

man. They looked around and saw, in the distance, at another end of the cemetery, that a Jew was standing at the side of a grave. They approached and asked if he could join them. At first it was difficult to have a conversation with the man, as he spoke only French and Rav Grossman spoke only *Ivrit*, but he soon understood what they needed. As soon as *Kaddish* was recited, the “tenth” man asked if the group could join him at his father’s gravesite. He never expected a *minyan* at the cemetery on this day, which happened also to be the day of his father’s *yahrtzeit*.

During the service, Rav Grossman noticed the inscription on the tombstone. The deceased had been the head of the *chevra kaddisha*, Jewish Burial Society, in Tunisia for sixty years! His son added, “My father was devoted to this position all of the time – day or night. Whenever he was needed, he would drop whatever he was doing to attend to the needs of the deceased.” Rav Grossman mused, “His outstanding devotion was rewarded that a *minyan* assembled by his grave on the day of his *yahrtzeit*.”

Rav Grossman continued, “We know that the kindness we perform with the dead is called *chesed shel emes*, kindness of truth. *Rashi* explains that one who addresses the needs of the deceased – *eino metzapeh l’tashlum gemul*, “does not look forward to repayment.” Yaakov Avinu asked Yosef to perform for him *chesed shel emes*. *Rashi* explains: Yaakov told Yosef – you attend to my burial; in return, I grant you a place in *Eretz Yisrael* where you will be buried. Furthermore, Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who attended to Yosef’s coffin the entire forty years that the nation journeyed in the wilderness, was rewarded by having *Hashem Yisborach* Himself attend to his burial.

“We see from here that one does not immediately receive reward for *chesed shel emes*; he receives it after his own demise. Our *niftar*, the deceased head of the *chevra kaddisha*, received a reward to which he did not look forward, since it is a posthumous reward.”

Returning to our question: What denotes a good person? I think an individual who acts consistently, who carries out acts of kindness regularly without fanfare, is a good person. Furthermore, he acts selflessly, not for remuneration or praise. He neither looks for reward, nor expects it. He acts out of the kindness of his heart.

One’s focus with regard to acts of kindness (be it inward, towards oneself, or outward, toward others) might be analogized with a parable attributed to *Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz, zl*, the *Alter, m’Novardok*. An individual traveled to a far off country to spend one day in that country. He went for a specific purpose, which should have been achieved in one day. During his stay, circumstances arose which prevented his return home for twenty years! Every day he packed, called a taxi and was about to leave; something, however, always came up to prevent his return home. This went on for twenty years. Now, despite the fact that this man spent twenty years in the country, as far as he was concerned, in his mind he had been there for one day! His mind never accustomed itself to his residency in the country.

Another man traveled to that same country for the express purpose of relocating. His plans were to stay, with no intentions

to return home – at least not in the near future. For various reasons, he was compelled to leave after one day! Now, that one day that he spent in that country, he spent as a resident who had moved there for the purpose of relocation. Although he returned home after one day, he considers himself to be a citizen of that country. Two men: one spent a day which was considered in his eyes as a lifetime; the other man spent a lifetime there, but, in his mind, it was only one day. The lesson to be derived is that it is all about mental consistency, focus on a specific idea, purpose or goal. Just as in Torah study, success is achieved by he who is unfailingly persistent, never deviating from his goal, diligently devoted to his Torah study. So, too, consistent focus on acts of *chesed* define a person as good. Acts of kindness performed irregularly, inconsistently, are still acts of kindness for which we offer gratitude, but they do not necessarily define the benefactor as being “good.”

Va’ani Tefillah

והחזירנו בתשובה שלמה – *v’hachazireinu b’seshuvah sheleimah*.

The *Rambam* in *Hilchos Teshuvah* (2:2) writes that *teshuvah*, repentance, does not atone unless Hashem can attest that the sinner will attest that he will not return to that sin. The *Mishnah LaMelech* questions this, since it will prevent people from becoming *baalei teshuvah*. Who can be certain that he will never sin again? *Horav Shimon Shkop, zl*, explains that *Rambam* does not demand that the person will never sin again. He says that the *teshuvah* must be such that the individual will not return to that same sin. *Teshuvah* does not atone for someone whose *teshuvah* allows for a possibility that he might return to the exact same sin. If, however, he has performed *teshuvah shleimah*, complete *teshuvah*, and has broken off all ties to that sin, but, later on, his *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, convinces him to sin again – it is considered a new sin. He is not returning to the old sin. This is a new *aveirah*.

