

Yaakov left Be'er Sheva. (28:10)

Undoubtedly, a *tzadik* impacts a community – if he is involved with the community. This is the common perspective. What about the *tzadik* who sits in his *vinkel*, corner, learning all day, going out just to *daven*? What does he do for the community? Yaakov Avinu was the consummate *ish tam yosheiv ohalim*, wholesome person abiding in tents, which is a reference to the *ohalah shel Torah*, the *bais ha'medrash*. Yet, when he left Be'er Sheva, the void his absence created was deep. As *Rashi* says, the splendor, beauty and glory of the community drifted away with him. Apparently, the *tzadik's* presence per se is in and of itself a talisman for the community. In reality, it is more than that. A *tzadik* cares. He may sit in his *vinkel* learning, but his mind and heart encompass his surroundings. He understands that his presence is Divinely inspired and, as such, he does not ignore the fact that he is present to help *Klal Yisrael*. Just because he does not go around knocking on doors asking, "Can I help you?" does not mean that his door and his heart are not open to everyone. Regardless of affiliation and religious perspective, a Jew is a Jew.

Horav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, zl, was a *gadol* during a time in which many notable *gedolim* lived. These were Torah giants of a *genre* beyond anything we can fathom. Rav Chaim Ozer was also head of the Vaad Ha'Yeshivos, the umbrella group for the sustenance and support of the European *yeshivos*. Indeed, the pulse of world Jewry was under his constant care. The *maskillim*, self-loathing Jews who fought with slander and vitriol against Torah Jews, were a powerful counter group. Nothing limited the extent to which they would stoop to vilify Torah Jewry and especially its exponents and disseminators. Thus, it was hardly surprising that Rav Chaim Ozer was their frequent target. In his regal manner, he ignored them, which added to their animus. One specific writer, a lawyer by profession, made it his life's goal to destroy Rav Chaim Ozer and the Vaad Ha'Yeshivos. At every possible juncture, he would spew forth his hatred against the Torah giant.

Hashem does not tolerate one who is *me'vazeh*, shames, a *talmid chacham*. One day, the lawyer mistakenly signed a check which was counterfeit. He did it by mistake. However, he was unaware of the "Hashem factor" in life. When one sins, he pays. When one disgraces a Torah giant, he pays exponentially. The judge found him guilty and sentenced him to several years in prison. While he was devastated about his sentence and the impact it would have on his future, he realized that, being his family's sole supporter, his sentence was almost a death sentence for his wife and children.

After a few years of good behavior, he was released from prison, a broken man. The once proud lawyer who had been able to write up a storm could hardly talk. He had feared for his wife and children, and he expected to return home to a broken woman, poverty-stricken with starving children. How shocked he was to discover that all was well; the children were well-fed; and the house was immaculate. His wife appeared as vibrant as before his fiasco. He asked what had happened. She explained that every month a messenger delivered an envelope from a Rav in the community with the funds equivalent to what he had been earning before his incarceration. When the man heard that their benefactor was none other than Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski, the Rav of

Vilna, the man he had vilified with bitter vitriol, he almost passed out from shock.

The man made an about-face and proceeded to the house of *Rav* Chaim Ozer. He fell to his feet, begging forgiveness for the slander and hatred he had poured out against the *Rav* and the *Vaad Ha'Yeshivos*, "Apparently, I never knew the *Rav* and the *Vaad Ha'Yeshivos* . From now on, I will become the greatest supporter of the *Vaad Ha'Yeshivos*."

When he left, *Rav* Chaim Ozer quipped to his *gabbai*, "I think now he knows who I am."