



IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR FATHERS  
**ALLOWING THE PRIMORDIAL LIGHT  
TO PENETRATE OUR SOULS**

*Avos Perek 6 Mishna 2*

*By Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita*

“Rabbi, is it not true that when two Jews talk, they should exchange words of Torah?”

“Well, yes, of course,” I answered, somewhat caught off guard.

This call had started off with my intention of confirming some travel plans with a colleague. He wasn't in his office, and the phone was answered by one of his congregants. Simple enough, I thought. “Oh, the Rabbi's not in? Please tell him I called. Thank you very much.”

It was then that the fellow moved up a gear to ask about *divrei Torah*. I was taken aback. Here I was, standing outside a local hospital, about to go in to visit one of its doctors. I had intended to make a quick call, and now I faced a *shiur*.

**“No matter how broken and low a Yied can fall, he takes  
the gold engraving of our heritage with him”**

In truth, the fellow was right. We unfortunately forget such niceties when ensconced in the daily grind of running about. He was reminding me that even Rabbis should always be aware of Torah opportunities.

“Tell me a dvar Torah, then,” I said to him, turning the tables. He replied, “What is the first mitzvah of the Torah? Most will say it is to be fruitful and multiply. However, the third sentence of Bereishis tells us, ‘G-d said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.’ The first mitzvah is to bring light into the world! Light doesn't mean the physical brightness we can see with the eye. It means the spiritual clarity that is ours through learning Torah.”

Hearing these words, a sense of sweetness ran through me. I would never have heard such a beautiful peshat, in such an innocent way, if my friend had been in his office. I had been in a rush, and from nowhere I had been lucky enough to hear such a holy tidbit of emess. Give light - a mitzvah of the first order. So simple, so real. I felt blessed.

The Mishnah tells us:

*“Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Every single day a Heavenly Voice emanates from Mount Chorev proclaiming and saying, ‘Woe to them, to the people, because of their insult to the Torah.’ For whoever does not occupy himself with the Torah is called “rebuked”, as it says, ‘Like a golden ring in a swine’s snout is a beautiful woman who turns away from good judgment.’ And it says, ‘The Tablets are G-d’s Handiwork and the script is G-d’s Script engraved on the Tablets.’ Do not read charus, engraved, but cheirus, freedom. For you have no freer man than one who engages in the study of Torah. And anyone who engages in the study of Torah becomes elevated, as it says, ‘From Matanah to Nachaliel and from Nachaliel to Bamos [literally, the heights].’ ”*

The Sfas Emes says that the Heavenly Voice mentioned in this Mishnah is the continuation of the Divine Voice heard at Sinai when Hashem gave the Aseres Hadibros. The Mishnah tells us that this unique sound never stops. Every day it pleads with us to study and live the Torah.

The Baal Shem Tov would ask, “Why does no one hear this Voice? If no one hears it, what is its purpose?” He explained that every day every Yiddishe neshoma hears this Voice, feels remorse and thinks of doing teshuva. Yet it is only the wise man who recognizes the Heavenly Source of these feelings and acts on them. Others are not so astute and pay them no heed.

This Voice of Hashem is present at all the unique moments of inspiration each of us has. It’s not something we hear physically; rather, this Voice is heard by a heart that yearns to listen. At different moments throughout the day, one hears a word or feels a pang of consciousness - this is that Divine Voice calling out. Such words reverberate within the engraved Torah that is in one’s soul. This engraved Torah sets us free - free from the crassness that abounds around us.

The Mishnah depicts a startling example of a base animal with a gold ring in its snout. No matter how broken and low a Yied can fall, he takes the gold engraving of our heritage with him. This gold loses none of its intrinsic worth. However, we debase it by our own unfortunate actions. The ring remains, so that perhaps, just maybe, we will hear the Divine Voice and rise from the mire.

That unknown Yied with his sweet Torah about Hashem’s creation of light was no less the vehicle of the Divine Voice than all the thunder and lightning one could ever muster.

We are all aware of tragedies that are befalling many of our holy community. Children losing their way, marriages being torn asunder, these and so much more just scratch the surface. These are the days before the Moshiach’s arrival, and we stumble in so much darkness. We all should hold on to that first light which is Hashem’s connection with each and every one of us, and allow its illumination to strengthen us during these difficult times.