



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

וזה דבר הרצה אשר ינום שמה וחי אשר יבה את רעוהו בבלי דעת והוא לא שנה לו מתמל שלשם ... (ד-ט)

The cities of refuge, are where one goes if he killed another by accident and he is protected there from the wrath of a "גואל הדם" (avenger) until the death of the *Kohen Gadol*. The *posuk* is clear that there was no premeditated murder and it only applies to one who “*strikes his fellow unintentionally, whom he did not hate in times past.*”

The *Gemara Makkos* (10b) states as follows: “*Where did the Torah say, “From the wicked comes forth wickedness?” From (the posuk) “But Hashem brought it about through his hand.” To what is this referring? To two people, one who killed unintentionally and one who killed intentionally, but there were no witnesses to testify to the matter. This one was not executed (intentional), and that one was not exiled (unintentional). So the Holy One, blessed be He, brings them both to one inn. The one who killed intentionally sits under a ladder, and the one who killed unintentionally is ascending the ladder, and he falls on the one who had killed intentionally and kills him. Witnesses testify about him and sentence him to exile. The result is that the one who killed unintentionally is exiled, and the one who killed intentionally was killed.*”

In 1987, then president of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, Dr. Don Harper Mills, went on stage at a banquet for members of his organization in the city of San Diego, California, and told a story about a case in which a medical examiner had investigated a suspicious death and concluded that a man was guilty of his own murder. Later, in an interview, he admitted that he had fabricated the story for entertainment and to illustrate to his colleagues how if you alter a few small facts you can alter the legal consequences. “Different legal consequences can follow each twist in a homicide inquiry.”

This is the story that he told that night. On March 23 of that year, the medical examiner viewed the deceased body of Ronald Opus, and concluded that he died from a shotgun wound to the head. Mr. Opus had jumped from the top of a ten-story building intending to commit suicide. He left a note to that effect indicating his despondency. As he fell past the ninth floor, his life was interrupted by a shotgun blast passing through a window, which killed him instantly. Neither the shooter nor the deceased was aware that a safety net had been installed just below the eighth floor level to protect some building workers, and that Ronald Opus would not have been able to complete his suicide the way he had planned.

The room on the ninth floor, where the shotgun blast emanated, was occupied by an elderly man and his wife. They were arguing vigorously and he was threatening her with a shotgun! The man was so upset that when he pulled the trigger, he completely missed his wife, and the bullet went through the window, striking Mr. Opus. Legally, when one intends to kill subject ‘A’ but kills subject ‘B’ in the attempt, one is guilty of the murder of subject ‘B’. But wait ... there’s more!

When confronted with the murder charge, the old man and his wife were adamant, and both said that they thought the shotgun was not loaded. The old man could not believe he might be charged with murder since he said it was a long-standing habit of his to wave his unloaded shotgun at others. He never had any intention to shoot his wife. Therefore, the killing of Mr. Opus appeared to be an accident - that is, assuming the gun had been accidentally loaded.

The continuing investigation turned up a witness who saw the old couple’s son loading the shotgun about six weeks prior to the fatal accident. It transpired that the old lady had cut off her son’s financial support and the son, knowing the propensity of his father to use the shotgun threateningly, loaded the gun with the expectation that his father would shoot his mother. Since the loader of the gun was aware of this, he was guilty of the murder even though he didn’t actually pull the trigger. The case now becomes one of murder on the part of the son for the death of Ronald Opus.

Now comes the exquisite twist. Further investigation revealed that the son was, in fact, Ronald Opus! He had become increasingly despondent over the failure of his attempt to engineer his mother’s demise. This led him to jump off the ten-story building on March 23rd, only to be killed by a shotgun blast passing through the ninth story window. The son, Ronald Opus, had actually murdered himself! So the medical examiner closed the case as a suicide. Better than an Agatha Christie novel!

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

עורי עורי לבשי עוד ציון ... (ישעי' נב-א)

The fourth *Haftorah* of consolation depicts *Yeshaya HaNavi* exhorting *Bnei Yisroel* to always remain true to *Hashem* and never lose sight of the goal of serving Him with complete conviction and devotion. The word “עורי” - “awaken” was used twice by the *Navi* while underscoring his point, so what is the significance of this double wording?

**R’ Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz ז”ל (Kli Yakar)** explains that *Yeshaya HaNavi* had prayed to *Hashem* earlier to come to the aid of the suffering Jewish people in exile. *Hashem* responded, that when *Klal Yisroel* “awakens” from their spiritual slumber, then and only then, will He come to

their assistance and bring *Mashiach*. For *Bnei Yisroel* in exile, “awakening” to someone saying that their redemption was imminent seemed more like a fantasy than reality. Nevertheless, this “awakening” was imperative to the coming of *Mashiach* and so the *Navi* tried to get the Nation to “wake up” out of their despair and then “awaken” and redefine their priorities to reflect their old feelings of devotion to *Hashem*.

In times of uncertainty, people tend to wonder and question *Hashem’s* plan and seek ways to artificially alter them. They forget that *Hashem* is the Master of the World and no human being will ever be able to “change His mind” on anything. However, *Hashem* has left one avenue open to us to try and influence His decision – the awe-inspiring power of *teshuva*.

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

כי תצא למלחמה על אינך וראית סוס ורכב עם רב ממך לא תירא מהם כי ה' אלקיך עמך (ב-א)  
 The *sefer Teshuas Chein* explains this *posuk* homiletically. “כי תצא” - As a person strives for *ruchniyusdike* perfection and sets out on his path to *teshuva*, he must know he is going “למלחמה” - that a big and brutal battle is about to begin. The *satan* will unleash his considerable power to prevent you from accomplishing your task, “וראית סוס ורכב רב ממך” - You may encounter seemingly insurmountable roadblocks and pitfalls before you, you see a great many things blocking your way. The advice of the *Torah* is: “לא תירא מהם” - Do not lose hope, do not despair, “כי ה' אלקיך עמך” - because *Hashem* is right there with you, helping you and making sure that these satanic traps will not slow you down. “המעלך מארץ מצרים” - Just as when you were in *Mitzrayim*, the Land of Egypt, when you were hovering at the 49th level of *Tumah*, *Hashem* in His infinite mercy took you out and allowed you to rise above the *yetzer hara*, so too, He will guide you all through the complex traps of the *satan*. So therefore, “לא תירא מהם” - Do not be afraid and do not get discouraged!

As *Elul* commences, with the daily haunting sound of the *shofar* beckoning, there is no better time to return to *Hashem*, knowing that His presence is so near. The *posuk* in *Shoftim* states: “ותמים תהי' עם ה' אלקיך”. **Rabbeinu Efraim** writes that the *gematria* of “ותמים תהי'” is 910 - exactly the same numerical value as “תשרי”. A person must make sure he is “ותמים” - flawless, without a blemish, with the impending approach of the ימים נוראים, while at the same time, realize that he must rely on *Hashem* to assist him in this war. As **Rashi** explains: “לא תחוקר אחר העתידות” - Don’t worry about the future, just do your best. Bearing this in mind, waging this war with the *yetzer hara* will be much easier knowing that *Hashem* “has our backs.” *Yehi Ratzon* that we merit a תשובה שלמה and all the *beracha* that comes with winning the great impending battle.

## משל למתה הדבר דומה

בי תועבת ה' כל עשה אלה ... (יה-ב)

**משל**: The **Tchebiner Rov, R’ Dov Beirish Weidenfeld ז”ל** was once in attendance at a *hachnasas Sefer Torah* and before the *Sefer Torah* was completed, he was asked to “write a letter” by dipping a quill in ink and filling in the outline of an already written letter. A few people had already written a letter, as is the custom before completing the *Torah*, and the overflow crowd was beginning to grow.

As R’ Dov Ber was walking to the front to write his letter, he suddenly stopped. He looked about and then sat down next to the *sofer*, who handed him the quill. R’ Dov Ber shook his head, and to the astonishment of all those present, he declared that he does not want to write in the *sefer* but rather, he is appointing the *sofer* as his *shaliach* to write the letter. The surprised *sofer* did as he was asked. Obviously, after the *Tchebiner Rov* had used the *sofer* as a *shaliach*, every

person continued to use him as well and the *sofer* ended up hand-writing all the remaining letters.

This was unusual and some people later asked the *Tchebiner Rov* why he altered the normal practice. He replied that he saw a man in the crowd who he believed was a מומר (heretic) to one of the *mitzvos* in the *Torah*, and he was afraid that this man would write a letter and touch the *Torah*. This was unacceptable to him. On the other hand, he couldn’t just embarrass the man either - so he came up with a way that the *apikores* wouldn’t touch the *sefer* or be shamed.

**משל**: The **Sifrei** learns that since the *posuk* does not state, “עשה כל אלה” (“*one who does all these things*”) but instead, “כל עשה אלה” (“*whoever does these things*”), it means even if he does just one of these acts of heresy and idol-worship, he is an abomination before *Hashem*. We must not learn from these people and we keep our distance, but a Jew is a Jew and we also cannot shame them. We are all *Hashem’s* children.

## EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ... מַחֲמָאוֹת דַּרְגָּה יְחִירָה

תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך ... (יה-ג)

*Parshas Shoftim* ushers in the month of *Elul*, the month of relationships. The *posuk* tells us: “תמים תהיה עם ה' אלקיך”. Our relationship with *Hashem* should be perfect. But even our relationships with others and with ourselves - the goal of *Elul* is to improve all our relationships. This means to become closer to the other party. The word for compliment in Hebrew is MACHMAAH. It stems from the root word CHAM, which means warm. The word for criticism in Hebrew is BIKORET which stems from the word KAR, which means cold. The surefire way to cool off a relationship with anybody, even *Hashem*, and even yourself, is with words of criticism. It is automatic. If you want to create a feeling of distance and coldness, then say something negative. Say something critical and you will feel a KIR, from the root KAR, a wall of ice that has just been created.

Now try the opposite. If you want to create warmth, love and good feelings between you and another party, say something nice! Give them a compliment! Tell them something positive that you like about them and you will immediately feel a CHOMAH, a wall of love, protection and caring that has enveloped both of you and created a certain bond in the relationship.

The acronym ELUL represents these 3 relationships that encompass all of our interactions in this world. “אני לדודי ודודי לי” represents the relationship between *Hashem* and us. “את לבבך ואת לבב זרעך” refers to the relationship we have with ourselves and “איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים” refers to the relationship we have with other people. All three *posukim* spell out the word “ELUL.” This teaches us that in *Elul*, we are meant to focus on and improve each of these relationships.

“*Ani Ledodi V’dodi li*” - Only if I am to my beloved .... if I focus on and express the goodness of the one I would like to have a true loving relationship with ... then my Beloved will be there for me, to reciprocate the good feelings that I have created with my good words. For it was those good words that have truly brought the relationship to a new level!