

The Choices We Make

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, Rosh Hayeshivah of Beth Medrash Govohah and architect of Torah in America, came to Yeshivas Slobodka at the young age of fourteen. Orphaned at a young age, his extended family were his guardians. "Concerned" that such a brilliant boy would spend his life in a yeshivah with no "hope" of "succeeding" in the "real" world, they attempted to remove him from the yeshivah and, instead, send him to dental school. As a successful dentist, he could achieve prominence and support his family. While they had no problem with his observance and even his diligence in Torah study, they were concerned lest it become a lifelong endeavor.

The members of the family came to Slobodka and spoke to the Alter, Horav Nossen Tzvi Finkel, zl. He listened and replied, "I understand your concerns. Give me three weeks and then as far as I am concerned, you may do as you please."

When they left, the Rosh Yeshiva asked a number of his most distinguished students to take the young boy under their wing and give him a geshmak, good taste, in learning, so that he could sense first hand the effect that Torah study has on a person. Those three weeks in such an exceptional environment, under the tutelage of some of the most brilliant young Torah scholars in Europe, established the foundation of the man who would one day change the spiritual panorama of America.

Three weeks went by very quickly, and the family returned to pick up their young charge. They called him, and, in the presence of the Rosh Yeshivah, asked, "Would you like to leave here and go to school to become a dentist?"

(Rav) Aharon looked at them incredulously and exclaimed, "What? You have nothing to do with yourselves? I should leave the yeshivah? I have never had it so good. Why would I dream of leaving?" The case was closed, and we are the fortunate beneficiaries.

There are choices in life that we must make. We pray that they are the correct ones. We could live out our greatest dreams, or they could one day be the source of our most frightening nightmares.