

Alumni Reflections

Impact of Limud HaTorah

Finding Ability and Time

By: Rabbi Moshe Koval

Then



Now



There's a famous midrash in Tana d'bei Eliyahu which relates the following story: Eliyahu Hanavi once asked a certain fellow why he didn't study Torah. The man responded that G-d did not give him the capability to do so. When Eliyahu asked him what he does for a living, the man responded that he's a fisherman and proceeded to describe in great detail his expertise in making nets and catching fish. Eliyahu responded, "Surely if G-d gave you the ability to be an expert fisherman he also gave the ability to study Torah. The man was heartbroken when he realized the truth of Eliyahu's words.

The Kotzker Rebbe ZT"l, asks the following question: What exactly was the conversation between Eliyahu and the fisherman? If the fisherman was indeed capable of studying Torah, why didn't he realize this on his own? And if he wasn't smart enough to study Torah then how could Eliyahu rebuke him?

The Kotzker Rebbe provides a fascinating answer. He says that in reality the fisherman was neither smart enough to study Torah nor to become an expert fisherman. He was not naturally gifted or exceptionally bright. However, explains the Kotzker, when your life depends on something, you'll find ways to achieve above and beyond your natural abilities.

This fisherman had to provide for his family. This was about survival. Therefore, no matter what limitations he may have had, he made it work! He did what was needed to be done and he became a successful fisherman. This was Eliyahu's rebuke. Had the fisherman valued Torah study and treated it as if his life depended on it, he would have found success in his studies as well and achieved far beyond his natural capability.

This, says the Kotzker, is how one has to approach to study of Torah. Torah is not just an intellectual pursuit; it's not just another subject that one can choose whether or not to study it. It is our lifeblood- essential for our spiritual survival. If we treat it that way we will achieve great success in our learning.

Let's conclude with another gem from the Kotzker. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avos states "*Al Tomar L'chisefneh eshneh, shema lo tipaneh, Do not say when I have the time I'll study, maybe you won't have the time.*" Simply understood, the Mishnah is telling us not to put off our learning because things come up and one may run out of time. The Kotzker offers a novel interpretation. "Maybe you won't have the time," really means that maybe G-d, by Divine design, has decided that you will be a person that never has the time. Yet, the Mishnah teaches that our job- regardless- is to make time for Torah study. How often do people say that as soon as they retire they'll have more time to sit and learn? As soon as they're done their next project at work. As soon as the kids grow up and move out of the house. And so on and so forth. There will always reasons, explains the Rebbe, why we don't have the time for Torah study. There will always be excuses, and sometimes very valid ones. What the Mishnah is telling us however, is don't say "when I have the time..." because perhaps, it's Hashem's will that you may never have the time and yet it's incumbent upon all of us to make that time. Let us always remember how important it is to make the time for Torah study and truly regard it as if our very life depends upon it.

Have a good Shabbos.





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MINNEAPOLIS COMMUNITY
KOLLEL

Alumni Profile

Rabbi and Mrs. Moshe Koval

Members of the Kollel: 2004 - 2010



Tzvi, 14, Yosef Elchonon, 12, Sari, 8, Blimi, 4

Personal Reflection

What can I say about our time in Minneapolis! When we moved from Eretz Yisroel in 2004, we were looking for a community where we could make a positive impact and raise our children in a warm Torah-true environment. It's fair to say the community far exceeded our expectations! Whatever we may have given to the Kollel and the community at large, we received far more in return. The Rosh Kollel's unbridled joy and love for learning is something I can never forget. It extended far beyond the Kollel as well. Seeing so many "baalei batim" who not only were able to raise such beautiful families and still be so dedicated to learning, to the school and to the community at large was truly inspiring. We like to think that, "While you can take the Kovals out of Minneapolis, you can never take Minneapolis out of the Kovals."

Highlights

- After leaving Minneapolis in 2010, we moved to Chicago. In 2012 we moved to Cleveland. Hopefully no more moving (unless it's back to Minneapolis :)
- Our kids are in the Hebrew Academy. In the fall, our oldest son, Tzvi, is going to Telshe Yeshiva here in Cleveland.
- I work in sales and my wife is the resource coordinator at the Hebrew Academy
- We both participate in Partners in Torah and try to help out with the local Kiruv organizations when possible.

Keep in touch with the Kovals

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