

Parashas
Acharei-
Kedoshim

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ח' אייר תשפ"ו 5786

י"ז ע"י

קהילת שבתאי בבית ד'

בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
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רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

English edition

באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

On the severity of the prohibition of humiliating another

טיב המערכת

והי בהם – אני ה' *And live by them – I am Hashem*

It is told about the holy Rav Rebbe Nosson Adler zt"l, the teacher and Rav of the Chasam Sofer zy"א, that at the time of his learning he would appoint a guard to watch over him, and if he would notice that due to his deep immersion in learning he was forgetting the Creator Yisbarach, he should immediately awaken him about this. However, this was an unfounded concern, since the guard never needed to awaken him, except for one time when a concern arose in the heart of the guard that perhaps due to the depth of the righteous one's analysis he had diverted his mind from the Creator Yisbarach, and he immediately reminded him, but Rebbe Nosson answered him that he remembers.

In our parashah it is written (18:4) 'את משפטי תעשו ואת חוקותי תשמרו' - "My ordinances you shall perform and My statutes you shall observe, to walk in them, I am Hashem your G-d," and immediately in the following posuk it is written: 'ושמרתם' - "And you shall observe My statutes and My ordinances, which a person shall do and live by them." At first glance, it appears as though part of the posuk repeats itself again, and we must understand the repetition of these matters. According to the above story it can be explained that the Creator Yisbarach, wants that the study of Torah and the fulfillment of the mitzvos should be with connection and remembrance for Whose sake and for what purpose we fulfill the mitzvos. Therefore, "My ordinances you shall perform and My statutes you shall observe," but in a manner of "to walk in them," with knowledge and remembrance that "I am Hashem your G-d," that everything we do is for the honor of Hashem. And then: "And you shall observe My statutes and My ordinances, which a person shall do," and when a person accustoms himself to these thoughts he will reach a state where he performs the mitzvos for the honor of Hashem in a manner of "and live by them, I am Hashem," he lives every moment with the thought that everything he does is for His honor, Yisbarach.

At first thought it appears as though these are lofty matters intended for elevated individuals, but the truth is not so, for each and every one of us needs and is able to repeat to himself again and again that everything I do — behold I do it for the sake of Hashem. As people relate, that one student came to his rebbe and said that he does not find time when to think about Hashem, for at the time of learning he is occupied with learning, and at the time of Tefillah he is occupied with intention in Tefillah, and likewise with his other needs, when he eats and sleeps and so on, so when does he have time left to think about the Creator?! And in order that we should not come to such a situation, we will remember that the purpose of the fulfillment of the mitzvoss and the study of Torah is in order to connect to the Creator Yisbarach Shemo, "and live by them, I am Hashem."

-Tiv HaTorah - Acharei

ואיש איש מבית ישראל ומן הגר הגר בתוכם אשר יאכל כל דם ונתתי פני בפש האכלת את הדם והכרתי אתה מקרב עמה: כי נפש הבשר בדם הוא ואני נתתי לכם על המזבח לכפר על נפשתיכם כי הדם הוא בפש יכפר: על בן אמת לבני ישראל כל נפש מקם לא תאכל דם והגר הגר בתוכם לא יאכל דם: (יז, י - יב)

Any man of the House of Israel and of the stranger who dwells among them who will consume any blood, I shall set My face upon the soul consuming the blood, and I will cut it off from its people. For the soul of the flesh is in the blood and I have assigned it for you upon the Mizbeach to provide atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that atones for the soul. Therefore, I have said to the Children of Israel, "Any person from among you may not consume blood, and the stranger who lives among you may not consume blood. (17:10-12)

Rashi explains: I shall set My face – my attention. I turn aside from all My affairs and deal with him. For the soul of the flesh – of every creature depends on the blood, therefore, I assigned it upon the Mizbeach to atone for man's soul. Let a soul of animal come and atone for the soul of man. Any person from among you – to warn adults with respect to minors.

