



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

י"ד טבת תשע"ח - ויחי - 22nd December 2018 - Volume 11 - Issue 24

## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Marcel Marks on the occasion of Shayna Leah's Bas Mitzvah.

Mazel Tov to Rabbi & Mrs YY Katz on the recent birth of a granddaughter to Mr and Mrs Chaim Emmanuel.

### Kiddush This Shabbos

There is a Kiddush this Shabbos after Davening sponsored by Andrew Addleman in honour of his birthday - Mazel Tov!

Mr & Mrs Jake Lewis invite the Kehilla to a kiddush after Davening at 28 Riverview Court in honour of the recent birth of their daughter Keren Freda - Mazel Tov!

### Bank Holiday Times

Please note Shacharis from this Sunday till Tuesday Jan 1st inclusive will be on the Bank Holiday schedule Sun, Tues, Weds & Fri 7.15/8.20/9.30, Mon & Thurs 7.10/8.10/9.30am.

## A Deathbed Enigma

Dani Epstein

During WWII the Nazis believed they had an edge on the Allied forces by encrypting their messages using the infamous Enigma machine. Fortunately for us, the Poles had garnered a great deal of knowledge about this device and that, coupled with some machines that had been captured, helped the cryptologists at Bletchley Park to decode millions of messages from the Germans that made a huge difference to winning the war.

In the Pacific Theatre, however, things were quite different. The Japanese were up against a code system that they failed to decipher. The people key to this unbreakable cypher were the Code Talkers, a group of Native American speakers who used their languages – barely known outside of the mainland US, to encrypt military messages. The Comanche used words such as "turtle" to describe tanks, "pregnant airplane" for bomber and "crazy white man" to describe Adolf Hitler. Plain and simple words, yet if you have no idea what the words mean in the first place, there is no guessing what they refer to.

We see something akin to this in this week's sedrah. Yaakov calls his sons in before he dies and appears to ramble on a little, leaving the reader to wonder whether anyone at the scene was entirely certain that they understood what their father wanted from them.

It is all too easy to dismiss their father's final missives as the wanderings of a frail mind on its deathbed. We are talking of Yaakov here, however, a novi of rare accomplishments, whose words are recorded in the Torah for posterity. His brilliance - which he demonstrated on many occasions – was not diminished one iota and his depth of his perception regarding the temperament of his sons was as deep as ever. Everything he said on his deathbed that the Torah records is of infinite value to us, which behooves us to study them closely, since we have some keys to decipher his rather oblique missives and final testament.

His opening statement seems a little repetitive: "הקבצו ושמעו בני יעקב" – gather around and listen, sons of Yaakov." That's fine, but why continue with: "שמעו אל ישראל אביכם" – and listen to Yisroel your father"? What does this second request add to the first?

Then Yaakov launches into a series of statements, some of which are quite terrible in their condemnation and others beautiful brochos. This

## Bank Holiday Special

**There will be a Bank Holiday Session of Ovos uBonim on Tuesday 25th December from 4.15 - 5.00pm following Mincha/Maariv (3.40pm).**

raises a fundamental question, which is: what was the purpose of his statements? The Abravanel lists four possibilities. They were either:

- 1) Brochos
- 2) Mussar
- 3) Warning them of the future
- 4) Informing them of their future inheritance

The problem with this list is that none of the above fit the entire speech. If the purpose was to bless his children prior to his death as we see from the blessings of Yehudoh, Don, Osher and Yosef, then those of Reuvein, Shimon, Levi, Yissochor, God and Binyomin really don't fit the bill, since they sound more like curses than anything else.

Conversely, if Yaakov's last missives were mussar, we simply reverse the previous question.

If it was to foretell the future, then that works fine for Yehudoh, Don, God, Osher and Binyomin and leaves everyone else in the lurch.

If Yaakov intended to inform them of their inheritance, again this does not work for Reuvein, Shimon, Levi, Yissochor, Don, God, Naftoli, Yosef and Binyomin.

The first question is critical to answering the second, so let's deal with that first.

The history of the shevotim and Yosef was now quite well known to Yaakov, and whilst he let things slide until now, at this point he no longer

## The Week Ahead

### שבת פרשת ויחי

זמן שבת	3.36pm
Mincha	3.41pm
Rov's Shiur	8.45am - 9.10am
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.15am
Children's Group	10.45am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
2nd Mincha	3.31pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following
Motzei Shabbos	4.51pm
Ovos uBonim	5.51pm
<b>Sun / Tues/ Wed / Fri</b>	<b>7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am</b>
<b>Mon / Thurs</b>	<b>7.10am / 8.10am / 9.30am</b>
Mincha & Maariv	3.40pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

felt that he could leave this world without saying something about everything his sons had gotten up to. More importantly, he wanted to leave them with some kind of direction in order to allow for the fruition of Klal Yisroel with the minimum friction.

He was well aware that simply calling in all of his sons for a right old yelling would get him nowhere, so he resorted to a simple ruse and called them all in on the pretext of informing them of the far distant future, the אחרית הימים. In this way he was certain of full attendance.

Once he had them there, he wanted to break things gently to them but leave them with no uncertain impression that he was going to be very firm. Above all, he had a very important task to complete, which was to make clear who stood where within the familiar hierarchy, something which would affect the future generations at a fundamental level. Who, in fact, was going to be appointed to leadership and eventually, king. Nothing was more important for Yaakov to sort out prior to his death.

So he starts with Reuvein, since he was the firstborn. As the bechor, he had responsibilities that his siblings did not. One of his duties was to take care of his parents in their dotage, which is one of the factors that explains the bechor's double share; after all, he probably had to spend some of his own cash when his parent's pension did not cover their needs and so on. The bechorhood was effectively an insurance policy in an era where pensions had not yet been invented.

This did not automatically result in the finest son getting the job, viz Yaakov and Esav. Yaakov was painfully aware that his own history was something that needed to be avoided at all costs, so it was a critical opening move to prevent Reuvein from thinking that as a firstborn, leadership and royalty would be an automatic entitlement.

To Reuvein he said "רְאוּבוֹן בְּכוֹרִי אַתָּה כְּחַיִּי וְרֵאשִׁית אוֹנִי – you are my firstborn and the first fruit of my vigour". By rights, you should have kingship and dominion placed in your hands, since you have "גָּדוֹל וְנֹרָא וְהָיָה לְךָ עֵד – great rank and great honour". However, you lost it all because you are פְּחוּזִים, as unstable as water. By Yaakov meant something along the lines of "אֵתְּמוּ לְאֵדָנָא, a hasty nation whose mouths precede their ears".

As a consequence, in your headlong rush to right what you perceived as a wrong, עָלִיתָ מִשְׁכַּבִּי אֲבִיר – you interfered with my bed and that was beyond your remit, above your pay grade, you have fallen from your erstwhile birthright and can no longer be considered ruling material.

This might also hint to the future, when the shevet of Reuvein jumped at an early opportunity to acquire land even before they entered Canaan, taking a large and hard to defend area without considering the problems they would encounter in the future. They were not the most numerous tribe, which would make defend their territory that much harder. This was perhaps reflected in Moshe's parting words "יְהִי רְאוּבוֹן וְאֵל יָמוֹת וְיֵהָיֶה – may Reuvein live and not die though his numbers are few". This was not a great strategic decisions, and not one fit for a ruler.

Then Yaakov moved on to Shimon and Levi, concatenating them into one group or brotherhood. "שִׁמְעוֹן וְלֵוִי אֲחֵימִי – Shimon and Levi, you are brothers." That was an obvious statement, but he was suggesting that they shared the same temperaments and were brothers in arms, especially when it came to Dinoh. They were the ones who were roused to a terrible anger and defended her virtue by wiping out an entire city.

"כְּלֵי הַחֵם מְכַרְתִּיהֶם – weapons of destruction are their tools." This word מְכַרְתִּיהֶם is very much out of place, in that it could suggest that this was their way of doing business or the first thing they would jump to in order to solve a situation. "בְּסֻדָּם אֶל־תָּבֵא נַפְשֵׁי בְקִהְלָם אֶל־תַּחַד בְּבֹדִי – in their council do not include me, in their assembly do not unite my honour." "כִּי בְאַפָּם – כָּלֵהוּ אִישׁ – for in their anger they killed a man". Once could translate this as "in their anger they should have killed a man." What Yaakov was saying was that if in their rage and fury they wanted to defend the honour of their sister, they should have only killed Shechem, since he and he alone was responsible for her downfall. The fact that they plotted and tricked the whole down and mowed them down in a furious rampage was something that Yaakov wanted to distance himself from, since he regarded that as not only morally reprehensible but an excuse to rampage and plunder. By the time they killed everyone in the city of Shechem, their anger had plenty of time to cool.

