



The Vital Lesson Conveyed by the King's Two Sifrei-Torah One Sefer Is Stored in His Brain and Heart One Sefer Comes and Goes with Him to Protect Him

In this week's parsha, parshas Shoftim, it is fitting that we examine the mitzvah to appoint a king over Yisrael. More specifically, we will examine the king's unique mitzvah to write two sifrei-Torah (Devarim 17, 14):

”כי תבוא אל הארץ אשר ה' אלקיך נותן לך וירשתה וישבתה בה, ואמרת אשימה עלי מלך ככל הגוים אשר סביבותי, שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו... והיה כשבתו על כסא ממלכתו, וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת על ספר מלפני הכהנים הלויים והיתה עמו וקרא בו כל ימי חייו, למען ילמד ליראה את ה' אלקיו לשמור את כל דברי התורה הזאת ואת החוקים האלה לעשותם, לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו ולבלתי סור מן המצוה ימין ושמאל, למען יאריך ימים על ממלכתו הוא ובניו בקרב ישראל.”

When you come to the land that Hashem, your G—d, gives you, and possess it, and settle in it, and you will say, “I will set a king over myself, like all the nations that are around me.” You shall surely appoint a king over yourself, whom Hashem, your G—d, shall choose. . . It shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a book, from before the kohanim, the leviim. It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his G—d, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them, so that his heart does not become haughty over his brethren and not turn from the commandment right or left, so that he will prolong years over his kingdom, he and his sons amid Yisrael.

Rashi provides the following clarification: **Two sifrei-Torah--one to be placed in his treasury, and one that comes and goes with him.** His source is the Gemara (Sanhedrin 21b). There, Rashi explains that this fact was deduced from the language employed by the passuk--“משנה התורה”—implying a duplicate process, two copies. We find that the Torah employs

the same language in relation to the “mahn” (Shemos 16, 22): “ויהי ביום השישי לקטו לחם משנה”—indicating that a double portion was to be collected on Fridays.

Now, there are mitzvos that we are not able to fulfill in this day and age; similarly, there are mitzvos that only apply to kohanim and leviim; or, in our case, there are mitzvos that only apply to a king. Notwithstanding, our holy sefarim state that it is incumbent upon every Jew to strive to fulfill the essence of these mitzvos. Apropos this concept, the Ma'or Einayim (Noach) writes: “הנה ידוע כי התורה היא נצחית ובכל אדם”—**it is a known fact that the Torah is eternal and applies to every individual.** In a similar vein, the Degel Machaneh Ephraim writes (Lech Lecha): “כי התורה היא נצחית וישנה בכל אדם ובכל זמן”—**the Torah is eternal and applies to every individual in every era.**

So, let us explore the underlying rationale for this mitzvah; why is a King of Yisrael obligated to write two sifrei-Torah? Furthermore, how is it possible for every Jew in every era able to fulfill the essence of this mitzvah? This is especially relevant seeing as the Gemara (Gittin 62a) states that every talmid-chacham is like a king. The Gemara derives this fact from the passuk (Mishlei 8, 15): “כי מלכים ימלוכו”—**through me, kings will reign.** In this passuk, the Torah is speaking of those who study her precepts.

The King's Two Sifrei-Torah Represent Humility and Greatness

There is a well-known concept presented by many of the commentaries regarding a king's obligation to write two sifrei-Torah: **One to be placed in his treasury, and one that comes and goes with him.** The source for this concept is found in the sefer Yismach Yisrael (Hoshanah Rabbah), authored by the

great Rabbi Yisrael of Chortkov, zy”a, and the sefer Ma’aglei Tzedek (Shoftim), authored by the great Rabbi Menachem Mendel Panet, zy”a, who served as the head of the Beis Din of Dej. Here is the gist of their exalted idea with some additional elaboration.

