

22 September, 2001

* This week's speaker after davening in the Youth Minyan, will be Rabbi Yossef Levinson.

* There will be a shiur (Gemorah Brachos) at Mark Franck's house on Shabbos afternoon at 4:55pm.

Katanga

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Caulfield
Beth Hamedrash Weekly Newsletter

D'var Torah

COSMIC HIDE AND SEEK

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair (ohr.org.il)

Once, there was a great rabbi who came upon a young child crying his heart out. "What's the matter, yingele?" asked the Rabbi, his eyes shining with sympathy and concern. "We were playing..." The child struggled to speak between sobs. "We were playing hide and seek...and I was the one who was supposed to go hide..." The boy looked up into the Rabbi's face. "Yes, I'm listening," said the Rabbi. "So I went and hid but...but..." The child broke down again in gales of sobs. "Tell me what happened," said the Rabbi softly. Finally, the boy managed to finish the sentence "...but nobody came to look for me!"

After a few moments, the Rabbi smiled his warm smile and said, "You know, you shouldn't feel so bad. You're in very good company." The child heaved a little, his tears abating. The Rabbi looked into the child's eyes and continued: "You're in very good company indeed. G-d feels a lot like you - not many people are coming to look for Him."

This world is a cosmic game of hide-and-peek. We are given an invitation to this world; the invitation is called life. This invitation itself is a challenge: Who brought us here? Who sustains us here? What are we doing here?

To make the game more challenging, and our success more meaningful and rewarding, there are various distractions and "false leads" which can take us away from the game. But our "Host" has not left us without a "crib sheet" to help us navigate this ultimate virtual adventure. He has provided a clear manual which is guaranteed to allow us to unmask Him and the purpose of our existence. This manual is called the Torah.

When we keep the Torah, we see our "Host" more and more clearly. But if we don't keep the Torah,

He will hide himself more and more deeply, and finding Him will be very difficult indeed.

"I will surely hide My face."

In the Hebrew language, the emphatic "to surely do" something is expressed by the repetition of the verb. In other words, the literal translation of the phrase "I will surely hide My face" is "Hide, I will hide My face."

The very structure of the Hebrew language gives us an insight into this "hiding." There are two kinds of concealment. One is a concealment where you know someone is there but you just can't see them. The other is a concealment where you don't even know if they are there at all. In this second type, the very fact of their being hidden is concealed. This is the ultimate hiding - where the very hiding is hidden.

When we are aware that G-d has hidden from us, He is not really concealed, because we realize that our hiding from Him has been reciprocated by His hiding from us. And so, we humble ourselves and return to Him, imploring his forgiveness. However, when the hiding is itself hidden, and we think that this is the way the world is supposed to be, then we are in big trouble, because nothing awakens us to return to Hashem. We think to ourselves: "This is the way things are supposed to be - isn't it?"

Ignorance, they say, is bliss. But only while we're ignorant of our ignorance. One day, we will all wake up in the real "Supreme" court, and we will then have to pay the price for our years of "bliss." On Yom Kippur, we have a chance to shake ourselves out of our self-inflicted ignorance. A once-a-year opportunity to throw ourselves on the mercy of the King. If we search with all our hearts, we will find Him.



Thoughts for the week:

"A clear conscience is usually the sign of a bad memory."

"Intelligence is like a river: the deeper it is the less noise it makes."

"When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what advantage is there to the owner thereof, saving the beholding of them with his eyes?"
(Ecclesiastes 5:11)

"Pride is what we have.
Vanity is what others have."

Other Developments

* After shule on shabbos, Rabbi Leon Goldman spoke of the tragic events which transpired in America last week. He made reference to the 'pintele yid' - the eternal Jewish spark which resides in each one of us. At this time of year, this spark yearns for reconnection to G-d and it is up to each one of us to use this impetus for positive and constructive action. Yasher Koach.

* Yasher Koach to those members of the Youth Minyan who participated in the davening on Rosh Hashanah, including; Ari Bergman, Isi Pacnowski, Simon Weinstein and Mark Franck. Their contribution to the atmosphere in the entire shule was certainly prevalent and we hope to see continued participation by further members of the Youth Minyan.

Shabbat Shuva - The Means and the Ends

by Rabbi Baruch A. Poupko (ou.org)

Rav Yisroel Salanter once remarked: "Amol loift, men tzu ton a mitzveh mit azah impit vos me ken choirev machen dei ganzte velt - At times, people run to do a mitzvah with such zeal that it is possible to destroy a whole world in the process."

A Chassidic tale tells of two chassidim were agonizing over the challenge of doing teshuvah during the month of Elul. One said, "I can't eat or sleep when I think about my sins of this past year."

His friend responded, "I'm not as worried about my sins as I am about my mitzvos. I know what my sins are and I am able to ask a Merciful G-d for forgiveness. But how can I begin to identify the sins I did, thinking they were mitzvos?"

In Parshas Vayeilech, we find a hint of this danger when Moshe confronts the Jewish people. "You were rebels before G-d," he admonishes them. Alternately, one can translate this verse as, "You were rebels with G-d" - in your passion for serving G-d you committed grievous sins.

Isn't this the lesson of history. Do we deny, for example, that the founders of Reform and Conservative Judaism were motivated by a sincere desire to assure the continuity of Judaism in their communities?

Announcements

- Katanga will be operating a crèche on Yom Kippur (including Kol Nidrei night). People wishing to enrol their children must do so as soon as possible. Children must be pre-booked in order to participate so please register now. For details and bookings, please call Jordi Elkus on 9528 6958.

- Yom Kippur begins this coming Wednesday (26 September) evening @ 6:01pm and ends Thursday evening at 6:58pm. Minyanim times listed below.

Parsha Overview - Vayelech

On the last day of his life, Moshe goes from tent to tent bidding farewell to his people, encouraging them to "keep the faith." He summons Yehoshua, and in front of all the people, exhorts him to be strong and courageous as leader of the Jewish People. Hashem tells Moshe and Yehoshua that after entering the Land, the people will be unfaithful and worship other gods upon which He will "hide His face," so that it will seem that the Jewish People are at the mercy of fate, hunted by all. Hashem instructs Moshe and Yehoshua to write down a song - Ha'azinu - which will serve as "witness" against the Jewish People when they sin. Moshe completes his transcription of the Torah and instructs the levi'im to place it to the side of the Holy Ark, so that no one will ever write a new Torah Scroll different from the original, for there will always be a reference copy.

Do we doubt the spiritual element that prompted Kaufman Kohler and Isaac Mayer Wise to formulate the misguided Pittsburgh Platform at the end of the nineteenth century?

At the same time, we can not ignore the destructive actions of some of the zealots within our midst.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l once commented, "The zealot's life is quite simple - no hardships confront him. He has no doubts to resolve. He is not challenged by painful doubts or difficult choices. For him there are very few questions and no regrets. For him there is only black and white."

The Chofetz Chaim was once asked how one can determine if one's actions are consistent with the teachings of the Torah. He replied, quoting the verse, "Derachecha? darchay noam. Are these the ways of Your Torah? Only if they are ways of pleasantness!"

During these days of introspection, in our earnest search for teshuvah, let us focus not only on our sins, but also on what we perceive to be mitzvos.

In that way, may our prayers be accepted by our Merciful Father in Heaven.

- Minyanim times for this coming week are: Shacharis on Erev Yom Kippur will be: first minyan @ 6am and second minyan @ 6:45am. Shacharis on Yom Kippur at 8:00am. Mornings: first minyan @ 5:45am, second minyan @ 6:25am. Mincha at 6:20pm followed by shiurim. Ma'ariv at 7:00pm.

- Please join us for our Katanga weekly Squash game on Sundays @ 6pm at Gardenvale Squash Centre. If you are interested in attending, please let Mendi Slodowitz know.

Suggestions or comments regarding our website or newsletter? Email us - we would love to hear from you.



Wishing everyone a Shabbat Shalom & Gut Shabbos, G'mar Chasimah Tovah and Shana Tovah.
"The Editors"