

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

אשר נשיא יחטא ועשה אחת מכל מצות ה' אלקיו אשר לא תעשינה בשגגה ואשם וגו' (ד-כב)

Rashi comments: “*The word 'אשר' denotes 'אשר' (fortunate). Fortunate is the generation whose Nasi directs his heart to bring atonement for his unintentional sin.*” A *Nasi* - ruler, is a very public figure and has a strong influence on his people. When the people see that in spite of the glory of his lofty position, he is not afraid to admit his sin and publicly ask for forgiveness, it sets a powerful example for them to repent for their own wrongdoings.

In the city of Bnei Brak there are many *Bar Mitzvah* celebrations every *Shabbos*. In practically every *shul* in the city, a different boy is called to the *Torah* for his very first time, often with a *kiddush* to follow. B”H, *kain yirbu!*

Of course, many of the *Rabbonim* of Bnei Brak and beyond, receive quite a few invitations to these milestone celebrations and at some point they have to juggle their schedules and routines if they wish to attend them. As he became older and it became increasingly difficult for him to walk, **R’ Yaakov Yisroel Kanievski ZT”L**, the elderly sage known as the **Steipler Gaon**, found himself unable to attend every *Bris*, wedding and *Bar Mitzvah* celebration that he was invited to. In fact, he was old and weak and barely mustered the strength to go to *shul*.

One week, however, one lucky *Bar Mitzvah* boy was treated to a rare honor. The boy had received *Maftir* and read from the *Haftorah*, and when davening was completed people had begun shaking his hand and offering their congratulatory blessings. Suddenly, a commotion was felt in the back as the great Steipler Gaon slowly entered the shul and humbly took his place on the hastily formed line, waiting to wish the *Bar Mitzvah* boy *Mazel Tov*.

When he reached the front, R’ Yaakov Yisroel bent down and began conversing in a low voice with the young boy, the newest member of the adult Jewish community. It seemed to the hushed crowd that this was much more than a perfunctory *Mazel Tov* wish.

Suddenly, the boy paled as he shook his head several times in amazement. “Of course, *Rebbe!*” he exclaimed. “Of course! There is no question. I feel terrible that the *Rebbe* had to make a special effort to come here in order to discuss this with me!”

But the Steipler smiled and shook it off. With true sincerity, he thanked the young boy, wished him *Mazel Tov*, blessed him, and made his way out of the *shul*.

The entire congregation was shocked. What could the Steipler have wanted?

“Let me explain,” began the boy. “Six years ago - I was barely seven years old at the time - I was davening in this very *shul*. I had found a large *siddur* and felt like a big boy davening from it. In the middle of davening, the holy Steipler was walking past my seat and he noticed my big *siddur*. Thinking it was a *gemara* due to the size of the *sefer*, he chided me for learning in the middle of the *Tefillah* and told me that I should instead look inside a *siddur*. I showed him that, in fact, it was a *siddur* and that I was actually davening. He apologized and left.”

“Today,” said the *Bar Mitzvah* boy, whos retelling of the story attracted hordes of listeners, “the Steipler came here to this *shul* and reminded me of the story. He explained to me that even though he apologized for his mistaken reprimand six years ago, it was not enough. Since, at the time, I was a child under *Bar Mitzvah*, I did not have the frame of mind to truly forgive him. Even if I did forgive him, it had no halachic validity. The Steipler found out when my birthday was and waited for six years until my *Bar Mitzvah*. Today, I am halachically old enough to forgive him, and so, he came back today to ask my forgiveness!”

משל' למה הדבר דומה

ואם לא תשיג ידו לשתי תרים או לשני בני יונה והביא את קרבנו אשר חטא וכו' (ה-יא)

משל: A rabbi once came to visit one of his community members to discuss an important matter. He arrived to find the family in the midst of a meal. The man welcomed the rabbi and asked him to please join the family in the meal.

One glance at the sparse amount of food on the table, however, indicated to the rabbi that there was hardly enough for the family, and that his partaking of any food would impinge upon their rations. Yet, he did not wish to refuse in a manner that would betray the reason for his reluctance and possibly embarrass the host.

“I’m sorry I cannot join you,” the rabbi said, “but I am under strict orders from a physician not to eat.”

The *shammes* who had accompanied the rabbi was surprised at this since the rabbi was not known to say an untruth. After they left, he asked the rabbi why he had lied.

“I did not lie at all,” the rabbi said. “It is well known that the **Rambam** was a great physician. The Rambam rules that one should not partake of a meal that is inadequate for the host. Hence I was under physician’s orders not to eat.”

גמסל: The *Torah* takes pity on less fortunate Jews who

ויקרא אל משה וידבר ה' אליו מאהל מעמד (א-א)

The *Medrash* states: “*Any talmid chacham (Torah scholar) that does not possess דעת (intelligence), is worth less than the carcass of a dead animal ... Look at Moshe, the greatest of all sages, the father of all prophets and yet he did not enter the innermost Tent of Meeting (Ohel Moed) until he was called to come inside, as it is written 'And He (Hashem) called out to him.'*”

Moshe Rabbeinu is praised for having the wisdom and understanding - “*Daas*” - to know right from wrong. This is seemingly difficult, for surely it is Moshe’s *Derech Eretz* and proper conduct that we are praising, not his intelligence; why then do *Chazal* denounce a *talmid chacham* who lacks *daas*, not *derecheretz*?

R’ Mordechai Gifter ZT”L gives a deep and profound explanation. *Moshe Rabbeinu’s derech eretz* and the manner in which he acted outwardly was not simple etiquette or the outcome of what man considers befitting conduct. Rather, it was the product of his “*Daas*” - the *Torah* wisdom contained within him, which he had integrated into his very fiber and which dictated his every move. *Chazal*, therefore, stress that *talmidei chachamim* must bring the *Torah* they learn to that level of wisdom and intelligence, where it does not remain mere knowledge but becomes the motivating factor behind their every action.

A human being is the only creature capable of refining his understanding and thereby transforming it into wisdom. Should he fail to do so, then he will have failed to attain his primary goal in life. Although an animal cannot reach such a high level of development, it at least fulfills its purpose in this world. Hence, the *talmid chacham* who does not possess “*Daas*” is worse than an animal’s carcass, for he has not fulfilled his G-d-given potential in life.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...
אמונה

As *Elul* is conducive to *Teshuvah* and *Adar* is a time of *Simcha*, the month of *Nisan* brings with it the power of *Eminah*, the foundation and fundamental *middah* of a Jew. The month of *Nisan* and the season of our redemption is the time that we PASSOVER this belief in *Hashem* to the next generation. The purpose of “הגדת לבנך” and the entire *יצאת מצרים* is an insurance plan that the *emunah* of *Klal Yisroel* will persevere forever and ever, throughout the generations.

Eminah means knowing that *Hashem* is the Creator and Supervisor of every single action in this world - and everything He does is for the good! Any negative trait - anger, frustration, כפירה - can be traced back to Pharaoh, the one who said, “*Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?*” We all contain a bit of that “Pharaoh” within us - yet if we truly BELIEVE that everything *Hashem* does is for our own good, why would we ever react negatively?

So what do we do? In the month of *Nisan* we clean out all the *chametz* from within our homes, closets, cabinets and yes - our hearts! Those hidden “crumbs” of Pharaoh - the bad traits we possess, the insistence of having everything in our lives exactly the way WE want them to be - this is the antithesis of true *emunah*, this is what will crumble our very foundation!

As we exert ourselves to rid our homes of forbidden *chametz*, let’s also “clean up” our act by not yelling at one another, by not imposing our will upon others, by being kind and gentle - the opposite of Pharaoh - and thereby tap into our wellspring of *emunah* and *bitachon* in *Hashem*, Who knows much better than we do exactly what we need!

ושחט אותו על ידך המזבח צפנה לפני ה' (א-יא)

The *gemara* (סוכה נב.) teaches: “*In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the Evil Inclination and slay it.*” Slaughtering the Evil Inclination (*yetzer hara*) means diluting its strength (ביטול כחו). This is, in effect, the best way to disarm and ultimately kill it. The **Toldos, R’ Yaakov Yosef of Polonye ZT”L** quotes the holy **Baal Shem Tov ZT”L** that *chazal* used the word “לשחט” which is a term normally employed for ritual slaughter of kosher animals, as opposed to the more appropriate “להרג” - to kill it. For just as *shechitah* (ritual slaughter) renders an animal kosher, so too, will “slaughtering” the *yetzer hara* render it “kosher” which will transform it into an angel of good.

R’ Nochum Twerski ZT”L of Chernobyl (Meor Einayim) adds that we learn this great lesson from the *posuk* in *Parshas Vayikrah*: “ושחט אותו על ידך המזבח צפונה לפני ה'” - “*And you shall slaughter it on the side of the altar, to the North, before Hashem.*” “*And you shall slaughter it*” - the Evil Inclination; “*on the side*” - a veiled reference to the sin of lust and infidelity; “*of the altar*” - a person’s table is akin to the altar in the Temple; “*to the North*” - the quest for money and possessions is termed “צפון” (North), as *Chazal* tell us: “*One who desires to be rich should turn to the North.*” (ב”ב כה); “*before Hashem*” - by ridding oneself of these three shortcomings - the lust for immorality, the pursuit of wealth, and the pleasures of food and drink - one can slay his evil inclination and come before the Almighty.

Similarly, we find a connection to the words of the *gemara* (שבת קיט): “*One who answers Amen with all his might, the gates of Gehinom are opened for him.*” The word “*Amen*” is an acronym for **אכילה** (food), **ממון** (money), **ניאוף** (adultery). One who “answers” these misdeeds and fights them off with all his strength, will surely be removed from *Gehinom*.

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

וצדיקבאמונתו יחיה וגו' (חבקוק ב-ד)

דרגה יתירה