

EC

Eternal Connections

BUILDING
OLAM HABA AWARENESS

Mitzvos are opportunities

I Won't Have the Merit to See Him

Whenever he would visit Eretz Yisrael, Rav Yaakov Bender would grab the chance to visit his cousin, Rebbetzin Ahuva Berman, daughter of the Steipler. Rebbetzin Berman was an exceptional person, whose *emunah*, *middos*, and *yiras Shamayim* were evident in each word she spoke.

When she passed away, Rabbi Bender was *menacheim* her son, Rav Chaim Peretz Berman, Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Ponovezh. Rabbi Berman shared that the week before her *petirah*, his mother had expressed her desire to visit her son, Rav Chanoch. Rav Chanoch suffered from a debilitating illness, which left him weakened and bent over and unable to come see his mother himself.

Rav Chaim Peretz tried to explain to his mother that in her condition it would be unwise to go anywhere, but she insisted, making it clear that she knew exactly what her situation was – and that was precisely why she wanted to visit her son.

She desperately wanted to see him because, she explained, “In *Yenneh Velt*, I probably won't have the merit.”

Rebbetzin Berman was a daughter, wife, sister and mother of *gedolim*, a woman who had cared for an unwell husband and buried children, a *tzaddekes* from a previous generation. Yet because Rav Chanoch was a *ba'al yissurim*, someone who withstood great suffering and maintained his exalted spirit despite his life's challenges, she wasn't sure she would be in his realm in the World of Truth.

In fact, Rav Shmuel Berenbaum tells us that Yaakov Avinu, no stranger to hardship himself, looked at his son Yosef Hatzaddik this way. In Parshas Vayigash, Yaakov says (*Bereishis 45:28*), “*Rav od Yosef b'nei chai eilchah v'erenu b'terem amus*,” – Enough! My son Yosef is still alive. I will go see him before I die.” Rav Shmuel explains that Yaakov added the words “before I die” because he felt that Yosef, who had faced and withstood great challenges in his life, would rise to a very high level in the Next World. “Therefore, I want to see him now, *before* I die, when it is still possible, for in the Next World, he may merit to be in a different place than I.”

Great people live with the reality of the Next World before them and the knowledge that every experience in this world is

only given to us to pave the way for that eternal life.

(Rav Yaakov Bender on Chumash, volume 2, Artscroll Publications, pages 78-79)

Take This Home

When we look at greatness in terms of the Next World, we will view and interact with others differently. Try putting on Olam Haba glasses for the rest of the day and see if it helps give you newfound respect for someone you encounter.

In Short

Rav Yechezkel Levenstein related the following to Rav Nachman Nachamchik:

“Yesterday, I visited the cemetery, and all I saw were stones...no packages...no one sends packages there. Here in This World, one can find a way to live. One day is difficult, the next day is better – but you can find a way to make it through This World. But there... in *Olam Haba*...you are in need of packages – packages of *mitzvos* – for without these packages, you are just left with bare stones

(Reb Chatzkel, Rabbi Yitzchak Kasnett, Artscroll Publications, pp. 282-283).

It Happened to Me!

My Olam Haba Moment

I heard a beautiful thought related to Purim. Achashveirosh's party was characterized by *gashmiyus* to the extreme, and this is where Klal Yisrael succumbed to the temptation that resulted in the decree for their annihilation. Interestingly, the *mitzvos* of Purim seem to revolve around *gashmiyus*. The lesson for us is to take the *gashmiyus* and elevate it to *ruchmiyus*. We need to learn to use it in the right measure, at the right time, as a way to elevate ourselves and connect to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And indeed, as I sat at the Purim *seudah* this year, replete with wine and meat, surrounded by the overflow of the day's *shalach manos*, I watched as the participants rose to beautiful heights in their quest for closeness to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His Torah. Overwhelming *gashmiyus* seems to be one of the great challenges of our generation, but Purim done right is proof that we can use it to rise to the highest heights!

P.F.

לע"נ אברהם יצחק בן חיים צבי

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