

PARSHAS TAZRIA

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STRIVING FOR GREATNESS

CHATAS BEFORE OLAH

Our subject today relates to the *has'chalas hazman* and it relates to the *parshah*. The *parshah* tells us about certain *korbanos* that are brought by a woman who gave birth. The pasuk says **וְאִם לֹא תִמְצָא יָדָהּ דֵּי שֶׁהָאִשָּׁה**, if she can't afford to buy a sheep, **אוּ שְׁנֵי תְּרִים**, she takes two pigeons or two doves, **אוּ שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה**, she takes two pigeons or two doves, **אוּ אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד לְחַטָּאת**, one *korban* is brought as a *korban olah* - a burnt offering that is **כֹּלּוֹ לַיהוָה**, and one the other is a sin offering (Vayikra 12:8)¹

Now, from the order of the *passuk*, which states, **אוּ אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד לְחַטָּאת**, it would seem that you first bring the *olah* and then you bring the *korban chatas*. However, Rashi tells us that is not so. Rashi writes: **לֹא הִקְדִּימָה הַכְּתוּב**, the Torah does not write the *olah* before the *chatas*, **אֲלָא לְמַקְרָא**, only for the *kriah*. That means: when you read it in the Torah, you read **אוּ אֶחָד לְעֹלָה** first, and then you read **אוּ אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת**. However, **לְהַקְרִיבָהּ**, in the actual procedure of the *hakravas hakorban*, **לְעֹלָה**, the *chatas* comes before the *olah*, **כִּדְּרֵי הַתְּדִיר**, as we learn in Zevachim (90a).²

So what's the obvious question? The obvious question is: if you first have to bring the *chatas* and then you bring the *olah*, so why in the reading of the Torah does the *olah* precede the *chatas*? If the order of events is that you first bring the *korban chatas*, it should say **אוּ אֶחָד לְחַטָּאת וְאֶחָד לְעֹלָה**. Why don't we write it in the order of the *hakravah*?

So we have to say that there is a lesson to be learned from these words. Apparently, even though you bring the *korban chatas* first and only then you bring the *korban olah*, when you're reading this *parshah*, the Torah wants you to mention the *korban olah* before the *korban chatas*. That is to prompt us to ask *vus shtait dah*.

AVODAS HASHEM: STEP BY STEP

Rav Eliyahu Dessler in his sefer *Michtav M'Eliyahu* says that the Torah is teaching us the appropriate *derech* in *avodas Hashem*. You see, the *korban olah* represents the *shpitz*. It represents **כֹּלּוֹ לַיהוָה** - it's completely dedicated to Hashem. That's the end game. That's the *shleimus ha'amitus*. It's **כֹּלּוֹ לַיהוָה**. The *chatas*, the sin offering, on the other hand, represents the means of a person getting there. The way a person reaches his goals in *avodas Hashem* is by progressing step by step. First you work on **סוּר מֵרַע** - staying away from evil. There are many people who attempt to ignore the **סוּר מֵרַע**. They just want to work on **עֲשֵׂה טוֹב** - "do good." What often happens, is people feel that if they work on the **עֲשֵׂה טוֹב**, the **רַע** will automatically go away. But the Torah says, **סוּר מֵרַע וְעֲשֵׂה טוֹב**. First, you have to accept upon yourself to distance yourself from the **רַע**, and with that approach you will be **עֲשֵׂה טוֹב**.

So the *chatas* is brought first. That's the **סוּר מֵרַע**, the sin offering, the cleansing, the *kapparah* for one's *cheit*. Practically, that's where you start. Afterwards, you go to the *olah*, **כֹּלּוֹ לַיהוָה**.

KNOW YOUR ENDGAME

However, a person has to know that it's not enough just to be **סוּר מֵרַע**. A person has to know that when he begins his pathway of **סוּר מֵרַע**, he does so in order to come to the **עֲשֵׂה טוֹב** in the best and highest form and fashion. So you have to read about the *olah* first before you mention the *chatas*, because you have to know that the goal is *shleimus*. My goal is to reach, and to be attached to Hashem as much as possible. That's the goal. Somebody who is involved in bad behaviors may say, "Okay, I'll stop the bad behavior." He understands it's bad behavior, so he's going to stop the bad behavior, but he doesn't understand that the ultimate goal is **כֹּלּוֹ לַיהוָה**.

I was just reading an article written by a girl who grew up in a *frum* family. The father was a learning person. They were considered a *haredi* family, not just *stam frum*. The father had a beard. He was *areingetun* on learning. The mother was a regular housewife. They

¹ וְאִם לֹא תִמְצָא יָדָהּ דֵּי שֶׁהָאִשָּׁה שְׁנֵי תְּרִים אוּ שְׁנֵי בְּנֵי יוֹנָה אוּ אֶחָד לְעֹלָה וְאֶחָד לְחַטָּאת וְכִפֹּר עֲלֶיהָ הַכֹּהֵן וְטִהַרָהּ
² לֹא הִקְדִּימָה הַכְּתוּב אֶלָּא לְמַקְרָא, אֲבָל לְהַקְרִיבָהּ חַטָּאת קוּדָם לְעֹלָה, כִּדְּרֵי הַתְּדִיר בְּזִבְחֵי בְּרָכָה כֹּל פְּסוּלֵי הַתְּדִיר (ובאים צ ע"א)

had a nice *frum* family. The kids went to the best of schools. Ostensibly, they did everything “by the book.” However, over the years, the girl noticed an interesting thing. Her mother would let them watch certain videos, but when the father came home, the mother would quickly put it all away and tell the kids not to mention anything about what they had seen. Their mother would let them watch videos like that throughout the years behind his back.

She said her mother was a very nice lady, a very friendly lady, but there was no sense that there was a goal or a purpose in their Yiddishkeit. Yiddishkeit was just ‘our way of life,’ but there was no reason behind whatever they were doing in Yiddishkeit. There was no mention of Hashem, not from her father and not from her mother. Her father was a busy person and he did not have time to instill a connection between their attitude to Yiddishkeit and their purpose in life into his kids’s lives. The one criterion was, just to stay within the cocoon, within the box, and not to step out, but there were no goals.

Then she grew up and she met somebody and she discovered that the real story about Yiddishkeit is to connect with Hashem. It’s not ‘just another religion’ that happens to be our religion. It’s not that it’s the best religion, and we do basically the same things as all the *goyim* as long as it doesn’t contradict our religion. We shop. We even go on vacation. We go to the fanciest stores. We buy the nicest things. The same Nordstrom is for them as it is for us. The same Saks Fifth Avenue is for them as it is for us. But that’s not what it’s all about. It’s a whole different *hashkafah*.

She said that as she grew up, she spoke to other people, and she discovered this wasn’t such an uncommon thing. People often don’t understand the goals of and the *mehalech* of *avodas Hashem*. This concept has to be emphasized.

SHTEIGING IS REQUIRED

Now, the emphasis has to be, not on you becoming anything *you want*, but rather, on you becoming *the best you can* (*shteiging*) to become a greater person. That’s what we have to tell ourselves. That’s what we have to tell our wives. We have to become the best we can. And our children, as well - they also must be the best they can. *Shteiging* used to be every person’s goal, but today, many children resent this idea. “Why do I have to be the best I can? I’m happy the way I am. As long as I’m not doing bad stuff, isn’t that enough?” And the answer is no. That’s the message of *אחד לעולה*. That’s the goal. It’s not enough just not to do bad stuff. You have to be *shoef*, you have to yearn and strive for greatness.

Now, Rav Eliyahu Dessler writes that there are many people who are already on the road of *עשה טוב*. They *shteig* a little bit and they do the right thing. He says you have to know that the goal in life is to be constantly *shteiging*. *Shteiging* is not something you do when you get onto a certain path. Constant growth is required. Look at a person who is a *frum* person. He learns every day. He *davens* every day. He doesn’t have modern media in his home. He’s a nice Jew. There are a lot of people like that, fine *yungerleit*. But the widespread concept of “Do you want to *shteig*?” is long gone.

I remember when I got married, I joined a *chaburah* in a *kollel* and they were learning *meseches Shabbos*. I learned it the way I learned any other *masechta*. I remember, I came to a Tosfos and I was bothered by this Tosfos. Back and forth I went. I went over to an older *yungerman*, who’s still learning today, and he told me an interesting thing. He said, “You only ask those kinds of *kashos* when you’re a *bachur*, when you’re younger. When you’re older, those kinds of *kashos* don’t bother you anymore.” I said, “I hope that I never get older. I hope I’ll always stay young and these *kashos* bother me.” I said, “And what if I don’t understand the Tosfos?” He said, “Is that an important Tosfos? Do you think this Tosfos will make a big difference to your life?” I said, “If I went with that *mehalech*, nothing would be important. Every time that something bothers me and I push myself a little bit to understand it, that means I’m alive. I am still interested!”

ARE YOU LOSING IT?

If I come to a *gemara* and I don’t understand it, and I say to myself, “I don’t understand this *gemara*. *Vaiter!*” Do you know where that really comes from? It shows that I lost interest already! *L’mashal*, if I have a button on my radio or a button on my computer, you could tell me the following: “*Mei heicha teisi* I need to know how this button works? I don’t have to know what this button does. Does everybody know what every button does?” But don’t you want to know what it could do? Don’t you want to be a *mumcheh*? You know why you want to be a *mumcheh*? Because that’s where your interests lie and you want to discover more about what you are interested in. You can find new *chiddushim*! A *mentsch* has to know, says Rav Dessler, that wherever he’s holding and whatever he is involved in, he has to *shteig*.

Now, Rav Dessler says as follows. If a person is holding on the lowest level of *shteiging*, you have to know - and this is another mistake that people make - that he thinks that he’s basically finished *shteiging*. I remember once I had a discussion with a young lady and she said, “Don’t take this personally, but I’m not a *ba’alas teshuvah*. I went to *frum* schools. So, basically the difference between me and you is that you maybe know more books and I know less books. We’re the same.” I said, “Have you spent any years learning Torah or being exposed to learning Torah or have a husband that learns Torah?” I said, “Actually, we live on different planets. We’re not living on the same planet.”

Rav Eliyahu Dessler says that a person has to know that when he's *shteiging*, he shouldn't think that getting "there" is just a matter of reading more books and more lines. When you *shteig* and then you *shteig* more and more, you look back and you discover that when you were first *shteiging*, you were totally and absolutely clueless, and what you thought you understood and grasped then, was *mamash* like a blind man groping in the darkness. Even though you were doing the right thing. Because whatever you think at this point in time, he says, it's only the beginning, and your mind is not yet developed and your *madreiga* of your *neshamah* is not yet developed, so you didn't even begin. You have to be aware of this. You have to be aware that it's not about having an attitude of "I'm there already," so it's just a matter of doing "a little more." Your *madreiga* at the end goal is a completely different *madreiga*.

HOW NOT TO BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY

He says that a person has to understand that when he starts on his journey, he'll be living in a world of *teva* and then he won't begin to be *masig* (comprehend) that it's even *shayach* (possible) for him to be *oleh*, to *shteig* and to actually live in a world that's beyond *teva*. That's amazing. If you talk to the average frum person on the street and you ask him the following: "Do you know that it's *shayach* to have an existence in this world that's *shelo kederech hateva*?" he will say to you, "Give me a break. That's what you tell kids. You tell them make-believe stories. Everybody has, *lehavdil*, their Santa Clauses, your wishful thinking of Eliyahu Hanavi coming and this guy coming. He's going to bring you this. He's going to bring you that. It's nonsense."

You know what that is? That's this problem that we are discussing, because when you're on *some madreiga*, but it's a *madreiga tachtonah*, your perspectives with which you see things now, do not enable you to see beyond that. The fellow who does not open a *sefer* - he understands he can't see what's in the *sefer*. But when the fellow opens up the *sefer* and he looks in the book, he thinks, "I really see it." If there's anybody here who knows that he crossed this line, namely, he went from the world of *teva* and he started to experience things that, all of a sudden, were beyond *teva*, can testify to this fact. At first he said to himself, "This must be a joke. It must be a coincidence. That's not real. It's good luck. Luck happens. Things happen." That's how a person *teitches* it up. But after a person really *shteigs*, he starts to see every area of his life from a different perspective.

Rav Dessler says that whatever level you're holding on, you should know there is a higher level, and that higher level will create a discovery for you. It will open up your mind to realize that where you are now, is just the beginning.

