



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

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## News This Week

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Miles and Linda Levine on the birth of a great grandson in Israel

### Kiddush

There will be a Kiddush this week following davening sponsored by Gabi Schwalbe on the occasion of his mother's Yahrzeit, Chaim Aruchim

### Chaim Aruchim

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

Shabbos, 17th Shevat - Gabi Schwalbe and Adina Kaufmann for their mother

Thurs, 22nd Shevat - Michael Lewin for his mother, Leivy and Dassy Goldman for their daughter

### Ovos uBonois

Ovos Ubonois enjoyed their end of season event on motzei shabbos where the girls enjoyed a magic show and pizza and chips



### What's News

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Though the marquee event of this week's portion surrounds the epic event of Matan Torah, the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, there are still many lessons to be learned from every pasuk of the parsha, even the seemingly innocuous ones. Rabbi Mordechai Rogov, of blessed memory, points out a fascinating insight from the following verses that discuss the naming of Moshe's children.

"Yisro, the father-in-law of Moses, took Zipporah, the wife of Moses, after she had been sent away, and her two sons – of whom the name of one was Gershom, for he had said, 'I was a sojourner in a strange land.' And the name of the other was Eliezer, for 'the God of my father came to my aid, and He saved me from the sword of Pharaoh.'" (Exodus 18:2-4).

After Moshe killed the Egyptian taskmaster who had hit the Hebrew slave, Pharaoh put a price on Moshe's head. The Medrash tells us that Moshe's head was actually on the chopping block but he was miraculously saved. He immediately fled from Egypt to Midian. In Midian, he met his wife Zipporah and there had two sons.

The question posed is simple and straightforward: Moshe was first saved from Pharaoh and only then did he flee to Midian and become a "sojourner in a strange land." Why did he name his first child after the events in exile his second son in honor of the miraculous salvation from Pharaoh's sword?

Rav Rogov points out a certain human nature about how events, even the most notable ones, are viewed and appreciated through the prospect of time.

Chris Matthews in his classic book Hardball, An Inside Look at How Politics is Played by one who knows the Game, tells how Senator Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, who would later serve as Harry Truman's vice president,

related a story that is reflective of human nature and memory. In 1938, Barkley had been challenged for reelection to the Senate by Governor A. B. 'Happy' Chandler, who later made his name as Commissioner of Baseball.

During that campaign, Barkley liked to tell the story of a certain rural constituent on whom he had called in the weeks before the election, only to discover that he was thinking of voting for Governor Chandler. Barkley reminded the man of the many things he had done for him as a prosecuting attorney, as a county judge, and as a congressman and as a senator.

"I recalled how I had helped get an access road built to his farm, how I had visited him in a military hospital in France when he was wounded in World War I, how I had assisted him in securing his veteran's benefits, how I had arranged his loan from the Farm Credit Administration, and how I had got him a disaster loan when the flood destroyed his home."

"How can you think of voting for Happy?" Barkley cried. "Surely you remember all these things I have done for you!"

"Sure," the fellow said, "I remember. But what in the world have you done for me lately?"

Though this story in no way reflects upon the great personage of Moshe, the lessons we can garner from it as well as they apply to all of us.

Rabbi Rogov explains that though the Moshe's fleeing Pharaoh was notably miraculous it was still an event of the past. Now he was in Midian. The pressure of exile from his parents, his immediate family, his brother Ahron and sister Miriam, and his people, was a constant test of faith. Therefore, the name of Moshe's first son commemorated his current crisis as opposed to his prior, albeit more miraculous and traumatic one. Sometimes appreciating the minor issues of life take precedence over even the most eventful – if that is what is currently sitting on the table.

### Spontaneous Consensus

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

The six hundred thousand people gathered around Mount Sinai didn't discuss it beforehand. They didn't consult with each other and decide on a consensus response. As we read in this week's Torah portion, Moses descended the mountain as Hashem's messenger and offered the Torah to the Jewish people. They asked no questions, held no conferences. And yet, they responded in one spontaneous outcry, "We will do it!"

How could such a thing happen? How could six hundred thousand people spontaneously utter the identical response? Whoever heard of even six Jewish people being of one mind, let alone six hundred thousand?

Let us read a little further in the Torah. "And Moses referred the words of the people back to Hashem." Here again, we are puzzled. Why would Moses have to convey the response of the Jewish people back to Hashem? Didn't Hashem know on His own what the Jewish people had

## Davening Times

זמן שבת & Candle Lighting	5.02pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	5.07pm
Shacharis	7.25am / 9.15am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.55am
Mincha	1.30pm / 4.50pm
Seuda Shlishis	Following Mincha
Motzei Shabbos	6.10pm
Ovos uBonim	7.10pm
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	5.10pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm

said?

The commentators explain that we are all a composite of body and soul, material and spiritual. Our material side responds to our environment, to our specific needs, to our situation. But our spiritual side completely transcends the physical and temporal. The spirit in its purest form is a divine spark, a blaze of eternal fire that responds only to the ultimate truths of the universe and is entirely impervious to the petty considerations of mundane existence.

Divisions and disagreements only arise when we are focused on our material sides. Since innumerable factors affect our material existence, no two people ever really experience the exact same conditions. Therefore, it is almost inevitable that there will be some differences in the way we react and respond to diverse situations. But if we step back from our material existence, if we reach deep within ourselves and connect with the divine spark that resides in all of us, we can break free of all the pettiness of the mundane world and soar into the exalted realm of the pure spirit. And in this world we are all one, luminescent divine sparks united by our perfect connection to the Source from which we are all derived. There are no divisions, no disagreements.

Had the Jewish people related to the Torah as a set of instructions to govern and improve their material lives, they would undoubtedly have responded with a plethora of questions, opinions and suggestions. But they understood that the Torah functions on a much more profound level, that it is the channel which connects the divine spark within each of us to the Master of the Universe, that it provides the wings on which our spirits can soar to the highest spheres of Heaven. In this light, there were no divisions among them, and they responded with a spontaneous consensus.

This then is what the Torah is telling us. "And Moses referred the words of the people," he explained their universal agreement, "back to Hashem," by attributing it to their total focus on connecting with Hashem.

A king was once travelling through the outlying districts of his realm. In one very remote village the people gave him a wonderful welcome, and the king was so moved that he promised them a gift. After much reflection, he decided to give them an airplane, since this would connect them to the rest of the country and improve their economy and quality of life. The airplane was delivered, and the people sent the king letters thanking him for the precious gift that had so enriched their lives.

Several months later, the king visited the village again. The people greeted him with great festivity and took him to see the airplane he had so generously gifted to them. He was taken to a lush meadow beyond the village, and there it stood in all its gleaming splendor. All around the airplane, families were enjoying picnic lunches. Teenagers sat on the wings, their legs dangling off the sides. Children scampered excitedly through the fuselage and cockpit, sliding down the emergency chutes and running back up for another turn. Everyone was having a wonderful time. When the king appeared, they all applauded and shouted their gratitude.

"My dear people!" the king cried out. "What are you doing? This thing flies!"

In our own lives, we all appreciate the ideals and values of the Torah. We know that the timeless wisdom of the Torah is as fresh and relevant to contemporary life as it was three thousand years ago. We know that it prescribes a way of life full of wonderful benefits and rewards. But do we also realize that "this thing flies"? But indeed it does. If we connect with the Torah on a spiritual level, we can transform ourselves and enrich our lives in ways we never thought possible.

## **If They Were Just Rich Men, They Still Would Not Necessarily Be 'Anshei Chayil'** **Rabbi Yissocher Frand (Torah.org)**

Parshas Yisro begins with Yisro's arrival and his taking notice that people were standing from morning until evening waiting for adjudication from Moshe Rabbeinu. Yisro came up with the idea that there should be a judicial system of lower courts and higher courts to improve the efficiency of the adjudication process. Yisro advised his son-in-law, "And you shall see from among the entire people, men of means, G-d fearing people, men of truth, people who despise money, and you shall appoint them leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens." (Shemos 18:21)

Moshe Rabbeinu accepted Yisro's plan: "Moshe chose anshei chayil (men of accomplishment) from among all Israel and appointed them heads of the people, leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, and leaders of tens." (Shemos 18:25). Rashi explains the expression "anshei chayil" as "ashirim" (rich people, who have no need to worry about flattering other people or showing favoritism)." (Shemos 18:21) In

other words, an independently wealthy individual is a good person to have as a judge.

