



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

עשו לקח את נשיו מבנות כנען ... ואת בשמת בת ישמעאל אחות נביות וגו' (לו-ב.ג.)

The end of the *parsha* goes into great detail about the family of *Esav Harasha*. In fact, we are taught that Esav was actually forgiven for his many sins when he got married to Basmah, the daughter of Yishmael. **Rashi** explains: “Elsewhere, the *posuk* calls her *Machalas*. I have found in the Aggadic *Medrash* on *Sefer Shmuel* [243]: There are three people, all of whose sins are pardoned: a *ger* (proselyte) upon conversion, one who is promoted to a high position, and a man on the day of his marriage. It derives the proof for the latter from here. The reason (*Esav's* wife *Basmah*) was called *Machalas* (from the word *mechilah*), is that *Esav's* sins were pardoned when he married her.”

In the year 5684 (1924), an event of huge proportions took place in the thriving Polish metropolis of Piotrkov. In the spring of that year, the entire community of Piotrkov began preparations for a great festivity all its own. The Jewish quarter became a beehive of activity, as ideas were proffered, discussed and adopted, with one purpose in mind: how to make the reception of the new *Rav* of the city truly imposing and impressive. For the new spiritual leader of Piotrkov was to be the renowned *Talmid Chacham* and wondrous speaker, **R' Meir Shapiro ז"ל**, who was at present the rabbinic head of Sonik. As the preparations got under way, the city became bathed in decorations, with gala ornamentation everywhere. A general holiday mood prevailed everywhere in the community, as day by day the feverish activities gathered momentum.

It was the first time in Jewish history that a community in Congress Poland took a person of eminence from Galicia to be its spiritual leader - and with so much regal pomp and tempestuous parading to boot. Moreover, it was no secret that the incoming rabbi, R' Meir Shapiro, was incredibly young for a position of such eminence. He was only thirty-seven. One would have to go back a long way in the community records to find another brilliant *Torah* authority who had been chosen for the post at such an early age. In short, this was an event of glory in the *Torah* world, that was to be celebrated to the hilt.

Among the early acts of ceremony, upon R' Meir's celebrated arrival in Piotrkov, was a formal visit that he made to one of the city's most eminent Jewish residents, when that gentleman arranged a courtly reception to receive him. It may have been there, or perhaps at another such reception that was arranged in his honor soon after his arrival, that he aired a light-hearted thought, as he began developing his own brand of friendly, easy-going relations with the people he met.

“You must surely be wondering,” he said to the little informal gathering, “how a fairly young man like myself has come to be appointed the *Rav* of such a major city as Piotrkov. Well, I am going to explain it to you; but first we need to understand why as a rule a young learned scholar generally accepts a rabbinic post in a small townlet, while an older man of learning is appointed to the position in a large city. Logically, it should be the other way around. A young man usually has his robust youthful energy, and so he has the strength for the tasks he would have to face in a large city. For an older person, as his strength ebbs and wanes, surely a modest little community would be appropriate?” The question was met with approval.

“Indeed, we have a teaching in the *Yerushalmi* (*Bikkurim* 3:3), however,” continued R' Meir, “that when a person is promoted to *parnas*, the managing head of a community, all his transgressions are forgiven. Whatever sins, misdeeds or wrongdoings there may be on his Heavenly record, his slate is wiped clean. Well, an older man probably has more sins on his record than a younger man so he needs the heavy burden of the rabbinate in a big city to earn him full forgiveness. For a young man, with a small number of sins to account for, a small, unburdensome position should be enough for his complete forgiveness.

“Now I,” concluded R' Meir, “apparently have too many sins to my discredit. I must, therefore, have a really large city's community to earn me any serious degree of forgiveness. So I had to come to Piotrkov. Still, though,” he went on with a smile, “since we see that the wicked, with heavy loads of sin, really succeed in this world. For this reason, I've left over some sins on my record, so that maybe I too, can do well in this world!” (Adapted from *A Blaze in the Darkening Gloom*, by R' Yehoshua Baume)

**תורת הצבי על הפטרות**  
הזון עבדיה כה אמר ה' ... לארזים וכו' (עובדיה א-נ)  
**A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTARAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN**  
*Ovadiah HaNavi* prophecies about the ultimate destruction of his birth nation, Edom. In it, the arrogance of the Nation of *Edom* is addressed, and he describes Edom's past violent actions against *Klal Yisroel*. *Sefer Ovadiah* is by far the shortest *sefer* in *Tanach*, yet it contains many pivotal messages and insights with great relevance for our times. Among them is the message of the greatness of a convert and how even though it is rare for a person to obtain the level of prophecy, nevertheless even a convert can reach that level. But why are we discussing the topic of conversion at this time? What relevance does it have to the topics of this week?

The correlation between this week's *Parsha* and *Haftarah*, says **R' Avraham HaKohen Pam ז"ל** is indeed

how similar *Yaakov Avinu's* situation was to a convert. In fact, the very essence of a convert is that he has severed ties with his previous life; his father, mother, brothers, sisters, etc. and has taken on a new family – the family of *Klal Yisroel*. *Yaakov*, too, left behind his family and ran away to a foreign land with little to no means, yet he managed to amass a fortune and build a large and thriving family.

The lesson for us is that while we don't encourage gentiles to convert to Judaism, if and when they do, it is our utmost responsibility to make them feel as much a part of us as possible, and we must also ensure that they are taken care of physically, socially, financially, emotionally, and of course spiritually. A *Ger* is the responsibility of every Jew.

ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש  
עמו עד עלות השחר ... (לב-ב.ג.)

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

# מחשבת הלב

*Yaakov Avinu* crossed over the river to retrieve “small jars” and faced a formidable foe in the *Sar shel Esav*. As they were pitted against each other, *avak*, dust, arose from their feet (see **Rashi**). It is impossible for us to fathom what exactly transpired and the levels of *kedusha* that *Yaakov* attained as he vanquished an angel! However, the **Ben Yehoyada** cites a *Medrash* that gives us a tiny inkling as to the benefits we are still reaping till this day from that battle.

The *Medrash* in *Shir Hashirim* says as follows on the *posuk*, “מקושרת מור ולבונה מכל אבקת רוכל”: Rav Yudan says all “*roichlos*” - loosely translated as business - that *Klal Yisrael* succeeds in, is due to the *avak* from *Yaakov Avinu*. Rav Azarya says all the battles that *Klal Yisrael* are victorious in are due to *Yaakov's* dust in his victory. Rav Avahu goes even further and states that *Hashem* places this special and unique dust under the *kisei hakavod*.

Now these concepts are indeed mystical. Yet on a practical level, perhaps we can glean the following *machshava*. The aforementioned *zechusim* that we have, didn't come from the actual victory of *Yaakov*. Rather the *Medrash* stresses that it came from the *avak*, the dust, the battle, the perseverance of *Yaakov* and this is what *Hashem* cherishes the most; the trying, the attempts, that we do to so valiantly, to ward off the *yetzer hara*. That is so *chashuv* and so beloved to *HKB"H*.

The word *avak* has the *gematria* of 103, same as the words *Mincha* and *Machane*. In the middle of a busy workday, when people stop to *daven Mincha*, that is *avak* and it is so very precious to *Hashem*. Our children are our *machane*, our camps. Our efforts expended on behalf of our children are priceless regardless of the outcome. *Hashem* keeps this “dust” close to him.

May we all be *zoche* to keep on trying in all areas of *avodas Hashem* with *yiddishe nachas* - not the *nachas* of *Esav*!

## משל למה הדבר דומה

כי הנני אלקים ובי יש לי כל ... (לג-א)

**משל**: Agent Moshe, as he became known, was a real estate agent in Northern Israel, the area where he lived. Due to the nature of his job, Moshe was always on call. Every missed phone call could spell the difference between a gain or a loss, as a client might move on to a different agent.

For this reason, Moshe always had to be on top of his game and promptly return every phone call. That is, except for one hour a day. Between 8-9 pm, Moshe shut his phone for his daily learning session. Nobody could reach him, whatsoever, and he never budged from this regimen.

One evening his wife called with an important and urgent question for him. Being in a rush, she forgot to take her phone, so she borrowed a stranger's phone. However, the time was 8:30 and Moshe didn't hear or see his phone. She tried a few times but nothing doing. Eventually, she managed

to reach someone who gave the message over to her husband.

After his learning period was over, Moshe saw that he had a few missed phone calls from an unknown number. He promptly called back the number. “Hi, this is Moshe's property management agency, did you try to reach me?” he asked. He was hoping he was not too late on a potential sale.

“Actually,” came the reply, “someone else borrowed my phone. But once you're on the line anyway, it happens to be I am looking for an apartment in the area ....” It was a wealthy individual, and it didn't take too long before they struck a deal from which Moshe profited quite nicely!

**משל**: *Yaakov* told *Esav*, “I have everything I need.” These words serve as a reminder in our own personal lives. Do we work to have “everything we need” and then dedicate a substantial amount of time to the service of *Hashem*? Or do we spend that extra time indulging in superfluous and maybe even luxurious activities that have no value or purpose?

על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה  
אשר על כף היד עד היום הזה ... (ל-א)

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

## דרגה יתירה

In *Parshas Vayishlach*, we are commanded not to eat the *Gid Hanashe*, the displaced nerve (sciatica nerve), because *Yaakov* was hit in the thigh by the angel of *Esav* when he wrestled with him all night. The **Me'am Lo'ez** says the reason it is called the displaced nerve is because eating it causes one's thoughts to be misplaced and takes away one's *Yiras Shamayim*! In fact, this is why eating kosher is so important for the Jewish *neshama*. When one eats something that is not kosher, he is literally blocking his ability to connect to *Hashem*. We can understand this in a physical sense. When one eats unhealthy food that is bad for him, he is clogging up his arteries. Unfortunately, people abuse their bodies so that they eventually need a double or triple bypass surgery to unclog those arteries. This is easy for us to comprehend because we are physical beings who can relate to physical things. It is the same thing, however, with our spiritual selves. We know that *Emunah*, belief in *Hashem*, is a hereditary thing! We are מאמינים בני מאמינים - believers, children of believers, because we got the *Emunah* gene way back from our *Zaida Avraham Avinu*! It is part of our spiritual DNA! So why do so many Jews claim to be atheists? The answer is that they have literally blocked their spiritual arteries, not allowing the flow of *Emunah* to penetrate their minds and hearts. They justify their behavior and rationalize their actions because they have desensitized themselves from their own core essence, their spiritual selves!

**Sefer HaChinuch** explains that the root of the *mitzvah* of *Gid Hanashe* is to be a constant reminder for all *Yidden* in all generations, that even though we will suffer torture and persecution from our enemies, the descendants of *Esav*, we should know that we will never be totally destroyed. This *mitzvah* is meant to instill within us the *Emunah* that we may be hurt, just as *Yaakov* was hit in the leg, but he emerged victorious! And just as the sun came out early and healed *Yaakov's* thigh, so too, the light of *Moshiach* will shine upon us and heal all of our pain and bring us all out of this *Golus*! May it be speedily in our days!