

Reverence

“Would you like to lead the congregation in the *tefillos* (prayers)?”
“Why certainly!”

The man puffed up his chest and walked confidently to the podium. “I know why they chose me,” he thought. “Because I have the best voice of anyone in this room. Now I get to show it off.”

“Moshe said to Aharon, ‘Approach the altar and perform the *avodah* (service)’” (Vayikra 9:7). Rashi zt”l explains that Moshe had to tell Aharon to go. Aharon was reserved and afraid to draw near the Holy Altar. Moshe said, “Why are you shy? For this you were created.” The Sefas Emes zt”l relates that this is the proper way to serve Hashem. With reservation and fear. One must be in awe of the holiness of the *avodah*. However, this should not prevent him from performing the mitzvos. Rather, he must realize that he was created for this holy service.

Kinderlach . . .

How do we enter the shul? With a lot of noise and fanfare? Or do we humbly bow our head when entering this holy place. How do we recite our blessings? Do we realize that we are about to speak to Hashem? Do we have the proper fear of Him? Are we embarrassed to speak to Him? Are our prayers said with a “clear and pleasant voice” as the angels in Heaven praise Hashem? What about our Torah learning? Hashem’s will, the Torah, is awesome. Do we treat it as such? Kinderlach let us do our best to perform all of our mitzvos with the proper awe and reverence.

It’s Hard For Me

“Danny, it’s time to get up.”
“Oh. Already? But I just went to sleep, Abba.”
“Believe it or not, you went to sleep eight hours ago. Now it time to begin your day.”
“But it’s so hard for me to get out of bed.”
“I know. I empathize with you. Let me tell you about Aharon HaKohen. It was hard for him to carry out a mitzvah also. He had to approach the Holy Altar and perform the *avodah* (service). The Imrei Emes zt”l relates that this is the way of the *Yetzer Hara* (Evil Inclination). He makes mitzvos seem difficult. However, the point

goes deeper than that.”

“Really?”

“We were sent down to this earth to perfect ourselves. Each one of us has his own *middos* that need work. How do we know which areas we have to work on?”

“The ones which are the most difficult for us?”

“Excellent. The *Yetzer Hara* makes the most important things seem the most difficult.”

“That is such an important thought, Abba!”

“Use it well, Danny, and overcome that evil *Yetzer Hara*.”

Kinderlach . . .

What is your job in this world? What middos were you sent here to work on? Just think about which are the most difficult for you. Is it hard for you to get up in the morning? How about speaking quietly; is that difficult? We all have our challenges. Difficult mitzvos and middos need work. That is your job in life.

Rotten Bones

“Shalom Imma, I’m home.”

“Shalom Devora. How was school?”

“Not so good.”

“I’m sorry to hear that. Let me pour you a hot drink and we’ll sit down and talk about it.”

“Thanks Imma.”

Devora sips at the sweet hot chocolate and begins to talk.

“It’s that girl who sits in front of me in class.”

“What did she do?”

“We had a spelling contest and she won. I studied so hard for that contest. I wanted to win.”

“Devora, no effort is ever wasted. I’m sure your spelling has improved tremendously.”

“But Imma, she always wins.”

“What do you mean?”

“She gets the best grades on her report card. She has the most friends. She has the nicest clothes. She has wonderful *middos* (character traits). She is just perfect. I’m so jealous of her.”

“Devora dear, I doubt very much that she is perfect. However, even if she is, that is no reason to be jealous of her. Jealousy is a very bad *middah*. Shlomo HaMelech, the wisest of all men wrote, “Jealousy rots the bones” (Mishlei 14:30). Our sages added to this when they said, “Jealousy, desire, and honor take a person out of the (real) world” (Pirkei Avos 4:21). The Mesillas Yesharim explains that a

person gains nothing from jealousy. It does not make him any better nor his friend any worse.”

“You’re so right, Imma.”

“Devora, we must all work on our *bitachon* (trust) in Hashem. He provides us with everything that we need. Our friend has what he needs. If we do not have what she has, that means that we do not need it. Therefore, why be jealous? Would you be jealous of a baby’s dress which is ten sizes too small for you?”

“Of course not. It’s not for me.”

“Your friend’s dress, which might happen to fit you, is not for you either.”

“Thank you so much, Imma. I am going to focus on thanking Hashem for what He has given me. I am so fortunate.”

“So am I, Devora. To have a daughter like you.”

“A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them (Nadav and Avihu, the sons of Aharon HaKohen), and they died before Hashem” (Vayikra 10:2). What sin that caused their deaths? One interpretation comes from the Gemora (Sanhedrin 52a). Nadav and Avihu walked behind Moshe and Aharon saying, “When will these two elders die? Then we will rule this nation.” The Maharsha zt”l comments that their sin was jealousy.

Kinderlach . . .

“He got a new toy and I didn’t.” He needed one and you did not. “She got two cookies and I only got one.” She worked harder to earn them. “She has more friends than I do.” She has a more outgoing personality. You are more the quiet type. “He runs faster than I do.” True, but you think faster than he does. Hashem gave you each your own special talents. Your job is to work with what you have. Don’t be jealous of the other one. You have everything you need to be the best possible you.

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