

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

והוצאתם את שניהם אל שער העיר והוא וסקלתם אתם כאבנים ומתו ... ובקרת הדין מקרבך (בב-כד)

The **Rambam** writes, *“It is better and more satisfactory to acquit a thousand guilty persons than to put a single innocent man to death.”* Executing a defendant on anything less than absolute certainty would lead to a slippery slope of decreasing burdens of proof, until convictions would be merely “according to the judge’s discretion.”

An interesting story is found in *Sefer L’maan Yishmau* (on *Sefer Ben Ish Chai*). In the year 5656 (1896), a wealthy businessman in the capital city of Bagdad decided to celebrate his great success by throwing a grand feast on *Motzei Shabbat*. To enliven the party, he invited Nissim the comedian, a well-known figure, who used humor to mock others publicly. He was humorous, but always at the expense of other people’s shame and humiliation. That night at the party, standing on a table set up to be a stage and sipping from a cupful of strong drink, Nissim made all sorts of bold gestures while he drew from his repertoire of cruel jokes and witty insults, filling the hall with noisy laughter.

During his performance, a waiter happened by holding a tray of fish in his hands. The performer took a plate and stuffed the fish into his mouth while continuing to amuse the crowd with his crude repertoire. Suddenly, a large bone from the fish got stuck in his throat. He began to choke and motion that he required assistance. Many thought it was part of his routine, while the others, not knowing precisely how to assist him, helplessly watched as Nissim turned blue and then fell to the floor, lifeless. Horrified, the wealthy host screamed in panic, for he feared he would be blamed for the comedian’s death!

One of the onlookers suggested they place Nissim upstairs, in front of Saadia the Doctor’s door. Maybe when he emerged from his room and saw the lifeless body, he could do something. A group of volunteers from among the many stunned guests carried the dead comedian to the upper floor, knocked on the doctor’s door and hurried away so as not to be seen.

Saadia, hearing the knock, came to the door, but because it was dark in the hallway, he did not notice a man lying on the floor by his door and tripped over Nissim’s feet, causing them both to roll down the steps, one over the other. Recovering from the fall, he looked at the other fellow and gasped; by tripping over this man and making him fall, he surely must have killed him! Not wanting to be punished for murder though, he stood the body against a nearby wall outside and left.

Ezra the tailor, still busy working at this late hour, suddenly noticed a man sitting on the ground, looking into his window and was overcome with fear; perhaps a thief was trying to break in? He ordered the man to leave immediately, but when there was no response, he took a hot iron burning on his stove and threw it through the window, hitting the dead Nissim in the face and knocking him down again. Seeing the body collapse, Ezra was mortified, thinking that he had killed a man! Not wanting to be caught, he dragged the body into the street and stood him up against a tree.

Soon after, a drunkard passed by and thought this man was laughing at him, so he took a bottle of whiskey and hit Nissim over the head, causing the dead body to once again fall to the ground. At that moment, a police officer was walking by, and seeing what the drunkard had done, arrested him. The news spread around town that in two days time, the drunkard would be hung for having killed Nissim the comedian. Feeling guilty, the rich businessman, the doctor and the tailor, each on their own, went separately to the police to admit that in truth, it was they who had caused Nissim’s death.

The judge was unsure how to pass judgment. Never had he encountered such a strange situation, that four people should admit to killing one man! He decided to seek the advice of the great Jewish Sage, **Chacham Rabbi Yosef Chaim ז”ל** of Bagdad, the **Ben Ish Chai**. The day of the court case arrived and many gathered to see how this episode would be resolved. The judge proclaimed his verdict: “All four men are free from punishment! My decision is according to the wisdom of the great Jewish rabbi.” The judge went on to explain what he had learned. “Nissim the comedian caused his own death through his public mockery, and received punishment corresponding to all four forms of Jewish execution - stoning, burning, slaying, strangulation - that Jews could have been sentenced to during the time of their Holy Temple!”

רני עקרה לא יולדה ... (ישעי' נד-א)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTARAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

The *Haftorah* opens with words from *Yeshaya HaNavi*, “*Rejoice barren one, who bore no child.*” The *Navi* uses the metaphor of a childless woman, to describe *Klal Yisroel* during the *galus*, who appear “barren” while the nations of the world appear to be fruitful, with many descendants.

Chazal (Berachos 10a) say that Bruriah, the famous wife of Rabbi Meir, once had an argument with an apostate who asked why the barren woman should “rejoice” that she did not have children? Bruriah responded that the barren woman is happy since she would rather not have children at all if it means her child would grow up to be like the apostate!

R’ Yitzchok Hutner ז”ל explains that the *Torah*, especially the oral tradition, trains a Jew to understand things on a deeper

level. To a non-Jew, the *Navi*’s statement seems simple; either you have children, or you don’t. There is no deeper understanding there. But to a Jew, it is much more complex.

Furthermore, says R’ Hutner, it is the mandate of the Jewish mother to ensure the continuation of *Klal Yisroel*. We see this from the four Matriarchs who had to make tough choices in life: *Sarah Imeinu* sent away Yishmael, Rivkah ensured that Yaakov got the *berachos* and not Esav, and Rochel and Leah encouraged Yaakov to leave Charan so they wouldn’t be under the influence of their father Lavan.

It is apt that Bruriah, a Jewish mother herself, responds to the apostate by explaining that a Jewish mother does not simply birth a child, rather it is much more complex than that.

