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אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
KI SISA 5778

# בְּשִׁיטְיָחָא

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## Try and Try Again

After *Kabalas HaTorah*, Moshe Rabbeinu stayed in heaven for 40 days, learning the Torah directly from Hashem. Hashem would teach it to him and Moshe Rabbeinu would repeat it.<sup>1</sup> However, the *Medrash*<sup>2</sup> states that Moshe Rabbeinu would forget everything he learned. There was so much to learn in such a short time that when he learned one thing he would forget something else.<sup>3</sup>

However, Moshe Rabbeinu did not give up. He kept on learning diligently from Hashem for 40 days. At the end of the 40 days, Moshe Rabbeinu said to Hashem, "I only have 40 days and I don't know anything!" In response, Hashem gave the knowledge of the Torah to Moshe as a present.

If Hashem ultimately had to give the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu as a present, why bother to wait 40 days to give it to him? Why allow Moshe Rabbeinu to go through the frustration of forgetting his learning?

The *Talmud Yerushalmi*<sup>4</sup> explains that Hashem was teaching us an important lesson. Some people might think, "What's the point of learning, whatever I learn I forget anyway." To that, Hashem answers, "Just like Moshe Rabbeinu, all I ask from you is that you put in your effort. Keep on trying. Don't give up. You do yours, I will do Mine and give you the Torah as a present, just like I gave it to Moshe Rabbeinu."<sup>5</sup> Additionally, one should *Daven* and ask Hashem to help us remember our learning.<sup>6</sup>

It is not uncommon to go through a stretch of learning and later forget the material, despite the effort we put in. However, learning Torah is not only for smart people with amazing memories. Torah is for all of us. We need to try, and Hashem will do the rest. Once we demonstrate our commitment to learning and we *Daven* that Hashem help us retain our learning, Hashem will do His part and will give us the Torah as a present.

1 *Rashi, Shemos 31:18 s.v. לדבר אֵתוּ*

2 *Medrash Rabbah 41:6*

3 *Eitz Yosef, ibid.*

4 *Horayos Chap. 3, Halacha 5*

5 *Pnei Moshe, ibid.*

6 *Chidushei HaRadal, Shemos Rabbah 41:6*

**Torah is for all of us. We need to try, and Hashem will do the rest.**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Is there a way to persevere in learning Torah? Perhaps a way to keep away the doldrums, and weather them when they show up?

It's very important to build a relationship with a rebbi, a *Talmid Chacham* who can guide you, not just in learning Torah, but in life. A wise and learned person can be relied upon when life seems difficult.<sup>1</sup>

Another idea is to recognize that the difficulties in learning are not only part of the process, but are integral. Just like physical exercise has to be done against some sort of resistance to be effective, "spiritual exercise" is the same way. If there is no resistance, there is no growth.

Lastly, there are many *Seforim* and books that can guide a person to have a better understand of the material they learn, and various tricks on how to retain the information.

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1 *Sheva Yipol Tzadik, Chap. 10*

# AT THE LAST MOMENT

There is a well known story\* about the *Netziv* (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, 1816-1893), the *Rosh HaYeshiva* of Yeshivas Volozhin, that speaks to the potential of the human being.

When the *Netziv* was a young boy, it was common for children to study with a *Melamed*, and after some years, the children would apprentice with an artisan, and learn a trade. Only a select few children, who had shown particular proficiency in learning Torah, would go on to higher learning. Though the *Netziv* was quite intelligent, he was not given to study. Therefore, after a period of some years, the *Melamed* suggested to the *Netziv's* parents that he cease his studies, and find a profession.

The three adults, though, were unaware that Naftali Tzvi was listening to the conversation. When he overheard the conversation, he ran into the room, and begged his parents to allow him to keep learning Torah. And that is what they did.

Many years later, the *Netziv*, now the head of Volozhin, published his sefer *Hamek Sheilah*. In celebration, he held a large *Seudas Mitzvah*, and told the aforementioned story. He then added, "Had I not chosen the path of Torah, what would have happened when I came before Hashem? I would have been asked, 'Where is the *Hamek Sheilah*? Where are all the students of Volozhin that you were supposed to teach?' and I would have thought that the angels were crazy! Me, a shoemaker, writing a *Sefer* like that? Teaching in the great yeshiva of Volozhin? But who would have been correct? They would have been correct!

I would have spent my life as a well-meaning and honest shoemaker, I likely would have set aside time for Torah study, and I would have wasted my entire life!"

*\*Though the story is often repeated, this author was unable to find a primary source.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Rebbi Eliezer ben Hyrkanus was praised as having a phenomenal memory<sup>1</sup>, yet when he was young, his father felt he would never be able to learn Torah!<sup>2</sup>
- If someone properly *Davens* to Hashem, asking to improve his Torah learning for the sake of Hashem, he is more likely to be answered, despite not being worthy of such a request.<sup>3</sup>
- A prerequisite for success in learning is learning for the sake of Hashem, and not for other reasons.<sup>4</sup>
- The Torah reciprocates whatever we put into it. If you put effort and enthusiasm into attaining Torah learning, the Torah itself will help you understand and remember it.<sup>5</sup>

1 Avos 2:8

2 Magen Avos on Avos D'Rebbi Nasson 6:3 s.v. אי אתה

3 Tzavah M'Chaim 8, Sefer Chasidim, 131

4 Tanah D'Bei Eliyahu Rabah 22:5

5 Rashi Yevamos 117a s.v. בדברי תורה