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מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויאמרו האחד בא לגור וישפמ שפוט עתה נרע לך מהם ויפצרו באיש בלוח ... (ט-ט)

In *Toras Avigdor*, **R’ Avigdor Miller זצ”ל** was once asked to explain what he feels is the best way to fight against the liberals, the progressives who are enemies of the *Torah*, who battle against a pure and religious lifestyle? He replied as follows: “To fight the leftists and reformers, the very best way is to get married and have a big family. But in a case where it will take a little time before you can find the right wife, you can still do something about it by writing letters. A letter costs very little. It’s a pity people don’t do that more often. Personally, I send letters to senators and congressmen. Don’t think they ignore the letters. If you’re capable, you can write letters to newspapers. And many times they print your letters.

“But remember, the very best method is to raise a family. Your children will speak as they walk through the streets - just by being alive they’re speaking the truth. I see a boychikel on a bicycle, wearing a *yarmulkah*. His *payos* are flying behind his ears and he is speeding down the street. You know what? That’s an advertisement for *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. A pleasure to see him.

“Or the *zechus* of seeing our girls coming out of the *Bais Yankev*. A whole group of *frum* girls dressed with *tzniyus*. That’s *kodesh kadoshim*. That’s an advertisement for *Hashem*. You know, when the liberals see that, they get sick to their stomach. *Kein yirbu!* It’s very important for us to increase and multiply. ‘*Pru Urevu Umilu Es Ha’aretz V’chivshuha*’! You should multiply and conquer the whole world by the number of your children!”

The following story was told by a *talmid* of Rav Miller. It was the late in the evening on Election Day in New York City, sometime in the early 1980’s. Rav Miller was very vocal about the upcoming election and had spent the previous four months storming about the importance of voting against the Democrat candidate for Mayor of New York. The *Rav* was adamant that the *frum tzibbur* should come out to the polls in large numbers to fight against the immoral and dangerous ideology of the Democrat Party in New York. He spoke about it before *shiurim*, after *shiurim*, even during *shiurim*. He urged his *misparallelim* and *shiur* attendees to call friends and encourage them to vote Republican, and to go as far as handing out papers, leaflets, to others to make clear the importance of the election for the city on a whole and especially for the *frum* community.

Finally, the polls closed - it was *Motzei* Election Day, and the final results were coming in. A grandson of Rav Miller was visiting his grandfather in the *Rav*’s apartment upstairs from the *shul* and he offered to do a favor for the *Rav*.

“Should I go down to the *shul* and find out from someone there what the results were, if our candidate won?”

The *Rav* responded. “No, I’m not interested. It’s fine. Whoever wins, wins.”

“But *Zeidy*,” said the grandson in shock. “What do you mean ‘Whoever wins, wins’? This is all you’ve been talking about for months; about how important it is to vote in order to fight against the *rishus*, the wickedness, of these politicians! How can you not be anxious to learn who won? What do you mean you’re not interested?”

“You have to understand,” the *Rav* explained, “When I fight against the liberals and the enemies of the *Torah*, I’m doing it because they’re waging a war against *Hashem* and part of my *avodas Hashem* is to fight on His side, to fight for what He wants. What the results will be, that’s out of my hands; I just have to do the most I possibly can to battle for *Hashem*. Once I do that, I’m not interested in following the results, being nervous about it and wasting time with it. Our job is to serve *Hashem* and fight for *Torah* values as much as possible. The results? What will be, will be. But we can never stop doing our part.”

That was R’ Avigdor Miller’s outlook on life. It’s all about fulfilling the words of *Dovid HaMelech*, “*Ohavei Hashem Sinu Ra*” - if we love *Hashem*, we must despise evil. We have to do our utmost to be on *Hashem*’s team. He could not understand how Jews can vote for a party whose platform is virulently anti-religious and anti-*Hashem*. How can Jews smile when corrupt individuals visit our community in an attempt to garner our votes? How can they justify voting in order to get money for *yeshivos* when those same votes will bring billions of dollars to the liberal anti-morality causes? Of course, *אין לנו להישען אלא*, “אין לנו להישען אלא, so no matter the outcome of any election, we all must place our faith and trust solely in the One above.

