



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ד"ר שבת תשפ"ד - 20th January 2024 - Volume 16 - Issue 28

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Malcolm and Vivienne Fagleman on the birth of a granddaughter to Natan and Avital Fagleman in Liverpool
20th Anniversary

The invitations for what will be a memorable weekend will be going out on Sunday, if you do not receive yours, please email office@ohryerushalayim.org.uk

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:

Tues, 13th Shevat - Bayla Brandeis and Penina Wieder for their father

Weds, 14th Shevat - Boaz Dinowitz for his mother

Thurs, 15th Shevat - Sharon Levinson for her mother

Fri, 16th Shevat - Danny Dresner for his father

Actions More Than Words

Rabbi J Rubinstein

The late Lord Jacobovitz made a telling observation about the Festivals of Shovous and Pesach. If somebody was drifting away from Judaism, which of those two Festivals would he abandon first? Logically one would think Pesach would definitely be discarded first. It involves so much hard work and appears to be so inconvenient, whereas Shovous is so easy to keep, it is only for two days and needs very little preparation. In real life we know the opposite is what happens. If there is one religious practice which remains, with even the most assimilated families, it is the Seder, unlike Shovous which is very rapidly forgotten. This illustrates a great truth about Judaism; it is the doing which matters. Inspiration, and understanding the ideals of Judaism are very important, but if they are not translated in to concrete deeds, they do not really affect the person. It is doing the Mitzvos which speaks to the soul, and impacts the individual.

This principle, enables us to understand a unique feature of the observance of Pesach by the Jewish people, when they actually came out of Egypt. They had to take the sheep for the Pesach offering, four days before it was sacrificed, and examine it over those four days. This did not have to be done with any future Pesach offering. Rav Wolbo explains, they were about to be saved from Egyptian slavery. This was not only to grant them freedom, it was also to enable them to live a full Jewish life, to be "spiritually saved". But they had to be capable of living as Jews should live, and rising to the opportunity to be "spiritually saved". In order to have this potential, they had to do Mitzvos and that would change them, and make it possible for them to be spiritually redeemed. In the words of Rashi, לא היו בידם מצוות להתעסק בהם כדי שיגאלו - "They did not have in their hands Mitzvos to be busy with, so that they could be redeemed" (Chap.12,6). Doing the Mitsvos of examining the sheep for four days, and performing circumcision which they also did at that time, made them fit for a spiritual as well as a physical redemption.

It is crucial we learn the ideas and inspiration of Judaism, but they must be accompanied by deeds. On Pesach we talk about the Exodus from Egypt, and all the lessons we learn from it, after all the Hebrew word Hagadah means to tell, but we also do the Mitzvos. We clear the house of Chametz, we eat the matzah and the morror, and we drink the four cups of wine. It is that, which makes Pesach so powerful.

Stay Calm, Cool, and Collected

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This weeks parsha, Bo, is replete with many fascinating events. It begins with the last three plagues (which, incidentally, is the numeric value of the word 'bo', beis and aleph, 2+1). It also discusses the preparations for the

Korbon Pesach and its accompanying mitzvos, the holiday of Pesach and our actual exit from Mitzraim.

Reb Yerucham Levovitz, in his classic work, Daas Torah, discusses how this parsha teaches us to properly view events.

The possuk (13:8) commands us to tell our children that for the sake of 'this', Hashem took us out of Mitzraim. What is 'this' referring to? Rashi explains that we were taken out of Mitzraim, in order that we would fulfill those pesach mitzvos such as, pesach, matzo and marror. In other words, Reb Yerucham writes, we don't perform those mitzvos because we were taken out of Mitzraim. Rather, the whole scenario of Mitzraim was created, in order that we would be presented with these mitzvos!

Perhaps this would be more easily understood with a parable. The Chafetz Chaim compares our earthly existence to a king who sent away his beloved son to a distant land. There, it was necessary for the son to wear very coarse clothing, eat extremely crude foods and deal with a rather unrefined clientele. How could a loving father send his son to such an environment? Clearly, the son's experiences there could afford him opportunities of growth and development which were unavailable to him while back in the palace with his father. Upon his return home, he will be able to assume new responsibilities and positions which would have been beyond his reach had he never been sent away.

The same applies to our stint here in this world. The Father, the King of kings, sends His children to a distant land. Being that in the spiritual realm there is no concept of space, distance represents dissimilarity. The existence that the neshama faces in this world is really the epitome of dissimilarity. It is clothed with the very coarse 'garment' of our physical body. The food needed by the body is hardly true 'soul food'! The clientele, I'm sure our New York readers will agree, are not necessarily the most spiritually aspiring!

