



קונטרס

ב'י'ם ד'ר'כ'ך

B'YAM DARKECHA

תורה

Learning Torah

בס"ד



קונטרס
ב'ים
דרבך

דרכי עבודה למעשה

B'yam Darkecha

Torah

בִּים דִּרְכָּךְ

Written in English under
the guidance
and direction of the original
author of the Hebrew
B'yam Darkecha seforim
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and his sefer Yam Hachochma

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HASKAMA FROM THE ORIGINAL HEBREW VERSION OF B'YAM DARKECHA

Rabbi Y.M. Morgenstern

Rosh hayeshiva of
"Toras Chochom"
Yerushalaim

יצחק מאיר מארגנשטערן

רב ור"מ דק"ק "תורת חכם"
לתורת הנגלה והנסתר
פעיה"ק ירושלים תובכ"א

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ב"ב בתכאב"י בספרן של צדיקים למב ולחיים ולשלם, וזוכה מהרה להרמת קרן התורה

ופנימיות התורה וישראל ולשנת גאולה וישועה בביאת גואל צדק במהרה דידן ברחמים

רבים, אכ"ר. -

יצחק מאיר מארגנשטערן

ה'טיבה ה' לטובים ולישרים

ברכותינו שגורות בזה לכבוד ידידינו

הרוצה בעילום שמו

על תרומתו הנכבדה להוצאת קונטרס זה

יעזור השי"ת שיעמוד לו ולבני ביתו זכות הפצת פנימיות
התורה ודרכי העבודה, שיזכו לרוב נחת דקדושה מכל
יוצאי חלציהם, מתוך בריות גופא ונהורא מעליא, והברכה
תשרה תמיד במעוניהם, אך טוב וחסד ירדפכם כל ימי
חייכם, ויזכו להרבות עוד ועוד חיילים בהפצת מעיינות
פנימיות התורה והעבודה

המברכים באהבה
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Yoni Fleischmann and family
לע"נ מרדכי מאיר בן בנימין ז"ל
המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבילי ציון וירושלים
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Refuah Shelaima for Bechor ben Blor

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INTRODUCTION



We all know how important it is to learn Torah, and that learning Torah is a foundational part of being a Yid and is considered equal to all of the other mitzvos combined.

But what is the true purpose of learning Torah? Is it just to acquire its knowledge — we *learn* Torah in order to *know* Torah?

And if so, what should one do if he doesn't have such a good head and struggles to understand his learning? What if someone feels that, for whatever reason, the reality is that he'll never be a true Torah scholar, and therefore he loses his passion for learning because he feels he isn't accomplishing anything anyway? What will give him the drive to learn and help him derive satisfaction in his learning? How will he experience the sweetness of Torah?¹

1. Although we need to learn Torah even if we are not feeling satisfaction from learning, the primary approach to learning should be to experience its sweetness, as the *pasuk* says in reference to Torah, "*It is sweeter than honey*" (*Tehillim* 19:11).

CHAPTER 1

The Soul of Torah



1 - The Light of Hashem

The Zohar Hakadosh writes (*Behaaloscha*, p. 152a):

Rabbi Shimon said: "Woe is to one who claims that the Torah is [merely] a book of stories and everyday affairs. Rather, all the words of the Torah contain within them deep truths and lofty secrets. The stories of the Torah are [just] its outer garments.

One who believes that the outer garments are the Torah itself, and there is nothing more [to the Torah], his spirit will wither and he will have no portion in the World to Come.

This is why Dovid Hamelech said (ibid. 119:18): **גַּל עֵינַי** וְאֶבְיטָה נִפְלְאוֹת מִתּוֹרַתְךָ — *Open my eyes so I will see the wonders of your Torah*, the wonders that are beneath the garments of the Torah.

The Torah has a body (*guf*), which comprises the

mitzvos of the Torah. And this body is clothed in outer garments, which are the stories that occurred in this world.

The foolish ones see only the outer garments, the mere narrations of the Torah, and they do not see that which is beneath the garment. Those who know more see as far as the body beneath the garment.

But the wise ones, the servants of the King, who stood at Har Sinai, they penetrate right through to the neshamah, the soul of the Torah, which is its main part; it is the Torah itself. Fortunate are the righteous who fix their gaze upon the Torah in the proper way.”
(Until here are the words of the holy Zohar.)

This Zohar teaches us a very important principle about how to approach the Torah: The stories of the Torah are its holy garments. The laws and topics that the Torah teaches us are its holy body. But the main part of the Torah is its innermost part, which is its neshamah.

And what is the neshamah that is within the Torah? The *ohr* (light²) of Hashem Himself!³

2. Ed. note: See footnote 23 for more about why we use the word *ohr* / light to refer to the concept of experiencing Hashem's presence. Since the English word "light" fails to capture the essence of the meaning of the word *ohr* in this pamphlet, we will often leave the word *ohr* untranslated.

3. As the Zohar writes (Part 2, p. 60a): "The word 'Torah' refers only to

Hashem is lofty and exalted, infinitely above the grasp of His creations. But He wants us to recognize Him, to attach ourselves to Him, and to have a close relationship with Him. He wants us to feel that we are His beloved children and servants.

But how can the lowly human, fashioned from the dust, recognize and experience such lofty Godliness?

This is why Hashem gave us the holy Torah, whose essence is the light of Hashem Himself that is being transmitted in a way that it can descend to our level and enter into us.

But we cannot access such a lofty light directly without it being clothed in some form of garment. Therefore, it is en clothed within the laws and topics of the Torah, and within its stories. Hashem, as it were, infused His very essence into the letters of the Torah,⁴ clothing Himself within the garments of the halachos, mitzvos, and stories of the holy Torah.⁵

Hashem” (אין תורה אלא הקב”ה).

4. As the Gemarah teaches us (*Shabbos* 105a), the word “אנכי” (in the beginning of the *Aseres HaDibros*;) is also an acronym for **אֲנִי נָפְשִׁי קָהֵיִת יְהִיבִית** — “I (Hashem) have placed My soul in the words [of the Torah] and given it over [to you]. Therefore, when we learn Torah, we are receiving His *ohr* that is within the Torah, and this brings us more connection and closeness with Hashem.

5. It is clear that the garments of the Torah are not just an ordinary covering,

When we learn Torah, we bring the holy garments, the letters of the Torah (which are the halachos and topics we are learning about), into our minds, and this brings the light of Hashem into us. This light brings us closer to Hashem, and through it, we can recognize and cling to the Giver of the Torah.⁶

but rather they are the perfect covering that is exactly what we need in order to properly receive the *ohr* of Hashem. The stories of the Torah show us clearly that there is a Creator Who is intimately involved in our world, and its lessons show us the proper way to live. And the laws of the Torah give us practical instructions on how to live our life in a way that allows us to reveal Hashem more and more.

These garments are tailor-made for the *ohr* that is hidden within it, because they teach us how to live an authentic spiritual life, without falling for the trickery of the *yetzer hara*, who is always trying to convince us that there is something else we should pursue, as if there is anything out there other than Hashem. Through the garments of the Torah, we learn how to live with Hashem, and to fully internalize *Ein Od Milvado*, that there is nothing else in existence other than Hashem. (See more in Chapter 5 about the benefit of learning every single part of the Torah, and not just certain areas.)

6. This is the deeper reason why the Torah is specifically for the Jewish people, and one should not teach Torah to a non-Jew (Sanhedrin 59a). The Jewish people merited to have a special role to enter into a covenant with Hashem, to live with Hashem and to reveal His presence throughout all of nature.

But a non-Jew's connection to Hashem uses Hashem's name of אֱלֹקִים, rather the name of הוִי"ה, and that name represents the way nature operates. The deeper secret of Oneness, that the inner dimension of everything is all Hashem, is specifically part of the spiritual mission of the Jewish people. For

2 - Light Cannot be Accessed Without Vessels

Although the essence of the Torah is the *ohr* within it, that *ohr* cannot be accessed without learning the body of the Torah, its topics and laws. The external parts of the Torah — the laws and stories — are very holy, and they hold the *ohr* of Hashem within them. They are not two separate things, rather they are one within the other, and the way to access what is inside is only through the outer layer (in a similar way, when two people speak with one another, although it looks like they are communicating through their bodies, really their neshamos are connecting).

Therefore, although we can access the *ohr* with any form of learning Torah, the more we toil in the body of the Torah, the more *ohr* will access through our learning. This means that the more effort we exert in both the breadth of Torah (by learning its many sections and *halachos*), and the depth of Torah (by diving deeper into the *sugyos* to understand them better), the more we will receive the *ohr* of Hashem in a deeper and stronger way.⁷

The way to access the most *ohr* is to learn with more

this reason, one should not teach a non-Jew Torah, and a non-Jew should not observe Shabbos, which also represents this secret of Oneness.

7. Many people experience this clearly and find that after delving deep into a topic until they reach the finest points and a full understanding, they feel a tremendous spiritual high. This feeling also comes from learning for a long time and from covering a lot of ground.

effort and depth, because the *ohr* of Hashem is clothed within the words and concepts of the Torah, and the deeper we immerse ourselves into it, the more *ohr* we will reveal.

Every single part of the holy Torah reveals the *ohr* of Hashem in a unique and special way.⁸

Therefore, those who love Hashem yearn for and chase after every word of Torah, down to its most intricate details and deepest level of understanding. As Dovid Hamelech wrote (*Tehillim* 119:72), **טוֹב לִי תוֹרַת פִּיהָ, מֵאַלְפִי וְכֶסֶף זָהָב וְכֶסֶף** — *The teachings of Your mouth are better for me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.*⁹

8. Every part of the Torah has a unique *ohr*. If you feel pulled towards a specific part of the Torah, you should learn it, because that is a sign that your neshamah needs the *ohr* that is accessible there. But one should ultimately strive to learn all parts of the Torah, which will bring him the unique *ohr* from each of its parts and complete his neshamah in a comprehensive way.

9. It is specifically by delving into the intricate details and by flushing out the finest points in every angle of the topic that brings one to the highest level of revealing Hashem in the Torah. Then one truly merits to “find” the Shechinah (Divine Presence) that is revealed through all the details of the topic at hand.

After revealing all the fine details, you can “zoom out” back to the general topic at hand, and internalize its message in a deeper way, while experiencing a wondrous and powerful sense of connection to Hashem.

3 - I Am Learning to Cling to My Creator

Now we can start to answer the questions we asked in the introduction.

If we understand that the primary essence of the Torah is the *ohr* of Hashem that is within it, then we can understand that anyone who learns it for the right reasons and exerts himself in accordance with his level to acquire it, will receive the *ohr* of Hashem that is within it.

Although it is true that in order to access the *ohr* we need to work on gaining more knowledge and depth in Torah, accessing the *ohr* is dependent upon the *effort* we exert, and not on the *outcome* of what we understand and remember.

A Yid who exerts himself in accordance with his level will undoubtedly receive the *ohr* of Hashem, even if he does not merit to fully understand every nuance of his learning, and even if he struggles to remember what he has learned.

Therefore, the mitzvah to toil in Torah day and night is fully applicable to every Jew in every circumstance. In every moment that a Yid learns, and with every word of Torah he utters, he is attaching himself to Hashem, gaining more understanding of Hashem, more *emunah*, and more closeness to Hashem.

Therefore, the benefit of learning is not dependent at all on the external success of the learning, that is, whether

or not he fully understands and remembers everything he's learned. Rather, with every bit of learning done in the proper way, a Yid will successfully attach to Hashem and access His *ohr*.

One who thinks about this will develop a strong desire and drive to learn Torah at all times and in all circumstances.

Before starting to learn, think about and contemplate¹⁰ – and even say out loud: הַנְּנִי הוֹלֵךְ עִכְשָׁו לְלַמֵּד תּוֹרָה בְּדִי לְהִדְבֵּק בְּבוֹרְאִי, וּלְהִתְקַרֵּב אֵלָיו, וּלְהַשִּׁיג אוֹתוֹ עַל יְדֵי אורוֹ שֶׁבְּתוֹרָה הַקְּדוּשָׁה — “*I am now going to learn Torah to attach myself to my Creator, and to come close to Him, and to access Him through His light which is within the holy Torah.*”¹¹

If you can do that each time you learn, and learn in accordance with your unique abilities, you will get tremendous satisfaction and happiness from your learning. You will see and you will know that there are fruits to your labor — that you attached yourself to your good and loving Father in Heaven! There is no greater pleasure than that, and there is no greater success in learning than that!

10. Although one who learns the outer garments receives the *ohr* within, even if he does not have the intention of connecting to Hashem through his learning, one who *does* have this intention and sits down to learn with this mindset will receive the connection in a much higher and incomparable way.

11. Or as an even shorter declaration of intention: הָרִינִי לִוְמַד בְּדִי לְהִדְבֵּק בְּבוֹרְאִי — “*I am learning to attach myself to my Creator.*”

Therefore, after every proper learning session (which means focused and undistracted learning [רציפות] and trying to understand as much as you can in accordance with your level in learning) you will walk away with a wonderful feeling and deep satisfaction, even if you did not merit to understand everything.

This is because your neshamah has been filled with the *ohr* of Hashem, and you are now on a higher spiritual level, closer to Hashem.

4 - Learning with Dveikus

There are some who think that they can be attached to Hashem without learning Torah, and there are some who make the main point of Torah the learning itself, but do not use it as a means to connect to Hashem.

Both of these perspectives are mistaken. On one hand, we cannot obtain the *ohr* of Hashem without learning Torah, and on the other hand, we cannot take just the Torah without Hashem.¹²

12. This explains why some people learn Torah but do not see their Torah as an effective antidote to the temptations of the *yetzer hara*.

The primary way that the Torah serves as an antidote is when one learns to seek a connection with Hashem. By receiving the *ohr* of Hashem in his heart and feelings, which is called "learning with *dveikus*," he obtains the strength to conquer his *yetzer hara*. But if one learns the Torah by itself, without bringing Hashem into his learning, such learning does not help him conquer his *yetzer hara*.

Chazal teach us (*Bava Metzia* 85b): “Over what was the land lost? [That is, why was the Beis HaMikdash destroyed and the people exiled from their land?] Because they did not make the *brachah* of *birkas hatorah* before they learned.” The Ba”ch explains that although the sin of failing to make a *brachah* is not severe enough to cause such punishment, the deeper problem was that their learning was not done for the right reasons. He writes: “Hashem’s intention was that we would toil in Torah in order to strengthen our neshamah with the spirituality and holiness of the source of the One who gave us the Torah.”¹³

13. Here is the full text of the Ba”ch: “It is very surprising that Hashem punished [the Jewish people] with such a harsh punishment [of destruction and exile] just for the fact that they did not make a *berachah* for learning Torah, which seems to be a minor sin! It appears to me that Hashem’s intent was always that we would study Torah so that our *neshamos* would bond with the essence, the spirituality, and the source of the Torah (not just the words as we understand them in this world).

This is why Hashem gave us a true Torah as a gift, which will never be forgotten by us, so that our souls and bodies — the 248 limbs and the 365 sinews — would bond with the 248 positive mitzvot (*mitzvot aseh*) and the 365 negative mitzvot (*mitzvot lo sa’aseh*).

If [the people in those days] would have learned Torah with that intention, they would have become a “chariot and palace” for Hashem’s *Shechinah*; the *Shechinah* would have really dwelt within them. They would have become “the palace of Hashem,” and the *Shechinah* would have fixed its home among them, and the whole world would shine with Hashem’s glory. This would unify the upper worlds with the lower world, and *the Mishkan would be one* (everything

would be properly connected).

But they violated this proper way and learned Torah only for their own material gain — to know the laws so they could engage in commerce [without difficulty], and also for the sake of honor — to show their intelligence. They did not have the intent to bond with the holiness and spirituality of the Torah, and to bring the *Shechinah* down onto the earth. Had they done so, this would allow their *neshamos* to rise to a very high level after they would pass away. Instead, they caused a separation between Heaven and Earth. The *Shechinah* has risen to Heaven, and this world has been left in its lowly state, without holiness, and that is what caused the destruction and made the Land perish.

This is what the *pasuk* says (*Yirmiyah* 9:11-12): *Why did the Land [of Israel] perish? And Hashem said: Because they abandoned My Torah, which I placed before them*, etc. It says: “*My*” *Torah*, meaning a true Torah, which I gave to them as a gift...My (Hashem’s) intent in doing so was so that they could bond with the holiness of my Torah, a Torah of truth, and the *Shechinah* would dwell with them. But they abandoned My Torah *and did not follow it*, meaning that they did not begin learning with the intent to connect to the spirituality of the Torah, rising from level to level, so that the *neshamah* would cleave to the very holiness of the Torah. *They did not follow it* means that they did not pursue it for its own sake (*lishmah*) when they began to study it. [Had they done so,] they would have made the *berachah* to Hashem, thanking Him for giving the Torah to His people, Yisrael, so that they would cleave to its holiness and to the *Shechinah*.

This is the meaning of the *berachah* of *asher bachar banu* (Who has chosen us and given us his Torah) — that He brought us before *Har Sinai* and gave us His holy Torah, His precious instrument, with which He would delight each day. He gave it so that our souls could cleave to the very holiness and spirituality of the Torah, and we could bring the *Shechinah* to our midst.

Yet, *they did not follow it*, to study Torah for its own sake, and this is why they were punished — that the *Shechinah* abandoned this world and *the Land*

The proper way to learn Torah is by learning with a sense of attachment to Hashem (*dveikus*).¹⁴ This is done by having the intention that through the power of your learning you should merit more connection with Hashem.

There are many levels of how much one can successfully think about Hashem while learning. At first, focus on thinking about Hashem as you start to learn, and eventually you can merit to think about Hashem and cleave to Him even as you are fully immersed in the details of the topic you are learning about.

perished, and became parched like a desert, with none passing through it. That means that it was destroyed and remained a purely physical thing, without the holiness of the *Shechinah* entering it, for the *Shechinah* completely rose from the Earth and went up [to Heaven].

14. One who learns in a spiritual way, clinging to Hashem through his learning, will not forget his learning, because such Torah learning is spiritual, and spiritual things do not take up physical space. The entire Torah can be held and remembered in our minds. We have the ability to learn it all and never forget anything.

But if one lowers his Torah to become less spiritual, by not learning in the proper way, then his Torah becomes more *gashmi* – physical, and physical things take up space and have limitations, and therefore his ability to remember what he's learned becomes much more limited.

This is the secret behind tzaddikim who have the entire Torah at their fingertips. Because their learning is purely spiritual, there is no limit to how much they are able to learn and remember, and they are not restricted to any physical constraints or human limitations and can learn tremendous amounts of Torah in a very short time.

Even one who has not yet reached the level of thinking about Hashem as he learns is attached to Hashem just by the fact that he attached himself to Torah study. As the Gemara (*Shabbos* 105a) says: אֲנִי נִפְשִׁי בְּתִיבַת יְהוֹשֻׁעַ — “I (Hashem) have placed My soul in the words [of the Torah] and given it over [to you]”; inside the Torah is the essence of Hashem.

But this only works when one knows, at least in a general sense, that through learning he is attaching himself to Hashem.

But if he does not know this, and he is only interested in the outer layer of the Torah (its garments), and he busies himself with understanding the topics without caring for attachment to Hashem, then he is separating the Torah from the Giver of the Torah (נותן התורה), and such learning is not being done properly at all.¹⁵

5 - Torah Lishmah

This is what it means to learn Torah *lishmah*¹⁶ (Torah for its

15. A sign that one's learning is not being done properly is if he learns Torah without maintaining his *kedushah*. One who pursues only the external garments of the Torah may not understand or feel that he needs to be holy and maintain his *kedushah* in order to learn properly.

This leads to falling for the temptations of the world and the deceptions of the *klippas*, and particularly to haughtiness and an egotistic feeling of 'being better in learning' than others, which is the root cause of many terrible things.

16. There are several approaches as to what it means to learn Torah *lishmah*.

own sake, and not for ulterior motives). Torah *lishmah* means to learn while sensing the Godliness within the Torah, and to learn in order to come closer to Hashem, whose *ohr* is revealed through learning Torah.

As the Ba"ch says (*Orach Chaim, Siman 47*) "*lishmah* – in order to attach oneself to the holiness and Divine Presence of the Blessed One."¹⁷ This means to learn in order to receive this *ohr* of Hashem, and to experience it within every word and law of the Torah.¹⁸

The approach we use here is based on the Arizal, the Ba"ch, and others.

17. The definition of *lishmah* means "for its own sake," which means to learn Torah for the purpose for which the Torah was given to us. The Torah was given so that Hashem's creations can use it to receive Hashem's *ohr* and to draw closer to our Creator. Therefore, someone who learns Torah in order to come closer to Hashem is using the Torah for the purpose for which it was given.

But if we are learning for any other purpose, and using the Torah in order to get to any other goals, that is called learning "*shelo lishmah*, (not *lishmah*)" because that is not learning for the purpose for which the Torah was given.

Learning for the purpose of searching for the *ohr* of Hashem that is within every word and topic in the Torah is learning to bring *yichud*, unity. By revealing that the garment of the Torah is not the extent of the Torah, but rather it is the means through which the *ohr* of Hashem is accessed and revealed, one's learning is uniting the surface level world with the *ohr* of Hashem that is hidden within it. This is called *יחוד קוב"ה ושכינתיה*, unifying Hashem with the Shechinah.

18. This is not a level that can be achieved overnight. The first step is to understand the very fact that the *ohr* of Hashem is infused within every word

One who does this will be happy with every single thing that he learns, because he knows that with every bit of learning, he is bringing the *ohr* of Hashem into himself. This brings more and more recognition of Hashem, until one can merit to feel Hashem's Presence in his bones in a tangible way and feel his entire body burning with *dveikus* like a flaming torch.

6 - Learning Shelo Lishmah in Order to Get to Lishmah

Chazal teach us (*Nazir* 23b): "One should learn Torah even in a way that is not *lishmah* (*shelo lishmah*), because by learning not *lishmah* you will come to learn *lishmah*."

