

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

Chazal (*Eiruv* 54b) derive from the words *simah b'fi'hem*, "Place it into their mouth," that Torah must be taught in such a manner that the student fully comprehends the material, to the point that he becomes fluent in it. Indeed, *Ramban* opines that a *rebbe*, Torah teacher, must review the material as often as necessary until his students are proficient. If the going is slow, he may not become angry; rather he must keep on explaining. In a letter to educators, *Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl*, underscored the need for a *rebbe* to present an amicable countenance, so that the student will be better inclined to accept his lesson. Patience and forbearance mark the qualities of a successful *rebbe*. In addition, the *rebbe* should pour out his heart to Hashem daily during his recitation of the *Ahavah Rabbah* prayer, for success in Torah study and its dissemination.

It is noteworthy that when we conclude the *Bircas HaTorah* with the blessing of *La'asok b'divrei Torah*, "To engross ourselves in the words of the Torah," we add another entreaty: *V'haarev na*, "Please G-d, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouth... May we and our offspring and the offspring of Your People... know Your Name." Why is this added request recited only concerning the *mitzvah* of *limud haTorah*? Why do we not ask Hashem: "May **all** Your *mitzvos* be sweet in our mouth?"

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, explains that the primary goal of the educator is to imbue his student with a desire, passion, for Torah. By infusing the child with the feeling that the Torah is sweet, he imparts to him that concealed within the Torah is a hidden light that can illuminate his life and give it meaning and "sweetness."

However, the *rebbe* cannot successfully confer this emotion to his students unless he has it himself. The *rebbe* who does not **love** every page of *Chumash, Navi, Gemora, Halachah, b'lev v'nefesh*, with heart and soul, is unable to transmit to the student the inherent love one must have for the Torah. The students must sense the *rebbe's* excitement as he enters the classroom. "I am about to teach you Torah – the greatest and most significant body of knowledge that the world has ever seen! **You** are so lucky to learn. **I** am so fortunate to teach!" With this kind of attitude, we can hope that the *mesikus*, sweetness, of the Torah will be felt by the students.

When someone has a bitter taste in his mouth, whatever he eats/drinks will also have a bitter aftertaste – regardless of its original sweetness. When *Klal Yisrael* came to Marah, they could not drink the well water. The Torah says *ki marim heim*, "Because they were bitter" (*Shemos* 15:23). The plain meaning (*p'shat*) is that the word *marim*, bitter, refers to the waters which were bitter. The *Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh* interprets the *pasuk* homiletically, saying that the bitterness focuses on the people: The people were embittered, so everything they ate/drank had a bitter taste. Their very outlook was jaundiced. Therefore, the water tasted bitter.

A student who has difficulty learning feels miserable. The difficulty may be the result of a simple learning disability which, when properly addressed, is easily corrected. On the other hand, it may be the result of deep-rooted emotional issues caused by some form of trauma. Regardless of the reason, the consequence is the same: The child is miserable and therefore, he is unable to “taste” the sweetness of Torah. Ultimately, this has an effect on his entire spiritual persona. It explains why some young Jews from observant families just seem to lack the *geshmack*, satisfaction and pleasure, of Torah study and all of its fringe benefits.

So, what does one do? The answer is elementary. Perhaps, the following vignettes will be illuminating: One of the close *chassidim* of the *Bais Yisrael*, *zl*, of Gur, related that as a youth he had studied in *Yeshivas Sefas Emes* in *Eretz Yisrael*, the principal *Yeshivah* of the *Gerrer Chassidic* movement. At the beginning of the *z'man*, semester, the *Rebbe* asked him if he had already arranged for *chavrusos*, study partners. He replied with satisfaction and mentioned the names of some of the preeminent students in the *yeshivah*.

When the *Rebbe* heard the names, he said, “You have selected for yourself the ‘lions of the group,’ the top students in the *yeshivah*. So, what will be with the weaker students? Who will study with them? Who will help them learn?”

Understandably, the *Rebbe* was communicating a powerful message to his close student: One might think that he loses out by studying with the weaker student. However, this is not the case. It might seem that way at first glance, but it will work itself out. Hashem will repay him. Torah is Divinely authored, and the ability to grasp its profundities goes beyond the natural approach to success. Spend time with weaker students, and Hashem will spend time with you.

Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl, had a group of students who had great difficulty in understanding the Talmudic lessons in the *yeshivah*. He brought them before the *Chazon Ish*, who was not only the *gadol ha'dor*, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, but he also had a warm, sensitive heart that matched his encyclopedic knowledge of Torah. “How do I imbue these boys with a love and taste for Torah?” *Rav Michel Yehudah* asked the venerable sage. The *Chazon Ish* replied, “Each and every Jewish soul has its own unique, individual *chelek*, portion, in Torah. When he learns that specific portion which is inherently his, he will sense the pleasant taste of Torah. Once he achieves this, the student will be inclined to study further and delve deeper into other areas of Torah.”