

A Serious Matter

צו את אהרן ואת בניו לאמר זאת תורת העלה הוא על מוקדה על המזבח כל הלילה עד הבקר ואש המזבח תוקד בו:

It's been more time than I planned that we haven't been together to discuss the weekly פרשה. Punctuating my week with you, discussing our lives as they unfold on the backdrop of our Holy Torah, is one of my favorite things about my career in the yeshiva. You know, though, that our yeshiva has turned its attention outward to the worldwide Jewish community through the Center for the Jewish Future. I'm privileged to visit with Jewish communities all over the United States as its ambassador and I've been away so many weeks recently. I will try to resume our weekly שיחות with a degree of regularity more like earlier in the year.

There is a sudden shift in language at the opening of our פרשה that of course does not go unnoticed by the ספרא. Whereas at the beginning of חומש ויקרא the general command to bring קרבנות is issued with the verb "דבר" (see (ויקרא א ב), uses the verb "צוה" when addressing the כהנים. As the רמב"ן explains, this verb is more appropriate for those charged with the particulars of the actual procedures rather than just the general obligation. "צו" denotes an exhortation as the ספרא teaches: אין צוה אלא זירו מיד ולדורות:

The ספרא continues with an additional rationale for the language of exhortation:

א"ר שמעון ביותר צריך הכתוב לזרו במקום שיש חסרון כ"ס [כגירסת הגר"א]

R. Shimon said: Scripture especially needs to exhort when there is financial loss involved

Many commentators on the ספרא note that this statement by R. Shimon is quoted out of context. R. Shimon wasn't commenting on our verse, for the כהנים cannot suffer financial loss in the performance of their duties. Indeed they stand to benefit from the bringing of קרבנות. The force of R. Shimon's statement is that the Torah may use the language of exhortation here but requires it even more in other contexts where the כהנים do have to be reminded to do their duty and not scrimp lest they seek to protect their personal interests.

With apologies to the רמב"ן and all the distinguished מפרשים who offer their own answers to the referent for R. Shimon's statement, I'd like to suggest that the חסרון כ"ס is not that of the כהנים at all but rather potential loss to בני ישראל. The כהנים are exhorted to be careful in their performance precisely because they are using the financial and economic resources provided by others. Their service needs to be performed with care lest they not do justice to the contributions of others.

I know many of you are struggling students and find it difficult to make ends meet. I'd like to exhort you and the many Jews around the world who receive these שיחות to join me in מלאכת הקדש. I've never used this forum to ask for help before but there is holy work that needs doing and I cannot be silent.

I have spoken before about ORA (Organization for the Resolution of Agunot). It is a not-for-profit organization founded by Josh Ross and Moshe Davis, products of Yeshiva College, and staffed by students. It operates on a shoe-string budget with a miniscule staff. Even with rent-free office space from the Center for the Jewish Future, ORA desperately needs funds in order to survive. I have personally undertaken to raise funds to keep ORA alive.

I'd like to share a letter from a woman who ORA assisted recently in receiving her גט:

March 13, 2008

משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה. Adar. The most joyful month of the year. This is the first time in several years that I can honestly say that I have been able to fulfill the mitzvah of being joyful in the month of Adar. For four years, I was stuck in a terrible marriage to a man whose mental health issues were hidden from me during the dating process. When we finally separated, I found myself involved in a bitter divorce and custody battle. And to top it all off, my husband would not give me a Get.

I turned to the rabbeim in my local community for help. They were kind-hearted, and they sympathized with me, but they had very little experience handling a recalcitrant husband, especially one with mental health issues. After contacting my husband a few times and hearing his refusal to give me the Get, things just got stuck. The rabbeim were reluctant to formally summon my husband to Beit Din because they feared that he would simply flee and leave me in an even worse position.

One morning when I was dropping off my children at pre-school, a friend of mine mentioned ORA. He said that a friend of his had successfully received a Get with ORA's assistance. The same day, I sent an e-mail to ORA

describing my situation. Within days I received a response from Josh Ross. He offered ORA's assistance at no cost to me and started contacting rabbeim in my community to get additional information on my situation.

The months passed by. It was ORA that kept the whole process moving. As the custody fight wore on, I became increasingly worried that my husband would use the Get as a bargaining chip to gain custody rights. As it became clear that this was the direction in which things were moving, it was Josh who regularly called the rabbeim and pushed them to continue to work towards getting the Get. On multiple occasions, Josh contacted my husband directly to ask him to give me the Get. Josh called my husband's family and friends. Josh even took the time to facilitate the communication between the various rabbeim involved in the situation.

When these type of situations drag on for long periods of time, even well-meaning people start to forget about them. It was because of ORA that this did not happen to me. Josh personally made sure that nobody was able to forget about me. In addition to that, Josh spent time reassuring me of ORA's commitment to my cause and making sure that I felt comfortable with any actions taken on my behalf. As a woman, dealing with a group of rabbeim can be intimidating. Josh explained the halachic process to me and was always there to answer my questions so that I could feel confident advocating for myself.

In the Fall of 2007, things became decidedly more intense. The civil divorce was getting close to completion. My greatest fear was that once I was awarded custody of the children and the civil divorce was finalized, my chances of receiving the Get would be next to nothing. I was starting to lose hope. It was around this time that I received a most surprising phone call. A friend of mine called to tell me that her synagogue was hosting a scholar-in-residence that had heard about me from Josh Ross. He had done some research and talked to the local rabbeim about my situation, and he wanted to get involved on my behalf. Of course, I called him immediately.

