

DIVREI TORAH FROM YESHIVOT AND SEMINARIES



Torah Tidbits is proud to highlight the many outstanding Rabbis and teachers that lead the various Yeshivot and Seminaries here in Israel.

YESHIVAT TORAT SHRAGA, YERUSHALAYIM



Now in its 20th year, Yeshivat Torat Shraga is a dynamic and exciting Yeshiva in Israel for bright, motivated post-high school students. Torat Shraga has several different goals: developing a relationship with Hashem, acquiring the skills needed for a lifetime of learning Torah, cultivating a lasting bond with Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael, fostering the middot expected of a Ben Torah, and advancing the leadership skills of our talmidim.

A Torat Shraga student not only wants to be personally impacted by his education and his environment, he also strives to share and convey the passion and excitement for learning to others as well.



**Rabbi Michael
Olshin**
Menahel, Yeshivat
Torat Shraga

No Excuses

Years back, at a meeting with prospective students and parents, I was asked a challenging question by one of the parents in the audience, “How does the Yeshiva deal with students who violate one of the rules of the Yeshiva?” I answered that it depends on the rule but our general approach can be understood from the following story:

The “Beis Yisroel”, Rav Yisroel Alter zt”l, the Gerrer Rebbe (1895-1977) once noticed two of his chassidim in the back of the Beit

Midrash talking during davening. Later, he approached one of them, admonished him for it and told him that he cannot enter the Beit Midrash for two weeks. The young man tried to explain that he wasn’t the one who did the talking but was just listening to his friend. The Rebbe immediately responded that since you have begun making excuses, you will not be allowed entry for six weeks.



Afterwards he went over to the friend and told him the same thing, that he is barred from entering the Beit Midrash for two weeks. The chassid said, “Rebbe, *chatati*, I sinned and I want to do teshuva for my actions.” The Rebbe responded, “Go reclaim your place in the Beit Midrash.”

The Medrash Rabba (Bamidbar 13:3) says that before Hashem banished Adam haRishon from the Garden of Eden he requested that he do *teshuva*, “even now as long as you do Teshuva I will accept it”. However, he chose instead to make an excuse, “the woman that you gave me, she gave me the fruit of which I ate.” Claiming “it’s not my fault” was Adam’s real mistake. According to the Midrash, the reason Adam was exiled from Gan Eden was not the sin of eating from the forbidden fruit but for refusing to admit his mistake and do *teshuva* for it.

The Rebbe, Reb Simcha Bunim of Przysucha zy”a (1765-1827) the Rebbe of the first Gerrer Rebbe shared this fundamental idea with his students. He said that when we come before the heavenly court we will not be asked why we did any particular sin. Rather, we will be asked but one thing, “why didn’t you do *Teshuva!*?” There may be many things pulling us towards sin but there is nothing preventing us from regretting our mistakes and repairing our actions.

Even though we may be exiting the “days of mercy and forgiveness” and entering the month of Cheshvan, the truth is that our entire existence is about taking responsibility for our actions, owning up to our mistakes and extending the days of *teshuva* and *slichah* to the rest of the year. ■

