



Ohr Yerushalayim News

א שבט תשע"ז – ארא – 28th January 2016 - Volume 9 - Issue 26

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Simcha Shadmi on the birth of a grandson to Mr & Mrs Ari Shadmi in London.

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Yehuda Issler on the forthcoming wedding of Esti to Motti Sandler on Wednesday. Mazel Tov also to grandparents Mr and Mrs David Issler.

Kiddush This Shabbos

There will be a Kiddush after Davenning in honour of Shabbos Rosh Chodesh kindly sponsored by Dr Davis in honour of the forthcoming Yahrtzeit of his father - Chaim Aruchim.

Kindliness is G-dliness

Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier (Torah.org)

And Pharaoh sent for Moshe and Aharon and said to them, 'I have sinned this time. HASHEM is righteous, and I and my people are wicked.' — Shemos 9:27

After months and months of rebellion, Pharaoh finally admitted that he was wrong. The Dos Zakainim explains that the makkah of barad moved Pharaoh more than any other. And it was because of one factor: Moshe had warned him that the hail would kill anything living. Again and again, Moshe cautioned Pharaoh to take his livestock and his slaves inside. Because Pharaoh was repeatedly warned to save the living creatures, he was moved and recognized his error.

This Dos Zakainim is difficult to understand. Why would this detail cause Pharaoh to admit that HASHEM was right? He witnessed the greatest revelation of HASHEM's mastery of nature—and it didn't move him. He watched as Mitzrayim, the superpower of its time, was brought to its knees. That didn't move him. Why should this single factor have such an effect?

This question is best answered with a moshol.

Henry Ford, while a brilliant businessman, was not known for his kindness. In fact, he used to brag that he never did anything for anyone. The story is told that while he was going for a walk in the fields with a friend, they heard yelps coming from a nearby property. A dog had gotten caught in a barbed wire fence and couldn't get out. Ford walked over to the fence, gently pulled on the wire, and freed the dog. When he returned to the road, his friend said to him, "I thought you were the guy who never did anything for anyone." Henry Ford responded, "That was for me. The dog's cries were hurting me."

This story is compelling because Ford didn't care about anyone but himself. He didn't choose to be kind. He didn't want to feel the pain of others. In fact, he tried his best to squelch this sensitivity. But it was still there. He couldn't stop himself. He was pre-programmed to have mercy. In his inner makeup, there was that voice that said, "Henry, the poor animal is in pain. Go do something!" Even though he prided himself on selfishness, he

couldn't quell that voice inside. It bothered him to hear a creature in pain. When he heard those cries, they reached down to his inner core, to that part of the human that only wants to do good, proper and noble things. That part was touched. It saw an animal in pain and said, "Don't just stand there, Henry. Do something. That poor animal is suffering."

This is illustrative of the basic components of the human. When Hashem created man, He joined together two diverse elements to form his soul. These are his spiritual soul, what we call his nishamah, and his animal soul, which is comprised of all of the drives and inclinations needed to keep him alive. The conscious "I" that thinks and feels is made up of both parts.

The nishamah comes from under the throne of Hashem's glory. It is pure and holy and only wishes for that which is good, proper and noble. Because it comes from the upper worlds, it derives no benefit from this world and can't relate to any of its pleasures. The other part of man's soul is very different. It is exactly like that of an animal, with all of the passions and desires necessary to drive man though his daily existence.

We humans are this contradictory combination. Within me is an animal soul made up of pure desires and appetites, and within me is a holy nishamah that only wishes to do that which is right and proper. The animal soul only knows its needs and exists to fulfill them. The nishamah is magnanimous and only wishes to give. These two total opposites are forged together to create the whole we know as the human.

This seems to be the answer to the Dos Zakainim. Pharaoh was a human being, and as all humans, he had a sublime side to him. He may have spent years ignoring and pushing it down, but it remained within him. What he experienced during the plague of hail was pure chessed. His enemy was concerned for his good. There was nothing that HASHEM had to gain by protecting the cattle and

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת וארא

Candle Lighting
Mincha
Shacharis
סוף זמן ק"ש
1st Mincha
Rov's Shiur
2nd Mincha
Seuda Shlishis
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos
Ovos uBonim
Sun
Mon / Thurs
Tues / Wed / Fri
Mincha & Maariv
Late Maariv

שבת ראש חודש שבט

4.27pm
4.32pm
9.00am
10.11am
1.30pm
3.48pm
4.18pm
Following
5.38pm
6.53pm
7.15am / 8.20am
6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
4.35pm
8.00pm

the slaves of the Egyptians. The only motivation was generosity, goodness, and a pure concern for others. Seeing this warmed even the callous heart of Pharaoh. He recognized this wasn't driven by lowly motives. He understood that he was dealing with something outside of the realm of normal human interests. He saw HASHEM.

This also helps us understand one of the great ironies of life.

The selfish person is focused on his needs and his wants. The generous person is concerned about the welfare of others—even at the cost of his own needs. We would assume that the selfish person would be happy. After all, he is singly focused on what's good for him. But the generous person has the good of others on his mind—surely he can't be as happy. He has to worry about the good of others.

Yet, just the opposite is true. The more a person is focused on others' needs, the happier he is. The more he focuses on his own needs and wants, the unhappier he will be.

When man develops the trait of giving, he achieves inner peace, balance, and harmony. When he ignores it, he suffers. His sense of self becomes fragmented. One part of him is demanding, "What's in it for me?" and the other side is crying out, "What have I done for others?" The more a person develops the nature of giving, the more he becomes like HASHEM, and the holier he becomes.

