



PIRKEI AVOS PERK 3 MISHNA 18
THE GIFT OF LEADERSHIP
 HARAV Y. REUVEN RUBIN SHLITA

The large Synagogue was unique. Newly built with the highest degree of expertise, even its attractive stain glass windows were hand crafted by a world-renowned artist. Nothing was spared, acoustic engineers created perfect seating so the sound would travel throughout the lofty structure, the large Bima worked on a hydraulic system so it could be moved. Nothing was left to chance, yes, it was a building of great beauty and distinction. The congregation was a suburban mix of sweet Yieden, many of whom hadn't yet become totally Torah observant. Counted amongst the large membership were judges, leading medical professors and high-flying businessmen. They were proud of their beautiful building and I as their Rov tried to use this fact to draw everyone closer to The Eibishter. To illustrate their pride allow me to show off a bit. It was to this new synagogue that Prince Charles wended his royal way to participate in our opening. This was a first in history and I stand in the rarefied air as being the only Gerrer Chassid to have hosted the future king of Britain, and even given a sermon in his presence.

So, the reader will have gotten the point, this is an orthodox shul that took itself seriously and swims through the waters of the secular world with ease.

And then The Rov came to visit.

The Rov I speak of was HaRav Hatzadik Rav Menachem Mendel Shneebalg Ztl, Rov of the Machzika Hadass community of Manchester who was nifter last week. Our synagogue was in South Manchester, miles away from the hiemisha community both physically and spiritually. My flock had never met the Rov nor even tasted the brilliant illumination that seemed to follow him wherever he went. He had come to be sandek by the bris of one of our Youth Rabbi's sons and from the moment he entered one could feel the spiritual energy ripple through the large crowd. Short in stature but a giant in real time kedusha, the Rov's



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entrance sparked an instant reaction in all. He never sought to take up anyone's oxygen, nor push himself forward. He just slowly walked in with his wondrous smile and calm demeanour and everything stopped. A High Court judge came over to me and whispered "so this is how an angel looks". The Rov was only there with us for a few minutes, but in that short while time stood still. I could put on many hours of Torah programs, bring eloquent speakers from near and far, but the Rov's shining face taught a deeper lesson that hopefully still lives on.

The Mishna in Avos (3:18) starts with:

Rabbi Akiva used to say: Beloved is man, for he was created in Hashem's image; it is indicative of greater love that it was made known to him that he was created in Hashem's image, as it is said (Bereishis 9:6) "for in the image of Hashem He made man"

The Lev Simcha of Ger was shown in a dream that whereas 'beloved is man' refers to the basic 'Image of Hashem' which is enjoyed by all mankind, but 'a greater love' refers to the Tzadikim who enjoy a more sublime level of this hidden, spiritual dimension.

There are those unique souls that Hashem has gifted each generation with. They live on a different plain, wherein their every action creates illumination. The Rov was such a neshomah. His entry into that large and beautiful space of our shul, flooded every corner with his calm sweet radiance. I personally was blessed in basking in his warmth on many occasions. He was an 'old school' Rav, never worried about his own koved, ever ready to 'get his hands dirty' in pursuit of answering shalous directed to him by the olam.

I feel sorry for the generations that will never experience the charm and dedication of those cherished pre-war Rabbonim who carried our mesorah with such grace. Manchester was blessed to have this remnant of another world as its leader, and he had no small part in creating the thriving Torah community we now all benefit from.

As I write these lines, it has been announced that one of the Rov's worthy sons, HaRav Chiam Fievel Shlita has accepted the arduous responsibility of stepping into the void left by his holy father. Rav Chiam Fievel is a popular and respected Rav in Monsey New York. He has acquired a reputation as a loving leader of his community and a leading Talmud Chochom. More than all these points that recommend him to this high position, he is his father's son. The natural warmth is there, the smile is at the ready, whilst his humility draws others closer. The new Rav is yet another gift from the Eibishter, a Yid with many years of experience who has learnt at the feet of the previous generation's giants. Yet he knows what is needed to calm the pain of many and the quest for growth of all. As the Lev Simcha indicated, 'a greater love' refers to 'the Tzadikim who enjoy a more sublime level of this hidden, spiritual dimension.' We were blessed to share the illumination of just such a Tzadik, and in his zchus we have been gifted with his son, a worthy carrier of this light into the future.

May we all be found worthy of this leadership and together see the coming of the Moshiach.

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