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The Satmar Rebbe And the Jeweler



The Satmar Rebbe, zt"l

One of the Chasidim of the Satmar Rebbe, zt"l, worked in the jewelry exchange in Manhattan, New York. Once, when he was visiting the Rebbe, he asked the Rebbe for a Brachah that he have abundant Parnasah, and it should come easily.

The Rebbe told him, "I give you my Brachah wholeheartedly, but only under one condition. Don't ever let a lie come out of your mouth. Neither in business nor in anything else in the world!"

The man protested and said, "Rebbe! In the jewelry exchange it is impossible not to lie! Many times, the gemstone is not perfect, and we have to hide a crack or a defect here or there. That is how it works in the jewelry exchange!"

But the Rebbe would not back down, and he said, "Listen to me well. You will be different from all the other merchants, and no lie will come out of your mouth, and B'Ezras Hashem, you will see the abundance of Brachah that will come your way!"

The Chasid accepted upon himself the instructions of the Rebbe, and he began to be scrupulous about the Middah of Emes and being straightforward. To any buyer that entered his store, he would say to them, "I am not sure if this stone is right for you. There is a defect here and a small crack there. I have to be honest with you, this is not a perfect stone."

Very quickly, this Jewish jeweler earned an exemplary reputation. Everyone testified about his honesty and integrity, and he became very wealthy from all the customers who preferred to deal with only someone who was honest with them. The Chasid soon realized the wisdom in the Brachah from the Satmar Rebbe!

Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Simple Jew's Great Love for Hashem

One time, the Divrei Shmuel, zt"l, was sitting next to Rav Mottel Slonimer, zt"l, when the Divrei Shmuel told over a story that had happened to him. The city's water carrier was a simple fellow who didn't know more than the very basics of Yiddishkeit. His daughter was nearing the age of seeking a Shidduch, and understandably, the water carrier looked for someone who was close to his own level to be a Chasan for her.

Baruch Hashem, he found a Bachur that he thought would be a good match for his daughter, and they happily got married. While the father-in-law knew very little, his new son-in-law knew even less.

Decided to Start Learning with His Son-in-Law

The water carrier decided that he would start learning with his son-in-law in the hopes of teaching him at least as much as he knew himself. They started with the basics. He taught him the Aleph-Bais, the Nekudos, and how to say Shema.

The son-in-law absorbed everything he was taught, and he had much excitement and a thirst for knowledge. He hadn't been taught anything in his childhood, and once he was exposed to it, he felt like he needed to make up for all the lost time. After they finished the basics, they started learning the meaning of Shema.

By the Pasuk of V'Ahavta, the father-in-law explained to him that it is a Mitzvah, and we are commanded to love Hashem. Hearing this, the son-in-law

responded disappointedly. He said, "That can't be the commandment." He explained, "It can't be that we're commanded to love Hashem. I think we should find a Rebbe to properly understand this."

Confirms that the Water-Carrier's Explanation is Correct

With that, the two headed to the Divrei Shmuel and asked their question. The father-in-law repeated the way he understood the Mitzvah, to make sure that he was understanding it correctly. After hearing the water carrier's explanation, the Divrei Shmuel confirmed that he was, in fact, correct.

The Divrei Shmuel then turned to the son-in-law and asked him, "What's bothering you with this explanation? Why can't you accept that this is a Mitzvah?"

The son-in-law said, "How can it be that Hashem commanded me, plain little me, to love Him?! How can it be that the King of the entire universe would want me to love Him? It just can't be!"

He then thought for a moment and said, "If Hashem is commanding this, it must be that there is a great love that Hashem has for us, and therefore, in return, Hashem commands us to love Him, as He loves us so much and wants our love back. The Mitzvah must definitely be that we in return should love Hashem!"

Hashem's Great Love for Us

The Divrei Shmuel responded, "You're right! That is the proper approach! Hashem loves us, and therefore, He desires that in return we should love Him. If Hashem did not have immense love for us, then there would be no way that He could desire for us to love Him. It is only out of Hashem's great love for us that He wants us to love Him in return."

When the son-in-law heard this, he began dancing uncontrollably. He started singing, "I love You because You love me!"

Seeing this, the Divrei Shmuel remarked that at that moment, the son-in-law reached the ultimate and exalted level of Ahavas Hashem. The Divrei Shmuel said to Rav Mottel Slonimer that true and proper Ahavas Hashem is love for Hashem that comes from the knowledge that Hashem loves us, and is seeking that we in return, express our love for Him!

Reprinted from the Parshas Shoftim 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The “Missing” Dinner

I had put in a long day of work at the office, and tonight, I really was hungry. I thought for sure dinner would be ready on the table when I got home, as my wife always so devotedly manages to do. I pulled the car into the driveway, anticipating a relaxing, nourishing meal, which would contrast sharply with the stress I experienced that day.

Saw an Empty Kitchen Table

You can imagine how surprised I was when I came in and saw an empty kitchen table. And even more surprising was my wife just standing there, as if nothing was amiss!

I felt myself being tested. I didn't want to express my frustration, but I just couldn't understand what had happened that day, of all days! She didn't look like she was frazzled by anything that had happened that day, which might have delayed her making dinner on time. She was just standing there, calmly.

Without saying a word, and before I could say a word, my wife led me into the dining room, where I saw the gleaming stemware, china and silverware set out on the dining room table, with flowers and elegant napkins. It had an immediate calming effect on me.

Questioned His Wife – “What is This All About?”

I asked my wife, “What is this all about?”

She said to me, softly, “Chaim, don't you remember what today is?”

I honestly was clueless.

She said, “It's our anniversary. I wanted to do something special, so I prepared an elegant dinner, and thought it would be nicer in the dining room.”

I was glad I had not expressed my frustration!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5783 email of The Weekly Vort.

The Power of Praising Hashem

A Midrash tells the following story. A talmid chacham was traveling with an innkeeper when they met a poor, blind man collecting money on the outskirts of a city. The talmid chacham gave tzedakah, and he urged the innkeeper to do the same, but the innkeeper replied, “You know him, so you gave him tzedakah. I don't know him, so I won't give him anything.”

They walked further, and the Malach Hamavet appeared to them and said to the talmid chacham, “You gave tzedakah, so your life will be spared, and you'll live another fifty years.” Then he turned to the innkeeper. “But your final day has arrived.” The innkeeper begged, “Let me give tzedakah now!” But the Satan explained to him that it was too late. He had lost his opportunity.

The innkeeper, stoic, said, “Before you take me, just allow me to praise Hashem for all the kindness He has done for me throughout my lifetime. Then I will come with you.” The Malach Hamavet paused and then decreed, “Since you want to praise Hashem, years have been added to your life. You will not be going with me today.”

We learn from this story the great benefit of counting Hashem's kindnesses. Yes, tzedakah is lifesaving, and we should aspire to give as much charity as possible. However, praising Hashem for His infinite chessed can offer a great amount of protection as well.

Reprinted from the Parashat Ki Tavo 5783 email for Jack E. Rahmey based on the Torah teachings of Rabbi Amram Sananes.

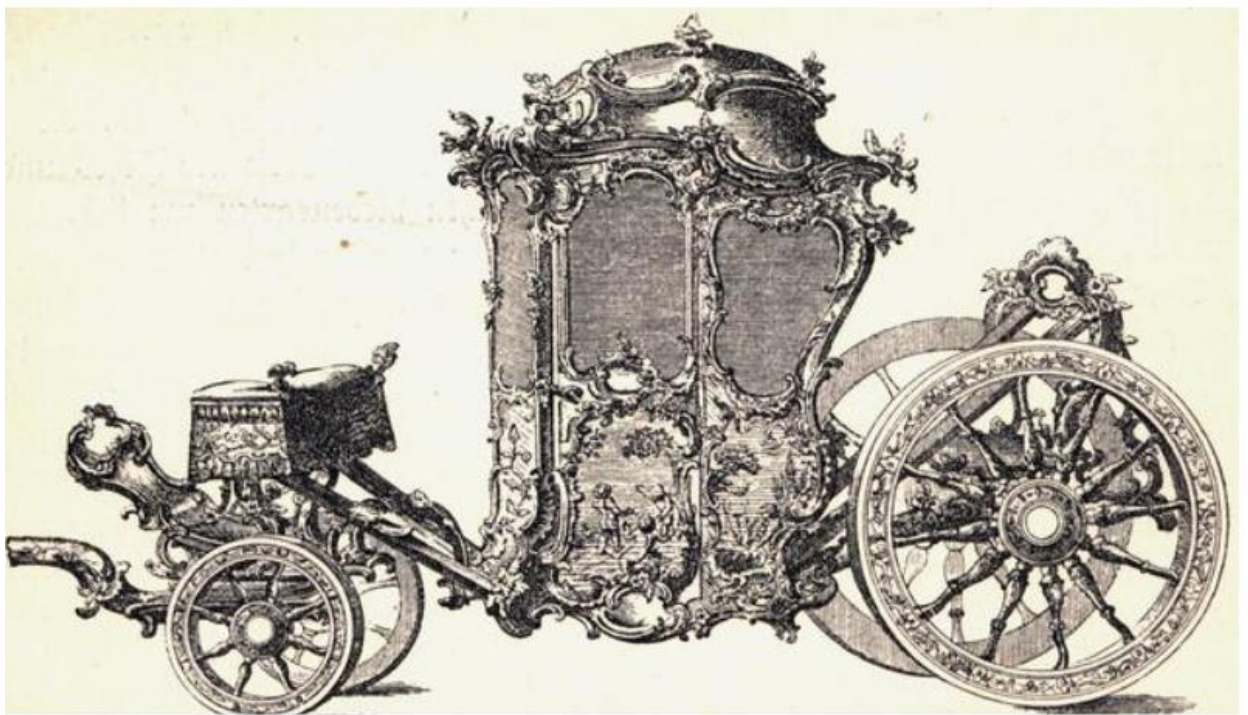
A Baal Shem Tov Story

It happened once that some Chasidim of the Baal Shem Tov were sitting together. The longer they shared their stories and insights and sang their Chasidic melodies, the stronger their desire to be with the Baal Shem Tov grew, till they impulsively decided to hire a horse and wagon and set out for the Baal Shem Tov's town of Mezhibozh.

Their own shtetl was actually quite a distance from Mezhibozh; even if they traveled non-stop for several days, there was only a small chance they might make

it before Shabbat. The wagon driver was less than enthusiastic; as far as he was concerned there was no need to hurry, and in his opinion, it was simply not possible to cover that many miles before sundown on Friday. The roads were very bad, he pointed out, and there were always unexpected obstacles and delays while traveling. But the Chasidim could not be deterred. Logical considerations could not compete with their intense longing to see their Rebbe. Without further ado they were on their way.

The wagon driver soon had the horses at a gallop, running as fast as they could under the circumstances. The roads were very narrow, wide enough for only one vehicle. They were so narrow, in fact, that if another vehicle were to appear, passing it on either side would be impossible.



As the Chasidim reached a fork in the road, at an intersection where another path joined the main thoroughfare, an elegant carriage suddenly pulled out in front of them. It was the carriage of the local poritz (landowner), and he was clearly in no hurry to go anywhere. At a leisurely pace his carriage ambled down the road, blocking all traffic. The Chasidim were now stuck behind it, reduced to a crawl.

The wagon driver gritted his teeth; even the Chasidim were becoming angry. The tiny chance they had to make it to Mezhibozh in time for Shabbat was rapidly evaporating before their eyes.

One Chasid was more upset than the others. "I can't believe it!" he complained. "After all our efforts, how can something so ridiculous spoil our plans? Just because of this slowpoke we're going to miss out on spending Shabbat with the Baal Shem Tov!"

Another Chasid, however, hastened to calm him down. "My dear brother, how can you say such a thing? Why are you worried? Have you forgotten what our master the Baal Shem Tov has taught us, that the Holy One, Blessed Be He, directly supervises every minute detail in the world, and that a leaf doesn't turn in the wind without Divine Providence?"

"Nothing Bad Can Come From on High"

"Does it not state in the Torah, 'From Him no evil will descend'? Nothing bad can come from on High, and indeed, everything is for the good. Whatever G-d does is only good and for the best. The more we accustom ourselves to thinking and acting accordingly, the more we will merit to see the good that exists in everything openly revealed. How can it be that this basic principle should be forgotten when it comes to actually implementing it in our own lives? I tell you friend, this is only a trial..."

The Chasid's fervent plea entered the hearts of the others, and their impatience disappeared. Their wagon could still only proceed at a sluggish pace, but they were filled with renewed faith and confidence that the unexpected delay was for the best. The wagon continued over the next few miles until suddenly, another potential problem appeared on the horizon. All the way up ahead, at the next intersection, they could see a group of drunken peasants waiting to pounce on the first wagon that passed by...

No One Would Have Stood Up for the Jews from Drunken Peasants

There was no doubt what the drunken peasants would have done to the Chasidim if they had been alone on the road, or traveling ahead of the poritz's carriage. No one would have stood up for the Jews or sought justice for them after the fact. They would have simply received the "usual" treatment drunken peasants knew so well how to mete out. The Chasidim would have been grateful to have escaped with their lives, let alone continue on their journey.

As it turned out, however, because the poritz's carriage was hogging the right of way, And you shall go to the place which the L-rd your G-d will choose to place His name there (Deut. 26:2) A Jew does not travel the face of the earth of his own volition; Divine Providence leads him from place to place for the sole purpose of "placing His name there" — sanctifying the name of G-d in that particular place. (Hayom Yom)

The hooligans simply dispersed once they saw whom the wago contained. By the time the Chasidim reached the intersection they had all slunk away and the danger was over.

A few minutes later the poritz's carriage turned off onto a side road, and the main thoroughfare was suddenly clear. With a crack of the whip the horses were again at a gallop, and the Chasidim made it to Mezhibozh before Shabbat—with plenty of time to spare.

From this incident we learn that even something that doesn't appear to be good at first, may in fact be so in reality.

Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tavo 5783 edition of L'Chaim.

The Eyes Have It

By Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

“If your brother is not near you and you do not know him, then gather it (the lost object) into your house, and it shall remain with you until your brother inquires after it, and you shall return it to him.” (22:2)



In the early 19th century in Lithuania, Reb Chaim Mi Verlogen once raised a large sum of money to rescue a Jew who was being held to ransom in a neighboring city. The only way to get to this town was through a forest notorious for its bandits.

They had barely entered the forest when the bandits surrounded Reb Chaim and his talmidim. There was no escape.

Reb Chaim handed all the money to the bandit chief.

“You will now be put to death,” said the chief. Reb Chaim said,

“Before you kill us, I ask for a final request.”

“What do you want?” asked the bandit chief.

“I ask for a few minutes for contemplation.”

Reb Chaim sat on the ground, seemingly lost in prayer. Finally, Reb Chaim said, “I am ready.”

The Bandits Flee from the Jews

The bandit chief raised his axe to kill Reb Chaim. Then he looked down into Reb Chaim's eyes, threw down the axe and the money and shouted, “Let's get out of here.” The other bandits fled.

The talmidim cried out. “A miracle!”

Reb Chaim said, “That was no miracle. When I knew that I was going to die, I thought to myself, the greatest deveikut, the greatest closeness that a person can have with his soul in this world is in the moments just before the soul departs the body. I didn't want my final moments in this world to be filled with hakpada, with resentment.

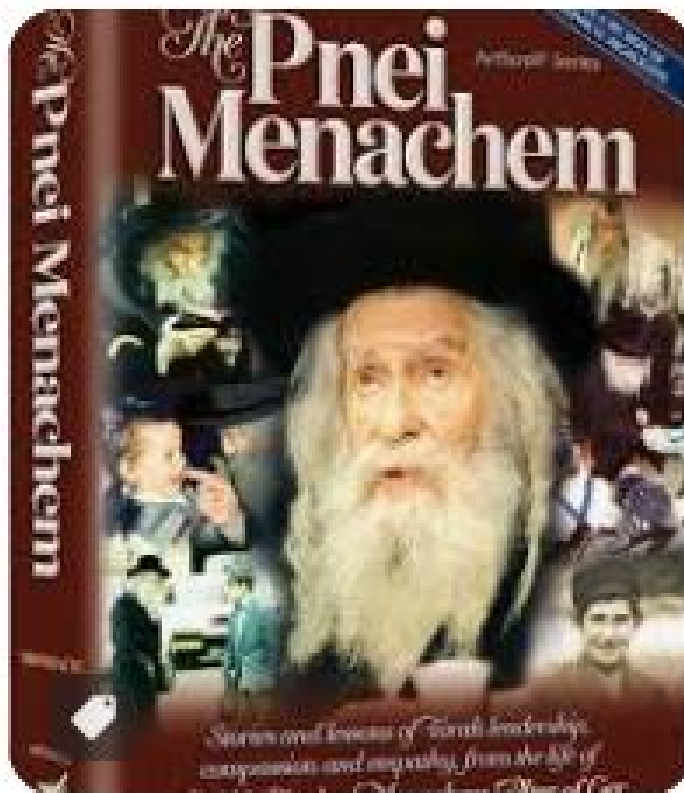
Finding Merits for the Murderous Bandit

“And so, I asked for time to try to judge the bandit favorably. Much as I tried, resentment overcame me, time and time again, until I thought to myself, this bandit was once an innocent young boy. He was probably poor and hungry. Probably, one day he stole an apple or a cake and someone caught him, and he got locked him up with a bunch of criminals, and when he got out, he turned to a life of crime and one day he killed someone. A young, innocent boy eventually became a killer.

