

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

פה אל פה אדבר בו ומראה ולא בחידות ותמנת ה' יבית ומדוע לא יראתם לומר בעבדי במשה ... (יב-ה)

The *Torah* records how Miriam expressed concern to her brother Aharon about a certain aspect of Moshe's behavior, yet *Hashem* felt it was inappropriate. *Hashem* reprimanded Moshe's siblings, ultimately punishing Miriam, saying, "Mouth to mouth do I speak to him (Moshe), in a clear vision and not in riddles, at the image of Hashem does he gaze. Why did you not fear to speak against My servant, against Moshe?" The **Seforno** on this *posuk* explains that "riddles" refer to "mashalim, parables, which are often used (in a "light" manner) to understand the meaning of a passage (Zechariah 4,5). Other prophets understood such parables without an angel needed to help them, such as Yirmiyahu (1-12) and even Bilaam sometimes revealed the parable he himself had been shown as the Divine message (Bamidbar 23-7) he was revealing."

There was once a certain *bochur* who reached marriageable age, a fine boy who had all the attributes that one seeks in a prospective son-in-law. He was diligent in learning, a *talmid chacham*, and good-looking as well. This *bochur* was suggested as a match to marry the daughter of the great sage, **R' Akiva Eiger ז"ל**. In those days, when a *bochur* was ready to marry a certain young woman, the father of the girl would test his knowledge. Nowadays, a young man prepares himself in one passage of *Gemara*, learns the commentaries of the *Rishonim*, looks through some of the explanations of the *Acharonim*, and voila! - he knows how to speak intelligently about that passage. In those days, things were a little bit different. They used to sit the *bochur* down and place many types of food before him. He would have to determine on which food a blessing should be said first. After he had made his decision, he would have to explain his choice according to the different opinions of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. In order to do this, he had to be familiar with many laws regarding the blessings recited over food. For example, he would have to know the *Gemara* which states that should one wish to eat more than one of the "שבעת המינים" (Seven Species) for which the Land of Israel is praised, the order of the blessings is as follows: Whatever species is closer to the word "ארץ" (land) in the *posuk*, "a land of wheat, barley..." (Devarim 8-8) is taken first (*Berachos 41a*), and many other *halachos* of *birchos hanehenin*, the blessings recited over food, spices, etc.

The *bochur* in question came to R' Akiva Eiger's house to speak to the *Rav* about marrying his daughter. R' Akiva Eiger could see all of the young man's fine traits, and agreed to test him. He set out many types of food on the table, and the *bochur* picked up an egg. R' Akiva Eiger asked him why he had made that choice, and the lad went through all the pertinent details.

R' Akiva Eiger was from Poland, so when he asked the *bochur* why he had chosen the egg, he pronounced the word for egg, "Bytzah." The *bochur*, being of Lithuanian origin, pronounced the word for egg, "Baytzah."

Trying to lighten the mood, the *bochur* commented to R' Akiva Eiger wittily, "Respectfully, I have a proof that the Polish pronunciation of 'Bytzah,' is more correct than the *Litvish* way." R' Akiva Eiger asked him to explain.

"The *posuk* in *Bereishis* states that when *Hashem* told Avraham Avinu to travel, he pitched his tent in a spot where בית אל - 'Beis El was to the west and Aiy was to the east.' The words 'והעי מקדם' can also be translated to mean 'And the aiy (egg in Yiddish) has precedence.' Thus, we see that the Polish pronunciation of 'aiy' is correct."

Nowadays we would consider this to be another plus, that the young man has a good sense of humor. However, R' Akiva Eiger looked at the *bochur* sternly and asked, "But what does that have to do with *birchos hanehenin*?"

"No, no," the *bochur* explained, "I was just using a *mashal*. It was a joke."

"A joke? A joke! That means you are a jester! The *posuk* says (*Tehillim 1-1*) not to even sit in the company of jesters! How could I possibly do a *shidduch* with you?"

So saying, R' Akiva Eiger sent away the *bochur*, despite all of his desirable attributes. To R' Akiva Eiger, the words of the *posuk* are the words of *Hashem* - and *Hashem* doesn't talk in riddles or make jokes. (From a Pure Fire, Shmuessen of Rav Moshe Aharon Stern)

כה אמר ה' ונתתי לך מהלכים כן העמרים האלה ... (יבד-ג')

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

In the prophecy of *Zecharia HaNavi*, *Hashem* charged *Yehoshua Kohen Gadol* with the following: "If you [*Klal Yisroel*] walk in My paths and keep My charge, you in turn will rule My House and guard My courts, and I will permit you to move about among these attendants [angels]." The question is what indeed does the Almighty mean when He says that *Klal Yisroel* would be permitted to move freely amongst the ministering angels? Is this physically possible or metaphorically speaking? Spiritual?

R' Ahron Kotler ז"ל (*Mishnas Rebbi Ahron*) explains that a person can never remain stagnate in his divine service for one is either growing in *Avodas Hashem*, or he is on a downward spiral. If a person chooses to not adhere to the will

of the Almighty, he is in essence subverting it. Additionally, the very notion of a physical human being permitted to "walk amongst the angels" seems unlikely, and there is obviously a connection between the spiritual world above and the physical world below that enables *Torah* Jews to bridge that seemingly impossible divide. It is not a physical "bridge" that connects a Jew to Heaven, but a Jew has the ability climb it.

Therefore, since a person must always be rising in his service of *Hashem*, it stands to reason that just as an angel lives on a high spiritual level, so too, a Jew adhering to the will of *Hashem* will find himself living on such a high plateau that the divide between ministering angels and a human *Torah* Jew will start to become blurred.

