בס"ד

Ohr Yerushalayim News

שופטים - ב' אלול תשפ"ו - 15th August 2026 - Volume 19 - Issue 7

News This Week

Mazel Tov

Mazel Tov to David and Eunice Wolfson on the birth of a grandson to Ben and Nechama Rapport in Yerushalayim.
Mazel Tov to Nissim and Laura Ann Hassan on the recent wedding of Avigail to Moshe Harris

Chaim Aruchim

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:
Sun, 3rd Elul - Yosaif Bernhardt and Joe Levene for their respective fathers
Tues, 5th Elul - David Jacobs for his mother
Fri, 8th Elul - Susan Kaye for her mother and Chavi Schijveschurder for her father

The Gates of Justice

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Parshas Shoftim begins with the command to appoint judges in all the cities of Israel. The Torah states: Judges and officers shall you appoint in all your cities — which Hashem, your God, gives you — for your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment (Deuteronomy 17:18). The issue is that actually the Torah does not say to appoint judges and officers in all the cities rather it uses a different Hebrew term all your gates. It is a strange expression. After all, the Torah is not referring to appointing officers to serve as border guards. Therefore the verse is translated as the gates of the cities, meaning, of course, all your cities. But why say the word gates instead of the word cities? Actually, the use of the word gates is analyzed by many commentaries, some that interpret the word gates as a reference to the personal gates of the human body the seven orifices which are a conduit to four of the five the senses i.e. two ears, two eyes, two nostrils and a mouth. The Shalah (Shnei Luchos HaBris) explains that those bodily gates of entry need both officers and judges who are constantly on guard to ensure that only the right matter is absorbed. However, I'd like to present a simpler approach.

Often the readers of Faxhomily and Drasha send in stories from anthologies or personal reminiscences that I might be able to use in future faxes. Here is one that I received not long ago, though, unfortunately, I do not have the name of the author. He related the following revealing story:

I remember my wife's grandfather of blessed memory. He was a shochet, a Litvishe Yid. He was a very sincere and honest Jew. He lived in Kentucky, and later in life he moved to Cincinnati. In his old age he came to New York, and that is where he saw Chassidim for the first time. There were not too many Chasidim in Kentucky and Cincinnati.

Once he went to a heart doctor in New York. While he was waiting, the door opened and a distinguished Chasidic Rebbe walked in accompanied by his gabbai. It seems that the Rebbe had a very urgent matter to discuss with the doctor, who probably told him to come straight into the office. The gabbai walked straight to the door and ushered the Rebbe in to see the doctor. Before going in, the Rebbe saw my grandfather waiting there. The Rebbe went over to my grandfather and said, "I want to ask you a favor. I am going to be with the doctor just one minute, if it's okay with you. If it's not okay with you, I won't go in. One minute is all I need."

My wife's grandfather said okay, and the Rebbe went inside. He was in there for a minute or so, and then he came back out. The gabbai was ready to march straight out the door, but the Rebbe walked over to him again, and said, "Was it okay with you? I tried hard to make it short. I think it was just a minute or two that I was there. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it." Later my wife's grandfather said to me, "I don't know much about Chassidim and Rebbes, but there's one Rebbe that I could tell you is okay."

Perhaps the Torah is telling us that those who adjudicate and lead are not only responsible to the people while they are in the court of justice. They are responsible even in their entries and exits as well. By telling us that judges must be appointed at the gates, the Torah may be telling us that the demeanor of the court officers and judges does not merely begin when the judges are performing official judicious acts in courts. Our leaders have a tremendous impact wherever they may be even at an entrance into the gates of justice.

אלול תשפ"ו

Urgent appeal from the Rov

תשובה תפילה וצדקה

מעבירין את רוע הגזרה

With the approach of the ימים נוראים I remind and request each and every member or Mispalel, who is able, to support the annual collection for funds to help those of our Kehilla who require a "top up" for Yom Tov expenses.

All donations are gratefully accepted with a ברכה for a שנה טובה ומתוקה.

Donations can be made in any of the following

1. Directly to the Rov (in Shul or at home) either cash, cheque or voucher payable to "The Beis" (charity no. 1175468)
2. By bank transfer to A/c Name : The Beis Sort Code: 53-81-36 A/c No. 86290711 Reference: RHC 87.

Please note and use new charity name and reference. Thank you for your generous response

תזכו למצוות ולמעשים טובים ולשנה טובה ומתוקה

Davening Times

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.42pm-7.55pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.30am
Ovos uBonim	5.00pm
Mincha	6.00pm / 8.29pm
Motzei Shabbos	9.34pm
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	7.25pm
Late Maariv	10.00pm

Doctors and Pilots

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

Seeing is believing. Most of us are natural skeptics, and it is difficult to convince us of something we have not seen with our own eyes. And even then, we are apt to have lingering doubts. Indeed, we take pride in our skepticism, because we know it protects us from all sorts of fraud and deception. We are nobody's fools.

In this week's portion, however, the Torah goes directly against this tendency. The Torah exhorts us not to deviate one whit from the words of our Sages, neither to the right nor to the left. What does this mean? The Talmud explains that even if they tell us that our right hand is our left and our left is our right we are to follow them with implicit faith. Of course, our Sages would obviously never tell us something that is patently ridiculous. Rather, the left and rights hands are a metaphor for something that is seemingly erroneous according to our perceptions. Nonetheless, we are required to follow their lead rather than our own judgment. The Torah demands that we have faith.

How do we understand this requirement to have faith? Why does the Torah demand of us to go against our natural instincts? Why should we follow blindly rather than take a stand as independent thinkers and demand explanations?

If we pause to consider, however, we will discover that faith forms an integral part of our everyday lives. In fact, without faith we would be practically immobilized. When we get into our cars, we do not worry that our brakes may be defective and will suddenly fail when we are traveling at high speeds. Why? Because we have faith in the manufacturers. When we get on a plane we do not worry that the pilot is incompetent or drunk. Why? Because we have faith in the pilot. When we go to doctors, we generally accept what they tell us. Why? Because we have faith in our doctors.

Without faith, we would be afraid to switch on the lights or put food into our mouths or believe a word anyone tells us. Clearly, Hashem created us with the innate ability to have faith. Why then, if we so easily have faith in our doctors and pilots, do we find it so difficult to have faith in Hashem even when we believe in His existence? Why do we find it so hard to accept all His deeds and commands without question?

The answer lies in our egotism. Doctors and pilots are there to serve us. Accepting them on good faith may result in physical restrictions, but it does not require us to surrender our personal independence in any way. We are still in control of our destinies. They advise. We make the decisions. Such faith comes easily.

Faith in Hashem is an altogether different matter. If we forfeit the right to question His deeds and commands, we acknowledge that we are subservient to Him. We surrender our independence, and that is a very difficult thing to do. But still, we must. For if we believe in Hashem yet refuse to give Him our faith and trust, we would be living a lie.

Therefore, the Torah exhorts us again and again to have faith in Hashem, to overcome the stiff, illogical resistance of egotism and submit to His higher intelligence. Certainly, He is at least as deserving of our good faith as our doctors and pilots.

After attending the yeshivah of a great sage for a number of years, a young student suddenly declared himself an atheist and announced that he was leaving. Naturally, this came as great shock to the other students and the faculty, and they begged him to consult the sage before he left. The sage nodded gravely as he listened to the young man.

"I agree that if you are an atheist this is not the place for you," he said. "But tell me, what made you become an atheist?"

"It is because I have lost my faith," the young man replied.

"Indeed? And why did you lose your faith?"

"Because I have questions."

The sage smiled sadly. "No, my young friend, you do not have questions. You have answers. You have decided that you want to live a certain lifestyle, and in order to do so you have to be an atheist. Now that you've come up with this answer, you have found questions to support your foregone conclusion."

In our own lives, we experience the egotistical resistance to faith in our children, who find it hard to admit that their parents may be right but would willingly accept the same statements from others. The difference is simple. When we acknowledge the wisdom of parents, we pay a high price in personal independence. Similarly, we pay a high price when we acknowledge the awesome might and wisdom of the Master of the Universe. But if we overcome our stubborn egotism and acknowledge the obvious truth, we will find that the rewards of faith are well worth the price we pay for them.

Biblical Draft Deferments Explained

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

The Torah lists people who are exempt from going to battle during a time of war. One exception is a person who built a house but did not make a chanukas habayis (house dedication). Another exception is a person who planted a vineyard, but had not yet partaken of the fourth year's crops. Another exception is a person who betrothed a woman (erusin), but had not yet married her (nisuin).

Finally, the Torah says that a fearful person is sent home lest he weaken the hearts of his fellow soldiers during battle and cause them to flee. Rashi brings the famous machlokes Tanaim as to the nature of this fear. Rabbi Akiva takes the expression literally. A person is frightened by the sounds of battle and cannot bear seeing a drawn sword. Rabbi Yossi Haglilee says the Torah is speaking of a person who is fearful that he may die in battle as a result of his personal aveiros (sins). According to Rabbi Yossi Haglilee, the Torah hides the embarrassment of the person who is afraid to do battle and allows him to take his deferment alongside the others who are newly married or have not yet enjoyed their new home or new vineyard. The Torah invented three other exceptions to spare embarrassment to the person who was afraid of battle.

Rav Baruch Sorotzkin asks an interesting question: How is it that the Torah risks a significant decrease in the number of soldiers available for war, just to protect those soldiers who are afraid to do battle from embarrassment? The Jewish army needs every able-bodied man who can participate! They are going to war! Why allow all these "fake deferments" just to give these people who are scared because of their aveiros, an excuse to not go to battle?

Rav Baruch Sorotzkin answers that we see from here, how important it is to make sure a person does not suffer embarrassment. Saving a person from humiliation is worth risking the loss of a thousand soldiers!

The truth of the matter is, I don't know if this is really enough of an answer. Perhaps we can suggest a stronger answer based on a very interesting Ramban in this week's parsha. The Ramban writes that the reason the Torah said "Do not allow the king to have too many horses" is so that the king won't rely on his military strength, but rather he should place his trust in Hashem. The Torah doesn't want the Jewish king to have the strongest army on the battlefield. The Torah wants him to realize that he will win or lose not because of the strength of his army, but because of his bitachon in the Ribono shel Olam.

The Ramban adds that in Sefer Shoftim, when Gidon went to war with Midyan, Amalek, and Bnei Kedem, he had an army of 32,000 men. However, the Ribono shel Olam told him that He did not want Bnei Yisrael to think that they were victorious because they had the larger and stronger army. Gideon was told to go to battle with only 300 men. This way he would recognize that the salvation was not coming from his army, but from Hashem.

In our day and age, we don't have the same giluy Shechina (Divine revelation) so we cannot say that TZahal should get rid of all of their tanks and planes, etc. We don't have that same level of siyata dishmaya (help from Heaven), but the truth of the matter is, for those of us old enough to remember the Six Day War in which we defeated the Arab armies in six days, the concern mentioned by the Ramban occurred. People were saying that the victory came "because the Israeli Air Force was so skilled" and "they bombed all of Egyptians planes while they were still on the runway." They were claiming "Kochi v'otzem yadi asah li es hachayil hazeh!" Nonetheless, today, we can't make such a cheshbon (calculation) because we don't have the same level of siyata dishmaya.

Therefore, the true answer to Rav Baruch Sorotzkin's question of how we can exempt all these hundreds of men is answered by the simple fact that we don't need all those men when we have siyata dishmaya. So there is no kasha about having so many exemptions.

In addition, the Rashbam explains the reason for the Torah's specified draft deferments by providing an insight into human nature. The Torah was afraid that a person who planted a vineyard and did not yet eat its fruits, built a house and did not move in, etc., would become depressed upon being drafted that he has no mazal! A person who feels he has no mazal will fear that he is doomed to die in battle. His perception of himself may become so negative that he might assume he will never see the end of the war. Such an attitude will ruin the morale of the entire army. That is why, the Rashbam says, we exempt these people from battle — because these are people who would be going to fight with the wrong attitude. And when someone goes into battle with the wrong attitude, it is very bad for morale.