

Fascinating INSIGHTS

יד' אב תשפ"א

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[Widow at the Window](#)

We know that we must treat widows with extra sensitivity.¹ Here are stories that demonstrate this. R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was once about to recite Birkas Ilanos in Nissan on a fruit tree when someone told him that there is a more preferable place to say it—

around the corner in someone's yard where there were two fruit trees (Saying it on two fruit trees is a *hidur*). R' Shlomo Zalman responded that "this tree in front of us has a special *hidur* since it is owned by a widow. She waits the entire year for me to make a bracha on her tree, as you can see her from the window us. This tree therefore has a bigger *hidur*."

In 2007, four years after R' Michel Birnbaum² passed away, his grandson in Lakewood had his second boy. Everyone thought the baby would be named Michel, after the grandfather. This was also because the first boy was named from his wife's side. To the shock of everyone, the father named the child Shimon Aryeh—after his wife's grandfather. At the Bris, he explained that while R' Michel was on his deathbed, he said that if his wife's grandmother is alive and he has a baby boy, name it after her husband so that it gives pleasure to the widow. (This didn't apply to his wife because she already passed away before him.)

Before R' Shraga Feivel Frank³ passed away at the age of 43 from pneumonia, he instructed his wife to marry off his four unmarried daughters (These were their only children.) to the greatest Torah scholars of the time, and to use his estate to provide them with their material needs. As a result his wife thoroughly researched each potential candidate. His eldest daughter married R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein (1866-1933), the second married R' Isser Zalman Meltzer (1870-1953), the third married R' Baruch Yehoshua Horowitz and the fourth married R' Sheftel Kramer. The one who married R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein was originally engaged to R' Aharon Bakst⁴ (1869-1941). R' Bakst noticed that after the engagement his Kalla's mother didn't have the natural joyous look that a mother of an engaged daughter would normally have so he asked his Kalla about this. She told him that her mother promised her father, R' Shraga Feivel, before he died that she would marry off their four daughters to the greatest Torah Scholars and you were one of them. But then she found out R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein was considered more prominent than you, so she feels she didn't follow the instruction of her husband. R' Bakst then said to his kalla, "If you agree, I'll break the engagement so that you can marry R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein so as not to cause your mother pain." And that is what happened! If that wasn't enough, listen to the next part. Years later R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel, known as the Alter of Slabodka, told R' Bakst that he wants to appoint him the Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka, which was considered the most prominent position at that time. R' Bakst refused, explaining that if he becomes the Rosh Yeshiva then

² He was a student of the Mir Yeshiva in the pre-war era and later became the Mashgiach of MTJ (Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim)—R' Moshe Feinstein's Yeshiva.

³ He was one of the wealthiest men in Kovno, as he owned a leather factory, a leather goods store, and a great deal of real estate. In his attic R' Yisrael Salanter, whom he was a student of, began teaching mussar to R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel (known as the "Alter of Slobodka"), R' Yitzchak Blazer (known as Reb Itzele Peterburger, because later became Rav of Petersburg) and others. In that attic, R' Yisrael and his disciples would spend the entire month of Elul where he would give lectures. R' Shraga Feivel would secretly hand out rent money to his tenants to enable them to make their payment to his wife when due.

⁴ He was a Rav in several communities until he was murdered by the Nazis in 1941.

¹ See Shemos 22:21-3.

the mother of the girl he was previously engaged to will think she made a mistake in that R' Bakst is greater than R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein. Due to his refusal, R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein became the Rosh Yeshiva!

Consolation

The Haftora begins נחמו נחמו עמי, comfort, comfort My people. Why the repetition?⁵

The consolation is referring to the Batei Mikdash that were destroyed. We therefore have the double wording since it is alluding to both Batei Mikdash. At times when one is going through a difficult seemingly never-ending trouble in his life, he may wonder to himself does this ever end. He may say to himself מאין יבא עזרי, from where will my help come.⁶ This may include dating, an illness and the like. The same applies with the loss of the Beis Hamikdash and Galus. We need to realize עזרי נחמו, my help is from Hashem.⁷ This is the meaning in נחמו עמי as the consolation for the Beis Hamikdash is that the help will come from Hashem.

The Difference Between 100 And 101

The Gemara⁸ tells us אינו דומה...לשונה פרקו מאה ואחד, there is no comparison between one who learns something 100 times and 101. This is learned from עובד אלהים לא עבדו, then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves Hashem and one who doesn't.⁹ עובד אלהים לא עבדו contain the initials which total 101. That is an עובד אלהים. How does the Pasuk classify one who is לא עבדו? Calculating those initials it gives us a sum of 100.¹⁰

The Kli Yakar¹¹ explains this is because the Malach appointed over memory is named זכר and has 227 כוחות, powers, strengths. The Malach for forgetting is שכח and possess 328 כוחות. It therefore has 101 more כוחות. Each time we learn, we weaken one כח from the Malach of forgetting. Once the

material is reviewed¹² 101 times he is under the dominion of the Malach of remembering and doesn't forget it anymore.¹³

The word to remember is זכר while to forget is שכח. The Gra¹⁴ among others point out if we take the difference of the value of these words we get 101 as זכר yields a sum of 227 and שכח of 328.¹⁵

The Shach¹⁶ writes: "Honestly, for many years I invested a great amount of work. I wasn't busy with anything else, I gave up a lot of sleep... I examined each case from every side, not once or twice, but rather a hundred and one times."

