Fascinating Insights

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Worthwhile Work Wages

The Cheishev Sofer¹ (1902-1962) brings the following question from the Ksav Sofer: We say אני משכים אני משכים לדברי תורה...אני עמל והם עמלים אני עמל הם משכימים אני משכים לדברי תורה...אני עמל והם עמלים אני עמל שכר... l arise early and they arise early: I arise early for words of Torah and they arise early for idle words. I toil and they toil: I toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward. Why is it that when it mentions arising early it says arising early for Torah in contrast to toiling where it doesn't say toiling in Torah? Just as it says it by arising early it should say it by toiling?

When a Jew awakes for Torah, he sets the tone for the entire day and so when he is working he conducts himself properly and deals honestly, in accordance with the Torah. When it says in this tefila אָנ , toil, it doesn't refer to toiling in Torah, rather it means when you toil at your job. So even though you are toiling at work and not in Torah you still receive reward as the tefila continues אני אני ומקבל שכר , I toil and receive reward, because you live the teachings of the Torah in all your dealings throughout the day.

Although that refers to reward in the next world, one gains in this world when he acts in accordance with the Torah. A Jew that had an important business meeting during the Nine Days asked R' Moshe Feinstein whether he may shave his beard. He explained, "There will be non-Jews at the meeting, and they will look at me strange

with my unkempt, shabby beard. This meeting has the potential to earn me a lot of money, but without a shave, it might not happen." R' Moshe told him that he must not shave. In the end, the person didn't listen and he shaved. The day of the meeting came and it began very well. However, when they were about to finalize the deal, one of the non-Jews there asked how do we know we can trust you? He replied, "I am a religious Jew, and the Torah obligates us to deal honestly in business. Our word is a word..." The non-Jew retorted, "You're a Jew? So where is your beard? I know that during these weeks, Jews don't shave their beard. I see that you aren't loyal to your own religion. How can we trust you to be honest in business?" And in the end the deal fell through.

In 2016, Mr. Shlomo (Sol) Werdiger, CEO of Outerstuff, a company that produces sports apparel, received a phone call from Mr. Oh Joon, the South Korean U.N. Ambassador, asking to meet him for lunch at a Kosher restaurant in Manhattan. Although Shlomo didn't know the purpose of the meeting, he agreed to meet with Mr. Joon. When they met, Mr. Joon told him the following, "I have always heard negative stereotypes about Jews and Israel, and I took it at face value. Then, my daughter took an internship working on design in your company. Throughout the year, she has been telling me how wonderful it is to work at your business." Mr. Joon continued, "There are four areas which stood out and impressed my daughter. 1) Every day, at 1:30 p.m., no matter what was going on at the office, all the men including those from neighboring offices, retreated into a room to pray with sincerity and calm. 2) Every Friday the office shut down early in the afternoon in preparation for your holy Sabbath and is closed on the Sabbath - this includes all workers no matter which faith or religion they maintain. 3) My daughter observed that each petitioner for charity – and there were many – were treated with respect and left with a check in hand. 4) My daughter was treated with the utmost respect and dignity." Because of the amazing experience and lessons the company taught his daughter, Mr. Joon took out his checkbook and was ready to write a check returning all his daughter's earnings! Mr. Werdiger wouldn't hear from it. "Your daughter worked and earned her salary and rightfully deserves her pay, and I will not accept any remuneration." Then the ambassador relayed the following: "As you know, I have voting privileges at the U.N. Because of my renewed appreciation of the Jewish people, I abstained from voting on resolutions against Israel on three occasions. At one resolution I was the ninth vote needed to pass the motion and resolution against Israel and because I abstained, it didn't pass!" Mr. Werdiger said that no one at the office had any idea that this girl was the daughter of an ambassador and no one ever imagined what type of impact their typical conduct at work had on her or how this impacted the votes against Israel.

When R' Shmuel Wosner counseled people about honesty in business, he would cite the Be'er HaGolah⁶ that says:

¹ This was authored by R' Avraham Shmuel Binyamin Sofer, who was a descendent of the Chassam Sofer and the oldest son of the Da'as Sofer. He taught in the Pressburg yeshiva from 1925 and served as a substitute for his father in the city rabbinate. Together with his father, they established the Pressburg yeshiva in Yerushalayim.

² In the tefila after learning and at a siyum.

³ The Klausenberger Rebbe once said that there has never been a time that it was so easy to be an honest Jew (an *erlich yid*). And there was never such a time that it was so hard to want to be an honest Jew.

⁴ R' Pam once told an accountant that to be successful at work you need to be honest, friendly and a hard worker.

⁵ It has been said that non-Jews respect Jews that respect Judaism and non-Jews are embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by Judaism.

⁶ Choshen Mishpat, 348:2. This was authored by R' Moshe Rivkash (1596-1672). In 1655, when crowds of Cossacks came upon Vilna and committed widespread massacres, R' Rivkash fled the city along with R' Shabsai Kohen (author of the Shach), R' Aharon Shmuel Kaidanover (author of Birchas Hazevach) and R' Efraim Hakohen (author of the Sha'ar Efraim). [In the introduction to his sefer Be'er HaGolah, R' Rivkash describes the terrors of that experience. He writes that he fled

"I write this for future generations: I saw many that became great and wealthy from the mistakes of non-Jews. In the end, they weren't successful and lost their money and didn't have blessing from it afterwards... And many have sanctified Hashem's name and have returned funds where non-Jews erred in significant amounts. They prospered, became wealthy and were successful and left substantial amounts to their descendants."

Learning Through Observing

In light of this, we can grasp the Gemara that says ממה המה חווקא קיימי מגברא רבה ארבה, how foolish are those that they rise before a Sefer Torah but not before a Torah scholar, 12 since they are a living Sefer Torah as they practice its laws and conduct!

R' Yoel Sirkis (1561-1640), also known as the Bach, in his youth was in the presence of the Mahrashal. He had the occasion to observe his actions, deriving several halachic conclusions from these observations.

R' Leib Sarah's¹³ (1730-1791) once expressed that he would travel to the Magid of Mezrich not to learn Torah rather

from Vilna with nothing but his walking staff in his right band along with his Tefillin bag...lamenting the loss of his house full of everything good, and, above all, his treasured library, which he inherited from his father, and which he had enlarged by his own new acquisitions. Among his sefarim were many Talmudic tractates, upon which he had written marginal notes and comments.] They eventually found refuge in Amsterdam where he published his work on the Shulchan Aruch, entitled Be'er HaGolah. It indicated the various sources for halachic decisions, along with brief explanations to resolve contradictions among Poskim with differing viewpoints. His descendant was the Vilna Gaon.

- ⁷ One may ask another what yeshiva he attends. He may answer Brisk, the Mir or the like, to which the person is very impressed. A rebbe once remarked that one shouldn't need to say that he goes to some prestigious yeshiva rather his behavior and character should emanate forth from him that it is obvious that he attends such a yeshiva (See Yoma 86a).
- ⁸ Yehoshua, the disciple and successor of Moshe, is described not as the student of Moshe but as his attendant—משרת משה (see Ralbag and Gra to Yehoshua 1:1).
- ⁹ Brachos 7b. שמוש is also learning just that it is learning the halachos from the conduct of one's rebbe (Maharatz Chayes, Brachos 7b, s.v. שמושה).
- ¹⁰ Brachos 62a. Ben Azai did the same as he followed R' Akiva to the bathroom. That is, although he was already taught these laws by R' Akiva, he followed him into the bathroom anyway to witness it (See Gra, Imrei Noam). Torah learning becomes much more deeply rooted in one's heart if he sees his teacher actually apply it than if he merely hears it from him (Maharatz Chayes, Brachos 7b, s.v. מגדולה (גדולה See Maharsha, Brachos 7b, s.v.). Incidentally, research has shown that we retain 10 percent of what we read and 90 percent of what we experience.
- ¹¹ Nida 65b.
- ¹² Makkos 22b.
- ¹³ The following story is how he received his name. Sarah, a most attractive girl—a modest, G-d-fearing young girl—was the daughter of a Jewish innkeeper. The son of a local landowner saw her beauty and wanted to marry her. He told his father, "If I cannot have her for a wife, I will die of heartbreak." Being that she was the daughter of his Jewish tavern keeper, he summoned him the next day, demanding his daughter. He asked for some time to think the matter over in which he had a week for a reply. How could he break the news to his good, pious

