

# LISTEN TO THE MUSSAR

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

## Rabbi Frand on Parshas Matos-Masei

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Good Shabbos!*

### Listen to the Mussar

*And Moshe said to the people of Gad and Reuven, "Your brothers will go to war and you will remain here?" (Bamidbar 32:6)*

The first Gerrer Rebbe was the Chiddushei HaRim. The second Gerrer Rebbe, the Sfas Emes, was not his son but his grandson. The Sfas Emes' father passed away when he was a child, and his grandfather raised him. He was an illui, a prodigy, the apple of his grandfather's eye. One night, when he was still a young boy, the Sfas Emes learned with his chavrusa straight through the night. He nodded off right before Shacharis, resting his head on the Gemara. After a few minutes, he awoke with a start. He washed his hands and hurried to the shul, but he was already a little late.

After Shacharis, the Chiddushei Harim called him over.

"What's this with coming late to Shacharis?" he said in a sharp tone. "It's bad enough for yourself, but think how it will affect others. If the grandson of the rebbe can come late, what kind of example is that for other boys? Or even men! It's a Chillul Hashem (desecration of G-d's Name), no less!"

The Chiddushei Harim went on in this vein for another few minutes, but the Sfas Emes did not say one word in his own defense. He could have argued that it had been an accident, that he had stayed up all night learning Torah and that sleep had overcome him at the end for just a few minutes. But

he remained silent.

A little while later, the chavrusa of the Sfas Emes asked him, "Why didn't you say anything to defend yourself? You were innocent! Why were you silent?"

"When a great man gives you Mussar [ethical advice or rebuke]," said the Sfas Emes, "it is worthwhile to listen, even if you don't deserve it, even if you are completely innocent. I wanted to hear my grandfather's Mussar.

"I have a proof to this from the Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu [our Rabbi Moses] gave the tribes of Gad and Reuven a strong tongue-lashing. He accused them of cowardice. He told them they were demoralizing the people just like the spies did. He went on and on for nine verses, and they remained silent. They never mentioned that they had intended all along to participate in the conquest. Why? Because it is always worthwhile to hear the Mussar of a great man."

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