

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ה' איש מלחמה ה' שמו ... נדות בחסדך עם זו נאלת נחלת בעוך אל נזה קרשך וגו' (פס-ג:)

Sapir Cohen, 29, was part of the last group of hostages released during the week-long truce between Israel and Hamas in November. For 55 days, she languished in captivity in Gaza. She was kidnapped alongside her fiancée Sasha Trufanov, and a few members of his family. After her release, she revealed more details about her abduction and captivity including the *perek* of *Tehillim* that she began reciting 30 days before that fateful *Simchas Torah*.

“A few months ago, I felt like something bad was going to happen to me,” Sapir related after her release. “I thought that maybe I was coming down with some illness. And actually, I did find out that I had some type of virus. I was told to recite a certain *perek* of *Tehillim* every day for 30 days. The 30th day was on *Shabbos*, October 7th. I said this *perek* every day, and one day I started noticing the words and they weren’t about *refuah* - the *perek* speaks about war, that *Hashem* should save me. And I thought to myself, why am I *davening* this? What war am I *davening* to be saved from?”

The *perek* she was told to say was *Kapital 27* - “*L’Dovid Hashem Oiry*.” The words she read literally jumped out at her: “*בקרבו עלי מרעים לאכל את בשרי צרי ואיבי לי המה כשלו ונפלו. אם תחנה עלי מחנה לא יירא לבי אם תקום עלי מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח*” - “*When evildoers draw near to me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies against me - they stumbled and fell. If a camp encamps against me, my heart shall not fear; if a war should rise against me, in this, I trust.*” Sapir noted later, “Much of this *perek* speaks about war. And thank you *Hashem* that I was saved from the hands of the evildoers.”

On Friday, October 6th, Sapir, a resident of *Kiryat Ata* in northern Israel, traveled to *Kibbutz Nir Oz* to visit relatives. She woke up at 6:30 on *Shabbos* morning and heard loud booms on a scale she had never heard before. A few hours later the terrorists arrived at *Kibbutz Nir Oz*. Sapir had rolled herself inside a blanket and hid under a bed. “They entered the house and found my hiding place. They rolled me out from the blanket,” Sapir continued. “I understood that it was better for me to get up and go. I got up and they took me out of the house and put me on a motorcycle with two terrorists.

“We began the trip and when we entered Gaza, the streets were full of people who came to video me. I looked at all the cameras with my head held high. I told myself that at least my parents would see me and realize that I was abducted. It was bedlam. We entered the Gaza Strip, everyone was screeching - some had sticks, some had cigarettes. They came close to me and screamed at me and began beating me. I started protecting myself with my hands. They (the terrorists) put a shirt over my head to try to protect me - they needed hostages and stopped them from hurting me so that I’ll arrive there alive.

“During captivity, there were days when people didn’t know if they would be able to survive,” she said. “The tunnels there are crazy things. Thank G-d, I was saved and I hope they will return the abductees who stayed there.

“I was very optimistic from the first minute there,” Sapir continued. “Maybe it was the *perek* of *Tehillim* - I kept smiling and laughing the whole time. One day, I saw one of the terrorists with a memorial candle that had ‘Sapir’ written on it. I got angry at him because I thought I had formed a connection with them. I said to him: ‘Why? Why did you write my name?’ And he said: ‘I don’t like you. You’re my enemy. I don’t like you. But when you’re here, for some reason, there’s light.’ I said to myself: ‘*Hashem Yishmor*, I heard this from a terrorist.’”

Sapir Cohen was released on November 30, 2023, from captivity as part of an extension of a temporary cease-fire deal brokered by Qatar and the United States, between Hamas and Israel. Sasha Trufanov is still held in captivity *r”l*.

Sapir Cohen, Yelena Trufanov and Yelena’s mother, Irena Tati, arrived at the Western Wall a few days after their release to recite prayers of thanksgiving. Sapir, the fiancée of Yelena’s son Sasha, said the *Hagomel tefillah* and the three women recited *Mizmor LeTodah* on the miracle of their release. They also sang the song “*Acheinu*” as a hopeful prayer for those still in captivity. Yelena’s husband, Vitaly, was murdered by Hamas on Oct. 7th. *Hashem Yikom Damav*.

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

The *Haftorah* details “*Shiras Devorah*” - the *Shirah* sung by *Klal Yisroel* in the aftermath of battle between the Jewish Nation (led by *Barak ben Avinoam* and the tribes of *Naftali* and *Zevulun*) and the army of the Canaanite General, *Sisera*.

The *Navi* tells us that *Devorah HaNeviah*, “*Sat under the ‘Palm of Devorah’ [a palm tree]*” so that she would not violate the *Halachos* of *Yichud* when men would consult with her. In fact, the word “*תמר*” is the same numerical value (640) as the words “*צנועה היתה*” - “she was modest.”

However, as we know, in every *Halachic* dispute there must be two men present, the accuser and the accused, essentially two potential witnesses to dispel any suspicion of wrongdoing on the part of *Devorah HaNeviah* when they

came before her. Why then was she required to sit under the palm tree in plain view of the public?

The *Chida*, *Chacham Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai z”l* answers that *Chazal* (*Avos 1:8*) surprisingly say that when the two plaintiffs are in front of a *dayan*, the judge is required to regard them both as guilty until proven innocent, but when they leave they should both be assumed innocent unless proven otherwise. This ensures a more impartial judgment.

Thus, as the *Gemara* (*Kiddushin 80b*) states, since two suspected “guilty” people are considered immoral, they cannot serve as kosher witnesses with regard to the issue of *Yichud*, and *Devorah* needed to sit under the palm tree in public so that she would be above suspicion.

כל המחלה אשר שמתו במצרים לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפואך ... (פס-ב)

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

מחשבת הלב

The two halves of this *posuk* seem to contradict each other. “*All the sicknesses that I have visited upon Egypt I will not visit upon you; for I will heal you.*” If *Hashem* says he won’t inflict these sicknesses on the *Yidden*, what is the need for *רפואך*, what is the need for *אני ה' רפואך*?

Based on the words of the *Ksav Sofer z”l*, perhaps we can say as follows: *Hashem* brings hardships or *tzaros* on a person for one of two reasons. Either as punishment for the purpose of retribution or for one’s benefit. Either to serve as an impetus for change, or to atone for their sins. The *Mitzriyim* received their due justice as payback for all they had subjected the *Yidden* to. However for us, *Hashem* promises that those “*makkos*” will not befall us because the “slap” we may receive is only to propel us to repent, to do *teshuvah*, or to grant us a *kapara*, a real atonement for our previous sins.

Another *machshava* can be as follows. The *Gemara* in *Megilla 13b* says that *Hashem* doesn’t smite His flock - *Klal Yisroel* - unless He first creates the remedy, contrary to when He punishes the nations. As the *posuk* in *ישעי* says, “ונפא ה' את מצרים” and only after does it say “ורפוא”. Hence, says the *posuk*, *Hashem* tells us, “I won’t place the type of *machlah* - sickness - on you as I placed on them because *אני ה' רפואך* - I am your healer, I already created the *refuah*.” The logic is based on the above. The purpose of a *Yid’s tzaros* is only for our good. Thus the “medicine” is already prepared.

In a similar vein, we close the *bracha* of “*רפואנו*” in *Shemona Esrai* with the words “*רפוא חולי עמו ישראל*” - *Hashem is the Healer of all the pain and sickness of His Nation, Yisroel*. But if *Hashem* heals everyone, the only difference being when the *refuah* is created, why then do we say “*עמו ישראל*”? Based on what we said, the *pshat* is the healing of a *Yid* is in a different league than that of a gentile, because it differs in the essence of the *makka*.

May we be *zoche* to see only the “*אני ה' רפואך*” as *Hashem*, protects and showers us with *יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנִחְמוֹת*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויקראו בית ישראל את שמו מן ... (פס-א)

משל: When *R’ Elya Lopian z”l*, was a young man studying in the *yeshiva* in *Kelm*, he joined a select group of elite *Torah* scholars. At one point, the group decided to hold a nightly meeting at which each member would reveal any thoughts he might have had during the day that he felt could use improvement. This exercise, they hoped, would motivate them to make a greater effort to perfect themselves.

At the first meeting, one of the most pious members, *R’ Tzvi Hirsch Broide z”l*, was called upon to begin. Facing the group, he tried to talk but instead blushed bright red. He cleared his throat and tried again, to no avail. Finally, he stammered to his esteemed friends that he simply couldn’t bring himself to tell them about his lowly thoughts.

At a later point in time, *R’ Elya* found himself in a private

corner with *R’ Tzvi Hirsch*. “For the sake of *Hashem*,” *R’ Elya* pleaded, “please reveal what it was that you found too humiliating to share with the whole group.”

At first *R’ Tzvi Hirsch* stammered and did not wish to respond, but then reluctantly agreed. “That evening, just before *davening maariv*, I thought to myself, I hope my wife will prepare potatoes for supper ... Can you imagine entertaining a thought about potatoes, at a time when I ought to be preparing to stand before our Creator?!”

משל: *Hashem* commanded *Aharon* to take off a portion of *mann* and hide it in a jar. This *tzitzetzes hamon* was hidden in the *Aron Kodesh* to show that *Hashem’s* food was “Heaven sent” and provided for our every need. This physical reminder was essential to emphasize the importance of not focusing on the pleasures of this world, rather trusting in *Hashem* that He can provide exactly what we need in this world.

ויראו מאד ויצעקו בני ישראל אלי ה' ... ה' ירחם לכם ואתם תחדשו (י-א)

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

דרגה יתירה

These words of *Moshe Rabbeinu* to *Klal Yisroel* - “*Hashem will fight for you - and you will be silent!*” - must reverberate for all generations, guiding us in all of life’s difficulties, so that we remember to *daven* and place our troubles upon *Hashem* and “remain silent” since it is only *Hashem* who brings about *shidduchim*, *parnassa*, and every other form of salvation.

The *posuk* tells us that as the Jewish Nation stood facing the sea, surrounded on all sides by the enemy and the elements, with nowhere to go and nowhere to turn, they grabbed onto the special craft of their forefathers (תפיש אומנת אבותם) and they prayed (*Rashi*). The culmination of all the *avoda* in *Mitzrayim* was this *tefillah* - עבודה שלב - of *Bnei Yisroel*. Similarly, says *R’ Yaakov Meir Shechter shlita*, the moment that we turn to *Hashem* in prayer is the high point of all of our *avodas Hashem*.

There are many different jobs that require much time and effort in the raising of crops. One must plant, sow, water, plow etc. However, the most exciting and rewarding aspect of the work is the harvesting. Likewise, says the *Baal HaTurim*, with respect to prayer. A wonderful feeling of satisfaction can be attained by man through attaching himself to *Hashem* in prayer. The tremendous thrill and spiritual high of a *gevaldige shemona esrai* that was said with intention and deep emotion. You feel like you never want to move your feet from that place because YOU are truly connected to your source. This is the greatest pleasure that one can feel in the entire universe. And it is truly the greatest wealth that one can acquire in this world.

True, when our prayers are answered and *Hashem* fulfills our requests, it is easy to recognize the value of prayer. But *tefillah* has another benefit. It fills one with great joy and satisfaction as the one who harvests his crop after much toil. We are here to attach ourselves to *Hashem*. Prayer does exactly that. It allows us to attach ourselves in this lowly physical earth to the Master and Creator of the world. It is the culmination of all that we do and it has the power to bring us the greatest joy imaginable.