



YESHIVAT CHOVEVEI TORAH RABBINICAL SCHOOL

WEEKLY PARSHA

By Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva and Dean

Parshat Ekev | August 10, 2012 / 23 Av 5772

What appears below is Rabbi Linzer's remarks from the Modern Orthodox Siyum haShas which took place this last Monday night at Congregation Shearith Israel in Manhattan. A focal point of this speech is the mitzvah of constantly speaking the words of Torah, which appears in the first paragraph of Shema which we read last week, as well as in the second paragraph of Shema which we read this week in parashat Ekev. We hope you find these words appropriate not only to this week's parasha, but also to our ongoing obligation to speak the words of Torah "when we sit in the house, and when we travel on the way, when we lie down and when we rise up."

We will soon be honoring the *misaymim, misayamot* and *magidei shiur*, those who have committed daily to teaching and learning the daf, and who, after 7 ½ years have now completed the entire Talmud. This is a remarkable milestone, and deserves the full measure of honor that is has been and will be receiving. But as anyone who learns the daf will tell you, much more than the finishing of Shas, it is the learning of Shas, the learning each day, every day, which is what really matters.

Why is that? Why should we spend our time learning about animal sacrifices, vows, ritual purity, torts, lashes, levirate marriage, undesignated bird sacrifices that get comingled, and about women who must go to the mikveh 90 times in a row? Why should anyone learn the daf yomi, and why should we, as Modern Orthodox Jews, learn the daf yomi?

In the Shema, in last week's Torah reading, we are told that we must keep the words of Torah near to our heart. And how do we do this – *ושננתם לבניך ודברת במ בשבתך* – *בביתך ובלכתך בדרך ובשכנך ובקומך* – by making Torah the staple of all that we talk about, it is what we talk about when we talk to our children, it is what we talk about when we are at home and when we are traveling, it is what we talk about first thing in the morning and the

last thing at night.

To learn the daf yomi is to live up to these verses, to make the Torah the foundation of lives by making it the foundation of every single day.

To learn the daf yomi is first to be *קובע עתים לתורה* - to have a fixed time every day to commit to Torah learning. When we do something every day, we make a statement, to others, but more importantly to ourselves, where our priorities lie, what is truly important in our lives.

To learn the daf yomi is also *ודברת במ*, to be in an ongoing conversation with Torah. If we dedicate quality time each day to talk to our children, what is most important is not the substance of the conversation. It is that each day we are making the time to give our children our full attention. It is the relationship that matters, and that each day, we invest in the relationship. Some days, those conversations may be difficult or even aggravating. And some days, those conversations are profound and deeply meaningful. But every day we are connecting.

But then again, maybe this isn't our obligation. An early sugya in Berakhot tells us that halakhically these verses may be referring to the mitzvah to say the Shema, and not, or not only, to the mitzvah of learning Torah. It is possible to limit these verses to this narrow, halakhic reading. Indeed, the Gemara in Menachot (99b) teaches, that one may fulfill the obligation to learn Torah merely through the reciting of the morning and evening Shema.

Now, this limited reading, this defining of our responsibilities in only their halakhic terms can sometimes, sad to say, be a feature of our lives as Modern Orthodox Jews. We have too often been *קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית ויצא* with our obligations

are what halakha demands and nothing more. And when we engage Torah, it will be in a selective way, with teachings that are particularly resonant and relevant.

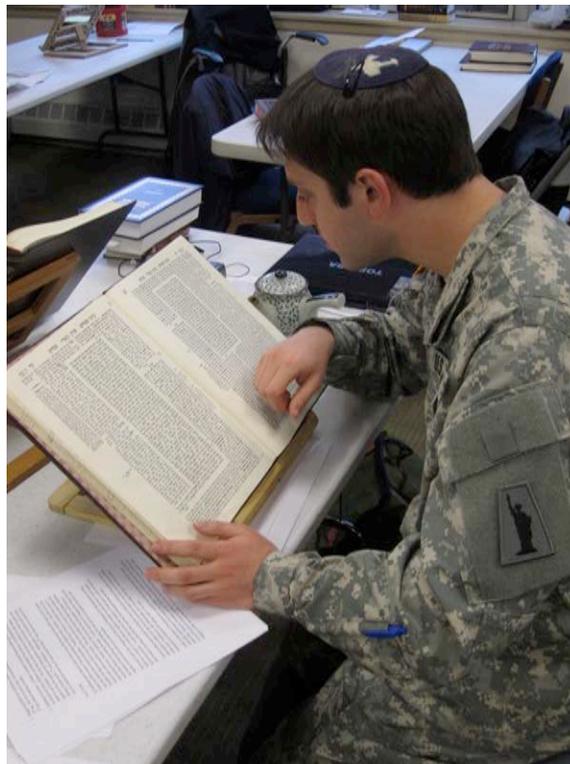
To learn the daf yomi is to reject this interpretation. It is to read these verses expansively; it is to assert that our obligations are more than halakha and observance. It is to live a life where we are constantly engaging the Torah, where it frames each day, where it seeps into every aspect of our lives. It is to take Torah out of a narrow box, to give ourselves over to its vastness, to allow ourselves to struggle to stay afloat in the Yam HaTalmud knowing that we will never reach its shore.

As Modern Orthodox Jews, we believe that it is our obligation to engage the world. Not to live a life just of **בביתך בשבתך** but also of **ובלכתך בדרך**. We must not seclude ourselves, but we also must not seclude Torah. To learn the daf is to bring the Torah in conversation the world, and it is also to bring the world in conversation with the Torah.

To learn the daf is not just to hear the voice of the Rabbis transmitted through the ages. It is to enter into a conversation, a dialogue, with them: to listen, to reflect, to consider, and also to ask, to question, to push back. It is to hear what the Talmud has to say to us, but it is also to ask the Talmud to hear what we have to say to it.

Tonight we celebrate **בם** **ודברת בם**. We celebrate the tremendous accomplishment of these *misaymim* and *misayamot*. We celebrate our passion for Talmud Torah, our contribution to Talmud Torah. The many classes tonight speak to what it means to truly bring the fullness of our lives, our intellectual engagement and our diversity in conversation with the Torah. Tonight we celebrate **ובלכתך בדרך**, engaging the world in an ongoing discourse with Torah. May we all be **זוכה** to live the message of Shema each and every day, so that truly **והיו** **על לבבך** **הדברים האלה**, God's words should always be close to our hearts.

Shabbat Shalom!



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