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*Lion of Yehuda*

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# פרשת ויגש

WITH

# R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## Lion of Yehuda

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## Part I. Being Strong

### A Dramatic Scene

We have in this week's *sedrah* a very dramatic scene, maybe one of the more dramatic scenes in the entire *kisvei hakodesh*. The *mishneh lamelech*, the ruler of Egypt, is sitting on his throne and he's castigating the *shevatim*; he's threatening to take away their little brother Binyomin and to imprison him for stealing the royal goblet.

You remember the story, how the brothers went down to Mitzrayim in order to buy grain and they were dealing now with the *mishneh lamelech* who was being very tough to them – they didn't know it was their long lost brother Yosef – and now he was taking Binyomin into captivity. And it seemed like all was lost; Binyomin will be imprisoned now and he would remain in Mitzrayim as a slave and die there in prison. And the brothers would have to come back now to their father without Binyomin. That was the *psak* of the *mishneh lamelech*.

Now, if we're going to set the scene properly we have to first forget about whatever we think a king is. Today we look at leaders, at presidents and prime ministers, as nothing people, as pushovers. And there's a good reason for that – it's because they *are* pushovers. Their threats are usually empty threats and their dignity is usually an empty dignity. Who's our President today? A peanut farmer, an empty suit. Even a king today, it's nothing; it's nothing compared to the ancient days.

### **Playing With Fire**

But in the good old days when a king spoke, you quaked in your boots – if you looked at him wrong, it was “off with the head”. And there were no parole boards and no appeals to the Supreme Court. No silly liberal judge was going to save you. An order was given and the head was promptly removed from the body.

And so when the *mishneh lamelech* was telling the brothers what was going to be now with Binyomin, so there shouldn't have been a peep. It's true, Binyomin is going lost now and they'll have to return to their father without Binyomin but there's nothing to do. With a king you don't argue.

Suddenly something happened. The *possuk* says וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה – *And Yehuda approached the mishneh lamelech*. They were standing there in great dread but Yehuda mustered up his courage and he approached. וַיִּגַּשׁ means *he came close to the king* וַיִּאמֶר, *and he spoke to him*. Now just to open up a mouth in a king's presence requires nerve; it requires a stiff spine. The truth is even to stand back and meekly beg for mercy is something already. But to approach the *mishneh lamelech*? It requires a certain spirit.

And not only he approached, but he spoke at length. Now, to make a long speech to a king, an argumentative speech, is a most unwise and perilous thing to do – it's like playing with the *malach hamaves*. But Yehuda was *moser nefesh* and he made himself the spokesman. He spoke with diplomacy but still he spoke, and he spoke tough. And that's how Binyomin was saved.

### **Rav Miller's Theory**

Now, I want to tell you something. This following principle is my own; I didn't hear it from my rebbes and therefore I take the responsibility for it. If it's not good, I'm to blame. But I'm inclined to say that this *parsha* is one of the reasons why the Am Yisroel today is made up of Yehudim:

the people of Yehuda. Not only are we called Yehudim but to a very great extent, we *are* Yehudim. Are all Jews today from Yehuda? No. But most of them are. Some are from the tribe of Binyomin, some are from the tribe of Levi. All Kohanim and Levi'im come from the tribe of Levi. And there is a small admixture from all the other tribes too – it's a fact that we have a little from every tribe among us. But we are mostly of the tribe of Yehuda.

Now, what is the importance that we descend from Yehuda? Why not one of the other *shevatim*? It wasn't an accident. Nothing is an accident but something so big like this, the future of our people? There's something there. And so it's a fair question: why is it that Yehuda was the one who turned out to be the Jewish nation? What about all the other brothers?

I think that this story is one of the more important reasons. Because we see that Yehuda had a certain quality of *gevurah* and in order to be successful in anything, especially as a Yehudi, you have to have a backbone. I think that's the reason why Yehuda became greater than his brothers.

### **Bold And Energetic**

You remember when Yaakov our father was saying farewell to his sons just before he passed away, he made the following remark (Bereishis 49:8): יְהוּדָה אֶתְּהָ יוֹדוּךָ אֶחָיִךְ – *Yehuda, your brothers are going to extol you.* Now יוֹדוּךָ means two things; it means sometimes to thank but over here it means 'to uplift, to be made great'. Your brothers are going to extol you, they're going to aggrandize you – it was a prophecy that the entire nation, all of the tribes, will someday recognize the primacy of Yehuda. יִשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לְךָ בְּנֵי אָבִיךָ – *the children of your father are going to bow down to you.*

Why? Why was Yehuda chosen? Because of his quality of boldness, of energy. יָדְךָ בְּעַרְףְּ אֹיְבֶיךָ – *your hand will be on the back of the neck of your enemies (ibid.).* Now if a man has his enemy by the back of the neck, it means he's bold and energetic, no question about it. And Yaakov compared Yehuda to a lion: גֹּר אַרְיֵה יְהוּדָה – *a young lion is Yehuda.* Why a lion? Because he was known for the quality of being fearless, of not shrinking before the enemy.

That's the defining quality of a lion that we are urged by the Sages to emulate: הוֹי עוֹ כְּנֶמֶר וְגִבּוֹר כְּאַרְיֵה – *Be as mighty as a lion,* לַעֲשׂוֹת רְצוֹן רַצוֹן אָבִיךָ – *to do the will of your Father in heaven (Avos 5:20).* That doesn't

mean the 'strength' of a lion; it could be that an elephant is stronger than a lion. It could be that an ox could pull a stronger load. But a lion is fearless.

And therefore Yehuda was considered the one who would be the mightiest, the most persistent in carrying out the service of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He was the one who most utilized his energies **לְעִשׂוֹת רְצוֹן אֲבִיךָ שְׂבָשְׂמִים**.

### **The Lion Plunges In**

You remember when they came to the Red Sea, to the Yam Suf, and they had to walk into the water; but it was deep water. The water wasn't open before them. And the nation was in despair. Here on one side the army of Pharaoh was pursuing them to take revenge and here on the other side was the deep sea.

It was Yehudah that decided to enter the water. Nachshon, the prince of Yehudah, went into the water. It took verve and gumption, it took boldness, to do such a thing. The water went up to his neck but he remained a lion and then the waters parted and opened up.

Also, when they came into Eretz Canaan in the days of Yehoshua, and they were commanded to drive out or to destroy all the Canaanim, it was *Shevet Yehuda* who acted with the boldness that Hashem wanted.

### **The Lion Conquers**

You have to know that this *mitzvah* of destroying the Canaanim was very unpalatable, very distasteful, to the Am Yisroel. They were *rachmanim*. They had pity. It was very difficult for them to do such a thing. And therefore the *shevatim* were lax. They did something but they were lax in carrying out this *mitzvah*.

Only one *shevet* fulfilled the *mitzvah* entirely. Yehuda drove out all the Canaanim. He destroyed all those that remained. It's stated in *Sefer Shoftim* that Yehuda fulfilled this *mitzvah* perfectly. That's an important point when you want to understand the greatness of Yehuda.

And because of that, Yehuda was always successful. All the tribes had invasions at one time or another from neighboring countries. There was Midyan and Amon and Moav, even Edom, who at some time or other had some kind of sovereignty over the Jews in Eretz Yisroel. But in the tribe of Yehuda, no foreign nation ever gained a foothold because Yehuda was a fighting people, a people of energy, and their energy was devoted to carrying out their principle of being loyal to Hashem. That's why

Yehuda lasted on the land longer than all the others. They were unencumbered by the *umos haolam*, and therefore they became more concentrated in their idealism, in their principles. **יְהוּדָה עַד יְרֵד עִם אֱ-לֹהִים**, *Yehudah was clinging to Hashem and was loyal to the nevi'im* (Hoshea 12:1).

### **The Lion Stands Strong**

When the time came to make a break and Yeravam broke away with the ten tribes, Yehuda remained with the *Beis Hamikdash*. That takes *gevurah* too, to ignore the multitudes, the rebellious ones.

