

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

וקשרתם לאות על ידך והיו לטמטפות בין עיניך וגו' (ו-ה)

This story took place back in the early sixties, when big mainframe computers were first being introduced into business. Mainframes are computers that are known for their large size, amount of storage, processing power and high level of reliability. They are primarily used by large organizations for applications requiring high volumes of data processing. It is often referred to as a “dinosaur” not only because of its size but because it’s becoming extinct.

There was a professor in Argentina who became fascinated with these machines. He studied them and understood everything there was to know about computer mainframes. At the same time, he began learning about Judaism and became fascinated with it, observing many of the commandments that he learned. In the course of his studies, this intellectual came up with a question that bothered him very much, and no matter which rabbi or Orthodox Jew he went to for clarification in Argentina, he was not satisfied with the answer. Upon the advice of a colleague, he traveled to New York to visit the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R’ Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt”l**, and pose the question to him.

The man arrived in Crown Heights and came to the *Rebbe’s* house. He asked for a private meeting and eventually was granted an audience. “I have been taught,” stated the professor, when he finally came face to face with the *Rebbe*, “that everything that exists in the world, even something that is discovered at a later point in the path of history, has its source somewhere in the *Torah*. If so, rabbi, I must ask: where are computers written in the *Torah*?”

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* did not hesitate and answered immediately, as though he had the reply prepared, “*Tefillin*.”

The professor groped to understand, but helplessly. Small black leather boxes that Jews wrap on their arms and heads have little apparent connection with anything of the twentieth century, never mind the modern-day computers.

The *Rebbe* saw his bewilderment and hastened to explain. “What’s new about a computer?” he asked, after a short pause. The professor did not respond. He was thinking about the huge mainframe monsters. Machines that took up whole floors of buildings. Desktop computing wasn’t even in science fiction. What was new about these machines?

The *Lubavitcher Rebbe* continued to stretch the professor’s intellectual capacity. “You walk into a room, you see many familiar machines. A typewriter, a large tape recorder, a television set, a hole puncher, a calculator. What is new and unique about the computer?” Another pause. The professor was thinking hard.

“I will explain it to you,” said the *Rebbe* warmly. “A mainframe computer is a huge machine that seemingly can do it all on its own. But under the floor,” the *Rebbe* went on, “unseen cables connect these machines so that they work as one.”

The professor nodded, enthusiastically. He knew all about these machines and how they operated. He himself hadn’t realized before, but, yes, this is all that a computer is: a synthesis of media and processing devices.

The *Rebbe* continued in a soft voice. “Now look at your own self. You have a brain. It is in one world. Your heart is in another. And your hands often end up involved in something completely foreign to both of them. Three diverse machines.

“Furthermore, your whole day could go along the same path: You brush your teeth, you pray to G-d, you go to work, you eat your kosher food - each act yet another sundry, unrelated fragment. And so the entire Jewish people could go the same way. Each does his *mitzvah* (commandment), follows his path but what one does has no relation to the other.”

The professor looked at the *Rebbe* as he continued to speak, and his mind was racing. “So you put on *Tefillin*. Small little black boxes - one on your head and the other on your arm. It is the first thing a Jew does in the day. Why do you do it? In order to connect your head with your heart with your hand with these leather cables - all to work as one with one intent. And then when you go out to meet the world, all your actions find a harmony in a single coordinated purpose.”

“And, whether you understand it or not,” the *Rebbe* concluded, “when a Jew puts on *Tefillin* in Argentina, it affects another Jew who may be fighting in a war in Israel.”

משל למה הדבר דומה

ובקשתם משם את ה' אלקיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ... (ד-כט)

משל: In the early 1960’s a young woman from the island of Jamaica, whose mother was Jewish, began to read the bible in her home and became fascinated with Judaism. With no options for her on the island, she somehow obtained a ticket from the Jewish Agency to fly to Israel to live on a *kibbutz*. After some time on the *kibbutz* she recognized that her goal of exploring Judaism was not being realized, so she wrote a letter addressed simply to “The Chief Rabbi of Meah Shearim, Jerusalem” and dropped it into the mailbox. The woman’s letter made its way to **R’ Amram Blau zt”l**,

the head of the ultra-Orthodox faction in *Meah Shearim* and, since it was written in English, it lay on his desk until someone could decipher it. R’ Amram passed the letter to **R’ Noach Weinberg zt”l**, who was considered the local American. R’ Weinberg read her plea, and went to the *kibbutz* to meet her. Sensing her commitment to making a full return to Judaism, he invited her to live in his home with his growing family, which she did for a year while becoming fully observant.

