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SEFER BREISHIS - THE SAKKAL EDITION

DEDICATED BY JOEY & PAMELA SAKKAL

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Tolerating Insult

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פרשת וישב

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Tolerating Insult

Contents:

Part I. Yosef's Merit - 3

Part II. Dovid's Merit - 7

Part III. Your Merit - 11

Part I. Yosef's Merit

Spit In The Face

Many years ago I was walking up the stairs from the subway and a woman was passing in the other direction. As she came closer to me she mumbled something about Jews with beards being the worst type of thieves. And then she looked at me and spat directly into my face.

Now, I didn't let her get away with it. I said, "You have to come upstairs with me to the street or something will happen to you. And I'm going to have you arrested." And I said it not so quietly like I'm saying it to you. There were people standing around; they wanted to defend her but they saw the look on my face - I meant business!

She tried to beg off. "I'm sorry. It was a mistake."

"Nothing doing," I said. I made her climb the stairs all the way up to the street level and I stood outside with her looking for a policeman, waiting for a police car to drive by or for an officer on his beat to walk by. But you know

how it is in New York; you look and you look, and you wait. If you need them, they can't be found.

So finally I told her to go home. What could I do? I had to get to the yeshivah - but I would have pressed charges. And if she hadn't come upstairs with me, she would have had something to remember! I wouldn't let her get away with it. She spat into my face!

The Tzaddik Is Humiliated

Now, I'm telling you this little anecdote in order to draw a contrast. That was me, a plain man. But let me tell you now about a certain *tzaddik*, how he reacted to a situation. When Yosef Hatzaddik was in the house of Potiphar, you remember how his master's wife cast her eyes on him and tried to tempt him. And finally she was so desperate, she started tugging at his garments. So he left his garment in her hand and he ran away.

She was so angry, so scorned by him, that she decided to ruin him. And so she went out in the street and began shouting to everyone that Yosef had attempted to violate her.

The Medrash describes what happened next. Potiphar rushed home from work and when she told him the story - all the made up details about what this wicked Ivri had tried to do - he became full of rage. He seized Yosef and began pummeling him. And after a good beating, he grabbed Yosef by the ear and she grabbed him by the other ear, and they dragged him to the police station, to come before the judges to be sentenced.

Now as they were dragging him through the streets they were calling out to the passersby, "Look at how this Jewboy pays us back for what we did to him. We took him into our house; we even gave him authority. And this is how he repays us."

And as more people gathered - men, women and children - they were all shouting calumnies against Yosef, slandering him. "What do you expect from a dirty Jew? That's what you get for bringing a Hebrew into your home," they said. And they were spitting at him and insulting him as he was being dragged through the streets.

The Refined Tzaddik

Now the whole thing was plain wickedness, a frame-up. It was just the opposite! She was the guilty one! Yosef had no intention of doing anything wrong at all - he was trying to remain virtuous. And here he's being blamed and insulted as if he was the guilty party.

So how did Yosef defend his good name? What was he yelling back as they insulted him with lies? Nothing. He kept his mouth shut and didn't say a word. Like they say, "Grin and bear it." That was Yosef. I don't know if he grinned - the Medrash doesn't tell us one way or another - but he bore it.

What does the Scripture say about this incident? In Tehillim (105:19) it's described as follows: אִמְרַת הַשֵּׁם צִרְפָּתָהּ: – *The command of Hashem refined him*. Which means that when a man goes through such an experience at the Hands of Hashem and he is quiet, he is thereby refined and purified. When you are insulted for nothing and you keep quiet you are making progress in perfection.

Yosef didn't say, "It's her fault. She's an immoral woman." He didn't say anything. He didn't accuse her. He just kept quiet. And as each epithet was hurled at him, each time Yosef became more refined. Because he understood that it was the אִמְרַת הַשֵּׁם, that it was according to the command of Hashem that these words were being hurled at him, so he was quiet. And just because of that he was refined.

Path to Purification

Not only it refined him; I'm inclined to say that this is one of the more important episodes that made Yosef great. We know of many things in the life of Yosef that catapulted him to greatness in the Eyes of Hashem but I imagine that this one episode – keeping quiet in the face of insults and criticism – is one of the more important ones that made him deserving of greatness.

Yosef could never have become later the ruler of all of Egypt if he hadn't passed through this test of fire. אִמְרַת הַשֵּׁם צִרְפָּתָהּ: – *it purified him*. It was an opportunity for perfection of character that was given to him as a gift. And because he made use of that opportunity that's why he became who he became.

Now, I'm not saying that you must always keep your mouth closed. If you're decent and you're being unjustly accused, of course you have a right to defend yourself. It's even a *mitzvah* if they're saying falsehood about you, to clear your name. But suppose it's not a matter where you can clear a name. They're ridiculing you anyhow; no matter what you'll say it's not going to change. You'll invite even more.

It could be, maybe sometimes you have to stand up for yourself – probably not, but it could be. It needs wisdom and discernment. But whatever it is, it's a perfection, a purification of your character when you learn to tolerate insults. That's why I'm still me, while Yosef became Yosef Hatzaddik. Because he knew how to purify himself.

Every Yid A Big Tzaddik

Now with this principle in mind – that remaining silent in the face of insults can make a person great – we'll go ahead and understand the following story.

We are told in a Medrash that Dovid Hamelech aspired to become great. It's good to be ambitious in *ruchniyus* by the way. Although we should be humble, but when it comes to spiritual things, to matters of personality and character and achievement, everybody should aspire to become great. Not merely to be good, but to excel.

The Rambam says in *Hilchos Teshuvah* an even more surprising thing. He says everyone can become a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabeinu. You can't become a *navi* like Moshe Rabeinu, that won't happen – in our days nobody will become even a small *navi*. But you can aspire to be a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabeinu. That's a statement of the Rambam that we should think about always. These words should be engraved someplace in a public place and everybody should look at these words and study them. "You can become a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabeinu." Not only a man; a woman too. Even a girl can aspire to be a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabeinu.

Abrahamic Aspirations

Now Dovid Hamelech understood this principle and he yearned for greatness. When Dovid opened up the Torah and he read about Avraham, how this great man earned a place in history, how Hakodosh Boruch Hu said about him (Bereishis 18:19) **בִּי יִדְעָתִי**, I love this man and My mind is on him; about Avraham being chosen from all others. And not only was he chosen but he's mentioned in our prayers - forever and ever we say "Elokei Avraham" in our davening. And we conclude *magen Avraham*, the shield of Avraham.

And so Dovid began to think, "Maybe I could aspire to such a thing? I could also become great. Why shouldn't I? I have a *neshamah* too. Why can't I be like Avraham?"

Now you have to know that Dovid was only seven hundred years after Avraham and so it wasn't such a remarkable thing for a man to aspire to, to become something like Avraham Avinu. He began to think. "How can I do that? In what way is it possible for me to achieve this greatness?" That's what the Gemara tells us. This happened when he was young and he was thinking, "Maybe I can mold my life in such a way I could become a second Avraham Avinu?"

And therefore if you want to know something about Dovid and his whole career, now you know a key to the biography of this great man. Already when he was a little shepherd boy he thought about this; and later in life when he became a *melech* he thought about it too. That was his desire always. How can I become like Avraham Avinu?

Actually it's an obligation on all of us. **חַיֵּב אָדָם לומר מְתִי יִגִיעַ מַעֲשֵׂי לְמַעֲשֵׂה** **אֲבוֹתָי** – Every Jew should say, "When will my deeds reach the level of the

deeds of our fathers?” It’s easy to say that *ma’amar* but Dovid lived that kind of a life.

A Discouraging Response

Now, we are told in the Medrash that Hakodosh Boruch Hu responded to Dovid’s yearning. He said to Dovid – he gave him information in some way and let him know that although it’s a very worthy aspiration but he’s not going to make it. It’s not going to happen,

Now why He told it to him, that has to be explained, but Dovid was given the information he won’t make it. These men, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov were unequalled. That’s what he was told.