And so it's my theory that this quality that Yehuda developed of being **גְבוּר כְּאַרִי**, *strong like a lion to do the will of Hashem*, was what made him great. Of course, a man can have a drive and be a failure; he still has free will and he might utilize his drive to be a conqueror and a tyrant. But that's a misuse of a very important *middah*, a *middah* that was given to you for *avodas Hashem*.

You can't be a weakling. You can't be a milquetoast and a *nebach'l*. You have to have backbone to be a Jew. A Jew has to have 'fight' in him, because all around us we are surrounded by enemies. External enemies and internal enemies, we have plenty of internal enemies. We have half Jews and one percent Jews and zero percent Jews and minus percent Jews; and they claim to be Jews, they claim they are *the real Jews*. We have to fight constantly against them.

### **The Lion And The Bums**

Not only as a nation living among the nations of the world but also as an individual living among other people. A person who has a weak character, no matter how virtuous he is, how good his intentions are, usually he doesn't accomplish much. You need a drive to be something. When the mother says, "You can't go the *yeshivah*; I want you to become a college professor," then you need to rise like a lion. "Never mind! All the bums in the street have their way, they don't become anything, they become gutter bums, and I want to go to *yeshivah* and you are going to force me just because I am good? All the bums disobey and I have to obey? I won't listen to you!"

And you have to fight against yourself too. You have a big enemy within yourself; the *yetzer hora* is always on the job, you have to fight against it. It's like Iyov said (7:1), **הֲלֹא צָבָא שְׂמַנּוּשׁ עָלַי אָרֶץ** – *isn't it military service for a man on this earth?* Every man in this world is in military

service, we are serving the Almighty, but it's a battle. And so you have to have guts, you have to have fire in you, you have to have viciousness in you.

And that's what Yehuda was and that's why the Jew today is personified by Yehuda. That's why even till today, we're the Yehudim. Whether you live in Canada, or in New Zealand. Whether you live in South America, wherever a Jew goes, he remains a Jew; he's a Yid, a zhid, a zwid, a Judean, a Judah, a kike. Whatever it is they'll call him, in all languages, and in all climes, he doesn't budge because he knows that's the truth; no matter what he remains a Yehudi.

## Part II. Being Weak

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### **The Mighty Softie**

Now, some people, when they hear this – I'm talking now about energetic people, people with a natural verve – so they're happy with the lecture up till now. They're Yehudim, they think; they have the energy to stand up and fight.

But it's not so simple. It's not simple at all. Yehuda was a strong man, no question. Only a strong-willed person, a rock, can stand up to a *mishneh lamelech* like that. But he was soft too. When he needed to be, suddenly he became soft. You remember the episode when Tamar gave him the opportunity to admit his guilt. Suddenly this bold *gibor* wasn't so bold anymore. He didn't argue. He didn't talk tough. He didn't make a long speech. He folded quietly. צַרְקָה מִמֶּנִּי – “I'm wrong; she's right.” That's what Yehuda said.

And so Yehuda was a model of the perfect *gibor*, a *gibor* who knows when to be strong and when to become a softie. That's one of the reasons Yehuda became Yehuda. Because he was *gur aryeh*, a lion, who knew when to be a little cat, a soft purring cat.

### **The King's Pseudonym**

I'm going to tell you now about a descendant of Yehuda who trained himself to be like his *zeide*, to know when to be strong and when to be not so strong. There was a certain character mentioned in Tanach (Shmuel II 23:8) who was called Adino Haetzni. It wasn't his real name – it was a title he received. *Adino* means the gentle one, the soft one, the

mild one. And *Haetzni* means the one who is like wood. He was as hard as wood.

Now the Gemara (Moed Katan 16b) tells us that this paradoxical name – soft yet hard – refers to none other than one of Yehuda's most famous descendants, Dovid Hamelech. Dovid was called the gentle one and he was called the tough one. That's the personification of this great man.

Now, we understand that he couldn't be both things at the same moment; it means that sometimes he was gentle and sometimes he was hard. Sometimes he was Adino, *adin*, and sometimes he was Haetzni, *kasheh ke'eitz*. And he was praised by this paradoxical name because that's the real Yehudi, the one who knows when to be this and when to be that. That's the trick of successful living.

