

He sent Yehudah ahead of him to Yosef, to prepare ahead of him in Goshen. (46:28)

Yaakov *Avinu* sent Yehudah ahead of the family to make the proper arrangements for their arrival. The *Midrash* focuses on the word *l'horos*, to prepare, which also means to teach. This implies that Yaakov sent Yehudah to Goshen to establish a *yeshivah*, a house of study. This set the priority for every Jewish community to first and foremost have a *makom* Torah, a place where Torah will be studied. A community that does not revolve around Torah is missing its soul. I think the word *l'horos*, to teach, imparts a lesson concerning the type of *yeshivah* that Yaakov wanted to establish. It had to be a place of Torah that taught, that reached out and illuminated the community via its teachings and students. Torah is ours to be learned and disseminated. It must be *l'horos*.

Why did Yaakov specifically send Yehudah ahead, rather than Levi or Yissachar, two sons who represented the Torah ideal? Why not any of the other brothers? Simply because it was Yehudah who took *achrayos*, responsibility, for Benjamin. One who builds Torah must take responsibility for everything he does. As a *Rosh Yeshivah*, he is revered and held in the greatest esteem. His *talmidim*, students, look to him for guidance and inspiration. Every aspect of his institution rests upon him. This is the meaning of *achrayos*.

Yehudah also represents the epitome of gratitude. Leah *Imeinu* named her fourth son Yehudah, because *hapaam odeh es Hashem*, "This time let me gratefully praise Hashem" (*Bereishis* 29:35). Why this time? She was especially grateful now, because as a mother of four sons, she was the mother of one-third of Yaakov *Avinu's* twelve sons. She had been granted more than her rightful share. Her gratitude in recognizing that she had received more than she possibly deserved set the tone for all of Jewish gratitude. We acknowledge and affirm that whatever we have is more than we deserve. This is why, explains the *Chiddushei HaRim*, we are called *Yehudim*, after Yehudah. Gratitude, in the sense that one recognizes that he has been granted more than his rightful share, is a Jewish characteristic.

It takes much effort, blood, sweat and tears to build a *yeshivah*. It also requires support, both emotional and material. One who builds a *yeshivah* must never lose sight of the *tamchin d'Oraisa*, the supporters of Torah, who often give not only their wherewithal, but also of their time and strength. It is a partnership in which the *Rosh Yeshivah* remains totally independent, but never loses sight of his partners. Gratitude is a vital part of building a *makom* Torah.

In the history of Torah building, many partnerships stand out. Every Jewish community which has a day school, *cheder*, *yeshivah*, Bais Yaakov, is acutely aware of this phenomenon. While often more than one supporter was responsible, usually one primary partner became the advisor of the *Rosh Yeshivah/menahel*, and this relationship continued on as long as they walked the face of the earth. One such unique relationship which spread over to every organization in which the *Rosh Yeshivah* was involved was that of *Horav Aharon Kotler, zl*, and *Reb Yitzchok/Irving Bunim, zl*. *Rav Aharon*

was the architect of Torah in America following World War II. He started with a group of students which set the stage for the largest *makom* Torah in America, *Beth Medrash Govohah*. His efforts on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* spread to *Vaad Hatzalah*, *Torah Umesorah*, and *Chinuch Atzmai* and infused true Torah values in this country. He left his indelible mark on Orthodoxy in the United States. Throughout all of this, Irving Bunim stood by his side as his staunchest supporter, student and partner. *Beth Medrash Govohah*'s New York office was right around the corner from Irving Bunim's business. For fifteen years the *Rosh Yeshivah* would stop by almost daily to confer or seek assistance.

Rav Aharon maintained a strong sense of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude, for those who supported Torah, feeling that they had a unique *z'chus*, merit. Indeed, he genuinely grieved for those who lacked the insight and foresight to support Torah endeavors. After visiting a wealthy man and being refused a contribution, *Rav Aharon* said, "The privilege of supporting Torah requires special merit – and it appears that Heaven did not deem some men worthy of it."

His *hakoras hatov* was legend. One sweltering, summer day, the *Rosh Yeshivah* announced that he was about to take a two-hour taxi ride to Long Island to attend a wedding. The immediate responses of his close *talmidim* were: "It is far too hot"; "Think of the time the *Rosh Yeshivah* will waste"; "Certainly some guests will be immodestly dressed." The *Rosh Yeshivah*'s response was simple, but definitive: "You do not seem to understand. The father of the *kallah*, bride, supports Torah. He must be accorded all due recognition."

A wealthy supporter of the *yeshivah* died during *Chanukah*, which is a time when *hespedim*, eulogies, are not delivered, unless it is for a Torah scholar. *Rav Aharon* felt that while the *niftar*, deceased, was not a Torah scholar, as a layman who supported Torah, he had achieved an exalted level of sharing in the *z'chus*, merit, of that of the Torah scholar, whom he supports. *Rav Aharon* delivered the eulogy for this *baal ha'bayis*, layman.

Rav Aharon's attitude toward supporters of Torah extended beyond those who supported *Beth Medrash Govohah*. Mr. Harry Herskowitz was a prominent supporter of both *Mesifita Torah Vodaath* and Lakewood. When he passed away, *Rav Aharon* gave a *hesped*. He remembered that at one point, *Torah Vodaath* was in such arrears, that they simply could not pay the salaries of their *rebbeim* and general studies staff. Mr. Herskowitz did something that (by today's standards) is unimaginable. As Director of Internal Revenue for the Southern District of Manhattan, he had invited many dignitaries from both Washington and New York to his daughter's wedding. Some of the invited guests were not Jewish, and those who were Jewish were secular in their religious orientation. Unembarrassed, Mr. Herskowitz halted the festivities in the middle of the wedding and made a heartfelt appeal on behalf of *Torah Vodaath*! He reminded his fellow co-religionists that they had an obligation to support Torah. He did not permit the affair to continue until he had raised sufficient funds for the *yeshivah* to remain open. He succeeded. One might think that what he had done had offended his guests. The love they had for this special man superseded any ill will. They

saw in him a person whose enthusiasm for his beliefs knew no bounds. This is why *Rav Aharon* was *maspid*, eulogized, him: *Hakoras hatov* on behalf of the Torah.

Why is Torah so much more important than any other religious endeavor – *mikveh*, *shul*, *gemillas chesed*, *bikur cholim*? Could Yaakov and his family not wait until they all arrived together, unpacked, and then set about preparing a *makom* Torah? Obviously the supremacy of Torah-study for a Jew demands that it precede every endeavor. Without Torah-study, we simply are not *Am Yisrael!* Jews without Judaism are void of the very ingredient which defines it. Judaism without Torah is just another culture. It is not Judaism! Just ask a secular Jew who does not believe in the Torah exactly what it is about his lifestyle that is inherently Jewish.

Horav Yehudah Tzedakah, zl, substantiates the concept of Torah's supremacy from an interesting *halachah*. The *Talmud* (beginning of *Meseches Megillah*) teaches that heralding back to the days of Yehoshua bin Nun, people within a walled city read the *Megillah* on the fifteenth of *Adar*, unlike people in other cities which are not *mukefes chomah*, surrounded by a wall, who read it on the fourteenth. [The battles fought between the Jews and their enemies took place on *Adar* 13; thus, the victory celebration took place on the next day, *Adar* 14. Shushan had a larger number of anti-Semites, thus requiring an added day of fighting to expunge this poison. They celebrated on the fifteenth of *Adar*. Hence, *Shushan Purim* is on the fifteenth. In solidarity with the city of Shushan, all cities that were walled from the time of Yehoshua's conquering *Eretz Yisrael* observe *Purim* on *Adar* 15.] The *Talmud* adds that a walled city whose wall was erected after people had already inhabited the city does not maintain walled status. The wall must precede inhabitancy.

Why is this? The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that if a city was inhabited prior to its having a wall, the wall is not vital to the city's security. The people can survive without a wall. Only a city whose wall is a critical part of its existence is considered to be a *mukefes chomah*, a walled city.

Our nation has a "wall" for protection. It is called the Torah. It is our wall. We cannot have a city or any place of inhabitation which is without the Torah. It is our life, our essence, our security. Without Torah, there is no *kiyum*, permanence, survival, for *Klal Yisrael*. *Rav Saadiah Gaon* said, "Our nation is a nation only because of the Torah." It is the key to our survival.