This was also what motivated them to suggest to their brothers that they

should kill Yosef; "וּבְרַצְנָם עָקְרוּ־שׁוֹר – and by their will they uprooted an ox", with the reference to the ox being Yosef.

This was also an oblique reference to future events, the tribe of Shimon being involved in the licentiousness at Shittim and Levi with Korach rebellion.

It begs the question why Yaakov condemned the descendants of these three great zadikim on the basis of their ancestor's deeds.

To this the Abravanel answers that Yaakov was not in a position to decide for himself what he was going to say, all of that was directly in the hands of Hashem. This was a pivotal moment in sowing the seeds that would form the most incredible nation on earth and the destructive power of anger had to be firmly implanted in their minds as well as those of the following nations. Reuvein's tribe eventually got involved in the Korach rebellion as well as Levi, Shimon as was mentioned with the story in Shittim.

Now that these first three brothers had been informed that none of them were fit to rule for one reason or another, it was time to appoint a king, and this was Yehudoh.

There were four reasons Yaakov saw fit to crown him for.

"יְהוּדוֹחַ יְהוּדוֹחַ אֶתְּךָ יוֹדוּךָ אֲחֵיךָ – Yehudoh, your brothers praise you." There is particular animosity that the jealousy of siblings brings out, as was seen with Yosef. In Yehudoh's case, his brothers all deferred to him as a leader without any malice or jealousy.

The second reason was "יָדְךָ בְעַרְךָ אֲנִיכֵךָ – your hand will be at the neck of your enemies". A prime quality of a leader for a nation has to be valour in battle. Not only do you have to be prepared to fight, you have to have fought as well. King Dovid was a battle-hardened warrior before he became king, which meant that he was well aware of the cost of war, in terms of morale, finance and political outcomes. This is a vital trait of rulership; you have to be able to fight when necessary and understand the implications of war as well.

To that end, "יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְךָ בְנֵי אֲבִיךָ – the sons of your father will bow to you." You have this quality that everyone acknowledges, and they defer to you; not just your siblings from your mother but all of my sons.

The third reason was "גֹּיֵר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה – Yehudoh is a young lion". While at the moment you might not be in a position to fight great battles, this will eventually come, because you have that nature in you. Despite that, you are in control of your abilities. "מִשְׁרָךְ בְּנֵי עָלִיתָ – conventionally this is translated as "on prey, my son, have you grown", but perhaps here Yaakov meant that he overcame the opportunity to prey on Yosef when he had the chance.

The last reason was "כָּרַע רַבֵּץ כְּאַרְיֵה וְכִלְבֵּיא מִי וְקִימְנוּ – He crouches, lies down like a lion, Like the king of beasts—who dare rouse him?" Everyone acknowledges that you are a king in waiting, much like a cub will eventually become a fully grown lion.

Due these four reasons Yaakov argued that Yehudoh was, of all the brothers, the one most fit to rule.

Now that Yaakov had crowned Yehudoh by ruling out the first three, he had to justify why none of the other brothers were fit to rule.

In this he examined each of their temperaments and proclivities when it came to earning a living, which is surprisingly enough something Moshe also touched in in his final speeches. Earning a living in a way one enjoys and is satisfied, it seems, is pretty important.

Zevulun as a seafaring tribe could not rule, Yissochor as a farmer (a bit surprising there, but this is how the Abravanel understands Yaakov and Moshe's brochos) with a large amount of people to feed is also off the table.

Although Don would judge his fellow tribes, that would be as a peer, not a king. Fighting as a snake does is not as valiant as a lion. That is to say, we could imagine the tribe of Don being the special ops forces of Klal Yisroel. This is a vital role, but the battle is won by the generals, not the vital but limited actions of snipers and the SAS.

Space forces brevity on me yet again, so I will rush to a conclusion without completing all the brochos of Yaakov.

The purpose of his final words were not to bless, curse, warn of the future or inform them of their future inheritance, but to appoint Yehudoh as king, and therefore even though there does not appear to be a common theme to his speech, once one understands that the kingship was the subject matter, everything falls into place.