This means that if one has the desire to learn *lishmah*, but

of Torah. Then, as one puts in the effort to learn with the mindset that we've described — "I am learning to attach to my Creator" — he will start to feel this *dveikus* and experience the *ohr* of Hashem that within the Torah that he is learning, in a general way.

Eventually, he will merit to feel Hashem's *ohr* that is within every single word, as we will explain further in the upcoming chapters.

An indicator that one's learning is being done *lishmah* is if he is learning with passion and joy.

It is important to know that the Torah cannot truly be acquired and internalized by anyone unless they seek to connect to the *ohr* of Hashem while they learn. A big component of the difficulty of our *galus* (exile) is that we do not appreciate the importance of remembering Hashem and attaching ourselves to Him, and we don't feel His light as we learn the holy Torah. The *yetzer hara* tries very hard to keep us away from the essence of what Torah is.

has not successfully gotten there yet, he should certainly learn *shelo lishmah*, with the mindset that slowly, over time, he will merit to learn more and more *lishmah* and ultimately come to feel closeness and attachment to Hashem through his learning.

But *Chazal* did not mean that it's okay to learn *shelo lishmah* with the intention of staying there forever, and not even working towards getting to a place of *lishmah*!

When a Yid is in the earlier stages of his learning and avodas Hashem, in heaven they are happy that he is learning Torah and aren't as stringent over whether such Torah learning is *lishmah* or not. But as he grows more and starts to see success in his learning, if he continues to only have ulterior motives for his learning, it creates a heavenly prosecution against his learning, and this can take away from the light of Torah that he merits to attain.¹⁹

19. The reason for this heavenly prosecution is not just to punish him by taking away the level of Torah he can attain. Its purpose is to give him a wake-up call to redirect him to learn in the right way, and to merit the lofty levels he truly can reach.

Sometimes, we may be trying to do something holy, such as learning Torah, and all of the sudden we have a distracting or inappropriate thought. We should not be thrown off by this, and we should see it as an opportunity that was given to us for our own good.

If we suddenly have a bad thought, it is because Hashem wants us to purify our minds more and more, to seek Hashem while we learn, and to throw ourselves into *dveikus* with Him through the Torah.

7 - Don't Learn in Order to "Become Something"

Part of learning *lishmah* is that our only desire while learning is to bring *nachas* to Hashem. And if you are writing your own Torah ideas or preparing Torah to teach others, you are doing that only for the sake of revealing Hashem in the world through the Torah you are writing and teaching.

Every Yid should be involved in teaching to others, in accordance with their unique ability in learning, whether it is through teaching Torah or writing Torah to publish and share.

It is important, however, when teaching, to be careful not to fall into the mindset that one is doing this himself — that he is sharing his own wisdom. And certainly, one's motive in teaching Torah should never be in order to be respected and honored.

The *yetzer hara* likes to send us a bad thought specifically when we are doing well and are accomplishing in our learning, and he often tempts us with haughtiness over what we've accomplished.

If we fall for the trap, then besides the damage done by the haughtiness itself, we risk losing the *ohr* and connection we've achieved through the Torah we've learned.

But if we can overcome the challenge and manage to continue to cling to Hashem with humility, and not be held down by the improper thought, we will soar to even higher levels. The entire challenge was an opportunity for us to build on our success and go even higher. This is why one should not be thrown off or overly bothered over why the *yetzer hara* gives him these such thoughts.

Rather, one's drive to teach should always come from the desire to attach himself to Hashem. Since Hashem's will is to give to His creations, if one sees that Hashem is shining His light through him (by giving him the ability to teach Torah to others), he should accept this holy mission to be a pipeline through which Hashem's light is shared with more and more Yidden.

But at the same time, his drive should be to cling to Hashem, without any intention to “be the one who teaches Torah.” As he sits down to teach or to write, he should feel that he, on his own, is nothing, and the only role he is playing is that there is a *ohr* of Hashem that is being revealed here, and he is nothing more than a pipeline to channel that *ohr*, through the Torah, to other Yidden.

It takes a lot of vigilance to be motivated purely for the sake of heaven, and even when one has the proper intentions prior to learning or teaching, when the moment of truth comes and he actually begins to learn or teach, it is hard to act with holy and clean intentions, purely for the honor of Hashem.

We must be strong to ensure that our thoughts, words, and actions will remain *l'shem shomayim*. Try to feel that the words of Torah you are speaking are really the words of Hashem that are simply passing through your throat, that you are just the outermost layer to help channel this

ohr, but the main thing that is happening here is that the *ohr* of Hashem is being spread.

Remind yourself again and again that it is not you, it is the light of Hashem!

One who learns and teaches in this way will be saved from haughtiness, and from the confusion and heartache that comes when the *yetzer hara* convinces a person that in order to affectively teach others, he needs to give a lot of attention to his delivery, so the listeners will accept what he says.

The truth of the matter is that the more a person teaches in a pure and clean way, without any ulterior motivations and without even having the intention to “be a great teacher,” the more he will be able to influence others, and the more he will accomplish in spreading the light of Hashem through the holy Torah.



CHAPTER 2

How to Merit to Feel Hashem's Light While Learning



Introduction

We explained in the previous chapter that the primary component of the Torah is its inner essence, which is the light of Hashem that is contained within each letter of the holy Torah.

Feeling the *ohr* of Hashem means to feel, in a “live” and clear way, that you can sense Hashem's Presence and that He is right there with you.

When this is experienced while learning Torah, you can sense Hashem's holy Presence within the Torah, which leads to your heart feeling attached to and close to Hashem

(*dveikus*^{20, 21}). This can often bring you a wondrous, sweet, pleasant, and tranquil feeling, which is the experience of the spiritual pleasure of “*ohr*,” Hashem's light.²²

Every single Yid can sense Hashem's Presence within the holy Torah and can merit to feel His light enter into him and illuminate his neshamah and body, bringing him a strong sense of *dveikus* with Hashem. Hashem wants His

20. *Dveikus* means to be attached to Hashem. “Learning with *dveikus*” means to learn while being aware of Hashem’s Presence (*ohr*) that is within the holy Torah, and with the intention of thereby clinging to Hashem through learning. {Editor’s Note: In this publication we will frequently leave the word *dveikus* untranslated, as “attachment,” “clinging,” and other English words fall short of capturing the essence of *dveikus*.}

21. The Torah instructs us to cleave to Hashem, as the *pasuk* says (*Devarim* 11:22): **לֵלֶכֶת בְּכָל דְּרָכָיו וּלְדַבְּקָהּ בּוֹ, לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיכֶם** — *by loving Hashem your God, by walking in His ways, and by cleaving to Him*. And as it says (*ibid.* 4:4), **וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בְּה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם חַיִּים כְּלָכֶם הַיּוֹם** — *And You, who cling to Hashem your God, are all alive today*.

22. There are some parts of the Torah that are easier to experience *dveikus* in than others, for example by learning the Zohar Hakadosh, particularly in the more revealed (non-Kabbalistic) parts of the Zohar (חלק הנגלה). By getting a taste of *dveikus* by learning seforim of avodas Hashem and *pnimiyus haTorah*, it then becomes easier to experience *dveikus* through learning all the other parts of Torah as well.

For more about the feeling of *ohr*, see the chapter on *Dveikus* and the Chapter called *How to Merit to Feel Hashem* in B'Yam Darkecha: Darkei Avodah L'maaseh.

Presence to rest within us and our hearts to be lit up with the warm feeling of closeness to Him.

Nevertheless, we must know that **feeling** this *ohr* in a tangible way is not the important part. What's important is that we attach ourselves to Hashem through our learning, but not that we **feel** that connection.²³

23. There are three components to feeling Hashem's Presence (*ohr*). 1) Recognizing that Hashem is here and that we are close and connected to Him, as if we could "see" Him. 2) Feeling this attachment with an awakened and illuminated heart. This feeling in the heart is what is generally called "feeling *ohr*." 3) The spiritual pleasure and joy that comes from feeling *ohr*.

But the truth is that all three of these components are really called *ohr*, because any spiritual feeling of Godliness, whether it is in the mind or heart, and whether it is a new level of recognition or an emotion in the heart, is due to the light of Hashem that the person has received.

Since it is difficult to say that Hashem "put Himself" in the Torah, because Hashem is so infinite and lofty that we cannot imagine how He could contain Himself in the Torah, we therefore use the term that Hashem put His *ohr*/light into the Torah.

What this really means, however, is that Hashem put a part of Himself into the Torah, as Chazal teach us (*Shabbos* 105a): אֲנִי נִפְשִׁי כְּתִיבֶתָּ יְהִי־תָא : "I (Hashem) have placed My soul in the words [of the Torah] and given it over [to you]."

Recognizing that Hashem is within the Torah is something we can always hold onto and remember, but actually feeling His *ohr* and experiencing the spiritual pleasure (*ta'anug*) that comes from that is hidden from us at times when we are spiritually disconnected. (These are referred to as times of *katnus*/smallness. You can learn more about how to navigate such times in the chapter on *Katnus* in B'yam Darkecha: Darkei Avodah L'maaseh.)

It is a wonderful thing to merit to feel the connection, but if you do not, believe that by learning in order to connect to Hashem, you are undoubtedly coming close to Hashem, and you should be happy with this connection, even though you do not feel it.

The main thing is that we recognize that Hashem is within the Torah, and that by learning it we receive His light, and that we desire to learn in order to come closer to Hashem.

That being said, with Hashem's help, we will offer strategies on how to learn in a way that can bring you to merit experiencing the *ohr* of Hashem through the Torah.

But we must preempt this with a reminder and warning that it is crucial to follow this guidance slowly, one small step at a time. Over time you will get accustomed to learning in a way that is increasingly *lishmah*, but do not skip levels and try to achieve more than you are ready for.

Grow one step at a time, until you will merit, with Hashem's help, that the Torah will illuminate within you and fill you with the light and knowledge of Hashem.

1 - Believe and Desire

The first step is to believe in the holiness of the Torah, and in the importance of learning it *Lishmah*.

This means to believe that the *ohr* of Hashem is hidden

within the Torah, and any Yid²⁴ who learns it in order to cling to Hashem and to reveal Him in this world has the ability to receive this holy *ohr* and attach himself to Hashem through it.²⁵

We need to really want this, to have a true desire to merit to receive the wondrous light of Hashem and to look forward to our Torah learning bringing us closer to Hashem.

2 - Preparation

The second step is to prepare your mindset and thoughts as you are ready to start learning.

Each person, in accordance with his level, should spend a few moments preparing his mindset. Think, and try to feel as best as you can, “I am now going to learn the holy Torah in order to attach myself to Hashem, and my intention is that every single word that I learn should

24. This is not something that is only accessible to great tzaddikim! Every single Jew can experience this on their own level. But when we do get a taste of this, we must be careful not to think that we’ve now gotten to the level of the tzaddikim, but rather understand that what we have attained is just a tiny amount compared to what the tzaddikim have.

25. This is the inner understanding of what the Gemarah (*Niddah* 70b) teaches us: “One who wants wisdom should pray for mercy from the One to Whom wisdom belongs.” The wisdom of the Torah is a revelation of Hashem Himself.

bring me to *dveikus*, to feel the presence and reality of Hashem.”²⁶

Daven to Hashem before you start learning: “Hashem, please help me learn Your Torah in the right way, to understand and comprehend what I will learn, and merit to attach myself to Your light that is within the Torah, because I know that the only light worth pursuing is Your light.”

26. An even higher level is to have the intention while you learn to unify Hashem with His Shechinah (Divine Presence), and to reveal that Hashem’s light is found in every single thing in the world.

Have the intention to connect the lower world and everything in it with its Creator, Who is the inner dimension and vitality of it all. Have in mind that every word and idea of your Torah learning should reveal Hashem’s Presence in the world.

{This is called *יחוד קוב"ה ושכנותיה*, unifying the Blessed One with His *Shechinah* (Divine Presence). We have the intention to bring this unity whenever we do a mitzvah, and many people will say that as part of a declaration of intention before doing a mitzvah (*l'shem yichud*).

By saying *l'shem yichud* before you do a mitzvah, you are essentially saying out loud what you are really about to do. Hashem’s presence fills the entirety of the world, but that reality is concealed by the illusions of nature, cause and effect, and so on. This looks like a disconnect between Hashem and the physical world. When a Yid pulls away from his focus on physicality and does a mitzvah, he is revealing the Shechinah by showing that Hashem is here too, and through this he declares Hashem’s Oneness to in the world.

For a more detailed, yet simple, understanding of *l'shem yichud* see B'yam Darkecha on Tu B'shvat, Ch. 2.}

It is also good to speak to Hashem openly in your own words, expressing your yearnings for connection with Him, and to hum or sing a tune that awakens your neshamah. These strategies are excellent tools for *dveikus*,²⁷ and can bring you to a fiery desire and longing for closeness to Hashem. Then, start to learn with *dveikus*, with great joy at the opportunity to come closer to Hashem through learning Torah. (See footnote.²⁸)

27. It is also good to think about Hashem, and the name of Hashem, and to contemplate on "שְׁוִיתִי הוֹי"ה לְנֶגְדִי תָמִיד" – *I envision Hashem before me always* (Tehillim 16:8). Any tool that you can use to awaken a sense of attachment to Hashem is a good thing to do before you learn. (For more tools and strategies, see the Chapter on *Dveikus* in *B'yam Darkecha: Darkei Avodah L'maaseh*.)

We need to use whatever we can to bring us closer to Hashem. On one hand, it is best to feel the Presence of Hashem in general, and then we can start learning and continue to cling to Hashem through our learning. For this reason, it is worthwhile to try to awaken a sense of *dveikus* before you start learning.

On the other hand, you can only really get a sense of *dveikus* from actually learning Torah! Therefore, it is best to hold on to both sides at once, and to try to awaken this connection prior to learning and while you are learning, through the learning itself. (See more about this in the next section of this chapter.)

28. This does not mean everyone will experience it in this way at all times. Sometimes, a Yid can have the best intentions, and sit down to learn with a real desire to come closer to Hashem through the Torah, and he doesn't feel the fire of *dveikus* at all. There are also some neshamos whose nature is that they aren't very emotional and they have a hard time feeling such a connection, particularly when they are in the early stages of this kind of *avodah*.

Do not be broken, and do not give up! Every Yid can and should access a place

3 - The First Moments of Learning

When you begin your learning, as you say the first few words, focus on them by looking at them or thinking about them in your mind, and try to feel the *ohr* of Hashem that is within these words, and a sense of attachment to Hashem by saying them.

of *dveikus* through learning, and if you are not able to right now, and you do not feel the fire of this connection, it is just a matter of learning how to handle and navigate this test.

If you are having a hard time with this, talk to Hashem about it. Pour out your heart, and tell Him about your struggle to connect to Him. Ask Him why you aren't meriting to feel a connection to Him. "Hashem, why should I not merit to feel close to You? Why should I lose out on this (לָמַדְךָ נִגְרַע)? I really want to experience *dveikus* while I learn Torah!"

If you can't feel it, yearn for it, long for it, and beg Hashem for it!

This is a fundamental principle in all areas of Avodas Hashem. If you cannot feel an inner connection, this means that at the moment the inner connection is out of your reach. It is a level that surrounds you, and is above you, but it is out of your reach. (This is called an *אור מקיף*).

The way to reach for this inner connection is by approaching it with deep desire, yearning, and tefillah. Instead of experiencing *dveikus*, the *avodah* becomes to yearn for it, and to beg Hashem that you merit to reach it.

Additionally, if you do merit it, even if it is only a subtle feeling and you really wish it were more, focus on what you have attained, and value it tremendously. Be very happy and proud of whatever level of connection Hashem allowed you to feel, and see a "little bit" as a big deal! The more we value even a little inner connection, appreciate it and rejoice over it, the more it will grow over time, with Hashem's help.

It is good to say these first words over and over again,²⁹ while singing a tune that awakens your neshamah, and contemplating how Hashem's *ohr* is hidden within these holy words, and that right now, as you repeat them, you are absorbing that *ohr* into yourself.³⁰

Then continue on with the rest of your learning, and focus on thoroughly understanding the concepts you are learning about.

This is generally the best way to start your learning, but it doesn't always have to be done in this order. Everyone is different, and some may have a hard time trying to enter into this kind of *dveikus* before they even start learning.

If that is the case, start your learning by only focusing on understanding the topic at hand, and after a bit of time you may find it easier to then have the right intentions and mindset to connect to Hashem through your learning.³¹

29. It is not uncommon to see this in the Beis Medrash, that someone sits down in front of a Gemarah and starts off his learning by repeating the first few words with a sweet and passionate tune: "*Amar Abaye, Amar Abaye!*"

30. As the words of Torah come out of your mouth, think to yourself that the *Shechinah* is speaking from your throat, and the Torah is nothing more than the *ohr* of Hashem. If you contemplate this, you can begin to feel as if Hashem is standing over you, putting the words of Torah into your mouth.

31. Sometimes, it may be easier to enter into a mindset of *dveikus*, and then start learning, and sometimes it is specifically through the actual learning

4 - Finding the Ohr Within the Topic You Are Learning

Then continue to immerse yourself in the topic you are learning about, learn it well and try to thoroughly understand all the nuances of the topic. These nuances are vessels that hold the light of Hashem, and only by learning and analyzing them you can bring that light within you.

Your mind should be focused on learning with great passion, learning through all the details and covering more ground, more layers of understanding, and more knowledge. At the same time, your heart should be attached to Hashem by accessing His *ohr* that is embedded into the words you are thinking and speaking about.

Hold on to both of these simultaneously — understanding what you are learning in your mind, while at the same

that the gates of *dveikus* open up.

If you don't feel much interest in learning at the moment, it can be good to first seek the *ohr* of *dveikus* in a more general way, and then start learning. This can be a way to awaken your passion for learning.

And sometimes it can happen in the opposite way; you may find yourself without much interest in the *dveikus* and inner connection in your learning, and then it is good to just open up the *sefer*, read the words, and begin to learn even without inner connection, and by doing this the learning itself can open the gates of *dveikus*.

time absorbing in your heart what is within these holy words, and connecting to Hashem through your learning.³²

Until you get more used to learning in this way, you may find it hard to do both of these at once. In the beginning, you may have to choose one focus at a time, and jump from one to the other.

Focus on learning with *dveikus* for a few moments, and then immerse yourself fully in understanding the topic at hand, and then at a later point go back to focusing on connecting to Hashem through the learning for another few moments, and back to the topic at hand, and so on.

The main thing is not to forget that there are two aspects of learning: learning the Torah, and attaching yourself to the Giver of the Torah.

But as you are working on growing in this area, it is fine if you are unable to do both at once. From time to time, you can take a moment to remind yourself that Hashem is here, within the Torah. You can use the tools we mentioned earlier to help you internalize this – thinking about Hashem, humming a tune that awakens

32. It is very important not to let either component of learning come at the expense of the other. Don't lose your ability to focus on understanding your learning because you are too busy with *dveikus*, but also don't lose your *dveikus* because you are too focused on the topic at hand. We need to get used to properly engaging in both the outer layer and inner *ohr* at the same time.

your neshamah, and davening to Hashem, asking Him to help you find Him within the Torah.

Slowly, over time, you will grow and get used to learning with total unity, fully immersing yourself in the topic at hand while simultaneously fully attaching your neshamah to the neshamah of the Torah, Hashem Himself.

5 - Pathways of Learning with Dveikus

There are three components to learning Torah: 1) saying the words, 2) thinking about what you are saying, and having a clear understanding of its meaning, and 3) understanding the full depth of the topic, which is a spark of Hashem that is sent to you.³³

We mentioned earlier that sometimes one may merit to experience dveikus just from the power of the holy words of Torah themselves, and sometimes the light of Hashem is only revealed when he thinks about and fully understands the details of the topic at hand.

33. This is what you might experience as an “aha moment,” when you’ve been thinking about and trying to make sense of the *sugya* (topic) you are learning, and then all of the sudden it hits you, and you get clarity in your learning. This clarity is a gift from Hashem, a piece of His light that he has sent you.

One who merits, after toiling to understand his learning, to receive such clarity can come to feel his heart burning with a fiery passion of closeness to Hashem, recognizing that it was Hashem Who gifted him with the light of understanding.

In order to receive Hashem's light through understanding the topic, it is important to learn until you achieve clarity on what you are learning about, every person in accordance with his level in learning.

Once you have this clarity, summarize what you've learned, so that you have in your mind a clear and concise summary, and review this summary again and again.

The more you review your learning, either by summarizing what you've learned in your own words or by reviewing the learning by reading it inside again and again, the more you will uncover the light of Hashem. Reviewing with clarity is a fundamental pathway to achieve closeness to Hashem through your learning.

6 - Bittul and Humility

Know that there are always ups and downs in this *avodah*. In order to stay connected to Hashem, it is important that your intentions be simply to come closer to Hashem through learning Torah. But do not focus on a goal of seeking great success in *dveikus* and experiencing a powerful *ohr*.

Just as we shouldn't learn for our own ego, to "become something in learning," we shouldn't learn to "be someone who experiences tremendous light and *dveikus*."

Rather, the intention should be to learn with complete *bittul* (self-nullification) to Hashem, with a simple and

sincere desire to attach yourself to Him, to bring pleasure to Hashem and to reveal His Presence in the world. It should not be for your own sake, because you want to feel His light, or for any other goal.

As we've explained earlier, attachment through learning can happen even if you do not feel it. The goal is **to be** attached to Hashem through learning, not to **feel** attached to Hashem through learning. Although Hashem wants you to feel it as well, we don't want the desire to feel something to lead to not learning *lishmah* (because you are learning to "be someone who experiences a powerful *dveikus*").

There are many levels to this, and as we mentioned it is important to grow one step at a time. Certainly, as you start out in this *avodah*, it is okay if elements of it are not fully *lishmah*. The main thing is that your goal is, over time, to become more and more *lishmah*.

7 - Tefillah

Daven before you learn. As *Chazal* teach us (*Niddah* 70b), one should "ask for compassion from the Source of all wisdom." In order to enter into Hashem's wisdom, we need permission and Heavenly assistance from the King.

This is particularly true for one who feels barriers to his learning, whether he has a hard time coming closer to Hashem through learning, or a hard time understanding his learning. Before he learns, he should daven and cry out to Hashem, begging Him to help him learn properly.

The only way to fully acquire Torah is by davening and crying out to Hashem!

Only Hashem can help. Every level of connection and understanding of Torah is fully dependent on the compassion of Hashem. Rise up and beg for the sake of your neshamah like a humble servant before a king: “Please, Hashem, help me understand my learning and connect to You through my learning!”³⁴

8 - Kedusha

Experiencing the *ohr* of the Torah is dependent on how one acts in matters of *kedusha*. Only with *kedusha* can one merit to feel the fire of Torah and to experience the light of Hashem within it.

Be vigilant in guarding your *kedusha*! Avoid speaking

34. The Arizal writes (נדפס בראש ספר עץ חיים, הקדמת סור מרע ועשה טוב) that one should cry over any Torah that he does not understand.

We must hold onto two sides at the same time: On one hand, we should daven and beg Hashem for compassion, fully understanding we are utterly helpless and have no ability to accomplish a single thing on our own. We must rely on Hashem completely.

And at the same time, a Yid's primary mission is to toil in Torah at every moment, to learn, develop, and increase Torah learning with *dveikus* to our Creator.

Both sides are entirely true at the same time.

lashon hara,³⁵ and avoid looking at things that you should not look at. Sanctify your eating and drinking³⁶ and the other things you do for your body, and separate yourself from temptations³⁷ in accordance with your level and ability. Work on improving your character traits, and particularly to avoid anger and haughtiness.

Obviously, one cannot just fully remove himself from all the temptations of the world and improve all his *middos*

35. Be extremely careful not to speak badly about any Yid, and **certainly not about a tzaddik, under any circumstances.**

By honoring and respecting every Yid, seeing only good in every Yid, and looking at a Yid for what he truly is – a chariot for the *Shechinah*, a piece of Hashem Himself, with this we will merit to properly acquire the Torah, and to a life full of *ohr* and *dveikus*.

36. Learn more about this in the Chapter on Achilah / Eating in *B'yam Darkecha: Darkei Avodah L'maseh*.

37. One who wants to properly attain the highest levels of Torah needs to obtain all of his vitality from learning Torah and serving Hashem alone, without being pulled in other directions. If one still has other desires and passions besides the passionate desire to cling to Hashem at all times, he cannot yet achieve completion in learning Torah.

The more he merits to purify his heart and to become more and more disgusted from worldly temptations, the more he will attain in the holiness and light of the Torah.

This is what it means when the Gemarah says (*Kidushin* 66a): “The Torah was placed in a corner, whoever wants can come and take it.” One who wants to truly take the Torah must be fully focused on it, as if you are standing in a corner and all you see in front of you is the Torah, without looking to the right or to the left.

and habits all at once. But the Torah itself is a fire that will help burn away and break the *klippos*, slowly over time.

The Torah itself will help him become holier, provided that he learns with the desire to come closer to Hashem. Although at that point he still has other desires as well, his desire for closeness to Hashem through the Torah demonstrates that in the inner recesses of his heart, he has only one true desire: to come closer to his Father in Heaven.

He also demonstrates this desire by the fact that he is working on adding more precautions and fences to maintain and elevate his *kedusha* and improve his *middos*, and with Hashem's help, he will merit to learn Torah with *kedusha* and *dveikus*.³⁸



38. It is written (ספר החזיונות לרבינו חיים ויטאל) that Rav Chaim Vital was told from Heaven that the reason he was considered to be greater than the other great tzaddikim in his generation was not because his deeds were better, but rather that he excelled above the rest of his generation in the *middah* of being disgusted by any worldly matters, and he was singularly focused only on being close to Hashem and serving Him at all times.

This is a trait that sits deeply in the soul of a person: how much has he truly decided that his life mission and focus will strictly be one of serving and attaching himself to Hashem.

CHAPTER 3

Passion for Torah



1 - Enjoying Your Learning

Many people wish they had more of a passion and drive (*cheishek*) for learning.

The first step towards getting more enjoyment and motivation to learn is to create more of a connection to your learning. The nature of a person is that he feels good about something he feels connected to.³⁹

This means that often the lack of motivation is because he feels that he isn't accomplishing in his learning, and so the Torah feels distant and unreachable. If he doesn't feel that the Torah is for him, and that he can accomplish, he will naturally feel very little passion to pursue it further.

Until a person develops a fiery passion for learning, with

39. For example, a person naturally feels good to be in a place that he feels a connection to.

his heart constantly pulling him to learn more Torah with more passion and *dveikus*, he must work on building his sense of connection to learning, by learning in a way that brings him accomplishment and satisfaction.

Find a way to learn that brings real satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment. Once one feels that Torah is for him, and that he can truly learn and accomplish, his passion and drive for more learning will increase.

There are many strategies one can use to do this.⁴⁰ With

40. Although these strategies are called learning “*shelo lishmah*,” because the drive to learn is not coming purely for the sake of the learning itself, but rather for the sense of accomplishment that will come from learning with these strategies, **nevertheless this is what a person should do, and this is learning shelo lishmah that will bring to learning lishmah.**

There are many levels on the spectrum of learning *lishmah*. Everyone should identify the level he is on, and grow slowly from there, without trying to skip to a level he isn’t at yet.

For some people, their motivation to learn is because they get paid for learning, or they get honor and respect from learning. This is called “*shelo lishmah*,” but if this is what will ultimately help one develop his passion for learning, then it is exactly what he should do, and through learning *shelo lishmah*, he will get to a place of learning *lishmah*.

Other people learn because it makes them feel good and gives them satisfaction. Relative to the previous level, this is more *lishmah*, because his motivation comes from the Torah itself, rather than from an outside factor. Someone who approaches his learning in this way should push himself to awaken more and more passion and inner connection in his learning, such as by taking tests or writing summaries of his own original insights (*chiddushim*)

Hashem's help, we will present some basic ones, but the main point is that whatever topic and way of learning he chooses should bring him a sense of excitement and satisfaction, increasing his passion for more and more Torah.

Covering Ground (Bekiyus)

Dedicate a set time every day to learning *bekiyus*, focusing on the simple understanding of what you are learning and moving on, so that you can accomplish learning a large

in his learning.

Another level higher than this is those who learn purely out of a desire to know and understand the Torah. (See more about this level in the Arizal at the end of the introduction to Shaar HaMitzvos.)

And an even higher level than all of these, are those who merit to learn with the intention to reveal Hashem's Presence in this world. Their intention is to attach themselves to the *ohr* of Hashem that is within the Torah, and to know the Torah in order to be a chariot to carry its Divine light, and to attach themselves to the Giver of the Torah.

There is more to say regarding the various levels, but this is not its place. The main thing is to identify the level you are on, and to always push yourself, one step at a time, to climb the ladder of *lishmah*.

Do not feel bad about learning *shelo lishmah* if it is part of the process of slowly becoming more *lishmah*. This is exactly what Hashem wants you to do, as the Gemarah teaches us (Sanhedrin 105b), אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אָמַר רַב לְעוֹלָם יַעֲסוֹק אָדָם, בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמִצְוֹת אֲפִילוּ שְׁלֹא לְשִׁמָּה — “Rav Yehuda says in the name of Rav: One should toil in Torah and do mitzvos even if it is not *lishmah*, because by doing it not *lishmah* you will come to learn *lishmah*.”

amount of Torah. Be firm in your daily commitment, and don't give it up for anything!⁴¹

Review (Chazarah)

Review what you've learned again and again and again! Whatever you decide to learn, review the same points

41. Decide on an amount that you will commit to learn that you can keep to, because it is always better to make a smaller commitment that you can keep to rather than a bigger commitment that you'll end up giving up (תַּפְסֻת מְרִיבָה (לֹא תַפְסֻת). But on the other hand, it needs to be enough of a commitment that it still gives you a good sense of accomplishment (which is the whole point of it in this scenario).

It is an excellent idea to make a daily commitment to learn a specific area of Torah, so that over time, you will learn through large sections of the Torah. Each person should commit to the right amount for him, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, but as an example, if you learn two chapters of *Nevi'im* and *Kesuvim* every day you will finish all of *Na"ch* every year. Or if you learn three chapters of *Mishnayos* every day, you will finish the entire *Shas* *Mishnayos* in half a year. Other examples are learning one or two *daf* of Gemarah, a few pages of the *Nigleh* of *Zohar*, the Midrash on the weekly parsha, or a daily learning of Mishnah Berura, or other seforim in halacha.

The commitment should give you the ability to learn properly enough that you understand what you are learning. However, if you generally understand it, and on one particular day, you get stuck and do not understand it properly, do not allow this to get you off track and lose your commitment. Rather, preserve the commitment by at least saying the words on that particular day, even if you don't understand what you are saying. (See more about dedicating set times for learning in Chapter 5.)

At times when you do not understand, even saying the words has a lot of value in Hashem's eyes, as we will learn more about later on.

until you understand it with absolute clarity. Then make a summary of what you've learned, and review that summary until you feel you have truly internalized and acquired the topic at hand.

This will show you that you are very connected to Torah, and that you truly have the ability to learn, understand, and know what you've learned.

Learning with Light (Dveikus)

As we've explained in the previous chapters, learning with a sense of attachment to Hashem can greatly increase your passion for learning. Anything you can do to increase your connection to Hashem through your learning will help build your passion for learning in general.

This has an additional benefit because even if you struggle to be excited about the topic you are learning, or you struggle to understand your learning, attachment with Hashem is something you can achieve every time you learn Torah.

Remind yourself that with every single word of Torah that comes out of your mouth, you are bringing the light of Hashem into you, purifying and elevating your neshamah and bringing you closer to Hashem.

This tremendous accomplishment is not dependent on any other factors. No matter what other struggles you may have in learning, and regardless of whether you feel it or not, if you learn with the intention to come closer to

Hashem through your learning, you *will* come closer to Hashem through your learning.

2 - Be Stubborn

Sometimes even the above strategies don't work, and even though one tries to find ways to develop his connection to learning, he still finds his learning to be dry, and he feels that he is in the dark, without feeling good about his learning or a sense of accomplishment.

Other times, one may feel that he does have the drive and passion for learning, but he encounters other obstacles that prevent him from learning.

These could be spiritual obstacles, for example, if his *yetzer hara* is giving him strong temptations for other things. They could be in his inner self (*nefesh*), which could be that he feels anxious or pained, or lonely, or even haughtiness. Or there could be pain or illness in his physical body, may Hashem protect us.⁴²

The first thing we must remind ourselves about, and really think about, **is that Hashem Himself is without a doubt right here as well, within the difficulties and obstacles we are going through.** Know that this challenge that He is presenting you is for your good. Hashem is

42. What we are addressing here is not how to navigate the challenge itself, but rather how to navigate the fact that the challenge presents an obstacle to Torah study.

hiding within this challenge, waiting to see how you react, and what you will do.⁴³

That is a very important first step, to believe with complete *emunah* that whatever challenges Hashem is giving you is undoubtedly for your own good. Use this absolute truth to overcome any anger that the *yetzer hara* might be giving you, any thought of “Why is this happening to me?”

