

To love Hashem your G-d, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him. (11:22)

To follow in Hashem's ways, to walk in His path, means to display the same loving compassion for all Jews, regardless of background, personality and religious attitude. Hashem is our Father, and, as such, turns away no one. On the contrary, it is we who turn away from Him. *Horav Shlomo Levinstein, Shlita*, relates the following episode. *Horav Mordechai Rabinowitz* is the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Yeshivas Oheiv Yisrael* in Petach Tikvah. It is a school that caters to a high caliber of highly motivated students. Like so many good schools, it is very difficult to gain entrance to this *yeshivah*.

One day *Rav Mordechai* received a call from **Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl**. The *Rosh Yeshivah* began, "*Rav Mordechai*, would you want to sit together with me in *Gan Eden*?"

"Of course! What is the question?" the *Rav* said. "There is a young student in one of the *yeshivos* who refuses to attend any school but yours. Will you accept him?" *Rav Michel Yehudah* asked.

"Yes, yes, *Rebbe*. I will accept him – no questions asked."

A few weeks elapsed, and *Rav Michel Yehudah* called again – this time to inquire concerning the boy's scholastic achievement. To the *menahel's* chagrin, he informed *Rav Michel Yehudah* that, although the boy had been accepted, he never showed up. When *Rav Michel Yehudah* heard this, he broke down in bitter weeping: "Woe, we lost a child to Torah! Woe are we that this boy will not attend *yeshivah*!"

Rav Mordechai felt terrible about the boy. After all, he had done all that he could do. A *Yiddishe neshamah*, Jewish soul, regardless of the reason, and notwithstanding upon whom blame is placed, is still a lost soul. *Rav Mordechai* nonetheless asked *Rav Michel Yehudah* if the boy's non-attendance at the *yeshivah* would affect their pact. Could the *menahel* "look forward" to "sitting together" with the Torah giant in *Olam Habba*? "Absolutely!" answered the *Rosh Yeshivah*.

Hearing the story, *Rav Eliyahu Mann* approached **Horav Chaim Kanievsky, Shlita**, with a simple, but compelling, question: "Who gave *Rav Michel Yehudah* permission to welcome 'guests' to *Gan Eden*? Is it his place that he can do as he pleases?" *Rav Chaim* removed a *Midrash Aggadah* on *Sefer Bereishis* from his bookcase and pointed out the following *Chazal* (84:1): "Rabbi Avahu said, 'In the future, people (*neshamos*) will wonder at the seating arrangement in *Gan Eden*. Individuals who had never studied Torah are sitting in close proximity to the *Avos*, holy Patriarchs. Hashem will explain His choice (for including these seemingly simple people together with the nation's spiritual elite). They listened to Me (whatever I asked of them, they immediately carried out).'"

Someone who listens to Hashem's call to save a Jewish child from spiritual infamy will surely have

a special place reserved for him in the world to come. After all, this person is following in the *darkei Hashem*, ways of G-d, emulating the Almighty.

Ponevez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak is one of the Torah world's most distinguished *yeshivos*. Gaining entrance to the *yeshivah* is no simple feat. A *yeshivah* student must be scholastically worthy and profoundly dedicated to achieving excellence. It was, therefore, quite surprising when a young teenage boy from Switzerland, whose level of proficiency was lacking, insisted on meeting the *Rebbetzin*, the widow of the *yeshivah*'s founder, **Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl**, Ponevezer Rav. The *Rebbetzin* did not have an active role in the *Yeshivah*'s admission process. The Rav had been gone for a few years. The entire meeting did not make sense. The boy, however, demanded to meet with the *Rebbetzin*. He was guided to the *Rebbetzin*'s apartment, met with her for a few moments, and then emerged with a big smile across his face. The *Rebbetzin* asked to speak with the present *Rosh Yeshivah*. A few minutes went by as the elderly widow met with the *Rosh Yeshiva*. A few minutes later, the *Rosh Yeshiva* motioned for the young student to come over. "Welcome to the *Ponevezer Yeshiva*."

Clearly everyone, especially the other students who had observed the entire incident, was clueless to what had taken place. The young boy explained to them that he had a "history" with the *Ponevezer Rav*. "When I was seven years old, one summer I vacationed with my mother in Switzerland. Coincidentally, the *Ponevezer Rav* was also staying at the hotel (it was the only kosher establishment in the area). The problem was that the only available room was on the top floor, which made it very difficult for the Rav to walk up and down. Upon hearing of the problem, my mother immediately offered to switch rooms with the Rav. The Rav graciously accepted our offer, and afterwards invited my mother and me to his room: 'I want to express my gratitude to you and to your son for your kindness. I know that when one is on vacation everyone wants everything to go as planned. I would like to buy your son a toy as a token of my appreciation.'

"I immediately interjected and said, 'I do not want a toy. I do not even want a few coins. I want only one thing: one day to be a student at the *Ponevezer Yeshiva*.' The Rav smiled and took out his pen and wrote a note on the hotel stationery that I was accepted as a student in the *Ponevezer Yeshivah*."

The boy had a vision. The Rav had a mission to teach Torah to every Jewish child. He was following in Hashem's ways.