

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ושמרתם את כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוה היום למען תחוקו ובאתם וירשתם את הארץ ... (א-ה)

It is well-known that Soviet Jews, through no fault of their own, were denied even the most basic Jewish knowledge. With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Jewish schools were shut down. Jewish *seforim* and books were destroyed and ritual objects destroyed. Germany tried to wipe out the Jews, while the Soviets tried to wipe out Judaism.

There was one man who gave body and soul to sustain the *Torah* under the nose of the extremist, anti-Semitic Bolsheviks. His name was **R' Yehoshua Horodner ז"ל** and he defied the Soviets throughout the 1920's, even into the 1930's. The legendary **Chofetz Chaim ז"ל** called R' Yehoshua an "*Eved Hashem*" - a true "servant of *Hashem*."

R' Yaakov Kaminetzky ז"ל once related the following story: In the city of Minsk, under Soviet rule, Rav Horodner maintained a *yeshivah*. He taught *Torah* and learned with students under tremendous duress. How did he manage to do what no other rabbi or teacher, no matter how wealthy, clever, connected, or committed, managed to do in the former Soviet Union? Well, he had a trick of sorts, similar to the Jews in the times of the *Chashmonaim*. Rav Horodner would stand outside his *yeshivah* in Minsk and pretend to be washing the windows or sweeping up. All the while, he was singing a tune. If anyone he suspected of being a Soviet agent approached or appeared suspicious, he quickly changed his tune - a signal to the students to flee via the back windows and disperse.

One day, in 1933, he was summoned to Moscow by the NKVD, the infamous precursor to the KGB. He was not told in advance what this "meeting" was about but it was fair to say that when someone got "called in" by the NKVD, it was not for a pleasant social visit. R' Yehoshua did not appear nervous - he knew better than anyone, that it was all up to *Hashem*.

When he arrived, he was made to wait in a cold anteroom for several hours, to work up his terror. Many a suspect, would lose his will to defy the Soviets in that dreary anteroom. After many long hours, he was suddenly summoned to another room. There, the chief officer called him into another even more private room and said to him, "Rabbi, I have known about your activities for a long time, and we have a file on you this big." He spread his hands far apart and took out a bulging file to prove it. R' Yehoshua glanced at the file - it was truly huge and intimidating.

Without warning, the officer suddenly changed his cold and official tone. "Rabbi Horodner, do you remember Chaikheh the widow from the Brisk railroad-station area?" Rabbi Horodner said he did not. He had lived in many places and knew people from all over, that it was difficult for him to keep track of them all.

"Well, I am her son. Yes, I am a Jew like you. You would bring us clothing, shoes, and food from time to time. I recall that one evening, the night before Passover, we did not have enough food and my mother came to your house after you had already distributed everything you collected for the poor. You took a utensil of pure silver out of your closet and gave it to her to sell for buying holiday provisions. We most likely would have starved if not for you," said the officer.

Now, he looked at R' Yehoshua with a sense of Jewish mercy. "Out of respect and gratitude, I will destroy this file, but you must cease your activities of propagating religion because in half-a-year I will be promoted and will not be in a position to protect you from my successor. The best advice is for you to try to leave the country before I leave my post."

Six months later, Rabbi Horodner successfully left the USSR and arrived in the Holy Land, having received his exit papers through another Soviet officer whose needy family he had sustained before the revolution at great self-sacrifice. However, upon his move, it signaled the end of the *yeshivah* in Minsk. The voice of *Torah* in that great city where it had not lapsed for generations, was silenced. It took an unbending integrity, a love of *Hashem*, which drove His servant, R' Yehoshua Horodner, to put his body and welfare at risk to sustain this holy community longer than any other person, and any other Jewish community, under Soviet rule. (Adapted from **The Unexpected Road**, by **Rabbi Hillel Goldberg**)

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

The *Haftorah* of "ותאמר ציון עובדי ה'" describes the feeling of hopelessness and abandonment felt by *Klal Yisroel* in the aftermath of the devastating *Churban*. *Yeshaya HaNavi* says; "*Tzion [Klal Yisroel] said, Hashem has forsaken me, and Hashem has forgotten me.*" If *Hashem* had forsaken the Nation, then surely He had forgotten the Jews as well! Plus, when the *Navi* uses the word "עובדי" - abandonment, he juxtaposes it with *Hashem's* special four-letter ineffable Name; but when he uses the word "שכחתי" - forgetting, *Yeshaya* uses *Hashem's* name of mastery - "*Adnus.*" Why?

R' Levi Yitzchok M'Berdichev ז"ל (Kedushas Levi) explains that the term "abandonment" applies to one whose affinity to a person or thing from the start was unconnected

to any favor done for them and now no longer recalls their original kinship. On the other hand, "שכחתי" - forgetting, is applicable to one who received a favor but does not recall what was done. The Name of *Hashem* has no relatable characteristic and is thus connected to the term of abandonment since *Hashem's* affinity for *Klal Yisroel* is purely out of His love for us. However, His Name of mastery indicates the attribute of kingship which comes through the Jewish people who accepted the *Torah* and His Kingship upon themselves, because there is no king without a people. So, it is separate. *Klal Yisroel* cried about the perceived abandonment of *Hashem's* unchangeable love, as well as the seeming forgetfulness of them even though they accepted *Hashem's Torah* and His Kingship.

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

ותאמר ציון עובדי ה' ואדני שכחתי (ישעי' פס-ה)

ואפן וארד מן ההר והדר בער באש ושני לוחת הברית על שתי ידי ... (ב-ט)

לעלמי נשמח אבנו מורנו הרבנו הרב חיים וסוף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ"ל

מחשבת הל"ב

A perfunctory glance of this *posuk* shows nothing that appears to be inaccurate. We have all been taught since children that *Har Sinai* was rimmed with a tremendous fire during *Matan Torah*. However, a closer look raises the following question. *Moshe Rabbeinu* said, "When I descended the mountain forty days later א'יהרר בוער באש' - in other words, even after the *Ma'amad of Har Sinai*, the fire was still burning strong. Why wasn't the fire already out?

There is another famous query. On *Shavuos* we celebrate *Kabolas HaTorah*. Why weren't the *luchos* destroyed? Many answers are given to reconcile this dilemma. One answer is that although we may have physically lost those *luchos*, it is still possible to attain a "smidgen" of that level. As we know the *shivrei luchos* are *munachin ba'aron* (resting in the Holy Ark) for a reason. Perhaps this thought can help us resolve our original question too. The mountain was still burning showing us that it is still within our reach to strive for the *madreiga* of those *luchos*, that lofty revelation.

Another *machshava* can be as follows. *Chazal* tell us that every day a *bas kol* emanates from *Har Sinai* and says, "Woe to man because of the shame of the *Torah.*" Who, may we ask, hears this Divine voice, and what is its purpose?

Some *meforshim* explain that inside each of us, at certain intervals in our lives, we hear that *bas kol*. It exhorts us: "*Nu*, why are you doing that? You know it is wrong and you must refrain. Why aren't you learning or serving *Hashem* as well as you can?" Our job is to hear that message and internalize it to the best of our ability.

In a similar vein, maybe that is why it says "ויהרר בוער באש" - the mountain inside of us is still "בוער" (burning, present tense). This should create the burning desire to continue growing and elevating our *ruchniyus*. כן יהי רצון.

משל למת הדבר דומה

ועתה ישראל מה ה' אלקיך שואל מעמך כי אם ליראה ... (י-יב)

R' Yehoshua (Shia) Freund ז"ל was considered one of the most influential *Rabbanim* in Hungary in the late 1700's. The King of Hungary adored him and enjoyed hearing his opinion on matters of the Kingdom. In return for Rav Freund's expertise in many matters, the king decided to make a unique scepter, fit for a king, for his close confidante, Rav Shia Freund. It was constructed of pure gold, and included a number of exquisite drawings on it. The only problem was that the scepter was topped with a cross!

The rabbi contemplated long and hard what to do about this predicament. To meet the king without this special scepter was unthinkable, yet walking around with a scepter that contained a cross on it was also not an acceptable option. Ultimately, his Fear of Heaven prevailed and he removed the cross that was on the top of the scepter. He placed his full

trust in the Hand of *Hashem*. Whatever will be His will, will be so for a purpose and only *Hashem* knows.

The next time he went to see the king, he walked in with the scepter, well aware of the consequences that awaited him. Sure enough, the king noticed right away and inquired about it. "Your majesty," Rav Freund replied, "the scepter was too tall for his servant, so the top was removed."

Naturally, the answer didn't sit quite well with the king. "Why didn't you chop off the bottom?" the king asked.

"Well," replied the rabbi, "his majesty surely understands that the problem is with the top - it was too short!" For some reason the king understood his line of thought and let him go.

נמשל: Real *Yiras Shamayim* means placing the will of *Hashem* above all other objectives in the world. Anything and everything a person does should be for the honor of *Hashem*. If it isn't the absolute will of *Hashem* it is an unthinkable course of action to take.

למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה וכו' כימי השמים על הארץ ... (א-ב)

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

דרגה יתירה

The *Torah* describes our reward as, "*Heavenly Days upon the Earth.*" What is meant by these words that we recite every day in *Krias Shema*? How does one make his days on this earth "Heavenly"?

R' Elya Lopian ז"ל cites Chana, the mother of *Shmuel Hanavi*, as an example of one whose days upon this earth were truly "*himmeldik.*" When Chana was begging *Hashem* for a child, she said the following words: "*Hashem*, You created every part of my body for a reason. Eyes to see. Ears to hear. Hands to feel. Feet to walk. You have also given me the organs to give birth and nourish a child. Should these organs go to waste?" *Hashem* heard Chana's heartfelt prayers and blessed her with a child who grew up to become the great *Shmuel Hanavi*.

R' Elya writes that these words that Chana cried out are so powerful that any woman who wishes to bear children should say them words and her prayers will be answered, as were Chana's. However, it's not only what Chana said that was so powerful; it was also the message she was conveying. She cried out to *Hashem*, "You created every part of a human body for a reason, and what did I do with every part of my body? With my eyes, I was careful to see only good. With my ears, I only listened to holy words. With my hands I did acts of *chessed* and righteousness. With my feet I ran to do *mitzvos*! THEREFORE, since I used the parts of my body to do Your will, *Hashem*, please allow me now to give birth and nourish a child with the parts of MY body that YOU gave me!"

This is the *סגולה* - the secret to the success of Chana's prayer to *Hashem*, and this is the meaning of living one's days upon this earth in a "HEAVENLY" manner. By utilizing every part of our earthly bodies for good, for *ratzon Hashem*, the true purpose for which they were created, this is deemed a heavenly, spiritual life upon this physical earth.