



THE WRITTEN WORD

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GEDOLEI YISROEL ON THE PARSHA AND YOMIM TOVIM

BY RABBI MOSHE KRIEGER

The Written Word features reviews and synopses of newly-released English language seforim, books and biographies. Each week, Rabbi Chaim Serebrowski selects and reviews a recently published volume, sharing with Yated readers information about its content and the background of its author. Suggestions may be submitted by authors, publishers and distributors to thewrittenword@yated.com.

It has been five years since the release of Rabbi Moshe Krieger's landmark *Sefer Gedolei Yisroel on the Parsha*, and the long-awaited sequel is finally available, a new *sefer* filled with Torah gems, presented with Rabbi Krieger's trademark warmth, clarity, and brilliant perspective.

Aptly named *Gedolei Yisroel on the Parsha and Yomim Tovim 2*, the *sefer* contains the Torah and *hashkafah* of the greatest *gedolim* of the past generations, presented by Rabbi Krieger in powerful and illuminative chapters.

Each chapter is generally only about two or three pages, but they contain some of the most fundamental *yesodos* for understanding both the *parsha* and core issues of *hashkafah* through the lens of *daas Torah*. The concepts are compelling, structured in a cohesive manner that allows the often-deep *yesodos* to be understood by anyone. Additionally, numerous stories of *gedolim* are scattered throughout the *sefer*, making the important lessons tangible and interesting.

Rabbi Krieger serves as a *shoel umeishiv* at Yeshiva Bircas HaTorah in Yerushalayim. For years, he has prepared weekly *divrei Torah* on each *parsha*, which were always very well received by those with whom he shared them. After several years, Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz, noted *mekubal* and *R"m* at Yeshiva Shar Hashomayim, pressed Rabbi Krieger to release a compilation of his weekly sheets as a *sefer* so that a wider audience could benefit from the keen insights and relevant *hashkafah* perspectives. With that instruction, Rabbi Krieger embarked on a journey, exerting enormous effort in publishing his initial release, *Gedolei Yisroel on the Parsha*.

With the *sefer* in hand, Rabbi Krieger visited Rav Rabinowitz, showing him the results of his directive. Rav Rabinowitz looked at the *sefer* with pleasure and immediately continued with another question: "And what about your next *sefer*?"

Rabbi Krieger objected, saying that the initial *sefer* already contained numerous *yesodos* of *hashkafah* on the *parsha*, and the amount of time and effort it took to prepare a high-quality *sefer* for publication was extremely taxing. But Rav Rabinowitz would not be dissuaded.

"Start writing," Rav Rabinowitz, who has authored numerous *seforim* himself, said. "Once you start, Hashem will give you the ideas and the strength. Your writ-

ing has a positive influence on people, and it is incumbent on you to write another *sefer*."

Rav Rabinowitz's command propelled the making of the new volume. In line with his first *sefer*, he weaved the words of the *gedolim* with a collection of stories, developing each chapter into a complete *shiur* on the *hashkafic* fundamentals on the *parsha*. Parting from the focus solely on the *parsha* that he maintained in the first *sefer*, Rabbi Krieger also included a number of chapters on *Yomim Tovim* in the second volume, which will give insight and perspective into the *Yom Tov* for any *lomeid*.

The *sefer* contains at least one chapter on each *parsha*, though most have two or three chapters. On *Yomim Tovim*, the *sefer* contains chapters on *Elul*, *Rosh Hashanah*, *Shabbos Shuvah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Sukkos*, *Simchas Torah*, *Chanukah*, the *Dalet Parshiyos*, *Purim*, *Shabbos Hagadol*, *Pesach*, *Shevi'i Shel Pesach*, *Shavuot*, and *Bein Hametzarim*.

Gedolei Yisroel on the Parsha and Yomim Tovim 2 contains the insights of a wide array of Torah leaders from a number of generations. Many of the concepts are rooted in the words of *Rishonim*, explained by both early and more recent *Acharonim*. A *zug* from the Brisker *rov*, a *derher* from the Alter of Kelm, a *he'arah* from Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, a *mehalech* from Rav Aharon Kotler, a *vort* from the *Chazon Ish*. The words of these *gedolim* come alive in the *sefer*, portrayed poignantly in a way that talks to *bnei aliyah*.

The chapters in the *sefer* are substantive and deep, though Rabbi Krieger's clear presentation allows them to be transmitted easily, whether by a *rebbe* to *talmidim*, by a father to his family around the *Shabbos* table, or by a *morah* to her students.

As with the first volume, *Gedolei Yisroel on the Parsha and Yomim Tovim 2* has met with tremendous success since its release. Numerous *lomdim* have shared that the *sefer* made a tremendous impression on them, and many have related how the *sefer* has uplifted their *Shabbos seudos*. Sales of the *sefer* have exceeded all projections, and the distributor, Feldheim, has already completely sold out of the *sefer*. Copies of the *sefer* are still available, as of the writing of this review, in select *seforim* stores, but there are none left in the distributor's warehouse.

