

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ותרא רחל כי לא ילדה ליעקב ותקנא רחל באהתה ותאמר אל יעקב הבה לי בנים ואם אין מתה אנכי ... (כה-יב)

Mr. Amichai Liani is a wealthy New York business man. He often sponsors worthwhile *Torah* and *mitzvos* projects in his community and is held in high regard. He was once invited to the *Chabad* Center for Russian Jewry in Queens, NY, to receive the high honor of serving as *sandek* (the one who holds the baby on his lap) at a *bris mila* event. Twin boys had been born to a Jewish couple from Russia after many years of childlessness. He did not know the family well but as a prominent individual, he was often invited to family events and he was happy to participate. The *Chabad* rabbi was designated to be *sandek* for the older baby, and Mr. Liani was invited to be *sandek* for the younger child. He graciously accepted the honor.

After both ceremonies were completed, one right after the other, all the guests took their seats around the laden table to participate in the celebratory *seudah*. After everyone had eaten a bit, the father of the twins jumped up and started to speak in rapid Russian. As Mr. Liani was the only non-Russian present, he discretely presented the rabbi with a check to cover the expenses of the meal in gratitude for the special merit of being *sandek*, and made his way quietly to the exit.

Before he could leave, however, the mother of the twins ran over to intercept him. She thanked him and asked him in good English to please delay his departure a bit longer; she would like to tell him a story. He agreed and she began.

“My husband and I married while we still lived in Russia. Soon thereafter, we emigrated to the U.S. I found myself wanting to start a family but I didn’t get pregnant. We went to a variety of doctors, but none of them were able to help us. As we grew up in the Soviet Union under Communism, we had no exposure to Judaism whatsoever. A year or so ago my husband developed an interest and began sporadically attending events and *Shabbat* services at this *Chabad* House for Russian-speaking Jews. I was unhappy about it. As Russians, and as modern, educated people this is not part of our culture, and I wanted nothing to do with it. I complained about this to my husband many times but he didn’t stop. Finally, one night I delivered an ultimatum: ‘You have to choose between the synagogue and me. If you go again, then don’t come back!’

“He stayed home. That night I had a dream. An elderly woman spoke to me. ‘I know that you are suffering because you very much desire to have children. If you let your husband continue to go to synagogue, I promise you that you will have a child. And...if you will go with him, I promise you two!’ I was astonished. ‘How will I let you know what I decide?’ I said.

“The lady responded, ‘Let me show you,’ and suddenly I saw myself standing in front of a house near the Springfield Cemetery. She told me to go into the house and then exit through a door on the far left into the cemetery and walk on the path till I arrive at a small building. ‘That’s where the **Lubavitcher Rebbe z”l** is buried. I am outside, opposite the entrance,’ she said.

“I woke up. I remembered everything in the dream clearly and it all seemed so real. Despite my ‘modern’ perspective, I found myself believing it. The next day I told my husband that the following *Shabbat* he could start going to the *shul* again. He was surprised and happy, of course. Then I told him that I would go with him, and his eyes bulged almost out of his head.

“Next, I called the Rabbi of the *Chabad* Russian center. I told him I wanted to go to the cemetery where the *Lubavitcher Rebbe* is. He couldn’t hold back his excitement. ‘Whenever you want to go, day or night, I will be happy to take you.’

“So I went there, and everything was exactly as described in my dream. Opposite the entrance to the *Rebbe’s ‘Ohel*,’ I saw a tombstone indicating his wife’s resting place. That’s when I realized that it was the late Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka who had appeared to me in my dream. I approached and whispered, ‘I want two. I agree to go to the synagogue with my husband.’

“The next *Shabbat* I accompanied my husband, and you know what, it wasn’t so bad. There were other Russian women in their thirties and forties there with backgrounds similar to mine and I enjoyed meeting them. I went back the second week and the third week, and found myself looking forward to the next time. A month after I started going, I found out that I was expecting. With twins! And this story that I just told you is what my husband is now telling everyone in Russian!”

יברכה יעקב שדה ארם ויערב ישראל באשה ... (הושע-יג)

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Hoshea HaNavi rebukes *Malchus Yisroel* while extolling the virtues of *Malchus Yehuda*. He recounts how *Yaakov Avinu* was forced to flee his brother *Esav*, who was threatening to kill him. Interestingly, the *Navi* says, “*Yaakov was forced to flee to the land of Aram, there he worked for a woman and he guarded (sheep) for a woman.*” But what does the fact that *Yaakov* worked for a woman have to do with the harsh reality that *Yaakov* was forced to flee his home?

R’ Yonason Eibshutz z”l (Medrash Yehonason) explains that *Chazal (Avodah Zara 13a)* say that although generally one may not leave *Eretz Yisroel* for *Chutz L’Aretz*, there are a few exceptions that make it permissible. These include the study of *Torah* and marrying a woman. Thus, the

Navi first says that “*Yaakov fled from the fields of Aram,*” which was located in what was to become *Eretz Yisroel* later on, so that we can raise the obvious question: since the *Avos* were known to keep the *Torah* in full prior to it being given to *Klal Yisroel*, how was *Yaakov Avinu* allowed to leave *Eretz Yisroel*? The answer lies in the second half of the *posuk* in which *Hoshea HaNavi* explains that *Yaakov* left to find a woman to marry – a permissible reason for leaving.

With a large portion of Jewry living in *Eretz Yisroel* today, in constant danger from bloodthirsty enemies surrounding them, it is important to remember that nowadays living in *Eretz Yisroel* is a privilege - not necessarily a given - and one must always be cognizant to treat the land with proper respect.

ויען לבן ויאמר אל יעקב הנות בנתי והבנים בני והצאן צאני וכל אשר אתה ראה לי הוא ... (לא-גז)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT”L

מחשבת הלב

Towards the end of the *parsha*, we are told of the encounter between *Yaakov* and *Lavan*. *Yaakov Avinu* had run away from *Charan* and *Lavan* chased after him as if he was a fugitive. What lessons can we learn from this event, and why does the *Torah* feel it was so vital for us to know it? Perhaps we can respond as follows: *Hashem* comes to *Lavan* in a dream and warns him not to harm *Yaakov* in any way. In fact, *Lavan* even “boasts” of this revelation. We know from *Bilaam*, that *Hashem* despises revealing Himself to gentiles. Yet, He does just that, to show just how much He loves *Klal Yisroel*. That’s one lesson.

Another lesson to be learned here is a fundamental perception of the inner psyche of the *אומות העולם* and how they view *Klal Yisroel*. *Yaakov Avinu* is confronted by *Lavan* and questioned as to why he left so stealthily and suddenly. *Lavan* also bemoans the fact that his idols were stolen. *Yaakov* so eloquently describes how he has been so loyal and trustworthy, a stellar and determined employee for twenty years. Any employer’s “dream” worker. While you, *Lavan*, tried to swindle me countless times, I was always devoted and there for you. *Lavan* should have been flabbergasted and rendered speechless. His employee speaks the absolute truth! Yet he answers so despicably and without any remorse: *אתה וכל אשר אתה* “EVERYTHING IS MINE! I don’t care what you say! The ultimate in audacity and colossal *chutzpa*!”

The **Chofetz Chaim z”l** explains that throughout the ages, we are not viewed as people. The gentiles don’t have to deal with our complaints. Thus, they have no issue brazenly lying or uttering nonsensical, preposterous retorts. That was then. Aside from the players, absolutely nothing has changed. We are living through this right now. We hear their ridiculous responses to our suffering in *Eretz Yisroel* and the world over. As we realize how fragile our security is, we are shocked into the reality of “אל תבטחו בנדבים” and realize more and more with each passing day, *אין לנו על מי להשען, אלא על ארנו שבשמים*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אהר אביה הוא ... (כג-יב)

משל: Rabbeinu Yechiel z”l, who was one of the last and most famous of the *Ba’alei Tosafos*, lived in France close to 900 years ago. Aside from his vast *yeshivah*, which produced many famous *Torah* scholars (**Maharam M’Rottenberg**), he is also well known to have debated a contingent of priests in France in the year 1240. Unfortunately, despite records showing how he disproved all of their Christian theories, the king ordered a public burning of all available manuscripts of the *Talmud* - and on Friday, June 17, 1244, twenty-four carriage loads of written works were set alight, *r”l*.

There is a story told how he was once invited to the royal palace where the king offered him a cup of wine. *Rabbeinu Yechiel* found himself in a terrible conundrum, because it was forbidden for him to drink the wine (as it was surely

considered *yayin nesech*), however, how could he not do so? The king would be furious if he should dare tell him so!

While he was pondering the situation, a servant brought a washbowl into the room for the king to wash his hands. As soon as the king had washed his hands, *Rabbeinu Yechiel* reached out and drank the water in the basin. Turning to the king he said, “It is forbidden for me to drink this wine, but I am honored to have drunk the water with which the king washed his hands.” That brought a smile to the king’s face, and the disaster was averted!

משל: Rashi explains that *Yaakov* told *Rachel*, “*I am your father’s brother,*” meaning, “I can be shrewd too, if need be.” The holy **Chofetz Chaim z”l** says that this is a lesson for *Torah* scholars as well. Know that being honest is of utmost importance, but at the same time, you must always be on alert and don’t let the “sharp and shrewd” take advantage of you!

ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך הרנה ... (כה-י)

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

דרגה יתירה

Yaakov Avinu leaves *Beer Sheva* and heads towards *Charan* at the behest of his mother *Rivkah*, who tells him to stay with her brother *Lavan* until *Esav’s* anger subsides - “*until your anger towards your brother passes.*” The **Panim Yafos** points out that there is a concept called “*Ohr HaChozer*” which means “Returning Light,” whereby a human being can influence another with positive thoughts. The way you think about others is the way they relate to you, as it says in *Mishlei*, “*Like water to the ocean, face to face, so is the heart of one man to another.*” If I look in the water and smile, my reflection will smile back at me. We have this power in our relationship with others. But this does not only apply to our actions, it applies to our thoughts! If I think good things about you, you will get that “message” and feel that “light” and you will automatically reflect it back to me.

This is an incredible way to work on our relationship with others, especially with people we have a hard time getting along with. We have so much light inside of ourselves that can be spread all over just by thinking happy, positive and encouraging thoughts. This is a great tool to be used to make peace with others. We can use it to work on shaky relationships. When children are sleeping, a mother can walk from bed to bed and send a positive message of love to each child. Sometimes, what is difficult to say out loud can be sent with the “*Ohr HaChozer*” to a family member that we wish to get along with better.

As we continue in the month of *Kislev*, the month of spreading light, we must really take this message to heart. By training our minds to think positively about others, we can improve all of our interpersonal relationships. If we take out a few minutes a day to think good about others, we will be pleasantly surprised with their change of attitude. But the one who will benefit the most from these good *machshavos* is you! You will become a happier, less critical person. You will become more flexible and start judging people favorably. The tremendous light you send all over the world, will return to you and make your life beautiful and bright.