
Introduction

Purity of Heart

It was a most unusual case.

Two litigants stood before the *dayanim* of the *beis din*. One was the owner of a diamond polishing factory and the other was an employee at the factory. “I have brought my employer here today because he fired me from my job,” the employee began in an injured tone.

“Is that true? And why did you fire him?” the *dayanim* asked the defendant.

The factory owner reluctantly explained, “This employee caused me a lot of damage with his work. Many diamonds were ruined and I incurred huge losses.” He took a deep breath; it seemed hard for him to speak.

“Despite the damages, I didn’t sue him for the losses. Furthermore, I didn’t want to leave him without a *par-nassah*, and so, at the time I fired him, I told him I’d continue paying his salary until he found a new job. I just wanted to prevent further damage to my business,” he concluded.



“Is this true?” the *dayanim* asked the employee.

“Yes. It’s true, but I’m suing him because he refuses to keep me employed. I don’t want to be the recipient of *tzedakah* money!” the man cried.

The *dayanim* were stunned.

“We’ve presided over many *dinei Torah* over the decades,” related Harav Chaim Meir Vosner, one of the *dayanim*, and the son of Harav Shmuel Halevi Vosner, author of *Shevet Halevi*. “We have never before encountered a person with such a pure heart. All the *dayanim* sat in utter shock as we witnessed the sincerity and integrity of the factory owner. Not only did he not sue his employee for the damage he had caused, but he also continued to pay his salary! Where has anyone ever heard of such a thing?”

Who was this person who displayed such sterling *middos*? Who was the defendant who was able to overcome every iota of his personal subjectivity and think only of the good of the other person?

Although I am his son, my family and I realized in retrospect how little we knew of the extent of his greatness.

A World of *Chessed* Activities

I knew that my father, Reb Shmuel Yehuda Daskal, was a businessman, a successful diamond dealer who employed hundreds of workers who polished diamonds. I saw many *tzedakah* collectors who were warmly welcomed; I also saw *roshei yeshivah* and *roshei kollel*, *rabbanim* and *rebbe*s coming to his door to ask for help. I knew that he was a beacon of *tzedakah* and *cheded*.

But there was so much I didn’t know.

What I knew was not even the tip of the iceberg; I had no idea how lofty his actions really were, what a giant in *cheded* he was, the pure *middos* he had. I could not have known about the scope of his activities — not because he tried to conceal them, but because he did not consider what he did to be particularly special.

He never spoke about his acts of *cheded*. I never felt that there was anything he was hiding from us. Only after his passing did I begin to discover a world I didn’t know, a world of wondrous acts of

chessed. The remarkable stories, incomprehensible in their frequency and scope, astonished us all.

At that time, I began to write down stories that I heard from reliable sources. Once the stories accumulated, I contemplated compiling a book, but publication of my father's accomplishments would be the diametric opposite of the way he had acted. He was modest to an extreme and he eschewed publicity. How then, could I go and publicize his life's work? Nevertheless, I printed the book *Ish Chessed Hayah* in Hebrew as a commemoration, just for our family.

From Above It Was Otherwise Ordained

On Chol Hamoed Sukkos 5769/2008, Harav Eliezer Dovid Friedman, one of the eminent *rabbanim* of London, unexpectedly contacted me. "I've read your book, *Ish Chessed Hayah*, twice. I received it by chance through a friend of your family and I want to read it yet a third time."

Although I knew that Rav Eliezer Dovid had known my father well and would deliver a regular *shiur* each Tuesday in our home, I was taken aback. I knew that Rav Eliezer Dovid had always been unstinting in his praise of my father, and in his approbation to my sefer *Shiurim Kesidran*, published in 5761/2001 on *Maseches Bava Metzia*, he wrote the following about my father, "Harav Hachassid, one of the unique personalities of our generation in his love of Torah and his outstanding support of it; a pillar of *chessed*; his praise cannot be put into mere words; his name is glorified in public: Moreinu Harav Shmuel Yehuda Daskal."

Nevertheless, his words took me quite by surprise. A person whose time is so precious, and dedicated entirely to Torah, should read a book about acts of *chessed*



Harav Eliezer Dovid Friedman

twice? When the *rav* sensed my surprise, he explained that these stories would amaze anyone who hears them, but all the more so because the person performing these acts was a *baalabos*, a diamond dealer, not a *rebbe* or famous *rav*. There is no *mussar sefer* more suitable for the wealthy than these stories, which clearly demonstrate what one can and should accomplish with the abundance bestowed upon him from Above. These stories are about a Yid who led an ostensibly regular life, yet his level of *chessed* was virtually unmatched — and that’s what makes the book a most unusual, powerful *mussar sefer*.

Then the *rav* asked a piercing question. “Why didn’t you print this book for the general public?” I tried to answer that such a publication would be the absolute opposite of the way my father had conducted himself his whole life, but I didn’t get a chance to finish the sentence.

Rav Eliezer Dovid Friedman explained, “The reaction of a person to *kavod* in this world cannot be taken into consideration when honoring him after his passing. There is no doubt that publishing it will bring him pleasure in the Upper Worlds. The more these stories are disseminated, the more they will illuminate the souls of other Jews, and they, in turn, will increase their acts of *tzedakah* and *chessed* — and that will bring your father a tremendous *nachas ruach*. In the Upper Worlds, the results of actions, and the influence that they have on other people, all bring benefits to the *niftar*.”

I followed his advice.

This is not a biography about a person named Reb Shmuel, nor is it a book chronicling the saga of the Daskal family. This is a *mussar sefer*.

In the world of *gashmiyus* that we live in, where people are absorbed in fulfilling their desires and calculating profits, these stories are like a breath of fresh air. They will increase the purity in the hearts of the readers, and will encourage them on the path of *chessed*.

The book is divided into sections, classified by different subjects of *tzedakah* and *chessed*. There are stories about compassion and humility, which are the basis for doing good in our world, as well as stories illustrating *emunas chachamim* and *ahavas Torah*, which are the basis for supporting Torah.

Another facet addressed in this book is my father’s *askanus*, an integral part of his life, which he did purely *l’shem Shamayim*, and

through which he contributed his talents towards establishing Torah institutions and *chessed* organizations.

Since a person's roots stem from his fathers and forebears, he inherits his *middos* and temperament from them. Appendices at the end of the book provide a family history and the history of the places where they lived, so that people can gain insights into where and how this magnificent flower bloomed. Additionally, I added a profile of my mother *a"h*, who was a dedicated partner to my father's life of *chessed*.

Please note, although this book was written by Reb Shmuel's son, Harav Yitzchak Beirach, it is written in third-person in order to provide a broader perspective.