

“And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life.” (17:19)

The Sefer Torah shall be the primary focus of the king's life. As it guides him through life, it shall be the object of his continual meditation. The love of Torah creates a bond that cannot be broken. Its influence is ever-lasting. Indeed, many years later, the original impact of the Torah upon a person retains its freshness and inspiration as evidenced by the following story: Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, tells of a Yerushalmi Jew, a profound talmid chacham, Torah scholar, who moved to Tzefas. The story takes place years ago when the opportunity and availability to own a complete twenty-volume Shas was rare. This scholar possessed one volume, which contained mesechtos, tractates, Beitzah and Rosh Hashanah. This was the “Shas” which he took with him to Tzefas.

Regrettably, the city of Tzefas did not possess added volumes. Thus, these two mesechtos became the focus of his love and devotion to Torah. During his stay in Tzefas, he reviewed this volume over three thousand times! While this individual was a talmid chacham of repute, he nonetheless asked his children, prior to his death, to inscribe on his tombstone only the fact that he had reviewed one mesechta over three thousand times. “Who knows,” he said, “if this feat will one day inspire another Jew to love the Torah as I do.”

Many years later, a distinguished family in Bnei Brak was shocked to learn that one of their sons had left the yeshivah where he had been studying, trading his seat in the bais hamedrash for a place in the street with a gang of young, rebellious hoodlums. The parents were broken-hearted. They made every attempt to bring their child back to the living – to no avail. The more they tried, the more he rejected their pleas. The influence of his newly-found friends kept him in a stranglehold that was unyielding.

One day, out of the clear blue, the young man returned to his family and to Hashem. He asked to return to the yeshivah, and, in a short while, he was counted among the masmidim, more diligent students, of the yeshivah. Today, he is a great Torah scholar, a disseminator of Torah, par excellence. In fact, that episode in his life, when he had left Torah, is long-forgotten, erased as if it had never occurred.

What catalyzed his about-face? What brought about his return to Torah Judaism? A short while after his spiritual metamorphosis he related the reason to his parents. “I once had occasion to visit a cemetery in Tzefas,” he told his parents, “and I noticed by chance the tombstone of a Torah scholar, upon which was engraved the fact that he had reviewed one volume of Talmud over three thousand times! What impressed me the most was the fact that a basically simple Jew – not a rosh yeshivah or a rav – just a simple Jew, had such overwhelming love for Torah that inspired him to review the Talmud so many times. This man's exemplary devotion, his incredible love for Torah, awakened within me a spark that became a passionate flame. If he could do this, why could not I? I

then made up my mind to pursue my own studies with a similar enthusiasm and fervor.”

What a poignant and beautiful story! There are a number of lessons to be derived herein. Quite possibly, the most significant is the impact our actions have on others, even over a period of time. Who would have thought that this young man would be walking in the cemetery and would notice a stone with a simple, but profound, message on it? But then, who are we to attempt to understand Hashem's ways?