The second thing to know is that what is happening now

43. Sweeten the harshness of the barriers you encounter to your learning by internalizing that the barriers and obstacles are all vessels that you can use to achieve great levels.

It is not for nothing that Hashem sends obstacles to learning, and it is not a coincidence if exactly when you want to learn, all kinds of issues and problems come up. These are all vessels and pathways through which you can merit an even higher level of Torah.

Look out for the *yetzer hara*, who will try to deceive you into thinking that you may as well give up, because with all these obstacles, you'll never succeed in learning anyway. The truth is precisely the opposite; if there is such difficulty learning, that is a sign that a great light and opportunity is hiding here.

Strengthen your *emunah* and tell yourself: “Hashem undoubtedly values me, and He is waiting for me, His beloved child, and has not abandoned me at all. He is certainly giving me these challenges to my learning for my own benefit, to draw me higher and closer to Him, and if I push myself to navigate these obstacles, I will merit a deeper connection to Hashem and His Torah.

I believe and rely on Hashem, and will continue to walk with Him even in a time of darkness, because Hashem is with me even when I don't feel His Presence, even though my heart is closed with heaviness, distractions, and challenges.”

is like a pregnancy, which is the preparation that happens before a birth. But only if you gather the strength to push yourself to learn even though you don't feel motivated and satisfied with your learning, will you merit to get to the "birth."

The birth, in this case, means an entirely new and higher level of Torah, a level where you learn deeper, understand better, and achieve a new depth in your relationship with the Torah and the Giver of the Torah.

It is impossible to authentically attain a deep connection to Torah if you only learn when things are going well and you feel good about your learning.⁴⁴ There is no tzaddik who ever succeeded in his learning from the very beginning with no challenges or ups and downs. It is by remaining stubborn and committed even when the learning is not going well that brings a Yid to the highest levels of Torah.

44. When we encounter difficulties in learning, the deeper message Hashem is sending us is a reminder that it is impossible to truly grow in Torah until we are ready and willing to learn and serve Hashem even when we find it hard to do so and don't feel good and successful about it.

Chazal teach us (*Berachos* 63a) that "Torah is only acquired by one who is ready to die for it." This means that we need to be so committed to the Torah that we push ourselves to learn regardless of how we feel about it. Our goal should be to serve our Creator with selfless dedication, and to throw ourselves into the sea of Torah whether we feel we are successful in our learning or not. We don't know whether we will succeed, but we jump in anyway, relying on the mercy and compassion of Hashem that He will show us the right way.

Understanding this reality gives us the strength not to despair, not to think that having a hard time learning now means that we just aren't cut out for success in learning, which is what the *yetzer hara* wants us to believe. The truth is the exact opposite; it is specifically by pushing forward now while things are not going well that brings us toward the highest level. The darkness of night always precedes the light of day, as the Torah says (*Bereishis* Ch. 1), וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר — *There was evening and then there was morning.*

Remind yourself that Hashem is bringing you this challenge in learning for your own good, because He wants you to have an even stronger connection to and understanding of Torah, and the pathway to get there requires you to stubbornly learn even when you don't feel interested or good about your learning.

With Hashem's help, by thinking about these truths you will find the strength within you to learn in the "evening," until you merit that Hashem sends you "morning," and a flame of passion for learning will ignite from within you,⁴⁵

45. Remember that the very fact that you are pushing yourself to stubbornly learn and cling to Hashem even when you don't feel motivated brings tremendous joy to Hashem, and that itself is a huge success even if you don't feel success in the learning itself!

Trust that Hashem sees and will reward every drop of effort you put in, and just because you don't see the success now does not mean the value is not there.

bringing you tremendous satisfaction, enjoyment, and connection from your Torah learning.⁴⁶

3- Say the Words

There is a very practical strategy you can use to break through the barriers and learn even when you feel you can't and aren't in the mood.

That is to persistently read the words of the holy Torah, even if you do not always understand what you are saying.⁴⁷

46. We must also remember that personal growth and success is specifically found through the areas that are the most challenging. Don't be foolish enough to give up the huge opportunity that is being offered to you! Push forward with holy *chutzpah* (עזות דקדושה)!

As the *pasuk* says (*Mishlei* 8:17): *Those who seek Me will find Me*. If you are determined to find Hashem through learning Torah even when it seems really hard, Hashem will light up your heart and fill you with passion for Torah, and illuminate your eyes and mind to understand the deepest truths of the Torah.

47. Every single word of Torah has its own holy light, and is infinitely precious and valuable.

We see this in the holy Zohar (Part 3, p. 85b): "HaKadosh Baruch Hu rejoices with that word [of Torah which is read by someone who doesn't understand what he is saying] and receives it and plants it around that river [in Heaven], and great trees are made from those words, which are called 'willows of the brook.' This idea is written in the *pasuk* (*Mishlei* 5:19): **בְּאַהֲבָתָהּ תִּשְׁגָּה תָּמִיד**. [Literally, You should always be engrossed in the love [of the Torah], but *תִּשְׁגָּה* can also mean "to be mistaken," teaching that one should always learn

The goal is to stubbornly learn by reading the words without paying any attention to your lack of interest, inner connection, and even a lack of ability to understand everything you are reading. Learn out loud, reading one word after another, understanding that your persistence when you aren't "succeeding" is your pathway to success.

Even though you don't feel very motivated, by learning with determination and strength, appreciating and valuing every holy word of Torah that comes out of your

Torah, even if he will make mistakes.]

Although the Magen Avraham and Shulchan Aruch Harav hold that you do not fulfill the mitzvah of learning Torah (Talmud Torah) if you do not understand what you are learning (in the case of *Torah Shebaal Peh* [the Oral Law]), their intent is for someone who does not want and does not try to understand what he is learning. But we are referring to someone who truly wants to understand, but at the moment, he is feeling that his mind or heart is closed, and he is struggling with his learning.

About this, the Gemarah says (*Avodah Zara* 19a) in the name of Rava: "One should learn Torah even if he will forget it and even if he does not understand what he is saying, as the *pasuk* says (*Tehillim* 119:20): **גִּרְסָה נִפְשִׁי לְתַאֲבָה** — *My soul is consumed with longing (for Your laws at all times)*. The word **גִּרְסָה** is also a reference to the word **גִּירְסָה** which means to read/learn Torah without getting to a thorough understanding. This shows us that our neshamah longs even for learning Torah without understanding it.

If, based on one's circumstances, this is what he can do, then even just saying the words without understanding them is very precious in the eyes of Hashem.

mouth, you can grasp onto the Torah just by saying its holy words.⁴⁸

Under these circumstances, the main thing is to learn with external persistence. Just say the words: Read pages of Gemarah, chapters of Mishnah, chapters of Tehillim,

48. In times like this, do not focus on the general messages of the topic at hand, but rather on believing in the power of each and every word, that by saying it you are connecting to the light of Hashem that is within it.

A level of Oneness and *dveikus* is already attained by merely touching the Torah, by uttering even a single word, because it is saturated with the light of Hashem. Hashem is infinite, and so by touching His light that is within even a single word, a person gains purity and true connection to Hashem. One word or one *pasuk* can already ignite the spark within him.

The main thing in practice is to hold onto the Torah in times of difficulty by just saying the words. Nevertheless, if you are able to, it is very good to also think about and try to feel the light of Hashem that is within the words you are saying.

Sometimes saying the words can reignite your passion, and sometimes trying to find the *ohr* and connection within the words can reignite your passion.

This is also a good strategy to use when you are delving into a topic and you get very tired, which is not allowing you to learn properly. At that point, shift your focus from trying to understand the topic as a whole to just focusing on the single word that you are up to.

Don't be bothered if you don't understand the externals of the words; just focus on attaching yourself to Hashem, the Giver of the Torah, Whose essence is infused into the word in front of you. Through this, with Hashem's help, you can renew yourself with vigor to go on to understand what you are learning.

or other seforim; the main thing is to say words of Torah according to your abilities.

When you stand strong and pass this test, and say more and more words of Torah out loud, the gates will open up, and suddenly you will start to feel a powerful and wondrous passion for learning,⁴⁹ because the light of the Torah itself has the ability to sweeten even the most bitter circumstance.⁵⁰

4- Uninterrupted Learning (*Retizfus*)

Strengthen your learning by learning the holy Torah in uninterrupted sessions. If it is constantly interrupted and split into parts, you will not be able to feel the holiness of your learning.

This is one of the main reasons that some do not feel good about their learning; they make frequent interruptions.

When you sit down to learn, see how much time you

49. After withstanding the challenge of Hashem's concealment, with Hashem's help, you can go on to really feel his *ohr* in a tangible way from the bright connection your soul forged with its Creator by persevering through the difficulty.

50. Similarly, when one is stuck on a topic that he cannot figure out, the foolish one decides that since he simply cannot figure it out, he may as well give up. But the wise one will not give up, but will stubbornly read the words he is trying to understand, again and again, until the gates of understanding are opened before him.

have, and commit not to interrupt in the middle of your learning. This brings tremendous light to your learning and an incredible feeling of satisfaction.

It is truly amazing if you can learn uninterrupted for five hours straight, without speaking about anything unrelated to your learning, and without eating or drinking. If you can manage to do this, with the help of Hashem, the *kedusha* of the Torah will spread throughout your body and you will feel Hashem's Presence resting within you.

5 - Start Again Today

Sometimes, one can lose his motivation to learn because his *yetzer hara* tells him: "Look how much you've already wasted your time! You already blew your chance, and there is nothing to gain by starting now. What do you expect to accomplish by only starting now?"

Do not listen to him! Listen to Hashem, Who says (*Tehillim* 95:7): - הַיּוֹם אִם בָּקֻלוּ תִשְׁמָעוּ Today! If you will listen to my voice. Every single day and every single moment has its own mission with its own opportunities.

Tell yourself that even if you wouldn't gain from the learning itself,⁵¹ you undoubtedly gain from

51. The truth is that there really is no such thing as "too late," as if the fact that you had not yet learned properly means that it's too late to start learning and to grasp a large amount of Torah. The Torah is spiritual, and is

the very fact that you are learning, because with that alone, you attach yourself to Hashem. Every moment of coming closer to Hashem through the Torah is in itself a massive accomplishment!

6- Daven

It goes without saying that we must call out to Hashem with repeated davening to help us get through any challenge, and to help us understand something we doesn't understand. It is impossible to attain Torah without davening and crying out to Hashem.

On one hand, continue to push yourself in learning, but on the other hand, daven to Hashem, begging Him to have mercy on you and open your eyes to understand the Torah. Everything is in Hashem's hands alone.



therefore never confined to human limitations. Many people have merited to learn tremendous amounts of Torah in a very short time (some examples of this are the Ram" a, the Sha" ch, and the Arizal). Therefore, everyone should make a fresh start and not look at his past.

CHAPTER 4

Ways of Learning



1 - In Depth (Iyun)

The Arizal writes⁵² that anytime someone does not understand something in his Torah learning, it is because he has encountered a *klippah* (shell) that is covering over the light of Hashem that is in that part of Torah. This

52. These are his words (שער רוח הקודש): “The root of the ability to attain spiritual perception lies in delving into learning *halacha* (including Gemara). This is because learning *halacha* works as follows: A person should intend that there is a *klippah* wrapped around the essence (the true meaning) of the matter he is studying (which represents *kedushah*), and this *klippah* is represented by a question or difficulty he has in understanding the *halacha*. The *klippah* serves as a barrier between his mind and the *halacha*, and doesn’t allow him to understand it.