And when this information came to Dovid, he was downcast. He was crestfallen. It was to him a very big discouragement because that was his dream; it was a big part of his life-work, his lifelong aspiration. But that was the *psak* he received. “To be on the level of the Avos,” Hashem said, “is too big of an achievement for you. It’s beyond your reach. The *merkavah*, the chariot of Hashem, is supported by the three Avos. And even with all of your greatness and achievements and perfection, that’s too much for you. Other things, you’ll achieve. But that perfection of the mind and character that the Avos achieved, it’s not going to be.”

Now, that was supposed to be the end of the story. Dovid’s aspirations would be a fuel that would lead him to great things. He would become Dovid Hamelech and he would write the Sefer Tehillim and wage wars on behalf of his people and thousands of other accomplishments he would make. But to become so great that he would be like the Avos, no, it can’t be.

Part II. Dovid’s Merit

Advice of Achisofel

Now we’re going to study a little episode in Dovid’s life that came much later. There came a time when Dovid was visited by a period of vicissitude, a bitter experience, and that was a revolt that rose against him under the leadership of one of his best friends, Achisofel, and his son, Avshalom.

Achisofel was actually revered by Dovid. **וְעֵצַת אַחִישׁוֹפֵל בְּיָמֵם הָהֵם כְּאִשֶּׁר** **יִשְׁאֵל אִישׁ בְּרַב־וְאֵלֵקִים** – *When they would ask Achisofel for advice it was with exactly the same confidence as if Hashem had spoken to them* (Shmuel II, 16:23). His counsel in those days was so revered as if you went and consulted the *urim v’tumim*. That’s the statement that’s made by the *nevi’im*. He was a living *urim v’tumim*.

Actually, before they did anything, before they set out on any campaign against the enemy so they asked the advice of Achisofel; and then they consulted the *urim v'tumim* and it always turned out to be the same advice. If Achisofel said no, they didn't bother asking the *urim v'tumim*. And so Dovid revered Achisofel. He was to him, a valuable confidant and close friend.

Admiration of Avshalom

Dovid also had a son, Avshalom. Avshalom you have to know was a big *tzaddik*. וַיְבַנֵּי דָוִד בְּהַנִּיחַ הָיָה – Dovid's sons were kohanim (*ibid*. 8:18). Kohanim doesn't mean that they were *makriv korbanos*; it means that they were *talmidei chachomim* and they used to *pasken shaylos* to the people like *kohanim* – יוֹרֵי הַלֵּוִי הַקְּשָׁטָיִם. They were all *talmidei chachomim* who taught Hashem's Torah to the nation. Shlomo was a very big *talmid chacham*. Kilav ben Dovid too; he was a perfect *tzaddik* without a blemish.

They all were *talmidei chachomim* but Avshalom was the star among them. Not only was he a big *talmid chochom* but he was a *nazir*. In those days people admired *nezirim*. A *nazir* was a man who dedicated himself to Hashem. No wine. Never. All his life he wouldn't touch wine. Not only that, he kept away from dead bodies. He wouldn't enter a house where there was a *meis*, or go in a cemetery. To him life was to be only *taharah*; purity of body and purity of mind.

And not only that but he had long flowing hair. He was a beautiful man to look at. He had the hair of the Nazirite and everybody who looked at him was full of *yiras hakavod* for Avshalom. They saw not only a *nazir* but a beautiful *nazir*. It was the Shechinah that rested on him. That's what people said about him, and because he was the son of the *melech* he didn't go alone in the street; wherever he went he had footmen running ahead of him. It was a spectacle to see this *tzaddik* appear in public.

How The Mighty Have Fallen

Suddenly something extraordinary occurred. These two great men, Achisofel and Avshalom, got together in collusion and they made a revolt against Dovid. And it was a successful revolt. The people came to their side and they overthrew Dovid.

