



Ohr Yerushalayim News

כ"ט אב תשפ"א – ראה – 7th August 2021 - Volume 14 - Issue 6

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Nati and Sharon Sebbag on Chaya's engagement to Yishai Lister, son of Rabbi David and Rachie Lister from Edgware. The Vort takes place next Sunday, 15th August in the Shul hall from 4-6pm

Mazel Tov to Mark and Tanya Duman on the occasion of the wedding on Sunday of Malka to Aidan Nussbaum. Aidan's Aufruf takes place in Shul this Shabbos.

Chaim Aruchim

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

Shabbos, 29th Av - Chaya Eljarrat for her father

Sun, 30th Av - Miles Levine for his father

Wed, 3rd Elul - Yosaif Bernhardt for his father

Fri, 5th Elul - Chani Steinberg for her mother

Fri, 5th Elul - David Jacobs for his mother

Who is Rich, and who is Poor?

Jonathan Grosskopf

In memory of my maternal Grandmother, Anna bas Yechezkel Tenenbaum (nee Ordover), whose yahrzeit is Rosh Chodesh, 30th Av

In Gemarah Bava Basra 10A, Turnus Rufus, the Roman Governor of Greater Syria that included Judea, asked R' Akiva, "if Hashem loves poor people, then why does he continue to make them poor?" R' Akiva responded that the act of giving Tzedakah to poor people is what saves rich people from the fires of Gehinom!

In Gemara, Niddah 16B, R' Channinah bar Popo states that the Angel (Leilah is his name) in charge of a baby's conception, takes the first molecule of a person to Hashem and asks Him the following questions. Will this human being be wise or foolish, strong or weak and rich or poor?

We can therefore see that poverty has been predecided before birth.

So, how are we to understand the Posuk 11, Perek 15 in Parshas Re'eh, saying "there will always be poor people in your land...?"

One could answer that just because it has been predestined that a person will be poor does not mean that he cannot change his Mazal/destiny. A proof for this contention appears to be in the Unesaneh Tokef prayer that states: "Teshuvah (repentance), Tefillah (including fasting) and Tzedakah can change an evil decree!"

Midrash, Vayikra Rabbah 34:3 suggests that life is like a wheel of fortune that revolves in the world. "The world is like a wheel at the well; the full bucket is emptied and, the empty one is filled."

R' M. Katz cites Derech Eretz Zuta in Teaching of our Sages (page 171) to explain the result of not giving charity. "Love the poor so that your children should not be reduced to poverty." The Gemara mentions a case in point concerning the daughter of Nakdimon ben Gurion, the richest man in Jerusalem at the end of the 2nd temple, who was reduced to scrounging for food in the dung heaps. Her father did not give enough Tzedakah to poor people based on his enormous wealth.

The Maharsha explains the Gemarah Niddah 16b, which states:

"everything is predestined except for fear of heaven (Posuk 12, Perek 10, Parshas Eikev)," to mean that we are given in our lifetime's various divine gifts, e.g. wisdom, strength and wealth etc.; but it is how we use those gifts, including appreciating that they come from Hashem, that defines us a wicked or righteous person.

This explanation the Maharsha posits is what the prophet Yirmiyahu meant in his prophecy (Perek 9, Posukim 22 /23) that we read on Parshas Tzav and also in the morning of Tisha B'Av. "Let the wise man not glory in his wisdom, nor let the strong one glory in his strength, nor let the wealthy one glory in his wealth. Only in this may one who wishes to glorify himself is in discerning knowledge of Me..."

To Produce the Blessing

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

See I place before you today blessing and curse. The blessing if you listen to the Mitzvos of HASHEM your G-d that I am commanding you today and the curse if you do not obey the Mitzvos of HASHEM your G-d and you turn from the path that I am commanding you today... (Devarim 11:26-28)

Moshe is speaking not only to the generation of Jews that stood before him at that time but he is giving a message directly to we who have arrived here in the 21st century, as well. The Torah is not a history book. It speaks to us contemporaneously. Moshe says, "See I place before you today blessing and curse...", and the word "today" means "today".

So how do we see the blessing and the curse "today". Where is this currently evident? Where is our Har Grizim, which, through its flowering appearance, displays the blessed path and Har Eivil which, with its desolate look represents the cursed approach?! Is this merely an abstract concept that needs to be internalized with some symbolic representation or is it a concrete reality!?

Since Moshe uttered these prophetic words 3300 years ago a lot of history has transpired. Jews who are around today as Jews are the near descendants of people who had been loyal to Torah. There is a slow disassembling process for those who have lost touch with Torah Living even if they continue to cherish Jewish sentiments. It may take a few generations to devolve but there is a certain conclusion for anyone who does not remain loyally obedient to the Torah.

Davening Times

פרשת ראה

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos

Candle Lighting

Hashkomo

Shacharis

סוף זמן ק"ש

Mincha

Motzei Shabbos

Sun Rosh Chodesh

Mon Rosh Chodesh

Tues / Wed / Fri

Thurs

Mincha & Maariv

Late Maariv

מברכין אלול

7.10pm

7.20pm-7.35pm

7.30am

9.30am

9.24am

2.00pm / 6.00pm / 8.48pm

9.53pm

7.00am / 8.00am / 9.30am

6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am

6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am

6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am

7.35pm

10.00pm

The odd reality is that most are blissfully unaware that this is happening. Not much thought is given to a Jewish future until it is almost too late and then in many cases it is sadly too late.

It's truly tragic! The ball is marched down field 3700 years from Avraham Avinu only to be fumbled or willfully forfeited on the 1 yard line of history, but how is one to know it's the one yard line without familiarity with Torah and the rules of engagement. It may explain why so many who faced with a choice of extinction or distinction have nobly chosen to become Baalei Teshuva and return to a Torah way of Life.

Here is a small slice of American Jewish history. The Talmud tells us that Torah is compared to water. Water catalyzes life. A community cannot survive physically if there is no water source. It can't happen! It's quite amazing to take note of the many communities that popped up across the fruited plain that do not exist today. Even if they had a large population at some time, they faded over time.

I have visited many old empty synagogues. There on the wall are the pictures of the handsome and dedicated individuals who were their officers. What happened? Why is the building an empty shell housing lonely Sifre Torah for the last few surviving members? At one point there were 500 Orthodox Synagogues in the Bronx but most are gone now and the few remaining places are struggling. What happened? No water! Water brings blessing!

A Shul is beyond wonderful, but it is not sufficient. Pardon my crude analogy but I believe it can be helpful here. If there is good Shul in a neighborhood it's like having a gas station nearby where you can refuel. That's nice. If, in that Shul, they learn a few Mishnayos between Mincha and Maariv, then it's like there is gas station that offers a 20 minute lube job. If there is a learned Rabbi who knows how to answer Hallachic questions, then it's like a gas station with a sign "mechanic on premises". Some cars can be repaired and get an even longer life with each of these features.

However, where there is a Yeshiva, a Torah learning center, and there are scholars that are learning and teaching and students that are learning with excellence, then it's like living in one of those cities that produces new cars. Every graduating class of boys and girls mean brand new cars rolling off the proverbial assembly line. With fresh enthusiasm new generations are launched. Cottage industries arise like Kashrus, Mikvos, Shuls, and more Yeshivos to service all ages and interests in Torah. The city comes alive with blessedness!

Those cities that not only survived but have thrived over many decades here in America had this reservoir of living waters that was created by the study of Torah. This catalyzes life and it continues to produce the blessing.

Every Soldier Has His Own Job

Rabbi Pinchas Avruch (Torah.org)

Anyone who has suffered the loss of a dear friend or relative understands the need to cry, to have an avenue of expressing the anguish of that tragic moment. This reality is addressed by the Jewish rites of mourning, which start with the most intense expressions of sorrow during seven day period of "shiva" and are followed by a graduated system which relax the observances over the course of the first year. Nevertheless, just as we are mandated to observe particular rites of mourning, the Torah forbids others.

This week's Torah portion dictates (Devarim/Deuteronomy 14:1) "You are children to Hashem your G-d, you shall not cut yourself... for a dead person," prohibiting certain forms of grief induced self-mutilation, a practice common amongst the Amorites.

Nachmanides (R' Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270, of Gerona, Spain, one of the leading Torah scholars of the Middle Ages; successfully defended Judaism at the dramatic debate in Barcelona in 1263) explains that nature compels us to cry at these times, but the Torah enjoins us to remember that all that our Father in heaven does is for the greater good, and just as a young child does not understand the deeds of his father, so, too, we do not understand the rationale of all

of G-d's decisions, but in our appreciation of His great love for us and our understanding of our holy status as His children, we do not allow ourselves such drastic expressions of our pain.

But the word for self inflicted mutilation, "sisgodedu", is written in a way that allows for two interpretations, a sign that it is one of the keys to the Oral Torah which was concurrently presented to Moshe at Sinai 3313 years ago.

The Talmud in Yevamos (14a) explains the second understanding of the word "sisgodedu" is factions; the Torah is warning us not to allow the Jewish nation to develop numerous factions within a community in its understanding of Torah law, lest it appear that there are two versions of the Torah. This concept is carefully balanced with the Talmudic principle of "ailu v'ailu divrei Elokim chayim", this (Torah opinion) and this (Torah opinion) are both the sentiment of the living G-d.

The Torah understands that different Rabbinical courts may offer different rulings on the same issue; as long as both are well legally grounded in Torah law, then this result is acceptable (not uncommon to what frequently happens in our own secular system of jurisprudence). But to have contradictory practices within one community, as legitimate as the two rulings may be, diminishes the glory of the Torah, and that is unacceptable.

The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Mayer Kagan; 1838-1933; author of basic works in Jewish law, philosophy and ethics, and acknowledged as the foremost leader of Torah Jewry at the turn of the last century) was asked, "Why is the Jewish community of Europe divided into so many different factions, some are misnagdim (followers of the Lithuanian Yeshiva movement) while others are chassidim (followers of the Ba'al Shem Tov's movement of the late 18th century to reinvigorate the spirituality of Judaism to counter the assimilation brought on by the "Age of Enlightenment"), and even amongst the chassidim there are those who give priority to Torah study over prayer, there are others who are more dedicated to prayer than Torah study, there are yet others who toil in music and song while still others are involved in festive dance.

Would the world be lacking if there were only one Torah lifestyle, a people who all share the same liturgy and the same traditions down to the smallest detail, all "carrying one banner"?

The saintly Chofetz Chaim elucidated, "Before you ask me about the Jewish people, please approach the Czar and ask him why he has so many different forces within the army: infantry, cavalry, artillery, air force and navy.

Would the world really be lacking if there were only one fighting force with only one weapons system with one general leading them all? Rather, the purpose of an army is to defeat the enemy; therefore, numerous tactics and resources must be available, since each one has strengths the other does not.

Infantry excels at hand to hand combat while the cavalry has speed and induces fear and the artillery can accomplish its goals from a distance. Even the military musicians inspire the troops and lift morale so they can fight on. Similarly in our fight against the yetzer hara, our evil inclination, every group of misnagdim and chassidim are soldiers in G-d's corps, each group using it's own "weapon system" to fight the enemy, this one with Torah study and this one with prayer, this one with song and this with the blast of the shofar, as long as they are focused on fortifying the system of Torah."

With next week's start of the Jewish month of Elul, we start the countdown toward Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year.

We start the process of introspection, taking personal inventory of which "weapon systems" are operational and which need repair or replacement. Let us be inspired and invigorated to appreciate our wealth of assets, including our own personal strengths, the inspiration we can draw from our peers with different but complimentary strengths, and the leadership of our mentors who guide us in our growth in Torah.