

“On the second day Nesanel ben Tzuar, the prince of Yissachar, offered.” (7:18)

Although each *Nasi*, prince, brought the same sacrifice, the Torah seeks to emphasize the importance of the independent declaration of each individual *Nasi*. *Horav Yechezkel Levenstein, z.l.*, infers from here the uniqueness of every individual and our responsibility to respect each and every Jew – regardless of his background or position. He cites the *Rambam*, who posits that to include all of the *Nesiiim* under one blanket grouping would be to diminish the individual honor each one deserved. The Torah is very careful to show respect to every one of Hashem’s creations – even inanimate ones.

Regrettably, we think that respect is something that is manifest by those who themselves are of a lower echelon. If we peruse history and take the time to study the lives of our *gedolim*, Torah leaders, we will note an interesting phenomenon – it was specifically the great Torah giants who were meticulous in their respect for their fellow man. No one was personally too great – nor was anyone too small – to honor. A Jew is a Jew. He represents the Almighty in this world. He must be given his due respect.

It once happened that *Horav Isser Zalmen Meltzer, z.l.*, was speaking with a group of students in his home, when one of them saw the *Brisker Rav, zl*, entering the apartment building. He immediately announced to those assembled that the *Brisker Rav* was coming. When *Rav Isser Zalmen* heard this, he immediately ran to his room to change his *kapata*, frock, for his *Shabbos* frock, as befits greeting a dignitary. He ran quickly down the stairs, so that he could be there to greet the venerable sage. When he came to the door, he realized that his student had erred. The individual standing before him had an uncanny likeness to the *Brisker Rav*, but he certainly was not the *Brisker Rav*.

Rav Isser Zalmen did not skip a beat. He accorded to the simple Jew who stood before him the same demeanor and reverence that he was prepared to accord to the *Brisker Rav*. The visitor, of course, begged *Rav Isser Zalmen* to desist. “I am a simple Jew who has come for a letter of approbation, so that I can seek funds to marry off my daughter,” he said. Immediately, *Rav Isser Zalmen* wrote an impressive letter for the man. When the visitor was ready to leave, *Rav Isser Zalmen* accompanied him down the stairs to the front door.

Afterwards, *Rav Isser Zalmen* explained to his students, “Just because he was not the person to whom I had originally intended to pay homage does not mean he does not deserve my respect. He is a Jew – and every Jew is worthy of honor. Furthermore, if Hashem caused it to occur that I should mistake him for the *Brisker Rav*, it proves that ultimately he was deserving of this honor.”

The Manchester *Rosh HaYeshiva, Horav Yehudah Zev Segal, z.l.*, relates a famous story which occurred with the *Rashash, Horav Shmuel Shtershun, z.l.*, one of the most distinguished Torah

scholars in Vilna. His scholarly commentary on *Mishnayos* and *Talmud* are widely accepted and studied throughout the Torah world. Aside from being a great Torah scholar, *Rav Shmuel* also coordinated a *gemach*, free-loan fund. He once lent a member of the community the sizable sum of one hundred ruble to be returned in four months.

On the designated day, the borrower appeared at *Rav Shmuel's* home to discover that *Rav Shmuel* was studying in the *bais ha'medrash*. He found the sage deeply engrossed in studying a difficult section of *Talmud*. Feeling very awkward, he interrupted, saying, "I have the money I owe you." "Fine, just put it down," *Rav Shmuel* said, as he took the envelope and placed it inside his volume of *Talmud*.

The next day as *Rav Shmuel* was reviewing his accounts, he noted with concern that the loan which he had made four months earlier for one hundred ruble had not been repaid. Apparently, he had been too engrossed in Torah study the previous day to remember what had occurred. He called the borrower to his home and asked for payment. The borrower, of course, declined after describing how just yesterday he had gone to the *shul* to repay the loan.

Rav Shmuel could not permit such a blatant denial to go by: after all, it was community money they were discussing. The borrower was sent a summons to appear before the rabbinical court to adjudicate the claim. As is regrettably common in some communities, the rumormongers began to do their malignant work. The borrower was disparaged and slandered. He was accused of everything from lying to stealing and worse. It became so unbearable that his only son, a fine, delicate young man, could not take the pressure and left town. He was humiliated by his father's "treachery."

On the day of the *din Torah*, *Rav Shmuel* was perusing a volume of *Talmud* when, lo and behold, he discovered the "non-existent" envelope. He was immediately filled with guilt and despair. What troubles he had caused the poor borrower. His name was now ruined in the community. His family was destroyed – all because he had not taken the time to listen to him. *Rav Shmuel* felt that he must throw himself at the borrower's feet and beg forgiveness for the tragedy that he had caused.

It was not so easy. The borrower said, "What will I gain by forgiving you? No one will believe me anymore. I am the liar who was accused by the *Rashash!* I have lost everything. But wait, there is one way to prove that you really forgive me and publicly assert that you believe it was all a mistake. If you give your daughter to my son in marriage, I will forgive you. This way everybody will believe that I am not a thief."

Rav Shmuel immediately accepted the condition and the *shidduch*, match, was made.

Horav Yitzchak Shraga Gross, Shlita, in his *sefer*, *Chaim Sheyeish Bahem*, infers two lessons from this narrative. First, we should look for merit in every Jew. Look for the positive and do not think the worst of a person just because circumstantial evidence "seems" to point in that direction. Second,

one who hurts another Jew – even accidentally – must seek every possible way to appease him. *Rav Segal* supplements this with another lesson. The *Rashash* was a distinguished Torah scholar, a man of means and great intelligence. He could have had any young man from the finest *yeshivah* for his daughter. Yet, in order to spare someone continued shame, he accepted a simple young man from a common background. *Rav Segal* conjectures that perhaps this was the reason his *seforim* received such unparalleled acceptance in the Torah world. Last, I was impressed by the *Rashash's* daughter, who immediately listened to her father and entered into matrimony with this young man. Her father directed – and she listened. My, how life was different in those days!