



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את בת לוי ... (ב-א)

A story is told about **R' Chaim Volozhiner (Itzkowitz) ז"ל**, the preeminent disciple of the **Gaon of Vilna ז"ל** and the founder of the renowned *Yeshiva* in Volozhin, Lithuania. The “*Volozhiner Yeshiva*” began in 1803 and soon became renowned as the “Mother of all Yeshivos” after which many other such *yeshivos* were modeled.

The town of Volozhin was built on the main road leading from Vilna to Minsk. It is apportioned into two sections: the “lower neighborhood” along the river and the “upper neighborhood” toward the hills. It is divided by a river, with a bridge connecting the two parts of the city. In the 1800’s, each section maintained their own *Rav*, however, for the most part, the Jewish population of Volozhin was considered one community. R’ Chaim served on one side of the river, while a certain R’ Elya served on the other. Since the two communities were not really distinct, there was an uncomfortable overlap in the activities of the two *Rabbanim*. People would sometimes gripe and say that one city cannot have “*two kings wearing one crown*” (*Chullin 60b*). R’ Chaim never expressed any bitterness about this situation, in keeping with the advice he once wrote in a letter: “One should never bear any resentment towards another, even inwardly, and certainly one should never express resentment to others. Patience and tolerance will help a person achieve his desires far more than all the resentment in the world.” This was his way and he showed great respect to R’ Elya at every opportunity.

However, a number of years after R’ Chaim founded the *Volozhin Yeshiva*, a vacancy opened up in the rabbinate of a nearby city. R’ Chaim sent a message that it would be best if R’ Elya were to leave Volozhin to take the other position.

When R’ Elya’s wife heard this message, she was incensed “What nerve telling my husband to leave his post!” she exclaimed. She insisted that R’ Elya respond that R’ Chaim should take the new post but R’ Elya quickly reproached her and told her that the wish of the great R’ Chaim Volozhiner must be obeyed. Without another word of discussion, he summoned a wagon, loaded his meager possessions on it - what did he own already? A *Shas*, a *Shulchan Aruch*, perhaps a few other *seforim* and a few pots and pans - and set off for the nearby town, where he took the rabbinical post.

Not long after R’ Elya and his wife left Volozhin, R’ Chaim’s 1-year-old grandson, the son of **R’ Itzele ז"ל**, took ill and passed away. While trying to console his son, R’ Chaim remarked, “If only R’ Elya could have troubles like yours,” a reference to the fact that R’ Elya had no children. He explained to his grieving family that indeed, their situation was preferable in light of the well-known *Medrash in Parshas Shemos (Shemos Rabbah 1:17)* which relates that when Amram separated from his wife Yocheved, their daughter Miriam told him, “Your decree is worse than Pharaoh’s, for Pharaoh decreed that the male newborn die only in this world, while you (by separating and not having children at all) have decreed death for them both in this world and in the World to Come.” R’ Elya never had a child so his troubles were infinitely worse.

This remark was subsequently reported to R’ Elya. Miraculously, a short time later, R’ Elya and his wife were finally blessed with a son. The parents’ joy was unbounded, and their hearts were full of love for the precious gift *Hashem* had sent them. When the baby reached the same age at which R’ Itzele’s son had passed away, he contracted typhus, a disease for which there was no cure at that time. Typically, a patient’s condition would grow progressively worse until he reached a crisis point. Usually there was one critical night, and if the patient survived it, he would gradually recover. If not ...

The doctor had warned R’ Elya and his wife to expect this crisis from the beginning of the baby’s illness, and they lived in constant fear of it. When the decisive night finally arrived, R’ Elya sat by the child’s bed reciting *Tehillim* and praying with all his heart. From time to time, he punctuated his *Tehillim* with a heartfelt cry, “This isn’t what R’ Chaim meant! This isn’t what R’ Chaim meant!” *Hashem* heard his *tefillos* and the young child overcame the crisis and returned to good health.

According to one version of the story, that child grew up to become the father of the **Rashash, R’ Shmuel Strashun ז"ל**.

היה ביום הווא יתקע בשופר גדול ובא האברים בארץ אשור והנהיגם בארץ מצרים - (שקדו כו-ג)

*Yeshaya HaNavi’s* message of redemption parallels *Hashem’s* message to *Moshe of Klal Yisroel’s* redemption from Egypt. Interestingly, the Navi describes the returning people as “אבדים” and “דחים” - two words that translate to mean lost and exiled. Was it so necessary for *Yeshaya* to use these two words that seem to have a redundant meaning?

**R’ Shamshon Raphael Hirsch ז"ל** gives a beautiful explanation. *Yeshaya HaNavi* was referring to two separate segments of lost Jewish souls which would not normally be equated with one another, but now they are. The word “דחים” usually refers to those who were forcibly removed and expelled from their land and heritage, while the word “אבדים” usually refers to those who have become lost. However, in

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this prophecy, “דחים” refers to those who were “induced” into leaving the path of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, while “אבדים” makes reference to those members of *Klal Yisroel* whose ancestors chose to leave the fold and assimilate into the gentile world and culture. They have grown up not even knowing that they were Jewish and their existence and whereabouts have long faded from the awareness of their brethren.

Says R’ Hirsch, when *Mashiach* arrives and the heavenly *shofar* is sounded, these lost Jews (אבדים) who never even knew they were Jewish will be identified and brought back into the fold by those Jews who were tempted/forced away from their faith (דחים) and together they will dedicate their lives to serving *Hashem* and doing His *mitzvos*.

לא תאכפו לתת תבן לעם ללבן הלבנים כתמול שלשם הם ילכו וקששו להם תבן (ו-ה) *Sefer Shemos* is called the “*Sefer HaGeulah*” according to the **Ramban**.

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

# מחשבת הלב

Suffice it to say that our sojourn from Egypt to Canaan was a long and arduous one. One may wonder how was it possible for the *Bnei Yisroel*, in such a short span of time, to become subjected and enslaved to Pharaoh. The *shevatim* were capable of decimating the entire Egypt just a mere few years earlier. How could everything have devolved so drastically, so quickly? A similar question is often asked about the sorrowful saga of the Holocaust. Why was there no fighting back? Why were we led like sheep to slaughter with so little in the way of protest?

Although this is a delicate question, **R’ Chatzkel Levenstein ז"ל** gives us the proper insight on *golus* and *tzaros*. He says that it really makes no sense, from a logical perspective; but this was the *gezeira mishamayim*. The *ratzon* of *Hashem* trumps and defies all forces of reason. That explains *Mitzrayim* and that explains Europe. But that isn’t the only point here. The *Sefer HaGeulah* focuses on renewal. How can we hasten this, oh so sought after renewal?

At the end of the *parsha*, the tide seems to tilt a bit. Pharaoh decrees that no straw will be supplied while his slaves’ quota will remain the same. The *posuk* says, “ויפץ העם בכל ארץ מצרים לקשש קש לתבן” - the *Yidden* scrambled to find straw to use. What was Pharaoh’s intention? I once heard the following beautiful *machshava*. Pharaoh knew the only way for the Jews to hasten their redemption is through unity and *achdus*. His “last straw” was to promote discord among the Jews as they would begin fighting over who found this particular straw and to whom does it belong. This would cause a delay in their salvation.

This teaches us that if we want to change the *Sefer HaGolus V’hatzaros* into the *Sefer HaGeulah V’yeshua* we must be proactive in promoting רעות ושלום ואהבה ואחווה - and then we’ll be *zoche* to עוד ישמע בערי יהודה ובחוצות ירושלים. Welcome home!

