

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

STAGE FRIGHT

“And Aharon did so...” (8:3)

Stage fright, or as it's called in Hebrew *“aimat ha'tzibur”* — literally, “fear of the public”, affects nearly everyone. For some people, having a molar extracted without anesthesia would be a preferable alternative to having to perform in public.

The degree of nervousness depends on several factors: The size of the audience, the importance of the audience, the amount, or lack, of preparation, the importance of the event, and the difficulty of the presentation.

Several years ago I was invited to speak at the plenary session of Agudat Yisrael. I had taken the precaution of flying to New York a couple of days before the event, having remembered a previous experience when I got off the plane, jumped into a taxi at JFK airport, rushed over to Long Island, *davened* with the yeshiva and then gave a speech to them for an hour. I had slept little, if at all, on the plane, and when I started to speak I felt like someone had filled my mouth with steel wool.

Because the Aguda Convention was both very large (around five thousand people) and it was a very distinguished gathering, I rehearsed my speech until I could “do it in my sleep”. Not that that left no room for improvisation

and spontaneity, but I believe, like a gymnast or a musician, when you reach the point where things become automatic, you can go into a “state of flow”. Because your mind is relieved of all technical considerations, you can “fly”.

I'm happy to say the speech was well received, but at the end of the day, however much work you put in, finding *chein* (favor) in peoples' eyes is something that comes only from G-d.

In this week's Torah portion Aharon HaKohen has a “command performance” that leaves all teeth-chattering, palm-sweating appearances in the shade. Aharon has to perform in front of the most important “audience” in the universe — G-d.

An ordinary person having to light the Menorah in front of the Master of the Universe would lose all physical coordination, become a mass of quivering jelly and pour the oil all over the floor.

Aharon, however, “*did so.*” Aharon rose to the occasion and performed his task flawlessly.

• Sources: based on the *Kedushat Levi* as seen in *Mayana shel Torah*

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BAVA BATRA 137 - 143

A DAUGHTER'S SPECIAL BLESSING

Rav Chisda said, "If a daughter is born first, it is a good sign for the sons that are born afterwards." ("Bat techila siman yafeh l'banim.")

The *gemara* on our *daf* cites this statement from Rav Chisda as one possible way to understand the *mishna* on the previous *daf*, which seems to indicate a preference for the birth of a daughter, based on the larger monetary amount promised to a daughter than to a son.

The *gemara* explains Rav Chisda's words by offering two different reasons. The first reason is that if a daughter is born first, she will be a special blessing to the family by helping to raise her younger siblings. Presumably, if a son would be born first, he would not be as available, since he would have a mitzvah to be constantly immersed in Torah study, a mitzvah that is unique to males. (This does not mean that sons and husbands are exempt from helping to raise their siblings and children, or to help out at home!)

The second way to understand Rav Chisda's statement that is offered in the *gemara* is, "So that the 'evil eye' will not rule over him." This begs explanation of what this particular "evil eye" is in this case, and who is being "protected" from it when a daughter is the firstborn. Rabbeinu Gershom Me'or HaGolah explains this to mean that since the firstborn is a daughter, other people will not look at the father with an "evil eye" of envy, saying: "Look at this person who has so many sons!" The Maharsha offers a different viewpoint. If a son was the firstborn, he would receive a "double portion" of the inheritance, twice that of his brothers. This could be cause for resentment and jealousy from his younger brothers toward him. When a daughter is born first, however, her brothers all share equally in the inheritance. This is what Rav Chisda meant when he taught, "If a daughter is born first, it is a good sign for the sons that are born afterwards." It is a good sign for the brothers born after her, since there will not be an "evil eye" of contention and jealousy amongst the brothers regarding inheritance, since all brothers share equally in the inheritance of their father's estate.

A minor aside, to correct an apparent misconception, seems in order. Numerous times I have heard a person saying to a first-time father or mother, "Bat techila siman l'banim", as if to say that having a daughter first is a good omen for a wealth of sons in the future, and that they should rejoice and not be disappointed in this child not being male. Although the well-wishers certainly intend well, they seem to be "misspeaking", since this statement of "Bat techila..." does not seem to allude to this idea according to either explanation offered by our great Sages of the *gemara* here.

• Bava Basra 141a

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Aharon is taught the method for kindling the Menorah. Moshe sanctifies the *levi'im* to work in the Mishkan. They replace the first-born, who were disqualified after sinning at the golden calf. The *levi'im* are commanded that after five years of training they are to serve in the Mishkan from ages 30 to 50; afterwards they are to engage in less strenuous work. One year after the Exodus from Egypt, G-d commands Moshe concerning the *korban* Pesach. Those ineligible for this offering request a remedy, and the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini, allowing a "second chance" to offer the *korban* Pesach one month later, is detailed. Miraculous clouds that hover near the Mishkan signal when to travel and when to camp. Two silver trumpets summon the princes or the entire nation for announcements. The trumpets also signal travel plans, war or festivals. The order in which the tribes march is specified. Moshe invites his father-in-law, Yitro, to join the Jewish People, but Yitro returns to Midian. At the instigation of the *eruv rav* — the mixed Egyptian multitude who joined the Jewish People in the Exodus — some

people complain about the manna. Moshe protests that he is unable to govern the nation alone. G-d tells him to select 70 elders, the first Sanhedrin, to assist him, and informs him that the people will be given meat until they will be sickened by it. Two candidates for the group of elders prophesy beyond their mandate, foretelling that Yehoshua instead of Moshe will bring the people to Canaan. Some protest, including Yehoshua, but Moshe is pleased that others have become prophets. G-d sends an incessant supply of quail for those who complained that they lacked meat. A plague punishes those who complained. Miriam tries to make a constructive remark to Aharon which also implies that Moshe is only like other prophets. G-d explains that Moshe's prophecy is superior to that of any other prophet, and punishes Miriam with *tzara'at* as if she had gossiped about her brother. (Because Miriam is so righteous, she is held to an incredibly high standard.) Moshe prays for her, and the nation waits until she is cured before traveling.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Toward which direction did the wicks of the Menorah burn, and why?
2. From what material and in what manner was the Menorah made?
3. Moshe was commanded to cleanse the *Levi'im* by sprinkling on them "*mei chatat*." What is "*mei chatat*"?
4. Which three "*t'nufot*" (wavings) are in the parsha?
5. Why did G-d claim the first-born of the Jewish People as His possession?
6. Why are the words "Bnei Yisrael" repeated five times in verse 8:19?
7. When a *Levi* reaches age 50, which functions may he still perform?
8. Why was the mitzvah of Pesach Sheini not commanded directly to Moshe?
9. What similarity is there between the Menorah and the trumpets?
10. What three purposes did trumpet signals serve?
11. How many tribes marched between the Gershon-Merari detachment and that of Kehat? How was the time differential used?
12. The tribe of Dan, who traveled last, was called "the gatherer of all the camps." What did they gather?
13. When the Jewish People entered the Land, who took temporary possession of Jericho?
14. Which aron is referred to in verse 10:33?
15. Which two topics are out of chronological order in the parsha?
16. Which tastes did the manna not offer, and why not?
17. Moshe was commanded to choose 70 elders to help him lead the Jewish People. What happened to the elders who led the Jewish People in Egypt?
18. Who did Moshe choose as elders?
19. What was the prophecy of Eldad and Medad?
20. Why did Miriam merit to have the people wait for her?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 8:2 - They leaned toward the middle wick so people wouldn't say that the Menorah was lit for its light.
2. 8:4 - It was made from one solid piece of hammered gold.
3. 8:7 - Water containing ashes of the *para aduma*.
4. 8:11 - The wavings of Kehat, Gershon and Merari.
5. 8:17 - Because in Egypt He spared them during *makat bechorot*.
6. 8:19 - To show G-d's love for them.
7. 8:25 - Closing the courtyard gates of the Mishkan and Beit Hamikdash; singing during the *avoda*; loading the wagons to transport the Mishkan.
8. 9:7 - The people who asked about it were rewarded by being the catalyst for the teaching of this mitzvah.
9. 8:4, 10:2 - They were each made from a single, solid block.
10. 10:2-7 - Announcement of the gathering of Bnei Yisrael, the gathering of the *nesi'im*, and the beginning of a move of the encampment.
11. 10:17-21 - Three: Reuven, Shimon and Gad. In the meantime Gershon and Merari set up the Mishkan.
12. 10:25 - They gathered and returned things lost by the other tribes.
13. 10:32 - The children of Yitro.
14. 10:33 - The aron which held the broken pieces of the first tablets, that was taken to the battlefield.
15. 9:1, 10:35,36 - The Pesach sacrifice, and the traveling of the aron.
16. 11:5 - Cucumber, melon, leek, onion and garlic - these are harmful to nursing women.
17. 11:16 - They were consumed in the fire at Taverah (11:3).
18. 11:16 - People who were supervisors in Egypt and had pity on Bnei Yisrael at risk to themselves.
19. 11:28 - "Moshe will die and Yehoshua will lead the Jewish People into the Land."
20. 12:15 - Because she waited for Moshe when he was cast into the river.

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THE PEOPLE ARE “LIKE” COMPLAINERS

Chapter eleven in this Torah portion begins with a very enigmatic verse: “And the people were like complainers; evil in the ears of G-d, and G-d heard and his wrath flared and a fire of G-d burned against them, and it consumed at the edge of the camp”. Curiously, they are not referred to simply as “complainers”. Rather, they are described as “like complainers”. Furthermore, we are not told what they were complaining about.

Abarbanel explains that despite the fact that Jewish People had spent an entire year at Sinai where they had received the Torah with its teachings and Divine admonitions, they never really abandoned the heretical beliefs that they had absorbed in Egypt. Similarly, they had imitated the crass Egyptian character, especially in regard to eating and drinking. Here, at Sinai, in a place where the Divine Torah should have straightened out their crooked beliefs and character, the Egyptian influence still could not be completely erased. Despite the fact that they were accompanied by the Ark of the Covenant and led by the Clouds of Glory, the two episodes that begin this chapter illustrate the failure of belief and character which remained with them.

The Hebrew word that is usually translated as “complainers” actually means, in the context of our text, “those who sought a pretext to complain”. Abarbanel then transfigures the rest of the verse so that it reads as follows: “They sought pretexts to prove that G-d’s ears were bad”; that is to say, that G-d did not pay attention to the everyday words and actions of the people. This is similar to the verse in Psalms 94:7: “And they said that G d will not see, G-d will not understand.” Their belief was that G-d was not aware of and

did not relate to the details of everyday, lowly physical existence. They expressed this belief now because Moshe had just said in the previous verse (10:36): “Arise, G-d, and let Your foes be scattered, let those who hate You flee from before You. And when it (the Ark) rested, he (Moshe) would say, ‘Reside tranquilly, O, G-d, among the myriad thousands of Israel’.”

The people were essentially mocking Moshe’s words. They didn’t believe that G-d really resided amongst them, that He was attuned to them. Yet they are still described as like those looking for a pretext because they were not totally denying the concept of Divine Providence. They understood that it applied to well-known and publicized miraculous interventions in nature. Rather, they were looking for a pretext to deny G d’s providence in regard to the details of everyday life.

Since their transgression does involve an overtly public action, the Torah does not go into further detail. Rather, to counter their claim that G-d does not hear, the Torah says explicitly that G-d heard. To counter their claim that G-d was not personally involved on an individual basis, G-d made sure that they would recognize Him through the punishment of fire, which was directed miraculously and specifically against only those who were guilty. The fire burned only on the “edge” of the camp, indicating that it was a miraculous fire, not a natural one which would have normally spread further. The people cried out to Moshe, who then prayed to G-d. To further demonstrate the uniquely personal and providential nature of the fire, it was then immediately absorbed into the ground.

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

KFAR SABA — TOMB OF BINYAMIN

Like all the sons of the Patriarch Yaakov, the youngest of them, Binyamin, found his final resting place in Eretz Yisrael.

There is a wide range of opinions as to exactly where he was buried. Some claim that he was buried



in Jerusalem, which was in the part of the Land inherited by his tribe. Jewish pilgrims from medieval times believed that he was buried in the Beit Netofa Valley near Tzipori.

The most popular tradition, however, is that his tomb is near Kfar Saba on the way to Kalkilya.

“SHTENDERS” IN SHANGHAI

From: Jesse

Dear Rabbi,
I recently heard of a yeshiva being saved from the Holocaust through Shanghai. Is this true, and how did it happen?

Dear Jesse,

Before recounting the actual history it is important to qualify that even more significant than the interesting events is recognizing the hand of G-d in history which orchestrated the miraculous salvation of these yeshiva students. That being said, the story is as follows:

As a result of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement in August 1939, Germany and Russia signed a non-aggression pact and subsequently invaded, annexed and divided Poland among themselves. In June 1940, Russia invaded neighboring Lithuania and annexed it as an official part of the Soviet Union as well. Hundreds of thousands of Jews thus found themselves suddenly trapped within an anti-religious, anti-Semitic, communist dictatorship that was particularly hostile to Jews and Judaism.

