

Of it you shall make oil of sacred anointment (30:25)

The *shemen ha'mishchah*, oil of anointment, was used exclusively for sacred purposes, such as anointing the *Ohel Moed*, the *Kohen Gadol* and the *keilim*, vessels in the *Mishkan/Bais Hamikdash*. In examining the *shoresh*, root, of the *mitzvah*, the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes that Hashem wanted us to perform an act ourselves, on the day that we go up to be inaugurated to the honor of performing His holy service *l'haros banu gedulah u'shevach*, to indicate greatness and praise in us. This is the anointing of the oil. *Horav Yitzchok Zilberstein, Shlita*, comments that the words, "to indicate greatness and praise in us," are counter to everything the *ben Torah/ben aliyah* stands for. Personal eminence is the antithesis of what the Torah wants for us. The last thing one who is dedicated to Torah study should consider is personal praise and aggrandizement of any sort. He should not think about his achievements and personal attributes; rather, he should focus on learning and continued learning. It is not about "me"; it is about the Torah. Yet, the *Sefer HaChinuch* writes that "on the day that we go up to be inaugurated...we should focus on personal greatness and praise."

The term *ben aliyah* refers to a young man who is in the process of being *oleh*, going up, ascending the ladder of spirituality and Torah scholarship. *Rav Zilberstein* explains that the concept of *ben aliyah* is based upon a *halachic* decision rendered by the *poskim*, *halachic* decisors. They posit that just as Moshe *Rabbeinu* refused (as an infant) to nurse from a gentile woman, because the mouth that would speak with the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, cannot be so defiled, likewise, no Jewish child should nurse from a gentile. The question is obvious: Moshe was clearly destined to speak with the *Shechinah*. How does this apply to the typical Jewish boy? What are the chances that a typical Jewish boy will speak with Hashem?

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Kamai, zl, explained that, in reality, every Jewish boy eventually speaks with the *Shechinah* when he studies *Gemorah*. When he learns a *blatt Gemorah*, passage of the *Talmud*, or any Torah segment, he is speaking to Hashem. This should be his attitude when he learns Torah. This is the definition of a *ben aliyah*; one who studies Torah should have his eyes on High, focused on what his learning Torah means. It is his conversation with Hashem! If this is how he learns, if this is his attitude, he is a *ben aliyah*.

Rav Zilberstein relates a well-known vignette concerning *Horav Shmuel HaLevi Vosner, zl*. The addendum to the often repeated story is not well-known. As a young teenager, *Rav Vosner* traveled to Lublin in order to gain entrance to the famous *Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin*. It was, at the time, the preeminent *yeshivah* of its day. Acceptance to the *yeshivah* was an indication of a student's high level of erudition. Entrance to the *yeshivah* was reserved for high caliber students who, due to their brilliance or extreme diligence in Torah study, would be enabled to reach a pinnacle of Torah knowledge accessible only to a select few.

When *Rav Vosner* initially took his entrance *bechinah*, test, he failed. This in no way meant that he was a weak student. Indeed, he was an excellent student. It was just that, due to his young age, he

lacked the achievement required for a Chachmei Lublin student. "Next time" was their response. A few hours later, the *Rosh Yeshivah* and founder of Chachmei Lublin, *Horav Meir Shapiro, zl*, visited the *bais hamedrash* (which he did many times daily) and noticed a young boy diligently studying in the corner of the room. It was young Shmuel Vosner. "What are you still doing here?" the *Rosh Yeshivah* asked. "I thought that we did not accept you?" he added. "Yes, I was not accepted. However, I have a few hours left before my return train to Vienna (his home town). What better way to spend them than learning?" the teenager responded. "If this is your attitude, I want you as my student!" was *Rav Meir Shapiro's* reply. The rest is history.

This is the well-known part of the story. Now, for the addendum. A man who was in charge of seeing to it that the *bais hamedrash* of *Rav Shmuel Vosner* (in the *Zichron Meir* section of *Bnei Brak*) stayed clean and orderly found a batch of *kesavim*, letters and writings dating back to 1928, to which *Rav Vosner* affixed his name, *Shmuel HaLevi Vosner, Av Bais Din Lodz*." Chief Rabbi of Lodz (Poland)! First of all, *Rav Vosner* was never this distinguished (Jewish) city's *Rav*. Furthermore, when he wrote this, he was but a young boy. What was he thinking at the time?

The distinguished *Rav* and *posek* explained why he had signed his name in such a manner: "When I was accepted in the *yeshivah*, I was much younger than the other *bachurim*, students. The *bachurim* that were engaged in Torah study in Chachmei Lublin were exceptional scholars. The *rebbeim* were Torah giants. How was I to ever reach their level? I had to do something that would motivate, as well as encourage, my rise to the pinnacle of Torah erudition. I decided to do something tangible by giving myself a title that was at that time, for me, unheard of and undreamed of. I was quite far from becoming *Av Bais Din* of Lodz, but that was exactly how I wanted to challenge myself. I felt that by striving for this tangible, but far - off position, I would be able to motivate myself daily to learn more and more until, perhaps one day, I would become worthy of this title." *Rav Vosner* accomplished beyond his wildest dreams. To be *Rav* of *Zichron Meir* for over seventy years, a community that was home to *gedolei ha'dor* of every generation, was no simple feat.

Bnei Brak is home to a number of *chadorim* whose *rebbeim* are quite creative in motivating their young charges to *shteig* in learning and to grow and excel in Torah study. One first - grade *rebbe* applied *Rav Vosner's* self-motivation to his students. The month of *Nissan* is reserved for lectures, with every *Rav* delivering both *halachic* and *aggadic* lectures pertaining to the upcoming festival of *Pesach*. The *rebbe* gave each student an individual placard that detailed a list of the varied *rabbanim* of *Bnei Brak* who would hold forth, their topic, and when and where the event would take place. Included among the names of the *rabbanim* was the name of the young first grader (each student had an individual placard) with full title, announcing his upcoming lecture. Instead of the date of the lecture taking place that year, however, the *rebbe* had added twenty years (making the boy all of 26 years old). This was the *rebbe's* manner of intimating to his students, "You, too, can one day lecture in a large *shul* in *Bnei Brak*. It is all up to you."

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, *Rosh Yeshivas Telshe*, entered the *yeshivah* world with a burning

desire to study Torah and make it his life's vocation. As a young boy growing up in Portsmouth, Virginia, and later on in Baltimore, Maryland, his background in Torah was far from impressive. His brilliant mind and unprecedented diligence and thirst for Torah helped him to catch up and soon overtake those who were older than he. When he was a teenager, his wall was adorned with pictures of *gedolim*, Torah giants. In the middle of them all was an empty frame with the words, "What about you?" His life was devoted to answering that question.