

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וישלומו את כנתנת הפסים ויבניאו אל אביהם ויאמרו זאת מצאנו הכר נא הכנתת בנך הוא אם לא ... (לו-לב)

The clothing worn by prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps contributed to their dehumanization by erasing individuality and reducing them to an indistinct mass. The highly visible and distinctive colors made any attempt to escape extremely difficult. Each inmate was issued one set of clothes. Any loss of items, especially the cap, was punished. Clothing could be changed only every six to eight weeks. Prisoners had no soap, and rarely had the strength to wash their clothes in the little free time allowed them. Holocaust historians say that finding coats and jackets from the camps today are fairly rare, since most of the clothing worn by concentration camp prisoners was burned because of lice and other potential diseases. Also, most freed prisoners didn't want to leave reminders of their horrifying ordeal and never thought to keep them around.

The story of Benzion Peresecki - who later became Ben Peres - is told in extraordinary detail, thanks largely to the serial number on his prisoner jacket and careful records he kept and that his family found after he died. A woman by the name of Jillian Eisman was rummaging through a packed closet during a Long Island tag sale when she immediately recognized the symbol of horror and hate: A jacket worn by a prisoner at the Nazi Dachau concentration camp during World War II.

"I knew exactly what it was, even before I saw the numbers (on the chest)," said Eisman, who purchased the jacket for \$2 at the sale and donated it to the Kupferberg Holocaust Center. Curators there not only put the jacket on display but also unearthed the story of the person who wore it: Ben Peres, a teenager forced to make munitions for the German war effort, spent four years in a DP camp and then came to America, never telling his children much about Dachau or that he kept the jacket.

In some labor camps during the winter months, inmates received a prisoner outfit made of somewhat heavier material and, if they were very lucky, a coat or sweater as well. Very few people owned an actual coat in the camps, and used a "kotz" - a woolen blanket, that was draped over their bodies for protection against the harsh elements.

One young woman, by the name of Esther Grosz, possessed such a "kotz" and wore it at all times, for fear that it might be discarded by the SS, or someone might steal it in the night. She came up with a brilliant plan. On her way to work on the night shift, she noticed a female day-shift laborer who was walking in the bitter cold without a coat. The woman heading for the day shift was without a coat because the Germans had punished her for some imagined "misdeed" by taking away her coat.

Esther felt compassion for this woman who would be forced to work for hours without protection from the elements.

One morning, as her night-shift was walking back into camp and the day-shift was heading out, she made eye contact with the woman and without hesitation, threw her "kotz" to the woman. The woman, Rivka Weiss, was surprised at this sudden action, but also very thankful. She had been working in freezing conditions for quite some time and did not know how she would survive day after day under these conditions. Rivka wore the coat all day and when her shift ended and she was now heading back into the camp, she saw Esther walking out to begin her night-shift. Instantly, she threw the coat back to her. The next day, this "coat throwing" repeated itself and continued throughout the duration of the war. The person heading to work wore the kotz.

This coat throwing was very risky. Obviously, had they been spotted by an SS guard while the coat was being transferred, it could have spelled disaster. It would seem that the genuine kindness of both women, was their merit of protection. Furthermore, had one of them gone back to her barracks one day with a kotz, and the next day without one, too many questions would have resulted and both women might have been paying with their lives. The fact that they each wore the coat half the day resulted in no one in the sleeping quarters finding out that she had obtained the kotz, when in fact it was shared with another person intentionally. At the Labor Camp, this was not known and therefore went unnoticed.

After liberation, the two women met. Although both had the same maiden name Grosz, they were not related by blood and lived in different countries. However, Rivka was married to Ephraim Weiss, who just so happened to be Esther's first cousin.

על מברם בכפם צדיק ואבינו בעבודת נעלים - (עמ"ס ב-ו)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In the *Haftorah*, *Amos HaNavi* reminds *Klal Yisroel* of the infamous sale of *Yosef HaTzadik* at the hands of his brothers, and how it was done for such a paltry sum, a pair of shoes. However, it seems that the error was in the sale - insinuating that had *Yosef* been merely given away to slavery for free it may not have been so bad.

R' Shloime Kluger ז"ל (Chochmas HaTorah) explains that often when a person does something wrong, he tends to rationalize his misdeed. He may even "outsmart the system" and find a technicality to make it as though his action was not in fact an *aveira*. While he may escape judgment on this world, *Hashem* nevertheless knows what he did, and his punishment will come.

In the *parsha* we see that *Yehuda* exclaimed "What do we gain by killing our brother and covering up his blood? Come, let us sell him to the *Yishmaelim*, but let us not do away with him ourselves." But they already decided not to kill *Yosef* - why did *Yehuda* reiterate it? The answer is that the brothers wanted to be as clean as possible and so they arranged for the *Midianites* to haul *Yosef* up from the pit and then sell him to the *Yishmaelim*. That means that technically, they had nothing to do with it. However, they made one mistake. By accepting money in exchange for *Yosef*, the brothers became implicated, placing themselves on the hook for not only the sale, but for all the suffering *Yosef* endured in the years he was separated from his family in *Egypt*.

