

The Chelmer Gaon and Chess

by Philip *Fishl* Kutner

Stop! Did you say Chelmer Gaon. That is not possible. How can Chelm produce a Gaon? Vilna had a Gaon, but Chelm—no! There must be a mistake.

Yes, it is true, and the explanation is really quite simple. It was determined that intelligence is a Mendelian recessive trait. There are six genes discovered that carry the trait of very high intelligence—brilliance.

It so happens that Chelmers have an unusual disproportionate number of these dominant genes; however, there is a very minute possibility that three genes from the mame and three from the tate line up to be recessive in the zygote and thus create a genius. Remember that only three come from each parent—it's possible.

The Chelmer Gaon's tate was Simon the Shusters son and his mother was Sadie the Shnayders daughter. Thus there was yikhes in his family. That is—yikhes in Chelm.

Perhaps you may ask, "When did the parents realize that they had a genius?" The Gaon was the eleventh of twelve children. By the time he was born they had a great deal of practical experience in knowing about the mental and physical development of kinder.

By the time the Gaon was three years old he already was completely potty trained—fully two years before any of his siblings. This was highly unusual in Chelm and the Chelmer Frayheit carried a full series on the Gaon and predicted a brilliant career for him. By this time he could even sing the alef, beyz giml song.

Several of the shkheynem with tekhter of the same age already were trying to make a shidakh for the young Gaon, but his wise Chelmer parents would hear nothing of it. Their son would marry a very rich girl from Lublin or Crakow or even Warsaw, with a huge dowry.

Let us speed up the story, and we now have the Gaon grown up. He has his court, his family and check out some of the wisdom he has expounded to the many admirers and followers all over Chelm.

Naturally the advice he gave covered many areas from child rearing, kashruth dilemmas, health problems and marital advice. Then came chess!

The Gaon and Chess

It all happened one day when Max der Melamed came to the Gaon with his problem. Because the Gaon had so large a following Max had to wait fully two weeks before he was permitted to enter the Gaon's Court. By this time the situation had deteriorated so badly that the parents had called a meeting, and Max der Melamed could not sleep.

Finally Max's wife Millie went to the Gaon's Court and pleaded with the men outside to intercede. It had gotten so bad that last Friday night Max did not fulfill his husbandly duties. This truly was a crisis. When the Gaon was made aware of this crisis, he immediately had his lieutenant advise Millie to have Max come early the next morning.

Happily Millie returned home, and Max was told the good news. This burden was removed from his narrow shoulders, for he knew the Gaon would give him sage advice that would solve the dilemma. With the pressure removed Max again was able to perform his husbandly duties.

Early the next morning Max went to the Gaon's Court. He laid the problem before the Gaon. Since the use of the computer, searches easily could be performed on Giggle, and the students became bored.

The wise Gaon said that the students needed to be challenged in a modern way. In addition to knowing the Talmud, mishna, gemorrah it was necessary to compete in the modern world. The best way is to learn all about strategy. This is when he recommended chess.

Chess has an almost infinite set of possibilities. Devising a game plan is part of Game Theory. Generals devised sets of possibilities and then tried to have counter-measures for each one. It is akin to coaches developing a game plan against an opposing team.

When the melamed told the parents and students what the Gaon advised, there was immediate acceptance. The students began playing chess with their parents and sibling at home. Then they played on the computer with students from other schools—even as far away as America.

The students could play chess only after they had mastered their homework. This is another example of the sage advice given by the Gaon of Chelm.