



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM
FROM THE PARSHAH

Torah is For Free

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בְּמִדְבַר סִינַי. (במדבר א, א)

Hashem spoke to Moshe in the wilderness of Sinai. (*Bemidbar* 1:1)

Why in the wilderness of Sinai? From here *Chazal* learned that the Torah was given in three things: in fire, in water and in the wilderness.... And why was it given in these three things? Just as these three things are for free to everyone in the world, so words of Torah are for free, as it says, "All who are thirsty, let them go to water¹." (*Bemidbar Rabbah* 1:7.)

1 *Yeshayahu* 55.

We ask for *Hashem* to give us Torah as a freewill gift. In *Birkas Ahavah Rabbah* we say: כן תחננו ותלמדנו, "Please bestow upon us a freewill gift and teach us." The word תחננו derives from the word חנים, which means "for free."

Also in the *Shemoneh Esreh*, when we ask *Hashem* for the mental faculties we need for Torah learning, we say: אתה חונן לאדם דעת וכו' חננו מאתך.

Why is this? Why do we ask for Torah in such an unusual way, as a free gift? Why don't we just say, "Please, *Hashem*, give us knowledge and understanding in Torah"?

It's because Torah is something no one could ever earn the right to or pay for. There never was and never will be a person whose deeds entitle him to receive Torah.

Moshe Rabbeinu himself proves the point. *Chazal* say:

No one is greater in good deeds than *Moshe Rabbeinu*.²

Nevertheless, it says in the *Midrash* that during the whole period of forty days and nights that Moshe

2 *Berachos* 32b.

was in heaven, he learned Torah and forgot it, until *Hashem* gave it to him as a gift.³

And *Chazal* describe *Kabbalas Hatorah* as follows:

Is there such a merchandise that the seller is sold along with it?! A person can give an object to his friend, but can he acquire its owner?!⁴

For instance, let's say you buy a car. You thereby acquire the car, but not the seller. The one who sold it to you does not become your personal driver...

Yet with the Torah, things are completely different:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to the Jewish people: I sold you My Torah, and, so to speak, I was sold along with it, as it says, ויקחו לי תרומה – “They will acquire Me through their donation.”⁵

Now, does *Hashem* have a price? If we could buy *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, how much would that cost? Obviously, all the money in the world could not buy the Creator of the World. So when the *Midrash* speaks of acquiring *Hashem*, of *Hashem* being “sold,” so to speak, it is not an ordinary sale; it is out of love.

When *Hashem* gave us the Torah, He thereby gave us Himself, so to speak. Because once the Torah was given to human beings, it is no longer in heaven. לא בשמים היא. From then on, the truth of Torah is decided by us.

How does *Hashem* give Himself?

This is not something we can really understand. It is a level of *deveikus* to *Hashem* that is beyond our comprehension. But we do know that *Chazal* say:

The Jewish people, the Torah and *Hakadosh*

Baruch Hu are one.⁶

And it says in *Shir Hashirim*:

ישקני מנשיקות פיהו – May He kiss me with the kisses of His **mouth**.⁷

This verse, speaking of kisses of the mouth, expresses an attachment of spirit to spirit.

Such is the level of attachment entailed by Torah learning:

כי ה' יתן חכמה מפיו דעת ותבונה – *Hashem* will give wisdom; from His **mouth** come knowledge and understanding.⁸

We similarly have no idea how great is the reward awaiting those who toil in Torah learning. We can't even comprehend it:

The *tzaddikim* are sitting with their crowns on their heads, enjoying the radiance of the *Shechinah*.⁹

This is a reality that no eye has ever seen, except for *Hashem's*.¹⁰

Such a wondrous giving, of a gift with such great value, could only come from the giver's overwhelming love for the recipient. It is a boundless love that brings the giver to look for any way he can to bestow good upon the recipient. The normal approach of *midah k'neged midah* could never produce such an exalted result.

