



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ב"ד טבת תשפ"ב – יחי' – 18th December 2021 - Volume 14 - Issue 24

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Rabbi and Mrs YY Katz on the bar mitzvah of their grandsons, Yehuda Leib Katz and Motti Bamberger, this Shabbos

Kiddush This Shabbos

There is a Kiddush after davening sponsored by Henry Brownson in honour of the Yahrtzeit of his father this Wednesday, 18th Teves.

Chessed, Emes & Anava

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

At the beginning of the parsha, Yaakov asks Yosef to swear that he will bring him back to the Land of Canaan and not allow him to be buried in the Land of Egypt. Rashi famously comments that a kindness done with the deceased is a "true kindness" (Chessed shel Emes) because the person extending the favor expects no repayment from the person receiving the favor. The quintessential Chessed shel Emes is the chessed someone does with a dead person. There are no ulterior motives involved in such kindness. Many Chevra Kadisha organizations are known as Chessed Shel Emes societies. The source is this Rashi at the beginning of Parshas Vayechi. However, a number of commentaries ask on this Rashi, because the pasuk explicitly says that Yaakov was giving Yosef an ulterior motive for rendering this kindness. Yaakov promised Yosef the city of Shechem because he was troubling himself not to bury Yaakov in Egypt! How can Rashi call this the classic paradigm of Chessed shel Emes where no gain or benefit is expected in return?

Moreover, the Gemara says in Kesuvos and other places that the way this world works is that if someone eulogizes others, others will eulogize him, and one who goes to funerals and participates in the burial of the departed will have others do the same for him as well. In other words, there is repayment for people who occupy themselves with burying the dead! Basically, this is a death insurance policy. The premiums are to eulogize and bury others; the payment is that others will eulogize and bury you. So, again we have a question on Rashi's characterization of the matter. The sefer Avir Yaakov offers the following interpretation: Certainly, when there is a funeral and someone buries a departed friend or neighbor, there can be and there will be a payback. However, the reason why kindness done with the dead is considered a Chessed shel Emes is because the dead person will not feel indebted to his benefactor. Every time someone does someone else a favor—for the purest of reasons—it creates an obligation on the recipient. He feels indebted to the one who did him the favor. It is just human nature. When you give something to someone, he feels indebted.

The favor may have been performed totally altruistically, but inevitably, later on, when you see the person who did you a favor in the street, you are thinking "I owe him something". And this other fellow may very well also be thinking that you owe him something. The only person who will certainly NOT feel indebted after receiving a favor is a dead person. That is why Rashi calls this a true Chessed shel Emes.

Rav Yeruchem Levovitz, the Mir Mashgiach, always portrayed a situation where Reuven does a favor for Shimon and Shimon is very appreciative and tells Reuven, "Thank you so much, how can I repay you?" Reuven answers "Oh, it was nothing. Forget about it!" Shimon persists "No, no. I really want to repay you somehow. What can I do for you?" Again, Reuven says "Please, just forget about it!"

People think, Rav Yeruchem said, that Reuven is being very nice and magnanimous. He is not asking for anything in return from Shimon for the

kindness he did for him. Rav Yeruchem said that the contrary is true. Reuven is not being nice by not giving Shimon the opportunity to do something for him as repayment. When a person says "What can I do for you in return," it gives him the opportunity to remove the feeling of indebtedness that he must now carry around. When the benefactor disallows the possibility of payment, he is really holding onto the debt for possible collection at a later date.

Therefore, the real true Chessed is only the kindness someone does with the dead, who have no feelings of indebtedness.

Yosef Had to Be Told His Father Was Sick?

There is a Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos in our parsha that comments on the pasuk "And it was after these matters, it was told to Yosef 'Behold your father is sick.' He took his two sons with him, Menashe and Ephraim." [Bereshis 48:1] Yosef hears that his elderly father is on his death bed and goes to see him, taking along his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim.

Let us ask a question: If someone is on his death bed, isn't it likely that the son will know about it without needing to be told? What kind of son would not know what kind of condition his father is in and need to be told by others "Behold, your father is sick"?

The Daas Zekeinim infers from this narration that Yosef did not visit his father frequently. Yosef was not there on a regular basis and therefore he did not know Yaakov's condition and consequently, he needed to be informed by others that the end was near. The Daas Zekeinim suggests a reason why this may have been the case: Yosef did not want to spend time with his father alone because he was afraid his father would ask him how it was that he wound up in Egypt.

This is an incredible idea. Yaakov was in Mitzrayim for seventeen years. He had not seen Yosef for twenty-two years prior to that. There was a dramatic meeting between the two of them in last week's parsha. They had been so close during Yosef's youth in Canaan. Can it be thought that now, after their initial dramatic reunion, that Yosef, the "heir apparent" to the patriarchal legacy, does not go back to visit with his father on a frequent basis?

According to the Daas Zekeinim, as hard as it is to imagine, and as difficult personally as it must have been for Yosef, he kept his distance. Yosef feared that moment of privacy with Yaakov when his elderly father would say to him "Yossele my dear son – tell me: what really happened? How did you ever wind up here in Egypt?" The truth would have caused Yaakov great aggravation and anger at his other sons. Yosef did not want to be the cause of that aggravation and family strife.

The sefer Avir Yaakov asks the following question: Yosef did not see his

Davening Times

פרשת ויחי

Zman Shabbos	3.34pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	3.39pm
Hashkomo	7.25am
Shacharis	9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.08am
Mincha	1.30pm / 3.29pm
Motzei Shabbos	4.49pm
Ovos uBonim	5.49pm
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	3.40pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

father all these seventeen years when they were both in Mitzrayim. It was painful to Yaakov and it was painful to Yosef. Why? Yosef wanted to avoid the question “What happened to you?” However, there is a simple resolution to this problem. It is called “Lie through your teeth.” There are plenty of stories Yosef could have told Yaakov to explain his disappearance without incriminating his brothers. “I was kidnapped by these Yishmaelim” is a very plausible story. It is not true, but perhaps Yaakov would have believed it. If there ever was an example of “one is allowed to extend the truth to preserve peace” (M’shaneh b’ad ha’Shalom) [Yevamos 65b] – this was it!

The Avir Yaakov offers an answer to this question. (If you have a better answer, perhaps discuss it around the family Shabbos table.) He suggests that even though Yosef may have been allowed to lie, he just could not bring himself to deceive his father. Maybe that is because Yaakov personified the attribute of truth more than anything else. If you know your father values truth over every other human characteristic – you just cannot lie to him. Despite both Yosef and Yaakov suffering for all of these years, Yosef could not lie to his father and violate the paramount value in his life.

The Fundamental Qualification for Malchus in Klal Yisrael: Lack of Arrogance

This final thought is from the sefer Chidekel, by Rav Chaim Dov Keller, the late Rosh Yeshiva of the Telshe Yeshiva in Chicago. It is based on a Targum Onkelos, a Targum Yonosan ben Uziel and a Medrash.

Yehudah is actually the first of Yaakov’s sons to receive an unadulterated blessing. Reuven, Shimon, and Levi received a “Bracha” that was actually more mussar than bracha. Yehudah’s “Bracha” was pure blessing.

Among the five pesukim of Yehuda’s bracha, Yaakov said: “The scepter shall not depart from his descendants nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh arrives...” [Bereshis 49:10]. This is a seminal pasuk in all of the Torah. It grants monarchy to the Tribe of Yehudah. All kings must be from his descendants. In fact, at the time of the Chashmonaim, when the Tribe of Levi usurped the monarchy (the Maccabees were Kohanim), they were punished severely despite their righteousness.

What did Yaakov see in Yehudah that made him fit for royalty? The pasuk “Yehudah ata yodoocha achecha...” is commonly translated “Yehuda—you, your brothers will acknowledge” [Bereshis 49:8].

Targum Onkelos translates the pasuk to mean: “Yehudah you confessed (Yoducha from the word Modeh) [when it came to the story of Tamar] and were not embarrassed”. When Tamar was taken out to be burnt at the stake and she said, “Whoever is the person who gave me these items is the person who impregnated me,” Yehudah said “She is more righteous than I.” Imagine the Yehudah’s humiliation in making this embarrassing admission. Targum Yonosan ben Uziel adds a further element in his translation of this pasuk: “Yehudah, you admitted in the story of Tamar. Therefore, all Jews will be called YEHUDim after your name.” We are called Jews because of the name Judah in all different languages. The name of our nationality is derived from the name of Yaakov’s fourth son! We received our national identity because of the strength of this incident. Being able to admit you are wrong is so fundamental to being a Yid that it is why we are all called Yehudim.

In fact, the Medrash Rabbah says that it was the Ribono shel Olam who made Yehudah the Melech of Klal Yisrael for this one act of humility and his ability to say “I am wrong.”

This is an amazing quality that is extremely rare among contemporary politicians—the willingness and ability to announce “I made a mistake” or “I am wrong!” In Klal Yisrael, the fundamental qualification for Malchus is lack of arrogance—the ability to be Modeh al ha’Emes.

In general, this is a Jewish trait. Rashi illustrates this point several times in Chumash. In Toldos, Rashi says regarding a certain pasuk [Bereshis 28:5] “I don’t know what this is coming to teach us.” Now obviously, Rashi does not comment on every pasuk in Chumash. Rashi could have easily glossed over this pasuk and not said anything. He could have just skipped it. However, Rashi felt compelled to admit that he was bothered by this pasuk and did not know why it was there.

Likewise, the same phenomenon [e.g. – Bava Metziah 108b] occurs in his monumental Talmud commentary. In the middle of a sugya, Rashi writes “I did not closely follow the words of my teachers (lo dikdakti b’Divrei Rabbosai).” He gives the impression – “Do you know why I don’t know complete pshat in this piece of Gemara? It is because I was sleeping during shiur!” Why does Rashi need to say that? It is because he is a Yid! Also see Brachos 25b. There is a Gilyon HaShas there which quotes every single place in Shas that Rashi explicitly writes that he does not understand the Gemara’s interpretation. The print is too small and the list is too long for

me to count all the places mentioned.

In each of those places, Rashi had the option of not saying anything but he chose not to take that easier option. That would be the less-than-fully-truthful approach. That is not the characteristic of Jews.

Rabbi Keller cites an incident he saw in a sefer that Rabbi Shlomo Loriczn wrote (B’Mechitzasam), describing the various Gedolim he had connections with in Eretz Yisrael.

The Chazon Ish wrote on the entire Torah. He wrote a chapter (Siman 12) in one of his Sefarim about Masechta Kelim. He later regretted having published that Siman. He didn’t think what he wrote was correct. He expunged it from his Sefer. In the Chazon Ish’s volume on Taharos regarding Masechta Kelim, the chapters skip from eleven to thirteen. Siman 12 was removed in all later editions.

Someone asked the Chazon Ish why he did not renumber the subsequent chapters and make Siman 13 into Siman 12 and so on? “Let there be one less Siman at the end of the Sefer. Why do you need to announce that there is something missing here?” The Chazon Ish said “I want people to know that I had something to say over here. It was originally included but I decided it was wrong so I removed it. That’s the way it is.”

This is another example of Yehudah – Ata yodoocha achecha. He admitted and was not embarrassed to do so. The ability to confess and say “I’m human, I was wrong, I made a mistake” is highly admirable. In Klal Yisrael, it is a qualification for true leadership. There has never been a dogma in the history of Klal Yisrael that anyone is infallible, as is the case in other religions. This is because people are not infallible. People are people and people are humans, and even the greatest can from time to time err.

The attribute that qualifies the Melech Yisrael for Malchus is the ability to say “I was wrong. She is more righteous than I.” That is why Yehudah merited monarchy. It is because a king cannot be arrogant. He has much too much power. Arrogance, on top of having all that power, can be disastrous. The higher up you are, the humbler you must be. Unfortunately, we see the opposite in the world around us.

Aging Gracefully

Rabbi Pinchas Avruch (Torah.org)

“And it came to pass after these matters that [the messenger] said to Yosef, ‘Behold, your father is ill.’... (Bereshis/Genesis 48:1) This is the first time in the history of the world that someone became sick.

Yalkut Shimoni (Chayai Sarah 105) narrates that Avraham requested from G-d the phenomenon of visible aging, for he feared that when father and son entered a room people would not know whom to give honor first, so G-d granted him his wish, with him as the first recipient. Yitzchak requested suffering before death, for he feared the result of the process of Divine judgment if one never had the warning to do teshuva, so G-d granted him his wish, with him as the first recipient. Yaakov (Jacob) requested illness, for he feared the consequences of not having a few days to resolve outstanding issues between one’s children. G-d granted him his wish, with him as the first recipient.

Michtav Me’Eliyahu explains that each of our saintly forefathers made requests consistent with his most pronounced character trait. Avraham, known for his acts of chesed (loving kindness), appreciated the need for giving genuine honor to his fellow human. G-d concurred to the great impediment this indistinguishability placed on one’s Divine service through chesed. Yitzchak’s focus was on justice, and he recognized the great tragedy in the afterlife that awaited one who did not do teshuva. Therefore, he beseeched a mechanism in this life that would awaken the consciousness to this inevitability so that the requisite correction could be made. Yaakov’s pursuit was perfection and completion, seeking resolution between opposing forces. Prior to death, a simple declaration of one’s will was insufficient; efforts needed to be made to ensure that the children accepted the determination. He understood that there would continue to be jealousy unless everyone genuinely felt his interests had been served, that there could be no peace (shalom) between parties without feeling a sense of wholeness (shleimus). This could not be accomplished with the suddenness that accompanied natural death at that time. G-d’s accommodation was extended illness.

Rabbi Akiva taught us (Tractate Berachos 60b) that one should regularly remind himself that all that G-d does is for the good. There are tragedies that challenge our faith in this maxim, such as the difficulties that comes with aging. But our Sages remind us often that trials are given to us as growth opportunities (see Kol HaKollel Parshas Lech Lecha 5764), and G-d, in his infinite kindness and love for us, granted our forefathers’ requests for the growth opportunities of aging. Our challenge is to maximize our utilization of them.