כי אם זכרתני אתך כאשר יימב לך ועשית נא עמדי חסד והזכרתני אל פרעה ... (ב-ד)

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

מחשבת הלב

Yosef Hatzadik interprets the wine steward's dream in a positive light and asks for a small favor in return; to mention his name to *פרעה* in the hope he'd be pardoned. It would seem that the words *כי אם* are superfluous as it could have just said *זכרתני*.

When Emperor Napoleon was conquering city after city in Europe, he called for a night of celebration. He commanded one of his soldiers to go to the nearest town and bring a Rabbi - because a Rabbi knows how to give a good speech! In the middle of the night, the Rabbi of the nearby town fearfully opens his door, and a soldier tells him that Napoleon wants him at once.

He packs his *talis* and *tachrichim*, and tearfully sets off with the soldier. Upon arrival at the banquet, Napoleon shouts, "Jew! I need a really good speech about me." The *Rav* thought to himself, "A *drasha!* That's my bread and butter." So he starts from *Bereishis*, explaining to the assembled about *Hashem*, *Adam*, the *Mabul*, the *Avos*, the *Shevatim*, with all the pertinent details. He explains that each word of the *Torah* is measured and precise. Not one unneeded letter! Finally he reaches the words in *Parshas Vayeishev*: "כי אם זכרתני" and asks the above question! These words are seemingly extra!

The *Rav* turns to Napoleon and says, "Yosef is telling Pharaoh's drinkmaster, 'Your entire incarceration was "כי אם" - just so that you should mention my name to Pharaoh.' Similarly, Your Highness, your power is unparalleled. Your victories, unmatched. But you must realize at the same time that as you ascend higher, you must remember the Jewish people favorably, because we are the reason for your unparalleled success. Everything is *bishvil Yisroel*." Napoleon was impressed with both the oratory skills of the Rabbi and the content. He smiled, thanked him, and sent him back home, handsomely rewarded.

Current world events demonstrate that, we too must realize: It is all for us - *Bishvil Yisroel*. And thus, we must prepare accordingly. *Hashem* is orchestrating everything and we truly hope that He will follow - "כי אם זכרתני" - remember us לטובה!

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני ... (לו-כו)

משל: A young boy was not doing well in school. His parents were well-to-do people - his father was a prestigious lawyer and his mother was a doctor - and it was a tremendous blow to them that their highly intelligent child was not succeeding in school. Not only that, but he was getting involved with the wrong crowd of kids. Things weren't looking good for him.

His parents tried encouraging him and offering him incentives, but it was only of minimal help. The parents even hired a private tutor to assist the boy with his schoolwork, which helped his grades rise gradually - but not enough. The boy claimed he was behaving in class and working hard on his work, but his grades were not showing it.

Finally, PTA night came. His parents dreaded the night for the fear they would hear the worst - which they indeed did.

Not only did all his teachers have very uncomplimentary things to say about their son, but his report card was awful. He got straight C's and D's, and even a few F's.

The father confronted his son, "What's this all about?!" he demanded. The son looked his father straight in the eyes, he seemed to truly be unaware as to why his father was so agitated. Finally, he blurted out with honesty and sincerity, "So dad, what do you think the problem here is - a genetic issue or an environmental one?"

משל: In this week's *parsha*, *Yehuda* taught us a lesson of immeasurable value. Instead of looking around for someone to blame his issue on, he took responsibility for his own actions (even though there was a basis for his actions). This is the attribute of a responsible leader and essentially the attribute of every Jew. Accountability brings one to rectify his own deeds and ultimately to a measure of perfection.

וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען (לו-א)

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

דרגה יתירה

It was after years of aggravation in the home of *Lavan*, physical and spiritual battles with *Esav*, terrible anguish over the defilement of his daughter *Dina*, and much *tzaar gidul banim* in raising his twelve sons, that *Yaakov Avinu* finally wished to settle down and learn *Torah* in peace. But this was not to be for the tragic episode of *Mechiras Yosef* interrupted his peace of mind and what ensued was a very long and difficult period in the life of *Yaakov Avinu*. The *Medrash* asks: "Is it not enough that a *tzaddik* experiences serenity in the next world - shall he also wish to feel that peace in this world?" Why shouldn't *Hashem* "fargin" *Yaakov* some peace and quiet? What would have been so terrible had he enjoyed tranquility and serenity?

R' Yeruchem Levovitz ז"ל explains that the purpose of life is to grow from every situation. For one to reach his personal *shleimus*, he must pass the tests, *nisyonos*, that *Hashem* throws at him. If he fails these tests, *Hashem* will send him the same tests in different forms, so avoiding the issue will not accomplish anything. Rather than seeking tranquility in his life, *Yaakov* should have asked *Hashem* - as *Dovid Hamelech* did - to give him the strength, wisdom and wherewithal to overcome the difficult tribulations that inevitably crop up, in order to be able to serve *Hashem* properly.

Our job is not to focus on how we feel about a situation, but rather to view each and every issue in life as a tool for growth. This way, we can actualize our potential and accomplish our goals - which is why we are here in the first place! So the next time you find yourself in a frustrating, upsetting or angering situation, STOP, CALM DOWN, and FOCUS on the source of your angst. Then, visualize it as an opportunity, a GIFT that *Hashem* is sending you, to work on yourself and overcome this *nisayon*. Remember, the purpose of life is not to relax, but to grow. So set your sights high to achieve your lofty goals, because in the long run, a person's ALTITUDE in life, is determined by his ATTITUDE in life!