



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

כי אני ה' אלקיכם והתקדשתם והייתם קדשים כי קדוש אני ולא תמנאו את נפשתיכם ... (יא-טז)

Our commentators offer a range of suggestions to explain why the *Torah* permits certain types of food, but prohibits others. However, the very fact that we are forbidden to eat certain food items enables us to enjoy what we are permitted all the more. And in doing so, we recognize *Hashem*, thank Him, and deepen our relationship with Him through *hakaras hatov* - gratitude. As **R' Eliyahu Lopian ז"ל** expresses in **Lev Eliyahu**: “*To fulfill the Torah, it is not necessary to fear Heaven greatly, but to possess the virtue of gratitude. This virtue alone will lead to the fulfillment of the whole Torah. As the posuk states at the end of the laws of Kashrus: ‘You shall sanctify yourself, and you shall become holy, for I am holy.’ By abstaining from forbidden foods and appreciating all the more what we may eat, we come closer to Hashem.*”

The JDC, The Joint Distribution Committee, was a Jewish relief organization founded in 1914 through a \$50,000 donation from Jacob Schiff, a Reform Jew. The JDC was involved in relief work and provided financial help to the great *yeshivos* in Europe. Although the organization was founded and run by Reform Jews, they attempted to help all Jews who needed assistance.

In October of 1929, after the Stock Market Crash, the world descended into the Great Depression. The JDC was forced to limit its financial assistance, including its aid to the *yeshivos*. As the financial support decreased, some of the *yeshivah* directors felt that the Joint should continue to prioritize the *yeshivos* in the allocation of its now limited funds. They felt that directing money to other causes other than supporting the *yeshivos* was indicative of the Joint’s bias against the *yeshivos*.

They decided to approach the holy **Chofetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen Kagan ז"ל**. They asked him, “*Rebbi*, the Joint wants to eliminate funding to the *yeshivos*. What should we tell them? How should we protest this terrible decree?”

The *Chofetz Chaim* looked surprised at the question and answered, “What should you tell them? You should tell them ‘Thank You’ for all the support they have given these last fifteen years. They are not *frum* Jews, yet they supported *yeshivos*; we must show them *Hakaras Hatov*, gratitude. Never forget there is no limit to *Hakaras Hatov*.”

Fast-forward almost a century and across the Atlantic to Passaic/Clifton, New Jersey. In July 2021, the world had been in the throes of the Coronavirus pandemic for over a year. *Congregation Ahavas Israel* led by **R' Ron Yitzchok Eisenman shlita**, removed almost three-quarters of the chairs from the three *Batei Medrash* to maintain the social distancing ordinance. The *Shul* was sparsely populated and looked and felt barren. Finally, the day arrived, and with the permission and encouragement of their medical expert, the seats could be reset to pre-pandemic mode. The issue was how to organize a team to reset the three *Batei Medrash* to their original form. Hundreds of chairs needed to be moved. The *gabbai* asked for volunteers. However, the job would be grueling and challenging and was not a job for middle-aged, out-of-shape men.

The appointed time arrived, and the *gabbai* looked worried. “How will the seats be moved?” Suddenly, as if angels dropped from *Shamyaim*, a group of *bachurim* from the *Mesivta* of Clifton arrived and began a coordinated and systematic effort. In a matter of minutes, all three *Batei Medrash* were restored to their pre-Covid places. These boys come to learn in the *Shul* every Friday night and *Shabbos* day. They are *Masmidim*. Although they came during their lunch break, each one of them has an additional *seder* during that time. They sacrificed their own precious learning time to help out the *Shul*.

That evening, Rabbi Eisenman spoke to their *Rebbi*. “I am so grateful to you. Your boys are shining examples of what a *Ben Torah* should be. Thank you so much for coming with them to set up the *Shul*.” The *Rebbi* looked at me surprised as he said, “What do you mean? Every Friday night and *Shabbos*, you allow us to use the *Shul* for learning. We benefit greatly from the *Shul*; isn’t it only right that we give back to the *Shul* when it needs our help. Is *Hakaras Hatov* a small thing?”

