



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ג אב תשע"ט – עקב – 24th August 2019 - Volume 12 - Issue 5

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Daniel and Reuvena Dresner on the occasion of Yehuda's wedding next week in London.

### It's Holiday Time!

As we're now into the holiday period where many people are away, we ask that those remaining in town support the Shul Minyonim.

## To Boldly Go

Ben First

This Dvar Torah is dedicated to the Morhaim Family. Sammy, Nathalie, Benny, Tamar, Doniel and Eli are about to embark on a bold journey of tremendous mesirus nefesh by making Aliyah this week. The departure of the Morhaim Family leaves a hole in our community. The idea of this Dvar Torah is that it should be both a dedication to them and hopefully a source of inspiration for ourselves to fill that hole.

Rabbi Yackov Gesundheit in his Hakdoma to his sefer Tiferes Yackov on Gittin quotes a Gemara which says that Eretz Yisroel, the Torah and Olam Haba are three gifts that are acquired through suffering. He uses this Gemara to explain Moshe's response to the Malachim when he went to Shomayim and they said the Torah shouldn't be given to humans (Shabbos 88b.) He explains that what the Malachim wanted was not that the Jews shouldn't have the right to keep mitzvos, rather they should lose the right to have control over the Torah and make Chidushim. Moshe responded by telling the Malachim that the suffering the Jews went through in Egypt gave them the right to make chidushim in Torah. Malachim could never have such a merit. The reward for the Jews suffering in Egypt was the right to understand and interpret the Torah.

The hakdoma concludes with Rabbi Gesundheit bemoaning what he calls 'Eyma yeseirah' (excessive respect) in his generation (mid 1800's Poland). He complains that people are afraid to move out of their comfort zone and challenge those that came before them for the sake of truth. In other words to be mechadesh you need both mesiras nefesh and boldness.

Rabbi Gesundheit's Hashkafah bore fruit in both respects. At the age of 18 he was really suffering such that he was deathly ill and it was then that he decided to write his chidushim down. I've never learnt his sefer on Gittin but I have heard that he will often give an opinion that differs from Rashi and Tosfos which is obviously very bold for an acharon. The result was a sefer that is very popular throughout the yeshiva world and one Talmid Chochom told me you can't learn Gittin without it.

At the end of the Hakdoma Rabbi Gesundheit demands that all Jews should be trying to muster up their boldness and mesiras nefesh to be mechadesh according to their own level of intellect.

This principle can surely be applied to any idea which one thinks might help the Jewish people. By suggesting a new education system for women Soroh Schneerer was being very brave. Yet her actions have made her into one of the most influential Jews of the 20th century.

Let me conclude with my favourite story about the Lubavitcher Rebbe as heard from Rabbi Moshe Weinberger.

There was a young boy in the 1950's who wasn't doing well in school. His parents took him to see the Rebbe. As he was about to leave, the Rebbe asked the boy if he liked baseball. The boy of course answered in the

affirmative. The Rebbe then asked the boy what the spectators do when one team is losing badly. The boy said that some of the spectators will leave early. The Rebbe then asked the boy if any of the players ever leave early. The boy replied that of course the players don't leave early because they are players. The Rebbe then made his concluding comment to the boy 'There are two types of people in this world players and spectators. What are you going to be: a player or a spectator?'

## Genuine Wealth

Rabbi Pinchas Avruch (Torah.org)

Ben Azai teaches us in Pirkei Avos, "Run to perform even a simple mitzvah and flee from transgression, for one mitzvah brings in its wake another mitzvah and one transgression brings in its wake another transgression, for the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah and the reward for a transgression is another transgression." (4:2) Rabbi Yaakov teaches later that, "Better is one hour of spiritual bliss in the World to Come than the entire life in this world." (4:22)

These two lessons come together to teach us that the reward for a mitzvah is so sublime, so spiritually intense, that this transient world and its temporal pleasures cannot be the medium in which genuine reward is given; that is held in reserve for the World to Come. The only meaningful compensation available in this world is the opportunity to further forge the bond with our Creator through more mitzvos.

