



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ויקרא לבנו ליוסף ויאמר לו אם נח מצאתי חן בעיניך וכו' אל נח תקברני במצרים ... (כז-כט)

Yaakov Avinu asked his son Yosef to show him kindness and not bury him in Egypt. **Rashi** offers a few explanations. One is that he saw into the future, that Egypt would be stricken with the ten plagues and the dust of the earth would turn into lice. He wished that his corpse would be spared this unpleasant scenario, infested with lice during *Makkas Kinim*. And although Yaakov could have asked to be buried in a coffin made from some kind of material like metal which lice cannot penetrate, he recognized the power that Yosef had at that time, as ruler of Egypt, and instead asked to be taken to *Mearas HaMachpela*, where his parents and grandparents are buried. More important than anything was being buried in *Eretz Yisroel*.

One of the unique and generous individuals who supported the *Baranovitch Yeshivah* in Poland, was a man of means called R' Cheikel. Besides assisting them with their needs, every morning, he would go to the local bakeries to get bread for the hungry *yeshivah* boys. As he approached the bakers, he would employ his special morning charm of singing for them while requesting their generous donations. When he had a substantial amount, he would return home with the collected bread and lay out his wares, as his house doubled as the *yeshivah's* dining room, and the boys would eat their breakfast there.

After that was done, he'd then turn to the butchers and ask them for any leftover meat to sustain the *yeshivah* boys for their supper meal. For a long time, his efforts successfully kept the boys well nourished.

**R' Elchanan Wasserman ז"ל** had great admiration for R' Cheikel and for his dedication. One day, R' Elchanan called him over and asked him if he had any request that he could fulfill in return for what he does on behalf of the *yeshivah*.

R' Cheikel responded that he never intended that the *Rosh Yeshivah* would grant him something in return for his work. But, if he was offering, he had one request: "Once a week, I ask that your *shiur* be given to the *bachurim* in my house. I may not understand what you will be learning, but at least there should be some *Torah* learning in my home."

This wasn't so bizarre, since his home already served as the dining room for the older boys. Out of *hakaras hatov*, R' Elchanan immediately approved his request and set up a weekly *shiur* in his home. R' Cheikel diligently listened to R' Elchanan's *shiur*, often leaving food for those who needed a snack, though he didn't understand any of it.

It was known throughout Baranovitch that no bug could ever be found in R' Cheikel's dining room. Though there were plenty of bugs swarming around the adjacent rooms, they stood immobile at the entrance to his dining room. People from the town came to observe this miracle, amazed at how the bugs didn't enter, despite the great amount of food that sat around.

When R' Elchanan was asked to explain what was happening in the home of R' Cheikel, all he said was that he hoped that in the Next World, they will give him an opportunity to gaze at the portion awaiting R' Cheikel.

But not everyone believed this open miracle. One time, a certain Rav Bornstein brought along a man named Dreazen, a well-known *apikores* in town, who sought to disprove *Yiddishkeit*. This *Yid* didn't even come to *shul* on *Yom Kippur*, and now here he was, looking at R' Cheikel's dining room, analyzing it in order to disprove the open miracle. "Look here," he said, and he took several bugs in his hand and tried to coax them into entering the dining room. Yet, despite his brazenness, the bugs miraculously wouldn't go in. With all his force, he was unable to get them to go there. Several times he tried to disprove the miracle, but to no avail. The bugs just wouldn't go into the *yeshivah's* dining room. Dreazen was amazed and after a few more efforts, he was convinced. It took only a few short days and the news hit the town of Baranovitch and the *yeshivah* that the former apostate Dreazen had returned to *Yiddishkeit* and was now becoming observant. Dreazen explained that when he saw what the Almighty was doing for R' Cheikel despite his limited knowledge in learning, he understood that great power lies in *Torah* learning. And although Cheikel wasn't the greatest *talmid chacham*, nevertheless, he was doing the best with whatever capacity *Hashem* had given him. That gave Dreazen the courage to start a fresh commitment to serving *Hashem*.

**תורת הצבי על הפטרות** **A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAPTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN**

In his final days, *Dovid HaMelech* advised his newly crowned son, Shlomo, on how to run the kingdom, stating, "I am going in the ways of the world..." While at first glance *Dovid HaMelech's* words might appear no different than any other elderly person on their deathbed, Dovid was anything but a typical person. So what indeed is the underlying message of Dovid's cryptic words?

The **Ozherover Rebbe, R' Moshe Yechiel Epstein ז"ל (Be'er Moshe)** explains that *Chazal* tell us that one can live for many, many years, but only have few actual days of worthwhile accomplishment. Dovid, on the other hand, had a full lifetime's worth of accomplishments, and his days were always full of *Torah* study, adherence to *mitzvos*, and many

*halachic*, military, and political accomplishments on behalf of the Jewish people. Although *Dovid HaMelech* was only seventy years old at his time of death, he became frail and infirm. This was due to the many battles and wars he waged throughout his reign which sapped whatever youth he had left in him and sped up the aging process.

Yet, Dovid's message for all generations is deep. While everyone eventually reaches the end of his life and passes on to a better world, it is what we choose to do with our lives prior to death that makes all the difference. A person must work hard while he still can, doing *mitzvos* and learning *Torah*, because before we even realize it, our day of reckoning will come and then we will all "go in the ways of the world."

