

There is a long standing custom that during the summer Shabbatot one learns the weekly chapter of Pirkei Avot. Each week Torah Tidbits will feature a prominent personality who will share insights and inspiration from the weekly Perek. Enjoy!



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Thirsty for Torah

The Torah is oft compared to water. One of the most famous allusions is found in this week’s Pirkei Avot portion, 1:4, "והוי שותה בצמא את דבריהם"; we are told to drink thirstily the words of Torah coming from our scholars.

There are many reasons why Torah is compared to water. Let us explore one.

The pasuk in Yeshayahu 55:1 says, "והוי כל צמא לכו לתיים"; "All who are thirsty, come drink water." The Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Stein, zt"l, commented- what’s unique about water as opposed to any other drink? Water, he pointed out, is as delicious as how thirsty you are. When you’re walking up a hill in 100 degree weather or you’ve done exercise for the last hour, there’s nothing more refreshing and delicious than a cold glass of water. No cup of orange juice, no Coke Zero will satisfy that thirst. The same is true regarding Torah. The thirstier we are, the more delicious the Torah is to us. If one is not thirsty, then our reaction to a dvar Torah is “ Oh, I heard that already etc” and doesn’t really move the person as much. The goal when we approach Torah and avodat Hashem is to come thirsty and when we are, there’s nothing in the world more satisfying, beautiful and fulfilling as the Torah we learn and the Mitzvot we do; nothing that gives us that refreshing “Ahhh” feeling more than Torah.



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Rabainu Yonah explains that when one is approaching Torah they should do so as someone who is thirsty, as opposed to someone who is full. When someone is full, he takes a sip and he is done no matter how tasty it is.

Rav Chaim Vilozhiner specifies that one should approach Torah specifically like a thirsty person drinking salty water. When someone thirsty drinks salty water he just wants more and more water and is never satiated.

The pasuk in Amos tells us:

”הִנֵּה יָמִים בָּאִים ... וְהִשְׁלַחְתִּי רָעַב בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא רָעַב לָקֹחַם וְלֹא צָמָא לְמַיִם כִּי אִם לְשִׂמְעַת אֶת דְּבַר־יְהוָה;

There will be a time when people will no longer be thirsty for water or hungry for bread but they'll be thirsty and hungry for

the words of Hashem.

We are living in times that feel so surreal. One thing rings true throughout; Klal Yisroel's desire, passion, commitment and yearning for Torah learning, for tefilah bitzibur, for connecting to Hashem. Seeing how many students and people come on to every zoom shiur and opportunity, when zoom has already lost its luster and excitement is nothing short of inspirational. It certainly feels like these times have helped us taste the Torah as being the most refreshing and rejuvenating factor in our lives. It has helped us crystalize our priorities as Torah being the water in our lives, our main source of life as well as what we thirst and yearn most for.

Days are coming. We can feel the droplets in the air. May it be soon! ■

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