

תלמוד תורה וחשיבות התורה

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In preparation for Shavuot, I would like to share some thoughts about תורה and the חשיבות of תורה:

In אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻעַ בֶּן לֵוִי, בְּכָל יוֹם וַיּוֹם, פֶּרֶק וּפְרָקִי אֲבוֹתַי, בֵּית קוֹל יוֹצֵאת מִהָרֶב וּמִכְרָזָת וְאוֹמְרָת, אוֹי לָהֶם לְבָרִיּוֹת מֵעֲלֻבוֹנָה שֶׁל תּוֹרָה. שְׂפָל מִי שְׂאִינוּ עוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה נִקְרָא נוֹוֹף, שְׂנַאֲמַר (מִשְׁלֵי יֵא) נָזַם זָהָב בְּאַף חֲזִיר אֲשֶׁה לָּפֶה וְסָרַת טַעַם. Every day a Bas Kol announces, “Woe to creation because of the disgrace of the Torah!” Because anyone who is not involved in learning Torah is called נוֹוֹף, which we see from the posuk in Mishlei חֲזִיר בְּאַף חֲזִיר, נָזַם זָהָב בְּאַף חֲזִיר, ‘a golden nose-ring in the snout of a pig.’ נוֹוֹף is an acronym for נָזַם זָהָב בְּאַף חֲזִיר. We first need to explain why one who doesn’t learn Torah is called a נוֹוֹף as well as why he is like a golden ring in the nose of a חֲזִיר. What is the connection between them?

The comparison is as follows. A human being is unique in all of creation because of his brain. The brain is the most complicated entity in all of the universe. The brain can accomplish more functions than all the computers in the world. Besides thinking, the brain also controls the body, the emotions, and the subconscious. Its breadth of ability in thinking, remembering, and decision-making is beyond what any scientist can fathom. Why do we have such a unique and complicated brain?

In nature, everything in animals serves for survival. A beaver has just the right amount of intelligence it needs to survive. Every animal is created this way, even the dolphin with the largest brain in proportion to its weight. But a human being has millions of times more intelligence than necessary for him to survive. Why is this so?

The answer to this is that he was given this additional intelligence in order for him to recognize the עוֹלָם שֶׁל עוֹלָם and find out how to live in accordance with His will. This entails studying the Torah, which teaches us what Hashem wants and expects of us. These are the mitzvos which He gave us. That is what makes תלמוד תורה so important- it is the study of Hashem’s will.

The brain that is given to us, this marvelous organ, is meant for us to know Hashem to the fullest extent of human capacity. Instead, how do we use our brains? Since we don’t need that extra capacity for survival, we end up using it to devise gadgets to keep ourselves busy, entertained or distracted, instead of thinking about הַקְדוּשָׁה בְּרוּךְ הוּא. We end up making ourselves too busy to engage in that which we were really given our brain for!

Now we can understand the mashal of the golden ring in the pig’s nose: Let’s say someone has a pet pig which he loves dearly. It is so precious to him that he decides to decorate it with a golden nose ring! But the pig itself is merely interested in digging through the muck. With the ring, it has a wonderful tool to aid in its endeavor. It can now use the golden ring to wallow even deeper into the muck than before. This of course, is not quite what the owner had in mind when he decorated his

