



Ohr Yerushalayim News

Volume 2 - Issue 16

THE NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

A Resounding Success

Our Tyne & Wear correspondent contacted us this week to report on the overwhelming success of the first Gateshead chaburah for Ohr Yerushalayim bochurim.

Last Motzei Shabbos saw eight bochurim meet at the home of Rabbi Meir Simcha Cohen where the chaburah was on the topic of Rainbows. In addition to the home-baked goodies, the questions flowed freely and all concerned are looking forward to the next chabura this Motzei Shabbos!

THE NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

Case Closed

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Torah.org)

Though this week's portion is packed with messages and moral examples that we can garner from our forefather, Avram, there is, however, a small lesson I'd like to share learned from none other than the ancient Egyptian customs agents.

Avram is forced to leave Canaan due to a famine and travel the only country that has food, Egypt.

The Torah tells us that Avram was afraid. His wife Sora was beautiful, and he feared that she would be taken to Pharaoh as a wife or concubine. Avram would be killed. So Avram devised a ploy to spare his life from certain harm.

But that was not his first strategy. The Torah tells us, "And it was when Avram came to Egypt, and the Egyptians saw the woman that she was very beautiful (Braishis 12:14). Rashi quotes the Medrash's question. Why doesn't the Torah say, "And it was when they came to Egypt?" After all, Sora came too?

The Medrash Yalkut Shimoni (12:67) explains that Avram actually arrived alone at the border. Sora was hidden in a crate.

It chronicles the account: Avram arrived, and the customs agents stare at the large crate and demand, "Pay a duty! You are carrying a crate of utensils! Avram gladly agreed. Seeing Avram's acquiescence, the agents were not pleased. "You must be importing expensive silk garments," they declared. Avram once again agreed to pay the tax on a crate of silk garments. Again they became suspicious. You are carrying a crate of jewels! Pay tax on jewels!" And again Avram readily accepted the enormous financial burden. At that point the agents expressed their skepticism and pried the crate open. The Medrash continues to tell us that a great light illuminated Egypt. What they found was Sora, hidden in the box.

Now, I am not sure of the procedures of customs agents. But from the Medrash it surely seems that they lost out on the biggest booty they could possibly have snared. Avram was willing to pay tax on a crate of jewels, the most valuable entity that the agents had known. Why open the box and risk finding a box filled with pebbles?

Financier J.P. Morgan wanted to give his wife a gift, so he called a

jeweler and asked him to send a beautiful jeweled ring for his wife.

"Send the ring to me," he barked, "put the bill in the package, and I'll send you out a check immediately."

Two days later a box arrived. Mr. Morgan inspected the contents and found a beautifully crafted ring with an enormous diamond in the center. Along with it came an equally enormous bill for \$25,000. Morgan stared in disbelief, as he removed the stone and wrote a check. Then he thought for a moment and re-wrapped the gift box with ornate, monogrammed gift-paper and sealed it with his inimitable JP Morgan cachet. He sent it back to the jeweler with a check and instructions.

"Dear Friend,

"The ring was magnificent, however your bill was exorbitant. Enclosed please find a check for \$12,000, which I hope, will meet your approval. If it does, please return the gift, untouched, in its personalized gift-wrap and seal. Then you may cash the check. If my amount does not suffice, please rip-up my check and return it at once. Feel free to remove the stone and keep the wrapping as a token for your good intentions.

J.P. Morgan."

The jeweler was incensed at the amount on the check. He ripped up the \$12,000 check and mailed the shreds back to Morgan. He then proceeded to carefully remove the ornate gift-wrapping that ensconced his precious jewel box. He walked toward his safe and opened the gift box and was about to put the ring into his safe when he was startled.

The ring was not in the box. In its stead was a small rock. Around the rock a check was wrapped. It was signed by Mr. J.P. Morgan -- for

The Week Ahead

שבת פרשת לך לך

Candle Lighting and Shabbos	4.25pm
Mincha	4.30pm
Seder Halimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.28am
Mincha 1st Minyan / 2nd Minyan	1.30pm / 4.25pm
Rov's Mishnayos Shiur	4.55pm
Maariv & Motzei Shabbos	5.30pm
Ovos uBonim	6.30pm
Sunday 1st/2nd Minyan	7.20am/8.20am
Sunday Mincha & Maariv	4.25pm
Monday / Thursday	7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday / Friday	7.20am
Maariv Mon - Thurs	7.45pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	4.12pm (Shabbos 4.17pm)

\$25,000.

Even the repartee between Avram and the customs agents can teach us a lesson. There can be something even more valuable than what is found in one's imagination. And as the item in question is under wrap and seal, you never know its true value. Because the contents of simple crate can never be estimated. You may even fantasize that it is filled with jewels, and you will still be underestimating.

Out of This World

Rabbi Label Lam (Torah.org)

Then Abram said, "See to me You have given no offspring, and my steward inherits me..." Suddenly the word of HASHEM came to him saying, "That one will not inherit you. Only him that comes forth from you shall inherit you." And He took him outside and said, "Gaze now, toward the Heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them." And he said, "So shall your offspring be!" (Breishis 15:3-5)

He took him outside: Simply, he took him outside of his tent to see the stars. The Midrash however learns that He told him to go outside the realm of his astrological limitations. (Rashi)

Why does Rashi need to offer a second explanation to Avram's being taken out? What was deficient with the first simple understanding? Maybe it was not important enough to know that he was inside the tent to learn now that he taken out of his tent. The Torah is not a book of choreography. It becomes necessary then to know that he was taken out of the world. Also worthy of note, "Habet" means to look down on something. It seems Avram was told to gaze from outside the bubble of the physical universe to observe the stars for some as yet unexplained reason.

We can only imagine that this must of have been a moment of intoxicating joy for Avram. He was hoping and begging for a child and HASHEM, Master of the Universe informs him that his children will be numerous as the uncountable stars. Wow! There's only small problem. In the ancient world before the innovation of telescopes, the naked eye is only capable of observing not more than 4,000 stars. That's not so many when talking about the creation of a great and influential nation over many thousands of years of history. The number 4,000 is not enough to swing the election in a small state. Big deal! So will be his seed? What did Avram perceive? The verse tells us that he was told to count if he was able. My five-year old can count to four thousand (with some help). Certainly Avram, one of the greatest original thinkers and investigative scientists of all time could make the count. Was this a moment of disappointment or joy? What did he see?

Amazingly, the Talmud Brochos (32B) writes the following: G-d said to the People of Israel, "I created twelve constellations, and for each constellation I created thirty hosts and for each host I created thirty

legions and for each legion I created thirty divisions, and for each division I created I created thirty battalions and for each battalion I created thirty camps, and to each camp I have attached three hundred and sixty-five thousand –tens of thousands of stars, corresponding to the days of the solar year, and all of them I have created only for your sake!"

Let's do the math! $30 \times 30 \times 30 \times 30 \times 30 \times 12 \times 365 \times 1,000 \times 10,000 = 1,064,340,000,000,000,000$ stars. As of 2003 astronomers estimated the number of stars in the universe to be 7 followed by 22 zeroes. The number offered by the sages is above 10 followed by 18 zeroes. Who's right? It may not be an exactly countable number anyway, because stars are constantly being created and destroyed. Even Avraham Avinu failed to tally the total if in fact he stepped out of more than his tent and what he saw was from **out of this world**.

Spiritual Lamarckism

Rabbi Dovid Begoun (Torah.org)

Pirkei Avos teaches that "Avraham Avinu was tested with ten tests and prevailed in all of them." (Pirkei Avos 5:4) Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner notes in his commentary on that mishna that the previous mishna also mentions Avraham but surprisingly omits the tribute "Avinu." Based on the verse in Mishlei (20:7), "A tzadik walks in righteousness, fortunate are his offspring after him," Rabbi Chaim explains what could be described as the Theory of "Spiritual Lamarckism."

According to Lamarck, organisms altered their behavior in response to environmental change. Their changed behavior, in turn, modified their organs, and their offspring inherited those "improved" structures. For example, giraffes developed their elongated necks and front legs by generations of browsing on high tree leaves. The exercise of stretching up to the leaves altered the neck and legs, and their offspring inherited these acquired characteristics. Although this theory has long been disproved in the science of the physical world, it nonetheless remains completely true in the realm of the spirit. One who ascends the spiritual ladder and acquires levels of saintly achievement does indeed bequeath these acquisitions to their offspring.

The commentaries point out that the word for trial or tribulation, nisayon, derives from the word for flag, nays, because the purpose of life's ordeals is to elevate the person, to raise him up like a flag, and to assist in the actualization of his potential.

Avraham was tested ten times because he was destined to become "Avinu," the progenitor of the holy Jewish nation. By rising to the challenge of each of these ordeals, and prevailing in each instance, he was able to realize all of his latent potential which would then, through the process of "Spiritual Lamarckism," become the inheritance of his offspring and part of the spiritual DNA of the Jewish People.

Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner uses this idea to explain how so many simple Jews over the centuries have proved willing to give up their lives, dying to sanctify the Divine name, dying as a Jew, in order to hold true to their religious beliefs.

It is encoded in the spiritual genetics of a Jew to be able to do so as a result of Avraham's willingness to be tossed into Nimrod's fiery furnace at Ur Kasdim rather than to relinquish his monotheistic convictions. Likewise, Rabbi Chaim explains, the ability of the simple Jew to uproot himself and his family and trek large distances through horrible conditions in order to set foot in the Land of Israel results from Avraham's success in his challenge to do the same upon hearing the command "Lech Lecha."

As we strive in our own lives to grow in Torah and G-d consciousness and to ascend the ladder of spirituality, we should do so with the awareness and joy of knowing that our achievements and acquisitions will not only elevate us, but will become the spiritual inheritance of our offspring as well.

Brainteasers

Here is this week's brainteaser based on the sedra:

a) How many animals did אברהם kill at the ברית בין הבתרים

b) How many מלאכים did הגר see (in לך לך)

Answer Next Week ...

Last Week's Answer

a) Who was אשכנז

He was the son of גומר and the grandson of יפת

b) Who were the סיני

They were descendants of כנען (some say they were the Chinese)