



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ג'כ"ב אייר תשפ"ג - בהר בחקתי - 13th May 2023 - Volume 15 - Issue 40

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to David and Zara Newman on the birth of a granddaughter to Elchonon and Shaina Newman in Israel
Mazel Tov to Charles and Joyce Khan on the Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos in Israel of their grandson Avrohom Zvi Shwedel, oldest son of Danny and Miriam Shwedel

Chaim Aruchim

We regret to inform of the Petira of Mr Leon Davidson, father of Nesanel (Nat) Davidson. Nesanel will be sitting Shiva at 4 Holmfield Avenue until Sunday morning. Shacharis Fri 8am, Sun 8.30am, visiting on Friday till 3pm.

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Vivienne Fagleman for the Yahrtzeit of her father this Friday, 28th Iyyar

Grateful Bread

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

It is rare to read two Torah portions together, each with nearly the exact verse. This week we read two portions: B'har, which commands the laws of shmita in which the Jewish nation lets its land lie fallow, and B'chukosai, which entails both blessing and curses bestowed upon the Jewish nation in response to its behavior.

But in each portion there is a similar blessing. The Torah tells us, both B'har and in B'chukosai, that if we deserve blessing then "you shall eat to satisfaction and live securely in your land." (Leviticus 25:19 & Leviticus 26:5) Each time the Torah talks about eating to satisfaction, an agricultural issue, it suffixes a security issue. Now there are verses that deal with the curse of war and the blessing of peace. But why mention tranquility with eating?

Yankel was a vagabond. Every Friday he would spend the last of his few zloty at the bathhouse and barber and, well groomed, he would present himself in the synagogue as a respected businessperson from out-of-town. Then he would usually get a sumptuous Shabbos meal at the home of the wealthiest Jew in town. One Friday afternoon he was in the city of Lodz and inquired about the wealthiest Jew. "Velvel, the banker," he was told "is definitely the wealthiest Jew. But he is also the stingiest. You never get a chance to eat the delicious dishes that he serves you!"

"How's that?" asked Yankel.

"Well, as soon as you take your first bite he engages you in conversation. You begin to speak, and as soon as your eyes leave your plate, a waiter comes and snatches your food away!"

With a game plan in mind Yankel posed as a businessman from Warsaw, and got invited to Reb Velvel's magnificent home. The table was set with exquisite china, and the delicious smells wafting from the kitchen made Yankel's hungry mouth water.

After kiddush and challah, the first course was served, a succulent piece of white fish stuffed with gefilte fish. As Yankel speared it with his fork a voice boomed from the head of the table.

"So, Yankel, tell me, how is my cousin Shloime feeling? You must know Shloime, the tailor of Podolska Street in Warsaw?"

Yankel kept his fork embedded in the fish and held tight as he nodded somberly. "He's dead."

"What?" shrieked Reb Velvel, "Shloime is dead? How can that be?" He ran to the kitchen and shouted for his wife, while Yankel managed to finish his fish in comfort. He even got in a few nibbles off an adjoining

plate. After the shock wore off, they served the soup.

After the first sip, the banker was quick to his old ways. "You don't happen to know my father's brother Reb Dovid the bookbinder, do you?"

With the waiter poised to pounce, Yankel nodded again. "He died too!"

"What?" cried the stunned host. "How can that be? I just got a letter from him last week!"

He ran next door to tell his brother the terrible news – while Yankel calmly finished his soup.

The main course, with chicken, kugel and tzimmes also saw the death of more members of the Warsaw community, each tiding throwing the banker into a tizzy. Meanwhile Yankel ate his portion and all the portions of those who were sickened by the terrible news that they had just heard.

By the time dessert came, the banker got hold of the scheme.

"What's going on?" he shouted. "Are you trying to tell me that the entire Warsaw has dropped dead?"

"No," answered Yankel, "what I am trying to tell you is that when I eat, the whole world drops dead!"

The blessing of plenty is worthless without serenity. Peace in your land is not only a blessing for military men. It is a blessing that enhances every aspect of life, from breaking ground to breaking bread. What good are storehouses of plenty or a wonderful economy without the peace and harmony in which to enjoy them?

Calm and composure are the greatest blessing. For without them, the bread of plenty can still be bread of affliction. The Torah does not give half-baked blessings. It tells us that we will eat our bread to satisfaction because it guarantees us peace in our land. For we must not only pray for sustenance, but also health, well being, and serenity with which to enjoy it.

Smacks of Affection

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week's parsha, Bechukosai, is the final parsha in Sefer Vayikra. "Im bechukosai telechu..." - if, with my commandments you will walk... "I will send your rains in their time" (26:3). Rashi explains that these 'commandments' refers to our toiling in Torah.

What is meant by this "walking"? I'll take the liberty of choosing from the 42 different explanations that the Ohr HaChaim offers. The pursuit of Torah differs greatly from that of individual mitzvos. Whereas a sin can 'extinguish' a mitzvah, it can never extinguish the merit of one's Torah. If one toils in Torah, he is guaranteed that it will walk with him - it will accompany him to the next world.

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.35pm
Candle Lighting	7.57pm - 8.05pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ה'ש"ט	9.08am
Ovos uBonim	5.00-6.00pm
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.58pm
Motzei Shabbos	10.03pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.05pm

Another explanation he brings is that man, unlike the animal kingdom, has the ability to change himself and improve. Our pasuk comes to reveal to us what gives man this ability to move, to change, to improve. If you will toil in Torah then you will walk! That is the only way for a true sustained improvement.

I'm often haunted by a quote I saw at the Yad V'shem Holocaust Museum. One of the Nazi arch killers (yimach shmom v'zichrom) commented that it's quite an accomplishment to be involved in mass murder while at work and still manage to be a good fellow amongst one's friends. The only way to truly improve and change oneself, to truly 'be a good fellow', is thorough the toil of Torah.

Another explanation is given by the R' Nachum Zev, the son of the Saba of Kelm. Often, when a group of friends are together in Yeshiva, it is very hard to discern a difference between them. When do their true strengths become apparent? Upon their leaving the Yeshiva. When each goes his separate path, when their true aspirations become realized, then tremendous differences are seen between them.

If, with my commandments, you will walk! What will you take with you? How will you behave when you are on your own? What lasting effect will the Yeshiva and your learning have on you? If, with my commandments, you will walk! That is the true test.

We have a basic concept of 'schar mitzvos b'hai alma lekah', there is no reward for mitzvos in this world. The only place that there can be a proper accounting for ones spiritual acts is in the spiritual realm.

A story is told of some students of the Chofetz Chaim who approached their Rebbe. They were very poor and had come to offer a desperate solution. "We are willing to forego on a small amount of the reward for our mitzvos in the next world. Let Hashem give some reward in this world to alleviate our difficult predicament."

The Chafetz Chaim answered with a parable. When one is buying an \$8 item, it would be expected to get change from a \$10 bill. For a \$7 item, one could break a \$20. To give a \$50 bill to pay for a \$5 item would raise an eyebrow. A \$100 bill for a \$3 item would probably be refused. Imagine trying to use a \$10,000,000 check to pay for a piece of gum. Impossible! You simply can't break such a large denomination for such a small purchase.

The eternal reward for a mitzvah, an act of connection between man and Hashem, is so colossal that it can't be 'broken' to pay off inconsequential, trivial money in this world. It is because of the huge reward awaiting them that they can't be paid in part in this world!

This brings us to a question from our parsha. "If you will keep the commandments... I will give the rain in your land." Isn't this a pledge of reward in this world? Haven't we established that as not being payable!

The Rambam explains that our parsha, and other similar parshas in the Torah, are not speaking of reward. This world is the arena that affords us the opportunity to draw close to Hashem through the

mitzvos. If a person will keep the commandments, then Hashem will create an environment that is conducive to the continued fulfillment of such mitzvos. Not reward but rather the logical outcome of the acts.

This brings us to an understanding of the tochacha- the harsh and chilling punishments that will result from our not fulfilling our obligations. "V'im lo tishm'u li... (25:14)" – and if you won't listen to me... then we klal Yisroel will go through tremendous hardship until we'll rectify our attitudes and actions.

This tochacha is in fact an act of tremendous kindness from Hashem. Let's try to gain an understanding in this and, in general, the hardships that Hashem sends our way.

Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch offers a fascinating insight into Adom Harishon being chased out of the Garden of Eden. Before the sin, when he had a pure and unsullied connection to Hashem, Gan Eden was the perfect environment for him to be in. However, after being pulled to the physical, after integrating evil as a part of himself, he needed to be removed from those surroundings. He needed to be in an environment where the pleasures were not as easily accessible. An environment where "with the sweat of his brow he would eat bread". That now became the perfect environment for him. That now became his Gan Eden. The perfect environment for us changes as we change.

Imagine a parent who watches his child walking along the edge of a cliff and decides not to shout a warning out of fear of upsetting the child. Ridiculous! Irresponsible! Call Social Services immediately!

Imagine a student who doesn't use the abilities that he has and just 'goes through the motions' during the years of his education. Teachers see his potential, recognize the waste and do nothing. Again, irresponsible! Cruel! A breach of their obligation!

A shout is the kindest possible act. An approving glance- the cruelest possible reaction.

If we recognize this when it comes to this transient world, how much more so when we are dealing with eternity. If Hashem sees a person acting in a way that he'll regret for a long time afterwards, the obvious and kindest reaction is to jolt that person out of his state of apathy and ignorance. He'll need a new environment where things, perhaps, won't be as easy. Where some pain and hardship will force him to reevaluate his priorities and view life differently. That will become his Gan Eden – the best possible environment for his growth.

The lesson that we need to learn from the tochacha is that kindness can be, at times, the greatest cruelty and cruelty can, at times, be the greatest kindness.

May we merit to toil in Hashem's Torah, putting ourselves in a state of constant movement toward Him. Seeing the tov in all that comes our way, recognizing that our personal situation is our personal Gan Eden, and making ourselves worthy recipients of His blessing.

