

You shall place the lid on the Aron from above, and into the Aron you shall put the Testimony. (25:21)

Rashi notes that the Torah previously mentioned (Ibid. 25:16), “And you shall put into the *Aron* the Testimony.” He explains that it is teaching us that, while it is an *Aron* alone without the *Kapores*, lid, on it, he shall place the *Eidus*, Testimony (Torah) into it, and afterwards he should place the lid on it. *Ramban* argues, claiming that the *pasuk* indicates the sequence to be *Kapores* – then *Eidus*. *Rashi* clearly is of the opinion that when the *Aron* was brought into the *Mishkan*, the *Eidus* was already inside of it, and the *Kapores* was above. Once it was inside the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, Holy of Holies, the *Paroches*, Curtain, was hung. The Torah/*Eidus* was to be placed inside the *Aron* even before the *Aron* was complete (with the *Kapores* above). Why is this? Why should the Torah be placed inside the *Aron* before it has been completed, with the *Kapores* above it?

Horav Aryeh Leib Heyman, zl, explains that it is done to demonstrate that the *Aron* is unlike any of the other *keilim*, vessels, which are completed in the *Mishkan* (i.e. The *Lechem HaPanim* was placed upon the *Shulchan* once the *Shulchan* was within the *Mishkan*’s environs). The reason for this disparity is that their functions are different. The *klei ha’Mishkan* are present to minister to the *Mishkan*. It is a holy site in which the *Shechinah* reposes – almost as if it were Hashem’s earthly abode. This is unlike the Torah, which is the focus of the *Mishkan*. Hashem designated the *Mishkan* as His “home,” so that He could be close to His Torah. *Chazal* (*Shemos Rabbah*) compare this to a king who gave his only daughter in marriage to another monarch who lived in a distant land. The father of the bride said, “I gave my daughter to this man as a wife. I am happy as a father, but it is impossible for me to remain separated from my child. I ask that you build a small apartment on the palace grounds, so that I will be able to visit as often as I want.”

Likewise, Hashem gave us His Torah, from which He cannot separate. He asked that we build a Sanctuary, so that the Torah will be there. Wherever the Jewish people move, the *Mishkan* will follow – and so will Hashem. Thus, the *Mishkan* serves the Torah, unlike the other vessels which serve the *Mishkan*. Since the *Mishkan* is present for the *Aron*, the *Aron* “enters” it *bi’shleimus*, in complete perfection – with the Torah within it. We should never err in thinking that the focal point is the *Mishkan*. It is the Torah – as is everything in our *avodas hakodesh*, holy service. The Torah is our guide; it is our life; indeed, it is life itself.

This is the approach one should take upon learning Torah. It is not merely an attempt at mental gymnastics. It is life itself. When we study Torah, we come alive. Whoever does not understand this has not yet learned.

The following story took place about forty-years ago. Two brothers, twins, Yair and Ariel, changed schools. They had originally been in a *mamlachti*, secular, school, in Kiryat Ono, and now transferred to She’eris Yisrael in Petach Tikvah. A tragedy that had taken the life of their father precipitated this change. During a visit to the United States, they were all – two brothers, a young

sister, and the parents – taking a road trip when it began to snow. It does not snow often in *Eretz Yisrael*. As a result, the father was unprepared for the icy roads which caused him to skid off the highway and fall hundreds of feet off a cliff. Miraculously, the mother and three children survived the accident, but the father did not. Having witnessed such a revealed miracle, the mother decided to change her spiritual leanings. The first step was to enroll her sons in a *frum*, observant, school.

The story does not end here. This is only the beginning. Yair and Ariel traveled daily from Kiryat Ono to Petach Tikvah. It was not an easy trip, but the boys did not complain, as they slowly acclimated to their new, observant lifestyle. They learned quickly and were receiving excellent grades until they started learning *Gemorah*. Ariel experienced great difficulty. He listened; he studied; but he could not pass the test. Finally, he informed his mother that he was not returning to school due to the difficulty he had with *Gemorah*. This was not acceptable to his mother. She decided to let him sleep on it. The next day, Ariel presented himself with his backpack on his shoulders, prepared to leave for school. “Ariel, what changed your mind?” his mother asked. “I cannot explain it, but last night *Abba* appeared to me in a dream. He was sporting a beard and *payos*, and he told me, ‘I will learn the *Gemorah* with you.’ I asked him how he knew *Gemorah*. We were not yet observant when he was so tragically taken from us. He explained, ‘Because of my two sons learning, my *neshamah* has been allowed entrance into *Gan Eden*. I am able to listen to your learning (the *rebbe*’s teaching), and I understand the lesson. Therefore, I am able to teach it to you.’ This is what happened. *Abba* studied with me all night. I now feel that I understand the *Gemorah*.”

Ariel told his mother, “*Abba* asked me to convey a message to you that your decision to have the family become observant is excellent, and you should continue to have us grow in Torah.” The mother broke down, weeping profusely. She feared that her son was suffering from an overactive subconscious, convincing himself that his dream was real. What would happen when he arrived in school and failed the test because he did not know the material?

Her fears were unfounded. Ariel negotiated the test and came out at the top of his class. The *rebbe* was so impressed that he called the mother and told her so. She wept into the phone. “You will not believe who taught him the *Gemorah*,” she said. When she shared with him what had occurred, he did not know if he should laugh or cry. He thought that both Ariel and his mother had become unhinged. Fathers do not appear in dreams to teach their children. On the other hand, the day before, Ariel had been totally clueless concerning the *Gemorah*. The *rebbe* asked Ariel to repeat the dream, which he did. The words expressed by his father, “I am learning here exactly what you are learning,” made the *rebbe* think twice. It was a concept which he may have heard, but he had never known anyone who had experienced it.

This story allows us a glimpse into the relationship between this world and *Olam Habba*, and how children can, with the power of Torah, catalyze extraordinary *nachas* and *illuy neshamah* for their parents. *Ki heim chayeinu*, “For they are our life”: Torah is our life in this world and in the World-of-Truth.

