



RAV ELYA BRUDNY

It Was There All Along



Chazal will often point to a case of two people who appear to be similar and experience identical situations, yet their outcomes are very different

Chazal analyze and identify the pivotal element that creates that difference.

Today, we see two types of *balabatim*: the *balabos* who is fully engaged in making a living yet he remains a *ben Torah*, and the *balabos* who enters the workplace and completely leaves yeshivah behind.

What's the difference?

People don't just suddenly split into two camps the instant they enter the workforce. The differences must have been present before, even if they weren't always apparent or evident. In the case of these two working men, both learned in yeshivah and kollel, but one was always deeply connected to the Torah with nothing else competing for his mind and heart. When this person leaves kollel because reality dictates that he feed his family — he signed a *kesubah* and undertook to support his wife, after all — he remains the same person. He is essentially connected to the Torah just as he always was, and the Torah itself is guiding him in this decision.

The second one, however, learned well, but he was always drawn in by the world beyond the beis medrash. He leaves kollel for the same reason, but he runs headfirst into the world that has been beckoning for so long.

The moment that the doors to the outside world open is the moment you see what was really going on all along.

It's very sad to see people who really learned

well — they toed the line, they appeared to *shteig* in yeshivah and kollel — suddenly become unrecognizable. Three months after they've gone to work, they look different. It's very unsettling. What happened?

The factor that creates a Torahdig *balabos* lies in a single word: *shei'fos*. Spiritual goals. Dreams of growth. That's it.

A person, a couple, with dreams of growth, are Torahdig. If they are aware of what they're accomplishing and they live with spiritual reckoning, they will remain connected to Torah.

I recently heard something that moved me. A gentleman in Lakewood, a *balabos*, wanted to have a connection with Rav Shlomo Feivel Schustal. When Rav Shlomo Feivel moved to Lakewood, this man asked for a seder with the Rosh Yeshivah, who had a very full schedule. Where did they find the time to learn? He offered to drive Rav Shlomo Feivel to yeshivah each day. Once a day, during this five-minute drive, they learn mussar. They've almost completed the entire *Shaarei Teshuvah*. Because this man realized that Olam Hazeh is a tough place — it pulls you down and tries to break you — he found himself something to keep him inspired.

Baruch Hashem, we have *choshuve*, serious, talented rabbanim in most communities — people who can keep your vision intact, your hopes intact, and who can keep imbuing you with *shei'fos*. You can be

the one to start the *chaburah* or *shiur*; you can incorporate the time into your weekly schedule. *Asei lecha rav, v'histalek min hasafek*. Make yourself a rav, and remove yourself from doubt. (Avos 1:16). Letting a rav into your life makes everything clearer.

Go over on a Motzaei Shabbos to talk with him, drive him places, go walking with him. Make it a priority. Go with your wife. Include her in the process. Learn a sefer with her as well.

Becoming a Zevulun is an *avodah*, not a vacation from *avodah*, and it takes work just like everything else in life.

And always, always keep the balance. Don't go to sudden extremes. Be a wholesome person, a good husband, and a good father. Invest time and real attention to creating satisfying relationships with every member of your family, which will be a starting point for whatever goals you have in life.

Then, if you have true *ahavas Torah*, if your wife and children see how much it means to you, they will want to make it possible for you to learn. No one can leave kollel and evolve into a true Torahdig *balabos* if he's not in partnership with his family.

Finally, let the Torah shine its light into every area of your life. There is no decision in life, no area, which isn't rich in Torah; whatever questions you're facing, expose your family — and yourself — to the depth of *chochmas haTorah* on that topic. If you want to institute a minhag or practice, learn through it with them, let them feel it the way you do. Show them that Torah isn't just something we learn, but the way we live. Don't live superficial lives, but lives in which Torah shows color and meaning to every detail.

If you're committed to living within the parameters of His Will, you will find out how vast the Torah is — and how great you can become — whatever you are doing from nine to five. ♦

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RAV YISROEL REISMAN

Battle That Entropy

Chazal will often point to a case of two people who appear to be similar and experience identical situations, yet their outcomes are very different

At that point, the answer is certainly that he will. After all, a person who is currently learning full-time undoubtedly appreciates the value of Torah study.

What happens later? What causes some young men to fall in this area?

