Reuvena Dresner on the engagement of Moishe to Elisheva Topperman.

Mazel Tov to Rebbetzen Rivka on her special birthday this Shabbos.

Mazel Tov to Adam and Sorele Bookman on the birth of a grandson to Eli and Chavi Bookman. Mazel Tov also to great grandparents Kalman and Esme Bookman and Yossi and Leah Lipsey. Whilst we're at it, Mazel Tov also to R' Shaya Klyne and Avi Stern - the great uncles!

Mazel Tov to Simcha and Channa Shadmi on the birth of a grandson to Yoni and Yudit Shadmi.

The Power of Rabbi Akiva Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

This week's parsha contains the command to "love your neighbor as yourself" [Vayikra 19:18]. There is a very famous Medrash (Sifra) that children sing: "Rabbi Akiva said that the mitzvah to love your neighbor as yourself is the fundamental principle of the Torah." There is a similar Talmudic passage [Shabbos 31a] concerning a gentile who was interested in converting to Judaism. He asked Hillel to teach him the whole Torah "while standing on one foot". Hillel instructed him — what you would not want done to you, do not do to others.

It is obvious to us that it can be very hard to observe this mitzvah properly. But I have a theory that it is specifically Rabbi Akiva who can justifiably preach to us regarding the importance of this mitzvah.

This time of year — between Pesach and Shavuot — is the period of the Omer Counting, when we observe certain mourning customs in memory of Rabbi Akiva's students. Rabbi Akiva had 24,000 students, a mind-boggling number compared to our current concept of a "big" Yeshiva. Rabbi Akiva was a great Rosh Yeshiva (Dean). Yet during the Omer period, his 24,000 students all died.

If you or I were Rabbi Akiva and we had a Yeshiva with 24,000 students and our whole Yeshiva died — due to some character flaw, which ultimately reflected negatively on the Rosh Yeshiva — what would our reaction be? Most people's reaction would no doubt be, "I am not cut out to be a Rosh Yeshiva. I must be doing something wrong." This must have been a devastating experience for Rabbi Akiva. This was his life's work — and they all died!

What, however, does the Talmud tell us? "When Rabbi Akiva's students died and the world was desolate, he got up and went to the south of Eretz Yisroel and started over again!" [Yevamos 62b]

It seems evident that Rabbi Akiva had unbelievable resilience. He was the type of person who, despite experiencing the biggest disaster, could find something positive within that disaster, providing him with the ability to continue onward. He had an incredible ability to be able to evaluate the worst of situations and believe that "all is not lost".

Another example of Rabbi Akiva's resilience is evident from an incident that occurred following the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash [Holy Temple]. The Talmud tells us [Makkot 24a], that several Tanaim were walking near the area that was once the Holy of Holies. There was total destruction surrounding them. When they saw a fox emerge from the site of the Holy of Holies they all began to cry, except for Rabbi Akiva, who began to laugh. Rabbi Akiva saw the positive in the situation: If the prophecy which predicted the destruction came true literally, then the prophecy which predicted the redemption will also come true literally. Rabbi Akiva tells us [Yoma 85b] "Happy are you Israel — Who purifies

you? Your father in Heaven".

Rabbi Akiva personally experienced Yom Kippur when the Bais HaMikdash was still standing. He experienced the Kohen Gadol [High Priest] doing the special Service of the Day, as well as the instant knowledge of whether it would be a good year or a bad year. There was nothing more beautiful than the radiance of the Kohen Gadol when he emerged from the Holy of Holies.

But Rabbi Akiva had to deal with a generation that had to experience a Yom Kippur soon after the Temple's Destruction, when there was no Kohen Gadol. Imagine how the people felt! This is a Yom Kippur? And Rabbi Akiva went to them and convinced them that Yom Kippur was still beautiful. We do not necessarily need a Kohen Gadol! We are now purified directly by G-d Himself.

Rabbi Akiva's strength was that he always saw the positive in every situation. That is why he taught: "Love your neighbor like yourself". Every person has SOME positive aspect. The Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760) interprets the word "Kamocho" (as yourself) in this pasuk [verse] as follows: When a person gets up in the morning and looks at himself in the mirror he thinks, "I am basically a good person. I have my faults and foibles; I am not perfect. But I am more good than bad." This, the Baal Shem Tov says, is how we must evaluate our neighbor: He is basically good; I will overlook his faults.

This is not always easy. It requires us to focus on the good, rather than the bad — to always see the glass as half full rather than half empty. That was the power of Rabbi Akiva and this is the key to the fulfillment of the mitzvah that is called "The fundamental rule of all of Torah".

Hashem spoke to Moshe after the death of Aaron's two sons, when they approached before Hashem and died. And Hashem said to Moshe: Speak to Aaron, your brother- he may not come at all times into the Sanctuary, within the Curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the Ark, so that he should not die... (Vayikra 16:1-2)

...And Hear It We Must

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to the entire assembly of the Children and say to them: Be Holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d am holy. (Vayikra 19:1-3)

It's a strange way to introduce the laws of Yom Kippur and the narrow guidelines for entering the Holy of Holies by reaching back to the death of the Aaron's two sons. Coupled with this we have the general

Davening Times

שבת פרשת אחרי קדושים

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.41pm-7.55pm
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.19am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.36pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.41pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

admonition to the entire assembly of Jews to “be holy” and its plethora of pedestrian applications. How are we to make a cohesive salad out of this odd mix of concepts?

At the gigantic rally in Washington D.C., of which I was proud to be counted, at the very end of the program of speakers, a friend of ours from Eretz Yisrael was called upon to speak. I was only sorry that his words were not in the middle of the program. I think they strummed a vital chord in the heart of the assembled masses.

Seth, Rabbi Mandel, whose son was one of two boys brutally and savagely killed on the “West-Bank” last year, told another story of another untimely death. He spoke about the conversation between a father and his young son that was overheard beneath the rubble of one of the infamous bombing sights. The son, sensing he was dying, asked his father what they should do. The father told his son, “Let’s say the “Sh’ma!” And so they did as they both passed on from this earth.

Seth mentioned that amongst the constant pains he experiences is the enormous sense of lost opportunity. Unlike that other father, he didn’t have a chance to say “Sh’ma” with his son before he died. For the benefit of the amazing and wonderful gathering of young and old from all over America, who came out to share in their common sense of pain, grief and frustration over what is happening to our brothers and friends all over the world, and particularly in the Land of Israel, he related the following; since he can no longer say “Sh’ma” with his son he wished to say it together with all of those there in attendance. It was articulate beyond words.

This scene showed me a new angle in the oft connected names of this week’s Torah portion; Acharai Mos (After the death) -Kedoshim T’hiyoo (You should be holy). After the death of the two sons...you should be holy. So that the lives of those lost should not have been for naught, the job of the living is to breath new meaning and a deeper sense of purpose into their life and the lives of others.

Part of the function of the “mourner’s kaddish” is to actively fill in more and more, to whatever extent possible, for what was lost from the orchestra of life when this precious and unique G-dly instrument was suddenly and tragically silenced. “May the name of G-d be amplified and sanctified in the world that He created as He willed...”

The connection between –“After the death”... and “Be Holy” reminds us that the courage to live a life of daily decency is the only genuine approach to exit life in holiness and not the other way around. Life, not death, is to be celebrated and reveled in, and it is the task of the living to see to it, that it is so.

It is in being self-disciplined and personally responsible, in concrete terms, that we express our G-dliness in human and heavenly interactions thousands of times each day. That profound blend that affirms life in the face of death yields a flavor we can identify as “real holiness”. After a death...comes the sound of the trumpet to the entire assembly...Be Holy...Sh’ma Yisrael...and hear it, we must.

Love in Three Parts **Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)**

You shall love your fellow as yourself. I am Hashem.

Meshech Chochmah: The simple reading of the pasuk implies a connection between the love of one’s fellow and the very existence of G-d. Indeed, we can speak of multiple varieties of this connection.

