

I will be G-d unto you, and you will be a people unto Me. (26:12)

For what more can one ask? When we look around at an environment whose degenerative societal values and plummeting moral compass and virtue are pervasive, we should feel a sense of relief and deep pride that we are part of the *am kadosh*, holy nation. A life wholly dedicated to moral purity, ethical integrity, virtue and kindness is, in and of itself, deeply fulfilling. It involves a strong sense of purpose and adherence to the ethical and moral principles of the Torah. In order to achieve these lofty goals, Torah study and prayer play central roles in a life dedicated to Hashem. Torah provides the guidance one needs for ethical/moral living, while *tefillah* fosters a direct and personal connection with Hashem. These contribute to a sense of completeness, spiritual fulfillment and moral grounding.

How fortunate are we to have been chosen for this privileged position! How sad it is when those who do not realize (in some instances through no fault of their own) this lofty blessing, instead fall into the abyss of societal abandon. The following story, related by *Horav Yechiel Meir Tzucker, Shlita* (quoted in *U'Masuk Ha'or*), concerning *Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zl*, is classic. *Rav Galinsky* was a student in *Yeshivas Novoradok* in Bialystok, Poland, under the guidance of its *Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Avraham Yoffen, zl*. When the Germans invaded Poland, people were originally unaware of their malicious intent. One thing was for certain: the Germans were sticklers for identification. Thus, a *yeshivah* had to be registered by the government as a bonafide school and the names of its administration, faculty and student body legally registered. The problem was that it was not really safe to travel to the capitol in Warsaw, unless one had papers that were in order. *Yeshivah* students hailed from all over, and many of them did not have their papers. Therefore, it was necessary for one representative to travel to Warsaw, pay the necessary fees and obtain the *yeshivah's* credentials. The *Rosh Yeshivah* felt that *Rav Galinsky*, being young and diminutive in stature, would not call any unnecessary attention to himself. He gave him the funds to pay for the registration permits for the *yeshivah* – and that is all. The Novoradok concept of *bitachon*, trust in Hashem, frowned on unnecessary *hishtadlus*, endeavoring. His means of traveling to Warsaw would somehow be provided for.

Rav Galinsky went to the train station with no extra funds other than that with which he was entrusted on behalf of the *yeshivah*. He walked around the station, which was filled with German soldiers. He finally came upon another Jew, whom he asked for a loan to cover his expenses – one way (to ask for a round trip would be a violation of his trust in Hashem). When he presented himself at the ticket counter with his money, he was informed that he would be upgraded to first-class. He did not realize until later that, as a result of his upgrade, his destination was shortened by two stops. He would have to disembark the train and somehow purchase a ticket to Warsaw. Well, he would not worry about that now.

He found his seat, and, no sooner did he sit down, than a huge giant of a man with a girth that took

up almost two full seats settled his body in the seat – nearly suffocating *Rav Galinsky*. For once, the *Maggid* was grateful for his small size. The man made himself comfortable, squeezing *Rav Galinsky* a bit more to the edge, took out what had become the latest technological rage – a pair of earplugs, and began to lay back and listen to his music.

The train departed the station, and everyone settled in for the trip. A short while later, a young man arose from his seat, took out a harmonica and began to play. People listened and began to clap along to the music. When the man began to dance to his own music, the passengers began to sing and gyrate their bodies. After a few moments of this, they one by one left their seats and began to dance. This went on for about fifteen minutes, as everyone forgot their cares and danced away their troubles. As they returned to their seats, one of the revelers remarked to the man with the earplugs, “You missed such entertainment!” He replied, “I am listening to a classical symphony. You listened to some fellow on his harmonica. You tell me who was better entertained.”

Rav Galinsky returned to his *Rosh Yeshivah* with his mission unaccomplished. He was happy to report, however, that he had learned a powerful Torah lesson: “The whole world thinks that they have the answer to pleasure. They listen to their “music,” the futile and temporary pleasures for which they give up their lives. In contrast, we are plugged into the Torah and thereby connected to Hashem. Now, who is really experiencing true pleasure?”