Entropy is the natural tendency of things to slide into increased levels of disorder and chaos, unless great effort is expended to avoid this. Couple that with our tendency to focus on the new and most immediate challenges in life, and it grows clear why a young man who leaves yeshivah to enter the workforce focuses primarily on succeeding at his new occupation and doesn't manage to set aside adequate time for learning.

In the yeshivah world, a “*chassan shmuess*” is considered an integral part of preparation for marriage. A similar *shmuess* is needed to prepare young men for their adjustment to the workforce. Will one *shmuess*, or even a series of *shmuessen*, really reverse a trend? Not on its own — but it will serve to redirect the person's focus, creating awareness of a

need for a spiritual focus during this transition.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky *ztz"l* would offer the following insight to his *talmidim*. When Yaakov Avinu set out to Lavan's home, he detoured for a 14-year stint at Yeshivas Sheim v'Eiver. But he was 63 years old and had learned all his life in his father's yeshivah. Why make the switch now?

Rav Yaakov answered that in Yeshivas Yitzchak, Yaakov Avinu learned the Torah of the home of the Avos. Now, he was setting out for Lavan's home, a very different environment. Yeshivas Sheim v'Eiver prepared him for that setting.

Hearing this, I wondered: What do we know about the unique teaching of Yeshivas Sheim v'Eiver? Couldn't we use some of that instruction today?

Chazal revealed to us only one unique aspect of Yeshivas Sheim v'Eiver. As Rashi tells

us, for those 14 years, Yaakov did not sleep in a bed. He pushed himself to learn, even when tired.

What a preparation for going out to work! Yeshivas Sheim v'Eiver taught *mesirus nefesh* for learning. Learning when it is difficult.

Is preparing for the workplace all about learning?

Of course not. Young men making this transition need to prepare for the new *nisyonos* they are bound to face — the challenges of a secular environment

with different values than those of the yeshivah. What will they do the first time a coworker makes an off-color joke? What if it's the boss? Laugh? Smile?

I know people who have earned the respect of their coworkers so that they no longer make these jokes in their presence. But it is difficult to get to that point. It takes unusual strength of character, and must always be accompanied by an admirable degree of interpersonal behavior. People who are happy and positive in their overall relationship with coworkers, who cover for others' errors and speak well of them, can garner that kind of deference.

But the key to all that is — and always has been — *kvias itim*, Torah study. Those who stick to learning are best prepared to master the new challenges.

There are two important reasons for this. First, discipline and commitment to regular Torah study build strength of character. We see this everywhere — in bochorim, in kollel *yungeleit*, and certainly in *bnai Torah* joining the workforce.

More importantly, the self-image of a *ben Torah* heading to work is crucial to his success in *avodas Hashem*. In fact, in

one of his letters, Rav Wolbe writes that a *ben Torah* going into the workplace should seek to maintain the same *levush* — style of dress — for precisely the reason that he will thus maintain the self-image of a *ben Torah*.

Beyond the clothing, however, the most important element in maintaining this self-image is the actual learning. If a working *ben Torah's* learning falters, and he is unsuccessful in adhering to the *kvias itim* that he envisioned, he will develop a negative self-image. If he sees himself as having fallen, he may sense that he is no longer a *ben Torah*. It is a feeling that, *chalilah*, can feed on itself. This is why a late-night *mishmar*, Torah sedorim, Yarchei Kallah on secular holidays, and Shabbos sedorim are so important.

Chazal teach, “*L'olam yilmad adam b'makom shelibo chafetz* — a person should study that which his heart desires.” A person will succeed in his learning and will focus more effectively when he chooses an area of study for which he has an inborn drive.

These words obligate us. In preparing for *kvias itim*, search for a section of Torah that will resonate for you. Is it *halachah l'maaseh*, is it the *lomdus* of the yeshivah *masechtos*, or is it the drive to finish *masechtos* and acquire a breadth of Torah knowledge?

Figure it out. Speak to a rebbi who knows you and explore the possibilities. A person with drive is a person who succeeds. Create that drive.

Yes, it takes effort and preparation. But when you think about it, you'll realize that anything meaningful takes drive and preparation. Otherwise it is all entropy.

And the key to battling that entropy is regular learning. Not just because of the learning itself, but because of the commitment to Torah that the learning represents. ●

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