



Ohr Yerushalayim News

ג' – כ מנחם אב תשע"ג – פרשת עקב – 27th July 2013 - Volume 6 - Issue 5

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Holiday Reminder

As many people have left town, we appeal to all members to support the Shul Minyanim.

T NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

When Serving Dinner

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

For if you will observe this entire commandment that I command you, to perform it, to love HASHEM, your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him. HASHEM will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will drive out greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place where the sole of your foot will tread shall be yours- ... No man will stand up against you; HASHEM your G-d will set your terror and fear on the entire face of the earth wherever you tread, as He spoke to you. (Devarim 11:23-25)

Quite a powerful formula for success is offered here. Let's see if we can demystify partially at least one of the main ingredients needed for gaining that kind of ultra-respect wherever we go. How does one "walk in the ways of HASHEM"? Rashi quotes the Midrash. "Just as He (HASHEM) is merciful so you should be merciful. Just as He does acts of kindness so you too should do acts of kindness." Is this a complete or only a partial list? Are these inclusive of "all His ways"? Where do we find a complete list of "all His ways"? This mandate opens the door to a large treasure trove of daily opportunities when we begin to seek out some sources for "all HASHEM's ways".

Amongst the ways to discover HASHEM's ways is through observing what's called the natural world. We say nightly in the blessings before Shema, "He creates day and night, removing light before the darkness and darkness before the light." We can observe with our own eyes how gently darkness falls and how tenderly the day light appears. Even when the sun has set, there is still sufficient light in the sky to have a chance to settle down before the real darkness arrives. Even then, HASHEM leaves a soft nightlight – the moon to reflect some sunlight and the stars too, so we are not plunged suddenly into absolute blackness. When the sun rises it doesn't shock the world by jumping to high noon height in an instant but rather He gradually stirs us lovingly from our sleep.

So when we put our children to bed it should be done with kindness. First a nightlight is put on then the lights go out. When waking them up too, it can be done with a soft reminder, an opening of the shades, at first. If you are doing these nice things anyway you might just remind yourself to have in mind that you are actually "walking in His ways".

Based on blessings and declarations in the Siddur, that we make daily here is a partial list of activities ascribed to HASHEM that we too might emulate throughout the day while having in mind that we are aiming to "walk in all His ways". 1) "Who clothes the naked" – When we dress our children. 2) Who provides for all my needs" - when taking care of an elder parent or child. 3) Who gives strength to the weary" - When giving encouragement or sustenance to anyone. 4) "Who prepares the steps of man" - when giving guidance to others. 5) "Blessed is He Who says

and does" - When we keep our promises and do what we say. 6) "HASHEM is good to all" - When we are being pleasant to people. 7) "The builder of Jerusalem is HASHEM" – When we escort a bride and groom or contribute to our brothers and sisters in Israel or when we mourn for the destruction of the Temple. 8) "He is the healer of the broken hearted" – When we comfort people who feel hurt. 9) "The selector song-hymns" –When we choose appropriate and holy music. 10) "Who chooses His people Israel with love" - When we look kindly upon our fellow Jews. 11) "Helper, Deliverer, and Shield" - When we put on a seatbelt and when we lock the door at night. 12) "Fulfiller of His faithfulness to those who sleep in the dust" - When we say Kaddish and follow the wishes of parents and grandparents even after they have passed. 13) "Teaches mankind understanding" - When learning Torah or doing homework with our children! 14) "Who blesses His people Israel with peace" - When praying for the welfare of the Jewish People! 15) "Who nourishes the entire world with His goodness, with favor and kindness and mercy" - When serving dinner!

Improving Our Character

Rabbi Naftali Reich (Torah.org)

One of the greatest challenges we face in life is being trapped in the rut of our personal shortcomings. As time progresses, we become more alert to those flaws that despite our efforts, have resisted change. It may be a propensity to anger or a lack of organizational skills. It may be a tendency to be self-centered or jealous of others. These mindsets tend to lock us in a viselike grip; as much as we try we simply cannot escape. One of the underlying principles of both the mussar and the Chassidic schools of thought is that we must never despair of improving our character, even regarding traits that are so stubborn they seem to be genetically embedded.

The saintly Yesod Hoavoda once told his disciples that he asked a professional horse jockey if his horse ever threw him to the ground. "Of course," said the jockey. "Everyone, even the most professional rider,

The Week Ahead

פרשת עקב

Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	7.30pm
Candle Lighting	7.35pm - 7.55pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.15am
Mincha 1st Minyan	6.00pm
Mincha 2nd Minyan	9.13pm

Followed by a Shiur by Josh Shields

Motzei Shabbos	10.18pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday / Thursday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	6.45am / 7.20am
Mincha & Maariv	7.45pm
Late Maariv	10.10pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	7.15pm

gets thrown from time to time."

"What do you do when you get thrown?" asked the Yesod Hoavodah. "I hold on to the reins and jump back on to the saddle as fast as I can. If not, the horse will run away and I will be left with nothing," the horse jockey replied.

"Our body too, pulls in different directions. While we try to harness its instincts, they are often times more powerful than we are, but that does not mean that we must despair of ever changing. Admitting defeat should be unthinkable-since striving for self-improvement and self-elevation is what our task in this world is all about.

King Solomon says in Koheles, "Sheva yipol tzadik vekam," seven times the righteous fall, but they will stand. Simply put, a righteous person will fall seven times but will continuously struggle back to his feet and get back in the running.

There is a classical homiletical interpretation of this verse that provides an avenue to assist us in getting back on our feet after a fall. A great Chassidic sage said we may fall seven times but if we know that deep down, our most fundamental desire is to be virtuous, to cleanse ourselves of unsavory instincts and elevate ourselves to be moral, giving and unselfish, we will persevere.

Just as a child when severely criticized will tend to internalize the judgment and feel he or she is incurably bad, we adults may also become harshly self-critical and "throw in the towel" on trying to improve. Instead of giving more power to our nature's darker side, however, our job is to reinforce the belief that a human being can reach for-and attain-the stars. We must stand erect and jump back in to the lifelong challenge of self-improvement, relying on assistance from Above to help us in the struggle.

This theme is echoed in a verse in this week's Parsha. The Torah tells us, Vehaya, im lo sishmiun bekoli," and it will come to pass, if you do not obey my voice and you stray after idols, I warn you today that you will be utterly destroyed and decimated, if you do not heed my voice. The word "vehaya" always precedes joyous tidings, the Sages say. Why then in so tragic a situation as the Jewish people straying from hearkening to G-d's word should the Torah use the word "vehaya?"

Furthermore, the commentaries ask, why does this piece conclude with the verse that all these terrible punishments will befall you since "you do not listen to Hashem's voice" (present tense)? Would it not be more apropos to write "since you have not listened to Hashem's voice" (past tense)?

The saintly Bnei Yisaschar explains that the Torah is alluding to the very concept we have discussed above. Sometimes we stray very far from where we are supposed to be. A little voice inside of us tells us that we are doomed and we might as well come to terms with our personal failure and embrace our diminished and compromised status. We will never be able to regain our footing and climb back up to spiritual heights.

It is that self-critical voice that is constantly buzzing inside of us, declaring we are doomed. Yet "vehaya," -the joyous tidings associated with this word teaches that the way to arouse Hashem's joy, so to speak, even as our inner voice condemns us, is to resist that voice with all our energy, and to choose self-affirmation instead. Bolstered by faith in Hashem's helping power, we can boost our self-confidence and courage in tackling life's ever-present challenges, and thereby succeed in realizing our inner spiritual aspirations.

The Longest Distance In The World Tal Segal (Shortvort.com)

Have you ever met someone who knew right from wrong but was still a bad person? Sure you have. We all have. And it's hard to understand sometimes. If they knew what is right, why did they do the wrong thing? It seems illogical! It just doesn't add up.

But the truth is, we are all exactly like this person, even if only to a smaller degree. We often know that we should be acting differently than we actually are, whether in the way we treat our friends and family, or in our financial affairs, or in our relationship with Hashem and Torah observance. We all know that there are things we should be working on and improving on.... but often, it just doesn't happen. And somehow,



JOIN IN AND SUPPORT MINYANIM

just like our friend we spoke about earlier, we land up living a life that is different than the way we know it should be .

In this week's parsha, Parshat Eikev, Hashem actually describes the Jewish people this way. He calls us a "stiff-necked nation". The Sforno, one of our most famous commentators on the Torah, says that to be "stiff-necked" means that someone could logically prove to you that you are wrong and it wouldn't make a difference. You still wouldn't listen. That's the way Hashem described the Jewish people.... So clearly the problem didn't start yesterday. It's been going on for thousands of years!

Why does this happen? If it is so illogical, then why do people so often live in ways that are different than what they believe to be true?!

There was a whole movement in Europe a few hundred years ago called the Mussar Movement, or Ethics Movement, who wrote a lot about this phenomenon. One of the main rabbis who thought and wrote about it was named Rav Yisrael Salanter. He worked out why people do this and he summed it up in a sentence:

"The greatest distance in the world is between a person's mind and their heart."

Someone can believe in one thing intellectually, but unless they find a way to return that to their heart, to internalise it, to know it with every fibre of their being, it won't affect their actions. This is what the verse in last week's parsha meant when it said:

"You should know today and return it to your hearts that Hashem is God, there is none other besides Him."

We see here that Hashem knew all along: It's not enough to know what's right and wrong. It's not enough to believe in something. We then have to return it to our hearts. We have to work out how to internalise those facts. That's what the sages of the Mussar Movement discussed.... techniques on just how to do that. Once we internalise what we know is true, then they can affect our actions and we can begin to start perfecting ourselves and living lives that are steeped with great and noble ideals. Then we can achieve greatness.