

## Agudas Yisroel Anshei Kielce

### Weekly Bulletin

#### פרשת חקת



Crime and Punishment. In a corporeal world, the correlation of a jail sentence to a crime does not symbolize a cogent philosophical message. Of course, it may tell us that crime does not pay. Unfortunately, that comprehensive message does not differentiate between one who steals to sustain his family, and the greedy scam-artist who bilks widows out of their life's savings. The two felons may sit only a few cells apart from each other, with an arsonist or barroom brawler separating them, but the crimes that sent them to their dismal abodes are so very different in intent.

Divine justice does better. Every aveirah generates a punishment specifically designed to send a distinct Heavenly message to the afflicted. Of course, it may take an otherwise perspicacious mind to correlate what life is handing to him and how it relates to his mortal misdeeds. We do not always relate events that occur to the acts we have perpetrated. Sometimes it is too much for us to bear, and sometimes our ideas may lead us to wrongful conclusions, harming both our psyche and morale.

But when the Torah teaches us about crime and punishment we are more fortunate. The lessons of our past are now devoid of the guilt-ridden, depressive response we may have currently; rather they are moral springboard from which to bound to greater heights. And thus, when the Torah tells us of a clear crime and an immediate response, we have to transpose the relationship between the two to attain another moral lesson.

The people spoke against Hashem and Moshe - "*Why did you bring us up from Mitzrayim to die in this wilderness, for there is no food and no water, and our soul is disgusted with the insubstantial food?*" *G-d sent the fiery serpents against the people and they bit the people. A large multitude of Israel died. The people came to Moshe and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against Hashem and against you! Pray to Hashem that He remove from us the serpent"* (Bamidbar,21:5-7). The people complained about their fare, and were punished with snakes. If Divine retribution is corollary to the crime, how do snakes correspond to kvetching?

Rashi quotes the Midrash Tanchuma. "Hashem said as it were - let the serpent which was punished for slanderous statements come and exact punishment from those who utter slander; Let the serpent to which all kinds of food have one taste [that of earth; cf (Bereshis :3:14) and (Yoma: 75a)] come and exact punishment from these ingrates to whom one thing (the manna) had the taste of many different dainties.

What was the slander of the snake? Didn't he just convince Chava to take a bite of the fruit? What connection is there with the Manna? The story is told of a Bubby taking her grandchild, little Irving, to the beach toward the end of spring. There is hardly anyone around as the child, dressed in a spring suit, plays innocently on the shore. Suddenly a wave breaks and sweeps him into the vast ocean. The grandmother, who cannot swim, yells toward the deserted beach, "Someone! Please save my Irving! Please! Anybody!"

Out of nowhere, a man charges forward, dives into the ocean and swims valiantly toward the helpless child. Moments later he is holding the gasping child aloft, while his weeping grandmother dashes toward them. She whisks the child from the man, and looks over the child making sure he is still in one piece.

Then she turns to the man, nods her head slightly and parts her otherwise pursed lips. "He was wearing a hat."

In Gan Eden, life was blissful. Adam and Chava had all they could have wanted, except for one type of fruit -- The Eitz Hada'as. It was the snake that taught his human cohort, the concept of total self-indulgence, rendering them powerless to say, "No!" The desert dwellers did not fare much differently. Their celestial fare adapted to almost any flavor in the world. Water flowed freely from the rock. But they were not content.

They wanted more. The unfulfilled flavors that the Manna refused to replicate were on their minds. They felt that Manna was only a mere simulacrum of the luscious cuisine that they desired. Their craving for everything, manifested itself in punishment through the animal that has his most favored fare, anytime anywhere -- the snake. To a snake, all dust is desirous!

When the Jewish nation were both led and fed, through a hostile environment, yet complained that their miraculous bread is insubstantial, then the only correlation, powerful enough to make them mend their thoughtless ways was the bite of the very being who gains no enjoyment from what he bites, while having all he desires.

Our goal in life is to revel in the blessing, rejoice in all the good that we have, despite the shortcomings of a limited world, and the trivial amenities we may lack. One must learn to appreciate his head, even if he is missing his hat.

Good Shabbos

Adapted from Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

**Mincha: 7:05 pm/8:45 pm**

**Candle Lighting: 8:42 pm**

**Shacharis: 8:45 am**

**Zman Kriyas Shema: 9:26 am**

**Mincha/Shalosh Seudos: 8:35 pm**

**Maariv/Motzai Shabbos: 9:51 pm**

**This week's Kiddush is sponsored by Rabbi and Rebbetzin Kaufman in honor of the aufruf of their son Binyamin. Mazel tov to the entire Kaufman family.**

**Mazel Tov to Avraham and Chaya Engel on the engagement of a grandson.**

**Guest Speaker: Rabbi Eliyahu Dovid Kaufman, Morah D'asra of Congregation Ohavei Emes, Highland Park, New Jersey will be delivering the Pirkei Avos shiur this Shabbos at 7:45 pm.**

**Guest Speaker: Rabbi Ari Hofstedter will be speaking at Shalosh Seudos.**