



KINDER TORAH[©]



For parents to share with children at the Shabbos table
Parshas Vayakhel (Parshas Shekalim)

The Wise Heart

The Torah uses the expression *chacham leiv* many times in this week's parsha. Literally translated *chacham leiv* means wise heart. Rav Leib Chasman zt"l asks the following question. When we speak about wisdom, we usually refer to the head, not the heart. Why does the Torah refer to the heart as being wise and not the head? A *chacham* (wise man) is not someone who is only able to speak and repeat words of wisdom. A true *chacham* is someone who internalizes these words of wisdom into his heart. He lives by them. That is why he is referred to as *chacham leiv*. As it says in the verse in *Kriyas Shema* (Bamidbar 15:39), "Do not search after your heart and your eyes." Rashi explains that the heart controls the desires and motivations of a person. If we put wisdom into our hearts, then our whole lives will be governed by wisdom.

Kinderlach . . .

How do we put wisdom into our hearts? When we learn a piece of wisdom in the Torah, we take it to heart and do what it says. When you learn a new halacha (Torah law), put it into practice. What if you had just learned the halachos of returning lost objects? On your way home from school you see a lost object. Wonderful! Hashem has given you the opportunity to apply what you just learned! Let us say that you had learned the halachos of netilas yadayim (washing hands before eating bread). The next time that you wash, you will do it much more carefully and correctly, because you have learned all about it. When you implement what you learn children, you will become real chachmei leiv.

Uncountable

"Do we have a minyan yet, Chaim? Let's count. One, two, three . . ." "We shouldn't do that, Avi." "Do what?"

"Count Jews like that. It is customary to count Jews with the words of a verse, or using objects." "I'm confused, Chaim. Can you explain what you're talking about?" "Look in this week's Maftir, Avi. Moshe Rabbeinu, counted the Jews using half-shekel coins. Each person gave a half-shekel. Moshe counted all of the half-shekels, multiplied by two, and came up with the number of Jews." "That's a little clearer, Chaim, but I have another question. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu use half-shekel coins and multiply by two? It would have been simpler to use one shekel coins and count them to get the number directly."

"Avi, that's a famous question asked by many of our great sages. Each one has his own answer to the question. I will tell you the answer given by the Kesav Sofer, zt"l the great Rav of Pressburgh. We are all composed of two parts, body and soul. Each part is represented by half a shekel. The two halves together make a whole. The only half that we can count, however, is the body. It is limited and can be counted. The body can only eat or drink so much. Then it must stop. It can only work so long. It can only live so long. It eventually reaches its limits. The soul, however, is unlimited. The soul is the part of us that comes from the heavenly realm. We cannot begin to count it. There is no limit to what the soul can accomplish. It is eternal."

"That's a pretty deep concept, Chaim. Can you give me an example of what you're talking about?"

"Take for example the great Rav who lived about 250 years ago, Rav Aryeh Leib MiMitz, zt"l who is known to us as the Shaagas Aryeh. He learned through the entire Talmud 1000 times in his life! The Talmud is 2700 pages long. He lived 90 years. If he knew the Talmud by the time he was 10, he had to review the entire Talmud once each month, or about 100 pages each day! That's

a pretty mind-boggling feat. Rebbe Akiva Eiger zt"l who lived a little later also learned 100 pages of Talmud each day."

"Wow!"

"But perhaps the most famous example of phenomenal accomplishment is Rebbe Akiva, the leader of the Jewish people who lived almost 2000 years ago during the time of the Romans. He did not begin learning Torah until he was forty years old. When he began, he could not even read aleph-beis. He studied diligently for twenty-four solid years and became the greatest *talmid chacham* of his generation and indeed one of the greatest of all time. Avi, these people accomplished things far beyond the realm of natural attainment. They showed us the boundless potential of the soul. The soul cannot be counted. It is infinite."

"Look at that Chaim, as we're talking, a minyan of men has arrived. Lets all pray to Hashem that we soar with our souls to great achievements."

Kinderlach . . .

There are many times when we feel tired, frustrated or too discouraged to continue. Now, we see what a person is capable of doing. Let us all listen to Chaim's encouraging words and try a little harder. We are all blessed with a holy soul. Who knows what hidden potential is inside of me, or you, or Yitzy, or Shmuelik. Try again. Greatness is yours.

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