

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ואמר אסתירה פני מהם אראה מה אחריתם כי דוד תהפכת המה בנים לא אמן בם ... (לב-ב)

In 2020, the world was mentally, medically and psychologically unprepared for a global epidemic, let alone a pandemic. The same was true in Vilna in the mid-19th century. One of *Klal Yisroel's* greatest leaders, **R' Yisroel Salanter ז"ל**, stepped up and took action. As the revered founder of the *Mussar* movement, he was also known for his unique response to a global health pandemic - the worldwide cholera outbreak that claimed untold lives across multiple continents, between 1846 and 1860.

R' Yisroel was relatively young - only 38 years old - when the epidemic struck Vilna, the heart of Jewish Lithuania, in the summer of 5609 (1848). Rabbi Dov Katz relates in his book "The Mussar Movement" that R' Yisroel focused all his energies on saving lives during this epidemic. He involved himself in relief efforts and actively enlisted his *talmidim* to go out and care for the ill and infirm. He even rented a building to serve as a 1,500-bed hospital and raised funds to care for the sick and dying.

Halacha permits the violation of all but three sins in order to save a life, and R' Yisroel actively encouraged people to do so if they needed - especially the *dinim* of *Shabbos* and keeping kosher. His son later reported that the only time he ever saw his father angry was when another rabbi challenged the public violation of *Shabbos* by some of his *talmidim*. When a certain elderly *Rav* in Vilna fell ill to cholera. R' Yisroel's students spared no effort to save his life, including chopping wood and boiling water for him on *Shabbos*. After a while, the *Rav* got better, whereupon he came to R' Yisroel and informed him that the *yeshivah bochorim* were excessive in their violation of the *Shabbos* laws.

R' Yisroel did something no one had ever seen him do. He became outraged. "You're going to tell me what is permitted and what is forbidden? I have taken on myself to ask 60 to 70 young people to work with the ill continually, and I promised their parents that I would keep them healthy. Indeed they are all healthy - not one has taken ill! Are you prepared to do this?"

The *Rav* apologized profusely. According to his son, R' Yisroel was forced to react so strongly for he could not afford to let the message get out that these young men ought not risk their patients' health by easing up on the *Shabbos* violations, which, if they did, would also mean not risking their own health; and the entire project could collapse in a tragic loss of life.

Perhaps the most dramatic incident of this period occurred on *Yom Kippur* of 1848. R' Yisroel Salanter felt that fasting on *Yom Kippur* would put lives in danger and that it would be a huge *Chilul Hashem* if Jews died observing the fast. Though he held no official role in the Vilna rabbinate, on the eve of *Yom Kippur* he placed proclamations in all the *Batei Midrashim* and synagogues telling people not to fast, to shorten the *davening*, take walks, and help each other in all ways possible.

This was itself a radical move, but R' Yisroel still worried it was not enough and people would not follow his instruction. So on the morning of *Yom Kippur*, R' Yisroel walked to the front of the main synagogue in Vilna, flanked by two of his esteemed *talmidim*, with wine and cake, made *kiddush* and ate in front of everyone. The people were in shock, with one member publicly challenging him as to why he was issuing edicts in Vilna instead of the official rabbinate. But R' Yisroel was not cowed. He urged everyone to make *kiddush* and eat and he remained in place until everyone in the synagogue had eaten. According to some accounts he then proceeded to other synagogues in town to encourage everyone to eat.

