



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויאמר לו אלקים שמך יעקב לא יקרא שמך עוד יעקב כי אם ישראל יהיה שמך ויקרא את שמו ישראל ... (לה-ו)

It was a bleak Friday night many decades ago. A blaze had broken out on the deck of a U.S. naval ship not long after the conclusion of the Second World War, with flames shooting up so monstrously high that the rescue helicopters were unable to fly close enough to the ship to save the crew. A disaster of epic proportions, on that night, three hundred navy officers and personnel perished at sea. It was one of the worst naval tragedies in history.

During *seudah shlishis* the day after the fire, **R' Yisroel Chaim Kaplan ז"ל**, venerable *mashgiach* of *Beis Medrash Elyon* in Monsey, entered the *yeshivah* dining room to deliver his weekly *shmuess* to the *bachurim* and began with a question that caught his *talmidim* by surprise. "Did you hear about the fire on the navy ship?" When the *bachurim* replied affirmatively - the news had traveled fast - the *mashgiach* continued, "What did you do when you heard about the fire?"

The *bachurim* exchanged puzzled looks and stared bewildered at their revered *mashgiach*. Would could they possibly have done, especially when they were nowhere near the ship?

R' Yisroel Chaim gazed at his *bachurim* in anguish. "Of course you could have done something! Do you know what I did? Throughout the night, I didn't sleep a wink. Instead I wept and recited *Tehillim*, begging *Hashem* for mercy in case there is even one *Yid* on that boat. Who knows? Perhaps because of my tears and *tefillos*, that one young Jewish soldier will be spared. Perhaps he'll marry and bring a Jewish child into the world, and that Jewish boy or girl will return to our people and bear generations of children who are *Yirei Shamayim* and *ovdei Hashem*?"

The *bachurim* listened, absorbing the gentle rebuke of their saintly *mashgiach*. Yet, only many years later, did one alumnus of the *yeshivah* discover how Rav Kaplan's words had truly been on the mark. Here's the rest of the story ....

A young man (the one who tells this story) relates that he was once discussing his parents' wedding with his father and his father told him that at one of his *sheva berachos*, his paternal grandfather, also a *talmid* of R' Yisroel Chaim Kaplan, was deep in discussion with his *mechutan*. In the course of the conversation, the new *mechutan* revealed that had been a sailor on a navy ship and was one of the survivors of that deadly fire. The grandfather, who still recalled his *mashgiach's* compelling words on that fateful *Shabbos* afternoon, couldn't contain his amazement and requested the permission of the guests to speak. He repeated the long-ago episode, the *mashgiach's* musings that his *tefillos* may have saved the life of a *Yid*, and concluded that the *Yid* he saved is sitting right here in the room! In fact, it is the *mechutan* himself!

When his father told him this incredible story, the young man was inspired to learn that his own *zaida* was on the ship and right then and there resolved that he would name his next son after R' Yisroel Chaim Kaplan, as an expression of *hakaras hatov* to the *tzaddik* whose *tefillos* had spared his maternal grandfather. One year later, he was blessed with a son. As he cradled his newborn in his arms, he recalled the decision he had made a year earlier. There was just one problem. As the day of the *bris* approached, he realized that the *yahrtzeit* of **R' Chaim Shmuelevitz ז"ל**, who had been his father's *rebbe muvhak* (main teacher) and the spiritual guide for their entire family for years, fell precisely on the day of the *bris*. He really wished to name the baby Chaim after the venerable *Rosh Yeshivah* of Mir, and to name his next son, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, after the *mashgiach*. Then, it hit him that it was impossible, since both *Gedolim* were named Chaim....

Ultimately, after much deliberation, he decided to name the baby for R' Yisroel Chaim Kaplan, in whose merit his entire family is alive. Indeed, he felt vindicated when after the *bris*, his father asked him how he came to this decision. He confessed that it had been a tough decision, but he believed that had he been able to ask R' Chaim Shmuelevitz himself, the *Rosh Yeshivah* would have responded that *hakaras hatov* takes precedence.

His father became emotional. "Yes, that's exactly what R' Chaim would have said!" (Adapted from R' Tzvi Nakar's book: Tftutza Pub.)

חזון עבדיה ... (עובדיה א-א)

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

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In this week's *Haftarah*, *Ovadiah HaNavi* describes an encounter with *Hashem* who addresses the Nation of *Edom's* arrogance and charges them for their violent actions against *Klal Yisroel*. *Ovadiah* was an Edomite convert to Judaism and yet, all his prophecies portray the utter destruction of his birth nation. Interestingly, *Chazal* note that unlike the other prophets who began their prophecies with mentioning their father's name or the place from which they hailed from, *Ovadiah* did neither. What is the reason for that?

**R' Moshe Feinstein ז"ל (Darash Moshe)** explains that when the *Torah* details the descendants of *Esav*, it first mentions them by name, and then they are called by the names of the provinces in which they lived. The reason for

this, says R' Moshe, is to teach us that just as the children of *Esav* were given respect and prestige based on their locality, more times than not, people are given respect only because they represent a powerful institution or organization, and not because they truly deserve the respect given to them.

Therefore, even though *Ovadiah* was a convert to Judaism who had no personal lineage to glean respect from, nor did he hail from a prestigious place; nevertheless, his life was an example unto others, since he was a self-made man. He proved that although "*Yichus*" helps, one does not need a prominent past to get close to *Hashem*, and in fact, such a person can even reach the highest levels of closeness to the Almighty which are only reserved for a holy *Navi*.

