

שיחות SICHOS YISROEL ישראל

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FROM THE SHIURIM OF

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PARSHAS BAMIDBAR - SHAVUOS



HARAV YISROEL BROG, SHLITA | ROSH HAYESHIVA, YESHIVAS TIFERES AVIGDOR
SHIUR PRESENTED IN 5777

Today, we're going to share with you a *moradige ma'aseh*, which is very well verified, about the *chashivus* of learning Torah and how a person has to take the opportunities that Hakadosh Baruch Hu affords him to learn Torah extremely seriously. If you go into the world and ask people, "What is your perspective or *shitah* about learning Torah?" a nice, well-meaning person would tell you, "It's very nice to learn Torah, but learning is not for everybody." "And what about *kollel*?" So he'd say, "You know it used to be *kollel* wasn't really a thing. It wasn't really that popular. Lately, they made a whole thing about it, that people should start their marriage off with Torah. Learn a year, six months, two years, three years. Long-time learner - five years. Super long time would be for eight years, maybe even ten years, but eventually they've got to grow up and get into the action." People have a totally *goyishe* perspective about the *chashivus* of learning Torah. The longer a person is out of the *yeshivah*, the more he loses his sense of the Torah's *chashivus*. I'm not going to tell you there are no exceptions because we're talking about generalities. This *shiur* is geared to those who are *zocheh* to learn Torah for a respectable amount of time in the day, those who are *zocheh* to learn in *kollel* and who are contemplating leaving the *kollel*, and people who are learning Torah out of *kollel* in a serious manner and contemplating taking it easy because, as they look around, they don't see many *balebatim* actually involved in serious, in-depth Torah learning.

ACCEPTING TORAH BY FORCE

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave us the Torah, even though we said *na'aseh venishma*, Hakadosh Baruch Hu was כפה עליהם הר כגיגית (Shabbos 88a). Hashem held the mountain over our heads and He said that if you're *mekabel* the Torah, good, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם, and if not, there will be your burial. Everybody ponders the question: Why was it necessary for Hakadosh Baruch Hu to act in a forceful manner? We had already said *na'aseh venishma*. We bought into the program already. What is the concept of putting this mountain over our heads and telling us, I've got to tell you something boys, if not, שם תהא קבורתכם. What's the *pshat*? Most people would say that sounds a little extreme. Hashem is selling such a wonderful thing, and we're all willingly accepting it and we're all interested in it, so why must He do it in such a strong fashion?

There are many answers, but the Maharal provides a famous answer.¹ The Maharal says, and this is a simplified understanding, that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was telling Klal Yisrael as follows. You know, there's a concept of a person accepting a job. He decides he's going to do the job, and accepts it seriously. But then you know what happens? He gets involved in the job, and he says, "I've got to tell you. It's not what I thought it was going to be. The conditions are not what I thought they'd be. I thought I was going to be working with better people. The type of work this job offers me - I'm not sure if that's what I'm looking for. This position is not for me." The boss says to the guy, "Excuse me. Didn't you come to those classes? Didn't you come to the meetings, and we showed you on the screen what was involved? We

