

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ולקחת את כסף הכפירים מאת בני ישראל ונתת אתו על עבדת אהל מועד ויהי לבני ישראל לזכרון ... (ל-ב-ו)

Around the turn of the 20th century, there lived a Jewish Hungarian couple in the city of Grosswardein. While the husband spent his days immersed in *Torah* study, his wife managed a flourishing business that had expanded to many branches in various cities and made wealthy people of them both. The only thing that marred their happiness was their childlessness. Oh, how they pined for a baby of their own! Unfortunately, after many years of marriage, they were still bereft of this joy.

One day the woman decided to act on her own and brought a sum of four hundred Gulden, a small fortune in those days, to her local *Rav*. "I would like you to relay this money as a donation to some great rabbi, whomever you choose, so that he may pray that I bear children," she instructed. The *Rav* considered the huge sum before him and suggested, "If you truly want the money to go to proper hands, send it to **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld** (*zt"l*) in Jerusalem. He will surely be able to help you."

The woman agreed heartily and the money was dispatched that very day. It was not sent directly, however, since diplomatic relations between the Turkish and Austrian governments were strained, and a major portion of the mail never reached its destination. Instead, it was sent to the Austrian ambassador in Palestine and requested to be forwarded to R' Yosef Chaim.

When the Austrian ambassador in Jerusalem received this large sum of money, he was curious to know its intended recipient, whom he assumed was a poor Jew living within the Old City walls. The curious ambassador read the letter accompanying the money. He was impressed and quickly had a servant bring the envelope to its proper destination.

Two weeks passed, and the husband learned of his wife's generous gift to the rabbi in Jerusalem. Although he was steeped in *Torah* study, he had never heard of R' Yosef Chaim and he was angry at his wife for sending so much money to this "unknown" rabbi. When the husband upbraided the local *Rav* for having accepted such a huge sum without consulting him, the *Rav* justified his action by arguing that he had been certain that the woman had acted with her husband's knowledge and approval. He couldn't imagine otherwise. This calmed the husband down somewhat but he nevertheless insisted that the *Rav* write to this Rabbi Sonnenfeld in Jerusalem and ask for the money back, explaining that it had been sent by mistake.

Not surprisingly, the *Rav* was extremely uncomfortable with this and reluctant to comply. "Let me rather repay the sum from my own pocket in monthly installments," he begged. The husband would not hear of it. An argument ensued.

While they stood there stalemated, the postman knocked on the *Rav's* door, bearing a letter from Jerusalem. Both the rabbi and the husband stood in open-mouthed amazement as the letter was delivered from R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, and in it were the four hundred Gulden together with a letter in which he explained why he was returning the money. The *Rav* read it aloud, "I received your letter in which you informed me that the woman brought the money herself. Since I fear that she may have taken this money without her husband's consent, I am returning the entire sum to you, begging you respectfully to return it to its rightful owner. May I add that this will have no effect upon my prayers that the woman be blessed with a child. *Hashem's* deliverance comes as speedily as the blink of an eye." The *Rav* and husband stood there dumfounded.

Only their eyes, overflowing with tears, expressed their emotions. Such sensitivity as R' Yosef Chaim had displayed, such nobility and strength of character, was beyond their imagination. In his new-found deep respect, the husband immediately asked the *Rav* to return the entire amount of money back to Jerusalem with a note expressing his desire that R' Yosef Chaim keep it. "It will be a tremendous merit for my money to go to such a *tzaddik*," he said fervently.

The Austrian ambassador had been following the developments with growing interest and a deepening respect for R' Yosef Chaim, as well. The story made an indelible impression upon him, and he was determined to meet this unusual man face to face. One night, he went alone to *Batei Machseh* and there, in a strange little apartment hewn out of mountain rock, the two men sat talking for hours on end and formed a lasting friendship, which served to help the fledgling community in Jerusalem under R' Yosef Chaim. The Austrian official spoke often to the rabbi, and revered him for his wisdom and exceptional character.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In the *Haftorah* of *Parshas Parah*, *Yechezkel HaNavi* predicts the eventual purification of the Jewish people through the Almighty Himself. The Jews had sunk so low that they had to be gathered and purified against their will and while the message may seem eerie and downright fearsome, there is also much within it, to give us reason to hope.

Rabbi Berel Wein *shlita* explains that most of the declines throughout history of the various world dominions and civilizations came about at the height of their power – and not necessarily when they were already in decline. Although one might think otherwise, the reason for this is because the arrogant nature that comes with being on top of the world, was in essence the catalyst that brought about each

individual culture's decline. He points out that the frightening thing about Jewish history is that *Hashem* allowed, and continues to allow, the Jewish people to live their lives as they choose, and when we do just that, we realize what a terrible mistake we make when not adhering to His dictates.

Yet, deep at its core, *Klal Yisroel* is a nation of humility, and for that very reason – among a few others – *Hashem* will not ever let us sink into total spiritual oblivion. So, while it is surely worrisome when Jews occupy positions of high power in foreign lands, thereby lulling the rest of us into a false sense of complacency and control, it is sobering to remember that *Hashem* sees and knows all, and He will always make sure that we find our way back to our roots.

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

בן אדם בית ישראל ישנים ... ויטמאון אותה בדרבם ובעלילותם (הוסיף לו-י)

וינתם ה' על דרעה אשר דבר לעשות לעמו ... (ל-ב-ד)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN *zt"l*

מחשבת הלב

The **Chasam Sofer *zt"l*** explains that *Hashem's* "regret" was directly caused when He spoke harshly to Moshe, concerning the *Bnei Yisroel's* impending punishment. *Hashem's* punishing words had such a dreadful impact on our selfless leader, *Moshe Rabbeinu*, that the raised "voice" *kavayachol*, in and of itself, was instrumental in revoking the impending *gezeira*.

This *machshava* is reminiscent of a *vort* I once heard from my maternal grandfather, **Reb Uri Weidermann**, in the name of **R' Elya Lopian *zt"l***. In *Parshas Haazinu*, it says "ק-ל אמונה ואין עול". The last two words are seemingly redundant. Obviously, if *Hashem* is exact in judgment, there cannot be any dishonesty therein! Why does the *posuk* add these last words? He answered that before *Hashem* issues a punishment, not only is the recipient of said reprimand taken into account, but his immediate family members are also added to the equation. If they are not deserving of the effects of such retribution, then that penalty is not meted out. Such is the "ק-ל אמונה" - which is exclusive to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. Hence, since *Moshe Rabbeinu* was so adversely affected, the decree was rescinded.

On the *Yom Tov* of *Purim* that we just celebrated, we clearly see the value of being *nosei b'ol*, feeling '*yenem's*' *tzaar*. *Mordechai HaTzaddik* sat at the gates of the palace for many years, checking up on Queen Esther, constantly ensuring her safety and reassuring her with his presence. That was a major catalyst in the *neis* of *Purim*.

If we wish to hasten our *geulah*, and annul any harsh *gezeiros* that may *ch"v* befall our people, let *Hashem* see how we are *nosei b'ol im chaveireinu*, carrying the load on behalf of our friend, and how each of us earnestly feels our fellow brother's pain. Then *Hashem* won't punish us, but will bring *Moshiach* instead, *b'siyata d'shmaya*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמרו אלה אלהיך ישראל אשר העלך מארץ מצרים ... (ל-ב-ד)

משל: In Prague, a new mayor was elected, in large part due to the efforts of many Jewish activists, who were unaware that the new official was actually an anti-semite and no friend of theirs. The Jewish community of Prague tendered a dance and banquet in honor of the newly elected mayor, and one of the guests was the city's rabbi, **R' Yechezkel Landau *zt"l***, author of the famous **Noda B'Yehuda**.

While the banquet was underway, the mayor-elect thought he saw an opportunity to insidiously tease the city's chief rabbi, and made the following remark:

"When I came to this dance, I thought, 'How fond Jews are of dancing!' It seems to be hereditary, for when their ancestors made the Golden Calf in the wilderness, they not only worshipped it, but danced before it."

R' Yechezkel Landau was a brilliant man and leader. He

wasn't about to just let this new mayor push the Jews of his jurisdiction around freely.

"Yes, Your Honor," he replied, "that is correct. Whenever the Jews go and appoint an ox or a calf as their leader, they've gotten a little too fond of dancing..."

משל: When the Jews mistakenly came to the realization that they were stranded without a leader, they didn't just merely sit around and do nothing. The **Ramban** points out that the golden calf was not a selection of a new God. They weren't naive. Rather, it was a guide in place of Moshe. *Hashem* performed the miracles in Egypt, but Moshe helped guide them out. They wanted the golden calf to continue to guide them. That was a terrible mistake because despite their intentions, their actions transgressed the horrible sin of idolatry. This is something to learn from, albeit hopefully on a smaller scale. Even in religion, intentions don't replace actions, rather, they are meant to compliment them.

סרו מורד מן הדרך אשר צויתם עשו להם עגול מסכה ... (ל-ב-ה)

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

דרגה יתירה

The fact that the Jewish people sinned with the Golden Calf is something that *Klal Yisroel* is still suffering from until this very day. The magnitude of this terrible act is so great and the ramifications are extremely far-reaching.

R' Gamliel Rabinowitz *shlita* explains this tremendous atrocity by zeroing in on one small word: "מהר" - "*Quick*." He says that everyone is human and we all have free will, which means that we make mistakes. It is true that *Bnei Yisroel* made a terrible mistake, but the fact that they fell so fast is an even greater tragedy. Just a few days earlier, they were standing at the foot of Har Sinai, on the level of angels, and now they were serving a Golden Calf! When one is faced with a test, a *nisayon*, a decision needs to be made fast. One must take a stand and fight against his *yetzer hara*. Just putting up a battle will allow him to slow down the evil influences that surround him.

We may even "borrow" a tactic that our greatest enemy uses to make us sin. We can take the concept of "מהר" - "*Tomorrow*," that Amalek utilized in the desert, to make us push off doing *mitzvos*. The *posuk* states: "לך הלחם בעמלק מחר" - Go out and fight Amalek with the power of **MACHAR**. *Amalek/Yetzer Hara* tells us, "Of course you should learn *Torah* and do *mitzvos*, but not NOW, do it TOMORROW!" This idea can be turned around and utilized to fight against the Amalek inside each of us which tries to make us sin. The difference between "מהר" and "מחר" is a little tiny connecting piece, that symbolizes that tiny little second it takes for one to fall, and begin a long slippery descent to the lowest of the low. We must jump QUICKLY - "מהר" - to do the will of *Hashem*, but when something is wrong or even questionable, we must say, "Let me wait till TOMORROW. Let me think it through." Surely by then we will have the time to gather our strength and marshal our thoughts correctly, in order to overcome and emerge victorious from even the most difficult tests!