לזכר נשמת האשה החשובה
גליקה בת ר' אברהם אלתר ע"ה

גידלה שעשועיה בדרך התורה ויראת שמים
לאחר ששתתה נוס התעלה בשנות הזעם
יורה לאמריקע וחינה דור ישרים
קיבלה מנת חלקה בשמחה ושם שמים שגורה על פיה
אמונתה ובטחונה ביססה את ימי חייה
נפטרה בשם טוב ה' אדר ב' תש"ס
תצ"ב"ה

In loving memory of
MRS. GLIKA SCHEINBAUM BOGEN
by her family

Parashas Tetzaveh

תשע"ז

פרשת תצוה

ואתה תדבר אל כל חכמי לב אשר מלאתינו רוח חכמה
And you shall speak to all the wise-hearted people
whom I have invested with a spirit of wisdom. (28:3)

Chachmei lev; “wise-hearted people,” is in the plural form. “Whom I have invested”; *m’leisiv*, is singular. Is Moshe *Rabbeinu* to speak to all of the wise-hearted people, collectively, or is he to speak to each one individually? Why does the *pasuk* change midsentence from plural to singular? Simply, this is referring to Moshe who personally merited to be filled with wisdom. He was to speak to the wise-hearted people, because he was especially filled with wisdom. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that *mileisiv* applies to the *chachmei lev*. Hashem instructed Moshe to speak to each individual craftsman to inform him that Hashem had filled him with unusual wisdom. Hashem imbued him with a potential for greatness, an ability to create extraordinary, beautiful appurtenances for the *Mishkan*. Their wisdom would allow them not only to construct the physical images, but also to imbue them with *kedushah*, holiness.

The *Chasam Sofer* explains: “Wisdom is implanted within the hearts of the individuals. They require someone to arouse and inspire them to unlock their potential, thus giving them the opportunity, empowering them to reveal to the world their extraordinary talents and abilities. Without the inspiration, their lack of motivation will only push them inward. Similar to a seed that is planted deep within the soil, the ground must be plowed, sowed, watered and weeded. As a result, it will grow strong and tall, providing sustenance for those in need. Otherwise, it will rot in the ground and become a total waste.

Hashem explained to Moshe that imbuing the men with wisdom was like planting a seed. Unless someone would rouse them, it would come to nothing. That someone should be Moshe, who should tell them that they were to be the beneficiaries of an incredible Heavenly gift. If they did not act accordingly, with honor, this gift would not have much efficacy.

A number of gifted and talented people are in our proximity, often individuals with whom we interact on a regular basis. Regrettably, these talents and abilities serve no one, frequently because this person lacks positive self-esteem. If he is unmotivated, if he does not believe in himself, because he thinks no one believes in him, he will give up without trying. If someone would come by and whisper in his ear, “You are great! You can do it!” he would.

Students engage when they act as their own learning agents, working to achieve goals meaningful to them. They must believe that they can learn and succeed. Also, they must learn to cope with failure – with which one can deal most effectively when he believes in himself. I may add that a teacher with high self-esteem is likely to engender high self-esteem in his or her

students. Perhaps this is why the individual who was best suited to awaken the *chachmei lev* was Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who had reached the apex of spirituality.

It would be wonderful if, in today’s society, we could encourage a child’s affinity for Torah study simply by explaining the infinite value of Torah in him. Unfortunately, we must employ other means of enticement in order to draw him to the *bais hamedrash*. Once he is there, the next step is keeping him there, but, if he does not enter, we need not worry about his leaving.

The *Alter, zl, m’Slabodka, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl*, was a strong believer in external encouragement, even simple prizes which would motivate a student to success. He felt that even the simplest, inexpensive prize or favor could make a difference. He remembered walking through the marketplace in Vilna where a woman vendor was selling beans. She vigorously called out to passersby the quality and price of her wares. Suddenly, another woman who was selling her wares offended her, causing the first woman to feel that the other vender was taking away her business. Words, accompanied by denunciations, flew back and forth; it was getting out of hand. Suddenly, a customer approached the woman who was selling beans and asked to purchase one penny’s worth of beans. Out of the blue, the woman’s attitude changed. Her demeanor was immediately altered, a smile appearing across her face. She thanked the buyer, heaping blessings upon him.

Anyone who had been a spectator to the earlier proceedings would have been hard-pressed to understand what had just transpired. Five minutes earlier, this woman was screaming and cursing. Now, she was all sugar and sweetness. What happened? The *Alter* explained: It was one penny. She gained a penny from selling her beans. She was a changed woman. With a simple prize, we can alter a student’s path of learning – from failure to success. A prize encourages; a prize engenders belief in oneself; a prize indicates that someone believes in him.

We can motivate a student by presenting him with a goal and indicating to him that the mentor believes in the student’s ability to achieve this goal. Achieving this goal becomes realistic, since the mentor believes in the student.

In 2013, Rabbi Paysach Krohn interviewed Rabbi Berel Wein. One of the questions he asked him was how he had been able to achieve so much, in preparing oral tapes and cd’s, writing books and papers, and lecturing all over. Very few individuals – however successful in their careers - have been able to achieve so much. It is obviously the result of a relentless pursuit of success, a man on a mission. What motivated him to have accomplished so much? In *Illuminations of the Maggid*, Rabbi Krohn records the incident that quite possibly changed Rabbi Wein’s life. While it is impossible for the written word to capture an oral inspiration, I would like the reader to take pause while reading the story to reflect on his own

life and ask: Was there ever an inspirational opportunity in my life that I let go by?

It was 1946, and *Horav Yitzchak HaLevi Herzog, zl*, Chief Rabbi of *Eretz Yisrael* was visiting Chicago. The building was packed, standing room only, as the *Rav* first gave a *shiur, halachic* lecture, then addressed the gathering which consisted of lay people, Torah scholars and *yeshivah* students. (There were not many, but there were not many of anything in those days.)

After concluding his *shiur*, *Rav Herzog* turned to the *yeshivah* students and addressed them – exclusively. “I have just returned from Rome,” he began, “where I met with Pope Pius. I had with me the names of 10,000 boys and girls whose parents had placed them in Catholic institutions or with families for safekeeping during the terrible war. The parents knew that they would probably not survive; their hope was for their children. I said to the Pope, ‘Give me back these children! These are our children! You are well aware why they were given to you. Now we ask you to return them to us – where they belong.’

“And the Pope said, ‘I cannot give you even one child.’ I pleaded with him, but he refused to budge. ‘We have a rule,’ he said, ‘that once a child is baptized, it cannot be revoked. He cannot leave for another religion. All of these children were baptized. They are now ours!’ I pleaded; I begged; he refused to listen to my cries.”

Suddenly, *Rav Herzog* began to weep incessantly, unable to stop. He put his head on the lectern and wept mournfully. Everyone in the *shul* was silent, almost afraid to say anything. When the *Rav* raised his head, his face tear-stricken and red, he looked like a lion. He looked at us (the students) and called out, “I cannot do anything for those 10,000 children, but what are you going to do for the children of *Klal Yisrael*? It is your responsibility to help raise the future of our people. What are you prepared to do about it? Are you listening? Will you remember what I am asking of you?” He repeated himself again, “What are you going to do for the children of *Klal Yisrael*?”

Rav Herzog was finished. We then all lined up to shake his hand. “When he took my hand,” Rabbi Wein said, “he looked me straight in the eye and asked, ‘Are you going to forget what I said? Will you remember what I said? What are you going to do for the children of *Klal Yisrael*?’”

Rabbi Wein concluded, “Every time I am tired, every time that I am about to put down my pen – I am haunted by those words: ‘What are you going to do for the children of *Klal Yisrael*?’”

These memorable moments (that we all have) should motivate us to rise to every occasion and do what is necessary. As an aside, it was fourteen years ago, *Baruch Hashem*, when a non-Jewish nurse came over to my bed, as I lay in the ICU, and asked (rather, she demanded), “Are you going to give up like the others (patients), or are you going to fight it? If G-d let you live, He had a purpose!” I have never forgotten those words.

וחשב אפרתו אשר עליו כמעשהו ממנו יהיה

The belt with which it is emplaced, which is on it, shall be of the same workmanship, it shall be made of it.

(28:8)

Horav Yosef Chaim, zl, m'Bagdad, derives an important educational principle from this *pasuk*. One’s children are referred to as *begadim*. This is implied by the *Navi Zecharyah* (3:4), when *Yehoshua Kohen Gadol* is admonished, *Hasiru ha'begadim ha'tzoim meialav*, “Remove the soiled garments

from him.” Concerning this, *Chazal (Sanhedrin 93a)* ask, “Was it the practice of *Yehoshua* to wear soiled garments?” They respond that the *Navi* refers to his sons who had married out of the faith. Thus, we see that children are likened to one’s garments. Perhaps, I might add, as the popular maxim goes, clothes make the man; children are often a reflection of their parents; or rather, we can often see the parents in their children.

