

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ואם בחקתי תמאסו ואם את משפטי תנעל נפשכם לבלתי עשות את כל מצותי להפרכם את בריתי ... (כו-טו)

For the Jewish people, a Nation that has been persecuted throughout the millennia, and yet, has survived and often even thrived throughout those millennia, we often require a bit of humor to bring us through the darkness. We even introduce darkness into our humor to remind us to hold onto the blessings we have right now. Just as the glass we break during joyous wedding ceremonies teaches us that no moment is fully wonderful; we are in *Golus* without our homeland and *Bais HaMikdash*, and we must always be thinking about whom we can help next. Likewise, even in those moments that are truly awful, times of death and destruction, we carry our humor with us to remind us of the laughter that will return in time.

“*Eis livkos v’eis lischok*” - there’s a time to cry, and a time to laugh (*Koheles* 3:4). We create relationships through laughter, and we bolster those relationships with our presence for one another during terrible times of persecution and tears. In teaching, in gratitude, in building relationships, in raising children, in *sholom bayis*, and in finding the good in others, we often turn to humor for a spark of inspiration. At every moment that we can, we must find opportunities to laugh heartily.

Here is an example of humor that can only be understood in the context of a Jewish backdrop. The meeting in the synagogue was getting heated. The week of *Parshas Behar-Bechukosai* was quickly approaching, and the curses of the *Tochacha* (section of reproof) and the gruesome details that are listed therein, are enough to send a shudder up anyone’s spine, That being the case, many men are reluctant to be called up to the *Torah* for that portion. Some *shuls* have a policy that no one is called up - the reader just begins to read, without an *oleh*. In other places, the *Baal Korei* receives that *aliyah*.

But in one particular synagogue, everyone seemed to have had his share of bad luck, and no one wanted the honor. Not even the *Baal Korei*. And so, the Wednesday before the fateful *Shabbos*, a meeting of the Rabbi and Board of Directors was called. “I will not take the *Tochacha* this year!” shouted the *Baal Korei*, who was also the *Gabbai* and a board member. “Two weeks after last year’s *aliya*, when I got the *Tochacha*, my business went kaput! I lost everything - and even more than that!” Looking around, he added for the curious and equally eager board members, “I’m not going to elaborate!”

The President spoke up. “Well, why don’t we give it to the Rabbi? He is the holiest person we have and not likely to be affected by the curses made for sinners.” Nodding heads all around the table could be seen.

The Rabbi mopped his brow for a moment and then demurred. “My friends, if you look at my contract, it says I get *Shlishi* (third *aliyah*) every week. The *Tochacha* is in the fifth *aliya*, so I am exempt” He smiled, knowing he dodged a bullet.

The *shamash* suddenly jumped out of his chair. “Don’t expect me to get called up for the *Tochacha*! It’s not going to happen. My job is to tidy up the *shul* and put everything in order. I won’t stand up there and take the curses of the *Tochacha*.”

The men were in a quandary. Someone went so far as to suggest that they cancel *Krias HaTorah* for the coming *Shabbos* since they could not seem to find someone willing to accept the *aliya*. The rabbi adamantly protested this bizarre idea.

Just then, an elderly gentleman spoke up in the back. “Alright, if you pay me fifty dollars, I’ll take the *Tochacha*.”

There was silence, and then in unison all heads nodded. The old man, a throwback to the old heyday of the *shul*, had stepped forward to be their salvation. They all agreed to the man’s price and looked forward to seeing him on *Shabbos*.

Well, *Shabbos* did indeed come. The *davening* went on as planned - but the old man did not show up! It came time to take out the *Torah*, and he was still not there. The Rabbi decided to speak before *laining* just to stall a little bit.

Without a choice, they started reading the *Torah* - but very slowly. It was not until the fourth *aliya* that the old man suddenly burst into the *shul*, panting. He made it! All the board members breathed a sigh of relief. He got his *aliya*, but as soon as he stepped off the *bimah*, the *Gabbai* cornered him. “Do you know how much you scared us? Where were you?”

The old man shrugged and replied, “You think a Jew can make a living today from just one *Tochacha*?”

ה' עזי ומעוזי ומנוסי וכי' ויאמרו אך שקר נחלו אבותינו ... (דברי' בז-ג)

Although *Yirmiyahu Hanavi* discusses many topics in the *Haftarah*, the central theme is the fact that those who follow *Hashem* and His *Torah* will live a blessed life while those who don’t will be cursed. *Yirmiyahu* states his personal and complete reliance upon *Hashem* and reminds *Klal Yisroel* that, “*Our fathers inherited utter delusions – things that are futile and worthless,*” and ultimately even the idolatrous Nations will turn to *Hashem*. But what did *Yirmiyahu* mean precisely when making such a statement?

The **Chofetz Chaim, R’ Yisroel Meir Kagan ז”ל** explains that it is well known that within every lie a shred of truth can be found, and without it the lie cannot exist. He explains that this adage applies as well to other matters, such as the degree

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

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

of pride, which although might be seen as disgusting in the eyes of *Hashem*, still holds a kernel of necessity and usefulness in a Jew’s life, and can be channeled for good. There is one exception to this rule though, and that is the lie of idolatry. Setting everything else aside, the lie promulgated by idolators that a foreign power exists is so deeply flawed that there is no shred of truth in it and *Hashem* truly hates it.

Thus, *Yirmiyahu* was chastising the Nation by saying that even though a Jew must follow *Hashem* and His *Torah* completely, the Almighty is forever merciful, and He may look the other way for most other sins. However, the lie of idolatry must be entirely stamped out because that is something that *Hashem* would never tolerate in the slightest.

דבר אל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם איש כי יפלא נדר בערכך נפשתי לה' ... (כו-ב)

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

מחשבת הלב

Several years ago, we discussed in this column the juxtaposition of the *harsh criticism* (תוכחה) to the *parsha* of ערכין. We explained then, that the *תוכחה* is a direct result of our sins, caused by not realizing or appreciating our intrinsic value. On a related note, I was once speaking with my *Zaida*, the **Baal Machsheves Halev ז”ל**, and he shared with me a **Baal HaTurim** that explains the *סמיכות* of the *תוכחה* and the *parsha* of ערכין (donating the value of a person to a person to *אדש*). I’d like to בעזרה, add a thought to the *Baal HaTurim’s* approach, which I believe the *Zaida* would approve of.

The *Baal HaTurim* tallies up the *shekalim* of all the ערכין one can possibly give, which comes to the amount of 143, corresponding to the total of all the קללות in both *תוכחות* (54 in this *parsha*, and 98 in *Parshas Ki Savo* = 143) Based on this, he says that through the concept of ערכין and evaluating our self-worth, the 143 קללות (curses) could be annulled.

The number of 143 is only reached by counting both men and women, young and old. This sends a clear message that without the contributions of the *Nashim Tzidkaniyos* of all ages, from the young *Bais Yaakov* girls to the elderly women, *Klal Yisroel* would not be complete. Additionally, we need our young boys and teenage *bochurim* too. They hold up the world!

However, the youngest ערכין age bracket is one month old to age five. Of course we know that the pure learning of *Yiddish* children - *הבל פיהם של תינוקות של בית רבן* - is powerful ... but of a month-old baby as well?

The possible *machshava* here is that the incredible potential of a child must be tapped from a young age. *Chinuch* starts early on. Therefore, even the one month-olds are part and parcel of protecting *Klal Yisroel* from penalty! Indeed, may *Hashem Yisborach* see each and every *Yid’s* potential, young and old, girl and boy, and bring an end to *Klal Yisroel’s tzaros*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם ... (כו-ג)

משל: One of the most famous *askanim* during the second world war was R’ Eliezer Landau ז”ל, a close confidant of the holy **Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon Rokeach ז”ל**. He was a well-to-do man who worked tirelessly to help his fellow Jews caught in the clutches of the Nazi beast.

After the war, he arrived in *Eretz Yisroel* and helped R’ Aharon rebuild the *Belzer chassidus* back to where it was, and even donated the *Aron Kodesh* in the temporary *beis medrash* that was set up. Eventually, a proper building came under construction and R’ Eliezer wanted to do more.

One day he met **R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ז”ל**, the great *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Kol Torah*, and figured this would be a great opportunity to seek his advice and ask the *Rav* what he thought would be proper to donate in the new building.

Without hesitation, R’ Shlomo Zalman asked him, “Tell

me, was the coffee room donated yet?” R’ Eliezer, surprised, replied that it was likely not donated. “People do not realize what a *zechus* this is,” exclaimed R’ Shlomo Zalman. “This one room has in it all three pillars on which the world stands. When a person takes a drink, he gets revived, thereby enabling him to learn *Torah* and *daven* better. In addition, you are performing a tremendous act of *chessed* by giving people the ability to revive themselves in such a capacity!”

משל: The *Gemara* mentions in a number of places that if someone has an ailment, “*He shall busy himself with Torah.*” The *Maharsha* explains, that although *Torah* study is the best remedy for a person, sometimes a person simply cannot study *Torah* due to the circumstances of his situation. In that case, the *Gemara* chose the words to be “busy” instead of “study” with *Torah*, to teach us, that a person can do something that enhances his or others’ *Torah* study, such as arranging the furniture or coffee room in a *beis medrash*.

ביבות ספירת העומר שספרתי יתקן מה שפגמתי בכפירה יסוד שביסוד ... (סדר ספירת העומר)

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

דרגה יתירה

In *Tehillim* (*Perek* 87), *Dovid HaMelech* tells us, “*סודתו בהררי קודש*”. The *middah* of *Yesod* can be found on the mountains of holiness. What are the mountains of holiness? **R’ Avraham Pam ז”ל** explains that this is referring to *Har Moriah* and *Har Sinai*. It was on *Har HaMoriah* that Avraham was asked to *shecht* his beloved son. Although *Hashem* promised him that from *Yitzchok* a great nation will come out, he asked no questions. He didn’t flinch. He eagerly went to do *ratzon Hashem* because he believed that *Hashem* can do anything. On *Har HaMoriah* we were taught that one must be ready to die *al kiddush Hashem!*

On *Har Sinai* we were given the *Torah*. We stood together as a nation and said *Naaseh V’Nishma*. We didn’t need to know all the details. We believed that *Hashem* is our loving Father and we were eager to follow His *Torah*. On *Har Sinai*, we were taught that we must live our lives *al kiddush Hashem*. *Hashem* is the *yesod* of the world. A *tzaddik* attaches himself to that *middah* of *Yesod* by constantly working on his *Emunah*. What is real belief? We all believe in *Hashem*. We believe that *Hashem* created this world and runs the world and everything He does is good. I BELIEVE ... as long as we feel that good. We believe from our comfortable chairs, from a place that is safe and secure.

Yesod is made up of two words. The letter *Yud* which is *Hashem*, and “*sod*” which means secret. *Hashem’s* plan is a secret. The past is a secret. The future is an even bigger secret. And the present is a present. Every moment of life gives us the opportunity to come closer to *Hashem* by realizing that *Hashem* made this happen. We strengthen our *middah* of *Yesod* by accepting His “secret” or whatever it is that we don’t understand. This is the *Yesod* of our lives. We must believe with all our might that *Hashem* is right here, *Hashem* loves us and everything He does is good. *Yesod* means that our foundation is strong. We must strive to really believe that every single detail of our lives is orchestrated by *Hashem* for our benefit.