From the first moment I spoke to Rabbi Ozer Glickman, I could tell that he was committed to the cause of helping women who are mesorevet get or agunot. One of the first things he said to me was that my husband's behavior was in violation of halacha, and that we as Jews need to send a communal message to men that we will not tolerate this. I had been waiting months to hear those words. Rabbi Glickman assured me that he and Josh were not going to rest until I had a Get. He told me that there would be only one thing asked of me in return for receiving their assistance: That he and Josh are allowed to give a toast at my next wedding.

Over the next several weeks, I was in constant contact with both Josh and Rabbi Glickman as they worked tirelessly with my local rabbeim to put together a plan for convincing my husband that now was the time to give the Get. There were days in which phone calls and e-mails were exchanged on an almost hourly basis. Sometimes vital information was being relayed. Sometimes they were just making themselves available with emotional support in order to help me remain calm. When emotions ran high, they communicated on my behalf in order to keep things on the right track. Rabbi Glickman even made himself available on weekends and late at night. He was never too busy to take my call or reply to an e-mail.

On December 18, 2007, I received a call that a sofer was flying into town. The next afternoon, I was summoned to the shul to receive my Get. I walked out of the shul that afternoon a different person. There is really no way to describe the weight that has been lifted off my shoulders. The first call that I made when I returned home was to Rabbi Glickman. He celebrated in my success as if it was his own. As for Josh, that week he was busy welcoming his first child, yet still found the time to call and wish me a mazal tov.

In the three months since I received my Get, Rabbi Glickman has continued to serve as a source of support to me. I have consulted with him for advice about a variety of matters, everything from halachic inquiries to advice about reentering the dating world. He has always welcomed my questions and given freely of his time in responding me.

to me. Each time we have spoken, Rabbi Glickman has shared with me his continued commitment to join with Josh and the rest of the staff at ORA to advocate on the behalf of agunot. Sadly, ORA provides a service that is very much in need. ORA's advocacy can make the difference between a woman remaining chained or having the chance to rebuild her life. As I rebuild mine, it is with immense gratitude to the staff at ORA for being there for me when I thought there was no hope.

S.Z.

My involvement, רבותי, is minimal compared to the work done by Josh Ross, my תלמיד Michael Kaplan, Jeremy Stern, and Moshe Davis. Consider the case of a poor young woman from Chicago who fled an abusive husband two years ago. This "pious" man drugged and kidnapped his wife. In court, he shouts at his lawyer that he will never give a גט until his wife does exactly what he wants. Meanwhile, he pays no child support and shows no interest in his two small children. He does, however, find money for clubs where he removes his shtreimel in order to get on with his life. ORA's staff accompany this poor woman to court. For the first time in years, she feels empowered. ORA staff are called רשעים by the husband and his father. Without ORA, she had no hope.

ORA works with top law firms like Kaye Scholar who offer their services pro bono on cases as geographically far apart as New York and Los Angeles. ORA is in contact with בתי דין from all branches of the Orthodox world, including Satmar, the Rabbanut, and the Beth Din of America. ORA arranges rallies outside the home of men who refuse to give גטין. ORA and the Jewish Press publish names of individuals who have been classified as מסרבין לדין. Other major papers have been enlisted to initiate similar columns.

ORA counsels local rabbis and lawyers who might lack experience in these difficult matters. One of my own activities in the case described above was to stay in contact with the local rav and help him mediate between the husband and wife. At one point, I became the wife's spokesman and saw the process through to the actual divorce.

As I told you before, I became involved due to the example of our rebbe, Rav Hershel Schachter שליט"א. Rav Schachter is the פוסק for ORA and is regularly consulted regarding strategy and tactics. Recently, Rav Schachter and I conferred with local rabbis on a particularly thorny case that still drags on.

I ask all those around the world who have some regard for Rav Schachter or even for me to consider helping ORA continue its important work. Without immediate contributions, the office will have to shut down by the summer. ORA's staff receives minimal compensation and relies heavily on volunteers like Rav Schachter and me. I've personally reviewed its budget and am astounded that ORA can operate as effectively as it does on so little funding. I personally guarantee that this sacred work is done with honor and the proper respect for the precious funds contributed. Unlike certain "activists"; ORA takes absolutely no money from any woman in order to help her. ORA's mission is to repair the תורה של תורה when Jewish men use its laws to extort funds and other concessions from their wives or chain them in perpetual limbo. ORA is a qualified tax exempt organization. Contributions can be sent to:

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New York, New York 10040.

שבת שלום

These sichos are published by students and admirers of Rav Ozer Glickman shlit"א. We may be reached at ravglickmanshiur@gmail.com.

Rav Glickman on the Road

Rav Glickman has written a paper entitled "Think Local, Act Global: Tzedaka in a Global Society" to be delivered at the upcoming Orthodox Forum sponsored by Yeshiva University. Rav Glickman recently delivered a shiur at YU's Kollel Yom Rishon entitled "Talmudic Jurisprudence: Does the Gemara Recover or Create Halacha?" The Rav recently spent Shabbos in the Westville Synagogue in New Haven, CT and will speak this week in YI of Oceanside. This summer, Rav Glickman will participate in Yeshiva University's lecture series on the Presidential Elections in the Hamptons.