

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

רק ככל אה נפשך תזכה ואכלת בשר בברכת ה' אלקיך אשר נתן לך ככל שעריך ... (יב-יג)

In the small town of Brezhna, Ukraine, the longtime *shochet* began to feel his age. “Just look how his hands are shaking,” one competitor pointed out to his friend, another of the other local *shochtim*. His friend just shook his head in silent agreement. It wasn’t the elder *shochet’s* fault; he had simply reached a venerable age, and as old age set in, so did rheumatism, and trembling hands. One thing the townsfolk agreed on: they no longer trusted the *shochet’s* unsteady hands and they wanted him to retire. But the *shochet* had his pride and refused to be forced into retirement. He and the townsfolk reached an impasse, with neither wishing to yield. The tiff went on for quite some time. In the middle of the dispute, the newly appointed rabbi arrived - and with him, new hope for the resolution of the town’s problem.

R’ Sholom Sofer ז”ל (*einikel* of the **Chasam Sofer**) was hired to replace their recently retired *Rav*. At the time, he was but a *yungerman*, a young *avreich* lacking the authority to remove the old *shochet* from his position. Yet, as each side became more entrenched in their opinion, *machlokes* took over the town. Distinct feuding lines were drawn with some supporting the respected but elderly *shochet*, while others opposed him due to his shaky hands.

“How can you dare retire our beloved *shochet* who has dedicated his life to ensuring that we eat kosher meat? Have you no shame?” argued one side.

“How can you not retire an old *shochet*? It is precisely our dedication to kosher meat that forces us to replace someone whose hands tremble and can no longer serve as a competent *shochet*! Have you no *yiras shomayim*?” argued the other side.

The new *Rav*, observing the controversy, decided to speak with the *shochet*. He advised him as follows: “You see how bitter this dispute is. In all honesty, I don’t think there is any substance to their complaint. As a new *Rav* here, however, I lack the authority to take any concrete action to help you keep your position and put an end to the *machlokes*. My suggestion is that you go to the *gaon*, **R’ Moshe Yosef Teitelbaum ז”ל**, of Uhjel, and ask him to test your abilities. Once he sees that your abilities as a *shochet* have not deteriorated, he will surely write you a letter of approbation. He will attest to the fact that the meat is kosher and that will settle the matter!” The *shochet* agreed and left for Uhjel.

When the *Uhjler Rav*, R’ Moshe Yosef Teitelbaum, saw the *shochet*, he saw for himself how unsteady his hands were. Yet, he was unwilling to embarrass the elderly man. The *Rav* suggested the following: “I don’t have time this minute to sit and write up the letter. I have an idea; you go back home and as soon as I have the time, I shall write up a letter and send it straight to your *Rav* back in Brezhna with my feelings and considerations.” The *shochet* agreed and returned home.

Some time passed and the *yahrzeit* of the holy **Yismach Moshe** of Uhjel approached. When R’ Sholom Sofer made his way to Uhjel for the *yahrzeit*, he stopped in to visit the town’s *Rav* as well. “Well, well, I owe you a letter,” apologized the *Uhjler Rav* to the *Brezhner Rav*. “Please check what has happened to the letter you wished me to compose.”

He pointed to a stack of papers on top of which lay a letter rendered illegible due to a great blot of ink smeared all over it. “Let me tell you the story of this letter: When I met your *shochet* and I saw firsthand how his hands shook, I realized I should write to you. Still, I didn’t want to shame the poor old man so I sent him home and promised to send you the letter. When I finally sat down to write the letter and address it, I fell asleep. As I slept, I had a dream. In my vision I saw my venerable *zeide*, the holy *Yismach Moshe*, who questioned me in consternation: ‘If they are searching high and low across the whole country for a murderer, someone who wishes to harm the livelihood and to shame an old man, spilling his blood, couldn’t they find anyone better than you?’ When the dream ended, I awoke with a start and the ink pot tipped over and ink spilled over the freshly written letter and ruined it, just as you see it here. I took this as a sign that I was not to be the one to send you this letter. Therefore, I haven’t sent you anything until today.” (Excerpted from **Teshuas Tzaddikim p. 511**)

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN עניה סערה לא נחמה ... (ישעי' מג-יא)

The *Medrash HaGadol (Vayechi)* tells us that at the moment when *Hashem* decided it was time to begin comforting *Klal Yisroel* over the terrible *Churban* that wreaked destruction on *Yerushalayim* and the *Bais HaMikdash*, the Almighty dispatched the *Avos* who tried to comfort *Bnei Yisroel*. However, they could not be comforted. The *Avos* returned to *Hashem* and said that *Klal Yisroel* could not be comforted using the opening words of the *Haftorah* - “עניה סערה לא נחמה”. *Chazal* tells us that it was at this very moment when *Hashem* decided that He - and only He - could truly comfort His children. But surely *Hashem* knew that in the end only He would be able to offer true comfort, so why did He even send the *Avos* in the first place?

R’ Moshe Dovid Vali ז”ל (Ramad Vali) remarks that this underscores the amazing *keshet* and closeness *Hashem* has with *Klal Yisroel*. For just like a beloved monarch will try every means at his disposal to repatriate his most ardent subjects, so too *Hashem* will do anything to draw *Klal Yisroel* closer to Him. In fact, by sending the *Avos* to start the process of comforting *Bnei Yisroel*, *Hashem* was showing that not only did He want them back under His fold, but that the Almighty cared enough to busy Himself with the tedious process of bringing them back and comforting them.

May we all merit to feel that closeness to *Hashem* and be drawn alongside the millions of Jews who drew closer to *Hashem* throughout the generations.

