

The Jewish Weekly

A Lesson in Silence

By Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin

It happened about a hundred years ago. Every weekday evening Rabbi Yisroel Hager, the saintly Vizhnitzer Rebbe, would go out for a stroll for about half an hour, accompanied by one of his attendants. One day, much to the surprise of his shamash (attendant), the Rebbe stopped in front of a large house next to the town park, went up the steps, and knocked on the door.

The attendant had no idea what the Rebbe could possibly want in this house, which belonged to the manager of the town bank. The banker was most certainly not a Chassid. In fact, he was one of the local leaders of the Haskalah ("Enlightenment" movement opposed to traditional Judaism). Nevertheless, when he saw the door open and the butler usher the Rebbe in, he quickly raced up the steps and slipped into the house too, not willing for the Rebbe to be left alone and unattended.

The bank manager came downstairs and couldn't believe his eyes: the Vizhnitz Rebbe in his house! He greeted his guest warmly, showed him to a comfortable chair in the salon, and sat down opposite him. After some initial pleasantries, he waited for the Rebbe to state the reason for his unexpected call.

A few minutes passed in silence. The host became a bit uncomfortable. A refined cosmopolitan man, he would never presume to confront his distinguished guest about why he had come. Excusing himself, he walked to a position where the Rebbe couldn't see him, and frantically signaled to the Rebbe's attendant to join him in the hall.

"Why on earth did the Rabbi come here?"

"I have no idea. The Rebbe didn't tell me anything. I saw him enter, so I followed him in."

Perplexed, the bank manager resumed his seat. He looked at the Rebbe. The Rebbe looked at him. More silence. What was going on?

The host was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain his constraint. Finally, after several more minutes, the Rebbe stood up. Still not saying a word, he walked towards the door. Displaying good manners, the bank manager escorted him out. He followed the Rebbe down the steps and several paces along the sidewalk, started to turn back, but then reconsidered and continued to follow behind the calmly strolling Tzaddik.

When they reached the Rebbe's house and the Rebbe paused to start up the steps, the bank manager finally threw off all restraint and called out, "Vizhnitzer Rebbe! Please excuse me for asking, but why did you come to my house? While you were my guest I would never presume to pry, but now we are at your house, so I can ask you."

The Rebbe turned slowly towards him. "I came to your house to fulfill a mitzvah. Thank G-d, I succeeded."

"Which mitzvah?"

"Our sages say that just as it is a mitzvah to speak out when you will be listened to, so it is a mitzvah to not say anything when you know you will not be listened to.

"But what does it mean to not say anything?" the Rebbe continued. "To sit in your house in silence? Not at all. You have to go to the person to whom you are not supposed to say what he won't listen to, and then face-to-face refrain from saying it!

"And that," concluded the Rebbe, "is precisely what I did."

"So what is it that you did not say?" queried the bewildered bank manager.

"I can't tell you that."

"Why not?"

"Because then I will lose my mitzvah!"

"But how do you know that I wouldn't listen?"

"I know."

"But you can't know that. You must tell me what it is!" pleaded the bank manager, totally overcome by curiosity.

"I'm sorry. No," said the Rebbe firmly.

After several more rounds, the bank manager begged: "Please, please, please, at least give me a chance."

"Oh, all right," said the Rebbe reluctantly.

"Yesterday a distraught woman, recently widowed, came to speak to me. Apparently, she received a notice from your bank that it has decided to put her house up for auction next week because she owes so much on the mortgage. That means she and her little children will be out on the street. She asked me to speak to you, because she knows that you are Jewish. She hoped I could influence you to be compassionate. I, however, did not bring it up to you because of the mitzvah to not say."

"But Rebbe," cried out the banker in frustration, "You don't understand! It's not me she owes, it's the bank. I don't own the bank, I only manage it; I don't set policy. Besides-"

"Right," the Rebbe interrupted. "As I said. I knew you wouldn't listen. Good night."

The Rebbe walked up the steps to his dwelling, followed by his attendant. The door closed behind them. The bank manager stood immobile, stunned. Finally, he walked home, alone and bemused. But the matter had entered his heart and he was unable to dismiss it.

Before the week was up, he paid the widow's entire mortgage out of his own personal account.

Reprinted from an email of KabbalaOnline.org.

It Once Happened...

A Real Jewish Mother

By Rabbi Benyamin Adilman

A renowned personage of the old Jewish settlement in Jerusalem was the holy Rabbi Dovid Biederman, the Lelover Rebbe. He was known as a Tzaddik among Tzaddikim. His only concern in life was whether or not he was living up to the expectations of his Creator.

Once, the Rebbe decided to undertake the arduous, almost day-long trek on donkey from Jerusalem to the gravesite of the matriarch Rachel, just outside of Jerusalem in Beit-Lechem (Bethlehem).

