



Ohr Yerushalayim News

18th August 2018 - Volume 11 - Issue 7 - שופטים - ז אלול תשע"ח

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Benjy Harris on the birth of a boy. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 12 Okeover Road.

Boruch Dayan HoEmes

We regret to inform of the Petira of the late mother of Mr David Penn. The Shiva takes place at 6 Park Lane Court, Bury New Road (end of Park Lane). Mincha and Maariv at 8.20 Shacharis 8pm till Sunday morning.

We regret to inform of the Petira of the late father of Mr Joe (Yosef) Levene. He will be sitting Shiva in the back Beis Hamedrash of Shul till Monday morning. Shacharis 8am, Mincha Maariv 7.45pm. Visiting from After Shacharis till 10.30am and from 4pm till after Mincha.

Battle Cry Of The Jew Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Approaching war correctly may be more difficult than waging war itself. In order to prepare Klal Yisrael for war a series of queries were presented to them. Soldiers who were newlywed or had recently built new homes or planted new vineyards were told by the officer in charge to leave the army and return home. Furthermore, soldiers who were faint of heart morally or spiritually were asked to return home so as not to weaken the hearts of others in battle.

But war must begin with encouragement. So before the officers ask the questions that may relieve some soldiers from active duty, the kohen gives a moral boosting speech. The kohen opens with Judaism's most famous words, "Sh'ma Yisrael – Hear Oh Israel! You are about to approach battle on your enemies. Let you hearts not wither and do not fear, tremble, or be broken before them. For Hashem who will go with you, fight with you, and save you" (Deuteronomy 20:3-4).

Rashi comments on the hauntingly familiar expression of "Sh'ma Yisrael – Hear oh Israel!" Those words are the national anthem of the Jewish nation whose doctrine of belief is contained in the declarative that follows. "The L-rd our G-d the L-rd is One" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Rashi connects the pre-battle pep-talk in Parshas Shoftim with the famous words read week's earlier in Parshas Va'eschanan. He explains that the expression, "Hear oh Israel" used in the kohen's prologue is actually used as a hint to Hashem. The kohen is in essence reminding Hashem of the unofficial anthem that Jews recite twice daily, world-over. The kohen is in essence declaring that "even if the Jewish people have only the merit of the words Hear oh Israel, they are worthy to be victorious and saved (from the ravages of war)."

I was wondering. Isn't the kohen talking to the people? If Rashi tells us that with this choice of words there is a subtle message to Hashem, can we not also presume that there is perhaps, an important, if only subtle message to His nation as well?

Refusenik Yosef Mendelevitch, imprisoned in a work camp by Soviet authorities refused to give up his religious convictions. He made a kipah, which he wore proudly in the work camp.

Once the KGB colonel in charge of the camp heard of Mendelevitch's behavior, he summoned him to his office and threatened him.

"Take that off your head or I will kill you!" he demanded.

Mendelevich was not moved. "You can kill me, but I will not take it

לעלוי נשמת דוב יצחק ב"ר אפרים אלחנן ז"ל

Elul

In Selichos, starting soon, we repeat the 13 Attributes of Mercy many times. These are linked to the possuk in Micah 7 (18) which says
מִי־אֵל כְּמוֹד נְשִׂיא עוֹן וְעֵבֶר עַל-פְּשָׁע לְשִׂאֲרֵית נְחֻלָּתוֹ וְכוּ'
Who is a G-d like You, Who forgives iniquity and passes over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage etc.? Chazal expound this and say: **כל המעביר על מידותיו מעבירין לו על כל פשעיו**
If we are not meticulous with people who have upset us, the Heavenly Court will not be strict in our judgment.
This is a good strategy for getting through the days of Judgement.

off." The officer was shocked by Yosef's calm attitude. In desperation he grilled him. "Are you not afraid to die?"

Mendelevich just smiled softly. "Those who will die by the commands of Brezhnev are afraid of death. However those who believe that our death will be by the command of G-d are not afraid of His command." Perhaps the symbolism of using the words of the Sh'ma Yisrael, which connect to our sincere faith in the oneness and unity of the Almighty is profoundly significant.

