***Parshas Vayigash, Asarah B’Teves – ויבך - and He Wept***

***Going Over the Midas HaDin Cliff***

The Torah relates that following Yoseif’s startling revelation to his brothers, he fell on Binyomin’s neck and wept and Binyomin did the same. Rashi brings the Chazal that they cried over the eventual Churbonos of the Batei Mikdosh and Mishkan Shiloh. What inspired such a vision of doom and calamity, at this sublime moment of new hope and the promise of reconciliation?

The Zohar HaKadosh in last week’s Parsha relates, that Rebbi Abba came across a man sleeping out in the fields. Suddenly, he noticed a poisonous snake speeding towards the sleeping figure. Rebbi Abba watched with amazement as another animal pounced on the snake and killed it, before it could reach the oblivious fellow. As he neared the man’s location, Rebbi Abba realized, that the man must have fallen asleep in the dark of night, for he lay sleeping right at the edge of a cliff! Then the man woke up and, as he stepped away from the cliff, there was a rumble and a sharp crack, as the ground beneath the cliff gave way. The very ground the man slept on just moments before, broke away and plunged down in a roaring avalanche. Rebbi Abba had to know what Zechus this fellow had, that he dodged certain death, again and again in the space of minutes. The man claimed that he led a simple and not particularly meritorious life. One thing he was meticulous about, though, was to never hold a grudge against anyone who wronged him. He would not go to sleep, before reconciling any differences and being מוחל במחילה גמורה, any and all who had offended him.

It is clear from the account of Yoseif’s reunification with his family that all was not settled between them. There remained an underlying tension and resentment that just didn’t go away. In next week’s Parsha we will see how, after Yaakov Avinu’s פטירה, the brothers concocted a whole story about Yaakov leaving instructions warning Yoseif not to exact vengeance, for their having sold him away. Yoseif and Binyomin both detected that air of lingering suspicion of Yoseif and his motives. They could see that although the brothers considered themselves בני איש אחד, they still were each out for themselves and only united superficially. This sense of פירוד, apartness, at a time that should have solidified their “Achdus”, was the edge of the precarious cliff that Yoseif and Binyomin foresaw giving way, and the Bais Hashem plunging over the precipice, Hashem help us.

For all that Klall Yisroel has accomplished in in these last decades, we still can’t seem to solidify our nation as loving, trusting brothers, in complete Achdus. Politics, mistrust and jockeying for the upper hand, digs away at the foundations of beautiful communities and Mosdos worldwide. The power of reaching out to one another and creating Achdus is so powerful. Powerful enough to head off anything that Midas HaDin can throw our way. We can protect ourselves from any storm of destruction and upheaval – if we work together in complete unity.

So, here we are again as we start a new cycle of “Daled Ta’aneism” for the Churban of our disunity. Instead of wishing each other “A Gringen Ta’anis”, an easy fast, and just getting through the day, maybe we should make an effort to make things easier for each and every Yid.

I, and all Klall Yisroel, lost a dear Chaver last week. R’ Beinish Mandel, z”l, dedicated his every breath to helping Yidden in any way possible. His drive for doing Chesed, could only be matched by his uncompromising love for any and every Yid. Dear, sweet, Beinish was constantly looking for new ways and innovations, to alleviate the plight of yet another family or individual, in their time of need. He perfected and broadened his knowledge of the medical field and became acquainted with top doctors and medical Askonim, so he could better help direct people to the resources they needed. Beinish devoted those same unending כוחות, to encourage Limud Torah and to promote אהבת שלום. I am still personally benefitting, after many years, from the Shiurim that Beinish Mandel helped establish. Beinish’s soft-spoken and eloquent efforts to bring people together and resolve differences, are legendary. From this Gadol of חיים חן וחסד, we may learn how to reach out and lend a supporting hand, without reservation or hesitation. From R’ Beinish we can learn how we can dig deeper and deeper still, to find virtually limitless כוחות הנפש and Siyata Dishmaya to grow and Shteig in Torah, Chesed and Avodas Hashem. From Beinish Mandel, we can learn how set aside differences, and act towards each other as true brothers. We need many more good and wonderful people like Beinish. He will be sorely missed. יהי זכרו ברוך.

A Guten Shabbos, B’suros Tovos, yk

**L’Ravcha D’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Thursday Eve, Parshas Vayigash** (Shabbos evening, according to some Minhagim)

*Nitel Nacht HaGadol*

“Nitel” from Latin “Natalis” (noel) - birthday.

“Nitel” connotes taken (out of the world) instead of coming in.

Some hold it is the “yartzeit” while the Pesach event was another ישוּ.

The original Dec. 25, 1 CE was 9 Teves on the original Julian calender - one of the reasons given for the fasting of Asarah B’Teves covering the events of 8, 9 and 10 Teves.

The date Jan. 6 on the current Gregorian calendar, in effect since February 24, 1582 corresponds to the original date. Hence the observance of “Nittel Gadol” on that date.

Several reasons are given for the Minhag of refraining from learning on the Eve before Dec. 25th:

Due to the heightened animosity for the perceived role of Yidden in his death at the hands of the Roman authorities, it was deemed unsafe to be out in the streets going and coming to learn. European Jews dreaded the expected assaults that were prevalent on that night

The supernatural “Dark Powers” become greatly increased from the various observances and the *Tumah* brought into the world with his birth and seem to gain power from any *Kedusha* created that night.

The minhagim of Nitel are mostly observed in the Chasidic communities, each one with some meaningful replacement for the learning missed. Gedolai Torah of note were known to occupy themselves with other activities as well. It is not really recognized in the “Litvish” Yeshivos and was never found in Sephardic communities originating from Moslem areas.

**Erev Shabbos Parshas Vayigash-8 Teves**

***Tekufas Teves*** *- The Halachic Winter Solstice occurs at 3:09 A.M. EST.*

*Ask any “Europeasheh Yidineh” and she’ll warn you “az mir tur nisht trinken vasser ven der Tekifeh falt!” - it’s forbidden to drink water as the Tekufah occurs. Some say it’s an old wive’s tale but the Beis Yosef does give Eitzos to avoid the problem. Several reasons are advanced by Avudraham for this. Some say it is because the Malochim who protect the water change guard at the tekufah and leave it unwatched for a short time. Others say that the constellation of Cancer fights with Libra and drops blood into the water. Another authority accounts for the drops of blood in the water at Tekufas Nisan by pointing out that the waters in Mitzrayim turned to blood at that particular moment. At Tekufas Tammuz, Moshe hit the rock and caused drops of blood to flow from it. At Tekufas Tishrei the knife which Avrohom Avinu held to shecht Yitzchok dropped blood. At Tekufas Teves, Yiftach sacrificed his daughter.*

Completion of The Septuagint under Ptolemy II, the translation of the Torah into Greek by seventy Chachomim, each working independently of the other. Every word and every change was identically reproduced by each Chochom! The Chachmei HaDor saw the detriment that would come out from making the Torah open for all to feel that they understand without the benefit of Torah Shebal Peh. They decreed three days of fasting. One of the reasons we fast Asarah B’Teves.

**Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Vayigash -9 Teves**

**Ezra Hasofer** (313 BCE or 320 BCE) and **Nechemya**

According to some sources, the birth of Yeshu.

Court-martial of **Captain Alfred Dreyfus** as a result of the hateful Dreyfus Affair. (1894)

**Sunday, Parshas Vayichi -10 Teves**

**Taanis Asarah B’Teves**

Start of the siege of Yerushalayim, first step towards the Churban.

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