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Principal's Newsletter

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Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University visits school on Rosh Chodesh Kislev. Delivers Shiur, observes classes, and meets informally with faculty.

On November 29, Rosh Chodesh Kislev, Yeshiva University High School for Girls, was honored by a visit from Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University. He addressed the students with a D'var Torah on Parshat Hashavua.

Parshat Toldot recounts the story of Be'erot Yitzchak, the wells of Yitzchak. It begins by describing the accumulation of Yitzchak's wealth, which incurred the jealousy of Yitzchak's neighbors, the Philistines. As a result, the Philistines began to close up the wells that Avraham, Yitzchak's father, had dug and their ruler Avimelech, asked Yitzchak to leave his land. Yitzchak left for a while, but then he returned and began to re-dig his wells. The first two wells that Yitzchak's servants dug, were immediately covered over by the Philistines. These wells were named עַשְׂק, denoting contention over the well, and שִׂטְנָה, meaning hatred. The third well dug by Yitzchak was named רְחוּבוֹת, denoting peace and comfort, because there were no fights over this last well. The Ramban asks a very strong question. Why does the story of Yitzchak's business dealings belong in the Tanach? Is it of any concern to the generations that followed?

The Ramban answers that according to the simple interpretation of the story, this question would be strong and very valid. Therefore we must attempt to find a deeper explanation of the topic. The story of the wells comes to hint to us about the future. Three be'erot were dug, each one representing one of the Batei Mikdash. The first well dug was named עַשְׂק indicating that the first Beit Mikdash was destroyed during external battles with other nations. The second well was named שִׂטְנָה indicating that the second Beit Mikdash was destroyed because of external hatred of other nations directed towards us and because of internal hatred, otherwise known as שְׂנֵאת חֵם. The third Beit Ha'Mikdash that will be built will exist in peace and comfort without any external or internal problems.

In a further analysis of the Ramban and the Psukim, we can learn an incredible lesson. It can be noted, from the Psukim, that while Yitzchak's servants built the first two wells, Yitzchak himself built the final well that was free of the problems that plagued the



first two. In the Psukim describing the first two wells, it is written " וַיַּחֲפְרוּ ", in plural, in other words, the servants of Yitzchak toiled. In the Pasuk describing the final well, it is written " וַיַּחֲפֹר ", in the singular. Yitzchak himself toiled. Combining this idea with the Ramban we can infer that the last Beit Hamikdash that we will put our effort into rebuilding, will last. The Beit Hamikdash built for us is not so stable. The Beit Hamikdash built by us will last forever.

This idea can be expanded to include many aspects of our lives. A person truly enjoys what he has, only when he has worked hard for it. The halachic principle of **שְׁלוּחַוּ שֶׁל אָדָם כְּמוֹתוֹ** that the actions of a messenger are as good as if the person himself were doing it seems at first glance to contradict this idea. Upon analyzing the essence of this principle, however, it can be noted that it does not apply to a Mitzvah that a person needs to do with his own body. A person, for example, does not fulfill his obligation of Tefillin if he has a messenger do it for him. Certain Mitzvot must be done by the person himself, by application of personal effort, thereby giving these Mitzvot that much more value in the person's own eyes. If we use this concept in our daily lives, and work hard to accomplish what we want, we will be worthy to see the Beit Hamikdash rebuilt soon, in our day.

By: Rebecca Wolf
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FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S DESK: Can't Do It Alone!

Why do parents choose Yeshiva education for their children? Certainly, because they expect the very best in formal education. Parents anticipate high academic standards, levels of achievement way above the "national norm," skilled, professional, experienced and dedicated faculty and well thought out and developed curricula. But they expect much more than mere excellence, which they can find in other fine, highly regarded private schools, as well. Committed Torah oriented parents expect much more. They seek the imparting of values, ethics and morality. They yearn for the finest academic atmosphere, true. But they simultaneously hope for an environment that will foster sensitivities, responses and reactions resulting not necessarily from book knowledge - but from religious and spiritual experiences, from role models, from an appreciation not simply for the worldly but moreso

from the G-dly. Jewish schools are expected to stretch the intellect. But, they are also sought after in order to develop the soul.

My experience has been that even when parents are not directly or personally involved with their children's academic progress, schools may still succeed in producing excellent students. In the modern society where both parents are frequently career oriented, leaving home early and returning late, having little if any time for personal involvement with their children's homework and school affairs, students properly motivated by caring and challenging teachers, may very well achieve maximally in the academic realm. The same however, cannot be assumed or expected in the spiritual, ethical, moral realm; in the realm of the soul. The acquisition of knowledge in mathematics, history, biology or French may not always need the reinforcement of father or mother (though it always helps!). The acquisition of good midot, living lessons in honesty, integrity and kindness and the learning of modesty, decency and