

Torah On One Foot

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Write Down This Teaching

In this week's Torah portion, *Vayeilech*, Moses "went" to the Israelites and told them that Joshua would be his successor. Now advanced in age, Moses wants to make sure that the wisdom of Torah survives. So he writes it down and tells the priests and elders to read the entire Book of Deuteronomy to the people every seventh year. So "that they may hear and learn" (31:12).

During the Ten Days of Repentance, our sacred task is to engage in *t'shuvah*, a process of learning and growth. We are asked to turn inward and think about how we can do better in the New Year. Rabbi Chaim Stern writes, "Within the word *learn* is the word *earn*. Help me to realize that nothing important is learned without an effort."

We learn from the time we are born. In fact, many believe that we begin learning even before that. There is a Jewish folktale that tells us about the angel Laila, who knows all the mysteries of heaven. She shares all of the secrets of the world infants as they grow. Including the entire Torah and the history of his or her soul. Then, when the child is about to be born, Laila touches the child's lip and the lessons are forgotten.

This year, may we come to understand that each of us can be a sage – quick to learn and slow to forget. Let us be attentive to our experiences, learn from everyone, and discover how we can translate our understanding into positive action.