



Ohr Yerushalayim News

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News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mark and Tanya Duman on the birth of a granddaughter to Aidan and Malka Nussbaum.

Chaim Aruchim

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

Sun, 27th Tammuz - Linda Ross for her mother

Weds, 1st Av - Brocho Kahan for her father

Kiddush

There will be a Kiddush this week following Davening in honour of Shabbos Mevorchin. If you would like to sponsor in whole or part please be in touch with Avi Stern

History and Your Story

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

Moshe wrote their goings out according to their journeys at the bidding of HASHEM, and these were their journeys according to their going out..." (Bamidbar 33:2)

These are the journeys: Why were these journeys recorded? To inform us of the kindness of the Omnipresent...-Rashi

This is the introduction to the 42 journeys made by the Jewish People during their 40-year stay in the desert. There are a few points to take note of here. Their journeys were "at the bidding of HASHEM". They were not wandering aimlessly. Every move was according to Divine guidance. Also, it seems that Moshe is keeping a journal, a travel log and writing down all of the journeys. What would be the purpose of documenting all the traveling that the Jewish People did? Rashi tells us that it is in order to inform us of HASHEM's kindness. How so?!

Years ago, I started a big project traveling throughout New York City and the New York Metropolitan area. I was charged with learning Torah with big businessmen, doctors, lawyers, men of industry, and influence. Before taking my first baby step onto the field I realized I had a problem. I had been learning in Yeshiva for years and teaching in Hebrew Day School but I had little experience in the business world and I was feeling outmatched and ill equipped to sit before people with vastly more practical and worldly experience than I had. So, I approached a senior colleague for some advice. Here was a man with many-many years of experience in the field. For sure he could answer my burning question. I asked him, "Which periodicals shall I subscribe to? What should I be reading and studying in order to remain current and in the conversation?" He looked at me oddly. Then he gave an answer I never expected but it turned out to be priceless for this project and ever since. He said, "You don't need to subscribe to any particular periodical. Just know your own story! Know your story!" I was more than a little surprised but I took it to heart. I went home and started writing my life story.

It was an amazingly therapeutic process and it has proven to be very practical. I have learned to spell out some version of that "story" whether I have 2 minutes in the elevator or an hour in front of a large audience. People are always fascinated and beyond curious to hear about me and how I transitioned from being an all American-Jewish kid who went to public school and was captain of the football, basketball, and baseball teams, but ended up in Yeshiva and is raising a Torah family. How does one get from here to there or there to here?

Maybe that explains why over and over again the Torah records not only

where the Jewish People traveled to but where they came from each time. That's part of the story. Each move is a fascinating chapter by itself. How does one transition from there, wherever it is we came from, to here, to where we find ourselves now? Life is way too interesting. Truth is stranger and more symphonic than fiction!

King Solomon writes, "Trust in HASHEM with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways know Him, and He will make your ways straight." (Mishlei 3:5-6) What is King Solomon the wisest of all men telling us here? This is how to live a successful life. Trust in HASHEM with your whole heart. We cannot possibly manage enough details in life to create a guaranteed result. We need to work with our Supreme Partner, HASHEM. That is Bitachon. It's a division of labor. I do my job and my All-Knowing Partner I must trust will take care of the rest. What is my job? Know HASHEM in all my ways. We follow daily Torah instructions, some spiritual by nature and others quite earthy. We are painting by numbers. Standing up close to the canvas of life it is hard to discern what we are doing. When we stand back and observe where we have been, a beautiful picture is revealed. We just tried to do the right thing at each moment and in the end a masterpiece emerges. "Who wrote this beautiful story?!" It can only be attributed to the author of all existence and the playwright of history and your story.

The Age Of Experience

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

"Man was born to toil," said Iyov, and indeed, how we toil! We seem to be under constant pressure, ever working to provide for ourselves and our families while trying to find time to enjoy the fruits of our labors. But did you ever notice that when we attempt to relax, it sometimes can be difficult to apply the parking break? While attempting to unwind, we tend to become restless, straining to return to the world of activity and achievement. And this makes us ask why we are so compelled to always occupy ourselves. Why, when we finally do have a chance to relax, do we find it so difficult to detach ourselves from the throb and hum of our daily lives?

At least part of the answer lies in the fact that "life" and "activity" are really synonymous. Creative activity is the ultimate expression of human life. Inanimate matter is fixed in its place, and even animals can do little more than move from one place to another. Only we humans are endowed with the innate ability to channel our talents toward meaningful growth and advancement. By creating us in this fashion, HaShem gifted us with the capacity to emulate Him, to become partners in the creation and development of His universe. As we move along the road of life we are naturally growing, developing, blossoming

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.49pm - 7.55pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.06am
Ovos uBonim	5.00-6.00pm
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.37pm
Motzei Shabbos	10.42pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Wed ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.30pm

and maturing. At times it may not appear as if we are realizing any major accomplishments. Nevertheless, we can be assured that core values and morals are continually refining themselves as we learn from our past mistakes and move towards a better tomorrow.

This concept is beautifully reflected in the opening words of this week's Torah portion, "These are the journeys of the children of Israel who left the land of Egypt . . ." . The Torah continues to devote many lines to detailing each of the forty-two locations where the Jews encamped during their forty years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness. The questions are obvious: why does the Torah devote so much space to delineating the precise places that the people traveled from and to which they arrived? Furthermore, it was only the very first journey, from Ramses to Succos, which took them out of the land of Egypt. Why then does the Torah associate all of their journeys with their Exodus from Egypt by telling us with each segment "they traveled from . . . and they encamped at"? Would it not have sufficed to simply record the historical location of each stop that they made in the wilderness? It is also interesting to note that the Shabbat Torah reading this week is recited in a melodious tone that is also used the recital of the other 'songs' in the Torah. Why is this historical narrative to be sung and celebrated?

The commentaries explain that the forty-two journeys enumerated here represent the many journeys, wanderings, and seemingly fragmented episodes that occur to all of us during our own lives. Just as the Children of Israel were distancing themselves from the ancient land of Egypt, so we, during each of our own stages of growth, are attempting to remove ourselves from our own mini-Egypt. The Hebrew word for Egypt-Mitzrayim is rooted in the word for boundary and constraint. "Egypt" expresses much more than the place of our physical slavery; it symbolizes the daily constraints and limitations imposed upon us by the terms of our very existence.

Throughout our life's journey, the physical body constantly moves forward, serving as the vehicle of our growth, while our soul and conscience take the role of an internal compass that steadily guides us across the wilderness, prodding us to leave our 'little Egypt' while drawing us ever closer to our very own promised land. Each stage and phase of our lives represent essential chapters in our personal life documentary. Each stage and phase has a celebratory note, for at each station on our journey we glean invaluable insights and pointers that bring us one step closer to our ultimate destination.

This important concept is reinforced with a Torah commandment that obliges us to honor and stand up before an elderly person. Why is it so important to venerate a senior fellow? Many older people do not seem to have accomplished that much in their lives, so why do we confer upon them so much esteem and reverence?

The commentaries explains that our esteem for the elderly is grounded in our appreciation for the reservoir of experience that they have inevitably garnered as they charted and navigated their passageway through life. The insight and understanding that they have gained with the passage of time are the 'goods' that we pay deference to and stand up for ! Thus, even if the older person may not have any groundbreaking accomplishments in their life's portfolio there is much that still deserves our respect.

This explains the Torah's lengthy description of the people's journey through the wilderness. Each stage of their journey was enriching. It enabled them to distance themselves from the constraining influences of Egypt and drew them one step closer to their destination. In our lives too each chapter invariably will leave us with valuable insights and lessons that guide us forward towards a more meaningful tomorrow.

If a man takes a vow to Hashem, or swears an oath to create a prohibition upon himself, he may not desecrate his word.

Vows are confusing. Sometimes they are recommended. Sometimes they are frowned upon. More confusing is how they work. A person takes something that is perfectly permitted according to Torah law, pronounces a verbal formula, and voila, it changes its spots. It turns into something impermissible. To boot, the Torah doesn't just suggest honoring one's word as an exercise in personal integrity. It views it as an actual, Torah-level prohibition like eating a cheeseburger or a BLT sandwich. How does this happen?

The explanation, I believe, is simple. It is axiomatic that Hashem demands of us not to be bound and shackled to our desires. We are directed countless times in our Torah to act in ways that are

inconvenient and otherwise opposed by our perceived wants and needs. The Torah expects us to get past them; He expects that we can work our way free of their pressure, by reining in our passions and lusts.

Seen this way, the intended nature of vows is apparent. They are some of the tools to cut through the shackles that bind us to our desires. They can be an effective way for us to self-discipline, to restrain ourselves when our resolve weakens. Hashem provides them in our tool kit to get our assigned jobs done.

Moreover, we are taught that we are held accountable according to the extent of our understanding. The more we understand, the more Hashem expects – no, demands! – of us. When we realize that we need to protect ourselves by imposing individualized restraints on our behavior, those restraints rise to the level of Torah! They, too, become part of halachah – of what Hashem commands us to do.

This approach is the key to unlocking the meaning of a passage in the gemara.

Porters broke a keg of wine belonging to Rabbah bar bar Chanan. He took their garments as payment. They went to complain to Rav, who said to Rabbah bar bar Chanan, "Give them back their garments." Rabbah bar bar Chanan asked Rav, "Is that the law?" Rav responded, "Yes, as it is written, 'In order that you go on the path of the good people.'" Rabbah bar bar Chanan gave them back their garments. The porters then said to Rav, "We are poor, we labored the entire day, and we are hungry and have nothing to eat." Rav then instructed Rabbah bar bar Chanan, "Pay them their fee." Rabbah bar bar Chanan asked Rav, "Is that the law?" Rav responded, "Yes, as the verse continues, 'And keep the ways of righteous people.'" Rav's rulings sound...progressive, but they hardly can be called din/the law. A person has the right to say that he is not interested in performing a mitzvah min ha-muvchar/a choicely performed mitzvah. He can opt to stay within the letter of the law, without going beyond it. And that is exactly what Rabbah bar bar Chanan conveyed to Rav. "Is that the law? I wish to follow what the law asks of me, and nothing more!" Why did Rav instruct him to go beyond, and act on what we ordinarily call a midas chassidus/the way of the extremely pious?

The answer is as we explained above. Rav recognized Rabbah bar bar Chanan's spiritual level, including what values he had fully comprehended and internalized. Rabbah bar bar Chanan fully understood the "right thing to do." For him, that comprehension became normative. It became part of Torah, for which he would be held fully accountable. For him, it had indeed become din.

Step-by-Step

Shlomo Katz (Torah.org)

The second of the two Parashot we read this week begins, "These are the journeys of Bnei Yisrael, who went forth from the land of Egypt . . ." R' David Twersky z"l writes: Here, the Torah is hinting at the way to serve Hashem—i.e., that a person must journey from point to point and from level to level until he reaches the highest level. For the simple Jew, who cannot merit complete D'veikut to Hashem all at once, this means beginning with "Sur me'ira" from bad," from physical desires, and from bad Midot. After that, one can progress to "Asei tov", " Mitzvot and good deeds. The Tolna Rebbe continues: Torah scholars, who are already on the level of "Asei tov," also must progress step-by-step until they reach true D'veikut. Thus, we read (Tehilim 84:8), "They advance from strength to strength." Likewise, we read (Zechariah 3:4), "I shall permit you movement among these immobile ones." The "immobile ones" is a reference to angels, who always remain on the same level, because they have no Yetzer Ha'ra to challenge them. Man, in contrast, is a physical creature, and he must constantly fight the Yetzer Ha'ra. The weapon man has for this fight is the Torah.

At the highest level, the Tolna Rebbe writes, a Torah scholar studies and prays because it is the right thing to do, with no conscious awareness of his own accomplishments. To achieve this very high level, one must perfect his Yir'ah of G-d. This, he writes, is alluded to in the verse with which we began, "Eleh mas'ei" / "These are the journeys. . ." The Gematria of that phrase (216) is the same as the Gematria of "Yir'ah," and also of "Gevurah"/ "strength." By journeying step-by-step until one acquires "Yirah," one will have the "Gevurah" to conquer his Yetzer Ha'ra, as we learn in Pirkei Avot: "Who is a 'Gibor' / 'strong person'? One who conquers his Yetzer Ha'ra. (Magen David)