

## **This was the dedication of the Altar. (7:84)**

In 1925, at the *Chanukas HaBayis*, dedication ceremony, for Yeshivas Baranovitz, **Horav Elchonon Wasserman, zl**, its *Rosh Yeshiva*, quoted the above *pasuk* in his address. *Zos*; “This,” was the dedication of the Altar. He observed that the *gematria*, numerical equivalent, of *zos* equals that of: *tzom*, fasting; *kol*, sound/prayer; *mammon*, money/charity. This alludes to the idea that in order to build/dedicate/establish a new altar/Torah edifice, in contrast to the amazing joy that accompanies such an endeavor, there must be a tempering of fasting, prayer and weeping. Joy is a mainstay of which our people sadly do not have a surplus. Nonetheless, it is not all about *simchah*, joy. For a *yeshiva*, Torah endeavor, to succeed, it must be accompanied by a heaviness of the heart, based upon introspection and repentance, so that we warrant that joy.

The **Chafetz Chaim, zl**, was wont to say, “The world thinks that a *yeshiva* is built with money. They are wrong. For a *yeshiva* to succeed, three ingredients are crucial: the place where it is established must be worthy; the builders must do so out of purity of heart (not just to have a *yeshiva*); tears. Thus, one is able to circumvent and ward off the evil powers that would take hold of such an endeavor and delegitimize it.” In order for the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, to rest upon an edifice, it must have a foundation created and maintained by these three components.

It is well-known that when *Horav Chaim Volozhiner, zl*, laid the foundation stone for what was to become the mother of all *yeshivos*, Volozhin, *Rav Chaim* stood there weeping profusely for an entire hour, with his tears mixing with the sand. It was this mixture of sand and *Rav Chaim*’s tears that created the cement, which held the foundation stone. *Ha’zorim b’dimah b’rinah yiktzoru*, “Those who sew with tears will reap with joy.” *Rav Chaim*’s tears gave the foundation stone and, ultimately, the *yeshiva*, the strength to withstand the strong alien winds of the *Haskalah*, European Enlightenment.

Likewise, when the *Ponevezer Rav, zl*, laid the foundation stone for Ponevez, during a time when the fires of destruction were raging in Europe, he was accompanied at this emotional gateway by the *Chazon Ish, zl*. Everyone recited chapters of *Tehillim*, after which the *Ponevezer Rav* put the stone in place. He then broke down in incessant sobbing for a short while. His sobbing was the capstone of the event. The *Chazon Ish* remarked, “When one commences an endeavor with whiskey (partying, celebration), it is doubtful if it will culminate in success. When one begins with tears, the success is guaranteed. As David *Hamelech* says, *Ha’zorim b’dima b’rina yiktzoru*.

When *Horav Raphael Baruch Toledano, zl*, emigrated to *Eretz Yisrael* from Morocco, he was greeted by the dean of *mashgichim*, *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl*. *Rav Toledano* survived not only physically, but also spiritually, in a country where radical anti-Semitism was a way of life, and secularism was the norm. Yet, he and his wife raised a family of children and grandchildren, all G-d-fearing Torah scholars. The *Mashgiach*, an individual who was considered to be one of the generation’s most astute and inspiring educators, asked the *Rav* what was his unique philosophy of education.

*Rav Toledano* replied, “We have no special philosophy of education; rather, every night I would sit in one room, while my wife sat in another room, and, for twenty minutes, we poured out our hearts in tear-drenched prayer to Hashem that He protect our children and grant them success in Torah. If you are seeking to identify the *z’chus*, merit, for our children’s success, that is it.”