When called to task by the *Vilna Beis Din* for not consulting with them before he issued his ruling, he felt no need to defend himself, and as a result, he no longer felt welcome in Vilna and was forced to leave a short while later. But R' Yisroel was happy with what he had done. Lives had been saved, he believed, and there was no reason for regret. In a letter he wrote some years later, during another wave of the cholera epidemic, he reiterated his stance on all these points. "Now that this disease is abroad in the land, this is the teaching for man, and the way of common sense: not to fear it at all. One must heed the instructions of the physicians, in light of whose words we shall walk, even by the *Torah*, and to establish the life of this world for good and for betterment. For experience has taught us that in days past, when the disease spread greatly, that whoever took upon himself the burden of the doctor's orders ... was free of the signs of the disease." (*Ohr Yisrael*, letter #22)

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך ... (השם ד-ב) **A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY A UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN** **תורת הצבי על הפטרות**

The effervescent words of *Hoshea HaNavi* - "*Shuva Yisroel*" - evoke an innumerable measure of emotion for each Jew. These words open the *Haftorah* of *Shabbos Shuva* with a beautiful message to *Klal Yisroel*: "*Shuva Yisroel!*" The Jewish people can indeed return to *Hashem* and repent from their sins. Why does the *Navi* say "שובה ישראל עד ה'" - "*return until Hashem*," not all the way to the depths of the Almighty?

R' Shmuel Shmelke HaLevi Horowitz ז"ל of **Nikolsburg** explains with a *mashal*. Imagine a man walking in the hot summer day laden with packages. He is heading for a nearby town and as he reaches the halfway point with sweat pouring down his face, he notes that he still has a long way to go. Feeling unable to continue any further, he loses hope of ever

reaching his final destination and decides to turn around and head back home to wait for another opportunity with better weather. Obviously, he is being silly. He already made it to the halfway point. If he would only set smaller goals for himself - like just getting to a nearby tree and then the one after that, and the one after that, and so on - little by little, he would eventually reach the neighboring town.

This, says Reb Shmelke, is *Hoshea HaNavi's* way of teaching *Klal Yisroel* the proper way to do *Teshuva*. In order to be successful in our journey of repentance, we need to take small steps to get there. We need to aim to just get "עד ה'" - "*up until Hashem*, because if we do that, we will make it all the way up to the heavenly throne! *Gmar Chasima Tova*.

כי ידיו ה' עמו כי יראה כי אזלת יד ואפס עצור ועוזב ... (לב-לו)

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

מחשבת הלב

The *Gemara (Sanhedrin 97a)* quotes this *posuk* and interprets it a few ways. One *pshat* is הגאולה מן החטאים. *Moshiach* will not come until we are מייאש (give up) from ever seeing the redemption. The simple meaning of this *Chazal* is difficult to fathom. How can we even imagine a time that one will be *kofer* in one of our religion's basic tenets, the עקרims - specifically the coming of *Moshiach*? Throughout the millennia we've been eagerly anticipating his arrival!

Some *Meforshim* clarify and explain that of course we want *Moshiach's* arrival. Yet, when we take stock of our lowly spiritual state, compared to earlier generations, and as we look at our denigrated society at large, we cannot help but feel forlorn. We then start to contemplate and wonder how *Moshiach* can come when we are so unworthy? How can we be the ones to usher in his arrival? How can we believe that he is coming in our generation? In that sense we are מייאש.

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky ז"ל offers another *pshat*. There are times when we hope that the benevolent government will aid in the rebuilding of *Eretz Yisroel* and the *Bais HaMikdash*, only to have our hopes dashed. So, until we are מייאש from human sources to bring about the redemption and realize that, אין לנו על מה להשען אלא על אבנו שבשמים, he won't be arriving. The word *איש* has the *gematria* (numerical equivalent of) 317. *א-א-א* is more: at 318. When *א-א-א* - my *Hashem* is *עוד*, it trumps *איש*!

On this *Shabbos Shuva*, we read the *Haftorah* of "שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך". The above idea applies to *Teshuva* as well. Although we may not think we are worthy of having our *Teshuva* accepted, and that we have sinned beyond where we should be, we must realize that *Hashem* craves our return. Let us therefore utilize this opportunity to be ברוטח בה', both, in regard to *Teshuva* and to the ultimate impending redemption. We should be *zoche* to them both very soon, speedily and in our days.

משל למה הדבר דומה

שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך ... (הפטרות לשבת שובה)

משל: At one point in time, the saintly **Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum ז"ל**, called a meeting of senior *Rabbanim* to discuss a series of tragic incidents that had hit their community in Williamsburg. During the discussion, a dispute arose and one of the *Rabbanim* made an inappropriate comment to the *Satmar Rav*, to which he replied sharply. Immediately, sensing that he had perhaps been hurtful in his response, the *Satmar Rav* asked for forgiveness, which was accepted. After the meeting the *Satmar Rav* asked the other rabbi if he had truly forgiven him in his heart, and the answer was that he had not truly forgiven him.

A few months later it was the night of *Yom Kippur* and the *Satmar shul* was filled to capacity. The *Satmar Rav* told the *gabbai* that when the *Sifrei Torah* were taken around the *shul* before *Kol Nidrei*, the offended *Rav* should be invited to

carry one of the *seforim* along with the *Rebbe*.

As they finished their circuit of the *shul*, the *Satmar Rav* turned to the other, and said in a loud voice, "I beg you to forgive me with all your heart," to which the other *Rav* replied, "Yes, I forgive you, with all my heart."

The entire *shul* witnessed the exchange and it made a tremendous impression on the community, raising the levels of *Teshuvah*, *Yiras Shamayim*, and promoting an atmosphere of forgiveness and reconciliation.

נמשל: There is a well-known custom, as is brought in *Shulchan Aruch*, to ask for forgiveness before *Yom Kippur* from anyone who might have offended, and vice versa, one should forgive anyone who slighted him without holding a grudge. If a person can bring himself to realize how petty and destructive it is to hold a grudge against another Jew, many disputes and long-standing feuds can be put to rest at the onset of the holy night of *Yom Kippur*.

האינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי ... (לב-א)

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

דרגה יתירה

Chazal tell us that on *Shabbos* in the *Bais HaMikdash*, when the *Kohanim* would bring the *Korban Tamid*, the *Leviim* would sing a selection from *Parshas Haazinu*. Each *Shabbos*, a different section was sung and the *parsha* was divided (and still is today according to the *aliyos*) in the format of "HAZIV LACH" (הזייו לך). The first *aliya* starts with the letter "ה", the second with a "ח", the third with a "ו", and so on and so forth, with each first letter spelling out the words "הויזין לך". The **Chasam Sofer, R' Moshe Sofer ז"ל**, writes that these letters are not coincidental and they are referring to the "אז קרני הויזין" - the special glorious shine that radiated from the holy face of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. If so, why does it say "לך" (YOU), it should say "לוי" - HIS shine?

The *Chasam Sofer* answers that the word "לך" in numerical value equals 50, and the shine on *Moshe's* face was a result of having attained the fifty gates of *Shaarei Bina* - Gates of Wisdom and Understanding. Furthermore, the true greatness of *Moshe Rabbeinu* was his tremendous *Anava* - Humility, which is hinted at in *Parshas Vayikra*, where the *Torah* writes the word "ויקרא" with a small "א". This little "*Alef*" is meant to teach us that although *Hashem* called out to *Moshe* and spoke to him face to face, *Moshe* still saw himself as small and insignificant. This is also the reason for the shining glow on his face, for it was his humility that allowed him to achieve the fifty gates of *Bina*. This is all hinted to in the word "האזינו" for this word can be divided into separate parts: "זין" - the shining glow on *Moshe's* face; "נ" which represents the fifty *Shaarei Bina*; and "א" which symbolizes the tremendous humility of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, like the small "א" in the word "ויקרא".

It is noteworthy to point out that the word "*Vayikra*" means to call out to someone, while the word "*Haazinu*" means to listen, which gives us a practical tool to achieve the greatest level of *Anava* - Humility. If you want to understand another person, you have to truly listen to them. One must put himself and his own needs aside in order to truly listen and heed the call of others.