

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

לקח את ספר התורה הזה ושמתם אותו מצד ארון ברית ה' אליקים והיה שם כך לעד ... (לא-כו)

On June 23, 1943, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt approved the formation of the “American Commission for the Protection and Salvage of Artistic and Historic Monuments in War Areas.” Thus, was born the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFAA) commission under the auspices of the Civil Affairs and Military Government Sections of the Allied Armies. Together the Monuments Men worked to protect monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. About two dozen Monuments Men, actual service members of the U.S. army, braved the front lines to track, locate, and recover looted objects. Their work was dangerous: two Monuments Men were killed in combat while protecting works of art. General Eisenhower gave orders that his forces should assist the MFAA as much as they could without interfering with their military duties and that they should do their utmost to protect important monuments from damage.

Several hundred Monuments Men remained in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Japan for up to six years after the conclusion of hostilities to coordinate the return of stolen works of art, and other cultural objects to the countries from which they had been stolen. By the time the last Monuments Man left Europe in 1951, they had overseen the return of some five million cultural objects. Their role in preserving cultural treasures was without precedent.

After arriving in Europe in the summer of 1944, the MFAA members soon realized that they would also have to be treasure hunters. The Nazis stole hundreds of thousands of paintings, artifacts, sculptures, and artifacts. As the Nazis absconded from the Allies they took these pieces with them and hid them in mines and castles all over Germany and Austria. Much of the art was also held by top Nazis in their personal homes and summer getaways (e.g. Goering’s in Carinhall and Hitler’s in Berchtesgaden). Much of the art stolen was from Jewish homes and Jewish collectors, and along with all this art, jewelry and valuable coins, of course, the Nazis also stole and destroyed many Jewish holy artifacts, including *Sifrei Torah*.

On April 12, 1945 the Allies found out the evil they were fighting against, when the U.S. Third army discovered and liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany. Captain Walker Hancock, a MFAA man, was one of the first on the scene, as he was stationed in the nearby town of Weimar. The sight of the horrors - the emaciated survivors, piles of deceased bodies, and gas chambers with human remains still clinging to them - changed him, and every soldier forever. When he entered a barrack, the prisoners were too weak to stand up. Many could not get out of bed - and the stench was unbearable.

In what seemed like a chance encounter, he came upon a Jewish Chaplain a few days later. The Chaplain had been to Buchenwald and he too, was moved and distraught at the scene he beheld. However, knowing how important it was to get the survivors to move on with their lives, he was planning to conduct the first religious services for the survivors. To Walker Hancock, the story the Chaplain told was heartrending, emotional beyond description, and especially sad because the chaplain wished to perform an authentic service but had nowhere to find an actual *Torah*.

“I have no idea where to get one,” the Chaplain lamented to Hancock. “They have all been destroyed.”

As it so happened, earlier that day, members of the MFAA including Captain Hancock had come upon an abandoned Gestapo headquarters building. The Nazis had fled in haste from the approaching American forces and did not have time to clean out their offices. They found many papers and lists still intact on the desks. But upon further review, Captain Hancock found a Jewish *Torah* scroll, with its velvet mantle still intact, looking in pristine condition. A Nazi official had kept one for posterity, hoping to take this as his personal artifact or maybe sell it for some cash. Hancock retrieved the precious scroll and stored it in his office. Now, as he spoke to the chaplain, he knew exactly where it should be returned to. Turning to the Jewish chaplain, he replied, “Not all the *Torah* scrolls have been destroyed. I have one just for you!”

The astounded chaplain could not believe it. “It’s a miracle,” he said; and it certainly was. The Chaplain took the precious *Torah* to Buchenwald and the survivors were able to *daven*, and hold services with the *Torah*, for the first time in years.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

שש איש בה' תגל נפשי באלקי ... (ישעי' טא-)

In thousands of years of exile, the Jewish Nation has experienced (and continues to experience) many sad and tragic moments, yet *Chazal* unequivocally exclaim: “A person is required to bless the bad as though he would (bless) the good” (*Berachos 54a*). How is this maxim relatable to ordinary Jews who feel that only lofty individuals can compartmentalize such a difficult contrast?

The **Zohar** writes that the Name "ה'" represents the Almighty's attribute of mercy, while the name "אלקי" represents His attribute of justice. Although *Mashiach's* times will of course be times of mercy and joy, since *Hashem* will

be weeding out those who are unworthy (מידת הדין) of seeing the redemption, feelings of pain might be felt by the worthy ones for not being able to share the moment with everyone.

Thus, says **R' Hersch Domaluk *shlit"a***, *Yeshaya HaNavi's* declaration of "שש איש בה' תגל נפשי באלקי" was more than a lofty declaration. *Yeshaya* was imparting that there is no such thing as an ordinary Jew, for every Jewish soul is sent down to this world to serve a purpose that no other person has. Therefore, when *Mashiach* comes and *Hashem's* attributes of mercy and justice will be in play simultaneously, it will be those “ordinary Jews” who will prove that not only *Gedolei Hador* can rise up and bless *Hashem* for both the good and bad but, every Jewish soul can also do it if he puts his mind to it.

מחשבת הלב

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

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אליקים ראשיכם שבמיתכם וקנייכם ושמיטיכם כל איש ישראל (כמ-ט)

At first glance, it would seem that there is a letter missing. It should have said "ראשיכם לשבטיכם" with a *lamed*. **Rashi** indeed explains the *posuk* this way. Hence the question: why did the *Torah* omit that single letter?

