



# Some Fundamental Principles of Learning B'Iyun

- 1. Repeatedly read and analyze the *Rishonim* on the *Sugya* as precisely and accurately as possible.** The primary goal is to bring out as much information as possible and understand the depth contained within their words. To achieve one should analyze the continuity of their words (*Hemshech*) and attempt to take note of what other ways the idea could have been expressed. Careful observation of *Lashon* is one way to help clarify why the *Rishon* chose to express the concept in the form that he did.
  - 2. Focus specifically on the area(s) where *Rishonim* disagree.** The fundamental principles (*Yesodos*) of a *Sugya* can generally be found by closely examining the *Machlokes Rishonim*. An important part of this process is to try and explain precisely where the *Rishonim* disagree. It is vital that the disagreement be expressed in a way that minimizes the difference between the two views. *Rishonim* were giants in Torah, and it is unlikely that such great Torah minds saw the same concept in vastly different ways.
  - 3. Clarify the change in understanding between the question and the answer.** Because of their broad knowledge of all of Torah, it is understood that a *Rishon* who asks a question is not just making casual conversation. It is crucial to understand exactly why he asked his question, and what unique *Chiddush* he is expressing in his answer. For example, when a *Rishon* brings another Gemara as proof to his answer, we have to determine how he understood that Gemara before his question.
  - 4. Work on *Tosfos* and relevant *Mefarshim* as building blocks for a *Sugya*.** Many of the core concepts in a given *Sugya* will often be centered around *Tosfos*. *Achronim* focus on explaining *Tosfos*, so extra clarity can therefore be attained. There are many important strategies necessary to learn *Tosfos*, such as when *Tosfos* brings two answers, there must be a reason why the first one was somehow insufficient. Also, if *Tosfos* asks a question from another Gemara, it means that there would be no problem in this *Sugya* if not for the other Gemara.
  - 5. Study *Gedolei Achronim* along with *Rishonim*.** Reaching greater depths in understanding *Rishonim* requires using *Achronim* to prevent us from straying from the correct approach in a given *Sugya*. The commentaries of the *Achronim* are often written at greater length and spell out certain concepts more clearly. *Achronim* also frequently quote necessary information from other places in *Shas*.
  - 6. To extract the fundamentals of the *Sugya* from the words of the *Sugya* itself.** The ideal way to break down a *Sugya* is to delve in primarily at its main location. Avoiding the introduction of outside *Sevaros* into the words of the *Sugya* and *Mefarshim* is preferable. Rather, the key is to see what the *Sugya* “says to you” when viewed more independently.
  - 7. Learn under an expert *Rebbi*.** The path to grow in learning *B'Iyun* can be found only by following a *Rebbi* who guides *Talmidim* on their respective levels. An *Iyun* shiur should be constructed so that *Talmidim* are motivated to work hard on the *Sugya*, while staying within their range of comprehension and ability. An active back-and-forth discussion between *Rebbi* and *Talmidim* is an essential component of the shiur and crucial for growth in clarity and *sevara*. A *Rebbi* should train *talmidim* to identify a “*Sevara Yeshara*” that can “be said”, and by contrast, a *Sevara* that “cannot be said.” He should guide them to differentiate between subtle shades of similarity in *din* to establish the truth precisely.
- Harav Dovid Leibowitz, zt”l, used to say that the job of a *Rebbi* is not to feed information, but rather to get inside the *Talmid*’s head to see how he is perceiving and understanding the information and, when called for, to straighten out his thinking.