

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וזאת התרומה אשר תקחו מאתם זהב וכסף ונחשת וגו' (כה-ג)

The *gemara* (חולין מו.) says that rich people are stingy (מקמצין). **R' Shimon Sofer ZT"Ł** explains that if a rich person were not stingy, his *tzedaka* would be meaningless. *Hashem* makes him stingy by nature so that parting with his money will be a challenge, even though financially speaking it is not. This way, he too, can earn the great *mitzvah* of *tzedaka* with *mesiras nefesh* just like his less affluent brethren, who are parting with money that they can ill afford to part with.

The following story was told over at an awards ceremony for Howard Schultz, chairman and chief global strategist of the famed coffee company, Starbucks Corp. Schultz received the Botwinick Prize in Business Ethics from Columbia Business school in 2000, and during his acceptance speech, he related a fascinating insight into how he became a better person.

“When I was in Israel,” Schultz related, “I went to *Meah Shearim*, the ultra-Orthodox enclave within Jerusalem. Along with a group of businessmen I was with, I had the opportunity to meet with the head of the (Mir) Yeshiva, **R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel (ZT"Ł)**. I had never heard of him before and didn't know anything about him. We were ushered into his study and waited for close to fifteen minutes before the rabbi came in. What we did not know was that Rabbi Finkel was severely afflicted with Parkinson's disease. He sat down at the head of the table, and immediately we looked away. We didn't want to embarrass him. Suddenly, the rabbi banged on the table and said, ‘Gentlemen, look at me, and look at me right now!’

“His speech affliction was worse than his shaking. It was really hard to listen and look at him at the same time. He said, ‘I have only a few minutes for you because I know you're all busy American businessmen!’ You know, just a little dig there.

“Then he asked, ‘Can anyone tell me what the lesson of the Holocaust is?’ He called on one guy - it was like being called on in the fifth grade - and not knowing the answer. The guy said something benign like, ‘We will never forget?’

“The rabbi completely dismissed him. Rabbi Finkel was looking around the table to call on someone else. We were all sort of under the table, looking away, hoping he would not call on any one of us. Personally, I was sweating. He called on another guy, who I thought had such a fantastic answer. ‘We will never, ever again be a victim or bystander.’

“But the rabbi said, ‘You guys just don't get it. Okay, let me tell you the essence of the human spirit. As you know, during the Holocaust, the people were transported in the worst most inhumane ways imaginable. The people thought they were going to a work camp but we know they were sent to concentration camps. After hours and days in this horrific corral with no light, no bathroom and extreme cold, they arrived at the camps. The doors were swung wide open, and they were blinded by the light. Men and women were separated, mothers from daughters, fathers from sons. Eventually, they were sent to the barracks.

“As they went into the sleeping area, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket had to decide before going to sleep, ‘Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it towards myself to stay warm?’ These are the types of questions they asked themselves.

“Rabbi Finkel paused for a moment. Then he said, ‘Gentlemen, it was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others. That is the lesson of the Holocaust!’

“With that, he stood up and said, ‘Take your blanket. Take it back to America - and push it to five other people!’”

There is a follow-up to this story. Apparently Mr. Schultz later returned to Israel and visited R' Nosson Tzvi again. This time, he pulled out a blank check, signed it and told R' Finkel to fill it out for whatever he wants.

R' Nosson Tzvi asked him, “I can fill out this check for whatever I want?” Mr. Schultz answered in the affirmative. R' Nosson Tzvi picked up his pen and wrote out the check for \$1400. Then, he handed the check to Howard Schultz, and told him to take it across the street to the scribe (*sofer*), use it to buy a pair of *tefillin*, and promise to put it on every day.

His *yeshiva* was millions of dollars in debt, and R' Nosson Tzvi worked very hard to raise money for the *yeshiva*, but he thought about his fellow Jew first.

משל למה הדבר דומה

וראה ועשה בתבניתם אשר אתה מראה בהר וגו' (כה-ט)

משל: The great conqueror and emperor of France, Napoleon Bonaparte, was known as a fierce general as well as a man with a quick and dreadful temper. Anyone who crossed him, paid a steep price, usually with his life.

It happened that Napoleon's wife was expecting a child and when the time came for the baby to be born, she began experiencing terrible labor pains. Her shrieks and cries were terrifying, for Napoleon himself was becoming agitated and everyone knew what that meant. A number of top doctors were summoned to the royal chambers but each

found a reason to excuse himself from assisting the patient for fear of the consequences should he fail in some way during the delivery. The only option was to call a local doctor from the village, an ignorant by big-city standards. On the other hand, he did not know who Napoleon was.

The doctor showed up and realized that it wasn't such a difficult delivery after all. Blissfully unaware of whose baby he was delivering, and thus working without any undue pressure, he calmly delivered a healthy baby.

נגמל: The *Medrash* says that Moshe was unable to create

דבר אל בני ישראל ויקחו לי תרומה מאת כל איש אשר ידבנו לבו תקחו את תרומתי וגו' (כה-ב)

The *Medrash* says that the poor do more for the *beit* (homeowner who gives charity), than he does for the poor. How can that be? If someone provides a person with a meal, the physical gift is a rather temporary thing. However, when one looks at the whole picture from beginning to end, he sees that there is a lot more to it. By giving to a needy person, one is in fact gaining a share in *Olam Haba* (World to Come). Therefore, his act causes a long-term effect as well.

For this reason, writes **R' Shlomo Breuer ZT"Ł**, the *Torah* employs the word “ויקחו” - “*You shall take*” rather than the contemporary form of “ויתנו” - “*You shall give*” by the command to donate to the *Mishkan*. This is to teach us that by “giving” something to another, whether with our bodies or with our money, we are in fact “taking” something for ourselves. We see this regarding the first act of *chessed* mentioned in the *Torah*, that the same expression is used: “קח נא מעט מים...ואקחה פת לחם” - “*Let water be taken I will take bread.*” (בראשית יח-ד,ה) Shouldn't Avraham have said that he will “give” water and bread? The answer is that Avraham was teaching us an eternal lesson: When you help someone else, you are in fact not giving, but taking.

Similarly, the *Aron*, the holy ark, was to be carried by the *Leviim* on two poles, each inserted through hoops, one pole on each side. However, the *gemara* (סוטה לה) tells us that in actuality the *Aron* didn't need carriers for it transported its bearers (נישא את נשיאיו) - a miracle occurred whereby the ark carried its own weight, easing the load of its bearers.

R' Nosson Adler ZT"Ł suggests that the same is true in a *Yissachar-Zevulun* partnership. The *Zevulun* appears to be “giving” - supporting the *Yissachar*, but in fact he is the one who is “taking.” This is a classic example of the “*ark supporting its bearers.*” The *Torah* that the *Yissachar* learns is in fact supporting the *Zevulun*, who is its bearer.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

קדושה

The **Ramban** tells us that the true *Geula* of the Jewish people did not take place until they had a *Mishkan*. Since the true purpose of our existence is to be close to *Hashem*, leaving Egypt and even receiving the *Torah* did not completely achieve this goal until *Hashem* had a dwelling place among his beloved people. *Hashem* tells us “*Build for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them.*” *Hashem* who is completely spiritual has no need for a physical dwelling place on earth. His sole intention in asking us to make Him a sanctuary is so that it will help us - physical human beings - feel *Hashem* in our midst.

Many ask the question, does the *mitzvah* of building a sanctuary apply nowadays or will we only merit to fulfill it in future times when we bring *korbonos* to atone for our sins and be uplifted by the beautiful songs of the *Leviim*? *Chazal* answer unequivocally that this *mitzvah* does apply today, because every single Jewish home has the potential to be a miniature *Bais Hamikdash*. A Jew has the power to transform his home into a place where the *Shechina* is happy and proud to reside.

In truth, both the *Mishkan* and the *Bais Hamikdash* were modeled after the very first Jewish home in history. The tent of *Avraham Avinu* and Sarah, and the three miracles that occurred there - blessing in the dough; candles never extinguished; cloud of glory hovering above the tent - all these were reinstated with the *Lechem Hapanim*, *Ner Tamid*, and the *Shechina* that always resided in the *Mishkan* and later the *Bais Hamikdash*. May we all merit to model our Jewish homes after the *Bais Hamikdash* and *Mishkan*, which were originally modeled after the first Jewish home, the beautiful tent of Avraham and Sarah.

ועשית מנורת זהב טהור מקשה תיעשה המנודה ידכה וקנה גביעיה כפתריה ופרחיה ממנה (כה-לא)

The *Menorah* in the *Mishkan* held seven individual branches, and yet it was forged out of one solid piece of gold that was hammered into its unique shape. Why was this so essential? Why couldn't the *Menorah* have been made out of separate blocks of gold to make it easier to transform?

Rabbeinu Ovadia Seforno ZT"Ł explains that the *Menorah* symbolized the light of wisdom. The straight, middle shaft of the *Menorah* represents the ultimate purpose of wisdom - the service of *Hashem*. The branches to the right of the central shaft symbolized *Torah* study and scholarship, while those to the left signified practical wisdom. The *Torah* commanded that all the lights of the *Menorah* be kindled facing towards the middle shaft, for all branches of wisdom serve the central and basic function of *avodas Hashem*. All branches of wisdom must form a single unit, for when all the light is directed to one place, similar to the single block of gold that symbolizes unity, then one can see light that has evolved from the Divine light and this light will bestow upon the individual supreme, heavenly wisdom.

The **Maharsham, R' Sholom Mordechai Hakohen Schwadron ZT"Ł** gives a more varied explanation. The seven branches of the *Menorah* represent the seven secular wisdoms of the world, which even a *talmid chacham* whose primary study is *Torah* must know. It was necessary for the *Menorah* to be made from one solid block of gold, for if each branch was formed separately and then added to the base, one might infer that a *talmid chacham*, too, must study each of the secular subjects independently so as to complete his total wisdom. *Hashem* thus commanded Moshe to form the seven branches of wisdom by shaping them out of one piece - the *Torah*. By learning *Torah* and plumbing its depths, one can gather all the requisite wisdom of the world - if he is willing to work hard and “bang himself” into shape!

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם (כה-ה)

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