

## Bayos Hazman: Questions of our Era

By Rabbi Reuven Grozovsky

### Stages in the Struggle Against Secularism

#### 1) The Invention of Secular Jewish Ideologies

“Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one” (Devarim 6:4). “The entire earth is filled with His glory” (Yishaya 6:3). “All that is called in My name, I created for My glory” (Yishaya 43:7). Our belief is that there is nothing besides Hashem, all creations were created for His glory, and their entire purpose is to come near to His light, to merit good and eternal life, for all who are far from Him will perish.

And especially the people that Hashem chose, “this people I have created for Myself, they will tell of My praise” (Yishaya 43:21), have come into the covenant with Hashem to be called by the name of Hashem, so that everyone will see, through all their actions and ways of life, that Hashem separated them out from all the nations to be a treasured and holy nation for Him.

And until the most recent generations, everyone agreed that the Jewish people were Hashem’s people and the people of the Torah, even those who in their private lives transgressed the Torah. And every man and woman took as obvious the ruling of the Rishonim and Acharonim: that a Jew who violates the entire Torah or worships idols, or a heretic, is considered to have left his people behind and is like a Jew who converted to another religion, who is like a non-Jew, separated completely from the chosen nation. And even if they saw the secular Jews as being better in some ways than sinful gentiles, that did not cause them to abandon the idea that “the despised person is disgusting to them” (Tehillim 15:4); rather, they attributed it to the greatness of the Jewish soul, whose impression can be seen even in this person who was distanced from his faith and sunken into the depths.

However, in recent generations, the heretics began to focus their fight on Jewish public life, and against the very concept that Hashem separated His people from the other nations and chosen them. They also fought against the concept of the supremacy of Torah and mitzvos in the life of the holy nation, and the idea that only in this manner could a Jew be considered unique. And due to this, they launched an open war against the Torah, emunah and mitzvos, blackening the image of those who clung to them, especially the Gedolim and leaders of Klal Yisroel. In this manner, they became partners with the worst anti-Semites, borrowing from them not only their theories, libels and lies, but also their strategies of taking power over the holy people and oppressing them. And their chief goal was that they, as the Satan’s representatives, should gain political power and aggrandize themselves in the world. And while they still allowed Jews as individuals to study Torah and keep its mitzvos, they fought furiously to take over the general appearance of the Jewish people, to remake its image; and they sought to control Jewish education and the kehilos, the community leadership in European towns.

Now, the Satan often changes his appearance, in keeping with the time and place. In Russia he took the form of the blood libels of the Czar and his government; in Hungary and other countries he was the ministers and congressmen; in Middle Eastern lands he was the money sent to them [by the Alliance

Israelite Universelle, to establish secular schools for Sephardic Jewish children]; in America, he was the money supplied by the government to public schools, whether through democracy or bureaucracy. Mostly it is bureaucracy, for when it comes to Torah observant Jews, all the elementary rules of how to treat a human being are forgotten.

So too, in the various secular Jewish ideologies, the Satan constantly changes form. He is like the animal mentioned in the Gemara (Bava Kama 16a) which, every seven years, changes into another animal, until finally he reveals himself as a demon. In every generation he changes according to the times and situation. As soon as the falsehood of one ideology becomes apparent, he takes on a new form – with the same main goal: to reshape the Jewish people in the spirit of atheism and becoming like the non-Jews.

At first, the Jews began to mix with the gentiles and, with time, assimilate among them; but the problem was that the gentiles had an idolatrous religion that the Jewish soul could not swallow. So the new goal became to reform and trim the Jewish religion until it completely matched the gentile religions, devoid of anything that would prevent Jews from living a secular lifestyle. Only those religious practices that gentiles had too, they allowed to remain.

They created an entire literature of denial and denunciation of the written and oral Torah. They based it on theories they learned from the anti-Semites, with the addition of references, knowledge and new empty ideas written by people who had once learned Torah but later abandoned it, as well as people who had never studied Torah in their lives, and called it “Jewish wisdom.”

However, the Satan’s goal of changing the form of the Jewish people through the Reform movement did not succeed, for several reasons. First of all, those assimilating Jews were quickly absorbed and became unrecognizable as part of the Jewish people. Secondly, such an open falsehood as a religion and synagogues without belief, only with denial of Hashem, did not make sense to anyone. And the third and most important reason was not to the Jews’ credit but due to the wickedness of the gentiles. To assimilate required the gentiles’ permission, and the wicked did not wish to unite with the blessed. The gentiles themselves sensed the falsehood of these people who were neither Jewish nor gentile, and so it was unnatural for them to mix. Thus many Jews who were still proud of their Jewish heritage could not, or would not, grovel and lower themselves to force their way into a society that would not tolerate them, only to live in an atmosphere of fear and constant suspicion.

At the same time, the nationalist movement arose and grew strong among the gentiles, proclaiming language and land as the central foundation of a nation. And it was then that two new Jewish ideologies were founded, with the goal of fitting the image of the Jewish people onto the spirit of heresy, without the necessity of holding on to any Torah, emunah or keeping mitzvos – only the nationalist spirit.

One movement taught that of all our spiritual possessions, we should keep only the Yiddish language. Jewish history would begin from the day they began to publish gentile literature in Yiddish. Although Yiddish was only a very minor part of the heritage of the wisest of peoples, since socialism was this group’s main ideology, they were content with adopting only this small thing. But for most Jews, especially those who were not socialists, this was not enough at all.

That is why the founders of Zionist nationalism felt the need to supplement their secular nationalism with both a language and a land. And to satisfy the Jewish soul's yearning for its source, in order to attract the hearts of Jews through the use of a substitute for the Torah and emunah of Hashem, they took as their language the Holy Tongue in which the Torah was given to Israel, as a vehicle to spread their heretical ideology. For their land, they chose our Holy Land, the land where the Divine Presence rests, where every clod of earth is holy and obligated in mitzvos; the land whose love is implanted in every Jewish person's heart. Settling in the Holy Land is one of the greatest mitzvos, and many Gedolei Yisroel strived to fulfill it, even in our time. Is it not the land promised by our Creator, about which we have always hoped and prayed that He restore us and restore His presence to Zion?

This was a stroke of genius on their part. The Zionists would not have to make any concessions to religion. For them, the language and the land were secular concepts, but for the Jewish soul, they were spiritual food, since they were also part of the Torah. For practical purposes, the religious Jews too would support the movement, for the sake of the love of Zion and the settlement of Eretz Yisroel.

At that time, the Gedolim came out and forbade anyone to join the Zionists in spreading their ideas, or in their efforts, for they saw the movement as a reform more powerful than Reform itself. The Zionists proclaimed, "We are not a people of the Torah at all, but a people with a nationalist sentiment." They took all the greatest heroes of Judaism from time immemorial, those who learned the Torah and passed it on to the next generation, and transformed them, portraying them as nationalist fighters. Of the Torah, mitzvos and special days of the Jewish calendar, they kept only whatever they were able to transform into nationalist holidays and customs. They uprooted them completely from their roots and connection to the Creator of the world.

Even if someone wished to join Zionism for the sake of the mitzvos of Hashem alone, the Gedolim opposed it because of the rule, "One may not join the wicked even for a mitzvah" (Avos Derabbi Nisson 9:4). The problem is compounded when people agree that the foremost secular nationalists should lead the movement. This is tantamount to agreeing to the heresy that nationalism is the fundamental image of the Jewish people, while Torah and serving the Creator are only a private matter, not the purpose of creation. Joining is even worse when one praises and honors the Zionist leaders, considering them leaders of the Jewish people, despite the fact that they are heretics who attempt to draw others away from Judaism. By doing so, he proves that he does not believe that emunah in Hashem and serving Hashem are the purpose of the world and of the Jewish people. Just as a furnace tests the purity of gold, so too a man can be tested by seeing whom he praises (Mishlei 27:21). If Torah and nationalism are equal to him, then he is not believing in one G-d, whose glory fills the whole world.

Also, the Gedolim foresaw that if a state were founded under an atheistic government, they would certainly secularize everyone living under their rule, not to mention all the new immigrants to their state, who would be at their mercy for a livelihood and living arrangements. One who leads another to sin is worse than one who kills him (Rashi, Devarim 23:9). We could have achieved worldly success by denying G-d in most countries we lived in during exile, even in the lands of the Inquisition. But we did not. We see it as the most terrible tragedy if, G-d forbid, our hearts become convinced that our nationalist pride is the main thing and not our belief in Hashem and coming close to Him.

## 2) The Founding of Agudas Yisroel, and Its Purpose

When the Gedolei Yisroel saw that the world was full of ideologies seeking to remake the image of the Jewish people and take control of Jewish public life, they arose and founded Agudas Yisroel as a means to unite all believers in traditional Judaism as the people of Hashem and of the Torah. The goal was to stand up for their lives and the lives of the people, and not allow others to conquer the Jewish communities and control them and their children.

During the period between the First and Second World Wars, Agudas Yisroel accomplished something or perhaps many things in Germany, Poland and Eretz Yisroel as far as control of the kehillos. In Hungary they had no need for Agudah, since they had already established separate kehillos going back to the time [the 1860s] when secularist Jews tried to take control of them. Slowly, Agudas Yisroel began to organize itself in America as well. At first it was Zeirei Agudas Yisroel, and then Agudas Yisroel too. Here in America, the battle is against the three idolatrous ideologies [Reform, Socialism and Zionism] at once. The most prevalent of these is the Reform and assimilationist movement.

In America, at first, due to the low number of members and the difficulty of the environment, not much work has been done toward the central goal of Agudas Yisroel – bringing Torah into control over public Jewish life. But now, with the addition of tens of thousands of members, we must prepare a broad plan of action, namely: 1) In education: we must increase the number of Torah learning groups for bochurim and children. We must help found Talmud Torahs and yeshivos in all places, even if not under the name of Agudas Yisroel. 2) Organizational: we must acquire new members, and in particular we must found new branches for Jews hailing from various countries. 3) In literature: we must provide material – both written and spoken - that honors Hashem, Jewish hashkafa and Jewish practice. 4) In order to bring Torah into control over Jewish life, we must influence everyone to join the boards of Talmud Torahs and yeshivos, in order to influence and encourage them to choose G-d-fearing principals and staff. And similarly in all organizations and institutions such as hospitals, old age homes and orphanages, we must try to get Torah observant Jews into positions of power. 5) To strengthen Torah, we must participate in Shemiras Shabbos groups, kashrus organizations, and the building of mikvaos, and write literature promoting these matters. 6) We must expand our activities to support the Orthodox community in Eretz Yisroel, putting the stress on education. 7) In the shuls, rabbis should be chosen who are Torah scholars, fear Hashem and will not deviate from their path.

## 3) Our Hashkafah on the Work in Eretz Yisroel

Our battle there is over all the principles of the Torah. We need to come to the aid of Hashem and our brethren who are fighting for their souls, the souls of their sons and daughters, and the souls of the whole people, against the atheistic government. We must showcase to the uninformed public the crimes of the secularists, their rebellion against Hashem and their persecution of the Torah-observant Jews, as they attempt to pull them away from the Torah. Also we must show that they do not have true Ahavas Yisroel, and on the contrary they persecute all religious Jews, trying to destroy them with all sorts of pressure and harassment.

And even if they did love Jews, they are disqualified and rejected as Jewish leaders, as we find in the Gemara regarding Achav, King of Israel, that although Hashem paid him his reward in this world, his death was considered a happy occasion (Sanhedrin 39b).

However, the State is a fact, and the Jewish settlement there is a fact. Our purpose here is not to debate whether to say Hallel or Selichos, or whether this is part of the sparks of the Geulah or only the birthpangs of moshiach and a new exile. First of all, it does not make so much practical difference. Why should we debate the secrets of the Merciful One? Also, why should we get into a war of words over a topic where those holding the opposing view are very numerous, because people's hearts are drawn to see this as a beginning of the redemption, and so it has been ingrained in the hearts of many? Why should we fight against the blue and white flag and attack it, when we could instead prove to any straight-thinking believer in Hashem that those in power there are wicked, and thus dissuade him from supporting them, and rather come to the aid of the Torah-observant Jews?

And even now, after the founding of the State, our hashkafah regarding the heretics who lead others astray, and our battle against their government, cannot change one iota, since they are our enemies and persecutors, not, G-d forbid, friends who simply have a different opinion. However, we must think hard about whether to change our methods of warfare, for this depends not only on our hashkafah about them, but also on studying the situation, the conditions of battle and comparisons with other cases. And on this point, there are many opinions within our camp.

Some say that there is no difference between the Jewish State and the Zionist movement, and we have the power not to join them in any manner, not to recognize any law passed by a majority of the atheists, and thus we will be free to live our lives as we please. According to this view, all the reasons for the prohibition to join the Zionist movement apply equally to the Jewish State, including their elections. And although there were Gedolei Yisroel who participated in the elections for parliaments in gentile countries, and in some cases even participated in their governments, proponents of this view draw a distinction between non-Jewish heretics and Jewish heretics.

Others evaluate our situation differently and draw a distinction between a state and a movement. If we live in a state, we are automatically participants in it, and the government is ruling over us whether we like it or not. It is impossible to completely ignore their laws. And the battle to remove or mitigate their evil decrees against us is impossible except through the democratic process. Therefore, the prohibition on joining the wicked (Avos 1:7). does not apply, since we are in any case automatically joined with them. And on the contrary, if we do not exercise the rights that they allow us in their laws in order to fight against them, such as by abstaining from voting in the elections, we are in effect giving our votes to them, and helping them to wield even more power over us, to lead us, our sons and daughters to idolatry, immorality and murder. For every vote and every representative in parliament is a part of the government's power, and every time we pass up the opportunity to be represented, we are benefiting our enemies by giving them more seats in the parliament. This view holds that voting is not tantamount to agreeing to their government, their laws and beliefs, because an action done under duress, to save one's life, is not counted as agreement.

The Gemara (Nedarim 22a) tells the story of how Ulla met two men on the road, and one murdered the other. The murderer asked Ulla if he was right for committing the murder, and Ulla said yes. Later Ulla came to Rabbi Yochanan and expressed his guilt that he might have encouraged a criminal. Rabbi Yochanan replied, "You saved your own life."

Proponents of this view compare the Israeli government to non-Jewish governments, in which Jews historically participated even when the non-Jews were fervently religious idolaters. There as well, there would have been no way to permit it, except for the above reasoning. They also find a precedent in the Kehillos of Poland, where the Gedolim permitted and directed their followers to vote, even in places where the majority were non-believers, and most Torah-observant Jews as well as, it seems, most Torah scholars agreed with this.

Some go a step further and say that the situation demands that we join the governing coalition, for the above reasons. Some compare this to Yosef, Mordechai, Daniel, Nechemiah, Rabbi Shmuel Hanaggid, the Abarbanel, or to Ovadiah in the palace of Achav, and many other Jewish shtadlonim (advocates representing the Jews before the government). Now, one could disagree with these comparisons. But since in this case the participation is done purely for the sake of saving the Jewish people, and under duress, as in the cases of Esther and Yael, which Chazal call "aveirah lishmah," without any respect in one's heart for the leaders or agreement to their anti-religious laws, we could say that this is not a disagreement in hashkafah, but rather in how to evaluate the situation. And even if the disagreement is also about halacha and Daas Torah, the disagreement is only about what case to compare this to, not about the fundamentals of our emunah, which are the foundation of Agudas Yisroel.

When powerful leaders rise up against us from all sides and seek to destroy us, and we need to escape like a deer from the trap and fight with all our strength against them, it is not time to carry on internal disputes among believers in Hashem, His Torah and the fundamentals of emunah, for all of us are equally persecuted by the enemies of Hashem - despite our differences over methods of escape, and even if in our view, those of the opposing view are making things worse through their approach. We are like the Jews living under Soviet oppression, where each one searched for what he felt was the best way to keep the Torah, and like those fleeing Nazi persecution, where this one escaped to the forest or hid in a bunker, another devised strategies to save his life in the ghetto or concentration camp, and another joined the Judenrat.

The important thing is to focus all our thoughts and senses, our bodies, abilities and actions to fight the battle of Hashem against His openly declared enemies, and not distract ourselves with thoughts of how to fight our fellow believers.

This is a practical consideration, for when we are obligated to fight the great battle of Hashem in the pre-messianic era, and people are sluggish, there is no time to push aside this great mitzvah, even if the other issue might also be a mitzvah.

