



פרשת פקודי

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

## The Torah Nation

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## Part I. A Fire is Kindled

### The King's Scroll-Room

וַיְהִי בַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בַּשָּׁנָה הַשְּׁנִיית בְּאָחָז לַחֹדֶשׁ הַיּוֹקֵם  
וְהַמְּשֻׁבָּן - And it was on the first day of the first  
month of the second year in the wilderness and the  
Mishkan was erected (Shemos 40:17). The greatest  
day in the history of the world had finally arrived.  
On the first day of Nissan the dwelling place for  
Hashem was established and the Presence of  
Hashem would now rest among His chosen  
people. The Mishkan was now going to be the  
place for the revelation of Hashem in this world,  
the fulfillment of Hashem's promise: וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָם  
- "And I will dwell among them" (ibid. 25:8).

And what was the first thing that Moshe did  
after spreading the roof over the Mishkan? He set  
up the *kodesh kodoshim*, the holiest space on the  
face of this earth, the room where the Presence  
of Hashem would dwell most intensely.

Now, if you would have asked me what I  
would have set up in that room where Hashem  
would now reside, so with my little head I would  
say, a throne. A big beautiful golden throne,  
something resplendent and ornate, placed in the  
middle of the *kodesh kodoshim*; and that would  
symbolize the *kisei hakavod*, the place where  
Hashem rests His Presence in this world.

"Nothing doing," said Hakadosh Baruch Hu, "I  
have other plans for My room, for the *kodesh  
kodoshim*." וַיִּתֵּן אֶת הָעֵרַת אֶל הָאָרֶץ ... וַיָּבֵא אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֶל  
וְהַמְּשֻׁבָּן ... וַיִּסְדֹּף עַל אַרְוֹן הָעֵרֹת בְּאֶשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה  
- Hashem commanded that into this holiest part of  
the Mishkan, the room that symbolized His place in  
this world, should be placed the two stone tablets  
engraved by the Hand of Hashem, and afterward  
the Torah itself was put alongside the *luchos*  
(Devarim 31:26).

### A Mountain In The Little Room

And that's what Dovid Hamelech said in  
Tehillim (68:18): ה' שָׁמָּה בָּם - "Hashem has settled

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among the Am Yisroel.” And how did He do that? סִינֵי בְּקָרְשׁ – “Because Har Sinai is now in the Mishkan.” That great day of the Giving of the Torah at Har Sinai is now found in the *kodesh kodoshim*. The Sanctuary was the heart of the nation, and it was the Word of Hashem, the stone *luchos* and the Torah, that were at the heart of the Mishkan.

What we’re learning here is that preparing a home for Hashem to live among us, really meant preparing a home for the Torah to reside among us. And the Mishkan in its entirety was actually an altar of devotion to the Word of Hashem. And so instead of a throne for Hashem to rest His Presence on, the revelation of Hashem in this world came by means of His Torah. And the Am Yisroel in the *midbar* lived according to that revelation.

### **What Did They Do All Day?**

I’ll explain that. Because really we have to ask ourselves: What was the Am Yisroel doing in the *midbar* for forty years after all? They ate what fell from the clouds; they didn’t have to go to the factory to get a paycheck. And so we have to understand that for forty years they had nothing to do except to study Torah. The entire nation actually became one big yeshivah.

And it was a yeshivah where they studied day and night; they didn’t have newspapers to read, or radio to listen to. And even if they would have been able to get their hands on something – let’s say a *ben Yisroel* would try to pick up a newspaper from a neighboring tribe, from Midian – you couldn’t get away with such a thing in the *machneh Yisroel*. You were in a *kollel*, and every *kollel* has a *mashgiach*. And this *kollel* in the *midbar* had more supervision than any *kollel* since then! Every nine men had a *mashgiach* who watched them, the *sar asarah*, and so they had to behave. And every forty nine men had a super *mashgiach*, the *sar chamishim*. Every ninety nine men had a super

super *mashgiach*, the *sar mei’ah*. And every nine hundred and ninety nine had a super super super *mashgiach*, that was the *sarei alafim*. You couldn’t sneak anything past this army of *mashgichim*. And Moshe Rabbeinu with his watchful eye was overseeing the whole thing, the whole Yeshivas Hamidbar.

