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**An Invaluable Lesson**

My dear bar mitzva boy, you have Nesanel ben Tsuar to thank. You are rightly concerned about the length of your sedra, a mammoth 176 pesukim, the longest single sedra in the whole Torah. But remember, many of these pesukim are repeats. Each of the nesi’im bring identical korbonos. It could have been a lot worse!

And who is to thank? Nesanel ben Tsuar, the nosi of shevet Yissocher. He was the second nosi to bring korbonos. Following the footsteps of shevet Yehuda’s Nachshon ben Aminodov, it must have been very tempting for him to do something different. And yet, he brought exactly the same as the first nosi and set the trend for all of the nesi’im.

This was an act of tremendous foresight and sensitivity and avoided the temptation of “keeping up with the Joneses”.

Let me share with you another example of extreme sensitivity.

We are all still mourning the passing of the legendary Rabbi Roberts ztl. An outstanding talmid chochom and role model. His late Rebbetzen was an equal partner in his avodas Hashem.

Rabbi Joey Grunfeld, a mechutan, once called Rabbi Roberts. The Rebbetzen answered and was delighted to tell Rabbi Grunfeld that one of her other children had just had a baby and he was the first person she was able to share her news with. Rabbi Grunfeld wished a warm mazal tov and asked when Rabbi Roberts would be home so he could call again. “He’s home”, replied the Rebbetzen, “but he’s learning and I don’t want to disturb him”.

Towards the very end of her life, Rebbetzen Roberts was in the Beenstock care home in Manchester. On one occasion, when Rabbi Roberts was there visiting her, he suggested they get some air in the garden. The Rebbetzen was frail and her walking unsteady. Nonetheless, despite her husband’s offer of support, she declined and walked unaided with her husband to a bench in the garden where they sat together.

The Rebbetzen explained to her husband that she declined his offer of support for a reason. “There are several almonohs here. Many widows who miss their husbands, and it would not be sensitive to walk together in this way”.

I once came across the following story from Rabbi Avi Lasdun. In the Mir in Poland, the authorities required the Mirrer Yeshiva students to keep their identification papers with them. On one night, five Yeshiva bochurim were walking back to their residences when they were accosted by two police officers who demanded they produce their identification papers.

Dealing with the local police was a matter of pikuach nefesh due to their corruption and virulent antisemitism. The bochurim responded that they had their papers at their residence, to which the officers said, “OK, we will go with you to your residence to inspect them.” The entire group of five bochurim and two officers went to the first residence, where three of the bochurim had their sleeping quarters.

After satisfying the police officers that their papers were in order, the officers announced that they would now escort the remaining two bochurim to their residence to inspect their papers. At this point, the first three bochurim stayed behind while the remaining two bochurim went with the police to produce their papers.

The next day, when Rav Yeruchem was told about the incident, he was utterly dismayed that the first group of three bochurim did not accompany their two chaveirim with the rogue policemen. Rav Yeruchem could not fathom, “How could you sleep last night knowing that your fellow students were at the mercy of these officers? It would be proper to close the Yeshiva for such insensitivity and failure to worry about your chaveirim!”

To the great masters of Mussar, displaying sensitivity and being a *Nosei B’ol Im Chaveiro*, worrying about and feeling the distress of a fellow Jew, was essential to their Jewish identity.

So, my dear bar mitzva boy, be grateful to Nesanel ben Tsuar. Not only has he aided your leining, but he has taught you, and all of us, an invaluable lesson.

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