¹ בפרק רבי עקיבא (שבת פח), "ויתצבו בתחתית ההר" (שמות יט, יז), אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר מחסאי, מלמד שכפה עליהם הר כגיגית, ואמר להם: אם אתם מקבלים את התורה - מוטב, ואם לאו - שם תהא קבורתכם. אמר רב אחא בר יעקב, מכאן מודעה רבה לאוריתא. אמר רבא, אף על פי כן הדר קבלוה בימי אחשוורוש, דכתיב (אסתר ט, כז) "קיימו וקבלו", וקיימו מה שקבלו כבר, עד כאן. והתוספות הקשו (שבת ריש פח), והלא כבר אמרו (שמות כד, ז) "נעשה ונשמע". ותרוצו, שמה כשיהיו רואים האש הגדולה יהיו חוזרין, עד כאן. ולפי הנראה אין הדברים האלו ברורים, שנאמר כי ישראל יחזרו מקבלת התורה, אשר לא יסוף זכות זה מזרעם וזרע זרעם עד עולם. ומה זכות הוא זה, שמה אם לא כפה עליהם ההר היו חוזרים. ועוד, יכפה עליהם ההר כשיהיו חוזרין, ולא עתה. ועוד, אם לא היה כפית ההר רק שלא היו חוזרין, הא דאמרין בעבודה זרה (ב'): 'כלום כפית ההר עלינו', לימא להו כלום אמרתם "נעשה ונשמע" קודם כפיית ההר. שאלו אמרתם "נעשה ונשמע" קודם, היה כופה עליהם ההר שלא יחזרו בשביל האש. אבל כיון שלא אמרו קודם זה "נעשה ונשמע", אין לכופות ההר. אבל מה שכפה עליהם ההר, שלא יאמרו ישראל אנוחנו קבלנו התורה מעצמנו. ואם לא היינו רוצים, לא היינו מקבלים התורה. ודבר זה לא היה מעלת התורה. היה התורה כל העולם תלוי בה. ואם לא הייתה התורה, היה העולם חוזר לתוהו ובהו (שבת פח). ולפיכך אין ראוי שתהיה קבלת התורה בבחירת ישראל, רק שהיה הקב"ה מחייב ומכריח אותם לקבל התורה, שאי אפשר זולת זה, שלא יחזיר העולם לתוהו ובהו. ואלו יקשה, סוף סוף היה בחנם מה שכפה עליהם הר כגיגית, שהרי כבר אמרו "נעשה ונשמע". דזה לא קשה, דדאורי עיקר הדבר לא היה בשביל שלא יחזרו, דלמה יחזרו, כיון שכבר אמרו "נעשה ונשמע". רק שדבר זה ראוי מצד עצמו, כי איך תהיה התורה, שהיא שלמות כל המציאות, על ידי שכן בחרי ישראל לקבל התורה. ואם כן שלמות העולם היה תולה בדבר אפשרי, שהיה אפשר שיקבלו, ואפשר שלא יקבלו. ולכן כפה עליהם הר כגיגית, שאם לא היו מקבלים התורה, שם תהא קבורתכם. ויש לומר גם כן שלכן כפה עליהם ההר כגיגית, שלא יאמרו ישראל כי יהיה חס ושלום בטול לקבלת התורה; כי מרצונם קבלו ישראל, ואפשר להפטר מדבר כזה, שהרי לא נעשה בהכרח, רק היה אפשר לקבל, ואפשר שלא לקבל. ולכן כפה עליהם הר כגיגית, לומר שהם מוכרחים לקבל התורה. וכל דבר שהוא מוכרח ומחויב, אין כאן הסרה וביטול, אחר שהיה מוכרח. וכך מוכרח במדרש פסוק (דברים כ, כט) "ולא תהיה לאשה לא ויכל שלחה לך ימיו". כשבה הקב"ה לתת תורה על הר סיני, כפה עליהם ההר כגיגית שיקבלו תורתו. וכיון שכן, הרי ישראל אנוסתו של הקב"ה, ואצל אנוסתו כתיב "ולו תהיה לאשה לא ויכל שלחה לך ימיו". ולא כן אצל מפתה. מפני שמשפט האנוס כפי מה שהיה המעשה המאנס. כי המאנס היה מכריח בהתולה על האישות. וכל דבר שהוא מוכרח, הוא מחויב, ולכן "לא ויכל שלחה לך ימיו". כפי אשר הוא עושה בעצמו האישות ההכרחי, לכן לא יסור כלל. ולכן כפה השם יתברך עליהם הר כגיגית, להיות החבור הזה הכרחי. וכל זיווג וחבור הכרחי, אין סילוק והסרה, כמו שהוא אצל המאנס אשה. ובמדרש, אתה מוצא כשבקשו לפרוק עול בימי יחזקאל, באו מקניי יהודה לדרוש (יחזקאל כ, א). אמרו לו, בן אדם, כהן הקונה עבד, מהו שיאכל בתרומה. אמר להם, יאכל. אמרו לו, אם חזר ומכר לישראל, אם יצא מרשותו. אמר להם, כן. אמרו לו, אף אנו יצאנו מרשותו של הקב"ה, נהיה כאומות העולם מכחישי ה'. אמר להם יחזקאל (יחזקאל כ, לב-לג) "העולה על רוחכם היה לא תהיה חי אני נאום ה' אם לא ביד חזקה ובחמה שפוכה אמלך עליכם", עד כאן. הרי שמדרש הזה בארו כי היו רוצים הרשעים לפרוק עול, שהיו עושים כי חבור זה אינו מוכרח, רק אפשרי שיהיה, ואפשר שלא יהיה. והשיב להם יחזקאל כי חבור זה מוכרח, כי הוא יתברך מכריח אותם על זה. ולפיכך כפה עליהם הר כגיגית, במה שהחבור הזה הכרחי, ואינו דבר שאפשר שיהיה, ואפשר שלא יהיה. שאחר שקבלת התורה הוא שלמות כל העולם, איך יהיה דבר זה אפשרי כלל. ולפיכך מסיק שם אחר זה מיד; אמר ריש לקיש, תנאי התנה הקב"ה עם מעשה בראשית, אם יקבלו ישראל התורה - מוטב, ואם לאו - יחזרו לתוהו ובהו. ולומר כי לכן כפה עליהם ההר כגיגית, מפני שכן מעשה בראשית תלויים בקבלת התורה. שכשם שבאש תיכרן כל מעשה בראשית, ונתן ללך אחד טבעו אשר יהיה נוהג עליו. כך ראוי שיהיה לאדם השכלי הנהגה שכלית, ודבר זה הוא תורת האדם, אשר התורה היא הנהגת השכלית, כמו שהתארר למעלה. ולפיכך היה נתינת התורה על ידי הכרח. אמנם למעלה בארנו עד עיקר הטעם. כי מחויב שיהיה האדם תחת העלה, מצד העלה אשר גזר המצות עליו, ובזה האדם הוא תחת רשות העלה. אבל שיהיה תחת העלה במה שהאדם קבל מעצמו עליו גזרת העלה, אין האדם בזה חבור העלה, כי ראוי שיהיה על האדם משפט העלוי. ודבר זה מחייב תורה מן השמים, והוא אחד מן מופתים שמחייב תורה מן השמים. ועיין למעלה (פ"ח) כי הארכנו בזה. ועוד יתבאר אצל (שמות כ, ב) "אני ה' אלהיך וגו'". ומה שאמר רב אחא "מודעה רבה לאוריתא". דסוף סוף היה קבלת התורה בהכרח, ואין דבר קבלה גמורה. שצריך שיהיה קבלת התורה ברצון המקבל. וכאשר כפה עליהם הר כגיגית, היה זה הכרח, ולא רצון. ועל זה אמר, "אף על פי כן הדר קבלוה בימי אחשוורוש וכו'". ביאור ענין זה, כי בימי אחשוורוש קבלו מצוה אחת מרצונם. ולא גזר השם יתברך דבר זה עליהם, רק הם קבלו מעצמם, והסכים הקב"ה עמהם. ומקרא מגילה היא מצוה אחת שנתחדשה, כמו שאמרנו שם (מגילה יד.) ארבעים ושמנה נביאים ושבע נביאות עמדו לישראל, וכולם לא פחתו ולא הוסיפו על תורת משה חוץ ממקרא מגילה. שמזה נלמדו כי מקרא מגילה כמו תוספות על התורה. ושם מפרש כי גם מקרא מגילה נרמז בתורה. וסוף סוף מקרא מגילה קבלת מצוה ממצוה אחת ממצוות התורה שקבלו מעצמם, ולא היה זה מצד הכרח כמו שהיה מתחלה. רק שהיה זה מצד הרצון, והקב"ה הסכים על דים. ובזה היו מקבלים כל התורה מרצונם. שאם המצוה שהיא אחרונה לכל התורה, שהיא מקרא מגילה, קבלוה מעצמם, כי מי הכריח אותם לדבר זה, מכל שכן שאר מצוות שהם קודמים למקרא מגילה, שכלם הם ברצון. ובזה כאלו היה תחילה קבלת התורה ברצון, כי הוכיח הסוף על התחלה. ובזה די לבאר כי התורה לישראל ברצון מצד עצמם, אבל הכרחי היה להם מצד השם יתברך. כאשר ראוי לכל הדברים אשר הם שלמות העולם, שראוי שיהיה מוכרח ואינו אפשרי, כמו שהתארר (תפארת ישראל ל"ב)

demonstrated to you clearly what the job and the company environment entail. We showed you the kind of people you're working with and what the job is about. We didn't sell you this program, and you bought into it. And we invested time and effort in training you. Now you want to back out?" So, a lot of companies will have a clause covering this type of scenario. There's a certain amount of commitment, but there's a concept that a *poel*, a worker who accepts a job, could back out. There is such a concept. I said I would do the job for you. I'll build you a house. I'll paint your house. There is a concept of a worker saying in the middle of the day, "I don't want to work anymore." I didn't say you have to pay him. How much you have to pay him is a *shaylah* in *halachah*. No one forces you to do anything.

At Matan Torah, there was a concern that - okay, you bought into it today, but what's going to be in the future? What's going to be tomorrow? Tomorrow, when you get the details and you learn about the Torah, you may say, "This is too much." So Hashem told them, "I want you to know something, boys. This is not a choice anymore. When you say *na'aseh venishma* and I grant you the Torah, you become hooked up to the breathing apparatus." Imagine a guy who decides to become a deep-sea diver and he takes a job. He goes out with those oxygen tanks on his back. He goes down and now he's investigating some old shipwreck in the water. I once read a description of what it's like to go down a mile under the sea. You don't see light. It's murky. It's not a pleasant thing. It's not a walk in the park. And then you have to find a hole in the ship and allow yourself to get in and start *kriehing* around in there, not knowing what you're looking for. You're definitely nervous. Will your tank hit something and get dislocated? Will you get stuck down there? You have to remember your way in and you have to remember your way out. Remember, a ship lying on its side is like a hotel. Some of these ships have a couple of floors. It's an extremely *moradige pachad*. If you have a fear of flying, forget about this one. But this is a fear that most people have. Deep-sea divers are a very unique group of people who are capable of doing this. That's why people like to send down those robots. The people stay on the ground and that's much easier.