But the *mashgichim* didn’t have a very difficult job, because they were serious *yungerleit* in that yeshivah. Never, in any subsequent era, was the Torah so supreme and so studied as under the forty year rule of Moshe Rabbeinu, the Torah teacher par excellence. “You should speak in the words of Torah when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the road, and when you lie down and when you arise” (Devarim 6:7) wasn’t merely a *possuk*, a *mitzvah*, or even an aspiration to yearn for – it was their way of life! The sole occupation for the Dor Hamidbar was Torah study. The *midbar* was actually a forty year *kollel*, a Torah Academy.

### **The ‘Main Dish’ Of Our People**

And it was that *kollel* that would define what the Am Yisroel would be forever. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (92a) says: אֵין שָׂרִיד אֲלָא תַלְמִיד חֲכָם, that the word *sarid*, “leftover” or “the one who remains” refers to a *talmid chochom*. Now that’s a puzzle, why is a *talmid chochom* called a “leftover”? He’s not the leftover; he’s the main dish after all!

There are various *pshatim*, but the simple *pshat* is that originally the whole Klal Yisroel were *chachomim*; the entire Dor Hamidbar was a big *kollel* of *talmidei chachomim*. And therefore, anyone who studies the Torah today is a ‘leftover’ from those days in the *midbar*. Because it was then that the Am Yisroel in its entirety recognized the truth that the goal of every Jew is to be a *talmid chochom*.

And from then on, the study of Torah became the national vocation and pastime. Never did the Am Yisroel, in all its subsequent history, ever use

their leisure time for anything else but Torah. There was no telling stories of adventure and war, and no playing sports. There were no theaters or stadiums and no amusement parks either. We found everything we wanted and everything we needed in the study of Torah and in the raising of families to be *ohavei Torah*. The word entertainment doesn't exist in the lexicon of our people.

### **Why Are We Still Here?**

And that's what Rav Saadia Gaon meant when he said (Sefer Emunos V'deios 3:7) אֵין אֲמִתְנוּ אֶמְרָה אֵלָּא בַּתּוֹרָה, that we are a nation only as a Torah nation. It means the following: We have no right to exist. We should have long ago disappeared. Where is Edom? They disappeared! Where is Amon? They disappeared! It's all gone! Where is Ancient Mitzrayim? All gone! Ancient Greece is all gone, everything is underground. You're going to need a lot of shovels and you'll have to sweat a lot before you can see all the ancient nations of the world.

So why are we still here? We're also one of the ancient nations, so why didn't we also disappear along with all the others? And the answer is that we are only here because of the Torah. We are a Torah-nation and that's the cause of our existence. It's the study of Torah that defines the Am Yisroel; it's our life-breath, our way of life. We are a nation of Torah learners and that's why we are forever. Hashem is forever, His Torah is forever, and we who study His Torah will be forever.

### **The Pageant In The Mesivta**

You know that in Bavel there were great Mesivtos, great yeshivos where the *chachomim* gathered to study and to teach. There was a Mesivta in Sura where Rav was, and there was another Mesivta in Naharda'eh where Shmuel lived; two big Mesivtos that were the center of

the Am Yisroel. And there were other Mesivtos too that functioned in Bavel.

But the Mesivta wasn't a place where you just learned Torah and heard *shiurim*. It was a very interesting experience, the Mesivta. Everything was done with a procedure. They used to march into the *beis medrash* at the beginning of the session; the *chachomim* marched in first, and then the *talmidim* marched in behind them, and everyone took his place; each one of the *chachomim* had his particular place. And there were designated people who would make the announcement, "The *chachomim* are coming in now; they're entering into the Mesivta." It was *mamish* like a pageant; that's how they opened up the Mesivta.

### **Babylonian State Of The Union**

And not only in the beginning of the *zman*; every day was like that. It was done with a certain panoply, like in a royal tribunal, with certain procedures, formalities and announcements. Like in the Congress *l'havdil* or in a king's palace; it was done with the greatest kind of ceremony. And we should ask ourselves: What was this for? Why all the fanfare?! Why couldn't they just get busy with learning already? Isn't that what they came for? It wasn't the State of the Union address after all; it was a yeshivah! And they didn't do this once a year; it was *every day*!

And the answer is that this pomp and the ceremony was vital for an understanding of the place of the Torah in the Am Yisroel.

In the *midbar*, where they all saw the Mishkan, and they all knew that hidden inside, in the room that Hashem chose to reside in, was the *luchos* and the Torah, so the entire nation lived with a tangible understanding that it was the study of the Torah that was the core function of our people – everybody was learning in *kollel*, and there was no question in anyone's mind that *limud Torah* was the function of our people. But in order to

keep that fire of *kavod haTorah* alive forever and to understand the centrality of the Torah to our nation, the nation had to see with their own eyes the glory of Torah. And so the Mesivta functioned with the prominence it deserved and the Am Yisroel learned that the aristocracy of our people were the ones who were studying the Toras Hashem in the *beis medrash*.

### **The Great Kiddush Hashem**

In Bavel they also established the *Yarchei Kallah* together with the Mesivta. Twice a year there was a *yarchei kallah*, a *kiddush Hashem* of remarkable proportions. You know they were almost all farmers in Bavel, so when the farming season was over, two months a year, tens of thousands of people came to the Mesivta. The town was overflowing with Jews. They slept on the streets, on the roofs, and in cellars, and they were learning all the time. The entire month they were learning Torah. And the *chachmei haTorah* were there to test them, to see if they knew it! Everybody was learning the same thing – it was a scene to behold – they were all learning the same *mesichta* and the *chachomim* farherred them.

And it wasn't little children we're talking about; these were adults, men in their forties and fifties, older than that too, men with families. From where did this fire of dedication to Torah come? How could a nation of so many different personalities: workers, wise men, simple folk, intellectuals, rich and poor alike all humbly submit themselves before the *chachmei haTorah*?

And the answer is that it wasn't something that began in Bavel; it was already engraved on our souls from the *Dor Hamidbar*. The same way the *Dor Hamidbar* submitted themselves before Moshe Rabbeinu, the Am Yisroel continued that practice always. And therefore there was always a tremendous outpouring of Torah learning, a tremendous demonstration that Torah is

everything for the Am Yisroel. We are always a nation of Torah learners.

## *Part II. The Fire Burns On*

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### **Nothing But Torah**

Once upon a time Jewish men didn't stay home at night. They weren't at the movies either; they were in the study halls, in the *shuls*. When fathers and sons would return home at night from the *beis medrash* they would bring all their baggage of Torah with them. Mothers and sisters would hear nothing but Torah. And therefore the Jewish street used to be a street of Torah.

Even a certain writer, an enemy of the Torah – I won't honor him by saying his name here – when describing Cracow in the times of the Rama he said that the children in the street “babbled Torah.” And the truth is that it wasn't only Cracow. That's how it was in every Jewish community; every town was a yeshivah town.

I remember when I was a little boy in Baltimore, when the new immigrants arrived, they used to laugh when they saw that the *shuls* were locked during the day. Locked?! “Aren't there people learning all day in the *shuls*?” And it wasn't the *talmidei chachomim* who laughed; it was the peddler, the poor working man trying to eke out a living. It was something impossible to them! Because in Europe, even a hundred years ago, they were still emulating the *Dor Hamidbar*, and still learning the lessons of the Mishkan. Some were there all day, some would come in for an hour here and there, but to close the *shul*!?

### **No Seats Available In Shul!**

When I was in Lithuania I once visited a *shul* in a small town and an old *melamed*, a remnant from the old generation, said to me, “Before World War I there was a time when if you came a little bit late to this *shul* on Thursday night you couldn't find a seat. It was filled with people

learning late into the night. *Every night the shul was filled with people learning.*”

In Slabodka, a *bachur* whom I learned with *b'chavrusa* once told me that in Beers, his hometown in Lithuania, there used to be a *chevrah mishmarim*. This was a group of people who were peddlers all week; it was their bitter lot in life to put a pack of merchandise on their backs and trudge through the gentile hamlets and villages to peddle merchandise among non-Jews. Now in those days a Jew still looked like a Jew, so the gentiles would set their dogs on the Jews as they passed through the town. It was a hard life, a wearisome week of work. And where did they go when they finally returned home? They gathered in the *shul* in Beers where they would spend *all* Thursday night learning to make up for the time they missed during the week. That was the *chevrah mishmarim!*

And as a young man in New York, I saw echoes of those great days. I once tried spending the whole night learning in a *chassidische shtiebel* on the Lower East Side on Montgomery street. I tried staying awake, but I kept dozing over the Gemara. But I couldn't sleep anyhow because the *Poilisheh chassidim* started coming in while it was still dark. They put on their *gartels*, took down their Gemaras, and started learning before the morning came. Early in the morning when it was still dark, the *shtiebel* was packed with Jews sitting and learning. And in the *Gerrer shtiebel* I used to watch a *Litvishe* Jew standing and learning Mishnayos by heart all night. Once in a while he would look into the open Mishna to refresh his memory. That's a remnant of the older generation; once upon a time the Jewish nation studied Torah.

### **The Greatest Mitzvah**

There are two *pesukim* in Mishlei: One says *בְּכֹל הַפְּצִיָּה לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ* – “*All of the things that you desire cannot equal to the Torah*” (Mishlei 3:15). All the things that people love in this world – people

love wealth, they love honor, they love food and all types of pleasure – it's nothing compared to the Torah. Everybody desires things in this world, all good things; health and happiness, *nachas*, long years, and wealth. But nothing compares to one word of the Torah.

But there's another *possuk*, *וְכֹל הַפְּצִיָּים לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ* (ibid. 8:11). Here it doesn't say *chafatzecha*, *your* desires; it says *chafatzim*, all desirable things, *even the things that Hashem desires*, *בְּה' יִשְׁווּ בָהּ*, cannot compare to the Torah. What does that mean? It means that even all the *mitzvos* of the Torah cannot compare to the *mitzvah* of studying Torah (Moed Kattan 9b).

Of course if you have to do a *mitzvah*, and there's no one else who can do it, you have to stop learning and do the *mitzvah*; but the *mitzvos* of the Torah are not as great a privilege as the one *mitzvah* of studying Torah. *כָּל הַפְּצִיָּה*, all the things that *you* consider important, *וְכֹל הַפְּצִיָּים שְׁמַיִם*, and even all the things that *Hashem* considers important, all the *mitzvos*, *אֵינָם שְׁוִים לְדָבָר אֶחָד מֵן הַתּוֹרָה*, *they don't equal one thing of the Torah*.

One line of Torah is more important than all the *mitzvos* put together. How can that be?! It's astonishing! All the *mitzvos* together, the *tefillin* and *mezuzos* and *tzitzis* and *matzah* and *korban pesach*, all the obligations of the Torah cannot compare to one thing of the Torah. You sit down, open a Gemara and learn one line, it's such a tremendous happiness, such a great achievement, that it eclipses, it far outdoes all the good things together. If you can open the Gemara for one line, you should know what you're doing for yourself in this world. I'm not saying you're a *talmid chochom* already; that takes work after all. But you're already joining the aristocracy of the Am Yisroel; you're emulating the upper class, the elite of our nation. You're becoming a Torah Jew; because that's the function of a Jew in this world.