ויאמר מרדכי את הלבית אליו היום לא חדש ולא שבת ותאמר שלום ... (מלכים ב' ד-כג)

Elisha HaNavi promised the *Isha HaShunamis* - the *Shunamite* woman, that she would merit giving birth to a child in appreciation for her hospitality, but after a few short years the child took ill and died. The woman laid her child on *Elisha*’s bed and went to find the holy prophet.

The *Navi* tells us that upon seeing the woman head out, her husband asked her why she was going to see the prophet on a day that wasn’t *Rosh Chodesh* or *Shabbos* - the customary time to visit a prophet socially. However, the bigger question here is why the woman did not tell her husband that their beloved child had passed away.

R’ Michel Feinstein זצ”ל (**Shai L’Torah**) quotes **R’ Chaim (Brisker) Soloveitchik זצ”ל** who explains that in

the tragic case of a deceased child, it is the generally the responsibility of a father to arrange the funeral and make the necessary burial arrangements. In this case, we glean a lesson in belief and faith, no matter what. The child had passed away, and most would rightly assume that there is nothing further one can do for the child at that point. However, the *Shunamite* woman displayed a rare strength of belief in the power of *tefillah*. While her husband would immediately arrange the funeral, she decided not to tell him until after she spoke to the *Navi* and exhausted all of her options.

A great lesson in *Eemunah and Bitachon* is learned from this story and the message is clear: how no matter what happens, the gates of *tefillah* are never closed.

וימדר אברהם האהלה אל שרה ויאמר מרדי ... ויקח בן כקר רך וטוב ויתן אל הנער (ח-ט)

In our *parsha*, we encounter two very different approaches to performing acts of kindness and *hachnasas orchim*. The approach of *Avraham Avinu* and the approach of his nephew, Lot. Regarding *Avraham* the *Torah* tells us that he sought to include both *Sarah* and *Yishmael* in the *mitzvah*, making it a family project. Lot, on the other hand, single-handedly took care of the *Malachim*, baking *matzos* and serving them. What is the difference in the results?

R’ Reuven Grozovsky זצ”ל explained as follows: When one does a *מעשה מצוה* alone, its impact is likely just on the one performing said *mitzvah*, and it won’t necessarily spill over to others. When, however, it is done inclusively, and not as an exclusive endeavor, the *hashpa’ah* filters down to all those involved, positively affecting them. Thus, regarding *Avraham Avinu* the *Torah* later relates, “ושני נעריו עמו” and “וילכו שניהם יחדו”. Whereas concerning Lot, the *Torah* writes, “ויהי כמצחק, בעיני חתניו”. His family degraded him. His actions weren’t reflected by, nor accepted by, even his closest kin.

The next *machshava* complements this *vort*. There’s a *posuk* in *Mishlei* (17-16) that states *ותפארת בנים ותפארת* “*Grandchildren are the crown of their elders, the glory of children are their parents*” R’ Reuven added one word to beautifully illuminate the meaning of this *posuk*: “עטרת זקנים בני בנים **בזמן** שתפארת בנים אבותם”. When are the children, the crown for the *Zaidas*? Only when the children feel that their glory is predicated on who their ancestors are. Only when there is respect and awe toward, and in connection with parents, will the children be the pride of their parents. When the children partake together with the elders in all aspects of our rich *mesorah*, they will strive to emulate them too.

May we and our children be *zoche* to continue the glorious chain of our *mesorah*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

וירא אליו ה' כאלוני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל ... (ח-א)

משל: For many years, **R’ Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer זצ”ל**, also known as **Ksav Sofer**, would go to the same vacation/health resort as Baron Rothschild. The Baron spent a lot of time enjoying the *Ksav Sofer’s Torah* that he delivered on different occasions, and their relationship flourished.

One year, the Baron cut his visit short. When asked by the *Ksav Sofer* why he wasn’t staying long, the Baron replied with a *vort* of his own: “*Chazal (Bava Metzia 30b)* tell us on the *posuk*, “והודעת להם את הדרך ילכו בה ואת המעשה אשר יעשוך” - make known to them the way they are to go and the practices they are to follow, the word “ילכו” - “*to go*” refers to visiting the sick. This is because when you visit the sick, you have to recognize when you should get up and leave. Perhaps your visit is a burden for the ill person, or perhaps the ill person is

embarrassed to be seen in this state. Therefore, the *Torah* says “ילכו” one must know when it is time to go ...”

With that, the Baron stood up and left. The *Ksav Sofer* often repeated this *vort* in the name of Baron Rothschild.

נמשל: When *Hashem* appeared to *Avraham Avinu* in *Ailonei Mamre*, **Rashi** tells us that He came to visit the sick, the *mitzvah* of *Bikur Cholim*. This is one of the greatest acts of kindness a person can do (*Peah1:1*). It is interesting to note that the words “*Bikur Cholim*” have a deep meaning. Besides the simple meaning of visiting, which is the act of showing up and seeing the sick person’s condition and praying for his speedy recovery, the term “*bikur*” implies a critical examination of the needs of the sick patient. Whether something physical or just merely encouraging the patient and cheering him up, one cannot fathom what he might accomplish with his “*bikur*” of the “*choleh*.”

GOLDEN NUGGETS ON THE PARSHA WITH A FOCUS ON LESSONS HOW TO SERVE HASHEM AND BE A BETTER JEW BY R' YEHOShUA GOLD

הנחמדים מזהב

Before destroying *Sodom*, *Hashem* seems to have contemplated informing *Avraham Avinu* first, questioning, “*Shall I hide from Avraham what I am about to do?*” The *posukim* continue, apparently spelling out *Hashem*’s decision process in telling *Avraham*: “*Since Avraham will become a great and populous nation ... that he may instruct his children and house to keep the way of Hashem by doing what is just and right ...*” This requires explanation. Where else do we find a debate whether a prophet should receive *nevuah*, and furthermore, for the *Torah* to reveal *Hashem*’s reasoning?

In the *Hakdama* to his *Sefer Pituchei Chosam*, **R’ Moshe Sofer זצ”ל**, the **Chasam Sofer**, writes an amazing explanation. To be a *Navi* many requirements must be met, as enumerated by the **Rambam** in *Yesodei Hatorah (ch. 7)*. One condition is *התבודדות*, which is spending time in seclusion, focusing entirely and solely on *Hashem*, which leads to an intimate closeness to the Almighty. But because *Avraham* was so busy with the people and drawing them to the truth, he never had the opportunity to do this. Subsequently, he never attained a level of *nevuah* found by other prophets! For this reason, *Hashem* was not going to reveal what was going to happen to *Sodom*. However, *Avraham* was perfect in every other area, a true *Ish Shaleim*, and the only reason he was short in this area was precisely because he was bringing others to true *Avodas Hashem*. Therefore, *Hashem* says, “This will not be the reason for *Avraham* to lose out. After all, he is spending his entire day on building a future that will do what is just and right and serve Me.” And so, *Hashem* disclosed *Sodom*’s imminent demise with *Avraham*.

The *Chasam Sofer* concludes and says that when helping others, one will certainly not lose out on his own personal growth; to the contrary, he will merit special *Siyata Dishmaya*. There is a known story of a woman who would call **R’ Moshe Feinstein זצ”ל** every Friday to confirm the candle lighting time. R’ Moshe insisted on taking the call himself, explaining, “If *Hashem* gave me time to help others, how can I not take the time?”