

## **פ' ויצא תשפ"ג**

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### **RAV STERNBUCH'S DIVREI CHIZUK TO PARTICIPANTS OF THE MIR YARCHEI KALLO LAST WEEK**

Everyone has to set aside fixed times for learning. This time is not his, it is “Hashem’s time”. He should never give up this fixed time, even if he can make a huge profit during that time. As the *Shulchan Oruch* rules (*O.C.* 155:1), “After leaving the synagogue he should go to the *Beis Hamedrash*, and fix a time for learning. That time must be fixed and he should not breach it, even if he thinks he can earn a lot [during that time]”.

The more a person displays self-dedication for learning Torah during difficult times, the more reward will he receive (even during times in which he does not experience difficulties), because Hashem pays a reward based on how much the person appreciates and values his learning. Therefore, every person should tell members of his family that during the hours set aside for Torah learning he is “dead”, and should not be disturbed for any matter, because those hours belong to Hashem. That way a person receives an inestimable reward for all his Torah learning.

Torah learning with a fixed inviolable time set aside for it is a totally different type of learning than the Torah learnt by someone who does not have a fixed schedule. Some people do not learn with a yoke of Torah, but only when they have finished all their other activities, and have nothing else to do. Such learning is not able to protect a person properly. Only someone who accepts the yoke of Torah, and sets aside a fixed time every day will enjoy the power and *segula* of Torah, which protects a person and causes the holy *shechina* to dwell amongst the Jewish nation.

One must appreciate the importance of every moment of Torah learning, because each moment is like a slice of life. As the Chofetz Chaim said, “They say that time is money, but I say that time is a slice of life”. According to *halocho*, it is forbidden to perform any activity likely to bring closer the death of a dying person (*gosses*), and anyone who does so is considered to have spilled blood. Accordingly, someone who wastes even several moments on futile things has committed an offshoot of murder. In other words, someone who wastes his time’ not exploiting it to the full, is tantamount to someone who has lost (“killed” so to speak) part of his life.

Above all, we must not forget that the holy *shechina* resides in *Eretz Yisroel*. You have witnessed all the good things in *Eretz Yisroel*, and your duty upon returning overseas is not to forget the Holy Land. There are many actions that need to be taken in order to prevent the desecration of the divine name, because the holy *shechina* is in exile. There are heretics residing here who deny the resurrection of the dead, reward and punishment, and we need great divine assistance. Due to our many sins, there are those who think that if they sit and learn, this is enough. But this is not the case, and every Jew around the world is duty bound to take action for the honor of the holy *shechina* that it should not become desecrated in its location in *Eretz Yisroel*. May Hashem help that we should witness the revelation of Hashem’s honor in His world speedily.

### **RAV STERNBUCH'S ADDRESS TO YESHIVAS TIFERES YISROEL**

The obligation to inculcate Torah and fear of heaven in children and young adults is not limited to teachers, but rather rests first and foremost upon parents, and someone educates his son only with regard

to Torah learning and not with regard to fear of heaven, has not fulfilled the obligation of “And you shall teach them to your sons”, because Torah without *yiras shomayim* is not Torah.

Included in this obligation is every father’s duty to investigate his sons’ friends to make sure that they do not detract from his son’s *yiras shomayim*. Due to our great sins, some friends may introduce or entice him into pernicious technological devices, and in addition to praying to Hashem to be saved from this, we also have to check who our children are befriending. Some children may appear innocent on the outside, and may even come from a good family, but may have already become corrupt inside.

A young yeshiva boy was killed brutally by Arabs. He was certainly a *korbon tzibbur*, and we do not have to worry about him, because he himself is situated in the special elevated place in *Gan Eden* set aside for those who have been killed for being Jews. On the contrary, his parents should be happy to have brought up such a *korbon*, and they also receive great reward for accepting Hashem’s decrees with faith.

A *tzaddik* who lived in the times of the *Tach v’Tat* Cossack massacres (in 1648–49) promised before he died that when he would get to heaven he would not rest until Hashem would bring the final redemption. After he passed away and Moshiach had still not come, he came to someone in a dream and revealed that in the World to Come things appear very differently. He now realized that at this time Hashem wants each individual to still have the opportunity of acquiring more merits for all eternity in a challenging environment, rather than insisting on Moshiach coming right away. The reward awaiting those in the final generation who remain strong in their faith and delve in Torah is inestimable, and this is one of the reasons why the redemption is being delayed, because Hashem in His great mercy wants to reward those who withstand these trials. In the meantime, we have to endure suffering, but Hashem has His *cheshbonos* (“calculations”), which we do not understand.

The only way of attaining any connection with Hashem in this world is through the holy Torah, but to understand Him is not possible in this world. Even Moshe Rabbenu did not merit a comprehension in this world of Hashem’s conduct with each individual in this world, and it is up to everyone to accept with *temimus* that Hashem’s ways are for the good. Only in the future will we merit a complete understanding of Hashem’s ways.

## **SHIDDUCHIM**

*And Yaakov left Beer Sheva, and he went to Choron (28:10)*

The *medrash* says here that Yaakov felt despair because he came empty-handed. Unlike Eliezer, who came with ten camels etc. in his possession, he came with nothing in his hands, not even one nose ring or a bracelet. Yaakov recited “From where shall my help come? My help comes from Hashem Who made heaven and earth” (*Tehilim* 121). Nowadays too, those who have children in *shidduchim* and do not have “even one nose ring or bracelet” in their possession must not despair. Even though according to the natural state of affairs, their situation seems difficult, if they trust in Hashem wholeheartedly, they will merit salvation. The Vilna Gaon says that one should not put too much human effort into finding a spouse, since these matters depend mainly on prayer and faith. One often sees highly sought-after boys or girls who spend a lot of time looking for *shidduchim*, whereas those who are considered inferior find an outstanding *shidduch* quickly. This phenomenon, and others, demonstrate the futility of excessive *hishtadlus* in this area.

Rav Menachem Azarya of Panu writes that someone who recites *Tehilim* 121 at the end of each *amido* before stepping back three times will merit a worthy spouse. According to the above, this is the case because when one recites that chapter one internalizes the fact that salvation comes only from Hashem, and by virtue of one’s *emuno* and *bitochon* one merits finding one’s *zivvug* (divinely ordained marriage partner).

## **RUCHNIYUS DEPENDS ON US**

*And he went toward Choron. (28:10)*

*Rashi* (on *possuk* 17, based on *Chullin* 91b) notes that when Yaakov passed the site of the *Beis HaMikdosh* on the way to Choron, Hashem did not detain him there because if it had not entered Yaakov's mind to pray in the place where his fathers prayed then, why should Hashem detain him? Only once he reached Choron did Yaakov say, "Is it possible that I passed the place where my fathers prayed without my having prayed there?" He then decided to go back, and he returned as far as Beis El, at which stage he had a *kefitzas haderech* (the ground "shrank" for him to allow him to reach his destination very quickly.) On the way to Choron, Yaakov did not even think about going to pray at the site of the *Beis HaMikdosh*. Therefore, there was no reason for Hashem to have assisted him by detaining him in some manner in order to encourage him to pray there. It was only when Yaakov resolved to go back, and took the first steps towards realizing his intention, that he received immediate Divine assistance in the form of *kefitzas haderech*.

Rav Elchonon Wasserman said that in material matters we must have *bitochon* (trust in Hashem), but when it comes to spiritual matters, *bitochon* does not help. In *ruchniyus*, the level of *siyatta d'Shmaya* (Divine assistance) that we merit is dependent on the amount of effort we put into Torah, prayer, and *tikkun hamiddos* (working on improving our character traits). The reverse holds true in the area of *gashmiyus*: the more we minimize the amount of time, effort, and money that we invest in material affairs, and place our trust exclusively in Hashem, the more will He repay us with Divine assistance, leaving us free to invest all our energy in spiritual matters, which reap eternal returns.