“Then I felt I could leave the world without resentment. When he looked into my eyes, he saw that I understood him. That was probably the first time anyone looked at him like that since he was a boy. When we judge people favorably, we can actually change who they are.

Reprinted from the Parshat Ki Tavo 5783 email of OHRNET, the Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine.

Providing Water for the Birds



The family members of the Pnei Menachem of Gur, zt”l, once noticed that something was wrong with their sink water. One of the Rebbe’s attendants decided to check the family’s solar water heater to see if he could find the source of the problem.

In Eretz Yisroel, people take advantage of the abundant sunshine to heat their water. There is a system that is made up of water tanks and solar panels that is installed on the roof. The Rebbe’s attendant went up to the roof, and saw that the cover of the water tank had fallen off, and he saw two little birds had perched on the edge of the tank, and were drinking from the water inside.

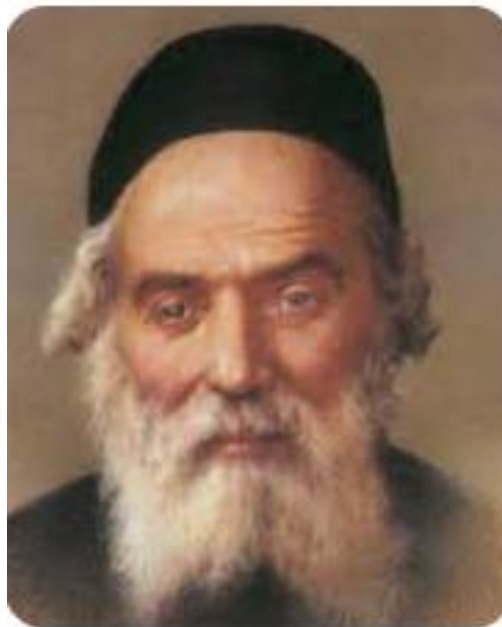
The attendant asked someone else to come help him pour out the contaminated water from the tank, and on the bottom of the tank, they found a dead bird. Apparently, it had fallen in while taking a drink, and it was preventing the water from going into the house.

The attendants cleaned the tank thoroughly and replaced the cover. They then went and told the Rebbe what they had found, and that the problem was taken care of. The Rebbe thanked them profusely, but his heart was filled with pity for the poor birds, who would now have to search for a different place to find a drink of water. He

instructed his attendant, "Please place a bowl filled with water on top of the cover of the water tank. That way, when the birds come back to drink, they will find what they are looking for!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

The Chofetz Chaim and the Ten-Year-Old Boy



At the beginning of World War I, the Chofetz Chaim had a dilemma about what he should do with the Yeshivah in Radin, as there was so much turmoil going on. One of the heads of the Yeshivah did a special Goral HaGra, where one can be directed by the Torah to a specific Pasuk that will guide one's decision, to see where Hashem was leading them to.

Without knowing that the Rosh Yeshivah was doing this, the Chofetz Chaim was approached by some people in the Yeshivah and asked him what they should do, and the Chofetz Chaim said, "I have given this much thought, and I feel that we should split the Yeshivah in two, similar to Yaakov Avinu's plan of action. When Yaakov was being approached by Eisav, he split his camp into two groups, so that

at least one will be able to escape if it was attacked. We too should do the same thing.”

The Rosh Yeshivah heard this and said that miraculously, the Pasuk that came out in the Goral was the exact one the Chofetz Chaim had mentioned! They followed the plan. Half the Yeshivah fled from Radin, and other half remained. The Chofetz Chaim went along with the half that left to a city called Semiarch. There, they were welcomed by the Edelstein family, one of whose children grew to become Rav Gershon Edelstein, zt”l, the Rosh Yeshivah of the Ponovezh Yeshivah.

Heard the Sounds of a Woman Weeping

One day, while in Semiarch, the Chofetz Chaim heard outside his window the sound of a woman weeping. He looked outside and saw that she was speaking with the Rosh Yeshivah, so the Chofetz Chaim decided to approach them to see if he could be of any help.

