



Delight in A Jewish Heart

Shavuot Special

Leilui Neshmas Meira Chaya Nechama Bracha A"H

Bat David Mordechai V'Zelda Shaindel Sheychu

A couple barged into my office, they were desperate. "I have no problem with Judaism," the father said, "but what you did with my son is fraud, you have stolen him from me. Now he is no longer ours."

I have been accused of many things during my years at Migdal Ohr, but kidnapping was a new one. I had no who those people were or who their child was – or what they were talking about. In these cases the best course of action is to empathize and hear them out. I had them seated and offered them something to drink.

After cooling off a bit, the father explained their plight. It all began when his son began to participate in Migdal Ohr's Ohr Yisraeli youth movement activities. "That's great," I said. The parents, who are not observant Jews, stressed that their son meant everything to them. As he joined the activities he became religious, "and then we lost him completely. He insisted in going to yeshiva. Every day that passes we feel we are losing him even more."

The breaking point occurred on his 16th birthday. His parents bought him a ticket for a two week family trip to Italy. "We were sure he would be delighted, but instead he said that he would not go. It was "wasting time" that could be used for the study of Torah, he said. We have lost him, and all this because of your organization," the father charged.

I was moved by the boy's actions. The boy was willing to stand up for his convictions and forgo pleasures to stick to what he believed. I had to explain this to the parents.

In Perkei Avos we learn: "Beloved are Israel, for they were given a precious article; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they were given a precious article, as it is stated: "I have given you a good acquisition; My Torah, do not forsake it."¹

My father, Rabbi Yisroel Grossman, would ask – why is the Torah called "a precious article?"

Father would explain that this teaches us that out of love for Israel, G-d implanted within each of us an immense desire to study Torah. We all stood at Mount Sinai as the Torah was given and are all a

vessel for Torah. Therefore, the Torah is called "a precious article," which every Jew seeks, even if he is far from his heritage and has forgotten about this.

The repetitiveness in the sentence teaches us that all are loved by G-d, close or far, and all desire to study Torah. All one has to do is to be exposed to Torah and discover this drive. When the love for Torah is revealed, nothing can stop it.

I looked at the angered parents and thought about trying to appease them and then sending them on their way. I then remembered my father's words, and understood that deep inside they too had a yearning for Torah. I decided to speak to this inner point within them.

Praised are you, I told them, that you have merited what mothers have desired for centuries. You have merited a son who is a scholar. "Who knows how many prayers your forefathers have recited to merit this moment. I am sure he will become a leading scholar who lights the world with his Torah," I told them.

My face was wet with my tears, and this softened their rage. The mother relented first. "Rabbi, we apologize. We were not aware that this was so important. You are right," she said excitedly. Moments passed and the father joined in the enthusiasm.

I saw at that time that the parents' "precious article" had been revealed. "The truth is rabbi, our younger son wanted to follow his brother and go to Ohr Yisraeli. We did not allow him to go, as we did not wish to lose him," said the father. "Now, I think we will support his wish. If this is what our forefathers wanted, who are we to oppose them."

The meeting ended. On Shavuot, the son will conclude the study of tractate Pesachim of the Talmud, together with 300 other Ohr Yisraeli boys. His brother will join in the new cycle of learning.

¹ Perkei Avot 3:14.