

Mishpatim / משפטים

The Broken Window

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

After enjoying a delicious Shabbos seudah, Rav Jacobs walked into his empty shul and opened his Mesillas Yesharim. All of the members of the shul were either taking Shabbos naps or spending time with their families, and Rav Jacobs relished this quiet time each week that allowed him to learn mussar undisturbed.

“אִמְנָם אִם אַחַד מִן הַתְּנָאִים הָאֵלֶּה יִחְסֹר לוֹ”
“לא יגיע אֶל השְׁלִימוֹת” Rav Jacobs chanted softly to himself...

Suddenly a loud cracking sound caused the Rov to look up from his sefer. To his surprise, it looked like someone was breaking into the shul through a window! Rav Jacobs jumped up and said a quick tefillah to Hashem that he should not be hurt, before realizing that the “intruder” was none other than Yanky Rosenstein who lived down the street.

As Yanky jumped down from the window and brushed himself off, the Rov walked over to him.

“Good Shabbos, Yanky,” the Rov said. “Is everything okay?”

“Good Shabbos, Rav Jacobs,” Yanky replied with a proud smile. “I came to shul because I really want to start spending my Shabbos afternoons learning. But the door to the shul was jammed so I had no choice but to climb through the window. I feel like one of the talmidim in Rabban Gamliel’s beis midrash who had to prove that they were willing to be moser nefesh in order to come learn!”



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“Is that so,” the Rov began, before stopping and noticing Yanky’s appearance. “Wait a second - since when do you wear a bekeshe?”

“Oh,” grinned Yanky. “I decided I want to be a Horki Chossid. And I think the levush suits me well.”

Rav Jacobs thought for a moment before responding. “Yanky,” he said. “Would you like to learn with me for a little bit?”

Yanky’s face lit up at the chance to learn with Rav Jacobs, who was known as one of the biggest talmidei chachomim in the neighborhood.

“Sure!” he said. “What are we going to learn? Noda B’Yehuda? Reb Boruch Ber? Bnei Yisoschar? Kedushas Levi?”

“Actually, I was in the middle of learning Mesillas Yesharim,” Rav Jacobs said. “Why don’t we learn that together?”

“Oh.” Yanky said, somewhat less enthusiastically.

“Is something wrong?” asked the Rov.

“Well, no, it’s just that I was hoping for something, um, a bit more geshmak...”

“Hmmm,” mused Rav Jacobs. “Did you know that Rav Yisroel Salanter once said that he was able to write a sefer like Noda B’Yehuda, but it was beyond him to write even one page of Mesillas Yesharim?”

“Really?” asked Yanky in wonder. “I didn’t know that.”

“Yes,” the Rov replied. “And in fact, I am right in middle of where the Mesillas Yesharim talks about chassidus!”

“I didn’t know the Mesillas Yesharim talks about chassidus,” Yanky said.

“Of course he does - that’s what the sefer is all about!” Rav Jacobs said. “Look here, the Ramcha” quotes the Gemara in Bava Kama: **האי מאן דבעי למהוי**

הסידא... לקים מילי דנזיקין - if someone wants to be a chossid, he must fulfill the halachos of nezikin’.

“Huh? - I didn’t know that,” Yanky repeated.

Rav Jacobs looked at Yanky. “It is wonderful that you want to be a Horki Chossid - there are many great people who are Horki Chassidim. But do you know what the word ‘chossid’ means? Being a chossid means taking your avodas Hashem to a whole new level, serving him above and beyond what it says in halacha. And one of the first steps to doing that is being extremely careful with other people’s money.

“It is amazing that you want to learn on Shabbos afternoon and that you want to follow in the footsteps of the great tzaddikim. But coming through the window and breaking the frame is not the way to go about that.”

“But the door was stuck - how was I supposed to get inside?” Yanky protested.

“Maybe you weren’t supposed to get inside,” suggested Rav Jacobs. “Or maybe you could have found another way. Don’t you find it interesting that immediately after mattan Torah, the next parsha is Parshas Mishpatim? Instead of talking the many mitzvos and their halachos, the very first thing - the most important thing - that the Torah teaches us is being careful with things that don’t belong to us.”

Yanky was quiet for a minute. “I’m sorry, Rav Jacobs,” he said. “I shouldn’t have come in through the shul window. I will bli neder pay for the damage after Shabbos and make sure not to hurt people or their things along my journey towards being a true eved Hashem.”

“Wonderful!” Rav Jacobs said with a smile. “Now why don’t you go bring us a Noda B’Yehuda and we’ll continue learning together!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

The first lesson the Torah teaches us after Mattan Torah, is to be careful not to hurt others.



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