

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

כי ה' אלקיכם ההלך עמכם להלחם לכם עם איביכם להושיע אתכם ... (ב-ד)

Before going out to a *Milchemes Rishus*, an elective war, the *Kohanim* and officers asked the troops, “Has anyone just built a new home for his family? Has anyone just planted a vineyard? Has anyone just married but not yet consummated the marriage? If yes, return to your homes. You are not to go to war!” Lastly, “Is there anyone who is fearful of going to battle? Are you afraid that you have sinned and will not be protected? If so, return home!” The *Torah* takes into account that a person who goes out to war may be killed or taken hostage by the enemy. And although the *halacha* states clearly: “*Other than redeeming or rescuing captives and hostages, providing relief for starving and destitute people is of the highest priority*” (*Yoreh Deah 251*), for a soldier not to be afraid would rightfully make us question his suitability for battle. The *Torah* wanted us to look at the fear inside and decide whether or not we have a reason to remain afraid.

Chacham R’ Ovadia Yosef ז”ל wrote a long responsa (*Y”O C”M 6*) about Operation Entebbe in Uganda caused by the flight from Tel Aviv to Paris in 1976 that was hijacked diverting it to Entebbe, Uganda. Would the government have been allowed to release the forty Palestinian terrorists demanded in return for the lives of the Jewish passengers? This may be problematic because if there would be this exchange then it may lead to another kidnapping so that they can free even more terrorists. Another concern was that almost certainly the terrorists that would be released would attempt to kill more Jews. After a lengthy discussion Chacham Ovadia concluded that *Gedolei Torah* were discussing this from a halachic standpoint when suddenly the Prime Minister, Yitzchak Rabin, came to them to inform them that the Israeli army was successful in killing the hijackers and their cohorts in Uganda and releasing the Jewish hostages who were now on their way to Israel.

An Israeli soldier involved in Operation Entebbe related to a high school class that *Havdala* was recited on the Entebbe airfield’s runway. He made the *beracha* of *Meorei Ha’ aish* on the burning wreckage of the destroyed Ugandan air force!

Another hijacking that targeted Jews took place in 1970. On September 6, 1970, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Mesivta Chaim Berlin*, **R’ Yitzchok Hutner ז”ל**, his daughter, and son-in-law **R’ Yonasan David shlita**, were on a flight from *Eretz Yisroel* to New York that was hijacked by Palestinian terrorists. The terrorists freed the non-Jewish passengers and held the Jewish passengers hostage. R’ Hutner was held alone in an isolated location while Jews around the world prayed for his safe release.

While the remaining passengers were being held, the hijackers realized that R’ Hutner was a prominent leader in the Jewish world. Although they generally treated him with respect, they did confiscate a bag in which he kept his precious writings of *chiddushei Torah* that he had accumulated over his lifetime, and they did not return it upon his release. His close followers went to great lengths to retrieve the *chiddushim*, offering financial rewards for their return. Even though there were several instances when the intermediaries thought they might be successful, nothing materialized and the writings remain lost to this day.

In the United States, there was talk about raising money to ransom R’ Hutner, but **R’ Yaakov Kamenetzky ז”ל** ruled against the move. Although there is a halachic basis for paying an exorbitant sum to save a great *Torah* leader, R’ Yaakov ruled that this applies only during peacetime, and Israel’s ongoing struggle with terrorism constitutes war.

There were young children traveling alone on this flight. Ten-year-old Yosef Trachtman and eight-year-old Tziporah Moran. As soon as passengers realized the plane was being hijacked, R’ Hutner’s two students on the flight, R’ Yaakov Drillman and R’ Meir Fund, moved from their own seats to sit next to the two unaccompanied children. Eight-year-old Tziporah was carrying documents from both the United States and Israel. R’ Drillman knew that signs of Israeli citizenship would put the girl in danger. He therefore ripped her Israeli documents into tiny shreds and swallowed them.

When **Chacham Yosef Harari-Raful shlita**, *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Ateret Torah*, was given a cup of water on *Erev Shabbos*, on this hijacked flight, he dipped his shirt into it to cleanse his clothing, in order to do something *l’kavod Shabbos!* (Rabbi Yehoshua Alt)

ודעה מורי חדש בחדשו ומדי שבת בשבתו יבוא כל בשר להשתחות לפני אמר ה' ... (ישעי' כו-כג) A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN

Although last week, the *Haftorah* of the “שבעה דנחמתא” which begins with the words “עניי סוערה” was not read due to *Rosh Chodesh* falling out on *Shabbos*, the **Mishnah Berurah** (425:7) rules that we don’t skip any *Haftorah* of the “שבעה דנחמתא” and we read both the *Haftorah* of “עניי עקרה” as well as that of last week (עניי סוערה). The *Haftorah* of “עניי עקרה” is also read on *Parshas Noach*, and in it, *Yeshaya HaNavi* declares: “*Shout, O’ barren one, you who bore no child. Shout aloud for joy, you who did not travail.*” Such a statement seems rather strange since it is more likely that a barren woman would feel sadness as opposed to joy.

R’ Avraham Saba ז”ל (Tzror HaMaor) explains that *Leah Imeinu’s* first four sons correspond to the four exiles the

Jewish people experienced, and after her fourth son, Yehuda, was born, Leah praised and thanked *Hashem* for she saw with divine inspiration that the fourth exile would be the last one.

The *Torah* tells us that she “*stopped giving birth*” and she was happy about it. The *Tzror HaMaor* explains that the words of *Yeshaya HaNavi* reference Leah’s reaction to the realization that she had stopped giving birth. He explains that Leah was happy because she understood that she had halted birthing new exiles for the future generations.