When a person answers a question he had, he should have the intent to remove the covering of the *klippah* from the *halacha* (etc.).

Have in mind to break the strength of the *klippah* and remove it from the holiness, and then the essence, the true meaning of the *halacha* will be revealed (you will understand it clearly).”

klippah causes a barrier between him and his Father in Heaven, and this is what causes him not to understand that point. One must strengthen himself and exert effort to break this *klippah* in order to fully understand the Torah he is stuck on.

Whether this obstacle is in the simple understanding (*pshat*) of the learning, or in the deeper understanding of the complexities of the topic (*iyun*), the way to break this *klippah* is to take a moment to focus on thinking about or davening to Hashem. Bringing a moment of more *dveikus* to your learning can give you the inner strength to then think again about the obstacle you've encountered, and, with Hashem's help, to break the *klippah* and understand what you are learning.⁵³

53. Sometimes it feels like the place you are stuck on is too difficult, and it is impossible to understand it. Know that these very thoughts are the result of the *klippos* themselves, which circle a person and try to weaken his heart by giving him thoughts that cannot do it.

But Hashem promised us in the Torah (*Devarim* 30:14): כִּי קְרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדָּבָר מָאֵד – *The matter is very close to you!* When it seems difficult, attach yourself to Hashem, and through that you can draw down a new *ohr* which will open up your understanding.

Sometimes, however, in accordance with a person's level, he may encounter a *klippah* that he is unable to break. His job is to try to understand it and to daven to Hashem to help him understand it, but then, if after putting in all his efforts he still does not understand, he should move on and continue with the next part of his learning. With Hashem's help, at some point he will merit to understand the point he is stuck on. He should rejoice with whatever he

Every time a Yid encounters difficulty in understanding his learning, it is a sign that he is being awakened from above to break another barrier and come closer to Hashem.⁵⁴

In order to break that barrier, on one hand he must exert real effort to think about, review, and contemplate the point he is stuck on, again and again, with determination not to move on until he reaches clarity.

And on the other hand, at the same time, he must remember then he can understand nothing on his own, and he should turn to Hashem for help, knowing that only Hashem can illuminate his eyes and open the gates of clear understanding of Torah.

2 – Bekiyus / Be'iyun

By learning in-depth, one merits to break the *klippas* and

has in Torah, with the knowledge that no effort in learning goes to waste.

54. If you toil in Torah with the intention that it should bring you closer to your Father in Heaven, and that it should remove any barriers that are between you and Hashem and atone for any sins you have done, that intention itself gives the Torah that you have learned the ability to remove the barriers and silence the prosecuting angels.

Particularly when it is very, very difficult, know, that persevering with all your strength instead of despairing, brings you the greatest atonement and *tikkun* for your *neshamah*.

to subdue the *yetzer hara*.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is important to learn Torah thoroughly, contemplating and internalizing each point, and reviewing it again and again by saying the words and thinking it through, until you reach a clear understanding of the topic. (This is called learning *be'iyun*.)

However, one must also learn *bekiyus*, covering ground on a journey through the entire Torah, which is “*vaster than the land and wider than the sea*” (*Iyov* 11:9).

Learning quickly and getting through large quantities of Torah has valuable advantages and is very precious in the eyes of Hashem. It also serves as a necessary preparation for the primary form of learning, which is learning in depth (*iyun*).

Some people think it is better to learn *bekiyus*, some people think it is better to learn *be'iyun*, and yet others think that it does not matter which way you learn. These are all mistakes. It does matter, and achieving the proper

55. If you feel that the *yetzer hara* is starting to overcome you or tempt you in some way, the solution is to throw yourself into learning Torah with depth and clarity, until you understand the topic with clarity.

By learning Torah with true depth and *dveikus*, you become illuminated with the light of Hashem's Presence, and in such a state, the *yetzer hara* has no power to overcome you.

But if you are not in a position to be able to learn in depth, then learning quickly can also give you the strength to overcome the *yetzer hara*, and you should definitely do that.

levels in Torah can only happen by learning **both** *bekiyus* and *be'iyun*.

3 - Strive for More, Be Happy with What You Get

Every person should have the desire to learn more and more, so he can come to know the entirety of the Torah, and thereby bring completion (*sheleimus*) to his *neshamah*.⁵⁶

At the same time, do not become overly ambitious, which is defined as having a pressing and urgent need to know the entire Torah **right now!** Your desire to learn it all should never come at the expense of your happiness and tranquility in your avodas Hashem. If it is making you anxious and pressured, and therefore you aren't enjoying your learning, that is called being "too ambitious."

Be ambitious, and grow and advance in learning, step by step, without trying to do more than is in your reach. And at the same time, in the depth of your heart, hold onto

56. Particularly if one finds that the *yetzer hara* is not letting him go, and is constantly attacking and trying to destroy him with constant bitter temptations, the antidote is to acquire more and more knowledge of Torah.

It's not specifically "knowing" Torah that subdues the *yetzer hara*, but rather it is the combination of the effort you exert to learn, together with the knowledge you've acquired. The light of the Torah is the antidote to the *yetzer hara*.

The bottom line is that in any situation you find yourself in, the more effort you put in to learn and acquire more Torah, with the intention to cleanse yourself, subdue your *yetzer hara*, and come back to Hashem, the more you will certainly be successful to ultimately destroy your *yetzer hara*.

the desire to ultimately complete and know the entirety of Torah.

On one hand, have the desire and strive to learn it all, and on the other hand, rejoice in your heart over every little bit of Torah you learn. Be full of *simchah*⁵⁷ at all times over whatever you have merited to learn until now!⁵⁸

If you hold on properly to both sides, and remain ambitious while being happy with the pathway in Torah that Hashem guides you on, you will ultimately merit to achieve the highest levels.

4 - Review (*Chazarah*)

By reviewing your learning you can start to feel the *ohr* of the Torah. This is a fundamental way to experience the light of Hashem within your learning. Reviewing the words of Torah again and again creates a pathway for the *ohr* that allows you to feel it, in a similar way that the smell of spices (*besamim*) increases and spreads when you shake them.

57. This is part of why *Chazal* emphasize the importance of saying *Birchas Hatorah*, because in it we praise Hashem that we merit to learn Torah. Even if we have so far merited to learn only a little bit, we must thank Hashem for it.

58. Don't be thrown off track by thinking about the levels you have not yet achieved, and don't look at what people around you have achieved, even if it seems like they achieved more than you. Focus on your own mission and on appreciating and rejoicing over what you've achieved.

The primary form of holiness of the Torah comes to you through reviewing. Reviewing is not only the way to make sure you don't forget your learning; it is also the way to merit *dveikus* through learning.

One who wants to merit learning *lishmah* should get himself used to endless *chazarah*, because constant review will give him the ability to feel the *ohr* and sweetness of the Torah in his heart.⁵⁹

Chazarah can ignite the fire within him, and therefore it has a power even in a situation where someone does not have the ability to understand what he is learning. At times when one has distractions and challenges that make it impossible for him to focus properly and understand his learning, or if one is tired⁶⁰ and therefore cannot understand his

59. The *yetzer hara* knows how powerful it is to review, and therefore he often makes it very difficult to do, convincing us that “*chazarah* is hard.”

But if we can push past this barrier and do it anyway, over time, with Hashem's help, it will get much easier, and we will come to really enjoy *chazarah*. Once you taste the sweetness of *chazarah*, you won't want to stop!

60. Sometimes, you might get tired and start to drift asleep, and then you catch yourself and jolt back awake. When that happens, stand up and do something that will wake you up, because if you just ignore what just happened, you will end up falling asleep completely.

The fact that you dozed off momentarily is like a warning sign, and if you don't listen to the warning and instead you say to yourself that you'll be fine,

learning, *chazarah* is still a very powerful tool to use!

Rather than stopping to learn, continue to learn by just saying the holy words of Torah, and repeat and review them again and again, and with Hashem's help you can feel your focus and inner connection to learning return.⁶¹

you'll end up falling fast asleep. From Heaven they are helping you out, by giving you a heads-up to do something to awaken you, but you need to take the message and do something about it, and not ignore it.

61. *Chazal* teach us (*Eiruv* 54a) that when Moshe Rabbeinu broke the first *Luchos*, "forgetfulness" descended to the world. With that, Moshe Rabbeinu gave us the "gift of forgetting" our learning.

Why is forgetfulness a gift?

The answer is that even had he not broken the first *Luchos*, we would have still needed to review our learning, even though we would not have forgotten anything, because *chazarah* brings out the *ohr* of the Torah, and is the main pathway to learning with passion and inner connection.

But it would be very hard for someone to push himself to review if he always remembers every single thing he's ever learned! Therefore, breaking the *Luchos* resulted in us receiving the gift of forgetfulness. Since we know that it's challenging to remember what we've learned, and it is clear that reviewing again and again helps us remember it, we see value in *chazarah*, either as a tool to prevent us from forgetting, or if we already forgot, we'll enjoy learning it again to bring it back to us.

But the truth is that the main benefit of reviewing is not that it is the solution to forgetting, but rather that is the pathway to learning with *dveikus* and revealing the *ohr* in the Torah one is learning.

5 - Wanting to Learn Everything

Every single Yid should want to learn all parts of the Torah.⁶² Believe with complete faith that if you push yourself hard, and really put in the effort to understand the Torah on its basic level (*pshat*), then Hashem will gift you with not only *pshat* but also every other deeper layer of understanding (called *remez*, *drush*, and *sod*), including the deepest of its secrets (*razin d'razin*). You need to believe, because only if you truly believe that you (yes, you!) can merit the crown of Torah, will you find the strength to push forward, no matter what tries to hold you back.

Hashem wants to give each of us the entire *Torah Hakedoshah*, and He easily can, but we need to really believe that this is possible and not think that there is a limit to what we can achieve in learning. Believe that

62. Everyone will have certain areas of Torah that his *neshamah* feels drawn to and wants him to learn. If you think about it, you'll come up with areas you intrinsically feel a deep yearning towards. Your *neshamah* knows what you need to learn.

Sometimes one might not take this seriously and ignore the Torah that his *neshamah* is crying out for. Sometimes the *yetzer hara* stands in the way, trying to prevent him, with all kinds of reasons, from learning what his *neshamah* yearns for.

It is not for nothing that everyone has specific areas of Torah they feel passion about. It is because their *tikkun* (soul rectification) is contingent on these areas, or on the mitzvot that are associated with them. If you give your *neshamah* what it needs, with Hashem's help you will bring it its complete *tikkun*.

Hashem wants you to attain the entire Torah, even if you don't feel you are worthy of it.



CHAPTER 5

Tools in Learning



1 - Learning Out Loud

Although we need to think about what we are learning, we also need to clearly articulate, out loud, the words of Torah.

As *Chazal* teach us (*Eiruv* 54a): פִּתַּח פּוּמִיךָ קָרִי, פִּתַּח פּוּמִיךָ פְּתַח פּוּמִיךָ - “Open your mouth and read from the Torah, open your mouth and read from the Mishnah, so that it (what you learn) will stay with you, and you will live a long life.”

