



Self Sacrifice - A Lesson to All

20 Menachem Av, 5735-1975

He put at risk his whole way of life, his own Torah study and his own performance of Mitzvos, in order to help another Jew. Among them were those who needed instruction in the simplest matters of Yiddishkeit. And, in fact, he was imprisoned for these activities – and in captivity he was not able to study Torah or practice Mitzvos properly.

And although, “if one is unable to perform a Mitzvah, he is exempt” the Jerusalem Talmud explains that he is only exempt, but the fact is, he has not performed the Mitzvah.

And he knew this beforehand: That his efforts for the highest standard of Kosher food, flour for Passover, etc., made it likely, and in fact, ensured, that he would be imprisoned and eventually that he would pass away there. And that is what actually happened. – It did disrupt his personal Torah learning, and his personal performance of Mitzvot. He was not able to fulfill certain Mitzvos in captivity. Nevertheless, my father did not stop; he continued his efforts tirelessly.

And this is the lesson to be learned from this Yahrzeit: When we contemplate that he was able to sit quietly, study Torah and perform Mitzvot, to answer Halachic questions, teach Torah, and guide all who would come to him, or to simply lead his community, for whom he was responsible.

Notwithstanding all this, he traveled to Moscow, the capitol, and made a tumult there about the situations in several cities and regions. He didn't consider waiting until someone would come to his home with a question, or ask to be taught. Instead, he encouraged and inspired people to come on their own, to ask and learn. And all of this was placing his life in mortal danger, and even more so, he was endangering his spiritual life.

And as mentioned several times, the Talmud states regarding the cities of refuge, “you shall live in them – one must give a person his livelihood.” If a person is exiled, his teacher is sent there along with him. In other words, if a Torah scholar is sent into a city with no ability to study Torah, it is considered a form of death.

And in Jewish law, a second Jew must go to the city of refuge to be with him – “we exile his teacher along with him.”



And that was exactly how his exile was – he was exiled without any books, and needless to say, without anyone with whom he could study Torah, neither the revealed parts nor Chassidus nor Kabbala – the story is well-known.

This is a practical lesson for every person how one must spread Judaism even to the farthest corner, meaning, a place which is spiritually distant: And more so – even to those who mock, we must relate to them too, in a way appropriate to them, even when it seems that it will disrupt one's own fulfillment of Torah and Mitzvot. And even when it does not just appear so, but it is a fact – as it was with my father, where it led to his arrest, exile, and ultimately, his passing.

This should encourage us and inspire us to our inner core, and stir us to action – to help those Jews who have already left the USSR, helping them to go in the path of Torah and Mitzvot. And in many cases, they don't even know what Torah and Mitzvot are, and they must be taught. Unfortunately, very little has been done so far; perhaps even less than 'very little.' May it be God's will, that from now on, whether on account of this wake-up call or some other inspiration, we should do more and more for them, giving it the proper attention, in all these areas.