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמר אל בנתני ואזי למה זה עזבתן את האיש ... (ב-ב)

**משל**: The ship carrying the **Brisker Rav, R’ Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik ז"ל**, and his sons from Odessa, Russia, to Turkey, during their famous escape from war-torn Europe, in 1941, did not afford them many amenities. Although the streamliner did have a kitchen and offered food to the passengers, the *Rav* and his sons understandably would not touch their food. They brought their own food along.

There was one waiter who noticed that the rabbi and his sons would not eat anything from the ship’s kitchen and he tried to talk to them and convince them to eat healthy food. He told them that he would provide them with brand new pots and pans so they wouldn’t have to use the non-kosher utensils, and if they wanted, he would only cook vegetables in those new pots and pans, so there would not be any problems with non-kosher food. Time after time, they turned down the kind man’s offer, but he kept returning, urging

them again and again, to eat healthier food than they had.

Finally, the *Brisker Rav* relented and agreed to allow the man to cook vegetables in a brand new pot. But before he cooked anything, he sent one of his sons to accompany the man to the kitchen to turn on the stove, so as to avoid “*Bishul Akum*” (non-Jewish cooking). Just as he struck the match to light the fire, the waiter slapped his forehead and exclaimed in perfect *Yiddish*, “He thinks I’m a *Goy*? I’m a *Yid*!”

When the *Brisker Rav* heard that the waiter on the ship was a *Yid*, he said, “I knew he couldn’t be a non-Jew. He kept trying and trying to help us. He just had to be a *Yid*!”

**משל**: **R’ Dovid Soloveitchik שליט’א** explains that when *Yisro* heard that an Egyptian man toiled selflessly to draw water from the well for his daughters, he couldn’t believe that that the man was really an Egyptian. He asked, “Where is this man? I must meet him to see if it’s really true.” *Yisro* knew that a *Goy* would not toil so hard to help another - he had to be an “*Ivri*” - a Jew - and thus, he wanted him for his daughter.

ויאמר מלך מצרים למלדת העברית אשר שם האחת שפרה ושם השנית פועה ... (א-טו)

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

## דרגה יתירה

This week we are introduced to two very special ladies: Yocheved and Miriam, otherwise known as *Shifra* and *Puah*. They were the Jewish midwives in *Mitzrayim*, and they risked their lives to keep the Jewish babies alive. They did *chessed* all day long, and yet the *Torah* doesn’t say a word about their *chessed* or about their *mesirus nefesh*. The *Torah* writes, “*Vatirena Hameyaldos es HaElokim*” - the midwives feared *Hashem*. They had *Yiras Shamayim*, and it was their fear of heaven that was the foundation of all of their other good *middos*. The **Nesivos Shalom** explains that *Yiras Shamayim* means to see heaven, to be able to see *Hashem* in the normal, mundane, everyday routine of life. This is what *Yiras Shamayim* is on a practical level, and this, as we learn from Yocheved and Miriam, is the foundation of all good *middos*. It is similar to a chain of pearls. Every pearl is a different *middah*, but the chain itself that is holding all of those *middos* in place is *Yiras Shamayim*.

The **Rambam** writes that the best places to find *Yiras Shamayim* are in *Torah* and *Tevah* (nature). *Torah* is truly the book of *Hashem’s ratzon* - His Divine will. They say, “If you want to get to know an author, read his book!” Well, there is probably no better way to get to know *Hashem* than by delving into His Holy words of *Torah*, which contain in them the myriad secrets and mysteries of the world. Every word of *Torah* is saturated with G-dliness, and therefore, *Yiras Shamayim* can be gained primarily from the holy words of *Torah*. But *Hashem* also left His imprint on every creation in the world. The mountains, the valleys, the oceans, and the forests all sing the praises of *Hashem*. The animals, the birds, the sun, and the moon, are all testimony to *Hashem’s* awesome handiwork. If we would only see and recognize that all of this beauty and glory is *Hashem* talking to us, inspiring us to see Him, fear Him, and get close to Him - then we will increase our *Yiras Shamayim* mightily.