



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ח תמוז תשע"ז – מטות מסעי – 22nd July 2017 - Volume 10 - Issue 2

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazal Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the engagement of their grandson, Yisroel Cohen (son of Rabbi & Mrs Sholom Cohen from Gateshead) to Chani Woolf, daughter of Mr & Mrs Greg Woolf.

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush this week in honour of Shabbos Mevorchin which is kindly sponsored by Mr & Mrs Yoeli Wreschner.

Mr and Mrs David Bondt invite the Kehilla to a Kiddush at their home, 2 Links Crescent (off Brooklands Road), to celebrate the recent birth of their daughter, Libby Bracha - Mazel Tov.

Journeys

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

What does it take to make a parshah come alive that seems to speak only of a distant past? How are we to find meaning in series of place-names completely foreign to us who couldn't locate any one of them today?

It takes but a single thought of the Besht.

So much falls into place when we realize that the forty-two legs of Bnei Yisrael's wilderness expedition point to the way every Jew must approach the great journey of his own life.

For Bnei Yisrael, the path led from their birth as a nation at the time of the Exodus, and took them to a permanent home and resting place in Eretz Yisrael. They left from a source of tumah, and arrived after forty-two mini-journeys in the land of kedushah. For each Jew, the journey likewise begins at birth, and ends with entering the land of eternal life above.

The seforim hakedoshim observe that the forty-two journeys correspond to the 42 words of Ana Bekoach, which has seven lines of six words each. These lines in turn correspond to the seven lower sefiros, each one considered in its combination with the other six. Toras Avos explained that the upshot of this observation is to expand our conception of our task and job in this world. We understand that we are obligated to meticulously heed all the expectations of halachah in performing all the mitzvos. Beyond that, however, waits another job description. Each of us comes into the world for the purpose of making some contribution to, some tikkun in, each of the midos through which Hashem relates to the world. The scope of this task is alluded to in the 42 journeys.

One need not be a kabbalist to appreciate this teaching. The point is that we live as Jews on two tracks. On one of them, we act decidedly like all other Jews act. The expectations are set, firm, and uniform within the parameters of our own group. At the same time, we move along a different track, each one of us on a road not trodden by another, walking very much alone on a very personal journey.

Why, though, is the journey so discontinuous? Why so many starts and stops? Why would the Torah not compare the course of our lives to a single perambulation, given to twists and turns and delays? Why is the journey punctuated with layovers, which turn it into multiple, serial journeys?

In this the Torah alludes to another great truth about the nature of

our lives. According to kabbalah, sparks of holiness became fixed in the world at the time of Creation. Their kedushah was such that their brilliance and power was masked by forces that would keep them hidden – the kelipos, or shells, about which the mekubalim speak. Another way of looking at our purpose in life is to find those kelipos and reveal and elevate the sparks inside them. The 42 mini-journeys accentuate the fact that these nitzotzos are everywhere, and that Bnei Yisrael stopped in those places to find the good that lay dormant there, waiting to be exposed. (Were it not for the sin of Adam and Chava, nothing of the sort would have been necessary, taught the Ohev Yisrael. With that sin came a blurring of the distinction between good and evil, and the mixing and blending of the two, particularly in the form of nitzotzei kedushah scattered about, always intermixed with the tumah of the kelipos. Man would now be charged with the labor of separating them.)

The generation of the wilderness in particular was up to the task. So says the Zohar, in understanding the Torah's description of that wilderness. It was "great and awesome, [a place of] snake, serpent, scorpion and thirst where there was no water," exceeding the harshness of other places unfriendly to human habitation. The Zohar sees these dangers as symptomatic of the tumah that suffused the area. Precisely because of the lofty level this generation attained, Hashem led them on a path to confront that tumah head-on. They would challenge it, overcome it, and tame it in the process. Were it not for the sins they committed, they could have fully contained it, resulting in the complete universal tikkun. While that was not to be, they did succeed in weakening the tumah they encountered.

The place-names do not really indicate locales of population concentration – the wilderness did not lend itself to producing so many population centers. Rather, each stopover yielded a dividend of kedushah through Klal Yisrael's weakening of the tumah that encased it. Each place-name indicates the nature of that dividend, taught the Magid of Zlotchov. (While we do not have a firm grasp on the nature

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת מטות מסעי	שבת מברכין אב
Mincha	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.41pm-7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.12am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.23pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	10.28pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon Rosh Chodesh	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Tue / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.20pm

of either the tumah or the kedushah of a given place, we get some idea of the possibilities through a teaching of the Kedushas Levi, who makes an object lesson of one of them. We are told that Bnei Yisrael encamped at Charadah. The name suggests a place associated with intense fear, albeit a negative, counterproductive one. By overcoming it, they turned around the fear itself, elevating it to an instrument of progress, of reverence for kedushah. We can see in this example how other challenges they encountered in their long trek could have similarly been transformed for the better.)

Following this approach, we understand why there was such disparity in the amount of time Bnei Yisrael spent in different stops along the way. Kadesh Barnea occupied them for nineteen years; they left other places after a day or two. If we assume that each place presented its own challenge, we grasp that some of those required more time to successfully deal with than others. The more latent kedushah resident in a place, the longer they needed to spend uncovering it.

Keep in mind that the subject at hand is no academic exercise. According to the Besht, parshas Mas'ei is nothing less than a mission statement of every Jew. Each of us comes into the world with a mixture of good and bad tendencies, every person according to the source of his neshamah in the upper worlds. Our job is to unravel the two, to separate the good from the bad. The path we must take bears our individual imprint. We cannot shift roles, or trade someone else's job for our own. The Yesod Avodah cites the Ari to the effect that on two days from the beginning of time, indeed no two hours, were ever meant to be equivalent. What was supposed to be accomplished at one moment cannot be compensated for at another. Each moment in time is its own challenge, its own opportunity. Similarly, no two people can take identical life trajectories. Each life is a complete world unto itself.

The Zohar we cited above emphasized how the wilderness traveled by Bnei Yisrael was hostile and difficult. We should expect nothing different in our own personal journey. Getting the job done well requires us to spend time in an environment of burning desires and navigating our way through the kelipos.

The difficulties are much easier to bear when we realize the parallel to the journey to the Promised Land. The environment was harsh, and the path was convoluted. Yet, every step was guided by Hashem. Nothing was random; nothing was gratuitous. So it is with the unpredictable and complex course of our own lives. We need to stop in many way-stations on the road to our destination. Every place we find ourselves, every new situation that arises, is meant to be. Every one is an opportunity to elevate in some manner the inner content of what lies therein.

Drawing a Connection

Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz (Torah.org)

Sefer Bamidbar describes the travels of the Bnei Yisroel in the desert over the forty-year period that began with the miraculous exodus from Mitzrayim and ended with the Jews poised to enter the Promised Land of Eretz Yisroel.

Parshas Masei concludes Sefer Bamidbar with a listing of each of the forty-two encampments of the Jews in the desert. Rashi comments that although the B'nei Yisroel were forced to pick up their tent stakes and relocate in the midbar numerous times, Hashem's mercy is still evident. The Jews were punished for the sin of listening to the meraglim (spies) by being forced to "wander in the desert for forty years (Bamidbar 14:33)." Rashi point out that aside from fourteen relocations during the first year that they left Egypt and eight during the fortieth year, there were only twenty moves during a thirty-eight year period of relative tranquility.

The other main topic mentioned in this week's parsha is the halachos (laws) related to one who kills accidentally. The Torah notes that once such a tragic event occurs, the person who took the life of another, albeit inadvertently, is required to immediately run to an Ir Miklat (a "city of refuge"), where he remains until the death of the Kohein Gadol.

The Kli Yakar connects these two seemingly disparate portions of this week's parsha by pointing out that there were forty-two cities that

were inhabited by members of Shevet Levi that were not formally designated as cities of refuge. Nonetheless, they offered protection to people who killed accidentally.

The Kli Yakar notes that these forty-two cities correspond to the forty-two encampments of the Jews in the desert. He explains that Hashem, in His infinite mercy, arranged that the cities of refuge were those designated for Shevet Levi. Members of Shevet Levi did not own portions in Eretz Yisroel, but rather lived in these cities.

Hashem lessened the discomfort of those who were exiled to arei miklat by sending them to cities where the leviyim were also landless.

Yosef Hatzadik (Bereshis 47:21, see Rashi) acted in a similar fashion, resettling all the Egyptians during his reign to remove the stigma of gerim' (exiles) from his brothers.

I would like to suggest a second reason for the linkage between the encampments of the B'nei Yisroel in the midbar and the halachos of the arei miklat – one that goes to the root of the imposition of galus.

We are familiar with the concept that Hashem does not discriminately deliver punishments for sins that we commit. Rather, His middas hadin is delivered middah k'neged middah (there is a direct correlation between the crime and the punishment). That being the case, what is the connection between the averah of killing accidentally and being sent to an ir miklat?

I would like to suggest a direct linkage between the two – one that would explain the juxtaposition of the encampments of the Jews in the desert alongside the halachos of ir miklat.

The taking of a human life – even accidentally – is an act of such magnitude that the perpetrator should lose his or her life as well. However, it would certainly be overly harsh to kill someone whose crime was committed accidentally.

I would like to suggest that going to exile is similar to losing one's life – and starting anew. Over the course of our lives, we establish our reputations, create and develop friendships, and stake our claims in our communities. When one abruptly pulls up his or her roots and is forced to relocate, it is, in many ways, like starting life anew.

Thus, when one kills accidentally, it is perfectly symmetrical that he relinquishes his current life. We do not take his life completely, as we recognize the inadvertent nature of his misdeed. However, it is fitting that he leaves behind all that he had built up over the years and start life anew.

Seen in this light, we can attain a fresh perspective on the wandering of the Jews in the desert. Hashem initially wanted to take their lives (Bamidbar 14:12) after they had sinned with the incident of the meraglim. After Moshe Rabbeinu begged Hashem for mercy on behalf of the Jews, He spared their lives, but gave them a sentence of galus – a symbolic death – and instructed them to wander in the desert for forty years.

There is, in fact, another striking similarity between the galus of the Jews and that of an accidental murderer. The Jews in the desert never knew when they would be asked to move. When the miraculous cloud rose, they needed to pack their belongings and move on to the next location. In the instance of the ir miklat, the murderer's galus ended with the death of the Kohein Gadol – an event that could not be predicted. In both cases, there was no predetermined time for the relocation to end – adding to the sense of instability.

Perhaps this is why the parsha of Masei is read during the three-week mourning period. In the midst of our commemoration of this long and bitter galus, one that is seemingly without end, we are reminded of Hashem's mercy – even when He delivers middas hadin. Even when His children were sentenced to death in the midbar, Hashem miraculously provided all their needs; food, water, and shelter for a period of forty years. As Rashi explains, He even grouped their moves in the desert to allow them longer periods of tranquility. So too, were the needs of an accidental murderer taken care of in every detail.

Like a loving Father who disciplines his child while taking care of his needs, Hashem's boundless love for us is evident in these two interconnected portions of this parsha.

May this be a source of comfort to us in these difficult days.