

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

המעט כי הקליטנו מארץ זבת חלב ודבש להמיתנו במדבר וכו' (זו-ג'יג)

It was another dark day during the Second World War. A hungry Jewish boy named Binyamin Wertzberger was hard at work dragging heavy train tracks with his bare thin hands. When it came time to eat, he hurried to secure his gruel with whatever strength he had left, although the food served was minimal and bland. He needed it to get through another day in the slave labor camp. One day, while standing in the food line, a Nazi officer gave him and his fellow inmates a dirty look. “Do you dream of getting out of here?” he asked with a sneer. “Perhaps going to your Jewish land, to your Jerusalem?”

Nobody spoke. They just wanted their dollop of nourishment. And besides, what was there to say?

The Nazi beast wasn’t finished. “I doubt you will ever get there. Maybe your ashes will get there, though, through the chimneys of the crematoria.” His taunts and barbs were unceasing.

Many years later, Binyamin Wertzberger recalls being “beaten, humiliated, starved and forced to work in the most difficult of circumstances.” But he never forgot the cruel Nazi’s words while waiting on line that day. He vowed that were he to survive, he would make it to Jerusalem.

Towards the end of the war, he was forced into an infamous death march. He and thousands of others trudged for weeks to the Austro-Hungarian border. He recalls: “We walked for days without food or drink. Whoever was tired or drifted off was shot to death. Bodies were piling up as we walked.” He shivers from the memory.

After weeks that seemed to drag on forever, the group - now much smaller in size due to attrition - arrived at the Mauthausen concentration camp in the Austrian Alps, a camp with the sinister label of “Grade III” (intended to be the toughest camps for the “Incorrigible Political Enemies of the Reich”).

Binyamin Wertzberger was only seventeen at the time. He suffered greatly in that inferno where the expected life span of an inmate was no more than a few weeks. On May 5, 1945, the camp was taken over by soldiers of the Forty-First Recon Squad of the U.S. Eleventh Armored Division, who liberated it after they disarmed the S.S. gendarmes.

The teenager, seasoned well beyond his seventeen years, was thankful to be alive, but quickly learned that he was the only member in his family to have survived. “I had a brother and two sisters and they were all murdered by the Nazis,” he says, eyes pinched shut to hold back the tears. His family was gone - he had lost them all.

He never forgot the promise he made. After a long journey, he made it to the Land of Israel where he married and raised a family. “*Baruch Hashem*, they all learned in *yeshivos* and lead a life of *Torah* and *mitzvos*,” he says proudly.

When he retired from work, the family hoped he would spend more time at home with them, but Binyamin Wertzberger had one more mission in life.

One bright day, he walked into the offices of the Western Wall Heritage Foundation, the Jerusalem organization involved in physically maintaining and renovating the area surrounding the *Kosel Hama’aravi* (Western Wall).

At first, nobody paid him any attention. Finally, he spoke up. “I want to work for you,” he told a young man at a desk.

A manager walked over and he reiterated his request. The manager looked at him strangely. “With all due respect, you are an elderly man. We don’t have a job to offer you.”

But Binyamin was not one to give up. If he was, who knows if he ever would have made it out of the numerous camps he labored in? With a shrill insistence evident in his voice, he said, “Sir, I will do anything you ask. Just let me work here - you won’t be disappointed.”

Binyamin Wertzberger was given the task of cleaning the stones of the *Kosel*, and he wakes up at 5:00 a.m. every day to do so. “I never look at the watch when I am at work,” he says. “When I stand near the holy stones, I feel like I’m taking נקמה - revenge, on that Nazi officer. This is my Jewish revenge.”

משל למה הדבר דומה

זהו לך תרומת מתנם לכל תנופת בני ישראל לך נתתם ולבניך ולבנותיך אתך לחזק עולם וגו' (ח-יא)

משל: A man found his three-year old daughter playing with fancy wrapping paper. Money was tight and he became infuriated when the child tried to decorate a box with the paper. Nevertheless, the little girl brought the gift to her father the next morning and said, “This is for you, Daddy.”

The man was embarrassed by his over-reaction, but his annoyance flared again when he opened the box and found it was empty. He took his little girl by the hand and said to her, “What is this? Don’t you know, when you give someone a present, there is supposed to be something inside?”

The little girl looked up at him with tears in her eyes and

cried, “Oh, Daddy, it’s not empty at all. I blew kisses into the box. They’re all for you, Daddy.”

The father was crushed. He put his arms around his little girl and he begged for her forgiveness. What better gift can a father get from his child than a box of kisses, true unadulterated love? The child grew up, moved away and began a family of her own. The father kept that gold box by his bed for many, many years and whenever he was discouraged, he would take out an invisible kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

נמשל: Love and responsibility are inextricably intertwined.