But besides that, regarding those who disagree only in their understanding of the situation, or in what case to compare this to, certainly the dictum applies, "Love truth and peace" (Zechariah 8:19, applied in Yevamos 14b to the disputes of Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel). Each side must treat the other with

brotherhood and friendship. And even with those whom we suspect might not be acting for the sake of Heaven, or those who are suspected of violating the Torah and deviating from its ways, although we are obligated to rebuke them, we must give that rebuke softly so that it should be accepted. Regarding this the Avos D'rebbi Nossen (16:5) says, "Love everyone, but hate the heretics and those who encourage others to sin."

When we go out to fight the battle of Hashem for the sake of Heaven, as Hashem commanded, Hashem will accompany our army, fight our battle, take up our cause, deliver the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, and make His name great and holy in the world, to hasten the coming of His moshiach, soon in our days.

### **On the Participation of Agudah Members in the Governing Coalition in Eretz Yisroel**

I said at the public gathering that it is impossible to issue a ruling or express our opinion from afar, because participation is forbidden in principle. Therefore, even if it becomes known that due to the needs of the times, Gedolei Torah in Eretz Yisroel decided that it was necessary and they permitted it, we must not express our satisfaction at this decision. Now I will explain the reasoning behind my words.

The concept of joining the coalition, as those joining understand it, and as the rest of the world understands it as well, is as follows: Many people or parties are interested in cooperating on running the state. Although they may disagree about many details, they join to work together, each one taking responsibility for all actions taken by the coalition. Every issue is decided by a majority vote, but the minority can still make certain general conditions on their participation, on which it is not willing to compromise, and the majority accepts those conditions. But as far as the details, and as far as carrying out the law, the minority has only one way out: that if their patience wears out and they see their general conditions unfulfilled, they may leave the coalition.

The meaning of joining and agreement is that all of the members are partners in action and views for most issues, and after this agreement there is to be no quarreling or disagreement. There can only be debate, in which each respects his fellow's opinion, and in particular, the minority promises not to fight against the decision and position of the governing coalition.

Now, all of this is forbidden in principle, and because of the resulting actions taken, as our rabbis of blessed memory, the Acharonim have taught us. This is stated in the words of Chazal and Rishonim, who forbade joining a wicked person, even in worldly matters, as it is written regarding Yehoshafat, "When you joined Achazyahu, Hashem made you fail, and the boats broke" (Divrei Hayamim 2 21:37). This applies even in business, even on a one-time basis, even for a mitzvah and even in order to bring the wicked person closer to Torah, as is stated in Pirkei Avos 1, Avos Derabbi Nisson, the Meiri there, the Mechilta on Yisro, Shaarei Teshuva by Rabbeinu Yonah 3:51,3:193 and other places, the Orchos Tzaddikim Shaar Ha'ahavah and Shaar Hachanifus. And in his commentary on Mishlei 1:15, Rabbeinu Yonah writes:

He who joins the wicked will be punished, for a sinner constantly does evil and damages others, and Chazal say (Makos 5b) that one who joins the sinners is like a sinner... Know that it is a cornerstone of fear of G-d to separate from the company of the wicked, and there is a great punishment in store for one who joins them, as it states (Mishlei 24:21): 'With different ones, do not mix.'

In Mishlei 16:29 it is written, "A man of violence convinces his neighbor," and Rabbeinu Yonah writes:

This comes to warn people not to join... for it is the manner of a violent man to convince others.

And so he writes in Shaarei Teshuva:

There are many paths to death that lie in companionship with the wicked, and those who join them – even if they do not act like them – get the same punishment as they do.

And this is explicit in Avos D'rabbi Nosson Chapter 30, and so says the Rambam in his letters, printed recently, letter number 171:

Anyone who joins the wicked or participates in any activity with them - whoever destroys them will destroy him too, and he will die when they die.

Rabbeinu Yonah makes the point again in Pirkei Avos 1:7:

In all the sins that the wicked person commits, he has a share... Do not think: the wicked man is still living peacefully, so I will join him, and when his fate changes, I will separate from him... Regarding this, Shlomo said, "With different ones, do not mix, for suddenly their downfall will come" (Mishlei 24:21-22).

And the Orchos Tzaddikim, Shaar Hachanifus, writes:

When one joins the wicked, in the end the wicked will rule over him.

In our case, it is worse, for the religious parties would be joining the Zionists in all areas, including real sins as well as acts of denial of the Torah and leading others to sin. And since it is impossible to protest publicly against everything, one's participation appears to the public as agreement. People of low intelligence – that is, unfortunately, most people – will learn from this that it is impossible to ask for more, much less achieve more, than what has already been accomplished in the way the state is run. They will think that, Heaven forbid, it is impossible to keep the whole Torah in our time, just a little of it as a memorial to the past. There is no greater Chillul Hashem than that.

Even to sit in their company is wrong, as the Shaarei Teshuva (198) writes:

One of the reasons why a person is obligated to leave the company of the wicked is that he will be punished for letting their evil words go by in silence, for he will become tired of retorting back every time.

This applies all the more in our case.

If an Agudah member receives a cabinet position, by accepting it he is agreeing to the government's appointments and power in general. The Rambam in Hilchos Melachim 1:7 says that it is forbidden to appoint someone who has no fear of Heaven to any leadership position in the Jewish people. Furthermore, a minority has to show deference to the majority: they must humble themselves to follow the majority opinion. So a minority of Torah observant Jews will follow a majority of non-religious Jews. And it is forbidden for a tzaddik to be submissive to a rasha, as the Chovos Halevavos says (Shaar Avodas Elokim, Chapter 10):

When you meet atheists and people who turn away from Hashem, do not be humble or submissive to them, so that you should not appear to be justifying them or leaning toward their view.

Also, due to the Agudah's participation in the government, the community of religious Jews will relate to the wicked not as their enemies, but as their leaders, and not only that - they will be filled with honor for them, which is the opposite of how it should be. The Shaarei Teshuva (149) has already explained the dangers of such a situation:

Honoring them is tantamount to desecrating the Torah and the service of Hashem, and it is a sin that destroys everything from the soul to the flesh. And furthermore, it causes many to follow them and adopt their way of life. And also, by honoring them, one diminishes the honor of men of truth, and stops people from serving Hashem. Honoring the tzaddikim can succeed only after the lowering of the prestige of the wicked.

This leads to a situation where even the accomplishments of the religious parties – the concessions that the wicked make to the people of the Torah – also mislead religious people, causing them to confuse an enemy for a friend, and think that even the secular do not hate religion at all, and even want people to keep the Torah as much as possible. Thus they say all of them are assumed to be good, and one must not suspect a good person of wrongdoing. This leads to people following them and thinking that they actually deserve to control the government.

However, our rabbis taught that the wicked hate the Torah and its bearers, as Rabbeinu Yonah says in his commentary on Mishlei 1:11:

"Let us lie in wait for the blood of the innocent" – for it is the nature of the wicked to hate the innocent and the pure... just as it is the nature of fire to hate its opposite. And so it is written, 'Men of blood hate the pure.' And this is one of the things that the exhorting teacher (Shlomo Hamelech, the author of Mishlei) needed to tell the young and old right at the beginning, so that they should not believe the words of the wicked who speak falsely about the tzaddik.

And see the Meiri on Sanhedrin 26a, who says that one who tries to give sinners the benefit of the doubt is aiding the sinners, and is like one who is suspect of committing the same sins.

Furthermore, by doing so (speaking highly of the wicked), they give power to the enemies of Hashem. The Shaarei Teshuva (160) writes regarding this:

We sometimes find people who are careful not to sin in deed or in words, yet they are disturbed over the honor of Torah scholars and tzaddikim, and in their hearts they are bothered when tzaddikim become powerful. Rather, they prefer it when the wicked receive honor and rule over the land.

The wicked will take encouragement from the fact that these religious Jews' mouths are full of praise of the wicked, as Rabbeinu Yonah explains in his comment on Mishlei 27:21:

"The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man according to his praise." If a man praises good deeds, Torah sages and tzaddikim, you can know and discern that he is a good man, and the root of righteousness is found in him... and although he may have hidden sins, he

is among those who honor Hashem. But if a man commends wrongful deeds, or praises the wicked, he is a completely wicked person. (Shaarei Teshuva 3:148)

And so it is written in Pirkei Avos 4:8:

Rabbi Yose says: If one honors the Torah, he will be honored by others, and if he shows contempt for the Torah, others will show him contempt.

And so says the Shaarei Teshuva 160: That those who prefer when the wicked receive honor and rule over the land are among the “enemies of Hashem” who have no share in the World to Come.

The same is stated by the Orchos Tzaddikim in his chapter on hatred. And the Shaarei Teshuva 189 writes about flatterers:

Even if he praises a wicked person only on his good attributes... this is also a terrible thing, for when he mentions the good and omits the bad, covering up all his sins, he will be considered by the listeners a righteous man, they will grant him honor and he will gain power.

This is based on the Gemara in Sotah 42a [which says that flatterers will not be privileged to greet the Divine Presence.]

See also Rabbeinu Yonah’s commentary on Avos 1:6, where he explains the verse, “The righteous man pays attention to the house of the wicked, overthrowing the wicked to their ruin” (Mishlei 21:12). [The Mishnah teaches to judge everyone favorably; Rabbeinu Yonah explains that this does not apply to the wicked. On the contrary, the tzaddik pays more attention to the negative traits of the wicked and does not gloss over them.] The same is found in the Rambam’s Commentary on the Mishnah there.

And Rabbeinu Yonah writes (Shaarei Teshuva 191):

Even if he praises the wicked in a foolish way... this mistake is counted as deliberate, for a servant cannot love his master if he loves his master’s enemies and befriends those far from him.

And in Mishlei 28:4 it states: “Those who abandon the Torah will praise the wicked, but those who keep the Torah will attack them.” And the Vilna Gaon explains: “They will attack both the wicked and those who praise them.”

All of the above has nothing to do with the teaching of our seforim that we must bring the wicked close to Hashem, for Rabbi Moshe Almosnino, quoted in Midrash Shmuel (by Rabbi Shmuel Uzeda) on Avos 1:7, says that joining the wicked is only forbidden if the good person goes and joins the wicked, but if the wicked takes a secondary role and he is the joiner, letting the good person lead the way, then he should be accepted – perhaps he will convince him to become good. But unfortunately, we have not yet reached the point where the wicked are secondary.

Now, it is brought in seforim that one should love every person. But Chazal say in Avos Derabbi Nossen 16:

Love every person, but hate the apikorsim and heretics.

And as the Rambam writes in his Commentary on the Mishnah, Chapter Chelek:

Anyone who has demonstrated his belief in the Thirteen Principles is a member of Israel, and it is mitzvah to love him, have mercy on him and treat him according to all the commandments of Hashem Yisborach regarding relations between people: love and brotherhood. And even he committed sins due to his desires and his overpowering lower nature, he will be punished accordingly, but he will have a share in the World to Come, and he is called one of the sinners of Israel. However, when a person is lacking belief in one of these fundamentals, he is no longer part of Israel, he has denied the central principles, he is called a heretic, an apikorus and a “chopper of trees” (an expression used to describe Acher, the famous Talmudic sage who became a heretic); and it is a mitzvah to hate him and destroy him, and regarding him it states, “I hate those who hate You, Hashem” (Tehillim 139:21).

Similarly, in Moreh Nevuchim 1:36 he writes:

They (idol worshippers) were punished with death, as the Torah says, “Do not save alive any soul” (Devarim 20:16)... They are called “enemies,” “foes,” “adversaries”... How great, then, must be the offense of him who has a wrong opinion of G-d Himself, and believes Him to be different from what He truly is, i.e. assumes that He does not exist... Such a person is undoubtedly worse than he who worships idols in the belief that they, as agents, can do good or evil.

Similarly, the Rambam writes in Hilchos Edus 11:10:

Informers, heretics and Jews who converted to another religion did not need to be listed by the Sages as invalid witnesses, for the Sages only listed Jewish sinners, but these heretical rebels are worse than gentiles.

The Ibn Ezra on Yisro, the Sforno on Vayikra and the Sefer Ha’ikarim 1:14 say the same thing.

True, the Smag, end of Mitzvas Aseh 81, does say:

The Torah says one must help his “hater” load or unload his donkey. This implies that there is nothing wrong with hating him. The Gemara in Pesachim 113b asks how this is possible – doesn’t the Torah command, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart?” The Gemara answers that we are talking about a case where he saw the person committing a sin and warned him, yet he continued to sin. As it is written, “Fear of Hashem means hating evil” (Mishlei 8:13), and “I hate those who hate You, Hashem” (Tehillim 139:21). Still, the Torah commands us to have mercy on sinners and help them when they need help, and this is what Yirmiyahu Hanavi (31:36) says, “So said Hashem: If the heavens above will be measured and the foundations of the earth below will be fathomed, I too will reject all the seed of Israel because of all they did, says Hashem.”

[So it seems that although we hate sinners, we still treat them as members of the Jewish people.] We must answer that the Smag is not discussing heretics. And although he quotes the verse in Yirmiyahu that Hashem will never reject all the seed of Israel, we must say that heretics are no longer part of the seed of Israel.

And the Rambam in Hilchos Avodah Zarah 2:5 says:

Heretics of Jewish descent are not considered as Jews for any purpose.

True, we find that an apostate is like a Jew for certain purposes: his get is a real get, his kiddushin is a real kiddushin, his act of acquisition works in the same way as a Jew's, and it is forbidden for another Jew to help him commit a sin under the rule of "do not place a stumbling block before the blind". But the Tur in Yoreh Deah 268 explains that there is a difference between laws that concern the heretic's connection with or separation from the Jewish people, and laws that concern the heretic's personal obligations and status. In essence, he is definitely Jewish, and his children have all the holiness of Jews. But regarding his relationship with other Jews, he is considered lower than a non-Jew. This is like a man who went insane: deep down, he is an intelligent person and he can procreate and have intelligent children, yet in his present state he is more difficult to handle than an animal, and he is more likely than an animal to harm himself or others.

At the same time, my teacher and father-in-law [Rabbi Boruch Ber Liebowitz] zt"l explained that this great hatred we must feel toward a heretic is rooted in our love and brotherhood for him, and in a Jew's great pain in seeing his Jewish brother defiling his holy soul. Based on this, we can explain the verse (Tehillim 139:22), "With utmost hatred I hated them, they became my enemies." The verse is actually to be read as a rhetorical statement of surprise: "With utmost hatred I hated them – thus displaying my feelings of brotherhood – and yet they became my enemies!" And it is well known that Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l used to say:

One's hatred and fight against the wicked should be like the fight of a person against the mice in his house, where he is upset that the mice are there and that he needs to get rid of them, and not like the fight of the cat, who gets pleasure out of having mice to chase and eat.

If someone is a "cat", then he is happy that the wicked exist. And this is what the Tomer Devorah, end of chapter 2, means when he says:

Even wicked people, you must love in your heart and say, "If only they would repent and be tzaddikim."

The wicked under discussion here are worse than regular wicked people, since they lead the Jewish people astray, especially the youth and children, away from Hashem, His Torah and His emunah. With regards to one who convinces others to sin, we have explicit commandments not to love him (Rambam Sefer Hamitzvos negative commandment 18, Smag negative commandment 27). The person who is the target of his convincing campaign must not judge him favorably (Sefer Hamitzvos negative commandment 20, Smag negative commandment 30). He must keep his hatred for him in his heart

forever (Sefer Hamitzvos negative commandment 18 and Sefer Hachinuch 458). He must not withhold himself from speaking badly about the convincer (Sefer Hamitzvos negative commandment 21, Smag negative commandment 31). The Rambam, Hilchos Sanhedrin 11:5 writes:

Cruelty toward these people who lead the people astray after emptiness is really mercy to the world, as the Torah says, "So that Hashem turn away from His anger and give you mercy" (Devarim 13:18).

Similarly, the Rambam writes in Moreh Nevuchim 1:54 that the commandment "Do not save alive any soul" (Devarim 20:16) is not for the sake of vengeance, but so that the idol worshippers should not teach you to do as they do.

The Ohr Hachaim on Parshas Pinchas on the verse "Make the Midyanites your enemy" (Bamidbar 25:18) says:

This means that we have to hate those who convince others to sin, and we must feel disgusted even by the sweet and good things that come from them, destroying every beautiful tree, sweet spring of water or any good that originates with them, because they caused us to do evil.

According to this, the word "tzaror" (make them your enemy) means that we should raise our level of hatred until we think of them as enemies. My teacher and father-in-law [Rabbi Boruch Ber Liebowitz] zt"l explained that, as we know, one who convinces others to sin is worse than one who kills him; how can one not hate someone who is chasing him to uproot him from the world?

