



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמר אליקים אל אברהם ואתה את כריתת תשמר אתה וורעך אחריו לדורתם ... (טז-יז)

In years gone by, every town in the “alter heim” had a *vekker*, someone whose job it was to go around early each morning and wake everyone up for *davening*. Every *vekker* had his own method and style in the way he did his job. Some would bang on the wooden window shutters. Others would knock loudly on front doors. Some *vekkers* claimed that the most effective method was to just walk down the street and sing out loudly “*Yidden!* It’s time to wake up to go to *shul* and *daven!*”

When R’ Avraham Yehoshua Heschel ז”ל moved to Apt to assume the position of *Rav*, the community provided him with a comfortable home within a cluster of other Jewish houses arranged around a spacious courtyard. His first morning in the city, he woke up with a start to the loud clanging of metal. It took only a few moments for him to realize that it was the town *vekker* waking everybody up for *davening* with his own unique method. He would walk into each courtyard and instead of banging on each door separately, he would bang with his hammer on the metal cover of the well in the center of the courtyard. That tremendous clatter alone was enough to wake up every family in the courtyard.

The *Oheiv Yisroel*, as the *Apter Rov* came to be known, began to feel a surge of energy each morning when he would hear the banging of the *vekker*. He would sense within himself a strong feeling of devotion to *Hashem* and a heightened desire to come closer to Him. After some time, the *Oheiv Yisroel* began to perceive that these special feelings must have something to do with the *vekker* himself. “He must be a hidden *tzaddik* and that is why I feel the desire to come closer to *Hashem* when he does the *vekking*,” thought the *Apter Rov*. He asked the *vekker* to tell him about himself, hoping that he would discover what it was that made him so special. The man did and the *Rav* didn’t notice anything out of the ordinary. R’ Avraham Yehoshua Heschel persisted because he just knew that there was something different, something special, about this *vekker*.

Trying a different angle, he asked him to describe his daily schedule, but again, he didn’t hear anything special or extraordinary about the *vekker*. Convinced that the man wasn’t revealing everything to him, the *Apter Rov* told him, “As the *Rav* of this town, you must reveal to me what special *mitzvah*, kindness, or action you do that makes you so extraordinary.”

The flustered *vekker* said he did not know - “*Rebbe*, I am just a plain old *vekker*. That’s all!”

The *Rebbe* was perplexed. He tried one more time. “Okay, tell me,” he asked gently, “What exactly do you do in the morning when you make your rounds waking everybody up for *shacharis*.” The *vekker* once again began to describe what he did from the moment he woke up in the morning until he left his house. The *Rav* listened carefully as the *vekker* went through his daily routine and how he would wake up the townspeople in the morning. “I enter each courtyard and bang on the well three times, no more and no less, and then I leave the courtyard to go to the next one.”

“Why are you so careful to bang only three times? What if you see they aren’t waking up, you wouldn’t bang a fourth time?”

“No,” he replied. “Absolutely not.” The *Apter Rov* asked him why, what is so special about three times?

“*Rebbe*, I am a *vekker*, my father was a *vekker*, and his father was a *vekker*, and the tradition goes back quite a few generations. I wake everybody up the way my father did, the way he learned from his father, who learned from his father, all the way back. My father taught me to lift up my hammer and bang on the metal cover of the well. By the first bang I should say, ‘In the merit of *Avraham Avinu* everyone should wake up.’ By the second bang, I should say, ‘In the merit of *Yitzchok Avinu* everyone should wake up,’ and by the third bang, I should say, ‘In the merit of *Yaakov Avinu* everyone should wake up.’ Believe me, *Rebbe*, that is all. I don’t do anything different than what my father and grandfather did!”

“Finally!” the *Oheiv Yisroel* exulted, “now I understand the special spiritual feelings I experience every morning. My dear *vekker*, when you bang your hammer to wake up the *Yidden* of Apt, you invoke the *zechus* of our *Avos*, making them a big part of our day, so of course there is a special *kedusha* in waking up to such sounds!” (Excerpted from Portraits of Prayer 2, R’ Eliezer Abish)

וקרי ה' יהלפינו בה ... (ישעי' ב-לא)

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

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In this week’s *Haftorah*, *Yeshaya HaNavi* makes reference to our saintly Patriarch, *Avraham Avinu*, by referring to him as “those who trust in *Hashem* shall renew their strength.” This indicates that when a person grows weary and tired, he should place his trust and hope in *Hashem* to renew his strength and enable him to move on with his life. But why is it important to chronicle the fact that a person grows weary in his *Avodas Hashem*?

R’ Avraham Ibn Ezra ז”ל explains that *Hashem* designed the world in an extremely intricate manner and made it so that *Klal Yisroel* has the unique ability to tap into reservoirs of strength that are meant to help them survive throughout the ages. In fact, *Hashem* designed the world so that even

before one power is exhausted, a second source of strength and power is already prepared for use.

The Ibn Ezra explains that the word “יהלפי” in this context means to be cut down, and just as a tree can be cut down and then renew itself, so too, members of *Klal Yisroel* who become weary and lax in their servitude to the Almighty can also renew their strength and sprout forth.

*Avraham Avinu* taught us that despite the odds, a person can draw close to *Hashem*, and *Yeshaya HaNavi* makes clear that every Jew has a unique opportunity to follow in his illustrious footsteps just by being a Jew. One should never underestimate himself - for deep within every Jew lies the power and strength upon which to draw even closer to *Hashem*.

ויאמר אברהם אל האלקים לו ישמעאל יהיה לפניך ... (יז-יח)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ZT"l

# מחשבת הלב

Rashi on these words explains that Avraham asked *Hashem* to allow his son Yishmael to fear and serve *Hashem*.

