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EIRUVIN 21B

BY RABBI AVIGDOR BERENSTEIN

"His sidelocks *(k'vutzosav)* are piled up *(taltalim)*, …" (*Shir Hashirim* 5:11) Rav Chisda said in the name of Mar Ukva, this teaches that from every letter's point (*kotz*), piles and piles of laws can be inferred. "… black (*shechoros*) as a raven (*oreiv*)." By whom can they be found? By one who comes early (*shacharis*) to the *Beis Medrash* and stays late (*maariv*). Rabba says, by one who blackens his face like a raven for them. Rava says, by one who makes himself as cruel as a raven to his children and family, like Rav Ada bar Masna who was going to *yeshiva*. His wife said to him, what shall I make for your children (to eat)? He said to her, are the greens all gone from the field? (*Eiruvin* 21b)

In short, the Gemara asks who can understand the piles of laws hidden in the points of every letter of the Torah and gives three answers based on similarity to the words "*shechoros ka'oreiv*". 1) One who in the *Beis Medrash* morning and night. 2) One who blackens his face like a raven for Torah. The *Maharsha* explains that this person afflicts and exerts himself learning Torah until his face turns black. 3) One who is cruel to his children, not worrying about their sustenance, similar to what ravens do.

The *Iyun Yaakov* asks that the first two answers explain both "*shechoros*" and "*ka'oreiv*", but the third answer, despite the comparison to a raven, seems to ignore the word "*shechoros*".

Another seeming difficulty is the *Gemara's* emphasis on his cruelty, apparently a negative trait, rather than on his focused learning, undistracted by earning his family's sustenance. Wouldn't one who inherited great wealth or has a generous patron also understand the Torah's secrets equally well or even better, graced with the additional peace of mind that his family's needs are provided, as opposed to one whose family barely subsists?

Also, what do these three answers have in common, and why do only these specific behaviors help understand the Torah's novelties? At first glance, it seems that they all imply learning more hours, either by lengthening the workday, by learning despite difficulty, or by eliminating other chores.

Perhaps there is more. The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 99b) interprets the *posuk* (*Mishlei* 16:26) "It works for the working soul because he bent his mouth for it" as referring to one who learns Torah: "He works here, and his Torah works for him elsewhere." *Rashi* explains that because he bent his mouth, toiling in learning Torah, it seeks him, requesting its Creator to grant him the Torah's underlying logic. The Torah becomes his advocate, begging Hashem to enhance his learning.

If begging is needed, it must be for something beyond his grasp, that he does not deserve to understand. Still, the Torah beseeches on his behalf, entreating Hashem that he comprehend the topics he is learning. Why? Because he invested effort, entitling him to special treatment, raising him above his previous level. We see that deep understanding of Torah does not depend on one's intelligence, quick grasp, or directly analyzing it, but on one's effort motivating the Torah to speak up for him. Thus, his comprehension is not the direct effect of his attempt, but a gift from Above.

This sheds new light on our *Gemara*. Who merits in-depth understanding of Torah to derive piles and piles of laws? The *Gemara* offers three answers, all based on the same concept: The deepest understanding of Torah depends on total dedication of one's abilities and motivation. The *Gemara* illustrates this in three ways:

By one who comes early to the *Beis Medrash* and stays late. In effect, he is there all day. Learning is not part of his daily schedule, it is his daily schedule. His merit does not lie in how many hours he learns, but in his total commitment. If one person learns ten hours daily and then wastes two hours, and someone else learns all his available nine hours and wastes no time, the second one will enjoy the benefit of discovering the hidden laws of the Torah, even though the first one learns more hours.

By one who blackens his face like a raven. He learns even when it is hard; his face turns black from his strenuous efforts. The issue is not how long he learns, but how important learning is to him, it is his primary goal, toward which he concentrates all his strengths, allowing himself no leniencies. Again, others may learn more hours than he, because they are endowed with more strength, but he is greater than they, because he squeezes out every drop of Torah that he can. The Torah is his first and last priority, to the exclusion of anything else.

By one who makes himself cruel to his children and family, like a raven. The emphasis is on making himself cruel, not on how he exclusively learns. One who received an inheritance and is free to learn does not reach his level. He makes himself cruel, meaning that he is naturally soft-hearted and merciful, he wants to worry about his children, he desires their wellbeing, and they will not have what they need if he does not provide them. Nonetheless, he makes himself cruel. Contrary to his nature, he becomes black, wicked, and dark, as the *posuk* says, "black as a raven", from which *Chazal* infer that it refers to cruelty. Why does he do so? Because he loves the Torah more than anything else. It is foremost in his mind and his life's goal. To attain it, he will forgo his other desires, even his dear family's bread and salt will have to wait; they can subsist on the field greens, and he can cuddle his beloved *Gemara* for a few more minutes. He merits knowing the piles of laws, not for his focus, not for his extra time learned, but because the Torah is his life's mission, to which end he abandons all his other desires.

We may think that we are limited by our limited strength and ability, that it is hard to aspire to more, and that learning another hour each day is just another hour. Untrue! If we try harder, if our strengths are more dedicated to Torah, we have achieved a quantum leap. For our increased toil, the very Torah, yesterday's *amud*, today's *amud*, and tomorrow's *amud* will recommend us to Hashem as deserving to understand everything deeply. The more we commit to this goal and make learning Torah our main desire, the more we will merit grasping its deepest secrets.

Amud HaYomi recently began its inaugural cycle through Shas! 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

יום	תאריך	DATE	עמוד היומי	דף היומי	דף היומי בהלכה - משנה ברורה עמוד	סימן וסעיף
			– פרשת בשלח –			
א	ד' שבט	2/2/25	עירובין כא.	סנהדרין מז	פו.	ש"ב א'
ב	ה' שבט	2/3/25	עירובין כא:	סנהדרין מח	פו: (172)	ש"ב ב'-ג'
ג	ו' שבט	2/4/25	עירובין כב.	סנהדרין מט	פז.	ש"ב ד'-ו'
ד	ז' שבט	2/5/25	עירובין כב:	סנהדרין נ	פז: (174)	ש"ב ז'-ח'
ה	ח' שבט	2/6/25	עירובין כג.	סנהדרין נא	פח.	ש"ב ט'
ו	ט' שבט	2/7/25	עירובין כג:	סנהדרין נב	חזרה	
ש"ק	י' שבט	2/8/25	עירובין כד.	סנהדרין נג	חזרה	
			– פרשת יתרו –			
א	י"א שבט	2/9/25	עירובין כד:	סנהדרין נד	פח: (176)	ש"ב ט'
ב	י"ב שבט	2/10/25	עירובין כה.	סנהדרין נה	פט.	ש"ב י'
ג	י"ג שבט	2/11/25	עירובין כה:	סנהדרין נו	פט: (178)	ש"ב י"א-י"ב
ד	י"ד שבט	2/12/25	עירובין כו.	סנהדרין נז	צ.	ש"ב י"ג ש"ג א'-ב'
ה	ט"ו שבט	2/13/25	עירובין כו:	סנהדרין נח	צ: (180)	ש"ג ג'-ט'
ו	ט"ז שבט	2/14/25	עירובין כז.	סנהדרין נט	חזרה	
ש"ק	י"ז שבט	2/15/25	עירובין כז:	סנהדרין ס	חזרה	