We begin with the usual place that our forebears looked to find signs of Hashem’s presence – the complexity of the natural world, and the synergy of all of its components. We stand in awe of the changing forms around us, all of them interdependent elements of a massive biosphere. Fine-tuning its design, and maintaining its stability are tasks that only a Divine engineer could oversee. The world testifies to Hashem’s existence. There is more. One part of this complex world yields different insight into the nature of G-d. The only creature vouchsafed the gift of free will is Man. Not even angels share this capacity. While all other things must slavishly read the lines scripted for them, Man writes his own story. Everything else obeys laws that are hard-wired; Man chooses between competing options. This ability is so unusual that it points to its source – the nature of G-d Himself. He is the singular element of existence that need not obey any rules, but acts solely according to His will. One who wishes to gain the slightest glint of recognition of Hashem’s utter independence and transcendence of all limits and boundaries must turn to the example of Man. There he will find a bit of similarity in the ability

of Man to choose, rather than to be driven mechanically by the laws of Nature. Man testifies to the limitlessness of Hashem.

We are not quite done. A subgroup of Man points in two ways to another quality of the Creator – His ongoing providence. The story of the Jewish people gives full-throated testimony to His oversight of their affairs. On the one hand, He provided for the Jews for forty years in an inhospitable wilderness. Every person of that generation subsisted through the mohn provided them each day by Hashem. In this we saw not an occasional insertion of His Will against the apparent constancy of the laws of Nature – what we call the open miracle. Rather, we witnessed the constancy of His supervision of the details of the lives of men, responding to their daily needs, and rewarding them for their choosing to be loyal to His mission. Evidence of His providence continued well beyond the charmed lives of the generation of the Wilderness. No stronger evidence could exist than in the long-term history of that same people.

Living often apart from all other nations, they survived the relentless efforts of a march of enemies to destroy them. Moreover, whenever provided with a brief period of tranquility, their fortunes rose meteorically, as if some property within them propelled them to distinction wherever they resided. Of course, that property was nothing other than Hashem’s presence amongst them, and its attachment to their very souls.

This attachment manifests itself in a pattern of Jewish settlement. No matter where they are exiled, it moves them to band together, to build communities, organizations of Torah and avodas Hashem, and charitable enterprises. Klal Yisrael testifies to Hashem’s hashgachah.

Moving, then, from the general world around us to the example of Man and on to the special case of the Jewish people, we are provided with glimpses of the meaning of Divinity. This is alluded to in our pasuk, “... your fellow as yourself – I am Hashem.” In other words, you and your fellow together point to Who I am, to the Essence of my being.

A second approach to our pasuk. Typically, the heart desires what the eyes see. An important exception is love of the unseen G-d. When the power of a person’s sechel overcomes its usual physical constraints Klal Yisrael testifies to Hashem’s hashgachah.

the soul fills with a desire to know Hashem, and to become closer to Him. We are instructed to love our fellow because his neshamah is hewn from the same Rock. This quality remains invisible. So the Torah instructs us to love our fellow as ourselves. How? In the same way we love Him, which is to love that which cannot be seen. Similarly, we are told to love our fellow because of the special quality of his soul, despite the fact that we cannot see it.

A final approach. Much of what we call love stems from inequality. A recipient loves a giver for providing him with something he needs. But this kind of love is reflexive. The recipient really loves himself, and attaches himself to the other only because that other offers him something. When this is not the case, the opposite occurs. The difference between them becomes grounds for hatred, rather than love. As Chazal say,[2] a craftsman hates another member of the same craft. When he doesn’t receive from him, the difference between them becomes a perceived threat to his well-being.

Some relate to Hashem the same way. They love Him because He provides them with what they want. This is not really what Hashem asks of us; the love object here is the person himself, not G-d.

There is a different kind of love that flows from commonality, not difference. A person accomplished in some intellectual field may come to love a great luminary in the same field. The love comes from what the two of them share, not from their difference, nor from anything that one gets from the other. The loved one is loved for what he is, not for what he provides.

We can – and should – relate to Hashem in the same way. We ought to love Him not because He enhances our lives, but because of what we share with Him. We are told to emulate His characteristics/ midos. When we incorporate those midos within ourselves, what we share allows us to love Hashem for what He is.

Our pasuk hints at this as well. We optimally love Hashem for what He is, not for how He helps us. Similarly, we ought not love our fellow because that person will reciprocate the love, or because he will honor us for our help. We ought to love our fellow for what we appreciate about him – the admirable qualities that we share with him.