

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויחל משה את פני ה' אלקיו ויאמר למה ה' יחרה אפך בעמך אשר הוצאת מארץ מצרים ... (לכ-א)

In the Sephardic community, reverence during prayer is considered a sacred tradition. For generations, congregants were careful not to speak during *tefillah*, especially during the *Torah* reading. Silence was seen as an expression of respect, a way of honoring the holiness of the words being recited. True leadership is not always about pleasing the crowd. Sometimes it requires bold, even shocking actions to protect values that matter most. Respect for sacred moments - whether in prayer, in learning, or in community life - must be guarded fiercely. Silence in the synagogue became not just a rule, but a renewed expression of reverence. It is said that when a prominent member of the Baghdad community once whispered something to a friend in middle of *Chazarat Hashatz*, the **Ben Ish Chai ז"ל** stopped the *chazzan* in mid-blessing and turned towards the man. His face was calm, but his voice carried the weight of *Torah*. "My son, when the angels hear the *chazzan* repeat the *Amidah*, they tremble. And you speak? Do you know what you are interrupting?"

The man immediately fell silent, shaken by the rebuke. After the *tefillah*, the *Ben Ish Chai* approached him privately and added gently: "I did not mean to embarrass you. I spoke because the *Shechinah* is here, and we must not forget before Whom we stand." The man later said that from that day forward, he never uttered a word during prayer again.

In the synagogue of **Chacham Rabbi Zion Halevi ז"ל**, Chief Rabbi of Panama for 57 years, the atmosphere gradually changed. It had once been a synagogue where not a sound could be heard, but over time habits began to slip. Despite the rabbi's repeated reminders, people continued to chatter during prayer and even while the *Torah* was being read aloud.

Chacham Zion, known for his deep devotion and gentle nature, tried to correct the situation through words of rebuke. He explained the seriousness of the matter, urging the congregation to remember that the *Torah* reading was not a casual moment but a sacred encounter. Still, his appeals fell on deaf ears. Chatter persisted, and the sanctity of the service was eroded.

One *Shabbat* morning, *Chacham Zion* decided that words alone would no longer suffice. After the third *aliyah*, he banged hard on the *bimah* with determination and announced: "*Rabbotai*, we are concluding the *Torah* reading right now and returning the scroll to the *Aron Hakodesh*. The talking in this synagogue is out of control, truly an affront to the *Torah*, and in this manner it is impossible to continue reading." His voice carried through the sanctuary, and the congregation froze in shock. Never before had they seen the *Torah* reading halted midway. Was it even permissible by *halacha*?

A number of members assured the rabbi in loud voices that everything will remain under control and the talking in the sanctuary will be halted. Unmoved by their gratuitous assurances, however, *Chacham Zion* carefully returned the scroll to its place. Quietly, he instructed his close associates that the reading would be completed later, during the *Mincha* service. He knew that some would miss hearing the full portion, but he believed the lesson was more important. The act was not meant to punish but to awaken the community to the seriousness of their behavior.

The impact was immediate. The congregation realized that their casual chatter had crossed a line. The *Torah* was not merely a book to be read; it was the foundation of their faith, deserving reverence and silence. From that *Shabbat* onward, the synagogue in Panama was transformed. The chatter ceased, and the *Torah* reading regained its dignity.

When this story was told to **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein שליטא**, *Rav* of *Ramat Elchanan*, he later shared it with his revered father-in-law, the *Posek Hador*, **HaGaon R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv ז"ל**, one of the great halachic authorities of the time. *Rav Elyashiv* admired *Chacham Zion's* boldness. When asked where in the *Torah* it permitted stopping the *kriah* midway, *Rav Elyashiv* responded with a striking comparison: "And where does it say that it is permissible to break the *Luchos*, as *Moshe Rabbeinu* did when he came down from *Har Sinai*?" Just as *Moshe* shattered the *Luchos* to preserve the honor of *Hashem*, *Chacham Zion* was certainly within his rights to interrupt the *kriah* to preserve the honor of the *Torah*.

תורת הצבי על הפטרות **A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALED HISTORIAN** וקדשתי את שמי הנדול המוגלל בנבים ... (חזקאל לז-כג)

In the *Haftorah* for *Parashas Parah*, *Yechezkel HaNavi* berated the people for defiling the honor of *Hashem*. The *Navi* explains that *Hashem* was concerned with the reputation of His name and demanded that His great name be sanctified, "So that the nations shall know that I am the Lord." In addition, *Hashem* added, "I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you back to your own land."

Immediately thereafter, *Hashem* declared, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." Being that the whole desecration of *Hashem's* Name stems from the Jewish people being dispersed among the nations, wouldn't it seem enough for *Hashem* to just bring back the Jewish

Nation and His name will be sanctified automatically? **R' Yechiya Tuvul שליטא (Ma'aros Yesharim)** explains that the Jewish people are called a "ממלכת כהנים וגי קדוש" - kingdom of priests and a holy nation - primarily because of their status as pure children of *Hashem*. The greatness of *Hashem's* name is safeguarded by G-d-fearing Jews who will go to great lengths to protect it.

Therefore, without purifying the Jewish Nation first, *Hashem's* name has no standing in the eyes of the nations of the world and will be desecrated even more. Thus, the purification of the Jewish people is an intrinsic part of protecting the greatness of *Hashem's* name and to simply redeem them without cleansing them first would be pointless.

