



Unusual Advice

לע"נ
אבינו הרה"ח הרה"ת
ר' יוסף מנחם מענדל
ב"ר יצחק ע"ה
ואמנו מרת זיסל דבורה
בת ר' אלי' הכהן ע"ה
טענענבוים
ת"נ צ"ב'ה

During the times of the Alter Rebbe, it was common practice for Jews to lease a parcel of land with an inn from a nobleman and use it as a source of *parnasa* by farming the land and using the inn to serve drinks to the local peasants and hosting travelers overnight.

One year, a group of these Jews faced a calamity; there was no rainfall and the fields would be devastated. Making matters worse, without the ability to sell crops, they would have no funds with which to pay the nobleman and that would surely mean their immediate eviction from the property.

They turned to the Alter Rebbe, begging him to intercede on their behalf before Hashem to bring the much-needed rain. "Rebbe," they cried, "If it doesn't rain in the next few days, we will

be ruined! Please daven for us!"

To their great dismay, however, the Alter Rebbe just listened and did not say a word. They left the room and burst into bitter tears. All those present heard their woes and shared their pain but practically there was not much anyone could do.

Their story and plight made its way around from person to person until it reached the ears of young Menachem Mendel, who would later become the Tzemach Tzedek. He advised them, "Go back into my grandfather's room and say exactly as I tell you."

He then scripted them word for word how they should present their case. "If you have the ability to help and you are choosing not to, then it is simply cruel. If you don't have the ability

then with what right have you taken upon yourself to be a leader of *klal Yisroel*!?"

Menachem Mendel continued sharing with the worried group the argument they should make based on a Gemara. "In *Maseches Taanis* it says that Reb Yehuda Hanossi decreed a fast day for rain, and when it did not help he became distressed. A few other stories on the same *daf* show a similar idea; when the *nossi* did not succeed in bringing about the *bracha* of rain, it would affect him so much that he became weak. So Rebbe, we are presenting this to you so it can have a profound impact and cause rain to come down."

The group looked at each other with surprise! A daring argument indeed, but what choice did they have? The situation was desperate!

They entered the Alter Rebbe's room, and repeated the words exactly as they had been told.

The Rebbe's face instantly became serious and he put his hands over his face and rested his head on the table for a long period of time. Finally, he raised his head and blessed them and wished them well.

A short while after they left the room, the skies began to cloud up and turn grey. To their great joy, a heavy rain began to fall from the sky and they could not even travel home for three days due to the incredible downpour.

Shortly after the incident, the Alter Rebbe commented, "Ah! Mendel's head." ¹

1. Meaning the whole idea was orchestrated by his smart grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek.