

(1) משנה ברורה קס"א:ב (2) שו"ת אור מציון ב' (3) בית יוסף או"ח כ"ז (4) או"ח כ"א: (5) תהילה לדוד כ"ג: (6) אגרות משה או"ח מ' (7) כ"יד (8) שו"ת הר צבי או"ח א"כ (9) שערי תשובה כ"ו:

# מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

והוא עבר לפניהם וישתחו ארצה שבע פעמים עד גשתו עד אחיו וגו' (לכ-ג)

Before the advent of the State of Israel, the ongoing battle for supremacy of the hearts and minds of the Jewish residents who lived there, was a major political agenda. The irreligious Zionists who asserted their formidable muscle in the hopes of doing away with traditional *Torah* Judaism and values, found an implacable antagonist and more than capable opponent in the great spiritual leader of the *Chareidi Kehillah*, **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld ZT"l**. It was R' Yosef Chaim who railed against the influence of the חילונים (secularists) and protected the independence of the religious community, including helping to establish many of the *Chareidi* neighborhoods throughout Yerushalayim.

Of course, the methods used by the secularists to impress their views upon the citizenry were of a much more forceful and brutish nature than that of their religious counterparts, and inevitably R' Yosef Chaim found himself directly in the crosshairs of targeted attacks by the impertinent secularists.

One afternoon, as R' Yosef Chaim sat in his house learning with his grandson, a band of five unruly ruffians stormed into the house and began to verbally abuse him. Shouting vile epithets at him and "his ilk," they hoped to intimidate him and maybe "rough him up" a bit to get his attention. His grandson quickly fled into a far corner and watched in shocked incredulity as the hoodlums continued to heap abuse and implied threats upon the calm and serene face of his holy grandfather. Inasmuch as they continued to shout and carry on with almost drunken abandon, R' Yosef Chaim sat serenely in his place looking down into his *gemara*, not moving a muscle and not showing any emotion. It looked as if he hadn't even heard them even though they towered over him and shouted directly into his face.

Suddenly, R' Yosef Chaim stood up and unbuttoned the top button of his shirt. Then, he forcefully pulled open his shirt and the garment underneath, revealing the skin over his heart. Turning to face his would-be attackers, his eye's ablaze, the sound of his voice seeming to emanate from an other-worldly place, the holy *Tzaddik* roared: "Shoot me! Kill me! Do what you want! I am prepared to die *Al Kiddush Hashem*! But I refuse to budge even a tiny drop from what I know is right and true." R' Yosef Chaim stared at the suddenly shriveled rioters and said: "You can tell the people who sent you that the *Chareidim* will not be intimidated by hooligans. You will not dictate how we think and what we do. We will continue to do what's right and no amount of threats will scare us!" Amazingly, the five ruffians shrank back, their venom had oozed out of them entirely. Silently, they turned and hurried out of the *Rov*'s house.

Later, R' Yosef Chaim told a group of *talmidim* what had inspired him to act the way he did. "In truth, I learned this from our holy father, *Yaakov Avinu*. When Esav was coming toward him with four hundred men, Rashi tells us that he came with hatred in his heart. He really wanted to kill Yaakov! Yaakov, too, felt animosity toward his brother and prepared himself for the inevitable confrontation. What happened when Esav got there? The *Torah* tells us: '*He (Yaakov) bowed seven times until he came close to his brother.*' With each bow, Yaakov attempted to find merit in his brother, to release his hatred and "*come close*" to Esav. By allowing his brotherly emotions to overcome his rational misgivings, he shone a light of tolerance and love into Esav's heart, which had the miraculous effect of softening Esav until he, too, felt mercy toward his brother, Yaakov, running to him and kissing him wholeheartedly and with brotherly love."

R' Yosef Chaim concluded, "When those five ruffians stood over me, I began to think of all the love and affection that I have for them, as fellow Jews. Although they may be misguided, they are our brothers, nonetheless. And even if my words were harsh, they were spoken out of sincerity and with love toward all Jews. They must have felt this love and it softened them!"

## משל' למזה הדבר דומה

אם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחות והכהו והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה וגו' (לכ-ט)

**משל:** A young man came to the **Chofetz Chaim ZT"l** requesting a blessing to be exempted from the draft in Czarist Russia. But the Chofetz Chaim refused the request and said cryptically: "*Siz gut tzu kenen shison.*" ("It's good to know how to shoot"). The young man was aghast at this response and eventually was drafted into the army where he was forced to serve for a number of years.

Thirty years later, during WWII, this young man escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto and was captured by Russian partisans in the forest who intended to shoot him. He told

them that he could help them fight the Germans but the partisans just laughed and said they were not interested in training some Jew how to shoot a gun. At that point, he told them that he was already trained from his army service and showed them that he knew how to use a rifle.

With G-d's help he survived the war as an active member of the partisans, always remembering the prophetic words of the Chofetz Chaim, "*Siz gut tzu kenen shison.*"

**במשל:** A *Yid* generally avoids violence but there comes a time when even a Jew has to stand up and fight. In the case

ולקחת מנחתו מידי כי על כן ראיתי פניך כראת פני אלקים ותרצני וגו' (לכ-י)

Yaakov urged his brother Esav to accept his generous gift with the following words: "*For now I have seen your face is like the Face of G-d, and you favored me.*" Rashi explains that Yaakov hinted to Esav that he was unafraid of him since he had already seen the face of the angel of Esav and done battle with him. Why was this necessary? Did Yaakov think that he could win over Esav so easily?

The answer may be explained based on the words of *Chazal* (מגילה כח): "*A man is forbidden to gaze into the face of a wicked man.*" The **Maharsha ZT"l** explains that according to the sages of *Kabbalah* the countenance of one's face reflects his character. An unclean spirit rests upon the wicked man and if one looks directly at his face the evil spirit will also rest upon him.

**R' Eliyohu Lopian ZT"l (Lev Eliyohu)**, analyzes this kabbalistic interpretation and says that sight is a spiritual property located in the brain that is connected by nerves to the eyes through which vision is transmitted. Hence, if one looks into the face of a wicked man, this harms the spiritual power of sight in the brain, and an unclean spirit will rest upon him. That is why our sages prohibited us from looking into the face of a wicked man. In fact, this is not mere *מדת חסידות* (pious behavior), but an actual prohibition. If one transgresses this prohibition, he will later notice an evil thought passing through his mind and wonder from where such an evil or lustful or arrogant thought came. In truth, the unclean spirit of the wicked man who is lustful or arrogant has clung to him.

Thus, Yaakov was making his point very clear to Esav: "You may come with soldiers and armies but I am unafraid. I have the seen the face of your angel, and defeated him in mortal combat. But I refuse to look at your evil face!"

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS  
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

נבישת היצר

וישאל יעקב ויאמר הגידה נא שמך ויאמר למזה זה תשאל לשמי ויברך את שם וגו' (לכ-י)

Samael, the angel of Esav that wrestled with Yaakov, is the personification of the evil that seeks to overpower good. In asking the angel's name, Yaakov hoped to identify his power so that he may be aware of it and more capable of overcoming it. We, too, must learn to overcome this power. This is why we so often fail a life-test - a נסיון (lit. a banner). For if one would see a warning "banner" before him, preparing him for each test and tribulation, he would surely emerge victorious.

The angel, however responded by saying, "I have no fixed name." (Rashi) The *Satan* is very clever. He comes in many disguises. Sometimes he comes dressed as a hostile enemy and other times as a friend - even a *Torah* scholar! No matter how he looks, the faster we identify him and prepare ourselves for the "fight" - the more certain we will be of victory.

When my son was a little boy, his grandmother told him he could go to the nosh cabinet and take one *Shabbos* treat. He ran excitedly into the kitchen but he didn't come out for close to ten minutes. We all wondered what took so long. When he finally emerged, I immediately asked him, "What took you so long to pick out one treat?" His answer was startling, "When I stood in front of the cabinet, with all the treats before me, my *yetzer hara* started telling me to take a whole bunch of goodies, instead of just one. He kept nudging me for a long time. But you know what? In the end, I didn't listen to him!"

From the mouth of babes! But if even a small child can recognize that it is much better to overpower and overcome the insidious designs of the *yetzer hara*, shouldn't **WE** identify his evil in our everyday lives - and do away with him for good?!

# TORAH GEMS

ויהי בהקשתה בלדתה ותאמר לה המילדת אל תיראי כי גם זה לך בן וגו' (לח-ה)

As *Rochel Imeinu* was delivering her second child, she languished in the throes of terrible labor. The midwife tried to ease her mind a bit and even before the baby was fully delivered, she informed Rochel that it was a boy. How could she have known before the baby was born? **R' Zalman Sorotzkin ZT"l** answers that in fact the baby was breeched! He was born feet first and his thrashing legs caused his mother immeasurable pain until she died. But not before her mind was set at ease; her second son had been born.

On a lighter note, a story is told about the **Ridva'z, R' Yaakov Dovid Wilevsky ZT"l**, who was once traveling on a train, when a frantic man rushed into his car and cried, "*Rebbe*, please help. My wife is not due to give birth for a few more weeks but she suddenly went into labor here on the train! What can I do? Please, you must help her?"

R' Yaakov Dovid shrugged helplessly. "What can I do?" he asked. But the man was in a state of panic and would not leave until the *Ridvaz* finally told him, "Go back and say the *kapitel* 'ישב בסתר עליון' seven times.... backwards!"

The man ran out of the train car and all was still for a few minutes. After a while, the man had calmed down and came back into the *Ridvaz*'s car to inform him that the labor had stopped and his wife was doing okay.

Another *Rov* who was traveling with R' Yaakov Dovid could hardly contain his curiosity. "Where did you come up with that? I have never heard of such a *segulah* before in my life! How did you know about this?"

Once again, the *Ridvaz* shrugged. "I'll tell you the truth, *Chazal* tell us that if a woman is 'מקשה לילד' (experiencing a difficult labor), one should say 'ישב בסתר עליון' seven times as a *segulah* to open up her womb. I figured that if you say it seven times backwards .... that would seal it shut!!"

דרכה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF  
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHILOMO

וישאל יעקב ויאמר הגידה נא שמך ויאמר למזה זה תשאל לשמי ויברך את שם וגו' (לכ-י)