

WE SHOULD TAKE A LESSON FROM G-D

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape #406: Shul Elections. Good Shabbos!

We Should Take A Lesson From G-d

The verse says, "And they shall make for me a sanctuary and I shall dwell among them" [Shmos 25:8]. The Medrash elaborates as follows: G-d told the Jewish people that He gave them the most precious thing in the world -- the Torah. However, this caused a 'problem'. "I cannot separate myself from the Torah." G-d was unwilling, as it were, to just hand over the Torah to the Jewish people and walk away from it. "Therefore, wherever you go with the Torah, I want you to make a dwelling place for me, so that I might still be able to accompany the Torah."

The Medrash compares this to a father who marries off a daughter and finds it very difficult to part with her. So the father requests that the daughter build a room for him in her house, so that he can be a frequent visitor and still enjoy her company. The "room" that G-d asked the Jewish people to build for Him so that he could stay in proximity with the Torah is called the Beis HaMikdash [the Holy Temple].

The message in this Medrash is the message of love of Torah. G-d lacks nothing, but allegorically he is unable to separate himself from Torah because of His great attachment to it. We have the Torah. It is accessible to us. Unfortunately, we may not find it so difficult to separate ourselves from the Torah. We should take a lesson from G-d.

A Person Who Has Torah Has Everything

The verse at the end of last week's parsha says, "Moshe was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights" [Shmos 24:18]. The Yalkut on those words quotes the following Medrash: Rav Yochanan was travelling from Teveria to Tzipori, and he was riding on the shoulders of Rav Chiya Bar Abba. They passed by an orchard and Rabbi Yochanan remarked to Rav Chiya Bar Abba that he used to own this orchard, and then he sold it so that he would be able to spend his time learning Torah.

The Medrash then says that they walked a little further and they passed an olive grove. Again, Rabbi Yochanan said that he used to own this olive grove and he sold it to be able to spend his time learning Torah. They came to a vineyard and he again said that it used to be his, but he sold it so he would have the money to sit and learn Torah.

Rav Chiya Bar Abba was so overcome by this knowledge that he put Rav Yochanan down and started to cry. Rav Yochanan asked him why he was crying. Rav Chiya Bar Abba responded, "I am crying because you will not have anything left for yourself for your old age." In other words, "Where is your retirement fund?" Rav Yochanan responded, "Are you so upset that I sold something which took only six days to create, and exchanged it for something which took forty days and forty nights to acquire (i.e.-- the Torah)?"

Rav Yochanan protested, "I am not left with nothing. I have everything! I have all those years that I sat and learned Torah." The Medrash concludes that when Rav Yochanan died, they eulogized him with the pasuk "...If a man gives over all the treasure of his house with love..." [Shir HaShirim 8:7], saying the the pasuk alluded to the love that Rav Yochanan had for Torah.

"What do you mean I have nothing? I have everything!" A person who has Torah, has everything.

The Love Of Torah -- Father of the Ridbaz

The Ridbaz (Rabbi Yakov Dovid ben Ze'ev Willowski; 1845-1913) was a very interesting personality. At one point in his life, he lived in Chicago. At the end of his life, he lived in Tzfas. When he was a very old man, someone came into his Beis Medrash in Tzfas and he saw the Ridbaz hunched over his shtender (study desk), crying. This person asked the Ridbaz why he was crying. The Ridbaz answered, "It's my father's Yahrtzeit today". At the time of this incident, the father of the Ridbaz might have been dead for over 50 years, so the observer asked him further as to why he was crying.

The Ridbaz explained that he remembered the love of Torah that his father demonstrated. "I remember how much my learning meant to my father." He recounted that when he was six years old, his father hired a tutor (melamed) to teach him Torah. But his father could not afford to pay the tutor and he was two months behind in the tutor's payment. One day, the tutor sent home a note with the Ridbaz giving the father an ultimatum. If the tutor did not get paid, he would need to find other employment and stop learning with the child.

The father was beside himself with anxiety. He went to shul and overheard a wealthy man saying that he wanted to build a house for his future son-in-law who just got married, but he could not find the necessary bricks to make the chimney. Without a chimney, he could not build the house. The father of the Ridbaz went home and dismantled his own chimney brick by brick, sold the bricks to the wealthy person, paid the tutor the back wages and then had enough money to pay him for the next six months.

The Ridbaz said that he remembered the bitter cold of those winters. There was no heat in the

house. The father took apart the chimney so that the son could learn Torah. This, he explained, was why he was crying on the Yartzeit. He was not crying over the loss of a father fifty years after the fact. He was crying for the love of Torah that his father had, to the extent that the whole family should shiver through the winters so that the son could learn Torah.

This is an echo of what Rav Yochanan told Rav Chiya Bar Abba. "What do you mean I'll have nothing in my old age? I'll have the years I sat learning Torah. What could be more important than that?"

We have opportunities galore. We have the Torah there waiting for us in all forums and all shapes -- chavrusas, shiurim, all kinds of media -- we have it! As with many things in life, we fail to appreciate what we have. Our attitude must emulate that of G-d: "I am unable to separate myself from it."

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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Terumah are provided below:

- Tape # 044 - Changing Nusach: Ashkenaz vs. Sephard
- Tape # 087 - Microphone on Shabbos.
- Tape # 135 - Living Above a Shul
- Tape # 182 - Davening Towards Mizrach
- Tape # 228 - Selling a Shul
- Tape # 272 - Chazakah B'Mitzvos: Is This Maftir Yonah Mine?
- Tape # 318 - Taking Out Two Sifrei Torah
- Tape # 362 - The Mechitza -- How High?
- Tape # 406 - Shul Elections
- Tape # 450 - Bais Hakeneses & Bais Hamikdash -- Differences & Similarities
- Tape # 494 - Bima in the Center of the Shul
- Tape # 538 - Preventing the Building of a Shul
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