And now Dovid had to pick up his feet and flee to save his life. Dovid who had been the hero of the Jewish people – at one time everybody sang songs about him; it says in Tanach that the people sang songs about Dovid – now he was a fallen hero.

Because not only did they make a revolution against him, but they put him into *cherem*. They declared that Dovid was a sinner. There were reasons why you could say that about Dovid and the people were convinced that

they were right. The time had come to get rid of this man. You know, people, even though they're enthusiastic for a man up to a certain time, but when others arise and speak against him with authority, you can win the people over and they become enemies of this man. And so Dovid fled to save his life.

Imagine now that terrible situation. Here is this king who gave his whole life for his people; he gave them everything! He conquered their enemies and won the land for them. He was once their darling and he deserved it. And now he's fleeing to save his life.

And so Dovid was walking with his small band of loyal people. He left the city and he was weeping and saying *viduy*, confessing to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He said, "I deserve all this," but his heart was heavy. Everything was crumbling before him.

Salt On His Wounds

And as they fled from Yerushalayim, they entered the territory of the land of Binyomin and they came to the town of Bachurim, a town in Binyomin. And a man came out of Bachurim, a dignified man. Dovid had known this man in his better days. A big *talmid chochom*. This man had always behaved towards Dovid like you do towards a great monarch, with the fullest respect.

Now when Dovid saw this man coming toward him with his company, Dovid was thinking, "He's coming probably to commiserate, to offer me sympathy. Maybe he'll offer me refreshments too so that I can regain my strength and my good mood."

What did this man do? This man was carrying in his hand a pile of dirt and stones and he heaved it upon the head of Dovid. And he said (*ibid.* 16:7): **יָצָא יָצָא אִישׁ הַרְמִיָּם** – "Get out of here you bloody fellow. You deserve what you're getting! Get moving. Don't stop in our town."

Immediately Dovid's loyal guard drew his sword and said, "This man deserves to be executed. A man who raises his hand against the king has to be put to death." And he drew his sword to do the act. But Dovid quickly said, "Don't touch him. **הַיְשֵׁם אָמַר לוֹ קִלְלָהּ** – *Hashem told him to curse me*. Let him be. We'll ignore him and move on." And they moved on. The man threw dirt and dirty words on Dovid, and Dovid ignored him.

The End Is The Beginning

Now, that's the end of the story in Tanach, the end of the story down below. But actually it's the beginning of a great new story – only that the new story was not written in the Tanach; it's written in the Medrash. Our Sages tell us what happened up Above at that moment.

בְּאוֹתוֹ שָׁעָה – At that time, when that happened, וְזָכָה דָּוִד – Dovid became worthy in the Eyes of Hashem, מְרַבֵּה, לְרַגְלֵי מְרַבָּה, לְהִיּוֹת הַרְבִּיעִי לְרַגְלֵי מְרַבָּה, – and he became the fourth one in the chariot of Hashem. After Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Dovid was put in the next place.

Now it's very difficult for us to say that. Where is Moshe Rabeinu? And even Yehoshua, where is he? So many great people! But Hashem skipped over everybody and he said, "You're the fourth one in the *merkavah*. Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov and the fourth one is Dovid.

"If you can have that fortitude of mind," said Hakodosh Boruch Hu, "that constant Awareness of Me, that even at such a time when you are so embittered at the loss of your power; when a son has made a revolt against you and your heart is bitter, and now somebody comes along and throws dirt on you and curses you, and according to the law his head should be taken off and you say, 'No. Hashem told him to curse me,' if that's the case, my child Dovid, I'm going to elevate you."

A Gift of Pain

Now when exactly Dovid discovered this, I can't tell you. Maybe it was only in the Next World that he realized what had actually occurred on that desolate road outside of the town of Bachurim; I don't know. But whenever he discovered it, he looked back and knew why it all happened. That insult, the dirt that was thrown at his head, it was a glorious opportunity that Hashem gave him. It was a gift. That's why his son rebelled against him and that's why they tried to take his life; that's why he had to flee and that's why they threw dirt on him and cursed him; all for the purpose he should pass the test and become what he always wished for – to become exceptionally great in the Eyes of Hashem.

