

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

ויאמר ה' אל משה קח לך את יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו וכמכת את ירך עליו ... (כו-ה)

As the premier Orthodox lay-leader of our generation, **Rabbi Moshe Sherer ז"ל** adhered to *shtadlanus* principles that were respected by all public officials. He made a point of keeping disagreements private and avoiding public confrontations.

One classic example followed Pope John Paul's 1987 public meeting with Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, after the latter had been exposed as a former Nazi officer. The pope's warm comments after the visit caused a great deal of bitterness in the general Jewish community and a number of harsh condemnations of the pope by mainstream Jewish groups. Rabbi Sherer met privately with Cardinal John O'Connor of New York more than a month after the pope received Waldheim, and expressed his own strong dismay at the visit and the pope's "laudatory remarks" after the visit. But he explained that Agudath Israel had nevertheless issued no public statements because as "religionists we do not use the newspapers and picketing and other rash methods to express our dismay with the heads of a religious faith community." The cardinal agreed and felt that perhaps a way to breach the divide between Catholics and Jews was through an ecumenical prayer service of some kind, or if necessary by the cardinal going to a synagogue for a joint "meditation event." Such an idea had been summarily rejected by the Orthodox rabbinate and it was up to Rabbi Sherer to explain the Orthodox opinion to Cardinal O'Connor.

The cardinal's proposal placed two of Rabbi Sherer's *shtadlanus* principles with respect to the church on a potential collision course. On the one hand, Rabbi Sherer strenuously opposed all forms of interfaith dialogue. On the other hand, his good relations with Cardinal O'Connor personally and with the entire Catholic hierarchy were a crucial component of his *shtadlanus* efforts. How could he preserve those relationships without violating his absolute rejection of interfaith dialogue?

Rabbi Sherer did not shrink from a challenge, and he scheduled a meeting with the cardinal the next day. He began the meeting by pointing out that Agudath Israel had issued no public condemnations of the pope's meeting with Waldheim. Next he described to Cardinal O'Connor the crisis facing the entire Jewish people as a result of rapid assimilation and intermarriage. In such a situation, "when we have such ignorant masses in the general population," Rabbi Sherer explained, "in order to preserve our integrity, and not permit the lines of demarcation between various faiths to completely tumble down, we have to build fences around ourselves." Avoiding any form of joint prayer services, he said, was one of those fences.

Not only did Cardinal O'Connor accept the explanation, he expressed his admiration for Rabbi Sherer's candor. "What is important," he said, "is that people should strengthen their own religion, as long as they respect the next person's religion."

Rabbi Sherer leadership abilities was evident again when Michael Lewan, chairman of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, drafted the legislation establishing a commission, which deals primarily with the preservation of Jewish graves in Eastern and Central Europe, while serving as an aide to Congressman Stephen Solarz.

In early 1997, Lewan read that Pope John Paul would be visiting his native Poland. As the first Polish-born pope, his visit was guaranteed to generate great interest in Poland. Lewan had the idea of asking the pope to use his visit to encourage the Catholic clergy in Poland to assist in the task of uncovering and preserving Jewish gravesites. The only problem was that he had no idea of how to reach the pope to broach the idea. He was told that the best way to get the pope's attention was through Cardinal John O'Connor. And the best way to get to Cardinal O'Connor was through Rabbi Moshe Sherer of Agudath Israel.

Rabbi Sherer agreed to introduce him to Cardinal O'Connor. At that later meeting, Lewan was struck by the warmth that the cardinal showed Rabbi Sherer. The cardinal agreed to place Lewan's request before Pope John Paul. In April of that year, he traveled to Rome, and met with the pontiff in the Vatican. Five weeks later, Pope John Paul delivered the following message to a gathering of Catholic priests in Kalisz, Poland: "These Jewish cemeteries are part of our common past. They are places of deep spiritual and historic significance. Let these places join Poles and Jews together." (Rabbi Sherer, by Y. Rosenblum/Artscroll)

כה אמר ה' וזכרתי לך חסד נעורייך ... לכתך אהורי במדבר בארץ לא ודועה (יהי' ב-ב)
On most weeks of the year, the *Haftorah* relates to the weekly theme of the *Parsha*, yet beginning with the seventeenth of *Tamuz* through the period of the *Bein Hametzarim*, the *Haftorah* focuses on the general theme of the *Churban*. This week's *Haftorah* marks the first of the "תלתא דפורענותא" – "the three (weeks) of calamities" which precedes *Tisha B'av*. In it, *Yirmiyahu HaNavi's* origins are discussed, and the tragic nature of his devastating prophecies are shown. Despite it all, the *Haftorah* ends with the positive notion of *Hashem* "remembering" how *Klal Yisroel* followed Him into the desert, trusting in Him implicitly. Why is this information important at this time?
R' Chatzkel Abramsky ז"ל (Chazon Yechezkel) explains

תורת הצבי על הפטרות
that when *Klal Yisroel* left Egypt and followed *Hashem* into the desert, they fully placed their trust in *Hashem* and formed an eternal bond with the Almighty that would and could never be severed - no matter what happens. From a rational perspective, it's hard to imagine any number of signs or miraculous events that would persuade an intellectual mind to blindly follow another to a place rife with death, with almost no chance of survival. Yet, *Klal Yisroel* did just that.

Says R' Chatzkal, *Klal Yisroel's* trust in *Hashem* was humanly irrational, and at a time when no nation believed in *Hashem* or appreciated His Almighty power. Thus, in *Klal Yisroel's* time of peril what better piece can *Yirmiyahu HaNavi* use to "persuade" *Hashem* to take pity on His children.