This is why kindness is so basic to being a Torah observant Jew. If it could be, HASHEM is all-giving, kindness, and mercy. Many mitzvahs train us in these traits because this is the greatest elevation of the human—to be as much like HASHEM as humanly possible. While it takes focus and attention to bring out the higher part of our personality, it is ingrained in our soul and so it comes naturally to us.

Those Little 'Yuds'

Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)

At the beginning of this week's Parsha, the Torah lists the genealogy of Moshe Rabbeinu [our Teacher]. The Torah begins by listing the sons of Reuven and Shimon, without listing their grandsons. Then the Torah lists Levi's sons and grandsons and even some of his great-grandsons (Moshe and Aaron), and finishes with Aaron's sons and grandsons [who were Levi's great-great- great-grandsons].

The Seforno asks why in discussing the first two tribes the Torah only lists the names of the children, but when it reaches Levi, the Torah lists the names of the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren as well. The Seforno answers that Levi's grandchildren were special individuals so they merited having their names mentioned. Reuven's grandchildren and Shimeon's grandchildren were not significant individuals so they did not merit having their names mentioned.

The reason why Levi's grandchildren were special, the Seforno explains, is because Levi lived longer than Reuven and Shimon. Therefore Levi saw and lived with and taught his grandchildren. Since Levi had a personal connection with his grandchildren, the grandchildren became special.

This teaches us that there is something special about having a zeida [grandfather] around. A grandfather can impart something that a father cannot. Unfortunately, Reuven and Shimon died earlier and never had a chance to learn with and share with their grandchildren. Levi's grandchildren had the benefit of having Zeida Levi in the house. That made all the difference in the world.

Part of the background to the Seforno's explanation is that Levi was not just any grandfather. Levi was the son of Yaakov Avinu. Levi's grandchildren had a grandfather in their house that was from a different generation, a generation that saw Yaakov Avinu and even Yitzchak Avinu. Therefore, Levi was a special person.

The Talmud [Eruvin 13b] relates that Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi [Rabbeinu HaKadosh] attributed his own greatness to the fact that he had seen "the back" of Rabbi Meir. Rabbeinu HaKadosh, the editor of the Mishneh felt that the fact that he saw Rabbi Meir from

his back made him better in learning than all of his colleagues. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi added, "Had I seen him from his [Rabbi Meir] front, I would have been even greater".

This passage is perhaps allegorical. I once heard a very nice interpretation of this Gemara from Rabbi Berel Wein. The Gemara is saying that Rabbi Meir was from a different generation. Rabbeinu HaKadosh was the last of the Tana'im. But there was a whole generation of Tana'im that preceded Rabbeinu HaKadosh and Rabbi Meir was the last of that generation. What Rabbi is saying is, "I at least saw the tail end of a different generation. I saw Gedolim! I saw Rabbi Meir. I saw what it meant to really be a Tanna. Even if it was the tail-end, even if it was Rabbi Meir towards the end of his life, that made an indelible impression upon me."

Rabbi Frand added the following observation:

I feel bad for my students, because I can say that at least "I saw Rabbi Meir from the back." I was fortunate to have at least seen the Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Yaakov Ruderman, zt"l. I can at least say that I saw someone who knew the Chofetz Chaim. Those who learned in the Yeshivas Ner Yisroel during the Rosh Yeshiva's lifetime knew someone who talked to Reb Chaim Ozer, who sat at Reb Chaim's table. We at least saw the back of that generation. Therefore, we are different. And so are all those of my generation, who saw the giants of the past generation in whatever Yeshivas that they may have studied. But my students did not see that. They never even saw the "back of Rabbi Meir".

That is what the grandchildren of Levi saw. They at least saw someone who saw Yitzchak Avinu and Yaakov Avinu. They at least had a relationship to that generation. That made all the difference. Therefore Levi's grandchildren were different. They had a link to something irreplaceable, a connection to a more beautiful generation, something that was unfortunately lost from the grandchildren of Reuven and Shimon.

Don't Start Tampering With the "Little Yuds"

There is an interesting Medrash in this week's Parsha: When G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people, He gave them positive and negative commandments, and He gave the king his own set of commandments such as "Do not take too many wives". King Solomon said that this law did not apply to him.

He felt that he could have many wives without being negatively affected. At that moment, the letter yud at the beginning of the word Yarbeh in the verse 'Lo Yarbeh lo Nashim' (do not take too many wives) came and complained before G-d that Solomon was ignoring him. "Today it is a little yud, tomorrow it will be the word, until the entire Torah is nullified". G-d responded to the yud, "Solomon and a thousand like him will become nullified, but even the little point of the yud will not become nullified." The Medrash concludes, "Solomon took many wives and in fact they affected him."

The Sefer Beis Av by Rav Elyakim Schlessinger quotes an opinion that gives a tremendously keen insight into this Medrash. Technically speaking, Solomon was right. He saw in himself that he had the ability to take many wives without being affected and he was right! But G-d caused it to affect him, because the little yud was also right. The yud was right that if Solomon can start tampering with Torah and saying this applies and this does not apply, then the whole show is over. The whole Torah will become nullified.

If Torah becomes a smorgasbord from which one can pick and choose, then it is no longer Torah. This is the meaning of the Medrash. Let Solomon fall from his stature (where in fact the multiplicity of wives should not have affected him) — I will cause Solomon embarrassment, but that will be worthwhile because if we start up with the 'kutzo shel yud' then the whole package will unravel. Therefore, in order to set a precedent, G-d caused Solomon to be influenced.