Now we have to question this because the way we see it Dovid had many achievements that made him great. If you would ask us, Dovid made many other achievements – bigger achievements – for which he deserved to be chosen. When Dovid made his Tehillim, every one of the *mizmorim* was such an achievement of purity of heart, of *ahavas Hashem*, of devotion to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and deep intellect. Each one is a masterpiece which for that alone Dovid deserved to be chosen. And how much more for the entire Sefer Tehillim?! That compilation, a masterpiece of *ruach hakodesh* that came out of his pure heart, is unequaled in the world history; it's unequaled even among our noble history. נְעִים זְמִירוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל – Dovid was called "the sweet singer of Yisroel" because his songs were composed with a pure heart that loved Hakodosh Boruch Hu with everything he had.

Wasn't that enough to make Dovid chosen? That from then on forever and ever the Jewish people would continue to sing the songs of Dovid? The

שִׁירֵי דָוִד עֲבָדְךָ – the songs of Dovid, Your servant, that's how we sing to Hashem even today. To this day, we're repeating his words forever. Isn't that enough to ensconce Dovid in a throne of glory near Hakodosh Boruch Hu?

The Greatest Achievement

Or, shall we look at the fact that Dovid conquered all of Eretz Yisroel? After so many years, beginning with Yehoshua, enemies were allowed to remain in the land and they did a great deal of harm. They persecuted our people and they corrupted with their bad example until Dovid came along and finally conquered Eretz Yisroel so that it should be a pure land where we could best serve Hashem. Dovid even conquered all the enemies outside of Eretz Yisroel and from now on they kept quiet. In the forty years that followed we didn't hear a word from them. All they did was to send tribute to Yerushalayim. Is that a small achievement?

And that's only the beginning. There's a long list of accomplishments that Dovid achieved. And yet, according to our Sages, for none of these things did Dovid merit to become a *revi'i lemerkavah*. Instead it was just one incident, a small episode. It just happened incidentally that as he was fleeing for his life, he passed through a town and somebody insulted him. Just at that moment something happened that topped all of Dovid's achievements and made him the greatest.

It was at that time the decree went out to the *beis din shel ma'aleh* that although you can't change *magen Avraham*, that's his place, but there's going to be a place for *magen Dovid* too. In the *brachos* that the Am Yisrael are going to say, there's one place where they're going to say *magen Dovid*. "You cannot be *magen Avrohom*, but you'll be *magen Dovid*."

Because Dovid at a time when he was being insulted so terribly, he was able to restrain himself, at that moment he became so elevated in the Eyes of Hashem that Hashem at that time conferred upon him the title *magen Dovid* – the shield of Dovid. And so these men, Yosef and Dovid, gained greatness from the quality of being able to tolerate injury and insult.

Part III. Your Merit

Tolerating Lazy Bums

Now, the question is, what's so great about this *middah* of tolerating insult? It's true that it's a good practice, a good way to live, no question about it. Life is going to continue smoothly and healthfully when you follow this practice. Because if you stop and you take issue and there's a confrontation, then who knows where the end will be. When people appear in divorce courts or when people land up in hospitals, in very many cases it

began by taking umbrage at a remark, an insult or a criticism. So you'll be more successful if you learn to ignore such things.

You might save your life too. You're walking down the street and someone says to you, "Dirty so-and-so." As far as you're concerned, you didn't hear it. Because suppose you do hear, and suppose you turn around and you bristle, then you're in for it.

Here's a young *yeshivah* man, nineteen years old. I knew him. It was *chamisha asar b'Shvat* and he was taking some boys from a *yeshivah ketanah* out to a certain stadium, Madison Square Garden, for an outing. As they get out of their station wagon and they're going under his supervision to the entrance which is some blocks away, two *shkotzim*, two vicious *goyim*, are standing there and they're insulting the group of boys. The boys are wearing *yamulkas* and the *goyim* are calling them filthy, anti-Semitic names.

