

הַיְהוּא THE PATH TO FOLLOW

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THE BENEFITS OF TORAH STUDY

(by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

The first verse in Parsha Eikev teaches us that the one who fixes (kevah – eikev) times for Torah study hears everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, commands him to do, and in this way he attains the joy implied by the word vehaya (*Bereshith Rabba* 4: 4). He is then ready to devote his entire body and soul to perform every mitzvah, even those enacted by our rabbis. That is what we derive from the following story in the Talmud: Our Sages teach that when Rabbi Akiva was imprisoned, Rabbi Yehoshua Hagarsi brought him food and water every day. Rabbi Akiva's prison guard once noticed that his daily ration of water was more than normal, and so he threw out half of it. Rabbi Akiva complained to Rabbi Yehoshua: "Don't you realize that I'm old, and that my life depends on yours?" He then told him what had happened, and insisted on using the remaining water to wash his hands for his meal rather than to drink. Rabbi Yehoshua replied to him, "If there's not enough to drink, do you think that there will be enough to wash your hands with?" Rabbi Akiva answered: "What can I do? The punishment for violating the words of the rabbis is Death!" Rabbi Akiva then refused to eat until Rabbi Yehoshua gave him enough water to wash his hands (*Eruvin* 21b).

Yet if, G-d forbid, we do not fix times for Torah study, but rather are content on learning here and there from our friends what is forbidden and permitted, we will always act differently because we will not have completely understood the law. We will therefore constantly be in doubt.

The first thing to do is to annul your ego before your teacher, to reach the level of eikev. The two parties will then be filled with joy: The teacher is happy to see his student yielding to him and listening to his voice, and the student takes pleasure from what he learns from his teacher and experiences joy as a result. He feels that he is his teacher's eikev. All filled with joy (vehaya), he senses the greatness of Hashem (Y-H-V-H), Who is the First and the Greatest.

Moreover, the very word eikev implies the idea of the end. In fact, the letter that precedes ayin is samech; the letter that precedes kuf is peh; and the letter that precedes beit is aleph. Putting these together, we get sefa (or sof), which means "end". King David exclaimed, "Had Your Torah not been my preoccupation, then I would have perished in my affliction" (*Psalms* 119:92). He felt that if he did not study Torah regularly, he would have experienced no joy in life and would have been like a destitute person, lost and devoid of all. It is primarily Torah study that filled him with joy in every difficult situation in which he found himself.

We know people who study Torah but do not have this joy for life that characterizes a pious Jew. They then ask themselves why the Torah does not help them to get rid of their sadness, or even their depression. The answer is very simple. It is because they do not devote fixed times to study Torah every day.

Thanks to regular Torah study performed in a spirit of submission, we feel no lack in the material sphere. The Gemara cites the case of Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, who was content with a small measure of carob from the eve of one Shabbat to the next (*Taanith* 10a). Yet how can a person be filled with joy while in a spirit of submission (the aspect of eikev)? If a doctor prescribes medicine that is bitter and hard to swallow for the patient, he will gladly take it if he realizes that his recovery depends on it. It is the same with serving G-d. The evil inclination constantly endeavors to make a man forget the objective of his life here below so that he becomes indebted in the World to Come. He then gets sick, jealously gnaws away at him, he becomes filled with pride and yearns for the greatest honors, and he speaks ill of others. He only rids himself of all his sins by constant Torah study and by exhibiting maximum humility, which is diametrically opposed to these grave sins. He will then see just how his joy will intensify in this world as in the World to Come.

To our great regret, the Jew of our days constantly covets what he does not have. He is no longer content with a small house or a regular daily allotment. And when he realizes that he cannot attain the lifestyle of his neighbor, he destroys the peace of his home with his own hands. I personally know of a Jew who divorced his wife because he did not have enough money to buy the same refrigerator as his neighbor, may G-d help us!

The Gemara teaches that the son of David (i.e., Mashiach) will only come when we no longer have a cent in our pockets (*Sanhedrin* 97a). This is an obvious sign of favor from the Holy One, blessed be He, for (as we know) greed destroys the world. When in the future money will have no value, jealousy, pride, and hate will disappear from the face of the earth. However in waiting for these messianic times to arrive, the majority of our brothers live in shame because each one covets what his neighbor owns. This is not the case with one who diligently engages in Torah study. Money does not mean much to such a person. He is constantly filled with joy and is submissive to his Creator. For him, the best investment is but diligent Torah study.

Our Sages also teach that Mashiach will come when the entire generation will either be guilty or innocent (*Sanhedrin* 98a). The disappearance of the concept of money will bring about in its wake the disappearance of jealousy, pride, greed, etc. The generation will be free of all sin, and the entire world will rush towards synagogues and houses of study to hear the word of G-d. The one who constantly walks and advances on his heel (eikev) in his piety will merit hearing the Torah of G-d Alm-ghty (*Admor of Gur, in his book Lev Simcha*).

STORIES OF TZADIKIM

The reward for helping Young newlyweds

We know that wearing a Tallit effectively protects a person against evil spirits. However during the time of Rabbi Chaim of Sanz, the inhabitants of his town believed that even the merit of giving a beautiful Tallit to someone enables a person to arrive in peace in the hereafter, in a world that is completely good. Here is that story:

One day Rabbi Chaim of Sanz set aside his Torah study in order to accomplish the mitzvah of helping a young woman to get married. With that in mind, he went with his friend Rabbi Moshe Rappaport to make the rounds of the well-to-do in town. While on route they stopped by the place of a wealthy man who was hospitable to neither G-d nor men, for he took Torah mitzvot lightly and was not among the orthodox of the community. Yet despite this he respected the Rabbis, and the visit of these two Torah greats gave him immense satisfaction.

When Rabbi Chaim explained their reason of their visit, the rich man inquired as to the sum that they still lacked for the wedding. "We still need money for the shtreimel and the Tallit," the Tzaddikim told him.

Such items were considered to be expensive during those times, and not everyone could easily afford them. Yet the rich man did not hesitate, and he gave them the entire amount that they lacked. The two Rabbis were very pleased by this kindly act, and Rabbi Chaim above all kept this matter in mind so that he could repay him measure for measure when the time would come. However the rich man remained wealthy for his entire life, and so the Rav never had an opportunity to pay him back for his good deed.

Many years passed, and the rich man left this world. However Rabbi Chaim had still not forgotten his good deed for the impoverished bride. He ordered his assistant

to inform him when the rich man's funeral would take place, for he wanted to be in attendance.

To everyone's surprise, during the funeral Rabbi Chaim stayed close to the casket at all times. People were astonished because Rabbi Chaim was known for his great diligence in Torah study, yet now he had left his studies to accompany a deceased man whose life was filled with rumors of impropriety.

Their surprise increased when they saw Rabbi Chaim waving his hand in all directions, as if he felt something there. Yet there was nobody next to him. When the funeral procession arrived at the cemetery and the deceased was about to be lowered into the grave that had been dug for him, Rabbi Chaim once again waved his hands to the four cardinal directions, and he also waved the cane that he was holding in his hand. That being done, Rabbi Chaim went home. One of those close to Rabbi Chaim asked him to explain his strange behavior during the funeral. Rabbi Chaim told him of the deceased's noble act when he was collecting funds for a poor bride, and because of that deed he wanted to attend his funeral. "Then," Rabbi Chaim said, "when I was following the deceased, I saw a great number of destructive angels who wanted to steal his soul away, claiming that it belonged to them. Seeing that, I began to wave my hand and I chased them away. However at the cemetery they returned and assembled together to remove him, so I again tried with all my strength to chase them away, and I succeeded. He therefore merited being laid to rest in peace in a world that is entirely good, all because of the mitzvah of the Tallit that he purchased with his own money for the groom.