

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

בשמע ה' את תלנתיכם אשר אתם מלינים עליו ונחנו מה לא עלינו תלנתיכם כי על ה' וגו' (טז-ה)

When the father of the *Kamenetzer mashgiach*, **R' Moshe Aharon Stern ZT"l** was twenty-six years old, he was stricken with a terrible disease of the kidneys. He consulted the very best doctors in the field, including a top specialist named Professor Loeb, at one of the esteemed medical centers in Manhattan. In the early part of the twentieth century, they did not have the medical technology which they have today. Treatment was limited, and kidney transplants were unheard of. His mother accompanied his father when he underwent treatment.

One day, the doctor called Mrs. Stern aside and said, "It hurts me to tell you this, but there is nothing else we can do for your husband. Take him home. We need the bed for someone whom we can help; we cannot help him. At this point, it is a matter of weeks, and no more!"

Here was a young, twenty-six-year old man, a person who feared and carefully followed the word of *Hashem*, a true *Ben Torah* - and his wife had just been told that medically, his situation was hopeless.

Disheartened, she told her father-in-law, **R' Yosef Stern ZT"l**, one of the close *talmidim* of the **Chofetz Chaim** who had moved to America, the doctor's dire prediction. R' Yosef didn't hesitate. Immediately, he sent a telegram to his *rebbe* in Radun, and asked him, "*Rebbi*, I have heard that there is a concept that it is possible to give away years of one's life to someone else. I am a healthy person. I do not know how many years I have left, but I am healthy. I have already reached the age of sixty-five. I am prepared to give however many years I have left to my son and to take upon myself his illness. Am I permitted to do so?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered him that it is permissible to do so, and instructed him regarding the procedure. R' Yosef carefully followed the instructions from the Chofetz Chaim and bestowed his remaining years of life upon his son. Immediately thereafter, R' Yosef became sick, and his son miraculously began to regain his kidney function. The doctors were stunned with this unprecedented development. A few months later, R' Yosef passed away from his sudden illness, while his son fully regained his health. In fact, this young man went on to live for another thirty-one years. Had his father not given away his remaining years, he would have lived to the age of ninety-six years!

R' Moshe Aharon further relates that when his father passed away, his mother sat *shivah* in America with his brother, Yisroel Meir (named after the Chofetz Chaim) and his sister, while he sat *shivah* in Yerushalayim. At one point during the *shivah* in the States, an elderly gentleman entered the room. They could see that he was a very old man but no one recognized him. The man entered with his wife, and sat down wordlessly to be *menachem avel* (comfort the mourners).

During a lull in the conversation, the man turned to the widow and asked, "Do you recognize me?"

She thought for a moment. "No," she said finally.

The man said, "I am Professor Loeb. I treated your husband thirty-one years ago."

The woman broke into tears, and lamented, "Doctor, my fifty-seven-year-old husband, a young man in the best years of his life, has been taken from me."

The doctor, who was not a religious Jew, raised his voice and said, "You have complaints against G-d? Thirty-one years ago your husband was as good as dead. I was there and I remember his condition. G-d gave you a present for thirty-one years. Give thanks to G-d!"

When she heard that she stopped crying and said, "Thank you. You have comforted me."

משל' למה הדבר דומה

תפל עליהם אימתה ופחד בגדל זרועך ידמו כאבן וגו' (טז-טז)

משל: In Czarist Russia, a little more than two hundred years ago, the Russian crown was investigating the great **Baal HaTanya, R' Schneur Zalman of Liadi ZT"l**, on trumped up charges of treason. He was arrested and led through the courtyard of the Russian compound to a brutal interrogation. A few children of the royal family were playing there as well. Amongst them was young Nikolai, brother to the Czar and a cruel child by nature, who later assumed the Russian throne himself.

Nikolai had a whip on him. As the *Rebbe* was being led

by, the boy boldly held up his whip as if to threaten the *Rebbe*. The *Rebbe* focused his gaze on the cruel child.

Suddenly, Nikolai felt himself becoming afraid of the prisoner. He dropped his whip and averted his gaze. Nikolai later commented to his tutor that he never before experienced such fear as when the prisoner looked at him.

Years later, the **Tzemach Tzedek**, commented that if not for his grandfather's stern gaze at Nikolai when he was a child, weakening his boldness, the Jews of Russia would have simply buckled under the weight of his harsh decrees.

וה' הלך לפניהם יומם בעמוד ענן... ולילה בעמוד אש להאיר להם ללכת יומם ולילה וגו' (יג-כא)

Klal Yisroel did not need to travel at night, for the Jews miraculously reached their destination in no time at all. However, it is apparent that they did travel at night as evidenced by the pillar of fire that led them in the dark. Why did they need to journey in the dark as well as by day?

The **Shem M'Shmuel, R' Shmuel Bornstein ZT"l of Sochatchov** explains that in symbolic terms, the day is a time of clarity, full understanding, and intellectual appreciation. The night, on the other hand, is a time which symbolizes obfuscation and intellectual uncertainty. *Klal Yisroel* traveled into the desert without knowing what would happen to them or how they would survive. They were content just to follow the directive of *Hashem*. As the *posuk* states: "*I remember for you the kindness of your youth ... when you went after Me in the wilderness in an unsworn land.*" (ירמיהב-ב)

The **Seforno** comments that the message conveyed is one of complete dedication to the word of *Hashem*; they stayed at a place whether they liked it or not; they traveled at very short notice, even if they liked where they were encamped; and while no journey actually began at night, they traveled day and night according to God's command even with few supplies prepared for the journey. In each one of these journeys *Klal Yisroel* demonstrated dedication to their mission to follow *Hashem*, no matter what.

The faith of *Klal Yisroel* was very strong, even if they did not know where their dedication would lead them. This is very much an expression of faith of the variety symbolized by night, when lack of clarity and uncertainty prevail. It is thus a great praise of *Klal Yisroel* to say that they traveled both by day and night, as this indicates that their faith was exceedingly strong and unshakeable.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...
ט"ז בשבט

Did you know that *Tu B'Shvat* and *tznius* are closely related? O.K., you're probably wondering what does *tznius* have to do with *Tu B'Shvat*? Actually they are very similar. The **Sefer HaTodaah** explains that *Tu B'Shvat* is the day when the soil of *Eretz Yisroel* becomes renewed and therefore it is a time to give thanks for the fruits and beauty of the Holy Land. *Eretz Yisroel* is truly a special place and who can testify to that better than us "*chutnikers*" who left our birth places because we felt the love towards the Holy Land and decided to build our lives on its Holy soil?

The *posuk* states: "*To my favorite choice son, I give the best land.*" Did you ever wonder why *Bnei Yisroel* - the "*Bechor*" of *Hashem*, received such a small portion from *Hashem*? *Eretz Yisroel* is a tiny speck on the map surrounded by powerful enemies. Isn't the Firstborn supposed to get a large, double portion (פישנים)? Yet it is our land and it is here that we thrive. This is where we demonstrate our essence - the strength of *Klal Yisroel* in their Holy Land.

Tznius is a small, modest and unassuming *middah*, yet it is the force that powers a Jew's spirituality. We don't have to "pop out everyone's eyes" and be big or loud in order to be special. Special qualities come from within and need not be big. *Tznius* - to be modest, small - yet truly great in qualities and deeds. The best way to achieve great height is quietly and unassumingly, growing in modesty and *tznius*. *Tu B'Shvat* is the day when we sing the praises of the Land - a small and unassuming land which possesses so many wonderful qualities - by eating its special fruits and focusing on its essence.

TORAH GEMS

מרכבת פרעה וחילו ירה בים ומבחר שלישיו טבעו בים סוף וגו' (טז-ד)

The **Zohar** writes that the forces of evil in this world, "*begin with unity and end in dispersion.*" The **Sfas Emes, R' Yehudah Leib Alter ZT"l** writes that this is precisely what occurred at *Krias Yam Suf*. The mighty Egyptian army, feared by the entire civilized world, met their end as a fragmented force, their drowned bodies strewn all over the beach after the sea spit them out. The Jewish People, though, broken up into twelve individual tribes crossed the *Yam Suf* and sang *Shirah* in perfect unison.

This unity is the key to our redemption, whether thousands of years ago in Egypt, or in the future *geulah* from our bitter exile. The *Mishna* (עדיותר-ז) maintains that *Eliyahu Hanavi* will come before the advent of *Moshiach* with the intention of: "לקרב ולא לרחק" - "*to bring close but not to divide.*" **R' Raphael Pelcovitz Z"l** (renowned Rabbi of the "White Shul" in Far Rockaway, NY) wrote: The Hebrew word for truth is "אמת" comprised of three letters, separated by the total spectrum of the Hebrew Alphabet - the "א" and "ת" - the first and last letters - with a "מ" right in the center of it all. On the other hand, the Hebrew word for falsehood is "שקר", composed of three letters that are right next to each other in the *Alef Beis*: ש'ק'ר:

What we may discern from this unusual juxtaposition of letters is that the forces of "שקר", those who wish to distort Judaism and ultimately destroy it, are generally more united in their hatred of *Torah*, whereas those who champion authentic *Yiddishkeit* are often hopelessly divided. The *Mishna* teaches us that the solution is not "שקר" - to separate the closely knit ranks of "*Sheker*" and disrupt the united front of the secular camp, but rather "לקרב" - to bring together the letters "ת" "מ" "א" of "*Emes*" - the various factions within the camp of *Torah*-true Jewry.

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHILOMO