



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ז"ת אלול תשע"ז - נצבים וילך - 16th September 2017 - Volume 10 - Issue 10

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov To Mr & Mrs Peter Nissen on the birth of a great granddaughter to Mr and Mrs Dovi Leventhal in Israel.

Newsletter Schedule

The next newsletter will be distributed on Tuesday night and cover through until Erev Succos

Timetable Correction

There are only two Minyanim on Sunday morning September 17th at 6 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. There will be no third Minyan.

Yom Noroim Seats

As in previous years, to ensure that everyone is allocated with a specific seat it would be appreciated if you confirm whether or not you or any of your family will be davening with us over **ראש השנה** and/or **יום כפור**. Please contact us via email office@ohryerushalayim.org.uk, text 07779 681 354 or speak directly to either Avi Stern or Oshi Wilks, by no later than this Sunday 17th September.

Rov's Yom Tov Collection

The Rov is currently collecting for the annual distribution of top-up funds to local families for Yom Tov.

Generous Donations should be given to the Rov at any time.

Breaking Open the Kohanim's Bank Vault

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

Moshe wrote this Torah and gave it to the Kohanim...

Meshech Chochmah: Moshe didn't hand over this sefer Torah to the kohanim because he wanted to keep it in the family. He had good reason to. As it turned out, the reason became controversial in the course of time.

The gemara reports that R. Elazar ben Azaryah bore some resemblance to Ezra HaSofer, his illustrious forebear of ten generations earlier. ("His eyes were similar to his [Ezra's].") This could simply mean that there was some facial similarity. But there is much more to it than that.

Our pasuk reflects a sobering reality. It makes sense to entrust the continuity of Torah to a relatively small group of people who act as its vigorous protectors and prudent guardians. That was Moshe's point in handing the Torah – physically – to the kohanim. They would guard it zealously, ensuring that its content would not be violated by the impious or uninformed. At other times, Torah was localized with elders of impeccable background. In the time of the Second Temple, the Perushim kept tight tabs on who should be admitted to the great yeshivos. The working assumption was that if a student wanted Torah badly enough, he would find a way to seek out the great centers of learning – all housed in Yerushalayim.

The very script that was used in Torah scrolls supported this guarded approach to the transmission of Torah. The script was a specialized one. The masses were not familiar with it. It served as a barrier to study, limiting access to Torah study.

Our first record of any change in this approach came from Ezra. He found halachic sanction to change the script to Ashuris, a script brought back from the Babylonian captivity. At the time, it was more "user-friendly." Ezra was deeply concerned by a confluence of factors that endangered the continuity of Torah. He saw the Jewish community begin to drift off to far-flung locations, all distant from the main centers of Torah learning. He observed vast ignorance concerning fundamentals of Jewish belief and practice, including chilul Shabbos, intermarriage, and the inability of a younger generation to speak Hebrew.

Ezra reasoned that the text of the Torah had to become more accessible to more people. He recognized the risks involved, but was prepared to pay a stiff price for the advantage of making Torah study available to far more people. These risks were in fact realized in the coming centuries of the Second Temple, as students who would have previously been barred from the yeshivos took their places in the great academies. The sub-standard students – as could have been expected – grasped the material imperfectly, and set the stage for the first protracted halachic disputes our people knew. Nonetheless, Ezra felt that the gains outweighed the losses.

The decision was a wise one, according to Chazal who praise Ezra as one through whom it would have been fitting to give the Torah.

Ten generations after Ezra, this issue was still not resolved. Rabban Gamliel, the Nasi, favored a restrictive approach. He was taciturn in his halachic pronouncements: "So I have received from my teachers." Rather than provide arguments for his position – which would invite all kinds of responses, including wildly invalid ones – he invoked the discipline of mesorah, as if saying, "This is what we have been taught by greater people of previous generations, and nothing more persuasive needs to be said." Furthermore, he imposed a strict standard for admission to the main academy. Only those whose inner selves matched their outward comportment were accepted.

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת נצבים וילך

1st Mincha / Candle Lighting	5.55pm / not before 6.06pm
2nd Mincha / Candle Lighting	7.09pm / no later than 7.09pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.53am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	7.06pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	8.11pm
Selichos Sun	6.00am / 7.30am
Selichos Mon	6.00am / 6.45am / 7.45am
Selichos Tues	6.00am / 6.55am / 7.45am
Selichos Wed Erev R.H.	6.00am / 7.15am
Mincha & Maariv	7.05pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

R. Elazar ben Azaryah believed differently. No sooner had he assumed the position of Nasi than he flung open the doors of the beis medrash, immediately gaining four hundred students who had previously been barred. He leaned towards seeking explanations for what others were content to accept as just-so. Thus, he questions why the Torah would ask people to bring small children to Hakhel when they are too young to understand the message – and he provides an answer. He took pride in the swelling of the ranks of Torah students in his times.

We thus can find a different understanding of the Yerushalmi that speaks of the resemblance of Ezra and R. Elazar ben Azaryah. The “eyes” were similar not in color and shape, but in function. Both possessed eyes that were able to look into the future, and determine a better policy for the continued growth of Torah.

Write This “Song”

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

I saw a beautiful observation in the sefer HaKesav VeHakabalah. The Torah teaches the very last of the six hundred and thirteen commandments in Parshas Vayelech: “So now, write this song (haShirah hazos) for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, place it in their mouth, so that this song shall be for Me a witness against the Children of Israel.” [Devarim 31:19]. From here we learn Biblical Mitzvah #613 – Writing a Sefer Torah.

