

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

יודו כאשר פתר לנו בן דהה אתי השיב על בני ואתו תלה ... (מא-ג)

There are some misguided souls who feel that doing acts of *chessed* and helping another Jew is not as important as devoting oneself all day and all night to learning *Torah*. In truth, some of the greatest *Torah* scholars with the most legendary intellects also spent time worrying about and helping the less fortunate. This pairing of *Torah* excellence and *chessed* was personified by **R' Chaim Soloveitchik (Brisker) z"l**. He was one of the greatest *Torah* scholars of his generation, a visionary and possibly the most innovative thinker in several generations, but nevertheless, his house was open to all to the extent that it became a public thoroughfare where notices and advertisements were posted. Food was doled out in the kitchen almost on a non-stop basis, while R' Chaim could often be found in a side room talking in learning with other *Rabbanim* or conducting a *din Torah*, with groups of people. It should not be surprising then, that he also spoke about the topic of *chessed* at the expense of *Torah* study with trademark clarity and wit. His grandson **R' Meshulam Dovid Soloveitchik z"l** recounts how R' Chaim once told a group of *Rabbanim*, "A rabbi that doesn't close his *Gemara* to do *tzedaka* and *chessed* – even when the *Gemara* is open in front of him, it's as if it's closed. However the converse is also true – a rabbi that does close his *Gemara* to do *tzedaka* and *chessed*, even when it's closed, it's as if it's open!"

One morning, R' Chaim was sitting with a few *Talmidei Chachamim* in his home and conducting a *din Torah*, involving a great deal of money and a number of colorful personalities. For hours, the case dragged on, when suddenly, a commotion could be heard outside R' Chaim's door. A woman came running into the house and began screaming uncontrollably that she must speak to the Rabbi immediately. It was a matter of life and death, so to speak, and she refused to budge until she got her way. A number of family members tried to calm her down and offered her a seat where she can wait until the *Rav* was ready to see her, but she absolutely refused to sit down or be assuaged. Her voice rose again and again, mingling with heart-rending cries and wails, until finally, R' Chaim himself opened the door and came out.

"What is going on here?" he asked softly, as was his way. "What is all the commotion?"

Instantly, the woman sprang forward and addressed the venerable rabbi. "*Rebbi*, please, I must speak to you right now. It cannot wait even another second." R' Chaim found a quiet corner somewhere, as an empty room was out of the question, and he softly asked her how he can help. "*Rebbi*," she began, in a strong and brave voice, "tonight is my daughter's wedding. I should be happy in the midst of such a wonderful celebration, and yet, I am scared of her future. Last night, I dreamed that my daughter suddenly went crazy! From a fine and refined *kallah*, all of a sudden, she began acting crazy and it appeared to me in my dream that she lost her mind! What can this mean? I feel like canceling the entire wedding right now, for how can I allow my daughter to go forth in marriage, when she will become sick and crazy in her head?" Her bravery cracked and a fresh burst of tears and wails emanated from the hapless mother of the bride.

R' Chaim stood next to her quietly, as she cried. Then, he smiled and whispered something that only she was able to hear. Instantly, she stopped crying and wiped away her tears. She smiled and nodded her head, and thanked the Rabbi emotionally before hurriedly heading out the door. R' Chaim shrugged and went back to the *din Torah*.

Later in the day, some family members questioned R' Chaim about what he whispered to the hysterical woman, that made her calm down and even smile happily as she left the house. This time, R' Chaim smiled broadly. "I told her that from the story of *Yosef HaTzaddik* in *Mitzrayim*, we learn that all dreams follow the interpretation. This means that however the dream is explained, that is how it will turn out. So, I said that I am qualified to interpret her dream and I am of the opinion that her daughter will become exceedingly rich. Not just wealthy or comfortable - rich beyond her wildest imagination. The reason is because most super rich people have quirks and '*meshugasin*' that they live with, so when she saw that her daughter was going to go crazy, it meant that she too, will become very rich and have a lot of '*meshugasin*'!"

ידיהושה דהה לבש בגדים צואים ... (זכריה ג-ג)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTARAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In the *Haftarah*, *Zechariah HaNavi* discusses the clothing of *Yehoshua Kohen Gadol* and how the *Satan* sought to incriminate *Yehoshua* because of the "soiled garments" he was wearing. The question begs to be asked: how is it that the holy vestments of the *Kohen Gadol* which are referred to as "the glory and splendor" could ever become soiled?

R' Moshe Shmuel Shapiro z"l (Rosh Yeshivas Be'er Yaakov) explains that *Chazal* say that the soiling of the holy garments is a reference to *Yehoshua's* children who had strayed from the correct path and he was clad in "soiled garments" due to his failure to reprimand them properly.

Says R' Moshe Shmuel, a profound lesson can be gleaned from this. Oftentimes, people tend to delude themselves into

thinking that after a lifetime of doing the will of *Hashem* they have reached a pinnacle in their lives and nothing that is thrown at them could ever cause them to waver from their routine. Unfortunately, it is this very fallacy that causes immense damage in *Klal Yisroel* for as soon as a person lets his guard down, even a small bit, the door gets opened for the *Yetzer Hara* to worm his way in and wreak havoc.

As the *Kohen Gadol*, the spiritual leader, *Yehoshua* had reached the pinnacle of his career, yet even his position became shaken up. Consequently, we see how the little band of *Chashmonaim* managed to shake up the mighty Greek army despite tremendous odds – all due to their unwavering faith in *Hashem* and his *Torah*.

יאמר ראובן אל אביו לאמר את שני בני המות אם לא אביאנו אידך ... (פס-ו)

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

מחשבת הלב

The *Medrash* says that when someone would tell Rav Tarfon a good *vort*, he would compliment it by saying "כפתר ופרח". When someone would say a whimsical *vort*, he would recite the *posuk* "לא ירד בני עמכם". The *Rav* in Radin would relate an explanation from his father, based on **Rashi**, who says that *Yaakov Avinu* scoffed at Reuven's offer to let his own two children die in place of Binyamin. Hence, Rav Tarfon would quip with this *posuk*, insinuating that such a *vort* was *na'arish*. (We see that he didn't brush the student away with harsh words, rather, in a backhanded manner, he told him the *pshat* was a bit off.)

So what was Reuven *takeh* thinking? The **Zaida's** *machshava* is as follows: Reuven put his most precious possession on the line - his own children! With his children's life at stake, he would insure Binyamin's safety. *Yaakov* explained that two sons for one doesn't balance the scale. Because each child or grandchild is special in his own right. This brings to mind a fictional story the *Zaida* would oft relate. There were 2 brothers, one was a wealthy man with *nebach* no children, who lived in America. The other lived in *Eretz Yisroel* with a large family amidst abject poverty. The wealthy brother offered his sibling 1 million dollars in exchange for one of his children while rationalizing to him that he still had 12 more. They agreed. That night, the brother in *Eretz Yisroel* had the task of selecting a child and went from bed to bed pondering and agonizing over which one to send. He was in a quandary and couldn't decide. He called his brother in America and said, "The deal is off. You said that I have 12 more so that's 1/13. But it's a *mekach taus*, I only have one Chaim, one Yosef, one Chani" Each child is a universe unto himself. In the same vein, said *Yaakov* to Reuven, losing your two boys won't mollify me for the loss of my one son, Binyamin.

The *Gemara* says, "הרגיל בך החיך ל' במס' ת"ח" in singular form "בכר" because we must view each child as a special, unique fire.

משל למה הדבר דומה

כי נר מצוה ותורה אור ודרך חיים תוכחות מוסר ... (משל יובג)

משל: A Rabbi was railing against the practice of playing *Kvitlach* on *Chanukah*. He told his congregation the following story: On the third night of *Chanukah*, it was bitterly cold outside in the small Russian town of *Vilkovitz*.

Two simple men, *Velvel* the Tailor and *Gershon* the Milkman, were playing a friendly game of *kvitlach*, when they heard a knock at the door. Surprised, *Velvel* opened the door to find an old man with a long gray beard shivering in the darkness. Quickly, *Velvel* took him in and brought him to the fire, where he served him some hot soup. When the color returned to the old man's face, he noticed that the others were playing *kvitlach* and asked if he might join them.

What followed was the greatest exhibition of *kvitlach* that the two men - or any man - had ever seen. In less than an hour, the old man had parlayed twelve kopeks into sixty

rubles, until his companions had nothing left to play with

Astonished, *Velvel* asked how it was possible for a man to have such luck. "My friends," the old man replied, "it is not luck. I am the Prophet *Elijah*, and I've come to reward your generosity with innumerable heavenly blessings."

The men rejoiced, and the Prophet blessed them, and he blessed their houses and their animals - but somehow he neglected to give back the sixty rubles. Quietly, he bade the pair goodbye. In the course of the eight day holiday, the "Prophet" would repeat the card scam twenty-three times!

משל: As his congregants listened with apt attention, the rabbi explained that *Chanukah* is a holiday of light, and light is represented by the *Torah*. "Why waste your time playing silly games and losing your money, when you can make the best use of your time and money, by learning *Torah* and giving *tzedaka* to all those in need? That is the best possible way for a G-d-fearing Jew to celebrate the *Yom Tov* of *Chanukah*!"

מסרת נברים ביד חלשים ורבים ביד מעטים וממאים ביד מהורים ... (על הנסים)

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

דרגה יתירה

Chanukah is a time to reignite our *neshamos*, because sometimes we forget how different and special we are. We refocus our minds to the truth of Jewish philosophy, the direct opposite of *Yavan* and American mentality. The word *Yavan* signifies their entire *hashkafa*. The *yud* is small, the *vav* is bigger, the *nun* is even longer - because by them, nothing is ever enough. The more you have, the more you want, which leaves one constantly with an emptiness that can never, ever be filled.

In *Al HaNissim* we thank *Hashem* for the military victory, but the spiritual victory is hinted to us as well. We thank *Hashem* for placing the *rabim*, the many, into the hands of the *ma'atim*, the few. On a deeper level, *Chanukah* is a when the philosophy of MANY, of having a lot of material acquisitions, was overcome with the *Yiddish* philosophy of MA'ATIM, being satisfied and happy with whatever one has, no matter how much it is because the only thing in this world that is worth investing time and effort into is our *ruchniyus*. Of course, we need to eat and sleep and wear clothing, but when so much of our time and energy is spent on these endeavors, we follow the well-trodden path of pursuing happiness and success, and never actually find it.

On *Chanukah*, we light 36 candles, which are the 36 hours that the *Ohr HaGanuz* existed in this world until *Hashem* hid it away for the *tzaddikim L'asid lavo*. Those 36 candles represent 36 *neshamos*, the 36 *tzaddikim* upon which the world stands. On *Chanukah*, every one of us can tap into that special holy light and make it our own. Every night we go back to the beginning and light candle number one again because candle number one is YOU. Your job in this world is to constantly light up YOUR *neshama* by being involved with *ruchniyus*. *Chanukah* is the time to remember the power, the philosophy, and true *simcha* of the Jewish people, who live a life of *Histapkus*. May we spend the next eight days and the next 120 years, thanking and praising *Hashem* for all the miracles in our lives, the greatest of all being that we are Jews, and we know it.