



Ohr Yerushalayim News

30th December 2023 - Volume 16 - Issue 25

News This Week

Kiddush

There will be a Kiddush after davening sponsored by Roy and Brocho Dinowitz in honour of the birth of their daughter, Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov also to grandparents Boaz and Shirley Dinowitz.

Holiday Shacharis

The holiday schedule for Shacharis continues up to and including Monday 1st Jan

Chaim Aruchim

Chaim Aruchim to Stephen Wieder on the recent Petira of his father, Leo Wieder, in London. The Shiva ends Friday afternoon.

We wish Chaim Aruchim to the following who have Yahrtzeit this week:

- Shabbos, 18th Teves - Henry Brownson for his father
- Weds, 22nd Teves - Nati Sebbag for his father
- Fri, 24th Teves - David Lewin for his father

Account For Your Time

Rabbi J Rubinstein

How many times have you heard the phrase "In the good old days....."? But the Medrash quotes the verse, "Do not say, how was it that the early days were better than these, because not through wisdom did you ask this" (Koheles 7;10). The Medrash adds, the generation which is coming, should be in your eyes, like the generation which is past. Do not say, if Rabbi Akiva were alive, I would learn from him etc. (Medrash Koheles 1;8).

Every day and every situation is different, and a world on its own, with its own challenges and its own particular opportunities. The story is told of the pharmacist in Minsk who was the head of the local Chevra Kadisha (Burial society), the poor brides fund, and other worthy causes. He told Rav Elya Dushnitzer, that at one point he had strayed far from a Torah observant life. One day he met the Chafetz Chaim who asked him what he did for a living. When he said he was a pharmacist, the Chafetz Chaim told him, when you are preparing medicines, have in mind that your intention is to fulfil the Mitzvah to help people who are ill. Those words changed his whole attitude to his work, and eventually led him to become fully committed to Torah and Mitzvos.

Reb Leib Lopian used to tell of the layman who lived in a town near him Lithuania, who started learning Gemara at the age of seventy, at the age of eighty he finished Shas and started writing his own original explanations. These are random examples of people in different situations and at different stages in life, who found a way to do new Mitzvos in their particular circumstances.

I have myself, seen people in hospital living in extremely restricted conditions, who created a phenomenal Kiddush Hashem by their behaviour, (and unfortunately the reverse as well). Every time and every place has its own distinct Mitzvos, if one is interested in finding them; and who can say, which of the Mitzvos is the greater one?!

We are told in the Parshah, למות, ויקרבו ימי ישראל למות, "And the days of Israel drew near to die" This Verse appears to be written the wrong way round, the days did not draw near to death, he drew near to the day of his death! But Rav Wolbe (Sefer Ali Shur Vol. 2, P.55) quotes the Zohar which says, after a person leaves this world, all his days are brought for judgement, and an account will have to be given for what was done on each individual day. So it is the days, which draw

near to the Day of judgement. It reinforces the idea that each day is a unique entity on its own; and we can, on every day, find an opportunity to serve Hashem in the particular circumstances of that day. In the words of Shema, יהיום על לבבך, "On this day they shall be on your heart."

Chesed Shel Emes. Truly.

Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein (Torah.org)

"Do chesed and emes for me."

Rashi explains that all chesed performed for the deceased is true chesed. The dead cannot repay the favor. When one performs chesed for the dead, it is a true chesed, because it is not marred by the expectation of reciprocity. In other cases, even when we think that we act altruistically, to some extent – even subconsciously – we are being transactional. What goes around, comes around. If we are good to others, we tell ourselves, they will be good to us. We cannot escape the reality that we are not fully giving, but also investing in a future pay-off.

Yaakov's point to Yosef is therefore clear. The favor that he asked of Yosef – to ensure his burial in Israel, rather than Egypt – would be unlike any other that he had ever asked of his son. Yaakov could not offer anything at all to Yosef in return, once he would no longer be among the living.

So we readily understand Yaakov's point. It is not so clear, however, why he had to say it the way he did. He was asking Yosef to tend to his remains after death. Since it is true that any chesed performed for the dead is achesed shel emes, there was nothing particularly remarkable about the request Yaakov made of his son. It was no different than any request any person makes for post-mortem assistance! Why did he have to point out the obvious?

Furthermore, is it really true that helping the dead is an elevated form of chesed, because there is no expectation of reward? Doesn't our real reward come from HKBH? He can and does reward us for mitzvos we perform for the dead as well as for the living!

There is another yardstick with which we can measure the fullness, the emes of achesed we perform. Using it, we can find a different meaning in Yaakov's words.

We don't always perform acts of chesed so willingly. Sometimes, an indigent person will ask for a handout when has us essentially trapped. We're not in the mood to give, and may not have very positive feelings for the would-be recipient. But we cannot easily escape, so we give begrudgingly. Sometimes, we are leveraged by a group of friends who come for our support for some cause or other. We are not very excited about the project or the institution. But there is no way to

Davening Times

זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	3.41pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	3.46pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.18am
Rov's Shiur	3.07pm
Mincha	1.30pm / 3.37pm
Motzei Shabbos	4.57pm
Ovos uBonim/Bonos	5.57pm
Sun	7.15am / 8.20am / 9.30am
Mon	7.10am / 8.10am / 9.30am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	3.45pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

evade the social pressure to participate alongside them.

In these and similar cases, our chesed is not one of emes. It is tainted and incomplete, as is any mitzvah not performed with simcha. We are taught, "Serve Hashem with simcha!" Doing mitzvos without simcha is actually an aveirah, as is clear from the Tochechah, which explains all the tragedies and horrors which it predicts: "Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with simcha and goodness of heart."

We have thus discovered another way of differentiating between achesed of truth, and one of untruth.

Whenever we are more or less coerced into performing, our chesed is not one of complete truth.

Throughout the last years of his father's life, Yosef gladly provided for all his needs. Yet, he really had little choice about it. Had he not wanted to, social convention demanded it of him. Egypt was watching how he treated his father; Paroh himself assumed that Yosef would assume the caretaker role of a good son. In some small measure, Yosef's chesed was not one of complete emes.

Yaakov now provided Yosef with a new level of chesed. It would not be easy for Yosef to resist Paroh's expectation that there would be a state funeral for Yaakov, with burial in an honored place among Egyptian notables. No one expected Yosef to take his father's remains back to the ancestral home. He did so nonetheless – happily. It was a genuine chesed shel emes.

Who's a Jew?

Rabbi Yisroel Ciner (Torah.org)

This week we conclude Sefer Breishis with the parsha of Va'y'chi. "Va'y'chi Yaakov b'Eretz Mitzrayim {And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt} for seventeen years. And the years of Yaakov's life were one hundred and forty seven years.[47:28-29]"

The parsha of "Va'y'chi Yaakov {And Yaakov lived}" paradoxically deals with Yaakov's preparations for his death. It's interesting to note that the two parshios which contain the word 'life' in their title (Chayai Sarah – The life of Sarah and Va'y'chi – And he lived) deal with death. The Torah's clear demonstration that true 'life' encompasses far more and extends far beyond our definition of that term.

Yaakov summoned his sons in order to bless them before his death. "Yehuda, atah yoducha a'checha [49:8]," literally meaning, "Yehuda, your brothers will admit to you." The Kli Yakar explains as follows. Because you put aside your embarrassment and admitted to having relations with Tamar, commensurately, your brothers will put aside their embarrassment and will admit and confirm that you alone are worthy to be the king.

The Medrash relates the extent of Yehuda's kingdom. Hashem said to Yehuda, "You saved Tamar and her two sons from being burnt to death and you saved Yosef from the pit he'd been thrown into, you will reign in both this world and the next."

Rav Sholom Schwadron zt"l asks why such a big deal is being made out of Yehuda's admission that Tamar was pregnant from him. Did he really have any other choice but to admit?

Tamar, disguised herself and had relations with Yehuda without him realizing that it was her. She was thereby fulfilling the mitzva of 'yibbum' – lending continuity to her late husband, Yehuda's son. The Yehuda-led court, unaware that Tamar was pregnant from Yehuda, sentenced her to death by burning for her seeming infidelity. As Tamar was being led to her death she sent them Yehuda's signet ring, cloak and walking stick. "I am pregnant from the man that these belong to!" What alternative did Yehuda have when he recognized his articles? Could he have murderously stood idly by while his daughter-in-law, pregnant with two babies fathered by him, would be burnt to death?! The reward he received reveals the difficulty of the test. What was the test? What could he have done?

Rav Sholom explains that Yehuda could have rationalized...

'True, if I don't admit, innocent people will die. However, if I do admit won't it be a chilul Hashem? What will happen to the honor of the courts and the judges? Won't it reap scorn onto the Kingdom of Israel that I will head? No! No! I can't admit... It will be a transgression for me to admit...

'How about the murder of innocent people? I'll work things out... As the leader of the beis-din I'll announce that in light of the new development, the arrival of a ring, cloak and staff, the court has decided to hold further deliberations. I'll then find ample doubts to indefinitely postpone the actual death sentence. No one gets killed

and the honor of Hashem, the courts and the kingdom remains intact.'

Yet, Yehuda didn't allow himself to get sucked into such calculations. He ignored the enormity of the humiliation he was about to suffer. There he was, the leader of the court. Who else sat with Yehuda on this court? His grandfather, Yitzchok Avinu and Shem, the son of Noach. Such leaders were surely surrounded by their disciples, soaking up their every word and nuance. Undoubtedly, there were also many onlookers, interested in following the developments of this rather sensational case and wanting to get a glimpse of their generations greatest and holiest leaders.

And then, the climactic moment... Tamar is being led to her death. All eyes are glued. Absolute silence. Yehuda sees the items. He recognizes them. No rationalizations are made. He shouts, "She is righteous! It was me!" Every single eye turns toward Yehuda as a collective gasp is heard. You?! Our judge?! The tzaddik! It was you?!

Who can imagine the stomach-dropping humiliation of that moment? What gave him the strength to do it? Honesty... No rationalizing. No misleading. Nothing less than the pure and brutal truth. Immediately! No hesitation! Any delaying would have prolonged a misunderstanding. It would have prolonged falsehood. It wasn't an option.

The question: 'Who's a Jew?' is one that often finds its way into the headlines. The name Yehudi comes from the name Yehuda. It means to acknowledge, to admit. Why was his name chosen to be the banner-carrier of the entire nation, even of those who in fact descended from his eleven brothers? Targum Yonasan ben Uziel writes: "Yehuda, you admitted to the incident with Tamar, as a result the nation will be called by your name, Yehudim [49:8]." Honesty. Pure, unadulterated, not from concentrate honesty. That's "Who's a Jew". That's how we got our name. If we're not following in the path of Yehuda then we're not deserving of his name.

Rav Chatzkel Levenstein zt"l, the renowned mashgiach of the Ponevezher Yeshiva had a grandson in America who was critically ill. One Friday night, the child passed away. After Shabbos, the family sent a telegram to Rav Nachum Pertzovitz zt"l of the Mirrer Yeshiva informing him of the sad news and asking him to gently break it to Rav Chatzkel.

Rav Nachum went to Rav Chatzkel and quietly said, "We received information from America."

"I know already," Rav Chatzkel replied. "Friday night I had a dream that my late father and another man buried the child wrapped in the cover of a Sefer Torah."

The two had spoken for a few minutes when there was a knock on the door. That day was the thirtieth day since the passing of Rav Isaac Sher, zt"l, the Slobodka Rosh Yeshiva. Eulogies were scheduled to be given and Rav Chatzkel was slated as one of the speakers. "When does the Mashgiach wish to go to the eulogy?" asked the young man who had entered.

"I can't speak there today," Rav Chatzkel replied softly. "I know that if I'll speak about Rav Isaac it will awaken in me a sadness that I feel about my grandson. I'll be moved to tears. Those attending will think that I'm crying for Rav Isaac but I'll know that I'm really crying for my grandson. I do not want to shed false, misleading tears..."

I recently heard an amazing story. A woman called a certain chevra kadisha asking them to come and tend to her husband. Although she was not a member of that community, she explained that she and her husband had not been affiliated with any community. When they arrived they found her alone with her late husband. Explaining that they had no relatives or friends who would take her to the cemetery, she asked for a moment to say good-bye before they'd take him to his burial.

One of the members of the chevra kadisha overheard as she bent down to her husband. "Itchik, you're going to the World of Truth. Tell them not to be upset with us that we had no children. Explain to them that it wasn't our fault. We wanted to have children but what could we do. We lived in Russia. And for seventeen years there was no mikveh. By then it was too late. Explain it to them Itchik..."

Honest people. Rav Chatzkel – one of the greatest of his generation – refused to mislead anyone with false tears. Itchik and his wife – simple Russian immigrants – with super-human resolve refused to rationalize and go against the little that they knew. Honest people. The true answer to the question "Who's a Jew?".

Chazak, chazak v'nischazek. Good Shabbos,