

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ושרץ היאר צפרדעים ועלו ובאו בבויתך ובחור משכבך ועל מפתך ובבית עבדך ובעמך ובתנורך ובמשארותיך ... (כ-ו)

The *Gemara (Pesachim 53b)* tells us that *Chanania, Mishael and Azariah* learned from the example of the frogs in Egypt, who jumped into the ovens to do the will of *Hashem*, that they too should be prepared to be thrown into a fire. They reasoned that the frogs who were not commanded in the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, were nonetheless willing to go into a burning oven for the sake of sanctifying *Hashem's* name. All the more so (*kal v'chomer*), human beings like them, who are commanded in the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, should be willing to allow themselves to be thrown into the fire.

With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the famed *Mir Yeshivah* moved to Poltava, Ukraine for a number of years, and only returned in 1921 to its original building in the Polish town of Mir. The *yeshivah* blossomed, attracting students not only from Europe, but also from America, South Africa and Australia. By the time the second world war broke out, the *Mir Yeshivah* was one of the most prestigious institutions of *Torah* learning in the world. There was hardly a *Rosh Yeshivah* in all of Europe who had not studied in the Mir. Although this was clearly the golden age of the *Mir Yeshivah*, world politics had brought tension to all parts of Europe, and the little hamlet of Mir was not spared its own fair share.

With incredible *Hashgacha Pratis* and serendipity, the entire body of the *yeshivah* managed to escape through Russia. The story of the *Mir Yeshivah's* escape from war-torn Europe, to the foreign shores of Shanghai during the height of WWII, is legendary. At the start of the war, the *yeshivah* moved en masse to Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, where they remained for a while before applying and receiving destination visas to Curacao, a Dutch protectorate in the Caribbean, along with travel visas to Japan. The visa-granting actions of the Dutch and Japanese consuls in Vilna enabled the entire *yeshivah*, which traveled to Vladivostok on the Trans-Siberian Railway, to find safety in Kobe, Japan, before eventually settling in Shanghai, China, for the duration of the war. Miraculously, the *yeshivah* managed to survive intact with nary even a slight drop-off in the students' devotion and diligence in their learning.

When the students and faculty members of the *yeshivah* arrived in Shanghai, they were initially treated well by the local Chinese populace. These rag-tag war refugees were a novelty and the locals took pity on them. However, not everyone was thrilled at the arrival of these Jewish students. A clandestine group of Chinese ruffians, people who hated these and all Jews, could not handle the fact that they were being allowed to survive, and plotted against them. They secretly arranged to kill a wholesale number of European Jews inside the *yeshivah* building and set a plan in motion.

Their nefarious scheme might have worked if not for one Chinese local, a resident of Shanghai who did not dislike the Jews; he even had an affinity for these refugees. Again, through tremendous *Hashgacha*, the man uncovered the plot and surreptitiously informed the local authorities, resulting in a foiled plot. The gang did some sort of internal investigation and found out exactly who had snitched on them. This Chinese man was discovered by the group that planned the attack and had him killed in a brutal manner, so as to warn others.

When the story was revealed to the masses, the incident troubled the boys in the *Mir Yeshivah* immensely because this Chinese man saved many Jews from a horrific death, not for his honor or money, but because it was the right thing to do. Why did *Hashem* punish him like this, they wanted to know? Is this the reward for doing a good deed - even for a non-Jew?

They took their question to the famed *Mashgiach, R' Yechezkel (Chatzkel) Levenstein zt"l*, who lovingly guided the *Mir Yeshivah* during those difficult years. When they approached the door to his office, they heard him crying, "*Hashem*, this non-Jew was a wonderful man but he was not Jewish. This was the only time he helped boys in *yeshivah*, and yet You gave him a gift - to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*. I, Chatzkel, have served You faithfully my entire life and have helped boys many times. Why didn't You give me this present to be *Mekadesh Shem Shamayim* like this Chinese person?"

ביום ההוא אצמיה קרן לברית ישראל ... (חוקא! כג-כ)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Yechezkel HaNavi declares in the name of *Hashem* that "*On that day I will cause a horn to shoot up from the House of Israel.*" But what indeed is the "blossoming of the horn of Israel" in the midst of the downfall of Egypt? What does one have to do with the other?

Rashi and other *meforshim* have a difficult time explaining the literal meaning of this *posuk*, nevertheless, they explain that "*on that day*" is referring to the end of a forty-year period of exile when *Hashem* promises to gather the dispersed Egyptians and reunite their kingdom only to relegate them to the lowest realms of history and obscurity when the once mighty Egyptian kingdom will end up being a small insignificant nation with little to no power.

R' Alexander Zusia Friedman zt"l (Avnei Ezel) explains that the salvation of the Jewish people is like a plant, which can sprout up only after a seed has rotted away and it appears that no fruit could possibly come from it. Salvation and renewed strength will come to the Jewish people only after its fortunes have reached a low ebb and it would seem as if it were doomed to decay.

By seeing their oldest nemesis Egypt being reunited, *Klal Yisroel* would surely think that they are doomed forever. But at that very moment, *Hashem* will then relegate the Egyptian "seed" to the lowest levels of insignificance before He brings the Jewish people out of their exile to sprout into a great nation once again.