The kohen is commanding the Jews to enter the battlefield without fear. There is no better familiar declaration than that of Sh'ma Yisrael. Those words kept our faith and calm-headedness throughout every death-defying and death-submissive moment throughout our history. During the Spanish inquisition, it was on our lips. During the Crusades it was shouted in synagogues about to be torched. And during the Holocaust Sh'ma Yisrael was recited by those who walked calmly to meet the Author of those hallowed words that captured the faith of Jewish souls more resolutely than the fetters that held the frail bodies. The Chofetz Chaim would urge soldiers to constantly repeat the paragraph of the Sh'ma Yisrael during battle. It would sustain their faith as it would calm their fears. And the words Sh'ma Yisrael remain the battle cry of the simple Jew who maneuvers through a world

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת שופטים

Mincha	7.25pm
Candle Lighting	7.35pm - 7.50pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.32am
1st Mincha	2.00pm
2nd Mincha	6.00pm
3rd Mincha	8.22pm
Rov's Shiur	Following
Motzei Shabbos	9.27pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

filled with land-mines of heresy and temptation.

It is the battle-cry of our faith and in encouraging a nation to be strong and remembering that Hashem is with us. And no matter what the message is, there is no better introduction than, Sh'ma Yisrael. And there are no better words during the battle either.

Protecting the Name

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Judges and law enforcers you must establish in all your communities . . . (Devarim 16:18)

EVERY YEAR WHEN I get to Parashas Shoftim, I am reminded of the world in which we live. The truth is, I do not need this week's parsha to do that. All I have to do is read a newspaper. I mean something else.

The Torah is G-d's program for history. It is built upon ideal concepts that are supposed to help a person achieve personal perfection, and the world, ultimate fulfillment. It pre-dated Creation by thousands of years and will outlive history as we know it. It is the word of G-d, eternal, and FAR above our everyday mundane reality.

So how is it that the Torah talks about such mundane matters as court systems and police forces? These sound like issues for societies that do not have Torah, and which have a difficult time getting their members to rise above crime and strive for loftier goals. It's as if the Torah is giving up on the Jewish people before they even have a chance to try and set themselves up as a Torah nation. It's as if the Torah is saying, "You're going to be just like everyone else." How disappointing.

We've discussed this idea in the past, how the version of Torah we currently learn is not the ideal version we were supposed to have received, prior to the sin of the golden calf. When Moshe Rabbeinu broke the first set of tablets, we lost our opportunity to receive that Messianic level of Torah. That one is based upon the same eternal concepts as our rendition of Torah, but expressed in a far loftier manner.

The sin of the calf greatly lessened our spiritual capacity. After that we were no longer capable or worthy of receiving the Torah of the Messianic Era. The Torah we have now is meant to try and lead us in that direction, and to allow us to rectify the world to whatever level we can. How's it working out so far?

In the incredible work, "Yesod v'Shosh HaAvodah," by Rav Alexander Ziskind, in the section about the "Ten Days of Repentance," he mentions the real damage of a sin. By doing a sin, the person has lowered himself spiritually and become worthy of punishment in the process. But the ultimate damage is the profanation of G-d's Name that the sin caused.

Any time a person sins, less Divine light enters the world. The sin blocks the spiritual pipe, and prevents G-d's light from positively impacting Creation. Just as a child who misbehaves denies his parents' the pleasure of giving him nice things, likewise a sinning person denies the Divine Presence an opportunity to do what it likes most: bless mankind.

The prophet Yechezkel says that this situation will be so bad at the End-of-Days that G-d will be forced to bring the Final Redemption just to end the "Chillul Hashem," the profanation of G-d's Name constantly committed amongst the nations of the world. The amount of light entering the world will be so minimal that if G-d doesn't change the situation Himself, the world will fall apart on its own.

A person might ask, "What difference can it possibly make to Creation if I personally improve myself and work on sanctifying the Name of G-d? I'm only ONE person against millions of others who are profaning His Name!"

As the Nefesh HaChaim points out, a person never knows how much their effort is worth in the eyes of G-d. It can be capable of a far greater impact than they might have otherwise thought. And does it matter anyhow? The main thing is that a person does whatever they personally can to make the world better, and it starts by being more concerned about G-d's Name than their own.

Sfas Emes

Dr. Nosson Chayim Leff (Torah.org)

This parsha begins: "Shoftim ve'shotrim ti'tein le'cha be'chol she'areetcha asher HaShem Elo'kehcha no'sein le'cha ..." (ArtScroll: "Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities [literally, gates] which HaShem, your G-d gives you ..."). The Sfas Emes tells us that his grandfather had his own way of reading this pasuk. The Chidushei HaRim would focus on the phrase "... the gateways that HaShem, your G-d, is giving you ..." He would then comment that the Torah here is telling us a basic — but often forgotten — fact of life. We should keep in mind that the gateways — she'arim — that permit access to HaShem are themselves a gift from Him. Like any gift, this access to HaShem should not be taken for granted.

Continuing, the Sfas Emes presents what he refers to as the pshat (the plain/simple meaning) of the pasuk. In that mode, he reads the pasuk as a command that we place judges and "enforcers" at all the points of access to our senses. Thus, we should monitor our eyes, so that we do not see what we should not see. Similarly, we should monitor our ears, so we do not hear what we should not hear (e.g., music from the jungle).

Thus far, I have been presenting the Sfas Emes of 5631. Four years later he elaborated on this theme, explaining that the "shoftim" (the "judges") to which this pasuk refers are our "chochma veda'as" (wisdom and knowledge). He adds that sometimes our chochma veda'as suffice to induce us to do the right thing. But we must also conduct ourselves properly in cases "she'ein ha'seichel mas'kim" (in which our intelligence does not concur).

Living life intelligently — and doing the right thing — requires yishuv hada'as (calm reflection). But often we are not able to be calm and reflective. In such circumstances, our seichel does not do the job. On the contrary, our judgment becomes an unreliable compass for navigating life.

The Sfas Emes notes that such cases often occur. That is, many times ("harbei zemanim") a person is not privileged to be in a state of yishuv hada'as, and thus to reach proper judgments about proper behavior. In such cases, the Sfas Emes tells us, the "shoteir" ("enforcer") — is needed to coerce us to do the right thing. In our context, what might fill the role of shoteir in cases where our sei'chel is not giving us accurate decisions? Two candidates come to mind. Peer pressure (from the right peers!); and firm adherence to policies that were decided in an atmosphere of yishuv hada'as.

Continuing with his ma'amar in 5631, the Sfas Emes closes the circle. Thus, he tells us that placing overseers on our senses can help us live life more reflectively. And living life with yishuv hada'as, we are better able to perceive the world as governed by HaShem rather than by immutable Nature. Finally, to the extent that we live our lives with prior reflection, the sha'ar of access to HaShem will be opened wider for us. Note : we are back to that key word and that key feature of life : namely , "gateway". (In reality, we are not "back " to it ; for with the Sfas Emes's singleminded focus, we never left it.)

The Sfas Emes concludes this discussion by citing a zemira (song) which the Arizal wrote for the Shabbos evening se'uda. The Sfas Emes quotes the zemira to enable us to see the link between : song (shira) and access (sha'ar).. We say in this zemira, "Aza'meir bish'va'chim lemei'al gav pisc'hin ..." ("I sing praises of HaShem, and thus may enter through the sha'ar to gain access to HaShem.)

In fact, singing praise of HaShem can remove the Hester behind which His Presence is often hidden. The Sfas Emes elaborates on the idea that song (zemira) can help us in our avoda (service), To do so, he calls up a secondary meaning of the Hebrew root ZMR — namely, "to cut away". Working with that meaning of ZMR, the Sfas Emes explains the objective of the "pe'su'kei de'zimra" ("the verses of song" that we recite before we begin the formal Shabbos Shacharis davening). By singing praise of HaShem, we can cut away the sitra achra — the power of evil — that constantly tries to interpose itself between HaShem and His people. Thus, the Sfas Emes can now read "azameir bishevachim" as "I will cut away with praise". Sounds right.