

WHAT A STONE!

by Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene

The toddler is joyfully playing with his new toy.

It is a shiny stone that he has mischievously picked up from the floor. And with a smile radiating upon his cute face, the child happily lets it fall onto the ground. And then with a glint in his eye, he flicks it across the room.

The object in question is, in actual fact, a priceless gem.

An elegant and rare antique dating back several centuries, its exquisite craftsmanship renders it a treasured heirloom.

But the toddler is blissfully oblivious to all this. In his eyes, this round object is a plain, shiny marble - something to nonchalantly roll and play with.

No one can fault the toddler for his ignorance. How could the young child have any knowledge of the stone's historic origins? Could his immature mind ever grasp the notion that this stone might to be anything other than a plaything? He is unable to marvel at its polished surface or appreciate its radiance. Nor has he any inkling that this bright object might behold a higher, more sublime purpose.

Only an informed adult can register the travesty of how all the child sees is a marble rather than a magnificent jewel. The principal investigation of a Jew is a quest for the meaning of Jewish living.

An appraisal of shemiras hamitzvos, mitzvah observance leads a Jew to the amazing discovery concerning the ancient code for living imprinted within the Torah. Despite being denigrated by some as a child's plaything, a marble, it is anything but that.

Really, it is a dazzling and cherished gemstone. It is a precious stone of immeasurable value.

This urges us to devote more than just a fleeting superficial assessment to pass judgment on a system that has existed for millennia. He cannot afford to make the mistake of a toddler and to instantaneously dismiss the claim that the "stone" is an ancient heirloom, one that is divine in origin.

The Torah is a priceless legacy, a treasure exclusively bequeathed to the Jewish people at Sinai for posterity, to uphold and delight in its values and laws.

This realization propels the Jew to lovingly delve into their heritage and pursue the depth of the commandments and to conduct extensive research into their meaning.

It is shemiras hamitzvos, mitzvah observance which defines a Jewish lifestyle. This is his coveted national birthright and raison d'être of living. A glimpse of this is to be gleaned from the astounding statement attributed to the rabbis that "It is worthwhile for a person to live a full a lifetime just to be granted the opportunity to perform one mitzvah"!

So let us pick up that marble from the dusty floor. Let us polish it and elevate it to reveal the dazzling gem that it really is!!

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