

## "For the matter is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it." (30:14)

There is a *Midrash* on the above *pasuk* which is particularly relevant at this time of year. Everyone is seeking areas in which to improve. Eliyahu *Ha'Navi* relates that he was once travelling from region to region, when he came across a man who sneered at him. Eliyahu was taken aback and immediately questioned the individual, "What will you respond to Hashem on the Day of Judgement?" The man quickly responded, "I have a simple answer to give my Father in Heaven. I will tell Him that I was not given sufficient understanding or intelligence to allow me to master the *Chumash* and *Talmud*."

This answer did not phase Eliyahu *Ha'Navi* who retorted, "My son, what is your profession?" "I am a fisherman," responded the young man. "And who gave you the ability to learn how to weave flax into nets, and then throw them into the sea to catch fish?" "Oh Rabbi," he replied, "For that I was given understanding and intellect from Heaven."

When Eliyahu heard this hypocritical remark, he admonished the young man saying, "My son, if Hashem gave you the mind and intelligence to master your chosen profession, He also gave you intellectual ability to master the words of the *Torah*, as it is written, '*the matter is very close to you.*'" (*Devarim 30:14*)

How true and meaningful are the words of this *Midrash*. Everyone finds an excuse for his "inactivity" in *Torah* study. One's activity in his chosen occupation, however, bears testimony against him! We find methods to master the most difficult problems, to understand the most detailed computer program, but the "piece of *Gemora*" is simply "too complex" to master! Suddenly, the only boys who can make it in *Torah* learning are the exceptionally bright individuals. The words of the *Midrash* rebound. If you can "make it" in any profession you can "make it" in *Torah* study as well.

We may add to this idea. If one achieves and excels in the field which he chooses, he must endeavor to do the same in the area of *Torah*. After all, should we not attribute equal value to *Torah* as to the pursuit of secular/material excellence? Can we say in all honesty that *Torah* is given "equal time"? There is no excuse for one who is proficient in various areas of secular/material pursuit to defer *Torah* study to a distant second place. We must make time for *Torah*, just as we do for everything else.

If one begins to study and perseveres, he will slowly, but surely, develop his knowledge of *Torah*. At this time of the year when our every action is scrutinized and Hashem is close to us waiting patiently for our return, how wonderful it would be to undertake to strengthen our *limud ha'Torah*, *Torah* study. May the commencement of and commitment to enhancing our *Torah* study be a source of merit for all of *Klal Yisrael*.