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PARSHA OF THE WEEK

When two souls struggle for supremacy

"IF YOU see your enemy's donkey lying under its load, you might want to refrain from helping him: (However), you must surely help with him." (23:5)

We are expected to help out, notwithstanding the fact that he is an enemy! He too is required to join the effort and he may not sit back while he is being helped.

Who is this enemy and what type of help does he require?

In a deeper sense the Torah is teaching us about ourselves and how we function! The "enemy" that is inside us is like a donkey. The word "Chamor" symbolises the element within us that is attracted to the lowest physical aspirations. As human beings our lives often feel like a dichotomy. One part of us appears to have a "donkey-like" attraction to indulge unabashedly in a materialistic world.

Sometimes we even find our-



PARSHAT MISHPATIM

Rabbi Sholem Bacher
Blairgowrie Hebrew Congregation

selves "working like a donkey" to attain goals that lack a higher meaning. This soul is called an "animal soul" because of its drive toward seemingly animalistic pursuits.

Then there is the intellectual soul which is focused on G-dliness and higher goals. This soul searches for deeper meaning. The Tanya describes these two souls with an analogy. They are like two kings who are fighting for the same city. Each wishes to subject its inhabitants and resources to his control.

Likewise two vastly different souls struggle for dominion over a person. They struggle to control you and I. They wish to harness the faculties of our entire persona and utilise them to achieve its respective goals.

How do we respond to this challenge? We might view our "animal soul" as an enemy and reject him. We see him as an obstacle to our spiritual growth. So we want to pull down the shutters and run inside, to lock him out of our lives as much as we can.

Like the donkey that struggles with its load, we mistakenly think that it is not in our best interest to help him.

So the Torah states clearly: "You shall certainly help with him." This is the essence of our real task in this world. We conquer the animal soul by making him a friend. We are obliged to

SHABBAT TIMES

February 20/ 26 Shevat
February 21/ 27 Shevat

Erev Shabbat

Starts	Ends	
18:15	19:18	Johannesburg
18:12	20:07	Cape Town
18:15	19:11	Durban
18:20	19:30	Bloemfontein
17:44	19:39	Port Elizabeth
18:15	19:28	East London

work with him, not against him to achieve our goals.

Our task is to not only suppress our human nature; rather we learn to utilise it in the correct way.

In the world of science we learn that most energies can be converted to maximise their efficiency. In spiritual terms the same rule applies. The animal soul has passions and ambitions that can be redirected towards good purposes. Our task is to harness these forces and direct them to serve Hashem.

Part of Pietersburg Shul will live on in Tel Mond

DAVID SAKS

ON JANUARY 30, the long-awaited building of the shul for the Mevaser Zion community was initiated by the turning of the sod ceremony held in Tel Mond, a small town located in the beautiful Sharon valley.

It was an important occasion not just for the congregation, many of whom are former South Africans, but also in its honouring the memory of what was one of South African Jewry's leading country communities, the Pietersburg Hebrew Congregation.

It is intended that when the new shul opens, it will contain the furniture of the old PHC, which formally closed down in 2002. Among the more than 200 people who attended the ground-breaking ceremony, were a number of former members of the old PHC, including Harold and Hillary Starkowitz, Joan Wiseman (Stein) and Charlotte and Dennis Wiener. Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft, who was at the time in Israel for the World Jewish Congress conference, was also present. Rabbi Silberhaft and the mayor of Tel Mond were among the speakers.

The link between Tel Mond and Pietersburg Jewry goes back to the very beginning of the decade, when the remaining members of the PHC, the last functioning Jewish community north of Pretoria, were engaged in the sad but necessary process of winding up their congregation's affairs prior to its closure.

It was a few years before this time that Nathan Mowszowski, of



A cake model of the new shul to be built in Tel Mond.

the Shivtei Yisrael Congregation in Ra'anana, suggested to PHC treasurer Dennis Wiener that through his agency, his community would donate two of their Sifrei Torah to Shiftei. This was readily agreed to, and in May 2001, the Sifrei Torah were formally presented to the Shivtei Congregation at a Hachnasat Torah ceremony.

Shortly after this, then Shivtei president Maish Isaacson informed Wiener of the proposed building of a new shul by the Mevaser Zion community of Tel Mond, the core of which comprised a young group of former South Africans led by Darren Platzky.

Pietersburg, he suggested, could assist in this regard by pro-

viding the shul with the necessary furniture and appurtenances. This led to formal negotiations being entered into between the two congregations, whereby it was agreed that the PHC would donate its furniture while Mevaser Zion would in turn perpetuate the memory of the PHC by placing its plaques and foundation stones in a prominent position in the new shul and through an annual Shabbat service to be held in the memory of its members and former members.

Early in 2003, the Pietersburg Shul was dismantled. Its furniture was packed into two 40-foot containers and shipped to Israel, where it has been held in storage until now.

AROUND THE WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

GERMAN OFFICER RECOGNISED BY YAD VASHEM

JERUSALEM - Yad Vashem cited the German officer made famous in the Academy Award-winning movie "The Pianist".

Wilm Hosenfeld was recognised as a Righteous Among the Nations, Israel's Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority announced on Monday, for helping Jews during the Holocaust.

Polish-Jewish musician Wladyslaw Szpilman, whose diaries are the basis for Roman Polanski's 2002 film, wrote to Yad Vashem that Hosenfeld in November 1944 helped him find a hiding place, and provided blankets, food and moral support.

Another survivor, Leon Wurm, testified that Hosenfeld employed him at the Sports Centre after his escape from the train to Treblinka.

Hosenfeld spent most of the war as a sports and culture officer based in Warsaw.

During the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, he was involved in interrogating prisoners. Hosenfeld was arrested and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Soviets. He died in a Soviet prison in 1952.

Hosenfeld's sons and two daughters, who live in Germany, will receive a medal and certificate on their late father's behalf. An official ceremony will be scheduled. (JTA)

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