The *Gedolei Yisroel* series has the *haska-*

mos of Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz; Rav Zev Leff, *rov* of Moshav Matisyahu; Rav Berel Wein, noted historian and *rov* of Bet Kneset Hanasi; Rav Shimon Yeruchom Green, *rov* of Kehillas Shomrei Emunim and *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivas HaTurim; Rav Nissim Tagger, *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshiva Bircas HaTorah; and Rabbi Krieger's father-in-law, Rav Elimelech Meller, *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshiva Minchas Chinuch.

In the first of three chapters on *Parshas Ki Seitzei*, Rabbi Krieger shares a concept that illuminates the *parsha* while offering a pointed *mussar* approach to the *avodah* of *Elul*.

The *posuk* cites two reasons why Amon

drash, which points that the *Yidden* were not in the need of bread and water, because they had *monn* and the *Be'er Shel Miriam*. Why, then, is the failure to bring food and water so significant that it is listed first?

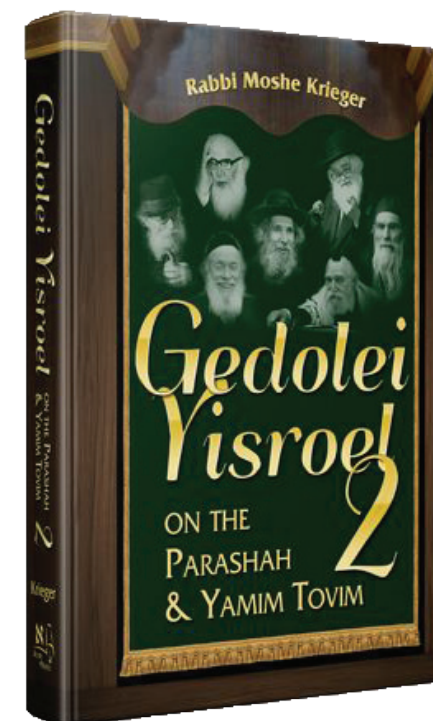
To answer this question, Rabbi Krieger quotes Rav Yaakov Neiman, *rosh yeshiva* of Ohr Yisroel in Petach Tikva, from his *Sefer Darkei Mussar*. Rav Neiman writes that although a simple lack of courtesy can seem like a minor flaw, such a lack of basic *derech eretz* can develop into more serious *aveiros*, and can even be the core reason behind the quest to have Bilam curse the *Yidden*. Lacking basic decency can lead a person to become a criminal, and even a murderer.

Rabbi Krieger uses this concept to lend understanding to a story related about the Alter of Slabodka. Once, Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer sent a group of *talmidim* to visit the Alter. Later, Rav Isser Zalman asked the Alter his opinion of the boys, and the Alter spoke highly of them, with the exception of one. "That boy – nothing will ever come of him," the Alter said. Rav Isser Zalman was surprised and inquired why the Alter thought so. "As we were talking," the Alter explained, "some sugar fell on the table. That boy poked his finger into the sugar and licked it. With that lack of *derech eretz*, I am sure nothing will come of him." Indeed, while the boy became a *rov*, he eventually left the field of *rabbonus* to become a lawyer, and later spent years in jail after forging documents.

With the aforementioned concept, it is understandable that the Alter of Slabodka was able to deduce the future of a boy based on his level of *derech eretz*.

Rabbi Krieger continues by portraying how any bad trait can have far-reaching effects on a person. He cites the words of the *Rambam* in *hilchos teshuvah* that *teshuvah* also applies to negative character traits. Rabbi Krieger points out that the *Rambam* uses the word *derech, way*, which indicates that the traits overtake a person's focus in life and leads them on a *derech*, a trajectory, to *aveirah*.

Rabbi Krieger concludes the chapter by sharing that in the *yeshiva* of Kelm, the primary goal of *Elul* was to identify negative traits and to fix them. Simply correcting bad deeds while leaving the bad *middah* intact was not sufficient, as it could lead to terrible places. Rather, the *avodah* was to uproot the bad *middah* in order prevent it from influencing a person in the future.



and Moav are not allowed to join the Jewish nation. Firstly, because they failed to greet the *Yidden* in the *midbar* with bread and water, and secondly, because they commissioned Bilam to curse the Jews. Asks Rabbi Krieger, shouldn't the second reason – which seems to have had the potential for much more dramatic consequences – have been listed first? Isn't hiring someone to curse a nation a greater grievance than simply not having the courtesy to bring them food and drink?

This question is accentuated by the *Me-*