



## Oy, I Need to Learn More

“Class, we have a special treat today. A very big talmid chochom will be coming to speak to us. When he finishes, you may ask him any questions that you like.”

“Wow, Rebbe. What a privilege! We are fortunate enough to hear a talmid chochom speak and will be able to ask him questions.”

“Boruch Hashem, class, you have this unique opportunity.”

*A short while later, the Rav enters the room. Everyone stands up, giving him the proper kovod (honor). He begins to speak.*

“Young men, I would like to thank your Rebbe for inviting me here to be with you today. It is a real privilege for me to speak to a class of such fine students. I would like to discuss with you the parashas ha’shavuah. Our Holy Torah states, ‘Moshe and the Kohanim, the Leviim, spoke to all Israel, saying: “Listen carefully, and hear, O Israel; this day you have become a people to Hashem, your G-d”’ (Devarim 27:9). The Gemora (Brochos 63b) darshens the word ‘haskes’ (listen carefully) to mean ‘koses’ (crush yourself). Raish Lokish relates that the words of Torah are only established within one who ‘kills’ (crushes) himself (so to speak) to learn Torah.

“How do we understand this? Of course, we do not literally kill ourselves in our learning. Rather, we beat down our attraction to physical delights. Both the Rambam (Talmud Torah 3:12) and the Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 246:21) cite this Gemora amongst their halachos of Talmud Torah. The Torah learned by one who pampers his body with food and comforts will not be eternal. Rather, great physical sacrifice is required for lasting Torah learning. Young men, if you want to truly acquire the Torah that you learn, you must give up the excess food, drink, and sleep that you do not need. Then your mind and body will be free and clear to allow the Torah to be absorbed into your heart and soul.

“That is the first requirement. The Medrash Shmuel on Pirkei Avos (3:6) adds another dimension to acquiring Torah. Shlomo HaMelech states, ‘For with much wisdom comes much grief; and he who increases knowledge increases pain (Koheles 1:18).’ One who wants to increase his Torah knowledge must feel pained that he is lacking in his learning.

He may have learned a lot, but there is so, so much more to learn. There are so many *sugyas* (subjects); each one of which contains a myriad of explanations, interpretations, halachos, and minhagim. A person has to feel distressed. ‘Oy, there is so much Torah that I do not know! Oy, I need to learn more! More and more and more!’ A person’s worry about his lack of Torah knowledge compels him to complete each *sugya*. He will not rest until he learns all of the different interpretations of the Gemora. Then he goes on to the later explanations and learns the halacha. Mishnayos, Tanach, mussar, are all included in his study. He does not and will not stop. Why? Because he is lacking. No one can rest when he feels that he is lacking something essential.

“Therefore, young men, I want to give you a big blessing. You should always feel pain over your lack of Torah knowledge. The Torah that you do not know should bother you. With this motivation, you will always find yourself in the Beis HaMedrash learning, learning, and learning. May each and every one of you become great talmidei chachomim!” “Amen!”



*Kinderlach . . .*  
 When someone lacks food, he is hungry. He cannot get accustomed to the feeling, because his stomach will not allow it. He must search and search until he finds food. Only then will he be satisfied. If someone is in pain he searches and searches until he finds a medicine to relieve his pain. He will not let up, because the pain bothers him. The Medrash Shmuel says that a person’s lack of Torah knowledge should pain him. There is so much that he does not know! He must relieve this pain! How? By learning, learning, and learning. That is the medicine. If we think like this, *kinderlach*, then we will acquire much Torah knowledge. “Oy, I need to learn more!” Great storehouses of wisdom will be ours.

## Pray For Others

“And you will answer and you will say before Hashem your G-d, ‘[Lavan the] Aramean sought to destroy my father”’ (Devarim 26:5). This is the beginning of the declaration made upon bringing the *bikurim* (first fruits) to the Beis HaMikdash (Holy Temple). Rav Zalman Sorotzkin zt”l points out that the Kohen (who accepts the fruit offering) does not speak on behalf of the one who brought the *bikurim*. Rather, each and every Jew is able to speak directly to the G-d of Heaven and Earth, without any intermediary. Hashem listens to his prayers.

Rav Sorotzkin continues to explain that with each additional prayer, Hashem brings Himself closer and closer to the worshipper. This concept is reflected in the prayer that we say three times, each time in a different order. “I look towards Your salvation, Hashem.” “Towards You, Hashem, I look for Your salvation.” “Hashem, I look forward to Your salvation.” The first time we say Hashem’s name at the end of the prayer, then in the middle of the prayer, and finally at the beginning. Each time, the Divine Presence draws Himself closer to us, and we pronounce His name sooner.

*Kinderlach . . .*  
 Hashem listens to you. Just think about that. The most powerful Being in the universe, the One Who created heaven and earth, listens to every word that you say to Him. What shall we say to Hashem during these days of Elul? Rav Noson Meir Wachtfogel, zt”l, suggests that we pray on behalf of other Jews. Do you know someone who is sick? Pray for his *refuah she-layma* (complete recovery). Pray for the poor man, the widow, and the orphan. All need Hashem’s mercy. Praying for someone else accomplishes many things. It helps you love the other person, and feel for him. This increases unity among the Jewish People. These are all things that we are working on during the month of Elul. Pray for others. Strengthen the connection between Hashem and His people.

- Parasha Questions:
- What happens to one who gives bad advice? (27:18 and Rashi)
  - Why did all of these curses come upon us? (28:47 and Rashi)
  - Why did Hashem perform all of the miracles in the Midbar? (29:5)