

# OUR FAMILY BUSINESS

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

**And you shall teach them (V'shinatam)** to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk on the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up. (Devarim 6:7)

**And you shall teach them (V'shinatam): - In Hebrew** Chidud is an expression of sharpness...They should be sharp in your mouth...That is when somebody asks, you should not hesitate and stammer but rather you should be able to answer immediately. (Rashi)

It seems everyone is expected to be an expert and acquire great proficiency in learning Torah. It may already be obvious but what is the purpose of this requirement? Is it to raise the level of scholarship?! How is everyone able to fulfill this standard if people have different learning styles and varying intellectual capacities?

The Maharal says that the reason for this Mitzvah is that the Torah should become "his". The student should make the Torah his very-own. He learns this from the very first chapter of Tehillim. It says, "If the Torah of HASHEM is his desire and in his Torah he meditates day and night, he will be like a tree planted by streams of water which yields fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither... (Tehillim 1:2-3)

Our sages saw a shift in ownership from the first part of the verse to the second. At first it was the Torah of HASHEM that was his desire. Later it is his, the student's Torah that he meditates in day and night. It became his possession.

How is this done? For sure it takes a great deal of work! There are no short cuts, but perhaps we can find here a hint at a motivation that might make this achievement more possible.

How many times does it happen to each and every one of us? We have all experienced it! Sometimes, many times in the same week this wondrous phenomenon will be displayed before our eyes and go unnoticed. Now we can begin to recognize what it means.

I was in a grocery store this past week. Like a dutiful husband, and like all the other fellows walking around with shopping carts and a handwritten list of specific items that we must come home with or else, there are always those few items that seem impossible to find. They don't fit neatly into an aisle category like dairy or beverage, or they are just exotic. So we all pass each other wondering aimlessly and calling home multiple times in search of that clue about how it might look or what category it might fit into. Only after the pressure is built up and his patience for this process is

diminished will a man park his ego and ask for help. Who do you ask for help in a large grocery store?

There, sitting on a milk crate, busily organizing cans on a shelf is a fellow you may not stop to have a casual conversation with in the street, but desperate times call for desperate measures. So you stand near him and clear your throat attempting politely to get his attention, "Excuse me, but where can I find salmon flavored toothpicks?" He looks up in your general direction pausing for a split second.

At first you wonder if he understood your question or if he speaks your language but within that nanosecond he scans the store in his mind and miracle of miracles, he says in a broken English, "Aisle 6 on the left side, 2<sup>nd</sup> shelf, half-way down." Then he goes back to putting cans on the shelf oblivious to and unimpressed with his own intellectual feat.

I always marvel. How did he do that? He must be a genius! Perhaps he stays up all night studying detailed pictures of the organization of shelves in the grocery store. Perhaps he is going to school at night in pursuit of a doctorate, a PHD in grocery shelf stocking.

None of this is true obviously but the question remains. How does he know where everything in the store is without having to study and memorize notes? The answer is, "It's his job!" We can learn from here that anybody can learn anything when they make it their business and learning Torah is **our family business!**