While not having children is from the most painful things in a woman’s life, *Leah Imeinu* taught that there may sometimes be a silver lining in that maybe *Hashem* withheld that privilege for a specific reason beyond which we may understand.

ונגש הכהן ודבר אל העם ואמר אלהם שמע ישראל אתם קרבים היום למלחמה על איביכם ... (ב-ג)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT”L

מחשבת הלב

As *Lal Yisroel* embarks on its way to wage a war, the *Kohen* steps forward, and proclaims the above and subsequent *posukim*. These *posukim* clarify who is and who is not qualified to fight in the army. The opening words of the *Kohen* are *Shema Yisroel*. **Rashi** quotes from *Chazal* that even if *Bnei Yisroel* have the sole merit of being saved. **R’ Yitzchok Elchanan Spector ז”ל** explains that what we say in *davening*: “שמור ישראל...האומרים שמע ישראל” - we are worthy of protection in the merit of saying *Shema Yisroel*. It would appear that there is a meritorious connotation in the words “שמע ישראל” alone, even without “ה’ אלקינו ה’ אחד”. We say afterwards “ה’ אחד” alone. What is that?

I heard from a *Rebbi* of mine, in the name of his father **R’ Dovid Affen shlita**, who quoted from the **Sefer HaChareidim** a new *pshat* in *Shema Yisroel*. Typically we’re used to translating *Shema Yisroel* as “Hear O Israel.” The *Chareidim* explains in depth and at length that here the word *Shema* means gather together, unite as one, based on the *posuk* “וישמע שאול את העם”. In order to accept upon ourselves the proper *Kabolas Ol Malchus Shamayim*, we must do so only through unity, forming a unified nation. That, in and of itself, is worthy of protection. Hence, “שמור ישראל...האומרים שמע ישראל”.

Based on this we may add a insightful *machshava*. Perhaps this is what the *Kohen* is proclaiming. *Shema Yisroel* - even if you only possess the merit of being a unified nation, that itself will enable you to successfully battle your adversaries, as one unit. As *Elul* commences, and we begin our preparations for *Rosh Hashana*, the coronation of our King, we must strive to do so as a cohesive nation with great *achdus* and unity and without any discord. As our *Rabbeim* taught us: “אין מלך בלא עם”.

With this in mind, we should all be *zoche* to an inspiring, uplifting *Elul* together as one.

משל למה הדבר דומה

לא ימצא כך ... קדם קסמים מעונין ומנחש ומבשה וגו' (ח-ה)

משל: People in the ancient world believed that the forces of nature had their own mystical powers and by placating them they would be able to bring about healing and serenity. Practitioners would use these methods to heal people and even today, such practices are performed in some oriental countries, especially in the deep remote areas of India.

Over the last century, this idea of using “energy healing” to treat ailments the same way it is performed by these Orientals, has crept into the western world and medicine. However, from a *Torah* perspective, **R’ Yisroel Belsky ז”ל** was known to be very critical of these foreign ideas. He frequently spoke out against them, exposing some of the serious prohibitions these practices could entail.

One day someone who practiced a certain “energy healing” known as kinesiology, came to him with complaints. “Since

the *Rov* is an acclaimed halachic authority, his words are damaging my reputation and hurting my business,” the man claimed. “Wouldn’t you be happy if I would cure [a certain relative] if she would have a certain condition?” he asked.

R’ Belsky was adamant. “I’d rather she has a condition than be filled up with your *kishuf* (magic). If the *Torah* says it is prohibited, then it doesn’t make a difference how amazing the results of your forbidden practices may be!”

נמשל: The *Gemara (Bava Metzia 59b)* relates an amazing account of how Rav Eliezer tried proving his argument by saying that if he was correct, the forces of nature should prove it, and they miraculously did! However, the other rabbis disagreed with him and subsequently he lost the debate.

The **Vilna Gaon ז”ל** explains that this is the only way to ensure that the *Torah* will never cease to exist. No matter how impressive, we must never be influenced by any phenomenal phenomena that aren’t aligned with the *Torah*.

שפמים ושטרים תתן לך ככל שעריך ... (צו-ח)

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

דרגה יתירה

Shoftim V’Shotrim Titein LECHA Bechol She’arecha, the *Torah* is teaching us a fundamental principle in human relationships. The way to judge others is the way you judge yourself. The same way we are so understanding and forgiving when we do something wrong, this is the way we should act when others do something that we think is wrong. It is human nature to judge others. As soon as we see someone new, our brain automatically goes into judgment mode. Is this person my type? Do they fit in? Does their behavior, dress and appearance fit in with what I think is normal? And if they pass the first test and we actually go over and speak to them, we then judge their speech. Do they speak nicely? Too loud, too quiet? Do they say anything that is not appropriate? We are constantly in judgment mode. Are they *frummer* than me? Are they modern? A million questions go through our minds. And if they do or say something that we don’t like, or they just remind me of someone I don’t particularly care for - well, then we can easily write them off and decide that this is not my type, and the judgment is passed, the verdict is decided and this person is signed and sealed in my book of life or death, in the blink of an eye.

This is why the very first piece of advice that we are taught in *Pirkei Avos*, the *mishnayos* that teach us how to interact with others is, “*Hevu Mesunim Badin.*” Be deliberate in judgment. Deliberate means to take things slowly. Don’t jump to conclusions. Don’t decide the future of a potential friendship on the basis of one encounter. Give people a chance to prove to you how special they are. Why are we so quick to judge? We are placed in this world by the mercy of *Hashem* to see the greatness of His Creations.

Maybe this is why we read *Parshas Re’eh* right before *Shoftim*. First we must SEE the good in others; only then can we become *shoftim*, judges. When you love someone, you want to see only good in them. You want others to see only good in them, This is the way to judge people favorably. If we would see everyone as a brother or a sister, it would not be hard to judge favorably.