



PIRCHEI Weekly

Agudas Yisroel of America

Nov 22, 2014 - כ"ט מרחשון, תשע"ה - Vol: 2 Issue: 5



פרשה: תולדות - הפטרה: ...מחר חדש... (שמואל א כ"ח-כ"ט)
דף יומי: יבמות מ"ט - מצות עשה: 0 מצות לא תעשה: 0 - מברכים ראש חודש כסלו
(מולד יום שבת קודש בשעה: חלקים 71 + 64:90)



Torah Thoughts

...וינתן לך האלקים (בְּרֵאשִׁית כו:כח)

May G-d give you ...

The name אֱלֹקִים that appears in this פסוק seems to be out of place. It represents the Attribute of Divine Justice, which is strict and demanding. We usually would not associate the בְּרָכָה that יִצְחָק is wishing his son יַעֲקֹב with יַעֲקֹב. If יִצְחָק wants יַעֲקֹב to receive בְּרָכוֹת from ד', shouldn't he have used the four-letter Name of ד' which is His הַרְחֵמִים Attribute of Mercy?

יי explains that although יִצְחָק blessed יַעֲקֹב with much abundance, he made those בְּרָכוֹת conditional. The בְּרָכוֹת would only come to fruition if his descendants would keep the תּוֹרָה and מִצְוֹת. יַעֲקֹב had no strings attached, as the פסוק says: הִנֵּה מִשְׁמַנֵּי הָאָרֶץ יִהְיֶה מוֹשְׁבֶדָּךְ וּמִטַּל הַשָּׁמַיִם מֵעַל — Behold, of the fatness of the earth shall be your dwelling and of the dew of heavens from above (כו:לט). This seems unusual. Why would יִצְחָק wish that his beloved son יַעֲקֹב should only receive a conditional בְּרָכָה, while יַעֲקֹב is blessed with guaranteed wealth?

The Kotzker Rebbe asks a similar question regarding the punishment the נֶחֱשׁ receives for enticing הָנֶחֱשׁ to eat from the עֵץ הַדַּעַת (Tree of Knowledge): "כי עשית זאת ארור אתה ... וצפר תאכל כל ימי חייך" — Because you have done this, accursed are you ... and dust shall you eat all the days of your life (י"ד). What is so bad about eating earth? The נֶחֱשׁ is now being blessed that he no longer had to search for food. No matter where he goes, his food — earth — is there. Why is this considered a curse?

ד's curse to the נֶחֱשׁ, explains the Kotzker, actually contained the most frightening message. "You cannot come close to Me. I am not interested in you! I do not want to hear you asking for food. You will always have what you need to subsist so that I never have to hear from you again!" ד' made the נֶחֱשׁ self-sufficient so that it would never have to come to Him and ask for his needs.

Animals are created to naturally be able to sustain themselves. People, however, cannot survive naturally. From the day they are born they need assistance. They learn that if they ask (or cry), then their needs will be taken care of. ד' wants us to request His help in the same way all our lives, as the פסוק states, "ד' seeks (favors) those who fear Him... those who hope for His kindness" (תהלים קמו:יא). ד' wants us to depend on His kindness. Why is this so? If we think about Him and daven to Him every day then we will be careful to follow His תּוֹרָה and מִצְוֹת. This is His Kindness in helping us to merit eternal life in עוֹלָם הַבָּא, the World to Come, which is the reason for our creation.

יעקב was 'a man of the field' and could not live with this type of relationship. יצחק wanted him to get the בְּרָכוֹת, so he gave it without any conditions. However, when יצחק gave the בְּרָכוֹת to יַעֲקֹב he realized that יַעֲקֹב was a בְּנֵי עוֹלָם, and wanted him to use the בְּרָכוֹת to get closer to ד'. By making יַעֲקֹב's בְּרָכָה conditional on proper behavior, יצחק gave יַעֲקֹב the greatest gift: the need to maintain a relationship with ד'. If יַעֲקֹב or his descendants strayed from the תּוֹרָה they would lose out. We, the descendants of יַעֲקֹב, have the opportunity to receive these בְּרָכוֹת, but only if we follow in His ways.

Adapted from: Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 2 (with kind permission from ArtScroll)



Yahrtzeits of our Gedolim

ב' כסלו 1910 - 1998 5671 - 5759
was born in Kuhl, Lithuania, to ר' פרידה דבורה, ר' משה יום טוב רב, and ר' ירוחם ליבוביץ צ"ל. His parents moved to Canada in the early 1920s. At age 17, he moved back to Mir to learn under ר' ירוחם צ"ל. In 1936, he received סמיכה from ר' שמעון שקופ צ"ל. He stayed in Kelm for over three years, eventually escaping to Australia with his כלה, Chava Slomowitz. In 1940, he moved to the U.S. and started a משיגה in White Plains, NY. In 1943 he was invited by ר' אהרן קטלר צ"ל to serve as משיגה in Lakewood, NJ, a position he held for over 50 years. In the 1960s, he began to open tens of community בורגלים. He tried to hide his נדלות and תורה, but his fine character and עגנה could not be disguised.