לא תאמין את לבבך ולא תקפין את ירך מאחור
האביון. כי פתח תפתח את ירך לו ... (יג-יג)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE
FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ז"ל

מחשבת הלב

While reviewing these *posukim*, one cannot help but notice the replication of terms. The *Torah* admonishes us: Do not close your heart and your hand, but rather - “פתח תפתח” - open your hand. Why all this double-speak?

Additionally, what’s the function of the word “כי” in this context? Because “Open your Hand” doesn’t seem to make sense. (**Rashi**, as does *Targum*, explains this word כי to mean “rather”, which seems to be *poshut pshat*)

Perhaps we can say the following thought and derive a significant message. There are various ways to perform the *mitzvah* of *tzedaka*. Obviously, giving money is one method. But having an open home, providing rides for *tzedaka* solicitors, or even just giving them helpful advice, are also ways to provide for the poor. Even more meaningful could be a kind word, a warm smile, or an encouraging pat on the back. Says the *posuk*, if you have the means, don’t close your hand. But even if you cannot help monetarily to the extent you wish you could, at least, says the *Torah*, don’t close your heart, because that too is a means of *tzedaka*. “פתח תפתח” - you can open your wallet or your heart. (See **Baal HaTurim** here which inspired this idea.)

The **Ohr HaChayim Hakadosh**, too, refers to the word “כי”, as a clarification - a reason not to close your heart. He explains that the *Torah* is teaching us an idea based on a *posuk* in *Mishlei*, (יא כד), “יש מפזר ויסף עוד” (יא כד). A person gives and receives. In other words, the pipelines of שפע is open for us when we give to others. Hence, don’t close your hand, because *Hashem* needs your hand to be ready to receive his myriad blessings, in return.

A number of *posukim* later, the *Torah* concludes with the words, “כי לא יחדל אביון מקרב הארץ”. In other words, there will always be those in need and therefore, opportunities to lend a helping hand abound. If we view it as a privilege and offer assistance in any way we can, we will be *zoche* to unleash and receive incredible *beracha* from Above!

משל למה הדבר דומה

נתון תתן לו ולא ידע לבכך בתתך לו ... (יג-יג)

משל: One of the first prominent *Chassidische Rebbe*s to come to Montreal was **R’ Yochanan Twersky ז”ל**, the **Tolner Rebbe**. During the difficult postwar years his home was always open to visitors, and he and his wife tended to the needs of each individual with loving tender care.

But it wasn’t only his greatly expanded heart full of love that he showered upon everyone; he went well beyond that. He realized there were individuals who had a difficult time soliciting clothing and other commodities they so desperately needed but didn’t have the heart to ask for them. To that end, he conceived a novel way to help these destitute refugees, especially before the harsh Montreal winters.

The *Rebbe* would arrive at the *mikvah* with layers of clothing, wearing numerous jackets and sweaters. He would

then conveniently “forget” them, announcing that anything left behind was “*hefker*” free for taking. The *Rebbe* thus ensured that while their bodies were warm, their pride was intact.

Once, after “forgetting” most of his clothing at the *mikvah*, the *Rebbe* was walking home, jacketless, only in his white shirt and *tzitzis* and someone reprimanded him that this was unbecoming for a *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* laughingly replied, “For someone like me, it’s very becoming.”

נמשל: In this week’s *parsha*, the *Torah* expounds on the *mitzvah* of *tzedaka*. The are many things that can be given as charity; some are monetary while others are commodities, but there is one common denominator that goes above and beyond them all: the way one gives the charity! Anyone ever in a pressing situation can attest that more than the help they received was they way they got it. This is why we strive to perform this especially important *mitzvah* in a respectful way.

ונתת את הברכה על הר גיזים
ואת הקללה על הר עיבל ... (יא-כג)

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

דרגה יתירה

The two mountains, *Har Gerizim* and *Har Eival*, are both located in the mountain range of *Shevet Ephraim*, and the contrast in their appearances can be clearly seen. Mount Gerizim, located to the south of the valley of *Shechem*, is verdant, lush, with gardens covering the terraces on its slope. Mount Eival, on the north side, is steep, barren and desolate. Mount Eival is approximately 2,900 feet high, a few hundred feet taller than Mount Gerizim, which rises to about 2,700 feet.

Accordingly, writes **R’ Shmshon Raphael Hirsch ז”ל**, these two mountains, standing side by side, present a striking visualization of blessing and curse. Both of them rise from the same soil; both are watered by the same rain and dew. The same air passes over both of them; the same pollen blows over both of them. Yet, *Har Eival* remains starkly barren, while *Har Gerizim* is covered with lush vegetation to its very top. There is clearly a stark contrast between the two mountains. In the same way “ברכה וקללה” - blessing and curse - are not dependent on external circumstances, but rather on a person’s inner receptivity to one or the other - on our attitude towards that which brings about blessing.

When *Bnei Yisroel* crossed the *Yarden* (Jordan River) and took those first steps on the soil of a Holy Land that sanctified them, the sight of these two mountains taught them that they, by themselves, by their OWN moral conduct, will decide whether they were headed for Mount Gerizim or Mount Eival - for blessing or for curse.

Avraham Avinu, too, came first to these mountains when he entered the Land of Canaan, and built the first *mizbeach* (altar) to *Hashem*, when He appeared to him at *Elon Moreh*. The word “מורה” translates as “teaching” because the lesson that Avraham was taught when he beheld the two mountains is that it is up to him to choose which way his life will go - closer to the Creator of the World and His *Torah* - blessing - or *chalilah*, the opposite - towards curse.