



Ohr Yerushalayim News

א"ב תשפ"א - עקב - 31st July 2021 - Volume 14 - Issue 5

News This Week

Farewell

We wish Benjy and Ilana Harris farewell and much Hatzlocho on their upcoming Aliya this week

Chaim Aruchim

We regret to inform of the petira of Marlene Sockolov – mother of Joyce Khan.

The family will be sitting shiva until Sunday morning at 82 Scholes Lane which will, weather permitting, be outside and inside (but with limited numbers and well ventilated), and the family request that those attending wear masks and keep to social distancing.

Visiting times: 11-12.30, 2.30-5 and 7.30 to 9.30. Joyce Khan: 07803 618299 / jfskhan@gmail.com.

We should only share Simchas

We wish Chaim Aruchim to Marilyn Sacho on the occasion of the Yahtzeit of her mother on Thurs, 27th Av

The Basis Of Idol Worship - Jewish Style!

Jonathan Grosskopf

In this week's Parsha, Eikev, Perek 8, Posukim 11-18, the Torah tells of the materialistic and morally bankrupt attitude of Jews who "forget" Hashem and end up serving idols!

In the first of the 13 Principles of Faith, we state: "I believe with complete faith that the Creator blessed be HIS name, creates and guides all creatures and that HE alone made, makes and will make everything.

However, some feel that Hashem's commandments are an imposition on their chosen lifestyles. Especially when people want for nothing and have the best of everything. There is a tendency then to do what we like and when we like it. The (arrogant) belief that we are in charge of our lives and no longer need G-d to tell us what to do is at the core of idol worship.

This attitude was endemic in the new refugees who fled Eastern Europe who changed their names and lifestyles to be as far away from the old religious ways of the shtetl where life was difficult, and people had to be religious! They wanted to assimilate and become Americans in the USA and no longer ascribed their material success to Hashem but to their own good fortune and hard work.

In Parshas Ha'azinu, Moshe prophesies the spiritual downfall of B'nei Yisroel in Perek 32, Posukim 15-42. We are showered with all blessings and grow fat (literally), but instead of thanking Hashem, we kick away our connection with G-d by no longer wishing to keep HIS commandments.

Our eyes "see" what our heart desires as the 3rd paragraph of the Shema states. Still, when we look at our Tzitzis and remember our spiritual connection with HIM, we will truly appreciate all the kindnesses and blessings and perform Hashem's commandments with joy and happiness.

Letting Go

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

In this week's portion Moshe talks about what was perhaps the most traumatic moment of his career. After spending 40 days and nights on the highest level of spiritual elevation, he returned from Mount Sinai to a scene that filled him with horror. At the foot of the mountain the Jews were reveling around a golden calf.

Naturally Moshe was appalled. Here he was, holding the luchos (tablets), a G-d-given immortal gift, and he faced a nation plunged into an act of idolatry. He smashes the luchos.

But if we analyze the narrative there is an interesting word that Moshe inserts as he describes his actions on that day. "I descended from the mountain

and the two tablet were in my hands. Then I saw and behold! You had sinned unto G-d; you made yourselves a molten calf. So I grasped the two luchos and I threw them from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes" (Deuteronomy 9:15-17).

Moshe was holding the tablets when descending the mountain. Why did he clutch them before throwing them from his hands? Weren't they already in his hands?

Shouldn't the verse tell us "Then I saw and behold! You had sinned and you made yourselves a molten calf. So I threw the tablets from my two hands and smashed them in front of your eyes." Why, and in what way did he grasp them?

A friend of mine told me a story about his great grandfather, a brilliant sage and revered tzadik. Whenever he saw one of his children commit an action that was harmful to their physical or spiritual well-being he would stop them. But this sage knew that stopping a child is not enough. The youngster would need a punishment too, whether it be potch (Yiddish for slap), reprimand, lecture, or the withholding of privileges.

But when a potch or harsh rebuke was due, the rabbi would not give it immediately. He would jot the transgression down in a small notebook and at the end of the week he would approach the young offender. After giving the child a hug and embrace, he reminded the child of the incident and explained to the child that his actions were wrong.

"I should have punished you immediately when I saw you commit your act," he would say, "but honestly, I was angry then, and my punishment may have been one spurred by anger, not admonition. Now, however, that occurrence is in the past and I am calm. Now I can mete your punishment with a clear head. And you will know that it is given from love, not anger."

