



# Ohr Yerushalayim News

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## F NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### מזל טוב

Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Yosef Keller on the birth of a boy. The Sholom Zochor takes place at 33 Cavendish Road  
Mazel Tov to Mr & Mrs Leo Stern and Mr & Mrs Motti Gershon on the engagement of their children, Esther to Chaim.

### Parshas HaShavua Shiur

There will be a Parshas HaShavua Shiur on Friday night straight after Davenning for 15 minutes. This week's Shiur is given by Dr Zev Davis.

### Pre-Chanuka Shiur

Rabbi Johnny Ross will be giving a pre-Chanuka Shiur, titled 'Chasing the Light' this Sunday evening at 9.15pm in the Shul.

### Ladies Coffee Evening

All ladies are invited to a coffee evening on Monday night (25th November) at 8.00pm in the Shul Hall. Come and catch up with Shul members and friends as well as get updated with what's happening in the Shul. Looking forward to seeing you.

### Chanuka Funday

Next Sunday afternoon (1st December) the Shul will be holding a family funday. See the back page for details.

## F NEWS ... LATEST NEWS ... LATEST

### Suffering and Tohu

Rabbi Pinchas Winston (Torah.org)

Ya'akov settled in the land of his father, in the land of Canaan. (Bereishis 37:1)

According to the effort is the reward (Pirkei Avos 5:26). That is often true, but that is not exactly what it says. A more accurate translation is, "According to the pain is the reward." If so, then Ya'akov Avinu had it right, and we have it wrong.

After all, even though we tout expressions like, "No pain, no gain," we spend a lot of time, money, and energy avoiding pain. In fact, some people even suffer in the present to avoid pain in the long run. Given the choice, most people would probably choose a pain-free life.

Once upon a time, that wasn't even a dream for the average person. Until about 50 years ago, there were barely any billionaires, and even a million dollars was a pipe dream for many. Realistic people did not dream of becoming wealthy, they just dreamed of becoming less poor.

Technology and the growth of the Western world changed a lot of that. As a result, currently, making a million dollars is not only not a distant dream anymore, it isn't even enough of a dream. Today people dream of making millions of dollars, and perhaps, of becoming billionaires. In the meantime, the standard of living has risen tremendously over the decades for even just the average individual.

This has also spilled over into the Jewish people, and not just the more

secular components, but even the more Orthodox part of the Jewish population. There are some Orthodox billionaires, many Orthodox millionaires, and the general Orthodox population enjoys many of the comforts that were once reserved for the well-to-do.

And why not? They're not stealing it. It's not interfering with their Torah observance. On the contrary! If anything, it is argued, increased affluence has enhanced the performance of many mitzvos, especially chesed. After thousands of years of brutal persecution and abject poverty on a national scale, isn't it about time that the Jewish people enjoy this world a bit more?

Perhaps. On the other hand, the Talmud says:

Rebi Yochanan said: "Why are the Jewish people likened to an olive-tree? To tell you that just as the olive produces its oil only after pounding, so too the Jewish people only return to the right way after suffering." (Menachos 53b)

Not only this, but such suffering seems to be part and parcel of bringing the Final Redemption as well:

Rebi Eliezer said: "If the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed; if not, they will not be redeemed." Rebi Yehoshua said to him, "If the Jewish people repent, they will be redeemed, but if not, they will not be redeemed?!" Rather, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will set a king over them whose decrees will be as difficult as Haman's, causing the Jewish people to repent and thus will He bring them back to the right path." (Sanhedrin 97b)

Yes, prosperity and an easy life is a good thing, if that is your goal in life. It is certainly the goal of the average human being who seems hardwired for physical pleasure and comfort, and rarely thinks of eternal matters such as the World-to-Come. And though they may be accustomed to terms such as Armageddon, they do not know too much about the Final Redemption.

