

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

ופדיוו מן חרש תפדה בערכך כסף חמשת שקלים בשקל הקדש עשרים גרה הוא ... (טז-ח)

In the second half of the 19th century, one of the leaders of Polish and Galician Jewry was the renowned *Posek* and *Rav*, **R’ Sholom Mordechai HaKohen Schwadron ז”ל**, known throughout the world as the **Maharsham**. He served as Chief Rabbi of Brezhan for over thirty years, and although he was called the “**Brezhaner Rav**,” he did serve in a number of communities before arriving in Brezhan. An incident occurred during his years in the town of Butchatch, where he served as *Rav*. The *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) of the town was a good, G-d-fearing person. He had an only son, who, in the course of time, joined his father’s trade and helped him with his work. One day, while plying his knife, the son cut his right hand, injuring his fingers to such an extent that he became incapacitated. The injury was devastating and life-threatening. The *shochet* took his son to many doctors, but not even the sophisticated physicians of Lvov (Lemberg) could help him.

Naturally, the father and son were heartbroken. One day, the *shochet* entered the *Maharsham’s* house and poured out his bitter tale of woe to the *Rav*. “Please, *Rebbe*,” wept the poor man, “he is my only son, bless him with a *refuah shleima*, a complete recovery. He is a G-d fearing boy, and he needs a means of earning a livelihood. How can he provide for his family if he has such a terrible wound? Indeed, he started helping me very capably when this happened. So much for my hope that he would eventually assume my position as the town’s *shochet* when I retire! Please, *Rebbe*, help him!”

Well, of course, the *Maharsham* commiserated with the man, blessing him and wishing him a speedy recovery. However, after a few days, the blessing still did not seem to have any effect. The miserable father frequented the *Maharsham’s* house to no avail. One day, an entirely original idea dawned on him. He came to R’ Sholom Mordechai and said, “*Rebbe*, my son is a firstborn and of course he had a *Pidyon Haben*. But now that I think about it, I am not 100% sure of the lineage of the *kohen* who I employed. Where can I find a ‘*Kohen Meyuchas*’ - a genuine *kohen* of impeccable lineage, to perform the *Pidyon Haben*?”

R’ Sholom Mordechai smiled and said, “Let me tell you a story. R’ Moshe Berniever, of blessed memory, was an ardent follower of the famous Chassidic leader, the *tzaddik*, **R’ Meir’l Premishlaner ז”ל**, and used to frequent his court on many occasions, especially on *Shabbos*. On one occasion when R’ Moshe was there spending *Shabbos* in the court of his *Rebbe*, the *tzaddik* ordered his *shamash* to call a ‘genuine *kohen*’ up for the *Torah* reading. The *shamash* was at a loss to understand how to fulfill the command. How was he supposed to know who a ‘genuine *kohen*’ was? However, he was quite familiar with the mystical ways and style of his *Rebbe*, the *tzaddik* R’ Meir’l. He was sure that the *Rebbe* did know who the ‘authentic’ *kohen* was, and fearing he would call up the wrong person, he preferred to remain silent.

“Don’t be foolish,” exclaimed R’ Meir’l. ‘Can’t you see that R’ Moshe Berniever is here, and he is a real *kohen*? Go ahead and call him up!’ Such an identification from the lips of a *tzaddik* reputed to possess *Ruach Hakodesh* is quite sufficient to consider one an undeniable scion of *Aharon HaKohen*. R’ Moshe got the *aliyah*!” The *Maharsham* paused for a minute and then concluded, “Do you know who R’ Moshe Berniever was? He was my father!”

The *shochet* yelled in joyous surprise. “In view of the *Rebbe’s* impeccable *yichus* (lineage) as a ‘genuine’ *kohen*, maybe my son did not have a kosher *pidyon*. I would like to redeem him again, from you. Maybe, with *Hashem’s* help, he will get well. I read a similar story in the *Sefer Chassidim* by **Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid**.” The *Maharsham* agreed.

The old *shochet* did not waste time. He promptly obtained the five *shekels* required for the redemption, prepared a festive meal, and invited the *Maharsham*, the “real” *kohen*, to perform the ceremony of the *Pidyon Haben* for his suffering firstborn.

To the *shochet’s* great amazement and relief, his newly redeemed son reported a dramatic improvement in his injured hand. Immediately after the ceremony, indeed just a few short days later, the son’s wound began to heal and his pain subsided. In a few days, his suffering ended. To his utter delight, he was able to resume his old occupation of *shochet* and again assist his aging father, until he was ready to take over as the town’s *shochet*. (Maharsham of Brezhan, by R’ Baruch Kalinsky)

אשר בחר בנביאים טובים ...

הנה שמעתי בקלכם ... ואמליך עליכם מלך וגו’ (שמואל א’ יב-א)

Chazal explain that as a direct descendant from Korach, *Shmuel HaNavi* felt it was his responsibility to correct his ancestor’s terrible error. Korach challenged Moshe and tried to usurp his authority as “the king,” thus, it was *Shmuel’s* calling to appoint the first Jewish king - *Shaul HaMelech*.

One of the 613 *mitzvos* in the *Torah* is “שום תשים עלך מלך” - “*You shall place (appoint) a king over yourself*” (*Devarim* 17:15). Nonetheless *Shmuel* was upset at *Bnei Yisroel* for demanding a King. Why did *Shmuel* oppose a monarch and become so upset at *Bnei Yisroel* for requesting something that they were already commanded to implement?

R’ Yehoshua M’Kutna ז”ל (Yeshuos Malko) explains

that *Klal Yisroel* demanded a king using the words, חנה לנו, “ננה לנו” - “*Give us a king*.” While the word “שום” means to place one thing into/onto another, the word “ננה” simply means to give. A king who is “carefully placed” upon a people, has the ability to properly integrate his rule into society thereby elevating his subjects. However, when a king is just “given” to the people, not only will his authority bear no weight, he will just become influenced by the people and lead them down a dark, slippery path. *Shmuel HaNavi* became upset because not only did the people’s request undermine the whole purpose of a Jewish monarchy, it would also disrupt this one chance at rectifying his ancestor’s mistake.

Join in and listen to a 5 minute daily shiur in Kedushas Einyim. Call 718-450-9990. Your eyes are precious - Turning one's eyes away from evil is the ultimate goal

השב את מנח אהרן לפני העדות למשמרת לאות לבני מדי ותכל תלונתם מעל ולא ימתו וגו' (ח-כה)

מחשבת הלב

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ז”ל

The *parsha* of the twelve staffs that were placed in the *Mishkan* to determine who is the true *Kohen Gadol*, is a bit mystifying. Wasn’t Aharon’s position already solidified after the feud of Korach? Was a second trial necessary? My *machshava* here is that although it was apparent to all that Aharon was correct, and that anyone who would dispute it would be swiftly punished, however, this may have been understood as a frightening experience, a manner of serving *Hashem* through *yirah* because one is afraid of the consequences. *Hashem* wanted to dispel that notion. *Avodas Hashem* is enjoyable, *geshmak*, things grow, flowers blossom, and spirits are happy. *Hashem* commanded the staffs to grow showing it’s a *simcha*, not a burden to serve Him.

There’s an unbelievable **Baal HaTurim** in *Parshas Vaera*. He brings a *Medrash* that Aharon’s staff swallowed all the other eleven staffs and that is why they didn’t grow. In other words, even a stick will flourish if it is in a place of *Hashraas Hashechina*. The only reason the others didn’t blossom was because they were swallowed up! If we allow ourselves to bask in the glow of *Yiddishkeit* and not become “swallowed up” by the allures of the world, we will no doubt grow tremendously.

With this in mind we can better understand why *Hashem* tells Aharon: “ועבדתם עבודת מנחה...ועבדתם את כהנתכם”. The *Kehunah* is a service that is a gift. Why a gift and why here? The answer is that the *Torah* is defining, now, after the story of Korach, that our *Avodas Hashem* is not a mundane task, not a burden; rather it’s a gift, a privilege, an honor to be able to have the opportunity to serve the King of Kings, to learn for Him, to *daven* and speak with Him. (see the **Ramban** and **Malbim**). It is our responsibility to transmit these feelings and מהלך הרוחם through our own behavior to our children. When they see that there is no greater *simcha* than a *blatt gemara*, a *perek Tehillim*, a *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*; when they see our *simcha* when we do *mitzvos*, it will be so contagious that they will *Bezras Hashem* want nothing else but to follow in the ways that our elders have paved for us!

משל למח הדבר דומה

כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קָדְשִׁים וּבְתוֹכָם ה' (טז-ג)

משל: In Slonim, there was a wealthy man who was quite tight-fisted and gave very little to *tzedakah*, which resulted in his being unanimously disliked in the community. On the other hand, he would try to impose himself as the *chazan* at prayer services, and in addition to his miserliness, he had a raspy voice which irritated the congregation.

They complained to **R’ Eizel Charif ז”ל**. R’ Eizel, who was known for his sharp retorts - hence the name “*Charif*” - replied, “How can you complain against this man? Why, he is equivalent to the Holy of Holies!”

To the bewildered *mispallelim*, R’ Eizel explained, “The *posuk* tells us: כִּי כָל הָעֵדָה כֻּלָּם קְדוּשִׁים - all *Yidden* are holy. There is a person who gives of himself even though he is impoverished, and he is certainly holy. Then there is the person of wealth who refuses to give, yet he too is holy.

“This man, our erstwhile *chazan*, fits both categories. As far as money is concerned, he has much wealth and refuses

to give, yet the *Talmud* (*Chulin 7b*) says he is holy. But he is one who insists on leading the services and giving of his musical talents, of which he has none. Since he is musically ‘impoverished’ but still wishes to give, that makes him holy. When you put both together, he is the ‘*Holy of Holies*.’”

נמשל: Korach and his cohorts thought they were clever. They believed that if they came with pious arguments and positive compliments for the people, they would win them over to their side. Although Korach succeeded in convincing 250 prominent people to follow him, to their credit, most of *Klal Yisroel* did not mix in and were thus not punished. Truly, the people of *Am Yisroel* are “*kedoshim*” - they are holy and spiritual, but they are also intelligent and practical. What would they stand to gain if they took Korach’s position? What benefit would they see if they agreed to revolt against the leadership of *Moshe Rabbeinu*? They knew all too well, that *Hashem* appointed Moshe and Aharon to lead the people, and although Korach might have been charismatic, they were not fooled by his schemes. They were truly a “Holy Nation”.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ... קְנָאָה

דרגת יתירה

ויקה קרה בן יצחק בן קהת בן לוי (טז-א)

Why would a distinguished person like Korach, a wealthy, wise, learned, *frum*, honorable man, do what he did? It seems even ridiculous to rebel against *Moshe Rabbeinu*! Who would do such a thing? We would never do such a thing! The answer is that even if a person is a big *tzaddik*, there is a *midda* that literally takes him out of the world. It causes him to view reality in a way that is completely distorted. The meaning of “*Vayikach Korach*” is that Korach took for himself. He was jealous, envious of what other’s had and wanted to take a position of power and glory for himself.

R’ Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev ז”ל gives us a tool how to overcome the *midda* of envy. He says that a righteous person should want only one thing: to bring *nachas ruach* to *Hashem*. It shouldn’t matter to him who is the one bringing *Hashem* pleasure, as long as the goal is achieved. Every *yid* has to make a choice, is it about *Hashem* or is it about ME? If it is about *Hashem*, there will never be *kinah*, jealousy if other people have more, because it is not about how much I have, it is about what I am doing with what I have! If it is about ME then I am not serving *Hashem*, but rather myself, which is AVODAH ZARA - a foreign service, in the fullest sense. When one is busy focusing on himself rather than *Hashem*, it is clear that he is going to make big mistakes. *Avodah Zara* only leads a person down to the lowest places of *kinah*, *taava* and *kavod*.

Let us internalize this great lesson from a prominent person like Korach. Don’t lose sight of your goal, which is *avodas Hashem*. One should be constantly in the mindset of how *Hashem* can best be served - rather than how can I best serve myself!