עלת שבת בשבתו על עלת התמיד ונסכה ... (כה-)

CONCEPTS IN AVODAS HALEV FROM THE FAMILY OF R' CHAIM YOSEF KOFMAN ZT"L

מחשבת הלב

Parshas Pinchos is replete with *korbanos*, the sacrifices offered for each *Yom Tov*, respectively. The *Torah* enumerates each one individually, yet concludes, "על עלת התמיד ונסכה" - besides for the regular *Korban Tamid*. There seems to be some significance to the *Korban Tamid*, that we begin and conclude the day with these offerings. Why is this so?

I would like to digress a bit to enable us to better grasp the importance of the *Korban Tamid* and it's relevance to us today as well. As we all know, five terrible calamities befell *Klal Yisrael* on the 17th day of *Tammuz*. I heard in the name of **R' Don Ungarischer ז"ל**, *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Beis Medrash Elyon* in Monsey, that the common thread shared by these five tragedies was that we took a direct hit, a shot to our gut. In other words, each tragedy, affected our *pnimiyus* - our inner core. For example, the *Luchos* were destroyed. They represented the *Torah*, our very essence. The *goyim* placed an idol in the *heichal*, a breach to the inner sanctuary. They also brought a halt to sacrificing the *Korban Tamid*. Why? An offering that we bring occasionally, that was something they could tolerate. But something that we bring on a constant basis - that was too much for them, because that becomes part of us, our structure and our foundation. They had to abolish that.

It would seem that in our most troubling and tumultuous times, and as the *yimei bein hametzarim* commence, we must delve deep into ourselves and strengthen our *pnimiyus*. Our core, which was hit, needs to be rebooted. Every individual, every family as a whole, must reconnect and rebuild a relationship with *Hashem*, as well as with ourselves. We must understand our strengths and weaknesses and channel them in the right direction. Instead of "crushing and demolishing" our unique identities and those of others, we must seek to build and strengthen our edifices. May *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* say "L'tzaroseinu dai" - enough of our troubles, and instead shower us with only *simchos*, *yeshuos* and bring *Moshiach bimheira biyameinu amen*.

משל למה הדבר דומה

אבינו מת במדבר והוא לא היה בתוך העדה ... בעדת קרח (כו-ג)
משל: One of the greatest *talmidim* of the **Sanzer Rav** was **R' Yosef Babad ז"ל**, *Av Beis Din* and Chief Rabbi of Tamipol, Poland. He is most renowned for his classic *sefer Minchas Chinuch*, a widely learned commentary on the *Sefer Hachinuch*, which serves as a form of legal commentary through the perspective of the *Gemara* and *Rishonim*.

On one occasion, two men came before R' Yosef's *beis din* asking to adjudicate a *din Torah*. As they were sitting down and preparing to begin, one of the litigants commented to the *Av Beis Din*, "Rebbi, I still remember your father, who served as *Mesader Kiddushin* at my wedding!"

When R' Yosef heard these words, he quickly turned to the other litigant and asked, "Did you also know my father? Was he also *Mesader Kiddushin* by your wedding?"

The man shook his head no.

R' Yosef looked around the room and then declared, "If so, then I must recuse myself from serving on this *beis din*. The fact that you knew my father might cause me to show a hint of favoritism to your side of the case."

נמשל: The *Minchas Chinuch* explained to the stunned group of people that there was such a precedent found in the *Torah*.

"We find that when the daughters of *Tzelofchad* came to *Moshe Rabbeinu* with their claim, he also recused himself and waited for a verdict directly from *Hashem*. Why? Because when they told him, 'Our father died in the desert and he was not part of the assemblage who went against *Hashem* during *Korach's revolt*,' *Moshe* thought to himself, 'I knew their father and he did not fight with me,' but as a result, he knew that this could affect the way he looks at their case, and thus, he recused himself. I am doing the same thing."

ונתת מזורך עליו למען ישמעו כל עדת בני ישראל (כו-ב)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Rashi on this *posuk* quotes an interesting *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* (75a): "The face of *Moshe* was like the sun; the face of *Yehoshua* was like the moon." The *Gemara* goes on and concludes with the following words, "Woe to such an embarrassment." In other words, even though he lived only one generation later, compared to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, who was considered "like the sun" - the one who shines *Torah* on the whole world - *Yehoshua bin Nun* was "like the moon" who only reflects the light of the sun. This is a cause for shame and embarrassment.

Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai ז"ל (Chida) explains this in a new light which serves as a great lesson to every one of us, especially during the days "בין המצרים". The *Medrash* tells us that *Yehoshua* was the one who would prepare the *Beis Medrash* for his *Rebbe's shiur*! He was the "youngster" who would set up the benches and prepare the *seforim*! It was because of this, says the *Medrash*, that he was chosen to be the Nation's leader! "Woe to such an embarrassment," says the *Chida*, is referring to the "embarrassment" of being the "helper" - the *Shammes*, the *Gabbai*, the "משרת" of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. He was a "second-class-citizen" in the eyes of others! But it was because he did this that he merited to become the leader!

How often do people refrain from getting involved in good causes or helping others because it is beneath their dignity? "Es past nisht!" is a common refrain! Had *Yehoshua bin Nun* felt this way, had he been "embarrassed" to serve *Moshe*, he would have never become the *manhig*! He wasn't afraid to "lower" himself which was really his ticket to greatness!

As we mourn the loss of our *Bais HaMikdash* because of "שפאת חנוך", let us take this lesson to heart and realize that doing *chessed* for others is not a put down! Making oneself small is an act of greatness - not the opposite! If it is not beneath *Hashem's* dignity to assist us each and every day, then it is certainly not beneath our dignity to service others, in any way!