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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת תצוה

וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלַיךְ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לְמָאוֹר. (שמות כז, כ)

They shall take for you pure, pressed olive oil for illumination. (Shemos 27:20)

This week's *parshah* instructs that the oil used for lighting the Menorah must be absolutely pure. Rashi brings from Chazal that the oil had to be *pressed* and not crushed to ensure that it was free from olive particles or sediment. After the oil was pressed, the remaining oil could be crushed and used for the *menachos*. Rashi derives this from the words *כְּתִית לְמָאוֹר* - pressed for lighting, *וְלֹא כְּתִית לְמִנְחוֹת* - but it doesn't need to be pressed for the *menachos*.

The Maharit explains that the oil used for the *menachos* was filtered at a later stage, resulting in the same final product as that used for lighting. However, the only difference was that the oil used for lighting was pure from the very beginning, whereas for the *menachos*, purity was only achieved at a later stage.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that the Menorah symbolises Torah as the *possuk* (Mishlei 6:23) says, *כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אֹר*, *for a mitzvah is a lamp and the Torah is light*. The higher degree of purity required for the Menorah teaches how Torah requires sheer purity from birth. This concept is similarly found in Avos DeRav Nosson (24) which states: *הַלּוֹמֵד תּוֹרָה בְּיָלְדוּתוֹ הַתּוֹרָה נִבְלַעַת בְּדַמָּיו*, *One who learns Torah in his early years, the Torah gets absorbed in his blood*. By beginning to learn Torah in his youth, one transforms his very essence, with his veins pulsating Torah, and his life being directed and nourished by the Torah he has learned.

The Mishna in Pirkei Avos (4:20) states:

הַלּוֹמֵד יֶלֶד לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְדִיּוֹ כְּתוּבָה עַל נֵר חֲדָשׁ. וְהַלּוֹמֵד זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דוֹמֶה, לְדִיּוֹ כְּתוּבָה עַל נֵר מְחֻיָּק.

One who studies Torah as a child, to what can he be likened? – to ink written on a fresh paper. And one who studies Torah as an old man, to what can he be likened? – to ink written on smudged paper.

By analysing the *mashal* of Chazal we can make the following observation. Ink written on a used and smudged paper is immediately absorbed, but the letters become blurred and distorted. Similarly, when a person begins to learn Torah at an advanced age, after fulfilling their worldly desires and realising the futility of those pleasures, their heart may be open to the words of Torah which can penetrate at once. However, they lack the inner strength to grasp its concepts clearly, since having gone through years of life without Torah, their senses have been dulled, and the “writing” of Torah they now wish to inscribe on their heart may be unclear and blurry.

In contrast, when writing with ink on fresh paper, the writing appears sharp, but it takes time for the ink to be absorbed. Likewise, when we learn Torah during our formative years, the writing is clear and discernible, providing us with lessons to be internalised throughout our lives. The Torah (*Devorim 6:6*)

commands us: **עַל לְבַבְךָ**, *let these matters that I command you today be **upon** your heart*. The *possuk* uses the word **עַל**, *upon*, instead of **בְּ**, *in*, indicating that we are not asked to force the Torah into our hearts, but to place it upon our hearts. This is because Torah often takes time to fully penetrate and be internalised. Our mission is to ensure that the words of Torah are placed upon our hearts, so that when the appropriate time and place arises, the lessons are easily accessible.

The Midrash (*Shir Hashirim Rabbah*) writes that Shlomo HaMelech wrote the various *seforim* he authored at different stages of his life. He wrote Shir Hashirim during his childhood, Mishlei as a young adult, and Koheles during his older years. The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita*, citing his uncle R' Eliezer Lopian *zatzal*, explains that this Midrash can also be understood metaphorically, referring to the stage in life when one is introduced to the Torah. The Midrash is teaching that someone who becomes familiar with Torah in childhood will have a life of "Shir Hashirim" – a life full of meaning, purpose, and joy, as the *possuk* (*Tehillim* 19:9) says: **פְּקוּדֵי ה' יִשְׂרָיִם מְשַׂמְּחֵי לֵב**, *the orders of Hashem are upright, gladdening the heart*. A person who only starts learning in adulthood will face difficulty due to the habits and lifestyle they have already adopted. However, he can still merit living a life of "Mishlei" – a life of purpose based on Torah intellect which directs him and infuses meaning into life. Lastly, the life of someone who only became acquainted with the teachings of the Torah in old age can be compared to "Koheles." Unfortunately, such a life will end up being futile and meaningless, similar to the gloomy passages of **הַבְּלִים הַבְּלִים** described in Koheles.

Let us appreciate the role that learning Torah plays in bringing us clarity in Torah and life. Although the knowledge we acquire may not always have an immediate impact, the wisdom is upon our hearts providing us with direction, purpose, meaning, and joy throughout our lives!

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