



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ב"ג שבט תשפ"ב – בשלח – 15th January 2022 - Volume 14 - Issue 28

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Lelli Fletcher and his parents, Noach and Shoshi, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzva this Shabbos. The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush after Davening in the Shul hall.

Mazel Tov to Rabbi YY and Adele Katz on the occasion of the Bar Mitzva this Shabbos of their grandson, Yitzi Emanuel.

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrzeit this week: Shabbos, 13th Shevat - Penina Wieder and Bayla Brandeis for their father

Sun, 14th Shevat - Boaz Dinowitz for his mother

Mon, 15th Shevat - Sharon Levinson for her mother

Tues, 16th Shevat - Danny Dresner for his father

The Valley of Tears

Dani Epstein

It was the holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, 1973. The Israeli 7th Brigade had moved on battalion to support the Barak Armoured Brigade atop the Golan Heights, bringing the total amount of tanks to roughly 100. That sounds like a significant force until the number of Syrian tanks are considered. The enemy were facing them with over 1,200 tanks, 1,000 artillery pieces and over 10,000 men. The odds were quite unfavourable to the nascent nation.

As if that was not enough, the Israeli doctrine of air superiority and support was shredded in no time by the vast number of SAMs (Surface to Air Missiles) the Syrians had bought from the Russians. Worse yet, when it came to night-time, the Syrians has IR vision, whereas the Israeli's had none and were forced to aim at muzzle flashes in the hope of hitting something. Some tank battles were the armoured equivalent of hand-to-hand fighting, with tanks separate by less than thirty metres.

If Ladbrokes were offering odds on the outcome of this particular skirmish, £100 would have become a king's ransom in a matter of days.

The conclusion was quite spectacular, despite the heavy Israeli losses of 80 tanks and running perilously low on ammunition. After witnessing the destruction of over 500 of their armoured vehicles, the Syrians suddenly legged it. To this day, various experts pontificate on a plethora of theories as to why the Syrian retreat abruptly took place in the face of such a rag-tag group of fighters, and yet none of them are definitive; it is, essentially, anyone's guess.

We might want to apply the verse in 84:7 (תהילים) to this incident: "עברי בעמק עברי בעמק" - transgressors in the valley of weeping make it into a fountain". That is to say that those who trespassed into the Valley of Tears – the Syrians – wept so much that they cried a river (Yes, I know about the gemoroh in Eruvin 19a, thank you; I am employing poetic license here).

As staggering as the odds were in this particular slice of history, when the Bnei Yisroel were standing on the edge of the Yam Suf their situation was far more dire. They were hardly short of weapons, but the skill and will to fight was bereft of them. All they saw were the hordes of fast chariots with their highly skilled soldiers hurtling towards them and they were utterly defenceless. Imagine how Moshe felt when he was standing between his people and the deep blue sea with Egypt's finest baying for their blood. Well, we don't really have to imagine that much since the Torah actually reports on the scene in some – albeit cryptic – detail.

First, in true Jewish style, the Bnei Yisroel turn to Hashem and cry out. Having completed that important duty, they follow up by haranguing Moshe.

"What were you thinking of, taking us out of Egypt? Are they short of graves there or something that you had to drag us out here to die in this forsaken desert? Seriously, was this your plan? Did you somehow forget that we told you we would rather serve the Egyptians than die in the desert?"

How does Moshe deal with these complaints?

First he says to them: אל תיראו – do not be afraid!

Then he says: התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום – chill, and check out what Hashem is going to do for you today.

He goes on to say: כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תספו לראתם עוד עד עולם – just like you see those Egyptians right now, so you will never see them again.

כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תספו לראתם עוד עד עולם – Hashem will fight for you.

And now for my favourite bit: ואתם תהרשון – you lot, zip it!

For a man in a hurry, Moshe looks like he ramped up to a major drosho, with perhaps slightly overestimated expectations on its outcome.

