



YOUR WAY IN LEARNING TORAH

דע את תורתך הדרכה מעשית דרכי הלימוד

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01 | *Early Stages of Torah Learning*

The Mitzvah To Speak and Think of Torah

It is our merit here to learn, with *siyata d'shmaya*, about the fundamentals of learning Torah, and the *avodah* of a person regards the ways of *iyun* (in-depth study) of the words of Torah. We will attempt, with assistance from Heaven, to begin from the very first steps, and solely, we will try, with *siyata d'shmaya*, to gain more direction, towards the *sugyos* (sections of Gemara) which we learn.

When a person is born, it is not within his capability to develop the power to study the words of Torah. In order to learn Torah, one needs to develop two different abilities of the soul: the ability to speak words of Torah, and the ability to think about words of Torah. Some of the *Rishonim* are of the opinion that besides for the *mitzvah* to speak in the words of Torah, there is also a separate *mitzvah* to think about words of Torah, and not just to speak of Torah. There is a dispute in the *Poskim* if thinking words of Torah is a *mitzvah* or not. In any case, the *mitzvah* of Torah study divides into two parts: **speaking** and **thinking** about the words of Torah.

When a person is born, he does not have the capability to learn. He can barely think. All he can do is make sounds and cry. He can't even talk. It is not possible for him to study Torah then. One of the Sages, when he was infant, was placed by his mother in a crib in the *Beis Midrash*, so that the words of Torah could enter his ears, but a person cannot actually learn Torah when he is in infant, because he cannot speak or think.

The *mitzvah* of learning Torah is not possible for a child, because the Rambam defines the *mitzvah* of learning Torah as learning the "wisdom" of the Torah and the *mitzvos*, meaning that one learns the Torah in order to know how to do the *mitzvos*. This isn't possible for a child, because a child isn't able to learn for the purpose of knowing how to act, for a child isn't obligated to do the *mitzvos*.

That is the outline here. To summarize, when a person is born, he cannot speak words of Torah. He can make sounds, but he can't speak, and this isn't enough to learn Torah. According to some opinions, there is a *mitzvah* to think words of Torah, and this isn't either possible for a child. A child cannot either learn Torah in order to know how to act properly, because he is not yet obligated in the *mitzvos*.

At a later point in childhood, the father is obligated to teach Torah to his child. The Gemara¹ says that as soon as a child knows how to talk, the father should teach him the verse "*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe*" ("The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe"), and the first verse of the *Shema*, which

¹ *Succah 42a*

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is, “*Shema, Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad*” (Hear, Yisrael, that Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one”). This is the beginning stage of learning the words of Torah. The child himself is not yet obligated in learning Torah, and it is the father’s obligation to teach Torah to his child.

Is The Elementary Stages of Learning Torah Also Included In The Mitzvah of Learning Torah?

As the child develops further, he can begin to understand more, and the father teaches him to say the words in front of him. At this stage, though, the child still doesn’t understand what he is saying. He doesn’t understand the meaning of the words “*Shema Yisrael*”. The question is: Is this merely a preparatory stage for the child, or is it part of the *mitzvah* of learning Torah?

The *sefarim* discuss if one fulfills the *mitzvah* of Torah learning just by reading the words of Torah, without understanding it. In some places in Eretz Yisrael, there are those who have the custom to learn from a *sefer Torah* even without understanding at all what they are saying. This is certainly a *segulah* (a mystical remedy) to the words of Torah, but does a person also fulfill the *mitzvah* of Torah study like this? Usually, a person will understand a little of what he is reading, but in a case where he truly does not understand anything he is reading, does he fulfill a *mitzvah* of Torah study, or not?

From the words of our blessed teachers, it seems to depend on what the definition of Torah study is. The Rambam says that the *mitzvah* of learning Torah is to “study the light of the wisdom of Torah”, and it is unclear if this means to learn with understanding or not. If “learning” the Torah means to learn it with understanding, it seems that a child who is being taught Torah is not actually learning Torah, because he doesn’t understand it. If that is true, not only isn’t the child getting a *mitzvah* of Torah study (and this is beside the fact that he isn’t obligated in the first place), but even the father or teacher isn’t getting a *mitzvah* of teaching Torah, because the father/teacher himself doesn’t understand what he’s saying. There is still an obvious point to teaching the child Torah, though, because it is certainly a preparation towards learning Torah. But if there is no understanding of the material, neither the child nor the father/teacher is getting a *mitzvah* of Torah study.

So, back to the question: When a father teaches Torah to his son, such as when he teaches him Shema Yisrael, is he getting a *mitzvah* of Torah study, or is it simply a *mitzvah* of *chinuch* (child education) that he has towards his son? He is certainly training the child to do *mitzvah* of Torah study. But is there an actual fulfillment here of the *mitzvah* to study Torah? It depends if the *mitzvah* requires understanding or not. But even if there is no *mitzvah*, it is the beginning of one’s connection to Torah.

It is also explained in the Gemara that a child should be taught Torah from the age he knows how to talk. This is when a person should teach the child the verse of *Shema Yisrael* and *Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe*. There is also an additional stage, which the *Rema* says to do, based on the ruling of the *Rishonim*: When a child turns three years of age, the custom is to begin to teach Torah to him, by teaching him the letters of the *aleph beis*. This custom is practiced today as well. At the age of

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three, a child is taught the *aleph beis*. But this is already a later stage of teaching Torah to the child. There must be a first stage which came before this: to teach him *Shema Yisrael* and *Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe*.

Teaching The Oral Torah Must Precede Teaching Written Torah

There is a fundamental difference between these two stages. The Torah consists of the Written Torah [Chumash] and the Oral Torah [Mishnayos and Gemara]. Which should precede the other? When one begins to teach Torah to his child, what should he teach him first, the Written Torah or the Oral Torah?

A child who begins to talk is usually before the age of three, and we first teach him *Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe* and *Shema Yisrael*. This is in the category of Oral Torah, not the Written Torah, because we are first teaching him these verses by heart, before he knows how to read. Later when he turns three, the *Rema* says that we begin to teach him the letters of the *aleph beis* and how to read them. Here we are teaching him the Written Torah.

When we teach him *aleph beis*, is this also a *mitzvah* of Torah study? Or is it only a preparation towards Torah study? Without understanding the letters of the *aleph beis*, a person cannot read Torah. If he cannot read Torah, he cannot understand it. So is teaching the letters of the *aleph beis* a part of learning Torah, or is it merely a preparatory stage? Certainly the letters of the *aleph beis* are the words of Torah, and therefore, we can define the letters of the *aleph beis* as a part of learning the words of Torah.

To summarize thus far, there are two beginning stages of learning Torah with a child. The first stage is when a child begins to talk, when he is taught two verses: *Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe*, and *Shema Yisrael*. This is in the category of Oral Torah, because it is by heart. The second step is when the child is taught letters of the *aleph beis*.

Teaching Nekudos (Pronunciation) To The Child

In order for the child to pronounce each letter properly, he must be taught the *nekudos* (enunciation). The child is first taught the letter *aleph*, and how the letters *aleph*, *lamed* and *pei* form the letter *aleph*, and how the letters *beis*, *yud* and *tav* form the letter *beis*, etc. This is called pronouncing the *miluy* (the full spelling) of the letter.

The truth is that at this stage, the child does not yet understand what he is saying. But he is trained to say letters and words, with their correct pronunciation. We begin to teach him the shape of the letters, how to pronounce each letter and how they combine to form words, and how the words are pronounced, with their *nekudos*.

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When we teach the *nekudos* to the child, he is usually not yet made aware of what he is learning. He is beginning his Torah learning by learning of abstract concepts that are still mysterious to him. This is what leads to most of the errors in one's Torah learning. If he was first being taught how to understand what he learns, he would first absorb it with understanding, and although he can still make mistakes, at least he is first learning how to understand. But since he is beginning from an abstract, mysterious kind of learning, he is first being taught how to pronounce letters and words, but without any awareness at all, of what he is doing. A child, in his first stage of learning Torah, begins to pronounce words, but he is not aware at all of what he is saying. So the child is beginning his Torah learning from a place that is above his *daas* (understanding).

There is certainly a gain in this, because “the purpose of knowledge is to know that we do not know”, [meaning that there is an area outside of the scope of *daas* (understanding), a simplistic level of not trying to understand, which, from a spiritual viewpoint, is on a higher level than *daas*\understanding].

However, we ask Hashem each day that “we and our children should “know” Your Name, and learn Your Torah for its sake”, and this implies knowing the Torah. This causes a difficulty. A child is beginning his Torah learning with ambiguity, and he also begins to do *mitzvos* without awareness. Just as there is a *bris* done to the body without the child's awareness, so is the Torah a *bris* which we first do without awareness. We begin Torah learning from ambiguity, and not from understanding. However, since our Torah learning begins with an absence of awareness, our clarity in Torah learning is negatively affected, as a result.

Our task is to recognize all of the stages we have been through until now. We need to return to our childhood stage of learning and begin everything from the start, as if we have never begun. We need to return to this elementary stage of non-awareness in our Torah learning, and we also need to return to there with a newfound understanding. In this way, we gain two beginning points in the soul (as a hint, the word *beraishis* means *beis raishiyos*, two beginnings): to begin from the place of non-awareness, and to begin from *daas*\understanding.

To summarize until now, there are two stages of Torah learning – Oral Torah and Written Torah. These are stages that need to be traversed in the soul. A child usually begins either of these stages of Torah learning without any understanding\awareness at all.

Teaching Peirush HaMilim (Meaning of Words) To The Child

At a later stage, a child is taught the meaning of words. The Gemara says that at the age of 6 or 7, a child is brought to a classroom where he can be taught Torah from a *rebbe*. He is first taught *peirush hamilim*, the meaning of words. The child is taught to understand what he is saying.

This is where actual Torah learning begins. If a child is taught the words “Abba” and “Ima” and the teacher intends for the *mitzvah* of teaching Torah, then the teacher fulfills a *mitzvah* of teaching Torah. Without specific intention for the *mitzvah*, there is no *mitzvah* of Torah fulfilled here, if the

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child is just being taught words. It would be no different than how the gentiles teaching words to the children in a classroom.

One should not try to advance any stage onto a child before he is ready. The Rambam says that a child should be taught more and more verses of the Torah, after he is taught *Shema* and *Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe*, until the age of 6 or 7, when he can be taught the meaning of words. But the child should not be taught to understand Torah before 6 or 7.

When the child is taught the meaning of words, this is where understanding begins. This is where the actual *mitzvah* of learning Torah begins, according to all views.

We ask Hashem each day, “And give to our hearts understanding, to understand and comprehend.” There are levels of understanding. The Gemara says that a person should divide his Torah learning three-fold: a third of his time for *Mikra* (studying verses of the Chumash), a third for *Mishnah*, and a third for *Talmud* (Gemara).²

The first part, *Mikra*, is to study written verses of the Torah. *Mishnah* is to understand the laws contained in these verses, which are collected in the *Mishnayos*. The *Talmud* means to understand these laws [via the study of Gemara]. This is stated by the Rambam and also in *Shulchan Aruch*. But where does the first stage of understanding begin? We first begin by trying to understand the meaning of words, *peirush hamilim*.

We need to understand this well: when a child is taught the meaning of words, there are some children who understand better, either due to the child himself, or because of the teacher, or because of other external reasons. When the child gets older and matures, what happens? Many people do not understand the meaning of words when they read them. They have a general idea of what they are reading, but they do not actually understand the meaning of the words. They may be able to read a paragraph and even explain well what is written there, but if they were to try and take apart the words, each word by itself, what each words means, they would not be clear at all of what they are saying.

This problem may be manifest in studying the grammar of *Lashon HaKodesh*, and in others, the problem is manifest when they learn Gemara. In either case, an important stage has been skipped. In the case of Gemara, perhaps the child could not understand Aramaic words and what they meant, and he was only taught paragraphs, not how to read individual words.

P'shat – Understanding The Simple Meaning

Understanding the meaning of words is the first step (of understanding in Torah learning) which must be traversed. Previously we discussed stages which do not require understanding on the child's part. Now we are discussing a stage of Torah learning which requires the ability of understanding.

² *Kiddushin 30b, Rambam Hilchos Talmud Torah 1:12, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 246:4*

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The Gemara says that one should teach his child *Mikra*, verses of the *Chumash*, and what does this mean? It means to teach the *p'shat*, the simple meaning, of the verse.

What defines teaching *p'shat*? The first step is to teach the meaning of the words, and the second step is to combine the words together so that one gains the *p'shat*, a general understanding, of what is being said. This requires a bit of understanding. Although this part seems simple to most people, anyone who knows a lot of people is aware that a large percentage of people skip this stage: knowing the meaning of words.

Here is an example. A person each week will recite the weekly Torah portion twice with the translation (*shnayim mikra v'echad Targum*) – according to some *Poskim*, one can recite *Rashi* instead of *Targum Onkelos*, if he does not understand the *Targum Onkelos*. But in either case, a person who makes sure to fulfill this obligation each week trains himself to simply recite words, and he doesn't understand most of them. There are Aramaic words in the Gemara, in the *Targum Onkelos*, in the *Targum Yehonasan*, and in the *Targum Yerushalmi*. People are usually not familiar with these Aramaic words. Sometimes the words are archaic, and sometimes the words are just unfamiliar to the reader.

Many people do not understand, for example, the words of *Akdamus Milin* [a liturgy recited on Shavuot morning, according to the Ashkenazic custom]. Now there is a translation of it which enables people to follow the words as it is being read. But people generally do not understand the words, because they are simply not familiar with these words. Even someone who is familiar with learning Gemara, which is in Aramaic, has a hard time understanding the Aramaic words of *Akdamus Milin*. The same goes for *Talmud Yerushalmi* – people are generally unfamiliar with many of the words in it, making it difficult to read, even for those who know how to read the Aramaic words of the Gemara (*Talmud Bavli*).

In any case, when a person recites *Shnayim Mikra* each week and he doesn't understand what he's saying – either for the most part, or even if it's only partially - he gets used to the habit of reciting many words he doesn't understand. This continues the problem of superficially reading Torah without understanding what one is saying, a problem that began in his childhood, in his first stages of Torah learning.

A Faulty Method In Education Today - Teaching Through Stories

Going further with this issue, children today are generally not introduced to Torah learning through in-depth Torah learning. First they are taught the meaning of words, and then phrases and sentences – and often, they are being taught in “story” format. In the times of the Gemara, children were first taught *Chumash Vayikra*, which are entirely laws, and nowadays children are first taught *Chumash Beraishis*, which are stories. That means that children are beginning their Torah learning with stories. In most cases, a child is beginning his actual Torah learning by way of stories, and not by way of understanding.

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As soon as the child is taught the meaning of the words, he is then taught sentences or phrases, and there becomes less emphasis on knowing the meaning of each word. He is taught sentences and phrases, without knowing the meaning of each individual word, and this causes a great impediment in his Torah learning. And even if he is being taught every word, he is first taught *sefer Beraishis*, which are stories, and the child's soul is first introduced to understanding the Torah by way of stories [as opposed to analytical thinking and taking apart the information].

As a result of this, we can see even adults who come on Friday night to listen to storytellers. Many people – in fact, most – are drawn to this style of learning. A story is told over, where an important lesson can be gleaned from. But often, the soul of a person becomes more attached with the story itself, and in its many details, rather than with the lesson.

Some people even learn a *sugya* of Gemara and try to understand it in the same way that they hear stories. Instead of trying to understand the concepts of the *sugya* and analyzing each word, they are trying to understand the general picture of the information, as if they are trying to glean lessons from a story.

This problem happens because a person has skipped the stage of trying to understand each word whenever he was taught something. Even if he understood each word, he has still skipped the stage of understanding the simple meaning of a phrase, because he was immediately taught a story about the word or phrase, without trying to analyze the actual word or phrase at hand.

Children today are taught a section of the *parshah*, by way of a story. The child is given a story to read, based on a lesson from the *parshah*. With girls, the issue is much worse, because they are taught this way throughout all of their school years, unlike boys, who go to *yeshivah* and learn different styles of learning, which enable them to mature past the “story” level of understanding things. The girls who are taught by way of stories acquire the habit of reading stories throughout their entire life, reading another story, and another story. In either case, though, the child strongly remains with an understanding by way of stories. The elementary stage of thinking for a child is first acquired through stories, as opposed to really thinking and analyzing and taking apart the information.

In Summary and In Conclusion

We have so far discussed the developmental process of learning Torah, which begins before learning the words of Abaye and Rava in the Gemara. These elementary steps become deeply engraved in the soul, and they have bearings on a person's entire life - some more and some less. These are stages that the soul traverses, in the beginning of learning Torah. When a child is later taught Gemara, his understanding of the Gemara will be based on whatever level of grasp he has acquired before then, from his earlier stages of childhood.

If we merit it, we shall learn in the coming lessons how these elementary stages contribute to a person's entire developmental process of learning Torah, and how it can affect a person long into adulthood [and how one can repair the issues].

02 | *Binah – Connecting Abstract Information*

A Child's Development of the Soul's Abilities

We will continue, with the help of Hashem, to discuss the ways of learning Torah. In the previous lesson, we explained briefly the structure of the early steps of Torah learning. We explained about the elementary stages of Torah learning, from when a child is first taught Torah, until the stage of learning *Mishnayos*. So far, we have not yet explained about how to learn Torah orally. Now that we have given the outline, we can try to get a little further into these matters.

In another series³, we have elaborated at length about the general description of the abilities of the soul: the power of *havayah* (“existence”), *emunah* (faith), *taanug* (pleasure), *chochmah* (wisdom), *binah*, or *hisbonenus* (contemplation\reflection), the *middos* (character traits or emotions), and action.

The root of power of the soul is *havayah*, existence. It is concealed and hidden. A person can definitely have a sense of it, but only weakly. For the most part, this deep power in the soul remains concealed from a person's awareness.

After the highest point in the soul, *havayah*, are the second-to-highest abilities in the soul, which include *emunah* (believing), and *taanug* (pleasure). These abilities are more consciously revealed. A person is aware of *taanug* already from his first day. Chazal compare the words of Torah to a child nursing from its mother. This is pleasure for a child. A child is also in touch somewhat with *emunah*, because he has a blind faith in his mother, that she will give him all of his needs. A child is entirely dependent on his parents, because his power of *emunah* is very active.

After *emunah* and *taanug*, the next-to-highest power in the soul is *ratzon*, the will. This is also very much revealed in a child. When a child wants something and he doesn't get it, he cries. When the child cries, it is very apparent that he wanted something badly. So a child's *ratzon* is very active.

[In summary, the power of *havayah* is not that revealed in a child, but the powers of *emunah*, *taanug* and *ratzon* are very much revealed already at a young age].

The Child's First Exposure to the Abilities of Chochmah and Binah

After *ratzon*, the next-to-highest power in the soul, *chochmah* (wisdom), is not that revealed in a child, as mentioned earlier. Although human beings are designed “with wisdom”, with *chochmah*,

³ refer to *Getting To Know Your Soul*

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there is basically almost no access to *chochmah* yet when one is at a young age. It is very hidden. When a child begins to talk and his father teaches him that the Torah was commanded to us from Moshe, and he is also taught *Shema Yisrael*, that is when the child can begin to perceive what *chochmah* is.

After the ability of *chochmah* begins to become gradually open for the child, the child also is introduced to a deeper ability of thinking, which is called *binah* (understanding).

There are several aspects to the ability of *binah*. It comes from the word *hisbonenus*, to reflect, and it also comes from the word *binyan*, “building”, to combine together different thoughts. An additional aspect of *binah* is called *tziyur*, to picture. When we build anything, we need a certain picture (*tziyur*, or *tzurah*) of what we want to build, so that we can carefully plan it out with thought. To illustrate, any carpenter will first formulate some kind of picture of what the future building will look like, and only then does he begin to build it.

To summarize, there are three uses of *binah*: the ability to combine together different information, the ability to picture information, and the ability to reflect deeper into the information.

Only after a child’s ability of *chochmah* becomes opened, can his ability of *binah* also begin to open. We have so far explained the outline, and now we will explain more about this developmental process, with *siyata d’shmaya*.

We mentioned before the abilities of *havayah*, *emunah*, *taanug* and *ratzon*, in order to complete the “picture” here, but we will mainly be explaining here about the abilities of *chochmah* and *binah*. A child’s ability of *chochmah* slowly begins to become revealed as he grows and matures, and then his ability of *binah* can slowly develop.

How does *binah* become revealed? It was mentioned that there are three parts to *binah* – reflecting, combining, and picturing. Which of these does a child first develop?

The three primary abilities of the soul are action, speech, and thought. The Vilna Gaon said that there are three different kinds of intellect: to think about doing an action (*seichel haMaasi*), to think about what one will say (*seichel haDiburi*), and to intellectualize (*seichel haIyuni*). A child is given toys to play with, such as playing blocks and various pieces which he combines together.

At first the child will simply move around the objects, for the simple enjoyment of moving things around. (On a deeper level, this represents the hidden level of the Torah, which is called *shaashuim*, “delight”, the simple joy of a child, which represents the deep delight in Torah learning. This is a much deeper point than what we will explain about here.) At a later stage, the child begins to combine the toys together. First he will create different combinations of toys together, without trying to form anything in particular. Slowly he will begin to understand that he can combine the pieces together to form something.

Once he begins combining pieces together, he will slowly begin to think more about what he is building. This is his first exposure to the ability of *hisbonenus* (reflection) that is *binah*, and even

though at this point it is mostly hidden from the child, it is still beginning to become revealed. The child has begun to be aware of how to combine and connect things together to form a certain structure. After that the child slowly begins to become more creative, for he has become aware that it is possible to create, either by combining or taking apart. He is beginning to think more.

At this point, the child is still only at the stage of *seichel haMaasi* – he is only using his ability to think in order to get something done. He hasn't yet been taught Torah. After the child begins to use his mind in order to do things, the child begins to talk, and that is when he is first taught Torah. At first the child will simply pronounce sounds, and his pronunciation will not be accurate. This is because although he has begun to combine information, he hasn't yet refined this ability. Although he has begun to grasp how to combine things together, he isn't consciously aware that he is using the ability to combine, so he still will not know how to combine properly. That is why he can't pronounce accurately yet.

Maaseh Beraishis (Raw Information) and Maaseh Merkavah (Combined Information)

The ability to keep information separate from the other is called *maaseh beraishis* (lit. “the story of creation”) - to first formulate the information without combining it with other information. The ability to combine together information is referred to as *maaseh merkavah* (lit. “the story of the Holy Chariot”), the idea of complexity. Although *maaseh merkavah* is a term that implies an esoteric view from the higher spiritual realms, it also exists as a way of thinking, when a person combines together information. When a child begins to combine together different objects, this is a subtle use of the ability of complex thinking, *maaseh merkavah*.

In different terms which mean the same thing, *maaseh beraishis* corresponds to *chochmah*, while *maaseh merkavah* corresponds to *binah*. As a hint, the *Targum Onkelos* translates the word “*Beraishis*” as “*b'chochmasa*,” “with wisdom”, alluding to how *maaseh beraishis* is identified as *chochmah*. As for the other kind of thinking, *maaseh merkavah*, the root word here is *merkavah*, and the root letters of this word are the Hebrew letters *beis*, *chof* and *reish*, which are all products of the number 2 (*beis* is equal to 2, *chof* is equal to 20, and *reish* is equal to 200). The number 2 is the root of all combinations, [because two is a combination of one and one].

As explained earlier, *harkavah* (complexity) is an ability that a child first begins to develop in the area of actions. Later the child begins to combine words together, with the ability of speech. But on a subtle level, a child also begins to develop the power to create (*maaseh beraishis*), as soon as he is given objects to play with, using the sense of touch. The child feels each object by itself, before learning how to combine one object with another. In the area of speech as well, first a child develops *maaseh beraishis* before *harkavah*. First the child hears sounds and discerns them, and later the child learns how to follow the sequence of the sounds, combining them together, where he will understand words and sentences.

Of course, every sound is complex. Everything in Creation is a combination of different factors together. But when a child first hears sounds, such as when he hears his parents talking to him, he only has *chochmah* and he doesn't have yet *binah*, so he perceives the sounds on a very simple level. The child doesn't yet have the ability to take apart information, so he is hearing a simple, undifferentiated level of sound. Slowly he will begin to understand different combinations of sounds, but until he develops the power of *binah*, any combinations that he does perceive will not be precisely understood.

We shall repeat this once again because it is very important. A child in the beginning stages of development can only hear things on a simple level. The child will hear a raw piece of information, and this perception is called *chochmah*, the simple level of knowing. When a child hears several sounds and words together, the child is unaware that he is hearing something a bit complex. The child also expresses this in the way he talks. When a child begins to talk, the words are mixed and cannot be properly connected together to form a sentence.

Certainly there is some degree of complexity even in the child's first words, but the child hasn't yet been opened to think in a complex way yet, so this will be expressed in one-word phrases which he cannot connect together with others words. As the child matures, slowly he begins to uncover the power of *binah*.

The Reason Behind Imprecise Thinking

If the above has been understood, we can now arrive at a deeper understanding, of what will result from this concept. It was a point mentioned earlier, and now it will become clearer, with *siyata d'shmaya*.

There are many mature adults who are able to think very well, but they will only have a general grasp on a matter, without thinking into the complexities involved and without gaining a precise understanding of a matter. They don't take apart the different factors involved. Sometimes this can happen when people simply don't pay attention to details. Sometimes it is because people will skip a detail, or they will make a false connection between one detail and another and drawn an erroneous conclusion. What is the root of this problem? It started in one's childhood: when one developed his ability of *chochmah*, but he never developed his ability of *binah*.

Chazal state there if there is no *chochmah*, there is no *binah*, and if there is no *binah*, there is no *chochmah*.⁴ This is a problem that begins with developing *chochmah* without revealing any *binah*. The result will be that one's thinking will be off-mark and imprecise, and it will become a firmly rooted habit in the person, to think in an imprecise manner.

Of course, a person can certainly change this. But our point here is to show that a child will usually develop *chochmah* without *binah*, and this becomes his "*girsas d'yankusa*" – "the way that one

⁴ Avos 3:7

learned as a child”⁵ - and what happens? There are many people who, as adults, are weak in their ability of *binah*. Their ability of *chochmah* is far stronger than their *binah* [and this causes an imbalance in their thinking: they will grasp a concept or idea in very general terms, without taking apart the matter and seeing the details involved].

There can also be another reason for this. It can be because there are different roots of souls, and therefore some people have more *chochmah* developed in their souls, whereas others will have more *binah*, by the very nature of their souls. Or, a person may have developed the problem from a previous lifetime. This is certainly what to discuss about that, but here we are talking about when the issue developed from childhood, where a person never learned how to take apart things when he was a child, he never learned how to combine things together, so he never learned how to be creative. As a child, he never learned how to reflect. The result is that the child never developed the ability of *binah*.

That is why many people think using only *chochmah*, but with no *binah*, which results in an imprecise thinking process. When a person uses *chochmah* and his thinking is not balanced enough with *binah*, a person will not be able to properly combine thoughts together. The combined thoughts will be off their mark.

