

On the Love of Torah: Impromptu Remarks at a Siyyum

By Maran HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik Zt"l

On April 1, 1973, Rabbi Soloveitchik's shiur at Yeshiva University completed learning the first chapter of Chullin. The Rav was asked at the time to say a few words in honor of the occasion. What follows is a reconstruction of his impromptu remarks explaining the custom of saying hadran alakh—we will return to study you again—which is recited upon the completion of learning a Talmudic chapter or Tractate. (This article first appeared in Shiurei HaRav published by SOY.)

The Jew unceasingly seeks, indeed craves, Kedushah (sanctity) and Torah. The Ramban explains that the preface to the Shir Shel Yom is always "Today is the first (second, third, etc.) day in the Shabbat (cycle) because the Jew counts each day with longing, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Shabbat. In a similar vein, the Chinukh explains that the counting of the Omer reflects the Jew's awareness that the goal of the Exodus from Egypt was the receiving of the Torah, and by counting the days, the Jew demonstrates his impatient longing for Torah. Similarly, the mitzvah of Tosefet Shabbat, of ushering in the Sabbath some small time before its obligatory commencement at sunset, exemplifies the Jew's impatient yearning for Kedushah.

This search for Kedushah is really a search for The Holy One, Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself. Real Kedushah is found only when He "spreads the shelter of His peace (sukkat shalom)" over us.

The Talmud (Pesachim 113a) says that one who leaves over wine from the havdalah cup for the following week's kiddush, is worthy of a share in the world to come, for such a person symbolizes that, even when one Shabbat is leaving, he is already anticipating the next one.

The Gemarah (Yoma 19b-20a) relates that once Yom Kippur was not properly observed in Nehardea and God explained that it was because of "lapetach chatat roveitz" (Genesis 4:7). In order to experience Yom Kippur properly adequate preparation is needed. We start preparing on Rosh Chodesh Elul and gradually ready ourselves for Yom Kippur. During Elul, we must climb a very steep mountain. Yom Kippur is the summit, the apex, the day of reconciliation between God and man. One cannot cross immediately and directly into Kedushah. At the entrance to Kedushah (petach), if there is insufficient preparation, there is sin (chatat). In Nehardea, they were not prepared to experience the sanctity of the day.

Muktzeh, which actually means something not prepared from before Shabbat, may not be used on Shabbat because one must prepare for Shabbat. Preparation which is so important for experiencing

Kedushah, is also important for Talmud Torah.

In a certain sense what Kedushah is for the Jew, Torah is for the talmid chakham. Torah should not just be an intellectual pastime. True, one can enjoy the intellectual creativity involved in Talmud Torah, but Talmud Torah should be an emotional experience as well; one should feel a tremor when engaged in it. The Torah should be seen not just as a book, but as a living personality, a queen like the Shabbat Malketa, with whom one can establish an I-thou relationship. In many places, the Torah is referred to as a personality, as for example: "The Torah said before The Holy One Blessed Be He." The study of Torah should be a dialogue, not a monologue. If I look at the Gemarah as simply paper and print, as merely a text, I would never be creative; Torah is a friend.

"Say to wisdom (Torah), thou art my sister" (Proverbs 7:4). If the Gemarah is approached as a plain text you might master it but you cannot be creative. To become a lamdan you must look at the Torah as an individual—a living personality. Then it becomes a part of you. I feel committed to defend the Rambam. Torah becomes a delight; it inspires you. There is a feeling of joy at having something precious, at having a treasure. But just as there is no Shabbat or Yom Kippur without preparing and questing, so also is this true concerning Talmud Torah.

To be a lamdan requires hatmadah and inquisitiveness and curiosity. If I love someone, I am inquisitive, I am interested in him and in his plans.

If I were asked how an emotional experience can be had through studying the laws of monetary fines and damages etc., I would say that it is true that the exterior of Torah is formal and abstract, but behind the shell of conceptual abstractions there is a great fire burning, giving warmth and love, and one can love the Torah in turn with great passion. When you apprehend the Torah as a personality, not just as a book, it infiltrates your emotional as well as your intellectual life. An am haaretz cannot have this experience, and one cannot be a lamdan without it.

"Blessed art Thou...Who has com-

manded us to be involved (laasok) in the words of the Torah." Torah is not only to be studied but demands an all encompassing involvement, laasok b'divrei Torah. Tosafot (Brakhot 11b sub. shekvar) asks why the blessing for Torah, recited once in the morning, suffices for each time one learns during the day no matter how many interruptions have taken place (e.g. one has gone to work), while the blessing for residing in the Sukkah must be recited anew each time one returns to the Sukkah after leaving it. They answer that since the obligation of Talmud Torah is continuous, v'hagita bo yomam valailah (Joshua 1:8)—one is always conscious of the mitzvah. However, any discontinuity of awareness (heseich hadaat) relating to the mitzvah of sukkah effectively requires that a new brakhah be recited each time the observance of the mitzvah is terminated and then subsequently renewed.

Apparently there are two kinds of awareness according to Tosafot. The first is an acute awareness; clearly this is lacking when one thinks about other matters. The second is latent awareness and this awareness is still present even though one is engaged in other matters.

When a mother plays with her child there is an acute awareness of the child. But even when the mother works at a job or is distracted by some other activity, there is a natural latent awareness of her child's existence. This latent awareness remains throughout her entire lifetime and can never be extinguished. It is expressed in commitment, devotion, and in a feeling of identification, a feeling that I and the baby are one. The infant is the center of gravity of the parent's lives. They feel they cannot live without their child.

The same is true with regards to Torah. There may not be an acute awareness of Torah for twenty four hours each day. But the latent awareness never ceases. The injunction which forbids discontinuity of awareness from Torah is measured in terms of "pen yasuru milvakhah" (lest Torah be forgotten from your heart—Deut. 4:9), not in terms of pen yasuru milimod (lest Torah not be studied). All the injunctions against heseich hadaat from Torah

(Continued on page 4)

Rabbi Philip Paretzky Passes Away

Rabbi Philip Paretzky, the bohen and a member of the Talmud faculty at RIETS since 1963, died suddenly on Sunday, October 4. Burial took place the same day. He was 75 years old and lived in the Bronx, NY.

Rabbi Paretzky had served as spiritual leader of Young Israel of Tremont in the Bronx for more than 25 years and was active in the Jewish community. He was the former executive director of the Bronx Miz-rachi and served as administrative director of the American Committee for Bar-Ilan University in Israel for four years.

Born in Poland in 1917, Rabbi Paretzky was ordained at the Grodna Yeshiva by the renowned Rabbi Shimon Shkop and by Warsaw's Chief Rabbi Shlomo David Kahana in 1934. He earned his master of arts degree in Semitics from Columbia University in 1942 and was ordained at RIETS a year later. He received a law degree from Fordham University in 1945.



As the bochen at the Yeshiva Program/Mazer School of Talmudic Studies and RIETS' Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Center of Rabbinic Studies, Rabbi Paretzky devoted himself to working with prospective rabbinical students, examining candidates and charting the progress of students already in the programs.

Rabbi Paretzky was the author of scholarly articles on Jewish law appearing in *Hamesilo*, the rabbinic publication of the Vaad Harabbonim in New York. He also wrote legal articles for the *Fordham Law Review*.

A hazkarah for Rabbi Paretzky z"l was held in the Harry Fischel Beth Hamidrash in the Joseph and Fay Tannenbaum Hall on Wednesday morning, November 18. Among those who addressed the assemblage were Dr. Norman Lamm, Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik and Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, and Rabbi Israel Paretzky. Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik referred to Rabbi Paretzky z"l as one of the last real talmidim of Rabbi Moses Soloveitchik z"l, his father.

Surviving are his wife, the former Yehudit Manber; three sons, Rabbi Koppel Paretzky, Rabbi Israel Paretzky and Zev Paretzky, a writer; a daughter, Mrs. Paulette Mandelbaum; and several grandchildren.

On the Love of Torah: Impromptu Remarks at a Siyyum

By *MaRan HaRav Joseph B. Soloveitchik Zt"l*

(Continued from page 3)

do not refer to a discontinuity of acute awareness. Rather they refer to a discontinuity of latent awareness, which, as already mentioned, is expressed in commitment, devotion, and self-identification with Torah. When even the latent awareness—the commitment to Torah—is forgotten and is dismissed from mind, then one is "worthy of death." This is the reason we say "laasok b'divrei Torah." Laasok implies that even when we are mentally involved with something else, we are aware of Torah. This awareness of Torah should become part of one's I-awareness. Just as I am always aware of my existence without having to walk around saying "I exist, I exist," so should I be aware of Torah.

If the blessing were "lilmod Torah" (to study Torah) and related only to the cognitive act, then any discontinuity of the acute awareness of Torah would require that a blessing be recited every time Torah study commenced anew after a previous discontinuity—just like the blessing for the Sukkan must be repeated with every new entry.

V'hagita (in the verse "V'hagita bo yomam valaila"), refers not to the actual study of Torah, but to the mitzvah of latent awareness of Torah. Higayon does not refer to

thinking in the sense of pure intellectual detached thought. Rather it refers to awareness of personal desires, wishes and concerns; it refers to a deeply felt longing and questing, as in "v'hegyon libi" (Psalms 19:15), which refers to awareness of one's prayers and petitions. No matter how much involved one is in other matters, there should always be an awareness of the appreciation of Torah as the highest value.

For this reason when we make a siyum we say hadran alakh—we still return to you. As far as acute awareness is concerned we are through, we are leaving this chapter. But the latent awareness remains and for that reason we still return again to learn Chullin. It is just like when a mother leaves her child and says "I'll be back." She does not say this merely to encourage the infant. She expresses a basic truth. A mother leaves only to return; otherwise she would never leave.

"Daatan alakh"—in our latent awareness we are still committed to you.

"V'daatak alan"—we hope you won't forget us. We hope that you, the tractate, will also keep us in mind, and if we view the Torah as a friend, the Torah will indeed be able to watch over us.

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman Appointed Bochen At RIETS

Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman of the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, a Shoel U'Meishiv at RIETS since 1988, has been appointed full-time Bochen for the Yeshiva Program/Mazer School of Talmudic Studies (MYP) and the Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik Center of Rabbinic Studies at RIETS, it was announced by Rabbi Zevulun Charlop, Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS.

The appointment of Rabbi Shulman follows the death of Rabbi Philip Paretzky, longtime rosh yeshiva and Bochen at RIETS, who died October 4 at the age of 75.

Rabbi Shulman will devote himself on a full-time basis to examining and evaluating all prospective and current MYP and RIETS students at the New York Campus and Joint-Israel programs.

The appointment of Rabbi Shulman "will ensure a direct and continuing view of the student's progress," according to Rabbi Charlop.

A native of Bridgeport, CT, Rabbi Shulman, 33, graduated from Yeshivas Toras Chaim of Denver in 1975. The following year, he studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel. He continued at the Mirrir Yeshiva in Brooklyn until 1979, then joined Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, NJ.