



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ואיש אשר יגע במשכבו יכבדו ורחוק במים וממנו עד הקרב ... (זוה"ק)

After the fall of Czar in 1917, and the defeat of the Bolsheviks in 1923, the Communists conquered all opposition and were in full control of what became known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). While the Communists were opposed to all forms of religion and especially Judaism, they were too preoccupied in the formative years of their regime to make a concerted effort at subverting religious practices. There was, however, one section of the Communist Party that from its inception, expended great effort to destroy Jewish religious life. This was the “Yevseksia”, the notorious “Jewish Section.” The Yevseksia advocated the death of the Jewish religion. They opened a network of kindergartens, schools and youth clubs where there was no mention of Jewish history or faith and where “G-d” was treated as a superstition of backward people. Instead, Communist ideology and culture was taught with enthusiasm and fervor. As time went on, *yeshivos*, *chadarim* and *mikvaos* in Russia were forced to close and teaching *Torah* to the young became a crime against the State.

The *Rav* of Luban, **R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל**, with his quiet, respectful manner and his avoidance of public encounters with the Communists, remained in relatively good standing with the regime and its supporters. Though there was no doubt where the *Rav* stood on religious issues, the government could tolerate a man who did not, at least publicly, attempt to show the fallacy of their brutal policies. In private, though, R’ Moshe continued to study *Gemara* with the men of the town, while inspiring and encouraging his people to remain strong in their faith and observance of every *mitzvah*, despite the persecutions.

One particular incident illustrates both R’ Moshe’s courage and effectiveness during those years. With a combination of ingenuity, personality, daring and most importantly, *emunah*, he succeeded in having a *mikvah* built with the aid of the Communists themselves. In the city of Luban, officials decided to demolish the old *mikvah* building on the pretext that it was unhygienic. In its place, they planned to build a modern bathhouse, designated for mixed swimming. R’ Moshe prevailed upon the non-Jewish contractor to build the pool in such a way that it would be a kosher *mikvah*. He bribed the man to arrange to have ice or snow placed in the empty bath. The pool was initiated with forty *se’ah* of kosher water, since when there’s no choice, one may even place snow in the empty *mikvah* via vessels. With the construction taken care of, a problem of a different sort had to be solved. Men and women were expected to use the pool at the same time, something no religious Jew in Luban would ever dream of doing. Unless this situation could be changed, the pool would be useless as a *mikvah*.

R’ Moshe approached a high-ranking official, whose respect he had earned, and put the dilemma to him this way: The Jewish community wanted very much to enjoy the new sanitary facilities generously provided by the government, but would not bathe in mixed company. The *gadol* put forth a convincing argument. “These new ways may be good for some, but us Jews have always lived with a deeply ingrained sense of modesty and we won’t bathe in a mixed bathhouse. This stands to endanger everyone since not bathing is unhygienic and tends to breed all sorts of disease. The best solution is to allow separate bathing at least once a week.” The official agreed and the Jews had themselves a *mikvah*, the only one for miles around.

In the entire region surrounding Minsk, a radius of hundred of kilometers, Luban possessed the only real *mikvah*. Since most people didn’t have access to transportation in those days, there were people, men and women, who walked all the way to Luban, in some cases a journey of three days, to use the precious *mikvah*. Although a number of leniencies had to be relied upon to validate the new *mikvah*, R’ Moshe’s allowed his *Rebbitzen* to make use of it, since it was vital for the Jews of Luban and the surrounding areas to see that their esteemed rabbi held from it in order for them to have confidence in the *kashrus* of the *mikvah*.

Many years later, R’ Moshe wrote a responsum in *Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim I §126)* that began with, “*In our city Luban, it became possible, through Hashem’s kindness, to construct a mikvah (during the years of evil decrees) in a public bathhouse run by the government, which was unaware that it was, in fact, a kosher mikvah...*”

יהיה מורו חדש כחדשו ומדו שבת בשבתו יבוא כל בשר להשתחות לפני אמו"ה ...

On *Shabbos Rosh Chodesh*, the *Haftorah* is taken from the concluding *perek* of *Sefer Yeshaya*, in which *Yeshaya HaNavi* speaks of the honor given to *Hashem* on *Rosh Chodesh* and *Shabbos*. *Yeshaya* states, “*And it shall be that, at every New Moon and on every Shabbos, all mankind will come to prostrate themselves before Me, says Hashem.*”

**R’ Avraham HaKohen Pam ז”ל (Chazon Avraham on Haftoros)** quotes the **Yalkut Shimoni** regarding this statement and says that *Hashem* desires to be recognized by all of mankind, and the medium to accomplish this is through *Klal Yisroel*. When Jews interact with all of mankind, fellow Jews and non-Jews alike, in a fair, honest, and respectful manner, it causes a universal sanctification of *Hashem’s*

Name and achieves the highest goals of Creation. This underscores the centrality of the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem* and the fearful sin of *Chillul Hashem* in the life of a Jew.

In today’s crazy world where news is instantly peddled to millions of people, we tend to think that the parameters of *Chillul Hashem* is when a Jew does something wrong and his misconduct is splashed across the headlines of a news outlet. While it is certainly true that such a thing is in fact a *Chillul Hashem*, the true definition as defined by the **Sefer Yereim**, is when a Jewish person causes a weakening of belief in *Hashem* and observance of *Torah* and *mitzvos* by not acting in accordance with behavior expected of a *Torah*-loyal Jew. This is the ultimate definition of *Chillul Hashem*.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות  
A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY  
HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו ... (י-ב)

לעילוי נשמת אבנו מורנו הרבנו הרב חיים  
יוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ"ל

# מחשבת הל"ב

Why does the *Torah* mention the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* again, specifically here in the *parsha* discussing childbirth? The *Gemara (Niddah 31b)* states: "מפני מה נתנה מילה בשמיני? כדי שלא יהיו אביו ואמו עצבים והכל שמחין". In other words, a woman after labor is *טמאה* (ritually impure). Thus, there is an element of sadness present, not allowing the *simcha* to be enjoyed in its entirety. As a result, we wait to do the *Bris Milah* on the eighth day when she is *tahor* again. This is a vital lesson in *bein adam l'chaveiro*. To make a *simcha* while causing another person angst is not the *Torah* way.

The **Yalkut Shimoni** offers another reason for waiting until the eighth day. He explains that we wait until the child has experienced a *Shabbos*, which is also why an animal must wait for the eighth day before it can be brought as a *korban*. The **Alter** from **Slabodka** would deduce that here we can see the power of *Shabbos*. It can trigger an actual transformation in all who go through it. He explains a fascinating **Machzor Vitri** who writes that while *halacha* dictates to make a *birchas hamotzi* on a *challah sholeim* (whole), if the “non *sholeim*” went through a *Shabbos* and the *sholeim* did not, use the *prusa* (not for *halacha l'maaseh*). Because having experienced a *Shabbos* elevates even the mundane, equating or possibly even surpassing the *maaleh* of *sholeim*. Perhaps we can use this reasoning to explain why at a *Shabbos Sheva Berachos* we don’t require a *panim chadoshos*. Because each person becomes a new person on *Shabbos* and we are all *panim chadoshos*.

As a mother welcomes her baby into this world, fraught with spiritual pitfalls and tribulations, the *Torah* attempts to allay her fears. You must *daven*, but also know that there is a *Bris*, a *Shabbos*, and other *mitzvos* which will B”H elevate, protect, and transform your new child in the face of these challenges. May we all be *zoche* to see only *Yiddishe nachas*.

