

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה וגר' (יב-ב)

The very first *mitzvah* given to *Bnei Yisroel* as they coalesced into a nation, focuses on time: "ה'חדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים" - "*This month shall be unto you a head of the months.*" Through this *mitzvah*, the Jewish people are taught to structure their lives through the various seasons of the year, by setting the calendar and the holy and celebratory days of the year.

Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis, famed founder of the Hineni outreach program, and a world-renowned speaker and lecturer, relates that in 1972 when the thought of establishing Hineni first came to mind, she was nervous. There had never been a precedent for such outreach before; how would she implement her idea? She met with various *Torah* sages including **R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"l**, the **Satmar Rebbe ZT"l** and **Rabbi Joseph B. Soleveitchik ZT"l**, and received advice and guidance for her program. She also asked her father, **R' Avraham Halevi Jungreis ZT"l**, a leader and *Torah* scholar in his own right, to arrange an appointment by the great *posek* of his generation, **R' Yosef Henkin ZT"l**.

It was a blistering hot summer's day when she went to see R' Henkin, a man in his nineties, who was the oldest of the sages. She took the bus in from South Fallsburg, New York, where she had been vacationing with her family in the Catskill mountains, to meet her father at the housing project on the Lower East Side of Manhattan where R' Henkin lived.

"Don't be shocked, my child, when you see R' Henkin," her father told her as they entered the humble apartment. "He's very frail and ill and has lost his eyesight." Esther looked around and saw a room full of *seforim* and a small *Aron Kodesh* that housed a *Torah* scroll. Her father explained that since R' Henkin had become ill, daily services were held in his home. They waited a short time before they soon heard the slow, shuffling sound of footsteps in the hall.

R' Henkin was led in by his aide, who pushed a trolley from which an IV bag hung. R' Jungreis and his daughter stood up and R' Jungreis embraced R' Henkin warmly. They had been close friends for many years.

After formal greetings, R' Jungreis announced to the sage, "My daughter, Esther, is also here with me. She has founded a new outreach organization called Hineni, and has come to seek your blessing."

R' Henkin's gaunt, pale face broke into a warm smile. "Any project undertaken for the sake of Heaven will surely succeed. *Hashem* will be with you and bless you in all your undertakings," he assured her. He paused for a moment and then said, "I would, however, like you to do one thing. When you speak, tell people what you saw here today. I am old and blind, and my body no longer functions. Whatever I know, whatever knowledge I have, I acquired when I was still able to see. The years pass very quickly, and one day every person will find himself in a similar situation in which the body just disintegrates, so tell people to study while they still have the energy and the tools with which to learn *Hashem's* wisdom."

And with that, R' Henkin and R' Jungreis sat down to exchange words of *Torah*. As their discussion became more involved, R' Henkin reached for a *sefer* to emphasize a point, and with his sightless eyes found the page he was looking for. The young rebbetzin sat there in awe, and then, as if to reinforce his previous statement, he said, "You have to study while your eyes still see so that you have something to remember when they grow dim."

Rebbetzin Jungreis would often comment on R' Henkin's message. Ours is a generation that has more time on its hands than our grandparents ever dreamed possible. Modern technology has liberated us from the drudgery of our daily chores, yet we have less time to spare than they did. This is partially due to the fact that we have developed an entire industry centered around "killing time." The most priceless and inane activities have been devised to keep us occupied and anesthetized. Time is the most precious gift that *Hashem* gave us, yet we abuse it the most and squander it away. If we were to see a person throwing his money into the trash bin, we would regard him as insane, but strangely enough, we think nothing of throwing our hours, our days, even our years away. Moreover, monetary loss can be retrieved, but time that is wasted is gone forever.

משל למה הדבר דומה

והיה לך לאות על ירך ולזכרון בין עיניך וכו' (יג-ט)

משל: The following excerpts are taken from the Journal of Chinese Medicine, October 2002: "*Tefillin* is an ancient Jewish prayer ritual that uses two small leather boxes; one is placed on the biceps of the weaker arm with a strap tightly wound around the arm, while the second is placed on the head, with a head strap tied in a knot at the base of the skull."

"The purpose of *tefillin* is to raise spiritual consciousness of the men who wear it. If we examine where the knots and wrappings are placed from a clinical point of view, it appears that the *tefillin* and wrap form a potent acupuncture

point formula focused on the Du Mai central governing vessel, and aimed at elevating the spirit and clearing the mind."

"Along with the three major skull points; *Shangxing DU-23* (which treats Psychosis and nearsightedness), *Fengfu DU-16* (dizziness, headaches, stroke), *Shenting DU-24* (mental disorders, epilepsy), the *tefillin* wrap contacts a good number of the 50 acupuncture points on the arm. These include: *Chize LU-5* (panic and anxiety), *Hegu LI-4* (anti-spasmodic effects, sinuses, eyes), *Faiyuan LU-9* (calms the mind), *Shaohai HE-3* (improves memory), *Houxi SI-3* (dementia, sorrow, fear)."

Adapted from "The Committed Life" by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis

וידו בחצי הלילה ודי חכה כל בכור בארץ מצרים מבקר פרעה הישב על כסאו עד בכור השבי (יב-ט)

In the *Maariv* prayer we say: "*Who struck with His anger all the firstborn of Egypt and removed His nation from their midst to eternal freedom.*" This implies that the striking of the firstborn preceded *Yetzias Mitzraim*. In fact the plague against the firstborn actually occurred at midnight, and the Jewish people first left the next morning. In the *Shachris* prayer, however, we say, "*From Egypt You redeemed us, Hashem, our G-d, and from the house of slavery You liberated us. All their firstborn You slew, but Your firstborn You redeemed.*" This implies that the exodus from Egypt preceded the smiting of the firstborn.

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT"l cites the *gemara Smachos* where a contradiction is raised. Our *posuk* says: "*It was at midnight, and Hashem smote every firstborn in the land of Egypt.*" Later, however, another *posuk* says (במדבר ח-י): "*For every firstborn was Mine ... on the day I struck every firstborn in the land of Egypt.*" This implies that *slavery* was done in the daytime. Rav Yochanan answers that although they were mortally struck at midnight, their souls hovered within them until the morning. Since *Hashem* wanted *Bnei Yisroel* to be aware of how the firstborn were punished, He kept their souls alive within them until daylight.

Thus, in *Maariv*, the reference is to the plague - "*Who struck with His anger all the firstborn of Egypt.*" Indeed, the plague struck at midnight, and only afterwards, *Hashem* "*removed His nation from their midst to eternal freedom.*" In *Shacharis*, however, the reference is to the killing of the firstborn - their actual deaths. This, likewise, occurred after "*You redeemed us, Hashem, our G-d, from the house of slavery You liberated us.*" It is for this very reason that in the evening prayers we thank *Hashem* for the miracle that occurred in the dead of night, and in the morning prayers we thank him for the miracle that occurred in the midst of day!

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

הזדהות

There seems to be a contradiction here and Rashi raises the question. In *Sefer Yoel*, we are told that in the times of *Yoel HaNavi*, there was a plague of locust that produced more locust than ever before in history. However, our *posuk* here tells us that there was never such a terrible plague of locust (ארבה) as the one that afflicted Egypt? How can they both be right?

The **Chasam Sofer ZT"l** gives us a beautiful answer and a wonderful insight into understanding people. He says that in *Mitzraim*, although the actual amount of grasshoppers was less than later in history, the devastation they caused was far greater because of all the plagues that came before and wreaked havoc on the land. When the locust arrived, they finished off anything and everything that was left in the decimated land of Egypt. Such total devastation had never been seen before, not because of the number of locusts but rather because of all the destruction that took place prior to ארבה.

This idea can help us understand people who seem to overreact to situations that, to us, don't seem to be so terrible. We think to ourselves, "If that would happen to me, I would never get so upset." or "Why is he making such an issue out of this; let him just get over it!" The truth is that we don't know how much suffering a person has undergone before and this seemingly "minor" incident is the straw that broke the camel's back! This idea can not only help us understand the reactions of others, but even our own! How "terrible" something is, is subjective. Let us use this idea to judge people favorably when it seems to us that they are getting carried away. Just by being empathetic to their feelings will help them tremendously.

TORAH GEMS

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FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

ויעל הארבה על כל ארץ מצרים ... לפניו לא היה כן ארבה כמותו ואחריו לא יהיה כן וגר' (יז-יח)

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