



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

ג"ת אב תשפ"ג - ראה - 12th August 2023 - Volume 16 - Issue 6

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Avi Pereira and his parents, Yochanan and Jodie, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos. The Kehillah is invited to a Kiddush after davening in Moor Lane Shul Hall.

### Chaim Aruchim

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

Mon, 27th Av - Marilyn Sacho for her mother

Thurs, 30th Av - Shirley Dinowitz for her mother

Thurs, 30th Av - Miles Levine for his father

### Tough Love

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Not only does the Torah teach us what to do and what not to do. It admonishes us before we turn off the proper path. Last week's portion cautions us not to turn after our eyes or hearts. Exodus 34:11 enjoins us not to socialize with idol worshippers lest we marry a spouse who will lead us away from our faith.

Most often the warnings about sin are succinct and precise. The focus of the Torah is clear: avoid any activity that will lead to straying from the path of Hashem. This week the Torah seems to spend as much effort exhorting us about involvement with bad influences as it does with sin itself.

The Torah discusses two scenarios where people intend to lead Jews astray. The first case is of the false prophet. Deuteronomy 13:2: "If there should stand a prophet or dreamer who will produce a sign or a wonder saying, 'let us follow gods of other folk,' do not hearken to him." The Torah then exhorts us to keep our faith and elucidates how to deal with the bogus seer. The next section deals not with a false prophet but with a kinsman. Deuteronomy 13:7: "If your brother, son of your mother, or your son or daughter or your wife or a friend who is like your soul, secretly entices you saying let us worship other gods, those that you or your forefathers did not know."

The Torah does more than exhort us not to follow the would-be influencer. It reiterates the admonition in no less than five different expressions. "You shall not accede to him; you shall not hearken to him; your eye shall not take pity on him; you shall not be compassionate toward him; you shall not conceal him."

When it refers to our own misdoing or those of a false prophet the Torah simply warns us, "do not listen" or "do not follow your heart." Yet when referring to kin the Torah offers a litany of variations on a theme of disregard.

Shouldn't our own feelings need more and stronger admonitions than ideas suggested by a friend or relative? Surely a prophet who conjures awesome miracles should warrant five or six expressions of caution. In that case, all the Torah says is, "do not listen to him for Hashem is testing you." There is no talk of mercy, compassion, or concealment, as there is when the Torah talks about kin. Why?

Robert A. Rockaway, a well-known author on Jewish American history, decided to publish a work on a less glorified Jewish persona, the Jewish gangster. In his research he interviewed old-time Jewish mobsters, their families and friends. A native of Detroit, Michigan, he actually interviewed his own mother who knew some of the notorious families that he was writing about.

In discussing some of the nefarious deeds of one of the local thugs, his mother stopped him abruptly. "That all may be true, but he was good to his mother!"

The Torah understands the intimate affinity our people have towards relatives.

It only needs one or two words of warning for us not to listen to the false prophet who comes with miraculous signs and mesmerizing oratory. It only tells us, "don't listen to him." Even when discussing our own desires and infatuations it simply warns us, "do not turn after your heart."

However, when referring to kin, brothers, sisters and relatives, the Torah has a difficult mission. We tend to excuse wrongdoing, cover up for misdeeds, and harmonize with our loved ones – although the results may be terribly destructive. There are countless stories of parents who did not have the heart to restrict their children's late-night activities. Too many tales are told of the man who was ensnared by his brother-in-law's misdoing because he had not the heart to refuse his overtures to evil.

The Torah expresses its warning in five different ways. You must love your kin to a point, but way before the point of no return.

### Exchanging Gold for Copper

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

Parshas "R'ay" begins with the Moshe saying: "R'ay anochi nosain lifnaichem ha'yom b'racha u'klalah – See that I place before you today a blessing and a curse(11:26)." Moshe lays out very clearly the choice that we have in life.

The Ohr HaChaim explains an added meaning of Moshe saying "r'ay anochi – see I". Moshe is trying to convince them to choose the eternal pleasures of the next world, rejecting the fleeting pleasures of this world. Only one who has a clear picture of the pleasures of both worlds can effectively convince others what to choose. Without clarity of the next world, one doesn't truly know what to offer. Without firsthand knowledge of the pleasures of this world, others will respond that if he'd known what this world really had to offer, he'd be singing a different tune.

To this Moshe said "r'ay anochi"- look at me! I am one of the wealthiest people with a clear picture of what this world has to offer, and I ascended Har Sinai, entered the heavenly realm and clearly saw what the next world has to offer. I, of all people, can tell you what is bracha (blessing) and what is klalah (curse). Choose wisely!

## Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.47pm - 7.55pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.28am
Ovos uBonim	5.00-6.00pm
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 8.37pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.42pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs / Fri ראש חודש	6.30am / 7.00am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

I'm often challenged by students who claim that, being that we only know the physical and not the spiritual pleasures, how can we discuss and work toward something that we are totally removed from?! I counter with a simple question. Which of the following pleasures would you choose? On one hand, all you can eat of your favorite food. A purely physical pleasure. On the other hand, speaking and connecting to a person who is feeling depressed and really helping that person. After the conversation, the person looks at you and says, "Thank you, I can't begin to tell you how much you've helped me." A pleasure which, even if we'll say is not spiritual, is certainly removed from the realm of the physical.

Any honest individual would clearly pick the second pleasure. If, when we are enclotted in our physical bodies, living in this physical world, we recognize the depth of the spiritual and the shallowness of the physical, how much more so when we'll shed the physical!

The Kli Yakar has a different approach. He notes that the word "r'ay" is in the singular, addressing a single person, yet, the word "lifnaichem", is in the plural, before y'all. Why does the pasuk make this switch?

