YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT DELIVERED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

PARASHAT KI TETZE

SICHA OF HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

In memory of Mr. Hy Rock z"l, father of Simcha Rock, grandfather of Yehuda Rock - by Judy and Lawrence Rosman.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

"The Words of Your Mouth You Shall Guard and Fulfill"

Summarized by Danny Orenbuch

"If you make a vow to the Lord your God you shall not tarry to fulfill it, for the Lord your God will require it from you and you will be found with sin. But if you refrain from making a vow then there shall be no sin with you. The words of your mouth shall you guard and fulfill, as you vowed to the Lord your God freely, which you spoke with your mouth." (Devarim 23:22-24)

 There are two positive and unique aspects to this parasha of vows: firstly, from a general perspective, we have before us a person who is ready and willing to take upon himself new tasks and obligations. Secondly, from a specific and subjective point of view, the obligations involved here pertain to Divine worship; by means of assuming new responsibilities this person aspires to reach greater spiritual heights. After all, after making his vow he becomes like a person who is commanded to act according to those new obligations, and as we know, "One who is commanded and fulfills is greater than someone who is not commanded but nevertheless fulfills."

 However, despite this positive description, our parasha also contains a great danger. For it is easy for a person to declare that he is taking on certain obligations, but often it becomes difficult to fulfill them, and the person - with all his good intentions - is then considered to have transgressed, as stipulated in the pesukim above.

 The same two aspects mentioned above exist in human nature as well. On one hand, man has a tendency towards conservatism - to maintain what exists, not to get involved in unnecessary obligations, not to complicate things and endanger himself. On the other hand, there is also a drive to push forward, to try new things, to conquer and to expand horizons.

 What, then, is the proper path that man should follow? Should he make vows and accept obligations upon himself, or is it better for him not to involve himself in unnecessary risks and rather simply to remain in his current situation and at his present level?

 There is no unequivocal answer to this question, and in fact the Gemara (Chullin 2a) records the following dispute:

"And as to that which is written, 'But if you refrain from making a vow then there shall be no sin with you,' and 'Better not to vow than to vow and not to fulfill' (Kohelet 5:4), we have learned that better than both is someone who never makes any vows at all - according to Rabbi Meir. Rabbi Yehuda says, better than both is someone who vows and fulfills."

 A person dare not remain static and rest on his laurels. He must continually strive higher, both in Torah and in other realms; he must set himself goals and then attain them. However, he must think about his goals carefully and set them at the appropriate level, in order that he will in fact be able to achieve the goals he sets for himself. If he sets himself goals that are too far removed from his abilities, then by not fulfilling them he faces a two-fold danger: on one hand, he could end up disdaining and scorning the goals he previously held in such high respect; on the other hand, he could suffer profound disappointment and spiritual crisis in the face of his inability to fulfill his tasks.

 A person who sets himself goals and tasks and fulfills them is certainly in the best position of all - even Rabbi Meir would agree. The golden rule is therefore to follow the directive of the pasuk: "The words of your mouth shall you guard and fulfill."

(Originally delivered at Seuda Shelishit, Shabbat Parashat Ki Tetze 5752.

Translated by Kaeren Fish.)