**‘A Metaphor: To What is the Matter Similar’ – The Popularization of the Torah**

**(Abstract)**

And as Koheleth grew in wisdom, he continued to teach the people knowledge and listened to and tested and improved many metaphors. (Ecclesiastes 12:9) And he heard words of Torah heard and he tested words of Torah and he made handles for Torah; and you find that up until Shlomo arose, there was no analogy.

 (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:8)

Six metaphors were given in the homiletic interpretation of this verse, and they all present one understanding: Shlomo engendered a revolution in Torah study. He created an aid – the metaphor – which translated the Torah from its difficult abstract language into concrete and familiar terms. And in this way, Shlomo made the Torah accessible to the masses. Before they trembled before it, as it appeared to them to be like: a *maze*; a *thicket*; a *heavy and inflexible* jar; a vessel *full of boiling water*; a *deep* well; and a *lost* jewel.

The metaphor assisted the student in *finding* a way through the maze, *cutting through* the thicket, *carrying* the full jar, *holding* the urn of boiling water, *entering and drinking* from the well, and *finding* the lost jewel. Each one of these six metaphors elucidates the function of metaphor – to concretize and simplify the ideas hidden in the Torah for its students, by seeing it from a different angle.

This was Shlomo’s endeavor, the *popularization of the Torah*. Shlomo gave the students of the Torah an aid – the metaphor; a tool which makes the Torah accessible to all via concretization, simplification and a more popular presentation. Hence Shlomo opened the gates of Torah to the masses and ‘established many students.’

And ‘the matter should not be light in your eyes’ – one should not demean its value due to it being simpler and popular. Nor should one should be concerned about the depreciation of the Torah’s status when it is made available to everyone. Behold, Shlomo’s reward for this was the acquisition of *ruach hakodesh* (holy inspiration) and the writing of three books of wisdom. And this reward – *ruach hakodesh* – is the reward of ‘all who say over words of Torah *among the masses*’; of all who make the Jewish library accessible to the public at large.