

## TRANSLATION FROM THE ORIGINAL HEBREW

2 Sivan 5780

The Honorable Chief Rabbi Rishon Letzion Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef, *shlit"א*,

In recent days, the Rav's comments were publicized differentiating between 'holy yeshivot' and those deemed not holy. According to the Rav, those yeshivot that complement Talmud study with science, arithmetic and English are involved in 'shtuyot' (nonsense.)

It is well-known that there is considerable disagreement within different Jewish communities on how to educate our youth (and young students) on how to pursue a life of Torah and service of Hashem. But it was deeply painful to hear how disagreement was denigrated to harsh attacks representing an outright insult on the integrity of scholars within the Religious Zionist community as well as our sons and daughters.

On the eve of Shavuot, we look back on the period of mourning for the scholars of Rabbi Akiva who died because they didn't respect each other, and the destruction of Speyer, Worms and Mainz during the First Crusade.

It is therefore that much more disheartening that during these very days, the Rav chose to publicly amplify a division within our people, to distance ourselves from our neighbors and intensify a sense of disunity within our community.

Recently, I have begun the honor of serving as the head of Ohr Torah Stone, an educational network composed of high schools, a yeshiva high school and ulpanot, yeshivot, seminaries, kollelim and rabbinical programs; all focused on a sincere and unwavering commitment to service of Hashem.

Based on my intimate understanding of our high schools, serving thousands of students from Kiryat Shemona to Eilat, I can attest to the breadth of knowledge and accomplishment in Torah study and on the remarkable Yirat Shamayim that defines our students and our educational staff.

From my very personal involvement with Ohr Torah Stone's Yeshivat Neveh Shmuel, I am deeply impressed by the dedication, intense study, and love that our students feel for Torah learning.

It is not simply that these schools are known as exemplars of excellence in general studies. Rather they are literally producing Talmedei Chachamim that choose to delve deep into the world of Torah study and students that continue their connection to Torah even as they enter into the greater world.

I certainly respect that the Rav can disagree with how we choose to teach and learn, and well-intentioned machlokot are an admirable aspect of our tradition. But it is unnecessary and unacceptable to disparage the holiness of our Batei Midrash.

Several decades ago, the Rav's father, Rav Ovadia Yosef, zt"l, travelled to the United States and visited Yeshiva University. There he met with Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. In the Beit Midrash, Rav Ovadia kissed and embraced Rabbi Soloveitchik warmly.

When the students asked Rav Ovadia, 'How can the Rav kiss and hug someone in a Beit Midrash (which is forbidden)?', Rav Ovadia responded that hugging Rav Soloveitchik is like kissing a Sefer Torah (which is permitted in a Beit Midrash). These were two giants of rabbinic scholarship, albeit from two very different worlds and schools of thought, but there was no dismissing the enormous respect one had for the other.

Many years have passed since that interaction, but I would humbly suggest that perhaps now is the time for a reminder of that sacred understanding. I would be honored to invite the Rav to come visit our Yeshivat Neveh Shmuel in the holy city of Efrat, where the Rav would be able to meet our students and appreciate our approach to Torah study that embraces people from many communities and walks of life. Of course, it would be an honor for us to hear a shiur from the distinguished Rav, to learn from his deep knowledge of Torah.

The Rav's visit to our yeshiva would help invigorate a sense of trust amongst our students in the institution of the Chief Rabbinate, something that has sadly eroded in recent years.

I very much hope that the Rav will seriously consider this invitation and enable us to reach out in a spirit of solidarity towards the world of our yeshiva high schools.

With sincere wishes and with the glory of the Torah,



Rabbi Kenneth Brander

President and Rosh HaYeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone