



זצ"ל Reb Shimon Epstein

As the Yartzeit of R' Shimon is this coming Monday כ"ה אלול, and the איחוד בחדוד is published לזכר נשמתו, we thought it appropriate to share with the עולם, an article that appeared on his fifth Yartzeit in the Yated.

It is already 27 years since R' Shimon Epstein was unexpectedly taken from us, yet to his family and those who knew him his legacy of תורה, עבודה, and גמילות חסדים is alive and well.

R' Shimon was someone who left an impression on those who were privileged to know him. One didn't have to know him personally to know who he was. Anyone who Davened in Yeshiva during his lifetime knew of the person sitting near the בימה would say אמן יהא שמיה רבה loud or take his time to make sure that his children said קדושה properly even though everybody else had already finished saying it. They knew that he loved to tell anecdotes that he personally witnessed about the ראשי ישיבה, Rav Aaron Kotler and his son Rav Shneur.

They would see him at his היומי שיעור each night downstairs in ישיבה, obviously worn out from a full day's work, yet sitting with the גמרא to end the day with the sweet sounds of תורה. For although R' Shimon was a butcher by trade, his heart remained in the בית מדרש. His מהלך החיים that reflected the ideals of the בית מדרש led his רבי אלי, ר' אלי, to remark: "R' Shimon isn't a butcher. He's an עובד ד' who happens to cut meat for פרנסה."

He had a knack of knowing what to say to the right person at the right time. Obviously he didn't have time to prepare for these moments, yet his good-natured character shone in these circumstances. After his פטירה, a yungerman in Lakewood remarked

that when he and his friends were teenagers, they had



R' Shimon as a Yungerman with his father, R' Zeidel ZT"L & in the background, R' Shneur ZT"L.

their rough moments. They needed someone who could relate to them with understanding and patience. Long before society became attuned to "teenagers at risk" and other such issues, R' Shimon knew how to talk to them in a way they could understand.

At the שבעה, a woman from a traditional background who purchased meat from Reb Shimon, but had not covered her hair, told the family that he would take time to speak to her when he would deliver her meat order. Over the years she began deliberating whether she should start wearing a sheitel. She finally

bought a sheitel but pushed off wearing it. She always found herself saying, "Next שבת I'll put it on." The only problem was that she said it again the next שבת and every שבת thereafter. Yet for R' Shimon's לוייה, she put it on for the first time, and is still wearing it! R' Shimon's positive influence helped her break the ice.

He was always thinking of the other person. As a certified Rabbi, he was available to sign marriage licenses because he was properly certified to be an officiating Rabbi. His son related, that when his father got סמיכה, he was told by his father Rav Zeidel Epstein to register as an official Rabbi. "You never know how you will be able to help people with such a certification." This concept stayed with him throughout his life. He was always on the lookout to help others.

When he was at the slaughterhouse and the meat of his competitor was ready for delivery, he would bring it to him. When his family asked him why he would help his competitor, he replied with his trademark "Hashem already decided on ראש השנה how much money I'll make this year. I'm going to make that amount regardless of my competition. So why not do someone a favor?"

He would drill this concept into

his children's upbringing that there technically is no such thing as competition! Just do what Hashem wants you to do and let Him take care of the rest.

He lent thousands of dollars over the years, never asking for payment. He would say, obviously the person can't pay back, when he has the means to do so, he will.

R' Shimon would offer drinks to those who would mow the lawn and offered the mailman a cup of coffee. His worker inspired by this noble gesture, continued this after his passing.

His house operated with an "open door policy." His attitude was, "It's not my house, it's Hashem's house," and lived his life accordingly. Of course he had the help of his esteemed Rebbitzin, who ably assisted him in his any endeavors, as she continues to do till this very day. No one hesitated at all to knock on their door. Relatives stayed with their families for months at a time when they had no place to live for various reasons, until they could find suitable quarters. When a child asked if he would have to give up his bed for a guest again, he answered "give him a bed? It's not your bed. It's Hashem's bed. We just live here!" When his children teased each other "get out of my room", he would tell them, "It's not your room- it's Hashem's room."

Living down the block from the Yeshiva, his backyard was used as a shortcut by those going to Yeshiva. While other neighbors fenced in their yards, he insisted on leaving his open. "If it helps Yeshivaliet get to סדר quicker, why not let them?" And although he made sure no extra lights were

running in the house, he always left the lights on outside to assist those who walked through Hashem's yard. As a הכרת הטוב, he would invite the person who taught him שחיטה, R' Hertz Kantarovitz who had no family of his own to go to, to spend the two months around פסח and סוכות in his house. Although he had a large family, especially when his own married children would move in for יום טוב, he was still an invited guest, for he taught him the ropes of the business. Rav Hertz would doze off at the end of the סעודה before Bentching, sometimes lasting a half hour or longer. The children would get impatient, yet he would quietly motion them to wait. Only after R' Hertz would wake up would they sing שיר המעלות and Bentch.

He combined his אהבת חסד with הצנע לכת as the פסוק in מידות states. Many חסדים he did on the quiet. One person related that his mother would always receive her meat with an envelope. To an outsider it looked like a bill; to the family it contained much-needed money. To others he concealed his חסדים as regular business. One customer approached him before יום טוב with \$100. He said that this is all he has. "Please give me as much as \$100 will buy." Realizing this person's wobbly financial situation, R' Shimon told him no problem and proceeded to give him

nearly double the amount of meat. This continued for years. This person subsequently moved to New York. When he ordered \$100 meat at a local butcher, he expected to receive the same amount that R' Shimon customarily gave him. Imagine his surprise when the butcher gave him half the amount! He angrily told the butcher he normally got more than this from his old butcher. The butcher insisted that he's giving him \$100 worth of meat and showed him that's what he gave him. It then dawned on him the tremendous חסד he received over the years from R' Shimon.

He had trying moments in his life. His business suffered and he had a host of ailments and other issues but never despaired. His steadfast בטחון kept him going amid all the troubles he faced on a daily basis. He longed for משיח's arrival. At the time of the first Gulf War, he started a מנהג in his home where he would sing at שלש סעודות אני, מאמין. With tears flowing down his face, his heartfelt rendering of these ageless words reflected a deep yearning for the days of "מתי תמלוך בציון."

Although he was not privileged to witness משיח's arrival, his beautiful legacy lives on through his wonderful family and all those who knew him who will hopefully merit heralding משיח by following the example he set for them.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

Riddles of the Week

Every year, we begin our Riddle of the Week series with the following הקדמה.

Is it מותר for someone who is asked a riddle to try to find out the answer from someone else when he, himself, doesn't know the answer?

In 'יד' we are told the story of הגבור שמשון marrying a Philistine woman. At the wedding, שמשון asks the thirty assembled guests a riddle. He tells them that if they get the answer to the riddle within seven days, he will give them thirty sheets and thirty suits of clothing. If they don't get the answer, however, they must give him thirty sheets and thirty suits. Not knowing the answer, they threaten שמשון's new wife and tell her that if she doesn't get the answer out of שמשון and tell it to them, they will burn her and her father's house. Without telling שמשון why she wanted to know the answer, she pleads and cries for seven days until שמשון tells her the solution. She then tells the information to the thirty men who repeat it to שמשון demanding their prize. שמשון pays, but only by killing thirty פלישתי men, taking their suits and giving the suits to the wedding guests.

However, he had promised them sheets and suits. Why did he only give them suits? The אברבנאל, as quoted by the מלבי"ם, says that שמשון was not sure of the answer to our question and was, therefore, unsure if he owed them the prize. After all, they really didn't know the answer themselves. They had to resort to threats to get the answer. On the other hand, they did come up with the right answer. Not knowing whether they could be considered legitimate riddle solvers he decided to only pay half the bet according to the rule of חולקין בספק - when money is in doubt each side gets half.

Yet on the other hand, in מדרש איכה, where it describes the smart children of ירושלים, we find the following story.

One time, a man from Atoona came to ירושלים and entered a school where the children were learning without their teacher. He started to ask the students questions and they answered. They then said to the guest, "Let's make a deal. We'll each take turns asking each other riddles. The first side not to know the answer to the other's riddle will have to give his clothes to the other side." They then said that since he was older, it was befitting for him to answer first. When the man agreed, they asked him a riddle which he didn't know, and they took his clothes.

He, thereupon, went to their rebbe, ר' יוחנן, with the complaint that the people of ירושלים welcome their guests by taking their clothing. Rav Yochanan, seeing what had happened, asked if they had asked him a riddle that he couldn't answer. When he admitted that that's exactly what had happened, ר' יוחנן told him the answer which he took back to the ישיבה and retrieved his clothes.

It seems from this that ר' יוחנן felt it was permitted to tell the man the answer so that he could get back his clothing which he, had he not found the answer, would have lost "fair and square"?

The בן איש חי, in his תשובות רב פעלים, however, is unsure about this point. It is possible that either 1) ר' יוחנן felt, as we said, that he was permitted to tell the man the answer or 2) that the boys behaved improperly with their questions and although they, technically, had won the bet, he wanted the students to return the clothing anyway to soothe the guest's feelings. Even though they didn't have to, because the answer was gotten illegally, Rav Yochanan felt sure that his תלמידים would cooperate.

(This was all heard on a tape of a שיעור given many years ago by Hagaon Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein שליט"א of Bnei Brak. In a subsequent tape, after mentioning the above once again, he added the following.)

Rav Yehuda Tzadkah זצ"ל, the ראש ישיבה of ישיבת פורת יוסף, told the following story. When he was a young boy growing up in ירושלים the Gerer Rebbe, אמרי אמת זצ"ל, came to visit ירושלים for the first time. All the ישיבה בחורים came to see the great רבי and he asked all the little boys some questions. When it was Rav Tzadkah's turn, he was asked by the רבי what he was learning and he answered שבת משניות. To which he was asked by the רבי, "How many פרקים are there in שבת?" and he answered, "Twenty-four". Asked the רבי, "And why are there twenty-four?" Rav Tzadkah didn't know. He ran across the streets of ירושלים to where the כף החיים זצ"ל was learning. The כף החיים told him that שבת is called כלה and just like a כלה has קישוטין – כ"ד – twenty-four ornaments, so, too, does שבת. Rav Tzadkah ran back to the Gerer Rebbe and told him the answer. The רבי then gave Rav Tzadkah two גרוש as a prize. The גרוש coin at that time was a coin with a hole in the middle. When Rav Tzadkah brought the coins home to his mother, she tied a string through one of them thereby making a necklace which she placed around her son's neck. From then on, said Rav Tzadkah, he had much, much more הצלחה in his learning.

From this story, says Rav Zilberstein, we see that when a riddle or question is asked, the understanding is that the questioner wants the one asked to work on the answer and as long as an effort is made to get the answer even from another source, the reward is his.

But there is yet another purpose to asking a riddle and that is, to facilitate learning and remembering what one has learned. To prove this, Rav Zilberstein asks the following riddle from a גמרא מפורשת.

Riddle:

When is a person required to sell his father?

Answer:

The גמ' quotes a ברייתא that tells of a case where someone can sell and must sell his father. This can happen if a person buys a slave and a slavewoman - who have a son from before, but the son was not included in the sale. If the purchaser of the slaves, אדון, frees the שפחה and then marries her, he is required to give her a כתובה which requires payment to her in case he dies or divorces her. If the אדון then writes a will to the son, who is not related to him in any way, which gives the son all his property upon his death and then the אדון dies, the son inherits all the property which includes the slave, his own father. When the woman requests the payment of the כתובה and there is no other way to pay the debt, the son sells his father to pay for the כתובה to his mother.

The גמרא then asks מאי קמשמע לן? What does this ברייתא teach us? And it answers that this ברייתא holds that an עבד is considered a מטלטלין – a movable item – and that it holds like רבי מאיר who says that מטלטלין is pledged to a כתובה and must be sold in order to pay for the כתובה. Or, says the גמרא, the ברייתא holds that an עבד is like land which according to everybody is pledged to the כתובה. (The הלכה is like neither, an עבד is considered מטלטלין and is not משועבד to the כתובה.)

Asks Rav Zilberstein שליט"א, if the ברייתא wanted to teach us that מטלטלין is pledged to the כתובה, why didn't it just say so? Why the convoluted (but very interesting) case of a son selling his father? We see from this, says Rav Zilberstein, that the גמרא wishes to say things in a mind-teasing or riddle-like manner so that what is being learned will remain in one's memory.

After that הקדמה, we would like to state that the purpose of our Riddle of the Week is to trigger some thought-provoking discussions at the Shabbos table or any other place. As such, we will accept any legitimate answer (sometimes a sole opinion and oftentimes not להלכה) brought to our attention no matter the source of the information. And we hope that what is discussed will, indeed, be remembered by all those who participate in these discussions ולהגדיל תורה ולהאדירה.

דבר תורה

ותדר נדר ותאמר ד' צבאות אם ראה תראה בעיני אמתך וזכרתי ולא תשכח את אמתך ונתתה לאמתך זרע אנשים... ויען עלי ויאמר לך לשלום ואלהי ישראל יתן את שלתך אשר שאלת מעמו... ותאמר תמצא שפחתך חן בעיניך ותלך האשה לדרכה ותאכל ופניה לא היו לה עוד. (פרש"י פנים של זעם).... הפטרת ר"ה יום א'

פשוט, חנה was agitated and very broken by the way פנינה treated her and by the fact that she was childless. However, after she received ברכה's עלי, she calmed down and no longer had a face of anger. There are many words used here that seem to have a much deeper explanation. Here is the מהלך החתם סופר!

The מעבירין tells us that when a person is מועד על מדותיו, they are עוולות more than they deserve; שמים (ר"ה י"ז). They are treating others, with more than they deserve; too, will deal with them, more than they deserve!

There are occasions when one does not have to be מעביר על מדותיו, and maybe they shouldn't be מעביר על מדותיו, for example the person is a רשע and is deliberately causing them pain! We see from the פסוק of כִּי מֵרַב שִׁיחִי וְכַעֲסִי דִּבְרָתִי of פסוק, that חנה felt that פנינה was a רשע and was deliberately causing her pain and therefore, פנינה was not deserved of getting a pass of מדותיו על מעביר. חנה did not know that פנינה's intentions were לשם שמים! But חנה realized that even though she was entitled to not let it go, she wouldn't be זוכה to get a מתנה of קיימא של זרע as she was not being מוותר! Therefore, when she asked ד' for a child, she said צבאות ד' which the גמ' ברכות teaches us, that חנה was מחדש a new טענה, that since ד' has so many צבאות, it would be befitting for ד' to give her a child! This טענה, says the סופר חתם, is a type of רחמנות said in בית דין, which means, that חנה felt that she should get the child through מדת הדין, without רחמנות. Not as a מתנה, as she isn't being מעביר על מדותיה! But she felt that in her case, she should NOT be מעביר על מדותיה!

and ויען עלי ויאמר told her, I think you're going about this the wrong way! לכי לשלום! Go back to your family, and start a new פנינה with פנינה, even though she is mistreating you! The reason is because פנינה is really being מתכווין. ואלקי ישראל יתן את שلتך אשר שאלת מעמו, and then, מעביר על מידתך, and then, מעביר על מידתך. Instead of coming with a טענה that you should get a child מן הדין, it will be much easier if you are מעביר על מידתך and get the child as a מתנה!

She accepted the מוסר of עלי עוד, לפני לא היו לה עוד, פנים של זעם, was now gone as she was being מעביר על מדותיו and she was זוכה to הריון!

says, that being **על מדותיו** is a shortcut to get **רחמי שמים**! We can get so much more, even more than we deserve, all by being **מוחל**, by being **מוותר** from the people that hurt us! We should all be **זוכה** to a **כתיבה וחתימה טובה**!

RIDDLE OF THE WEEK

When should we be concerned about the last time the $\mu\pi\eta$ in our Shul took a haircut?

PARSHA MYSTERY

מה הטעם 'מצוות הקהל' היא דוקא במוצאי שמיטה בחג הסוכות???

ANSWER

וז"ל טעמא דקרא (ל"א י') במועד שנת השמיטה בחג הסוכות-מה שקבעה תורה מצות הקהל בסוכות במוצאי שמיטה י"ל משום דסוכות נקרא 'חג האסיף' שאוספין את התבואה ובשמיטה שלא זרעו אין מה לאסוף, אמנם התורה הבטיחה שבשנה הקודמת תעשה התבואה לב' שנים ולזה מזכירין בסוכות בהקהל בזה שקוראין בסוכות שנתקיים מה שהבטיחה התורה שהתבואה מוכנה משנה שעברכה וא"צ לאסוף אם מקיימין את התורה!

If you have any comments or answers to the riddles or the דבר תורה, please fax them to 732-363-4947 or email me at ichudbchidud@gmail.com.

If you would like the English **איחוד בחידוד** emailed to you at no charge, please send us a request at ichudbchidud@gmail.com !!

Riddles of the week & the answers are written by R' Michoel Levi of Bais Yaakov D'Rav Meir