

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וראה כל העם אשר אתה בקרבך את מעשה ה' כי נורא הוא אשר אני עשה עמך ... (ד-)

The *yeshivos* in Europe were unlike the *yeshivos* in our days. Today, the *yeshivos* take full care of all the needs of the *bachurim*, but it wasn't so in Europe. The *yeshivos* didn't have dormitories; most *bachurim* were far from home, and so boys would sleep on the benches in the local *shul*. Even then, the benches weren't enough for all the boys; often only the older *bachurim* had the privilege of sleeping on a bench! The younger *bachurim* had to sleep on the floor.

One particular thirteen-year-old boy was having a hard time sleeping on the floor and was getting tired of *yeshivah* life. One day, he received a telegram from his elderly uncle who ran a successful business in a distant town. It read: "We are offering you to take over our successful business. We don't have any descendants to continue it, and you're the most capable relative to run it, so please come and we will set you up."

The boy was very tempted by the offer. He wouldn't have this discomfort anymore. Sleeping on a cold floor in a wintery night wasn't enjoyable, and with uncomfortable sleep every night, he asked himself what he was really gaining out of *yeshivah*? "I can't continue like this," he told himself, "enough is enough. I'm going to take him up on the offer."

The night before he planned to leave the *yeshivah*, the door of the *shul* opened, and a woman who had just lost her husband walked in with a stack of blankets. Her late husband owned a textile shop, and she was giving the *bachurim* what she hadn't sold from her business. All the *bachurim*, especially this boy, happily took of her gift.

Many years later, in 1976, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Ponovezh*, **HaGaon HaRav Elazar Menachem Man Schach zt"l**, called his grandson into his office and asked for a favor. "We need to go Haifa today," he told him. "There's a woman who passed away, and I want to be at her *levayah*."

The grandson complied, and they drove through a driving rain to the cemetery in Haifa. However, the grandson was surprised to see how few people were there. Only eight men had shown up and R' Schach and he completed the *minyán*. This perked up the grandson's curiosity. "Why is my holy *Zaida* partaking in this *levayah*?"

The rain persisted through the *levayah*, and after she was buried, everyone quickly made their way back to their cars. The grandson brought R' Schach to the passenger seat, but R' Schach didn't immediately get in, instead standing out in the rain for a few more moments. Eventually, he got back into the car, and they drove back to *Bnei Brak*.

R' Schach was aware of his grandson's wonder, and so he explained himself. "This woman was responsible for making me who I am. If not for her, I wouldn't have continued in *yeshivah*, and I wouldn't have become the *Rosh Yeshivah*. It was this lady who was the woman who gave us the blankets that fateful night when I was ready to leave the *yeshivah* and run my uncle's successful business. I had been so cold, so fatigued, and was ready to take up his offer. When she arrived and gave us those blankets, it gave me the courage to stay on, and I declined my uncle's offer."

"But what was the reason," asked the grandchild, "that you stayed out in the rain when we'd gotten back to the car?"

"I wanted to remember what it felt like to lie on the floor every night on those cold wintery days, and what her gift had spared me from feeling. That way, I can properly appreciate what she did for me."

R' Schach's grandson explained that there are several lessons to take from his grandfather's actions. First is the degree to what R' Schach did to show his *hakaras hatov* to a woman who helped him many years earlier, going all the way to Haifa amidst his busy schedule. Also important is how R' Schach wanted to feel the discomfort of the cold and rainy day to properly appreciate the *chessed* that she did all those years prior. But third, and perhaps most important of all, is that her *chessed* had an unbelievable effect which saved an entire generation. Indeed, the *mitzvos* that we do have unbelievable power to them. Sometimes we're given a picture of the effects, and sometimes not, but the effects are there regardless. (Stories to Inspire)

ידי סימן לבנים ודבר ה' היה אל אליהו... (מלכים א' ה-א)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

With *Klal Yisroel* sinning indiscriminately, *Hashem* brought about a terrible drought. *Eliyahu HaNavi* warned the nation that without shirking idol worship and repenting, the drought will continue indefinitely. Finally, "after many days, the word of *Hashem* came to *Eliyahu* in the third year," where the Almighty told him go and present himself before King Achav and tell him that rain will fall and grain will grow, since some in the nation have repented out of great hunger.

R' Yaakov Ashkenazi zt"l (Tze'enah Ure'enah) says that there are times when *Hashem* must punish *Klal Yisroel* in the hope that they will repent. In fact, *Chazal* tell us (*Megillah 14a*) that King Achashverosh gave the signet ring from his hand to Haman's, with the implicit permission for

him to do to the Jews as he pleased. This significant but simple act, though, caused *Klal Yisroel* to immediately repent, and a nationwide *teshuvah* movement brought all the Jews together.

The truth is that when the prophets warned the nation and even implemented certain restrictions and consequences, it was often not enough to get all the Jews to repent. *Klal Yisroel* would simply ignore the prophets and go on with their sinful lives. But the simple act of Achashverosh handing over his signet ring accomplished more than all of the prophet's admonishments and warnings to the nation. May it be His will, that we should not need punishments to see the folly of our ways, and may we only require a simple admonishment after which we will repent and return to *Hashem*.

המור הרביעי תרשיש ושהם וישפה משכנים והב יהו כמלוואתם ... (מג-ב)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

After witnessing firsthand the מעשה העגל, *Moshe Rabbeinu* proceeded to throw the לוחות down, shattering them on the mountainside. The word "מידר" is read "מדעי" - his hands, but written "מידר" - his hand. Why was this written so?