### **The King is Belittled**

The Gemara (Brachos 4a) states as follows. Dovid Hamelech would come into the *beis medrash* to learn – even though he was already a king he always came to study Torah – and Mefiboshes was at that time his superior, his Rebbe.

Now, the Gemara sets the scene for us. Dovid Hamelech is sitting down before his Rebbe who's speaking words of Torah; he's teaching the *sugya*. And in the middle of the *sugya* an idea occurs to Dovid, a Torah thought. So he says over his *chiddush* to his Rebbe. That's how it was – there was a give and take between the Rebbe and the student, and so Dovid would present his Torah ideas to his Rebbe.

Not only his *chiddushim*; whenever Dovid had to *pasken* a *shailah* he would appeal to his Rebbe for approval. **קָפִיבְשֵׁת רַבִּי יָפָה דְנָתִי** – “Rebbe, did I decide this question properly? **יָפָה הִיבְתִי יָפָה זְבִיתִי** – Was I right when I said this? Did I say it correctly?”

Now Mefiboshes was the kind of man who wouldn't brook any loose thinking; he wouldn't tolerate any laziness of mind in his disciples. When a disciple demonstrated loose thinking, Mefiboshes didn't pull any punches. **שֶׁהָיָה מְבִישׁ פְּנֵי דָוִד בְּהִלְכָּה** – he used to put Dovid to shame when Dovid slipped up in something. “That's so silly,” he would say. “I'm surprised at you. You're not thinking.” He belittled him.

### **Silky As A Worm**

It could be that it surprises you but that's how it always was among the Sages – loose thinking was considered a crime. Among us, there are

worse things. If someone would sneeze into your face, you would rebuke him for his bad manners; and it's true, it's a crime. But among the *Chachomim* if someone said something carelessly, if he was lazy in thinking straight, it was worse than that; it was much worse manners and he'd be excoriated for that.

And what did Dovid do? Dovid the King swallowed this humbly. The Gemara says **שָׁהָיָה מְתַעֲרֵן בְּתוֹלְעָת**, *he made himself as soft as a worm*. If you looked at this man sitting in the *beis hamedrash* before his senior teachers or his Sages, you wouldn't imagine that he had a bone in his spine. However much his teachers criticized him he bore the brunt. He wasn't soft but **הָיָה מְתַעֲרֵן בְּתוֹלְעָת** – *he made himself soft like a worm*; he was soft and pliable to his teachers. That's why he's called *Adino*, the Soft One.

### **The Grim Reaper**

But this same man is also called *Haetzni*, the Man of Wood. Because if we change the scene for a moment and imagine now that we are with Dovid in the battlefield we see a different person. Here is Dovid, the same Dovid who yesterday was in the *beis medrash*, but now he's carrying a heavy battle axe. And he's plunging into the fray ahead of his soldiers, wielding his battle axe, a heavy axe made of iron and shouting. Not only wielding it – he is crushing the skulls and the spines of his opponents without the slightest compunction. With no quarter, no mercy, Dovid is killing men right and left, causing on all sides that the people should fall like weeds before the reaper.

Now, looking at Dovid battling you wouldn't dream that he had in him any softness at all. Because when he went out to battle against the enemies of his people, it means the enemies of Hashem, Dovid was *kasheh ke'eitz*. That's how Dovid is described.

And so, if you were looking at Dovid on the battlefield crushing skulls you wouldn't dream that he had in him any softness at all. That's why Dovid is also called *Haetzni*, “the man of wood.” If somebody would see him, he would say, “That man has no heart. He is all iron; he is a piece of wood. No softness in him at all.”

But we remember Dovid the *Adino* from the *Beis Medrash* too. He was soft and pliable like a worm in front of his rebbes. And what that means is that Dovid wasn't a one-track person. Like Yehuda his *zeide*, he was capable of both attitudes. Sometimes he was *Adino* – a gentleman; quiet, attentive, humble. And other times, when the situation called for it, he was *HaEtzni* – as hard as wood.

