

Moshe heard, and he approved. (10:20)

We do not find disputes between *Klal Yisrael's* leaders: Moshe *Rabbeinu* and his brother, Aharon *HaKohen* – except with regard to the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh*, he-goat brought on *Rosh Chodesh*. They disagreed about whether an *onein*, mourner, was permitted to eat the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh* on the day of the funeral. The question arose concerning *kodshei doros*, that which is sanctified for generations: a *korban* which will continually be offered; and *kodshei shaah*, a *korban* designated for that specific time. Three he-goats were offered that day – two of which were *kodshei shaah*, and one of which was *kodshei doros*. Aharon reasoned that Hashem's command that the *Kohanim* eat the meal-offerings, which were *kodshei shaah*, applied equally to the two sacrifices which were *kodshei shaah*. He felt that they should not eat the *sa'ir Rosh Chodesh*, as they were *kodshei doros*. Moshe disagreed with Aharon, to the point that he became "angry." Had he not become upset, he would have understood Aharon's logical rationale. Moshe ultimately agreed with Aharon, saying, "I heard (the decision), but I forgot."

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, was wont to comment concerning Moshe's ability to concede error – rather than cover up when it would be rationally acceptable. When Moshe said, *Shamaati v'shochachti*; "I heard but I forgot," he was opening himself to an accusation that some might level at him: "What else did you forget? Did you make any 'other' alterations in the Torah?" Indeed, the entire *mesorah*, tradition of transmission from *Sinai*, was in danger of being impugned. Nonetheless, Moshe did not allow this possible allegation to prevent him from stating the truth. Veracity trumps *l'shem Shomayim*, acting for the sake of Heaven. Some rabble rousers might have raised questions, ultimately leading to a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name. Moshe *Rabbeinu* understood the mandate of *Midvar sheker tirschak*, "Distance yourself from falsehood" (*Shemos 23:7*) to override all *cheshbonos*, justifications.

During the controversy surrounding the implementation of the study of *mussar* into the *yeshivah* curriculum (or for that matter, taking time ordinarily dedicated for Torah study and diverting part of it to *mussar* study or the study of the soul), *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, the *Mussar* Movements founder and chief proponent, would upon occasion be harassed by the *misnagdim*, opposition, to the movement. This was no different from that which the early *chassidim* endured in their quest to imbue *avodas Hashem*, the service to the Almighty, with passion and joy. While today *mussar* study is an accepted, vital part of Torah study, a time existed in which a number of Lithuanian *gedolim*, Torah giants, were vehemently opposed to it. As usual, one could always find *rif raf* who live for controversy and dispute, who come out of their "holes" in order to disparage and malign anyone who does not agree with them.

Rav Yisrael was brilliant and erudite, but he did not call attention to his vast knowledge – focusing instead on the need to study *mussar*. He was a prolific speaker, who had the ability to captivate, as well as inspire, his audience. He was asked to give a *drashah*, lecture, in Vilna, which was a huge Torah center. His *misnagdim*, many of whom were quite learned, planned to attend for the purpose of refuting his words, thereby casting aspersion on him, his scholarship, and, above all, the *Mussar*

Movement.

During the *shiur*, a member of the opposition asked a powerful question focused on the fundamental principle upon which the *shiur* was based. *Rav* Yisrael stood thinking for a few moments, then announced that based upon the question presented to him, his entire *shiur* was refuted. He then left the podium and returned to his seat. Afterwards, he explained that actually he had twelve answers to the question. They were so compelling that the questioner would be unable to unravel them to see that they did not ultimately answer the question. At the end of the day, however, truth must prevail. If these answers were not an absolute fit, they were false. He would rather have his *shiur* refuted, suffer the “possible” humiliation, than to agree to settle for anything that was not completely true.

Rav Yisrael confessed that a powerful battle raged within him. On the one hand, admitting defeat imperiled his life’s work. On the other hand, how could he settle for something that lacked integrity? Finally, he cried out to himself, “Yisrael! Yisrael! You learn *mussar*, and *mussar* obligates you not to settle for anything that is not absolute truth. This is when I decided to end the *shiur*.”