



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

ואעשה שם מוכח לא-ל הענה אתי ביום צרתי ויהי עמדי בדרך אשר הלכתי ... (לה-ג)

The following story was told by a Canadian businessman who marvels at the manner in which *Hashem* speaks to each and every individual. He relates: I worked in the building supplies industry for many years and that is where I met David. As a partner in a Residential Management company in Toronto, David owned and managed tens of apartment buildings across the city. He was an exceedingly wealthy and giving man, and his level of *Tzedaka* was equal only to the good heart that he possessed. Having serviced David's company for several years, I became acquainted with many of his managers and staff.

A few years ago, I had a negative experience while meeting with one of his managers, which I was compelled to relate to David, as the "boss." He nodded sympathetically but his surprising response was, "I am well aware of the deceit that some of my managers employ in operating my buildings and how I must constantly be on guard with how they treat my vendors. In fact, I rarely keep my staff for more than two years. That's how quickly I get rid of them!"

Now it was my turn to express surprise. "David, what about your senior manager, Beta? She's been with you for at least as long as I have known you?" He answered, "Oh, Beta is indeed a different story completely."

He then shared with me a very interesting explanation to Beta's longevity with the company. It seems that after managing some buildings, complaints began pouring in from tenants and vendors regarding Beta's attitude, laxity and general dour disposition with which she dealt with all the residents, as well as the numerous issues which would crop up. The level of disappointment reached the point where David was seriously considering firing her.

But he knew she was quite capable and suspected that something might have precipitated her recent lacking disposition. He decided to investigate what if any underlying situation could have triggered this change in her behavior. It turns out, David learned, Beta's husband took ill the previous year, and after a few short months, tragically passed away leaving Beta alone with her two young children. She became depressed and despondent, and let it out on her co-workers and tenants.

David wasn't sure how to handle this situation. He went to ask his Rabbi. "Being non-Jewish, do I still have to treat this woman with the extra sensitivity the *Torah* requires of us to deal with a widow and orphans?" His Rabbi told him, "No, according to *halacha*, you may dismiss her if that is in the best interest of the business." Yet, David's conscience was still bothering him. Something gnawed at his insides: how can I do this to a widow and her young children?

He tried a different tactic. He proceeded to sponsor courses for her in Property Management and ESL to help her improve on her sorely lacking English. She was appreciative of David's efforts and there was small improvement in her overall performance.

A while later, David's partner, Max, was retelling a lecture he had recently attended entitled, "The Role of the Armenians in the Holocaust." In it, the Professor spoke at length of how the Armenian people as a whole, resisted the Nazis, refused to comply with their orders, and actually many Armenians hid and saved Jews during war.

Fascinated at this historical anomaly, David told Max, "You know that we have an Armenian woman working for us, Beta. Maybe we should ask her if she knows about this and if she can corroborate this historical fact?"

When asked about the role of Armenians during the Nazi occupation, Beta actually perked up and said, "Yes, it is true. Many Armenians resisted the Germans and paid a heavy price. Others got away with it. In fact, I vividly recall hearing my late mother sharing with us the story of the Jewish family she hid during the war years!"

Now David realized why he was so hesitant to fire Beta. Deep down, in his heart of hearts, something was telling him to be nice to her. For a long time, he could not shake the unusual feeling but it was his Jewish spark that was crying out. He was very pleased with his decision to retain Beta, for through this he feels, the Jewish people were able to repay a debt to her.

That very day, David announced to his staff, "Beta is here to stay and her job is not touchable!" (Heard from a Canadian Askan)

והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף דהבה ודויה המהנה הנשאר לפליטה ... (לב-ט)

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

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

As an Edomite convert, *Ovadiah HaNavi* was given the divine task to prophesize about the downfall of his birth nation. Edom is a descendent from Esav, and in the *Haftorah* *Ovadiah* states that "the house of Yaakov shall be like fire, the house of Yosef shall be like a flame, and the house of Esav shall be like straw." Although *Ovadiah* concludes that "they (Yaakov and Yosef) shall ignite them (the fire and flame) and consume them (the straw), and the house of Esav shall have no survivors," nevertheless, *Chazal* say that specifically Yosef is the antithesis of Esav, and only descendants of Yosef possess the ability to overcome the designs of Esav. Why is that so?

The **Maggid of Slonim, R' Yehuda Leib Adil zt"l (Avei**

**HaYam**) explains that Yosef was different than his brothers and he carried a special divine protection with him all the time. This special protection stemmed from the fact that Yosef was born through a miraculous manner since Leah, Bilha, and Zilpah all had no problems having children, while Rochel was in fact barren up until the point that *Hashem* opened her womb and allowed her to become pregnant.

Therefore, unlike the children born to Yaakov's other wives, Yosef the son of Rochel, was seen by *Yaakov Avinu* as the child who required extra protection aside from the natural protection afforded to a child born into the world. As a result, only Yosef who had this extra protection was capable to counter the powerful forces of evil from Esav.

ויותר יעקב לבדו ואבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר ... (לב-ה)

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

# מחשבת הלב

The *Gemara* in *Chulin* says that Yaakov returned to fetch his "Pachim Ketanim" - small jars, which he had left behind. It was precisely at that seemingly mundane moment that the Angel of Esav pitted himself against Yaakov in battle and was vanquished. Yaakov, as a result, had a new name bestowed upon him. What was so significant about this specific time?

Our *Gedolim* teach us that in *ruchniyus*, spiritual matters, there is no such thing as small things, things that are beneath us. In fact, *gadlus* is attained through the little, not so public acts - small acts of kindness or the like done quietly and away from the view of the masses. Thus, stresses the *posuk*, "Levado" - and Yaakov was alone. Nobody was aware of his actions, and yet, he returned to retrieve a few small flasks. Esav's way of life was the polar opposite. Esav, both externally and publicly, attempted to portray himself to Yitzchok as a *tzaddik* by marrying at age 40 like his father, and (as noted in *Parshas Toldos*) also steering away from the *Bnos Canaan*. Yet, his private abomination-filled life was one of pure evil.

In the merit of Yaakov's actions, the *Medrash* states: "You saved your small jugs - I will send you another jug in the times of the Chashmonaim which will light for 8 days." What is the *midah keneged midah*? The *Medrash* is teaching us never to belittle a seemingly insignificant act, because it can become very significant. We were all *zoche* to the special *Yom Tov* of *Chanukah* for all eternity. A *neis* happened with the small flask. I once heard that if a person wants to know where he's really holding in life, he should ask the small people, the people at home - his kids, spouse, cleaning lady... because in public one can pretend, but in the privacy of one's home, it's much harder. So let us learn from Yaakov to try our utmost not to belittle the small things in life and to work on ourselves so that even the "small people" will always look up to us!

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ויותר יעקב לבדו ואבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר ... (לב-ה)

**משל:** A number of years ago, there was a *bachur* learning in *Telshe Yeshivah* in Wickliffe, Ohio. This *bachur* was an excellent *talmid* and devoted himself to his studies. He was known as an incredible *Masmid* who used all of his time for *Limud HaTorah*. He also happened to be very talented in the art of calligraphy. His penmanship was flawless and his handwriting was a vision to behold. Due to his unique talent, he was occasionally asked by friends to help them out when they needed to have something written artistically. For example, if someone was creating an invitation to a *simcha* or event, they would inevitably call on him to write out the words before submitting it to the printer.

At first, the *bachur* was happy to oblige people and he usually made himself available. But after some time, he became very torn; on the one hand he definitely wanted to

help others and he appreciated the gratitude they showed him when he wrote something for them. On the other hand, he was also concerned that all these little "jobs" would take away precious time from his learning.

He approached the *Rosh Hayeshivah, R' Mordechai Gifter zt"l*, for guidance on this issue. The *Rosh Hayeshivah* smiled and opened up a *chumash*. He proceeded to read out loud the words of **Rashi** in *Parshas Vayishlach* which says that Yaakov went back to retrieve his "small jars."

Rav Gifter asked, "Why would Yaakov risk his life for small jars? What it means is small talents that a person has. Even these 'small jars' must be retrieved and used in life."

**נמשל:** "If *Hashem* has given you this talent," Rav Gifter told the *masmid*, "you have no permission to ignore it and leave it dormant. Indeed, each and every one of a person's 'Pachim Ketanim' must be developed and used to their utmost in his *Avodas Hashem*." (Heard from Rav Mordechai Simon)

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

# דרגה יתירה

*Yaakov Avinu* prepared to meet his arch enemy Esav in 3 ways. He devised war strategies in case there would be a fight. He put together a large and impressive gift, and of course he *davened*! We know that "Maase Avos Siman L'banim" - the deeds of our forefathers are a sign for us and these three acts teach us how to deal with difficult situations in all three relationships of life.

**BEIN ADAM L'ATZMO**, between man and himself. Our *yetzer hara* disguises itself in so many. One of his greatest tactics is to get us into a BAD MOOD! Once you get into a bad mood, you don't have to do anything because you have the best excuse in the world: I am in a bad mood! If you realize that this is simply a ploy of the great enemy inside yourself who is waging war with your *neshama*, you can be prepared to fight and overcome this evil force.

**BEIN ADAM L'ACHAVEIRO**, interpersonal relationships with others. People are complex, and we must make a tremendous effort to truly get along with people. Yaakov teaches us the greatest thing that we need to know in order to have deep and satisfying relationship with others is to GIVE PRESENTS! As **Rav Dessler zt"l** explains in **Michtav M'Eliyahu**, the greatest way to love someone is by giving to them. The reason we often have difficulty getting along with people is because we are focusing on what are we getting out of the relationship. This is the big mistake in interpersonal relationships. It is true that some people are harder to get along with, but no human being does not respond, sometimes slowly to the kindness and true giving of others.

**BEIN ADAM L'MAKOM**, our relationship with *Hashem*. We truly form a connection through *Tefillah*! **R' Yeruchem zt"l** explains that *Hashem* wants our *tefillas* because He wants our closeness! When He says that we are distant, He gives us a difficulty so that we should be awakened to call out Him. Wouldn't we be wise if we would call out to *Hashem* and form that connection before the *tzaros* come so that they will not have to come? If we want to win the war like Yaakov, let us follow his 3 ways.