Given that the Bnei Yisroel were quite literally giving him a thorough scolding, what reaction was he hoping for when he said "אל תיראו – do not be afraid"? Supposing you were in the American wilderness on a camping holiday and suddenly a huge brown bear lumbered into your camp, headed right towards you, since you are feasting on honey sandwiches. A helpful member of your party yells out "Don't worry!" In what way exactly is that particular snippet of advice going to be remotely useful? Maybe worrying is exactly what you should be doing, since it might allow you to survive the encounter relatively intact.

OK, so maybe it was the preamble to the next bit.

התיצבו – just stand there, וראו את ישועת ה' – and see the salvation of Hashem. You can imagine how some of the panicked people must have reacted. "Seriously, you want us to just stand here? Have you by any chance seen what's coming our way? After everything you threw at them, they're still after us! And we should simply stand here and what, twiddle our thumbs? How about we hoof it somewhere else whilst the salvation of Hashem happens over in that direction, as close as possible to those blood-thirsty savages."

You can see how this is going. So Moshe tries again.

כי אשר ראיתם את מצרים היום לא תספו לראתם עוד עד עולם – just like you see those Egyptians right now, so you will never see them again. The panicked response comes swiftly. "It would be nice if they disappeared right now! Look, we all admire you. You did amazing things in Egypt, we loved the plagues, the Exodus was awesome and so on but we're not to keen on this bit. Right now we can see them, and at the moment we fail to see how we will no longer see them. We're doomed, doomed, doomed. The end of our world is nigh."

Moshe then seeks to reassure them. ה' ילחם לכם – Hashem will fight for you." Aha, so now we are getting somewhere. But here is the thing, why not open with that? Better yet, instead of the whole drosho why not just say to everyone: "Hashem is going to fight this one for you, don't panic." See? Nice and short and very much to the point.

As if this not enough, after Moshe tells everyone to zip it, Hashem says to him: מה-תצעק אלי דבר אל-בני ישראל ויסעו – Why are you crying to Me? Speak to the Bnei Yisroel and tell them to move it."

When did Moshe say anything to Hashem? The last we saw, he was running up a drosho then telling everyone to pipe down. On the face of it, this whole story is an endless confusion. Was Moshe panicking? What did Hashem mean by Moshe

Davening Times

פרשת בשלח

Zman Shabbos	4.03pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.08pm
Hashkomo	7.25am
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.17am
Mincha	1.30pm / 3.57pm
Motzei Shabbos	5.17pm
Ovos uBonim	6.17pm
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	4.10pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

crying to Him, when that clearly wasn't the case? We've seen what Moshe was like when he became upset with his Maker (Shmos 5:22). After Pharaoh's initial reaction to Moshe's demands, the situation grew dire for the Bnei Yisroel. They complained to Moshe and blamed him for the worsening conditions, and in turn Moshe complained to Hashem.

"Why have you done this evil to these people? Why did you bother to send me? From the moment I have arrived this has been an unmitigated disaster and you haven't exactly saved them either." He doesn't ask Hashem what the grand plan is or suggest a different approach or even stay calm. It's straight into blame mode, and if he did pass Go, he didn't collect £200 (If you have different rules for Monopoly, then lucky you. That's how I play the game).

Here though, he hadn't said a word! And yet Hashem asks him: "Why are you crying out to me?" He hadn't complained, he hadn't davened, he hadn't even address Hashem in any way.

As always, Don Yitzchak Abravanel comes to our rescue here. He quotes the medrash (a rarity for him, but you will see why – right now in fact) which explains that at this point the Bnei Yisroel fell into one of four groups.

The first group were presumably suicidal and said, "Let's jump into the sea!" Not much of a plan, but maybe some of them could swim.

The second group thought that simply returning to Egypt would solve all their immediate situation. Of course, this was wishful thinking, but they had their back against the wall, so perhaps clarity of mind was not at the forefront of their consciousness.

The third group said: "Come one, we have the weapons, let's fight." Maybe they were under the impression that if enough of them would wade into the battle they would win. Bearing in mind that they had absolutely no experience fighting, what they were thinking was anyone's guess, considering that their enemy consisted of fast chariots stuffed with the finest fighters Egypt had to offer.

The last group suggested crying out and begging to the Egyptians to, well, I don't really know. Let them off this time? Who knows?

So, to the first group who were advocating a marine expedition, he said: "התיצבו וראו - Stand right there and watch what happens."

To the second group who simply wanted to return to Egypt he said, "כי אשר, ראינתם את מצרים היום לא תספּו לראתם עוד עד עולם" – this is the last time you are going to see them. There is no point in going back."

The third group who had some kind of fighting spirit he responded with: "Don't even think about it. ה' ילחם לכם" – this is not your fight".

Now, how do you deal with people who are so irrational that they think a bit of crying and begging would satisfy a blood-thirsty group of elite fighters who had spent the last year having their country thoroughly trashed? There is not much you can say. Other than, "ואתם תחרישון" – you lot, zip it! Not another word."

All of this requires some explanation though. Why did the Bnei Yisroel first cry out to Hashem then round on Moshe? Why ask Hashem for help if the next minute you verbally attack his prophet? Just how crazy is that?

Well, consider the following. First of all, no-one had told them what the plan was, so they were quite in the dark about Hashem's designs on Pharaoh – the final thrashing so to speak. The one that everyone would really remember. Hashem wanted Pharaoh and his elite soldiers to be utterly defeated in a grandiose manner. For that, the Bnei Yisroel had to be led into a trap that would lure in the Egyptians and their king, so one can understand how the Bnei Yisroel felt at that point.

Then there was another consideration. Supposing someone was captured by some evil ne'er-do-wells who want to part him from his head, and just at the last moment, flying through the window in a cloud of glass shards, comes this incredible Special Forces chappie who sprays bullets everywhere like they are going out of fashion, rescues the poor fellow and drags him out of the building into a back alley, saving him. Then, seconds later our hero jumps on a motorbike and heads off into the sunset, saying: "I won't be back."

Unfortunately, the alley into which our hapless victim was dragged into after the rescue is also home to another group of low lives who would like to relieve him of his watch, mobile phone and smart watch. Can this poor chappie expect his erstwhile rescuer to come to his help yet again? Probably not. After all, the guy did his job – save him from the people who were going to kill him.

With this in mind, we can understand what was happening here. Bnei Yisroel were operating under the assumption that Hashem would do one thing, and one thing only: free them from slavery. From that point forward they would have to fight their own battles. When they saw the Egyptians arriving onto the scene, they became livid and cried out to Hashem, not to save them, but in anger. What was the point in freeing them if they were going to be slaughtered in the desert? Then in the same vein they turned on Moshe and complained in a lengthier fashion. Moshe felt that it was his duty to explain to each group of people why they were wrong, or what they should stop doing, and exactly why they were wrong about their understanding of the situation and that Hashem was yet again going to save them from the muggers in the dark alley. Even though this attempt of Moshe's is retold in a few verses, just figure out how long all that took in real time. It's not like he had an amplifier system, a huge LED screen or WhatsApp that in a matter of a minute or so can address everyone who was whining, wailing and shrieking; which was everyone. Exactly how long this took is anyone's guess,

but it certainly wasn't five minutes.

To this last rather time-consuming process Hashem said to Moshe: "מה תצעק אלי – why are you shouting at them on My behalf? Why are you explaining everything to them? There's no time for that. Right now, they have to move down to the shore, so tell them to move it." This was what Hashem was referring to with the "crying out". Not that Moshe was crying to Hashem at all, but that he was yelling at the people on His behalf. There's a time and place for telling people off, but if you are in a burning building, dressing down the building manager for having faulty smoke alarms and insufficient fire extinguishers makes no sense. Get out first, then deal with the causes later.