## The Dusty Tyrant

It wasn't only Dovid. From the beginning of our nation all of our great men were like that. You remember when Avraham said **אָנְכִי עָפָר וְאָפָר** – *I'm dust and ashes* (Bereishis 18:27). It means, "I'm nothing." Now a lot of people say that, **אָנְכִי עָפָר וְאָפָר**. I know a man, he's fond of that phrase. He doesn't mean it though. He doesn't act like *afar v'eifer*. When he comes home he opens his big mouth on his wife and he shouts; he doesn't remember that he's *afar ve'eifer*.

But Avraham didn't only say it, he practiced it. You remember when Sarah said those sharp words to him, **הַחֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ** – *My anger is upon you ... Hakodosh Boruch Hu will take retribution from you because you allowed Hagar to become arrogant against me.* (*ibid.* 16:5)"

Now, those are very sharp words to say to a husband. It's a reproach of most extreme vehemence. And it wasn't even Avraham's fault. He didn't do anything. Only because he didn't instruct Hagar enough how she should behave so Sarah sharply rebuked him.

What did Avraham do? He was soft, like a worm. He was patient and polite and quiet. **הִנְנִה שׁוֹפְחוֹתָךְ בְּיָדִי**. "I'm so sorry. Here, you can do whatever you want to make it good. I accept whatever you'll decide."

Now, you shouldn't think that story is something that happened once. It's told to us as a model, an example. Avraham was a good husband; he was a quiet man to his wife.

## The Stern Leader

He wasn't quiet to his enemies though. Avraham knew how to wield a sword. You think Avraham was a weakling? He wasn't a *nebach'l*. He was a *gibor ish milchamah*. You have to know that he was a general, a strong stern leader. And when he was forced into battle, he made himself into a lion.

Avraham chased the four kings and their armies from Sedom all the way up to Syria. That's a journey of several days, you know. Several days! And Avraham had a very small force. He had 318 of his own and he had Aneir, Eshkol and Mamrei who were helping him out. I don't know how many they had, but they weren't as many as the invaders were.

But Avraham was a strategist. **וַיַּחַלֵּק עֲלֵיהֶם לַיְלָה** – *in the darkness of the night he divided his forces* and attacked from different sides (*ibid.* 14:15), so that the enemies would think "who knows how many people are attacking us". And they got up and started fleeing.

Of course it was Hakodosh Boruch Hu giving him *siyata dishmaya* but don't think Avraham was sitting in the back thinking about *chesed*, about feeding hungry wayfarers and being polite to his wife. He plunged right into the fray and he was chopping down the enemy. He took a battle axe and he chopped off heads. Ooh ah, was Avraham tough.

But when his wife was angry at him, Avraham said, "Do whatever you want. Yes my dear, whatever you say." That's how he answered. He bowed his head and made himself soft.

### **Moshe Rabeinu**

Now these models of Adino Haetznis are manifold. Not only Yehuda. Not only Dovid and Avraham. You remember Moshe Rabbeinu, when he left the palace to help his brothers? His soft heart ached for the people who were being afflicted. וַיֵּצֵא אֶל אָחָיו – *he left the palace and went out to his brothers* because the kindness of his heart wouldn't let him rest (Shemos 2:11). He left the palace and put his shoulder under the burden with them.

But he wasn't a milquetoast. He wasn't a pushover. When he went out, וַיֵּרָא אִישׁ מִצְרִי מַכֶּה אִישׁ עִבְרִי מֵאָחָיו, *and he saw an Egyptian who was hitting one of the Hebrews* so Moshe Rabbeinu picked up his huge fist, he had a huge fist, like a bag of flour, and he gave the Mitzri such a zetz that there was a funeral right away.

Now had Moshe been only an Adino, a soft man, he would have gone forth to his afflicted brothers and he would have seen them carrying loads on their shoulders and he would have said like he did, "Let me help you. I have a good shoulder, I can carry it for you." It would have been a great thing but it wouldn't have been enough.

But when he saw somebody persecuting his brother and that aroused his indignation, his righteous indignation and he smote him. וַיִּדְּ אֶת הַמִּצְרִי. "Ooh!" Hakodosh Boruch Hu said, "That's My man. Because you have both things. You have kindness and mercy in you, you have compassion, but you also have strength of character; forcefulness, boldness.

We need Yehudim who are able to take their kindness and translate it into action too. A kindly *lemech'l*, a kindly *nebach'l* who can't do anything, all he can do is say, "Ah, it's a pity," and shed tears for his brothers, it's very good, but not good enough. A kindhearted man who is a weakling is only half a man. A Jew becomes great, successful, because

he can be tough and soft. Tough and soft, *adin* and *eitz*. With wisdom and discernment he knows when yes and when no.

## Part III. Being Both

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### **Walking The Tightrope**

You know, when we read these stories in the Tanach it's unfortunate that they remain just that – stories. They're supposed to be examples, teaching lessons. That's what Torah means, 'a teaching'. It's the Torah's intention to create precedents – not presidents, *precedents*; it means models for us to follow.

So when you learn about Yehuda in this week's *parsha* you already have one precedent. Adino Haetzni, another precedent. Avraham Avinu and Moshe Rabbeinu – there are so many more; I had planned on talking to you about Aharon and Pinchas and Shaul too – the Torah and Gemara and Medrashim are full of stories; there are thousands of them, much more than I said here.

And what is it that we especially see from these people? That life is a balancing act, a tightrope that requires leaning; sometimes to one side and then sometimes to the other side. Rabeinu Saadya Gaon in *Emunos veDeos* talks about this subject. He says it's a big error when people choose one way in life. Some people say the success of life is this or that, and they rule out, they exclude everything else. No. There's no such thing as following one *derech* in everything. A man must make his life a spectrum of many things and he must learn when this quality is desirable or when another quality is desirable. All the attitudes are true – it's the *application* of the *middos* that makes them right or wrong.

### **Hard On Hotels**

You're hearing now a big principle for living successfully – the Jew must know how and when to manipulate his qualities of character *because such important decisions cannot be left to mere intuition*. Otherwise you have people who are Adino Haetzni but they're all mixed up. They're not in control; their emotions are in control of them and therefore they're hard when it comes time to be soft and they're soft when it's time to be tough.

I once told you, there was a certain gentleman, he used to attend my *shul* years and years ago. Now, this man was a tough man. I remember

when I spoke about the necessity of making Pesach in your own home, about how important it is to lug dishes in and out preparing for *yom tov*, about how important it is to make a *seder* in your own house, in your own little sanctuary, instead of going away to a hotel. It loses the entire character of that holy night when the traditions are handed over from generation to generation if you go off to a hotel.

Now this fellow scorned that, he was tough as nails. He disagreed with me entirely. And he wasn't soft in expressing his opinion. In the *beis knesses* he was as hard as wood. He told people I was wrong. He had a backbone. He was bold.

### **Soft On Sukkos**

One day I met him on the East Side and we were buying *esrogim* for *yom tov*. So I bought an *esrog* and a *lulav* and I carried them in my hand and I got on the bus to go home. In those days it was an uncommon sight to see someone carrying a *lulav* with pride. What will the gentiles think? But I carried my *lulav* as a *lulav* should be carried. Let all the Puerto Ricans see I'm carrying a *lulav*.

He also got on the bus but the *esrog* he wrapped up and he put it into his coat pocket and his *lulav* he wrapped up in paper; the *lulav* looked like a curtain rod! That's what he wanted people to think. He made every precaution to make sure nobody should know what he's carrying. He didn't have the boldness that people should see him carrying a *lulav* in the streets.

So I was thinking – I didn't tell it to him but I was thinking: you're a stubborn fellow in the *shul* but when you come to the world you're a weakling. He's not able to oppose the world. Why don't you carry your *lulav* and your *esrog* like a stubborn Jew and let them stick their eyes out if they don't like it? In the *beis hamedrash* that's a place to be humble and soft but outside you have to be tough.

### **Managing Your Middos**

And therefore we come back to the fundamental question that everyone always asks: "How do I do it? How do I manipulate my *middos*, to know when yes, when no?" And the answer is: it's Torah, Torah and Torah.

When a person has his mind full of Torah precedents so when a situation comes suddenly upon him, immediately there flashes up before

his mind's eye a picture of what he once learned and he knows what to do in this and this circumstance. By learning these precedents and visualizing them, reviewing them again and again, they provide the patterns on which he'll base his future behavior.

That's one of the great benefits of learning the stories of our great men and women who operated with wisdom and lived successfully. Our minds become full of living pictures of proper Torah living and that's how we know how to behave; we always have some reference that's stored up in our minds which serve as patterns. And even if the story of Yehuda approaching the *mishneh lamelech* or of Avraham Avinu speaking softly to Sarah doesn't flash before your eyes, but subliminally it's there. Your studying of the Torah, of the lives of our great ones who came before us, already created patterns of thinking in your head, patterns of good character.

### **Learn To Steer**

And that's how we live successfully, by steering our *middos* with wisdom. Because life is a highway and when you're driving on the highway of life, you have to know when to turn the steering wheel this way, when that way. You can't afford to yield to moods, to emotions, when you're driving. Otherwise you're liable to make a smash-up.

That's what we're learning tonight, that you have to grab hold of the steering wheel. If you're alive, then you can choose how to steer and when to turn. Forget about the torah of the psychiatrists who say you're a prisoner to your instincts, to your thoughts and emotions. *Sheker v'chazav!* It's up to you to guide those traits. Sometimes you have to be an Adino and other times you're Haetzni. And it's all done with *seichel*, *al pi Torah*.

When you are dealing let's say with your *rebbe*, or with people who need more sympathy; sometimes even with *reshaim*, with sinners, it requires a gentle and yielding side. And so you turn the steering wheel of your mind; you guide your thoughts and your attitudes and your words in a different direction. But when there's a benefit in combating the wicked or wickedness so you have to be as tough as could be. It doesn't mean you have to be impolite. You need not be insolent. But inwardly you must be as tough as possible. Whatever it is, it has to be done with *seichel*, with Torah *seichel*. That's how a man becomes a *sholet bi'yitzro*.

## A Ruckus In Shul

Sometimes even in the *shul* you have to make yourself a lion. When there's talking during davening you have to remember what the Tur and Shulchan Aruch say. גּוֹעָרִים בוֹ – *you have to scold him*. That's not the time to be soft. All around that's how it should be; if you see somebody talking, everybody should start shouting "Sha! Sha! Sha!" All around.

Everybody is standing or sitting in *shul* and the *shatz*, the leader, is speaking for them to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and this nincompoop, this empty head, this *leitz*, turns to his neighbor to exchange idle conversation, it means that he is negating everything that goes on. Nothing is worth anything in comparison to his little unimportant desires. And so it's *chillul Hashem*; he's profaning the glory of Hashem. *Gadol avono m'niso!* That sin can never be forgiven. Even if you want to do *teshuva* you cannot repent from *chillul Hashem*. And so people must be told! You have to throw it in their teeth again and again, until finally some people will listen.

And yet this man who made himself a lion in *shul*, when he comes home to his wife he changes the dial again. He knows how to talk mildly. In the environment of his home he reminds himself that now is different; Hashem wants something different now and he speaks gently. Even when his wife shouts at him, he's *adin katola'as*. He answers quietly.

## Soft At Home

Of course you have to know when. Because sometimes in the home you have to speak also with molars like you say in Yiddish with *bak-tzeiner*. You have to speak with your molars. Sometimes there are principles involved and you have to talk tough too at home. Sometimes a man's wife is yearning for what's not right – she wants to bring this or that magazine into the house; maybe she's not willing to throw out the television – and therefore he has to put his foot down and talk tough. But in general there's a certain softness that's expected at home.

The *schmoozers* in *shul*, he can be tough with them, but at home, he speaks with *nichusah*, with soft words. And he helps out too. He is willing to help with the dishes, why not? He is willing to get up sometimes at night when the baby cries and his wife is trying to get a few minutes of sleep. He's soft at home.

But then in the morning, he activates the *middah* of boldness again. He has to be tough with himself sometimes to get out of his warm bed and go out to the *shul* to learn. He has to go out and make *parnassah* too.

