

## Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon, and tell them (21:1)...The son of an Israelite woman went out – and he was the son of an Egyptian man. (24:10)

*Horav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv, zl*, makes a practical connection between the opening command of our *parshah*, in which Hashem commands-- in what appears to be a redundancy-- that *Kohanim* should maintain their purity, and the conclusion of the *parshah* which relates the sad incident of the *megadef*, blasphemer. *Emor el ha'Kohanim – v'amarta aleihem*. *Rashi* comments: "The Torah uses the redundant wording *emor – v'amarta*, 'say,' followed by, 'and you shall say,' *l'hazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim*, to enjoin adults with regard to minors. The Torah writes *va'yeitzei ben ishah Yisraelis*, "The son of an *ishah Yisraelis* went out." *Chazal* ask, "From where did he go out?" Various answers are suggested. We will focus on one. *Mi parshas ha'yuchsin yatza*. He went out from the passage of *yuchasin*, pedigree/lineage. He wanted to pitch his tent in the tribe of Dan. He was denied entrance, since inclusion in the *degel*, banner, of a tribe follows patrilineal lineage. Since his father was a heathen Egyptian, he was prevented from moving in.

The Torah begins the *parsha* with an enjoinder concerning the adult's educational obligations to the youth and concludes with the narrative about the product of an intermarriage who seeks acceptance despite his flawed lineage. How do we reconcile these two passages? *Rav Elyashiv* begins with an innovative interpretation of *l'hazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim*. At first, the *bechorim*, first born, carried out the *avodah*, sacrificial service, "He sent the youths of *Bnei Yisrael*, and they brought up *olah*-offerings and they slaughtered bulls to Hashem and peace-offerings to Hashem" (*Shemos* 24:5). These "youths" were the firstborn. In the *Talmud/Megillah* 9a), *Chazal* relate the incident concerning Ptolemy, King of Egypt, who gathered and sequestered seventy-two elders individually and instructed each one to write a Greek translation of the Torah for him. Hashem caused a miracle, and they all arrived at a unanimous translation. (This was critical, because an Egyptian king would be hard-pressed to understand and accept the true translation of the Torah.) One of the *pesukim* which they altered was *naarei Bnei Yisrael*, which they translated as *zaatutei*, distinguished members of *Bnei Yisrael*. The rationale behind this was that the non-Jewish king would neither understand nor accept the importance of youthful involvement in Jewish spiritual endeavors. He would posit that only the elders, scholars and men of achievement, should represent the nation in the Sanctuary.

Our Torah teaches otherwise. The future of *Klal Yisrael* lies in the hands of the youth. They will ensure our legacy. We find that the *Keruvim*, which rested above the *Kapores*, were fashioned in the image of youths. When their wings were spread Heavenward, when our youths focus on spiritual growth, they serve as sentinels who preserve the *Aron HaKodesh* which is the repository of the Torah.

*Emor el ha'Kohanim*: Speak to the *Kohanim* who are charged with the *avodas HaKodesh*, sacred service, in the Sanctuary and throughout. They must remember that their appointment includes

*l'haazhir gedolim al ha'ketanim*, the adults must protect the *kedushah* and *taharah*, sanctity and purity, of the youth. They must impress upon our people to live by the ideals of *va'yishlach es naarei Bnei Yisrael*, in which the youth serve and carry on the legacy of the Torah. If they do not adhere to this mission and the youth is not nurtured, protected and championed, the end result will be a war within the Jewish camp – a war in which the likes of the blasphemer, a product of an illicit union, will be pitted against the Torah hierarchy of our people. He will insist/demand that his tainted lineage be recognized, and his contemptuous pedigree be accepted. He will insist that this intermarriage become a viable, sanctioned union.

Our first line of defense against spiritual acculturation and apathy is to strengthen and acknowledge the contribution of *naarei Yisrael*. If they, Heaven forbid, fall prey to the winds of change, to the apostasy that is rampant in today's liberal society, then our future is in grave peril. The *yeshivah bachur*, student, of old was compelled to fend for himself. Poverty for the Jew had become a way of life. Under such circumstances, the *yeshivah student* was at the mercy of whomever would help him. He wore whatever clothes he had, and when they wore out, he repaired whatever he could. Food was scarce under the best of conditions. If he was among the fortunate ones, he might receive one decent meal a week. A bed meant sleeping on a bench in a cold *shul* – if he was lucky. Nonetheless, despite the miserable conditions that prevailed, he sat and learned Torah day and night. All of this continued despite the harangues and abuse heaped upon him by members of the secular streams. Sadly, they were not the only ones who regarded the *yeshivah bachur* with contempt. The following well-known story has been quoted by *Rav Elyashiv*. It is a classic which every Torah devotee who has suffered disparagement should review – and review.

*Horav Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, zl*, was *Rav* in Kovno and the undisputed *gadol hador*, preeminent Torah leader, of his generation. As a young *yeshivah* student, he suffered abject poverty. Despite his extreme destitution, he continued his learning. Once, in the middle of a frigid winter, his shoes tore and his coat – whatever was left of it – was tattered beyond repair. The cold penetrated his bones, causing him much suffering. He discovered that one of the wealthiest men in the community was marrying off his son. *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* figured that the *chassan* would be outfitted from head to toe with new clothes. He went to the house and asked if he could have his old clothes. The mother readily agreed, as did her son, the *chassan*. As he was leaving, the father came home and asked what was happening. They explained that a *yeshivah* student had asked for their son's old clothes. The father said absolutely not. He was a healthy young man who should be working and earning his way. He even offered the *yeshivah bachur* a job in his factory at a salary that was both competitive and enticing. *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* demurred, saying that learning was his life. If it meant suffering through a cold, hungry winter – so be it. His learning would continue unabated.

Ten years passed, and the young *yeshivah bachur* was now a distinguished Torah scholar and *Rav* of Kovno. He was about to print his novella and was seeking sponsors whose names would be entered into the book. Among those wealthy individuals who sought to partner with him was the wealthy man who had refused to help him when he was an impoverished *yeshivah* student. How

shocked and embarrassed he was when he discovered the identity of the *Kovner Rav*! He sought to make amends, because being a sponsor of the *sefer* was a source of extraordinary merit. *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* told him that, indeed, had he given him the old clothes and shoes, he would have immediately earned his merit and gained his share in *Olam Habba*, the World-to-Come. Now, however, since *Rav Yitzchak Elchanan* was no longer a *yeshivah bachur*, but the upcoming *gadol hador*, the purchase price of a sponsorship had risen. Every *yeshivah* student has within him the potential to become a *gadol hador*, and he should be treated as such.