The question then shouts, why were we sent here? Clearly the explanation is, that there was no opportunity for real growth when we were tucked under Hashem's Throne of Glory. Hashem's presence was so awe inspiring that no free will decisions could be made. Only by being in an environment of concealment, are decisions and subsequently growth possible. If we are to adhere, under these circumstances, to the G-d given directives, then the relationship will be established and will carry through to our return 'back home'.

At this point it becomes very clear that our mitzvos do not arise from circumstances such as leaving Mitzraim. Rather, in order to present us with these mitzvos in a meaningful way, the scenario of Mitzraim needed to have been created. These mitzvos afford us the opportunity of growth and thereby help us form a bond with our Creator.

Let's take matzo as an example. In this weeks parsha (13:6) we are commanded to eat matzo. On a simple level we think that we ate matzo

Davening Times

זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	4.11pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	4.16pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.16am
Rov's Shiur	3.34pm
Mincha	1.30pm / 4.04pm
Motzei Shabbos	5.24pm
Ovos uBonim/Bonos	6.24pm
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	4.20pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

because, being in a rush, there wasn't enough time for our dough to rise. However, we must understand that Hashem certainly could have had us start baking 18 minutes earlier! Clearly, we left in a rush in order that we would be eating matzo. Now, why would a benevolent G-d want His beloved children to be eating baked cardboard?! There must be a necessary and crucial lesson to be learned and internalized from the matzo.

After 210 years of brutal slavery we are being freed. It would be natural for us to breathe a sigh of relief and to anticipate an easier future. Right at that crucial moment Hashem has us eat matzo. You weren't placed in Mitzraim and then taken out in order to have an easy and relaxing life. You are leaving from an oppressive bondage under a selfish king, to an incredibly rewarding servitude under a magnanimous King. At times the environment will be comfortable and conducive to this service. At times it will be harsh and difficult to serve. Know clearly from the very outset and leave with the understanding that at times the relationship will be forged through hardship. The food of those first lightheaded moments of freedom must be matzo!

We can view the mitzvah of honoring one's parents in a similar way. On a simple level, parents have given life and sustenance to their children. The children, therefore, must show their appreciation. Once again, that is a rather reversed view of the situation. Hashem felt it necessary that in order for us to be able to relate to Him properly, we must experience a relationship where we have an obligation of gratitude. He, therefore, created a world where we have parents.

This perspective can have a tremendous effect on the way that we perceive common everyday events. Situations arise causing difficulties in performing certain mitzvos. We often feel that it's just too much and we therefore neglect the mitzvah. Perhaps we need to realize that the whole circumstance was created only in order to challenge us! When dealing with an annoying person or situation we often find ourselves losing our cool. We need to pause for a moment and realize that this situation is being served to us for the express purpose of seeing if we will lose our cool! With such a realization, one can smile up toward the heavens, say, "I know what you are trying to do!", and proceed to stay cool, calm and collected!

It is the sum total of such experiences, over the course of a lifetime, which allows a person to realize all of his latent potential. As the Chovos Halevovos writes, we don't want to be like the baby who cries and fights every time the parent tries to change their dirty diaper. At times, we too would choose to remain sitting in our 'dirty diaper', and it's those G-d-sent situations which jolt us out of our stupor! May Hashem grant us the wisdom and perspective to properly view the events and challenges of our lives, and may we be all that we can be!

OMG

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

Therefore, say to the Children of Israel, 'I am HASHEM, and I will take you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will save you from their labor, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a G-d to you, and you will know that I am HASHEM your G-d, Who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Shemos 6:6-7)

Every good lesson requires a goal. The students should know in advance what they are going to learn. Then the teacher cleverly imparts his lessons and in the end checks to see if the goal of the lesson hit its mark and the intended message was actually and successfully delivered. The goal of this lesson plan, this exercise entitled "Exodus from Egypt" is explicitly spelled out. When all is said and done, the Jewish People will "know that I am HASHEM, your G-d". That is exactly what a great teacher does!

The Zohar writes: This is the first Mitzvah of all the Mitzvos, to know that there is the Holy One Blessed Be He in general. What is in general? To know that there is an Almighty Ruler on High and He is the Master of the world and He creates all of the worlds, heaven and earth and all of its agents. This is in general and the end of the matter is in detail. General and detail they are; the beginning and the end."

What is this talk of general and specific knowledge? If we take a brief look at the Ten Commandments, the way they were configured on the Luchos we might gain a picture of what this is about. Crowning the top on the first side, which contains Mitzvos between Man and G-d is that grand proclamation, "I am HASHEM your G-d Who took you out of the Land of Egypt!" There it is the general declaration! Sitting on the bottom is "Honor your mother and father".

Why are they on the side between Man and G-d? There are many answers and approaches. Let us try this simple one. The Ten Commandments are not just a random sample of the 613 Mitzvos. It is an orientation to reality. The supreme and global reality is that HASHEM alone made, makes, and will make everything in the universe.

On the local and personal level, the parents we were gifted with, the DNA that we inherited is specifically designed and tailored for the purpose of our existence. This is the seat we were assigned on the airplane of life, by HASHEM. It's not negotiable! It's a fact of life, a given, and given for a supernal reason!

Looking out directly to the side, neighboring the Mitzvah of honoring parents is a similar idea and ideal of not being jealous of what has been granted to your neighbor. Reb Wolbe zl. said that the last of the Ten Commandments is a final exam on the first. If one understands well and has internalized that HASHEM is master decider in all these matters great and small, local and global, then he cannot be jealous of what somebody else has. That's the cure to existential anxiety, nausea, forlornness, and despair. It's the key to happiness to accept and work with reality rather than against reality.

I remember many years ago our family was settling down at the Pesach Seder and my mother was arranging the seating in a small dining room to the best of her ability. It was like a parking lot puzzle. I had an uncle Zevy, a soft sweet intellectual person who was joining us that year. My mother apologized to him that his seat was on the corner of a rickety card table with an equally shaky folding chair. My mother said, "I'm sorry you didn't get such a great seat." He responded incredibly, "It's Ok! I'll make it great!" That, for me, was rich, and memorable! "I'll make it great! Not having this orientation can be maddening. Everything is seen as negotiable, fluid, or judged as a cosmic mistake and something to feel bitter and complain about. It makes a world of difference!

Many years ago, I heard directly from the mouth of the Tzadik of Monsey, Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl. dramatically recited the whole Adon Olam, "Master of the Universe before any creature was created ... He was, He is, and He will be- He is One - there is no comparison to Him - Without beginning, without end...and after all these grandiose proportions, he rubbed his heart gently and declared, "Hu Eli" - "He is my G-d". HASHEM, not as a distant entity but an intimate - personal G-d who is deeply interested in every detail of your life and my life, as we often say, "OMG"!

It's Not the Locusts!

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

Come to Paroh. I have hardened his heart...so that I can put these signs of Mine in their midst, and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt.

By hardening Paroh's heart, the makos continued. They would convince everyone of Hashem's role in the drama of the plagues. Even future generations would be able to transmit the account of the absolute triumph of Hashem.

This is all well and good - but why are these facts related here, in conjunction with the plague of locusts? How was this makah in particular a greater demonstration of Hashem's presence and power than those that occurred earlier?

The simple answer is that wasn't the locusts at all. It was the hardening of Paroh's heart that turned the tide of any residual disbelief into a full acknowledgment of His role.

How were people able prior to this plague to ignore Moshe's warnings? They rejected Moshe's claim to speak in the name of some unknown G-d of Israel. Moshe was simply a very clever trickster. Someone would figure out some day how he performed his "miracles," but surely there was a reasonable explanation. Somewhere.

One thing, they acknowledged, could only be done by a supreme G-d: taking away human free choice. No trickster could accomplish that. Only G-d could burrow into the human mind and take control of it.

Arbeh made that happen. The makos had progressed from the first ones that caused discomfort and pain. They ramped up to wreaking economic havoc and destruction. Barad dealt a knockout blow to food security. It was near-fatal; some of the younger, supple grain was not damaged, and remained. The locusts, however, denuded the land of even that.

It was beyond comprehension that a sane Paroh (which most assuredly he was!) would not surrender at this point to save his people. But he didn't. There was no rational way to explain his intransigence in the face of total ruin. Only the intervention of G-d could explain the hardness of Paroh's heart.

"Come to Paroh. I have hardened his heart." It will not be the locusts per se that will allow the Bnei Yisrael to "relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt." (As Ramban points out, locust plagues were not uncommon in Egypt.) Rather, it is the hardening of Paroh's heart that will allow the world to understand that I was the cause of the makos - not Moshe. So come to Paroh. Know that I have already hardened his heart to ignore the total devastation that the locusts will bring about.

When people take stock of Paroh's resistance, they will understand that I am in control.