



BAMIDBAR

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Gimmel Tammuz: The Sensitivity of a Leader

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INDISPENSABLE LESSONS FOR TODAY: THE SENSITIVITY OF A LEADER

ABSTRACT

Aleh neshomos vos kumen arein in der velt un gayen arois fun der velt, gayen durech dem tzimer (all souls that enter this world and leave this world go through this room)...

Der adres vu tzu shiken di briv veistu me'stameh nisht, b'meila loz zei doh (you probably don't know the address where to send these letters [to those souls that have already left this world], so leave these letters here)...

These two unforgettable stories of the Rebbe, among some others, offer us some of the most vital lessons in life that we will ever hear.

With all our advanced communication and hi-tech tools – with Facebook, Twitter and Google putting us in instant touch with each other – we are witnessing an unprecedented lack of sensitivity to one another. How many of us are suffering silently due to the inhumane insensitivity and callousness that daily life brings? How much humiliation and indignity do we endure?

We can learn tremendous lessons in sensitivity from the way Moses reacted to the mutiny of his rebellious cousin Korach and his cohorts, which is related in this week's Torah reading. When challenged with the most outrageous accusations and arrogant mockery, Moses did not fly into a rage. Rather, he humbly buried his face and grieved over the actions of the rebels.

Why did he grieve? Why didn't he squarely place the responsibility on those clearly culpable? Again and again Moses bent over backwards to reach and accommodate them. And from his behavior we can derive some of the greatest lessons in life – for how to treat others and ourselves.

As we honor the 23rd anniversary of Gimmel Tammuz this coming Tuesday blessed by this Shabbos of Parshat Korach, we can identify uncanny parallels between the Rebbe's and Moses' humility as a leader, their ultra sensitivity to every single soul, offering us indispensable lessons in discovering new levels of gentleness in our own lives today.

1. Survival of the Fittest

Two friends were camping in the woods when a huge brown bear suddenly appeared in the clearing about two hundred feet in front of them. The bear saw the campers and turned in their direction.

One of the two started frantically lacing up his sneakers.

His friend scoffed, “Sneakers won’t help you outrun that bear.”

He answered, “I don’t need to outrun the bear. I just need to outrun you.”

How sensitive are we to others? Do we live our lives following the dog-eats-dog rule of survival of the fittest?

I would like to address this issue today.

2. Lack of Sensitivity

I was with a friend who was so absorbed with texting that, as much as I tried, I couldn’t get his attention to discuss an important matter. Until ... I texted him...

With all our advanced communication and hi-tech tools, we are witnessing an unprecedented lack of sensitivity to one another. The above example is perhaps a humorous, harmless episode. But how many of us are suffering silently due to the inhumane insensitivity and callousness that daily life brings? How much humiliation and indignity should we endure?

We can learn tremendous lessons in sensitivity from the way Moses reacted to the mutiny of his rebellious cousin Korach and his cohorts, which is related in this week’s Torah reading.

3. Facing Rebellion and Mockery

First let me ask you: How would you react to someone who rebelled against you, laughing and mocking you, despite you being appointed by God to your leadership position?

Well, we may not know how you would react, but we don’t have to speculate how a true leader dealt with just this type of challenge. And his reaction was totally counterintuitive, unexpected and surprising ... but, upon analysis, contains volumes of lessons for us on the nature of true leadership, on how to be sensitive to others and how to face confrontation.

This week the Torah relates the dramatic account of how a wise man, a spiritual man named Korah, led a mutiny against Moses, who had been chosen by God Himself to lead the Jews out of Egypt, bring down the Torah and build the Tabernacle! This is what the Torah tells us in the Book of Numbers:

Korach the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi took Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, descendants of Reuben. They confronted Moses together with two hundred and fifty men from the children of Israel, chieftains of the congregation, representatives of the assembly,

men of repute ... [accusing Moses and Aaron]: “You have gone too far. All the people in the community are holy and God is with them. Why are you setting yourselves above God’s congregation?”¹

4. Moses’ Reaction

How did Moses react to this uprising?

The Torah testifies: “When Moses heard it, he fell on his face.”²

And the Midrash³ fills in the pieces:

Moses was thrown into a tremor ... for this was already their fourth offense. To what can this be compared? To a prince who had offended his father the king and for whom the king’s friend had effected a reconciliation, once, twice, and three times. When the prince offended a fourth time, the king’s friend lost courage, saying to himself: “How many times can I trouble the king?”

So it was with Moses. When Israel had sinned in connection with the Golden Calf, “Moses besought God⁴.” When “the people were murmuring ... Moses prayed⁵.” In connection with the sin of the spies, Moses [also interceded with God and] said: “When Egypt shall hear...”⁶ But when the dissension of Korach broke out he became disheartened and said: “How many times can I impose myself on God?” So, “When Moses heard it, he fell upon his face.”

Instead of getting angry or upset, instead of taking the attack personally, Moses grieved because he was so concerned how he will petition God on behalf of these offenders!

Moses then further delayed the process, in the hope that they might retract their opposition⁷.

[And then] Moses began to speak *softly* to Korah, but when he saw that Korach was adamant, Moses thought, “Before the other tribes join him and perish with him, I will speak to all of them as well.” He then began addressing them saying, “Listen to me, sons of Levi.”⁸

1 Numbers 16:1-2.

2 Numbers 16:4.

3 Midrash Tanchuma 4. Bamidbar Rabba 18: 6. Rashi on the verse.

4 Exodus 32:11.

5 Numbers 11:2.

6 Numbers 14:13.

7 In the morning, the Lord will make known: Night is a time of drunkenness for us, and it is improper to appear before Him. His real intention was to delay, with the hope that they might retract their opposition (Numbers 16:5. Midrash Tanchuma Korach 5).

8 Numbers 16:8. Midrash Tanchuma Korach 6. Bamidbar Rabba 18:9.

“Softly”! Is this how you would speak to blatant and arrogant mutineers?!

And even when the Torah appears to suggest that Moses got angry by using the word “*vayichar l’Moshe me’od*,” Rashi explains that this means not anger but distress. To the point of being apologetic: “I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them.” Even when I went from Midian to Egypt, and I placed my wife and sons on a donkey to ride, and I should have taken that donkey from their property, I took only from my own property¹⁰.

When his attempts at reasoning with Korach failed, Moses summoned Dathan and Aviram (the other leaders of the rebellion) but, defying him, they refused to come. And what did Moses do then? *He went to them*¹¹. All in the effort to quell the mutiny! As Resh Lakish said: This teaches that one must not persist in a dispute, because Moses sought them out to conciliate them with peaceful words¹².

And after all this – though they remained as defiant as ever – Moses still maintained his humble composure, as he proposed a test that would demonstrate for all God’s intentions: Each of the rebels was to bring an offering before God to see whose offering God will accept and who is the true and righteous leader¹³.

Finally, the moment of truth arrived – and it became unequivocally clear that Moses was indeed following God’s exact orders, and that God had indeed chosen him and Aaron to lead.

5. How Humble Can a Man Be?

Throughout this dramatic story what is most striking is Moses’ equanimity ... how he submitted himself to the worst humiliation yet never for a moment lost his composure or presence of mind.

All the Jews knew that God had chosen Moses. They had witnessed Moses leading them out of Egypt, parting the sea, bringing down the Torah from Sinai. They knew about Moses’ profound humility. So no one could have suspected Moses of self-aggrandizement or power-grabbing. Indeed, Moses initially resisted assuming leadership, begging God to “send someone more appropriate,”¹⁴ until God had to basically force him to take

9 Numbers 16:15.

10 Tanchuma Korach 7. Bamidbar Rabba 10.

11 Numbers 16:25.

12 Talmud, Sanhedrin 110a. Midrash Tanchuma Korach 10.

13 Moses said, “With this you shall know that God sent me to do all these deeds, for I did not devise them myself. If these men die as all men die and the fate of all men will be visited upon them, then the Lord has not sent me (18:28-29). but I did everything on my own, and he [Korach] is in the right for opposing me (Midrash Tanchuma Korach 8. Bamidbar Rabba 12).

