

מוקדש לעילוי נשמות
הר"ר אברהם רפאל בן
הרה"ג רב יצחק הופמן זצ"ל
נפטר כ"ח אבול תשס"ז
תהא נשמתו צדור בצדור החיים

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וכתבת עליהן את כל דברי התורה הזאת בעקבך למען אשר תבא אל הארץ וכו' (כו-ג)

Towards the latter half of the 19th century, two of the greatest *Chassidic Rebbes*, were also the greatest of friends. As youngsters, **R' Avraham Twersky ZT”L (Maggid of Trisk)**, son of **R' Mordechai (Mottel) of Chernobyl ZT”L**, and **R' Menachem Mendel Kalish ZT”L**, son of **R' Yitzchok of Vorka ZT”L** formed a pact of friendship that was to last a lifetime - indeed, they died just a few months apart. As the two boys grew older and eventually inherited their respective chasidic dynasties, maintaining contact became all the more difficult. R' Mendel lived in Vorka, Poland, while R' Avraham lived in Trisk, Ukraine. The distance between the two was a half-day’s wagon ride and it often took weeks for letters to reach one another. R' Mendel’s personal attendant, a caring young man by the name of Moishele, saw his *Rebbe’s* distress and offered to travel every week back and forth to deliver correspondence between the two.

And so it went. Each week, very early Friday morning, Moishele would set out from Vorka to deliver R' Mendel’s letter to his dear friend, the *Trisker Maggid*. He would arrive in the morning hours and hand-deliver the letter to the *Maggid*. Then, he would wait for the *Maggid* to read the letter and reply. Often it would take a while until the *Maggid* returned from his study, eyes red from tears, his quivering hand holding the magnificently crafted response in a special sealed envelope. Moishele would take the letter, turn his wagon around and deliver the response to the *Vorka Rebbe*, and that letter, too, evoked the same emotional response: tears of joy and meaning filling his *Rebbe*, R' Mendel’s, eyes.

Moishele felt privileged to do his job and carried it out faithfully every week for many years. During that entire time, he never dared to open the letters and violate the intimate bond between the two *Tzaddikim*. Until one Friday morning, after Moishele had left Vorka with his *Rebbe’s* letter, he was suddenly struck with a bizarre urge to open the letter and read what the *Tzaddik* wrote to his lifelong friend. “Perhaps, I can learn from the words of the righteous,” he rationalized.

Carefully, so as not to ruin the seal, he opened the envelope. He looked inside and was shocked to find nothing! It was a completely blank piece of paper! At first he felt confused, maybe he took the wrong envelope, but he was sure he had not made a mistake. If so, was this some sort of trick that his *Rebbe* had been playing on him all of these years?

Without a word, Moishele carefully placed the “letter” back into the envelope, sealed it and delivered it to the *Trisker Maggid*. Like clockwork, the *Maggid* went into his study, and a half-hour later, misty-eyed and filled with emotion, he emerged from his study and returned a sealed envelope to be delivered to his friend, R' Mendel of Vorka.

At this point, Moishele could not wait to leave the *Maggid’s* house and race back into the forest, where he hurriedly opened the envelope and stared at its contents. Again ... nothing! A blank piece of paper! Moishele was mortified and felt pangs of hurt and mistrust. All this time, had he been sacrificing for his *Rebbe* to travel every Friday in hot summers and cold winters as part of some practical joke at his expense? “What is this - a game?” he wondered bitterly.

The entire *Shabbos* he could not contain his displeasure. On *Motzei Shabbos*, R' Mendel called him in to his study. “Moishele, my dear *shammas*, you seem agitated.” He asked softly, “What seems to be the problem?”

“Problem?” he responded. “Well, those letters I’ve been carrying back and forth between Vorka and Trisk. I admit it - I looked this Friday. I opened the envelope and there was nothing in it! Just blank paper! What kind of letter is that?”

R' Mendel did not flinch. “The *Torah*,” he explained, “has black letters written on white parchment. The black letters represent the words that are expressed - the *mitzvos*, the laws, the morals, the love *Hashem* has for the Jewish people. The white - the blank spaces - however, contain the messages that are much deeper. This is how *Hashem* expresses His love for us which is so great and which bursts forth to such an extent, that it cannot possibly be put into words.”

R' Mendel’s eyes welled up with tears as he looked at his contrite *shammas*. “Moishele, you must understand. When I correspond with my dear friend, we usually express our words through the black letters. This week, however, our messages were so deep, so intense. This week, we wrote with the white parchment. We expressed an emotion that transcends letters!”

משל למת הדבר דומה

ישלח ה' כך את המארה את המהומה ואת המנערת ככל משלח ירך אשר תעשה וכו' (כה-ב)

משל: A Hebrew Sunday school once took a group of kids on an overnight trip as an “ice-breaker” for the upcoming school year. The kids built a bonfire and together with their *madrichim* (guides), sat around singing songs and playing games. At one point, they went around the circle, and everyone had to say a little something about themselves. Most kids basically said the same thing, nothing too profound, until it came to one boy who said something pretty unique.

“I’m Zach,” he said, “and I know the secret of life.”

“All right, Zach. Would you mind sharing this with us?”

Zach responded, “Last summer, I went to an overnight camp with a bunch of friends. One night, I overheard the boy who slept on top of me, mumbling to himself. I asked him if everything was all right and he told me that every night before he goes to sleep, he talks to G-d. Every night, he asks *Hashem* a question. ‘Why did You have to make me different? Why do my parents have to be divorced?’

“Suddenly, another boy exclaimed, ‘I do the same thing! I ask *Hashem* why my sister had to die in a car accident.’

‘And why my brother is mentally disabled,’ said a third.”

מחשבת הלב

ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלוקך ולביתך אתה וחלוי ודגרי אשר בקרבך (כו-א)

Chazal describe the great celebration of bringing *bikkurim* in a beautiful basket up to *Yerushalayim* and handing it to the *Kohen*. People from each city along the way would stop working and joyously play music and dance, celebrating and honoring the people who were bringing the *bikkurim*. **R' Mordechai Gifter ZT”L** asks a question: With regard to the *bikkurim*, the *Torah* commands us: “ושמחת בכל הטוב” - “*And you shall rejoice with all the goodness.*” Do you really think the *Torah* has to command us to be joyous? A person bringing *bikkurim* couldn’t be happier! Just seeing everyone singing, clapping and dancing, partaking in his *simcha* ... this alone causes him great joy, like a *chosson* and *kallah*! The answer, said R' Gifter, is that although he may be very happy - but in his mind he is thinking, “Look at the luscious fruit my friend is bringing next to me! Look in his basket - his fruit is much nicer than mine.” At that moment, “לא תחמד” rears its ugly head and his *simcha* becomes diminished. Therefore, the *Torah* tells him that after he brings his *bikkurim* to *Yerushalayim*, it is important that he is happy! “ושמחת בכל הטוב” - be happy with the good *Hashem* gave YOU and don’t be jealous of your neighbors.

Later, in the *Tochacha*, the *Torah* states that although *Bnei Yisroel* enjoyed prosperity and all they desired, they didn’t serve *Hashem*, “בשמחה ובטוב ללב” - with happiness. However, the *Torah* adds two extra words - “מרב כל”. What does this mean? Well, as you all remember, Esav said “יש לי רב” - I have much (but I could use more), while *Yaakov Avinu* answered “יש לי כל” - I have everything I need from *Hashem* and don’t need more. *Bnei Yisroel* weren’t happy because they didn’t understand the meaning of “מרב כל”. **R' Avraham Pam ZT”L** used to say: “People are looking for the city of happiness, but don’t realize that happiness is in the state of mind.” May we all be happy with the gifts *Hashem* bestows us with - gifts that meant for us alone!

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

בדרך אחר יצאו אליך ובשבועה דרכים יגוסו לפניך ... (כה-ז)

In general, every member of *Klal Yisroel* contains within him or her the *middos* (attributes) of *Yiras Hashem* (Fear of G-d) and *Ahavas Hashem* (love of G-d). Likewise, each and every Jew has inside all of the seven *middos* of *Hashem* - *Chessed* (Kindness), *Gevurah* (Severity), *Tiferes* (Harmony), *Netzach* (Perseverance), *Hod* (Humility), *Yesod* (Foundation), *Malchus* (Royalty). All these G-dly attributes can be used for *Avodas Hashem*. The reason why we have them is so that *Hashem* should be able to bestow upon us, His people, all the good things in this world.

R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev ZT”L (Kedushas Levi) notes that the flip side of this, is the fear of things other than *Hashem*. The same is with love and the other seven *middos*. These can all be applied to things other than the service of *Hashem*. The difference is that with the *middos* of *kedusha*

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ...

התמסרות ... יתירה

The period of *Elul* is a gift. It’s entire essence is encapsulated in the words “אני לדודי ודודי לי”. It is about deepening and strengthening our bond of love with *Hashem*. The **Nesivos Shalom ZT”L** explains that the only way to achieve “אני לדודי” - “*I am to my Beloved*,” is by giving myself over to my Beloved. The #1 reason we are distanced from *Hashem* is because we think WE are Him! From the time we are born we are desperately trying to control the world around us. As we get older, we spend most of our existence trying to get the world around us to see things our way and do what we want. The single most effective way to do *Teshuva* is to stop trying to control the situation. One must say, “*Hashem*, You love me, and I trust You more than I trust myself. If You put me in this situation, be it financial, physical, medical or otherwise; if you gave me or didn’t give me these children, this spouse, this job then I AM HAPPY. I give myself over to you” - “*Ani L’dodi.*”

In *Parshas Ki Savo*, we read about all the terrible curses, but we must not be scared. Yes, it is definitely a message to us before *Rosh Hashana* about our vulnerability, but if we take to heart WHY such curses come about, we can understand what our Beloved *Hashem* wants from us. The *posuk* does not say that the curses come from NOT serving *Hashem*; they come from serving *Hashem* ... without *simcha*! Lack of *simcha* stems from not being happy with what *Hashem* gives me. It comes from thinking that I know better than *Hashem* what is good for me. It is serving MY ego rather than *Hashem*! *Teshuvah* is about accepting the life *Hashem* has given me in the big things and also in all the little aggravating incidents that occur daily.

Multiple times a day, we must learn to say “*Ani L’dodi*” - *Hashem*, I give myself over to YOU ... with *simcha* and pleasure, and then we can be assured that *Hashem* will shower us with HIS abundant blessings, measure for measure - “*V’dodi Li.*”

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

On behalf of thousands of Shomer Shabbos Jews - www.chickensforshabbos.com - The charity that simply feeds & clothes Shomer Shabbos Jews in Pretz, Yisroel with zero overhead