

פ' תצוה תשפ"ג

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TORAH BEFORE PURIM

During a *hesped* on Rav Chaim Kanievsky, marking a year since his passing, Rav Sternbuch said that who would have thought that the *bein hazmanim* of Nissan would have an impact even on the previous month, so that from the beginning of *Odor* the prevailing atmosphere is that of “the end of the *zman*”, with the result that the learning is less intensive. Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer recalled that in the Volozhin Yeshiva there was no *bein hazmanim* and the learning continued until *erev* Pesach, so there was no attenuation of Torah there even in *Nissan*, never mind *Odor*.

The obligation to delve in Torah day and night applies to every day, and there is no difference between the beginning and the end of the *zman*. In fact, in the days leading up to Purim, it is especially important to strengthen our Torah learning, since that is the way to subjugate Amolek, as *Chazal* say, “Since they became weaker in Torah, Amolek came”. The implication is that although they continued learning, they did so with less intensity, and since the power of Torah became weaker, immediately Amolek’s power of *tumah* became stronger. Therefore, every year during this period, there is a special obligation to obliterate *Amolek* by delving in Torah assiduously.

The only way to make sure that we do not abandon the Torah, G-d forbid, even for one moment, is by accepting the “yoke of Torah”. This means that one should feel a connection to Torah not only when learning, but rather subject all one’s actions to living a life of Torah.

FIRE AT SATMAR

The Satmar Beis Hamedrash in Yerushalayim was burnt down last Friday night, and Rav Sternbuch spoke at the *levaya* for two *sifrei Torah*, and many pairs of *tefillin* and *seforim* that had been burnt and were now being buried.

Although we are not privy to divine calculations, if a tragedy like this occurs, it means that Hashem is not pleased with our *avodo*. Citing Rav Chaim Brisker, Rav Sternbuch noted that it was not enough to decree fasts, but one must rather become aroused to repent, and search for points that need to be rectified.

Since the honor of the holy Torah has been impaired by the burning of *sifrei Torah* and a *Beis Hamedrash*, which is considered a quasi-*Beis Hamikdash*, we must increase the honor of the Torah by being especially careful to avoid the sin of *bitul Torah*, which constitutes a desecration of the Torah’s honor. As the *Divrei Yoel* noted, the main way to honor Torah is to delve in it with purity, and institute fixed learning sessions for the public.

Furthermore, when *sifrei Torah* are being burnt, it is a sign that working people should honor *talmidei chachomim*, who are walking *sifrei Torah*, more by assisting them financially.

One must also make a point of avoiding idle or mundane speech, all the more so forbidden speech in *botei kennesiyos* and *botei medrash*. The Gerer Rebbe, the Imrei Emess, noted that Sefardi Jews were saved, for the most part, from the Holocaust (for example, although the Nazis reached the borders of Egypt and Morocco, Jews there were not harmed), and he attributed this to the fact that they are very careful about maintaining the sanctity of *botei kennesiyos* and refrain from speaking *divrei chulin* (mundane matters) there.

The fire of heresy is rampant nowadays, and we are obligated to extinguish it by fighting against heretics, and feeling sorrow for the desecration of the divine name.

The *Divrei Yoel* once mentioned that his ancestor, the *Yismach Moshe*, said when he was old that if he would have known when he was younger that he would have to endure several decades in *gulus*, he

would not have been able to suffer the pain of the *chilul Hashem*, and the only thing that kept him going throughout his life was his belief that *Moshiach* would come at any moment.

Rav Sternbuch concluded that this calamity was not a private one, but rather a call to every Jew, wherever he may be situated, to become aroused to repent in order to prevent further calamities. Our task is to grab more *mitzvos*, more charity, more Torah learning and to pray to Hashem that He should assist us to repent, and that we should be granted the power to withstand trials. As the *Divrei Yoel* said, our trials become more difficult by the day.

We are in need of great divine mercy, more than we can imagine. May Hashem help us to be saved from the difficult birth pangs of *Moshiach*, and remain strong in our faith until the very end.

It is brought down in the name of Rav Y.L. Diskin that the period immediately preceding the coming of *Moshiach* will consist of extremely difficult trials of faith. We pray to be saved from such trials, and to prevail over them. Rav Y.L. Diskin said that those who follow his path of complete detachment from the wicked will be saved in the period prior to the coming of *Moshaich*. May we merit the final redemption with the coming of *Moshiach* and the building of the *Beis Hamikdosh* speedily.

