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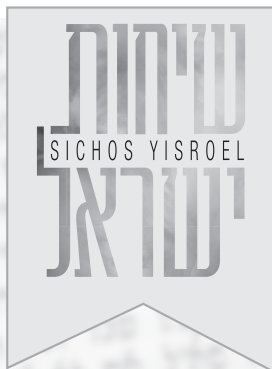
DEMONSTRATING GEVURAH FOR KABBALAS HATORAH



FROM THE SHIURIM OF

HARAV YISROEL BROG שליט"א

ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR



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# PARSHAS BAMIDBAR-SHAVUOS



HARAV YISROEL BROG, SHLITA | ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR

SHIUR PRESENTED IN 5780

## DEMONSTRATING GEVURAH FOR KABBALAS HaTORAH

### THE HALLMARK OF A POWERFUL PERSON

The subject of today's *shiur* is about the middah of *gevurah*, the attribute that's required for *Kabbalas HaTorah*. If someone would ask, "What does it take to accept the Torah way of life upon yourself and to abide by it in a committed fashion?" The answer is that the *middah* of *gevurah* (strength) is required. The gemara (Shabbos 88a) tells us that when Klal Yisroel were *mekabel* the Torah and they said *na'aseh v'nishma* they demonstrated tremendous *koach*, and they were referred to in the pasuk as *giborei koach*.<sup>1</sup> They were people who were very strong and were full of *koach*. Powerful individuals. The hallmark of our forefathers who accepted the Torah, was *gevurah*.

When you meet a person who exhibits bravery, strength and fortitude to make changes in their life, you see that they used *gevurah*. That is the hallmark of a powerful person. I've met "spiritual Tarzans," supermen and superwomen, who undertook to go up against their entire universe. They were willing to face mockery, scoffing, people talking about them, and loss of friendships - they were prepared to lose everything they valued - in order to make changes in their lives. I know people who stood up and said, "*Na'aseh v'nishma*." *Gevurah* was the hallmark of our forefathers. Avraham Avinu had *gevurah* like no one else had. He went up against his entire family. His own father, who happened to be the minister of religion, reported him to the authorities, to Nimrod, as a heretic. Avraham Avinu was put into prison for years and was subjected to a burning hot furnace, yet he continued to be obstinate and stood up for the *emes*.

### THE BIGGEST WIMPS

Now, Avraham Avinu didn't start up with anyone. He didn't put down anybody. All he did was to educate himself and attempt to educate

<sup>1</sup> אמר רבי אלעזר: בשעה שהקדימו ישראל "נעשה" ל"נשמע" יצתה בת קול ואמרה להן: מי גלה לבני רז זה שמלאכי השרת משתמשין בו! דכתיב: "ברכו ה' מלאכיו גברי כח עשי דברו לשמע בקול דברו" - ברישא "עשי", והדר "לשמע"

others. This was the hallmark of real strength, not physical strength, such as the ability to beat someone up. Nimrod demonstrated brute physical strength. He had the ability to whip and punish somebody, similar to the strength of the Russians, who are, by the way, the weakest, the wimpiest sissies. They are petrified. Their tough bluster and talk only demonstrates their insecurity and that they are made up of “mush.” But they have a “big gun” and they influence their people to have a herd mentality. Then, with the whole pride of lions and thugs together, they impose their strength upon others, even though the others are not threatening them. They are not demonstrating strength.

The country of Russia was petrified of religion. They came up with their formulas and methods for dealing with religion, just like the Spanish did at the time of the Spanish Inquisition. Those funny-looking *galochim* (priests) demonstrated that they were a bunch of low lives, degenerates, despicable Nazis, who would subject innocent men, women and children to torture and death by the burning at the stake. The Catholic Church thought they were strong. But really they were despicable. They were the epitome of people who were petrified of meeting the *emes*. Was there ever a Jew who was afraid of another opinion, of another nation, or could be accused of trying to push another nation to follow their ‘Judaism’? No. That’s strength of character! That’s called strength of belief. But when you have to go and force someone else to believe your *narishkeit* (nonsense), and you can’t present it in a normal, rational way that people would buy into it, that shows that you are demonstrating that your position is inferior. And if you settle things through torture and through guns and the like, it’s not a sign of *gevurah*, but a sign of weakness, and not strength.

