

Haazinu 2016

1.

Is heaven connected to earth?

“Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth.” (32, 1)

"האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי."

Both heaven and the earth are mentioned in this pasuk. The question arises; why is it that the continued existence of this world is dependent on Jews learning Torah? The Kli Yakar explains that the upper world and the lower worlds are completely opposite. There needs to be some sort of intermediary that combines the two. Humans are this crucial intermediary. We are comprised of both physical and spiritual elements. Without the Torah however, we have no connection to the heavens.

2.

Wealth or poverty, which is better for avodas Hashem?

“Jeshurun (Israel, when it does not deviate from the high standards demanded by God) became fat and kicked” (32, 15)

"וישמן ישרון ויבעט."

The Gemara in Berachos (32a) relates that Moshe attempted to defend the Jews. He tried to defend their sin of the golden calf by claiming that upon leaving Egypt, the Jews had an overabundance of silver and gold that they took from the Egyptians. They used this to create the golden calf. A lion doesn't get happy, crazy and damage from a box of straw, rather from a box of meat. The Di-zahav (acquiring silver and gold from the Egyptians) at the end of the pasuk is Moses's defense for the sinner's reason for making the golden calf. This is analogous to a son who is bathed, anointed, and fed well. He is given a wallet that is hung around his neck. He is then placed in front of a place of prostitution. Will he not sin? So too, the Jews had nothing to do in the desert. They had an overabundance. Moshe asked, were they really expected not to sin? דבי רבי ינאי אמרי מהכא "ודי זהב" מאי ודי זהב? אמרי דבי רבי ינאי כך אמר משה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם בשביל כסף וזהב שהשפעת להם לישראל עד שאמרו די - הוא גרם שעשו את העגל. אמרי דבי רבי ינאי אין ארי נהם מתוך קופה של תבן אלא מתוך קופה של בשר. אמר רבי אושעיא משל לאדם שהיתה לו פרה כחושה ובעלת אברים האכילה כרשינין והיתה מבעטת בו. אמר לה מי גרם לך שתהא מבעטת בי? אלא כרשינין שהאכלתיך. אמר רבי חייא בר אבא אמר רבי יוחנן משל לאדם אחד שהיה לו בן, הרחיצו וסכו והאכילו והשקו, ותלה לו כיס על צוארו, והושיבו על פתח של זונות, מה יעשה אותו הבן שלא יחטא? אמר רב אחא בריה דרב הונא אמר רב ששת היינו דאמרי אינשי מלי כריסיה זני בישי שנאמר "כמרעיתם וישבעו וירם לבם על כן שכחוני" רב נחמן אמר מהכא "ורם לבבך ושכחת את ה'" ורבנן אמרי מהכא "ואכל וישבע ודשן ופנה." ואי בעית אימא מהכא "וישמן ישרון ויבעט." אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני אמר רבי יונתן מנין שחזר הקדוש ברוך הוא והודה לו למשה? שנאמר "וכסף הרביתי להם וזהב (עשו לבעל)." (עשו לבעל.)

The Chinuch (mitzvah 248) explains that **most sins occur because of overeating**. The reason for this is eating is physical as we know, while Torah and mitzvos are spiritual. The spiritual and physical are complete opposites. When one overindulges the physical overpowers and naturally

weakens his spirituality. Therefore the Torah and mitzvos will be unable to endure within one who is overtaken by the physical. ( והענין הוא לפי שהמזונות רוב חטאות בני אדם יעשו בסבת ריבוי האכילה והשתיה. והענין הוא לפי שהמזונות הם עיסת החומר, וההתבוננות במושכל וביראת אלהים ובמצוותיו היקרות היא עיסת הנפש, והנפש והחומר הפכים גמורים כמו שכתבתי בראש הספר, ועל כן בהתגבר עיסת החומר תחלש קצת עיסת הנפש. ומזה השורש היו מן החכמים זכרונם לברכה שלא היו נהנין במזונות רק למה שצריך להחיות נפשם לבד, וכמו שכתוב [משלי יג, כה] "צדיק אוכל לשובע נפשו".

Based on the aforementioned information we can easily understand the Gemara in Nedarim (81a) that says be careful with poor people because the Torah will come from them. ( הזהרו בבני עניים שמהן ) Rashi explains that we shouldn't view teaching them as a light and insignificant matter. The Ran explains that **poor people have more time. Since they are unemployed they have more time. They could utilize this time by learning.** **Another reason why the Torah will come from them is because they are humble.** Since they are so socioeconomically low, they essentially have absolutely nothing to be haughty about. (להשתדל ללמדם תורה שמהן תצא תורה שאין להם עסק אחר ועוד שדעתם שפלה עליהם.)

Let's elaborate on the second reason that the Ran related. Rabbi Arya Leib Katz (shut Ohel Arya chalek beis siman 20) quotes the Gemara in Tanis (7a) that says the Torah will only exist within someone who is humble. The Torah is compared to water. Just as water descends (due to gravity), for example if water is on a hill; so too, the Torah will exist within one who is humble. One of the forty eight ways to acquire the Torah is through humility, as stated in Avos (perek vav). The Gemara in Nedarim (38) states, Hashem only rests His divine presence amongst one who is humble. The Shearim Hametzuyim Behalacha quotes the Gemara in Kesubos (103b) that states that Rabbi Chiya strived to teach orphans Torah. The reason why he exerted so much effort to teach specifically orphans is because of their great humility.

Let's now return to the first reason that the Ran related. The Torah Temimah (Bamidbar (24, 15)) explains that **wealthy people are typically high maintenance. They are involved with a lot of stuff. This takes away time from learning Torah.**

The Maharal (Chidushei Agados) offers another reason why the Torah will most probably last within poor people more than with others. Poor people aren't involved with many of the physicality's that others are involved with. The Torah will therefore be able to enter and stay within their minds more than in others. They are more removed from this world.

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (Tiferes Shimshon pages 249-250) explains that regarding chesed (kindness), an overload could be problematic. Any time we receive some good we must thank Hashem and be careful not to get too ahead of ourselves. Kindness in this world is bordered, or limited. The reason for this is we are unable to withstand an overabundance. The Gemara in Tanis (23a) relates that Hashem withheld rain from descending because we were unable to handle such a great abundance. Similarly, sometimes parnassah (sustenance) is withheld from us. The reason why this occurs, as mentioned above, is because we are unable to handle an overabundance. If these people would have their desired parnassah then they would detach themselves from Hashem. Conversely, the Torah is a borderless and limitless gift that Hashem bestowed upon us. We can freely learn without needing to worry about any potential concern. Just as in the next world there won't be any boundaries, so too, learning Torah in this world is boundless. The Gemara in Berachos (40a) quotes Rabbi Zara who says that Hashem is different than humans. Regarding humans, an empty cup can hold a beverage; however, full cups cannot

hold more liquid. Hashem differs in this regard. Something that is full can hold more and something that isn't full can't hold more. There is always more room for more Torah. If the cup isn't full, aka someone who doesn't learn; he will have difficulty learning. For example, someone who consistently lifts weights will be able to lift more than someone who doesn't consistently lift weights. The reason for this is the consistent lifter built up a tolerance. The concept of tolerance also applies to drinking alcoholic beverages. Tolerance certainly applies to learning Torah.

The Chafetz Chaim (Al Hatorah pages 289-290) relates a story of two sisters who got married. One of them married someone wealthy and the other one married someone poor. Many years later, the sister who married the poor person visited her sister. When she came to the house she was greeted by her sister's finely dressed servant. The servant asked for her name. She responded and then entered into her sister's large house. She saw enormous rooms with very fancy and expensive interior decorations. She asked her sister why she looked so sad, after the fact that she wasn't lacking anything. She responded that even though she wasn't lacking anything, nevertheless she was sad because of her husband. She said that he doesn't listen to me, or let me express my opinion. Sometimes she would even get disgraced in front of others by her husband. She then said that she wouldn't be surprised if her sister's portion was better than hers. Even though she is poor and doesn't have the same quality of jewelry, nevertheless, at least her husband respects her properly and allows her to express her opinion. The same applies to the Torah. Sometimes people dress up the Torah. They use fancy items and hang jewels on the sefiray Torah. It is useless if the Torah and sefarim are just shelved and not used. Even though those who are poor won't elaborately decorate the Torah, nevertheless, they will properly respect the Torah.

Rav Shalomo Kluger said in his will that he wants to be buried next to poor people.

The easy part is buying sefarim or paying a Rabbi to teach Torah. The hard part is the diligence and toiling for one to become a talmid chacham.

**In summary: there are advantages and disadvantages of both wealth and poverty. Some of the pros of wealth are the following: he might not need to work as much and as hard as someone who is poor to put bread on the table. Furthermore, he never needs to worry that he won't be able to feed his family. Additionally, typically, those who are wealthy are able to learn with yeshuv hadaas (a settled/calm mindset). Additionally, he will be able to afford a good Rabbi to teach him Torah. Lastly, he will be able to afford good doctors to take care of his health.**

**Some of the pros of poverty are the following: the aforementioned sources that relate the benefits of being poor. They have more time. They are more humble. They don't have the overabundance that causes people to sin.**

**Some of the disadvantages of poverty are the following: they might need to spend more time working or trying to collect money. They might be more tired at the end of the day, not having any strength to learn. They are constantly worried that they might not have food to eat. They won't be able to afford a good Rabbi to teach them Torah. They won't be able to afford good doctors.**

**What is the bottom line? Which one is better at the end of the day? Maybe someone in between is the best option, one who lives an average lifestyle. Statistically, poor people are**

**more religious than those who are wealthy.** The Gemara in Yuma (35b) relates that the poor person, wealthy person and rasha will all get judged after they die. If the poor person tries to defend himself for not learning because he was poor and he had to work, then he will be asked were you poorer than Hillel. Hillel was so poor that he would use half of his wages to enter into the Yeshiva. Once he couldn't afford to enter the Yeshiva, he climbed up to the skylight of the Yeshiva to listen to the shiur. Unaware of the snow he froze. The next morning they realized that he was frozen and unable to move. They lowered him and helped him. If the wealthy person claims that he was preoccupied with his business and therefore he didn't have time to learn, then he will be asked were you wealthier than Rebbi Eliezer ben Charsom. He had large and incomparable amount of wealth. He remained low key his entire life in order that he could devote his time to learning Torah.

The Rambam (hilchos Talmud Torah perek alef Halacha 8) says that **everyone is obligated to learn, whether they are wealthy or poor.** It is irrelevant whether one is married or not, old or young. Even one who collects money from the tzedaka box is obligated to learn. Even one who has a lot of kids is obligated to set time to learn during the day and night.