SPIRITUAL SELF-SACRIFICE

And you shall command the Bnei Yisroel'' (27:20)

Parshas Tezave is the only *parsha* from the time of his birth in which Moshe *Rabbeinu* is not mentioned. This is in complete contrast to both previous and succeeding *parshiyos* in which his name is mentioned very frequently. The *Baal Haturim* explains in the name of the Zohar that at the time of the *chet hoegel* Moshe had asked Hashem to “blot me out of the book which You have written”, and the curse of a *chochom*, even if made conditionally, is fulfilled. That is why Moshe’s name was omitted from *parshas Tezave*.

However, why should Moshe have received a punishment for his act of self-sacrifice? Moreover, the Zohar itself contrasts Noach’s conduct with that of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. When Noach was told that the whole world would be destroyed except for him and his sons, he did not ask Hashem to have mercy, and for that reason the waters of the flood are called by his name. Hence, not only was Moshe’s request to have his name blotted out a commendable deed, but had he not done so, he would have exposed himself to punishment, just like Noach. Why, then, was Moshe punished for acting the way Hashem expected him to?

The Chofetz Chaim explains that the phrase *uvechol me’odecho* in *krias shma* means that a person should sacrifice something very dear to him, namely his spirituality, for the sake of his love of Hashem. Each time his name is mentioned in the Torah this was a great *zechus* for Moshe *Rabbeinu*, and yet he was willing to forego numerous such *zechuyos* for the greater good of the *klal*.

Hashem did not deem it necessary for Moshe’s name to be deleted from the entire Torah, and the omission of his name from *parshas Tezave* was not meant as a punishment, but rather served to praise Moshe *Rabbenu*, demonstrate his greatness, and teach us that we too should not hesitate to be willing to sacrifice our own spiritual growth for the sake of others. Such self-sacrifices on our part, so far from resulting in a decline in our level of *ruchniyus*, will only increase it.

Several decades ago Rav Sternbuch was asked by Rav Yechezkel Abramsky to leave Bnei Brak in order to spread Torah in the adjacent Rosh Ha’ayin. Rav Sternbuch responded that he felt he was learning well where he was, and that if he would leave for Rosh Ha’ayin, this would disturb his learning. Rav Abramsky replied by citing the above explanation of the Chofetz Chaim on *uvechol me’odecho* and also the words of Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, who derives from the Rambam (*Sefer Hamitzvos* 3rd Ase) that drawing fellow Jews closer to their Father in Heaven is included within the mitzvah of loving Hashem. Rav Abramsky concluded that Rav Sternbuch was obligated to leave Bnei Brak in order to disseminate Torah, and that is what he did for many years, first in Rosh Ha’ayin, and subsequently in South Africa.

SPIRITUAL CHARITY

Moshe Rabbeinu was upset because he noticed everybody contributing to the *mishkon* and the *bigdei kehuno*, and he asked Hashem what contribution he could make. Hashem responded by telling Moshe that his speech was dearer to Him than everything, and his contribution was to teach *bnei yisroel* the Torah (*Vayikro Rabbo* 1:6). This *medrash* brings home the point that spiritual charity is more important than material charity.

When Rav Sternbuch was learning in Rav Schneider's yeshiva in England, the Rosh Yeshiva had an "Avodas Hakodesh" project. Under this program, the older boys in the yeshiva stood around the *bimo* twice a week devoting about two hours of their time to answering any questions from younger boys in the yeshiva. Rav Schneider said that this practice was a key to the spiritual success of these boys, and he noticed that the learning level of everybody who participated in the *Avodas Hakodesh* program improved distinctly.

He also noted that in the generation of the *midbor* poverty was non-existent, because there was never any shortage of *mon*, but this meant that there was no possibility of charity in the conventional sense. However, the *yiden* did manage to observe the *mitzvo* of *zedoko* by guiding and teaching others in need of assistance.

CLOTHES UPLIFT

"You shall make holy garments for your brother Aharon, for honor and glory" (28:2)

The *Sefer Hachinuch* explains that the *Kohen Godol's* garments had to be "for honor and glory", so that he would be constantly aware that he was standing and serving before Hashem. Additionally, his external appearance would instill awe of Hashem in the eyes of those visiting the *Beis Hamikdosh*, and remind them of the holiness of the place they were visiting, thus inducing them to repent.

Those who have a teaching position in *yeshivos* should wear special clothes in order to remind themselves of their status and obligation to behave in an elevated manner as befits *bnei Torah*, and also so that their students will feel their superior status, and honor and obey them accordingly. Nowadays, some teachers, wishing to remain humble, avoid wearing honorable clothes, but it would be more desirable for them to stick to the established custom of wearing distinct clothes.