He then proceeded to punish the child in a way that fit the misdeed. Moshe was upset. But he did not want to throw the luchos down in rage. He therefore grabbed them and held them tight before hurling them. Moshe, in his narrative tells us that he seized the luchos before breaking them. He wanted to send a clear message to the revelers below. That the mussar (ethical reprove) that he was affording with this action was not born out of irrational behavior or in anger.

Before smashing the luchos Moshe embraced them, just as a father hugging a child that he would soon admonish. Because Moshe wanted to tell us that before we let loose, we have to hold tight.

Laughing All the Way to the Bank Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

...and you will say to yourself, "My strength and the might of my hand that has accumulated this wealth for me." But you must remember the Lord your G-d, for it is He that gives you strength to make wealth, in order to establish

Davening Times

פרשת עקב

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| Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos | 7.20pm |
| Candle Lighting | 7.30pm-7.45pm |
| Hashkomo | 7.30am |
| Shacharis | 9.30am |
| סוף זמן ק"ש | 9.19am |
| Mincha | 2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.04pm |
| Motzei Shabbos | 10.09pm |
| 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 | 7.45pm |
| Late Maariv | 10.00pm |

His covenant which He swore to your forefathers, as it is this day. (Devarim 8:18)

There is a very grave danger, and perhaps the greatest danger that is highlighted and emphasized, and hammered time and time again. What is that gravest of all dangers? Forgetting about HASHEM! We are all at risk and at all times regardless of the external condition in which we find ourselves. The Ramchal gives this description of the human condition; "Thus, we see that man is truly placed in the midst of a raging battlefield. For all matters of this world, whether for the good or for the bad, are trials for a man; Poverty from one side or wealth from the other. This is as Shlomo said: "Lest I be satiated, and deny You, and say, Who is G-d? or lest I be poor, and steal..." (Prov.30:9). Tranquility on the one hand and suffering on the other... until the battle is being waged against him from the front and from behind!"

What looks like the worst situation may actually be the best and the best the worst. It matter more what we do with each of the ever changing circumstances of life. There was a book written about tennis called, "The Inner Game". This is what matters most. Does my inner response to whatever the surroundings bring me closer or farther away from HASHEM?! That is the question!

There's an odd expression that goes like this, "Nothing fails like success!" I think that maybe now we cannot understand it from this angle. Wealth may even be a bigger test than poverty, although we have been crying out for generations now, "TEST ME!" Looking at the landscape of many materially successful Jewish people in the last few decades, we would have to wonder if wealth brought enough of them and their families closer to HASHEM. No one can know! Everyone can ponder!

The Sefer Orchas Tzadikim outlines three reasons why a person might be treated to wealth in this world and then he provides a sign, a way of telling which of these reasons most likely applies. Someone might become rich as 1) a punishment 2) a test or 3) a blessing.

What might indicate that it is a punishment? The person's suffering and perhaps even his ultimate demise is because of all that money. He falls out of harmony with his children or his wife or his friends.

He takes on new habits of indulgence that eventually are the cause of death. How often do we hear about people who were stricken with "sudden wealth syndrome" for having won the lottery or getting a giant signing bonus and not only does the money not solve their problems, it amplifies them by millions.

A husband and wife janitorial team, married and working together for 40 years win the lottery and what happens!? Two years and two wives later he falls of his yacht with a high alcohol and drug content in veins in what the police are calling, based upon insufficient evidence, an accident.

What would show that it is a test? He cannot spend on himself or anybody else either. He is paralyzed with fear of losing the sum. He obsesses on his investments and lives a miserly existence.

He cannot give charity and neither can he gives himself permission to splurge on himself. The money holds him more than he holds the money.

How does one know if wealth is given as a blessing? He is busy using his wealth to accomplish more and more good for himself and others. He hires an assistant to watch his affairs so he can spend more time learning.

He actively seeks out Tzedaka and Mitzvah opportunities in which he can happily invest without expecting returns in this world. With this attitude he rejoices as someone who is truly laughing all the way to the bank!

The Spice Of Life

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig (Torah.org)

"You shall place these words of Mine upon your heart..." (11:18)

In the second portion of the Krias Shema, we find the instruction to constantly contemplate and internalize the Torah and its precepts. The Talmud interprets the word "vesamtem" – "you shall place" as "vesam tam" – "a perfect elixir"; the Torah is the ideal cure for the "yetzer hara" – "evil inclination". The following analogy is offered by the Talmud: A father educating his child finds it necessary to strike him. The father then instructs his child to place a compress on the inflicted wound, saying to his son "As long as the compress is in place, you may eat and drink what you desire, you may bathe with hot or cold water, and you need not fear that your wounds will become infected. However, if you remove the compress, your health is at risk." Similarly, Hashem says "My son, I created the evil inclination and I created the Torah as its 'tavlin' – 'antidote'"

We generally understand that Hashem created the Torah for man to follow, with the yetzer hara as the obstacle which man must overcome in his pursuit of Torah study and adherence. However, from the aforementioned passage in the Talmud, we see that this perception is not entirely correct. The Sages

of the Talmud describe the Torah as a "tavlin" – literally, "condiment" or "spice" used to enhance the flavor of the main course. It would appear that the primary creation is the yetzer hara, with the Torah being the necessary but secondary creation. This notion is substantiated by the parable given in the Talmud; the child's punishment, which is analogous to the yetzer hara, is a necessary facet of his education, while the compress serves as the counterbalance or antidote which prevents the beating from having a negative consequence. How do we understand the idea that the Torah is merely the spice that enhances the yetzer hara's natural flavors?

The Talmud states that the yetzer hara threatens to overpower a person every day and kill him.² What function of the yetzer hara makes its existence necessary?

Hashem created man with an enormous potential for accomplishment. Man's overwhelming awareness of his capabilities, coupled with the fear that he may not be able to live up to his potential, leads him on a path of self-destruction. Man indulges in behaviors which either block out the awareness of his capabilities, or demean him to the extent that he can rationalize that the expectations of him are unfounded.

The part within us which makes us aware of our potential is the yetzer hara. Left unharnessed, this awareness develops into man's most destructive force, the destruction he wreaks upon himself. The Torah is the tool through which we can actualize and develop our potential. Without the yetzer hara making us aware of our potential, the Torah's capacity to actualize and develop that potential would not be utilized. Our Sages therefore confer upon the yetzer hara the significance of being Hashem's primary creation for without the aspirations of what he can become man's potential would be wasted.

Trivial Matters

"This shall be the reward when you listen..." (7:12)

The simple interpretation of the verse is that if we observe the ordinances of Hashem, we will be rewarded and He will love us. However, Rashi interprets the verse midrashically. The word "eikev" means "heel". The verse is referring specifically to those mitzvos which we trample underfoot, for we perceive them to be less important. The Mizrahi questions the need for Rashi's interpretation, especially since the Midrash apparently contradicts the simple interpretation. The simple interpretation implies that the verse refers to all ordinances. Rashi limits the verse to only those which we perceive as less important.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos warns us to be as meticulous in our observance of the less important mitzvos as we are in the more important mitzvos, for we do not know on what basis we are being rewarded. If it is possible to distinguish between less important and more important mitzvos, why, in fact, are we not rewarded more for those which are more important?

The stronger the relationship you have with a person, the more at ease you are with asking him to do something which is relatively trivial. However, in a relationship which is not so strong, you tend to limit requests to matters of significance. For example, a person would not think twice about waking up a mere acquaintance at two o'clock in the morning for medical assistance, but the same person would find it inconceivable to wake up the acquaintance asking for a pint of ice cream. On the other extreme, a woman will have no problem with asking her husband to buy her a pint of ice cream at two o'clock in the morning.

We are naturally more meticulous with those precepts which we perceive to be more fundamental, for example belief in Hashem and honoring one's parents. Moreover, for those precepts which Hashem commands us to observe, in which we do not perceive any major fundamental principles, it is possible to approach them with less enthusiasm. However, it is with these very mitzvos that we show our commitment and express our love for Hashem. The stronger the relationship, the more apt one is to acquiesce to a seemingly trivial request. Therefore, our observance of "themitzvos kalos", the less serious mitzvos, is the yardstick for our relationship with Hashem.

With this, we can understand what the Mishna in Pirkei Avos is teaching us. We do not know on what basis we are rewarded for observance of the precepts, whether it is the gravity of the precept or the reflection of commitment and love in adherence of the precept. The Midrash understands that these are the precepts which the verse is alluding to, for the verse is referring to those mitzvos for which we are rewarded with Hashem's love. This must be because those mitzvos express our love for Hashem. This, the Midrash explains, must be the mitzvos which are perceived to be less important, for our observance of them truly expresses our love for Hashem.