

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וביום השמיני ימול בשר ערלתו ... (יב-ג)

The year 1929 (5689) was a year of pain and suffering for the Jews of *Eretz Yisroel*. The murderous and marauding Arabs attacked the small Jewish community of Chevron (Hebron), including the renowned *Knesses Yisroel Yeshivah*, killing sixty seven Jews and wounding another sixty. The savagery inflicted by the Arab killers was astounding even by their own bestial standards and Jews all over the world - even decent gentiles - were appalled at the massacre that took place.

However, what was more appalling, was the local British authorities seemed to indicate that it was the Jews’ own fault that they were subjected to this treatment, and had they not insisted on living amongst the Arabs in Hebron, there would have been no provocation to warrant such an attack. In fact, this was the distinct impression that Sir Harry Charles Luke - British High Commissioner of Palestine and later deputy to the acting Chief Secretary - gave in his dealings and memorandum to local British officials, and it was no secret that he favored the Arab minions over the Jews of the *Yishuv*.

At one of the numerous official ceremonies that took place in Jerusalem, not long after the 1929 massacre, the Jewish delegation, led by Chief Rabbi, **Rav Avraham Yitzchok Hakohen Kook ז”ל**, was met on the receiving line by the High Commissioner himself. Sir Harry Luke, prim and proper, and totally devoid of warmth, held out his hand disdainfully in greeting, however, Rav Kook refused to shake the hand of a person who so openly disregarded the Jews, and quickly walked on by. The slight was noticed by everyone present and the High Commissioner was mightily insulted.

The Chief Rabbi’s actions became the topic of heated discussions all over Jerusalem, and beyond. There were those who supported Rav Kook and felt that he was right in snubbing Sir Luke, for this was a way to show that he was most undesired and not respected by the bulk of his Jewish subjects. On the other hand, a great many of the Chief Rabbi’s foes were upset with his actions and feared that the High Commissioner, as well as his underlings in the governing British Mandate, would now have even more reason to dislike the Jews, and thereby show greater favoritism to the Arabs. Who knows, they claimed, if this does not lead to more pogroms and more unrestrained incitement against the *Yishuv*, for the British would now have no reason at all to protect its Jewish subjects. A bitter war of words broke out between the various factions of the *Yishuv*, and it further splintered the small community into even greater disunity.

During this period, a *Bris Milah* was held in Jerusalem, and the Chief Rabbi was invited to attend. When Rav Kook arrived, the accusations and finger-pointing began again in earnest, and the heat of the arguments threatened to disturb the celebration. Finally, Rav Kook called over his attendant and told him how to respond to the naysayers.

The attendant stood up and spoke to the massed crowd. “*Rabbosai*, the baby is about to arrive and when he does, he will be greeted by the customary ‘*Boruch Haba*.’ It is interesting to note that we do not welcome a *Bar Mitzvah* boy, or a *Chosson* and *Kallah* with ‘*Boruch Haba*.’ Only a tiny baby. Furthermore, we do not send off the baby, after the conclusion of the ceremony with ‘*Boruch Hayotzei*’ - a parting blessing to see him on his way. Did you ever wonder why this is so?”

The hall was now quiet. The fomenting arguments had ceased. Everyone was listening with rapt attention. “My friends, when a tiny baby is brought in, he is not yet circumcised. He is an ערל - for all intents and purposes, he is not yet Jewish. So people are so impressed by the sight and polish of a non-Jew, that they will show extra respect and greet him with extra salutations. Once the baby is circumcised, however, he is no longer an ערל - he is a Jew like all other Jews, and people are not all that impressed anymore!” The crowd began to buzz heatedly but the *gabbai* smiled and quieted them down.

“My friends, obviously I am joking. But can we not all learn a lesson from the matter at hand? Why should we let a gentile treat us harshly and then show him our respect? A gentile must know that he cannot treat a Jew as he pleases and the Jew will roll over and accept it!” The mood in the room seemed to shift and people understood the reason behind Rav Kook’s action.

וארבעה אנשים היו מצרעים
פתח השער ... (מלכים ב' ו-ג)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY
HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALED HISTORIAN

The four *metzoraim* (lepers) identified as Geichazi and his three sons, were forced to sit outside the city of Shomron due to their infliction. Nevertheless, *Hashem* orchestrated that they became the instrument of salvation for *Malchus Yisroel* in the face of the Aramean threat. The *Torah* states that a *metzora*h must isolate himself outside the camp so as not to make it impure, however that biblical commandment applied only to the *machaneh* in the desert, and by extension the city of *Yerushalayim*, which maintained a heightened level of *kedusha* due to the *Bais Hamikdash* being there. But why were the four lepers not allowed into the city of Shomron?

R’ Meir Simcha of Dvinsk ז”ל (Meshech Chochma) answers that despite the many terrible and sinful kings who

ruled *Malchus Yisroel*, they considered themselves upstanding Jews. In fact, in their minds, these kings followed *halacha* and adhered to the *Torah*, albeit only to the parts that they wanted to. As such, the kings of *Malchus Yisroel* treated their capital city of Shomron with the same reverence as *Yerushalayim* - the capital city of *Malchus Yehuda*. Whatever *halachos* applied to *Yerushalayim* also applied to Shomron.

Although their logic is wrong, there is still a valuable lesson to be gleaned from this. We may think that our minor good deeds will never tip the scale in our favor so there is no point in even trying to do them. However, it’s important to remember that regardless of a person’s level of *yiddishkeit*, doing a *mitzvah* - any *mitzvah* - is beloved by *Hashem* nonetheless.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

כי תבאו אל ארץ כנען אשר אני נתן לכם לאחזה
ונתתי ננע צרעת בבית ארץ אהותכם ... (יד-לד)

These opening words connote good tidings. *Hashem* is making us privy to breaking news. As we enter *Eretz Canaan* and move into our new homes, we may experience *tzaraas* on our new homes. **Rashi** comments that this is good news; the afflicted house is demolished and treasure hidden by its former Canaanite owners is discovered. The question is obvious: Does *Hashem* not have a different method of bestowing immense wealth upon us? Also, if *tzaraas*, as we know, is a divine retribution for certain transgressions, what about the well-known dictum that אין חיטא ושכר? A sinner does not get rewarded through his wrongdoing!

R’ Yechiel Michel Epstein ז”ל, the **Baal Aruch Hashulchan**, explains that *Hashem* has so much love for his children that even when they sin, He still showers them with blessing, because the point of pain we may be afflicted with, isn’t necessarily for the purpose of punishment, but rather to awaken in His children the will to repent and return to Him. Hence, if and when we heed the calling, we can be the recipients of even more *beracha*. Based on this, we can understand the connection between this week’s *haftarah* and our *parsha*. In it, we read about the four lepers who remained למחרה. The rest of the *haftarah* discusses how out of desperation and hunger, they checked out the nearby camp of Aram, which seemed desolate. They were unsure if the inhabitants were waiting in ambush or had actually deserted it. They told their brethren and together investigated and discovered that the camp was actually abandoned. They then proceeded to loot the empty camp of Aram.

Aside from the fact that they were *metzoraim*, what does this have to do with this week’s *sedra*? Perhaps the point is in line with the above explanation. Although *tzaraas* and its ensuing term served חוץ למחרה would at first seem to be a punishment with no silver lining, the opposite is actually true. It’s all *Hashem*’s blessing, albeit in disguise. Through the *tzaraas*, treasures can be found, both in the demolished homes and also in Aram. In truth, this is the case with all our trials and tribulations. At times we realize it and other times we may not. But we must always remember: חייב אדם לברך על הרעה כשם שמברך על הטוב!

משל למה הדבר דומה

ונתתי ננע צרעת בבית ארץ אהותכם ... (יד-לד)

משל: A wealthy man once wanted to support a friend who had fallen on hard times. His friend, on the other hand, was too ashamed to accept charity. Time after time he tried all sorts of clever ways to convince his friend to take money, with no success. Finally, the wealthy man devised a plan. Instead of giving him money directly, he helped him open a business so the friend would feel like he was earning the money himself. Behind his friend’s back, he sent customers to buy merchandise and paid for it out of his own pocket until the business was up and running successfully.

A while later the two friends sat down for a “business meeting.” The now economically comfortable man turned to his wealthy friend: “I didn’t know I had it within me to create

such a successful business.” The rich man smiled knowingly.

נמשל: **Rashi** tells us that when *Bnei Yisroel* came into *Eretz Yisroel* and their homes were inflicted with *tzaraas* they were forced to demolish their homes and it was then that they found hidden treasures from the previous occupants. But why? If *Hashem* wanted a person to have the treasures, why put him through all the trouble of demolishing his house? One of the numerous lessons derived from here is a concept of great significance. *Hashem* wants to provide for every person; however, He does not want a person to feel ashamed by simply receiving. Therefore, He created a system in which, if a person truly places his full trust in *Hashem*, *Hashem* will reward him by taking care of all his needs. Here too, if a person fully adheres to His commandments and demolishes his house, he will find the reward.

אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו שאת או כפתת או
בהרת ודהה בעור בשרו לננע צרעת ... (ג-ב)

GOLDEN NUGGETS ON THE PARSHA WITH A
FOCUS ON LESSONS HOW TO SERVE HASHEM
AND BE A BETTER JEW BY R’ YEHOShUA GOLD

הנחמדים מזהב

In this week’s *Parsha*, we learn that for certain *aveiros*, a person would be subject to a *Nega*, a form of leprosy. And while such a condition may form on the person’s skin, the **Seforno** points out that it was a pure miracle to occur on clothing or bricks of a house! *Hashem* does this to wake a person up, and give him a reminder about Who is truly behind everything that happens in the world, even what seems like a natural occurrence. **R’ Yeruchem Levovitz ז”ל**, *Mirrer Mashgiach*, broadens this idea. If you want to explain what water is, the answer is pretty basic. But upon further scrutiny, water is quite complex. It involves hydrogen and oxygen atoms, a coalescent bonding, and the formation of polar molecules. When *Hashem* performs miracles, it opens our minds and changes our perspective. What we assume to be ordinary is anything if not extraordinary!

Recently, a video circulated of a plane carrying Jewish families that skidded off the runway. The fuselage broke apart and the wheels landed a distance from the plane’s body. The videographer is incredulously thanking *Hashem* for the clear miracle, saving every man, woman and child on that plane. We’ve heard about other aerial disasters lately that did not have such happy outcomes. Clear miracles happen, and we should use them to strengthen our belief in *Hashem*’s existence and control.

The *posuk* in *Mishlei* says, “שוט לסוס, מתג לחמור, ושבת לוג כסלים” - a whip for a horse, a bridle for a donkey, and a rod for the back of a fool. The **Vilna Gaon ז”ל** explains, without a whip, a horse will not get its rider to the desired location. But once trained, the horse only needs the whip to be raised, and it knows to follow commands. The more stubborn donkey requires actual reins to be guided. But the most obstinate of all is the fool, who refuses to get inspired. Even the clearest message from *Hashem*, cannot get the dullard to draw closer to the One giving the messages. Don’t be worse than a donkey. Wake up and hear the clear message!

May we *taka* be *zoche* to the fulfillment of הנחמים ומן הפסחים ומהם, speedily and in our days!