14 Exodus 4:13.

on the job. Likewise, Moses surely knew that he was chosen by God. So why in the world would he allow himself to be subjugated to this desecration of God's will? As a humble man, clearly he wasn't interested in defending himself against personal attacks. But he had every right to stand up for the sake of God's honor, not his own!

One would think that even humility has a limit. Healthy humility should not be confused with weakness and second guessing oneself. True humility is not allowing oneself to be stepped all over and treated like a doormat. It means standing up for what is right. So why here, when Korach and his henchmen, rose up against God's choice of leader was Moses seemingly so doubtful, conciliatory and even apologetic?!

6. A True Leader

Moses was not simply the humblest man on earth, he was a true leader – indeed, the ultimate leader: a shepherd. And as a shepherd his primary concern was the welfare of his flock.

The Midrash tells us that the first title given to Moses in the Torah is that of a shepherd, because God tests his leaders with sheep. As Moses was tending the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro, one little sheep wandered away from the flock. Moses went searching, only to find the young animal sipping water from a nearby spring. When Moses reached her he cried: “Oh, I did not know that you ran away because you were thirsty! Now you must be tired.” He then cradled the runaway sheep in his arms and carried it back to the flock. Said the Almighty: “Because you are so merciful in tending sheep, you will tend My flock, the people of Israel.”¹⁵

In addition to demonstrating Moses' compassion, the incident holds an important lesson in sensitivity. Moses realized that the little sheep did not run away from the flock out of malice or wickedness – it was merely thirsty.

By the same token, when any Jew behaves in an inappropriate way, even challenging God, it is because he is thirsty. His soul thirsts for something that is eluding him. So he may act out in strange ways, seeking to quench his spiritual thirst.

When Moses understood this, he was able to become a leader of Israel. Only a shepherd who hastens not to judge the runaway sheep and who is sensitive to the causes of its desertion, can mercifully lift it into his arms and bring it back home.

¹⁵ *Shemot Rabba* 2:2.

7. The Secret of Moses' Success

And this is the secret of Moses' success as a leader:

When the Jewish people were in jeopardy (as for example, with the sin of the Golden Calf), Moses always protected them. He broke the tablets and told God “erase my name from Your book” if you do not forgive them! His devotion to Israel superseded all – including that which defined the very essence of his own being: his divine mission and his relationship with the Almighty¹⁶.

¹⁶ More elaboration:

The conclusion of the entire Torah is with these words: *Moses, the servant of G-d, died there in the land of Moab... And there arose not since a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom G-d knew face to face; [who performed] all the signs and wonders which G-d sent [Moses] to do in the land of Egypt... [who equaled] that mighty hand, those great fearsome deeds, [and that] which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel.*

Rashi in his commentary on Torah, interprets the last verse as follows: *[that] which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel---* “that his heart emboldened him to break the tablets before their eyes, as it is written, ‘[and I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my two hands] and I broke them before your eyes.’ G-d’s opinion then concurred with his opinion, as it is written, ‘[... the first tablets,] which you broke’ --I affirm your strength for having broken them.”

The Hebrew word *asher* (“which”) can also be pronounced *ishur*, which means “to affirm” and “to praise.” Thus, G-d’s words to Moses, “... the first tablets, which you broke” can also be understood as: “I affirm your having broken them” or “Thank you (*yishar koachacha*) for breaking them” (See Rashi on Talmud, Shabbat 87a).

The breaking of the tablets was one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history, resulting from the building of the Golden Calf. How can this act be condoned and moreover be considered one of the “signs and wonders” that Moses did, to the extent that G-d thank him for it?! Indeed, the breaking of the tablets is the closing verse of the entire Torah, signifying that it is Moses’ greatest act!

