

The Dee

Pirkei Avot Project

מֹשֶׁה קִיבֵּל תּוֹרָה מִסִּינַי, וּמִסָּרָה לִיהוֹשֻׁעַ, וְיִהוֹשֻׁעַ לְזִקְנִים, וְזִקְנִים לְנְבִיאִים, וְנְבִיאִים מִסָּרוּהָ לְאַנְשֵׁי כְּנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הֵם אָמְרוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְבָרִים, הֵווּ מְתוּנִים בְּדִין, וְהֶעֱמִידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה, וַעֲשׂוּ סִיָּג לַתּוֹרָה:

Moses received the Torah at Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the Men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be patient in [the administration of] justice, raise many disciples and make a fence round the Torah.

Pirkei Avot starts by telling us that Moshe received the Torah from Hashem and Moshe then passed it on to the Elders. Interestingly, the Mishna doesn't say that Moshe learnt ('lamad') the Torah from Hashem, it says that he received ('kibel') it. This underlines the fundamental difference between the Torah and any other book. When you read a book, you can be totally immersed in it at the time, but then you put it down and get on with the rest of your day. The Torah is not like that and we need to 'receive' it, so as to allow it to permeate into everything we do. We see a similar idea with the bracha of Talmud Torah (the blessing on learning Torah). We don't say 'lilmod (to learn) divrei Torah'. Rather, we say 'la'asok b'divrei Torah' (to busy ourselves with, or immerse ourselves in, Torah). The idea of being 'assuk' in the Torah, like being 'mekabel Torah', means internalising Torah values and allowing them to influence all aspects of our lives.

The Mishna continues that the Men of the Great Assembly (Anshei Knesset HaGedola) had three principles, the second of which was to 'develop many students'. Rabbi Kalish, from the Mesivta of Waterbury, suggests that when the Mishna says 'many students', this means having many types of students. There is not one single 'right' type of Jew. Indeed, we each have 'chelek elokaiv mimala', a unique G-dly spark; but this is different for every person. For that reason, we are encouraged to have many students in the sense of encouraging others around us to be the best version of themselves, not just identical copies of each other. We all have unique qualities, life experiences and our own special spark which means that the torah will sculpt you into an individual that nobody else in this world can replicate.

Discussion Points

Who has transmitted the Torah to me?

What is my role in transmitting the torah to the next generation?

The other two principles which guided the Anshei Knesset HaGedola are to be careful in judgment and to make a safety fence around the Torah. What makes each one important and what is the connection between them?

Idea by Libby Levey, Friend of Maya

לעילוי נשמת:

לאה בת רפאל הכהן וציפורה

מאיה אסתר בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

רינה מרים בת הרב אריה מרדכי ולאה

היום ששה עשר יום שהם שני שבועות ושני ימים לעומר



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