

Holy Shoes

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

כָּל חֵלֶב שׁוֹר וְכֶשֶׂב וְעִז לֹא תֹאכְלוּ... כִּי כָּל אֵכֶל חֵלֶב מִן הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִקְרִיב מִמֶּנּוּ אִשָּׁה לַיהוָה וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ הָאֹכֶלֶת מֵעַמִּיָּה. (ויקרא פרק ז' פסוק כ"ג ופסוק כ"ה)

Any fat of oxen, sheep, or goats, you shall not eat. Anyone who eats the fat of an animal species from which one may bring a korban to Hashem, he will be punished with Kareis” (Vayikra 7:23/25)

The village of Horki - 1875

“Hi boys!” said Tatteh, looking up from his workbench. “What a nice surprise!”

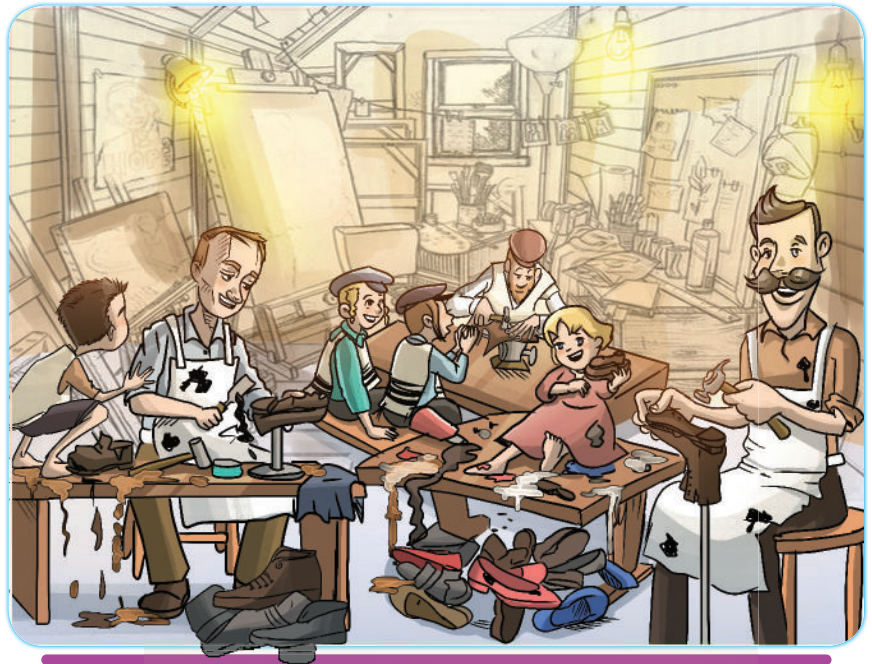
“We were on our way home from the melamed,” explained Shimon. “We decided to stop by and see if you were almost finished so we could walk home together.”

“Oh, how nice!” Tatteh said warmly, picking up a nail and getting ready to hammer it into the shoe he was making. “I just have to finish making this pair of shoes and I’ll be done.”

As Tatteh placed the nail carefully on the shoe and began to hit it with the hammer, the boys looked around. There were two goyishe shoemakers who also worked in the shop. One of them also had a child with him, who was sitting on top of his father’s workbench.

“Tatteh,” said Shmaya. “Can I sit on top of your table too?”

“I’m sorry, Shmaya,” Tatteh answered. “I can’t let you do that. You know that a Yiddishe table is like a mizbeiach - we don’t sit on it.”



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"I thought that's only the table that we eat on in our house," said Shmaya.

"Well, I eat my lunch on this table," Tatteh said with a smile.

The boys continued to look around as Tatteh continued to work. Shimon noticed that the other shoemakers were working much faster than Tatteh and had much larger piles of shoes on their tables. Meanwhile, Tatteh took time to slowly position each nail before hammering it in, and if the nail didn't go in perfectly straight, Tatteh would pull it out and put in a new one.

After about fifteen minutes, Tatteh finished making the shoes and covered them with a nice shiny coat of polish before setting them neatly on his workbench.

"Okay boys, let's hurry home. Mammeh is waiting for us with a nice hot supper!"

"Tatteh," Shimon said as they walked down the dirt road. "I noticed that you work so much slower than the other shoemakers. They work much faster. Wouldn't you make more money if you worked as fast as them?"

"Shimon," Tatteh said. "You are definitely correct that I work slower than them. And if you paid attention, you would notice other differences between them and me, as well. You see, that's because I'm a Kohein."

Shimon and Shmaya looked at Tatteh confused. They weren't Kohanim. Why, just this past Shabbos, Tatteh got called up for *chamishi*!

"You see, this week's Parsha talks all about the Avodah in the Beis Hamikdash. But then the Torah says something that seems out of place. It says that we are not allowed to eat *cheilev* - certain fats from the animal which, when we bring a *korban*, are burned on the *mizbeiach*. Now, first of all, why is the Torah telling us about what we are not allowed to eat in our

homes in middle of the *halachos* of the Avodah? And secondly, what does the fact that *cheilev* is burned on the *mizbeiach* have anything to do with whether or not we can eat it?"

Shimon and Shmaya thought this over. This question had never occurred to them before.

Totty continued. "And if you pay attention to the Torah, you will also see that there are other times that the Torah says that something is *ossur* for Kohanim to do - for example, cutting off a beard - but then the Torah again repeats that it is *ossur* for all Yidden to do that as well!

"And the answer is, that every Yid is actually a Kohein. Not a Kohein who can serve in the Beis Hamikdash, but our lives are devoted to serving Hashem. Everything we do, not just davening and learning, needs to be done with the mindset that we are doing *Avodas Hashem*.

"Now, I could churn out batches of poorly-made shoes covered with shiny polish like my *goyishe* co-workers do, but that wouldn't be honest. It would be *posul avodah*. And my table is like a *mizbeiach*, so I have to make sure to keep it clean and uncluttered.

"The *goyishe* shoemakers aren't Kohanim, so they don't care about the quality of their work as long as they get paid. And they let their children sit on the table, because to them it's no different than this rock on the side of the road.

"Kinderlach, what I'm telling you now is very important! We may not be able to get called up for Kohein or eat *Terumah*, or work in the Beis Hamikdash, but we are still part of the *Mamleches Kohanim* - we must remember to keep in mind with every single thing that we do, no matter what it is, that we are serving Hashem!"

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway:

The Torah teaches us that we are special - like kohanim. It means that we have to live our lives on a higher plane, and remember always that we are servants of Hashem.



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