

Third Edition

Thriving in Our Yeshiva - and Beyond!

**A Ben Torah's Guide to Maximizing His
Growth in Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan**



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A Ben Torah's Guide to Maximizing His Growth in
Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan

Expanded Third Edition

Written and compiled by Judah Diamant

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הרה"צ' שכטר
ראש ישיבה וראש כולל
ישיבת רבינו יצחק אלחנן

כב' יקירי הר"ר יהודה הי"ו,
לצמח הילל את כל התקוות
אצמתי, כצאו מאלו ההצרכים.
יש לי הרבה נחלות חשובות
אמוציאות שבצאו אליהם צדק רשום
אז עושה, אצלם מאמרו רמנו
הר"ר מאור הצדקה, שיוח' נאמרו
לצדקת וצדקת אצלם אצמתי
תביטו וצדקת אצלם אצלם

צדקת,
צדקת עשה
י"צ אצלם, תשפ"ג

כב' יקירי הר"ר יהודה הי"ו,

עברתי היום על כל הקונטרס ולדעתי, כדאי מאד להדפיסו. יש צד הרבה נקודות חשובות ומועילות שדאי לתלמידים לשום לצ עליהם. וכל ג' מאמרי רבנו הר"ר מאיר טברסקי, שיחי', נאמרו צבהירות וצטוב טעם ודעת ודבר גדול תעשה אם תפרסמם!

בכבוד,
כבי שכטר
י"ד אב, תשפ"ג

Dedicated to
Annette and Stanley Strachman

לזכר נשמת

ר' שמואל צבי ב"ר שלום פורמאן
האשה ריזל בת ר' יעקב זעיגעלשטיין
שנשרפו על קידוש השם

הי"ד

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

What is This Book?

Every yeshiva, company, and organization of any type has its own unique culture, strengths, and challenges. Some of these cultural elements are present by design and are intended to help the entity and its constituents achieve their goals, while other elements are emergent, i.e. come into being over time based on the aggregate behavior and decisions of everyone involved in the organization. It will typically take a newcomer an extended period of time – at least months, and sometimes years – to fully notice and understand how an organization functions, and how he can perform optimally within it.

Whether it is important or not to accelerate this integration period depends on the nature of the entity one has just joined. There is no great loss if it takes months to fully understand, and integrate into, a company where one starts a new job, since any reasonable employer assumes that there will be a ramp-up period during which a new employee is learning the ropes. However, every moment – every day, hour, minute, and second – of a *talmid's* time in yeshiva is extremely precious, both because of the infinite value of the *talmud* Torah in which he is engaged, and also because our years in yeshiva form the spiritual foundation for the rest of our lives. Therefore, it is very important that a *talmid* gain an accurate understanding of the opportunities and challenges of his new yeshiva as fast as possible, so he can make the most of his time there.

Another fundamental difference between integrating into a new company vs. into a new *makom* Torah is the nature of the relationship we have with our new surroundings. Our association with a company is primarily transactional; we are there to make appropriate *hishtadlus* for *parnassa* (which includes being faithful and reliable employees) and to accomplish whatever good we can along the way, but we do not view a company as the source of our values or our outlook on life. By contrast,

our time in yeshiva should be a formative and defining period during which we not only generally grow in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, but also receive a *mesorah* of attitudes, priorities, etc. from our *rebbeim*. As such, the sooner we have an initial understanding of the *hashkafa* of our *rebbeim* in key areas of life, the sooner we can begin to delve into it, integrate it into our thinking, and continuously refine and improve our understanding and fulfillment of our *mesorah*.

This book was compiled as a “quick start guide” to help *talmidim* gain familiarity with some of the key *hashkafos* that characterize our yeshiva, as well as some of the key strategies a *talmid* can employ to get the most out of our yeshiva. *Baruch Hashem*, a number of *shiurim* have been given by our *rebbeim* over the years that capture our yeshiva’s *hashkafic mesorah*, and some of those *shiurim* have been reproduced in this volume. I am not aware, however, of any systematic treatment of specific strategies for *talmidim* to employ when navigating the opportunities and challenges of our yeshiva, and therefore had no choice but to write one, which is found at the beginning of this volume. While there is no *hava amina* that my thoughts are worthy of being included in the same book as those of Rav Hershel Schachter and Rav Mayer Twersky, I take direction from the words of *Chazal* (*Avos* 2:5), “במקום שאין אנשים השתדל להיות איש”. The absurdity of my thoughts being included together with theirs is elevated to the level of the absolutely ludicrous when the chapter I wrote (“Advice on Maximizing Your Growth in Our Yeshiva”) is placed first in the volume, but that too seems to be necessary; because the topics dealt with therein impact decisions that *talmidim* must already make during their first couple of weeks in yeshiva (in addition to impacting decisions they will make throughout their stay), it was placed first to increase the odds of *talmidim* reading it as soon as possible.

My deepest gratitude is extended to Rav Schachter and Rav Twersky for allowing me to present their *divrei Torah* in this volume. The chapters that contain Rav Twersky’s thoughts are printed with his

permission but have not been reviewed by him, except for “Perspectives on a College Education”, which Rav Twersky edited. The chapters adapting Rav Schachter’s *shiurim* have all been reviewed by Rav Schachter.

I would like to thank Dr. Allan Weissman who edited all the chapters presenting *divrei Torah* from Rav Hershel Schachter. Dr. Weissman is well known in our yeshiva and extended community as the author of the “Rav Schachter on...” series of eight volumes which beautifully and faithfully capture Rav Schachter’s *shiurim* on a wide range of topics. The reader is strongly encouraged to avail himself of this eight-volume gift that Dr. Weissman has given the world. I would also like to thank Yoni Rabinovitch and Srully Scharf for proofreading the second edition of this volume.

There are two final things about this book the reader should be aware of. First, because it is composed primarily of written adaptations of oral *shiurim*, we had to strike a balance between that which is expected from well-written essays on the one hand and maintaining the flavor and choice of words in the original oral presentations on the other. As such, there may be times when the style, structure, or syntax is not what one would expect in a written work. Lastly, the reader should note that this volume is self-published and is not a Y.U. publication.

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This third edition includes three new chapters (1, 3, and 5), and has been reorganized into three sections (“*Hishtadlus* for *Parnassa*”, “Secular Studies”, and “General Outlook”), followed by an appendix which collects an expanded set of sources on the topic of *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*.

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Advice on Maximizing Your Growth in Our Yeshiva

This chapter's goal is to help *talmidim* who are learning in Y.U. take full advantage of the world-class spiritual opportunities our yeshiva makes available to every one of us. Cognizant of the reality of “זה לעמת זה עשה אלקים” (*Koheles* 7:14, see Rashi there), i.e. that the challenges created by the *yetzer hara* are proportional to the spiritual potential that is present, we will highlight some of the traps that the *yetzer hara* plants in each of our paths in his attempt to prevent the tremendous growth in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* that every one of us can work towards and achieve while learning in Y.U.

The need to share these thoughts stems, in part, from our uniqueness among yeshivas. As we will discuss, the set of ways in which a successful *talmid* functions and grows in our yeshiva differs to some degree from how he would do so elsewhere. These differences lead to awesome and unparalleled growth for a great many successful *talmidim*, but also create the risk of a *talmid* not understanding what he needs to do until he is already multiple semesters or years into his stay in our *beis medrash* (or, in extreme cases, never figuring it out) and therefore missing out on growth in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* that he could've achieved.

This chapter was written based on the experience of being a *talmid* in our *beis medrash* since the Fall 1992 semester and watching one cohort of *talmidim* after another over that period. Observation over such a long period of time allows one to discern patterns of opportunity and challenge that are invisible to one who is only here for a comparably small number of years, and those patterns that have held constant over the last thirty years are focused on herein. It is critical to realize, however, that in other areas that we will not address, significant changes can and do occur in as short of an amount of time as five years or less. It is therefore absolutely essential for a *talmid* who is seeking personalized *eitzas* in any aspect of his *avodas Hashem* for which the *metzius* in yeshiva is relevant to get that guidance from a *talmid chacham* who is currently in our yeshiva and fully aware of the current set of facts, in all their subtleties and nuances. Someone who learned in our yeshiva five or more years ago, and, all the more so, someone who never learned in our yeshiva, is extremely unlikely to have an accurate perception of the current set of opportunities and challenges that exist here.¹

¹ This need for one giving advice to have current, complete, and preferably firsthand, knowledge is not something that it is at all unique to Y.U. For example, I once heard Rav Schachter refuse to *pasken halacha l'ma'aseh* if Jews may go up to those portions of *Har Habayis* which are definitely not where the *azara* etc. were. He explained that the reason for this refusal to *pasken* was that as a rabbi who lives in America, he can't *pasken a shayla* which is specific to *Eretz Yisrael* since one must be intimately familiar with all the nuances of the situation in order to *pasken*. Similarly, Rav Meir Schlesinger (the founding *rosh yeshiva* of Yeshivat Sha'alvim) shared that someone in France once called him with a *shayla*, the answer to which seemed to Rav Schlesinger to be relatively obvious since it was dealt with explicitly in *Shulchan Aruch*, and he *paskened* accordingly. He subsequently received a call from someone else in France who informed him of the potentially damaging ramifications of his *psak* due to the facts on the ground in France at the time. Rav Schlesinger said that he decided then to never again *pasken shaylas* that come from *chutz la'aretz*. The *talmidim*, and *kvod Shomayim*, would benefit from everyone following these wise examples.

A Highly Accomplished Yeshiva

Our yeshiva has a lot in common with other yeshivas whose *talmidim* go to college. For example, many *talmidim* in our yeshiva learn two *sedarim* a day and go to college during what would otherwise be a third *seder*. Additionally, the *yeshiva* has arranged for the *talmidim* to get college credit for their learning – thirty-two credits for a year of learning in *Eretz Yisrael*, and the option to take *shiur* for up to three credits each semester² - to reduce the number of secular classes that must be taken in order to earn a bachelor's degree. Despite these similarities, too often a *talmid* decides, before even setting foot in our *beis medrash*, that once he arrives in Y.U. his primary growth in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* is over, and thus his goal should be to merely maintain whatever he achieved elsewhere. This *yei'ush* is a tremendous victory for the *yetzer hara*, and a terrible loss of potential for the *talmid*.

In an attempt to preempt such tragic loss of potential, we will very briefly highlight some of the amazing history and accomplishments of our *beis medrash*. A multi-volume set of books would be necessary to document all the Torah achievements of our yeshiva, so we will limit ourselves to a tiny, but representative, glimpse into the multigenerational greatness of our *beis medrash*. An accurate sense of the century-long history of *gadlus* in our *beis medrash* should inspire, energize, and motivate a *talmid* to take full advantage of the incredible learning and growth opportunities that are available to him in our yeshiva.

² There is a strange phenomenon of some of the very same *talmidim* who did not think twice about accepting the thirty-two credits for learning in *Eretz Yisrael* feeling that getting credit for *shiur* in Y.U. somehow compromises learning *lishma*. One's learning is certainly not lacking in *lishma* if his intention in taking *shiur* for credit is to free up more time for Torah learning, or to prod himself to attain greater mastery over the *mesechta* and *shiurim*; both of those motivations, by their very definition, are *l'shem Torah*!

We will first list off some of the *gedolei* Torah who have been Y.U. *roshei yeshiva* in the past. While the definition of what it means to be a *gadol* is more completely addressed by Rav Twersky in the *shiur* about the Rav *zt"l* which has been reproduced later in this publication, at this point we will satisfy ourselves with the following simple definition: a *gadol b'Torah* is someone whose greatness is recognized by *talmedei chachomim* throughout the Torah world.

- 1) **Rav Shlomo Polachek *zt"l*, a.k.a. "the Meitcheter Ilui"** (1877-1928). Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman attested that he personally heard from Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, regarding Rav Polachek, in 1896, "*Aza meshunediger illui vi der Meitcheter hob ich in leben nit gezen* — I've never met such an unusual genius like the Meitcheter my entire life." Rav Polachek arrived in America in 1922 to become a *rosh yeshiva* at RIETS, where he taught for six years until his sudden passing in 1928.
- 2) **Rav Moshe Soloveitchik *zt"l*** (1879-1941). Rav Soloveitchik was the eldest son of Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik. He held various positions in Europe and immigrated to New York in 1929 to join the faculty as a Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS. He was the father of Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt"l* and Rav Ahron Soloveitchik *zt"l*.
- 3) **Rav Moshe Shatzkes *zt"l*** (1881-1958). Rav Shatzkes, known as the "Lomzhe Rov", was a preeminent *rosh yeshiva* and one of the greatest rabbis in all of Poland. He was a close friend of Rabbi Yitzchak Halevi Herzog, chief rabbi of Israel, and had been a close friend and confidante of both the Chofetz Chaim and Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzinski before the Second World War. He eulogized at both their funerals. Rav Shatzkes reached America in 1941 and was immediately appointed to become a senior Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS, remaining in this role for the last eighteen years of his life.³

³ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Shatzkes

- 4) **Rav Mendel Zaks *zt”l*** (1898-1974). Rav Zaks was the son-in-law of Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan *zt”l*, a.k.a. the Chofetz Chaim, and was appointed to be the *rosh* yeshiva in Radin in 1928. In 1946, he accepted the position of *rosh* yeshiva and *bochein* at RIETS. Legend has it that Rav Zaks edited the final version of the *Mishna Berura* in his office in the MTA building.⁴
- 5) **Rav Nisson Alpert *zt”l*** (1927-1986). Rav Alpert was widely recognized as being the *talmid muvhak* of Rav Moshe Feinstein *zt”l*.⁵ In 1967, he was appointed as a *rosh* yeshiva at RIETS, and later became the first *rosh kollel* of its *Kollel L’hora’ah*, i.e. *Yadin Yadin*.
- 6) **Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt”l*** (1903-1993). It is impossible for us to provide a quick but accurate summary of any aspect of the Rav *zt”l* – his *gadlus*, his impact on Y.U. and on the community in general, etc. Instead, we simply refer the reader to the talk Rav Twersky delivered on the occasion of the Rav’s tenth *yohrtzeit*, printed later in this volume.
- 7) **Rav Dovid Lifshitz *zt”l*** (1906-1993). Rav Lifshitz, commonly referred to as “Rav Dovid”, became a *rosh* yeshiva in RIETS in 1944. Rav Dovid had a unique and powerful impact on the *ruach* and *yiras shomayim* of our *beis medrash*.
- 8) **Rav Ahron Soloveitchik *zt”l*** (1917-2001). Rav Soloveitchik’s first teaching position was in Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, then headed by Rav Moshe Feinstein, from whom he received his *semichah*. Shortly thereafter Rav Ahron was appointed by Rav Yitzchak Hutner to give the highest *shiur* in Yeshiva Rabbi Chaim Berlin. Rav Soloveitchik then moved on to give a *shiur* in Y.U. and in 1966 he moved to Chicago to head the Hebrew Theological College in Skokie, Illinois, and later

⁴ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mendel_Zaks

⁵ See the book Sunset, by Rabbi Chanoch Teller, for further details.

opened his own yeshiva in Chicago, Yeshivas Brisk. He was well known for being a humble and kind man, yet one with an iron will. Although the stroke he suffered in 1983 left him partially paralyzed, in nearly constant pain and often in need of a wheelchair, he continued his duties at Yeshivas Brisk and flew to New York every week to give *shiur* at Y.U.⁶

Without proceeding any further, one should already have a sense of our yeshiva's wonderful place in the Torah world. However, the story of our yeshiva's Torah accomplishments does not at all end with its great *roshei yeshiva* of the past. It continues, to this very day, with our current *roshei yeshiva* as well as the consistent flow of outstanding *talmidim* who grow to become *bnei Torah* and *talmidei chachomim*. Compiling a list of every *talmid chacham* who learned in our *beis medrash* is a nearly impossible task. We will have to satisfy ourselves with four short, but important, points:

- From its earliest days, our yeshiva produced many *gedolim* who went on to be pillars of the Torah world, including Rav Avigdor Miller *zt"l*, Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg *zt"l*, Rav Nosson Meir Wachtfogel *zt"l* (*mashgiach ruchani*, Beth Medrash Govoha, a.k.a. Lakewood), Rav Mordechai Gifter *zt"l*, Rav Moshe Tzvi Aryeh Bick *zt"l*, and Rav Melech Schachter *zt"l*, and Rav Yitzchok Scheiner *zt"l*.
- Our yeshiva succeeded in producing subsequent generations of *roshei yeshiva* who not only serve our own *talmidim*, but are also recognized well beyond the four walls of our *beis medrash*. Examples include (picking one from each of three different age groups) Rav Hershel Schachter, Rav Zvi Sobolofsky, and Rav Aryeh Lebowitz.
- Most of the *rebbeim* in most of the yeshivas in *Eretz Yisrael* in which the *talmidim* learned for a year or two are *musmachim* of our yeshiva.

⁶ Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahron_Soloveichik

Additionally, a great many other yeshivas throughout the world have Y.U. alumni serving as *rebbeim* and *roshei* yeshiva as well.

- Rav Schachter has said on a number of occasions that there are quite a number of alumni who know how to learn very well, even though they earn a living in some field other than *klei kodesh*.⁷

It should be abundantly clear that a yeshiva that consistently enjoys elite Torah achievements for the better part of a century presents *talmidim* with incredible opportunities to learn and to grow. Every *talmid* should be excited by the possibilities that are open to him in our yeshiva! We should all set ambitious goals for ourselves (that are realistically calibrated to our abilities) to take maximal advantage of both the unique set of abilities that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has given each of us as well as the tremendous opportunity He has granted us to learn in a yeshiva which so consistently has so many *talmidim* who grow immensely in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* during their years in our *beis medrash*.

Transitioning from Learning in Israel

For many *talmidim*, the year or two of learning in *Eretz Yisrael* after high school is an extremely positive experience. While attending the yeshivas in *Eretz Yisrael* (henceforth referred to as the “Israel yeshivas”) for *shana alef* and *shana bet*, the *talmidim* are free to focus exclusively on learning Torah and other obvious forms of spiritual advancement, and it

⁷ It is important for *talmidim* to internalize the fact that several of *Klal Yisrael*’s influential *mechabrei seforim* were “*ba’alei batim*”, i.e. earned a living in some field other than *klei kodesh*. Examples include Rav Avraham Danzig (author of the *Chayey Adam*), Rav Menchem Zemba (author of a number of *seforim*, including *Totzos Chaim*), and Rav Pinchas Kehati (author of the *peirush* on *Mishna* that bears his name). This sets the bar very high for the standard we must hold ourselves to regardless of how we earn a living.

is absolutely correct for us all to yearn to spend our entire lives in such a situation, as the Rambam (*Hilchos Melachim* 12:4) famously writes:

לא נתאוו החכמים והנביאים ימות המשיח. לא כדי שישלטו על כל העולם. ולא כדי שירדו בעכו"ם. ולא כדי שינשאו אותם העמים. ולא כדי לאכל ולשתות ולשמח. אלא כדי שיהיו פנויין בתורה וחכמתה. ולא יהיה להם נוגש ומבטל. כדי שיזכו לחיי העולם הבא.

In addition to having no focus other than learning (or activities to prepare and encourage *talmidim* to learn), most of the successful Israel yeshivas strive to be supportive environments, where interested *talmidim* are closely guided and/or led along at each step of their path of growth. Sometimes this guidance comes in the form of one-on-one interaction with *rebbeim*, but even without extensive interaction of that type, the Israel yeshivas are highly designed experiences that are each built to funnel certain types of *talmidim* in a certain direction. (As such, a properly advised high school student will choose an Israel yeshiva based on which of those yeshivas has been designed to guide someone with his abilities, level in learning, etc., down a specific path that makes sense for him.) It is good and correct that the Israel yeshivas are designed this way, and the *talmidim* benefit tremendously from it.

The highly designed and controlled approach taken by the Israel yeshivas is best when trying to motivate *talmidim* to be interested in learning and/or when *talmidim* who are already motivated are, for the first time in their lives, learning long *sedarim*. As is required by that approach, *talmidim* have very limited control over most of their day and week in the Israel yeshivas; the daily schedule, whose *shiur* a *talmid* attends, when one may or may not leave yeshiva for Shabbos, where one may go at what point of the day or week, etc., are all dictated by the yeshiva. Additionally, many *rebbeim* in the Israel yeshivas are very proactive in guiding their *talmidim*; they warmly but firmly push their *talmidim* in a certain direction.

In our yeshiva, each *talmid* has complete control over, and therefore responsibility for, all aspects of his schedule and activities. As *talmidim* grow and individuate in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, it would be counterproductive for a *rebbe* to micromanage them. To succeed as a *ben Torah* who continues to learn and grow **עַד יוֹם מוֹתוֹ**, a *talmid* must rise to the challenge of adult reality in which he is responsible for his own direction and decisions. To that end, our yeshiva provides a controlled simulation of adult life, which includes both the resources and tremendous opportunities needed to achieve greatness in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, as well as the challenge to make real and repercussive decisions that will impact him in both the short term and for the rest of his life. Although taking complete responsibility for oneself is a jarring change for many *talmidim* compared to their experience in Israel, there is no clear alternative to properly prepare them to navigate the rest of life as *benei Torah* who are responsible for every aspect of their own lives.

Let us delve deeper into the issue of taking responsibility for oneself. The contrast between being in an Israel yeshiva and being in our yeshiva is not as narrow as taking responsibility for one's own path in overt *avodas Hashem*, such as learning and davening. The time in our *beis medrash* takes place at a stage in life in which real choices must be made, selecting from a wide range of options in many different areas. The choice can be about something as relatively small as which class to take in a given time slot, or it can be of such a magnitude that it will impact the rest of our lives, such as what field to enter, whom to marry, what standards of excellence in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* we will each hold ourselves to, etc.

Why is taking individual responsibility to make impactful choices on matters in which there is no one right answer and whose results will reverberate for years to come such a completely alien, and uncomfortable, experience for many *talmidim*? After all, isn't it true that a significant

percentage of *talmidim* make substantial changes while in *Eretz Yisrael*? It is true, and wonderful, that many raise their level of Torah and *yiras Shomayim* during their time in an Israel yeshiva, but those changes “go with the flow” of the yeshiva they are in. One of the reasons a *talmid* can feel less anchored in Y.U. is because there is not only a single correct “flow” for all *talmidim* to follow, and each *talmid* is responsible to find the path that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* has in mind for him. The path, e.g. exact daily schedule, which is obligatory for someone who plans to go to *semicha* and serve *Klal Yisrael* as a *rebbe* or *rav* may be wrong for someone who is a pre-med or a Computer Science major. Such variety is very rare in the Israel yeshivas because significant differences in paths usually lead to attending different yeshivas in Israel to begin with. In our yeshiva, *talmidim* on a range of correct paths in their service of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* all share the same *beis medrash*. The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 17a) explicitly describes the existence of multiple, correct paths in *avodas Hashem*:

מרגלא בפומייהו דרבנן דיבנה: "אני בריה, וחברי בריה. אני מלאכתי בעיר והוא מלאכתו בשדה. אני משכים למלאכתי, והוא משכים למלאכתי. כשם שהוא אינו מתגדר במלאכתי, כך אני איני מתגדר במלאכתי. ושמא תאמר: אני מרבה, והוא ממעיט — שנינו: אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים".

To summarize, while the foundation that many *talmidim* gain in *Eretz Yisrael* is extremely important, our yeshiva’s job is to give *talmidim* the opportunity to build on those gains and advance to the next level of Torah and *yiras Shomayim*. Therefore, our yeshiva correctly differs from those in *Eretz Yisrael* in the following ways:

- 1) During *shana alef-bet*, *talmidim* are free to focus exclusively on learning. In our yeshiva, they are involved in a wider range of *avodas Hashem* (at least during their undergraduate years).
- 2) Each Israel yeshiva has built a very specific experience, designed to actively funnel its *talmidim*, who arrive with roughly similar attitudes

and at similar levels, in more or less the same direction. However, students from all the various yeshivas in *Eretz Yisrael* all converge in our *beis medrash*, where *talmidim* follow a range of correct paths in *avodas Hashem*.

- 3) While in Israel, *talmidim* have very little individual responsibility; they are simply expected to follow the fixed schedule of the yeshiva, attend the shiur they are assigned to, and not break any of the yeshiva's rules. In our yeshiva, *talmidim* are responsible for their own schedules and must independently make decisions that impact them in the short term and for the rest of their lives. Growing to accept, and successfully wield, such responsibility is a critical step in the growth of anyone whose goal is to be a *ben Torah* for life.
- 4) There is another significant difference in terms of schedule and free time, which we will cover in the next section.

It would be a disservice to our *talmidim* if our yeshiva would function in the same exact way as the Israel yeshivas. Over the course of decades, innumerable *talmidim* (regardless of whether they became *rabbonim*, doctors, lawyers, etc.) have taken advantage of the opportunities presented by our yeshiva and thus continued to grow in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, both while in yeshiva and for years afterwards. Every single *talmid*, regardless of how he plans to earn a living, where he plans to live, etc., should strive to embrace the responsibilities and opportunities our yeshiva has placed in front of him, and thereby join that long line of *talmidim* who bring נחת רוח ליוצרים.

A Critical Key to Success: Using Your Time Wisely

Life is made up of time; the definition of a long life is one that is blessed with more years, and a short life, *rachmana litzlan*, means the opposite. There is no way to make the most of life other than making the

most of one's time throughout life. And of course, for any *eved* Hashem that means using our time in a way that maximizes our ability to serve *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* 24x7.

One of the pronounced differences between learning in the Israel yeshivas and in our yeshiva is the process by which time is allocated. It is common to describe *shana alef-bet* as “learning all day”. However, the reality is that five minutes of research on the web sites of the Israel yeshivas quickly reveals that even the most demanding among them have three to four hours of downtime built into their daily schedule (without even counting the time after night *seder*) in the form of breakfast + lunch + afternoon break + dinner. While this is a wise way for the Israel yeshivas to structure the day (see Rambam, *Shemoneh Perakim, perek* 5), it is simply not true that everyone is “learning all day.” A more accurate description of the schedule in Israel is to say that the only structured/required activity during the day is learning, and there is a large supply of unstructured time as well. The Israel yeshivas correctly realize that one must be smart when setting up a schedule and not overload the *talmidim* by making demands beyond what they can handle.

As we discussed in the previous section, in our yeshiva each *talmid* is responsible for his own schedule. Since it is not the case that on the flight back from *Eretz Yisrael* a *talmid* is somehow magically transformed into a superhuman who does not require any breathing room in his schedule, each *talmid* has to create a schedule for himself that pushes him to stretch and grow but does not burn him out. The schedule does have to be more demanding than that of the Israel yeshivas in order to help the *talmid* grow towards an adult level of efficiency and responsibility, but it still has to strike a realistic balance between a set of ambitious goals and human limitations.

“No Time to Think”, Part 1: How Many Semesters in Yeshiva?

The Mesilas Yesharim (*perek 2*) famously describes that one of the *yetzer hara*'s clever tools is to pile so much on us that we don't have time to think:

ואולם הנה זאת באמת אחת מתחבולות היצר הרע וערמתו להכביד עבודתו בתמידות על לבות בני האדם עד שלא ישאר להם ריוח להתבונן ולהסתכל באיזה דרך הם הולכים. כי יודע הוא שאלולי היו שמים לבם כמעט קט על דרכיהם, ודאי שמיד היו מתחילים להנחם ממעשיהם, והיתה החרטה הולכת ומתגברת בהם עד שהיו עוזבים החטא לגמרי.

Let's reflect on one of the ways that the *yetzer hara* employs the strategy of “no time to think” against *talmidim* in our yeshiva. Years ago, learning in Israel for one year was the norm, and a minority stayed for *shana bet*. Over time, it has become the norm in some yeshivas to stay for *shana bet* as well, and now a small minority of *talmidim* even stay for *shana gimmel*. Why do *talmidim* want to stay in their Israel yeshivas longer? To learn more Torah for as many years as possible, of course! Why is it, then, that some of those very same *talmidim* who were so anxious to increase their learning time subsequently try to shorten their stay in our yeshiva as much as possible, even though for most of them the next step in life is working full time or going to graduate school, neither of which allows for nearly as much learning as being in our yeshiva does!? The rush to finish college as fast as possible is tremendously damaging in multiple ways:

- 1) First, and most obviously, for most *talmidim*, fewer semesters in college directly translates into fewer semesters in the *beis medrash*, and that itself is already an immeasurable loss; shouldn't we want to stay in yeshiva as long as possible and maximize the number of years we are learning many hours a day, before we take on other full-time obligations!?

- 2) As tragic as a truncated stay in yeshiva is, it doesn't begin to compare to the magnitude of the second, even greater, price that *talmidim* pay when they rush to finish Y.U. Not only does the *yetzer hara* succeed in cutting your stay in yeshiva short in terms of semesters, he also succeeds in significantly damaging the semesters that you are in yeshiva. How so? In order to complete college as fast as possible, a *talmid* has to take sixteen or seventeen credits a semester⁸, which means he will be in class almost all afternoon, every day from Monday through Thursday. How is anyone supposed to have time to simultaneously learn his *sedarim*, do his schoolwork, get enough sleep, and have some needed downtime, if he is scheduled all day, nonstop, breaking only for lunch? The answer is that it is nearly impossible, and one or many things inevitably suffer⁹. Some *talmidim* deprive themselves of the amount of sleep they need or the amount of downtime they need to be healthy and function normally, and as such they are always exhausted and/or stressed. They may manage to keep their schedule each and every day, but they have no time to think and reflect, and are not as sharp or focused in *seder* and *shiur* as they would be if they were keeping a healthier schedule. Even though they ostensibly are "doing it all", the *yetzer hara* is victorious by watering down the quality of all that they do via exhaustion and stress¹⁰. Such a

⁸ A student must take 96 credits while on campus to add to the 32 credits from Israel, in order to reach the total of 128 needed for graduation.

⁹ As an example, the four-year Bachelors of Science tracks in Yeshiva College's Department of Computer Science were created after strong students came, as a group, to the administration and explained that while they think it is great that the C.S. major was made so strong, doing it in three years while taking learning seriously as well was extremely difficult.

¹⁰ Regarding the poor results that come from overworking, see, for example, [The Research Is Clear: Long Hours Backfire for People and for Companies](#), by Sarah Green Carmichael, Harvard Business Review, 2015.

schedule also forces *talmidim* to not get all that they should out of their college classes as well, which further magnifies the *yetzer hara's* victory, since this can lead to a range of negative consequences later in life, e.g. being less skilled in their field and therefore having to work longer hours, not qualifying for better jobs which provide an easier *parnassa*, etc.

- 3) A *talmid* with such a schedule is usually exhausted and at least somewhat burnt out by the end of the week, and thus Friday and Shabbos become time to crash instead of being productive days. That translates into two sevenths of his time being sacrificed on the altar of his pressured, rushed approach to college.
- 4) Because a *talmid* with such an unrelenting schedule is constantly functioning in triage mode and has no time for anything that has a deadline beyond the immediate future, he does not have time to review or do readings for his college classes. Thus, when midterms or finals arrive, he must cut out all or most of his learning time, since he now has to spend every waking moment cramming for tests. This alone can eliminate a month or two of learning from his year.
- 5) As all of this piles up on a *talmid*, he becomes disillusioned and cynical about our yeshiva, loses sight of the tremendous opportunities it presents, and gives up on growing significantly in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*. The desire and drive to grow that he cultivated for one or two years in Israel are replaced with the mediocre goal of just “surviving”.

In short, by encouraging *talmidim* to rush through our yeshiva as fast as they can, the *yetzer hara* radically reduces both the quantity and quality of time that *talmidim* spend learning Torah and growing.

Let's contrast that “no time to think” situation with that of a *talmid* who stays in our yeshiva enough semesters (e.g., four years) to have a lighter college load and thus a reasonable daily schedule. With more

semesters to finish college, a *talmid* can take fewer credits a semester and have significant chunks of unstructured time every day of the week, which can be used for doing schoolwork and/or as downtime, as needed. He will still have to use his time efficiently, but the pressure will be significantly reduced, and all the problems listed above are eliminated, or at least mitigated.

In other words, staying in college longer not only gives a *talmid* additional semesters in the *beis medrash*, it also makes each semester so much better! Instead of just trying to “survive”, he can use his time wisely, get his college work done, and have peace of mind to grow in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*. He will be more awake and focused for every *seder* and *shiur* and be able to make good use of *erev Shabbos* and *Shabbos*. Instead of midterms and finals being weeks devoid of learning, he will continue to be in the *beis medrash*, both because he has fewer tests to contend with and because he wisely reviewed during the semester such that studying is just reviewing, not cramming. He enjoys his time in yeshiva, thrives and grows. He has highly productive years of growth, instead of years of exhaustion and stress. If a *talmid* is pursuing an easy major, staying additional semesters may allow him to have an afternoon *seder*; the *mitzva* of *talmud Torah* does apply in the afternoon as well! If he is taking a hard major, there is no question that taking the maximum possible number of credits each semester in order to finish as fast as possible while also keeping his *sedarim* will be stressful and exhausting, if not outright unbearable and impossible.

What about the cost of each year in Y.U.? The “list price” (i.e. before any financial aid) of a year in Y.U. is about \$60,000¹¹, which is

¹¹ Based on tuition + dorm + meal plan for 2022-2023. Similarly, the 2021-2022 tuition for Ner Yisroel (just the yeshiva alone) was \$20,200, and if one adds in [tuition for Johns Hopkins](#) (\$60,000) or [out of state tuition for UMBC](#) (\$41,411+), one will spend at least as

unquestionably a very significant amount of money, and for most people it is not a level of spending that they take lightly. At the same time, there are a number of perspectives worth reflecting on when considering this expense, including:

- The cost of a year¹² in an Israel yeshiva is about \$30,000. Assuming a *talmid* spent one year in Israel and three years in Y.U., his cost (without any financial aid) is \$210,000. If he spent \$60,000 on two years in Israel and \$180,000 on three years in Y.U., his total cost is \$240,000. It does not make financial sense to allow the yield on \$240k to be radically reduced (by rushing through Y.U. as fast as possible) when one can optimize and multiply it by adding another \$30k or \$60k to reach the level of investment necessary to take full advantage of the opportunity.
- Educating one's child in our community from kindergarten through twelfth grade costs roughly \$220k¹³. The majority of people in our communities will have spent a five-figure sum of money on summer camp for their children by the time they graduate high school. A wedding celebration (which only lasts five hours) on the more modest end of what is considered normal in our community costs roughly as much as a year in Y.U. (and unlike Y.U. tuition, there is no financial aid available for weddings.) Houses in the communities in which most of our students will purchase homes less than ten years after graduating currently start at roughly \$400k-\$500k, and most end up spending at least \$600,000, i.e. ten times the full cost of a year in Y.U.¹⁴

much as going to Y.U. This is what it costs to provide a strong yeshiva combined with a quality secular education that will serve you well throughout your life.

¹² Based on the tuition rates being charged for the 2022-2023 academic year, and including one round trip ticket.

¹³ Assuming \$15k/year K-8 and \$25k/year for high school.

¹⁴ Based on common home prices in 2022.

While all these expenses certainly relate to essential parts of life, and no one is arguing not to have a wedding, not to buy a house, etc., they do highlight the fact that we somehow cover massive expenditures equal to, or much greater than, the cost of a year in our yeshiva. How do we find the funds for these expenses? Each family takes its own path, but the common denominator is that we all will try our utmost to find a way to afford whatever we consider to be essential. What is more essential for an *eved* Hashem than having the best possible years in yeshiva, which are the foundation for the rest of his life of *avodas* Hashem?

- It is rare that a year in Y.U. actually costs \$60,000; 80% of students receive some level of financial aid, and the greater the need is, the greater the financial aid which is forthcoming.

It is true that the cost of a semester or year in our yeshiva is non-trivial, but if properly valued as a pillar of one's lifelong *avodas* Hashem, and if put in the context of our other life expenditures, a very compelling case can certainly be made to strive to make it work, whether that means more investment by parents or more loans by the student. In this context, it is worth reflecting on the famous *Gemara* (*Berachos* 20a) regarding the payoff for *mesiras nefesh*:

דאמר ליה רב פפא לאבוי: מאי שנא ראשונים דאתרחיש להו ניסא, ומאי שנא אנן דלא מתרחיש לן ניסא? אי משום תנויי, בשני דרב יהודה כולי תנויי בנזיקין הוה, ואנן קא מתנינן שיתא סדרי. וכי הוה מטי רב יהודה בעוקצין, האשה שכובשת ירק בקדרה, ואמרי לה זיתים שכבשן בטרפיהן טהורים, אמר: הויות דרב ושמואל קא חזינא הכא. ואנן קא מתנינן בעוקצין תליסר מתבתא, ואילו רב יהודה כי הוה שליף חד מסאניה, אתי מטרא, ואנן קא מצערין נפשין ומצוח קא צוחינן, ולית דמשגח בן. האמר ליה: קמאי הוּו קא מסרי נפשיהו אקדושת השם, אנן לא מסרינן נפשין אקדושת השם.

“No Time to Think”, Part 2: Using Weekends Wisely

No matter how many semesters one stays in our yeshiva, the schedule Monday – Thursday does not have chunks of unallocated time the size of those that exist on *erev* Shabbos, *motzaei* Shabbos, and Sunday. The weekends are a wonderful opportunity to get “into the flow” of a project and get large amounts of schoolwork done, thus enabling a *talmid* to use some of the breaks in his schedule on Monday-Thursday to relax and recharge. By contrast, one who spends the entire weekend taking it easy will force himself to work nonstop during the week. As Rav Twersky once pointed out, one of the hallmarks of the *avodas* Hashem of *gedolim* is constancy and consistency. If our week oscillates wildly between a very intense week and a completely laid-back weekend, we both lose momentum in our *avodas* Hashem and reintroduce all the problems of time pressures that we described earlier.

Getting into the habit of using your weekends wisely also builds an excellent foundation for continued growth in Torah and *yiras Shomayim* throughout your life. When one is working full time, it is often hard to have a multi-hour *seder* during the work week, but there is nothing stopping anyone from getting up early on a Sunday and having a great morning *seder* before spending more time with his family. *Talmidim* must train themselves now, when they have comparably few responsibilities, to use weekends wisely, so they will continue to do so for decades to come.

A Rebbe and a Mesorah, Not Just a Shiur

Chazal (*Berachos* 47b) discuss how to define an *am ha'aretz*, and the conclusion is that “אפילו קרא ושנה ולא שמש תלמידי חכמים הרי זה עם הארץ”. In other words, one can accumulate a lot of Torah knowledge and still remain an *am ha'aretz* due to a lack of *shimush chachomim*. What does *shimush chachomim* mean – do we all have to be sure to give our *rebbe* a

ride to the airport, or carry his *seforim* for him? Rav Schachter once shared that Rav Soloveitchik *zt"l* was asked about a certain rabbi and replied that, “he’s an *am ha’aretz*”. The questioner pressed further, pointing out to the Rav *zt"l* that the rabbi in question knew a lot and gave *shiurim*, to which the Rav *zt"l* replied, “he’s still an *am ha’aretz*.” Rav Schachter explained that the Rav *zt"l* was not using the term “*am ha’aretz*” as defined colloquially, i.e. “a complete ignoramus”, rather he was using Chazal’s definition from the aforementioned *Gemara* which teaches us that even if one has accumulated a lot of Torah “book knowledge”, one is still an *am ha’aretz* if he has not picked up his rebbe’s attitudes; receiving and internalizing the rebbe’s attitudes and priorities is what the *Gemara* refers to as *shimush chachomim*. On a very similar note, Rav Twersky once commented that not all of Torah *she’b’al peh* has been written down, and there is a *mesorah* of attitudes one must tap into which can’t be accessed by sitting alone with lots of *seforim*.

This halachic reality has tremendous implications on how one chooses a *rebbe/shiur*. If the point of a *shiur* was simply to hear *chiddushei* Torah on whatever *mesechta* the yeshiva is learning, a *talmid* with sufficient self-discipline need not attend *shiur* at all! There are many *achronim* whose *seforim* span all of, or at least large parts of, *shas* (e.g. the Chazon Ish, the Steipler Gaon, Rav Boruch Ber, etc.), and one could pick one such set of *seforim* and systematically spend 9am-3pm every day learning a *mesechta* along with the given *sefer*, thus acquiring a storehouse of *chiddushim* that are internally consistent across the *mesechtas* learned. However, once we understand that *mesorah* is not just about amassing knowledge and/or analytical skills, but about molding how we think and what our attitudes are in all areas – learning a *sugya*, interacting with others, priorities in all aspects of life, etc. – it becomes abundantly clear that even the most thorough and systematic analysis of the *iyun seforim* of

one of the *gedolei achronim* is insufficient for any *talmid* who does not wish to be an *am ha'aretz*.

Of course, this argument for attending a *shiur* is built on the assumption that the *maggid shiur* is, in fact, doing more than just sharing his *chiddushim*. When determining what a *rebbe* must do in order to successfully pass on the *mesorah*, it does not suffice to look at what worked sixty years ago (when a *talmid's* grandfather might've been in our yeshiva) when American society had much more respect for authority and tradition, nor does it suffice to base ourselves on what worked thirty years ago (when a *talmid's* father might've been in our yeshiva) when the culture we live in still subscribed to the idea that one must work hard to acquire that which is valuable¹⁵. Effective *chinuch* takes into account the realities

¹⁵ Since the 1960s, popular culture in Western society has steadily marched away from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and all expressions of truth, and has become increasingly hedonistic and anthropocentric. As such, people are focus on feeling good instead of doing good. Sadly, this horribly warped perspective has infected some religious Jews as well, who abandon genuine spirituality and instead seek the quick fix of “spiritual experiences” that make them feel good. There is no question that *simcha* is a central component of *avodas Hashem* (see *Devarim* 28:47), but if one merely learns *parshas Bechukosai* with Rashi, let alone goes further into studying the Torah's ethos of *ameilus* (see, for example, *Da'as Chochmo U'Mussar* by Rav Yeruchum Levovitz zt”l, vol. 1, #8), it is abundantly clear that consistent and persistent hard work is a central and defining characteristic of authentic *avodas Hashem*. To the Western mind of 2022, this seems to be a contradiction – how can the Torah demand *simcha* and simultaneously require us to work assiduously towards very challenging goals? The answer, of course, is that the question itself reveals how badly we have been infected by the hedonism of Western culture; true *simcha* comes from doing what is right, not from superficial “feel good” experiences, as the Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah* 2:17), for example, teaches us, “**מוטב לאדם להרבות במתנות אביונים מלהרבות בסעדותו ובשלוח מנות לרעיו. שאין שם שמחה גדולה ומפארה אלא לשמח לב עניים ויתומים ואלמנות וגרים. שהמשמח לב האמללים האלו דומה לשכינה שנאמר (ישעיה נז טו) להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים**”. For a complete treatment of the correct Torah definition of *simcha*, listen to Rav Twersky's shiur posted as the second track at <https://ravtwersky.torahweb.org/the-inner-life-of-an-oveid-hashem-5758/>

of today's society in which we are living¹⁶, and thus a *talmid* must pick a *rebbe* who takes all the steps necessary to successfully pass on all aspects of our *mesorah* today. Therefore, to ensure that he has the opportunity to reach his full potential in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*, each *talmid* should seek out a *rebbe* for whom the following assumptions hold true:

- 1) The *rebbe* educates *talmidim* in how to learn (a.k.a. *derech halimud*), and does not only say *chiddushim* without showing his *talmidim* the process of learning. If the goal of having *shiurim* was merely to give access to *chiddushim*, the *talmidim* could spend their time learning Reb Chaim, the Ketzos, etc., whose *chiddushei Torah* have stood the test of time.
- 2) The *rebbe* is easily accessible during morning *seder* and thus all his *talmidim* have the opportunity to discuss *shiur* and the *Gemara* and *rishonim* with him. If a *rebbe* is only easily accessible to “talk in learning” right after *shiur* or later in the afternoon when most of the *talmidim* have their college classes, some of them will not have sufficient opportunity to interact with the *rebbe* one-on-one, will not receive the personal guidance and encouragement they need in their learning (and other areas of *avodas Hashem*), and will not see how the *rebbe* learns and approaches a *sugya* when he is not delivering an already-polished *shiur*. Similarly, one should choose a *rebbe* who is available to discuss any other matters about which a *talmid* may seek guidance.
- 3) The *rebbe* makes a conscious and systematic effort to pass *hashkofas haTorah* on to his *talmidim*. The *rebbe* must see to it that any *talmid* who is in his *shiur* for a couple of years will come out solidly grounded

¹⁶ It goes without saying that this does not mean that a *rebbe* should give in to the *zeitgeist*, rather it means he must understand it and be effective in overcoming it and elevating his *talmidim* to be real *benei Torah*, with all the *ameilus* etc. that the Torah demands of them.

in all the fundamentals of *yiras Shomayim* and how they apply to all aspects of life.

- 4) The *rebbe* models, in his own behavior, internalizing and applying *hashkofas haTorah* to all aspects of life – *bein adam lamakom*, *bein adam lachaveiro*, and *bein adam l'atzmo*. This must include greatness in *anava*¹⁷ and *chessed*, which are essential for being an excellent *rebbe*.

The *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 15b) famously sets an extraordinarily high standard¹⁸ for who one should have as his *rebbe*: “אם דומה הרב למלאך ה'” – “צבקות יבקשו תורה מפיהו, ואם לאו אל יבקשו תורה מפיהו”. *Chazal* highlight for us the necessity of having a *rebbe* who is “the complete package”; it would be both arrogant and foolish to think we know better than *Chazal*!

We will close this section with a powerful and highly relevant passage from Rav Dr. Abraham J. Twerski, *zt”l*:

If one asked my older brothers where they were learning, they would say, “By Reb Shlomo,” referring to Hagaon Rebbe Shlomo Heiman of Mesivta Torah Vodaas. Others would say, “By Reb Ahron”, referring to Hagaon Rebbe Ahron Kotler of Lakewood. Others would say, “By the Rav”, referring to Hagaon Rebbe Yosef Dov Soloveichik. If you ask a yeshiva *bachur* today where he learns, he

¹⁷ See *Ruach Chaim*, by Rav Chaim Volozhiner, on *Avos* 1:1, as well as [How to Choose a Rabbi](#), and [The Leader With the Small Aleph](#), both by Rav Schachter and available on TorahWeb.org

¹⁸ Another aspect of the extraordinarily high standard for a *rebbe*, and the fact that the growth of *talmidim* is the top priority, is codified *l'halacha* in *Bava Basra* 21a: “ואמר רבא האי מקרי ינוקי דגרים ואיכא אחרינא דגרים טפי מיניה לא מסלקינן ליה דלמא אתי לאיתרשולי רב” – “דימי מנהרדעא אמר כל שכן דגרים טפי קנאת סופרים תרבה חכמה job should be removed from his job and replaced with a new *rebbe* if the *talmidim* will learn more with the new *rebbe*! This has an important *nafka mina* for a *talmid*: if after careful research and reflection he thinks that a different shiur would be better for him than the one he is currently in, he should not feel bad about switching *shiurim*.

answers, “In Ponevezh”, or “In Brisk”, or “In Tshebin” or “In Y.U.” Students identify with a *place* rather than with a *person*. It may be more convenient to follow the herd instinct¹⁹. That spares us the need to think for ourselves. However, if happiness is the result of self-fulfillment, we may be sacrificing happiness for convenience.²⁰

The Potent Poison of *Machlokes*

It is well known that Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt”l* stayed far away from all forms of *machlokes*, which is an extraordinary and unusual accomplishment for someone of his stature. Rav Meir Goldwicht, who had a close relationship with him, shared that someone once asked Rav Auerbach how he had the strength to resist all pleas and prodding to speak out and get involved in various things. Rav Auerbach answered that he was a *talmid* in Yeshivas Etz Chaim (in Yerushalayim) when the *machlokes* between *talmidim* of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook *zt”l* and Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt”l* was raging. He saw some of his fellow students who had “the potential to be like *gedolim* of past generations” lose their opportunity for greatness as soon as they became involved in the *machlokes*. Rav Auerbach learned then to stay very far away from such things.

¹⁹ One relevant example of “the herd instinct” is attending a *shiur* because the *talmidim* in that *shiur* aggressively assert that it is “the top *shiur* in yeshiva”, even if it is not the best *shiur* for the *talmid* based on the parameters we outlined earlier. The reality is that there is no single “top *shiur*” in our yeshiva, neither *de facto* nor *de jure*; for the past number of decades, the *talmidim* who have accomplished the most (while in yeshiva and afterwards) have come from multiple *shiurim*.

²⁰ [Adam – A Unique Individual](#), TorahWeb.org, *parshas Bereishis*, 2009

In a very similar vein, Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky *zt”l*, one of the leading *gedolim* in twentieth century America, gave up his position as *rosh yeshiva* of Torah Vodaas rather than remain involved in *machlokes*:

“In the summer of 1967, Reb Yaakov decided to step down as *rosh yeshiva* of Torah Vodaath...Torah Vodaath in his last years there was beset by many internal disputes. Reb Yaakov feared that the prolonged involvement with *machlokes* would destroy his *middos*. And he was unwilling to endanger the striving of a lifetime.”²¹

If *machlokes* can wreak spiritual havoc and destruction on a (potential or actual) *gadol*, just imagine what it can do to the rest of us! To give one last jarring example, it is well known that a long-standing *machlokes* in one of the world’s largest and most prestigious yeshivas has repeatedly resulted in physical violence between groups of its *talmidim*. This is absolutely mind-boggling, but it just goes to show us the extent to which this *yetzer hara* can warp our thinking.

A conscious effort must be made by every *talmid* to distance himself from *machlokes*, as well as the *lashon hara* and *motzi shem ra* that fuel and animate it. To remain spiritually sound and to maintain an emotionally healthy outlook on our yeshiva and the people around him, *talmidim* should distance themselves from all sources of *lashon hara* and *motzi shem ra*. Information which is both true and pragmatically relevant to the *talmidim* will reach them through permissible channels regardless.

²¹ Reb Yaakov, Mesorah Publications, 1993, p.185

To review, in this essay we discussed the following issues that have a strong impact on a *talmid's* ability to reach his potential in Torah and *yiras Shomayim*:

- 1) A *talmid* should be cognizant of the illustrious history of, and exceptional opportunities present in, our yeshiva, and thus have a positive and ambitious outlook on what he can potentially accomplish here.
- 2) Our yeshiva functions differently than the Israel yeshivas, and those differences serve to properly prepare a *talmid* to succeed in his *avodas Hashem* for the rest of his life.
- 3) A critical contributor to success in our yeshiva is wise time management. A *talmid* should strive to maximize the quality and quantity of time he has in our *beis medrash* by extending his stay in yeshiva as much as possible and by setting up his schedule such that he can be consistent in his *avodas Hashem* throughout the year.
- 4) A *talmid* must receive the complete, multifaceted *mesorah* from a *rebbe*, and thus must make sure to attend a *shiur* in which that will happen for him.
- 5) *Machlokes* is a poisonous and wildly destructive force that *talmidim* should stay very far away from.

The rest of this volume is dedicated to giving the *talmidim* easy, organized access to some critical aspects of the *mesorah* of attitudes that shapes our yeshiva, which every *talmid* should strive to understand and internalize.

**Part I: *Hishtadlus* for
*Parnassa***

Chapter 1: A Time to Learn, A Time to Earn

Rav Hershel Schachter, 2004²²

I. Common Misconceptions

There is a common misconception among many observant people that intense Torah study is meant only for students. They erroneously think that only students attending high school, *yeshiva*, college, or graduate school are supposed to be deeply engaged in the study of Torah, and that once a person has graduated and has moved on in life, learning Torah is reserved for rabbis and *mechanchim* who are in the field of Torah study.

The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:8) is clear that this distinction is not correct:

כל איש מישראל חייב בתלמוד תורה בין עני בין עשיר בין שלם בגופו בין בעל יסורין בין בחור בין שהיה זקן גדול שתשש כחו אפילו היה עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה ומחזר על הפתחים ואפילו בעל אשה ובנים חייב לקבוע לו זמן לתלמוד תורה ביום ובלילה שנאמר והגית בו יומם ולילה.

Every Jewish man is obligated in the study of Torah, whether he is poor or rich, whether his body is healthy or

²² The audio can be found at: https://www.torahweb.org/audio/rsch_020804.html

afflicted, whether he is a young man or an elderly man whose strength has diminished. Even a poor man who is supported from charity and begs from door to door, and even a husband with children, is obligated to fix a time for the study of Torah by day and by night, as it says, “You shall contemplate it day and night.”

Thus, the obligation to learn Torah applies whether teaching Torah is one’s professional occupation or not. I know many doctors and lawyers who know how to learn better than many rabbis and *mechanchim*! There is no contradiction; one can become a proficient doctor or lawyer, or a successful businessman, while still becoming a *talmid chacham*. Everyone is obligated to learn Torah throughout their lifetime in order to come closer to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*.

We recite as part of the *nusach hatefillah*, “ותן חלקנו בתורתך – and grant us **our share** in Your Torah,” which indicates that each Jewish person has a specific portion in the Torah. The *sefer Megaleh Amukos* (*ofen* 186, based on *Zohar Chadash, Shir HaShirim* 91a; see *Pnei Yehoshua, Kiddushin* 30a) makes this point as well, in teaching that the word **ישראל** is actually an acronym for the principle: “יש ששים רבוא אותיות לתורה” – there are six-hundred-thousand letters in the Torah”, corresponding to the same number of Jewish *neshamos*. Each person is given the capacity to develop new insights in Torah that no one else is capable of developing. All of the insights together constitute *shleimus haTorah*, the wholeness of Torah.

One should not feel that his learning is worthwhile only if he is able to learn *Gemara be’iyun* with *Tosfos* and the *Maharsha* for an extended period of time, like he did when he was in *yeshivah*. One is certainly in fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *talmud Torah* if he uses his time to learn lighter subjects, such as *Tanach*, *Ein Ya’akov*, *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, or *Mishnayos*. This type of *limud* is also most praiseworthy. It is difficult for

most people to concentrate on complicated topics for hours. One can therefore take “breaks” by making use of the variety within Torah itself, focusing on those aspects that he enjoys, and thus limit the need to engage in outside activities.

There are some well-meaning people who say that they want to work hard to become wealthy so that they can give more to *tzedakah*. Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah* 3:155) considers it obvious that there is no such *mitzvah* – to earn money in order to give *tzedakah*. The obligation applies only in the opposite direction, namely, that one who has extra money is obligated to give *tzedakah*.

The same is true regarding the *mitzvah* of *piku'ach nefesh*, saving a life. This *mitzvah* does not obligate a person to attend medical school in order to learn how to treat patients. Rather, if a person has attended medical school and has the ability to treat patients, he becomes obligated to do so. Reportedly, the Vilna Gaon wished to learn pharmacology from the doctors of his time, but his father did not permit him, recognizing that his son would become extremely proficient in medicine, and thus obligated to treat patients at the expense of learning Torah (*Pe'as HaShulchan, Hakdamah*). Thus, if a person has an option to work part-time and support himself, and use the extra free time for learning, this is preferable to working full-time and giving more money to *tzedakah*.

II. Learning and Forgetting

Some people feel frustrated by their propensity to forget their learning, and wonder whether they actually accomplish anything by learning something if they know in advance that they will forget it.

The *Gemara* (*Niddah* 30b) describes how a *malach* teaches the entirety of Torah to every Jewish fetus while it is in its mother's womb. Before birth, the *malach* hits the baby on his mouth to cause him to forget all this learning. Even though the newborn child does not consciously

remember the Torah studied in utero, we should not view the teaching of the *malach* as an act of futility. Instead, the purpose of the learning must be in order to form an impression on the Jew's heart, to endow every Jewish *neshamah* with a natural responsiveness to Torah teaching. Rav Soloveitchik, elaborating on the purpose of the *limud hamalach*, explained that it is in order to implant within a person a "hidden love" for *Hashem* that will remain with him throughout his entire life. That is why, deep within his personality, every Jew possesses a natural inclination to follow the *mitzvos haTorah*.

Additionally, the brother of the Vilna Gaon writes (*Ma'alos HaTorah*) that it is necessary for the *malach* to cause the child to forget the learning so that he will be able to rediscover that Torah through his intense efforts. In other words, the forgetting of the Torah is really a *berachah*. *Hashem* wants a person to develop in learning through *amalah shel Torah*, by laboring intensively in *limud haTorah*. If a person would recall everything he learned with ease, he would not be forced to work hard. *Hashem* places great significance on exerting oneself to learn Torah, as the *Mishnah* teaches, "לפום צערא אגרא – The reward is in proportion to the exertion" (*Avos* 5:23). The reward for learning Torah, and for fulfilling any *mitzvah*, does not depend on how much a person actually accomplishes, but rather on how challenging it was for him. A person who must apply himself to understand the *Gemara* will get more reward than the one to whom learning comes easily.

Furthermore, in his commentary on the *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* (6:1), "ומכשרתו להיות צדיק חסיד ישר ונאמן" – [Learning Torah for its own sake] makes one fit to be righteous, devout, fair, and faithful," Rav Chaim Volozhiner (*Ruach Chaim*) relates the word *ומכשרתו* to the process of *kashering* (purging) a pot that was used for non-kosher food and absorbed its forbidden flavor. There may be times when one's Torah learning can be described as "going in one ear and out the other." Even if he remembers

nothing of the learning, we may argue that he has gained nonetheless. The words of Torah cleanse his mind from incorrect ideas and attitudes. Just as in the process of *libun* one uses fire to *kasher* a non-kosher pot, Torah has the ability to “*kasher*” a person and thereby prepare him to become a *tzaddik*.

Indeed, Rav Chaim Volozhiner notes that Torah is compared to fire in the *passuk*, “הלווא כה דברי כאש נאום ד’ – Is My word not like fire, says Hashem” (*Yirmiyah* 23:29). It was through expounding this *passuk* that the *Tanna'im* repealed the earlier *takanah* made by Ezra that a *ba'al keri* must immerse in a *mikveh* before studying words of Torah (*Bava Kamma* 82a-b). They reasoned that words of Torah, like fire, cannot possibly contract *tumah* (*Berachos* 22a).

Along these lines, the *Gemara* (*Ta'anis* 4a) uses this *passuk* to support the idea that when a *tzurva mei'rabbanan* (young rabbinical student) becomes angry, his anger should be viewed with tolerance. Rava explains, “אורייתא הוא דקא מרתחא ליה – It is the Torah that is causing him to become heated.” The knowledge of Torah that burns within him increases his sensitivity, and he thus takes things more to heart. It is said that Rebbi Akiva Eiger applied this statement to his *talmid* Rav Eliyahu Guttmacher (Greiditzer), upon the latter’s rowdy dancing at a wedding. The fire of Torah has a positive effect on a person who engages in it, provided he does so *lishmah* – it purifies his personality.

Rav Soloveitchik (*Shiurim L'Zecher Abba Mari Z"l*, p. 164) made a similar point regarding the value of learning Torah even if one has a poor understanding of the material, and even if it will be completely forgotten. He presented a *mashal* of a king who ordered his subjects to draw water using pails that had large holes (see *Vayikra Rabbah* 19:2). The foolish subjects stopped obeying the king’s command when they saw that all of the water they drew simply flowed out of the hole; it seemed to be an act of futility. Other servants, however, continued to obey the order and

repeatedly tried to fill the pails, albeit unsuccessfully. In the end, these were recognized as the wise ones, since the true objective of the king was not to draw the water, but rather, to clean the pails.

Words of Torah work the same way. Engaging in *limud haTorah* is worthwhile regardless of how much Torah knowledge one amasses in the process, because one thereby elevates his character.

III. The Parameters of the *Limud HaTorah* Obligation

Another mistaken attitude that many people have is that one is free to do whatever pleases him once he has fulfilled his daily quota of learning Torah. They feel that one is obligated to give the *Ribbono Shel Olam* His due, whether it be by learning *daf yomi*, *mishna yomis*, *Mishna Berurah yomis*, or even all three, and that after that point, one is excused from further learning. This is not correct. A person is obligated to learn to the best of his ability. For some people, the maximum amount of time that they are capable of learning is five minutes a day; if so, that is all that is expected of them. If a person has more time and has the *kishronos* to learn more, he is obligated to learn to his maximum capacity.

The *Mishnah* (*Menachos* 99b) presents two opinions as to the extent of the requirement mandated by the *passuk*, “ונתת על השלחן לחם” – פנים לפני תמיד – “You shall place on the Table show-bread before Me, always” (*Shemos* 25:30).

The *Tanna Kamma* describes the procedure for arranging the *lechem hapanim* on Shabbos as follows. As two *Kohanim* removed the previous week’s *lechem* from the *shulchan*, two others placed the new *lechem* on the *shulchan*: “טפחו של זה בצד טפחו של זה” – the fist of this [*Kohen*] should be next to the fist of the other [*Kohen*].” To fulfill the

requirement of לפני תמיד, there must be *lechem* upon the *shulchan* every single moment of the night and day.

Rebbi Yossi's dissenting opinion contends that לפני תמיד is fulfilled even if the old *lechem* is removed in the morning and the new *lechem* is arranged in the evening. At some point of every night and day, there must be *lechem* on the *shulchan*. לפני תמיד mandates not a constant presence, but a regular one.

The *Gemara* proceeds to apply this *machlokes* to the *passuk*, “לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפוך והגית בו יומם ולילה – This Book of the Torah should not depart from your mouth; rather, you should contemplate it day and night” (*Yehoshua* 1:8). The *Gemara* understands that the obligation to learn Torah *b'hasmadah* parallels the *lechem hapanim* obligation of לפני תמיד. According to Rebbi Yossi, one must ensure that no full day or night passes without the study of Torah: “Even if a person learns only one *perek* in the morning and one *perek* in the evening, he has fulfilled his obligation.”

When the Torah is not explicit about how frequently one must perform a positive *mitzvah*, the default assumption is that one must fulfill it once a day every day. We may learn this rule from the *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashanah* (28b), which describes the *mitzvah* of *Birkas Kohanim* in this way. Once a *Kohen* has *duched* on any given day during *Shacharis*, he is not obligated *min haTorah* to *duchen* a second time during *Mussaf*. In addition, if he *duched* for one *tzibbur*, he may decline to bless another *tzibbur* later that day (*Kehilos Yaakov, Berachos, siman* 15). According to Rebbi Yossi, the innovation of the *passuk*, “והגית בו יומם ולילה” is that it is not sufficient to learn Torah once a day every day; one must also learn once a night every night.

In contrast to Rebbi Yossi, the corresponding opinion of the *Tanna Kamma* would hold that לא ימוש obligates a person to spend every single

available moment of his life engaged in *limud haTorah*, all day and all night.

There is a third opinion cited by the *Magen Avraham* (1:1) in the name of the *Shelah*, that *יומם ולילה* indicates that one should connect *yom* to *lailah* through *limud haTorah*, both in the morning and the evening. This is the basis of the practice in many *shuls* to learn Torah between *Mincha* and *Maariv*, from slightly before *shki'ah* (sunset) until slightly after *tzeis* (the emergence of three stars). The *Shelah* advocates this practice in the early morning as well.

The *Netziv* (*Ha'amek She'eilah* 143:3; *Ha'amek Davar, Vayikra* 8:35) explains that the source of the *Shelah* is a comment of the *Yerushalmi* (*Yoma* 1:1) regarding the required presence of *Kohanim* during the *Milu'im* (inauguration) of the *Mishkan*. The *passuk* describes that Aharon and his sons were to remain at the entrance of the *Ohel Mo'ed* uninterruptedly for seven days straight, “*יומם ולילה שבעת ימים* – day and night for a seven-day period” (*Vayikra* 8:35).

The *Rishonim* question how this was physically possible. The explanation of the *Yerushalmi* is that Aharon and his sons were required to be present at the *Ohel Mo'ed* only when *yom* connected with *lailah* and when *lailah* connected with *yom*. Rather than being a twenty-four-hour daily requirement, it was sufficient for them to be there at the points of transition – when the day became night (nightfall) and when the night became day (daybreak). By repeating this process daily, it was considered as if they were present for the entire seven days.

The *Yerushalmi* maintains that “*לחם פנים לפני תמיד*” similarly means that one should connect daytime with nighttime and nighttime with daytime with the presence of *lechem hapanim* on the *shulchan*, and thus, the *Shelah* notes, this is also the way to fulfill, “*והגית בו יומם ולילה*” according to the *Yerushalmi*.

With respect to the *machlokes* regarding the procedure for arranging the *lechem hapanim* on Shabbos, the *Rambam paskens* (*Hilchos Temidin U'Mussafin* 5:4) like the majority opinion among the *Tanna'im* – טפחו של זה בצד טפחו של זה, i.e. as the *Kohanim* removed the previous week's *lechem* they placed the new *lechem* on the *shulchan*. According to the parallel that the *Bavli* drew, just as there must be a **constant** presence of *lechem* on the *shulchan*, the obligation to learn Torah *b'hasmadah* similarly means that one must learn Torah **without interruption**.

Given the necessity to sleep, eat, and provide for one's family, the Vilna Gaon (*Sh'nos Eliyahu, Pe'ah* 1:1, s.v. *v'talmud Torah*) somewhat modifies the way to understand the *hasmadah* obligation – one must learn Torah every **free** moment that he has without interruption. The Gaon explains that when it is not free time one is not obligated to learn, such as when one performs other *mitzvos*, including eating and engaging in *parnassah*.

It is important, though, to carefully determine which moments of one's day should be considered “not free.” While it is true that time used for eating, *parnassah*, and also relaxation, is not free time, one should honestly assess how much time he actually requires to satisfy these and other needs. One should try to free up as much time as possible for *limud haTorah*.

III. Guidelines Regarding Earning a *Parnassah*

In the context of discussing the *chol hamoed* prohibitions, the *Gemara* in *Moed Katan* (14a) considers the extent of *parnassah* that is deemed necessary. The *Chachamim* sought to motivate people to groom themselves prior to *yom tov* and not enter it while they are unkempt. To accomplish this, they prohibited haircutting (and laundering clothes) during *chol hamoed*, but made an exception for a person who arrived in

Eretz Yisrael from overseas during *Chol Ha'Mo'ed*, who was unable to cut his hair before the *yom tov* began.

The *Gemara* distinguishes, however, between three possible reasons for the traveler's initial departure. If he originally left home in order to travel for pleasure and then returned during *chol hamoed*, since he was not permitted to leave *Eretz Yisrael* initially, his failure to groom himself before *yom tov* is not considered unavoidable, and he is forbidden to cut his hair on *chol hamoed*. If, on the other hand, he left home for purposes of seeking a livelihood, his departure was necessary, and he is permitted to cut his hair on *chol hamoed*.

There is a *machlokes Tanna'im* in a third case, an individual who makes a sufficient *parnassah* but who left on a business trip for *harvachah* – additional profit. Should we compare him to one who left to tour or to one who left to earn his livelihood? The accepted *halachah* is that traveling abroad for *harvachah* is legitimate, and one may therefore cut his hair on *chol hamoed* in this case (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 531:4, *Mishnah Berurah* 14, for further details).

This *Gemara* is relevant with respect to the obligation to learn Torah *b'hasmadah* as well. If a person has the opportunity to work part-time and earn a basic livelihood, and use the free time for *limud haTorah*, whether he is permitted to work full-time to earn extra money depends on the above *machlokes Tanna'im*. We *pasken* that one **does have** the right to work for *harvachah*, and it is therefore permissible for him to work full-time.

Of note is that if a part-time job yields a *parnassah* **with** *harvachah*, and working full-time will enable a person to earn much more than he requires, the Halachah would say that time spent on the additional work is considered free time. If he can live comfortably on a smaller income, and it is possible for him to reduce his work time and maintain his position, he

should do so and endeavor to use his newfound free time for *limud haTorah*. There are many people in our communities who have succeeded in doing this, and just as they have been successful, others can be as well. There will be a *teviyah* (complaint) on those who could have done so and did not, as the *Gemara* describes regarding the financial state of Hillel and of Rabbi Elazar *ben Charsom* (*Yoma* 35b).

One should not think that working harder now will allow him the opportunity of an early retirement, at which time he will be able to devote significant time to *limud haTorah*. The *Mishnah* tells us that this attitude, though popular, is in fact based on an incorrect calculation: “אל תאמר, לכשאפנה אשנה שמא לא תפנה – Do not say, ‘When I am free I will study,’ for perhaps you will not become free” (*Avos* 2:4).

We should also not feel that it is too difficult for us to change. “כי קרוב אליך הדבר מאד בפיך ובלבבך לעשותו – Rather, the matter is very near to you – in your mouth and in your heart – to perform it” (*Devarim* 30:14). We live in an *olam hasheker* (world of falsity), filled with so much superficiality, and this leads us to be embarrassed by what others will think. We must remember that this world is so dark that it is compared to night (*Bava Metzia* 83b). It is only with the light of Torah, through which *Hashem* gives us illumination, that a person can know what is right and what is wrong and have the courage to change.

IV. Balancing *Limud HaTorah* with *Parnassah*

We may elaborate on the Gaon’s formulation – the requirement to learn Torah constantly, but not when engaged in *parnassah* (and other obligations). The last of the *ל"ג מידות שהתורה נדרשת בהן* (thirteen exegetical principles through which the *Torah SheBichsav* is expounded) listed by Rabbi Yishmael is the rule of *שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה* – two *pessukim* that contradict one another. When we are confronted with this situation, we are to enlist a *kasuv hashelishi* (third *passuk*) to help reconcile the

inconsistency. The *Gemara* does not tell us explicitly what we should do if we come across two contradictory *pessukim* and there is no available *kasuv hashelishi*.

It seems that this question is actually the subject of a *machlokes Tanna'im* (*Pesachim* 68b; *Beitzah* 15b). The *Gemara* points out seemingly conflicting requirements of observance regarding the *mitzvah* of *simchas yom tov*. One *passuk* states, “עצרת לד' אלקיך” – There shall be an assembly **for Hashem your G-d**” (*Devarim* 16:8), which seems to describe a day that is consecrated to *Hashem's* service. Yet, the Torah also states, “עצרת תהיה לכם – There shall be an assembly **for you**” (*Bamidbar* 29:35), which implies that one should observe the *yom tov* by partaking of physical delights. The question of the proper way to comport oneself on *yom tov* is therefore a case of two contradictory *pessukim*, where there is no third *passuk* to help resolve the apparent contradiction.

The opinion of Rebbi Eliezer is that in such a situation, the Torah offers a person two options. In other words, there are **two** ways to observe *yom tov* : “או כולו לד' או כולו לכם – [by devoting it] either exclusively to *Hashem* or exclusively to yourselves.” One may sit and learn Torah (and eat and drink as he does on a weekday), or he may eat and drink lavish meals (and *daven* and learn as he does on a weekday).

The opinion we accept *l'halachah*, however, is that of Rebbi Yehoshua, who resolves the *pessukim* by **compromising** and thereby partially complying with both requirements: “חלקהו חציו לד' וחציו לכם – Divide [the day]; half of it to *Hashem* and half of it to yourselves.” A portion of the day should be dedicated to the *Beis HaMedrash* and a portion should be devoted to physical pleasures.

Interestingly, the *Rambam*, both in *Hilchos Shabbos* (30:10) and in *Hilchos Yom Tov* (6:19), seems to understand that the compromise of Rebbi Yehoshua must be implemented in a prescribed order on Shabbos

and Yom Tov. Accordingly, on *leil Shabbos* and *leil Yom Tov*, one should *daven Maariv* and then eat his first *se'udah*. In the morning, he should *daven Shacharis* and *Mussaf* and eat his second *se'udah*, and in the afternoon, he should *daven Mincha* and eat his third *se'udah*. In other words, the activities of the day must alternate back and forth between those that are 'לד and those that are לכם, in order to fulfill the *halachah* of חציו לד' וחציו לכם.

[Rav Soloveitchik argued that it emerges from this that it is not proper to make *Kiddush* and eat the *se'udah* on *leil Shabbos* before *davening Maariv*, nor is it appropriate to eat *se'udah shlishis* before *davening Mincha* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 291:10-11; *Ma'aseh Rav* 64, 117). [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., p. 158.]

With this in mind, we can understand a similar *machlokes Tanna'im* regarding the division of one's time between learning Torah and earning a *parnassah*.

The *Gemara* in *Berachos* (35b) analyzes a pair of *passukim* that seem to instruct disparate approaches and, once again, there is no third *passuk* in *Tanach* that can help resolve the conflict. One *passuk* states that one should engage in work that provides him with sustenance, “ואספת ודגנך ותירשך ויצהרך – And gather in your new grain, your wine, and your oil” (*Devarim* 11:14), but a different *passuk* demands the learning of Torah without interruption, “לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיק” – This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth” (*Yehoshua* 1:8).

Similar to Rabbi Eliezer above, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai maintains that a person must choose **one** particular path in life. Therefore, one must dedicate himself completely to learning Torah. In terms of earning a livelihood, Rabbi Shimon maintains that when the Jewish People act in accordance with the will of *Hashem*, they merit that, “מלאכתן נעשית” – על ידי אחרים – their work is done for them by others.”

As in the *machlokes* discussed earlier, this method of resolving the contradiction is not the accepted opinion. Rather, we adopt Rabbi Yishmael's view – that the Torah instructs, “הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ – Lead, together with [Torah study], a life conducted in the way of the world”, **combining** Torah study with the earning of a *parnassah*. In other words, it is self-understood that the *passuk* in *Yehoshua* requires *limud haTorah* only during one's **free** time. Just as one must obviously carve out time from his *limud haTorah* for eating and sleeping, he is expected to do the same to earn a *parnassah*.

Interestingly, the *Gemara* concludes: “הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל – ועלתה בידן, כרבי שמעון בן יוחאי ולא עלתה בידן – Many people did as Rabbi Yishmael advocates and were successful, while others attempted to follow the view of Rabbi Shimon *bar* Yochai but did not succeed.” In other words, the *psak halachah* is in accordance with Rabbi Yishmael, and historically, as well, this method was the one which proved to be successful.

V. *Parnassah* as a *Mitzvah*

The Torah records Yisro's advice to Moshe as to how he should guide the Jewish People: “וזהרתה אתהם את החוקים ואת התורות והודעת – להם את הדרך ילכו בה ואת המעשה אשר יעשון – And you shall advise them of the [Torah's] statutes and laws, and you shall make known to them the way that they may walk in and the actions that they should do” (*Shemos* 18:20). The *Gemara* in *Bava Metziah* (30b) interprets each phrase as a reference to a particular area of conduct: “והודעת להם, זה בית חייהם – ‘And you shall make known to them’ refers to their livelihood (*Rashi*).” Moshe was told to instruct the nation of an individual's obligation to learn a craft or trade to provide for his physical welfare.

Along these lines, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 19a) teaches that although, generally, one may not embark on a journey by boat within three days of *Shabbos*, this is permitted if the seafarer is journeying for a *d'var mitzvah*.

While the *Mechaber* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 248:4) cites journeying to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* as an example of such a journey, the *Rama* adds that a person traveling on a business trip is also considered journeying for a *d'var mitzvah*. The Vilna Gaon (*Bei'ur HaGr"a*) cites the above *Gemara* in *Bava Metziah* as the source for the *Rama* that it is a *mitzvah* to make a *parnassah*. The Gaon then references the *Gemara* in *Mo'ed Katan* mentioned earlier to show that even earning *harvachah*, over and above one's basic needs, is also classified as a *mitzvah* to permit traveling within three days of Shabbos.

The *passuk* in connection with Moshe's instruction to the Jewish People regarding the *mon* provides further evidence that earning a *parnassah* is considered a *mitzvah*:

ויאמר משה אליהם הוא הלחם אשר נתן ד' לכם לאכלה. זה הדבר
אשר צוה ד' לקטו ממנו איש לפי אכלו עומר לגלגולת מספר
נפשותיכם איש לאשר באהלו תקחו.

Moshe said to them, "This is the food that *Hashem* has given you for eating. This is the thing that *Hashem* has commanded, 'Gather from it, for every man according to what he eats – an *omer* per person – according to the number of your people, everyone according to whoever is in his tent shall you take'" (*Shemos* 16:15,16).

The Brisker Rav (see *Chiddushei Maran Ri"z HaLevi al HaTorah, Parshas Shemini*) elaborates upon a comment of *Rashi* (*Vayikra* 6:2): "[The word] **צו** (command) expresses urging on, for the immediate moment and for future generations" (*Kiddushin* 29a). Thus, in contrast to *hora'as sha'ah* (temporary ruling), "**מצוה**" is a technical term that connotes the fact that the *din* remains in effect throughout all future generations. It is therefore noteworthy that the Torah employs the expression "אשר צוה ד'" in Moshe's instruction regarding the *mon*, since this expression

indicates that what follows is a *halachah* that applies for all generations and the *mon* only fell from heaven for forty years in the desert.

An additional, related observation is the Torah's use of the words "זה הדבר" in this context. The *Sifrei*, cited by *Rashi* in the beginning of *Parshas Matos* (*Bamidbar* 30:2), teaches that there is a difference between the *nevu'ah* of Moshe and that of the other *Nevi'im*. Other *Nevi'im* prophesied with the phrase, "כה אמר ד" – So said *Hashem*," but Moshe, uniquely, prophesied using the phrase, "זה הדבר – This is the word [that *Hashem* has commanded]."

The *Kedushas Levi* (*Shemos* 11:4) explains that the other *Nevi'im* perceived a vision in a dream, which they then interpreted, using the *ruach hakodesh* that rested upon them, in their own language and from their own perspective. They introduced their *nevu'ah* with "כה אמר ד" because their *nevu'ah* reflected the general message that *Hashem* showed them, but was not transmitted in the actual words of *Hashem*.

In contrast, Moshe's *nevu'ah*, introduced with "זה הדבר", consisted of a **direct dictation** given to him by *Hashem*, word for word and letter for letter. *Chazal* call this, "אספקלריא המאירה – a clear glass" vision. Since his *nevu'ah* contained אותיות ונקודות (precise letters and vowels), there was no need for his personal commentary and explanation. This distinction corresponds to a further point – that Moshe was the only *Navi* able to transmit *mitzvos*, which are binding throughout all future generations. The *nevu'os* of other *Nevi'im*, preceded by "כה אמר ד", were not intended to convey a *mitzvah* for all future generations, but rather only a *hora'as sha'ah* (*Megillah* 2b).

Following this line of reasoning, the phrase "כה אמר ד" would be appropriate even to introduce a *nevu'ah* of Moshe if it were only a *hora'as sha'ah*. Even Moshe at times conveyed prophecies that were *hora'os sha'ah*, such as the special directives involved in *makkas bechoros* and the

Korban Pesach in Mitzrayim. This is why Moshe's *nevu'ah* regarding *makkas bechoros* is introduced with “כה אמר ד” in the *passuk*, “ויאמר משה – Moshe said, ‘So said Hashem: At about midnight I shall go out in the midst of Mitzrayim’” (*Shemos* 11:4), for it contained no *mitzvah* for future generations. This *nevu'ah* was apparently not through an *אספקלריא המאירה* and was thus akin to the level of *nevu'ah* of the other *Nevi'im*.

Thus, the fact that in the context of collecting the *mon*, the Torah employs the phrase, “זה הדבר אשר צוה ד”, indicates that the Torah intends to present a *mitzvah* that applies to all future generations, and not a *hora'as sha'ah*. The explanation seems to be that despite the fact that collecting the *mon* applied only in that generation, there are aspects of the instruction that apply at all times, namely, the obligation of a man to provide for his wife and young children. This is spelled out in the conclusion of the *passuk*, “מספר נפשותיכם איש לאשר באהלו תקחו”. The particular method of providing for one's family at that time, collecting the *mon*, was a *hora'as sha'ah*, but the more general requirement to do so is indeed a *mitzvah l'doros*. [See Rav Schachter on the Parsha II, Parshas Masei.]

VI. Choosing a Career

Commenting on the *Gemara* we mentioned earlier, “הרבה עשו”, “כרבי ישמעאל ועלתה בידן, כרבי שמעון בן יוחאי ולא עלתה בידן”, Rav Chaim Volozhiner (*Nefesh HaChaim* 1:8) writes that although Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai's method is not for the masses, it is highly recommended for certain talented and dedicated individuals. They can succeed by engaging exclusively in *limud haTorah* and emerging as great *talmidei Chachamim*.

This is along the lines of the comment of *Rashi*, quoting the *Midrash*, on the *passuk*, “אדם אחד מאלף מצאתי” – One man in a thousand I have found” (*Koheles* 7:28). The way of the world is that one-thousand children enter *yeshiva* to learn *Chumash*, one hundred go on to learn

Mishnah successfully, ten are successful in *Talmud*, and only one is capable of rendering halachic decisions.

In a related teaching, the *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 5b) interprets the three expressions of “tears” found in the *passuk*, “וּדְמַעַתְּ תִדְמַעַתְּ וְתִרְדַּתְּ עֵינַי” – And I shall surely weep and my eyes will drip with tears, for the flock of *Hashem* is taken into captivity” (*Yirmiyah* 13:17), as a reference to three types of “misplaced persons” about whom *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* cries every day. The first is a person who belonged in the field of *limud haTorah*, but instead entered a secular field; another is a person who did not belong in *chinuch* or *rabbanus*, but who nevertheless pursued those careers unsuccessfully; and a third is a communal leader who behaves arrogantly toward the community. *Hashem* is brokenhearted over all of these tragic situations.

Rav Soloveitchik often spoke of the idea that *Hashem* created every human being *b'tzelem Elokim* (in the image of G-d). The Jewish People – who possess a greater degree of *tzelem Elokim*, as they are called *banim laMakom* (children of the Omnipresent) – were instructed, “וְהָלַכְתָּ בְּדַרְכָיו” – And you shall go in His ways” (*Devarim* 28:9). By observing this *mitzvah*, we preserve the *middos Elokus* (characteristics of G-dliness) that were implanted within us. The *Rambam* writes (*Hilchos Dei'os* 1:6; *Moreh Nevuchim* 1:54) that the reason we are presented with a description of the characteristics and actions of *Hashem* throughout *Tanach* is so that we know what the “ways of *Hashem*” are, in order that we imitate them.

The Rav noted that the Torah describes *Hashem* as being extremely creative, and we must imitate this “way of *Hashem*” as well. It follows, then, that if a person has been gifted with a particular aptitude, such as in music or science, he should pursue a career in which he applies that talent. He should not force himself to enter a field that does not match the gifts he was given to be creative with, rather he should select a profession that suits him.

In the famous *passuk* at the conclusion of *Hoshea* (14:10) the *Navi* states, “כי ישרים דרכי ד’ – For the ways of Hashem are straight.” The use of the plural form *דרכי* indicates that there are **many** paths to serve Hashem. *Chazal* tell us that just as people’s faces are not similar to one another, so too, their ways of thinking are not identical (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 21:2; *Tanchuma, Pinchas* 10). This is considered a praise of the Creator. Unlike a man who mints many identical coins from one mold, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* minted all men from the mold of Adam *HaRishon*, yet not one of them resembles the next (*Sanhedrin* 38a). The Creator never wanted all of us to conform to the same mold and make the exact same career choice.

In the concluding lines of *Mesillas Yesharim*, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto points out that someone who, out of necessity, enters a lowly occupation can be a true *chassid*, just like one from whose mouth Torah learning never departs. We are taught that Chanoch was a simple shoemaker by trade. Yet, because he did his work *l’sheim Shamayim*, and in a scrupulous fashion, he is described by the Torah as an unusual *tzaddik* (*Bereishis* 5:22): “ויתהלך חנוך את האלקים – And Chanoch walked with G-d” (see *Yalkut Re’uveini* [5644 ed.], p. 120; *Zohar, Bereishis*, 56b).

Hashem needs *tzaddikim* entering all kinds of fields to accomplish a *kiddush Hashem*. In this regard, the *Gemara* (*Berachos* 17a; see *Maharsha, Chiddushei Aggados*) records a dictum that the Rabbis of Yavneh were wont to repeat:

אני בריה, וחברי בריה. אני מלאכתי בעיר והוא מלאכתי בשדה. אני משכים למלאכתי, והוא משכים למלאכתי. כשם שהוא אינו מתגדר במלאכתי, כך אני איני מתגדר במלאכתי. ושמה תאמר: אני מרבה, והוא ממעיט — שנינו: אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים.

I [who am engaged in Torah study] am a creature, and my [less learned] friend is a creature. My work [of studying Torah] is in the city, and his work is in the field. I arise early

to my work and he arises early to his work. Just as he does not distinguish himself by doing my work, so I do not distinguish myself by doing his work. And perhaps you will say that [I will receive more reward, for] I [study] extensively, whereas he [studies] only minimally. [This is not so!] For we have a tradition that both the one who does much and the one who does little [are equally rewarded], provided that each directs his heart towards Heaven.

There is nothing embarrassing about working for a living and following the words of the *Gemara*, “הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ”. The program of Rabbi Shimon *bar* Yochai is not appropriate for the masses, and therefore one who feels that he has to earn a livelihood should do so without compunction. No one should think that the *talmid chacham* will receive more reward. If people fulfill their designated roles in the world, by learning Torah according to their ability and by accomplishing a *kiddush Hashem* in their work, they will all receive proper reward.

Every Jewish man gives a *kesubah* to his wife that contains the statement: “ואנא אפלא ואוקיר ואיזון ואפרנס יתיכי ליכי כהלכות גוברין יהודאין - and I will work, honor, feed, and support you, according to the laws of Jewish men, who faithfully work, honor, feed, and support their wives.” It is self-understood that during the early years of a marriage, a husband may learn in *kollel* or attend graduate school while his wife supports him, as a similar arrangement is common among non-Jews as well. In principle, though, as the text of the *kesubah* indicates, the *din* requires the husband to earn a *parnassah*.

In light of our discussion, we conclude that both of the following extreme views are incorrect. The attitude that earning a *parnassah* is not an obligation, but rather a concession that one makes when he has no other choice, is not accurate. It is, in fact, one of the *mitzvos* in the Torah for a man to provide for himself and his family. Likewise, the attitude that

there is no constant obligation of *talmud Torah* once a person joins the work force is equally mistaken. One might even argue to the contrary, that the *mitzvah* applies in an even stronger fashion to an older, more mature individual. Each person must fulfill both *pessukim* – “והגית בו יומם ולילה” and “ואספת דגנך ותירשך ויצהרך” – uniquely, and in the best possible fashion.

Chapter 2: *Hishtadlus* for *Parnassa*

Rav Mayer Twersky, 5761²³

The Approach for a Torah Society as a Whole

We will explore together what the *hashkafa* of a *ben* Torah should be towards *parnassa*, i.e. making a living. Our focus will not be just on how a *ben* Torah should view it for himself as an individual, but on what approach or attitude one should have for a Torah society as a whole when it comes to *parnassa*.

On the one hand, it certainly must be deeply ingrained and embedded within us that, “כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה ועד” (Beitza 16a), i.e. that the *parnassa* which is forthcoming to a person is part of the comprehensive *hashgacha pratis*. This is developed at great length by Rabbeinu Bachya in *Chovos Halevavos*. A person should never fall prey to the delusion of (*Devarim* 8:17), “כחי ועצם ידי עשה לי את” “החיל הזה”, and he should recognize that it’s not his expertise or efforts which bear results (as the Mishnah in *Kiddushin* 82a says, “לא עניות מן”

²³ The audio can be found on ravtwersky.torahweb.org, as the fifth and sixth track of [Tikkun Hamiddos; Parnassa \(Tuesday Night 5761\)](#)

האומנות ולא עשירות מן האומנות”), rather results come from the *Ribbono Shel Olam*. All of this notwithstanding, *Chazal* certainly emphasized unequivocally the role of *hishtadlus* - initiative, effort, and even exertion - for making a *parnassa*.

Parenthetically, I want to indicate what we are discussing and what we’re not discussing. We’re all familiar with the Rambam at the end of *Hilchos Shemittah V’yovel* (13:13), presumably based on R’ Shimon Bar Yochai (*Berachos* 35b), but we’re not focusing on that primarily because it seems quite clear there, and even more so from the Gemara, that that’s not a path for the *rabim*. Rather, that’s a path for *yechidei segulah*, as the *Gemara* itself says (*ibid.*), “הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל, ועלתה בידן. כרבי שמעון, ולא עלתה בידן”. We’re not ignoring that but most of us, if not all of us, certainly fall into the class of the *harbei* rather than the class of *yechidim*.

Moreover, even that path described by R’ Shimon Bar Yochai and by the Rambam doesn’t exhaust itself in not having a job for earning *parnassa*. What it means is that a person is totally immersed in *talmud* Torah, makes no *hishtadlus* whatsoever, and relies on *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* to somehow or another channel the *parnassa* without the *hishtadlus* because of the person’s total devotion and commitment. The very minute one makes any kind of *hishtadlus*, including collecting money or anything of the sort, he already forfeits the *derech* of R’ Shimon Bar Yochai and the Rambam at the end of *Hilchos Shemittah V’yovel*.

Chazal’s Unequivocal Emphasis on the Requirement to Make Hishtadlus

As such, we will discuss what clearly seems, according to *Chazal*, to be the path that’s intended for the overwhelming majority of people.

Despite the fact that a person has to not only believe but also know and realize that what we each have is determined by *hashgacha pratis*, Chazal couldn't have emphasized more clearly or more strongly the critical role of *hishtadlus*. For example:

ברכות ח. - ואמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמיה דעולא: גדול הנהנה מיגיעו יותר מירא שמים, דאילו גבי ירא שמים כתיב "אשרי איש ירא את ה'", ואילו גבי נהנה מיגיעו כתיב: "יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך". "אשריך" — בעולם הזה, "וטוב לך" — לעולם הבא, ולגבי ירא שמים, "וטוב לך" לא כתיב ביה.

קידושין פ"ב. - רבי מאיר אומר לעולם ילמד אדם את בנו אומנות נקיה וקלה ויתפלל למי שהעושר והנכסים שלו שאין אומנות שאין בה עניות ועשירות שלא עניות מן האומנות ולא עשירות מן האומנות אלא הכל לפי זכותו.

קידושין כ"ט. - רבי יהודה אומר כל שאינו מלמד את בנו אומנות מלמדו ליסטות ליסטות ס"ד אלא כאילו מלמדו ליסטות.

אבות ב:ב - רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר, יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ, שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון. וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה, סופה בטלה וגוררת עון.

One can't outsmart or outwit Chazal, and Chazal certainly, in no uncertain terms, alerted us to the dangers and the *nisayon* of being poor, of not having enough *parnassa*, of not making the requisite *hishtadlus* for adequate *parnassa*. Moreover, the reality of the world we live in (and to make *hishtadlus* means to take into account the reality of the world we live in) is that it doesn't seem possible for a Torah community as a whole²⁴ to remain totally insular and totally isolated and yet pay heed to the mandate which Chazal gave us of being **אומנות מלמד את בנו אומנות** and not being in the class of **עמה מלאכה תורה**. This point can be learned (perhaps a little bit *al derech drush*, maybe even close to the *p'shat*), from the Gemara (*Berachos* 3b):

²⁴ While it is possible for *yechidei segulah*, that is not out focus here, as explained earlier.

נכנסו חכמי ישראל אצלו. אמרו לו: אדונינו המלך, עמך ישראל צריכין פרנסה. אמר להם: לכו והתפרנסו זה מזה. אמרו לו: אין הקומץ משביע את הארי, ואין הבור מתמלא מחוליתו. אמר להם: לכו ופשטו ידיכם בגדוד.

Rashi explains Dovid *HaMelech's* initial response to be that the rich should give *tzedakka* to the poor. *Al derech drush*, maybe even *al derech p'shat*, one can further explain it to mean that one person will open a grocery store, one person will be an electrician, one person will be a shoemaker, etc. The *chachmei Yisrael* replied to Dovid *HaMelech* that it doesn't work and is not viable - "אין הקומץ משביע את הארי, ואין הבור מתמלא" – there isn't enough economic opportunity in a totally insular and isolated community to provide adequate *parnassa* for everyone. It's not an adequate *hishtadlus*. Dovid *HaMelech*, as is clear from the continuation of the *Gemara*, concedes the point that such an approach does not work.

The Dilemma Which Confronts a *Ben Torah*

Here we come to the crux of the issue and the basic dilemma which confronts a *ben Torah*. On the one hand, it's very easy to understand, and there's a lot of truth to, an approach which says that one has to be totally insular, even economically, because there's no question that contemporary society in which we live is thoroughly immoral and morally corrupt. When one looks at what's accepted as normal and what's criticized as reactionary or extreme leaves no question that it's certainly a society which has totally lost any kind of religious or moral direction. Therefore, there's no question that contemporary society certainly does pose tremendous *nisyonos* for a *ben Torah*, e.g. the lack of business ethics in the workplace, the kind of false advertising (*genaivas da'as*) which is almost built into the system which is obviously halachically unacceptable, and the difficulty of any kind of *shemiras ha'einayim* in contemporary society. There's no question that

the challenges and the danger of involvement in contemporary society are very real, and we shouldn't for a minute ignore them or even minimize them. But on the other hand, to be concerned with those dangers and challenges at the expense of the *yetzer harah* which a person has for *gezel* is not right either; such a tradeoff is not being any more loyal or faithful to Torah. *Chazal* say (*Chagiga* 11b), as the Rambam quotes (*Hilchos Issurei Biah*, 22:19) that, “גזל ועריות נפשו של אדם מתאוה להן ומחמדתן” - a person covets not only *arayos*, but *gezel* as well, and (*Bava Basra* 165a), “רב בגזל” - the majority of people are *nichshal* in *gezel*. As real as the challenges and dangers of involvement in contemporary society are, the dangers of withdrawal and the economic isolation which that creates are no less real. *Issur gezeila* is not inferior to any other *din* or any other *issur* in the Torah, and the resultant *chilul Hashem* certainly only compounds things even more. As such, “לכו והתפרנסו זה מזה” is just not an answer, and we see [from contexts where that approach was adopted and the dire results therefrom] that it doesn't work. It feeds, heightens, and magnifies the *nisayon* and *yetzer harah* of אדם חומדת גזל נפשו של אדם.

When it comes to what one's *hashkafa* / vision should be for a Torah society as a whole (as opposed to some *yechidim*), while one can't ignore the dangers of involvement in contemporary society, it's as much of a mistake and a danger to ignore the problems with total economic withdrawal from contemporary society. If total withdrawal is not economically feasible, then obviously whatever training is needed to earn a living is not just part of one's *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, rather it's a religious obligation in two senses. First, if the Torah tells us that we should make *hishtadlus*, then it's a religious obligation in that sense, and secondly, if *Chazal* warn us that without *hishtadlus* a person is prone to having his Torah become בטלה וגוררת עון (*Avos* 2:2) and he will be prone to *listus* (*Kiddushin* 29a), then clearly measures to prevent that outcome are also a religious obligation.

The Balance that Must be Maintained

While for *yechidim* there are alternatives, for a Torah society as a whole we have to try to strike a difficult balance between making *hishtadlus* for *parnassa* and guarding ourselves against being influenced by contemporary society. We must never for a moment forget that the standards by which we have to measure ourselves cannot be adopted from the surrounding society. The danger, which at times is very subtle, of involvement in the outside world is not necessarily being attracted to the most crude and extreme forms of immorality, rather the danger is that one begins to measure oneself against the standards of the surrounding culture. In other words, instead of measuring oneself against the standards of *hasmada b'Torah* and *dikduk b'mitzvos*, one measures one's piety by the excesses of society, and then it becomes very easy to think that if one is not involved in outright *gezeila / geneiva*, then obviously he's doing everything correctly according to *halacha*. We have a tendency and susceptibility to measure ourselves by those around us, and yet that can never be the standard for a *ben Torah* in today's society. One can never measure himself by the business ethics of contemporary society and say to himself, "well, I'm not doing what they're doing"; that's never the question which we put to ourselves and that's never the standard to which we have to answer. One of the most important perspectives that needs to be maintained and constantly reinforced is that a person has to always measure himself against the exacting standards of Torah and not relative to the immoral and unethical excesses of modern society. That having been said, in terms of what the vision should be for a Torah society, we can never underestimate the dangers of not making adequate *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*.

Even if one lives at a time when, for whatever reason, there's not as much clarity in certain areas of *hashkafa* as there once was and there ought to be, it's very important that we try to maintain balance and clarity. In

particular, I think we have a very great obligation when it comes to representing this kind of *hashkafa*. Our level of *dikduk b'mitzvos* and our *hasmada b'Torah* has to be so high and so great that we shouldn't help generate the misconception that somehow or another *hishtadlus* for *parnassa* in the way that we've been describing automatically entails some compromise or laxity in terms of one's devotion to Torah and one's *shemiras hamitzvos*. Any position which a person takes which advocates or recognizes the need for a measure of involvement with the world has to be complimented by infusing more *yiras Shomayim*, greater *dikduk b'mitzvos*, and greater *hasmada b'Torah* lest we, *Rachmana litzlan*, feed the misconception that such involvement automatically has to result in some laxity in *shemiras hamitzvos*.

Bifurcating Our Time or Broadening Our Avodah?

Even in *halacha* it's quite clear that *hishtadlus* for *parnassa* is a *tzorech mitzva*. For instance, a person is not supposed to be מפליג בספינה השבת קודם ימים ג' but *l'tzorech mitzva* it's *mutar*, and in that context *parnassa* is considered a *tzorech mitzva* (see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 248). And yet, even though this obligation emerges unequivocally from innumerable *mekoros* in *Chazal*, we instinctively resist accepting such a *hashkafa*. Someone who understands the *chashivus* of Torah, whose attachment to Torah has become strong and intense, and whose aspirations in Torah are real and challenging, as they should be, is suspicious of anything which seems to distract or divert one from an exclusive preoccupation with Torah. That suspicion seems to be a healthy instinct, and certainly seems to have its root in our *yetzer hatov*. And yet, it seems unequivocally clear that the Torah does mandate the *hashkafos* that we've described regarding this topic. What's the *kasuv hashlishi* to resolve this seeming conflict?

The *kasuv hashlishi* is to be found in the Rambam's presentation of "בכל דרכיך דעהו" and "וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים" (*Hilchos De'os*, 3:2-3). I'd like to share with you two *ha'aros* (the second being more germane to what we've been discussing) that focus on where the Rambam doesn't place these *halachos* and where he does place them, which will in turn answer our question.

The first point is absolutely remarkable and probably something which a person should be mindful of every day of his life. Rambam begins the fifth *perek* of *Hilchos De'os* as follows:

כשם שהחכם נכר בחכמתו ובדעותיו והוא מבדל בהם משאר העם.
 כך צריך שיהיה נכר במעשיו במאכלו ובמשקהו ובבעילתו ובעשית
 צרכיו ובדבורו ובהלוכו ובמלבושו ובכלכלו דבריו ובמשאו ובמתנו.
 ויהיו כל המעשים האלו נאים ומתקנים ביותר.

Those who are *chachomim* have to hold themselves to a higher standard in everything they do, in every realm of life, and in every type of activity in which we all engage. It's interesting that some things which we find in *Pirkei Avos* are only quoted by the Rambam here in the fifth *perek* of *Hilchos De'os* which describes the higher standard for *chachomim*. While it's not clear whether everything in this *perek* is limited to *chachomim*, certainly for the most part the emphasis here is that these standards are only expected of *chachomim*. Once the Rambam has made this conceptual breakthrough that not everything in *Pirkei Avos* is addressed to all of us but some of it is only addressed to *chachomim*, we certainly would have expected that "וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים" (*Avos* 2:12), the demand that we strive that everything we do, without exception, should be *l'shem Shomayim*, would be among the *Mishnayos* to be quoted in the fifth *perek* which addresses *chachomim*, not in the third *perek* which addresses all of us. And yet, the Rambam includes this *halacha* in the third *perek*, which means that what we all do is supposed to be measured by, and

oriented, *l'shem Shomayim*. This is what we glean from where the Rambam didn't place the *halacha*.

The second *ha'ara* on this Rambam relates to what's to be learned from where the Rambam does place the *halacha* of “וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים”, and it's this point which ties in more directly with our topic. The first two *perakim* of *Hilchos De'os* are about how a person is supposed to follow the *derech hamemutza'as* – the middle path between the extremes – when it comes to *middos*, and according to the Rambam this is actually how we fulfill the *mitzva* of *v'halachta b'drachav*. The Rambam very conspicuously doesn't end his discussion of the *derech hamemutza'as* at the end of the second *perek*, rather he lets it spill over into the first *halacha* of the third *perek*, and then in *halacha beis* he proceeds to discuss “בכל דרכיך דעהו” and “וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים”. Why did he extend the discussion of the *derech hamemutza'as* into the third *perek*²⁵? The answer is that the Rambam here is responding to a question which is similar to the one we asked above regarding the seeming distraction of earning a living. Following the *derech hamemutza'as* means, for example, that on the one hand a person certainly should not go to the extreme of being driven to amass wealth but on the other hand he's not supposed to go to the opposite extreme in which he doesn't spend enough time to earn enough money to meet his basic needs. As another example, this means that a person

²⁵ Parenthetically, the Rambam intended *Mishna Torah* to be studied in order, as he states in the *hakdama*. However, that's not the way history has decided that *Mishna Torah* be studied, rather we look at an individual *halacha* in the Rambam which the *Ein Mishpat* refers us to, in isolation from the *halachos* that precede it and follow it. When we look at a *halacha* in isolation we sometimes don't really have perspective in terms of what's happening within the Rambam, and sometimes we miss a lot because of that. Reb Chaim and *mamshichei darko* after him, e.g. the Rav, did a lot to restore the approach of reading the Rambam in context. What we are highlighting in the Rambam in our discussion is a perfect example of this.

certainly shouldn't be a hedonist or be gluttonous in eating, rather he should eat a sound diet which will keep him healthy. When reading this, a question bothers us: how can it be that the Torah is distracting us and diverting us from *avodas Hashem*? Isn't it good that a person should go to the extreme in his *avodas Hashem* that he's not interested in money at all, and shouldn't a person's *ruchnius* be so strong and so defining that he doesn't have interest in eating anything and therefore follows an aesthetic regiment? Aren't these extremes fuller expressions of devoting oneself to *avodas Hashem*?

The Rambam says that to understand why the *derech hamemutza'as* doesn't constitute a distraction or a lesser expression of devotion, we need to be introduced to the concept of “**וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים**”, and thus his presentation of the *derech hamemutza'as* must extend into the third *perek* in order to connect the two concepts. It's unequivocal in *Chazal* that a person is supposed to make *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, and the Rambam tells us unequivocally that a person is supposed to avoid certain extremes. Why aren't the extremes more spiritual? If a person recognizes that the Torah says “**בכל דרכיך דעהו**” and “**וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים**”, he will realize that the Torah is not distracting us from *avodas Hashem* by requiring us to make *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, rather we have a too narrow definition of what *avodas Hashem* is. Anything which the Torah says should be done is an act of *avodas Hashem* if only a person orients and gears that act *l'shem Shomayim*. And that's what the Rambam says in concluding (3:3) “**נמצא המהלך בדרך זו כל ימיו עובד את ה' תמיד. אפילו ... בשעה שנושא ונותן...**”.

The Rambam's *kasuv hashlishi*, then, is that although a person is supposed to make *hishtadlus* for *parnassa* and is supposed to be moderate when it comes to *middos*, as outlined in *perek aleph* and *beis*, neither of these represent a compromise, distraction, or diversion from *avodas Hashem*. On the contrary, the Torah says that one's *avodas Hashem* has

many fronts to it, and it's a big mistake for a person to think that only the hours that he's privileged to spend in the *beis medrash* is *l'shem Shomayim* and everything else is *כפאו שד*. Of course a person is supposed to be *כאילו כפאו שד*. Of course a person is supposed to be *כאילו כפאו שד* the amount of time he spends learning and involved in formal *taryag mitzvos*, but he also has to realize that the whole idea of "בכל דרכיך דעהו" and "וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים" is that a person can and should remember (as highlighted by the first *ha'ara*, i.e. that this *halacha* is not in the fifth *perek*) that each of us, *באשר הוא שם*, can and should be *תמיד ה' עובד את ה'*, which includes when he's making *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, when he's avoiding the extreme of not eating enough to keep himself healthy, etc.

Why Being Mindful is Essential

Something that we have to be on guard against, which is certainly one of the things that human nature is most prone to, is going about our daily routine automatically and without thinking. Whether one is in college, learning full time, or holding down a job, we all have routines, and this danger is present for us all at all times. The danger is greater, however, outside of Torah and *mitzvos* formally defined. Why? *אחרי ככלות הכל*, Torah and *mitzvos* formally defined are intrinsically meaningful, so as flawed and as undesirable as it is if a person is not stopping to think and reflect about what he's doing, even so, what he's doing is intrinsically meaningful and intrinsically holy. However, when doing things that are not obviously and intrinsically meaningful, e.g. going to work, paying the bills, etc., the difference between someone who is not *masiach da'as*, who remains focused, oriented, and geared *l'shem Shomayim*, as opposed to someone who is on automatic pilot, is the difference between day and night. If you make a *cheshbon* of how many hours the average person spends on the job, eating, sleeping, etc., it is decades of one's life, probably the majority of one's life, and *hesech ha'da'as* happens totally passively and too often without our even being aware of it or sensitive to it. Taking the

time to reflect each morning about what I'm trying to accomplish by going to work or by my involvement in any other worldly matters which I need to be involved in, can determine if I spend forty or fifty years of my life involved in *avodas* Hashem or not. It's absolutely staggering how these few minutes in the morning, and maybe once or twice during the day as well, spent reorienting oneself makes the difference between one who is עובד יהוה כל ימיו and *Rachmana litzlan* missing out on that opportunity.

This mindfulness is a גדול בתורה, and it also underlies these seemingly moderate *hashkafos* which, in truth, are neither distracting nor diverting us from *avodas* Hashem, rather they are simply a manifestation of the fundamental idea of וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים.

Part II: Secular Studies

Chapter 3: *Sha'ar HaChochmos*

Rav Hershel Schachter, 1994

I. Misconception of *B'nos Lot*

In *Parshas Vayera*, we read about the story of Lot and his daughters, who were the only survivors from the upheaval of Sodom. Thinking that the rest of the world had been destroyed as well, the *bnos Lot* felt that it was their responsibility to propagate the human race by bearing children, even though the only living male was their own father. That night they made their father drunk with wine and the older daughter engaged in relations with him, and as a result of that union, she gave birth to a child whom she named Moav, the ancestor of the Moavi nation. The following night they made their father drunk once more, and the younger daughter conceived from him. She named her son Ben Ami, the ancestor of the Ammoni nation (see *Bereishis* 19:29-38).

Whenever we *lein* this *parsha*, I am struck by the extent of Lot's daughters' mistaken impression. Their first mistake was that they thought that they were the only righteous people in the world who deserved to be spared, similar to Noach and his family being spared from the *mabul*. The fact is though, as the Torah attests (*Bereishis* 19:29), they were actually saved only in the merit of Avraham, not in their own merit. Indeed, the true reason for many events that we witness in life is not readily apparent.

Along these lines, the *Rambam* (*Hakdamah L'Seder Zera'im, Peirush HaMishnayos*, s.v. *achar kein*) offers a *mashal* to a king who constructs a grand palace for himself. It is possible, he writes, that the entire palace was prepared years in advance for the sole purpose of a particular *chassid* who would one day require the shade of one of the palace walls. Similarly, it could be that an entire *yeshiva* or an entire business exists in order to benefit one virtuous secretary who works in the office or one righteous clerk who sorts mail in the mailroom.

As the *Gemara* in *Berachos* (17b) tells us, “בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת, מהר חורב ואומרת כל העולם כולו נזונין בשביל חנינא בני וחנינא בני די לו בקב חרובין מערב שבת לערב שבת – Each and every day a Heavenly voice issues from Har Chorev and says: “The entire world is sustained for the sake of Chanina [ben Dosa], My son, while Chanina, My son, is satisfied with just a *kav* of carobs from one *erev Shabbos* to the next *erev Shabbos*.”

The erroneous conclusion of the *bnos Lot* led them to engage in incestuous relations with their father. This point also teaches a valuable lesson. Of course, the Halachah does say that we have a right to be lenient due to a *sha'as hadchak* (pressing circumstance). For example, the *Mechaber* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 306:14) permits *chillul Shabbos* for the sake of *piku'ach nefesh* – literally, the saving of a **soul** – to save one's abducted daughter, who, it is feared, may be brought to apostasy as a consequence of her abduction. We must be careful, though, not to take things out of proportion like the *bnos Lot* did.

Oftentimes, well-meaning people who work in vital organizations exaggerate their roles. The *mitzvah* of *kiruv rechokim*, for example, is indeed very significant, but it does not always justify the violation of other *mitzvos*. People engaged in *kiruv* may develop a distorted sense of reality, considering their work indispensable, and may then allow themselves excessive leniencies in their quest to “save *Yiddishkeit*.” We ought to take

to heart the warning Rav Soloveitchik once gave to young *musmachim* – “Do not develop a Messiah complex!”

In point of fact, *Hashem* did not hold the *bnos Lot* accountable for their actions. Quite the contrary, the *Gemara* in *Horayos* (10b-11a) applies the *passuk*, “צדיקים ילכו בם – The righteous walk in them [the ways of *Hashem*]” (*Hoshei'a* 14:10), to the *bnos Lot* since they sincerely intended to fulfill a *mitzvah*. They believed that the entire world had been destroyed along with Sodom, and their motive was a noble one – the perpetuation of mankind.

In fact, the older daughter received reward for the one night by which she preceded her younger sister in cohabiting with their father. Because of her decision to take the initiative and act swiftly, she merited to precede her sister to *malchus* by four generations, i.e., four generations descended from the older daughter through Rus *HaMoaviyah* – Oved, Yishai, Dovid, and Shlomo – before a descendant of the younger daughter emerged through Na'amah *HaAmmonis* – Rechavam, the son of Shlomo.

Along these lines, the *Gemara* (*Menachos* 64a) teaches that if doctors assessed a sick person to be a *choleh mesukan* who requires to eat a dried fig on the Shabbos, and ten people ran and brought ten dried figs at one time, they are not liable for *chillul Shabbos*, and are, in fact, well rewarded by Heaven for their good intentions (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 328:15). This ruling applies even if the sick person had already recovered by eating the first fig brought to him before the latter ones did their *melachah*.

II. Broadening Our Scope

One of the ways to avoid making the mistake of the *bnos Lot*, and to gain a correct perception of reality, is to broaden one's scope. The *bnos Lot* had a very narrow range of vision, and when they saw the destruction

of their cities, they assumed that the entire world had been destroyed. Indeed, it was for the purpose of expanding his scope that the Vilna Gaon is known to have valued all fields of knowledge and educated himself in them, in order to more fully understand the Torah.

Upon visiting the Gaon in 5538 (1778), Rav Baruch of Shklov, who translated the work of Euclid into Hebrew, reported: “I heard from his holy mouth that to the extent that a person lacks knowledge of *sha’ar hachochmos* (secular wisdom), he will be lacking a hundredfold in Torah wisdom, for Torah and secular wisdom are joined together ... and he commanded me to translate into our holy language what is possible from secular wisdom ... so that knowledge will increase among our people Israel” (*Uklidus, hakdamah*).

In fact, the Gaon authored a work on trigonometry and geometry, *Ayil Meshulash*, and encouraged his *talmidim* to learn secular sciences. Rav Yisrael of Shklov writes (*Pe’as HaShulchan, Hakdamah*) that the Gaon knew the wisdom of algebra, trigonometry, geometry and music thoroughly, saying: “All wisdom is necessary for our holy Torah and is contained therein.” The Gaon had also wished to learn pharmacology from the doctors of his time, but his father did not permit him, recognizing that his son would become extremely proficient in medicine, and thus obligated to treat patients at the expense of learning Torah.

It emerges from the Gaon’s comments that if we were to compare one person who knows all of *shas* with another who knows *shas* **and** *sha’ar hachochmos*, the latter would certainly have a better perception of Torah given his broader scope of knowledge. It seems equally obvious, though, that if we compare a person who knows all of *shas* but not *sha’ar hachochmos* with another who knows only a fraction of *shas* but has knowledge of *sha’ar hachochmos*, the Vilna Gaon would **not** say that the latter has a better perception of Torah.

Different *talmidei chachamim*, who possess a comprehensive knowledge of Torah and who are therefore entitled to render a halachic opinion, may issue different *pesakim* that are equally legitimate. This represents the beauty of the principle, “אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים – These and those are the words of the Living G-d” (*Eruvin* 13b). With respect to the many disputes between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel, for example, we assume that both sides of the *machlokes* have validity.

Hashem has left it to the discretion of the qualified *chachomim* of each generation to rule based on their perspective of *kol haTorah kulah* – the complete corpus of Torah knowledge. As long as both sides of a *machlokes* arrive at their positions by working with the *מידות שהתורה נדרשת בהן* (exegetical principles through which the Torah is expounded), each is considered to have a correct point of view. However, in the example above, when one person knows all of *shas* and another knows only a small section of *shas* but has knowledge of *sha'ar hachochmos*, the two are not viewing the same body of information. Here, we would **not** apply *אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים*. The former has a much clearer perception of the *halachah* than the latter since he is considering more Torah.

We must broaden our scope when we learn *Gemara* as well. We cannot be satisfied with taking one piece of *Gemara* and analyzing it in isolation; such a narrow scope will not lead to a full understanding. Instead, to understand one piece of *Gemara*, it must be taken along with all of the related *sugyos* throughout *shas*. The analysis will then be informed by a clearer perception. In truth, all of life is this way – the wider the scope the better the perspective.

III. The Need for *Havdalos*

I have seen a certain problem that affects many of the *talmidim* in the *yeshiva*. They are learning Torah and gaining secular knowledge, and they are observant of Torah and *mitzvos*, but they seem to be rooted in

chol, not in *kodesh*. The Torah requires a separation between these two realms, as we conclude the Shabbos *Havdalah*, “מבדיל בין קודש לחול – Who separates between holy and mundane.” In fact, we must even differentiate between *kodesh chamur* and *kodesh kal* (stricter and lighter *kedushah*), which is a less obvious *havdalah*. This is how the *passuk* describes the purpose of the *paroches* in the *Mishkan*, “והבדילה הפרוכת לכם בין הקודש – ובין קודש הקדשים – and the partition shall separate for you between the Holy and the Holy of Holies” (*Shemos* 26:33).

The *Avudraham* (*Seder HaHaggadah U'Peirushah*) explains that the *paroches* is the source in *Tanach* for the special *Havdalah* recited when Yom Tov immediately follows Shabbos (known by the acronym *yaknehaz*), which concludes with the phrase, “המבדיל בין קודש לקודש – Who distinguishes between holiness and holiness.” We highlight the fact that Shabbos possesses a higher level of *kedushah* than Yom Tov.

Along these lines, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 119b) teaches, “לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שהשוו קטן וגדול – Yerushalayim was destroyed only because the small and the great were considered equal.” One of the deficiencies of *Klal Yisrael* at the time of the *churban* was equating great *talmidei chachamim* with weaker ones.

One can live in two different worlds, as did the Vilna Gaon himself, but one must always remain firmly rooted in *kodesh*. Only then do we consider his conclusions acceptable, based on אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים, even if they are in disagreement with those of others. One who is rooted in *chol*, however, is like a person looking into a room from the outside whose narrow view of the room hides from him many aspects of the room. His are **not** Torah perspectives, and we do **not** apply אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים to his points of view.

IV. The Importance of Seder

After making proper *havdalos*, the next important step is to inculcate the *middah* of *seder*, orderliness, into one's personality. This is true in practical terms, that one should dress neatly and keep orderly notes and a tidy room. Even more important, though, is to be *mesudar* in the realm of *machshavah* – to arrange one's principles and values in the proper order. Most people subscribe to a great number of ideals, and we should put in the effort to organize these beliefs in our minds and to assign the appropriate relative value to different ideals.

The philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote that although each of his individual ideas may have appeared in the writings of earlier philosophers, his innovation was in the arrangement in which he presented them. Just as the same words in a different order form a different thought, the same thoughts organized differently form a different discourse. Pascal compared this to a game of tennis. “When we play tennis, we both play with the same ball, but one of us places it better” (Thoughts 1:22).

Similarly, if two people subscribe to principles A and B, but one believes that A is the rule and B is the exception to the rule, and the second believes that B is the rule and that A is the exception to the rule, they have totally different outlooks.

This principle is necessary in the realm of *mitzvah* observance as well. It is very important to keep all the *mitzvos haTorah* in their proper *seder*. All Orthodox Jews subscribe to the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* and endeavor to fulfill each and every one in a complete fashion. Yet, it is very important to recognize what the hierarchy of *mitzvos* is, and it requires a great deal of Torah knowledge to attain such a level of discernment. Some *mitzvos* are more critical than others; having a sense of their relative value will allow us to correctly prioritize them.

V. Learning Torah

Learning Torah expands one's perspective. Rav Velvel Soloveitchik once commented that his father, Rav Chaim, was much greater than him. Because of the Torah that he had learned, Rav Chaim had such keen insight that he was able to carefully analyze a situation and accurately predict what would follow in another sixty years if one route were to be followed as opposed to another. Rav Velvel readily admitted that he did not at all have that ability. After pausing for a moment though, he added that he believed he possessed a certain degree of insight that others lacked; "At least I'm able to see what's under my nose!"

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 87a) similarly expounds the *passuk*, "אני חומה ושדי כמגדלות" – I am a wall, and my breasts are like towers" (*Shir HaShirim* 8:10), as follows: "אני חומה" is a reference to the Torah, which protects those who study it as a wall protects the residents of a city. "ושדי כמגדלות" refers to *talmidei chachamim*, who resemble watchtowers. Because they have succeeded in amassing a significant amount of Torah wisdom, they are able to protect their generation with their greater vision and enhanced perspective.

When my children were young and wanted to run into the street, I warned them not to go because a car was coming. They looked at me as if I had *ruach hakodesh* because I knew a car was approaching! It wasn't *ruach hakodesh*; they were simply too short to see over the parked cars on the road, and I was tall enough to see the oncoming car. Similarly, a *talmid chacham* is like a tall tower, and the higher one's vantage point is, the more distant one can see.

In reciting, "המבדיל בין קודש לקודש", we declare that while Shabbos and Yom Tov are both *kodesh*, not all *kodesh* is on the same level. Learning more and more Torah will help a person recognize what is *kodesh* and what is *chol*, what is *kodesh chamur* and what is *kodesh kal*, what is *ikar*

(primary) and what is *tafel* (secondary), what are the rules and which are the exceptions to the rules. We can thereby hope to attain a broad scope of vision and a clear perception of reality.

Chapter 4: Perspectives on a College Education

Rav Mayer Twersky, 2022²⁶

We will begin with a few remarks regarding the value of secular education, followed by Q and A.

Balance

A profound dialectic characterizes *avodas Hashem*. On the one hand, we are called upon to have a single-minded intensity and passion in our *avodas Hashem*; such single-mindedness is usually associated with imbalance, lack of nuance, and extremism. On the other hand, *avodas Hashem* demands the very opposite qualities - balance, nuance, and being measured.

One such area within *avodas Hashem* which necessitates balance is relating to the outside world, to disciplines other than Torah. *Chazal* tell us “חכמה בגוים תאמין” (*Eichah Rabbasi* 2:13). Unlike Torah which is the exclusive province of the Jewish people, *chochma* is cultivated by the nations of the world as well. This comment of *Chazal* is reflected in

²⁶ This chapter presents an annotated and redacted transcript of a conversation with students on Dec. 8, 2022.

halachic sources. For instance, in cases of *pikuach nefesh*, halacha seeks medical expertise, and explicitly recognizes non-Jewish doctors as well as potential experts. We must not indiscriminately reject everything which comes from the outside world, and, conversely, we obviously must not indiscriminately accept everything that comes from the outside world; we have to strike the right balance. Balance, of course, does not necessarily mean a fifty-fifty division; it means accepting from contemporary culture that which is true and rejecting that which is false. This approach is perfectly balanced even if currently it translates into accepting a very small percentage and rejecting an overwhelmingly large percentage of contemporary culture.

Although axiomatically it does not need to be true, practically it is the case that in our generation *benei Torah* with a good secular education have a much easier time recognizing the need for, and striking, the required balance in this vital area of relating to the outside world. Why is that the case? The following explanation is speculative: perhaps we can understand this with a *mashal*. Many of us live in communities that are more or less homogeneous, and attended schools that are similarly homogeneous. The spectrum of frum Jews, however, is much more heterogeneous than our immediate exposure. Since we have limited, if any, meaningful personal contact with other communities, what we “know” about them is based on stereotypes. Our community depicts others stereotypically, and, in turn, our own community is stereotyped as well. Stereotypes, as we know, tend to be indiscriminating and undiscerning. When our knowledge of other communities and other types of Jews within the Torah world is based on actual interaction instead of stereotypes, when there is personal contact, almost inevitably we realize that the nuanced reality significantly differs from the homogenizing stereotypes. Whereas stereotypes generally elicit opposition, personal contact will often command respect and affection, differences notwithstanding.

The rather distant *nimshal* is that lacking a secular education we tend to resort to indiscriminating stereotypes and, accordingly, uniformly reject the truths of *chochma* together with the falsehoods of pseudo *chochoma*. We do so to our own detriment. But the ultimate – in truth the only “real” – consequence of indiscriminate rejection is *chilul Hashem*. Instead of fulfilling our mission as the *am ha'nivchar* to command respect as an *am chochom v'navon*, we appear benighted.

A sound, discerning and discriminating secular education where *chochma* is distinguished from pseudo *chochma* under the penetrating, illuminating lens of Torah provides the vitally needed balance in our interaction with the outside world.

אומנות נקיה וקלה

A second perspective relates more to the value of a college degree than secular education per se. One of the מצות הבן על האב, the obligations of the father to his son, is to teach his son a trade (*Kiddushin* 29a). *Chazal* (*ibid.* 82a) teach, “לעולם ילמד אדם את בנו אומנות נקיה וקלה”, one should teach his son a clean and easy trade”. When transposed to the contemporary reality, this means that a person should prepare his son to enter a profession that has a good work-life balance. Some jobs do not provide adequate *parnassa*; others provide more than adequate *parnassa* but lack the right work-life balance. An אומנות נקיה וקלה, in our terms, provides an ample *parnassa*, and, concomitantly, a good work-life balance.

Some nobly (but misguidedly) inclined, idealistic individuals postpone preparatory *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, or even thinking about such preparations, until fiscal realities force the issue upon them. They assume that when the time comes, they will somehow manage. The impetus for this modus operandi is certainly understandable. It is certainly true that we were not put in this world to focus upon *gashmius*. Nevertheless, for

many people this approach backfires and, on the contrary, results in a disproportionate focus on money.

The best way to live a spiritually focused life in which one is not disproportionately focused upon money, in which money is a non-factor and non-issue, is to *b'siyatta d'Shamaya* become qualified to hold a good job and earn enough money to meet one's family's needs. Generally, the people who, *rachmana litzlan*, spend the most time thinking about money are those who do not have a good job and therefore do not have enough money. One need not be wealthy, but one does need to have enough money that a bill, expected or unexpected, arriving in the mail does not trigger a crisis. For many people, perhaps most, the path to an *אמנות נקיה וקלה* goes through a college degree.

Chachmei Yisroel's Use of Secular Knowledge

A third perspective relates to advanced secular education itself. The *rishonim* differ regarding the pursuit of *chochoma*. For those *chachmei Yisroel* who studied and acquired secular knowledge, it played a significant role. Rav Sa'adya Gaon could not have written *Emunos V'd'eos* without having studied Arabic philosophy, the Rambam could not have written *Moreh Nevuchim* without having studied Greek and Arabic philosophy, and the Rav could not have written *Ish Hahalacha* and *Halachic Mind* et al. without his vast humanistic and philosophical knowledge, especially Kantian philosophy. That should not be misunderstood, *chas v'shalom*, to question the Torah authenticity of any of the above-mentioned *chachmei Yisroel* or their works. Reb Yaakov Moshe Charlop *zt"l*, in a remarkable and profound comment (Introduction to *Mei Marom* on *Shemoneh Perakim*), writes that the Rambam did not just quote Aristotle; he first was "*migayer* – converted" the ideas, and then he quoted them. What does it mean to be *migayer* Aristotle's ideas? It means that when *chachmei Yisroel* studied the works

of *chachmei umos ha'olam*, they reflected upon everything they were studying from the perspective of Torah and rejected anything that was antithetical to or inconsistent with Torah. They also rejected what was useless. However, true insights or categories of thought that were useful for understanding, interpreting, and presenting Torah, etc., were recast in a Torah mold, developed, and utilized.

While this third perspective on secular education is unquestionably true, I do not know how many of us have the capacity to utilize secular education in this way. This is so for two reasons. First, profound Torah knowledge is needed to be able to discern and discriminate what is a candidate for Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop's *geirus*, and what is not. Second, it requires a rarified creative bent which recognizes possible connections, uses, etc. Therefore, while this perspective is certainly relevant to *yechidim*, I do not know that it is relevant to most of us.

Q&A With Students

Q: If one can get a college degree online in a quicker and more efficient way than earning a degree at YU and one's career will not be negatively affected by that approach, why should one stay in YU, where it will take longer to earn a degree and where one is not in a yeshiva environment all day? Would it make more sense to leave YU, enroll in an online college, and learn in a "real" Yeshiva?

A: It is certainly true that one distinctive feature of Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan is its cooperative partnership with the different college tracks, Yeshiva College & Sy Syms. However, whether to come learn in our yeshiva is a multifactored decision. Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchanan imparts an encompassing *hashkafa* and a *derech hachayim*.

In highlighting the following features I do not mean to imply that we have a monopoly on any of them. Nor is the ensuing presentation comprehensive. Our yeshiva, inter alia, teaches:

- Balance; creating the correct balance in so many different areas within *avodas Hashem* – for instance, between *talmud* Torah and *hishtadlus* for *parnassa*, between insulating ourselves from outside influences and maintaining familial relations with relatives who are not yet frum, relating discriminatingly and wholesomely to the outside world, etc.
- *yashrus* in relating to secular authorities and following *dina demalchusa*.
- an empathetically positive attitude towards *Medinas Yisroel*; not necessarily towards every policy of *Medinas Yisroel*, but towards the existence of the *Medina*.
- to appreciate, and accord *kavod* to, *gedolei Yisrael* across the entire spectrum of the Torah world, past and present, regardless of whether they are the *gedolei Yisrael* who are our *morei derech*. The fact that in a *shiur* from Rav Schachter *shlit"á* you can hear everyone from Rav Kook to the Minchas Elazar quoted is something very beautiful; it requires tremendous *bekius*, but also a humble, apolitical devotion to our authentic, rich, polychromatic *masorah*. Such devotion is a beautiful part of the *hashkafa* and the *derech hachayim* which is imparted in our yeshiva.

The connection that our yeshiva has with Yeshiva College, undoubtedly a distinctive feature, expresses only part of Yeshiva's *hashkafa* and *derech hachayim*. When a *talmid* is deciding which yeshiva best suits him, it is not as simple as honing in, with tunnel vision, on the college.

Q: Rebbe said that studying secular philosophy is not relevant to most people due to our lack of Torah knowledge and/or creativity, both of

which are needed to properly reapply the philosophy. Is that true only regarding philosophy, or in other fields as well, such as the natural sciences?

A: Rambam, at the beginning of *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* (2:2), writes “והיאך היא הדרך לאהבתו ויראתו. בשעה שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו ומשבח הנפלאים הגדולים ויראה מהן חכמתו שאין לה ערך ולא קץ מיד הוא אוהב ומשבח ומפאר ומתאוה תאוה גדולה לידע השם הגדול”. He clearly states that study of science will lead to *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem*. On the other hand, *hachush mach’chish*. We see and know of scientists who are very far from *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem*; and, even in our own experience, (think back to high school biology!) many of us have not been inspired to *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem*. What is the *kasuv hashilishi* between the Rambam and our own experiences with science?

A careful reading yields the answer. The Rambam writes “בשעה ביעולם והבריאה הנפלאה”, not “שיתבונן האדם במעשיו וברואיו הנפלאים”. Only a highly religiously sensitive and conscious individual who sees and experiences the world as the *Rebbono Shel Olam*’s creation will be inspired to *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem*. The study of science will not (necessarily) dispel the blindness of an atheist; even a *ma’amin* who is lacking the requisite heightened religious sensitivity and consciousness to experience the world as הנפלאים וברואיו מעשיו may not be inspired by his scientific studies. The study of creation, i.e. natural sciences, is certainly a potential source of *ahavas Hashem* and *yiras Hashem*; whether it actually serves as such a catalyst depends upon the individual.

Q: Is there any value to be derived from the humanities?

A: The study of philosophy is governed by the third perspective we discussed earlier, relevant only to *yechidim*. Sometimes literature is essentially philosophy which is written in narrative form instead of as a treatise.

Some literature - satire or historical fiction - is intended as a critique of society. For example, in Gulliver's Travels a major war is triggered by a disagreement between the warring nations over the best way to crack an egg. Uncle Tom's Cabin depicts the evil of American slavery. Literature which poignantly critiques society, highlights weaknesses in human nature, exposes hypocrisy, and is also unsullied by *deavrim ha'asurim*, has value. Such works are generally older. I do not know how much unsullied literature of value has or is being composed in modern times.

I am unable to comment on art and music.

Q: Does Rebbe think that there is a fundamental difference between the sciences, math, i.e. things that can be proved using proofs or formulas, as opposed to literature, poetry, art, and music, i.e. things that are more subjective but can be appreciated? Or is it that case that any of these, if used properly, can connect you to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*?

A: There is a major difference between sciences and humanities. Even according to the modern conception of natural science, i.e. science provides only a model of reality, a construct which accounts for what happens in the world, but does not presume to know absolute reality, scientific theories can still be falsified. Natural scientists formulate theories which generate predictions. As such, although it is impossible to verify these theories, it is possible to falsify them. In that sense there is obviously an objective dimension to these sciences which does not exist in the humanities. That is a major difference. It is due to the lack of objectivity that the humanities can, and very often do, deteriorate into worthless *boych sevoras*. The social sciences engage in research and operate with data; yet they clearly can not match the objective dimension which characterizes the natural sciences. Hence, the debate as to whether they are truly sciences. When one sees how the social sciences are so easily

manipulated and politicized in today's world, it becomes more difficult to maintain that they are sciences. On the other hand, all its falsehoods and distortions notwithstanding, psychology, for instance, has yielded some very valuable insights.

Another major difference is that the natural sciences directly study *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* creation, whereas the social sciences to a very significant degree study how people behave – i.e., how they exercise their *bechirah*. The same is true of much of the humanities. Does reading a book and coming away with insight into human nature lead one directly to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*? Such reading, for some individuals, can have value, but its relevance to *bakkoshas Hashem* is decidedly indirect, akin to a link in a chain or a step in a process.

Q: Are there any secular books or secular authors that rebbe personally has found valuable?

A: Yes, but those books and authors may or may not be of value and interest to someone else, depending upon that individual's intellectual interests, the associations and connections he would make, etc. (In the same vein someone else's list may or may not be of value and interest to me.) A reading list, especially outside of the natural sciences, needs to be personalized.

Q: Rebbe spoke about the need to be discriminating and filter out ideas. I think most of us think of that need with respect to blatant, categorical *issurim* such as *pritzus* or *apikorsus*. Could rebbe speak to other more subtle things which could be a problem?

A: Although expressed more subtly than direct statements or explicit pronouncements, tone, attitude, inuendo, etc. can also be [very] objectionable. Two illustrations. 1) Works in Jewish studies whose authors lack the requisite *yiras hakavod* for *chachmei Yisroel*. In truth, an

irreverent attitude will inevitably result in explicit objectionable statements. Nonetheless, it is very important to realize that the insidious subtle attitude will be more pervasive than the explicit statements. 2) In *The Scarlett Letter* Hawthorne never explicitly expresses sympathy for the protagonist adulterers, yet a sympathetic tone runs as an undercurrent throughout the book.

Q: Given that many people have not achieved the level of appreciating Hashem through various secular subjects, which secular subjects should we standardize, and to what extent should they be standardized, across the levels of our educational system?

A: The question is an excellent one. Unfortunately, at present, I'm not prepared to give the careful, thoughtful response that the question warrants. The premise of the question is certainly true and profoundly important. In recognizing from a Torah perspective the value of secular education we should not make the mistake of simply adopting the western ideal and definition of education. Our curriculum must be based on Torah axioms, values and *halachos*.

Q: Regarding exposing ourselves to the outside world so that we can relate to non-frum Jews. Is that just practical or is that idealistic?

A: In the *b'dieved* world in which we live, it is *l'chatchila*. We should maintain healthy familial relations with not-yet religious parents, siblings, etc. On the other hand, especially when young, impressionable children are involved, these relationships must be carefully, not indiscriminately, cultivated because they are fraught with challenges. On a macro level, we can not *chas v'shalom* abandon the majority of Jews because they are not yet *shomrei Torah u'mitzvos*. On the other hand these interactions are also fraught. It is *l'chatchila* to navigate and find the right balance.

Q: Is it ever justifiable for a student to do something in class besides to pay attention, participate, and take notes?

A: This question touches on a very important principle. *Middos* are very important; behaving in a *menschlech* way is very important. The Vilna Gaon (commentary to *Mishlei*, 4:13) teaches that our *neschama* comes down to this world to perfect its *middos*, and that's the *avoda* of a person's life. But theoretically knowing that good *middos* are very important does not suffice; the concern with *middos* must practically impact and shape our behavior. Let us illustrate what a commitment to cultivating and consistently acting with *middos tovos* entails by considering a parallel from a different area of *halacha*. Imagine the following: a *ben Torah* is hungry and looking to buy some meat for dinner; there is a *treife* butcher shop on his block, and a kosher supermarket two miles away. Further, imagine that he does not have a car. It will take thirty minutes each way to procure the kosher food, while the *treife* meat is available right down the block, thirty seconds away. It is simply unimaginable that anyone would suggest eating *treife* so as to save time. And yet we reason this way when it comes to *middos*! In some instances, classroom time is not being productively utilized. But if a student rudely turns his attention elsewhere, he is guilty of *middos* malfeasance. Just as observing the *halachos* of *kashrus* requires an investment of time, so too displaying the right *middos* also requires an investment of time. If there is no official attendance requirement and the teacher really does not mind, let the student not attend the class. But if the teacher is particular about attendance, he should respectfully attend. Rudeness is never an option. [Depending upon circumstances, it may or may not be appropriate to complain to the dean about the quality of instruction.]

Q: How is a person supposed to display good *middos* when he's in a class and the teacher starts teaching things that are harmful?

A: First of all, if the student could anticipate this happening, then he should not register for the class. Also he should speak to his rebbe and the dean of the college to apprise them of the problem. Such classes should not be offered. In the event that the student did not know ahead of time, and stumbled into a problematic class, how he should react would depend on the specifics of the situation and therefore it is impossible to generalize. The situation might warrant the student leaving and subsequently consulting with his rebbe as to how to move forward. However, the student should not reach that conclusion rashly. Leaving mid-class is a last resort. Often, especially if the teacher is new to YU and is not yet attuned to its sensitivities, he is not acting or speaking out of malice or with an agenda; the instructor is simply unaware that the material is offensive. In that case, a simple, respectful, non-confrontational request or comment which avoids embarrassing the teacher might rectify the situation.

Q: Usually parents like to see their children get good grades, so is there any requirement, due to the *mitzva* of *kibud av v'eim*, to work harder and spend more time studying in order to get higher grades than one needs otherwise?

A: In some instances the question will be moot. *Hishtadlus* often necessitates good grades. For example, if one's career of choice requires a graduate degree, then he needs to receive [very] good grades to gain admission into graduate school.

Within *miztvos kibud av v'eim*, there are two domains, *chiyuv* and *kiyum*. The *chiyuv* is basically to render physical service as needed/requested, assisting with eating, shopping, getting around, etc. Additionally, the *chiyuv* of *kibud av v'eim* involves according honor, standing for one's parents, etc. There is no obligation to abide by anything and everything they say; there is no formal *chiyuv* to do everything possible that gives them *nachas*. The domain of *kiyum kibud av v'eim*,

however, is much broader. Thus, by way of example, the *Sefer Chassidim* (quoted by the *Beis Lechem Yehuda, Yoreh Deah* 240) rules that one should not undertake optional *ta'aniyos* if his so doing would upset his parents. The *kiyum kibud av v'eim* takes precedence over the *middas chassidus*.

In order to provide an appropriately personalized answer to the specific question regarding grades, several other factors would have to be considered. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Would the additional study time necessary to attain higher grades come at the expense of *talmud* Torah? This question needs to be answered carefully, upon reflection. It often amazes how much un- or under-used time we have.
- Will the failure to perform to parents' expectations create tension? What will the fallout from that tension be?
- Is the parents' desire for good grades self-contained, or is it part of a broader intrusive pattern?

Q: Do we believe that any truth found in any discipline can be found in Torah, i.e. *chochma bagoyim ta'amin* means that a *goy* can come to a correct conclusion on their own but anything that is true is also to be found in Torah, or can there be a true point which can not be found in the Torah itself?

A: The *mishna* in Avos (5:22) teaches, “הפך בה והפך בה, דכלא בה”. Some commentators (e.g. *Rabbeinu Yona*) understand that “כלא”, all refers to *kol chochma*; Torah contains all wisdom, all truth. But others (e.g. *Meiri*) offer a range of alternate interpretations (all your questions about Torah will be answered if you continuously delve into it; Torah will provide you with everything of value in this world and the next; etc.). The common denominator to the alternate interpretations is that “כלא” does not refer to *chochma*.

Even according to the *Rabbeinu Yona* school of thought, it is not clear that we learn with the requisite depth to unlock and access the *kol chochma* embedded in Torah

Part III: General Outlook

Chapter 5: Modern Orthodoxy

Rav Hershel Schachter, 2003²⁷

The *Rambam* lists as the ninth of the *ikarei ha'emunah* (Principles of Faith), “שזאת התורה לא תהא מוחלפת” – that this Torah will not be exchanged.” The *dinim* of the Torah are immutable. In our generation, it is this *ikar* that differentiates the Orthodox from the non-Orthodox who believe that the *dinim* of the Torah are subject to revision. In accordance with this *ikar*, even if a recognized *Navi* were to call for a permanent change in one of the *dinei haTorah*, he would be branded a *Navi sheker* and would receive the death penalty.

Why do Orthodox Jews insist so stubbornly that the laws of the Torah cannot be changed? There are amendments to every state constitution, as there are to the United States Constitution, to be able to adapt to changing times; what would be wrong with the *Ribbono Shel Olam* communicating to a *Navi* that He wishes to modify a *halachah*, or for the Rabbis to be given the authority to alter some of the outdated *dinim*?

²⁷ The audio can be found at https://www.torahweb.org/audio/rsch_091403.html

I. The Essence of Torah

The *Gemara* (*Berachos* 21a), applying an additional level of interpretation to the *passuk*, “כִּי שָׁם ד' אִקְרָא הַבּוֹ גּוֹדֵל לְאַלְקֵינוּ” – When I call out the Name of *Hashem*, ascribe greatness to our G-d” (*Devarim* 32:3), teaches that this *passuk* is also the source of the *mitzvah* to recite *Birchos HaTorah* before *limud haTorah*. Given that the *passuk* speaks of calling out the name of *Hashem*, but does not at all seem to refer to Torah study, we may wonder how *Chazal* viewed it as the basis for reciting *Birchos HaTorah*. We can appreciate the answer to this question if we understand the nature of *talmud Torah* and the essence of the Torah itself.

The *passuk* (*Shmuel* I, 24:14) states, “כֹּאשֶׁר יֹאמֵר מִשַׁל הַקְּדֻמוֹנִי” – As the Ancient Proverb says, ‘Wickedness emanates from the wicked.’” *Rashi* (*Shemos* 21:13), quoting *Chazal*, explains that the phrase *משל הקדמוני* is a reference to the Torah, which is the “proverb” of *Hashem*, the “Ancient One.” In other words, the meaning of the *passuk* in *Shmuel* is that the Torah has taught us the lesson that “wickedness emanates from the wicked” when it stated, in reference to one who committed manslaughter unintentionally, “וְהָאֱלֹקִים אָנָּה לִידּוֹ” – And G-d brought it [the manslaughter] to his hand” (*Shemos* 21:13). This *passuk* shows that it was decreed *min haShamayim* that the tragedy should come about through his hand because he is a wicked person, and that is why he deserves *galus* for his actions.

The *Chofetz Chaim* (*Shem Olam* 1:12) explains that *משל הקדמוני* not only means that the Torah is the Divine *mashal* authored by *Hashem*, but that it is also a *mashal of Hashem*. The *Chofetz Chaim* likens the Torah to a photograph of the king. Even if one has never actually seen the king himself, he is able to identify the king when he meets him based on the photograph.

The Torah includes many positive and negative *mitzvos*, and, of course, we must be exceedingly careful to fulfill, in practice, all of the *mitzvos* of the Torah and be careful not to violate any of its *issurim*. However, this collection of *mitzvos* is not really the essence of the Torah; they are ancillary in nature. The essence of the Torah is that it provides us with a description of *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. The Torah is the wisdom of *Hashem*, and He and His wisdom are one. Rav Soloveitchik (*Divrei Hashkafah*, p. 206) elaborated on this idea in the name of both the *Ba'al HaTanya* and the *Nefesh HaChaim*.

An exact definition of *Elokus* (G-dliness) could not be conveyed to us, because the intrinsic nature of *Hashem* is too esoteric and abstract to comprehend: “כִּי לֹא יִרְאוּ אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים וְחָיָה” – For no human can see Me and live” (*Shemos* 33:20). As Rav Yosef Albo (*Sefer HaIkarim, ma'amar 2, perek 30*) wrote, “אִילוּ יָדַעְתִּי הֵייתִי” – If I would know Him [i.e., what *Elokus* is], I would be Him.” Yet, in the Torah, *Hashem* gave us a “*mashal* of a *mashal* of a *mashal*” of what *Elokus* is about, so that we may at least gain somewhat of an insight in understanding *Elokus*.

Thus, *Hashem* simplified *Elokus* by explaining it to us through the practical *mitzvos* of the Torah. In a similar way, one might present the abstract concepts of atomic energy to children using different colored balls to represent protons, neutrons, and electrons. Those models do not accurately depict the actual workings of atomic particles but do serve as a *mashal* for the uninformed to facilitate a basic understanding of these concepts.

With this background, we can now better appreciate the comment of the *Ramban* (*Hakdamah* to his *peirush al haTorah*), citing the *Zohar*, that the Torah is referred to as “שְׁמוֹתַי שֶׁל הַקָּב"ה” – the names of *Hashem*.” This is an accurate description of the Torah, which, as we have seen, contains within it the personality and characteristics of *Hashem*.

Along these lines, both Rav Chaim Volozhiner (*Nefesh HaChaim* 4:19) and the *Maharsha* (*Chiddushei Aggados, Berachos* 21a) explain the derivation of *Birchos HaTorah* from the *passuk* with which we began, “**כי שם ד' אקרא הבו גודל לאלקינו**”. Based on the notion that the entire Torah is *הקב"ה*, *Chazal* interpret the *passuk* in the following way: **כי שם** – **ד' אקרא** – When one learns **Torah**, **הבו גודל לאלקינו** – he must ascribe greatness to *Hashem* by reciting a *berachah* beforehand.

Furthermore, we can now understand the *nusach* of *Birchos HaTorah* (cited in *Berachos* 11b), in which we ask that we, our offspring, and the offspring of all of *Klal Yisrael* may be, “**יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך** – לשמה – those who know **Your Name** and study Your Torah for its own sake.” At first glance, *Chazal*’s insertion of the concept of *yedi’as Hashem* (knowledge of *Hashem*), a *mitzvah* seemingly unrelated to that of *limud haTorah*, into the text of *Birchos HaTorah* is surprising. In light of our explanation, however, we may suggest that *Chazal* wanted to emphasize that one who learns Torah gains a better understanding of the concept of *Elokus* and thereby comes to “know” *Hashem* Himself to a greater extent.

Rav Soloveitchik explained that this is the reason for the obstinate insistence on the immutability of the Torah. The collection of *mitzvos haTorah*, in combination, represents a description of *Elokus*, an illustration of *Hashem* Himself. Thus, the *ikar* of, “**שזאת התורה לא תהא** – **כי אני ד' לא שניתי**” – For I, *Hashem*, have not changed” (*Malachi* 3:6). Change is relevant only to created beings, not to the Creator Himself who is *l'ma'alah min hateva* (supernatural). Since G-d’s essence does not change, the *dinim* of the Torah are also not subject to change. [See *Ginas Egoz, Pesichah*, pp. 2-3; *Eretz HaTzvi, Pesichah*, p. 1; *Rav Schachter on the Parsha I, Parshas Metzora*.]

II. What “Modern Orthodoxy” Means

Once we understand that, by definition, the laws of the Torah are immutable, we are left with the task of explaining what the expression “Modern Orthodoxy” means. At first glance, this would seem to be a contradiction in terms: “Orthodoxy” refers to the belief in the *ikarei emunah*, whereas “Modern” connotes the ability to adapt to changing times.

The explanation is that, in truth, there is no contradiction at all. This is because every section of Halachah contains many intricate details. Usually, there is not only one *se’if* describing one possible scenario with one *din*. Rather, the *Shulchan Aruch* contains many different possible scenarios which are spelled out in the many *se’ifim* in any given *siman*, and, obviously, the *din* varies in accordance with the different details of the case. Even if superficially, to the layman, a certain question seems identical to one raised centuries ago, one with a broad knowledge of Halachah may draw significant distinctions between them. The *dinei haTorah* do not change, but in a different set of circumstances, the *sheilah* is a different *sheilah*, and that often yields a different *psak*.

Therefore, what we mean by the expression “Modern Orthodoxy” is the position that we must constantly assess whether a certain activity or situation in modern times is governed by the same *halachah* as it was governed by in earlier times. It is true that we live in a changing world, and as a result of that reality, the relevant *se’if* in *Shulchan Aruch* may no longer be *se’if alef* but *se’if beis*. We are not interested in changing the *halachah*, but the conditions of the case have changed, and perhaps we need to apply a different *se’if* to the current setting.

III. Genuine *Masorah*

People often believe that by acting in the same way as their ancestors, they are following their *Masorah*. However, if the circumstances have changed, performing the same act is not necessarily following the same tradition. It may be that their ancestors themselves would have acted differently under these conditions.

There are many illustrations of this in the *Chumash*. For example, the *passuk* states, “ויחפור את בארות המים אשר חפרו בימי אברהם אביו ... ויקרא – And [Yitzchak] dug anew the wells of water that they had dug in the days of Avraham his father ... and he called them by the same names that his father had called them” (*Bereishis* 26:18). Rav Soloveitchik (see also *HaKesav VeHaKabbalah*, based on a source in the *Zohar*) explained that the connotation of this *passuk* is that Yitzchak followed the exact *Masorah* of his father. This is why earlier in the *parsha*, when there was a famine in the land, Yitzchak traveled to Gerar, intending to dwell in Mitzrayim, just as his father had done earlier.

Rashi (26:2) cites the *Midrash* that *Hashem* said to Yitzchak, “Do not descend to Mitzrayim, for you are a blemish-free offering, and [territory] outside the Land [of Israel] is not worthy of you.” *Hashem* was explaining to Yitzchak that by going to Mitzrayim, he was, in fact, **not** following in the footsteps of his father. Following the incident of the *Akeidah*, Yitzchak had attained the *kedushah* of a *Korban Olah* (Burnt Offering) and was not permitted to leave *Eretz Yisrael*. This restriction was unique to Yitzchak and never applied to Avraham, who was permitted to leave *Eretz Yisrael*.

Another instance involves Yehoshua *bin* Nun, who was most certainly a devoted *talmid* of Moshe *Rabbeinu*. Upon conquering Yericho, he placed a *cherem* (ban) upon the spoils captured in that battle, just as his *rebbe* Moshe had done earlier after his battles. When Achan violated the

issur of the *cherem*, the punishment for which was the defeat of the Jewish Army in Ai, *Hashem* chastised Yehoshua, saying, “You caused [this calamity to befall] them” (*Sanhedrin* 44a).

The *Acharonim* wonder about Yehoshua’s guilt in this regard, for he apparently was simply following the tradition of his *rebbe*. The *Maharsha* explains that by the time of Yehoshua, circumstances had changed. Once *Bnei Yisrael* had crossed the Yarden, the *din* of *arvus* (guarantorship) had become operational, placing blame upon the entire community even if an individual were to violate the *cherem*. In the current situation, even Moshe would not have placed such a *cherem*. Although Yehoshua had intended to duplicate the exact practice of his great *rebbe*, he was, in fact, deemed responsible for **deviating** from the proper procedure given the current reality. [See *B’Ikvei HaTzon, Pesichah*, pp. 1-2.]

IV. Changed Circumstances in *Halachos* and *Minhagim*

Let us examine a few common practical examples of this idea.

In a situation in which there are two families eating in the same dining room, the *Mechaber* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 263:8) rules that the family that lights second should light without a *berachah*, because at that point the room is already illuminated for the sake of Shabbos. The *Gemara* expresses this idea with the phrase, “שרגא בטיהרא מאי אהני – Of what use is a candle at high-noon?” (*Chullin* 60b). As Rabbeinu Tam notes (*Tosfos, Shabbos* 25b, s.v. *chovah*, cited by the *Rama* 263:4), if there is a previously lit *neir* in the room, one should first extinguish it before lighting *neiros Shabbos*.

The *Rama* disagrees with the *Mechaber* and holds that in a situation in which the second lighting is done in a different part of the

room, a *berachah* may be recited on this second *hadlakah* as well. This way, the *Magen Avraham* explains, there will be תוספת אורה ושמחה – additional illumination and joy – brought about by the second lighting. However, if an electric chandelier is already providing a great deal of illumination to the entire room, it is very questionable whether it is proper to recite a *berachah* over a *hadlakah* in that room without first turning the light off.

In the 1800s, when electric incandescent bulbs first began to be used widely, most of the classical *poskim* held that one would fulfill the *mitzvah* of *hadlakas neiros* using these bulbs (see *Beis Yitzchak, Yoreh Dei'ah* 1:120, by Rav Yitzchok Schmelkes; *Shemiras Shabbos K'Hilchasah* 43, footnote 22, citing Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach). Given the view that electric lights are acceptable for *hadlakas neiros*, Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky held that if at the time one is about to light candles there are electric lights illuminating the room, one should first turn the lights off, light the Shabbos candles, and then turn the lights on for the sake of Shabbos. One should then recite the *berachah*, which will cover both the candles and the electric lights. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., pp. 155-156.]

Years ago, orthodox families would not leave the electric lights on over Shabbos due to the significant expense involved. Women would light candles in the dining room, and the *neiros* alone would provide the illumination for the *seudah*. If a woman nowadays lights candles in the dining room, she may think she is following the practice of her grandmother. However, given the above discussion, since we leave the chandelier in the dining room on at the start of Shabbos, if she were to light candles without first turning off the electric lights, she would actually be deviating (unintentionally) from the ways of her grandmother who always lit in a dark room.

A further case involves the *halachah* that one who forgets the insertion of *Ya'aleh VeYavo* in the *Shacharis Shemoneh Esrei* of Rosh Chodesh must repeat the *Shemoneh Esrei*. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik understood that the reason for the repetition is in order to fulfill the obligation to make note of the *kedushas hayom* (within each one of the day's various timeframes), that day's particular quality, in this case by invoking the status of Rosh Chodesh (*Berachos* 40a).

Rav Chaim felt that the repetition is **not** necessary in order to fulfill his obligation to recite a valid *Shemoneh Esrei*, as most people believe, for we find that if the *shali'ach tzibbur* makes a similar error, he need not repeat the *Chazaras HaShatz*, but may rely on the fact that he will recognize the day as Rosh Chodesh when he davens the *Mussaf Amidah* (*Rashi, Berachos* 30b, based on *Behag*). If a *Shemoneh Esrei* without *Ya'aleh VeYavo* were to be deemed invalid, such a dispensation for the sake of *tircha d'tzibbura* (public inconvenience) would be impossible. Rather, argued Rav Chaim, the requirement of offering a valid *Shemoneh Esrei* has **already** been fulfilled even in the absence of *Ya'aleh VeYavo*. Repetition of the *Shemoneh Esrei* is really a rabbinic dispensation, **allowing** one to offer a *tefillas nedavah* (voluntary prayer) so as to be able to fulfill a different obligation – to recognize the day's status as Rosh Chodesh.

If so, Rav Chaim continued, the proper practice would be different nowadays, when, due to our inadequate concentration during *Shemoneh Esrei* in general, we shy away from offering *tefillas nedavah*. Nowadays, even an individual who forgot *Ya'aleh VeYavo* in *Shacharis* should act in accordance with the practice of the *shali'ach tzibbur* and rely on the fact that he plans to mention Rosh Chodesh in the *Mussaf Amidah*, rather than rely on the dispensation to offer a *tefillas nedavah* and repeat his *Shacharis Shemoneh Esrei*. Here, the *halachah* has not changed. Rather, the required action of the one who forgot *Ya'aleh VeYavo* has changed because the

circumstances have changed, as now the offering of a *tefillas nedavah* is generally not recommended. [See *Eretz HaTzvi*, pp. 43-44.]

In a similar application of the above principle, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 102:3) rules that if a pot that requires *kashering* became mixed with many kosher pots, one is not required to perform *hag'alah* (scalding with water) to *kasher* all the pots in question, for we are able to rely on *bittul b'rov* (nullification in a majority). The pot is not considered to be a **דבר שיש לו מתירין** – something that has a ready method to make it permissible (in this case, through *kashering*) – which would disallow reliance on *bittul b'rov*, due to the great expense involved in undertaking the *hag'alah* of so many pots. Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that nowadays, due to the rather inexpensive nature of heating water for *hag'alah*, one would indeed be obligated to *kasher* all the pots in question. The application of the previously held *halachah* has changed due to a changed set of circumstances.

Another example relates to the *Beraisa* that teaches that one who rents a house in *chutz laAretz* is exempt from *kevi'as hamezuzah* (affixing the *mezuzah*) for a full thirty days (*Menachos* 44a). Most *Rishonim* have accepted *Tosfos'* second explanation (s.v. *tallis*), that the term **ביתך** in the *passuk*, “**וּכְתַבְתֶּם עַל מְזוּזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ**” – And write them on the doorposts of **your house**” (*Devarim* 6:9), is expounded to exclude a rented house, which is always exempt from a *mezuzah* on a *d'oraisa* level. After thirty days, the *Chachamim* obligated the renter to affix a *mezuzah* due to *maris ayin* (appearance), since at that point people begin to think that the house is his.

Rav Elazar Shach *z"l* (*Avi Ezri al HaRambam* 1, pp. 68-69) pointed out that nowadays, we follow the *dina d'malchusa*, according to which *sechirus* (rental) is virtually the same as ownership for the duration of the lease. This is evidenced by the inability of the owner of the house to evict

the tenant in the middle of his lease. It is for this reason that we permit renting one's house to a non-Jew, even though he may bring an idol into the house (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'ah* 151:10, *Shach* 17). If so, a rented house should be considered like a house that a person owns in *Hilchos Mezuzah* as well, and a renter therefore becomes obligated in *mezuzah* immediately on a *d'oraisa* level. Rav Shach did not change the *halachah*; he merely pointed out that nowadays, a rented house belongs to a different *se'if* in *Shulchan Aruch*.

There are also many *minhagim* which were instituted based on circumstances that no longer apply. Regarding *dinim derabbanan*, we have a principle, “דבר שבמנין צריך מנין אחר להתירו” – a law passed by a vote [of an assembly of *Chachamim*] requires another vote to repeal it” (*Beitzah* 5a). A *gezeirah* legislated by the *Chachamim* remains in force, even after becoming unnecessary, until another body of *Chachamim* formally rescinds it. This principle does not apply to *minhagim* though, which terminate automatically if their rationale is no longer relevant (*Teshuvos HaRama* 19, s.v. *omer*; *Achiezer* 3:84; see *Rashi, Beitzah* 4b, s.v. *kavasei d'Rav*).

Therefore, *minhagim* must be re-evaluated to ascertain whether they continue to be pertinent, and that by observing them we are in fact following the traditions of our forefathers. Rav Shimon Schwab would point out on a yearly basis that although there was a *minhag* in certain parts of Europe not to eat chicken on Pesach (see *Sha'arei Teshuvah, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 467:44; *Chok Ya'akov* 465:3; *Birkei Yosef* 467:11), this *minhag* no longer applies. Chicken feed used to consist of grain, and it might happen that a chicken would be cooked on Pesach with a kernel of grain present in its stomach. Now that chickens are fed corn there is no cause for concern.

Along these lines, Rav Schwab once made the following humorous observation when he saw someone who, in preparation for *tefillah*, removed his necktie, tying it around his waist to be used in place of the customary *gartel*. The donning of the *gartel*, a sash worn around the waist, is a fulfillment of the *passuk*, “הכּוּן לְקִרְאֵת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל” – Prepare to greet your G-d, *Yisrael*” (*Amos* 4:12), which instructs us to be fully, formally dressed when *davening*, since wearing such a sash constituted formal dress in some societies. Rav Schwab felt that nowadays, the more appropriate way to fulfill that *passuk*, and in fact to **preserve** the *Masorah* of his community, would be to don a necktie prior to *tefillah*. Thus, in thinking he was fulfilling the custom of his ancestors by replacing his necktie with a *gartel*, the man was actually forfeiting the fulfillment of that very practice!

V. Consistency in Modern Orthodoxy

It seems that in earlier years, Modern Orthodoxy was subject to much misunderstanding. Many thought that it represented some sort of compromise in religious observance. As a superficial understanding of the term Centrist Orthodoxy implies, one could observe three hundred and seven of the six hundred and thirteen *mitzvos* and consider himself orthodox. This is obviously a distortion of Orthodoxy, and not at all in line with a legitimate Modern Orthodox *hashkafah*! The children of those who engaged in such compromise detected the inconsistencies in their parents’ observance and often were not interested in following it.

