

[illegible]

מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

את ה' אלוקיך תירא ואתו תעבד ובשמו תשבֹּעַ וגו' (ו-יג)

“*It was taught, Shimon Haemsoni (others state, Nechemia Haemsoni) interpreted every אֶת in the Torah. As soon as he came to, ‘You shall fear (אֵת) Hashem, your G-d,’ he desisted. Said his disciples to him, ‘Master, what is to happen with all the אֶתִּיךְ which you have interpreted?’ ‘Just as I received reward for interpreting them,’ he replied, ‘so will I receive reward for retracting them.’ Subsequently, Rabbi Akiva came and taught: ‘You shall fear Hashem, your G-d,’ is to include Torah scholars.*” (פסחים כב:) Chazal tell us that the reverence demanded by the *Torah* for its scholars and those who guide and lead the Jewish people, is the same as the respect and veneration demanded for *Hashem Himself*.

The late afternoon during the twilight hour of the day, is a mysterious time in Jerusalem, when the sun is descending into the horizon but night has not yet fallen, and objects cast their long shadows along the smooth stone building walls. In the narrow alleyways that comprise the dusty streets of *Meah Shearim*, the renowned *Posek Hador*, **R’ Yosef Sholom Elyashiv ZT”L** and an accompanying student were headed for the *Beis Medrash* where the *Rav’s* daily *Gemara shiur* was scheduled to begin soon. The winding, narrow streets of Jerusalem are well documented and the *shul* to where they were heading was a few sharp turns ahead. Not surprisingly, they did not notice a stranger slowly sauntering in their direction. The man was reputed in the community as one whose *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) had gotten the upper hand, enticing him time and again to speak disparagingly about *Torah* scholars. Many people avoided talking to such a person who blatantly disregarded the Sages’ dictum (פסחים כב-ד-טו): “*The fear of your Rebbe should be as great upon you as your fear of heaven.*”

As the *Rav* and his *talmid* approached, the fellow looked about making sure no one other than the great *Gaon* and his escort were walking toward him. He had a “beef” with the *Rav* and he stood there poised, waiting until R’ Elyashiv was only a few steps away and then, with the utmost of *chutzpah*, began yelling and hurling a barrage of foul language at the eminent *talmid chacham* on the other side of the street. The tone and barrage was shocking but amazingly, R’ Elyashiv wasn’t surprised or at all fazed by the ugly words. It wasn’t the first time he had been insulted by riffraff who, for various reasons, disapproved of his halachic decisions. But the *Rav’s* escort was dismayed and unnerved. It was the first time he had witnessed something of this nature, and he was shocked to the very core.

“*Rabbeinu*,” he trembled, turning to the *Rav*, “how is it possible to remain silent? Indeed, is it permissible to remain silent? After all, *kavod haTorah* is being trampled on.”

R’ Elyashiv remained calm and unruffled. “Come,” he said by way of reply, “instead of feeling negative towards this man, let us give him a *berachah*!”

Turning around, R’ Elyashiv faced the man and said, “*Reb Yid*, may *Hashem* bless you that you will have no time to spare for nonsense like this.” R’ Elyashiv and his escort then continued on their way.

The man who had started up with R’ Elyashiv was dumbstruck. He was totally unprepared for this reaction and stared in confusion at the receding figures. “What did the *Rav* mean?” he wondered aloud, actually talking to himself. “If I had the courage, I would run after him and ask him to explain what he meant.” But of course, he didn’t.

Exactly a year after that disturbing incident, almost to the day, the man and his wife became proud parents of - can you guess? No, not twins, triplets, or even quadruplets - but quintuplets! Yes, five tiny babies filled their home with healthy cries for attention. The streets of Jerusalem were abuzz with the news. R’ Elyashiv’s blessing had come true. Overnight, this man became so busy that he had absolutely no time for anything else!

What many people did not understand about the nature of this fellow and R’ Elyashiv, in his wisdom, immediately grasped, was that he had too much time on his hands and this led him to sin. Well, after R’ Elyashiv’s blessing, he was never bored again and certainly had no time for shenanigans like the one that brought about the amazing heartfelt blessing in the first place!

משל למת הדבר דומה

וקשרתם לאות על ירך והיו למטפת בין עיניך וגו' (ו-ה)

משל: A non-religious physician once asked **R’ Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman ZT”L**, “What is the great importance you attach to *Tefillin*, such that the Sages say, ‘*Anyone who does not don Tefillin is considered as one of the rebellious sinners of Israel*’? Anyone can see that they are just leather boxes containing some biblical verses on parchment!”

R’ Ruderman responded with a question. “You are a doctor. Surely you’ve studied anatomy. If so, then you have certainly seen what the human brain looks like - a gray, shriveled, wrinkled tangle of tissue, not much larger than a

fist.” The physician nodded in assent.

“Perhaps, then, you can explain to me why people make such a fuss about the brain? it looks like an overgrown walnut, no more! What is the difference between the brain of a genius and that of an idiot? Do they not appear exactly the same? The answer, of course, is that the importance of the brain lies not in its outward appearance, but in its actions and accomplishments. It is not the physical look of the brain, but the invisible power of intelligence and spirit that is housed within it that determines its significance.”

אז יבדיל משה שלש ערים בעבר הירדן מזרח שמש
לנם שמה רוצה אשר ירצה את רעהו בבלי דעת (ד-מא)

Rashi writes: “*He (Moshe) made sure to be eager and anxious over the matter (עיר מקלט) until he designated them. Even though they would not protect until the cities of refuge in Eretz Canaan were also designated, Moshe reasoned: If it is possible for me to fulfill a mitzvah, I shall fulfill it!*”

Chazal state that *Moshe Rabbeinu* exemplified the *posuk* in *Koheles* (ה-ט): “*אֹהֶב כֶּסֶף לֹא יִשְׁבַּע כֶּסֶף*” - “*He who loves money will never be satisfied with money.*” Similarly, one who loves *mitzvos*, shall never be satisfied with the *mitzvos* he has already performed. Moshe did many *mitzvos* and acts of charity; yet, he took upon himself a *mitzvah* that would stand for the ages, as it is written, “אִזְיִבֵּל מֹשֶׁה שְׁלֹשׁ עִירִים” - “*Then, Moshe designated three cities.*” (קהלת רבה א-ח)

In *Parshas Vaeschnan*, observes **R’ Yisroel Belsky Shlit’a**, *Moshe Rabbeinu* describes the future deterioration of *Klal Yisroel’s* commitment to *Torah*, and their fall into the decrepit practice of idol worship. He also describes the rehabilitation of *Hashem’s* nation, and ends with a succinct description of *Torah hashkafah*, its way of life, imploring the people to keep its ways: “*You shall keep His statutes and commandments that I instruct you this day.*”

Moshe Rabbeinu wished to strengthen the nation’s commitment to *Torah* and *mitzvos*. For that to happen he had to take his own words to heart and create within himself a greater commitment to *mitzvos*. This is why the *Torah* states: “*Then, Moshe designated three cities*” - The instant he finished his speech, Moshe quickly ran to do a *mitzvah*. Setting apart the cities of refuge represented Moshe’s pure love of *mitzvos*. It was precisely a *mitzvah* of this sort that *Moshe* performed in order to demonstrate his own increased commitment to fulfilling all the *mitzvos*. It was an act that needed to be done instantaneously. Thus, *Moshe Rabbeinu* wasted no time. After speaking to *Klal Yisroel* about the importance of doing *mitzvos*, he ran to fulfill a *mitzvah* himself. He heeded his own words and “took mussar.”

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ... דברת הטוב

“*There were no greater days for Klal Yisroel than Yom Kippur and Tu B’av.*” (תענית כו:) *Yom Kippur* is a great day for the Jewish people because we are forgiven for all our sins and given a fresh slate; what is so special about *Tu B’av*, and if it is so great, why indeed isn’t it an actual *Yom Tov*? **Rabbi Zev Leff Shlit’a** explains that on *Tu B’av* two great things happened: 1) Many *Shidduchim* were arranged on this day. 2) The corpses of the Jews killed by the Romans in Beitar and left unburied for years were finally buried. To commemorate the fact that their bodies did not decompose, *Tu B’av* was instituted as a special day and the Sages inserted the fourth *beracha* of “הטוב והמטיב” into *Birchas HaMazon*. Rabbi Leff ties these two concepts together and notes that *Tu B’av* teaches us that the “realities of life” - *shidduchim* and burying the dead, are not to be taken for granted.

The key to happiness in life is *Hakaras HaTov*, to appreciate and recognize the good things we have, rather than just think that this is the way it is meant to be! “כפי טוב” literally means to “cover up the good” - when we complain about things that other people would be thrilled to have. For example, “doing” a *shidduch* - even if EVERYTHING is not perfect - is a reason to rejoice, and burying one’s dead is a great *zechus* that unfortunately not every Jew is worthy to merit - *nebach*, millions in the Holocaust did not have this *zechus*. The message of *Tu B’av* is APPRECIATION. It is a day without any special *mitzvos* or *Yom Tov* customs - and that is exactly the point! Even an ordinary day is worth appreciating and rejoicing over! The greatest days in our lives are the days in which we choose to see all the good that we have - rather than take it all for granted.

... לא תרצה (ח-ה)

TORAH GEMS

In the year 1233 (4993), **Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona ZT”L** and other leading rabbis signed a ban against reading the **Rambam’s** great philosophical work, *Moreh Nevuchim* - Guide of the Perplexed, as well as the first book of the *Mishne Torah (Sefer HaMadda)*. Rabbeinu Yonah believed that the philosophical ideas in these works were too dangerous for the public. Indeed, at his urging, the Christian authorities publicly burned the Rambam’s works in Paris in 1233. But once people are given the idea that it is fine to start burning books, it is hard to put out the flame and so in 1242, twenty-four wagonloads of the Talmud were burned exactly where the Rambam’s books were burned. When Rabbeinu Yonah saw this he felt that it was divine retribution for his participation in the early burning of the Rambam’s writings and he publicly admitted that he was wrong in front of his entire congregation. For the rest of his life he tried to repent for his activity. He quoted the Rambam frequently and wrote different works on how to repent. The most famous of these is his masterpiece called *Shaarei Teshuvah*, the Gates of Repentance, which offers a blueprint to repentance.

In *Shaarei Teshuvah*, Rabbeinu Yonah writes that just as one must give up his life to avoid the three cardinal sins, one must also be killed rather than be an “accessory” to the prohibition of murder - *Lo Tirtzach*. What is considered *avizrayhu*, or accessory to murder? הלבנת פנים - shaming someone so that his face turns white. When his face turns white and its ruddiness disappears, this is like he is dead.

This is not just a nice moral teaching. This is a legal ruling. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that one must allow himself to be killed rather than embarrass another Jew. As the Talmud says, and he takes literally: “*A person should throw himself into a (כבשן האש) fire rather than embarrass another in public.*” In our “cultured” society, can we even fathom the severity of such a crime? Well, apparently we must!

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

לא היו ימים טובים לישראל בחמשה עשר באב וכיו"ח ... (תענית כו:)