



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלה מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבנים ... (מגילת אסתר ט-כב)

The amazing story of **R' Michael Ber Weissmandel ז"ל** and the way he survived World War II is truly inspiring. When the war broke out, he quickly realized the horrific extent of Germany's plans for his Jewish brethren. His creativity and understanding of human nature, though, told him there was a way to at least delay the menace: the Nazis could be bribed. With supreme daring and ingenuity, he and a small "Working Group" managed to hold off the deportation of Slovakian Jews for almost two years, from 1942 till 1944. This created a window of opportunity through which thousands of Slovaks escaped. During that time he worked to save individuals and whole communities with every fiber of his being, communicated with the Nazi beasts themselves, the Allied powers, the Zionist groups, and international Jewish agencies.

Tragically, a lack of funds and apathy from overseas, along with assimilated Jews' distrust of "ultra-Orthodox" rabbis, conspired to thwart his plans. Nevertheless, thousands of Jews escaped certain murder through his assistance. However, as a well-known presence and guardian of Slovakian Jewry, he was also a prime target of the Nazis. He was able to evade capture for some time but eventually the Nazi sadist in charge of Slovakian deportations, Alois Brunner ym's, made it his prime goal of capturing the renowned Rabbi Weissmandel, and before long, he was caught and placed on a cattle car to Auschwitz.

But R' Michael Ber came prepared and snuck a small saw with him which he used to cut through the wooden boards of the train doors. When he opened up a hole large enough for a person to fit through, he begged his family and the other Jews on the train to jump out. But they were petrified at the thought of hurtling from a speeding train and in the end, only R' Michael Ber jumped off and saved himself. He was sure that his wife and children would see his example and follow him but when he realized that they were not coming, his heart was torn asunder and he never fully recovered from the pain of their loss.

Through his networks, he had been made aware of a secret bunker set up for Slovakian Jews by a kind Slovakian gentile who allowed Jews to stay there protected from the authorities. By the time R' Michael Ber reached the confines of the bunker, seventeen Jews, including the holy personage of the **Stropkover Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Halberstam ז"ל**, were already living there. It was said that when the *Rebbe* came to the bunker and asked to be let in, the people there would only do so if he blessed them and "guaranteed" that they would all survive. He did so and not one person from the bunker was lost!

Life in the bunker was menial and at times interminable. The men used their time to learn *Torah*, and the women took care of the cooking and laundry. The kind Slovak provided them with food and raw goods, and tried to acquire whatever they requested of him. It was hot and stuffy inside and there was very little to do in the bunker.

Among the group residing in the bunker were a number of teenaged girls, and one day, R' Michael Ber noticed that some of the young girls were hiding some inappropriate reading material which they surreptitiously looked at throughout the day. Apparently, they had asked the Slovak gentile to procure them some reading material to while away the long hours of boredom and he had brought them whatever he found. How was he to know what was appropriate and what was not?

As the weather began to moderate, the holiday of *Purim* arrived and the Jews inside the bunker were determined to keep the spirit of the holiday and the *mitzvos*, as best as they were able. There was one single cube of sugar in the bunker and every one took turns passing it to the next person. In this way, they fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos*.

Suddenly, R' Michael Ber thought of an idea. Turning to the girls, he said, "We have given each other a 'gift' with this cube and done our best to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos*. Now let us give *Mishloach Manos* to the One Above, *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. Let us offer Him a gift as well. If we were to get rid of these books and papers which a Jewish daughter has no business reading anyway, surely *Hashem* will look favorably on this 'present' that we are presenting to Him. Maybe this merit will see us all through to the end of this bitter war." The girls agreed and the books were tossed.

הלוא אם קיפון אתה בעיניך ראש שבמי ישראל אתה ... (שמיאל א' יז-יח)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

The *HafTORah* of *Parshas Zachor* details *Shaul HaMelech's* blunder in his war with Amalek and how he allowed a few cattle to live despite *Shmuel HaNavi's* clear instructions from *Hashem* to wipe out the tyrannical nation entirely. After a brief discussion Shmuel said to Shaul, "You may look small to yourself, but you are the head of the nation of Israel... Why did you disobey Hashem?"

The question is what does one have to do with the other? Surely, even if Shaul had not seen himself as small, he would have no excuse not to heed the word of *Hashem*?

The **Dinover Rav, R' Tzvi Elimelech Shapira ז"ל** explains that while humility is a positive trait, it often makes a person doubt himself resulting in him seeking out council

from someone seemingly higher than himself. Although *Shaul HaMelech* was a model of humility, he still possessed the capability to make clear decisions - as was the case with allowing the Amaleki sheep to be left alive. He determined on his own that while the Amaleki people were deserving of extermination, the animals probably did nothing wrong and could be left alive. As such, he did not heed the council of *Shmuel HaNavi*, and he did not listen to the word of *Hashem*.

This explains why Shmuel started by saying that although Shaul may possess humility and may be small in his own eyes, he must remember that he is the King of Israel, and he must adhere to *Hashem's* word and not make unilateral decisions on whether to listen to the Almighty or not.

המור הרביעי תרשיש ושהם וישפה משכנים זהב יהיו כמלואתם ... (כח-כ)

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

# מחשבת הלב

Each one of the stones on the *Choshen* corresponds to a different *Shevet*. Thus, "ישפה" was Binyamin's stone. The *Medrash* explains that "ישפה" is comprised of two words, "יש פה" - there is a mouth. This alludes to the fact that Rachel, Binyamin's mother, didn't disclose to *Yaakov Avinu* that Leah was being offered in her stead.