Instead, the Modern Orthodoxy that we subscribe to consists of the realization that because we live in a changing world, we must be prepared to re-evaluate our circumstances. In order to remain loyal to our *Masorah*, we seek to determine whether we continue to be governed by the same *se’if* in *Shulchan Aruch* that was relevant in earlier times, or whether current conditions demand the establishment of different practices which follow

the *psak* in another *se'if* that addresses current realities. This requires great *talmidei Chachamim*, who understand the true nature of the *dinei haTorah*, who alone are in the position to ascertain the correct way to observe the *halachos* and the *minhagim*. If we are careful to fulfill the *mitzvos* properly, in accordance with a consistent approach, and continue to update our application of Halachah to enable an even more enhanced observance of the *dinei haTorah*, we will hopefully be able to impart this *hashkafah* to our children.

Chapter 6: *Derech HaLimud*

Compiled by Dr. Allan Weissman from a number of *shiurim* given by
Rav Schachter

I. The *Chiyuv* of *Talmud Torah*

The *Ba'al HaTanya*, in his *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (*Yoreh De'ah, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 1:4), explains that there is an obligation to learn *kol haTorah kulah*. However, he is bothered with how that could be possible. After all, the *passuk*, ארוכה מארץ מדה ורחבה מני ים – “Longer than the earth is its measure, and wider than the seas” (*Iyov* 11:9), describes the Torah as so vast that it is impossible for the human mind to grasp (*Eruvin* 21a).

Shulchan Aruch HaRav answers (1:5; 2:9-10) that this description of the Torah refers only to the **depth** of *chochmas haTorah*, which is limitless and unfathomable. The **text** of the Torah, in contrast, is not ארוכה מארץ מדה. There is a limit to the corpus of *kol haTorah kulah* that we are obligated to learn. This obligation includes the twenty-four *sefarim* of *Tanach*, *Sifra*, *Sifrei*, *Mechiltah*, *Tosefta*, *Midrashim*, *Mishnayos*, *Talmud Bavli*, *Talmud Yerushalmi*, the *halachah l'ma'aseh* sections of *Shulchan Aruch*. Everything else is included in the depth of *chochmas haTorah*.

One could put all of these *sefarim* in a single bookcase. It is not an impossibility to learn *kol haTorah kulah* by learning a portion each day. One has his entire lifetime to cover this material.

However, it is important to approach this study properly. It is not at all the case that the important, fundamental principles of a *mesichta* emerge from just the first few *blatt* of the *mesichta*; one will definitely **not** master the principles of the *mesichta* in just the first few *blatt*. It is well known that when Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook was a *bachur* learning in the Volozhin Yeshiva, he would cover up to sixty *blatt* each day (see *L'Sheloshah B'Elul I*, 5698, 1). It is true that he was unusually talented, but the other *talmidim* did not learn ten lines a day; they also learned a few *blatt* every day.

Another mistaken attitude is that learning *Gemara* “*lishmah*” means that one must not focus on what the *psak halachah* is, as if the sole purpose of knowing *halachah l'ma'aseh* is in order to go into the field of *rabbanus*. This is totally incorrect! In fact, the *Gemara* considers אסוקי שמעתתא אליבא דהלכתא – “to conclude legal discussions in accordance with the *halachah*” as the highest level of learning (*Bava Kamma* 92a, *Sotah* 7b).

When the *Chazon Ish* was a young man, whenever he would finish a *sugya*, he would make sure to learn through the *Tur* and *Beis Yosef* in order to know the *psak halachah l'ma'aseh*. At the time his colleagues mocked him, but years later, when *sheilos* arose, he was glad that he learned the way he did, since it enabled him to issue *piskei halachah* (*Shevet HaLevi* 2:57). The same is said of Rav Elyashiv. Rather than frown upon it, we should encourage this style of learning.

II. All of Torah Forms One Large Mosaic

In the 1940s, Rav Soloveitchik observed that he set out to accomplish two things by delivering his *shiurim*. The first was to popularize the learning of *Gemara* among the masses. Just as the Science section of *The New York Times* presents the newest findings in chemistry and physics in such a way that even non-scientists can understand them, the *Gemara* should also be made accessible to the layman.

The Rav taught that it is forbidden to create a caste system regarding *limud haTorah*, as if the Torah is reserved exclusively for special individuals or families. The Torah was not given to individuals, but rather to *Klal Yisrael*. The Rav stressed this point to the *musmachim* of the *yeshiva*, emphasizing that they should teach their *balabatim* with this goal in mind. They should take even the complicated *sugyos* of *Shas* and explain them in a fashion that everyone can understand.

An extension of this point is that one may not treat his Torah knowledge as his private possession; one must share his Torah with others. The *Gemara* in *Berachos* (63b) interprets the *passuk*, חרב אל הבדים – “There will be a sword against the sorcerers” (*Yirmiyah* 50:36), as a disparaging description of *talmidei chachamim* “who sit each one alone and engage in Torah study.” The Rav understood the *passuk* as a reference to priests who would hoard all of their knowledge, keeping it a secret from the masses whom they left ignorant and illiterate. The Rav read the *Gemara*’s interpretation not as a complaint against people who learn Torah without a *chavrusa*, but as a claim against those who do not make it a priority to teach others. *Chazal* declared that punishment will be visited upon such *talmidei chachamim*, just as it was upon those sorcerers. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., pp. 5-7.]

A second conscious objective of the Rav was to teach Torah in a manner that can at least compare – and compete – with the way secular

disciplines are taught in universities and graduate schools. Those who are not sufficiently initiated in Talmudic study often view the *Gemara* as being composed of thousands of disjointed and irrelevant details, but this is an inaccurate perception. Just like the secular disciplines, the Halachah has a complete and consistent internal system of thought. Indeed, the entire thrust of the *Gemara* speaks to this point, as it always presents questions and distinctions from seemingly unrelated *dinim* and shows how they inform the discussion at hand.

The Rav would use the scientific process as a *mashal* to what he attempted to accomplish in *talmud Torah*. A chemist, for example, observes the many varied physical phenomena in nature and attempts to discern a unifying pattern. He then develops formulas that enable him to make predictions about further potential chemical reactions. The same is true of the study of *Gemara*. The Rav always sought to elucidate the concepts found in one *Gemara* based on a related concept that appeared in a different *Gemara*. He would postulate different formulas until he discovered the correct one, which would explain how all of the disparate *dinim* really fit together into one cohesive system.

Through approaching *limud haTorah* in this way, one can come to appreciate how *kol haTorah kulah* forms one large mosaic. In the words of the *Tosefta* in *Sanhedrin* (7:5), כל התורה ענין אחד. All of the laws of the Torah blend in together to constitute one big picture. [See *Ginas Egoz, Pesichah*, p. 7.]

This premise that all *dinei haTorah* are interrelated and comprise a single unit forms the basis of the *derashah* known as מה מצינו. For example, using this exegetical principle, the *Gemara* in *Sukkah* (45b) teaches that one must hold the *daled minim derech gedilasan* (in the manner in which they grow), just as the *kerashim* (beams) of the *Mishkan* stood in that manner. The *halachah* of *derech gedilasan* regarding the

kerashim posits a general requirement on all natural objects used for a *mitzva*, and this *halachah* may therefore be extrapolated to the *daled minim*. Despite their superficial dissimilarity, there is an intrinsic connection between one *din* and the other, because they are both part of the cohesive unit of *dinei haTorah*. [See *Eretz HaTzvi*, p. 7-9.]

The entire Torah is composed of “building blocks” of Halachah, and one can identify patterns in Halachah if he grasps these underlying principles.

This notion of interconnectedness within the halachic system extends to *dinim derabbanan* as well, and this is the basis of the principle, *כל דתקון רבנן כעין דאורייתא תקון* – “Every law the rabbis enacted they enacted in the manner of a Biblical law” (*Yevamos* 11a). *Chazal* wanted their *takanos* to blend into the corpus of Torah. They therefore structured them according to recognized Torah principles and did not create new categories of Halachah. [See *B’Ikvei HaTzon*, pp. 68-73; *Divrei Sofrim*, pp. 41-42.]

III. Analysis Must be Data-Driven

Rav Soloveitchik once noted that the Greek scholars did not believe in scientific experimentation. They felt that performing such menial labor with one’s hands should be reserved for slaves, and free men should use their mental capacity and apply abstract philosophical reasoning to solve questions involving even physical phenomena. These scholars considered collecting data to be below their honor. They would therefore speculate about why water extinguishes fire and theorize as to why fire ascends and water descends.

The problem is that one cannot impose outside, intuitive logic onto science. The approach of the Greek scholars led to incorrect

conclusions, rendering their scientific discoveries worthless. Scientific analysis must be based on experimentation.

In sharp contrast, just as *Chazal* were always on the cutting edge of the medical knowledge of their time, they did their best to ascertain the physical facts in any given situation.

For example, the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 42a, 57b) records a *machlokes Tanna'im* regarding whether טריפה חיה – “a *treifah* can live [a full year].” The *Ramban* (*Chullin* 42a) is very troubled by this. Why didn't the *Tanna'im* simply conduct experiments to resolve this question? It cannot be that the *Tanna'im* would argue over *metzius* (factual reality) that could be readily determined!

The *Ramban* suggests that the *Chachamim* probably did conduct experiments, but the issue could not have been decided on this basis alone. Perhaps all of the *treifah* animals that the *Tanna'im* observed failed to survive the year, but some of the *Tanna'im* may have considered the experimental evidence inconclusive since it was not what we would call a controlled experiment. The possibility also remained that further observation using a larger sample size would have uncovered cases of *treifah* animals that did survive for more than a year.

A similar notion is found in the *Gemara* in *Chullin* (48b) that teaches: אין אומרים בטרפות זו דומה לזו – “We do not say regarding *treifos* that this one is comparable to that one.” The *halachah* is that if the flesh of an animal's hind leg is severed above the *tzomes hagridin* (junction of the sinews) but the bone is not broken, the animal remains kosher. However, if the flesh is severed lower down, at the *tzomes hagridin*, the animal is *treifah*. Although logic would have dictated that the higher cut should be more serious, the facts indicate otherwise. One cannot derive these *dinim* by comparison or analysis. *Hilchos treifos* is based on the study of biology. Anatomy and physiology determine the *halachah*.

The *Ramban's* approach follows that of the *Yerushalmi* (*Challah* 1:1), which discusses which grains are subject to the obligation of *challah*. The *Yerushalmi* records that the *Tanna'im* knew, based on *pessukim*, that in order for bread to be obligated in *challah*, like the *matzah* used for the *mitzva* on the first night of Pesach, it must be made from a grain that can form leavened bread (*chametz*). The *Chachamim* investigated and discovered that only the five species (wheat, barley, spelt, rye, and oats) can become both unleavened and leavened. All other grains, if left to ferment, only reach the stage of *sirchon* (spoilage).

The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (35a) cites a *machlokes Tanna'im* regarding the capacity of dough made from rice and millet to leaven. Rebbi Yochanan ben Nuri was of the opinion that rice and millet can become *chametz*, whereas the *Chachamim* disagreed. As we saw above in the *Ramban*, the *Yerushalmi* questions how there could be such a *machlokes*. Let them investigate to see whether its dough can become *chametz*! Why is something verifiable a matter for theoretical debate?

The *Yerushalmi* explains (see also *Yerushalmi Terumos* 3:1) that in fact the *Tanna'im* did investigate, but there was still room for dispute, as they argued about the very outcome of the investigation. The dough that resulted resembled something that was halfway between *chimutz* and *sirchon*, and they disagreed as to whether the changes they observed in the dough represented true leavening. In other words, the *machlokes* was not about the *metzius*, but rather about where to draw the line between *chimutz* and *sirchon*.

The *Ramban* in *Maseches Shabbos* (95a) makes a comment along these lines as well. The *Gemara* there cites a *machlokes Tanna'im* regarding sweeping the floor of a house (*mechabeid*) and sprinkling water over the floor to prevent dust from rising (*merabeitz*) on Shabbos. The *Chachamim* maintain that these activities are forbidden rabbinically, since

in the process, it is possible that some of the dust may enter holes in the floor and level them out, which would constitute a *melachah* of *boneh* (building). Rebbi Eliezer, however, maintains that these activities constitute a violation of a *melachah d'oraisa*.

In explanation of the *machlokes*, *Tosfos* (s.v. *hamechabeid*) notes that *mechabeid* and *merabeitz* fall into the category of *davar she'eino miskavein* (an unintentional act). Although a *melachah* may occur as a result of one's action, if it is not his intention to cause the prohibited *melachah*, his action is classified as a *davar she'eino miskavein*. In many cases, however, one knows that his action will definitely cause the *melachah* to occur. In such a situation, the *melachah* is classified as a *p'sik reisha* (an inevitable consequence) and is prohibited (*Shabbos* 133a). Thus, *Tosfos* suggests that the *Tanna'im* dispute whether it is in fact a *p'sik reisha* that *mechabeid* or *merabeitz* will result in *boneh*.

The *Ramban* (s.v. *ta'ama*) does not accept *Tosfos'* explanation, arguing that the point of dispute cannot be whether *mechabeid* and *merabeitz* are considered to be *p'sik reisha*. The *Tanna'im* should simply have conducted a study to determine the facts! We believe in experimentation. Instead, he argues that the opinion of Rebbi Eliezer is that *mechabeid* and *merabeitz* are forms of *boneh* in their own right, because the floor is thereby leveled and improved, whereas the *Chachamim* dispute this point and maintain that these are only prohibited as *gezeiros derabbanan* since they could potentially lead to violations of *boneh*.

In the context of describing *Chazal's* positive attitude towards experimentation, Rav Soloveitchik quoted an expression attributed by the *Gemara* in *Berachos* (4a) to Dovid *HaMelech*. To express his piety, Dovid presented before *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* a contrast between his practices and those of other kings: "All the other kings of the East and West sit

among their company in their glory, ואני ידי מלוכלכות בדם ובשפיר ובשליא – but as for me, my hands are soiled with blood, embryos, and afterbirths, which I examine in order to permit a woman to her husband.” Dovid did not share the Greek philosophers’ disdain for menial tasks. In his statement, he expressed how the Halachah is careful to not only scrutinize all of the details of a particular case, but also to collect as much physical data as possible to determine the correct *psak*. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., p.17.]

The only way to succeed in science is to collect as much data as possible and, only afterwards, to try to discern a pattern. The same is true in the realm of *limud haTorah*. It does not make sense for a person to “philosophize” over what he has learned in one line of *Gemara*, or even in a single *sugya*, without first knowing the additional information that other related *Gemaros* throughout *Shas* offer on the topic. One must first be aware of all the data on a given subject by learning many, many *Gemaros* before proceeding to analyze that data. Once he becomes expert in what the *din* is, with all of its details, he is in the position to examine the nature of the *din*.

This is really what it means to develop a *derech halimud* in *talmud Torah* – to learn a thousand and one *dinim*, or a million and one *dinim*, and then to try to arrange the data he has accumulated into a system. One may be able to discern a pattern in the Halachah and gain insight into what the rule is and what the exception to the rule is, when it does apply and when it does not apply, and which *dinim* are related and which *dinim* are unrelated.

It is well known that Rav Soloveitchik’s grandfather, Rav Chaim, developed a new, analytic approach to *Gemara* study. For example, in order to answer many apparent contradictions in the *Gemara*, Rav Chaim would explain that the *Gemaros* that seem contradictory really address

“*tzvei dinim*,” two separate aspects of the *halachah* at hand. However, Rav Soloveitchik said in *shiur* that his grandfather never theorized or made abstract inquiries; he never “*klerred chakiros*.” Rather, he would first learn the facts – the *Gemara*, *Rashi*, *Tosfos*, and the *Rambam*. Then, in order to explain the various opinions, he would express their views in what has become known as Brisker terminology, i.e. *Rashi* apparently thinks that it is a *din* in the *gavra*, while *Tosfos* feels it is a *din* in the *cheftza*.

When Rav Chaim wrote his *sefer* on the *Rambam*, he presented his *chiddushim* in the opposite order. He first writes, “*yeish lachakor*,” and outlines two possible ways to theorize the *din*, questioning, for example, if it is a *din* in the *gavra* or a *din* in the *cheftza*. Then, Rav Chaim shows how these two possibilities form the basis of the *machlokes* between *Rashi* and *Tosfos*. But this is not the way Rav Chaim learned a *sugya*. He did not begin with *chakiros*. Rather, he started by collecting the data, and then analyzed the data to try to discern a pattern.

IV. The Dangers of Premature *Sevaros*

There is another important point that is necessary to appreciate before engaging in the analysis of the *Gemara* and *Rishonim*.

Rashi (*Bamidbar* 16:1) cites the comment of the *Midrash* that Korach ridiculed Moshe’s ruling with respect to a garment completely made of *techeiles*-colored wool:

What did [Korach] do? He rose up and gathered together two hundred fifty heads of courts ... and he clothed them in cloaks that were made entirely of *techeiles*. They came and stood before Moshe. They said to him, “Is a cloak that is entirely of *techeiles* obligated in *tzitzis* or exempt?” He said to them, “It is obligated.” They began to jeer at him, “Is

this possible? In a cloak of a different type, one thread of *techeiles* exempts it. In this one, which is entirely of *techeiles*, should it not exempt itself?!”

The *Midrash (Bamidbar Rabbah 18)* records another argument brought by Korach and his followers: “Is a room filled with [Torah] scrolls exempt from a *mezuzah*?” When Moshe replied that it did require a *mezuzah*, Korach argued, “The two hundred seventy-five *parshiyos* [of the Torah] do not satisfy the room’s requirement, but one *parsha* in the *mezuzah* does?!”

Rav Soloveitchik delivered a *derashah (Reflections of the Rav, pp. 146-148)* in which he portrayed the argument of Korach as the “Common-Sense Rebellion against Torah Authority.” Oftentimes, *balabatim* who are not attuned to the halachic process complain that a rabbi’s ruling does not “make sense.”

When a doctor prescribes a particular medication for a patient, a layman may disagree with the doctor’s choice, since he knows that the medication is used for a different condition. But we understand that the layman, who is not familiar with the principles of medicine, is not entitled to render an opinion in this case. Every discipline has a self-contained logic, and only one with expertise in that discipline knows its system of thinking.

As in the case of the specialized fields of medicine, chemistry, and physics, Halachah possesses a self-contained system of logic. Halachah is not simply a compilation of religious laws; it is a specialized discipline, and it has its own methodology and means of analysis. The unlearned layman will ask, as did Korach, about the *techeiles* garment and the *sefarim*-filled room. But after studying the sections in the *Shulchan Aruch* dealing with *Hilchos Tzitzis* and *Hilchos Mezuzah*, the questions seem ridiculous. Of

course the Halachah dictates that the garment requires *tzitzis* and the room requires a *mezuzah*! People must realize that common sense does not necessarily carry the day when it comes to the halachic legal system. Halachah need not make common-sense any more than medicine, physics, or chemistry.

It is said in the name of Rav Chaim that *sevara* (logical analysis) is certainly one of the *מידות שהתורה נדרשת בהן* (exegetical principles through which the Torah is expounded). The *Gemara* says several times, *למה לי קרא סברא הוא* – “Why do I need a *passuk* [for this principle]? It is logical!” (*Bava Kamma* 46b). The *sevara*, however, must be informed by a comprehensive knowledge of the facts of the Halachah and its methodology. The mind of the Torah scholar, which is attuned to thinking in terms of the system of Halachah, is able to formulate a *sevara* that will be binding. “*Sevara*” does not mean a “common-sense *sevara*.” One cannot impose outside *sevaras* onto the *Gemara*, which operates solely according to Talmudic logic, the style of thinking of *Chazal*. The *sevaros* must flow from within the *Gemara*.

It is also said that Rav Chaim told his children that they should not venture to say any *sevara* before they complete all of *Shas* with *peirush Rashi* (*Kuntres Limud HaTorah*, p. 46, found at the end of *sefer Toras Chaim on Tanach*). A *sevara* offered prematurely and not grounded in the Talmudic system of thought will be a pedestrian *sevara*, not a Torah-based *sevara*. Everything must be found in the *Gemara*. One has to know that the *sevara* fits into Talmudic logic in order for it to be valid; there must be a *Gemara* that demonstrates that the *sevara* is acceptable.

The *Noda B'Yehudah* (*Tinyana, Yorah De'ah* 198) echoes this idea as well in a *teshuvah* regarding *ma'aser kesafim*. He writes that if there is no *sugya* in the *Gemara* that deals with the topic in question, any *sevara*

one advances is merely a *sevaras hakeres* ("sevara of the stomach"), also known as a *boich sevara*.

In our generation, boys in high school are already encouraged to say original Torah. This practice – aside from being a highly ineffective form of *talmud Torah*, as we have discussed – has led to disastrous results. One such consequence is the emergence of a group that calls itself the International Beis Din. These are people who learned in *yeshivas* and who were trained improperly in those *yeshivas* to say *sevaros*. The *sevaros* did not have to be in keeping with Talmudic logic or even with the *dinim* presented in the *Gemara*. Now that these people are on a “*beis din*,” in the position to *pasken* serious *sheilos halachah l’ma’aseh*, they feel justified to allow a married woman to remarry without a *get* on the strength of their *sevaros*. This is simply scandalous. It is a terrible disservice to the unsuspecting women, who regrettably may end up in violation of *lo sinaf* as a result.

One cannot *pasken* a *sheilah* solely based on one *sugya*. There may be additional considerations that are mentioned in other *mesichtas*. It is all the more true that one cannot be *matir* an *agunah* based on original *sevaros*. We can be *matir* an *agunah* only based on sources in *Poskim*, who, in turn, based their legitimate *hetteirim* on *sevaros* from the *Gemara*. The advent of such a “*beis din*” is a great *tzarah* of our generation, and it is one of the terribly negative consequences of a disastrous style of learning in which students are encouraged to say *sevaros* prematurely.

V. Valid *Sevaros* Come Exclusively from the *Gemara*

Rav Soloveitchik insisted that just as chemistry and physics are self-contained disciplines, the same is true of the *Gemara*. This, in fact, is the uniqueness of the Brisker method of learning, in contrast to other

approaches. The Brisker method does not promote introducing outside ideas from the areas of philosophy, *mussar*, or *hashkafah* to explain the *Gemara*. Likewise, the formula proposed to make the *dinim* fit into a pattern is not an ingenious, novel idea that is extraneous to the *Gemara*. Instead, the method assumes the premise that the *Gemara* is autonomous; thus, when one attempts to analyze the *Gemara*, the idea he uses to align disparate *sugyos* that appear to be contradictory must come from the *Gemara* itself.

On one occasion, Rav Soloveitchik was at a loss to explain a particular *sugya*, and told the students that he was open to suggestions. One student offered a *sevara*, to which he responded, “No, no, no, let’s not philosophize.” When the Rav returned the following week, he announced that the student’s suggestion was indeed the correct *p’shat*. Originally, the Rav thought the student was introducing a foreign notion to explain the *Gemara*, and he would not accept such a *sevara*, but he later realized that the student’s *p’shat* was in truth rooted in the *sugya* itself. In the system of Halachah, all of the considerations that determine the *din* must appear in the *Gemara*.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook’s father would often take his young son to nearby Dvinsk to speak in learning with Rav Reuveleh Deneburger (Levin). Years later, Rav Kook would recount in the name of that *gaon* that every *sevara* is suspect. It must be either **explicit** in the *Gemara* or *Rishonim* or **almost explicit** (*Sichos HaRay”h*, by Rav Moshe Tzvi Neriah, pp. 67, 71).

The regular *shiur* that Rav Soloveitchik delivered in the *yeshiva* followed this methodology. In the *shiur*, the Rav dealt with difficulties in the *Gemara* we were learning, but he would not resolve the difficulties with a *sevara*. Instead, he would begin to analyze a different *Gemara* and show how that *Gemara* reveals a certain *yesod*, which, in turn, can be used to

explain our *sugya*. He would always explain a difficulty in one *Gemara* based on an idea he discovered in a different *Gemara*. All of the *Gemaros* have to fit together to make up one large pattern.

The celebrated public *yahrtzeit derashos* the Rav delivered on 'ג שבט, the *yahrtzeit* of his father, also followed this general design. In these *derashos*, the Rav began with a series of strong, wide-ranging *kashyos*, which to the listeners seemed completely insurmountable. Then the Rav would develop a certain fundamental principle from a different *sugya*, and almost magically, on the strength of that *yesod*, all of the *kashyos* simply faded away.

In *shiur*, if the *Gemara* presented a *sevara*, the Rav would work with it, but he would not invent original *sevaros*. He would likewise not force the *Gemara* into a straight-jacket, as if every *Gemara* must fit into a certain mold, a list of catch-phrases, or preconceived notions. Instead, the interpretation of the *sugya* flowed from ideas found inside **that** *sugya*. Similarly, there are times when a *din* can be explained in two ways, but one approach is convoluted and the other much more straightforward. He taught us that the simpler explanation is usually the correct one.

The Rav was a great genius. He could have fabricated novel concepts to explain the *Gemara*, but doing so would not have been the *derech halimud* he espoused. Genius does not help in learning *Gemara*. Learning *Gemara* must be grounded in Talmudic traditions.

Along these lines, the *Beis HaLevi* once commented to his son, Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, regarding the new style of learning that the latter introduced. The *Beis HaLevi* said that when someone asked him a strong *kashya* on a *Gemara* and he worked out a sharp *teretz* to the *kashya*, the result was that both of them felt elated. The questioner was happy that he asked such a good question, and the *Beis HaLevi* was happy that he was able to be *mechadeish* a beautiful *teretz*. “But when someone asks you a

kashya and you answer it, there is a very different outcome,” the *Beis HaLevi* told his son. “Both of you walk away disappointed!” The methodology of Rav Chaim was to dissect the *sugya* and interpret it in such a way that there never really was any *kashya* at all. The *kashya* had been based on a mistaken premise; the questioner had simply misunderstood the *Gemara*. Rav Chaim merely pointed out the plain meaning of the *Gemara* to the questioner; he did not actually need to provide any sort of answer. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., p. 19.]

There was a great *gaon* in Europe named Rav Itzele Ponevezher (Rabinovich), who was known as a tremendous *ba'al mechadeish*, an unusually original thinker, and whom Rav Chaim held in very high esteem. On one occasion, when Rav Chaim happened to be out of town, Rav Itzele visited Brisk and spoke in learning instead with Rav Velvele, Rav Chaim’s son. When Rav Chaim returned, he asked his son how it was to speak with such a creative genius. Rav Velvele replied that Rav Itzele could indeed answer any contradiction with his brilliantly sharp *sevaros*, but the *sevaros* could not be proven to be accurate by the *Gemara*. When one presents a *chiluk*, he must always have a *Gemara* that indicates that the *chiluk* is founded and rooted in some *Gemara*. Indeed, in his *sefer* on the *Rambam* (*Chiddushei HaGriz*), Rav Velvele always explains the *Gemara* in such a way that he is able to demonstrate that his *chiluk* (distinction) or *teretz* is explicit in the *lashon haGemara*. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., pp. 18-19.]

Rav Chaim Volozhiner (*Nefesh HaChaim* 4:12) emphasizes the importance of being *mechadeish chiddushei Torah* when one learns. He quotes the *Zohar* (*Hakdamah* 4b-5a) on the *passuk*, כִּי כַּאֲשֶׁר הַשָּׁמַיִם הַחֲדָשִׁים וְהָאָרֶץ הַחֲדָשָׁה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה עֹמְדִים לִפְנֵי נְאוֹם ד' כֵּן יַעֲמֹד זְרַעְכֶם וְשִׁמְכֶם – “For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I will make will endure before Me, the word of *Hashem*, so will your offspring and your name endure” (*Yeshayah* 66:22). The *Zohar* understands from this

that the Jewish People create fresh *olamos ha'elyonim* (spiritual, upper worlds), especially through the *chiddushei Torah* that emerge from their learning. At the same time, the greatest *chiddush* is when the new understanding leads one to realize that this is actually the simple interpretation of what the *Gemara* itself said (*Likutei Eitz HaChaim* 21, in the back of *Nefesh Hachaim*, 5749 ed.; *Kesser Rosh* 56).

This was true of Rav Soloveitchik's *shiur*. Often, when the Rav's *shiur* concluded, the *talmidim* would wonder why they had not figured out the Rav's explanation on their own. It had been self-evident in the *Gemara* all along; they had simply misunderstood the *Gemara*! The Rav would not introduce new ideas and insert them into the *Gemara*. Rather, he would show how the answers were already contained within the words of the *Gemara*, once the *Gemara* was interpreted correctly.

One example among a great many is the Rav's explanation of the obligation to mention the unique character of the day in the *Birchas HaMazon* by adding *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo*. The *Gemara* in *Berachos* (49b) provides a guideline regarding the omission of *Ya'aleh VeYavo* in *Birchas HaMazon*: One must repeat *Birchas HaMazon* if there was an obligation to partake of a meal consisting of bread at that time. Thus, on Rosh Chodesh or Chol HaMo'ed, when no such obligation exists, one does not repeat *Birchas HaMazon*; on Shabbos and Yom Tov, when there is a requirement to have a *seudah* with bread, one does repeat *Birchas HaMazon* if he omits *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo*.

Most people think that the reason one must repeat *Birchas HaMazon* if he omits *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo* on Shabbos and Yom Tov is that he has not been *yotzei* the *chiyuv* of *Birchas HaMazon* due to the omission. However, Rav Soloveitchik (*Shiurim L'Zecher Abba Mari Z"l II*, 1985 ed., pp. 110-117) developed a different approach based on the *Gemara*'s rule: Repetition is **not** necessary in order to fulfill one's

obligation of *Birchas HaMazon*. If the obligation to mention the unique character of the day in the *Birchas HaMazon* were in order to discharge one's obligation of *Birchas HaMazon*, why would the repetition of *Birchas HaMazon* depend on whether one was obligated to partake of bread at that time? It is clear from the guideline of the *Gemara* that one **does** fulfill the obligation of *Birchas HaMazon* even if he omitted *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo*.

The reason one must repeat *Birchas HaMazon* on Shabbos and Yom Tov if he forgot *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo* must be in order to fulfill a **different** requirement – in order to fulfill one's obligation of ***seudas Shabbos*** or ***seudas Yom Tov***. Even if one has eaten a meal, if he failed to mention the unique character of the day of Shabbos or Yom Tov in the *Birchas HaMazon*, he has not appropriately labeled the meal as a *seudas Shabbos* or *seudas Yom Tov*. This is the purpose of the insertion of *Retzei* and *Ya'aleh VeYavo* in the *Birchas HaMazon*. We mention the *kedushas hayom* in *Kiddush*, before the meal, and in *Birchas HaMazon*, following the meal, in order to be *kovei'a* (to establish) the *seudah* as a *seudas Shabbos* or *seudas Yom Tov*.

Thus, if one omitted *Retzei* or *Ya'aleh VeYavo*, he has the option of eating another meal to fulfill his obligation of *seudah*. However, the *Chachamim* were lenient and permitted him to repeat *Birchas HaMazon* and mention the day's particular *kedushas hayom*, in order to establish his meal as a *seudas Shabbos* or *seudas Yom Tov*. He thereby fulfills his obligation of ***seudah***; his obligation of ***Birchas HaMazon*** was fulfilled earlier, in his first recitation. That is why if there is no obligation of *seudah* on a given day or at a given meal, and there is thus no need to be *kovei'a* the *seudah* in this manner, *Birchas HaMazon* need not be repeated. [See *Eretz HaTzvi*, p. 46; *Rav Schachter on the Moadim, Shabbos: Kiddush*

B'makom Se'udah, section I; *Rav Schachter on Tefillah*, *Hazkaras Mei'ein Hame'ora*, section VIII.]

VI. Halacha Has an Established Set of Concepts

Not only must *chiddushei Torah* be evident within the *Gemara*, but the categories of thought that become the building blocks of Halachah must also be concepts that appear in the *Gemara*.

An example can be found in the *Gemara* in *Nedarim* (2b) that teaches that a *shevu'ah* (oath) to abstain from a certain activity creates an *issur gavra* on the one who took the *shevu'ah*, whereas a *neder* (vow) contains an added element – an *issur cheftza* on the item that is the subject of the *neder*.

The *Ran* (*Nedarim* 18a, s.v. *hilkach*), citing the *Yerushalmi*, makes use of this distinction to explain why a *neder* takes effect on something a person already took a *shevu'ah* on, but a *shevu'ah* does not take effect on a preexisting *neder*.

When one takes a *neder* after a *shevu'ah*, he adds a dimension of *issur* that was not present before. This does not violate the principle of אין איסור חל על איסור – “a prohibition cannot take effect upon a similar preexisting prohibition,” and the *neder* goes into effect. However, in the reverse case, when one takes a *shevu'ah* after a *neder*, the *shevu'ah* does not take effect at all.

The *Ran* explained that an *issur cheftza*, like a *neder* that prohibits a food from being eaten, always places a concomitant prohibition on the *gavra*, prohibiting him from eating the food. Thus, nothing is added by taking a *shevu'ah* on something that was already prohibited by means of a

neder, and according to the principle of אין איסור חל על איסור, the *shevu'ah* is inconsequential.

The *Gemara's* presentation of the distinction between an *issur gavra* and an *issur cheftza* paved the way for Rav Chaim's application of this conceptualization more widely.

Another example relates to the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (2b-3a) discussing the requirement for a *beis din* of three *dayanim* with *semichah*. The *Gemara* explains that the language of the *Mishnah* indicates that we distinguish between *gezeilos v'chavalos* (cases of thefts and bodily injuries) and *hoda'os v'halva'os* (cases of loan disputes). *Gezeilos v'chavalos* require three *semuchin*, whereas *hoda'os v'halva'os* require three *dayanim*, but the *dayanim* need not be *semuchin*. In fact, according to one opinion in the *Gemara*, on the *d'oraisa* level, even one *dayan* is sufficient to adjudicate loan cases.

In seeking to better define the terms *hoda'os v'halva'os* and *gezeilos v'chavalos*, Rav Soloveitchik cited a comment of the *Shittah Mekubetzes* in the name of the *Me'iri* (*Bava Kamma* 70b, s.v. *v'HaRav*; see also *Beis HaBechirah*), in reference to the principle, קם ליה בדרבה מיניה - "he is subject only to the greater penalty."

One cannot incur a *chiyuv misah* and a *chiyuv mamon* simultaneously; one is subject only to the more severe of the two. Thus, for example, the *Mishnah* in *Bava Kamma* (34b) teaches: והוא שהדליק את בשבת פטור מפני שהוא מתחייב בנפשו הגדיש - "A person who sets fire to a stack of grain on the Shabbos is not liable to pay, because he is liable to lose his life."

The *Me'iri* distinguishes though between this case and one in which someone is obligated to pay money as a result of a business transaction. If a person bought something or borrowed money while

performing a forbidden *melachah* on Shabbos, we would not apply the principle of **קם ליה בדרבה מיניה קם** and exempt him from paying for the item or repaying the loan. In other words, the *Me'iri* understands that the rule of **קם ליה בדרבה מיניה קם** exempts a person only from a monetary obligation that the Torah imposes, like *adam hamazik* (one who damages another's property) or *chovel bachaveiro* (one who assaults someone). It does not exempt a person from a *hischayvus mida'as*, a monetary obligation that he undertook of his own volition.

Thus, the Rav continued, we see that the Halachah recognizes two distinct categories of *chiyuvei mammon* – *milveh hakesuvah baTorah*, which the Torah imposes, and *milveh she'einah kesuvah baTorah*, which a person accepts upon himself (see *Kiddushin* 13b, and *Tosfos*, s.v. *milveh*).

This distinction may be relevant to the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* as well, despite the different terminology used in that *sugya*. The category of *gezeilos v'chavalos* refers to Torah-imposed monetary obligations, and these obligations must be meted out by a bona fide *beis din*. However, in the realm of *hoda'os v'halva'os*, where the person obligated himself, we require only the *psak* of non-*semuchin*, or even of one *chacham* alone (according to one opinion), to determine that the person remains obligated.

In order to authenticate a certain halachic concept or term in one *sugya*, one must use recognized building blocks of Halachah that have practical relevance in a different *sugya*. [See *Eretz HaTzvi*, p. 227; *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., p.17.]

Another application of this principle that has become very relevant in recent years relates to the identification of the moment of death in Halachah.

The *Rishonim* disagree about under which *melachah* of Shabbos the act of *chavalah* (causing bleeding) is subsumed. According to *Tosfos* (*Kesubos* 5b, s.v. *dam*), it is included in *netilas neshamah*, a *toldah* of *shochet* (slaughtering). This is the case even though the victim remains alive; *chavalah* is like a partial *shechitah*. To explain this assertion, *Tosfos* invokes the phrase, מה לי קטליה כולה מה לי קטליה פלגא – “What difference is there whether he killed it entirely or whether he killed it partially” (*Chullin* 35b, *Niddah* 55b), to teach that the spilling of blood is tantamount to the taking of life.

This understanding is based on the *passuk*, כי נפש כל בשר דמו היא – “For the life of any creature is its blood” (*Vayikra* 17:14; similarly, 17:11 and כי הדם הוא הנפש – “for the blood is the life” in *Devarim* 12:23), used to describe the *issur* of consuming blood and the *mitzva* to cover the blood of a slaughtered animal. The Torah emphasizes that the flow of blood represents life.

Accordingly, the definition of the death of an organ should be the **irreversible cessation of blood circulation** – when the heart no longer sends oxygen in the blood to that particular organ (see *Igros Moshe, Orach Chaim* 1:8).

If death of an organ is based on blood circulation, we should use the same criterion in order to determine the time of death of an entire organism. There are several *sugyos* (*Nazir* 21b, *Temurah* 10b, *Arachin* 20a) that speak of the concept of אבר שהנשמה תלויה בו (an organ upon which life depends). This category includes the brain, the liver, and (according to the *Rambam* in *Peirush HaMishnayos, Arachin* 5:3) the heart. It is unclear whether the Halachah recognizes other organs as being vital organs as well. The “death” of these organs due to lack of blood circulation has implications for the designation of the “death” of the organism, but it is

questionable whether one, the majority, or all of the vital organs must be classified as dead in order to label an entire organism as dead.

The *Gemara* in *Yoma* (85a), based on the *passuk*, כל אשר נשמת רוח – חיים באפיו (Bereishis 7:22), teaches that “breathing” is synonymous with “life.” Thus, if rescuers discover a person under rubble on Shabbos and he lacks respiratory function, he is deemed dead, and they may not further desecrate the Shabbos on his behalf. A minority of *rabbonim* understood this *Gemara* to teach that the definition of death is related to a cessation of function of the respiratory system, which occurs in a situation of “brain death.”

However, recognizing brain death as the definition of death is a highly questionable approach, because whatever the definition of death is, it must be a concept that was known to the *Tanna'im*, such as blood circulation.

The *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* (9a) teaches, “The Academy of Eliyahu taught a *Beraisa*: The world is [destined to exist for] six thousand years – two thousand of nothingness, two thousand of Torah, two thousand of the days of *Mashiach*.” The *Chazon Ish* (*Yoreh De'ah* 5:3) comments that although Torah **study** has clearly continued into the third two-thousand-year unit, the intent of the *Gemara* is that the establishment of halachic **definitions** was fully completed by the end of the second two thousand-year unit, roughly the time Rebbi Yehudah HaNasi passed away.

The various definitions of death currently used in medical practice are based on cerebral function, the details of which were totally unknown to the *Tanna'im*. We cannot present a definition of death based on a concept unknown to the *Tanna'im*, as they were the ones who established the categories used in Halachah. It seems that we should not accept any of

these modern definitions, because there are no sources in the Talmud to validate them.

One could argue that brain death should be recognized as the definition of death, not on the basis of cessation of cerebral function, but due to the irreversible lack of blood flow to that single organ, as mentioned above. It should be noted, however, that if one is prepared to accept brain death as the definition of death on this basis, he should accept liver death as constituting death as well. [See *Rav Schachter on the Parsha I, Parshas Acharei Mos.*]

VII. Which Rishonim Should One Learn?

When Rav Soloveitchik delivered a *shiur*, he was not interested in looking at all of the *Rishonim*. He said that after the *Gemara*, he was only interested in *Rashi*, *Tosfos*, and the *Rambam*.

Whenever we learn a *Gemara*, it is often the case that there is another *Gemara* that seems to contradict the first. A major theme in learning is to try to figure out if in fact they disagree with each other. Perhaps there is no disagreement, in which case we must ascertain which *Gemara* demonstrates the rule and which the exception to the rule.

The Rav explained that we have *Rashi*, *Tosfos*, and the *Rambam* on all of *Shas*, and we are therefore able to compare one *sugya* with another using their explanations. However, with regard to the other *Rishonim*, which we do not have on all of *Shas*, one cannot know exactly how they understood every conflicting *Gemara*.

Occasionally, the *Shulchan Aruch* quotes an important *Ramban*, *Rashba*, *Rosh*, or *Ran*, and these we spent time on. But we did not generally study other *Rishonim* that are not quoted in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

The Rav emphasized that in learning, we should adopt the practice taught in universities to always check the primary sources and verify that they are being cited accurately. *Tosfos* often cites another *Gemara* that contradicts the one being learned, or the *Masores HaShas* refers the reader to another *Gemara*. It is very important to look up the cited *Gemara*, since it may not appear exactly as *Tosfos* quoted it, or other *Rishonim* may interpret that *Gemara* differently.

Furthermore, when *Tosfos* cites another *Gemara* and the word “*v’sham*” is added in parenthesis, this means that *Tosfos* in the other location discusses the same topic. One should follow this instruction and check the other *Tosfos*, since that presentation may be clearer or may be different. Another cross-reference resource is the *Hagahos HaLevush* in the back of the *Gemara*. This is a superb listing of every *Tosfos* in *Shas* that discusses the *Gemara* at hand.

When I was a teenager, an old *balabus* in my father’s *shul*, who had lived in Novardok when the *Aruch HaShulchan* was appointed *rav*, made a comment to me that I have seen, over the years, to be correct. He said that most of the comments of *Tosfos* in *Shas* quote another *Gemara* and fill in the missing information necessary to clarify how one *Gemara* is consistent with the other. *Tosfos* may explain, for example, that the other *Gemara* only applies under a certain set of circumstances or is due to a special consideration. If a person were familiar with enough *Gemaros*, he would be able to arrive at *Tosfos*’ conclusions on his own.

The *chachmei Provence* – including the *Ra’avad*, the *Ba’al HaMa’or*, and the *Me’iri* – often had different *girsas*’os in the *Gemara* or different traditions as to how to understand certain *Gemaros*. For this reason, we do not generally rely on their opinions *l’halachah*, and one need not investigate or examine them.

An example of this attitude appears in Rav Dovid Karliner's *teshuvah* regarding *shemittah b'zman hazeh* (*She'eilas Dovid 1, Chiddushim B'Inyanei Shvi'is*, p. 39-41). Rav Dovid Karliner (Friedman) was one of the great *gedolim* and *poskim* in Europe one hundred years ago. Rav Soloveitchik recounted that his grandfather, Rav Chaim, had such respect for Rav Dovid that he would be careful to come on time to the rabbinical meetings in order to be able to stand up when Reb Dovid would enter the session. In his *teshuvah*, Rav Dovid completely rejects the opinion of the *Ba'al HaMa'or* and *Me'iri* (and possibly also the *Ra'avad*). They held that nowadays, because of the lack of a *Sanhedrin* to declare the year as a *shemittah* year, *shemittah* is only a *middas chassidus* (meritorious act), and not even an obligation *miderabbanan*. According to this view, a *hetter mechirah* would be unnecessary in order to work the land.

The *Rama* (*Choshen Mishpat 67:1*), in the context of *shemittas kesafim*, also raises the issue of *shemittah b'zman hazeh*. For centuries, Jews were not careful to prepare a *pruzbul* document, which allows for the collection of loans following a *shemittah* year, presumably relying on the opinion of the *Ba'al HaMa'or* (see *Bi'ur HaGr"a*). The *Rama* recommends, however, that one not rely on this minority opinion, but should instead prepare a *pruzbul* document to prevent the cancellation of loans during a *shemittah* year, as *shemittah* nowadays is not considered to be a *middas chassidus*, but rather a *din derabbanan*. We absolutely do not accept the view of the *chachmei Provence*.

Likewise, Rav Soloveitchik would become upset when a student would ask him a *kashya* based on a *Me'iri*. He would say, "Would you stop bothering me with your *Me'iri*'s?" One should not build the *yesod* of a *sugya* around a *Me'iri*, but should instead focus on the more mainstream *Rishonim*.

VIII. *Shas* Contains More Agreement than *Machlokes*

In *shiur*, Rav Soloveitchik would always begin by developing clear definitions of the technical terms in the *Gemara*. He provided the background of the *sugya* by proceeding from the relevant *pessukim* to the *Mishnah's halachah* to the discussion in the *Gemara*. In this way, he made even the most complex topics straightforward and easy to understand.

The Rav was fond of the *Ba'al HaTanya's* comment (*Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah 2:12-13*) that there is a major distinction between *limud Torah SheBichsav* and *limud Torah SheBe'al Peh*. If one reads the text of *Torah SheBichsav*, he fulfills the *mitzva* of *talmud Torah* even if he does not understand anything he reads, because these are the *divrei Elokim chaim* (words of the living G-d). This is not the case with *Torah SheBe'al Peh*, however, where there is no *kiyum hamitzva* without comprehension (*Magen Avraham 50:2*). Indeed, the Rav worked hard to present all of his *shiurim* in such a way that they would be understood by everyone.

There is a *machlokes* on virtually every *daf* of *Gemara*, and some people who do not appreciate the learning of *Gemara* sometimes have the attitude that everything in the *Gemara* is subject to *machlokes*. However, Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that for every *machlokes* in the *Gemara*, there are another hundred issues that both sides of the *machlokes* agree upon. Thus, whenever the Rav learned a *machlokes*, before he would begin to analyze the *machlokes*, he would place the *machlokes* in context. He gave the students perspective by first discussing the many premises that are not included in the *machlokes*. In fact, after discussing the issues that were not part of the *machlokes*, the crux of the *machlokes* itself often became clear on its own.

An example of this approach relates to the requirement of *oneg Shabbos*. The *Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 30:1)* writes that there are a total of four *mitzvos* associated with Shabbos, two of which appear in the *Chumash* and two of which are explained by the *Nevi'im*. In the *Chumash*, we find “*zachor*” (*Shemos 20:8*) and “*shamor*” (*Devarim 5:12*). The two *mitzvos* that appear in *Navi* are *kibbud* (honor) and *oneg* (enjoyment), based on the *passuk*, וקראת לשבת עונג לקדוש ד' מכוּבד – “You shall proclaim the Shabbos ‘a delight,’ and the holy [day] of *Hashem* ‘honored’” (*Yeshayah 58:13*).

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of using the Vilna Gaon’s definition of *kibbud* and *oneg Shabbos (Bi’ur HaGr”a, Orach Chaim 529:1)*: *Kibbud* refers to all preparations done **in advance** of Shabbos, while *oneg* refers to enjoying **on** Shabbos that which was prepared beforehand. For example, setting the table before Shabbos is a fulfillment of *kibbud*, while enjoying the decorated table during the Shabbos meal is considered *oneg*. Similarly, lighting the Shabbos candles before Shabbos is *kibbud*, and enjoying a well-lit home on Shabbos is *oneg (Beis HaLevi 1:11)*.

The *Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 271:4)* notes that there is a *machlokes* between the *Bavli* and the *Zohar* regarding which takes precedence – *oneg on leil Shabbos* or *oneg on Shabbos day*. The *Gemara* in *Pesachim (105a)* teaches that if one has only enough of a delicacy to partake of it at one Shabbos *seudah*, and he must therefore choose between *k’vod yom* and *k’vod laylah*, *k’vod yom* takes precedence, and he should save the delicacy to eat during the day. The *Zohar* disagrees, however, and maintains that it is preferable to serve the delicacy at the *seudah on leil Shabbos*.

Even though the two opinions are in complete disagreement as to precedence, the Rav explained that we can discern a certain premise that they share in common. Both are working with the assumption that it is not

the case that there is a general *din* of *oneg* that extends over the twenty-four hours of Shabbos. Rather, there is a separate *mitzva* of *oneg laylah* and a separate *mitzva* of *oneg yom*. Shabbos is composed of two separate time-units as far as *oneg Shabbos* is concerned – night and day.

Based on this, Rav Soloveitchik beautifully explained Rabbeinu Tam's opinion that although there is a *mitzva* to eat *shalosh seudos* over Shabbos, one may discharge his obligation of eating a *seudah shlishis* with *minei targima* (non-bread items) (*Orach Chaim* 291:5). Based on this opinion, *Tosfos* (*Berachos* 49b, s.v. *i ba'i*) questions whether one would have to repeat *Birchas HaMazon* if he were to omit *Retzei* following *seudah shlishis*. What could be the rationale for a relaxed requirement involving *seudah shlishis*?

There is a requirement to eat a *seudah* with bread on *leil Shabbos* and a *seudah* with bread on the day of Shabbos, based on the existence of the separate *chiyuv oneg balaylah* and the separate *chiyuv oneg bayom* outlined above. However, aside from these *chiyuvei oneg*, there is an additional, unrelated requirement to eat three *seudos* over Shabbos. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (117b) derives this *chiyuv* from the *passuk* with regard to the *mann*, *ויאמר משה אכלהו היום כי שבת היום לד' היום לא תמצאהו בשדה* – “Moshe said: ‘Eat it today, for today is a Shabbos to Hashem, today you shall not find it in the field’” (*Shemos* 16:25). Each of the three mentions of *היום* alludes to a separate *seudah*.

The Rav concluded that according to Rabbeinu Tam, as far as the *chiyuv* of *shalosh seudos* is concerned, one could have had all three *seudos* with only *minei targima*; bread is required only for the *chiyuvim* of *oneg laylah* and *oneg yom*. Therefore, once one has completed one *seudah* during the day and has thereby fulfilled his *chiyuv* of *oneg bayom*, the third *seudah* he eats to complete his *chiyuv* of *shalosh seudos* need not include bread.

IX. One Must Identify the Underlying Principles of Halacha

The *Bi'ur HaGr"ra* on *Shulchan Aruch*, expanding on the work of his ancestor, the *Be'eir HaGolah*, provides the sources in the *Gemara* and *Rishonim* for every line in the *Shulchan Aruch*. He will often comment, 'כנ"ל בסעיף א' – “as mentioned above in *se'if alef*,” for example. Oftentimes, the *Gr"ra* is simply referring back to the *Be'eir HaGolah*'s comment, but this also may mean that the rule in the *se'if* at hand is the same as that already taught in *se'if alef*, and the different details are simply ancillary.

Of course, in order to recognize this, one must possess an understanding of the underlying principles of the *halachos*. There are those who do not approach learning in this fashion, but rather learn the *halachos* on a superficial level. As a result, they are unable to be *medameh milsa l'milsa* (compare one case to another). The *din* in one case can almost never be applied in another setting, since only rarely does a second case meet all of the conditions of the first. Contrary to that method, it is critical when learning to set aside the irrelevant details of a case and to determine which details are the key aspects that lead to a certain ruling. In other words, one must abstract the *din* from the case.

Thus, when Rav Soloveitchik delivered *shiurim* on *Shulchan Aruch*, he would break down each case into its component parts. He analyzed how each condition in a particular scenario contributed to the final *psak* and how the *din* would be affected by a change in some of those conditions. Indeed, the Rav commented that until the days of his grandfather, *Yoreh De'ah* consisted merely of pots and pans; it was Rav Chaim who succeeded in removing *Yoreh De'ah* from the kitchen. By elevating the cases to the level of abstraction, we no longer deal with simple details, but with fundamental halachic principles. As the Rav would often

say about his approach to learning, “My father taught me how to read between the lines.” [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., pp. 14-15.]

In this vein, the *Ba'al HaMa'or* in his *Sefer HaTzava*, written as a summation of his comments on the *Rif*, compiled thirteen principles necessary for the proper understanding of *Torah SheBe'al Peh*. He writes (*midah* 2) that two *Gemaros* may use the exact same word or expression, but they connote completely unrelated concepts. Indeed, the *Pri Megadim* (*Pesichah HaKolleles*, *Orach Chaim* 5:2, 5:13) notes that the term “*chazakah*” is found in different contexts throughout *Shas* and connotes multiple different meanings.

This is a most important aspect of learning *Gemara*. One should not be satisfied with repeating the **text** of a *halachah* superficially, but should rather try to understand the **nature** of the *dinim* and, when there are two *Gemaros* that use the same language, understand whether the *halachos* they discuss are identical or not.

It is said that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik would make this point in a humorous way (*Ishim V'Shitos*, p. 56). The *din* is that *sheva berachos* are recited for a newly married couple only in the presence of a *panim chadashos*, a person who had not previously celebrated the marriage with the *chasan* and *kallah* (*Kesubos* 7b).

The term *panim chadashos* appears in a different context as well. The *Gemara* in *Temurah* (34a) teaches the *din*, מותר אפרם מותר – “In the case of all things that must be destroyed by being burned [such as fruits of *orlah*], their ashes are permitted [for benefit].” Some *Rishonim* explain that the reasoning behind this *din* is that the burning of the original item served to destroy it, and the ashes that currently exist are considered a new item. In other words, the ashes that remain are not forbidden, because פנים חדשות באו לכאן – “a ‘new face’ has come into being here” (see *Eruvin* 24a).

According to this explanation, asked Rav Chaim, if there are no new guests at a *seudas sheva berachos*, could the *berachos* be recited if someone were to bring ashes to the *seudah* to take the place of *panim chadashos*?! Obviously, the two usages of the same expression “*panim chadashos*” are completely unrelated.

The opposite is also true. Sometimes two *Gemaros* may use different terminology or may deal with different topics, but in essence, they teach the same principle.

For example, the *Mishna* in *Sanhedrin* (32a) teaches: דיני ממונות – דנין ביום וגומרין בלילה – “Monetary cases are tried by day and may be concluded at night.” Rav Soloveitchik pointed out that this *halachah* shares its reasoning with a *din* taught in the *Gemara* in *Bava Metzia* (55b). A *beis din* does not convene for a *din Torah* that involves less than a *perutah*. However, אם הוזקקו בית דין לשוה פרוטה גומרין אפילו לפחות משה – פרוטה – “If a *beis din* convened to adjudicate a case involving the worth of a *perutah*, [the *dayanim*] render a judgement even [regarding a second claim] involving less than the worth of a *perutah*.”

The Rav explained that we see from both *sugyos* that there is a concept in Halachah of *kevius yeshivas beis din*, establishing a *beis din* to adjudicate a *din Torah*. A *beis din* would not sit for a claim of less than a *perutah*, and it may not commence a court session in the nighttime. However, once the *kevius* of the *beis din* has already been created, the *beis din* may judge even a case that involves less than a *shaveh perutah*, just as it may continue judging a case into the night. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., pp. 17-18.]

X. Historical Background vs. Halachic Mechanisms

There are instances when the *Gemara* seemingly provides a reason for a *halachah*, but upon further analysis, it becomes clear that what first seemed like a reason is really nothing more than the historical background of the development of the *halachah*. The *halachah* is in fact based on a completely different set of considerations.

The Rav made this point in the context of the *sugya* of *heter agunos*, permitting the marriage of women unable to remarry due to insufficient evidence of their husband's death. The *Tanna'im* felt compelled to rule leniently that a single witness is trustworthy regarding his testimony that the *agunah's* husband has died, in contrast to the usual requirement of the testimony of two witnesses in the realm of *davar sheb'ervah* (a matter pertaining to forbidden marital relationships). They felt this way because during the Roman persecutions, when so many men were murdered in dungeons, it was difficult enough to procure even a single witness who could testify to the husband's death.

In reference to this allowance of a woman to remarry on the basis of an *eid echad*, the *Gemara* (*Yevamos* 88a) uses the famous phrase, משום עיגונה אקילו בה רבנן – “Out of concern for the *agunah*, the rabbis were lenient with her.” This led some of the *Rishonim* to understand that the acceptance of the *eid echad* in this case is a rabbinic leniency.

Rashi (*Shabbos* 145b) understands that the power of the rabbis to exercise this leniency is based on the rule אפקעינהו רבנן לקידושין מיניה – since whoever is *mekadesh* a woman does so subject to the will of the rabbis, the rabbis are able to retroactively annul the original *kiddushin* and return her to her premarital state.

Tosfos (*Yevamos* 88a, s.v. *mitoch*) understands that this case falls under the category of יש כח ביד חכמים לעקור דבר מן התורה – the

Chachamim are empowered to uproot a *din* of the Torah. Although the *Gemara* (*Yevamos* 90a) concludes that this authority of the *Chachamim* to suspend Biblical law is limited to a **שב ואל תעשה** (passive) violation, *Tosfos* holds that even an active violation (**קום ועשה**) is permitted in this case. This is because the leniency of reliance on an *eid echad* is a **דבר הדומה** – a *din* “similar” to one that is **within** the framework of Halachah, which is therefore not viewed as contradicting the Halachah.

Other *Rishonim* (*Nimukei Yosef*, *Yevamos* 28a in *dapei haRif*, in the name of the *Ritva* and *Ra’ah*; cited in *Pischei Teshuvah*, *Even Ha’Ezer* 17:13), however, understand that the acceptance of the *eid echad* in this case is not a rabbinic leniency. Indeed, the *Gemara* in *Yevamos* (115a) provides the rationale for accepting the testimony of a single witness who reports that a woman’s husband has died, thus enabling her to remarry. First, regarding a **מילתא דעבידא לאיגלויי** – a matter that is likely to be exposed (upon the husband’s return), it is presumed that the witness will not lie. Second, we rely on the fact that **אשה דייקא ומינסבא** – a woman herself investigates carefully and only then marries. These *Rishonim* maintain that the above considerations are acceptable on a *d’oraisa* level as well. If that is the case, what did the *Gemara* mean when it said **משום רבנן עיגוונא אקילו בה רבנן**, implying that a **rabbinic** leniency was employed here?

At the time that Rav Soloveitchik discussed the opinion of the *Ritva* and *Ra’ah*, a book had recently been published by a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary. The professor argued that during the time of the *Tanna’im*, there must have been a scarcity of wood in *Eretz Yisrael*. That is why *Maseches Sukkah* is replete with *dinim* aimed at minimizing the requisite dimensions of the walls of the *sukkah*, such as *lavud* – viewing gaps of less than three *tefachim* as actually closed – and *gud asik* – viewing the walls as extending upward to the *sechach* above them.

Rav Soloveitchik said that he did not think that the professor's arguments necessarily made him an *apikores*. It is possible that there **did** exist a scarcity of wood at that time in *Eretz Yisrael*. That fact alone, however, does not explain the *halachah*.

He proceeded with a *meshal*. The American government became aware that the Nazis were working on atomic energy in order to create an atom bomb that would enable them to be victorious in World War II. The American government therefore commissioned leading scientists to do the research leading to the creation of the first atom bomb, in order to secure its victory in the World War. Now, assume one were to ask, "How does the atom bomb work?" If one were to reply, "It is simple. The American government became aware that the Nazis were working on atomic energy..." would that suffice to explain **how** the atom bomb works? Of course not. That explanation simply provides the historical background that led to the creation of the atom bomb. The atom bomb functions based on certain precise formulas. In science, for something to work, there has to be a formula to justify its function.

The Rav explained that Halachah works the same way. It is possible that there was a *sha'as hadchak* (pressing circumstance) that led to the presentation of leniencies in the construction of the walls of the *sukkah*. This consideration, however, can only provide the historical framework to understand why the *Tanna'im* were interested in introducing their *kulos*. As to **how** the *kulos* function, there has to be a **formula**. There was already a recognized rule of *lavud* and of *gud asik* in other areas of *halachah*, such as in *Hilchos Shabbos*, but these principles may not have ever been applied to the *dinim* governing the walls of the *sukkah* until that time. It may have been due to the pressing need of the time that the *rabbonim* convened a "committee" to attempt to come up with a legal mechanism to alleviate the situation.

In our context as well, there was a significant *agunah* issue due to the Roman persecutions, especially in light of the general *davar sheb'ervah* requirement of two witnesses. Thus, משום עיגונא אקילו בה רבנן is the historical background explaining that there was a *sha'as hadchak*. Next, after careful consideration, the *rabbonim* applied a known **halachic formula** to allow for the acceptance of only one witness. This bona fide mechanism is either מילתא דעבידא לאיגלויי or אשה דייקא ומינסבא. These halachic principles create a רובא דליתא קמן (an assumption based on probability) that the testimony of the *eid echad* is reliable. The *agunah* is thereby allowed to remarry, even on the level of *d'oraisa*. [See *Nefesh HaRav*, 5755 ed., pp. 12-13.]

Chapter 7: A Glimpse at the Rav *zt”l*

Rav Mayer Twersky, 2003, *L’chvod the Rav’s Tenth Yohrtzeit*²⁸

I had originally hoped to use this time to try to distill into an hour a sense of who the Rav was. When I began trying to organize my thoughts, I realized that even superficially, even schematically, it was impossible even to give just *roshei perakim*. As a result, I’d like to try to focus on two or three isolated points, fully aware, as I’m sure all of you are, that it won’t add up to any kind of comprehensive portrait.

What Does it Mean That Rav Soloveitchik *zt”l* Was a Gadol?

Any discussion of the Rav has to begin with his defining characteristic, and that is that he was a *gadol sheb’gedolim b’Torah*. I’d like to explain a little bit what that term means, at least as applied to him. It’s a term which is used and bandied about rather freely. I’d like to try to

²⁸ The audio can be found on ravtwersky.torahweb.org, the fifth track of [Hespedim & Yohrtzeit Shiurim for Rav Yosef Dov Solovetichik *zt”l*](#)

explain what that means when we describe the Rav as such, as having been an *anak sheb'anakim* in Torah. It's very difficult to do in this generation because [for] someone the age of the [current] *talmidim*, who didn't know the Rav, not only don't such individuals exist today, I'm not even sure that the *hasagos*, I'm not even sure that the conceptions of that magnitude of *gadlus*, exist anymore today. So, it's very difficult to try to communicate. But, nevertheless, let's try a little bit.

***B'kius* is a Precondition Which Brisk Took for Granted**

Let's begin first by trying to explode a myth. One can't talk about the Rav without also talking about his roots, without talking somewhat about Brisk, about Volozhin. There is a mistaken notion that Brisk neglected or, *Rachmana litzlan*, was even *mizalzel* in, *b'kius*. This is a prevalent notion, but this is absolutely untrue. What is true, and one sort of heard this in between the lines of different comments which the Rav would make, is that Brisk took *b'kius*, familiarity with, knowledge of, *kol haTorah kulah* on its most basic level, for granted. It wasn't that Brisk was *mizalzel* in *b'kius*, it's that [*b'kius*] wasn't the definition of *gadlus*, [rather] that was a precondition to one's aspiration to *gadlus*. The *b'kius* was taken for granted. For instance, the story is told, it's quoted [in writing] as well, that Reb Chaim once pointed to Reb Velvel when he was a young boy and said with clear pride that he knows *Shas* with Rashi. Similarly, [it is reported] that Reb Chaim used to learn two *sedarim* a day and in each *seder* he would cover twenty, thirty blat. So, it wasn't a question of being *mizalzel* in *b'kius*. The *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 10b) says that someone who is a *baki b'kol haTorah kulah* can be *dan a kal vachomer*. *Dan a kal vachomer* seems to be something which is restricted to a rather narrow context, so why does it require a *b'kius* in *kol haTorah kulah*? Reb Elchanan quotes from Reb Chaim that to be *dan a kal vachomer* all you have to do is be sharp. But to know whether or not there's a *pircha*, to know whether or not the *sevara* is correct, whether or not the *sevara* can withstand scrutiny, that requires a *b'kius* in *kol haTorah kulah*. Brisk didn't stress *b'kius*, it

didn't talk about *b'kius*, it didn't display *b'kius*, but not out of any sense of *zilzul* or neglect, but because it was just taken for granted.

Chiddushei Torah as the Apex of Talmud Torah in Brisk and Volozhin

Another aspect or element of the approach of Brisk, and this had its source in Volozhin already, in its attitude towards *talmud* Torah was that the ultimate in *talmud* Torah, the apex in *talmud* Torah, was *chiddushei* Torah. Now, to understand the significant of that, if you contrast that with the approach of other *gedolim*, say someone like the Chazon Ish, so it's quite clear in various places that the Chazon Ish sees as the ultimate *biur halacha*, *halacha l'ma'aseh*, and he quotes *Gemaras* which he feels corroborate that position. In Brisk, but again I think it basically has its source in Volozhin, [the apex in *talmud* Torah, was *chiddushei* Torah]. That's what Reb Chaim Volozhiner writes in *Nefesh Hachaim*. Just for instance, in *sha'ar* 4, *perek* 12, [he writes as follows:]

וכ"ש חידושין אמיתים דאורייתא המתחדשין ע"י האדם. אין ערוך לגודל נוראות נפלאות ענינם ופעולתם למעלה. שכל מלה ומלה פרטית המתחדשת מפי האדם. קב"ה נשיק לה ומעטר לה. ונבנה ממנה עולם חדש בפ"ע. והן הן השמים החדשים והארץ החדשה שאמר הכתוב.

And Reb Chaim Volozhiner continues [in that vein]. That's why, for instance, the Rav used to write down *chiddushei* Torah, [but] he didn't make a habit of writing down his *teshuvos* and his *piskei halacha*. There are a handful of *teshuvos* which he had to write up fully for purposes of dissemination. But in terms of his own records, his own *k'savim* were *chiddushei* Torah, not the *teshuvos* which he gave, the *pesakim* which he rendered. Now this is not to say that the Rav didn't invest and devote a lot of time to answering *shaylas*. He certainly did. He spent endless and countless hours hearing *shaylas*, thinking about them, weighing them *b'koved rosh* and *paskening*. None of this is to imply that he wasn't involved in *psak* and, as the Rav himself, using the phrase the *Gemara* attributes to Dovid *Hamelech*, said autobiographically, ידי מלוכלכות בדם

ובשפיר ובשליא, his hands were dirty with the practical nitty gritty of dealing with *shaylas* and halacha *l’maaseh*. But he did so out of the sense of service to the *klal*, out of a sense of responsibility to provide leadership for the *klal*, not so much as the ultimate fulfillment of *talmud* Torah. But he did, and this needs to be emphasized as well, that he did see it as a sacred obligation to *pasken shalyas*.

Koved Rosh in Psak Halacha

The Rav was very *makpid* on the *hefkeirus* which he saw in America in the area of *paskening shaylas*, and he used to say that in America, he would say in Yiddish, *yedda einem pasken far zich*, that everyone *paskens* for himself. That *baalei batim pasken* for themselves, and *rabbonim* who are not necessarily of the caliber to be *paskening* the types of *shaylas* which they are, but everyone *paskens* for himself. And he said it very plaintively, very painfully that there was a *hefkeirus*, there was a lack of *koved rosh* in the area of *psak halacha* in America.

The contention that the Rav used to encourage everyone to *pasken* for themselves is simply not true. Perhaps one of the sources for the misunderstanding is that there were occasions when the Rav wouldn’t *pasken*. For instance, it would happen from time to time that the Rav would get a *shayla* from someone from whom he had never had a *shayla* before, and it wasn’t someone who was a *talmid* of his or who had any connection to him. The Rav had this uncanny sixth sense to know whether people were coming to him because it was an especially difficult *shayla* which needed his *psak*, or whether they were coming to him because they had an idea of what *psak* they may get from him which they wouldn’t have gotten elsewhere. On those occasions [when it was the latter case] the Rav refused to take up the *shayla*; he refused to *pasken*. Very often he would ask “Who’s your Rosh Yeshiva?” and then say, “well, you should be asking him this *shayla*.” Once someone from a certain *chassidic* group asked him whether or not there are *isurrei yichud* between adoptive parents and children. He asked the Rav, and the Rav had never heard from this person before despite the fact that the person had had many other opportunities

to ask *shaylas* of the Rav but did not do so. It was quite clear that the person was shopping for a certain *psak*; he thought he was going to get a *kulah* from the Rav which he wouldn't have gotten elsewhere. The Rav told him, "no, you have to take this *shayla* to whomever you generally ask your *shaylos*." So there were occasions where he deferred *shaylos*, but that was for a totally different consideration, because one has to be consistent in how, and of whom, one asks *shaylos*, and when the Rav detected that there was an inconsistency he would not get involved.

Brisk's Approach to Learning *Rishonim*

Another element of the Brisk tradition which the Rav imbibed and subsequently personified is one which has become so fundamental that I think we don't even, we can't even appreciate the profound influence which Reb Chaim exerted here. And that is, I remember once the Rav was asked to explain *derech halimud*, so he said that his father used to say that you have to learn with the following assumption, and this is what underlines the *derech halimud*, and said something which seems so simple and so obvious and so self-evident that it's almost meaningless. The assumption that his father used to state was, "*a rishon ken learnin*", the *rishonim* knew how to learn. Rashi, the *Baalei Hatosafos*, the Rambam, and the Raavad all knew how to learn well. That's a *derech halimud*! That's an even partial explanation of a *derech halimud*, that we know that Rashi and the *Baalei Hatosafos* and all the *rishonim* are all in good standing with us! But the truth is if you step back for a minute, the Rav's father was saying something very profound. Look at the *teshuvos* as well as *chiddushim* of the *gedolei Litah* in the generation right before Reb Chaim, e.g. the Mishkenos Yaakov or the Shagas Aryeh. The Mishkenos Yaakov, as well as the Shagas Aryeh in his *sefer*, deals with classical questions (not new contemporary questions) which were already taken up by the *rishonim*, and usually what happens in these *teshuvos* is that they are *machria*. They say there's a Gemara here which certainly proves that Rashi is right in this *machlokes* and, therefore, *halacha k'moso*. And in this [other] *machlokes* there's a *raaya* from a Gemara here like the Rambam, against the Rosh,

and therefore we *pasken* a certain way and not another way. None of this distracts from the *geonus* of these *mechabrim*, but their approach was to be *machria* by being *docheh* one side in the *machlokes rishonim*, and that was prevalent. Reb Chaim came and said no, they're both right. Reb Chaim said it's not that there's a *Gemara* which is like the Rambam and against the Raavad, like Rashi and against Tosafos. One of the basic axioms within Reb Chaim's approach was that both *rishonim* have an internally consistent approach which works through all the relevant *Gemaras*. This is what the Rav's father was saying when he said that *derech halimud* is based on this assumption as *a rishon ken learnin*, and therefore it's not so *pashut* to say, for example, that the *Gemara* in *Megillah* here about *kedushas beis medrash* proves that the Rambam is correct that *tefillah* is *d'oraysa* and the Ramban, who says that *tefillah* is only *d'rabbanan*, is wrong. This has become so fundamental and so basic to the way we learn that we don't even realize the tremendous influence which Reb Chaim exerted here.

Along the same lines there's another comment from Reb Chaim which should be understood in this respect as well, and, when placed in context, represents something new and not at all trivial. I think Reb Elchanan quotes the comment of Reb Chaim that we're not *mechadshim*. Not the comment one would expect from Reb Chaim! The *rishonim* were *mechadshim*, and our job is only to say *pshat*, to understand what the *rishonim* were *mechadesh*. What does that mean, and what was Reb Chaim conveying in saying that? Once again if you look at the Shagas Aryeh's *sefarim* on *Shas*, the *Gevuras Ari* [for example], as well as [the writings of] many of the *gedolei achronim*, often they'll have a *kasha* on Rashi and Tosafos and then they will say a new *pshat*, a new *mahalech* in the *Gemara*, different than that of Rashi and Tosafos. By contrast, you almost never find Reb Chaim saying a *pshat* directly in the *Gemara*. Reb Chaim insisted that part of our tradition is that we see the *Gemara* through the lens of the *rishonim*. That's what Reb Chaim had in mind with the comment recorded by Reb Elchanan that we don't say *chidushim*, rather we only try to say

pshat in the *chidushim* of the *rishonim*; our task is to see the *Gemara* through the lens provided to us by the *rishonim*.

Brisk and Chumras

This approach to learning has implications in *psak halacha* as well. Given this *derech halimud* of emphasizing אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים not just amongst the *tanaim* and *amoraim* but amongst the *rishonim* as well, it becomes much more natural to be *machmir* for more than one *shita* and to see to it that one is יוצא לכל הדעות. The propensity in Brisk to be *machmir* stems partially from a trepidation of *hora'ah*, but in addition it also ties in with the *derech halimud*. When one emphasizes אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים, it becomes much more natural to become *machmir* for both opinions in a *machlokes* and to be much more hesitant to be *machria* like one opinion or the other.

Notwithstanding this, the tendency to be *machmir* was much more pronounced in the *bais harav* with respect to their own personal *hanhagos* than it was regarding *psak l'rabim*. For instance, someone once *paskened* that everyone has to be *machmir* for the *zmanei* Rabbeinu Tam and not to do *melacha* until *Shabbos* is over according to the *zman* of Rabbeinu Tam, in response to which the Rav commented critically that of course his father was very *makpid* on Rabbeinu Tam's *zmanim*, and he was as well since that was his *kabbalah*, but it wasn't something that was *paskened* for others. Even though this tendency to be *machmir* was a direct outgrowth of the *derech halimud* of Reb Chaim, it was primarily something which was accepted on themselves, not necessarily the *psak* which was given to the *rabim*.

The Rav's *Gadlus*: Eliciting the *Neshama* of Torah

Coming back to our original description of the Rav as a *gadol sheb'gedolim*, we don't mean that he was a *baki* in Shas, Rambam, and Shulchan Aruch, and that he had a *koach* אליבא דהלכתא, because all that was taken for granted. Those were the preconditions for *gadlus*, not what the *gadlus* consisted of; those were the tools and provided

the platform from which one can try to achieve and attain *gadlus*. So what, then, was the *gadlus*? The Rav once said about Reb Chaim that Reb Chaim brought forth the *neshama* of Torah. That when Reb Chaim learned and explained he exposed, and penetrated to, the *neshama* of Torah. What does that mean?

Let's again discuss Reb Chaim's *derech* because even though within the tradition in which he stood the Rav was obviously was unique, just as every other *gadol* is, but nevertheless one can't begin to speak of the Rav without talking about that tradition. It's well known that what Reb Chaim did, what we stumblingly try to do as well, was to make the leap from the concrete *halacha*, from what you see phenomenologically on the surface, to the underlying idea and concept. Hence the description of the Brisker *derech* as being one of conceptualization or abstraction. In a letter the Dvar Avraham wrote in advance of the Rav coming to America, he famously said that, "נחה עליו רוח זקיננו", that the spirit of Reb Chaim rests upon his grandson, the Rav. Reb Chaim's *gaonus*, his *gadlus*, and the Rav's as well, was in being able to make this leap of conceptualization or abstraction.

When you learned with the Rav you had the sense that he had a golden touch. Sometimes a *Gemara* can, לפי מיעוט שכלי, לפי שכלי הדל, seem boring, *Rachmanah litzlan*. We don't say it, but we do think it sometimes. With the Rav there was no such thing as a boring line in the *Gemara*; the words were dancing. He had this amazing *koach* to go from what was on the surface, what seemed to be a dry *halacha*, and, as he said about Reb Chaim, penetrate to the *neshama*, to what was lurking below and underlying it.

But the *gadlus* and the *gaonus* was not only in making that conceptual leap. The *gadlus* and *gaonus* was also in the ability to notice things on the surface, and that is often not sufficiently emphasized. How did Reb Chaim learn? How did the Rav learn? Too often, and maybe this misunderstanding is created in part by how things are presented in writing in Reb Chaim's *sefer*, but too often we have the association with *chakiras*,

and we think that everything with Reb Chaim was a *chakira* - is it *cheftza*, is it *gavra*, etc. But that's not at all how they learned. Neither Reb Chaim nor the Rav had a set of questions which they asked when they approached a *blat Gemara*. Rather, you opened the *Gemara* and you started learning, and there were no *chakiras*. In the course of learning, a catalyst within the *blat* is what stimulated probing deeper. Sometimes the stimulus to probe deeper is obvious, e.g. Tosafos points out that Rashi is against the *Gemara* elsewhere. That's a blatant difficulty, and in such a case the only *gadlus* and *gaonus* you need is in resolving it. But the *gadlus* and *gaonus* in Brisk was that even when others didn't detect any difficulty, even when others saw a smoothly paved road in front of them, Reb Chaim sensed the bumps in the road, and when there was a bump, when the *blat Gemara* wasn't smooth, that's what prompted the rethinking and reexamination of what our assumptions are that makes it difficult, and what the difficulty is pointing to in terms of revising our assumptions.

After the fact you can summarize this learning process in the form of a *chakira*, but the creative process is not a *chakira* at all. Rather, it's being stimulated by something in the words of the *Gemara*, in the Rambam, etc. Sometimes the stimulus required such a keen sense to notice that others did not notice it. But the rethinking, the reexamination, was always a response to some stimulus in the *Gemara* or *Rishonim*. It wasn't triggered by asking a specific set of questions or applying a specific set of tools. Sometimes one ends up at the same finishing point regardless of whether one begins with specific, predetermined questions or whether one is stimulated by the *Gemara* itself, but often the paths will diverge. This is how the Rav learned as well.

Training *Talmidim* in the *Derech Halimud*

The Rav was very conscious of training *talmidim*. There are some who say that *bizman hazeh* when Torah *she'b'al peh* is written down, one doesn't have a *rebbe muvhak* anymore since most of what we learn is

learned on our own. The Rav disagreed²⁹, and said that while it's certainly true that he learned more *blat Gemara* on his own than he learned with his father, his father is the one who gave him the tools and equipped him to understand how to learn. Therefore, every *blat Gemara* which he learned on his own was due to the formative influence which his father had upon him. By virtue of that, the Rav had no doubt that his father was his *rebbe muvhak* even though *Chazal's* definition of *rebbe muvhak* is “רוב חכמתו הימנו”. “רוב חכמתו” can't be measured by how many *blat* they learned together, rather by the *rebbe* teaching his student the tools, the *derech halimud*.

Because of this, the Rav was very conscious of not just conveying the content of Torah, but also trying to train *talmidim*, the next generation, in knowing how to learn as well, and he clearly saw conveying the *derech halimud* as a primary task of a *ba'al masorah*. The way the Rav conveyed the *derech* was by inviting people into the inner sanctum, so to speak, and letting them see his creative process unfold. In that process, there was no formalized methodology which you could capture in certain key questions, because ultimately what the *derech halimud* consisted of was a certain sense of knowing when there's more to a *Gemara* than meets the eye, that there's something deeper underlying it. This sense is developed by exposure to someone who has it, and then by more and more learning.

So when we say that the Rav was a *gadol b'Torah*, it does not only mean familiarity with the phenomena of Torah, with the *halachos*, since that was the *b'kius* which was a pre-condition to *gadlus b'Torah*. The *gadlus b'Torah* was that ability to elicit the *neschama* of Torah and to do so from *Berachos* through *Uktzin*, בכל חדרי התורה.

²⁹ See *Shiurim L'Zecher Aba Mori*, vol. 2, page 15 (1985 edition.)

Making the Most of One's Abilities

The Rav used to tell the following story: when he was in Berlin he knew someone who had been a *talmid* of Reb Chaim and then subsequently had studied math and science and worked as an assistant to Einstein, and was fond of comparing the two, *lehavdil*, giants under whom he had studied. This person used to say that if one wanted to rank them intellectually, it's a fair question, but clearly Reb Chaim was the greater of the two. But when it came to *chessed*, even though Einstein was reputed to be a great humanitarian, he said that Einstein wasn't worthy to shine Reb Chaim's shoes.

