

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ואנחנו נחלין חשים לפני בני ישראל וכו' וישב מפני בערי המבצר מפני ישבי הארץ ... (לב-ז)

The history of the “Jewish Guard” began almost immediately with the arrival of the disciples of the **Vilna Gaon zt”l** and the **Baal Shem Tov zt”l** to *Eretz Yisroel*, more than two hundred years ago. When it became apparent that the Turkish authorities were either unable or unwilling to deal with Arab marauders, these early settlers realized that an armed Jewish defense force was needed to prevent the fledgling Jewish settlement from becoming fair game to the roving bands of Arab Bedouins who plagued the region. The headquarters was located in the Old City and it was commanded by some of the most outstanding disciples of the *Gaon*. On one of the Guard’s missions, **R’ Yosef Shick of Ladi** was killed. On another occasion, **R’ Nosson Nota**, the son of **R’ Menachem Mendel of Shklov**, a disciple of the *Gaon*, was seriously wounded and blinded in one eye. Rabbinic leaders of the *yishuv* such as **R’ Yeshayah Bardaky**, **R’ Eliyahu Yehoshua Magid**, **R’ Zev Babis**, and **R’ Hillel Sherlin**, were all leaders of the Jewish Guard and risked their lives on many dangerous missions to protect the *yishuv*. Many members of the *Sephardic* community also joined the ranks of these valiant defenders and due to them, much death and destruction was withheld from those early Jewish communities.

One morning in 1820, **R’ Hillel Rivlin zt”l** (1758–1838), one of the prominent leaders of Jerusalem’s *Ashkenazic* community and the head of its first *beis din* was about to leave his home to *daven shacharis* in the morning, when he was approached by a solitary, letter-bearing Bedouin. The letter revealed that a party of Jewish immigrants had been captured by an Arab gang and they were demanding ransom. R’ Hillel convened an urgent meeting of the community leaders and the Guard. It was decided that two men, seemingly bearing the ransom money, would accompany the Arab emissary, while all the members of the Guard would secretly follow them to the bandits’ camp.

They arrived at the camp which is near what today is the city of *Bnei Brak*. In a surprise assault, the Guard members destroyed the camp and freed the prisoners. The bandit chief as well as many of his band were killed and the remaining members barely escaped with their lives. When the victorious Guard returned to Jerusalem together with their rescued captives, they found the community still steeped in fasting and prayer for the success of the mission.

One way or another, the Guard managed to arm itself not only with clubs and knives but also with pistols and rifles. Two Guard leaders, R’ Shmaryahu “Shmerel” Luria and his brother-in-law, R’ Shmerel Zuckerman, devoted themselves to arming Guard members with pistols. For quite some time afterward, pistols in Jerusalem were known as “*shmerelech*.”

When the neighborhoods of *Nachalat Shiva* and *Meah Shearim* were founded outside the city walls, the Guard assumed new and more dangerous duties. These new settlements were open to attack, especially at night when the Old City’s gates were locked. Guard members stood watch over these neighborhoods day and night, alternating their shifts between guard duty and *Torah* study. These new duties were in addition to their normal responsibilities of escorting groups of travelers to Jerusalem and guarding the storehouses of food and building materials in the exposed neighbourhoods.

In the summer of 1873, the Old City of Jerusalem was terrorized by a powerful gang of Arab Bedouin bandits named Jehart-Al-Harabiah. Attacking Jewish homes became an almost nightly occurrence. People were terrified and in many instances, Jews were killed and tortured mercilessly. At an urgent meeting that was hurriedly convened at the home of Jerusalem’s chief rabbi, **R’ Meir Auerbach zt”l**, it was decided to attack the gang at its hide-out. The night before the planned attack was declared “watch night” and Jerusalem’s citizens gathered in the *shuls* to recite *Tehillim* and *daven* for the success of the mission. On the night of the 18th of *Sivan*, groups gathered into *shul* to spend the entire night in *tefillah*.