In this dire situation, many Jews vacillated between accepting the dangers of staying or risking the ramifications of leaving — if they could. In order to emigrate, it was necessary to acquire an exit visa from the Soviet authorities. The communist regime in those days touted itself as the “Land of Freedom and Equality”, but in reality it was nothing more than a huge prison. Two hundred million human beings found themselves behind the “Iron Curtain”, forcibly separated from the rest of the world. For most, acquiring an exit visa was a pipedream.

This policy had been in place for more than 20 years, since the revolution of 1917, when the communists had risen to power. The roots of the policy were anchored in the ideology that the Soviet Union was paradise. The communist state was purportedly governed by justice and equality. According to Soviet propaganda, there were no poor and no wealthy; all men were equal, content with their lives. There was no class system, no competition, no oppressors and no oppressed. The government was the “beneficent father” that had been established only to serve and benefit the people. Within this agenda it was unfathomable and intolerable that anyone would want to leave such a “utopia”. Thus, according to the principles of the Soviet Union, citizens who wished to leave were nothing more than traitors and deserters, deserving death or exile to Siberia.

Among Jews, two small groups were exceptions:

Because of the initial alliance between Russia and Germany (until Nazi Germany later turned against and attacked Russia in

June 1941), German citizens could travel freely, and the Russian government granted them permission to leave, together with non-German spouses and children. Therefore, many Lithuanian or Polish Jews asked yeshiva students with German citizenship to arrange fictitious marriages. Indeed, many girls or widows with children were saved in this way.

Another exception was the Mir Yeshiva, which had earlier fled from Russian-occupied Poland into Lithuania, and became trapped again after the Russian takeover of Lithuania. Under the pretext of being Polish refugees in flight, they claimed exemption from the Soviet prohibition on Lithuanian emigration. Against all odds, permission was given on condition that they be granted asylum in a destination country.

Characteristically, not a single western country was willing to accept this trickle of Jews that Russia was willing to let go. Yet, through a most curious course of events, the members of the Mir Yeshiva received visas from none other than the then-recently-opened Japanese embassy in Lithuania, through the good-will of Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara. What made this particularly “odd” was that Japan was saving Jews under the very nose of both the Russians and the Germans through its embassy in Russian-Lithuania (which was actually a front for espionage on Russia), while being simultaneously strongly allied to Nazi Germany!

In this way the approximately 350 members of the Mir Yeshiva were granted permission to flee Russian-occupied Lithuania as Polish refugees, and boarded the Trans-Siberian railway, not to exile in Siberia, but to freedom in Japan! In the fall of 1940 the yeshiva departed for Vladivostok on the extreme eastern coast of Russia, and then by ship to Tsuruga, Japan. The yeshiva reopened in Kobe, Japan in March 1941. It was there, and later in Japanese-controlled Shanghai, China, that they passed the war in relative safety until moving the yeshiva to separate locations in New York and Jerusalem.

Later, the *mashgiach* of Mir, Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, *zatzal*, recalled that extraordinary period as follows: “How much Divine counsel and planning was behind the trip from Mir to Vilna, and afterwards from Vilna to Keidan (Lithuania), and afterwards the greatest of wonders — the way we acquired the exit visas. The most wondrous thing of all, something inexplicable — that the Russians gave us permission to travel as we wished. This was completely against their nature and against their laws...yet they changed their laws and their conduct. Instead of sending ‘wicked sinners’ like us to Siberia, they were benevolent to us. They themselves didn’t understand what had come over them, as the verse states, ‘The heart of a king is like streams of water in the hand of G-d. Wherever He wills, He will direct it’ (Mishlei 21:1).”

LAWES OF BLESSINGS

Rabbi Yitzchak said: Nowadays we no longer have prophet or priest, sacrifice or temple, or any altar to atone for us. From the day that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, nothing was left for us other than prayer. Therefore, G-d, hear our prayers and forgive us.

• *Midrash Tehillim 5:7*

Prayer was instituted in place of the Temple service. Therefore, just as a sacrifice needed proper *kavana* (intention), so too one's prayer should be said with proper *kavanah*. On this point the Lavush writes that if a person does not comprehend the meaning of what he is reciting, he is likened to a bird that chirps without any comprehension.

