

Ethics of the Fathers

It is customary to study *Pirkei Abot* (Ethics of the Fathers) during the six weeks between Pesah and Shabuot, one chapter every Shabbat.

“Who recognizes his place” (*Pirkei Abot* 6:6) “וְיָדַע, טְרַף וְטָרֵף”

The *Mishnah* writes that the Torah is acquired by forty-eight things. One of these is being a person who recognizes his place.

A man once complained rather constantly to the *Hafess Hayim* about the weather; it was too cold, too hot, too damp, too soggy, too foggy, etc. Finally, the *Hafess Hayim* answered him with this story: “Once while I was travelling, I stopped for a night at an inn. Finding my room most uncomfortable, I called the innkeeper and said, ‘You know, this room should have a larger window; the stove is too close to the bed; and the ceiling is entirely too low.’ The innkeeper listened politely, and then he asked me how long I intended to stay. When I said, ‘just for the night,’ he replied, ‘If you’re staying for so short a time, perhaps it would be wiser to simply accept the room as it is.’” The *Hafess Hayim* smiled at the grumbler and said, “For the amount of time we are going to be here, perhaps we had better accept the world as Hashem gives it to us.”

Knowing our place in the scheme of things helps us to concentrate on the Torah and its precepts. They are more important in our short stay than physical setting and creature comforts. (Ethics from Sinai)

A Balanced State of Mind

“It is truly remarkable to see how people have the natural ability to balance themselves on two legs even while walking over rough terrain and snow. Animals also have the ability to balance, but they walk on four legs and so the accomplishment is not as striking.”

Through challenging times, life can be perceived as being off balance. Faith in Hashem and living a Torah based life will ensure a well-balanced state of mind. (Norman D. Levy, Based on Rabbi Miller’s, Duties of the Mind.)

The Truth Regardless

Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak, the *Hozeh* of Lublin, had many *hassidim*, but felt unworthy of being a Rebbe. He implored people not to come to him, but to no avail. Finally, he approached Rabbi Ezriel, the Rabbi of Lublin, and asked him what he should do.

“My advice to you is simple,” replied Rabbi Ezriel. “On the next *Yom Tob*, when all your *hassidim* are gathered around you, tell them that you are ignorant in Torah and lacking in good deeds, and that you are not worthy of their adulation.”

The *Hozeh* did as Rabbi Ezriel had advised him, but the effect was exactly the opposite. Everyone talked about how humble he was, and the next *Yom Tob* an even greater number of *hassidim* came to him.

The *Hozeh* returned to Rabbi Ezriel and described what had happened. “Well then,” said Rabbi Ezriel, “at the next *Yom Tob*, why don’t you tell everyone what a great Torah scholar and *saddik* you are? That way, they will all think you are conceited and stop coming to you.”

“Heaven forbid,” said the *Hozeh*. “I may be ignorant and lacking in good deeds, and I am indeed unworthy of having people come to me, but I am not willing to lie!” (A Word of Wisdom, A Word of Wit)

The Lorraine Gammal A"K Edition

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סגל

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SHABBAT

BEMIDBAR ♠ ρ X ♣ σ f v X , X ♥ ↑

Haftarah: Hoshea 2:1-22

MAY 18-19, 2018 5 SIVAN 5778

Friday Shir Hashirim/ Minhah: 6:39, 7:30 Shaharit: 4:38, 6:40, 8:30, 9:15 am
Candlelighting: 7:50 pm Morning Shema by: 8:20 am
Evening Shema and Omer after: 8:48 pm Shabbat Classes: 6:30 pm
Day 49 of the Omer Shabbat Minhah: 7:30 pm
Shabbat Ends: 8:49 pm (R"Y 9:21 pm)
Sunday Minhah: 7:00 pm

These times are applicable only for the Deal area.

Mabrook to Steven and Chana Gindi on the birth of a baby boy. Mabrook to the grandparents, Michael and Stacey Gindi. Mabrook to the great-grandparents, Mose and Stella Sitt and Mrs. Sylvia Gindi.

Mabrook to David & Miriam Kassin on the engagement of their daughter, Luisa, to Elie Abady. Mabrook to the grandparents, Armando & Luisa Behar.

A Message from our Rabbi

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַּר סִינַי

“Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai” (*Bemidbar* 1:1)

It is traditional to read the *parashah* of Bemidbar before the holiday of Shabuot. The Shabbat before Shabuot is known as Shabbat Derech Eress, the Shabbat of Good Character, because we always say “Derech Eress Kadmah LaTorah – good character comes before Torah.” As a matter of fact, Parashat Yitro, which contains the Ten Commandments, has in it advice from Yitro to Moshe that according to some opinions took place before the giving of the Torah. He said, “And you shall make known to them the path in which they should go and the deeds that they should do.” In the *Gemara* (*Baba Kamma* 99a), Rav Yosef understands this to mean that Moshe should teach them to do *hesed* and *bikur holim* and to bury the dead. Yitro told Moshe to teach this to the people even before receiving the Torah.

Rav Paysach Krohn related the following beautiful anecdote. An elderly woman, who was a friend of Rabbi Krohn’s, went to visit her friend who was sitting *shiva* in

Washington Heights, NY. The mourner, who was close to 90 years old, had just suffered the passing of her husband and was sitting *shiva* alone.

The widow was speaking with her lone visitor when a Jewish couple from Boro Park entered the apartment. As the husband and wife sat down, the widow began conversing with them. She didn't know them, so she asked if they knew her late husband. "No," they responded.

In the politest manner, the widow asked them why they had come. After all, they didn't know her and they didn't know her husband. Why come all the way from Boro Park to Washington Heights to visit someone they didn't know?

