



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמרו הדיינו נמצא הן בעיני אדני והיינו עבדים לפרעה ... (מ-כה)

As conditions in Europe deteriorated for the Jewish population during World War II, activism in relief and rescue efforts increased ten-fold, and many of the great American *shtadlanim* continued to press any and every influential government official on this side of the Atlantic Ocean, to do what could be done to save the remaining Jews caught in the clutches of the German vise. The renowned *Rosh Yeshivah* of Lakewood, **R' Aharon Kotler zt"l**, was the spiritual leader of the *Vaad Hatzalah* organization, which worked above and beyond to help their unfortunate European brethren. He traveled quite often between New York and Washington D.C., accompanied by various *Hatzalah* leaders, including **Elimelech (Mike) Tress z"l**, **Irving Bunim z"l**, and others. R' Aharon hoped that the many meetings with top officials in the Roosevelt administration and the State Department, would bear fruit and ultimately allow the salvation for his suffering brethren, in the form of easing American immigration quotas for Jewish refugees and military strikes on strategic German landmarks and railroad supply routes. Unfortunately, more times than not, government officials turned a deaf ear to their heartfelt requests or didn't even give them the courtesy of a face-to-face meeting.

Despite these setbacks, R' Aharon never lost his drive to save as many *Yidden* as possible. At the same time, though, he was always concerned for those around him. Once, for example, he and the well-connected activist, Irving Bunim, scheduled an appointment with a State Department official on an urgent matter.

The date was December 26, 1944, corresponding that year to *Asara B'Teves*, the Tenth of *Teves*, the fast day commemorating the original siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. The two traveled by train to Washington D.C. the night before the scheduled meeting. Bunim stayed in a hotel, while R' Aharon went to the home of a close friend.

The next morning, they met at their pre-arranged spot, and the *Rosh Yeshivah* handed Bunim a small satchel containing rolls and hot coffee. Bunim looked at the food in puzzlement. "*Vos is dos* - what is this?"

R' Aharon explained that it would no doubt be a grueling day of meetings, requiring all of Bunim's diplomatic skill and energy. Certainly, he said, the Fast of *Teves* is rabbinically decreed. But by eating and maintaining his strength on this important day, it might help Bunim sway government officials and in turn, save Jewish lives.

Irving Bunim was hesitant. After all, it was a fast day and he was feeling strong and well at the present time of morning. "Bunim," R' Aharon wagged a finger at him, sensing his hesitation, "I hold you should eat."

"*Rebbe*," Bunim responded pleading, "I feel all right. Really. I can fast" He smiled encouragingly at the *Rosh Yeshivah*, hoping to alleviate his concerns. Finally, R' Aharon gave a curt nod of approval.

"Good," he said, turning to go, Bunim fast on his heels. "If you feel well enough, then fast."

Bunim held out during the long, enervating day, enduring tedious meetings with intransigent government officials. He spoke from his heart and pleaded from his soul. R' Aharon was with him every step of the way, providing sage advice and moral support. But the meetings were long, and when they finally concluded late in the afternoon, Bunim was weak with hunger. The *Rosh Yeshivah* and the layman finally settled in on the return train ride home.

Bunim sighed. Looking distractedly out the window, he said, "*Rebbe*, now I feel like I could really use something to eat."

R' Aharon barely looked up from the *sefer* he was learning from. "Now," he retorted gently, "you could fast."

The effort was over and the *heter* was not needed anymore.

But in truth, it wasn't over. Directly from the train station, the *Rosh Yeshivah* and Irving Bunim went directly to make an appeal for critically needed *Vaad Hatzalah* funds. Standing before a sizable crowd in New York, his head still light from fasting, he gave an impassioned speech which touched the hearts of his listeners. (Heroes of Spirit, Israel Bookshop Publications)

ועשיתי אתם לגוי אחד ... ולא יחצו עוד לשתי ממלכות עוד (החזקא לו-כב)

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

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

While this week's *parsha* begins with a confrontation between Yehuda and Yosef, in the *Haftorah*, *Yechezkel HaNavi* prophesied a time when the divided kingdoms of Yehuda and Yisroel would reunite beneath a single banner of *Malchus Bais Dovid*. *Chazal* say that while both Yehuda and Yosef were destined to be Kings over the Nation, Yosef's reign was limited to necessity and circumstance while Yehuda's was meant to be as eternal as the Jewish people themselves. As such, why did *Hashem* split the kingdom if He was always intending to reunite them later on?

**R' Elazar Ben Moshe Azikri zt"l (Sefer Chareidim)** explains that the distinct quality of Oneness that *Hashem* has can only be appreciated and revealed through His people's

harmonious interactions. When the Jewish people function as one harmonious body, they deserve *Hashem's* favor and kindness. But when they are fragmented and divided, their divisive behavior gives the impression that *Hashem's* influence is disjointed and fragmented, and at that point *Hashem* removes His presence from His people and disassociates Himself from their inappropriate ways.

Thus, while the ultimate would have been for the Jewish people to have always stayed united, the reality is that there needed to be a split. However, borne out of that split came the opportunity for *Klal Yisroel* to reunite as one nation - a prerequisite for *Hashem's* return to His people and standard from which we can always base our return path to *Hashem*.

בלבם נתן לאיש הלפות שמלת ולבנינו נתן שלש מאות כסף והמש הלפת שמלת ... (מז-כג)

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

# מחשבת הלב

Yosef gave Binyomin more gifts than his brothers. This is seemingly a blunder on his part. Why would he want to perpetuate a "mistake" by showing favoritism to one over the others, which was the very cause of him being sold to *Mitzrayim* in the first place? (See *Gemara in Megilla 16B* for an alternative explanation and the **Vilna Gaon's** elaboration.)

