

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

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PARSHAS VAYEISHEV

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

YOSEF AND THE CHASHMONAIM

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Part I. A Torah Nation

Yosef's Business

Everyone remembers the story of וַיְבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת וְיִבְיָא יוֹסֵף אֶת אֶלְאָבִיָּהּ, how Yosef, whenever he saw anything in his brothers' behavior that he felt was wrong, he brought it to his father's attention. Now, I don't know if all the reports that he brought were always factual. It could be that sometimes it only looked like they were doing something that wasn't proper and actually he suspected them wrongly; it could be. The brothers were righteous people after all.

But that's not our subject now. What's important for us is that Yosef felt some sort of responsibility and he went and told his father everything. He didn't say, "It's none of my business."

That, after all, would have been the more prudent thing to do. It was a dangerous adventure, what Yosef was doing. Actually, we see that it almost cost him his life; the brothers wanted to get rid of him because of that. And Yosef was no fool; he knew that he wasn't increasing his favor in the eyes of his brothers. And nevertheless he didn't

hold back and he continued to bring דְּבַתְּם רָעָה אֶל אֲבִיָּהּ. He did what was commanded by his conscience. He made it his business.

Now, don't think it was immaturity, a little brother who was a babbler, a tattletale. No; you should never project your own faults, your own immature attitudes, on a great person like Yosef Hatzaddik. Yosef was a responsible person, very responsible and very thoughtful.

The Chanukah Attitude

And so you have to say that there was a certain *middah*, a certain attitude of *making* it his own business, of feeling that it was his business. And that brings us to the heroes of Chanukah, the Chashmonaim and all the loyal Jews of that generation.

In the *Al Hanissim* of Chanukah we say to Hashem as follows: עֲמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעַת צָרָתָם – We thank You for standing up for our ancestors at their time of trouble, רָבַתְּ אֶת רִיבָם – you stood up for their quarrel, וַדַּנְתָּ אֶת דִּינָם – and You judged their case. It means, You took up for them. You stepped in and fought their fight.

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It's a beautiful *tefillah* of gratitude that we say all eight days of Chanukah, but we're going to see now that the language seems to be wrong. Because actually, it wasn't "their fight"; it wasn't "their quarrel" that they were fighting. And we'll explain that.

Everybody knows that there's a big difference between Chanukah and Purim. On Purim our enemies were making war on the Am Yisroel as a people; they wanted to destroy our bodies, לְהָרֵג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים. On Chanukah, however, there was no such intention. Antiochus wasn't a Hitler. He didn't want to exterminate them; all he wanted was to destroy the Torah. We say that in the *Al Hanissim*: It was לְהַשְׁכִּיחֵם תּוֹרָתָךְ; it was only to make them forget the Torah.

Fighting Hashem's Fight

And so when Matisyahu and the Jews rose up in revolt to uphold the Torah it wasn't "their fight" at all – it was Hashem's fight that they were battling. Because if they had been willing to yield His Torah and accept the Greek way of life then there wouldn't have been any battles. They would have been like all the nations around the Mediterranean who all adopted the Greek ways and lived in peace. Alexander the Great had conquered them, so they accepted his ways.

The Egyptians had Greek ways now. The Syrians had Greek ways now. All over Asia Minor everybody had adopted the ways of the conquerors. They didn't put up any fight and they lived peacefully. And the Jews could have done the same thing; they could have lived in peace. But the Am Yisroel rose up anyhow; they rose like lions – not to defend themselves, but to defend the Torah of Hashem. The whole battle, the whole campaign, all those years that they sacrificed their lives and everything else was only for Hashem.

And so we see, that there's a concept of us taking on something that's not our business, and making it our business. That's what Yosef Hatzaddik

was doing when he was bearing reports to his father. He cared so deeply about the conduct of his brothers, that he inserted himself, he took it personally, and that is our subject for tonight.

The Righteous Man

In the first chapter in *Tehillim*, the righteous man is described, אֲשֶׁר־יֵאָמֵר לֹא הָלַךְ בְּעֵצַת רְשָׁעִים – *How fortunate is a man who didn't walk in the counsel of the wicked.* Even if he doesn't do anything good, just not to go in the ways of the wicked he's already a lucky man. וּבִרְדֵּף חַטָּאִים לֹא עָמַד – *And he doesn't stand on the path of the sinners,* וּבְמוֹשָׁב לִיצִים, לֹא יֵשֵׁב – *he didn't sit in the place where leitzim sit, kibitzers sit, empty people.* No; he doesn't mix with them.

So what does he do? If he does nothing, that creates a vacuum. If you're not sitting in the gambling parlor, if you're not standing in OTB, if you're not hanging around the tavern, if you're not in the salon, so where are you? כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' הִפְצִו – *His desire is in the Torah of Hashem.* That's what this man does instead of what other people do. He's *ashrei!* He's the most fortunate one because his heart is in the Torah of Hashem.

But then, right after that, it continues describing that same person and it says וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ – *and in his Torah,* יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וּלְיָלָה – *he thinks day and night.* Whenever he gets a chance he opens a *sefer* and studies his Torah.

Whose Torah?

So the Gemara notices a change here. First it says בְּתוֹרַת ה', he desires the *Torah of Hashem*. It's called Hashem's Torah. And then it says וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ – *in his Torah he meditates.* His passion is in his own Torah. So what is it, Hashem's Torah or is it this man's Torah?

So the Gemara says – and pay attention because this will help us understand what Chanukah really is – that in the beginning it's *Toras Hashem*, Hashem's Torah. But after a while it becomes *toraso*, his own Torah.

Here a boy, a little boy, comes into yeshiva, and they show him *seforim*, books. They're all strange. They're not *his* books. He's accustomed to little coloring books. He's accustomed to books about Mendy and Hendy and now he's being introduced to a strange world, a world of Abaye and Rava. He doesn't know these strange people.

But after a while it becomes his; Rava and Abaye and Rav Ashi become his. The Gemara becomes *his* book. It's not only that he feels that the *chachmei haTalmud* were a fine group, worthy of our admiration. He became identified with them – they're his ancestors, his heroes, his people – and whatever they said, whatever attitudes they held, became his.

At first when you learn, you hear what the Mishnah says, alright, the Mishnah is saying it; but after a while, you become so imbued, so saturated with the ideals, that it's your Torah – you want to carry it out. It's *my* Torah! It started out being *Toras Hashem* but when you keep on practicing it and studying it and thinking about it and talking about it, after a while it gets into your blood and becomes who you are. The Torah ideals are coursing through your veins and they become *your* ideals. The attitudes of the Torah become *your* attitudes. And therefore, it's called *Toras*, his Torah.

Arguing For My Torah

I remember an episode from almost sixty years ago, when a boy came from out West to our yeshiva; he didn't know anything and one of my *chaveirim* wanted to influence him so he started from the beginning. He started with proving that there's Hashem, *brias ha'olam*, *yesh meayin*, all the *yesodos ha'emunah*.

I said, "That's not the way to do it. If you're going to start from the beginning with him, he's been brought up the other way and so, he'll challenge you at every step. You'll start teaching

him *emunah*? No. Start teaching him the Gemara right away. Get him involved in Gemara."

You know why? Because once he gets into the spirit of the Gemara, he identifies with the Gemara. When he first came into the yeshiva the Torah was something else, someone else's business. He was willing to look inside but it's not his. But it becomes his! He's arguing now for Abaye, he's defending the *sevaros* of the Chachmei HaShas, and even without thinking he has already become a defender of the Torah. The ideas become his ideas, his Torah.

You know what happened to him? I'm not going to say his name – he probably doesn't want to be identified – but he became a big fighter for his Torah. He's building yeshivos now because it's *his* business.

Identifying With The Torah

That's what it means to be a Torah Jew, when the Torah becomes your business. *Tznius*, for instance, is not something we do because the Torah says so. No, *tznius*, that's my business! That's how it has to be! Anything else is disgusting to me; it's nauseating how they dress in the street.

Chesed? I do *chesed* not because it's an obligation. I do it because it's my business. A man, he takes out his checkbook from his drawer and he's writing out a *tzedaka* check, he's doing his own business. Supporting the poor *kollel* man with fifteen children, that's his business, no less than when he writes checks in the factory, making orders, paying his employees. To help his fellow Jew, to do mitzvos, to marry off orphans, to smile at his fellow Jew, that's his business.

And therefore after a man becomes identified with the Torah, that man now is *ashrei*. How fortunate is a man that now it's his business! You're not fighting for *Toras Hashem*. You're fighting for your own business; it's your private business.

He's not fighting for the rabbis. He's not fighting for the yeshivos. He's fighting for himself.

Supporting Judaism, fighting for Judaism, it's his business. וְבִתְוֹרָתוֹ – Now it's his Torah!

The Torah's Enemies Are My Enemies

And when he has to stand up against the wicked people, the wicked ideals, he's not standing up only against enemies of the Torah. They're *his* enemies! הֲלֹא מִשְׂנֵאֵיךָ ה' אֲשֶׁנָּא – Hashem don't I hate Your enemies (Tehillim 139:21)? If they're the enemies of the Torah, I hate them too; they're enemies of mine. The reformers, the atheists, the reconstructionists, the evolutionists, they're enemies of *my* ideals, of *my* attitudes.

You cannot be wishy-washy like the Modern Orthodox, “Oh, the *mushchasim*? We have compassion on them. Let them be members of the shul. Let them get married in the synagogue.”

What do the Orthodox Jews say? I'm talking about the real ones. “Nothing doing! It's *toeivah*! We'll demonstrate against it! We'll fight against it! We'll mobilize public opinion against it! Because you're an enemy not only of Hashem's Torah. And I won't pass the buck, because it's *my* Torah! It's *my* business and I won't let the ideals of *my* Torah be trampled underfoot.”

Part II. A Priestly Nation

Your Business Is My Business

Now we understand what it means in the *Al Hanissim* that we thank Hashem for fighting *our* fight. Because in those days, they lived up to the ideal of לְבִסּוּף נִעְשָׂה תּוֹרָתוֹ, that it becomes your Torah in the end. When the Chashmonaim and all the loyal Jews saw that the Greeks were tearing down the Torah and abolishing mitzvos, they didn't say, “Well, let Hashem come and He should rescue His Torah. After all, it's His business. We'll do our part if it's required, but it's His business so let Him come and do miracles.”

You know why they didn't say that? *Because they didn't think like that!* It didn't occur to them

that they were fighting for Hashem's Torah – doing Him a favor. “It's *our* Torah and it's *our* business,” they said, “and we're ready to lay down our lives for it.”

The Inseparable Couple

That's how they considered it. קוֹדֶשׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא וְאוֹרֵינָא וְיִשְׂרָאֵל הוּא – The Am Yisroel and the Torah are one (Zohar, Acharei 73a). They're inseparable! The Jewish way of life, that's the only way a Jew can live. Like Rabbi Akiva said, just like a fish cannot exist out of the water, a Jew cannot exist outside of the Torah. And therefore, to suppress the Torah meant to suppress the souls of the Jewish nation. They cared about the Torah. And they cared for it to the utmost *because it was their Torah, their business, their life.*

It was unimaginable to them; it was impossible that the Jewish people should continue existing without their Torah. If a Jew is without his Judaism, he doesn't want to live. Like the king who said, “Either I wear the crown or I don't want to live!” Either you wear the crown of Yisroel or otherwise, life is a waste. Because we're not interested in just existing, in being like the nations of the world. Just to live like a rabbit? Like a tree? בְּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת הָאֲרָמָה, like the nations of the earth? By no means! We live only with the crown of Torah on our heads. Otherwise, life is not worth living.

