

Mussar HaMadda

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The Wizard of Oz

“I’LL GET YOU MY PRETTY... AND YOUR LITTLE DOG, TOO.”(Wiz. Oz. 3:8)

THE Wicked Witch of the West was attempting to demoralize Dorothy, her nemesis and murderer of her sister, the Wicked Witch of the East. To accomplish this task, she interjected with her now-famous line. This was the one-liner that would introduce an element of total yish and defeat into Dorothy’s outlook. Only a later moment of inspiration would save Dorothy and her mutt, melting...melting the witch’s carefully laid plan.

**Behind every
successful man is
a surprised
shvigger.**

At first glance, this invective seems rather puzzling. Once she threatened to inflict damage and/or death to Dorothy, what would she gain by threatening to kill the dog? Nobody likes their pets more than themselves. This should seemingly have the opposite effect- it should blunt the sharpness of her line, and make her look like a raving idiot. Why should she bother attacking the dog?

Before she was the Wicked Witch of the West, she was just an ordinary kollel wife. She used to learn mussar with her husband every night for at least fifteen minutes. Through her mussar seder, she learned that there are some people who care for their property more than themselves. By threatening to terminate the dog, she was showing us a glimpse of her keen knowledge of human psychology, gained from her mussar sederim. She ascertained that Dorothy was materialistic, and proceeded to verbally terrorize her in a lo zu, af zu style- not only would she eliminate Dorothy, but even Dorothy’s precious puppy was subject to annihilation! The Witch revealed herself to be a mammash shvigger with horns.

**בטלה is tiring
because you
can’t take a
break.**

One question begs to be answered. How did she end up to be a witch, if she used to be a kollel wife? Shouldn’t the mussar have shielded her from deteriorating so badly? Shouldn’t the fact that she was a member of the Sarah Gordon Sisterhood put her on enough mailing lists to be swamped with chances for soul-saving chesed and tzedakah? Shouldn’t the yearly Purim basket stuffings have ingrained an indelible mussar mark on her psyche?

**בטלן-someone
who tries to make
two weekends
meet**

We see from here the devastating effects of leaving the yeshiva too early. Her husband, ~~that second-rate citizen that he is~~, left the yeshiva before finishing his fourteen years. After being exposed to the vicissitudes and evil thought patterns of the outside world, the mussar she had learnt got twisted and distorted, turning into a weapon for evil. Her readings of treif newspapers like the Jewish Press (but not her readings of the New York Times) gave her a warped outlook on life, undoing the years of chesed. Had her husband stayed in the yeshiva, she would have instead been known as the Rebbetzin of the Midwest with the Wicked Cholent. After being infused with the required dosage of mussar sederim and sisterhood sessions with the Rosh Hayeshiva, she would have been impervious to any heretical, right-wing thoughts. We must stay in yeshiva for the full fourteen-year program, getting a fair share of mussar marks along the way. Then, we must get semicha, and go out and be mekareiv the world. The world is waiting for us.