



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ש"לח לך - כ"ג סיון תשפ"ד - 29th June 2024 - Volume 16 - Issue 51

News This Week

מזל טוב

- Mazel Tov to Osher and Sara Sternbuch on the birth of a boy. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 19 Broughton Mews, Legh Street (opposite MH)
- Mazel Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the birth of a great grandson to Pinny and Chaya Rubin in New York
- Mazel Tov to Rafi Blackston and his parents, Raymond and Talia, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah this Shabbos in Holy Law. The Kehillah is invited to a Kiddush after Davening in the Holy Law Shul hall.
- Mazel Tov to Jonathon and Abi Simons on the engagement of Aliza to Hillel Harris. The Kehilla is invited to the engagement party which takes place on Sunday 30th June in their home, 149 Moor Lane

The Centre Point Of Our Lives

Rabbi J Rubinstein

One of the great skills of Jewish writers and speakers throughout the generations, has been to take events which are relevant to us, and show us how to learn from them. For example, a travelling salesman is generally entitled to his expenses being paid by head office. Fares, hotel accommodation, entertainment for business purposes, and sometimes very high class accommodation, will be taken care of, if they help him function more efficiently. A Jewish person should see everything which he has in life, including his health and his livelihood, as an expense account paid for by Hashem. Without Hashem's help, none of his efforts to build his life will succeed. All the "expenses" can be justified, if we use our lives to do Mitzvos. (Based on Ethics from Sinai By Irving Bunim)

The Medrash on this week's Parshah tells of Rav Idi the father of Rav Yaakov who travelled for three months to spend one day studying the Torah and then spent another three months travelling home. He became known as ברבי רב דחד יומו - "the Rabbinical student of one day". But Rav Yochanan said about him, someone who learns one day a year, is considered to have learnt the whole year. Conversely, someone who travels a long time to do a sin, is considered to have sinned the whole time; as we see the people were punished for accepting the bad report of the spies, by having to wander in the desert one year for each of the forty days the spies spent travelling to make their report (Yalkut 14:742) In other words, if one's behaviour in life shows, that what one ultimately wants to do is Mitzvos, then the whole life is part of the Mitzvah. In the language of the above comparison, the "expense account" is justified, But if not, it is not justified!

Rav Yosef Leib Bloch of Telz expressed and explained this idea, in another way. It is like a centre dot surrounded by ever larger circles. The circle immediately around the dot is smaller, those further away are larger, but they all surround the dot. This means, people of the calibre of the Vilna Gaon measured to the minutest amount, how much they needed to sleep, eat, have a livelihood, and relax, in order to keep the Torah. They are like the circle immediately around the dot. We generally have the amount of sleep and food we need to function, but we don't measure it so precisely. We have the extra helping of ice cream, and a few minutes extra sleep, or whatever the case may be. Similarly, perhaps we have more holidays, and concentrate more on earning our livelihood than we strictly need to. But in the end, in general terms we do it all, so that we will function well and keep the Mitzvos of the Torah. We are like the wider circle which is drawn more sparsely, but still surrounds

the dot at the centre. If however we live in order to eat, or in order to spend all our time holidaying, then our lives have no real purpose, or in the terms of Rabbi Bloch's analogy, the circle is not drawn, in any way, around what should be the centre point. It is drawn around something else, which is absolutely not what Hashem wants.

The great lesson to be drawn from the journey of Rav Idi, and by contrast from the journey of the spies, is to ensure that the real goal and centre point of our lives, is to fulfil the Torah.

Gentle Reminders

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

The universal image of the devout Jew is a praying figure wrapped in a tallis, but it is not the tallis that is significant. Rather, it is the long fringes on each of its four corners. At the conclusion of this week's Torah portion, we read that these fringes were to be dyed a particular shade of blue called techeiles. What was the significance of this particular shade of blue?

The Talmud explains: "Because techeiles is reminiscent of the sea, and the sea is reminiscent of the sky, and the sky is reminiscent of the Kiseh Hakavod, Hashem's celestial throne." Wearing techeileth, therefore, draws the mind to thoughts of Hashem and is a source of constant inspiration.

The questions immediately arise: Why do we need any memory devices at all to remind us of Hashem? Why doesn't the Torah simply command us to think of Hashem continuously?

Furthermore, why does the Torah choose techeiles which reminds us of Hashem in such a roundabout way? Why doesn't the Torah simply choose a color directly associated with Him?