### **YESHIVA AND KOLLEL MINYONIM**

*And he arrived at the place and lodged there because the sun had set* (28:11)

The *gemoro* (*Chullin* 91b) says that when Yaakov arrived in Choron he said, "Is it possible that I have passed the place where my forefathers prayed, and I did not pray there?" In other words, initially, when Yaakov passed Har Hamoriya he did not pray there. What was his reasoning at the outset, and why did he change his mind subsequently?

The Tchebiner Rov explained that initially Yaakov thought that since he was in the middle of travelling to the *Beis Hamedrash* of Shem and Eiver it would not be proper to delay and lose Torah learning time in the yeshiva, and he therefore did not stop to pray. Subsequently, however, he changed his mind and decided that since prayer is an essential requirement for Torah he should delay his journey and pray. Torah is not like other forms of wisdom. Since it is divine, it requires divine assistance to attain it, and such assistance can only be obtained through prayer. Therefore, since his forefathers made great efforts to pray at this place, prayers there must have the quality of being accepted, and he decided that it would be worthwhile to retrace the entire journey in order to pray there and obtain the key to Torah, which is prayer.

Every day in *ahavo rabbo* we pray, "For our fathers' sake, who trusted in You, and whom You taught the statutes of life, Be also gracious to us and teach us". In other words, our ancestors did not rely on their intellect or talents to understand Torah, but they "trusted in You". They knew that it is not possible to attain the wisdom of Torah through natural means, and therefore trusted Hashem to provide them with the divine assistance to understand Torah, and in that merit they indeed became privileged to be taught the statutes of life. And we go on to pray, "Be also gracious to us and teach us etc". Since we also rely on Hashem, like our ancestors, Hashem enlightens our eyes with His Torah.

This teaches us that yeshiva *bochurim* should be praying in the yeshiva, because their success in Torah depends on prayer, and *davening* in the yeshiva cannot be compared to prayer with working people who are busy going to work and may hurry their prayers. The *mashgiach* of Ponovezh, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, bemoaned the lack of *minyonim* in *kollelim*. He felt that since prayer is the key to success in Torah, this area of praying properly could not be neglected, and so he would ask *avreichim* to *daven* in the yeshiva, since yeshiva *davening* is of a different quality. Similarly, when Rav Dessler opened the

Gateshead *kollel*, he insisted that it would include a *Beis Medrash* for *davening*, since Torah and prayer are inextricably linked.

Rav Sternbuch's Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Moshe Schneider, would reiterate during almost every talk in the Yeshiva that yeshiva *bochurim* are not university students who are there to learn the wisdom of Torah. The yeshiva is rather a place to grow in Torah and pure fear of heaven, and in order to achieve those goals one has to both learn and *daven* in the *yeshiva*. When a *bochur* would come late to *davening*, even if he was a big *lamdan*, Rav Schneider would rebuke him calling a "student", since the Torah had not affected his behavior and way of life. On one occasion, during a talk, he said to the *bochurim*, "I need yeshiva *bochurim*, and have no need whatsoever for students. Should the situation arise that the people learning here will become students, I will close the yeshiva immediately". *B"H*, this never happened, but, on the contrary, the *bochurim* absorbed Torah and *yiras shomayim*, and they or their children became disseminators of Torah and fear of heaven.

### **HALOCHO PARAMOUNT**

*And Yaakov awakened from his sleep, and he said, "Indeed, Hashem is in this place, and I did not know it." (28:16). Rashi: For had I known, I would not have slept in such a holy place.*

Rav Sternbuch heard several times from the Brisker Rov how amazed he was by this *possuk*. Even though Yaakov attained a *giluy Shechinah* in his sleep, and with Eisav planning to kill Yaakov, Elifaz having stolen all his money, and being about to encounter Lavan, he received a promise from Hashem in the dream that He would always protect him ("I am with you, and I will guard you wherever you go"), Yaakov nevertheless would have been willing to forego all these spiritual and material benefits rather than transgress the *halocho* of desecrating a holy place by sleeping there. This teaches us, concluded the Brisker Rov, that we cannot do "business" with Hashem by committing a forbidden act, even if the potential gains are very appealing. If there is any sin involved, no potential gain is worth it — even apparent spiritual gain.