What if the guy decides in the middle of the job that it's not for him? Forget about it. I know I bought into this. They gave me a nice package over here to do the job. They showed me the pictures and what it looks like. They showed me diagrams of what they have and all kinds of things. I say I don't like the job anymore. Do you know what you need to make sure you don't do? Make sure you don't disconnect your air supply when you say, "This job ain't for me," because if you do, you know what's going to happen? You're going to drop dead on the spot. You better play and act like you like the job. You swim out nicely. You come up to the top. When you're on the boat you say, "Boys, I quit." They say, "You quit? We don't have any quitters on this boat. Now we're throwing you back in the sea with the sharks." So the guy is smart. He waits until he gets back on dry land and then he says, "I quit."

A DIFFERENT NESHAMAH

Hashem told us, "My *kinderlach*, Torah is not optional. By Me giving you the Torah, you go through a metamorphosis. You now exist on different oxygen. You now live a different life. Your *neshamos* are now different. You have a different *neshamah* than you had yesterday." You're plugged into all kinds of *zachen*. If you pull out now, שם תהא קבורתכם. Remember that for the

rest of your existence. A Jew doesn't have the option.

That's a frightening thing. Secular people or even modern people don't understand that or buy into that. They can never accept that. "What do you mean I don't have an option?! What does that mean I don't have an option?!" My friend, you're Jewish. You were chosen. You were a chosen nation. You're a deep-sea diver. You don't like it? Too bad. שם תהא קבורתכם.

I'll never forget years ago when I was in Eretz Yisrael and they opened up a new road in Yerushalayim. A car was driving on it on Shabbos and some Yerushalmi guy decided to make a protest. There was one car. So he lay down like this in a way that the car couldn't get around him, spread-eagled on the highway. I told that Yid, "I'm telling you, you could end up being *kaved katzutz*, chopped liver. It's Shabbos, be careful. You're playing with fire." He said, "But it's Shabbos!" Anyway, the driver sees him on the road and he slows down his car and drives up right up until his body, until the front wheels touch the guy's body. Then he stopped. And this Yerushalmi guy didn't even flinch. The driver came out of his car and started screaming. I thought he would scream in Hebrew. No, he screamed in English. "What the...! What's going on over here?" He was from England.

I said, "Sir, what seems to be the problem?" He said, "What's this bloke doing on the road?" I said, "You hear? He's saying something. Listen to him." He said, "What's he saying?" "He's saying it's Shabbos today. On Shabbos, you're not allowed to drive." He said, "What! Jews are not allowed to drive on Shabbos?" "It's in the Bible. I'm sure you believe in the Ten Commandments. You are Jewish, right? It says you've got to remember the Shabbos. You've got to rest on Shabbos." "That's not called resting." The guy was saying like, "I never accepted that. I never bought into that. You can't force your way of life on me." I said, "I don't force it on you, and he's not forcing it on you. The One Above forced it on you." שם תהא קבורתכם, my friend. You can understand I didn't tell him the *vort* so he wouldn't run the guy over and show him that שם תהא קבורתכם - your *kevarah*, not my *kevurah*.

YOU CAN'T SWITCH JOBS

But *al kol panim*, that's what a person has to realize. You don't have an option. I told you a story from Rav Elya Lopian (1876-1970), a mind-blowing story. There was a *bachur* who came to the yeshivah, and then a war broke out and he decided he's going to participate in the war. Rav Elya Lopian says, "You can't. If you go, you're a deserter." He said, "No. There's a war going on. I want to fight." He says, "You're fighting right here in the *yeshivah*. It's where your position is. You can't switch positions. You know what it says in the *gemara*: "If you switch positions, you're going to Gehinom." The guy said, "No. I've got to go." He meant well. He was idealistic. He didn't understand what Torah was. He didn't understand that this was the position that Hashem placed him in. Rav Elya Lopian fought with him, and he said to him, "Do not leave! Who knows if you'll ever make it to the front. This is the front. Fight your battle here." The guy didn't listen.

I'm not going to repeat the whole story now. I'll tell you about it very briefly. The guy didn't listen. He went. And then the first time they were training with hand grenades, he pulled the pin a little too fast, and didn't let go of the thing. It exploded in his hand, and he died. The yeshivah was in an

uproar. “Nu,” Rav Elya Lopian said, “Who says he’ll make it to the front.”

So we’re going to say he meant well? He was idealistic? They still shoot idealistic soldiers. You could be in a position in the army, and they tell you, “You take that position. Don’t move.” You say, “I don’t like it.” That guy needs help. They don’t ask you for any stories. You can’t do what you want. It’s not a *hefkervelt*.

