

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

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### The Older Spouse

The gemara<sup>1</sup> says that forty days before the formation of an embryo, a Heavenly voice proclaims *bas ploni l'ploni*, the daughter of so-and-so is destined for so-and-so. Why is the gemara incongruent? Instead of saying *bas ploni l'ploni* it should say either *plonis l'ploni* or *bas ploni to ben ploni*?

Both the Rema<sup>2</sup> and Maharsha<sup>3</sup> explain that since usually the boy is older than the girl, she is not yet in existence when he is born. As a result, the proper terminology of *bas ploni l'ploni* is used, and not *plonis l'ploni* or *bas ploni to ben ploni*.



In explaining the phenomenon of why sometimes a wife is older than her husband, R' Shimon Aharon Agassi<sup>4</sup> (1852-1914) writes that at

times the wife is older because there are souls that are delayed in descending from heaven.

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### Superb Sins

Some people may read particular episodes in the Torah and think, "How did these people act in such a way? I wouldn't have made such mistakes." This erroneous thinking is an outcome of misunderstanding what occurred.<sup>5</sup> R' Dessler<sup>6</sup> writes that the sins told by the Torah as having been committed by the righteous biblical figures can't be understood plainly as actual sins. They are considered sins only by the pristinely strict standards that are even smaller than microscopic.



<sup>1</sup> Sota 2a.

<sup>2</sup> Mechir Yayin, Esther 2:2.

<sup>3</sup> Sota 2a.

<sup>4</sup> In his Sefer Bnei Aharon in his commentary on Shaar Hagilgulim, Hakdama 20, 2. R' Agassi came from a family of traders who dealt in importation from India and had moved to Iraq from Persia. At age 13, he was expected to leave his studies to work in the family business. With the support of his parents but much to the chagrin of his brothers, he chose to continue his Torah studies. His parents changed the family home's ownership and placed it in his name in order to secure his financial future. In 1899, R' Agassi bequeathed the house

he had inherited from his father to serve the community as a shul. His friendship with Meir Eliyahu, the famous benefactor, led to the founding of many public institutions, such as a hospital in Baghdad and a yeshiva for outstanding students and rabbinic training.

<sup>5</sup> Each story has many explanations. See the Mefarshim in each occurrence.

<sup>6</sup> Michtav M'Eliyahu, Volume 1, p. 161. The Sifsei Chaim (Introduction to the Sifsei Chaim Al Hatorah) comments about the stories of our righteous ancestors' wrongdoing that it is forbidden to understand these matters with a superficial, shallow understanding.

The following are some instances where this is revealed to us.

1) The Gemara tells us if we think Dovid sinned with Bas Sheva, we are mistaken. Other examples include Reuven in the incident with Bilhah<sup>7</sup> and the sons of Shmuel concerning taking bribery and perverting justice.<sup>8</sup>

2) When Rav Ashi asked Menashe why he worshipped Avoda Zara if he was so learned, he replied, "If you were living when I was alive, you would have lifted up the bottom of your garment and ran after me."<sup>9</sup>

3) In reference to the מתאווננים, it says רע באזני ה' it was evil in the ears of Hashem.<sup>10</sup> That is, it was evil in the ears of Hashem, but if we were around at that time, it would seem proper to us.

5) The noble intentions of the Meraglim are shown to us in the words נעלה וירשנו אתה כי, we shall surely ascend...,<sup>11</sup> where the end letters spell י-ה-ו-ה. In a similar vein, the first letters of נושביה הוא וכל העם,<sup>12</sup> a land that devours its inhabitants... spell י-ה-ו-ה. Indeed, the Meraglim are called אנשים which is a term connoting importance, as they were honorable.<sup>13</sup>

This can be understood with the following analogy. A gas attendant reads in the newspaper that his gas company is debating whether to invest a billion dollars. Upon reading this, he thinks to himself they surely should not invest. In the end, they invest and lose their money. Although he was correct, he was correct on his level as he doesn't know that for months the company had been doing extensive, rigorous research and hiring people to see if the investment was worth it. Can he honestly judge his company in regard to that?!

When we look at the story of Korach, we may think "How wicked!" When the Chozeh of Lublin (1745-1815) would begin his shiur on Parshas Korach, he would start by saying, "My holy grandfather Korach."

The Igra D'Pirka<sup>14</sup> writes that in the Zohar and Midrashim the greatness of Korach is magnified, that he was great in wisdom. Temporarily he made a mistake in a slight sin. The Arizal<sup>15</sup> comments that in the future Korach will be elevated above (יתעלה קרה) (למעלה). The end letters of צדיק כחמר יפרח, a righteous man will flourish like a date palm,<sup>16</sup> spell קרה.

