

TORAH WEEKLY



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True Love

By: Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg (Originally Published 2013)

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 Chefetz, 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 her 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 Shavuos, 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 Shavuos to receive the Torah. We therefore count the days and weeks up till Shavuos. 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 Shavous. 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 Shavuos 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.

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Rabbi Dovid Schwartzberg

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