And that's why they arose in revolt like lions. Because they could not tolerate the persecutions against their Torah way of life – it's the only way to live – and so they rose up in great indignation, in a holy fury, to defend their existence as a Torah nation.

Fighting Our Fight

Now, they didn't have any army. They were not organized. They were few and weak, and here was a king with a powerful army. It was a hopeless cause. But what does hopeless mean when they're coming against our way of life, our existence, our Torah?

And so, they persisted in their “hopeless” cause. But there was no thought of doing Hashem any favors; they fought for themselves. It’s our battle, our own personal cause. That’s what they were thinking. And therefore, when Hashem saved them, they felt like He was doing them the favor and they owed Him a great debt of gratitude for taking up their cause. מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ – We thank You, Hashem, רִבַּתְּ אֶת רִיבָם – that You took up their cause. You helped us save the cause of our Torah, our business! Torah and mitzvos is our nation’s business!

A Nation Of Priests

And this brings us to the entire role of our nation among the peoples of the world. Because it’s not just Chanukah. The days of Chanukah, בְּיָמֵים הַהֵם בְּזִמְנֵי הַזֶּה, that’s when the nation was tested if they’d live up to this ideal. It’s an attitude for all year long and it’s for everyone. It’s a fundamental role of the Am Yisroel – that we live with the attitude that Hashem’s Torah is ours.

You recall when Hakadosh Baruch Hu was about to give the Torah, He told Moshe Rabbeinu that he should go down and tell the people a certain message, and among the points in that message was the following: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְלַכֶּת כֹּהֲנִים – You are going to be for Me a nation of kohanim (Shemos 19:6). “I’m giving you the Torah now,” Hashem said, “and I want you to know that along with the Torah comes a certain responsibility, a certain role that you must undertake in this world: You’re a nation of kohanim.”

The Essence Of The Nation

Now, we have to understand what that means. What’s the function of a *kohen*? It’s somebody to whom a certain charge, a certain responsibility, is handed over. He was born into *kehunah* and he has a special interest in upholding that service, because that’s what makes him who he is. His entire identity stands on that worship. He has a

personal interest in maintaining the worship. The business of *kehunah* is his business. It’s who he is.

And therefore when Hashem said, “You’re going to be for Me a nation of *kohanim*,” it meant that the function of a Jew in this world is that the business of Hakadosh Baruch Hu has to be his business. Not like the people in the other nations who feel that it’s the business of their priests. “Let the priests worry about it. They’re running this show and we’re only spectators.”

Trading Idols

That’s good for the nations of the world. The priest says “Boo!” so they say “Ooh!” That’s why when a king in Europe came and told his people, “I have decided that from now on you’re all Christians,” so they said “Thank you for the good news,” and they all accepted it. It was no problem.

Because what difference did it make to them? It wasn’t their business anyhow. They were interested only in pleasing their king and getting along with him. So instead of bowing down to the idol of... I won’t say its name because you can’t say a *shem avodah zarah*; I can spell it however – instead of bowing down to W-o-t-a-n, a certain Anglo-Saxon idol, now they bowed down to a different idol, to a dead man, J-e-s-u-s. The same idol. What difference does it make to them? It’s the business of the priests anyway.

But at *Matan Torah* we received a role not like that; we became a *mamleches kohanim*, a nation of priests. Not a nation ruled by priests; *mamleches kohanim* means a nation where all the citizens are *kohanim*.

Of course, there’s a priesthood that serves in the Beis Hamikdash, a certain technicality, but actually, there’s a bigger truer picture: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְלַכֶּת כֹּהֲנִים – Each of you is a priest. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, “You’re going to be a nation of *kohanim* where every one of you has to be concerned about the Torah like it’s his own private

affair. To fight for My Torah is going to be your business.”

