

"And Moshe was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights." (24:18)

The *Yalkut Shimoni* cites a *Midrash* from which we can derive a valuable lesson. The story is recounted that Rabbi Chiya *bar* Abba was crying when he heard that Rabbi Yochanan had sold all his possessions in order to be able to study *Torah*. He was concerned that nothing had been put aside for Rabbi Yochanan's old age, when he would have no source of, or ability to earn, an income. Rabbi Yochanan assuaged Rabbi Chiya by saying that it was well worth it, since he had exchanged earthly possessions -- which were created in six days -- for *Torah* which was given in forty days. Simply put, *Torah* has greater value than anything material. *Torah* took longer to be "created" than the earth, which took only six days.

Let us analyze this *Midrash*. Rabbi Chiya cried when he saw the dismal state of Rabbi Yochanan's material life. His financial status and lifestyle obviously left much to be desired. Rabbi Yochanan, on the other hand, did not seem to be concerned. Why? Rabbi Chiya's concerns were realistic. He took one look at his colleague's material conditions, and he began to weep. What was the difference in perspective between these two Torah scholars that engendered two such disparate reactions?

Horav Henach Leibowitz, shlita, suggests that Rabbi Yochanan teaches us a profound lesson. Rabbi Chiya was concerned about his colleague's material condition because he viewed it in an inappropriate context. An individual must not observe the material condition exclusive of spiritual circumstances and the success he has attained. It is essential that one look at both conditions simultaneously. If he does not, the picture he will see will be ambiguous and distorted. One must see the spiritual benefits that the individual reaped as a result of his lack of material success. One who waits a long time and searches all over for a very precious jewel will not be concerned with the expense and sacrifice involved in attaining this gem. His only thought is of the treasure he has finally procured.

Rabbi Yochanan told Rabbi Chiya not to be concerned with what he had lost. Instead, when he perceives what he has gained and the loss would pale in insignificance. We should learn to accept life's challenges with joy, by viewing them in the context of the spiritual advantage that we realize.