The Torah seems to tell us otherwise. "And it will be that if you continually listen to My commandments that I commanded you today, to love G-d your L-rd and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, then I shall provide you with the rain of your land in its time, the early rain and the late rain, and you shall bring in your grain, your wine and your oil. I shall provide grass in your field for your animals and you will eat and you will be satisfied." (Devarim 11:13-15)

In the Torah, G-d takes the most imperative command – to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul – and gives it the most basic, mundane reward: food. How are these two concepts reconciled?

Rambam (Laws of Teshuva, chapter 9) teaches, "We are promised in the Torah that if we fulfill [the mitzvos] with joy, a positive spirit and wisdom, then G-d will always remove from our paths all impediments to our success, such as illness, war, hunger and the like. He will shower us with

## The Week Ahead

### שבת פרשת עקב

### מברכין אלול

Mincha	6.40pm
Candle Lighting	6.52pm - 7.05pm
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.37am
Children's Group	10.45am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.07pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Motzei Shabbos	9.12pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

the good that will strengthen us with that which we need to fulfill the Torah, such as bounty, peace and wealth, so that we will not need to distract ourselves with our mundane bodily needs and we will be free to pursue Torah learning with wisdom and fulfillment of mitzvos so we can acquire the World to Come.”

Michtav Me’Eliyahu explains that all our worldly possessions with which we are blessed are not given to us to revel in them. Rather, they are Divine tools for achieving holiness. Indeed, there is NO reward in this world for a mitzvah other than a mitzvah, and the material benefits we enjoy are simply vehicles to assist in the accomplishment of that goal. As such, all of our mundane possessions are now elevated. They are vessels for holiness and spiritual growth, akin to the implements utilized in the Bais HaMikdash.

With this we can truly understand the final words of the verse above, “you will eat and you will be satisfied.” Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of men, taught us “A lover of money will never be satisfied with money” (Koheles 5:9) If the Torah’s verses were discussing one who values wealth for its own sake, the elusive blessing of satisfaction would be impossible. Only one whose vision is spiritual fulfillment, for which possessions are a means to those ends – only one whose desire is a relationship with G-d – can be satisfied with all G-d has blessed him.

Rabbi Dessler concludes we also understand our Sages teaching, “Who is [truly] rich? He who is happy with his portion.” (Pirkei Avos 4:1) If someone’s spirituality would dictate poverty and separation from all possessions, then he has no desire for any material items; even what he does own is a burden. He cannot be considered wealthy. But one who appreciates that material wealth is the means to spiritual ends also appreciates the delicate balance – each one of his possessions has no inherent value, but as a key to facilitating spiritual growth is priceless. This person is genuinely satisfied, genuinely wealthy.

## Yichud Hashem

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

...and you will say to yourself, “My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me.” (Devarim 8:17)

ANYONE WHO KNOWS anything about the End-of-Days probably also knows about, “Chevlei Moshiach—Birth Pangs of Moshiach.” Although it’s not clear exactly how they will unfold and what they will be like, it is clear that they are to be AVOIDED. REALLY avoided.

The question is, how?

How about running away to some remote part of the world? That might work, if G-d wasn’t behind whatever it is that is destined to occur at the End-of-Days. But there is no place in the universe that is “remote” to Him. If a person does not MERIT to avoid Chevlei Moshiach, then they will experience them WHEREVER they are.

How then does a person MERIT to be spared them?

According to the Zohar, and later, the Ramchal and Vilna Gaon, it has to do with a concept called “Yichud Hashem,” or “the Unity of G-d.” Everything does.

There are basically four phases of Yichud Hashem. The lowest of these four is that a person does not believe in G-d at all. They lack an adequate explanation for existence, but they certainly don’t think that G-d is it, even though they have not thoroughly investigated the matter.

The next level up is that a person DOES believe in the existence of G-d, but does not think that life is influenced by anything He does. Perhaps He made Creation, but after that, this person believes, He switched on “Auto-Pilot”{ and sat back to watch His handiwork in action.

The level up from that is where a person believes in both G-d and Divine Providence. They accept that there is no such thing as an accident or a coincidence. They understand that everything is a function of Hashgochah Pratis. The good, the bad, and even the ugly, are all a function of G-d’s will...even though this person can act as if they believe to the contrary.