The Satmar Fighter

That’s how the ancient Jew felt. You know the old Satmar Rav, he fought for everything like it was his own business. And people said to him, “Why are you doing this? Why are you mixing in? Why are you starting up with the Zionists? Don’t you know how much power they have? And you’re losing because of it.”

In those days it was very unpopular, even today it is, but then especially. And they told him that he’s losing out because there were a lot of old Hungarian Jews who were in America a long time already who would have showered the Satmar Rav with money. A *rebbe* that came over from Europe, a man with authority, an elderly man, was very much respected with his old *landsleit*, and they would have showered him with money.

So people said to him, “What are you doing, protesting so much?! Is that your business, what’s taking place in Eretz Yisroel? Let them fight it out over there.” But this old man was spending day after day, a lot of time, and he was spending big money too, fighting for the Torah attitudes.

He was being attacked for it and vilified but he didn’t stop. He put his heart into it. And now you know why. Because it was *his* business. He was fighting for himself.

Combative People

And so, not so long ago when the Maskilim first came to Russia from Germany to try to persuade Jews to yield their ancient Torah ways and walk instead in the ways of the Haskalah and Reform, you know who opposed them? Not the *rabbanim*. The people in the street! The plain people arose like one man and they pursued them in the streets. Little children pursued them and tried to chase them out of town. Because the entire Jewish nation felt that the Torah is **רִבְתָּ אֶת רִיבָם**, that it was their business.

That’s why when you come into a *shul* sometimes you find that people speak up and give an argument to the rav. Every Jew feels like a rabbi. That’s the truth. Walk into a synagogue, you find that simple Jews are arguing with their rabbis about customs. Not because he has disrespect; it’s because he’s concerned. He can’t overlook it, it’s his business.

The Chasam Sofer said that once. He said the greatness of the Am Yisroel is that even a great man, a great Torah authority has to be afraid of public opinion because the people will not stand for any deviation from the Torah tradition. Among Jews, if somebody would get up and try to change even a small *minhag* there would be a revolution, a revolution of the *balebatim*.

Non-Combative People

Lehavdil in the church, whose business is it? If the *galach* would say today the opposite of what he said last week – and they do; they’re changing all the time – but who cares? “It’s not our business,” the people think. “You want to add Mary to the trinity, so do it.” Because what’s the difference to them if it’s a three-in-one shoe polish – they have in the stores a three-in-one polish; it has the black color and the oil and the grease, trinity shoe polish. So what does matter if it’s three-in-one or they add a fourth ingredient and now it’s four-in-one polish? Who cares? It’s the business of the priests, that’s all.

But try something like that among the *mamleches kohanim* and you’ll find yourself with a lot of enemies. Because you’re playing with their Torah.

Of course, even among the Jews, in the ignorant places where the people are *mamash* like gentiles, the rabbis can do things like that. They can change whatever they wish – and they do. But wherever Jews are Jews, wherever they’re still a *Mamleches Kohanim*, you’ll find a very big resistance. Because it’s not the rabbi’s business. It’s not the business of

this or that Orthodox organization. It's our business. Judaism belongs to all of us.

That's what it means, *his* Torah. That's how life should be. Not only Hashem said it and he goes along with it. No. He understands that this is how it must be! It becomes his own ideas and attitudes and he'll fight for it like he's fighting for his own life.

Part III. Hashem's Nation

The Juggling Sage

Now, a person lives entirely differently when Hashem's business is his own business. Everything he does takes on a whole new meaning. Because if you're doing someone else's business, you might be somewhat lazy about it; you might think, "Well, I'm doing this not for me, so I'll do it slipshod."

Nothing doing! You have to do it like it's yours; you have to fight like you're fighting your own battles, which means you go all out.

It's like the Gemara tells – it's a random example you're hearing now, but it applies to everything we do in fulfilling the Torah. The Gemara tells about a sage who used to come to weddings to fulfill the mitzvah of being *mesameach chasan v'kallah*, to bring happiness to the *chasan* and the *kallah*. How did he do it? It says he used to take eight torches and juggle them in the air. Burning torches! And they were going all eight in a circle, a fire circle. They were like fireworks.