# מחשבת הלב

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

ויאמר אלהם אני נאסף אל עמי קברו אתי אל אבתי אל המועדה אשר בשדה עפרון הרתי ... (מג-מז)

Yaakov Avinu gave precise instructions to his children how to proceed with his *kevura* after his imminent *petirah*. But the phraseology used here is interesting. Why did he say "אני נאסף על עמי" - "I'll be gathered unto my nation"? What nation? At this point it was only *Avraham Avinu* and *Yitzchok Avinu* up in שמים.

**R' Moshe Feinstein ז"ל** says the following *pshat*. There were other righteous people who had already passed away. In this world they weren't referred to as עמי, the same nation as the *Avos*. But in the עולם האמת where everything is clear, their status rose to a degree that they could be in the vicinity of the patriarchs as well. Thus, עמי includes the likes of Noach, Mesushelach, Chanoch, among others of their ilk.

Perhaps we can say another two thoughts that the *Zaida (Baal Machsheves Halev ז"ל)* would no doubt agree with, if he did not actually say it. Granted there were only two *Avos* already in שמים but the אמהות were there too. Additionally, Yaakov would finally be reunited with his *nshei chayil*, Leah and Rochel. His wives, with whom he built such a beautiful familial edifice, were to him, literally, his "עמי" because they bore, raised, and built his "עם" of Yisroel.

And lastly, as the *Zaida* was wont to say at every *simcha*, our ancestors come down from on high to rejoice in and partake of our joyous events. And if, *lo aleinu*, there is a *tzara* in the *mishpacha*, a terrible "klop" for the family, we can count on them to intercede on our behalf, pleading for us by the *kisei hakavod*, the Heavenly Throne, so that we can emerge relatively unscathed. They are our *melitzei yosher*. *Yaakov Avinu* was telling his children, "Fear not that I am taking leave of you. I am being 'gathered' into you. I will be able to be there for you when needed." Hence, the *posuk* aptly states that Yaakov said, "אני נאסף אל עמי", to my dear children and the entire nation. ויפתח יני עלינו, ולכל ישראל.

**משל למה הדבר דומה** **ואתם השבתם עלי רעה אלקים חשבה לטובה ... (ג-ד)**

**משל:** A simple fellow was traveling and found himself in a far-away city for the upcoming *Shabbos*. Not far from his hotel room, he found a large *shul* and attended all the prayers there. When it came time to read from the *Torah*, he was fascinated by the choice of people who were called up to the *Torah*. Instead of following a more logical approach of calling up people by sections, the *gabbai* seemed to have no specific method. He called up random people from random sections of the *shul* in a totally confusing manner.

After prayers were finished, to his great delight, the *gabbai* approached the "guest" with traditional *Shabbos* greetings. "Where are you from," he inquired with a smile, "is there anything you need here in our 'remote location'?" "Well actually," began the guest, "I'm pretty well-stocked

with all the provisions I need for *Shabbos*. However, if you don't mind me asking, please explain to me your seemingly random way of calling attendees up to the *Torah*?"

"You don't understand," replied the *gabbai*, "because you came for one week, so you don't see the whole picture. Every person was called up for a reason; a *simcha*, a *yahrzeit* or a simple birthday. Stick around for a few years and you'll understand the sketching in its entire form!"

**נמשל:** We come to this world for a couple of years and expect to understand everything going on. Unfortunately for us, some pictures are drawn over the course of many years and we don't always see the end or connect the dots. However, we can reinforce our *emunah* in *Hashem* when we do see a years-long tableau coming to a beautiful end. This was Yosef's message to his brothers, and the inspiring message that can be "drawn" from it for all of eternity.

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

*Parshas Vayechi* is the *parsha* of *berachos*. It is the final words of a father to his children expressing his love, advice and blessing to each one individually according to his needs. "ורחי" means to live, and we may add that the purpose of living is certainly to bless others and to count our blessings. From the first words of Yaakov we can learn what is the prerequisite of acquiring a *beracha*. We know that a *beracha* must be על something - meaning that a person has to make some effort in order to help himself so that the *beracha* be fulfilled. The *Bnei Yaakov* are told, "GATHER TOGETHER and hear ...." and we too are meant to internalize this message. If you want a *beracha* for yourself, your family, your community, the key is to GATHER TOGETHER. Make every effort to live with *achdus*, with true compassion and brotherly love.

No one should ever think that he is insignificant, or that other people are brighter, more talented or more capable than him. Every one of us has a unique and individual mission in this world. Every one of us is beloved and precious to *Hashem*. Every one of us is crucial to bringing the world to its completion, using our individual talents in the service of *Hashem*.

When Yaakov blessed his grandsons, Ephraim and Menashe, he said, "Through YOU all of Israel will be blessed." In many Jewish homes on Friday night, the father blesses his sons to be like Ephraim and Menashe, and not like the *Avos*, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, because more than anything else a father wants his children to love each other, and live with *achdus*. This is his greatest *nachas* - whereas his greatest *tzaar* is when his children fight! When Yaakov switched his hands and gave Ephraim the older son's *beracha* and Menashe the younger son's *beracha*, there was no jealousy between them! There was only pure love and peace between them. Their *achdus* was the source of their blessing's fruition.

May we all be wise enough to promote peace above all and may all the blessings we receive come true.