

Beyond

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt'l, Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferet Yerushalayim on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, was the Poseik haDor, the leading Halachic authority of the generation. He was adored for his compassion, sensitivity and midos tovos, and respected for his unmatched genius and hasmada, constant engagement in Talmud Torah.

Once, when he was no longer a young man, Reb Moshe made the long trip to the West Coast to fundraise for the Yeshivah. Upon arriving in Los Angeles, he spent the entire rest of the day on his feet going from meeting to meeting. The organizers were shocked when after such an exhausting day, he proposed that they then go visit an elderly rav who lived some distance away.

One of those accompanying Reb Moshe sought to protect the aging Gadol's strength: "Rebbi, you've had such a long and demanding day, would you not prefer to rest for the night or take some time to learn?" Reb Moshe replied with absolute clarity, "The Torah commands us to love the Ribbono Shel Olam with all our heart and soul, u'vechol

meodecha, 'with all our possessions', specifically our wealth. For most people, 'wealth' refers to their material belongings. I don't have much money, and for me, my Torah learning time is what is most valuable and precious to me... and I am prepared to sacrifice that to fulfil another mitzvah."

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Our sedra contains the Shema, the core declaration of our Emunah, our daily affirmation of the Oneness of Hashem: "V'Ahavta, and you shall love Hashem your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and uvchol me'odecha, with all your means." (Devarim 6:5)

Rashi says, 'The meaning of uvchol m'odecha is "and with all your possessions". However, there are people whose possessions are more precious to them than their own bodies; therefore the pasuk says, "and with me'odecha, all your means"'.

Ramban interprets the word me'odecha to mean "much". That is to say, we are obliged to love and serve Hashem with whatever is most precious to us.

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Moshe Rabbeinu had dedicated his

adult life to fulfilling Hashem's will in the service of Bnei Yisrael. From the period of slavery in Egypt to the transmission of Torah, to the years of wandering in the Desert, Moshe was the Ro'eh Ne'eman, the Faithful Shepherd, leading Hashem's flock. In our sedra Moshe expresses his greatest desire; he davens and pleads with G-d to allow him entry to Eretz Yisrael with the People to whom he was so dedicated. Moshe Rabbeinu doesn't let up, beseeching Hashem 515 times to be granted the privilege of coming into the Land.

Rav Yaakov Bender shlit'a, a master educator and Rosh Yeshiva of Darchei Torah in Far Rockaway, refers to a beautiful teaching of the Ba'al haTurim regarding the way our leader mentions his merits in an attempt to awaken Divine compassion. Of all the great accomplishments Moshe Rabbeinu might have mentioned in his davening – of all the powerful moments between Moshe Rabbeinu and Am Yisrael from Yam Suf to Har Sinai, including his leading the Jews out of Egypt, enduring criticism and rebellion in the wilderness, sacrificing his home life for the sake of the Nation – what does Moshe mention? He begs G-d to remember that Chizakti es Yisrael, ulai yeracheim alai, "I have given chizuk, strength, to the Jewish

People; perhaps Hashem, you can thus have mercy on me...."

Moshe's ability to give chizuk was his me'odecha, his most precious possession.

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Following the period of mourning and reflection on our losses, the reading of Parshas Va'eschanan, and Shabbos Nachamu itself, is an opportune time for us to consider what currency we value most, what is most important in our lives. For Reb Moshe, zt'l, Talmud Torah was his greatest pleasure and asset. The chessed of visiting and giving chizuk to the elderly rav, another Jew, was his fulfilment of "love Hashem with all your means."

May we be prepared to go beyond ourselves and be ready to elevate all of our inner resources and possessions to be mechazeik es Yisrael, to strengthen ourselves and each other – and may Hashem continue to show mercy and compassion to us all.