That's some feat, some sleight of hand. He caught one burning torch and threw up another, and as they were going through the circle, he was catching them up and throwing them back again. Something like that needs a tremendous amount of practice. You can't just decide you're going to throw eight torches and it happens. It has to be done just right; otherwise, the whole thing would be a fiasco.

Practice Makes Perfect

Where did this sage get this ability from? The answer is, where does *anyone* get the ability? He practiced it. He started in his backyard, in his barn, or in the field, and he was practicing with just one torch. He didn't light it at first. It was just a piece of wood; he practiced throwing a piece of wood and catching it. Then he did it with two pieces and then three. After many weeks and months of practice, when he could throw eight pieces of wood and keep them in the air, he started lighting them.

He was practicing with fire-torches, but it still took a long time. And there were accidents too. Maybe he was singed. Maybe he lost some of his hair. But he kept at it and finally he was able to do the mitzvah of being *mesameach chasan v'kallah* perfectly.

Now, that's surprising. A *talmid chochom*, a sage, should put so much effort into juggling? If somebody today would do it, we'd understand that it's a lot of honor for him. He'll be the center of attention, people at the wedding will watch his show and clap for him. But these sages didn't waste their lives on such foolishness, on being exhibitionists. So why would he spend so many hours and days practicing in the barn?

The answer is because what he did for Hashem was like what anybody would do for a career. To become an acrobat in a circus, you'd have to spend a lot of time practicing. But you'll make a living out of it, and what won't you do for the business? So just like an acrobat does it for himself, so he did it for Hashem! It's his business, his full-time job, serving Hashem.

Businessmen Are Hustlers

Somebody mentioned to one of the sages that he sees that he spends so much time studying the Torah, that he gives away so much effort studying the Torah. "Maybe you should rest a little bit during the day? Maybe you should go on vacation?"

So the sage said, “פועלי דיומא אגן – We are hired day workers” (Eiruvin 65a). It means we are employed by Hakadosh Baruch Hu and we’re working all day for Him.

Now we might think that’s excessive, to work for Hashem from nine to five is a lot. But the truth is he meant more than that, because in those days they didn’t work from nine to five. They worked from the first crack of dawn until it was too dark to do any more work. And פועלי דיומא אגן means even more than that. It doesn’t mean at night he stopped, because the business of *avodas Hashem* is not dependent on daylight. At night too, there’s business to be done. A Jew, even when he gets into his pajamas and climbs into bed, he’s still laboring for Hashem.

Full-Time Loyalty

Now, don’t make a mistake when you hear that word “laborer.” It’s not like the laborers today. Today, let’s say, if you walk into a yeshiva in the afternoon, sometimes you see the teachers in the hallway – they’re talking to each other; on the boss’s time they’re talking in the hallway. Meanwhile, the boys are breaking the windows in the classroom. Sometimes they’re even breaking bones.

No, that’s not a loyal worker. In Torah language, a worker means he has an attitude that it’s his business now; he’s invested in the children and the windows the same as the one who owns the yeshiva. And that’s what this *talmid chochom* was saying. “I’m a loyal worker and therefore, it’s my business. When it’s your own business, it’s an entirely different story. When it’s your business, you don’t take naps and vacations so quickly.”

Now those three words, פועלי דיומא אגן, are a good yardstick for us to use. You know what a yardstick is? It’s a way to measure things, a way of knowing if you’re living up to a certain ideal. And since our ideal of making the business of Hakadosh

Baruch Hu is our business, we should consider it important to measure ourselves up to this ideal.

This expression is a good way of measuring up. It’s three words, easy to remember: פועלי דיומא אגן – We are day workers. That’s a yardstick of נעשה תורתו – when you’re devoted to Hakadosh Baruch Hu as much as you are to your own business.

