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[Home](#) > Tefillah - 054 The Source of Torah Thoughts

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The Torah - A Chain of Tradition

In the fourth blessing of *Shemoneh Esrei*, when we ask Hashem for understanding, we also mention how Hashem is the One who teaches us understanding.

Throughout the generations – starting from Moshe Rabbeinu all the way down to our current generation – we must learn Torah from a teacher. But it is Hashem Himself who teaches us.

The Ten Commandments contained the entire Torah, according to Rav Saadya Gaon. Hashem Himself told us the Torah and taught it to us - through the Ten Commandments. But the people then were afraid to hear Hashem's voice, so they requested instead to hear it from Moshe. Ever since then, we have had to hear the Torah from a teacher, who teaches it to us. This is the chain of tradition described in the Mishnah in the *Pirkei Avos*.

This shows us two things. First of all, we need to learn Torah from a teacher, and secondly, it must be a teacher who has the tradition passed down from Hashem Himself.

Our Thoughts In Torah Come From Hashem

When a person learns Torah, does he have to think about Hashem and connect his thoughts with Him?

This was a big argument a long time ago. We are not currently discussing this point here. But another argument is: when a person learns Torah, Who is teaching him the Torah – his teacher, or Hashem Himself? When a student hears Torah from his Rebbi, is that all there is to it – or is there something more, a more inner aspect of what is taking place?

When a person is learning Torah, even if he learns it from a Rebbi, he might be unaware that the Rebbi is giving him the tradition all the way back to Moshe, who received it from Hashem. The inner way to learn Torah is to realize that our Rebbi who teaches it to us has it passed down from Hashem, and therefore, it is always Hashem Who is teaching us the Torah.

Usually when a person learns Torah, if he works hard at it and he's enjoying it, he feels like it's his own intellectual accomplishment. This is the kind of learning we often are familiar with. What happens when a person doesn't understand something in Torah? Let's say he can't figure out what the *Rashba* or what the *Ketzos HaChoshen* is saying, or he's trying to analyze a *chiddush*. He tends to think that his understanding is all a result of *his* own intellect. People get used to this and come to

expect success, just like people expect to have a good marriage and a good family, as long as they put effort into it.

But if we reflect into this, if we become aware, we can realize that our thought process during learning is really beyond human ability. It's not coming from our regular intellect; it's coming from a G-dly source.

When a person comes up with a *chiddush* in Torah, he often thinks though that this is due to his brilliance. But if a person becomes aware of his thoughts, he can discover that there is an inner source of thoughts in himself from which his Torah thoughts are flowing out from, and that it's not coming from his regular intellect. It's coming from Hashem, who is allowing His light to pour into him and thus enable him to come up with *chiddushim*.

So when a person merits to realize a *chiddush* when he's learning, he should realize where it came from. It did not come from himself. It did not come from his human brain. It came from the inner source of thought, which Hashem provides the person.

The Gemara is really all the words of Hashem. Most people, when they learn Gemara, do not see it as the words of Hashem. When a person sees the words of Abaye and Rava in the Gemara, he does not feel like they are Hashem's words. Of course, he knows intellectually that it is Hashem's words, but he doesn't feel that way.

The truth is that if a person would keep thinking that Abaye and Rava's words are the words of Hashem, he wouldn't be able to concentrate on what he's learning. Reb Akiva Eiger was able to do it, but we are not on that level. So we can't think about Hashem as we are actually learning and trying to figure out the Gemara.

For this reason, the Chazon Ish wrote that before a person opens up his Gemara, he should think that he is about to learn the Torah of Hashem.

When a person learns Torah, he must realize that anything he understands in Torah is not coming from his actual human mind. Torah is the real power of *machshavah* (thought), and *machshavah* is the power that comes from our *neshamah* (Divine soul).

The regular thoughts that people have are coming from the brain, and this is not '*machshavah*'. It is not coming from the soul. But if a person realizes where his thoughts are coming from, he accesses the deeper source of thought, *machshavah*, which is coming from his *neshamah*.

A person has to exert himself in the physical sense in order to understand Torah. But we are addressing another kind of exertion here: to exert the mind.

In order to exert our minds in Torah, we need to reflect on where our Torah thoughts are coming from – that they really come from our soul – and if we do that, we access the inner source of thought of our soul.

The more a person does this, the more he will merit to understand the truths of the Torah. He will merit a kind of understanding which is above regular human intellect.

Making This Practical

A person needs to become aware of his thoughts in order for this to happen.

You can't become aware of your thoughts as you're actually sitting and learning in front of your

Gemara, though, because if you do, then you won't be able to concentrate on the Gemara, and it will disturb you. Instead, take the quiet time every day to reflect about where your thoughts are coming from, and realize that your thoughts in Torah come from the *neshamah*, not from your human brain.

If a person does this, the Chazon Ish wrote of this that he will experience a kind of intellect that is incredibly enjoyable, and he will discover a sheer pleasure when he learns Torah. We will then merit true understanding of our Torah learning, and through that we will become truly connected to the Torah, which in turn will connect us with Hashem, Who is intertwined with His Torah.

When a person merits the true thoughts in Torah, it's not the regular kinds of thoughts that a very smart non-Jew has. It's a whole different kind of thought, and it does not come from the brain; it comes from a higher source, which is above human intellect. It is the kind of thoughts that can take a person out of his *shelo lishmah* (ulterior motivations in learning the Torah) and enter him more and more into *lishmah* (pure motivations in Torah), which is a force that the brain cannot understand; it is the kind of thought that can only come from our *neshamah*.

May we merit the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, when the light of our souls will all shine, and we will all realize then that it is Hashem who gives us understanding.

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