

A Taste of Torah In the Eyes of the Beholder

By Rabbi Avraham Abrams

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz, the great Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir Yeshiva in Jerusalem (1902-1978), was fond of recounting a certain outlook on life that his father, Reb Alter, had possessed. Reb Alter was constantly on the lookout to find traits that his own father had excelled in, compared to the average population.

For many years Reb Chaim wondered what the point of this exercise was. Was this some sort of obligation that all children had toward their parents?

After a while, Reb Chaim realized that indeed this was something necessary, and that it played an integral part in honoring one's parents, Torah scholars, and one's wife – as the Talmud instructs us, "Honor her more than yourself" (Yevamos 62).

The principle that Reb Chaim learned from his father's custom was that if one doesn't look at another person as someone who is deserving of honor, then it will be impossible to fulfill the commandment of honoring him or her.

In this week's Parsha, the Torah tells us, "Do not subjugate him through hard labor – you shall have fear of your G-d," (Leviticus 25:43). Rashi explains that this transgression includes forms of work that are not necessary, or those that are given only to place an additional burden on the worker.

One might think that no one will notice the difference. The Torah therefore tells us, "You shall have fear of your G-d," because Hashem, the All-

Knowing, will be able to perceive what the true intention is within your heart.

The Torah is telling us an amazing thing. A servant goes about his daily chores, and he thinks every act is as important and necessary as the next. He does not see that what he is told to do by his master is a possible insult to his honor. He doesn't know, for example, that once he leaves the room, his master is going to pour the water he just served down the drain. Why, then, does the Torah consider this a serious offense? What is the harm if the servant will never know the reality of the situation?

The Torah is telling us that, in this case, the intention is even more important than the act itself. In assigning unnecessary work, the master is exhibiting a lack of respect for the servant. We know that an underlying principle of the Torah is that all people are created "B'tzelem Elokim," "in G-d's image."

If the mindset of the master is that his servant is an insignificant person, then the master will not demonstrate the proper respect that the Torah commands. Only when one recognizes the spark of the Divine in each human being and the good in one's fellow man, can one recognize the true worth of all human beings – even those who seemingly appear to be the lowliest.

Reb Alter and his son, the renowned Reb Chaim, understood that there is no one who doesn't have at least one attribute that they excel in, and when we make the effort to discover it, we grow in our ability to respect our fellow man.

Stories For The Soul

Cast your Meat Upon the Waters

When we walk in the ways of Torah, amazing things will happen, some of which we will see during our lifetimes, some of which we will not see during our lifetime; but they will happen, as the following true story illustrates:

Joe was a very successful Israeli. A son of Holocaust survivors, he rose from a childhood of poverty, and, by the mid-1980s, he had built up a huge, successful hi-tech company. One day, his wife called, asking him to pick up some meat on his way home from the office. He stopped at a take-out place to order basar lavan (pork). As he stood on line, he began to feel uneasy. He began to remember a story he had heard from his parents and it now took on heightened meaning:

Joe's maternal grandfather was Rav Shraga Feivel of Hungary. Rav Shraga Feivel was captured by the Nazis about a year before the war ended and imprisoned at a slave labor camp. After a year, Rav Shraga Feivel was about to be freed. The war was over, and the allied forces were going from camp to camp, liberating prisoners.

At that moment, the head SS officer gathered the Jewish prisoners together and announced, "The war has ended. In a few hours you will all be free." "All but you," he said, pointing to Rav Shraga Feivel, "You must pass one more test. You must eat this piece of pig's meat. Only then will you be allowed to go free. Refuse and I will shoot you in the head."

The tension was thick. Rav Shraga Feivel had been meticulous

Kollel Happenings

PARTNERS IN TORAH AT AISH

Join the Kollel's Partners in Torah program for men at Aish Denver, on Wed., nights at 8 p.m. If you'd like to join - and learn the topic of your choice, at your own pace, with a knowledgeable mentor - please call the Kollel at 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.



FATHERS-AND-SONS PROGRAM SUN., MAY 15 AT EDOS

The next Fathers-and-Sons learning program will be held on May 15 at EDOS. Breakfast begins at 9 a.m. with learning following. For information, contact Rabbi Yehuda Amsel at 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org



PARSHA AT DENVER TECH CENTER, THURS., MAY 19

Want to add meaning to your workweek - and Shabbos? Rabbi Yehuda Amsel's 'Parsha at the Denver Tech Center' for men will be held on Thurs., May 19. The biweekly class will be held at 2 p.m. at 6565 S. Dayton, Suite 1200. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email rya@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Returning Stolen Property Part III

If the victim is unaware of the theft, the thief may return the stolen item without informing the victim. For example, if one stole money, he may simply place the money in an envelope

and send it to him with no name or explanation.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi Stolen Charity

Rivka from Manchester, England wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

If money that had been put aside for charity is stolen, must one replace it?

Dear Rivka,

I spoke with Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, shlita, and he said that although a Torah court would not force one to do so, the person has a moral obligation to replace the money.

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Stories for the Soul

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throughout his stay at the camps not to eat unkosher meat. With pride, Rav Shraga Feivel proclaimed, "I will not eat chazir fleisch (pork)."

A shot rang out, and Rav Shraga Feivel's soul was returned to its creator.

And now, 40 years later, Rav Shraga Feivel's grandson stood thinking to himself, "I am waiting in line to pay money to eat that which my grandfather gave his life not to consume. All he had to do was eat that one small piece of pork, and he would be set free. He would be allowed to return to his family - yet he wouldn't do it. I have everything, I am free to live with my family and have anything I want; yet I am about to purchase this meat."

"Either my grandfather was crazy, or I am crazy - and I cannot believe that he was crazy," thought Joe as he got off the line and went to buy dinner elsewhere.

When he got home, he spoke to his wife about his feelings and the emptiness he had been experiencing. They both had to acknowledge that despite all their material prosperity, a certain

spiritual emptiness gnawed at them. They were missing something, but they never knew exactly what. They spoke for a long time about values and what is important in life. They decided to attend an Arachim seminar. Joe was enthralled by the seminar - it penetrated the murky mysteriousness of G-d, Torah and Judaism. It rocked his world and shook his soul.

Afterwards, Joe ran up to them and said, "Why isn't this incredible message getting out to the whole world?" They explained that though they had a terrific 'product,' they lacked the money, manpower, and marketing to do so. Joe would not hear of this. Right then and there, he became the General Director of Arachim - a title which he still proudly holds to this day.

Joe, now known as Yossi, lives a completely observant life with his wonderful family. He has estimated that since the 1980s, 60,000 children have been born to families that were re-JEW-venated by Arachim.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.