

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

מן השמים השמייעך את קולו ליסודך ועל הארץ הראך את אשו הגדולה ... (ד-ל)

Jewish life in the city of Nikolsburg reached a peak in the early 19th century, outshining other towns in Moravia. Jews benefited from the relatively benign regime of the Prince von Dietrichstein family, and a thriving community developed on the western slopes of the imposing hill on which stood the princely palace. Nikolsburg, the seat of the Moravian Chief Rabbi, had a well-known *Yeshiva*, many *shuls* and a large graveyard in which many of the famous rabbis of Moravia are buried.

Around the turn of the century, the Jewish community of Nikolsburg decided to set up an *eruv* in the city, to accommodate the *Shabbos* needs of the people. Of course, this was easier said than done. The boundaries of the *eruv* were very specific and detailed, as the streets of the Jewish section of Nikolsburg were narrow and winding. After much deliberation, it was decided that it was going to be necessary to run the wire past the large house on the corner of Quergasse. There was just one problem which had the potential to ruin the entire plan: the owner of the house, a Christian butcher named Topolanski, stubbornly refused to allow the wire to be set up near his premises. This was not so much due to any scruples of his own, as much as acquiescing to the objections of his neighbors, who absolutely refused to allow the presence of this symbol of an alien belief - the *eruv* wire - in their proximity. The governor of the town, to whom both parties appealed for arbitration, not surprisingly, decided in favor of the house owner and the idea seemed to be dead on arrival.

After that, there was only one person who could possibly accomplish anything, and that was the Chief Rabbi, **R' Mordechai Banet ז"ל**, who was the object of great veneration by both Jews and Christians alike, and whose judgment was accepted unconditionally by all. A deputation of the community elders went to see the *Rav* and explained to him the problem in great deal. In return, R' Modche, as he was known, answered them in his short and taciturn way, assuring his listeners that he would attend to the problem. And indeed, the very next day, R' Modche was seen making his lonely way through the streets and alleys of Jewish Nikolsburg, towards the Quergasse.

Topolanski was sitting in front of his house relaxing and smoking his pipe. As he saw the Rabbi coming, he rose and walked a few steps towards him. After all, it was a great distinction when this famous man paid him the honor of a visit.

R' Modche, explained the reason for his visit. Topolanski responded with a bewildered shaking of his head and a torrent of objections. He insisted that he himself was not an enemy of the Jewish people, but the neighbors will complain and that is why he was unable to accede to the Jewish community. And anyway, he said for good measure, the authorities had decided against the whole thing so there was no point.

The Rabbi listened quietly and then replied, "As the authorities have decided in your favor, no one can make any complaint against you or force you to comply with any wish of mine. But pay heed to my words: All the different religious confessions which divide humans and fill them with blind hatred for one another, are G-d's children, and are all equally valued in His fatherly heart. Thus, you need not be afraid of complying with my request and allowing the *eruv*. Furthermore, you and your descendants will be richly rewarded. I shall bless your house, which will for all time, protect it from fire."

Topolanski was speechless and in awe. He had heard too many wondrous things about the Rabbi, not to believe him now. After a moment's silence he agreed to comply with the request and some days later the *eruv* was set up.

And what R' Modche had promised came true. Huge fires engulfed the city during the 18th century, but when a terrible fire destroyed almost the entire city of Nikolsburg in the 1830's, one house was protected from the flames. Time and again, as was common in the olden days of the nineteenth century, and once again during the last fire, the biggest ever in Nikolsburg, in the confusion of flames, smoke and rubble that so often fell upon the city, the Topolanski house always remained unaffected. The flames seemed to be brought to a halt before they reached that house - thanks to the rabbi's blessing.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAPTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אליכם ... (ישעיה מ-א)

"*Nachamu Nachamu Ami!*" These are the eternal words of *Yeshaya HaNavi* who declared that *Hashem* wishes for His children to be comforted even after deserving of and receiving terrible punishments. But while these words are meant as a present comfort in the aftermath of the terrible destruction and pain wrought on *Klal Yisroel*, it is interesting to note that the *Navi* made this declaration years before the actual *Churban* took place.

R' Tuvia Lesitzin ז"ל (Sefer Kerem Tuvia) says that this interesting point is in fact what underscores a fundamental ideal of Judaism. He explains that *Chazal* teach us that Jews should always try and see the positive in difficult situations and while we do our best, it is by no

means an easy feat. *Yeshaya HaNavi* made this declaration prior to the actual destruction so that when *Klal Yisroel* will be forced into exile, they will have some vestige of hope to cling to. As they were being bound, shackled and dragged down to *Bavel*, they already knew that they could rely on *Hashem* to comfort them and ultimately redeem them.

What is truly amazing is that *Yeshaya HaNavi's* timeless message, while it offered *Klal Yisroel* an assertion of comfort which helped them back then get through the tough times, is still a relevant message of comfort which enables us – thousands of years later – to draw comfort in the knowledge that the coming of *Moshiach* and the ultimate *geula* is just around the corner.

ואתהנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר ... (ג-ב)

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

מחשבת הלב

Moshe Rabbeinu stormed the heavens for permission to enter ארץ ישראל. He *davened* 515 תפילות. Alas, *Hashem* denied his pleadings. One would think, therefore, that Moshe had no connection to the land, but as I once heard, in the name of **R' Refoel Schorr *shlita***, the exact opposite is true. Moshe, through his *davening*, became even more connected. When one very much desires an item and constantly prays for it, he creates a *keshet* with the object of those prayers. Perhaps we can speculate that א"י, which is notably connected to *tefillah*, became so linked through Moshe's intense supplications.

This *machshava* can help us to better understand a *churban*-related *Medrash*. A famous philosopher once met *Yirmiyahu Hanavi* and found him weeping over the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash*. He asked him two questions. One, you're a prophet - a wise sage. Why are you crying over the loss of a building constructed of wood and stone? Second, what will your crying accomplish? It won't bring back the temple. *Yirmiyahu* responded as follows: You, as a philosopher, must be troubled by many unanswered philosophical questions. Go ahead, ask me any them. In short order, *Yirmiyahu* successfully resolved all his problems. The gentile was awestruck. The *Navi* then continued. You should know that all my wisdom was derived from that structure. Hence, it was not merely a physical edifice. That is why I'm weeping. With regard to your second question, you, as a non-Jew, cannot begin to comprehend the answer, just as we, as the children of G-d, cannot begin to comprehend the question. Even though the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash* may not be in our control, the mere fact that we long for it, and cry for it, creates an awesome physical bond to it, and aids us in cultivating a very real relationship with *Hashem*.

When *Hashem* sees our desire, he will hopefully return it to us. If, tragically, this does not happen, then on this *Shabbos Nachamu*, let us internalize this concept and continue to yearn for the speedy rebuilding of the בית השלישי במהרה בימינו אמן.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמר ה' אלי רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה ... (ג-ב) **משל: R' Aharon Kotler ז"ל**, was one of American Jewry's greatest *Torah* leaders. After the turbulent years of WWII, when the Jewish world was in need of so much guidance and direction, especially in America, R' Aharon was at the forefront of it all. He was personally involved in assisting countless groups and individuals, as well as leading and directing many communities and organizations.

Once, **Reb Meir Pantel ז"ל** and **Reb Yosef Friedenson ז"ל**, were talking with R' Aharon about an important communal matter. Suddenly, R' Aharon stood up and apologized for not being able to talk with them any longer. He had an urgent matter elsewhere, he explained, and had to immediately attend. R' Aharon was on edge. It was obvious that he was anxious and in a big rush.

וקי ה' הילפו כח יעלו אבר כנשרים ירוצו ולא ייגעו ילכו ולא ייעפו ... (ישעיה מ-א)

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

דרגה יתירה

This is the *Shabbos* we've all been waiting for! *Shabbos Nachamu*, when *Hashem* so lovingly comforts His people after three long weeks of mourning. But the amount of comfort we feel truly depends on us! This month, the saddest month of the year is called "*Menachem Av*" which literally means "Comfort the Father" signifying quite clearly the *avodah* of this period. We, the beloved children of *Hashem* must comfort our Father, Who is in terrible pain over the *Churban*. WE must look for every opportunity to console *Hashem* and ease His pain. How do we do this? Firstly, we comfort others by FEELING their pain. But there is another great way to be *menachem* our *Av*, and that is by bringing Him *nachas*! Now think to yourself as a parent, what brings you *nachas*? The answer is clear: when your kids get along!

The *Bais HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *Kamtza* and *Bar Kamtza*. Isn't this puzzling? We can understand that *Bar Kamtza*, who was thrown out of the party, had a hand in the *churban*, but what did *Kamtza* do? His good friend made a big party and he wasn't even invited. One answer is that if *Kamtza* was such a close friend of the host, he should never have allowed his friend to have such an enemy! We should all stop at this time and think: Is there anyone I know that has an enemy? Do I, in fact, have an enemy? What can I do to make peace, since this is truly a *nachas* and comfort to *Hashem*.

On *Shabbos Nachamu*, *Hashem* comforts us. But let us remember that *Hashem* is our shadow - "ה' צלך" - and He treats us the way we treat Him. The more we pray, we *daven*, and we pour out our hearts and innermost desires and feelings, we develop a real, genuine, strong, unbreakable bond with our Father in Heaven. Let us maximize this *nechama* by truly and continuously striving to be "*Menachem OUR Av*". May all the *tefillos* of *Klal Yisroel* merge together to realize the words of the *Navi* במהרה בימינו אמן, - and we shall be truly comforted with the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash*.