

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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בעזרה ש״ת

פרשת פקודי

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Torah, the Heart of Our Nation

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Part I. A Fire is Kindled

THE KING'S SCROLL-ROOM

The - ויהי בחודש הראשון בשנה השנית באחד לחודש הוקם המשכן - The greatest day in the history of the world had finally arrived. On the first day of Nissan the dwelling place for Hashem was established and the Presence of Hashem would now rest among His chosen people. The Mishkan was now going to be *the* place for the revelation of Hashem in this world, the fulfillment of Hashem's promise: וישכנתי וישכנתי - "And I will dwell among them" (Shemos 25:8)

And what was the first thing that Moshe did after spreading the roof over the Mishkan? He set up the *kodesh kodoshim*, the holiest space on the face of this earth, the room where the Presence of Hashem would dwell most intensely. Although the Shechinah was now going to dwell among the Bnei Yisroel, it would dwell even more intensely in the Mishkan. And where was the holiest place in the Mishkan, the place where Hashem chose to rest his Presence with the most intensity? The *kodesh hakodoshim*. Now, if you would have asked me what I would have set up in that room where Hashem would now reside, so with my little head I would say, a throne, a big beautiful golden throne, something resplendent and ornate, placed in

the middle of the *kodesh kodoshim*; and that would symbolize the *kisei hakavod*, the place where Hashem rests His Presence in this world.

“Nothing doing,” said Hakodosh Boruch Hu, “I have other plans for My room, for the *kodesh kodoshim*”: ויתן את העדות אל - הארון...ויבא את הארון אל המשכן...ויסך על ארון העדות כאשר צוה השם את משה - Hashem commanded that into this holiest part of the Mishkan, the room that symbolized His place in this world, should be placed the two stone tablets engraved by the Hand of Hashem, and afterward the Torah itself was put alongside the *luchos* (Devarim 31:26).

A MOUNTAIN IN THE LITTLE ROOM

And that’s what Dovid Hamelech said in Tehillim (68:18): השם בם - “Hashem has settled among the Am Yisroel.” And how did He do that? סיני בקודש - “Because Har Sinai is now in the Mishkan.” That great day of the Giving of the Torah at Har Sinai is now found in the *kodesh kodoshim*. The Sanctuary was the heart of the nation, and it was the word of Hashem, the stone *luchos* and the Torah, that were at the heart of the Mishkan.

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

WHAT DID THEY DO ALL DAY?

I’ll explain that. Because really we have to ask ourselves: What were the Am Yisroel doing in the *midbar* for forty years after all? It was at least two million people in the *midbar*, and they were there for forty years. And it was forty years without worries of *parnasa*. They ate what fell from the clouds; they didn’t have to go to the factory to get a paycheck.

Did they plow their fields? No, there were no fields for them to plow. And not only were there no worries about *parnasa*, but no enemies could touch them either; they were more secure during those forty years than at any subsequent time in history. So you’ll say, maybe they travelled. No, they only travelled together; nobody went away to the country and nobody vacationed in Florida. They were

home on Pesach and in the summer too. Never again did we have such an ideal existence, so much time for leisure, as we had during those forty years.

Ahh, leisure! So what did they do all day? What were they busy with for forty years? Did they go to the theatre? Maybe they played with a stick and a ball and tried to hit homeruns? It's hard to imagine; forty years of nothing to do, forty years of vacation.

FORTY YEARS IN KOLLEL

And so we have to understand that for forty years they had nothing to do except to study Torah. The entire nation actually became a one big *yeshivah*. And it was a *yeshivah* where they studied day and night. They didn't have newspapers to read, or radio to listen to. And even if they would have been able to get their hands on something; let's say a *ben Yisroel* would try to pick up a newspaper from a neighboring tribe, from Midian; you couldn't get away with such a thing in the *machaneh Yisroel*. You were in a kollel, and every kollel has a *mashgiach*. And this kollel in the *midbar* had more supervision than any kollel since then. Every nine men had a *mashgiach* who watched them, the *sar asarah*, and so they had to behave. And every forty nine men had a super *mashgiach*, the *sar chamishim*. Every ninety nine men had a super super *mashgiach*, the *sar mei'ah*. And every nine hundred and ninety nine had a super super super *mashgiach*, that was the *sarei alafim*. You couldn't sneak anything past this army of *mashgichim*. And Moshe Rabeinu with his watchful eye was overseeing the whole thing, the whole Yeshivas Hamidbar.

But the *mashgichim* didn't have a very difficult job, because they were serious *yungerleit* in the *yeshivah*. They knew what their purpose was because they knew what was in the *kodesh kodoshim*. Never, in any subsequent era, was the Torah so supreme and so studied as under the forty year rule of Moshe Rabeinu, the Torah teacher par excellence. "And you should speak in the words of Torah when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the road, and when you lie down and when you arise" (Devarim 6:7) wasn't only a *possuk*, a *mitzvah*, or even an aspiration to yearn for - it was their way of life! The sole occupation for the *dor hamidbar* was Torah study. The nation functioned like a huge *yeshivah* - what the *midbar* was for the Am Yisroel was actually a forty year Kollel, a Torah Academy.

THE 'MAIN DISH' OF OUR PEOPLE

And it was that *kollel* that would define what the Am Yisroel would be forever. In the *midbar* we were transformed into a *mamleches kohanim*, a nation of Torah learners, and that experience remained engraved for all time on the hearts of our people. And that explains for us a *gemara* that has confounded many. The *gemara* in Sanhedrin (92a) says: **אין שריד אלא תלמיד חכם**, that the word *sarid*, “leftover” or “the one who remains” refers to a *talmid chochom*. Now that’s a puzzle, why is a *talmid chochom* called a “leftover”? He’s not the leftover; he’s the main dish after all! There are various *pshatim*, but the simple *pshat* is that originally the whole Klal Yisroel were *chachomim*; the entire Dor Hamidbar was a big *kollel* of *talmidei chachomim*. And therefore, anyone who studies the Torah today is a leftover from those days in the *midbar*. Because it was then that the Am Yisroel *in its entirety* recognized the truth that the goal of every Jew is to be a *talmid chochom*.

And from then on, the study of Torah became *the* national vocation and pastime. Never did the Am Yisroel, in all its subsequent history, ever use their leisure time for anything else but Torah. There was no telling stories of adventure and war, and no playing sports. There were no theatres or stadiums and no amusement parks either. And that’s because we found everything we wanted and everything we needed in the study of Torah and in the raising of families to be *ohavei Torah*. The word entertainment doesn’t exist in the lexicon of our people. Who needs the fleeting and empty joy of circuses, carnivals, sports, hunting, races or any other pastime, when we find all of our fulfillment by means of the *luchos* and the Torah?

WHY ARE WE STILL HERE?

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

So why are we still here? We're also one of the ancient nations, so why didn't we also disappear along with all the others?

And the answer is that we are only here because of the Torah. The *frum* Jews study the Torah in its most minute details, and that's why there is still an Am Yisroel. And that's *אין אומתינו אומה אל'א בתורה*. We are a Torah-nation and that's the cause of our existence. Mitzvos, wonderful, wonderful! But it's the study of Torah that defines the Am Yisroel; it's our life-breath, our way of life. We are a nation of Torah learners and that's why we are forever. Hashem is forever, His Torah is forever, and we who study His Torah will be forever.

THE PAGEANT IN THE MESIVTA

And that explains something queer that we notice when we study our history. You know that in Bavel there were great Mesivtos, great *yeshivos* where the *chachomim* gathered to study and to teach. There was a Mesivta in Sura where Rav was, and there was another Mesivta in Naharda'eh where Shmuel lived; two big Mesivtos that were the center of the Am Yisroel. And there were other Mesivtos too that functioned in Bavel.

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

BABYLONIAN STATE OF THE UNION

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

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

the *midbar*, where they all saw the Mishkan, and they all knew that hidden inside, in the room that Hashem chose to reside in, was the *luchos* and the Torah, so the entire nation lived with a tangible understanding that it was the study of the Torah that was the core function of our people - everybody was learning in *kollel*, and there was no question in anyone's mind that *limud Torah* was the function of our people. But in order to keep that fire of *kavod hatorah* alive forever and to understand the centrality of the Torah to our nation, the nation had to see with their own eyes the glory of Torah. And so the Mesivta functioned with the prominence it deserved and the Am Yisroel learned that the aristocracy of our people were the ones who were studying the Toras Hashem in the Beis Medrash.

THE AM YISROEL GETS FARHERRED

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

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

WE REMAIN AT SINAI FOREVER

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

learning, a tremendous demonstration that Torah is *everything* for the Am Yisroel.

In the days of old the fire of Torah burned hot because they were emulating the *Dor Hamidbar* when Hashem had taught the nation that in the center of the *machaneh*, the focal point of the people, was the *Luchos* and the Torah. And that fire continued to burn on forever in the Am Yisroel. We live with Sinai and Bavel from now on. Our life is Bavel; *Nehrada'e*, *Masa Mechasya*, *Pumbedisa*, all the towns of Bavel are our learning today. We're at Har Sinai forever because we live with the *luchos* and with the Talmud Bavli forever and ever. All of the *yeshivoos* in our history, in Eretz Yisroel, in Bavel, Spain, North Africa, Europe, and America are all merely echoes of the great Yeshivas Hamidbar. We are always a nation of Torah learners.

Part II. The Fire Burns On

NOTHING BUT TORAH

Once upon a time Jewish men didn't stay home at night. And they weren't at the movies either; they were in the study halls, in the *shuls*. Of course, the ladies were home - they were raising children who as soon as they could toddle, would make their way to the study halls because that's what mattered. And when fathers and sons would return home at night from the *beis medrash* they would bring all their baggage of Torah with them. Mothers and sisters would hear nothing but Torah. And therefore the Jewish street used to be a street of Torah. Even an enemy of the Torah - I won't honor him by saying his name here - but when describing Cracow in the times of the Rama he said that the children in the street "babbled Torah." And the truth is that it wasn't only Cracow. That's how it was in every Jewish community; every town was a *yeshivah* town.

I remember when I was a little boy in Baltimore, when the new immigrants arrived, they used to laugh when they saw that the *shuls* were locked during the day. Locked?! "Would you lock the Mishkan?! Aren't there people learning all day in the *shuls*?" And it wasn't the *talmidei chachomim* who laughed; it was the peddler, the poor working man trying to eke out a living. It was something impossible to them! Because in Europe, even a hundred years ago, they were still emulating the *Dor Hamidbar*, and still learning the

lessons of the Mishkan. Some were there all day, some would come in for an hour here and there, but to close the *shul*?!

Even in Baltimore the fire still burned. There was a shul in Baltimore's East side, the Lloyds Street Shul. When I was maybe fourteen years old, I used to sit and learn in that shul in the evenings. There were about ten tables there and around each one people gathered to learn according to their level. They were poor European Jews, most of them with long beards and *kashketlach*. They made their living on a very poor level, but they admired the Torah learners and they themselves made sure to be from the Torah learners. There were tables and tables and each one was full of Jews sitting and learning separate subjects according to their level. Each table had a rebbe. At one table, they were learning gemara with Tosfos. One table over they were studying gemara without Tosfos. There was a Shulchan Aruch table and a chumash with Alshich table. It was a scene out of Europe, and out of Bavel. And actually it was a scene out of the Yeshivas Hamidbar encamped around the Torah in the *kodesh kodoshim*.

NO SEATS AVAILABLE IN SHUL!

When I was in Lithuania I once visited a *shul* in a small town and an old *melamed*, a remnant from the old generation, said to me, "Before World War I there was a time when if you came a little bit late to this shul on Thursday night you couldn't find a seat. It was filled with people learning late into the night. *Every night* the shul was filled with people learning." He showed me a copy of the *teshuvos* Rabbi Akiva Eiger that belonged to the shul. The pages were very worn out from use; they were loose and all the margins were so thumbed that they were falling apart. I was a bit surprised; after all the *teshuvos* of Rabbi Akiva Eiger is not a *siddur* that people use every day. So I asked the old teacher, "How could this happen? Who wore this out? It's not a *siddur*." So this *melamed* told me that the sefer *had been used every night by a regular working boy*. "Every night, a working boy who lived here came to the shul and this was his favorite *sefer*; he wore it out from learning."