The allusion in צדיק כחמר יפרח hints to that he acted in שמים, as he wanted to bring the עולם התיקון, the Geula. At that time the Leviyim will be like Kohanim, as it says והכהנים והלוים בני צדוק, the Kohanim, the Levites, descendants of Tzadok....<sup>17</sup> Korach's claim was that in

the future we will all be equal as it says in the future Hashem will make a circle for tzadikim where Hashem will sit among them in the middle.<sup>18</sup> In a circle, everyone is at equal distance from the center, Hashem, since every radius in a circle has the same measurement. Korach wanted that time to be now. Therefore, Korach said כי כל העדה כלם קדשים ובתוכם ה',<sup>19</sup> the entire assembly is holy and Hashem is among them — that Hashem is equally distant from each person.<sup>20</sup>



The Divrei Yoel<sup>21</sup> tells us that really Korach was a great and holy man who served Hashem and had Ruach Hakodesh. This is just as we see in Rashi<sup>22</sup> who says Korach saw a great chain of descendants emerging from him — Shmuel who was as important as Moshe and Aharon together, would descend from him...The Arizal writes that Korach saw what will be in the future, that he will be a Kohen in the future. Korach thought to bring that time of the עולם התיקון in his days. This was Korach's mistake.



The Divrei Yoel continues that the Yitov Lev heard from his grandfather, the Yismach Moshe (1759-1841), that it was his third time in this world. The first time was in the *Dor Hamidbar*. He mentioned that all the ראשי סנהדראות, heads of the courts stood on the side of Korach and only the ordinary people were with Moshe. The Yitov Lev asked which side the Yismach Moshe stood on. His reply: Neither side — not with Korach or Moshe — as he was anodyne. When the Yitov Lev then asked, "How is it possible to be against Moshe?" He answered, "You didn't know Korach. If you did, you wouldn't ask such a question. Korach was a holy man who was a true tzadik but he just made a mistake."

Let us conclude with the following account. There was once a tzadik who would say tashlich alone. Once a man stealthily followed him and while the tzadik was reciting tashlich, he realized this person was there. The man said, "I want to take the sins of the Rebbe,"<sup>23</sup> as a tzadik's sins are another's Mitzvos.<sup>24</sup>

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of five books including the recently released Magnificent Marriage Insights. His writings, some of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

<sup>7</sup> Breishis 35:22 with Rashi

<sup>8</sup> Shabbos 55b-56a.

<sup>9</sup> Sanhedrin 102b. This was so that it shouldn't slow you down in your rush to the place of idolatry (Rashi, s.v. הוית).

<sup>10</sup> Bamidbar 11:1.

<sup>11</sup> Bamidbar 13:30.

<sup>12</sup> Bamidbar 13:32.

<sup>13</sup> Bamidbar 13:3 with Rashi. See Devarim 1:23, Rashi.

<sup>14</sup> 33.

<sup>15</sup> Pri Eitz Chaim, end of Shaar Hanhagas HaLimud. R' Chaim Vital testified that it was in the merit of the Alshich that the Arizal became known as he writes in Sefer Ha'chezonos (44): "From the first moment the Arizal spoke with me, he told me that I should be very careful not to reveal his level and knowledge to people because he came only to help and rectify me alone (R' Chaim Vital) and then through me to help and rectify others. He warned me that if I reveal this that it will bring great damage to him, me and the entire world. The Alshich found out about this and commanded that I should reveal the matter and from the power of his command I was forced to reveal it to him. From then on, many people came to the house of the Arizal. I thought that I did a great mitzva, to bring merit to all these people

that were now coming closer to Hashem. Many times the Arizal would reprove me about this when I didn't have time to learn with him due to the many visitors. He would say 'You (R' Chaim Vital) caused all this — all these visitors. Even though it caused great damage, I am unable to turn them away.'"

<sup>16</sup> Tehillim 92:13.

<sup>17</sup> Yechezkal 44:15. See Tanya, chapter 50. However, it wasn't the right time.

<sup>18</sup> Taanis 31a. See Pri Tzadik, Korach, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Bamidbar 16:3.

<sup>20</sup> Emunas Itecha, Korach, s.v. פרשת ציצית.

<sup>21</sup> Parshas Korach, p. 15.

<sup>22</sup> Bamidbar 16:7.

<sup>23</sup> Taamai Haminhagim, p. 319. In this way we can grasp (Eicha 5:7) אבותינו חטאו ואנים ואנחנו עונתיים סבלנו, that which is a sin by our great ancestors is not a sin to us, as we wish we could have such sins.

<sup>24</sup> This is in line with those great tzadikim that did teshuva every day since each day they had a new recognition of the greatness of Hashem.