



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT VAYIKRA

Two Movements

R' Elimelech Biderman shared something amazing in the name of one of the sons of R' Akiva Eiger. A *talmid chacham* was spending the Pesach Seder with his father-in-law, who happened to be an ignoramus. Towards the end of the night, they sang the famous song which starts with the words *chad gadya*: "חד גדיא דבין אבא בתרי זחי". The father-in-law asked his learned son-in-law what the song was portraying, upon which he explained to him the basic understanding. "There was a goat that a father bought for two coins, and a cat bit the goat, and a dog bit the cat..." The father-in-law interrupted, "I don't understand what is happening here." The son-in-law tried reiterating it again, but he saw that it didn't sit well by his father-in-law. Finally, he admitted that there was a more profound theme running through the cryptic and ancient text of "*chad gadya*." The father-in-law smiled, "I knew right away that there was more to it!" he exclaimed. "Because no one can sell me nonsense! I know very well that a goat does not cost two coins; a goat costs a thousand dollars! This tale must be of deep kabbalistic foundations, because only in the black market can you find a goat for two coins."

The son-in-law enthusiastically explained: The 'חד גדיא' / *chad gadya* [one goat] is a reference to a person; 'דבין אבא' / *d'zabin aba* [that the father bought] signifies Hashem, our Abba in Heaven. In other words, a person is able to "acquire" his Father in Heaven, so-to-speak – to advance one's relationship with Him and infuse one's prayers with added potency. How? The song continues: 'בתרי זחי' / *b'trei zuzei* [with two coins]. The word 'zuz' can mean 'coin,' but can also mean 'movement.' With two movements, one can "acquire" his Father in Heaven – through moving one's eyelids to guard one's eyes, and through moving one's lips to close one's mouth, two areas that are often very hard to guard from spiritual harm. In the black market – i.e. when a person's *yetzer hara* is raging and yet he overcomes it through these two movements, he then attains a spiritual growth and connection to his Father in Heaven, which isn't uniquely reserved for the loftiest individuals but for each and every one of us.

Greatness, Defined

R' YY Jacobson passed along the following meaningful message.

One year, by the Pesach Seder of the Tzemach Tzedek, as they were in the middle of *yachatz* - the step in which the middle matzah on the Seder plate is broken into two pieces, the larger of which is then hidden as the *afikoman* - there was a bit more commotion as to which piece was the '*gadol*,' i.e. which one came out bigger. As they were trying to measure and closely compare the two pieces, the Tzemach Tzedek made a profound and thoughtful remark: "A *gadol* which you have to measure is not a *gadol*."

Utilizing a play on words, the Rebbe meant to communicate a deeper message, not related to matzah per se. The Jewish nation loves the word "*gadol*" [greatness]; much of Jewish history is centered on the *gedolim* and giants of our people that have transformed the world and shaped our nation. What, though, is the definition of a *gadol*? What makes somebody great? Can it really be that a *gadol* is defined as someone who is a bookworm and less social than the average individual, and that someone with a lower IQ and with an extroverted, socially active persona can never be a *gadol* because he can't concentrate as much?

Our Sages explain that a *gadol* is someone who lives the life that G-d wants him to live – someone who taps into his own unique and individual *neshamah* and works towards achieving the mission given to him by his Creator. When one starts emulating other people, however, he actually becomes a "*katan*" (small) – he minimizes himself and his soul's distinct journey to greatness. This is what the Tzemach Tzedek was alluding to: true greatness is only perceived by Hashem based on His exclusive mission and path for each *neshamah*; once a person starts measuring and comparing himself to others, whether it be to look up to another in envy or down upon another in arrogance, he missed the boat entirely. That's not tapping into *gadlut*; that's minimizing oneself into a *katan* through disregarding his own soul's select path to greatness.

When Yaakov and Esav were fetuses in Rivkah's womb, Chazal describe that Yaakov gravitated towards the Bet Midrash and Esav gravitated towards houses of idolatry. Yitzchak, however, never labeled Esav a failure. He loved Esav dearly; he never saw him as a disappointment. Ultimately, the failure of Esav wasn't that he gravitated towards *avodah zara* but that he thought that he was a failure for having such impulses. His pull towards idolatry wasn't his inherent downfall; that was his Divine journey! His mistake was his despair when he saw that he wasn't like Yaakov.

We don't know what's great and what's small. Sometimes, what looks great can really be small, and oftentimes, what looks small can in fact be much greater than one can ever imagine...

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Avigail Bat Tehila Frida Bat Yaffa Miriam Bat Bakol Michael Ben Devorah Rena Bat Bakol
Yitzhak Ben Naama Yehoshua Ben Miriam Rachamim Ben Shifra Svetlana Tzivya Bat Esther Moshe Ben Moriah
David Ben Rivka Yehudit Bat Chaya Sima Nechama Bat Rachel Leah Shoshana Mazal Chaya Tova Bat Chedva

"Every act of forgiveness mends something broken in this fractured world. It is a step, however small, in the long, hard journey to redemption." (R' Jonathan Sacks)