HaKesav VeHakabalah was a master of the Hebrew language (lashon haKodesh). He asks – why was Torah called a ‘song’? If we were asked to draw up a list of ten words which might be used to describe or summarize the contents of Torah, ‘song’ would very likely not be on the list. Yet the Mitzvah to write the Torah is expressed here as “write this song”. Why?

HaKesav VeHakabalah writes the word shir [shin-yud-reish] (song) is related to the word yashar [yud-shin-reish] (straight). He explains “If you want music to be appealing, the musical notes need to follow one another in a perfectly arranged sequence to provide a harmonious melody.” Once music goes “off key,” it greatly bothers the listener. This is the essence of shirah: A flow, a precise sequencing of the components of the song – one note following another in carefully planned arrangement. When the notes are “off,” the song loses its pleasantness.

If that is the case, it is obvious why the Torah is called shirah. The Torah is – as the prophet calls it “Sefer haYashar” [the Book of the Straight]. The pasuk alludes to this: “... behold it is written in the Sefer haYashar...” [Yehoshua 10:13]. The Torah is a book of yashrus – of being straight.

The Netziv in his introduction to the Book of Bereshis writes that this book, in particular, is “the book of the Yashar” because it is the story of the Patriarchs who were straight and upright (yesharim). The Netziv writes that the nations did not know that Avraham kept the entire Torah (even Eruvei Tavshillin) [per the teaching of Chazal], but they knew he was a “straight shooter”. They knew he was honest and upright.

The word that defines Torah is Yashar – to be straight, to be honest, no tricks, no deception. This is what the Sefer HaYashar represents. Unfortunately, we live in a time when this principle is observed in the breach rather than in actuality. We hear all too many times stories about people who are “less than yashar”. Very less than yashar! We all cringe when we hear these stories, every time one of these scandals rears its ugly head. That is not the way it is supposed to be.

A nephew of mine corrected a story I had heard involving Rav Aharon Soloveichik, zichrono l'bracha. Rav Aharon Soloveichik commuted by plane between Chicago and New York. He lived in Chicago, was a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Brisk there, and for a time served as a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshiva University. He travelled regularly between the two cities. One time, his mother-in-law, who lived in New York, wanted to visit her daughter in Chicago, but she did not like to fly. So Rav Aharon Soloveichik accompanied her back from New York to Chicago on the train.

They came to the train station to purchase two tickets and the agent

behind the counter said, “you’re in luck – today spouses go for free!” So Rav Aharon Soloveichik looked at the agent and said, this woman is not my spouse, she’s my mother-in-law! The agent responded, “We don’t look at marriage licenses.” Rav Aharon was insistent: “But she is not my wife. Let me see your supervisor!”

The dialog was repeated with the supervisor. Rav Soloveichik protested that they should not be eligible for the free ticket because she was not his wife. The supervisor told him, “Listen here, you look old enough that she looks like she’s your wife! What do you care?” “No. She’s not my wife. I want to pay for her.” This is yashar.

Rav Yakov Kamenetsky was a Rav in Toronto before he came to Torah VoDaath. One Purim, the community in Toronto gave him a silver platter. A couple of days later, a congregant saw Rav Yakov in downtown Toronto at a pawnshop. It looked like he was trying to pawn the silver tray he had received earlier that week as a present from his congregation. The congregant went back to the other members of the shul and said “What kind of a Rabbi do we have here? We give him a present and he pawns it!” The President of the shul called in Rav Yakov and demanded an explanation. Rav Yakov told them that the Magen Avraham rules that the presents a Rav gets from his congregation for Purim and Pessach are to be considered as part of his salary. “If it is part of my salary, I have to report it on my taxes so I have to know how much it costs. I went to the pawn shop to find out the fair market value of the tray so I could accurately declare it.” This is yashrus.

This is the yashrus of which the Semag writes [Positive Command #74] that when the Almighty finally comes and redeems us, the nations of the world will say “He acted correctly (b’Din assa) because they are honest people (sh’hen anshei emes). However, if the Jews will cheat, the nations will wonder “What is this that G-d has done? He chose for Himself thieves and cheaters!”

We daven the entire Rosh Hashana that we want Moshiach. We want G-d to rule over the entire world. There is a very simple formula for bringing Moshiach. We must first make ourselves into such people that the nations of the world will be able to say “Ah! Those Jews are so honest! The Almighty knew what He was doing by redeeming them!” — When that happens, Moshaiach will come, may it be speedily in our time.

The Torah is a Song!

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The final mitzvah in the Torah is in our sedra, and it is the mitzvah of writing a sefer torah. Actually, you fulfill a branch of this mitzvah by buying Jewish serafim too! Anyway, the pasuk that tells us this is ‘now write for this song and teach it to the Bnei Yisrael...’ (31;19) [sefer hachinuch]. You will notice that the Torah is called a ‘song’ (shirah) here.

What is the meaning of this name? Perhaps one idea is the following: I used to walk to yeshiva, and often I would listen to music through my headphones as I walked.

I noticed that I might see two people arguing with each other in the street or any other stressful sight like a major traffic jam, but because of the relaxing music in my ears it would all seem different, relaxing, and much less stressful. And the same is true now when I often listen to music on the bus; the music puts you in a different world and you look at things differently. (I am talking about relaxing Jewish music of course, not the heavy metal dustbin-banging modern noise that inexcusably passes for music nowadays!) This is an answer to our above question.

The Torah is described as a ‘song’ because it gives us a completely new perspective on life. It teaches us that HaShem controls the world and everything is there for a reason. And so troubles are not really troubles, they are tests, and all is planned from Above.

It is like looking at an argument whilst listening to music - it does not affect you at all for you are in a different world.

This is Torah. HaShem should help us that we should appreciate His Torah and Live by It to the max!