

## **So now, write this song for yourselves. (31:19)**

The *Talmud Chagigah* 15b quotes Rabbi Yochanan, who asks: “What is the meaning of that which is written (*Malachi* 2:7), ‘For the *Kohen*’s lips should keep knowledge and they should seek Torah from his mouth; for he is an angel of Hashem, Lord of Hosts’?” The *pasuk* is teaching: If a *rebbe* is similar to an angel, they should seek Torah from his mouth, but, if not, they should not seek Torah from his mouth.” Obviously, the comparison of an angel to a *rebbe* requires elucidation. *Rambam* offers a basic explanation, taking a frank approach. A *rebbe* must be a role model who adheres to the Torah way of life. Like an angel, he is an agent of Hashem, and, accordingly, he must act in a manner becoming such responsibility. A second approach looks at the angel’s unswerving fidelity to his mission. The angel neither adds nor subtracts from his mission. He is completely devoted to his sender and is not interested in his own benefit. The *rebbe* should act likewise. Third, the angel stands straight and unmoving. He focuses totally on his mission with no concerns for himself and his spirituality. When the angel is on his mission, everything that concerns himself comes to a halt. Likewise, the *rebbe*’s only concern is his student – even if that means that the *rebbe*’s own spiritual status suffers. A *rebbe* must often sacrifice his own growth for that of his students.

We now come to a fourth explanation which addresses the above *pasuk* and is innovative in the sense that it focuses less on comparing the *rebbe* to an angel, and more on the *rebbe* imparting the overreaching and demanding significance of – and requirement for – Torah study at all times, under all conditions, regardless of inconvenience or adversity. *Chazal* (*Megillah* 3a) relate the incident which took place during the siege of Yericho (*Yehoshua* 5:14) when a Heavenly angel appeared to Yehoshua to reprimand him for the people’s neglecting to study Torah. During the day they were engaged in war and, thus, exempt from learning. At night, however, when the fighting stopped, they no longer had an exemption. The angel said to Yehoshua: “This afternoon, you failed to offer the daily *Tamid*, afternoon sacrifice, and now (after dark) you have neglected to study Torah.” Yehoshua asked, “For which of these two misdeeds did you come (to reprimand me)?” The angel replied, *Atah bassi*; “I have come now,” which is explained by the *Rivan* as a reference to the sin of neglecting to study Torah, as it says in our *parshah*, *V’atah*, “Now, write this song (the Torah) for yourselves.” From here, we derive that the study of Torah is even greater than offering sacrifices.

Having said this, *Horav Shmuel Kaminetzky, Shlita*, observes that the angel was unforgiving in his demand that the people – even in the midst of a war – should not neglect their Torah study. True, it was night, and they were exhausted from a day of heavy warfare on the battlefield, and they needed to nourish themselves, to rest their weary bodies, and pull themselves together emotionally. Nonetheless, the angel was relentless in his demand that they should have studied Torah. We brook no compromise with regard to Torah study. It is our life source. One does not sever himself from his life source because it is inconvenient or even overwhelming.

This is *Chazal*’s message regarding the required similarity between a *rebbe* and an angel – not any angel, but the angel that spoke to Yehoshua and conveyed the message that Torah is paramount.

Torah reigns supreme. The angel sets the standard for the *rebbe* to emulate. It is a lofty bar to reach, but then teaching Torah is in and of itself a lofty mission which lays the foundation for the future of *Klal Yisrael*.