

Ki Heim CHAYEINU



Issue 8 • Hei Teives

True Victory

Preface

With the approach of Hei Teives, the day of our “didan natzach”—our very public victory (in federal court) with regard to the books and writings of Rabboseinu Nessesieinu that are part of the collection of the Lubavitch Library—we are publishing a small selection of the Rebbe’s words about the victory of the seforim and the instructions derived from that victory.

In the selection that follows, the implication of the victory of the seforim is clearly highlighted. The Rebbe emphasizes that the proclamation of “didan natzach” alone does not give full expression to the victory of the seforim: the true victory is manifested only in the increase of Torah learning that it brings about.

This selection includes many points about the virtues of learning from the seforim and the manner in which this learning should be done. Some examples include the importance of learning as an expression of honor toward the seforim; the advantage of public Torah learning; the importance of learning halacha and chassidus—i.e. areas of learning that lead to action; learning with fervor and passion; dissemination of Torah; learning

VICTORY CELEBRATION— ACCORDING TO THE SEFORIM’S INSTRUCTIONS.

It is obvious that the way to find out how to celebrate the victory of the seforim is by “asking” the seforim themselves—i.e. by analyzing the seforim themselves for the answer to this question, and implementing their instructions.

In the thinking of the masses, a victory surrounding a precious object, such as a precious stone for example, is celebrated by an increase in the honor shown to the object. This is done by putting it in a most honorable place, where it remains untouched, and unused. At the very most, it may be gazed upon from time to time.

THE SEFORIM PROCLAIM THEIR PURPOSE: TO BECOME WORN OUT AND TORN

The Seifer Torah itself emphasizes that its purpose is realized when [Jews study] seforim and exert themselves [to understand the seforim’s content], on a daily basis.

According to Torah, then, the victory of the seforim—as stated in the seforim themselves—is expressed (not in their being more heavily guarded...off limits...like a Seifer Torah in an aron kodesh, but) in their being used and studied more. Indeed, the more the seforim are studied, the greater the honor shown to them (notwithstanding the wear-and-tear that may result from abundant use of them). Ultimately, this brings additional honor also to the Sifrei Torah (which must be safeguarded in an aron kodesh, etc), for, as the pasuk says, the purpose of the Sifrei Torah is “teach it...place it in their mouths,” this being accomplished through

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of mishnayos; the contribution of Torah study to the bringing of the Redemption; the value of time and its proper utilization, and the purchasing of seforim.

We are grateful to all those who assisted, physically or financially, in this work aimed at inspiring Anash to increase their Torah learning. May the words of the Rebbe Rayatz be fulfilled in them: “One who dedicates himself to arousing others to set aside fixed times for the study of Torah—the Torah will bring him abundant good, both physical [good] and spiritual [good].” (Likkutei Dibburim vol.1, p. 120)

May we soon merit the fulfillment of the verse, “Tzion will be redeemed through justice”—i.e. through the study of Torah we will enter the period when the Jewish people “will be undistracted from Torah and its wisdom” and “the entire world will be involved in nothing but knowing G-d...for the land will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as waters cover the ocean.”

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TORAH STUDY— THE TRUE VICTORY OF THE SEFORIM

TRUE VICTORY— INCREASED TORAH STUDY

Obviously, the redemption and victory of the seforim is true only insofar as it results in an increase in the learning of Torah seforim [especially the seforim that were redeemed]. As such, it is understood that the day of Hei Teives needs to be accompanied by a strengthening and an increase in the learning of Torah seforim, beginning with the first ‘seifer’ of the Oral Torah—mishnayos.

learning [also those Torah teachings appearing in the form of] printed text.... The seforim themselves proclaim that the purpose of their existence (which is, therefore, also the way they are honored) is that they be studied—even at the expense of their physical condition.

MEASURING STICK OF VICTORY

The conclusion from all of the above, insofar as it concerns actions that are to be taken, is that from this point on there needs to be a significant strengthening of, and increase in, the study of Torah. This is the measuring stick that determines the true extent of the seforim’s victory – the seforim’s “didan natzach.”

In simple terms, there needs to be an increase in the establishing of fixed times for Torah study, especially communal Torah study—in the spirit of the teaching, “Ten people sitting and studying Torah...”—[which makes it possible to study through] “interaction with friends,” and “deliberation among students.”

First and foremost, this [increase] should involve such learning as leads to the performance of deeds (“Great is Torah study, for it leads to deeds”)—i.e. to knowing “the deeds that are to be done and the deeds that are not to be done.” This includes the learning of halacha, in such works as the Rambam, the Shulchan Aruch and commentaries, etc. It also includes the learning of Pnimitiyus HaTorah—Chassidus—which enables one to fulfill those mitzvahs whose obligation is perpetual, such as “belief in G-d,” “unity of G-d,” “fear and love of G-d,” etc.

PERMEATES ONE’S ENTIRE BEING— “ALL MY BONES SHALL SAY”

Furthermore—and this is essential—the learning should be such that it permeates one’s entire being—in the spirit of the verse, “All my bones shall say,” and in the spirit of the Talmudic saying, “it is set in all of the 248 organs,” i.e. from the brain of the head to the heel of the foot, with the utmost vitality and passion. In the terminology of our Sages, “Just as [at Sinai], fear, trepidation, trembling and perspiration [accompanied the giving of the Torah], so too here [i.e. when one studies Torah at any given time], it should be with fear, trepidation, trembling and perspiration.” That is to say that “the Torah study of any given person at any given time (even the time of exile, and even the current exile—one of very intense darkness) is the actual word of G-d, spoken to Moses at Sinai ... as though [the one studying] received it from Sinai this very day!” This is underscored in the terminology of the daily Torah blessing, which uses the [present tense] “noissein (Who gives) haTorah” [rather than the past tense, “nossan”].

