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The *Nefesh HaChaim* (Gate IV, Chapter 1) explains that in earlier generations, there was no need to learn *sefarim* that explain *yirah* (fear of Hashem), for they were so immersed in Torah that “the love of Torah burned in their hearts, like a burning fire, with love and fear of Hashem that was pure. Their entire desire was to increase the Torah’s honor. Thus they taught Torah to many proper students, so that they could fill the world with knowledge of Torah.”

Here in the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, it is explained that in previous generations, they were mainly immersed in the study of Torah. Their minds, hearts, and mouths spoke mainly of Torah. Besides for their diligence in learning Torah, the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that a love for Torah burned in their hearts, like a burning fire. The previous generation had powerful hearts: their hearts were filled with a burning love for Torah.

Our psyche is comprised of *seichel* (intellect) and *lev* (heart). When a person is learning Torah, it appears to be only an intellectual field of study, which makes use of the mind. The heart seems to be in the background, when it comes to Torah study. In contrast, when it comes to the study of *mussar*, though, it appears that it is entirely involving the emotions of the heart, and not the intellect.

But the true perspective is entirely different. In the study of *mussar*, there is great wisdom involved, which makes heavy use of the intellect. The Ramchal in the beginning of *Mesillas Yescharim* says that “*fear of Hashem is wisdom*”, therefore, it takes great wisdom to know what fear of Hashem is. So *mussar* is not just involving the emotions\heart. It requires in-depth analysis just as when we learn Gemara.

However, we will not discuss this right now. Here, we are dealing with the other side of the coin: the role of the heart in Torah study.

It appears to be that Torah study only makes use of our intellect, for the discussions of Abaye and Rava require in-depth analysis to study, not emotion or inspiration. But this was actually the mistaken notion that caused many people to slacken off from Torah study in the times of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, for the *Nefesh HaChaim* writes that this was the very argument the *yetzer hora* used in order to sway people into learning *mussar* all day and thereby neglect Torah study. People were only learning Torah for the sake of intellectual analysis alone (*pilpul*), thus many people began to look at Torah learning as a purely intellectual pursuit, with no heart involved. Thus they turned to learning *mussar* all day, so

that they could be in touch with their heart; but they gave up Torah study with this.

In previous generations, they possessed both a strong intellect and a strong heart, thus they did not come to make the mistake of giving up Torah study for the sake of studying *mussar*. They were immersed in the intellect of Torah, but at the same time, a love for Torah burned in their hearts. Thus they never thought of abandoning Torah study.

But as the generations went on, their hearts stopped burning so strongly with a love for Torah, and Torah study was being seen as just as an intellectual pursuit alone. It became nothing but *pilpul* (intellectual analysis and discussion) alone, but their hearts weren't in it. Therefore, they came to feel that they needed to heavily pursue the study of *yirah* and *mussar*, which led to the neglect of Torah study.

We need to understand exactly what transpired here. What was the way that things were supposed to look like? What went wrong? What needs to be fixed?

When a person learns Torah with his intellect alone, even if he is successful in his learning and even if he is a Torah scholar, even if he knows *sugya* upon *sugya* and he knows how to learn very well, and even if it appears that he's always getting it right – this is only half of a connection to Torah. In fact, it is even less than half.

With the involvement of just the intellect in Torah, even if he has exertion in it and he clarifies it, and he can remember much of his learning and even if he comes to the proper Halachic conclusions based on every *sugya* he learns – it appears to onlookers that he is a Torah scholar, someone who can answer questions on any place in the Talmud; but the truth is that Hashem can see into his heart, and He knows what's really going on inside that person's heart.

The Gemara says, "*Hashem wants the heart.*" Hashem wants a person's heart to be involved in the Torah he learns.

In previous generations, their hearts burned with a love for the Torah. When one's heart contains a fiery love for Torah, his mind and heart are both connected to the Torah; he is connected to Torah through both his intellect and heart. This is the true and ideal kind of exertion in Torah study.

The problem which the *Nefesh HaChaim* speaks about was not only a problem that affected people in those times. It affects us nowadays as well, and we hope that it won't get worse than the level it's already at which the *Nefesh HaChaim* describes.

Firstly, a person needs to connect to the Torah with his intellect. This is surely no easy task; it requires tremendous involvement of our intellect. We must learn how to think into the Torah, how to speak of it, and not just superficially, but to really exert our minds in it. First we need to train ourselves to always think of Torah thoughts, and then we need to uncover a more inner level: to deeply think into it. All of this is yet the 'intellectual' connection towards the Torah, however; it is not nearly enough.

Those who learn Torah superficially are only interested in learning it in a *bekiyus* (cursory) manner. Those who are more connected to their learning are those who learn it with *iyun* (in-depth analysis). However, not all those who learn it with *iyun* are really using their thoughts so much. Very often they are not thinking that much. Those who take their learning more seriously are those who learn it with a deeper and clearer kind of *iyun*, where they seek clarity in their learning.

Yet, this alone is still not a deep mental connection to Torah. Those who are past this level are able to always think in learning wherever they go, habitually; and those who get beyond that level are

capable of thinking in learning because they consider it to be their very vitality in life, so they are able to naturally think in learning without even having to push themselves.

All of this is all but an intellectual connection to Torah. It is necessary to traverse, but it is not enough for one to form a deep connection to Torah. It is still not making use of our heart.

Normally, it is prayer which is referred to as the “service of the heart”. However, we see from the words of the *Nefesh HaChaim* that the heart also plays a role in our Torah learning, for he mentions that as the generations continued, people were studying Torah with their intellect alone and their hearts weren’t in it.

The previous generations had a love for Torah that burned in their hearts. They were closer to Har Sinai and thus they learned Torah as if they were receiving it from Sinai, which is the ideal way to learn Torah. But as the generations went on, people lost this appreciation for the Torah, thus their connection to Torah grew weaker.

We need both our intellect and heart in order to learn Torah. If a person would try to awaken a burning love for Torah in his heart without studying it in-depth, he would be deluding himself. Such a person has a yearning for Torah, but he still doesn’t have Torah in his life. The ideal way to learn Torah is to make use of both our intellect and heart. We need to connect our intellect with the Torah (by involving our thoughts in it), and we also need to yearn for more and more Torah (which makes use of our heart).

Practically speaking, when you learn a *sugya* of Gemara, you should be focused in your thoughts on the *sugya* you are learning, and you must heavily think into it and feel a mental connection to it; but at the same time, you also need to have a constant fiery drive in yourself to know of more and more Torah. This is essentially the concept of *ahavas HaTorah* (loving the Torah): for one to yearn and desire more and more Torah, like the nature of a flaming fire which keeps ascending.

When a person has the balance of these two abilities together (intellect\analysis and heart\yearning), he is connected to the Torah he learns, and at the same time, he always has a drive to ascend higher in his learning, by desiring more and more Torah. He will ignite a fire inside of himself that demands more and more ascension in his learning.

When one lives in this way, he will find that today is never the same as yesterday, and the next day, he will have a completely new day.

If a person ever feels that each day feels like the same day as the day before it, it must be a sign that he is only learning Torah with his intellect alone. He is only connected to Torah because he has certain ‘anchors’ that make him feel obligated, such as coming on time to *seder* every day at 9:30 A.M. *Baruch Hashem*, he comes on time to *seder*, but that doesn’t always mean that he connects his mind to Torah when he learns.

Everyone must deeply examine himself and ask himself if he really connects his mind to his learning when he learns, or if he is rather just obligating himself each day to learn.

However, even a connection of the mind to Torah is not enough, as it was explained above. When a person is only connected in his mind to Torah but his heart isn’t in it, each day of his learning will feel monotonous and it won’t feel different than the day before. When one’s heart isn’t in his learning, he doesn’t feel a desire to have renewal in his Torah learning, and he merely sticks to his monotonous route. He might feel that he is basically successful in his learning, for after all, he is immersed every day in the study of Torah, and he is learning *sugya* after *sugya*. Everything looks great. So what is he missing?

He is missing a “heart that burns with love for Torah”. When the heart burns with a love for Torah, it does not rest; it always wants more and more Torah.

Understandably, one must have a proper balance between his mind connection Torah and his heart connection to Torah. He should make sure that the yearning of his heart to know more Torah shouldn't impede on his thinking as he's in the middle of learning the Gemara, because while learning Gemara, a calm mind is required. (The *seiche*\intellect is called “*mayim shekaitim*”, 'calm waters').

Just as one thirsts to know of Hashem and to have *d'veykus* with Him (“*My soul thirsts*”), so must one desire to know of Torah. This is not only referring to the sweetness one feels when he sees the clarity and truth meaning as he is learning Torah, which is pleasurable to the intellect. It requires the heart's yearning for Torah.

When one merits to have a burning love for Torah along with the involvement of his intellect in it, he is properly balanced between his intellect and heart in the study of Torah. On one hand, he will be able to analyze the most subtle of nuances in his learning, attaining a great connection of the intellect to the Torah he learns, and at the same time, he is never satisfied and complacent from this, for his heart yearns for more and more Torah.

If someone comes to tell him that he needs to yearn for more Torah, instead of taking this as an insult, he realizes that it is a true demand. The soul has a yearning to know all of the Torah, (in the three dimensions: length, width, and depth), and until a person gets there (and the truth is that no one has ever gotten there completely), the fire of the soul does not rest, and constantly demands more and more growth in Torah.

When this is the way one's learning looks, a person will be both intellectually immersed in Torah as well as full of yearnings for more and more growth in Torah. Instead of continuing each day from the place he stopped, he will instead be in a mode of constant ascension in the words of Torah, with true connection to Hashem and His Torah.

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