Behold, according to its simple meaning, the posuk speaks about the prohibition of eating blood, and from here we must learn that a person cannot know what is a severe transgression and what is a light transgression. For as we see here, the Torah warns very strongly about the prohibition of blood, and as we see in the words of Rashi how far HaKadosh Baruch Hu is particular about this and warns that because of it He will turn away from all His affairs in order to punish the one who transgresses this prohibition. And had the Torah not said this, we would not have imagined how far this prohibition reaches.

Since this is so, it is incumbent upon every person to be very fearful of all types of sins, even those that appear to him as light.

However, even if this strictness would still receive explanation and understanding by us, and it would be a lesson for us regarding all the mitzvos to be more fearful of trampling even one of them, the following posukim come and again arouse wonder. For in them we see that the Torah did not suffice with the "severe warning" alone, and saw fit also to expand and explain before us the reason for its severity, as though it were a commandment that a person does not find agreeable, and they need to appease him and explain it to him until the matters will be accepted in his heart—that not for nothing was blood forbidden, but "for the soul of the flesh is in the blood," and "therefore," out of lack of choice, "I said to the Children of Israel, any soul among you shall not eat blood." And this is a great wonder, for we know that the opposite is true, and a person's soul despises blood, and even the souls of the nations recoil from blood and are repulsed by it.

And by way of Mussar it may be said, that besides what the posuk intends regarding the prohibition of blood in its simple meaning, it also intends the sin of "whitening the face" (humiliating another), for one who embarrasses his fellow is also in the category of one who eats blood. For Chazal said (Bava Metzia 58b): "Anyone who whitens the face of his fellow in public is as if he sheds blood," and as the Gemara there brings the reason: "For we see that the redness departs and whiteness comes." Behold for you that one who embarrasses his fellow causes a loss to his blood, and therefore he is in the category of "one who eats blood," Rachmana litzlan.

This sin is also among those that a person's soul recoils from very much. An ordinary person cannot see a scene of humiliation. However, in this sin there are times of "trial," and a time of trial is different. Sometimes this trial is aroused in a person as a result of distress that rests upon his heart, and it seems to him that with a sharp remark at

the expense of his fellow he will give relief to his anguished soul, until it is very difficult for him to place a restraint upon his mouth. And sometimes a person comes to this because of the strong desire within him to say some humorous remark in order to gladden those around him, and out of his great desire to demonstrate his sharpness he does not descend to the full understanding of his fellow, who can be hurt by the statement.

However, even at this difficult time it is incumbent upon a person to strengthen himself greatly to stop his words, for this sin is among the very severe ones, and as we see in the Gemara (ibid.), that this sin is counted among the matters because of which a person does not ascend from Gehinnom, and this is similar to what is stated here regarding the soul that eats blood: "and I shall cut it off from among its people."

Regarding this sin it is indeed understood why the Torah elaborated to explain its severity, for by this it wishes to persuade a person that even at a time of trial he should restrain his spirit and place a barrier to his mouth, and it informs him thereby how far the matter reaches: "for the soul of the flesh is in the blood," and it follows from this that with his words he strikes the soul, as we see that the shame of the embarrassed person is evident in his blood, and at the time of his shame his blood is diminished and withdraws and hides. And the "striking of the soul" is not like the "striking of the body," for the "striking of the body" heals within a few days, whereas the "striking of the soul," for the most part, creates a permanent blemish Rachmana

litzlan. For the souls that are insulted are not able to recover from their pain.

And in order to express the depth understood from the above statement "for the soul of the flesh is in the blood," the posuk continues and says: "And I have given it to you upon the Mizbeach to atone for your souls," that is to say, from the fact that you see that the atonement for all sins depends on the placing

of blood upon the Mizbeach, you must understand that indeed all the life of a person depends on the soul, for the matter of atonement with blood is a matter of "a soul in place of a soul," for according to the letter of the law it would have been fitting that the sinning soul should die, and only because of the kindnesses of the Omnipresent Baruch Hu, and the greatness of His mercy, HaKadosh Baruch

Hu exchanged a soul for a soul. And since all atonement depends on the placing of blood, it is proven that in it is the essence of the soul. Since this is so, those who whiten faces should understand that they are dealing with souls.

This is what the posuk concludes: "Therefore I said to the Children of Israel, any soul among you shall not eat blood," that is to say, since the "double-edged sword" is very severe, therefore we must be very careful with this prohibition, and therefore every soul among you should also understand the soul of the other and distance himself greatly from eating blood, that is to say, from consuming souls like himself...

Regarding this sin it is also understood the words of Rashi who explains the words "And I shall set My face," that HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "I turn away from all My affairs and engage with him," and according to our words, these matters refer to one who humiliates his fellow, that HaKadosh Baruch Hu turns away from all His affairs in order to engage with his punishment, for the pain of the soul is very hard and literally reaches up to the heart of Heaven. And therefore, Chachamim, be very careful with your words, and warn the adults regarding the minors, as Rashi explained...

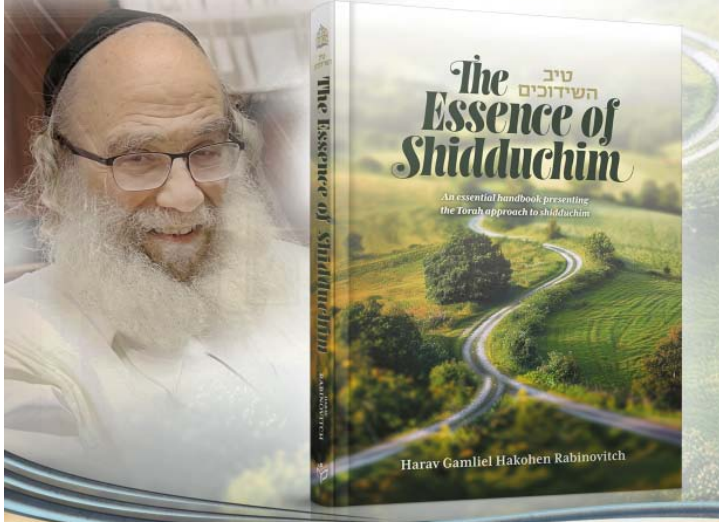
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'צום מסוים' 'A Certain Fast'

It is the custom of the firstborn of Israel to fast on Erev Pesach, and one who makes a siyum of a mesechta, or participates in a siyum made by someone else, is permitted to break the fast and eat.

I wanted to participate in a siyum immediately after davening, but I calculated that it would be at the expense of the Daf Yomi shiur, and therefore I decided to go to the shiur, and after the shiur, I would certainly find many siyumim being made by bechorim.

However, after the shiur I received a phone call from home, and I hurried to help pack suitcases and finish organizing the children on the way to my parents for the Chag of Pesach...

This pressured day passed and behold we reached five in the afternoon and the weakness from the fast was already making itself felt. I felt that it was not possible to enter the Chag of Pesach drained and exhausted both from the work on Erev Pesach and from the fast.

According to halacha I could have completed three pages of Gemara from a mesechta that I had been learning and make a siyum, but I felt that I did not have the mental capacity to sit and learn. I asked Hashem to help me. And behold, just like that I tried my luck and turned to my father, my teacher, and asked: "Perhaps by chance you have a siyum of a mesechta to make so that I can eat?"

Father thought and said: "The truth is that I have a siyum that I saved to make with someone, but I will complete it now, and with the other I will complete another mesechta at another time!!!" I was astonished at the unexpected answer, because

Father completes mesechtos all the time and does not save them.

Siyumim of mesechtos are a frequent matter for him and behold here he had a mesechta that he saved.

It was clear to me that HaKadosh Baruch Hu prepared the completion for me in advance so that I could receive the festival with joy, with a refreshed feeling and not from a fast and difficulty...

ל.ז.

'הכל מדוייק!!!' 'Everything is Exact'

With good fortune I bought a house, and I transferred the house to an architect and interior designer for the preparation of plans for renovating the house and adapting it to our needs before we enter to live in it.

The architect called that he needed a diagram of a space that was closed off in the basement level, and it did not appear in the original plans in order to prepare an optimal plan. I did not know from where I could obtain such a thing, and I thought to call the seller of the house and ask if she had any idea what the measurements of the space were.

Before I managed to call the seller, behold I received a letter with all the pictures and diagrams of the house, with an added note: "Hello, I am going through the materials in order to delete them from the computer, and before I deleted I thought that perhaps you would want to use this someday..." I was astonished to see the Divine hashgacha in every step and at every moment!!!

ו.ה.

טיב המעשיות

A Period for Spiritual Refinement
We learn in the sixth chapter of
Yevamos (62b): "Rabbi Akiva had
twelve thousand pairs of disciples,
from Gevat to Antipras, and they all
died in one period because they did
not conduct themselves with honor
toward one another, and the world
was left desolate, etc. A baraisa
teaches: They all died between
Pesach and Atzeres [Shavuos]."

The commentators explain that it was not incidental that they all died specifically during these days, "from Pesach until Atzeres." For the very root of the rectification of these days, and the spiritual blessing inherent in the days of the sefirah, lies in the refinement of character traits encompassed within the seven weeks of the sefirah from Pesach until Shavuos.

Accordingly, we are commanded in this week's parashah with the mitzvah of serving Hashem through the days of the Omer (Vayikra 23:15-16): וּסְפַרְתֶּם לָכֶם מִמִּזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ בֹּ' שִׁבְעַת שָׁבָּתוֹת תְּמִימֹת, תְּהִי יְיָ, עַד מִמִּזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ תִּסְפְּרוּ חֲמִשִּׁים יוֹם, - And you shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Shabbos... they shall be seven complete weeks. Until the morrow of the seventh Shabbos you shall count fifty days, and you shall bring a new offering to Hashem.

That is to say, during these days we consider the rectification of each day's specific trait, day by day, in order to redeem our souls through the purifying power of the Exodus from Mitzrayim, when Bnei Yisrael were taken from the gates of Egyptian impurity. Through this process, we prepare within ourselves proper and refined vessels for the "Receiving of the Torah" and the exalted standing of the Yom Tov of Shavuos, wherein we become a treasured nation, a kingdom of kohanim and a holy people.

Thus, during these days of sefirah, from Pesach until Atzeres, Klal Yisrael toils in the refinement of all these traits, so that they may arrive purified at that exalted day of the Yom tov of Shavuos.

As stated in the Zohar (3:97b): "Come and see: Anyone who does not count these seven 'complete' weeks, in order to merit this purification, is not considered 'pure,' and is not included among the pure, and is not worthy of having a portion of the Torah. But one who arrives at this day pure, and is careful to keep the counting [of the days of Sefirah]—when he reaches that night, he must engage in Torah and cleave to it, and guard the supernal purity that comes upon him on that night, and he is purified..."

The Avodah of the Days of Sefirah

Now, when one carefully examines the language of the Gemara—"they did not conduct themselves with honor toward one another"—it does not state that they humiliated each other or caused one another pain, chas veshalom. Rather, it speaks of the absence of a positive trait: that they did not honor one another.

When one is haughty and arrogant, regarding himself as elevated and more important than his fellow, he therefore does not treat others with honor. For a person honors one whom he esteems; it is from a sense of appreciation and recognition of another's importance that one treats him with honor and dignity.

Thus, when it says that they did not conduct themselves with honor toward one another, this indicates that they did not properly appreciate each other. They failed to hold their fellows in esteem, or to see and recognize their virtues and their true inner worth, and they did not value the precious stature of a fellow Jew.

As is explained in the wording of the Midrash

(Otzar Midrashim, Gan Eden-Gehinnom), a person is asked at the time of judgment: "Did you crown your fellow with contentment?"

This, then, is the sacred labor of these exalted days—the days of the sefirah and preparation for the Receiving of the Torah: to rectify our souls, spirits, and neshamah; to cleanse and refine ourselves from all the impurity that clings to a person and whose root lies in arrogance and self-aggrandizement; to purify our hearts from all negative traits; and to conduct ourselves with integrity between man and his fellow, so that we truly treat all our fellow men with honor.

This must flow from a proper appreciation of the inner essence of every Jew and from the refinement of character traits for the good—so that one may arrive purified at that great day, Amen.

Top of Form

Rav Nachman Galinsky zt"l, son of the renowned maggid meisharim Rav Yaakov Galinsky zt"l (author of the Ve'sHigadta series), was known in his youth as one of the outstanding prodigies of the yeshivah.

Once, in the midst of a shiur klali delivered by the rosh yeshivah to the entire student body, a paper airplane suddenly "landed" on the lectern of the rosh yeshivah. One of the students—whose mind was clearly not focused on the shiur klali—had been absent-mindedly folding paper to relieve his boredom and sent the small airplane gliding across the beis midrash toward a friend. To his great misfortune, a local draft altered its course—straight toward the rosh yeshivah.

The shock was absolute. The students were stunned by the severity of the disrespect. The rosh yeshivah abruptly halted the shiur; his face flushed as he picked up the insolent airplane. Striking the lectern forcefully, he demanded—without ambiguity—that the student who had launched it stand up immediately and leave the beis midrash.

A great fear fell upon all the bachurim. The tension was palpable, yet no one moved. The rosh yeshivah did not relent; he struck the lectern again with greater force and declared loudly that he would not continue the shiur under any circumstances until that student rose and exited.

In those grave moments, Rav Nachman Galinsky—one of the elite students who had been fully attentive throughout—understood well the anguish that would befall the culprit. Overcome

with compassion, he rose suddenly from his seat, filled with embarrassment, and walked out with head bowed—thereby relieving the true offender, to the astonishment of the entire yeshivah and the rosh yeshivah alike, who beheld this act of moral heroism.

The shiur concluded. Neither the students nor the staff succeeded in identifying the paper-airplane launcher. Rav Nachman himself neither knew nor sought to know who it was.

Many years passed swiftly after that bitter episode. When Rav Nachman passed away at a young age from a grievous illness, a stranger arrived at the family home during nichum aveilim—a figure whose bearing testified to his stature as a distinguished talmid chacham.

Asked how he had known the departed, he recounted the very episode that had occurred during their yeshivah years. He concluded with deep emotion: "I was that wayward student who sent the airplane aloft. Had my identity been revealed, I would certainly have been expelled in disgrace—and in truth, my diligence at the time was, to put it mildly, lacking. But your father's great act awakened within me profound remorse and a powerful stirring of repentance. I resolved to change my ways. I took myself in hand and began to ascend steadily in Torah and fear of Heaven.

"Today, baruch Hashem, I serve as the rosh yeshivah of a large institution. All my Torah—and the Torah of my students—is to be credited to the extraordinary self-sacrifice of your father."

One of the great tzaddikim of the previous generation would routinely send any ill member of his family to my father Rav Levi zt"l, so that he should daven on their behalf for a complete recovery. My father, in his great humility, felt they were trying to ridicule him and asked that sage, "Have I become a Rebbe? Why do you send me kvitelech—do I read notes?"

The tzaddik replied, "To pray, one need not be an Admor. Prayer requires a pure mouth. And this I know and recognize—that your mouth is guarded, pure, and refined. (The Yerushalmi sages called him the Chafetz Chaim of our generation.) Therefore I send you the requests, for I need prayers that ascend from such a clean and polished mouth."

Vigilance in matters between man and his fellow is among the most difficult obligations, and one must be exceedingly careful to conduct oneself with honor toward others. For example, when walking in the street late at night, one must take care not to make noise and awaken sleeping neighbors—especially in summer, when many leave windows open for fresh air. The theft of sleep admits of no restitution. In all such matters, one must guard carefully the honor of one's fellow, his wife, his household, and the dignity of all people.

Conduct yourselves with honor toward one another!

When the gaon and tzaddik Rav David Baharan zt"l, the venerable leader of the illustrious Shaarei Chesed neighborhood, reached the age of seventy, there was great joy, for

he had merited seivah, as taught in Pirkei Avos (5:21), גַּן שְׂבָעִים לְשִׁבָּה - "[Yehudah ben Teima says...] at seventy, one attains old age."

(The responsa Chavos Yair, siman 70, discusses the obligation to make a seudas mitzvah and recite Shehecheyanu upon reaching this age; see also Pri Megadim, Orach Chaim 444, Mishbetzos s.k. 9.)

The residents of Shaarei Chesed—learners and worshippers of the great beis midrash—who had always accorded him great honor for his Torah and fear of sin, now increased their respect. Whenever the tzaddik entered the beis knesses (the Beis HaKnesses HaGra of Shaarei Chesed), they were meticulous to rise before him, in accordance with the halachah that one must rise before an elder of seventy, especially one who is a talmid chacham, as the pasuk states (Vayikra 19:32) - מִפְּנֵי שִׁבְיָה תִקּוּם וְהִדַּרְתָּ פָּנָיו זָקֵן - Before old age you shall rise, and you shall honor the face of the elder.

(My revered father ז"ל, was deeply pained that children were not properly educated to rise before elders and talmidei chachamim, and he frequently exhorted others regarding this mitzvah.)

Rav David, a man of profound yiras Shamayim, became deeply concerned—not because of the honor shown him (from which he always fled), but because of those who did not rise before him. He feared he might be causing them to stumble; since many did rise, his status as an elder talmid chacham requiring honor was effectively established; those who failed to rise might thereby violate a positive mitzvah. Thus, by passing before them, he feared he himself was causing their transgression—raising concern for the grave prohibition (ibid. 19:14), וְלִפְנֵי עֵינָיו לֹא תִתֵּן מִכְשֵׁל - And before the blind you shall not place a stumbling block. He appeared distressed every time he entered the beis knesses.

Seeing his anguish, the gabba'im devised a wise solution. They opened a small additional entrance in the eastern wall of the beis knesses, besides the main western entrances. Rav David would enter through that small entrance and immediately sit down in his place, rather than passing before many congregants. Thus the matter was resolved in peace. To this day, that small eastern entrance can be seen in the Shaarei Chesed Gra shul.

This teaches how far the mitzvah extends—to conduct ourselves with honor toward Torah scholars, never to treat it lightly. Chazal testified (Shabbos 23b): "One who loves the sages will have sons who are sages; one who honors the sages will have sons-in-law who are sages."

It is also known that this mitzvah carries a great segulah for attaining yiras Shamayim (as explained in Agra DePirka, os shemah, citing the Zohar.)

Conduct yourselves with honor toward one another!

An esteemed avreich related to me an incident that personally occurred with him.

During his youth, he studied at the Berlin Yeshivah here in the Holy City, may it be rebuilt and established. There was a Jewish man

who lived near the yeshivah and was one of its regular worshippers. He was, tragically, childless, chas veshalom. Every week, on Sunday, he would customarily bring to the large dining hall of the yeshivah the leftovers of the traditional Shabbos stew, or chamin, commonly known as cholent.

That man innocently assumed that his righteous wife prepared an exceptionally fine and superior cholent—and she herself, of course, fully agreed with this assessment. However, since, to their great sorrow, they had no children to whom they could distribute such a large pot of food, and since that righteous woman specifically loved to cook in a large pot, it turned out that every week they were left with a substantial amount of fresh and wholesome cholent. They therefore decided that at least the students of the holy yeshivah should benefit from it.

(As is well known, people commonly say that any dish or food remaining in a home with no one to eat it should be respectfully brought to a yeshivah or a shtiebel—for it will surely be consumed there, right to the last drop.)

Nevertheless, Sunday cholent is not the same as Shabbos cholent. It lacks that distinctive, elevated, and refined flavor it possesses on Shabbos Kodosh itself.

This is despite the great spiritual quality attributed to Shabbos leftovers, as discussed at length in the sacred work Bnei Yissaschar (Maamarei Chodesh Tammuz—Av, maamar I:10), regarding the special merit found in the remnants of the Shabbos meal. He even cites opinions permitting the consumption of Shabbos leftovers during the Nine Days, as explained there.

The yeshivah bachurim did not always enjoy eating leftover cholent on Sunday, and many refrained from touching it. As a result, there were many occasions when the pot of cholent stood shamefully off to the side, with no one seeking it and no one desiring it.

One student in the yeshivah, who was somewhat more brazen than the others, found the entire situation distasteful. Why did this man stubbornly insist on bringing his pot of leftovers to the yeshivah every single week? Is this a collection center for food scraps?—he thought to himself. Doesn't the man see with his own eyes that almost no one wants their leftovers?

He apparently did not know the painful secret that the couple was childless and desperately wished to honor others with their food.

When the student saw that the man continued bringing the pot week after week, he became angry and once lashed out at him publicly, in front of all the bachurim: "Why do you bring this here every week? Don't you see that nobody is interested in it? Stop bringing it here already! This isn't a garbage dump!"

After that humiliating incident, the man disappeared from the yeshivah and was never seen there again. Naturally, he no longer brought the pot of cholent on Sundays, and he himself vanished entirely from the area, eventually moving elsewhere.

In time, that student married a young woman his age, in a joyful and auspicious union, to the cheers of his good friends from the yeshivah. Yet, to their great sorrow, many years passed and there was still no sign of a child. They remained childless and underwent numerous painful and difficult treatments. They even consulted several renowned specialist professors abroad—but nothing helped.

After nearly exhausting every possible avenue, the man stood bewildered and broken, crushed by

unbearable anguish. In his distress, he began to reckon with himself and conducted a deep and piercing moral accounting, by scrutinizing his deeds. What could be the reason that fruit of the womb was withheld from them? He thought long and hard—until one day he suddenly recalled that painful incident years earlier, when he had humiliated the neighbor of the yeshivah over the pot of cholent. He now reflected: Who knows whether I caused that man deep pain?

He immediately set out to investigate and then learned that the couple had indeed been childless. He traveled to the holy yeshivah to search for the man, but they no longer lived there. He inquired tirelessly until he discovered their place of residence in a distant city. Without delay, he traveled there, searched and searched until he found the man, greeted him warmly, and asked whether he might come to his home, as he had an important private matter to discuss.

The man agreed and set a meeting for that very evening. At the appointed hour, the visitor arrived and opened with pleasant greetings. After introducing himself, he asked whether the man perhaps remembered an old incident involving a pot of cholent that had occurred many years earlier at the Berlin Yeshivah in Jerusalem.

"Oh, I remember it well," the man replied immediately. "I am unable to forget that painful and humiliating incident. Your face is familiar to me as well. If I am not mistaken, you are the very student who lashed out at me publicly and demanded that I stop bringing the cholent to the yeshivah—am I right?"

The avreich flushed deeply and nodded in shame. "Yes," he whispered, "I was that bachur."

"You should know," said the man with great emotion, tears streaming from his eyes, "that this incident caused us immense pain. Every week my wife was happy at the thought that the bachurim were enjoying her special dishes. I never told her that the students were not interested in it and that it was being discarded. She innocently believed that she was feeding many Torah scholars a warm and excellent dish. That motivated her to cook a large pot of cholent again and again each week in honor of Shabbos, and it eased, at least a little, the gaping sorrow in our home.

"But from that Sunday onward, when I returned home with a crestfallen look and was forced to tell my wife the truth—that the yeshivah students no longer wished to taste our cholent—it devastated us. She wept bitterly and said that that student has no idea, cannot imagine, and does not feel how immense is the pain of the childless, who have no one for whom to prepare cholent for Shabbos."

When the visitor heard the rest of the story, he immediately understood how deeply he had wounded them. He burst into sobbing and pleaded for his life. He told them that he too had been childless for many years and now begged for their forgiveness, admitting that a grave error had slipped from his hands in a moment of loss of control. He implored them to forgive him, for his sake and for the sake of his household.

After much pleading and heartfelt supplication, they forgave him wholeheartedly. He returned home with a lightened heart.

And then—so the man who experienced this related to me—less than a year after the forgiveness was granted, a son was born to them, and the home was filled with light. Soon thereafter, many more children were born to them in close succession, as if to make up for all the years that had been lost.