Chazal teach us in the Gemara (Kesubos 103b) that when Rabeinu hakadosh, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi, became ill and sensed that his passing was imminent, he called for his oldest son, Rabban Gamliel. As his successor, he wished to impart to him guidelines regarding the conduct of a Nasi:

“אמר להן לבני גדול אני צריך, נכנס רבן גמליאל אצלו ומסר לו סדרי נשיאות. אמר לו בני נהוג נשיאותך ברמים, זרוק מרה בתלמידים. איני והא כתיב (תהלים טו-ד) ואת יראי ה' יכבד, ואמר מר זה יהושפט מלך יהודה, כשהיה רואה תלמיד חכם, היה עומד מכסאו ומחבקו ומנשקו, וקורא לו רבי רבי מרי מרי. לא קשיא, הא כצינעא, הא בפרהסיא.”

Rebbe said to those attending him, “I require my eldest son.” Rabban Gamliel came to him, and Rebbe transmitted to him the protocols related to a Nasi. He said to him, “My son, conduct yourself as a Nasi with greatness; cast fear upon the students.” Is this so? But it is written: “And those who fear Hashem, he (a tzaddik) shall honor.” And the master stated: This refers to Yehoshaphat, King of Yehudah. When he would see a talmid-chacham, he would rise from his seat, embrace him and kiss him; and he would call him “My teacher, my teacher! My master, my master!” This is not difficult. This teaching applies to private settings; while this teaching applies to public settings. Rashi explains: Privately, he (the Nasi) can honor each and every person; publicly, he must cast fear on others, to demonstrate his position as the Nasi.

This teaches us a fundamental principle regarding the proper conduct of a leader of Yisrael. He must conduct himself in two contradictory manners—each in its appropriate time and place. In private, he must exhibit humility and modesty. In public, he must exhibit greatness; he must instill fear, so that his orders will be followed.

As the Gemara (Shabbas 56a) teaches us, Rabeinu hakadosh was a descendant of David HaMelech: **“רבי דאתי מדוד מהפך ודריש—בזכותיה דדוד—Rebbe, who came from David, overturned and taught the merits of David.** Thus, we can suggest that Rebbe learned this crucial lesson from David HaMelech. In his dealings with HKB”H, he demonstrated humility by saying (Tehillim 22,

7): **“ואנכי תולעת ולא איש חרפת אדם ובזוי עם”-- but I am a worm and not a man, scorn of humanity, and despised of people.** Similarly, it is written (Shmuel II 7, 18): **“ויבוא המלך דוד וישב לפני ה' ויאמר מי I—David HaMelech then came and sat down before Hashem, and said, “Who am I, my Lord, Elokim, and who is my household, that you should have brought me this far?”** Yet, when he led the troops in battle against Yisrael’s enemies, as their king, he said (Tehillim 18, 38): **“ארדוף אויבי ואשיגם ולא אשוב עד כלותם, אמהצם ולא יוכלו קום יפלו:—I pursued my enemies and overtook them, and did not return until they were destroyed. I struck them down and they could not rise; they fell beneath my feet.**

Examining the mitzvos in this week’s parsha pertaining to the appointment of a King of Yisrael, we find that HKB”H suggests to the king quite clearly that he must adopt these two distinct modes of conduct. On the one hand, it states: **“שום תשים עליך מלך— you shall surely appoint a king over yourself.** Expounding on this passuk, the Gemara (Kesubos 17a) teaches us: **“מלך שמחל— על כבודו אין כבודו מחול, דאמר מר שום תשים עליך מלך, שתהא אימתו עליך— if a king renounced his honor, his honor is not renounced, for the master said: “You shall surely appoint a king over yourself”—that you should be in awe of him.** On the other hand, the Torah warns the king: **“לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו”-- so that his heart does not become haughty over his brethren.** These pesukim reflect what we learned above. In private, in his dealings with HKB”H, a king must exhibit humility. In public, however, in front of his subjects, he must instill fear and awe, so that they heed his words.

This provides us with a very nice understanding of the unique mitzvah HKB”H imposed upon a “melech”: **“וכתב לו את משנה התורה:— he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah.** As Rashi explained: **One to be placed in his treasury, and one that comes and goes with him.** These two sefer-Torahs allude magnificently to the two modes of conduct required of a King of Yisrael. The Torah located in his treasury alludes to the way he must conduct himself with his Maker. In those interactions, he must take care not to be haughty: **“לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו”.** In the presence of HKB”H, he must demonstrate his sense of lowliness and modesty, as expressed by David HaMelech: **“ואנכי תולעת— but I am a worm and not a man.** The other Torah, however, that accompanied him in his comings and goings, alludes to the second mode of conduct required of a king. He

must instill fear and awe in his subjects. These are their sacred words with some added explanation.

**Humility and Lowly Stature versus:
“ויגבה לבו בדרכי ה”**

Thus, we can explain very nicely how the essence of this mitzvah applies to each and every Jew. As we know, every person must adopt these two modes of conduct. On the one hand, a person must adopt the midah of humility—the source and foundation of all the good midot. In the words of the Mishnah (Avos 4, 4): “מאד מאד הוא שגבל רוח”—**be exceedingly humble in spirit**. The Bartenura explains that although with regards to the other midot, the middle road is commendable; with regards to arrogance and haughtiness, this does not hold true. Here one should tend toward the extreme of humility, because haughtiness is so despicable.

This truth is evident from the historic revelation of Matan Torah. We have learned in the Gemara (Sotah 5a): “אמר רבי יוסף, לעולם ילמד אדם מדעת קונו, שהרי הקב”ה הניח כל הרים וגבעות והשרה “**Rabbi Yosef said: A person should always learn (the midah of humility) from the wisdom of his Maker (Rashi: to love the lowly); for HKB”H passed over the taller mountains and hills and rested His Shechinah on Har Sinai.** The Gemara there also teaches us: “כל אדם שיש בו גסות הרוח, אמר: “**concerning any person who possesses a haughtiness of spirit, HKB”H says: I and he cannot dwell together in the world.**

Notwithstanding, the holy Ba’al Shem Tov and his pupils, zy”a, teach us a vital principle. The midah of humility is admirable and commendable only with regards to one’s own, personal honor. With regards to the honor of Heaven—“kevod shamayim”—one must adopt an attitude of haughtiness for the sake of kedushah. One should be among Hashem’s legion of zealots, in keeping with the notion of (Divrei HaYamim II 17, 6): “**ויגבה לבו בדרכי ה—he was filled with exuberant self-assurance (arrogance) as he went in the paths of Hashem.** For, if one fails to do so, he will fall prey to the yetzer due to inappropriate, false modesty and humility. The yetzer will convince a person that he is a big sinner and is not worthy to study HKB”H’s Torah and to perform His mitzvos. Therefore, it is imperative to make every effort to serve Hashem with self-assurance and self-pride.

This, in fact, is the lesson taught by Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa, zy”a. A person must always have two pockets. In one he must carry the doctrine of Avraham Avinu, who said to HKB”H (Bereishis 18, 27): “**אנכי עפר ואפר—I am but dust and ashes.** In the other he must carry the teaching of the Mishnah (Sanhedrin 37a): “**כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר בשבילי נברא העולם—every single individual must think to himself, “The world was created for me!”** When confronted and assailed by the yetzer of haughtiness, he should take out the maxim: “**אנכי עפר ואפר—I am but dust and ashes.** When overcome by the yetzer of false humility and modesty, he should take out the maxim: “**בשבילי נברא העולם-- The world was created for me!**

So, in theory, every Jew should possess two sifrei-Torah—two ways to serve Hashem. **One that lies in his treasury,** used in private for his encounters with HKB”H. During these interactions, he should demonstrate humility and a sense of low self-esteem, reflecting Avraham’s doctrine of: “**אנכי עפר ואפר**”. Yet, along with this first Torah, he should also possess a second Torah: **One that comes and goes with him.** So, when he goes to perform one of Hashem’s mitzvos in actual deed, and the yetzer attempts to overwhelm him with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt--attempting to convince him that he is not worthy to serve Hashem—he should should adopt an attitude of self-pride and prominence, saying to himself: “**בשבילי נברא העולם**”.

