

THE STICK FACTOR

by Torah.org

"How could you forget? You knew we arranged to meet for coffee at 1:30 today!"

"Really — it just slipped my mind. I'm sorry. I just forgot."

"What do you mean you just forgot?"

"I don't know. My memory isn't perfect. These things happen."

"Well, if it was really important to you, you would have remembered."

Ouch.

Moshe, in his address to the Jewish people as they're about to enter the promised land, declares, "G-d did not give you a heart to know... until today (Deut 29:3)." What does the verse mean when it says "a heart to know" — isn't it the brain that does the knowing?

The answer is that we remember, we retain what we have learned, when our hearts want it. There's so much trivia and outright nonsense in the average mind, but much less that makes a lasting impression. How can we recite the exact lines of *Return of the Jedi*, or all five stanzas to *We Didn't Start the Fire*, but not remember what the Rabbi said in his sermon last Shabbat? It's all about what we want to know. If it's really important to us, we remember it.

Knowing G-d, and studying His words of Torah are important to us, but we're often pulled in the other direction by more tantalizing pursuits. Jews pray each morning, "Put into our hearts" — help us want — "the ability to understand, to think, to hear, to learn, and to teach (*Siddur, Blessings of the Shema*)." Part of knowing is wanting to know. So if we don't actually want to learn as much as we should, let's pray for that: *we should want to want it*.