## ONE CANNOT BE FRUM WITHOUT GEVURAH

To commit to a Torah life takes amazing strength. Take for example, someone who is used to being *mechalel* Shabbos. They have plans to wash their cars every week, or to go to the movies, or the beach, or to clean their homes and mow their lawn. Then someone comes and tells them [something about Yiddishkeit], and explains to them that as Jews, this is not the way to conduct themselves. And they hear the argument. No one forces them to accept it. No one twists their arms, and no one threatens them with Gulag or prison. No one threatens that they would be put on a bed and dragged and extended from all sides, like the people did in Sodom. Instead, someone with a rational mind explains it to them. And then a

rational person hears the truth and accepts it. This takes tremendous *gevurah*. Now, you cannot be frum, or committed to Hashem without *gevurah*, because the world is not on the side of Hashem. The world is anti-Hashem. The upper echelons of American society and academia find it repulsive to even believe in the ‘theory’ of Creation - that Hashem created the world. They are petrified and frightened to hear such an idea.

### A WIMP FROM HARVARD AND A STRONG BACHUR

I like to tell a story of a smart professor, who was on the Clintons' Advisory Board, who once came to my house. He was very distraught that I was able to educate his son and to demonstrate to him the truths of Yiddishkeit. He came to town and decided to engage me in a debate. I asked him if he accepted the concept of belief in Hashem. He said, “No.” I asked him, “If I can prove the existence of Hashem to you, would you accept it?” He kept on saying that this cannot be proven. I asked him, “I am only asking you theoretically now - if it could be proven theoretically - would you accept it? Would you be forced to accept it, if I could prove it to you?” He still said, “No, it can't be done.” He was petrified that I would tell him something that he wouldn't be able to refute, and that he would be forced to admit that he's a weakling.

There was once a different fellow, who was from Harvard. Most people would consider him an *iluy*, a genius. He came to Cleveland to do some project, and stayed here for a year and a half. I got a hold of him and engaged him in discussion. He said to me that I had to prove to him the existence of G-d, mathematically. I said, “Okay.” At that point I was busy with proving Yiddishkeit mathematically. We had a book based on statistical and computer models that were mathematically sound (and someone who was a mathematician would appreciate it more than me). So I began to learn with him. We spent a year and half learning. He told me, “If you prove it to me, I will accept that this is the way to live.” Every time I brought him proofs and papers, and copies of this book, he would bring it to his professors to attempt to challenge it. He would come back to me and say, “You know, statistically it's almost impossible [that Torah isn't true].” This book was written by brilliant Torah-observant mathematicians. And he kept on going with the learning. At the end of the year, he told me that I had proven it to him, and that I was 100% right, but he wasn't going to commit to making a change. I had to contain myself from hitting him, that he should remember that for the rest of his life! I said to him, “I spent a year and a half learning with you and you

weren't in denial - you told me that it was 100% sound mathematically. You told me you were going to do it!"

His reply was astounding, He said, "So what? I wasn't honest." So do you know who he was? No, he wasn't strong. He wasn't a *gibor*, he was a weakling, a weasel, a nobody, a gornisht, he had no strength to himself whatsoever - and that's why he couldn't commit. After that experience, I really appreciated seeing somebody who decided to become frum, and actually committed to becoming frum, even changing their eating habits from one extreme to another.

I remember one young fellow, a bochur, who didn't have a home; he lived by people. He used to go from store to store, where they sold him leftover food. Later on, when he became frum, he complained to me, "What does Hashem expect a person to do? I just discovered there was not one kosher establishment anywhere near my work or school." And then I understood how hard it was for him. A *goy* has practically no place where there isn't a restaurant within his *daled amos*, but a Yid doesn't have it. This fellow told me, "How in the world was I going to eat kosher, if there wasn't one kosher place around me?" And then Pesach came, and he was sure that a store downtown would have some goods for Pesach, and he was overwhelmed when he discovered there was no Pesachdik food in that area. But he was committed and he didn't give up. He was a strong young man, and he demonstrated tremendous *gevurah*.

