

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

למה נרדע שם אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו בן תנה לנו אחזה בתוך אחי אבינו ... (כז-ד)

NASA's space shuttle program began setting records with its first space launch on April 12, 1981 and continued to set high marks for achievement and endurance throughout its thirty years of missions. Starting with Columbia and continuing with Challenger, Discovery, Atlantis and Endeavour, the space shuttle missions carried astronauts and payload specialists into orbit repeatedly, launched, recovered and repaired satellites, conducted cutting-edge research and built the largest structure in space, the International Space Station. The final space shuttle mission, STS-135, ended on July 21, 2011 when Space Shuttle Atlantis rolled to a stop at its home port, NASA's Kennedy Space Center located on Merritt Island, Florida.

One of the earlier missions, named STS-51-L, was the twenty-fifth Space Shuttle flight and the tenth flight of the Space Shuttle Challenger. The crew was commanded by Dick Scobee and it included the pilot, and three mission specialists. There were also two Payload Specialists. One was assigned to conduct experiments and research for the Hughes Aircraft Company, and the second was Christa McAuliffe, who flew as part of the Teacher in Space Project.

The Teacher in Space Project (TISP) was a NASA program announced by President Ronald Reagan in 1984 designed to inspire students, honor teachers, and spur interest in mathematics, science, and space exploration. The project would carry teachers into space as Payload Specialists (non-astronaut civilians), who would return to their classrooms after their missions to share the experience with their students. The few teachers who were chosen for this exceptional honor considered it one of the greatest accomplishments of their careers. There was fierce competition amongst educators to be chosen for this special mission. After months of speculation and decision-making, the contest was narrowed down to a few finalists, one of whom was an Orthodox Jewish teacher in a Hebrew Day School. She had submitted her application and was a fine choice for the selection. In the end, though, she was not chosen as the Teacher in Space finalist as another teacher, Christa McAuliffe, was honored with a seat on the Challenger.

On January 28, 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded in mid-air 73 seconds into its flight, killing all seven crew members aboard. The spacecraft disintegrated 46,000 feet (14 km) above the Atlantic Ocean, off the coast of Cape Canaveral, Florida. It was the first fatal accident involving an American spacecraft while in flight. The crew was scheduled to deploy a communications satellite and study Halley's Comet while they were in orbit, in addition to taking Christa McAuliffe into space under the Teacher in Space program. The latter task resulted in a higher than usual media interest in the mission; the launch and subsequent disaster was viewed live in many schools across the United States.

It was a horrific incident and it was all anyone was talking about. Many students who watched the launch live were traumatized and could not function properly for a long time afterward. The Jewish schoolteacher who had almost been chosen for the mission, was receiving so many phone calls and messages from her family and friends expressing how lucky she was that she had not been on the mission. It clearly saved her life.

The next day, as she was walking down the hall in her school building, one boy who was known to be quite rowdy and mischievous, walked up to her and commented, "I wish you would have been on the Challenger shuttle."

The teacher froze in disbelief. How could anyone say something so evil and horrible to another human being no matter how much the student might hate her? Who thinks this way - let alone a young child? What parent would allow their son to say such malicious words? It was as if this boy wanted her to die or even worse, was threatening her in the future!

Her mind was whirling with thoughts about how to admonish this boy. He needed to be punished - she was sure of that! She just wasn't sure how. Suddenly, the boy looked up at her and explained, "I wish you had been on the space shuttle because you are such a good teacher, that if you were on it, then Hashem would not have let the shuttle explode!"

ואמר אהה ה' אלוקים תנה לא ידעתי דבר כי נרדע אנכי... (וימ' א-ו)

In the first of the "Three (weeks) of Calamities," Hashem tells Yirmiyahu HaNavi: "I appointed you a prophet concerning the nations..." Yirmiyahu replies: "I don't know how to speak, for I am still a boy." Obviously, Yirmiyahu HaNavi was no child at this time, so why did he use such specific language?

R' Meir Leibush Malbim z"l explains that in his great humility, Yirmiyahu HaNavi had three reasons for saying what he said. Amazingly, the first reason was because he simply lacked the basic confidence in himself, and he felt there were others greater than himself who should be given such a privilege. The second, being that he felt like a child who does not know how to order his words in the correct

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manner, and he did not know how to speak well in front of a gathering. And finally, Yirmiyahu was nervous that the nation would hear his words and become angry with what he says. As a result, they would go after him and kill him.

Chazal note that all three reasons were ones of great humility - a character greatly missing in the pre-Churban era. Yirmiyahu HaNavi was a once-in-a-generation person who served as a role model, but alas Klal Yisroel did not heed the call and the nation continued to suffer.

During this time, self-reflection is important, and it might serve us well to take a cue from the great Yirmiyahu HaNavi who despite his greatness, still saw himself as not worthy of carrying the word of Hashem to the nation.

ויאמר ה' אל משה קח לך את יהושע בן נון איש אשר רוח בו ... וצויתיה אתו לעינינו וגו' (כז-הש)

On the words "קח לך", above, Rashi says that Moshe was to tell Yehoshua bin Nun: "אשרך שזכית להנהיג בנו של מוקים" - "Praiseworthy are you that you are meriting to guide Hashem's children." It is clear that here, Hashem was praising the Jewish people. However, in the very next posuk, Rashi says on the words "וצויתיה אותך": "Command him that although the Yidden are 'טרדנים' (troublesome) and 'סרבנים' (obstinate), he must still be tolerant." Would this not seem to be contradicting the earlier flattery of Klal Yisroel? R' Shimon Schwab z"l answers that the essence of each Yid, the penimius, is pure and sublime. At times, though, it gets sullied. The job of a true leader is to polish those diamonds, returning their original shine.

The next vort complements Rav Schwab's, as it too brings out the job description of a caring gadol. Hashem told Moshe to place his hand on Yehoshua bin Nun and bentch him. Moshe, though, placed both hands on Yehoshua. Why two? Perhaps we can say a machshava, prefaced with a story. A bochur in the Ponovezh Yeshivah once needed some respite and a break from his daily routine. He thought that a Shabbos away from the yeshivah would do the trick. When he asked R' Gershon Edelstein z"l for permission to leave, his answer was, "You can rest in the yeshivah just as well. There's no need to leave the yeshivah." That Erev Shabbos, R' Gershon approached the boy and asked if he would like to join him for a seudas Shabbos. The bochur was thrilled at the opportunity to bask in the Rosh Yeshivah's presence! R' Gershon knew the boy needed a change but as he pushed him away with one hand, refusing his request, he pulled him closer with the other, by offering him a great opportunity. Similarly, Moshe Rabbeinu, the seasoned manhig, was imparting a lesson to Yehoshua bin Nun, the next leader. You need two hands to guide: "שמאל מרחק, ומיין מקרב". It's a delicate balance in chinuch we all must utilize. Yehi ratzon that we enjoy much success with those we are charged with being mechanech, and have unlimited Yiddish nachas from them all.

משל למה הדבר דומה ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד בן חפר בן גלעד בן מנשה ... (כז-א)

A maggid (inspirational speaker) once got up to the podium in front of a large crowd and told the following story: There was once a man who drank a "drop too much." This was what he told his wife and friends, but in reality, he was a bonafide drunkard. Eventually, feeling that his life was on the edge, he turned to his family and said, "After I die, make sure not to do the purification process (Taharah) on my body in our house as there are potatoes in the ground (this was before refrigerators in order to keep them fresh). I don't want the potatoes to get ruined!"

There was a hush in the crowd. Everyone looked at each other and thought the same thing: A true drunkard - all he thought about, even on his death bed, was silly potatoes.

Then the maggid said the same story about a great tzaddik.

אלה תעשו לה' במועדיכם ... לעיתים ולמנחתיכם ולנמכתכם ולשלמיכם וגו' (כט-ט)

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

Parshas Pinchos, seemingly out of nowhere, speaks about our glorious Yamim Tovim. And yet, we find ourselves in this dismal time-period known as "בין המצרים" - the "Three Weeks" leading up to Tisha B'av. The Apta Rav z"l (Ohev Yisroel) points out that there are 21 days in this time-period which are directly connected to the 21 days of rejoicing mentioned in the parsha: Shabbos, Yom Kippur and Rosh Chodesh is 3; Pesach has 7 days and Sukkos has 8; 2 days of Rosh Hashanah and one day of Shavuous. The sad days of the המצרים בן are rooted in the 21 days of rejoicing on the Chagim. The posuk (Tehillim 73) states: "אך" - The word "אך" has the gematria of 21. "אך" means "only" - which teaches us that there is "only" goodness - "TOV" - for Klal Yisroel, no matter if it is a time of mourning or a time to rejoice. Even sadness is rooted in joy. This is why Tisha B'av, which is the zenith of the three weeks of sadness, will eventually turn into the greatest "מועד" - the most joyous holiday of all.

This is a crucial lesson for all Jews at all times. We have all experienced times in our lives when we felt completely broken. We could not see a light at the end of the tunnel and did not know where to turn. However, we later realized that Boruch Hashem, there still is and will be many opportunities in life to rejoice. Life continues to move on, bringing upon us many different experiences, some that are distressing and others that fill our hearts with song. The message is that we should never allow the times of sadness to wear us down and lead us to believe that there is no HOPE. The expression: "This too shall pass," should be our motto to remind us, even at our lowest moment, that days of joy will come once again.

For this reason, explains R' Abraham Twerski z"l, our holidays are called "Moadim L'simcha" - holidays FOR joy, rather than holidays OF joy. Our festivals are not only meant to bring us happiness while we experience them; rather, they are great days that stand FOR joy throughout the year and should lift our spirits and inspire us that happy days will come once more.

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

מחשבת הלב

דרגה יתירה