just to see him put his shoes on and remove them, as his actions were Torah.

In this way we can explain יוילך משה וידבר: "Moshe's actions spoke. From just observing Moshe, one was able to learn much.

Mitzvos of Women

The Gemara¹⁵ highlights three tasks to be done upon the entry of Shabbos: מטה מוצעת, שלחן ערוך, גר דלוק, וamp burning, the table set and the bed made. Why are these three highlighted?

There are three mitzvos that have a special connection to women. They are חלה, הדלקת ברות הדלקת נרות הדלקת משוח. The three mitzvos endowed to women line up with the three the Gemara mentions: הדלקת ברות is synonymous with מטה מוצעת as Shabbos is the time of relations. Finally, חלה is aligned with שלחן 18

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daughter, he thought. She, too, would rather die than marry a gentile. The family got together to devise some way out of their predicament. It was Sarah who came up with a plan. What about R' Yosef the old מלמד, teacher, she inquired. This was an old man whom the innkeeper had hired to teach his young sons. The man had been with the family for the past several years. She suggested that she marry him and then run away, leaving the landowner powerless to do anything. In the end, the old man was called. He surely had no objections to marrying the lovely Sarah, even though he might be risking his life. Quickly and quietly, they married. Then they left for a nearby village. Three days later the landowner came for a reply and was shocked to learn what Sarah had done to escape marrying his son. He wished not to pursue this any longer especially since the marriage had been her own initiative. He was aghast that a young, beautiful girl should prefer an old man to a young, wealthy and handsome nobleman. Sarah's husband, a hidden tzadik, had known all along that his employer's daughter was destined to be his wife. He told his young bride that since you had the moral strength to choose an old man instead of a young duke who would have given you a life of luxury and ease, you will be blessed and bear a child whose light will shine far and wide and commemorate your name all his days. The child that was born to them in the following year was named Aryeh (Leib). As he grew up, it was apparent that he was destined for greatness. Aryeh's father did not live long to enjoy his young treasure and it was Sarah who brought up the child. She lived to have him bear the name, R' Leib Sarah's, as he was always to be called.

- ¹⁴ Devarim 31:1.
- ¹⁵ Shabbos 119b.
- ¹⁶ Mishnayos Shabbos 2:6. See Breishis 24:67, Rashi. The first letters of these—חלה, נדה, הדלקת ברות—spell הנה (see Maom Loaz, Shmuel 1, 1:8) since Chana was a reincarnation of Chava (Rema Mipano, Gilgulai Neshamos, footnote 161), who sinned in these three areas, as is shown in the following. The Yerushalmi (Shabbos 2:6) explains why these three are connected to women: Chava caused the death of Adam who is called the blood of the world (corresponding to nida), the pure challa of the world (corresponding to the mitzva of challa) and the light of the world (corresponding to lighting candles). In fact, the Chida (Mesachta Geirim, 1:4, s.v. מלה, בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר) מלה, בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר) מלה, בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר) מלה בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר) מלה בדלקה (נר) בדלקה (נר)
- ⁷⁷ See Kesubos 62b, Orach Chaim 280:1. Indeed, the first letters of בני (Shemos 31:16-7) spell בני ישראל אות היא and ישראל את השבת, relations. ¹⁸ In light of this we can understand why אשת היל is said upon the entry of Shabbos.