

So now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to Bnei Yisrael. (31:19)

Every *ben Yisrael*, Jew, is enjoined to write a *Sefer Torah*. The source of this *mitzvah* is the above *pasuk*. *Mitzvas Kesivas Sefer Torah*, the commandment to write a *Sefer Torah*, has the distinction of being the last, 613th, *mitzvah* of the Torah. It is the culmination of the Torah's commandments. When one writes something down on paper, he concretizes it. I remember visiting my *Rosh Yeshivah*, **Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl**, with a request for his approbation on one of my volumes. He began to weep. He said that part of his learning process was to put to immediately paper the *chiddushim*, original thoughts, which he innovated during his learning.. Due to his illness, his hand had begun to tremble, making writing most difficult and hardly legible. For this, he wept. His learning was (to him) incomplete.

In his commentary to this *pasuk*, the **Torah Temimah** wonders where in this *pasuk* is the indication that one is required to write an entire Torah scroll. The *pasuk* says, "Write this song," which is a reference to *Shiras Ha'azinu*, the song of *Ha'azinu*, which is in the following *parsha*. It does not state that an entire Torah be written. He quotes the *Rambam*, *Hilchos Sefer Torah* 7:2, who interprets the commandment that every Jew write a *Sefer Torah*, which includes *Shiras Ha'azinu*. Since one may not write the Torah piecemeal, *parshiyos*, *parshiyos*, chapters, chapters, it is prohibited to only write *Shiras Ha'azinu*. The song must be part of an all-inclusive edition of the entire Torah.

The *Rambam* begs elucidation. To say that it is prohibited to write individual *parshiyos* impugns the allowability of writing the *parshiyos* of *Tefillin* and *Mezuzah*. Only small segment of the Torah is included in the *Tefillin* – even less goes into the *Mezuzah*. What does the *Rambam* mean? In his *A Vort from Rav Pam*, Rabbi Sholom Smith quotes the *Rosh Yeshivah*, *zl*, who explains this matter in his usual manner – with simple, poignant profundity that goes to the crux of the issue.

The purpose of *Kesivas Sefer Torah* is not to store it in one's bookcase. It is for *V'lamadah es Bnei Yisrael*, "To teach *Bnei Yisrael*." For the purpose of teaching *Klal Yisrael* Torah, one may not write chapters, chapters. The two *parshiyos* of *Tefillin* and *Mezuzah* are not written for the purpose of studying them. They are placed into the boxes and remain there for all time. Therefore, there is no issue concerning writing their *parshiyos*, *parshiyos*.

What is the problem with writing chapters, chapters, if the Torah is written for the purpose of teaching? *Rav Pam* explains that, when one learns Torah, he must focus on the entire Torah as one whole, one unit. He must see before him the entire Torah. When one views the Torah piecemeal, it undermines his drive and passion to become knowledgeable in the entire Torah.

Rav Pam relates that **Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl**, was once shown an innovative printing of a *Gemarah*. It was printed on individual loose-leaf pages to be later placed in a loose-leaf binder and

placed together. He became upset, exclaiming, “Is this what the Torah is, a sheet of paper? A *talmid*, student, must see the entire *hekef*, broad scope, of Torah, thereby realizing the all-encompassing profundity of Hashem’s wisdom. Only when one sees the whole *Gemorah* in its entirety, does he develop a desire to master it all. If, however, he views Torah as a piece of paper, how can he be inspired to become fluent in all of *Shas*?”

It is not this author’s place to remark concerning the importance of covering ground in Torah study. Historically, however, in Europe, the *baal ha’bayis*, learned layman, was well-versed in all of *Shas*. He did not only cover the first few *blatt*, pages, of a *Meseches*. He studied and became proficient in the entire *Meseches*. *Rav Pam* decries the fact that we have not mastered *Shas* and that only *Orach Chaim* and parts of *Yoreh Deah* are the areas of *Shulchan Aruch* in which we are accomplished. We are, in essence, neglecting the entirety of the Torah.

Rav Pam suggests that this is what the *Rambam* is teaching us. Do not write Torah, *parshiyos*, *parshiyos*, do not settle for mediocrity in Torah study. Torah is our life blood. Why would anybody want to shortchange his life?

Perhaps we might supplement the shortsightedness of learning Torah *parshiyos*, *parshiyos*, with an analogy which I feel applies with regard to all self-guided perceptions. We see what we want to see. We also see only what is within our ability to see. Thus, if the big picture is either beyond us or above us, we might think that we are seeing something, but it is nothing in comparison to one whose vision is more perceptive than ours.

Let me explain. In his *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, **Horav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, zl**, describes two approaches to Torah. There is the individual who is able to absorb the inner essence of Torah, because his level of purity is quite lofty. His closeness with Hashem, his *deveikus*, clinging to the Almighty, is so close that it precludes any personal need to probe the inner reason for specific *mitzvos* intellectually. He does not find it necessary to know why Hashem wants him to perform a certain *mitzvah*. It is enough for him simply to know that Hashem wants it. His closeness to Hashem is his all-encompassing interest. Nothing else matters. He is neither guided by need or expediency. Reason does not play a role in his relationship vis-à-vis Hashem.

The second Jew has not yet achieved this pinnacle of faith, this intense closeness with Hashem. He will apply his intellect to understand and give reason for those *mitzvos* which are cogently perceptible. He will, however, execute those *mitzvos* which are above him, because this is a Jew’s obligation. He needs a reason, but he understands that some things are beyond his realm of perception, although he does feel that something is inordinately missing. His relationship with Hashem is that of *yirah*, fear/awe – not of *deveikus*, closeness/clinging.

Having delineated between these two individuals, *Rav Dessler* offers the following analogy to explain this distinction: A child who is learning the *Aleph Bais*, compared to an adult who is proficient in *Talmud*. The child sits on the adult’s lap and gazes into the same *Gemorah* as the

adult. The child sees the familiar *alef, bais, gimmel*, while the adult, of course, sees and understands the profundities of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim* which are recorded in the *Talmud*. They both see the truth, but what the child sees is far from the whole truth. The adult is hardly aware of the letters or of their combination into words; his mind is absorbed with the underlying ideas behind the words. The child has absolutely no inkling concerning the concepts. Likewise, all intellectual achievements fade into oblivion when compared with the inner truth of *deveikus*.

This is the problem of learning *parshiyos, parshiyos*. One thinks that he “knows,” but, in reality, he is merely focusing on the structure of the letters. He is clueless about their connection and the depth of their meaning. There are those whose level of proficiency in Torah is, at best, limited. Yet, they have no problem expounding their beliefs and postulating what they feel is the correct manner of religious observance. They refuse to concede their apparent lack of knowledge, because they think that, if they can recognize the letters, they have license to connect them any way they want to fit their personal interpretation.

As we stand here on the last *Shabbos* of the year, in preparation for a period when our prayers must be meaningful, sincere and reflect our true emotions, it is especially important that we not delude ourselves into just staring at the letters. It behooves us all, for our sakes and for the sakes of our families, to open our eyes to the truth and connect the letters in the way Hashem would like us to – rather than in a way that suits our fancy.