

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

וספר לו שבעת ימים למחרתו וכבם בגדיו ורחץ בשרו במים חיים ומחר ונו' (פז-ג)

During World War II, the American government enacted a rescue commission known as the War Refugee Board which achieved a few notable results (although not as much as it could have), including the rescue of over 100,000 Jews and the distribution of vital relief services when the war ended. In one unique instance, roughly 1,000 refugees were brought from Italy to Fort Ontario, an abandoned army base near Oswego, New York. *Vaad Hatzalah*, the Orthodox relief organization, offered a wide range of support services, a model for its postwar efforts. Among the refugees were 300 *Torah*-observant Jews.

The *Vaad* promptly met their basic needs: kosher food, *talis*, *tefillin* and a *shul* in which to pray. At first, only Orthodox refugees registered for kosher food. Yet, as word of its superior quality spread, the number of registrants doubled. How could the *Vaad* refuse? After all, Jews wished to eat kosher. The *Vaad* was delighted. In time, a second kosher kitchen was established, and a *Talmud Torah* for the children. The camp's needs increased daily and the refugees requested an *eruv* in order to carry on *Shabbos*. The *Vaad* had no difficulty taking care of that need to the great appreciation of the refugees.

The next request, however, was not as simple - the Jews insisted that they need a *Mikveh*, to ensure spiritual sanctity in their homes. The *Vaad* was happy to oblige but before they could anything, they needed to explain the concept and importance of a *Mikveh* to Mr. Joe Smart, the Christian camp director. Without his approval, nothing could be done.

The *Vaad* asked **R' Eliezer Silver ז"ל**, a ranking member of the *Vaad* and the chief rabbi of Cincinnati, Ohio, who had come to visit the refugees and offer them encouragement, to represent them in their attempt to procure permission for this endeavor. R' Laizer was eager to be of assistance. The word *Mikveh* needed to be translated into English, and one way to do this was to use the word ritualarium, which had been coined earlier while building Boro Park's first *mikveh*.

"A ritualarium," R' Silver explained to Joe Smart in his heavily accented English, "is a bath where Jewish men and women immerse themselves for religious purposes. Separately, of course."

Smart nodded knowingly. "What you need is a swimming pool," he said chirpily. R' Laizer shook his head indicating that a swimming pool was not acceptable. He decided to try to explain the concept of a *Mikveh*, by showing Smart how to build one. "Okay. First," he said, "the *Talmud* requires that a *Mikveh* must have at least 40 *se'ah* (a minimum of 648 liters) of water."

Smart shrugged unknowingly. He had never heard of a "se'ah." But R' Laizer didn't notice. "Also, the space is measured in *amos* (cubits)." The camp director looked around, helplessly lost in the terminology, searching desperately for a translator.

But R' Laizer would not let him go. "Amos ... you know, forearms, forearms. It's measured in cubits - about the length of a forearm." He stretched out his right arm as if to demonstrate the exact dimension in true life.

Joe Smart immediately demurred, taking the matter on faith. "Rabbi, it's okay. Amos cubits, that's fine."

Joe realized that the diminutive rabbi had already drawn a crowd. And he still had no idea what the man was talking about! "Okay," R' Laizer said, "now the water. A *Mikveh* needs natural water." He began making flowing gestures with his hands.

Displaying enormous patience, Smart smiled. "All water is natural. You want us to pump water in for your *Mikveh*, right?"

"No, no," R' Silver shouted, arms flailing in all directions. "Still, natural water. A *Mikveh* cannot have water collected from a pipe. The water must be obtained from the sky or a river. It has to be still and natural." Joe Smart sighed and gave up. He could not grasp the details and really had no clue what this eminent rabbi was talking about. Shrugging, he motioned to a couple of army engineers standing nearby. "Do whatever the rabbi says," he said, and slowly backed away.

The engineers had not been part of the conversation before and now ambled over to the short man with the top hat and long coat. Before they had even reached him, R' Laizer launched into a discourse on *amos*, forearms and natural water, to the utter surprise and bewilderment of the new arrivals. R' Eliezer Silver persevered, and in two weeks there was a *Mikveh!*

וארכעה אנשים היו מצרעים (מלכים ב' ז-ג)

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

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In this week's *Haftorah*, four *Metzoraim* (lepers) whom *Chazal* identify as Geichazi (*Elisha HaNavi's* student) and his three sons, became the instrument used by *Hashem* to bring about salvation to *Malchus Yisroel*. The Arameans laid siege to the city of Shomron (the capital of *Malchus Yisroel*) and a terrible famine ensued causing food prices to inflate astronomically. Eventually, *Hashem* sent word through Elisha that the following day would see a drastic change to their situation and food would be so plentiful that prices would be slashed immediately.

Since a *Metzora* must live separate from others how was Geichazi and his sons able to arrive close enough to inform King Yehoram of the miracle *Hashem* had performed?

R' Zalman Sorotzkin ז"ל (Oznayim L'Torah) explains that contrary to the belief that a *Metzora* must separate from society at all costs, according to *Halacha*, a leper is only required to leave a walled city if it was built in the days of *Yehoshua Bin Nun* or earlier. Since the wall around Shomron was built many years later by King Omri of Yisroel, Geichazi and his sons were technically not required to leave it. Still, the four lepers dwelled outside the perimeter of the city. Why?

Because although they were not required to leave, even *Malchus Yisroel* who were steeped in idolatry and wickedness felt extremely uncomfortable living amongst impurity. Such is the power of the "Pintele Yid" - the Jewish spark that blazes inside of each Jew, no matter what his/her affiliation is.

אדם כי יזיה בעור בשרו שאת או ספחת או בדרת וזה בעור בשרו לנגע צרעת... (וי-ב)
Chazal tell us that a person can be afflicted with צרעת for a variety of misdeeds.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

מחשבת הלב

Two of the better known causes are speaking *Lashon Hara* and the extremely bad trait of *Tzaras Ayin* (a "negative" eye). *Ga'ava* - haughtiness is another cause. At the conclusion of the *tahara* process, the *Torah* commands that the person must shave his beard, head and eyebrows. These three things correspond to the aforementioned *aveiros*. The head, for being haughty. The beard, due to its proximity to the mouth, reflects gossip. And lastly, the eyebrows relate to the trait of *Tzaras Ayin*. Shaving these three articles of hair on one's head is a final reminder before the *metzora* returns to society, to make the commitment to better himself in these areas.

The letters of the word "צרעת" also spell "עצרת". *Atzeres* can mean to stop. The *tzara'as* served as a penalty for terrible deeds and therefore it is also a reminder to stop these actions. The *Metzora* didn't pause before speaking, thus causing another person pain and anguish. A person must think before he speaks. A seemingly innocuous statement must undergo a clearing process inside one's brain prior to its utterance - how much more so a negative or spiteful comment must be cleansed!

The letters of the word "ענג" also spell "ענג" which refers to pleasure. Because when a person is complacent, a peaceful and pleasurable bliss envelops him. In that state, there is no need to knock a fellow *Yid*. When the *Metzora* becomes pure, he has clearly gone through a transformation. Thus, the נג becomes ענג as he now embraces his newfound serenity. He is now ready to embark on his trek to forging good and healthy relationships with all those in his orbit with a true and real *ayin tova*.

So make sure to utilize *atzeres*, restraint, so we don't, *chalila*, need a reminder of *tzara'as*. This *midda* will help us achieve only ענג - real pleasure and peace, in this world and in the next *B'ezras Hashem*. May we all be *zoche* to reach this level.

משל למה הדבר דומה

וזאת תהיה תורת המצרע ביום מחרתו והוכח אל הכהן ... (ד-ב)

משל: In the olden days, milk did not come in ready-made cartons with a twist-off cap. A milkman would come around and deliver unpasteurized milk, raw and directly from the cow, and people would boil it up until it was drinkable.

On one occasion, the *Rebbetzin* of **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer ז"ל**, had a pot of raw milk on the fire and was preparing it in order to make her husband his morning coffee with milk. She walked out of the small kitchen for a moment in order to take care of something and in that short time, a cat hopped in from the window and smelled the warm milk.

Sensing it had "hit the jackpot," the cat inched closer to the pot and when it was satisfied with the contents, it tipped over the pot and spilled the milk on the counter. Then, it happily began lapping up the milk with its tongue.

The *Rebbetzin* heard the commotion and came running into

the kitchen, where she sent away the cat and cleaned up the mess. Then, she went to tell her husband what had happened.

His reaction was shocking. He began to tremble and he cried out, "Why did *Hashem* do this to us? It must be we sinned in some way and *Hashem* is sending us a message. We must search our deeds to find out what we did and how we can do *teshuvah* for it!" They both sat down and began to think until they determined that there was some *Maaser* money they had forgotten to give to charity.

As soon as R' Isser Zalman set aside the money and made a verbal confession of his sin, his mind was set as ease and his normally relaxed demeanor returned.

נמשל: The entire *parsha* of the *Metzora*, from beginning to end, is a message from Heaven to a person who needs to rectify his deeds. There is nothing natural about *Tzara'as* - on one's house, clothing or skin - and it only comes to serve as a reminder that a person has sinned and must do *teshuva*.

ב"ה אלהינו וזנים תלמידים היו לו לר"ע ובולו מנו כפרק א' מפני שלא נהנו כבוד זה לזה (יבמות כב:)

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

דרגה יתירה

If you think the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* is over, you are mistaken. **R' Shimshon Pincus ז"ל** relates that the days between *Pesach* and *Shavuot* are holy days. They have the status of *Chol Hamoed*. This entire fifty-day period from *Pesach* until *Shavuot* is also compared to the *Yamim Noraim*, a time when we come close to *Hashem* through *Yirah*, fear, as well as love.

It is interesting to note that it is specifically during this period that the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva died. 24,000 great *Talmidei Chachamim* passed away because "Lo nahagu kavod ze baze". They did not act respectfully towards each other. This is mind-blowing. How could such great and learned people not treat each other with respect? I heard a fascinating explanation from my son, who heard from his *Mashgiach*, **R' Kirschenbaum shlit'a** in *Yeshivas Nachlas HaLeviim, Haifa*.

There are different types of relationships, he said. The relationship between friends demands extra caution and propriety because if you don't treat a friend well, they will stop being your friend. Then there is the relationship between brothers. Often, brothers cross over boundaries and red lines, even hurting each other's feelings. They do not treat each other with the utmost respect because they are so close they believe they can say or do anything. "After all, he is my brother; he will always be my brother." This is dangerous. This often happens in relationships that are very close, like marriage or blood relatives. There is often a lack of *Kavod*, which is replaced with a comfortable familiarity that becomes too comfortable until it becomes uncomfortable.

The *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva were such close friends that they became too comfortable with each other and did not treat each other with the respect great *Talmidei Chachamim* deserve to be treated. They were like brothers, but that special courtesy, politeness, and respect was lost in the familiarity and lack of value and appreciation for who they truly were. Let us work on ourselves so we can reach tremendous levels in all our relationships, especially with the most important one of all, *Hashem*.