Certainly not on the level of Ya'akov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik, whose lives were filled with difficulty and pain. But, they understood, that is the

## The Week Ahead

### פרשת וישב

Candle Lighting	3.47pm
Mincha & Kabbolas Shabbos	3.52pm
Seder HaLimud	8.40am
Shacharis	9.00am
סוף זמן ק"ש	9.51am
Mincha 1st Minyan	1.30pm
Rov's Pirkei Ovos Shiur	3.07pm
Mincha 2nd Minyan	3.37pm
Motzei Shabbos	4.57pm
Ovos uBonim	6.20pm
Sunday	7.15am / 8.20am
Monday	6.45am / 7.10am
Tuesday / Wednesday	6.45am / 7.20am
Thursday / Friday חנוכה	6.45am / 7.10am
Mincha & Maariv	3.45pm
Late Maariv	8.00pm
Mincha & Maariv Next Shabbos	3.45pm (Shabbos 3.40pm)

nature of this world, no matter how much pleasure and comfort this world seems to be able to provide, and of which they took part on occasion. Even Moshiach Ben Yosef is destined to die in battle as he makes possible the Final Redemption. Why me? Why now? Why at all?

Classic questions that do not really have classic answers, at least on a non-Kabbalistic level. Sure, there are statements that have been made over the years to help people deal with their suffering, which are only amplified by the way people around them do not seem to be suffering, at least not at the same time. But, if you ask enough questions, such answers usually come up short.

On the level of Kabbalah, all of it is summed up in one word: *tohu*.

Not to be confused with that chalky white substance made from soya beans, *tohu* is definitely not good for your health, and it certainly isn't *pareve*. In fact, based upon the Torah's description, it is nothing but chaos and destruction and, much to our chagrin, the basis of history until Moshiach comes.

*Tohu* is a cosmic migraine headache of astronomical proportions, for which God prescribed two tablets, the first two tablets with which Moshe Rabbeinu came down the mountain and subsequently broke upon seeing the golden calf in the camp below. The medicine gone, the malady prevailed (the second tablets, carved out by Moshe Rabbeinu were too weak to end the *tohu*), and will continue until Moshiach brings a conclusive end to the War of Gog and Magog.

One may ask at this point, "Why? Why create *tohu* at all?" I mean, who really needs it?

We do, that is, if we wish to go to the World-to-Come and enjoy eternal pleasure, an hour of which, its says in *Pirkei Avos*, is greater than a lifetime of pleasure in this world. Make that many lifetimes of pleasure in this world. *Tohu* is, in a matter of speaking, the threshold to all of that.

As always in such matters, it comes back to the issue of free will. Without getting complicated, free will is the ticket to the eternal bliss of the World-to-Come. This is because our personal portions in this eternal Heavenly paradise is comprised of all our moral victories, of all

those moments when we were tempted to do the immoral thing, or at least, the less moral thing, and didn't.

Sometimes our victories are not sins resisted because sometimes the challenge to avoid them is too great. Instead, victory may come, as Adam HaRishon discovered too late, from how quickly we spiritually recover from our errors, first by admitting our failures and then by making amends for them. God loves righteousness, but He loves sincere *teshuvah* as well.

Hence, to get to the World-to-Come, you need free choice. To have free choice you have to choose, specifically between good and evil. To have evil, you have to have *tohu*, because that was the primordial state of existence that made evil possible in a world that should be, by definition, only good.

After all, Creation exists inside of God, and God is all, and only good. He doesn't have an evil bone in Him, and not even a bone for that matter. So, how do you create a reality of evil, necessary for free will, in an existence that is completely good, inside and outside? The answer in a word: *tohu*.

It is not the final word, though. Indeed, if anything, *tohu* is the middle of the discussion, as a quick perusal of the *Zohar* and works like the Arizal's *Aitz Chaim* will reveal. We know, from tradition, what it is, and why it exists. We even know where it can be found, and how to tame it, as the Talmud states:

It says, "And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day" (*Bereishis* 1:31). The letter *Heh* (preceding the word *shishis* in the Hebrew) is extra . . . to say that [God] made a condition with them (Creation): "If the Jewish people accept the Five Books of the Torah [on the sixth day of Sivan, in the year 2448], then you can continue. If not, then you must return back to *tohu v'vohu*." (*Shabbos* 88a)

What we don't necessarily know is when it will show up on the historical scene, or even just in our own personal lives, at least in full force. But when it does, people like Ya'akov Avinu know, it is but a threshold to rectification, personal and world, and it need not be a reason to despair.