Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l
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פרשת שמיני

Anger and Avodah Zarah

Sponsored
l'iluy nishmas HaRav Avigdor ben Yisroel Miller
whose yahrzeit is the 27th of Nissan
and l'iluy nishmas
Dr. Elliott Samet
who was literally moser nefesh for Klal Yisroel
Anger and Avodah Zarah

It was Shabbos Parshas Shmini and Uri and Yaakov Leib were very excited about the first siyum they were going to make together. They had been learning Mishnayos Mesichta Avodah Zarah together over Pesach vacation and they were hoping to make a siyum on Shabbos. According to the schedule they hung on the wall in their room they were supposed to finish the mesichta on Sunday but they planned on learning an extra two mishnayos on Shabbos so that they could make a siyum at shalashudis.

“Isn’t it strange,” said Uri to Yaakov Leib as they sat down after davening to finish the last few mishnayos of the mesichta, “that there were people – even Jews – who used to worship avodah zarah in the olden days?! It means that they totally forgot about Hashem and bowed down to an idol! How can someone be so, so, so I don’t know what?”

“You’re right,” said Yaakov Leib. “I was wondering about that too. Maybe we should come early to mincha and try to ask Rabbi Bergman that question. Actually, let’s come a half hour before mincha and we’ll finish the mesichta then. My best friend Sruly just invited me over to his house and I told him I’d come.”

“Come on, Yaakov Leib! You said that we would finish it now! I made up to go to my friend before mincha. If we don’t do it now, we’re not going to finish it! You’d better not go to Sruly now,” said Uri angrily.

“You’re not my boss!” yelled Yaakov Leib. “I already told Sruly that I’m coming over now, so I really have to go. He’s probably waiting for me already.”

“No! It’s not right!” screamed Uri angrily getting red in his face. “You said we’d finish it now! Why are you being so stubborn?!”
“Boys, boys!” called out Rabbi Bergman, the shul’s rav, as he walked over to the boys. “Yelling in a shul?! What happened? Maybe I can help?”

Uri and Yaakov Leib’s angry faces turned even more red in embarrassment. They weren’t exactly going to explain to Rav Bergman that they had gotten angry at each other and were screaming about that, so they quickly tried to change the subject.

“Well, uh, we, uh, we were just uh, we had a question for you. We’re learning Avodah Zarah together and we learned so much about different types of avodah zarah, and we were just wondering how could it be that there were Jews who would forget about Hashem. How could a frum Jew forget about Hashem and bow down to an idol?!”

Rabbi Bergman smiled because he had just heard the boys arguing and now he had the opportunity to teach them a lesson. “That’s a beautiful question you boys are asking. So, I want to show you a Rambam that might help us with an answer.”

Rabbi Bergman took out a Rambam Hilchos Dei’os from the shelf and opened up to the second perek and showed the boys the following words: Somebody who gets angry, it’s as if he worshipped avodah zarah.
“You see this?” said Rabbi Bergman, if someone is angry it’s as if he bowed down to an idol.

“Now, that’s very hard to understand” said Rabbi Bergman. “And it’s something that Rav Avigdor Miller spoke about very often. Because if you would ask an angry boy if he believes in Hashem, he would say, “Of course! A hundred million percent!”

“But Chazal are teaching us that it’s not true. Because if you’re angry about something it means that you’re forgetting that whatever is happening, Hashem is making it happen.

“Hashem is running the world, and he does everything for a good reason. If you think that He’s not taking care of things properly, then that’s what avodah zarah is – it means that Hashem is not the King of the Universe; He’s not running the world, chas v’shalom.” concluded Rabbi Bergman as he returned the Rambam to the shelf.

“Oh boy,” said Uri to Yaakov Leib as Rabbi Brog walked away. “I guess that means that me and you were just worshipping avodah zarah while we were arguing about when to finish Mesichta Avodah Zarah.”

“Yeah,” said Yaakov Leib. “I guess that answers our question. It seems like finishing Mesichta Avodah Zarah and making a siyum is only the beginning of our learning. We’re going to have to make it our next project to learn how to be satisfied with all the ups and downs that happen in our lives – and to never get angry and bow down to idols ever again.”

Have a wonderful Shabbos!