It is specifically by saying the words with your mouth that you will be able to etch the Torah you learn into your memory. As the Gemarah says (*ibid.* 53b-54a): “Beruryah (the wife of Reb Meir’s) came across a student who was whispering his learning (rather than reading it aloud). She kicked him and said, ‘Does it not say (*II Shmuel* 23:5): *Arranged in all and secure?* This teaches that if Torah is arranged in your 248 limbs (i.e., your body is engaged in

it), it will be secure [with you], and if not, it will not be secure!’” This means that we need to learn with our body, by expressing our learning out loud, and not just with our minds.

It is not enough to think and understand. Once we think about it, we must say it out loud as well, and articulate what we have come to understand.

2 - Dedicated Time

The primary solution to preserving and building your connection to Torah is to establish dedicated times in your daily routine to learn the holy Torah.

One who does not have dedicated times for learning will end up drifting away from Torah and, G-d forbid, end up very far away from closeness to Hashem, as it says (Zohar, Part 3, p. 36a; Rashi to *Devarim* 11:13): **אִם תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי יוֹם יוֹמִים אֶעֱזָבְךָ** – If you leave Me for one day, I will leave you for two days.”

The Torah gives a person a heart full of happiness,⁶³ and

63. Even one who does have a daily commitment of learning should always try to add to it as he can.

Hashem wants us to learn in accordance with our abilities. The Sefer Chassidim writes that if someone learns a lot, but he could have learned more, then even if in the eyes of other people that is considered a lot of learning, in the eyes of Hashem, he still will not have properly fulfilled his mitzvah to learn.

A *talmid chochom* (Torah scholar) is only someone who learns as much as he is

committing to daily learning will undoubtedly bring you great *simchah*.

3- Learn Even When You Don't Understand

The nature of learning is that sometimes one's mind is illuminated and he understands what he is learning, but sometimes he does not feel great inside, and his heart is closed, and even though he wants to and tries to, he simply does not understand what he is learning.

Don't give up your learning because of this! Hold on tightly to your established times of learning, even if it isn't going well on any particular day. Hashem wants us to dedicate time for learning based on what we can generally handle. But if on any particular day your mind is closed, don't be broken, and don't give up the learning sessions. At the very least, say the words without understanding them, until your dedicated time is finished.

About this, it is written (*Tehillim* 119:20): *My soul is consumed with longing for Your rules at all times*. At all times, even when we don't understand, our soul longs for the holy Torah. If we merit to learn even when we don't understand, in the end, Hashem will open our minds to the light of understanding.

The truth is that many of the difficulties in learning that we encounter are from the barriers that were created by

able to in accordance with his level and strengths.

our *aveiros*. Through the self-sacrifice of preserving our dedicated times for learning at all costs, we can help bring ourselves an atonement, and once we clear away those barriers, the difficulties in learning will automatically disappear.

Once you've established your learning routine, brace and strengthen yourself to hold onto it even when you encounter hard days.

On a hard day, focus on your emunah. Believe that Hashem is watching you, paying close attention to the efforts you put in as you try to persevere when it is tough. Through your efforts to hold on to your learning, and by saying the holy words even without understanding them, you are already coming closer to Hashem.

By staying firm to learn even when it is hard, you will merit that the Torah will come to you, and it will ask of its Creator to give you a deep understanding of it.

And of course, daven to Hashem and awaken His compassion. Beg Him to help you hold on to your learning commitments under any and all circumstances, as a rule that you will never break.

4 - Toil Regardless of Whether You'll Succeed

Growth and true success in learning only comes when we are ready to learn and serve Hashem, even if we won't

succeed in achieving high levels of understanding and connection.

If one is focused only on achieving success, the Torah will ultimately throw him out.

We need to have the utmost *mesiras nefesh* (self-sacrifice / dedication) for learning. Therefore, when we encounter a hard time learning properly and “successfully,” it is a wake-up call from heaven not to seek success, but rather to accept the yoke of Heaven, and to be a loyal servant of Hashem, regardless of whether we’ll be “successful” at it.

Torah is truly acquired by someone who is willing to die for it, which means to give himself entirely over to serving the King. The only thing that matters is that we position ourselves to be a loyal servant, and learn with *mesiras nefesh*, regardless of the levels we will achieve.

We need to give ourselves over entirely for Torah. In the beginning this may seem difficult, but we need to serve Hashem with sacrifice and emunah and continue to increase our diligence even with all the difficulties.

Then it will get easier, and Hashem helps us merit great spiritual pleasure from our avodas Hashem and to experience the sweetness and light of the holy Torah.⁶⁴

64. One who gives himself over to learn even when he encounters many difficulties, will ultimately merit that Hashem removes all of those obstacles, and the “yoke of Torah” becomes easy and enjoyable for him.

5 - Finish It!

It is important to know how powerful it is to complete what you are learning from beginning to end. Even if it is one chapter or one *halacha*, learn it from beginning to end.

And particularly, if you can merit to finish a full *masechta* in *Sha"ts*. With every *masechta* you finish, you become an entirely new person.⁶⁵ Even if it is not a full *masechta*, but a chapter, or a Mishnah, with each full section you complete, you are transformed into something entirely new.

Even more so, if you choose a *masechta* in *Sha"ts* and learn it from beginning to end again and again, until you really know it well, there is no end to the greatness of this. Every *masechta* in *Sha"ts* is a part of the *Shechinah*, and by learning it until you know it well, you are binding your *neshamah* to the *Shechinah*, because one who grasps onto part of something holy, it is as if he grasped onto the whole thing.

6- Chiddushei Torah

We should learn until we have such clarity that we merit

65. This is why we make a *siyum* with great happiness to celebrate after finishing a *masechta*. The Satan therefore tries very hard to prevent us from finishing a full *masechta*, as is alluded to in the words you can spell out from his name - ס'י'ו'ם מ'סכ'תא א'י'ן ל'עש'ות - A *siyum* on a *masechta* do not make.

to create our own original insights in Torah (*chiddushei Torah*). By delving into the Gemara, Tosfos, the Rishonim and Acharonim, we will come to create our own insights.

Every single Yid has his own portion in Torah and can and should create his own novel ideas in accordance with his level and abilities.

The Nefesh HaChaim (and others) write that even if you don't merit to come up with a completely new insight in learning, if you learn something with clarity until you get to a new level of understanding, that is also called a *chiddush*. The main point is that you dive deeply into understanding the topic, until you reveal clarity in a point that was hidden and unclear, and with this you give tremendous pride and joy to your Father in Heaven.

7 - All You Need is Hashem

Sometimes, a person might think that in order to learn properly, he needs a specific person to teach him and explain things to him, or some other specific form of guidance to learn, and without that he will not be able to learn.

But the truth is that everything is dependent only on Hashem. Although it is true that one needs a teacher to learn from and a chavrusa to learn with,⁶⁶ nevertheless,

66. As the Mishnah in Avos (1:6) teaches us **עֲשֵׂה לָךְ רֵב וְקַנָּה לָךְ חֵבֵר** – “Appoint for yourself a teacher and acquire for yourself a companion.”

that is just because it is part of the system of Torah learning that Hashem created, but the absolute truth is that everything is always dependent only on Hashem.

If you find yourself, for whatever reason, without a teacher or chavrusa, don't be broken, and know that Hashem is everything, and right now He is serving as your teacher and your chavrusa.

Your success in learning is never dependent on any particular person. It is dependent only on your attachment to Hashem.



GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS



Only terms that are not immediately translated in the book are listed here.

Achronim – Later Torah commentators and authorities (after the *Rishonim*).

Aseres Hadibros – The Ten Commandments.

Aveiros – Sins or transgressions.

Avodah – Spiritual work and service of Hashem.

Avodas Hashem – Serving Hashem

Beis Hamikdash – The Holy Temple in Jerusalem.

Beis Medrash – A study hall for Torah learning.

Bekiyus – Learning quickly for the sake of covering ground rather than learning in depths.

Birkas Hatorah – The blessings recited before learning Torah.

Bittul – Self-nullification before Hashem.

Brachah – A blessing.

B'yam Darkecha – Lit. “In the Sea of Your Ways”; the name of this book.

Chavrusa – A Torah study partner.

Chazal – The sages of the Talmud and Mi-drash.

Chazarah – Review of learned material.

Chiddush – A novel Torah insight or interpretation.

Chiddushei Torah – Novel Torah insights and explanations.

Daf – A page of Gemara.

Daven / Davening – To pray / prayer.

Dveikus – Deep attachment and closeness to Hashem.

Ein Od Milvado – “There is nothing besides Him”; the belief that Hashem alone is everything.

Emunah – Faith and trust in Hashem.

Gemara – The main body of the Talmud discussing the Mishnah.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu – “The Holy One, Blessed is He”; a name used for Hashem.

Halachos – Jewish laws and practical rulings.

Har Sinai – Mount Sinai, where the Torah was given.

Hashem – “The Name”; a way of referring to God.

Katnus – A state of spiritual smallness or limited awareness.

Kedushah – Holiness and sanctity.

Kesuvim – The Writings section of Tanach.

Klippah / Klippos – Spiritual impurity or forces that conceal holiness.

Lashon Hara – Negative or harmful speech about others.

Lishmah – Doing something for its pure and proper spiritual purpose.

Masechta – A tractate of Mishnah or Gemara.

Mesiras Nefesh – Lit. “Giving one’s self” – having firm dedication for serving Hashem.

Middos – Character traits.

Midrash – Rabbinic teachings and interpretations on the Torah.

Mishnayos – The Mishnah, a foundational text of the Oral Torah.

Mitzvah / Mitzvos – A commandment from Hashem / commandments.

Moshe Rabbeinu – Moshe, our teacher.

Na’ch (Tanach) – Torah, *Nevi’im*, and *Kesuvim*; three components of Torah.

Neshamah / Neshamos – Soul / souls.

Nevi'im – The books of the Prophets in Tanach.

Nigleh – The revealed parts of Torah, such as Gemara and Halachah.

Ohr – Lit. light, in the context of this booklet it refers to the light / essence of Hashem. (See footnote 2 and 22)

Parsha – The weekly Torah portion.

Pasuk – A verse in Tanach.

PNimYus Hatorah – The inner dimension of Torah.

Rishonim – Early Torah commentators and authorities.

Seforim – Jewish books, especially Torah works.

Shechinah – The Divine Presence.

Shelo Lishmah – Doing something not for its pure spiritual purpose.

Shabbos – The Sabbath.

Siyum – A celebration upon completing a Torah text or tractate.

Simcha – Joy and happiness.

Tehillim – Psalms, written by King David.

Tefillah – Prayer.

Torah – The divine teachings given by Hashem, including the Written and Oral

Torah.

Torah Hakedosha – The holy Torah.

Tosfos – Classical commentaries on the Gemara by medieval sages.

Tzaddikim – Righteous people.

Yetzer Hara – The evil inclination that pulls a person toward sin.

Yichud – Unity; often referring to the Oneness of Hashem or spiritual unification.

Yid / Yidden – A Jew / Jews.