Developing Your Child's Thinking

Practically speaking, we need to implement the following exercise for children, in order to avoid the above issue. There are gentiles who taught this as well, and they reached the right conclusion, so it would be an example of “Wisdom is among the nations.”⁶ Children should be given toys to play with so that they learn how to combine the toys together and make different structures out of them. This will introduce the child to develop a more complex and precise kind of thinking, the ability of *binah*.

Playing with toys involves the realm of action, but there is also the realm of speech, which a child will also need to learn how to become more precise in. The Gemara says that when you teach Torah to your children, the “words of Torah should be sharpened in your mouth”, to the extent that if someone would ask a question about it, you can give a clear answer on it.⁷ This is true on different levels. We need to do so that we can have clarity in our Torah knowledge, so that we are clear about it in our thoughts. This aspect is discussed in *halachah*. Here we are mentioning an additional reason why. It is because there is a more developmental problem if a person isn't “sharp” about his Torah learning.

On a subtle level, even by Moshe Rabbeinu we find that he had “*k'vad peh*”, his “mouth was heavy upon him”. However, this flaw in his speech was rectified at the giving of the Torah, the

⁵ Talmud Bavli Shabbos 21b

⁶ Eichah Rabbah 2:13

⁷ Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 30b

fiftieth day after the exodus, which corresponds to the “50 Gates of Understanding”, which repairs everything.

The Sages are saying that “the words of Torah should be sharp (*mec’hu-dadin*) in your mouth”, and the simple implication of the word *mec’hu-dadin*, “sharp”, is from the word “*chad*”, “one”. When a person keeps each matter separate from another and he is careful not to mix together two different concepts, this is called *mec’hu-dadin*. However, a person will not develop the power of *binah* in this way, because, as it was mentioned before, a person develops *binah* through *harkavah* complexity, which a child develops slowly through pronouncing sounds, letters, words, phrases, sentences, etc.

Katnus Sheini: A “Second Childhood” - The Concept of Returning To and Repairing Our Childhood Stage of Learning

We should understand that almost all people, without exception, have skipped an important stage of analytical development in their childhood. We have begun to mention how we can repair this: We will need to “return” to our beginning, childhood stage, and re-train our thinking patterns. Certainly, this is not the entire task of man. However, practically speaking, one who wants to deepen his life will need to “return” to his childhood, and to begin our development again, from the start.

In the words of our Sages, this concept is known as “*katnus sheini*”, “second childhood.”⁸ It is a return to one’s childhood stage, by returning in our adult state to our childhood stage. As opposed to returning to our childhood stage from amidst our *child* state, we need to return to our childhood stage from amidst our *adult* state. The childhood stage we need to return to, though, is *the exact childhood stage* we have never yet gotten past. This is the concept of *katnus sheini*, the “second” childhood – to “return” to our childhood stage, beginning again from the very first stages of childhood.

There is a great depth to this, which was mentioned earlier, and which we will now elaborate upon. A child lacks awareness. So far, we have mentioned the negative side to this, which is that it may carry into adulthood. However, there is also an advantage contained in the child’s perspective. Chazal praise the “words of vanity uttered by children” of the Jewish people, which upholds the world⁹, for children haven’t yet sinned. This is the deeper implication of the term “*girsā d’yankusā*”, the way one learned as a child, which is when the child is first taught the verses of “The Torah was commanded to us by Moshe” and “*Shema Yisrael*”. But there is also another purpose to this childhood stage: One needs to return to it, and apply a clearer perspective to it.

As mentioned earlier, a person can work on this idea when reciting the weekly Torah portion, of *Shnayim Mikra V’Echad Targum*. Generally speaking, most people are able to set aside enough time

⁸ *Kavanos HaArizal*

⁹ *Talmud Bavli Shabbos 119b*

to recite the *Shnayim Mikra*, but we will also need to put a little bit more energy into this. We should use it as an opportunity to return to the childhood stage, and develop the power of *binah*. One can take a word and think about the combination of the letters, and when he pronounces it, he should do so with the awareness that he is using the power of *binah* to combine different letters together. And one should practice this precisely when he is reading the verses of the Torah, because the point is to “return” to the childhood stage when one first began reading the verses of the Torah.

By doing so, one forms a very deep connection to the very first stage of his Torah learning, his childhood stage, when he began his Torah learning by reading the verses of the Torah. One returns to the childhood stage of learning Torah by simply reading verses of the Torah, but it is not simply a return to the childhood stage, it is coupled with the ability to become consciously aware that when one is reading the letters, he keeps combining together different combinations of letters.

All of us are aware that when young children are taught by their respective teachers in the *yeshivos*, they are first taught letters. Some of the letters form words, such as the letters *aleph* and *beis*, which form the word *av* (father) and the letters *aleph* and *mem*, which form the word *aim* (mother). But children are also taught various letter combinations which do not form any words. They are shown the letters *aleph*, *beis*, and *gimmel* together, with various different *nekudos* (pronunciation) and then they are told, “Read this word”, but such “words” do not mean anything. The reason that this is done is so is because sometimes the child already understands what a word means, so he will read it quickly, and then he will not read the word correctly. To counter this issue, the child is given different letter combinations which cannot form any words, and in this way, the child is trained to first pronounce the word, regardless if he understands what it means or not.

The idea we can see from this is that there are two different abilities of combining information together: through understanding, or through pronunciation. We need both abilities. There is a gain in training oneself to read letters which cannot be combined to form any words, because a person will learn how to pronounce the word. Therefore, we can also say that there is a gain in reading Aramaic words which we aren't familiar with.

On a subtler level, let us consider the following. A prominent amount of the teachings of Rav Abulefia involve various letter combinations, usually letters which cannot form any understandable words. When one first sees such words, he is puzzled. But there is something very deep in these illogical letter combinations. It is because, as explained, the words of *lashon hakodesh* which we are familiar with today are already understandable to us, and we can analyze them, but in order to connect together letters which seemingly cannot form any words, we need to access a higher level of understanding which is beyond our regular comprehension. The letter combinations brought in the *sefarim* of Rav Abulefia cannot form any logical sounding words, because he is describing abstract information that cannot be logically understood. These illogical letter combinations are to show that “The purpose of knowing is to know that we do not know”, the spiritual point of non-intellectual understanding.

This illustrates a deeper understanding of what a child's learning is supposed to be like: A non-intellectual point of understanding, where letters don't necessarily combine to form any sensible words. A child begins learning when he has no *daas*, and his learning does not involve the use of *daas*. It is non-intellectual. Hashem made it this way on purpose, so that children will begin learning from a point where there is no *daas*, where letters don't connect and words cannot be formed! Although they cannot comprehend this, their *neshamos* gain spiritually from this, like the Gemara that says, "Even if he doesn't see, his *mazal* sees."¹⁰

Why should children be shown letter combinations if they don't form any words? What is the point of seeing all these different combinations of letters? We already explained the external reason for this, but the inner reason is because of what we have just explained now. We can see the concept explained in the *sefarim* of Rav Abulefia where many different combinations of letters are presented and they cannot form any words. When we read combinations of letters that can't form words, although we are not doing this for the lofty purpose of accessing the spiritual, non-intellectual plane, we can still do so for the purpose of accessing the child state of learning, by combining letters that cannot really combine. By getting used to combining letters that don't form any words, our ability to connect words together will actually become more precise.

Studying Letter Combinations of Each Word We Read

There is another point here to accomplish, which is deeper, and we will mention it.

Words are formed from letters, and letters are formed from *nekudos* (vowelizing). Some of our *Gedolim* emphasized *dikduk* (wording and pronunciation) and some did not place that much emphasis on *dikduk*.

There are certain instances where correct *dikduk* of a word will make a very big difference, such as when it comes to the *mitzvah* of erasing Amalek, where there is an argument in *halachah* if one needs to say the word *zecher* or *zeicher*, but in many cases there were commentaries of *Gedolim* which did not place emphasis on *dikduk* and they were not so exacting with their wording. Not only that, but sometimes they would even change the *dikduk* of the word in order to deliver a *derasha* on it.

On a deeper level, this is because there is a level above *dikduk*, as we can see that there are certain crowns (called *tagim*) placed atop letters. The words of the Torah contain *taamim* (enunciation), *nekudos* (vowelizing), *tagim* (crowns) and *osiyos* (letters).¹¹ The *tagim* (crowns) look like combinations of different parts of letters and for the most part they cannot be read. The reading of a word is not contingent on the *tagim* of the word. The *tagim* are the hidden part of a word. It is only the *nekudos* (vowelizing) which affects the reading of a word.

¹⁰ Talmud Bavli Megillah 3b

¹¹ As elaborated upon at length in *Sefer Etz Chaim of the Arizal's teachings*

On an esoteric level, before the world became spiritually devastated, the world was a world of *tagim*, and after spiritual devastation occurred, the world became a world of *nekudos* (points). For this reason, there is a concept that one should connect himself to the realm above *nekudos*, which is the realm of *tagim*. From the perspective of the world of *nekudos*, we need to place emphasis on *dikduk*, and be exacting with wording.

Those *Gedolim* who placed absolute emphasis on *dikduk* had souls whose role was to fix the devastation of the world, and by correcting the *dikduk*, they were fixing the devastation of the world of *nekudos*. In contrast, those *Gedolim* who were not exacting with *dikduk* were those souls who were connected to the world above devastation, and that being the case, they were also above the need to fix devastation.

In short, *nekudos* (vowelizing of a world) is a product of the “world of devastation”, where each *nekudah* (point) stands by itself, because it is part of the world of the “breaking of vessels.”¹² All of the *nekudos* (except for those shaped like lines, which are *patach* and *kamatz*) are comprised of several points, implying division and separation, and therefore they are the root of devastation, for they represent a world of separation (or the “world of the breaking of vessels”). Their *tikkun* (repair) is when they become connected. One who is exacting with *dikduk* is fixing the devastation of *nekudos*. But the higher perspective is the world of *tagim*, where there are no *nekudos*.

However, although there are gains of connecting to the world of *tagim* that is above the world of *nekudos*, one cannot acquire the ability of *binah* without being involved with *nekudos*, and if a person spends most of the time studying *tagim* of words without *nekudos*, his ability of *binah* will be weakened.

All of these deep concepts were mentioned so that we can understand the deeper roots behind the practical aspect here, as follows. Practically speaking, when we learn, we need to get used to reading words with the awareness that each word is a certain combination of letters. *Binah* is about connecting together information, picturing it, and reflecting on it. We should specifically develop our *binah* further by taking letter combinations that don't make any sense, and see how they can be combined to form different words.

If we take a word that's already readable and understandable, we would be skipping over the stage of *binah* and we won't develop this ability. That is why we should try this on combinations of letters that don't make sense. You can do this either with Aramaic words (as mentioned before), or with letters that cannot combine to form any sensible words, and try to combine the letters. In this way, we can develop our power of connecting information together, with awareness that we are doing so, as opposed to the immature child level of this ability, where we were just swallowing words.

When one person practices this idea, at first it will be difficult but gradually a person will be developing the abilities in his soul, and the result of it will be that his ability of *dikduk* will become

¹² The concept of “the world of breaking of vessels” is first mentioned in *Safra D'Tzniyusa*

more precise, in all areas. He will become more precise and more exacting in his *avodah*, and when he analyzes the words of the Gemara, as well as in all other parts of learning Torah.

Of course, we will still need more than this ability in order to advance in our Torah learning, but this should be our starting point: Knowing how to build and develop a word from the start, which later will develop our thinking further.

The ability of *binah* contains three parts, as mentioned: *hisbonenus* (reflecting), *chibbur* (connecting information) and *tziyur* (picturing the information). The ability of *hisbonenus* is the most inner ability from all of these, and it known as “higher *chochmah*”, an ability to build and develop information from the root, a simplistic ability of connecting information together. It can be used on a practical level, as well as on a linguistic level, by combining letters together and thinking of different ways for combining letters.

The idea is that one should practice reading words by seeing them as letter combinations. Instead of trying to understand what the words mean when you learn them, which is *hisbonenus*, instead try to combine the letters and see the different combinations of the word, as you read each word.

There are different soul roots. Those who are more inclined to *taamim* (reasons) will have a harder time with combining letters as they read the words of the Gemara, and if one has a soul rooted in *osiyos* (letters) he will also have a difficulty with this, from an opposite angle. If one has a soul rooted in *tagim*, he makes more use of the ability of *hisbonenus* in order to know the *dikduk* of a word, as opposed to simply reading the words. But in either case, each person at his respective level should start to read the words of the Gemara with the awareness that each word is a combination of certain letters, and he should think about the different letter combinations in each word he reads.

With Hashem’s help, if we merit, we will continue with another lesson.

08 | *Balancing Intellect & Simplicity In Torah Learning*

We Are Introduced To Torah Study Through Temimus – Non-Intellectual Simplicity

The Torah is called *Toras Hashem Temimah meshivas nefesh*, “The Torah of Hashem is perfect, it settles the soul.”¹³ The inner essence of the holy Torah is known as its *temimus* [non-analytical simplicity].

In childhood, we begin our connection to Torah study through *temimus*, through non-intellectual study of the Torah. In the first lesson, it was explained that a person first begins to learn Torah when he is just starting to talk. When a child is just beginning to speak, he can barely understand things, so for the most part, a child has no *daas*. Even as a child begins to understand letters and phrases, he still cannot analyze yet that much. That is how a child is first introduced to Torah study, and as the child matures, he begins to develop his thinking abilities, such as the ability to combine information, the ability to picture information, and the ability to mentally reflect and take apart information. These abilities were discussed in the previous chapters. In any case, the introduction to Torah study begins in a state of *temimus*.

In order for one to mature and progress in his Torah learning, he needs to connect to the Torah using two different fundamental abilities of the soul: The ability of *temimus* (non-intellectual simplicity), and the ability of the intellect. These are two contradicting abilities to each other, but one will need the balance between these two opposite abilities when it comes to Torah study.

In the previous chapters of this series, we discussed how to develop the abilities of the intellect when it comes to Torah study. Using our intellect in Torah study is comprised of the abilities of connecting information together, picturing information, and analyzing and breaking down the information into different details and nuances. This is all part of one the main root abilities we need for Torah study: developing the power of the intellect. The other main root ability which we need for Torah study is the ability to learn it with *temimus*: non-analytical simplicity.

Accessing Temimus (Non-Intellectual Simplicity) In Our Torah Study

The absolute level of *temimus* (non-intellectual simplicity) is hidden from most people, because it is very deep in the soul. Just as the depth of the Torah’s holiness is concealed from most people, so is the connection to Torah through *temimus* a very hidden level. There are only a few individuals who have actually reached the point of *temimus* in their soul. However, every person who learns Torah is

¹³ *Tebillim* 19:20

able to gain a degree of the non-intellectual simplicity that is found in the Torah, on his own level. There are different ways of how one can gain some level of access to it.

Now that we have explained that the two fundamental abilities which we need for Torah study are the abilities of intellect and non-intellectual simplicity, we need to learn how we can attain the balance between these two opposite abilities. Let us see how we can reveal these abilities in our Torah study, as well as how these abilities affect our Torah study, and finally, how we can strike the balance between them.

Iyun vs. Bekiyus In Torah Learning

As it is well-known, Chazal describe two different abilities of learning Torah: Those who gain a lot of Torah knowledge, who are called “Sinai”, and those who know how to analyze the Torah well, who are called “those who can uproot mountains.”¹⁴ Corresponding to this statement is the teaching of Chazal that when it comes to learning Torah, one should first finish studying Torah (*ligmar*) and then analyze what he learns (*lisbar*).¹⁵ In our terms, we refer to these two different styles of Torah learning as *bekiyus* (non-analytical, cursory reading of Gemara) and *iyun* (in-depth analysis of the Gemara).

These two different styles of learning Torah also correspond to the different abilities of intellect and non-intellectual simplicity. Those who are in the category of “Sinai”, who are mainly drawn towards gathering a lot of Torah knowledge and who learn in a manner of *bekiyus*, correspond to the power of non-analytical simplicity (*temimus*). Those who are in the category of “uprooting mountains”, who are mainly drawn towards in-depth analysis, correspond to the power of the intellect.

Certainly, when gathering knowledge of Torah and learning the information for the first time (which is called *ligmar*), a person will still use his thinking in order to understand what he is learning, so a cursory reading of the Gemara is not absolutely non-analytical, and it is not a complete level of *temimus*. However, we already explained that in any case, any of the *temimus* we can attain cannot be the absolute level of *temimus*. (The complete level of *temimus* is a deep power of the soul which cannot be used for understanding the written or audible word, because it is above all human expression. It is the light of Torah as it existed before the words of the Torah were formed.) Whatever *temimus* a person can attain is usually an illumination of *temimus*, a degree of it, but not absolute *temimus*.

A person who is mainly drawn towards gathering knowledge of Torah - the kind of learning which is called “Sinai” - is a person who is more drawn towards the non-intellectual simplicity

¹⁴ Talmud Bavli Horayos 14a

¹⁵ Talmud Bavli Shabbos 63a

(*temimus*) in learning Torah, and he is less drawn towards the complex kind of thinking of the intellect.

Balancing of Times For Iyun and Bekiyus In One's Learning

There is a deep balance one needs to attain between cursory reading of Gemara and gathering knowledge in Torah without analyzing it (*ligmar*), which corresponds to the style of learning called *bekiyus*, and analysis of Gemara (*lisbar*), which corresponds to the style of learning called *iyun*. There is both an external and internal way to balance out these two areas.

On the external level, one needs to determine how time and energy he needs to invest in having times for both *iyun* and *bekiyus* in his Torah learning. The mitzvah of learning Torah includes gathering knowledge of Torah and reviewing and remembering Torah, as well as understanding Torah. This is discussed in the *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* and in the commentaries of the *Poskim* by the laws of learning Torah. The amount of time which one needs to spend on each of these kinds of learning will depend on the parameters of the obligations of Torah learning, as explained in the aforementioned sources. It is a subtle thing to know, but suffice it to say that a person needs to divide his schedule between these two kinds of Torah learning: gathering knowledge of Torah and reviewing it, and seeking to understand what one learns.

One needs to have the proper balance between how much time and energy one needs to have in order to gather knowledge of Torah without analysis (*ligmar*) and in order to understand what one learns (*lisbar*), and this balance will depend on the obligations of how much one needs to strive for knowledge and understanding in Torah.

Balancing Between Intellect and Non-Intellectual Simplicity In One's Learning

The inner level of the balance between *iyun* and *bekiyus* depends on balancing the two opposite abilities of intellect and non-intellectual simplicity. When one tries to gather knowledge in Torah without analyzing it yet, he is receiving illuminations of *temimus* (non-intellectual simplicity) in his Torah learning, and when one seeks to analyze and understand what he learns, he will receive illuminations from the power of the intellect.

When a person gains illumination from intellect in his Torah learning, he will feel more drawn towards *iyun* (seeking more understanding in his Torah learning), and when a person gains illumination from non-intellectual simplicity in his Torah learning, he will feel more drawn towards *bekiyus* (cursory reading of Gemara without analyzing it).

Therefore, when a person feels drawn towards learning Torah in a style of *bekiyus*, this can be coming from the depths of one's soul, which yearns for non-intellectual simplicity.

Clearly, though, this is not always the reason why a person prefers *bekiyus*. For example, maybe a person is more drawn towards *bekiyus* because he doesn't find any success or achievement when learning in the style of *iyun*. Therefore, he prefers to gather knowledge of Torah without trying to analyze it, as opposed to trying to understand what he learns. Or, he may want to learn *bekiyus* if that's what everyone else around him is doing and he wants to fit it in with everyone else. Or, he may have a belief that the main point of life is to gather a lot of knowledge of Torah, and that is why he prefers *bekiyus* over *iyun*. There can be other reasons as well that are motivating him.

But if none of these are the reason, then his desire for *bekiyus* is coming from a yearning of the soul that wants to become attached with *temimus*, non-analytical simplicity, or *peshitus*, a simplistic and non-complex thinking.¹⁶

Therefore, the balance between how much *iyun* and *bekiyus* one has in his Torah learning will depend on the balance between one's ability of intellect with the ability of non-intellectual simplicity. Through balancing non-intellectual simplicity with complex, analytical thinking, one can attain balance of how much time and energy he needs to spend on gathering knowledge of Torah versus how much time and energy he needs to spend on trying to understand what he's learning.

In summary, we have just explained how to strike the balance between how much time and energy should be spent on *bekiyus* and *iyun*. The external part of this balance is to figure out how much time should be on each, and the inner part of this balance is to strike the balance between complex, analytical thinking (the *seichell* intellect) and non-intellectual simplicity (*temimus*).

Accessing Non-Intellectual Simplicity (Temimus) Through Initial Understanding When Learning

An additional revelation of *temimus* and *peshitus* (non-analytical and simplistic thinking) is through the initial understanding (*muskal rishon*) which one has when he first learns something. We have already mentioned that one first needs to learn without seeking to understand it, and after he has gone through a superficial reading of the Gemara, he should go back and analyze it and try to understand it. In addition, we mentioned in previous lessons that a person needs to try to see all the different possible ways to understand a matter that he comes across.

The first thing that a person needs to do, when learning, is to pay attention to what your "initial thinking" is as soon as you learn something. When you first read something in the Gemara, what is the first thought that comes to mind? How do you simply understand it, before you start analyzing it? That is your initial understanding (*muskal rishon*). This initial understanding is really coming from a place of simplicity in the soul.

¹⁶ Editor's Note: Later in this lesson, the Rav noted that there is a subtle difference between *peshitus* and *temimus*, but they bear the same root. They are both abilities of thinking which are simplistic and non-intellectual. (Elsewhere, in a response on this topic, the Rav explained that *peshitus* is a higher level than *temimus*. With *temimus*, a person is still found within the ego, but with *peshitus*, a person is divested of his ego.)

This is not the case for those whose thinking opposes the Torah's view, of whom it is said, "The views of laymen [referring to those who don't learn Torah] is the opposite of the view of Torah."¹⁷ When people have a kind of thinking that opposes the Torah's view, their intellect is crooked, and their initial thinking will not be coming from a place of simplicity in the soul. The initial thoughts of a person can only be trusted when one lives a life of Torah and the light of Torah shines within him substantially.

Therefore, when a person learns Torah, one should become aware of his initial thoughts on what he's learning about. If a person is more in touch with the simplicity in his soul, his initial thought will be more aligned with the truth.

To summarize so far, we have mentioned that there are two fundamentally different and important abilities in the soul: The ability of non-intellectual simplicity (*temimus*) and the analytical abilities of the intellect (*seichel*). We have explained how these abilities correspond to two different styles in learning, *ligmar* (Sinai/gathering knowledge of Torah/*bekiyus*) and *lisbar* ("uprooting mountains"/in-depth analysis in learning/*iyun*), and we discussed how much one should spend on each of these different kinds of learning. We also explained that one of the ways to gain access to *temimus* (non-intellectual simplicity) in one's Torah learning is by becoming aware of one's initial thinking when he begins to learn something.

How Non-Intellectual Simplicity Balances The Analytical Abilities In Learning Torah

The non-intellectual simplicity (*temimus*) of the soul also has bearings on the accuracy of one's logic. When a person comes up with a logical reasoning (*sevara*) about something he is learning, this reasoning is either "straight" thinking (*yashrus*), which is a sensible and truthful kind of thinking, or, the reasoning will be off-mark. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin wrote a letter to his grandson that "The *Rishonim* are praised only because of their straight, accurate way of reasoning (*sevara yesharah*)". On the other end of the spectrum, the Gemara says that sometimes, when a person has a very sharp and insightful kind of thinking, a person will make mistakes precisely because his thinking is so sharp. (*l'fum churfa shabeshta*).¹⁸

What is the root of mistaken reasoning, and what is the root of straight, accurate reasoning? These correspond to the abilities of intellect and non-intellectual simplicity which we have been mentioning in this lesson. Straight, accurate thinking (*sevara yeshara*) comes from the place of non-intellectual simplicity in the soul. The verse says, "G-d made man upright",¹⁹ He gave man ability of *yashrus* (straight, accurate thinking), and this was the original state of man, when non-intellectual simplicity was clearly revealed in the soul. Mistaken thinking comes from analyzing, because the

¹⁷ Sema on Choshen Mishpat 3:13

¹⁸ Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 96b

¹⁹ Koheles 7:29

verse finishes off, “*But they sought many calculations*”, meaning that complex and analytical thinking is what led to sin.

The kind of thinking of seeking “many calculations” corresponds to analytical abilities of the intellect. These include all of the abilities of *iyun* (in-depth thinking), such as analyzing the text, coming up with a reasoning, and all of the intellectual abilities which were discussed in the previous chapters. These intellectual abilities are used improperly when one becomes focused on materialism and non-spiritual pursuits. But even if a person is thinking properly and he is using his analytical thinking for learning Torah, he will need to balance out his thinking abilities with a kind of thinking that is simplistic and non-intellectual. If he doesn’t, he will analyze too much and his thinking becomes crooked from this. It will be like the verse, “*But they seek many calculations*”, which is a deviation from a pure kind of thinking, and it will cause him to make mistakes, in spite of his sharp intellectual abilities.

Therefore, in order to avoid this problem, one needs a balance between analytical thinking and simplistic, non-intellectual thinking. When one strikes the balance between these opposite abilities, on one hand he will gain immensely from his in-depth analysis when he learns Torah, learning Torah with great depth according to his mental capacities, and simultaneously, his heavy use of thinking will not turn him into a mere ‘intellectual junkie’ who seeks “many calculations”, which is the road that led to sin. Instead, his “many calculations” will become elevated from a deep point in the soul which contains a pure and accurate kind of thinking, the original state of thinking where “*G-d made man upright*”, which still exists deep in our souls – the place of non-intellectual simplicity in the soul.

Many times, when one doesn’t have the balance between non-intellectual simplicity and analytical thinking, his in-depth learning will actually ruin his thinking and it will lead him into mistaken thinking, even though if he is a very sharp thinker. That is why, as mentioned, one needs the balance between non-intellectual, simplistic thinking and analytical, intellectual thinking. When these abilities are balanced, the “initial thinking” of the person will be purer, and one will have a more accurate kind of thinking (*seichel yashar*) which remains in its purity and which only becomes purer, to the degree that one attains this balance.

Accessing Non-Intellectual Simplicity Through Silencing One’s Thoughts

An additional facet of this matter [the ability of non-intellectual simplicity] is related to what was discussed in the previous chapter: Part of Torah study requires a person to think analytically, then stopping one’s thinking so that one’s thinking is silenced, and then returning to thinking, in a cycle.

It was explained in the previous chapter that a person should not have continuous, uninterrupted thinking in his Torah study, because this doesn’t allow the mind to rest sometimes and this will lead to detrimental results. Previously, we explained about this with regards to returning to the beginning point of one’s learning. Now we are speaking about this concept with regards to a different point.

When a person quiets his mind from thinking, he is also taking a break from the analytical abilities of the mind, and he is instead entering into an area of the mind that is simple and divested from any analytical thinking.

With the more that a person learns Torah in this cycle of thinking analytically, then quieting his thinking and then returning to analytical thinking, he attains a balance in his soul between complex analysis and non-intellectual simplicity. This connects a person constantly to an inner place in the soul, where the “*Torah of Hashem is perfect*”, and the result of this will be that even when a person returns to analytical thinking, which are “many calculations” that deviate from pure, simple thinking, these “many calculations” will become balanced out and elevated by the pure thinking that comes from the simple, non-analytical thinking ability of *temimus*.

The previous chapter elaborated upon the ability to analyze a *sugya* of Gemara through different opinions and views of the *Rishonim*. Let us now mention that if a person will only use the abilities of in-depth analysis in his Torah learning, he will be disconnected from the inner place of non-intellectual simplicity (*temimus*) while he learns Torah. This is because learning Torah with in-depth analysis is only one side of the coin in learning, the “many calculations”, which are only one part of learning Torah.

When a person is only connected to “many calculations” in Torah learning – when he can only use his intellectual abilities of analysis, but he never uses the ability of simplistic thinking – what will be the result? If he does not learn Torah *lishmah* (which is the situation for most people), he may deepen his intellectual abilities in Torah, but in the process, he will become further from the inner spiritual light of his *neshamah*, and he will become distanced from the “light of the Torah”, so he will be far from the root of the *neshamah*.

Accessing Non-Intellectual Simplicity Through Learning Torah Lishmah

There is another deep way for one to become connected to the point of simplicity in the soul, which is being described in this lesson, and it is when one genuinely learns Torah *lishmah* (learning for its own sake and not for any other motivation). By learning *lishmah*, one becomes connected to the purest place in the soul, and this is because *lishmah* connects a person to a spiritual point in the soul that is beyond any of the thinking abilities of the intellect.

When a person learns Torah *shelo lishmah*, he is involved with various calculating thoughts that deviate from the purity of the soul. When one learns Torah *lishmah*, he is accessing a point in the soul beyond logical reasoning. There is no logical reason for a person to learn *lishmah*, because *lishmah* is a non-logical matter. Learning Torah *lishmah* is learning from a place in oneself that is beyond the intellect. It is the kind of learning that depicts the verse, “*The Torah of Hashem is perfect*”, a kind of learning that is non-intellectual simplicity, and it is a kind of learning that comes from a simple, pure place in the soul. It is coming from a nature deep in the soul to be immersed in learning Torah. Each day we request, “And make us accustomed in your Torah”, where we ask Hashem to

reveal forth our soul's nature to learn Torah with no other motivation other than to simply learn Torah for its own sake.

Therefore, if a person learns Torah *lishmah*, and he can also have in-depth analysis when he learns Torah, he will strike an amazing balance. The reason motivating him to learn Torah in a non-logical and pure motive, *lishmah*, and that itself will connect him to the place of simplicity in the soul, to *temimus* and *peshitus*. At the same time, he will also be learning Torah with depth and analytical thinking as he should be. He will gain a balance between his abilities of intellect and non-intellectual simplicity.

On the other end of the spectrum, to the degree that a person learns more Torah *shelo lishmah* (for ulterior motives) and less Torah *lishmah*, he will be increasing his intellectual abilities in Torah but he will become disconnected from the spirituality of his *neshamah* in the process.

Practically speaking, learning Torah *lishmah* is a very high level of learning. Thankfully, there is other advice by which a person can reach the ability of non-intellectual simplicity (*temimus*) in the soul. As mentioned earlier, one can balance out his intellectual abilities in Torah either by making sure to also have time for gathering knowledge in Torah without analyzing what he learns (*bekiyus*), or he can become connected with simplicity by making sure to quiet down his thoughts after he has gone through a lot of thinking, then quieting his thoughts again, and repeating the cycle. These are different ways by which a person can become connected to the point of non-intellectual simplicity in the soul, and this will increase one's connection to "*the Torah of Hashem is perfect*".

Cycling Back and Forth Between Intellect and Simplicity

When a person is connected to both analytical thinking and simplistic, non-logical thinking, the result will be that each of these extremes will increase the other. When one is properly balanced in his ability of simplistic thinking, he will gain Torah wisdom from an inner source, as in the verse, "*And wisdom, from where is it found?*"²⁰ This will, in turn, increase one's abilities of thinking in Torah study, and it will improve one's ability to analyze Torah.

How? By being connected with simplistic thinking [i.e. by regularly quieting one's thoughts after in-depth analysis], one returns to in-depth thinking in his Torah study and then he naturally yearns for simplistic thinking again. When his analytical abilities become more developed, due to his increase of Torah wisdom that comes from simplistic and non-analytical thinking, he will discover a contradiction in his soul between the abilities of intellect and non-analytical thinking, because his abilities to analyze Torah are getting better and with the more he analyzes, the more he will want to return to simplistic thinking again, repeating the cycle. This inner contradiction in himself will sharpen and it will actually cause him to release more of his potential.

When that is the case, a person will keep penetrating into the place of non-intellectual simplicity in the soul, and he will want to keep repeating the cycle of using his intellect, returning to non-intellectual thinking, and using his intellect again.

The Constant Progress of a Torah Scholar

This is the inner description of what it means to live a life studying Torah. The Gemara says that Torah scholars have no serenity, not on this world and not in the next world, for it says, “They go from place to place.”²¹ The simple meaning of this is that a Torah scholar keeps increasing his knowledge and depth of Torah wisdom, and that is why he never has any rest. That is true, but there is a deeper meaning to this, as follows.

We can see that a person has a nature to move back and forth between two different extremes. For example, if a person is trying to climb higher on a slanted surface, it will be too difficult to climb higher if he simply goes straight ahead. Instead, he moves in a zigzag manner from one direction to the opposite direction, and it becomes easier for him to get higher. This analogy is also a very real description of how a person attains spiritual progress. A person tends to move in extremes, and usually when a person moves towards one extreme, he totally abandons the other extreme.

With regards to our current discussion, either a person will engage his mind in analytical thinking, and he will lose the ability of simplistic thinking in the process, or he will be connected with simplistic thinking but he will lose his ability to analyze. But when a person can attain a proper balance between these two extremes, by not going too far from any of the extremes and making sure to keep himself centered in the two extremes, as soon as he starts to go towards one extreme he will want to pull himself back towards the other extreme, and vice versa.

This is the deeper reason why Torah scholars have no rest on this world or on the next world. It is not only because they keep yearning for more and more Torah knowledge and comprehension in the Torah. It is also because they have two contradicting abilities which are each well-developed, when it comes to their Torah study, and this creates an internal tug-of-war that is constructive for their souls and for their Torah study. When their intellect is well-developed and when they are also very in touch with non-intellectual simplicity, they feel the sharp contradiction between these two opposing abilities of the soul, and it only demands more growth from them. It creates spiritual aspirations that are endless.

When the abilities of in-depth analysis and non-intellectual simplicity are each well-developed in one's Torah study, one becomes greater in his Torah study and he truly will have no rest, not on this world and not on the next. Certainly, it takes wisdom for one to know how to attain the subtle balance between these two opposite abilities, *seichell*/intellect and *temimus*/simplicity.

Differing Soul Roots of Intellect vs. Simplicity

²¹ Talmud Bavli Berachos 64a

Getting deeper into this discussion, there are two different roots of souls when it comes to Torah study. One group of souls will be more drawn towards non-intellectual simplicity, whereas the other group of souls is more drawn towards complex, analytical thinking.

One's task is to fuse these two different ways together, so that one can both learn Torah with in-depth analysis and also be able to gain from simplistic, non-intellectual thinking in his Torah study.

However, even after one attains this balance, one will always be more drawn towards one of the two extremes. This is where the difference between different soul roots really comes to the fore. Even after one is balanced between intellect and simplicity in his Torah learning, if his soul root is more drawn towards simplicity, that is where he will lean towards, and if his soul root is more drawn towards intellect, that is where he will find himself leaning towards.

But as long as one has attained a balance between intellect and simplicity, this natural affinity for either one of the two extremes will only be subtle, and it won't become an extreme leaning where a person will only feel a connection to one way over the other. It won't lead a person into abandoning in-depth analysis in his learning in favor of non-analytical thinking, nor will it cause a person to ignore the need for non-analytical thinking in favor of in-depth analysis, in his Torah studies.

Either of these extremes is not a genuine way of learning Torah. Genuine Torah learning is when one can live with both of these contradicting abilities equally in his Torah learning, and it is just that each person will feel naturally drawn towards one particular way of thinking (either in-depth analysis or non-intellectual simplicity), depending on his soul root.

The Balance Between Torah Learning (Intellect) and Prayer (Simplicity)

The ability of in-depth analysis corresponds to the concept of Torah in general, and the ability of non-intellectual simplicity corresponds to the concept of prayer. Prayer is about talking to Hashem without using any abilities of analysis or intellect, whereas Torah study uses the intellect and in-depth thinking.

One's abilities of intellect and simplicity, on an external level, are manifest in the areas of his Torah study (intellect) and prayer (simplicity). But the inner manifestation of these abilities is in the soul, as explained in the beginning of this lesson. Furthermore, a person really needs a fusion of both intellect and simplicity in his Torah learning (even though Torah study in general corresponds with the intellect and not with simplicity). One needs a balance between these different abilities within his soul (the ability to think analytically as well as the ability to be simple and not analyze), and one also needs this balance in his Torah study (the ability to think analytically when he learns Torah as well as the ability to think simplistically in his Torah study), as well as a balance between his Torah study and prayer.

We can see, many times, that if a person is very connected to the ability of simple, non-analytical thinking and he is not properly balanced by the ability of intellect and analysis, such a person

connects deeply to the area of prayer, but he will become weaker in his connection to Torah study (on varying levels). The Gemara says of this, “He removes his ear from hearing Torah, so his prayers are also disgusted.”²² The aforementioned statement of the Gemara is discussing someone who interrupts his Torah learning in order to pray, but on a deeper level it can also be referring to a tendency in some people to be more drawn towards simple, non-analytical thinking, who slacken off from in-depth study of Torah. By avoiding analytical thinking in Torah, one’s prayers are not deemed worthy by Hashem, because such a person is only connected to non-intellectual simplicity of the soul, and he is missing a balance in his soul that he could have gained from using the intellectual and analytical abilities in Torah learning.

A Wondrous Balance

The kind of life being described in this lesson is an inner way of living in general, and it mainly affects our abilities of Torah study.

When a person learns Torah with the balance between intellect and simplicity, on one hand he will resemble a childlike purity, connected to a simplistic, non-intellectual state that resembles a day old infant, who cannot even fathom sinning or deviating from Hashem’s will. The ability of *temimus* (simplicity) is like the verse, “*Like an infant on his mother’s lap*”.²³ At the same time, he will also resemble an elderly sage who is full of Torah’s wisdom.²⁴ A person like this will fuse together these two different extremes (intellect and simplicity) in the depths of the soul, so he will be simultaneously like a young, innocent child and a mature, elderly, wise sage.

Avraham Avinu was called “*An elderly sage, who was becoming in his years*”.²⁵ At the end of his life, when he had the wisdom of an elderly sage, he still retained the innocence of his childhood, when he had the simple, unquestioning belief to recognize his Creator. In his old age, he was a fusion of simplistic, childhood innocence together with his mature wisdom, unlike most, who lose their childhood innocence when they become elderly and mature.

In the previous chapters, we began with describing the very first stages of Torah learning, when one is still a child, and it was explained that we actually need to return to that stage of being a child and begin our Torah learning again from that place. In other words, we need to return to the “child” part of our self and begin to develop our Torah learning again, as if we are starting to learn as a child, and we need to keep taking our “childhood” Torah study with us, even as we mature further.

The main idea of what has been described until now, with *siyata d’shmaya*, is that a person needs to recognize the childhood abilities in his soul and to go back to developing them again. We need to realize that there are parts of our childhood which we need to bring into maturation, but there are

²² *Talmud Bavli Shabbos 10a*

²³ *Tehillim 131:2*

²⁴ *See Talmud Bavli Kiddushin 32b*

²⁵ *Beraishis 24:1*

also parts of our childhood development which we need to keep taking with us, all the way until old age. We need a fusion of proper childhood development and mature wisdom in our Torah study, and to attain a balance between these two different parts.

This fusion is the true way that Torah study is supposed to look like. It is a subtle wisdom to attain, because sometimes a person will lean towards one extreme over another, and then he will comprise the other extreme, because he naturally favors one particular ability over another. And at other times, there may be one period of his life where he is more involved with a particular ability of Torah study (i.e. intellect and analysis) and a different period in his life where he is more involved with a different ability in Torah study (i.e. simplistic, non-analytical thinking). But the correct way to go about it is to fuse together these two different abilities, and we can each have our own subtle personal preferences, depending on our particular soul roots, as long as we are making sure that our personal preferences aren't causing us to comprise one ability in favor of another.

דע את תורתך – דרכי הלימוד_09

09 | Two Methods In Learning: Reb Chaim & the Rogotchover

The Ways of Learning of Reb Chaim and the Rogotchover Gaon

Continuing our discussion on the ways of Torah study, let us now expand a bit upon the concepts of the previous chapters.

There is a well-known statement of the Chazon Ish²⁶, which was mentioned many times already in the previous lessons, that there are two different styles of thinking when it comes to Torah study: The way of Reb Chaim of Brisk²⁷ was to turn one concept into two different concepts, whereas the way of the Rogotchover Gaon²⁸ was to turn two concepts into one.

Certainly the Rogotchover Gaon could take apart a concept and divide it into several parts, but we can also see in his works an opposite style, where he turns two different concepts into one single idea. As for the Chazon Ish himself, the Chazon Ish once said that there are some concepts which are really two different ideas, and there are other concepts which seem to be different two different ideas but are really one idea.

26 Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz, leader of Torah Jewry in Eretz Yisrael in mid-1900's, whose many works are called "Chazon Ish"

27 Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, early 19th century scholar, son of Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveitchik zt"l (the Beis HaLevi) and father of the "Brisker" dynasty (the Soloveitchik family), whose way of thinking greatly influenced the style of learning in the yeshiva world until today, and author of *Chiddusei Rabbeinu Chaim HaLevi al haRambam*

28 Rabbi Yosef Rosen, early 19th century scholar and Rav in Dvinsk, author of *Tzafnes Paneach*

1. Noticing Different Parts of a Halachah in the Gemara

Throughout all of Torah, and especially when it comes to Gemara, any concept will be comprised of several parts. In the previous lessons we explained that Torah study is comprised of different intellectual abilities, such as combining information, picturing information, and coming up with a logical reasoning to explain something. The first thing we need to do when we learn Torah is to see the different aspects about what we're learning. A *sugya* (section) of Gemara, or any statement of one of the Sages in the Gemara, involves a certain concept which is always comprised of different parts and factors, and we need to discover those different parts.

When we first begin to analyze the Gemara, we have a certain initial understanding of what we're learning about, but as we continue to learn about it and think about it more, we see that it's more complex. There are different parts to what we are studying and it's not one-dimensional.

For example, sometimes the words or letters of a phrase in the Gemara will add another dimension to the topic, and sometimes one word itself can imply different things. The particular instance or scenario that the Gemara is discussing, and sometimes even the wording or terminology being used, can be explained in several ways. Sometimes it's tough to even know the practical reality of the facts involved, and it's up for discussion. We can wonder about what exactly the Gemara is talking about, and in what circumstance, and what the facts really are. Anyone who is used to learning Gemara is familiar with this and regularly encounters this ambiguity.

But in any case, the very first thing we need to when we learn is to try to discover the different parts that are involved. When learning a teaching of one of Sages, we need to see the different parts that the teaching is comprised of. The deeper and clearer one's analytical abilities become in Torah learning, one develops a subtler ability of in-depth analysis in his Torah learning and then he can see better what the different parts are in a matter that he's learning about.

Many times, this is the approach of Reb Chaim of Brisk. When there is an apparent contradiction [in the Gemara or in the words of the Rambam] between two different statements, often his approach is to differentiate between the two different statements, by explaining how each statement is a different *halachah* (Torah law). One part of the matter is part of a certain *halachah* while a different part of the matter has a different *halachah* to it. If both *halachos* will apply to the same aspect, in certain cases a particular aspect of the *halachah* will apply, and in a different case that part of the *halachah* won't apply.

The idea is that when a person is learning Torah, he needs to see all the different aspects that a matter is comprised, seeing all the different parts that comprise a particular *halachah* or statement in the Gemara.

2. Seeing an Underlying Fundamental

There is also a second aspect needed for in-depth Torah study, which is by seeing the basic fundamental (*beis av*) behind the explanation for a Gemara. The basis of a reasoning is able to be applied to different *halachos* and statements throughout the Gemara.

When analyzing any of the parts or details that comprise a statement or *halachah* in the Gemara, we may try to explain or understand each detail separately, but one reasoning will not be the same for each part that we try to understand, because each part may have a different reasoning to it. Sometimes, we can come up with a reasoning that explains several parts of the topic at once, and there will still be other parts that need their own reasoning. In either case, though, we need to be able to explain and come up with a reasoning for each part or detail that we learn about.

In the best case scenario, we can discover a reasoning that gets to the root of the matter being discussed, and when that is the case, we can notice that this very same reasoning can appear dozens of times throughout learning *Shas* (all the tractates of Gemara in the Talmud Bavli).

Every single case we learn about in the Gemara, and every single *sugya* (section) of Gemara, is always comprised of several parts. It's never about one matter alone. There are several parts to each matter we learn about. Since there always several parts to a *sugya* or *halachah* or statement of Gemara, there can be several different root ways of understanding and reasoning to explain what's going on in the Gemara. Each *halachah* may have its own reason. However, there is always one underlying fundamental behind the reason for something, and this underlying fundamental, in most cases, will appear several times throughout the different tractates of *Shas*.

Three Different Ways of Reasoning When Learning Gemara

We have so far mentioned three different concepts about Torah learning in this chapter. Let us now give more definition to these concepts:

(1) When learning [Gemara], we need to **define** the different parts that comprise a *halachah* or statement of the Gemara. (2) There is also the **individual reasoning** for each *halachah* or statement of Gemara we come across. (3) There is also the **root reasoning (underlying fundamental)** behind a matter, which is able to explain many other statements and concepts in the Gemara as well.

Individual Reasoning vs. Root Reasoning

When a person learns Gemara superficially, he sees a case in the Gemara accompanied with a certain *halachah*, and he comes up with a logical reasoning for it, which would only explain that specific case. This comes from an undeveloped thinking, which is called *katnut mochin* (smallness of mind). With such a mindset, every *sugya* that a person learns will only be understandable to him with a reasoning based on the particular circumstance the Gemara is discussing, and he doesn't see all the different parts that the matter in the Gemara is comprised of, so he only sees the Gemara is

very one-dimensional terms. Whatever explanation he comes up with for the Gemara will only work for that particular Gemara he's learning.

This is called an "individual reasoning" when learning Gemara, and it is an understanding that is limited to the specific Gemara that one is learning. For this reason, there can be thousands of different explanations that a person can discover for each Gemara one learns, since each situation in the Gemara can have its own individual reasoning and explanation.

But there is a deeper way than this to understand a Gemara. On one hand, a person needs to notice the different parts of the matter he is learning about, and how those different parts contribute to the *sugya* and how they affect the *halachah* being discussed. But along with this, there is also an underlying fundamental behind the explanation in a *sugya*, and this underlying fundamental is not only used to explain the particular *sugya* one is learning, it explains other *sugyos* as well.

From a superficial look at the *sugya*, one only sees a particular, individual reasoning in what he's learning. But when one deepens his analytical abilities when learning, he can notice the underlying fundamental behind the reasoning, and he may also discover that the same reasoning applies to many different places in the Gemara throughout *Shas*.

Understanding the Difference Between the Approaches of Reb Chaim and the Rogotchover

We will now apply the above concepts to the two different methods of learning explained in the beginning of this chapter: The style of learning of Reb Chaim of Brisk, and the style of the Rogotchover.

Reb Chaim's style in learning is to take apart the different parts of a matter, splitting a matter into several parts and showing how there are several factors that comprise a single matter. Reb Chaim's approach shows one thing can really be two different things, and sometimes it is even more than two. When a person learns superficially, he only sees one matter in front of him, but if he analyzes it deeper, he may discover how it can really be divided into two different matters. One may see one particular scenario or *halachah* in the Gemara and analyze it and discover two different roots to explain the matter, and each of those roots will lead to a different *halachah*. This is how something which is seemingly one matter gets divided into two, using the approach of Reb Chaim.

The approach of the Rogotchover vastly differs from this. Although we can also find the Rogotchover Gaon dividing one matter into two, there is an ongoing style throughout the Rogotchover's works which will explain the root behind an argument, as opposed to just explaining a particular reasoning for something which doesn't get to the root. For example, when the Gemara is arguing if the *halachah* like the Mishnah or not, the Rogotchover will explain what the root of the argument is, and that it is not simply a technical argument. The Rogotchover will also explain how the argument is really about if a certain root fundamental can be applied in this case or not. His approach is to show how an argument in the Gemara really corresponds to other arguments in the Gemara that are elsewhere, and how the root of all these arguments is really the same.

If you view the Rogotchover's commentary, he cites many other Gemaras that are applicable to the Gemara at hand, but when you view those other Gemaras, it seems at first glance that he is sending you to the wrong page. It doesn't seem right away that the other Gemaras he is citing have any relevance to the Gemara you're learning about. You might spend a whole night trying to figure out what the connection is. But the underlying approach of the Rogotchover was to see the root of each matter and to cite all the different places in the Gemara where the same root is being discussed and argued about.

Getting To The Root Behind A Debate In The Gemara

Here are examples of this idea. Whenever we see a matter that involves several parts, do we just see the separate parts involved, or do we see it all as one piece? Either we can analyze each detail by itself, or we can see it in more expansive terms and see how all the different parts go into it.

Also, every matter can exist either in potential or in the active sense. When the Gemara [or *Rishonim*] are debating something, is the debate about what's happening now in the active sense or does the debate start even when the matter exists only in potential form? Where is the debate or argument or question beginning from?

When we are able to analyze the matter in its potential form, even before it exists in the active sense, that is how we are able to get to the root of the matter, by thinking about the matter in the abstract. This is a kind of thinking that we call "philosophical" thinking, where we don't just analyze the particular instance in front of us, but we view the matter in the abstract, in its potential form. When we can think in the abstract about something, before we see how it is actualized, we are getting closer to the root of a matter.

When we learn any *sugya* of Gemara, the discussion in the Gemara surrounds a certain case or a certain setup and that is where the debate is. But the debate in the Gemara is only the manifestation of a different debate that comes before it. In order to uncover a deeper ability of reasoning and understanding when we learn Gemara, we need to wonder about the matter at hand even if the particular case in the Gemara wouldn't be. We need to be able to remove the actual case at hand in front of us, so that we can get ourselves to think about the root of the matter that is behind the whole discussion in the Gemara.

In order to get to the root of a matter, we need to remove the actual case at hand or the specific question that the Gemara has. The root of the issue already exists, even without the actual case in the Gemara which it is presented in. We need to be able to see that root of the issue as it exists in potential form, removing the "case" that it is presented in and just seeing the very issue behind it. The root of the issue is able to appear in many other cases in the Gemara, so the root of the issue is not limited to the particular case in the Gemara that one is learning about right now.

Therefore, every reasoning and explanation (*sevara*) found in the Gemara has a certain fundamental basis (*beis av*) behind it, and that fundamental basis is able to appear in many different

scenarios throughout *Shas*. The particular Gemara you are learning is one example of it, and there are other places in the Gemara where the same issue is being discussed, just with different variables or a different case or setup.

Usually, the style of thinking throughout the generations, when it comes to explaining a Gemara, has always been about understanding each part of a Gemara by itself, to give an explanation for each part of the Gemara as if it exists independently of a different Gemara. The definitions that go into these explanations are based on certain rules that come from the Gemara. However, in this style, each of the different explanations on each Gemara are not connected or integrated with each other. Rather, each Gemara will have its own explanation.

In order to understand this idea better, if you compare learning a *sugya* of Gemara with learning *sefer Moreh Nevuchim* of the Rambam, it appears that both are full of independent reasoning. (There was a big discussion from the times of the *Rishonim* about learning *sefer Moreh Nevuchim* and at what age a person may learn it, but we will not get into this discussion here.) But the Rogotchover would find an underlying reasoning behind different statements in *sefer Moreh Nevuchim* (others would do this with the *sefarim* of *Kaballah*) and he would use that underlying fundamental to explain other discussions in *sefer Moreh Nevuchim*, as well as other discussions in the Gemara.

From a simple glance, the basis behind each of the explanations of Gemara and *sefer Moreh Nevuchim* are independent from each other. *Moreh Nevuchim* contains philosophical reasoning and it doesn't seem like it can be used to explain Gemara. Although the entire Torah is all interconnected, and it is all "*the Torah of Hashem is perfect*", we know that learning *Midrash* is very different from learning Gemara. And when that is our perspective, certainly we view the thousands of different explanations of Gemara as all being separate and independent from each other, because each *sugya* of Gemara is distinct.

However, we are explaining here that there is a whole different way of thinking when learning Gemara, where one line of reasoning can be used to explain many different *sugyos* and connect them all together. A certain fundamental can be the root behind many different debates in the Gemara. The root fundamental stays the same, and it just has many branches to it, discussed in different *sugyos* of Gemara. When we use this approach, we can interconnect together many different *sugyos* of Gemara which seem to be apart from each other, and in this way we can unify many different parts of Torah into one collective whole.

Thus, the idea is that one line of reasoning, one underlying fundamental, is able to tie together many, many *sugyos* of Gemara, which at first glance seem to be very separate from each other. [This was the way of thinking which runs throughout the Rogotchover Gaon's works that explain the Gemara.]

Two Different Ways To Learn A Sugya

We have so far explained the idea with regards to the connection between many different *sugyas* of Gemara. Now let's apply how this idea can be applied as well within learning any one *sugya* of Gemara.

When learning any Gemara, there are two different kinds of thinking we can accomplish during our analysis of the Gemara. One approach, as mentioned, is to see all the different parts that comprise the *sugya* of Gemara [i.e. when learning about paying for damages caused by a pit, we need to understand the different heights of a pit, the impact of the fall, the foul air inside the pit, and the difference between when the pit causes injury verses when the pit causes death, etc]. We need to notice the defining parameters of each *halachah* involved and the different cases. This is the thrust of the approach of Reb Chaim of Brisk: taking apart the details of a matter. This leads a person to uncovering the many different details involved in a *sugya*.

Taking this further, when a person learns the words of the *Rishonim*, he uncovers even more details, and he tries to discover all the different possible angles of understanding. The *sugya* of Gemara is comprised of several parts, there are many views of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* on it, and so many fundamentals behind the different ways of understanding of the *sugya*. That is one way of learning Gemara – uncovering a lot of reasons and fundamentals for each *sugya* learned. But, as mentioned, there is also another way to learn a *sugya* of Gemara. One can discover a line of reasoning or an explanation, and then he can uncover the root behind the reasoning. He can get to the root behind the reasoning by thinking in the abstract, removing the case or scenario in front of him and seeing if the Gemara would still have its question even without the particular case or scenario being discussed. Like this, one can connect one *sugya* of Gemara to a different *sugya* of Gemara which seemingly had no connection

Here is an example, to help us relate better to the idea behind the second approach mentioned. The Sages describe the concept of different soul roots. Many different souls share one root, and although each soul is independent from another, they are really subdivisions of one soul. One soul can be divided into several parts. (In the mystical parts of the Torah, there is a concept that spiritual light can be divided into “sparks” of the spiritual light). One part of a soul might be in Eretz Yisrael, a second part of the soul is in another country across the ocean, yet they are two parts of one soul, one person.

Because of this concept, it is said that sometimes two people will meet each other and for some unexplainable reason they will instantly feel familiar with each other, and they immediately take a liking to each other. Why is it that two people may instantly like each other? The *sefarim* explain several possible reasons for this. Either they were close friends in a previous lifetime, or they are close together in their soul root, or they were next to each other in Gan Eden for some time, or other reasons. But another reason for this is because they are really two different parts of one person. They look like two different people, because their soul has been divided into several parts, at their root they are one person.

At the root, the two people are really one, and it is just that in the reality in front of us, the person has been divided into two. They may even be very different people and it doesn't seem like they are two parts of one whole, and they don't come from the same family or background, but they are really one person. They are not two different people, they are really one person divided between two different bodies!

The above example is about a very different concept than the topic of this lesson, but it can help us relate better to the concept of learning Gemara. When a person is aware of the root behind a reasoning, he knows that there is only one reasoning which is able to clothe itself in many different scenarios. The root reasoning always stays the same, and it is just the variables which change. (In order to really understand this concept better, we would need to bring many different examples from various *sugyos* of Gemara to see how this works.)

In Summary of The Two Approaches

The first approach in learning that was mentioned (analyzing the reason behind each concept of the Gemara and breaking it down further into different details) is more familiar, because it is the approach used by Reb Chaim of Brisk, which is a well-known style in learning.

The second approach mentioned – getting to the root behind a reasoning – is not as known. It can be learned about by studying the *sefarim* of the Rogotchover, which includes *sefer Tzafnas Paneach* and other *sefarim*, in which many different *sugyos* of Gemara are explained using one underlying fundamental.

(However, this is not limited to the approach of the Rogotchover. The purpose here was to show the different ways of thought when it comes to trying to understand and explain discussions and *sugyos* of Gemara. As mentioned, the Rogotchover based his line of thinking on *sefer Moreh Nevuchim*. Others would also use one underlying fundamental to explain many different *sugyos* of Gemara, but they based their line of thinking on the *sefarim* of *Kaballah* instead.)

In summary, there are two different abilities of analysis when it comes to Torah study: Coming up with a reasoning for each concept we come across in the discussions in the Gemara, or tracing a discussion in the Gemara back to a certain underlying fundamental that lays at the core of the discussion, which is also at the core of other discussions in the Gemara as well.

The Abilities of Connecting Information Together and Explaining A Reasoning

Now we shall explain how these two different ways correspond with two different abilities in Torah study which we mentioned in the previous chapters: The ability of connecting information together, and the ability of logical reasoning. (We also mentioned the ability of picturing information, but this is not relevant to what we are discussing here. Certainly we can also

incorporate the ability of “picturing” in our Torah learning, but this won’t be relevant to what we are currently discussing, in this lesson.) The main two abilities which are relevant to Torah study, with regards to what we are discussing in this lesson, are the ability of connecting information together and the ability of logical reasoning.

With the ability of connecting information together, we are essentially taking concepts that seem to be separate from each other, and connecting them together. This corresponds to the style of learning where each part of a *sugya* is traced back to a certain underlying fundamental behind it (the style that is explained by the Rogotchover). The other ability, using logical reasoning to explain each thing, is the ability to see the different parts of a matter in the Gemara, breaking it up into different details and seeing the different factors that the discussion in the Gemara is comprised of.

We shall point out now that there is an ability to combine together separate details of information, and there is also an opposite ability than this: The ability to take apart information and see the different parts that it is comprised of. In the beginning chapters, we explained about the ability of connecting separate information together. The example of this was taking separate letters and combining them into words, and then combining the words into sentences and phrases. This takes separate information and connects it together. But there is also an opposite ability than this: To take information that is connected together, and to take it apart and see what it is comprised of.

The Challenge In Learning Gemara

The first stage, connecting separate information together, is the “childhood” stage of learning Torah [and it is the basis]. But we also need to be able to graduate from that level and advance in our analytical abilities when learning Torah, by taking information that is seemingly connected, and breaking it down into different parts, and seeing all the different parts that the matter is comprised of.

This ability is precisely the challenge when learning Gemara: To try to understand the different factors that comprise a matter in the *sugya* of the Gemara. When a person doesn’t think enough about what he is learning, he doesn’t see a connected unit of different parts, he only sees one matter at a surface level. But any one matter in the Gemara is really comprised of several parts that are connected together. When a person analyzes the Gemara even more, he can notice a great amount of details and break them down even further.

The ability to break down a matter into detail is really another use of connecting information together. Instead of connecting together separate details, one can already notice the connected details before he has broken it down into the details. In doing so, he can see how a matter is really a connection of many details together. By seeing how a matter is really divided into different parts, he is seeing how they all connect. Even though he is dividing the information, it’s really another way of connecting the information together, but instead of focusing on how the details connect, this ability focuses on uncovering details instead of simply connecting them together.

The second ability mentioned, logical reasoning (*sevara*), is, on a simple level, an ability to explain and understand each part of the discussion in the Gemara, We have been explaining here, though, that the more inner way of learning Gemara is to couple together the abilities of connecting together information and also explaining and understanding each part of a matter separately.

Connecting together information can show you the details of a matter, and logical reasoning and explaining can then be used to unify the details together. Certainly the same can be true vice versa: The ability of logical reasoning can also be used to divide the matter into different parts, and the ability of connecting information can also be used either to uncover many details, or to connect the details together.

Rav Chaim's approach will sometimes use one fundamental to answer many issues, but generally his approach contains a fusion of the abilities of connecting information together with logical reasoning. This really involves two opposite uses in the mind: An ability to increase information, which complicates the information further and makes one aware of more details, and an ability to combine together information. Since these are contradicting abilities, most people struggle with this approach and they will either learn towards connecting the information together without trying to understand the reasoning behind it, or they will try to understand and explain each detail without seeing the connection of the details.

Learning the Gemara requires two different thinking abilities which are opposite of each other and which are in contradiction with each other, and this adds to the challenge of learning. It requires both analyzing details of a *sugya*, which makes it complex and detailed, and it also requires putting together the information and seeing how the details connect. Each of these abilities are very different from each other.

The less developed and the more narrowed one's perspective is, the more he will gravitate towards either of these abilities [but he will find it too difficult to fuse them both together in his learning] and stay at the level he's comfortable with. He won't want to expand his thinking abilities in learning, and he certainly won't want to fuse together opposite abilities of thinking when he is learning. It is challenging enough to analyze the *sugya*, because it requires one to graduate from an undeveloped mind to a more mature mind. When one hasn't yet developed his thinking abilities, he prefers to stay with his limited thinking abilities (and by contrast, with a more developed mind, one expands his thinking and analytical abilities).

So it is hard enough for a person to analyze the *sugya* and really use his thinking, and certainly it's harder for a person to use opposite abilities of thinking when he is learning: Noticing the complexities and details of a *sugya* (the ability of *sevara*/logical reasoning) and being able to combine information together (*chibbur*). When most people try to fuse together these two different thinking abilities in their learning, it creates a stress and pressure on the soul. That is why most people will remain at their comfort level in their learning.

Why Many People Don't Change Their Thinking Patterns

Understandably, because of the above mentioned reason, there are those who remain on the same level of thinking for many years, and they never develop their minds further, and they learn in a style that matches exactly how they were educated and trained, and they don't try to get further.

In most cases, the average person has learned in many different *batei midrashim* and *yeshivos*, and even in the same *beis midrash* or *yeshivah* there can be many different Torah educators (*rebbeim*), and each of these teachers had their own style of learning which they were drawn to. During one's younger years, a person may have received a certain style or way of thinking in Torah study from someone who was a role model to him, and it's very possible that he will remain his whole life with that same way of thinking.

Others remain with the same style of thinking in their learning not because they didn't try to develop their minds and remained superficial, but because they gradually became clearer about the style of learning which they grew up with and they clarified that it was indeed suitable for them. They were drawn toward a certain style of learning because "A person should learn Torah in a place where his heart desires",²⁹ and they felt attracted to a certain style of learning and felt it was right for them.

Certainly, this decision can just be another way of fooling oneself. A person may have decided that a certain style or way of learning Gemara is more "for him" because he's just choosing what's easier and more comfortable for him. He may also be motivated by laziness and that is why he prefers an "easier" route in his learning, or he may simply have a nature to go with the flow of everyone around him, and if people around him are into a certain approach, he may want to follow them. Therefore, even when one feels clear that a certain approach or style in learning is suitable to him, it does not always mean that a person has found his true share in Torah yet.

There are also instances where a certain style of thinking is indeed aligned with one's personal share in Torah, but that was only true for a certain period of time, when he was beginning, and the person was not meant to stay on that path forever. Now it may be time for a person to move on to a different share in Torah, and he should not end his life at a level of learning that was good for him in his younger years. If he doesn't want to change the style he is familiar with, it is very possibly because he doesn't want to work hard at his learning and that is why he is stagnating.

Certainly, throughout each stage in one's development in Torah study, and through any style of learning that a person gains, there are tremendous spiritual gains. But this can become a problem if the gains are causing a person to halt his growth in Torah study, making him think that this is where his place in Torah is and that there is no need for him to move on from there.

But if any person wants to reach his true share in Torah, he will need to go through all of the different ways in Torah learning. For most people, this will seem to be beyond their capabilities. A

²⁹ *Talmud Bavli Avodah Zarah 19a*

person cannot figure out which approaches in Torah learning are more appropriate for him, though, if he never gets to know what those approaches are in the first place.

Of course, what we are saying here cannot apply to young *yeshiva bochurim* who are still in their first stages of development in Torah. At that stage, it is very risky to try and become familiar with all the different approaches in learning that exists, and it will only confuse him. Even when one is older and more mature, it still needs to be done with caution and with a lot of wisdom, and one will mainly need to be assisted by someone else for help in this.

Recognizing Different Approaches In Learning

The fact is that there are many different approaches when it comes to Torah study, and one will need to become familiar with them, in order to truly find his place in Torah learning.

It is told that the Chazon Ish was asked about the style of learning of the Baal HaTanya³⁰, and the Chazon Ish replied famously, “It is a truthful approach according to all views. Each person’s way of learning reflects his own soul root.” Whoever is more connected to the soul root of the one who founded a particular approach, is meant to use that particular approach, since it is more relevant to his particular soul root. So there is no question about which way in Torah learning is correct or not, *chas v’shalom*. All of the ways of learning of all our *Gedolim* were true.

To bring this point out stronger, the Chasam Sofer³¹ said, “Reb Akiva Eiger³² is definitely greater than me in Torah. But I think that my style of learning is more appropriate for most people.” There were those who raised a question on this statement, because we can see that the style of Reb Akiva Eiger became more accepted than the style of the Chasam Sofer. The point, though, is that there all kinds of styles of learning Torah. The *Maharal* had a certain approach, and the *Ramchal*³³ developed a different approach³⁴, which very few people actually use. There were many other approaches in learning as well, including the *Gedolim* from Sephardic Jewry and Poland Jewry, and those who are familiar with the different styles of learning are able to recognize them.

When a person is not open to understanding different style of learning, and certainly if he doesn’t try to familiarize himself with most of them, he will simply remain with the style he grew up with and that is all he recognizes, and he remains there. On one hand, this will save a person from the turbulence of making drastic changes in his learning, which will save him discomfort, but it is also very possible that because of his ignorance about the different styles of learning, he will never

30 Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (17th century), founder of Chabad Chassidus

31 Rabbi Moshe Sofer, 18th century Torah leader whose works on Shas and on the Chumash are called Chasam Sofer and Toras Moshe

32 Father-in-law of the Chasam Sofer, and author of Chiddushei Rebbi Akiva Eiger, one of the most widely studied commentaries of Acharonim (scholars spanning the 15th-19th centuries) on the Talmud Bavli.

33 Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto, 17th century kabbalist and famed author of Mesillas Yesharim

34 Sefer Higayon of the Ramchal

discover his share in Torah learning. At best, he may be learning only a part of it, but he won't find his unique place in Torah learning, if he doesn't know about the different methods of thinking in Torah learning which exist.

It should be emphasized that this is a very subtle concept, and it needs to be done wisely, because most people have difficulty learning about different styles of thinking when it comes to Torah study. But the true and complete way of learning Torah is, for each person on his own level, to go through all the different styles of learning. One should take a certain style of learning and adapt it in his learning for a certain period of time, and then adapt a different style of learning at another period. In this way, a person can gradually recognize different ways of learning Torah.

The gain of this will be that when a certain approach is not helping him understand something in his learning, he can make use of a different approach. To illustrate, if a person is having difficulty understanding a certain passage of Gemara, and the simple, surface understanding (*pshat*) implies one way but his logical reasoning (*sevara*) is telling him a different meaning of what the Gemara means, he has two options. Either the simple understanding of the Gemara can dismiss the logical reasoning that he has (that is, if he is more drawn towards the *pshat*, the simple, surface understanding of a matter), or, his logical reasoning can uproot the simple meaning.

Some of our *Gedolim* were more inclined to the simple understanding of a Gemara, which is *pshat*, even if it didn't fit in well with their reasoning. Other *Gedolim* were more inclined to ignore the simple meaning in favor of a novel interpretation of the *sugya* that they based on a *sevara* (logical reasoning), and even if went against the simple meaning of the text, as long as the reasoning seemed clear and sensible to them. Each way of thinking of all the *Gedolim* and Torah leaders throughout the generations had a certain leaning, favoring one particular method in learning over another. If one isn't familiar with any of these ways of thinking, his thinking in the Gemara will be very limited.

As mentioned, another detrimental result of this ignorance is that it will be difficult for a person to see where his true place in Torah is. A person cannot get reach his unique place in Torah if he doesn't recognize different varieties of opposite ways of thinking. The more complete that one becomes, the more ways of thinking he can encompass, and he will also make use of all (or most of) the different ways of thinking that exist. To what extent should a person make use of any method of learning? This is something that will depend on one's particular soul root, so each person will be different when it comes to this.

When one has a narrower perspective, he only recognizes his own style or a style that is similar to his. The broader one's perspective is, the more that one will recognize additional styles of learning and other schools of thought, and he can keep widening his perspective until he learns how to make use of all the different styles of learning, as much as he is able to. At that point, one will mainly be using the approach that is most suitable to his own soul, but he can still know how to make use of a variety of different schools of thought.

Fusing Together the Two Fundamental Approaches In Learning Gemara

In this lesson, we have explained two of the fundamental schools of thinking [the way of Reb Chaim and the way of the Rogotchover] when learning Gemara.

Here is an example of fusing together these two approaches in one's learning. When one begins to think about the *sugya*, does he only begin to analyze the *sugya* when he notices a question or a contradiction, or does he begin to think about it even before he notices the question or contradiction? Every single *halachah* or statement in the Gemara can be thought about, analyzed, defined, and explained with a particular reasoning. One needs to become of all the different parts of the *sugya*, breaking it down into all its details, and analyzing and trying to understand and explain each part. There are many different parts to every *sugya* - and there is always an underlying fundamental behind all of it, or one fundamental discussion behind the current discussion of the Gemara at hand.

Understandably, the method of Reb Chaim of Brisk received acclaim in the Torah world and it became the more accepted approach in *yeshivos*, while the method of the Rogotchover was, for the most part, not accepted. But as we have explained here, these two ways of thinking, while being opposite from each other, really complement each other. Since the main approach accepted in *yeshivos* was the way of Reb Chaim, we also explained the way of the Rogotchover, the 'opposite side of the coin', which one can use in order to complete the way of thinking that he has acquired from the method of Reb Chaim.

Although the Rogotchover's approach was mostly unaccepted, and it is completely the opposite of the accepted approach (Reb Chaim of Brisk), one needs to be familiar with it and make use of it in order to complete his way of thinking when learning. The more expansive one becomes, the more one encompass other ways of thinking and other approaches, until one can identify each way of thinking and how it works, and what the opposite of it is. In this way, when one learns the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, one can discern which approach each of them is using. Even more so, though, one will be activating the potential of the soul (each person according to his own intellectual abilities).

In Conclusion

This was all a description of a way to have complete comprehension in one's Torah learning. We cannot reach all of this completely, because only Hashem and His Torah are perfect, but on our own level we can reach it. The closer we get to the complete light of the Torah, which is "*the Torah of Hashem is perfect*", to that extent will we deepen our connection to the Torah, and to the One Who gave us the Torah.

10 | *Thinking On Your Own*

Gathering Knowledge vs. Thinking On Your Own

With *siyata d'shmaya*, we will continue to explain the ways of learning Torah.

There is a well-known that the wisdom of a person depends on the amount of *sefarim* he has. That is one side of the coin, but there's also another side to the coin: There was once a story that a person came with his young child to speak to the Brisker Rav, and the child noticed that there were very little *sefarim* on the Brisker Rav's bookcase. The child wondered: How can it be that a *Gadol* has so little *sefarim* in his house? The child kept looking at the few *sefarim* that were in the house and he didn't say anything. The Brisker Rav noticed the puzzled look on the child's face and turned to him and said, "The amount of *sefarim* in the home does not indicate how wise or unwise a person is."

What is the depth behind this?

There are three parts to the mind: *chochmah* (knowledge), *binah* (detailed knowledge) and *daas* (inner understanding). The ability of *chochmah* is the raw information that one receives from a teacher, *binah* is when a person develops the information further and arrives at a more detailed understanding, and *daas* is when a person understands on his own, as the Mishnah states regarding a student who is eligible to be taught secrets of Torah: "One who is a wise person, who understands on his own."³⁵

Within *chochmah* (raw knowledge), there is also *mochin d'gadlus* (a developed, more expansive thinking) and *mochin d'katnus* (underdeveloped thinking), but as a general definition, *chochmah* is the knowledge that one receives from his teacher. It is any knowledge which receives from an external source.

The ability of *binah* is an intermediate stage between *chochmah* and *daas*. *Binah* is where a person starts to develop his thoughts further, but it is not entirely original. It is based on information which one received from the outside, so it is not yet a totally independent and original kind of thinking. *Daas*, when one understands from within himself, is where a person begins to think originally. When one uses the ability of *daas*, he produces a thought from within his *neshamah*, bringing it out from its dormant state and activating its potential.

Chochmah and *daas* are at two opposite ends of the spectrum. Whereas *chochmah* is knowledge received from the outside, *daas* is knowledge that one draws out from deep within, from one's soul, on his current level. *Binah* is somewhat original because the person is developing his thoughts

³⁵ Editor's Note: These abilities of *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas* are described here according to sefer *Tanya*.

further, but it is not totally original because it uses information that one has received externally. *Binah* is therefore a bridging level between *chochmah* and *daas*.

In short, there are two kinds of understanding. There is an ability of understanding which comes from one's outside, and there is an ability of understanding which is coming from within. The ability of a person to come up with a logical reasoning (*sevara*) is influenced by the knowledge (*chochmah*) which one has received from his teacher, and this is not only referring to the knowledge about the Oral Torah (Torah teacher), but even the knowledge that one receives by studying the Written Torah. In either case, *chochmah* is the knowledge one receives from the outside.

There is also another kind of understanding, which comes from within, where a person produces information, just like giving birth, where the fetus is formed from within its mother and eventually goes out.

Masculine and Feminine Aspects In Understanding Torah

There is also a more precise definition of these concepts.

The Gemara says, based on the verse, “*Man and woman He created them*”³⁶, that Hashem created man and woman as one, and only later did He split them into two different beings [Adam and Chavah]. Therefore, since man and woman were originally created as one, every person retains a “masculine” and “feminine aspect” within his or her being.³⁷

In this context, we can ask: What is the “masculine” way of understanding, and what is the “feminine” way of understanding? The “feminine” corresponds to being on the receiving end, being deficient, being a “container” to receive, and receiving information from a teacher (*chochmah*), whereas the “masculine” corresponds to having the completion and self-sufficiency to give and provide (*daas*).

A person receives *chochmah* either orally through a teacher, or through the written word contained in *sefarim*. In either case, *chochmah* is to receive information from the outside and bring it inside. It is all about being a receiver, which corresponds to the feminine. Another source of understanding, which corresponds to the masculine, is what one produces from within. This is *daas*. In between these two kinds of understanding is *binah*, when one develops the information further after receiving it from the outside. *Binah* is still within the category of “feminine” understanding because it can only produce new information after receiving the raw information.

Applying this to Torah study, there is a kind of Torah learning which one receives from the outside, from a *rebbe* or from *sefarim*, and there is a kind of Torah learning which comes from within, where one ‘gives’ the Torah knowledge instead of ‘receiving’ it.

³⁶ Beraishis 5:2

³⁷ Talmud Bavli Kesubos 8a

On one hand, there is a *mesorah* (tradition) passed down to us from Moshe, who received the Torah from Hashem, which was transmitted to Yehoshua, then to the Elders, and onward. But from a deeper understanding, Chazal explain that Moshe “grew exhausted, like a woman” when he had to pray to Hashem to receive the Torah for the Jewish people after they had sinned.³⁸ What was this exhaustion? The masculine implies strength, whereas the feminine implies lack of strength. Since Moshe became exhausted as a result trying to receive the Torah again, this was like the exhaustion of a woman, who is a receiver (as opposed to as a man, who is the giver and provider).

There is also a subtler understanding of this: Receiving Torah is the feminine aspect of learning Torah, in which one is not getting Torah from the inner source, and this kind of Torah study exhausts a person, because it is not coming from the inner source of Torah. At the giving of the Torah itself, the level of Torah of the masculine was revealed, and Chazal compared it to a groom going out to greet the bride: Hashem went out to meet the Jewish people, and the giving of the Torah was like the marriage ceremony between the groom (Hashem) and the Jewish people (the bride).

After the sin with the golden calf, the people fell from this exalted level at the giving of the Torah, and ever since then, comprehension in Torah learning is not on the same level. The Gemara describes the second pair of *Luchos* as being a Torah that one is able to forget, and we had we received the first pair of *Luchos*, we would not be able to forget Torah.³⁹ One is only able to forget his Torah learning because the Torah today is on the level of the second *Luchos*, which was on a lower level than the first *Luchos*.

The depth of this is that the level of Torah of the second *Luchos* (the general level of Torah learning today) is a kind of Torah learning that comes from one’s outside, and therefore one can forget it, because it doesn’t come from within. The Torah learning that comes from within oneself, which corresponds to the masculine, is not able to be forgotten. As a hint, the word *zochor*/man is from the word *zecher*/remember.

So there are two levels of Torah: the level of Torah before the sin, and the level of Torah after the sin. The level of Torah before the sin is a kind of Torah learning that comes from within, from the depths of the *neshamah*, corresponding to the masculine. The level of Torah after the sin is a Torah learning that comes from one’s outside, it is a Torah which is “received”, corresponding to the feminine.

Thus, the level of Torah today, which is after the sin and which is on the level of the second *Luchos*, is associated with the feminine. The Gemara says on the verse, “*Say to my wisdom, you are my sister*” that if something in the Torah is as clear to you just as your sister is forbidden to you, you may say it, and if not, you may not say it.⁴⁰ Why is the Torah called ‘your sister’? Why isn’t it compared to a brother instead? It is because on our current level, our Torah learning is compared to

38 Talmud Bavli Berachos 32a

39 Talmud Bavli Eruvin 54a

40 Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 7b

the feminine. The Torah is also called “woman of valor”. We become exhausted when we learn Torah, and this exhaustion and lack of strength corresponds to the feminine.

Torah today is spread apart and needs to be gathered together in order to be understood, because Torah learning today is usually not coming from within oneself (from the masculine level), but from one’s outside (the feminine level), and therefore it has to be gathered from afar. This is the depth behind the teaching, “The words of Torah are wealthy in one place and poor in another place.”⁴¹

The inner source of Torah learning, Torah that comes from within oneself, was the kind of Torah which Moshe received at Har Sinai, where he received every Torah insight that would come in the future from anyone who learns Torah. All Torah *chiddushim* were received by Moshe at Har Sinai⁴², because it was a level of Torah that was all-inclusive, where everything was included in one place. After the sin with the golden calf, the words of Torah became spread apart. Now that it has become spread apart, our Torah learning comes from our outside and our work is to gather it all together.

As an offshoot of these concepts, there are two very fundamental concepts in our Torah learning which go hand in hand, and we cannot have one of them without the other. Hashem created man and woman together and He called them *adam* (man), which means that every human being is a fusion of both the masculine and the feminine. That will mean that the masculine also contains the feminine in it, and vice versa. Therefore, when any person learns Torah, there is a kind of Torah learning which corresponds to the masculine (Torah learning that comes from within) but which, to some extent, will also require one to learn Torah from the outside (the feminine), and there is a kind of Torah learning which corresponds to the feminine (Torah gleaned from one’s outside) but which also require Torah learning that comes from within (the masculine).

When one’s Torah learning is coming entirely from within, it is the masculine level of Torah learning, and when one later gathers Torah knowledge together and applies his Torah learning that came from within, this is the feminine aspect within the masculine aspect of his Torah learning. When one’s main source of Torah learning is coming from outside of oneself, from knowledge in Torah that one has gathered together, this is the “feminine” level of Torah learning, because he isn’t getting his Torah learning from his inside but from a source outside of him. (The Gemara says that those who are called *baalei asufos* are those who gather the words of Torah that have been spread apart and they collect it into one place.⁴³ This is really describing the ‘feminine’ level of Torah learning).

Thus, there are two different kinds of Torah learning, with a very big difference between them. When a person learns Torah mainly from other sources and not from within, he will constantly be looking in *sefarim*. He becomes one with the *sefarim* he learns, the words learned in his *sefarim* became a reality to him, and at every possible moment he is looking in a *sefer*. He keeps gathering

⁴¹ Talmud Yerushalmi Rosh HaShanah 3:5

⁴² As explained in Nefesh HaChaim Shaar IV

⁴³ Talmud Bavli Chagigah 3b

more and more Torah knowledge, from all four corners of the globe, collecting together all the words of Torah from distant places.

The Abilities Needed When Gathering Torah Knowledge Together

When one collects Torah knowledge and gathers it all together, what abilities in the soul does he need to use, in order to succeed with this kind of learning? One of the abilities he will need is the power of organization (*seder*), by giving order and organization to all of the words of Torah that have been spread apart. By gathering together all the words of Torah into one place, he is clearing up the confusion caused by the dispersion of Torah which came as a result of the exile of Bavel (from the word *bilbul*, confusion). When one gathers together a lot of knowledge of Torah, there can be a lot of confusion, because there will be a lot of contradictions. By organizing all of the information of Torah that one gathers together, one is clearing up all of this confusion. Therefore, the power of organization is needed, when one is gathering together all of the knowledge in Torah from all over.

In addition to giving order to all of the information of Torah, one also needs the ability to work out all of the details and how one part of Torah will not be in contradiction with a different part of Torah, how one *sugya* of Gemara will be in harmony with another *sugya* of Gemara. This is called the ability of calculating (*cheshbon*). This is the ability of comparing together questions that are similar to each other and questions that are different from each other, and working out the contradictions, seeing how they are really all aligned with each other.

Certainly, one also needs to the ability of logical reasoning (*sevara*) in order to do this. But when gathering knowledge of Torah together, the primary abilities which one needs to make use of are the two abilities of organization (*seder*) and calculating (*cheshbon*) in his Torah learning, and making minimal use of logical reasoning (*sevara*).

With the other kind of Torah learning mentioned - when one is mainly learning Torah from within and not from gathering Torah knowledge together - one will certainly need these abilities of organization and calculating. But one will need to make a lot more use of the ability of logical reasoning (*sevara*), taking apart each matter and dividing it into different parts. The ability of taking apart the details of a matter was discussed in a previous lesson. The depth of Torah is uncovered when we bring it outward, which is by taking apart each detail and uncovering more details within them.

When one is mainly learning Torah from one's outside (gathering Torah knowledge together), one is mainly learning from *sefarim*, and one will need to make use of the abilities of organization and calculating, as mentioned. When one is mainly learning Torah from within [he does not use *sefarim* that much] and while he will certainly need to use these abilities of organization and calculating for every *sugya* of Gemara he learns, he will mainly be making use of the ability to clarify each part of the Gemara, dividing each matter into different parts, taking it all apart, clarifying the

defining parameters of each thing, and analyzing each part in-depth so that he can come up with a reasoning and explanation for each thing.

Two Different Kinds of Torah Learning – Gathering Knowledge vs. In-Depth Understanding

Any sensible person should be able to see these two kinds of Torah learning reflected into different types of personalities. There are those who are mainly rooted in *chochmah* (encompassing knowledge), who are more focused on gathering together Torah knowledge, gleaned from many *sefarim*, while others are rooted in *binah* (detailed knowledge) and are more focused on in-depth understanding of each matter they learn, while others are rooted in *daas* (understanding that comes from a fusion of *chochmah* and *binah*).

When a person is rooted in *chochmah*, he can gather much Torah knowledge together, but he is not just an intellectual, he will also make sure to act upon what he learns, because he sees his life as an expression of what he knows and he sees reality through the prism of the knowledge in Torah that he has acquired. *Chochmah*, the ability of wisdom, is the ability to gain a wise perspective towards life, which comes from one's Torah learning. It resembles how "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world" – a person is able to see the world through the prism of Torah.

A person whose soul is rooted in *chochmah* has a strong ability to gather much Torah knowledge together, but he does not make that much use of the other thinking abilities, *binah* and *daas*. His main source of Torah learning comes from outside, from afar, and he gathers it all together.

By contrast, another kind of person will mainly be getting his Torah learning from within, from the depths of his own *neshamah*, and his worldview and his ability to act upon what he learns is coming from carefully weighing out his thoughts and subtle analysis. This is a kind of person who is rooted in *binah*. If a person thinks even deeper than this, his soul is rooted in *daas*, and he is usually thinking about the deeper meaning of things, as it is written, "Very deep are Your thoughts, a boor does not know them, and a fool cannot understand this."⁴⁴

When a person becomes a Torah scholar, whether his Torah learning is reflecting *chochmah*, *binah*, or *daas*, these abilities will not only encompass his Torah learning, they will encompass his worldview as well and he will see life and reality through that perspective. When one learns Torah mainly with the ability of *chochmah*, he will see life from the prism of *chochmah*, and when a person learns Torah mainly with the ability of *binah*, he will see life through the prism of *binah*, etc. This will only be true for a Torah scholar, whose Torah learning encompasses all of his life, and therefore he sees everything through the prism of his Torah learning (which he considers his very life).

Chochmah: Learning Torah From The Outside

⁴⁴ Tehillim 92:6

Let's first analyze the first kind of Torah learning mentioned, "learning from the outside", which corresponds to the "feminine" level in Torah, and which mainly uses the ability of *chochmah*, gathering Torah information together from teachers and from *sefarim*.

With this kind of Torah learning, a person is focused on growing more and more in his Torah knowledge. He will learn what is written before him, he will calculate the matters well, and he will keep broadening his knowledge in Torah. As his knowledge in Torah grows, he will organize and calculate the information more. When he has a question, he trusts his initial thinking, looks through *sefarim* and finds the first *sefer* which discusses his question. He will also find others who ask the same question he has, and if he finds answers to his question, he will gather together all of the possible answers he has seen, which he has found written in the *sefarim* of all *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*.

When he has a difficulty or a question, his response is to look for it in the *sefarim*. He wants to see how the great Sages of the past dealt with this question. If he doesn't find anyone who asked his question, he will start to think of what the answer may be. He doesn't think right away about it. First he learns about all the possible information he can find, and only after exhausting the topic will he start to think about it (and that will only happen if he hasn't yet found the question or answer on the topic he's looking for). He first learns whatever is written and available to him. Some questions will come to him as a result of his learning, and some questions will be glaring and obvious to him, as long as he has learned the *sugya* of the Gemara properly. He will find that many of these questions are already discussed by the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*.

In short, his style of learning is to first learn about whatever is written about, and if he has a question, he will look for a *sefer* that discusses it. If he doesn't have any questions on what he is learning, he will look through all of the *Rishonim* and the *Acharonim* on the *sugya*, all the way down to the latest of the *Acharonim*, using his abilities of thinking and memory, according to his own level. And that is how he goes on to cover all of the Torah knowledge that he learns about. That is his particular way of learning [for a person who learns Torah "from the outside", which corresponds to *chochmah*].

Affinity For Halachah

Usually, a person who learns Torah in this way is drawn towards learning *halachah* (Torah law) and to acquire a breadth of knowledge in this area of Torah. He feels a greater need to encompass an entire area of Torah, from the beginning until the end, and covering all of the views of the *Poskim* (commentaries and authorities of *halachah*) until he arrives at the final *halachic* conclusion of a matter.

During the course of learning, a person drawn towards *halachah* will discover questions that are relevant to practical *halachah*, which are not discussed explicitly in the commentaries. For whatever reason, a particular case or issue is not discussed explicitly by the *Poskim*, because the *Poskim* were

discussing a very specific case, and it is not exactly identical to the issue that one is looking into. When trying to figure out the *halachah* about a certain issue or case, one can try seeing if the *Poskim* discuss it, and if they don't discuss it explicitly, one can find if the cases or the issues discussed in the *Poskim* are very similar to the case at hand or if there is no comparison.

With this kind of learning, a large part of one's learning will be encompassing all of the knowledge that one received from teachers and *sefarim*. It will mostly be based on the knowledge which has one received from outside of him. There is a countless amount of *sefarim* available, and it is not possible for a person to learn every single *sefer* that exists, especially in our generation, where there are constant new findings of writings of *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*.

(On a side note, all of the *sefarim* are becoming available today, due to a great spiritual light which is gathering together all the generations together, because the ingathering of the exiles is soon approaching. Our Sages describe Torah learners who are *baalei asufos*, those who collect together all available information in Torah, corresponding to the tribe of Dan, whose blessing is to "gather all the camps". On an inner level, this refers to a power in the soul to gather and collect together all available information. And it is taught that this power will be especially strong in the final days, when all holiness is being gathered together from all over the world, paving the way for the "ingathering of exiles" which will begin the process of Redemption. This is actually the deeper reason behind all of the computer programs today which where one can view any *sefer* he chooses. It comes from the spiritual light that shines strongly in the End of Days, and it is not coincidental that this phenomenon exists in our times, and any sensible person understands this.)

Viewing all of the different views in *halachah*, by studying *Poskim* and *sefarim* of *halachah*, is a kind of Torah learning where one gathers all available information together. Any thinking that one does in this kind of learning is only for the purpose of organizing the information together. There is an endless amount of information in Torah for one to combine together, because there is a countless amount of *sefarim* available. Any Torah *chiddushim* which one discovers along this kind of learning is mostly coming from a combination of all different views of the *Poskim*. In this kind of learning, one discovers a certain question and how it is answered, and how a similar question is asked and how it is answered differently, and then one combines all of this information together and tries to work it out so that there are no contradictions. (This is somewhat of a use of *binah*, because it is connecting together information.)

The Disadvantage To Learning Halachah In-Depth

A problem arises with this kind of learning, however. When one uses his extensive knowledge of *halachah* to actually decide on *halachic* questions, he will be asked about a certain scenario which he has never encountered yet. If he cannot find an answer to the question being asked, he will start to look in the *sefarim* for any other scenarios or cases that are similar. He will need to think if the information he finds is similar and if he can draw any conclusions from it to the current question he is dealing with, or if there is no comparison at all. He will need to look through a countless amount

of sefarim, though, before he makes any conclusions. Even if a person would live for 1000 years, the Torah is so vast that he would never be able to encompass the entirety of the Torah.

There is not enough in one's lifetime to learn every *sefer* and encompass the entire gamut of questions that can be discovered, and certainly there will not be enough time to span all of the information in the Torah available and arrive at a definitive *halachic* conclusion. In spite of this issue, though, it is still an accepted and valid approach of Torah learning, of attempting to encompass as much Torah information as one can, and it is one of the ways of Torah learning.

Learning Torah From Within: Thinking On Your Own

Now we will discuss the second way of Torah learning mentioned: When one learns Torah from within. This is a very different way to approach Torah learning than the way described until now. It is all about thinking and analyzing. Instead of beginning one's Torah study by gathering a lot of Torah knowledge, this kind of Torah study begins from thinking on your own.

Here is a strong example of it. The Chazon Ish, as it was known, would first read the Gemara without looking at Rashi. He would try to think about the Gemara on his own, and after concluding his view, he would then look at Rashi's words. If he saw that his thinking was explained in Rashi, he would be very happy. If he saw that Rashi's words didn't fit his way of thinking, he would think: "Why does Rashi say the opposite of how I thought?"

Sometimes he would remain with initial his way of thinking, as long as it wasn't against the views of the *Rishonim* about what the actual *halachah* was. In any case, this was a certain way of Torah learning in which he began to understand a matter through analyzing it on his own. Even when Rashi would quote a Gemara, he would not read the Gemara until he first thought on his own about it.

This is an ability that should first be used in order to understand the surface meaning (*pshat*) of the Gemara. It is to attempt to understand the simple meaning of the text without even seeing the *Rishonim*'s commentary on it, including Rashi. While this ability is not only used to understand the simple meaning (*pshat*), it should be first used when trying to understand the simple meaning of the Gemara. If one just gives a little thought about the Gemara and immediately looking at the *Rishonim*, this is the antithesis to the inner way of learning Gemara being described here.

Taking this further, after thinking on your own in order to understand the simple meaning of the Gemara, the next step is that instead of continuing further in the Gemara, you analyze each part. You can analyze each word, its implication, and the defining parameters of a statement or *halachah* in the Gemara. After you have defined the boundaries of a certain statement of *halachah* [i.e. when and where the *halachah* applies and how far it goes], you then need to try and understand the reasoning behind something, on your own.

Certainly when questions arise, you need to answer them. But even if you don't have any questions left unanswered, it is not yet time to move on to the next line in the Gemara. Rather, each point in the Gemara needs to be thought about. First you need to think about the simple meaning of something, and to see if it fits in to the what the Gemara is doing, and to pay attention to the wording (these abilities were described earlier and we will not repeat them here).

After this, you should then begin to think about the reasoning for something. Through developing your ability of reasoning, you will see that it is not so simple anymore to just continue to the next line in the Gemara. You should only move on to the next line of the Gemara if you have felt that you have a simple understanding of what you just learned.

The basic idea of this approach is that whenever you learn something, you should start to think about it on your own. Take each word, think about what it means, see how it relates to the discussion, and what the discussion would look like if a certain word or if a certain part of the *halachah* wouldn't be there, and how it would change the discussion. Then you can think about the defining parameters of something: How far does it go? When and where do we say it? Think of all the different possible ways of defining its parameters.

Finally, the goal is to think about the reasoning behind what you are learning, and to think about the depth of it. As mentioned earlier, when trying to analyze the reason or explanation of something, one approach is to define when and where it is said (the way of Reb Chaim of Brisk), and a different approach is to understand the reasoning within the reasoning (this was the way of Reb Shimon Shkop).

With this kind of learning, you will not be looking in *sefarim* that much. Looking at *sefarim* will be a very small part of your learning, when you are spending most of your time thinking and your own, analyzing, and trying to understand the line of reasoning in the Gemara. It is a way to learn Torah from within you, as opposed to taking in knowledge from outside of you. Certainly you will also need to receive knowledge and information, but with the "masculine" way of learning Torah, there is a very small amount of knowledge from the outside, because the main part of your Torah learning will be coming from within.

This does not mean, of course, that you should only try to come up with your own insights and *chiddushim* in every *sugya* of Gemara you learn. Rather, through getting used to thinking on your own, you will discover your way of thinking in *Rashi* and *Tosafos*, and in the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*, and you will find that with more you think on your own, you can find your way of thinking in the words of most (or a decent part) of the words of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*. You will think of a certain reasoning, and then when you discover it in the words of the *Rambam* or *Rashba* or *Ritva*, it will be proof that you have an accurate direction of thinking.

If you don't discover your way of thinking in the words of the *Rishonim* even after you have thought on your own, it is only a sign that you haven't yet developed your abilities in the ways of learning Torah. Once you develop your abilities in Torah learning, and you learn how to think on

your own before seeing any *sefarim*, you will find your way of thinking in most of the words of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*.

Certainly, it is not possible for a person to discover every point on his own. This is because the Torah is “*longer in measurement than the land, and wider than the seas.*”⁴⁵ But one certainly has the ability to draw forth Torah from within his own thinking. Whatever Torah knowledge you gain from outside of your thinking will not be the main part of your learning (when your Torah learning is mainly coming from within), only a small part of it. The larger part of your Torah learning will be drawn from within.

The Approach of The Chazon Ish – Learning Torah From Within

There is more to say about the Chazon Ish’s approach in learning, because there were additional subtleties within that way of learning. The Chazon Ish had his unique way of learning, but we are not explaining his way of learning so that we can copy his approach. We explained it in order to illustrate the idea of thinking on your own, but we did not explain here how exactly the Chazon Ish analyzed a Gemara. That is a different discussion.

[The following is an example of one of the subtleties to the approach of the Chazon Ish]. It is known that the Chazon Ish would sometimes lie down in a bed, close his eyes, and cover himself in a blanket, and then he would think about what he was learning. He did this because the light blocks the ability to concentrate, and by shutting out all light he was able to concentrate better. He would also lean his head on a wall and place his hands behind him and concentrate. This was part of how he would review his learning. He would do this for 40 consecutive days. Besides for his review of the Gemara, though, he was analyzing it with depth, concentrating with all of his being.

Find The Way In Torah Learning That Suits Your Soul

This lesson described two fundamental approaches in Torah learning: gathering a breadth of Torah knowledge before thinking and analyzing it, and thinking on your own before gathering knowledge. We have so far described two different ends of the spectrum when it comes to learning Gemara: Learning all possible information about a topic before beginning to understand it, which is “learning from the outside”, and the more inner method of learning, “learning from within”, by first thinking on your own before gathering information. (Those are the two extremes, and certainly one can find a balance in between these two different approaches, each person on his own level and according to his capabilities).

Some schools of thoughts emphasize the first approach, and other schools of thought emphasize the second approach. Each person has been educated in a certain upbringing, background, and

⁴⁵ *Iyov 11:9*

upbringing which emphasized either one of these approaches, but each person also has a particular soul root which is drawn towards either of these approaches.

Not always does a person's education, background and upbringing match his particular soul root. Sometimes a person merits being born and raised in a place that teaches a certain school of thought which is suitable for his particular soul, but others were born and raised in a place which was really an "exile" to their particular soul, where they were pushed to learn in a certain style or approach that isn't tailored for them. That is why a person will need to clarify deeply which approach is more suitable to his particular soul.

Usually a person will be drawn to the approach that he was educated with, and it is that approach which he will want to be clearer about. However, we must know that one's background, education and upbringing should not decide what one's approach in Torah learning should be. One's upbringing was certainly the first stage of one's Torah learning and it is to be respected, but it is not an indicator of what one's unique place in Torah learning is. A person did not always merit to be raised in an environment that brought out his true potential in Torah learning. He may have grown up in a place that wasn't suitable to his needs in Torah learning. The words of Torah and the style of Torah learning which one learned in his younger years, was not necessarily attuned to the needs of his particular soul.

Therefore, a person needs to clarify deeply where his uniqueness in Torah is, and if his upbringing and Torah education brought out his uniqueness in Torah, or not. This is a very deep process of clarifying.

Most People Cannot Fuse Together These Two Approaches

We have described here two very different ways of Torah learning.

There are very few individuals who can fuse together the two approaches mentioned in this lesson. We will explain why.

Chazal describe two different kinds of Torah learners: One who is a "Sinai", who mainly gathers knowledge of Torah, and one who can "uproot mountains"⁴⁶, who can take all of the knowledge apart and thoroughly understand what he learns. These two different abilities in Torah learning correspond to the two different approaches explained in this lesson.

If there is a person who can combine together these two different approaches, this can be likened to the union of the two redeemers, Mashiach ben Dovid and Mashiach ben Yosef, where two very different approaches are fused together – a very rare combination. Most people (with barely any exception) are not able to fuse together these two different approaches in Torah learning, because we live in a world of disparity, where everything is separated.

⁴⁶ Talmud Bavli Horayos 14a

Even those who are more interested in amassing much Torah knowledge are usually drawn towards a particular thinking ability versus another. If someone excels in amassing Torah knowledge, he may also excel in his ability to calculate the flow of information in the Gemara, but he won't analyze it that deeply or try to understand it thoroughly. And if a person can analyze a Gemara deeply, it is almost impossible to find the same very type of person with a vast amount of Torah knowledge.

To summarize, either a person knows a lot of Torah but he doesn't understand it deeply, or a person will analyze Torah deeply and understand thoroughly what he learns, but he doesn't amass a lot of Torah knowledge. There are people who have amassed an amazing amount of Torah knowledge, but their knowledge is limited only to the surface meaning of statements in *Shas*, *Midrashim*, etc. It is therefore very rare, almost impossible, to find someone who can amass all the views of the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* and who can also understand in-depth everything that he has learned. In the world today, we cannot find such people, because such a fusion will only be possible after the Redemption. May it be revealed soon, when "*A new Torah shall come forth from Me.*"⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Yeshayahu 51:4*

11 | *Thinking On Your Own – Part 2*

“Outside” Torah Learning vs. “Inside” Torah Learning

With *siyata d’shmaya* we will continue here to discuss the ways of learning Torah. In the previous lesson, it was explained very generally that there are two fundamental and different ways of Torah learning: learning Torah from one’s outside, and learning Torah from within.

When one learns Torah “from the outside”, he mainly gathers Torah knowledge. This kind of Torah learner is called “Sinai.” Amassing Torah knowledge uses the mental ability called *chochmah*, an ability to gather information from outside of oneself.

An opposite kind of Torah learning than this is when one learns Torah “from the inside”, from the depths of his soul root [by thinking on his own. This uses the mental abilities of either *binah* or *daas*, and such a Torah learner is referred to as “one who uproots mountains”]. One can access this level of Torah learning either by becoming what the Sages described as a “mighty wellspring”⁴⁸, or, alternatively, by using the ability of in-depth analysis. [This will later be explained more in detail.]

The two different ways of learning (amassing Torah knowledge vs. in-depth analysis of each matter) really correspond to two different levels of learning, *shelo lishmah* (learning for one’s own gain) and *lishmah* (learning Torah for pure motives).

When a person learns *shelo lishmah*, he really wants to “receive”. It was explained in the previous chapter that when a person mainly tries to amass a lot of Torah knowledge, he is looking to receive more and more knowledge, which is the “feminine” level of Torah learning. [A man gives and provides, whereas the woman is the receiver.] When one learns Torah *shelo lishmah*, it is the “feminine” level of Torah learning because the person is interested in “receiving” more and more Torah. It is a kind of Torah learning where one is mainly interested in receiving and getting something out of it (whether he wants more knowledge in Torah, or a reward for his Torah learning).

The other way of learning Torah, in-depth analysis, corresponds to the masculine, and it corresponds to learning Torah *lishmah*, a kind of learning that is a “Torah of kindness on her lips”, a kind of Torah learning that is for the sake of teaching others. It is all the same concept: Learning Torah not for the sake of receiving more knowledge, but for the sake of giving it to others.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Avos 6:1: “Anyone who learns Torah *lishmah* (for its own sake)...becomes like a mighty wellspring”

⁴⁹ After the lesson, the Rav clarified: “Certainly it is possible for a person to amass a lot of Torah knowledge (learning Torah from the outside) and to also learn *lishmah*, and it is also possible that one is learning Torah from within, yet he is learning *shelo lishmah*. We have only mentioned here the general concept, and in the next chapter this will be explained more.”

There is also an even higher level than giving Torah to others: When one learns Torah simply because it is the nature of the soul to learn Torah. We allude to this each day in the blessing, “*And make us grow accustomed to Your Torah.*” This concept will be the basis of what we will describe in this lesson, with the help of Hashem.

We Need Both Kinds of Learning

Let us first discuss more about the two different ways of Torah learning: Learning Torah from the outside, and learning Torah from the inside.

If we want to practically make use of these two different kinds of Torah learning, it is clear and simple that we cannot take only one of these approaches. We cannot only learn Torah from the inside, and we cannot only learn Torah from the outside. We need aspects of both.

Consider Avraham Avinu, for example. Avraham Avinu began to learn Torah at the yeshiva of Shem and Ever. On the other hand, Chazal state that Avraham Avinu learned Torah from within himself: “His kidneys became like two Sages, and from them he learned Torah.”⁵⁰ This implies that he learned Torah from his soul root, and “his kidneys” is referring to the inner source of Torah in oneself. Thus, Avraham Avinu received Torah from the yeshiva of Shem and Ever, and Avraham also learned Torah from within, from an inner source.

Before the giving of the Torah, there was very minimal Torah that one could receive from an outside source [because the Torah wasn’t given yet, and only a select few knew it, such as Shem and Ever], so most of the Torah learning before the Torah was given could only come from within, from an inner source, and not from an outside source. After the giving of the Torah, the main bulk of one’s Torah learning is received from the outside.

Although these are two different ends of the spectrum, it is clear and simple that every person needs both of them. The only issue is what the percentage of each should be: How much Torah should one receive from the outside, and how much Torah should come from within? That is the only question. But every person needs both kinds of Torah learning. One without the other is not possible.

In this lesson, we shall explain how one should not learn Torah mainly to receive, nor should one mainly strive to give and teach Torah to others. Rather, an integration of these two approaches will be emphasized. We will explain how.

Practically Applying These Two Kinds of Learning

⁵⁰ *Beraishis Rabbah* 61:1

In the previous chapters, we explained the different abilities that are needed in order to develop further in learning Torah: connecting information together, picturing a concept, and reflecting with analysis. Now that we have laid down those foundations, we can expand our understanding of this and add on an additional step in our development of Torah study, as follows.

When a child first begins to learn Torah, he is “receiving” Torah – he is being a receiver. A child can only receive, and he is not able to give. A child is entirely a receiver: He is fed, clothed, loved, given a house to live in. When one gets older, he gains the ability to give.

On a subtle note, even a child gives in some way, because his birth gives joy to his parents. Our Sages also explain that when a person does a kindness for another, the recipient is also doing a kindness, because it is through him that the giver will be rewarded: “More than what the wealthy one does for the poor one, the poor one does for the wealthy one.”⁵¹ So, from a deeper perspective, we can’t say that a child only receives. The child is giving in some way, because every recipient of kindness is ultimately benefiting the giver.

However, for the most part, a child is a receiver, and therefore a person begins to learn Torah by receiving it. A child’s Torah learning is on the level of “receiving” Torah. When a father teaches Torah to his child, the child is receiving Torah from the outside. Later, the child’s mental abilities develop: The abilities of connecting information together, picturing information, and reflecting and analyzing.

The ability to think, reflect, and analyze is essentially the power to learn Torah “from the inside”, the concept which we began to explain in the previous chapter. In the beginning chapters, we discussed the ability of reflecting and analyzing as a stage of development in Torah study, but now we are explaining it with regards to a deeper level: It is really a use of the ability to learn Torah from within oneself. In our Torah learning, we will need to integrate both learning Torah from the outside (receiving Torah from outside sources) and learning Torah from the inside (thinking on our own). By thinking on our own, we are mainly learning Torah from within, and we need to integrate it with learning information of the Torah, which is also fundamental to our learning.

In the elementary level of learning, a person reads the Gemara and receives more and more information of Torah. When one is an adult and his thinking abilities have matured, he is able to analyze and think about what he learns, and he acquires a deeper awareness as he is learning Torah, and he is able to integrate together two different kinds of Torah learning: the ability to gather information, and the ability to think on his own. He will first gather Torah knowledge from the outside, by reading a verse in the Torah or a line of the Gemara, and then he can think about it and analyze it, where he will be learning Torah from his inside.

When learning the Gemara, a person learns a phrase of the Gemara or a *halachah*, and then he can begin to think about it. This should not be done merely for the sake of thinking about it. It is

⁵¹ *Vayikra Rabbah* 34:8

more about changing from the first level of Torah learning (gathering information) to the more inner level of Torah learning (thinking on your own).

When you begin to read the Gemara, you are really receiving Torah from “outside” of yourself and bringing the information inward. When you begin to think about what you are learning, you are learning Torah from within and bringing the thoughts outward. These are two opposite kinds of learning. Without being aware of these two different kinds of learning, a person will be like an unsorted mixture, because his different thinking abilities will clash with each other and no order is given to these abilities. Instead, one can become aware of the two different kinds of Torah learning, and then he will be aware of the transition he needs to make from gathering knowledge to thinking on his own. The gain of this will be that his thinking will become more accurate and precise.

A person is always integrating these two different kinds of Torah learning together, whether he is aware of it or not. But the question is when, how, and in what way he can strike the balance. A person reads a statement of the Gemara, where he receives Torah from the outside. When should he begin to think about what he has just learned? And how should he think about it?

Certainly he will need to think a little about what it says in the Gemara. In addition, as mentioned in previous lessons, one should think about the simple meaning of each word, what its implication is, and how it contributes to the *sugya* of the Gemara, and what the Gemara would look like if that detail wouldn't be there. One should also try to think if there are any other possibilities that the Gemara could have said. When reading a question in the Gemara, before seeing the Gemara's answer, one should try to think of a possible answer on his own.

Before looking at Rashi, one should try to think of what the Gemara means, and after seeing Rashi, one should think about why Rashi explained it that way, and why he didn't say a different explanation. One should think if Rashi is explaining in the opposite way of what I thought, or if Rashi's explanation is indeed how I thought. And when one learns an argument between Rashi and Tosafos, one should think: Why didn't Rashi say like Tosafos? And why didn't Tosafos say like Rashi? And so forth.

Learning in this manner is a way to integrate together the two kinds of Torah learning (learning Torah from the outside and learning Torah from the inside) and it will also make the transition much quicker. By learning in the above manner as it was laid out here, one can get a lot quicker to the stage of learning Torah from the inside.

Learning Torah from the inside is not only meant for when a person feels the need for it, like when a person has a question or difficulty on what he is learning and then he looks through all the sefarim and he can't find the answer, so he thinks on his own. Rather, to begin with, one needs to integrate together the two kinds of learning: gathering Torah knowledge as well as thinking on your own, in one process. It is just that before beginning to think on your own, you first need to make sure that you know what you have learned and gathered. After you have absorbed well the knowledge that you gathered during your learning, you will then be able to accurately use the ability to think on your own.

Throughout your learning, you should keep going back and forth between these two different kinds of learning: Learning Torah from your outside (gathering the necessary knowledge about the *sugya* of Gemara) and learning Torah from your inside (thinking on your own).

Step 1: Learning From The Outside

We will now go more into detail about something that was explained in the previous lessons. First we will quickly summarize what was explained.

In the first steps of learning Gemara, one goes through the *sugya* of the Gemara and then sees Rashi's commentary. Then, one should use the ability to picture the setup of the Gemara and what the general picture of it is. One should become aware of the roots and branches of the *sugya*, and any other details that the branches lead into. After this, one can become aware of two different extreme lines of thought in the *sugya*, and then one can think of any of the points that are in between the extremes.

A person first learns and thinks about it says before him in the Gemara and tries to arrive at the simple understanding of it. He should understand each word and see how each word contributes and what the Gemara would look like without it. After getting a general picture of the *sugya*, one should then become aware the roots, branches, and the branching details. There is one root point in the *sugya* which leads to many branching points, and each of the branching details in the *sugya* are included in the root point.

To emphasize, this is the intermediate stage of learning, in which uses the ability to connect together information, organize the structure and general picture of the *sugya* (the root point and the branching points of the *sugya*), and then to analyze it and take it apart. The point of all of this is to give structure to one's learning. It does not only include becoming aware of all the different *halachos* that are mentioned in the *sugya*. It is to become aware of all the different points that are being produced from the *sugya*: One gets a general "picture" of the *sugya* by noticing the roots, branches, and further branches.

And, as mentioned, the next step is to notice the two different extremes in a *sugya*, and any other points between the extremes. One should try to become aware of the different points in the *sugya* in the order of their extremity, so that one sees a clearer picture of the *sugya*.

If one has difficulty with this, he should take a pen and paper and write it down. Picture a family tree: There is the name on top, the root, and there are branches that come from it, and each of those branching names branch into other names. Writing a list of the different points of the *sugya*, in order of their extremity, can be compared to writing down the name of a grandfather on top, a father in the middle, and children on bottom. By organizing all the different points of the *sugya*, one gains a clearer picture of it.

By summarizing the *sugya* in this way, one is truly gathering all of the Torah knowledge that he has gleaned on the *sugya*, solidifying his first stage of learning: “Learning from the outside”. After a person has gone through all the points of the *sugya* – each person does this according to his own capacity – he can then organize it in his mind. This is all the “outside” level of Torah learning, and it is the first and elementary stage which one must traverse.

Of course, it is not entirely “from the outside”, because one will certainly need to do some thinking and analyzing even as he is merely gathering the information, because organizing the *sugya* certainly requires some thinking and analysis. But, in general, one is still learning from the outside at this point, and he hasn’t yet begun to really think about into the details of the *sugya*.

Before you start to think into the details in the *sugya*, your mind needs to have a general picture of it. This has to be emphasized: For every *sugya* you learn, you must emerge with a general picture of it. If you don’t have a general picture of the *sugya*, in most cases you will miss the details and if you try to analyze the *sugya* deeply, your thinking will not be accurate, because you don’t have any picture of details to work with, and it is so far unclear to you. Only when gain a general picture of the *sugya*, by going through the learning process until now, can you begin to enter the next stage of learning, which will be from your inside.

Step 2: Thinking On Your Own

When you finish summarizing the *sugya*, you have learned it all “from the outside”, giving yourself a picture of it. Now you can begin to learn Torah from the inside: You can begin to formulate your own inner picture of the *sugya*, and bring those inner thoughts outward. As mentioned, part of your inner thinking process is the ability of *sevara*, formulating your own logical understanding.

When you begin to formulate your own thinking on a matter, this is the point where learning from the outside and learning from the inside cross paths. This is because some explanations are written in the Gemara and in the commentaries, and other explanations are based on your own inner understanding.

To review: The stage before this, learning from the outside, is by becoming aware of the details that arise from the *sugya*, gaining a picture of the *sugya* by noticing the root points, the branching points, and the divisions of those branching points. After you have done that, you can then move on to the next step in your learning: The ability to formulate your own logic (*sevara*).

When formulating your own logic, you are at the crossing point between learning from the outside and learning from the inside. The first thing you need to do is organize the different lines of reasoning that are explained explicitly in the Gemara and in the commentaries (as much as you have gathered, according to your own capacity). Then you need to become aware of the two different extreme lines of reasoning and the points between them, and that completes your picture of the *sugya*. This is in the first stage of learning, which is all learning from the outside.

When you are formulating your own understanding (*sevara*), you are only partially gathering information from what you learn in the Gemara, because it is mostly a kind of learning that comes from within. When you are thinking on your own, even the details that emerge from the *halachos* in the *sugya* will become novel insights which are not written anywhere explicitly. You can only notice these “unwritten” details as a result of thinking about what you have learned.

The stage of *sevara*, formulating your own logical understanding, is the bridging point between learning from the outside with learning from the inside. This is because you can only formulate your own understanding (learning from the inside) based upon what you have learned and gathered (learning from the outside). *Sevara* is therefore an integration of learning from the outside with learning from the inside.

However, many people formulate their *sevara* entirely from knowledge that they have received from the outside, without thinking on their own at all. Here we are explaining that *sevara* can only come after you have gathered your information on the *sugya* and organized the information, but this does not mean that your entire ability of *sevara* should come from information you have learned and gathered.

Again, the actual *halachos* and the fundamentals behind them are written in the Gemara and in the commentaries. But the fundamentals behind any line of reasoning (*sevara*) are products of analysis and thinking, which cannot be learned from any outside source, because they can only be learned from within.

If you tell a *sevara* to another person and he understands what you are saying, though, the other person has learned about this *sevara* from the outside, because he did not think of it on his own. Any *halachah* or fundamental written explicitly in the Gemara or in the commentaries is always a kind of learning which you receive from the outside. Your own logical reasoning (*sevara*) comes from within you, but if another person hears it from you, he has received such learning from the outside.

Many of the lines of reasoning of the Gemara are not even written explicitly in the Gemara, and one can find them in the commentaries of the *Rishonim*. Any of the *halachos* written in the Gemara are, for the most part, learned “from the outside”. But the *sevara* (line of reasoning) behind any given *halachah* or fundamental in the Gemara will be hidden and it is never spelled out clearly. For example, if you take a few different explanations that are found in the *Rishonim*, you can notice that usually they will explain only the beginning of a *sevara*. But in order to understand their words, one will always need to think about them on his own, using his own inner understanding.

Therefore, although *sevara* can only come after one has gathered information and organized it, it is the transition stage between learning from the outside and learning from the inside. When one uses the ability of *sevara*, he is starting to reflect on the Gemara on his own, and this begins the stage of learning Torah from the inside.

How does one analyze and get further into the *sugya*? By thinking of the root and branches of the *sugya*. Think: What is the root of the issue or debate in this *sugya*? And what does that root issue

branch out into? What are the different aspects of each *halachah* in the *sugya*? Like this, you can uncover all of the branches of the *sugya*, in their details.

Some people get to the branches by way of the root, whereas other will get to the root by way of the branches. One first kind of person will try to first get to the root of the *sugya*, from deep analysis, whereas another kind of person will first think of particular aspects of a *halachah* or from a particular explanation in the *sugya*, and from there they can arrive at the root of the discussion in the *sugya*. There is a way to get from the root to the branches, and there is a way to get from the branches, and each person can use the approach that is most suitable to him.

In this manner of learning, a person is able to become clear on the parts in his learning that came from the outside (the information he has gathered and learned), and which parts of his learning came from his own thinking.

Let us explore further now how to analyze a *sugya*. When you learn a *sugya* of Gemara, there are several detailed *halachos*. You should try to come up with a logical reasoning, a *sevara*, for each of these different details. For example, in our *kolel*, we are currently learning a *sugya* that involves 8 different *halachos*. Try to think of a *sevara* (explanation) for each of these 8 *halachos*. You will discover more and more subtleties within each of these details with the more you analyze the reasoning behind them. As mentioned earlier, you first need to have the general picture of the Gemara, and then you can begin to analyze it. Be aware of the *sevaros* which you have actually seen in the Gemara and in the commentaries, and the *sevaros* which you have come up with on your own.

As you persist with this way of learning, gradually, your ability of “learning from the inside” will expand and open further. In fact, even your ability to “learn from the outside” will grow in its capacity, and you will be able to gather more information.

Becoming Clear About What Kind of Learning You Are Engaged In

Each person has a root, personal share in the Torah. Each person has his own capacity of how much he can learn. But when you learn in the methodical manner that is being presented here, your capacity is able to grow, and you will be able to hold more information in your mind – and your thinking abilities will grow as well.

This will happen with the clearer you can differentiate between information and reasoning which came from the outside with information and reasoning that came from your inside. The less clear you are about this difference, your capacity will of course be limited. The more you stick to this approach and the clearer you become about the different kinds of learning in the process of Torah learning, the more will you be able to expand your capacities of gathering knowledge and thinking on your own.

Gradually, with the more you recognize the difference between the Torah knowledge you’ve gathered from outside of yourself versus the knowledge you have received from within, you will also

become clearer about which kind of Torah learning is more suited to your soul. How much of your Torah learning is coming from outside of you, from knowledge you are gathering, and how much of your Torah learning is coming from within, from your own thinking? By recognizing this difference, you will recognize netter where your personal share in Torah is.

Torah Chiddushim – A Result of Searching For Truth In One’s Learning

Although we have emphasized here the importance of the ability of “learning from within”, it is clear and simple to anyone that no one should try to expand this ability by forcing himself to come up with novel Torah *chiddushim* (insights) to accomplish this kind of learning. Your emphasis when you learn (even when thinking on your own) should be: To try to get to the true, accurate meaning of the words you are learning. Your aim should be to uncover truth, and when your goal is to get to the truth, you will certainly have insights (*chiddushim*) as a byproduct.

From trying to get to the true meaning of what you are learning about, and with the more you try to think on your own, your ability of learning from the inside will expand and open further. If you keep to the method of learning explained here, you can use the general picture of all the different *halachos* and the explanations found in the *sugya*, and then you can think your own about the *sugya*. Understandably, with the more you are using your own thinking, your general picture of the *sugya* will also become clearer, and you will discover more details in it, leading you to more explanations, and this will expand your understanding of the *sugya*.

Now you can better understand the verse that describes Torah learning: “*It is longer than the sea in measurement, and wider than the seas.*”⁵² You can keep uncovering endless details in every part of Torah you learn. Each person has his own capacity in Torah, based on his personal capabilities and limitations, and each person at a certain point will finish the *sugya* he is learning (either because the *kolel* is moving on to the next *sugya*, or because he has reached his limit, or because it is time to gather more information of Torah). In any case, by getting used to the method of learning here, one will gain a clearer picture of the *sugya* he is learning.

Let us now summarize this lesson until this point. There are two ways of Torah learning. There is a way to learn “from the outside” and a way to learn “from the inside”. These are two different ways of learning Gemara, which are each fundamental. Every person needs to be clear about which part of his learning is coming from the outside (knowledge he has seen and gathered) as well as which part of his learning is coming from the inside (from thinking on his own).

Your Main Share In Torah

⁵² Iyov 11:9

The part in your learning which came from the outside [any of the information, knowledge, or explanations which you have gleaned from what you have seen, read, and learned in the Gemara or in the commentaries] cannot be your main share of Torah learning. Only the learning that came from your inside [your own thinking] becomes your main share in the Torah.

Certainly, the external part of your learning, the knowledge which you have gathered, can also be part of your personal share in Torah, to a certain extent. This is because one person has more capacity than another. Reuven can amass a certain amount of knowledge in certain areas of Torah and Shimon can amass greater knowledge in a different area of Torah. However, Reuven's uniqueness and Shimon's uniqueness in this regard is but the external part of their unique Torah learning. This aspect cannot be considered Reuven's or Shimon's unique part in Torah, because it is only the surface level of learning. The fact that Reuven can gather more information in one part of Torah than Shimon can, and vice versa, is but the external part to their learning, so it cannot be the completely unique aspect of their learning.

Everything in Creation has an external part and an internal part to it, and the same goes for our Torah learning – there is an external part to our Torah learning, and an internal part to our Torah learning. The external part of our learning is the information in Torah that we learn and gather, by looking in the Gemara and in the commentaries and *sefarim*. The internal part of our learning comes from within: The thinking that we do on our own. When a person finds his own share in both his external and internal parts of his Torah learning, he becomes connected to the depths of the Torah. It is this which we refer to when we make the blessing each day, “And give us a portion in Your Torah.”

Finding The True Joy of Torah Learning

Connecting to one's true share in Torah learning is what brings a person to the true *simchah* (joy) of Torah learning. There are many people who learn Torah, but their *simchah* in learning is far from complete, each person on a different level.

Why is it that many people do not have complete *simchah* in their Torah learning? There can be many reasons for it, but generally there can be three different reasons that cause it (1) Either a person is lacking *simchah* in general when he studies Torah, or (2) A person is not putting enough effort and exertion into his learning, or (3) Mainly, it is because the person is missing his true share in Torah learning.

In most cases, the reason why a person lacks joy in his Torah learning is because he has not found his true share [method] in Torah learning. When a person is missing his main kind of Torah learning, he will not find true, complete joy in his learning. If Reuven learns Shimon's main part in Torah learning, and vice versa, they will not have true joy in their learning. One cannot unify his being with the Torah when he is learning in a way that is not suitable for him. One can unify only with the part of Torah that is aligned with his soul. Any Torah learned “from the outside” cannot

become completely unified with the one who learns it. Only Torah learning that came from within can become unified with the person.

The main bulk of what we are explaining here concerns Torah study, but what is the goal of all this? It is so that each person can reach his unique share in Torah, to reach true joy in learning Torah, and to unite completely with the words of Torah that one learns.

In the previous chapters we have been explaining the ways of learning Torah, and here we have added on an important dimension: Becoming clear of Torah learned from the outside versus Torah learned from the inside.

ractically Speaking

What is the order of steps that a person should go in? At first a person will need to get used to practicing the steps that were explained in the previous chapters, and he cannot begin with the concept explained in this chapter. If a person begins to improve his Torah learning by trying to implement the concepts discussed in this chapter, it will be a lot more difficult. That is why we did not explain these concepts until this chapter. Only after a person has gotten used to the steps of Torah learning discussed in the previous chapters can he take this deeper step into his Torah study and become aware of these two different kinds of learning described in this chapter.

There are a few people who can begin improving their Torah study with the concepts explained in this chapter. This is the case for people who love to live in a very deep, inner world. By beginning with “learning Torah from the inside”, they feel more settled. When they first try to understand something on their own before they have delved into all the information on it, they have a better time connecting to the information they learn, after they have first thought about it well on their own.

But most people will need to do the opposite than this, and they will need to first learn in a methodical manner, as explained in the previous chapters, and only after that can they take the next step, gradually entering into a deeper kind of Torah study, alternating between learning from the outside and learning from the inside. As one is learning, one should become aware if he is learning from the outside or learning from the inside. This will give clarity to their Torah learning and imprint their learning onto their souls, uniting together two kinds of learning (learning from the outside and learning from the inside). In this manner, everyone can reach his personal share in the Torah.

12 | *Shelo Lishmah & Lishmah In Torah Learning*

Summary of Previous Chapters

In the previous chapter, two fundamental methods of Torah learning were explained: Learning Torah “from the outside” and learning Torah “from the inside.” These two different kinds of learning represent the two primary movements of the soul: That which is absorbed from the outside, and that which emanates from within.

As explained, Torah learning “from the outside” corresponds to the feminine, where one “receives” his learning from a source outside of him. Torah learning “from the inside” corresponds with the masculine, when one gives and teaches Torah to others (from a pure point in one’s soul).

In Chapter Five, we discussed five kinds of memory when it comes to Torah learning: picturing what one has learned, remembering what one has learned in general terms (*chochmah*) or in detailed terms (*binah*), remembering one’s Torah learning as a result of being emotionally connected to the Torah (for example, if a person enjoyed his learning and it became imprinted onto his memory), and the deepest level of remembering Torah, which is when one remembers it because he has formed a deep soul connection to the Torah, in his *neshamah*.

Remembering One’s Learning – As A Byproduct of Learning From The Inside

The highest level of remembering one’s learning, which emanates from one’s *neshamah*, can be coming from different sources.

One source is the Torah that one learned as a fetus, when he was taught the entire Torah by an angel.⁵³ As a fetus, one is taught all of the Torah that he is meant to learn in his current lifetime (after he will be born).

An additional deep source of remembering one’s Torah learning is when one is connected to it because his feet stood at Har Sinai and he received the entire Torah. There were souls who were actually there and those who weren’t there. Every soul was present at Har Sinai, but some of us were actually alive in that generation and we were there physically, while other souls were there only in their souls and not with their bodies. Each person received the Torah from Har Sinai.

In addition, each of the 600,000 letters of the Torah corresponds to the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people, so each soul has a root in the Torah. On the deeper level, each soul is connected to

⁵³ Talmud Bavli Niddah 30a

the Torah because there are “three crowns tied to each other, Yisrael, the Torah and Hashem.”⁵⁴ On an even subtler level, one’s connection to Torah is due to the oneness that he shares with the Torah, for “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are all one.”⁵⁵

Those are the roots of one’s connection to the Torah.

To the degree that one is only learning Torah from the outside, one will not be that connected to his deeper roots in the Torah. The more that a person is learning from the inside, he is more in touch with the roots, with his soul, with his personal share in Torah. Touching upon one’s share in Torah means that one becomes connected to the Torah he learned in fetal state, when he was taught by the angel, and to the special share in Torah he received at Har Sinai, and to his soul root in each of the letters of the Torah, his soul root in the three-fold connection between Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael, and even more so, his soul root in the oneness of Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael.

One’s comprehension in Torah comes from being connected to any of the aforementioned sources. But in general, remembering one’s Torah learning from any of these deeper levels of connection to Torah can only come when learns Torah “from the inside.”

Learning From The Outside Corresponds To Shelo Lishmah, Learning From The Inside Corresponds To Lishmah

At the root of learning from the outside and learning from the inside are the concepts of *shelo lishmah* (learning Torah for some self-gain) and *lishmah* (learning Torah for its own sake). Receiving Torah “from the outside” is generally in the category of *shelo lishmah* [as will be explained], whereas learning Torah “from the inside” generally corresponds to learning Torah on the level of *lishmah*.

“Receiving” Torah knowledge, on an external level, is when one learns *shelo lishmah*. An example of this is when learns for prestige, to be called “Rebbi”⁵⁶, and the like. Such a person is learning Torah in order to receive something. What is he trying to receive? Either he wants the title of being called a “*rebbe*” so that he can get honor (a deeper motivation) or so that others will make him wealthy (a coarser motivation). Either way, by learning for any of these reasons, he is learning Torah in order to get something from it.

His very learning is from the perspective of “receiving”.

Although he wants to get something out of his learning, he is not trying to receive anything from the actual words of Torah he is learning. Rather, he is learning Torah so that he can receive something outside the Torah: honor, wealth, etc. This is an external kind of receiving. (On a subtler

⁵⁴ Zohar I (Beraishis) 224a

⁵⁵ Zohar III (Achrei Mos) 73a

⁵⁶ Talmud Bavli Nedarim 62a

level, learning in order to be honored is also like trying to receive from the Torah, because the Torah is the epitome of honor, as it is written, “*The honor of the Sages they inherit.*”⁵⁷) But in any case, when a person learns to get honor or wealth, this is the external motivation in trying to receive from the Torah.

A deeper level of trying to receive from the Torah is when one’s very learning is receiving: When he learns *shelo lishmah*. His learning, and the perspective he has in his learning, is on the level of a receiver. Such a person is not learning to receive necessarily, it is just that his learning is on the level of a receiver, because by learning *shelo lishmah*, he is learning Torah from the outside.

Thus, the depth of *shelo lishmah* is not simply when one learns to be called a *rebbe* or to gain wealth and honor. It is when a person learns from the outside, when his learning is on the level of receiving. As mentioned earlier, Chazal teach that after the sin with the golden calf, Moshe’s strength grew exhausted, like a woman.

This meant that before the sin with the golden calf, our Torah learning was at the level of *lishmah*, and as a result of the sin with the golden calf, the level of the nation fell, and ever since then, we begin our Torah learning from the level of *shelo lishmah*.

Chazal say “A person should always learn Torah and do *mitzvos shelo lishmah*, because from *shelo lishmah* comes *lishmah*.”⁵⁸ Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that a person “always” must begin with *shelo lishmah*, even if he is on a high level, because a refined spiritual level must always be preceded by an unrefined level.

The verse “*And it was evening, and it was morning*”⁵⁹ is a hint that we begin with *shelo lishmah* (evening/darkness/the unrefined level) before we can arrive at *lishmah* (morning/light). But the more subtle understanding is that a person “always” starts from *shelo lishmah* because ever since the sin with the golden calf, we begin our Torah learning from a state of concealment, from *shelo lishmah*.

Rav Chaim Volozhiner explained that even when a person is not yet at the level of *shelo lishmah*, there is always a moment where a person experiences *lishmah*. Taking this further, not only are there moments in time where a person experiences *lishmah* in his learning, but in the soul as well, one can always experience the ability of “learning from within”, which is the perspective of *lishmah*.

A person is therefore always able to reach *lishmah*, “learning from within”, even when he learns *shelo lishmah*, when he is “learning from the outside” and “receiving” Torah. The only question is how much of each kind of learning one experiences, but these two different kinds of learning exist in every soul, and one keeps alternating between them. This concept affords us a deeper understanding of *shelo lishmah* and *lishmah*.

⁵⁷ *Mishlei* 3:35

⁵⁸ *Talmud Bavli Pesachim* 50b

⁵⁹ *Beraishis* 1:5

Learning Torah On The Level of the Body vs. Learning Torah On The Level of the Soul

In different terminology which means the same thing, there are two kinds of learning: On the level of the body and the level of the soul. When one learns on the level of the body, he is learning Torah in order to receive. When one learns Torah on the level of the soul, he is learning in order to give and bestow Torah upon others.

When a person learns on the level of the body, he will learn because we are commanded to have exertion in Torah, and he exerts his mind in the Torah. He will use the mental abilities of connecting information together, picturing the body of the information, and analyzing it and breaking it down into details (as explained in the previous chapters). But at this level, he is only using simple human logic (*seichel enoshi*), because with bodily and mental exertion alone, he is found at the level of *shelo lishmah*.

The Sages use a term called “These are the *gufei Torah*”⁶⁰ (lit. these laws are the “body” of Torah, meaning that they are important and basic), and this is a hint to learning Torah on the level of the *guf* (the body). When Torah enters the innards of a person and penetrates to the *neshamah*, it is called *nishamasa d’Oraysa*, the “soul” of Torah, the higher level of Torah learning.

In every part of Gemara one learns, there are the *gufei Torah*, the ‘bodily’ part of the text, the words of the Gemara that are written in front of him. There is also a hidden aspect: the *nishmasa d’Oraysa*, the secret part of the learning, which is hidden and not obvious at the surface understanding. One needs exertion to reveal the secret part of the *sugya*, the soul of the Torah which is found within the *sugya*.

This is the way of Torah: it was the way of the Sages to conceal their words, even in the words of Abaye and Rava, the Gemara, which is called *niglos haTorah*, the revealed aspect of Torah. The revealed part of the *sugya* which we can see in front of us is only the smaller part of the learning. The concealed part of the *sugya*, which we cannot see at face value, is much bigger [i.e. think of a glacier. The part we can see above the water is only a small part of the glacier, in comparison to the rest of the glacier underneath the water, which is much larger].

When it comes to finalizing the *halachah*, the Sages were coming to explain and make things known, and they were not trying to hide anything. But in the ways of learning Torah [i.e. Gemara], there is a part of Torah learning which is hidden, and this hidden part of the *sugya* is much larger than the revealed part of the *sugya*. The revealed part of the *sugya* is more obvious to us, whereas the hidden part of the *sugya* is a lot bigger but it is not obvious. Yet, it is there.

Thus, the depth of Torah learning, even when it comes to learning the revealed aspects of learning, divides into two parts: (1) The *gufei Torah*, the words of Abaye and Rava, etc. (2) The hidden parts to the words of Abaye and Rava as well as all the words of the Sages, the *nishmasa d’Oraysa* which is hidden in their words.

⁶⁰ Avos 3:18

With the more a person learns and gathers Torah knowledge (learning from the outside), he gradually becomes sharper and he can then plumb to the *nishmasa d'Oraysa* which is hidden in the *sugya* of the Gemara. But even more so, he can reach his own *neshamah* and then his learning becomes transformed into learning from the inside, and his inner thoughts will be revealed outward, like revealing a secret.

We should emphasize that we are speaking about two very fundamental ways throughout all of Torah study. Learning from the outside, *shelo lishmah* - learning on the level of a receiver – is, on a general level, studying the revealed part of Torah (*nigleh*), which is called *gufei Torah*. Learning from the inside, *lishmah* - learning on the level of a giver - is studying the hidden aspect of Torah (the *nistar* within *nigleh*), which is called *nishmasa d'Oraysa*. The hidden parts of Torah, *nistar*, does not only refer to the wisdom of Kaballah (the mystical parts of Torah). Rather, anything hidden is in the category of *nistar*. If there is a very hidden point in the words of the Sages in the Gemara, it is in the category of *nistar*.

Those are two very important aspects in our Torah learning: the revealed aspect of the *sugya* which we can understand, and the hidden aspect of the *sugya*, which we can also get to and understand.

Taking Our Learning Abilities To The Next Level

When we are clear about these concepts, our learning will take on a whole different level. We haven't yet explained everything about it, and we are only describing the way to get there, with *siyata d'shmaya*.

Anything discussed in the previous chapters, for the most part, was still from the perspective of “learning from the outside”, even when we were describing “learning from the inside.” This is because we began from the lower level. At the lower level, every person is able to access both levels: Learning from the outside and learning from the inside. But once a person penetrates to the higher level, learning from the inside, every aspect of a person's learning undergoes an overhaul.

In the previous chapters, we were mostly describing the level of learning from the outside, except for when we discussed remembering Torah study, where we touched upon the inner level of learning. For the most part, we were describing the lower level of learning, learning from the outside. Once a person is accessing the level of learning from the inside, all of the abilities of Torah study discussed until now will take on a whole new level.

How Lishmah Affects Our Ability To Connect Information Together

Here is one small example, but a sensible person will understand that this is just opening the discussion. In the earlier chapters we discussed the mental abilities in Torah study, which are:

connecting information together (*chibbur*), picturing the body of the information (*tziyur*), and analyzing it and breaking it down into details (*hisbonenus*). We explained how to progress through these levels, from lowest level to highest level.

At the lower levels, a person only uses these abilities by “learning from the outside”. Everyone starts out at this level of learning, “learning from the outside.” But when one penetrates, with *siyata d’shmaya*, through learning Torah *lishmah* (which is the goal of doing all *mitzvos*, to do them *lishmah*, and mainly when it comes to Torah study, to learn it *lishmah*), one’s ability of connecting information together (*chibbur*) will be very different. How?

When one learns *shelo lishmah*, one learns for his own gain. He is learning on the level of a receiver and he is only looking to gain something for himself. When one is at this level, his understanding will also be limited, because it will be limited to his individual self, since by learning *shelo lishmah* he is still found within the *alma d’piruda* (the world of separateness). He will have to connect his knowledge together, because he will see the separateness of the details he learns and therefore he sees the need to connect it together. He sees each detail separately and he needs to keep connecting them together so he can formulate a single structure out of them.

He has essentially begun from a perspective of separation. Although he can connect all the details together, he is connecting them from a perspective of separation. His perspective is, “All of this is separate and scattered information, and I need to connect it all together.”

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the difference between a child and a mature adult (or the difference between an immature and mature perspective) is that a child sees separate parts and doesn’t see a connection, whereas an adult can see the bigger picture, the connectedness of the details, the structure. A child relies on his parents for everything. The Gemara says that as long as a person “relies on his father’s table”⁶¹ (is supported and fed by his father), he has the status of a child [for certain things], and if he doesn’t get supported by his father, that is when he is considered an adult. That means that even if an adult is still relying on his parents for support, he is regarded as a child, because he is still found within a child’s perspective, and in turn, a child who is no longer supported by his parents will graduate to a more mature, “adult” perspective.

A child’s level is when one is at the level of a receiver. His perspective is focused on himself and on what he can receive for himself. Anything discussed in the previous chapters, which was the “child” level of learning, was all about learning on the level of a receiver, which is when learns *shelo lishmah* – when one is focused on himself as an individual.

At that level, a person learns Torah and sees scattered and separate details. He can certainly sharpen his thinking by applying the ways of learning Torah (as explained until now) and he understands the way to learn, and he can grow to become a *Talmid Chochom* (Torah scholars), who are called “friends.”⁶² He will grow to become pleasant amongst others, and this is why *Talmidei*

⁶¹ *Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 6b*

⁶² *Rambam’s commentary to Mishnayos Tractate Demai 2:3*

Chachomim are pleasant company, because they have the ability to connect their Torah knowledge together [and therefore they can also connect with others]. Even more, they can build and develop their thoughts in Torah study, using their power of analysis.

They can connect information and details together. However, although they can connect Torah details together, this is not the actual level of their soul. They are coming from a world of separation, so their ability to connect is beginning from separation. As a person gradually becomes sharper in his thinking abilities when he learns Torah, he acquires the ability of connecting information and it becomes second nature to him, as with any other act practiced over time, which eventually becomes second nature to a person. With a sharper brain one can gradually get better at connecting together different details. When one penetrates to the level of *lishmah*, though, one's perspective is unified to begin with. It becomes more natural for him to connect details together, because learning *lishmah* reveals the simple nature of the soul, which sees unity, togetherness, and connectedness.

Certainly, this doesn't mean that he will always be able to connect the information together correctly. On an inner level, everything in Creation is interconnected, but to know how each thing connects, one needs to be familiar with each point that he is trying to connect. There is certainly a lot of room for a person to make mistakes in connecting together different points, when he won't make the connection accurately. Although everything in Creation can be connected together, we need to be able to see the connection. If we assume two points are connected due to a reason that is not true, we are not making the connection accurately.

In any case, the immature perspective of the soul is when one is only learning Torah to receive personal gain, and he will see things from a fragmented perspective, where all details are separate from each other. The mature perspective of the soul is when one graduates to the unified perspective, where everything is connected. When a child begins to connect together details, he sees the letter *aleph* as the letter *aleph*, the letter *beis* as the letter *beis*, etc. After he learns the letters, he can then learn how the letter *aleph* can connect with the letter *beis*, forming the word *av*. But he still has a fragmented perspective. He keeps separating separated information and he can learn how to think more and unify the information together, but he always starts from a fragmented perspective. But when one is at a more mature level, by learning *lishmah* it becomes his nature to see connectedness of details. The child level of the soul can break down something into details, whereas the adult level of the soul can connect them together.

The ideal way of Torah learning is to fuse these two abilities together: To see the difference between the details and then to be able to unify them together. But the deeper way of connecting the information together is when one has a unified perspective [when one already sees how the information is all connected and then he goes about connecting it].

Connecting Points Together Can Only Come After Knowing How To Separate

There are people who did not properly go through the step of the childhood aspect of their learning, and they didn't learn how to separate information and break it down into details. They entered into the more mature aspects of learning before having gone through the elementary stage. Sometimes this happens when a person began to learn Torah only when he was older, and when one skips over the stage of breaking down details, he tries to connect it all together but the connection will be off-mark and imprecise. One who hears it will be able to see how it is all mixed up. In short, they skipped a stage in their development of Torah learning, because they did not learn how to accurately divide information properly.

But when the ability of breaking down information was indeed developed properly, a person can then unify information correctly and accurately. Again, to emphasize, if one does not know how to separate and break down information properly, he also will not be able to unify and connect together information accurately.

When one is able to unify information properly, though, he is using the power of *lishmah*, because he will be able to see the interconnectedness of all the details in his learning and he will unify the different details of Torah together [as opposed to creating separation and division in his learning], which is a use of *lishmah*.

Two Different Ways of Connecting A Sugya Together

Two people can be learning the same *sugya*, but one of them may be learning it *shelo lishmah* and the other is learning it *lishmah*, so they will each see a different *sugya*. If one learns *shelo lishmah*, he can slowly get to the fundamentals behind the words he is learning, by exerting his mind through the details and trying to work them out. Once he reaches the fundamental behind it all, he can connect together the different points in the *sugya*. And, applying the words of the *sefer Nefesh HaChaim*, from learning *shelo lishmah* a person can eventually arrive at *lishmah*, so he will be able to access the power of unifying together the information.

Every person who learns *shelo lishmah* will always experience a moment of *lishmah*. The “moment of *lishmah*” affords a person a spiritual light which enables him to see a unified, interconnected *sugya*. Once he accesses this moment of *lishmah*, he will be able to unify together the different points of the *sugya* and he can get to the depth behind all of the words.

It is very common for people to be learning Torah and suddenly, in middle of learning, they arrive at the fundamental behind all of the words they are learning. Once they get the fundamental point behind the discussion in the Gemara, they grasp the true definition of a concept [knowing when and where it is said], knowing the concept of the particular *halachah* they are learning about, etc. This leads a person into getting to the inner facet of a matter they are learning about. Getting to that point can only come as a result of the “spark of *lishmah*” that they experience even when learning *shelo lishmah*.

Compare this to a person in a dark room, who can't see a thing and he is groping in the dark. Suddenly there is a flash of light in the room, like if a candle gets lit for a moment, a person will immediately see everything in the room and where it is. Even if all light disappears a moment later, he has just seen everything in front of him and now he can know where everything is, even though it is dark again. Once you have seen everything in the room, now you can remember where every object is.

Similarly, even when people learn *shelo lishmah*, they can still experience a moment of *lishmah*, as the *Nefesh HaChaim* describes, and this enables them to find a true point in what they are learning about. Once they grasp a true point, it shines the way for them throughout the *sugya* and they can see how all the points in the *sugya* connect. This is true even though the light of *lishmah* was only accessed for a moment. Although it lasts a moment, it is enough to illuminate the way for them. This is the more common experience which is usually found by those who exert themselves in Torah, and anyone can experience it on his own level. The ability to connect together the *sugya* can only come after they reach the moment of *lishmah* in their learning.

But the deeper way to learn is when one already has the perspective of *lishmah* to start with, where it is natural for him to connect the points of the *sugya* together.

Shelo Lishmah and Lishmah In Our Torah Learning

Although Chazal state “A person should always study Torah and do *mitzvos shelo lishmah*, for *shelo lishmah* leads to *lishmah*”, how much time should a person spend on learning *shelo lishmah* before he can reach *lishmah*?

It is different with each person. The more that a person is living at the level of *shelo lishmah*, he will be spending a lot more time learning Torah *shelo lishmah* before he arrives at the moment of *lishmah*. But the more a person is connected to the level of *lishmah*,⁶³ he will be spending less time on learning *shelo lishmah* because he can quickly connect the *sugya* together.

To have a deeper understanding of this, there is both an impaired and a repaired use of *shelo lishmah*. The impaired use of *shelo lishmah* is when a person lives with motivations that aren't pure, but there is also a repaired use of *shelo lishmah*, which is the ability to separate and break down the details in one's learning, and one needs to use this ability when learning. A person also needs to arrive at the ability of *lishmah* in his learning, which is to unify the *sugya* together.

Depending on what a person's level is, a person will either be doing more separating and differentiating (repaired *shelo lishmah*) or more unifying and connecting (*lishmah*), and the percentage of balance between these two different kinds of learning will depend on what level he is on.

⁶³ Note: The Rav discusses how to reach “*lishmah*” in Torah learning in the Rav's shiurim on sefer *Nefesh HaChaim*, Shaar IV. The Rav also discusses the level of “*lishmah*” in general (living for Hashem) in *Bilvavi Parts 2, 4, and 6*.

In Summary

We have so far given one example of how “learning from within” (*lishmah*) changes one’s abilities in Torah learning. We gave a very fundamental example, with regards to the ability of connecting information together.

Once a person exposes the power of *lishmah* in his Torah learning, he will be able go further than simple breaking down the details of the *sugya*, and he will naturally be able to connect together the separate details, seeing it all as one unified structure. When a person is learning *shelo lishmah*, he can only see separated details of a *sugya*, and a person can only see a connected *sugya* when he gains the unified perspective that comes from *lishmah*.

How Lishmah Changes Our Ability To Picture The Information of the Sugya

Here is another example of how learning from within (*lishmah*) changes one’s analytical abilities in Torah study. The ability of *tziyur* (picturing the *sugya*) at the beginning of one’s way, involves making a chart or graph of the *sugya*, writing down each fact and each point of the *sugya* until a certain organized picture of it is formed. But if a person has a stronger ability to picture information, he can have a picture of the *sugya* in his head already before he has written it down.

Usually a person is good at making a chart of the *sugya* if he has a lot of experience making charts and graphs, or if he has a strong ability to picture the *sugya*, or if he has a vivid imagination. Often, a person adds more and more details to the chart until he forms the complete structure of the *sugya*. He doesn’t start out with the total picture, and he only formulates the picture after he has put all the details together. That is the case when a person learns *shelo lishmah*: Each detail is separate and he needs to add it all together.

For example, sometimes a person will finish a chart or graph of the *sugya* and he will realize that when he began to make the chart he didn’t know how it would turn out, and in the end he figured it all out. He began from separate details, slowly adding up all the details and piecing everything together until he arrived at the complete picture of the *sugya*.

However, when one learns *lishmah*, he already has the picture of the *sugya* in his head before he began to write it out. He already has the complete picture, because he learns with a unified perspective, seeing how all the details of the *sugya* are connected.

How Lishmah Changes Our Ability To Analyze A Sugya

Another example of how learning *lishmah* changes one’s mental abilities in learning Torah is with regards to the ability of analyzing (*hisbonenus*). When a person learns *shelo lishmah*, he can analyze the *sugya* only in terms of slowly building the structure. He places one brick on top of another, slowly formulating the structure of the *sugya*, until it is complete before him. This is reminiscent of the first and second *Beis HaMikdash*, which were slowly built, brick by brick, until they were completed.

But when a person learns *lishmah*, it is like the third *Beis HaMikdash*: the understanding of the *sugya* will come to him on its own, already complete, just as the third *Beis HaMikdash* will descend from Heaven, in complete form.⁶⁴ With learning *lishmah*, a person doesn't just keep 'adding on brick by brick' to the *sugya*, which would be a perspective of separation. Rather, the structure of the *sugya* is already built for him!

With the more that a person learns *lishmah*, everything in the *sugya* becomes quickly built for him. When he analyzes the *sugya*, it is merely a way for him to remove any elements of *shelo lishmah* from his learning which are preventing him from having a clearer understanding. This is because there is always some element of *shelo lishmah* which a person has, and for that reason a person needs to think a little about what he is learning. But after a little bit of thinking and analyzing, the *sugya* comes to him like the third *Beis HaMikdash* descending from Heaven, already built. The words and the structure of the *sugya* enter his mind and a complete picture is formed.

This doesn't mean that he will have a perfect picture of the *sugya*. Perfection is never possible. But each person on his own level can merit the complete structure of the *sugya* as it is, without thinking too much to formulate it. Instead of forming the *sugya* brick by brick, it comes on its own. And it also doesn't mean that the entire *sugya* will come to him at all once. That cannot happen, because it is impossible for a person to think two thoughts at once. Rather, it will come to him, one thought after another, and soon a complete structure of the *sugya* will formulate in his mind, and it will come to him quickly, relatively speaking. He will not need to keep thinking about each point until he formulates the picture of the *sugya*.

Again, there is always some *shelo lishmah* involved, and because of that reality, a person needs to do some thinking and analyzing of the details of the *sugya*. But to the extent that a person minimizes *shelo lishmah* in his learning, and his *lishmah* grows stronger, the structure of the *sugya* will come on its own to him, as if it is descending from Heaven to him. It will not all come to him at once. It will keep descending to him, each point by itself, until a complete structure is formed. This doesn't mean that each detail will come to him slowly until he gets the complete picture of the *sugya* - rather, the complete structure will keep descending to him. Instead of coming down bit by bit, it will come down complete.

This concept is far from most people, though, because many people learn *shelo lishmah*, and few learn *lishmah*. We have so far given three examples of how *lishmah* gives a complete overhaul to the abilities of connecting points together (*chibbur*), picturing the structure of the *sugya* (*tziyur*), and reflecting and analyzing the *sugya* to further develop the structure of the *sugya* (*hisbonenus*). We also mentioned how *lishmah* changes one's ability of remembering his learning (*zikaron*). So, altogether, we have discussed four different abilities in learning (*chibbur*, *tziyur*, *hisbonenus*, and *zikaron*) on two different levels of learning, *shelo lishmah* and *lishmah*, and the differences of the abilities between these two levels of learning.

⁶⁴ *Rashi on Talmud Bavli Succah 39a*

How Lishmah Affects Our Abilities of Cheshbon, Diyuk and Sevara

In the previous chapters, we also discussed two more advanced abilities in Torah study: *cheshbon* (working out the details of the Gemara) and *diyuk* (making inferences and implications from the words that one learns).⁶⁵ Let us now see how learning *lishmah* affects both of these learning abilities.

The ability of *cheshbon*, in concept, is rooted in *shelo lishmah*. There is a verse, “G-d made man upright, and they seek many calculations”⁶⁶, meaning that the need to make *cheshbonos* (calculations) is a result of the altered state of mankind after the sin, where we have fallen from our pure state of thinking.

But with the more a person learns *lishmah*, the *cheshbon* of the Gemara will come on its own, just like we explained regarding the other learning abilities: When a person learns *lishmah*, these abilities will come on their own, with not that much of a need to think things through. When one learns *lishmah*, he is above the level of *cheshbon*, and any *cheshbon* he does make will need that much exertion on his part, because it will come to him on its own.

Certainly, one will still need to make a *cheshbon* of what he’s learning, because the *cheshbon* is a basic step of learning and it is ultimately a “container” that will hold everything together. But if a person learns *lishmah*, sometimes the inner understanding of the *sugya* that comes to him will not always be aligned with the *cheshbon* he has made of the *sugya*.

Learning “from the outside” (*shelo lishmah*) makes heavy use of the ability of *cheshbon*, but when learning “from the inside” (*lishmah*), one has a certain understanding of the *sugya* which may fit the *cheshbon* of the *sugya*, or it may not. The spiritual light that comes from learning *lishmah* will not always be able to enter the “container”, which is his *cheshbon* of the *sugya*, and a person will realize that his *cheshbon* of the *sugya* is not aligned with the inner understanding that has come to him.

The same thing can happen when it comes to the ability of *diyuk*. With *diyuk*, one is essentially analyzing the letters and words in order to make inferences and implications from the wording. Letters are clearly a “container” for spiritual light, because a person scrutinizes the letters and words simply as they are, and anything on a surface level is always a container that serves as the basis to hold a greater level. (Some souls are better at *diyuk* and some are better at *sevara*, depending on their soul root). The more one is learning from the outside, he will be more included to follow *diyuk*, and he can only grasp the true meaning of what he’s learning either through *cheshbon*, *sevara*, or *diyuk*. One needs to make heavy use of *diyuk* when studying the words of the *Rishonim*, such as Rashi, the Ramban, and the Rambam. (When one accesses a more inner level of learning, he can analyze the *sevara* of what he is learning, and either his *diyuk* will be secondary to the *sevara*, or he will consider the *sevara* secondary to the *diyuk* (as mentioned earlier).

But the more a person learns *lishmah*, Torah will come to him from the depths of his *neshamah*, and it will shed light on even the simple letters or words that one sees. And, sometimes, the light of

⁶⁵ see Chapters 6-7

⁶⁶ Koheles 7:29

Torah *lishmah* is more powerful than the container, which in this case is the *diyuk*, and the inner understanding coming from one's *neshamah* doesn't match the *diyuk*. For this reason, some of our *Gedolim* were not as inclined to *diyuk* and they were more inclined to follow their *sevara*.

We are not referring to *sevara* gleaned from learning "from the outside", but a *sevara* that comes from the depths of the soul. When a person learns *lishmah*, a *sevara* will come to him on its own, without much thought, and it will come to him as a complete structure, already formulated. Alternatively, it may burst its way into his mind, like a "mighty spring", with each *sevara* coming to him, one after the other. But one should be aware that the understanding based on this *sevara* will not always match the understanding based on his *diyuk*.

This concept is another meaning of the statement of Chazal, "It is impossible to be exact." The *sevara* that one gains from within, from the *neshamah* (by learning *lishmah*) will not always fit in to every word of the *sugya* that one learns. Therefore, a *diyuk* can be overpowered by an inner *sevara*. This sometimes creates a difficulty, because the *sevara* which came from deep within (on its own, with little thought beforehand) is not matching the *diyuk* that he has derived from the words of what he has learned. This is why, as we can see, that some of our *Gedolim* did not use *diyuk* as the deciding factor on how to understand the *sugya*. If the *sevara* did not fit the *diyuk* of the words, this would not take away their understanding based on their *sevara*. That is the case when learning "from the inside": learning *lishmah*.

Again, when learning "from the outside" (*shelo lishmah*), there is more emphasis on one's thinking abilities, and when that is the case, a *diyuk* has more weight to it and it can be a deciding factor on how to understand the *sugya*. Upon a *diyuk*, we can base a *cheshbon* or a *sevara*, and we can certainly go further with the *diyuk*. But when learning "from the inside" (*lishmah*), a *diyuk* only serves as a "garment" for our understanding, it can enhance our understanding, but our understanding won't depend on how well it fits in with the *diyuk*. That is the case when a *sevara* comes to a person as a result of learning *lishmah*: It can overpower the understanding which one gained from a *diyuk*.

In Conclusion

This lesson has described the inner way of understanding the two different kinds of learning: Learning from the outside, which corresponds to *shelo lishmah*, and learning from the inside, which corresponds to *lishmah*. This has been a brief description of these matters at their root, which we have been explaining until now, with *siyata d'shmaya*.

13 | *The Goal - Inward Connection To Torah Learning*

Uniqueness In One's Torah Learning

In the previous chapters, we explained about the ways of learning Torah. As mentioned, there is no one way in learning Torah. There are many ways of learning Torah. Also, there is no one way of Torah learning which works for everyone. And, even more so, each person has his own unique way in Torah learning, to get to his own unique part in the Torah.

When the sea was split, there were 12 separate paths leading for each tribe. These represent 12 different unique paths in *avodas Hashem*. Since the splitting of the sea was for the purpose of arriving at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, this is also a hint that there are different ways of learning Torah which are each unique.

The Goal of The Different Ways In Learning Torah

However, we need to be aware that all of the different ways of Torah learning (described in the previous lessons), as well as one's uniquely tailored way in Torah learning, is still not the goal. These are all "ways" in Torah learning, they are all paths to take in Torah, but they are all paths that must lead to a certain goal.

[The following analogy will be used throughout this lesson, in order to illustrate the concept that is being described here.] The ways of learning Torah can be compared to a person travelling on a road that leads to a city. There are different roads to take in order to reach any city. Some are the main roads which are meant for anyone to take, and there are also some roads leading to the city which are only meant for certain individuals to take. But in either case, the goal of traversing any of the ways of Torah learning is not the "way" of Torah learning itself - that is just the "road" that leads to the "city." The goal - which is to arrive at the city - is to arrive at the very reality of the Torah itself.

The goal of the different ways of learning Torah is to arrive at the very light of the Torah. (The light of Torah is called *ohr Torah*, and the deeper level of this light is called *me'ohr*, the spiritual illumination of the Torah which returns everyone to good). The ways of learning Torah bring one to learning his own part in Torah. The paths of learning Torah are just the means to get to the goal - which is the Torah!

The path that one takes in order to learn Torah (any of the paths mentioned in the previous lessons) is certainly part of the revelation of one's Torah learning. But there is so much depth to the

Torah that one should not remain only on his particular way of learning Torah. There is more depth to the Torah than knowing one's way in Torah learning. Exertion in Torah learning must lead to *menuchah* (serenity) in the Torah.

The blessing given to Yissocher is that he is like a strong-boned donkey that carries its load and then rests on the road. The donkey exerts itself to carry a big load, which refers to the yoke of Torah learning, and after it has exerted itself on its path, it needs to rest, and it finds rest on whichever path it is on. So too, when one exerts himself in Torah learning on his path towards the Torah, he needs to also find *menuchah* (serenity) along the way. Exertion in Torah learning is only one part of Torah learning. The other part of Torah learning, which is the goal, is finding *menuchah* in learning Torah.

Chazal teach that "Everyone agrees that the Torah was given on Shabbos." The depth of this is that Shabbos is a day of *menuchah*, and therefore Torah was given at a time of *menuchah*, because Torah is all about the concept of finding true *menuchah*.

The goal of learning Torah is for one to reach his own root in Torah. Each of the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people have their own root in the Torah. Each Jew has his individual portion in the Torah. When one hasn't yet found it, he is still found on the "way" towards the Torah, but he is not yet at the Torah itself. When one does merit finding his individual part in Torah learning, he has essentially found his root in the Torah. He is no longer on the way that leads to the Torah, because he has gotten past the path and now he is found at the very goal of his path, which is the Torah.

At first, every person must find himself on the path of learning Torah, which entails living a life of frugality. As Chazal teach, "Eat bread dipped in salt, water in a cistern, and live a life of suffering, and in Torah you should exert yourself." The beginning of one's way in Torah learning entails exertion and a willingness to sacrifice for the Torah.

But as one proceeds on the path of learning Torah and he is making progress in his learning, the "city" begins to get closer, and he can begin to see the light of the city as he travels on the "road" towards the Torah. With the closer he gets to the city, the more he can enjoy the "light" of the city as he gets nearer and nearer towards it, as it lights up the road for him. With the more that a person progresses in his Torah learning, the closer he is getting to the very Torah, to the "city" at the end of the "road". And, the closer one is getting to the Torah, the more that the light of the Torah will shine for him, just as a person travelling further on the road and getting closer to the light of the city.

When learning Talmud Bavli, which is known as the words of Abaye and Rava, one encounters much difficulty. The Talmud Bavli, which contains the Oral Torah, is compared to darkness. It is also called Bavli from the word Bavel, confusion, because it can get really confusing. When learning Gemara, there are an endless amount of difficult points and seeming contradictions and questions which one encounters, and it is like trying to find your way in the dark.

One begins his path in learning Torah by trying to exert himself, physically and mentally, as he tries to understand the Gemara. With exertion in Torah learning, one is carrying the yoke of Torah, travelling on the road that leads to the city. With the more one exerts himself on the way towards

the Torah, the closer one is getting the light of the city. As he travels further on the path, the light of the city is getting closer, and the light begins to penetrate the darkness that he finds in his Torah learning. The light of the Torah begins to illuminate his path for him, and the Torah becomes more and more revealed to him.

To the extent that one exerts himself in learning Torah, the closer he gets to the Torah, which reveals the Torah more and more to him. With exertion in Torah, he is brought closer to the “light” of the Torah, and to the extent that he exerts himself in Torah, he merits the “light” of Torah, and the Torah becomes slowly revealed to him, more and more.

But, if a person doesn't merit getting closer to the Torah itself, when he isn't trying to get the Torah itself and he's more interested in finding the right “way” in Torah learning and that's all he's concerned about, what will happen? Such a person will only find his “way” in learning, and that is where he will remain! He will never get to the Torah itself, because he isn't trying to get to the ‘city’, he's more concerned about the ‘road’ he needs to take to get there! He will remain on the ‘road’ towards the Torah, but he will never get to the ‘city’, to the Torah itself. And he won't find the light of the Torah, because he isn't getting closer to it.

Arriving At The Goal of Torah Learning – Finding The Torah That Is Connected With One's Neshamah

In the previous chapter, we discussed the male and feminine aspects of Torah. The male aspect of Torah is the areas of Torah where one gives and teaches Torah to others, whereas the feminine aspects of Torah is what one receives in Torah, such as receiving Torah from a teacher and learning Torah from others. However, all of this is only applicable when one is found on the way towards Torah learning. When one finds the Torah learning that is uniquely tailored to his *neshamah*, finding his own portion in the Torah, he has passed the “way” towards Torah learning and now he is found with the Torah itself. This is a deeper level of connection to the Torah than the connection to Torah through the male and feminine aspects of learning Torah.

When one finds the Torah learning that is uniquely meant for his soul, he has graduated from the dimension of separateness and disparity, and he has entered into a dimension of oneness. He has left the system of “two” (disparity, separation, division of souls, man and woman), and now he has entered the system where everything is “one” and unified. When one has passed the path towards learning and now he is found with the Torah itself, he is at the dimension of oneness there, because he is connected to the one root (the Torah) of his soul.

Exertion in Torah through having *mesirus nefesh* for Torah, being willing to die to hear the word of Hashem, gets one to this level. Those who died in the desert represent those who stay on the path and never get to the goal. The goal of our Torah learning is to reach *mesirus nefesh* for the Torah, to be willing to die for Torah, just as the people were willing to die to hear the word of Hashem at Har

Sinai. This brings one to the goal of Torah learning: To reach a Torah of oneness, an inner level of Torah learning where one is connected to his root, to the root of his *neshamah*.

At this level, one has exertion in Torah learning on a deeper level which is more connected his soul. It is a kind of Torah learning that is “above logic and reason”. The Kotzker noted that we make a blessing each day to become accustomed to learning Torah. Normally, doing things out of habit (i.e. habitually performing a mitzvah because it’s part of our daily routine) is not constructive to the development of our spiritual world. But when it comes to Torah learning, it is not so. Learning Torah out of habit is a good thing, a very good thing. It is a very holy level when one has become familiar with learning Torah, to the point that he learns Torah naturally. This can only happen when is connected to Torah on a level that is above reason and logic. It is a kind of Torah learning that emanates as a natural expression of one’s soul, because the soul is naturally returning to its root.

Two Ways of Learning Torah – Logical and Non-Logical

There are generally two different ways of connecting the Torah through learning the Torah: A connection to Torah learning that emanates from logic and reason, and a connection to Torah that is simplistic and non-logical, because it comes from the nature of one’s soul.

In the first way of Torah learning, one connects to Torah through analysis, understanding, reflection, intellect, and speech. This is the first level of learning Torah, and it is required. But it is not the goal. The second way of Torah learning, which is the goal, is a more inner level of learning. Examples of this are saying Tehillim or reading statements of the Zohar even though he doesn’t know what he is saying, which is a simple, non-analytical connection to the Torah. While this kind of simplistic Torah learning cannot be properly developed before one develops his analytical connection to Torah, it should still be the goal in one’s Torah learning: to arrive at a connection to Torah learning that goes beyond our intellect and reasoning.

The inner level of Torah, which must come after the stage of learning with Torah with analysis and logical understanding, is to learn it with simplicity, a level above logic and understanding, to reach a level where there is no *daas* (logical understanding), just the nature of the soul to connect to the Torah.

One way to connect to Torah is through using our mental abilities of *chochmah*, *binah*, and *daas*, and speaking of Torah. Another way to connect to the Torah, a more inner level of connection to Torah, is through the heart, through using the deep feelings of the soul, such as feeling the awe of standing at Har Sinai and receiving the Torah there. An even more inner level is to connect to the Torah from one’s *neshamah* (which is beyond even the feelings of the soul), as a simply nature of the soul to connect to its root. At this level of Torah learning, a person feels “one” with the Torah and he becomes “one” with Torah, at his own level.

This deep level of connection to Torah (from the *neshamah*), of naturally learning Torah because one’s soul is drawn to Torah, is not an intellectual connection to Torah. It is rather an intrinsic

connection to Torah. It is a connection to Torah that goes beyond our *daas* (logical understanding). It is to connect to the Torah in the depths of our soul, from our spiritual heart, from our *neshamah* – which is above any of the intellectual abilities. This is also the true source of understanding in Torah, and when one is learning Torah on this level, one merits inner understanding in Torah, a kind of understanding of Torah which is deeper and which is coming from a place beyond the intellect.

There is a way to connect to Torah through speaking words of Torah, for “*daas* is hidden in the lips”, and also because verbalizing the words of Torah through the mouth makes the words of Torah become more alive to the one who says it. And there is a way to connect to Torah through reflection and intellect, and even through using the mind’s power of imagination to vividly picture certain concepts of Gemara. But after one has developed all of these different abilities of connection to Torah, the final level of connection to Torah is to connect to the Torah through the heart. When one connects to Torah from the heart, he becomes a *maayan hamisgaber* (mighty wellspring) and he merits inner understanding in Torah which comes from the *maayan*, the inner source of Torah understanding.

Connecting To The Torah From The Heart – After One Has Exhausted His Mental Abilities In Torah

At the root, the *neshamah* of every person is “one” with the Creator and with the Torah. Until a person uncovers this “root”, a person first needs to progress through the stages of developing his intellect and understanding in Torah, as it has been explained in the previous chapters. But one needs to exert not only his mind when connecting to the Torah, but also the heart. One needs to think and analyze what he learns until he can no longer think any more about what’s learning, until he feels that he has reached his mental capacity and that he can’t think any more. That is where his thoughts finish. One needs to mentally exhaust his thoughts in Torah until he can no longer think about what he’s learning.

(And of course, this must be done sensibly, because when this is not done correctly, a person exerts his mind too much and then he stops learning altogether, for a long period of time. Many unfortunate situations have resulted from lack of guidance in this area.)

After a person can no longer think any more about what he’s learning, he has reached the point where his mind has been negated, where it is finished for now. That is where one can find a more inner level of understanding in Torah: When one stops using his mind to analyze what he’s learning, because he has thought about it enough, and now he puts the mind to rest, he can now begin to understand what he’s learning from a deeper place that is beyond his intellectual abilities. That is how uses the “heart” to connect to the Torah.

It should be emphasized that if one tries to skip to this inner level, he will fail. Only after exerting oneself in Torah (as explained in the previous 12 chapters), can one reach a place where he is connected to Torah beyond the level of the intellect. To the degree that one merits to reach his own

portion in Torah, exhausting his mental abilities to get there, he can reach the level of understanding in Torah that is above logic and reasoning. When being immersed in Torah, one needs to reach the place where the mind can no longer think any more, and that is where a person can get to the inner level of understanding in Torah.

This is not just about having a deeper connection to the Torah. It is a connection which makes a person “one” with the Torah! It connects one to the very reality of Torah. It is a “oneness” with the Torah. It is a connection to Torah from one’s very existence, where one is naturally connected to Torah. It is above the masculine (teaching and giving) and feminine (receiving) aspects in Torah learning. Superficially speaking, it looks simply like regularly and habitually learning Torah. But from a deeper perspective, habitually learning Torah is really a deeper connection of Torah learning that goes beyond logic.

There, a person accesses the level of “Torah which came before the world”, the Torah which came before all concealment (for the word for “world”, *olam*, is from the word *he’elam*, concealment). It is a Torah of revelation, the Torah of one’s *neshamah*, a level of being “one” with the Torah, learning Torah out of natural connection that one feels to the Torah. To the degree that one is learning Torah from this place of naturally connecting to the Torah, one accesses this deep level of Torah.

The following story illustrates this point. Once Reb Baruch Ber Lebovitz zt”l was sitting at a gathering and someone got up to speak about how great the Torah is and about the importance of supporting Torah learning, and he said that the “Torah is so important, it is like the air we breathe, because without it we cannot live life.” Reb Baruch Ber objected, “No! The Torah is not the ‘air’ we breathe - the Torah is our very “life” itself!”

In Conclusion

May we merit to traverse the paths of learning Torah, which are paths of pleasantness, but even more, may we merit to reach the dimension in our Torah learning where “Hashem, the Torah and Yisrael are one.”

14 | *The Torah*

Preface

The Sage Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair taught that Torah leads to all the levels of spiritual greatness. In the previous lessons of this series, we have been explaining the ways of learning Torah. From this lesson onward, we will be explaining how Torah brings a person to all spiritual greatness, for the Torah contains everything.

How To View The Torah

Anything in Creation can either be viewed by through an immature perspective (*katnut mochin*) or through a mature perspective (*gadlut mochin*). What is the immature perspective towards Torah, and what is the mature perspective towards Torah? This is not referring to the quality of understanding in one's Torah learning or the lack thereof, which we have been explaining in the previous lessons. Here we are asking: What is the mature perspective that one needs to have towards the very concept that is the Torah?

Simply speaking, we can all see that there are 24 books of *Tanach*, and there are all the tractates of *Mishnayos*, and *Gemara*, which includes the *Talmud Bavli* and the *Talmud Yerushalmi*, and there are also the teachings of the *Sifra*, *Sifrei*, *Toras Kohanim*, *Midrashim*, *Zohar*, etc., and everything else in Torah comes from these sources. It seems, from a superficial perspective, that this is all there is Torah.

Let us use the following teaching of the Sages to give us more of an idea about what the Torah is. The Sages said that even the ordinary conversations of Torah scholars are considered to be words of Torah. The conversations of a Torah scholar is another extension of Torah, just it is not as obvious. Conversations of a Torah scholar are considered to be part of Torah because they contain wisdom of Torah. Simply speaking, this is because the Torah scholar's heavy involvement in Torah inevitably laces even his ordinary conversations with wisdom of Torah. But there is more to it. It is really because a Torah scholar has gained a mature and wise perspective about life, and his mature perspective that he gains through his Torah learning inevitably elevates his conversations, turning even his conversations into Torah. Since the Torah scholar has a Torah perspective, even his ordinary conversations are Torah.

Before Creation, there was only *Ain Od Milvado*, nothing besides for Hashem, as explained in *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer*. Then it arose in Hashem's will to create the world, and He created it all from the Torah. Therefore, this entire Creation is an extension of the Torah, which is the revelation of

His will. Before Creation there was only the reality of Hashem and nothing else, and when it arose in His will to create the universe, His very will to create is what became known as the Torah. Although “Hashem looked into the Torah to create the world”, the revelation of Torah already began with His will to create the world.

Therefore, everything in Creation (except for Hashem) is an extension of the Torah. Everything was created from the Torah, because the Torah contains everything, since the Torah was the beginning point of Creation. Hashem also reveals His reality to us through the Torah, and that is why the Torah is called “one” with Hashem. (Hashem Himself, His essence (*atzmityus*) so to speak, is not revealed to us. Only His will is revealed to us, and the Torah is the revelation of His will, and everything else comes from there).

The author of the *sefer Leshem* says that the Hebrew word for reality, *metzius*, is from the word *yotzeh*, to “go out”, because something only becomes reality when it is revealed to us, when it goes out of concealment and becomes revealed to us. We were all created to reveal Hashem, to know and recognize Hashem. The Torah is the *metzius*, the reality of Creation, because the Torah is the “revelation” of Hashem to us.

It seems that there are many different realities, as if they are all independent of Torah (and in turn, it seems that everything is independent and separate from Hashem) but the true reality is that everything on this world is a part of revealing Hashem. When we view everything as a separate reality from Hashem, this is called the view of *alma d'piruda*, the dimension of separation.

After the Redemption, when the purpose of Creation will be revealed and Hashem’s name will be One again, it will be a return to the state of *Ain Od Milvado* again. Then everything will be one again. Until then, it seems to us that everything is separate and not connected with each other, that there is no oneness which binds together all of Creation.

The Three Pillars of the World Are All Revelations of Torah

The world stands on three pillars (Torah, *avodah* and *chessed*). These three pillars imply separation, because three is a deviation from one. But these three pillars can be bound together into one, just as the three Avos form one unbreakable knot. These three pillars of the world are really three different revelations of Torah. The Torah is revealed either in the form of *chessed*, or in the form of *tefillah* (*avodah*), or in the form of Torah itself. Let us see how the three pillars of Torah, *avodah* and *chessed* are each revelations of Torah.

Let us first consider the concept of *chessed*. Chazal teach, “Torah begins with kindness and ends with kindness.” The Torah begins with the kindness of Hashem, when He created the world to bestow His kindness upon His creations, and the Torah ends with the kindness of Hashem in burying Moshe. And before the Torah was given, when Hashem revealed Himself to Avraham, Hashem was revealing to Avraham a level of Torah which corresponded to the *chessed* that Avraham

revealed on the world, which really revealed the chessed that is the Torah, the revelation of Hashem on the world.

This is the meaning of the term *Toras Chessed*, a “Torah of kindness”, a revelation of Torah in the form of *cheded*, which was received by Avraham. Furthermore, the Torah itself is the greatest form of *cheded* and that is why it is called *Toras Chessed*. The Sages teach that “The world was built on kindness”, and this is also connected with the fact that “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world from it”. Since the Torah is really a “Torah of kindness”, the world was really built on kindness.

Tefillah is also a revelation of Torah. The Torah speaks about the prayers of Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov and Moshe. Since these prayers were all prayers that are described in the Torah, they are really Torah in the form of prayer. These tefillos were really a revelation of Torah, in the form of *tefillah*. Also, Torah is the bridging level between the creations and the Creator, and so is *tefillah* a medium by which the creations can have a connection and relationship with the Creator.

And certainly, Torah itself is a revelation of Torah. Moshe revealed the Torah to the world, and Yaakov Avinu (who is really the outer aspect of Moshe) was also a revelation of Torah on the world by way of learning Torah, for he dwelled in the tents day and night, immersed in Torah. Yaakov was also called the “choicest of the forefathers”, and this was because Yaakov revealed Torah on the world, and the Torah is the primary way of revealing Hashem.

How Torah Reveals The Reality of Hashem’s Existence

In the beginning of this lesson, we mentioned that one can either have an immature perspective towards the Torah, or a mature perspective towards Torah. Now we shall return to that discussion.

From an immature perspective, Torah is merely viewed by people as wisdom, intellect, and understanding. Torah learning in this context is to learn the Written Torah and Oral Torah and, of course, to fulfill it. In this context, the Torah is viewed as nothing but wisdom. But the more truthful perspective is that wisdom is only one of the aspects of Torah. Torah is not only wisdom, Torah contains a spiritual power that returns people to *teshuvah*. The wisdom of Torah is known as the “light” (*ohr*) of Torah, whereas the Torah’s power to return people to *teshuvah* is the deeper spiritual illumination in the Torah, known as *meohr*, and it is the inner essence behind all of the wisdom of the Torah.

To illustrate, in a person, there are different parts of the body, and a brain and a heart, etc. Although a person thinks from his brain, this doesn’t mean that the brain is the person. There is a person here, and he has a brain in him, but the brain is not him. Although it is true that he can’t function without his brain, he exists without his brain. His brain thinks for him, but there is also a person behind the brain, and he would exist even without his brain. So too, although the Torah reveals G-dly wisdom, this wisdom is not all there is to the Torah. Behind all of the wisdom of the Torah is a spiritual light that reveals Hashem.

The will of Hashem is clothed in the wisdom of Hashem, and the Torah reveals it. We are able to know of Hashem's will and wisdom through the Torah. But what about Hashem's very existence? What is the source by which we can recognize Him? On a simple level, the mere awareness that there is a Creator is able to come from the revelation of His will and wisdom. Since we know of His will and wisdom, we can know of His existence. The power to recognize Hashem is because we see His will and wisdom, and that tells us that he exists. But, although Hashem's existence is self-evident, that is not the deepest way by which we can know of His existence. The existence of Hashem is more intrinsic than this.

To become aware of Hashem on a more intrinsic level, one does not attain this awareness through learning about His will and His wisdom. Rather, an intrinsic awareness of Hashem is attained by believing in Him and recognizing Him simply from the depths of the soul, which is a more direct awareness of His existence that goes beyond intellectual awareness.

Taking this further, since everything is an extension of the reality of Hashem, our own existence is only made possible because Hashem exists. If one believes he can exist but he does not recognize Hashem's existence, he is imagining himself, because one cannot exist without Hashem. The reality of our entire existence is a revelation of the reality of Hashem.

This very concept (revealing the reality of Hashem by being aware of Him in the depths of the soul) is what epitomizes the very concept of Torah, because the Torah is the primary way by which Hashem is revealed to us. The very will of a person to reveal the Reality of Hashem is what the Torah is all about!

In Conclusion

The more one gains this perspective, first becoming intellectually aware of it and then internalizing it in the heart, the more truthful one's Torah learning will become, and to that extent, one will know what "true" Torah is, because it will be aligned with awareness of the true meaning of reality.

15 | *Accessing A Revealed Torah*

The Torah Is All About Revelation

As explained in the previous chapter, the very concept of the Torah is revelation. The revelation of Hashem which we were able to have a connection to is His *EinSof*, His endlessness, a connection with the very *havayah* (reality) of the Creator, so to speak.

The purpose of Creation is the revelation of Hashem. The revelation of Hashem is: the Torah. The Torah was the first revelation of His reality. Since every reality we know of is nothing but an extension of the reality of Hashem, because Hashem is the only Reality that exists, and Torah is the first revelation of His reality, it follows, then, that everything is an extension of Torah. There are other revelations of Hashem as well, but since Torah was the first revelation of Hashem, the Torah therefore epitomizes revelation.

A Disparate View vs. A Unified View

When we have a superficial perspective, our view is coming from the *alma d'piruda*, the dimension of separateness, where we see everything as separate and we don't see the interconnectedness of everything. But when we have an inner perspective, we can view the interconnectedness of everything because we are viewin

++++g it all from a unified dimension (*achdus*).

“The world stands on three pillars, on Torah, on *avodah*, and *gemilus chassadim*.” Since everything is ultimately a revelation of Torah, all of the spiritual pillars of the world are all extensions of Torah, so they are independent of Torah. For example, *tefillah* is not just *tefillah*, but an extension of Torah. The same goes for the concepts of *emunah*, *ahavah*, *yirah*, *maaseh*, etc. They are not all simply separate matters from each other. They are all intertwined, because they are all an extension of Torah.

When one views all of these as separate areas, that is the view from *alma d'piruda*, where each matter contradicts a different matter. This is why we find that some people mainly are involved in *emunah*, or in *tefillah*, or in *chessed*, or in Torah, each person doing what he excels in - but they don't fuse them all together, because they don't see the interconnectedness of all these aspects. They will emphasize either a lot of *emunah* or a lot of *chessed* or a lot of *tefillah* or a lot of Torah, without trying to incorporate anything else into their *avodas Hashem*, because they don't see how it is all supposed to be connected. They are coming from a disparate view.

The inner view is to live in a world where everything is interconnected, since it all reveals *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. What exactly reveals *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? There are 613 separate *mitzvos* which each reveal Him, but it's all one perspective about revealing Him. How can we see that Torah, tefillah, and chessed each reveal *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? How are these areas different ways to reveal *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*? The Torah is the main revelation of Hashem's wisdom and will. *Tefillah* is the revelation which reveals how one receives everything from Hashem. *Chessed* is the revelation that we need to resemble Hashem's kindness even in this physical world.

The *halachah* is that one needs to interrupt his Torah learning in order to do a *mitzvah* which cannot be done by others. When one needs to interrupt his learning, he might simply think that he's not involved with learning Torah now, and he plans to return to learning later. But that is not the way to look at it. One has to realize that learning Torah is about revealing Hashem's will and wisdom, and since Torah reveals Hashem, the *mitzvah* to learn Torah and night means to live in the perspective that one always reveals Hashem through learning Torah. It means being involved all day with one thing alone: to reveal Hashem. That is the *avodah* of each individual on this world!

This is a perspective which unifies everything in life together. It is not just an intellectual perspective, this is something that can be sensed and felt. Your entire attitude towards life can be viewed as one thing alone, revealing Hashem. This is really the secret of the entire inner, spiritual dimension of life.

The more you are in touch with this perspective, you don't just learn Torah, you gain the attitude that life is all about revealing Hashem. In this context, learning Torah is not just about knowing and learning more Torah. It is more than that. It means that your entire attitude is that your Torah learning reveals Hashem more and more. Exertion in Torah learning and remembering your learning is part of revealing Hashem! It is not just so that you should yearn to know more Torah (which is also true). It is to immerse yourself in Torah because this is something that reveals Hashem.

Desiring To Live In A Dimension of Revelation

The more you acquire this attitude, that everything we do on this world is a means of revealing Hashem, the more you will want to live in a reality where everything is revealed.

The Serpent was a creature that went around telling secrets to people, and this was said in a derogatory context, because the Serpent was evil. There is an evil desire to reveal secrets. But in the side of holiness, this is the soul's power to desire a world of revelation, of revealing Hashem more and more. One needs to desire to reveal not only the Torah's wisdom, but also the revelation of Hashem, in his Torah learning. One needs to desire revelation of Hashem in his Torah learning.

The Torah of Mashiach – A Torah of Revelation

In the future, the *daas* of Hashem will fill the world. Currently, the Torah is hidden, in a concealed dimension, and we reveal it more and more with our Torah learning. But at the Redemption, there will be the redemption of the Torah, revealing the Torah from concealment, because the redemption is all about revelation. This will be the “Torah of Mashiach”, where the words of Torah will be clearly revealed.

In the time period we live in, the words of Torah are very hidden and concealed from us. The secret parts of Torah are certainly hidden, but even the words of Abaye and Rava in the Gemara, even the conclusive views of *halachah*, are concealed. The Rambam’s words are very concealed, the *Shulchan Aruch*’s words are very concealed and the commentaries struggle to explain the true meaning of the *Shulchan Aruch*’s words, and the *Poskim* and commentaries on *Shulchan Aruch* conclude with uncertainty of what the *halachah* is. This is the kind of Torah learning in this 6,000 year era: It is Torah in a concealed dimension, and this makes the words of Torah concealed from us. And only through exertion in Torah can we keep uncovering more and more true understanding in Torah. But after the coming of Mashiach, when the *daas* of Hashem will fill the world, the Torah will all be clearly revealed, with no room for uncertainty in any area in the Torah.

The Key To A Revealed Torah – Learning Torah Lishmah

Although we are currently in the 6,000 year era, far from Har Sinai, and darkness completely covers the earth and we are found in concealment, a person who learns Torah *lishmah* can penetrate to the level where Torah is revealed. When one learns *lishmah*, he is no longer found in the concealed level of Torah and he can grasp revelations of Torah.

Learning Torah *shelo lishmah* will only afford a person a “concealed” level of Torah, leaving a lot of room for ambiguity and lack of clarity in one’s learning, whereas learning Torah *lishmah* reveals the essence of the words of Torah and it’s all clear. The Sages teach that when learning *lishmah*, a person becomes a *maayan hamisgaber* and Torah becomes revealed to him. This is because, though learning Torah *lishmah*, one becomes connected to a dimension of revelation, and therefore the secrets of Torah are revealed to him, not just as a merit for learning Torah *lishmah*, but because the person is connected to a dimension of revelation, by way of learning Torah *lishmah*. Revelation becomes his very level, and that is why secrets of Torah become revealed to him.

Compare it to a person who has many sefarim in his house. If he has any question, he can easily find the answer because he has so many sefarim. If he doesn’t have an answer to his question, it’s not because the Torah is being concealed from him, it’s simply because he didn’t bother to look into the matter. As soon as he starts looking in his selection of sefarim, he would find the answer. This is what Torah learning after the Redemption will look like, and this is what it means when secrets of Torah are revealed to a person who learns Torah *lishmah*. [Because everything in Torah will be so clearly revealed after the Redemption, it will take minimal effort to understand Torah. No real

exertion will be needed in order to understand Torah after the Redemption, and the same goes for one now if he learns Torah *lishmah*.]

The Depth of The Shechinah In Exile and Yearning For The Redemption

In order to be “there”, in order to access this level of Torah, one needs to live in a dimension of revelation. Everything is comprised of *dovor v'hipucho*, something and its opposite. The Creation we are in now is currently a dimension of concealment, and this is the depth of why there is “pain of the *Shechinah*”, the *Shechinah* in exile. We are currently in a dimension of *hester* (concealment) and therefore we live with mostly *hester panim* (concealed mode of conduct of Hashem, where we don't understand His ways). But the revelation of Torah of the future will be like “*Megillas Esther*”, which means the “revelation of concealment”, because it will be a Torah where everything is revealed and nothing is concealed. (For this reason, *Megillas Esther* is the root of the Torah of the future).

The more a person gains the perspective of revelation, he can be pained with the *Shechinah* at our situation of exile. When one lives only superficially, and he wants to feel the pain of the *Shechinah* in exile, at best he can feel the pain of others and join with others in their suffering. But that's barely scratching the surface of the pain of the *Shechinah*. The deeper pain of the *Shechinah* is the fact that we live in a reality where everything is concealed. When one desires to live in a world of revelation, he is pained at the fact that we live in a reality where everything is concealed. This is the true meaning of joining with the pain of the *Shechinah*.

The more that a person learns Torah *lishmah*, he penetrates into the dimension of revelation (depending on how much Torah *lishmah* he learns), and he will know acutely what this pain is. It will truly bother him that we don't live in a world of revealed Torah and that we instead live with so much concealment. Waiting for the Redemption, on a deeper level, means waiting for the time in which we will leave concealment and enter into revelation.

The Torah is comprised of opposite aspects. The Torah is called *sarvin v'galya*, “concealed and revealed”, because although the Torah is very concealed from us, it is also possible to know of a revealed level of Torah. Exertion in Torah learning is how we can come out of the concealed level of Torah, if exertion in Torah learning leads us to arrive at the level of learning Torah *lishmah*, whereupon we can discover the revealed level of Torah.

Why Exertion In Torah Learning Doesn't Always Lead To Clarity

As it has been explained here, one can only arrive at a revealed level of Torah after one has already acquired a yearning for a reality of revelation [coupled with exertion in Torah learning], when one desires to live in a world where everything in Torah is clearly revealed. When one doesn't have this desire for revelation, what happens? It is what we can see before us: Even when people have exertion

in their Torah learning, it doesn't always lead to clarity in their learning, and this is because they aren't desiring to get the inner level of the Torah.

There are many different schools of thought on how to have exertion in Torah, but the inner path which is being described here is hidden from most people. As explained in the previous chapter, ever since the *Lucho*s⁶⁷ were broken and the letters flew out from the *Lucho*s, comprehension in Torah is only on a level called *achorayim*, "from behind", an unclear understanding of Torah, as opposed to the original level of understanding in Torah, which is called *panim* (face-to-face). In deeper terms, which we are explaining now, *achorayim* refers to the "concealed" level of Torah, *hester*, whereas *panim* is the revealed level of Torah.

At the concealed level of Torah, one thinks that there are some parts of his learning which happen to be clear to him and others parts of his learning which are more revealed. At that level, whatever a person comprehends in his Torah learning is viewed by him as his own *chiddushim* or his own insights in his learning.

That is the level of *achorayim* in Torah. Clearly, when one thinks that revelations in his Torah learning are merely his own insights and nothing more, he never gets to the inner level of Torah (*panim*).

To illustrate the idea, two people can be learning in a *sugya*. One of them learns it and thinks and reflects on it and he gets clarity, gaining a clear picture of the *sugya*, because he has gotten to the inner level of Torah in his learning.

The other may exert his mind in the *sugya* and doing a lot of thinking, but even after all of his exertion in his learning he is still missing a clear picture of a *sugya*. He may think of a *chiddush* (novel Torah insight) which gives him a sense of clarity on the *sugya*, but because he isn't trying to get to the inner level of Torah in his learning, he is only gaining an understanding of Torah on the level of *achorayim*. At best, he can suddenly gain a *chiddush* that falls into his mind.

This is certainly true Torah learning, but the person will be missing clarity in what's learning about, because he is only learning on the level of *achorayim*, because he isn't trying to get to the inner level of Torah, since he's only interested in his own *chiddushim* and discovering his own insights and he's not desiring to experience a revealed level of Torah.

Clearly, this is only relevant for those who are truly exerting themselves in Torah learning, who wish to take their learning even further, attaining true understanding in Torah and plumbing to the Torah's depths. For those who are not exerting themselves in Torah study, these words will not be relevant at all. To the extent that a person purifies his inner being, more and more, one will be able to get to the inner level of Torah, the level that is called *panim*, where one is connected to the revealed level of Torah, which is a source of inner understanding in Torah.

⁶⁷ Tablets

Practically Actualizing This Concept

Understandably, this is a concept which is very subtle and deep, but it is the root of learning Torah day and night. We need to be clear about the deep root of Torah study and to gain this perspective and seek to actualize it from potential.

Practically speaking, we should become clear about what is revealed to us in Torah. In anything we learn, we should keep seeing what is revealed to us. When concluding a *sugya*, we should become aware of whatever Torah has become revealed to us, whatever we are clear about. This will be a redemption for the soul (though it is not yet the complete Redemption). Even if a person doesn't have complete clarity in his Torah learning (and indeed, on This World there is never complete clarity, because complete clarity will only be in the future), one can still become aware of whatever clarity he does have, and this connects him further to a dimension of clarity and revelation.

If one sees that he is totally clear about everything he learns, this is living on the level of *Olam HaBa*, the "World To Come", which was discussed in the previous chapter. Here we are describing a more accessible level, of being clear about what you know and what you don't know, and this is called *me'in olam haba*, a semblance of the World To Come. It cannot be the level of absolute *Olam HaBa* since there are still some parts in your learning which aren't clear to you. Yet, it is a very worthy level of Torah learning to connect yourself to, because it connects you to a dimension of clarity and revelation, even if it's not on the complete level.

In Conclusion

That concludes the description of the root of the inner perspective towards Torah and the way of learning Torah, which we have discussed throughout all of these lessons.