

כבוד הגון

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As we have entered the *Yemay Hasefira*, I would like to share a few basic *ha'aros* on the *hashkafa* of *Sefiras Ha'Omer*.

There are two times a year when Klal Yisroel has a collective *aveilus*: during the Three Weeks for the *Churban Beis Hamikdosh*, and during *Sefiras Ha'Omer*. In *Yiddishkeit*, when we celebrate or mourn something, it is not for what was, rather it is for something that is. We mourn the *Beis Hamikdosh* because our lives today are totally different as a result of not having the *Beis Hamikdosh*. It is easy to understand why *Chazal* established an annual period of time of *aveilus* for the *Beis Hamikdosh*. Our lives are very different; we don't have *korbanos* nor are we living the same life that the *Eibeshter* wants us to have.

However, the *aveilus* of *Sefiras Ha'Omer* commemorates the loss of *talmidei R. Akiva*. How does that tragedy affect us today that it requires annual *aveilus* for entire Klal Yisroel? With the following example to give perspective, it is easy to understand the answer:

Imagine for a moment that there had been no Second World War and six million *Kedoshim* were not lost. What would Klal Yisroel look like today? Whether we would still be in Europe or not, those six million people made an enormous impact on Klal Yisroel the world over, both because the sheer amount of Klal Yisroel which was lost as well as the volume of Torah which was lost. Each and every one of us would be on a different *madreiga* today had it not happened. Given the fact that so many *yerayim* and *shlaymim* were taken from us, had they not been taken then seventy years later the world would be a different place.

The *gemara Menachos* tells how there was a special *makom* for the Torah of R. Akiva. (This is an *inyan* of *Kabbala*, which makes it hard to understand.) Moshe Rabbeinu saw all of the *derashos* which R. Akiva would make and had *chalishas hadas* until R. Akiva said, "*halacha l'Moshe MeSinai*." This is a very deep *gemara*. We see that there was a special *koach* given to R. Akiva in *Torah Sheb'al Peh*, and that *koach* would have been disseminated by twenty-four thousand *talmidim* instead of his remaining five *talmidim*. We can theorize that with the exponential difference from each successive generation, had R. Akiva's *talmidim* not died, *Moshiach* would be here!

Hence, the *aveilus* of *talmidei R. Akiva* is not an *aveilus* of the past, rather it is in the same vein as the *Churban Bayis*. Both tragedies have left us at a level which pales in comparison to that which we would be on had they not happened.

Many different *peshotim* are said to understand the depth of the reason *talmidei R. Akiva* died, that being "שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה". Truthfully, if you think about it, we associate "*kavod*" as a negative thing. If on an aptitude test one was asked, "*Kavod- ma'aluh* or *chisaron*?" I believe most people would answer, "*chisaron*." In the normal way people speak, *kavod* is looked at as something which is unimportant. ("I'm not looking for *kavod*", is a common expression which illustrates this.) Of course, bad *kavod* is unimportant and negative. It falls under the category of "קנאה תאוה וכבוד מוציאין את האדם מעולם".

Yet, there is obviously a good *kavod* as well. We ask for "חיים של עושר וכבוד" in *Rosh Chodesh Bentching*. As well, there are countless *mitzvos* of *kavod* that are *choshuv* such as *kavod* for *talmidei chachomim* and *kohanim*. There are levels of *kavod* which are essential and not at all negative.

How does one differentiate between healthy, necessary *kavod* and negative *kavod*?

Good, *kosher kavod* is for a person to be appreciated for what he is. That is something which is a *toiradigge* value and has *chashivus*. The Yerushalmi talks about different *Amoraim* who learned different amounts, and says a person who knows more Torah needs more *kavod*. Negative *kavod*, on the other hand, is for someone to be appreciated as someone who he is not. That is not real nor is it *emes*.

The *talmidei R. Akiva* did not show enough appreciation, on their level (which we have a hard time understanding), towards other people according to what they were. That is a *chisaron*, especially for tremendous *gedolei Torah*.

Real *emmesse*, *toiradigge kavod* is to be *machshiv* things for what they are and people for where they are holding.

In my opinion, the root for a person to come to recognize the correct and healthy *kavod* and distance himself from bad *kavod* begins internally. A person has to be *mechabed* himself and appreciate himself for the positives traits he has without becoming a *b'al ga'ava*. A person must feel the correct measure self-appreciation, without becoming complacent with it and without suppressing it. Once a person is balanced and appreciates himself for exactly who he is, then it is easy to be *mechabed* others as well. It all starts *beino l'bein atzmo*.

R. Chaim Shmulevitz z"l used to tell over the following amusing story: There were two garbage collectors in Yerushalayim, and one would stand riding on the back of the truck to throw in the bags and the other would run back and forth along the street grabbing the bags to hand over to the one on the truck. The one running around grabbing the bags works much harder than the one riding on the truck. The runner once said, "I could also be the one on the truck, but I don't need *kavod*."

We can find this amusing. After all, what is the *groisse kavod* in riding on the truck? You're still collecting garbage.

The Rosh Yeshiva zt"l once said over the following from R. Leib Chasman: There was once a person who used to clean out the outhouses, a real *melacha mechu'ar*. He used to go from village to village and before he entered the new village he would straighten his jacket and put himself together as if he was "coming to town." Did it even matter to do this once he was already filthy and working such a job? The *pshat* is that a person appreciates himself according to who he is, for his own *chashivus*.

R. Chaim Shmulevitz used to say that it is not only garbage collectors who are like this. When he would travel to Haifa to be *mesader kiddushin* at a *chassuna* and they called him up with many titles, he said that he himself felt good from it. And he was *takeh* deserving of the titles which they called him.

Everyone needs *kavod*. Everyone needs *kosher*, healthy, and balanced *kavod* to be appreciated for who they are. The more one is *mechabed* himself correctly, the easier it will be to be *mechabed* others. The less one appreciates himself, the harder it will be to be *mechabed* others.

The *avoda* of *Yemay Hasefira* is to first work on *kavod atzmo* to recognize one's own *ma'alos* in order to gain and reflect a true sense of the good *kavod* which holds an important place in the world. This is my *havono* of the *Slabodka Mussar* we received from the Rosh Yeshiva zt"l. A *mentsch* has *ma'alos* and one must be aware of things to do better and not become complacent with where one is already holding or what one is doing. Yet, one can be *tzufreeden* with the *kochos* which the *Eibeshter* gave him and feel good about one's accomplishments with the *bikush* of doing more.

A person should feel an inner *eidele* pride about being a *Yid* and a *yeshiva mann*. This will lead one to be able to be *mechabed* others as well. May we all be *zoche zein* to start with working on our *kavod atzmo* to have a healthy balance and end with the proper *kavod* for others in order to be *mesaken* for the *chisaron* of *Tekufas Yemay Hasefira*. From there the *yeshua* will come with *bee'as Go'el Tzedek bimhayruh biyomeninu, kein yehi ratzon*.