

And you shall appoint the Leviim over the Mishkan of the Testimony. (1:50)

The *Baal HaTurim* notes an intriguing *Mesorah* concerning the word *hafkeid*, appoint. There is one other *hafkeid* in *Tanach*: *Hafkeid alav rasha*, “Appoint a wicked man over him” (*Tehillim* 109:6). What relationship is there between the two *hafkeids*? Appointing the *Leviim* to a position of distinction, and signifying one as wicked, are hardly parallel. The explanation of the *Baal HaTurim* seems to intensify the ambiguity concerning the correlation of the two *pesukim*. He says that this supports a statement made by *Chazal*, “One does not become a *pakid* (*hafkeid*), overseer – rise to a position of importance and responsibility below – until after he has been designated as a *rasha*, wicked, by Heaven.” In other words, it is almost tit for tat. The one who ascends to greatness on this world’s stage has already been “demoted” in the Heavenly sphere. Does this make sense? How are we to reconcile this *Chazal* and the *Mesorah* which the *Baal HaTurim* suggests is supported by *Chazal*?

Horav Menachem Tzvi Taksin, zl, offers the following homiletic rendering of *Chazal* and applies it to explain the *Baal HaTurim*: In the *Talmud Yoma 22b*, *Chazal* state: *Kama lo chali v’lo margish gavra d’Morei sayei*, “How spared from sickness and worry is the person whose help is his Master in Heaven!” *Shaul b’achas v’lo alsa lo; David b’shtayim v’alsa lo*, “Shaul erred in one sin, and it was reckoned against him; whereas David erred in two sins, and it was not reckoned against him.” *Rashi* explains that *Chazal* are teaching us that one who has Hashem’s support can be confident that no misfortune will befall him. This means that the punishment he receives from Hashem will be mitigated and not necessarily commensurate with his sins. As proof, *Chazal* illustrate the difference between the manner in which Hashem treated Shaul, who had erred once concerning the incident with Agag, King of Amalek, whom he allowed to live; and David, who had erred twice: first, concerning Uriah *HaChitti*, and second, when he took a census of the Jewish People, thereby causing a plague. Shaul was penalized with death, causing an end to his monarchy and precluded his establishing a dynasty. David was not punished for either of his infractions.

David received favorable treatment, whereas Shaul did not. Apparently, David had Hashem’s support, while Shaul did not. This is the case, despite the fact that *Chazal*, in the *Talmud Moed Katan 16b*, imply that Shaul was on a higher spiritual plane than David.

How are we to understand the implications of *Chazal*’s statement? Are we to think that Hashem plays favorites? Clearly, there is no such thing as favoritism with Hashem.

In his *Yaaros Devash*, *Horav Yehonasan Eibeshutz, zl*, explains that Shaul was a good person by nature. This means that he was born with a “good” DNA – he was kind to everyone, and viewed everything through the prism of “good” and positive. Even those who were disrespectful of Shaul never saw a negative reaction. He was nice to every person, regardless of their behavior. While this may be a wonderful – even laudable – way to live, it precludes the individual from being a

successful leader. A king is not allowed to let people insult him. A leader must rule with discipline. “Mr. Nice Guy” does not make an effective leader. There comes a time when he must make demands, must put his foot down.

In contrast, David was born with a nature that was far from affable. It is not that he had a mean streak, rather there were elements of his personality that presented a challenge he needed to overcome. David *Ha'melech* rose to the challenge, worked on himself and refined his character. He learned how to deal with all types of people under various circumstances. He transformed himself from Heaven's original “designation” of him. It was for this incredible refinement of character that Hashem chose him to be the King of *Yisrael* and the founder of the Davidic dynasty.

Rav Taksin suggests that the *Baal HaTurim* is alluding to this. One does not become an “overseer” in this world until after he has been designated as wicked Above. This means that one who was born with character traits that are less than desirable – with a nature that was destined for evil – but, of his own free will and tenacity has succeeded in overriding these innate qualities – can manifest leadership capabilities for which he deserves to become an overseer over his community. It is not what a person **was** – it is what, through his own grit and resolution, he has **become**.

This was the nature of *Shevet Levi*, about whom Moshe *Rabbeinu* said, “The one who said of his father and mother, ‘I have not favored him’” (*Devarim* 33:9). When they were asked to carry out Hashem's decree against those who sinned with the Golden Calf, they listened and acted immediately – regardless if it meant that they even had to punish close relatives. These *Leviim* subdued their natural tendencies and did what had to be done. Those who were originally known for their exceptional compassion transformed themselves in order to execute Hashem's decree.

The *Peninei Rabbeinu Yechezkel* relates that *Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl*, was meticulous in this area. Every endeavor, every moment in his life, was governed by Torah and *Halachah*. If *Halachah* demanded strict justice, he acted in this manner. If *Halachah* called for extreme compassion, *Rav Chaim* was compassionate. One could never form an opinion of *Rav Chaim's* nature, since every aspect of his life was in consonance with what the Torah was asking of him **at that moment**. His entire essence was suffused with Torah. He was its mortal embodiment.

The *Ksav Sofer, zl*, suggests a practical explanation of this *Mesorah*. It is well-known that the greater one's spiritual achievement, his *yetzer hara*, evil-inclination, grows commensurately. There must be a balance in order to earn reward. Thus, the challenge must be raised. One who has been designated for spiritual leadership must be aware that, with his appointment to distinction, a spiritual entity was created in Heaven, or power was given to *Satan* to challenge him. Thus, with spiritual ascension on this world, a *rasha*/wicked challenge, must be created in Heaven.

The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, was known for his short aphorisms which always hit the bull's eye of truth. He viewed leadership over the community, with its responsibilities, as a thankless experience

which isolates one from his true purpose on this world: serving Hashem. He, therefore, would say that when one is appointed to a leadership position, it is an indication that Heaven is upset with him. Otherwise, why would he warrant such “punishment”?