



Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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Light Insight

The ABC Of Ecology

The world gets smaller every day. One of the fears of living in a global village is that the village store is going to run out of food. Will we wake up one day and find our planet can no longer support its population? For years, science fiction has dwelled on highly imaginative schemes to “farm” the solar system. Here’s the good news. You can relax and stop planning your trip to Andromeda. It isn’t going to happen.

The letters of the Hebrew language are the building blocks of Creation. When G-d created this existence, He did so using “speech.” “And G-d said: Let there be light...And G-d said, let there be sky....And G-d said...” This is not merely a narrative tool, a stylistic convention; it means that G-d built the world out of letters and words, it consists of nothing more than G-d’s speech. This explains why the Hebrew word for “thing,” *davar*, is comprised of the same letters as the word for “speech,” *dibur*. Ultimately,

“things” are no more than G-d’s “words.”

There’s a prayer we say three times a day called *Ashrei* (*Ashrei* is the first word of this prayer.) *Ashrei* is a combination of two of the Psalms of King David. What is so important about these particular Psalms that we say them three times a day?

If you open a siddur, you’ll notice that the first letters of each line of *Ashrei* go in alphabetical order: The first line starts with *aleph*, the second with *beit*, etc. *Ashrei* also contains the verse “You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of all life.” This is a promise that G-d will sustain each one of us. What is the connection between having enough to eat and the *aleph-beit*?

With the same *aleph-beit* with which G-d created the world, He creates a sufficiency for every living thing. G-d created this world with a plan. Man is the centerpiece of this plan. Just as He created the ABC of Creation, He has made sure that His plan will be fulfilled, right down to X, Y and Z. Every creature will receive its

needs. We don’t have to worry that there won’t be enough for everyone to eat. We don’t have to worry that the world will become overpopulated. With that same “whole cloth” with which G-d fabricated existence, the *aleph-beit*, He provided a sufficiency for His Creation at all times.

“This is the thing that G-d has commanded, ‘Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats — an *omer* per person — according to the number of your people, everyone according to whomever is in his tent shall you take.’ ”

In this week’s *Parsha*, we learn of the *manna*, the miraculous food that sustained the Jewish People for 40 years in the desert. *Manna* is the prototype of G-d sustaining man miraculously, providing for his every need. Just as in *Ashrei*, the above verse illustrates that every person receives according to his needs. And interestingly, it also contains all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. You don’t have to worry. The “village store” is never going to be “out of bread.”

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LOVE of the LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel

Tsipori

The modern settlement of Tsipori serves as a reminder of the ancient city of the same name that was the largest and most important city in Galilee during the first four centuries of the Common Era.

“Why was it called Tsipori?” ask our Sages in the Talmud as they reflect on the relationship between this name and the Hebrew word for bird. “Because,” comes the explanation, “It was perched like a bird on the top of a mountain.”

Response Line

Taking Stock

Marvin Peysner wrote:

Here is a question for you. I own stocks in some companies that are not doing too well these days. (What stock is?) Anyway, some of these companies just announced massive layoffs, in the tens of thousands. This will result in lower costs, therefore greater profits, and I'm liable to make some money on it when the stock subsequently rises. (One company's stock went up 5% just with the announcement of the layoffs.)

My question is: I would like to feel joyful that my stock will rise, but then I am reminded that tens of thousands of families will have lost their income. This is a dilemma. Is there any Torah insight on this?

Dear Marvin,

First, I'd like to say that your question shows a great deal of sensitivity, compassion, and market savvy.

How should you feel when others

lose their jobs

while your stock rises? Bad and good. Feel bad that others have lost their jobs, and glad that your stocks went up.

The Talmud actually deals with this idea of relating to contradictory emotional stimuli. The Talmud's example regards how to relate to a parent's death when at the same time that death brings financial relief to the child. If someone hears that his father has died, leaving him and his brothers an inheritance, what blessing does he say? Should he say, “Blessed is G-d, the True Judge,” which is the blessing accepting G-d's will upon hearing sad news? Or, should he say “Blessed is He who is Good and who bestows good,” which is the blessing for good news which benefits him and others, such as here where he and his brothers have become wealthy?

The Talmud states that he should say both blessings. First the blessing for the bad news, and afterwards the blessing for the good news.

This can be understood as recognition that people can feel contradictory

emotions; an event which has positive and negative aspects can be experienced as such. I think an important part of this lesson is that a person shouldn't feel guilty for experiencing the happy aspects of a bad situation. It doesn't necessarily mean that he is insensitive.

With that, I would like to tell you a true story. A rabbi I know once called the police to report his teenage son, last seen riding his bicycle, missing. Later that day the police phoned asking the rabbi to come and view the body of a boy, matching his son's description, who had been hit by a car while riding his bike.

The Rabbi later told that while he and his wife were in the car on their way to identify the body, he had hoped for a fleeting moment that the sight which would greet his eyes would not be that of his son. “But if it's not my son,” he realized, “then it will be someone else's son, and my joy will be someone else's tragedy. If it is my son, others will be spared.”

That thought gave him courage and helped him to accept the sight that he was ultimately to see, the sight of his beloved son.