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מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

לא ארני שמעני השדה נתתי לך והמקרה אשר בו לך נתתיה לעיני בני עמי נתתיה לך קבר מתך וגו' (בנ-א)

During the most recent Presidential election campaign in the United States, then candidate Donald Trump made a speech in which he recalled how his father Fred Trump built a synagogue in New York. He remembered the location well, and he recalled the work that his father had sent him to do in the residential buildings around the Jewish neighborhood near the *shul*. **Rabbi Shmuel Wagner *shlit'a*, mashgiach ruchani** of *Yeshivas Ohr Yerushalayim in Moshav Beit Meir*, shares the incredible story of how Fred Trump built a *shul* for the congregation headed by his father, **Rabbi Yisroel Wagner *zt"l***, and went on to make annual donations to the *kehillah* and for many Jewish families in financial distress.

Rabbi Yisroel Wagner survived the Holocaust and made his way to Bolivia, in South America, where he served as the *Rav* of a Jewish community. In 1950, he and his wife moved to California and a few years later to New York, where he became a rabbi in a residential area of Brooklyn, near Brighton Beach. Fred Trump owned thirty-one buildings in the area, with many Jewish tenants. Despite the fact that most of the local residents were not religious, they took an interest in the new rabbi. Reb Shmuel recalls: “There were Jews from Europe there, and they all cared about *davening*. The *shul* operated in the parking garage of one of the buildings, and began with thirty members, but it experienced tremendous growth in just a few years, to the point that it came to serve hundreds of families. They might not have been observant Jews, but they loved the experience of the *shul* and listening to my father’s *Torah* classes. And he, with his kindhearted manner and his trademark warmth for every single Jew, taught them *Torah* and *chassidus*, at least to some degree.”

Eventually, the *shul*’s membership grew to the point that the garage facility was no longer large enough to house the congregation. “My father had an idea,” Reb Shmuel recalls. “He offered to approach Fred Trump, the millionaire landlord, although he didn’t know him personally. He hoped that he could convince the man to supply an adequate space for the synagogue. He knew that Fred Trump was a generous soul, a man of faith, and he was likely to relate to the request.”

Rabbi Wagner met with the landlord and his request indeed appealed both to Trump’s emotions and his shrewd business mind. Instantly, the two men hit it off and they became close friends. Rabbi Wagner and Fred both understood that a *kehillah* that revolved around a synagogue would be a community whose members lead a proper spiritual lifestyle, and his business would benefit from that. Trump was very moved by the proposed idea and he proceeded to donate a piece of real estate at 723 Avenue Z, which became the Beach Haven Jewish Center, and is open and active to this very day, offering programs for youth and the elderly. He even made a very generous donation so that a beautiful edifice could be built.

According to Reb Shmuel, not only did Fred Trump donate the plot of land where the *shul* was built and cover most of the expense of the construction, but he also attended the ceremony in 1956 at which the cornerstone was laid. “Fred was very moved by my father’s speech at the ceremony. He was highly impressed, and he became my father’s close friend.” Over time, Fred Trump’s donations grew progressively more generous. Many times, Rabbi Wagner would tell him about various Jewish families in the area who were poor and needy, and he would give large sums to help them out as well.

Later, the Beach Haven Jewish Center housed a local *Talmud Torah*, a school for Jewish studies that held classes after public school was over. Fred Trump used to donate large sums to that institution as well. He was a very pleasant person with a kind heart, very serene and delicate. He was responsible for the beginning of Donald’s business career.

Reb Shmuel has vivid recollections of Fred Trump’s son, a wild, blond-haired youth of 14 and 15. “I still remember going to *shul* with my father for *Shachris* every Sunday morning. The laundry room, where all the tenants washed their clothes in coin-operated machines, was in the basement of one of the buildings. Fred used to send his son Donald early Sunday to collect the coins from the laundry machines. Fred taught his children from a very early age to take responsibility; he gave them no breaks. Donald may have been wild as a youth, but his father raised him well.”

משל למה הדבר דומה

ותמת שרה בקרית ארבע הוא הברון בארץ כנען ויבא אברהם לספר לשרה ולבכתה וגו' (בנ-ב)

משל: A man was happily married to his dear and loving wife for nearly half a century. Her sudden death cast him into a terrible depression for which there was almost no cure. His son graciously invited him to stay at their home and share everything with them. His daughter-in-law cooked every meal with care and love - but the man was never pleased. No matter how carefully she prepared the meals, he would sigh and mutter, loud enough for all to hear, “This was not the way Momma made the soup.”

His daughter-in-law poured through her mother-in-law’s old recipe books and tried to recreate the taste for which her

father-in-law longed. But the man could not be pleased.

One day, while the soup was on the fire, one of the grandchildren fell down and in her haste to help her child, the daughter-in-law dropped almost an entire pepper shaker into the bubbling soup. In addition, by the time the child was washed and bandaged, the soup was totally burned!

There was nothing to do but serve the severely spiced, burnt soup. The young woman stood in agony as her elderly father-in-law brought the soup to his lips. His complaints would be deafening. But it was not to be. “Delicious my dear,” he said with a tear in his eye. “Truly delicious! This is

ויהיו חיי שרה מאה שנה ועשרים שנה ושבע שנים שני חיי שרה וגו' (בנ-א)

Human nature is such that when a young person passes away, people consider it a terrible tragedy, and the funeral is usually very tearful. When an older person passes on, the attitude tends to be, “Well, he lived a long, happy and productive life.” The second *posuk* in the *parsha* says that *Avraham Avinu* came home to mourn for Sarah and to cry for her. If we look in the *Sefer Torah* we will see that the letter ״פ״in the word ״ולבכתה״ is smaller than the other letters. The **Baal HaTurim** explains that it is written smaller to denote that since Sarah lived to a ripe old age, *Avraham Avinu* did not cry excessively. Interestingly, the ages of all the *Avos* are documented in the *Torah*, but only Sarah’s lifespan is recorded. Furthermore, the *Torah* tells us that the life of Sarah was one hundred + twenty + seven years - ״שני חיי שרה״ - these were the years of Sarah’s life. Why repeat that these “*were the years of her life*”? Isn’t it obvious? Rashi quotes a *Medrash* that the juxtaposition of the passing of *Sarah Imeinu* and the *Akeida* reveals to us that the shock of Yitzchok’s near death at the *Akeida* was what caused her to die. The *Torah* is telling us that this is not accurate because these were ״שני חיי שרה״ - the years she was destined to live, and no more.

My *machshava* here is a valuable lesson to be learned from *Avraham Avinu*’s approach to his wife’s death. When a family member passes away, often relatives start blaming themselves saying, “If only we had done this, if only we had changed doctors, if only we had changed hospitals - he or she would still be alive.” From the *Torah*’s account of Sarah’s life, we see that the *Torah* is teaching us that feelings of guilt are not in order. Once a loved one is gone, we must mourn in proportion to the tragedy. We are not to view the loss as indictment of our own actions. Therefore, no matter what we feel we could have or should have done, every person has a predestined lifespan, as the *Torah* tells us, ״שני חיי שרה״, - these were the **only** years of Sarah’s life. May we always focus on the joy and *simcha* in our lives with those we hold dear and lose any misplaced feelings of guilt.

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

ה' אלקי השמים ... הוא ישלח מלאכו לפניך ולקחת אשה לבני (בד-ו)

A student in the *Radin Yeshivah* was involved in a *shidduch*, and since the girl was reluctant to commit to him, there was no progress. The boy’s friends advised him to shave off his beard, thinking that the beard was the reason for the girl’s hesitation. They claimed that most *yeshivah* students shaved their beards, and he should do the same.

The **Chofetz Chaim *zt"l*** heard the boy’s plight and invited him to his home. He told him the following *machal*: A locomotive was pulling more than one hundred loaded cars up a steep mountain. Even though the engine driver had put the engine on full steam, the locomotive was still moving quite slowly due to the extremely heavy load. One passenger thought he was clever and figured out a way to speed up the pace of the train. He got out and walked to the back of the last car and began pushing the train with both hands certain

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF כל טוב

We make a fascinating declaration every time we *bentch*. We say: בריך את אברהם בכל ... (בד-א) “*Just as He blessed our forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, ‘in all things’ ‘by all things’ with ‘all things’ so may He bless all of us together (Bnei Yisroel) with a complete blessing, and let us say, Amen.*”

The *Avos* are mentioned with three variations of the word “*everything*” (כל) and we ask *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* to bless us with the same “COMPLETE BLESSING” that they were blessed with. What is the nature of this blessing; what is it all about?

The answer is that this “COMPLETE BLESSING” is the ability to find happiness in our lives. By *Avraham Avinu*, it says *Hashem* blessed him with EVERYTHING (בכל) - ״וה' ברך את אברהם בכל״. Avraham was wealthy monetarily, intellectually and in all areas of his life. But he chose to utilize all the gifts that *Hashem* showered upon him for the sake of others. *Avraham Avinu* teaches us that the first key to happiness is to stop thinking about ourselves and start GIVING to others - to do *chessed* and kindness with everyone around us. This brings us far greater joy in our lives than being on the receiving end.

Regarding *Yitzchok Avinu*, it says: ״ואכל מכל בטרם תבוא ואברכר״ (כז-לג) - Yitzchok gained sustenance from EVERYTHING (מכל). From every situation in life - good or bad - he learned valuable lessons and rather than get angry, frustrated or wallow in self-pity, *Yitzchok Avinu* grew and became a righteous person. The second key to happiness, then, is GROWING.

The third key to happiness is learned from Yaakov, who said: ״יש לי כל״ (לג-יא) - I am content with EVERYTHING (כל) and I am GRATEFUL to *Hashem* for giving me exactly what I need. *Yaakov Avinu* was happy because he was completely satisfied. Let us all attain true happiness like the *Avos*, by GIVING, GROWING and being GRATEFUL, so we too shall be blessed!

מחשבת הלב

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

that with his help, the train would now move faster.

The other passengers laughed at him and said, “What is your strength compared to the strength of the locomotive? You are like a mosquito compared to that of an ox!”

The *Chofetz Chaim* ended his *machal* and said to his student, “The same thing applies to *shidduchim*. Even though every *shidduch* is announced in Heaven forty days before the formation of a child, it is still as hard to accomplish as the splitting of the *Yam Suf*! We know that *Hashem* Himself makes the *shidduchim*. You might suddenly have the idea to help *Hashem* by shaving your beard so that the girl will like you more, but then you will be similar to the ‘clever’ passenger who pushed the heavy train with his hands, thinking he was ‘helping’ a hundred train cars up the mountain!”

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דרגה יתירה FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ואברהם וכן בא בימים וה' בריך את אברהם בכל ... (בד-א) “*כמו שתברכו אבותינו, אברהם יצחק ויעקב בכל מכל כל. כי יברך. ‘in all things’ ‘by all things’ with ‘all things’ so may He bless all of us together (Bnei Yisroel) with a complete blessing, and let us say, Amen.*”

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