



A Taste of Torah True Love

By Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg

Every Friday in Lakewood, New Jersey, the Dean of Beth Medrash Govoha, Rabbi Yerucham Olshin, delivers an inspiring lecture on the weekly parshah. I would like to retell a story I heard at one of those lectures.

Rabbi Leib Bakst (1915-2003), Dean of Yeshiva Gedolah of Detroit, told the story of Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (1843-1926), better known by the name of his famous work, the *Ohr Sameach*. Reb Meir Simcha and his *chavrusah* (study partner), Rabbi Yechezkel Chafetz, were trying to learn a very difficult topic in the Talmud, but they just couldn't understand the passage. Reb Meir Simcha told Reb Yechezkel, "We must step outside and pray to Hashem that He grant us love for Torah." Upon returning, they finally understood that which had been perplexing to them earlier. After they finished learning, Reb Yechezkel asked Reb Meir Simcha, "Why did you insist we pray for love of Torah? Wouldn't it have made more sense to ask Hashem that he 'enlighten our eyes with his Torah', since it was understanding that we were lacking?"

Reb Meir Simcha answered him with a parable: There was a mother who left her infant by a neighbor. Soon after, the baby started crying, and the babysitter couldn't figure out what the child wanted. When the mother returned and saw her baby crying, she knew within seconds what her child needed. Reb Meir Simcha then asked Reb Yechezkel, "Do you know what the difference is between the mother and the neighbor who babysat? The mother had a great deal of love for the baby. Through the love she was bonded with her baby; therefore, she knew exactly what he baby needed. Just as when one bone in

your body is aching with pain, the rest of the body feels and knows about it, so, too, when attempting to understand the Torah, it's only possible if we make ourselves one with the Torah. That is possible only if we have true love for the Torah. "

With this story, said Rabbi Olshin, we can understand the verse in Proverbs (2:4) that states, "If you seek it (the Torah) as (you seek) money, and search for it (as you search for) hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of Hashem and discover the knowledge of G-d."

In this week's parsha we learn that one is obligated to count the forty-nine days leading up to the holiday of Shavuot, when we once again experience receiving the Torah, just as the Jewish people did millennia ago at Mt. Sinai. The *Sefer Hachinuch* writes that an idea behind this counting is to show how great our love is for the Torah, and that we can't wait until Shavuot to receive the Torah. We therefore count the days and weeks up till Shavuot. Like a young woman, engaged to be married, anxiously and excitedly counts the minutes, hours, and days to her wedding, we, too, count toward that great moment of receiving the Torah.

The *Sfas Emes* writes that in these forty-nine special days, we have a unique opportunity to reignite and intensify our love for the Torah. Don't walk away empty-handed this Shavuot. Let us pray to Hashem to grant us love of Torah, and let us also appreciate and learn about the greatness of learning Torah. Then we can confidently walk into Shavuot knowing that we have a love for the holy Torah burning inside our hearts, that we are one with the Torah, and are therefore fit to receive and understand the depths of the Torah.

Stories For The Soul

Nothing But the Truth

As soon as Rabbi Aharon Kotler escaped to the United States at the beginning of World War II, he established the famous wartime Vaad Hatzalah (Rescue Committee), which helped sustain Jewish refugees in Europe, Russia and Shanghai.

At one point, he went to the American Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, a Jew, to ask for his assistance.

Accompanied by Mr. Irving Bunim, who acted as the interpreter, Reb Aharon, speaking in Yiddish, pleaded with Mr. Morgenthau for government cooperation in the rescue work.

"If I am seen to favor my Jewish brethren, I will soon be out of office," replied Mr. Morgenthau.

To this Reb Aharon told the interpreter to reply: "Saving Jewish lives is more important than holding even twenty positions like yours."

At first the interpreter refused to translate these words. Noticing the argument, Mr. Morgenthau insisted that he be told what Reb Aharon had said, and the interpreter acquiesced.

Reb Aharon's reply so impressed him that he said, "If so, I will do my utmost and face the consequences."

As it turned out, Mr. Morgenthau's efforts proved invaluable in setting up the War Refugee Board, and he continued in office until after the death of President Roosevelt, who had appointed him.

When we reap our harvest, the Torah commands us to leave some of the crops remaining in the field, so that the poor can gather them for themselves (Leviticus 23:22). We

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Kollel Happenings

FATHERS & SONS

The Denver Community Kollel invites all fathers and sons to its inaugural Fathers & Sons program at the DAT Minyan, 6825 E Alameda Ave., on Lag Ba'omer, Sunday, April 28th. Shacharis begins at 8 am, followed by breakfast and father and sons learning until 9:30. There will be a story and great prizes raffled off at 9:30. There will also be ice cream sundaes! For more info, email rmf@denverkollel.org or call Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg at 732-779-1297.



LEARN TO LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. All classes take place in the Aish Bais Medrash 9550 Belleview Ave. There are other opportunities to join this program outside of the current program. For more info, email rmm@denverkollel.org.



INSIDE THE ALEPH-BAIS

There is a unique fascination with the Hebrew language and the aleph-bet. Mystical sources explain that the letters of the aleph-bet are the building blocks of the whole world. Discover the world of the aleph-bet with Rabbi Heyman in this informative, dynamic class. For time and location, contact rmh@denverkollel.org.

Interpersonal Issues

The Laws of Lashon Hara (Slander)

It is forbidden to speak lashon hara despite the fact that the information being conveyed is true. In fact, if the information is false, the transgression is more severe, and is known as motzi

shem ra.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi

The Little Things that Count

Alan Shear of Yeshiva College South Africa wrote:

Dear Rabbi

Many people have asked me the following question, which can really be a bit perplexing. A boy who has his bar mitzvah during Sefiras HaOmer, may he continue counting with a bracha? This has practical application here right now, so a timely answer would be greatly appreciated.

Dear Alan,

The Torah says "From the day after Pesach you shall count seven complete weeks..." We therefore count each day for 49 days between Pesach and Shavuot, saying "today is the first day of the Omer, today is the second day of the Omer, etc." Each day we make a blessing.

The authorities differ whether each day's count is a mitzvah by itself, or if together all 49 days comprise one single mitzvah. The difference would be in a case where someone forgot to count:

If each day is a separate mitzvah, someone who forgot a day continues to fulfill the mitzvah by counting the following days. So he should continue counting and each day say the blessing.

But if together all 49 days comprise

one single mitzvah, someone who missed a day can no longer fulfill the mitzvah. Consequently, he can't say the blessing.

In practice, someone who forgets a day continues to count - in accordance with the first opinion - but does not say the blessing - in consideration of the second opinion.

But what should you do? On the one hand, you've counted every day! But since you're not yet bar mitzvah and aren't commanded by the Torah to count, perhaps your counting 'doesn't count.' Perhaps your "seven complete weeks" are incomplete.

Most Poskim rule that if you counted every day until your bar mitzvah, you continue counting with a blessing.

Interestingly enough, Akiva, the command to count the Omer is found in parshat Emor - your bar mitzvah parsha. The verse says "Count after Pesach, the day you bring the Omer offering, seven complete weeks..." In Hebrew, the word 'complete' is the 12th word of the verse. Perhaps this hints that even though you are only 12 years old and not yet bar mitzvah, your mitzvah of counting is nonetheless 'complete'!

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Stories for the Soul

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learn from here that we can never become so wrapped up in our business or careers, that we forget our responsibility to protect the lives and wellbeing of

others. We must realize that this is why Hashem gave us the resources that we have in the first place.

Adapted with permission from Shul-Week by Rabbi Boruch Lederman.