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“Mishnah” - Reviewing Your Learning

One of the 48 *kinyanim* to acquire the Torah is called “*Mishnah*”. On a simple level, this means that one has to learn the six orders of *Mishnayos*.

However, it also means that we must “review” what we learn; the word “*Mishnah*” comes from the word *shinun*, which is to repeat, or to review. Chazal learn from the possuk, “*V’shi-non-tum li-vo-nec’ha*” (“And you shall teach your children”) that besides for learning Torah, we also have an obligation to review what we learn.

Chazal also say that we need to review our Torah learning so that “the words of Torah should be “*mechudadin b’picha*”, sharpened in your mouth”, as opposed to when our learning feels to us like ‘broken pieces’ when we don’t review it.

Through *shinun* - review of our learning - we can come to have “*mechudadin*” - a sharp and clear understanding of the material. The word “*mechudadin*” comes from the word “*chad*”, which means “one.” So through reviewing our learning - instead of having our learning in ‘broken pieces’ - we can get our learning to become one piece.

“*Shinun*” also comes from the word “*Shnayim*”, which means “two.” “Two” connotes pieces; when a person doesn’t review, his learning is in pieces. A person has to have *shinun*\review in his learning in a way that he comes to have *chad*\one piece, as opposed to “*Shnayim*”\two pieces.

Chazal say that a person should not be like someone who is asked a question on his learning and he stutters over it - because he hasn’t reviewed it and is therefore unclear of the material. Rather, one should review his learning, so that he will be able to answer questions on it. The learning should be “*mechudadin p’picha*”, sharp in your mouth - it should be *chad* (“one”) to you, as opposed to being in pieces.

Reaching Oneness

The deeper understanding, though, is as follows.

The entire Torah was told to Moshe at Sinai, even the Oral Torah. Chazal say that the Oral Torah went from Hashem’s mouth and was carved into the *Luchos*; in other words, the Oral Torah is part of the Written Torah.

One of the differences between the first and second *Luchos* was that the first *Luchos* directly from Hashem, and it contained both Written and Oral Torah. But the second *Luchos* only contained the Ten Commandments, and not the Oral Torah.

This is also the reason why the Oral Torah can have arguments in it [as Chazal reveal]. For this reason, it's possible for people not to have "*mechudadin b'picha*" when it comes to their learning; an example of this is that there were certain students of Shamai and Hilel who did not have enough *shimush* (mentoring) by their teachers, and therefore came to misinterpret the Torah.

At Har Sinai, we were all *chad*\one - we all stood as "one man, with one heart". In order to prepare for the Torah, we all had to be "one". Afterwards, with the sin with the Golden Calf, the unity was lost; people were killing each other. But at Har Sinai, though, we were all "one" - the perfected and ideal level of mankind.

"Hashem the Torah and Yisrael are one". This tri-fold unity - Hashem, Torah and the Jewish people - was revealed at Har Sinai. The perfected level of mankind - stand at Sinai and receiving the Torah - is to be "one"; to be on the level in which all of the Torah is "one", where is not split into broken pieces.

The way we prepare for the Torah is to become *chad*\ "one" with Hashem. [This is the deeper implication of "*Mishnah*"\ "*mechudadin b'picha*"]. Without aspiring to reach this oneness with Hashem, it can still be called Torah learning, but it's not called the "*giving*" of the Torah; it's not the perfected level of Torah which was at Har Sinai.

Shavuos - Access To Our Perfected State Of Before The Sin

Now we live after the sin with the Golden Calf, and we are missing that great level we were at when we stood at Sinai, in which we had no evil inclination. It was a level in which we transcended Creation. But when the time of the giving of the Torah comes each year, we must prepare for the kind of Torah that was given at Sinai - the kind of Torah that existed before there was any sin. It was a Torah in which we had complete unity.

Shavuos is the only remembrance we have of the exalted level of pre-sin. The other *Yomim Tovim* remember the exodus, but Shavuos is a remembrance of our state of pre-sin, and it is the only remembrance we have of this perfection we once had.

To prepare for Shavuos, it's not about learning Torah for more hours than we usually do, nor is it about staying up at night to learn. It's about preparing for the level of the pre-sin state, in which we were at a level above Creation.

Therefore, preparing for Shavuos is a much deeper kind of preparation than preparing for the other *Yomim Tovim* - is to prepare for the state of pre-sin.

Chazal say that when the Angel of Death came to take the life Dovid HaMelech, it couldn't kill him, because Dovid *HaMelech* was engrossed in learning Torah. It had to distract him from learning [by making noise] in order to take his life. Why is it then that people learn Torah, yet they can die in the middle of the learning? Why doesn't the Torah protect them from all harm? It is because when most people learn, it is the kind of Torah of the second *Luchos*, which came after the sin. When Dovid *HaMelech* learned, he was connected to the Torah of before sin, which was the perfected level of Torah. That was why his Torah learning made him invincible.

On each of the three festivals, there are special *mitzvos* to keep. Sukkos has the mitzvah of *sukkah* and the Four Species. Pesach has *matzah* and *maror*. Shavuos, though, has no *mitzvos*. Why not? How can it be the festival which is about the giving of the Torah doesn't contain any special *mitzvos*?

It is because Shavuos, the giving of the Torah, was a time in which the world reached perfection – and when the Torah was given, the world reached a state of complete good, in which there was no need for *mitzvos*.

Now we live after the sin of the Golden Calf, and ever since then, our Torah has fallen from the level of “Torah” to the level of “*mitzvos*”. We therefore have *mitzvos* to keep. But Shavuos comes from a higher realm, from a world higher than the world of *mitzvos*, and therefore, there are no unique *mitzvos* to keep due to Shavuos.

The Inner Light Contained On Shavuos: To Realize That A Jew Belongs In The Realm Of Torah Thought

It is possible for Shavuos to go by many times in a person’s life - yet he never really gets in touch with this special festival.

The way to prepare for Shavuos is to make ourselves ‘one’ with Hashem. What does this mean?

Chazal state, “Yisrael was first in Hashem’s thoughts.” The depth of this is that the essence of a Jew is *machshavah* thought – not just to learn Torah, but to be involved in the thoughts of Hashem, which is Torah. *Ramchal* writes that “The way of the wise is to constantly think”. This is because the essence of a Jew is to be there, in that place, of true thought – the thoughts of Torah.

It’s not that we have to ‘think’ more about our Torah learning – rather, it is to realize that our *entire essence as Jew* is to be that of *machshavah* thought. (We cannot live in this perfected state completely, though, for we live after the sin).

We need to realize that the situation of today greatly contradicts the way things used to be. When a person learns Torah and he does not have trace of connection to the level of Har Sinai, he has nothing to do with standing at Har Sinai and receiving the Torah there. But if he at least makes sure to have some kind of connection to the level of standing at Har Sinai, then when he learns Torah, he has somewhat of a connection with the state of standing at Har Sinai.

The state of Har Sinai is for us to feel that Torah thought is our very essence as Jews. We need to reach this place in our soul in order to have a connection with the level we had when we were at Sinai.

Preparing for Shavuos is therefore not such a simple matter. It is not like preparing for the other *Yomim Tovim*. It is to realize that our very essence is our power of thought; to deeply realize the concept of “*Yisrael* were the first thought of Hashem”.

Of course, we cannot ‘live’ in such a world of perfection that we are describing, but we can definitely touch upon it and have a connection to it. In order to reach it, we need to remove the barriers on our soul that are holding us back from it. All of us heard the Torah at Har Sinai – not just a few individuals; so we all have the ability to access an inner place in our soul in which we can access the perfected level of being at Sinai.

The words here can open us at least a little to this deep place of our soul and how we can possibly reach it. But we definitely need *siyata d’shmaya* (Heavenly assistance) and exertion in learning in order to actually get there.

Although we live after the sin, we can believe with *emunah* that we are able to access somewhat the state of perfection.

In the future, the perfected level will once again be returned, but for now, we can at least have some access to that perfected state. It is available once every year - when Shavuos comes.

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