To understand Yosef's actions, let us take a look back at *Parshas Mikeitz*, when Yosef planted his goblet in Binyomin's sack. What was his motive and why did he wait until they were on their way? Why not set imprison them right then and there? Perhaps his motive was to test the brothers' loyalty, to see if they learned their lesson or if they would throw Binyomin under the proverbial bus, as well. The *Shevatim* stood in unity and defiance against Yosef, along with Binyomin. They returned with Binyomin to *Mitzrayim*. Yehuda opened a harsh dialogue with Yosef. He explained why he is taking charge. The *posuk* says, "כי עבדך ערב את הנער" - Yehuda offered himself as collateral and took responsibility to ensure the boy's safe return.

The word "ערב" can also mean sweet, as in "כל ישראל ערבים זה לזה". We are responsible for each other, because we realize how sweet and precious our interpersonal relationships are with our fellow brethren. Yehuda declared his allegiance to Binyomin and that their relationship is sweet. His support was unwavering. Yosef was then reassured that he can gift Binyomin a bit more and the rest of them would not be jealous. Yosef himself created a home of *vatranus, middos tovos* and *achdus* to the degree that in next week's *parsha*, Menashe, the older brother, didn't even flinch when *Yaakov Avinu* showed Ephraim preference and blessed him first. *Klal Yisroel* internalized this lesson. *Chazal* teach us, one of the main *zechusim* enabling us to be redeemed from *Mitzrayim* was the merit of sticking together and having each others' back. May we be *misakein* the sin of *sinas chinam*, thereby hastening the arrival of *Moshiach Tzidkeinu, bimeheira b'yameinu, Amen!*

## משל למת הדבר דומה

וישלחני אלקים לפניכם לשום לכם שארית בארץ ולהחיות לכם (מז-ז)  
**משל**: Once, as **R' Eliyahu KiTov zt"l** was about to set off on a journey to America, one of his neighbors approached him with a request: He had a relative in America who would send him a generous amount of money every year before *Pesach*. This year, the envelope didn't arrive. The neighbor asked R' Eliyahu if he can look him up and send regards, hoping that the relative would remember and send the money that he desperately needed. R' Eliyahu agreed to visit the man.

Upon his return, R' Eliyahu presented his neighbor with an envelope stuffed with cash. While the man was initially grateful for the Rabbi's efforts, he wanted to know why his relative hadn't sent dollars as he usually did. R' Eliyahu explained that he had saved him the trouble and gone to the bank to exchange the funds into *Lira*, the local currency at

the time. Rather than thanking him, the man became angry at him for changing the dollars at the bank instead of on the black market, which would have yielded a better rate.

The man summoned R' Eliyahu to a *din Torah* where they ruled that the Rabbi had indeed caused him a loss and must pay the difference out of his pocket. R' Eliyahu did so, and it wasn't until much later that the neighbor discovered that the reason his uncle hadn't sent him money before *Pesach* that year, was because he had passed away several months prior, and not only had R' Eliyahu personally funded the post-*Pesach* gift, but he had undergone the embarrassment of the *din Torah* and further expense without uttering a word.

**נימשל**: In an attempt to alleviate the brother's embarrassment after he revealed himself, Yosef told them that *Hashem* put him in this exact situation in order to support them. We don't always know why, but when it comes out, we see the reason.

וירא את העגלות אשר שלח יוסף לשאת אתו ותהי רוח יעקב אביהם ... (מז-כז)

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

# דרגה יתירה

**Rashi** comments: "*The Shechina, which had separated from him (because of his grief), rested upon him once again.*"

**Rabbi Dr Abraham J. Twerski zt"l** asks: When Yosef revealed himself to his brothers, he said, "*I am Yosef, is my father still alive?*" He had just heard from Yehuda that Yaakov is alive, so why is he asking again? Similarly, when the brothers came back and told Yaakov that Yosef is still alive, Yaakov says, "*My son Yosef still lives, Od Yosef Bni chai.*" Why is Yaakov saying something that is obvious? And why do they both reference the word "*chai*"? It is interesting to point out that in next week's *Parsha*, when *Yaakov Avinu* passes away, the *parsha* is called *Vayechi*. The *parsha* in which *Sara Imeinu* is *niftar* is also called *Chayei Sarah*. Why do we speak about their deaths under the title of life - "*chai*"?

The *Gemara in Brachos* (18a) tells us that the righteous are alive even after they die, whereas the wicked are called dead even when they are alive. This is because the *Torah* views life as spirituality rather than biology. As Rabbi Twerski explains, a human being without spirituality is nothing more than an animal with intellect. He lives biologically but is spiritually dead.

Yosef knew that Yaakov had *Ruach Hakodesh*, and assumed that Yaakov knew precisely where he was. When Yehuda told Yosef that his father had two sons, and one was ripped away from him, Yosef understood that Yaakov did not know he was alive. Thus, he asked, "Is my father still *chai*?" To physically exist without *Ruach HaKodesh* was not truly being *chai*... And Yaakov likewise says, "*Od Yosef Chai?*" Can my son survive spiritually in a place like Egypt? The spiritual achievements of a person survive his physical existence. We are all the beneficiaries of the *tzaddikim* of the past. As long as their spirit lives on, they too are alive. This is why *Vayechi* is called *Vayechi*, and *Chayei Sarah* is called *Chayei Sarah* because although in those *parshiyos* we learn of their physical deaths, the *Torah* is teaching us that *Yaakov Avinu* and *Sarah Imeinu* continue to live on forever.