

A Taste of Torah Proper Mourning

By Rabbi Moshe Heyman

The verse (14:1) prohibits pulling out hair or cutting skin upon hearing about the loss of one's relative. The Torah explains that this is because the Jewish people are children of Hashem, and are assured of the fact that Hashem loves them as a father does, and does everything with their best interests in mind.

Inasmuch as the passing of a relative feels like a terrible tragedy to those left behind, keeping in mind that we believe their soul lives on in the next world, to lose control of one's senses over this is taking mourning too far. There is a time and place and proper action for mourning, but this is not the way.

This leads us to try to understand a Tosfos in Yevamos which says that when the Tanna, R' Eliezer died, R' Akiva hit himself until blood poured down to the ground. How is it that the great R' Akiva would go against a prohibition in the Torah? Tosfos answers that R' Akiva was in fact not going against this prohibition; R' Akiva understood that the loss of a human being, although

tragic, is not catastrophic. The loss of Torah, however, is catastrophic. R' Akiva was mourning to this extent over the loss of R' Eliezer's Torah, which is in fact something to mourn over to such an extreme.

We actually see this concept of how precious mourning the loss of Torah is to Hashem. The Talmud Shabbos (105b) says that anyone who sheds tears for an upright person, Hashem counts them his tears and puts them in His storehouses. The wording of the Talmud is "tears falling." Why not use the standard term "Whoever cries?" The answer is that when we mourn a true loss to the world, the tears need to fall; they need to come from the brain (eyes) to the emotion (heart). It is not just crying that achieves this purpose, it is when your tears flow down to connect your understanding with your emotion, that it is worth Hashem counting and storing that type of emotion. As we leave the month of Av, where we mourned what we have lost, let us utilize those emotions to rebuild our relationship with Hashem.

Ask the Rabbi Religion and Respect

Zalman writes:

Dear Rabbi,

When I went home, my parents got really upset by the way I dress. I think this is really hypocritical since they are the ones who are supposedly liberal and

who believe in equality and tolerance. If everybody can do whatever they want, why can't I wear a black hat? Also, even though my Hebrew name (that THEY gave me) is Zalman, they insist on calling me Steve. How can I get them to understand?

Stories For The Soul

From Italy to Israel

When Omri Vartash, a secular Israeli from Kibbutz Ruchama, was invited to study acting at the prestigious Theater Lab in Italy, headed by the world-renowned Jerzy Grotowski, his parents were overjoyed.

One day Grotowski invited Omri to dinner, something that was considered a great honor.

"What do you know about the Baal Shem Tov?" Grotowski began.

"Baal what?" Omri asked, thoroughly confused and at a loss.

"You are a Jew, aren't you!?" asked the director. "And you've never heard of the Baal Shem Tov, one of the greatest men of your nation!?"

Grotowski, a Polish gentile, proceeded to tell Omri about the Baal Shem Tov and the Chassidic movement. Omri listened attentively and couldn't help but wonder, "I'm completely disconnected from the history of my people! How is it that a Polish gentile knows more than I?"

Grotowski then gave Omri a book about the Baal Shem Tov, and when Omri asked Grotowski, "What should I do next?" Grotowski encouraged him to learn about his heritage.

Omri followed Grotowski's advice and eventually returned to Israel, where he became a *ba'al teshuva*.

"Children are you to the L-rd your G-d... For you are a holy nation... a treasured people" (Deut. 14:1-2).

Sometimes Hashem's beloved children reunite with their Father in the most unexpected ways.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.

Kollel Happenings

LEGAL HOLIDAY LEARNING MON., SEPT. 5

The next legal holiday learning program will take place on Labor Day, Mon., Sept. 5 at Zera Avraham. Shacharis will be at 8 followed by breakfast and a class from 9:10-10:10. \$125 sponsorship is still available. For information, call 303-820-2855 or email rye@denverkollel.org.



'GOOD GOSSIP?' AT SEPT. 7 TORAH FOR TYCOONS

Join Dean Phil Weiser, Dean and Thompson Professor of Law, University of Colorado Law School. Former Senior Advisor for Technology and Innovation in the White House's National Economic Council and Kollel Dean Rabbi Shachne Sommers Schwab for "Good Gossip? The Ethics of Speech Where Knowledge is Power" at the next Torah for Tycoons, Wed., Sept. 7. The program will be held at noon at the East Side Kosher Deli. Cost: \$20. To RSVP, call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org



CHERRY CREEK MUNCH AND LEARN, MON., SEPT. 12

The next Cherry Creek Munch and Learn for men, led by Rabbi Yehuda Amsel, will be held on Mon., Sept. 12, at 12:30 p.m. at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. . The class focuses on Pirkei Avos. For information, contact Rabbi Amsel at 303-820-2855 or at rya@denverkollel.org

Interpersonal Issues Avoiding Bal Tolin Part III

If hiring through an intermediary to pay on time in such a case. is impractical, one may ask the worker beforehand to accept payment at a later time. If the worker consents, the employer avoids bal tolin. Nonetheless, the employer should make every effort

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

Ask the Rabbi

continued from front

Dear Zalman,

The Torah's ways are "ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace." If your actions do not bring peace, it may be that you are not following the ways of the Torah.

Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that, although it's better to use a Hebrew name, there's no prohibition in using a non-Hebrew one. According to this, if your parents address you by your non-Hebrew name you should respond, and you should not correct them.

Regarding dress, Rav Feinstein maintains that there is no halachic obligation to wear any particular style that has become traditional for Jewish communities in various places and times. He also rules that there is no prohibition of "following the ways of the pagans" in adopting fashions of the gentile world. This is all providing that the clothing has no pagan religious significance and conforms to the prohibitions against sha'atnez, immodesty, and cross-dressing.

I'm not advising you to wear ripped jeans and a Grateful Dead T-shirt. In Orthodox communities, as in all societies, specific styles of clothing are the norm. Integrating into these groups without dressing "frum" would be difficult. Therefore you should see your dress as an intrinsic part of your development, and not necessarily accede to your parent's tastes.

You should take their feelings into account, however. If your dress causes them great distress, a compromise would be to wear "civilian clothing" at home, or to tone down religious clothing styles.

Respecting parents will demonstrate that Judaism does not seek to alienate children from their families, and is concerned with the preservation of family ties even when not every member of the family observes Jewish law.

Respecting parents requires proper communication, as the following incident illustrates:

A Mother told her daughter, "There are two words which you use constantly, and I'd appreciate if you'd eliminate them from your vocabulary ... One is "drippy" and the other is "disgusting."

"O.K., Mom," said the daughter, "Tell me what the words are and I'll stop saying them."

Sources:

-Mishlei 3:17.

-Iggros Moshe, Orach Chayim 4:66, Yoreh Deah 1:81.

-After the Return - Mordechai Becher & Moshe Newman, 2:1, Feldheim 1995.

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