

## And Hashem then said to Moshe, “You are now going to lie with your fathers, but this people will arise and stray after the gods of the nations of the land.” (31:16)

*Horav Shlomo Lorincz, zl*, was the Agudath Israel representative to the Knesset. He was one of those unique individuals who had the merit to spend seventy years *b'michitzasam*, in the shadow of the *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah giants, primarily of *Eretz Yisrael*. As such, he was afforded the unparalleled opportunity not only to bask in their greatness, but also to learn from them and impart their lessons to others. He relates the following profound observation from the *Brisker Rav, zl*, which he sees as a living will, a mandate to every public activist, as well as to every Jew.

*Rav Lorincz* once came to the *Brisker Rav* depressed to the point of despair. He had drafted a bill concerning the prohibition of raising pigs (in the Holy Land). Despite promises from a number of ministers to support his bill, the Knesset voted it down. This was obviously a sad commentary on the low state of spiritual affairs in a country that was touted to be the Jewish state. He poured out his heart to the *Brisker Rav*, expressing his fears that he felt the spiritual nadir had not bottomed out. It would descend even lower.

The *Brisker Rav's* response was: “Come, let me teach you a lesson in *Chumash*, as I used to teach my sons.” He opened a *Chumash* and turned to the above *pasuk*, which he read out loud. He said, “To stray after the gods of the nations of the land does not mean that they did not *daven Shacharis*, it means that they literally worshipped idols.” Now, if that was not (bad) enough, the *pasuk* continues, “And they will forsake Me.” That does not mean that they did not *daven Minchah*, it means what it says: They will not serve Me (Hashem). And if that (these first two sins) were not (bad) enough, the *pasuk* continues, “And annul the covenant that I formed with them.” That does not mean that they did not *daven Maariv*; it means that they reneged the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*, circumcision. Hashem concludes with the words, “I will distance them and make Myself (as if) oblivious to them.”

“Nu,” the *Brisker Rav* said, lifting his eyes (from the *Chumash*), “I am certain that you will agree that the situation described here (by the Torah) is much worse than the one you described (permitting the raising of pigs in what is considered the Jewish state). But, let us continue learning. ‘So now write this song for yourselves, and teach it to *Bnei Yisrael*.’ (This *shirah*, song, refers to the Torah which is considered to be a song.) Torah learning is the antidote for every spiritual failing, regardless of its degree of deterioration, even to the point of idol worship and the abandonment of *Bris Milah*. Regardless of the nature of the people’s plunge to a spiritual nadir, Torah will return Hashem’s people to Him. All that we are obligated to do is to take care of ‘teaching it to *Bnei Yisrael*.’

“In that case, there is no reason for you to despair.”

The *Chazon Ish* was of a like-minded opinion. (After all, why not? This is *daas Torah*.) The *Chazon Ish* arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* in 1933. At that time, the spiritual profile of the new *Yishuv*, settlement, comprised of the newly-arrived immigrants, was quite low – milking cows on *Shabbos* was acceptable and common. When the *Chazon Ish* passed away, nineteen years later, the new *Yishuv* boasted dozens of *yeshivos*, including *Ponevez* and *Slabodka*. The *Chazon Ish* had a hand in laying the foundation of each and every one of those *yeshivos*.

It was the *Chazon Ish*'s opinion that the future of Judaism in *Eretz Yisrael* depended solely on the establishment of as many *yeshivos* and *chadorim*, preparatory schools, as possible. He felt strongly that "We need more *yeshivos*, more *talmidei Torah*, more *chareidi* schools, more *shiurim*, Torah classes. This is all that we can do until the advent of *Moshiach*."

The *Chazon Ish* instilled in parents the importance of a Torah education for their children by elevating the status of *talmidei chachamim*, Torah scholars and *Roshei yeshivah*. Thus, he was able to communicate the critical importance of the centrality of Torah learning to parents. When queried concerning outreach by *yeshivah* students during the summer vacation, the *Chazon Ish* replied, "If a *yeshivah* student becomes involved in anything other than Torah study (even) for the duration of a few weeks, chances are that he will not return to the *yeshivah*. Each and every *yeshivah* student is a potential *gadol hador*." Concerning a group that emphasized disseminating Torah to the masses, the *Chazon Ish* said, "The most powerful way of (spiritually) benefitting the masses is to (spiritually) benefit oneself. A person who aspires to (personally) achieve spiritual perfection – he is the one who is benefitting the masses."

The *Ponevezer Rav*, *zl*, was a visionary, whose dream was to transplant Torah from the spiritual destruction of Europe to the Holy Land. When he arrived in *Eretz Yisrael* bereft of his home, *yeshivah* and most of his family, he did not come as a broken man. He came energized with the goal to build Torah, because he knew that with Torah all Jews would one day unite under G-d. Without Torah, there is absolutely no hope for the future of the Jewish People. Luckily, Hashem has promised, *Ki lo sishkach Torah m'Yisrael*, "Torah will not be forgotten from the Jewish People." The *Ponevezer Rav* was going to see to it that this mission would be realized.

At Agudath Israel's National Convention held in Petach Tikvah in the early summer of 1941, while destruction was engulfing European Jewry, every speaker at the podium lamented the tragedy of the war and its bitter consequences. In an address that became famous, the *Ponevezer Rav* instead spoke of the need for construction and creativity, proclaiming that the order of the day should be the rebuilding of Torah institutions. It was during this talk that he made his clarion call which eventually has been immortalized, "Write *Tefillin* for the children of Ein Charod. We will yet open *Talmudei Torah* for the children of Nahalle!" These were both secular *kibbutzim* whose animus towards Torah and its way of life was unparalleled. Yet, the *Rav* felt that once Torah study began, it would mushroom into an unstoppable flow of inspiration that would uproot the evil and supplant it with religious observance.

The boldness that personified the *Ponevezer Rav* was extraordinary. Today, we do not really grasp the animus that existed in these secular *kibbutzim*. While today we find indifference resulting from Jewish religion illiteracy, then it was hatred borne of fear – fear that they may have to become *frum* and “Heaven-forbid” live the way they did in Europe. The *Rav* understood this, and he felt that no greater antidote exists than Torah.

To demonstrate how divorced the *Rav's* statement (write *Tefillin* for the children of Ein Charod) was from reality, the classic story of the *Sefer Torah* of *Kibbutz Sha'ar HaGolan* (another secular *kibbutz*) tells it all. The story's protagonist was a Jew who survived the Holocaust and arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*, alone and bereft of his family, save for a son who lived in *Kibbutz Sha'ar HaGolan*. *The father had lost all of his material property except for a Sefer Torah*, to which he was attached with every fiber of his being.

The father had no desire to spend the rest of his days living on a secular *kibbutz*, but it was sadly where his son lived. He had no alternative but to move there together with his precious *sefer Torah*, which had accompanied him throughout his tragic journey through the Holocaust. What confronted him when he arrived at the *kibbutz* was a page out of a horror story. Instead of welcoming the holy relic that had survived Hitler, the members of the *kibbutz* were shocked that someone would dare bring a *sefer Torah* into their *kibbutz*. They were offended to the core at the prospect of permitting a *sefer Torah* to reside in their preserve. They feared that the mere presence of a Torah scroll in their environs might harmfully influence their youth, who were being scrupulously protected from any contact with the slightest vestige of Judaism. This could harm them irreparably.

An emergency session of the *kibbutz* leadership was quickly convened, at which time it was decided that while the son (who was one of their own) had every right to invite his father to join him on the *Kibbutz*, the *sefer Torah* had no place there. Thus, the precious *Sefer Torah* was banished from *kibbutz Sha'ar HaGolan* – without any feelings for the broken-hearted, elderly Holocaust survivor. One would think that he had suffered enough at the cruel hands of Hitler's barbarians. No, he still had to undergo the cruelty and hard-heartedness evinced by the members of the secular left who (due to their fear of the truth and its effect on their goals) wanted to uproot Torah from their midst, banishing it entirely from their hearts and the lives of their offspring.

Nonetheless, despite this prevalent atmosphere, the *Ponevezer Rav* declared, “Write *Tefillin* for the children of Ein Charod.” Four years later, he spoke at a convention concerning *Shemittah* observance. “To whom am I addressing myself?” he asked loudly. “Even to those at Sha'ar HaGolan, who expelled the Torah from their midst in order to prevent their children from seeing and learning from it... I do not give up hope on any single member of *Klal Yisrael*; ultimately these things will happen.” And they did.

It took time, but his vision became a reality, when a *siyum ha'Shas* took place in Ein Charod. “Every Jew is inherently holy,” he declared. The Torah which is authored by Hashem is the Jew's elixir of life. It must penetrate his soul – if he will only allow himself to learn from it.