

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

זכור את אשר עשה ה' אלקיך למרים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים ... (כד-ט)

Rashi explains that this *posuk* is referring to the prohibition against talking *Lashon Hara*: “If you wish to take precautions against being stricken with tzara’as, then do not speak Lashon Hara (derogatory remarks). Remember what was done to Miriam, who spoke against her brother (Moshe) and was stricken with plagues (of tzara’as).”

One day, while discussing with a friend the precarious situation in *Eretz Yisroel*, I mentioned how interesting it is that the stories we hear about the victims of the Arab terrorist murderers have a similar thread running through them: The victims all appear to be very righteous and special, either great in learning or giants in *chessed*. It sends shivers up and down my spine whenever I think about it. My friend, usually very outgoing and gregarious, did not say anything in response. He got up from the couch and motioned for me to follow him. I was a bit taken aback at the solemn expression on my friend’s face and his unusual behavior.

He led me into his study and pointed to a picture hanging on the wall above his desk, “Look at that.”

I looked, and could not understand what he was trying to tell me. I tried to figure out what could be so special about an old red cell phone. After all, it’s one thing to want to own a nice red cell phone, but to hang a picture of one in your study above your desk?

“This is a picture of Malka Roth’s cell phone,” he explained.

“Huh? Who is Malka Roth,” I asked, “and why would you have a framed picture of her cell phone hanging in your study? I don’t get it.”

My friend pulled out his large leather chair, sat down and explained. “Malka was a sweet and good-natured, popular fifteen-year-old girl. She was so full of life and zest. She was especially devoted to her younger sister, Chaya Elisheva, who is blind and has other serious disabilities. She was also a very popular youth leader for nine-year-old girls. Her magnetic personality and propensity to always see the good in people made everyone want to spend time in her company.”

“That’s beautiful, but I still don’t get it. What does that have to do with having a picture of her red cell phone hanging in your study?” I asked him, still completely baffled as to what my friend was leading towards.

“On the twentieth day of Av 5761, she was in *Yerushalayim* with some friends, enjoying a slice of pizza in the Sbarro restaurant, when an Arab terrorist murderer entered with a guitar case full of explosives and nails - to ensure maximum damage. Hundreds of innocent people were seriously injured, many of them for their whole lives. Malka was one of the fifteen innocent people brutally murdered in that senseless terrorist attack. She was less than four months shy of her sixteenth birthday. The red cell phone in the picture is Malka’s cell phone. The police found it among the destruction and carnage and gave it to the family after they got up from *shivah*.”

I had tears in my eyes. It broke my heart to visualize parents sitting *shivah* for a murdered fifteen-year-old daughter. But I still did not understand the significance or purpose of the picture of Malka’s red cell phone occupying a prominent place on the wall of my friend’s study.

In response to the quizzical look on my face, he instructed, “Go and take a closer look at the phone and you’ll understand.”

I walked over to the picture and took a close look at it. My eyes welled up with tears that I could not contain. Malka had written on the phone in black marker “אסור לדבר לשון הרע” - It is forbidden to speak *lashon hara*. “That picture,” explained my friend, “does more than anything else could, to help me realize and internalize how much more there is for me to accomplish in life. It helps inspire me to see how great every day common people - even young fifteen-year-old girls - can become. I hung up that picture to inspire me to grow and constantly strive for greatness.” (Portraits of Prayer, Rabbi Eliezer Abish)

רני עקרה לא ירדה ... כי רבים בני שוממה מבני בעולה ... (ישעי' נד-א)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALED HISTORIAN

תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In this week’s *Haftorah*, *Yeshaya HaNavi* exclaims, “Sing o’ barren woman who has not borne; burst out into song and jubilate.” This prophecy relates *Hashem*’s comparison of the holy city of *Yerushalayim* to a barren woman devoid of children. However, the irony is seemingly quite apparent. How could *Klal Yisroel* ever be expected to rejoice over a desolate *Yerushalayim*?

R’ Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sedilkov ז”ל (Degel Machaneh Ephraim) quotes his grandfather, the holy Baal Shem Tov ז”ל, who explains that a tremendous lesson in *Tefillah* could be gleaned from *Yeshaya HaNavi*’s seemingly contradictory statement.

When a person goes through a difficult period in life, he is

oftentimes left feeling distant and alone, all the while thinking that his situation seems so far gone that no amount of prayer or charity can ever save him. Unfortunately, this is quite far from the truth, for one must remember that *Hashem* listens to all *Tefillos* and there is no such a thing as an empty prayer.

Thus, the lesson being imparted by *Yeshaya HaNavi* is that even when a person’s situation is desperate and his frantic *Tefillah* appears to be akin to those of a barren woman, *Hashem* still says “רני” - sing and rejoice, “כי רבים בני שוממה מבני בעולה” - for his desperate and haphazard prayers, which are likened to those of a desolate woman, are still considered more precious by *Hashem* than many thought-out and settled prayers - like those of a married person with children.

השבתו לו וכו' כן תעשה לכל אברת אחיך וכו' לא תוכל להתעלם ... (כב-ג)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

Once upon a time, R’ Akiva Eiger ז”ל, who possessed a unique sense of humility, spent an inordinate amount of time searching for a relative of his in a specific town. Eventually, he tracked him down and proceeded to engage him in discussion, words of encouragement to be *mechazek* the individual. Afterwards, some well-meaning people asked the *Rav* why he went to such lengths to speak to this family member, when he could have been learning or putting that time to better use. He responded with his inimitable trademark humility and brilliance as follows: “In regards to a lost object, the *Torah* writes, 'לא תוכל להתעלם' - You cannot look away. But *Chazal* in *Bava Metzia*, when explaining this *posuk*, explain that, פעמים, there are times that you may look away. For example, זקן ואינו לפי כבודו, An elderly *Yid* or a תלמיד חכם can, at times, be exempt from returning an object that is beneath his dignity to be seen with. However, there is another *posuk*; 'מבשרך אל תתעלם' - don’t look away from family. With family members, unlike with a lost object, there is no such leeway given. One must give him his full attention. So I happily did the *mitzvah l’mehadrin*.”

This is the outlook of a true *בישראל*. R’ Akiva Eiger, the paradigm *masmid*, a תלמיד חכם from whose *Torah* we still benefit today, knew how to be שוקל and discern right from wrong, not looking to shirk his responsibilities.

As *Elul* progresses, a well-known *eitza* to be זוכה בדין is to become an individual that others depend upon. In that way, *Hashem* takes their needs into account as well, not just yours. As the famous idiom goes: *Chessed* – Charity begins at home. Well, at least with family. Do you really know how your parents, siblings, and extended family are doing? Are you in tune with their wants and needs at all times? If we do our best to help our extended family members, we can hope that *Hashem will iy”H* reciprocate and “take care” of His family - we, the Jewish Nation - this year.

משל למה הדבר דומה

כי יהיה ריב בין אנשים ... (כה-א)

משל: The Vietnam War was a protracted conflict between the years 1964-1975. It pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States. Human cost of the long conflict were harsh for all involved. Not until 1995 did Vietnam release its official estimate of war dead: as many as 2 million civilians on both sides and some 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters!

While the war was raging on in the far-away land, someone asked R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל in New York City: Should we be *davening* for peace?

R’ Moshe answered unequivocally: Yes! The questioner then pressed: “But the war itself has nothing to do with us

per say? Why should we pray for some far-out country?”

R’ Moshe’s answer was short and concise: “The *Ribono Shel Olam* wants peace in the world! All over the world!”

נמשל: Rashi brings a fascinating *Medrash* that elicits the idea of fighting. The *Torah* opens the *parsha* of *malkos*, lashes, by saying, “If there will be a dispute between two men and they come to judgment so that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous and condemn the wicked. Should the wicked one deserve flogging.” We see from here that NO GOOD comes out of a fight and fighting definitely does not bring to peace! On the contrary, these two men began to quarrel over something trivial going on between them and ended up deserving lashes because of something reckless they did as a result of the fight they were in. This stands as a lesson for all of us: stay clear of anything that can potentially lead to a fight!

וראת בשביה אשת יפת תאר וחשקת בה ולקחת לך לאשה ... (כא-א)

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

הנחמדים מזהב

Our *parsha* teaches us about *Eishes Yefas Toar*. A soldier in the heat of battle desires a woman and the *Torah* permits him to marry her, but not without restrictions. Rashi explains this unusual allowance: “לא דברה תורה אלא כנגד יצר הרע”, the *Torah* is speaking only in reference to opposing the Evil Inclination. The *Torah*, in its innate wisdom, recognizes the human psyche and its frailty. Knowing that a soldier would likely give in to temptation, the *Torah* channels his desire into a framework of halachic law. This does not mean it is a good thing, rather, it is a manner of dealing with reality. If this is the case, however, why does Rashi write “כנגד יצר הרע” - “against the *Yetzer Hara*”? Wouldn’t it seem more fitting to say “about the *Yetzer Hara*”?

In *Parshas Nitzavim* the *pasuk* states: “והתברך בלבבו לאמר שלום יהיה לי כי בשריות לבי אלך”. *Targum Yonasan* translates: “A person will give up hope in his heart and say all will be well with me, and I will follow the *Yetzer Hara*.” A *Mashal* is given of a thief trying to break into a guarded mansion. Seeing no access from any windows or doors, he approaches the guard and confidently whispers to him that due to lack of trust, he has been fired. The guard sits down in despair, and the thief is able to enter right through the front door. The *Baalei Avodah* explain that the *Yetzer Hara* has a particularly dangerous strategy. First, he entices a person to sin. But then, he follows up with a second blow; pushing the person into despair. “Who am I already?” the sinner thinks. “Just a lowly failure.” In this state of despondency, a person no longer fears slipping further down the spiral. One sin leads to another, and the destructive cycle continues. It is this *איטוש* that one must avoid at all costs.

Rashi’s words can be explained with this idea. If the soldier would marry in a sinful way, the *Yetzer Hara* would have him ensnared forever. He is literally married to sin so why not continue down that path? To ensure faith in oneself and against the *Yetzer Hara*’s whisper of hopelessness, the *Torah* permits the marriage. *Hashem* believes in us, shouldn’t we do the same?