

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

עשה משפט יתום ולאמנה וכו' הוא תהלתך והוא אלקיך אשר עשה אתך את הגדלת זאת הנוראת האלה ... (-י-ה.כא)

Rashi gives us a fascinating insight into the workings of the Almighty. The Torah tells us: “He executes the judgment of the orphan and widow” - (previously) we had a description of Hashem’s power (Gevurah). Now alongside His power, we find (a description of) His humility (Megillah 31a).” The greater the humility, the greater the strength.

A young Talmid Chacham passed away and left a widow and small orphans, r”l. His nine-year-old son was quite unruly in class and could not retain anything he learned. The problem already began two years earlier when his father had taken ill, and could no longer stay on top of his son’s progress in school. It only got worse when his father passed away.

The mother took her son to a well-known psychologist, who diagnosed the boy as hyperactive with major stress. He recommended removing the boy from school for the lion’s share of the day’s learning, as the boy could not be productive in such an intense setting. Furthermore, he felt the boy needed ongoing monthly therapy sessions with him.

The widow couldn’t afford the expensive therapy, and people rallied to help her raise the money but they didn’t know quite how to do so. She did not bring in much money this way and she bemoaned the fact that she had no way to pay for the psychologist or the ongoing therapy sessions he demanded.

The dire situation was brought to the attention of R’ Avraham Genachovsky zt”l, the Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Kochav M’Yaakov, the Tchebiner Yeshivah in Jerusalem. He was beloved and revered by everyone - from the greatest rabbanim of his time to the most simple of Jews. Even non-religious Jews respected his opinion. His profound understanding of Torah and his tremendous sensitivity to others were the hallmarks of his life. He would cry and commiserate in another Yid’s pain and he did all that he could to make the situation better.

When he heard about the woman’s desperate situation, his first reaction was, “Is it possible to bring the child to me at the yeshivah? I would like to talk to the boy and see if I can help him in some way.”

The woman was at her wit’s end and did not object. A few days later, the boy appeared at the yeshivah accompanied by his older brother. The Rosh Yeshivah brought the boy into his private office, and sat down on the floor. The young child stared incredulously at the sight of the venerable Rosh Yeshivah sitting on the floor. He was even more astounded when he asked the child, “What games do you like to play? Cars? Planes? Tic Tac Toe?”

They played games for an hour, sitting on the floor. At that point, R’ Genachovsky told the boy, “Ok. You have school, and I have a Yeshivah. So we can’t play games any longer. So, I have an idea, listen carefully. Once a week, I will make up a Torah riddle on a piece of paper, and you will present it as a challenge to your classmates. The following week, you’ll come here and tell me which kids got the right answer, and I’ll give you prizes to give out to all the winners. Are you ready? Okay, here’s the first one: Explain how it is that you can put something in your mouth without eating or swallowing it, yet you make a beracha on it!”

The boys eyes lit up. “I don’t know,” he replied. The Rosh Yeshivah smiled and said, “It’s a shofar!”

The boy was so excited that he ran at top speed to tell his older brother, and couldn’t wait to share this brainteaser with his buddies in school. The weekly quiz was a spectacular hit. Not only did it earn his classmates’ participation in the riddles themselves, but they began to include him in other games and activities for which he had always been an outsider.

They started accompanying him on his weekly visits to the Tchebiner Rosh Yeshivah to get their prizes, and the young boy felt like a million dollars to be the center of attention. After several weeks, the child changed dramatically. He quickly rose to the top of his class, and positive behavior took the place of all the negative stuff. Now, full of self esteem, he no longer needed the assistance of therapists. He was a new person, thanks to the special attention given him by R’ Avraham Genachovsky.

הבינו אל אברהם אביכם ואל שרה תהללכם כי אחד קראתיו ואברכוהו וארבתו ... (ישעי' נא-ג)

In this week’s Haftorah, Klal Yisroel is once again comforted. Following the devastating Churban, the people are haunted by what they think is a terrible truth - that the exile proves that Hashem has abandoned His children and the covenant made on Har Sinai. Yet, Yeshaya HaNavi challenges that notion and states that Klal Yisroel need to only, “Look back to Avraham, your father, and to Sarah who brought you forth. For he was the only one when I (Hashem) called him, but I blessed him and made him many.”

Despite this optimistically sounding statement, the terrible purge had taken place and the land lay desolate, so in what precisely was Klal Yisroel supposed to find comfort? The Chofetz Chaim, R’ Yisroel Meir HaKohen Kagan

zt”l explains that the lesson to learn from Avraham Avinu and Sarah Imeinu is to never give in to despair and regret, despite the circumstances. Avraham and Sarah were well advanced in age with no natural chance of them ever having children of their own. Yet, they never lost hope or belief in the workings of Hashem, and as a result of their faith, they were rewarded with the birth of their son, Yitzchok Avinu.

As the land lay wasted and desolate, it is easy for Klal Yisroel to simply “throw in the towel” and despair of ever seeing the light of redemption. Yeshaya HaNavi’s words are meant to inspire the people to remember the amazing turn of events regarding the birth of Yitzchok Avinu and to learn that despite it all, a Jew must never give in and never give up.