The commentators point out that our natural tendency of people is to connect what we see with whatever is dear to our hearts. Thus, a businessman spotting a piece of paper on the ground will think of the problems of waste disposal, the new technologies, the investment opportunities in companies active in this field. A policeman spotting the same piece of paper will think of the littering laws, zero tolerance policies, litterbug fines. An environmentalist will think of the tree that was cut down to produce this piece of paper which was so casually discarded. The businessman, the policeman, the environmentalist may all have been walking along absorbed in totally unrelated thoughts. But that little deviation from the ordinary, the simple piece of paper lying on the ground, pulls each one out of his reverie and sets him off in his own individual direction along the route that is dear to his heart.

In this light, the commentators explain the rationale behind techeiles. The Torah does not make unrealistic demands of us. The Torah realizes full well that no matter how spiritual we want to be, no matter how much we would like think of Hashem, we still live in the mundane world. We have to earn a living and pay the mortgage and take care of the children, and we cannot realistically expect to keep our minds focused on Hashem

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	7.56pm - 8.00pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	8.57am
Mincha	2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.54pm
Rov's Shiur	Following Mincha
Motzei Shabbos	10.59pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.50pm

at all times.

If, however, we truly yearn to be connected with Him, if we harbor a strong love for Him deep in our hearts, then a few gentle reminders here and there will bring Him squarely back into our thoughts. Therefore, the Torah does not simply command us to think of Hashem at all times. It is too much to expect of us amid the sea of distractions in which we live. Instead, the Torah tells us to keep a symbol with us at all times, a symbol which will remind us of Hashem with just a brief glance.

To accomplish this purpose most effectively, the Torah does not choose a symbol directly associated with Hashem. Rather, the Torah chooses a fairly simple symbol which can insinuate itself easily into the mad rush of daily life, a shade of blue that reminds us of the sea. But once the chain of thought is set in motion, our natural tendencies take over. That flash of blue sets us to thinking, and if there is a true love for Hashem deep in our hearts, our thoughts will naturally turn to Him. If the heart is set in a good direction, the mind is sure to follow. But the converse is also true. A great sage was visiting an art gallery, and he saw a large redfaced man protesting vigorously in front of a colorful abstract painting.

"How can you display such lewd art?" the angry man yelled.

Intrigued, the sage drew closer and looked at the painting.

"My good fellow," he said. "This is a wonderful painting. It is a warm representation of a mother soothing a distraught child. The lewd images you see on the canvas are a reflection of the lewd images that occupy your own mind."

In our own lives, we are all caught up in the dynamics of our daily existence, continuously distracted by financial, familial, social, emotional and all sorts of other concerns that make up the fabric of our lives. Under these circumstances, it is very easy to forget about Hashem. But if He has a permanent place in our hearts, if deep down we recognize and acknowledge that life has no meaning without a strong relationship with Him, then we will inevitably find myriad symbols everywhere that will nudge us gently back on track and bring Him back into our thoughts.

Missing Much More than Half

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

And when the people complained, it displeased HASHEM; and HASHEM heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of HASHEM burnt among them, and consumed those who were in the outlying parts of the camp. (Bamidbar 11:1)

One thing is for certain. If you want to try to figure out what HASHEM wants from us and what HASHEM does not want from us, it is abundantly clear, even without a deep reading, that complaining is strongly not recommended. Frankly, nobody appreciates complaining. It betrays a lack of trust and a shortage of gratitude. Not only that, but it is not an effective tool to "win friends and influence people". Maybe it works in the short run. "The squeaky wheel gets the grease!" However, for the long haul, it's not an effective way to build or retain a relationship with the important people in our lives or with the Creator of the Universe either.

Rabbi Yonason Eibshitz ztl. pointed out a percentage point difference between two statements from the sages. One says that "If somebody has 100 then he wants 200!" It's the nature of a person to want even more than what he has attained. This statement seems to say that he has reached 50% of his ambitions. Another phrase states that "a person does not leave this world having fulfilled half of his desires." That means he reached, at best, 49.9%, and certainly he did not get to the 50-yard line of his hopes and dreams. How do we square this circle? How do we reconcile the subtle and percentage point differential between these two statements about human nature. It's not a joke!

Rabbi Yonason Eibshitz ztl. offers a brilliant answer with profoundly personal implications. He says that the half that the person does not have is more-dear to him than the half that he does have. So, while quantitatively he may have reached 50%, attitudinally and qualitatively he is still shy of that halfway mark. When my daughters would ask me, if they can go buy more shoes in Marshalls, I would point out to them how many shoes they have in the shoe bag behind the door. I came to appreciate that the shoes that are in Marshalls are more-dear to them than the shoes they have already.

The Mishne in Pirke (4:1) asks, "Who is the wealthy person?" It answers, "The one who is (SOMAYACH B'CHLKO) happy with his portion."