כי יקה איש אשה חדשה לא יצא כצבא ולא יעבר עליו לכל דבר ... (כד-ה)

לעלו נשמת אבנו מודיעו רבינו הרב חיים יוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ”ל

מחשבת הלב

There is a well-known *Gemara* in *Brachos 8a* which states that years ago in *Eretz Yisroel*, a newlywed groom was asked “*מצא או מוצא*” - Did you marry well or not? Do you “find” yourself in an unfortunate or negative marital situation or have you “found” your wife to be a wonderful and satisfying partner?

Why does “מצא” connote a good match while “מוצא” implies the opposite?

I saw a powerful *pshat* from **R’ Shimshon Pinkus ז”ל**. As a person commits to marrying his spouse, it is an enduring life-long commitment. It is not a decision one should make at the drop of a hat or in a split second. It must be thought out well, because then, he cannot second-guess himself, and ask continuously and incessantly: “Is my spouse for me? Was it a mistake to wed this person?”

The word “מצא”, which reflects a past tense, means that you’ve already found your soul-mate, and are ready to embark on life’s path together, no matter what. Whereas “מוצא”, the present tense, symbolizes the ever-present question, “Did I *take* find my *bashert* or not”? That constant questioning is a recipe for disaster.

Similarly, our relationship with *הקב”ה* is analogous to that of *איש לאשתו*. The *posuk* says “*כה אמר ה' מצא חן במדבר*”. *Hashem* says about *Klal Yisroel*, “I’ve found (past tense) my beloved.” Thankfully, no matter our *matzav ruchani*, He has committed Himself to us, and will be at our side rooting for us and exhorting us to reach higher and higher on the *ruchniyusdike* continuum. Unfortunately, it is we who sometimes seek avenues other than His loving embrace.

As Chodesh Elul is now upon us, let us strengthen the אמי לדודי so He will iy”H resoundingly reciprocate לי דודי

משל למה הדבר דומה

ולך תהיה צדקה לפני ה' אלוקך ... (בר-יג)

משל: “Yossel the Pauper” as he was known, seemed condemned to his fate. No matter what he tried his hand at failed. He tried opening a grocery, and everything spoiled. He tried opening a clothing store, and rats ruined the merchandise. He opened a flower shop, and the flowers died. He even tried to be a janitor, but his broom broke...!

Finally, he had enough. He thought long and hard until he came up with a brilliant idea. He went to the cemetery and dug a grave. He watched closely to make sure that the “poverty” shadowing him all his life followed him into the grave. Then, he quickly jumped out and covered the grave, burying “poverty” forever!

Sure enough the tables turned and he soon became very wealthy. When the High Holidays arrived and the *gabbai* in *shul* sold various *kibudim*, Yossel out-bid even Yankel, the

richest man in town. He became a sensation!

Yankel, however, was seething. No one dares outbid Yankel! When Yossel gleefully told Yankel his tall-tale of how he became so wealthy, Yankel decided to take revenge. He promptly went to the cemetery, found the grave and dug it open. Then he called out, “Okay ‘poverty’, you can come out now and return to Yossel...”

A sudden voice cried out, “Return to Yossel? Not a chance! Never! Just look what he did to me! You on the other hand, you seem like a nice guy...”

נמשל: The *Torah* describes the process of taking a collateral from a poor person. Each night it must be returned since the poor man needs his meager possessions. This, the *Torah* says, is called righteousness. We learn from here, that treating a poor man properly and respectfully makes a person into a *Tzaddik*, a righteous person. What an easy way to become a *Tzaddik*!

כי תצא מהנה על איביך ונשמרת מכל דבר רע ... (כג-י)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHILOMO

דרגה יתירה

In a fiery *shmuess* delivered by **R’ Gamliel Rabinowitz shlita** a number of years ago, he commented on an interesting phenomenon: how during *Elul* everyone is busy looking for *segulos* and mystical *kabbalos* to achieve the goal of *Teshuva* - repentance. Everyone is looking for the “easy way” out! That’s all great, he exclaimed, but how about learning *halacha*? How about opening up a *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and learning through the necessary and applicable laws? This is a great way to do *Teshuvah* - to come back to *Hashem*. By knowing the *halachos* and what He wants of you.

There are 74 *mitzvos* in *Parshas Ki Seitzai* which equals the *gematria* of “דע” - to KNOW! The greatest way to know an author is by studying his book. The greatest way to KNOW *Hashem*, is by studying the *Torah* which is *Hashem*’s will.

Learning the will of *Hashem* will actually teach us strategies to overcome the impulses of the heart and give us the tools to deal with difficult people and stressful situations in life. As **R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ז”ל** famously said at his *Rebbeztin’s* funeral, “Usually one asks *mechila* at a spouse’s funeral, but I have nothing to ask my wife forgiveness for, nor she from me. We lived every day of our lives according to the *Shulchan Aruch*!” R’ Shlomo Zalman was a great man, but he was still human! Anyone who is married knows that even in the best of relationships there may be quarrels and feelings can get hurt, even unintentionally. To live together for over sixty years and not have the need to ask forgiveness can only come from a life of pure *Torah* - from *הקירבת ה'*.

The number 74 - the amount of *mitzvos* in this week’s *parsha* - is also the numerical value of “עד” which means to bear witness, for only the laws of *Torah*, and how one keeps them properly and correctly, can bear testimony to a person’s true level of overcoming his *yetzer hara* and returning to *Hashem*. May we all be *zoche* to be such a witness.