



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוות דזעיר אנפין collections of
maamarim

given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Vayelech 5780

This week I remembered a lesson that I was taught by *Mori V'Rabi* the *Beis Yisrael zy"a*.

It came about as a result of an incident that took place with my father *z"l* (whose *yahrzeit*, the first night of *Sukkos* is drawing near), may these words be *l'iluy nishmaso*.

During the years that I spent in the presence of the *Ish Elokim Kadosh* the *Beis Yisrael zy"a*, he drew me close and guided me in every step of my life. He instructed me to go home at least once every few *Shabbosos* and *daven* together with my father and my grandfather, the Tolner Rebbe *zy"a*, in his little *shul* in Bayit Vegan. Even though I wanted to take advantage of every opportunity I had to spend *Shabbosos* with the *Beis Yisrael*, I followed his clear instructions and spent some *Shabbosos* in Bayit Vegan.

Once, when I davened in my grandfather's *shul*, he honored me with the *aliya* of *maftir*. Because I was such a fervent devoted *chasid* of the *Beis Yisrael*, I had taken on the *minhagim* and *nusach* of Gur. The *Gerrer minhag* is that the *brachos* of the *haftara* aren't recited with the *nigun* that is heard in so many communities. The *brachos* are simply said with no tune at all. That is how I said the *brachos* in my grandfather's *shul*.

This upset my father, and he scolded me after *davening*, for not respecting the *minhag hamakom*, and the *minhag* of my ancestors, which is also the widespread *minhag* in *Am Yisrael*. He added that while it's



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true that the *Beis Yisrael* doesn't know how to sing, because he wasn't blessed with that talent, I need to follow the *minhag ha'makom*.

A few days later, I was at my parents' house, and my father told me that he had gone to the *Beis Yisrael* to complain about my behavior. Upon hearing that, I was filled with trepidation as I anticipated the *psak* (strong rebuke) that I would hear from the Rebbe.

Later that same day, one of the *gabaim* told me that the *Beis Yisrael* summoned me to meet with him tomorrow at four AM. I fearfully entered the Rebbe's room, and the Rebbe chastised me very sharply. He said, "Haven't I spoken with you about this again and again? Haven't I explained how careful you must be with the *mitzva* of *kibud av*, for it is *chamura she'b'chamuros*, one of the most serious of all *mitzvos*."

He went on to say, "And what difference does it make if you say the *brachos* of the *haftara* according to the *minhag* of *Klal Yisrael*? Do you think that with such insignificant matters you build a *kesher* with me?" After that he continued to give me more and more *mussar*.

I stood before him, ashamed, and accepted his rebuke. After a few minutes, his demeanor changed, and he said with a bit of a smile, "Your father told me that I don't know how to sing, and that is in fact true!" He then laughed out loud and added that it is well known that the first Gerer Rebbe, the *Chidushei Ha'Rim zy"a*, actually *davened* that his descendants wouldn't be musically talented. He feared that they would be distracted by their involvement in music and spend less time learning Torah. He noted that his great-grandfather's prayers were answered, for none of the *Chidushei Ha'Rim's* descendants were talented singers or involved with music.

This story contains a very fundamental principle. A person must know what is *ikar* - primary, and what is *tafel* - subsidiary and secondary. We must never mistakenly turn something which is *tafel* into a great, fundamental *ikar*. Sometimes people, especially when they are young,



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have such fiery desire to follow the ways of *chasidus* that they make this mistake. This may lead them to *chas v'shalom* treat *kibud av v'eim* lightly even though it is one of the most serious *mitzvos*.

That mistaken approach can never succeed. Before approaching any topic, a person must define what is the *ikar* and what is *tafel*. Then, he can choose his actions wisely, guided by *derech hatorah* אכי"ר



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