The Sefer Hachinuch 461 says that the commandment "not to refrain from condemning the inciter to idolatry" applies to all wicked people who we cannot hope will ever repent. Similarly, Rabbeinu Yonah in Shaarei Teshuva 3:37 says that the commandment "not to have pity on the inciter to idolatry" applies to all those who convince others to commit any sin, not only idolatry. The same is implied in Sanhedrin 29 and Tosafos there [who apply the law of the inciter to the serpent in Gan Eden]. However, the Yad Ramah there in Sanhedrin says that there are two types of inciters: an inciter to idolatry is punished even if his audience did not listen to him, whereas an inciter to other sins (like the serpent) is punished only if they listened, and only if he does not make the argument, "The words of the Teacher or the words of the student, which should one listen to?" Even regarding other sins, if he does not actually make the argument "the words of the Teacher..." we do not suggest it for him. In any case, an inciter to heresy is no better than an inciter to idolatry. See also the commentary Avodas Hamelech on the Rambam Hilchos Avodah Zarah chapter 5, who quotes the Smag, who says that the commandment not to love a convincer applies not only to his audience but to all people.

All the holy seforim are full of this idea. And the Sefer Hayashar, by Rabbeinu Tam, says, "One must be cruel and strong against those who convince others to sin." And Rabbeinu Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva 3:59:

One who does not carry on a conflict against those who stand on the wrong path, will be punished for all their sins, and transgresses the commandment, "Surely rebuke your neighbor and do not bear sin due to him" (Vayikra 19:17).

The Maharsha in Sanhedrin 26a writes that Shevna and his followers, who wanted to make peace with Sancheriv after he insulted the people of the living G-d, were considered to have been planning evil against Hashem, and it was as if Shevna planned to worship idols; regarding idolatry the rule is that Hashem considers a plan as if it were a deed.

All of the above applies to being a member of the coalition, but if one accepts a cabinet portfolio, it is considered taking action, for whether he likes it or not, he will have to support and actively help places and people who transgress Torah and Rabbinic prohibitions, some small and some severe, and those who increase heresy and convince others to sin, such that the cabinet member will actually be aiding sinners.

So it seems obvious that participation in the coalition is forbidden; however, it is impossible to rule on this practical question from afar without a thorough knowledge and understanding of the situation. For example, it can be argued that all of the above is true only when the participation is not done under duress and out of necessity, in order to save whatever can be saved from the anti-religious decrees, G-d forbid. But if it is done under duress, one could argue that this is not an act of participation, joining and agreement, but rather an act under duress, which is like the act of a monkey. This would be similar to the way our righteous forefathers acted in the past when they cooperated with evil kings, both Jewish and non-Jewish, as well as with other evil people, under duress.

Or, it could also be that this forced situation falls under the principle of "it is time to act for Hashem, they desecrated your Torah" (Tehillim 119:126), where we choose the lesser of the two evils. For example, those in power may have the ability and desire to secularize young and old, to cut off *tinokos shel beis rabban* from their heritage, as Achaz did in his time, to force Jewish girls into immorality and to close, G-d forbid, the doors of the Beis Midrash. They may threaten to subject the Jewish people to a trial of poverty and hunger, should they refuse to follow their ways, and there may be no other way to save whatever can be saved except by infiltrating the camp of the enemy and standing guard so that they should not extinguish the last spark. We would then be following the example of Chushai Ha'arki when he infiltrated the camp of Avshalom, and Ovadiah when he hid the one hundred prophets, although by doing so he was forced to help Achav search for Eliyahu Hanavi. Indeed, through his actions Ovadiah merited to attain prophecy himself, to the point that Scripture writes about him something greater than that which was written about Avraham. [Avraham "feared G-d" (Bereishis 22:12) but Ovadiah "feared G-d exceedingly" (Melachim I 18:3).]

And we find in the words of Chazal some cases where it is permitted to flatter the wicked in this world, as it states in Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer 31 regarding Yaakov, who lowered himself before Esav. Yaakov said, "I flattered this wicked man so that he should not kill me." And as Rabbeinu Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva 3:199, as well as the Menoras Hamaor 20, 3:1:2, just as we may honor wealthy and powerful people, hoping to reap a benefit, and not due to their personal value or our love of them, we may honor

the wicked for a similar reason. This is why we find (Bava Basra 4a) that Bava Ben Buta advised King Herod to remodel the Beis Hamikdash, despite the fact that this advice enabled his kingdom to continue existing, as the Gemara says; the reason given is that if not for the government, it would never get remodeled.

And the same is found in the Yerushalmi at the beginning of the first chapter of Avodah Zarah (1b):

If one enters a city and finds the people celebrating their holiday, he may celebrate along with them, because it is obvious that he is merely flattering them.

Also, we find many times in the Gemara that, due to danger, tzaddikim did not tell their wicked persecutors that they were following the mitzvos and were willing to give up their lives for Hashem. For example, Elisha Baal Knafayim (Shabbos 49a) pretended that his tefillin were the wings of a dove, rather than proudly display the tefillin and be killed for wearing them. Similarly, Rabbi Eliezer ben Prata saved his own life by claiming to the Romans that he had never taught Torah and that he was called "rabbi" only [in the sense of "teacher"] because he gave lessons in weaving (Avodah Zarah 17b). (And the fact that Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon answered the Romans honestly and said, "I taught Torah because this is what Hashem my G-d commanded me" is not because he was greater in his devotion than Rabbi Eliezer Ben Prata. On the contrary, the Gemara relates there that Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon said to Rabbi Eliezer ben Prata, "Fortunate are you that you were caught for five things, yet you are being saved because you study Torah and carried out acts of kindness.")

Furthermore, we find (Avodah Zarah 18a) that Rabbi Chanina ben Tradyon was criticized by the other sages for flaunting Roman law:

Rabbi Yossi ben Kisma said to him, "Don't you know that this nation of Rome was placed in power by Hashem, because they destroyed His house and burned His sanctuary, killed His pious ones and destroyed His best, and still they are in power? Yet I heard that you sit and learn Torah and teach to public gatherings with a Sefer Torah on your lap." Rabbi Chanina replied, "Heaven will have mercy." Said Rabbi Yossi, "I am telling you a reasonable argument, and you're telling me that Heaven will have mercy? I will be surprised if they don't burn you and your Sefer Torah in fire!" Rabbi Chanina asked, "Rebbe, will I get life in the World to Come?"

[The Gemara continues to say that Rabbi Yossi declared that Rabbi Chanina would get into the World to Come only because of an unrelated mitzvah he once did. Clearly, the fact that he risked his life to teach Torah was not enough of a merit.]

And so we find in Gittin 14b when some powerful men with connections to the government tormented Rabbi Yossi ben Kippar to force him to agree to return an object, and Rabbi Yossi appealed to his companion Rabbi Dostai for help, Rabbi Dostai said to the bullies, "Good, keep beating him," because he feared for his life. And so we find in Nedarim 22a that Ulla was traveling with two men and one murdered the other, and when the murderer asked Ulla if he was right, Ulla said yes. Later Rabbi Yochanan reassured Ulla that he was not guilty of encouraging a sinner because he had saved his own life. If this is true regarding danger to life, all the more so when it comes to danger to the soul, that we

can argue that it is not called encouraging sinners if, without your interference, they would continue sinning and leading others astray.

The Torah prohibition of "lifnei iver" (placing a stumbling block before the blind) applies only on "two sides of the river" - where the sinner cannot commit the sin without your assistance. Tosafos and the Rosh in Shabbos 3a say that even if the sinner could obtain the object himself, it is Rabbinically forbidden to assist him. However, if someone knows that if he does not assist the sinner, he will obtain assistance from others who are worse or equal sinners, and will continue sinning and leading others astray, it can be argued that helping him is saving, not aiding the wicked. Also, joining them is not considered agreement as long as the religious groups stress vehemently their true demand to keep the entire Torah at all times, except when unavoidable. We see that making a limited request while stressing one's true desire is permitted, from the story of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, who requested from Vespasian to save Yavneh and its Sages (Gittin 56b). No one ever suggested that this was considered as if he agreed, G-d forbid, to destroy the Beis Hamikdash and send Israel into exile.

See the responsa of the Rashba 5:238, who brings a proof from Avodah Zarah 16a, where it says that Rabbi used to send a fat ox as a gift to the government on the non-Jewish holiday. Rabbi then sent a bribe of 40,000 coins to allow him to send the ox on the day after the holiday, then another bribe to allow him to send it pre-slaughtered, and then another bribe to allow him to stop sending the gift altogether. The Gemara explains that Rabbi wanted to stop the gift-giving entirely, and his plan was to stop it little by little. The Rashba shows from here that one must fight one's battles with planning and strategy, because sometimes it is impossible to put an end to all bad things at once; rather one must go step by step and await an opportune time. See there at length. And similarly, in Sotah 48a the Gemara says that if we want to end the practice of men and women singing responsively, but we know that people will not agree, we should begin by outlawing the more flagrant case where women sing and men respond, because this ignites the evil inclination "like putting fire to flax." Only later should we outlaw the case of men singing and women responding; although this too is promiscuous, temporarily allowing it is not tantamount to agreeing to promiscuity.

An even greater statement is made in Sanhedrin 102b: that when Yeihiu said [as a ruse], "Ahab worshipped the Baal a little; Yeihiu will worship him a lot," Yeihiu was still considered a greatly righteous man and was not condemned for these words. The only problem was that, according to Abaye, the principle that "there is a covenant with the lips" (i.e. be careful what you say, it might come true) caused him to veer from the proper path later.

Incidentally, there is a problem here: one who says "I will go and worship" would seem to be considered an inciter to idolatry as is stated in the Mishnah in Sanhedrin 67a. Why then was Yeihiu considered righteous? The answer is that Rashi on 61a explains the Mishnah on 67a to be referring to the one who was convinced: if he agrees to the inciter and says he will worship, he is liable to death immediately because we assume he will not change his mind. Abaye and Rava (on 61b) further specify that this is only true when he was convinced by others, not by his own mind. Rav Ashi goes even further and says it is only when the convinced person was a Jew who has already worshipped idols in the past. Thus Yeihiu, who was not being convinced by others, and had no previous record of idol worship, was not in this category. According to the other answers brought in the Gemara, the question remains. See Tosafos, Maharam and Rishonim.

Returning to our subject, one could argue that we should not participate in the Israeli government, because our participation will accomplish very little, and we can only hope our influence will last.

Participation may render us accomplices to the three cardinal sins for which a Jew must give his life, and adding to that the fact that this might be considered a decree forcing Jews to abandon their religion, perhaps we should rather stand up at the risk of our lives and fight a battle as the Chashmonaim did in their time, putting our trust in Hashem, who can save us with a small army just as with a large one.

But on the other hand, we know that we cannot compare ourselves to the Chashmonaim or to any of those from earlier generations. In these later generations, we do not risk our lives for the holiness of Hashem's name so much, to the point of going out to war with sword and spear. Our power is only through our mouths. We learn from Yaakov Avinu that there are three methods of coping with danger: gifts, prayer and warfare. Now, it is certain that a war of words is not a war, nor may we rely on a miracle and assume that our prayers will help us. That leaves only gifts. And we can make the argument that participation in the government represents the method of gifts, and that by engaging in this method one is also part of the army fighting the battles of Hashem. For all paths that lead to strengthening the Torah and mending its breaches, as long as they are based on the guidelines of the Torah, are part of the battle of Hashem against Amalek, the eternal battle between good and evil.

Still, I have already prefaced that one must possess deep understanding about the situation as well as the ability to make decisions based on the Torah and the traditions of our fathers. These are delicate decisions, and whoever makes the decision on this must imagine that Gehinom is open under him, for the Torah and the Jewish people depend on his ruling.

And there is another condition necessary here: since participation in the government is only a sort of "sin for a holy purpose" to save the Jewish people, it must be done under complete duress, as if a demon was forcing him, and one must derive no pleasure from the sin, like Yael and Esther, because "pleasure from the wicked is unpleasant to the righteous." We must honor them only as much as necessary, only where necessary and only the person that is necessary. Members of Knesset, who are not so beholden and are able to speak openly against the evil plans of the heretics, and all the more so the newspaper of the Agudah, must openly disclose all secret plans and come out in a public attack, not revealing some things and hiding others or speaking words that can be understood two ways. And all the more so when we speak at gatherings or among ourselves, that it is forbidden to praise the wicked, speak well of them or to appear as partners and friends of the heretics. We must denounce them just as our righteous forefathers did when they were required to join efforts with the wicked. This certainly applies in our generation when there are more heretics around, and there are many, even among those who keep Torah and mitzvos, who praise the wicked as well as disrespect the righteous, for there is much confusion of the minds in our camp.

And certainly we must show disgust for the heresy itself, calling it a disparaging name, as the halacha is ruled in Yoreh Deah, Hilchos Avodah Zarah 146:15. And for this reason even if, based on a ruling of Beis Din, it is permitted in practice to participate in the government, we here in America should not welcome this participation, because people would draw the conclusion that the participation itself is good and will bring blessing, as well as the unity of the Jewish people and the success of the state. People will then say, "Our forefathers and teachers of blessed memory were wrong when they warned us strictly against this." This would lead to the raising of the pride of the wicked and agreement to all that is done in the State of Israel. Rather we must stress at every election that this is a tragedy and unfortunately we have reached this point.

Another reason why we cannot decide on this case from afar is because we have to know through whom and how this will be carried out. In a case like this, where it is possible to make an error and think that

the Orthodox have permitted the matter, we must definitely stress as much as possible at every gathering of religious Jews the repugnance of the heretics and their evil, and the prohibition of joining them, adding as many stringencies as possible, just as we find in Yuma 2a regarding the burning of the red heifer - that because they were lenient about one aspect of the service, they needed to add on many stringencies of taharah so that people should not take it lightly. And the same concept is found in many places.

We can find precedent for joining the wicked, albeit on the smaller scale, in the actions of the Agudah and other Torah-observant Jews in many communities in Poland, Lithuania and Galicia. The largest of these communities was Warsaw, where the Orthodox did not have an absolute majority, so they joined forces with a heretical group in the leadership of the kehillah. Although there were some individuals who protested against this, we do not find any protest on the part of the gedolim. The rabbinic leaders of Warsaw at that time were the Gerrer Rebbe and Rabbi Menachem Ziemba. True, there were differences between Warsaw and our situation today: as the leader of the Warsaw kehillah they appointed a member of Mizrachi, not a heretic; and his appointment was not to such a high position nor was the government so powerful. Still, fundamentally the question is the same, and in fact, there the danger that lay in boycotting the election was not so great, yet they permitted it. And we see that the joining of the parties did not at all damage the battle waged between the religious and their enemies, nor was the boundary between holy and profane blurred.

We have to understand, as well as explain to others, the tremendous distinction between participation in something where all participation is voluntary, and participation in something where one is automatically already a partner, and if he does not participate in the leadership, the opposing side will take over his share as well. Even in monetary matters, which are not so serious, one is not obligated to give up on one's money and waive his rights in order to avoid being a partner with a wicked person. For example, a convert to Judaism and his brother, a non-Jew, who inherited property from their father, and the property cannot be split, may remain partners. And in Sanhedrin 63b it states that one may not enter into a partnership with a non-Jew lest he get into a dispute and take the non-Jew to court, where he might swear by his idol, and the Jew would be violating the verse, "the name of other gods shall not be heard due to your mouth". This implies that if not for this possibility, partnership with a non-Jew would be permitted. And so in Avodah Zarah 22a we find that a Jew and a non-Jew may own a field in partnership, with the non-Jew working on Shabbos; and in other places as well we find that partnership with a non-Jew is permitted. If this is true for business, all the more so in matters relating to our souls and our lives that we cannot allow them to take over everything in cases where we don't have the ability to separate from them and leave the partnership. And on the contrary, our refusal to join would be tantamount to consent to the wicked controlling everything. For we can compare this to the case of two men holding onto a tallis, where if one of them relinquishes the part in his hand and allows the other to grab the entire tallis, then it appears that he is agreeing that the other one owns the entire thing. Even if he later shouts that he does own it, we don't listen to him (Bava Metzia 6a). In our case as well, if logic dictates that we do not have the power to separate from the partnership, we may not rely on the fact that we cry out with a high voice and say, "From Heaven they will have mercy."

For the above reasons, it would seem to us that on the question of sending our representatives to the Knesset, it is clear that we are obligated to send them in order to stand guard and fight so that the wicked should not swallow up the righteous. This is not considered joining, agreeing, aiding or subordinating ourselves to them; but rather it is considered standing up for our lives and doing everything in our power in the most effective natural way, with our last ounce of strength, to save the people of Hashem, and not give away the partial ownership we have to others. And even regarding

protesting against what the wicked have done by grabbing power [where some claim that by joining them we have dropped our protest], we must know that the main purpose of protesting is that the public should hear it and that those against whom we have a claim should hear it. Such protest can only be carried out by our representatives in the Knesset. What is the purpose of protesting among ourselves, when no one even knows who or how many are protesting? The same is true of our obligation to prevent evil decrees and to lobby for our needs – obviously, in order to do that, one must be in the place of action. This is similar to the Gemara in Avodah Zarah 18b which says it is permitted to go to a bullfighting stadium because when one cries out there, he can save the life of the Jew being gored by the bull. Our forefathers always had designated representatives in the capital cities of their countries, and they were lenient in a few areas of halacha for these representative before the government. And although they were often forced to debate with gentiles and their priests, or with heretics, and as part of their role they listened to words of heresy, they were undeterred from carrying out their mission.

Regarding the argument that participation in the Knesset is the same as joining the Zionist organization or sending representatives to the Zionist congresses, which our rabbis of blessed memory forbade, my response is that there is no **similarity**. As I explained above, then any partnership was voluntary, but now, no one would say that it is possible for us to split off from them. And even if we refuse to join the government, a complete separation in all matters is impossible.

But of course, the representatives we send must be strong men, men of truth, who fear G-d and hate financial gain, wise enough to understand their mission, bold as a leopard and swift as a deer to fight the battle of Hashem, like a wall and not like a door swinging on its hinge, able to speak to the enemies at the gate.

Regarding partnership with the wicked, I am reminded of the Maharshal on Bava Metzia 7, who asks: when two people come to Beis Din holding a tallis, why do we sell the tallis to a third party and have them split the proceeds? Why not say “gud o agud” – let one of the two litigants take the tallis and compensate the other with money? He answers that “gud o agud” applies only when the two own an item as partners, in which case each one agrees that his half belongs partially to the other. But in the case of the tallis, where each one claims to own it all, even when the Beis Din rules that they must split it, neither is admitting that the other owns any of what he is holding.

Here too, I say that if the servants of Hashem were to collaborate with the enemies of Hashem in such a way that they agreed that the enemies of Hashem also have the right to lead the Jewish people, that would indeed be a forbidden partnership; but if the servants of Hashem deny that the enemies of Hashem have any rights, and they join with them only in order to hold onto what is theirs, and it appears to be collaboration only because the others have also grabbed their portion - that is not included in the prohibition. Although it is not a perfect analogy, because joining the Knesset is a real partnership, not just holding onto what is theirs, still it would seem that if a convert to Judaism and his brother, a non-Jew, inherited property from their non-Jewish father, a real partnership, the convert would be permitted to harvest and eat the fruits of the field, if otherwise he would lose his portion, or the non-Jewish brother would take it. It makes sense that it would even be allowed for him to plow and sow in partnership, in order not to lose out; because it is only deliberately joining the wicked that is forbidden, not when he becomes a partner with him automatically due to his share of the inheritance.

Furthermore, if a tzaddik and a rasha found an ownerless item, they would be allowed to pick it up together, provided that this is a one-time event and the tzaddik does not form a permanent business

arrangement with the rasha to pick up such items. He is not obligated to let the rasha get it all, just to avoid being a partner with the rasha.

In the past, our rabbis forbade joining the Zionist movement, because this was not merely a matter of joining the wicked; it was joining a movement built by its founders and leaders upon the heretical idea to transform the Jewish people so that they should no longer be called the people of Hashem and the people of the Torah. Our tradition from Chazal, the Rishonim and Acharonim was always that when a Jew abandons Torah and mitzvos, he is no longer part of the Jewish people, and that the name "Israel" can only apply to someone who has the holiness of the people of Hashem, His Torah and mitzvos. But the Zionists raised their hands against the Torah, saying that the concept of Israel depends on some kind of nationalist or racist feeling, and the Jewish people is a nation like any other nation.

But none of this applies to the elections for the Knesset, because the Knesset in and of itself has no connection with any particular movement, and even joining the coalition is not considered being part of a movement or an ideal.

Another one of the reasons given for opposition to Zionism was that joining it would be helping to transgress the oath that the Jewish people must not go up as a wall (Kesubos 111a), and also because Zionism would place the Jewish people in physical danger from our Arab neighbors, as well as spiritual danger, lest the land spit out its inhabitants when they defile its holiness, G-d forbid. Now, I will not speak about whether there was a transgression of the oath, given the actual situation that arose, but one thing is for certain: that participation in the elections or joining the coalition do not involve transgression of the oath, and they do not lead to danger. For if there is, G-d forbid, another war, we would be forced to take part in it, and we would do so willingly, because of the rule that if one comes to kill you, kill him first. And on the contrary, to the extent that our voice is heard, we will use it to convince them to forego their victories in order to avoid bloodshed and provoking war.

Also, participation in the elections or even in the coalition is not an expression of approval of the founding and building of the state, for it is not expressing any opinion, whether positive or negative. Now, there is no one among us who knows anything about the ways in which Divine Providence guides us – let alone at a time when the Divine face is hidden in this era preceding the coming of moshiach. But "the hidden matters are for Hashem our G-d and the revealed matters are for us" (Devarim 29:28) to do practically whatever our holy Torah teaches us: to compare one case to another based on the methods that were passed down to us by Chazal and by our teachers, the Rishonim and Acharonim, without any bias or prejudice to be lenient or even to be strict. As the Rashba writes in a Teshuva, Volume 5 number 238:

The dayan must suspect himself, lest the fire of his zealousness for Hashem burn within him and cause him to ignore the path that is good and correct, therefore... he should delay his decision and discuss it first with other rabbis and those who are straightforward in their minds."

For example, in our subject, the bribe and the bias of one's zeal and hatred toward heretics may convince him to say that only through battling against them can we succeed in strengthening the Torah, while those who are straightforward in their minds may decide that the best path to success is to flatter the wicked. Anyone who speaks his mind on this subject for the sake of Heaven - that is Daas Torah, and we must follow the majority of poskim among those who are fit to pasken in this generation based on their greatness in Torah, in fear of G-d and wisdom; and "G-d stands in the assembly of G-d" (Tehillim 82:1).

But regarding our conduct in relation to the Neturei Karta, it is forbidden to denigrate, to condemn or to quarrel with them, and certainly to hate them, for many reasons:

- 1) Because they are Jews who believe in the fundamentals of the Torah, and not only that, they have among them many talmidei chachomim, whom we are obligated to respect. We must not judge them to be baalei machlokes (controversy mongers), about whom it is permitted to speak lashon hara, because they rely on their rabbis, who are on the level to disagree with their peers and certainly with those below their level. This is all the more true given that the rabbis have not all met together and taken a majority vote, so it is allowed for each one to rule according to his own opinion (see Maharit 1:68, Choshen Mishpat 25 and Knesses Hagedolah 16). And when there are two batei dinim, there is no prohibition of "lo sisgodedu" (maintaining variant religious practices). On the contrary, their logic that the cases (joining the Zionist movement and joining the state) are the same leads them to conclude that the Agudah's beis din is in disagreement with the Agudah's own teachers from the previous generation. But this is not true, since their claim that the two cases are the same is also a halachic ruling [subject to dispute]. And although some think that their actions cause a loss to the Torah, this is far from clear and it would seem the opposite is true. But even if we were to consider them to be acting wrongly, they are just misled, and it is not regarding the fundamentals of emunah.  
Also, the Chofetz Chaim (Klal 8) rules that it is not allowed to speak lashon hara (against baalei machlokes) unless this will lead to the end of the machlokes, and he proves this; but here this would not be the case.
- 2) A second reason is that if we quarrel with them outside of the political realm, where we do not have to flatter the wicked, we would be showing that we are a party like all parties, fighting against whoever does not agree with us, whether they are religious or not.  
Additionally, it would look like we are adopting a compromise position between the two extremes, striving to be middle-of-the-road, and this is incorrect, for on the essential issue we are all on the same side of this terrible battle and we have the same enemy. Furthermore, as to the Neturei Karta's position that they need not give in to our opinion, though we outnumber them - all believing Jews say the same thing: that although the heretics and wicked ones are in the majority, their opinion does not count, as the Gemara says (Sanhedrin 26a), "A conspiracy of the wicked does not count," for they are not part of the Jewish people. The heretics, on the other hand, say that the Torah and emunah are a private matter, and anyone who identifies as Jewish, is Jewish, and therefore the minority should give in to the majority. Now, if it were to appear to the public that we agree with the Zionists on this point (by saying that Neturei Karta should give in to us), that would be similar to agreement to Avodah Zarah.  
And truthfully, our disagreement is only over battlefield strategy and our understanding of the situation: they hold that there is no room for the "gift" approach here, only open warfare with all its risks, while others hold that gifts and flattery of the wicked are a better approach. Now, for us to quarrel with them would be a repetition of the sin of the Mizrachi, who made peace with the wicked while fighting against those (Agudah) who were more religious and didn't agree with them. We must stress that we are merely like the Jewish representatives of the past who advocated for the Jewish people in the halls of non-Jewish governments, nothing more.
- 3) Thirdly, Neturei Karta is essentially correct: we must go out to open battle on matters for which a Jew must put his life on the line. And even according to the beis din (of Agudah) which holds that, in the present situation, the approach of gifts is more effective, of course everyone understands that the situation could worsen, G-d forbid – and logically, this is quite a likely possibility. At that time, we would all be obligated by the Torah to be like the Neturei Karta, and

even more extreme than them. How then can we throw a clod of dirt into a well that we may one day need to drink from?

And even now, there are cases where we must use the tactic of warfare, and the wicked would take advantage of the fact that the Neturei Karta is denigrated and hated (by us) to marginalize the protests by blaming them on Neturei Karta.

## **The Essence of Agudas Yisroel**

Agudas Yisroel is the unification and alliance of Jews who accept the Torah, and it cannot be an official party with a uniform emblazoned with the letters tzadik alef yud (Zeirei Agudas Yisroel) or peh alef yud (Poalei Agudas Yisroel).

Its founding principles are:

1. The unification, alliance, and gathering of observant Jews, as the posuk says, "When you cry out, your gathering will save you" (Yishaya 57:13), and Chazal say, "When tzaddikim join together, it is good for them and good for the world" (Masechta Kallah Rabasi 6, see Sanhedrin 72a). And to achieve this, each one must submit to the opinion of his peers. An organization splintered into pieces and sects is not an Agudah.

Conversely, in a community where religious Jews can be better united without being under the name of Agudah, we should help them do so and not oppose it, and this is also an Agudah.

Unity is the main thing, and divisiveness is the opposite of Agudas Yisroel.

2. Observant Jews should be the leaders in community life and independent Charedi life; they should not be subservient under the leadership of the irreligious.

We are not talking only about Agudas Yisroel being in power as opposed to Zionists or Mizrachi; but in every city and country, in every shul, group and organization, the goal is to raise the power of observant Jews, that they should be elected as presidents or gabbaim in place of the non-observant. We must bolster the strength of the Charedim, and support Charedi rabbis and Gedolei Torah.

3. To resolve day to day issues in the spirit of the Torah. And in order to know the unadulterated spirit of the Torah, they established the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah, as the Torah commands, "You shall come to the judge who will be at that time... according to the ruling that they hand down you shall do" (Devarim 17:9,11). Any person who is universally recognized as a Gadol Hatorah Vehayirah must be appointed to this panel. This is contrary to those who interpret the Torah based on the spirit of the Agudah, as they understand it, and reject any rabbis who disagree with those appointed to the Agudah. Rather, it is they who must submit to the opinion of the Gedolim.

The goal is to increase the honor of Heaven, to increase Torah, avodah and gemilus chasadim.

If it turns out to be better for spreading Torah, strengthening observance or saving Jews to carry out a given project not under the name of the Agudah, then it is better to forego the name of the Agudah than to forego the main purpose of creation. Each project must be done for its own sake, for the sake of this act or mitzvah, not for the honor of the Agudah; this applies to spreading Torah, education, strengthening observance, saving Jews and settling Eretz Yisroel.

Also, each member of the Agudah should ask himself: what have I done to teach and do kindness for the Jewish people, and uplift the honor of Heaven?

Within Agudas Yisroel itself, we have to honor whoever is a Gadol in Torah and Yirah, and not raise up someone who does not deserve it, even if he is brazen and jumps to the lead.

[This is all that remains of the written manuscript of this article.]

### **The Battle of Agudas Yisroel**

(The following is the end of a speech given at a gathering of rabbis of Agudas Yisroel on the subject of a Jewish state, Tuesday of Parshas Shmini 5708 (March 30, 1948).)

Who has reached the level to rule on a halachic question of such severity? Besides, this requires a person who has toiled all his life in Torah, avodah and *yiras shomayim*, and he would have to fast at least 40 days not to make a mistake in this ruling, which would have consequences for tens of thousands of lives, as well as the honor of Hashem. This is similar to what the Noda Biyehuda replied to Rabbi Yishaya Berlin: "On matters of Agaddah I am not learned enough to respond." And in the same vein, my father-in-law [Rabbi Boruch Ber Leibowitz] zt"l was afraid to speak about matters where his speech could result in killing people. Anyone who rules on this question because of desire to please the Mizrachi or the zealots, or due to his fear of them, is spilling blood.

A halachic ruling on this, as in all subjects dealt with by the Agudah, must be given by a meeting of the Torah sages, not by an elected committee of laymen and rabbis. For even a prophet who prophesied the word of the Holy One, blessed is He, if the Sanhedrin had not appointed him, would not be allowed to prophesy, as it states in Yalkut Yishaya 1. Each of the Gedolei Hatorah Vehayirah must speak his mind for the sake of Heaven. And if there is disagreement among them, we follow the majority. One must not, G-d forbid, suspect any of them of heresy, or of lack of love for the Jewish people or for Eretz Yisroel, for even in the most serious matters we find that there is disagreement. So writes the Rashba in his Teshuvos, Siman 148. Even regarding Divine providence there is a dispute, over whether the Jewish people is governed by mazal (Shabbos 156a). In the Chiddushei Harashba he adds that even regarding moshiach there is a disagreement. And without this [process of meeting together and following the majority], every Jew would build his own altar, and no Torah view would be heard. However, those who take bribes are disqualified from judging the case, and certainly those who lack fear of Heaven.

The selection of Moetzes members should not be done in a fair way, like a Din Torah where each side picks a judge of their liking; rather, whoever are true Gedolei Torah, even if not official members of Agudas Yisroel, should be selected. For the Agudah is subservient to the Torah; the Torah is not subservient to Agudah.

And it is true that the residents of Eretz Yisroel can follow their own rabbis, and so too in every country they can follow their rabbis even on matters relating to Eretz Yisroel. But in general, we must follow the opinion of the majority of Jewish sages in the world, because there is one Torah for everyone, and Eretz Yisroel belongs to all Jews. Also, this question is relevant to the lives of Jews no matter where they live.

Serving Hashem according to the Torah is very difficult, as my father-in-law zt"l said, "Hatred of the heretics must be based on pure middos, without any agenda at all. This is one of the most difficult things to do: one must stand up and fight against those going on the wrong path, but it is forbidden to be a "baal machlokes" (controversy monger), neither may he derive any pleasure out of the dispute or his victory. All must be done out of love of Hashem, love of other people, and his true pain over the lowering of Hashem's honor and the fall of the Jew from his high level. He must rejoice in the uplifting of Hashem's honor, like the Gaon Rabbi Yosef Dov [Soloveitchik, the Beis Halevi] zt"l who gave a thousand thanks to Rabbi Yaakov Gezundheit for learning Torah with diligence.

Agudas Yisroel is currently weak and small in number; its hope for victory is only justified because it fights the war of Hashem against Amalek, fighting for the honor of Hashem's name. "His glory fills the world," and we are promised that one day "His glory will fill the entire earth" (Tehillim 72:19). "He is the place of the earth" (Rashi, Shemos 33:21). Our enemies, on the other hand, have abandoned His Torah and mitzvos, His emunah and His middos. They had the audacity to expel the Master of the World from His Temple, the Jewish people, and to conquer Him in His own house: the shuls, the Talmud Torahs, the yeshivos, the rabbinate, Jerusalem and Eretz Yisroel, chesed, tzedaka and the leadership of Israel. Regarding this the posuk says, "Some come with chariots and some with horses, but we call in the name of Hashem our G-d" (Tehillim 20:8). And another posuk says, "Why do you fear a mortal who will die, and a man who will one day become a field of grass?" (Yishaya 51:12).