**It Is a Mitzvah to Etch the Letters
of the Torah in Your Brain**

As it is the nature of the Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, I would like to propose a novel explanation to our esteemed audience regarding a king’s obligation to write two sifrei-Torah—**one that lies in his treasury, and one that comes and goes with him.** Let us refer to a fascinating passage on this subject in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 25, 70a). Here is a Hebrew translation of the passage:

“בראשית זו התורה, זהו שאמר הכתוב (משלי ח-כב) ה' קנני ראשית דרכו... והתורה שתי מצוות יש בה, האחת (יהושע א-ח) והגית בו יומם ולילה, השניה שיהיה למלך ספר תורה שהולך עמו בכל מקום, זהו שאמר הכתוב (דברים יז-יט) והיתה עמו וקרא בו כל ימי חייו”.

“Bereishis” refers to the Torah . . . There are two mitzvos with regards to the Torah. The first: “You shall contemplate it day and night.” The second: The king should have a sefer-Torah that accompanies him everywhere. That is the

implication of the passuk: “It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life.”

It appears that the Tikunei Zohar is providing us with a new interpretation concerning the two mitzvos HKB”H imposed upon a King of Yisrael: “וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת”. We must endeavor to comprehend why two Torahs were necessary? What benefit was served? Hence, the Tikunei Zohar explains that one mitzvah dictates that a person should labor in the study of Torah, fulfilling the directive: “והגית בו יומם ולילה”. By fulfilling this mitzvah, the Torah is placed securely in a person’s “treasury.” That is, the letters of the Torah are imprinted upon his brain—a person’s “treasury.” The second mitzvah dictates that the king actually write a sefer-Torah that comes and goes with him: “It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life.”

When One Comprehends the Torah It Is Embraced by His Intellect

Continuing onward and upward along this enlightening path, let us elaborate on this concept based on an in-depth lesson from the author of the Tanya in Likutei Amarim (Chapter 5). A Jew is commanded to toil and devote himself to the study of Torah until he achieves Torah-based insights, in keeping with the notion of (Megillah 6b): “I have labored, and I have succeeded,” believe him. Then the insights he has gained become ingrained and are embraced by his intellect to the point that the intellect endeavors to comprehend every detail it contains. Here are his sacred words:

“הנה כל שכל, כשמשכיל ומשיג בשכלו איזה מושכל [מחכמת התורה], הרי השכל תופס את המושכל ומקיפו בשכלו, והמושכל נתפס ומוקף ומלוכב בתוך השכל שהשיגו והשכילו... דרך משל, כשאדם מבין ומשיג איזו הלכה כמשנה או בגמרא לאשורה על בוריה, הרי שכלו תופס ומקיף אותה.”

At the end of the chapter, he uses this concept to clarify the Gemara’s (Chagigah 14a) statement that the Torah is compared to bread. Just as the bread’s nutrients enter the body and sustain it, thus the light of the Torah penetrates the intellect that embraces it. From there it sustains the entire body and soul, as it is written (Tehillim 40, 9): “ותורתך בתוך מעי”—**and your Torah is in my gut.**

This then is the message of the Tikunei Zohar. First of all, it is incumbent upon a king to write a personal, virtual, intangible sefer-Torah by fulfilling the mitzvah of: “והגית בו יומם ולילה”—devoting himself to the study of Torah until it penetrates his

brain and intellect. This is the sefer-Torah that will remain in his “treasury”—his brain and intellect. For, the thoughts and insights ingrained in his intellect are stored away and concealed from sight; they are visible only to HKB”H, Who sees all that is concealed.

“בבית גנזיו”--It Is Stored in His Brain and in His Heart

I would like to propose my own explanation for why they specifically said of one of the Torah scrolls: “שהיא מונחת בבית” “גנזיו”—**that it lies in his treasury.** This is curious, because the term “בבית גנזיו” is plural. If they meant to say that by means of Torah-study, the insights are embedded in his brain, they could have used the singular term “בבית גנזו”. Therefore, I would like to suggest that they were referring to both the brain and the heart, both of man’s treasure-houses—hence “בבית גנזיו”. For, it does not suffice for the Torah to illuminate only the brain, it must also illuminate and be etched in a man’s heart, as it is written (Mishlei 3, 3): “כתבם על לוח לבך”—**inscribe them on the tablet of your heart.**

This can be understood based on an explanation from the the great Rabbi of Kozhiglov, ztz”l, in Eretz Tzvi (Shoftim). Citing his mentor and Rav, the great author of the Avnei Nezer, zy”a, he addresses Chazal’s statement in the Midrash (D.R. 4, 2): “הסייף והספר ירדו כרוכים מן השמים, אמר להם אם תעשו מה שכתוב בספר הזה, אתם the sword and the book came down from heaven bound together. He said to them: **If you observe what is written in this book, you will be spared from this sword; if you do not, you will be killed by this sword.**

He explains in his own inimitable way a vital concept concerning man’s actions in this world. A person must apply the wisdom located in the brain to determine which actions are good--and therefore are worth doing--and which are bad, and are therefore inappropriate. Having made this determination in his brain, he must send the message to his heart. The brain’s intelligence must illuminate the way and influence the desire of the heart--so that its will affects the bodily limbs that perform a person’s actions. In this manner, a person will perform only good deeds and refrain from the performance of negative, undesirable deeds.

Yet, the yetzer hara, who attempts to ensnare a person, is compared to a sword. The sword kills a person by separating

the head from the heart (and the rest of the body). Similarly, the yetzer hara kills a person spiritually by separating the brain from the heart, preventing the intelligent brain from enlightening the heart and its desires with its wisdom. Consequently, the remaining limbs of the body and the limbs that perform external actions are not guided to act in accordance with Torah precepts. The remedy, of course, is that one should strive to attain Torah-knowledge with the intellect in one's brain. With the light of Torah in his brain, he will be able to apply his intellect to control the will of the heart and, thus, the limbs of action.

This, then, is the meaning of the Midrash: **"The sword and the book came down from heaven bound together. He said to them: If you observe what is written in this book"**—by engaging in Torah-study to know what is permissible and what is not; **"you will be spared from this sword"**—because the yetzer will not be able to prevent the brain from influencing the desire in the heart; **"if you do not"**—however, if you fail to engage in Torah-study; **"you will be killed by this sword"**—the yetzer will intercede and create a disconnect between the intelligence in one's brain and the desire in one's heart; that is tantamount to spiritual death. This concludes his sacred remarks.

Now, this explains very nicely our blessed sages' allusion that a king's first mitzvah is to write a sefer-Torah that will remain **"בבית גנזיו"**. In other words, he must be occupied with the Torah day and night, until the Torah is secured safely **"בבית גנזיו"**—in his brain and heart. By using the intellect in his brain to capture the illumination of the Torah, the brain will be able to illuminate his heart, as well, with the light of Torah. Together, the brain and the heart, will then be able to illuminate all 248 limbs and 365 sinews with the light of the Torah.

**"As you go forth, it will guide you;
as you recline, it will protect you"**

Following this royal, pastoral path, let us now address the second mitzvah required of a king—to write an actual sefer-Torah just as the Torah dictates. This second Torah according to Chazal was to **"go and come with him."** In the merit of toiling tirelessly to understand the Torah, to the point that it is ingrained deeply in his brain and heart--**"בבית גנזיו"**—the Torah itself will shine on him externally. It will accompany him wherever he ventures to go, protecting him from all harm and danger. For, upon seeing the brilliant light of the holy Torah, any external, harmful forces will retreat, just as the darkness retreats from the light.

