

House of Sages

MEMORY

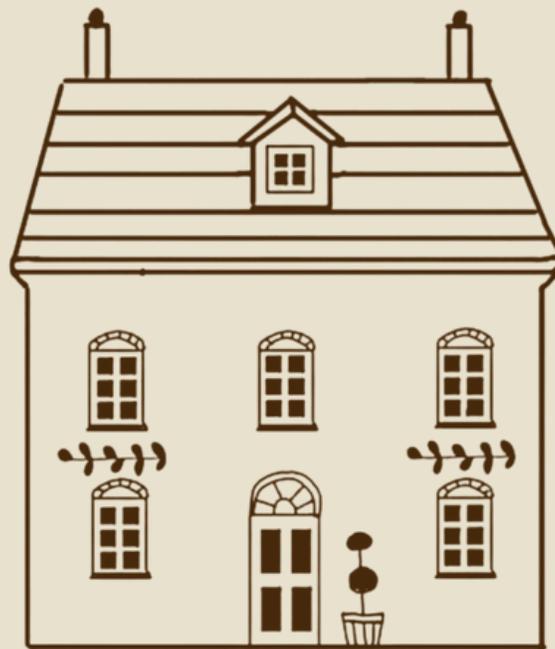
8TH MARCH, 2026

COME & LEARN

בָּא מַלְאָךְ וְסָטְרוּ עַל פִּיו, וּמְשַׁכְּחוּ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוּלָּהּ

An angel comes and slaps it on its mouth, causing them to forget the entire Torah.

Niddah 30b



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SOURCE 1 – NIDDAH 30B

And a candle is lit for it above its head, and it gazes from one end of the world to the other, as it is stated: “When His lamp shined above my head, and by His light I walked through darkness” (Job 29:3). And do not wonder how one can see from one end of the world to the other, as a person can sleep here, in this location, and see a dream that takes place in a place as distant as Spain.

And there are no days when a person is in a more blissful state than those days when he is a fetus in his mother’s womb, as it is stated in the previous verse: “If only I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me” (Job 29:2). And the proof that this verse is referring to gestation is as follows: Which are the days that have months but do not have years? You must say that these are the months of gestation.

And a fetus is taught the entire Torah while in the womb, as it is stated: “And He taught me and said to me: Let your heart hold fast My words; keep My commandments, and live” (Proverbs 4:4). And it also states: “As I was in the days of my youth, when the converse of God was upon my tent” (Job 29:4).

And once the fetus emerges into the airspace of the world, an angel comes and slaps it on its mouth, causing it to forget the entire Torah, as it is stated: “Sin crouches at the entrance” (Genesis 4:7), i.e., when a person enters the world he is immediately liable to sin due to his loss of Torah knowledge.

נִרְדָּלוּק לּוֹ עַל רֵאשׁוֹ, וְצוֹפָה וּמִבֵּיט
מִסּוֹף הָעוֹלָם וְעַד סוֹפוֹ, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר:
”בְּהֵלוֹ נִירוּ עָלַי רֵאשֵׁי לְאוּרוֹ אֵלַי
חֹשֶׁךְ”, וְאֵל תִּתְמָה, שֶׁהָרִי אָדָם יִשֵּׁן כְּאֵן
וְרוֹאֶה חֲלוֹם בְּאַסְפִּמְיָא.

וְאֵין לָךְ יָמִים שְׂאָדָם שְׂרוּי בְּטוֹבָה יוֹתֵר
מֵאוֹתָן הַיָּמִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ”מִי יִתְנַנִּי
כִּי־רַחֵי קֶדֶם כִּי־מִי אֱלוֹהֵי יִשְׁמְרֵנִי”,
וְאִיזְהוּ יָמִים שֵׁישׁ בָּהֶם יָרַחִים וְאֵין בָּהֶם
שָׁנִים? הֵי אֹמֵר: אֱלוֹי יָרַחֵי לִידָה.

וּמִלְמַדִּין אוֹתוֹ כֹּל הַתּוֹרָה כּוֹלָה,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ”וַיִּזְרַנִּי וַיֹּאמֶר לִי יִתְמָךְ דְּבָרֵי
לְבָבְךָ שְׂמֹר מִצְוֹתַי וְחַיֵּה”, וְאֹמֵר: ”בְּסוֹד
אֱלוֹהֵי עָלֵי אֶהְיֶה”.

וְכִי־וֹן שֶׁבָּא לְאוֹר הָעוֹלָם, בָּא מְלַאךְ
וְסָטְרוֹ עַל פִּיו, וּמִשְׁכַּחוּ כֹּל הַתּוֹרָה
כּוֹלָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ”לִפְתַּח חֲטָאת רֹבֵץ”.

SOURCE 2 – MENO, PLATO

“As the soul is immortal, has been born many times, and has seen all things here and in the underworld, there is nothing which it has not learned; so it is in no way surprising that it can recollect the things it knew before, both about virtue and about other things. Since all nature is akin, and the soul has learned everything, nothing prevents a man, after recalling one single thing, as people say, from discovering everything else, if he has courage and does not tire of the search. For seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection.”

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SOURCE 3– KOHELET RABBAH 1:13

Rabbi Abbahu said: This is the pursuit of Torah, for a person studies Torah and forgets it. The Rabbis there, in the name of Rabbi Yitzhak from here, and Rabbi Tovya in the name of Rabbi Yitzhak: It is for his own good that a person studies Torah and forgets, as were a person to study Torah and not forget it, one would engage in Torah study two or three years and would return to engage in his labor and never pay attention to it for the rest of his life. Rather, because a person studies Torah and forgets it, he does not move or remove himself from matters of Torah.

בִּי אֲבָהוּ אָמַר זֶה שְׁפוּטָהּ שֶׁל תּוֹרָה, שְׂאֵדָם לְמַד תּוֹרָה וְשׁוֹכְחָהּ. רַבְּנָן דְּתַמְנָן בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יִצְחָק דְּהֵכָא וְרַבִּי טוֹבִיָּה בְּשֵׁם רַבִּי יִצְחָק, לְטוֹבְתוֹ אָדָם לְמַד תּוֹרָה וְשׁוֹכְחָהּ, שְׂאֵלוֹ הִיא אָדָם לְמַד תּוֹרָה וְלֹא שׁוֹכְחָהּ, הִיא מִתְעַסֵּק בְּתוֹרָה שְׁתֵּימָן שְׁלֹשׁ שָׁנִים וְחוֹזֵר וּמִתְעַסֵּק בְּמִלְאֲכָתוֹ, וְלֹא הִיא מְשַׁגֵּיחַ בָּהּ לְעוֹלָם כָּל יְמֵיו, אֶלָּא מִתּוֹךְ שְׂאֵדָם לְמַד תּוֹרָה וְשׁוֹכְחָהּ, אֵינוֹ מִזִּיד וְאֵינוֹ מִזִּיעַ אֶת עַצְמוֹ מִדְּבַרֵי תּוֹרָה.

SOURCE 4 – “RETRIEVAL PRACTICE IMPROVES RECOLLECTION-BASED MEMORY OVER A PERIOD OF ONE WEEK”

(DAVID SUTTERER, FRONTIERS IN PSYCHOLOGY)

This peer-reviewed experimental study compares retrieval practice to restudy and shows that actively recalling information leads to stronger long-term memory than additional study trials. The authors highlight that these benefits generalize across age groups and persist over a week-long delay

Retrieving information improves subsequent memory performance more strongly than restudying... In view of its pervasive long-lasting memory effects, [retrieval practice] is a potential candidate to improve memory not only in young but also older adults.

SOURCE 5 – JOHN LENNON AND THE JEWS, ZE'EV MAGHEN (2014)

See, you personally were born quite recently. You haven't existed, built, climbed, fallen, lost, won, wept, rejoiced, created, learned, argued, loved and struggled for thousands of years. Nevertheless, you, my friend, happen to have lucked out. You are a distinguished member of a nation which has done all these things, and more. You have special eyes, eyes that can see for miles and miles. If only you will it - enough to work at it - you can extend your arms and touch the eons and millennia, you can suck up the insights and bask in the glory and writhe in the pain and draw on the power emanating from every experience of your indomitable, indestructible, obstinately everlasting people.

This is not an ability acquired solely through learning or reading (although this is a major ingredient, I hasten to emphasize); it is first and foremost a function of connection, of belonging, of powerful love. If you reach out and grasp your people's hands - you were there. You participated in what they did in all places and at all times, you fought their battles, felt their feelings and learnt their lessons.

SOURCE 6 – RABBI AVI STRAUSBURG, "FORGETTING THE TORAH"

Despite the text's ending in which we are made to forget all of the Torah that we have learned, I imagine, after the fact, there still remains an impression, a remnant of that close encounter. I wonder if God teaches us all of the Torah not so that we should actually know the Torah but for the sake of the impression that it leaves on us, a trace of something we once knew.... There is some subconscious part of us that remembers this close encounter with God and wants to get back to that Torah. If we never learned the Torah, perhaps there would be nothing to draw us back to it; there would be no impression calling us home.

MEMORY