

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

אם בחוקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם וגו' (כז-ג)

Rashi quotes the famous words of the *Toras Kohanim* at the beginning of this week's *parsha*: שתהיו "אם בחוקתי תלכו - עמלים בתורה" - *"If you will go in the ways of My laws - That you shall intensely labor in (the study of) Torah."* The study of *Torah* and the need for constant diligence and עמלות, is a Jew's most important obligation in this world, and every minute that one spends in the pursuit of *Torah* knowledge is richly rewarded, both in this world and in the next. It is not enough to simply learn *Torah*; one must expend extra effort and diligence in order to plumb the depths of *Torah*.

An extremely complex halachic question once arose in a certain town, leaving the local *beis din* unable to render a decision on the difficult case before them. Two representatives were sent to the town of Tismanitz to consult with the brilliant *Rov*, **R' Meshulam Igra ZT"l**, and to get a decision from him. On the way, the two men stopped at an inn, where a fellow traveler, a young Talmudic scholar, engaged them in conversation and asked them the purpose of their trip.

When he heard what had brought them, he suggested, "Perhaps, you'd like to present the question to me?"

The two men laughed heartily, saying, "A difficult question that has stumped all our local *rabbanim* - do you really think you are capable of resolving such a difficult question?"

"Well, perhaps you could just tell me what it is," the young man responded with the confidence of youth. "If you are not satisfied with my solution you can always continue your journey to R' Meshulam Igra."

Feeling that they had nothing to lose, the two put the case before this young scholar. He closeted himself in his room for about an hour, at the end of which he presented them with a full written *psak* (decision). As soon as they read it they felt certain that this was indeed the correct verdict; however, as they were already nearly at their destination, they continued on to present the case before R' Meshulam Igra as well.

When he heard the complicated case, R' Meshulam Igra nodded his gravely. "I will need a few days to look into this matter." After a number of days, they returned, and R' Meshulam asked for yet another day. Finally, he handed them his verdict, which was exactly the same as the one the young man at the inn had given them! Surprised, they told the *Rov* that there was a young man who had arrived at the same answer as he, but in one hour instead of close to one week!

"I must meet this genius!" exclaimed R' Meshulam Igra. "He must surely be one of the giants of the generation, with such incredible learning ability!"

He hastened to don his *Shabbos* clothing, as befits a visit to such a luminary. During the ride to the inn, R' Meshulam Igra could barely suppress his excitement at his imminent meeting with such a *Torah* genius.

When he arrived, he greeted the young scholar heartily and told him he had heard that he was an outstanding *Talmid Chacham*. Taken aback, the young scholar asked why the great *Rov* thought such a thing. R' Meshulam was surprised at the question. "But you came up with such a brilliant solution to that difficult *sha'alah*!"

The young man turned red. "Oh, that!" he said quietly. "I'll explain. You see, I am finding it extremely difficult to make a living. When I heard that these men needed a decision rendered, I thought I could help them and earn some money at the same time. I thought that perhaps the difficulty of the question was overrated. But when they presented the *sha'alah* to me and I saw that it was indeed very complicated, I went into a room and cried, '*Hashem*, please save me from shame!' And He gave me the answer! It wasn't through my *Torah* learning that I got the *psak*, it was my *tefillah*!"

Disappointed, R' Meshulam Igra told him, "You can daven? I thought you could learn!" With that, he turned and left.

משל' למזה הדבר דומה

ונגפתם לפני אויביכם ורדו בכם שנאיכם ונסתם ואין רדף אתכם וגו' (כ-ז)

משל' A low member of the King's court was accused of committing a terrible crime. The Viceroy had been found murdered and all signs pointed to this man's complicity in the crime. He was arrested and convicted.

In a surprise move, however, rather than be imprisoned in a dungeon, this low ranking member was promoted. Soon, he found himself in an important ministerial position. After a few short weeks, he was again promoted and was now a senior member of the cabinet.

The man couldn't believe his good fortune. Instead of

being punished, he was being rewarded!

It was not long before he rose to the highest office in the land - the position of Viceroy. He reveled in his good fortune and he relaxed in the knowledge that he was now the second most powerful person in the government. His arrogance and glory knew no bounds.

At the height of his fame, he was suddenly arrested! He protested loudly but to no avail. The king then ordered his execution. It was precisely at the point of his highest glory - when he believed himself to be "high and mighty" - that

וכי תשיג יד גר ותושב עמך ומך אחיך
עמו ונמכר לגר תשיב עמך וכו' (כה-מז)

The words "וכי ימוך אחיך" - *"And if your brother becomes impoverished"* is mentioned a number of times in the *parsha*. It is interesting to note that only the final time does the *Torah* express a reason for the impoverishment of the Jew. As Rashi details: *"Who caused him to become impoverished? Through his attachment to the non Jew; through having learned from the actions (of the non-Jews)."* Thus, the punishment for a Jew who wishes to attach himself and learn from the actions of the non-Jews and idol-worshippers is that the non-Jew will become rich, the Jew will become impoverished, and ultimately he will be sold as a slave to work for the non-Jew.