The woman was requesting that her ten-year-old son be accepted into the Radin Yeshivah. While the Rosh Yeshivah thought the ten-year difference between him and the other boys would be too much for him, the Chofetz Chaim thought differently. He said, “The mother knows best. If she feels that her son would benefit here, we are to do the very best to ensure that he gets accepted.” And that was the end of the conversation.

A few months later, unfortunately, this boy became ill with a rare disease, and he had to be hospitalized for many months. The Chofetz Chaim instructed his daughter, Faiga, to supervise the boy, and be at his side to take care of all his needs. Soon after, the Yeshivah realized that because of impending war activity, they had to leave Semiarch.

The Chofetz Chaim Tells His Daughter to Stay and Help the Hospitalized Boy

However, this boy was still in the hospital, and if they fled, he wouldn't get the medical care he needed. The Chofetz Chaim instructed Faiga to remain in Semiarch so that he could continue getting the proper treatment. After three months, when he was healthy enough to be discharged, he left the hospital.

However, instead of going and rejoining the Radin Yeshivah, he insisted that he switch and attend the Slabodka Yeshivah. His decision to go to a different Yeshivah was a little disappointing to Faiga. She had spent three months away from her family during a turbulent time looking after him, and just like that, he decided to leave the Yeshivah? Based on his age, he wasn't even supposed to be accepted, but still, the Chofetz Chaim let him in, and she devoted all that time to him!

But she accepted the situation with Simchah. The young boy was successful in the Slabodka Yeshivah, and he became one of the top students, and eventually, he

married the daughter of the Rosh Yeshivah. Many years later, toward the end of her life, Faiga, who was already a great-grandmother, moved in to her son's home.

She told her daughter-in-law, "Years ago, my father asked me to look after a young boy who had been taken into the Yeshivah. I watched him for a few months in the middle of the war, and look what he became! That boy's daughter married my son, and that daughter is you!"

Faiga reflected how she had nurtured a boy who ultimately left the Yeshivah, but in the end, she saw how, in that fearful time, she was actually looking after the father of her very own generations to come. This boy was Rav Moshe Chavroni, the Rosh Yeshivah of the Chevron Yeshivah, whose daughter married the grandson of the Chofetz Chaim!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

A Time to Not Display Humility



Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, was known for his tremendous humility. His sister was once asked, "What makes your brother so special?" She responded, "What makes my brother special is that he never looks at himself as being so special."

However, Rav Moshe's humility was not from any weakness. When necessary, he could be firm and strong, if that course of action was needed. Once, when Rav Moshe was deciding a Halachic argument between two

individuals, he caught someone offering testimony that was clearly lies. Rav Moshe reprimanded the man and asked him to leave the room.

Another time, Rav Moshe stated a Halachah that one of the litigants did not agree with. The man even had the Chutzpah to accuse Rav Moshe of creating a false Halachah in order to finish up with the case.

Rav Moshe stood up and looked at this individual and exclaimed, "My name is Moshe Feinstein. True, I do not know how to learn, but go out in the streets and ask if I am a liar!"

In another case, Rav Moshe decided that a certain woman could be released from her Agunah status, and she was free to get married. Some Rabbanim who were involved in the case disagreed with Rav Moshe, and kept bringing arguments as to why he could not rule as he did.

When it reached a certain point, Rav Moshe raised his hand and quieted the opponents. He said, "I am the Gadol HaDor, and the Halachah is like I have said it is!" And that was the end of the arguing!

Rav Moshe was full of humility, but he knew his place and position in Klal Yisroel, and that is not Ga'avah!

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5783 email of Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg's Torah U'Tefilah.

Fences and Traffic Lights

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, ZT" L, was in a taxi when a secular driver began to grumble as to why the rabbis always seemed to make life so difficult for the Jews. He could not understand why it was necessary for them to create additional fences around the existing prohibitions of the Torah. Rabbi Shlomo Zalman did not respond. A few minutes later, the car stopped at a traffic light. Rav Shlomo Zalman said, "why do these traffic lights make our life difficult - I am in a rush and we have to stop!

The driver stared at the rabbi in the amazement. "Rabbi, those lights protect us from other reckless drivers," he argued, "without them, we would probably get killed!" Rav Shlomo Zalman concurred and added. "Now you understand the need for rabbinic fences. Without them, we would probably transgress all the other sins. They, too, protect us!"

Reprinted from the Parshas Ki Savo 5783 email of Torah Sweets.