

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

וכל ישראל ישמעו ויראוך ולא יוספו לעשות כדבר הרע הזה בקרבך ... (יג-יב)

R’ Seligmann Baer Bamberger ז”ל, popularly referred to as the **Wuerzburger Rav**, was one of the last great *Gaonim* of German Jewry. Together with **R’ Yaakov Ettlinger ז”ל**, **R’ Shamshon Raphael Hirsch ז”ל** and **R’ Azriel Hildesheimer ז”ל**, he led the struggle against Reform and helped found the educational institutions that resuscitated Orthodoxy and enabled it to confront modernity. His stance on many issues underscores his commitment to Jewish communal unity, and suggests just how far he was willing to go in order to prevent factionalism from gaining a foothold within the community.

R’ Shmuel Salant ז”ל, the ninety year old Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, a man of extraordinary scholarship and piety, was in charge of administering the *Kollel Ashkenazim* and its *chalukah* system. R’ Bamberger was in charge of the collection of all monies in Germany on behalf of the charities in the Land of Israel. The German-Dutch Palestine Fund Committee had decided to distribute these funds primarily to needy Jews in Israel who were of German origin. The committee acted in line with the concept which divided the *Yishuv in Eretz Yisroel* into separate communities according to national origin. R’ Shmuel opposed this method of distribution. He felt that funds should not be apportioned according to differences resulting from a mere accident of birth and native homeland, but rather according to one’s stature in *Torah* scholarship and piety in Jerusalem. When his letters to responsible authorities failed to resolve the issue, he decided to undertake his one and only trip to Europe, in 1860, and personally visit Wuerzburg in order to discuss the matter with the rabbi in charge of the *Kollelim*.

R’ Shmuel Salant gave the following account of his meeting with R’ Bamberger. “When I entered the synagogue in Wuerzburg, I saw Rabbi Seligmann Baer standing there in clerical vestments. I further noticed that, contrary to halachic requirements, the *Almemar (bima)* stood directly in front of the Holy Ark instead of in middle of the synagogue. I was astonished, but said to myself that if a *Tzaddik* such as Rabbi Seligmann Baer *davens* here, surely it is inappropriate for me to raise any questions. I was called up for an *aliyah* to the *Torah* and I went up, again saying to myself that if Rabbi Seligmann Baer allows himself to be called up to the *Torah* in this synagogue, surely I can do likewise. As we left the synagogue, the *Wuerzburger Rav* said to me, ‘I am certain that there must be questions you wish to raise about my synagogue practices!’”

“Heaven forbid,” I replied, “when you approve of a particular practice, it is inappropriate for me to raise any questions.”

“Nevertheless,” countered R’ Seligmann Baer, “I know that you were surprised to see me officiating in a clerical robe, and in a synagogue where the *Almemar* was not positioned properly. Let me assure you that I did not do so of my own free will. The dissension caused by the ‘innovators’ in our community threatened either to render it asunder or to lead it entirely into the Reform camp. I had only two alternatives; either to see my community divided into two camps, or else to save its unity by means of minor concession. Unity was more precious than anything else. It is a situation like this that calls forth the rule: ‘*It is time to act for the Lord; It is necessary to violate a commandment of the Torah.*’ I concluded that without concessions, I would not be able to save *Torah* Judaism in Wuerzburg. At the very least, I would have to make concessions in ‘non-essential’ issues. I consulted with the elderly *Gaon, R’ Avraham Bing ז”ל*, (a contemporary of the **Chasam Sofer** and *talmid* of **R’ Nossou Adler ז”ל**) who gave his consent. Then I spent three consecutive days in fasting and prayer, struggling with my conscience. When I was firmly convinced that concessions were absolutely necessary in order to save my community, I approved of this unorthodox practice. Indeed, due to these relatively small sacrifices, I was able to stem the Reform tide.”

R’ Shmuel Salant then said to R’ Bamberger, “There is no need for you to justify your behavior. I knew from the start that it is inappropriate to raise questions about anything you do!” Upon his return to Jerusalem, his rabbinic colleagues were about to issue a ban against all synagogues that did not have the *Almemar* positioned in the center of the *shul*. R’ Shmuel voiced his opposition to such a ban, stating: “I have seen one of the greatest *Tzaddikim* of our generation, the *Wuerzburger Rav*, *daven* in such a *shul*. I myself prayed there and was even called up to the *Torah* there. It would be impudent for anyone to ban what he permitted.”

דמו אונכם ולבו ארי שמעו
ותירו נפשכם ... (ישעי' נה-ג)

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

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

This week’s *Haftora* is the third of the “שבעה דנחמתא” in which *Yeshaya Hanavi* prophesies about *Hashem’s* promise to restore *Yerushalayim* and the *Bais HaMikdash* to its full glory. The *Navi* implores the nation that *Hashem* wants them to, “*Incline your ear and come to Me [Hashem].*” But in *Sefer Vayikrah (26:14)* where *Hashem* uses similar language to get *Klal Yisroel* closer to Him, the *Torah* uses an entirely different tone: “*And if you will fail to hearken to Me ...*” Why are they different?

Rabbeinu Chayim ibn Attar, Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh ז”ל says that the very notion that obedience to *Hashem* and His *mitzvos* is optional, is in itself flawed. It’s not “if” a Jew fails to listen to *Hashem* then, and only then, will he face

consequences. Rather, a Jew must obey *Hashem*. Period.

In *Vayikrah* the prefacing of the conditional word “if” before *Hashem’s* statement is due to idea that *Klal Yisroel* was steeped in sin. They were slipping deeper and deeper into sin and no amount of pleading and cajoling would help. At such a time, a heavenly threat is warranted, and such a threat can be recognized by the prefacing of the word “if.”

