

Now you shall command Bnei Yisrael. (27:20)

The *Baal HaTurim* cites the *Zohar HaKadosh* who observes that the Torah does not mention Moshe *Rabbeinu's* name in this *parsha*. Indeed, from Moshe's birth in *Sefer Shemos*, no other *parsha* excludes the name of our quintessential leader and *Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael*. The absence of Moshe's name in this *parsha* is due to his reaction to Hashem's desire to enact the ultimate punishment against the Jewish People. Their initiation of – and participation in – erecting the Golden Calf was a spiritual descent that rendered them undeserving of the privilege of being Hashem's chosen people. Moshe responded, "If you choose to do this, then *m'cheini na mi'Sifrecha*; 'Erase my name from Your Book/the Torah.'" When a Torah scholar, especially one who had achieved the caliber of Moshe *Rabbeinu*, issues forth a *kelalah*, malediction, even if it is *al t'nai*, contingent upon a specific criteria, it will realize fruition. Since Moshe's *yahrzeit* is usually during these weeks, the Torah chose *Parashas Tetzaveh* as the likely *parsha* from which to delete his name. This begs elucidation. Moshe stood up for the nation. We have no question that the sin of *Klal Yisrael* reflected a lack of fidelity on their part. Yet Moshe, as a responsible leader, had to do whatever he could to seek absolution for their actions. Is this a valid reason for him to be punished? Our leader was prepared to relinquish his entire future – his spiritual ascendancy and opportunity to rise to even loftier spiritual elevation -- just to save his nation. Is this a reason for him to be censured?

Furthermore, asks *Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, the *Zohar HaKadosh (Parashas Noach)* asserts that Hashem criticized Noach for not acting like Moshe. When Hashem informed Noach that the entire world population would be destroyed, except for him, Noach accepted the decree without arguing on behalf of the people. The Flood is called *Mei Noach*, the Waters of Noach, because he did not present a defense of the people. Moshe, on the other hand, was prepared to give up everything for the people. Yet, he was "punished" for this. Is the critique consistent with Moshe's appeal?

Rav Shternbuch explains that veritably the deletion of Moshe's name from *Parashas Tetzaveh* is not a punishment, but rather, a compliment which lauds his exemplary *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. Hashem wanted His People to remember for all time that Moshe was willing to sacrifice his spiritual growth if it would somehow spare the Jewish nation. Thus, we should derive that *mesiras nefesh* is a primary sense of devotion, especially if one sacrifices his *ruchniyus*, spirituality, to save others.

Throughout the generations, our Torah giants were prepared to give up their learning and spiritual advancement in order to better the lot of their people. *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, gave up time from his *shiurim*, lessons, to travel to England and America to fundraise for his *yeshivah*. He could have sent someone else, but he was acutely aware that no one would do it like he would. His *yeshivah* was his life. His training of his students was paramount. If they had nothing to eat, however, they could not learn. *Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl*, would often quote the *Chafetz Chaim's* take on the words, *b'chol me'odecha*; as "with all of your resources" (*Devarim* 6:5). The

Chafetz Chaim translated the word *me'odecha*, as “with all that you consider *me'od*,” which means exceedingly. Nothing is as important to the Jew as *limud haTorah*, the study of Torah. Thus, he said, if someone truly loves Hashem, he will give up what is most important to him – his learning, his spiritual advancement, in order to fulfill Hashem’s mandate. Helping another Jew is an essential aspect of serving Hashem. One who serves Hashem, but ignores the plight of his fellow, is not really serving Hashem.

The one Torah giant most identified with devoting his life and energy to the needs of his brothers and sisters – even at the expense of his own *ruchniyos* – was *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl*, known by his *nom de plume*, the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim. His utter dedication and willingness to give of himself, to sacrifice himself in his love for all Jews and Jewry, were legend. As his biographer observes, he was simply referred to as “*Reb Aryeh*,” because no adjectives were required to know to whom one was referring. He ministered to those living in restricted environments, i.e. prisoners, lepers who were contagious, despite the personal danger involved. He encouraged and gave hope to the unfortunate, the downtrodden, the needy – materially, physically and emotionally. He loved them all with his all-encompassing heart. He showed that just as one can be a *gaon*, brilliant towering ability in Torah (which he certainly was), one can also be a *gaon* in *chesed*. He was the patriarch of the most distinguished families in Yerushalayim. When his *neshamah* left its mortal abode, thousands of Jews from all walks of life paid respect to him: from the greatest *Roshei Yeshivah* and *rabbanim*, to the leaders of the Israeli State; the officers of the defense forces; and the throngs of *hamon am*, the average Jew, whose lives he touched in some manner.

Rav Aryeh preached that sacrifice is not limited to the relinquishing of one’s physical self, energy, effort, time money and property, but includes the readiness to sacrifice one’s spirit, one’s soul. *Rav Aryeh* said that he derived this lesson from a story that took place concerning two pious brothers, disciples of the *Gaon, zl, m’Vilna*, named *Rav Moshe* and *Rav Yitzchak*. *Rav Moshe* spent the entire year traveling all over, teaching the children in rural areas where schools were a luxury. He barely eked out a livelihood from the paltry payments he received. He would return for the primary *Yomim Tovim*, Festivals, to share the material “bounty” that he earned with his family.

In earlier generations, the custom was to select one specific *mitzvah* and devote oneself to executing it to the fullest letter of the law. *Rav Moshe* had chosen *tzitzis*. As a result, he refused to walk four *amos*, cubits (six feet), not wearing his *tzitzis*. He adhered to this self-imposed obligation religiously.

Once, early in *Nissan*, as *Pesach* quickly approached, he hired a wagon driver to take him home. With his few belongings and his small bag of earnings, they set out for Vilna. Along the way, *Reb Moshe* asked to stop so that he could *daven Minchah*. He stood near a large boulder to the side of the road. He did not notice that one of his *tzitzis*/fringes had become entangled in a crevice of the stone and tore. He was stuck, since his *tzitzis* were no longer kosher. He asked the wagon driver to go to the nearest Jewish home or town and either borrow or purchase a pair of *tzitzis* for him. The man agreed for the exorbitant price of the contents of *Reb Moshe*’s money pouch. What could

he do? He gave up all of his *Pesach* funds for a pair of *tzitzis*. This would not have been so bad had the wagon driver kept his end of the deal. He did not, as he took the money and disappeared. *Reb* Moshe stood in place for twenty-four hours until someone came by and brought him a pair of *tzitzis*.

So ends part one of the story. Part two begins with *Rav* Yitzchak, the saintly brother who spent the entire day and a good part of the night engrossed in Torah study, becoming gravely ill. A few days into his illness, the doctor despaired for his life and directed the family to summon the *Chevra Kaddisha*, Jewish Burial Society. It was time. They also called *Rav* Moshe to be at his brother's side.

Rav Moshe came without delay. When he entered the room in which his brother lay comatose, he asked everyone to leave. He removed his *tallis katan* and laid it upon his brother's motionless body. He cried up to Hashem: "*Ribono Shel Olam!* There is one *mitzvah* to which I have adhered with all my strength. That is the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis*. I hereby give all of my reward that I will receive in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come, to my brother, so that he will recover from his current illness." *Rav* Moshe prayed passionately amid profuse weeping, so that his brother would emerge from the imminent crisis. Hashem listened, and, not only was *Rav* Yitzchak cured; he lived fifteen more years.

After *Rav* Aryeh related the story, he concluded with his summary: "This incident taught me that a Jew must be prepared to give up his spiritual ascendance and reward to help his brother. Physical well-being, life and wealth are important fundamentals to relinquish on behalf of one's fellow. To give up the spiritual reward which one has earned and the opportunity for spiritual growth, however, is true self-sacrifice."