The Rav, too, had extremely prodigious abilities. One would imagine that with those prodigious abilities, one would easily rise to the top without necessarily having to engage in עמלה של תורה or being ממית תורה עצמו באהלה של תורה. And yet, I once asked one of my great aunts what her memories were of her older brother. She was several years younger and therefore didn't know him when he was a young child, but she said she remembers him as a teenager and never saw him for a moment not learning either on his own or with his father. There was never a moment when he wasn't learning.

The need for עמלה של תורה doesn't depend on one's abilities. The need for עמלה של תורה is to make the most of one's abilities, and the Rav apparently felt that the greater the abilities with which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* blesses one then the greater the obligation, and the more sacred the obligation, to learn. The same total preoccupation with learning, the same עמלה של תורה, continued throughout his life, and continued to times that I can remember as well. The Rav used to like to say, "I don't like to plagiarize myself." What he meant, although well he wouldn't have said it this way, was that if Torah is מים שאין להם סוף, it's irrelevant that one has חידושים על גבי חידושים in a particular *sugyah*, because every time one learns it there is more to be discovered. Every time, no matter how many years and decades had passed, he had the same עמלה של תורה to bring forth even more *chiddushei* Torah.

The Primacy of *Nigleh*

Rubam k’kulam of *gedolei Yisrael* throughout the generations were preoccupied not only with *shas u’poskim* but also with what my father used to call meta-halachic disciplines. For some, like the Rambam, this meant philosophy and for others this meant *kaballah*. This was the *tzurah* of most *gedolei Yisrael* throughout the generations, and the Rav stood in that tradition of *gedolei Yisrael*. Simply put, there was nothing that the Rav didn’t know; you couldn’t catch him not knowing a Zohar, a passage in the Moreh Nevuchim, the Kuzari, the Likutei Torah, or anything. It was absolutely awesome. The word “awesome” is overused today, and therefore is stale, but his knowledge was literally awesome. There was nothing he didn’t know. Chazal (Sukkah 21b) explain the passuk, “ועלהו שאפילו שיחת חולין של תלמידי חכמים” (Tehillim 1:3) to teach us, “צריכה תלמוד”. Sometimes in conversation you really got a glimpse of the grandeur of his greatness, even more than when talking in learning about a particular *sugyah*. It was incredible how in the course of one conversation he would draw, when it was relevant, from every branch of Torah, whether it was *chassidus*, *mussar*, *kabalah*, or the *chachmei hamechkar* (i.e. the Rambam, Reb Yehudah haLevi, Rabbeinu Bachya). It was absolutely awesome.

These *gedolei Yisrael* throughout the generations who, *rubam k’kulam*, were *gedolim* not only in the *yam haTalmud*, but also in the other disciplines (for some it was philosophy, for some it was *kaballah* and for some, as in the case of the Rav, it was both) dealt with the question of what is the relationship between one’s involvement with study of *halacha*, the *yam haTalmud*, and study of those other Torah disciplines. Much of this debate centers on how you learn *pshat* in the following *Gemara* (Sukkah 28a) which is describing the greatness of Rav Yochanan *ben Zakkai*:

שמונים תלמידים היו לו להלל הזקן ... קטן שבכולן - רבן יוחנן בן זכאי. ואמרו עליו על רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שלא הניח מקרא ומשנה, גמרא הלכות ואגדות; דקדוקי תורה ודקדוקי סופרים; קלים וחסורים וגזרות שוות; תקופות וגימטריאות; שיחת מלאכי השרת ושיחת שדים ושיחת דקלים; משלות כובסין, משלות שועלים; דבר

גדול ודבר קטן. דבר גדול - מעשה מרכבה. דבר קטן - הויות דאביי ורבא.

The *Gemara* describes that Rav Yochanan *ben* Zakkai knew everything, and then says that he knew “דבר גדול ודבר קטן”. The *Gemara* then says that “דבר גדול” refers to “מעשה מרכבה”, the vision which Yechezkel beheld which is recorded in the first *perek* of Yechezkel and is the *haftorah* of Shavuos, and “דבר קטן” is defined as “הויות דאביי ורבא”. The Rambam (*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 4:13) says that this means that axiologically, “מעשה מרכבה” is more important than “הויות דאביי ורבא”, which represent the halachic part of Shas. The Vilna Gaon (Bi’ur haGra, Yoreh Deah, 179:13) says this *pshat* in the *Gemara* as well, but says that the Rambam was terribly mistaken to understand “מעשה בראשית” and “מעשה מרכבה” to refer to philosophy, rather it really refers to *kaballah*, *chochmas hanistar*. Others rejected that *pshat* in the *Gemara* entirely. For instance, the Kesef Mishna in *Hilchos Yesodei haTorah* quotes the Ritvah in Sukkah as well as a Mizrachi who say that “דבר קטן - הויות דאביי ורבא” refers to those places where a tradition was forgotten, where there were all kinds of *safeikos*, where our vision is skewed or clouded. But *chochmas haTalmud* as a whole is the greatest *chochma* that exists, and *nigleh* remains the ultimate in terms of *talmud* Torah and the most important.

It’s very important to clarify that even according to the Rambam’s school of thought, one has no right to progress to “מעשה בראשית” and “מעשה מרכבה” unless one first, as the Rambam himself says, is “מלא כריסו” unless one has first become a *gadol b’Torah*. In terms of the sequence in which one should study there’s no *machlokes*, and one must master *nigleh* first. The axiological question is something which different *gedolei Yisrael* had different opinions on throughout the generations.

One illustrative example of this question being dealt with is the Kesef Mishnah’s discussion (*Hilchos Mamrim*, 2:2) of the *Gemara* (*Beitza* 5b) which reports that Rav Yochanan ben Zakkai was *matir* an earlier *gezeira* with regard to פירות נטע רבעי. *Min haTorah* the fruit which is produced by a tree in the fourth year of its growth, which has a status of

revai which is the same as *ma'aser sheini*, is allowed to be redeemed if it is outside Yerushalayim, and then the money must be brought and spent in Yerushalayim. However, a *takana* had been made לעטר שוקי ירושלים that if one lived within a day's journey of Yerushalayim one shouldn't be *pode* the *revai*, and instead should bring it to Yerushalayim. Subsequently, after the *churban*, Reb Yochanah ben Zakkai, was *matir* this. The Kesef Mishnah asks that the Rambam explains that in order to overturn a *gezeira* of an earlier *beis din* you have to be גדול בחכמה ובמנין, so how is it possible that Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai, who among the *talmidim* of Hillel was the *katan shebikulam*, seemingly the lowest ranking amongst them, how can he have been גדול בחכמה ובמנין compared to the *chachomim* of an earlier generation when even in his own generation seemingly the *Gemara* doesn't rank him first? The Kesef Mishnah has two answers. One of them is:

תדע דהא קאמר התם שלא הניח ממשלות כובסים משלות שועלים
שיחת שדים ושיחת מלאכי השרת ומעשה מרכבה ובאותן חכמות
אפשר שהיו גדולים ממנו אבל לא בחכמת התורה

The Kesef Mishnah says that when the *Gemara* says that Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai was *katan shebikulam* it meant that his *gadlus* was less than their *gadlus* in things like *ma'aseh merkavah*, but in *chochmas haTorah* Reb Yochanan ben Zakkai was preeminent not only in his generation but even vis-à-vis earlier generations as well. The Kesef Mishnah seems to be saying that ultimately, the status of גדול בחכמה ובמנין depends upon the *chochmas haTalmud*. This certainly does seem to have implications for the question of the axiological supremacy of *Shas/nigleh* vs. *kabbalah*.

Where did the Rav stand on this question? I think one can fairly say, and this is especially meaningful given the fact that he knew everything, that the Rav was certainly of the opinion that *chachmos haTalmud* was the *ikar*. He certainly aligned himself with that group of *gedolim* throughout the generations.

The Rav's Revolutionary Impact on *Machshava*

I'd like to move on to the second point in which I will very briefly give *roshei perakim*. If one were to ask what effect Reb Chaim had on the world, one would say that he revolutionized the world of *derech halimud*; his impact wasn't only specific *chiddushei* Torah, rather he transformed the way we learn. Obviously, that *derech halimud* then generates lots of individual *chiddushim*, but on the macrocosmic scale one certainly associates with Reb Chaim his *derech halimud*. What if the same question is raised about the Rav? What *chiddushim* did he reveal to us within the *masorah* (a *chiddush* is something from within, not from without)? I'd like to share two answers to that question, although these answers are neither comprehensive nor exhaustive.

First, one of the things which the Rav said about Reb Chaim in his *hesped* for Reb Velvel (where he has a long description of Reb Chaim's *derech halimud*) is that Reb Chaim revolutionized certain areas of *Shas*. Specifically, before Reb Chaim it was known that there was a lot of *lomdus*, depth and profundity, in parts of *Nashim* and *Nizikim*, but it was not recognized in other areas of Torah. For example, the Rav used to say that before Reb Chaim, *Yoreh Deah* was all pots and pans and then Reb Chaim came along and all of a sudden *Yoreh Deah* was just as deep and profound as *Nashim* and *Nizikim*. Another example is *shtaros*; before Reb Chaim there was no *lomdus* in *shtaros*, and Reb Chaim revolutionized that *inyan*. In *Orach Chaim*, especially *tefillah* and the like, there's no question that the Rav revolutionized more than Reb Chaim did. The Rav brought more *lomdus* to the *siddur* in terms of *tefillah* needing a *matir*, and just so many **על גבי חידושים** **חידושים** which just totally transformed these *chelkei* Torah. That's more than just an individual *chiddush* in a *sugyah* - it's a total transformation.

The second answer is that the Rav had a tremendous, revolutionary effect in *machshava*. How so? I'd like to very briefly try to describe it and maybe give one or two illustrations. In his essay "The Halachic Mind" the Rav writes the following:

To this end there's only a single source from which a Jewish philosophical weltanschauung can emerge. The objective order, the halacha ... problems of freedom, causality, God-man relationship, creation, and nihility would be illuminated by halachic principles. A new light could be shed on our apprehension of reality. The halachic compass would also guide us through the lanes of medieval philosophy.

And then the Rav concludes with one of the most tantalizing lines ever written by one of *gedolei Yisrael*:

Out of the sources of halacha a new world view awaits formulation.

What the Rav said, and I'm not sure if we sufficiently appreciate to what degree he made good on this promise, is that the ultimate and most definitive source of the *hashkafa* of Torah, of *Yahadus*, is *halacha*. Left to our own understanding, we would differentiate between *halacha* and *aggada* and see them as two distinct parts of *Shas*. If we would want to know what is *mutar*, *assur*, *tamei*, *v'tahor* we would study *halacha*, and if we would want to know *hashkafa* then we would study *aggada*. The Rav showed, more than anyone without exception in terms of what we have written down in *sefarim* as part of our *mesora*, that the *hashkafa* of *Yahadus* is latent in the *halacha*. *Hashkafa* is to be elicited not by philosophizing about *halacha*, but by learning the relevant *sugyas* in *halacha* the same way you learn *yeish dichuy*, *nireh vinidcheh*, *dichui me'ikara*, etc., and extracting the philosophy of *Yahadus* from it.

Let's look at one example of where the Rav himself did this, but without waving a red flag to indicate he was doing so. In the second volume of the *yohrtzeit shiurim* there's a wonderful shiur about *mechikas ha'sheim*. In that shiur, the Rav talks about the *machlokes Tanaim* (*Shavuos* 35b) regarding אֹתוֹת הַנְּטָפוֹת לַשֵּׁם. What happens if you have prefixes or suffixes attached to the *sheim* Hashem, e.g. אֱלֹהִים or אֱלֹהֵינוּ. Do these אֹתוֹת הַנְּטָפוֹת לַשֵּׁם have *keddushas hasheim* and therefore

there's an *issur mechika*, or not? One view in the *Tanaim*, which is how we *pasken*, distinguishes between a prefix and a suffix; נטפלות לשם לפניו doesn't have *keddushas hasheim* but לאחריו לשם נטפלות does have the *keddushas hasheim*. This is straight *halacha*, not *aggada*. The Rav beautifully explains that when *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* appears to Avraham Avinu and says (*Bereishis* 17:7), “להיות לך ולזרעך אחריו לאלקים”, He said that even though I, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* am absolute in that My existence is absolute and I'm totally independent, nevertheless I am going to allow Myself to be defined in terms of you and your children. Because of that revolution of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*'s relationship with *Klal Yisrael*, the אותיות הנטפלות לשם לאחריו – e.g. אלקיכם and אלקי, have *keddushas hasheim*, because those suffixes express the relationship of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* with us, in which He allowed Himself to be defined as “אלקיכם”. A prefix, however, doesn't reflect *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*'s relationship with us, is not part of the name/definition of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in this world, and therefore lacks *keddushas hasheim*. I can guarantee you that when the Rav wrote the line in “The Halachic Mind” cited above, “problems of ... God-man relationship ... would be illuminated by halachic principles”, he certainly had in mind this Torah about *mechikas hasheim*. And *koheina v'choheina*, so many of the Rav's *chiddushei* Torah deliver, at least in part, on this promise of revealing a *hashkafas olam* from within halachic sources.

This notion, that the same rigor and *derech halimud* that we apply to יאוש שלא מדעת reveals a *hashkofas olam* when applied to certain *sugyas*, was an absolutely revolutionary contribution to *machshava*. And, again, it is done with the same rigor and methods with which we learn *halacha*, without taking liberties and without philosophizing.

The Rav's Relationship with Modern Orthodoxy

The last point which I would like to discuss is the Rav's relationship with what's called Modern Orthodoxy. First of all, for the most part, the

term almost didn't exist in his lexicon. When the Rav would talk about what his understanding of the Torah's position was, he didn't even talk about "Orthodoxy", *על אחת כמה וכמה* he didn't talk about Orthodoxy with an adjective in front of it. The most common term that he used was "the *halacha*"; sometimes he would say "*Yahadus*" or "*Yiddishkeit*." This notion of self-definition apart from the Torah community as a whole wasn't the way he spoke. "Modern Orthodoxy" wasn't his vernacular in terms of self-identification. It's very important to understand what the Rav's so called "modernity" consisted of, and it is something which is often misunderstood and misrepresented. The way my father z"l once described it was that the Rav engaged modernity on his own terms. What does that mean? The Rav talks a lot about some of the pertinent issues in the *Chamesh Derashos*. The Rav believed very strongly and passionately that Torah could, and would, overcome every challenge, and that to try to retreat from challenges was ultimately doomed to failure. The Rav felt that if people were told that you have to make a choice between remaining true to Torah and being able to integrate economically into modern society, too many Jews would be lost. If people were told that one can't remain a *ma'amin* or a *ben Torah* and also get the education which would let one be a lawyer, scientist, or a businessman with an MBA, the Rav felt that there were going to be too few Jews inside such an insular area and too many Jews who'd be left outside.

The Rav used to express this idea by saying he would add a fourteenth *ani ma'amin*. He obviously didn't mean it literally, and what he was saying was that included in the *ani ma'amin* of *זאת התורה לא תהא מוחלפת ולא תהא תורה אחרת מאתו יתברך שמו* is that Torah can be lived, studied, fulfilled, and followed *בכל מקום ובכל זמן* in laboratories, in boardrooms, everywhere. That was his vision. It wasn't a vision of compromise, rather it was a vision of doing it all on our own terms, and one which believed that one could be steeped enough in Torah to meet the challenges of being a lawyer, being in a corporate boardroom, etc., with one hundred percent loyalty to *halacha* without compromising on a *קוצו של יוד*. If being modern means not sticking your head in the sand and

instead confronting, and even engaging, modernity, but on the Torah's terms, then the Rav certainly was modern. However, if being modern means that somehow or another you reshape or reinterpret Torah, he was not modern at all.

The one place which I'm familiar with where the Rav used the term "Modern Orthodoxy" is in his *hesped* for Reb Chaim Heller, where he used it very critically³⁰. There the Rav described that he would go visit Reb Chaim Heller, who lived on the West Side, and he would feel like he was going from one world to another world, that he would leave one universe when he would leave the West Side and go into that enclave which was Reb Chaim Heller's apartment:

כשהייתי מבקרו במעונו, במערבה של מנהטן, על כל חשרת החיים היהודים הסואנים והנבוכים שבה; על כל בתי כנסיותיה, חברותיה, מועדוניה ואביזריהם, הייתי מרגיש תמיד, כאילו נכנסתי לעולם אחר, כאילו הבקעתי את הגבול המבדיל בין שתי רשויות קיום – רשות דורות הראשונים – הש"ך, הט"ז והגר"א – ורשותה של האורתודוקסיה המודרנית קצוצת הכנפיים להגביה עוף ונטולת השורשים לחדור לעומק החוויה הדתית.

The Rav felt he was leaving behind, "the Modern Orthodoxy whose wings have been clipped so that it can't soar and lacks the roots to penetrate to the depth of religious experience." The Rav was very critical of the excessive materialism and superficiality that exists in our community.

The Rav certainly believed very much in the indispensability of Torah leadership, and devoted countless time to it. He devoted much time to the RCA which was a very powerful force in his lifetime precisely because of his involvement and his leadership. The Rav's encouragement of individuality wasn't at the expense of recognizing that *Klal Yisrael* is supposed to be led by *gedolei Torah*. Here's a true story which is typical of his understanding of individuality: someone once called the Rav and said that his son told him he wants to leave yeshiva and was interested in a

³⁰ *Divrei Hagos V'ha'aracha*, p.148

certain blue collar profession. It was an honest profession but not a white collar one, and *על אחת כמה וכמה* was not *rabbanus* or *chinuch*, and the father wanted to force him to stay in yeshiva. The Rav knew the son and knew that he wasn't cut out for *rabbanus*, that it would be a disaster and that, if anything, had the potential to turn him off. However, if the son pursued his desired profession, he would be a *frum ba'al bayis* who was *קובע עיתים לתורה*. If, on the other hand, he was forced into a mold where he didn't fit, so then *Rachmana litzlan*, it could have alienated him. So the Rav told the father that he should tell his son to pursue his desired blue collar profession, but tell him he has to get the proper training so that he could succeed. The father followed the Rav's advice, and remains indebted to the Rav *עד היום הזה*. That's where the Rav's understanding for individuality was, but it's not at all the case that the Rav thought that everyone should be deciding what's right and what's wrong.

Even in questions where the Rav stated that the course of action must be determined by experts in the given field (e.g. medical issues, Israeli security / military issues), the Rav saw that judgement itself as a *psak*. In other words, it was the Rav's *psak* that he didn't have the expertise to dictate the course of action and instead the approach should be determined by an expert in the field. However, it remained the Rav's prerogative to judge when to defer to those in the field and when not to. This wasn't a retreat or withdrawal from, or abandonment of, Torah leadership. Rather, it was saying that there are *halachos* where a rav has to take into account the expert opinion of people in the relevant field, and that itself was his *psak*.

It's very important to understand that the Rav's affinity with what we call Modern Orthodoxy, which should also be the self-perception and the self-definition of Modern Orthodoxy, was unwavering support for *Medinat Yisrael*, a recognition of *Medinat Yisrael* as a tremendous *nes* and *chessed* of the *Ribbono Shel Olam*, and a recognition that it is incorrect to force everyone into a single mold. The Rav recognized that *talmidim* each had their individual identities. Therefore, if this *talmid* was destined to be

a *rav* or *mechanech* so be it, and if another *talmid* didn't have the *kishronos* or temperament for *klei kodesh*, don't force him into the same mold as the other one. But his encouragement of individuality did not condone people doing whatever they want, or the relativism and subjectivism which is sometimes falsely portrayed and ascribed to him.

Ultimately I think it's fair to say, and it's something which is worth deep thought on all of our parts, that whether the community which looked to the Rav as its *moreh derech*, as its *gadol*, remains viable, let alone thrives, will depend on to what extent it has, and is steered by, Torah leadership. The leadership of the Rav is not available anywhere today, but *יפתח בדורו כשמואל בדורו* (Rosh Hashana 25b). The Rav was a *Shmuel b'doro*, and I don't know whether we'll ever see the likes of that again; I certainly would like to but I don't anticipate seeing it in my lifetime. Nevertheless, in order for that community not only to thrive but even to be viable, it still has to have Torah leadership. Rabbi Louis Bernstein *a"h* wrote a very interesting book entitled, "Challenge and Mission: The Emergence of the English Speaking Orthodox Rabbinate", which is a history of the RCA. Look in the index for where the Rav's name appears and read those pages in the book. It's fascinating to see where orthodoxy would have been and where it ended up because of the Rav. You really get a sense from that book of how the leadership which he exercised and the influence which he had kept the community on its course, and the future of that community depends upon maintaining that type of influence and leadership.

Chapter 8: How to Disagree

Lessons From the Current State of Political Discourse in America³¹

Rav Mayer Twersky, Summer of 5782

We're going to try to reflect together about style rather than substance. We're not going to debate or try to establish what the correct policy is in the areas of economics, the environment, immigration, foreign policy, or abortion. We're rather going to talk about style, and reflect on what we see and hear in the news as to how the respective sides of policy debates advocate their positions. We will discuss how we, as *bnei Torah*, should be processing what we see, and while initially we'll be talking about the American political scene, the goal is to establish a Torah framework for engaging in disagreement.

The Need to Live in a Society vs. Differing Views

At the end of Koheles, Shlomo *HaMelech* writes, “סוף דבר הכל” “נשמע את האלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור כי זה כל האדם”, on which *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 30b) comment as follows:

מאי “כי זה כל האדם”? — אמר רבי (אליעזר) [אלעזר]: כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא בשביל זה. רבי אבא בר כהנא אמר: שקול זה

³¹ The audio is available on YUTorah.org, under the title [NCSY Kollel Leil Iyun 2022 - The Current State Of Political Discourse In America](#)

כנגד כל העולם כולו. שמעון בן עזאי אומר, ואמרי לה שמעון בן
זומא אומר: לא נברא כל העולם כולו אלא לצוות לזה.

Chazal understand “כי זה כל האדם” to refer to all of humanity, and the *pshat* attributed to Ben Azai or Ben Zoma is that the rest of humanity was created to provide a society for the sake of the one individual who is a *yerei Elokim* and *midakdeik b'mitzvos*. In the non-Jewish intellectual Western tradition, the idea that man is a social animal, a social being, is associated with Aristotle. But *Chazal* themselves say that the *yerei Elokim*, the one who's at the pinnacle of the *beria* by virtue of how he lives his life, needs the rest of the world because man's natural state is to live in society.

The need to live in a society exists on two levels, the first of which is the pragmatic. If every time anyone needed a pair of shoes he had to make the pair of shoes from scratch, and he had to prepare his food from scratch, and he had to construct his own house or build his own tent, everyone would spend their entire lives just trying to attend to basic needs, and even then they wouldn't be able to complete everything that is necessary. Therefore, it is true in a pragmatic sense that we all need to live in society.

There is another way in which we need society as well, and that is in the psychological and emotional sense³²; quoting the *passuk* somewhat loosely, “לא טוב היות האדם לבדו” (*Bereishis* 2:18) - we're built to live in groups, in society. However, it's also true, and it's also a part of the blueprint for the human personality architected by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, that “כשם שאין פרצופותיהן דומין זה לזה, כך אין דעתן שוין זה לזה” (*Bamidbar Rabbah*, 21:2), just as no two people have identical physical features, similarly no two people react, think, feel, perceive, or judge the same way. This *mashal* of *Chazal* is true in degree as well: just as no two people are

³² The Rambam talks about this in the *hakdama* to his *peirush Mishnayos*, when he quotes this *ma'amar Chazal*.

completely physically identical but some do have similar appearances while other pairs of people don't look alike at all, so too regarding “אין שוין דעתן שוין”, even though no two people see, judge, and frame everything exactly alike, some people are similar in how they think while others are very far apart, כרחוק מזרח ממערב.

As such, while on the one hand we need to live together, but on the other hand (stated in extreme but not really inaccurate terms) we can't really agree on how to live together. We therefore have שני כתובים embedded in *berias ha'adam*, and most instances of זה המכחישים זה את זה cannot coexist unless we find a *kasuv hashlishi* which integrates and balances them³³. The *shnei ksuvim* are that on the one hand, we're social beings - the Rambam says that one of three overarching goals of all of Torah *u'mitzvos* is *tikun hachevel* because we're social beings - but on the other hand אין דעתן שוין, we can't agree on what the policies, rules, and bylaws of society should be. And if there will be no *kasuv hashlishi*, that disagreement and debate becomes acrimonious and adversarial; political opponents are *mevazeh* each other, they are contemptuous of each other, they mock and ridicule each other, and it breeds hate and distrust. Do you know what that world looks like? It looks like America in the year 2022.

³³ Some שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה can coexist without a *kasuv hashlishi*, without guidelines as to how to balance them. Many years ago, Rav Shachter's *kollel* was learning *maseches Beitza* and a question on one of the *bechinas* asked what you do when there are שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה. What he had in mind was the *machlokes* R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua at the beginning of the second *perek* (15b), “עצרת לה' אלהיך”, “כתוב אחד אומר: 'עצרת תהיה לכם'”, and “וכתוב אחד אומר: 'עצרת תהיה לכם'”, which is an example of *shnei ksuvim* that can coexist without a *kasuv hashlishi*. Some שני כתובים המכחישים זה את זה don't need a *kasuv hashlishi*, but most of them do.

Once upon a time, not that long ago, no one ever questioned the stability of American democracy, but now, without being a Chicken Little, people do question its stability. Once upon a time, when we studied American history, the Civil War was something that happened in the past and was inconceivable in the future, but it's not inconceivable anymore. I'm not saying it's about to happen or likely to happen, but it's not inconceivable anymore, and that's staggering. A major factor, perhaps the major factor, contributing to this situation is because there's no *kasuv hashlishi* between the fact that on the one hand we must all live together, but on the other hand in American society people no longer know how to disagree. There has to be a *kasuv hashlishi* that tells us how we disagree. We're not commenting on who's right and who's wrong on immigration policy or economic policy; we're not talking about any of the hot button issues in terms of their substance. Rather, we're talking about style. The *kasuv hashlishi* is how people are supposed to disagree.

Rules of Engagement

When thinking about this and trying to identify the *kasuv hashlishi* for how we go about dealing with different opinions, there are two types of disagreements we need to address. In some disagreements, if we had a little bit of *anavah*³⁴ we would recognize that one's political opponent, one's next door neighbor who goes to the voting booth and pulls the lever in a different direction, is equally entitled to his opinion. Not only is he entitled to his opinion, but there are people who are no less informed than I, who are of equal ability as me, and care as much as I do, who sometimes see things differently. How can I be so absolutely certain that I'm right in my political position and the other person is wrong to the point that I can

³⁴ The obligation to have humility is not limited to Jews - "כל המגביה לבו כפר בעיקר" (Rambam, *Hilchos De'os*, 2:3), so *anavah* is for *bnei* Noach as well, and arrogance is something which is universally unacceptable.

insult, mock, or ridicule them? As such, rule of engagement number one in terms of disagreement, is that it has to be with humility, and in some cases there will be a recognition that I'm only relatively certain about my opinion and not absolutely certain.

There certainly are, however, issues where we are, in fact, absolutely certain about our position. When something is unequivocal in the Torah and that issue enters the political realm and there's an opinion which is against the Torah, the reservation of being relatively certain but not absolutely certain doesn't apply. For example, one can say with absolute certainty that the overwhelming majority of abortions that have been performed over the past fifty years on demand have been categorically *assur* and absolutely wrong. It's not a situation where the person on the other side of the issue may be right and I may be wrong. The Torah says, and it applies to *bnei* Noach as well, "שופך דם האדם באדם דמו" (*Sanhedrin* 57b). Similarly, there is no possibility that living an actively gay lifestyle is right. On the contrary, there is absolute right and wrong on this issue as well, and this *issur* is included in *שבע מצות בני נח*. Regarding such issues, humility and entertaining the possibility that I'm not absolutely certain is not going to be the rule of engagement. So what are the rules in these cases?

Rule number one of engagement in such cases is that it should be with civility and courtesy rather than with rancor, ridicule, or recriminations. *Kavod habrios* is also something that's a universal value (as the Rambam says explicitly towards the end of *Hilchos Sanhedrin*) and applies to all people. The Rav used to say that the *mechayev* in *kavod habrios* is that people are created *b'tzelem Elokim*, and thus it applies to all people. In order for disagreement to be civil and courteous, we have to have a second rule, and that is that the disagreement should focus on issues and not on people. What one takes issue with is the position being espoused, not the person espousing it. And finally, the third rule of

engagement is that even when the other person is certainly wrong, there's a vital need for restraint in language.

Civility and Courtesy are Not a Cop-Out

A question that bothers us though, is why is civility called for and why should there be restraint in language? If there are unborn babies being killed, why isn't being civil and courteous not just a lack of principle, not just being "wishy-washy"? Let's answer that by beginning with a *mashal*. It's obviously *assur* to hit someone – "פן יסיף להכתרו" (*Devarim* 25:3). However, there are extreme cases where not only is it *mutar* but it's a *mitzva*. When we had a *Sanhedrin* and *malkos* were administered, if someone actually was *mischayeiv malkos* it was a *mitzva* to do what ordinarily is *assur* and administer the *malkos*. Killing someone is one of the most serious *issurim*, but when there was a *Sanhedrin*, if someone was *mechuyav misa* (i.e. he had *hasra'ah*, and after all the *v'shaftu* and *v'hitzilu* etc. the *eidus* stood and the person was convicted) then the *issur chamor* of killing becomes a *mitzva*. However, if at the last minute we realize that the *eidim* are *zomemin* or we discover a *tzad zechus*, then we revert back to our default setting of killing being an *issur chamor*. What's the *nimshal*? The default setting is that we have to interact with all people (not just with Jews) with *kavod habrios*. *Kavod habrios* implies civility, courtesy, not attacking people that are arguing issues, and restrained language.

There certainly are situations which override that default setting of *kavod habrios*. If we are confronted with someone who's doing that which is halachically categorized as a *ma'aseh rishus*, doesn't that override the default setting, and require different behavior on our part? In theory, under very different circumstances, yes. However, you're all familiar with the famous Chazon Ish (*Yoreh Deah* 2:16) which says that the *halacha* of *moridin v'ein ma'alim* doesn't apply today because it was intended to protect and uphold Torah and *b'zman hazeh* it would have the opposite

effect and would cause people to associate violence with Torah, and thus it's damaging to Torah. Once that *din* doesn't apply, you revert back to the default setting of *kavod habrios*. The same is true regarding the issues we are discussing as well. In political discourse, no one is won over or convinced that they're wrong by being insulted, ridiculed, mocked, or by being the object of a skit on late night comedy shows; no one has changed their political positions or political beliefs because of any of that, and no one is changed because of being insulted and being an object of scorn and hatred. Therefore, because it doesn't accomplish anything, there is no *mitzva* to react that way, and we revert back to behaving with *kavod habrios*. Engaging with civility and courtesy is not a cop-out, rather that is the *mitzva b'zman hazeh*, just as it's not a cop-out to not practice the *din* of *moridin v'ei ma'alin* today. We're not holding back due to a lack of principle or a lack of backbone, rather because the *mitzva* is not to act that way because it doesn't have the desired effect, there's no heter to behave with anything other than *kavod habrios*. It's simply a lack of understanding to think that incivility and lack of courtesy are called for.

A Cheshbon Hanefesh Regarding Machlokes

There is a very important and relevant *yesod* from the Ba'al Shem Tov *hakadosh*. Sometimes we are minding our own business, walking down the street, and we see two people involved in a bitter argument or fight. Or, sometimes we see someone being extremely rude. Why do we have these experiences? The Ba'al Shem Tov homiletically explains the *Mishna* (*Negaim* 2:5) “כל הנגעים אדם רואה חוץ מנגעי עצמו” to highlight that it's so much easier for me to see flaws in other people than it is to see flaws in myself. כל הנגעים אדם רואה - I see all the flaws in everyone else - חוץ מנגעי עצמו - somehow the one case in which I don't have twenty-fifteen vision to detect flaws is when it comes to my own flaws. What does *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* do to help me compensate for that blind spot? He

makes me witness my *negaim* in others. When I see two people arguing with each other and I see one being rude to the other, it's a message to me to engage in *cheshbon hanefesh* about my own involvement in *machlokes*.

As *bnei Torah*, as Jews, in *chutz la'aretz*, who are supposed to keep a low profile, we should be somewhat on the sidelines in terms of the tone and tenor of American political life. However, as pointed out by the Ba'al Shem Tov's *yesod*, we're being shown this behavior as a wake up call to recognize that we, internally, also need to make *cheshbon hanefesh* regarding how we disagree. Within the Jewish community as well there are two types of disagreement. One type includes disagreements with other *bnei Torah* over issues in *hashkafa*, *halacha*, and *derech hachaim*. We live by that path which has been charted and paved by the *gedolim*, past and present, to whom we look and we do so with relative certitude that this path is the *emmes*. But here too, with a healthy dose of *anavah*, we need to recognize that there are other *gedolim* who paved and charted other paths, and who also were, and are, entitled to their opinion, and there is such a thing as *eilu v'eilu*. Within Torah there are multiple valid opinions.

There is, however, another set of disagreements where there's no *eilu v'eilu* and where we're absolutely certain that we're right. When our fellow Jews who unfortunately don't know any better espouse things that go against the Torah, we are absolutely certain that they are wrong. Perhaps millennia ago there would have been a different approach, but today there's no *heter* whatsoever to veer from *ahavas Yisrael* and *kavod habrios*. When it's counterproductive to show a lack of respect there's no *heter* to react that way and, on the contrary, it's *assur* to engage in any such behavior because it's *machshil* people.

The *Ribbono Shel Olam* puts us in a place where we witness our own shortcomings, flaws, and inadequacies in others so that when we easily recognize those flaws and diagnose what others need to correct, we

should know that we need to do the same. Just as in American political discourse we see the dire need for a healthy dose of humility, for civility and courtesy, for pushing back against the issues and not against the people, and for restraint in language, so too in our dealings with other Jews – whether they are *bnei Torah* or not – we need to do all this as well, and our behavior must be characterized by *ahavas Yisrael*.

In terms of language, I don't know that there's anything more reprehensible than when one Jew calls another Jew a Nazi. It is absolutely reprehensible. I don't think that really needs to be explained, but I'll explain it anyway. The abuse of the term "Nazi" is intentionally and profoundly anti-Semitic. Some rabid anti-Semites openly and aggressively deny the Holocaust. A somewhat less aggressive form of anti-Semitism, however, is to deny the uniqueness of the Holocaust and to say look at Rwanda, look at Black slavery in the United States, etc. Those are both very evil as well, but there are different types, expressions, manifestations, and degrees of evil, and the Holocaust was, is, and will always remain unique in the annals of human evil. It's horrible, terrible, and reprehensible when non-Jews use the term "Nazi" about us, but it's even more horrible, terrible, and reprehensible when we use that term about each other.

Disagreement in all arenas must be with humility, civility, and courtesy, must be focused on issues and not pushing back against people, and must be done with restraint in language. And internally, when disagreeing with other Jews, it must be with *ahavas Yisrael*.

Appendix: *Mareh Mekomos on Hishtadlus for Parnassa*

This appendix is intended to help *talmidim* who wish to delve further into the Torah's attitude earning a *parnassa*.

אבות ב:ב

רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר, יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ, שיגיע שניהם משכחת עון. וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה, סופה בטלה וגוררת עון.

אבות א:י, עם פירוש, "רוח חיים", מאת הרב חיים מוולאז'ין:
שמעיה ואבטליון קבלו מהם. שמעיה אומר, אהב את המלאכה, ושנא את הרבנות, ואל תתודע לרשות.

אהב את המלאכה.

אמר כי מי שְׁהוּא בְּעַל מְלָאכָה וּמִתְפָּרְנֵס מִיְגִיעוֹ, לֹא תִהְיֶה לוֹ הַמְּלָאכָה בְּזוּיָהּ, וְאֵךְ מִפְּאֵת הַקְּרָחוֹ הוּא עוֹסֵק בְּמִלְאכְתּוֹ, אֲכַל בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ וְחִפְצוֹ מִקְנֵא הוּא לְרָאשֵׁי הָעָם וְרַבָּנִים וְזֶה נֶאֱהָב אֲצֵלוֹ. לְכֵן אָמַר "אֶהָב אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה", כִּי אֵת הַמְּלָאכָה יֵאֱהָב, וְכִי גְדוֹל הַנְּהִנְהָ מִיְגִיעוֹ יוֹתֵר מִיָּרֵא שְׁמַיִם (ברכות ח, א), וְרָצָה לוֹמַר יוֹתֵר מֵאֲשֶׁר יִנְהַג מִתּוֹרָתוֹ וּמִיָּרֵאת שְׁמַיִם שָׁבוּ כְּגוֹן רַב, וְאִם הָיָה רֹאשׁ וּמְנַהֵיג פֶּן הָיָה נִלְכָּד בְּשִׁחִיתוּתָם וּבְפִחַ הַגְּאֻנָּה. וְאָמַר "וּשְׂנֵא אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת" כִּי בְּרַבְּנוּת וּשְׂרָרָה נִהְפֶּךְ הוּא, אֵךְ כִּי א"א לְעוֹלָם כְּלֵא רַבָּנִים וּפְרֻנְסִים, וְלִפְעָמִים מִקְרָח לְאֲדָם לְהִיּוֹת רַב, אֵךְ יִהְיֶה זֹאת לוֹ אֵךְ מִצַּד הַהִכְרַח, אֲכַל בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ יִשְׁנֵא אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת, לְהִתְפָּרְנֵס מִזֶּה, וְיֵאֱהָב יוֹתֵר הַמְּלָאכָה.

ברכות ח.

ואמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמיה דעולא: גדול הנהנה מיגיעו יותר מירא שמים, דאילו גבי ירא שמים כתיב "אשרי איש ירא את ה'", ואילו גבי נהנה מיגיעו כתיב: "יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך". "אשריך" — בעולם הזה, "וטוב לך" — לעולם הבא, ולגבי ירא שמים, "וטוב לך" לא כתיב ביה.

ברכות י"ז.

מרגלא בפומייהו דרבנן דיבנה: "אני בריה, וחברי בריה. אני מלאכתי בעיר והוא מלאכתי בשדה. אני משכים למלאכתי, והוא משכים למלאכתי. כשם שהוא אינו מתגדר במלאכתי, כך אני איני מתגדר במלאכתי. ושמא תאמר: אני מרבה, והוא ממעיט — שנינו: אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים".

ברכות ל"ב.

תנו רבנן: ארבעה צריכין חזוק, ואלו הן: תורה, ומעשים טובים, תפלה, ודרך ארץ. **רש"י: צריכין חזוק** — שיתחזק אדם בהן תמיד בכל כחו: **דרך ארץ** — אם אומן הוא לאומנתו אם סוחר הוא לסחורתו אם איש מלחמה הוא למלחמתו:

ברכות ל"ה.

אמר להו רבא לרבנן: במטותא מינייכו, ביומי ניסן וביומי תשרי לא תתחזו קמאי, כי היכי דלא תטרדו במזונייכו כולא שתא.

ברכות ל"ה.

תנו רבנן: "ואספת דגנך" מה תלמוד לומר? — לפי שנאמר: "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיו" — יכול דברים ככתבן, תלמוד לומר: "ואספת דגנך" — הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ, דברי רבי ישמעאל. רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ודש בשעת דישה, וזורה בשעת הרוח, תורה מה תהא עליה? ... אמר אביי: הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל, ועלתה בידן. כרבי שמעון בן יוחי, ולא עלתה בידן.

ברכות מ"ג.

ואמר רב זוטרא בר טוביה אמר רב: מאי דכתיב "את הכל עשה יפה בעתו" — מלמד שכל אחד ואחד יפה לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אומנותו בפניו.

