

Parashat Nitzavim/Vayelekh: Fiery Wisdom

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Devarim 31:19	
וְעַתָּה כְּתֹבוּ לָכֶם אֶת־הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת וְלַמָּדָה אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁמָּה בְּפִיהֶם לְמַעַן תְּהִיָּה־לִּי הַשִּׁירָה הַזֹּאת לְעֵד בְּבִנֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:	Therefore, write down this poem and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths, in order that this poem may be My witness against the people of Israel.

1. Torah Study's Revolution

Ibn Ezra on Devarim 31:19	
כתבו לכם. מצוה שיכתוב אותה משה גם כל מבין לכתוב: ולמדה. הטעמים הקשים שיבאר להם: שימה בפיהם. שידעו' בגרסא:	Now, write this: A commandment that Moses, and all who know how to write, should write it. And teach it: Explain to them the difficult meanings. Put it in their mouths: That they should be able to recite it orally.

Bavli Eruvin 54b	
רבי עקיבא אומר: מנין שחייב אדם לשנות לתלמידו עד שילמדנו — שנאמר: "ולמדה את בני ישראל", ומנין עד שתהא סדורה בפיהם — שנאמר: "שימה בפיהם"...	Rabbi Akiva says: From where do we derive that a person is obligated to teach his student until he learns the material and understands it? As it is stated: "Now, therefore, write this song for you, and teach it to the children of Israel ; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel" (Devarim 31:19). This verse indicates that one must teach Torah to others. And from where do we derive that one must teach his students until the material is organized in their mouths ? As it is stated: "Put it in their mouths," so that they should be capable of teaching it to others...
רבי פרידא הוה ליה ההוא תלמידא דהוה תני ליה ארבע מאה זימני וגמר. יומא חד בעייה למלתא דמצוה. תנא ליה ולא גמר.	Having discussed the importance of reviewing one's Torah study, the Gemara relates that Rabbi Perida had a certain student whom he would have to teach four hundred times, and only then would he learn the material, as he was incapable of understanding it otherwise. One day, they requested Rabbi Perida's presence for a mitzvah matter after the lesson. Rabbi Perida taught his student four hundred times as usual, but this time, the student did not successfully learn the material.
אמר ליה: האידנא מאי שנא? אמר ליה: מדדהיא שעתא דאמר ליה למר איכא מילתא דמצוה — אסחאי	Rabbi Perida said to him: What is different now that you are unable to grasp the lesson? He said to him:

¹ All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

<p>לדעתאי, וְכָל שְׁעֵתָא אָמִינָא: הַשְׁתָּא קָאִי מַר, הַשְׁתָּא קָאִי מַר. אָמַר לִיה: הַב דַּעְתִּיךְ וְאַתְנִי לִיךְ. הַדַּר תִּנָּא לִיה אַרְבַּע מָאָה זִימְנִי [אַחֲרֵינִי].</p>	<p>From the time that they said to the Master that there is a mitzvah matter for which he is needed, my mind was distracted from the lesson and every moment I said: Now the Master will get up, now the Master will get up to go and perform the mitzvah and he will not complete the lesson. Rabbi Perida said to him: Pay attention this time and I will teach you, and know that I will not leave until you have fully mastered the lesson. He taught him again an additional four hundred times.</p>
<p>נִפְקָא בֵּת קָלָא וְאָמַר לִיה: נִיחָא לִיךְ דְּלִיסְפּוּ לָךְ אַרְבַּע מָאָה שָׁנִי, אִו דְּתִיזְכוּ אֶת וְדָרְךָ לַעֲלֵמָא דְאַתְּ? אָמַר: דְּנִיזְכוּ אָנָּא וְדַרְי לַעֲלֵמָא דְאַתְּ. אָמַר לָהֶן הַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: תִּנּוּ לוּ זִו וְזִו.</p>	<p>Due to the merit of Rabbi Perida's great devotion to his students, a Divine Voice emerged and said to him: Is it preferable to you that four hundred years be added to your life, or that you and the rest of your generation will merit the World-to-Come? He said: I prefer that I and my generation merit the World-to-Come. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to the angels: Give him both; he shall live a very long life and he and the rest of his generation will merit the World-to-Come.</p>

Mishneh Torah- Hilkhot Talmud Torah 4:4

<p>הָרַב שֶׁלֹּמֵד וְלֹא הִבִּינוּ הַתַּלְמִידִים לֹא יִכְעֹס עֲלֵיהֶם וְיִרְגֵּז אֶלָּא חֹזֵר וְשׁוֹנֶה הַדֶּבֶר אֶפְלוּ כְּמָה פְּעָמִים עַד שֶׁיִּבְיִנוּ עִמָּךְ הַהִלָּכָה. וְכֵן לֹא יֹאמַר הַתַּלְמִיד הַבְּנִי וְהוּא לֹא הִבִּין אֶלָּא חֹזֵר וְשׁוֹאֵל אֶפְלוּ כְּמָה פְּעָמִים. וְאִם כָּעֵס עָלָיו רַבּוֹ וְרָגַז יֹאמַר לוֹ רַבִּי תוֹרָה הִיא וְלִלְמַד אֲנִי צָרִיךְ וְדַעְתִּי קְצָרָה:</p>	<p>If the teacher taught [a concept] and it was not grasped by the students, he should not become upset with them and display anger. Rather, he should repeat and review the matter, even if he must do so many times, until they appreciate the depth of the halakhah. Similarly, the student should not say "I understood" when he did not understand. Rather, he should ask again and again, even if he requires several repetitions. If his teacher becomes upset with him and displays anger, he should tell him: "My teacher, this is Torah. It is necessary that I study, and my powers of comprehension are weak."</p>
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2. Fiery Wisdom

<p>Jacob L. Wright, "The Origins of Torah Study," TheTorah.com</p>	
<p>In a time of radical change and upheaval, the Torah, and other ancient texts, gave the community a source for rebuilding their identity—as Jews, who could rally around a book, and not just Judeans, connected by a geographical territory. From that time until the present, Jews seek and find in this body of tradition a means for negotiating their way into an unknown future and use it as a wellspring for creating a resilient Jewish culture and society, lasting millennia.</p>	
<p>Stephen A. Geller, "Fiery Wisdom," Prooftexts (1994), 133-134</p>	
<p>One can hear someone in the next room, who remains unseen. Hearing is a faculty that does not require the actual presence of the object in the same space. As image or metaphor, the ear commends itself to covenant faith. Text religion is the inevitable result. The heard word, incorporated in canon but transmitted by oral instruction, is the ground of ever-contending revelation. In it God is forever near...</p>	
<p>Scripture is the fire from which the wise hear the voice of the unseen God, whose instruction becomes immanent in the mind of those generations of toddling schoolchildren, on whose breath, the Rabbis said, all creation depends.</p>	