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“RABBI’S MUSINGS (& AMUSINGS)”

*Erev Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Shelach*

*22 Sivan 5777/ June 16, 2017 - Avos Perek 3*

*Mevorchim Chodesh Tamuz*

Back in the days when "being on line" meant you were in a store, and the web was something spiders wove, audio was recorded on cassette tapes. I grew up in that archaic world. I still have dozens of tapes containing recordings of schmoozen (Torah lectures) and shiurim from my years in yeshiva.

Recently, I purchased a device to transfer the recordings as MP3 files on my computer.
Aside from benefiting from the Torah thoughts shared my rabbeim, which I have largely forgotten, there is a great deal of nostalgia that I feel when listening to those lectures. I cannot help but remember where I was and at what stage of life I was, when hearing those lectures live over two decades ago.
Although we are still in denial that we are old enough to have a son heading to high school, our oldest son Shalom is graduating elementary school this week iyh. After the summer, he will enter Yeshiva Shaarei Torah, twenty years after his father graduated High School from there.

Two decades after leaving the yeshiva, a few of my classmates have begun discussing the twenty-year reunion we planned before we graduated.

It's amazing to see how our lives have progressed. Each of us have married and built families, chartering our own unique paths along the roads of life. Some of my classmates have led lives exactly as we predicted professionally and religiously. But there are a few who have shocked everyone, perhaps mostly themselves. Had you told them two decades ago what they were destined to accomplish, and who they would become, they would never have believed you.

I have more than one classmate, who during our high school years was not known for his diligence in learning, to say the least. Today they are scholars of note, with numerous students of their own. [One classmate in particular, has banned me from speaking to his children out of fear of the recollections I may share.]

During hallel, we state the pasuk: "The stone which the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone."

The commentators explain that Dovid Hamelech stated this verse about himself. He was the "stone" that was spurned and rejected, even by his own righteous father and brothers. They wrote him off as a simple-minded shepherd, surely not one worthy of the monarchy. Dovid Hamelech too, viewed himself in a similar vein, never daring to imagine the incredible destiny that awaited him. The rejected stone became the cornerstone, the source of strength for all eternity. "Dovid, king of Yisroel, alive and enduring."

Whenever we recite Hallel in yeshiva (such as on Chanukah or Rosh Chodesh) and recite the aforementioned verse, I look around at my students and wonder to myself to which of them will these words apply to. Who will be the student who will surprise us all by overcoming challenges and naysayers, transforming himself into a leader and/or scholar?

Part of being a parent and an educator is to have this sense of vision regarding our children. We must always be able to see beyond what the child is now, and to see what the child can become. It is only once we have that optimistic vision that we can hope to impart it to the child who may have given up on himself.

Noted psychologist, Dr. Robert Brooks, notes that for a child who struggles in school, the greatest thing you can give him is a sense of hope that life can and will be ether. During their school years, a child believes that school is a microcosm of life. He therefore often concludes that he will always have the same challenges and struggles that he currently has. For many children that sense of despondency is even worse than their academic struggles. Conveying to a child that many successful adults struggled mightily in school, and relating one’s own personal struggles, can be invaluable for the struggling student.

Twenty years later, things are often very different than how we expected, for good or for better.

Who better to serve as an example than Dovid Hamelech!

Shabbat Shalom & Good Shabbos,

 R’ Dani and Chani Staum