When **R' Yisroel Salanter ZT"l** met the famed **Rasha'sh, R' Shmuel Strashun ZT"l**, the latter said to him, "I have been told that your *Rebbetzin* bought a lottery ticket, and that when you became aware of it, you called her before two witnesses and said, 'I have no claim upon your estates, their produce, and the produce of their produce forever.' Does this imply that you hold that it is good to be poor and forbidden to be a wealthy man?"

"No, not at all," answered R Yisroel. "Why should it be forbidden to be a wealthy man if one utilizes his money properly, as ordained in the *Torah*? The reason I renounced any share in the lottery ticket was because I feel that buying a lottery ticket and depending on such sources is in itself a manifestation of lack of faith. We are obligated to believe that *Hashem* will bless us in a manner of His choosing. But to risk money in anything where the loss - in this case the cost of the lottery ticket - is immediate, while the reward (winning the prize) is distant and far-fetched, this is something which one who has real faith in *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* should not do."

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS
ON THE WEEKLY MIDDAH OF ...

גדלות

The day of *Lag Bomer* is a day of great *simcha*. On this day, the world received an incredible depth of *Torah* from Rabi Shimon bar Yochai, which is the reason we light fires in his memory to signify the great light that illuminated the world. On this day, too, we celebrate the end of the horrific period when all 24,000 disciples of Rabi Akiva died.

R' Gedalya Schorr ZT"l offers an insightful remark. Rabi Akiva should have been completely devastated and discouraged. Anyone else would say to himself, "Maybe I should not be in *chinuch*!" But the great and holy Rabi Akiva reacted quite differently. He didn't sit around and bemoan his terrible loss. Instead, he immediately took five new *talmidim* - among them Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai - and started teaching *Torah*! And all the *Torah* we have today is from them!

One of the non-kosher birds mentioned in *Parshas Shemini* is the "דוכיפת". The *Gemara Gittin* brings down an interesting story about how *Shlomo Hamelech* procured the "שמיר" - the special worm that cut the stones of the *Bais HaMikdash*. The שר (Angel of the Sea) chose the דוכיפת bird to guard this invaluable treasure because there was no one as trustworthy as her! But when she failed to watch over the *Shamir* and it was captured from her, she was so distressed that she killed herself!

The lesson of both these stories is the same. Greatness in a person is not measured in their talent or ability. Greatness is measured in how one reacts when there is pain, failure, difficulty or tragedy. We must emulate Rabi Akiva who raised himself up in the face of the most horrific loss and in this merit became the Master and teacher of the entire Jewish nation.

TORAH GEMS

והתהלכתי בתוכם והייתי לכם לאלקים ... ואשר
מסת עלכם ואלך אתכם קוממיות וגו' (כו-כזג)

The *gemara* (ברכות מג:) discusses the *middah* of *ga'avah* - haughtiness: *"He who walks with an upright stature, even a distance of four cubits, is as though he pushed against the feet of the Shechinah (Divine Presence)."* Furthermore, the *gemara* lists as one of the six things which are a "גנאי" - "shameful" - for a *Torah* scholar is to *"to walk with an upright stature."* However, this seems to be in direct contradiction to another dictum of *chazal* (לא): *"One is forbidden to walk four cubits with an upright stature."* Why in one place is "walking upright" merely considered "shameful" whereas in another place it is literally forbidden?

The **Chasam Sofer, R' Moshe Sofer ZT"l** quotes the words of the **Sifra** on the *posuk*, *"And I will walk among you, and will be your G-d, and you shall be My people."* The *Sifra* comments: *"I will walk about with you in Paradise (גן עדן) as one of you."* In the next *posuk*, the blessing concludes, *"And I made you walk upright,"* which the *Sifra* interprets as "בקומה יקופה" - with an "upright stature." This implies that when all the blessings will be fulfilled and *Bnei Yisroel* will be following the precepts outlined in the *Torah*, the Jewish People will be able to walk with an "upright stature" without any reason to hang their heads in shame or dishonor. This will also preclude any semblance or possibility of *ga'avah* and haughtiness as in "pushing against the Divine Presence," since the Almighty Himself "will walk about with you."

Since a *Talmid Chacham* merits such a blessing, his walking with an "upright stature" would not be considered a form of arrogance at all. Nevertheless, since some people may attribute his demeanor to haughtiness, it would be a גנאי (shameful) for him to walk in this manner (**S. Weiss**)

דרגה יתירה

FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF
R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

אמר רבי עקיבא אשריכם ישראל! (שיר ל' גבעומה)