Gedolim Glimpses

The Lakewood משיגה, ר' נתן מאיר, Wachtfogel had an inner calm and שמחה that clearly radiated from his ד'. He lived each day hoping for ביאת המשיח and would end his shmuesen with the words, "This is the last shmuess in exile." He kept a pressed suit in his closet so that he would have something to wear to greet משיח as soon as he arrived. Whenever בְּחוּרִים would sing לו אַחֲרָה, he would dance with his נַפְשׁ, infecting every one with his pure enthusiasm.



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לעיני ה' ישעיהו דוב ע"ה בן יבלחטי"א יצחק צבי נ"י

Focus on Middos

Dear Talmid,
As a young בחור, R' Nosson Meir Wachtfogel would frequent a shul on the East Side. Other young בחורים would also gather there to learn.

On one such occasion, R' Nosson noticed another younger בחור and walked over and introduced himself with a friendly "שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם." When he inquired about the בחור's studies, the בחור complained that he was having constant difficulties in his learning. Surprised, R' Nosson asked the בחור for some examples. The young man began asking questions. "I don't understand how the גמרא here says this, when just three blatt further the גמרא says the very opposite..." After hearing some of the בחור's "problems," the [future] משיגיה exclaimed, "These aren't problems at all, they are solid קושיות — they are just the type of קושיות asked in the great קושיות of Europe. That is where you belong!"

The בחור was interested and eventually decided to make the trip. R' Nosson himself also wanted to study in Europe but his parents were apprehensive about his leaving home at such a young

age. This time it was the turn of R' Nosson's new friend to step up to the plate. Self-assured and impressive, the young man went straight to R' Nosson's parents, told them of his own plans and reassured them that if they would allow their son to come along, he would personally take full responsibility for his welfare. They agreed.

The young man with the 'constant difficulties' was R' Yehuda Davis, who later became ראש of Yeshiva Zichron Mayir of Mountindale. The boys didn't go alone, however; they convinced others to join them in their trip to Europe: R' Mordechai Gifter, R' Mordechai Yoffe and R' Avigdor Miller – זכר צדיקים לברכה.

My תלמיד, not only did R' Nosson's warm שָׁלוֹם עֲלֵיכֶם give 'spiritual' life to these famous תלמידי, it also was the guiding Hand that helped him go to Europe. In His Creation, די, designed things in such a way that one who performs a חסד is also the beneficiary of that same חסד!

רבי Your, בדידות

Story adapted from:
A Living 'Mishnas R' Aharon' (Feldheim)



Understanding Davening

An introduction to תחנון... (Cont.)

The מדרש quotes an interesting מוזר כל בו to explain why we say a longer תחנון on Mondays and Thursdays. In the times of the מרד, there were ר' יוסף and ר' שמואל, ר' בנמין, תנאים 3 who were captured by an evil king. He put the three on separate boats in the high seas without any captain. Each boat miraculously landed safely on a faraway shore. They each composed a heartfelt תפלה די which contained 18 שמונה עשרה, representing די, the evil king died a painful death. Another king arose and was unusually kind to these תנאים. Realizing the power of their combined תפלות, they put it into one תפלה and sent it to every קהלה, telling them that this beautiful תפלה was powerful and instituting that it should be said every Monday and Thursday.

לעיני ר' משה צבי בן הר"י טוביה הלוי זצ"ל



This Week in History

1 5464 / 1703 – Yahrzeit of R' Yosef Shmuel of Cracow, זצ"ל, the מסורת השי"ס. Born in Kremnitz, his father, R' Tzvi Hirsch, was his main יוסף. He settled in Cracow after marrying the daughter of R' Chaim Yeshayah the blacksmith, who generously supported him. The גדולים in Cracow at that time, among them the משיגיה שלמה and the משיגיה טוב, realized the greatness of R' Shmuel and appointed him to the city's דין. He served as רב in Cracow for 26 years.

When R' Yeshayah Horowitz, grandson of the משיגיה הקדוש, was appointed רב in Posen, the הקהל of Frankfurt sent a delegation to Cracow to ask R' Shmuel to be their new רב. He refused, and the delegation sadly left Cracow.

Soon after their departure, R' Shmuel became deathly ill. Doctors could find neither cause nor cure for his disease. Many תפלות were said on his behalf, and the name יוסף was added to his name. At that time, R' Shmuel promised that if he overcame the illness, he would accept the position of רב in Frankfurt, since he understood his refusal to be the reason for his illness. As soon as he was healthy enough, he moved to Frankfurt and assumed the רבנות, 1690 / 5450 תמוז, רבנות.

In Frankfurt, R' Shmuel established a ישיבה and taught hundreds of תלמידי, many of whom became גדולי ישראאל. R' Shmuel elevated the prestige of the תורה and those who toiled in it in Frankfurt. His soft and gracious ways were his trademark, and his care for orphans and poor families was legendary.

He served as רב in Frankfurt for 14 years. R' Shmuel was survived by one son, R' Aryeh Leib, Rav in Mattersdorf, and two sons-in-law: R' Aharon and R' Pinchas Auerbach, the מחבר on הלכה ברורה. The חיד"א wrote in his biography of R' Yosef Shmuel that he learned all of 42 שנים, fulfilling the commandment תורה בם (the numerical value of בם is 42). He also added that for 25 years he learned standing on his feet, and all his learning was תורה לשמה.

