

Because Avraham hearkened My voice and safeguarded My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws. (26:5)

In his commentary to the above *pasuk*, *Sforno* makes an important point. He notes that Hashem promised Yitzchak *Avinu* to multiply his offspring, grant his descendants the Land and bless them – all because of His oath to Avraham *Avinu*. We see here (explains *Sforno*) that *z'chus Avos*, merit of others (his father, Avraham *Avinu*) is invoked when Hashem speaks to Yitzchak. Not so with Avraham (who did not have *z'chus Avos*) or Yaakov. This is because, before Yitzchak was inspired to call upon the Name of Hashem (after Gerar), when Avimelech came to him and said, “We saw that G-d is with you... you are now the blessed of G-d” (Ibid. 26:26,28,29), he had practiced his faith in private. He did not develop a student following. Once *z'chus Avos* was invoked, he no longer experienced the hardships of envy and quarrels that had previously hounded him. Yaakov *Avinu* never had to rely on *z'chus Avos*, because, from his youth, he dwelled in the tents (*Yeshivah*) of Shem and Ever, studying and teaching knowledge of G-d to the students who had come there to learn.

Although *z'chus Avos* is a fundamental concept in Judaism, it is only invoked regarding Yitzchak. Avraham had to develop his own merits, which he did via his outreach. Yaakov, as a student and mentor in *yeshivah*, also reached out. Yitzchak, however, practiced his *avodas ha'kodesh*, service to Hashem, in private, prioritizing his own spiritual self-development over his outreach obligations. As a result, he required the merits of his father, Avraham, for his own preservation. Once, he, too, called out in the Name of Hashem, he became worthy of Hashem's blessing.

Horav Yaakov Yitzchak HaLevi Ruderman, zl, derives from *Sforno* that *harbotzas Torah*, disseminating Torah, to others (individuals and to the masses) is the foundation of *kiyum ha'olam*, existence of the world. *Limud Torah*, study for the purpose of one's own spiritual development, is a mainstay of the Jewish faith, but unless one exemplifies *lilmod u'le'lamed*, to study and teach, reaching out to others, he does not completely execute the *mitzvah* to perfection. Yitzchak *Avinu* certainly spent his life learning and praying, but, until he reached out to others, he was unworthy of receiving Hashem's blessings in his own right. He required the support of his father's merit.

What about the time lost out from one's personal advancement? Outreach requires time and exertion. While the exertion can be overlooked, but the expenditure of time is a fundamental expense that cannot be ignored. The *Rosh Yeshivah* quotes the *Chasam Sofer* in his commentary to *Bereishis* (18:17,18), where Hashem says that He will divulge to Avraham *Avinu* what He plans to do to Sodom. The reason that Hashem gives is: I love him because he commands his children and household to follow in Hashem's ways. What does one thing have to do with the other? That Avraham believes in educating his family does not necessarily warrant that he should receive a heads-up, forewarning, concerning Sodom's imminent destruction. The *Chasam Sofer* explains that Avraham did not achieve (on his own) the plateau of *Nevuah*, prophecy, achieved by such *Neviim* as Yeshayah, Yirmiyahu and Yechezkel, who perceived events that would occur to nations other

than *Klal Yisrael*. This was not due to Avraham's spiritual deficiency (in comparison to these later *Neviim*), but rather, due to a lack of time during which he could focus his thoughts and comprehension on spiritual matters through which he would achieve the *madreigah*, level, of *Nevuah*.

Thus, Hashem said, "How can I hold back from Avraham what I am about to do? The only reason that he did not achieve *Nevuah* on his own is that he was busy reaching out to a pagan world to bring people closer to Me." Avraham cannot be deprived and left out in the dark just because he was actively engaged in disseminating Hashem's word.

Incredible! The *Chasam Sofer* teaches us (as the *Rosh Yeshivah* presents it) that what a person (who is a Torah disseminator) loses out (in spiritual advancement) because he is involved in outreach, Torah dissemination, in its various, multifarious forms, Hashem will ultimately grant him as a gift. One does not suffer a spiritual setback or regression due to his devotion to teaching others. On the contrary, the *Chasam Sofer* was once queried by a young Torah scholar whether he was permitted to interrupt his Torah study to teach a group of youngsters who were in need of a *rebbe*. The saintly *Chasam Sofer* replied, "One hour teaching students is equivalent to many hours of personal Torah study. You will merit greater Torah erudition by learning with students." (As I have reiterated time and again: not everyone is suited for teaching. Obviously, the *Chasam Sofer* was speaking to an individual who was talented and, thus, able to inspire these children to learn and continue learning. Teaching is a skill and also a holy mission, which demands commitment coupled with love in order to catalyze positive results.)

Harbotzas Torah requires immense inner strength to overcome the difficulties the *Satan* presents before us. The challenges come in various forms, of which financial remuneration will probably rise to the top. I have yet to see a successful *mechanech*, educator, however, relinquish his mission only due to money. Truthfully, the challenges in the field of *harbotzas Torah* are probably not much different than in any other profession, but only someone who is jaded would trade away the satisfaction one has after having successfully navigated a lesson, a class, a semester, and the good feeling knowing that precious Jewish lives have been changed.

The challenges do not necessarily come from without. The *Rosh Yeshivah* relates a conversation that he had during the nascent days of *Ner Israel* with a distinguished lay person, himself a *talmid chacham*, distinguished Torah scholar, G-d-fearing and highly respected. The man asked how the *yeshivah* could possibly succeed. A *yeshivah* requires large sums of money for maintenance. Where would he obtain the funds to run the *yeshivah*? *Rav Ruderman* replied with a *Tosfos* in *Meseches Shabbos* 21b that asks what difference did it make (*halachically*) that one jug of oil was discovered untainted, with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest intact? *Chazal* rule that when a gentile moves a jug of oil (or anything), the contents become *tamei*, *tumas hesit*, ritually contaminated, as if moved by a *zav*, a man who had an abnormal body emission. This was a special rabbinic decree issued against a gentile who moves a vessel. The *Rosh Yeshivah* observed that had the Jews of that time asked *Tosfos'* question, there would not have been a *Chanukah*,

because they could not even have lit the *Menorah* the first night!

When one builds a *yeshivah* (when one commences to be *marbitz Torah*), many questions and many naysayers will arise. Ignore them! One must do what he sets out to do and pray for *siyata diShmaya*, Heavenly assistance. Otherwise, he will be left standing with one major unanswered question: *Why did you not make the yeshivah?*