R' Moshe Feinstein ז"ל explains as follows: the *Torah* is teaching each individual an eternal lesson. One should never belittle himself by thinking: What can I accomplish already? Or, why should I exert myself if I will never amount to much? Instead, think that even “little me” can become someone great! לראשיכם isn't bound to לשבטיכם. Rather, ראשיכם שבטיכם, all people of the *shevet* can become “*Roshim*” - heads and leaders in their own right. With regard to doing *Teshuva* this is especially pertinent. The *posuk* says later on "לא יאבה ה' סלח לך" - *Hashem* will not want to forgive a sinner. The *meforshim* ask, how can that be? *Hashem* does not want to forgive a sinner? *Hashem* always wants our *Teshuvah* in order to forgive us. We know that *Hashem* has the *middah* of "להאריך ימים" (Yechezkel 18-32). He wants us to live!

Explains, the **Beis Halevi, R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik ז"ל**, these are the words or thoughts of the *Rasha*, the wicked one, himself. He thinks, “I don't want *Hashem* to forgive me. I'd rather continue in my evil ways.” That is deserving of, *chas v'shalom*, the punishment of "...כי אז יעשן אף ה'...". But perhaps, we can say it slightly differently. A person, a sinner, may think, “I am so low, I am so evil, that *Hashem* probably won't even forgive me, for it's just too late for me to beg for forgiveness.” What a fatal mistake! No matter how low one has fallen, with *Siyata D'shmaya* can climb out of the spiritual morass he may find himself in, and can still become "ראשיכם שבטיכם" - not only "ראשיכם לשבטיכם".

Let us all take the time to utilize the rest of *Chodesh Elul* to get closer to Him -*Dodi* and aspire to reach higher and higher.

משל למתה הדבר דומה

חוקר ואמנו אל תיראו ואל תקרצו מפניהם ... (לא-ו)

משל: With the establishment of the Israel Defense Forces and the dismantling of the underground militias in 1948, the government decided to draft women into the army under a law requiring mandatory service. The religious contingent fought against this tooth and nail and many protests were held. Indeed, the “status quo” held from after the War of Independence until the late 1990's, and no women were allowed to serve in combat positions, aside from a short attempt in the 1950's to accept women into flight school.

As a Member of the *Knesset* in the 1950's, **R' Eliyahu Moshe Genechovsky ז"ל** approached the **Chazon Ish ז"ל**, who opposed the vote and expressed to the Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion his feelings on the matter in no uncertain terms, told R' Eliyahu Moshe to miss the vote. He

should not participate at all in the upcoming vote as a way to protest against it, so R' Eliyahu Moshe traveled out of the country and never actually voted on this measure. When he returned, the *Chazon Ish* guaranteed him that as a result of his actions, he would have a son who would light up the world.

Indeed, he was blessed with a son, **R' Avraham Genechovsky ז"ל**, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Tchebin in *Yerushalayim*, who became one of the *Gedolei Hador*.

משל: We have many occasions in our lives where we must stand up against evil and repression. Sometimes it requires us to be verbal and sometimes we need to take action. But we cannot just sit idly by and let things happen, when we know they are wrong. Those people who make an effort to correct the evils or at the very least, will not join in with the actions of the sinners, those people will receive great blessings from *Hashem* and will merit to see enjoyment in their lives.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ... נצבים

דרגה יתירה

אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ה' אליקים ... (כמ-ט)

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

Nitzavim is an interesting *lashon*. It means to stand. But in reality, it really means standing like a soldier with nothing else in mind but to be ready to do the command of the King! *Nitzavim* means standing in waiting for the King to tell us what to do next. *Vayelech* means to march as per the King's instructions. Therefore, when the King tells us to halt, then we are in NITZAVIM mode. When the King tells us to march, then we are in VAYELECH mode. The point is, no matter what happens to an individual in life, he or she is only here for one purpose.... “*Laasos Ratzon Avinu Shebashomayim*.”

One of the greatest preparations for *Rosh Hashana* is to be prepared. Very often in life, we fall - not because we don't know what is right, and not because we don't intellectually know how to handle a situation. It is simply because we are caught off guard. We were suddenly thrown a “curve ball” and we did not know how to respond. We were planning things to work out a certain way and then, at the very last second, everything changed. We needed to quickly switch to Plan B (which stands for Plan Bashert!). Very often, we cannot change gears so swiftly and our reaction comes out all wrong. It actually goes against everything we really believe. Sometimes we are having a very pleasant conversation with someone and suddenly, they say something that we find extremely hurtful or condescending. Those words just pushed the wrong buttons and my response was spontaneous and sarcastic! What began as a pleasant exchange turned into a major catastrophe. Why did this happen? Not because we are insufficiently informed, but rather because we are insufficiently prepared.

The message of *Nitzavim* is that our entire life needs to be a preparation. That anything can happen at any moment and we must be NITZAVIM, standing in waiting with only one thing on our minds: following the true *ratzon Hashem*. I must be calm and ready at all times to think, “What does *Hashem* want me to do now?” Sometimes that means standing in silence and sometimes that means getting up and going, but whatever the case, *Hineni*. I am ready and prepared to serve *Hashem*.