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## Droschos - The Rav Speaks

We all know and believe that Torah and *mitzvos* are what life is all about, but do we really feel that these are what make our lives meaningful? Listen to the Rav's personal account of how he searched and grappled with these issues, and how he came to feel these truths in his own heart. He promises that we can get the same results as he did. ***The MP3 file was recorded live with a English translation.***

### ***Feeling Empty***

I remember about 17 or 18 years ago I looked on the calendar and saw that it would be *Rosh HaShanah* soon.

Since the *Yomim Noraim* were approaching, I knew that I must feel something, but I didn't know what to feel. I didn't see anything in my life that is missing. I knew that I felt empty, but I didn't know what it was that I was missing.

Why did I feel so empty? I learned all day; I had three full *sedarim* in the day where I learned. I *davened* and did all the *mitzvos*. So why did I feel empty inside?

I sat and thought: Am I missing something? Why do I feel empty if I am doing everything I am supposed to?

It bothered me very, very much.

I started to look at others to see if I could know how others are happy, and I saw that everyone else was happy except myself. Then I became very lonely, because I felt that everyone else was happy and enjoying their learning – everyone except me.

After many years, I met many people who felt what I felt then – people who feel like they're empty inside and haven't found themselves in life. There is no one here in Eretz Yisrael who hasn't found themselves when it comes to *mitzvos* and *Halacha*. So what was missing in my life that I have to change myself?

I began to ask people if they felt like me. No one understood me – they were like Pharaoh's servants who couldn't interpret his dream. No one gave me answers I was satisfied with.

This was one of the hardest times in my life – I can't forget it. I had no idea what to do and where to go in my life. But I knew that I shouldn't give up; I knew I'm not an old person at the end of his life, that I'm young and that I have hope.

I davened to Hashem to help me

After some time, I went to a private room and cried to Hashem. I asked Hashem, "Hashem, I know there is no more prophecy anymore, but what do You want from me? Tell me what You want from me!"

I cried terribly to Hashem. But I had faith that Hashem would send me my answers and show me what He wants from me in my life.

I hope no one goes through what I went through then. But if you ever went through this too, I want you to know that I was there too and went through it – and I came out of it.

After this, I remember that I made a list of all the things I was unhappy with my life, and I wrote how I feel like an old person who has no satisfaction in life. But I told myself not to give up, and I knew that Hashem will help me and show me what He wants from me. I didn't know where my answer would come from, but I trusted in Hashem that He would send me the answer. How?

I knew it wouldn't come from my mind. I knew that when Hashem opens up my **heart**, it will be then that I understand – to understand what the reality of this world is.

### ***The Realization***

I remember this clearly. I was sitting and learning with a *sefer*, and suddenly it hit me: I felt the reality that Hashem exists. Then, everything became clear to me.

I grew up in a *frum* home and learned in a good yeshivah, and I knew all about *Emunah* that a person is supposed to have. I was taught the 13 principles of faith of the Rambam about belief in G-d. But I realized that although I *knew* a lot, I didn't *feel* what I knew.

Then I knew what I was missing.

This is what I realized: There is a place in one's heart where he can feel the Endlessness of Hashem's existence, and when a person doesn't feel this, he feels empty. He will search and search and he will not find the answers to his emptiness.

Some people were not blessed by Hashem with much feeling, and this emptiness doesn't bother them, the same way a table doesn't feel anything. They get up and go to work or even if they go learn, they simply don't feel this emptiness. They feel fine. But any person with a little feeling can see how this world is full of so much emptiness – *tohu* and *vohu*, and utter darkness. They want light – the light of Hashem – to illuminate their darkness.

The more feeling  
a person is, the  
more unhappy he  
is with what the  
reality is.

There are a few people who are very deeply feeling people and they are in a lot of pain. They see

others who are fine and look happy, and they don't know why they themselves aren't happy. These people suffer greatly inside. In addition to this, they are searching to fill their emptiness, and they don't know how.

The more feeling a person is, the more unhappy he is with what the reality is. He sees others sitting and learning and enjoying their learning – he sees how by others, the Torah is their life. But he doesn't feel in his own life how the Torah is life. He knows that it is supposed to give him life, but he doesn't feel it. He feels that Torah doesn't give him life, so maybe life is found elsewhere... such as the streets...

