

nothing, he has nothing to lose, thus nothing to worry about.

Not so, his wealthy neighbor. He has difficulty falling asleep. What is keeping him awake? His friend's wealth! "Why does he have more than me?" This causes the wealthy man to be anxious, to interrupt his good night's sleep. One may have all that he will ever need, but if his neighbor has more, then he cannot sleep.

Thus, explains the *Ksav Sofer*, the Torah offers a blessing: Peace, that wonderful blessing which eludes so many. There will no longer be any jealousy. So the wealthy man can sleep peacefully. He will not be jealous of his neighbor's success. When there is peace, everyone sleeps.

ואוֹכֵךְ אַתְּמִית And I led you erect. (26. 13)

Being a true servant of Hashem is not compatible with being/walking erect. Indeed, a little crimp in his walk, a slight curvature, rather than standing fully erect, demonstrates a sense of humility before Whom he stands. *Horav Baruch, zl, m'Medziboz*, explains that the epitome of *hishtachavus*, bowing, genuflection, is achieved when one stands straight, externally manifesting a regal, dignified, appearance, while internally he bows before Hashem. In other words, one does not have to show that he is bowing – as long as, in his mind and psyche, he is bent over.

Horav Menachem Mendel, zl, m'Vorko, was wont to say: "A *chasid* should 'know' how to execute three things: To dance while sitting; to bow while standing; to cry out when silent." It is all in one's concentration. When a person meditates, he transports himself in an almost out-of-body sensation to the point that: he can bow down while his body stands erect; he can dance, while his body sits; he can cry out, while his body is silent. Thus, one trains himself to transcend his body to live on a higher plane, to spiritually connect without being bogged down by his physicality.

It is all about connecting to a higher realm, a different standard, a set of values unlike that to which he is presently exposed. In dealing with men and women incarcerated in an environment totally antithetical to Jewish life and dictate, I am often confronted with this question: How does one act and think Jewish in an environment where the people – both incarcerated and administrative – are of a different, almost antagonistic, culture and lifestyle? In

order to experience this consciousness one must elevate himself by transforming his mind, by thinking of a different realm, a holy world. When reading a *sefer*, he must become part of the story – involved – not observing. So many just want to remain spectators, for fear that, if they involve themselves, it might "rub off" on them. They should be so lucky!

Va'ani Tefillah

רֵאָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ וְרִיבָה רִיבֵנוּ – *Re'eh v'anyeinu v'rivah riveinu.* Behold/See our affliction and take up our grievance.

No one asks for a free ride. We all realize that a life without challenge, without a degree of adversity is, to a great extent, vacuous. Challenge adds to life's value and meaning, and, for some, to its excitement. It is the accompanying pain and affliction from which we ask to be spared. We realize that pain is worse than the challenge. We can overcome challenge, but pain devastates the mind as well as the body. I think that we miss an important aspect of this prayer: *Re'eh*, Behold/See. We ask Hashem to take a penetrating look at the affliction and what it is ultimately doing to us. People who suffer become different people. Suffering takes its toll on the entire psyche of a person. Furthermore, one form of suffering, for the most part, human beings do not see. The hidden/emotional suffering that is the lot of many is an experience which only Hashem can see and understand. We ask Him to *Re'eh*, take a deep look at our travail, because, at times, only He can see; thus, only He can help. Incidentally – we have no right to ask the Almighty to look at our affliction until we are prepared to open up our eyes and look at the hidden suffering experienced by those around us.

Dedicated in memory

Mrs. Seliga Ahuva (Schur) Mandelbaum

זְכִירָה אֶהְיֶה בְּתוֹךְ רַבֵּי דְנִיָּאל ע"ה

כ"ו אייר תשנ"א

"תנו לה מפרי ידיה ויהללוה בשערים מעשיה"

by her family

HoRav Doniel & Shoshana Schur ז"ל

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Parashas Behar- Bechukosai

תשע"ז

פרשת בהר – בחקתי

Behar

וְלֹא תוֹנוּ אִישׁ אֶת עֲמִיתוֹ

Each of you shall not aggrieve his fellow. (25:17)

Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita, asks: What is the difference between a *tzaddik*, righteous person, and a *chasid*, pious person? Simply, a *tzaddik* follows *halachah* to the letter of the law. He is meticulous in his observance, never cutting corners, always doing exactly what is expected of him. A *chasid* goes the extra mile. He carries out *mitzvos lifnim meshuras ha'din*, beyond the letter of the law. Not only does he not look for shortcuts, but he also takes the longer, more strenuous route.

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, offers a powerful distinction between these two approaches toward serving Hashem. A *tzaddik* does not fool others; he is always careful to be considerate of others, never cheating them. The *chasid* goes one step further: he is careful not to cheat even himself! This means that (especially) in areas of *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, he will never convince himself that he is *frum*, observant, G-d-fearing. He is always questioning his spiritual integrity, "Am I really observant – or am I observant relative to others?" A scale that is based on the behavior and religious observance of others is flawed.

Chazal teach that a person should demand of himself, "When will I reach the spiritual plateau of the *Avos* – Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov?" While this should be a primary form of motivation, one who even dreams that he is in the "running" of achieving the *madreigah*, spiritual level, of the Patriarchs is seriously confused. This is an example of fooling oneself.

There is a well-known story (quoted by *Rav Levenstein*) concerning the *Pnei Yehoshua*, who left early in the morning one day for *davening*, bedecked in his *Tallis* and *Tefillin*, when suddenly, a lion stood in front of him. He now understood why the streets were unusually empty. The *Pnei Yehoshua* pulled back his *Tallis*, revealing the *Tefillin Shel Rosh* on his head, and the lion immediately ran. He later explained the reason for his unusual reaction and its effect on the lion, as based on the *pasuk* in *Devarim* 28:10, "Then all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Hashem is proclaimed over you, and they will revere

you." When the lion saw Hashem's Name on the *Tefillin Shel Rosh*, he was filled with awe.

Imagine a person walking on the street wearing *Tallis* and *Tefillin* who confronts a large alley cat that, upon seeing him, runs away. Now, if this person would compare his incident to that of the *Pnei Yehoshua*, he obviously has a problem. Do not fool yourself into thinking that you have *yiraas Shomayim*.

וְכִי יָמוּךְ אַחִיךָ... וְהִחֲזַקְתָּ בוֹ

If your brother becomes impoverished... you shall strengthen him. (25:35)

The *Pele Yoetz* writes: "*Chesed*, performing acts of kindness, is a pillar of the world. It is one of those *mitzvos* whose fruits are eaten in this world, but whose principal remains for him (generating reward) in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come." The *Chafetz Chaim* writes that the performance of *chesed* can engender such incredible merit that it has the power to overwhelm the *Middas HaDin*, Attribute of Strict Justice. *Rebbetzin Miriam Shmuelevitz*, wife of the venerable *Rosh Yeshiva* of Mir *Yerushalayim*, was very involved in a successful *chesed* organization that reached out to Jews all over *Yerushalayim*. I will present the following story, which is well-known, with a different twist, in order to impart a powerful lesson which will hopefully carry an inspiring message.

A young *kollel* fellow who had been suffering the pain of abject poverty was gifted a box of food for *Succos* from the *chesed* organization – fish, chicken, soup, salad, *challah* – sufficient to serve his growing family. Tears rolled down his face as he saw this *manna* from Heaven. One half hour before the *Yom Tov* was to commence, he heard a knock at his door. He opened the door to greet an impoverished woman, begging for "something" for *Yom Tov*; "Perhaps, you might be able to share some food with me? I have nothing. Whatever you can give me will be a lifesaver," she said. "I would love to help you," he began, "but I myself just received my *Yom Tov* package – barely enough for my family." "Surely, you can give a poor woman something?" she pleaded. "I really have nothing. This is the first time that we received a package of food that was designated specifically for *Yom Tov*. My children have looked forward for some time to eat a piece of chicken, to savor

some hot soup. I would love to help you, but my children..." he said.

A war raged within him. On one hand, he wanted so much to help this woman. On the other hand, he had so little, he had nothing to spare. Back and forth he went, until he decided to go to the fridge and take out the chicken, cut off a piece, and share it with the woman. So, they would all eat less. It was still more than they would otherwise have had. He went to the refrigerator, opened the door, and almost passed out! There before his eyes lay his two-year-old son, blue in the face. He had somehow crept in, and, since he was small, he fit on a shelf as the door closed on him. Immediately, they called *Hatzalah* who miraculously revived the child. The paramedics told him, "Reb Yaakov – you were just given a child as a gift. Five more minutes, and we would not have been able to save him." The *kollel* fellow certainly gave the chicken to the woman who "indirectly" had played a role in saving his son's life.

What are we to learn from this story? *Rebbetzin* Shmuelevitz asked the *Rosh Yeshivah* for his insight. *Horav Chaim, zl*, said, "Obviously, the simple, most straightforward lesson to be derived is *Tzedakah tatzil mi'ma'aves*, 'Charity saves from death.' By giving charity to this poor woman, the *kollel* fellow performed a *mitzvah* which ultimately catalyzed his son being saved from death. There is another – even greater – lesson to be derived from here. This *Kollel* fellow was granted a 'final test' to determine if he was worthy of being his son's father. A 'final test' is not a simple test. It is the last opportunity granted to a person to give him a chance to save himself – or others close to him – from death. If he passes the test, he has earned a *zechus*, merit, for life. If *chas v'shalom*, Heaven Forbid, he fails... Our young man was fortunate to have passed the test and saved his son's life. What if he would not have passed the test? What if he would not have opened the refrigerator? *Baruch Hashem*, he did."

Horav Meir Abuchatzzeira was riding in a car together with his aide, when he suddenly looked up from the *sefer* he was reading and said, "Stop the truck behind us (on the highway). It was a massive Coca Cola truck. His driver could not fathom what *Rav Meir* wanted with the Coca Cola truck, but one did not question the holy *Rav Meir*. Everything that he did was by Heavenly design and for a holy purpose. When they cut off the truck, the driver came out in a "somewhat" upset mood. "What are you doing?" he screamed. "You are on a highway. Traffic must move." *Rav Meir's* aide asked the driver for a bottle of Coca Cola. The driver began to scream, "For this, you stopped me? I do not sell retail to individuals. You want soda – go to the store!" "But, I am so thirsty," the aide pleaded. "I will pay you fifty *shekel* for the bottle." The driver turned away angry, and both vehicles continued on the highway.

Five minutes later, the truck driver lost control of the truck, which crashed, causing one fatality – the driver. *Rav Meir* commented, "I sent him one 'final test.' I saw the *Malach HaMaves*, Angel of Death, dancing on his steering wheel. I tried to save him by according him one last opportunity to perform *chesed*. Sadly, he did not rise to the occasion; this resulted in his failing the test."

Bechukosai

אם בחקתי תלכו

If you will follow My decrees. (26:3)

Rashi interprets "following" in Hashem's decree as, *Shetiheyu ameilim baTorah*, "You will toil in Torah; engage in intensive Torah study." If one studies Torah in a lackadaisical manner, it undermines the importance of Torah. One does not take chances; his mind will not wander when he is holding dynamite. He will be very careful. Likewise, one who lacks the respect for the Torah as manifest by his lack of intensity, will ultimately reject the Torah and everything for which it stands. *Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl*, was a *gadol*, Torah giant, whose *ameilus*, toil, was evident when he gave *shiur*, rendered his Torah lecture. He would sit on an old, rickety wooden chair and refuse to rest his arms on its armrests. When he reached the age of eighty, his students noticed that this was his practice even when not teaching. Wherever he sat, he refused to rest his arms on the armrest.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* once explained to his *talmidim*, students, the reason for his refusal to "enjoy" such a simple pleasure as resting his arms. One of the Torah giants of the previous generation met another distinguished Torah scholar and presented to him a difficulty which he had regarding a passage in the *Talmud*. In no time, the other Torah scholar explained the difficulty in such a manner that it left the presenter dumbfounded. He had slaved over this *Chazal*, while his friend took one look and immediately illuminated the entire passage. Needless to say, he was troubled. He wondered: "Is there something wrong with my Torah study?"

Apparently, his anxiety showed, because the other scholar immediately said, "Why are you surprised that I had an answer, while you kept struggling with the passage? The reason is quite simple. You are a wealthy man, thus allowing for you to learn amid luxury: i.e. leather chairs, sturdy desks, warm, carpeted study. I, on the other hand, am poor, and, thus, compelled to sit on a shaky chair, writing on a broken table, in a cold, drafty room. When one studies Torah *mitoch ha'dchak*, amid strenuous, formidable circumstances, one merits to achieve a loftier level in Torah understanding and erudition." The *talmidim* now understood why their revered *Rebbe* pushed himself so much. It was all about

attaining greater heights in Torah achievement.

אם בחקתי תלכו

If you will follow My decrees. (26:3)

A clear difference exists between a Jewish child reared in a lifestyle replete with Torah values and one who is not. Is there a cure –to all of society's ills, to American family crisis, to the troubles that haunt our youth and plague our adults? Yes, there is, and it is to be found in the words of the *Midrash's* commentary to the opening *pasuk* of our *Parshah*. *Im bechukosai teileichu*, "If you will follow My decrees." The *Midrash* quotes *David Hamelech*, *Bechol yom veyom ha'yisee mechasev lemakom peloni, u'l'vais dirah pelonis ani holeich, v'hayah raglai molichos osi l'batei kneisios u'l'batei medrashos*, "Every day I had planned on going to a specific place, to a certain house etc. Yet, my legs (made me/guided me) walked me to the *shul* or to the *bais hamedrash*" (free translation).

David Hamelech remarks that he had many choices concerning where to go, places to visit, people to see. Clearly, *David Hamelech* was not talking about places that were inappropriate for an individual of his stature. He was simply stating the fact that he did not necessarily plan on going to the *bais hamedrash*. His legs had taken him there. This means (I think) that his entire body, his psyche, was attuned and focused toward the *shul* and house of study. It was how he was raised; his education and upbringing so influenced him that to go anywhere other than the *bais hamedrash* was to veer off course. His Jewish instinct always emerged victorious.

Every day we are pulled in many directions by the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination. At times, the places are not bad, but they are of a dubious nature – certainly not the type of place where a *ben Torah* or a *bas Yisrael* should frequent. When we raise our children in a Torah milieu, with values, ethics and morals dictated by the Torah, we are ensuring that their legs will guide them to the *bais hamedrash*. When we choose the Torah center as destination, we, by example, impart to our children what it is that we value. Our GPS is homing toward the *makom Torah* – which is where a Jew belongs.

I write this after reading an article written fifty years ago, decrying the troubles that haunt our youth, from delinquency, to intoxication, and other forms of addiction, rebelliousness toward parental authority and disrespect of the law and, for that matter, any form of authority. Parents are blamed; teachers are considered inept, schools are labeled insensitive. The problem, however, is that there is no religious component to their learning. When there is no Torah study, there is nothing; the education is deficient. Even when Torah is studied, but it is not studied from the perspective that it is *heilig*, holy, *Toras Moshe*, authored by *Hashem Yisborach*, then it

is not Torah study! We cannot prevent the lawlessness and rebelliousness of our youth with an educational diet founded in secularism, with Torah viewed as nothing more than another form of intellectual discipline. If it is not *Toras Moshe* – it is *chachmah*, wisdom – which is no different than any other form of educational discipline that does not inspire the heart and soul of the student. Without inspiration, there can be no lasting influence.

There used to be a time when idealism for Torah was a matter of pride: when parents were more concerned about how much their children knew – than how much they would earn; when the standard of excellence was erudition, not bank account; when *harbotzas Torah* was measured by personal outreach, not by how many institutions one supports. If we are to impart the proper Torah values to our children, we must first be sure to make those values a part of our own lives.

We are so concerned about depriving our children of the "important" things in life. One cannot promote Orlando and expect his son's legs to walk him to the *bais hamedrash*. Vacations are important, and, for those who have the ability, why not? Nonetheless, it cannot be at the expense of the *shul*, the *bais hamedrash*, and standards of *kashrus* and moral/ethical behavior that are officially the parents' standard when they are home. In other words, if one seeks to raise a "David Hamelech," he must provide his child with the education and spiritual backdrop to enhance his upbringing. *Nachas* is a gift that keeps on giving, but only if one keeps working on it.

ונתתי שלום בארץ ושכנתם ואין מחריד

I will provide peace in the Land, and you will lie down with none to frighten you. (26:6)

The blessing of peace, of Jews getting along with one another, is awesome – and also quite daunting. This is especially true when envy enters the question. Jealousy is quite possibly the greatest catalyst for discord among fellows who "used to be" friends. One becomes jealous of the other, or, as often happens, a spouse become jealous, and, by allowing one thing to lead to another, two friends, or even brothers, can suddenly be transformed into rivals – or worse, enemies. In addressing the above *pasuk*, the *Ksav Sofer* cites the *Alshich Hakadosh* in his commentary to *Sefer Koheles* 5:11, concerning the *pasuk*, "Sweet is the sleep of the laborer, whether he eats little or much; the satiety of the rich (however) does not let him sleep."

The *Alshich* explains that, unlike the wealthy man, the fellow who is subject to a life of poverty – at least sleeps well. Whether he goes to bed on an empty stomach or satiated, the poor man sleeps, since he has no worries to disturb his sleep, no anxieties creeping to unnerve him, to disrupt his sleep. When one has