All of the above relates to each individual both in terms of his own self and in terms of his influence on others. With regard to the latter, this means that one should inspire others to increase their Torah study. Indeed, influencing others is an expression of the commandment, “You shall love your fellow as yourself,” which is a “great principle of Torah”—in fact, “it is the entire Torah, the rest is but commentary.”

(Toras Menachem 5748, vol. 2, p. 165ff.)

Based on the above, we can better appreciate how the redemption of the seforim leads to the general Redemption. For the verse says, “Tzion will be redeemed through justice, meaning that through study, there occurs the redemption of Tzion. (which, as stated, makes the victory [the justice] of the seforim a true one) [Of the different ways to study Torah] the above pertains especially to the learning of Torah in seforim, beginning with mishnayos, of which the Sages said, “The ingathering of all the exiles occurs only in the merit of the mishnayos.” Among seforim themselves, the “redemption” aspect—“Tzion will be redeemed”—is especially underscored through the study of seforim that have already undergone redemption.

CELEBRATING HEI TEIVES: INCREASED TORAH STUDY

One may add that there is a practical instruction to be gleaned from all of this—that the event of Hei Teives needs to lead first and foremost to a strengthening and an increase in the learning of the seforim, including, and beginning with, the learning of mishnayos. As stated, this causes the redemption of the seforim to be followed immediately by the ultimate Redemption.

When G-d sees that the decisions made with regard to [the above] are sincere—i.e. they will surely be kept—He will regard it as though the mishnayos have already been learned.

(Toras Menachem 5752, vol. 2, p. 59)

NO CELEBRATIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF TORAH STUDY

NOT EVEN DURING “FREE TIME”

This is an appropriate occasion to point out something that is really self-evident—that the main purpose in the printing of a seifer is that the seifer should be learned. Buying the seifer and displaying it in a prominent place on the shelf is insufficient. In addition to the honor and respect shown a seifer through its purchase with money—which could have been used to buy items “vital to one’s life” (as stated by the Alter Rebbe in Tanya)—and through its being displayed in a prominent location, it is obvious that the main thing is to learn in the seifer. Even a little child understands that when his parents buy him a seifer it is not enough to honor the seifer (which is something he has learned to do by observing the way his parent relate to seforim), for the main thing is to learn in the seifer.

Likewise, the ultimate purpose in the release of the seforim from captivity is that it should lead to an increase in the learning and dissemination of Torah. G-d forbid that the joy [of the seforim’s release] should lead to any kind of distraction from Torah study—not only with regard to the fixed times for Torah study, such as the Torah study curriculum of yeshiva students, but even with regard to one’s free time, which can also be utilized for Torah study. [With regard to the yeshiva students]: celebrating and dancing for hours on end at the expense of Torah study—well intentioned as it may be—is unacceptable.

THE MAIN THING: DILIGENT TORAH LEARNING

As for the explanation given for this behavior—i.e. that Chassidim want to celebrate this joyous event—they should do this at the expense of their eating, sleeping, and so on; not at the

expense of their Torah study. When the time for Torah study arrives, one must forget about everything in the world, open his seifer, and learn with great diligence, as per the instructions of Rabboseinu Nesieinu, the founders of the yeshiva. Of course, one must pray for success in his learning, and also give tzedaka toward that end, but the main thing is to actually learn with great diligence. Furthermore—and this is essential—it is not enough that one learns Torah, the Torah must also teach him (as the well-known saying goes).

The reason I need make mention of so obvious a matter is because, in fact, the situation is not as it ought to be, etc.

As for the fact that there are mashpiim and mechanchim [to guide the students]—their behavior is such that their words have no affect on the students. Students are affected only by actual behavior, the ‘intentions’ of the mashpia (i.e. his being busy with very important things) are of no consequence to them.

IN DAYS GONE BY

I thus have no choice but to point out this obvious fact. If I remain silent, it is liable to be interpreted as acceptance [on my part] of this kind of behavior, though in days gone by, when things were as they should be, it was not necessary for me to point out that I surly would not agree to anything contrary to the Shulchan Aruch. There are ‘shpitz chabad’ individuals who maintain that questions should not be asked [about celebrating at the expense of Torah study]. But that is not true. Quite the contrary. I will be happy to receive questions, if something [I have said here] remains unresolved.

I have already spoken about this matter—i.e. that my not protesting is not to be interpreted as agreement—a number of times, but to no avail. I have no choice but to reiterate it yet again.

(Toras Menachem, 5748, vol. 1, p. 558)

REDEEM THE CAPTIVES: BUY SEFORIM

NEW SEFORIM ARE READILY AVAILABLE

What can each person do in order to hasten the redemption and return of the [captive] seforim and writings [still in Russia]?

The answer is simple:

Each and every person—men, women and children—should do an act resembling [the redemption of seforim]. That is, everyone should bring new seforim and (holy) writings into their home and [private] library, to be added to the seforim they already have in their “bayis malei seforim.”

Nowadays this is easy to do because new Torah works are being printed every week; some are reprints, and others—and this is the main thing—are new. Seforim are thus readily available for purchase, and [everyone should] acquire and purchase more and more seforim.

[Nesi Doreinu maintained, as is well-known, that a seifer ought to cost money. (In fact, there were certain booklets with regard to which he instructed that the price actually be printed on the cover.) He explained that in the world [at large]—the word “Olam,” is etymologically related to the word “he’elam,” which means concealment—a thing of value costs money. This is based on a teaching of our Sages: “A doctor who heals for free—his cure is worthless.” How much more so is this true of words of Torah—“Torah brings healing to the world!”

(Toras Menachem, 5752, vol. 2, p. 75)

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