

Every wise-hearted woman spun with her hands...all the women whose hearts inspired them with wisdom spun the goats. (35:25,26)

This was extraordinary craftsmanship, for they would spin the fibers from the fleece on the backs of the goats before it was shorn from them. *Sforno* explains that, after it is shorn from the animal, goat's hair loses more and more of its luster each time that it is handled. Thus, by combing and spinning the fleece while it was still growing, they were able to preserve much of the luster that would otherwise have been lost. How much luster is diminished after a few hours of spinning? Probably a minimal amount, which is unnoticeable. Yet, the women made the effort to enhance their work, so that it would retain that slight bit of extra luster. *Horav Boruch Shimon Solomon, zl, Rav* of Petach Tikveh, observes that the Torah made a point to emphasize the wisdom of these women. How demanding we should be of ourselves to see to it that nothing is spared in our effort to enhance the glory of the *Mishkan*.

This idea applies to every aspect of Jewish life. We should never settle when it involves *kavod Shomayim*, honor/glory of Heaven. *Kavod haTorah*, the esteem reserved for the Torah, is commensurate with the value one places on Torah study. An individual is as great as the knowledge he embodies. I use the word "embodies," because Torah knowledge is unlike any other form of erudition. A mathematician does not have to epitomize math, nor does a scientist have to actualize his scientific specialty. A Torah scholar, however, must personify the Torah which he studies in every aspect of his total demeanor. Otherwise, it is no different than studying math or science.

How one feels about himself, how he views his merit of being able to devote himself to Torah study, is largely based upon his *rebbeim's* appreciation of him and the extent to which they imbue this sentiment in their students. In other words, when a student sees how much his *rebbe* values his Torah, his learning, his potential, it obviously will leave a lasting impression on the student.

While this concept is virtually true of all successful *rebbeim*, **Horav Eliezer Yehudah Finkel, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Mir**, exemplifies *kavod haTorah* with the respect that he gave each and every *talmid*, student. He made a point to cogitate over each *talmid's chiddush*, innovative Torah thought, remembering every *dvar Torah*, storing it in his brilliant mind, and, often, years later, laud the student for his wonderful work. Certainly, having a *Rosh Yeshivah* of his stature remember a student's *chiddush* can be most ennobling. Indeed, for some, it could spark the difference between a life in which Torah reigns paramount and one in which it does not.

Another aspect of *kavod haTorah* is in the manner a *ben Torah* carries himself. There is a certain *shtoltz*, dignity, to the bearing of a *ben Torah* which should be the result of a profound understanding of his mission in life. When I recorded the history of the *yahudus* of *Ashkenaz*, I gained a glimpse into the world of the *rabbanim* of Germany. Theirs was not a profession, but a

calling, representing Jewish spiritual leadership at its apex. Indeed, it was crucial that they maintain this dominance, as their flock was being slowly blinded by the dazzling rays of seemingly permanent economic security, which catalyzed their distancing themselves from Hashem and His Torah. These leaders navigated through the stormy seas created by the secularists who were bent on assimilating into German society and who were prepared to outdo the gentile with their German fervor. The *rabbanim* were armed with Torah scholarship which gave their minds access to a deeper understanding of life and its challenges to the Torah-oriented Jew. They preached the importance of adhering to tradition, because the Torah is immutable, an eternal truth which rises above the falsehoods of contemporary society. These men, their Torah dignity intact, spearheaded the revolution of Torah which saved generations of Jews from spiritual extinction. They demonstrated to the charlatans who painted Judaism and its leaders as parasites that Judaism was very much alive and that tradition was the mainstay and anchor of our people.

This idea is exemplified in the life story of **Horav Yosef Carlebach, zl**, the last Orthodox *Rav* in Germany, Chief Rabbi of Altona/Hamburg, an individual who exuded *kavod haTorah*. A giant of the spirit, he was friend and mentor to Jews of all stripes, from the most powerful who sought his counsel, to the orphans and the destitute for whom he was a loving father and sympathetic friend. I take the liberty of quoting excerpts from his installation sermon upon assuming the pulpit of the chief rabbinate of Hamburg.

“As I try to read what is in all your eyes, your hearts, what is it that you are expecting from the rabbi you have chosen?... I believe that this distinguished congregation is wishing for a man in whom all the infirm can find a source of strength; a man to whom they can say, ‘We want to go with you because we know that G-d is with you’...

“What do I bring to you that I can regard myself strong enough for that task? When I was just a child, the rabbinical personality of my father, zl, became my life’s model. In him I saw the ideal of a man who was modest, pure and noble, whose heart was open to the needs of all, without distinction between the high and the low-- one to whom the welfare of the criminal behind prison walls was just as important as the honors and celebrations of the mighty of his congregation. His benevolent eyes unlocked every heart to trust and to a willingness to be educated.”

In describing the common denominator which wove its thread through all of the great Torah luminaries whom he met in Germany, Lithuania, and Poland, the *Rav* says, “The outstanding character traits of these great men were the *maalos enoshios*, that simple, selfless humanity that heals and redeems all human frailty. In their presence, one thought neither of their genius in Torah and other fields of knowledge, nor of their far-reaching activities for the benefit of the Jewish community. One felt only, *zos Toras ha’adam*, “so shall a true human being look,” (*Shmuel II:7*).

In closing, the *Rav* intoned, “I will cry and laugh with you and bear all the anguish of your soul with you; I will regard the honor of having been called to this rabbinical position only as an obligation to relate to everyone with simple *mentchlichkeit*, humanity.”

True dignity is defined by its integrity. True *kavod haTorah* is applied to one who personifies Torah without embellishment, whose values are simple, but whose actions on behalf of all men speak volumes about the Torah which guides him. The unembellished Jew is the Jew who is *kulo Torah*, his Torah is all encompassing, reigning in full force throughout every aspect of his life.