

YOU CAN BE JUST LIKE THE SUN!

PARSHAS BAMIDBAR

Rabbi Yechezkiya Chaim Chizkiya Medini lived from 1834-1904. He is known by his encyclopedic work, the Sdei Chemed. The Sdei Chemed is a 9-volume encyclopedia of topics in the Talmud and Jewish law. It contains the decisions and discussions of over 1800 years! Rabbi Medini was able to write this amazing work due to his knowledge of all aspects of the Torah and his photographic memory.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

(Torah.org) brings a fascinating story about the Sdei Chemed. The Sdei Chemed once told his family that as a young man, his memory was not exceptional and was not photographic. However, after he did something very special, he felt spiritually elevated and suddenly got superhuman powers of intellect. What happened?

"For [the tribe of] Gad, Elyasaf the son of De'uel." (Vayikra 1:14) "The tribe of Gad, and the leader of the sons of Gad is Elyasaf the son of Re'uel." (Vayikra 2:14)

The Sdei Chemed was learning in a kollel. Another member of the kollel was very jealous of him and did something terrible. He bribed the Arab woman who cleaned the Beis Medrash to accuse the Sdei Chemed of engaging in inappropriate behavior with her. She accepted the bribe and made the claim. People believed her, and the Sdei Chemed suffered terrible shame and abuse such that he felt the need to leave the kollel and run away. The head of the kollel did not believe the woman and fired her, but that did not help the Sdei Chemed whose reputation was already ruined. A short time afterwards, when the bribe money ran out, the cleaning lady went to the Sdei Chemed to apologize. She offered to admit publicly that she had lied. That admission would restore the Sdei Chemed's reputation. She only asked that the Sdei Chemed ask the head of the kollel to give her back her job, as she literally had nothing to eat. The Sdei Chemed was tempted to take her up on

this offer and restore his reputation. However, he realized that if this woman would publicly confess and tell the full story, that would create a terrible *chillul Hashem*, desecration of Hashem's name. The first *chillul*

Hashem was bad enough, when he was accused of inappropriate behavior. Imagine how terrible this second *chillul Hashem* would be, when people would find out that another member of the kollel had stooped so low that he had paid money to slander a fellow Torah student! The Sdei Chemed decided not to do anything! He agreed to speak to the head of the kollel to try to get the Arab woman her job back, on the condition that she not confess anything. He didn't want the truth to come out because of the terrible *chillul Hashem* that would ensue. The Sdei Chemed wrote that after that incident, he felt his mind open and he merited super intellectual ability! That enabled him to write his 9-volume, encyclopedic sefer. Why did he merit this gift? It was because he kept quiet. He was willing to accept personal shame to protect Hashem's name from shame!

In the parsha, Hashem told Moshe to take a census of the Jewish People. The *nesiim*, the heads of each tribe were together with Moshe during the count. Later in the parsha, the tribes

were divided into groups of 3 and assigned the specific areas around the *Mishkan* in which they would camp during their travels in the desert. During the count, the *nasi*, the head, of the tribe of Gad is referred to as Elyasaf son of Deu'el (Bamidbar 1:14). Later, when the tribes were divided into groups, the *nasi* is referred to as Elyasaf son of Reu'el (2:14).

Rav Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l, the Chida (in the name of Sefer Imrei Noam) explains the change in name. Dan was the Bilhah's firstborn and Gad was Zilpah's firstborn. The tribe of Dan was chosen to lead one of the groups of the three-tribe formations. Gad was part of another group but was not made its leader. The *nasi* and the tribe of Gad could have complained to Moshe Rabbeinu that this was unjust. They could have protested that it was not fair since both Gad and Dan were firstborns. Yet, the *nasi* and the tribe of Gad did not protest. They remained silent. The **Chida** says that because of that, Gad merited

two things. Firstly, the *nasi* of the tribe, whose real name was Elyasaf ben Deu'el, was called Elyasaf ben Reu'el, which means the friend (*Reya*) of Hashem. Secondly, the tribe of Gad merited that Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest leader in the history of the Jewish Nation, was buried in their portion of *Eretz Yisrael*. Both rewards were eternal. (Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Torah.org)

It says in **Pirkei Avos** (1:17), "*I have found nothing better in life than silence*". **Midrash Shmuel** says that this applies even if a person embarrasses or curses someone. One who can remain silent under those trying circumstances will be blessed as the sun was. During Creation, the moon was initially the same size as the sun. The moon complained that two kings could not wear the same crown. The sun remained silent and was rewarded. The moon was diminished in size while the sun retained its brilliance. Similarly, the one who disgraces others will be diminished while the one who remains silent will become great.

Often, we are faced with situations in which we could justifiably complain about something.

The challenge we face is to remain quiet and not complain.

Frequently, it is meritorious not to speak up and to remain silent. We will gain by our silence.

**[G-D forbid, if one is in an abusive situation then they MUST speak up
to get help for themselves and/or for the abusive person.]**

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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