R' Yisrael Salanter zt"l is quoted as saying the following *pshat*. At first, *Moshe Rabbeinu* thought to himself that since מצות the one bearing those טמא העגל only affected למקום אדם, it was only necessary to destroy one of the לוחות, the one bearing those טמא העגל. As a result, the *posuk* writes "מידר" - only one of the לוחות. However, he then decided that one is not enough; he needed to break both, "וישלך מידר". Because אדם למקום is a prerequisite and a critical component to be מקיים the מצות of לחבירו בן אדם לחבירו properly. Therefore, *Moshe* felt it was pointless to retain just one side of the לוחות without the other.

Perhaps we can add another *machshava*. **Rabbeinu Yonah zt"l** describes that even when people band together intending to commit an עבירה, their mindset is לתאוה יבקש נפרד. They are still divided and not באחדות. Each person has his own agenda and תאוה, and he won't feel a close unity with the others. Thus, when כלל ישראל sinned, there automatically existed an element of discord among them. As a result even the portion of אדם לחבירו בן אדם לחבירו was rightly destroyed.

Haman, the Amaleki, the quintessential thorn, the *baal lashon hara*, told King Achashverosh: "שמעו (מלשון שינה) עם אחד. מפני ומפרד בין העמים". The Jews are "sleeping" (שינה) from the מצות of ממילא they're spread out and are lacking the protection of אחדות. In this point, he was correct. His spectacular fall from grace, culminating in his stunning demise, occurred after ישראל united as one in prayer and *teshuvah*. *Chazal*, therefore, instituted the מצות חיסוד of *Mishloach Manos* and *Matanos La'evyonim* to instill in us these ideals of אחדות and חסד, and being there for one another.

May Hashem eradicate all of our enemies as He did then, and bring us the ישועות we so need, as a unified nation.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויעמד משה בשער המחנה ויאמר מי לה' אלי ... (לב-ב)

משל: The following is an exchange between a teacher and a student, wise beyond his years. The teacher was discussing careers and handed out an assignment asking the students to write about different types of jobs. After they handed in the assignments, the teacher gave a one question pop quiz: "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

All the pupils began feverishly writing paragraphs about their future careers, except one. This student didn't seem to be in a rush. He scribbled something quickly on his paper and sat quietly waiting for everyone to finish.

The teacher, assuming he was neglecting his work, began to admonish him. "Why aren't you doing your work?" he demanded. "I already finished," came the reply.

"Alright, let's see your work," said the teacher. The student

handed in his work containing one single word: "Happy."

The teacher was taken aback. "I don't think you understand the test," he quipped. The student - a boy wise beyond his years - answered, "And I don't think you understand life."

This is a person who has direction in his life!

נמשל: As we continue to celebrate the happy joyful day of *Purim - Meshulash* through Sunday - let us stop and think about the costumes of the day. An old tradition is to dress up or put on some kind of costume we don't normally wear. The idea is to cover up and forget, at least momentarily, our year-round self and to re-evaluate our values. Are we really heading in the direction we ought to be? Maybe we need to accept upon ourselves the yoke of *Torah*, again, just like the Jews in the *Purim* story did. In the *parsha*, too, we are struck by this idea. *Moshe* called out to all of *Bnei Yisroel*, "מי לה' - אל" - who is still true and faithful to the word of *Hashem*?!
INSIGHTFUL TORAH THOUGHTS ON THE WEEKLY SEDRA TO LEARN AND TO ENJOY BY R' MOSHE GELB

וינפש

When *Moshe* descended from *Har Sinai* with the *luchos*, and saw what was happening down below, he took them and smashed them at the foot of the mountain. Apparently, the *cheit ha'eigel* was a direct contradiction to the concept of *Matan Torah*. The **Beis HaLevi** writes that in making the *eigel*, *Klal Yisroel* had no intention to worship idols. Rather, based on their intimate knowledge of the spiritual forces in Creation, they calculated that this would help bring about *tikkunim*, spiritual rectifications, in the upper worlds. However, their fatal flaw was that all these *tikkunim* only happen through *mitzvos* when they are based on *Hashem's* command. Since the people acted on their own recognizance and not *Hashem's*, they were punished.

R' Chaim Volozhiner zt"l explains that at *Matan Torah*, the entire creation became subservient to the *Torah*. Beforehand, lending with *ribbis* was a huge *chessed*. You're helping someone out with a loan and just charging a small fee? *Taka a chessed!* But once *Matan Torah* arrived, it turned into one of the biggest *aveiros*, to the point that one who does it doesn't get up by *techiyas hameisim!* *Chessed* itself was redefined by the *Torah*. So, certainly, according to their *cheshbonos*, the Jewish people were correct - the *eigel* should have accomplished big *tikkunim* in the world. But they did not appreciate that after *Moshe* received the *Torah*, things had changed, Creation now turns on the command of *Hashem*, on the *Torah* and its *mitzvos*, and not on anything else. This was what *Moshe* conveyed to them when he threw down the *luchos*: *Klal Yisroel*, you missed the point! You didn't just get a set of laws when you got the *Torah*, you got the whole *beriah*, a new creation! Everything runs on *Torah!*

On *Purim*, this was rectified - "הדר קבלוה בימי אחשורוש" - when the Jews reaccepted the *Torah* after their miraculous salvation from the hands of Amalek, the embodiment of "אשר קרך בדרך" - everything in the *beriah* is disconnected from *Hashem* and His *Torah*. Let us too be *mechazek* ourselves in looking at things only through the lens of *Torah!* *Freilichen Purim and Gut Shabbos!*