

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמר להם יוסף מה המעשה הזה אשר עשיתם הלאו ידעתם כי נחש נחש איש אשר כמני ... (מד-10)

Yosef is known throughout the generations as “Yosef HaTzaddik,” implying that he was perfectly righteous in all matters, *bein adam l’ makom* (between man and G-d) and *bein adam l’ chaveiro* (between man and his fellow man). Many commentators wonder how a *tzaddik* like Yosef could submit his brothers to a seemingly cruel hoax when first he conceals from them his true identity, then accuses them of espionage, incarcerates their brother Shimon, and finally plants his royal goblet in Binyamin’s sack to incriminate him for a theft he did not commit? How could he do such a thing?

The **Akeidas Yitzchok** writes that Yosef felt that he had to place his brothers in a situation where they would be forced to stand in Binyamin’s defense, and thereby atone for their sins against Yosef. They needed to recognize what they did wrong to Yosef and by admitting their mistake, this was the first step in their path towards *teshuvah*. Their second step was taken when they offered themselves together in slavery to pay for the theft of the cup. By resolving to face their difficulties as a group, they had reached the admirable recognition that all Jews are truly responsible for one another. The completion of their *teshuvah* was finally attained when Yehuda declared his willingness to become Yosef’s slave in place of Binyamin. The highest expression of love for another human being is when one is willing to accept suffering in his place. Only after Yosef saw that his plan had come to fruition and the solid foundations of brotherly love had indeed been laid in *Klal Yisrael*, was he at last able to reveal himself and express to them the great love that he felt towards them.

The humility of our *Gedolim* throughout the years is legendary and many stories are recounted to teach us a great many lessons. One story in particular is truly uplifting. While traveling to a distant city on a crowded coach, the great **R’ Akiva Eiger ז”ל**, was suddenly accosted by the passenger sitting next to him. “My watch!” shouted the man, distraught. “My gold watch is gone. It was right here and since you are the person sitting next to me, you must be the thief!”

“Excuse me sir,” said R’ Akiva, “I assure you I didn’t take your watch.”

“Liar!” shouted the man insolently. “It couldn’t have been anyone else. Aren’t you ashamed of yourself, an elderly man like you! Return it immediately!” He grabbed hold of R’ Akiva’s coat and began shaking him furiously.

“Please believe me,” protested R’ Akiva gently, horrified at the man’s implication. “I didn’t steal your watch.”

The man insisted on searching R’ Akiva’s pockets. Of course, he found nothing, but that didn’t stop him from ranting and raving throughout the rest of the journey about the “thief” sitting next to him. R’ Akiva Eiger immersed himself in a *sefer* but he was somewhat shaken that a fellow Jew could so violently accuse him of theft.

When the coach pulled up to their destination, the passengers collected their packages and disembarked. Looking out of the carriage, they could all see throngs of people lining the streets, and enormous posters welcoming a great *tzaddik* to the city. The man who had lost his watch approached somebody and asked what the commotion was all about. In whose honor had the whole town gathered?

“Oh, haven’t you heard? The great *tzaddik*, R’ Akiva Eiger, just arrived in the carriage. He is coming to grace our city with his presence! Oh, look! There he is now, the *Gadol Hador* and *Torah* leader of our generation!”

The man followed the pointing finger and nearly fainted. He had accused the *Gadol Hador* of stealing his watch!

Aghast, he pushed his way through the crowd, fell to R’ Akiva’s feet and cried out, “*Rebbe! Rebbe!* Please forgive me!”

Panic struck the elderly *Rav*. “What is it you want from me?” asked R’ Akiva, alarmed that the same man was back again. He was literally afraid for his safety. “Please believe me. I’m telling you the truth! I don’t have your watch!”

It took some time for the man to explain himself but in his great humility, it had never dawned on the great R’ Akiva Eiger that the violent man had realized who he was and was now appalled at how he had treated a *Torah* scholar.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Usually *Parshas Mikeitz* falls out on *Shabbos Chanukah* and a different *Haftorah* is read, but this year, we are privileged to examine the rarely read *Haftorah* (which has only been read four times in the past fifty years) of the brilliant twelve-year-old *Shlomo Hamelech* rendering his first court decision. The case was between two women living in the same house. Both had given birth to sons, and one unfortunately smothered her child in his sleep. The distraught woman swapped her dead child with the other woman’s live one, claiming it was her own. Shlomo ordered that the child be cut in half and be divided equally amongst the two women. The imposter agreed while the true mother cried and pleaded that the child be spared and given to the imposter.

Shlomo immediately ruled that crying woman who had expressed compassion for the child was the true mother.

R’ Meir Leibish ז”ל (Malbim) notes the different priorities in the women’s statements. The true mother argued that her son was the live one while the imposter’s child was dead, while the imposter claimed that the dead child was the other woman’s while the live one was hers. This subtlety reveals the true intention of the imposter in that the child’s mother prioritized the life of her son while the imposter prioritized the death of her friend’s son. What disturbed her most was that the live child belonged to someone else while her own child had died. Even in tragedy, a Jew must never lose focus on his priorities and what the Almighty wants from us.

ויצטק העם אל פרעה ללחם ויאמר פרעה לכל מצרים לכו אל יוסף אשר יאמר לכם תעשו ... (מא-נה)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT”L

מחשבת הלב

As ruler of Egypt, Yosef instructed his subjects, the Egyptians, to undergo a *bris milah* in order to receive their necessary food rations. Needless to say, they were not happy, and so they came to Pharaoh to protest. He promptly replied that it was imperative to heed Yosef’s directives. The obvious question is why did Yosef demand that they circumcise themselves? Did he want them to all become Jews? Why did he deem this necessary to force the starving Egyptians to have a *bris milah*?

There’s a famous *pshat* from the *Rebbe, R’ Heschel ז”ל* in *sefer Chanukas HaTorah*. He says that Yosef possessed far-reaching vision. He saw that during the enslavement in *Mitzrayim*, *Bnei Yisroel* would struggle with the *mitzvah* of *Milah*. Thus Yosef, even decades earlier, instituted that the *goyim* must also have a *bris*, thereby easing the discomfort for his people later.

R’ Yerucham Levovitz ז”ל, the venerated *Mashgiach* of the Mir offers another *pshat*. He asks an additional question: We know that *Yidden* do not look to convert anyone. Why did Yosef mandate this prerequisite? We find an analogous idea when one acquires an *עבד כנעני*. A slave must also undergo a *bris*. Why, in both these cases, is the *bris* required? He answers with the following thought. When one owns an *עבד*, he is responsible for his well-being, which includes his physical needs. But in reality, the greatest good one can do for another human is in the spiritual realm. Thus, a master must provide a *milah*, a spiritual connection to enable his slave to thrive. *Yosef HaTzaddik*, in his position as the supplier of the entire land, knew that he not only must give them their physical sustenance, but also their *ruchniyus*. Hence, he insisted that they receive a *Bris*.

This *machshava* is pertinent to all *mechanchim* and parents. The ultimate gift we can bequeath to the next generation of *Klal Yisroel* is not merely the physical security to weather the winds of time and the vicissitudes of life, but also the spiritual anchors required to remain steadfast and connected to *Hashem* in the face of today’s world’s turbulence. *Kein yehi ratzon*.

משל למת הדבר דומה

וא-ל-ל-שד-י-יתן-לכם-רהמים-לפני-האיש-... (מג-ד)

משל: In a particularly small out-of-town community, the local rabbi was determined to figure out a way to make his congregants become more connected to Judaism and the *Torah*. He tried various avenues and incentives, but the people remained steadfast in their ways.

One day, being in a particularly enthusiastic mood, he decided to give it all he got. As is customary in many synagogues, the prayers of *minchah* and *maariv* are done in consecutive order and the local rabbi often gives a short sermon for a few minutes on notable topics between prayers. The rabbi thought this would be an opportune time, so he began exhorting his congregants to greater devotions.

“We need to be more focused on *Hashem*,” he began. “We need to think about *Hashem*. We need to bring *Hashem* into

our lives. We need to concentrate on *Hashem*.”

The rabbi became so enthusiastic about his speech that he completely lost track of time. His face aflame, his words rose and fell with emphasis. What was supposed to be a five-minute sermon, was still going strong fifteen minutes later!

Finally, one old man lost patience and called out from the back of the synagogue, “Come on, come on, enough about devotion to *Hashem* already. Let’s just start the prayers!”

משל: The *Torah* tells us that when Yaakov sent the brothers back down to Egypt with presents to flatter the “leader” there, he also added a short prayer. The *Torah* seems to be alluding to us an important lesson and reminder that every action that we do must be accompanied by a prayer to *Hashem* in order for it to be successful. Everything we say or do is guided solely by the Almighty in Heaven, and only He has the deciding power to make it prosperous.

אם בניכם אתם אחיכם אחד יאמר כבית משמרכם ואתם לכו הביאו שכר רעבון בתיכם ... (מב-יג)

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

דרגה יתירה

Before sending them off, Yosef told his brothers to take sustenance with them to their homes. He was in charge of all the storehouses in Egypt and he gave them food. But the expression he used, “*Go bring grain for the hunger* (רעבון) *of your households*,” teaches us an important lesson about the proper way to eat. The *Shla”h Hakadosh* uses these very same words to describe exactly how much a person should eat. It should be “*עבר רעבון*” - enough food to break your hunger. Not more and not less! In today’s world there is such a stress on food consumption and many, if not most, people have some sort of eating disorder - either they eat too much or they eat too little! Either way it is a “disorder” for it disrupts a natural, healthy lifestyle.

In *bentching*, we mention the three keys to successful eating. We say: “*ואכלת ושבעת וברכת*” - You shall eat. You shall be satisfied (in other words, “Stop eating!”). Last, but certainly not least, you should thank *Hashem*! The Hebrew word for satisfied is “*שָׂבַע*” which is the same letters as “*שְׁבַע*” - the number seven. Seven represents *טבע* - the natural order of the world. Since the world was created in seven days, the number seven also represents completion. Thus, “seven” and “satisfied” have the same connotation, as a person feels complete when he has eaten his fill. Now, the word for FAT is “*שָׁמֵן*”, which, not coincidentally, is the same root as the word “*שְׁמוֹנֶה*” which is the number eight. The number eight represents “*למעלה מן הטבע*” - going beyond nature, which also means eating beyond what is necessary and healthy in the physical world. And wouldn’t you know? The word for oil is “*שָׁכֵן*”. During the eight days of *Chanukah*, we used lots of *shemen* for our *Menorahs*. Why? Because it reminds us to stay away from the philosophy of “Greece” which is to stress the physical without proper boundaries.

Chanukah is over but we must still fight the Greek mentality and not fall prey to overindulgence! We all need to eat, that is simply a matter of survival. But how? Well, we must eat, become satisfied (STOP) and then ... THANK HASHEM!