CLIMBING HIGHER

Rav Dessler says, the rule is that a person has to live within his *madreiga*. That's why there are many stories about people who live in this type of world. There are people in the *gemara* who were *zocheh* to Eliyahu Hanavi. The Chafetz Chaim lived not that long ago and he himself was *zocheh* to *giluy Eliyahu*. There are a number of *ma'asos* like that. Rav Chatzkel Levenstein writes that he was present with the Chafetz Chaim when *neshamos* came and they were disturbing and trying to beg the Chafetz Chaim for *tikunim*. Could you imagine when a person is on that level? I can't. And I can't imagine Rav Chatzkel was on that level and he was aware of that. I'm sure a lot of people talked to the Chafetz Chaim, and they thought the Chafetz Chaim was talking to himself because he said, "Okay do this, do that." Why is the man talking to himself? Is he talking to me? He's talking to himself? But Rav Chatzkel could see who the Chafetz Chaim was talking to. He understood what was going on. But a person who is on a very low *madreiga* would likely say that the Chafetz Chaim is already getting senile. That's what a person would say. He doesn't understand. He doesn't have a concept of such greatness, so he can't imagine it. He thinks, "He's talking to himself, *nebach*. He's not fully focused, or maybe he's not fully there."

That's what a *mentsch* has to understand. He has to learn. Rav Dessler says a person is *chayav* to learn about the higher levels, to become aware of such a thing (i.e. although practically, one has to conduct oneself according to the level one is on now, and one cannot jump to the next level, nevertheless, he has to understand that there are higher levels and strive to get there).

I remember when I read this about Rav Chatzkel, it shook me up and boggled my mind. I remember reading a story about a fellow who was in a car accident, a major car accident in a foreign country, and he died and was brought *lefnei beis din shel ma'aleh*. The *pelah* was, that on the *beis din* were two Yidden who were living in this world. He was revived and lived to tell his story, where he writes that they asked him not to mention their names. He went to them afterwards. They were on the *beis din pashut*. Could you imagine that? A person could live in this world and be used as a *dayan* in the next world? You can't imagine that. But that's because you don't understand. You live in a tiny little world and your awareness of things is extremely, extremely limited. But if you study such *musagim* you can at least understand a little bit.

SEEING BEYOND THIS WORLD

There was a *tekufah* when we were very involved with the autistic kids. What was that all about? That was just to give me an awareness of the world that I can't see. It opened my mind and expanded my thinking. I thought sometimes my head was going to explode. I thought the head gaskets were going to blow, because when you connect with the world of autistic kids, you realize you have no idea about anything. You realize you're walking around with a plastic or paper bag over your face and you can barely see, and you think you're seeing but you see *gornisht*. And when you tell somebody else about it, you know what the guy says? "You're losing it. You're

starting to get there.”

Just now, somebody called me up, who was *nebach* very sick, and the person became extremely close to Hashem. That person started to become aware of things that in their life they never became aware of, to such a high *madreiga*, it's unbelievable. The person called me up one day and said, “My friends are telling me that I'm starting to lose it, that I'm a different person, that my personality is changing now. They tell me, ‘You're starting to hallucinate. You're starting to imagine things. You're starting to talk about spirituality. Come back to your normal personality.’” I said to him, “Your friends are at a very low *madreiga*, so they have not had the opportunity to become aware of what you, *baruch Hashem*, have become aware of. Yes, you're not normal. The normal of yesteryear you're not anymore, because you *shteiged* and you grew.”

BECOMING THE CHOFETZ CHAIM OVERNIGHT

That's how you want to grow, rabbosai. Every one of us wants to seek this growth through Torah and through *shteiging*, and only through *shteiging*. So if you're not *לעולה אחד* (i.e. if you don't realize the goal of *להשם*), you will make a mistake. You will stay on your low *medreigah*. But you have to realize that you can't jump to *אחד לעולה*. First, one must bring the *chatas*. Imagine the person who is on a low *madreiga* and he reads about this Chofetz Chaim story. All of a sudden, he goes into a room, he closes the light and he rubs his eyes very *shtark* and then he starts to see stars and then he's imagining he's talking to *neshamos*. Someone comes into the room and says, “What are you doing?” He says, “I'll be *megaleh* to you - I'm talking to *neshamos*!” You know what you say to the guy? “You're an absolute nutcase.” You give him a slap in the face to wake him up. You try to get him out of his reverie. “Go back to the *beis medrash* and be a *mentsch*.” Because you're not holding on this level. But you want to know if what you see is the end? It is not the end. You have to be aware of the big world beyond a person and how little the world we live in is. And as all of us *shteig*, Hashem will make you aware of things that are unbelievable.

I'll never forget the *passuk*, which I've told you about a number of times, that has spurred me on to this path. The *passuk* says in the *chumash* that when you'll be in *galus*, you'll be old, you'll be tired and you'll be far away and if you will seek Me out with all your heart and your soul, Hashem says, “I will reveal Myself to you.” (Devarim 4:29)³ I remember reading that *passuk* over many, many times and I decided you know what? That means I could find Hashem! It's possible for me to discover Hashem! So I asked people. People said to me, “It's not *shayach*.” I said, “But in the Torah it says so!” So a guy told me, “It says many things in the Torah.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Well, you have to know, you have to understand.” I said, “I understand that I'm not going to be *zocheh* to *giluy Eliyahu*.” I remember reading that if you fast for forty days, you're guaranteed to see Eliyahu. I was contemplating if I could do that and if it was even *shayach* for me to do that. I didn't think so and I figured that, even if I got through forty days, I'll probably be very *shvach* and I won't see Eliyahu. I would need a hospital. But there is such a thing out there. Because there is such a thing out there, it doesn't mean it's not real, but I have to know my current *madreiga* of where I'm holding right now.

In summary then, and practically speaking - you have to take care of the *chatas* first and then you advance to the *olah*, but when you start you have to know the goal is the *olah*.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF “ENOUGH IS ENOUGH”

There is a *gevaldige* Rav Baruch Ber in the *Birkas Shmuel* in *Kiddushin* (סימן כז אות ב) where he brings down from Rav Chaim Brisker about the *darkah shel Torah* and how important it is for a father to yearn, strive and teach his children as much Torah as possible.⁴ He says there are those people that have new-fangled ideas and they decide that they're going to limit the *limud haTorah* of their son and they say, “You know what? It's enough.” The father basically decides what is enough. What the *rebbe* teaches him in school, that's enough. He says what this person is doing is removing *dorosav* (generations) from Hashem Yisbarach. That's what he's doing. He says, you know what the end is going to be? *שבני ביתו*, his immediate family, *או הדור שאחר כך יהיו ריפורמה*, or the next generation are going to be Reform Jews. That's what he says! A person has to bring his kids up *al pi Torah*, the father has to transmit to his son the entire Torah that we learned at Sinai. *כל המלמד את בן בנו תורה כאילו קבלה מהר סיני* - anyone who teaches his son's son Torah, the verse ascribes him credit as though he received it from Mount Sinai (Kiddushin 30a).⁵ A father has to transmit the whole Torah, *כל התורה כולה* and that's the *ikar*, *תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם*. The father comes and says to his son, “You know what? For you I'm happy if you have part of it.”

Rav Chaim says that kid doesn't stand a chance and he's going to become a *סריס הדורות מן התורה*, he's going to cut his generations off from the Torah and the *emunah hatehorah vehakedoshah*. He says *oy lo*, woe onto that father who removes his *doros* from Torah!

בקשתם משם את הי אלקיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך

⁴ כתוב ברכת שמואל (קידושין סימן כ"ז, ב) והביא בשם הגר"ח זצוק"ל בביאור חיוב הבנים בחינוך לת"ת, וז"ל: כי כל איש מישראל אשר הוא מקמץ בלימוד תורה לבנו ומסתפק עצמו בזה שמלמד אותו לפי בידיו דעתו ומסיר את דורותיו מהש"ת, וסוף שב"ב או הדור שאח"כ יהיה רפורמטור כי ע"י שבנו מתגדל בתוה"ק ונעשה חכם בתורה ידע איך להזיח באזהרות ובדקדוקים, ומוסר עצמו עברה, רואה שגם בנו יהיה לחכם בתוה"ק, וע"ז משריש האב לדורותיו התורה עד עולם, וזהו מאמר הגמ' כל המלמד לבנו וב"ב תורה כאילו קיבלה מהר סיני, ביאור הדבר כאילו קיבלה והשריש התורה לדורותיו, אולם אם הוא מקמץ התורה מבנו אומר ה"ברכת שמואל" בשם הגר"ח מבריסק דאם לא למד מאין זיהר בה ונעשה דל, וממילא אם לא נהר הבן האם ילמד הוא לבן הבן, הינו שהסבא ילמד תורה את הנכד, ואם לא יעשה כן נמצא ממילא סרים הדורות מן התורה והאמונה הטהורה והקדושה, וכתב שם הגר"ח שהאב בעצמו הראשון הוא המסיר את דורותיו מן התורה ואין לו... וכתב עוד: "ואם תשאל על זה הלא יש כמה אנשים בעלי אומנות שאינם גדולים בתורה ובכל זאת אנשים יקרים ומאמינים המה בהש"ת: י"י והשיב על זה דהדבר הוא דהוא הכין את עצמו להיות גדול בתורה מפני שלמד בההדר בתמימות ואולם כשרונותיו לא השיגו לזה ועל בן בזה לבד על ידי שהכין את עצמו לתורה נשאר צדיק ומאמין הנה זהו תוכן דבריו הקדושים, עכ"ל.

⁵ אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי כל המלמד את בן בנו תורה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו קבלה מהר סיני שנאמר והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך וסמך ליה יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלקיך בחרב

SETTING YOURSELF UP FOR A SUCCESS

Then Rav Chaim asks a *kasha*, which Rav Baruch Ber quotes. We find a number of people who are working people, *ba'alei umnus*, that they're not such *gedolim baTorah* and in spite of that they're *teire Yidden* and they're *ma'aminim* in Hashem Yisbarach. How could it be? You just told me that if a guy is not taught the *gantze Torah* and the guy is only given "partial" Sinai, he's finished!?! So how is it *shayach* to find *erliche Yidden*? I guess there was such a thing once upon a time. You had people with *emunah* in Hashem and who were *teire mentschen*.

So Rav Chaim says **והדבר הוא**, you want to know what the secret is? Such a person prepared himself and he was prepared to be a *gadol beTorah* because he learned in the *chadarim betemimus*. This fellow went to *yeshivah* as a child and he really was set on the path to be **מקבל כל התורה כולה**. But you don't learn **כל התורה כולה** in *cheder*. That's just the beginning. And then something happened to stop it. Not a *shitah*. You know what it was? What made him stop was either *parnasah* or *kishronos*, he didn't have the *kishron* to grow in Torah, but he was a person who was prepared. He was a *muchan*. He had the *chinuch* and the preparation of Torah. That's why he remains a *tzaddik* and a *ma'amin*.

But then, there was a person whose *hachanah* was to be a part of Sinai, and his father told him, "You don't have to learn *gemara*." I will give you an example. I know of a school where the talmid told me that they learn *gemara*. It was a Mizrachi school. I said, "What do they learn there?" So he brought me the *gemara* they learn. You know what he brought? He brought me papers. I said, "What is this? A joke? Is this *sheimos*?" He said, "No." They gave papers out and they learned selections from the Talmud. It's called 'selections' of Talmud.

Now, what's the *chiluk*? What's the difference here? I want you to know that even though we don't learn *gantze masechtos*, we have *gantze masechtos* on our shelves and we give them out to our talmidim! Some *chacham* may come up one day and say, "Listen, since you only learn a few *blatt* in the *seder*, I have a good idea. Forget about buying expensive *gemaros* so that somebody could make a few pennies. I have a better idea. Make a couple of copies, sit and learn a few pages and that will be enough."

That's the *chiluk*. The person who holds the *gantze masechta* says, "I'm starting with the first page, but I understand that I'm being *meichen* myself for the whole *masechta*. I want to know everything in the Rosh and in the Tosfos and in the Rashi and the this and the that." But the guy who buys the *gemara* and the *gemara* doesn't have Rashi, doesn't have Tosfos and it leaves out *gemaros* - that person has no *hachanah* to be a *tzaddik* and he can't be a *tzaddik*!

A POWERFUL INSIGHT FROM THE CHAZON ISH

Now, the Ponovezher Rav related a very interesting story. He said he had a *bachur* in his *yeshivah* who was a *ba'al kishron*, but he got *farchapt* by the *olam hata'avos* and he wasn't going *bederech HaTorah*. The Ponovezher Rav decided he had to expel this guy from his *yeshivah*, but he was afraid if he would send him away he would become *frei*. On the other hand, if he left him in the *yeshivah*, he would cause damage to the other *bnei yeshivah*. He didn't know what to do. So he decided to bring the *shaylah* to the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish said, "Send me the *bachur*. I want to see the *bachur*." The Chazon Ish saw the *bachur* and then spent an inordinate amount of time

with this *bachur*. He worked on him. He was *mekarev* him. He turned him into a *talmid chacham* and an *emese yarei shamayim*. The Ponovezher Rav said that this happened not one time, it happened with many *bachurim*.

They asked the Chazon Ish, "What's the *pschat*? Why did you waste your time with this *bachur*?" The Chazon Ish was a Torah machine. He wasn't a *kiruv* machine. He wasn't a *kiruv* man. They said the following to the Chazon Ish: "If a guy would come to you who is 'Mizrachi,' who is *frum*, *shomer Torah umitzvos*, and he would come and he would want to get close to you, you wouldn't talk to him. You wouldn't have any *shaychus* to him. You wouldn't even let him cross the threshold of your door! And here you're *mamash* being *moser nefesh* - you're being *metafel* yourself with a *bachur* who is totally going off the derech."

The Chazon Ish said, "I'll tell you the *teretz*. *Bederech klal* - why does a *bachur* go to *yeshivah*? He has a *she'eifah* to grow." Now, today maybe it's different, but in those days you didn't go to a *yeshivah* to sleep or to eat. I'm not saying you didn't eat and sleep in *yeshivah* but that's not why you went. If a person decided to go to *yeshivah*, he was committed to becoming a *gadol baTorah* and a *yerei shamayim*, so he had the *she'eifah*. He had an awareness of what the goals were. But what happened? The *yetzer hara* saw the guy is capable so he comes and he wants to disturb him and he wants to pull him down into the *beis hakisei* and make him a *mushchis*. The Chazon Ish contrasted the *yeshivah bachur* who tried and was disturbed by his *yetzer hara* to the Mizrachi *mentch*, for whom this was his *shitah* in life! He could be a *shomer Torah umitzvos*, but together with a new 'Torah,' called Torah with the Medinah. Medinas Yisrael is one of their *yesodos*, as in *Torah ve'Eretz Yisrael*. "The difference is, that fellow is not looking for more. He has his limit. He has his own 'Torah' that he created. With such a *mentch* I don't want to have any *shaychus* because he has no goals of **אחד לעולה**."

ARE YOU HOLDING BY SHTEIGING?

A person has to understand that this is our *avodah* in our life. We must strive to reach greater heights. What I heard from my *zeida* (HaRav Avigdor Miller, zt"l) all my life was that a person must constantly be holding in a *shteiging* mode. When you're twenty, you have to *shteig* and when you're fifty, you have to *shteig*. You're not *shteiging* in *davening*? How can you not *shteig* in *davening*? Are you planning on *shteiging* in *davening* this *zman*? Are you planning on *shteiging* in learning this *zman* or just continuing to learn like last *zman*? You know, if someone is a lawyer or a doctor, for example, they have to take continuous education classes. Every year they have to take a certain amount of hours of classes to make sure they're still on top of the *matzav*. But that's not *shteiging*. That's just continuous education to keep yourself refreshed with the subject.

The *passuk* in Hoshea (11:1) states: *יְשָׁרְאֵל וְאֶהְיֶהוּ וּמִמְצָרִים קָרָאתִי לְבָנִי - I fell in love with Israel when he was still a child; and I have called him My son ever since Egypt.* Hashem says that when Klal Yisrael is a *na'ar*, וְאֶהְיֶהוּ, He loves them.

Rav Yisrael Salanter explained what that means. He says Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves Klal Yisrael on condition that there's a *bechinah na'ar*. What is a *na'ar*? A *na'ar* is a youth. Youth is an unfinished product. When you see a kid, you know he's going to grow up. If someone is a kid it means he's growing. A kid is inquisitive. A kid is interested. He's learning new things about life. That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves. But once a person reaches a certain age, he's not growing any more. He's finished. You're not going to expect that if you meet him in three years, he'll be a few inches taller. A *na'ar*, on the other hand, is in a *matzav* of *hachanah* - he's still growing and developing himself. Rav Gifter used to always say over from the Telzer Rosh Yeshivos that the greatest *ma'aleh* - more than all other *ma'alos* that a person could attain - is to be holding by *shteiging*.

You know how sad it is when you meet *frum* Yidden and they're not holding by *shteiging* anymore?

