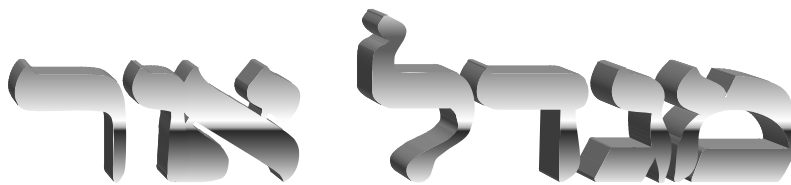


OLD MATH – The Daas Zekainim says that the Torah's math seems off. If 5 Jews can chase 100 enemies, each chases 20. If 100 can chase 10,000, each chases 100. Which one is it? He answers simply, "The prayer of a tzibbur is greater [and thus more powerful.]"

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- 6:43 - פלג המנחה
- 7:57 - הדלקת נרות
- 8:15 - שקיעה
- 8:35 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:11 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:25 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 8:17 - שקיעה
- 9:06 - צאת הכוכבים
- 9:29 - צאת 72

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

אגוטען שבת!

Did You Know?

In Pirkei Avos, Elisha ben Avuyya says that one who learns while he is young is likened to ink written on new paper. His mind is receptive and will retain what he learns like fresh paper clearly holds what is written upon it. One who learns when he is old, however, is likened to ink written upon smudged paper, in which the words will not be as pristine or clear. As it has previously absorbed other ink, everything new will be somewhat affected by it.

While his statement is essentially correct, and teaches us the importance of proper training of the young, it implies that there is not much point in learning later in life. That is not true.

The Gemara relates that at Elisha's bris, his father saw two Chachomim learning who became surrounded by a holy fire. His father said, "I will teach my son Torah so he may also bring down such a fire."

Elisha ben Avuyya later became a heretic and was referred to as "Acher," the 'other' one. Chazal say his upbringing was bismirched by the ulterior motives of his father. He wanted his son to learn not because HaShem said so, but so he could perform parlor tricks, and this was why it had a negative effect. When Acher was urged to repent by R' Meir, he refused, declaring that it was too late for him. This was his fundamental error. Ideally one should follow G-d from the outset, but it is never too late to begin doing what is right.

Thought of the week:

When we daven, we speak to HaShem. When we learn Torah, He speaks to us.

– R' Mordecai Gifter z"l

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"אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם" (ויקרא כ"ג)

"If you go in My statutes and keep My commandments and you will fulfill them;"

The Toras Kohanim (as quoted by Rashi) says that one's initial understanding of "going in HaShem's statutes" would be fulfilling the mitzvot. However, since the mitzvot are mentioned next, it must mean something else. Therefore, these words teach us that we must be involved and toil in learning Torah. It is a prerequisite to keeping the mitzvot, and a mitzvah of great import on its own.

There is something unique about this parsha. Most parshiyos in the Torah begin with an introductory verse. They will tell us what was taking place, such as "In the Beginning, HaShem created Heaven and Earth," or "These are the generations of Noach." Other times, it will say, "And HaShem spoke to Moshe, saying..." If it is direct speech to Moshe, it may begin with a letter "vov," used as the conjunction "and" to tell us it is a continuation of the previous conversation.

Parshas Bechukosai seems to begin in the middle of a thought. There is no introductory verse or even the letter vov. It is the only parsha in the entire Torah which begins this way, with G-d speaking to Moshe without introduction or connection to previous verses.

Perhaps this teaches us a very important lesson. We are directed by this posuk to actively learn Torah, and put in effort to do so. Sometimes, we may offer excuses why we cannot learn, and why we should be exempt. "I did not have the proper education," one might say, so I can't learn Torah. "If I had paid more attention in Yeshiva I might be able to learn but I am not prepared so I can't do it," or "With my background, I can't learn. I'm not cut out for it."

This posuk is teaching us that these excuses are not valid reasons not to learn. One does not need the best beginning; one does not need extensive introduction to be successful in Torah learning. Though helpful, they are not absolutely necessary. HaShem is teaching us that in order to succeed, one only needs to work at it.

This parsha comes during the Omer, when we mourn the loss of R' Akiva's students. We often discuss the fact that though they learned Torah, they failed to acknowledge the successes of their peers. However, what often gets overlooked is the fact that R' Akiva had so many students at all. Here was a man who did not have the background that many of us have been fortunate enough to have. He did not learn a word of Torah until he was forty years old, and yet, he amassed tens of thousands of Talmidim.

This underscores what we have learned here. To succeed in Torah, one need not have the best preparation. What is required, however, is a desire and willingness to immerse oneself in Torah and work diligently in it.

The Netziv, R' Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, the great Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin, made a special seudah when he completed his sefer, the Haamek She'eila. At that occasion, he explained why this milestone was so significant for him. As a young boy, he did not show much interest in his Torah studies. One night, young Naftali overheard his father bemoaning his lack of progress. With tears in his eyes, his father told his mother it was time for their young son, Hirsh Leib (his nickname), to leave the yeshiva and become an apprentice to a local craftsman, so that he might learn a meaningful trade. Naftali was deeply moved by his parents' distress, and he rushed to them and promised to apply himself to his Torah learning. From that day on, Naftali grew to become one of the great Torah giants of the 19th century.

The Netziv displayed the Haamek She'eila and said with much emotion, "Had I become a shoemaker or tailor, I never would have written these volumes. After 120 years, I would have appeared before Hakodesh Baruch Hu, and He would have demanded, "Why didn't you write the Haamek She'eilah?" No doubt I would have responded in disbelief. "I am only a simple shoemaker. How could I have written this magnificent sefer?" "No," G-d would have insisted, "you were capable of authoring this profound work," and of course that would have been the case. Imagine, for eternity I would have endured the anguish, pain and disgrace of not having authored the Haamek She'eilah because I did not apply myself." Source: R' Y. Luban -- ou.org