To prove his point, he cited the *Tosefta* in *Terumos* that rules that if a non-Jew tells a group of Jews, "Give us one of you and we will kill him, and if you don't, we will kill all of you," it is forbidden to surrender even one Jew to be killed. Rather, they must allow themselves to all be killed instead. We see from here that we are not allowed to "do business" with the laws of the Torah. Murder is forbidden, and to transgress for the sake of the "greater good" is prohibited — because in reality, the "greater good" is following Hashem's Torah in every minute detail.

He also cited the *gemoro* (*Eiruvim* 43b) that Eliyohu is not permitted to come on Shabbos to redeem the nation, since his coming would involve the prohibition of *techumin derabbonon*. Even though a delay in his coming might mean that the redemption will be delayed for a long time, because if the nation sins subsequently for a moment, causing a decline in its spiritual level, they would no longer be entitled to be redeemed, and the redemption would be postponed to an unknown future date. In other words, it is forbidden to transgress even a rabbinic prohibition in order to hasten the redemption.

Similarly, during World War I, when many Jews were being killed, one rabbi told Rav Chaim Brisker that it would all be worth it if it will expedite the coming of Moshiach. Rav Chaim responded that this was not so, and, for example, it is forbidden to deliver Jews to be killed even for the sake of bringing Moshiach, notwithstanding the fact that when he will come we will be privileged to witness Hashem's honor increasing greatly in the world as well as an immense spiritual reawakening.

We are subject to *halocho*, and according to *halocho* it is forbidden to sacrifice Jews in order to save others, no matter the gain! The laws of the Torah were not given to us to bargain with, and we are not allowed to commit sins in order to reap other supposed gains. In the same vein, the Brisker Rov explained that the *possuk* that Hashem does not accept bribery (*Devorim* 10:17) means that He does not accept

bribes of good deeds. In other words, He does not forego strict adherence to *halocho* in return for other merits, because *halocho* is paramount.

### **PARTNERING WITH HASHEM**

*"If Hashem will be with me... I will surely tithe to You"* (28:20-22)

Seeing that it is obligatory to give *ma'aser kesofim*, why did Yaakov make a condition? Yaakov was saying that he was not giving a tenth from his own belongings, but rather making Hashem his "partner", so that the "*ma'aser*" was merely the equivalent of paying a partner his due. When Rav Sternbuch was in South Africa, there was a very wealthy person who became a *baal teshuva*. He told Rav Sternbuch that now that he was religious Hashem was his partner, but since that was not the case before he became religious, he feels that he does not have to pay *ma'aser kesofim* retroactively for the profits made during that period. Rav Sternbuch responded that he was not sure that he was right, but he was happy to hear that he now feels that Hashem is his partner! (See also *Teshuvos Vehanhogos*, Vol. II, section 483).

### **HOW TO CRITICIZE**

*And he said, "The day is yet long; it is not the time to take in the livestock. Water the sheep and go, pasture. (29:7)*

Rashi brings the *medrash* that Yaakov saw them lying down, and he thought that they wished to gather the livestock to return home and that they would no longer graze. So he said to them, "The day is yet long," i.e., if you have been hired for the day, you have not completed the day's work, and if the animals are yours, it is, nevertheless, not the time to take in the livestock. They responded (29:8): "We cannot do that, until all the flocks are gathered together, and they will roll the rock off the mouth of the well, and we shall then water the sheep".

The Ponovezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, noted that it seems amazing that the shepherds did not tell Yaakov to stop preaching to them, to mind his own business and leave them alone. After all, he was a stranger, and they were veteran shepherds in the town. Instead, they responded calmly by explaining their actions. Rav Kahaneman said that their reaction was due to the way Yaakov had started the initial conversation with them. He had said: "My brothers, where are you from?" (29:4). Yaakov spoke to them affectionately by addressing them as his "brothers", and since they saw that he did not want to harm them but had their welfare at heart, they spoke to him as he were their friend. That is why they did not get upset at his criticism of their actions.

