

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ובעבור תהיה יראתו על פניהם לבלתי תחטאו וגו' (כ-ז)

A student in the Ramailles Yeshivah, Netzach Yisroel, in Jerusalem, was once asked to lead the *Kabbolas Shabbos* prayers on Friday night. He was not much of a *chazan* and he tried to wriggle his way out of it, but the *gabbai* was persistent and ultimately the *bochur* decided to give it a try. At first, his voice wavered but as the davening progressed, the boy began to settle down. Suddenly, a mishap occurred! He failed to notice the small asterisk on the side of the page which indicated that at the end of the prayer “*Hashkiveinu*” there are different words for *Shabbos* than for weekday. Without thinking he continued on and missed the special instructions for Friday night davening.

The *bochur* had just begun finishing off the *beracha*, with the words “*Boruch Ata*,” when he heard a commotion behind him. He looked down at the page and realized that he had missed the words, “*Ufros aleinu sukas shlomecha*” and his heart went still. People began calling out impatiently from behind him, “*Ufros aleinu.... nu....nu?*”

He could feel beads of sweat standing out on his forehead. What should he do now? The silence in the shul was deafening. Instinctively, he turned to look at the *Rosh HaYeshivah*, the *Gaon*, **R’ Yisroel Zev Gustman ZT”L** for guidance. R’ Gustman considered the dilemma for a moment before calling out, “*Nu ... Hapores!*” This was an indication for him to continue saying the *beracha* from where he had left off, which he did as the chorus behind him quietly melted away.

Of course, the debate erupted anew the moment davening ended and the *bochur* stepped away from the *amud*. A cluster of people descended on R’ Gustman, surrounding him on all sides to discuss his halachic decision. They questioned why the *beracha* had been valid, and if any consideration should be given to a “do over”!

The erstwhile *chazan* slinked away in embarrassment. He felt terrible and ashamed for having brought about so much trouble and he pledged to never daven for the *amud* again. He sat down dejectedly, staring at the ground and deliberately avoiding catching anyone’s gaze in his. He watched as R’ Gustman bravely dealt with all of the various opinions that the “wise men” had to offer. Within a few minutes, most of the *minyan* had departed.

Finally, the boy stood up prepared to leave himself, now that he was no longer the center of attention. Just then, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, R’ Gustman himself walked over to him. “Are you feeling down because of what happened tonight?” He asked his student. The boy nodded sheepishly. “I feel terrible,” he said glumly.

“Well, don’t!” said R’ Gustman loudly. “Let me share a story with you which contains a powerful lesson that I was taught by the great Vilna Rav, **R’ Chaim Ozer Grodzenski ZT”L**.

“I once attended a funeral with R’ Chaim Ozer. A man had just lost his wife, and at the funeral the husband got up to speak and eulogized his wife so beautifully and so eloquently. Although he was not a learned man, his speech was flavored with words of *Chazal* and filled with significant *Torah* content. Everyone was extremely impressed. As we were walking back after the funeral, however, R’ Chaim Ozer noted that the man had spoken eloquently, without any hesitation or mistakes. But someone who is emotionally affected, one who is truly heartbroken and in mourning, would never have been able to do that! It was a clear indication that he did not truly care for his loss.”

R’ Gustman paused and looked at his student who was listening intently “How can anyone stand and speak before the *Ribbono shel Olam*, the Master of the World, and not feel nervous or hesitant? When a person davens for the *amud* he should sense some Fear of Heaven and experience at least a little hesitation.” Then, the *Rosh Yeshivah* looked into his eyes and said, “Your mistake tonight shows that you truly have *Yiras Shamayim* - Fear of Heaven.”

The *bochur* smiled, gratified and humbled by the tremendous sensitivity R’ Gustman displayed. It was a beautiful gift of consolation from a *rebbe* to his *talmid*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

על כן ברך ה' את יום השבת ויקדשהו כבד את אביך ואת אמך וכו' (כ-יא,ב)

משל: One Friday night, **R’ Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz ZT”L**, the legendary founder of *Yeshivah Torah Vodaath*, was invited to be the guest of a certain individual for the *Shabbos* meal. Arriving home with his host, though, it was immediately apparent that the hostess had fallen asleep from an exhausting week and hectic *erev Shabbos*, and had failed to awaken on time to put the finishing touches to the table. When her husband and his respected guest came home, the husband berated her for her failure to cover the *challahs*.

R’ Shraga Feivel was standing there, feeling a bit

ashamed and the thought occurred to him how absurd it was for the man to humiliate his wife for not having covered the *challahs* - a custom designed to keep the *challahs* from being “embarrassed” during *Kiddush* and to teach us how sensitive we must be to another person’s honor.

It seems, he would say later, that the host, in his concern for the custom, had completely ignored its implications.

במשל: There is more to leading a *Torah* life than merely observing 613 rules. The ultimate goal is to understand the implications of each *mitzvah* in the context of the overall

הוד סיני עשן כלל מפני אשר ירד עליו ה' באש ... ויחדד כל הודר מאד וגו' (ש-ח)

The *gemara* (ברכות לב.) asks: “Why is it called הר סיני (*Mount Sinai*)? Because miracles (נסים) were done there for the Jewish people. If so, it should have been called “הר ניסי” (*Mountain of Miracles*)? Rather, it is called ‘Sinai’ because hate (שנאה) came down to the nations there.”

This statement is puzzling. Firstly, we find other instances in the Talmud where *Chazal* use a play on words (אל תקרי) and read a *posuk* differently in order to stress a point or learn a new idea. Why couldn’t the *gemara* read the word “סיני” as “ניסי” saying, as it often does, “*Don’t read it as ‘Sinai,’ but rather read it as ‘Nisi’?*” Secondly, why do we celebrate a mountain from which hatred comes down?

The holy *Rebbe*, **R’ Elimelech of Lizhensk ZT”L (Noam Elimelech)** gives us a fascinating response. It is apparent from the *gemara*’s question that *Chazal* do not agree to the first answer that Sinai was a “Miracle Mountain” because miracles generally stem from the *chessed* and kindness that *Hashem* does for His people, even when they are unworthy. In His mercy, *Hashem* performs miracles for the Jewish people even when their actions prove they do not deserve it. However, according to the second answer that this mountain is where hate came down against the nations, this proves that indeed the Jewish people are worthy of goodness from their Creator. The other nations, on the other hand, are hated because *Hashem* sees their wicked deeds, and compares to them the actions of Yisroel who do good.

Therefore, the *gemara* answers that שנאה (from “סיני”) came down upon the nations, because it is better for the Jews to be meritorious through nature rather than through miracles. After all, miracles are not an everyday occurrence. Therefore, when we serve *Hashem* and refine ourselves, uplifting the divine sparks from the nations, hate and retribution come down upon them and we are redeemed.

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

התקשרות

What did Yisro hear that made him pick himself up and change his entire life by becoming a member of the Jewish people? Yisro heard about the splitting of the Red Sea and the war with Amalek. (Rashi) **R’ Elya Lopian ZT”L** asks: It is understandable that Yisro was inspired by *Krias Yam Suf*. The Divine revelation throughout the entire world was incredible and the lofty level that every Jew reached at that time was truly extraordinary. But what was inspirational about the war against Amalek. Why would a malicious battle against the Jewish nation cause someone to wish to become a Jew himself?

He explains that these two episodes were proof to Yisro how crucial it is for one to be connected to *Hashem*. *Krias Yam Suf* was the epitome of attachment to *Hashem*, as the Jewish people pointed with their fingers and declared: “*This is my G-d and I will glorify Him!*” Their one desire was to sanctify *Hashem*’s name by living the lives of loyal and dedicated Jews.

The war with Amalek was exactly the opposite. Amalek attacked the Jewish people in a cruel manner, at their most vulnerable moment. If a human being, who lives without *Hashem* in his life, can stoop so low, reasoned Yisro, then that is the furthest thing in the world that I would want to be! It was obvious to Yisro that only by being connected to *Hashem*, can a person live with real values. In fact, this *middah* is found in the name “יתר” as well. Yisro’s greatness lay in his ability to find the “יתרון” - the advantage, the lesson to be learned from every single person and from everything in life. We, too, must emulate Yisro and remember that in every situation - positive or negative - there is something to be gained.

והי קהל השופר הולך וחוץ מאד משה ידבר והאלוקים יענו בקול וגו' (ש-ט)

One of the differences between *Moshe Rabbeinu* and the other *Neviim* (prophets) was that they were unable to speak to *Hashem*; they simply heard His message. Moshe, however, could converse directly with the Almighty. This distinction between Moshe and the other prophets is made by the **Rambam** (הלכות יסודי התורה זו) who further notes that *Bnei Yisroel* did not have complete faith in Moshe until they witnessed the events at *Har Sinai* (שם ח-א). Hence, Moshe’s uniqueness was clearly demonstrated at that time, when the people saw with their own eyes how he approached the mountain, and heard him speak directly to *Hashem*.

Every year at the annual Agudath Israel convention, a large crowd gathers to hear and be inspired by words of *Torah* and *hashkafa* from *Gedolei Yisroel*, *Rabbanim* and important lay leaders. One of the regulars at the annual convention in years past was a man who came in from out-of-town especially to hear the speech delivered by **R’ Moshe Feinstein ZT”L**. Year after year, at great expense and effort to himself, he would arrive in time to hear R’ Moshe speak and then he would leave. Many people knew him as he was an annual participant, but what most people did not know was that this man did not speak a word of *Yiddish* - and R’ Moshe addressed the crowd only in *Yiddish*! And yet, he came, every year without fail, and sat through R’ Moshe’s keynote address, concentrating and appreciating every single word.

Someone who knew him finally asked him, “Why do you come running here especially to hear R’ Moshe when you don’t even understand what he is saying?”

“What? Do you think I need to understand what R’ Moshe is saying?” retorted the man. “When *Moshe Rabbeinu* spoke at *Har Sinai*, it says “משה ידבר” - but only *Hashem* could hear him. The words are not important. I just need to look at the *tzaddik* and my *neshama* understands everything he says!”

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R’ GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

ישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה (ח-א)

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