One must take care not to skip words or letters from the prayers and blessings he recites. Rather, he should look at each word like a valuable coin that he is counting. (*Hagahot Maimoniot*, Laws of Prayer, chapter 4)

It is forbidden to do any type of work, even something easy, while reciting a blessing (Chayei Adam). The same rule applies when answering *kaddish*, which is a great and exalted praise of G-d. One also should not busy himself with folding his *tallit* or putting away his *tefillin* during *kaddish*. (Kaf HaChaim)

What should one do when he is in the middle of a blessing, and *kaddish*, *kedushah*, *barchu* or *modim* is being recited?

There are long and short blessings. Short blessings are like

the ones we say before we eat food or perform a mitzvah. They have a relatively short and standard formula, with a very short, unique ending. It is forbidden to interrupt in the middle of these types of blessings, or before partaking of the food or performance of the mitzvah that the blessing was recited over, even to answer for *kaddish* or *kedushah* and the like.

Examples of long blessings are the blessings of *kriat shema*, *baruch she'amar*, *asher yatzar* and *me'ein shalosh*. It is permitted to interrupt in the middle of these blessings to answer for the above-mentioned praises, such as for *kaddish*. However, one must not interrupt unless he has already begun to mention part of the idea unique to that blessing. For example, if one only said "Blessed are You" and is before saying "Who forms the luminaries", he may not interrupt; but if he already said "Who forms the luminaries" he may interrupt.

At the conclusion of the blessing, as well, one may not interrupt. An example: Between "Blessed are You G-d" and "Who forms the luminaries".



DELETERIOUS DESIRES

The Torah relates that not long after the Jews left Mount Sinai, the *erev rav* — who were the “mixed-multitudes” of Egyptians that joined the Jews in the Exodus — “desired a desire” (Numbers 11:4). This led to a confrontation between Moshe and the people about the disadvantages of the Manna. Tradition explains that at the core of this clash was the refusal to accept the Torah’s laws about whom one can marry. The Rabbis find an allusion to this in the verse which says, “And Moshe heard the nation crying according to its families” (Num. 11:10), which is exegetically rendered: “And Moshe heard the nation crying about ‘family matters’.” However, the literal text of the Torah suggests that the dispute centered around the Manna. So why does tradition continue to assert that the core issue was “family matters”? It seems that the basis for this explanation is found in the Torah’s word choice in describing the desire which the *erev rav* expressed: *hitavu taavah* (“they desired a desire”). As we shall see below, the Hebrew word *taavah* (pronounced *tayvuh* in the prevalent Yiddish pronunciation) almost exclusively conjures intimacy-related desire, and other forms of desire are denoted with other terms, such as *chemdah* or *chafetz*.

The Vilna Gaon (1720-1797) explains that the difference between *taavah* and *chemdah* is in whether the fulfillment of said desire causes a direct physical pleasure or not. *Taavah* denotes a type of desire whose fulfillment leads directly to bodily pleasure. In contrast, *chemdah* refers to the desire for something which one may desire, but does not directly lead to physical pleasure. Thus, the desire for elegant clothes, a nice house, or a lot of money are all called *chemdah*. Indeed, the Vilna Gaon points to a Talmudic passage (*Chagigah* 11b) which applies the terms *chemdah* and *taavah* to theft and illicit relations. The Vilna Gaon explains that the Talmud applies these terms respectively, as *chemdah* is more associated with theft, and *taavah* with illicit relations.

In another context, the Vilna Gaon offers a similar explanation by contrasting three terms for desire: *taavah*, *chemdah*, and *chafetz*. There he explains that the former refers to sensual desire, the middle to monetary desires, and the latter to culinary desires.

In a slight departure from the Vilna Gaon’s approach, Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) and Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) offer another way of explaining the difference between *chemdah* and *taavah*. They explain that the type of desire denoted by the word

chemdah is the direct result of the inherent properties of the object of desire. In other words, when something/someone possess traits universally recognized as desirable, then the desire for such an object is described as *chemdah*. On the other hand, when one’s desire is not intrinsically derived from the object itself, but results from an alignment of other factors, including the subject’s own proclivities, time, place, etc., then such a desire is called *taavah*. In truth, this explanation can be understood as somewhat of an expansion on the Vilna Gaon’s, because carnal desires do not usually stem from recognition of the objective value of the body of one’s desire, but from one’s own personal appetite — aptly branding such desire as *taavah*. Conversely, the desire to steal or to otherwise accrue material commodities is not generally derived from one’s appetite for physical pleasure, but from one’s recognition of the advantages and benefits of possessing such belongings. So the term *chemdah* applies to those types of desires. The term *chafetz*, which the Vilna Gaon applies to food-related desires, seems to be the happy medium between these two types of desire. The delectable taste of delicious food is indeed an inherent value in such food, but the desire to masticate on such foodstuffs is also tied to the eater’s own appetite for feasting.

Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (1809-1879), better known as the Malbim, explains that both *chemdah* and *taavah* refer to self-damaging desires, but that there is a difference between the two: The form of desire denoted by the word *chemdah* is the result of visual stimuli which create the desire. The word *taavah*, on the other hand, denotes a desire created by one’s own power of imagination, whether or not he actually saw the object of his desires. *Taavah* is not a person’s reaction to outside stimuli, but comes from within. This too is in consonance with the Vilna Gaon’s approach, which views *chemdah* as the desirer’s recognition of the desired’s goodness, while *taavah* in certain ways ignores the desired and simply focuses the desirer’s predetermined cravings for a specific object. In discussing the word *chafetz*, the Malbim compares it to the word *ratzon* (will), and highlights their difference by explaining that *chafetz* is an *emotional* desire while *ratzon* is an *intellectual* desire or yearning (and, as such, usually connotes a positive type of desire).

Author’s note:

Le’Zechut Refuah Shleimah for Bracha bat Chaya Rachel

ELYAH LEBOFF

Age 42 - Malden, MA - Emerson College, Boston, BA in Mass Comm. and TV Production
Beit Midrash, 1996 – 2001

Our Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Nota Schiller, *shlita*, recently received a letter from Reb Binyamin Wolpin, a *magid shiur* (*gemara rebbe*) in Kiryat Sefer and son of the illustrious scholar and Editor of the Jewish Observer, Rabbi Nisson Wolpin, *zt'l*. After relating his close relationship with our Yeshiva and its *bochurim* (single students) when he lived in the Ma'alot Dafne neighborhood of Jerusalem – the location of Ohr Somayach – and its amazing work in educating *ba'alei teshuvah* to become *talmidei chachamim*, he continues:

“However, there was one special experience that struck me more than the other ones. Last week a neighbor of mine, R' Elyah Leboff, made a siyum on the entire shas – Talmud Bavli! This was an amazing undertaking – a labor of love and commitment that began over 14 years ago! An amud (one side of a folio) a day, every day, for more than 14 years. The big seudah (feast) that was made in honor of this special simcha was filled with some of his friends from his years back at Ohr Somayach, along with many talmidei chachamim and admirers...

*“When I begin to think about the tremendous zechuyot (merits) of those who showed him the way to a true Torah life, expressed by *ameilus b'Torah* (toiling in the study of Torah), I become overwhelmed with emotion.”*

Reb Elyah comes from a traditional background. The family belonged to an Orthodox synagogue, Congregation Beth Israel, which was led at the time by Rabbi Geller, the father of Rabbi Avi Geller who teaches in our Mechina Program. He was an inspiration, and maintained contact with Elyah through high school and into college. Before his Junior year in college, Rabbi Geller (and other members of the Jewish

community) encouraged Elyah to learn in yeshiva in Israel. Rabbi Geller's son Avi was teaching at Aish HaTorah, where Elyah spent a year. He then returned to Boston to finish his degree, but was intent on returning to yeshiva after graduation.

Reb Elyah came to Ohr Somayach in 1996 after being recruited by Rabbi Saul Mandel, whom he met on the



Emerson Campus. He started off in the Beit Midrish Program, where he learned for five years — the last three in Rabbi Pindrus's *shiur*, and the last two years as a member of the Ohr Somayach Kollel, after marrying his wife, Pessie.

The family moved to Kiryat Sefer where they are today. They have five children — three boys and two girls, ranging in age from 8 to 16. Reb Elyah learns in a *kollel* in the mornings, where he is also a *magid shiur*, and he works as a translator and editor in the afternoons.

Now that he has accomplished that incredible 14-year task, what will he do now? Of course, he started *shas* again! This time he plans to learn it in even greater depth.

Reb Elyah says about his experience with Ohr Somayach: “What I appreciate most is that my connection with Ohr Somayach didn't end when I left the Yeshiva; it has continued into the next generation. My sons have had Rabbi Gottlieb's son as a school principal, Rabbi Weinberger's son as a Rebbi, Rabbi Lazerus's son as a Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Pindrus's son as a classmate, and we're even neighbors with the son of Rabbi Cohen, the Ohr Somayach librarian.”

Mazel Tov on your many accomplishments — and *b'hat-zlacha!*

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