

The Saga of Heroic Children: Shlomo Zalman Teichman

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoach Teller

In this class, Rabbi Teller explores the Chassidic world of Munkatch. He discusses the period after WWI when the city was under Czechoslovakian rule. Munkatch had over 30,000 Jews with more than 35 *batei midrashim*. It was under the tight control of the famed Rebbe, the Minchas Elazar, who was born in 1871 and served as Rebbe from 1913 to 1936. The Rebbe was an independent, fiery, zealous, figure. Even the gentiles in the area respected him.

Munkatch was a distinctly Jewish city. On *erev Shabbat* all the stores closed, even the non-Jewish ones. The gentiles saw no point in leaving their stores open because who would buy from them? About 10 minutes before candle lighting, a shofar was sounded to indicate that Shabbat was coming. Ten minutes before Shabbat actually began, the *shofar* would be blown again to remind the bakers to insert all the *cholent* pots into the ovens. The *cholent* would keep warm until midday the next day when the people came to pick up their food. Every respectable Jew had a charity box in his home with the proceeds earmarked for Kollel Munkatch in Eretz Yisrael. In Czechoslovakia, the period after WWI was relatively tranquil. Jews prospered and antisemitism was almost nonexistent. This was in stark contrast to their fellow Jews in Poland and the Ukraine, who suffered constantly from rabid antisemitism. The Talmud Torah in Munkatch only taught Jewish subjects. The boys attended public school either in the morning or afternoon where they got their secular education. Older boys attended the yeshiva where they were required to master 50-60 *blatt Gemara* each semester. Life in Jewish Munkatch was peaceful till 1938 when Hungary gained control of the region.

Rabbi Teller begins telling the story of Shlomo Zalman Teichman, a young boy born and bred in Munkatch. Shlomo Zalman's grandfather was Berish Teichman, a local hero and saint and one of the largest grain distributors in Europe. Family business meetings would take place *Motzai Shabbat* in the home of Shlomo Zalman's father, Shmuel. Little Shlomo Zalman would hide under the table and listen

to the going ons. Berish Teichman was an incredibly hospitable individual. In shul, Friday night, he would mastermind the placement of all the guests. First he would allocate guests to go home with his sons and sons-in-law. Then he would invite the remaining people, sometimes numbering over 80 guests, to his home where he would treat them to a feast that he himself had helped prepare. He would never eat meat unless he had ten men who would partake of the meal with him so they could *bentch mezuman* with Hashem's full name. He would not eat at all unless there were at least 3 men that would join him. He would travel often by rail on business and then he wouldn't eat unless he could share his food with another hungry person. That is the kind of magnanimity and philanthropy Shlomo Zalman observed in his grandfather.

Initially, when WWII broke out it did not affect the Jews of Munkatch. However conditions worsened under the Hungarians when they drafted all able bodied Jewish men into the army. They were assigned monotonous and dangerous work such as clearing mines. When Shmuel Teichman was drafted, he realized his life would be best saved if he became a tailor. Therefore he volunteered to do needlework for the army. When the Hungarians decided they needed more soldiers at the front to assist the Russians, Shmuel Teichman realized his days as a tailor were over. He jumped off the train heading for battle and managed to hide in Budapest till the end of the war.

With his father gone, 13 year old Shlomo Zalman, the oldest son, assumed the leadership of the family taking care of his sister and four younger brothers by bartering food and other supplies. In March 1944, the Nazis invaded Hungary. Although Hungary was an ally of Germany, the Germans were irked that the Hungarians weren't competent enough to destroy their own Jews. Although they were losing troops on all fronts, the Germans could not give up their all important war against the Jews. On the second day of Pesach, the Nazis evicted the Teichmans from their homes. They were given a few scant moments to gather their possessions and then were driven to the ghetto where they moved in with their uncle. About a dozen people were crammed together

in a room not much larger than a closet. When the Nazis finished clearing the entire area of Munkatch and its surrounding villages they herded the unsuspecting Jews onto trains bound for Auschwitz. Upon arrival, the Teichmans were separated. Shlomo Zalman stood alone with one brother as a mysterious man approached them. He asked how old they were. When Shlomo Zalman replied that he was 16 and his brother three years younger, the man said, "No, your 19 and he's 18." That saved them from initial destruction. Mengele had only one question for the Jews who lined up, "How old are you?"

Seventy thousand members of the Teichman family were sent to the ovens. Shlomo Zalman and his five brothers survived. Their existence in Auschwitz consisted of standing for Appel and doing cleanup duty in the camp. The Germans made it their business to scatter paper and strands of hair so they would have to work hard. If so much as one hair was left on the ground, there would be crushing of skulls and whipping of backs. Shlomo Zalman learned at a very young age that a German armed with a weapon would never give a Jew a second chance.

After 10 days in Auschwitz they were loaded on to trains and sent to a concentration camp on the border of the Warsaw ghetto. During the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in April 1943, the Germans set the ghetto ablaze. Many of the buildings were charred beyond recognition. Shlomo Zalman and his friends were ordered to remove the bricks from these buildings with a hammer and chisel. They were to take off the concrete and then scour the black stains from the flames with their bare hands. The bricks were then placed on pallets and sent back to Germany.

With Russia gaining an upper hand, the Germans decided to move forward away from Warsaw. The Jews were told they were being sent to a different place and were asked how they wanted to be transported. Those who said they wanted to go by truck or train were immediately killed. The rest were marched on foot to the train station where they were transported to another camp.

Ignorance Causes Improper Speech Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Beinish Ginsburg

Rav Orlowek points out that when parents send their child away to a dorm for high school they must figure in visiting costs as part of tuition costs. Rav Wolbe adds that when the child comes home for a visit, parents must show him extra warmth and how much he means to them. Sometimes a father could be the worst study partner for his son. There's the pressure of wanting one's son to reach the highest level which adds tension and leaves the child with a negative impression of learning. Rav Shmuel Auerbach writes how he remembers the joy his father had when they learned together. Rav Orlowek encourages father to make learning time with

their son a pleasant experience. Offer to end five minutes early so that they leave on a pleasant note instead of trying to pack in those last moments. In the long run the positive feeling the child gets will be worth a lot more.

The Chofetz Chaim writes that *loshon hara* is a tragic sin that a Jew could unwittingly violate thousands of times in his lifetime. Repeating this seemingly small *aveirah* over and over again turns it into something gargantuan. For example, if a person isn't careful and speaks 4 or 5 words of *loshon hara* a day it can amount to over 1000 prohibitions in a year. Just as every word of Torah is a *mitzvah* every word of

loshon hara is a sin. If a person continues speaking *loshon hara* his whole life he can accrue thousands of *aveirot*.

How did the sin of *loshon hara* become so disregarded? The Chofetz Chaim offers several reasons for this. Many unlearned people are ignorant of the basic laws of *loshon hara*. They don't realize that it is prohibited even if it's true. Those who are more learned may know all this but the *yetzer hara* deceives them in other ways. While some are ignorant of the basics of the law, some are missing the nuances.

Interest and Heter Iska Part I

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

While lending with interest to a non-Jew is permitted, the Torah obligates every Jew to lend money to another Jew without interest. The prohibition applies not only to money but to any benefit the lender might accrue from the borrower. This might include a favor, a job, or any type of help the borrower would not normally offer. It also includes greeting one's creditor in the street, when one normally wouldn't greet him. The prohibition of *ribbis* (interest) applies both to the creditor and the debtor and it can come up in a number of ways. The simplest way is demanding one's debt to be repaid with interest. This is *ribbis d'oraysa*. Another type of interest arises from a business transaction. A third type is when produce is swapped for produce. For example, if the price of wheat goes up between the time one lent it and gave it back

so that now the wheat is worth more, that would be interest. A fourth type of interest is demanding a fine if a debt was not paid in time. The last 3 types of interest are *d'rabanun*. Where the interest charged was *d'oraysa* it must be returned. Where it was *d'rabanun* the *beit din* can't force the lender to give back the interest. He certainly should if he wants to repent.

Ribbus kezuzza (fixed interest) is *d'oraysa* and must be returned. Chazal strongly denounce someone who takes interest. He does not merit a portion in *olam habah* and it is as if he denies the Exodus of Egypt. There are two situations where a problem of interest may arise in a business transaction. If I want to buy merchandise and I make an advance payment to secure the price, I am paying today's price

for wheat when it may go up tomorrow. The supplier delivers it to me when I need it although its value may fluctuate. Advancing money is like a loan. If the price of wheat goes up, it's interest on the loan. A second type of problem is buying on credit. For example, a supplier supplies me with 100 tons of wheat today and I only pay in a month's time. However the supplier demands extra payment from the buyer for the privilege of paying later. That's interest.

The sages introduced the concept of *heter iska* to overcome interest problems. Everyone wants time and value for their money and *chazal* understood this. If the seller quotes a price and the buyer offers to pay cash can the seller give him a discount? Some opinions allow it and some don't.