R' Meir Shapiro and other Talmidei Chachamim were passing by the home of the Maharsham who was sick in bed. The Maharsham overheard them arguing about an obscure Halacha and told R' Shapiro that it is in the Darkei Moshe in Hilchos Mezuzah and showed it to him in the margin handwritten in his Tur. He explained he just finished reviewing the Tur 101 times.

R' Moshe Feinstein invited someone to what he called his second Siyum Hashas. The invitee was perplexed as he knew R' Moshe finished Shas many more times than twice. R' Moshe explained that he considered each set of 101 times as one. His second Siyum Hashas was really his 202nd time.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years. He received semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the books, Fascinating Insights and Incredible Insights in addition to being the host of The Fascinating Insights Podcast. His writings, some of which have been translated into German and French, 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 Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹² R' Yitzchak Hunter once remarked that no one ever became great from הלימוד התורה, learning Torah. They became great from הלימוד, reviewing their learning.

¹³ There are other techniques also. Writing is like learning the material four times. However, typing on a computer doesn't make the same impression. This is because any key typed on the computer is the same. There is no difference between pressing the letter "w" or "g." On the contrary, when we write, each letter has its own shape and design. Additionally, when we write we put in more of our own toil than when typing.

¹⁴ Devarim 6:7.

¹⁵ There is a tombstone in Har Menuchos located near where R' Moshe Feinstein is buried that says "Here lies buried R' Elazar Yosef Lederberg who learned and reviewed Mesachta Rosh Hashana and Beitzah by heart more than 4,000 times. He died on the 23rd of Sivan תשי"ד, 1954." R' Lederberg wrote this inscription in order to arouse others to learning Torah. What is the story behind this? R' Lederberg was a man who dedicated most of his time to Torah, and authored a sefer called Ahavas Hashem. As he got older, his vision was becoming dimmer. The doctor told him that he needed to go through a complicated surgery in order to save his eyesight. However, there was a risk that he may go blind as a result of the surgery. This left him frightened because without vision he would be unable to learn. After having a sleepless night, he went to the doctor's office the following day to ask what the maximum time allowance was for him to safely delay the surgery. The doctor told him that he has six months. For the next six months he learned in the Beis Midrash learning and reviewing the Mesachtos of Rosh Hashana and Beitzah, so that if he would go blind he would still be able to learn as it would be memorized in his head. He went through the surgery after six months. However, it would take weeks to see if it would render him blind. During that period people visited him and they were amazed at his tranquility although he was still unsure if he would go blind. He explained to them that for the last six months he was learning and reviewing Rosh Hashana and Beitzah in order that if he went blind he would still be able to learn because he now knew it by heart. In the end, the operation was a success. Although with his new perfect eyesight he could learn many more aspects of Torah, he never abandoned these two Mesachtos. The outcome was that he learned these two Mesachtos, times in his lifetime!

¹⁶ Introduction to the Shach, s.v. אמר המהרש"א.

⁵ Every setback and defeat—whether financial, social or anything else—has two parts. One is the setback or defeat itself. The second is the feeling of being abandoned by Hashem. The feeling of where were you, Hashem? Why didn't you look out for me? We see this in the words ואמר וזכרתי, and Zion said, "Hashem has forsaken me, my L-rd has forgotten me" (Yeshaya 49:14). This is why it says נחמו עמי twice in נחמו עמי יאמר אלהים, comfort, comfort My people, says your G-d (Yeshaya 40:1).

⁶ Tehillim 121:1.

⁷ When we look at נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלהים, comfort, comfort My people, says Hashem (Yeshaya 40:1), we notice it is in future tense. This is to tell us that in each generation, Hashem consoles us for the issues and hardships we deal with. Every year, Hashem tells us to be uplifted and comforted, for better days are coming.

⁸ Chagiga 9b. (1) Another meaning in this statement is that there is no comparison between one who learns the material 100 times to one who learns it 100 times with the אחד-ה'—אחד. Connecting to Hashem while learning may be overlooked but is very necessary (see Nefesh Hachaim 4:7). Before we learn we should say I am learning Toras Hashem. There are those, including R' Akiva Eiger, who when for example learning Gemara would say אמר אביי—Abaye says the Ratzon Hashem is So they would do with all their learning. There were Gedolim who when they didn't comprehend what they were learning would stop and cry out to Hashem until they got the explanation. (2) The Imrei Emes gives a different novel interpretation and says there is no comparison to one who learns the material 100 times to one who learns the 100th time as if it was the 1st. Most of us get dulled after several times of learning the same subject. However, Torah has so much depth to it and as it says הפך בה ודלדל בה, delve and continue to delve in the Torah for everything is in it (Avos 5:25).

⁹ Malachi 3:18.

¹⁰ Maharsha, Shelah.

¹¹ Devarim 4:9. He says that this is hinted to in ושמר בך ושמר נפשך מאד as the initials equal 101 (besides לך). The ל represents התורה (as ל spelled out is למד התורה meaning learn it 101 times since otherwise as the Pasuk continues ופן תשכח את הדברים—you may forget).