The *shlemazel*, the softie without a backbone, he stays home most of the time; he's discouraged, he doesn't have the boldness to go out and to achieve a livelihood. That's a failure because industry, energy and boldness must be part of your personality.

And so we come back to Yehuda; when you look at Yehuda, why did Yehuda become the leader of the Jewish nation? And the answer is **וַיִּגַּע אֱלֹהֵי יְהוּדָה**. That's our model of a successful person. He knows that he's always standing before Hashem and he's expected to perfect his *middos*, to manipulate them to perfection.

At all times a person must know first and foremost that he is standing *lifnei Hashem* and he's responsible for his behavior – and included in your behavior is your character trait of strength and boldness, and on the other side, it's your character trait of *chessed*, of being soft and conciliatory. And you're responsible to Hashem for everything, You cannot yield to your toughness and you can't yield to your softness. A man must at all times be under control. And the *eved Hashem* who reminds himself constantly about his obligation to be Adino and Haetzni – each one its proper place – that's the person who has lived successfully; that's the real Yehudi.

### **Have A Wonderful Shabbos**

## **LET'S GET PRACTICAL**

### ***Balancing Our Personalities***

Yehuda was chosen for his boldness; for his ability to stand up for what's right and be tough when it was needed. But Yehuda was also a model of humility. All of our great men were like that – they were strong and humble – because they were emulating Hashem. The Paradigm of being Mighty while remaining Humble is Hakodosh Boruch Hu and this idea is delineated in the second *bracha* of *Shemoneh Esrei* which discusses Hashem's *Gevuros* as well as His Kindliness. We strive to emulate the *middos* of Hashem and act powerful while acting kind. This week I will *bli neder* stop for a minute each time I say this *bracha* and think about how I can implement this in my life.

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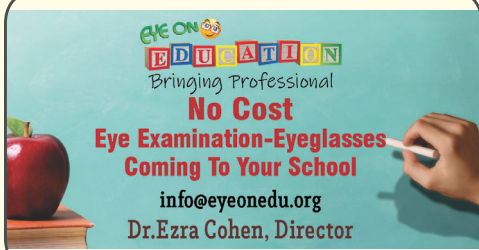
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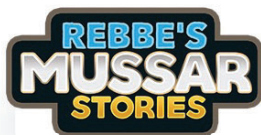
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# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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Q:

The Rav said tonight that Yoshkeh was basically an observant Jew and that it was only the later Christians who created a new religion. But then why is Yoshkeh called a *meisis* in the Gemara?

A:

Yoshkeh was considered a *meisis* because he ridiculed the *Chachomim* and encouraged the ridicule of the *Chachomim*. And anyone who ridicules the Torah leaders is *chayav misah*. We know that כל העובר על דברי חכמים חייב מיתה – “If someone is going to disregard the words of the Sages, then he is deserving of death” (Brachos 4b). The *Chachmei haTorah* are the light of our eyes. They are the *einei ha'eidah*, the eyes of our people, and a loyal Jew views the world through their eyes. And so if a fellow in the street is walking around with a few bums following him, and he's making jokes against the *Chachomim*, and ridiculing them and encouraging others to ridicule them, then he has lost his right to exist. That's a *meisis*.

But did Yoshkeh himself worship *avodah zarah*? No, no. He wouldn't even think of *avodah zarah*. You have to know that he was a Jew. And if sometimes you find statements that are attributed to him that seem to imply differently, those may be due to the later writers who put things into his mouth as if he said it. But it's not *mistaber* that he said it. No, it's not logical that those are his words. Because we know that he was a Jew. He said the following – and I'm telling you what it says in the New Testament – “If anyone were to oppose even a jot or a tittle of what's in the Torah” – that means even a *yud* or a tag – “then that man has no place in this world.”

All Jews were like that in ancient times. Only that he opposed the *Chachmei haTorah*. And that we know. We know that he opposed the Sages and tried to rally people to this cause. And that is a tremendous *aveirah*, a terrible sin. Just for that he lost his right to live. That's why we call him a *meisis*.

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