

He turned this way and that... so he struck the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. (2:12)

Moshe *Rabbeinu* felt that this Egyptian had perpetrated a grave injustice. As such, he took the initiative and punished him. Shortly after the passing of the *Chazon Ish*, who was the preeminent Torah giant of his generation, *Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl, Rosh Yeshivas Telshe*, was *maspid*, eulogized him, in Cleveland. Sadly, only a small group of lay people attended the *Rosh Yeshivah's hesped*. *Rav Eliyahu Meir* felt strongly and took umbrage over the fact that they chose not to pay their respects to the memory of the *gadol hador*. He felt this was a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name. One who is *machshiv Torah*, understands Torah values for its eminence as the lifeblood of our people, should concomitantly pay proper reverence to its disseminators. If he does not, it is a *chillul Hashem*. A few months later, the *yeshivah* celebrated its annual dinner, which was their primary fundraiser. During his greetings, the *Rosh Yeshivah* rebuked the lay people for not having attended the *hesped* for the *Chazon Ish*. Understandably, *Rav Eliyahu Meir's* position and public chastisement of these individuals put the *yeshivah* in jeopardy. Clearly, some members of the board felt that the *Rosh Yeshivah* should perhaps have taken a more sensitive approach towards expressing his feelings.

Horav Avraham Chaim Levine, zl, explains his saintly *Rebbe's* actions based on an exposition cited in *Peninei Daas* (a collection of the *Rosh Yeshivah's shmuessen*, ethical discourses) concerning Moshe's actions *vis-à-vis* the Egyptian. Did he have to kill him? He could have ignored what happened and kept it to himself. In due time, Moshe, having been raised by the princess and having found favor in her father's eyes, would have been appointed to a ministerial position. As such, he would have had Pharaoh's ear and could then have influenced him not to harm the Jews. What would have been so bad?

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that Moshe was destined to become the *Rabban shel kol Yisrael*, the quintessential leader, who would serve as the paradigm for all future leaders of *Klal Yisrael*. If he would have been *mevater*, foregone, even one iota of the truth – he would not have become Moshe *Rabbeinu*. He would have been a fine leader, a diplomat who knew how to “play the game” – but he would not have been Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Without Moshe as our leader, we would not be *Klal Yisrael*. In other words, principles and morality must guide our actions, rather than just convenience, personal gain, or political correctness. The end does not justify the means when it involves the truth. Doing what is right and proper – even when it is not expedient – reflects our true values and integrity.

Veritably, *Rav Eliyahu Meir* could have ignored the slight to the memory of the *Chazon Ish*. After all, he was building a fledgling *yeshivah* in a community in which a *yeshivah* was foreign. Why would he endanger it? If he would have maintained his silence, he would not have been *Rav Eliyahu Meir*! The *Rosh Yeshivah* could not ignore a *chillul Hashem*. To look away would make him an active participant in the travesty.

Horav Ovadiah Yosef, zl, began his long tenure as *Rav* and *posek* as *Rav* in Cairo, Egypt. Although much younger than the other *rabbanim*, *Rav Ovadiah* was unstintingly assertive in protecting *halachah* from those who, for prestige or profit, would compromise its interpretation. In 1949, a diplomat, gentile by religion, died. The chief rabbi was unable to attend the funeral, so he asked *Rav Ovadiah* to represent him. It was a “given” that members of the clergy attend these proceedings in order to maintain *shalom*, peaceful coexistence, with the gentile majority. Since the deceased was Christian, the funeral would take place in a church. The chief rabbi instructed *Rav Ovadiah* not to be concerned, since historically many of the city’s *rabbanim* had attended such a service in order to preserve the peace. The young *Rav* was not deterred. *Halachah* is an absolute which cannot be compromised. It was either permitted, or it was not. He wrote a *teshuvah*, responsa, concerning the permissibility of attending the church funeral: A) Is one permitted to enter a house of idol-worship; B) Was a church, in fact, a house of idol-worship? C) Would it be a *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's Name, for a *rabbinic* leader dressed in the official *rabbinic* vestments worn by *Sephardic Chachamim* to appear in a church? He ruled that it was categorically prohibited for a *Rav* to appear in a church. As an added caveat, he wrote that, if this had been the accepted *minhag*, custom, it should be abolished. While others before him had their reason for conveniently overlooking aspects of *halachah*, *Rav Ovadiah* refused to follow along in their obsequious interpretation of right and wrong. This is why he was *Rav Ovadiah*.