He set out early in the morning, right after the conclusion of the sunrise minyan. The entire way he contemplated and organized the prayers he would say there. He wanted to be sure not to forget anything, since it was only infrequently that he had the opportunity to make the journey.

When he finally arrived he saw that he was not alone. A woman with a number of small children had arrived previously and was making herself at home in the monument's domed chamber. She had already spread out a blanket and laid the youngest child down to sleep, and was busy preparing the evening meal.

The Rebbe was incredulous. Did she have no regard for the sanctity of the site? Didn't she realize where she was? How could this woman busy herself with such mundane matters in such a Holy place?

He approached the woman and in a less than friendly tone demanded an explanation.

The weary woman looked up at him from her seat on the floor and replied softly, "I would think that our Mother Rachel would be pleased that we are eating and resting here."

The Lelover felt suddenly faint and uneasy. He realized that he had been making the journey to Rachel's Tomb for decades and had not even begun to understand what it represented.

Here was a simple unlearned woman, yet she possessed a profound grasp of the true holiness of Rachel's Tomb. What had he been doing here all those years!

He now understood that Rachel was the mother who wept and prayed for her children.

Her desire is only that we should have some relief, some comfort in life, some peace of mind in order to better serve the Holy One.

From that day on, whenever he traveled to the Tomb of Rachel, he made sure to bring with him a meal which he would share with all the others who came to entreat our mother Rachel to intercede for them and bring their prayers on high.

Reprinted from an email www.nishmas.org, the website of Nishmas Chayim Yeshiva



Y-GRAPHICS

Shabbat Times - Parshat Shemini

	Candle Lighting	Motzei Shabbat	Motzei Shabbat ר"ת
Jerusalem	6:31	7:46	8:25
Tel Aviv	6:47	7:48	8:22
Haifa	6:39	7:48	8:25
Be'er Sheva	6:49	7:47	8:24



The Price of Prophecy

By Rabbi Uri Kaploun

When Rebbe Meir of Premishlan was a child of about ten, he was taught by Reb Dov of Podheits, a chassid of Meir's father, Rebbe Aharon Leib of Premishlan. Every Thursday, which was market day in Podheits, the boy would collect donations and distribute them to the poor in time for them to buy their provisions for Shabbat. In the course of his rounds he once came to a butcher by the name of Shimon and asked him for his weekly donation of one kreutzer for the poor.

"I'll give you two," said the butcher, "on condition that you tell me whether this ox that I want to buy is going to turn out to be kosher or not."

"Very well," replied the boy. "If you give me half a fertziger - that is, ten kreutzer - then I'll tell you."

The butcher thought it over for a moment, and gave it to him, whereupon the boy told him: "This ox cannot be eaten; it is treifah."

Pointing to another ox, the butcher asked: "And what about this one?"

"If you give me another half-fertziger," said the boy, "then I'll tell you."

And when he received the coin, he said: "About this ox there aren't any queries about possible blemishes in its lungs: it is glatt kosher."

The butcher had his doubts as to whether there was any substance to all this, but he paid up his two half-fertziger all the same, because the boy was born of holy parents, and he was a likable child - and besides, everyone knew that the alms he collected was for the paupers. And so it was, that Shimon bought the second ox, while the first was bought by some other butcher. Sure enough, Shimon's ox was in fact glatt kosher, and the other was found after slaughtering to be treifah.

The following Thursday, when the boy came to the ox market to collect his donations from the dealers, Shimon the butcher called him aside and said: "Meir'che, I will give you a whole fertziger if you tell me whether each one of the oxen up for sale is kosher or not."

"If you give me half a fertziger for each ox," said the boy, "I'll tell you."

The butcher paid in full without hesitation, and the boy told him: "This one is kosher, this one is treifah" - and so on.

Young Meir was of course delighted with the way things had worked out, for he now had a considerable sum to distribute to the poor without having to lose valuable study time in trudging for hours from one donor to the next.

The butcher, for his part, seeing that the child never missed his target, approached him on the third week with a new proposition: "I would like to make a contract with you, and I will pay you weekly for each ox according to your request - provided that our little transaction remains a secret."

"I am not interested in contracts and secrets," said the boy, "but if you give me half a fertziger for each ox, I'll give you the answer."

This went on for a few months, and no one knew of it. Week by week the butcher paid in advance for his information, as a result of which he prospered exceedingly, because he bought nothing but kosher animals, while the other butchers grew poorer. His competitors banded together and brought their bitter complaint to the local Rav; it was clear that the shochatim were receiving bribes from Shimon in exchange for which they pronounced his animals kosher, while in the course of slaughtering they either caused or pronounced their animals to be treifah.

"But you can see for yourselves in the slaughterhouse," said the Rav, "that all of Shimon's cattle are in fact glatt kosher, without any room for the slightest doubt - and what is to be done if he has such good fortune?"

To this the butchers had no answer. Nevertheless, they started watching Shimon's movements very closely, what could he be doing to ensure that all his animals without exception were in fact kosher? The following Thursday they watched him walking the length of the market place in the company of little Meir, who was pointing at each of the oxen in turn. When Shimon finally left him, they approached the child and said: "Meir'che, pray for us, too, just like you pray for Shimon, or please do for us whatever you do for Shimon."

"I don't do anything," he assured them. "If you give me half a fertziger I'll tell you what I tell him."

"Well, what is it that you tell him to do?" they asked. "Tell us, too, and then we'll do whatever he does."

"He asks me which ox is kosher and which is not," said Meir, "and I tell him."

So they gave him a half-fertziger, and pointed at an ox that stood near them.

"That one is treifah," said the boy.

When they pointed at another ox, he said: "But you have given me only one half-fertziger, and Shimon gives me that much for every single ox."

"So that's his secret!" said the butchers to each other. And from that Thursday on, they gave Meir in partnership the amount he stipulated for charity, and walked with him up and down the market place, while he told them which oxen were kosher and which were not.

When word of this reached the boy's melamed, Reb Dov, he scolded him and told him that in the future he should not tell anyone things revealed to him through the Divine Inspiration - Ruach Hakodesh.

Subsequently, when Reb Dov went to visit the Rebbe, Meir's father, he told him the whole story, adding that he had scolded the Rebbe's son.

"Well done," said the father. "A boy must learn not to divulge privileged information."

Reprinted from A Treasury of Chassidic Tales (Artscroll).

we discover in Parshat Shemini, a surprising ingredient for outstanding leadership.

Aaron had been appointed as the Kohen Gadol, the High Priest of the nation. And now, the moment came for him to offer his opening sacrifice, and yet Moshe needed to say to Aharon, "קרב אל המזבח" - Approach the altar."

Rashi on Vayikra 9:7 explains that Moshe was saying to Aaron, "למה אתה בוש? לכך נבחרתי" - Why are you withdrawing yourself? It is for this that you were chosen."

The Baal Shem Tov gives a beautiful commentary here. He says that Aharon was filled with humility and that's why he would have preferred that somebody else would have taken on this role, in the same way as he loved the fact that his younger brother Moshe became the leader of the nation. Moshe, therefore, said to his brother Aaron, "לכך נבחרתי" - It's on account of your humility that you are becoming the Kohen Gadol."

The Talmud Yerushalmi tells us a fascinating story about the people of Simonia in the northern Galilee. They approached Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi in the third century and they explained that they were an important community, and asked if he could please provide an outstanding rabbi for them. Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi said, "I've got just the right person for you. His name is Levi Bar Sisi."

Levi bar Sisi arrived in Simonia. They created a large bimah, a platform, upon which they seated him on a throne. The people came and they fired questions at him - questions in Halacha, questions in Tanach - and he was stunned. He didn't know how to answer a single question! The people went back to Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi and said, "The man you sent us - he's a fake! He's a dud! What happened?"

Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi said, "But at the very least, he's as great as I am!" Indeed, we know that Levi bar Sisi assisted Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi in compiling the Mishnah! So Rebbe Yehuda HaNasi turned to Levi bar Sisi and asked him what had happened.

"Well," said Levi bar Sisi, "They made a king out of me, it went to my head and I forgot everything!"

The Talmud here wants us to know that sometimes arrogance can be an impediment to outstanding leadership. Rather we should have the qualities of Aaron the High Priest, who was filled with humility.

Indeed, sometimes we notice how a person who promotes himself or herself, somebody who's arrogant, can end up attaining a position of power, authority, and leadership. Actually from the Torah, we learn that the most outstanding ingredient for great leadership is the humility of Aharon the High Priest.

So with this humility let us ask that Hashem bless and watch over our people with peace, no more fighting, no more issues, not to suffer great tragedies as we have in the past. So let us join together to pray with all our hearts for all those who are sick, as well as praying for our soldiers who go out to protect us and 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, sweet and happy Shabbat, and Chodesh Tov.

Yossi

The Jewish Weekly's PARSHA FACTS

NUMBER OF MITZVOT: 17
MITZVOT ASEH: 6
MITZVOT LO TAASEH: 11

NUMBER OF PESUKIM: 91
NUMBER OF WORDS: 1238
NUMBER OF LETTERS: 4670

HAFTORA:
Ashkenazim: Shmuel II, 6:1 - 7:17
Chabad & Sephardim: Shmuel II, 6:1 - 19

Shabbat Mevarchim Chodesh Iyar which falls on Friday and Shabbat, April 21 & 22.
This Shabbat afternoon we begin the weekly study of Pirkei Avot, every Shabbat until Rosh Hashana. This week we study Chapter 1.

