

Bechukosai / בְּחֻקוֹתַי

Sweetness of Torah

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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

The classroom was filled with the sound of learning as the boys learned with each other b'chavrusa. Rebbe Cohen walked around as boys argued and worked their way through the sugya, asking questions and coming up with answers.

"Ah!" Rebbe Cohen exclaimed, after hearing Shloimy stumping his chavrusa Motty with a difficult question. "Tosafos asks exactly that kasha!

Rebbe Cohen explained Tosafos's answer to Shloimy and Motty and headed to the back corner of the room, where Donny and Benjy were learning much more quietly than the rest of the class. Approaching, he was shocked to see that instead of Gemaros, these boys had large colorful comic books in front of them!

"Donny, Binyomin!" Rebbe Cohen said in a surprised voice. "I don't understand. How can you be reading comics when everyone else is learning?"

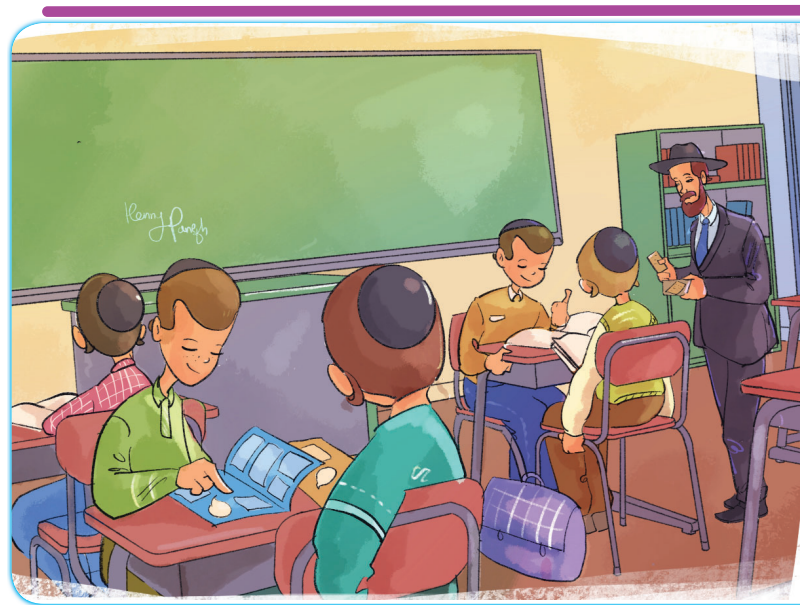
"But we are learning," Benjy replied, holding up his "comic book". "See, this is the new Risnik Edition Talmud - the whole masechta is illustrated in comics to make it easy to learn!"

"And it's more fun this way too!" added Donny. "Look how angry Rami Bar Chama is as he asks his kasha!"

Rebbe Cohen peered at the red-faced bearded man in the picture and sighed. "Boys, can you maybe think of why this might not be the best way to learn?"

"Not the best way to learn?" asked Donny. "But look how much further ahead we are than the rest of the class!"

"Well," said Rebbe Cohen. "Have you boys thought of any kashas of your own while learning this way?"



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“Well no,” answered Donny. “The pictures explain it so well that we have no kashas and we can just fly through the sugya!”

In response to this, Rebbe Cohen repeated Shloimy’s kasha from a few minutes earlier.

“Hmm...” said Benjy. “We didn’t think of that.”

Rebbe Cohen continued. “In this week’s Parsha it says ‘אם בְּחֻקְתֵי תִלְכוּ’ - Rashi explains that it means ‘שְׁתַּהֲיוּ עֲמִלִים בַּתּוֹרָה’ - now what does that mean?”

“That we should learn Torah!” Benjy said.

“Close, but not exactly,” Rebbe Cohen explained. “You see, the word ‘ameilim’ doesn’t just mean ‘learning Torah’ - it means that we must ‘work hard’ in Torah. In Pirkei Avos it says ‘לְפֹם צַעֲרָא אֲגָרָא’.”

“Oh, that’s an ‘Avraham Ben David’ song!” said Benjy.

“And what does it mean?” Rebbe Cohen asked.

Both boys stared blankly back at their Rebbe.

Rebbe Cohen went on. “It means that the more a person works hard on something, the bigger the reward that he will receive. But it’s not just talking about the reward in Olam Haba. It also means the immediate reward.”

“Immediate reward?” asked Benjy, puzzled.

“Yes, let me show you. This is something Rabbi Miller always pointed out.” Rebbe Cohen walked out of the classroom and quickly returned with a box of plain crackers, which he started distributing to the class.

“Boys,” he said. “I want you to make a brocha and start eating your crackers, but don’t swallow right away. Chew for a minute before swallowing.”

After the boys did as instructed, Rebbe Cohen asked, “did anyone notice anything interesting about the taste of the crackers?”

Donny raised his hand. “Yeah, as I chewed it, it became sweet!”

“That’s right,” said Rebbe Cohen. “Hashem puts amazing enzymes in our saliva which turns the starch in the cracker into sugar. Now, I assume you’re wondering what this has to do with learning. And the answer is, that just like when we chew starchy food it becomes sweet, so too when we ‘chew’ on the sugyas in the Gemara, it also becomes sweet and we understand it better.

“For example, Shloimy and Motty worked so hard to understand the sugya, that they were zoiche to ask Tosafos’s kasha. The harder we work in our learning, the more we get out of the Torah.”

“All that because they don’t have pictures in their Gemara?” asked Donny in wonder.

“Yes!” Rebbe Cohen said. “Before Rashi, people had to work harder to learn the Gemara and they knew it even better. And earlier than that, there were no written Gemaros and everyone had to learn by heart. And the result was that all of the talmidim learned the entire Shas Baal Peh!

“Of course, nowadays we need to have a written Gemara with Rashi and Tosafos, but as long as our Gedolim don’t decide that the Gemara should be converted into comic book format, we should probably just keep using our regular Holtzbacher editions of Gemara. Anyway, I am pretty sure you boys are smart enough to learn from words, without needing pictures to understand pshat. When it comes to learning, we should put in as much effort as we can so that we will get as much as possible out of it.”

And with that, Donny and Benjy sheepishly closed their comic books and opened real Gemaros to learn from.

Takeaway:

**It is important to ‘toil’ in Torah Learning,
to struggle and keep learning even though it’s tough - that’s what makes the Torah sweet!**



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