

זכרו תורת משה

לעילוי נשמת ר' משה בן החבר צבי זצ"ל ור' משה יצחק בן אברהם צבי הכהן זצ"ל

HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

Self-Dignity

THE NEW HAT

SEVENTEEN YEARS AFTER THEIR *chasunab*, Shmuel's wife requested that he get himself a new hat. He was already making bar mitzvahs; he should have a new hat for himself. So, he went to a hat store, where they measured his head, showed him a few models, and eventually he chose one. After he paid, they offered him to wear the new hat home or to wear the old one and place the new one in a box until it would be ready to be worn. He decided to wear it home.

You can only imagine how he felt; he felt like a million dollars. When he walked down the street, everyone greeted him warmly, and everyone was so respectful toward him. "It was the hat," he thought to himself. "Now that I have a new hat, everyone is respecting me, and I'm becoming a popular man."

He came home so delighted. He told his wife the whole episode — about how he was greeted nicely by everyone now that he has his new hat, and how it's made all the difference.



"What hat?" questioned his wife. "I don't see a new hat. Did you really get a new hat? This is your same old hat. What are you talking about?"

Shmuel took his hat off his head and saw that it was, in fact, his old hat. "Oops. I must've left the new hat at the store. I didn't even bring it home!"

If so, what caused the change that suddenly made him so popular and respected? Once he felt good and confident with himself, he radiated this to others. It obviously wasn't the hat but his feeling good with himself that others related to, and that caused him to become popular, well-liked, and admired. (Reprinted with permission from *Be'er Haparsha*)



SELF WORTH

As a close *talmid* of R' Yechezkel Levinstein, Reb Noach Chofetz was able to learn *b'chavrusab* with his esteemed *rebbe*. A couple of years ago, Reb Noach fell ill, and many came to visit him. He told over that as a *bachur*, he began to go to a particular Chassidic *rebbe* for Shabbosim, and Reb Yechezkel Levinstein asked him, "What do you get there that you don't have by us?"

Reb Noach replied, "Every morning before *Korbanos*, we say, '*Moh onu, Meh chelkeinu... U'mosar ba'Adam min ba'beheima ayin ki ha'kol havel...* — Who are we? What is our life...? Behold, all the mighty are like nothing before You, the famous are non-existent...because most of their deeds are foolishness, and there is no benefit of man over an animal; everything is vain.

"*Aval anachnu amcha b'nei brisachab, b'nei Avraham obavcha... Asbreinu mah tov chelkeinu u'mah noim goraleinu* — But we are Your children, the nation of Your covenant, the children of Avraham whom You loved... We are fortunate! How good is our portion! How sweet is our lot! How beautiful is our inheritance! "The lesson of 'Who are we? What is life?' I learned very well from you. You taught me that the *gashmiyus* of this world is nothing. But the lesson that we are Hashem's beloved nation — that I learn by this Rebbe."

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein praised this answer, and told Reb Noach that he should continue going to that Rebbe. Reb Yechezkel then repeated many times to himself, "*aval anachnu... aval anachnu...*"



THE CRIMPLED LION

A man was recently in Argentina where a wealthy member of the community took him for a visit to the local zoo. Over there, he saw something shocking. He saw visitors walk up to unchained, unguarded lions and hand-feed them. The lions were docile and treated the humans with respect.



The shocked visitor asked his host, "These lions act like young, peaceful children. How is this possible? Lions are ferocious, dangerous animals! How do people get so close, and why don't the lions attack?"

"When these lions were born," answered the host, "they were raised together with dogs and were fed all that they needed. They never discovered that they were lions and that they possess mighty strength. They think they are dogs."

Elephants and camels also make this mistake. They have immense strength but can be trained not to be aware of it.

People also make the same error. They don't recognize their potential and strength, and thus are convinced that nothing much will come from them. Especially when they're surrounded by people who don't accomplish much, they think they won't be different from their peers. The truth is that everyone has amazing strengths, and when one devotes himself to Hashem's service, he can accomplish a lot. (Reprinted with permission from *Be'er Haparsha, Torah Wellsprings, Beshalach*, p. 4)



INNER GREATNESS

A grandson of a Chassidic Rebbe was waiting for his turn to speak to the Beis Yisrael of Gur. As he waited, he said to the *gabbai*, Reb Chaninah Schiff, "When you bring me to the rebbe, tell him who my grandfather is."

The *gabbai* replied, "It isn't our custom to do so."

But the *bachur* insisted, so when Reb Chanina Schiff brought him before the Beis Yisrael, he said, "He wants you to know that he is a grandson of the *tzaddik*."

The Beis Yisrael replied, "I should know? He should know!" In other words, he should know whom he comes from and stand up to the name. This is a key for his personal growth.

The same is regarding our inner greatness. We should know our *yichus*. We should know that we are descendants of the holy Avos. This awareness will fill our hearts with pride and joy.

זכרו תורת משה



A SON-IN-LAW LIKE R' AKIVA EIGER

A man once entered the Mir Yeshiva in Poland, seeking a new son-in-law for his daughter. He asked the *mashgiach*, **R' Yerucham Levovitz**, who the best boy was. The *mashgiach* replied: "Who do you want? This boy is like Reb. Akiva Eiger, this one is a R' Yitzchok Elchanan, and the next is R' Paysach Pruskin. Which do you want as a son-in-law?"



At the time, these weren't necessarily top boys of the yeshiva, yet R' Yerucham gave each *talmid* the feeling that he's going to be the next *gadol*, empowering and infusing each of them with courage of greatness. Many of these *bachurim* grew to be great leaders in the past generation.

More than what R' Yerucham said was the inner *chasivus*, respect, that he gave to them. Empowering them with the capabilities gives a person the courage to bring forth the great potential.



"YOU CAN BE A GENERAL!!!"

The doors of the *beis midrash* opened up, and in came the **Chofetz Chaim**. All the *talmidim* were eagerly waiting the message that their great *rebbe* would reveal. "We know what Napoleon would convey to his army," he said. "One who doesn't believe he can be a general, even a soldier he can't be.' Besides strength and power, fighting in the army needs 'courage.' The courage needed to fight in an army must be strong, and therefore only the one who believes that he can be a general is fit to fight as a soldier.



"So much so," continued the Chofetz Chaim, "applies to serving Hashem; one who believes that he can be great will have the courage and bravery to stand strong, but the one who thinks that he can't be great won't have the courage to stand up and fight." (*Sheva Ipol Tzaddik*, p. 450)

"There are many who think that they can't reach greatness," says R' Yitzchak Hutner. "But this is the *kefirah* of our generation. The great shortcoming that a person can have, is the feeling that he can't become great, and that we must battle with all our might."²



RESPECTFUL DOGS

In 1937, **R' Elchanan Wassermann** set out on a trip to America to raise the necessary funds for the Baranowitz Yeshiva. He traveled all around America for these funds. At one point, he had **R' Shmuel Greinamen**, the principal of Yeshiva Torah Vodaath, while he was staying in the home of R' Zalman Levin, going around with him as a translator.

When they got to upstate New York, they passed a wealthy-looking home, but R' Shmuel walked right by, not giving it much attention. R' Elchanan questioned why they were skipping that home. "There is a *mezuzah* on the doorpost." To which R' Shmuel answered there were two vicious-looking dogs at the gateway, preventing any visitors entry, and that's why he avoided it.

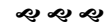
¹ **Reb Tzadok HaKohen** writes: "Just as one must believe in Hashem, one must also believe in himself. This means to believe that Hashem is interested in him. He must believe that his soul comes from Above, and Hashem has pleasure from him and has enjoyment when he does Hashem's will. (*Tzidkas HaTzaddik* 154)

R' Elchanan responded that he's going in despite the vicious-looking dogs. He opened the gate and headed toward the front door. Sure enough, the dogs came charging at him, but as soon as they got to him, they immediately paused.

He persisted and went to the front door, asking for a donation. The shocked man answered the door, asking, "How did you get in? Didn't the dogs 'greet' you at the entrance?"

R' Elchanan responded that dogs see the *tzelem Elokim* within every person. Many people lose it along the way, but I managed to keep it clean, and they respected it, and that's why they didn't harm me.

This serves as a great lesson. Even dogs can feel the intrinsic value that's within our *neshamah*. Even though at times it may not be seen, it is something that's tangibly seen even by dogs. So, although we can't see it, we must remember that this is a very tangible thing. (R' Lazer Abish)



A REAL "LEVI!"

R' Avraham Goldstein, a well-known *ger-tzedek* living in Scranton, Pennsylvania, had a friend whose son started drifting from Yiddishkeit. The family reached out to R' Avraham to see if he could try to influence their son, Yaakov.

R' Avraham sought after Yaakov, hoping to influence him for the good. During their conversation, he thought of a great idea. Soon after, R' Avraham brought Yaakov to John's store, who greeted R' Avraham warmly and inquired as to who was R' Avraham's companion. R' Avraham introduced Mr. John to his young friend, Yaakov, and told him that Yaakov was a *Levi*, Levite.

Hearing this, John leaped from his seat and announced on the PA system that all workers should come and get a blessing from this authentic Levite. "We want all our people to be blessed by such a person."

Within moments, all seventy employees of John's store gathered around R' Avraham and Yaakov, seeking his *brachah*.

Everyone lined up, bent their heads, as they were instructed, and Yaakov *bentched* them all.

As Yaakov and R' Avraham returned to the car, Yaakov started crying uncontrollably. "Why are you crying?" asked R' Avraham.

"All this time I never valued myself as a special *Levi*. This is the first time that the awareness is touching me!"

This episode stood for Yaakov as a life-changer, motivating him to redirect his life, to serve Hashem, to do His mitzvos, and to understand his intrinsic value.

Most of us are not *Leviim*, yet we have a lot to learn from this story. We are the one and only chosen nation, chosen by non-other than the Creator, Hashem. This recollection gives us nobility and dignity. This in itself stands for us to take great pride in and to conduct ourselves in an uplifting manner.

² Chazal teach us (*Sukkah* 52a) that the greater the man, the greater the *yetzer hara*. If so, said the **Verka Rebbe**, someone facing a tough *yetzer hara* can be **sure** that he's great and treasured by Hashem. The size of the challenge reflects the greatness of the person.