This sounds and looks like hypocrisy, but it’s more like inconsistency. We tend to assume that what the brain accepts the heart automatically absorbs. That, however, is usually only when it is a win-win situation, like winning the lottery or something. People might be shocked by such good fortune, but they do not tear up their winning tickets in disbelief.

But it is one thing to INTELLECTUALLY accept that G-d runs the ENTIRE

show, and that ALL He does is for the GOOD. It is something altogether greater to accept this EMOTIONALLY. When a person does, they will never complain about the events of their lives again. They may pray to improve them, or for the betterment of others, but their heart will still tell them that “all that G-d does He does for the good”.

THAT is true Yichud Hashem. The G-d-believer doesn’t just “talk the talk,” they also “walk the walk.” They don’t just TALK bitachon and emunah—trust and faith—in G-d, they LIVE it. When something happens that makes life look random, or unfair, and they feel the urge to go that way—an EMOTIONAL thing—they wash it away with the TRUTH, reflected by their demeanor. It’s impressive.

For example, when the Torah warns in this week’s parsha against taking credit for our success, it is not just trying to keep us from stealing G-d’s show. It is a violation of Yichud Hashem, because it gives the world the impression that G-d is not involved in EVERY detail of EVERY thing.

That was why Yosef stayed in jail two extra years. Rashi says that it was a mistake for him to rely on the wine steward for help, but others feel that he was just doing his part—hishtadalu. If so, then the question returns, “What did he do wrong to warrant two more years in the royal prison?”

The answer is in Yosef’s own account of how he got to jail. He didn’t just tell the wine steward to remember him to Pharaoh. He went a lot further, discussing his kidnapping from his family in Canaan, and the false accusations made against him by Potiphar’s wife. The overall message: BAD things happen to GOOD people, not very good publicity for G-d’s control and perfect justice.

He certainly learned his lesson from his extra prison time. Later, once he was brought before Pharaoh, who insisted on crediting Yosef with his dream-interpreting ability, Yosef was quick to deflect ALL the credit to G-d. The message: G-d runs the ENTIRE show, and we only merit to be His “vehicles” down here for “good” or “bad.”

It’s one of the biggest disruptors of Yichud Hashem, bad things SEEMINGLY happening to good people. The entire book of Iyov addresses this very issue because it is the very issue that “Amalek” exploits to pull people away from G-d, and undo Yichud Hashem, endangering the world.

How does Amalek do it, and why does G-d let him?

Basically, to discover the answer, just ask an atheist and agnostic what bugs them about G-d. Whatever makes them doubt G-d is what Amalek throws at the world. They might say:

- Religious laws that don’t make sense.
- Perceived injustices.
- Cheaters who seem to prosper.
- Honest people who seem to fail.
- Incredible corruption.

If anything happens in history that makes it seem as if G-d isn’t involved, either because of the outcome or the way it occurred, Amalek will exploit it. He’ll use people’s intellectual, emotional, and spiritual weaknesses to HIS advantage, just to pull them away from G-d. It may look as if it is just irreligious people having a blast, or religious people being a little less spiritual, but it is really Amalek pulling the heart of mankind away from its Creator.

This is why, as Rashi points out at the end of Parashas Beshalach, that Amalek divides the Name of Hashem. In truth, He can’t TOUCH anything about G-d, and certainly not one of His HOLIEST Names. But the way he causes people to misperceive G-d or at least His Providence, it’s as if He can and has divided the Name of G-d.

So we declare, before doing mitzvos, that we do them for the sake of just the opposite, to UNIFY the Name of G-d. We do them for the sake of Yichud Hashem. At least that is what we say. The truth of this is borne out by the extent to which we invest ourselves in the mitzvos we do.

Do you do the mitzvah out of habit...because of social pressure...or because you want to better connect to G-d?

The answer is important because it determines if the mitzvah will result in Yichud Hashem, or not. And that, the Zohar, Ramchal, and the Vilna Gaon say, is not just a matter of earning reward in the World-to-Come. It is also a matter of being spared the troubles of Chevlei Moshiach!