Treasure Hunts

And that’s what Mishlei states. In Mishlei, he’s talking about succeeding in *avodas Hashem* and he gives the reader advice on how to succeed. You know there are people who feel they haven’t succeeded in learning Torah. Not only learning – there are other things besides Torah too; there are all types of greatness in *avodas Hashem*. But whatever it is they’re doing – maybe they’re marrying off orphans, doing mitzvos, *gemillas chasodim*, raising children, other things – they feel like they’re not succeeding as much as they hoped.

Shlomo Hamelech will tell you what the solution is. He says, אִם תִּבְקֶשׁוּהָ כֶּסֶף, – If you’ll seek it like you seek money, וְכִמְטָמוֹנִים תִּחְפְּשׁוּנָהּ, – If you’ll search for it like you search for hidden treasures, אָז יִרְאֶתְךָ הַגְּדוֹלָה – then you’ll realize all the great ideals, the great accomplishments, in the service of Hashem (Mishlei 2:4).

Now, he doesn’t say “If you’ll seek it”. He puts in an extra word: If you’ll seek it *kakesef*, like you seek money and treasures. Because finding treasures, making money, that’s your business and so, it’s a serious thing for you. How do you search for hidden treasures? By sleeping till 10 o’clock in the morning? By sitting on your couch at home? Oh no! You have to get up and hire a certain kind of boat, a diving boat. You have to make expeditions. You have to study plans. You have to study history to know where ancient Spanish galleons were sunk. You have to go through a great deal of expense and discomfort before you can find hidden treasures.

How do you make a business? It takes a lot of effort, a lot of energy, and a lot of worries. It takes working very long hours, maybe even sleepless nights sometimes. But you do it because you're invested in it. It's your business after all.

Men At Work

That's the yardstick for *avodas Hashem*. Monday, you must go out to your bitter career in the salt mines. You can't help yourself; you have to go to the office on Monday. But what about Sunday?

So the man who doesn't understand the yardstick of **אֲנִי רְיוֹמָא** and **תְּבַקְשָׁנָה בְּכֶסֶף** so he'll go riding on the highways in his car, perhaps. Maybe he'll sleep late, very late. Even if he's *frum*, so he'll eventually get to Hashem's business. Maybe he'll open a *sefer* later on. But there's nothing pressing. It could wait.

But that's all wrong because Sunday you are also employed. It's a day of business; your business. And so, the loyal Jew gets up Sunday morning and says, "**אֲנִי רְיוֹמָא אֲנֵא** – Today I have to work all day long for Hashem. I have my business waiting for me." He packs up lunch, says goodbye to his wife, and goes out to the shul or the yeshiva and he gets to work. And he stays there all day.

Business Vacation

"Oooh," your wife will say, "but today you're not doing business. At least today you have to be home."

So you have to say, "My dear, you don't understand. Today is my real day of business. All the yeshiva men are going full steam ahead all week long. I have a lot of catching up to do." So Sunday morning, say goodbye to your family, take along lunch and don't go home until nighttime. Nighttime means 10 o'clock at night.

It's remarkable how much people can accomplish if they spend time in front of the Gemara on Sundays. Only that you need first that

attitude, that this is your business. You're not doing Hashem any favors. You're building up your own business.

Weekday Work

Now, the truth is that it's not only on Shabbos and Sunday and legal holidays. Because the one who develops this attitude understands that even in the office, he is also working for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. So as you're standing all day long in a factory or in your store or in your office, it's important to keep in mind that you're busy with Hashem's business. It costs good money to raise a Jewish family. The IRS takes a big percentage of what we earn and we therefore have to work overtime. But you're invested. You're doing it because Hashem's business is your business.

Suppose a woman in the kitchen has the understanding that she's laboring in a business, in real estate, that will bring her tremendous profits. A child is like owning an apartment house. The truth is that compared to a child, an apartment house is nothing.

Women who say that the children make them crazy, the answer is it pays to get crazy if you have ten apartment houses. Ask the big businessmen. They go crazy from it. But it's their business! Ten huge buildings! Every month piles of checks come in!

And so is the woman that **נִעְשָׂה תוֹרָתוֹ**, she's in business. With this business that Hashem gave her, she's the most successful businesswoman. Not the unmarried woman who is, let's say, an executive in a business. She comes home at night to her lonely apartment on the West Side – let's hope it's lonely – and she's unhappy, unfulfilled, because she never made the business of Hashem into her own business.

The Business Of Chanukah

Now, this yardstick that Hashem's business that's our business is going to help us along the line of all our activities and that's one of the great

lessons of Chanukah. It's one of the ideas to think about during these days: **רַבַּתְּ אֶת רִיבָם** – You, Hashem, judged *their* quarrels; You fought *their* fight. Because that's the greatness of the loyal nation. They fulfill what we say **עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כְּרְצוֹנֶךָ** – *Make the will of Hashem your will* (Avos 2:4). What Hashem wants, that's what we want! We don't live our lives merely fighting for what Hashem wants. What Hashem desires becomes what we desire.

And that's a tremendous achievement – to feel that the Torah, the upkeep of the Torah and mitzvos and Torah ideals – is our lifeblood. That's what Chanukah is. It's not only *latkes* and *dreidel* and parties. You can do that too, but that's not Chanukah. These eight days are a time for acquiring an attitude: We live for our Torah! It's my business! **אֲשֶׁרִי הָאִישׁ** – *Praiseworthy is the one who makes the Torah Hashem into his own Torah.*

**Have a Wonderful Shabbos
and a Freilichen Chanukah!**

Let's Get Practical

Making Hashem's Torah My Torah

Yosef Hatzaddik cared deeply about Hashem's Torah, so he took his brothers' actions personally. The Chashmonaim, similarly, internalized Hashem's battle against Hellenism and foreign ideals, making it their own.

This week, I will strive to emulate the Chashmonaim by aligning my desires with Hashem's. Each day, after reciting Birchos Hatorah in which I ask Hashem to “sweeten His Torah in our mouths” I will *bli neder* pause for thirty seconds and endeavor to internalize this concept. As the *possuk* says, “Praiseworthy is the one who makes the Torah of Hashem their own Torah.”

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

150 – Chanukah II | **197** – Loyal Servants | **388** – Chanukah VII
E-5 – The Zealot | **E-85** – Chanukah: The Light of Emunah

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QUESTION

How can one talk himself out of his despair in knowing the Torah?

ANSWER

I suppose it means that he thinks that it's too much for him to do and he gives up hope; he gives up hope of succeeding in knowing Torah.

We'll take an analogy. As you walk on Kings Highway, you see big establishments. There are some big businesses there, successful stores. But on one street corner, there's a man with a peanut stand. It's a simple cart; two wheels, that's all, and there's a little stove that's heating the peanuts. And this man is standing there and waiting for customers.

Now, they're not standing in line for him. Customers are few and far between. And sometimes it's cold too. Does he give up? No. Why doesn't he give up? Because he wants as much as he can earn. He can earn three dollars a day, five dollars a day, he's satisfied. Of course, he'd like to earn five thousand dollars a day but when it comes to money, however, you earn as much as you're able. And he's quite happy if he takes home five dollars at the end of the day.

When it comes to learning, all of a sudden nobody wants to learn for peanuts. Everybody wants to be a millionaire. “If I cannot be a *gadol hador*, then I don't want to learn.” He gives up. I had a case like that. He said, “I can't become a *gadol*, so what's the use?”

No! If you can learn one line a day it's a success! You learn two lines? A bigger success! Learn whatever you can and that's a great achievement.

It's only the *yetzer hara* that tells you either you learn for the highest stakes or don't learn at all. It's a deception and many people allow themselves to be persuaded by that. It's remarkable how much people can accomplish if they learn little by little. In the course of time, it adds up to a great amount of wealth!

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