

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה. את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות ה' אלקיכם ... (א-כ.ו.ב.)

Hashem sends us blessings every day but unless we make an effort to look out for them and “see” them as blessings, we may not even realize that we are being blessed! In fact the greatest blessing we receive daily is life itself. **R’ Avraham Pam ז”ל** would say that when we wake up in the morning and say *Modeh Ani*, we should look at our breakfast as a *seudas hodaas* (thanksgiving feast). By employing a singular term, “ראה” (see) the *Torah* reminds us that each individual should see his blessing as an individual, and not as part of the *klal* because everyone looks at life through his own individual lens. Since people don’t always realize the *beracha* they receive daily, it often gets misused and that same *beracha* can turn into a curse (*klala*).

Although the Holocaust of 1939-1945 clearly overshadowed it, the First World War, also known as the “Great War” was the most appallingly savage international conflict in all preceding history, and had a profound impact on world Jewry. This was due to the existence of a large concentration of Jews within one of the principal arenas, the enlistment of unprecedented numbers of Jews to the armies of the belligerent nations and the success of Jewish leaders in influencing the political policies of the major powers. Furthermore, increasing tensions during the war years deepened the hostile attitudes towards the Jews, particularly in Germany and in Eastern Europe. Russia was especially harsh towards its Jews.

During the second year of the war, with the Czar’s army being mauled on the western front, a new draft order went out for all young men to enlist and fight for the Motherland. At the time, a young **R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל** was twenty-years old and living in the Russian hamlet of Uzda where his father, **R’ Dovid Feinstein ז”ל**, had been the *Rav*. Aside from the dangers of fighting in a war, serving in the Russian Army meant being forced to desecrate the *Shabbos* at the threat of death, and transgression of other *mitzvos*. Therefore, Moshe and his parents felt it imperative to seek an army deferment for him. Moshe traveled many miles to speak with an attorney who was said to have helped others with this problem, but their meeting proved fruitless. Moshe headed back home, but decided to make a stop on the way. He got off the train at Smilovitz to visit, for the one and only time in his life, **R’ Yisroel Meir HaKohen Kagan ז”ל**, the holy *Chofetz Chaim*.

The *Chofetz Chaim* lived in Radin, Poland, but had been forced to flee to Russia, along with his family and *yeshivah*, because of the advancing German armies. They escaped just in time and found a temporary home in Smilovitz. Moshe found the *Chofetz Chaim* studying in the *Beis Medrash* with his famous disciple, **R’ Elchanan Wasserman ז”ל Hy’d**. The *tzaddik* had already heard of the “*Iluy* (young *Torah* genius) from Starobin” and delighted in discussing *Torah* with him.

Moshe then explained why he had embarked on this journey and made clear the gravity of his situation. The *Chofetz Chaim* blessed his visitor warmly and then, together with R’ Elchanan, escorted Moshe to the door.

As they were about to part, the *Chofetz Chaim* turned to the future *Gadol Hador* and said, “*Chazal* tell us: ‘Whoever accepts upon himself the yoke of *Torah* - the yoke of government and of worldly responsibilities will be removed from him’ (*Avos* 3:6). This means that if a person’s actions are purely for the sake of *Hashem*, then even decrees which have already been proclaimed upon him ‘will be removed from him.’” With these words, the *Chofetz Chaim* bade Moshe farewell.

Not long afterwards, the Russian government announced that fewer recruits would be needed than had originally been thought, and therefore rabbis would not be called to serve at that time. Many *bochurim* and *Torah* scholars scrambled to attain rabbinical positions throughout Russia to avoid conscription. The town of Uzda, R’ Moshe’s birthplace, was also in need of a *Rav*, and the Jews there were filled with pride to have young Moshe Feinstein, the renowned son of their former *Rav* serve as their leader. Twenty years old and still unmarried, R’ Moshe was appointed *Rav* of Uzda.

In his modesty, R’ Moshe would rarely speak of his meeting with the *Chofetz Chaim*. Only on *Purim*, when he was in a heightened state of joy and surrounded by his family and *talmidim*, did R’ Moshe allow himself to speak of it. He was convinced that it was the *Chofetz Chaim*’s blessing which had brought about his salvation at that time.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

ושמתי ברכה שמשתך ... וכל נבוכדן לאבני הפזן וכו' (ישעי' נד-יב)

In the third *Haftorah* of consolation, *Yeshaya HaNavi* delivers *Hashem*’s promise that in the future, the holy city of *Yerushalayim* will become very rich and precious gems will be used for the most menial purposes. Why did *Hashem* deem it necessary to promise fabulous riches to the Jewish people? Wouldn’t it be sufficient for *Hashem* to simply promise that we will live in comfort, and instead of physical wealth, our spiritual level would be raised exponentially?

R’ Moshe Kordevero ז”ל (Ramak) explains that every tear that a Jew sheds because of the destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash* and the Jewish people’s exile turns into a “gem”

which *Hashem* stores away for the future *Bais HaMikdash*. Interestingly, the *Navi* specifically chose to use the word “מוקד” which is related to the word “אקדח” when speaking of these gems. This is indicative of the importance of these tears/gems in bringing *Moshiach* in a more expedited manner. *Hashem* wants to see that His children care that there is no home for the *Shechina* to dwell in and would even go so far as to shed tears for Him.

Although it seems to be a lofty mission that only the spiritual elite could endeavor to fulfill and accomplish, in fact, each and every simple Jew who sheds a tear in pain has the ability to have his tears used in rebuilding the holy *Bais HaMikdash* if he so chooses to direct it for that purpose.

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מחשבת הלב

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZTL

בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגודדו ולא תשמו קידה בין עיניכם למת וגו' (ד-א)

Moshe Rabbeinu makes a profound pronouncement with this posuk: He says, “*You are children of the Hashem, your G-d; You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.*” It is quite profound, yet, we must understand: what is the connection between “בנים אתם” - “*You are children of Hashem,*” and the prohibition against defiling and cutting oneself as consolation for the loss of a loved one?

The following *machshava* was inspired by the words of the **Seforno** and the **Kli Yakar**. Typically, when a person loses a close relative, he or she naturally feels a void in their life. As a result they may either scratch themselves or rip out their hair leaving a bald spot. Both are symbols of loss, *chisaron*. To preempt this, says the *Torah*, you need to recognize who orchestrated this happenstance? Who brought it about? It was “אבינו שבשמים” - our Father in Heaven, for You, His child. Does a father ever wish to harm his child? Most definitely not! So don’t become despondent, don’t look at it as a misfortune. As the *posuk* continues “כי עם קדוש אתה” - You are a holy nation and understand that there is life after death. You can help elevate the *niftar*. For a Jew, loss is not *chisaron*, rather a Father’s reminder, gentle *potch* or even embrace.

Chazal also derive from the words “לא תתגודדו” a totally unrelated concept, the idea that two different sects or groups of *Yidden* do not exclude each other - “לא תעשו אגודות אגודות”. The reason behind this is to avoid the terrible abomination called *machlokes*. Thus, the *posuk* states: “בנים אתם” - you are all one big happy family, children to the same good Father. It is a father’s ultimate dream that his children remain united. May we always apply these lessons to our lives, promote *achdus* and unity and finally be *zoche* to the end of the *tefillah*: אחשו כל בית ישראל ... המקום ירחם עליהם ... השתא בעגלא ובזמן קריב.

משל למת הדבר דומה

לא תאמין את לבבך ולא תקפין את ירך מאחד האביון ... (מ-ו)
משל: There was once a *meshulach* (money collector) who was truly destitute. By the look of his clothing and his unkempt appearance, he looked as if he barely had pennies to buy clothes and food to eat. But he was a happy and cheerful person and no matter what anyone handed him as a donation, he graciously accepted it, thanking and blessing the person with numerous blessings.

He was known to frequent *Yeshivah Torah Ohr*, located in the Mattersdorf section of Jerusalem, and was friendly with some of the boys there. One day, when one of the *yeshivah* boys went to give him some money, the man smiled cheerily and announced, “Today is my 60th birthday!” On account of his special day, he extended even more blessings than usual to his donors and friends.

The *bochur* told some of his friends and they said, “Let’s

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF - חפישת

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHILOMO

ורדשת ודקרת וישאלת הימנ והנה אמת נכון הדבר ... (י-ט)
The foundation of *Yiddishkeit* is belief in *Hashem*. The **Rambam** composed the thirteen “*Ani Maamins*” that are recited every day to attest to this fact. We teach our children from the day they are born to say the words “*Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*” before going to sleep and “*Modeh Ani L'fanecha Melech Chai V'Kayum*” upon awakening. Our entire education is based on the belief that *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* is the One - and Only One - Who created and is in control of everything. We trust that all He does is good - and for this we thank Him. As we walk outside on a sunny day holding our child’s hand, we often remark to him or her, “Look at the sky - see how blue it is? Do you know Who made it so beautiful?” And of course the child knows to answer: *Hashem*.

R’ Avigdor Miller ז”ל asks a question. When *Hashem* created the world - the Heaven and Earth - the first thing He made was light, as it says, “ויאמר אלקים יהי אור ויהי אור”. Later, on the fourth day of Creation, *Hashem* created the sun. Why did *Hashem* need the sun if there already was light in the world? What did the sun add to the light that was already there?

The answer is quite illuminating! We say every day in *Shacharis*, “המאיר לארץ ולדרים עליה” - “(*Hashem*) is the One who lights up the earth and all those who live upon it.” The sun doesn’t light up the world; it is merely *Hashem*’s way of making His light seem natural! *Hashem* created light and lit up the world on the first day of Creation, but on the fourth day, He hid Himself in the form of the sun. *Hashem*’s omni-present light is emanating from His marvelous creation - the sun.

All of nature is meant to hide *Hashem*. And all of us are meant to seek Him out and find Him. *Hashem* is *mechanech* us to seek Him out and find *yeshuah* and *hatzlacha* even when they are hidden from view. So, too, must we be *mechanech* ourselves and our children to find *Hashem* in the sun and the sky and in every seemingly natural occurrence.