

## If a person will have on the ??? skin of his flesh a seis... he shall be brought to Aharon HaKohen. (13:2)

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* noticed that inspecting the physical plagues that appeared on a body was included in the function of a *Kohen*, he was troubled. *Chazal* (*Vayikra Rabbah* 15:8) say that Moshe had *tzaar gadol*, great pain, concerning Aharon *HaKohen's* function to view and render his *halachic* decision concerning the plague's impurity. He felt that it was below his brother's dignity as *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest, to engage in such an unappealing task. Hashem quickly reminded Moshe that Aharon and his descendants enjoy twenty-four *matnos*, gifts, of *Kehunah*, which *Klal Yisrael* shares with them. *Chazal* teach us an important message which pertains especially to the *osek b'tzarchei tzibbur*, those who are engaged with the needs of the community, the *mezakeh ha'rabbim*, who bring merit to the many, those who put themselves on the line day in and day out to address the needs of the community. Veritably, they do so much and give up so much of themselves and their families in order to help others, but they do receive the twenty-four gifts of *Kehunah*, which in the context of the one who works for the community means: Hashem will take care of them. Hashem grants recompense for everything.

*Zikui ha'rabim* requires a special person. They live for the community, often at the expense of their personal lives – physical and emotional. I remember when the pandemic was raging, my son asked me to speak with his good friend who, as a member of *Misaskim*, was falling prey to the emotional toll of dealing with both the living and those who were less fortunate. He was one of many who literally risked their lives and emotions to help the members of our community. What they saw, and to what they were exposed, will live with them for the rest of their lives, but so will the extraordinary *s'char*, reward, that they garnered for themselves. Their families also grew exponentially. When their children grow up and ask them what they were doing during the pandemic, they will have a unique response. *Zikui ha'rabbim* is a family affair, and the *s'char* is a family reward.

Reaching out to help others, *klal* work, applies to many facets of our daily endeavor, from teaching, mentoring, *kiruv*, to fundraising for community and individual needs. This is followed by spearheading programs to address the various needs of members of our communities. While we have no doubt that these special individuals – both men and women – will receive outstanding reward and recognition from the Almighty, it would be “nice” if we, as beneficiaries, would acknowledge their contribution with a simple “thank you.” We take too much of what they do for granted, and if, *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, something does not work out exactly to our liking, not only do we not thank them, but rather, we hold them responsible. Unfortunately, this all comes with the territory of *klal* work. It may not always be nice or *geshmak*, but the satisfaction one derives from helping others has no parallel.

Truthfully, the term *zikui ha'rabbim* is an inaccurate term. What if one does not reach the multitudes? Are his efforts and dedication any less valuable? How do we define *rabim*, multitude? Is the term dependent on immediate numbers or long term effect? *Chazal* teach that he who saves

one person in the long term can have an immeasurable effect on others. Do we know? The following vignettes grant us a window to the perspective of the *Chafetz Chaim* and other *mashpiim*, men of influence, who changed the spiritual lives of countless men and women.

*Horav Meir Tzvi Bergman, Shlita*, relates that his father-in-law, *Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl*, once remarked to him, “The *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, was cloistered for years on end, learning Torah diligently and writing his *magnum opus* on *Halachah*, the *Mishnah Berurah*, and his ethical *magnum opus*, the *Shemiras Halashon*. During this time, he created a “man” the likes of whom was the saintly *Chafetz Chaim*. All of this, the years of solitude, was for one singular purpose: to help others, to allow the world to study Torah and become more proficient in it. In other words, the sole purpose of writing the *Mishnah Berurah*, which took twenty-five years to complete, was to enable others to learn – not for any other goal. He did not seek to aggrandize his name, to garner attention for himself. He studied Torah so that he could teach Torah. This is why his *sefarim* are classics that are mulled over by thousands upon thousands of serious Torah devotees. His *Shemiras Halashon* has forever altered the spiritual panorama of Judaism, by his understanding and teaching of the significance of the spoken word. When we act solely for ourselves, we regrettably do not even reach ourselves!

A *Rosh Yeshivah* once asked *Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, zl*, why it is that the world hangs on his every word. He reviews every statement that he makes over and over, and he enters them into his mind for safekeeping. *Rav Shteinman* replied by asking the *Rosh Yeshivah* how much time he devotes to preparing a *shiur, halachic* discourse. The *Rosh Yeshivah* replied, “If it is on the *yeshivah meseches*, the chapter presently being studied in the *yeshivah*, I spend a few hours. If it is on an abstract topic, I spend even more time. If I am preparing a *shmuess*, an ethical discourse, it also takes me a few hours.” *Rav Shteinman* listened to his responses, then asked, “And how much time have you spent on preparing the ‘speaker’? The reason that my words are heard is that I am older. I have prepared myself for over eighty years.”

The *Chafetz Chaim* was wont to compare outreach to hunting. He observed that the wealthy landowners who had as much money as they had free time would waste their days hunting in the large forests they owned. They could pass an entire day with hours spent in pursuit of their elusive prey, and, at the end of the hunt, if they were lucky, they might bag one animal. Likewise, one who enters the field of *zikui ha'rabim* should not determine success by numbers. One person whose life he has changed is worth an entire world.

*Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, the preeminent *maggid* in Yerushalayim, was a powerful orator whose dynamic talks would mesmerize and captivate his listeners. His lecturing career had a humble beginning. Following his wedding, *Rav Schwadron* commenced to give a *shiur, class*, in *Talmud* in a small *shul* that bordered on the Shaarei Chesed neighborhood. Three men showed up for the class: one slept right through; one daydreamed his way through the class; and one listened fifty percent of the time. This went on day after day – the same three men with the same attitude towards the class. *Rav Sholom* kept on giving the *shiur*, despite the dismal attendance. One day,

the member of the class who had been paying some attention became ill. Apparently, he had fallen and badly injured his leg. It would be months before he could safely return to the *shiur*. Rav Sholom decided that this was an “opportunity” to terminate the *shiur*, since the only real participant was no longer attending.

A few days passed, and Rav Sholom realized that, having sat for weeks with the group, he owed the stricken member a house call. He decided to visit him at home. The man (who was no youngster) was very happy to welcome Rav Sholom to his home. While they were speaking, the man stopped and asked, “I heard that you stopped saying the *shiur*. Why?” Rav Sholom told him the truth, “I really had no one that was attentive. I actually had only one member who paid attention, and, once that ended, I had no reason to continue the *shiur*.” The man was surprised, and he remarked, “Just one? Did you think that I needed your *shiur*? Did you think that without your *shiur* we would have no option for learning? *Baruch Hashem*, neither I nor the other attendees were in dire need of a *shiur*. But you, Rav Sholom, it was for you an unparalleled benefit to give the *shiur*. For you, it served as an opportunity for training yourself in the nuances of teaching a *shiur*. With time and practice, as your self-confidence improved, so would your teaching and speaking skills. We will not lose out, but you can only benefit from the *shiur*.” I think that anyone who has successfully traversed the difficult course from novice to master can attest to this verity. The teacher often has much more to gain than the student. The ability to learn from one’s challenges and mishaps, to persevere through them, creates a better, more confident professional.