## FACING CHALLENGES AS A MEASURE OF GEVURAH

The Gemara in Shabbos, that we quoted in the beginning, compares those of us who commit to *Na'aseh v'Nishma* as *giborei koach* - mighty ones. Now, there are many frum Jews who accept Hashem's laws and Torah generally, and they do all the *mizvos* that they have no trouble with - and they believe in - and they don't do any *aveiros* that they have no trouble with. Most of them won't murder anybody - they have an aversion to murder. They won't knife a person, even if just to draw some blood - they don't do that, it's not a Jewish way of life, it's not in their DNA. But you have to know, that attitude is worth tiddlywinks! If you have a Jew who tells me that he doesn't murder, or rob banks, or push old ladies down to the steet, or on the train tracks - you have to know that is *gornisht mit nisht*, it doesn't mean anything. And I don't care if you take pride in yourself, and think you are a good Jew because of that. Do you know why? Because the Mishnah's (Avos 5:23) measure of



anything of value is called לפי צערא אגרא - according to the difficulty or challenge that person has in doing something, is the reward. If a person does a *mitzvah* that he was never really challenged by (from the time he was a little boy), you know what reward he will get for this *mitzvah*? Very little. Now, if he used to have a challenge with this *mitzvah* when he was younger and he overcame that challenge, then he will get a reward for that *mitzvah* for the rest of his life!

There was once a rabbi who was a big *tzaddik*. He was naturally a very good person; he did good things all the time. One time, he had traveled out of town on an eight-hour trip and arrived back to town at 5am. He went home, and was back at Yeshiva at 7:15am, before *shacharis*, at the same time he usually arrived. My *chavrusa* said to me, "Isn't this man a *tzaddik*? He didn't come one minute late - he came at 7:15am like he does every day! He just drove for eight hours. He's not a youngster anymore, and he still came on time for *davening*." I told him, "I don't know if he's a *tzaddik*. He's only a *tzaddik* if he was challenged with coming on time." My *chavrusa* said, "I am sure it was a challenge." I told him, "You know, I am going to verify it." I waited till the end of the *sefer* and I approached him as he was walking out and asked him, "Reb so and so, I'd like to ask you a question. I understand that you had a hard day yesterday - you traveled, as the *gemara* says that traveling wears out a person. Did you have an iota of a challenge to be in the *shul* this morning at your usual time." He looked at me and said, "As a matter of fact - none whatsoever." I asked him, "Do you remember in your life ever having such a challenge?" He told me that this was never his challenge. He had other challenges. He's a *tzaddik*, but not in this area. Coming on time to Yeshiva when it is easy for him doesn't make him a *tzaddik*. I felt bad for him, because the guy could get more *sechar* if he became a little lazy or a little chilled out. But he was okay, he got *sechar* for other things.

## A SHEITEL THAT LASTED TWO DAYS

The Torah tells us the most amazing thing. When the *Yidden* received the Torah, they were למשפחתיו - *crying "over" their families* (Bamidbar 11:11).<sup>2</sup> As brought down in Chazal (Yoma 75a, Shabbos 130a) and explained by Rambam.<sup>3</sup> There were certain restrictions on acts in the area of morality that were permitted to them before *Matan Torah*,

