

BADERECH
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Everything

The Rebbe Chaim Halberstam, the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz, zy'a, was a remarkable *tzadik* and mystic, renowned for his Torah genius, righteousness and charitable ways. He never went to sleep at night with an extra *peruta* in his home; every penny would go to help those in need.

A highlight of the year in Sanz was the Motzai Simchas Torah *tish*, where the Rebbe had an unusual *minhag* considered to be a *segulah* for wealth: distributing apples by throwing them to the chasidim. While it may have seemed foreign to outsiders, to members of the Chasidic court, the apple throwing was a special event highlighting the Rebbe's mystical powers.

Over the years, word spread of the curious minhag, as well as the stories of miraculous financial salvations that came in the wake of catching an apple. Jews came from far and wide for the chance at receiving the Rebbe's blessing, to the point that overcrowding and hype undermined the solemnity of the gathering. Eventually, over-aggressive pushing, jostling and shouting turned the 'apple *tish*' into a dangerous event.

The Rebbe's inner circle, including his son and Gabbaim, were concerned with both the disturbing public appearance of such a fiasco, as well as the spiritually detrimental behavior of some of those desperate to grab the blessed apple. As a result, the Rebbe's confidants advocated that the apple tish be cancelled; the risk of people's physical safety was itself not worth it anymore. The Rebbe however, was not willing to forego the *segulah* and the special opportunity to bless needy petitioners with *parnassah*.

However, the Rebbe came up with some new ground-rules to eliminate the aggressive behavior: one night he announced that instead of being blessed with wealth, anyone who pushed another person in order to catch an apple would not be blessed, but would instead experience ten years of poverty. The new regulation was effective. When the Rebbe threw the apples, no one moved, but only raised their hands high in the air hoping to catch one; all the chassidim glanced around afraid of accidentally pushing someone and being punished with a decade of poverty.

Suddenly, to everyone's surprise, one of the *ziknei ha-eida,* the elderly chasidim of the Divrei Chaim, began pushing and shoving his way through the crowd to the front in order to grab an apple. The chasidim and visitors were aghast. Wasn't he afraid of the Rebbe's decree? The Gabbai whispered at him incredulously: "Don't you know that ten years of poverty will be decreed upon you?"

The *alter yid* replied with the sweetest of *temimus,* sincerity and simple faith: "Yes! *Halevai!* I'm looking forward to those ten

years of poverty! So what if I'll be poor — at my age, ten more years is a huge bracha!"

~

"And Avraham was *zakein, ba ba-yamim* — old advanced in days — and Hashem blessed Avraham *bakol,* with everything" (Bereishis, 24:1).

Forty years earlier in the narrative, in Parshas Vayeira, the Torah tells us, "Avraham and Sarah were old, *ba'im ba-yamim*" (18:11). The Lubavitcher Rebbe explained that the repetition of *ba ba-yamim* in our sedra emphasizes that forty years later, despite their advanced age, our grandparents Avraham and Sarah were still *ba ba-yamim,* "immersed in daily life", filled with *simchas ha-chayim,* still engaged and involved in day-to-day chores and meaningful projects; they were filled with energy and zest for life.

The Sfas Emes was known to point out the difference between *arichus shanim,* 'long years', and *arichus yamim,* 'long and full days'. There are people who are blessed with long lives, and there are those who have length and depth to their days. While the Sefas Emes himself did not attain *arichas shanim,* leaving the world at the young age of fifty-eight (in 1905), the *tzadik* did have great *arichas yamim,* overflowing with awe-inspiring accomplishments. He was a living model of his own teaching, showing us how to make the most of each day, to extract the potential and unique opportunity of each hour and moment, to live life to its fullest.

In Midrash Rabbah, Rebbi Levi suggests that at this point, Avraham had completed the major tests of his life and was able to enjoy *nachas* and some much deserved peace in his advanced age. Avraham merited to experience the blessing of a full life, completion, satisfaction, and most of all, *temimus,* the crowning achievement of a lifetime of *avodas Hashem:* "And Avram was ninety-nine years old, and Hashem appeared to Avram and said to him, "I am the Almighty G-d; walk before Me and be *tamim, whole*. And I will place My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you very greatly" (Bereishis, 17:1-2).

Temimus, simple, sincere, wholehearted living, forms the backbone of Jewish practice. It is the foundational touchstone of the pathway of righteousness. When we appreciate every moment, strive to make the most of every day, and know that whatever it is that we have, then we are by definition blessed with "everything", *Bakol.*

May we be blessed with meaningful days and many long happy and healthy years of living with *temimus* and simple faith. And may we have success with our *parnassah* and be "multiplied greatly" — without having to push anyone for an 'apple'!

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