

# Fascinating INSIGHTS

ח' כסלו תשפ"ו

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L'Refuah Shleima Gutzya Bryna bas Perel Chaya, Danielle bat Lucie and Rafael ben Danielle

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R' Yehuda Leib Orlean<sup>1</sup> offered a striking explanation in the Al Chet of על חטא שחטאנו לפניך

<sup>1</sup> R' Yehuda Leib Orlean (1900-1943) was born to a family of well-off Gerer Hasidim in Warsaw, and was a Gerrer chassid of the Imrei Emes. In 1933, he became the director of the

Bais Yaakov Teachers' Seminary. He was a soft-spoken but charismatic and beloved teacher, who wrote a number of important Bais Yaakov texts including the 1935

ביוֹדעים ובלא יודעים, for the sin we have committed before You knowingly and unknowingly. He asked: Why should we be held accountable for sins committed unknowingly?



and sensitive.

His answer was that this phrase does not refer to mistakes made in ignorance, but to the *sin of not knowing itself*. We are commanded to know—to be aware, attentive,

We live in a world where people are wrapped up in themselves, concerned only with their own needs and concerns. Such self-absorption leads to spiritual blindness. A person who doesn't notice another's pain, confusion, or struggle is guilty of *not knowing*.

To truly live as a Jew means to be aware of what is happening around us—to see the person crying in distress, the elderly man who is lost, the one struggling under a heavy burden. There is no excuse to say, "I didn't know my neighbor was sick or alone and needed help." You should have known—because caring requires awareness.

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### Commanded Boy

When a boy becomes a *bar mitzvah*, he becomes a *metzuveh ve'oseh*—one who is commanded and fulfills. The Ohr Gedalyahu<sup>2</sup> explains that this is based on the gemara that גדול מצווה ועושה ממי שאינו מצווה ועושה, one who performs a mitzvah having been commanded to do so is greater than one who performs a mitzvah without having been commanded to do so.<sup>3</sup> According to this, a *bar mitzvah* boy is now a *gadol*—not merely because of age, but because he now enters the elevated state of *gadol ha'metzuveh ve'oseh*.

One who is *metzuveh ve'oseh* has the power of the very One who commanded him. This is reflected in the bracha we say before performing a mitzvah אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו, Who sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us, meaning that through fulfilling the mitzvos, which is the will of Hashem, the kedusha of Hashem rests upon him and that's what gives him the power to fulfil the mitzvos properly.

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### Pain of Pleasure

textbook *Yidish leben* (Jewish Life) and the biographical essay "Sarah Schenirer." In 1943, R' Orlean was murdered in Birkenau.

<sup>2</sup> Likutim, Bar Mitzvah. Interestingly, when a boy becomes bar mitzvah, a neshama descends to him from heaven (see

The gemara<sup>4</sup> tells us that when R' Akiva was being killed and his flesh was being combed, he was accepting upon himself *ol malchus shamayim* and he said to his students כל ימי הייתי מצטער על פסוק זה...<sup>5</sup> all my days I was troubled by this pasuk, בכל נפשך<sup>5</sup> with all your soul, which means even if he takes your soul. I said to myself when will the opportunity come that I can fulfill this. Now that it has come into my hands, should I not fulfill it? What is meant by "All my days I was troubled by this pasuk"?



R' Tzvi Hirsch Meisles explains that when one recites shema, he should have in mind that if he is ever put to the ultimate test, he will be *moser nefesh* and give his life *al kidush Hashem*.<sup>6</sup> Now, when R' Akiva said this pasuk he imagined he was giving up his life *al kidush Hashem*. So R' Akiva felt the pain of that moment.

R' Akiva was essentially saying I know that if I am ever called upon to surrender my life for Hashem, I can do it when I say shema because I have lived through that experience every day when I say shema.

This is what is meant in כל ימי הייתי מצטער על פסוק זה: I lived that experience of pain, of the process of dying *al kidush Hashem*, each time when I said this pasuk. And now, having been granted the actual opportunity to give up my life while reciting shema, how can I not fulfill it, that which I anticipated my entire life?

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written thousands of Torah articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of ten books including the recently released "Astounding Torah Insights about the Human Body." His writings, many of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Spanish and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lectures, writes and teaches, and is passionate about inspiring Jews of all levels of observance.

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Sefas Emes, Pesach, 5645, s.v. B'inyan Shem Shabbos Hagadol).

<sup>3</sup> Kidushin 31a.

<sup>4</sup> Brachos 61b.

<sup>5</sup> Devarim 6:5.

<sup>6</sup> See Mishna Brura 61:3.