לכן אמר לבני ישראל אני ה' ... וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים ... (טז-י)

Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed to tell the *Yidden* "אני ה' - Who will redeem you. Why then, in the very next *posuk*, did he repeat those words "וידעתם כי אני ה'?" It would seem to be redundant. One thought that comes to mind is that the first time, *Moshe* was instructed to tell them "אני ה'". The second time, after they'd already seen the "גבורת ה'", it says "וידעתם כי אני ה'". You, on your own, will know, not only from what *Moshe's* telling you. Another idea is as follows: In *posuk* י', it says "ולקחתי" "אלוקיכם", adding the word "אלוקיכם". In the previous *posuk*, when *Hashem* demonstrates His might, the entire world realizes that He runs the world - that's ה' אני. But once *Hashem* says "ולקחתי אתכם לי" and chooses us as His people, it's a more personal and intimate relationship. Perhaps we can add a final *machshava* based on how the words of the **Chiddushei HaRim zt"l**, who beautifully explains the double *lashon* in the following *posuk*: "הוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלת מצרים. והצלתי אתכם מעבדתם. In *golus* we tend to get a bit too comfortable and begin to follow the behavior of the *goyim, r"l*. The initial impetus for us to do *teshuva*, is when we become disgusted by their ways. Thus, *Hashem* promises, "I'll take you out of *Mitzrayim* so you won't have to be influenced by the depravity of their lifestyle. Then you'll be ready for redemption."

There is an amusingly sad but all too true-sounding anecdote. *Eliyahu Hanavi* comes to a simple farmer and asks if he wants *Moshiach* to come. The farmer responds, how does it benefit me? *Eliyahu* answers, he'll redeem you and take you to *Eretz Yisroel* leaving your oppressors behind, never to bother you again. The farmer says let me ask my wife. Her response? Tell him that *Moshiach* should take all the *goyim* to *Eretz Yisroel*, and then we'll be able to live here in peace! Maybe that's what the *posuk* is saying. After *Hashem* enables us to purge that feeling of comfort in *golus*, we'll truly be able to appreciate what we've been missing, the magnificence of "אני ה' אלקיכם". We should live with this realization, so that we can be ready for the imminent *geula!*

משל למת הדבר דומה

ולא שמעו אל משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה ... (טז-י)

משל: After living in *Yerushalayim* for almost a year, the **Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum zt"l**, decided to relocate to America. One day, a very prominent *Torah* sage, **R' Asher Zelig Margulius zt"l**, came knocking at his door. He had heard about the *Rebbe's* impending move and came to dissuade him from going through with his decision.

"Our *Rebbe*, our leader," he addressed the *Satmar Rebbe*, "in whose care will you be leaving us, should you move to America? If, Heaven forbid, someone will face a misfortune, whom will he have to turn to?" he asked.

The *Rebbe* replied, "Let me give you some practical advice. If anyone seeks a blessing that will have an impact in Heaven, all he has to do is go to a *shul* and keep his eyes open during *Shacharis*. When the congregants roll up their

sleeves to place *Tefillin* on their forearms, watch for a person displaying a tattooed number engraved into his flesh. That is the person to whom you should turn, for after having gone through the purgatory of the concentration camps and the Holocaust, he was so totally cleansed and purified that his blessing surely has great weight in the Heavenly court."

נמשל: Among the many purposes of our enslavement in Egypt, one of the key purposes it served was a purification process for the Jewish nation. We are told this explicitly in *Parshas Vaeschanan (4-20)*, "*I [Hashem] have brought you out of Egypt, that iron blast furnace, to be G-d's very own people,*" meaning Egypt served as a furnace that purifies fine metals. This is a very important lesson that pertains to many of us. If, when faced with trials and tribulations, we can remind ourselves that there is also a beneficial cleansing in process, then the troubles will be a lot less painful.

ו'אמר משה לא נכון לשנות בן כי תועבת מצרים נובה לה' אלקינו הן נובה את תועבת מצרים (ה-כג)

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

דרגה יתירה

The true character of a person is how he lives his life when nobody is looking. Most of the things that we do in public, we do a certain way because we know people are watching us. Sometimes it is conscious and sometimes it is subconscious, but we often act differently when we are with others than when we are alone. This week's *parsha* gives us a deep and penetrating look into the greatest man who ever lived and how he became so great. The sensitivity of *Moshe Rabbeinu* goes beyond human comprehension. His deep feelings of right and wrong can boggle the mind of the most righteous among us.

After the first four plagues, Pharaoh finally gave permission for the Jews to bring *korbanos* to *Hashem* in Egypt. *Moshe* refused. Why? Explains the **Chasam Sofer zt"l** that when the *Mitzriyim* would see the Jews slaughtering sheep, which to them was their god, they would become so angry that they would wish to stone the Jews. However, they would not dare do so after being humbled and put in their place after four *makkos*. This would make them even more frustrated and *Moshe* felt that it was not proper to inflict this kind of psychological torture on the Egyptians. *Moshe* said, "*Lo Nachon Laasos Kein*" - it is not right to do this! It would not be the correct conduct for a Jew to cause harm or pain to another human being in this way. It doesn't matter that the Egyptians are killing and torturing us Jews! That has nothing to do with the way a Jew behaves. A Jew does not inflict unnecessary harm or pain on another human being, no matter what.

This is GADLUS! This is *Moshe Rabbeinu*! Only someone of his caliber could take into account the feelings of his own people's torturer. But this is what makes one truly great. When a person is able to take himself OUT of the equation and truly see the WHOLE picture with perfect clarity. Every one of us, in our own lives, can try to go that extra mile, by truly feeling the pain or joy of others and showing them how much we care, because this is what makes one into a greater person.