Sage Sayings

A תלמיד once asked R' Nosson Meir Wachtfogel זצ"ל about creating a balanced environment in the home. On the one hand, it is important to create a home that radiates a happy, cheerful atmosphere. On the other hand, life must be serious and one must think about עולם הבא. R' Nosson Meir smiled and said, "בעסער, — צו חוטא זיין אויף יענער זייט side of שמחה and happiness!]"

Source: A Living 'Mishnas R' Aharon' (Feldheim)



LEARNING FROM OUR LEADERS

ב"ט"ד
PIRCHAI AGUDAS YISROEL OF AMERICA

EVEN THOUGH R' MOSHE SHAIN AND HIS WIFE RUCHOMA HAD HEARD ABOUT THE TERRIBLE POVERTY IN PRE-WAR EUROPE, THEY WERE STILL SHOCKED WHEN THEY CAME TO MIR, POLAND, AND SAW THE UNSANITARY CONDITIONS AND PRIMITIVE MEDICAL CARE. ONE DAY, R' MOSHE FELL ILL WITH TONSILLITIS.

DR. SALPEK, I HAVE HIGH FEVER; MY THROAT IS BURNING!

THIS IS NOT TASTY, BUT IT IS NECESSARY TO LOWER YOUR FEVER... YOU MUST DRINK EVERY HOUR... YOU ARE GETTING DEHYDRATED...

THE MEDICINE WAS GHASTLY AND BURNED HIS INFLAMED THROAT.

MOSHE, PLEASE, PLEASE DRINK SOMETHING... I ALSO COOKED THIS SOFT PORRIDGE. IT WILL GO DOWN WITHOUT HURTING YOUR THROAT...

I JUST CAN'T ...THE PAIN WHEN I SWALLOW IS SO GREAT... OY, THE PAIN IS TOO MUCH...

RUCHOMA GOES TO R' YECHESKEL LEVENSTEIN, THE MASHGIACH.

REBBE, PLEASE FORGIVE ME... MY HUSBAND IS JUST NOT EATING OR DRINKING... HE HAS TONSILLITIS AND HIGH FEVER... WHAT SHOULD I DO?

OY! DO NOT WASTE A MOMENT! TAKE ME TO YOUR HOME AS FAST AS YOU CAN...

R' MOSHE WAS AWED AND SHOCKED WHEN THE MASHGIACH WALKED IN. R' LEVENSTEIN ASKED MRS. SHAIN TO REHEAT THE PORRIDGE AND GIVE HIM A CUP OF WARM WATER WITH A SPOON.

NOW PLEASE OPEN YOUR MOUTH AND TAKE THIS SPOON OF WATER... NOW PLEASE OPEN YOUR MOUTH FOR THIS SPOONFUL OF PORRIDGE... NOW PLEASE TAKE THIS SPOON OF WATER...

WITH PATIENCE AND CARE THE MASHGIACH SAT AND FED R' MOSHE FOR OVER AN HOUR...

...NOW PLEASE TAKE THIS SPOONFUL OF PORRIDGE...

I SIMPLY DARE NOT COMPLAIN...

MORE THAN AN HOUR LATER...

PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL ME IF HE REFUSES TO EAT OR DRINK.

OY, REBBI - THANK YOU! HE LOOKS SO MUCH BETTER. THIS IS THE FIRST MORSEL OF FOOD AND DRINK HE'S HAD ALL WEEK.

THE MASHGIACH'S CARING AND CONCERN HELPED ME JUST AS MUCH AS IT HELPED MY HUSBAND MOSHE!

R' YECHESKEL LEVENSTEIN, זצ"ל, WAS BORN IN WARSAW, POLAND, TO A חסידישע FAMILY. AT AGE 13, HE WENT TO LOMZA ושיבה AND THEN TO RADIN. THERE, HE BECAME VERY CLOSE TO ירוחם ר' LEVOVITZ, WHOM HE REVERED AS HIS MENTOR. UPON ירוחם ר' LEVOVITZ'S ADVICE, HE WENT TO KELM. WHEN ירוחם ר' LEVOVITZ RELOCATED FROM POLAND, HE SERVED AS ITS משגיח DURING ירוחם ר' LEVOVITZ'S ABSENCE. LATER, HE WAS משגיח IN משגיח חיים IN KLETSK. IN 1935, HE MOVED TO ארץ ישראל AS משגיח OF LOMZA ושיבה, BUT RETURNED TO מיר AFTER ירוחם ר' LEVOVITZ'S DECEASE. HE LED THE מיר DURING WORLD WAR II IN SHANGHAI, LATER IN THE U.S., AND FINALLY IN ארץ ישראל. UPON ר' DESSLER'S DECEASE, HE BECAME משגיח IN PONEVEZH. SEVEN VOLUMES OF HIS WORKS, אור יחזקאל, HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED, INCLUDING A VOLUME OF LETTERS.



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