

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ונתנה הארץ פריה ואכלתם לשבע וישבתם לבמה עליה ... (כה-ב)

A fascinating story is told about the neighborhood in Jerusalem known as *Meah Shearim* and its humble origins.

In Hebrew, *Meah Shearim* means one hundred doors. The Jerusalem neighborhood by that name refers to the one hundred gates evoked in the *Torah* and the *Parshas HaShavua* that was read in the *Beis Haknesses* during the week in which the district was created. It was built during the 19th century, as life in the Old City of Jerusalem became too uncomfortable. The neighborhood houses consisted of two rooms for about ten people, each built next to each other, forming a natural wall, while schools and *yeshivos* remained in the Old City.

About 120 years ago in the holy city of Jerusalem, lived an *askan* by the name of **R' Zalman Baharan ז"ל** (son of the holy **R' Nochum of Shadik ז"ל**). He had a beloved student by the name of Yissachar who was engaged to be married to a girl from a fine Jerusalem family, with a high pedigree and lineage. Unfortunately, two years passed after their initial engagement and the couple were still not married. Eventually, the bride's father gave Yissachar an ultimatum: either marry my daughter at once, or break off the engagement. The problem was that poor Yissachar did not have two pennies to rub together, let alone enough money to make a wedding and support a wife. He did not know what to tell his prospective father-in-law. So he said nothing and waited for Divine salvation.

R' Zalman Baharan was touched by the young man's plight and longed to help him. At first he considered going door to door collecting donations, but he knew that his student would never accept such a handout. To further complicate matters, his own dire financial straits prevented him from helping Yissachar from his own pocket.

R' Zalman had a cousin who was also named Zalman. To differentiate between the two cousins, one was called R' Zalman Baharan and the other was known as R' Zalman Baharil (ben Harav Yaakov Leib). R' Zalman decided to ask his cousin's advice, and the two Zalmans put their heads together to devise a plan. It was obvious that they couldn't take out a loan, for how would they ever repay it? R' Zalman Baharil then suggested that they wait until *Sukkos* and sell *esrogim*, but his cousin countered that it would deprive the regular *esrog* merchants of their livelihood.

In the end it was R' Zalman Baharan himself who came up with a viable plan: There was a vacant lot north of the city, that they hoped to eventually use to build a settlement, although they had yet to obtain enough money to start building. "Why don't we use part of the land to grow wheat for *shmura matza*?" he suggested. "We'll have lots of customers, as people know they can trust our integrity. We can earn money, and the profits will pay for Yissachar's wedding!"

A fine idea indeed. That very day the residents of Jerusalem were astonished to see two of its most distinguished citizens - R' Zalman Baharan and R' Zalman Baharil - setting out early in the morning, with gardening equipment slung over their shoulders. For three days straight, the two Zalmans weeded and plowed until the ground was ready for seeding. The day after the wheat was planted, a light rain fell - a sign, the two men agreed, that *Hashem* approved their plan. Indeed, the crop seemed to take to the land and it was not long before they began to see results. A few days later, R' Zalman and his cousin informed the girl's father that the wedding would take place before *Pesach*. After that, they were able to secure a loan, confident that they could repay it in time. Yissachar and his bride were blissfully wed.

At the end of the season, the two Zalmans harvested the wheat, bundled it into sheaves, and personally milled and sifted it. It was a very fine quality of wheat, and kosher for *Pesach* according to the highest standards of *kashrus*. It sold well, and with the money they earned, they easily repaid the loan.

They continued to succeed in this righteous endeavor until they earned enough money to begin construction on the land, and in this way, the holy community of *Meah Shearim* was founded on the basis of a *mitzvah*.

ברוך הגבר אשר יבמה בה ויהיה ה' מבמתו ... (ירמי' א-ז)

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

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

Yirmiyahu HaNavi declares, "Blessed is the man who trusts in *Hashem*, and *Hashem* is his trust." While this seems to be an uncontroversial declaration of trust and faith in *Hashem*, the doubling of the conviction seems superfluous. Surely, if someone does indeed trust in *Hashem*, he will make *Hashem* his base of trust. It seems quite obvious. Can it be any other way?

R' Yaakov Ettlinger ז"ל (Minchas Oni) explains that the basic understanding of *Yirmiyahu's* wording is that there are people who trust in *Hashem*, but only trust in Him to send them salvation in the way they plan and in the way they act. Often times a person feels confident in his actions because he wholeheartedly believes that *Hashem* will

provide the specific answer he wants. However, trust in *Hashem* can only be just that – trust that the Almighty will do whatever is the best for him, regardless of his personal feelings.

But R' Yaakov takes it a step further. He explains that when faced with the slightest hint of resistance, people tend to give up quite easily. *Yirmiyahu's* intentions were that a person should never despair of saying that he cannot overcome his desires. Rather, he should place his trust in *Hashem* that if he makes an effort and really wants to do it, *Hashem* will help him. Because if he does so, then his true belief and trust in *Hashem* will ultimately come. That is why there is no doubling of language at all.

ואם ברחקת תמאס ואם את משפתי תגעל נפשכם לבלתי קשות את כל מצותי להפרכם את בריתי ... (כו-טז)

לעילוי נשמת אבני מורנו הרבנו הרב חיים יוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ"ל

מחשבת הל"ב

This *parsha* discusses the frightening curses of the *tochacha*. I once heard an amusing anecdote that can perhaps help us gain insight into these seemingly ominous *posukim*.

A woman was experiencing the onset of labor and its associated pain. She saw a piece of paper on which several *posukim* were written. Not knowing how to read, she simply placed it under her pillow as a *segula* to alleviate her pain and to expedite a smooth labor. Unbeknownst to her they were *posukim* from the *tochacha*! That, notwithstanding, she *Boruch Hashem* had an exceptionally easy time and the shouts of *Mazel Tov* were soon heard. (Please, do not try this "segula" at home!) Let us delve a bit deeper to understand what transpired here. The *Gemara* says in *Megilla 31b* that we always read the *tochacha* in close proximity to *Shavuos* because it is a *Rosh Hashana* of sorts פירות האילן על פירות האילן בעצרת נדונים.

Possibly there is a direct correlation between the crops and the *tochacha*. As one peruses the *posukim* of the *tochacha*, we chance upon a concept. That one may be living life as a "mikra" - a chance happening. Failing to see the *Yad Hashem* in everything. That is, *Lo Aleinu*, a catalyst for retribution, to shake us into reality.

Parshas Behar is replete with the idea that all our possessions are divinely on loan to us and WE are not the owners. The concept of *Shemittah and Yovel*, the temporary sales of fields, all teach us this. Thus, the judgment of פירות האילן is how much we realize that all the heavenly gifts bestowed upon us are not *mikra*, by chance.

That is the lesson of the *tochacha*. Realizing that each child is a gift and not something natural that we deserve means learning the lesson of *Bechukosai*. Hence, she had a healthy baby.

משל למת הדבר דומה

וכי תאמרו מה נאכל בשנה השביעית ... (כה-ב)

משל: After the sixth grade class in a New York *yeshiva* managed to get their third *Rebbi* to quit in a span of weeks, the principle realized he was going to have to do something drastic to get a *rebbe* for this class. He posted the position, offering double the regular salary. Naturally, there were many applicants. Here was a *rebbe* job with double the salary. How hard could the class possibly be?

One applicant in particular did very well on the interview. He assured the principle with a great deal of confidence that he was qualified for the job. "Okay," said the principle, "tomorrow, please come and teach a model lesson for the class. Let's see if you are able to deal with them." The applicant got a good night's sleep and came bright and early the next morning. Things started out well and the new *rebbe* thought his charismatic approach was really working.

But he didn't have long to wait. One after another, the boys kept making annoying noises. Knowing he was "on trial," he kept his cool and continued teaching. All was well, until a few minutes went by and he saw paper airplanes under some boys' desks. Apparently they were up to something.

Suddenly, he heard: "One, two, three ATTACK!"

Paper planes began to fill the air, until one kamikaze made a direct hit - right into the new *rebbe's* mouth! Tense with frustration, he was about to scold them, as they deserved, but then he remembered he was still on trial. He faced the class with a glint in his eyes and said, "A plane fell from the sky? So what! You know what else falls from the sky every day? The *tefilla* of 'ברוך שאמר' - it also falls from heaven ...!"

The boys were impressed and he was hired on the spot!

משל: This world is a giant test. If we can only internalize that, our lives would be different and we would have a much easier time dealing with the trials and tribulations of life..

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

דרגה יתירה

If someone would ask you, what is the best *midda* that a person should acquire, what would you say? This question was asked by *Rav Yochanan ben Zakai* to his 5 *talmidim*. Each one said a different *midda*. One said a good friend, one said a good eye, and another said a good neighbor. But *Rav Elazar ben Arach* said a good heart, a *lev tov*. *Rav Yochanan* then said that everything that everyone else said is found in the words of *Rav Elazar*. This means that all the other good *middos* will be acquired, if one works on achieving the all encompassing *midda* of *Lev Tov*. What is a *Lev Tov* and how do we acquire it?

Rabbeinu Yonah explains a *Lev Tov* as one who is patient with others and doesn't get angry. The **Tiferes Yisroel** teaches us that a *Lev Tov* is someone who responds to people softly and considerately and is always ready to do them favors. *Shlomo HaMelech* teaches us in "*Lev Tov Mishte Tamid*." (*Mishlei 15,15*) A person who has a good heart is as if he is always at a party! In fact these are the last words of the **Shulchan Aruch (O"C)** which is implying that one should make this a goal of life to achieve a happy frame of mind and have a good and happy heart with all people and throughout the challenges of life.

If this is a goal of life, then certainly it is what we strive to achieve during these lofty days of *Sefiras HaOmer* which is all about *tikkun HaMiddos*. The numerical value of *Lev* is 32 and the numerical value of *Tov* is 17. The first 32 days of *sefira*, are days of *Lev*, when we mourn the 24,000 students of *Rabbi Akiva* who died for not showing each other sufficient honor. These 32 days after *Pesach* are therefore saturated with "heart" and it is our job to grab the sparks of holiness at this time. The last 17 days are called *Tov*, since "אין טוב אלא תורה". We begin a new and higher level in our journey toward *Tikkun HaMiddos and Kabbolas HaTorah*. The last 17 days receive their holiness from *Shavuos*, from the great day of *Matan Torah*.

I think we can all agree with *Rav Elazar ben Arach*, that one who has a *Lev Tov* has it all.