



## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

# Of Scrolls and Scholars

THIS WEEK'S TORAH PORTION REFERS TO THE mitzvah of learning Torah, as well as the mitzvah to maintain reverence for Torah scholars. A Torah scroll from which we learn must be treated with great regard, and a sage who provides Torah guidance is to be revered.

But which of the two warrants more respect, the Torah scroll or the Torah scholar?

Participants in the local, early morning Dirshu program (yes—this is a plug!) recently came across an intriguing comment:

Rava said, "How foolish [most] people are, who stand before a Torah scroll and don't stand before a great man." (Talmud, Makkos 22b)

Rava explains the greatness of such a man: The true Torah sage reveals truths not

evident in a basic reading of the text.

Numerous commentaries challenge this. It seems to contradict another passage:

The question was asked: Must one stand for a Torah scroll? Rabbi Chilkiya, Rabbi Simone, and Rabbi Elazar said... "We stand up for those who learn it [to the point of mastery]; before [the Torah itself], all the more so!" (Talmud, Kiddushin 33b)

The first passage seems to imply that a Torah scholar is more deserving of respect than the Torah itself. But the second indicates that standing for the scroll is even more appropriate than standing for a scholar!

Among many suggested resolutions, one that sheds fascinating light on the very

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## PRACTICAL HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

SHMUEL SAID TO RAV YEHUDA, "SHARP ONE! DON'T BE A HOUSE WHERE INHERITANCES ARE SHIFTED." (TALMUD, BAVA BASRA 133B)

Disinheriting an halachic heir works, but *ein ru'ach Chachamim nochah heimenu*—the spirit of our Sages is not pleased by him. This opinion is codified by the Rambam (*Nachalos* 7:11) and *Shulchan Aruch* (C.M. 282).

Authorities point to all sorts of exceptions to, and loopholes in, this law.

- Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe* C.M. 2:50) rules that one may disinherit a son who has completely abandoned a Torah lifestyle.
- If someone's adult children act irresponsibly with their money, and he is concerned that they will waste their inheritance on gambling or other frivolous activity, he may disinherit them. (*Sefer HaTzava'os*, p. 6)
- The Talmud (K'subos 53a) explains that one may divert money to a daughter to improve her marriage prospects.
- *K'tzos haChoshen* (282:2) cites the *Tashbetz* (3:741), who rules that our Sages' negative

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## A RIDDLE FOR YOU

What begins sweet and ends bitter?  
(Hint: We perform a mitzvah with it.)

The answer will appear in our next issue.

LAST WEEK'S RIDDLE:

**Q** Who was allowed to perform the mitzvah of circumcision at night?

**A** *Minchas Chinuch* (Mitzvah 2) learns from the words of Rashi (B'reishis 17:23) that Avraham could have done his own circumcision at night. 🥂



with Rabbi Heinemann

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## PRACTICAL HALACHA

CONTINUED

attitude toward disinheriting halachic heirs does not apply if those heirs are provided with a significant share in the estate.

When it comes to disinheritance in favor of charity, generous charitable bequests are encouraged, to address the needs of the testator's soul.

The Talmud (K'subos 67b) records that Mar Ukva donated a considerable amount of charity during his lifetime. However, before he died, he gave away half of his worldly assets. He explained, "I am about to embark upon a long journey [the eternal afterlife], but the provisions I have set aside [charitable deeds] are insufficient!" This idea is developed at length in the Chafetz Chaim's work, *Ahavas Chessed*.

The later authorities differ regarding how much of a person's estate may be designated for charity instead of the halachic heirs. *Rama* (Y.D. 942:1) seems to permit donating an entire estate to charity. Rabbi Akiva Eiger, however, cites the view of the *Sh'iltos*, that one should not divert more than one-third of his estate to charity. *Aruch haShulchan* (Y.D. 249:1) rules that one may leave up to half of his estate to charity. It's possible that, if an estate is unusually large, one may leave a much larger percentage of his estate to charity, since the halachic heirs will nevertheless receive sufficient money.