We understand that the person who celebrates what he has rather than complaining about what he doesn't have or lacks is the truly wealthy person. That makes a lot of common sense.

I was thinking of a different answer recently. The word that's used for one's portion is CHELEK. The mystical books are telling us that Hashem breathed a breath of life into humanity and that divine investment is

referred to as a "CHELEK ELOCHAI M'MAAL MAMASH" – An actual piece of G-dliness that resides within the person. One who knows how to exercise, stimulate, and rejoice with his G-dly soul, is the wealthy person. How is it done?

Rabbi E.E. Dessler says that worry and unhappiness begin when one has ambitions that are dependent upon other people. When someone has a spiritual goal that is only reliant upon his degree of desire and doing, then he has control over his destiny and can choose to excite and rejoice his G-dly CHELEK.

Rather than complaining and blaming and looking for fault, and feeling lack, frustration, and jealousy, it becomes possible to adjust our mindset and become truly optimistic. We always hear that an optimist is someone who sees the glass as half full and the pessimist sees the glass as half empty. The Torah has an entirely different approach, I do believe to optimism and pessimism. There is a story about two brothers, twins one was an optimist, and the other one was a pessimist. On their birthday, their father decided to put their attitudes and nature to test. For the pessimist, he bought a room filled with toys. When he went to see what his response was, he observed his son sitting there and fretting about all the toys. "What if it runs out of batteries!? What if it breaks?! What if somebody borrows it and doesn't return it? Where am I gonna keep all of this stuff!?" Then he went to visit the optimist. For his birthday, he filled a room with a giant pile of horse manure. He found the boy was jumping and skipping with joy. He asked his son, "Why are you so happy?" The boy replied, "there has to be a pony in here someplace!"

The world is dense with the presence of HASHEM. There is no place which is absent of His presence. A Torah optimist does not see a glass as half full. It is brimming! If a pessimist sees a glass half full, he is missing much more than half.

Internal Injury

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig (Torah.org)

"Send forth men..." (13:2)

This week's parsha introduces the episode of the spies who spoke disparagingly concerning Eretz Yisroel. As a result of the spies' actions the entire generation of Bnei Yisroel who accepted their evil tidings were doomed to die in the desert. Rashi explains that the reason why this parsha is juxtaposed to the story of Miriam's affliction with tzora'as recorded at the end of last week's parsha, is that the spies should have taken a lesson from Miriam regarding the consequences of speaking Loshon Horah. The prohibition of speaking Loshon Horah is amongst the most severe offenses recorded in the Torah. The Chofeitz Chaim enumerates the many positive and negative precepts violated when engaging in Loshon Horah. Why did the spies, who where the greatest leaders of the generation, require the incident with Miriam to teach them a precept which is clearly delineated in the Torah?

The Torah identifies the sin of the spies as "vayatziu dibas ha'aretz asher taru osah" – "and they presented evil tidings concerning the land that they had spied out". Although we can infer that giving such a negative account of Eretz Yisroel reflected the spies' deep-rooted lack of faith in Hashem's ability to fulfill His promise that Bnei Yisroel would enter Eretz Yisroel, the Torah focuses upon the Loshon Horah spoken concerning the Land. Based upon this verse, the Chayei Adam records speaking disparagingly about Eretz Yisroel as a separate prohibition. Why is it so grievous an offense to speak Loshon Horah regarding a piece of land; an inanimate object?

In last week's parsha, immediately after recording the Loshon Horah which Miriam spoke against Moshe, the Torah states "veha'ish Moshe anav me'od" – "and the man Moshe was exceedingly humble". What is the connection between the two verses? Speaking Loshon Horah is generally portrayed as "bein adam l'chaveiro" – "a sin against society", the heinous nature of the sin reflected by its anti-social repercussions. Although the aforementioned is valid, the Torah is revealing to us that the most destructive force which is unleashed when we engage in Loshon Horah is the damage we inflict upon ourselves. The Torah records the exceedingly humble nature of Moshe immediately after Miriam's criticism of him to teach us that he was completely unaffected by her comments. The damage caused by Miriam's words was the damage she caused herself. Loshon Horah causes part of the transgressor to die; this is reflected by the tzora'as – dead flesh, which is a natural by-product of the transgression. Consequently, Aharon pleaded with Moshe to pray for their sister, "al na sehi kemeis" – "let her not be like a corpse". This message was not apparent until the story of Miriam, when it became evident that a person has violated the sin of Lashon Horah even if the subject of the tidings is unaffected. This should have prevented the spies from speaking Loshon Horah, even against an inanimate object.