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Introduction

What we will learn about here needs to be understood in all its intricacies – we need to learn about it with the approach of a Torah scholar, delving into the matter very well, in all its nuances.

It is written, *“And you shall know today, and you shall settle the matter on your heart.”* First we need the *“daas”* of a matter - to understand it well intellectually; then we can internalize the matters in our heart and be able to act upon it practically. So first we will learn about these matters and try to understand them and reflect into them, and then we will get to how to apply it practically.

As in introduction to what we will learn here in **Sefer Nefesh HaChaim (Gate IV)**, we first need to know what the power of Torah is, and then we need to reflect how our personal soul is connecting to the Torah.

If one doesn't know what Torah is about, he won't be able to know how his soul is connecting to the Torah he learns. After a person clarifies what Torah is, he then needs to reflect on how well he is understanding the Torah and how well he is connecting to the Torah.

Six Points of Reflection To Think About

To give a brief introduction, here are a few points one needs to reflect upon in order to figure out how well he is connected to his learning.

(א) כמה בהתורה אני למד - עד עכשיו

1) The first clarification one needs to make is: To discover how much Torah you have **learned** until now – not how much you **know**, but how much you simply **learned**. Chazal say that whatever Torah you learned and forgot, you will remember it in Heaven.^[1]

(ב) כמה ידיעות התורה למעשה יש לי

2) The second thing to ask yourself is to figure out how much **knowledge** of Torah do you know now.

(ג) האם יש לי השגה ב"פשוט

3) Another thing to ask yourself is to ask yourself how well your **grasp** is in the simple meaning of

what you learn (**pshat**).

(ד) האם אני יכול לפלפל בתורה

4) Another thing to ask yourself is how well you can have "**pilpul**" (have back-and-forth discussions) in it.

(ה) כמה אמת יש לי בהסוגיא

5) Another thing to ask yourself is how **truthfully** you are understanding what you learn.

(ו) האם אני יכול לחדש חדושי תורה

6) Another thing to ask yourself is how much you are having **chiddushim** (novel Torah thoughts).

These are all parts of how you clarify how well you are connected to Torah, but there is an even more inner clarifying to do: How much are you **immersed** in Torah? What exactly is connecting you to Torah?

A Summary Of What Is To Come In Nefesh HaChaim "Shaar Daled"

The *Nefesh HaChaim* here (in Gate IV) in this chapter will describe how we connect to the *chochmah*\wisdom of Torah, to the *ratzon Hashem* (will of G-d) in the Torah, to the *shirah* (song of Creation) that is the Torah, to the *mesikus* and *areivus* (sweetness) of Torah, to *Torah Ohr* (the light of Torah) and to *giluy metzius HaBorei* (the revelation of the Creator) in the Torah.

This is just an introduction; **one needs to take at least ten minutes a day to think about these things and reflect into them.** The truth is that ten minutes is only a little bit; if someone doesn't reflect that much, ten minutes seems like a lot of time. But if someone is used to reflecting into matters, he knows that ten minutes barely scratches the surface of what he needs to think about. One has to reflect every day, in an orderly fashion, on a set basis every day.

At the beginning stage of this, the matters are still not clear, and in addition, we don't know at this point how to make them practical. Therefore, we need to learn the words of our Sages, which have been compiled and explained in *Sefer Nefesh HaChaim* here which we are learning.

When we learn these words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, each of us on his own respective level needs to know what he has gained until now and how there is more room to grow in Torah, both in quantity, quality, and soul connection to the Torah.

The Opening Words of "Nefesh HaChaim\Shaar Daled"

Let us now begin *Nefesh HaChaim: Shaar Daled* (Gate IV) which explains to us what Torah is about.

The *Nefesh HaChaim* starts *Shaar Daled* (Gate IV) by stating that every Jew has an obligation to learn Torah, day and night, and that we must know the greatness of our obligation towards learning the Torah.

We all know that we have an obligation to learn Torah, and all of us are already doing that, *Baruch Hashem*. But what is new to us here is: How great our obligation to learning is.

Firstly, the obligation towards learning needs to be defined, as there are certain situations in which

one is exempt from learning Torah.

Also, besides for knowing this, included in this is not to rely on having grown up in a Torah environment. It is not enough for a person if he grew up in a Torah environment; he needs to personally connect to the Torah, by reflecting into how great Torah learning is.

One should therefore reflect into the concept of “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”; and how “Hashem, the Torah, and Yisrael are one”. One who truly thinks about this will realize how great his obligation of learning Torah is.

But if one merely reads the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* as mere facts of knowledge, and he doesn't try to internalize them in his heart, he won't know of how great his obligation towards learning Torah. One must continuously make sure that he reflects about what his obligation of learning Torah is. If someone is learning Torah year and year, he must make sure that he is also aware of his obligation towards learning; he must deepen his awareness as time goes on.

Of course, you always have an obligation to learn Torah, and that doesn't change. But what does need to change is the quality of your feeling of connection to learning. It must feel stronger to you as time goes on, and if it is not growing, it is a sign that something is missing from your learning.

This should not just be mere inspiration - it must be an inner clarification about your personal connection to Torah is.

We are commanded to learn Torah day and night - this is not simply because we are supposed to always “take up our free time” with learning Torah, *chas v'shalom*. Rather, it is because since Torah was created before the world, it is above time, and therefore we must learn Torah day and night, because there is no set “time” to learn Torah.

In order for one to realize this, he needs to penetrate deeply into his soul, into the place where “Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world.” One needs to know with both his intellect and then with heart, to feel that Torah is the greatest reality that exists, second in importance only to the reality of Hashem. Torah is the beginning of all creation.

One must know, with clarity, of how great learning Torah is. It is not enough to merely be inspired by the words you read about of how great the Torah is. The truth is that no word can really describe the depth of its greatness.

In Summary and In Conclusion

So the real question is if a person will just seek to superficially “inspire” himself about how much his connection to Torah is - or if he will make a truly **deep reflection** about the level of his current personal connection to learning the Torah. Is one approaching the learning of *sefer Nefesh HaChaim* in the same way that one learns mussar, which must be learned with a mournful voice that awakens him to tears? Or he is more interested in learning this sefer in-depth, so that he can clarify these matters?

It is more important for one to focus on getting clarity on these matters; to learn these matters in-depth, as opposed to trying to learn it as *mussar*. Of course, it is wonderful if one learns it with passion, but that should not be the main approach here. The focus here should be on knowing and analyzing these matters in-depth.

One must be very clear in what the roots are of why we learn Torah. In order to live in the “clear world” that is the Torah, one has to first gain clarity of what his connection to learning Torah is.

It's scary to think that a person can be sitting and learning Torah for several hours each *seder*, analyzing the most subtle of subtleties, when he has never yet clarified what the root of his own Torah learning is.

When it comes to the actual obligation of learning Torah, we understand that it can take an entire *seder* of 4 hours with *iyun* (in-depth study) in order to clarify what isn't clear. So too, you can deeply reflect about your personal connection to the Torah, and to contemplate deeply how great our obligation is to learn the Torah.

With the more you make the reflection, the more you will find that your connection to Torah will grow and sharpen as time goes on. It will make you undergo a transformation. It will cause you to demand more connection to Torah, and you will sense a greater obligation towards learning Torah as time goes on; the feeling will become sharper.

[1] Sefer Chassidim of Rabbeinu Yehuda HaChassid

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