He looked at the *Rebbi*, and suddenly it dawned on him. “Rabbi Yaakov Mordechai Zaks, aren’t you an *einikel* - a direct descendent - of the *Chofetz Chaim*?” Rabbi Zaks smiled and said, “Yes, I am, and as I have heard many times from my father, who heard from his mother, and she from the Chofetz Chaim, “Never forget there is no limit to *Hakaras Hatov*.” (Olam Resource)

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

In the *Haftorah* of *Parshas HaChodesh, Yechezkel HaNavi* elaborately describes the process by which a Jew shall conduct himself upon entering the future *Bais HaMikdash* and the service that will take place once *Moshiach* has come, and the Jews have returned to *Eretz Yisroel. Yechezkel HaNavi* details, “*Whoever enters by the northern gate ... shall leave by the southern gate, and whoever enters by the southern gate shall leave by the northern gate...*” Why was it necessary for *Yechezkel* to describe his point in such a long-winded manner when he could have simply said that one should exit opposite the way he entered?

**R' Yaakov Bender shlita** quotes **R' Chaim Shmulevitz ז"ל** who explains that one of the greatest challenges facing a

*Torah* Jew is a person falling into a habit in his spirituality. Because even though he is doing the right thing, his service lacks vigor and energy, and an excited freshness to it.

Thus, since habitual performance is such a great enemy of true *Avodas Hashem*, the message of the *Navi* is that it is imperative for a person to always seek out fresh ways to enhance his spirituality - like the way *Klal Yisroel* will be instructed to always find a different door from the one they had just used to enter the *Bais HaMikdash*.

This is stressed in the understanding that *Parshas HaChodesh* highlights the renewal of our focus each month through the observance of *Rosh Chodesh, Kiddush Levanah* and the like, each month.

ויאמר משה זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' תעשו וירא אליכם כבוד ה' ... (פ-ה)

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

# מחשבת הלב

In last week’s *parsha*, we find a *posuk* with similar wording to the above: “ויאמר משה אל העדה: - *Moshe spoke to the assembly.*” This begs an explanation as to why it ends without the words “וירא אליכם כבוד ה'” as our *posuk* here does.

**R' Moshe Feinstein ז"ל** explains as follows: In *Avodas Hashem, Kiyum Hamitzvos*, or *Limud HaTorah*, the ideal way to serve *Hashem* and perform *mitzvos* isn’t based on the outcome, e.g. העשראת השכינה or some lofty ambition. Rather, we do everything solely because “אשר צוה ה' לעשות” - *Hashem* commanded us to fulfill them and for no other reason. Therefore, initially *Moshe* told the *Yidden* simply, “אשר צוה ה'” - it is a command from *Hashem*. That was in *Parshas Tzav*. Here in *Parshas Shemini*, when the *Shechina* didn’t immediately appear, and the people were nervous that they were to blame, *Moshe Rabbeinu* calmed them down and said that *Aharon Hakohen* is worthy to bring the *Shechina* down through his *avoda* and you will see “וירא אליכם כבוד ה'”. But otherwise we do everything without an agenda. As the famous maxim from **R' Yisroel Salanter ז"ל** goes: “*Mir darf nisht uptun; Mir darf nisht nuchtn; Mir darf nur tun.*”

Further on in the *parsha*, the *Torah* describes the tragic demise of *Nadav* and *Avihu*, and states, “ואחיכם כל בית ישראל יבכו, את השריפה אשר שרף ה'” - The simple understanding is that *Klal Yisroel* should mourn the tragedy. As this week was the *Zaida’s yahrtzeit (Baal Machsheves Halev)*, I believe he would’ve enjoyed the following *vort*: When a *tzara* befalls us, it is referred to as a “שריפה” - a fire. The way to extinguish a fire is with water. Hence, our tears that flow like water, can serve as the “dousing agent” for this purpose. When *Hashem* sees the tears we shed on behalf of our fellow brethren, both locally and globally, He collects them and uses them to snuff out the flames. This coming week, as we usher in *Chodesh Nisan*, let us *daven* for *besuros tovos, yeshuos u’refuos* for all, and the final *geula, b’karov*. בניסן נגאל, ובניסן עתידין ליגאל.

## משל למה הדבר דומה

אל תשקצו את נפשתיכם ... (יא-טז)

One day, a *chavrusa* of **R' Chaim Kanievsky ז"ל**, who taught in a local *cheder* in *Petach Tikva*, asked if he could substitute for a day. *R' Chaim* agreed to help his friend and showed up to teach the class of fourth graders. After *R' Chaim* taught the boys a single *Mishnah* in *Bava Metzia*, a student raised his hand. *R' Chaim* anticipated a question on the *Mishnah*. “May I go to the bathroom?” the boy asked.

“Of course!” *R' Chaim* enthusiastically responded, sensing a teaching moment. “When someone feels a need to go to the bathroom, there is an obligation to go right away because it says, “*You shall not make yourselves abominable.*”

A wave of understanding swept through the classroom as the other boys immediately sensed *R' Chaim*’s inexperience. One by one they raised their hands to be excused from class

for a variety of reasons. Soon only one student remained. “Don’t you also need the bathroom?” *R' Chaim* asked.

“Actually, I do,” the boy replied, “but I don’t want to leave the *rebbe* alone with no students.”

“I think you should go to the bathroom immediately,” *Rav Chaim* suggested. “Then we can both leave the classroom, and I can go back to the *Lomza Yeshivah* to continue my learning there!”

**נמשל**: The ultimate purpose of *mitzvos* is to make an individual holy and closer to *Hashem*. Should one observe the entirety of *Torah* and *mitzvos* but fail to attach himself to *Hashem*, he is deficient in achieving the purpose of all the *mitzvos*. Thus, we are given guidance to avoid certain actions which cause our soul to become coarser, and/or block the acquisition of holiness. This is especially true as we prepare to bring the *Korban Pesach* this year on the Temple Mount - *amen!*

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

## דרגה יתירה

This past *Shabbos* we read *Parshas Parah*, all about purification. We need to make a move in the right direction. If *Zachor* is the “*Sur M’rah*” then *Parah* is the “*Asei Tov*”! *Hashem* does not expect us to make monumental changes in ourselves. He wants us to be purified with a little drop of effort. Just like the ashes of the *Parah Adumah* purified one who was *tamei* even if one little tiny drop touched them, we need to try to do SOMETHING. It could be something small, but if we say to *Hashem*, “I am coming to purify myself. I want to be better. Please *Hashem*, give me *siyata dishmaya* so that I can succeed,” then *Hashem* will help us! He will lead us right into *Parshas HaChodesh*! The power of *Hischadshus*, Renewal! Yes, you can change! You can become a new person! You can get out of all those negative patterns, old and destructive habits and sinful thoughts.

In order to truly experience this *Zman Cheiruseinu*, you are obligated to see yourself as if YOU left *Mitzrayim*! There are those who actually act out the *Pesach* story as they read the *Haggadah* on the night of the *Seder*. They create a virtual *yetzias Mitzrayim* and imagine themselves leaving slavery and becoming free people. This can be taken literally or figuratively, but either way it must be taken to heart. Getting out of your own personal Egypt, whatever it is you are enslaved to, entails getting the ten *makkos* - the ten plagues, out of our system. Although we did not experience the ten plagues in *Mitzrayim*, the ten plagues have seeped into us in this long and difficult *galus*. We can free ourselves of all that plagues us in our lives.

We all go through times of “*Mitzrayim*” in our lives! Both on a collective, “*Am Yisroel level*” and on an individual and personal level. But now we are entering the Time of Freedom. Now is the time to rid ourselves of the slavery, the hardships, the plagues and take *Mitzrayim* out of ourselves. We must liberate ourselves with *Emunah* in *Hashem* and be *zoche* to see all the great miracles that await us at this great time of redemption.