



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

- Mazel Tov to Mordechai and Malky Sinason on the birth of their daughter, Esther Chana
- Mazel Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the Bar Mitzva of their grandson, Avrohom Moishe Royde, in Shul this week.
- Mazel Tov to Marcel and Beverley Marks on the wedding this Tuesday in Israel of Yisrael Chaim to Tali Kauffman daughter of R' Gedalia and Mandi Kauffman from Ramat Bet Shemesh
- Chaim Aruchim**
- We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:
- Shabbos, 16th Sivan - Angela Addleman for her mother
- Sun, 17th Sivan - Michael Lewin for his father
- Fri, 22nd Sivan - Laurence Ross for his father

How To Please HaShem

Rabbi J Rubinstein

There is a beautiful background story to one of the events in this week's Parshah. The Chumash says, Hashem told Moshe Rabeinu to gather seventy elders to help him lead the Jewish people, and He would bestow prophecy upon them. The Medrash (partially quoted by Rashi) elaborates, Moshe Rabeinu said, "How do I know who is fit and who is not fit?" Hashem replied "Whom you know, they are the elders of the people and their officers" Chap. 11, Verse. 16. There was a time, during the slavery of the Jewish people in Egypt, when the Egyptians appointed Jewish people as overseers of the Jewish slaves, to make sure they produced a sufficient number of bricks. When they failed to produce enough bricks, the overseers were whipped. But they accepted the blows on themselves, rather than push the workers under their charge, to work harder. They were the people Moshe Rabeinu knew were the elders of the nation.

One might ask on the Medrash, how does the fact they were kind overseers, prove they were worthy of prophecy? But as Rav Aaron Kotler explains (Mishnas Rav Aaron Vol 1 Page 186), their behaviour as overseers showed that they would use their knowledge as prophets, to help the people. They were obviously filled with concern and pity for their fellow Jews, and the very greatest kindness one can do for another Jewish person, is to guide him in the ways of Hashem.

Rav Kotler adds, we pray that we should have חיים ברצונו "A life which pleases Hashem" (Psalm 30). He says that one of the ways in which we can achieve חיים ברצונו, is to help other people to live as Hashem wants them to live; this pleases Hashem. This was the opportunity which was given to the seventy elders in this week's Parshah.

Reading this explanation, reminded me of a Jewish businessman I knew. Next door to him, there lived a Jewish family who were not religious. They were on good terms with one another, and the businessman persuaded his neighbours to allow him to take their son to Shul on Shabbos, where he showed him how to Davven etc. It also reminded me, that many years ago, before there were many books in English about the practical application of Dinim, a Rav produced a book in English explaining the practicalities of observing Shabbos. My father took it upon himself to write a letter to the author, congratulating and encouraging him. (The recipient's son recently gave me the letter). These were small but real examples, of people who had no motivation for what they were doing, other than the wish to help people learn about, and practice, Judaism.

They were surely living in those moments, חיים ברצונו - A life which pleased Hashem.

We can all, in small ways, and perhaps sometimes large ways, take the initiative with sensitivity and diplomatically, to assist other people materially and spiritually. Through this, we will be following the example of the elders referred to in this week's Parshah, and live חיים ברצונו - A life which pleases Hashem.

The Greater the Gavra, the Greater the Gratitude

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The pasuk in Parshas BeHa'alosecha says, "And the people were k'mis'onenim (as murmurers), speaking evil in the ears of Hashem; and when Hashem heard it, His anger was kindled; and the fire of Hashem burnt among them and devoured in the uttermost part of the camp." (Bamidbar 11:1). The Ribono shel Olam became very angry. Moshe Rabeinu had to pray to Him, and the fire was extinguished. What exactly is the meaning of the word "mis'onenim"? The Ramban quotes the Ibn Ezra that it comes from the word aven (sin), meaning that the people said "sinful things." The Ramban disagrees with the Ibn Ezra because the Torah did not mention any "sinful things" that the people spoke, and the Torah is usually not shy about mentioning what aveira is being punished when there is a Divine punishment.

The Ramban suggests that when the people distanced themselves from Har Sinai and moved deeper into the vast and awesome desert, they panicked and did not know what to do. "How are we going to survive in this desert? What are we going to eat and drink? How will we manage through all the depravation and suffering that exists in this barren stretch of land? How are we ever going to get out of this place?" According to the Ramban, the etymology of the word "mis'onenim" is the same as the expression "Mah yis'onen adam chai" (Of what shall a living man complain) (Eicha 3:39), which connotes pain and complaint about a person's situation. A mis'onen is a person who is feeling sorry for himself. "Woe is me that I have such tzores."

