

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

The following story is said to have taken place during the 1200's. The Second Crusade was under way. Thousands of peasants became soldiers overnight and marched across Europe to fight the Muslims who had conquered the Holy Land. It was an adventure for them, and their religious leaders promised them great rewards if they were successful. So the ignorant peasants banded together and marched - and the first thing they did was massacre the Jews wherever they went.

The ancient community of Eisenstadt, Germany, was a proud and vibrant *kehillah*; yet they now lay directly in the path of the marauding crusaders. The Jews, terrified and frantic, ran to their rabbi for advice. Calmly, the rabbi replied, "It is late in the afternoon. Let us assemble in the *shul* for *Mincha/Maariv* prayers. As *Hashem* wishes, so shall be our fate."

Swiftly the men, women and children came to the *shul*. The davening that afternoon was unlike any other. Every word was said slowly, clearly, tearfully, from the worshipers who were facing massacre and death, The children did not know what was happening, but the fright and terror of their parents spread to their hearts. The *shammass* bolted and barricaded the heavy doors. There was no need to leave the doors open any more. Every Jew in Eisenstadt was inside that *shul*.

It was the first night of *Chanukah*. Whatever will happen, the first candle must be lit! The rabbi motioned to the *shammass*, who nodded and brought a box of candles. Then the rabbi walked toward the *menorah* that always stood on a shelf on the south wall - but it was gone! What had happened to it? But there was no time to think about that now. The mob would be here at any moment. Men, women and children cried and wailed. The rabbi went up before the Ark and asked for silence. The trembling assembled looked up, wondering what the rabbi would say in these, their final moments.

"Tonight," the rabbi began, "is the beginning of *Chanukah*. At this time many years ago, our forefathers were saved from a terrible fate. Tonight we cannot celebrate this holiday, because our *menorah* is lost. But if we are worthy, another *Chanukah* miracle can happen tonight. Even when the sword lies on the throat of a Jew, he does not give up hope. We are *Hashem's* children so we must not give up hope. Until the last moment let us pray; and if that moment should come, let us know and understand that it is the will of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Let us meet our death as loyal Jews!"

Everyone remained silent. Then the *shammass* suddenly cried out, "Now, I remember!" Everyone looked at him, startled. He went on, "There is another *menorah* in the *Aron*. I know I saw it, but I couldn't remember where."

He opened the *Aron* and reached down into the left-hand corner. His hand grasped the *menorah* and pulled. The *menorah* wouldn't budge. It stuck fast. He tried to turn it. And strangely, it turned freely. He looked down and couldn't believe his eyes. The platform in front of the *Aron*, on which he was standing, was moving inward. Below was a stone staircase. Like an electric shock the news spread through the crowd. The rabbi and the *shammass* began directing everyone down the stairs, and as each one went down, he took with him one of the *Sifrei Torah* from the *Aron*.

When the last person had descended, the rabbi calmly shut the doors of the *Aron*, went down the stairs, and pulled the platform board to its regular position. As he did so, the *shul* doors crashed and splintered. While the mob let their wrath out on the empty seats, the Jews walked along an underground tunnel until they reached a large chamber, with ladders all around leading to trap doors. But before the people could rest, the rabbi said, "In peril we turned to our Creator; now we must thank Him. Let us say *Hallel*." In that underground room cut out in the earth, they all recited *Hallel* with great fervor.

Afterwards, the rabbi made two indentations in the chamber's wall with his fingers. In each he stuck a candle, and lit the top one. With tears in his eyes, he chanted the blessings for the *Chanukah* candles and then lit the other candle. While the *menorah* burned brightly, lighting up the dim chamber, no one spoke. They just gazed at the candles and seemed to absorb what it was saying - the message of *Chanukah* - the promise of rescue to those who deserve it.

משל' למה הדבר דומה

ויכר יהודה ויאמר צדקה ממני כי על כן לא נתתיה לשלח בני וגו' (לה-כו)

משל' Towards the end of his life, a life of righteousness that lasted into his ninety-third year, the holy **Rimnitzer Rebbe, R' Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz ZT"l**, was frail and weak. His *gabbaim* were always hovering nearby to ensure that he did not fall due to his frailty and they were always at his side to assist him when he walked.

It happened, though, that the *Rebbe* was once walking down the stairs into his yard, when he slipped and fell down the few remaining steps.

Everyone rushed to his side. The onlookers gasped at

the sight of the Rimnitzer Rebbe sprawled out on the ground, while his *gabbaim* scrambled to try to help him up. The *Rebbe*, however, refused their help.

Members of his household hurried over to him, asking anxiously, "Is the *Rebbe* hurt? Does it hurt very badly?"

But the *Rebbe* shook his head. "No, no," he said Surprised, they asked, "If the *Rebbe* is not hurt, why doesn't he stand up?"

The *Rebbe* looked at his family members and then at his *gabbaim*. "I'm sitting down to figure out why I fell!"

וימצאנו איש והנה תעה בשדה וישאלוהו האיש לאמר מה תבקש וגו' (לו-טו)

Yosef is sent by his father to visit his brothers, who are tending the family's sheep in the open pasture. He cannot seem to find them until a mysterious stranger finds Yosef, and tells him where he can locate his brothers. Because of the intervention of this unknown "איש" - the rest of the story unfolds. The brother's sell Yosef; a 22-year separation from his father; his torturous Egyptian existence, culminating in triumph as viceroy of Egypt; the reuniting and reconciliation of *Bnei Yaakov*. All this would not have occurred without the appearance of this stranger. So ... who was he?

Rashi believes that the stranger was the Angel Gavriel, sent by *Hashem* to influence the course of events. However, the **Ramba"n** disagrees: "*It was prepared for him (Yosef) a human guide, unbeknownst to him, in order to lead him into the hands (of his brothers). This is to teach us that man's diligence is futile, and only Hashem's decree is valid. This is the teaching of Chazal that the man was an 'Angel' - meaning he was fulfilling Hashem's mission, for His decrees are always realized.*" Ramban teaches us that all of the "chance" occurrences that life brings us, all of the strangers we may encounter, are to be viewed as "angels," seen in the perspective of our relationship to our Creator.

R' Berel Wein Shlit'a comments that the modernity of Western Civilization pretty much did away with the concept of a personal G-d. Man thinks he is the sole arbiter of his fate; G-d no longer plays a major role in human affairs. And since we are empty of belief, we recoil at meeting "strangers" - or Heavenly "Angels" - who constantly intrude upon the pursuit of our goals. We don't understand the message that is being sent to us. The wise person looks for Divine aid in every occurrence and meeting of life. We should be alert to the next "stranger" that we meet.

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

דרגה יתירה

ויהי כהיום הזה ויבאה הביתה לעשות מלאכתו ואין איש מאנשי הבית שם בבית (לז-יא)

Chazal tell us that the greatness of *Yosef Hatzaddik* was established when he was a lowly slave in Egypt and confronted by the wife of Potiphar. Although he was given every opportunity to sin and his master's wife could have even helped his situation had he gone along with her wishes, he immediately and adamantly refused her. Yosef was protected by his father Yaakov, who suddenly appeared to him in a vision. When he looked up and recognized the "דמות דיוקנו" - *Comparative likeness*, of his father, he held himself back from sinning! The Sages laud him for this great act, and he is hereby given the honorary title of "*Yosef Hatzaddik*." But we remain with a question: If Yosef saw the image of his holy father, of course he is not going to sin! How could he with such an image in mind? If so, why is he called a *Tzaddik* from this episode? He should be called a *Tzaddik* if his father's image did NOT appear to him and he still overcame the test!

R' Simcha Sheps ZT"l explains that when a person is exceedingly careful in a certain area of *Avodas Hashem* and adamantly refuses to be swayed, *Hashem* will send that person extra special protection. *Hashem* will turn over heaven and earth if need be, to make sure the person doesn't fall! This is what happened with Yosef. It wasn't his father's image that miraculously saved him; it was his own excellence in the area of *Tznius* and *Kedushas Haguf* (sanctifying his body) that allowed him to merit *Hashem's* protection against sinning, by showing him his father's image! Thus, it was due to his own toil and righteousness in *Avodas Hashem*, that is he known to all future generations as *Yosef Hatzaddik*!

ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ותשא אשת אדניו את עיניה אל יוסף ותאמר שכבה עמי וגו' (לז-י)

The wife of Potiphar enticed Yosef day after day, but he would not listen to her. The more he turned her down, the more she repeated her vile request on a daily basis. As for Yosef, he surely considered various ways of escaping his dangerous predicament. If he told his master what his wife was thinking, he would not be believed since, according to the *Medrash*, she was held to be a modest woman. Hence, he would be heavily punished for slandering an Egyptian "lady" of the highest circles. To flee was impossible, for no slave could flee Egypt. Plus, his conscience forbade his fleeing a master who had paid a high price for him and treated him excellently.

Therefore, says **R' Zalman Sorotzkin ZT"l (Oznaim L'Torah)**, Yosef placed his trust in *Hashem* and waited for a miracle from Heaven. Because he "*did not listen to her,*" he merited salvation, as is the case for all who successfully avoid temptation (קידושין מ.). Then, Potiphar's wife slandered him, and even grabbed his clothing, but Potiphar did not believe it. In fact, the garment's remaining in her hands as evidence worked out to Yosef's benefit. When Potiphar presented Yosef's case to the Egyptian priests, they said that if the garment was ripped in front, it meant Yosef had attacked Potiphar's wife, and she had ripped his garment. If it was ripped from behind, it meant he had fled and she had chased him and grabbed it from behind.

The garment was brought, and seeing that it was ripped from behind, the priests exonerated Yosef, adding only that Potiphar should have Yosef imprisoned out of respect for his wife. Thus, Yosef abandoning the garment saved him from death (ויגש - מושב וקנים). Rather than killing him, Potiphar imprisoned him to pacify his wife and friends. From this prison, Yosef later went on to rule Egypt.

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO