



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ו תמוז תש"פ – מסות מסעי – 18th July 2020 - Volume 13 - Issue 2

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Yisroel Meir and Chani Cohen on the birth of a girl. Mazel Tov also to great grandparents, the Rov and Rebbetzen.

Mazel Tov to Avi Scherer and his parents, Ari and Elisheva, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos.

Mazel Tov to Stephen and Penina Wieder on the bar mitzvah of their grandson, Moishe Berlin, this Shabbos.

Mazel Tov to Yehuda and Bernice Issler on the birth of a granddaughter to Duddy and Shuli Breuer. Mazel Tov also to great grandparents David and Vera Issler.

Mazel Tov to Natan Black, parents Dov and Debbie and grandparents Dovzi and Anne Lopian on the occasion of his Bar mitzvah this Shabbos.

Chaim Aruchim

We wish the following Chaim Aruchim for Yahrtzeit this week:

Sun 27th Tammuz Linda Ross for her mother

Weds 1st Av Brocha Kahan for her father

Backslidings

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

So says G-d: What wrong did your forefathers find in Me, that they distanced themselves from Me, and they went after futility and themselves became futile? (Yirmiyah 2:5)

THERE ARE BASICALLY three kinds of change, those we welcome, those we reject, and those we reject but are forced to welcome. We are watching all three occur simultaneously in the United States right now.

American Liberals welcome that change occurring there right now. In the words of one young person: "We're going to tear the whole thing down and start again!" Asked by the Interviewer, "And what will you replace it with?" she answered, "We don't know...but we'll figure that out once we get there!" That's REALLY welcoming change!

Then, of course, you have the other side of the argument, those on the Right, who do not welcome the change at all. They may include some racists, as the Left clearly does and those making the dramatic changes. But these are mostly people who liked the United States of America the way it was, albeit perhaps with some changes to curb ACTUAL racism.

Then there are those who liked the USA the way it was, because they did great while it was that way. They never complained about racism or a lack of equal rights while no one else did, and might have been found guilty of some rights violations back then. But since they see where the winds are blowing, and since they are worried about their futures, they have capitulated to the angry crowd, with the hope that they will be protected against its vengeance. Hey, it worked for Bayer back in the early 1940s, so why not in America in this decade?

Never mind the fact that some of these groups to which they are giving obscene amounts of money to placate them are being called "terrorists" by those who know their histories. Never mind the fact that many of these groups have a long history of virulent anti-Semitism, and pose a grave threat to the Jewish community of America. It's a small fish to throw to the sharks when they circle your boat.

Oh well, no one really expected the American empire to last forever, right? No, but at least 300 years.

There are many ways to define a "chacham—wise person," and indeed, the Talmud has a few of its own. But the most instructive way is one I have quoted so often in this parsha sheet over the years: one who sees what is being born (Tamid 32a). I understood what it meant from the start, at least intellectually. The events of recent times have helped me to understand

the idea better emotionally as well, making the concept that much more real.

When unintelligent people make bad mistakes, we're not surprised. We're more surprised when they get things right, and chalk it up to mazel. The curious and scary thing about history is when intelligent people make bad mistakes. Then we scratch our heads and wonder, "Didn't they see that coming?" The answer, of course, is no. The question is, why not?

The Talmud answers that question: they did not see what was being born. I mean, they SAW it, but they didn't actually SEE it. They see it coming now, as the media reports. What they don't see is what will follow in its wake, which means, according to the Talmud, that they do not really see what is being born...because they are all so incredibly subjective and blindsided by personal ambition.

That's not me speaking, that's HISTORY speaking. If you don't believe me, go back and learn it. Whenever change has come through fear of reprisal, it has given rise to dictators and demagogues. And by the time all the people who supported them in the beginning wake up to what they have created, especially the Jews, it has always been too late to do anything about it. It probably already is.

Of course, from a Torah perspective, it is not about political parties and revolutionary factions. Only one thing makes all the difference in the world in any given situation, and that's G-d's opinion in the matter. Religious or secular, that is what carries the day and determines the outcome in any situation, regardless of what seems to be the facts on the ground or the statistical outcome. When you're omniscient and omnipotent, none of that ever gets in the way.

