

A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

Why We Have A Kollel



RABBI  
DOVID  
SPETNER

Rav Yaakov Weinberg, ז"ל, once met a *talmid* who, after a number of years of advanced study in Kollel, had accepted a position as an 8<sup>th</sup> grade rebbi. He was six months into the job and Rav Weinberg asked how it was going. "It's not quite as much involvement in Torah as I expected," he responded. "It's mostly discipline, grading papers and creating worksheets." Rav Weinberg shook his head and said "Everyone learns the Rashi wrong." The *talmid* asked to which Rashi he was referring and Rav Weinberg explained:

Rashi at the beginning of *Bechukosai* explains that the words "*Im bechkosai tailaichu*" (literally - "If you walk in my statutes") cannot be referring to performance of the *mitzvos*. That is addressed by the next words in the *posuk* - "*V'es mitzvosai tishmoru*" - "and guard my *mitzvos*." What "*bechkosai tailaichu*" refers to, says Rashi, is that we must "toil in Torah study." Rav Weinberg asked that, while all of *Klal Yisroel* must always keep the *mitzvos*, is it possible that everyone must always be toiling in Torah? Who will till the fields, bake the bread, and fix the shoes? How did each man sit under his grapevine or fig tree in the days of Shlomo *Hamelech* if he did not tend to them?

Rav Weinberg said that Rashi means that while some will toil directly in Torah study itself, others will be engaged in a myriad of other activities. However, they must also have the study of Torah as their goal, whether supporting others, educating others or sustaining and developing their own children. All of these activities, says Rashi, must be done with toil and dedication. You are not merely doing for yourself so that you can take it easy if you want; rather, you are, in whatever your pursuit, dedicated to the Torah.

What I believe Rav Weinberg was alluding

to was that we as *Klal Yisroel* have a national mission to toil in Torah study. The Torah must be learned and we as a people are charged with making sure that happens. Why is the study of Torah so fundamental? Why are we not just charged with the fulfillment of the *mitzvos* and the study of Torah as one of them? To understand this, we must peek into the understanding of the world as explained by Rav Chaim Volozhiner.

In *Nefesh Hachaim*, Rav Chaim explained how, unlike other *mitzvos* which are performed at various times, the Torah and its study is so fundamental that it must always be studied somewhere, by some Jew, in order for the world to continue to exist. Rav Chaim writes (*Shaar* 4, chapter 25) that if even for a moment no one on Earth would be studying Torah, the world would revert to non-existence. A frightening proposition? I do not believe, nor does Rav Chaim indicate, that there is a risk of this happening. That is a matter that Hashem has always tended to, as we will soon explain.

A gentleman who studied in Yeshiva Chaim Berlin in the 1940s told me that the *rosh yeshiva*, Rav Hutner, ז"ל, would have the students take turns learning throughout the night after the end of Yom Kippur, telling them that no one may be learning Torah that night and they must keep the world going. I told the gentleman that I believe that, master pedagogue that he was, Rav Hutner knew full well that Hashem is in charge of making sure that it happens, yet he wanted to drive home the point of the critical importance of their learning. And indeed, it may very well be that they WERE the only ones learning at times throughout that night.

There is a story told about Rav Chaim Volozhiner that illustrates these ideas<sup>[1]</sup>. Rav Chaim was explaining to his students

that in *golus* the Torah has ten *stahntche* or stops before *Moshiach*. The last stop before *Moshiach*, said Rav Chaim, will be America<sup>[2]</sup>. Rav Chaim died in 1821 at a time when there would be no particular reason to believe that Torah would flourish in America any more than Africa. Based on Rav Chaim's principle that someone

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

CINCINNATI Community KOLLEL

לקראת זמן מותן תורתנו תשמ"א

**Pre-Shavous  
Yarchei Kallah**  
with Harav Aaron  
Lopiansky

Rosh Hayeshiva, Yeshiva of  
Greater Washington - Tiferes Gedaliah

Sunday, May 9th  
כ"ז אייר

8:15AM Shachris  
9:00AM Seder Bring a *chavrusa* or we will find you one  
Mareh Meitzvos will be provided  
10:00AM Shir  
Followed by a deluxe breakfast

Mark your Calendar

(and check your *tzedaka* account!)

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must always be studying Torah, the reason Torah would have to flourish in America becomes clear. As time has gone on since Sinai, the intensity of Torah study has increasingly waned with every ensuing generation. In order to guarantee that someone was always studying Torah, the time zones from England to Iran were sufficient. As a Jew closed his book in London, a Jew was beginning to study in Shiraz. As we grow close to *Moshiach*, it would take the additional time zones of the western hemisphere to guarantee that Torah would always be studied<sup>[3][4]</sup>.

Thus we see that the Jewish people are partners with Hashem in maintaining the world's existence. And not only those who study the Torah are His partners, but everyone who makes Torah study possible is a partner. Whether a woman who is not commanded in the *mitzvah*

of Torah study<sup>[5]</sup> or a Jew who has simply not received enough education to study Torah<sup>[6]</sup>, all are partners with Hashem through our national project and destiny of Torah study. As Rav Weinberg explained Rashi, even those who study Torah, if their other activities are performed with the greater project of Torah in mind, then all of their activities are making Torah study happen and contributing to the project.

The Talmud<sup>[7]</sup> tells us that although we will receive reward for all of our *mitzvos*, only the merit of Torah study will resurrect us to enjoy *Olam Haboh* – the World To Come. The Talmud<sup>[8]</sup> goes on to make clear that it is not the actual study alone that will do this, but rather any of the support activities that are part of the project have that same power of bringing us back to life for eternity. 🌟

[1] This story has a pedigree. I read it in article written by Rabbi Yisroel Shurin who heard it from his brother-in-law Rav Aharon Soloveitchik, who heard it from his father Rav Moshe Soloveitchik, who heard it at his own *bar mitzvah* in Volozhin being told by the *Netziv* who heard it from Rav Dovid Tevel, a student of Rav Chaim Volozhiner who was present with Rav Chaim.

[2] The story continued that he then began to cry. Rav Dovid Tevel later asked him why he had cried and he said “Who knows how many *korbanos* it will take to build Torah in such a barren place?” It is not clear what Rav Chaim meant by “*korbanos*” or if he even knew what sort of *korbanos* would be required or just simply a sense of enormous sacrifice. Simply it may mean the selflessness that will be required to overcome the obstacles to building Torah in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The other possibility is based on a statement made by Rav Elchonon Wasserman before he was martyred by the Nazis in Kovno. In a lecture he delivered shortly before they he and others were killed, he expounded on the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem* they were about to perform. An eyewitness reported that he said that they are *korbanos* from their brothers and sisters in America and, as such, they must avoid any impure intent in their sacrifice just like when one brought a *korban* in the *beis Hamikdosh*. It may be that there was this *mesorah* among Lithuanian Torah leaders stretching back to Rav Chaim that building Torah in America would take sacrifice and it became clear to Rav Elchonon that they were that sacrifice.

[3] According to Rav Dov Eliach's biography of Rav Chaim Volozhiner, Rav Chaim actually gave this as the reason for America's destiny to be the last station.

[4] My dear friend Rabbi Yirmiyahu Benyowitz of Baltimore, upon hearing this explanation, added that this explains the highly unusual circumstance of the entire Mir Yeshiva spending the entire period of the Holocaust studying Torah without distraction in Shanghai, China. Never since Sinai had any significant group of Jews studied Torah in China! While Europe was burning and a few Jews in Israel and America studied Torah, the Mir was on the other side of the world learning undisturbed day and night, keeping the world alive.

[5] See *Talmud Brachos* 17a.

[6] See *Talmud Kesuvos* 111b towards the top of the page.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid* and *Brachos* 17a.

## A SHINING EXAMPLE

Rabbi Dovid Orlofsky relates a story about the first NCSY Shabbaton that he headed in Big Bear, California, in 1978. There were two teenagers who stuck out in his memory from that weekend because of how clear it was that they were serious skiing enthusiasts. Sometime over Shabbos Rabbi Orlofsky delivered an address where he said, in short, that man is made both from earth and a piece of G-d, so to speak, and that man lives in this world with a choice; he can be G-dly, or he can be dirt. Six months later Rabbi Orlofsky tells, he was walking through a *yeshiva* where he saw one of these two skiing enthusiasts. “Wow!” Rabbi Orlofsky thought to himself, and calling the boy over, asked him, “How did you end up here?!” “Simple,” the boy explained, “I went home and after what you said about how we have to choose between being G-dly or being dirt, I looked at myself in the mirror and said to myself, ‘I know that I’m not interested in dirt, so I’ve got to go the other way,’ and so I decided I wanted to go to a *yeshiva* and here I am!” 🌟

## Mazal Tov to

Rabbi and Mrs. Preis on the marriage of their daughter Tzipporah to Chaim Toledano 🌟