Adapted from “The man who cleans the Kotel” by M. Cohen for COLlive.com

ויבא משה אל אהל העדות והנה פרה מטה אהרן
לבית לוי ויצא פרה ויצא ציץ ויגמל שקדים (ז-כג)

The *Ribono shel Olam* told *Moshe Rabbeinu* to take the staff of Aharon and place it in the *Aron Kodesh* together with a flask of *mann*. When the Holy Ark was hidden (נננו), the jar of *mann* and Aharon’s staff (מטה) were also hidden away for safekeeping. **R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל** quotes the *Gemara* (נב) (וימא) that the *mateh* of Aharon was hidden with the flowers and almonds (פרחים ושקדים) that miraculously blossomed on it when it was placed in the *Ohel Moed* in order to prove that Aharon was the truly chosen *Kohen Gadol*. This in itself was a miracle since normally, when fruits grow, the leaves and blossoms disappear immediately. Here, though, they miraculously remained on the *mateh* forever. R’ Moshe writes allegorically, that the fruit of a *mitzvah* represents the actual performance of the *mitzvah*, while the blossoms represent the hard work and preparation leading up to the *mitzvah*. Thus, he says, in this world of *gashmiyus*, once the almonds begin growing, the blossoms are generally forgotten. But in heaven, the blossoms - the reward for the effort one invests in *Torah*, *mitzvos* and *chinuch* of his children - are never lost once the results are achieved. This is symbolized by the safekeeping of Aharon’s *mateh*, since it was he who invested all his efforts in *avodas Hashem* and always pursuing peace (ורודף שלום). Therefore, the blossoms - the flowers and the almonds - all became holy together with the staff of Aharon and remain living (גויו) forever.

My *machshava* here is that it was for this reason that each *Nasi*, who had also placed his *mateh* in the *Ohel Moed*, took his “losing” stick back. He did not lose. His *mateh* was not a worthless lottery ticket to be ripped up and thrown away. No, it was something to be proud of, and displayed at home. It shows that each *Nasi* was ready to give up a life of *gashmiyus* in order to serve the *Ribono shel Olam* in the *Mishkan*. It is something to treasure, for his children and grandchildren to see and recognize the strong roots of their ancestors. May all of our עמלות in *mitzvos* and *chinuch habanim* be a *zechus* for *yeshuos* and *refuao*.

DRUSH V’CHIDDUSH

ותפתח הארץ את פיה ותבלע אתם ... ואת כל הרבוש (זו-לב)

Somebody once asked **R’ Avigdor Miller ז”ל** why the *posuk* refers to the “פי הארץ” - the “mouth” of the earth that swallowed up Korach and his company. In a heartbeat, he responded sharply, “Because he opened up his mouth (and spoke against Moshe), the earth opened up its mouth and swallowed him up!” The severity of Korach’s words and deeds were so overpowering, that even those around him - wives, children, babies, and all of their possessions - were swallowed up into the ground and lost forever.

Korach was one of the wealthiest men in the camp of *Bnei Yisroel*. The Sages tell us that Korach was so rich that it took 300 animals to carry the keys for his chests of gold and silver. The offspring of Korach dedicated an entire *psalm* to the subject of wealth: הבטחים על חילם ... למנצח לבני קרח מזמור. “*They who trust their riches, and are proud of their wealth.*” (*Tehillim* 49:7). The **Seforno** explains

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF מחלוקת

דרגה יתירה

The word “מחלוקת” means argument or fight. It comes from the root “חלק” which means piece, and gives us insight into why we fight. When a person doesn’t see the entire picture, but rather just a PIECE of the puzzle, it causes *machlokes*. The root of a fight is seeing only one side of the story. This causes people to be fragmented; it separates us from each other, and causes many individual PIECES to form in *Am Yisroel*. From Korach we learn that NO ONE is exempt from this ugly phenomenon. You can be a great *Talmid Chacham*, like Korach; you can be smart, powerful, rich and respected like Korach - and you can be blinded by your own greatness to create such terrible separation that you wind up being swallowed up by the earth!

So how can one avoid *machlokes*? There are two ways. One involves the brain and one involves the mouth. Indeed, the *Torah* teaches us that the soul of man is “דעה” - thought and “דיבור” - speech. The first thing we have to know is that it is okay for people to think differently than we do! We can agree to disagree, and we don’t have to get angry and disturbed if people don’t think the way we do! It is actually a good thing! Instead of thinking in terms of good and bad, or right and wrong, try to tell yourself that it is just different! It is not bad and it is not wrong - just different! The second idea involves our speech. In fact the best way to stop a fight is to avoid one! The **Aishel Avraham of Buchatch** explains that it is not the one who starts the argument who is at fault - it is the one who answers back! If someone remains quiet or acknowledges another person’s pain when they get angry, they are in fact stopping a *machlokes*! So try not to be the one who starts up, but if someone starts up with you, be sure not to be the one to continue and thus create a *machlokes*. Let us use our דעה and דיבור to avoid tragedy at all cost.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

מחשבת הלב

On behalf of thousands of Shomer Shabbos Jews - www.chickensforshabbos.com - The charity that simply feeds & clothes Shomer Shabbos Jews in Pretz, Yisroel with zero overhead