

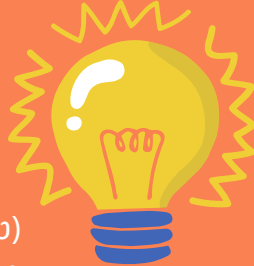
Amnesia Torah

Forgetting Torah and
Remembering Ourselves

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Deuteronomy 4:9-10



(ט) רַק הִשְׁמַר לְךָ וּשְׁמֹר נִפְשְׁךָ מְאֹד פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּפֶן־יִסּוּחוּ מִלְּבַבְךָ כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ: (י) יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּחַרְבַּב בְּאֶמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי הִקְהַל־לִי אֶת־הָעָם וְאִשְׁמַעְם אֶת־דְּבָרֵי אֲשֶׁר יְלַמְדוּן לִירְאָה אֹתִי כֹל־הַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר הֵם חַיִּים עַל־הָאֲדָמָה וְאֶת־בְּנֵיהֶם יְלַמְדוּן:

(9) But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children: (10) The day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to Me, "Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words, in order that they may learn to revere Me as long as they live on earth, and may so teach their children."

Pirkei Avot 3:8



(ח) רבי דוסתאי ברבי ינאי משום רבי מאיר אומר, כל השוכח דבר אחד ממשנתו, מעלה עליו הפתוב כאלו מתחייב בנפשו, שנאמר (דברים ד) רק השמר לך ושמר נפך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך. יכול אפלו תקפה עליו משנתו, תלמוד לומר (שם) ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייך, הא אינו מתחייב בנפשו עד שישב ויסירם מלבו:

(8) Rabbi Dostai ben Rabbi Yannai said in the name of Rabbi Meir: whoever forgets one word of his study, scripture accounts it to him as if he were mortally guilty, as it is said, “But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes” (Deuteronomy 4:9). One could [have inferred that this is the case] even when his study proved [too] hard for him, therefore scripture says, “that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live” (ibid.). Thus, he is not mortally guilty unless he deliberately removes them from his heart.

Babylonian Talmud Tractate Shabbat 8b

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi further advised: **And be careful** to continue to respect **an elder who has forgotten his Torah knowledge due to** circumstances **beyond his control**. Even though he is no longer a Torah scholar, he must still be respected for the Torah that he once possessed. **As we say:** Both **the tablets** of the Covenant **and the broken tablets are placed in the Ark** of the Covenant in the Temple. Even though the first tablets were broken, their sanctity obligates one not to treat them with contempt. An elder who forgot the Torah knowledge he once possessed is likened to these broken tablets.

וְהִזְהָרוּ בְּזִמְנוֹ שֶׁשֶׁכַח תַּלְמוּדוֹ מִחֶמֶת אוֹנָסוֹ. דְּאִמְרֵינָן: לֹחֹת וְשִׁבְרֵי לֹחֹת מוֹנְחֹת בְּאֶרֶץ

Babylonian Talmud Tractate Eruvin 54b

And, lastly, **Rabbi Eliezer said: What is the meaning of that which is written:** “And the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, **engraved upon the tablets**” (Exodus 32:16)? This teaches that **had the first tablets**, the subject of this verse, **not been broken, the Torah would never have been forgotten from the Jewish people**, as the Torah would have been engraved upon their hearts.

וְאָמַר רַבִּי (אֶלְיָעֶזֶר): מֵאֵי דְכָתִיב “חִיּוֹת עַל הַלְּוִיּוֹת”, אֶלְמְלִי לֹא נִשְׁתַּבְּרוּ לְוִיּוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹנוֹת — לֹא נִשְׁתַּכְּחָה תּוֹרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל.

Babylonian Talmud Tractate Menachot 99a-b

Reish Lakish says: Sometimes the apparent dereliction of the study of Torah is its foundation, e.g., if one breaks off his studies in order to participate in a funeral or a wedding procession. This is derived from a verse, **as it is written:** “And the Lord said to Moses: Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and I will write upon the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, **which [asher] you broke**” (Exodus 34:1). The word “*asher*” is an allusion to the fact that **the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses: Your strength is true [yishar koḥakha]** in **that you broke** the tablets, as the breaking of the first tablets led to the foundation of the Torah through the giving of the second tablets. **And Reish Lakish says:** With regard to **a Torah scholar who sinned, he is not disgraced in public, as it is stated: “Therefore, you shall stumble in the day, and the prophet also shall stumble with you in the night”** (Hosea 4:5). One can derive from the verse that if a prophet or any other Torah scholar stumbles and sins, one **should conceal** his offense **like the night** and not punish him in public.

And Reish Lakish says: Anyone who causes himself to forget even one matter from his studies violates a prohibition, as it is stated with regard to the receiving of the Torah on Mount Sinai: “Only **observe for yourself, and guard your soul diligently, lest you forget the matters** that your eyes saw, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life, but you should make them known to your children and to your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9)...