An allegory illustrates the point. Let's say we see that someone has a very nice pen, so we ask him where he bought it. And if we see he has a really nice new car, we might ask him where he purchased it. But if we see him holding a giant diamond weighing fifty pounds,

6 *Zohar, Acharei Mos* 73a.

7 *Shir Hashirim* 1:2.

8 *Mishlei* 2:6.

9 *Berachos* 17a.

10 See *Yeshayahu* 64:3.

3 *Shemos Rabbah* 41:6.

4 *Ibid* 33:1.

5 *Ibid*.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נדיהם ~ עשרת הקנים בני בנים והפארת בנים אבותם

Subtract the Leviim, and...

וַיְהִי כֹל הַפְּקָדִים שֵׁשׁ מֵאוֹת אֶלֶף וּשְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים וַחֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת וַחֲמִשִּׁים: וְהַלְוִיִּם לְמִטָּה
אַבְתָּם לֹא הִתְּפָקְדוּ בְּתוֹכָם: (במדבר א, מו-מז)

All of those counted were six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty. And the Levites according to their fathers' clans were not counted among them. (*Bemidbar* 1:46–47)

All this counting might not seem so meaningful to us, but *Sefer Taam v'Daas* brings out an amazing point here.

In *Parshas Pekudei* it is recounted that all the men who went out with the army – כל יוצאי צבא – brought their half-shekel to donate to the *Mishkan*. And after it was all counted up, it amounted to the same number of people as here: 603,550. Rashi explains there that the census of *Parshas Pekudei* is not the same census as here. There, it was when they brought their donations for the *Mishkan*, and here, in *Parshas Bemidbar* it is after the *Mishkan* was erected.

And it came out exactly the same number.

But there was actually a big difference between the two countings. In *Parshas Pekudei*, the warriors of the whole Jewish people were counted, including those of the Tribe of Levi. But here, the *Levi'im* were separated to be holy to *Hashem*, and were counted separately. Also, the *Levi'im* were counted according to different criteria. The male *Levi'im* were counted from the age of one month and up, as opposed to the males of the other tribes, who were counted from the age of twenty years and up. Yet, it came out exactly the same number.

How?

During the six months between the two countings, the population of the other tribes increased by the same number as there were *Levi'im*. So when they counted the second time, without the *Levi'im*, it came out the same.

This teaches us an amazing thing. When the *Mishkan* was built and the *Levi'im* were dedicated to its service, we would have expected for the size

of the army to decrease, because an entire tribe was exempted from military service. The Torah shows us here that it is not so. When the *Levi'im* were separated and dedicated to *avodas Hashem*, it did not decrease the army at all. The number of fighting men remained exactly the same.

Hashem fills the lack, whether it be in quantity or in quality.

As we mentioned before, the *Levi'im* were counted from a much earlier age. As soon as they were a month old, their number was included in the census.

Why were they counted from such an early age?

Because the *Levi'im* were dedicated to *avodas Hamishkan*. Their dedication to Divine service required them to start at an early age. One doesn't wait until one is twenty years old to start serving *Hashem*.

The Rambam states¹ that the “tribe of Levi” in our times is those who dedicate their whole lives to Torah and *avodah*. Those who set themselves aside from all other pursuits, and only study Torah, are sanctified and separated like the *Levi'im* were.

This bears a message for parents as well. If they wish their sons to become great *talmidei chachamim*, and their daughters to become mothers of holy individuals, they need to start preparing the children from an early age.

Even more important, they need to remember that the *Levi'im* were not counted together with the rest of the people. Parents need to pay attention to who

¹ *Mishneh Torah*, end of *Hilchos Shemitah v'Yovel*.

their child is playing with, what he sees and where he goes. This is especially true in our generation, as the street is so full of indecency.

If a father lets his little boy go with his bike wherever his heart and eyes take him, he is placing in

danger his child's future membership in the "tribe of Levi." From the age of one month and up, the parent should separate him and guard him for the sake of *kedushah*, so the child will forever be *Hashem's* special portion. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

It is Great to Educate

וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת אֶהְרֵן וּמֹשֶׁה. (במדבר ג, א)

These are the descendants of Aharon and Moshe. (*Bemidbar* 3:1)

It mentions [after this] only the sons of Aharon. They are called the "descendants" of Moshe because he taught them Torah. This teaches us that anyone who teaches Torah to his friend's son, Scripture considers it as if he fathered him. (*Rashi*)

A False Feeling

It is a great thing to be one of those who teach Torah to Jewish children. It is so great that it is considered as if the children are theirs. Jewish educators don't always have enough appreciation for their own immense value.

In my opinion, one of the biggest problems of Torah educators is the constant feeling that they are "sandwiched."

I will explain what I mean by that.

A sandwich is a slice of bread on one side and a slice of bread on the other side with something hidden in the middle, such as peanut butter, for instance. A middle brother is often referred to as the "sandwich" brother. The idea is that a lot of attention goes to the big brother and the little brother, and the middle brother somehow gets lost between them.

It seems to me that many Torah educators, too, suffer from this problem. A carpenter or a welder or someone like that will typically see himself as a *baalabas*, a working man, and will thus be happy to participate in a *daf hayomi shiur*. Whereas *Talmidei chachamim* are wont to have higher aspirations. They want to know *Shas*, to do *shteigen* in learning...

What about the *mechanchim*, the Torah educators? They are somewhere in the middle. On the one hand, a *mechanech* might not feel comfortable joining the *daf hayomi shiur* with the working men. He doesn't see himself as a *baalabas*. On the other hand, he thinks that he is also not a *talmid chacham*; after all, he just a children's teacher. How can he finish all of *Shas*!?

In short, he is not a *talmid chacham* and not a *baalabas*. He does *melech hakodesh*, he has a sacred profession, and thinks he is therefore exempt from being a *gadol baTorah*, and he thinks

he is also exempt from the obligations of the *baalabas*, the working man. This misconception causes him to be stuck for years upon years somewhere in the middle. He doesn't make progress and grow to higher levels.

And this is a very big practical problem.

Be a Gadol

The public in general has the same feeling regarding *melamdim*, Torah educators. The *melamdim* are seen as being stuck in the middle somewhere between the working man and the *talmid chacham*. As a result, they are seen as sort of second-class. They are not *yeshivah* drop-outs by any means, but they are also not people who sit in *Kollel* or become *Rabbanim* and *Roshei Yeshivos*.

They are “sandwiched.”

This is a false and mistaken outlook, and it cuts out a good slice from the Jewish people. In the *Gemara* we see that *melamdim* were *Gedolei Yisrael*. R. Chiya, who was the greatest *Tanna* of his generation, served as a teacher of children.¹ And there were other *melamdim* who were great *Tannaim*. Also the *melamdim* in our generation need to become *Gedolei Yisrael* in every aspect. They are not exempt.

In order to teach *Gemara* in a class, you need to be a *lamdan* on the same level required to give a *shiur* in *beis midrash*. To teach *Chumash*, and to imbue children with true *yiras Shamayim*, even if they are just in kindergarten, you need to be *Gedolei Yisrael*. This is the truth and there is no doubt about it.

I myself know *melamdim* (I have my own children in *cheder*) and among them are some who truly have the potential to become *Gedolei Torah*. The only reason they don't develop as they should is that they themselves don't realize it. They don't feel the obligation. They have everything it takes to become *Gedolim b'Yisrael*,

except that they feel they are exempt from it.

Learn Every Day

A Torah educator needs to know that even if he spends his day teaching little children their first *pesukim* in *Chumash*, he needs to set aside for himself an hour to learn *daf hayomi*. We were given a pure *neshamah* by *Hashem*. We can't leave this world without learning (or at least going through) *Seder Kodshim*, *Seder Taharos*, *Seder Zera'im* and other deep subjects in *Shas*.

Daf Hayomi is a brilliant idea. It is a tremendous thing. It enables a Jew to acquire knowledge in all areas of *Shas*. It is not the right thing for everyone, but for the majority it is a great blessing and carries a lot of advantages.

