



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to Hillel and Chavi Schijveschuuder on the occasion of Benjy's wedding to Michal Yodaiken on Sunday. The Aufruf takes place this Shabbos followed by Kiddush in the Shul hall
 Mazel Tov to David and Eunice Wolfson on the birth of a great grandson in Yerushalayim
 Mazel Tov to Atara Kauffman and to her parents, Harrison and Adina, on the occasion of her Bas Mitzva
 Mazel Tov to Charles Khan on the occasion of his 70th birthday.
 The Kehilla is invited to a Kiddush in Holy LawShul hall from 11:30 approx

Chaim Aruchim

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

- Shabbos, 12th Tammuz - Jenny Lewin for her mother
- Mon, 14th Tammuz - Yoel Rubin for his mother
- Weds, 16th Tammuz - The Rov for his sister
- Thurs, 17th Tammuz - Dean Kaye for his father
- Fri, 18th Tammuz - Avi Stern for his father

Snake Eyes

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

I would not consider this week as one of Moshe's easiest ones. Through this entire portion Moshe suffers through a series of disappointments and tragedies. First, his sister Miriam dies. Then the miraculous well ceases to flow from the rock that traveled with the Jewish nation. The people complain bitterly and Moshe is told to talk to the rock and it will produce water. Moshe doesn't talk to the rock. He hits it. He is censured by Hashem for distorting His command. For that, he will not enter Eretz Yisrael. He and Ahron would both die in the desert. The setbacks do not end there. Next, Moshe sends messengers to the king of Edom, imploring him to allow the children of Israel, cousins of the Edomites, to journey through the land of Edom. "We will," they promise, "purchase supplies from the citizen's of Edom and only take the main roads" (Numbers 20:14-18). Yet Edom responds with an emphatic no and threatens war. Again Moshe acquiesces and takes the long route toward the land of Israel. Then the Torah tells us of another blow to Moshe – the death of his only brother Ahron. Now Moshe is left alone, with neither Miriam nor Ahron to support him. And the death of Ahron brings no tranquility. Immediately after Ahron's death, the Jews are attacked by the King of Arad in the south, whom the Talmud explicates as our evil nemesis Amalek. And though the battle is won, the Torah tells us that the Jews were still not satisfied. They verbally attack Moshe and Hashem complaining, "why did you bring us to die in this wilderness with no food or water and our souls are disgusted with the light fare of manna!" (Numbers 21:5). But Hashem is not quiescent. Fiery snakes attack the people. And Moshe, despite the trials and tribulation he has endured, has only one thing on his mind. Many people would have just given up. But Moshe had strength, courage, and love of B'nai Yisrael. He pleads to Hashem on behalf of his nation. "Stop the snakes!" Hashem tells Moshe to make a snake and put it on a stick, and whoever was bitten shall gaze at the snake and will be cured. And so it was. Moshe made the snake. Those who were bitten looked at the snake and were healed. The Mishna in Rosh HaShana asks rhetorically, does a snake actually cure? Of course not! It explains that it was not the snake that healed but rather the snake was just a symbol for the nation to gaze heaven ward and repent.

The obvious mystery strikes every reader of the Torah. Why would the snake be an impetus of teshuva? Why didn't Moshe put a sacred scroll on the stick? Why had the symbol of fiery venom and certain death motivated the nation to repent? What transforms the very item we loathe and fear into the symbol of our cure?

In fact on a secular note; it is a slithering image gliding up a staff that represents an organization that fights the effect of its very venom. Based on the episode in this week's portion, the snake on a staff has become the symbol of those who are divinely guided to heal the very wounds that it inflicts. But why has our misfortune become the symbol of our cure? Paul Harvey writes about a fascinating piece of American History, quite appropriate for Independence Day.

It was two decades before the Declaration of Independence. The Redcoats were tired of the colonies and they made sure the Americans knew it. They would sing a song, historians are not sure if the tune was of French, Spanish or German origin, but its lyrics were meant to taunt. The silly song mocked the colonists and was by the British sung outside the patriot's meeting places – even in front of their houses of worship. It was meant to scare them into submission. But it did not.

A strange thing happened with the very tune orchestrated to demoralize the fledgling nation. The Americans stole it. And the ragtag brigades used it against their enemy. They sang it in battle. They sang it in victory. They even sang it in defeat! And it was played and sung by the victorious Colonial Army at the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. The song that was meant to mock became a ballad of honor and was incorporated into the melodies and compositions that glorified the victories of the colonial army. It even was highlighted in Benjamin Carr's Federal Overture written in 1794.

So the very words that were meant to irritate were used celebrate, and the tune that was meant to jeer became a nation's cheer. Even today every American child knows it and sings it proudly. Yankee Doodle! How did Moshe survive his the ordeals, suffering and hardship that plagued him through most of his career? Moshe in his earliest meeting with Hashem endured a very frightening experience. Hashem told him to throw down his staff. It transformed into a vicious snake. And Moshe ran. But Hashem told Moshe to confront the snake and grab it. And it miraculously conformed back into a very benign stick (Exodus 4:1-5). Moshe now teaches that very lesson to Klal Yisrael. It is easy to run from your fears and horrors. Sometimes you may be running from the very

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.56pm-8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.56am
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
Mincha	6.00pm / 9.55pm
Motzei Shabbos	11.00pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.50pm
שבעה עשר בתמוז	
Ta'anis Starts	1.13am
Shacharis	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.25pm
Ta'anis Ends	10.46pm

monster that bit you. But if you confront the monster with fire in your eyes and sincerity in your heart, then you have nothing to fear. For with the right frame of mind, the very animal that took control of you is not only harmless, it becomes a source of strength.

You Can't Pick Your Cards...

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week's parsha, Balak, begins with the worries of Balak, the king of Moav. "Vayar Balak ben Tzipur eis kol asher asah Yisroel laEmori – and Balak saw all that Yisroel had done to the (nation of) Emori (22:2)." Tremendous miracles had been performed for Bnei Yisroel. In order to cause them to falter, he hired Bilaam, a sorcerer and prophet to come and curse them.

In Shemos we learned of another gentile who had heard of the miracles performed for Bnei Yisroel. "And Yisro... heard all that Elokim had done for Moshe and Yisroel (Shemos 18:1)."

Two gentiles hearing of miracles. Two reactions which couldn't be more distant from one another. One comes to join, to try to be a part of this miraculous existence. One tries to destroy that which he doesn't have.

It's reminiscent of the old Russian proverb of two neighbors. Boris owned a cow and Ivor didn't. A fairy godmother visits Ivor and grants him any wish he desires. Overcome with the injustice of his 'cowless' life being so arduous, he implores the fairy godmother... "Kill Boris' cow!"

How often do two people experience similar situations, yet are affected in totally opposite ways. Death in a family can cause people to draw closer to Hashem or to angrily distance themselves. Hardships with children build as many marriages as they destroy. The list is as long as life's occurrences.

Taking this a step further, how often do we see wealthy people bitter with their fate and poor people always wearing a smile. Healthy people in states of depression, and physically challenged individuals with a true sense of balance.

One thing becomes very apparent. Our major life decisions, attitudes and states of mind are not determined by what goes on outside of us, but rather by the way we decide to perceive, process and ultimately deal with those events. We don't control the cards we are dealt, but we decide how to play the hand.

We can build or we can destroy. The choice is ultimately ours.

Unable to successfully curse Bnei Yisroel, Bilaam advises Balak to cause them to sin. This would accomplish his objective of distancing them from Hashem. This leads to our parsha's conclusion of Bnei Yisroel's strong attachment to the idol worship of Baal P'or.

Baal P'or had quite a strange form of worship. One would relieve themselves in front of, or on to, the idol. The gemara (Sanhedrin 64.) tells of a person who wanted to show the idiocy of this worship. He relieved himself and then used the nose of the idol itself to wipe himself. "Never before has anyone served the idol in such a meaningful way!", gushed the priest.

What was the meaning behind this form of worship? How could a generation that had experienced all of the miracles throughout the wilderness, that had tasted the sweetness of a true relationship with Hashem, be drawn to such a sick form of worship?!

The Ruach HaChaim (Avos 3:3) gives us an insight into Baal P'or. The sin of Adam Harishon caused the world to be changed in a very fundamental way. Just as he internalized evil and now had an internal drive to sin, so too, the world became a mixture of tov and ra, good and evil. Man's task was to sift through, rejecting and removing the ra and attaching to and strengthening the tov.

This is the process of our dealing with the food that grows from the 'accursed' earth. Our body pulls from the food the 'tov', the parts needed by the body, and eliminates the rest. In the 'asher yatzar' blessing recited after tending to bodily needs, the final words are that Hashem is 'mafee la'asos' – wondrous in His doing. This wonder is referring to the body's ability to choose what it needs and to reject the waste.

When Bnei Yisroel consumed manna, food from heaven, there was no bodily waste elimination! The manna, coming from heaven, never affected by the sin and subsequent curse, was totally tov! There was no ra for the body to eliminate!

Once this world has gone through this transformation of everything being a mixture of tov and ra, deviantly and defiantly serving pure ra, the forces of evil, is quite a challenge. Where can one find service to pure unadulterated ra? Baal P'or! All tov aspects have been removed by the body. All that remains is the stench of 100% ra!

Baal P'or was openly declared war against Hashem. Fighting against Him. Seeking to strengthen and increase the presence of ra. Bnei Yisroel, who

felt forced into serving Hashem, looked to go all the way to the other extreme. They connected to Baal P'or.

Rav Chaim Shmuelovitz's explanation shows that this avodah zarah is really a lot 'closer to home' than we realize. We live in a society where anything goes. Any degenerate behavior is labeled an alternative lifestyle. Nothing is sacred. Let it all hang out. Or, as the Beatles sang, "Why Don't we do it in the Road?!"

What are the few areas where the line is usually drawn? "Hey, don't involve my mother!", is one, and religion, G-d, is another. When almost nothing is scared, a bit of reverence is usually left for G-d.

If one wants to really let it all hang out, to show that nothing is sacred, what does he do? Baal P'or. The whole service was to debase anything of value. To take your god and relieve yourself on him! Once I do that, I can do anything! Absolutely nothing is sacred. Wiping yourself with the nose of the statue takes this concept to an even higher madregah (level). Once one does that, can you expect him to give his seat on the bus to a senior citizen?! To not pick his nose in public? I'm free!!! I can do anything I want!

Bnei Yisroel who were so close to Hashem, who felt His constant watch and supervision, felt restricted. To them, Baal P'or, the epitome of 'freedom', had a tremendous attraction.

May we realize that the only true freedom comes from being in control of ourselves, adhering to the 'Toras Chaim', the instructions for life, given to us by the Source of all Life.

Can An Extra Beracha Hurt? Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

Do not curse the nation, for they are blessed.

Did G-d need to explain Himself to Balak? He should have simply commanded Balak, "Do not curse them! Full stop."

Rashi, citing a midrash, provides the background conversation to this incident. After Balak receives the instruction not to curse the Bnei Yisrael – which he accepts – he says, "OK. So I'll bless them then." Hashem responds, "Don't bless them. They are already blessed."

You may ask, what is the harm in a little extra beracha? Why did Hashem insist that Balak not bless them?

The gemara's story about the poor man whose wife died may hold the key to understanding why. The fellow was left with a newborn, and no way of sustaining the baby, His wife was out of the picture, and he could not afford to pay for a wet nurse. Hashem provided a miracle for him. He grew breasts, and was able to nurse the child himself.

Two opinions in the gemara take diametrically opposing positions. One praises the father. "How great is this person, that Hashem performed this miracle for him." The other one regards him dismissively. "How lowly is this person, for whom the protocols of Creation were changed on his account." The two positions do not really conflict. Whether he was praiseworthy or lowly depends on who the person was – whether or not he was a tzadik who deserved miraculous Divine intervention, or whether he wasn't, but managed to move the Heavenly Court with his davening.

It always bothered me, though, that the gemara did not preserve some parallelism between the two positions. If the non- tzadik is frowned upon for "changing the order of Creation," then the tzadik should be lauded for doing the same! Why did the gemara instead find different phraseology, and praise him instead for the Heavens "performing a miracle for him?"

A holy man explained that parnasah for the tzadik does not require the creation of something new. Think of Hagar, crying out for water, until the malach "opened her eyes, and she saw a water spring." The water did not have to be created for her. It was already there, just waiting to be revealed. The tzadik doesn't need new parnasah to be arranged for him. Lesser people are different. As emunah and bitachon diminish, the need for new avenues of parnasah increase. Thus, it is specifically, "When you say, 'What will we eat [in the shemittah year]?' that Hashem answers, "I will command my beracha for you." Had they not asked the question, they wouldn't require a special beracha! The food would already be there, waiting for them.

This, then, is the reason why the gemara only speaks about changing the natural order for the less-than-tzadik. Such change would not be a compliment paid to the greater person. He does not require any real-time intervention. For him, the answer to his dilemma is a miracle – but one that precedes the need, not appears to answer it.

When Balak said that he would offer a beracha on behalf of the nation, Hashem told him, "No way. They are not in need of any new beracha. Their success is already assured and hard-wired."