Now the ordeal wouldn't have lasted long because the *goyim* wouldn't bother following them; they're too lazy for that. Troublemakers, loudmouths, are usually especially lazy. And so, in perhaps two minutes they would have been out of earshot and the entire episode would have been forgotten. But this *bochur*, because he was a leader of the boys and he thought the boys looked up to him for leadership, so he retorted. He answered back the *goyim*. So the *goyim* became even more abusive and there became an altercation and one *goy* went back to the car where he had his tools and took out a hammer and he struck this *yeshivah* boy over the head and he murdered him.

Annoying Customers

And so this humility is worthwhile. Wise people, even if they're not trying to perfect their character in the service of Hashem, but they know that if you want to remain alive or you want to remain in business, so you must restrain your anger at the insults. When the customer comes into the grocery store with all types of complaints and insults, even though you would prefer to chase the annoying customer out of the store, but you know that tomorrow they'll come back with their food stamp money from the government and they'll buy all types of *nosherei*. So it pays to ignore – it pays in this world.

And all that is very good. Wonderful! We want successful businessmen. We want to live in peace with our spouses and our neighbors. We want to live long lives without getting beaten up by *shkotzim*. That's also part of living successfully. But it's not everything; we see from the stories of Yosef and Dovid that we're talking now about something much bigger than that.

Yosef was so purified that he went on to become the leader of the Am Yisroel for eighty years. Never again did we have a leader chosen by Hashem

to lead the nation for such a long period of time. And Dovid became the fourth *merkavah*. His great ambition to be great like the Avos was realized because of this little incident. And that's a question we have to answer: what's so great about keeping quiet in the face of insults that it should accomplish such levels of greatness?

Emulating Him

Now, we won't be able to cover the subject in its entirety but we'll give one answer now that is absolutely true. One of the greatest achievements a person can make in this world is to be like Hashem, to emulate Him. That's why, if you're looking for a ticket to greatness, a path to perfection, then *וְהִלַּכְתָּ בְּדַרְכָיו*, to walk in His ways, that's it. And that's how these great men, Yosef Hatzaddik and Dovid Hamelech and others like them, achieved their greatness – they practiced emulating Hashem in their lives.

Now we're going to see what it means that they emulated Hakodosh Boruch Hu. How does tolerating insult and remaining quiet in the face of calumnies mean that you're emulating Hashem?

There's a *sefer* called Tomer Devorah, a famous *sefer* written about four hundred years ago by Rav Moshe Cordovero, and he speaks there about this *mitzvah* of emulating the ways of Hashem. Now among other things he speaks there about this quality of tolerating insult. He quotes what the *navi* says about Hashem: *מי קל כְּמוֹךָ* – Who is there a strong G-d like You?

What does it mean, “a strong G-d”? The Tomer Devorah says like this. Strength means the strength to bear insult. That's a strong G-d. And he explains there that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is a King who is constantly suffering the insults of mankind beyond what our imagination can contain. People are constantly sinning against Him and He continues to bear it.

Empowering The Rebels

There's nothing that's concealed from Hakodosh Boruch Hu's view. He sees everything and there's no moment that a man isn't fed and supported from the power of Hakodosh Boruch Hu that bestows upon him the ability to function; because man, every living thing, has hundreds of thousands of functions that are performed by miracles. When you study them, it's remarkable. And you see it's the Word of Hashem that keeps life going. If a man dies, even though he's intact, all his organs are intact, nobody can give him life again. All the scientists of the world cannot recreate life. Once he's dead, it's forever. So Hakodosh Boruch Hu is the one that maintains life.

Now that means that when people sin, in that moment that they're committing the sin, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is showering upon them the blessings of life! Any man who walks out in the street on Shabbos in *reshus*

horabim carrying a newspaper, as soon as he walks out of the door he makes an *akirah vehanachah*, he should drop dead. That's what he deserves. He deserves to fall down the steps. That's *sekilah*. Carrying on Shabbos is *chiyuv sekilah*. He should fall down and drop dead. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu bears it. He waits; He gives him a chance. *Ad yom moso yechakeh lo*. He gives him a lot of chances.

Not only He waits but He's helping him perform the sin! Hakodosh Boruch Hu at that moment that a man is committing the sin, at that moment that he's raising his hand to his mouth to eat something forbidden let's say, or he's going to hit somebody with his hand, in that moment Hakodosh Boruch Hu is showering upon the man the blessing of strength and good health; He's even helping him doing it.

Don't we see that the atheists are still able to eat; they don't get immediate obstruction of the intestines like they deserve. They're still able to see; they're not stricken blind like they deserve. They continued to enjoy the gifts of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Emulating His Power

Not only atheists; don't we look in places we shouldn't? Why shouldn't Hakodosh Boruch Hu, *chas v'shalom*, remove from us the ability to see that He's giving us every second? Don't we use all the gifts of life, sometimes, to sin. But no; Hakodosh Boruch Hu still performs for people all the miracles of life despite what they're doing against Him.

It means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is demonstrating all the time His power – His power of ignoring insults. And so we see that's a *middah* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, to tolerate reproach, calumny, slander, and insult. Now that man is actually slapping Hashem, *kavyachol*, in the face by rebelling against Him. But Hashem is a *Melech Ne'elav*. He's a King that allows Himself to tolerate insult and therefore He remains quiet and even aids the people who are rebelling against Him in the moment of their revolt. Hakodosh Boruch Hu continues to confer all benefits even upon evil men who rebel against Him openly.

And because our great men studied that example, they were humble. Yosef kept his mouth closed; Dovid said "Don't do anything." To bear insult with silence! That's a tremendous way of emulating Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now, to emulate Hashem in such a fashion requires not only that you saw this in the Tomer Devorah or that you heard someone speaking about it. That's important, to spend time thinking about Hashem's *Middos* so that we can emulate them, but if in the heat of the moment, while someone is pouring complaints and insults upon your head, we forget about Hashem so it's for naught.

Acting On A Tip

You know, if you prepare for such a thing, then maybe you can do it too. Certainly, if they'll tell you, "Mister Chaim So and So, you have to know as you leave your home after breakfast to go to your office tomorrow morning, there's a fellow who is going to accost you on the street and he'll throw dirt on you and he'll belittle you and slander you. And you should know it's a big opportunity to get *Olam Habo*." So what are you going to do the night before? You'll take out the Mesillas Yesharim and you'll sit down and study the words. You'll find the section on *Anavah* and you'll study for an hour or for two hours, three hours.

And then tomorrow when you set out after breakfast, you're gritting your teeth. You're pushing your fingernails into your flesh to restrain your anger. And here comes this mean fellow and he's heaving dirt on your head. You flush, you turn white, you're full of anger but two hours of Mesillas Yesharim, three hours, had some effect on you and so you pass by. Maybe you think in your heart it would be a good idea if he dropped dead. But at least you passed that one time test.

But to live that way all the time, it's too unpredictable; it's impossible unless you remember that you're standing in front of Hashem. Such a thing requires an Awareness of Hashem all the time, an Awareness that He's giving you and giving you more and giving you more, no matter how much you insult Him by means of your sins.

Now, beside for an awareness, you should *daven* for it too, for help to achieve this. You have to know that every day we pray in *davenen*, we say **וְלִמְקַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי תְרוֹם** – *to those who curse me or belittle me, my soul should remain solid*, **וְנַפְשִׁי כְעָפָר לְכָל תְּהִיָּה** – *and my soul should be like dust to everybody*. Dust is trampled on. And you pray for it! You pray to Hashem every day you should gain that quality that people should be able to trample on you and you shouldn't react.

