

Love For Torah

Love for Torah, has been the hallmark of many a great Torah leader. Indeed, it is something we have come to expect. How often do we hear or read an episode concerning a "regular" Jew, a simple, devout Jew, not a Rosh Yeshivah, whose love for Torah is overwhelming? I would like to take this opportunity to share with the reader a few brief narratives about such "regular" Jews. After World War II, those Jews who were fortunate enough to survive the Holocaust were placed in DP (Displaced Persons) camps. Soldiers from the United States army were there to attend to the basic necessities of these survivors. Rabbi Goldman was an observant Jewish chaplain who went out of his way to provide for the needs of his brethren. One of his functions as chaplain was to determine each survivor's most urgent needs. He would mount an army truck and with the help of a megaphone, instruct the people to line up. The survivors would then file past the truck and tell Rabbi Goldman what they required.

One of those who stood on line was a Mr. Schwartz, a frail, battered survivor of the Auschwitz concentration camp. When his turn came, he looked up at the chaplain and said, "I need a Gemora Bava Kama."

Rabbi Goldman did not believe what he was hearing. He looked at Mr. Schwartz and said in a kind, soothing voice, "I am here to try to get you clothing, medical supplies - whatever you need to become healthy again. So, now how can I help you?"

Mr. Schwartz looked up and responded, "Let me explain my immediate needs to you. Five and a half years ago, I was studying Meseches Bava Kama. Then the Nazis came and destroyed Jewish life as we knew it, sending me away to the camps. I have not seen a Gemora since that day. Now, Baruch Hashem, with the help of the Almighty, I am free to study Torah again. I want to resume my learning. Trust me, what I need most is a Gemora. Please help me to obtain it."

Rabbi Goldman could not believe his ears. Five and a half years in the Nazi purgatory, and all this man wanted was a Gemora. He would do whatever he could to find a Gemora for Mr. Schwartz. He succeeded in locating an old Meseches Bava Kama among the contents of a Hebrew library dumped by the Nazis. Words cannot describe how Mr. Schwartz's eyes lit up, as five and a half years of misery, torment and longing - for freedom to learn Torah, to live as a Jew should live - all came to a climax when Rabbi Goldman handed him the Gemora.