



A Taste of Torah

A True Leader

by Rabbi Dov Holczer

This week's parsha details the birth and rise of Moshe as the leader of Bnai Yisrael. A leader of epic proportions, Moshe brought the Jewish slaves out from the clutches of the Egyptians to freedom, facilitating the birth of the Jewish Nation. He was the agent who brought the Ten Plagues, led Bnai Yisrael through the Red Sea and brought the Torah down to the world. What secret ingredient made Moshe the great leader that he was?

The Torah tells us (Shemos 2:11) that Moshe went out and saw the burdens of the Jewish People. Rashi explains that he didn't just see their burdens, rather, he made the conscious decision to go out and help his brethren. Moshe was raised in the palace of Pharaoh, treated as a son of the king. Yet, when he saw the pain and affliction of his brethren, he went to help them. Helping them didn't just mean encouragement, it meant bending his shoulder to actually help with the carrying; Moshe was personally involved in the slave labor.

Moshe did not stop at helping his fellow Jews with their work, however. The Torah tells of how Moshe saw an Egyptian mercilessly beating a helpless Jew. Moshe notices and proceeds to kill the Egyptian, bringing about a drastic change in his status from prince of Egypt to fugitive from the king. What drove Moshe to take such an extreme step of killing an Egyptian, putting his own life at risk, so as to save his fellow Jew?

The answer is that Moshe possessed the virtue of personally feeling

someone else's pain as his own. Moshe didn't just feel bad and go back to business as usual. Rather, he acted on his feelings and did something to help the situation. So acutely did Moshe feel this pain and have a need to do something that he was willing to put his life on the line for it!

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953) explains that merely feeling bad about someone else's misfortune can actually be a negative character trait. When a person feels badly due to someone else's troubles, the person may selfishly seek to rid himself of that feeling. This has nothing to do with actually feeling the pain of another, but, rather, is focused on making oneself feel better.

That being the case, what is the appropriate type of feeling someone else's pain? Rabbi Dessler explains that when one truly feels the pain of another, he will seek to help the other person in a fashion that will alleviate that individual's suffering, not his own.

This latter category describes the *middah*, or trait, of Moshe. Moshe did not sit idly by; he went out of his comfort zone to help others, physically shouldering the burden with them and even risking his life by killing the Egyptian who was beating another Jew.

This is the mark of a true leader, to live for other people and to care so deeply that there is no other option but to help them. That was Moshe, the leader of Bnai Yisrael.

Stories for the Soul

Dogged Determination

Chaim Tzvi Solomon was a young man learning in yeshiva in Hungary whose father owned a successful factory. Prior to the Nazi deportations of Hungarian Jewry that began in 1944, it was common for Jewish men to be sent off on labor battalions to help the war effort; many Jews never returned from these brutal units. Chaim Tzvi was selected and sent to work as part of one of these battalions. He did his utmost to perform whatever mitzvos he could, even managing to smuggle and hide a pair of *tefillin* in his barracks.

Chaim Tzvi survived the horrors of WWII, though his parents and siblings were murdered in Auschwitz. He returned to his hometown, where he found everything in shambles. Approaching the ransacked synagogue where he had prayed as a youth, he discovered that the two ancient Torah scrolls that had been in the Holy Ark, highly regarded for their beautiful writing, were gone.

Chaim Tzvi sat down on a rock and, weeping, prayed to Hashem.

"Hashem, I am willing to forgo everything, but I beg you that if the ancient Torah scrolls that were in the synagogue still exist, please allow me to find them."

As he completed his prayer, he heard barking. A dog came bounding toward him, and he recognized it as the dog that had guarded his father's factory before the war. The dog was barking frantically, and

continued on back

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Halacha Riddles

Last week we asked: How can cooking prevent hand-washing?

Answer: If one breaks a bread-type item into pieces that are smaller than a *kezayis* (olive's-volume) and then cooks them, they lose their status of bread and require only a *mezonos*, even if one is *kove'a se'uda* (establishes a meal) over this food item (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 168:10). There is no need to wash one's hands for bread in such a case. For example, matzah balls are *mezonos* even though they are made from matzah, since the pieces are quite

small and less than a *kezayis* (Mishna Berura *ibid.*:59). Similarly, if one deep-fried bread croutons, they would be *mezonos*, since deep-frying is considered cooking (Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchasa 1:1:61). (There is a debate whether pan frying in a significant amount of oil is considered cooking or not. [Mishna Berura *ibid.*:56] A halachic authority should be consulted for practical questions.)

This week's question: How can adding liquid prevent hand-washing?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Saadia Gaon - Part XI

Rav Saadia returned to Babylonia, where he was appointed to the position of *ahuf* (lit., chief) of the Pumbedisa Yeshiva. This position is associated with the biannual *kalla*, a massive gathering of Torah students from across Babylonia which lasted for an entire month during the months of Elul and Adar. These gatherings featured a group of the top Torah scholars who were given different ranks; *ahuf* was one of those ranks.

However, greater things awaited him. The Exilarch, impressed by Rav Saadia's scholarship and grateful for his successful intervention, considered making him the head of the Sura Yeshiva. This move would have been a departure from tradition, as the Ge'onim had always been chosen from among those who had studied at the Babylonian yeshivos of either Sura or Pumbedisa, something which Rav Saadia had not done.

Stories for the Soul

continued from front

Chaim Tzvi got the feeling it wanted to tell him something. He stood, and the dog ran off, with Chaim Tzvi following behind. The dog soon came to a large field, ran to a random spot, and began digging with its paws.

Chaim Tzvi followed the dog's example and began digging. After some time and much arduous digging, he had found nothing, but the dog continued to paw at the ground, refusing to leave, so Chaim Tzvi soldiered on. Suddenly, he encountered a large metal box. Extracting it from the ground, he opened it to discover the two Torah scrolls from his father's synagogue! He prepared to depart, but the dog

continued to bark and dig with its paws. Chaim Tzvi thus began digging some more, and he soon encountered another chest. This one was full of money, and he was able to identify that this was his father's fortune from his business - his father had hidden the Torah scrolls and the money, and he, Chaim Tzvi, had merited to miraculously discover its whereabouts. The Jewish People in Egypt suffered greatly during their slavery. However, they managed to maintain a connection to their rich past, and this enabled to survive with their identity intact.

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