

Fascinating INSIGHTS

טו אלול תש"פ

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A Supporter's Dream

The Chofetz Chaim¹ writes from sefarim that one who supports Torah, although he was an *Am Ha'aretz* in this world he merits that he will know the Torah in the future. This is easy to understand because he has reward for the Torah he supported and the great pleasure in Gan Eden is Torah. Consequently, how can he have pleasure in Gan Eden otherwise?

After one of the supporters of the Volozhiner yeshiva died, R' Chaim Volozhiner would learn Mishnayos in his memory. One day R' Chaim Volozhiner was leaning a difficult Mishna that he was unable to understand. From his exertion, he got tired and fell asleep. While asleep, the deceased appeared to him in a dream, explaining to him the Mishna, as if he was an expert in that Mishna—although he was ignorant in Torah throughout his life. When R' Chaim Volozhiner awoke, he exclaimed, "I knew that one who supports Torah receives Gan Eden. But I didn't know that it would happen so quickly" (as this story took place just a few days after this supporter's death.).

Telling Words

We commonly use words such as Mishna, Gemara, Tanna and the like. Do we ever wonder where these words come from?

The word משנה is related to משנה המלך,² deputy to the king. This is because תורה שבכתב, the written Torah, is supreme whereas Mishnayos is secondary (as in משנה המלך) in this regard.

Where does the term Taanaim come from? Mishna means to teach.³ Consequently, the people of the Mishna are called תנאים, teachers.

Why are those in the Gemara⁴ called Amoraim? אמורא refers to an interpreter as Rashi tells us.⁵ So, those in the Gemara are called Amoraim because they explain the Mishna (through Gemara).

A tractate is known as a Mesachta.⁶ Where does this word come from? מסכה יינה means mixture as in מסכה יינה, mixed her wine.⁷ This is because it is a mix of laws.⁸ The Aruch explains that מסכה is related to שמע ושמע, be attentive and hear, as this is how the Oral Torah was passed on.¹⁰

There are six sections to Shas, known by the acronym נקט. These six letters stand for the six sections—זרעים, מועד, נשים, נזיקין, קדשים, טהרות. The

³ One place we see this is by ושנתם לבניך, teach them to your children, which Targum Onkolos translates לתננו לבניך (Devarim 6:7).

⁴ Parenthetically, Gemara is in question form. For instance, the Gemara could say טעמא דרבי, the reason of Rebbe is.... Instead, it first asks what is the reason of Rebbe and then tells us the reason. This is because we should ask what is the reason once we hear Rebbe's opinion.

⁵ Yoma 20b, Rashi s.v. לא.

⁶ Titles of Mesachtos give us insight into the Mesachta. Let us take for example Mesachta Pesachim. Pesachim is in plural form. Why is it different than other Mesachtos where it is in singular form—Shabbos, Rosh Hashana, Succa and so on? (A) One answer is that there is also Pesach Sheini. Because there are two Pesachs, it is in plural form. This also explains the wording of ערבי פסחים which is plural as it refers to Erev Pesach Rishon and Erev Pesach Sheini (Pesachim 99b, Tosafos s.v. ערב). (B) Originally, Pesachim was divided into two—Chametz and Matza, and Korban Pesach. One was called Pesach Rishon and the other was called Pesach Sheini. Tosafos Yom Tov says it was prevalent in his time (Tosafos Yom Tov in the Hakdama to Pesachim). Regarding Mesachta דמאי, R' Elazar Rokeach (Maaseh Rokeach on Mishnayos, p. 22) comments that the 7 chapters of דמאי correspond to the 7 shepherds. They are all hinted to in the letters of דמאי—צברהם, צחק, בעקב, משה, צהרון, נוסף, ביד.

⁷ Mishlei 9:2.

⁸ Tosafos Yom Tov, Hakdama to Mesachta Brachos, s.v. מסכת. See also Sefer Chassidim 928 and the Bris Olam there.

⁹ Devarim 27:9.

¹⁰ See Eruvin 53a. The Rambam (Hilchos Mamrim 2:4) says a limb may be amputated to save an entire body. Similarly, the sages at times went against Torah. Examples: A) Transgress one Shabbos so that many more will be kept. B) To write down the Oral Torah. Tangentially, even though תורה שבעל פה, Oral Torah is written down today, it is nevertheless written in a way that it is חסורי מיחסרה והכי קתני, the text is missing words and this is how you should read it (a phrase from the Gemara).

¹¹ Of all six sections of Mishnayos, why is only מועד in singular form? One answer is that it refers to Shabbos which is the source of Kedusha of all the Moadim. Consequently, in Parshas Emor (chapter 23), when it is mentioning the Yomim Tovim,

¹ Shemiras Halashon, Shaar Hatorah, end of chapter 6.

² Divrei Hayamim 2, 28:7. Also Esther 10:3.

Abarbanel explains that זמן נקט forms the acronym for Shas since we must uphold תורה שבעל פה in all times, as this is what זמן נקט means.¹²

The question is asked¹³ why is Talmud Yerushalmi called so? After all, the Yeshiva of R' Yochanan and his students who arranged Talmud Yerushalmi were in Tevarya, not Yerushalayim? Furthermore, just as the Babylonian Talmud is called תלמוד בבלי, Talmud Yerushalmi should be titled תלמוד ארץ ישראל or תלמוד דבני מערבא. The answer given is that this follows the style of those from Yerushalayim as the Gemara says האני תנא ירושלמי הוא דתני לישנא קלילא, this Tanna was a Jerusalemite who taught using abbreviated language.¹⁴

The name for the Oral Torah is תורה שבעל פה. To be congruent with תורה שבכתב it should be called תורה שבעל פה. This hints to that one needs to be in control of his mouth (בעל פה) to merit תורה שבעל פה, as he shouldn't speak idle words rather words of Kedusha and Torah.¹⁶

A Seesaw

Rashi¹⁷ explains ואכלתם לחמכם לשבע, you will eat your bread to satiety, that one will eat a little and become satisfied. The Chassam Sofer¹⁸ wonders why this was necessary? Let the storehouses be filled and they can eat to satiation?

The more steeped into physicality one is, the less spirituality he can attain. In the third Ani Maamin we say ולא ישיגוהו משיגי הגוף, Hashem isn't affected by physical phenomena. Another interpretation given is that those

Shabbos is the first to be mentioned (This answers the question—see Vayikra 23:3, Rashi—why Shabbos is mentioned there after it says ... מועדי אם לא היה Shabbos isn't a Yom Tov). For this reason, the first Mesachta in the section of מועדי of Shas is Mesachta Shabbos.

¹² In fact, this is why the Torah was given in the Midbar, explains R' Moshe Feinstein, since it is a transitory place, not set. It is telling us that the Torah is not limited to a specific time or place in history. One can't say it doesn't apply in this society.

¹³ Shem Hagdolim, Maareches Sefarim, י, footnote 33.

¹⁴ Baba Kamma 6b. At times, the Gemara (as in Brachos 8a) concludes with תיקו. One meaning is that it derives from תיקום, let it stand, as it indicates the questions still stands and the matter remains in doubt. Others say תיקו is an acronym for תשובי, Eliyahu Hanavi—a native of Toshav—will resolve all the difficulties and questions (Tosafos Yom Tov to Idiyos 8:7, s.v. שנאמר).

¹⁵ Rabbi wrote it in a code as it is very concise, missing words, etc. Rav Ashi did the same with Gemara as it is half sentences, ambiguous texts, no punctuation and the like. Due to this, the reader becomes active in the text.

¹⁶ See Noam Elimelech, Bechukosai, s.v. ואיתא. Just as a spy's words mean something else because he talks in code, likewise תורה שבכתב deciphers the code of תורה שבעל פה. For example, it says עין תחת עין, an eye for an eye (Shemos 21:24). תורה שבעל פה teaches us it refers to money, not the actual eye. One outcome of this idea is that it makes it a transmission of giver and receiver. Additionally, it makes the Torah transferable to a generation such as ours. That is to say, we can translate, for instance, a fire to mean light and an ox to mean a car. Since it is based on a code, it just needs to be extrapolated.

¹⁷ Vayikra 26:5.

¹⁸ Bechukosai, s.v. ואכלתם.

who are into their physical desires (גוף) can't grasp Hashem, spirituality. In this way we can grasp an alternate explanation in הגשם ומוריד, raise your spirituality and lower the physicality.¹⁹

To understand this idea, let's take a look at a seesaw. When one side is up, the other is down. This is in accord with ולא מלאם יאמץ, the might passes from one regime to another²⁰ and as Rashi says כשזה קם זה נופל, when this one rises the other falls.²¹

In light of what we said, we can answer our original question as through being satiated with little food they can now truly have Torah,²² since one can't be steeped in physicality and spirituality simultaneously.

Unhappy Service

It is written תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלהיך בשמחה... because you didn't serve Hashem with Simcha...²³ The question is asked by many: The result of a lack of Simcha is all these curses?!

We must serve Hashem with Simcha.²⁴ In שמע אחד... the ע of שמע and the ד of אחד are written large in a Sefer Torah. These two spell עד, witness because by reciting Shema we bear witness to Hashem's oneness. What do the remaining letters of שמע and אחד spell? אשמח, and it says ואני אשמח בה', I will rejoice in Hashem.²⁶ We must accept Hashem's sovereignty (symbolized by Shema) with Simcha and as it says בשמחה עבדו את ה', serve Hashem with Simcha.²⁷

When we have true Simcha, we don't sin. The above Pasuk can now be understood that the underlying (תחת) cause of sin is a lack of Simcha.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander Tz"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁹ In this light, the Sefas Emes comments on (Avos 1:17) ולא מצאתי ולא טוב לגוף משתיקה that there is a constant battle between the body and soul. So, this can be understood as silence the body. See also Kesubos 104a, Tosafos s.v. לא and the Rambam in Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:12.

²⁰ Breishis 25:23, see Rashi.

²¹ See Derech Hashem 1:3:2.

²² See Vayikra 26:3, Rashi.

²³ Devarim 28:47. Parenthetically, on the Shalosh Regalim we have a special Mitzva of Simcha. Consequently, שמח is an acronym for שמחתנו, מתן תורתנו, חרותנו—Succos, Shavuos and Pesach.

²⁴ The father of R' Tzvi Meir Silverberg was once asked how he merited to have such a son. His response (after he said סייעתא דשמיא, heavenly assistance): he emphasized Simcha in the house.

²⁵ Devarim 6:4.

²⁶ Tehillim 104:34.

²⁷ Tehillim 100:2. R' Bachaye (Devarim 28:47) writes that the Simcha of a Mitzva is itself a Mitzva. As a result, one receives reward for the Simcha in addition to the Mitzva itself.