



Ohr Yerushalayim News

30th January 2016 - Volume 8 - Issue 29 – יתרו – כ שבט תשע"ו

News This Week

מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to the Rov and Rebbetzen on the birth of a grandson, born to Mr & Mrs Binyomin Rubinstein in Yerushalayim.

Mazel Tov to Dr & Mrs Danny Dresner on the birth of a granddaughter, born to Mr & Mrs Alex Waters.

Ladies First Aid Course

We have arranged a paediatric first aid course for ladies with Mr Nussi Burns. It will be on Sundays 14th and 21st February from 7.00-9.00pm. Cost for both sessions will be £10 for members or £15 for non members. To register interest or for more information please contact Esther Blima Graff 07704327082.

Good Reception

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

And now, if you obey Me and keep My covenant, you shall be to Me a treasure out of all peoples, for Mine is the entire earth. Shemos 19:5

OF COURSE, THE MAIN attraction of this week's parshah is the giving of the Torah. It remains to be the single most important event in history, after Creation itself. Any civility that mankind exhibits and enjoys stems from Torah. The human body is survival-oriented, which tends to make people selfish. Torah teaches a person how to act selflessly, nobly, in the face of temptation.

One might argue that it would only have been a matter of time until mankind would have developed mores and civility. After how, how many people today who have never heard of Torah are still good and civil people?

First of all, it must be pointed out, this is only because society is already based upon Torah values that were integrated long ago and passed down over the generations. Secondly, wars have shown just how easily man regresses when he perceives a threat to his existence, or just his way of life.

In fact, many of the laws that are the basis of daily life in the secular world exist solely because people want to be protected. It is basically a case of, "If you don't rob me, I won't rob you." The incentive to not act selfishly toward one another is actually based upon a mutual selfishness. This already represents a fundamental departure from Torah law. If a desire to protect personal interests is at the heart of adherence to societal rules and regulations, members will break the rules the first time they believe they can get away with it. If violating a law will not result in a personal repercussion, then there is no compelling reason for a person to keep the law. In such circumstances, it has been proven, many people do not.

One of the main things the Torah teaches is that there is an objective need for boundaries in life. We have a lot of freedom to do many great things, but we also have to know our boundaries. This is also part of being great. In fact, some of the worst tragedies in history have occurred because people assumed too much about themselves, or about what they could or should do, starting with the very first man and woman.

It is interesting that the first test of mankind should be with respect to

knowledge. It wasn't just a test of eating, like a person on a much needed diet. It was about breaking a rule to get desired knowledge, knowledge that the perpetrator felt she had every right to obtain. Eating was just the means to get it:

And the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes, and the tree was desirable to make one wise; so she took of its fruit, and she ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. (Bereishis 3:6)

The end result of Chava's intellectual expedition? And they heard the voice of G-d going in the garden to the direction of the sun, and the man and his wife hid from before G-d in the midst of the trees of the garden. (Bereishis 3:8)

And mankind has been in hiding ever since. People think that it is G-d that is hidden. The reality is that it is people's approach to life that hides Him. It is much easier to see G-d once a person accepts certain key principles of life.

In fact, as part of some research I am doing for a project on which I am currently working regarding bitachon, trust in G-d, I checked out the latest theories of Quantum Physics. I have to say, some people have done a great job of educating the masses on very difficult and abstract topic, using language that is easily understood by people like me.

In the world of physics, questions lead to answers which in turn lead to even more complicated questions. As a result, many scientists today have fallen away from sacred notions such as the Big Bang being the beginning of "everything." They now insist that there must have been something else prior to the Big Bang, which gave rise to it and our universe

What, or how, they do not know. Theories abound, and all of them are interesting. However, they are all predicated on an assumption, that being that if the knowledge exists, we can have it. Even though, by our very nature and that of the universe, we can never know with absolute certainty that we are right about anything, physicists forge forward as if they can do no wrong, "just to know."

The Week Ahead

פרשת יתרו	
Candle Lighting	4.29pm
Mincha	4.34pm
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	10.10am
1st Mincha	1.30pm
Rov's Shiur	No Shiur this Shabbos
2nd Mincha	4.20pm
סעודה שלישית	following
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	5.40pm
Ovos uBonim	6.55pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Mon / Thurs	6.45am / 7.10am / 8.00am
Tues / Wed / Fri	6.45am / 7.20am / 8.00am
Mincha & Maariv	4.40pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

One thing is for certain. Whatever we come to know will always be very short of everything there is to know. We cannot have perfect knowledge because we are limited beings. Mathematics may not like the idea of infinity, and even consider it a copout, but it is very much there. We may push back the boundary of what we can discover and know, but all we're doing in the end is approaching a point at which we have to surrender our intellect to G-d and His knowledge.

This in fact was part of the test and message of the Akeidah. According to the Midrash, as Avraham Avinu brought Yitzchak up as a sacrifice, the Sitra Achra, aka the yetzer hara, tried to stop him. One such interference was the creation of a river into which Avraham Avinu was forced to wade until he could walk no further. The water went up this neck.

At that point, Avraham said to G-d:

"I'm trying to do Your will. Either you remove this river from my path, or I have to return back home. I have done all that I can from my side."

At that point, the Midrash says, the river disappeared and Avraham and his party were able to continue unhampered the rest of the way. The question is, what was the point being made? Why did Avraham not complain until his entire body was submerged, and why did G-d wait until then to help him?

Avraham's tenth and final test not only went against his nature of Chesed, it was also a contradiction. G-d had promised him that Yitzchak would be his spiritual heir. Now he commanded that Yitzchak be brought up as a sacrifice. Not yet being a father himself, what could remain of Yitzchak to continue on with what Avraham started? More importantly, if G-d doesn't change His mind, why did it seem as if he did?

The questions had to have bothered everyone along the way to the Akeidah, certainly Avraham and Yitzchak. Try as they did though, there was no logical explanation to solve the riddle. Both statements had to be true, even if they appeared to contradict each others. It was precisely such an intellectual dilemma that caused Chava to stumble, and modern man as well.

"Severing" Avraham's head from his body with the river made a point that there comes a time in the service of G-d when things just don't add up. We're given the opportunity to understand the will of G-d on very deep and profound levels. On the other hand, there are times when we "hit" an intellectual wall that we just can't scale. It is just a part of being man, and not G-d.

At that point, a person has two choices: abandon G-d or abandon logic. It doesn't mean that G-d ceases to be logical that point, just that our ability to understand His logic ceases. It means that as much as we're able to know we also have to accept that we can't know as much as we might like to. It means that our lack of knowledge cannot deflect us away from a clear and strong belief in G-d and His involvement in every last detail of existence.

It's okay to probe. It's okay to keep trying to further our understanding of Creation. What is not okay is to put G-d "on hold" while we do, or worse, ignore His reality just because we can't understand it. This approach led to expulsion from the Garden of Eden. It also leads to expulsion from the World-to-Come, not to mention all the chaos and destruction we witness daily.

It all comes down to the dove. Yes, you heard me correctly: the dove. As it is known, Biblical nations are represented by animals whose traits match their own. The Jewish people, the Talmud says, are compared to the dove, or "yonah," in Hebrew.

This may not seem too significant at first, but consider the fact that the word "yonah" has the word "yavan," or "Greece," built into it. Ancient Greece is considered to be the origin of the approach to life that is the basis of Western Civilization and thought, especially science and philosophy. They are regarded by many secularists as the real "light unto nations."

Ironically, the Hebrew letters of "yonah" allude to the fundamental difference between the Torah approach to life, and the so-called Greek approach. The first three letters of the word, Yud-Vav-Nun, are similar in shape except that each is longer than its predecessor. The Yud is a short stroke that is followed by a longer stroke, the letter Vav. This in

turn is followed by an even longer stroke, the Nun.

This sequence of three letters describe the Greek approach to understanding life: they probed, then probed deeper, and then they probed even deeper. But that is where their investigation ended, especially if they could probe no further.

It is precisely at that point, when the rest of the world throws up its hands in confusion and frustration, that the believing Jew returns "up" to the Heh, the last letter of "yonah" and which also represents G-d. The Jewish people also want to understand Creation, as evident from Kabbalah.

At the end of the day, however, after a Jew has understood all he can, no matter how many questions remain, he "gives" his mind to G-d. We admit, and appreciate, that our knowledge is limited, that we are limited regarding what we can and should know. We acknowledge that the entire point of knowledge is to bring us closer to G-d, not further away from Him.

This is the essence of Kabbalos HaTorah. This is ultimate receiving of Torah.

Whom Do You Fear?

Shlomo Katz (Torah.org)

In this week's parashah, we read about the revelation at Har Sinai. Near the end of the parashah (20:17), Moshe Rabbeinu tells Bnei Yisrael that Hashem appeared to them "so that yir'ah / fear (or awe) of Him will be upon your faces, so that you shall not sin."

R' Meshulam Feivish Heller z"l notes that people often misplace their feelings of yir'ah. For instance, sometimes a person sees a vicious dog charging toward him, and he is afraid. In reality, writes R' Heller, one should not fear the dog. Rather, one should realize that Hashem sent that dog to alert the person that his yir'ah of Hashem has become weak and must be strengthened.

To what may the person who focuses his fear on the dog, rather than on Hashem, be compared? R' Heller answers: To someone who is summoned before a king to face some charge or other, and who attempts to bribe the arresting officer in order to get a lighter sentence. Who is the officer that he should be feared? He doesn't sentence criminals. Rather, it is the king who should be the subject of the person's yir'ah.

The same is true, continues R' Heller, regarding the middah of ahavah / love. If the king's messenger calls someone to receive a gift from the king, is it the messenger who deserves to be loved? Of course not! Rather, it is the king who should be loved. Similarly, all love ultimately must be directed toward Hashem. (Yosher Divrei Emet No. 17)

"You shall be to Me a kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to Bnei Yisrael." (19:6)

R' Klonimus Kalmish Shapira z"l Hy"d writes: There are some people who do not feel that they are lacking anything spiritually. Even if they would occasionally look into a book of mussar / character development and read that a certain middah is bad, it would never occur to them that they possess that middah and should correct it. Know, that if a person feels no pain or worry because of bad middot, it is a bad sign for him, for he is equivalent to someone who is so ill that he has lost all sensation.

R' Shapira continues: Then there are people who do feel that they are lacking, who do feel pain or worry. But, they quickly console themselves by saying, in the words of King Shlomo (Kohelet 7:20), "There is no man on earth so wholly righteous that he always does good and never sins." Such a person, writes R' Shapira, is in league with the yetzer hara.

The root of both of these illnesses, continues R' Shapira, is that people do not demand greatness from themselves. They think that perfecting oneself is for great tzaddikim, not for the average Jew, who (they think) can be satisfied because, "That's how I am." This is a grave error, R' Shapira writes. Even if all a person wants to be is an "average Jew," he should understand what that means. G-d made the very same covenant with every Jew, even with the woodcutters and water carriers (see Devarim 29:9). Every Jew is identified by the Torah as a member of the "kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation." (Chovat Ha'talimidim ch.3)