

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

כי לי כל בכור ביום הבתי כל בכור בארץ מצרים הקדשתי לי כל בכור בישראל מאדם עד בהמה ... (ב-א)

The *Mishnah* (*Bechoros 51a*) teaches that when a *pidyon haben* is performed and a father gives 5 coins to a *kohen* in order to redeem his firstborn son, the *kohen* is permitted to return the coins as a gift to the father. Once the *kohen* receives them, they are his and the son is redeemed. However, the *Gemara* relates an incident about Rabbi Chanina, who would often return the money when the father lingered, indicating that he wanted the money back. Rabbi Chanina commented that if the father did not give the money with full intention, the son was not redeemed because the *pidyon* payment was never given sincerely. Although these unique silver coins are the payment to the *kohen* and are considered one of the twenty-four *matnas kehuna* (priestly gifts) that are given to the *kohanim*, they are sometimes returned by the *kohen* to the family as a gift for the child. Halachic authorities stipulate that, for the *pidyon haben* to be valid, the choice of returning the coins as a gift rests entirely upon the *kohen* whereas pressuring the *kohen* to do so would render the redemption invalid (**Chasam Sofer**).

The Jewish community of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the 1920's and 30's, was comprised largely of Russian and German immigrants. Due to its religious tolerance, industry and German roots, Milwaukee was considered a good place for Jews to pull up roots. By the early 20th century, many of the community's early Jewish founders had assimilated into the city's educated German elite. A few of these people had achieved a modicum of *yeshivah* education and *Torah* learning in the old country, but many who came to the United States as youngsters, became involved in the struggle for survival, and did not have an opportunity to further their Jewish learning.

Mr. Hershel Katz was a *Kohen* in the small community, who recited the priestly blessings on the holidays and took his mandate as a member of the priestly family seriously. Hershel was an unlearned man. As a child, he had gone to *cheder* in Europe, and had learned to read Hebrew, but little beyond that. He came to America with the early Eastern European immigration, and peddled rags with his pushcart. In time, he eventually worked his way up to a horse and wagon, and among other things, collected scrap metal, rags, and paper.

Hershel was well liked. As a *Kohen*, he would be called to officiate at a *pidyon haben* - redemption of the first-born, where he would receive the five silver coins that the father is required to give to the *Kohen*. He relished his role in the auspicious occasion and treasured the coins that he received. He kept every last coin.

When Hershel became older and took sick, he called his son and told him, "As soon as I go, open the drawer of the bureau, You will find a little cloth sack. Open it and follow instructions."

Immediately after Hershel breathed his last, the son obeyed his request. The little sack contained silver dollars and a gold piece. There was an accompanying note that read as follows: "All my life I tried to earn an honest living. I never knowingly cheated anyone. But who can say that he never, ever, accidentally overcharged or shortchanged anyone?"

"I have pitifully little in *mitzvos* and good deeds to accompany me when I stand before the Great Judge to give an account of my life. At least, I want to be dressed nicely. Sometimes nice clothes make a favorable impression.

"The only truly honest money that I can swear is justly mine are the coins in this sack. These are what I have received at the *pidyon haben*, as the redemption gift. I know they are mine because the *Torah* assigned them only to me as a *Kohen*, regardless of whether I deserved them. My father was a *Kohen* and so am I. Therefore, this money is honestly mine.

"My son, I want this money to be used to pay for my shrouds and all burial needs. This way, if I appear nicely dressed and neatly groomed with honestly acquired fittings, the Great Judge may be merciful in His judgement of me."

His final wish was done. Is there any doubt that Hershel's entrance into the Heavenly Court must have created quite a stir, for when else had the Heavenly Host ever seen so handsomely attired a person, wrapped with the glow of so many *mitzvos*?

והיה מספר בני ישראל כחול הדם אשר לא ידו ולא יספר... (דשע ב-א)

תורת הצבי על הפטרות A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Hoshea HaNavi states that "The number of the people of Israel shall be like that of the sands of the sea, which cannot be measured nor counted ..." However, *Chazal* (*Yoma 22b*) add that this promise from *Hashem* is only applicable when *Klal Yisroel* is following the will of the Almighty. If they are not following the word of *Hashem*, *ch"v*, then they can indeed be counted. And yet, we find in many places, how *Klal Yisroel* were counted among the seventy nations of the world, even when they were following the will of *Hashem*. How do we understand the statement of *Hoshea HaNavi*?

The Rebbe Reb Heschel, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel z"l of Krakow, explains that *Chazal* had a problem. The *Torah* tells us to follow the opinion of the many (רוב) but

Klal Yisroel's adherence to *Hashem* and His *mitzvos* is a minority opinion (מיעוט) amongst the nations of the world, making our very faithfulness to the *Torah* seemingly contrary to the teachings of *Hashem*. How can this be?

Thus, says the *Rebbe*, *Reb Heschel, Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, in His infinite wisdom, arranged that *Klal Yisroel* be counted amongst the other nations of the world in order to make them a "דבר שבמנין" which is בטל "even amongst a thousand." As a result, when *Klal Yisroel* is doing the will of the Almighty they have no number associated with them and they cannot be counted. But when they are sinning, they no longer have the elevated status mentioned above and can thus be counted and not be swept along with the majority.

והיו כל פקודי בני ישראל לבית אבתם מן עשרים שנה ומעלה כל יצא צבא בישראל ... (א-טז)

Moshe Rabbeinu was instructed to count the *Yidden*. Perusing the *posukim*, one clearly sees that there were two countings. One per *shevet*, each individual, and a second one, the sum total of everyone together. Why was it done that way?

The **Chasam Sofer** offers two *pshatim*. The first *pshat* he says is there is a benefit to being included with the *tzibbur* at large and a benefit in being separate. A person can blend in with the majority and enjoy the *chutz mitzvos*. He will be included among the *tzaddikim* and receive their protection. If, however, the *צבור* is not comprised of the most pious Jews, it would work better for him to be counted as an individual. Thus, *Hashem*, in His kindness, counts him whichever way is more beneficial for him.

The second *pshat* is based on the **Rosh** in *Pesachim* who answers the famous question regarding *Sefiras Haomer*. If there are only 49 days, why does the *Torah* say "תספר חמשים יום"? He answers that this is the way of the *Torah* that when we are one away from a unit of 10, we round it up. For example, *Malkus* (39), and the number of original Jews entering *Mitzrayim* (69). Here in our *parsha*, says the *Chasam Sofer*, had the *Torah* just written the individual totals, the count would have been one off per *shevet*. Hence, the *Torah* summed it up again with a complete reckoning of everyone.

Let us return to the words of the *Rosh*. He says that although the *Torah* writes that 70 people entered *Mitzrayim*, in reality it was 69. **Rashi** says that Yocheved was born הרומות בין. Why didn't *Rashi* agree to the *Rosh* like we find by the counting of the *Omer* and by *Malkus*? Perhaps the *machshava* is that when it comes to most counted items, the *Torah* isn't so *makpid* on the exact number, rounding off the total. However, when it comes to counting people, we don't round off because people aren't merely numbered items. Each person is a world unto himself. The *Torah* is extra scrupulous to count each person, thereby showing his *chashivus*. May we be *zoche* to always be a part of the *tzibbur*, while never forgetting our own identity and self-worth.

משל למה הדבר דומה

לנפתלי אחריע בן עיני ... (א-טז)

משל: Anyone who has ever seen a raven walk will quickly notice that the raven's walk is quite odd and unusual. It hobbles from side to side, waggling and jiggling unsteadily, until it reaches its destination. The *Medrash* tells us a fascinating story about the raven and its odd way of walking.

In the beginning of creation, the raven saw the dove walking, elegant and graceful, and decided to try and copy him. He got behind the dove and began mimicking every move, every gesture that the dove made.

When the other animals caught on to what the raven was doing, they began teasing and taunting him. The raven was insulted, frustrated and upset. He thought everyone was going to respect him for his graceful and elegant mannerisms and now exactly the opposite was happening. He decided he

had enough and stopped his practice of walking like the dove. However, he soon realized that now he was actually in worse shape than before. He hadn't perfected the "dove walk" yet, but he couldn't seem to figure out his original "raven walk." Try as he might, he couldn't remember how he originally walked and eventually, he simply gave up!

This is a historical background as to why all ravens walk in an eccentric and unsteady manner.

משל: The **Ohr Hachayim** (7-78) explains the words אחריע "אחריע ענין" to mean, that the *Nasi* of *Shevet Naftoli* thought to himself, "אחי רעי" - my brothers have a worse life than me. And he strove to improve their lives. This is a very impressive thing. Most people have the opposite problem. They think everyone else has a better life than them. They try and mimic the rich and popular in society ... and end up like the raven! Let's make sure not fall into this trap.

בזכות ספרת העומר שספרתי היום יתן לך מה שפגמתי בספירה ... (גיתס ספה ע')

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

דרגה יתירה

It has been quite a journey, seven weeks of working on the seven *middos* that connect us to *Hashem*. These 7 *sefiros* are the *Middos of Hashem* with which He created the world, and by focusing on them for 7 weeks, we attach ourselves to the Creator.

In *Pirkei Avos* (2-13), we are told, "Go out and see, what is the good path that a person should stick to. Rabbi Eliezer says, a good eye. Rabbi Yehoshua says, a good friend. Rabbi Yossi says a good neighbor and Rabbi Shimon says, one who sees what will be the outcome of his actions. Rabbi Elazar ben Arach says a good heart." The *Mishna* then tells us that the correct answer is a "Lev Tov" - good heart like Rabbi Elazar ben Arach and all the other things that were mentioned are included in this one.

The words "Lev Tov" in *gematria* is 49. Our journey of *tikkun hamiddos* is 49 days which culminates in the *Yom Tov of Shavuos*, the day of *Kabbolas HaTorah*. *Sefiras Haomer* can be divided into two parts. *Lev* is 32 and *Tov* is 17. The first 32 days of *Sefirah* are days that receive their spiritual energy from *Pesach*. The *middos* of *Chessed*, *Gevurah*, *Tiferes*, *Netzach* and the beginning of *Hod* are all about the heart. We are working on being a person with a heart. We are meant to rectify the terrible sin of the *talmidim* of Rabbi Akiva who did not show sufficient respect to one another. These days of *Sefirah* are about your heart, your *Lev*. Being the kind of person who truly feels the joy and pain of others.

The second part of *Sefirah* is *Tov*. The last 17 days receive their holy power from *Shavuos*. "Ein tov ela Torah" - there is nothing that is truly GOOD in the world except *Torah*, because *Torah* is the will of *Hashem* and *Hashem* is all good. These last 17 days that we are in now are days of acquiring the deep appreciation and attachment to *Hashem* and His *Torah*. The *Middos* of *Yesod* and *Malchus* are *Middos* that focus more on our relationship with *Hashem* than our relationship with others. The only way that we can truly be *zoche* to be *mekabel* the *Torah* is if we understand and appreciate what this time is all about.