



Ve-Ha'arev Na: The Transgenerational Kinyan Ha-Torah

Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig '14R

Special Remarks from the RIETS Annual Dinner Evening of Tribute

The rishonim are puzzled by two aspects of *ve-ha'arev na*, the second berakhah of the *birkhot ha-Torah* we recite each morning. First, as the Ba'al ha-Maor (Rif *Berachot* 5b) observes, why do we have multiple berachot for the single mitzvah of talmud Torah? Why isn't the first berakhah, *la-asok be-divrei Torah*, sufficient?

Second, as Rabbenu Manoach notes (*Hilkhot Tefilah* 7:10), *ve-ha'arev na* is typically interpreted as a request that the experience of talmud Torah should be pleasant or sweet. But where do we ever find a berakhah asking for a ma'aseh mitzvah to be pleasant? Imagine if, in addition to *al akhilat matzah*, we made a berakhah asking for the matzah to be tasty? Further, as some achronim press, doesn't the request of *ve-ha'arev na* infringe upon the principle of *mitzvot lav leihanot nitnu*?

To address these questions, let us examine the nature of the berakhah of *ve-ha'arev na*.

The *Sefer ha-Manhig* (*Dinei Tefilah* no. 19) argues that *ve-ha'arev na* is actually a berakhah on securing three generations of talmidei chakhamim. Although *ve-ha'arev na* is introduced in *Berachot* 11b in

the name of Rav Yochanan, the berakhah is in fact patterned after Rav Yochanan's derashah in *Bava Metzia* 85a:

אמר ר' יוחנן כל שהוא תלמיד חכם ובנו תלמיד חכם ובן בנו תלמיד חכם שוב אין תורה פוסקת מזרעו לעולם שנאמר ואני זאת בריתי וגו' לא ימוש מפיד ומפי זרעך ומפי זרעך אמר ה' מעתה ועד עולם. מאי אמר ה', אמר הקב"ה אני ערב לך בדבר זה.

Hashem says, if you can secure three generations of talmidei chakhamim, I'll guarantee—*ani areiv*—your family a perpetual legacy of talmidei chakhamim for future generations as well. This Gemara is the source for *ve-ha'arev na*.

The *Sefer ha-Manhig*'s grounding of *ve-ha'arev na* in *Bava Metzia* 85a has two important ramifications. First, as the Manhig himself contends, the proper girsa of the berakhah should read ונהיה גירסא של הברכה. Since the whole import of the berakhah is about securing three generations of talmidei chakhamim, the berakhah ought to specify three generations.

Second, as R. Yehudah ben Yakar points out (*Peirush ha-Tefilot ve-haBerachot le-Rabbenu Yehudah ben Yakar* II, pg. 22), the word *ve-ha'arev* should not be interpreted as “make pleasant”



Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig

or “sweeten.” Rather, it should be understood in the manner that it appears in that Gemara in *Bava Metzia*—*ani arev lekha be-davar zeh*—as “guarantee.” We ask Hashem that if we succeed in securing three generations of talmidei chakhamim, he should guarantee—*ha'arev na*—a family legacy of Torah for future generations.

But what is the significance of three generations? And why should it feature so prominently in our *birkhot ha-Torah*?

The Maharal, in his commentary to *Bava Metzia* 85a (*Chidushei Aggadot s.v.*

RIETS celebrated the semikhah of eleven musmakhim whose grandfathers are also musmakhim of RIETS

Rabbi Tuvia Brander '15R and Rabbi Aaron Brander '59R • Rabbi Shlomo Clark '14R and Rabbi Matthew Clark '56R

Rabbi Yakov Danishefsky '16R and Rabbi Dr. Chaim Danishefsky z"l '46R • Rabbi Noam Friedman '17R and Rabbi Abraham z"l Insel '45R
Rabbi Noach Goldstein '17R and Rabbi Dr. Noah Goldstein z"l '53R • Rabbi Jonathan Grossman '17R and Rabbi Zelo Schussheim z"l '48R

Rabbi Ari Lamm '15R and Rabbi Norman Lamm '51R • Rabbi Elchanan Poupko '16R and Rabbi Baruch Poupko z"l '42R

Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig '14R and Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig '50R • Rabbi Ashie Schreier '17R and Rabbi Max Schreier '52R

Rabbi Yaakov Taubes '17R and Rabbi Chaim Schulman z"l '52R

kol she-hu), explains that talmud Torah, *au fond*, is not a personal endeavor but a transgenerational enterprise: A *kinyan ha-Torah* is only achieved by securing three generations of talmidei chakhamim. A grandfather can fulfill *li-lmod*, becoming a talmid chakham himself, but this does not constitute a *kinyan ha-Torah*. A grandfather can further accomplish *li-lmod u-lelameid*, raising his children to become talmidei chakhamim, but this too does not constitute a *kinyan ha-Torah*. A *kinyan ha-Torah* is only achieved when a grandfather imparts his Torah to his children and those children pass it forward to their children: *li-lmod u-lelameid*, and that *le-lameid* kindles a further *le-lameid*.

This is why the berakhah of *la-asok be-divrei Torah* is complimented by *ve-ha'arev na*. The *ma'aseh ha-mitzvah* of talmud Torah would be incomplete if it didn't prospectively aim towards securing a *kinyan ha-Torah* over three generations. Without the perspective of *ve-ha'arev na*, talmud Torah would be a sterile enterprise that withers and decays with the passage of time.

It is this very idea that the Gemara in *Nedarim* 81a has in mind when it maintains:

ומפני מה אין מצויין תלמידי חכמים לצאת
תלמידי חכמים מבניהם וכו' שאין מברכין בתורה
תחילה.

The Gemara asks, why is it the case that talmidei chakhamim, by and large,

The *ma'aseh ha-mitzvah*
of talmud Torah would
be incomplete if it didn't
prospectively aim towards
securing a *kinyan ha-torah*
over three generations.
Without the perspective of
ve-ha'arev na, talmud Torah
would be a sterile enterprise
that withers and decays
with the passage of time.

fail to produce grandchildren who are also talmidei chakhamim? The Gemara answers, because the grandfathers didn't recite the berakhah of *ve-ha'arev na* (see Rashi s.v. *she-ein*). They didn't study with the perspective of securing a *kinyan ha-Torah* over three generations.

Tonight we are celebrating the realization of a *kinyan ha-Torah* that was initiated at a Chag HaSemikhah three generations ago, a *kinyan ha-Torah* that is realized tonight through the securing of three generations of talmidei chakhamim in one family.

My grandfather, Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig '50R, shlit"a, initiated his

kinyan ha-Torah some sixty-seven years ago when he received his semikhah here at RIETS, under the tutelage of his esteemed *rebbeim*, Rav Moshe Shatzkes, zt"l, and the Rav, zt"l. He was then *marbitz Torah*, first as a *mara de-asra* in Toronto and later in New York, and also as president of the Rabbinical Council of America, where he worked closely with the Rav in navigating American Orthodoxy through the high seas that threatened to overwhelm it.

My grandfather passed that mesorah to my father, Rabbi Michael Rosensweig '80R, shlit"a, and sent him to study with his rebbe, the Rav, under whom my father received his semikhah some thirty-seven years ago. My father then sent me and my brothers to study with his rebbe, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, in Eretz Yisrael—And I've now spent the last nine years studying in my father's shiur here at RIETS. Such is the transgenerational enterprise of talmud Torah, rebbe to talmid, father to son.

Today's Chag HaSemikhah is the realization of that transgenerational *kinyan ha-Torah* our grandfathers began at their Chag HaSemikhah three generations ago. As for me and my chavirim, we look forward to the day when we can stand here and witness the realization of our *kinyan ha-Torah*—a *kinyan* we commenced at the Chag HaSemikhah today. ■

