



Parshas Metzorah

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A beautiful Midrash on this week's Parsha (Vayikra Rabba 19) discusses a huge pile of dirt that needed to be moved by two people. The foolish man cynically questions how he can possibly do so much while the wise person figures out that if he moves 2 shovelfuls today, and 2 the next day and every day after that, and so on until the job is completed, he will finish the job!

The same applies to Torah. A foolish person gives up by asking how he can learn all of the Torah, there are 30 perakim on damages and 30 of Kaylim, while the wise person posits that he will learn 2 laws today and 2 tomorrow until he finishes the entire Torah!

The second parable seems to focus on attaining depth of wisdom. The Midrash discusses a case of a cookie hanging from the ceiling. The fool questions how anyone can reach the cookie which is so high up, while the wise person reasons that if someone hung it there and figured out how to put it up, than it should be also possible to get it down!

So too, a fool says how can one learn all the wisdom in my Rebbe's heart, while the wise person expresses that if his Rebbe got all his wisdom from his own Rebbe, then certainly I can pull it from my Rebbe!

We can assume that while the fool is being intimidated by the big scary jobs and getting stifled by these emotional blocks, the wise person doesn't let the emotions overwhelm him and stop him, and rather logically assesses the situation and calculations and figures out a system to accomplish the goal.

The third and perhaps the most fascinating mashal is an owner of an estate who hires workers to fill up baskets full of holes with water! The fool quits the jobs because of his lack of ability to fill the holey bucket, while the wise man says – let's just do our job. After all, we are being paid to do it!

So too the fool gives up on the whole experience of learning based on forgetting everything he learns, while the wise man says that let's just work because we are getting paid to put the water in the baskets so who cares about the results!

Let's zoom in on the third parable. The fool in the case with the basket with holes is very foolish because how do you give up working and supporting your family because the job is pointless! He's still making a living! So that person seems completely unreasonable and yet the Midrash is making a comparison to the memory case! But when we look at the memory case, if everything someone learnt when in one ear and right out the other, anyone in their right mind would feel so discouraged that it would be completely understandable if he quit learning after a short while, and the Midrash is telling us is that when someone quits learning Torah because he can't remember any of his learning he is as foolish as someone who quits a job based on lack of satisfaction instead of keeping the job! The fool in the forgetting Torah story is as foolish as the fool in the holey bucket story!

What we see from here is the amazing and incredible reward that is waiting for us for all the Torah that we learn. Of course reviewing what we learn and retaining it is very important. But when we start to get discouraged because we feel like we aren't accomplishing in our learning, we need to remind ourselves that the reward in this world and the next that we will receive is impossible to describe, regardless of whether we retain anything! That's how intrinsically holy and rewarding the study of Torah is!