

Orchos HaAmud

Weekly Presentation Highlighting an Amud of the Week



AMUD HAYOMI PROGRAM DETAILS



Daily Amud
7 Amudim weekly



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BERACHOS 34B

BY RABBI AVIGDOR BERENSTEIN

“Once, Rabi Chanina ben Dosa went to learn Torah under the tutelage of Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai and Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai’s son became ill. Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai said to Rabi Chanina ben Dosa: Chani-na, my son, *daven* for mercy for him so that he may recover. Rabi Chanina ben Dosa put his head between his knees and *davened* for mercy for him and he recovered. Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai said: If ben Zakai stuck his head between his knees all day long, he would be ignored. His wife asked him: Is Chanina greater than you? He said: No, but he is like a slave before the King, and I am like a minister before the King.” (*Brachos Daf 34b*) *Rashi* explains that a slave is a member of the household; therefore, he may enter and leave without permission. In contrast, a minister is not accustomed to come before the King.

This *Gemara* is astounding. How can it be that Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai, the greatest of the *chachomim*, had to ask his student to *daven* for his ill son? And how can it be that although Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai was greater than his student, as he told his wife, only Rabi Chanina ben Dosa’s *tefila* was accepted? What was Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai’s answer and what does the comparison to a minister and a slave signify?

The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary on *Megilas Esther* (1:3) and *Mishlei* (17:2) sheds precious light on *Chazal’s* words. He writes that there were always various levels in *Klal Yisroel*. There were *talmidei chachomim* who dedicated themselves to understanding and delving deeper into the Torah, while others dedicated themselves mainly to *davening* with great concentration and elevated *yichudim* and to fulfilling *mitzvos*, such as Rabi Chanina ben Dosa and his colleagues. They are the “*chassidim harishonim*” mentioned earlier (*Daf 32b*) who spent an hour before each *shmoneh esrei*, an hour for *shmoneh esrei*, and an hour after each *shmoneh esrei*, provoking the *Gemara’s* question: Since they spent nine hours a day *davening*, how was their Torah learning preserved? The *Gemara* replies that because they were *chassidim*, their Torah learning was preserved. Certainly they learned and knew Torah; still, most of their time was dedicated to serving *Hashem* and *davening*, and the Torah they had learned was preserved.

Based on this, the Vilna Gaon (*Mishlei* 10:22) explains that the *posuk* “*Hashem’s* blessing brings wealth without increasing stress” refers to one who constantly serves

and cleaves to *Hashem* most of the day. His Torah learning will be blessed, he will not forget what he has learned, and he will even increase his Torah knowledge and understanding without stress and toil, as a reward for serving *Hashem* by *davening*. That is, even those whose days were filled with *avoda* and *tefila* learned Torah and through their closeness and cleaving to *Hashem* they acquired it more easily, for it is *Hashem* who transmits Torah to us, as we say in *bircas haTorah*: “He who teaches Torah to His nation Yisroel.” Therefore, one who deserves Torah due to his spiritual level merits spiritual wealth and his Torah is acquired and retained easily, without much toil.

Based on the above, the Vilna Gaon explains our *Gemara*. Those who learn Torah all day are on a higher level; they are like ministers before the King, but those who *daven* and serve *Hashem* are like slaves who are constantly in the King’s presence. Since they are constantly *davening*, they can present themselves and supplicate before *Hashem* at any moment and He accepts their requests. That is why Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai who was outstanding in Torah and Rabi Chanina ben Dosa’s *Rebbi* asked his student to *daven* for his ill son.

The question remains, given that the level of learning Torah is greater, as Rabi Yochanan ben Zakai told his wife and the Vilna Gaon states explicitly, why did some put their main energy and strength during most of the day into *davening* and serving *Hashem*?

The answer may be found in an episode in the life of the famous Gaon and *Tzaddik* Rav Aryeh Levine *ztz”l*. Even in his youth

he was known as a *talmid chochom* who learned Torah passionately and his *rebbeim* in the Yeshiva of Volozhin highly regarded his greatness in Torah. Nonetheless, after his marriage, he was very involved for most of the day helping the ill, prisoners, and depressed people who needed his help.

Understandably, his wife was upset, arguing that she had married a *talmid chochom* whose life’s mission was to toil in learning Torah to the best of his ability. Rav Aryeh actually agreed with her but argued that he felt that those in need of kindness were “pursuing him” and appearing at his doorstep, and he was unable to refuse those who needed it. They agreed that he would ask his great *Rebbi*, the Gaon and Kabbalist Rav Shlomo Elyashiv *ztz”l*, author of “*Leshem, Sh’voi, V’achlomo*” which path to follow.

His revered *Rebbi* answered that he must put his main effort into the area to which he felt most drawn, in which he felt the most spiritual satisfaction, because that is his Heavenly mission. When Rav Aryeh answered that although he loved learning Torah, he felt his greatest happiness and elevation when helping the depressed and the lowly, His great *Rebbi* said that that is his life’s mission towards which he should invest his great abilities. He also blessed him that he would have sons and sons-in-law who would be *talmidei chachomim*. This blessing was fulfilled in its entirety, as Rav Aryeh’s sons were noted disseminators of Torah, and his sons-in-law were outstanding Torah giants, Rav Shmuel Aharon Yudelevitch *ztz”l*, Rav Eliezer Manoach Plachinsky *ztz”l*, and Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *ztz”l*.

Amud HaYomi recently began its 1st cycle through Shas with Masechta Brachos! This historic initiative will enable deeper comprehension of Shas. Additionally, there are optional monthly bechinos with stipends, which affords one a much greater opportunity to be koneh Shas through Dirshu’s proven retention and accountability methods.

UPCOMING AMUD HAYOMI LIMUD SCHEDULE

| DAF HAYOMI | AMUD HAYOMI | DATE | תאריך | יום |
|------------|-------------|----------|--------|-----|
| בבא קמא מה | ברכות לג. | 12/17/23 | ה טבת | א |
| בבא קמא מו | ברכות לג. | 12/18/23 | ו טבת | ב |
| בבא קמא מז | ברכות לד. | 12/19/23 | ז טבת | ג |
| בבא קמא מח | ברכות לד. | 12/20/23 | ח טבת | ד |
| בבא קמא מט | ברכות לה. | 12/21/23 | ט טבת | ה |
| בבא קמא נ | ברכות לה. | 12/22/23 | י טבת | ו |
| בבא קמא נא | ברכות לו. | 12/23/23 | יא טבת | שבת |
| בבא קמא נב | ברכות לו. | 12/24/23 | יב טבת | א |
| בבא קמא נג | ברכות לו. | 12/25/23 | יג טבת | ב |
| בבא קמא נד | ברכות לו. | 12/26/23 | יד טבת | ג |
| בבא קמא נה | ברכות לה. | 12/27/23 | טו טבת | ד |
| בבא קמא נו | ברכות לה. | 12/28/23 | טז טבת | ה |
| בבא קמא נז | ברכות לה. | 12/29/23 | יז טבת | ו |
| בבא קמא נח | ברכות לה. | 12/30/23 | יח טבת | שבת |