

Ahavas Torah for Everyone

For BYSO Bamidbar 5784

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We would like to discuss a connection between the Parsha and the upcoming Yom Tov, and we will expound on an idea that was mentioned five years ago in the BYSO. The Parsha begins with a listing of the Nesi'im (leaders) of each Shevet (tribe). The Nasi (leader) of Shevet Yissachar is Nesanel ben Tzu'ar. The Posuk says in the first Perek of Tehillim, "Ki Im B'toras Hashem Cheftzo, Uvsoraso Yeh'geh Yomam Va'layla – His desire is for the Torah of Hashem, and about his Torah he thinks day and night." The Gemara (Avoda Zara 19a) notes that the Posuk begins by referring to the Torah as Hashem's but ends by calling it 'his' Torah. This teaches us that after a person has toiled in Torah, Hashem's Torah becomes his own.

The **Chida** says this idea is hinted to in our Posuk. Yissachar is the Shevet that represents learning Torah, and his Nasi was "Nesanel" which can be broken up to read "Nasan Keil – Hashem gave (him the Torah, which was originally His, as a gift)." How did this happen? "Ben Tzu'ar," when a son (of Hashem) is Nitzta'er (pains himself through toil) to understand the Torah, it turns that Torah from being Hashem's into his own. (**Yechi Reuvein**)

On the original Shavuos we merited receiving the Torah from Hashem, and each year since on Shavuos we all reaccept upon ourselves to keep the Torah. We beseech Hashem daily in davening to place in our hearts the wisdom to understand the Torah, to guard the Torah and to fulfill the requirements of the Torah "with love." On Shavuos a person can be granted the Siyata Dishmaya (Heavenly assistance) to be successful in his learning throughout the year; it's just dependent on how much he values the Torah and how much he prepares himself for the Kabbalas HaTorah. That's why the Ahava (love) of Torah plays such an integral role here. And that love comes from Ameilus, from toiling in Torah. As the **Chovos Halevavos** says (in Sha'ar Avodas Elokim) a person can get excited about serving Hashem only after he's been convinced that the benefit that will come from that work will more than compensate for the effort he put in. And the only way to reach that recognition is through working hard and toiling at it. (**Shaarei Ezra**)

There are two questions that one may possibly ask on this. One is, that's all well and good for the full-time learners, but what about me? And the second is, what about the women, who don't spend their day toiling in Torah?

The Gemara (Brachos 17a) asks, how do the women merit Olam Haba (since they don't fully immerse in learning Torah)? The Gemara answers through sending their sons off to learn in school, and through seeing their husbands off to learn and waiting for them to return. The question is that women are obligated in many Mitzvos, even if it's not as many as the men, so why aren't those enough for them to merit Olam Haba? The **Vilna Gaon** answers based on the Posuk, "Ki Ner Mitzva V'Torah Ohr – Mitzva is like a candle while Torah is compared to light (of the sun)." A candle only illuminates its immediate surrounding area while the sun lights up the whole world. So, the Gemara's question was, how will she merit Olam Haba commensurate with that of the men who merit the great light that learning Torah provides. And the answer is that she partners with her children and husband in their learning, and through that she becomes an equal partner in their great reward.

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld would say that he is certain that he will merit to sit in Gan Eden. Why? "My wife sends me off each day to learn. She doesn't know if I learn well or not, but she certainly sanctifies her entire day to my learning. So, after her death, she will certainly earn a prime spot in Gan Eden. As for me, I'm not sure what the Heavenly Court will decide based on my actions, however, I will make a winning argument: My wife earned a good spot because of me; shouldn't I at least get a Shadchan (middleman) fee?!"

The Haskala (“enlightenment”) was making great inroads in the frum camp of European Jewry. Young Yitzchak was a bright boy and learned in his Cheder with diligence and Simcha, but some of his friends had already fallen to the Haskala movement, and it was drawing his interest as well. One day he came home from school, intending to join one of the movement’s meetings. As he entered his house, he saw the table decked in white with a beautiful Seuda set up. His mother was wearing a new dress. “I purchased this dress for your sister’s upcoming Chasuna,” she told her son. “However, since I heard you completed a Masechta in Cheder, there is no greater Simcha than that! The feast and the new dress are in honor of your Siyum!” Yitzchak was so moved by how much his learning meant to his mother that he dropped all association with the Haskala movement. He grew up to become R’ Yitzchak Hutner, Rosh Yeshivas Chaim Berlin and one of the great Gedolim of the last generation.

Even one who works during the day has the ability, through his attitude, to be on par with full-time learners. The Torah groups Yehuda, Yissachar and Zevulun together in the encampment of Klal Yisrael. Rabbeinu Bachya says it’s because they are all B’nei Torah, and he cites Pesukim as proof. The question is that we know from Chazal that Yissachar learned Torah all day, but Zevulun went out to do business and only supported Torah? However, the Gemara (Shabbos 23) says that whoever loves Talmidei Chachamim will merit children B’nei Torah. Even Zevulun, since he loved Yissachar, merited to have children who were B’nei Torah, and therefore he too was under the same banner as Yissachar – the Degel HaTorah.

In addition, *everyone* can have Ahavas HaTorah on their own level.

A Talmid Chocham in Eretz Yisrael consulted with R’ Yitzchak Scheiner, Rosh Yeshivas Kamenetz, about a dilemma. His friend in America provides him with much financial support while he sits and learns, and the friend is making a Chasuna. He feels that out of Hakaras Hatov he should travel to attend the wedding, but it would cause him many days of Bitul Torah. He wanted to know what he should do. R’ Yitzchak replied that his opinion is that he should travel overseas for the Simcha. “However,” added the Rosh Yeshiva, “I don’t want to make the final decision, because, since I did not merit to attend Yeshiva in my earlier years, Ahavas HaTorah was not implanted in me from a very young age. You should consult with R’ Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz or R’ Aharon Leib Shteinman. Their Ahavas HaTorah is complete!”

He, in his humility, looked at his own Ahavas HaTorah as minimal compared to some other Gedolim. *We* laugh at that, because we *know* how great his Ahavas HaTorah was. Just read the biography on R’ Yitzchak; his Ahavas HaTorah screams out from every page. It was sufficient for him to build a literal empire of Torah through the Kamenetz institutions.

We are no different! We consider *our* Ahavas HaTorah minimal compared to the next person who is greater, but we *can*, and we *do*, have our *own* level of Ahavas HaTorah. All we need to do is realize that and capitalize on it.