

Mazel Tov to Mr. & Mrs.
Mendy Schonbrun on the
Bar Mitzvah of their son
Yossi. May he bring the
family and gantz Klal
Yisroel much nachas.

מעשה אבוזי... סימן לבנים

לכן אתה וכל עדתך הנוקדים על ה' ואהרן מזה הוא כי תלינו עליו וגו' (פז-יא)

A number of years ago, a scandalous rumor spread throughout the city of Bnei Brak. Reb Shimon, a well-regarded *Torah* scholar who studied in one of the larger *kollelim* in Bnei Brak was making a wedding for his oldest daughter. This was not so unusual. What caused people to wonder was that the wedding was to be held in the most exclusive - and expensive - hall in town. The gossiping neighbors were outraged. “Did you hear where Shimon, the poor and needy *yungerman*, is making his daughter’s wedding? Can you believe it?” Indeed, this was the incensed reaction of a handful of neighbors upon receiving the wedding invitation. Not surprisingly, each neighbor shared his or her annoyance with other neighbors and soon a full-blown scandal was afoot. People who had recently gone around collecting money from wealthy donors and neighbors to provide Reb Shimon and his family - who were known to live a simple, almost indigent, lifestyle - with the minimum funds required to make a basic wedding, were shocked and appalled.

Very quickly, the rumors circulated about town until they reached the ears of Reb Shimon himself. He could not believe what people were saying about him. It was quite obvious that more and more people were surprised at his choice of a hall, and realizing that something must be done to halt the spread of this hideous plague of *Lashon Hara* and widespread gossip, he hurriedly rushed to the *Rav* of his local *shul* to explain what had happened.

“Of course we cannot afford to make a fancy wedding in an expensive hall,” began Reb Shimon, practically in tears. He explained in full detail how immediately after their daughter’s engagement, he and his wife had contacted one of the cheaper halls in town and made an appointment to discuss arrangements. They didn’t even know how they would pay for that hall, but they scheduled the meeting nonetheless. However, even before they could finalize the meeting, a man appeared at their door, knocking incessantly. When Reb Shimon opened the door, there stood a stranger who asked to speak to him for a few minutes. “Are you Reb Shimon the son of?” he asked. Reb Shimon nodded his head. “Can you tell me please, was your father in Europe during the second world war?” Reb Shimon was surprised at this line of questioning, but answered affirmatively. His father had been in the war and like every other survivor, came through it alive in miraculous fashion.

The stranger at the door became visibly excited. He told Reb Shimon that just a few days ago, he had gotten up from *shiva*, the mourning period for his father, who had lived to a ripe old age. The pain of his loss was still visible on his face.

“Just before passing away,” the man said, “my father called me to his bedside. During his lifetime, he didn’t talk much about his earlier years, how he grew up in Europe and how he managed to survive the Holocaust. Now, however, he shared with me that during the war, he was almost killed and if not for a Jew who risked his own life to rescue him, he would not be here today. Upon arriving in Israel, my father was anxious to locate this Jew and repay him somehow. All he knew of him was his first name and the town he came from. Unfortunately, his search proved unsuccessful. Now that he was leaving this world he charged me, his son, with the responsibility of locating this man or his heirs and repay the favor he owed him.”

Reb Shimon stood there listening, wondering what all this had to do with him. The stranger continued, “A few days ago, during the *shiva* period, someone came to offer consolation and began talking about my father’s heroism during the war and how he survived together with another Jew. In the ensuing conversation, the man revealed that my father’s savior, the mysterious benefactor who nearly died to save my father’s life, was your father! As soon as the *shiva* period was over, I rushed over here to verify that indeed you are the son of the man who saved my father’s life!” With that, the man burst into tears.

Well, Reb Shimon welcomed the man into his home and they began talking. Upon hearing that Reb Shimon was soon to be marrying off his first daughter, the man revealed that his father had owned a wedding hall and he now insisted that the wedding be held at the hall he inherited from his father - at no expense! He would not take no for an answer!

Thus, the mystery of how Reb Shimon, the *yungerman*, was making a wedding in the fanciest hall in Bnei Brak was solved - and his reputation was restored.

משל למת הדבר דומה

הבדלו מתוך העדה הזאת ואכלה אתם כרגע וגו' (פז-כא)

משל: In the early years of *Beis Medrash Govoha* in Lakewood, New Jersey, the custom was to call up the *Rosh Yeshivah*, **R’ Aharon Kotler ZT”L**, for an *aliyah* every *Shabbos*. As a sign of respect, instead of calling him up by his name, as is the custom all over the world, the *gabbai* would announce, “*Yaamod, Morein V’Rabbeinu*,” and everyone knew it was referring to R’ Aharon.

This practice went on for a number of years, until it was discovered that in the local Conservative synagogue, which was active in Lakewood even before the *yeshivah* arrived,

they had a similar custom with regard to how they called up individuals to the *Torah*. Apparently, saying a person’s full name was either too arduous or some people were not aware of their Jewish names, so the *gabbai* would simply announce, “*Yaamod, Kohen*,” “*Yaamod, Levi*,” *Yaamod, Shlishi*.”

When R’ Aharon heard about this, he immediately changed the *minhag* in the *yeshivah*, so as not to appear similar to those who had strayed from the true path of the *Torah*. From that day on, he was always called up by his full name: “*Yaamod, Harav Aharon ben Harav Schneur Zalman ...*”

ויקה קרח בן יצחק בן קהת בן לוי ודתן ואבירם בני אליאב ואון בן פלת בני ראובן וגו' (פז-א)

One of the original co-conspirators in the “Korach Rebellion” was a man named *On ben Peles*. Fortunately, his wife was smart enough to recognize the folly of his ways and she confronted him with the fact that no matter who was correct - Moshe or Korach - he had nothing to gain and everything to lose. This realization helped to awaken *On ben Peles* to reassess his situation and back out of the rebellion.

This incident, says **R’ Henach Leibowitz ZT”L**, gives us a clearer understanding of the great measure of control the *yetzer hara* exerts upon our thoughts and actions. *On* was involved in a *machlokes* - a conflict. The *yetzer hara* enticed him to become more involved in the growing confrontation. He was so blinded to the truth that he neglected to show concern for the person he held most dear: himself. Not only could he not comprehend that the uprising itself was wrong, he could not even see the unmistakable fact that he had nothing to gain and his life to lose! But if *On* was so completely persuaded by the *yetzer hara*, how could his wife so easily pull him away from the conflict?

The answer, says R’ Henach, is that the *yetzer hara* is convincing, but *Emes* - truth - is even more powerful. *On ben Peles* was thoroughly blinded by the dispute, but all he needed was a dose of real undiluted *emes*, to bring him back to his senses and save him from a horrible death.

We must constantly maintain an equilibrium between two formidable powers. We must counterbalance the deceptive forces of the *yetzer hara* with the influence of *emes*. When we find ourselves straying from the path of *Torah* - involving ourselves in *machlokes* and the like - we must take out our map and compass - truth - and find our way back. There is rarely anything to be gained by fighting, other than causing hatred and bitterness. Contemplating this truth will provide us with the necessary firepower to win our struggle with the *yetzer hara* and avoid *machlokes*.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

התאוננות

After the staff of Aharon blossomed and bloomed, *Hashem* told Moshe to put the stick away as a keepsake for all generations so that the Jewish people should remember and not have complaints against *Hashem*. However, if people do have grievances and are unhappy with the way *Hashem* is doing things, it can lead one to his death! **R’ Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlit’a** explains that when one walks around with complaints - in his heart or expressed verbally - things often do not go well for him in life. Such a person gets punished with death or with a “living death” - as we know that poverty, blindness, *tzaraas*, and one who has no children is comparable to a dead person. Says R’ Gamliel, “Who knows if the reason why people have so much *tzaros* (suffering) in their lives is because they are so unhappy and spend their time *kvetching* and complaining!”

One of the *talmidim* of the **Chozeh of Lublin, R’ Shimon Yaroslover ZT”L**, lived an extremely long life. When asked what was his secret, he responded, “People have all sorts of questions about their lives. Why does he have *parnassa* and I don’t? Why does he have *nachas* from his children and my kids give me so much grief? Until *Hashem* says, ‘Down on earth, these things cannot be understood. Come up to *shamayim* and here you will see and understand that everything is just and fair!’” R’ Shimon concluded, “I never have any questions or complaints against *Hashem* and therefore He leaves me alone!”

On the flip side, if one rejoices with his life and looks to see the good, then he gets rewarded with even more good. ואתה If You say “היטב” - it’s all good, then “איטיב עמך” - I will shower you with even more good! (בראשית לב-יג)

TORAH GEMS

ואם בריאה יברא ה' ופצתה האדמה את פיה וכו' וידרו דיים שאלה וידעתם כי נאצו האנשים האלה את ה' (פז-ל)

While *Bnei Yisroel* traveled through the desert, they angered *Hashem* again and again, yet each time *Moshe Rabbeinu* stood in prayer in their defense, recalling the merit of the *Avos* (Forefathers), invoking the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy, and pleading for the sake of *Hashem’s* Own honor, which would be disgraced by the destruction of the Jewish nation. Yet in this single instance, Moshe offered no argument at all in defense of Korach and his followers; instead, he prayed that they meet a gruesome demise of a type that the world had never seen before: “*If Hashem will create a new creation, and the earth shall open its mouth to swallow them and all that is theirs, dragging them alive into the abyss, then you shall know that these men have provoked Hashem.*” How was Korach’s rebellion so much worse than the sin of the Golden Calf or the Spies, that Moshe himself prayed for their destruction?

The **Biala Rebbe, R’ Benzion Rabinowitz Shlit’a** provides us with a clear-cut understanding. When a sinful person realizes his errors, he is close to the path of *teshuvah*. Such was the condition of *Klal Yisroel* after the incidents of the Golden Calf and the Spies. They knew that they were wrong, and *Moshe Rabbeinu* felt justified in pleading in their defense using every argument at his disposal. However, the danger of *machlokes* is that its proponents walk along the brink of the abyss without even realizing the magnitude of their folly. They deem themselves the champions of the *Torah*, fully authorized to wage holy wars against the heretics in their community who dare to contradict them. Yet, the real truth is that the *Torah* itself forbids strife and *machlokes* of any kind, as we learn from the *posuk*, “*And do not be like Korach and his congregation.*” In fact, the **Chofetz Chaim ZT”L**, based on the opinion of many *Rishonim*, interpreted this *posuk* as a *Torah* prohibition against starting or supporting a *machlokes*.

דרכת יצירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHILOMO

השב את מטה אהרן וכו' ותכל תלונתם מעלי ולא ימתו (ז-כה)