## משל למת הדבר דומה

אשה כי תוריע וילדה זכר ... (יב-ב)

**Harav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, ז”ל**, *Rav* of *Yerushalayim*, was originally named Chaim at his *bris*. Later in his life, it happened that one year shortly before *Yom Kippur* he suddenly fell gravely ill. R’ Chaim’s *Rebbi*, the illustrious **R’ Yehoshua Leib Diskin ז”ל**, also known by **Maharil Diskin**, gave him his word that he would be able to fast safely - on the condition that he spent *Yom Kippur* day resting at home. R’ Chaim did so but after *Yom Kippur* his situation took a turn for the worse. His holy *Rebbi* spent an entire day at his bedside until he finally decided to add the name Yosef which literally means “add,” to the name Chaim - “life.” Almost immediately, R’ Yosef Chaim began to feel better and within a few days was back to his regular routine.

A few years later, on *Purim*, R’ Yosef Chaim brought his *Rebbi mishloach manos* very early in the morning. The

Maharil was happy to see his student arrive so early and praised him saying, “*Zerizin Makdimin L’mitzvos.*”

R’ Yosef Chaim smiled and said, “It was the holy *Rebbi* who turned me into a *zariz* (one who acts quick). At first, my name was only Chaim. When the *Rebbi* added Yosef to my name, the numerical equivalent of my full name, Yosef Chaim, became 224, equal to the *gematria* of the word *רצו*.”

Hearing the clever response, the Maharil rose and recited the blessing written in the *Gemara* to be recited when one sees that his student is successful: *ברוך רחמנא דחמי לי פירין עד - דאנא בחיסם - “Blessed is Hashem Who has shown me fruits during my lifetime.” (Yerushalmi Horayos 3:4)*

**נמשל**: *Chazal* say that a person’s name is a very powerful tool, as it can affect a person’s life and have a meaningful effect on him as well. Hence, when parents choose a name for their newborn child, they must be aware that it can be instrumental in the child’s progression in life.

משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסרה ליהושע ... מחד מחד הוי שפיל (פרקי אבות ד-ד)

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

## דרגה יתירה

After *Pesach* there is a big stress on *middos*. **R’ Chayim Vital ז”ל** writes that our main preparation for *Kabbolas HaTorah* is *Tikkun Hamiddos*, fixing our character traits. We must align our traits on the middle path, the golden way, which means that one should not be extreme in any *midda*. No extreme is good and we must learn to fine tune our *middos* and synthesize them to work in harmony without acting extreme in any way. All except one. There is one *midda* that we are taught to go to the extreme. The *Mishna (Avos 4-4)* teaches us, “*Meod meod hevei shfal ruach,*” be very, very humble. This means extreme.

*Perek Aleph* in *Avos* starts by delineating the *mesorah* of our people. We read how Moshe received the *Torah* from *Sinai* and he gave it over to Yehoshua, Yehoshua to the *zekainim*, and so on and so forth. There is a chain here. But the first link in the chain seems odd. Why do we say that Moshe received the *Torah* FROM *Sinai*? He received the *Torah* ON *Sinai*, but he got the *Torah* FROM *Hashem*? Why does the *Mishna* tell us that he got the *Torah* FROM *Sinai*? The **Kotzker Rebbe ז”ל** explains that he received the *Torah* from the lesson of *Sinai*. *Har Sinai* was a small and lowly mountain who did not compete with the others in thinking that the *Torah* should be given on him. He was humble and he was small, and it was because of his extreme humility that *Har Sinai* was the mountain chosen for *Kabbolas HaTorah*. Moshe, too, was the most humble of men and it was he, who was chosen to be the Master and Teacher of *Torah* for the entire Jewish people. So, the very first lesson that we learn in *Pirkei Avos* is “*Moshe kibel Torah MiSINAI,*” Moshe got the *Torah* from humility, and if we want to be worthy vessels of *Torah*, then that is the most important *midda* to work on. And not just to get to the middle path - we need to go to the extreme.

The *Mishna* says (2-8): “*If you learned a lot of Torah don’t hold yourself as great, because this is what you were created for.*” With these words, we can begin our journey towards spiritual growth, *Tikkun Hamiddos*, to be worthy vessels to receive the *Torah*.