ומכן המשים שנה ישוב מצנח העבודה ולא יעבד עוד ... (ה-ה)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ז"ל

מחשבת הלב

A *Ben Levi*, when he reaches the age of 50, does not continue his physical service but instead receives other service opportunities. **Rashi** cites an example "אבל חוזר הוא לנעילת השערים". The *Levi* can't perform any *עבודה* work, but is in charge of closing the gates. Why do *Chazal* mention only closing of the gates and not their opening as well?

Perhaps we can explain with a story. At the *חנות אבן הפינה* of the *Volozhiner Yeshivah*, **R' Chaim Volozhiner ז"ל** shed copious tears. Years later, **R' Berel Soloveitchik ז"ל** explained the reason for these tears. To open a *yeshivah* is one thing but to have the courage and wisdom to know when to close it - that takes herculean strength. R' Chaim was *davening* that if ever need be, he would have the conviction and moral clarity to close its doors. And this is what happened. The *goyim* sought to undermine the *yeshivah's* purity by introducing and mandating the study of secular studies, which at the time was a breach in the *mesoras haTorah*. The *Roshei Yeshivah* convened and decided it was better not to have the *yeshivah* at all, than to have the influence of modernization and assimilation present. They locked the doors and closed the *yeshivah* until the danger passed.

Hence, these "retired" *Bnei Levi*, who possessed life's wisdom were tasked not with opening the doors, which could be done by others, but rather with closing the gates, to have the inner strength to maintain the purity of *Hashem's* sanctuary. (see **Sfas Emes**)

My dear uncle told me a *vort* related to last week which complements this *machshava*. At *Matan Torah*, *Klal Yisroel* didn't ask "מה כתיב בה", as the other nations did, but if we had, what would *Hashem* have answered? The **sefer Eretz Tzvi** says that a *Yid's* greatest ambition in life is *kirvas Elokim*. At *Har Sinai*, we were not permitted to approach the mountain; we must observe from afar. That is a *Yid's nisayon*! Beautiful! To open the gates and enter the *Mikdash* is much easier than closing those gates and staying away. But as *Yidden* we know that it's all one and the same goal. To do the *ratzon Hashem* and לעשות נחת רוח ליעזרו.

משל למה הדבר דומה

המקנה אתה לי ומי יתן כל עם ה' נביאים ... (יא-כט)

With a reputation as a *gaon* and a *tzaddik* preceding him, **R' Avraham Dovid of Buchatch ז"ל**, was appointed *Av Beis Din* of the city while still a young man. When he arrived in Buchatch, the entire city honored him by turning out to greet him - except one person, R' Abbale. As a community leader, a *talmid chacham* and a wealthy, distinguished individual, he refused to even sign the certificate of *Rabbonus* on the grounds that R' Avraham Dovid was too young.

A few days after the rabbi's arrival, R' Abbale's assistant appeared before him complaining that R' Abbale refused to pay him for his services. R' Avraham Dovid immediately sent his assistant to summon R' Abbale to a *din Torah*. However, the man returned from R' Abbale with a message to tell the *Rav* that he was a greater *lamdan* than the *Rav*, and

that he ought not to interfere in his business. The assistant was dispatched once more with a warning that if R' Abbale didn't show up for a *din Torah*, he would be placed in *cherem*.

When R' Abbale heard the assistant's message, he went to R' Avraham Dovid, kissed his forehead and asked to sign the certificate appointing him *Rav* of the city. He explained that in fact his assistant had no complaint against him at all. The entire story was concocted as a test to see if the new rabbi would try and curry favor with a powerful community leader, or would he stick to his guns. When R' Abbale saw that the young *Rav* was not afraid to uphold the *Torah*, he was convinced of R' Avraham Dovid's worthiness to the position.

There is a profound lesson here from Moshe, who upon seeing that there were people worthy of continuing the leadership of *Klal Yisroel*, didn't feel threatened for his own *kavod*. He was happy to do whatever was the will of *Hashem*!

ויהי העם כמתאננים דע באזני ה' וישמע ה' ויודי אפו ותבער כם אש ... (יא-ה)

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

דרגה יתירה

Rashi comments that when the *Misonenim* were complaining, they had no real cause to complain! They were looking for an excuse to separate themselves from *Hashem*, so as to not feel obligated to keep His laws! Complaining, very often, is just a way of justifying one's own negative behavior and lack of motivation to do what is right. It is the cause of so many *tzaros* in *Klal Yisroel*. The *Meraglim* in next week's *parsha* complained about *Eretz Yisroel* and because they cried tears for no reason, *Hashem* gave us many reasons to cry over the centuries of Jewish history. The *Meraglim* CHOSE to see the negative in *Eretz Yisroel* because of their own personal agenda! We, too, must realize that when we complain, there is usually no reason to complain. We have to ask ourselves, what is my underlying motive for saying these negative words? There is usually a reason.

When you complain, you become plain. You rob yourself of the ability to be a great person, because you are pulling yourself down and away from happiness and *Kirvas Elokim*. Ultimately, a person who goes through life complaining is robbing himself of all the wonderful things in his life that he does have, but does not see! If a person has a gift but does not appreciate it, it is as if he does not have it. Imagine if you would wake up every morning only with the gifts that you appreciated yesterday.

But *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, in His infinite and endless kindness and *rachmanus*, does not turn off the air if we don't appreciate it. He continues to shower us with millions of blessings every day no matter if we acknowledge them or not.

By focusing on the negative and failing to appreciate all the good we have, is not only a *potch* in the Divine face, but it is a *potch* in our own face! The one who loses out the most is you. The more heightened our appreciation is for anything, the more we will enjoy it and the more pleasure we will have. Happy people are those who choose to focus on their gifts and don't complain about things they cannot change. In fact, they understand that these challenges are also gifts from *Hashem* to help them grow!