In Slabodka, a *bachur* whom I learned with *b'chavrusa* once told me that in Beers, his hometown in Lithuania, there used to be a *chevrah mishmarim*. This was a group of people who were peddlers all week; it was their bitter lot in life to put a pack of merchandise on

their backs and trudge through the gentile hamlets and villages to peddle merchandise among non-jews. Now in those days a Jew still looked like a Jew, so the gentiles would set their dogs on the Jews as they passed through the town. It was a hard life, a wearisome week of work, and they finally came home to their families for Shabbos on a Thursday or Friday. And where did they go when they got home? They gathered in the *shul* in Beers where would spend *all* Thursday night learning to make up for the time they missed during the week. That was the *chevra mishmarim!*

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

THE GREATEST MITZVAH

There are two *pesukim* in Mishlei: One says **כל חפצריך לא ישוו בה** - "All of the things that you desire cannot equal to the Torah" (Mishlei 3:15). All the things that people love in this world; people love wealth, they love honor, they love food and all types of pleasure, it's nothing compared to the Torah. Everybody desires things in this world, all good things; health and happiness, *nachas*, long years, and wealth. But nothing compares to one word of the Torah.

But there's another *possuk*, **כל חפצים לא ישוו בה** (ibid. 8:11). Here it doesn't say *chafatzecha*, your desires; it says *chafatzim*, all desirable things, *even the things that Hashem desires*, **לא ישוו בה**, cannot compare to the Torah. What does that mean? It means that even all the *mitzvos* of the Torah cannot compare to the *mitzvah* of studying Torah (Moed Kattan 9b). Of course if you have to do a *mitzvah*, and there's no one else who can do it, you have to stop learning and do the *mitzvah*; but the *mitzvos* of the Torah are not as great a privilege as

the one *mitzvah* of studying Torah. כל הפעיק, all the things that *you* consider important, וכל הפעיק שמים, and even all the things that Hashem considers important, all the *mitzvos*, אינם שווים לדבר אחד מן התורה, they don't equal one thing of the Torah.

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

THE KOSEL IN YOUR LIVING ROOM

You know it has become the style today to travel. People are busy traveling, going, doing, visiting, and there's no time left for the most important function of our lives. Even to Eretz Yisroel, people are traveling back and forth, back and forth. For what? Who needs you there? You have time to travel, but not to sit in the *kollel* on Sundays? At least on Sunday you can enter the *kodesh kodoshim*! You know, someone asked me recently, if it's OK for him to give up on some of his Torah learning in the evening, in order to work a little extra so that he could save up money for a trip to Eretz Yisroel. "No! Absolutely not," I told him. What is the purpose of Eretz Yisroel? It's only for you to make something out of yourself. You're going to give up learning, even one line of *gemara*, for travel?! *Kol chafeitzim lo yishvu bah!*

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

notes, in between the *gemaros* on your shelf and pray to Hashem for success in becoming a *Shas yid*.

THE RIGHT WAY TO FEATHER YOUR NEST

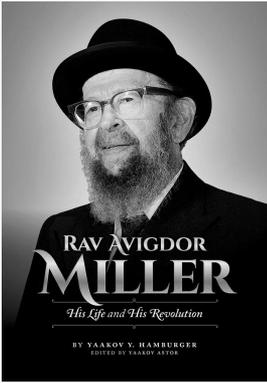
The Shas is our everything! That's why the *luchos* were the centerpiece of the Mishkan, because that's everything. Since the *churban Beis Hamikdash*, when the *kodesh kodoshim* and the *luchos* went lost, there's nothing more important to Hakodosh Boruch Hu than the *arba amos shel halachah* (Brachos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

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

BUILDING YOUR DREAM HOUSE

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

And the truth is that even if you never looked inside, it was worth it. Because just to have *seforim* lining the walls of your house, it's a demonstration of where your heart is. It should be the showcase of pride in your home. I always say that even if you're never going to open it, it's worth all the money in the world to have a big Shas - buy the biggest one you could find and display it in your home. The Shas, the *seforim*, should be placed in the most prominent place in the



“Once, a *bochur* who was leaving Brooklyn to go learn in an out-of-town *yeshivah* came to say goodbye to Rav Miller. He told the *bochur* that he should view everything in his new *yeshivah* as literally *kodesh kodoshim*. He added, “That’s how I perceived things when I was in Slabodka. Every brick, every square inch of even the physical structure was, in my eyes, the holiest thing in the world.” That attitude, Rav Miller told his *talmid*, is necessary in order to get the most benefit out of the *yeshivah*.”

