

Tzadok Gets Ready

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l

Tzadok "Hatzadik" sat on the floor of his cell with five small brass cubes in front of him. He picked up one of the cubes, tossed it in the air, and with a sweeping motion attempted to pick up the other four cubes before catching the first cube. However, he missed and one of the cubes flew across the cell and disappeared under the bed.

"Good afternoon, Tzadok," Rav Volender, the prison rov, said as he approached.

"Ah, hi rebbi," Tzadok said, reaching under the bed to retrieve the cube.

"Tzadok, did you take a look at that paper I gave you earlier?" asked Rav Volender.

"No, rebbi," responded Tzadok, spreading the cubes on the floor again. "I'm busy practicing *chameish avanim* so I can be the best player in the whole prison."

"Tzadok, it's an important paper."

"Just one more game, okay rebbi?"

"Tzadok, stop playing for a second," ordered Rav Volender. "This paper is an application for the early release program. If you get approved, you might be able to get out of prison early."

"Really???" exclaimed Tzadok.

Tzadok got to his feet and picked up the slightly crumpled application form that was on his bed. He grabbed a pen and quickly scribbled the answers to the questions before handing it through the bars to Rav Volender and returning to his game.



“Wait, Tzadok,” Rav Volender said. “You filled out this form in less than ten seconds.”

“Well yeah, I’m very busy,” Tzadok responded.

“Tzadok, you need to take this seriously. This is an opportunity for you to be a free man again.”

“But I answered all of the questions,” insisted Tzadok.

“Where it asks what type of job you plan on getting, you wrote ‘*gadol hador*,’” Rav Volender said, reading the form.

“Yeah, I think that’s the perfect job for me,” replied Tzadok, not looking up from his *chameish avanim*.

“Job? ‘*Gadol hador*’ isn’t what I’d call a job. How are you going to support yourself? And besides you can’t just walk out of jail and become the *gadol hador*.”

“Why not?” Tzadok asked as he successfully swept up the brass stones and caught the one he had tossed in the air. “All I would have to do is give people *brachos* and advice all day. I’m very good at that.”

“Tzadok, do you know what this week’s *parsha* is?”

“Um... Parshas Vayigdal?” Tzadok guessed.

“Vayigdal??? There’s no such *Parsha*. This week is Parshas Vateitzei.”

“That’s perfect!” said Tzadok excitedly. “‘*Vayeitzei*’ means ‘and he left’ - what a perfect week for me to leave prison!”

“In Parshas Vayeitzei,” said Rav Volender, ignoring Tzadok’s comment, “Yaakov Avinu heads to Charan to find a wife. But in order to prepare himself for marriage, he made a stop to learn in Yeshivas Ever.”

“Like for a whole day?” Tzadok asked.

“No,” said Rav Volender. “He spent fourteen years in *yeshiva*, learning and perfecting himself so he would be ready to build Klal Yisroel.”

“FOURTEEN YEARS?” asked Tzadok, shocked. “What took him so long? It sounds like he wasn’t so interested in getting married.”

“No, no, Tzadok. Yaakov Avinu was very interested in getting married and building the Jewish nation. But before doing something so important, one must prepare himself properly. Doing something without the proper preparation is a recipe for failure.”

“Ah, so you’re saying I need to learn for fourteen years in order to become the *gadol hador*.”

“No, Tzadok, it takes a lifetime of work to get to the level of our *gedolim*. There is no way someone can just walk out of prison and be the *gadol hador*.”

“Oh, maybe I should choose a different job,” said Tzadok thoughtfully.

Rav Volender smiled and handed Tzadok a fresh application form. “I’d be happy to help you fill out this form, Tzadok. But just like anything important in life, you can’t just rush into it. And not only should you think about these questions carefully before answering them, but you need to start preparing yourself for life as a free man.

“B’ezras Hashem, your application for the early release program will be approved and you will be heading out into the world once again. But are you ready? You need to start preparing yourself for life on the outside so you can be set up to succeed - otherwise you might *chas vechalila* find yourself back here in a few weeks.”

“So how do I prepare?” asked Tzadok.

Rav Volender smiled again. “Why don’t you start by coming to my *Mesilas Yescharim shiur* instead of playing *chameish avanim*? Learning *mussar* is the absolute best way to prepare yourself for living a healthy life.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Let’s review:

- Why can’t Tzadok be the *gadol hador* when he gets out of prison?
- Why did Yaakov Avinu stop to learn for fourteen years before getting married?



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