

The Jewish Weekly

The Baal Shem Tov, a Poor Chassid and the Wealthy Merchant

By Rabbi Shmuel Butman

When the Baal Shem Tov saw that Reb Dovid, one of his chassidim, was not arranging a match for his daughter, he called in some of his other disciples. "Collect 200 rubles. Take the money to these two addresses, look over the two young men and decide who is more suitable for Reb Dovid's daughter."

The chassidim visited both young men and chose the second of the two. They then concluded the engagement to the satisfaction of the young man and his family. The father of the groom told the chassidim, "Take this gift along for the bride and tell her father that I await a similar gift for my son."

Reb Dovid and his daughter were delighted with the good news and the gift. Reb Dovid tried to put the money together for a gift to send in return, but due to his extreme poverty he was unable to come up with a sizeable sum. Reb Dovid wrote a letter to the groom's family, assuring them that he would eventually be sending a dowry.

Then, he traveled to the Baal Shem Tov to explain his predicament. The Baal Shem Tov listened compassionately and said, "Do not worry. Trust in G-d and everything will be all right."

When Reb Dovid arrived home, he found a letter waiting for him from the groom's family. "We have not yet received the dowry. Is it not time for our children to celebrate their wedding?"

Overwrought with worry, Reb Dovid decided to travel once again to the Baal Shem Tov and explain the urgency of the situation.

"I told you not to worry," the Baal Shem Tov told Reb Dovid. "Go home, put your trust in G-d, and everything will work out well."

Reb Dovid returned home, but upon his arrival, Reb Dovid found another letter: "We are leaving for your city within two weeks. Please be prepared for us."

"Two weeks," Reb Dovid read, in sheer misery. He didn't even have enough food in his house for his own family let alone the groom's family and all their guests. His only option was to go once again to the Baal Shem Tov. As Reb Dovid neared the Baal Shem Tov's study hall, one of his traveling companions pointed to a beautiful carriage travelling in front of them and said jokingly, "There is your help."

As it happened, the passenger in the carriage arrived just a moment before Reb Dovid and they both entered the Rebbe's room together. The Baal Shem Tov greeted only Reb Dovid and said "I will tell you a story. A wealthy merchant named Reuven lived in Danzig. Once he was returning from a very successful business trip with his bookkeeper and secretary.

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"The two men became jealous of their employer's wealth and plotted to rob him. They attacked the coach driver and beat him to death. They then bound Reuven.

"Please, spare my life for the sake of my wife and children," Reuven pleaded. "Take all of my money but spare my life." "The two thieves laughed. 'We cannot leave you alive. Prepare to die.' "Reuven pleaded, 'Then give me five minutes to say the final confession,'

"The thieves agreed. While Reuven said the final confession, he wept from the depths of his heart. He called out to G-d, 'I swear that if my life is spared, I will give one quarter of my fortune to the poor of my family and one quarter to other needy causes.'

"At that moment the sound of hoof-beats were heard. The would-be-murderers fled. It was a nobleman approaching with his servants. Having come upon an abandoned wagon loaded with costly merchandise, they entered the forest to investigate.

"The noblemen sent two of his servants to accompany Reuven home. There, Reuven rejoiced wholeheartedly with his family. After the celebration, Reuven called in a bookkeeper and ordered him, 'Add up all of my assets.' "But when Reuven saw what a large sum half of his fortune was, his determination faltered. He decided that giving half of his fortune all at once would break him. He therefore decided to 'pay it off' over many years' time.

"A short while later, Reuven's wife became ill. The local doctors could not figure out what was wrong with her. They sent Reuven's wife to specialists who sent her to other specialists. Reuven and his wife traveled from specialist to specialist. But no doctor could diagnose her illness. Finally, Reuven's wife said to him, 'Let us go to the Baal Shem Tov.'

"Reuven agreed to his wife's suggestion," the Baal Shem Tov concluded. "How much money have you spent on doctors ever since your wife became ill?" the Baal Shem Tov asked the second visitor, finally acknowledging his presence. "Was it not more than a quarter of your fortune, the amount you should have given to the poor? Redeem the rest of your pledge immediately, down to the last penny. You will see that your wife will regain her health."

Reuven was in shock from the Baal Shem Tov having so vividly described the horrifying events of the past few months. Dutifully, in front of the Baal Shem Tov and Reb Dovid, Reuven emptied his entire purse of money. It contained three thousand gold coins. The Baal Shem Tov gave the money to Reb Dovid and it was not long before his daughter's wedding was celebrated amidst much joy and happiness.

Reprinted from an email of L'Chaim Weekly.

It Once Happened..

The End Does Not Justify the Means

By Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum

During the controversy surrounding the implementation of the study of mussar into the yeshiva curriculum (or for that matter, taking time ordinarily dedicated for Torah study and diverting part of it to mussar study or the study of the soul), Horav Yisrael Salanter, z"l, the Mussar Movements founder and chief proponent, would upon occasion be harassed by the misnagdim, opposition, to the movement.

This was no different from that which the early chassidim endured in their quest to imbue avodas Hashem, the service to the Almighty, with passion and joy. While today mussar study is an accepted, vital part of Torah study, a time existed in which a number of Lithuanian gedolim, Torah giants, were vehemently opposed to it.

As usual, one could always find rif raf who live for controversy and dispute, who come out of their "holes" in order to disparage and malign anyone who does not agree with them. Rav Yisrael was brilliant and erudite, but he did not call attention to his vast knowledge – focusing instead on the need to study mussar. He was a prolific speaker, who had the ability to captivate, as well as inspire, his audience.


He was asked to give a drashah, lecture, in Vilna, which was a huge Torah centre. His misnagdim, many of whom were quite learned, planned to attend for the purpose of refuting his words, thereby casting aspersion on him, his scholarship, and, above all, the Mussar Movement.

During the shiur, a member of the opposition asked a powerful question focused on the fundamental principle upon which the shiur was based. Rav Yisrael stood thinking for a few moments, then announced that based upon the question presented to him, his entire shiur was refuted. He then left the podium and returned to his seat.

Afterwards, he explained that actually he had twelve answers to the question. They were so compelling that the questioner would be unable to unravel them to see that they did not ultimately answer the question. At the end of the day, however, truth must prevail. If these answers were not an absolute fit, they were false. He would rather have his shiur refuted, suffer the "possible" humiliation, than to agree to settle for anything that was not completely true.

Rav Yisrael confessed that a powerful battle raged within him. On the one hand, admitting defeat imperiled his life's work. On the other hand, how could he settle for something that lacked integrity? Finally, he cried out to himself, "Yisrael! Yisrael! You learn mussar, and mussar obligates you not to settle for anything that is not absolute truth. This is when I decided to end the shiur."

Reprinted from an email of Penimim on the Torah.



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times – Parshat Kedoshim

Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem 6:42	7:57	8:36
Tel Aviv 6:57	8:00	
Haifa 6:50	8:01	
Be'er Sheva 6:59	7:59	



The Missing Money

By Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

For many years, my father was a principal in a Jewish day school. A devoted mechanech (educator) who looked after the well-being and success of every individual, he saw the development and growth of countless students over the years. Yet, I will never forget one story he related years ago and continues to remain with me to this very day.

On one occasion, a boy decided to bring all the money he had received for his birthday to school. Despite his mother's advice not to do so, the young boy entered the classroom one morning with \$80. Yet, quite quickly, he learned that the words of his mother were wise indeed. Within just a few hours, all the birthday money was gone, and the boy was in tears.

As soon as my father got wind of what had occurred, he knew what he needed to do. He proceeded to call each boy out from the classroom separately and inquire if they perhaps had found the money, knew where it was or accidentally took it and forgot to return it. One by one, the boys filed out of the classroom and into my father's office for a brief questionnaire.

After seeing half the boys in the class and coming up empty-handed, he walked a boy with something bulging in his back pocket. As it seemed, it was a wallet. "You probably know," said my father to the boy, "that one of your classmates is missing money. It is his birthday money which he brought to school. Have you seen it around?"

"I haven't" replied the boy.

"Okay," swallowed my father. "Is there a chance you took it and planned on returning it, but forgot to? He really feels terrible and it would be a tremendous mitzvah to help him."

At this point, my father could tell that he was not getting anywhere. So, he tailored his questioning to be just a bit more direct. "I can see that you have a big wallet in your back pocket."

"Yeah!" enthused the boy.

"Well, how much money do you have in it?"
"\$79.50!" proudly exclaimed the boy.

"I had \$80, but I bought a soda for 50 cents."

At this point, it was more or less clear to my father that he was dealing with the boy who had taken the money.

"Is there a possibility that this money belongs to the other boy in the class?"

The boy continued to hem and haw, denying that the money belonged to anyone else besides him. Nothing seemed to be working.

"It's a shame that it's not that money because the boy came to me crying about this birthday money he had been looking forward to receiving an entire year."

Silence filled the office for just a moment, until the boy spoke up, "Oh yeah! This money... I was thinking about another wallet... I wanted to give it back to him, but I got really thirsty and needed to buy a soda..." After a brief period of rationalizing, the boy finally reached into his back pocket and handed over the wallet.

My father proceeded to walk the boy into the classroom and allow him to sit back down in his seat. And then my father did what differentiates a good educator from an excellent educator.

He called the next boy in the class to his office and asked all the same questions he had asked the other boys. And so, he did with the next student and the next student, until everyone in the class had been spoken to.

Why did my father do so? He realized that were he to stop his interrogation after any one particular student in the class, it would be made quite obvious who the thief was. And in the interest of discovering who the responsible boy was, my father was not ready to embarrass anyone. The boy would be privately reprimanded and told of the hurt and harm he caused a fellow classmate, but the larger picture would not be overlooked. My father was pursuing justice and that which was right, but he understood that it could not be done at the expense of embarrassing a student. Pursuing justice must also be carried out with justice.

When faced with situations in which we feel warranted and justified to guide, reprimand and educate our children and students, we can never get carried away. We must carefully weigh our words, actions and reactions and only then make a sound decision as how to proceed. Every situation must be examined individually, but all in all, preserving justice and dignity are to be our guiding lights along the way.

Reprinted from an email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace



It's a record that relates to words. As is well known, the title of a Parsha comes from the first key word in that portion. Often it's the very first word, sometimes the second, third or fourth. But let's have a look at the beginning of parshat Kedoshim, "ידבר ה' אל משה לאמר. דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל, ואמרת אליהם קדשים תהיו, it's the 14th word! At this point the Torah tells us "You must be holy".

Why the long introduction leading up to "קדשים תהיו"? It's in order that we should know that Moshe was to instruct ' כל ' עדת בני ישראל, the entire assembly of the Children of Israel about the content of this portion. Rashi explains that seeing as the majority of the primary principles of the Torah are included in this portion – that's why it was important for Moshe to impart it directly to the entire nation.

The Alshich Hakadosh adds a further insight. He says that there is a danger that some people might think that not all of the mitzvot relate to them – that they're only for 'frum' or holy people. Therefore the Torah says to every single individual 'קדשים תהיו', you have a responsibility to be holy yourself.

Furthermore, we recognize that there are some people who cannot easily relate to the concept of Kedusha, holiness. They might feel that a holy person is an extraordinary spiritual lady or a Rabbi – they are the only ones who can be holy. However the Torah here wants every individual to know that we ourselves can and should be holy.

We are currently living in a world in which artificial intelligence is being developed in order to enhance human achievement, and we already know that some computers are more intelligent than human beings. But with all the artificial intelligence in the world, a computer will never have a 'neshama' – it doesn't have a soul. A computer cannot experience the presence of Hashem, it cannot achieve spirituality – that is something that only we can do! In this age of advanced technological prowess, we often find that our souls cry out for a channel through which to express their spirituality, and as a result there's an enormous need for Kedusha today.

There is an important part of our prayers which we call Kedusha. It starts depending on the Nussach ' נקדישך ונעריצך ' - We will sanctify You and adore You or ' נקדש את שמך בעולם ' - let every single one of us sanctify the name of Hashem in this world. Let us take heed of the mitzvah of 'קדשים תהיו', the imperative of this week's Parsha, in order that every single one of us can become holy and can increase holiness in this world.

Let us become holy by asking Hashem to bless those suffering from the current situation in Eastern Europe, as well as for the recovery of all the sick, our soldiers and healthcare professionals, and Chevra Kadisha members worldwide, for peace and for those who need healing, shidduchim, children and parnassah and may we be blessed to have the most awesome, gorgeous, beautiful, peaceful, healthy, amazing, relaxed, spiritual and sweet Shabbat.

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 51
MITZVOT ASEH: 13
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 38

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 64
NUMBER OF WORDS: 868
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 3229

HAFTORA:
Shmuel 1 20:18- 42. "מחר חודש" the special Haftora for a Shabbat whose tomorrow is Rosh Chodesh.

Rosh Chodesh is on Sunday and Monday, May 1 & 2.

Some say אב הרחמים which was composed for the martyrs of the Crusade period most of whom were slain during the period of Sefirat HaOmer. The Gra and Chabad do not.

This week in Israel, we study Chapter 2 of Pirkei Avot (outside Israel one studies Chapter 1).

קדושים
אחרי מות

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