The Gemara qualifies this statement: One **might** have thought this applies **even** to one who forgot his Torah knowledge **due to** circumstances **beyond his control**. Therefore, **the verse states: “And lest they depart from your heart.”** This indicates that **the verse is speaking of one who willingly causes them to depart from his heart.**

אמר ריש לקיש פעמים שביטולה של תורה זהו יסודה דכתיב (שמות לד, א) אשר שברת אמר לו הקב"ה למשה יישר כחך ששברת ואמר ריש לקיש תלמיד חכם שסרה אין מבזין אותו בפרהסיא שנאמר (הושע ד, ה) וכשלת היום וכשל גם נביא עמך לילה כסהו כלילה ואמר ריש לקיש כל המשכה דבר אחד מתלמודו עובר בלאו שנאמר (דברים ד, ט) השמר לך ושמור נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים... יכול אפילו מחמת אונסו תלמוד לומר (דברים ד, ט) ופן יסורו מלבבך במסירם מלבו הכתוב מדבר

Midrash Vayikra Rabbah (Margoliot 19:2)

R. Yohanan said [this is analogous] to a loaf of bread hanging in the height of a house. The dull one, what does he say? "Who can lower this?" And the alert one, what does he say? "Didn't someone else hang it? Rather I will bring two sticks and knock them against one another and bring it down."

Similarly, what does the dull one say? "Who can learn the Torah which is in the heart of the wise one?" What does the alert one say? "Didn't he learn from someone else? Rather I will learn two laws in the day and two laws at night until I have learned all of the Torah like him."

R. Levi said it is like a basket with holes whose owners hired workers to fill it. The dull one, what does he say? "What am I gaining? It goes in [this opening] and goes out that one!" What does the alert one say? "Don't I get reward for each jug?!" Similarly, what does the dull one say? "What have I gained in learning Torah and forgetting it?!" What does the alert one say? "Doesn't God pay for effort?!"

ר' לוי לקסטל נקוב בשכר בעליו פועלין למלאותו. מי שטיפש מהו אומר, מה אני מועיל מכניס בזו ומוציא בזו. מי שפיקח מהו אומר, והלא שכר כל חבית וחבית אני נוטל. כך מי שטיפש מהו אומר, מה אני מועיל ללמוד תורה ומשכחה. מי שפיקח מהו אומר, ולא שכר יגיעה הקב"ה נתן.

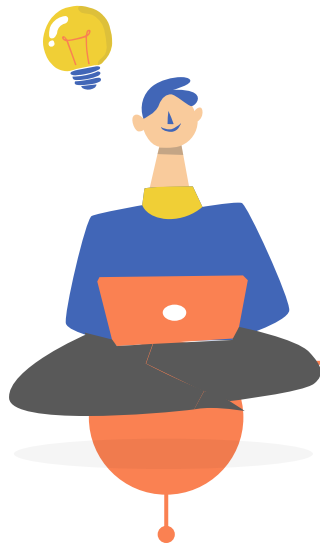
כך מי שהוא טיפש מהו אומר, מי יכול ללמוד תורה שבליבו שלחכם. מי שפיקח מהו אומר, והוא לא מאחר למדה, אלא הרי אני למד שתי הלכות ביום ושתי הלכות בלילה עד שאני למד כל התורה כמותו.

אמר רבי יוחנן לכפר תלוי באוירו של בית, מי שטיפש אומר מי יכול להוריד את זה, מי שפיקח אומר ולא אתר תלאו, אלא מביא שני קנים ומספקן זה לזה ומורידו.



Babylonian Talmud Tractae Niddah 30b

דרש רבי שמלאי: למה הולד דומה במעי אמו? ..
ומלמדין אותו כל התורה כולה, שנאמר "ויוֹרְנִי
וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יִתְמַךְ דְּבַרִי לְבָךְ שִׁמּוֹר מִצוֹתַי וְחַיִּה"
(משלי ד:ד) ואומר "בסוד א-לוה עלי אהלי"
(איוב כט:ד) ... וכיון שבא לאויר העולם בא
מלאך וסטרו על פיו ומשכחו כל התורה כולה
שנאמר "לפתח חטאת רובץ" (בראשית ד:ז)...



Philtrum

the vertical groove between the base of the nose and the border of the upper lip.

R. Simlai expounded: To what is a fetus in its mother's womb similar?... And they teach the whole Torah as it says, "He taught me, and said to me, 'Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live'" (Proverbs 4:4). And it says, "When the friendship of God was upon my tent" (Job 29:4). And when it arrives to the atmosphere of the world an angel comes and taps him on his mouth and causes him to forget the entire Torah. As it says, "Sin crouches at the opening" (Genesis 4:7).