שבת קי"ח.

רבי עקיבא היא, דאמר: עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות. **רש"י: אלא הא מני ר' עקיבא היא** - ולענין סעודת שבת במאן דאפשר ליה איכא למימר כרבנן ואיכא למימר כרבי חידקא ומיהו האי דצריך לבריות יעשה שבתו חול ולא יטייל על אחרים כבוד שבתותיו:

פסחים קי"ג.

גאמר ליה רב לרב כהנא... פשוט נבילתא בשוקא ושקיל אגרא, ולא תימא "כהנא אנא, וגברא רבא אנא, וסניא בי מלתא".

קידושין כ"ט:

דת"ר האב חייב בבנו למולו ולפדותו וללמדו תורה ולהשיאו אשה וללמדו אומנות וי"א אף להשיטו במים רבי יהודה אומר כל שאינו מלמד את בנו אומנות מלמדו ליסטות ליסטות ס"ד אלא כאילו מלמדו ליסטות

קידושין פ"ב.

רבי מאיר אומר לעולם ילמד אדם את בנו אומנות נקיה וקלה ויתפלל... רבי נהוראי אומר מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה מהרש"א: ור' נהוראי דקאמר נמי לקמן מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם כו' אלא תורה ודאי דלא פליג וצריך כל אדם ללמוד אומנות אלא דה"ק מניח אני הקביעות של כל האומנות ואני מלמדו תורה בקבע ואומנות עראי (ועוד עיין בפני יהושע שם מה שביאר בזה.)

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות דעות, ב:ז

וכן לא יהיה בעל נפש רחבה נבהל להון ולא עצב ובטל ממלאכה. אלא בעל עין טובה ממעט בעסק ועוסק בתורה. ואותו המעט שהוא חלקו ישמח בו.

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות תלמוד תורה, א:ט

גדולי חכמי ישראל היו מהן חוטבי עצים ומהן שואבי מים ומהן סומים ואף על פי כן היו עוסקין בתלמוד תורה ביום ובלילה והם מכלל מעתיקי השמועה איש מפי איש מפי משה רבנו:

רמב"ם, משנה תורה, הלכות תלמוד תורה, ג:י"א

מעלה גדולה היא למי שהוא מתפרנס ממעשה ידיו. ומדת חסידים הראשונים היא. ובזה זוכה לכל כבוד וטובה שבעולם הזה ולעולם הבא שנאמר (תהילים קכח ב) "יגיע כפיך כי תאכל אשריך וטוב לך" (משנה אבות ו ד) "אשריך בעולם הזה וטוב לך לעולם הבא" שכלו טוב:

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והטעם שמחמתו חייב השם את האדם להתעסק בסבות הפרנסה ויתר צרכיו — גחלק לשנים. האחד — בן שחיבה החכמה לבחן את הנפש בעולם הזה במשמעת ובמרי, לפיכך בחן אותה במה שיגלה את זה, והוא הצורך והזקיקות למה שהוא מחוצה לה מאכל ומשקה ומלבוש ומדור ותשמיש; לפיכך צוה עליה להתעסק בגורמים כדי להשיגם על-ידי הסבות המצטרות להם באפנים מיוחדים ובזמנים ידועים. ומה שגזר השם שישגי האדם מהם ישג ויתקיים בקיום הסבות בקלות, ומה שלא גזר לו השם השגתו מהם לא ישג וימנעו ממנו הסבות, ותתקיים לו המשמעת והמרי לשם יתרומם ויתהדר בפנינה ובכחירת אחת מהן בלעדי השגייה, ויתחייב בכך השכר והעונש ואף-על-פי שלא השיג האדם בצויע הפעלה להן. והאפן השני — פי האדם, אלו לא היה זקוק לעמל לגורמים ולסבות בהשגת פרנסתו, היה מרשיע ובוועט וממהר לעברות ולא היה שם לב לחובותיו על טובות השם עליו — כאמרו: "והיה כנור ונבל תף וקליל וזין משתייהם ואת פעל ה' לא יביטו ומעשה קדיו לא ראו" (ישעיה ה, יב); ואמר: "וישמן ישרון ויבצעט שמנת עבית פשית ויטש אלוה עשהו" (דברים לב, טו). ואמרו הראשונים: "יפה תלמוד-תורה עם דרך-ארץ, שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון; וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון" (אבות פ"ב מ"ב). ויותר קשה מי שהפסיד את שניהם יחד ולא הטריד מחשבתו באחד מהם.

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ועל דרך משל זה

תמצא תכונות בני-אדם ואיבריהם מעתדים למיני המסחר והמלאכות. לפיכך, מי שמצא בתכונתו ובטבעו תשוקה לאחת המלאכות והיה גופו מתאים לה וסובל את טרחה ההתעסקות בה, יפנה אליה ויעשה אותה סבה להשגת פרנסתו ויקבל עליו את מתיקותה ומרירותה, ואל יקוץ אם באחד הזמנים לא ישיג את פרנסתו בה, אלא יבטח על השם יתעלה, שיתן לו פרנסתו בשלמות כל ימי חייו, ויתפונן בהתעסקות מחשבתו וגופו בסבה מסבותיה וגורמיה לקיים מצות השם, אשר צוה לאדם לעסוק בסבות בעולם הזה, כגון פליחת האדמה ועבודתה וזריעתה—כמו שנאמר: "ויקח ה' אלהים את-האדם וינחהו בגן-עדן לעבדה ולשמרה" (בראשית ב, טו);

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"יגיע בפיד כי תאכל

אשר יד וטוב לך" (תהלים קכח, ב); ואמרו הראשונים ע"ה: "וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם-שמים" (אבות פ"ב מ"ב). ואז תקיים בטחונו בשם, ולא תזיקהו ההתעסקות בסבות להשגת פרנסתו בהם כלל, אם נתפונן בהם במצפונו ובמחשבתו לשם-שמים,

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ועם

ידיעתו הברורה שענינו מסור לגזרת הבורא יתעלה ושמח שבחר לו הבורא היא הבחירה הטובה ביותר—הרי הוא חייב להתעסק בסבות תועלתיותו ויבחר את היותר חשובה לפי פשט הענין בעיניו, וכיד השם יתרום ויתעלה בצוץ מה שגזר אותו מראש.

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 כִּי שְׁאָר עֲנִינֵי הָעוֹלָם הִזָּה לֹא גָלָה לָנוּ אֲפֹן
 הַפֶּשֶׁר וְהַטּוֹב בְּסִבָּה מִן הַסְּבוּת בְּלַעֲדֵי זְוִלְתָּהּ וְלֹא אֲפֹן הַהֶפְסֵד וְהָרַע
 בְּמִקְצָתָן וְלֹא בְּאַחֲרוֹתָיִם, כִּי אָנוּ לֹא יִדְעֵנוּ אִי זֶה מִן הַמִּקְצוּעוֹת יוֹתֵר נֶכּוֹן
 לָנוּ וְחָשׁוּב לְמַעַנְנוּ בְּבִקְשַׁת הַפְּרָנְסָה וְהַבְּרִיאוֹת וְהַטּוֹבָה וְלֹא כְּאִי זֶה
 מִמִּינֵי הַמִּסְתָּחֵר וְהַמִּסְעוֹת וְהַמַּעֲשִׂים הַשְּׂיִכִּים לְעוֹלָם הִזָּה נִצְלִיחַ בְּאֶשֶׁר
 נִתְעַסֵּק בָּהֶם; וְלָכֵן חוֹבָה עָלֵינוּ לְבַטֵּחַ עַל הַשֵּׁם בְּבַחֲרֵתָם וְהוֹצֵאָתָם
 לַפֶּעַל, שְׂיִיטִיב לְעִזְרָנוּ עַל מַה שְּׂיֵשׁ בּוֹ תוֹעֲלָתָנוּ אַחַר שְׁנִתְעַסֵּק בָּהֶן,
 וְנִתְחַנֵּן לְפָנָיו, שְׂיַעִיר אוֹתָנוּ לְבַחַר הַנֶּכּוֹן לָנוּ וְהַחָשׁוּב עֲבוּרָנוּ.

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 שֶׁהַבּוֹטֵחַ עַל הַשֵּׁם, וְאֶף-עַל-פִּי שֶׁהוּא מִתְעַסֵּק בְּסִבּוֹת,
 אֵינוֹ סוֹמֵךְ בְּלִבּוֹ עָלֵיהֶן וְאֵינוֹ מְקַוֶּה מִהֵן תּוֹעֲלָתָן וְלֹא נֹזֵק בְּלִי גְזֵרַת הַשֵּׁם,
 אֲלֵא מִתְעַסֵּק הוּא בָּהֶן בְּבַחֲרֵתוֹ מִשְׁמַעַת הַשֵּׁם, אֲשֶׁר צָנָה לְהִתְעַסֵּק
 בְּעוֹלָם הִזָּה לְבַנְיָנוּ וּלְשִׁכְלוֹ;

שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים קנו:א

אח"כ ילך לעסקיו, דכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון, כי העוני
 יעבירונו ע"ד קונו; ומ"מ לא יעשה מלאכתו עיקר, אלא עראי, ותורתו קבע, וזה וזה
 יתקיים בידו...

משנה ברורה, ביאור הלכה, סופה בטלה וגוררת עון - כתבו הספרים שזהו
 נאמר לכלל העולם שאין כולם יכולים לזכות לעלות למדרגה רמה זו להיות עסקם
 רק בתורה לבדה אבל אנשים יחידים יוכל להמצא בכל עת באופן זה [וזהו שאמרו
 בברכות ל"ה ע"ב הרבה עשו כרשב"י ולא עלתה בידן ר"ל דוקא הרבה] והקב"ה בודאי
 ימציא להם פרנסתם וכעין זה כתב הרמב"ם פ"ג מהלכות שמיטין ויובלות ולא שבת
 לוי בלבד וכו' עי"ש ובפרט אם כבר נמצאו אנשים שרוצים להספיק לו צרכיו כדי
 שיעסוק בתורה בודאי לא שייך זה ויששכר וזבלון יוכיח:

שולחן ערוך, אורח חיים רמ"ח:ד

ג' ימים קודם שבת אסורים לצאת...הג"ה: "א שכל מקום שאדם הולך לסחורה ...
 חשוב הכל דבר מצוה

משנה ברורה: (לד) לסחורה - אפילו יש לו מזונות והולך לסחורה להרוחה

חיי אדם, הלכות ט' באב, כלל קל"ג, ס' י'

מ"ח עד התענית מדינא י"א דצריך למעט בכל משא ומתן. ומנהגנו להתיר בכל מ"ומ שהכל נחשב לדבר מצוה שהוא פרנסתנו.

הקדמה לספר חכמת אדם

הגם שנסעתי למרחקים והייתי סוחר אף חכמתי עמדה לי כי בנסיעתי לדרך דעתי עליה ובישיבתי בחנות דעתי עלי' ותיתי לי שאפילו בשעת מ"מ פעמים הרבה היה דעתי עליה בהרהור פירוש או קו' ובפרט בשישה מ"ע שכתבתי בח"א כלל א'. וקיימתי בעצמי אל תעזביה ותצרך.

מסילת ישרים, פרק כ"א

אמנם מה שיוכל לשמור את האדם ולהצילו מן המפסידים האלה הוא הבטחון, והוא שישליך יתנו על ה' לגמרי, כאשר ידע כי ודאי אי אפשר שיחסר לאדם מה שנקצב לו, וכמו שאמרו ז"ל במאמריהם (ביצה ט"ז א): כל מזונותיו של אדם קצובים לו מראש השנה וגו', וכן אמרו (יומא ל"ח ב): אין אדם נוגע במוכן לחברו אפלו כמלא נימא. וכבר היה אדם יכול להיות יושב ובטל והגזרה היתה מתקימת, אם לא שקדם הקנס לכל בני אדם, (בראשית ג:יט): בזעת אפך תאכל לחם, אשר על כן חייב אדם להשתדל איזה השתדלות לצורך פרנסתו, שכן גזר המלך העליון. והרי זה כמס שפורע כל המין האנושי אשר אין להמלט ממנו. על כן אמרו (ספרי): יכול אפלו יושב ובטל (יראה סימן ברכה) תלמוד לומר: בכל משלח ידך אשר תעשה (דברים כח:כ). אך לא שההשתדלות הוא המועיל, אלא שההשתדלות מכרח, וכיון שהשתדל הרי יצא ידי חובתו, וכבר יש מקום לברכת שמים שתשרה עליו ואינו צריך לבלות ימיו בחריצות והשתדלות, הוא מה שאמר דוד המלך עליו השלום (תהלים עה:ז-ח): כי לא ממוצא וממערב ולא וגו', כי אלהים שופט וגו' ושלמה המלך עליו השלום אמר (משלי כג:ד): אל תיגע להעשיר מבינתך חדל.

מסילת ישרים, פרק כ"ו

וכבר יכול להיות חסיד גמור איש אשר לא יפסוק מפיו הלימוד כמו מי שמפני צרכו הוא בעל מלאכה פחותה, וכתוב (משלי טז:ד): "כל פעל ה' למענהו". ואומר (משלי ג:ו): "בכל דרכיך דעהו והוא יישר אורחותיך".

נפש החיים, שער א, פרק ח'

ואמרו שם (ברכות ל"ה): הרבה עשו כר"י ועלתה בידם. והרבה עשו כרש"בי ולא עלתה בידם. היינו רבים דוקא. כי ודאי שלכלל ההמון כמעט בלתי אפשר שיתמידו כל ימיהם רק בעסק התורה שלא לפנות אף שעה מועטת לשום עסק פרנסת מזונות כלל. ועז"א באבות כל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה וכו'. אבל יחיד לעצמו שאפשר לו להיות אך עסוק כל ימיו בתורתו ועבודתו ית"ש. ודאי שחובה מוטלת עליו שלא לפרוש אף זמן מועט מתורה ועבודה לעסק פרנסה חס ושלום. וכדעת ר' שמעון ב"י:

אורחות צדיקים, שער השמחה:

גם אם היה אדם בטל ממלאכה, ולא היה טורח אחר מזונותיו, היה בועט ורודף אחר העברות, כדכתיב (דברים לב טו): "וישמן ישרון ויבעט". ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (אבות ב ב): "יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ, שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון".

אך עתה מסר השם יתעלה שתי עבודות ביד האדם: האחת עבודתו והשנית עבודת התורה. וצריך האדם להיות ממצע בית שתי העבודות, וליחד שעות מיחדות לעבודת התורה ולעבודת העולם הזה. וצריך שתתחזק, שתעשה עבודת שניהם לעולם לטוב לך לאחריתך; ולא יהיה אחד מפסיד לחברו, כמו שנאמר (ירמיהו כב טו): "אביך הלוא אכל ושתה ועשה משפט וצדקה, אז טוב לו"; ואומר (קהלת י יח): "טוב אשר תאחז בזה, וגם מזה אל תנח את ידך". וצריך שיבטח בשם יתברך שיצליחהו בעסקיו, ולא יבטח על מלאכתו ועסקיו, אך יחשב אשר מלאכתו ועסקיו הם דרך לפרנסתו מאת השם יתברך.

בית הלוי, מאמר הבטחון

כ. [וַאֲלֵי יְחֻשׁוּב הַקֹּרָא כִּי אֵין צָרִיף לְמִלְאכָה, רַק אַדְרָבָה רְצוֹן הַתּוֹרָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה אֲשֶׁר כָּל אָדָם יִהְיֶה נִהְנֶה מִיגִיעַ כְּפוֹ, כְּאָמְרָם בְּבִרְכוֹת (ח, א) גְּדוֹל הַנִּהְנֶה מִיגִיעַ כּו', וְכֵן מְצַנּוּ בְּמִדְרָשׁ (בראשית רבה פרשה לט, ח) כְּשֶׁבָא אַבְרָהָם לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמָצָא אוֹתָן חוֹרְשִׁים כּו', אָמַר הַלְוָאֵי יִהְיֶה חֶלְקִי בְּאֶרֶץ הַזֹּאת²⁸. וּבִיצְחָק כְּתִיב (בראשית כו, יב) "וַיִּזְרַע יִצְחָק" כּו'. רַק הַפְּנוּנָה, כִּי יָכִין הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר הַמְּלָאכָה בְּעֶצְמָהּ אֵינּוּ מוֹעִיל, רַק עַל יְדֵי בְּרִכַּת ה']²⁹.

ספר אהבת חסד (לבעל חפץ חיים), חלק ב', פרק י"א, הערה א'

כְּמוֹ שְׂאֲמָרוֹ חֲכָמֵינוּ זְכוֹרֵנָם לְבִרְכָה בְּרִכּוֹת (י"ד. ט). וְאַחַר שֶׁהִתְפַּלֵּל וּמְתִישֵׁב בְּנַפְשׁוֹ מֵהַלְעֲשׂוֹת עֵתָהּ, אִם לְלַמֵּד אוֹ לִילֵף לְבֵיתוֹ — בְּנֻדָּאֵי לְכַתְחַלְהַה הַמְצָנָה שְׂיִלְמַד תְּכַף אַחַר הַתְּפִלָּה, כְּמַבְאָר בְּאַרְחַח חַיִּים סִימָן קנ"ה (סעיף א') ט, אִם לֹא שֶׁהוּא אָדָם חָלוּשׁ. וְאַחַר שְׂלֵמַד וְדוֹרֵשׁ מֵהַלְעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד — בְּנֻדָּאֵי עֵתָהּ שׁוֹאֵל הַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרֵּךְ מֵאֵתוֹ שְׂיִלְף לְאַכֵּל, לְקַיֵּם "וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּם מְאֹד לְנַפְשׁוֹתֵיכֶם" (דברים ד, טו). וְאַחַר שְׂאָכֵל, מְצָנָה שְׂיִלְף לְעֵסֶק קְצַת בְּדֶרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, וּכְמוֹ שְׂאֲמָרוֹ חֲכָמֵינוּ ו'ל שֵׁם (ל"ב: ט). וְאַחַר שְׂעֵסֶק וְשׁוֹאֵל עֵתָהּ מֵהַלְעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד — בְּנֻדָּאֵי עֵתָהּ שׁוֹאֵל הַשֵּׁם יִתְבַּרֵּךְ שְׂיִחְזוֹר לְלַמּוּדוֹ, כִּינֵן שְׂיֵשׁ לוֹ פְּנָאֵי. כָּלֵל הַדְּבָר: עֲנִין "וְעֵתָהּ" שְׂיֵף לְהָאָדָם בְּכָל רִגְעַ מִימֵי חַיָּו, וּלְכָל אֶחָד כְּפִי עֲנִינָיו.

אמונה ובטחון (חזון איש), פרק ג', קטע ט"ו

וְאִמְנָם אֲמֵן שֶׁל בְּנֵי מֵתָא, דְּמַצִּי לְעַבְב מְשׁוּם "פְּסֻקָתָ לְחֵיּוֹתֵאִי", אֵינּוּ עַל צַד מְצִיאוֹת, אֲלֵא עַל צַד חַיִּיב הַהִשְׁתַּדְּלוֹת. שֶׁפֶל מְזוֹנוֹתָיו שֶׁל אָדָם קְצוּבִין לוֹ מֵרֵאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה וְעַד יוֹם הַכְּפֹרִים, וְלֹא יִחְסֵר לוֹ אִם יִהְיֶה כָּאֵן אֲמֵן שֶׁל מֵתָא אַחֲרֵיתָא, וְלֹא יוֹתִיר לוֹ אִם לֹא יִהְיֶה. רַק אִם מְצִי לְעַבְב נִכְנָס זֶה בְּחֹב הַהִשְׁתַּדְּלוֹת מְצַדוֹ, וְחֹב הַרְחֻקָת הַנֶּזֶק מְצַד רַעְהוּ, וְאִי לֹא מְצִי מְעַבְב אֵין בּוֹ מְשׁוּם חֹב הַשְׁתַּדְּלוֹת, וְאֵין עַל חֲבֵרוֹ מְשׁוּם מְזִיק, אֲבָל הַמְטָרִיף לְחֵם חֲקוֹ שֶׁל כָּל יְצוּר בְּטַח יִתֵּן לוֹ דִּי מַחְסוֹרוֹ, וְהַרְדִּיפָה אַחַר הַסְּבוֹת הַמְדָמוֹת לְפִי תִיּוֹר הַלֵּב וְזִנוֹת הָעֵינַיִם – הַבֵּל.

שו"ת אגרות משה אורח חיים חלק ב סימן קי"א
בענין אינשורענס אם יש בזה חסרון ח"ו בבטחון בהשי"ת או לא

לחכם אחד.

כ"ז מרחשון תשכ"ד³⁵.

בדבר אם יש איזה מעלה או גם איזה חשש איסור ליקח אינשורענס פאליסע מצד שהוא ח"ו כחסר לו בטחון בהשי"ת שביכלתו לעשרו שישאר אף אחריו ליורשיו סך גדול. הנה לע"ד אין בזה שום חסרון בבטחון בהשי"ת, דהוא ככל עניני מסחר שהאדם לא רק שרשאי אלא גם מחוייב לעשות מסחר ועבודה לפרנסתו ואסור לו לומר שאף אם לא יעשה כלום יזמין לו השי"ת פרנסתו באיזה אופן, דמנא לו שיש לו זכות כזה, לבד האיסור לסמוך על הנס אף לאלו שראוין להעשות להם נס,³⁶ דהא אסור אף להתפלל שיעשה לו השי"ת נס כמפורש בברכות דף ס' שעל יהי רצון שתלד אשתי זכר כשהיא מעוברת ה"ז תפלת שוא הקשה הגמ' מלאה שהתפללה כשהיתה מעוברת בזכר שתהיה נקבה אלמא אף לאה שהיא מהאמהות הקשה שהיה אסור לה להתפלל אף שראויה היתה להעשות לה נס וגם הורגלו האבות והאמהות בנסים, ולכן אף שתירץ אין מזכירין מעשה נסים שמשמע שהוא תירוץ גם על מה שהיתה רשאה להתפלל הוא רק לאה שאין דוגמתה בכל הדורות וגם אולי הוא מצד הדין שדנה, וגם בלאה סובר תירוץ בתרא שלא היתה רשאה והוצרך לתרץ דהיה זה בתוך ארבעים יום, וא"כ ודאי שאסור לסמוך שישלח לו השי"ת פרנסתו בלא שום עבודה ומסחר,

³⁵ While the practical/worldly advice given in a *teshuva* dated November 14, 1963 may or may not make sense today, the *divrei Torah* in this *teshuva* are, like all Torah, timeless.

³⁶ The type has been bolded to highlight the most relevant parts of the *teshuva*.

אף שהוא צריך לידע שכל מה שמרויח מעבודתו ומסחרו הוא רק מהש"ת כפ"מ שנקצב לו מר"ה, אבל מ"מ כן נגזר מהש"ת שרק ע"י איזה מעשה עבודה ומסחר ישלח לו הש"ת פרנסתו מצד שנאמר בזעת אפיק תאכל לחם וכמפורש בסוף קידושין הרעותי את מעשי וקפחתי את פרנסתי. ואף לר' נהוראי שם שאומר מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה, שמשמע שאינו מחייב להאב ללמד את בנו אומנות, נמי פשוט שגם הוא מודה שאין לסמוך על הנס, אבל סובר שכיון שרוב בנ"א בקטנותם א"א להם ללמד תורה כראוי אם ילמדו אז גם אומנות אף בזמנם, והתורה חייבה להאב ללמד את בנו תורה בע"כ שיכול לסמוך ע"ז שיזמין לו הש"ת איזה עבודה בגדלותו בשעה שיצטרך להרויח לפרנסתו ופרנסת אשה ובנים, כזו שיוכל אף בלא למוד ועסק בזה בילדותו קודם שהוצרך לפרנסה, אבל בלא עבודה בגדלותו גם ר' נהוראי מודה שאסור לסמוך על הנס אלא צריך לעבוד לפרנסתו, וכדאיפסק ברמב"ם פ"ג מת"ת ה"י, אף שבקטנותו משמע שפוסק כר' נהוראי שאין האב חייב ללמד אומנות לבניו כי לא מצינו ברמב"ם דין זה שמחוייב האב ללמד אומנות לבנו .

ועוד נראה בטעם ר' נהוראי שכיון שאם ילמד לבנו גם אומנות לא יוכל ללמד כראוי בהכרח שגזירת בזעת אפיק וכן והרעותי את מעשי וקפחתי את פרנסתי שאמר רשב"א במתני', א"א שיהיו על השנים דבילדותו וכמו שא"א שיהיו גם על ימי השבתות וי"ט ואף בחול על זמן התפלה, דהא לא יגזור הש"ת שיעברו על איסורין ובהכרח הוא רק על ימי החול ולא בזמן התפלה, והובטחנו שמעבודה דבימי החול ולא בשעת תפלה יתן לנו לחם וכל צרכינו, וכ"כ סובר ר' נהוראי שהוא לענין הלמוד עם בנו בנערותו שכיון שא"א שיוכל ללמד אם בנערותו ילמדהו אביו גם אומנות בהכרח שהשנים הללו א"צ ללמדו אומנות ולא נאמר על שנים אלו שיצטרך לעסוק בהן באומנות בשביל הגזירה דבזעת אפיק ומאמר וקפחתי את פרנסתי. ולכן שייך זה רק בנערותו אבל כשנגדל וצריך בעצמו לעמול לפרנסתו ופרנסת אשתו ובניו לא שייך זה וגם הוא מודה דצריך לעשות איזה מלאכה דעל שנים אלו הרי ודאי היתה הגזירה, וגם הא כבר הגיע בזמנם להמדרגה שהיו יכולין ללמד גם עם עשיית מלאכה, ואף בזמננו שכל חיינו אין מגיעין רובא דרובא למדרגה כזו שלכן התירו בזמננו וזה מאות בשנים ליטול שכר בעד רבנות ולמוד תורה, לא שייך שנתבטל גזירת הש"ת לגמרי אלא אולי ליחידים ממש שייך שתתבטל .

וכיון שהוא כן אף לגדולים וצדיקים שראוי ליעשות להם נס כ"ש לאלו שבדורנו שאנן יתמי דיתמי שאסור לנו לסמוך על הנס ואין שום חטא על מה שמשתדלין לבקש אומנות יותר נוחה וקלה וראויה לפי שומת האנשים יותר להרויח, אף שצריך להאמין שהש"ת יכול ליתן פרנסה מכל אומנות שהיא כדאר"מ שם שאין עניות מן האומנות ואין עשירות מן האומנות אלא הכל לפי זכותו, משום דאינו יודע שמא הוא אינו זוכה להרויח באומנות אחרת אלא בכזו שיותר ראויה להרוחה, אבל ידע שכל מה שירוויח אחר כל הדברים והשתדלות שעושה הוא רק מהש"ת הנותן כח לעשות חיל ותרגם אונקלוס שנותן לך עצה למקני נכסין וכן כל דבר שעושה ומרויח בזה .

וא"כ גם אינשורענס הוא ככל ענייני מסחר וכדומה שעושים לפרנסת עצמו ופרנסת בניו שרשאים ליקח זה כיון שהוא מעשה פרנסה, וגם אולי יקיל זה מעליו

שלא יצטרך לעבוד הרבה להניח שישאר לעת זקנותו ולירושה לבניו אחריו, כיון שבדרך נס אינו זוכה וגם אסור להתפלל ע"ז וגם בשבת דף נ"ג מגנה זה אביו למי שהוצרך לפרנסתו לנס ולא נתן לו השי"ת בדרך הטבע להצליחו שיהיה לו שכר מניקה וגם אסור ליהנות ממעשה נסים כדאיתא בתענית דף כ"ד עיי"ש ברש"י, וא"כ כשרוצה להשאיר לזקנותו ולירושה הרי צריך שהשי"ת ישפיע לו ממה שעושה יותר מכפי הראוי בדרך הרגיל שהוא כעין דרך נס שאולי אינו זוכה וגם אינו מן הראוי כדלעיל, ולכן כיון שהשי"ת נתן דעה בדורות האחרונים שיהיה עסק זה של אינשורענס בעולם שהוא השארה לזקנותו ולירושה בדרך טבעי, הוא דבר טוב וראוי גם לאנשים כשרים יראי השי"ת ובוטחים רק על השי"ת שהוא הנותן עצה למיקני נכסין, דגם מי שקונה אינשורענס הוא נמי עצת השי"ת למיקני אינשורענס ובוטח על השי"ת שיוכל לשלם בהגיע הזמן בכל שנה וזהו הבטחון שאנו מחוייבין, וכן הוא באינשורענס של שריפה וגניבה והאינשורענס של הקארס, שכל אלו הוא דבר שאין בזה שום חסרון לענין הבטחון וכמו שנהגו היתר כל העולם אף יראי השי"ת ביותר.

והנה מצינו ברמב"ם פכ"ד משבת ה"ה שמנה ג"כ בחשבונות של מצוה שמותר בשבת הא דללמדו אומנות משום שהוא מחשבונות של מצוה הרי נמצא שפסק הא דצריך האב ללמדו אומנות, אבל מכיון שלא הזכיר הדין רק כאן אגב גררא יש לפרש בתינוק כזה שאין לו הכח ללמד תורה או שללמדו אומנות לא קאי על תינוק אלא על גדול שצריך לפרנסה.

ידידו,

משה פיינשטיין.

פחד יצחק, אגרות ומכתבים, אגרת צ"ד:

אהובי חביבי,

מכתבך לאחר חזרתך לחו"ל הגיעני לנכון. האמת ניתנה להאמר כי הרבה נהניתי מקריאת מכתבך זה. הנאה זו צמחה משני שרשים: (א) מפני שתוכן הדברים וסגנונם ערוכים בטוב טעם ודעת; (ב) מפני שהנך מתבטא בגילוי לב על הנפתולים אשר בנשמתך. והנני בזה להגיד לך כי לפי דעתי הנפתולים הללו שהנך דן עליהם במכתבך מקורם היא תפיסה מוטעת בענין הנידון. הרושם הכללי המתקבל מדבריך הוא כי זו היא הנחה פשוטה אצלך כי "secular career" היא "double life". למותר להגיד לך כי מעולם לא הייתי מסכים בשום אופן ל-"double life". אמנם מי ששוכר לו חדר בבית לחיות בו חיי תושב, ושוכר לו עוד חדר במלון לחיות בו חיי אורח, בודאי שיש לו double life, אבל מי ששוכר לו דירה בת שני חדרים יש לו broad life not double life. זכורני שבקרתי פעם בירושלים בבית החולים של ד"ר וואלאך שליט"א וראיתיו כשהוא נגש לחולה שהיה עומד להכנס לחדר-נתוח ושאל לו על שם אמו בכדי להתפלל עליו לפני הנתוח. כשספרתי את זה לאחד המיוחד מבין גדולי ירושלים זצוק"ל התבטא „כמה צריך לקנאות ביהודי זה שיש לו הזדמנות כל כך גדולה לשמש כלי שרת לכבוד שמים!“ הגידה נא לי האמת, אהובי חביבי, האם אמירת פרק תהלים לשלומי של חולה על ידי הרופא העומד לעשות את הנתוח, האם זה הוא double life ?

ואתה חביבי יקירי חלילה לך מלדאות את עצמך בראי כפול של חיים כפולים. כל המאריך ב„אחד“ מאריכין לו ימיו ושנותיו. אדרבא, כל חייך צריכים להיות בבחינת המאריך ב„אחד“ – אחד ולא כפל. צר לי מאד עליך חביבי אם נקודה זו נעלמת היא מעיניך. המון נקודות המפוזרות זו תחת זו בודאי שיש בהן משום ריבוי, אבל אותו המון הנקודות עצמו כשהוא מסודר מסביב לנקודה אחת העומדת במרכז הרי זה עגול אחד. זו היא, חביבי, חובתך בעולמך להעמיד במרכז חייך את „אחד“ ואז אין עליך לדאוג כלל לכפלות. כל נקודה חדשה שתרכוש לך רק תרחיב את העגול אבל האחדות אינה זזה ממקומה. מצטער אני על שלא הבנת את כל זה עד עכשו. ומתוך צערי הנני דן אותך לכף זכות כי רק מצב רוח של רגע שם בפיך את הדברים אשר דברת במכתבך. חזק ואמץ חביבי, עלה והצלח יקירי, ורכב על דבר צדק ועשה את כל הצלחותיך לבסיס לדיבוי כבוד שמים.

המתפלל להצלחתך

יצחק הוטנר

Rav Hershel Schachter: On Amassing Money³⁷

Some sociologists opine that money is an evil of society. The Chazon Ish (*Yoreh De'ah* 72:2) pointed out that *halacha* does not share that perspective. Rather, even in an ideal Torah world, we would use *keseif* (money) to fulfill *mitzvos*.

The *halacha* declares that in most instances *shaveh keseif* (a commodity which has value) can be used in place of *keseif*. For example, we get married by having the *chasan* hand a ring, i.e., *shaveh keseif*, to the *kallah*, as opposed to giving her *keseif*, and this constitutes a form of *kiddushei keseif*. Nonetheless, one can only fulfill the *mitzva* of *machatzis hashekel* by giving *keseif* to the *Beis HaMikdash* for the purpose of purchasing the *korbanos tzibbur* (*Bechoros* 51a).

A variety of opinions are presented in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 369) regarding the extent to which *halacha* recognizes *dina demalchusa*. The *Shach* (*Yoreh De'ah* 165:8) points out that all agree that *dina demalchusa* determines what is considered *keseif*. Whatever currency the government of any given country establishes has the halachic status of *keseif*. When the second *Beis HaMikdash* was built, there was no Jewish government ruling over *Eretz Yisrael*. As such, the *mitzva* of *machatzis hashekel* had to be fulfilled by giving a coin recognized as *keseif* by the ruling non-Jewish government. After several centuries, when the *Chashmona'im* established a Jewish government in *Eretz Yisrael* and minted their own coins, “Jewish” coins replaced the “non-Jewish” coins for this *mitzva*.

The Talmud (*Pesachim* 54b) speaks of the concept of money being part of God’s initial plan for creating the world, just as the Torah and the *mitzvos* preceded the creation of the world. The Rabbis of the Talmud

³⁷ TorahWeb.org, Vayigash, 2008

(*Shabbos* 33b) tell us that Yaakov *Avinu* improved the life of the citizens of Shechem by introducing a monetary system for them. Money is something positive. Without money we cannot function.

Judaism, as opposed to certain other religions, has never preached that poverty is an ideal. The Rema (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 248) considers making a living something positive, comparable to a *mitzva*. As such, one who lives in *Eretz Yisrael* is permitted to go to *chutz laAretz* for the purpose of making a living. Even if one is making ends meet, but wants to go to *chutz laAretz* to make a more comfortable living, the accepted opinion is that this too is permissible. However, we would not allow one who already makes a comfortable living to go to *chutz laAretz* in order to become wealthy (see *Moed Katan* 14a). There is no *mitzva* to be poor, but there is also no *mitzva* to be rich.

We all need food in order to survive, be healthy and function. However, we should not love food. Many Americans suffer from obesity because they love food and overeat. Similarly, we all need money to live in this world. However, we should not develop a love for money. *Koheles* (5:9) teaches us that one who *loves* money will never be satisfied with the money he has. The *Midrash (Koheles Rabba* 1:34) famously comments, “אין אדם יוצא מן העולם וחצי תאותו בידו” - when those who love money die, regardless of how much money they have amassed, it will not be even half of what they desired.

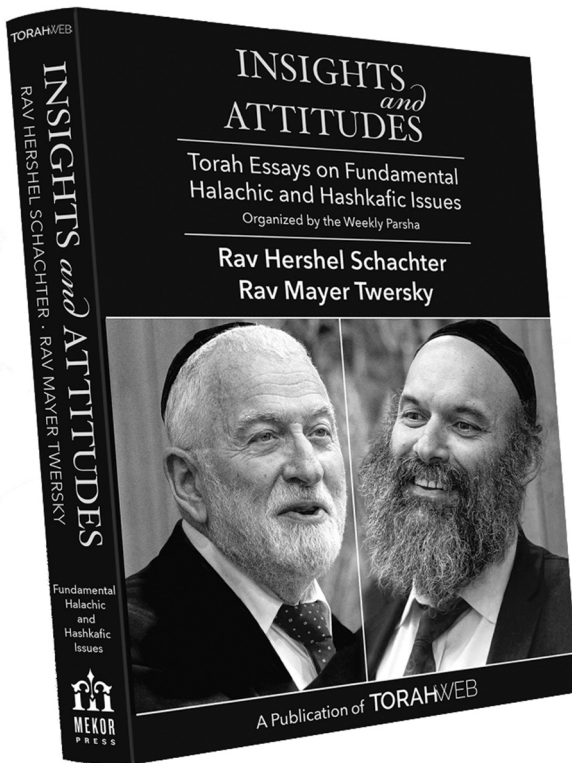
The Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 11a) tells us that R. Yehuda *HaNasi* was extremely wealthy, which was necessary for his position as chief rabbi. But he did not love the money. In fact, he hardly took any pleasure from this world (*Kesubos* 104a).

The *parasha* tells us (*Bereishis* 47:14) that Yosef amassed all of the cash from Egypt and Canaan by selling the grain that he stored. He understood that this was needed for the Egyptian government, and

apparently saw this as part of the message of Pharaoh's dream. However, we do not get the impression that he became one who loved money.

The *Midrash (Koheles Rabba 5:8)* distinguishes between two types of observant Jews: one who merely observes the *mitzvos*, and one who loves *mitzvos*. The one who observes but does not love *mitzvos* will be satisfied with keeping the *mitzvos* which come his way. But the one who loves *mitzvos* will always be on the lookout for additional *mitzvos*. He will never be satisfied with the *mitzvos* that he may have fulfilled already – “אוהב מצוות לא ישבע מצוות”.

Rather than love money, or love food, we should all develop a love for *mitzvos*.



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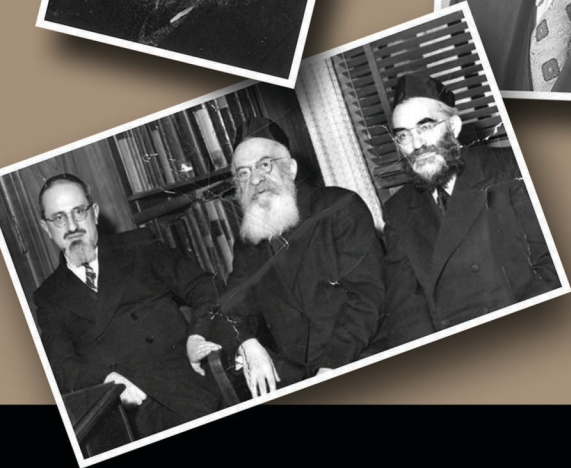
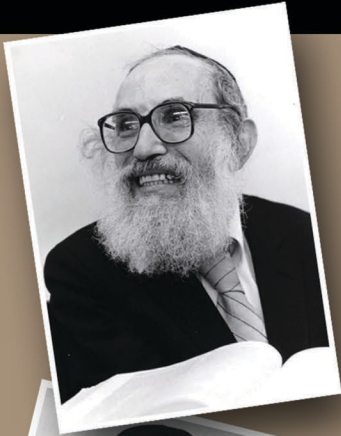
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This guide was created to help *talmidim* internalize some of the key *hashkafos* that characterize our yeshiva, as well as some of the key strategies a *talmid* can employ to get the most out of our yeshiva.



Front cover: R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ("the Rav") giving shiur, R' Hershel Schachter in the front row.

Back cover: top left - R' Ahron Soloveitchik; top right - R' Schachter & R' Dovid Lifshitz; center left - R' Mendel Zaks; center middle - R' Nisson Alpert; bottom left - the Rav, R' Moshe Shatzkes, R' Lifshitz; bottom right - R' Moshe Soloveitchik.