Everyone must learn *Shas*. We believe and know that our soul is perfect and complete, and the Torah, too, is perfect and complete. Our soul needs the whole Torah. Every *daf Gemara* we are lacking will cause us to have a defect that will last for eternity.

We won't be able to say to *Hashem*, “What did You expect from me? I am just a children's teacher,” because, as we explained, *Hashem* will have two things to say in reply. First of all, even if you are “just” a children's teacher, you still have an obligation to know the whole Torah. And second, there is no such thing as “just” a children's teacher.

Learning *daf hayomi* is a wonderful framework that brings a person to learn subjects that he never would have gotten to if he didn't participate in the *shiur*. It is simply untenable for a Jewish soul not to know the meaning of **בטל ברוב**, not to know what is **חולין** and what is **הקדש** and so on. How can a Jewish *neshamah* leave the world without knowing these concepts?

The learning must, of course, be in as much depth as possible. We can't be superficial.

However, the *Gemara* says:

Said Rava: A person should always learn

¹ See *Bava Metzia* 85b.

the words, גורס, even if he forgets and even if he doesn't know what he is saying. For it says, גִּרְסָה נִפְשִׁי לְתַאֲבָה – “My soul broke it into pieces, out of appetite.”² It says גרסה, “broke it into pieces,” and does not say טחנה, “ground it up.”³

Torah learning is compared here to eating wheat kernels. One can't swallow whole wheat kernels, i.e., one cannot just mouth the words of the Torah with zero understanding. But it is also not necessary to grind them up into fine flour, i.e., to gain a thorough and detailed understanding. If you just break the wheat kernel into two or four pieces, it is edible.

To get to an “edible” level of knowledge and understanding, a person needs to review the *daf* at night, and that requires a lot of *mesirus nefesh*.

In my opinion, joining a *daf yomi shiur* is a tremendous thing, but the learner needs to know that it is not so simple and easy. Understanding and growth don't come by themselves. Love of Torah is hard work:

כִּי עֵזָה כְּמוֹת אֶהְבֶּה קָשָׁה כְּשֹׂאֵל קִנְיָה –
Love is as fierce as death; zealotry is as
harsh as hell.⁴

There are plenty of difficulties and disruptions involved with learning *daf hayomi*. Seven years is a very long period. All sorts of things come up that get in the way of our learning, and sometimes we are tired out, and sometimes we might even feel like quitting. But fortunate is the person who sticks with it. He will see success, *bezras Hashem*.

2 *Tehillim* 119:20.

3 *Avodah Zarah* 19a.

4 *Shir Hashirim* 8:6.

A Teacher's Mouth is Holy

Chazal have another amazing thing to say about *melamdim*:

Whoever teaches Torah to the son of an ignorant man, even if *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* makes a decree, He cancels it for him, as it says, וְאִם תּוֹצִיא יָקָר מְזוּלָל כְּפִי תִהְיֶה – “If you bring something precious out from something cheap, you will be like My mouth⁵.”⁶

The *melamed's* mouth is holy; it is compared to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu's* mouth.

Once I saw one of the great Torah lecturers walking by, and I went up to him to ask for a *berachah*. I saw that he was a little surprised, so I explained myself. I said that he is involved with “bringing something precious out from something cheap.” He speaks to people with weak Jewish backgrounds and draws them to Torah observance. If so, he has the *segulah* of “you will be like My mouth.” He can even overturn *Hashem's* decrees.

Torah educators need to know that even teaching little children is a matter of “bringing something precious out from something cheap.” The mouth of the *melamdim* that teaches Torah to pure Jewish children is a channel of *kedushah*, and for this reason, they have the power of, “you will be like My mouth.”

Torah educators should therefore remember to always be a *saneigor* for the Jewish people, to defend them and present them in a good light, and to *daven* for *Klal Yisrael* that we should soon merit the *Geulah Sheleimah*. ●

5 *Yirmeyahu* 15:19.

6 *Bava Metziah* 85a.