



# מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

וענית ואמרת לפני ה' אלקיך ארמי אבד אבי וירד מצרימה ויגר שם במתי מעט ... (כו-ה)

Every so often, you run into someone whose life feels like a quiet answer to a question you did not even realize you were asking. I recently met a local rabbi, a well-known figure across our community whose counsel is sought by people from every imaginable walk of life. He asked to remain anonymous, and once you hear his story, it is entirely clear why. He comes from what people often call a “simple” family - though in truth, no Jew is simple, as every *neshama* carries an irreplaceable, priceless value. His brothers were practical men who naturally transitioned into trade and commerce, building comfortable, grounded lives. But his own heart burned for something else entirely: his soul yearned for the depth and wisdom of the *Torah*.

His choice was not met with easy acceptance. His parents placed heavy pressure on him to leave the *yeshivah*, step away from abstract study, and learn a practical craft that could secure a stable livelihood. The weight of that expectation eventually wore him down until he finally broke, ready to surrender his true calling. But at the absolute eleventh hour, his rabbi stepped in and told his parents the following ancient story: Centuries ago, a wealthy farmer named Hyrcanus watched all of his sons work diligently in his fields. All, that is, except for one. One son abandoned the farm, fleeing the physical labor to immerse himself in study. Hyrcanus was furious. How could his son abandon a secure, guaranteed future for an intangible spiritual pursuit? While his brothers broke their backs in the field, this son simply sat and read. Hyrcanus reasoned that when the time came to divide his vast estate, this boy should receive nothing, having neither toiled nor labored for the family fortune. Fueled by anger, Hyrcanus traveled all the way up to Jerusalem to formally disinherit his son before the rabbinic courts.

When the father arrived in the holy city, however, he discovered that his runaway son had developed an incredible, unrivaled brilliance under the tutelage of *Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai*, the leader of the Jewish people. That young scholar was being ordained as a master teacher, standing as the greatest disciple of his generation. His name was *Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*. When the great leader realized who the father was, he embraced Hyrcanus and proclaimed, “Blessed are you, for such greatness came from your house!” Seeing the immense spiritual stature his son had attained, the father never disinherited him. Instead, Rabbi Eliezer became the enduring crown of the entire family.

Finishing the tale, the neighborhood rabbi asked the young man’s parents, “Surely you have heard of the divine *Tanna, Rav Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*?” The father, a knowledgeable man, replied immediately, “Of course, In the *Mishnah*, he is defined as a plastered cistern that never loses a single drop. His brilliant insights fill our sacred texts.”

The rabbi smiled and asked one final question: “And his hard-working brothers - what were their names?” The room fell silent. Nobody knew. Their names dissolved into the passage of time, lost to the mundane routines of everyday life. Touched by the realization, the young man stayed in the *yeshivah*, and the rest is history.

As the neighborhood rabbi walked away after sharing this story, a realization hit me. Just like the brothers of Rav Eliezer, no one actually knows the names of this local rabbi’s brothers either. Despite their commercial success, they faded into the background, while the brother who chose a life of spiritual dedication became the anchor of his family’s memory.

This dynamic lies at the very heart of the *Torah parsha* where we declare, "ארמי אובד אבי", referring to Lavan’s attempts to spiritually dismantle Yaakov. Lavan did not merely seek physical harm; he sought to absorb Yaakov into his material, self-serving worldview. Lavan’s own sons were completely lost to history, forgotten because their lives were tethered only to temporary possessions. Had Yaakov followed their path, he too would have been forgotten.

Instead, Yaakov chose a life of righteousness and eternal values, earning a legacy so deep that our sages teach “*our father Yaakov did not die*” - he lives on through the vibrant heritage he built. We often meet people who take immense pride in their ancestry, boasting of great grandfathers or celebrated lineages from generations long past. A noble lineage is meaningless if the present generation abandons the very values that made their ancestors great.

קוֹמֵי אֲדָרִי כִּי בֵּא אֲדָרִי וּבְכֹד ה' עֲלִיךָ וְדָחִי ... (ישעי' כ-א)

Unlike the terrible curses mentioned in the *Parsha*, *Yeshaya HaNavi* draws a contrasting view with promises from *Hashem* that *Klal Yisroel* would eventually find comfort in the very punishments that they had experienced throughout the long exile. “*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of Hashem has shone upon you.*” Such is the divine message for *Klal Yisroel* which offers a sliver of hope in a very dark world. But what light is the *Navi* referring to and what is the significance of its shine?

**R’ Shlomo Ashkenazi Rappaport ז”ל** of **Chelm** explains that that the light and shine detailed by the *Navi* are a reference to the two crowns that *Klal Yisroel* received at *Matan Torah* on *Har Sinai* when they wholeheartedly

accepted the *Torah* with the immortal words of *Naaseh V’Nishma*. These two crowns signified a balance of the two main worldly elements - light and dark - which enumerates how the *Torah* is the only thing that holds the balance of evil (dark) and good (light) in this world. After *Matan Torah*, *Klal Yisroel* proudly wore these crowns and acted as arbiters of their ideals, but they were eventually lost due to sin and *Hashem* promised to return them at a later time.

As the keepers of these values, it is important for every individual Jew to know that simply activating a light does not make a significant difference. Rather through projecting the light of *Torah* and letting it shine forth, the light will ultimately make an impact on the world around.

## תורת הצבי על הפטרות

DEEP, PENETRATING ANALYSIS  
OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH

ושמרתם את דברי הברית הזאת ועשיתם אתם  
למען תשכילו את כל אשר תעשון ... (בט-ה)

*Parshas Ki Savo*, famously known for containing the second תוכחה, closes with the above-referenced *posuk*. Its simple understanding is: If a person adheres to *Torah u’Mitzvos*, he’ll know exactly how to act, thereby avoiding קללות.

The **ילקוט שמעוני** says, if one wants to survive in this world, he needs only to learn *Torah*. He sees this from the *Torah*’s beginning the next *posuk* with "אדם נצבים". If "ושמרתם" ... then "אדם נצבים" - you’ll be able to stand. Furthermore, the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin 99b* extrapolates from this *posuk* the following *Chazal*: כול המלמד את בן חברו תורה כאילו עשא, כאילו עשאו לדברי *Chazal*: It’s as if he made the child, or the *Torah*, or himself. Asks the **Netziv**: Where did *Chazal* see this lesson in this *posuk*? The *Torah* is replete with similar *posukim* and there’s no such message gleaned. For example, it says in *Kedoshim*, "ושמרתם את כל חקתי ואת משפטי ועשיתם אתם", or in *Emor*, "ושמרתם מצותי ועשיתם", and there’s no mention of this concept. What is added here that prompted this לימוד? He answers that unlike the other places, our *posuk* adds the word ברית. The *bris* of *Torah* is its continuity, passing on from generation to generation; as we say in daily, ובא לציון ומפי, "לא ימושו מפיד, ומפי, זרעך, ומפי ... מעתה ועד עולם". The idea of זרעו מפי זרעו. The other *posukim* thus refer to a person’s own connection to *Torah*. But if one teaches *Torah* to the young, there’s a הבטחה that the תוכחה need not come.

Earlier in the *parsha* it says, "ארור אשר לא יקים את דברי התורה". Meaning that if one ensures the *kiyum* of *Torah* through conveying its beauty to the children, that brings *beracha* to the world. **Rashi** says, כאן כלל את כל התורה כולה.

In light of the above, this can mean that the entire *Torah* is contingent on this principle; on our everlasting *mesorah* chain, from link to link. May we be *zoche* to impart the *Torah* to our descendants and earn the *beracha* of "אדם נצבים היום" as we stand before *Hashem* this *Rosh Hashanah*.

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ובאת אל הכהן ... ואמרת אליו הגדתי היום לה' אלקיך (כו-ג)

**משל**: Judge John Kralik once hit a really low point in his life. Everything was going wrong. His work as a lawyer was failing, his personal life was becoming a mess, and he felt totally overwhelmed by his problems. He felt like he had nothing good left in his life.

One day, he had a simple but powerful idea. Instead of looking at what he was missing, he decided to focus on what he did have. He set a goal to write one handwritten thank-you notes every single day for a whole year.

At first, writing these notes felt a bit weird. But slowly, something amazing happened. Because he had to look for reasons to say thank you, he started noticing kind acts everywhere. He saw the good in his friends, coworkers,

ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך  
ולביתך אתה ודלוי ודגור אשר בקרבך ... (כו-א)

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

*Bikkurim* is the commandment for every farmer to bring the first fruits from each crop to the *Bais HaMikdash* and give them to a *Kohen*. By this *mitzvah* the *Torah* says explicitly, "ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך", there must be genuine *simcha* in this *mitzvah*. But how can a farmer be happy when he is giving away his very own crop? After working the land and tirelessly caring for the crops, finally the first fruits appeared. Instead of enjoying them himself, he has to give them away!

The fruits were transported in a basket. Wealthy farmers would bring their fruits in beautiful, expensive baskets, even accompanied by cows whose horns were covered with gold. Poor farmers, however, would use a home made woven basket. *Chazal* teach that the fancy baskets were returned by the *Kohen* while he kept the poor persons.

The **Malbim** shares a deeper reason for this. The poor farmer personally invested his time and effort into making his basket. His own hands created the vessel that carried his *Bikkurim*. An additional fascinating detail was that the baskets were made from the branches used for *Aravos* on *Sukkos*! Their very source was a holy! Therefore, the basket itself became part of the *mitzvah*. But the wealthy person simply purchased an expensive basket. Its beauty was not an expression of his personal *Avodah* and it therefore was merely a physical fancy basket.

**R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל** explains that the farmer's happiness comes from recognizing the truth of "אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך", everything he has was given to him by *Hashem*. The farmer did work. He plowed, planted, watered, and waited. But ultimately, he realizes that the fruit did not come from his own power. *Hashem* gave him the land, the ability to work it, the rain, the sun, and ultimately the fruit itself.

When a person thinks what he worked for his, it is difficult to give it away. But when a person realizes that *Hashem* gave it to me, there is joy in giving it back. It is an expression of gratitude and *Avoda* to *Hashem*.

family, and even people he didn’t know.

The biggest surprise wasn’t how the notes made others feel, but how they changed him. His anger and sadness turned into real happiness. Because he was more thankful, his relationships got much better. He later wrote a book about how this small daily habit completely turned his life around.

**נמשל**: The *Torah* value of “*hakaras hatov*” which means noticing and being thankful for the good things we get, is the opening message of this week’s *Parsha* and it is also an essential tool to use as we get ready for *Rosh Hashanah*. When we train ourselves to look for good, the way we see the whole world changes. Often, we think life has to get better before we can feel thankful. But it’s actually the other way around. When we choose to be thankful first, our everyday life starts to feel full of blessings.

## הנחמדים מזהב