We must know one thing. The world is full of false pleasures; the Sages say that our soul will never be satisfied with this world's pleasures, whether it is forbidden pleasure or whether it is permissible pleasure. Why? It is because our soul comes from Heaven; it wants something else.

### ***The Root Of All Problems***

At one point in my life, I realized what the root of all problems in the world is.

*Baruch Hashem*, people know most of the statements of Chazal, but they only *know* it intellectually - and that's it. People *know* that Chazal say that the world stands on Torah, and that Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world, etc. But what is missing from us? We only *know* it – but we **feel** differently in our own life.

What we need to do is truly **feel** the truths about Torah and how it is everything, and then everything will change.

### ***Falafel and Vacations***

For many years, I thought about this until I finally came to this conclusion.

One time I passed by a falafel store and I saw a long line waiting out the store; a new kind of falafel came out, and everyone was waiting in line to try it. I thought to myself, "Maybe they're right – maybe there really is something to this falafel? Maybe this falafel will make me happy?"

I waited on line, I bought it, I ate it – and I was very disappointed.

I began to think about what makes people feel more happy and alive.

I realized that some people feel a certain vitality from the honor they receive from other people, but I knew right away that that this was a false kind of vitality.

I saw people who were always going on vacations who seemed to really be enjoying it, though. I thought maybe there really is something special to all these vacations. I went on one of these vacations, but I was terribly disappointed. I rented a car, checked out into the hotel room, and as soon as I got into the room, I threw the keys onto the bed in frustration. I realized that while going to a hotel may have given me some more relaxation, it didn't make me feel happier with my life.

It took many years for me to go deep into my soul and realize that I couldn't be happy with my life based on anything external, but that it has to come from within myself. The more connected I felt to Torah and to Hashem, the more alive I felt. The more I would run after pleasure from the outside of myself, the more I realized I was chasing wind.

This is not a lecture. I am talking about a true story of my life – I am talking about my search, and

what I found. Candies, cigarettes and walking on the beach can all give a person relaxation, and sometimes a person does need to relax in order to have some *yishuv hadaas*, but these things don't give a person life. A person can only feel alive when he is truly connected to Hashem and the Torah.

### **More Frustration**

It took me a lot of time to come to this conclusion.

One of the hardest times in my life I remember was when I learned in Yeshiva. I learned in Yeshivas Ponovezh, and I learned a lot. But I didn't feel that my learning was giving me more life. I knew that the Torah is supposed to give me life, but I didn't feel it. I thought that maybe I am the kind of student that the Sages say doesn't see success in his learning. It wasn't that I didn't know how to learn; I knew how to learn very well. I was regarded as an excellent student. But I didn't feel like the Torah is what is giving me life, which is what I am supposed to feel.

I thought maybe I should leave yeshiva – I didn't feel like I came onto the world to learn Torah. I knew that there are people who feel that they came onto this world to learn Torah, but I just didn't feel that way.

I went to Jerusalem and decided that I will speak to one of the Gedolim who was there and ask him for his advice.

I went to his house, but he wasn't available. I was very frustrated that I didn't get into him, and I didn't know what to do. I was very, very frustrated!

### **The Answer**

At some point later, I realized what the answer was.

I thought to myself and realized clearly that if Hashem was the one who said that the Torah is our life – "*Ki heim chayeinu*" – then it must be so, and that I should never give up.

### **My Message To You**

**Don't ever give up**, even for one moment. Hashem is *Avinu Av Harachaman* – He is a merciful Father, and He wants you to have life. If you really want to find life in the Torah, you will find it.

If someone feels empty inside – or even if he doesn't – he must know that he will not find anything pleasurable on this world; it's all in his imagination that maybe there is something good out there other than the Torah.

Any pleasure on this world is fleeting and will not give a person enjoyment out of his life. If you really want to have a true life, cry to Hashem from the depths of your heart, "*Open my heart to Your Torah*" – not just that Hashem should open your mind, but to open your **heart** that you should have the true life – and then you will become a truly happy person, plain and simple.

I hope with all my heart that all of you should merit this and that Hashem should open up your hearts to realize that besides for a deep connection to Hashem and learning the Torah, there is nothing else we have that will give us enjoyment out of life.