Rav Chaim Ozer said that every time he meets the Chafetz Chaim it's not the same Chafetz Chaim he met last time. He was *nespael*. You know why? Because the Chafetz Chaim was always *shteiging*.

CLIMBING HIGHER AND HIGHER!

We have to always *shteig*. Don't think you got there - i.e. "Okay, so now I know a little about how to learn. I know how to look at a *gemara*." So that's it? I want to be *mesgaber*. I want to grow in *yiras shamayim*. I want to become *frummer*. I want to become closer to Hashem. I want to know my goals. Even though right now you're holding on a low level, don't tell yourself that therefore you should give up. There are many people like that. The *yetzer hara* pulls them down. He tells you: "You're not going anywhere. You're mine. You're not going anywhere." And other people also say, "You're right."

Just recently, I saw somebody undertake to do *shteiging*. A person who had stopped *shteiging* for a while and the person now decided to undertake *shteiging*. I told the person, "I want to give you a warning that you're going to get unbelievable *nisyonos* from the *yetzer hara* because he doesn't want you to *shteig*. He wants to see if you understand what *shteiging* means." The night before the person was supposed to undertake the *shteiging*, he contacted me and he said bad stuff is starting to happen. I told him, "Say the words that Avraham Avinu used. *Afal pi ken*. Just say, 'I don't care what. I don't care when. I don't care how.'" And the person made a lot of *hachanos* so that the big day should be perfect. Then early in the morning I got a text, "What should I do? My employees called off from work today and my business can't open up without me." I said, "Kiss it goodbye." I said, "Forget it. I'm telling you he's [yeitzer hora] not going to let you go. *Afal pi ken*. Take it out of your mind. Forget about it. I'm telling you, it's going to work out. It's all your imagination now, to show you that you can't *shteig*." *Baruch Hashem*, the person passed the test! Afterwards, the person said, "Wow, that felt good." *Baruch Hashem*, the world didn't collapse. He didn't go bankrupt. He didn't lose any money. הרבה דרכים למקום.

This is what we have to know in our life, Rabosai. We're starting a new *zman* now. We have to say that by the end of this *zman*, none of us want to be the same. We want to grow step by step. We want to grow. We want to grow in many ways, in our *hasmadah* (diligence). We want to be in the *beis medrash* more after *ma'ariv*, if we're able to. We're going to be learning more. We're not going to get sidetracked. On Shabbosos, on Erev Shabbos we're going to be *areingetun* in learning. At the end of this *zman*, we want to be *davening* better than we did until now. You should feel that you took a step up in having a *shaychus* in talking to Hashem. You want to feel that it's not just that you know the words - you want to feel connected with Hashem. You want to feel your *chashivus* for Torah is going up. You want to feel, "I've been working on my *middos* more than before. I'm going to go work on my *middos*. I'm going to be *machnia* myself. I'm going to go *vaiter*." You want to know something? It's a very short *zman*. The *zman* is only two months and twenty days. It's a very short *zman*, but it's a loaded *zman* because in the middle you have Shavuos, *kabalas haTorah*. It's unbelievable. They even give you vacation in this *zman*. I can't figure out why. They give you a Shabbos vacation.

Rabosai, let's make a plan, that at the end of this *zman* - I don't want to be the same. I want to be - if not 'כולו לה' - at least, more *laHashem*. I want to know it's only the beginning of the *shteiging*. I can't fool myself. I know where I'm holding right now. There's no one here who can't learn more *ratzaf* (continuously), someone who can't be more *areingetun* in learning, someone who can't be more

❧ THE BOTTOM LINE ❧

Although in practice we bring korban chatas before olah, the Torah lists korban olah first, to teach us that it's not enough to simply work on סור מרע (i.e. to stay away from negative actions); rather, we must take the concept of עשה טוב - of constantly growing and becoming the "best we can be - and integrate it as our main mission in life, despite the barrage of real and unforeseen circumstances that may deter us from that. This coming week - whether I am learning full-time or working - I will (bli neder) make a plan for myself to accomplish the spiritual goals that I set for myself, even though life's circumstances will challenge me. Despite these obstacles, I won't be swayed or discouraged by the yeitzer hora from continuing to grow and accomplish my goals. And in that zechus, when someone asks me, "Where are you holding?" I will proudly answer, "I am holding by shteiging."