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מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ויאמרו בני ישראל אל משה לאמר הן נוקטנו אבדנו כלנו אבדנו וגו' (ז-כז)

On any given *Shabbat*, the *Rishon L'Tziyon* and Chief Rabbi of Israel, **Chacham Ovadia Yosef ZT”L**, would deliver up to seven *shiurim* in various *Batei Midrashim*. He would walk from one synagogue to another, intent on giving the public the merit of *Torah* learning and a diverse crowd drank in his words thirstily. After one of Chacham Ovadia’s impressive lectures, **Chacham Avraham Harari-Raful ZT”L** (one of the rabbis of *Yeshivat Porat Yosef* and an elderly Syrian rabbi) said with his sweet humor, “The name עבדיה' is an acronym for בלי עין הרע דורש יפה' (*Bli ayin hara, he speaks well*).” A different time, Chacham Raful said, “The words גן עדן בחיים' (Paradise on Earth) have the same numerical value as ‘Ovadia Yosef.’ (247) Whoever listens to Chacham Ovadia’s lectures experiences paradise on earth.” In fact, listening to Chacham Ovadia might have postponed “Paradise” for those who were listening to him on one fateful Friday night.

It happened in 1965 (5725), when Chacham Ovadia was delivering his usual lecture in the downstairs hall of *Yeshivat Porat Yosef*. It was a wondrous sight: the room was packed, including the hallways, doorways and window sills. Inside, *Torah* was being delivered as at Sinai: *halacha* and *agadah*, together with parables and riddles to sweeten the *Torah* for all those who thirstily drank in the brilliant words of the *Chacham*. That Friday night, he was talking about how a person’s limbs serve to protect him: “The head is the most important limb of all, as the head is the seat of wisdom. The proof to this is that when a person is about to hit his head, he instinctively raises his arms to protect his head. His arms can also be damaged but because a person’s main life-force is in his head, he would allow himself to be hit on his arms and not on his head.”

Suddenly, as he was saying these very words, a series of loud noises were heard outside. People became scared as they thought they were hearing gunshots, but the noises started getting louder and louder. It wasn’t coming from outside the building - it was coming from the top floor of the *yeshivah* building which had become unstable and began to collapse onto itself! As the roof caved in on the top floor, huge boulders began falling down on either side of the building. The noise became deafening and all the men inside the *Bet Midrash* were frozen with fear. If the building collapsed, there was no place for them to escape to! A number of individuals ran into the adjoining kitchen area, but who knew if it was any safer there? Perhaps the entire building was falling and they would be buried alive! The noise level had reached such a crescendo that it was impossible to hear a thing. Chacham Ovadia had stopped talking as the noise level rose and now he stood in his place, white with apprehension, until the boulders stopped falling and everyone was able to run outside.

Incredibly, no one was hurt - there was no one in the street! The very fact that it happened during his lecture and not before or after was an outright miracle, for who knows what might have happened if everyone was not gathered inside. In 1949, after the conclusion of the War of Independence, when the Arabs ransacked the Old City of Jerusalem and destroyed, among other places, the building of *Yeshivat Porat Yosef*, a new home was established for the *yeshivah* in the *Geula* neighborhood, at the corner of *Malchei Yisrael* and *Yosef Ben Matityahu Streets*. This happened to be next door to the renowned *Beis Medrash* of the *Gerrer Chassidim*. At any given time, there were dozens upon dozens of *Gerrer Chassidim* as well as *Sephardic* students of *Porat Yosef* in the narrow alleyway between the two buildings. However, when the building collapsed on Friday night, a throng of *chassidim* had just gone inside to await the *tish* of their *Rebbe*, the **Beis Yisroel**, while all the *Sephardic* students were inside their *Bet Midrash* listening to the *shiur* of Chacham Ovadia. Additionally, there were usually some students of *Porat Yosef* who learned in the upper hall on Friday night. That night, though, they went to study in a nearby study hall. Had they been in the upper study hall they would have found themselves in mortal danger.

The municipality ordered the building closed. Chacham Ovadia’s Friday night lecture was transferred to the lower level of the the *Gerrer Beis Medrash*, at the behest of the *Gerrer Rebbe*, who appreciated and showed Chacham Ovadia much love. The miracle was attributed to the *shiurim* of Chacham Ovadia, who dedicated himself selflessly to the public for the sake of Heaven. The *Torah* saves and protects (סוטה כא), and in its merit, *Hashem* did not allow harm to befall anyone there.

משל למא הדבר דומה

וירדו הם וכל אשר להם חיים שאלה ותכם עליהם הארץ ויאבדו מתוך הקהל וגו' (ז-לג)

משל: An anti-Semitic priest once met a rabbi in the street and with a sinister smile remarked, “What a coincidence! Just last night, I dreamed I was in Jewish heaven. The streets were filled with Jews. Children with dirty faces, shirts untucked, clothes unpressed, playing in the dirt. Women were haggling with fish-vendors, as Jewish beggars tried to interrupt, asking for handouts. And of course,” the minister added with a vicious laugh, “rabbis were running back and forth with large Talmudic volumes tucked under their arms!”

The rabbi pursed his lips and then replied, “That is truly

amazing. You see, I dreamed last night that I was in Episcopalian heaven.” “Really?” the minister asked. “And pray tell me what was it like in Episcopalian heaven?”

“It was magnificent,” the rabbi smiled. “The streets shone as if they had recently been washed. The homes were lined up just right, each with a small garden, beautiful flowers and a perfectly manicured lawn. The buildings were all freshly painted, and they sparkled in the gleaming sunlight!”

The minister beamed. “And what about the people?” he questioned. The rabbi smiled, looked the minister right in the

מחשבת הלב

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

ויקה קרה בן יצחק בן קהת בן לוי ודתן ואבירם בני אריאב ואין בן פלת בני ראובן וגו' (פ-א)

I was once sitting at a *sheva brachos* with a *Rosh Yeshivah* who was asked to say a few words. When he arose to speak he said, “*Rabbosai*, it is difficult to speak about *Parshas Korach* at a *sheva brachos* as it is full of *machlokes* - not a good lesson for a *chosson* and *kallah*.” He then went on to speak about lighting the *Menorah* (from *Parshas Behaloscha*) and how it can illuminate a young couple’s home, etc. When he finished speaking, the *Baal Simcha* asked me to say a few words. I began as follows:

“*Rosh Yeshivah*, please forgive me, but I beg to differ with your opinion. I’d like to say that the best lesson for a new couple can be learned from *Parshas Korach*. There is a famous novel called ‘A Tale Of Two Cities.’ *L’havdil*, in this *parsha*, there is ‘A Tale of Two Wives.’ *Shlomo Hamelech* writes in *Mishlei*, ואולת בידיה תהרסנו', *Chazal* tell us: ר'חמתי ר'חמתי נשים בנתה ביתה, וואולת בידיה תהרסנו'. Korach and On were partners but On was saved and Korach was killed. Why? On’s wife said to him, ‘Why are you with Korach? Even if he wins, you will only be his *talmid*. I’d rather you remain the *talmid* of *Moshe Rabbeinu*!’ The **Daas Zekainim** says that she gave him wine, put him to sleep, sat on the steps and uncovered her hair. When Korach’s people came to get him, they saw her and moved on. On’s wife was a true עזר כנגדו' because by being his עזר כנגדו' and sticking to her opposite opinion, she was his עזר' - the one who saved him. Korach, on the other hand, had a wife who destroyed him. She told him, ‘Korach, you are a nobody. Look at Moshe. He is a king, his brother is the *Kohen Gadol*. Do something with your life.’ She was the opposite of an עזר כנגדו' and she got him killed! Look at the difference a wife can make in life! Each husband and wife can be the GPS who leads the other on the proper *derech* ... but sometimes one needs to tell the other, ‘Recalculate!’ in order to build a home of *Torah*. So you see, ‘A Tale of Two Wives’ is a Tale of Two Men!”

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

האיש אחה יהמא ועל כל העדה תקצף וגו' (פ-כב)

As the rebellion of Korach and his cohorts accelerated, *Hashem* informed Moshe that He intends to destroy the entire congregation of *Klal Yisroel*. In response, Moshe and Aharon fell on their faces and implored the Almighty saying, “*Hashem, the G-d of all spirits, if one man sins, shall You be angry with the entire congregation?*” Rashi explains their words: “*Hashem*, You are not like earthly beings. A mortal king against whom part of his country transgresses does not know who the sinner is, and when he is angry, he metes out punishment upon them all. But as for You, *Hashem*, all thoughts are revealed before You, and You know who the sinner is.” To this argument, *Hashem* responded and said, “You have spoken well. I know and will make known who sinned and who did not sin.” (*Medrash Tanchuma*)

One must understand the rationality of this argument: do

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ... הכרת הטוב

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ומדוע תתנשאו על קהל ה' ... (פז-ג)

What a shame, what happened to Korach! Korach had it all. He was from an illustrious family, he was a great *Torah* scholar, he was wealthy, dynamic and looked up to. But it wasn’t enough: he turned his gains into pains! The wicked Haman was no different. He, too, had it all. He was rich, powerful and respected by the King. He had the entire world bowing down to him - everyone, that is, except for one Jew named Mordechai. What did Haman say? “וכל זה איננו שוה לי” - “*Everything I have is worthless*,” if I don’t have the ONE thing that I want. Haman did not see that everyone else was bowing down to him; all he saw was that Mordechai was NOT! Very often this kind of behavior stems from “קנאה” (jealousy), “תאוה” (lust) and “כבוד” (honor). These three negative traits are so terrible that they can cause a person to not only go out of his mind, but even go out of his world! In other words, the person does not even see all the good things in his life and in the world around him.

Perhaps, though, the underlying root of all three issues is really one, and we can suggest a simple and practical solution for all three. There is a well-known *segula* of saying *Perek Shira*. It is a beautiful *tefilla* that quotes *posukim*, from all over *Tanach*, which are proclaimed by the animals, the birds, fish and the entire creation including the sky, earth, and everything in it. Each creation sings a song of praise to *Hashem* with it’s own unique verse. Why is this so effective? What is it all about? **R’ Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlit’a** explains that it is about APPRECIATION. It is to think to oneself, “The mountains and oceans are praising *Hashem* - am I? What is MY special *shira*, MY unique gratitude to *Hashem* for all that He has given me?” The *segula* is not in *Perek Shira*; the *segula* is in the heightened awareness of *hakaras hatov*, gratitude and appreciation to *Hashem* for what we have - not focusing on the things that we don’t! The greatest way to truly be “in this world” is by working on appreciation.

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