

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

זהה כי ישאלך בנך מחר לאמר מה זאת ואמרת אליו בחוק יד הוציאנו ה' ממצרים מבית עבדים ... (יג-ד)

The **Ramban** at the end of the *parsha*, beautifully explains that the whole purpose of miracles in this world is to dispel the myth that there is no G-d, or there is a G-d but He does not know or care about what goes on in this world. This was the philosophy of the Egyptians. They either denied the existence of *Hashem* or denied Divine Providence. Thus, *Hashem* made open miracles which over-ruled the “laws of nature” to establish once and for all that He is the Master over all and cares what people are doing. He punishes individuals who disobey Him and rewards those who listen to Him. We are commanded to remember the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* with many *mitzvos*, because through contemplating their meaning, one will come to *Emunah* in *Hashem*. Those who believe in and follow foreign philosophies “*have no portion in the Torah of Moshe.*”

The **Chiddushei Harim** once told over the following story. Many years ago, a great warrior arose, a Cossack, who became a high-valued minister in the government. Due to his newly prominent position, he was gifted with an Egyptian-Arabian horse, one of the most beautiful and rarest horses in the world. The Cossack prized his new horse and would not let it out of his sight. He washed it and combed its hair and would ride around town enjoying people’s awed reactions.

It happened that he needed to travel to another town on government business but he refused to let his horse out of his sight. He hired a watchman to accompany him on his trip and while he slept at a local inn, the watchman was required to stand in the stable and literally never take his eyes off the horse. He explained to the guard that his life depended on the well-being and safety of his horse and he even offered a few suggestions how to keep himself awake during the long night hours. “Perhaps you can come up with some deep and philosophical question to mull over throughout the night. This way, your mind will remain active and fresh and you will not fall asleep on the job!” The guard nodded in agreement.

The minister went to sleep but after two hours, he could not stay in bed. He was too worried about his horse and if it was being watched properly. Stealthily, he slipped into the stable and was happy to note that the watchman was wide awake, staring directly at his horse. “My good man,” said the minister, “Did you come up with a philosophical question?”

The guard replied, “Sir, I did as you told. I am contemplating a deep and mysterious problem. The problem is this: when one bangs a nail into a wall, there remains a hole in the wall. I was wondering, where did the wood from the wall go?”

The minister smiled. “That is a deep and penetrating question. Carry on and soon you shall have an answer.”

He went back upstairs and got into his bed. After two more hours of sleep, he again awoke and was having misgivings. He needed to check on his valuable horse again and tiptoed silently back into the stable. Once again, the watchman was standing erect, facing the horse, almost looking it directly in the eyes. “Well,” said the minister, obviously pleased, “you are doing a fine job watching my horse. What interesting question is occupying your brain now?”

The guard bowed reverently. “My lord, I was wondering; when one eats a bagel, it has a hole in the middle. After finishing the entire bagel, where does the hole go?” The minister was impressed. “Excellent question. I’ll leave you to it ...”

The minister went to sleep for the remainder of the night. In the morning, he woke with a start and needed to see his horse. He ran down to the stable where he found the watchman sitting on a chair, head in his hands, his prized horse nowhere to be found. “What is going on here? What have you been thinking about all this time? Where is my horse?”

The watchman replied, “Your honor, this question is the hardest of them all. I simply cannot come up with an answer. How is it that I am standing here all night, watching your horse, and yet, somehow, it was stolen from right under my nose?!”

“This is the way of heretical philosophy,” explained the **Gerrer Rebbe**. “A person thinks of all different explanations for his existence, what makes a human being operate, and how the world continues to run. All the while, as he thinks his lofty thoughts, his G-d, his Creator, the Master of the World, is stolen out from right under his nose! A person must know with a firm belief that *Hashem* runs the world and that his job is to be a ‘*Tamim*’ - not subscribe to philosophies of *apikorsis!*”

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Chazal say that the Babylonians had a habit of toying with their victims, and even gave conquered nations “autonomy” while maintaining a tight grip. In fact, due to their sins *Klal Yisroel* lived that way for a while in the lead up to the *Churban* and expulsion from *Eretz Yisroel*. Although *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* told the Egyptians that they would be punished for their cruelty, his explanation of what it will be and when it will take place was vague at best. So, *Hashem* gave the young and cruel Babylonians an opportunity to rise to power and destroy the Egyptians since it was in their nature to continue this campaign of fear for Egypt. What they didn’t know was that *Hashem* always keeps tabs, and the Babylonian’s time was limited as well.

R’ Dovid Pardo zt”l (Maskil L’Dovid) explains that in a court case, the sentencing phase is often worse than the punishment itself since when a person is being punished he can at least prepare himself accordingly. However, during sentencing, a person can never know what to expect.

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

ונתתם ביד מבקשי נפשם וכד נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל ... (ירמי' מו-כ)

אשר לא ראו אתך ואבות אתך מיום היותם על האדמה עד היום הזה ויפן ויצא מעם פרעה ... (יג-י)

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

מחשבת הלב

The **Sefas Emes** draws the following powerful insight: When a *Yid* enjoys a *simcha*, that person’s ancestors share and partake in that *simcha* from on high. When *goyim* undergo sufferings, their ancestors too are forced to observe. The reasoning is *similar* for both. All that we as offspring go through in our lives is either because of the meritorious actions and commendable lives of our ancestors, or the despicable and wrongful lives of theirs. *Hashem*, therefore, shows the departed what transpires by their respective offspring. A *Yid’s* ancestors, who were righteous, are allowed to partake in our *simchos*. A gentiles forebears must share their pain, because they themselves were inherently bad. Thus, Moshe told Pharaoh, “Your ancestors, who are here now witnessing your punishment, have never observed such a scene.”

I saw a question on this based on the *Chazal* quoted by *Rashi* in *Parshas Chukas*. The *posuk* says, ... וירעו לנו המצריים ... On this, *Chazal* say: “מכאן שהאבות מצטערים בקבר כשהפרעניות באות על ישראל”. This seems to contradict the above words of the *Sefas Emes* that only by the *goyim* do the deceased take part in their pain and not by the *Yidden*? (See **Beis Yisroel** who reconciles this) Perhaps, though, we can say that *Chazal* added the word “בקבר” - in their graves. Because, only in their grave, do our ancestors feel our pain. In *Olam Haemes*, however, where everything is clear, not only do they not partake in our suffering, but they realize that all that *Hashem* does is for the good!

At many of our family gatherings, our *Zaida* would get emotional, saying that his parents/in-laws are here now *shepping nachas* from the growing, beautiful families, KA”H. This *vort* is for him, as now it is his turn to be shown his *nachas* here. May all of our actions bring a *nachas ruach* to him and all our ancestors in *shamayim*, as we still reap the benefit of their efforts!

משל למה הדבר דומה

וילכו ויקשו בני ישראל כאשר צוה ה' ... (יב-כא)

One of the pioneers of the *kashrus* standards we adhere to today, was the renowned **Posek, R’ Yisroel Belsky zt”l**. On one occasion, he was visiting a company that manufactures baby food. He checked some items and noted which ones needed upgrading. Later, at a senior staff meeting, someone commented, “Rabbi this place has been kosher for 57 years. Why the sudden changes?”

R’ Belsky replied, “If I would be sitting with any other staff personnel in this company, this question would have been acceptable and expected. But not here. You are the department of quality control. You are the very people in the company who oversee that the baby food is on par with the highest standards. Don’t you have meetings from time to time to discuss how to upgrade the product? Well, with regard to *kashrus*, we too have standards. Don’t we have the

right to do the same thing and sit dow to discuss necessary and appropriate upgrades from time to time?”

His words hit their mark and they all nodded in agreement. “You know Rabbi,” a head staff member quipped, “you speak our language!”

The first *mitzvah* that the Jewish people were commanded to do was *Korban Pesach*. The Torah says that after *Moshe Rabbeinu* told them the laws of this *mitzvah*, they immediately went out and did it. **Rashi** notes that even though they didn’t actually bring the *korban* yet, it is considered as if they did it because they accepted the yoke of the *mitzvah*. This is the essence of a Jew. Always looking to upgrade and accept anything that’ll make him better. The same concept is found by *Matan Torah*. Our ancestors said “נעשה ונשמע” and accepted upon themselves the yoke of *Torah*, thereby making them a better people. A Jew is always looking for a way to help him upgrade his service of *Hashem!*

החדש היה לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה ... (יב-ב)

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

דרגה יתירה

In *Parshas Bo*, the Jewish people received a great gift. We got our first *mitzvah* as a nation. This was even before we left *Mitzrayim* and came to *Har Sinai*. The question is, why was it necessary to give us this gift even before we left Egypt? The answer is that because without it, we could have never left! Without this gift, we would all be stuck in the “*Mitzrayim*” of our lives as well! What was this gift? It was the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh*. It was the gift of time and the power of renewal!

We all have ups and downs in life. This is normal. Sometimes we are on top of the world. We walk around singing and feeling blessed. Other times we feel so low, we don’t want to get out of bed! We don’t want to talk to anyone; we feel so down in the dumps. *Hashem* knows the nature of people and He gave us this great power to renew ourselves! Every month there is a *Rosh Chodesh*, because every month there is a new moon! At the end of every month it looks like the moon disappears, but that never happens! It gets so small that we almost cannot see it. But *Rosh Chodesh* is the beginning of a new moon! And by the middle of the month, it is big and full, and shines down on us from the sky, this incredible message of the power of renewal.

Klal Yisroel is compared to the moon. We, as a nation, have been brought so low, only to be raised up once again as *Hashem’s* Chosen People. This *mitzvah* was given to us in Egypt, when we were at the 49th gate of impurity. We were so low. *Hashem* gave us a boost. He said, “*Hachodesh Haze Lachem.*” The power to renew yourselves is yours! You don’t have to stay in this lowly place and low state of mind. Pull yourselves out and be the great and holy people you are destined to be!

This is the trick to growing in life. You can’t stand still because then you will fall. You have to be proactive in your spiritual growth. There is no such thing as stagnation in *Yiddishkeit*. Let us grab onto this great gift that *Hashem* has given to us. Let us never allow ourselves to fall too low, but rather remember that the power is in our hands to renew!