At midnight members of the Guard launched a three-pronged attack on Jehart-Al-Harabiah stronghold, north of the city, and inflicted heavy casualties. Within a half-hour, the enemy camp was decimated with nearly 150 of them dead. For many years, “salvation night” was celebrated in Jerusalem on the 18th of *Sivan*. (From *Sefer Halsh Al HaChoma*)

כי אם תכבסי בנתר ותרבי לך בירת נבתם עיניך לפני ... (דמי' ב-כב)

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

This week’s *Haftorah* is the second in the “Three *Haftoros* of Punishment” series. *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* rebukes the Jewish people for their devotion to the vanities of idolatry which surpassed even the standards of the pagan nations around them. *Yirmiyahu* declares: “*Even if you (Yisroel) wash with lye and apply an abundance of soap, your iniquity is marked as a stain before Me*”

How could *Yirmiyahu*, who repeatedly encouraged the Nation to mend their ways in order to evade a calamity, say something like this? Besides, doesn’t a person always have the ability to repent for his sins and do *Teshuvah*?

The *Zohar* explains: If a person sins once, his sin makes an impression which may be eradicated, similar to a stain in

garment that can be rubbed out. If he repeats his sin, the impression is strengthened, but it can still be removed. When a sin is repeated a third time, it becomes embedded so deeply into a person’s soul, it becomes like a stain that has penetrated to the reverse side of the material and no amount of scrubbing would be able to remove it.

Similarly, *Bnei Yisroel’s* idolatry had become so deeply embedded in their souls that *Hashem’s* heavy decree of punishment was inevitable. *Yirmiyahu* was saying that of course, they must do *teshuvah*, but at this point that alone will not suffice, since their very souls had become stained. Thus, in order to be purified, they must also bear a measure of suffering, either in this world or in the next.

והדינה מזהל תרצה הנלה ומלכה ונעה בנות צלפחד לפני דודוק לנשים ... (ד-א)

לעלמי נשמת אבני מוריזו רבינו הרב חיים יוסף בן ר' ישראל אברהם קויפמאן זצ"ל

מחשבת הל"ב

Last week in *Parshas Pinchas*, the *Torah* listed *Bnos Tzlapchad*, the daughters of Tzelafchad, who came to Moshe and asked for their inheritance, albeit in a different order than it does in this *parsha*. **Rashi** notes this change, and explains the difference as follows: “כאן מנאן לפי גדולתן...בשנים ונשאו כסדר גדולתן ובכל המקרא מנאן לפי חכמתן. ומגיד ששקולות זו בזו”.

This **Rashi** brings to mind another famous **Rashi** in *Parshas Vaeira* on the two phrases “הוא אהרן ומשה” and “הוא משה ואהרן”. There too, the *Torah* purposely reversed the order to teach us that Moshe and Aharon were equal.

R’ Yaakov Kamenetzky zt”l (I believe) explained that although we know “לא קם כמשה עוד”, however, if a person rises to his full potential as Moshe did, in that regard they are considered equal. Here though, that *סברה* doesn’t apply because in *Vaeira* the *Torah* reversed the names for no apparent reason. Here, though, **Rashi** himself says that some possessed greater wisdom and in regard to marriage they followed their respective chronological order. So how can we prove that they were equal? In fact, the source for **Rashi** is the *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* (120a) and the **Rashbam** there says that these two explanations do not agree. Some say that we must insert in **Rashi** here, דבר אחר מלמד ששקולות, meaning a secondary *pshat*.

Perhaps we can say the following *machshava*. חכמה is an attribute that doesn’t necessarily raise one’s qualitative stature. Old age too is an attribute. Life experience leaves a mark and is the greatest teacher in this regard. Maybe that’s what **Rashi** meant. It’s one *pshat* on the one hand, and זקנה on the other. When well-balanced, it made the *Bnos Tzlapchad* equal.

It’s comforting to realize that while we are זקנין ויאמרו לך, we can also be זקנין ויאמרו לך ועל זקני שארית ... לעל הצדיקים ... לאריכת ימים ושנים טובים *We daven*. May we be *zoche* to keep a *keshet* with both.

משל למת הדבר דומה

ידבר משה אל ראשי המטות לבני ישראל לאמר ... (ג-ב)

משל: A grandson of **R’ Chaim Kanievsky zt”l** related the following incident. One day while tending to the needs of his illustrious grandfather, R’ Chaim mentioned to him that when he was younger, he tried to memorize the entire *Mesaches Kedushin*. This way, if he ever found himself in a position where he didn’t have a *Gemara*, he could still continue learning by heart. About half way through the *masechta* though, he realized it was taking too much time away from other things he was learning, so he stopped.

“*Zaidy*,” the grandson asked, “doesn’t it say in *halacha* that starting something constitutes a *neder*, a promise, thereby obligating you to finish?”

R’ Chaim looked at his grandson with a warm smile. “Correct,” he said, “but this story happened before the age I was obligated to keep a promise.”

The grandson looked at R’ Chaim and was dumbfounded, “Does that mean *Zaidy* did this before he was 12 years old?” he exclaimed. R’ Chaim nodded with a wink.

His grandson got the point!

נמשל: The virtues of honesty and integrity are not just descriptors of individual persons’ characters. Rather, they are social values, which ideally should define the essence of human communities and entire societies. From a Jewish perspective, “honesty” and “integrity” cannot be restricted to individual paragons of virtue, saints and holy men, but must become universal cultural norms.

This is why the laws of vows, unlike all the other laws of the *Torah*, are explicitly given to “*Roshei HaMatos*” the chieftains of the tribes. It is to emphasize that the sanctity of speech is not just a goal for a few spiritually gifted individuals. It must be enunciated as one of the essential mores of the entire tribe.

ויכתב משה את מוצייהם למסעיהם על פי ה' ואלה מסעיהם למוצייהם ... (לג-ב)

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

דרגה יתירה

As *Sefer Bamidbar* draws to a close, the *Torah* lists the forty-two encampments where the Jewish people rested on their ultimate journey into the Holy Land. In fact, writes the **Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh zt”l**, not only was it listed in the *Torah*, even *Moshe Rabbeinu* kept a personal list of their travels in his own “פניקס” - his own private diary of sorts. Thus, the *posuk* states: “*Moshe wrote their goings forth (מוצייהם) of their travels (למסעיהם)*.” He wrote it down in his own diary.

What is unusual, though, is that the very same *posuk* concludes with different words: “*And these are the travels of their goings forth.*” At the end of the *posuk*, the word “מסעיהם” comes before the word “מוצייהם”. Why are these words switched around and what are we to learn from this?

R’ Pinchos Hoffman shlita, gives a wonderful analysis based on the words of the **Chid’a (Chomas Enoch)**, who quotes in the name of **Chacham Vidal Tzorfaty zt”l** that the word “ואלה” (42) is a reference to the forty-two encampments in the desert. However, as we know, when *Aharon Hakohen* passed away and the Clouds of Glory protecting *Bnei Yisroel* were withdrawn, the Jews panicked and ran backwards, tracing their steps a full eight encampments back. They finally halted at a place called “מוסרה” and from there, they proceeded forward again (רש"י כ"ו-יח). As a result, there were not just forty-two stops along the way; there were actually fifty stops in total. The word “ואלה” teaches us that only the forty-two “*goings forth*” - “מוצייהם” - were deemed worthy of being considered “*travels*” - “מסעיהם”.

When *Moshe Rabbeinu* transcribed the travels in his own diary, he listed the total amount of times the people traveled - fifty in all. He wrote down all their “מוצייהם למסעיהם”. However, *Hashem* insisted למוצייהם - only those 42 encampments in which the people went forward, not backwards, are worthy of being mentioned in the *Torah*.