Binyamin too, didn't reveal to his father, Yosef's whereabouts. It was therefore appropriate that this stone should allude to that legacy. This trait seems to have been hereditary. The *Gemara (Megillah 13b)* says, ויבוכו צניעות שהיתה בה ברחל, וזתה, "יבוכות צניעות שהיתה בה ברחל, וזתה, ויצאה ממנה שאול ... זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר" exemplified by Rochel, Binyamin, Shaul, and *Esther Hamalka*.

The question is why was this stone called "ישפה"? The trait of oratory discretion should have been called "אין פה", no mouth. Answers the **Chiddushei Harim ז"ל**, if people speak impulsively, with little or no control over what escapes their lips, and later regrets it, that shows that they do not own that mouth. True possession is the ability to exercise total control and not utter a solitary peep, even when one has plenty to say. Hence it was called "יש פה", as they exhibited total ownership of their mouths, knowing when and how to use it ... and more importantly, when not to.

The *posuk* in *Tehillim* (לחיד) says, "ואני כחרש לא אשמע וכאלם לא יפתח פי". Why does the *posuk* begin in first person - I - and continue in third person - his mouth? Perhaps this teaches us a method to help control what we say. If we view our mouth as not belonging to us, but rather as a vehicle to serve our Creator, it will be that much easier to remain silent. And as *Chazal* teach us, "וכל רגע ורגע שהאדם חוסם את פיו, זוכה בשבילו לאור הגנון שאין מלאך ובר' יכולים לשער",

May we all be *zocheh* to bask in the אור הנצח of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ועשיית מעיל ... פעמון זהב ורמון ... (כה-לא"ה)

**משל**: A story is told about a fellow who approached the holy **Chofetz Chaim ז"ל**, with a request to purchase all of his *seforim* - except one, his magnum opus *Sefer Chofetz Chaim*. "I don't want that one," the man explained, "because it talks about guarding your mouth, and for me it's too hard to control myself, so I think I'll pass on that *sefer*."

When the *Chofetz Chaim* heard this, he responded with the following account: When I was preparing to write this *sefer*, I asked the *Gadol Hador, R' Yisroel Salanter ז"ל*, whether it was perhaps better not to write it, since *Chazal* teach us that everyone transgresses the prohibition of *avak lashon hara*, and we know it's better to be a *shogeg*, a mistaken sinner, than a *maizid*, a rebel. By not informing them of the severity of the sin, I'll prevent them from

intentionally transgressing it.

R' Yisroel responded, "It's worth writing the entire *sefer Chofetz Chaim* if even one person will speak *lashon hara* with a *krechtz*, a sigh. The value of that one *krechtz* is so great that it's worth writing the entire *sefer* so that even if someone will speak *lashon hara*, at least he'll do it with a sigh!"

**ניסל**: *Chazal* say the *meil* and it's noise-making paraphernalia, the pomegranates and bells, atone for *lashon hara*, a noisemaking sin. The *Chofetz Chaim* explains, based a *Gemara (Sanhedrin 99b)*, that the noisy bells represent the times a person should make noise - learning *Torah*, whereas the pomegranates that don't make noise, represent all other times - when a person ought to keep his mouth shut lest he say the wrong things. As brought earlier, *Chazal* say most people, when they open their mouth, end up saying *avak lashon hara*, a sin of epic proportions!

ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל ויקחו אליך שמן ויתן וך כתית למאור להעלת נר תמיד ... (כו-כ)

INSIGHTFUL TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRA TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY BY R' MOSHE GELB

# וינפש

The *Torah* tells us that oil must be pressed from olives for the purpose of lighting the *Menorah*. However, *Chazal* expound on the above *posuk* - "כתתו עצמכם על דברי תורה" - the only way one can access the *Maor HaTorah*, the eternal light contained in the words of the *Torah*, is through *Yegias HaTorah*, by pressing and exerting oneself in his learning. To illustrate this, the **Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh** brings in the name of the *Zohar*, that the first three exiles were redeemed in the merit of the *Avos*, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov respectively, whereas our current and final exile will be redeemed in the merit of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. And he writes that it is for this reason that the final *galus* has gone on for so long: as long as Moshe, the teacher of *Torah* to *Klal Yisrael*, sees that the Jewish people are not exerting themselves in their learning enough, that it's not למאור כתית, that there is a lack of עזמכם על דברי תורה - he is not interested in the *Geulah! Haflah V'feleh!* It goes that far!

This is one of the big lessons of *Purim* - "קימו מה שקבלו כבר". For as the *Medrash Tanchuma* explains, although at *Har Sinai* the Jewish people accepted *Torah Shebiksav*, they were afraid to accept *Torah Shebal Peh*, due to the sweat and toil that they would have to invest in plumbing its depths. But after witnessing their miraculous salvation on the wonderful *Yom Tov* of *Purim*, the Jewish people recommitted themselves to *Torah* and fully accepted that *cheilek* of *Limud HaTorah* as well.

This is a bit of a personal question, but how long has it been since we really worked hard and "hureved" over a *sugya* like we did in *yeshivah*, breaking our heads over the *Gemara* and going through it *b'iyun*? Yes, without an Artscroll or *Mesivta Gemara*, or *Reid Bites! Morai V'rabbosai*, let's rise to the call of the hour, the *ikvasa d'Meshichah*, and rededicate ourselves to *ameilus baTorah* - whether to add an *iyun seder* with a *chavrusa*, or to learn carefully and with more clarity whatever *limud* we are learning now - so that our beloved *Moshe Rabbeinu* will finally be happy to declare: NOW is the time for the *Geulah!*