

Man does not live on bread alone, but that man may live on anything that Hashem decrees. (8:3)

The forty years of wandering in the wilderness served as a course of instruction and training – instruction about *Hashem's Hashgachah*, Providence, and training for serene and disciplined surrender to His guidance. When our lack of conviction in Hashem's Omnipresent care and guidance over us diminishes, our practice, which fulfills the requirements of our moral and spiritual training, likewise wanes. For forty years we lived a lifestyle that impressed upon us the notion that, “It is not by bread alone that man make a life for himself.” We have been taught that the prime factor for man's sustenance is the Providence of Hashem. Yet, in our pursuit of providing for our family's sustenance, we often fall prey to the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, convincing us that we, and only we, are the providers for our family. We go so far as to believe that “anything goes” when it involves supporting our family – even if we must overstep the boundaries which Hashem has set forth for us. This is why Hashem imbued in us (for forty years) that all sustenance is derived from Him. Furthermore, not only does the poor man who prays for his daily bread know that it comes to him (via messenger) from Hashem, but the wealthy man, who has “made it,” must also realize that his sustenance is from Hashem, Who granted it to him for a purpose: to share with others.

Hunger is a terrible and debilitating experience. Over 53% of children in Yerushalayim are impoverished. We read the articles; we see the ads; those of us who have traveled there have sadly seen the young children rummaging through the garbage in search of food. The purpose of this thesis is not to cast blame; on the contrary, I want to focus on those who care. Sometimes, one must grow up poor, deprived, lacking, in order to feel what it means. The founder of *Yad Ezra v'Shulamit*, an organization that feeds 200,000 Jews annually, himself grew up poor. When one grows up poor, he learns to care for others. On some days, he would go to school with a sandwich; on other days, he had nothing. On those days that he had a sandwich, he gave half to his friend who had nothing. He recalls once, as a child, he was waiting in line to get a free bag of potatoes. Someone came by and gave him a torn doll. He meant nothing negative, but he destroyed a child: “Here, this is what you are worth.” Now for the story which teaches about the ravages of hunger, the feelings of a brother, and, most of all, not to callously judge people by what one sees. Think first; then act.

Horav Moshe Auerbach, zl, was a German Jew steeped in the Torah and *kedushah* that he received in the Frankfurt *Kehillah*. He moved to *Eretz Yisrael* to establish the first observant *cheder*/school in Petach Tikvah. *Rav* Auerbach was a dynamic educator who overflowed with Torah and *mussar*. His devotion to *Klal Yisrael* was peerless. Indeed, he was often referred to as the “*Chafetz Chaim* of Germany.” During his stay in Petach Tikvah, war broke out between the Jewish settlers and their Arab neighbors. (What else is new?) As a result, the Jewish community became victim to much economic adversity, of which hunger and starvation was at the top of the list. When *yeshivah* students do not eat, they cannot learn. It would take a master educator to succeed under such challenges of deprivation.

The children in the *yeshivah* had limited portions of food. One slice of bread – or less – was their daily ration. Obviously, this was insufficient. No one brought food from home, because they had even less to eat at home. In *Rav Auerbach's yeshivah*, the students each received one slice of bread around late morning, which served as both breakfast and lunch. The more fortunate ones would receive supper at home. The rest waited for their slice of bread – tomorrow. One young student daily committed what was an unusual, almost brave (under the conditions), act. He would take his daily slice of bread and fling it over the fence – as if he were just throwing it away. His fellow students could not make sense of this. First, one does not show disrespect by throwing food. Second, was he not hungry? Did he not require the same sustenance as the others? They brought his bizarre practice to his attention. He listened respectfully, but continued doing his thing.

When the students observed that, regardless of their prodding, he continued acting strangely, they spoke to *Rav Auerbach*. He should be made aware that one of the students of the *yeshivah* was acting strangely. He spoke to the boy, who listened, and ignored everything that he said. He continued throwing his bread over the fence. *Rav Auerbach's* patience wore thin. He called the boy into his office and, with a heavy heart, said, “The next time this happens, you will be asked to leave the *yeshivah*.”

The next day, the boy picked up his slice of bread and proceeded to the fence where he carefully threw the bread over the fence. The principal was informed of this, and, true to his word, *Rav Auerbach* asked the boy to leave the school. The next day, the boy's father appeared at *Rav Auerbach's* door and asked to speak with him. It was obvious that the father had been crying, the remnants of his tears still in his eyes: “We are no different than many of the members of the Jewish community. We, too, are starving. Every child receives a daily portion of bread. One of the younger children cannot subsist on one slice. As a result, the hunger causes him to cry constantly. His older brother, who is your student, felt bad for him, and, in order to assuage his hunger pains, he would throw him his daily slice of bread that he received in school. His brother would wait daily at the preordained time to retrieve the slice of bread that his brother sent him.”

When *Rav Auerbach* heard this, he began to shake uncontrollably, and he broke out in bitter weeping. He called in all of the school's *rebbeim* and said, “We must learn to judge everyone justly, to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. We (including myself) judged this boy in the most negative terms, when, in fact, he is a *tzaddik*, a righteous person. He gave away his bread, so that his younger brother would not cry! He starved, so that his brother could be happy. This is how we should act: with empathy, with good judgment, with love, to never pass judgment until we have revealed all aspects of a situation.