



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

וכי יגור אתך גר בארצכם לא תגנו אותו ... ואהבת לו כמוך כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים וגו' (יט-לג.)

The *Torah* warns us to never hurt or taunt a *Ger*, a convert who was once a stranger to Judaism, for we, as a Nation, were once strangers in the Land of Egypt as well, and we must be sensitive to his feelings and needs. **Rashi** points out that "לא תונו" means "you shall not taunt him," tormenting him with words (as opposed to torment through other means, e.g., financially). For instance, do not say to him, "Only yesterday you were an idol worshipper, and now you have come to learn *Torah*, which was given over by the Almighty Himself!" (*Toras Kohanim 19:82*)

One of the numerous *seforim* that the *Gaon*, **Harav Chaim Kanievsky ז"ל** wrote was called "Shemos Ba'aretz" a *sefer* that deals primarily with the topic of names. The *sefer*, and a host of others, were written in conjunction with his *talmid*, **R' Tzvi Yabrov שליט'א**, who is close to the Kanievsky family, and wrote *seforim* on R' Chaim's uncle, the **Chazon Ish ז"ל**, as well as with his brother-in-law, **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein שליט'א**, *Rav* of *Ramat Elchanan*.

R' Tzvi relates a story that he was once in the Kanievsky home on a Friday morning, while R' Chaim was having his usual *chavrusashaf*t with his brother-in-law, R' Yitzchok. The two were fully immersed in their learning, when suddenly, **Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a"h**, walked into her husband's study, followed by a very distraught looking *kollel* couple. The group waited respectfully for a few moments until they were noticed, and the *Rebbetzin* related their tale.

The couple got married recently. During the engagement, and even before, the young bride was aware that her husband was a *baal teshuva*, and did not grow up religious. This morning, however, she learned for the first time, that her husband was really a *Ger* and had converted to Judaism a number of years ago. He was sincere and fully observant, but she was not prepared for this bombshell, and was having trouble coming to terms with it. The young woman continued to cry softly as the *Rebbetzin* detailed fully how the two met and how she was fine with his status as a *baal teshuva*, but this is a whole new level. The husband, too, felt terrible that he had kept this important information from his bride, now his wife, not to mention her entire extended family and friends. This morning, after he broke the news to her, she cried hysterically for a while, until her husband said, "Let us go to Rav Chaim and we will do whatever he tells us." She agreed.

The *Gadol Hador* sat and listened pensively to the couple's story. He absorbed every word and his mind was already processing the solution. He looked at the young bride first and spoke directly to her wounded heart. "What are you saying? That your husband is a *Ger*? Why, being a convert to *Yiddishkeit* is לכתחילה שבלכתחילה - one cannot be greater than that! The **Rambam** lists Shemaya and Avtalyon as two of the 'Mosrei HaTorah' - transmitters of the *Torah*, who literally carried the Jewish people on their backs - and they were converts. The great *Tanna*, Rabbi Akiva, had 24,000 *talmidim* - he came from a line of converts. Even *Dovid Hamelech* was famously a descendant of *Rus Hamoaviya* - who was the daughter of a gentile king and she converted to Judaism when she married the son of Naomi. She was a righteous convert!"

At this point, R' Yitzchok joined the conversation and began to shower praises upon *Geirim* and the many holy *tzaddikim* who were converts. The young woman stopped crying and it was clear that she was feeling better.

But R' Chaim was not finished. He turned to his *Rebbetzin* and asked for some wine. The *Rebbetzin* was a little surprised as R' Chaim's doctor had prohibited him from drinking alcohol, but she did as she was asked. She brought in a bottle of wine and R' Chaim began to pour it into a cup. "You should know that my doctor forbids me from drinking wine, but today, in your honor, I will partake of a little wine." He held up the glass and made a loud *beracha*, "Borei Pri Hagafen," and took a small sip. "L'Chayim, L'Chayim. Mazel Tov! R' Yitzchok, a niggun?" he said to his brother-in-law.

R' Yitzchok started a song. R' Chaim urged the *avreich* and they both joined in. The young bride's eyes were now shining from happiness. She was proud to have married such a special husband, on the word of the *Gadol Hador*!

ההשמדתך אתה מעל פני האדמה אפס כי לא השמיד אשמיד את בית יעקב ... (קמ"ג-ה)

Seeing the continuous downfall of *Malchus Yisroel* in the Northern half of the country, *Hashem* directed the venerable prophet *Amos Hanavi* to leave his home in *Yehuda* and chastise *Malchus Yisroel* for indulging in outlandish luxuries while persecuting the poor and helpless. In the *Haftorah*, *Amos* stresses the all-important lesson that unchecked sinfulness leads directly to expulsion from *Eretz Yisroel*.

*Amos* declares in the name of *Hashem*, "I will waste it from the face of the earth; but I will not utterly destroy the House of Yaakov." This is a particularly unusual statement as it appears to contradict itself. How is it possible for *Hashem* to wipe a sinful Jewish Nation off the face of the earth while simultaneously pledging not to utterly destroy them?

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

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

**R' Dovid Altschuler ז"ל** of *Prague (Metzudas Dovid)* explains that it is important to remember *Hashem's* long-time promise of "נצח ישראל לא ישקר" - "the eternity of (Klal) Yisrael is not a lie," and that *Hashem* will always see to it that *Klal Yisroel* survives their many trials and tribulations.

That being said, when *Hashem* vows to wipe the sinful Nation off the face of the earth, but not entirely destroy them, He was referring to the institution of the monarchy which serves as the face of the Nation. The kings of *Malchus Yisroel* were mostly sinful, and *Hashem* vowed to destroy the Kingship of *Yisroel*. Although that would unfortunately leave that part of the Nation leaderless, it is undoubtedly better than utterly destroying the people themselves.

לא תשנא את אחיך כלבבך הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך ולא תשא עליו חטא ... (יג-ז)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

# מחשבת הלב

As *Klal Yisroel* stands between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, the days of *Sefiras Haomer*, a fitting topic to speak of would be our interpersonal relationships. As little as our small minds can grasp in this matter, *Chazal* teach us that *talmidei Rabbi Akiva* were tragically *niflar* during this period, due to the lack of *kavod* they exhibited one to another, *Rishonim* explain (see **Rambam** and **Rashbam**) that the *Torah* may be attempting to convey to us with the aforementioned *posuk*, that sometimes, when we feel slighted, we bury that hurt deep in our hearts. We don't want to appear petty, or we don't wish to pick a fight. However, what tends to happen is that the hurt festers and grows inside, finally reaching a boil, causing us to lash out, or at best, simply ignore that person. The *Torah* tells us that instead of that route, rather "הוכיח תוכיח" explain to the wrongdoers what they've done, tell them you're in pain and feel hurt - "ולא תשא עליו חטא" - give them a chance to correct their mistake. They can apologize or explain their actions. You know what? Maybe it was YOU who made the mistake and jumped to the incorrect conclusion. The possibilities are endless. One thing is for sure - you'll feel better when you seek peace.

But one question lingers: Why does the *posuk* start with "אחיך" your brother, and then switch to "עמיתך" your friend? A possible *machshava* can be that if we view each other, not as acquaintances and associates, but rather as family and brothers, we would surely have a harder time hating one another. Hence says the *posuk* "לא תשנא את אחיך" - don't hate him, he's your brother! Additionally, the *Torah* is defining what a true friend is: "הוכיח תוכיח את עמיתך" - if you are a real and true friend, you'll find a way to gently remind that friend to mend his ways. Why? Because you truly care for his or her welfare.

As we seek to perpetuate more *shalom* in the world, may we all be *zoche* to the special *beracha* of "שמעו בשלום".

## משל למה הדבר דומה

דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו ... (יג-ב) **משל**: The world renowned Camp Agudah, in the heart of the Catskill Mountains, is home to a learning camp within the camp, known as the "Masmidim." Each year, close to one hundred boys are accepted into the program where they can rest, relax and rejuvenate for the coming *zman*, all while continuing to study *Torah* in a wholesome environment. The mere fact that the program was led for years by one of the premier *poskim*, **Rav Yisroel Belsky ז"ל** was always a major attraction. (It continues today and is led by his son).

One afternoon, a few *masmidim* were getting off a bus upon their return from an inter-camp ballgame. As they walked towards their bunkhouse, one boy was drinking a bottle of Snapple. After draining the bottle, he unthinkingly tossed it on the ground in front of him and proceeded to kick it forward as he chatted with his friends. As they reached the

bunkhouse, he kicked the bottle into the woods. Unbeknownst to him, Rav Belsky, who had not accompanied them on the trip, had been observing the group from a distance. A few minutes later, someone came into the bunkhouse to tell them that Rav Belsky was waiting for them outside.

They all gathered on the porch facing the towering posture of their great *Rebbi*. He said in his calm but authoritative voice: "Boys, knock this: the world is not a garbage can!" The lesson struck home, and everyone was dismissed.

**משל**: This week's *parsha* begins with the commandment of "קדושים תהיו" - "You shall be holy." On an elementary level, *Hashem* is exhorting us to be holy, to be exalted above the mundane and often incorrect actions that people perpetrate. Just a quick look at our surroundings can sometimes be the biggest "Mussar Shmooze" on how we ought to act. The lesson from Rav Belsky is that we are all "Kedoshim" - we are better than that and we need to act that way!

איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת שבתתי תשמרו אני ה' ... (יג-ג)

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

## דרגה יתירה

The *Torah* tells us that the *mitzvah* of honoring one's parents is applicable at every stage of life, even after one's parents have passed on. In fact, the *Zohar* writes that the main *mitzvah* of honoring parents applies only after they've left this world. There is only so much a child can do for his parents in this world; in the next world the reward they receive from their children is limitless. This is certainly not to minimize the greatness of this *mitzvah* here. The **Ksav Sofer** explains that the word "Ish" is used to describe one who performs this *mitzvah* because one should know that even when he grows up and becomes an adult, the *mitzvah* of honoring parents is not diminished. If anything it should be more, because as we grow and parent our own children, we must realize how much our parents did for us throughout the years and this should help us appreciate them more. Unfortunately this is not the way it goes. People often feel that because they are now adults, they do not need their parents so much. They have their own opinions and feelings about things, which often clash with their parents' view. They have become rich or successful and don't necessarily feel dependent on their parents. This might cause one to honor his parents less.

The *Ksav Sofer* is teaching us that no matter how much of a "self-made MAN" you've become, it is specifically at the time that you feel like such a big "Gavra" that you must show honor and respect to your parents. *Kibbud Av V'em* is increasingly more challenging as the technological changes in the world are causing our young children to feel more "advanced" and "ahead" of their parents. This is causing a terrible breakdown in our *frum* society. We as adults must remember and teach our children that the premise of *Kibbud Av V'em* is *Hakaras HaTov*; appreciation to your parents for bringing you into this world! No matter how big you are, you could not have done that by yourself! You don't have to agree with all your parents say, but you must respect their opinion. The way you talk about and treat your parents is the way your children will talk about and treat you.