This teaches us that when we need to criticize or rebuke someone, we must do so in a friendly manner, so that when the other person sees that we are fond of him, he will gladly accept our rebuke. However, if we act in a cross manner, our words are likely to fall on deaf ears. It should be added, though, that this principle only applies to those who do not hate religion or engage in anti-religious incitement.

### **PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT OF THE YESHIVAH**

*And Yaakov kissed Rochel, and he raised his voice and wept (29:11). Rashi: Eliphaz the son of Eisov had pursued him to kill him at his father's orders; he (Eliphaz) overtook him, but since he had grown up in Yitzchok's lap, he held back his hand. He said to him (Yaakov), "What shall I do about my father's orders?" Yaakov replied, "Take what I have, for a poor man is counted as dead".*

This *medrash* cited by Rashi shows the extent to which being in the vicinity of a righteous person and a positive environment can have long-term effects. Even Eliphaz, who was cruel enough to pursue Yaakov and take away all his possessions, absorbed enough fear of heaven from his grandfather Yitzchok in his youth to refrain from murdering his uncle Yaakov.

The Steipler commented that nowadays a young man needs to learn in a yeshivah for two reasons: firstly, in order to escape the harmful environment outside, and secondly, in order to learn and grow in *yiras Shomayim*. Consequently, even if a *bochur* is not learning as well as he could, he must still continue to remain within the safe confines of the yeshivah, thus refraining from being exposed to an undesirable environment.

Rav Moshe Schneider was opposed to boys going to work before marriage, and was even more adamant that they should not attend university. He argued that even if the boy's religious observance would not be affected, the very exposure to the behavior and manner of speech prevalent in such environments would have a detrimental effect on him. For this reason, he felt a boy should not be thrown out of yeshivah into a street environment, and that those responsible for such an action would be held accountable before the Heavenly Court. Although the main protection afforded by the sanctity of the Torah applies to someone immersed in studying it, just being present in an environment of *bnei Torah* also saves a person from sin, and has a beneficial effect on him. Rav Schneider would say that once a boy has enrolled in the yeshiva, he becomes like a son, and you do not throw your son out to the street to fend for himself. (However, if a boy is having a harmful effect on other *bochurim* that is another matter).

Rav Sternbuch recalls the time when a young sailor from Greece, about twenty years old, somehow found his way to Rav Schneider's yeshivah in London. Once Rav Schneider had ascertained that he was indeed Jewish, he made sure that this young man would be taught *aleph-beis*, *Krias Shema*, *hilchos tefillin*, and other basics of Judaism. Even though the yeshivah was not designed for such people, since Rav Schneider could not find a suitable alternative, the commandment to look after a "lost body and soul" applied to this visitor. Had he not come of his own accord one might have been exempt from helping him out, Rav Schneider reasoned, but since he had fallen into our hands, we are forbidden to send him away from the yeshivah.

## WEDDING EXPENSES

*And Lovon gathered all the people of the place, and he made a feast (29:22).*

The *possuk* emphasizes that Lovon invited *all* the people to the wedding feast. A Jew who was collecting money for the marriage of his daughter asked Rav Zalman of Volozhin (brother of Rav Chaim and also a *talmid* of the Vilna Gaon) for a letter of recommendation. He told Rav Zalman that he needed a lot of money to make a grand wedding. Rav Zalman responded that this is the way of Lovon, who made a feast for *all* the people of his town, and if he wanted the young couple to build a decent Jewish home he should follow the example of Boaz, who gathered together ten men for his wedding. He had the merit of being the ancestor of the royal house of Dovid.

Although one should certainly make a respectable *seuda* and feel joy at the privilege of setting up a home in which the *Shechina* dwells, and fulfilling the great mitzvah of a Jewish wedding, which is akin to the consecration of the *Beis Hamikdosh*, it is quite another matter to incur extravagant expenses in order to display one's wealth and receive honor. Doing so only causes harm to the *choston* and *kalla* and their entire future. It focuses one's mind and energy in the wrong direction, and causes *ayin horo*, which is no simple matter. *Gedolei yisroel* throughout the generations have endeavored to enact regulations to limit wedding expenses, and, in our time too, several places have been successful in this matter, which is a very great thing.