What prompted Moses’ heart to “embolden him to break the tablets”?

The Jewish people had worshipped the Golden Calf, violating their covenant with G-d documented in the tablets. Moses thus found himself in the position of having to choose between the preservation of the Torah or the preservation of Israel, as the Midrash illustrates with the following metaphor:

Once there was a king who went off on a distant journey and left his bride with her maidservants. Because of the [promiscuity of the] maidservants, rumors began circulating about the king’s bride. The king heard of this and wished to kill her. The bride’s guardian heard of this, so he went ahead and tore up her marriage contract, saying: “Should the king say, ‘My wife did such and such,’ we shall say to him, ‘She’s not your wife yet.’” “The king subsequently investigated and found that there was nothing promiscuous in his bride’s behavior, that only the maidservants were corrupt, and was reconciled to her. Said the bride’s guardian to the king: “Sir, make her another marriage contract, for the first one was torn up.” Said the king to him: “You tore it up, so you supply the paper and I shall write on it with my hand” ... Thus, when G-d forgave [the Jewish people], He said to Moses: “Carve, yourself, two tablets of stone [like the first ones, and I shall write on these tablets what was on the first tablets, which you broke]” (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 30; a slightly different version is cited by Rashi in his commentary on Exodus 34:1).

G-d, explains the Midrash, is the king, Israel His bride, the *erev rav* (the “mixed multitude” who had joined the Jewish people at the Exodus and were responsible for the making of the Golden Calf) her corrupt maids, Moses her guardian, and the Torah the wedding contract. When G-d wished to destroy Israel because of their involvement in the worship of the Golden Calf, Moses

He understood that his duty as a leader – as a shepherd – was to be prepared to not only sacrifice his physical life for his flock, but also his very soul and spiritual essence.

Now we can appreciate Moses behavior and reaction to Korach's rebellion: Moses was not being weak or doubtful. He was not being merely humble. He was being a leader. And the first priority, the greatest virtue, of a leader – of a shepherd – is sensitivity to his flock. To consider the motivations of his runaway sheep ... to understand what may be missing that is causing this mutiny ... to speak softly and do everything possible to touch their hearts.

The leader's primary mission and prime directive is to do whatever it takes to preserve the flock, even if it means reaching out to the mocking mutineers.

smashed the tablets, thereby dissolving the marriage-bond that they had allegedly violated and leaving G-d no grounds on which to punish His bride's "unfaithfulness."

And this the Torah considers to be Moses' highest virtue: his unequivocal loyalty to the Jewish people, a loyalty even greater than his loyalty to the Torah, and to his own very soul. As Moses told G-d: Erase my name from Your Book if you will not forgive these people (Exodus 32:32)!

When the very existence of the Jewish people is threatened, Moses is prepared to tear up the wedding contract in order to save the bride. No one is more deeply identified with the Torah than Moses. In smashing the tablets, Moses stood to destroy everything he was and stood for. And yet, when the Jewish people are in jeopardy--or even a small minority of the Jewish people --Moses does not hesitate to break the tablets.

When the Jewish people are in jeopardy, Moses does not consult anyone. He does not even consult G-d. When Moses must choose between Torah and Israel, his devotion to Israel supersedes all--including that which defines the very essence of his own being: his divine mission and his relationship with the Almighty.

Indeed, Moses' breaking of the tablets is the greatest deed of his life. In everything else he did, he was acting on a clear mandate from G-d: G-d instructed and empowered him to take the Jews out of Egypt, split the Red Sea and transmit His wisdom and will to humanity. Always it was G-d's desire that he followed; here, it was "his own opinion," with which the divine opinion subsequently concurred.

In breaking the tablets, Moses was acting on his own, contrary to his divine mission to deliver G-d's Torah to the world. In breaking the tablets, Moses, who could not presume that G-d was to replace the first tablets with a second pair, was eradicating his very being, his very *raison d'être*, for the sake of his people.

And Moses did not go off to a side to carry out the most painful and potentially self-destructive act of his life. He broke the tablets "before the eyes of all Israel," a fact which the Torah repeatedly emphasizes, and then reiterates in its concluding words. For Moses wished to demonstrate to all of Israel, and to all generations to come, the duty of a leader of the Jewish people: To be prepared to not only sacrifice his physical life for his flock, but also his very soul and spiritual essence.

The above is a summary of the Rebbe's sicha on the night of Simchat Torah 5747 – one of the most moving sichos ever delivered. The Rebbe cried throughout the sicha, stopping a number of times, unable to get the words out. It was clear to all those attending that Farbrengen that this talk was about a Rebbe...

That was why Moses fell on his face, trembled and was so distressed. As the true leader that he was, he saw their problem as *his* problem.

8. Your Problem is My Problem (Optional)

A powerful story that captures this theme is told about with Rabbi Dovber, also known as the Mittlerer Rebbe, the son and successor of the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. People from far and wide would come and seek his advice and blessing, and long lines would form of people waiting for an audience with him.

One day, in the middle of such an audience, the Rebbe suddenly announced that he could see no one else. His disciples were astonished. So many people were still waiting – what had happened?

They were doubly astonished when they heard the Rebbe weeping and praying behind closed doors. It took two days for the Rebbe to emerge, and then, in answer to the many questions of his disciples, he explained what had happened.

He told them that when people came to him for advice and described their faults and mistakes, he was always able to counsel them with compassion because he had already rectified a similar fault (even if in far more subtler form) within himself. On this occasion, however, a man came to him and confided something so heinous that the Rebbe's instant response was repulsion.

And just as instantly the Rebbe realized that this very fact was pointing out a very similar fault in him. But search as he did, he could not find anything remotely similar (even in the subtlest form) within his own experience.

Yet the very fact that the man had shared this demanded self-examination. The Rebbe could not advise this person until he first found a similar “fault” within himself. Since he could not find anything close to this, the Rebbe stopped seeing anyone, and he wept and prayed – and soul-searched – to discover within himself that which he was unable to see.

He finally identified what was the subtle fault in himself. And once he repaired it, he was able to advise to fellow who had come to him for advice.

This story teaches us one of the most powerful lessons about the sensitivity and empathy that is necessary to help advise and heal others. When someone shared a problem with the Rebbe, he did not for a moment think to himself that this is “his problem, not mine, and in my benevolence I will help him.” The Rebbe took the issue personally and saw it as his own problem.

This was Moses' approach. He, too, took the Korach uprising personally. As the leader and shepherd he saw it as his problem, and recognized that he must look deeper into himself to find ways to help them. He therefore fell on his face and was very distressed.

What a lesson in sensitivity!

9. Gimmel Tammuz

This coming Tuesday is the 23rd anniversary of *Gimmel Tammuz*, when we honor the Rebbe and all his great contributions. And especially at this time, we remember the amazing parallels of Korach's uprising against Moses with the challenges that some have posed to the Rebbe and his leadership. And the Rebbe's response.

Just like we witnessed Moses' ultra sensitivity with every soul – even with Korach and his fellow mutineers – so, too, we witnessed the Rebbe's extreme gentleness and sensitivity in dealing with every single soul and the dignity he conferred upon each human being, regardless of background and situation.

10. The Rebbe as a Child

One sweltering stifling unbearably hot summer day when the Rebbe was a young five year old, he was walking in the street of his town wearing a wool *kasket* covering his head, when he met one of the Jewish intellectuals. The scholar asked the Rebbe: “In this heat, why don't you take off that thick hat from your head?” The Rebbe replied, “*M'tor doch nish!*” (we are not allowed [to go with an uncovered head]). The man cynically continued: “*Ich vel dos oinesh nemen oif zich*” (I will assume the punishment coming to you).

What would you answer to that?

The Rebbe, as a little child, replied: “*Vos is der undersheid tzi du oder ich*” (What difference does it make whether you or I will be punished. A punishment is a punishment).

Many of us are busy with taking care of ourselves. Often we can be perfectly fine if we can get away with something and someone else will carry out burden. When we see the bear coming we are busy tying our own sneakers to outrun others, abandoning them to fend on their own. As Churchill said about appeasing tyrants: It's like feeding the crocodiles in the hope that you will be eaten last.

But the answer of a leader is – I am in the same boat with you. We are in it together. If something is wrong it's wrong, regardless who is punished for it.

11. The Pilot and Surgeon

Rabbi Yossi Shemtov, the Chabad shliach (representative) in Tucson, Arizona, shared with me the following reply he gave someone who asked him about the distinction between different Rabbis.

Some Rabbis, he said, are like surgeons and others are like pilots. What is the difference between a surgeon and a pilot? When someone is in need of surgery, God forbid, he will be very cautious and search around for the best possible surgeon. Why? Because his life is at risk, and he wants to ensure that whoever is cutting him open is the most qualified expert in performing this particular surgery.

Why then is it that when the same person books an airline flight, with all the risks of air travel, he doesn't go searching for the best pilot in the world?

The answer is because the pilot is flying together with you on the airplane, and he is exposed to the same risk as the passenger. The surgeon, on the other hand, is not lying on the slab with the patient. If the surgery doesn't go well, G-d forbid, the surgeon remains intact [except for possible malpractice suits].

Some Rabbis are like great surgeons. They are brilliant scholars, erudite legal experts, eloquent orators. Many of us who see a Rabbi as an 'outsider,' one who is not in the 'same boat' with us, will go searching for the best surgeon. We will look for the greatest scholar and expert. However, Chabad rabbis are like pilots – they may not be perfect, but they are in it with us. Our problem is their problem. Our celebration is their celebration.

We are not looking for 'perfect' Rabbis; we are in search of Rabbis who humbly appreciate the value of Divine souls and know that we are all sacred souls struggling in an agnostic world.

And we learn this sensitivity from the Rebbe.

12. A True Friend

A skeptic once came to see the Rebbe in a private audience. Sensing the discomfort of the visitor, the Rebbe asked him if there is anything he, the Rebbe, can do to put him at ease.

The man replied that it would be helpful if the Rebbe could tell him why people respect the Rebbe so much and come from far and wide to see him. "I am here," said the gentleman, "due to the suggestion of one of my colleagues. But frankly, I don't understand what a Rebbe is."

The Rebbe looked at him with a warm smile, and in a low voice and very gentle tone (that's how the visitor described it later), the Rebbe said to him: "A Rebbe is a friend, a very close friend."

Surprised, the man said, "Is that all?! I have many friends. What makes a Rebbe special?" Without hesitation, the Rebbe replied: "Allow me please to define the meaning of a friend, and then tell me how many friends you have."

“A friend,” the Rebbe explained, “is someone you can speak with as if you are speaking with yourself – with no defenses and no fears. Someone you can totally trust and be transparent with. Someone you can bare your soul to and never feel judged.”

The Rebbe paused. “How many friends like that do you have?”

“Not one,” admitted the man, “not one single person in my life fits that description.”

Always know, the Rebbe reminds us, that you have all the power you need to fulfill your mission in life. G-d would never give you a challenge that could not overcome.

13. Like Moshe

Like Moshe, the Rebbe epitomized the combination of humility and confidence. Like Moshe, the Rebbe was the caring shepherd. And he was also our friend.

He tirelessly worked hard at imbuing us all with these qualities, so that we could humbly recognize and accept the mission that God has charged each one of us with ... and forge ahead with confidence and pride regardless of the challenges that may confront us.

May we use this day to assess our own level of humility and confidence, and apply these powerful lessons to our personal lives and our relationships.

Towards that end, let me share with you several inspiring stories that demonstrate the Rebbe as a shepherd of all souls.

14. All Souls Go Through This Room

In the 1960s an officer of the IDF, whose unfortunate responsibility was to keep tally of military fatalities, came to see the Rebbe. He shared with the Rebbe the number of deaths reported in the last year – thirty fatalities to be precise – and asked the Rebbe for a blessing that the number should go drastically down over the next year. After he mentioned the number thirty, the Rebbe quietly corrected him: “Thirty two.” The IDF official said nothing, but he thought to himself: “Please. This is my job. How can the Rebbe know better than I how many soldiers were killed?!”

When he returned to Israel, intrigued, he asked his staff to review the number again. After all, the figures did change, due to the wounded dying over time and unreported casualties. To his utter shock the number that came back was indeed 32!

The next year he decided not to tell the Rebbe any number, and just asked outright: “How did the Rebbe know the precise number?” The Rebbe looked at him very seriously and replied: *Aleh neshomos vos kumen arein in der velt un gayen arois fun der velt, gayen durech dem tzimer*. “All souls that enter this world and leave this world go through this room...”

15. Every Soul has an Address

Long-time personal secretary of the Rebbe, Rabbi Leibel Groner, told the following story:

In the late 1950s or early 60s the Rebbe instructed him to begin indexing all those who corresponded with the Rebbe, so that the Rebbe could send them each a Rosh Hashana greeting for the New Year. The Rebbe also wanted the Rosh Hashana greetings drawn up during the summer, so that there was time to sign them and send them out before the Hebrew year end.

Rabbi Groner complied and sometime late in August he brought the letters to the Rebbe for review and signature. Subsequently, he was again summoned to the Rebbe’s office. The Rebbe has signed the letters, but had set some aside because, as he explained to Rabbi Groner, their souls had departed in the interim. Rabbi Groner was about to remove those letters from the Rebbe’s office when the Rebbe stopped him. “What are you going to do with them?” the Rebbe asked. Rabbi Groner said that he was going to discard them. And then the Rebbe said, *Zei darfen doch oich a shoneh tovah. Un der adres vu tzu shiken di briv veistu me’tameh nisht, b’meila loz zei doh*. “These [people] too need a good New Year, and you probably don’t know the address where to send their letters, so leave them here...”

Every soul has an address. A shepherd is cognizant and sensitive to every single sheep.

16. The Rebbe’s Kapote

On a warm afternoon of Shabbos of Parshat Pinchas in the summer of 1978, a young child was playing outside of 770, when the Rebbe came out of his room walking home. Looking for his father, the child mistakenly grabbed onto the Rebbe’s kapote (long black coat), as children are prone to do, and proceeded to wipe the sweat off his brow with the edge of the Rebbe’s kapote. Witnessing all this from across the street, the child’s mother was mortified. After a few minutes the child realized that the Rebbe was not his father and, startled, he scurried off.

Immediately after Shabbos, the deeply embarrassed mother wrote to the Rebbe, profusely apologizing for the child’s disrespectful behavior. The Rebbe replied as follows:

On the *contrary*: this caused much *nachas ruach* (satisfaction), because [one] cannot estimate the great heartfulness, simplicity, innocence and truth of a child ... Even more so since it followed and concluded the end of

the Haftorah of that day about the greatness of *chesed ne'urayich* (devotedness or love of your *youth*).

May you bring up him and all your children, may they live, to Torah, *chuppah* and good deeds...

17. Conclusion

Moses' behavior and the Rebbe's example – which we remember today on *Gimmel Tammuz* – teaches us a far-reaching lesson how to show sensitivity to one another.

Even if we see someone mutineering against us and our beliefs – a rebellious teenager, a defiant friend or stranger – we ought not to get angry. We need not respond to that person's provocation by matching belligerence for belligerence. What we need do is be even more sensitive to the troubled soul and look deeper into the roots of the rebellion. We need to look deeper into ourselves and recognize that this is our problem as well ... and that together we must look for a solution.

Always treat others with dignity, delicately speaking to each soul that you encounter. Remember – as the Rebbe reminds us always – the majesty of each individual soul (including ourselves).

What better way to pay tribute and honor the Rebbe on this day?

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