The idea of Agudah was conceived of by Gedolei Yisroel who realized that those who put on tefillin, keep Shabbos, learn Torah and keep its mitzvos do not understand that it is important to increase the honor of Torah in the world, as the posuk says, "You shall love Hashem your G-d... and teach them to your children" – both actual children and students. And the Gemara expounds the word "you shall love" to mean, "Make His name beloved to people" (Yuma 86a). Rabbi Yonah writes in Shaarei Teshuva 3:19:

A dedicated employee will check over the work of his fellow employees and come to their aid.

See there at length. And the main point is to raise the honor of sages and tzaddikim, so that they should be the leaders of the people in every place, and to lower the honor of the wicked, as the Shaarei Teshuva writes at length there, from Siman 147 to 160.

And at a time when the evildoers are built up, then "those who fear Hashem must speak to each other" (Malachi 3:16).

But we must take care in every mitzvah we do, not to lose track of its essence and adopt only the outer shell. This can happen because the yetzer hara's chief method is to blind people to the truth.

Even regarding the mitzvah of korbanos, whose holiness is very great, and which come to atone for our sins, the Torah warned us: "Who asked this from you, to come and trample My courtyards?" (Yishaya 1:12). And: "Slaughtering an ox is like killing a man, sacrificing a lamb is like chopping a dog's neck" (Yishaya 66:3). Similarly: "I did not speak to your fathers nor did I command them, on the day I took them out of Egypt, on the laws of burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Yirmiyahu 7:22). And the meaning is as Chazal explain the verse, "Behold, listening is better than a sacrifice" (Shmuel Alef 15:22): "The good part of a sacrifice is the fact that you listened to the word of Hashem in bringing it." That is why we must bring the sacrifice "according to His will" (Vayikra 1:3). But if this essential point is forgotten, the korban is emptied of its content and it is worthless.

Even worse, there are heretics or non-Jews who adopt the outer appearance of certain mitzvos, rendering those mitzvos unwanted by Hashem, like the one-stone altar (matzeivah). This is why Chazal cautioned, "Discourage your children from studying Tanach too much" (Berachos 28b) - because the heretics used it to bolster their beliefs. Similarly, "a

Sefer Torah written by a heretic must be burnt" (Gittin 45b). For this reason, our rabbis in recent times have discouraged the study of Hebrew, settling in Eretz Yisroel and other things – because they saw that the heretics took up these mitzvos.

And now that the heretics' power has increased and they have taken hold of every Davar Shebikdushah, emptying it of holiness, Agudas Yisroel's goal must be to restore clarity. The Torah must be the true Torah, connected with the Creator of the World and faith in Him, based on the traditions of the Gedolei Torah and Yirah. There must be true Ahavas Yisroel, obligating us to put our lives on the line to save the fingernail of one Jew. When we work on the needs of the public and make decisions that affect people's lives, we must feel that a sword is between our knees and Gehinom is open under us (Sanhedrin 7a), so much should be our fear of being guilty of spilling blood. We must feel the urgency of danger to life, which supersedes any law in the Torah – unlike certain other people who take everything lightly. These people see the whole world as easy street, and they make decisions while living a life of luxury, casually, and while distracted, as they strive for honor and money. Once, when HaGaon Rabbi Yosef Dov [Soloveitchik, the Beis Halevi] zt"l took part in a meeting and his advice was not adopted, he became ill from the pain. And one community leader from the previous generation used to put on his burial shrouds before coming to a meeting, so that he should control himself and give his opinion for the sake of Heaven, so that no blood should be spilled, G-d forbid.

The goal of Agudah is also to purify the rabbinate, the shuls and every holy matter.

## **The Role and the Purpose of Zeirei Agudas Yisroel**

[A speech given in Ferndale, NY at a gathering of Zeirei Agudas Yisroel, Elul 5710 (1950).]

“The pride of youth is their strength” (Mishlei 20:29). The advantage of the young is that they have strength, initiative and vigor to get things done. But the main “pride of children is their parents” (Mishlei 17:6) – that they are educated in the path of their parents, as one of the Gedolim of Mussar said, “Israel is a youth and I love him (Hoshea 11:1) – because he wants to be educated like a youth.”

But the practical education given at Zeirei Agudas Yisroel is mainly about public mitzvos. The Torah was not given only to individuals, but also to Klal Yisroel. Israel is one nation in the world, and its souls are included within each other. As the Tomer Devorah explains: “All Jews are responsible for each other” (Shevuos 39a) and therefore the public’s job is the individual’s job. There are some mitzvos that only apply to the public; they are called “chovas hatzibbur”. And if a person does not improve his community, that community will deteriorate, for a man is drawn after the group he belongs to. But when he uplifts others, we say, “When someone benefits his neighbor, he benefits himself too” (a play on the rule in Gemara that if one can benefit himself, he can benefit others, e.g. by picking up an ownerless object with another in mind – Bava Metzia 9b). And “because he is so busy giving to others, he cannot absorb” (Yoreh Deah 70:1) – [i.e. absorb the negative influences of his environment]. Military experts say that the best defense is a good offense.

These are all reasons why helping others benefits oneself, but ahavas yisroel itself obligated us to work to others’ bodies and souls. Furthermore, all creations were created for the honor of Hashem Yisborach, His mitzvos and love, that is, making Him beloved by people; that is the purpose of all our actions, down to the smallest movement of our eyes.

But a person must be cautious, because “we do not tell a person to sin in order to prevent another from sinning” (Shabbos 4a), for the foundation of love of Hashem is fear of Hashem, and listening to His commandments is better than an offering. The most important thing is not to transgress the commandments of Hashem; we must fulfill the mitzvos first, before attempting to increase the honor of Heaven. The mitzvos are for our own good, not for Hashem – what can we give to Him? And in any war, if one marches too far out toward the enemy front, away from his home camp, he may be captured instead of capturing others.

Our guideline for community mitzvos is only the Torah, as it is interpreted by our tradition from our Sages throughout the generations. For if we depart from the Torah, we are likely to fall into the net of actual idolatry, as Rashi says:

Lest you turn away and worship other gods” – as soon as you turn away from the Torah, you will worship other gods. (Commentary to Devarim 11:16)

And this is especially true in our generation where ignorance of Judaism so often borders on heresy and idolatry, unlike in previous generations, when every ignorant Jew was a great scholar when it came to fundamentals of the Torah.

It is especially important to follow the Torah in community matters, because almost any mistake in this area is a mistake about the principles of faith and the oneness of Hashem. This is because our belief is that Hashem is one, there is none besides Him and nothing can exist without Him, and He alone should be served by keeping Torah and mitzvos, because that is the purpose of the creation of man and the Jewish people. All a person's deeds from youth to old age should be based only on the Torah given to us by Hashem Yisborach. One's love for Hashem must be with all his heart and soul and means. And although there are other services a Jew must perform, and other things he must love, like chesed, one's fellow Jews and Eretz Yisroel, these all stem from one root: the will of the Creator as expressed in His Torah, for the Torah is all-encompassing and has many subdivisions: between man and Hashem, between man and his fellow man, etc.

Therefore, the love we must have for chesed is an important part of Hashem's mitzvos, and it is rooted in the mitzvah, "You shall walk in His ways" (Devarim 28:9) – just as He is merciful, so shall you be merciful etc. (Shabbos 133b). That is why our gedolim attained such high levels of chesed, to the point that none of the great ethical and moral people could reach their ankles.

This is also the reason why our gedolim, and all religious Jews in general, excelled in loving their fellow Jews more than all the nationalists among us: because their love of Jews was a part of their Avodas Hashem, rooted in their belief in the Jewish people as the people chosen by Hashem, "children of Hashem" (Devarim 14:1), "brothers in the mitzvos" (Bava Kama 88a).

And similarly our love for Eretz Yisroel is because it is the Holy Land that Hakadosh Boruch Hu gave to His holy people. Speaking Hebrew is also counted by the Rambam as a mitzvah, albeit a small one (Commentary on the Mishnah, Avos 2:1).

But all of this is only when these mitzvos are but branches of our emunah in the oneness of the Creator. However, if a person limits his service and love of Hashem, saying that they are only one part of his purpose, and that besides serving Hashem he must also do chesed, that besides being religious he must also be nationalist, that besides loving Hashem he must also love Eretz Yisroel and our Hebrew or Yiddish language, and especially if he ascribes holiness to loving the Jewish people, the land and the language – then he is believing in another god in addition to Hashem. And the biggest mitzvah, for him, is transformed into a false deity, into idolatry.

Even worse, there are some who, due to ignorance and lack of Torah education, do not believe at all that the Torah was given from Heaven, and the whole Judaism for them is nothing more than an emotion like all emotions - and all emotions are equal to them. For others, the whole Judaism is merely a tradition, a custom passed down from one's ancestors. These people are complete heretics, because the whole Judaism for them is just extreme nationalism.

Although all of the above is in the realm of theoretical philosophy and emunah, it has practical implications, and by listening to a person, one can tell where he stands. If he is a true maamin, his jealousy will be directed at Torah scholars. He will wish he were like the biggest talmid chacham and the biggest tzaddik. Then, even if he himself is far from reaching

that goal, he will be blessed with descendants who are like them, and he will be a wealthy Jew in this aspect. In his spoken and written words, his praise, glorification and admiration for Gedolim and leaders of the Jewish people will shine through. His only desire will be that all Jews should follow the Gedolim and that they should stand at the head of the people with prominence, influence, authority and leadership to guide them on the path of Hashem and His Torah.

If someone excels in one area of the Torah, such as chesed, ahavas yisroel, love of Eretz Yisroel, or any other particular mitzvah, this true maamin will praise him as a servant of Hashem, and will try to have him appointed a leader in this area. But if the person excelling in one of these areas is not a servant of Hashem, or even worse, is an atheist or an enemy of Hashem, or someone who leads others away from Judaism, then the maamin will see him as an object of scorn and disgust, and certainly he will not admire him or appoint him to a high position where he will be a symbol of honor and greatness. He will not place the reins of leadership of the holy people in this person's hands.

In fact, sometimes the mitzvah itself, when placed in the hands of a wicked person, becomes a sin. The Rambam says in his commentary to Avos (1:17) that lustful songs and heresy are worse when written in the Holy Tongue, because they defile the Holy Tongue.

On the other hand, he who believes in another god in addition to Hashem, and compartmentalizes his service of Hashem and His Torah, saying, "Until here you may come, and no further" (Iyov 38:11), does not want the Torah to encompass the entire lives of his children, or the Jewish people in general. To him, the one who studies Torah day and night and knows Hashem in all his ways (Mishlei 3:6) is guilty of the prohibition "do not be too righteous" (Koheles 7:16). (Actually, this verse applies only to those who make themselves righteous in ways that do not fit the Torah's definition.) Since he does not believe that service of Hashem is the ultimate goal, anyone who excels in one of the holy areas is in his eyes great and admirable; he holds up such a person as a role model for his children and all Jews to learn from, and he appoints him as a Jewish leader, even if he is an enemy of Hashem who leads other Jews astray from their father in Heaven.

And there are some for whom one of these holy mitzvos outweighs all the service of Hashem, and therefore they give the person doing that mitzvah precedence and importance above all those who serve Hashem, considering him the leader of the Jewish people, while all the Gedolei Yisroel are like a garlic peel by comparison.

To a Jew who sees the service of His Creator as central, the enemies of his father in heaven and those who lead others astray are like his own enemies and persecutors, and he does not join them, even for matters where he agrees with them, such as a mitzvah – unless he is forced: for example, if he becomes a partner with them due to events beyond his control. And even then, he does not consider them his friends, since he knows that their goals are the opposite of his; they are his adversaries.

But to a Jew who believes in another god in addition to Hashem, his differences of opinion with the anti-religious do not prevent him from feeling like a true friend and ally of someone who agrees with him on certain points, though he may be a heretic who leads others astray.

The true maamin must love all those who believe in Hashem and join them, although they disagree on details, since they are together on the main point. This is true even if these other believers quarrel with him or insult him due to their error – whether he considers them as “too righteous” or “too wicked” (Koheles 7:16-17) – as long as they believe in Hashem and intend to serve Him. And certainly it is forbidden to hate people because their families hail from a different part of the world, have different minhagim, different personalities or even different opinions – for “party hatred” is forbidden.

We must be careful not to rush to conclude that people claiming to be believers in Hashem are actually heretics and minim. Rather, we must try to judge everyone favorably.

[This is all that remains of the written manuscript of this article. However, we found the following in a different place among the author’s manuscripts: In the Teshuvos Haradbaz Volume 4 #1258 he writes, “One who errs about the fundamentals of Judaism due to his incorrect study of the matter is not called a heretic. After all, Hillel was a great man and he erred in one of the fundamentals (by not believing in a personal moshiach – Sanhedrin 99a)... it was not his fault and he is exempt from punishment.” And so is the opinion of the Raavad (Hilchos Teshuva 3:7). Based on their opinion, one must not rush to decide that a Talmid Chacham is a heretic, even if we hear from him ideas that are truly against the 13 Principles.]

## **The Role of Rabbis**

[A speech given at a conference of the Igud Harabbanim, Sivan 5708 / 1948]

I call this conference a Kinus Latzaddikim (a gathering for the righteous – based on Kallah Rabasi 6: “A gathering of tzaddikim is beneficial for them and beneficial for the world”). Although you may speak humbly and say that you are not all perfect tzaddikim, the point is that this is not just another professional conference; it is for the purpose of conferring together over how to best fulfill the holy task that is upon you, so it may be termed a Kinus Latzaddikim.

“You may be small in your own eyes, but you are the leader of the tribes of Israel” (Shmuel I, 15:17). It is no small matter to be a leader of Israel, the nation of holy people. Your role is similar to that of Moshe Rabbeinu, who stood between the Jewish people and Hashem, and was privileged to have his face shine. The servants of Hashem, the kingdom of priests, the children of kings, have no king or leader besides the one Hashem, as Shmuel told the people: “Hashem your G-d is your king” (Shmuel I 12:12). But a Jewish leader is G-d’s representative. We must always remember that. Rabbi Yishmoel said to Rabbi Meir, “Be careful with your work [as a scribe] because it is the work of Heaven” (Eiruvin 13a). This means: You took it upon yourself to be a representative of G-d, doing His work and fighting His battle against the Satan. “Any man who is fearful and soft-hearted should go and return home” (Devarim 20:8) and choose a different line of work from which to earn a living. But, as the Rambam says (Hilchos Melachim 7:4), returning home is only an option before the battle begins. In the middle of the battle, no one may leave the front open for the enemy to breach. Rabbi Yisroel Salanter said that any rav whose congregants do not want to fire him is not a rav. At the same time, he must not let them fire him. As the Chofetz Chaim said, one must go with the stronger side, which is Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

You have been appointed as guardians over the people of Hashem, as it says, “On your walls, O Jerusalem, I appointed guardians...” (Yishaya 62:6). The obligation of a paid guardian is to do as Yaakov Avinu did for his flock: “The heat consumed me by day, and the ice by night” (Bereishis 31:40). He is held responsible for every negligence or lack of attention. Even if he sleeps as normal people sleep, he is held responsible (Choshen Mishpat 303:2). Yechezkel Hanavi cried out:

Prophesy about the shepherds of Israel... they used to guide their flock, but now the flock guides the shepherds. The frail you did not strengthen, the sick you did not heal, the broken you did not bind, those astray you did not bring back, and the lost you did not seek, but with strength and with rigor you chastised them. They scattered because they had no shepherd, and they became prey for all the beasts of the field, and they scattered. My flock strayed throughout all the mountains and upon every lofty hill, and upon the entire face of the land My flock scattered – and none searches or seeks.  
(Yechezkel 34:2-6)

[And in another passage Yechezkel speaks of the awesome responsibility of a Jewish leader:]

And you, son of man, I have appointed you a prophet for the house of Israel, and you will hear the word from My mouth, and deliver to them My warning message to the

wicked: You wicked man, you will die! If you do not speak up to warn the wicked man to mend his ways, and he dies in his sin, I will demand his blood from you. (Yechezkel 33:7-8)

And the obligation of a Jewish leader is to be the one “who goes out before them” (Bamidbar 27:17) – he takes the initiative in every holy activity. **Rashi** says on that same posuk, “He will bring them out and bring them in – he must lead them and not be led by the crowd.”

His obligation is to do battle with those who rise up “to conquer the queen with him in the house” – i.e. to expel the Divine Presence from the holiest places. He must defend the holiness of the synagogue, the miniature Temple, and not allow them to desecrate it, much less to violate it. And when the Conservative movement comes to desecrate Bris Milah, the mitzvah on which 13 covenants were made, or bar mitzvahs, weddings, funerals and all holy events, he must not give in to them or to their rabbis. He must not give in even a finger in order to curry favor and goodwill with them. He must support every rav who is a Ben Torah in his area, and unite with him, and with all Bnei Torah and those who respect the word of Hashem. Especially, he must stand up and fight against the Satan’s efforts to conquer the children. He must raise up the honor of the Talmud Torahs, and, most importantly, establish yeshivas everywhere possible, or at least work to have the children sent to yeshivos. In a place where no one else is available, every rav must teach the children himself, and he must seek out ways to teach the adults more. Every time a communal question arises, he must teach the people that everything is from the Creator and His Torah, and every choice we make should be aimed at coming closer to Him. Hashem is one and His name is one, all comes from Him and all leads to Him.

The same applies to chesed and tzedakah, and the same applies to the love of Eretz Yisroel. Although now that our enemies have attacked us we must help in defending ourselves from them, we must still remember and mention constantly that Hashem was, is, will be and is now controlling us and controlling the world. “False is the horse for saving; with all its strength it will not rescue. The eyes of Hashem are on those who fear Him, those who await His kindness” (Tehillim 33:17-18). “Not by might and not by power...” (Zechariah 4:6). Therefore we must pray hard to Hashem alone, not for the sake of protest or politics. The Targum on the words “with my sword and my bow” (Bereishis 48:22) translates “with my prayer and my request.” Also, we must study much Torah and support Torah and yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel. As Chazal say, “If all of them study, I will gather them in from exile now” (Bava Basra 8a). And regarding Yehoshua it says, “Now I have come - to rebuke them for neglecting the study of Torah in the midst of the battle.” Immediately afterward, “he spent the night in the valley - in the depths of learning” (Eiruvin 63b). Not just superficial learning, but deep learning.

Also, the rabbis should not be attracted to **belligerent** approaches and views, which come from losing one's spirit and Daas Torah to the point where one loses his ability to think logically - for example, the movement to boycott England. This would be a threat to Jewish lives, just as the Gedolim and Tzaddikei Yisroel all protested loudly at the time of the 1933 boycott on German goods - but everyone ignored them. And now look what they accomplished with this: saving Jewish lives, or the worsening of the situation and the murder of Jews? Indirectly, they are like murderers themselves.

But for all of the above, it is necessary that the rav himself study Torah, and then he will not be far from Daas Torah. Rabbi once said that before every time he had to go to the Roman Emperor

Antoninus, he studied the Torah portion of Yaakov and Esav, and on one occasion when he neglected to study it, he made an error in his conduct at the meeting. [Source?](#)

For a rabbi and a Jewish leader, there is no greater ignoramus than a person who does not know the right path of conduct in education to Torah and fear of God, and the questions of the day.

The best advice for a leader is that he should be able to go against any wind that may blow, as Rashi says on the words “G-d of spirits” in Parshas Pinchus (that the leader must be able to withstand the spirit of every single Jew). But heaven forbid that the rav himself should be dragged after every spirit of the time and flatter everyone. Rather, he must be wise in his fear of G-d and his rebuke should come from hidden love, love for every single person, without any personal agenda. Chazal say, “Any Torah scholar who does not take revenge and bear a grudge like a snake is not a Torah scholar” (Yuma 23a). The commentators explain that a rav should be like a snake, which gets no pleasure from its bite, and that is why its bite is so powerful. Truth stands but falsehood cannot stand (Shabbos 104a). The rabbi who speaks falsehood [in order to gain the people’s favor], and whose words do not emanate from the heart, will not get people to love him. For although it is a fact that these people do not love the truth and they do not love a Ben Torah, they hate doubly the Ben Torah who pretends to be someone he is not. They hate him for carrying the banner of Torah, and for taking advantage of them. “False witnesses are lowered in the eyes of those who hired them” (Sanhedrin 29a). The people hate both truth and falsehood, especially here where the truth was transformed into falsehood. This causes a Chillul Hashem, because people won’t simply say that the Torah is true while this no-good rabbi is based upon falsehood and opposed to the Torah; rather they will say that a Ben Torah is full of falsehood.

And deep down, the soul of a Jew is pure and holy, and can recognize the truth when he sees it. If they give him to drink pure water, clean water, from a spring of fresh water, words that emanate from the heart in a holy flame - then the Jewish soul will emerge from its low state and be drawn like a candle after the flame to return to its source. As the Torah says, “Pure, beaten olive oil for the Menorah” (Shemos 27:20). For a mincha offering the oil need not be beaten; it may be ground in a grinder. But to give light to others, one must have completely pure and beaten oil.

## **Keeping the Holy Shabbos**

In Kiddush on Shabbos we say, *Zecher Litzias Mitzayim* ("A memorial of the Exodus from Egypt"). This is puzzling because Shabbos teaches us about Creation, not about remembering the Exodus. The Ramban on Chumash gives an answer, but his answer is difficult to understand.

Similarly, in Parshas Va'eschanan it says, "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem your G-d brought you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, therefore Hashem your G-d commanded you to keep the Shabbos day" (Devarim 5:15). What does Shabbos have to do with the Exodus?

The answer is that the Shomer Shabbos and the violator of Shabbos are two different people. One experiences one sixtieth of the World to Come, the world that is all Shabbos. "Those who taste Shabbos are privileged to life" – rest in eternal life, a rest of holiness, a rest of joy. *Shovas vayinofash* ("He stopped and rested") means that Shabbos is the soul of the world. For the whole week, we are counting toward Shabbos: the first of the Shabbos, the second of the Shabbos. For six days we must work, due to the curse "by the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (Bereishis 3:19), but Shabbos is the source of all blessing. Rabbi told Antoninus that there is a spice called Shabbos, and only one who keeps Shabbos can taste it. "See that Hashem gave you Shabbos" (Shemos 16:29) – because one who gives his friend a gift must make him aware of that he is giving it (Shabbos 10b). Those who make Shabbos enjoyable will inherit honor forever.

One who violates Shabbos has lost his Jewish soul. The Torah says, "He who violates it shall surely die, for anyone who does work on it, that soul will be cut off from his people" (Shemos 31:14). The Meshech Chochmah explains that the violator shall die because if he works on Shabbos, clearly his soul has already been cut off from his people in any case, and he is not like a Jew. All he has in the world is pursuit of tiny temporary pleasures that vanish in a moment. The *kareis* written regarding niddah (Vayikra 20:18) is to be explained in the same way.

Now, a free man rejects slavery, even though a slave is allowed to consort with multiple slave girls, and sometimes [as Rabbi Meir argues – Gittin 13a] a slave prefers to remain a slave because he likes the permissive lifestyle. Even the Jewish people, due to their long years in slavery, longed for the fish and watermelons they used to eat (Bamidbar 11:8) – but Hakadosh Boruch Hu proclaims, "They are My slaves! They are free men, not slaves to other slaves" (Rashi on Shemos 21:6). *Yetzias Mitzrayim* represents our emergence from slavery into true freedom. In the Pesach Haggadah we say, "But now Hashem has drawn us to His service." This is true freedom, and this is the main point of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Therefore Shabbos, which uplifts us above the pursuit of slavery [to our desires], is a reminder of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Now, if those in America who are called Shomrei Shabbos were true Shomrei Shabbos, then those who violate Shabbos would be jealous of them. Furthermore, the Shomrei Shabbos themselves would have pity and would not be able to keep silent; they would save these suicidal people. Certainly they would send their children to yeshivos, and they would take care to make sure that their children and grandchildren would not violate Shabbos. And certainly they themselves would not violate Shabbos by carrying in the streets and the like. But they are merely taking a day off from work in order to have strength to work the following week.

When we keep the Shabbos, we will immediately be redeemed (Shabbos 118b), and merit to see the day that is completely Shabbos.

### **The Holiness of Shabbos**

The Sages enacted to say Havdalah in the blessing for knowledge, because if one has no knowledge, one cannot distinguish (Yerushalmi Berachos 39b). Without knowledge, one cannot distinguish between sacred and profane, between Israel and the nations, or between the seventh day and the six days of work. Not only between Israel and the nations, but even between man and beast he cannot distinguish. All his thoughts and goals revolve around animalistic pleasures, only instead of grass he invents ice cream, and instead of running on four legs like horses, he invents soccer and movies. His sole advantage over the animal is that he craves dollars, and imagines that the more dollars he possesses, the more he and his life will become greater and better. He thinks that the life of one who has \$100,000 is happier than one who has \$10,000. A millionaire is even happier, and so on.

Since he is empty of holiness, he sees holy things as secular. A bris milah is done by a non-observant doctor, a wedding is just a long honeymoon, a funeral is a rush to the attorney to claim the inheritance. If he wants to do it with more class, he hires a clean-shaven singer at his wedding and has mixed dancing or partying. The funeral is a long line of cars strewn with flowers, and a fancy meal afterwards. A bar mitzvah is a meal of fat delicacies to which guests drive on Shabbos. And what is a synagogue? A place for opera singers and card games, and a rabbi presiding over it all. From this, people descend into a life of defilement and sin, without a mikveh to cleanse them.

Now, if we had Shomrei Shabbos with the knowledge to distinguish between sacred and profane, and their Shabbos were holy to Hashem with Torah and prayer, then certainly the number of Shabbos violators would decrease. We see that in the time of the Gemara, on Shabbos even an ignorant Jew was trusted to testify that his food was tithed, because the fear of Shabbos was upon him (Mishnah, Demai 4:1). Not only would he not violate Shabbos, but he felt its holiness and would not lie on that day. Although the ignorant Jews in the time of the Gemara were worse in general than those today, the Shomrei Shabbos then were different. In our society, many of those who are called Shabbos observers not only waste the day doing nothing, but many times don't keep Shabbos at all: they carry small objects with them or buy the newspaper. Their family members certainly don't keep it properly. But we should not criticize them; rather, we should remember the Gemara's adage, "Improve yourself first and then it will be easier to make others improve" (Bava Basra 60b). And the main area where we can improve is that Shabbos should be holy, as it says, "If you withhold your feet (raglecha) because of Shabbos" (Yishaya 58:13). We can interpret raglecha as hergelecha – your normal activities. If you refrain from your regular activities on Shabbos and withhold yourself from doing what you want (your desires and weekday pastimes) on My holy day, but rather you call Shabbos itself a pleasure – for all the pleasures of Olam Haba are termed "a day that is completely Shabbos" – then you will truly be privileged to get pleasure from Hashem and inherit an infinite portion.

## **The Halachos of Chinuch**

[A shiur given to elementary level yeshiva teachers at a Torah Umesorah seminar.]

### **1. Halachic definitions**

The halachos of melamdim is an area of halacha in Shulchan Aruch, like all other parts of the Torah. To explain the halacha, one needs all 80 hours and 80 shiurim of this convention. As in all of halacha, one needs to be well-versed and sharp in Gemara, Rishonim, Acharonim and the Torah sources, as well as the Torah's logic, the Poskim, the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch on this subject. Whoever is greater in Torah should be the decision maker on these subjects. Even if the melamed is one of the greatest gaonim, he must ask questions and receive answers from someone greater than himself. Rav Shmuel Bar Sheilas (Bava Basra 21a) was a professional melamed and also an Amora, yet he asked Rav questions about chinuch. For example: what age children should he accept? Should he hit, and with what he should hit? What should he do if the hitting doesn't help? How should he teach and how much? See the Rambam, Laws of Talmud Torah 2:2 [who codifies the answers to some of these questions as law]. This is all brought in Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 245. The Shulchan Aruch Harav rules that a melamed who hits with a stick is transgressing the prohibition against wounding another person. The fact that Hilchos Melamdim is only one siman does not make the matter more trivial, but rather more serious. Rabbi Yisroel Salanter once said [to a student who was afraid to become a shochet, lest he accidentally cause others to eat treif, so he decided to become a melamed instead], "You are afraid of shechitah even though its laws are explained clearly by the Rishonim and Acharonim – but you are not afraid of being a melamed?" Obviously, if a shochet cannot decide halacha without consulting a rav, how much the more so for a question regarding teaching Torah. For the melamed, it is not a question of making the animal treif, but making a holy Jewish child treif. This is even truer today, when one must be clever with *yiras shomayim* and sometimes give in on one point in order to gain another point. The caution required is at least as much as that of a shochet who is a *yerei shomayim*. The Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 245:17) rules that we need the melamed to be a *yerei shomayim* so that he should not be negligent in his work; what we are saying here is another reason why he must be a *yerei shomayim*.

I don't know how many of the 80 hours will be spent on this, but for lack of time I will not go into detail; I will explain the main points, and the details can be derived from them automatically.

### **2. The Details Depend on the Main Point**

The actual method of teaching, and the solutions to many detailed problems, depend on knowing what a yeshiva or a Talmud Torah is, and what its purpose is.

For example, one cannot learn how to blow shofar from an expert trumpet or flute player, and certainly not from Jascha Heifetz [a famous violinist]. If someone's only experience is as a Jewish butcher, it is forbidden to hire him as a shochet, and certainly he may not slaughter korbanos. If on the interview he refers to "the four melachos" (instead of the five **halachos**) I know he is an ignoramus. Not only the laws, but even the skill of shechitah must not be learned from a non-Jewish butcher, because shechitah means not pressing down

with the knife, or uprooting the windpipe etc. Similarly, a sofer does not learn his trade from a draftsman, because the sofer must know how to make crowns on the letters, surround each letter with blank parchment, and not erase ink to form a letter indirectly, etc.

This is all the more true when it comes to the profession of being a melamed. One must learn the halachos from an expert rav, and he must be trained in at least by a melamed who has yiras shomayim, who can teach him how to avoid what is forbidden. Even the factual questions have different rules when it comes to mitzvos and prohibitions. For example, we don't consult a doctor on whether an animal is healthy enough to live a year and is therefore not a treifah, and we don't consult a chemist on whether non-kosher food is nullified in a mixture. If shechitah and writing a Sefer Torah must be learnt from an expert, teaching the Torah itself certainly must be. Writing a Sefer Torah is only the preparation for a mitzvah, but teaching Torah is the positive mitzvah itself - "you shall teach them" (Devarim 11:19). The proof that this is more of a mitzvah is that a shochet and a sofer may take a salary, but a melamed may not; he may only charge for the incidental tasks that go along with it (such as watching the children – Nedarim 37a). In fact, teaching Torah is greater than a mitzvas aseh, because a mitzvah is called a "candle" and Torah is called "light" (Sotah 21a), and because it is a spiritual activity.

### **3. *Tinokos shel beis rabban*, and the Melamed**

Therefore, let me explain the definition of a Talmud Torah, of a yeshiva, of a melamed and of a rosh yeshiva; and what is a Beis Sefer and a Hebrew teacher.

#### **1. The greatness of the Torah learning of *tinokos shel beis rabban***

"Jerusalem was only destroyed because they stopped teaching *tinokos shel beis rabban*" (Shabbos 119b). "The tongues of children can prevent misfortunes" (Reishis Chochmah, Perek Gidul Bonim). "The world exists only by the breath of *tinokos shel beis rabban*. Rav Papa said to Abaye: What about my Torah and your Torah? He replied: Breath that contains sin cannot compare to breath that is free of sin" (Shabbos 119b).

#### **2. From this we can understand how important teaching Torah is**

For who can imagine being a talmid, much less a rebbe, of Abaye and Rav Papa, who were like angels? Obviously that is far above the ability of any teacher. Chazal say, "One who teaches his grandson Torah is as if he received it from Mount Sinai (Kiddushin 30a). Chazal derive this from the verse, "You shall make it known to your children and your grandchildren, the day you stood before Hashem your G-d at Horeb" (Devarim 4:9-10). This is because the grandfather becomes the representative of Hakadosh Boruch Hu to give over the Torah, similar to Moshe Rabbeinu, who became Hakadosh Boruch Hu's spokesman and was zocheh to have a shining face. The Mishnah says: "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over..." and so it continued from one generation to the next. For this same reason, Chazal learn from the verse, "as Hashem my G-d taught me" (Devarim 4:5). that every melamed must teach for free, just as Hashem taught for free (Nedarim 37a). A messenger must do as the one who sent him did, and walk in His ways. We can explain further with the posuk, "For the lips of the kohein guard knowledge, and Torah they will

seek from his mouth, for he is an malach of Hashem Tzva-os" (Malachi 2:7). The word malach means he is a messenger of Hashem, but of course he must be similar to an angel of Hashem too. If he is teaching Torah to the son of an ignoramus, then he is even more powerful, as Chazal say that even if Hakadosh Boruch Hu makes a decree, He will annul it for this teacher's sake, as the posuk (Yirmiyahu 15:19) says, "If you bring out the precious from the unlearned, then you will be like My mouth" (Bava Metzia 85a).

### **3. The goal of the Yeshiva**

1. The goal of the yeshiva is that the students should fear Hashem for all of their lives, as the Torah says, "And their children, who did not know, will hear and learn to fear Hashem... all the days" (Devarim 31:13). "So that he might command his children and his house after him, and they will keep the path of Hashem, to do righteousness and justice" (Bereishis 18:19).
2. Acceptance of the Torah, as the Torah says, "You shall make them known to your children... the day when you stood before Hashem your G-d at Horeb" (Devarim 4:9-10) – this is the clear meaning of the posuk.
3. That the students should learn Torah constantly, as it says, "You shall teach them to your children to speak of them" – that they, the children should speak of them – "while sitting in your house and while walking on the road." The melamed must inculcate into them the spirit of Hashem, His wisdom and His endless holiness, in order to bring creation to its purpose for which the Creator created it.

### **4. The Subject Matter**

The children of Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov. The children of the Nevim. The holy souls who stood at Har Sinai, who are, like the Torah, the purpose of creation and who were created for the Torah, who have a spark of holiness inside them that yearns and waits for someone to kindle it. The melamed's job is to return the hearts of the children to their Father in heaven, and that all creations should recognize their Creator. What does any of this have to do with a school and a secular teacher, where the subject is different, the goal is different and the material is different? The goal there, at best, is that the child should be successful among people, for his own needs and pleasures. This approach to education is designed with non-Jewish children in mind. Modern education's goal is to develop a child's potential, his character traits, his desires and even his views, which emanate from the yetzer hara of his youth.

This is all out of place in the teaching of Torah, which is everlasting life and holiness. How can a melamed learn the laws of teaching Torah from a professor of pedagogy, much less if the professor is non-religious and has opposing goals, and the books from which he lectures have opposing goals?

### **5. Teachers and books**

As with every halacha, we need to have a source in the Gemara and poskim. Let us bring the Gemara in Succah 42a: "The Sages taught... when a child learns to speak, his father must teach him Torah and Krias Shema. What is Torah? Rav Hamnuna said: 'Torah tzivah lanu Moshe...' What is Krias Shema? The first posuk." The Rambam says that he must continue to teach the child more pesukim, until he brings him to cheder. The Shach, based on the Yerushalmi and the Mordechai, says that the father must also teach the posuk, "Hear, my son, the rebuke of your father, and do not reject the Torah of your mother" (Mishlei 1:8).

Now, every word of Chazal, and certainly of the Torah, speaks volumes. This Gemara contains a complete program, telling us what the essence of teaching Torah is: that the Torah was commanded to us, that it is an inheritance passed down to the community of Yaakov, that Hashem is one, that our children should hear and not reject, as we said.

When we understand this, we know the answers to many questions. For example:

1. If a principal has the choice to hire a teacher who is an excellent pedagogue, but lacks yiras shomayim, or a ben Torah who is lacking in pedagogy, he should have no doubt as to whom to choose. When one needs a doctor, one will go to the lowest of the doctors rather than the most expert lawyer. The Chofetz Chaim said that if you are choosing from two wagons to travel on, you don't choose the one that travels nicely and quickly and has luxurious seats, if it doesn't go to your destination. You choose the one going to your destination, even if it is low quality. (And in Yoreh Deah 153, it states that it is forbidden to send a child to a non-Jewish teacher to teach him to read, or even to teach him a trade, because he will influence him to be a heretic. And it says that it is forbidden to teach him songs by singers that are a bad influence.)
2. If a teacher is considering whether to teach from a textbook that he feels is of high pedagogical quality, but contains the scent of heresy, can he use this book to hand over our Torah and emunah? Will this lead to the holiness of *tinokos shel beis rabban*? Even a Sefer Torah with nothing wrong with it, other than the fact that it was written by a heretic, must be burnt. Can one fulfill the mitzvah of matza, even matza shmurah, if it is mixed with prohibited food? Even if the teacher has no substitute for this book, it is better not to use it. As the Chofetz Chaim put it, "Would a Jew buy an idol until he finds a tallis katan?" And my father-in-law (Rabbi Boruch Ber Liebowitz) said, "Learning Gemara in a place where one is exposed to heresy is worse than eating ten times on Yom Kippur."

## **6) Separating the sacred from the profane, and history**

Similarly, we should not teach them secular books in yeshiva, or assign them as homework. It is enough that they are forced to learn English under the law – a subject that we will address separately.

3. And it follows that books that contain a mixture of the holiness of Torah Shebichsav or Torah Sheb'al Peh together with secular material are a desecration of the Torah's holiness. Even binding them together in one book is forbidden. Textbooks that place words of the Neviim or Chazal side by side with secular poets are books of heresy. We must be careful to separate the sacred from the profane, not to mix the Holy Scripture and Chazal with general maxims.
4. One of the most important principles is to stress the holiness of the Torah, the greatness of every word of Torah, and the prohibition to add or take away from the Torah. We teach them to distinguish between sacred and profane, between Israel and the nations, between Maaminim and non-Jews or heretics, between a closet and the Aron Kodesh (see Shabbos 32a – "the ignorant Jews die because they call the Aron Kodesh a simple closet"), and the prohibition of following the ways of the non-Jews. We must stress the holiness of the Avos, the Neviim, the Tannaim and the Rishonim, the holiness of Dovid Hamelech, the composer of Tehillim, and the righteous Jewish kings.
5. We have to stress that all of our history is controlled by Divine providence, as is written in the Tanach, and that by contrast, the nations of the world write their history in the spirit of "my strength and the power of my hand brought me this wealth" (Devarim 8:17) – and the same is

true of Jewish history books written by secular Jewish writers. In general, we should explain to the students the difference between the Torah and the wisdom of the nations. For this reason, in my opinion, the period before the destruction of the First Temple should not be studied as "history" because it would be hard to stress the hand of Hashem properly. And certainly it would be impossible for a history book to compare to Tanach, and this would desecrate the sanctity of Tanach. The only way to teach this period is by studying the stories told in the Agados of Chazal. And we must be very careful to stay away from pictures that try to realistically depict the heroes of Tanach, because this lowers them and desecrates their holiness, unless it is done with much forethought. Certainly **comic books** are forbidden.

## 7) The oneness of the Creator and His Torah

The oneness of Hashem and His Torah leads to the conclusion that it is forbidden to worship idols; therefore, G-d forbid that we should make other goals and objectives besides the Torah. This would be like believing in two gods, the opposite of the Torah, like Christianity, for which we gave up our lives rather than agree to it. All the good and holy things that we have come from one source and lead toward one goal: all come from the one Hashem, His emunah and His Torah, and all lead to coming closer to Hashem and His Torah. For example, good middos, love of other Jews, Eretz Yisroel and the Holy Tongue are very holy concepts, but only as part of the Torah and not as goal unto themselves. If they are done as goals unto themselves, that is denial of the unity of the Creator.

1. Let us begin by discussing middos, laws between one person and another and respect for others. The Vilna Gaon in his letter, as well as Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei (22:15), write that we must train children to have good middos, since this requires much practice from a young age, and we must teach them Derech Eretz, which came before the Torah. We must teach them to love others, and punish them for cursing, oaths, lies, lashon hara, gossip and mockery. We must teach them these concepts from Mishlei and Pirkei Avos. We must teach them to honor their father and mother, as well as all those who are older. Middos are fundamentals of the Torah. All the non-Jewish lessons on this subject are nothing compared to the Torah's imperative to imitate the middos of Hashem: just as He is merciful, be merciful etc. because His middos are infinite. Everything we teach should come from Hashem and His Torah.
2. Similarly, Ahavas Yisroel, loving our fellow Jews, is many times stronger when it emanates from the goal of imitating Hashem's middos. One can reach the level when he is sick over the pain of other Jews, as our gedolim were – we witnessed this with our own eyes. But we must love Jews as Hashem's treasured people, because the honor of Hashem is bound up with them, as Hashem's "firstborn son" (Shemos 4:22). This is a love that uplifts the soul, not a love with a nationalistic goal, which would be extraneous to the emunah of Hashem and His Torah.
3. The same goes for the love of Eretz Yisroel, where our gedolim kissed the earth in the same way we kiss holy books, and longed for it with every fiber of their being – all because Hashem gave the land a great holiness. It is the throne of Hashem; "the land's air gives life to the soul", in the poetry of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi (Kinnos of Tisha B'av 36), the greatest "lover of Zion". The land is positioned opposite the heavenly Eretz Yisroel, and its earth is holy, giving its produce many mitzvos. Many laws of the Torah depend on its holiness. But this is all true when our love of Eretz Yisroel emanates from our belief in Hashem and His Torah, and leads to belief in Hashem and His Torah.
4. Similarly, Lashon Hakodesh is the Holy Tongue which we have so carefully guarded due to its holiness, the language in which the Torah was given and with which the world was created, and

through which we can understand our Torah. But all of this is due to its holiness. When we see that the language is a vehicle for the opposite of holiness, it ceases to be holy to us, and on the contrary, in that case speaking in Hebrew is worse than speaking another language, due to its elevated status and holiness, as the Rambam says in his commentary on Avos (1:16).

5. The Yiddish language also connects us together and keeps intact our holy concepts, imbued into the language by our ancestors; and this protects us from assimilation. But neither Lashon Hakodesh nor Yiddish are goals unto themselves, only vehicles for the Torah.
6. It is also forbidden to make any party a goal, and to adjust our views or Torah study to conform to that party's platform. The Torah is our goal; it is above all, and it is the source and the decider of all our attitudes, views, goals and actions. Even the non-Jews, whose individual biases are behind their differences of opinion, agree that political parties have no place in education.

## **8) The fundamentals, and when the child begins to speak**

The Gemara in Succah says that when a child begins to speak, his father teaches him Krias Shema. The Yerushalmi we brought earlier gives another posuk that one must teach when it is only possible to teach the child a little. The main points he must teach is that Hashem commanded us the Torah, the Torah has been passed down to us, the oneness of Hashem and the holiness of tradition. It is not as some people think, that for such a child who can't learn much, it makes no difference what we teach him, as long as he can parrot a few holy words. These pesukim were chosen from the Torah itself, the holy chosen from the holy, and the chooser was Rav Hamnuna. If we only have time for a few pesukim, then certainly we should not be wasting precious time on other subjects, making the Torah just one among them. We should not even be teaching the children trivial minhagim, just to satisfy the parents and ignorant baalebatim, or simply for other goals. The Mishnah in Berachos 15a teaches that if one said Krias Shema but did not pronounce the letters properly (dikduk), there is a dispute if he fulfilled his obligation. On this the Chofetz Chaim quipped, "But if he learned dikduk and did not say Krias Shema at all, then everyone agrees that he was not yotzei." The main subjects children should learn are Chumash, Rashi and Gemara; the rest is just an aid to the above. There must also be a curriculum for dinim, hilchos Shabbos, and the meaning of the tefillos, as the Vilna Gaon wrote. We also see from the Gemara in Succah quoted above that whenever we have to choose what to teach – which comments of Rashi, or any other sefer – we should choose the passages that inculcate these fundamentals the most.

We also learn that from the time when the child begins to speak, he must start with Torah and emunah; no other learning should come first, so that Torah and emunah should be set in his brain first. It is regarding this first speech that Rav Hamnuna chose the posuk to begin with. The Rambam says that the father should continue teaching him more and more pesukim until he brings him to cheder. From this we see that in kindergarten, when they teach the child Hebrew words, they should choose words that he will encounter later in Chumash and in the berachos that he makes. And when he learns how to read and begins Chumash, he should learn more words, with the stress on the words that appear most often in Chumash Bereishis.

## **9. Fear of Heaven leads to learning**

In Bava Basra 21a, the Gemara tells the story of how children's schools began. At first the schools were only in Jerusalem, because the Navi says, "From Zion the Torah shall emerge." Tosafos explains that the child traveling to Jerusalem to study would witness a high level of kedusha and kohanim doing the avodah, so he would focus better on yiras shomayim and learning Torah. This, says Tosafos, is in line with the Sifri's statement that maaser sheni, which must be eaten in Jerusalem, leads to learning Torah.

We see from this that it is not enough for the child to learn now; he must have *yiras shomayim* that will lead him to be devoted to the Torah in the future.

Similarly we see that the Torah says, “You shall teach them to children to speak of them when you sit in your house and walk on the way...” The implication is that the children should learn to love Torah to the point where they themselves speak of it in their homes and on the way, not just in class, as we mentioned earlier.

The Rambam also says that the melamed should teach the children all day and some of the night, in order to train them to learn by day and by night. We see that the purpose of chinuch is to train them to learn on their own. And similarly, the posuk implies that the purpose of “educate a child according to his way” is that “even when he grows old he will not deviate from it” (Mishlei 22:6). The Chasam Sofer derives from the above Tosafos that when a child sees kedushah in his rebbe – he sees him teaching with burning *yiras shomayim* – the child’s heart too will be excited to learn. Children can sense the fibers of the heart, and the candle of Hashem, the holy soul that is within them, will light up when it senses the fire of truth with no falsehood mixed in. Then, even if the child’s soul is soiled on the outside, it will return to its roots. As the Gemara says, “If the rebbe is like a malach of Hashem Tzevaos, seek Torah from his mouth, and if not, do not seek Torah from his mouth” (Moed Katan 17a). If the teacher sees that his words are having no effect on the children, then he must increase his own *yiras shomayim*. In the words of the Chasam Sofer, “He must be even more of a *yerei shomayim* while he is teaching the children.”

I once told someone that it is not enough to test the talmidim to see if they know what they have learned, but you must also see if they are going to continue to learn. A melamed through whom the talmidim become attached to the Torah and go on to learn in higher yeshivos – that is an excellent melamed.

Someone made a good suggestion: to appoint at least one influential person who is a *yerei shomayim* in each school, even if he does not teach. It is a good idea to influence the boys to go to a summer camp where they will be part of a group of bnei yeshiva. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 85b) tells the story of how Rabbi Chiya himself grew the flax to make nets, to catch deer, to make their skins into sefarim, to teach Jewish children Torah. We see from this that if even the preparation for the preparation is done for the sake of the mitzvah, then even a few children can prevent the Torah from being forgotten from the Jewish people.

## **10. Greatness in Torah**

We must make the children understand the greatness of the Torah, and that it is the center of our lives. They must hear about the breadth and depth of the Torah, until they long to grow in Torah and become gedolim. We must explain to them the greatness of gedolei Torah, Rishonim and Acharonim. In general, the teacher must praise and exalt the tzaddikim and good people of the generation. Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik writes (in Darkah Shel Torah). that anyone who does not have a desire to become a gadol, does not even have *yirah*. It is impossible that he has it. Obviously, to accomplish this, the school must teach a lot of Gemara, in quantity and quality, and it must have higher Gemara classes. And they must pay attention to the graduating talmidim to make sure that they continue their learning at higher level yeshivos.

## **11. Heavenly work, and the representatives of Hashem**

If you choose this occupation, be careful with your work, for it is the work of Heaven. Teachers of Torah are the representatives of Hashem. They are Hashem's employees, not merely teachers, representatives of their wives to make a living, or representatives of political parties. For this reason, they are different from other employees, although they share many rules with other employees, for example, they are forbidden to fast, forbidden to overeat and forbidden to stay up late at night. Furthermore, like other employees, they may not walk out on their job, be negligent or do another job at the same time. But in the case of a melamed, it is not just because they are employees – even if they are teaching free of charge, these rules apply. It is a *kal vachomer*: if they apply to working for a human, certainly they apply to working for Hakadosh Boruch Hu. In fact, for a melamed it is stricter, because if he does his job improperly, he is cursed (*Bava Basra 21b*).

The lesson from all of this is that the melamed should not try to satisfy the ignorant parents and certainly not the non-religious, whether they are caught up in Americanism or Zionism. Rather, he must satisfy the Giver of the Torah. Otherwise, he will have no success. If there is a shailah about whether to invoke the principle of "Eis Laasos Lashem" – to be lenient in one aspect in order to accomplish a higher goal – then gedolim must be consulted.

Another lesson is that melamdim should not be like people working for a paycheck, who try to get their job done as quickly as possible. They should not shorten the learning to a minimum, but rather they should try not to interrupt the children's learning, as the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch 245 rule. And certainly schools should not be closed on Sundays or on non-Jewish holidays; they should be open and teach even if not all the talmidim show up.

May Hashem give success to your work to increase Torah and the honor of Hashem among the Jewish people, and may the zechus of the *tinokos shel beis rabban* bring an end to all our troubles so that we may be privileged to a true yeshuah. May you receive the blessing (*Daniel 12:3*), "Those who lead the public to righteousness will be like stars forever."

### **The Yeshiva Curriculum**

[A shiur given at a gathering of teachers and principals, held by Torah Umesorah in Cleveland.]

To determine the curriculum and method of learning, one must first determine the goal of the learning: what is the primary and what is secondary. The same applies to the decision of what we wish to teach and to whom. Because the previous speaker said it well: the cure must be matched to the illness and the patient, but for this you must have an expert doctor who knows both the science of health and sickness, and the nature of this particular patient and his illness. We cannot be like those women who, every time someone gets sick, say, "Our relative or neighbor so-and-so had this same thing," and therefore they think that the exact medicine that the other patient took must be the right one for this person too. Here too, we cannot take into account the opinion of those who don't know what Torah and emunah are, what mitzvos and middos tovos are. These people also do not know the inner qualities of a Jewish child's soul, and want to copy the techniques of pedagogy they learned in secular schools, the goals of which are to develop the child's abilities, will, inclinations and desires. But our chinuch's goal is to restore the souls of lost Jewish children to their Father in heaven, and to fan that spark of holiness, which is only longing for its source. If we can only reveal to a Jewish child a little of the true light, without any admixture of falsehood (where light and darkness reign simultaneously), his soul will light up and become aflame in its purity. As the Rambam writes when he explains the reason why we can

force a man to divorce his wife, the inner will of a Jew is to do mitzvos, except that his yetzer hara overpowers him. And my father-in-law zt"l (Reb Boruch Ber) quoted the Gemara in Shabbos 88b, that with every word that Hakadosh Boruch Hu said at Sinai, the Jewish people's souls left them, but the next word He said brought them back to life. He added, "This neshamah that came back due to the words of Hashem is inseparable from the Torah. The neshamos of Jews are attached to the words 'Anochi Hashem.'"

This is an important practical rule: we must not listen to the non-religious mothers and the ignorant principals who want a secular Torah, emptied of its holiness, as they see it – for that will not succeed. In cases like this, we have to remember what the Chofetz Chaim zt"l said, when one rav asked him, "You know that the strongest members of your community want a Zionist-style school. What will you do?" The Chofetz Chaim replied, "One has to go with the stronger side." The rav asked, "But isn't it forbidden to make a school that does not follow the Torah?" The Chofetz Chaim then explained, "The strongest one of all is Hakadosh Boruch Hu, and one must go with the stronger side." And so too here, every teacher must do the work of Hashem faithfully, because this leads to the success of his work, and he must not give in to those who don't know their right hand from their left.

The foundation of our emunah is that Hashem is one, there is none besides Him and everything was created for His glory. Serving Him and coming close to Him, in the manner handed down to us in His Torah, are the purpose of creation, the perfection and success of mankind. (And for this belief in the oneness of Hashem, we have put our lives on the line for thousands of years.) We have no other service and no other purpose. And although certainly we have many holy things and holy activities, this does not contradict the emunah in oneness, because for us, everything emanates from one source and leads to one goal. For example, Ahavas Yisroel, love of our fellow Jews, is not love for the purpose of gaining something, based on cold and dry calculation; neither is it love based on pity, coming from our inability to see others suffer; neither is it love based on a common race or a common history of persecution. Rather, it is boundless love emanating from the source of the Torah and the source of kindness, toward Jews who are children of Hashem, the chosen ones and the goal of creation. This is the love that leads to willingness to give our lives for the fingernail of every single Jew, and all the more so for a large group or all Jews. This is the love that makes the pain of any part of the body of any Jew our own pain, until we feel sick ourselves. This is the love that is not satisfied with temporary or limited success of a fellow Jew, or all Jews; instead, we hope for the blessing of Hashem that befits the children of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov, an eternal boundless inheritance. This is the love that we find in Chazal in Shas and Midrashim, in our great gaonim and gedolim, and which we were also privileged to see in our teachers.

Similarly, our love for Eretz Yisroel is the love that Chazal had, that Rabbi Yehuda Halevi had, that the Ramban had; the love of our gaonim great and small, who kissed its earth and risked their lives to come there and cherish its dust. "Because Hashem chose Zion and desired it as His dwelling place" (Tehillim 132:13), and it is the Holy Land, chosen by Hashem for His holy people. It is the place of the Beis Hamikdash, the house of our life and the source of our souls, the place from which Torah, our life and the length of our days, goes out to the world. In the words of Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, "There the Shechinah rested for you, your Creator opened your gates opposite the gates of Heaven, and the glory of Hashem alone was your source of light. The land's air gives life to the soul. I choose for my soul to pour out my prayer in the place where the spirit of G-d was poured out upon your chosen ones, the place of the kingdom and the throne of Hashem..." (Kinnos of Tisha B'av 36)

So too, our love for our holy tongue, which we preserved for thousands of years and did not leave behind, is only because the Torah was given in it and Hashem created the world with it, and also because we use it to understand our Torah.

In the same way, the reason we preserve our Yiddish language is only because it protects us from assimilation and binds us together. Also, because most religious Jews have spoken it in the past and continue to speak it, they have already filled it with our holy concepts, unlike other languages, which express the souls of the people who speak them.

Thus all these things are precious to us, but Heaven forbid to worship them and make them into idols – the one Hashem is our G-d and there is no other. Therefore, the whole dispute that has flared up here over the language of instruction – Hebrew, Yiddish or English – cannot be a dispute over the goal of the learning, for neither Hebrew nor Yiddish are idols for us, and we do not bow to them as goals unto themselves. Rather, we say that both are needed to reach the goal, which is learning Torah and serving Hashem. Without them, we will certainly fall short of the goal. Learning Yiddish here in our country is also very important, but as to the details of when it is possible to start teaching Yiddish, the answer is whatever will accomplish the goal best, depending on the place. And since Yiddish itself is not the goal, we will not give an absolute answer here.

The point here is that teaching Torah cannot be done “party line” style. It is the parties that need to measure their actions against the standard of the Torah, passed down to us from Hashem. The Torah, independent of human opinion, must be the source for all our positions, outlooks and goals. Therefore in our schools, the teaching of Torah and chinuch must be above any party platforms; the Torah should not have to answer to the party. This is in contrast to the non-Jews, whose desires, biases and minds are the source for the differences of opinion between parties.

Knowing what is the main thing and what is a subdivision is very important for every teacher and menahel, because it makes a practical difference in many ways. For example, let's say there is a textbook that is good according to general pedagogy, but for the purpose of emunah in Hashem and serving Him it is not good. When the teacher knows clearly what his main purpose is, he will certainly not use the textbook, which works in the opposite direction of his job. The same applies to an applicant for a teaching job who has good teaching skills but influences the students against emunah. On the other hand, if an applicant for a teaching job has Torah and *yiras shomayim*, and can influence the talmidim with his spirit, they should hire him, even if he is not so skilled at pedagogy.

There is another principle of education that leads to this main goal, and that is to implant into the hearts of the children the greatness of a gadol batorah uv'yirah. They should be encouraged to dream of growing great in Torah, and to understand that the Torah is our life and the purpose of the whole creation, that it is longer than the earth and wider than the sea. Even the youngest children need to know this, even those who will, for various reasons, not become gedolim batorah. R' Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l writes in the sefer “Darkah Shel Torah” that anyone who does not have even the desire to become a gadol, cannot be a *yerei shomayim*. My father-in-law (Reb Boruch Ber) explained that this is because he is placing a limit and a measure on something that has no limit. Besides, it is impossible to know what Judaism is, and to live and become a true Jew, without broad knowledge and deep understanding of Hashem's Torah. And the Jewish people cannot exist without its sages and gedolim. Just like “if there are no kids, there are no goats,” so too “if there are no goats, there are no kids.” All of this leads to the conclusion that we must try to raise the quantity and quality of the Gemara classes, and to influence those students who excel to continue their studies in higher level yeshivos.

Menahelim and teachers must know that their work is the work of Hashem, and if they chose this job, they cannot be simple employees who care about nothing but their paycheck. As Rabbi Yishmoel said to Rabbi Meir, “Be careful with your work, for it is the work of Heaven” (Eiruvin 13a). The teachers are the representatives of Hashem, standing between Hashem and the Jewish people, similar to the role of Moshe Rabbeinu a”h. Chazal say in Kiddushin 30a, “Whoever teaches his grandson Torah is considered as if he received it from Mount Sinai, as it states: The day that you stood before Hashem at Chorev.” You are the ones who give over the mesorah of Torah to the next generation, and you have the obligation to do the mitzvah of returning a lost object, and not ignoring the mitzvah of returning the lost object to its owner. Here the “lost object” is the Jewish people, “for My people are lost sheep” (Yirmiyahu 3:6), lost from their Father in heaven. They too have lost their G-d who is in the depths of their souls, and they have become broken to pieces – they are not Jews, nor are they gentiles. They are lost more than the rest of the world, because they are cut off from the Mekomo Shel Olam – Hashem.

Therefore it is your obligation to water the youngest of the flocks, who have never tasted sin, the pure and clean souls; to give them fresh water, pure water from the well of living waters, natural for the roots of their souls. And though they may have become polluted and dirtied on the outside due to the impure surroundings, or from their upbringing, the freshness of youth will heal everything that is broken. But the teacher’s lessons must be “words that emanate from the heart,” spoken with enthusiasm. If he sees that his words are not influencing the children, he should do more, and he must know in his heart that the children are feeling it in their heartstrings. Whatever is done with purer intent is more successful, for “the truth stands” (Shabbos 104a), as we see from the story of Rabbi Chiya (Bava Metzia 85b):

Rabbi Chanina said to Rabbi Chiya, “You are arguing with me? Heaven forbid, if the Torah were to be forgotten from Israel, I would restore it with my logic.” Rabbi Chiya said to Rabbi Chanina, “You are arguing with me? I made sure that the Torah would not be forgotten from Israel in the first place. What did I do? I went and planted flax, made nets, caught deer, fed the meat to orphans, and made parchment out of the skins. I wrote down the five books of the Torah and went into a town, and taught the five books to five children... and I made sure the Torah would not be forgotten from Israel.” This is what Rabbi meant when he said, “How great are the deeds of Chiya!”

My father-in-law (Reb Boruch Ber) z”l asked in the name of the Gra z”l: why did he have to work so hard and waste so much time? Wouldn’t it have been better to buy ready-made Sifrei Torah? Also, weren’t there other children’s teachers besides Rabbi Chiya? So how is it that Rabbi Chiya, by teaching a few children, prevented the Torah from being forgotten from the Jewish people? - But the truth is that the Torah cannot be built by these children’s melamdim who teach a little Chumash, some more and some less. Only when a great and holy Tanna such as Rabbi Chiya, with his holiness and purity, someone for whom the Torah fills his entire body and soul, his 248 limbs, 365 sinews and all his senses - when he excites the souls of the Jewish people with the flame of Hashem that burns within him, then their souls flare up. And in order to accomplish this, even the Sefer Torah from which they learn must be written for the sake of Heaven by Rabbi Chiya himself. Even the slaughter of the deer and the preparation of their skins for the Sefer Torah must be done with holiness and purity, for the sake of Heaven. And even the making of the nets and the planting of the flax from which the nets were made must be done for the sake of Heaven, for the purpose of Torah, by Rabbi Chiya himself. Only when a child learns this way can the Jewish people be built through him, and the Torah will not be forgotten from Israel, because its flame will not be extinguished, and from the sparks of that flame it will spread throughout the Jewish people, whose souls are from Har Sinai. But it is important that the word of Hashem be studied with the

approach of truth, with purity of heart and it must come from the innermost depths of the teacher, because then it will be the truth from the heart, the word of Hashem that does wonders, just as the Heavens were created with the word of Hashem.

Rabbi Chanina's statement that he could have restored the Torah with his logic is also really a method of keeping the Torah alive – because if there exists such a great person who could restore the Torah with his logic, the Torah will not be forgotten from Israel in the first place. The deep Torah is the essence of Torah, which was hidden in Heaven and given at Mount Sinai. It is the light of Hashem – a small amount of it dispels much darkness, and the whole Jewish people fills with light.

All of this is very pertinent today, because if you, teachers, are the representatives of Hashem and not the representatives of the ignorant parents and unlearned board of directors, or of the political parties, or of your wives, trying to bring in a living for them, then it will not occur to you to be stingy and keep the hours of learning, or the days of school to a minimum, in order to shorten your work time. On the contrary, you will try to add more hours, and to push for school on Sundays, even if not all students show up. Also, as representatives of Hashem you will not hire a teacher with non-religious views or use a non-religious textbook, even if as a result, it seems that the children will gain less knowledge. This is because the focus must be on the purpose of the learning: that the children should cling to Torah and emunah. And in Yoreh Deah 153, the halacha is ruled that it is forbidden to send a child to a non-Jewish teacher to teach him to read, or even to teach him a trade, because he will influence him to be a heretic.

This also has an implication for the learning schedule: if Torah and emunah are the goal, the children should be reading the Torah of Hashem as soon as they learn to read, as Chazal say (Succah 42a), "When a child begins to speak, his father teaches him Torah." But if the goal is that the children should gain knowledge with which they can impress their families, or if the goal is to make it easier for the children, they will spend a lot of time teaching them to read unrelated things because starting Torah. They argue that this is preparation for learning Chumash, but actually this makes the Chumash more trivial in their eyes, as if it were just one subject among others, and then it will not impart as much holiness to the mind, heart and senses of the child. It is even worse when, for political or funding-related reasons, they fill the child's head with extraneous material, until Torah learning is to him a small detail. It reminds me of what Rabbi A.G. z"l said: that in a certain town the schools bind together a page of the Torah and a page of Krylov's fables, so that the two should be connected in the student's mind.

Another practical implication of the focus on Torah is that they should learn only from a complete Chumash, unabridged, with no words or subjects missing. The Gaonim of the previous generation ruled this way in the sefer "Darkah Shel Torah". And also, they should not use a textbook that contains a mixture of Hashem's Torah and secular subjects, even if they have some connection to Torah learning, but have no holiness of Torah. The melamdim should also inculcate into their hearts a desire and a love for Torah, in order to attract their hearts more and more when they reach Gemara.

And you must know that everything depends on the *tinokos shel beis rabban*. "If a city has no *tinokos shel beis rabban*, we destroy it. Ravina's version is: we put them in cheirem" (Shabbos 119b). The proof to this is the *Ir Hanidachas*, the city that was led astray to worship idols, where we kill even the children, although they did not sin (Rambam, Hilchos Avodah Zarah 5:6). The reason must be because in a wayward city there is no future for the children. [Here too, in a city with no Jewish school there is no future for the children, so we destroy it.] We see from this that if there is a future for the children, it is impossible for the city to be led astray. Therefore, don't listen to those narrow-minded rabbis who don't see beyond their noses and don't realize that without raising the younger generation to keep the Torah,

they will lose their pulpits in a few years and be like an unwanted tool. And when you seek truth, Hashem will inspire you with good counsel leading to success.

### **Various Comments on Chinuch**

[From a manuscript found among the author's papers.]

1. It is forbidden to learn from an abridged Chumash, missing any of its holy text given at Sinai, as the Gaonim of the previous generation have already ruled. It is also forbidden to teach secular books or newspapers in yeshiva, or to assign them as homework. The material they fill the children's heads with to satisfy the law is enough. My teacher and father-in-law zt"l (Reb Boruch Ber), said that what they learn to satisfy the law is not so harmful.  
The Hebrew language must be learned as a preparation for Tanach; therefore they should teach it in connection with the Torah text, not as a spoken language using familiar objects.
2. The spirit of Torah, not the spirit of Ivrit, is the goal.
3. Vocabulary should be words from the Chumash, not words from the child's surroundings.
4. They should be taught songs about the Yamim Tovim, not songs from the Mizrachi's Board of Religious Education, and not Israeli army songs.
5. They should learn about good middos from the Torah.

### **Guidelines**

1. Preparation for Chumash
2. Grammar for Chumash – grammar and word usage in the Parsha.
3. They should learn the meaning of the Tefilos, and not only the Shabbos tefilos.
4. The correct name is "Pesukim and Maamarei Chazal" – not "Pisgamim" (sayings or proverbs).
5. Hebrew stories are not necessary, and in fact most of them are forbidden.
6. Learning the week's news is not learning Torah.
7. "Anshei Hakedem" (men of old) is not a kosher expression.
8. There should not be too many secular subjects taught because this would take away from learning Chumash.
9. Reading newspapers is forbidden, and is not learning.