### **The Kosel In Your Living Room**

You know it has become the style today to travel. People are busy traveling, going, doing, visiting, and there's no time left for the most important function of our lives. Even to Eretz Yisroel, people are traveling back and forth, back and forth. For what? Who needs you there? What is the purpose of Eretz Yisroel? It's only for you to make something out of yourself. You're going to give up learning, even one line of Gemara, for travel?! וְכַל הַפְּצִים לֹא יֵשׁוּן בָּהּ!

If you want to go to the Kosel Ma'aravi, then you should know that the Shas Bavli is your Kosel Ma'aravi. Make the *seforim shrank* with the Shas Bavli in it, your Kosel Ma'aravi. That's your success! The success of life is transferring the contents of the Shas into your mind. So stand in front of that big Shas on the shelves and make *that* your Kosel Ma'aravi. You want to give that up to travel thousands of miles to Eretz Yisroel? If you want to, you can put *kvitlach*, prayer notes, in between the Gemaros on your shelf and pray to Hashem for success in becoming a *Shas yid*.

### **The Ambitious Couple**

The Shas is our everything! That's why the *luchos* were the centerpiece of the Mishkan, because that's everything. Since the *churban Beis Hamikdash*, when the *kodesh kodoshim* and the *luchos* went lost, there's nothing more important to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than the place where Torah is studied (Brachos 8a). There's nothing in the world more *kadosh*, more special to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than the study of His Torah.

You must have *seforim* in your home and they should be your pride. It's very important! Even if you don't have the competition of a television set, nevertheless if you live within four walls without those important companions that every Jew must have then you're not going to utilize your life. Every young couple that begins to feather its nest after marriage should have an ambition to line

the walls of their home with bookshelves of *seforim*.

### **Building Your Dream House**

That should be your dream house! If your wife wants drapes, OK, nothing wrong with drapes; you can buy her drapes at the five and ten too. Explain to her – first you'll have to explain it to yourself – the beauty of a home where the walls are covered with shelves of *seforim*. And even if you'll dip into the *sefer* only once in your lifetime – you bought a *sefer* and it cost you sometimes twenty dollars and you used it only once? It was worth it; it was a bargain. Sometimes you get a lift, you can get some inspiration from one line, and there's no price you could put on it. So in case your wife tells you, “Look Chaim, you used this *sefer* only once, or maybe you never even used it yet. So why did we spend so much money on the *seforim*?” So tell her, “Chana'leh, wait; if I'll ever look into it *once* it's going to be worth *everything* that we paid for it.”

And the truth is that even if you never looked inside, it was worth it. Because just to have *seforim* lining the walls of your house, it's a demonstration of where your heart is. It should be the showcase of pride in your home. I always say that even if you're never going to open it, it's worth all the money in the world to have a big Shas – buy the biggest one you could find and display it in your home. The Shas, the *seforim*, should be placed in the most prominent place in the home. When you walk into a Jewish home, it shouldn't be the chandelier or the curtains that you see. It should be a big Shas, shelves and shelves of *seforim* should be showcased in your living room. The *seforim shrank*, that's the glory of our nation, that's what makes your house into a Mishkan.

### **Important Demonstrations**

And if the loyal Jewish home, with *seforim* lined shelves is the Mishkan, then the *beis medrash*, the yeshivah is the *kodesh kodoshim*.

The atmosphere in the *beis medrash* is *mamish kodesh kodoshim*. I can tell you – I’ve been in the atmosphere for so many years. It has an effect on you. No matter how good you are, you become improved by breathing that air.

You have to realize that תְּהִלַּתוֹ בְּקִהְלֵי חַסִּידִים – “The praise of Hashem is when there is a great number of *chassidim* coming together” (Tehillim 149:1). Just that alone – when the *chassidim* come together as a *kahal* – that itself is a *tehillas Hashem*. What are they all gathered in the *beis medrash* for? They’re all there for the purpose of demonstrating that learning Torah is important. Every day the *beis medrash* is full of demonstrators. Some are demonstrating by learning Gemara. Some are demonstrating by learning Mishnayos. Some are demonstrating by just sitting there. But they are all demonstrating that learning Torah is the foundation of the Am Yisroel.

Do you realize what that demonstration means?! Walk out on the street and what do you see? Even a *frum* street: Money is important. Food is important. Clothing is important. Who knows what else is important?! So the *beis medrash* is *mamish* a Noach’s *teivah* – especially today. Boys get married when they’re young, twenty maybe, twenty-one, twenty-two. You can’t go out into the world yet. A boy of twenty-two is very raw material. He’s not capable of dealing with the world. He has to be in the *kollel* for some time; for years and years. Even if he’s not so serious about learning, it’s the best place for him to be; *limud haTorah* is our salvation.

### Part III. Bearing the Torch

#### A Dedicated Life

A yeshivah man who leaves the *kollel* and he begins a life of productivity in *gashmius*, must make sure that he remains dedicated to Torah learning as well. A man like this, he can’t afford

the luxury of wasting all those odd hours. A yeshivah man, whether he’s still in the yeshivah or not, has to get up Shabbos morning early to learn. He has to spend Shabbos studying. Shabbos night he can’t go out to *melave malkas* with the family. He can’t visit Uncle Yossi on Sundays; he can’t go to every wedding, and he can’t stay late at the ones he goes to.

I recall once – it was at a *melave malka* in the old building and I said over from the Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:13): הַרוּצֵה לְזָכוֹת בְּבִתְרָה שָׁל תוֹרָה – “Anybody who wants to earn the crown of Torah, אֵל יֵאבֵד אֶחַת מְלִילוֹתָיו – he shouldn’t waste even one of his nights.” You have to work by day, what could you do already; but you shouldn’t waste even one of your nights.

You hear that?! The Rambam says that you shouldn’t even waste one of your nights! And there was a man who was sitting there and he heard that. I saw that it went into his ears and he changed his way of life. He became great subsequently. He was a working man and he became great in Torah. I remember once his wife had to attend a wedding in the Riverside Plaza, uptown, but that night was a *shiur*. So he took his wife by car to Riverside Plaza and left her there and he came back here to attend the *shiur*. Then he went all the way back to the hall to bring her home. That’s dedication!

And so, if you won’t waste any of your nights, you’ll be able to remain a yeshivah man forever. Forget about going to weddings. Forget about family parties. Now you’re wedded to the Torah. Now of course some women will say: “What kind of a life is that? What kind of a life is a *kollel* life? My husband is a businessman, not a *kollel* man.” I’ll tell you – it’s a dedicated life; it’s a life dedicated to success! If you want to be a nothing, so you do what everybody else does and you’ll succeed in becoming what you want to become. Nothing! But if you have some idealism, if the fire still burns

in you, then this is the career of success for you in this world.

### **Women Lamdanim**

Now you'll ask me about the women. How do women do that? Women encourage their husbands to learn Torah. They say, "Chaim, go to the *shiur*". "Chaim, go to the yeshivah". They encourage them to go, so they have *full partnership in all the Torah* of their men and that's going to be their great happiness. That's what the Jewish nation once did. In Europe of long ago every shul used to be a place where people sat and learned. Some men worked part of the day, but others were forced by their wives to go and learn *all day long*. Their wives ran little businesses, they managed the family, and their husbands were expected to do nothing but learn for their entire lives.

In Europe, before World War I, there were a lot of Jews who moved into the shul in the morning, and they didn't move out till late at night. There was a whole population like that all over Eastern Europe. It stopped with World War I, it began to disintegrate little by little. But way back, throughout our history, all the shuls had a big populace of learners. Many men were driven away to the shuls by their wives. These dedicated women, the *noshim tzidkoniyyos*, said "Don't work; you sit and learn and I'll take care of the *parnassah*." All over Eastern Europe it was a frequent thing. Even when I came to Europe in 1932, when it was already ruined, I saw it. The wife stood in the store and her husband sat in the *beis medrash*.

### **A Full Partner**

The Zichron Yaakov tells us that when Friday night came – this was before the people spoiled – so all the townspeople slept until around *chatzos*. Then they started getting up to study Torah. He even describes how there were a lot of Jews who weren't capable of studying Torah so a paid *rebbe* would come to their homes late Friday

night or early Shabbos morning. A man would learn with his *rebbe* while his wife was still in bed behind the curtain; and she was *shepping nachas* from her husband's learning. To take the little money they had and use it for learning was a great sacrifice that the wife made. But she was encouraging him and was happy with what he was doing.

And therefore if the wife cooperates and she doesn't demand the husband's presence at home; if she understands it's her success as well, that it's her partnership, that woman is from the *noshim tzidkoniyyos* that always preserved our nation. And the fact that he is making progress, that he's forging ahead in learning, that's her *zechus*. She is a full partner in all of his Torah; not a fifty percent partner, a one hundred percent partner!

### **The Other Siyum HaShas**

And not only is she learning Shas along with him, but she's raising *Shasim* at home too. Every child that a mother raises is like finishing Shas many times! So she's at home learning her Shas and she's encouraging him to finish his Shas in the *beis medrash*. And with such a great partner in life he can forge ahead, as long as he's not lazy and he's willing to carry the brunt of a career of study. And that's what the Jewish nation once did; and that's an ideal which many people are beginning to realize today.

Right now in Gan Eden all the men and women are enjoying the great splendor of eternal happiness because of their portion in Torah – in addition to all the good things that they do. You're all invited to go to Olam Haba. All those who pass away, even a *pashute Yehudi*, is basking in happiness in the World to Come. But those people who spend some time learning Torah are far, far more privileged, beyond all the rest of them.

## Start Selling Peanuts

So here's a man who asks me: "How can someone even begin to learn when there's so much to learn; it looks so impossible?" But you have to know that those are the words of the *yetzer hara* talking. When it comes to making money you don't say, "Why should I bother to start making money when there's so much money to make?" No, you don't say that; you start selling peanuts on the street corner, you hustle, you try to get whatever you can. And little by little you accomplish.

Start hustling; learn one line of Gemara. You mean to say you're going to leave this world and you won't be able to say that you learned one line of Gemara? You can't learn one line?! Are you such a dumbhead?! Ask somebody to help you! Say it over inside, ten times, fifty times.

Now the truth is you could learn more than one line. If you would learn one line a week, you know that in ten years you'd know something! One line a week, and you'd review it constantly. One line a week; who couldn't do that?! And so, there won't be any excuse to give on that great day when the question will be asked, "Osakta baTorah? Did you engage in the study of My Torah?" Everybody must study the Gemara. And it's not hard. It's difficult to learn a lot of Gemara, the whole Shas, but one line?! You can't learn one line?!

## "Who Was Rav Huna?"

In *shomayim* they'll ask you, "Who was Rav Huna?" "Rav Huna? I think he lived in our neighborhood." There are people like that; they think that Rav Huna was maybe the rav of the other shul in their neighborhood. No; we have to recognize our *Tana'im* and *Amora'im*. Not just recognize them but to love the names in the Gemara. You should love the sound of Abbaye and Rava; of Rav Papa and Rav Huna brei di'Rav Yehoshua. All of our great men; love their names!

The taste of their names should be on our tongues sweeter than honey. Because that is the honey of the Am Yisroel.

And therefore we are not impressed by the fact that there's so much to learn. Certainly we are impressed but we aren't overwhelmed. It says *לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לִגְמוֹר*, it's not your job to learn the whole Shas. If you can, learn it. But at least learn a piece of it. You mean to say that you're going to leave here and you'll forget about what you heard here, about the great ideals of Torah learning? You're not going to learn Gemara because it's so much, so vast of a wisdom?! No, you have to learn, at least one line. And make it your business to repeat that line again and again and again.

## The Perfumed Yeshivah Man

Now once a person understands these ideas, so the way he looks at the Am Yisroel is transformed. Because now he understands who really are the aristocrats of the Am Yisroel. And so when you see a yeshivah man, a *talmid chochom*, you know that he is the one who is closest to the *kodesh kodoshim*, he's closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu than anyone else. And you admire him, you're impressed by him.

That's what the Gemara says: *עֲתִידִין בְּחוּרֵי שְׂרָאֵל שְׂיִתְנוּ רִיחַ טוֹב כַּלְבָּנוֹן* – "The young men of Israel will in the future emit a fragrance like the forest of Levanon" (Brachos 43b). The time will come when the young *talmidei chachomim*, the yeshivah men who spend their days and nights learning, will issue a sweet fragrance like the cedar trees of the Levanon. It means that one day the world will recognize the truth; the whole world will learn to look through the Eyes of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. And everyone will see that it is the Torah learners who smell pleasant, that they are the ones who give off the sweetest of fragrances in this world.

But we are expected to recognize that truth even today. When you see a yeshivah man, you should imagine that he smells like sweet smelling

roses. Let's say you see a group of yeshivah boys walking in the street. Now, there is nothing especially attractive about them. They're all wearing the same uniform, white shirts, and black pants; nothing special. So what about it? What's so important?

But if you understand this lesson of *Parshas Pekudei*, you understand that these yeshivah men are the aristocrats of our nation. Because it was in the *midbar* that the Am Yisroel learned that our nation is only a Torah nation. That's the lifeblood of our people; it's what we are. **אֵין אֲמֵרְתֵנוּ אֲמָהָה אֶלָּא בַּתּוֹרָה** – “Our nation is a nation only because of the Torah.” And it's those who keep pumping the blood of Torah through the veins of our nation, who are keeping us alive. And therefore it's the Torah learners who are the aristocrats of our nation, the ones whom we admire and emulate. Once you understand this, you have gained a new perspective on the Am Yisroel, and you've learned to see our nation the way Hashem sees them!

### Have A Wonderful Shabbos

#### LET'S GET PRACTICAL

##### *Joining the Torah Nation*

The centerpiece of the Mishkan was the Torah. “Our nation is only a nation by means of the Torah.” This week, once a day, I will *bli neder* stand near my *seforim shrank* as if I'm standing at the Kosel and reflect on the fact that I am a member of the Torah nation. I will beg Hashem for the merit of acquiring more and more Torah Knowledge, and think of ways to achieve that.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

103 - Poverty | 108 - For What to Pray | 783 - With the Torah People  
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**There's a statement there from Rav Yosef (Megillah 16b) who says that learning Torah is greater than saving lives. I don't understand that. Maybe Rebbe can explain that to us?**



Yes. The Gemara states that Mordechai at the beginning was a leader of all the Jews and at the end of the whole episode it says he was accepted by most of his brothers. “Most” means not all. So the question is, after this great salvation which Mordechai helped bring about, he surely should have been accepted by everybody. So why did he lose out with some of his brothers?

So the Gemara says because the study of the Torah is greater than saving Jews. And during this time that he was busy in the king's palace, he lost some time from the study of the Torah. And therefore, at the beginning when he was all Torah, he had saved nobody, he was accepted by all his brothers. At the end, he had to spend some time in the king's service; after all he was appointed as the king's right hand and he was given the king's ring at the end, so he had to lose some of the time from learning and so he was accepted by “most” of his brothers, not by all of them. And it's because the study of the Torah is the greatest distinction a Jew can have. So what's the problem?

**Q: But aren't all the Torah leaders of the Am Yisrael obligated to be *mevatel Torah* for *hatzalas nefashos*?**

**A:** Certainly you have to. You have to stop Torah for *kiddush levanah* too. For any custom, you have to stop the learning of the Torah. No question, you have to stop learning. And still, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't send such a mitzvah to a Jew and allows him to study the Torah in peace, he's more fortunate. Because the greatest gift to a man is perfection in the Torah. If you have to stop to save somebody's life, you must stop. There's no such thing as not stopping! But the time that you lose is deducted from your perfection.

However in the next world, there are two Gan Edens; a Gan Eden for Torah and a Gan Eden for good deeds.

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