

Good Shabbos Everyone. A sad mood prevailed in the home of Rav Elayahu Dessler in the Jewish month of Kislev, 1951. His rebitzin (wife) had passed away the Friday night before and now he was sorrowfully preparing for his first Shabbos alone. An endless flow of people had come to be menachem avel (comfort the mourner) Rav Dessler during the week of shivah. He was the revered Mashgiach of the Ponevezher Yeshiva in Bnei Brak and was known throughout the Torah world for his piety and the depth of his mussar thoughts (words of rebuke).

The Chazon Ish, Rav Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz (1878-1953) of blessed memory, had gone so far as to refer to Rav Dessler as the gadol hador in kochos hanefesh, the generation's leader in the area of self restraint. Now, an hour before Shabbos, the apartment was nearly empty.

One of Rav Dessler's primary talmidim-students was setting the Shabbos table. As the tablecloth, cutlery, challos, Kiddush cup and Shabbos candles were set on the table, Rav Dessler whispered to his talmid-student, "Put back that Kiddush Cup and take out the other one that is on the shelf."

The talmid was surprised. It seemed like such a mundane matter. What difference did it make what kiddish cup would be used. The talmid knew that this was not the time to ask his rebbi to explain. Nevertheless, he remained curious. He knew that there was a reason for anything his rebbi did. He was the quintessential exacting person and halachic Jew, and he had a rationale for every action. After the shabbos meal the talmid asked the question.

Rav Dessler told the following story. Years later Dayan Ehrentreu heard it from the talmid. Some history is in order. At the bequest of Rav David Dryan, the shochet in Gateshead, England, Rav Dessler had initially come to that city in Northern England to found the famous kollel, which he led from 1941 until 1948.

When the Ponevezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (1886-1969) met Rav Dessler on one of his fundraising trips to England, he was so impressed that in 1946, when the Mashgiach (Principal) of the Ponevezh yeshiva, Rav Abba Grosbard, passed away, he offered the position to Rav Dessler.

At that time Rav Dessler felt that his many responsibilities in England did not permit him to leave, but shortly after Pesach in 1949, the Desslers indeed settled in Bnei Brak, and he assumed the position as Mashgiach of the yeshiva.

For all the years the Desslers had been married, since the spring of 1920, Rav Dessler always made Kiddush on a kiddish cup that he and his wife had received as a wedding gift from Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky (1863-1940), who had received the kiddish cup as a wedding present from Rav Yisrael (Lipkin) Salanter (1809-1883), Rav Chaim Ozer's first wife's grandfather.

On their first Shabbos in Bnei Brak, Rav Dessler used a different kiddish cup. Noticing that he had not used the familiar family kiddish cup, the rebbetzin asked him about it. Rav Dessler explained that because they now lived in Bnei Brak whose spiritual guide was the Chazon Ish, it was proper to follow his halachic opinions. According to him, a Kiddush kiddish cup had to be larger than the one they had used until now. Rav Dessler therefore wanted to use the larger kiddish cup.

The rebbetzin respectfully disagreed. She maintained that if their kiddish cup had been used by such gedolei hador (Torah giants of a generation) as Rav Yisrael Salanter and Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky, then it should be good enough for them, as well. Rav Dessler acquiesced, and from then on until she passed away, he used the family kiddish cup he had used in England. Only now, after her passing, did Rav Dessler begin to abide by the ruling of the Chazon Ish, so as not to act disrespectfully to his wife. (from, Rav Paysach Krohn, p. 152 Reflections Of The Maggid)

We read about such a concept in this week's Torah portion, which describes at length the preparations that Avrohom Avinu took to find a suitable burial plot for his wife Sorah who unfortunately had predeceased him. It has been taught that "The actions of the Patriarchs are an example to their descendants." This means to say that we can study the ways of the Avos - Patriarchs to learn the proper behavior in life. Thus we learn from Avrohom Avinu how important it is to honor one's wife.

When describing the extent to which a man must honor his wife, the Sages tell us, "one must honor his wife more than he honors his own body." (Yevamos 62b) This means to say that a Jewish husband is obligated to do whatever he can to honor his wife, even if it causes his physical discomfort! For example, if it is cold outside and a wife asks her husband to bring something in from outside, even if it could wait until the next morning, a man is obligated to honor his wife and bring in the object at that time, instead of waiting until day time when it would be warmer.

By remembering the story of Rav Dessler and by learning from the example of Avrohom Avinu, we will all merit to live happier, more fulfilled and peaceful lives. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**

A Refuah Shleimah to Shusha Malka bas Golda "Anyone who brings merit to the masses, no wrongdoing will come into his hands."