

"Only take care and guard your soul most diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen." (4:9)

The *pasuk* teaches us that it is as important to remember and ultimately transmit the experience of *Matan Torah* to the next generation, as it is to pass down the actual content of the *Torah*. As *Rabbeinu Bachya* states, "For if one forgets the experience, he will end up denying the content." Without the tremendous and awesome experience of Revelation, Judaism can be transformed into an uninspiring secular experience. Judaism is alive! It is a religion with vibrance and vitality, which is transmitted from generation to generation. It has been passed down from that first group of Jews who stood at *Har Sinai* and accepted the *Torah* in a spiritual and historical moment unparalleled by any other.

The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos 3:10* cites this *pasuk* as basis for the dictum of *R' Meir*, "Whoever forgets even one thing out of his *Torah* learning, Scripture regards him as though guilty to pay with his life." The difficulty in interpreting the text of the *Mishnah* is apparent. The *Mishnah* sets out to show that to forget even *one* item of one's learning is sinful. Yet, it presents a *pasuk* which speaks of "the things." Why does the *Mishnah* change from the singular to the plural within one sentence ?

Reb Yitzchak Bunim, z.l., suggests that this concept is the key to understanding the *Mishnah*. *Torah* is not a collection of laws. It is a systematic, interrelated totality. It is a compendium in which each item is an integral part of the greater whole. Should even one word, one letter, one thought be missing, the entire entity becomes unbalanced. The end result is a distortion which affects much more than the single missing word or item. If one forgets "one thing" of his learning, he is, in reality, losing sight of many things. This idea is manifest in the *halachah* that if even one letter of a *Torah* scroll is missing, that scroll is rendered unfit for use to *lain*, read, the *Torah* in *shul*.

One who truly cares about his *Torah* learning will integrate its knowledge into his heart. One does not forget that which he truly wishes to remember. One who is truly interested in a body of knowledge or in a matter of vital importance will inevitably think about it -- incessantly. It will never leave his train of thought, recurring constantly time and time again. Indeed, it becomes an obsession with him. Every time a word is mentioned which in some way relates to this topic of concern, the individual immediately responds with interest.

If, however, *Torah* learning is relegated to the stack of irrelevant material, then it is truly subject to forgetfulness. To put it simply, that which is "lived" is not forgotten! To forget something we must first relegate it to the realm of the inconsequential and insignificant. The mind can store just so much knowledge. When we substitute worthless nonsense for the diamonds of *Torah* wisdom, we incur a serious guilt which is unrelenting in its demand for retribution.