The *pasuk* teaches that the *Cheishev ha'Eiphod*, belt of the *Eiphod*, which is on it, must be made *K'maaseihu*, of the same workmanship (as the *Eiphod*), unlike the *Kispos ha'Eiphod*, shoulder straps, which are sewn on. The *Cheishev* was *mimenu yiheyeh*, made of it. When one seeks to impart the Torah-way of life to his children, the appropriate path by which they will achieve character trait refinement and develop strong erudition, he must teach by example, by personally living a Torah-life. One will find himself hard-pressed to teach his children the importance of: *tefillah b'tzibbur, davening* with a *minyán*; listening to *Krias haTorah*, the reading of the Torah; Torah *sedarim*, study sessions. If he himself does not adhere to his own teachings, then *mimenu yiheyeh*, it shall be made of it. The father’s and mother’s actions set the tenor for their children’s Torah’s lives. If the father *schmoozes* during *Krias haTorah*, so will his son. The *sefer Kzeh Reeh v'Chanach* (quoted by *Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita*) relates an incident which underscores the overriding significance of positive parental prototypical involvement in their children’s upbringing. *Rav Plitnik*, a student of the *Chafetz Chaim*, served as *Rav* in Liverpool, England. A devout *Rav*, whose uncompromising standards and encyclopedic knowledge of Torah were well-known, he nonetheless had difficulty establishing a close working relationship with his congregation. The lack of closeness did not disturb him as much as the constant belittling and abuse that he suffered from his president. An arrogant man, whose claim to fame and power was his wealth, the *Rosh HaKahal*, president, went out of his way to show the *Rav* who was actually in charge.

One evening, the president appeared at the *Rav’s* door, disheveled, depressed and crying incessantly. “What is wrong?” the *Rav* asked. “My daughter, my only child, the love of my life, just informed me that she is engaged to marry – a gentile! What should I do? What can I do?” he cried bitterly. “*Rebbe*, I have made your life miserable for years. Please forgive me and speak with my daughter. I know that I do not deserve your forgiveness, but I realize now the error of my ways.”

The *Rav*, of course, acquiesced to the president’s plea. The man might be a boor, but why should his daughter suffer? He called for the daughter, and, after speaking with her for quite some time, received the same response that she had given her father. She was not reversing her position. The marriage was on.

A week passed, and the president once again stood on the threshold of the *Rav’s* home. “Why did you not help me in my time of need? My family is falling apart, and you are unable to convince my daughter not to marry a *goy*! How could this be?” the man railed on, as usual blaming only the *Rav* for all of his problems (common fare for those who refuse to acknowledge their own shortcomings).

The *Rav* listened patiently, and, when the president took a break from his tirade, he interjected and said, “Let me share a story with you. A doctor discovered a serum that could cure one of the most devastating illnesses in recent times. This doctor was a special person, who -- out of the goodness of his heart -- traveled from city to city, doling out doses of his precious serum to save thousands of children. During one of his trips, he was

waylaid by ruthless thieves, who took what little money he had and sadly also took the serum which he was bringing to the next town. The doctor was spared by the skin of his teeth. On the one hand, he was grateful to the Almighty for having been spared from a brutal death, but, on the other hand, he mourned the loss of the serum, knowing that hundreds of children would now perish. It would take weeks to produce more serum which could help others. The children in the next city were beyond his help.

“Arriving at the town, he was met by a throng of people, parents waiting to receive the life-saving medicine that would regenerate their children. How surprised he was to see at the head of the line none other than the leader of the thieves that had robbed him of the medicine. The robber did not recognize the doctor when he brought in his very sick son to be seen. The doctor checked the child and gave the father the grim diagnosis. ‘Surely, you can do something to save him. You are the genius with the wonder medicine. You must save my son,’ the thief begged.

“Under normal circumstances, I could have helped your son back to health, but, on my way here, I was held up by a band of merciless thieves who stole my money and my serum. Do not blame me – blame them!” the doctor responded.

“At that moment, the robber understood what had happened. The message was all too clear to him. He was responsible for his son’s premature death.”

Rav Plitnik concluded the story. He looked across the table into the face of his president and said, “You should know, Torah scholars have a unique attachment with Hashem, through the Torah they study. As a result, they are able to inspire their congregations. This is possible, however, only as long as the congregants respect, revere and hold dear the *talmid chacham*. As long as there is respect for the *talmid chacham*, he can have an influence on the people. Once the people lose respect -- for whatever reason -- the congregants are culpable, not the *rabbanim*. I could have helped you only if you would have respected me for the Torah which I embody. Once you lose respect, I am rendered powerless.”