The gentile world will do what it will, because G-d will direct them that way. They will think that they are controlling their situations and dictating their outcomes, but G-d did all of that long before they were even thinking about it. The Midrash Koheles Rabbah says so. When the average German rallied around the National Socialist German Workers' Party, they thought the Messianic Era was upon them. Only later, and too late, did they realize that it was more like Hell than Heaven, and that they would end up with even less than what they started with.

As for the Jewish world, at least those who might read something like this, or at least those who would read this and take it to heart (anyone left?), they have to ask only one question now: What is G-d thinking? It doesn't make a difference how long you have been living in the USA, and

Davening Times

פרשת מסות מסעי

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Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.45pm-7.55pm
Shacharis - Hashkomo	7.30am (שוכן עד) 7.55am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.00am
2nd Shacharis	9.30am (שוכן עד) 9.55am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	9.30pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Motzei Shabbos	10.35pm
Sun	7.30am / 8.30am / 9.15am
Mon / Tues / Thurs / Fri	7.00am / 8.10am / 9.15am
Wed Rosh Chodesh	6.50am / 8.10am / 9.15am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm

how dug in there you might be. We are first and foremost G-d's people, and as such, we have to first and foremost concerned about HIS opinion about history now.

And before you jump in and say, "G-d obviously agrees with my view on the matter!" consider how many Jews have said that in the past, only to find out differently in the end. An opinion is only as good as the knowledge feeding it, and tragically, so many opinions have been formed with an incomplete understanding of what matters most to G-d. Adam HaRishon knew A LOT more than we did, and still got it wrong. Why are we so quick to assume that we haven't?

As I have written about extensively, we have been, since 1990, in the period of history that corresponds to the hour during which Adam and Chava ate from the Aitz HaDA'AS Tov v'Ra, the infamous Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. We live in a remarkable generation of knowledge—da'as—because, like the first man and woman, our test is with respect to da'as. It's a matter of what we know, and what we think about it.

And though you can fool people some of the time, yourself most the time, you can't fool G-d ANY of the time. He knows our thoughts and reads our hearts. And every once in while He takes us to task for them, especially just in advance of a redemption, and how much more so before the FINAL one.

As this week's Haftarah, the second of three before Tisha B'Av, says, "What wrong did your forefathers find in Me, that they distanced themselves from Me, and they went after futility and themselves became futile?" It also warns, "Your evil will chastise you, and your backslidings will reprove you, and you will know and see that your forsaking G-d your G-d is evil and bitter, and fear of Me was not upon you, says G-d, G-d of Hosts" (Yirmiyah 2:19).

Make no mistake about it, as so many have over the generations. We don't read these words to remind us only about what once went wrong. We read them to remind ourselves about what can go wrong in any generation of Jews, no matter how modern or how smart. If we're not on target with what G-d thinks about current history, then we have condemned ourselves to the results of past generations.

There are many who would rather shoot the messenger, and they have done so over the generations. But remember. It is absolutely amazing how a little of the "right" da'as can turn an enemy into a friend, and vice-versa. But it takes a REAL chacham to not only know this, but to act on it too.

Crossing Holiness to the Other Side of the River

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week's parshiyos, Matos-Masay, conclude the sefer of Bamidbar. There are numerous episodes here which reveal to us the power of our words. The first parsha, Matos, begins with the laws of nedarim – oaths. "Kechol hayotzay mipiv ya'aseh", all that comes out from his mouth he must do (30:3).

A person pronounces something as being forbidden and it becomes forbidden as a law of the Torah! It assumes the same severity as eating a Big Mac! We all grew up with 'sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never harm me'. However, in the spiritual realm wherein we exist (which is clouded by the seeming reality of the physical), the 'ruchni' (spiritual) words have more power than the physical actions. Our words create a spiritual reality that partaking of something that we have pronounced forbidden is spiritually harmful and dangerous.

Our parsha then tells of our going out to war against Midian. The pasuk states that one thousand men from each tribe went out to battle. The medrash adds that an additional one thousand from each tribe went out to pray.

Rav Chatzkel zt"l asks why, if their victory was guaranteed by their being sent by Hashem, was tfilah necessary? Why was it necessary to have one thousand 'daveners', an equal amount to the fighters? Why was it necessary for them to go out to the fields where the fighting was going to be taking place?

He explains that we are misled by that which we see or do not see. If the battle had been won without the 'daveners' being present, even with the fighters being tremendous tzadikim, there would have been an erroneous feeling of 'our power has won the battle'. In order for them to clearly realize that the tfilah was the only factor contributing to their victory, they needed to see the tfilah taking place. The equal amount of daveners were

winning the battle! "The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav (Breishis 27:22)." Our battles are won with our mouths, our tfilah, our connection to Hashem. Only in that way can any battle be won. In the account of the battle, the Torah states that Bilaam was killed with a sword (31:8). Rashi explains that Bilaam had tried to use our weaponry, he tried to verbally cause us harm through his curses. It was therefore fitting that his death would come about through our use of his weaponry. The Torah therefore stressed that he was killed with a sword.

Our struggle against the nations (and our internal struggle to be properly fulfilling our roles here in this world) is a struggle of the words versus the sword. Are we placing our trust in our hands, our own abilities and strengths, or are we cognizant of the fact that all of our successes and our ultimate redemption is solely based on the will of Hashem, predicated on our relationship with Him?

The potency of our words is illustrated by a gemara in Kiddushin (29:). What should be done in a situation where there are limited funds available, only allowing either the father or the son to pursue full time Torah study? The first opinion states that the father takes precedence – he should go and learn. Rav Yehuda argues and states the opinion that if the son is eager, successful and retains that which he learns, he takes priority over the father.

The gemara then relates an incident that Rav Acha sent his son Rav Yaakov to study at Abaye's yeshiva. Upon a visit home, Rav Acha saw that his son's learning wasn't as sharp as it should have been. Rav Acha therefore decided to leave Rav Yaakov at home and he would go learn instead.

When Abaye heard that Rav Acha was coming, he recognized a unique opportunity. There was a demon in the Beis Medrash of Abaye which was so dangerous, it would harm even two students while studying together in broad daylight. "No one may offer Rav Acha lodging!", announced Abaye. This would force Rav Acha to sleep in the Beis Medrash and encounter the demon. The gemara explains that Abaye's thinking was that perhaps a miracle would happen and Rav Acha would kill this demon.

Rav Acha came to the town and, faced with 'no vacancy' signs all around, was forced to sleep in the beis medrash. The demon attacked him, appearing as a seven headed serpent. With every bow of Rav Acha's prayer, one of the serpent's heads fell off until the demon /serpent had been killed.

"If not for a miracle, I'd have been in serious danger", was how Rav Acha recounted the 'hospitality' of the town.

The Maharsha asks two basic questions: 1) How could Abaye place Rav Acha in a dangerous situation, hoping that perhaps a miracle would occur!? 2) Even if a miracle would occur, wouldn't that detract from the merits of Rav Acha? In other words, how could Abaye set up a situation that, at worst, could get Rav Acha killed and, at best, would lessen his merits!?

He answers, very simply, that Abaye knew that Rav Acha's prayer would kill this demon. That was not a miracle! "The voice is the voice of Yaakov and the hands are the hands of Esav!" The same way that a professional boxer winning a bout against my three year old daughter would never be described as a miracle, so too, a Jew on the level of Rav Acha killing a demon with his prayer was a very natural act!

Abaye's thinking was that, perhaps, before Rav Acha would even begin to pray, Hashem would, in the merit of Rav Acha, kill this demon. That would be a miracle and, in fact, would have detracted from his merits. That was a chance that Abaye felt was worth taking in order to rid the town of this demonic danger.

Rav Acha, in his modesty, didn't want to attribute the demon's death to his prayer, and therefore attributed it to a miracle. However, in fact, the death of the demon was the natural result of the Rav Acha's 'KO' prayer.

The second parsha we read this week, Parshas Masay, recounts the 42 travels we made through the desert on our way to Eretz Yisroel. Only through the travels and travails of the wilderness did we reach the necessary level to enter Eretz Yisroel. This needs to serve as a reminder to us when we face the inevitable travels and travails of our own personal lives. Every instance of resistance allows us to build ourselves in a way that otherwise would not have been possible.

May we utilize the myriad opportunities that we all encounter throughout our lives, particularly using our unique power of speech to connect to our Creator and to properly connect to each other. Chazak chazak v'nischazeik!