ועתה אם נא מצאתי הן בעיניך הודעני נא את דרכך ואת דעך למוען אמצא הן בעיניך ... (לג-ג)

Moshe Rabbeinu requested to comprehend the ways of *Hashem*. The Gemara in *Berachos* (7a) explains that this refers to the old age question of "מפני מה צדיק ורע לו ורשע וטוב לו" - why do hardships befall a righteous man while its smooth sailing for the wicked? In the *hakdama* to the **Sefer Oneg Yom Tov** he expounds on the *posuk*, "כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדיקים ילכו בם ופשעים יכשלו בם" as follows: *Moshe* asked the above query and *Hashem* responded. Nevertheless it's still a baffling situation. But a *yid*, a *tzaddik* has full faith in all that transpires and knows that in the next world everything will be clear. The wicked on the other hand use this phenomenon to continue on their estranged and evil ways. Ultimately, the actions of *Hashem* are just and straight. Thus, "כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדיקים ילכו בם ופשעים יכשלו בם".

I saw in another *sefer* from one of the *tzaddikim* the following *teitch* in a *posuk* here in the *parsha* a bit later which complements this *vort*. *Hashem* told *Moshe* "וראית את אחורי ופני לא רוא" - you can see My rear but not My front. He explained in light of *Moshe's* earlier question: you can see and comprehend things in hindsight "אחור" but "פני" to see ahead when you experience hardships, "לא רוא" - this one cannot grasp.

My chavrusa told me a different *vort*, unrelated, but also a time related *pshat*. As *Purim* is still a vivid memory, the *Mishna* in *Megillah* states: "הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא" - One who reads the *megillah* out of order isn't *yotzei*. He explained that if a person lives in the past - always saying, "I could've, should've, would've, if only, etc., then "לא יצא" - they will not succeed in life. The focus of a *yid* must always be on the present and future.

Let us be *mechazek* in our *emunah* in all that *Hashem* does and focus on the present while serving Him faithfully!

משל למה הדבר דומה

העשיר לא ירבה והדל לא ימעיט ממהצית השקל ... (לז-ג)

משל: During **R' Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz's ז"ל** leadership at *Torah Vodaath*, tuition was never a barrier to a student's desire to learn. One afternoon, while walking through the hall, he heard the muffled sobbing of a woman coming from the financial office. Stepping inside to investigate, *R' Shraga Feivel* found a mother of three boys enrolled in the *yeshivah*, tearfully begging for a tuition reduction. Without a word, he signaled for one of the office administrators to follow him outside. "Let us see for ourselves how she lives," he said.

The walk from the *Mesivta* to the woman's apartment was only a few blocks, but the reality inside was a world away. They were admitted into a cramped, meager dwelling where the very walls seemed to cry out with the weight of poverty. *R' Shraga Feivel* stayed only long enough to quietly leave a

וירא העם כי בנש משה לרדת מן ההר ... ויאמרו אליו קום עשה לנו אלהים אשר ילכו לפנינו (לכ-א)

The *Chet Haegel*, sin of the Golden Calf, stands as one of the greatest calamities to ever befall *Klal Yisroel*. Many *churbanos* have come over time from this tragic circumstance. A simple but fundamental question must be asked. How is it possible that the *Dor Deah*, the generation who heard *Hashem's* voice at *Har Sinai*, could succumb to a sin so severe? Moreover, how did they continue to sin repeatedly while in the *Midbar* as recounted in the following *Parshiyos*?

Many *Seforim* including *Rishonim* grapple with this paradox. One approach is based on the following *Mashal*: A Russian Jew was traveling late into the night. Exhausted, he finally came upon an inn and knocked on the door hoping for a place to rest his weary bones, however he was told there was no space. The man begged, perhaps there was some straw he could use, until eventually the innkeeper admitted that the last spot had gone to a Russian soldier who was now lying drunk on the floor. The two rolled the soldier over and the *Yid* went to sleep peacefully. The next morning, he overslept. Panicked, he hurriedly dressed and ran toward the train station. Suddenly, he caught sight of a frightening reflection: A Russian soldier's uniform in the window! Terrified, he exclaimed, "If the Russian soldier is here, I must run back and wake myself before I miss the train!"

This foolish man's mistake is often our own. Instead of looking inward and identifying ourselves by who we truly are, we define ourselves by our external "clothes." What a tragic error. We are the *Am Hanivchar*, the chosen children of *Hashem*! The **Maharal M'Prague ז"ל** explains that *Bnei Yisroel* did not fully internalize who they had become when they received the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. While living a miraculous existence they failed to realize that they themselves were now living with *Hashem* in their midst. Although the revelation had changed them, it had not become part of their inner identity. Because of this they were able to sin. This is a central theme on *Purim*, as well. We wear costumes because we are reminded to live with our innermost *Pnimitiyus*. Let us remember this idea as we begin to prepare for the upcoming *Yom Tov* of *Pesach*.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOPFMAN ZT"l

מחשבת הלב

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

few dollars on the table as a courtesy.

Upon returning to the office, he turned to the staff who had refused the woman's request. His voice was firm: "You are dealing here with *dinei nefashos*, matters of life and death. In the time you spent arguing over whether to reduce her tuition from five dollars to three, you could have gone out and collected far larger sums elsewhere." From that day forward, he instructed the staff that every request for a tuition reduction must be met with compassion and a favorable eye.

משל: The Half-Shekel teaches us that every *neshama* holds an equal stake in the *Mishkan Hashem*. Neither the affluent nor those who struggle to afford the "admission" are viewed differently; rather, the gates are open to anyone who sincerely desires to be part of *Hashem's* holy presence. By requiring a uniform contribution, the *Torah* reminds us that while our bank accounts may differ, our spiritual worth is identical.