וירא את הנשים ואת הילדים ויאמר מי אלה לך ויאמר הילדים אשר נתן אלקים את עבדך ... (לה-ה)

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

# מחשבת הלב

*Esav* saw the children and asked *Yaakov* "Who are these to you?" *Rashi* adds that *Esav* was asking, why are you deserving of these children? I once heard from one of my *Rebbeim*, *Reb Mordechai Affen*, in the name of *baalei mussar*, the following *machshava*. *Esav's* issue here was that *Yaakov* wasn't keeping his end of the bargain. "I am to get *Olam Hazeh* and you, *Olam Haba*. I get the *gashmiyus* and you, the *ruchniyus*." So when seeing *Yaakov's* children, *Esav* said, having such a beautiful family is clearly a violation of our agreement. *Yaakov* replied: Your mistake, *Esav*, is that children are not a luxury. Their purpose is not for parents' self-aggrandizement. "הילדים אשר נתן אלקים" - They are the continuity of the *Yiddishe Mesorah*. They are *kulo ruchni*, and having them is not a violation of our deal. Au contraire! Having them is a sacred mission, an *Olam Habadika* task.

*Esav* tried a different tactic. Let's travel together. Hoping that his influence will penetrate *Yaakov's* spiritual armor and negatively affect him. But *Yaakov* saw right through the subterfuge and said, "הילדים רכים" - maybe I can withstand the *nisayon* of your influence, but the children are soft. They can still be molded - "ומירו כל הצאן" - the future descendants will be lost for all eternity. That is *יהרג ואל יעבר* and I cannot allow it. *Esav* knew that for him to ultimately win, the target must be the children. The *Sar shel Esav* grasped this as well, and when it saw it couldn't conquer *Yaakov*, it went after "כף ירכו", *Yaakov's* pure and innocent children. This is a *siman l'doros*. Our children and young adults are under attack. The *satan* is utilizing all sorts of machinations to entice us to enter his "web"; e.g. technology, substance abuse, etc... We have no other choice but to follow in *Yaakov's* footsteps and, *tefillah* notwithstanding, prepare for war, by overriding any enticements or policies that infringe upon the *tahara* of *Klal Yisroel*. With this objective, we will *b'ezras Hashem* be *zoche* to much *yiddishe nachas*.

## משל למת הדבר דומה

ויאמר אליו מה שמך ויאמר יעקב ... (לה-ב)

**משל**: A young man spent many untold hours preparing a manuscript of *Torah* topics for print and when he was finished, he proudly showed it to **R' Meir Leibush Malbim ז"ל**, to receive an approbation - a *haskama*, on his *sefer*.

The *Malbim* received the young man cordially and accepted the the manuscript. However, after reading a few short pieces, it became abundantly clear that there were no original thoughts or *Chiddushim* to speak of in the *sefer*. Rather, the young man basically quoted from many different sources and intended to pass it off as his own. R' Meir Leibush spent a few more minutes perusing the manuscript and came to the realization that there wasn't much to publish there and the young man was basically wasting his time.

"Tell me, have you come up with an appropriate name to

give to your *sefer*?" he finally asked, cautiously.

The young man nodded enthusiastically. "My name is *Yaakov*, so I thought of calling my *sefer* 'יעקב'."

"Splendid! A perfect name," exclaimed the *Malbim*. "This name could not have been more appropriate!" The young author's eyes shone from happiness. But the light quickly dimmed when the *Malbim* explained. "You see, you're manuscript reminds me of a *posuk* in *Parshas Vayishlach*, where it says the words 'יעקב יעקב' - '*And Yaakov said*' - but we don't find that *Yaakov* actually said anything!"

**נמשל**: The *posuk* in question was *Yaakov* responding to the *Sar shel Esav's* query, "What is your name?" to which *Yaakov* simply said "Yaakov." In the context of the *posuk*, though, the word "יאמר" usually means a statement is being said. Here, though, the *Malbim* alluded to the fact that just as *Yaakov* didn't say anything, neither did the young man!

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

## דרגה יתירה

When *Yaakov Avinu* went to meet his brother *Esav*, he feared the worst. He prepared with war tactics, gifts and lots of prayer that he and his family should remain unscathed. *Yaakov* set up his family in such a way that the *shefachos* and their children were up front, *Leah* and her children were behind them, and *Rachel* and *Yosef* were at the back. Why did he put *Rachel* last? Explains **Rashi**, "*Acharon Acharon Chaviv*." They were the most beloved to him. From this *Rashi*, it seems that *Yaakov Avinu* is playing favorites. Could it be that *Yaakov* put the *shefachos* and their children first because he loved them the least? Can we assume that *Yaakov* treated his wives and children differently, even putting the least favored ones in danger?

The **Divrei Yechezkel, R' Yechezkel Halberstam ז"ל** explains with remarkable clarity, that since the sons of the *shefachos* were called "children of maidservants" by the rest of the *shevatim*, a somewhat derogatory title, they felt humbled and scorned, as they felt looked down upon by their brothers. This caused them to be in the category of one who is a "*Lev nishbar v'nidke, Elokim lo tivze*," one who is made fun of, ridiculed, or looked down upon, is considered "broken-hearted and pushed away." Such a person has a special *shmira* (protection) from *Hashem*. *Hashem* envelops those people who are mistreated and made to feel low. They have a special place in His eyes and He shows them extraordinary protection and love. This, explains the **Shinover**, is why *Yaakov Avinu* put them first. It was not because he loved them least *ch"v* - it was because he knew they had a special *shmira* and nothing bad would happen to them. *Hashem* would show them His special protection. Since *Rachel* and *Yosef* were the most beloved to him, they had the least protection from *Hashem* and therefore he put them last.

Sometimes in life a person finds himself in a situation where he feels scorned or ridiculed. It is truly bothersome, but instead of reacting with anger, he should tap into the special relationship this creates with *Hashem* and the protection it provides. Remember, if you feel you are being mistreated, don't try to get EVEN, try to focus on getting EVEN closer to *Hashem*.