

Mishnah 1: Studying Torah *li-sh'mah*

רַבִּי מֵאִיר אֹמֵר כָּל הָעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה לְשִׁמָּה זֹכֶה לְדַבְּרִים הַרְבֵּה וְלֹא עוֹד אֶלָּא שְׂכָל הָעוֹלָם כֻּלּוֹ כְּדִי הוּא לוֹ.

Rabbi Meir said: Whoever occupies themselves with the Torah *li-sh'mah* merits many things; not only that but the whole world is worthwhile because of them.

Nefesh ha-Hayim Gate IV 1:9-10 (Rav Chayim of Volozhin 18th-19th century)

ותחלה אשים דברתי בענין עסק התורה לשמה מהו ענין לשמה. כי גם זה פרי חטאת לכמה המונעים עצמן מעסק התורה הקדושה בחשבם כי ענין לשמה פי' בדביקות גדול בלי הפסק. וגם רעה חולה יותר מזה. שסוברים בדעתם שעסק התורה בלא דביקות אין כלום וללא שום תועלת ח"ו. לזאת כשרואין עצמן שאין לבם הולך לזאת המדרגה שיהא לימודים בדביקות תמידי. לא יתחילו כלל ללמוד. וע"כ תפוג תורה ח"ו. ומהמשך הענינים יתבאר אי"ה ממילא מעלתה של התורה הקדושה והאדם העוסק בה כראוי.

And first, I'll focus my words on the matter of involvement with Torah *li-sh'mah*—what "*li-sh'mah*" means—for this too is connected to a horrible misunderstanding, for there are some who halt themselves from involvement with the holy Torah because they think that the definition of the matter of *li-sh'mah* is "with great and constant *d'vekut* ['attachment']." And there's an evil even more pathological than this: in their thoughts they hypothesize that involvement with Torah without this kind of *d'vekut* amounts to nothing, and has no benefit, heaven forbid. And for that reason, when they observe that their heart doesn't arrive at the level where their learning would be with constant *d'vekut* they don't even start to learn, and the result of this would be that the Torah will fade away, heaven forbid. And as the matter progresses, it will be explained, God willing, therefore, the high degree of the holy Torah and of the person who is involved with it as it deserves.

Mishnah 4: The way of Torah

כֹּךְ הִיא דִּרְכָּהּ שֶׁל תּוֹרָה: פֶּת בְּמַלַּח תֹּאכֵל וּמִים בְּמִשׁוּרָה תִּשְׁתֶּה וְעַל הָאָרֶץ תִּישָׁן וְחַיִּי צָעַר תִּחְיֶה וּבִתּוֹרָה אַתָּה עֹמֵל.

Such is the way of Torah: You shall eat bread with salt, and rationed water shall you drink; you shall sleep on the ground, your life will be one of privation, and in Torah shall you labor.

Mishnah 5: What not to do

אַל תִּבְקֹשׁ גְּדֻלָּה לְעַצְמְךָ, וְאַל תַּחְמֹד כְּבוֹד, יוֹתֵר מִלְּמוּדְךָ עֲשֵׂה, וְאַל תִּתְאָוֶה לְשִׁלְחָנָם שֶׁל מְלָכִים, שֶׁשִּׁלְחָנְךָ גָּדוֹל מִשִּׁלְחָנָם, וְכִתְרְךָ גָּדוֹל מִכִּתְרָם, וְנֶאֱמָן הוּא בָּעַל מְלָאכְתְּךָ שִׁישְׁלָם לְךָ שְ�כָר פְּעֻלָּתְךָ:

Do not seek greatness for yourself, and do not covet honor. Put into practice more than you learn. Do not yearn for the table of kings, for your table is greater than their table, and your crown is greater than their crown, and faithful is your employer to pay you the reward of your labor.

Mishnah 6: How to acquire Torah

גְּדוּלָה תוֹרָה יוֹתֵר מִן הַכֹּהֵנִיּוֹת וּמִן הַמַּלְכוּת, שֶׁהַמַּלְכוּת נִקְנִית בְּשָׁלָשִׁים מַעֲלֹת, וְהַכֹּהֵנִיּוֹת בְּעֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבַּע, וְהַתּוֹרָה נִקְנִית בְּאַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁמֹנֶה דְּבָרִים. וְאֵלוֹ הֵן:

בְּתַלְמוּד, בְּשִׁמְיעַת הָאָז, בְּעֲרִיכַת שְׁפָתַיִם,
בְּבִינַת הַלֵּב, בְּשִׁכְלוֹת הַלֵּב,
בְּאַיְמָה, בְּיִרְאָה, בְּעֲנָה, בְּשִׁמְחָה, בְּטַהֲרָה,
בְּשִׁמוּשׁ חֻכְמִים, בְּדִקְדּוּק חֲבָרִים,
וּבִפְלֻל הַתַּלְמִידִים, בְּיִשׁוּב,
בְּמִקְרָא, בְּמִשְׁנָה,
בְּמַעֲוֵט סְחוּרָה, בְּמַעֲוֵט דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ, בְּמַעֲוֵט תַּעֲנוּג,
בְּמַעֲוֵט שִׁנָּה, בְּמַעֲוֵט שִׁיחָה, בְּמַעֲוֵט שְׁחוּק,
בְּאַרְךְ אַפִּים, בְּלֵב טוֹב,
בְּאַמוּנַת חֻכְמִים, וּבִקְבֻלַּת הַיִּסּוּרִין.

הַמִּפְּרִי אֶת מְקוֹמוֹ, וְהַשְׁמִיחַ בְּחֻלְקוֹ,
וְהַעֲוִשָׁה סִיג לְדַבְּרִיו, וְאֵינּוּ מַחֲזִיק טוֹבָה לְעֶצְמוֹ,
אֲהוּב, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַמָּקוֹם, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת,
אוֹהֵב אֶת הַצְּדָקוֹת, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַמִּישָׁרִים, אוֹהֵב אֶת הַתּוֹכָחוֹת,
מִתְרַחֵק מִן הַכְּבוֹד, וְלֹא מִגִּיס לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ,
וְאֵינּוּ שֹׂמֵחַ בַּהוֹרָאָה,
נוֹשֵׂא בְעַל עִם חֲבֵרוֹ,
מְכַרִּיעוֹ לְכַף זְכוּת,
מַעֲמִידוֹ עַל הָאֱמֶת, וּמַעֲמִידוֹ עַל הַשְּׁלוֹם,
מִתְיָשֵׁב לְבוֹ בְּתַלְמוּדוֹ, שׂוֹאֵל וּמְשִׁיב, שׂוֹמֵעַ וּמוֹסִיף,
הַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לְלַמֵּד וְהַלּוֹמֵד עַל מְנַת לַעֲשׂוֹת,
הַמְּחַכֵּים אֶת רַבּוֹ, וְהַמְּכֹנֵן אֶת שְׂמוּעָתוֹ,
וְהַאֲמִיר דָּבָר בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרוֹ.

הָא לַמְּדִתָּ שְׂכָל הָאוֹמֵר דְּבָר בְּשֵׁם אוֹמְרוֹ מִבִּיא גְּאֻלָּה לְעוֹלָם, שְׁנֶאֱמַר (אסתר ב) וַתֹּאמֶר
אֶסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מְרֻדְכָּי:

Pirkei Avot Chapter 6: How to acquire Torah

Greater is learning Torah than the priesthood and than royalty, for royalty is acquired by thirty stages, and the priesthood by twenty-four, but the Torah by forty-eight things, and these are them:

By study, attentive listening, proper speech,
By an understanding heart, by an intelligent heart,
By awe, by fear, by humility, by joy, by purity,
By attending to the sages, by critical give and take with friends,
By fine argumentation with disciples, by clear thinking,
By [study of] Scripture, by [study of] Mishnah,
By a minimum of business, by a minimum of politeness, by a minimum of pleasure,
By a minimum of sleep, by a minimum of conversation, by a minimum of laughter,
By long-suffering, by generosity,
By faith in the sages, by acceptance of suffering.

[Learning of Torah is also acquired by one]
Who recognizes their place, who rejoices in their portion,
Who makes a fence about their words, who takes no credit for themselves,
Who is loved, who loves God, who loves all creatures,
Who loves righteous ways, who loves reproof, who loves uprightness,
Who keeps far from honors, whose heart does not swell on account of learning,
Who does not delight in giving legal decisions,
Who shares in the bearing of a burden with a colleague,
Who judges another with the scales weighted toward favor,
Who leads [one being judged] to truth, who leads [one being judged] to peace,
Whose heart is tranquil in study, who asks and answers, who listens and adds,
Who learns in order to teach and learns in order to do,
Who makes one's teacher wiser and who is exact in what one has learned,
And who repeats a teaching in the name of the one who said it.

Thus you have learned: everyone who repeats a teaching in the name of the one who said it brings deliverance into the world, as it is said: "And Esther told the king in Mordecai's name" (Esther 2:22).