

משנה FOR נשמה



GLOBAL WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN TO LEARN PIRKEI AVOS

לע"נ הרב מנחם מענדל ע"ה בן יבלח"ט הרב ישראל שיחי'

פרק א'

מֹשֶׁה קִבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינִי וּמִסֶּרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וִיהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנָבִיאִים, וְנָבִיאִים מִסֶּרָה לְאַנְשֵׁי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוּלָּה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים: הָיוּ מְתוֹנִים בְּדִין, וְהִעֲמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיג לַתּוֹרָה.

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and gave it over to Joshua. Joshua gave it over to the Elders, the Elders to the Prophets, and the Prophets gave it over to the Men of the Great Assembly. They [the Men of the Great Assembly] would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgement. Establish many pupils. And make a safety fence around the Torah.

ONE MAY WONDER

Why is it necessary to list the many steps of the transition of Torah through the generations? The Mishna could more succinctly say "the Torah was passed down through every generation".

This question becomes even stronger when you notice that this list is far from complete. If for some reason it is important to list the generations, why have only certain ones been mentioned?

THE JOURNEY

The reason why only these specific groups of people or generations have been listed is because there is an important lesson that can be learned from each of them.

The Rebbe tells us to look at each step in transition of the Torah as a step in a person's Torah journey.

...משה קיבל תורה מסיני...

Moshe was known to be the most humble person. Moshe nullified his intelligence and had the Shechina speak through him without coloring Hashem's words at all with his understanding.

He personified **humility**.

When a baby is just starting to learn how to talk, we teach them about getting the Torah specifically from Moshe: "Torah tziva lanu Moshe" because the foundational step to a person living a life of learning and keeping Torah is humility.

We raise our babies and toddlers to give tzedakah, do a mitzva or say a bracha with the purity and simplicity akin to that of Moshe. We don't wait until they have the intelligence to understand what they are saying or doing.

This is the important first step in giving Torah to our children.

...ומסרה ליהושוע...

Yehoshua was Moshe's most focused dedicated student. He pitched his tent near Moshe's, and even when Moshe was outside of the camp or when Moshe had gone up the mountain to get the luchos, Yehoshua was not far behind. He had no will or life outside of what Moshe was teaching him.

Yehoshua personified absolute dedication and קבלת עול.

Once the child becomes of age to go to cheder and learn Torah, educate him to be as focused and dedicated to his learning Torah as possible. His intelligence and opinions are more developed than that of a baby but we still try to impart and apply Kabolas Ol to his learning. Obviously, children need to play etc. but the strong message is that

the most important thing we care about is his Torah learning.

In the Mishna the first two generations are linked with the words ומסרה – “and he gave it over” are from Moshe to Yehoshua to teach us that these two steps are especially linked one to the other. The only way Yehoshua was able to have such one track minded dedication was because he was a student of Moshe, who personified humility. In order to have our child be dedicated to learning with such a strong Kabolas Ol, the foundational acts of humility as a baby, to say and do without understanding at all, are linked.

...ויהשוע לזקנים...

The Zekeinim refer to a specific generation of leaders. However the word Zekeinim translates as “elders” and it is used as a word to refer to intelligent, learned people.

At this stage, as the child grows up, they have the cognitive ability to truly understand and appreciate Torah. **The avoda now is to encourage them to learn Torah not only with kabolos ol, but also to understand and to connect to the Torah.** Encourage them to form opinions, make inferences, and to insert their mind, individuality and passion into what they are learning. A person is supposed to try to enjoy learning Torah and to constantly grow in his breadth and depth of Torah knowledge.

...וזקנים לנביאים...

A Navi is someone who can give over a message from Hashem and has very strong awareness of Hashem in his life.

A Navi personifies **yiras shomayim**.

Having yiras shomayim means that you live with an awareness of Hashem and worry about chas veshalom misunderstanding a halacha and therefore guiding someone in the wrong way. Therefore, the Torah is being learned with even more depth and sharpness. The fear of misinterpreting and causing himself or another person to do an aveira sits heavy on him and the pressure produces yet an even higher quality level of Torah learning.

...ונביאים מסדרה לאנשי כנסת הגדולה...

After the first Beis Hamikdash was destroyed there were people who removed the description of Hashem that He is “awesome and strong” from davening. They rationalized that if people were able to come and destroy His Holy Temple, how awesome or strong can He be? The Anshei Knesses Hagedolah put those words back into our davening. They explained, the fact that He allowed this to happen and that the strength of Torah hasn't been diminished shows how great and strong He is, even more so.

They personified **learning Torah despite adversity**.

The golus we live in is difficult, our lives can be complicated and challenging, and we may think that now is not the time for me to learn. The truth is, that not only should we do our best to make our learning and our kids' learning a priority, but sometimes it's specifically in those times when the best learning happens and is needed most.

LAST LICKS

The Mishna continues:

1. Be careful with judgment. The spiritual state of our generation is so challenged. We need to recognize that and hold off from being judgmental of ourselves and others if the state of their Torah learning isn't as it should be. **Every small accomplishment and milestone should be celebrated and a victory against a difficult darkness.**

2. Set up many students. **With this sympathetic non judgmental perspective one is able to reach many students**, even the unmotivated or unaffiliated and teach them torah.
3. Make preventative fences for the Torah. Many ways have been set up to help any Yid, especially one who is struggling, succeed. By **being careful to stay away from doing the things that we are told can lead to aveiras**, not only do we have less chance of doing the aveira, we also get an extra zechus for each preventative thing we stay away from.

STORY

Mrs. Esther Sternberg relates:

Her father, Reb Zalman Gurary, was sent by the Rebbe to Eretz Yisroel as his shliach to bring the crown for the first children's sefer Torah, which was to be completed on Chof Av 5741*.

Mrs. Sternberg was about to give birth at the time, and due to some complications her father was quite concerned about her wellbeing. It seems that Reb Zalman mentioned his concern to the Rebbetzin, and when Mrs. Sternberg gave birth on 17 Av, the Rebbetzin called her at the hospital twice a day to inquire how she and the baby were doing. The Rebbetzin also called the Sternberg household every evening during this time period to speak with the oldest daughter and check on the other children.

On Chof Av the Rebbetzin called Mrs. Sternberg and during the conversation she asked: "Do you have a way to hear tonight's farbrengen?"

Mrs. Sternberg responded positively and explained that she had a special phone line that was connected to WLCC (World Lubavitch Communication Center).

The Rebbetzin told her: "In this case, it would be a great idea, to take your little girl in bed with you, and you should put the phone receiver between your ear and the baby's ear, as you listen to the Farbrengen so that the baby should also hear the Farbrengen, as it is very important that children should hear Chassidus!"

Mrs. Sternberg was in shock from what she just heard, and she promised the Rebbetzin she will follow her directives. She took the 3-day old infant with her in bed and put the receiver from the Rebbe's voice next to her ear. She remembers how the baby was laying very calmly the entire farbrengen.

Even tiny babies who have no sechel of their own, humble with the extreme humility of Moshe, can and should be in a Torah environment. Indeed this is the very first building block to a person receiving the Torah in all its levels.