Rav Avigdor Miller – His Life and His Revolution p. 81

home. When you walk into a Jewish home, it shouldn’t be the chandelier or the curtains that you see. It should be a big Shas, shelves and shelves of *seforim* should be showcased in your living room. The *seforim shrank*, that’s the glory of our nation, that’s what makes your house into a Mishkan.

DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE BEIS MEDRASH

And if the loyal Jewish home, with *seforim* lined shelves is the Mishkan, then the Beis Medrash, the *yeshivah* is the *kodesh kodoshim*. The atmosphere in the Beis Medrash is *mamish kodesh kodoshim*. I can tell you - I've been in the atmosphere for so many years. It has an effect on you. No matter how good you are, you become improved by breathing that air.

You have to realize that תהילתו - בקהל חסידים - "The praise of Hashem is when there is a great number of *chassidim* coming together" (Tehillim 149:1). Just that alone - when the *chassidim* come together as a *kahal* - that itself is a *tehillas Hashem*. What are they all gathered in the Beis Medrash for? They're all there for the purpose of demonstrating that learning Torah is important. Every day the Beis Medrash is full of demonstrators. Some are demonstrating by learning *gemara*. Some are demonstrating by learning *Mishnayis*. Some are demonstrating by just sitting there. But they are all demonstrating that learning Torah is the foundation of the Am Yisroel.

Do you realize what that demonstration means?! Walk out on the street and what do you see? Even a *frum*

street. Money is important. Food is important. Clothing is important. Who knows what else is important?! So the Beis Medrash is *mamish* a Noah's *teivah* - especially today. Boys get married when they're young, twenty maybe, twenty-one, twenty-two. You can't go out into the world yet. A boy of twenty-two is very raw material. He's not capable of dealing with the world. He has to be in the Kollel for some time. For years and years. Even if he's not so serious about learning, it's the best place for him to be. It's a *yeshua* for our nation because *limud hatorah* is our salvation.

SUPPORTING THE SANE ASYLUMS

I was once walking on Eastern Parkway and a man with a big beard approaches me - "Rabbi Miller," he calls out. "Who are you?" I asked, and he tells me his name. Whoooo! He was in the *yeshivah* with me years before. He was a nobody, *mamish ah lo klum*. It seemed hopeless. And now he has a big beard - a *frum* Jew. And his grandchildren are learning in Yerushalayim, he tells me. That's a result of the Beis Medrash. I can tell you stories like that without end. Again and again.

Therefore, we have to support - we have to feel a debt of gratitude - to the Yeshivos. They're bringing forth every day - every day - the future Torah families of Am Yisroel. And only because the environment is so good. Torah Vada'as. Chaim Berlin. Mirrer yeshivah. Lakewood. Other places too. Hakodosh Boruch Hu should give all of them *hatzlachah* and a lot of money. And the *yeshivahleit* should have long lives, and their wives and their families. It's a tremendous thing that they're doing. The *yeshivos* are doing a tremendous thing! You don't realize the sanity we are getting from the *yeshivos*. The outside world is a *meshugeneh* house, it's crazy outside. And it's those who are in the *yeshivos*, the ones learning Torah, they are the sane ones.

Part III. Bearing the Torch

YOU'LL NEED YOUR WIFE'S COOPERATION ON THIS

Now of course, even once you leave the *yeshivah* and you become involved in business you can remain sane. But it will require a great deal of cooperation from your wife, as well as a certain amount of heroism and dedication on your part. I'll give you an

example. Now listen carefully because it means you. And it means me too.

We have people who come here Friday night. They come here about seven, seven-thirty and they sit here learning till almost eleven thirty at night. They're working people, professionals. They sit here in the shul for four hours on Friday night. Some a little less. That's the program for dedicated men with dedicated wives. The women of course have to understand that, in order that it should work. But the better ones want it and they encourage their husbands. On *Motzoei Shabbos* we have the same thing again. People come here until late, until after eleven o'clock, and learn here in groups and as individuals. It's a great phenomenon here in Brooklyn.

On Shabbos afternoon people come to study here, and in the longer days they study all day long Shabbos afternoon. And some people study all day Sunday. There are about four *shiurim* on Sunday here and people attend all of them, and then they sit until late and they study Torah. Now that's an example how a person can continue to be a *yeshivah man* even after he leaves the *yeshivah*. And in ancient times that was the Jewish way of life.

A DEDICATED LIFE

A *yeshivah man* who leaves the Kollel and he begins a life of productivity in *gashmius*, must make sure that he remains dedicated to Torah learning as well. Now, a man like this, he can't afford the luxury of wasting all those odd hours. A *yeshivah man*, whether he's still in the *yeshivah* or not, has to get up Shabbos morning early to learn. He has to spend Shabbos studying. Shabbos night he can't go out to *melave malkas* with the family. He can't visit Uncle Yossi on Sundays; he can't go to every wedding, and he can't stay late at the ones he goes to.

I recall once - it was at a *melave malka* in the old building and I said over from the Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:13): הרויצה לזכות בכתרה של תורה - "Anybody who wants to earn the crown of Torah, אל יאבד אחת מלילותיו - he shouldn't waste even one of his nights." You have to work by day, what could you do already; but you shouldn't waste even one of your nights. You hear that?! The Rambam says that you shouldn't even waste one of your nights! And there was a man who was sitting there and he heard that. I saw that it went into his ears and he changed his way of life. He became great

subsequently. He was a working man and he became great in Torah. I remember once his wife had to attend a wedding in the Riverside Plaza, uptown, but that night was a *shiur*. So he took his wife by car to Riverside Plaza and left her there and he came back here attend the *shiur*. Then he went all the way back to the hall to bring her home. That's dedication!

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

WHEN WIVES DRIVE THEIR HUSBANDS AWAY

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

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

SHEPPING NACHAS FROM YOUR HUSBAND

The Zichron Yaakov tells us that when Friday night came - this was before the people spoiled - so all the townspeople slept until around *chatzos*. Then they started getting up to study Torah. He even describes how there were a lot of Jews who weren't capable of studying Torah so a paid *rebbe* would come to their homes late Friday night or early Shabbos morning. A man would learn with his *rebbe* while his wife was still in bed behind the curtain; and she was *shepping nachas* from her husband's learning. To take the little money they had and use it for learning was a great sacrifice that the wife made. But she was encouraging him and was happy with what he was doing.

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

THE WIFE FINISHES SHAS MANY TIMES

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

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

START SELLING PEANUTS

So here's a man who asks me: "How can someone even begin to learn when there's so much to learn; it looks so impossible?" But

you have to know that those are the words of the *yetzer hara* talking. When it comes to making money you don't say, "Why should I bother to start making money when there's so much money to make?" No, you don't say that; you start selling peanuts on the street corner, you hustle, you try to get whatever you can. And little by little you accomplish.

So you see the whole Talmud Bavli and you say, "Oh, I can't do that. It's too much!" So what about it?! That's a *teirutz*?! It's a very silly excuse. Start hustling; learn one line of *gemara*. You mean to say you're going to leave this world and you won't be able to say that you learned one line of *gemara*? You can't learn one line?! Are you such a dumbhead?! Ask somebody to help you! Say it over inside, ten times, fifty times. You know when you go to the next world, they'll say, *אשרי מי שבא לכאן ותלמודו בידו* - "How fortunate you are if you arrive to here and you have Talmud in your hand." They'll ask you: "You have any *gemara*?" "I have one line," you'll say. "One line? Fine! Let's hear it." But to not even have one line?! "You didn't come here with some Torah in your hand?! What were you doing down there for seventy, eighty years?!" "Oh, I was saying *chumash*, I was praying every day." And Hashem will say, "I'm very sorry, so very sorry. You had no time to learn one line of My Torah *Hakedosha*, My *Talmud Bavli*?"

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

"WHO WAS RAV HUNA?"

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

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

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

IT'S TIME TO LEAVE THE STABLE

You have to learn - otherwise the language of the Torah is meaningless to you; all the ideals and all the *halachos* are vague. You go through the motions of being a frum Jew but it's all very weak, very superficial. You must learn. And you must learn *gemara*! Not like one man said to me, "Don't bother us; we're not *gemara* buffs." *Gemara* buffs?! What?! Like you don't collect old coins or you don't collect stamps you also don't learn *gemara*?! *Gemara* is not a hobby; it's our life breath. We learn *gemara* because that is the air we breathe. If you don't learn *Gemara* you know what you are? You're an ox! (Pesachim 49b) That's what you are without *gemara*. And don't tell me about other things you learn, moral teachings. If you don't learn *gemara* then you and your family are called *beheimos*. And anyone who marries your daughter it says about him "*Arur shocheiv im beheimah*." It's important to know that! Jews always knew this! You must breathe *gemara*. That's our life!

And if you don't learn, so the *talmid chochom* can't even speak to you. If you're a *beheimah*, then you don't talk the language of Torah. How can he talk to you if you're still in the stable? You're eating oats and you're braying. A *talmid chochom* will knock on the stable door and say, "Listen to this." So you bray, and he talks. Totally different languages. I have experience in this. I've spoken to people and they don't even begin to understand what you're talking about. It's only when you become familiar with Torah ideas, at least in the *gemara*, that you're able to communicate with the Torah world and appreciate and understand what they're telling you.

THE PERFUMED YESHIVAH MAN

Now once a person understands these ideas, so the way he looks at the Am Yisroel is transformed. Because now he understands who *really* are the aristocrats of the Am Yisroel. And so when you see a *yeshivah* man, a *talmid chochom*, you know that he is the one who is closest to the *kodesh kodoshim*, he's closer to Hakodosh Boruch Hu than anyone else. And you admire him, you're impressed by him. And that's what the *gemara* says: עתידין בחורי ישראל שיתנו ריח טוב כלבנון - "The young men of Israel will in the future emit a fragrance like the forest of Levanon" (Brachos 43b). The time will come when the young *talmidei chachomim*, the *yeshivah* men who spend their days and nights learning, will issue a sweet fragrance like the cedar trees of the Levanon. It means that one day the world will recognize the truth; the whole world will learn to look through the eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And everyone will see that it is the Torah learners who smell pleasant, that they are the ones who give off the sweetest of fragrances in this world.

But *we* are expected to recognize that truth even today. When you see a *yeshivah* man, you should imagine that he smells like sweet smelling roses. Let's say you see a group of *yeshivah* boys walking in the street. Now, there is nothing especially attractive about them. They're all wearing the same uniform, white shirts, and black pants; nothing special. So what about it? What's so important?

But if you understand this lesson of *Parshas Pekudei*, so you understand that these *yeshivah* men are the aristocrats of our nation. Because it was in the *midbar* that the Am Yisroel learned that our nation is only a Torah nation. That's the lifeblood of our people; it's what we are. אין אומתינו אומה אלא בתורה - "Our nation is a nation only because of the Torah." And it's those who keep pumping the blood of Torah through the veins of our nation, who are keeping us alive. And therefore *it's the Torah learners* who are the aristocrats of our nation, the ones whom we admire and emulate. And the more a person is *michaber* himself to the Torah, the greater of an aristocrat he is. Once you understand this, you have gained a new perspective on the Am Yisroel, and you've learned to see our nation the way Hashem sees them.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ttz"

Q:

It says משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה - "In the month of Adar we should increase our happiness." My question is how do I do it? How should I acquire more *simcha* in the month of Adar?

A:

And the answer is, you have to know that Hakodosh Boruch Hu has made in each person a fountain of *simcha*, a fountain of happiness. Only that the fountain has to be primed. But once you open up the fountain and it starts gushing forth you'll be surprised how much *simcha* there is within your own mind.

Once you start thinking about how happy this month of *Adar* is when Hakodosh Boruch Hu showed us a picture how Haman is hanging with all of his sons - the happiness will begin to gush forth from your mind. Only that you have to think about what happened on Purim. Hashem lifted up the curtain and we got a glimpse of what the future will look like for the Am Yisroel. They took a look: "Who is that hanging there?! It's Haman! Haman is hanging!!" They were surprised; they were shocked. And they went out of their minds with *simcha*!

We have so many enemies today, and we always had enemies. And the time will come that our enemies will be hanging. We won't have to do it; Hakodosh Boruch Hu will do it for us! They'll be hanging! And we will be looking on and enjoying the sight! It's a *simcha* to see your enemies hanging! Hashem is showing you that He loves you - that's the real *simcha*!

So keep on thinking thoughts of happiness, of how much Hashem loves us, and that will open up that fountain of *simcha* that's in your mind. And it will start gushing forth in the month of *Adar*. And then you can keep the spigot of the fountain open even in *Nissan* and *Iyar*, and all year long.

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