Not everyone explains "anshei chayil" in this fashion. For example, the Ibn Ezra interprets the term as "patient people." There is something called "judicial temperament." People can get very testy about *dinei Torah*. A judge needs to have a certain calmness and emotional discipline to maintain the appropriate decorum between litigants. The Ramban has a third interpretation: "hachacham, hazariz v'ha'yashar" (someone who is wise, diligent, and has integrity).

At any rate, Rashi says that *anshei chayil* means rich people. The *pasuk* also lists several other qualities, in addition to *anshei chayil*: G-d fearing, men of truth, and those who hate corruption. What would we consider as the number one quality of a judge? I would think that the top two qualities would be "G-d fearing" and "men of truth". It is certainly nice for a person to be wealthy and not beholden to others, but why should that be priority number one on the list of qualifications for the job?

A second question may be asked: The Gemara says (Bechoros 5b) that every Jew who left Mitzrayim had ninety donkeys laden with silver and gold. Everyone was rich! If that is the case, there should have been no need at all to specify that the judges chosen should be rich. Pick a number out of a hat! Look in the phone book! Everyone met this criterion! I saw a very interesting approach from the Tolner Rebbe. The Tolner Rebbe states that there is a difference between "the essence of a person" and "a person who possesses a certain quality." To what can this be compared? The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 53) asks that a *shliach tzibbur* (chazan) who leads the congregation in prayer should be "free from sin and not have a bad reputation, even in his youth, and be modest and acceptable to the congregation." We might suggest that the Shulchan Aruch forgot to mention the main quality to look for in picking a chazan: The *shliach tzibbur* should know how to clearly articulate the words of the prayers. We are not going to even mention that the Shulchan Aruch contains no mention of a requirement that a chazan should have a "nice voice." Why was there no mention of the requirement to enunciate properly?

The Tolner Rebbe explains that the reason is that proper enunciation is not a quality. It is the definition of a chazan. If a chazan can't speak the words or if he doesn't know 'Ivra' (Hebrew), then he is not a chazan. Similarly, Rashi's comment about the judges needs to be understood in the same fashion. When Rashi says that he must be a wealthy individual who does not flatter people, Rashi is not talking about the candidate's bank account or stock portfolio. Rashi is saying that the judge must have the essence of an *ashir* (rich man)." A person who is by essence an "ashir" is a person who is not going to lower himself by trying to curry favor with flattery of individuals. That is beneath his dignity. That is not who he is. Possessing money is not good enough to qualify someone as a judge. The person needs to have the essence and the mentality of an *ashir*. On occasion, people win lotteries worth mega millions. Overnight, these people are worth a couple hundred million dollars. Are they *ashirim*? They may have money but they are not *ashirim*. An *ashir* is a person who has a certain standard, a certain approach and dignity. That is what Rashi means when he comments that *anshei chayil* = *ashirim*, as the number one criterion for a judge.

The colloquial term for a rich man is a "gvir." Rav Leib Steimann once commented that a "gvir" must be a *gibor* (possessing strength of character)! A person can have a lot of money but that alone does not make him into a *gvir*. A *gvir* means a person who is in charge of himself. Who is the *gibor* – one who conquers his evil inclination (Avos 4:1).

Many of us remember Rav Moshe Reichmann of Toronto. By all standards he was an *ashir*. But not only was he a person who had a lot of money, he was an *ashir* because of the way he conducted himself and the way he treated others. He was not just an *ashir*. He was a *gvir*.

Of all the stories I read about Rav Moshe Reichmann, the following made the most lasting impression on me: He was suffering from cancer at the end of his life. He had an aide who used to take him for treatments. After his treatments, he was very thirsty. After one of his treatments, he asked his aide to get him a glass of water. The aide came back with a bottle of water and no cup. Rav Moshe Reichmann refused the water. He said that since the time he was a baby, he never drank out of a bottle and he did not intend to start now. That is a certain dignity and presence of how a person holds himself. That is an *ashir*! That is a *gvir*!

So sure, all the people in Klal Yisrael had ninety donkeys laden with silver and gold. But that only makes them into people with a lot of money. It does not make them into *ashirim*. It does not make them into *anshei chayil* (according to Rashi's interpretation of the term.)