However, in the *Haftora*, *Klal Yisroel* had already been punished for their sins – the *Bais HaMikdash* was destroyed and *Yerushalayim* had already been razed to the ground. At such a point, threats are no longer warranted, and *Yeshaya Hanavi* therefore uses much kinder and gentler language to convey *Hashem’s* message.

למען ייטב לך ולבניך אחרוך עד עולם כי
תעשה הטוב והישר בעיני ה' אלקיך ... (יב-כה)

לעמלו נשמתו אבנו מורנו הרבנו הרב חיים
קוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ"ל

מחשבת הל"ב

Rashi comments: “הטוב” in the eyes of *Hashem*, “והישר” in the eyes of people. The obvious question is that the conclusion of this *posuk* doesn’t seem to jive with this, as it ends “בעיני ה’”. So how can Rashi say “והישר” means in the eyes of people?

The first *machshava* that comes to mind is an oft-used famous principle. Although we have *mitzvos* למקום and בין אדם לחבירו they are both listed on the same *luchos!* The implication being that the interpersonal *mitzvos* must possess the same importance that we afford the *mitzvos* למקום. בין אדם לחבירו. Essentially, בין אדם לחבירו is also between us and *Hashem*.

A similar *pshat* is said in the name of **Rabbeinu Ovadia M’Bartenura ז”ל**. He quotes the well-known *Mishna in Pirkei Avos*, “כל שררו הבריות נוחה הימנו, רוח המקום נוחה הימנו”. Meaning a person who pleases his fellow man, *Hashem* is pleased with him as well. And lastly, yet also similar, is a explanation from the **Chasam Sofer ז”ל**. He explains the conclusion of our *posuk* a bit differently - grammatically - כי תעשה הטוב הישר. When a person does either, למקום OR בין אדם לחבירו, it must be done ביעני ה' אלקיך - for the sake of *Hashem*. *Lishma!*

Which brings to mind the famous *vort* on the *Gemara in Shabbos*. One of the questions a person is asked when standing before the Heavenly Tribunal is, קבעת עתים לתורה - Have you set aside time for *Torah* learning? One *pshat* is, that this question is referring to the first eight *posukim* at the start of the third *perek of Koheles*. “לכל זמן ועת לכל חפץ תחת השמים”. The *posuk* goes on to enumerate myriad times and intervals in person’s lifetime (...ועת למות...). We are asked: קבעת עתים לתורה? Were you *kovea* all of your עתים, your precious time, to be governed by the light of our *Torah*?

May we be *zoche* to bring much *nachas ruach* in both areas of למקום and לחבירו.

משל למה הדבר דומה

כי יסתך אחד בן עמך... לא תחום עיניך עליו וכו' (יג-יב)

משל: There was once a sly and violent villain who managed to evade and outsmart the authorities for quite some time. No matter what they did to investigate, chase and apprehend him, they could not get their hands on him. Eventually, they managed to corner him and he was summarily arrested. Not wishing to take any chances, they rushed through all the necessary procedures and his court case was hastened so as not to give him a chance to escape.

The trial was conducted with the utmost speed and clarity. The jury heard the case and after some deliberation he was condemned to be executed.

Before being executed, however, as a benevolent gesture, the convicted man was allowed to choose one last food or meal before his execution. The man thought about it for a minute and then asked for strawberries. Immediately

a messenger was dispatched to go find strawberries. After a while he came back and said that unfortunately strawberries are out of season and are unavailable for a few months.

When the convict heard this, he sighed slyly, “Well, in that case,” he stammered, “I... I guess I’ll wait.”

נמשל: In a *Torah* courtroom we are commanded to avoid the death sentence at all possible costs. Jewish judges are required to turn over the case again and again, and to look for possible loopholes so as not to kill a Jewish soul.

Regarding someone who entices other people to stray off the *Torah* path however, we are commanded to condemn him in every possible way. Such a person needs to be eradicated from amongst the Jewish people at the earliest possible opportunity. As **Rashi** states, even if he is found not guilty, the court must reconvene to try and find a way to convict him. For such a terrible sinner who causes others to stray, there is no benevolence, and no second chance!

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

דרגה יתירה

This week we are taught how to come close to *Hashem*. First and foremost, one has to open up his eyes and SEE. When a person sees something, he is actually making an effort to take a picture in his mind of the vision before him. This takes thought! A person can literally be blind with open eyes and can go through life without truly seeing.

Moshe Rabbeinu tells *Klal Yisroel*, “RE’EH” - every single individual in their own life situation should open up their eyes and see that, “I am placing before you today a blessing and a curse.” Every day of your life can be a blessing or a curse, depending on what you choose to SEE! The first step to a happy and truly spiritual life is by making a conscious effort to focus on the good. To even take situations that can be perceived as negative and find something good in it. Because everything that *Hashem* does is for the good. He is just giving us the freedom to choose how we perceive it. And that will make all the difference in the people we become and our relationship with *Hashem*.

One day not too long ago, when I was at the *Kosel Hamaaravi*, I overheard a mother say to her children. “*Kinderlach*, this is the holiest place in the world, You can ask *Hashem* for anything you want. What do you want to ask *Hashem* for?” And each one then said something that they want to *daven* for, what they want to ask *Hashem* to give them.

I was thinking to myself, why do we come to the *Kosel* and immediately think what we are missing? Shouldn’t we first say, “Thank you *Hashem* for all the millions of *chassadim* You do for me each day?” Shouldn’t we stand up and thank *Hashem* for so much good, for all the incredible things He provides for us, before we focus on what is missing and what we still need? It was a wake up call to me that before I start asking and focusing on what I don’t have, I need to open up my eyes and SEE all the good in my life. I need to choose the blessing over the curse for this is truly the first step in real *avodas Hashem*.