

## מעשה אבות... סימן לבנים

מה אל מה אדבר בו ומראה ולא בחדת ותמנת ה' ימים ומדוע לא יראתם לדבר בעבדי במשה ונו' (יב-ח)

In addition to his greatness in *Torah* learning, R' Avrohom Genichovski zt"l, the *Rosh Yeshivah* of *Tchebin*, was also a giant in *middos* and *bein adam lachaveiro*. *Chessed* encompassed his entire life. People constantly visited his home for advice, consolation and monetary loans. Millions of shekels of charity funds passed through his hands and none of it remained with him. He was always on the lookout for people in need and would often seek them out. He was known to co-sign on loans for people and in one situation, this practice came back to hurt him.

The story is told by one of his close *talmidim*, who traveled to the United States and Canada to raise funds on behalf of the National Center for Family Purity ("המרכז הארצי לטהרת המשפחה"), an organization that is involved in the strengthening of *Taharas HaMishpacha* (family purity), by training, informing and constructing *Mikvaos* all over *Eretz Yisroel*. R' Avraham Genichovski was the head of the executive committee, a post he inherited from the previous *Tchebiner Rosh Yeshivah*, R' Dov Ber Weidenfeld zt"l, and one he took most seriously. Under his direction, the center established, operated and continues to supervise over 800 ritual baths throughout the country, providing them certificates of *kashrus*.

The *talmid* arrived in Toronto and made his way to the home of a wealthy benefactor, a man renowned for his generosity and open heart. He described the organization, how it functions and who controls it. Then, he pulled out a letter of approbation from R' Avraham attesting to the legitimacy of the work. The wealthy man took one look at the paper and announced, "I am very sorry but I refuse to give to this organization." When pressed to explain himself, the man told him how he once lost a great deal of money on account of Rabbi Genichovski, and although it was a long time ago, and he had already forgiven the money, he nevertheless did not feel like donating to a cause that this rabbi was promoting.

The *talmid* was shocked and refused to let it go. How can it be that a *tzaddik* like R' Avraham Genichovski can cause a fellow *Yid* to lose money? It was totally out of his character. The rich man explained that a number of years ago, a man came to his door requesting a loan for a business proposition. It was a large sum - \$300,000 - but he immediately produced a paper with the title and signature of the *Tchebiner Rosh Yeshivah*, R' Avraham Genichovski, attesting to the fact that he is honest, trustworthy, and capable of paying back any monies lent to him. Rabbi Genichovski even agreed to be a guarantor on the loan, and would pay back the sum should the man be unable to do so. On the strength of his word, the rich man loaned him \$300,000. "Unfortunately," said the Canadian, "he never did pay me back, and out of respect to Rabbi Genichovski, I didn't feel it was appropriate to go after him for the money. I forgave the debt even though it was a guaranteed loan. However, because of this, I am not interested in giving any more money to his organization."

He left emptyhanded and confused. He knew his *Rosh Yeshivah* would never allow such a thing to occur. When he arrived back in *Eretz Yisroel*, he made it his business to ask the *Rosh Yeshivah* about this incident. R' Avraham was quiet when he heard the details and would not elaborate. The *talmid* continued to inquire at later times, always mentioning the fact that if this rich man would not honor the *Rosh Yeshivah's* letter of endorsement, then others might not do so either, which could prove to be very painful when raising money. Finally, R' Avraham agreed to tell him what happened.

"The *Rosh Yeshivah* told me," recounted the *talmid*, "that he never signed such a document. He never guaranteed the man's loan and never offered any words of approbation. Obviously, the man forged the whole document and ran away with the money. Since the rich man had already forgiven the loan, R' Avraham did not feel it was necessary to go back and explain what happened to the man in Canada, for by doing so, he would be speaking *Lashon Hara* about this man!"

The *talmid* concluded, "I asked the *Rosh Yeshivah*, 'But isn't it important to follow up on this so that this man doesn't pull such a stunt again?' to which R' Avraham explained that he knew who the man was, had already spoken to him and taken care of the matter. I understood that if he couldn't retrieve the money, at least he ensured that it would never happen again!"

## משל למה הדבר דומה

ויאמר אל נא תעזב אתנו כי על כל בן דעה נתתו במדבר הדין לנו לעינים ונו' (י-לא)

**משל:** In the winter of 5690 (1930), *Torah* giants and the *Rebbs* of Poland, with the *Chofetz Chaim* zt"l at their helm, gathered in Warsaw for a historic conference to annul a decree affecting Jewish schoolchildren. One of those invited to the conference, a great rabbi in his own right, arrived late. When the *Chofetz Chaim* asked him why, he justified by explaining that he had a personal matter to attend to.

The *Chofetz Chaim* reprimanded him: "Does the *Rav* not know the *posuk* in *Shiras Devorah* (שפטים ה-כג): 'Curse Meroz... for they failed to come to help Hashem, against the

the angels - are scrutinized and judged for coming late!"

The conference hall was filled with an uneasy silence. At that point, R' Meir Shapiro zt"l of Lublin arose and attempted to ease the tension. With great tact he said, "All my life, I have wondered: Ordinary people listen to the reprimands of rabbis and preachers, and *Rebbs* teach their *Chassidim*. Yet who is capable, when the need arises, to reprimand those who are used to reprimanding, meaning the great men of Israel? Now I am at peace, for we have the *Chofetz Chaim*, the greatest among us, who spares no one,