

Living with the Torah

ולכל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִחַרְבֵּן כְּלָב לִשְׁנּוֹ ... (כל-פֶּטֶר תִּמְרֵי הַתְּפִלָּה ... (שְׁמוֹת י"א: ז, י"ג: י"ג)
But against all the Children of Israel, no dog shall sharpen his tongue ...
Every firstborn donkey you shall redeem with a lamb...(Sh'mos 11:7, 13:13)

Both dogs and donkeys were rewarded for the role they played in מצרים. Dogs held back their natural tendency to bark. We show appreciation by throwing them forbidden meat. Donkeys carried the extra burden of all the new possessions at the Exodus from Egypt. As a reward the donkeys are the only non-kosher animal with a firstborn status. The dogs were just silent; however, the donkeys alleviated the burden of a Jew. The donkeys therefore, received an even higher reward than the dogs. Comforting a Jew and reducing his pain is one of the greatest acts of חסד.



R' Yeruchem Miller, a רב in Bat Yam, nervously checked his watch. He had a meeting scheduled with R' Shach for 4:30. Knowing that the ראש ישיבה's time was precious, he did not want to be late. A few moments later the taxi arrived.

The driver, Benny, a balding, burly man clicked on the meter. R' Miller would often try to talk about religion with disinterested Jews. R' Miller tried to initiate a conversation over the sound of the blaring radio. After a while, Benny lowered the volume and slowly allowed himself to be drawn into the conversation. Benny demonstrated a disdain for anything religious. Many of his responses were full of cynicism.

The trip went quicker than anticipated and the taxi pulled up at R' Shach's home 15 minutes early. Benny shut off the meter and told R' Miller the amount. As an afterthought Benny asked who he was visiting. R' Miller replied that he had come to see R' Shach and was astounded by Benny's indifference, "You mean to tell me you don't know who R' Shach is?"

"Tell me why I should even care who he is." Benny said in the sarcastic tone he had used a few times too many on the trip. "Why would you need to come to some old rabbi anyway?"

R' Miller explained that he had come to ask R' Shach for advice on several communal affairs. Furthermore, there were some individuals who were ill for whom he wanted the ראש ישיבה to daven.

This last statement, struck a chord with Benny. R' Miller seized the opportunity. "Why do you look so sad? Do you know someone who is ill?" Benny expressive face indeed seemed saddened. "Actually, I do have a friend who is very sick — His voice trailed off, and the tone carried with it a sense of despair. R' Miller urged Benny to join him in visiting the ראש ישיבה, even offering to pay for a running meter, as a rejoinder to Benny's initial excuse of getting back to work.

Benny was both nervous and incredulous that he was convinced to tag along and visit the aged rabbi. R' Shach spoke to R' Miller briefly, then spoke to Benny with warmth. "I understand you have a friend who is ill and needs a blessing and some prayers for a complete recovery." Benny nodded, surprised that R' Miller had alerted the ראש ישיבה. "Yes, that's true."

R' Shach removed a סדור from the bookshelf and began to recite a פרק מי שצברך. After he finished, Benny asked R' Shach to recite a פירוש תהלים of פרק מי שצברך. The ראש ישיבה immediately started to recite the prayer, pausing at the part that calls for the name of the ill individual. Benny said the name "Roki" — which sounded very strange — and R' Shach looked quizzically at him. Benny explained that the ill friend was none other than his dog — Roki!

Without missing a beat, R' Shach continued with the מי שצברך, wishing Benny a רפואה שלמה for his sick friend. R' Miller was shocked and embarrassed at the turn of events but R' Shach did not seem to mind at all.

After Benny left, R' Shach explained to R' Miller that Benny's pain was clearly evident. The davening was as much for Benny as it was for the animal. And if he could gladden the heart and ease the pain of a fellow Jew, then it was well worth it.



Focus on Middos

Dear Talmid,

Among those who sat in Baba Sali's זצ"ל waiting room one morning, was a woman and her teenage son. The mother explained to the זצ"ל, R' Eliyahu, about their strained and tense relationship.

Finally, it was their turn to see Baba Sali, and the זצ"ל ushered them into his chambers. The boy entered the room with a little hesitation in his steps. At Baba Sali's request, the boy's mother went outside to wait. Baba Sali looked at the teenager and asked him to sit down. Both the boy and his mother, who was standing just outside the room, heard what R' Eliyahu said to Baba Sali in Arabic.

"The mother of this boy asks the רב to bless her son with תבונה, attributes, that he lacks, through words of תעוזה, encouragement and strength, especially emphasizing the מצוה of מצוה אב נאמן"

Baba Sali's eyes filled with tears while he listened to the story. As they streamed down his cheeks, he whispered to himself. "If my mother was alive, I would carry her on my shoulders and dance with שמחה, joy." Seeing the זצ"ל's pain and hearing his longing for his mother reached deep into the boy's sensitive heart. The youth lowered his head between his hands and began to cry. With a tear-stained face, he went outside the room to his mother and begged that she forgive him for the grief he had caused in the recent past.

Baba Sali motioned for him to return to the room. He told him a beautiful and personal story about his brother's מצוה אב נאמן. He then blessed the boy. "If you promise that you'll change your ways, I will bless you with כל טוב, all good," said the רב. "You will be happy with everything if you obey and observe the מצוה of מצוה אב נאמן. The words of the רב affected the boy deeply and he was a changed person.

My תלמיד, Baba Sali never needed to mention a person's wrongdoing. His message was from a heart overflowing with the love for a fellow Jew. Such a message will always be heard! תרי וקרוב קרובי

בגדידות, Your רבי



Sage Saying

With his limitless love and compassion for his fellow Jew, Baba Sali זצ"ל lightened the load of those who came to unburden themselves. He often said [in his native tongue], "איך טו דאס נישט פאר יענעם, איך טו עס פאר מיך! — I don't do this for others, I do it for myself! — ס'איז ניט דא א זאך — There is nothing I enjoy more than making another Jew happy!"



Halacha Corner

הלכות ראש חדש

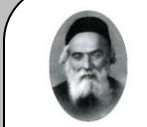
- On those שולית צבור, if one is reciting דומקה when the ראש חודש starts הלל, one should say הלל together with the צבור, omitting the ברכות of הלל, as one can rely on the ברכות of הלל.
- On those טובים which we recite the entire הלל, one should not interrupt davening דומקה and should, rather, say הלל later.

question of the week:

1. Where do we find that one is rewarded for even the walking to part of a מצוה (שכר הליכה) דבר מצוה?
2. What word (an every day item) in the תורה is composed of two separate words, neither of which are הלכות?

Answers

1. When the פסוק tells us that בני ישראל listened to משה and אהרן, it specifies, "And they went and they did ..." ד"ה הלכו והעשו (12,28)
2. The word תפילין, which refers to תפילין, is equal to four, representing the four housings of the ראש ט: טל in Kaspi means two and פ in Afriki means two. ד"ה ולטופת בין עיניך (13,16)



Chofetz Chaim Moment: ספר ח' הלכות לשון הרע כלל ח' סעיף ה' What is the correct way for Manny to handle the situation?

*Harry Weinberg was new in town. Although he went to shul 3 times a day and kept שבת in public, rumor had it that he was not שבת and he was a missionary. Yechezkel Jacobs was not one who ever was aware of the 'town rumors'. He had a business opportunity and was looking for a partner and asked Manny if he should partner with Harry. Manny knew about the rumors and was concerned about saying anything that is לשון הרע.

Answer: We learned last week, the אפיקורוס לשון הרע does not apply to an אפיקורוס. This is only true if actually one heard the אפיקורוס directly or it was an established fact. In our case, it is only a rumor; therefore, Manny should advise Yechezkel, only privately, that he heard an unsubstantiated rumor.