

Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai. (1:1)

Chazal (Bamidbar Rabbah 1:7) explain that Hashem chose the wilderness as the site where He would give the Torah, by design. It is not that we received the Torah in the wilderness, because we just happened to be there. Rather we were there because this is where Hashem wanted us to receive the Torah. *Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, explains the simile of wilderness as a place where there is no *baalus*, ownership. Likewise, one who learns Torah, one who seeks to grow and achieve in the field of Torah, must render himself like a wilderness, by relinquishing control, possession over his time. This plays itself out with regard to giving up time toward helping others learn Torah. With regard to Torah, “My” time is “your” time. “I” have no time.

Rav Shternbuch relates that his revered *Rebbe, Horav Moshe Schneider, zl*, organized in the *yeshivah* that all senior students (*elter bochur*) would take turns standing near the *bima* in the center of the *bais hamedrash*, for two hours for the express purpose of helping the younger students with difficulties they encountered in understanding the *shiur*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* commented that just as one is obliged to give *tzedakah* with his material assets, so, too, must he give *tzedakah* with his time (and patience) to help someone who is finding learning Torah to be difficult. Just as one who gives *tzedakah* with money is assured of a *segulah*, talisman, a remedy or charm, to protect his money, likewise, one who gives up his time to assist others in learning, will himself be blessed with extraordinary personal achievement.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* added that this falls under the rubric of *middah k'neged middah*, Hashem repays/rewards measure for measure. Thus, if one performs an act of *chesed* through the medium of Torah, the Almighty will repay him in kind. He will be accorded an extraordinary dose of *siyata d'Shmaya*, Heavenly Assistance. He cites *Chazal (Avodah Zarah 35b)*, “A *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who teaches Torah to others, those areas of Torah which, heretofore, had been concealed from him (too difficult), will now be revealed and mastering them will come with ease and little toil.” One not only does not lose precious time when he helps another student, he personally benefits from the interaction. Indeed, this is how the Jewish people fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, charity, while they journeyed in the wilderness. Clearly, not a single Jew was financially challenged, having left Egypt with gold, silver and jewelry beyond their wildest dreams. On the other hand, there were those who could use a spiritual uplift, some inspiration, or tutoring with their Torah lessons. This was *tzedakah*.

In the *hakdamah*, preface, to his *Shaarei Yosher*, *Horav Shimon Shkop, zl*, writes that many *yeshivah* students err in thinking that since their material assets are at a premium, they are absolved of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. This is not true, because *tzedakah* is not the exclusive domain of money. When one teaches Torah to another fellow, there is no greater execution of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. He fulfills the *mitzvah* and garners for himself the added blessings acquired by one who is charitable. Torah is the source of blessing for a person. What greater source of blessing is there than helping another Jew expand his Torah knowledge.

The prevailing excuse for sidestepping, avoiding our responsibility toward others is most commonly “no time.” The “no time” excuse comes in all shapes and sizes, from “previous commitment” to “already involved in a *mitzvah*,” may often be valid, but this does not grant one immunity from his obligations. This is especially true when one has convinced himself that the *mitzvah* in which he is presently involved takes precedence. Perhaps, the following vignette may be enlightening.

Horav Shlomo Lorincz, zl, was a *shtadlan*, intercessor, advocate, who often acted as a liaison between the *gedolei Yisrael* and the ruling authorities of the secular Israeli government. His function was to explain and advocate on behalf of the Orthodox community. His position required diplomacy, political skill and connections. He was highly respected by members of both sides of the bargaining table.

The *Chazon Ish* highly valued those who undertook to serve the Torah community. The following incident indicates just how much it meant to the *gadol hador*. *Rav Lorincz* was charged with raising funds for the many organizations in the Torah community. At this juncture, he traveled to Bournemouth, England (1952) to spend *Rosh Hashanah* in a resort hotel. He was not the hotel type, but it was there where men of means would spend their *Yom Tov*. He represented the *Chazon Yechezkel* youth village, established by *Zeirei Agudas Yisrael*. As such, he was asked to deliver the pre-*Maariv* opening sermon, which he did. As a member of the Knesset, he was not only knowledgeable, he was also a powerful and prolific orator. Understandably, the audience was quite pleased – responding with generous pledges.

Then it came time for *Maariv*. *Rav Lorincz* took one look at the *mechitzah*, separation between the men and women's section, and realized that its *halachic* status as a kosher *mechitzah* was, at best, questionable. Therefore, rather than *daven* with the congregation, he opted to *daven Maariv* in his room. Now only did he fail to *daven* with a *minyan*, it was also his father's *yahrtzeit* and he failed to recite *Kaddish*. The next morning, he was able to locate a more suitable *minyan*, but missing *Kaddish* the night before gnawed at him. To make matters worse, since he did not say *Kaddish* the night before, he forgot to recite *Kaddish* the next morning as well. Thus, his father's entire *yahrtzeit* passed without him having recited *Kaddish*.

Rav Lorincz was filled with remorse and guilt. His commitment to the *klal*, greater community, was the reason that he spent *Rosh Hashanah* in a resort in England. In his depressed state, he viewed his failure to say *Kaddish* for his father as a Heavenly sign that the time had come for him to leave public life.

On his return to *Eretz Yisrael*, he immediately went to the *Chazon Ish* to share his decision with him. He explained to the *Gaon* that he was returning to the *bais hamedrash*, which was actually his “home” before being asked by the *gedolim*, Torah giants of the generation, to become the official spokesman for the Torah community.

The *Chazon Ish* listened intently, and then spoke. “I do not accept what you said. You did recite

Kaddish.” He assumed that the *Chazon Ish* either did not hear what he had said, or, did not understand. So, he repeated the story, ending with, “This is why I am giving up *klal* work. It is because of my work that I did not say *Kaddish* for my father!”

Once again, the *Gaon* said, “You are mistaken. You very definitely said *Kaddish*. What do you think is the purpose of a son saying *Kaddish*? It is to bring *nachas ruach*, pleasure to his father's soul, when he sees his son sanctifying Hashem's Name. What could bring greater pleasure to your father's *neshamah*, than what you did on behalf of the youth village? You ignored your personal comfort, and was compelled to *daven* on *Rosh Hashanah* alone, without a *minyan*. Why? Because *Klal Yisrael* needed you. What greater *Kaddish* can there be than that?” Obviously, after hearing these words spoken from the *Chazon Ish*, his decision to leave *klal* work was scrapped.

In a similar vein, the *Chazon Ish* asked an *avreich, kollel* fellow, to assist a sickly woman with a certain chore. The young man replied that he would do it, but it was the *yahrzeit* of one of his parents and he did not want to miss reciting *Kaddish* following *Minchah* at the *minyan* he attends regularly. The *Chazon Ish* countered that an act of *chesed* for the woman in need would be no less of a good deed for the elevation of his parent's *neshamah*.

In other words, we find excuses, and, in some instances, they are valid reasons for non-participating in an important endeavor. We must remember that at the end of the day, they are mere excuses for our lack of desire to help. Shlomo *Hamelech* says (*Mishlei* 26:13), “The lazy person says, ‘There is a lion in middle of the road.’” Those who look for a way out will always conjure up an excuse, no matter how absurd.