The gemara (Kiddushin 40:) teaches that a person should always view the world as hanging in perfect balance between merits and sins. Your performing a single mitzva will tilt the scale of the entire world towards merit and the credit is all yours. A single sin will tip the scale of the entire world to that side, and the responsibility is all yours.

'R'ay!' – you, the individual, you must realize, that it is in your hands to determine the fate of the entire world. "Lifnaychem" – before them. If bracha or klalah will be before them, before the whole world that is hanging in balance, is dependent on you.

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Our parsha also discusses giving one tenth (ma'aser) of one's earnings to charity. "A'ser t'aser – you should tithe (14:22)." Chaza"l explain, "aser k'day she'tisasher", give one tenth in order to become rich. Giving to others is the way to guarantee that you'll have a plentiful amount. The gemara (Kesuvos 66.) states "melech mamone chaser". The salt, meaning the preservative, for money is to make sure that some is missing (chaser). Share what you have!

The Chofetz Chaim illustrates this with a parable. A farmer would bring his produce to sell to a merchant at a price of a gold coin per bagful. The agreed upon procedure was that a mark was made on the wall each time the bag was filled. Afterwards, the marks were counted, thereby determining the amount delivered, and the number of gold coins to be paid.

The farmer began to get suspicious about this procedure, being that the merchant could possibly erase some of the marks, thereby cheating the farmer out of his due payment. He suggested to the merchant an alternative method. For every bagful measured, the merchant would place a copper coin on a plate. They would then tally the amount of coins, thereby determining the quantity delivered and the amount of gold coins owed by the merchant.

They instituted this method and it ran smoothly for a while. However, the farmer had a hard time controlling himself. When the merchant wasn't looking he would reach forth and steal some of these copper coins!

The Chofetz Chaim would compare a person who felt he'd gain by either working on Shabbos or by withholding charity, to this farmer. A blessing is promised to those who don't work on Shabbos and to those who give ma'aser. A person who tries to make some extra money by neglecting either of these mitzvos is gaining copper coins at the expense of gold ones!

## The Love Test

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

He is everything you would expect a prophet to be. He has a flowing white beard and eyes that glitter with fire. He is wise and learned, and he seems to have supernatural powers. And he claims to be the bearer of an important prophetic message. But there is one problem. His message runs contrary to the dictates of the Torah.

How are we supposed to deal with such a person? The answer appears in this week's Torah portion. "If there should arise in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of dreams who will show you a sign

or an omen, and if the sign or the omen should materialize as he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us follow other gods whom you do not know, and let us worship them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams, for G-d your Lord is testing you to determine if you still love G-d your Lord with all your heart and all your soul."

Why did Hashem allow this false prophet to display "signs and omens"? In order, the Torah explains, "to test us, to determine if we still love Him with all our hearts and souls."

Two questions immediately come to mind: If anything, such a scenario would seem to be a test of our faith or our fear of Heaven. Why does the Torah consider it a test of our love, of all things? Furthermore, what is the purpose of testing our love? Surely, the Creator knows whether or not we love Him. A test of faith would present us with a choice, an exercise of our free will, just like any other commandment in the Torah, but a test of love only determines a fact – which is already known to Him.

The solution to this puzzle can be found earlier in the Torah when Bilaam attempts to curse the Jewish people. "But G-d, your Lord, did not want to listen to Bilaam," the Torah tells us. "And G-d your Lord transformed the curse into a blessing, because G-d your Lord loves you." Why did He find it necessary to transform the curse into a blessing? Why wasn't it sufficient to nullify the curse and render it impotent and harmless?

The answer, explain the commentators, lies in the next phrase, "Because G-d your Lord loves you." Such is the power of love! A person who loves cannot bear to hear anything negative about the object of his love. His beloved is pure and good and beautiful, a paragon of virtue and grace. Because of His love for the Jewish people, Hashem found the very sound of Bilaam's curse abhorrent, even if defanged and rendered harmless. Only by transforming the curse into a blessing was His love fulfilled and satisfied.

Similarly, when we are confronted with a false prophet who attempts to tear us away from our beloved Creator, the Torah tells us, "You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams." We must turn a deaf ear to him. It is not enough to ignore, reject or disdain his words. That only shows good intellectual judgment, not passionate love. We must place our hands over our ears and blot out those terrible words from our earshot, from our very consciousness. We must show that the love burning in our hearts makes us wince and cringe at each blasphemous syllable, that we cannot bear to listen.

"I am having serious problems with my wife," a man told a great sage. "We bicker. That wonderful feeling we had when we first married is gone."

"Indeed?" said the sage. "I'm not surprised. You see, I've heard she was unfaithful to you."

"What!" screamed the man. "That cannot be! She is a fine, loyal woman. My wife would never do such a thing. Take those words back right now! How can you say such a terrible thing about my wife? I can't even begin to tell you what a wonderful person she is." "Fine, I take them back," said the sage. "But if she is such a wonderful person, perhaps your problems are not serious after all. Eh?"

Sometimes, when the pristine love in our hearts is buried under the rubble of everyday life, the shock of hearing our beloved maligned will reawaken the dormant love and fan its embers into a flame once again.

Unfortunately, the same can happen to our love for the Creator. Therefore, in order to revive our love, He sends false prophets who speak dreadful, blasphemous words. And if there is still some love in our hearts, we clap our hands over our ears, unable to listen.

In our own lives as well, the ubiquitous blandishments of contemporary society whisper in our ears and lure us away from a faithful Jewish life. But if we allow ourselves to be scandalized, if we to turn a deaf ear to the modern false prophets and embrace our own ideals and values, we will undoubtedly feel a new surge of love for our Creator, a love that will blossom forth and suffuse "all our hearts and all our souls."