

MORE CLEAR YEAR AFTER YEAR

by Rabbi Label Lam

I have been thinking a lot recently about something I heard many years ago at an alumni dinner. It's a deeply profound and elegant explanation given by a friend from "Yeshiva days", who tragically passed away just this week. He was a young man, a father, a friend, a Tzadik. He briefly shared with me that night a statement, a one liner from Tractate Menachos, "Keshet Elyon D'Oraisa" - "The Top Knot is Torah".

Simply, it is talking about the top knot on the Tzitzis. That's the plain meaning of the Talmud. The top knot of the Tzitzis is the Torah obligation while the other windings and knots are not.

Avraham A explained "Keshet Elyon D'Oraisa" - The top connection that two people can have is through studying Torah! The most profound relationships in life are with those with whom we have studied Torah. Also the highest and deepest relationship with HASHEM is through the connection with Torah. "The top knot is D'Oraisa". Ain't it the truth!?

Going out for pizza with pals and bowling with buddies is nice. Those experiences, though, of playing ball and joking around with friends are never again as current as the moment they happened. They are quickly catalogued in the nostalgia file. Thirty years later it's hard to remember if it happened that way or if it merely was a childish fancy. Not so with Torah. Decades pass and those relationships are as alive today as then and more easily revived.

Similarly, I once heard a remarkable and stunning statement directly from the Lubavicher Rebbe ztl at a Yurtzeit gathering in commemoration of the anniversary of the departure of his beloved mother.

He said that one of the proofs of NESHAMA- soul is that, in the usual course of life, the farther a person gets away from a material thing the more it fades from memory. Be it time, person, or place- it's hard enough to recall what we ate for lunch last week and even more so last year. It becomes less and less important or impactful, meaningful or memorable as time marches forward.

That's how it is with all physical things. The flavor, the color, the entirety of the experience fades and is less influential with the passage of time. However, with spiritual matters, the memories are persistent and even more impressive, even as the present tense becomes the deep past. The Talmud tells us that a person does not completely understand what his Rebbe said until after 40 years have passed.

So it is with the loss of a loved one. The more distant one travels from their time of departure from

this world the more their truest qualities are crystalized and the more clearly we are able to perceive their essence.

Perhaps because we are less distracted by the sound of their voice, the shape of their nose, we are able to gain a greater clarity of their quintessential being, their mission in life, their special message.

There was no greater spiritual event in the history of the world than Matan Torah- "The Giving of the Torah". A lasting bond between all Jewish People for all generations was forged then by our common connection to Torah. Although it happened 3329 years ago, even still the persistent echo from that ancient encounter is current and relevant as ever centuries later becoming **more clear year after year.**