<sup>2</sup> בכך למשפחתיו. משפחות משפחות נאספים וזוכים לפרסם תרעמתו בגלוי. ורבותינו אקרו (יומא ע"ה) למשפחתיו, על עסקי משפחות - על עריות הנאסרות להם (רש"י)  
<sup>3</sup> אין לך דבר בכל התורה פלה שהוא קשה לרב העם לפרש אלא מן העריות והביאות האסורות. אמרו חכמים בשעה שנאטטו: שקראל על העריות בכו וקבלו מנה זו בתרעומות וזכיה שנקמר (במדבר יא י) "בכך למשפחתיו" על עסקי משפחות (משנה תורה, הלכות איסורי ביאה כ"ב: י"ח)

and afterwards, they became categorized as immoral actions and were therefore forbidden. These were actions that people were accustomed to, and the emotional reaction which they expressed (when those actions were forbidden to them) was crying, which means it touched them deeply on the emotional level. At the same time, they made other changes, going from non-kosher, to kosher, to glatt kosher - and even though they were inconvenienced (as Chazal tell us they had to kasher their dishes after *Matan Torah*) - they didn't cry about this change. But regarding the issur of עֲרִיזָה, it says, they were בכה למשפחתיו. There were certain familial relationships that were not prohibited to them beforehand, and now those have become forbidden. And for that they cried. Now, I don't want you to imagine that 600,000 people in Klal Yisroel were crying about it. No. But there must have been a sizable enough number of people who were affected, that the Torah testified that they cried. This means it was a challenge for them, and it took *gevurah* for them to accept it.

Let's say there is a woman who grew up in an environment where people didn't cover their hair, and she didn't cover her hair when she got married. It is challenging to abide by this rule when suddenly she hears about covering the hair.

Many years ago, I dealt with a young man whose wife was a respectable person with an important job, and she was the one who insisted that her husband pursue some study of Judaism. She had some basic background because her mother was a 'Deformed' rebbetzin. She told her husband to pursue some Jewish study so he would understand what he was doing. To his good fortune he eventually did do so, with a shliach that Hashem sent him, which was myself. I felt badly for her because she was extremely furious. She would slam the phone when I would call their house. She was perturbed that I had messed up her life. They had just gotten married and she thought that I was attempting to take a wrecking ball to everything in her life and her marriage and destroy it.

### A PROMISE FROM RAV AVIGDOR MILLER

When they got married, they decided they would not have children, as they wanted to 'serve society' and mankind and they could do it on a much higher level without being encumbered by kids. As a matter of fact they thought that having children was too selfish for them. I told her very nicely that after I finished educating her, she hopefully would change her mind, and she really didn't like that. And then I had a *sheila* whether I should have told her about certain *halachos*, as I was sure she would not



accept them. I called my zeide (HaRav Avigdor Miller, zt"l) to explain my predicament, and he said, "You have to tell them everything. You don't have to hold a gun to their heads and don't tell them you are going to do anything to them, but you have to educate them on the mitzvos, one by one." He said, "It doesn't mean that she has to cover her hair tomorrow, but if you give over the information correctly, he will, in turn, educate his wife in a step-by-step fashion, and in two and half years she will be wearing a sheitel." When I told this couple this "wonderful" news that I heard from my zeide, I remember the husband gave this raucous laugh, which might make one believe that I was the funniest comedian on planet earth. But I told him, "Mark my words, because a great Rabbi told me this." Two and half years later, they decided to make a religious chuppa, and she surprised her husband by showing up to her *chuppah* wearing a *sheitel*. Many rabbis came from the community. The *chuppah* was on Thursday night. Everyone was blown away. I said, הודו לה' כי טוב. I called my *zeide* to let him know that she put a *sheitel* on and she got remarried with a religious *chuppah*.

Now, this lady was a superwoman, because when she was mekabel to wear that *sheitel*, she thought that she would be wearing that *sheitel* for the rest of her life! Now, there are some frum ladies who even wear a sheitel in their homes, but they don't wear them when they go to sleep or when they shower or go swimming. So Sunday morning, this lady called our house and asked to speak to my wife. She told my wife, "My wig got totally wrecked." My wife said, "Why? You just put it on, on Thursday?" This lady replied, "Well, the shower wrecked it. I haven't taken it off once since Thursday." This means that when she committed to covering her hair, she committed all the way! She was amazing! That's a *gevurah* that's שאין כמות!

## JUMPING INTO A FREEZING LAKE

Recently, I was blown away and moved by what some of my *yungerleit* did. As you know, one of the great tragedies of the coronavirus is that the *taharah* of the *mikvah* (for men) became nullified in Klal Yisroel. There was never a *gezeirah* like coronavirus in history, in that it was the only time in history where every shul in the world was forced to be closed. It wasn't just one country or one neighborhood - in every country in the world where there were Jews, the shuls were forced to close. Yeshivos were also forced to close down in every country. *Mikvaos* were forced to be closed down in all countries. It's amazing how far the *gezeirah* went.

There were some people who were very perturbed by this. I know a fellow who went to a Rav and told him, “Rabbi, since my bar mitzvah, I didn’t miss one day of mikvah, and I can’t miss now.” So this rabbi wanted to make him feel good and he told him, “Just like you had a mitzvah all your life of going to a Mikvah, now you have a mitzvah of listening to the rabbis by not going to the *mikvah*.” Maybe he wanted the fellow to feel good, but he completely ignored the *ratzon* to do a mitzvah in spite of a *gezeirah*, and the potential for the *midah* of *gevurah* in upholding mitzvos. Since he was towing a party line, doing what was ordered by authorities, even though he personally might not agree with it, they printed this story in many Jewish publications.

You know what I was thinking? Boruch Hashem that he wasn’t there when Moshe Rabbeinu was in the midbar, when a small group of Jews who were *tamei mes* - since they were involved in the *mitzva* of burying Jewish bodies - came to Moshe Rabbeinu and told him that they didn’t want to miss Korban Pesach. Now, if that rabbi would have been present in Moshe’s stead, he would have said, “Just like they are getting a mitzvah for coming (to bring Korban Pesach), you are getting a mitzvah for not bringing Korban Pesach. Go home!” And the guy would say, “No Rabbi, I don’t want to miss this mitzvah.” And he would say, “Cut it out, and go home!” You know what Moshe said? “Wow, I am blown away!” Now, there was no way for Moshe to reform, or change or add anything to the Torah - this was a black on white *halachah*, with no ‘ifs or buts’ about it! Moshe thought, “What should we do?” There was no way to get around it. Moshe knew every *halachah* and he tried every single *shtickle* Torah possible to find a solution, but he couldn’t. And you know what he said? “I am so proud of you, boys! Let me go ask Hashem!” Now, if I was there, do you know what I would have told Moshe? “Moshe, don’t even ask Hashem.” And if that rabbi was there, do you know what he would have told Moshe? “Moshe, you are a choshuve Yid - why are you asking Hashem? You know it’s a black on white *halachah*, there is nothing to talk about!” But do you know what the Torah answers this rav? “Keep quiet! Hashem wants Moshe to ask Hashem.” And do you know what Hashem said? “I am going to give you Pesach Sheni! I am going to create a Pesach Sheni for you!”

## STANDING UP FOR TAHARAH

Now, a lot of people couldn’t go to the mikvah during coronavirus. So some people started to come up with ideas for solving the *mikvah*

problem. Some Yidden in Eretz Yisrael, started offering to build a mikvah in people's homes for 4000 NIS. For about \$1000 a man could have a mikvah built in his house. Let me tell you - the people who did it were tzaddikim. In the next world, the *gevurah* they demonstrated by spending \$1000 was unbelievable. I was shocked to hear that some of my *yungerleit* went to Lake Erie, to use it as a *mikvah*. Now, at the start of coronavirus in January 2020, it was snowing here in Cleveland. It snowed here after Purim and it also snowed on Pesach in Wickliffe. Winter ended very late this year. It was freezing outside. And these *yungerleit* went down to the freezing lake, of course with social distancing - one at the time (not as a whole group). Of course, it was not an enjoyable swim, with the waves, etc. And everyone that I spoke to, told me that it wasn't that bad. It was a *chessed* of Hashem שאין כמותו! And I figured that after the first time, they would never see Lake Erie again. But they "saw" Lake Erie continuously, constantly. That's called strength, that's not called weakness! That's called being a strong person, standing up for *taharah*. No, by not going, you don't have a *taharah*! And I am not saying that you have to go or you are *chaitv* to go. If you do go, are you bothering anybody? Why would some modern Jewish orthodox doctors complain about going to Lake Erie? Are you going to contaminate the waters with the virus?! What kind of nonsense is it to tell people not to go, and then get the local rabbonim to threaten not to let them back into the community if they would ever go to Lake Erie again?! And on top of it, they will make sure that the government won't let them swim in Lake Erie again!

### COMMITTING TO TORAH WITH GEVURAH

That's *gevurah*. You should be proud of these people! Not stam! I am proud of these guys like anything! I have heard stories in the past about when Jews in Russia were becoming frum, they would commit to travel to a *mikvah* which was often hours away, each way. It was amazing! These were the *giborim*! That's *gevurah* - committing yourself to Torah! *Gevurah* is what we need in order to commit to Torah!

The Vilna Gaon says that to change your middos you also need *gevurah*. People who have temper problems need *gevurah*. No one likes to have temper issues. What are you missing? You are missing *gevurah*. People engage in pursuits that they know are wrong. What do they lack? Do they lack understanding? No, they lack *gevurah*!

## RAV ELYASHIV'S PSAK

We had a student here, a youngerman, whose father grew up in Russia. The father moved to Eretz Yisrael and settled there. He lived there for many years, and he died there. The question arose if his son had to sit *shiva* for him. I told him that according to the way I see the halacha, he wasn't chayav to sit *shiva*. So he went and asked a couple of "American" rabbis and they all said, "Oh, no. Your father came from Russia, he was *tinok shenishba* - he was an innocent person who didn't know any better. Of course, you have to sit *shiva* for him!" I decided to call Rav Elyashiv, zt"l. I called Rav Nachum Eisenstein - one of Rav Elyashiv's confidants and I explained the situation. He arranged to speak with Rav Elyashiv. Rav Elyashiv asked, "Did this man come to Eretz Yisroel shortly before he died? How many years has he lived in Israel?" I said that he had lived in Eretz Yisroel for many years. "There is no *chiyuv* of *shivah* for him whatsoever," Rav Elyashiv said, "No mitzvah, no *kiyum*, no nothing." Do you hear that? Who knew the right answer? Was it the American rabbis with their tremendous "strength," where if you tell them "no *shivah*" they say, "Oh boy!"

On the other hand, I once had a student whose father was a *goy*, and when his father died, he went to some rabbonim to ask if he could sit *shivah* and they all said, "You can't sit *shiva* for a *goy*!" Then he came to me and I told him, "You can sit *shivah* 100%. Enjoy yourself. It's not a mitzvah, but you can sit *shivah*." A rav called me up to ask, "Did you just tell him that he could sit *shivah*?! How did you tell him that he can sit *shivah* for his father who is a *goy*?!" I told him, "Yes, I told him he could sit *shiva*, because Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, writes that in his *teshuvah*. There's nothing *assur* about sitting *shivah* for a non-Jew. If it makes his son feel good, let him do it. Why should he feel that when his father died and he's not sitting *shiva* for him, as if he's not mourning for him? He can do it. Not as a mitzvah, of course, but he can do it." That's *gevurah*. People have no strength; they can't stand up for what you have to stand up for!

## STAND YOUR GROUND

That's what we have to know. *Kabala haTorah* depends on *gevurah*. Here we are, sitting like meek little puppies, waiting for the *goyishe* government to give us permission, to give us *haskamah*.<sup>4</sup> Just today the government passed the law that, in Cleveland, you can make *chasunas* for 300 people! They went from 10 people to 300. Now, even I think this is

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<sup>4</sup>This shiur was given on May 25, 2020, in the middle of the Covid outbreak.

crazy, but they made that the law. 300 people. And then they said, “There’s no way that you can open up schools and *shuls* without encountering or meeting many people.” What do you mean? If you can have weddings with 300 people, why can’t you be in the *Beis Midrash*? “Well, we will have to ask the doctors, then we will ask the rabbis, we will get through these hoops to figure out what we can do and what we cannot do.” That’s not called strength. That’s not *kabalas haTorah*!

If we would have gone with that *mehalech* during *Kabalas HaTorah* what would have been? I don’t know why no one is mentioning Gemara with Rabbi Akiva over and over again. Remember the gemara that describes the times when Romans made a *gezeirah*, that if you teach Torah publicly, you would be killed. And Rabbi Akiva went and taught Torah! What would a doctor say? They would say, “Rabbi Akiva is mentally retarded!” They would have brought a slew of psychiatrists and psychologists, and they would have said, “R’ Akiva has lost his mind, he’s emotionally imbalanced. He certainly knows the *halachah* of *pikuach nefesh* - why is he endangering his life?!” I am sure all the Rabbonim who are friends with those doctors would have come and written letters, in the name of all the organizations, that would have stated: “Rabbi Akiva is not doing what is proper to do. He’s not doing the *ratzon* of Hashem. The *ratzon* of Hashem now, is that no one should learn Torah not to endanger the lives of your wives, your kinderlach, your bobbies, your zeides, and your tatties and your mommies, and all your cousins.” I am sure they would have all said that - I have no doubt about it. But Rabbi Akiva did teach Torah and he was imprisoned.

Now, there was someone else who was in prison with Rabbi Akiva. They were two brothers - Papus and Lulianus. And Rabbi Akiva was jealous of them. (The Gemara in Ta’anis 18b explains that they showed a tremendous act of heroism and self-sacrifice after they stepped forward to take responsibility for killing the daughter of the Roman Emperor, although they never committed that crime. They wanted to protect the Jewish people from Roman retribution because the Jews were unjustly accused of killing her. They were executed by the Roman named Turyanus for their admission; as explained there by Rashi). So when Rabbi Akiva saw Papus and Lulianus in prison, he was jealous of them, because they heroically wanted to save the Jewish people from Roman onslaught. He looked at them and exclaimed, “You are *tzaddikim*!”

Famously, they told him that they were imprisoned for a “meaningless matter,” when in reality they were impressed with Rabbi

Akiva themselves. They said to Rabbi Akiva, “You were imprisoned for Torah! It was a *gezeirah* against Torah and you didn’t take the escape route! You demonstrated *gevurah* שאין כמותו!”

Now, we all know that the Gemara was not afraid to critique its rabbis. There was a famous rav at the time of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, who was part of the chain of its destruction, and the gemara said that his humility destroyed the Beis Hamikdash! The gemara didn’t cover up for people who it thought needed critique. The sages didn’t say, “Rabbi Akiva got carried away (with his public teaching) and decided to do something that wasn’t right. He endangered his life and the lives of others as well. He should not have done that.” No, no one mentions this. You don’t hear this side of the argument in the Gemara at all! Why not? Do you know why? Because when faced with a situation that threatens the Yiddishkeit, you have got to demonstrate *gevurah*!

When Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, wrote his pesakim, he wasn’t afraid that the whole world was against him. The whole world used to *shrey* and argue with him. And he just said, “This is what I hold. This is my strength. This is the *p’sak*.” Hakosh Boruch Hu should help us to gain our strength and build ourselves up and be *zoiche* to practice and continue the chain of Torah, and with this we will merit the true Kabolat HaTorah!

## THE BOTTOM LINE

A person cannot be fully committed to serving Hashem, doing mitzvos with passion, staying away from aveiros and learning Torah, without the middah of *gevurah*. This middah is equally necessary for those who embrace Yiddishkeit for the first time and those who toil to give a psak halacha. The middah of *gevurah* is also essential for working on improving one’s middos. In these last remaining days before the Yom Tov of Shavuot, I will bravely identify one area in which I want to use the middah of *gevurah* to change. It might be a weakness in performing a certain mitzvah, staying away from a particular aveirah, or even not wasting time that could be used productively. I will, bli neder, demonstrate a little more mesiras nefesh and *gevurah* in that specific area. In this zechus, IY”H, I will become more committed to Hashem, and be a stronger link in the chain of Torah. I will earn more sechar, and be *zoiche* to experience a true Kabalas haTorah!



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