



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** a collection of maamarim on  
"תנא דבי אליהו" given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

### Melave Malka Parshas Balak 5763

We just learned in **תנא דבי אליהו** that one who has Torah knowledge but does not share it with others, harms himself. His own Torah will diminish and he will certainly not gain.

We find a similar lesson in our Parsha. Chazal, in Maseches Nedarim (פ"א.), explained the words **יזל מים מדליו**, with the following warning - "**הזהרו בבני עניים שמהם תצא תורה**". Take care with the children of the poor, for Torah will come from them. The Ran explains that taking care, means, "**להשתדל ללמדם תורה**", to try to teach them Torah. He also explains why Torah will especially come from the children of the poor. "They have no other involvements, and they are humble". The Gemara tells us to invest more in teaching the children of the poor, than in teaching children of the wealthy, since it is more likely that Torah will come from them.

On the same page in Maseches Nedarim, Chazal say, **אין עני אלא בדעת**, a truly poor man, is one lacking understanding. We can now define **בני עניים**, not simply as children from financially impoverished homes, but as children from ignorant homes.

In Tana D'vei Eliyahu, Eliyahu Hanavi warns Talmidei Chachomim to take care when the child of an ignorant Jew asks a Talmid Chochom to learn with him. Not only will he not lose by learning with this child, he will gain. However, if he rejects the child, his own Torah will diminish.

The words of Eliyahu Hanavi help us understand the continuation of the Gemara in Nedarim. Chazal ask **"ומפני מה אין מצויין תלמידי חכמים לצאת"**



[1]

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תלמידי חכמים מבניהן? רב אשי אמר, משום דקרו לאינשי חמרי. Why don't we find that the children of Talmidei Chachomim are also Talmidei Chachomim? Rav Ashi says that it is because the Talmidei Chachomim call other people donkeys.

The Gemara doesn't mean to say that they actually call everyone else in the world, a donkey. Rav Ashi is describing the environment in the homes of these Talmidei Chachomim. They truly are Talmidei Chachomim. The Gemara would not use that title flippantly. However, at home, this Talmid Chochom repeatedly speaks about his importance, and his high level of Torah knowledge. He warns his child not to befriend another boy, because that boy's father is a simple "Baalhabos", who is merely kovea itim L'Torah. He wants his son to understand that, unlike his own father, that boy's father is not a "true Talmid Chochom."

The mother also warns her daughters not to associate with girls who don't come from homes like theirs, homes of true Talmidei Chachomim.

They transmit the message that, when compared to people like their father, all others are donkeys. When those children grow up, and the child of a "donkey", asks one of them to learn something simple like Parshas Hashavua with him, they will reject him. They won't want to abandon their high-level learning, to learn something basic with this young donkey. This is the upbringing they received in the home of their father, the Talmid Chochom, and this is their undoing.

Many teachers in Talmudei Torah, and Yeshivos Ketanos, told me about a surprising phenomenon. When it comes time to transition, from Talmud Torah to Yeshiva Ketana, or from Yeshiva Ketana to Yeshiva Gedola, those boys classified as "iluyim", (geniuses), know that their ability guarantees them a place in the yeshiva of their choice. During the months of Tamuz and Av, when their classmates wait to hear where they have been accepted, the "iluyim" degenerate spiritually.



[2]

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מה יעשה הבן ולא יחטא! How can we expect them to behave otherwise? During the “recruitment season”, he sees the so called “educators” flattering him and his father, and they pursue them, begging them to choose their institution for the young genius. They promise him anything he wants, if only he will agree to glorify their yeshiva with his greatness.

How can we expect this boy not to call others “donkeys”? It’s virtually inevitable that he will become a “Baal Gaava”. It’s almost beyond his control.

Our society suffers from the sickness of “talent worship”. We value talented students more than those who work hard, and learn with all of their strength. We must realize that this approach is totally mistaken. In reality, Torah greatness results, not from talent, but from toiling in Torah, with true humility. That is why the children of those with little knowledge of Torah, truly excel. Indeed, specifically from those children does Torah come to all of us.

Once, the Gerer Rebbe, the Bais Yisroel זיע"א, instructed me to leave my night seder chavrusa. He wanted me to learn in a certain yeshiva, so that I could ensure that an environment of Kedusha V'Tahara was maintained. The Rebbe saw how upset I was by the thought of leaving an excellent chavrusa, and the Beis Medrash where I enjoyed learning.

The Rebbe told me that he applies the posuk, עבודת הקודש עליהם בכתף, ישאו (they are assigned to Avodas Hakodesh, and will carry on their shoulders), to my situation. He explained, די האסט דיין עבודת הקודש, און, "איך זאג דיר צו, אז איך ועל דרך טראגען אויף מיין פלייצע". You have your Avodas Hakodesh, and I promise you, that I will carry you on my shoulders.

This statement of the Gerrer Rebbe expands the lesson of the Tana D'vei Eliyahu. Not only someone who teaches Torah to others, but even someone who helps others learn Torah with kedusha and tahara, will not lose Torah, but will gain Torah. The Zohar Hakadosh tells us that Torah without tahara, לא פרחא לעילא (תיקו"ז עשיראה כה:). (does not fly upwards).



[3]

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Dovid Hamelech, the Baal Haseuda of Melave Malka, is the original example of this principle. We find in the Midrash, “R. Huna said in the name of R. Yosi, that on the night that Dovid fled from Shaul, he learned more from Shmuel, than an experienced talmid could learn in one hundred years.” Nonetheless, we find that Dovid Hamelech himself went to teach others. His students weren’t just regular Jews. They were פושעי ישראל, sinners. The Medrash Tanchuma tells us (תנחומא ישן כ"ח), “Hakadosh Boruch Hu said, ‘Dovid taught those who did tshuva, like a teacher of young children. The Posuk says, "אלמדה פושעים דרכיך, וחטאים" (I will teach sinner your ways, and transgressors will return to you).

If someone is fortunate enough to have a home of Torah and Avoda, and children who follow in his ways, he must not separate himself from others. Instead, he should fulfill the teaching of Eliyahu Hanavi, and share his Torah with others. He should also teach his children to follow that path. If he does so, he will merit the fulfillment of Eliyahu Hanavi’s promise that his own Torah wisdom will increase and multiply.



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