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Revere and Severe

On one of his visits to the wealthy philanthropist R' Binyamin Banisch, R' Elchonon Wasserman decided to enter through the side exit of the house and not through the regular front door. This was because there was a big snowstorm followed by rain which dirtied his boots with mud and he didn't want to dirty up the nice white carpet of R' Banisch. The side entrance was where the kitchen was which had tiles and not carpeting. When R' Banisch saw R' Elchonon enter the kitchen, he was visibly upset and told R' Elchonon that all the years he educated his two daughters that there was nothing more important than *kavod hatorah*. He pleaded with R' Elchonon to enter through the front entrance with his dirty boots and sit on his nice couch even if it meant getting it filthy. R' Elchonon then entered through the front door and sat on the couch.¹ After that, R' Banisch gave him his regular generous donation. Fast forward years later, when after escaping communist Russia to a temporary dwelling in Hamburg, the Banisch's eventually moved to Petach Tikva in Israel. It was there that he said to his friend, R' Yitzchak Greenberg, "Today I have no more money (because the Bolsheviks during the communist revolution stole everything) but I have two diamonds the Bolsheviks couldn't take from me—my sons-in-law." One son-in-law was R' Avraham Yitzchak

Bloch² (1891-1941) while the other was R' Zalman Bloch³ (1886-1941), who headed the Telz yeshiva. This is in fulfillment of the Gemara⁴ that one who honors Torah sages will have sons-in-law that are Torah sages.

R' Yitzchak Zilberstein⁵ relates that the Rabbanim of Remat Elchonon in Bnei Brak said many times to use the names of the Remat Elchonon streets in an honorable way. That is to say, one shouldn't say "I live on Sonnenfeld street or Ziemba street" rather he should say "I live on Harav Sonnenfeld street or Harav Ziemba street."⁶ This was in order to honor these tzadikim even

² At the age of 38, R' Avraham Yitzchak succeeded his father as Rosh Yeshiva of Telz, which was one of the largest and most prestigious yeshivas in Europe. R' Bloch was both a prolific writer and speaker yet many of his writings were lost during the Holocaust. Some notes of R' Bloch's lectures were rescued by students who escaped the Holocaust, and published by his family: *Shiurei HaGra'i Bloch* on the Gemaras of Chullin and Yevamos and *Shiurei Daas* which is a collection of essays on a variety of topics viewed from the unique Telz method of analysis.

³ He served as the Mashgiach of the Telz yeshiva.

⁴ Shabbos 23b.

⁵ Tuvcha Yabiu, Parshas Bamidbar, s.v. במשרד וגם.

⁶ R' Menachem Ziemba's (1883-1943) father, R' Elazar, died while Menachem was still a young boy and the orphan was brought up by his grandfather R' Avraham Ziemba. R' Avraham had been a chassid of the Kotzker Rebbe and a student of the Chiddushei Harim, and was now a follower of the Sefas Emes of Gur. R' Ziemba was brought up in the Gerrer Chassidus by his grandfather and remained a loyal chassid his entire life. He was very humble and when he visited Ger, he was called by his first name and refused to sit at the Rebbe's top table, an honor reserved for visitors of note. At the age of eighteen, he married the daughter of a wealthy local merchant, which enabled him to learn Torah unhindered for the next twenty years. His fame spread further, attracting the attention of R' Meir Simcha of Dvinsk among others. He once confided that he authored more than 10,000 pages of Torah novellae during this golden period. When his father-in-law died, R' Ziemba found it necessary to help out in the former's store in order to continue supporting his family. He was offered the prestigious position of Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim, but turned it down. After the untimely death of R' Meir Shapiro, R' Ziemba was offered the position as his successor as both Rabbi of Lublin and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. For unknown reasons, this never came to pass. In the Warsaw ghetto, he set up secret locations for Torah study, and at great personal risk, constantly visited these clandestine places to strengthen those who studied there. His wife died in the ghetto. R' Ziemba was one of the few rabbinic leaders who called for armed resistance against the Germans. Rabbi Ziemba established a committee to provide Pesach supplies for the Ghetto inhabitants. He was under constant surveillance by the authorities, and as such, could not become personally involved with the Ghetto underground. However, when money was needed to obtain ammunition, he was the first to donate, and added personal blessings to this resistance movement. R' Ziemba was eventually killed in the Warsaw Ghetto. Tens of thousands of pages of works authored by R' Ziemba were destroyed in the burning of the Warsaw Ghetto. Among these was a treatise on the entire Rambam called *Machaze Hamelech*, another on

¹ When R' Shlomo Freifeld would speak to his Rebbe R' Yitzchak Hutner on the phone, he would put on his hat and jacket out of respect.

after they passed away. A resident of Remat Elchonon related that when he was in Misrad Hapnim (Ministry of Interior) and said to the clerk that he lives on Harav Sonnenfeld street, the clerk was amazed that the word “Harav” accompanied the street name. The clerk blurted out “something like that you find only by the religious (chareidim), mentioning the gedolim in an honorable way.”

