

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ואלה המשפטים אשר תשים לפניכם וגו' (כא-א)

Last week, we read of *Klal Yisroel's* preparation for the sublime experience of *Matan Torah*: שלשת ימי הגבלה - the three days prior to the Revelation, the great fire and smoke that rose like from a furnace, the lightening, *shofar* blast, *Hashem's* “voice” ushering forth from the mountain. This week, we read of the rights of the servant and maid, the laws of damages and watchmen, the prohibition against oppressing the foreigner, orphan or widow, and against cursing people and corrupting justice. What is the connection? In effect, we have here the thrust of Judaism in one brief anecdote: serving *Hashem* while ensuring to treat others properly. We received two *Luchos* at Sinai, the first containing the *mitzvos* between man and G-d, and the other presenting the *mitzvos* between man and his fellow man. The Almighty chose to teach us monetary and damage laws, rights of servants, the proper treatment of orphans, widows and strangers, immediately following *Matan Torah*, in order that we implant this understanding within our hearts: complete *avodas Hashem* must combine both *Luchos* - the laws governing one's relationship to *Hashem*, and those regarding one's conduct towards others.

An aging bachelor was having a difficult time finding a *shidduch*. Day by day, year by year, this once eligible bachelor was becoming less and less eligible, as he just couldn't find the “right” one. To top it off, he had an additional “shortcoming” that made finding a match for him all the more difficult. He had stipulated to all *shadchanim* that he would only listen to a proposal for a girl who was prepared to care for his elderly and ailing mother, and allow her to live in their home once they were wed. He was adamant about this. Needless to say, this precondition did nothing to enhance his opportunities or endear him to prospective candidates, and soon, fewer and fewer offers came his way.

The boy's relatives were up in arms over his precondition. Even without it, they reasoned, it was not as if the *shadchanim* were breaking down his door, and the stipulation all but guaranteed that the prospects wouldn't even knock politely. “Your only hope,” he was assured repeatedly, “is to have your dear old mother admitted to an old age home, where she will be cared for and looked after with professional care.” He wouldn't hear of it.

Due to the mounting and relentless pressure that his family and close friends had imposed, the bachelor reluctantly turned to **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT”L** and presented his situation. On the one hand, he loved his mother dearly and knew nobody could love and care for her like he did; on the other hand, it was clear that this was affecting his present ability to get married. R' Shlomo Zalman listened carefully and weighed all the sides of the equation. Then, he told him that he heartily agreed with the bachelor's stipulation. The *Rav* contended that the most important thing about a prospective wife was her good character. Her willingness to accept such a difficult condition would attest to the fact that she was imbued with wonderful *middos tovos* and a pure heart. Furthermore, insisted R' Shlomo Zalman, if he decided to settle for a girl who did not meet this criterion, and in the end, his mother had to be placed in an old age home anyway, the new husband would forever hold a grudge against his wife, thinking that because of her heartless inconsideration to his mother's plight, she is being forced to live out her years among strangers.

Relieved that his way of thinking had been vindicated by the great *Gaon's* confirmation, the bachelor continued to adhere to his inflexible precondition and refused any offer that did not meet it. Amazingly, though, it appeared that R' Shlomo Zalman had not only rendered a decisive ruling, but also a spectacular blessing, for soon after the encounter, the not-so-young bachelor returned to the *Rav* to tell him the delightful news that he was finally engaged to be married.

R' Shlomo Zalman was overjoyed. “Now you know for sure that you have a woman with gilt-edged qualities,” R' Shlomo Zalman declared. “And now, too, the time has come for you to make arrangements for your mother in a good old age home. It is far too much responsibility for a young wife to have to bear such a burden”

משל למה הדבר דומה

וכי יפתח איש בור או כי יכרה איש בור ולא יכסנו ונפל שמה שור או חמור וגו' (כא-ל)

משל: A *Chupah* is at once a solemn and sanctified place where a bride and groom officially become joined as one. It is also a scene of bedlam in the moments right after the glass is broken, the horns start blaring, and the well-wishers “attack” the platform to offer blessings of *Mazel Tov*.

It is highly unusual at this frenetic time for the *chossan* himself to disappear right under the noses of all of his guests. But that's exactly what happened at the *Chupah* of **R' Leib Chasid ZT”L of Kelm**. As everyone looked around to wish the young man well, he could not be found.

Where exactly was he? Well, he was on all fours crawling around under everyone's feet picking up the broken shards of glass he had moments before crushed, as a customary commemoration of the destruction of the Temple.

People were shocked to see young Leib'l on the floor and asked him what he was doing. His answer is inspiring.

“It is my obligation to clean up these pieces of glass,” he said matter-of-factly, “for I am the one who broke the glass, thus I am the ‘*Baal Habor*’ (maker of the pit)!”

נגמל: The *gemara* (בבא קמא ל:) learns from here that one

על כל דבר פשע על שור על חמור ... יבא דבר שניהם אשר ירשעו אלהים ישלם שנים לרעהו (כב-ח)

The *gemara* (שבת לא.) states: “*When man is led in for judgment he is asked, 'נשאת ונתת באמונה, 'Did you conduct your business affairs with faith (integrity)? Did you establish set times for studying Torah? ... Did you debate wisely to understand the deeper meaning (of knowledge)?'*” These questions, which place business affairs before *Torah* study, seem to contradict a different statement of *Chazal* (קידושין מ): “*The beginning of man's judgment is in respect to words of the Torah.*” Apparently, one is first judged in regard to *Torah* and then in regard to other matters.

R' Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman ZT”L suggests that the two passages in the *gemara* are not contradictory for they refer to different judgments. A person is judged every single day, as well as at the beginning of every new year. It is on these days of judgment that a person must first answer to his responsibility to study *Torah* as the primary item on the docket, and only afterward, to queries regarding his integrity in business affairs. Illicit business practices can always be neutralized through monetary compensation, whereas neglect of one's obligation to *Torah* study can never be repaid.

After a person dies, however, he must stand judgment for his entire lifetime. Then, a person's financial misdeeds remain on his record, with no opportunity for recompense. Dishonesty in business harms others, and as such, even takes precedence over neglect in *Torah* study when both are beyond self-correction. This ultimate emphasis on personal integrity as well as personal commitment to *Torah* study demonstrates how dominant these must be in every individual's personal life as well as in our national existence.

One year, at a convention for the “Association of Jewish CPAs,” **R' Shimon Schwab ZT”L** addressed the audience and said in no unclear terms: “A person who is dishonest in business is a כופר בעיקר (does not believe in G-d at all)!”

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

עבודה

(כג-כה)

The command here to serve *Hashem* is written in the plural form - “ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם” - whereas the resultant blessing is phrased in the singular - “וברך את לחמך ואת מימך”. What is the significance of this wording?

R' Tzadok Hakohen ZT”L, in **Pri Tzaddik** explains: *Avodah* represents the “service of the heart,” which refers to *Tefillah* - prayer. In this respect, prayer is different from other “services” in that each and every person has his own way, unique unto himself, in serving *Hashem*. Thus, *tefillah* is an *avodah* that is described in our *posuk* in a plural sense, since it takes on many different and unique forms and expressions. However, prayer also has the ability to unify individuals for the purpose of praising and glorifying *Hashem*. Although it may come from many different sources, the ultimate result is a unification of Jews in the service of *Hashem*. It is then, says the *posuk*, that *Bnei Yisroel* will collectively merit to receive a blessing on “*your bread and water*,” which *chazal* refer to as תורה שבכתב - Written Law, and תורה שבעל פה - Oral Law. An individual's success in *Torah* is part of a collective blessing resulting from a unified devotion to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*!

The same is true on a literal level as well. Unity in ה' עבודה brings collective sustenance and personal health as well, because “*I will remove sickness from within your midst*,” is also written in the singular. When we will raise our collective voices Heavenward, and unify the entire Jewish nation around the flag of *Torah*, we may then merit the collective *berachah* - spiritually and physically - to which the *Torah* refers.

ובכל אשר אמרתי אליכם תשמרו ושם אלהים אחדים לא תזכירו לא ישמע על פיך וגו' (כג-א)

When a Jew performs a *mitzvah*, he must be watchful (תשמרו) to do it in the correct manner. Simply doing it is not enough. The **Chasam Sofer, R' Moshe Sofer ZT”L** offers an example of this from the *gemara* (חולין קמב.) regarding a father who told his son to do שלוח הקן (sending away the mother bird to take the younglings), and while on top of the ladder, the son fell and died. The *gemara* asks how this is possible (שלוח מצוה אינו נזקק) and answers that perhaps the son was thinking thoughts of עבודה זרה (idol-worship). Thus, our *posuk* teaches that one must be watchful to do the *mitzvos* while “*the name of strange gods shall not be on your lips.*”

One year, **R' Zalman Sorotzkin ZT”L (Oznaim L'Torah)** was asked to speak on *Parshas Mishpatim*, regarding bolstering *Shabbos* observance in a synagogue where some of the congregants had begun opening their stores on the *Shabbos*. However, when he walked into the main hall, he was startled to see the synagogue filled to “standing room only” capacity. The unusually large attendance was explained as being due to a non-Jewish holiday which fell on the same day, and on which the state forbade the opening of stores. Therefore, even the *Shabbos* violators had come to pray, bringing their children with them.

Addressing the congregants from the pulpit, R' Zalman pointed out, “My friends, your children have surely asked you מה נשתנה השבת הזה? - why is this *Shabbos* different from all others, and no doubt you were compelled to reply that on this *Shabbos* some “important” gentile was born. Could there be any greater desecration of *Hashem's* name?

“Regarding this the *Torah* admonished, ‘*On the seventh day shall you desist.... beware of everything I have said to you. The name of strange gods shall not be on your lips.*’ A Jew must keep *Shabbos* because *Hashem* commanded him to, not because some *goy* was born on the same day!”

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ועבדתם את ה' אלקיכם וברך את לחמך ואת מימך

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