BELIEVING IN THE ADVICE OF ZADDIKIM

"You shall place the Urim and Tummim into the choshen of judgment" (28:30), Rashi: *This refers to the inscription of the explicit Name, which he [Moshe] would place within the folds of the choshen, through which it would light up (meir) its words and perfect (mitamem) its words.*

We see from Rashi that Tummim shares the same root as *temimus*, simple and absolute faith. What is the connection between absolute faith and the *Urim and Tummim*?

Only if a questioner had complete faith that the *Urim and Tummim* were the absolute truth, and he would therefore be willing to accept any answer unquestionably, was he guaranteed of receiving the correct answer. If he only asked a question in order to receive the answer that he wanted to hear, he would not receive a genuine answer.

The same thing applies to a *goral Hagro*. Rav Sternbuch remembers the time at the beginning of the Second World War, when Hitler was threatening to invade England. Everyone was worrying about what would happen, when the British government suddenly announced the possibility of evacuating people to Canada or America on government-chartered boats. Rav Sternbuch's mother was deliberating whether to send her sons on one of these boats, or whether she should leave them in London. She asked Rav Elya Lopian what to do. He agreed to do a *Goral Hagro*, but he told her that she could only receive an accurate answer using this method if she agreed to unquestionably abide by whatever answer would result from the *goral*, because if she did not agree to that, the *goral* would not work and he would not receive the correct answer.

Similarly, when his advice does not achieve the expected result a *zaddik* may explain that apparently those who came to consult with him did not agree completely to abide by everything they were told, and therefore he did not have the *siyata dishmay* (divine assistance) to attain the truth.

LESSONS OF THE BELL

It shall be on Aharon when he performs the service, and its sound shall be heard when he enters the Kodesh before Hashem and when he leaves, so that he will not die (28:35)

The bell had to be heard when the *Kohen Godol* entered in order to remind him that he was now in a holy location and had to be very careful to avoid any sin in speech or thought. When he departed, the bell served as a reminder not to rest on his laurels, and be satisfied with the fact that he is a *talmid chochom* and *tzaddik*, but rather to give of himself to the nation, so that he will be heard not only when he enters the *Kodesh* but also when he departs.

PURPOSE OF THE MIKVEH

And you shall bring Aharon and his sons near the entrance of the Ohel Moed, and you shall bathe them in water (29:4). Rashi: *This refers to the immersion of the entire body.*

The Brisker Rov asked what else there was in the courtyard of the *Mishkon* other than the *Mizbe'ach Hachitzon* and the *kiyor*. He answered that we see from the above Rashi that there was also a *mikveh*. If this location was considered the appropriate place for housing the *mikveh*, in which Aharon and his sons would *toivel*, then a *mikveh* must possess a quasi-holy element of purity.

Although it is forbidden to utter (and in part even to think) *divrei kedusha* in certain parts of the *mikveh* and in certain circumstances, thoughts of *teshuvah* are not only permitted, but make up an essential component of the *mikveh* experience. In any event, some people have the habit of lingering in the *mikveh* to enjoy the warm water or engage in idle chatter, and this should be discouraged, because the sole purpose of the *mikveh* is to *toivel* and become sanctified.

TZDOKOH UNDER DURESS

And a bull as a sin offering you shall offer up every day for the atonements, and you shall purify the Mizbe'ach by performing atonement upon it (29:36)

Rashi (*ibid*) says that the atonement for the *Mizbe'ach* was necessary because perhaps someone had donated a stolen article for the work of the *Mishkan* and the *Mizbe'ach*, but the *Targum Yonasan* (on *Vayikra* 8:15) explains that the objects in question refer to those that had been donated under duress. This shows that charity donated not of one's own volition, but because of embarrassment or fear, is not favorable in Hashem's Eyes. Therefore, *gabbo'im* must be careful not to pressure people to give charity. *Tzedakah*, like a *korban*, is only desired by Hashem when it is given with joy.

When asking people for donations for *tzedoko*, or for his institutions, the Imrei Emes was very careful not to pressurize them, since that would be tantamount to quasi-theft. Moreover, if he would accept such donations, the sanctity of the Torah and prayers of those who benefited from them would be impaired.

Rav Moshe Schneider was also very careful not to push potential donors too much in case they really did not have the means to help. Rav Schneider also demonstrated his concern for donors in other ways. For example, on one occasion, he asked a regular contributor to the yeshivah to give a donation, but the donor told the *Rosh Yeshivah* that he no longer wanted to make contributions because the yeshivah was producing loafers who did not go out to work. Rav Schneider told him, "It is your right not to give, but I'm asking you not to regret your past donations (*toheh al harishonos*), because otherwise you will lose your reward for what you've given until now" (see *Kiddushin* 40b). Rav Schneider was not satisfied until that person promised that he did not regret his past donations.