

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
YISRO

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING

A mere seven weeks after leaving the slavery of Egypt, *Klal Yisrael* were now ready to receive the Torah, the manual of life, from Hashem. On the morning of *Matan Torah*, the air shook with the sound of thunder, as *Har Sinai* smoked like an oven. The commandments rang out while the nation trembled, with trepidation and awe.

The Torah then states the nation 'saw the sounds.'¹ Which sounds? Rashi² explains the people saw the sounds of Hashem's 'voice,' which is certainly something that doesn't normally happen.

Reb Moshe Feinstein³ (1895–1986) asks the obvious — what purpose was there in this miracle? What value or lesson was Hashem imparting by having the entire *Klal Yisrael* see the sounds of the *Aseres HaDibros*?

Reb Moshe explains that Torah learning requires dedication and perseverance, and a person's goal is not just simply to 'know' Torah, but to have such clarity in their learning that it is as if they can see the Torah directly in front of them.

Such clarity is indeed rare, and takes work to accomplish. However, Reb Moshe adds a particular area where one should focus one's efforts. If one has the opportunity to teach or instruct others, it is especially important to understand to the best of one's ability what they are learning. Each teacher is a link in the *mesorah* stretching back to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, and the chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If a teacher doesn't have clarity in a specific subject, the students' grasp will be even more muddled. When a parent learns with a child, or a *rebbe* with a *talmud*, that child is relying on the teacher's abilities to elucidate and clarify.

Thus, says Reb Moshe, Hashem caused the *Bnei Yisrael* to see the sounds, as if to say, "This is how one should learn the Torah, to the point where you can have this experience." This is our goal. Clarity — seeing the Torah in front of our eyes.

1 *Shemos* 20:15

2 *ibid.* s.v. את הקולות

3 *Darash Moshe ibid.*

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Clarity in learning is something that everyone would love to attain, but sometimes it can be very difficult to reach this point. Perhaps the subject matter is complicated, or the one learning is distracted, and so on.

Is there any method one can utilize to help their Torah learning?

Many methods and ideas can work and are useful. Review, of course, is essential, as it doesn't just help one's memory, but helps one's clarity as well.

However, there is a simple tool that takes little effort, yet has far-reaching benefits. A good practice would be to verbalize one's thoughts. That is, instead of simply thinking of a question, an answer, or an explanation, one should give word to these ideas.

By slowing one's thought's down and actually articulating them, one is more likely to catch any errors in thinking, leading to better overall clarity.¹

1 *Tosfos* s.v. כיון דפסקה on *Gittin* 83b



The Torah isn't an oven where you bake a cake, and it comes out perfect. One also needs Mussar, Tikkun HaMiddos, and Milchemes HaYetzer.

- Rav Leib Malin zt"l, related by his student Rav Michel Shurkin shlit"a of Yerushalyim

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MISHNA MAVENS

“Easy,” thought Rabbi Tzvi Zuckerman.* “Sure, I’ll do it,” he said, and hung up the phone.

The local *yeshiva* was looking to offer an extra-curricular activity to the lower grades, and called Rabbi Zuckerman, the *rav* of the *shul*, to ask if he could give a *mishnayos shiur* after school. Rabbi Zuckerman surmised that it would not take too much time — about forty-five minutes for the *shiur* and travel time, but not much more than that. It’s not *gemara*, how much preparation was needed for *mishnayos*?

The first few classes went as expected — some classroom management was needed, and getting to know the boys, their strengths and weaknesses, and so on. However, even after things settled down, Rabbi Zuckerman still felt slightly unsettled. He felt things weren’t ‘clicking,’ the boys were, at best, just repeating back what he said, and at worst, not really understanding the material. The idea nagged at him, but he didn’t really pay it too much attention.

One Shabbos, Rabbi Zuckerman ran into an old friend, Rabbi Yisroel Silver. Rabbi Silver was a veteran *rebbe*, with decades of experience. In the course of the conversation, Rabbi Zuckerman mentioned his newest endeavor, but also brought up the fact that he felt the boys were not grasping the *mishnayos* as well as they could.

“That can happen, and there can be a few causes. After school is a hard time, the boys are tired and distracted, and they could be focusing on what they’ll do when they get home.”

“I suppose it’s possible, but I give out prizes and tell stories — I do everything I can to make it engaging.”

“Well, there’s another idea, but it takes time to implement. I don’t think you want to overburden yourself with preparation. How much time do you spend on preparation right now?”

“Now? Um... not much. Maybe five minutes?”

“What?! I don’t mean how long it takes you to get there. I mean, how much time do you spend reviewing the *mishnayos*?”

“Reviewing the *mishnayos*? I know them by heart! I don’t spend any time on that. Most of my time is spent on buying the prizes and thinking of what story to tell them.”

“I think I see the problem, no special method needed. Yes, you are correct, *mishnayos* are easier to know and understand than *gemara*. But the clarity you have will be passed on to your *talmidim*. It’s a totally different *mishna*. Try it — review the *mishnayos* beforehand and see if anything changes.”

Rabbi Zuckerman indeed did so, and the difference was astonishing.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Rebbi Akiva’s greatest skill was his ability to take a complicated subject and make clarity out of it.¹
- Though one may feign ignorance of Torah knowledge out of humility, when asked to teach, or a *halacha*, one must reply with clarity.²

¹ *Avos D’Rebbi Nosson* 18:1

² *Kiddushin* 30a, *Tosfos ad loc.* s.v. אל תגמגם

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