The *Maharsha* in *Masechta Berachos* asks the following question: Rav Meir had *davened* for certain wicked *reshaim* to be *zoche* to do *teshuva*. The question is, how does this work? We have a rule: “*Hakol bideiy shamayim chutz m'yiras shamayim*.” Fear of *Hashem* must be worked on independently and it isn’t something that is preordained. If so, how could Rav Meir *daven* for them to repent? A person may *daven* for his own *hatzlacha* but to *daven* for another person that he or she should acquire *yiras shamayim* is seemingly against the rule of the *Gemara*. So how could Rav Meir have done so?

In a similar vein, we can ask: how did *Avraham Avinu daven* for his son Yishmael to attain Fear of *Hashem*?

R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל in his famous *sefer Igros Moshe* was asked this same question. He answered that one can *daven* that another person shouldn’t have a *nisayon* or should become in some way inspired. But just to be granted a 180° turnaround, simply doesn’t work. However, the *Chazon Ish ז”ל* argues that as long as a person, any person, is involved, it can work. *Chazal* just mean that it won’t come divinely without a human’s intervention. Hence, Rav Meir was able to *daven* for those *reshaim*.

Another *machshava* might be that the above maxim of “*Hakol bideiy shamayim chutz m'yiras shamayim*,” applies only to random or unrelated individuals. However, a parent’s *tefillos* on behalf of his own offspring operate under a different set of rules, as a child is, in essence, a part of his parents. Therefore, *Avraham Avinu* was able to *daven* for Yishmael.

Perhaps our job is to feel another’s pain to such an extent, that they are considered no different than immediate family. By doing so, we will then be able to *daven* “יתמו חטאים מן הארץ” - that all sin, and not sinners, be eradicated

## משל למה הדבר דומה

לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך ... (יב-א)

R’ Yechezkel Levenstein ז”ל, was the revered *Mashgiach* of *Yeshivas Mir* and *Ponovezh*. Throughout his life he served *Hashem* with such awe-inspiring *Yiras Shamayim* that he was rarely seen smiling. One day, a *talmid* noticed that R’ Yechezkel was in a jovial mood. Surprised, he asked his *Rebbi* why he was in such good spirits.

The *Mashgiach* explained: “Before the Second World War, I served as *Mashgiach* in the *Mirrer Yeshiva*. I received a paltry salary that was nowhere near enough to feed my family. Every day, I beseeched the heavens to spare my family from hunger. With the help of *Hashem*, my prayers were always answered. I felt like the Jews in the desert who had no choice but to place their faith completely in *Hashem*. Similarly, when we escaped to Shanghai during the war, the only way I managed was with complete trust in

the Almighty. Indeed, He always supported me.

“After the war, I arrived in *Eretz Yisroel* and began serving as *Mashgiach* here in *Ponovezh*. For the first time in my life, I was paid a comfortable salary and without even realizing it, my feeling of dependence on the *Aibisher* diminished. Suddenly, I had money in my pocket, and I no longer felt that I could not possibly survive a single day without *Hashem’s* help.”

The *Mashgiach* looked at the questioning *talmid* and mused, “But now that the *Yeshiva* is experiencing financial difficulties and I haven’t been paid in months. I suddenly find myself pleading with *Hashem* to sustain my family with the same fervor I used to pray with every day. The realization that I had regained a precious treasure fills me with joy!”

*נמשל*: *Chazal* tell us that *Avraham Avinu* was tested ten times, ultimately ending with עקדת יצחק. Perhaps these weeks are a good time for us to reflect on our personal *nisyonos*, trials and tribulations, and see how we too can grow from them.

ויאמר ה' אל אברהם לך לך מארצך וממולדתך ומבית אביך אל הארץ אשר אראך ... (יב-א)

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

## דרגה יתירה

*Lech Lecha - Hashem* told *Avraham Avinu* - “You must get up and go! Leave your land, your birthplace and your father’s house. Leave all the comforts and pleasures of the familiar. That is the only way you will become great!” The *Nefesh HaChayim* writes that it is only because our *Zaida Avraham* passed his ten tests (*nisyonos*) that *Klal Yisroel* has the ability to persevere and overcome all of our trials and tribulations throughout this long and difficult *golus*. We must look at how *Avraham* passed his *nisyonos* and learn for ourselves how to pass the tests in our own lives. The *Nesivos Shalom* writes that just as *Avraham* had 10 tests, so too, every Jew has 10 tests that he must pass in his life in order to fulfill his *tafkid* in the world.

We are certainly living in a crazy world that is pressuring us all to live a life of materialism and comfort. The *avoda zara* of today is the fact that we worship the almighty dollar above all else. This can easily turn us into very superficial people whose goals and aspirations are those of Western society rather than true *Torah* ideals. So what are we supposed to do? We are supposed to look at *Avraham* and see what he did in a similar situation. *Hashem* told him, “LECH LECHA” - go and be your real self, the true YOU. Go and discover your inner potential, but first take yourself out of this place! Go and make a life for yourself by getting rid of all those things that are pulling you down. We, too, must pick ourselves up and “LECH LECHA” - go and find the inner peace and tranquility that we are lacking because too much time and energy is spent on material pursuits.

*Avraham* was called “*Ha'Ivriy*” because he stood up against the entire world to do what he knew was right. He looked inside himself and found *Hashem*. And he gave over his message to the entire world! We, too, must not be put off or swayed by the messages of the world. We must stand apart from doing all things Jewish with a secular mentality. We must pass the 10 tests in our lives so that *Hashem* will call to us and say, “MI K'AMCHA YISROEL” - come, My dear children, it is time to come home!