



Ohr Yerushalayim News

א – ט"ו אב תשפ"א – ואתחנן – 24th July 2021 - Volume 14 - Issue 4

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Rabbi and Mrs YY Katz on the recent wedding of their grandson Meir Katz from London to Bassi Klyne from Manchester. Mazel Tov to Dean and Susan Kaye on the birth of a grandson to Doni and Adina Kaye in Manchester. Sholom Zochor takes place at 1 Healey Close. Mazel Tov to Mod Cohen on his engagement to Ruchama Bernstein from Edgware. Mazel Tov also to grandparents, the Rov and Rebbetzen.

Shabbos Hisachdus And Siyum For Lockdown Learning

Following the government's opening up on Monday, we are delighted to see the full reopening of our Shul for men women and children.

As we are now allowed to hold Kiddushim, we are delighted to mark this occasion and the Siyum with a celebratory Kiddush for the whole Kehilla following the 9.30 Minyan.

There will be no Hashkomo Minyan for this Shabbos only

Killer Torah

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

It is said with a combination of passionate joy and admiring wonder. As the Torah is raised for all to see, the congregants point to it as they recite a verse from this week's parsha. "V'zos hatorah asher sam Moshe..." This is the Torah that Moshe presented before the children of Israel (Deuteronomy 4:44). It would seem that this verse refers to the deep and beautiful laws that inspire the same awe as the sight of the Torah scroll unfurled in all its glory. It isn't. In fact, the words now used to announce the glory of the Torah in its entirety are placed directly after a part of the Torah we might rather have skipped. The words, "V'zos HaTorah – this is the Torah" are written following the laws of the cities of refuge. People convicted of negligent manslaughter or awaiting trial for that crime must stay in specially designated cities until the Kohein Gadol dies. The cities of refuge are strategically located and in this week's portion the Torah reviews both the entry qualifications and the terms of inhabitation. We Jews are not proud of killers, yet we obviously must deal with them. The question is, however, why are the words, "this is the Torah," which seem to personify the very essence of our code of life, placed within any proximity to laws that show our lowest point. Rashi, the classic medieval commentator, may be bothered by this juxtaposition. He comments that the words refer to an ensuing portion, which recounts the Sinai experience and the receiving of the Ten Commandments. Ramban explains that after Moshe's admonition of the people, he once again resumes discussing the laws with them. I would like to explain the location of the words with a homiletic approach.

In the early 1900s a Rabbi who lived in the tenements on the Manhattan's Lower East Side had to attend a City function at which a notoriously anti-Semitic Episcopalian Minister was also present.

The Minister turned to the Rabbi and with a sinister smile remarked, "What a coincidence! It was just last night that I dreamt I was in Jewish heaven."

"Jewish heaven?" inquired the Rabbi. "What is it like in Jewish heaven?"

"Oh!" replied the priest. "In Jewish heaven the streets were filled with Jews. Children, their faces dirty, shirts untucked, and clothes unpressed were playing in the dirt. Women were haggling with fish-vendors as Jewish beggars tried to interrupt, asking for handouts. The clotheslines stretched across the roads with the dripping wash mixing with the dust below to add more mud to the existing mess on the ground. And of course," he added with a sinister laugh, "rabbits were running back and forth with large Talmudic volumes tucked under their arms!"

The Rabbi pursed his lips and then replied, "that is truly amazing. You see I

dreamt last night that I was in Episcopalian heaven."

"Really?" the Minister asked "And pray tell me what is it like in Episcopalian heaven?"

"It is magnificent. The streets shine as if they have recently been washed. The homes are exquisitely lined up in perfect symmetry, each with a small garden that has beautiful flowers and a perfectly manicured lawn. The homes were freshly painted and they sparkled in the sunlight!"

The Minister beamed. "And what about the people? Tell me about the people!"

The Rabbi smiled, looked the Minister right in the eye, and tersely stated, "There were no people."

By placing the words "this is the Torah that Moshe presented" directly after the laws of the cities of refuge, the Torah sends a message that it does not shirk or evade guiding us through every aspect of life. Whether the Torah is commanding the laws of priestly blessings or sharing the Passover story or rehabilitating a man who accidentally killed, it is an equal part of Torah and must be proudly proclaimed as such. We don't ignore our misfortunes nor hide them as if they do not exist. The laws of thieves and murderers are as part of the Torah as the perpetrators are part of society. We don't hide the unfortunate and wrongdoers from our existence. They exist in society and in the Torah that deals with their needs and laws. And when it deals with them the Torah proudly proclaims that this, too, is the Torah that Moshe placed before the Children of Israel.

Beyond the Letter of the Law Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week we read the parsha of VaEschonon. It begins with Moshe pleading with Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisroel and continues with Moshe's admonitions and exhortations to Bnei Yisroel to follow the Torah's instructions.

"Carefully adhere to the mitzvos of Hashem your G-d and the eidos {testimonies} and the chukim {laws beyond our understanding} that He has commanded you. V'asisa ha'yashar v'ha'tov b'ainai Hashem {And do that which is straight and good in the eyes of Hashem}. In order that He will give you good and you will come and inherit the good land that He promised your Forefathers [6:17-18]."

The Ramban offers two explanations of these pesukim. The simple understanding is that Moshe first exhorted us to fulfill the mitzvos. He then told us that our intentions when doing the mitzvos should be solely to do that which is straight and good in the eyes of Hashem. By our doing what is good in Hashem's eyes, He will return good to us.

The Ramban then offers a different explanation. In the first passuk, Moshe cautioned us to fulfill the mitzvos that we'd already been commanded. Moshe then commanded us "V'asisa ha'yashar v'ha'tov b'ainai Hashem".

Davening Times

פרשת ואתחנן

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos

Candle Lighting

Shacharis

סוף זמן ק"ש

Mincha

Motzei Shabbos

Sun

Mon / Thurs

Tues / Wed / Fri

Mincha & Maariv

Late Maariv

שבת נחמו

7.30pm

7.39pm-7.55pm

9.30am

9.13am

2.00pm / 6.00pm / 9.21pm

10.26pm

7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am

6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am

6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am

7.45pm

10.15pm

Even that which you have not been commanded, see what is good and straight in the eyes of Hashem and do it! Act in a way which is 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din'

The Ramban goes on to explain that the Torah couldn't have dealt with every detailed aspect of man's dealings with neighbors, friends, business and society. Therefore, after mentioning many detailed laws, it gave a general command — do that which is good and straight.

The sefer 'Toldos Adom' explains this further. Each person is different. Some have the mental capacity to 'catch on' very quickly — others must work very hard in order to understand. Some have the physical strength and stamina to put in long hours — others have much less vigor and vitality.

The Talmud teaches that at the time a person is conceived, Hashem decrees what the future holds for that individual. Will he be strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor. Hashem obviously doesn't expect from any individual any more than that capacity that He Himself gave him.

It is therefore clear that the ability to fulfill the commandments of the Torah is not contingent on the measure of these G-d-given abilities that one's been granted. Those commandments, Hashem's wisdom dictated, are relevant to the whole gamut of Bnei Yisroel.

However, there are acts which, while being beyond the capacity of some to fulfill, are necessary to bring out the full potential of others. These, which could not be spelled out as specific commands, were written in the Torah in a relatively vague manner. "V'asisa ha'yashar v'ha'tov b'ainai Hashem." Each person according to their specific abilities.

Lifnim mi'shuras ha'din. The letter of the law is that which is prescribed and applicable to everyone. Beyond that is not considered din for everybody — only for those for whom it is applicable!

The Talmud [Bava Metzia 83A] relates a very telling incident. Raba Bar Rav Huna hired porters to transport some barrels of wine. They clumsily broke the barrels. In order to reclaim some of his losses, Raba confiscated their jackets. They came and complained to Rav who ordered Raba to return their garments. "Is that the 'din'?", Raba challenged Rav. Rav responded with the passuk: "To go in the way of the good [Mishlei 2]". Raba returned the jackets. They again approached Rav, complaining, "We are poor, we've worked all day and we have nothing to eat!". Rav then commanded Raba to pay the wages they would have deservedly earned had they not broken the barrels. "Is that the 'din'?", Raba again challenged Rav. Rav answered by completing the passuk he had quoted earlier: "And to the path of the righteous you shall adhere".

Amazing. How could Rav explain to Raba that his ruling was the 'din', yet support his view by quoting a passuk which discusses 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din'? It is clear that Raba was on the lofty level that his returning the garments and paying the wages was considered for him 'din'. "V'asisa ha'yashar v'ha'tov b'ainai Hashem." That which for others was considered 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din', for Raba was simply 'din'. Each person according to their specific abilities, going far beyond the obligations of others.

The following story is told about the saintly Rav Zalman of Vilna. One person approached another on the eve of Yom Kippur to ask for forgiveness. He refused, citing the law that you are not obligated to forgive someone who slandered you.

Rav Zalman, a young boy at the time, turned to the person who had refused to forgive. "Chazal teach that Yerushalayim was destroyed only because they decided their laws based on the strict law of the Torah. At first glance this seems very strange. The prophet Yechezk'el enumerates many very serious sins that were being committed. How can the destruction be ascribed to not acting 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din'?"

"Perhaps, it can be explained in the following way. True, many very serious sins were being committed, however, as long as we weren't holding others to the letter of the law, Hashem didn't hold us to the letter of the law. Once we refused to treat others in the manner of 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din', Hashem was no longer willing to treat us in that way. That strict accounting that He held Bnei Yisroel to, directly led to the churban of Yerushalayim."

Zalman's brilliant and insightful words found their mark. He immediately rushed back to his friend and forgave him for what he had done to him.

This week is called Shabbos Nachamu. May our dealing with one another 'lifnim mi'shuras ha'din' bring the ultimate consolation, speedily in our days.

A Humble Plea

Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz (Torah.org)

Parshas Vaeschanan begins with Moshe Rabbeinu imploring Hashem to reverse His decree and allow Moshe to enter Eretz Yisroel.

In his first commentary in this week's parsha, Rashi takes note of the word that Moshe used to describe his prayer — vaeschanan' (and I implored [Hashem]). Rashi, quoting the Sifrei, points out that chanun' is one of the ten

expressions used in Tanach to denote prayer. However, it is not one that is used often, and it would be fair to question why Moshe did not use a more common terminology for prayer — such as tefilah.

Rashi offers a profound analysis for the reason that Moshe selected the word chanun'. He explains that Moshe, the most self-effacing of all men (see Bamidbar 12:3), did not wish to mention his considerable merits when pleading his case, but rather resorted to a humble plea — as if he was requesting an undeserved favor of Hashem. Rashi notes that Moshe learned this most effective form of prayer directly from Hashem during their encounter following the incident of the Golden Calf (see Shemos 33:12-23). Moshe had asked Hashem for a deep understanding of His ways — to "see His face." Hashem responded by informing Moshe that no human can fully comprehend Hashem during his or her lifetime and his request was denied. Hashem did share with Moshe that he would be permitted to understand His ways on some level, to "see the back of Hashem".

During that discussion (Shemos 33:19), Hashem informed Moshe "Vchanosi es asher achon (I will show favor/have mercy when I chose to show favor/have mercy). Our chachamim (sages) explain that this cryptic comment refers to the fact that Hashem often grants the requests of people who may be unworthy — when they pray to Him in the form of chaninia'; this type of humble, undeserving request. (See Brachos 7a).

Rashi draws on this information to explain the word usage of Moshe when he implored Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisroel. Rather than relying on his own merits and engaging in a dialogue with Hashem about his worthiness to entering The Promised Land, Moshe chose to use the chanina' prayer and plead with Hashem as if he was undeserving of having his tefilos answered on his own merit.

Once we see that Moshe internalized the lesson of the effectiveness of a chaninah' prayer, a question arises. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu not utilize this powerful form of prayer when he begged Hashem for mercy on behalf of the Bnei Yisroel after the sin of the meraglim?

When Hashem informed Moshe of His desire to punish the Jews for mourning the negative reports of the spies, Moshe did not use the chaninah' prayer when he successfully defended K'lal Yisroel. If fact, it seems that he did not daven on their behalf at all, but rather informed Hashem of the negative impact that killing the Jews in the desert would have on the nations of the world. Even if Moshe felt that the Jews were undeserving of forgiveness on their own behalf, why did he not unleash the power of a chaninah' prayer at that critical time?

I would suggest that the highest level of the chaninah' prayer that Rashi referred to does not apply to an undeserving individual. This powerful tefilah is unleashed when a righteous person who does have zechusim (merits) humbly ignores them when davening to Hashem. When a tzadik presents his requests in the tone of an undeserving human being, Hashem's mercy is aroused and he grants his or her request immediately.

This may explain the phrase used by Hashem to introduce this concept of chaninah' to Moshe — "Vchanosi es asher achon (I will show favor/have mercy when I chose to show favor/have mercy). Note that Hashem implies that not all who seek chaninah' will receive it. This would be in line with this concept that chaninah' is effective only when utilized by righteous individuals. Rashi's words in the first pasuk of this week's parsha seem to support this view. Rashi says that tzadikim, who do have merits, do not mention them when praying to Hashem.

This would explain the two diverse approaches to Moshe's prayers.

At the time of the sin of the spies, Moshe realized that chaninah' would not be effective since the Jews were undeserving of forgiveness and would not withstand the scrutiny of Hashem's middas hadin. He therefore defended Klal Yisroel to the best of his ability without the chaninah' prayer.

When praying on his own behalf, however, Moshe chose to use the chaninah' prayer, ignoring his myriad merits and offering his humble prayer to Hashem. This may explain a possible reason for Hashem's request of Moshe that he cut short his chaninah' (Devorim 3:26, see Rashi, others) and refrain from continuing his request to enter Eretz Yisroel. Perhaps Moshe's chaninah' prayer was so powerful that it was about to be answered. Hashem therefore informed Moshe that it was not part of His master plan to have Moshe do so — and requested that he not continue with this chaninah' prayer.

Moshe Rabbeinu, ever the master rebbi, left all future generations of his children a format to follow when praying to Hashem.

Live a meaningful and spiritual life, filled with mitzvos and ma'asim tovim (good deeds). And, when davening to Hashem, approach Him with simple and profound humility.

May all our tefilos be answered in these trying times — b'rachamim u'vratzon (with mercy and favor).