Get Ready

Now, when a person begins to think with such a pattern so he's preparing himself for emulating Hashem. "If Hakodosh Boruch Hu is *soveil elbon* like that, so I'm going to be like Him too. That's how I'll achieve perfection in this world. That's how Yosef Hatzaddik achieved greatness. That's how Dovid did it. And like them, I'm going to walk in the ways of Hashem and achieve greatness in my own little life."

And then you're prepared. If at breakfast let's say tomorrow morning your wife says a word to you and it's an opportunity to blow up but you restrain yourself, you cannot know – it could be that a golden throne in Gan Eden is being prepared for you just for that. Don't say, "I'll ignore such

picayune, such unimportant little opportunities. I want big opportunities. If they'll want to take my life for *kiddush Hashem*, I'll mount the scaffold and I'll proclaim *shema Yisrael*. I'm ready to die for *kiddush Hashem*. Or I'm ready to sit in the *beis hamedrash*. I'll be *meimis atzmo beohel shel Torah*. Big things! But little things like not to answer back, that's not important."

Oh no! Yosef knew that *this* is what's important. Dovid knew that it wasn't little at all! They were justified in answering back. The *halachah* permitted them to answer back. But because of the perfection of the *neshamah* they didn't. And that's one of the important lessons we have to think about when we read this week's *sedrah*. A man or woman who practices this *avodas Hashem* of "grinning and bearing it," that person is walking in the ways of Yosef Hatzaddik and Dovid Hamelech and most importantly, he or she is walking in the ways of Hashem.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Learning to Tolerate

As we make our way through life, we suffer from insults, small and big all the time. This week I will look out for these opportunities and make sure to ignore them completely, to not get upset at all. And even more, I will train myself to make believe nothing at all happened and I will continue to behave with the person who insulted me as if nothing happened, in order to practice up on this *middah* of *מי קל כְּמוֹד* – *Who is there a strong G-d like You who tolerates insult.*

In order to be prepared for whatever comes my way, every day at the end of *Shemoneh Esrei* I will *bli neder* pause for thirty seconds by the words *וְלִמְקַלְלֵי נַפְשִׁי תָרֹם* and plan ahead: "And towards anyone who might make me feel hurt or slighted today, I will remain silent without reacting at all."

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

57 - Happy Is He Who Ignores | 361 - Greatness in Little Episodes
553 - Tolerating Insult | 635 - Getting Along With Others

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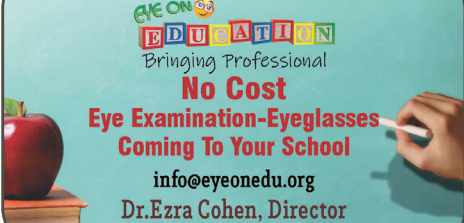
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Q:

When a person works in a dangerous neighborhood, is it advisable to apply for a license for a gun?

A:

Now that's a question that's not so easy to answer because many times you can get by with a substitute for a gun. Like what you say in *Elokai Netzor* every day: *ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה* – *And my soul should be like dust to everybody*. If somebody, a goy, is fresh and insults you, become an *anav*. It pays to be an *anav* – you'll live longer if you're humble and keep your mouth closed.

But when you have a gun in your pocket, you might forget yourself and answer back something rash. And then, it's not so certain that he doesn't have a gun. And he might know how to use it better than you.

I was once walking in the street and I visited a friend of mine and he saw that I carried a stick, a heavy stick, on me. It was many years ago, about thirty years ago and it was a dangerous neighborhood so I was holding a stick. And this friend told me, "Don't do that! It's dangerous to carry a stick."

It's dangerous to carry a stick, because first of all they could take the stick away and hit you with it. That's number one. Secondly, with a stick, you become reckless. Without a stick, you'll stay home. You're safer off. And it's better always to avoid trouble.

I told you this many times. The Chinese say, "Who is a hero? The one who knows how to run away." That's a hero – if you know how to run away you're the hero.

So therefore, I won't answer the question. It's always better to avoid any possibility of danger, but carrying a gun sometimes makes you reckless and you go into places where ordinarily you wouldn't go.

This week's Q&A sponsored:

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