"You see," they explained, "we regularly review the listings of Misaskim organization of people who are sitting, along with the mourner's locations and hours. Whenever we see that a person is sitting *shiva* alone, we make sure to visit and console that mourner.

It is so difficult for a person to sit *shiva*. But imagine having to sit *shiva* all alone. The pain of the loss is compounded by the solitude. There are two people somewhere in Boro Park who recognize this fact, and expend time and effort and money to address this. As we said, *Derech Eress Kadmah LaTorah*.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Reuven Semah

"Change Me"

The *Midrash* gives a parable in this week's *parashah*: There was a King who wanted to build a palace and scouted around for an appropriate site. He went to one city after another and in each city the people ran away from him, indicating they did not want the palace in their town. Finally he came to a deserted ghost town and the few people there graciously and gratefully accepted the King's offer to build a palace in their town. The King said, "This is the place where I will build my palace."

The *Midrash* explains the parable: When G-d wanted to give the Torah, he went to the sea and it ran away, as it is written "The sea saw and fled" [*Tehillim* 114:3]. G-d then went to the mountains and they ran away, as it is written "The mountains skipped like rams" [114:4]. He then came to a desolate desert (Sinai), which accepted Him with open arms, and G-d gave the Torah in a desert.

What are our Rabbis trying to tell us with this parable?

Why didn't those cities want the King's palace? Because they knew that building the palace in their cities would impact on their lifestyle. They had certain ways of doing things; they had certain customs. They knew that building a palace in their city would mean changes for them. The ghost town knew that it had nothing. They were saying, as it were, "Remake us. We have nothing anyway. We want you. We'll accept you and we'll take with your palace all the changes that accompany it."

If one wants to accept Torah, he must be like a desert — ready and open with no baggage. Torah takes root in a person who says, "Change me."

Many of us have had the experience of dealing with apparently "religious" brethren and have sometimes come away disappointed. Our reaction invariably is "This is Torah? This is all that Torah can do for a person? I thought Torah was supposed to change a person! Here is a stereotypical guy with 'beard and pe'ot' and he is ripping me off!"

Someone once said, and it is a very important point: "Never judge Judaism by Jews." Judaism is bigger than almost any Jew that one will find. If one wants to judge Judaism by a particular Jew, he must look at the *Hafess Hayim* or Rav Chaim Ozer or Rav Moshe Feinstein. Why? Because they made themselves like a desert and said, as it

were, to G-d, "Change me." They let themselves become desolate and open for the Torah to permeate them.

The rest of us are like those cities. We are not really ready to fully change. If we accept it, we want to accept it on our terms. Therefore the Torah cannot change us, because we are not willing to be changed.

This is what our Sages are hinting at when they tell us that Torah was given in a desert. Torah can only really change someone who is willing to be changed. When a person makes himself like a desert in his acceptance of Torah, that is when he can be changed to the extent that G-d can say, "You are My Servant, Israel, in whom I can be glorified." [*Yeshaya* 49:3]

When people are not prepared to make themselves like the desert, the Torah cannot make them over. The result is that sometimes we find people to be less than we would expect. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Whoever Teaches His Friend's Son Torah...

In *Parashat Bemidbar* the verse states "And these are the children of Aharon and Moshe on the day G-d spoke to Moshe at Mt. Sinai" [3:1]. However, the *pesukim* continue and enumerate only the descendants of Aharon.

Rashi raises the obvious question — why does the Torah refer to the children of Moshe if only Aharon's children are mentioned? *Rashi* answers that Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Itamar are considered to be like Moshe's children, because he taught them Torah. "For anyone who teaches his friend's children Torah, is considered as if he gave birth to them" [*Sanhedrin* 19a].

Another *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* [99b] expresses a similar concept with a similar expression: "Anyone who teaches his friend's child Torah, is considered as if he made him." *Rashi* quotes the verse with Abraham "the souls he made in Haran" [*Beresheet* 12:5]. *Onkelos* there translates "*d'shabidu l'oraita*" (he subjugated them to the Torah).

We thus see two different ways of formulating the accomplishment of one who teaches his friend's son Torah — one Chazal says "it's like he bore him" and one Chazal says "it's like he made him." How are these two versions reconciled?

Rav Schlessinger, a *Rosh Yeshiva* in *Eress Yisrael*, suggests that the Chazal are trying to paint for us the Rebbe, par excellence, in Judaism.

We as parents have something going for ourselves in the education of our children that a professional teacher does not have. On the other hand, a professional teacher has something that we as parents do not have.

We as parents have a natural love and a natural sense of compassion for our children. The words of our Sages and the words of our *Siddur* are replete with expressions such as "as a father has mercy on his children." Such a feeling is necessary in teaching any child. But sometimes those feelings of compassion can be a detriment. Sometimes a father has to mitigate his natural feelings for his children because such feelings are detrimental to the child's education.

On the other hand, the professional teacher has the advantage of being "like one who has made the student." We see from the verse with Abraham, that there is a concept of bringing a person under the yoke of Torah. Sometimes it is not easy, but it has to be done. The professional teacher always has that advantage. But sometimes he lacks the aspect of "as if he gave birth to him" — the matter of compassion and personal love that the parent naturally has and that the true educator should have.

These expressions in the *Talmud* are telling us that in the eyes of the Rabbis, the perfect teacher must have both the sweetness and compassionate traits of a father (as if he bore him) and also the strength of 'subjugating him to Torah' (as if he made him).

One without the other is an incomplete teacher. Moshe *Rabenu* had both aspects.
Therefore the verse treated him as if they were his children. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand)