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תלמוד תורה וחשיבות התורה

מורנו ראש הישיבה הרב אהרן פלדמן שליטייא

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

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 רבונו של עולם 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 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 מקדוש ברוך הוא. 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

precious pig with the golden ring; in fact, it's the opposite! It turns out that instead of the ring bringing his pig distinction, it is increases its disgrace.

Unfortunately, sometimes people are no different.

A human being was "decorated" with a magnificent brain to bring him distinction by becoming ever closer to Hashem. But, if he doesn't study Torah to accomplish this goal, he ends up using this adornment in a manner that actually disgraces him! This is why one who does not learn Torah is called עזיר. He is turning what should be his בושה into a חזיר with a golden ring in its snout.

The Mishna continues: יְאוֹמֵר (שמות לב) וְהַלְּחֹת מַצְשֵׁה אֱלֹהִים הֵמָּה וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתָּב מִכְתָּב (שמות לב) וְהַלָּחֹת מַצְשֵׁה אֱלֹהִים הַמָּה וְהַמִּכְתָּב מִכְתָּב מִכְּתָּב מִילְּחָת, אֵל תִּקְרָא חָרוּת אֶלֶא חֵרוּת, שְׁאֵין לְךְּ בֶּן חוֹרִין אֶלֶּא מִי שָׁעוֹסֵק This Mishnah tells us that the Luchos are described with the word חָרות, engraved, to hint to the fact that one is only truly free (חֵרות) if one is involved in learning Torah.

Why are we free through Torah? The Torah has so many restrictions- we cannot do melacha on Shabbos; we cannot marry whomever we like; we can't eat what we like. Why are we free?

The answer is that with Torah we are free to do that which our Neshamos bid us to do. Our Neshama bids us to be kind; to listen to the רצון הי; it even bids us to listen to the חוקים, which we don't understand. This is because the Neshama understands that all of these things are what is truly good for us. This is how we become free. Without Torah, we are enslaved to our יצר הרע which bids us to live like animals, to live for power and wealth- to live for selfish reasons. The would have us stay away from anything the Neshama would have us do. By keeping the Torah, which is represented by the Luchos (they contained the entire Torah in them), we free ourselves to live according to the purpose of which we were created.

The first part of the Mishna teaches us that we have an amazing brain, and we must use it to learn Torah otherwise it becomes an ugly embarrassment. The second part teaches us that keeping the Torah frees us to listen to our Neshama. The Neshama wants to express itself in the world and we feel satisfied by accomplishing that. The Neshama helps us perform our function in life and live for the reason for which we were created. Therefore, we are only truly free to the depths of our Neshama when we learn Torah and keep the Luchos, when we live with the Torah engraved into ourselves. [חַרות means חַרות]

So, in this time leading up to Shavuos, the time of *Kabolas HaTorah*, let us realize the unbelievable and incomparable zechus that we have as בני ישראל to have received the Torah and to have been given the ability to learn the Torah. May הקדוש bentch us all in our endeavor to learn the Torah instead of becoming מוף and to keep Torah in order to be free to reach the goals for which Hashem created us.

Thank you and a Gutten Yom Tov.