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מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

הים ראה וינס הירדן יסוב לאחור וגו' (תפילת הלל – תהלים קד–ב)

There was once a *poritz* (gentile landowner) who was strapped for cash and decided to ask a wealthy Jew, who lived on his estate, to lend him a large sum of money. The Jew, anticipating great hardship in being the creditor of this *poritz*, went to a friend in a nearby village and begged him to lend the money to the *poritz*. The friend, likewise wary of the *poritz*, refused his request. After much persuasion, however, he agreed to lend the money, on the condition that his friend act as guarantor. The agreement was made, and the friend from the nearby village gave the money to the *poritz*.

As expected, when the loan became due, the *poritz* did not return the money. Consequently, the creditor went to his friend and demanded that as guarantor, he pay the *poritz's* debt. But his friend declined.

“True, I agreed to be a guarantor,” explained the man, “but I never committed myself to pay you unless you first go to the *poritz* and claim your debt. If he refuses to pay you, then I will reimburse you.”

“No, sir!” cried the lender. “I never thought of it that way. I never wanted to have anything to do with the *poritz* in the first place. Only after you convinced me that by acting as guarantor on the loan, you’d accept responsibility for it under all circumstances, did I lend it so that I could claim the money from you instead of having to go to the *poritz*!”

“Too bad,” said the first man, refusing to assume the title of *Arev Kablan*, i.e. a guarantor who bears full responsibility for repaying the loan. “I’m just a simple guarantor, and I don’t care what you had in mind. Go to the *poritz* first!”

Since the two could not reach an agreement, they decided to go to the great *Posek*, **R’ Sholom Mordechai Hakohen Schwadron ZT”L (Maharsham)**, also known as the **Brezhaner Rav**, for a *din Torah*. When they appeared before the Maharsham, they were certain that the Rabbi would look into the complicated *halachos* of *Arvus* (guarantorship) and require at least a few hours, if not days, in order to decide their case.

Instead, the Maharsham surprised them. “My dear *yidden*,” he said on the spot, “may I draw your attention to the words of *Chazal* in *Pesachim* (קט"ז) that clearly deal with your case. The *gemara* expounds on the *posuk* in the *Tehillim*: ‘וַיִּמְרוּ עַל יַם סוּף’ (תהלים קיז) - *‘And they (Bnei Yisroel) rebelled on the sea, at the Red Sea.’* When they came to the Red Sea, the Children of Israel acted rebelliously against *Hashem's* promise to rescue them from their Egyptian pursuers. They said, ‘Just as we are coming up from this side, the Egyptians will go up on the other side (and capture us).’ Then the Holy One, Blessed is He, spoke to the heavenly prince of the sea (שר של ים), commanding him, ‘Spew the Egyptians out on the shore.’ The prince of the sea said to the Holy One, Blessed is He, ‘Can there be a slave who is given a gift by his master, and then the master takes the gift back?’ *Hashem* said to him, ‘I will give you one and a half times as much as they are!’ Then the prince spoke to *Hashem*. ‘Lord of the Universe! Can there be a slave who presses charges against his masters?’ *Hashem* responded, ‘Let the River Kishon serve as a guarantor!’ At that, the prince of the sea immediately spewed them out onto dry land, and the Children of Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the shore.”

The Maharsham had quoted the entire passage from *gemara* by heart, to the astonishment of the litigants. Then, he commented, “Even though one usually is expected to get repaid on a loan from the borrower himself and not from the guarantor, that applies only to an ordinary guarantor. In the case of the River Kishon, however, since there cannot be a slave who charges his master, the River Kishon is considered a guarantor who assumes surety on the loan and is charged first under all circumstances. If so,” concluded the Maharsham, “your case is exactly the same. The person who volunteered to be a guarantor, without specifying what kind of guarantor, must be regarded as an *Arev Kablan*, and thus must assume full responsibility for repaying the loan!”

משל' למה הדבר דומה

אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל את השירה הזאת לה' ויאמרו לאמר וכו' (שירת הים – שמות טו–א)

משל' Late one Friday night, **Chacham Rabbeinu Avraham Tzorfati ZT”L**, dozed off in the midst of his learning and he saw, in his dream, a vision of an old man with a long flowing beard coming towards him.

The man, *Eliyahu HaNavi*, spoke. “My son, who was the greatest prophet in history?”

“*Moshe Rabbeinu*, of course,” was the quick reply.

“If so,” replied *Eliyahu HaNavi*, “Why didn’t he sing *Shirah* (songs of praise) even before the Egyptians drowned? Shouldn’t the greatest of prophets known that

his enemies would drown and his nation saved? Why didn’t he trust in this miracle and begin to sing before?”

The *Chacham* realized that this was no ordinary question and that he was being tested. He chose his words carefully.

“Surely, Moshe could have sung before the Egyptians drowned. But as a dedicated shepherd to his flock, he understood that his people were not fully convinced and were as yet afraid. Thus, they were not prepared to sing *Shirah* and Moshe did not want to sing without his people.”

Eliyahu HaNavi beamed. “This is the correct response

ובני ישראל הלכו ביבשה בתוך הים והמים להם חמה מימנם ומשמאלם וגו' (שמות יד–כט)

The Great White Sea. Both awe-inspiring and mystifying. The majestic waves and the shimmering blue/green of the ocean surface, doesn’t even begin to compare to the dizzying depths, the formidable sea creatures and the vibrant plant life of the ocean floor. And who can forget the shipwrecks? How much gold and silver lies on the bottom of the many oceans and seas that constitute a full three-quarters of the earth’s surface? Untold numbers of ships and sea vessels, loaded with precious materials have matched up against the tempestuous seas - and wound up battered and broken - their cargoes spilled out in stunning disarray.

And yet, there was one moment in time, when the sea met its match - and gave way to the “ocean” of humanity passing through it. That was the miracle of *Krias Yam Suf*.

R’ Simcha Sheps ZT”L quotes the *Medrash*: “*The Sea saw and retreated: It saw Yisroel coming with the bounty of Egypt in their hands.*” The “bounty in their hands”? Undoubtedly, they carried the immense wealth of Egypt on the backs of their donkeys and in their caravans. Yet, *Chazal* were making a point here. Many people are blessed with wealth and riches, however, it is not they who control their money; it is their money that controls and consumes them. Their entire lives revolve around the pursuit of ever more gold, ever more riches, without the slightest concern for restraint or self-control. In such a case, when these rich men “take on” the sea, the sea responds mercilessly and they and their wealth end up at the bottom of the ocean.

But *Bnei Yisroel* came with the wealth “in their hands” in their control, with no regard for greed or earthly desires. Their eyes were turned to Heaven, even if their coffers were overflowing with wealth. When the sea saw how the Jews handled their wealth, at once it gave way for them to pass.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

אתגה

The great *Tanna*, Rabi Akiva, teaches that all the writings of the *Torah* are holy, but the book known as *Shir Hashirim* is deemed the “Holy of Holies.” For this reason we read, at the outset, the words, “ישקני מנשיקות פיהו” - “*Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth.*” The question is: What exactly are we asking *Hashem* for with this heartfelt request?

The answer is that this is truly the underlying theme of the entire *sefer Shir Hashirim*. It is our passionate yearning above all else to be connected deeply to our Beloved Master of the world. A נשיקה (kiss) is the natural way for people to show love to one another. When *Hashem* grants life to a person, He attaches His essence to that person by breathing into him a soul, literally a piece of Himself. Similarly, a “kiss of death” is when *Hashem* attaches Himself to the soul of a person and “pulls out” the *neshama*, as He did with *Moshe Rabbeinu*. We experienced a similar “kiss of *Hashem*” at *Har Sinai* when we heard the voice of *Hashem*, were kissed by His words through angels (*Medrash*), and our souls were actually removed from our mortal encasing in order to become one with the Almighty Himself. Only later, were we revived. A kiss is sharing a “*ruach*” (spirit) between the two parties. It is an attachment, a spiritual closeness that we yearn to have with *Hashem*.

May all of *Klal Yisroel* merit to live their lives with closeness to *Hashem* as their primary goal, so that they will never miss a single kiss of the truest and most purest love - *Hashem's* love to His Nation. May we sing the song of all songs and receive the kiss of all kisses in our times, as we greet *Moshiach Tzidkainu*, speedily and in our days, amen!

TORAH GEMS

ואמרתם ביום ההוא הודו לה' קרא בשמו וכו' והכיר כי נשגב שמו וגו' (הפטרה לאחריזל של פסח)

The holy **Baal Shem Tov ZT”L** established a custom to eat a third meal on the last day of *Pesach*. This meal is known as “Moshiach’s Meal,” for on this day the Messianic radiance is revealed. This revelation foreshadows the future redemption. The last day of *Pesach* is a day which is added only in the Diaspora. The essence of the added day is that in *chutz la’aretz* (out of Israel), the Jewish people can transform one mundane day into a period of *kedusha*. On *Acharon shel Pesach*, we transform this day into a festival of freedom and redemption for this is the very essence of the imminent redemption - converting *Golus* itself into actual *Geulah*, so that the Almighty is revealed even at the very lowest levels of creation.

In certain circles, there is also a custom at this special meal to drink four cups of wine akin to the four cups that are drunk at the *Seder*, on the first two nights of *Pesach*. The **Rashab, R’ Sholom Dov Ber Schneerson ZT”L** explains that the first days of *Pesach* echo the redemption from Egypt. The accent in this redemption is on the beginning of a new period, a period in which the world was granted permanence and fulfillment through *Kabbolas HaTorah*. For *Yetzias Mitzrayim* itself was a preparation for the *Torah*; as *Hashem* told *Moshe Rabbeinu* when He first sent him on his mission: “*When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will serve the Lord on this mountain.*” We drink four cups of wine at the *seder* to relate to the four expressions of redemption that began in Egypt.

The Last Day of *Pesach*, by contrast, foreshadows the future redemption. Here the stress is on the end of a period, the end of *Golus* with its distinctive mode of divine service. The four cups relating to the future redemption remind us that the end of *Golus* is near: *Moshiach* is on his way!

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ישקני מנשיקות פיהו כי טובים דודיך מיין וגו' (שיר השירים א–ב)