Unlike the Bnei Yisroel at the Yam Suf, the IDF at the battle of the Valley of Tears had no prophet to foretell them the final outcome; to tell them that when the situation was at it's very worst, ה' ילחם לכם. However, מעשה אבות סימן לבנים. Of course no-one in their right mind would base a military strategy on something that happened 3,000 years ago or even 50 years ago. That's not the point. What they could draw from this incident is that Hashem's plan for a given situation is not for public consumption, but unlike our Special Forces hero, He will not drag us from the pan only to dump us into the fire.

Clear Instructions

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

It was a battle for the ages. As the Jews departed Egypt and miraculously crossed the Red Sea, they were brutally and savagely ambushed by Amalek, a nation who would prove to be the perpetual nemesis of the Jewish People until this very day. The nation of Amalek repeated their malice again during the Israelites' trek in the desert after the death of Ahron. At that time, they posed as Canaanites and once again tried to defeat the Jews (Numbers 21:1). Both times they were repelled. Amalek's venom spewed throughout history. Eventually, Amalek's direct descendant, Haman, would unsuccessfully try his hand at the total annihilation of our nation during the era between the destruction of the first Holy Temple and the rebuilding of the second Temple.

It therefore is no surprise that historians and scholars alike have traced the German butchers of World War II as descendants of the Amalekites.

But history did not have to be repeated. Amalek could have been quashed at the beginning of his ruthless career. After the first ambush, Hashem gave specific instructions on how the Jewish nation must deal with Amalek. The directive was not pretty. It entailed war, but following the directives precisely would have prevented generations of bloodshed and preserved millions of Jewish lives throughout our history.

The failure to fulfill them in toto would lead to the Jewish People's eventual and constant persecution, even attempted annihilation. The plans were so precise that instructions were given as to how the directive was supposed to be transmitted. Yes, even the instructions were given with instructions!

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Write this as a remembrance in the Book and put it in the ears of Yehoshua (Joshua) that I shall surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens' " (Exodus 17:14).

And so Moshe is told to instruct Joshua, his warrior, in no uncertain terms how the Jewish nation must deal with those who sought to abort their growth only days from their triumphant emergence from the parted waters of the Red Sea. He is told write it down and then place it in the ears of Joshua. What troubles me is the double directive. The entire Torah was either written or transmitted orally. The Torah hardly ever tells Moshe to do both write and transmit orally. Wasn't the entire Torah written and taught? Why, then, when it comes to this particular command does the Torah instruct both a written and verbal instruction, the latter to be placed directly into the ear of Joshua?

Towards the end of last year, a Judge in Denver Colorado was presiding over a civil trial when she noticed that a screw must have fallen out of the Venetian blinds over a window on the right side of the courtroom, and they were beginning to give way. As the window treatments were suspended directly over the jury box, the judge was concerned. A screw must have fallen out and the shades were beginning to tilt precariously.

She did not want to interrupt the testimony of one of the litigants, and quickly scribbled a note and motioned for the court officer.

With a look of concern, and without even directing her attention toward him, she handed the note to the court officer.

The officer looked at the note and immediately raced from the courtroom for assistance. Within minutes, an ambulance, sirens blaring, screeched to a halt in front of the courthouse. The paramedics raced to the courtroom, stretcher opened, fully prepared to treat a stroke victim.

The startled Judge looked up in horror as she protested the onslaught of medics – until they handed her the note, she had given the court officer. In her own hand it read, "Blind on the right side. Send for immediate assistance."

Instructions that deal in life or death situations can be easily misconstrued. Wars have been fought, lives have been lost, and nations defeated due to homonymic misinterpretations. The formidable foes were on the verge of defeat all too often in Jewish history when misplaced compassion led to progenitors who returned the Jewish kindness with murderous onslaught. And so, writing messages or telling stories were not enough. The message had to be oral and written, spoken and recorded, documented and preserved. For hatred and evil must be eradicated – in our minds, in our mouths, with our ears, and with our quills.