

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

וישלח אתם משה לתור את ארץ כנען ויאמר אלהם עלו זה בנגב ועליתם את ההר ... (ז'ג-י)

Living under Soviet oppression was hard enough; living in Leningrad in 1943, during the Nazi onslaught was horrific. A desperate mass flight from Leningrad was gathering momentum: anything, anywhere, was better than the horrors of a fate such as this. Anyone who was able to do so fled, men, women and children, young and old, the healthy and the ailing, shrunken civilians and soldiers in uniform. **Reb Baruch Shifrin ז"ל** and his family left Leningrad, in a train of seventy carriages that were packed cruelly beyond capacity. The stench was such that it was almost impossible to utter a word of *Torah* or of prayer, and every day he would try to clamber towards a corner so that he could put on *tefillin* and whisper *shachris*.

While he was thus standing one day in his *talis* and *tefillin*, he noticed a young stranger making his way towards him. He sat down nearby, and from that moment scrutinized him constantly. He completed his morning prayers as the train slowed down at some station, and took off his *tefillin*. It was time for his meager breakfast. Suddenly, three burly officers of the NKVD burst into the carriage. Pointing at him triumphantly they screamed, “That’s him.” It transpired that the young naive informer who had observed him so carefully had run out when they arrived at the station to report to the Secret Police what he had seen with his own eyes: a bearded Jew with clandestine transmission apparatus mounted on his head and under his left sleeve, into which he was muttering coded communications to the German enemy. At last: a real-life spy, caught redhanded!

Pushing their way through the bewildered crowd towards him, they seized Baruch as if he were Russia’s most dangerous criminal, and wanted to know, “Where’s that thing you’ve hidden away?” His children could not understand why their father was being manhandled in such a manner, and asked what had happened. “Your daddy’s a German spy!” they were answered.

They hustled him off the train, and began at once to cross-examine him as to the nature of his unconventional wireless equipment. He explained that this was a pair of *tefillin*, that the little black boxes housed tiny parchment scrolls which bore quotations from the Bible, and that Jews wore them every morning when at prayer. They remained unconvinced, insisting firmly that he open up the *tefillin* boxes so that they could confirm his story. He, of course, refused. In the course of his bargaining he recalled that he did have one official-looking piece of paper in his pocket - a note certifying that he had worked in Leningrad for eight years without any objections from officialdom. Why then should he now be suspected of being a spy for the Germans?

Finally, one officer said to his friends, “Only five kilometers from here lives a Jew who’ll be able to clear up this whole thing for us. In the meantime we’ll let the train go on its way, and our obstinate friend here will never see his wife and children again.” Again they began their interrogation about the contents of his *tefillin*. Desperate, Baruch shouted from the bottom of his heart, and at the top of his voice: *Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad!* The officers gaped at him as if he was out of his mind. “What does that mean?” they demanded. So he repeated the sentence in Russian - but again at the top of his voice, so that the message should not be lost on them. Seeing that he was not budging from his stance, they gave him up as a lost cause and let him climb back up to the train just in the nick of time. His sole regret was that the only piece of paper that attested to his identity was no longer in his hands and he had to remain fixed to his exact place in the train, because without papers of any kind, he would be hounded at every step by uniformed criminals: “Who are you? What’s your name?”

After twenty days and nights without the most minimal human living conditions, without even clean air to breathe, locked in a carriage stoked with the anguish and stench of the ailing and starved, tossed about like a splintered ship on a turbulent ocean, the train finally arrived at Khazakstan in Asia Minor. When they alighted at the last station, they were asked what their destination was. They simply did not know what to answer. The same prospect seemed to await them wherever they would choose to turn - famine, disease, unrest. For four years, they lived in a town called Alma-Ata, before finally escaping the Russian bear in 1946 and ascending to Zion, to the holy city of Jerusalem. (Adapted from: “In the Shadow of the Kremlin” - Artscroll History)

וישלח יהושע בן נון מן השמים שנים אנשים מרגלים ... (יהושע ב-א)

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

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In the *Haftorah* this week, the mission of the two spies sent by *Yehoshua bin Nun* to scout out *Eretz Yisroel* prior to the invasion, is laid out in great detail, and is comparable to the spies sent by *Moshe Rabbeinu* many years earlier. *Chazal* state that *Yehoshua* chose righteous men hoping that they wouldn’t repeat the earlier debacle - but why indeed did he think his group would fare better than the first group? After all, those spies were from the elite class of *Klal Yisroel*, and they were sent by *Moshe Rabbeinu* himself?

The **Ohr HaChayim HaKadosh ז"ל** explains that the words of *Hashem* in this week’s *Parsha*: “שלח לך אנשים” - “send out men for yourself,” are the key to understanding *Yehoshua’s* mindset. *Chazal* explain that the word “לך”

indicates permission from *Hashem* rather than a command. As such, it stands to reason that the idea of sending spies to help in the conquest of the Holy Land was not objectionable in itself. Furthermore, the deficiency of the first mission sent by *Moshe* was clearly not due to the caliber of the spies since the *Torah* testifies that *Moshe* sent out righteous men. Therefore, it must be said that the difference was that *Moshe* presented the mission as a necessity which only required *Hashem’s* approval, while *Yehoshua* presented it as a question of whether or not they should even undertake it at all.

It’s important to remember that even when we think we know what is required of us and that we only need validation, it may very well be that we shouldn’t do it all!

וראיתם אתו וזכרתם את כל מצות ה' ועשתם אתם ... למען תזכרו ועשתם את כל מצותיו וכו' (שם-למב)

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

מחשבת הלב

It behooves us to analyze and understand these *posukim* as they are recited thrice daily in *Krias Shema*. Why does the *posuk* mention the idea of זכירה twice? I saw a beautiful explanation in the name of the **Chernobler Maggid**. The answer, he says, lies in the words between these two זכירות. The *posuk* says ואלא תתורו and he elaborates: A *Yid* knows he must combat the *yetzer*, so he commits to adhere to *mitzvos Hashem*. (That’s the first זכירה) But no one is perfect and we occasionally stumble, falling prey to the *yetzer hara’s* devious tactics. At that moment, one may give up. Thus, the *posuk* continues: even if you cave, and are ותתורו - you sin, don’t give up. Rather ותזכרו (the second זכירה), remember how elevated you felt when you were on that spiritual high. Those exalted levels are there for you; how can such a *choshuva* person like you stoop even lower? So catch yourself now.

We might add the famous concept of **Rabbeinu Tam** in *Sefer Hayashar*, where he explains that people have spiritual high points and low points. He refers to them as ימי אהבה and ימי שנאה. During the ימי אהבה, everything is smooth, *mitzvos* are enjoyable, the *Torah* is *geshmak*. Then, comes along some potholes - ימי שנאה - when the going gets rough. He says that we mustn’t totally let go of all our good. Even if we cannot maintain our high, do NOT throw in the towel! We mustn’t allow the *yetzer* to completely win. Hold on to at least some *mitzvos*, so that with *Hashem’s* help, the rebound will be easier when we are strong enough. Truly inspiring and timeless words. Perhaps specifically in the *parsha* of *tzitzis* this thought is mentioned. The *tzitzis* accompany us wherever we go, even in impure places. Thus, they serve as a reminder, urging us to stay strong, holding on a bit longer until the clouds, the temptations, pass and the sun shines again. May *Hashem* protect us now, as the temptation-filled summer months begin, and enable us to cling to Him even stronger, and not חס ושלום fall prey. Amen V’amen.

משל למה הדבר דומה

במדבר הזה יפלו פגריכם ... מבין עשרים שנה ומעלה וכו' (יד-כב)

משל: The Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, **Chacham Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ז"ל** related the following unusual incident he once witnessed as a youngster: “One day, as I was making my way to the *Kotel Hamaaravi*, I saw a gathering of people walking and crying. I tried to get closer, but I was told that this is not for me and to leave. That only increased my curiosity, so I found somewhere high up where I was able to see everything from a distance. There were a few dozen men gathered around a coffin walking toward *Har Zeitim*, so I presumed it was a funeral.

“But as I watched, I was terrified to see the coffin open and someone jump out! He began screaming ‘שמע ישראל’ and everyone burst into tears. Spellbound, I watched as he got back into the coffin and the ‘*levaya*’ proceeded onward. This continued all the way to *Har Zeitim*, where they

stayed for a bit and then dispersed.

“Shaking with fright, I ran up to one of the attendees and begged him for an explanation. Finally, he complied. The man in the coffin was the great *tzaddik*, **Chacham Rav Yitzchak Alfia ז"ל**. He wanted to experience the dictum of *Chazal* that a person should always remind himself of his death day so that his whole life will be in a constant state of repentance. Thus, he and his students made a funeral reenactment to help them reach that lofty level.

נמשל: Every male Jew in the *midbar* was destined to die before reaching *Eretz Yisroel*. *Chazal* tell us that every year on the night of *Tisha B’av*, they would each dig a grave for themselves and sleep there. Each year, about 15,000 people didn’t wake up. However, at the end of their sojourn, they realized that throughout the 40 years in the desert, only people ages 20–60 died, while the rest survived. *Hashem* hadn’t disclosed this to them for their own benefit!

וילינו על משה ועל אהרן כל בני ישראל ... לו מתנו בארץ מצרים או במדבר הזה לו מתנו וגו' (ד-כ)

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

דרגה יתירה

How can it be that the Jewish people did not want to go into *Eretz Yisrael*? The *Nesi'im*, the greatest of the nation, spoke against the land? How is this conceivable? *Chazal* tell us that the *Nesi'im* were on such a lofty spiritual level that they did not want to live a physical life. They did not want to be removed from their heavenly existence in the *midbar*, where they felt *Hashem* constantly. They ate *mann*, did not need to clean their clothing, were protected by the *Ananei HaKavod*, and truly lived a high and lofty life. They did not have to work hard to see and feel *Hashem*, it was obvious that He was there.

This was exactly the point. *Hashem* wanted the Jews to find Him, even when it was not so obvious. When they would have to plow and harvest the land, sew themselves clothing, and make themselves food, they would have to say, “this is all from *Hashem*.” This is a lot more difficult than living in the *midbar* with *Hashem* taking care of all their needs. But that is not the *tachlis* of man. If it was, then *Hashem* would have left us all in the *midbar*. But *Hashem* wants something more from us. He wants us to feel Him and know that He is in charge, even when it looks like we are.

For this reason, the *parsha* of the *Meraglim* is followed by the *parsha* of *nesachim* (wine libations), the *parsha* of *Challah*, and the *parsha* of *Tzitzis*. What do all of these have in common and why are they here, after the tragedy of the *Meraglim*? The answer is that *Hashem* is telling us we can be holy even as we do seemingly mundane tasks, like pouring wine, baking bread and wearing *Tzitzis*. We are a “*mamleches kohanim v'goy Kadosh*” - a great and holy people, not satisfied with living a simple physical existence of eating and sleeping. We make the most physical action into something great and holy. And this is a clear message from this *parsha*. *Hashem* is telling the *Nesi'im* and all of *Klal Yisroel* that our job in this physical world is to uplift the mundane. May we all be *zoche* to enter the Land of *Eretz Yisroel* and live holy, spiritual lives no matter where we are physically.