Either way, not only are charitable estate gifts a non-issue, we are encouraged to leave some of our money to charity. Authorities write that supporting an institution that learns, and enables others to learn, Torah would be the biggest merit for a person's soul, and it should be on top of one's "gift list." 🍷

## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

THE HOFFMANS HAD A TOUGH TIME MAKING ends meet. They weren't able to afford anything in the way of luxuries or extras.

The one place they "splurged" was to provide Shabbos treats for their children. Every Friday, Mr. Hoffman would take along one of the children to pick out a pastry for Shabbos from the local grocer.

One Friday, Mrs. Hoffman called over Zev, whose turn it was to go that week. She told him that, even though he could go with his father to the store, he shouldn't ask for a pastry. The past couple of weeks had been harder than normal for his father, and there just was no money for a treat.

At the store, Zev couldn't keep his eyes off of the cake display. Mr. Hoffman noticed



**SUMMER BREAK** The Kollel will be on recess

from midday Sunday, August 13 till Tuesday night, August 29.

## THIS WEEK IN JEWISH HISTORY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

On **20 Av, 5628 (1868)**, Baron James Mayer de Rothschild of Paris bought the wine estate Chateau Lafite in the Bordeaux region of France, renaming it Chateau Lafite Rothschild—one of the most expensive brands of wine in the world, then and now. The wine was ranked a prestigious "First Growth" at the 1855 *Exposition Universelle de Paris*—one of only four to be awarded that title. The average bottle currently fetches around \$900; their most expensive was a 1787 bottle, thought to have belonged to Thomas Jefferson (a known patron), which sold for \$156,000. Baron Rothschild's great-grandson, Eric de Rothschild, is the current owner. As an aside, the family sold the Baron's Paris residence, Hôtel Rothschild, to the United States Government in 1950; it is now part of the American Embassy. 🍷

### Scrolls and Scholars CONTINUED

nature and goal of Torah scholarship is offered by Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory.

Rav Moshe introduces his theory by raising a basic question about Rava's remark. Rava referred to non-standers as "foolish." Why comment on their lack of intelligence, rather than the more objective, halachic aspect of their disrespect? Why didn't Rava call them out for shirking their obligation to stand for sages?

Rav Moshe infers that these "fools" did, in fact, stand. They were not technically "sinners." But Rava discerned a deficiency in their attitude.

In order to grasp just what it was that Rava deemed so foolish, we must ponder for a moment just what we honor when we stand for a Torah scholar. Does the Torah he has absorbed render him a "walking Torah," a container holding vast Torah content? Are we, in essence, standing for the Torah contained within him? Or does something about the sage himself warrant our respect?

Rav Moshe explains, and actually rules, that there is no mitzvah to stand for a brilliant scholar who has simply memorized all of Torah. To warrant our respect requires more than absorbing an enormous amount

of data. The bearer of that information must also utilize the Torah to *expand* the Torah. He must analyze, compare, contrast, and further develop Torah.

of data. The bearer of that information must also utilize the Torah to *expand* the Torah. He must analyze, compare, contrast, and further develop Torah.

The subjects of Rava's criticism revered the text, and they stood for a Torah scroll. They also applauded mastery of the text, and they stood for Torah scholars. But they failed to comprehend the true value of the scholars for whom they stood. Rava detected a deficiency in their grasp as to just what elevates the Torah sage to his position of stature. They didn't appreciate the true nature, and invaluable contributions, of Torah scholars. That, explains Rav Moshe, was "foolishness."

Which is greater? Certainly the Torah scroll reigns supreme—hence the lesson of the second Talmudic passage above. But the Torah cannot be understood without the input of the Sages. It's not just their immense knowledge that we venerate, but their perspectives, interpretations, and derivations. And, as such, it is foolish to "undervalue" the *Talmid Chochom*—and hence the lesson of our first passage. With the perfect example of Rav Moshe himself to open our eyes, we are left with no contradiction!

May we merit to always respect and fully appreciate our sacred scrolls and sagacious scholars! 🍷

As the poor man turned to move away, Mr. Hoffman had second thoughts.

"Wait!"

Mr. Hoffman pushed the pastry into the startled man's hands and said, "A Shabbos treat for you. Enjoy."

Mr. Hoffman smiled down at his son, and Zev smiled back up at his father. Happily they walked home together, content with their (Erev) Shabbos treat. 🍷