

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויברך אלקים את יום השביעי ויקדש אותו כי בו שבת מכל מלאכתו אשר ברא אלקים לעשות ... (ב-ג)

Reb Shmuel Strauss, a great-grandson of the **Baal Shem of Michelstadt**, lived in Karlsruhe, Germany, and managed a small bank that his father-in-law had founded. From the start, it was evident that Reb Shmuel possessed unrivaled business acumen. As a man of integrity, many entrusted their entire savings with him, enabling him to support his family in comfort.

One Friday morning, Reb Shmuel donned his *Shabbos* clothing to attend a relative’s *bris* and headed straight to his office for several hours before returning to prepare for *Shabbos*. That evening, on *Leil Shabbos*, Reb Shmuel was returning home from *shul* when he suddenly felt something in his pocket. To his shock and horror, he realized that all the monies from the morning’s deposits were still in his coat, neatly wrapped in a cheesecloth and fabric pouch. His heart pounded wildly in his chest. His life and future, his reputation and integrity, all hung in the balance. Dropping that pouch was tantamount to throwing everything he had worked to build, into a raging river. In his mind’s eye, he could already imagine the storm in the bank, his faithful clients - simple farmers and proprietors, professionals and small-time businessmen who had put aside penny after penny over the course of many years - gathering around his house and shouting, “Thief!” “Swindler!” “Criminal!”

Standing on the sidewalk in the heart of Karlsruhe near the teeming town square, Reb Shmuel Strauss made his choice. His hands didn’t even tremble as he gently shook out his pocket and watched the money pouch fall to the ground. Without delay, he continued on his way, without casting another look behind him. Only in the back of his mind did the thought glimmer that he’d just switched fates with some Karlsruhe gentile who was about to catapult to wealth, while he’d plummet to poverty.

That *Shabbos* was unlike any *Shabbos* the Strauss family could remember. Reb Shmuel sang every *zemer* and melody with extra fire and passion, and *divrei Torah* spilled from his lips as pearls and gems. His wife and children were all blissfully ignorant of the sacrifice he’d made on the way home from *shul*, and they couldn’t help but be infected by his unusual enthusiasm on that uplifting *Shabbos*. And when three stars glittered like diamonds in the Karlsruhe sky, Reb Shmuel held his gleaming silver *becher* and recited *Havdalah*. Droplets of red wine trickled down his hand and palm as he recited the blessings, inwardly thanking *Hashem* for infusing him with the strength of character and spiritual fortitude to fulfill His will.

Then, to his family’s surprise, Reb Shmuel asked everyone to be seated and listen as he told them what he’d done on *Leil Shabbos*. Shock and fear, joy and consternation, terror and gratification, mingled in those moments as the family sat at the table still bedecked in its white tablecloth, and absorbed the enormity of their father’s decision, his sacrifice, and future consequences. A long, meaningful silence ensued as everyone sank into their thoughts, reflecting on what Reb Shmuel had done. Suddenly, Reb Shmuel stood up abruptly and walked to the ornate coat closet, removing his hat and coat. “I must still do my *hishtadlus*,” he said. “I’m going to look for the money pouch. Maybe, by some odd chance, it’s still there.”

Reb Shmuel hurried toward the spot where he’d dropped the money pouch several paces away from the town square, and, sure enough, right there in the corner where he’d dropped it nearly twenty-four hours earlier was his pouch! He knelt to the ground and picked it up. The familiar feel and thickness were sufficient for him to know that every bill was still there! Reb Shmuel lifted his eyes Heavenward. Tears shone in his eyes, and his lips murmured the timeless words of *Mizmor L’sodah*, expressing his boundless gratitude to *Hashem* for standing guard over his money, just as Reb Shmuel had guarded *Shabbos*.

The following morning the Finance Minister of the district visited Karlsruhe. Deeply impressed by Reb Shmuel’s character, the minister decided to open a government account and deposit government funds in his bank. Word of the government account spread like wildfire, attracting numerous clients, who all opened accounts in Strauss Bank, ultimately causing the business to triple and then quadruple in size, catapulting Shmuel Strauss to fame and fortune. With the proceeds, Reb Shmuel donated the historic Strauss Courtyard in Jerusalem, at the request of **R’ Yisrael Salanter ז”ל**, which housed numerous *tzaddikim* and *gaonim*, among them **R’ Itzele Blazer ז”ל** and **R’ Naftali Amsterdam ז”ל**. (Stories That Changed People’s Lives, Rabbi Tzvi Nakar)

שירי לה’ שיר חדש תהלתו מקצה הארץ
יורדי הים ומלאו איים וישיבתיהם ... (ישעי’ מב-)

Yeshaya HaNavi exhorts Bnei Yisroel: “Sing to Hashem a new song, praise from the ends of the earth. You who sail the sea and you creatures in it, your coastlands and their inhabitants!” Chazal wonder why the Navi uses the words “praise from the ends of the earth” to espouse praise for the Almighty, while the second half of the posuk seems to be more mystifying “those who sail the sea ... and the creatures in it.” What is the understanding of the elaborate wording?

Based on the words of the **Ibn Ezra ז”ל** and the **Malbim ז”ל** we can say as follows: There is a fundamental difference between wonders that have already taken place to wonders that *Hashem* intends to do in the future. Wonders that have taken place, even supernatural and nature-defying, become

fathomable after they are performed and rooted in the essence of the earth itself. Thus, even though they are supernatural, mortals on earth can find a way to humanize them and even “understand” them. But wonders that *Hashem* intends to perform are completely unfathomable as *Hashem* can do anything and we cannot imagine His possibilities or capabilities.

Since humans dwell on the earth, we have come to believe that we have some understanding of it. However, the deep sea and the heavens remain a mystery to us. Though we may study them, we still have very little understanding of how they work. Thus, the *Navi* says that we can better praise *Hashem* with what we feel more comfortable with - the earth, rather than attempting to praise *Hashem* “via the sea.”

ויקרא האדם שם אשתו חוה כי
היא דתתה אם כל חי ... (ב-ג)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE
FAMILY OF R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOPMAN ז”ל

מחשבת הלב

Immediately after the חטא of the הדעת of Adam proceeded to name his wife Chava. Her name connotes motherhood of all humanity. The *Meforshim* grapple with why the name-giving was precisely now. (See **Rashi, Baal HaTurim, Ohr Hachaim** and others). Perhaps we can suggest the following *machshava*. The earlier *posukim* describe the punishments all the parties involved received; the *Nachash*, Adam and Chava. She was told “בעצב תלדי בנים”, child delivery would be a painful ordeal. Rashi comments on the word “עצבונך”, and says “זה צער גדול בנים” - this refers to childrearing hardships. *Chazal* describe that before their sin, having a baby was a quick, painless process. After, it became a pain-filled blessing. What is the מדה כנגד מדה?

Maybe there’s a lesson to be gleaned. Sometimes, as we decide how to tackle a problem, we reach a decision based on how it would affect us, and only us. We fail to consider our action’s impact on others. Our *bechira* not only affects us now, but also our future, and the future of our *doros* for all eternity. Chava, on her level, failed to “see” the wider effects of her actions. Thus, she was punished with regard to her childbearing, showing her that current actions affect the future too.

Adam Harishon taught us another lesson. Mothers - parents more accurately - are not *zoche* to that title unless they earn it! Until that point there was no pain linked to having a child. Now though, she would have to endure suffering in order to successfully raise them. Therefore, it was exactly at the time of discipline that was she named “אם”.

As the story goes, there was once a person who complained about the צער גדול בנים that required him to wake up during the night for his cranky child. A wise man replied, that’s not צער גדול בנים! That is actually גידול בנים! While it’s definitely not always an easy feat, this concept justifies our existence as the older generation passing on the *mesorah*.

May it be the will of *Hashem* that we heed our calling and we all be *zoche* to have much *nachas* from our children.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמר ה’ לא ירון רווח באדם לעולם בשנם הוא בשר ... (ו-ג)

משל: The renowned English literary celebrity, Sir Robert Louis Stevenson, tells of one of his voyages to the South Sea Islands. In the midst of his voyage, a terrible storm arose. Rain and wind lashed at the ship and the terrified passengers, all huddled below deck, feared the ship would be lost.

Suddenly, one sailor asked where the captain was. Carefully, he climbed to the upper deck, where he saw the captain quietly pacing the bridge. The sailor was astounded to see the level of calm and confidence displayed on his captain’s face. When the wind attempted to thrash him from side to side, the man stood his ground and calmly held onto the ship’s wheel. The captain saw the sailor and with an undisturbed face, he looked out across the raging sea and

issued decisive orders for handling the ship.

After handling the orders, the sailor made his way back to the lower cabin where all the passengers were huddled together. They were anxious to hear from him.

In response to their questions, the sailor responded, “Believe me, I have seen the captain’s face and all is well.” **נמשל**: *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* is the “Captain” of the World. He knows all and steers His creations in any way He wants. Amid all the anxiety and unpleasantness of our time, it is important for mankind to recognize that all matters are out of our hands for they are surely in the hands of the Master of the World. Amid all the uneasiness and confusion over what may lie ahead, it is critical for every person to take the time to separate himself from the others and gaze upon the “face of the Captain” - placing his trust in *Hashem Yisborach*.

ויאמר אלקים נעשה אדם בצלמנו כדמותנו ויררו
בנינו הים ובעוף השמים ובבהמה ... (א-ב)

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

הנחמדים מזהב

Chazal teach us that prior to the creation of our current world, the Almighty brought other worlds into existence which were destroyed. The reason they are not mentioned is illustrated through a *machal*. A king who builds a magnificent palace upon a garbage dump would certainly not highlight the refuse buried beneath his royal edifice. The **Vilna Gaon ז”ל** explains that all the previous creations were characterized by such overwhelming evil they could not endure, comparable to the discarded trash. The remnants of these destroyed worlds became the very source of evil that exists in our current world. As humans with a unique blend of *Guf* and *Neshama*, it is our responsibility to vanquish the evil and elevate our existence through *Avodas Hashem*. The question is: Why create this complex universe, with such a struggle to achieve *shleimus*?

When *Hashem* was creating man, He “sought advice” from the *Malachei Hashares* who questioned whether it would be worthwhile. *Hashem* then asked them to name the animals and they could not. Man, *Hashem* pointed out, knew how to name them. Why is this item used to prove that human intellect is worthy of creation?

R’ Aharon Lopiansky shlita uses this to explain that real value isn’t found in effortless perfection. The *Ribono Shel Olam* desired to create a world where people *choose* to serve Him. Certainly there would be imperfections, but through our struggle we create a world striving toward *Avodas Hashem*. The best *rebbe* is not necessarily the one born brilliant, but rather the one who worked hard and persevered through his own challenges. Similarly, the *Malachim* who automatically serve *Hashem* could never lead this mission. Man - who was able to name the animals precisely because he shares their *chumriyus* - would be the one entrusted with this task. Our connection to the physical world, positions us to elevate creation through conscious choice.

As we start the new year, acutely aware of our imperfections, we may feel down. Remember, *Hashem* specifically created an imperfect world for He loves the struggle. Remember His love and rise to the occasion.