



# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמר אל נא יחד לאדני ואדברתי אך הפעם אולי ימצאון שם עשרה ויאמר לא אשחית בעבור הקשרה ... (ח-לב)

While learning in the *Ponovezh Yeshiva* back in the early 1960's, an Israeli *bochur*, one of the brightest and most respected in the *yeshiva*, got engaged and married to an American girl in *Bnei Brak*. The wedding was festive and during one of the ensuing nights of *Sheva Berachos*, the **Ponovezher Rov, R' Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman ז"ל**, was invited to attend. He happily participated in the *simcha* and while they were waiting for the *chosson and kallah* to arrive, the *Ponovezher Rov* sat down at the head table and began conversing with a number of family members.

One of the American uncles of the *Kallah* innocently asked the *Rov*, "So, tell me *Rosh Yeshiva*, what does the *chosson* do for a living?"

Instantly, the *Ponovezher Rov* responded, "Why, he is a very successful builder (*kablan*) here in Israel."

The uncle raised his eyebrows in surprise. A builder? Here, in Israel? At such a young age? He was mightily impressed.

Immediately, he stood up and ran over to his wife who was sitting and talking with a group of women. "Did you hear? Your sister's daughter's *chosson* is a builder. And a successful one at that! Did you know that?"

His wife admitted that she did not and she, too, was impressed. They were under the impression that he was just another *yeshiva* student who sat on a bench all day, with no source of income to speak of. The fact that he was a working man, was truly surprising. Instantly, she stood up and went over to her sister - the *machatenista* - and *kvelled*. "Wow, I am really impressed. Your new son-in-law is a builder here in Israel. That is amazing!"

The mother-in-law wasn't aware of this tidbit of information and hurried over to her husband to verify this report. He had not heard anything of the sort and was shocked when he learned that his new son-in-law was not a full-time *yeshiva* student learning in *Ponovezh*, but rather a *kablan* who apparently spent the day working on construction sites.

He ran over to his new *mechutan*, the father of the boy and asked him if it was true. His blank expression said it all - he had no idea that this was the case. As far as he knew, his son was one of the top *bochurim* in the *Ponovezh Yeshiva*.

While all this hullabaloo was going on, R' Yosef Shlomo was watching from his seat with amusement. He realized that perhaps now was a good time to clear the air and he stood up from his seat at the *dais* and cleared his throat.

"*Morei V'Rabbosai*, I think an explanation is in order. The uncle of the *kallah* asked me what the *chosson* does for a living, and I told him that he is a successful builder. Everyone here seems to be shocked and in wonderment about this information, and I honestly do not understand why. Do we not recite every day in *davening*, ו'רב שלום בניך, and our Sages expound on this *posuk* and explain, - אל תקרי בניך אלא בניך - do not refer to these people as sons, but as builders? The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (קיד.) further clarifies that these 'builders' mentioned here are the *Talmidei Chachamim*, the *Torah* scholars who are responsible for building the world!" He looked at the uncles and aunts and proclaimed, "This *chosson* is truly a builder - quite a successful one - for he shares a part in building the world with his *Torah* learning!"

The *Ponovezher Rov* continued speaking to the mesmerized audience. "The *Mishna* (מגילה ה.) states: What is considered a large city? One that has ten '*batlanim*' - ten individuals who are *mevatel* their time from working and spend it on learning and teaching *Torah*. Less than that is merely a village. Our *chosson* together with his esteemed colleagues in the *Yeshiva* and all throughout the city of *Bnei Brak*, are literally building our city - and what more, they are protecting it as well. Didn't *Avraham Avinu* ask *Hashem* if there were at least ten '*tzaddikim*' in Sodom who will protect the city from destruction? Unfortunately for Sodom, there weren't. These ten *tzaddikim* were the ten *batlanim* who learn *Torah* all day."

"My friends," he concluded, "don't be so surprised. our *chosson* has the most valuable and important job in the world. He is not just building the city of *Bnei Brak* - he is literally protecting the world!"

וישכב על הידה וישם פיו על פיו ועינו על עינו ובפיו על כפיו ... (מלכים ב' ד-ה)

Just as *Sarah Imeinu* was promised a child by *Hashem* in the *parsha*, *Elisha Hanavi* repays the *Isha Hashunamis* for her hospitality with a promise of a child in the *Haftorah*. Unfortunately, the child became ill and suddenly passed away. The woman cried out to *Elisha* who miraculously revived the child. *Chazal* say miracles are not meant to be flaunted, which is why *Elisha* "placed himself over the child. He put his mouth on its mouth, his eyes on its eyes, and his hands on its hands." Such actions can still be perceived as a miracle since it is unfathomable that such actions would ever revive anyone. So, what is *Chazal* saying?

**R' Chatzkel Levenstein ז"ל (Yad Yechezkel)** explains that there is a fallacy in the world. Some believe that *Hashem*

embedded power into the laws of nature and the world works by itself with this power. This is really not the case. In fact, the continued existence of the world is in itself a miracle, and just as *Hashem* creates food to satiate a hungry person, He could have just as easily allowed a person to live without any nourishment at all. The only difference between nature and a miracle is that nature is what is seen frequently, while miracles are infrequent – but both are sure acts of miracles.

Therefore, although *Elisha Hanavi's* actions would obviously not amount to revival by the laws of nature, when understanding that even nature exists upon the premise of miracles, one can see how by doing what he did, *Elisha* managed to mask the miracle under the pretense of nature.

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY R' TZVI HIRSCH HOFFMAN תורת הצבי על הפטרות

וילך ה' כאשר כלו לדבר אל אברהם ואברהם שב למקומו ... (ח-לב)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ז"ל

# מחשבת הלב

*Parshas Vayera* is replete with timeless lessons for life that we can glean from *Avraham Avinu's* legacy. The following is one such lesson. *Avraham* pleaded with *Hashem* to spare Sodom from destruction. Many supplications were extended - only for *Avraham* to receive a flat-out NO! A regular person would feel dejected and down - not capable of continuing life as usual. *Avraham*, on the other hand, took this rebuttal in stride, writes the **Izhbitza Rav**, as if nothing was amiss. Only his staunch conviction in following the *ratzon Hashem* enabled him to do so. *Avraham Avinu* had no personal agenda.

Another gem we find at the end of the *parsha* is the *nisayon* of *Akeidas Yitzchok*. On the *posuk* ה' ויאמר בי נשבעתי נאום ה' *Medrash* says that when *Avraham* asked *Hashem* not to test him again, *Hashem* was *maskim*. However, many *Rishonim* consider *kevuras Sarah* as yet another test. Another difficulty arises when we study **Rabbeinu Yonah** on *Avos*. He says the hardest of the *nisyonos* was that of the *Akeida*. Yet, he himself maintains that the death of *Sarah* was also a test. If the *Akeida* was passed with flying colors, what was the point of an additional "easier" test afterward?

I saw a *machshava* from **R' Shimshon Pinkus ז"ל**, that explains both difficulties. He says that *misas/kevuras Sarah* was part and parcel of the *nisayon* of the *Akeida*. Part of passing a test is the ability to forge on with life's sojourn, weathering its bumps and potholes with renewed vigor. Had *Avraham* become despondent after his "wife's *petira* portion" of the *Akeida nisayon*, it would have *ch"v* reflected failure on the entire *Akeida*. The way he handled this final challenge, was a reflection of the entire *nisayon* of the *Akeida*. We should all learn from *Avraham Avinu's* inner reservoir of strength and the manner in which he passed all his tests, thereby embracing our challenges as vehicles through which to grow closer to *Hashem*.

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ועקת סדם ועמרה כי רבה חטאתם כי כבדה מאד ... (ח-יב)

**משל**: Like every city in the *Alte Heim*, the city of *Vilna* also had a special committee that would decide on communal matters pertaining to the needs of the city. When the great **Vilna Gaon ז"ל** resided in *Vilna*, he made an agreement with the trustees of the committee that he was not to be summoned to a meeting unless it involved a proposed new communal regulation.

Once, the trustees wanted to pass a regulation that no outside paupers would be admitted into *Vilna* to collect alms. They claimed that there had been such an unusual influx entering the city that it was becoming a burden on the entire community. They called a meeting and sent a message for the *Vilna Gaon* to join the meeting.

When the holy *Gaon* arrived and heard the proposal at hand, he said to the trustees, "We had an agreement that you

would not summon me to any meeting unless it had to do with a new regulation to be enacted."

"Yes, *Rebbe*," they responded. "This is a new regulation that we're proposing."

"No," said the *Gaon*, "it's actually a very old regulation."

The trustees looked quite confused. As far as they knew, there was never such a regulation instituted.

The *Gaon* explained, "This is a regulation from long ago established by none other than the city of Sodom. They had a law forbidding the admission of paupers or giving charity to them. Now, you want to re-enact this same decree here!"

**משל**: *Chazal* tell us that when someone converts to Judaism, he is immediately taught the laws of what a person must give from his produce to the needy (שכחה ופאה) (תרומת ומעשרות לקט שכחה ופאה) There is a deep and powerful message that is being conveyed with this: the essence of a Jew is to be a giver and one who performs acts of kindness – there are no exceptions!

כי עתה ידעתי כי ירא אלקים אתה ולי חשבת את בנך את יהודך ממני ... (כב-יב)

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

# דרגה יתירה

After the *Akeida*, *Hashem* says to *Avraham*, "Now, I know that you are G-d fearing, you are a *yerei shomayim*." **Rashi** says, quoting the **Tanchuma**, that *Hashem* told *Avraham*, "Now, I have an answer for the Satan and the nations of the world who wonder why I love you so much. Now, I have proof because everyone can see that you have *yiras shomayim*." We may wonder, didn't everyone know at this point that *Avraham* was G-d fearing? He spent his days and nights inspiring the masses that there is a one and only G-d. His whole life was completely devoted to serving *Hashem*. Wasn't that obvious? Furthermore, wouldn't we think that *Avraham's* behavior at the *Akeida* demonstrated his love for *Hashem* rather than his fear of *Hashem*?

**R' Shimon Schwab ז"ל** explains that *ahavas Hashem* alone would not have been enough to pass the test. The *Medrash* tells us that when *Avraham* lifted the knife to slaughter his son, tears flowed freely from his eyes and went into *Yitzchok's* eyes. His love for *Hashem* did not overpower his love for his son. His love was fully there as a father loves his child and would never do anything to harm him, and therefore it was his *yiras shomayim* that stood strong and gave him the ability to pass this test.

Love and fear seem to be contradictory emotions, however, in our relationship to *Hashem* we need both. We need to feel a love to *Hashem* so that we want to please Him, but we also must feel Fear of Heaven so that we will not transgress His will. *Chazal* teach us that "*Ahava mekalkeles es hashura*," Love destroys the normal order of things. But here we see that *Avraham* did not pass this most difficult test through love. He did not go to *shecht* his son because he was drunk with *ahavas Hashem* which led him to do something crazy. *Avraham* passed this test by overcoming his tidal wave of tears and overpowering love and compassion for his son with *yiras shomayim*. He was afraid to violate the command of *Hashem* because he valued the relationship he had with *Hashem*. The lesson for us is that being a true *oved Hashem* means fulfilling *Hashem's* command, no matter what.