

Enhancing Our Chashivus Hatorah - A Shavuos Message

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנחם | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי
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The Pesukim in Devarim (4:9-10) say, “Only you should be careful, and extremely guard your soul, lest you forget the things that you saw with your eyes, and perhaps it will be removed from your heart all the days of your life. You should make it known to your children and grandchildren the day that you stood in front of Hashem at Har Sinai.”

The Medrash Tanchuma comments, “This teaches us that anyone who neglects studying Torah is equated to one who denies Hashem. This is because the Torah was only given to Klal Yisrael so that they would be engaged in it all day and night, as it says (Yehoshua 1:8), ‘You should meditate in it by day and night’....and anyone who is involved in Torah and fulfills it, it is as if they received the Torah from Har Sinai. Therefore it says, ‘You should make it known to your children and grandchildren,’ and right next to it, it is written, ‘The day you stood in front of Hashem at Har Sinai.’”

At first glance the Medrash Tanchuma is difficult to comprehend. It is understandable to equate one who takes his learning seriously and passes it on to the next generation, as if he received the Torah from Har Sinai. Such a person clearly views the Torah as if Hashem is speaking to him, and therefore his learning experience is equated to receiving it from Har Sinai. However, the equation the Medrash makes between one who neglects Torah study and one who denies Hashem, is perplexing. What is the connection between these two? Generally a person who does not study Torah day and night is not doing so because he denies Hashem, rather it is often due to a lack of patience or ability to focus. This comparison necessitates further explanation.

The Medrash can be explained by understanding the deep connection between Torah study and Hashem. When one studies Torah it is as if he is at Har Sinai and Hashem is speaking to him. The learning process is not merely an intellectual exercise, rather the wisdom and depth of Torah

is beyond human comprehension, thus anything we attain is a gift from Hashem. Based on this perspective that the entire learning experience is so totally focused on Hashem, hence, if a person gives up on that, on a certain level he is ignoring Hashem. This explains the above equation, since Torah study signifies the process of encountering Hashem, a person who neglects studying Torah is to some degree denying Hashem by turning his back to Him. This Medrash clearly illustrates how connected Hashem is to the Torah and how Torah can help us connect to Hashem.

Another insight that can help enhance our Chashivus Hatorah can be learned from another comment by the Medrash Tanchuma on the Pasuk, (Devarim 4:140) “At the same time, Hashem commanded me to impart to you laws and rules for you to observe.” The Medrash indicates that Rabbi Yochanan says, that anyone who follows the Torah in truth, it is considered as if he created himself.

This Medrash implies that if one does not follow the Torah he is not merely missing out on a better way of life or a chance for more rewards, but he is not even considered created. Meaning, without the Torah it is as if he is not alive, because his life is bereft of meaning and purpose. However, with the Torah he is now considered alive, and it is as if he created himself. Thus, not only does a person who follows the Torah have a life, he is also given the credit for making himself alive.

As we celebrate Shavuos and Kabalas Hatorah, we can use these two ideas to enhance our Chashivus Hatorah. By recognizing that when we learn Torah we are encountering Hashem and He is kissing us, as it says in Shir Hashirim *ישקני מנשיקות פיהו*, and that we are literally creating ourselves through make our lives meaningful, our commitment to Limud Torah will surely increase.