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But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children: The day you stood before your Hashem at הר סיני	רַ֣ק הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ֗ וּשְׁמֹר֤ נַפְשְׁךָ֙ מְאֹ֔ד פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּ֖ח אֶת־ הַדְּבָרִ֑ים אֲשֶׁר־רָא֣וּ עֵינֶ֗יךָ וּפֶן־יָס֙וּרוּ֙ מִלְּבָבְךָ֔ כֹּ֖ל יְמֵ֣י חַיֶּ֑יךָ וְהוֹדַעְתָּ֥ם לְבָנֶ֖יךָ וְלִבְנֵ֥י בָנֶֽיךָ: יוֹם֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָמַ֔דְתָּ לִפְנֵ֥י ה' אֱלֹקֶ֖יךָ בְּחֹרֵ֑ב (דברים ד, ט-י)
This teaches us that anyone who neglects studying Torah is equated to one who denies Hashem. This is because the Torah was only given to כלל ישראל so they would be engaged in it all day and night... and anyone who is involved in Torah and fulfills it, it is as if they received the Torah from הר סיני.	לְלַמֶּדְךָ, שֶׁכָּל מִי שֶׁמִּתְבַּטֵּל מִן הַתּוֹרָה, כְּאִלּוּ כּוֹפֵר בְּהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא. שֶׁלֹּא נָתַן תּוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶלָּא כְּדֵי שֶׁיַּעַסְקוּ בָּהּ יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה.... וְכָל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּמְקַיְּמָהּ, כְּאִלּוּ קִבְּלָהּ מֵהַר סִינַי. (מדרש תנחומא)

Instructions For Teaching This Lesson:
Present to your class the reasons for learning תורה and the מסירת נפש that people have displayed for it over the ages.

Step 1:
Explain to the students that learning תורה connects us to Hashem - the purpose of this world.

Step 2:
Teach the students that תורה is greater than all the gold and silver in this world. Explain that תורה remains forever and is even taken with you into the next world.

Step 3:
Discuss with the students how acquiring the תורה takes complete devotion. Show stories of the great people who have given up so much for תורה.

Step 4:
Show the video from BMG to Rabbi Ephraim Wachsman's song "Ahavah Rabah". As always, use your discretion when showing it. You may rather just tell all or some of the stories.
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cQD56RCDsDK_g2VgW3s8hVyS-i_W1uy7/view?usp=drive_link
You can also show one of the beautiful stories by Rabbi Paysach Krohn.
https://vimeo.com/569474840. The story about the Ridvaz begins at 19:20 min.

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At first glance the מדרש תנחומא is difficult to understand. It is understandable to equate one who takes his learning seriously and passes it on to the next generation, as if he received the תורה from הר סיני. Such a person clearly views the תורה as if Hashem is speaking to him, and therefore his learning experience is equated to receiving it from הר סיני. However, the equation the מדרש makes between one who neglects תורה study and one who denies Hashem, is perplexing. What is the connection between these two? Generally a person who does not study תורה day and night is not doing so because he denies Hashem, rather it is often due to a lack of patience or ability to focus. This comparison necessitates further explanation.

The מדרש can be explained by understanding the deep connection between תורה study and Hashem. When one studies תורה it is as if he is at הר סיני and Hashem is speaking to him. The learning process is not merely an intellectual exercise, rather the wisdom and depth of תורה is beyond human comprehension, thus anything we attain is a gift from Hashem. Based on this perspective that the entire learning experience is so totally focused on Hashem, hence if a person gives up on that, on a certain level he is ignoring Hashem. This מדרש clearly illustrates how connected Hashem is to the תורה and how תורה helps us connect to Hashem.

<u>מדרש תנחומא (דברים ד, יד)</u>

אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן, כָּל הָעוֹשֶׂה תוֹרָה לַאֲמִתָּה, מַעֲלֶה עָלָיו הַכָּתוּב כְּאִלּוּ עָשָׂה אֶת עַצְמוֹ

Rebbi Yochanan says, that anyone who follows the תורה in truth, it is considered as if he created himself.

If one does not follow the תורה he is not merely missing out on a better way of life or a chance for more rewards, but he is not even considered created. Meaning, without the תורה it is as if he is not alive, because his life is bereft of meaning and purpose. However, with the תורה he is now considered alive and it is as if he created himself. Thus, not only does a person who follows the תורה have a life, he is also given credit for making himself alive.

teach to reach

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ברכות סא:

תָּנוּ רַבָּנָן: פַּעַם אַחַת גָּזְרָה מַלְכוּת הָרִשָׁעָה שֶׁלֹּא יַעַסְקוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּתּוֹרָה. בָּא פַּפּוּס בֶּן יְהוּדָה וּמְצָאוֹ לְרַבִּי עֲקִיבָא שֶׁהָיָה מַקְהִיל קְהִלּוֹת בָּרַבִּים וְעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה. אָמַר לוֹ: עֲקִיבָא אִי אַתָּה מִתְיָרֵא מִפְּנֵי מַלְכוּת?

אָמַר לוֹ: אֶמְשׁוֹל לְךָ מָשָׁל, לְמָה הַדָּבָר דּוֹמֶה — לְשׁוּעָל שֶׁהָיָה מְהַלֵּךְ עַל גַּב הַנָּהָר, וְרָאָה דָּגִים שֶׁהָיוּ מִתְקַבְּצִים מִמָּקוֹם לְמָקוֹם. אָמַר לָהֶם: מִפְּנֵי מָה אַתֶּם בּוֹרְחִים? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: מִפְּנֵי רְשָׁתוֹת שֶׁמְּבִיאִין עָלֵינוּ בְּנֵי אָדָם. אָמַר לָהֶם: רְצוֹנְכֶם שֶׁתַּעֲלוּ לַיַּבָּשָׁה, וְנָדוּר אֲנִי וְאַתֶּם, כְּשֵׁם שֶׁדָּרוּ אֲבוֹתַי עִם אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם? אָמְרוּ לוֹ: אַתָּה הוּא שֶׁאוֹמְרִים עָלֶיךָ פִּקֵּחַ שֶׁבַּחַיּוֹת?! לֹא פִּקֵּחַ אַתָּה, אֶלָּא טִפֵּשׁ אַתָּה! וּמָה בְּמָקוֹם חַיּוּתֵנוּ, אָנוּ מִתְיָרְאִין, בְּמָקוֹם מִיתָתֵנוּ — עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה. אַף אֲנַחְנוּ עַכְשָׁיו שֶׁאָנוּ יוֹשְׁבִים וְעוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה, שֶׁכָּתוּב בָּהּ: "כִּי הוּא חַיֶּיךָ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ", כָּךְ, אִם אָנוּ הוֹלְכִים וּמְבַטְּלִים מִמֶּנָּה — עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה!

Once, the wicked government of Rome decreed that the Jewish people were forbidden to study Torah. Pappus ben Yehudah saw Rabi Akiva teaching תורה in public. He said to him: “Akiva, are you not afraid of the government?”

Rabi Akiva answered, “Let me give you a משל: A fox was walking along a river and saw fish rushing to and fro. He said to them, ‘What are you running away from?’

They answered, ‘From the fishermen’s nets trying to catch us.’

The fox replied, ‘Why don’t you come out onto the dry land and we’ll live here together? Then you’ll be safe from the fishermen’s nets.’

The fish answered, ‘Are you the one of whom it is said that you are the wisest of animals? You’re not wise, but foolish! In our environment of life which is the water, we may live, but we may die if caught. If we leave the water, we are dead for sure!’

Rabi Akiva explained, “The same applies to us. If now, when we sit and study the Torah, which is our life as it says (דברים ל, כ) "כִּי הוּא חַיֶּיךָ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ", we are in danger of the Romans catching us. If we stop learning תורה, we are dead for sure!”

We can’t live without תורה!

Indeed, Rabi Akiva was caught and died על קידוש ה’. And his תורה lives on forever!

teach to reach

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קדושין ל:
כְּךָ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אָמַר לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: בָּנַי, בָּרָאתִי יֵצֶר הָרָע וּבָרָאתִי לוֹ תּוֹרָה תַּבְלִין. וְאִם אַתֶּם עוֹסְקִים בַּתּוֹרָה – אֵין אַתֶּם נִמְסָרִים בְּיָדוֹ
Hashem said to כלל ישראל: My children, I created an evil inclination, which is the wound, and I created Torah as its cure. If you are engaged in Torah study you will not be given over into the hand of the יצר הרע.

Hashem created people with a יצר הרע, with the intention that we should perfect our character and deeds. This can only be attained by the study and involvement in תורה.

שיר השירים describes the tremendous love that Hashem has for בני ישראל and that בני ישראל have for Hashem.

שיר השירים א, ד
מָשְׁכֵנִי אַחֲרֶיךָ נָּרוּצָה הֱבִיאַנִי הַמֶּלֶךְ חֲדָרָיו נָגִילָה וְנִשְׂמְחָה בָּךְ נַזְכִּירָה דֹדֶיךָ מִיַּיִן מֵישָׁרִים אֲהֵבוּךְ:
At His word of invitation, we rushed with perfect faith after Hashem into the wilderness. The king brought me into his chamber of protective clouds. We are still glad today and rejoice in your תורה more than earthly delights.

רשי: בְּזוּ, עוֹדָם הַיּוֹם גָּלִים וּשְׂמֵחִים בּוֹ אַף לְפִי עָנְיָם וְצָרָתָם, וּמִשְׁתַּעְשְׁעִים בַּתּוֹרָה, וְשָׁם מַזְכִּירִים דּוֹדָיו מִיַּיִן וּמִישׁוֹר אַהֲבָתָם אוֹתוֹ:
With this, they are still joyful today and happy with Him despite their afflictions and distress; and they delight in the Torah, and there they recall His love more than wine, and the sincerity of their love for Him.

When we delight in the תורה, we relive מעמד הר סיני. At that time, Hashem showed us tremendous love by taking us out of מצרים, protecting us in the מדבר - providing our every need, and giving us the תורה. We also showed our love for Hashem by fulfilling לכתך אחרי במדבר - following Hashem through the barren desert and completely trusting in Him that He will provide us with our needs, and by saying נעשה ונשמע and accepting the תורה without any questions. When we relive מעמד הר סיני by learning תורה, we remember the tremendous love between us and Hashem and we continue to feel that love today.

teach to reach

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<u>אבות ו, ט</u>
אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי בֶּן קִסְמָא, פַּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וּפָגַע בִּי אָדָם אֶחָד, וְנָתַן לִי שָׁלוֹם, וְהֶחֱזַרְתִּי לוֹ שָׁלוֹם. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, מֵאֵיזֶה מָקוֹם אַתָּה. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, מֵעִיר גְּדוֹלָה שֶׁל חֲכָמִים וְשֶׁל סוֹפְרִים אָנִי. אָמַר לִי, רַבִּי, רְצוֹנְךָ שֶׁתָּדוּר עִמָּנוּ בִּמְקוֹמֵנוּ, וַאֲנִי אֶתֵּן לְךָ אֶלֶף אֲלָפִים דִּינְרֵי זָהָב וַאֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמַרְגָּלִיּוֹת. אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ, בְּנִי, אִם אַתָּה נוֹתֵן לִי כָּל כֶּסֶף וְזָהָב וַאֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמַרְגָּלִיּוֹת שֶׁבָּעוֹלָם, אֵינִי דָר אֶלָּא בִּמְקוֹם תּוֹרָה. וְכֵן כָּתוּב בְּסֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים עַל יְדֵי דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל (תהלים קיט), טוֹב לִי תוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף. וְלֹא עוֹד, אֶלָּא שֶׁבְּשָׁעַת פְּטִירָתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם אֵין מְלַוִּין לוֹ לָאָדָם לֹא כֶּסֶף וְלֹא זָהָב וְלֹא אֲבָנִים טוֹבוֹת וּמַרְגָּלִיּוֹת, אֶלָּא תוֹרָה וּמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים בִּלְבַד

Rabbi Yose ben Kisma said: “Once I was walking by the way when a man met me, and greeted me and I greeted him. He said to me, ‘Rabbi, where are you from?’ I said to him, ‘I am from a great city of sages and scribes.’ He said to me, ‘Rabbi, would you consider living with us in our place? I would give you a thousands upon thousands of golden dinars, and precious stones and pearls.’ I said to him: ‘My son, even if you were to give me all the silver and gold, precious stones, and pearls that are in the world, I would not dwell anywhere except in a place of Torah; Like it says in תהילים, “Your תורה is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.”’
And also, when a man passes away, neither gold nor silver accompany him, nor precious stones, nor pearls, but Torah and good deeds alone.”

<u>תהילים קיט, עב</u>
טוֹב־לִי תוֹרַת־פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף׃
Your תורה is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver.

teach to reach

שבועות

מדרש תנחומא פרשת תרומה

מַעֲשֶׂה בְּחָבֵר אֶחָד שֶׁהָיָה בִּסְפִינָה עִם פְּרַקְמָטוֹטִין הַרְבֵּה, הָיוּ אוֹמְרִים לְאוֹתוֹ חָבֵר הֵיכָן פְּרַקְמַטְיָא שֶׁלָּךְ? הָיָה אוֹמֵר לָהֶם: פְּרַקְמַטְיָא שֶׁלִּי גְּדוֹלָה מִשֶּׁלָּכֶם. בָּדְקוּ בַּסְּפִינָה לֹא מָצְאוּ לוֹ כְּלוּם, הִתְחִילוּ שׂוֹחֲקִים עָלָיו. נָפְלוּ עֲלֵיהֶם לִסְטִים בַּיָּם, שָׁלְלוּ וְנָטְלוּ כָּל מַה שֶׁנִּמְצָא בַּסְּפִינָה. יָצְאוּ לַיַּבָּשָׁה וְנִכְנְסוּ לַמְּדִינָה, לֹא הָיָה לָהֶם לֹא לֶחֶם לֶאֱכֹל וְלֹא כְּסוּת לִלְבֹּשׁ. מָה עָשָׂה אוֹתוֹ חָבֵר? נִכְנַס לְבֵית הַמִּדְרָשׁ יָשַׁב וְדָרַשׁ. עָמְדוּ בְּנֵי הַמְּדִינָה כְּשֶׁרָאוּ שֶׁהוּא בֶּן תּוֹרָה מְרֻבֶּה, נָהֲגוּ בּוֹ כָּבוֹד גָּדוֹל וְעָשׂוּ לוֹ פְּסִיקְתּוֹ כַּהֹגֶן וְכָרָאוּי בְּגְדֻלָּה וּבְכָבוֹד. הִתְחִילוּ גְּדוֹלֵי הַקָּהָל לֵילֵךְ מִימִינוֹ וּמִשְּׂמֹאלוֹ וּלְלַוּוֹת אוֹתוֹ. כְּשֶׁרָאוּ הַפְּרַקְמָטוֹטִין כָּךְ, בָּאוּ אֶצְלוֹ וּפִיְּסוּ מִמֶּנּוּ וְאָמְרוּ לוֹ: בְּבַקָּשָׁה מִמְּךָ, עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ טוֹבָה וְלַמֵּד עָלֵינוּ זְכוּת לִפְנֵי בְּנֵי הָעִיר, שֶׁאַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מֶה הָיִינוּ וּמָה אִבַּדְנוּ בַּסְּפִינָה. בְּבַקָּשָׁה מִמְּךָ עֲשֵׂה עִמָּנוּ חֶסֶד, דַּבֵּר לָהֶם אֲפִלּוּ עַל הַפְּרוּסָה שֶׁיִּנָּתֵן לְתוֹךְ פִּינוּ וְנִחְיֶה וְלֹא נָמוּת בָּרָעָב. אָמַר לָהֶם: הֲלֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם, שֶׁפְּרַקְמַטְיָא שֶׁלִּי גְּדוֹלָה מִשֶּׁלָּכֶם, שֶׁלָּכֶם אָבַד וְשֶׁלִּי קַיֶּמֶת. הֱוֵי: כִּי לֶקַח טוֹב נָתַתִּי לָכֶם.

There was a Torah scholar riding on a boat with many businessmen. They all had their wares with them. They asked the Torah scholar, “Where is your merchandise?” The Torah scholar responded, “My merchandise is better than yours.” They searched throughout the boat and could find nothing. They began to mock him.

Pirates attacked the boat. They robbed and plundered all that was on the boat. Everyone was left destitute. When they arrived at the port and entered the country, they were all ‘in the same boat’ – without any merchandise to sell.

The תלמיד חכם entered the בית מדרש and began lecturing. People recognized that he was a great scholar. They treated him with honor and asked that he become their Rabbi, promising him a large salary. This תלמיד חכם was now secure. Meanwhile, the merchants from the boat were left with nothing. They walked into the בית מדרש, and found the תלמיד חכם who had been on the boat with them. The businessmen who had made fun of him asked for his forgiveness and for him to help them get פרנסה. The תלמיד חכם responded, “I told you that my ‘merchandise’ was better than your ‘merchandise’. Your goods can be lost and destroyed; but mine are preserved forever.”

תורה איז די בעסטע סחורה!

Even a person with all the money and possessions in the world has no guarantee that it will stay with him forever. Physical things can get lost, damaged, stolen, etc. And even if he keeps his wealth for his entire life, he does not take it with him to the next world. However, the תורה you learn and the זכותים you get for it will stay with you in this world and forever in עולם הבא!

שבועות

<u>אבות א, ב</u>
שִׁמְעוֹן הַצַּדִּיק הָיָה מִשְּׁיָרֵי כְנֶסֶת הַגְּדוֹלָה. הוּא הָיָה אוֹמֵר, עַל שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים הָעוֹלָם עוֹמֵד, עַל הַתּוֹרָה וְעַל הָעֲבוֹדָה וְעַל גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים:
שמעון הצדיק was one of the last of the men of the אנשי כנסת הגדולה. He used to say: the world stands upon three things: the Torah, the service in the בית המקדש which today is תפילה, and the doing of חסד.
The תורה is one of the three pillars of the world. The world would not be standing if there was even one moment without תורה. One who learns תורה is holding up the world!

<u>שבת פג:</u>
אָמַר רֵישׁ לָקִישׁ: אֵין דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה מִתְקַיְּימִין אֶלָּא בְּמִי שֶׁמֵּמִית עַצְמוֹ עָלֶיהָ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״זֹאת הַתּוֹרָה אָדָם כִּי יָמוּת בְּאֹהֶל״.
Torah only endures in a person who ‘kills himself’ over the Torah, one who is ready to devote all his efforts to it.
To truly acquire and internalize the תורה, we must put in tremendous effort and be completely devoted to it. We must put our heart and soul into it no matter the obstacles.

On שבועות, we read מגילת רות. In it, we read about רות who was a princess from מואב and had all the money in the world. She had been used to being wined and dined in her father’s home. Yet, she made the choice to leave everything behind and follow her mother-in-law נעמי to accept the life of תורה in poverty. She went to the fields collecting food with the paupers and it didn’t bother her as long as she could live a life of תורה. To her, תורה was more precious than all the money in the world. She realized that תורה is eternal and would stay with her forever, long after any delicacies of this world. For that reason, she was זוכה to be the אם המלכות, and דוד המלך, all the kings of יהודה, and משיח himself come from her. What a זכות for eternity!

שבועות

Not far from ירושלים there lived a rich man, one of the richest Jews of his time, by the name of הורקנוס. He had a number of sons, one of whom was called Eliezer. Eliezer was not thought to be a scholar able to understand the teachings of the Torah. He was brought up on the land, as were his other brothers. He spent most of his time plowing and planting, shepherding the sheep, and doing similar farm jobs.

Eliezer was dissatisfied with his work. His heart yearned to learn Torah. He dreamt of the great city of ירושלים, where great ישיבות and תלמידי חכמים were to be found. He often used to think about the Creator and His wisdom in managing the world. He used to walk about deep in thought as if in a dream, and his father and brothers considered him to be lazy and "good-for-nothing." They therefore took a dislike to him and gave him the hardest jobs to perform.

The brothers once went to the valley to plow, where the earth was soft, while sending Eliezer to a hill to plow, where the ground was hard and stony. Eliezer tried his utmost to plow smoothly, but his animal stumbled on a stone, fell and broke a foot. Eliezer decided it was time to once and for all leave home and go and fulfill his dream of learning Torah. With no money or food, Eliezer went toward ירושלים.

When the brothers discovered that Eliezer had disappeared, they ran quickly and told their father that Eliezer had run away from home. הורקנוס became very angry and declared that he would never allow Eliezer to enter his home again and he would receive no part of his father's wealth.

Tired and hungry, Eliezer finally arrived in ירושלים and wended his way to the great Yeshivah of רבן יוחנן בן זכאי.

רבן יוחנן בן זכאי saw before him a young man in his 20s, thin and pale but with a burning desire to learn the holy Torah. He accepted him into his Yeshivah. Eliezer started learning with his whole heart and soul. He did not pay attention to his hunger. Nothing bothered him as long as he could learn. Each day saw him rising higher and higher in his accomplishments and studies. One day while learning with רבן יוחנן, the Rebbe noticed a foul smell emanating from young Eliezer's mouth. He asked Eliezer what he had been eating. When Eliezer didn't answer, the Rebbe did research and found out that Eliezer had been picking bitter roots and grass, and eating them with sand to alleviate his hunger. רבן יוחנן invited him to be a regular guest at his table. He gave him a ברכה that just as the foul smell emanated from his mouth, the words of Torah should emanate from his mouth to the entire world for all future generations. And so it was. Rabbi Eliezer came to be called Eliezer HaGadol, and became one of the greatest תנאים, whose words of Torah in the משנה and גמרא are learned today as they have been for two thousand years, all over the world. He chose the "merchandise" that is eternal.

שבועות

Story:

A young couple was going through financial difficulty. The husband was learning in the בית מדרש in Kollel all day and they were not making ends meet. The husband told his wife that he would go to work to help support them. The wife objected. She did not mind a life of poverty. All she wanted was for her husband to learn. A few months later, it became obvious that they needed money. Once again the husband said that he would go to work. The wife would not allow it. She held out her diamond engagement ring and said, "Please sell my ring. With the money, we will have a few more months for you to learn תורה before you have to go to work."

Reluctantly, the husband took the ring to the diamond district in Manhattan to sell it. He came to the first shop that was run by a Chassidish man. The man heard the story and said, "Go to my brother's shop down the block. He is more successful than me and can offer you more money for the ring. I'll call him and let him know that you are coming."

The husband went to the brother's shop to sell his ring. The shop owner studied the diamond ring for a while and said, "This diamond is very special. I will give you $10,000 for it."

Satisfied, the husband agreed to the price and the man gave him a check for $10,000. On his way out of the shop, the owner stopped him and handed him a small box.

"One more thing," he said, "I'm giving you the ring as well. I want a part in your תורה learning!"

Money, if you are lucky, stays with you in this world, תורה is for eternity!

שבועות

Story:

When the Ponevezher Rav, Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman was laying the cornerstone of the Ponevezh Yeshiva, he began to cry uncontrollably. The Chazon Ish told him to keep on crying because a Yeshiva is built on tears, not on money.

The next day Rav Kahaneman said to his talmidim, "You might think that the cornerstone of the Yeshiva was laid yesterday, but in truth it was put in place 57 years ago. He then told this incredible story:

When I was growing up, my family was very poor. My mother was extremely dedicated to our Torah learning and did everything in her power to ensure that her children would grow up to be talmidei chachamim.

I will never forget what my mother did for us one freezing winter morning. There had been a heavy snowstorm the night before and the snow was piled high. My brothers and I had yeshiva the next day, but there was a problem- my family only owned one pair of boots. The snow drifts were so high, and without boots it would be impossible for us children to get to yeshiva. My mother asked us, " Who wants to go to yeshiva tomorrow?"

My brother said "I must go, my Rebbe said we're learning an important Gemara tomorrow."

My next brother and I each said we wanted to go as well, as we were also excited to be learning Torah the next day. My mother said she would draw a raffle that night to see who would get to go and in the morning she would let us know who won.

Early the next morning, my mother woke my oldest brother to get ready for yeshiva. He excitedly said, " Ma, I won the raffle?"

"No, I won the raffle," she answered. My mother put on the boots and told my brother to get on her shoulders. She then walked for half an hour in the high snow with my brother on her shoulders. She came home and woke my next brother. She also told him that she was the winner. Then she put him on her back and carried him to yeshiva as well. Then it was my turn. My mother put me on her shoulders and made the hard trek all the way to yeshiva for the third time in the brutal weather. As she carried me, I heard her singing a familiar song, "Ashreinu, ma tov chelkeinu- how fortunate are we! How great is our portion..."

I was overcome with emotion and I knew that this incident would have a tremendous impact on my Torah life."

The Ponevezher Rav then turned to his students and said, "That, my dear students, is when the real foundation of this yeshiva was built."

The מסירת נפש of the Ponevezher Rav's mother built the Yeshiva and continues to impact the תורה learning of generations and generations for eternity!

(taken from "Night of Emunah" by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky)