



Adapted from the sefer במוצאי שבת a collection of maamarim on  
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

### Melave Malka Parshas Trumah 5761

The Torah commands us to construct the Aron Hakodesh out of wood, and "מבית ומחוץ תצפנו", to cover it inside and outside with gold. The Gemara (יומא ע"ב:), learns from this that, "כל תלמיד חכם שאין תוכו כגוון חיצונו", (Any Talmid Chacham, whose inside is not the same as his outside, is not a Talmid Chacham).

The Sfas Emes zy"ta, in his commentary on Maseches Yoma, wonders why the gemara did not fully match the description of the Talmid Chacham to that of the Aron Hakodesh. The Aron was gold both inside and outside. The parallel description should be, "Any Talmid chacham, whose inside is not like his outside, and whose outside is not like his inside, is not a Talmid Chacham". He resolves this discrepancy by explaining that "ובאמת צריך להיות צנוע שלא יכירו בו מבחוץ כל כך", (In truth, he should hide himself so that people observing his outside, will not fully realize who he is inside).

This lesson echoes many sources in Chazal and the Rishonim that emphasize the importance of צניעות, in our relationship to Torah. We must remember that the essential difference between Torah and other worldly wisdom. The Torah is the foundation of all creation and the purpose of the universe. The Zohar Hakadosh teaches that the entire Torah is "חד שמה קדישא", (one holy name). The Ramban explains that the countless permutations and numerical values of the letters in the Torah, all form names of Hashem. Everything is hidden in the Torah, the purpose of each creation, all aspects of Hashem's presence. Someone who understands the magnitude and depth of Torah realizes that a human being can only grasp the tiniest fraction of its content.



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Those who parade their Torah knowledge in every forum, denigrate the honor of Torah and the honor of Hashem, by treating Torah as they would treat worldly wisdom that human beings can master and utilize.

To the Baal Shem Tov zy”a, and those who follow his path in each generation, viewed the practice of hiding the true extent of one’s Torah knowledge, as fundamental in Avodas Hashem. They put great effort into concealing both their Torah knowledge and their deeds. As the Sfas Emes described it, their internal world was consistent with their external world, but their external world did not reveal the true extent of their internal wisdom and greatness.

The Yahrzeit of מו”ר הרה”ק הבית ישראל מגור זי”ע, comes out on the second of Adar. He was known throughout the world for his kedusha and tzidkus, and for his tremendous accomplishments in rebuilding the world of תורה ויראה after the war. At the same time, he did all that he could to hide his constant Torah learning, and mastery of Torah knowledge. Only a few individuals extrapolated his greatness from the snippets of wisdom that he revealed from time to time.

I would like to share an example that I saw with my own eyes. Once on Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Yisro 5736, during the “learning break” that is customary between Kabbolas Shabbos and Maariv, the rebbe sent someone to look for me. For some reason, it took him some time to find me. When he told me that the Rebbe had summoned me a while ago, I rushed up and immediately ran into the Rebbe’s inner room (that the chassidim called the “cabinet”). When I burst in, I interrupted the Rebbe who was deeply engrossed in a sefer. The Rebbe immediately closed the sefer, and put it on his bed. This discussion, the last that I merited to hear from the Rebbe zy”a, went on for some time. As we spoke, I glanced at the sefer. It was a new printing of the “Ktzos Hachoshen” with an index. The image of the Rebbe’s intense absorption in the Ktzos has never left me.



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Years earlier, a discussion that I had with the Bais Yisroel zy”a, led him to tell me a very complex “Maaracha”, in limud. The brilliance and clarity of his analysis astounded me. When the Rebbe saw this, he tapped me on the head and said, “You are impressed by a ‘shtikel lomdus’? (as if to say, what’s so special about that?). If I knew you would be so impressed, I wouldn’t have said it. The most important thing is D’veykus in Hashem Yisborach.”

We approach the Yahrzeit of Harav Hakadosh, the Pnei Menachem zy”a, who was taken from us suddenly on that bitter day, the seventeenth of Adar 5756. Even though he was famous as a Gaon, I can testify to the great effort he invested in masking his true greatness in Torah. He would even embarrass himself publicly and portray himself as an “empty vessel”.

One public speaker shared that the Rebbe once told him, “Let me give you some good advice. You speak to audiences, and chas v’shalom, this can lead you to arrogant thoughts. Adopt the following custom. When you quote pesukim or drashos of Chazal, mispronounce and mix up the quotations. The audience will think that you don’t have a clear grasp of the material, and this will save you from arrogance.

The Rebbe himself would intentionally mix up pesukim when he spoke, even though those who knew him could testify to his perfect recall of Tanach, Mishnayos, Talmud Bavli and Yerushalmi. Once, after taking on the leadership of Chasidus Gur, he addressed thousands of Gerer chassidim at a nationwide gathering. Throughout the drasha, each time he quoted a pasuk or a statement of Chazal, he read from a page of notes on the table. After the drasha, I saw that paper. It contained, not the quotations, but other material totally unrelated to the drasha. The Rebbe had pretended that without relying on notes, he wouldn’t have been able to quote those sources.

What can we say about the Mara D’asra, my grandfather zt”l, who utilized his cleverness to convince everyone who met him of his



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ignorance. He created the impression that he didn't even know Chumash or Mishna.

As a child, I opened one of his cabinets and found some old papers. They were documents of semicha that were given to him by the Geonim of Yerushalayim. Even though he was a young bochur, Rav Yosef Chaim Sonenfeld zt"l, the Av Beis Din of the Eida Chareidis, not only declared "Yoreh Yoreh, Yadin Yadin", but expressed his confidence that this young man will increase Torah and Tahara in Am Yisroel. Other Gedolei Yerushalayim described his bekus and brilliance in Torah as far beyond the norm for someone of his age.

I still see the image of his face when I approached him with those papers and asked about them. He turned white with embarrassment, as if I had caught him committing a shameful crime. He begged me to give him the documents and hurried off to hide them. He desperately tried to explain that the Rabbonim only praised him because his father Rav Dovid Mordechai zt"l, supported poor talmidei chachomim in Yerushalayim. They wanted to thank his father, so they wrote descriptions that had no connection to reality.

I had the opportunity to speak with old Yerushalmim who had learned with him in the Ohel Moshe yeshiva in the Old City. They said that his diligence and great accomplishments in Torah learning were the "talk of Yerushalayim", a city that suffered no shortage of Torah scholars.

Once, when my grandfather visited a certain town in Israel, he discovered that a mikva was pasul. Initially, he tried to get the Rav to notice the problem himself. Only when that failed, did he resort to showing the Rav what was wrong. The complex problem could only have been spotted by someone who understands the intricacies of Hilchos Mikvaos. When asked, my grandfather explained that since they had just built a mikva in his house, he had recently discovered these halachos for the first time.



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When they built the mikva in our beis medrash, my grandfather invited a top Posek to certify the mikva. During the inspection, my grandfather inadvertently revealed his expertise in the most complicated halachos of Mikvaos. The Rav told me that what amazed him more than this surprising mastery, was the fact that he knew my grandfather for years, yet never imagined that he was an expert in mikvaos.

These are only a few of countless examples. My grandfather's approach came to him through his predecessors in the Chernobyl dynasty. We should follow in their ways and hide our good deeds. At the very least, we must never "show off" our Torah knowledge, or allow arrogance to convince us that we are better than others.

True involvement in Torah, with awe and kedusha, trembling, humility, and **לעבודו בלב שלם ובנפש חפצה כל הימים** will enable us to draw close to Hashem Yisborach,



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