It happens all the time. Children grow up in a home in which all they hear is abuse: against the *Rav*; the principal; the *rosh yeshivah*; the spiritual leadership. *Mah yaase ha'ben v'lo yecheta*, “What else can the child do but sin?” Whom should he respect? His parents “robbed” him of the life-sustaining serum. Now, they have only themselves to blame.

לקח פר אחד בן בקר ואילים שנים תמימים ולחם מצות Take one young bull and two rams, unblemished, with unleavened breads. (29:1, 2)

There are good people, and there are people who perform good deeds. A good person is consistent in his acts of goodness. He does not take a vacation from performing good deeds. It is part of his DNA. His counterpart might have a “good” day during which he acts appropriately. For him, “good” just happens upon occasion. It is not a way of life. Having said this, we will segue into the commentary of the *Baalei Tosfos* to the above *pasuk*. “The *par*, ox, was sacrificed in the merit of *Avraham Avinu*, regarding about whom it is written, *v'el habakar ratz Avraham*, ‘and *Avraham* ran to (get) the cattle’ (*Bereishis* 18:7). The *erim*, rams, were in the merit of *Yitzchak Avinu* and *Yaakov Avinu*, the *lechem*, bread, in the merit of *Sarah Imeinu* and *Hagar* whom *Avraham* instructed to quickly prepare loaves for dinner to feed

those Arabs that appeared in the tent.”

The Torah does not mention *Hagar’s* involvement in serving *Avraham’s* guests. Likewise, *Yishmael*, who is alluded to by the term *naar*, youth, *va'yitein el ha'naar laasoso*, “He (*Avraham*) gave it to the youth to prepare” (*Bereishis* 18:7). *Rashi* comments that *naar* was *Yishmael*, whom *Avraham* was training in *mitzvah* performance. Both *Hagar* and *Yishmael* acted appropriately, helping to prepare the meal for *Avraham’s* visitors. Apparently, they received incredible reward for their endeavor. So why are their names not mentioned? Unless one is aware of the *Baalei Tosfos* commentary, we do not know that *Hagar* participated. *Yishmael’s* name is not mentioned. Why is the Torah writing covertly concerning *Hagar* and *Yishmael*?

Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, suggests that, on the one hand, we see that no good act goes unrequited. On the other hand, we note that, if the reward will go to someone’s head; if they will not properly appreciate the reward, the Torah will give it to them without the accompanying publicity. They will use their reward as a way of glorifying themselves over the Jews. Hashem rewards those who deserve it and respect it. The reward does not go to their head. Instead, they maintain a sense of gratitude for being the fortunate beneficiaries.

Furthermore, *Klal Yisrael* are good people. *Hagar* and *Yishmael* symbolize the individuals who perform good deeds, despite having base characters, and inappropriate moral postures. As soon as *Hagar* conceived *Yishmael*, she immediately slandered *Sarah Imeinu*, claiming that she was not really righteous. After all, she had been married to *Avraham Avinu* for years and had yet to conceive, while she, *Hagar*, was with him one time and immediately conceived. *Yishmael* was no different, demanding distinction because he was circumcised. Hashem told him that, although he was circumcised, since it did not take place when he was eight days-old, his connection with Hashem was limited in this world.

When good people carry out good deeds, it is the result of their good heart’s motivation, unlike those who act kindly for the attention they receive, or as the result of pressure. It is important that anyone in a position of serious leadership (not one who manipulates his feelings for personal reasons), a caring parent, a *rebbe* who cares about the students, should often praise those who deserve his praise. Nonetheless, he should be careful when praise is due to someone who is far from “good,” who will use the praise to lord over and hurt others. Under such circumstances, the praise can ultimately be the cause of the student’s downfall in life. Perhaps, had someone held back in extending praise to those whose *middas*, character traits, were deficient, they might today be good people – not just going through the motions for attention.

What defines a good person? How can we tell when a person is truly good? The other day, I came across a Torah thought from *Horav Yitzchak David Grossman, Shlita, Rav* of Migdal HaEmek. He relates that during *Pesach Seder* 2002, in a hotel in Netanya, an Arab terrorist took the lives of thirty Jews. This followed a series of terrorist attacks in the area. As a result, it was not high on the “must visit” list of the cities in *Eretz Yisrael*. A close friend of his from New York contacted him concerning putting together a *minyán*, quorum, at the cemetery in Netanya for his mother’s first *yahrtzeit*. Due to the heightened terrorist activities in the area, his family did not allow him to travel there. *Rav Grossman* agreed.

That Friday was the *yahrtzeit*, and they were able to assemble nine men. They were missing the proverbial tenth