This girl, R’ Weinberg’s first *Baalas Teshuvah*, eventually married a brilliant student learning in *Kfar Chabad* and they

כבוד את אביך ואת אמך כאשר צוה ה' אלקיך
למען יאריך ימים ולמען ייטב לך על הארמה (ה-ט)

The *Torah* tells us we must honor our parents. However, in *Parshas Yisro* the *Torah* gives us one reason: “למען יאריך ימים” - because “כאשר צוה ה' אלקיך,” the *Torah* adds the words, “*Hashem* commanded us. What is the significance of this additional phrase?

The **Meshech Chochma** refers to the *Talmud Yerushalmi* that considers a repayment of a debt of gratitude to one’s parents. After all, consider the enormous amounts of money, food, clothing, tuition ... not to mention the time, effort and energy, that parents invest in their children. The least children can do is honor their parents as a small token of gratitude for such a large debt. However, the *Torah* here is telling us that הַכֶּרַת הַטוֹב (gratitude) is not the only motivation for this *mitzvah*. Rather, it is an obligation, a מצות עשה, incumbent upon us solely because *Hashem* commanded us to do so. The *Torah* waited until this *parsha* to tell us “כאשר צוה” it is a direct commandment from *Hashem*, rather than a repayment of the debt of gratitude.

R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt”l held that one cannot be יוצא hearing *Megillas Esther* through a hearing aid. As a result, he taught himself how to read the *megillah* and would do so every year for his hearing-impaired mother. She would always remove her hearing aid and R’ Shlomo Zalman would *lain* the *megillah* loud and clear right near her ear, so that she could be יוצא. As she grew older, R’ Shlomo Zalman’s children were concerned that she could not hear all the words despite his great efforts and wondered why he continued to do it year after year. He answered that, in truth, he was never sure all the years if she was actually יוצא the *mitzvah*, but he continued *laining* anyway just to perform the *mitzvah* of אדם כבוד אב ואם.

May we all be זוכה to perform the *mitzvah* of אב ואם כבוד אב ואם and merit “למען ייטב לך” along with the rebuilding of the *Bais HaMikdash*, בב”א, and the fulfillment of the words of the *Navi*: “*Nachamu Nachamu Ami...*”

DRUSH V'CHIDDUSH

כי א-ל רחום ה' אלהיך לא ירפך ולא ישחיתך ... (ד-לג)

The *Torah* reading for the morning of *Tisha B'av* is taken from *Parshas Vaeschanan* where Moshe foresees the exile *Bnei Yisroel* will endure as punishment for abandoning *Hashem* and His *Torah*. He assures the people that their repentance will be accepted by *Hashem*, because, “לא ירפך” “*He shall not fail you nor destroy you.*”

The **Netziv, R’ Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin zt”l**, explains that these two promises - He will neither “fail” nor “destroy” the Jewish people - speaks to the Jewish Nation’s two primary concerns in exile: the dual threat of spiritual and physical destruction. “לא ירפך” refers to the concern that the spiritual influences and pressures exerted upon them in foreign lands will not prevent them from renouncing idolatry and returning to the service of *Hashem*. “ירפך” literally means “*allow you to become weak*,” which refers to “weakness” of resolve and determination in resisting the foreign pressures and influences that we confront in exile.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON THE MIDDAH OF הכרת הטוב

דרגה יתירה
“*There were no greater days for Klal Yisroel than Yom Kippur and Tu B'av.*” (תענית ב:)
Yom Kippur is a great day for the Jewish people because we are forgiven for all our sins and given a fresh slate; what is so special about *Tu B'av*, and if it is so great, why indeed isn’t it an actual *Yom Tov*? **Rabbi Zev Leff Shlit’a** explains that on *Tu B'av* two great things happened: 1) Many *Shidduchim* were arranged on this day. 2) The corpses of the Jews killed by the Romans in Beitar and left unburied for years were finally buried. To commemorate the fact that their bodies did not decompose, *Tu B'av* was instituted as a special day and the Sages inserted the fourth *beracha* of “הטוב והמטיב” into *Birchas HaMazon*. Rabbi Leff ties these two concepts together and notes that *Tu B'av* teaches us that the “realities of life” - *shidduchim* and burying the dead, are not to be taken for granted.

The key to happiness in life is *Hakaras HaTov*, to appreciate and recognize the good things we have, rather than just think that this is the way it is meant to be! “כפי טוב” literally means to “cover up the good” - when we complain about things that other people would be thrilled to have. For example, “doing” a *shidduch* - even if EVERYTHING is not perfect - is a reason to rejoice, and burying one’s dead is a great *zechus* that unfortunately not every Jew is worthy to merit - *nebach*, millions in the Holocaust did not have this *zechus*. The message of *Tu B'av* is APPRECIATION. It is a day without any special *mitzvos* or *Yom Tov* customs - and that is exactly the point! Even an ordinary day is worth appreciating and rejoicing over! The greatest days in our lives are the days in which we choose to see all the good that we have - rather than take it all for granted.

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM R’ CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN

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