

וַתַּגֵּד בַּלְעִיָּז הָאִשָּׁה הַחֲשׂוּבָה שְׁלוֹחַ רִאשִׁי
 בֵּת ר' יִשְׂרָאֵל מִנְחֵם עִיָּה, נִלְבָּע ל' נִסָּן
 תַּחַת נִשְׁמָתָה צְרוּרָה בְּצִרְוֹר הַחַיִּים

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ומוצק לא תתן להעביר למלך ולא תחלל את שם אלוקך אני ה' (ח-כא)

Legend has it that the city of Vilna was founded many centuries ago through an amazing tale involving a young child. But we have it on no greater an authority than the holy **Ben Ish Chai, Rabbeinu Yosef Chayim of Baghdad zt”l**, that this story is absolutely true. Close to eight centuries ago, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Gediminas, was hunting in the forest near the Valley of Šventaragis. Tired after a successful day’s hunt, he went to sleep and began to dream. A huge iron wolf was standing on top a hill and the sound of hundreds of other wolves inside filled all of the surrounding fields and woods. Upon awakening, the Duke consulted his pagan priests to interpret the meaning of his dream. He was told, “The iron wolf represents a castle and a city which will be established by you on this site. This city will be the capital of the Lithuanian lands and the dwelling of their rulers, and the glory of their deeds shall echo throughout the world.”

Gediminas was excited and began to plan the construction of his great city. But before he could continue, the pagan priests issued a dire warning: “The gods have decreed that in order for the city to achieve success, it is necessary for a woman to come forth of her own free will and offer her only son as a sacrifice to the gods. This son must become the foundation stone of the new city. This sacrifice will ensure the successful completion of this grand endeavor.”

The Grand Duke, like most people in the Dark Ages, was superstitious, and immediately sent forth messengers throughout the land in search of a woman willing to sacrifice her only son for the “greater good” of the Lithuanian people. This was easier said than done and it required much time and effort to locate such a devoted woman. Soon enough, though, a simple woman from a distant village near the border, came forward and offered her one and only son, a bright twelve-year-old boy, to be just the sacrifice the Grand Duke needed.

Of course, Gediminas was ecstatic to hear the news. A day was chosen for the event when the child would be buried alive, and the city would be founded. It would be a joyous occasion, a holiday for the entire population. Everyone, from the country’s nobility to the common folk, gathered for this auspicious event - to witness a mother sacrificing her only son.

The child was brought to the public square. The trumpets blared and the drums pounded. Suddenly, the boy spoke up. “Why did you bring me here?” he asked, his obvious intelligence shining forth. “I cannot believe that our god is party to such a terrible injustice. Indeed, the priests claim to have seen this in a vision, but perhaps they misunderstood what they saw. I, therefore, request to be allowed to ask the priests three questions. If they answer these questions correctly, I will concede to their wisdom and go to my death quietly and peacefully, for I will know that this is the true will of the gods.”

Intrigued, the Grand Duke immediately granted the boy’s request. The boy turned to the pagan priests and asked, “What is the lightest thing on the earth? What is the sweetest thing in the world? What is the hardest thing of all?”

The priests snorted derisively and answered in unison, “You call these questions? Why everyone knows that the lightest thing in the world is a feather; the sweetest thing is honey and the hardest thing is a stone!” The crowd laughed merrily.

Now it was the boy’s turn to scorn. “Your grace,” he said to the Grand Duke, “the priests do not understand my questions. If they cannot interpret the questions of a young boy like myself, how can they be expected to understand the will of the gods? I am no fool. I would not ask a question which has an obvious answer. I was looking for the obscure, the answer which only an astute man can answer. Even a young child knows that a feather is light, honey is sweet and a stone is hard. I am asking about that which appears heavy, but is really light; seems bitter, but is actually sweet; seems soft, but is in reality very hard.

“Your majesty, the lightest thing in the world is an only child being carried in his mother’s womb. He may seem heavy, but for his mother, he is no burden. The sweetest thing in the world is a mother’s milk to her nursing child. The hardest thing in the world is the heart of a mother who is prepared to sacrifice her one and only child!” Gediminas and all those assembled were astonished by the young boy’s incisive mind. His penetrating wisdom mesmerized all those who had gathered to see him sacrificed. An announcement was made that the priests had been mistaken and human sacrifice was indeed an injustice. At once, the child was set free.

משל למח הדבר דומה

ונתן את הקמרת על האש לפני ה' וכסה ענן הקמרת את הכפרת אשר על העדות ולא ימות וגו' (פז-ג)

משל: It is told that the **Chozeh of Lublin, R’ Yaakov Yitzchok Hurvitz zt”l**, kept an open house. His door was open to anyone at any time and he himself served his guests who came from all walks of life. One day a poor man came to the house and the Chozeh served him a meal. When the guest was finished his meal, the Chozeh cleared the table and brought the empty plate and utensils into the kitchen.

The poor man attempted to take the plate from the *Rebbe* but R’ Yaakov would have none of it. Astounded, the guest said, “I understand that the *Rebbe* occupies himself with

the great *mitzvah* of *Hachnosas Orchim*. But why must he clear the table himself? Surely, there are attendants in the house who can take the plates and utensils away?”

The Chozeh replied, “Taking out the pan of ashes from the Holy of Holies in the *Bais HaMikdash* on *Yom Kippur* was part of the tasks of the *Kohen Gadol*. It was a sacred duty that only he was entitled to perform. Furthermore, our Sages teach us that the table at which guests eat becomes akin to a *Mizbeach*, an altar, upon which sacrifices are offered. Am I more important than the *Kohen Gadol*?”

בזאת יבא אהרן אל הקדש כפר בן בקר להמאת ואיל לעולה וגו' (פז-ג)

Parshas Achrei Mos relates the *avoda* of the *Kohen Gadol* on *Yom Kippur*. Doesn’t it seem odd that the *posuk* which begins discussing this holy pursuit starts with the word “בזאת” meaning “*with this*” which seems entirely superfluous? There is a famous *vort* in “נתנה תקף” on the words we proclaim loudly “תשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה”. We find the words “צום, קול, ממון” in every *machzor* above these words written in small print. The *Meforshim* say that each of these three words has a *gematria* of 136, which total altogether 408. That is the exact numerical value of the word “זאת”. Therefore, the *Torah* is hinting to us that before the *Kohen Gadol* can enter the *Bais HaMikdash* on *Yom Kippur*, he himself must work to accomplish these three things - Repentance, Prayer and Charity - so that his *avoda* can avert any negative decrees against *Klal Yisroel*.

My *machshava* here is that this relates to each individual as well. In *Pirkei Avos* (which we begin learning this *Shabbos*) we say that the world rests on 3 things: *Torah, Avodah* and *Gemilus Chasadim*. This is similar to the 3 words mentioned previously. “צום” relates to *Avoda*; “קול” is *Torah*; “ממון” is used for *Tzedaka/Chessed*. Every *Yid* must incorporate these three aspects into his life in order for the *berachos* of our *Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur tefillos* to be answered. Therefore - “בזאת” - with all three attributes totaling 408, every *Yid* can come and ask *Hashem* to answer all his *tefillos*. As *Dovid HaMelech* so eloquently tells us: “אם תקום עלי מלחמה בזאת אני בוטח” (תהלים כז-ג). Homiletically, after 120 years of life, when the Heavenly Tribunal will ask if we are worthy of entering *Gan Eden*, they will look to see if “בזאת אני בוטח” - were we faithful in - “בזאת” - to live a life of tzedaka and gemilus chesed, as well as avoda, prayer and charity. If we do, then this will ensure our entry into *Gan Eden*.

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

ושמרתם את משמרתי לבלתי עשות מחקות התועבת ... (יה-ל)

After years of learning in *yeshivah*, a young *avreich* decides that it is time for him to head out into the workforce and earn an honest living. Having grown up in an insular community, he was ill-prepared for the sights and sounds that he encountered in the workplace. His job was stationed in a large office building, and for the first time in his life, he met all sorts of people, with all sorts of lifestyles.

If this new station in life was a test of the mettle of this religious young man, it can only be said that he failed miserably. His newfound exposure had a terrible influence on him and wreaked devastating havoc on his level of observance. But rather than embrace it, the young man was mortified and embarrassed that he had stooped so low. He had never been this way before, had never spoken this way or acted this way before. He knew he had to change.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF ...

הדמנות

דרגת יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דם יחשב לאיש שהוא דם שפך (ז-ד)

The *Torah* teaches that if a person sacrifices an animal outside the *Ohel Moed* - “דם שפך” - he has spilled blood. Whose blood has he spilled? The animal’s blood? Well, of course he has! That is no *chiddush*! So whose blood are we talking about?

R’ Avigdor Miller zt”l describes what it was like to go up to the *Bais HaMikdash* and bring a *korban*. It was a life-altering experience! Just entering the holiest place and seeing the *Kohanim* in their special clothing doing their special *avodah* was absolutely awe-inspiring! And then, as the *korban* is being brought on the *Mizbeach*, one has in mind that it is really HIM that is being sacrificed! It touches him to the very core of his being! Then he would go home and tell his family all about the experience, describing it all in explicit detail, showing how affected he was. No doubt, he becomes a changed man! Not at all the same person he was before. And thus, one who forfeits this opportunity and brings his *korban* elsewhere ... spills blood. He has murdered the person he COULD have become. The blood he has spilled was his very own blood! He committed suicide!

This idea can be applied to any opportunity in life where one can *shteig*, grow, and be inspired - and he doesn’t seize the moment! When a person is too lazy to get off the couch to hear a great *shiur* or do a wonderful *chessed*. Killing time is first degree murder! “דם שפך” means that one has spilled the blood of time, and once time is gone, it never comes back.

The root of the word “הדמנות” - opportunity, is ZMAN. “זמן” means time and the message is that every single moment of time that one is given in this world is a glorious opportunity to grow, to change and to come closer to *Hashem*. Some people wait for opportunities to fall into their lap, but they don’t realize that if you are alive and breathing at this very moment then the greatest “הדמנות” has fallen into YOUR lap and it is YOUR choice to use it or lose it! In fact, the word “הדמנות” also carries in it the word “דם” - blood. Let us stop spilling our own blood and utilize every moment to become who we really can be!

On behalf of thousands of Shomer Shabbos Jews - www.chickensforshabbos.com - the charity that simply feeds & clothes Shomer Shabbos Jews in Israel, Yisroel with zero overhead