

Whenever Moshe would go out to the Ohel, the entire people would stand up and remain standing, everyone at the entrance of his tent, and they would gaze after Moshe until he arrived at the tent. (33:8)

Chazal (Midrash Tanchuma) derive from here the reverence one must accord to a Torah scholar. “One must stand in the presence of an elderly Jew, a Torah scholar, an *Av Bais Din*, Head of the Rabbinical court, and a king.” Moshe *Rabbeinu* was the nation’s quintessential leader; it would make sense that he be demonstrated such respect due to his position as leader – no different than a distinguished political leader, king, etc. *Chazal* do not say this explicitly. The fact that they mandate *kavod talmid chacham*, the respect one must show to a Torah scholar, indicates that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was respected because he was *Rabban shel kol Yisrael*, the *Rebbe* of the entire Jewish nation. They were honoring the Torah which he embodied. When one honors the Torah, he honors Hashem. The *talmid chacham*, Torah scholar, who devotes his life to Torah study is the present-day embodiment of a living Torah scroll. This is how one honors Hashem.

Regrettably, the “modern” human mind has difficulty equating Torah with Hashem, or, rather, the individual who studies Torah with great diligence and devotion with carrying out Hashem’s command. It is, therefore, no surprise that the contemporary secular Jew has no understanding of the critical importance of the maintenance of Torah study in our midst. Indeed, a few decades ago, shortly before the *petirah*, passing, of the venerable sage, the *Tchebiner Rav*, *Horav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zl*, the *Gaon* was approached by representatives of the security forces of *Eretz Yisrael* to discuss issues of national security. They presented a bleak picture, emphasizing that the newly-established State was under increased pressure from its surrounding enemies. This was their overture to getting him to “understand” permitting *yeshivah students* to leave the *bais hamedrash* and join the country’s security forces.

The *Tchebiner Rav* listened to their request, and very calmly he replied, “Let me share a story with you. I am hopeful that, after hearing the story, you will on your own understand my response to your request. A wagon laden with various wares attempted to make it up a steep mountain. The wagon driver nudged the horses along – at first, ever so gently, but then, as the climb became increasingly difficult, he applied greater pressure. At one point, the horses could no longer go on. They had reached their breaking point. It was just too much for them.

“The wagon driver descended from the wagon and began removing some of the heavier items that he was carrying. It was to no avail. The wagon would not budge. Finally, the driver removed everything from the wagon. Yet, the wagon was stuck in “park.” It could not budge forward. What was the driver to do? Suddenly, he thought of a brilliant idea. The wagon’s large wheels were made of steel. As such, they were quite heavy. If he could remove the wagon’s four large wheels, the diminished weight should do the trick.

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“Obviously, you understand that once its wheels had been removed, it was no longer a wagon. It was a large immovable box. A similar idea applies to the phenomenon of Torah study with relationship to the Jewish People. Without Torah, we have no “wheels.” We cannot move! With their Torah study and prayer, the *yeshivah* students are truly protecting the Jewish nation. To halt their studies would be tantamount to removing the wheels of the wagon.”