When R’ Shlomo Hoffman first came to the Chevron yeshiva, he wore shorts even on Shabbos (for an entire year). R’ Meir Chodosh (1898-1989), who was the Mashgiach, tried to convince to take money from the charity fund for boys in order to buy a suit. However, he refused saying that when he has money he’ll buy one for himself. One time he was approached by two of the best boys in the yeshiva telling him they were going to take him to a tailor to get him measured for a suit. And that is what happened and he got a new suit. Rosh Hashana night when the entire yeshiva passed by R’ Yechezkel Sarna for a bracha, R’ Sarna stared at him and looked at each part of his suit with such excitement. He then exclaimed, “This is *kavod hatorah!*”

Spend Freely

We know that money spent on Shabbos, Yom Tov, and for teaching Torah to one’s children⁷ is paid for. That is to say, the amount one is allotted to fund these mitzvos is not fixed in advance. Rather, depending on what he spends, the profitability of his ventures is increased or decreased accordingly.⁸ Does this only apply to these mitzvos?

The Ritva tells us that הוא הדין לכל הוצאה של מצוה, this applies to all mitzva expenditures.⁹ So feel free to give money to tzedaka, spend on אורחים, buy the nicer mezuzah, and so on. In this light, we can understand לא ירושו מפיו ומפי זרעו ... ומפי זרעו—one doesn’t lose out by listening to Hashem and spending money on mitzvos.

With this we can grasp why the word ונתנו to give, is a palindrome (it reads the same whether you read

Talmud Yerushalmi called Menachem Yerushalayim, as well as hundreds of responsa and novellae on Bavli, Shulchan Aruch, Midrash and many other parts of the Torah. In 1958, upon learning that the Polish Government was planning to rebuild the area of the ghetto that included Rabbi Ziemba’s grave, his nephews R’ Avraham and R’ Yitzchok Meir Ziemba (who were with him to the very end) and others expended great efforts to exhume his body and bring it to Eretz Yisrael. After weeks of work by surveyors and others, his grave was finally located—all landmarks remembered by the survivors had been destroyed in the interim. His body was flown to Eretz Yisrael and after a funeral attended by all the Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah and tens of thousands of people, he was finally laid to rest on Har Hamenuchos.

⁷ The pasuk says וּכְתַבְתָּ עַל הָאֲבִנִים, you shall inscribe on the stones all the words of this Torah (Devarim 27:8. See also Shemos 24:12). This is also telling us that we should give Torah to our descendants, as אבן is an acronym for נכד, בן, אב, father, son, grandson and אב, mother, daughter, granddaughter. Then we can fulfill לא ירושו מפיו ומפי זרעו ... ומפי זרעו, it won’t be withdrawn from your mouth nor from the mouth of your offspring nor from your offspring’s offspring (Yeshaya 59:21).

⁸ Beitza 16a.

⁹ Ritva to Beitza 16a, s.v. כל. Only these mitzvos are mentioned because they are the most common ones.

¹⁰ Devarim Rabba in Reeh, 5.

frontwards or backwards), since what you give to mitzvos, you get back.¹¹ In fact, the Midrash says that מי שיתן למצוה אינו מחסר את נכסיו, one doesn’t suffer monetary loss by performing a mitzva that involves money.¹² Now we can comprehend another meaning in יש מפזר ונוסף עוד, there is one who scatters and gathers more.¹³ That is to say, money spent on doing Hashem’s will brings additional wealth.

Our Instant World

Let us take a look at what we have today: modern-day technology, great advances in the sciences and medicine, comforts and luxuries that weren’t available in earlier times. When was the last time we waited to receive a letter we were expecting in the mail? People used to hang their laundry on a clothesline to dry and not use a dryer. Not too long ago, people would snap pictures with cameras that used rolls of film, which they would take to be developed only when the roll was finished. Then they had to wait several days to see the pictures for the first time. Today we have digital cameras on which we can see the pictures immediately.

Corded phones were once owned only by VIPs and business tycoons. Now they are considered a primitive means of communication. These days every youngster carries around his advanced cell phone. We correspond almost exclusively through electronic mail and phones. We are able to shop and instantly order almost anything we wish with a touch of a finger. Who needs to go to the bank anymore as we have online banking? Who needs a map as we can just plug the address of our destination into a device and let it guide us?

Although this seems to be a perfect world, it surely is not. So much exposure to instant gratification has removed our tolerance for waiting. We have grown so accustomed to getting everything immediately that we have lost our patience to wait for a process to unfold. In life we are forced to wait for a shiduch, have a child, find a way to buy the home we want, etc. Things are so easily available and happen so quickly that we expect our desires to be fulfilled with speed. We need to appreciate when our desires are met. We also must have full trust in Hashem that everything will come at the right time, as Hashem knows what He is doing.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R’ Mordechai Friedlander ztz”l for close to five years. He received semicha from R’ Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz”l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, *Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights* in addition to being the host of *The Fascinating Insights Podcast*. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹¹ See Baal Haturim, Shemos 30:12.

¹² Shemos Raba 36:3. We even see people gaining from mitzvos. One example is עשר בשביל שתתעשר, tithe so that you will become wealthy (Taanis 9a). Another example is teaching Torah, as Chazal tell us ומתלמידי I learned the most from my students (Taanis 7a).

¹³ Mishlei 11:24. Regardless of all this, this is what money is made for—to do the will of Hashem. If we do this, then we take money which would normally be temporary and make it eternal. There was a tzadik in the Kosel who, when he heard Jews beseeching Hashem for money, actually heard, “I want mitzvos,” as this is what a Jew needs money for.