



Avos Perek 4 Mishna 15

## All For Some Snuff

*Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

The Shabbos was historical. The Bobover Rebbe HaRav Shlomo Ztl was visiting Eretz Yisroel for only the second time, and this shabbos The Rebbe was in Bnai Brak. We were davening in the Bobover Shtieble, a rustic building barely capable of holding the throngs that wanted to share in the Tzadik's tfilahs. We are talking about over sixty years ago, and I was blessed to witness the Rov's visit at close quarters. As a talmud in the Yeshivah, the Rov's visit was a state event, and each day brought a fresh slice of wondrous memories. Throughout the visit there were untold numbers of survivors coming forth for a blessing from the Torah leader who had survived the holocaust with them.

One wonderful moment remains extremely clear in my memory. It was Shabbos morning just before Lienen, the shtieble was packed with ardent followers leaving hardly any room to move. The Rov stood by his shtender surrounded by a ring of devoted students. I stood just to the right as Reb Moshe Elias Z'l was at the amud. Suddenly a tall figure came pushing closer. Elbow at the ready, the ring of young students was ready to run interference so that no one dare disturb the Rebbe's davening. The tall stranger was clean shaven, a stranger yet not about to take no for an answer. Having seen many such visitors I immediately understood that this tall yield was one of the sheiris hapletah that hadn't yet fully recovered from the spiritual upheaval they had experienced. His demeanour spoke of his past yet indicated that for the moment he wasn't fully adherent to the teachings of his holy ancestors. He elbowed in closer 'The Rebbe knows me,' he boasted in a broad Romanian accented Yiddish. 'The Rebbe knows me, I want to give him a shmeck tabac! (a pinch of snuff). The circle standing around the Tzadik knew full well that the Rebbe never used snuff, and with the arrogance of youth we smirked and doubled our efforts of keeping this presumptuous stranger at a distance from the Rebbe. Just then the Rov turned around, in a blink he took everything in, 'Sholom Aleichem! Oy Baruch HaShem die lebst!'



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(Boruch Hashem your alive!) The air stood still; the full room held its breath. The Rov's arms were stretched out in an arch of love, his smile illuminating the entire room, 'Sholom Sholom', turning to the crowd the Rov told everyone, 'Der Yied, This Yied, I met him in Romania, he was so kind to us!' The stranger was now transposed to a close friend, he turned and offered the Rov a battered tabac pushka, 'Der Rebbe vill a shmeck tabac?' The Rov smiled that wondrous way of his and said 'Avada' (certainly) taking a fulsome pinch of the snuff. Our guest was now kvelling, tears rolling down his face, his eyes alight, he looked at the youngsters who just moments before tried to keep him away, 'You see the Rebbe loves my tabac,' as this was said the Rov surreptitiously brushed the snuff from his fingers, this was done out of site, but I caught it from the corner of my eye. The Yied wafted out of the circle of bochurim on a cloud of spiritual warmth, with the Rov's brochos ringing in his ears. Yet another yied was grasped back into the arms of his former hiemisha Torah circle of life, and a Malach was created by the Rov's sweet, quick thinking love for a lost yied. A Neshomah brought closer, and all for a shmeck tabac.

I have seen so much since that shabbos morning in Bnei Brak. Hashem has granted me the merit to witness many tzadikim, giants of the spirit who have understood immediately what it was a yied needed. Not only do these special souls know what we need, but they are able to stoop down to whatever level we are at and spiritually caress our neshomas back to life.

The Mishna in Avos (4:15) tells us:

*Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua says: Let the honor of your student be as dear to you as your own....*

Gutta Yieden explain that Rebbeim and talmidim enjoy a symbiotic relationship. Of course, students owe much of their knowledge to their Rebbe's, but equally so, the Rebbe owes his role as a disseminator of Torah to his students. The true teacher understands this innately, his Tikun lays in his ability in bringing those around him closer to the Reboino Shel Olam.

As we tiptoe out of the era of Covid we must grasp this lesson if the hope of enliven our young. They have been through so much, and many who were vulnerable before are now at even greater peril.

At the end of March 2019, I wrote an article about the need for a dedicated space so that youngsters who need mentoring and extra chizuk should have a safe environment that would be conducive for such help. I undertook to provide such a place and we gave it the provisional name, 'The Shed'. We spoke to architects even costed out how much was needed. Then, tragically the Rebbetzin A'H suddenly was nifta, and before we could catch our breath Covid entered our world wreaking it's horrendous trail of tears. Everything was shelved as we had to close our shuls and create ways and means to carry on our lives as safely as possible.

Now as we slowly move out of the clouds that have covered our lives, it is time to return to the drawing board and revise the plans for 'The Shed'. We need this space more than ever, we can't waste a moment more, our kids need our support. This week I sat with an architect and several interested Baal Habatim. This is going to go forward; I don't know from whence the funding will come but I know in my heart that the Torah community will help.

I have witnessed time and again how our leaders in the past have seen fledgling problems and stooped down to create answers. They carried the burden for generations not yet born, and did it because as teachers they respected their youngsters and intuitively knew what they needed.

We have all come through a time never before experienced, I plead with you all, let us band together in giving all our young the space to become ignited with Hashem's Torah. All Yiedisha neshomahs need the sweet understanding they require, and it has fallen to us to give it.

In the zchus of our accepting our task, may Hashem have rachmonus on us and bring the Moshiach.

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