This, then, is the meaning of the passuk (Mishlei 6, 22): **"כהתהלכך תנחה אותך בשכבך תשמור עליך והקיצות היא תשיחך"**-- **as you go forth, it will guide you; as you recline, it will protect you.** In relation to this passuk, we find the following elucidation from our blessed sages (Avos 6, 10):

"שבשעת פטירתו של אדם אין מלווין לו לאדם, לא כסף ולא זהב, ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה ומעשים טובים בלבד, שנאמר בהתהלכך תנחה אותך בשכבך תשמור עליך והקיצות היא תשיחך, בהתהלכך תנחה אותך בעולם הזה, בשכבך תשמור עליך בקבר, והקיצות היא תשיחך לעולם הבא."

When a man departs from this world, neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones nor pearls escort him, but only Torah-study and good deeds, as it is said: "As you go forth, it will guide you; as you recline, it will protect you; and when you awake, it will speak on your behalf." "As you go forth, it will guide you" refers to Olam HaZeh; "as you recline, it will protect you" refers to the grave; "and when you wake, it will speak on your behalf" refers to Olam HaBa.

From this Mishnah, it is apparent how every Jew, without exception, can fulfill in thought and mind this exalted mitzvah addressed to the King of Yisrael: **"וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת"**. By laboring diligently in the study of Torah, he will succeed in imprinting the Torah in his brain and his heart--**"בבית גנזיו"**. As a result, the Torah will precede him wherever he goes, protecting him from all evil and ensuring that he will succeed in all of his endeavors.

He Toils Here and His Torah Toils for Him in Another Place

Let us now examine the far-reaching effects of this concept. In the Gemara (Sanhedrin 99b), we find an elucidation regarding the following passuk (Mishlei 16, 26): **"נפש עמל עמלה"**—**"If a person toils (to acquire Torah-knowledge), then it (the Torah) will toil on his behalf, because he has saddled his mouth to it." He toils here and his Torah toils for him elsewhere.** Rashi comments: **Because he toiled in Torah-study, the Torah toils on his behalf . . . It (the Torah he has learned) beseeches G-d to grant him a special insight into the Torah's deeper meanings and secrets. Why? Because he inclined his mouth to acquire words of Torah.**

Thus we have an explicit source stating that as a reward for a person's diligent Torah-study, the Torah toils on his behalf. It beseeches HKB"H: "Master of the Universe, You gave Yisrael Your holy Torah. See how this person toils and labors tirelessly in his Torah-study. Please favor him with wisdom, intuition, and knowledge, so that he can comprehend the Torah."

We can appreciate from this Gemara the power of the Torah and the tremendous benefits that accrue to someone who is diligent in his Torah-study. So, when the yetzer attempts to interrupt a person's studies with all sorts of pretexts, it behooves him to remember the Gemara's elucidation: **"נפש עמל עמלה לו, הוא עמל במקום זה תורתו עמלת לו במקום אחר."** When a person toils in the study of Torah, the Torah in turn toils on his behalf. It prays to HKB"H to fill his every heart's desire for the good; he should not want for anything; so that he will be able to study Torah with a clear mind, without any interruptions or interference.

Now, we can conjecture that this was the point of Rava's elucidation (Moed Katan 16b) related to the passuk (Mishlei

1, 20): **"דאמר רבא כל העוסק - בחכמות בחוץ תרונה ברחובות תתן קולה"** - **"Wisdom sings out in the street; it gives forth its voice in the squares."** . . . for Rava said: **Anyone who is engaged in Torah-study from within, can rest assured that his Torah will announce his presence outside.** In other words, if a person studies Torah diligently—establishing the light of Torah within, **"בבית גניזו"**, in his brain and heart; then the Torah announces his presence in the world at large. The Torah accompanies him wherever he goes, in the sense of: **"As you go forth, it will guide you."** It will announce to all the harmful forces and negative influences that they dare not harm him or bother him. Elsewhere (Berachot 5a), the Gemara expresses this notion as follows: **כל העוסק בתורה יסורין כדילין הימנו—** **all who engage in Torah-study will be free of suffering.** Not only will he be protected from all that is evil and negative, but he will merit the fulfillment of the promise to those who embrace the Torah (Mishlei 3, 27): **"אורך ימים בימינה -- length of days is at its right; at its left, wealth and honor."**



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