

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' לבנות צלפחד לאמר לטוב בעיניהם תהיינה לנשים אך למשפחת מטה אביהם תהיינה לנשים (לו-י)
The *gemara* (בבא בתרא כק) describes to us the significance of Moshe's words to the elders of *Shevet Menashe*: “Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav Shmuel, the daughters of Tzelafchad were permitted to marry whomever they chose from among all the tribes of Israel, as it says, ‘Let them become wives to anyone who pleases them.’ If so, what then is the meaning of the next words, ‘Nevertheless, to the family of their paternal tribe (Menashe) shall they become wives’? He (Moshe) gave them a good idea (sound advice) that they should only look to marry those men who were right for them.”

The story is told of an American *Yungerman* who had studied in *yeshivah* for quite a few years, and then became involved, and extremely effective, in his career of *Kiruv Rechokim* (creating *Baalei Teshuvah*) on college campuses. This man had one daughter who had graduated from an intensive teachers seminary program, and was on the faculty of a local *Bais Yaakov* high school. When the time came for her to pursue a *shidduch*, she was introduced to a brilliant, young *yeshivah* student whom she found interesting and charming. There was just one problem: she was unattracted to his lack of “worldliness” and the fact that he had no sense of the “real” world, as she saw it. For this reason, she could not see herself married to him. Her parents, however, were excited and decidedly in favor of the match and tried to convince her of the boy's wonderful merits. The give and take went on for a number of days before her parents decided to take her to the great *Rosh Yeshivah*, **R' Yaakov Kamenetzky ZT”L**, to discuss the matter with him.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* spoke pleasantly to the young girl and put her at ease. Then, he listened as she described the boy in her own words, and her dual complaints that he is, “too European (old school),” and “very unworldly.”

R' Yaakov mused. “It very well could be. Some *yeshivah bochurim* who are so steeped in their learning, do insulate themselves completely from the American environment. Tell me, does he play ball?”

“Yes, but only in the summer,” she replied.

“Then he's not European,” R' Yaakov said with a broad smile, putting to rest one of her chief contentions.

She nodded in understanding but then said, “Okay, but he still seems to have no bearing to the real world.”

The *Rosh Yeshivah* stroked his beard for a moment. Then, he replied, “Let me explain it this way. In truth, most every boy that is searching for the perfect wife to marry subconsciously has an image in mind. The more similar she is to his mother - who as far as he knows represents the perfect woman - the closer she is to the ideal image. Similarly, a girl searches for the ideal man, and in her frame of reference her father represents perfection. The more similar he is to her father, the more pleased she is. Your father is a *Talmid Chacham*, a *Baal Middos*, and is also quite worldly and while the young man in question has the first two attributes, you find fault with him for lacking the third.”

“You must understand that this concept of ‘worldliness’ is surely a *ma'alalah*, a positive attribute; yet for some *Torah* scholars, they cannot grow fully in *Torah* and worldliness. They need to focus all their might on *Torah* so that they may grow to the highest levels in *Avodas Hashem*. The fact that a *yeshivah bochur* is less worldly is not necessarily a liability. On the contrary, it means that he is fully devoting himself to *Torah* and *mitzvos*. In fact, if he were more aware of the outside world, that would be cause for hesitation. It would be a *חסרון*, a drawback, an indication that he is less of a *Ben Torah*. As for your father, he needs the outside knowledge for his *Kiruv* work.”

The young lady turned 180 degrees in her attitude. She now understood what it means to be a “*Ben Torah*.” As the father later remarked, “Imagine a nineteen-year-old girl consulting a ninety-one-year-old man for affairs of the heart, and after a five minute conversation, heeding his advice. Such is the power of a *Torah* personality!”

משול' למה הדבר דומה

ויענו בני גד ובני ראובן לאמר את אשר דבר ה' אל עבדיך כן נעשה וגו' (לב-לא)

משל: A member of the Israeli *Chayal Avir* (Air Force) was attending some course requirements between assignments. One of the courses had a professor who was an avowed atheist. One day the professor walked into the classroom and shocked the class when he looked to the ceiling and flatly stated, “G-d, if you are real then I want you to knock me off this platform. I'll give you exactly 15 minutes.”

The lecture room fell silent. Ten minutes went by and the professor proclaimed, “Here I am G-d, I'm still waiting.”

It came down to the last couple of minutes when the

soldier got out of his chair, went up to the professor, and gave him an upper cut knocking him clear off the platform.

The other students were shocked and stunned, and sat there looking on in silence. The professor eventually came to, noticeably shaken, looked at the *Chayal* and asked, “What in the world is the matter with you?”

The *Chayal* calmly replied, “G-d was busy today protecting our soldiers who are protecting your right to say moronic things and act like a fool. So, He sent me.”

The classroom erupted in cheers!

ואמר אלעזר הכהן אל אנשי הצבא הבאים למלחמה זאת חקת התורה אשר צוה ה' (לא-כא)

The *Torah* tells us how *Elazar Hakohen* instructed those returning from the war with Midian in the ritual laws of cleansing utensils (הגעלת כלים) used by gentiles. However, the terminology of the *posuk* is unclear. Why does it say “*who came to the war*” rather than the more grammatically correct “*from* the war”?

The **Yetev Lev, R' Yekusiel Yehuda Teitelbaum ZT”L of Siget**, interpreted this issue on a moral level. *Elazar Hakohen* was not just teaching these soldiers returning from Midian a set of *halachos*; he was giving them a lesson in ethics. He was exhorting them not to boast of their victory in the battlefield nor to become conceited, for they must withstand an even greater battle than engaging with enemy soldiers: they must conquer the advances of the *Yetzer Hara*. This danger is one that is especially vulnerable to a war hero, a warrior filled with pride and glory over his victory. Thus, Elazar instructs those returning from war, by alluding to them that just as it is necessary to cleanse utensils that have become impure, it is duly necessary to cleanse the heart of vanity and arrogance. He spoke to those who were “coming to the war”; the new war that is poised to erupt; the struggle for the hearts and minds of the righteous Jewish warriors; the battle to retain their purity and spirituality; the “מלחמת היצר” - the fight of their lives!

This explanation can also answer the question posed by the **Ramban**: Why weren't *Bnei Yisroel* commanded regarding the ritual laws of cleansing utensils, during the war of Sichon and Og, which took place before the war with Midian? The answer is clear; in those wars, all of *Bnei Yisroel* took part and there was no one to boast to. During the war with Midian, only 12,000 selected warriors went out and they were in danger of undue conceit.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

דִּיעוּר

ויסעו מאיתם וישב על פי החירות אשר על פני בעל צפון ויחנו לפני מגדל וגו' (לג-ו)

The words, “פי החירות” literally translate as “the mouth of freedom.” **R' Dovid Moskovitz ZT”L** in his *sefer Gelilei Zahav* explains that this is referring to a type of *Avodah Zara* that expressed total freedom of the mouth; in other words, one could slander, insult and say whatever derogatory and negative things he wanted, for this is the way one served this idol. This is “Strange service” - “עבודה זרה” - and the absolute antithesis of true *Avodas Hashem*.

A person who uses his mouth freely and without limits is almost always one who causes pain with his words. Speech is so powerful because it is the connecting force between the physical and the spiritual parts of man. The physical mouth formulates the words, whereas the words are completely spiritual. Similarly, the mouth is situated directly between the head and the heart - the connecting link between the two most important and valuable bodily organs. Speech is the quality that turns a “living” being into a “human” being, and in fact, *Hashem* used speech (עשרה מאמרות) to create the world!

One of the greatest and most rewarding ways to fulfill the *mitzvah* of “Loving one's fellow man,” is by thinking carefully before speaking and not allowing one to have a “פי החירות” - a mouth with free reign. THINK! If you are about to say something that MIGHT cause pain or harm to another individual - DON'T SAY IT! It's just not worth it.

So remember this tongue twister: “Every negative speech that is spoken turns the speaker into a negative person!” Who do you want to be? Someone who is doing *Avodas Hashem*, or someone who is using his words to perform *Avodah Zara*?

TORAH GEMS

ומצרים מקברים את אשר הסה ה' בהם כל בסוד ובאלוהים עשה ה' שפטים וגו' (לג-ד)

The *Medrash* states: “*The Holy One Blessed be He said to Moshe, ‘Write down all the travels of the Jewish People in the desert, so that they may know of all the miracles I have done for them.’*” The first journey is then transcribed and it tells of the Jewish exodus from Egypt and how the Egyptians were mourning over the loss of their first-born sons. But why is only the plague of the first-born mentioned? If the desire is to recount the great miracles, shouldn't all ten plagues have been mentioned so that the “*people may know of all the miracles*” *Hashem* did for them, which brought about their journey from Egypt?

R' Sholom Schwadron ZT”L answers this question by asking a different question. The *Torah* tells us that during *Makas Bechoros*, there was “*a great cry in all the Land of Egypt, like there never was and never will be.*” (שמות יא-ו) There is no doubt that during the other nine plagues, the Egyptians cried out. The pain and suffering they went through - even death and destruction on many occasions - surely made them cry out in fear and desperation. Why is it that we do not find that the Egyptians cried mightily by any other plague - only by the final plague of the first-born?

The difference is that for the first nine plagues, Pharaoh had a “כבדות הלב” - a hardened heart that refused to allow him to recognize that he was being punished for his sins. Now, however, *Hashem* had had enough. The time had come for the redemption of His people and He summarily lifted the weight off the heart of Pharaoh. It was now - by the tenth and final plague - that Pharaoh and all of Egypt felt the effects of not just one plague, but the cumulative impact of all ten plagues! This pain was too awesome to bear and they cried out like they never cried before! This is the miracle that is mentioned because this miracle encapsulated all the others.

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO