

For all inquiries and , please call 845-821-6200 or E-mail: TorahTavlin@aol.com

carried it to the bakery. As they approached the bakery - the woman walking respectfully behind the *Chacham* - the baker looked out and saw them. In shock, he could only gesture helplessly as words were unable to escape his lips! He ran over to take the tray from R' Nissim Chaim's hands. Finally, he cried, "Our holy rabbi, what are you doing? Why didn't you call my helper, it would be an honor for him to carry your dough!"

"I am surprised," responded the *Rishon Letzion* "If your helper isn't careful enough in the commandment of sensitivity to a widow, which is an express commandment in the *Torah*, why would he hurry to my house?"

"I - I, don't understand," stammered the baker. R' Nissim Chaim handed him the tray of dough that he was carrying. "This is not my tray, it is the tray of the widow he refused to help. I don't understand how you can allow workers to work for you with such a lack of compassion!" The baker made every effort, after that, to see to all of his customers equally.

TORAH GEMS

(àè-àè) 'áââ úîâé úâî âîââ áéââ ìì÷îâ úîâé úâî âîââ áéââ äëîâ

Rashi tells us that the difference between "אִם יִכּוּ אָב אוֹ אִמּוֹ" - "*Striking a father or mother*" and "אִם יִכּוּ אָב אוֹ אִמּוֹ לִי" - "*Cursing a father or mother*" is in the severity of the punishment. For striking a parent, a person is sentenced to death by שְׁמוּטָה - *Strangulation*, while the preferred form of death for one who curses a parent is אֶלֶף - *Stoning*. This does seem a bit odd, though, because since stoning is considered in the *gemara* to be a far harsher form of death than strangulation, why does one who curses a parent - which would appear to be less severe than actually beating a parent - receive a stricter death sentence, whereas the one who bodily harms a parent receive a lighter sentence?

Answers **R' Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman ZT"l**, the *Torah* is teaching us an important lesson that applies to many facets of life. The *Rambam* writes that the things in life that we are more familiar and accustomed to, these are what we must watch out for ever more vigilantly, so as to not be led astray. A child grows up in his parent's home and is taught to respect his parents. He cannot imagine ever coming to the point of actually harming his father or mother, physically hurting them by the force of his own hand. On the other hand, a child may tend to quarrel with his parents and at times, really negative things can be said, often regretfully. Since this has a greater chance of occurrence, a greater barrier is required. The *Torah*, therefore, lays down a much stiffer penalty to the one who curses, as opposed to the one who hits, so as to better protect and scare us from committing this terrible, albeit more likely, sin.

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מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

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About two hundred and fifty years ago, in the holy city of *Yerushalayim*, lived the holy *Sephardic Chacham*, **R' Nissim Chaim Moshe Mizrachi ZT"l**, who served as the "*Rishon Letzion*." He was known to possess an elevated soul, and was also renowned as a tremendous genius in both hidden and revealed *Torah*. No less great were his kindness, modesty and noble traits.

One day, during the afternoon heat of a mid-summer Mediterranean day, R' Nissim Chaim was walking in the street. Across from him walked an older woman, carrying a tray of dough, ready for baking. In those days, women did not bake bread in their homes. The women would prepare their dough and then call the baker for assistance. The baker's assistant would arrive to help in the carrying of the dough, and they were baked in the bakery for a few pennies, and then delivered back to the owner's home. R' Nissim Chaim happened to look across the street and he saw this poor woman struggling to carry the heavy tray. He was shocked. "Where is the baker's assistant?" asked the rabbi to the woman. "Isn't this his job, his responsibility?"

"Please, holy rabbi, I called him," sighed the woman, "and he did not want to come. I am a widow and I have no one else to send. And the dough would have started to spoil soon, so I decided to take it myself."

"Give me the tray, please," requested the rabbi. The widow hesitated, unwilling to burden the great rabbi with her problem. R' Nissim Chaim looked at the tray sternly, "I command you, in the name of the holy *Torah* to give me the tray!" With only a slight hesitation now, she gave the tray into his hands and he