

Good Shabbos Everyone. Sitting at his father's hospital bed, Rabbi Shlomo Gissinger waited patiently. His father was stirring, showing signs of awakening from his restless sleep. Perhaps he would wake up feeling stronger. Perhaps today, the lingering illness would finally loosen its grip and enable him to embark on the road to recovery.

The bustling entrance of a nurse, who was pushing a squeaky-wheeled medicine cart into the room, roused the patient out of his last moment of sleep. She pushed past both the father and son to the snoring man occupying the bed on the far side of the room.

Downstate Medical Center - a busy urban hospital in a run-down Brooklyn neighborhood - offered little in the way of peace and quiet. Rabbi Gissinger's father woke up fully. His eyes lost their cloud of sleepy disorientation and lit up with happiness at the familiar sight of his son. He cleared his groggy voice as if preparing to make an important announcement. "I want you to do something for me," he stated. "I want you to go to your rebbi, Rav Pam, and ask him to come visit me here. I feel that if he would come and give me a brachah - blessing, I would get better."

The younger Rabbi Gissinger had been a talmid-student at Yeshivah Torah Vodas for many years, and he had built a close, warm relationship with Rav Pam, his rebbi and Rosh Yeshivah. Nonetheless, his father's request would not be simple to fulfill. How could he ask the revered talmid chacham to make the arduous trip to the hospital? Rav Pam's days were filled from beginning to end with learning and teaching. His office and his home were both magnets for Jews from all over the world who sought to benefit from just a spark of his wisdom, or to have their worries soothed with the balm of his wise and kindhearted words. A trip to Downstate seemed a terrible imposition. Perhaps his father would forget about this idea.

Rabbi Gissinger began speaking to him about a different subject, and nothing more was said about Rav Pam's visit. That is, until the next day. "Nu? Have you spoken to Rav Pam yet?" his father asked expectantly. "What did he say?" Clearly, this was a desire that would not soon be forgotten. It was obviously something that had come from deep within his father's heart, and Rabbi Gissinger knew he had no choice but to try to fulfill it.

The next day, upon returning to yeshivah, he found Rav Pam in his office. The rebbe invited his talmid to take a seat and discuss what was on his mind. "My father is a patient at Downstate Medical Center," Rabbi Gissinger explained. "He asked if it would be possible for Rebbe to come visit him there."

"I would love to visit your father in the hospital," Rav Pam replied. "But I'm sorry to say that I cannot, because I'm a Kohen. (A Kohen is bound by special rules of ritual purity that prohibit him from being in the same building as a dead body). My own relative called recently and asked me to visit him in the hospital, and I had to say no to him."

But what Rav Pam said next, typified his greatness. He gazed down at his desk, as if searching there for an idea. At last, he looked up at Rabbi Gissinger. "Is there a window in your father's hospital room?" he asked. "Yes."

"Does your father have the ability to get to the window?" "I think so." "Wonderful!" said Rav Pam with the excitement of someone who has just made a remarkable discovery. "I have a plan. At 2 p.m. on Tuesday, bring your father to the window and I will be right outside on the street across from his room. I'll look up at his window and wave to him and give him a brachah. That way, I can fulfill your father's request."

That Tuesday, at precisely 2 p.m., Rabbi Gissinger helped his father out of bed and make his way to the window of his hospital room. Standing out on the street, many stories down, was the great Rosh Yeshivah, who was looking directly at the window, waving and smiling and uttering a berachah for the patient's recovery.

Despite the windowpane and the distance between them, Rabbi Gissinger's father basked in the warmth of Rav Pam's presence. Rabbi Gissinger testified that shortly after Rav Pam's visit, his father's condition began to improve. He had finally obtained a healing dose of the only medicine that could really help him. Rav Pam's love of chesed motivated him to find a way to help another Jew. Rav Pam's show of chesed motivated Rabbi Gissinger's father to have the will to be better.

In the end of this week's parsha, the Torah tells how Moshe Rabeinu has his assistant Yehoshua stand by him. Rashi explains that it was the last day of Moshe's life and he wanted to give credence to Yehoshua, who would assume the leadership of the Bnai Yisroel after Moshe's death.

In a sense, Moshe was "grooming" Yehoshua to take the lead. Yehoshua would be the leader in the next generation. It is from this point in history, which began the process which continues until today. Namely, every generation has its Tzadikim, righteous leaders.

We believe that our great Rabbis are characterized by their elevated midos - character traits. Nobody is perfect; not even the greatest Tzadik, as the verse in Koheles tells us, "For there is no man so wholly righteous on earth that he [always] does good and never sins." (7:20) In any case, we must chose leaders for ourselves from among the most righteous, such as Rabbi Pam, of blessed memory. As we saw from the story above, Rabbi Pam personified the midah - character trait of Chesed - Kindness, which we can all emulate in the coming year. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**