The Ramban explains that the Torah is thus teaching us what they did wrong: They acted like the worst thing had just happened to them. The Torah uses a simile here "like mis'onenim." They were not people in desperate straits, but they acted LIKE such people! This upset the Ribono shel Olam, who felt that they should be following Him in joy and rejoicing by virtue of all the positive things they had experienced: Yetzias Mitzrayim, Krias Yam Yuf, Kabbalas HaTorah, as well as being provided with the manna and the be'er! How dare they complain after all that? Hashem said that someone who has it so good and nonetheless complains as if he has it so bad is guilty of a terrible aveira. That aveira is the inability to be 'makir tova' (recognize favors), failing to appreciate the positive. The Ribono shel Olam cannot tolerate ingratitude and therefore

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	7.56pm - 8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.55am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.56pm
Rov's Shiur	Following Mincha
Motzei Shabbos	11.01pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.50pm

punishment immediately followed.

The Brisker Rav, zt"l, once said that if a person has a bad character trait (such as being haughty, or having a bad temper), we judge him as an imperfect human being (not an 'adam shalem'), a person who has a fault – perhaps even a bad fault. However, if a person is not makir tova, the Brisker Rav said that he is not merely not an 'adam shalem,' but rather, he is not an adam at all. He lacks the most basic component of humanity! We all have our challenges with certain ideal character traits. We need to work on them. But someone who is an ingrate is not a mensch at all! The truth of the matter is that the Ramban alludes to this in Parshas Ha'Azinu. The pasuk there says, "Is it to Hashem that you do this, O' vile and unwise people?" (Devorim 32:6) The Ramban writes that Moshe Rabbeinu is chastising the people: "This is how you treat the Ribono shel Olam after all that he did for you?" What does Moshe Rabbeinu call them? Am naval. The Ramban notes that when an animal dies, it is called a neveilah, indicating it is no longer an animal, but rather it is a dead carcass. So too, a person who is not makir tova is a naval, because he ceases to be a human being. He is no longer a mensch.

That is the meaning of "Vayehi ha'am K'mis'onenim".

In truth, this is not the only example of ingratitude in Parshas BeHa'aloscha. There is a second incident as well:

"And the mixed multitude that was among them felt a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept on their part, and said: 'Would that we were given flesh to eat! We remember the fish, which we used to eat in Mitzrayim for free; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic; but now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all; we have only this mann to look to.'" (Bamidbar 11:4-6) The next pasuk, after those three pesukim is "Now the mann was like coriander seed and the appearance thereof was like the (white and sparkling) appearance of bdellium" (Bamidbar 11:7). The Jews are complaining about their lack of onions and garlic and then suddenly, the Torah makes an editorial comment. What is that all about? Rashi clarifies: In the first three pesukim, Bnei Yisrael were talking. Pasuk 7 is Hashem talking! They are complaining that all they have is mann and then Hashem inserts into the Torah the divine character of the mann, as if to say, "Let the world come and see about what My Children are complaining. The mann is so so special!" If you can complain about mann, you can complain about anything!

I once heard a schmooze from Rav Pam, zt"l, in which he says that he often hears such a bas kol proclaiming "Look at what my children are complaining about!" When a young man comes and complains to him that he comes home from yeshiva or from work and finds the house strewn with toys all over the place, he complains to his wife, "Why can't you keep a neat house?" Rav Pam says that when he hears such complaints, he hears the bas kol: "Look at what my children are complaining about?" How many infertile couples are there who would give their right arms to have a house full of strewn toys lying around! And these fellows are complaining that the house isn't neat!

He goes through several examples in his sefer: A child comes home from school at 5:30. Supper is ready on the table. The mother prepares meatloaf and a plate of vegetables, the child comes home to a set table and a hot meal and he complains. "I hate meatloaf!" Look at what my children complain about!

The following very instructive Medrash is not located in Parshas BeHa'aloscha, but I feel it is appropriate to share at this time. The Medrash is in Sefer Shemos (Parsha 4): When Hashem told Moshe that it was time to take the Jews out of Mitzraim, Moshe responded, "Master of the Universe, I am not able to take on this job. I need to ask permission from my father-in-law, Yisro. If he will not give me permission, I guess You will need to get another man."

The baalei mussar make two very interesting comments on this Medrash: It is our assumption that it is only necessary to show hakaras hatov to someone who is doing something positive for you out of the goodness of his heart. But if a person is doing something because it is his job or it is for his or her own personal reasons, then he or she does not deserve my hakaras hatov. They are just doing what they need to do or what they really want to do anyhow! The baalei mussar infer just the opposite from this Medrash:

Consider: Who owed whom? Moshe did not owe Yisro. Yisro owed Moshe. First of all, Moshe saved Yisro's daughters (Shemos 2:17). But moreover, Yisro could not get a shidduch for his daughters for all the money in the world because he was a pariah. He was ostracized by his community. He had been an idolatrous priest and suddenly, he adopted Judaism! Who wants to marry into his family? Moshe Rabbeinu did Yisro

a great favor by marrying his daughter. Nonetheless, Moshe Rabbeinu did not say, "He owes me. I do not owe him." The lesson is that it does not make a difference. If someone has benefited from someone else, he must show gratitude no matter why the other fellow did what he did. I saw the following incredible story in a sefer:

A Jewish fellow in New York was going to work by subway. He was standing by the side of the tracks and suddenly, he fell onto the tracks and could not get up. Everyone was paralyzed after having witnessed what just happened. An African-American man standing on the platform with everyone else jumped onto the tracks, pulled the fellow up, and saved him, shortly before the next train came riding right over the tracks where this fellow had fallen. The news crews of the New York papers tracked down this fellow and told him, "You are a hero!" He responded "I am not a hero. I did not do this to be a hero. I have a job. I am a dishwasher in a restaurant earning ten dollars an hour. I knew what would happen if this fellow had been run-over. The train would have been delayed for two hours. I would lose twenty dollars off my salary. I did not jump down onto the tracks to save him. I jumped down there to pull him off the tracks so that the train would not be delayed and I could get to my job on time." This is not the end of the story. This Jew who had fallen onto the tracks made a neder (vow) while lying on the tracks: "If someone will save me, I will give him \$100,000." He now read the newspaper account where he learned that his savior did not do what he did to save him, but in order to not lose the \$20 from his job! He sent the shaylah to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein: Does he need to give the \$100,000 or not?

Rav Zilberstein paskened that he needed to give 1/3 of that amount. (I am not certain about the logic Rav Zilberstein used to come up with this specific figure.) Rav Zilberstein, however, then took the shaylah to his brother-in-law, Rav Chaim Kanievsky to see if he agreed with his psak. Rav Chaim told him: The fellow needs to give the entire \$100,000! Rav Chaim ruled that it does not matter why the fellow did what he did. He could have done it to become a hero or he could have done it to save \$20. The reason he did it is not relevant. He saved this Jew's life. The Jew said that if someone will save his life, he will give him \$100,000. The Jew has to keep his neder.

Hakaras hatov does not depend on why the person does it. Hakaras hatov is an obligation regardless of the motive. A person must be a mensch. As the Brisker Rav said, a person who does not appreciate, iz nit kin mensch (is not a person).

Over the years, I have read dozens, scores, and perhaps hundreds of stories about how great people were makir tova over things that we might take totally for granted, perhaps not even considering them favors at all. And yet, great people consider these things favors and remember them forever. The understanding of this is simple: Someone who is not a makir tova is not a mensch, and the bigger the mensch, the bigger makir tova a person is. The two go hand in hand. People who are literally gedolim, know what it is to be a makir tova.

I once mentioned the story of a bochur in Yeshiva Torah Voda'as who was not coming to minyan. No matter what they tried to do, they could not get him out of bed. The dormitory supervisor came to Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, who was the Rosh Yeshiva at the time, and requested to throw this fellow out of the dormitory for not coming to minyan. Rav Yaakov said, "Yes. If his not coming to minyan affects other people, you can throw him out of the dormitory." But first, Rav Yaakov said, send him in to see me. I want to speak with him.

The head of the dorm told the fellow, "You are being kicked out of the dormitory and Rav Yaakov wants to see you." The fellow was literally shaking in his boots. Rav Yaakov said to him, "I understand that you need to leave the dormitory because you do not come to minyan, but tell me, where are you going to sleep from now on?" The boy said, "I don't know. I have no back-up plan." Rav Yaakov said, "You will come to my house. You will sleep by me." (This is what we call an 'upgrade'.)

The boy was astonished: "The Rosh Yeshiva said that I am being thrown out of the dormitory and now he is telling me that I am going from the dormitory to the Rosh Yeshiva's house?"

Rav Yaakov explained, "Yes. It is because I learned in the Kovno Kollel when I was a young man in Lithuania. Your grandfather used to give money to the Kovno Kollel. Therefore, I feel I owe you a debt of gratitude and so therefore, if you don't have a place to sleep, you can sleep by me." This grandfather was not the sole supporter of the Kovno Kollel, but he was on their contributor's list.

This is just an example of the maxim: The bigger the mensch, the bigger the makir tova and the lesser the mensch, the lesser the makir tova.