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

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

ארץ אשר ה' אלקיך דרש אתה עיני ה' אלקיך בה מרשת השנה ועד אחרית שנה ... (יא-י)

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

מחשבת הלב

I once saw an explanation on this posuk that struck a chord with me and probably with anyone who’s ever heard it. The posuk starts with “Hashana” - THE year, but ends with “Shana” - year. Why the change? The pshat I saw was that at the outset of the year, one is filled with ambitious, lofty “New Year” resolutions ensuring that THIS year will be different. “I’ll change this and I’ll fix that. I’ll become the best spouse, child, Rebbe, friend or person I can be.” But much to his chagrin, sadly, at the end of the year, it seems to be just another “plain old” year, no different than all the previous ones.

Rabbosai, we still have time left to make this year different. The past year was indeed a most trying and difficult one, to say the least. But, we are still able to salvage it and utilize its remaining days to their fullest, thereby turning this year into a “Hashana.” There are many areas to focus our improvement on. Each individual knows where they may be lacking, and in need of a spiritual “tune-up”. But there are two concepts I’d like to hone in on; our emunah in Hashem and harmony amongst ourselves.

In this week’s parsha the Torah refers to Matan Torah as - בימים הקהל” - the day of gathering. My machshava here is that Har Sinai brought us all together in a way that is hard to fathom. A Nation of former slaves and now being chosen by Hakadosh Boruch Hu! But we became an “Ish echad b’lev echad” - a people who truly feel each other’s pain and triumph. That wasn’t just then but still remains in effect for all eternity. Secondly, the posuk says “מה ה' אלקיך שאל מעמך כי אם ליראה” - It literally translates to: Fear of Hashem. However, perhaps we can say an alternative explanation: Hashem is requesting that we SEE HIM. To see Hashem in all that transpires in the world. Throughout our day to see HIM, talk to HIM, be aware that HE is lovingly guiding us through any hardship we must endure. It is and always will be, Hashem, Avinu Shebashamayim.

במהרה בימינו אמן THE YEAR that we change and THE YEAR that we greet Moshiach

משל למה הדבר דומה

עיני ה' אלקיך בה מרשית השנה ועד אחרית שנה ... (יא-י)

משל: The family of R’ Elya Lopian z”l owned a chicken which laid fresh eggs for them every day. One morning, as the family gathered to eat breakfast, the chicken suddenly jumped up on top of the table. Though startled, R’ Elya’s mother quickly grabbed the chicken and gently placed it on the floor before shooing it off. While it seemed like a nondescript event, young Elya was perturbed, and he asked his mother why she simply took the chicken off the table when it clearly did something wrong. “If I would jump on the table,” he said, “you would get quite angry and probably even punish me. Why then don’t you punish the chicken?”

R’ Elya’s mother explained that although the chicken probably does deserve punishment, it is after all a chicken – and what can you expect from a chicken? A Yiddishe boy on

the other hand is not a mindless chicken. On the contrary, there is so much more expected of him and if he jumps on a table like a brainless chicken, he deserves a fitting punishment!

במשל: R’ Henoah Plotnick shlita explains that the Torah tells us, “The eyes of Hashem are constantly on the Land” and by extension on Klal Yisroel as well. As the gentiles of the world run around like mindless chickens going from fad to fad, a Jew’s actions must be more carefully calculated. Thus, while it seems at times that some people “get away” with things, as Hashem’s Chosen People there is so much more expected of us. It is not surprising that the rest of the world views the Jewish people with a critical eye and keeps our every action under a microscope. Although we cannot expect the world to appreciate us for what we are fully worth, we are nevertheless constantly reminded of our value and how every move we do in this world is calculated and documented.

ולמדתם אתם את בניכם לדבר בם בשבתך כביתך ובלבתך בדרך ובשבתך ובקומך ... (יא-טז)

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

דרגה יתירה

Chazal tell us: “Since the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, the only thing Hashem has left in this world is the four amos of Halacha.” (ברכות ת.) The Chasam Sofer z”l writes that this refers to the four levels that man should strive to attain in this world - “ללמוד, וללמד, לשמור, ולעשות” - To learn, teach and safeguard the Torah, and to do the mitzvos. These are the four measurements of halacha. Halacha means to go (הליכה), to move forward, and THIS is what Hashem has in this world. The people who are making strides in Torah learning and observance - there is nothing else that Hashem has that is valuable.

Sefer Mishna Sachir offers a slightly different twist to the words of this Gemara. He quotes the posukim in Krias Shema where we are told to place the mitzvos “on our hearts and tie them on our hands” - that is the first level, a reference to man’s obligation to improve himself. “ולמדתם אותם את בניכם” - “And you shall teach it to your children” - this is the second level, man’s obligation to teach his children the laws of the Torah. “וכתבתם על מזוזות ביתך” - “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your home” - this is the third level, where man must instruct all the members of his household and those that come to his door to observe the Torah. “ובעערך” - “and your gates” - this is the fourth level which implies how a person must be an example to anyone that he comes in contact with. When a person acts in this manner, and strives to uphold the four levels of HALACHA - of moving forward in the spiritual spheres, then he is creating a substitute for the Bais HaMikdash in this world. This novel idea is alluded to in the next words of Krias Shema: כימי השמים ... כימי ימיכם” - “So that you may increase your days like the days of Heaven on this earth.” “כימי השמים” refers to the heavenly kedusha of the Bais HaMikdash, “על הארץ” here in this world!

It is truly our obligation to create a place for Hashem to dwell in this world by keeping the four amos of halacha!