In light of that, we’re going to share with you a story, a *moradige ma’aseh*. This story was told by Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer (1877-1949), one of the closest *talmidim* of the Chafetz Chaim. They say he was one of his top three *talmidim*.

REB ELYA DUSHNITZER’S TZIDKUS

Reb Elya was born in 1877. He was a *tzaddik* from his youth. He was a *ba’al ma’alah*, and worked on himself to become a super *ba’al ma’alah*. He was an *anav*, known to be the most outstanding person in respect to others, even to a little child. He had an interesting *minhag* that at the end of speaking to everyone, even a child, he would say as follows: “I hope you can be *mochel* me if I didn’t treat you with the proper respect.” He did this with anybody, after whatever conversation it was, in learning, in anything. They used to say about him that he was particular with the *Chazal* that says: when you come to *shamayim* they will ask you *המלכת את חברך עליך בנחת רוח*, did you appoint your fellow man as your *melech* pleasantly? Did you treat him like he was your *melech*? He took that *Chazal* literally and that’s what he worked on his whole life.

Eventually, Rav Elya came and learned by the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim once sent him to remove a dybbuk from a girl. This was an episode that caused an uproar all over Klal Yisrael. Rav Elya Lopian said there was a *mesorah* that people who were there when they were removing the dybbuk from this girl verified that the dybbuk started to praise Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer. The dybbuk said that in *shamayim* they call you *פה קדש וטהור*. That’s what they call you: Rav Eliyahu the *פה קדש וטהור*. That alone should tell us who Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer was. The Chazon Ish said by him it’s *barur* he’s one of the *lamed vav tzaddikim*. To him, it was *barur*.

But Rav Eliyahu Dushnitzer, the same way he was *ahuv* upstairs, he was *ahuv* downstairs. People knew him as one of the *chassidim* of the generation.

The first time I heard about him was when I was a young *bachur*. I had never heard of him before. Even though he was *rosh yeshivah*, he was part of the *hanhalas hayeshivah* in Lomza in Eretz Yisrael for many years, but as a young boy, I wasn’t familiar with Lomza in Petach Tikva. I heard about him for the first time from Rav Sholom Schwaradron (1912-1997), *zichrono levrachah*. He spoke about him in the most amazing, glowing terms. Even though I had never heard of Rav Elya Dushnitzer before, after hearing Rav Sholom speak about him, I remember feeling such a *teshukah*, such a desire to find out more about this man. How come he’s hiding? How come I don’t see him in Olameinu or the Jewish Press? How come I don’t see him?

Since then, I’ve gotten to know a lot about him. I read his Torah. He was a very special person. His last twenty-five years, he was in the Lomza Yeshivah in Petach Tikva. To give you a little example of how *medakdek* he was, the *yeshivah* provided him with electricity in his house. He had a little

shack *mamash*. It had no floor on it, only sand. They couldn't put tiles on. It had no furniture. He used the electricity in such a limited way so as not to waste the money of the *yeshivah*. When he would sit down and eat supper, he would turn off the electricity and open a little lantern. When they asked him, "Why don't you use it?" he said, "This is all the light I need to eat. I don't need any more light, so why should I waste the electricity of the *yeshivah*?" In his later years, even when he would sit and learn after supper, he also stopped using the electricity. They asked him, "Why did you stop? It's for learning." He said, "Now that I'm older, I'm always concerned that maybe I'm going to fall asleep when I'm learning. If I fall asleep when the light is on, it means I'm stealing that electricity from the *yeshivah*." That's the kind of *tzaddik* he was.

There was once a man from Petach Tikva who was going to take a trip to Europe to the city where Rav Elya Dushnitzer came from. Rav Elya told him, "Can I ask you a favor?" The man said, "Sure, why not?" Rav Elya said, "There's a certain store that a lady runs, an *almanah*, and she sells *sefarim*. Many years ago, I bought a *sefer* from her, and I'm not sure if I paid enough for the *sefer*. The *sefer*, it seems, was very valuable. I'm sending you there with money. Give her the money. Tell her that I want to make up for the cost of the *sefer*, and she should be *mochel* me the rest."

Bekitzur, the guy went to the store, and the lady said, "What does he want from me? Do you know how many people he already sent to me with money for that *sefer*? I told him he paid it up the first time he bought it. Tell him I'm *mochel* him. It's a *matanah*. He shouldn't send me any more money. Tens of people came in to offer me money for that *sefer*," she said.

That's Rav Elya Dushnitzer.

THE DYBBUK

I heard the following story from Rav Sholom Schwardron, to whom Rav Elya had related it. I remember Rav Sholom Schwardron telling it over with a *gantze hakdamah* about who Rav Elya Dushnitzer was. Not the *hakdamah* we just mentioned, but other stories about him. He said, "This is what my *rebbe* told me: 'You can repeat this story and it's *kedai* to tell it to others, and you could say that I told it to you *bediyuk*, exactly like I heard it from the *gaon* and *gadol beYisrael* Rav Elazar Moshe Hurvitz (1817-1890) from Pinsk, the Pinsker Gaon.'" (Rav Elazar Moshe had a *kup* not *stam*. He was a *baki* and a *lamdan*. In Brisk they're *machshiv* him. I can't even tell you how much they're *machshiv* him. The Chazon Ish was *machshiv* him. He wrote a *sefer* called *Ohel Moshe*.) So Rav Shalom said, "I heard this story from Rav Elya." And he added, "You know me, that I don't lie and I don't even exaggerate or even add one thing to what I heard. I'm repeating this *milah bemilah*, word for word, the way I heard it from Rav Elya who heard it from the *gaon* Rav Elazar Moshe." And this is the story.

There was a Yid who lived in Kelm. He was a *socher*, a businessman, and a *ben Torah*. His name was Rav Nota. He had one daughter, a *bas yechidah*, and he married her off to a *chashuve bachur*, an outstanding *bachur*. A *talmid chacham*. He gave him a dowry of thousands of rubles and a number of years that the *bachur* and his wife could eat by the *shver* so he wouldn't have to spend his money, and he sat and learned Torah for a number of years. When the time was up that he was finished living by his *shver*, he moved out of his

shver's house and they started to live on their own, from their own money. The daughter, like most wives, started to say, מה נאכל, "What are we going to eat now? We've got to make a plan. If we're going to eat the savings, we're not going to have any money." So the husband said, "I'm very sorry. בפשי חשקה בתורה. I love learning. I'm *shteiging* away. I can't separate from the Torah and go to business." These were his words. You want me to throw the Torah in the *yam*, in the sea?

It happens all the time. The wife says, "That's enough. I've had enough. My brother went to work. Other people go to work. I'm *paskening* that you should go to work. I want to have a better life. I can't live like this anymore. I can't live with this *mesiras nefesh* anymore. I can't sacrifice. I want to be like everybody else. I want to have two new cars." Don't you have two cars? No, it's not two cars. "I want a new Honda Odyssey. I don't want a four-year-old Honda Odyssey. Only one of us drives the Sienna minivan. And I want a Honda Pilot and I want a this and a that. I want to be a captain. You learned enough years already. It's enough time. *Nu*."

They had money from the dowry. The wife said, "Let me tell you what's happening with my father's money. We're going to take this money and we're going to invest it in a business. We're going to open a store. I'll run the store." See, the wife was a *tzadeikis*. She didn't tell her husband, "You have to run the store." I'll run the store. A *tzadeikis*. "Except for two hours. For two hours a day, you stand in the store, and the rest of the hours you can continue learning just like you learned until now." It sounds like a very nice, accommodating wife, no? It sounds like a fair offer. The guy's wife wants *parnasah*. That's not a crime. People have to live. That's not a crime. Everybody likes to live. The guy was *maskim*. For three months, it went like that. He worked two hours a day, and his wife took care of the store the rest of the day. But after three months, the two hours became four hours. Business is business. Then the four hours after a while became eight hours. Everybody works eight hours a day. That's a full day. He became *kulo* involved in the business. He didn't have time to learn anymore. He was too tired. Everybody knows these stories today.

One day, it was a Motzei Shabbos, after *chatzos halaylah*. Outside, there was a snowstorm falling. Rav Sholom said, "I'm telling you over the words the *rebbe* said. How he said it. I'm not being *mosif*." The lady went outside to spill out the barrel of unclean water. They had used it to wash their dishes or whatever they used it for, and now they had to spill it out. She walked outside to throw it out and returned home. And then, all of a sudden, she was choking. She couldn't talk. Her husband was afraid something got stuck in her throat, so he ran to call the doctor. They called the doctor. He checked her out. He said, "I don't know what to do." Starting from the next day, they started to visit doctor after doctor. They visited many doctors. They even travelled to Vienna; from Kelm, they went to Vienna. That's a *shtickel* trip. Vienna was famous for hospitals with big experts. They checked. No one could give a diagnosis.

In Kelm, they started to talk and say *efshar* it's a dybbuk. Maybe a dybbuk entered her body, and it's not a medical condition. Maybe that's what's causing her *tzaros*. They traveled from Kelm to Stutchin. Why did they go there? Because in Stutchin there was a famous *mekubel* named Rav Mendel. For such matters, you went to him. They came to Rav Mendel. Rav Mendel started to talk to the dybbuk about certain things, and suddenly they heard a voice emanating from the woman answering the questions.

Now, when a dybbuk talks, the lips don't move at all. The sound comes out. Then all the people that heard it were astounded, and they said, "Ah! It's *taka* a dybbuk." But the *tzaddik* Rav Mendel said, "*ich vais dos nisht*, I don't know for sure if it is." He asked the lady, "Who is accompanying you? Who is with you?" The *kol* said, "Five *malachei chavalah*, five black destroying angels." He said, *vos zenem zei nemen*, "Tell me their names. What are their names?" The *kol* said *kach vekach*. He named each one by name. Rav Mendel said, "Yes, *dos is an emese dybbuk*."

He started to ask the *neshamah* questions. He said, "Who are you? Where are you from?" He said, "I lived tens of years ago, as a *bachur* in Brisk. Not in the Brisk *yeshivah* but in the city of Brisk. Then I traveled to Africa." He said that when he got to Africa, he got into the wrong company and his friends ruined him. They were *mekalkel* him. He was chilling in Africa, like they say. He was chilling with the *sheine mentschelach* over there. He was *over al kol haTorah kulah*. He went off the *derech*. One time, he was traveling in a wagon going fast. It hit something and turned over, and he was killed. He's being *mesgalgel* in the world from then until now. For tens of years, he had no rest. Rav Mendel said, "Why didn't you do *teshuvah* before you died?"

I remember the first time I heard this, I said, "Wow, I hope I'm *zocheh* to do *teshuvah*." It means if this *sheiget*, this Brisker *bachur* who was *over al kol haTorah kulah* would have done *teshuvah* before he died, you know what would have been? A whole different *matzav*. Unbelievable! He told him that because of the *pachad* and the *bahalah* at the time that he fell off the wagon, he was disoriented and he forgot to be *meharher beteshuvah*.

Then he said to him, "*Nu, vus vilst du?* What's your connection with this lady? Why did you *krich* on her? You caused her *yesurim noraim*." And he began to laugh an uproarious laugh. He said, "You want to know? I'll tell you." He said that the mother of this girl and the mother of her husband, that's her mother-in-law, who both had already died and were in the *olam ha'emes*, had beseeched Hakadosh Baruch Hu *lema'alah beshamayim*, that I should enter her and I should cause her *yesurim*. "Please let my daughter suffer. Give my daughter *yesurim*."

This is what he said. If not for this, she would have no chance, not in this world and not in *olam haba*. She stands no chance. For doing what? Was she *mechallel Shabbos*? Was she not *zahir beniddah*? Was she not *zahir bechallah*? *Behadlakas haner*? What did she do wrong? She combed her hair on Shabbos? No. She took her husband away from *eisek haTorah*.

Now we would say she didn't take him away. They made up for two hours of work. She didn't take him away. He got more involved, four hours, and then six hours, and then eight hours. It's not her fault. "You took your husband away from learning." "Oh no. I said he could learn. When it's not day and it's not night, I don't mind if he learns Torah all the time. As long as he's with the family the whole evening, and then he spends quality time with me, and then he goes to work all day like all normal people. If he wants to stay up and learn from two to six in the morning, I've never stopped him." Her mother and her mother-in-law begged Hashem, beseeched Hashem. "Give her *yesurim*. She has no chance in this world and in the next world to make it."

When Rav Mendel heard this he turned to the husband and said, “Promise me you’re going to go back to learning” and he promised on the spot. Then Rav Nota said to the *neshamah*, “I’m going to learn *mishnayos le’iluy nishmascha* - of the *bachur* - and I’m going to donate a certain amount of *neiros* to light in the *beis hakenesses* for your *neshamah*.” Then Rav Mendel gathered a *minyan* of ten people into his room to say *Tehillim*. Rav Mendel was standing behind the ten. The ten were in front. He was standing behind the ten, and he was saying something, whatever he said. They don’t know what he was saying. The lady was sitting on a chair in the middle of the room. Suddenly, she rolled off, and fell off the chair, she fell onto the ground and a huge, abnormal *kol* came out that you were able to hear in the whole city of Stutchin. What did it say? *Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem echad, kabalas malchus shamayim*. And then her nail on her pinky broke off, shot off from one hand. Suddenly, the window broke and she was out of it. She then came back to herself.

This is the story. I heard it from Rav Shalom’s mouth. He said again, “You can tell this *ma’aseh* over and you know I don’t tell lies and I’m not *magzim*. I told you exactly how it was.”

Now Rav Sholom added that his *rebbe*, Rav Elya Dushnitzer was *mosif*, saying, “I’ll tell you something else. I heard that this couple, already older, came to Eretz Yisrael and they live in Tel Aviv. They have a whole *mishpachah* of children, *eineklach*.” He told Rav Sholom, “You know them but I’m not going to tell you the name because it could *shtir* their *shidduchim*. People will be afraid. I went myself on a Motzei Shabbos Kodesh from Petach Tikva to Tel Aviv, and I sat in their home and they themselves told me the whole story the way I heard it from Rav Elazar Moshe and the way I gave it over to you.” *Ad kan divrei* Rav Elya Dushnitzer.

There is another transmission of this story that came through Rav Elya Lopian. Rav Elya Lopian was another *rebbe* of Rav Sholom. Rav Elya Lopian said, “I heard this story from the father of the girl, who told it to me by the fence of the *chatzer* of the *talmud Torah*. There was a fence around the *talmud Torah* in Kelm. I was standing there with him. He said over this whole *ma’aseh*. He said he told me one *hosafah* that Rav Elya Dushnitzer didn’t say over. The *hosafah* was that when the dybbuk was in the presence of Rav Mendel, he would scream *bekolei kolos*. It was *pachadim noraim* that anybody who was there *pashut* trembled in their boots, and *mamash* was shaking from the cries. Rav Mendel said, “*Vos shreis du?*” He would say, “I’m petrified. The *malachei chavalah* are waiting that I should leave the *guf* of this *ishah* and they’re going to tear me to shreds.” The *malachei chavalah* can’t touch the *nefesh* when he’s in the *nefesh* of somebody else. After a number of minutes went by he started to talk *leitzanus*, *nivul peh*, disgusting *nivul peh*. Everybody had to put their hands over their ears not to hear the *divrei nevalah*. They asked him, “What’s the *pshat*? Here you are petrified from the *malachei chavalah*. You’re *mamash* shaking in your boots, so behave!” You know what he said? “*Teidu*, you should know, if you don’t do *teshuvah* and you don’t cleanse yourself from the *cheit* when the *nefesh* comes up *lema’alah*, it still desires to do the *ra* in the same way it did it *lematah*.” That’s what he said! Rav Elya Lopian concluded that from this story you see the power of the *koach hata’avah* how it becomes part of you and stays with you, so that even with the *pachadim* of five *malachei chavalah*, who could scare the pants off anybody, and still in all, you can’t control yourself!

TORAH IS NOT SOMETHING TO PLAY AROUND WITH

Rabosai, you have to know this is the *ma'alah* of *limud haTorah*. Says the *gemara* (Bava Basra 79a): כל הפורש עצמו מדברי תורה נופל בגיהנם. It doesn't mean in the next world. It means right now. In this world. A person might say, "Oho, does that mean I have to learn my whole life?" It says in the *passuk* והגית בו יומם ולילה. It does say that. I'm sorry to tell you. It does say חייב אדם ללמוד תורה. Did I say you don't have a *heter*? I told the guy, "Did you ever go to a *gadol* and ask him how much of a *heter* you have to go to work? What's the minimum amount of time you have to learn Torah every day and every night? Can you do it?" He said, "I've just gotten to the age that I want to leave *kollel*. It's time for me to leave. What if my wife tells me it's okay, but I'm feeling a little burnt out? Is that an acceptable reason?" You have to ask a *gadol* that *shaylah*. But after hearing this story I've got to tell you something. Torah is not something to play around with.

The Ramchal writes a letter to his *rebbe*, Rav Yeshayah Bassan (1673-1739), where he asks, 'Do you know why in a certain city (he called it *medinas hakomer*, in the country of Italy where the Vatican is), there was a *sereifah* where they burned *sefarim*?' They made a public burning of *sifrei kodesh*. The Ramchal writes to his *rebbe*, "I'll tell you why it happened. *Mishamayim* they told me זאת חוקת התורה." He says, "What's the *pshat*?" He says, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants Klal Yisrael to be *meimis* themselves *al divrei Torah*." It says זאת התורה אדם כי עמלו באוהל and therefore this thing happened. He said, "There was a tremendous *kitrug* against Klal Yisrael in that *medinah* כי לא המיתו עצמם." They are not *meimis* themselves in Torah. There's no *mesiras nefesh* for יגיעה בתורה and עמלות בתורה. That's number one and והלכו אחרי הנאות העולם, they went after the pleasures of the world. It was a message for the whole Italy, כי כן בכל אטליה. This is how it is in the *gantze* Italy. He writes to his *rebbe*, "I'm telling you *al pi* what was *nimsar* to me from the *shamayim*."

There's an *eidus* from Rav Yosef Cairo who also had the same message from *shamayim*. The *maggid* was *megaleh* to him that there was a city in Northern Bulgaria that also had terrible *gezeiros*, and he said it was because of the *miut tzedakah* and the מיעוט תורה שעושה בהם. The *tzedakah* wasn't great and the Torah wasn't great. That's what Beis Yosef writes in his *Maggid Meisharim*, *Parshas Va'eira*.

Rabosai, we're coming to Shavuos. Shavuos is *kabalas haTorah*. It's a recommitment, a rededication. Of course you have *ta'avos*. Of course you like *hana'os olam hazeh*. But not at the expense of ימינו. אם תקבלו את תורת ימינו. מוטב ואם לאו שם תהיה קבורתכם

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