OUR LEARNING-DISABLED TEACHER

Eruvin 54b

Rabbi Perida had a certain student whom he would have to teach four hundred times, and only then would he learn the material.

One day they requested Rabbi Perida's presence for a mitzva 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.

Rabbi Perida said to him: What is different now that you are unable to grasp the lesson? He said to him: From the time that they said to the Master that there is a mitzva matter for which he is needed, my mind was distracted from the lesson and every moment I said: Now the Master will get up and leave; now the Master will get up and leave!

Rabbi Perida said to him: Pay attention this time and I will teach you. He taught him an additional four hundred times.

Subsequently, a Heavenly voice emerged and asked him: Do you prefer that four hundred years be added to your life, or that your entire generation will merit the World-to-Come?

He said: I prefer that my entire generation merit the World-to-Come. Then the Holy One, Blessed be He interrupted and commanded: Grant both rewards!.

The learning disabled [=LD] child taught Rav Pereida that the act of teaching requires that the teacher be totally absorbed "in the moment." His unswerving focus must be upon the learning process which the student is undergoing "in the now," Nothing else matters, because, while the teacher is engaged in the teaching process, , it is as if nothing else exists. In teaching - as in prayer and as in acts which express love - one must one place himself in the realm of the eternal, exclusive present.

A necessary component of the teacher's focus is a willingness to cultivate a sense of deep caring for each student as a unique individual, often with a unique learning style which the teacher must be committed to accommodating

The teacher's devoted caring must be perceivable to the student. If the teacher fails to maintain this focus, the student will sense it, will feel trivialized, and will become distracted from the learning process.

The need to recognize the student as a unique individual appears again in a midrash which Rashi cites as his first comment to Sefer Vayikra:

And He called to Moses: *Every time God communicated with Moses… He preceded that communication by calling him by name. This calling [**קריאה**] **is an expression of love and affection.** It is the same expression which the ministering angels employ when calling to one other to unify in the sanctification-praise of God, as it says, "And one called (וְקָרָא) to the other and declared, "Holy…"* (Isa. 6:3).

In Rabbinic tradition, Hashem's communication with Moshe constitutes a paradigm for Torah teaching. This midrash stresses the requirement that the teacher lovingly recognize the student's singularity, just as the Divine Teacher would always initiate Moshe's lesson by calling to him, with affection, by name.

The teacher, therefore. must constantly keep in mind that he is engaged in the most sacred task of endowing God's *image* (i.e., the student) with the redemptive gift of accessibility to God's *Word* and *Will*.

Hashem wired Rav Pereida's LD child to be aware of and sensitive to the requirement of personalized pedagogical devotion. It is precisely to this child that He assigned the task of teaching this principle. This nameless child-student acquitted himself quite successfully of his Divinely mandated task – at first teaching it directly to Rav Pereda, and subsequently, by means of this short sugya, by teaching it to

countless Jews, including us, throughout the millennia.

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SOURCES IN HEBREW

Eruvin 54b

רַבִּי פְּרִידָא הֲוָה לֵיהּ הָהוּא תַּלְמִידָא דַּהֲוָה תָּנֵי לֵיהּ אַרְבַּע מְאָה זִימְנֵי וְגָמַר. יוֹמָא חַד בַּעְיוּהּ לְמִלְתָא דְמִצְוָה. תְּנָא לֵיהּ וְלָא גְּמַר. אֲמַר לֵיהּ: הָאִידָּנָא מַאי שְׁנָא? אֲמַר לֵיהּ: מִדְּהָהִיא שַׁעְתָּא דַּאֲמַר לֵיהּ לְמָר אִיכָּא מִילְתָא דְמִצְוָה — אַסְחַאי לְדַעְתַּאי, וְכָל שַׁעְתָּא אָמֵינָא: הַשְׁתָּא קָאֵי מָר, הַשְׁתָּא קָאֵי מָר. אֲמַר לֵיהּ: הַב דַּעְתָּיךְ וְאַתְנֵי לִיךְ. הֲדַר תְּנָא לֵיהּ אַרְבַּע מְאָה זִימְנֵי [אַחֲרִינֵי]. נְפַקָא בַּת קָלָא וַאֲמַר לֵיהּ: נִיחָא לָיךְ דְּלִיסְפּוֹ לָךְ אַרְבַּע מְאָה שְׁנֵי, אוֹ דְּתֵיזְכּוֹ אַתְּ וְדָרָךְ לְעָלְמָא דְּאָתֵי? אָמַר: דְּנֵיזְכּוֹ אֲנָא וְדָרַיי לְעָלְמָא דְּאָתֵי. אָמַר לָהֶן הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא: תְּנוּ לוֹ זוֹ וָזוֹ.

Rashi Vayikra 1:1

וַיִּקְרָא אֶל־מֹשֶׁה: לְכָל דִּבְּרוֹת וּלְכָל אֲמִירוֹת וּלְכָל צִוּוּיִים קָדְמָה קְרִיאָה, לְשׁוֹן חִבָּה, לָשׁוֹן שֶׁמַּלְאָכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת מִשְׁתַּמְּשִׁין בּוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר וְקָרָא זֶה אֶל זֶה (ישעיהו ו)'