



THE PEOPLE'S TORAH

Is Torah study only for those able to dedicate their lives to it?
How regular people can make Torah study part of their lives.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



PARSHAT BESHALACH

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India



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After thirty days in the wilderness, the Jews' food ran out. They complained, and G-d said, "Behold! I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven ... so that I can test them, whether or not they will follow My teaching." (Source 1).

Rashi explains that the test was whether they would observe the commandments related to the manna. However, the Midrash and Ba'al HaTurim explain that G-d is essentially saying that He will provide the Jews with the best possible conditions—bread from heaven with no worries—to test if, under such circumstances, they will learn and uphold the Torah (Source 2).

The Midrash learns that "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna." In other words, the ideal state for Torah study is when people have no worries because their food comes directly from heaven.

The Rebbe raises a question: The Midrash's statement that the Torah was given only to "the eaters of the manna" contradicts the fact that the mitzvah of Torah study obligates every person, in every situation—whether poor, wealthy, elderly, or healthy—to learn Torah.

The difficulty intensifies:

The Talmud states that Hillel, who studied Torah under extreme poverty, proved that one can study Torah even in dire circumstances (Source 3).

Even during the Temple period, Jews engaged in physical labor to the extent that Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai exclaimed: "What will become of the Torah?" (Source 4).

B. Whose Torah?.....10

The Rebbe explains: The Talmud says that at the beginning of one's study, the Torah is called G-d's, but eventually, it becomes the learner's—"and in his Torah he toils" (Psalms 1:2).

At first, when one studies superficially, the Torah is referred to as G-d's Torah. However, when a person delves deeply and is fully immersed in their learning, the Torah is considered their own.

Based on this, when the Midrash says, "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna,"

it means that people in a mental state similar to "the eaters of the manna"—free from worries and studying with complete focus—are the ones who can study Torah in such depth that it becomes “their own Torah.”

Nonetheless, ordinary Torah study is relevant and accessible to everyone, regardless of their circumstances.

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How can one achieve this state when, according to the Torah, a person must be involved in providing for their family?

A person must train themselves to be in a mental state similar to that of “the eaters of the manna” while studying Torah—free from financial worries—so that during the time of study, they are not distracted by any concerns.

Introduction

Throughout the generations, a question has often arisen: Is Torah study reserved only for those whose circumstances allow them to dedicate their lives to learning, or does it obligate every Jew, regardless of their status or financial situation? The Midrash states that “the Torah was only given to those who ate manna,” but how does this align with the universal obligation of Torah study? And what can we learn from this about how each of us can achieve focused and dedicated learning, even amidst life’s challenges?

השיעור לפרשת בשלח

משיחת מוצאי שבת קודש פרשת בשלח, יו"ד שבט, ה'תשכ"ז
תורת מנחם כרך מ"ט עמוד 40

A. Was the Torah Given Only to the Elites?

On the 15th of Nissan, the Jews left Egypt and followed Moses into the vast and treacherous wilderness. They journeyed with their wives, elders, children, and infants, driven by complete faith in G-d and in Moses.

After thirty days of wandering and hardships in the desert, the food they had brought from Egypt ran out. Hungry and desperate, they complained, asking, "What will we eat?"

Manna As a Preparation For the Giving of the Torah

Source 1 Exodus 16:1-5

Student's
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They journeyed from Elim, and the entire community of the children of Israel came to the desert of Sin, which lies between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt.

The entire community of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the desert. The children of Israel said to them, "If only we had died by the hand of G-d in the land of Egypt, when we sat by pots of meat and ate bread to our fill! For you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire congregation to death."

G-d said to Moses, "Behold! I am going to rain down bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather what is needed for the day, so that I can test them, whether or not they will follow My teaching. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring, it will be double what they gather every other day."

וַיִּסְעוּ מֵאֵילָם וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל עֵדַת
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל מִדְבַּר סִין אֲשֶׁר
בֵּין אֵילָם וּבֵין סִינַי בְּחַמְשָׁה
עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי לְצֵאתָם
מִמִּצְרָיִם.

וַיִּלּוּנוּ כָּל עֵדַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
עַל מֹשֶׁה וְעַל אַהֲרֹן בַּמִּדְבָּר.
וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֲלֵהֶם בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
מִי יָתֵן מוֹתֵנוּ בְּיַד ה' בְּאֶרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁבְתֵּנוּ עַל סֵד
הַבָּשָׂר בְּאֹכְלֵנוּ לֶחֶם לְשַׂבֵּעַ
כִּי הוֹצֵאתָם אֹתָנוּ אֶל הַמִּדְבָּר
הַזֶּה לְהָמִית אֶת כָּל הַקָּהָל הַזֶּה
בָּרָעַב.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנְנִי
מְמַטֵּיר לָכֶם לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם
וַיֵּצֵא הָעָם וַיִּלְקְטוּ דָּבָר יוֹם
בְּיוֹמוֹ לְמַעַן אֲנִסְנוּ הַיָּלֹד
בְּתוֹרָתִי אִם לֹא. וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם
הַשֵּׁשִׁי וְהִכִּינוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר יָבִיאוּ
וְהָיָה מִשְׁנֵהוּ עַל אֲשֶׁר יִלְקְטוּ
יוֹם יוֹם.

When the Jews discover the layer of dew with the bread in the morning, they ask one another, "Man hu?" (meaning, "What is this?"), and thus the heavenly bread is named "manna."

G-d commands them to gather an "omer" (a specific measure) of manna for each family member. They are forbidden to leave any of it until morning (though some disobey, and the leftover manna is infested with worms). On Friday, they are instructed to collect a double portion, as no manna will fall from heaven on Shabbat. Despite this, a group of people ventures out to gather on Shabbat but finds nothing in the field. At this moment, G-d commands them to observe the Shabbat.

To ensure that future generations remember this miracle, Aaron, under G-d's instruction, places some manna in a jar. Altogether, the Jews ate manna for forty years, until they entered the Land of Israel.

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 1

The weekly Torah reading of Beshalach is followed by that of Yitro. The logic of the sequence is that the theme of Beshalach is the Exodus from Egypt, and the Exodus occurred for the sake of, and in merit of, the giving of the Torah. As the verse states, "When you take the people out of Egypt, you will worship G-d on this mountain." This is why Beshalach is followed by Yitro, because the theme of Yitro is the giving of the Torah.

Student's
pg. 2

There is however an interlude between the story of the Exodus and the giving of the Torah: the story of the manna.

The manna is directly linked with the giving of the Torah. This is stated explicitly in the verse, "I am going to rain down for you bread from heaven . . . so that I can test them, whether or not they will follow My teaching." This shows us that the manna, "bread from heaven" is linked with the giving of the Torah, "follow My teaching."

דובר לעיל שמיד לאחרי פרשת בשלח באה פרשת יתרו, כי, בפרשת בשלח מסופר אודות היציאה ממצרים, וכיון שיציאת מצרים הייתה בזכות ולשם מתן תורה, כמו שכתוב "בהוציאך את העם ממצרים תעבדון את האלקים על ההר הזה", לכן, מיד לאחרי סיפור יציאת מצרים בפרשת בשלח, בא הסיפור של מתן תורה שהוא התוכן העיקרי של פרשת יתרו.

אמנם, בין הסיפור של יציאת מצרים לסיפור של מתן תורה, בא בינתיים הסיפור אודות ה"מן".

וענין זה קשור באופן ישיר עם מתן תורה - כמפורש בקרא¹ "הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים וגו' למען אנסנו הילך בתורתי אם לא", היינו, שענין ה"מן" ("לחם מן השמים") קשור עם הענין של מתן תורה ("הילך בתורתי").

1. בשלח טז, ד. וראה תו"א בשלח טז, סע"א ואילך. ובכ"מ.

Torah to Manna Eaters

Student's
pg. 2

This is why we find an apparently puzzling passage in the Mechilta: "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna to expound." Even more puzzling is the version cited in the Baal Haturim commentary on the Torah: "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna."

ולכן מצינו דבר תמוה במכילתא:
"לא ניתנה תורה לדרוש אלא
לאוכלי המן", ותמיהה גדולה יותר
- הנוסח שהובא בבעל הטורים על
התורה³: "לא ניתנה התורה אלא
לאוכלי המן".

Source 2 Commentary on the above verses

Rashi

Student's
pg. 2

So that I can test them, whether...they will follow My teaching: Through giving the manna I will test whether they will keep the commandments contingent upon it, i.e., that they will not leave any of it over, and that they will not go out on the Sabbath to gather the manna.

למען אנסנו הילך
בתורת. אם ישמרו
מצוות התלויות בו,
שלא יותירו מןו ולא
יצאו בשבת ללקט.

Ba'al Haturim

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Test them, whether...they will follow My teaching: The Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna.

אנסנו הילך בתורת.
שלא נתנה התורה אלא
לאוכלי המן.

Sforno

Test them, whether...they will follow My teaching: While effortlessly earning a living, as the sages said, "The Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna."

למען אנסנו הילך
בתורת. כשיהיה
מתפרנס שלא בצער,
פאמרם ז"ל לא נתנה
תורה אלא לאוכלי המן.

>> The Rebbe

Student's
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The Mechilta differs from Rashi's explanation of "so that I can test them, whether or not they will follow My teaching" as referring to the commandments

כלומר: הפירוש "למען אנסנו
הילך בתורת" אינו כפי שמפרש
רש"י בפשטות הכתובים, "אם

2. עה"פ. וכ"ה בר"פ בשלח. תנחומא שם כ. יל"ש שם רמז רנח.
3. עה"פ. וכ"ה בר"פ תרומה, ור"פ חוקת, ועקב ח, ג. - אם
ממדרש אחר, או שהיתה אצלו גירסא כזו במכילתא.

Student's contingent on the manna itself. According to the
pg. 3 Mechilta, "whether or not they will follow My teaching" refers to the Torah as a whole.

ישמרו מצוות התלויות בו", אלא שזה מתייחס לכל התורה כולה ("תורת" סתם).

The commentators deal with the question of the connection between the descent of manna and the continuation of the verse, "so that I can test them." Rashi explains that the test is whether the people will observe the commandments related to the manna itself: not to leave over from one day's portion to the next day, and not to go out and look for it on Shabbat. The Mechilta explains differently: G-d is saying "I will give the Jewish people the best possible circumstances, with bread descending from heaven, so that they should have no worries. Then I will give them the Torah, and we will see if they observe it."

Student's This means that "I am going to rain down for you
pg. 3 bread from heaven" was needed in order to test "whether or not they will follow My teaching," and without the manna this test could not have been made. It therefore follows that the "Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna"—only they could have gotten it.

וכיון שצריך להיות הענין של "ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים" כדי לבחון "הילך בתורת", הרי מובן, שללא ענין המן אי אפשר לבחון זאת, ובמילא, "לא ניתנה תורה לדרוש", או "לא ניתנה התורה" בכלל, כי אם לאוכלי המן.

Since the test could only be made with manna coming down from heaven, it follows that "Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna." In other words, the best way to study and observe Torah is when people are without material concerns and the worries of everyday life.

Everyone Needs To Study Torah!

Student's This raises a powerful question:
pg. 3

Granted, "manna eaters" doesn't only mean those Jews who ate the literal manna during their forty years in the desert. This can also be relevant in later generations, when people are able to make a livelihood without strain and difficulty, enjoying peace of mind like the "manna eaters." However, this still stands in complete contradiction to the basic obligation of Torah study that is incumbent on "every single Jew . . . both rich and poor, physically

אך כאן מתעוררת קושיא עצומה:

הן אמת שאין הכוונה דוקא ל"אוכלי המן" כפשוטו במשך הארבעים שנה שהיו בני ישראל במדבר, אלא ענין זה יכול להיות גם בדורות שלאחרי זה, כאשר הפרנסה היא ללא טרדות וטרחות כו' על דרך ה"מן", כך שישנה מנוחת הנפש כמו שהיתה אצל "אוכלי המן", אבל עדיין הרי זה בסתירה גמורה לכללות החיוב

Student's
pg. 4

strong or suffering, young or old and weak.” There is no difference between different Jews regarding the basic obligation to study Torah. The only differences are in quantity, whether a particular individual is obligated to study all day long, or whether they can suffice with a study period every morning and evening. However, all those who study Torah, even those that only study in the morning and evening, are fulfilling the mitzvah of Torah study and they make a blessing on it, invoking G-d’s name.

This appears to completely contradict the version of the Baal Haturim that “the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna,” and even the version that appears in our copies of the Mechilta that “the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna to expound.”

How can it be said that proper Torah study—the highest form of Torah learning—can only occur in someone who lives without worries? This seems to contradict the entire concept of the mitzvah of Torah study, which obligates everyone, in every situation, regardless of their circumstances!

Pauper To President

This is especially true in light of the Talmud’s statement that “[the example of] Hillel obligates all poor people.” A person is asked, “why didn’t you study Torah?” If they say that they were poor and busy making a living, they are asked, “were you poorer than Hillel? . . . every day Hillel would work and earn a half-dinar, half of which he would give to the guard of the study hall and half of which he spent for his sustenance and the sustenance of the members of his family.” This is the exact opposite of the condition of the “manna eaters” who received an omer measurement per head without expending any effort.

במצות תלמוד תורה שמוטל על “כל איש מישראל... בין עני בין עשיר בין שלם בגופו בין בעל יסורין בין בחור בין שהיה זקן גדול שתשש כחו”⁴, ללא חילוק; החילוק הוא רק במידת החיוב, אם החיוב הוא ללמוד כל היום כולו ממש, או רק “פרק אחד שחרית ופרק אחד ערבית”⁵, אבל גם מי שלומד רק “פרק אחד שחרית ופרק אחד ערבית”, מקיים מצות תלמוד תורה, ועד שמברך על זה בשם ומלכות. ולכאורה, הרי זה היפך הגמור לגרסת בעל הטורים ש“לא ניתנה התורה אלא לאוכלי המן”, ואפילו להגירסא במכילתא שלפנינו, “לא נתנה תורה לדרוש אלא לאוכלי המן”!

ובפרט על פי דברי הגמרא “הלל מחייב את העניים”, “אומרים לו מפני מה לא עסקת בתורה, אם אומר עני הייתי וטרוד במזונותי, אומרים לו כלום עני היית יותר מהלל וכו” (ככל אריכות הסיפור) - שזהו ההיפך הגמור מההנהגה שהיתה אצל “אוכלי המן”, שללא כל טרחא קיבל כל אחד (“המרבה והממעיט”⁷) “עומר לגולגולת”⁸, ובאופן ש“הממעיט לא החסיר”.

7. בשלח שם, יז.
8. שם, טז.
9. שם, יח.

4. רמב"ם ואדה"ז דלעיל ס"ט.
5. מנחות צט, ב. וראה הל' ת"ת לאדה"ז שם. וש"נ.
6. יומא לה, ב.

Source 3 Talmud, Yoma 35b

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The sages taught: A poor person, and a wealthy person, and a wicked person come to face judgment before the Heavenly court for their conduct in this world. To the poor person, the members of the court say: Why did you not engage in Torah? If he rationalizes his conduct and says: I was poor and preoccupied with earning enough to pay for my sustenance and that is why I did not engage in Torah study, they say to him: Were you any poorer than Hillel, who was wretchedly poor and nevertheless attempted to study Torah?

They said about Hillel the Elder that each and every day he would work and earn a half-dinar, half of which he would give to the guard of the study hall and half of which he spent for his sustenance and the sustenance of the members of his family. One time he did not find employment to earn a wage, and the guard of the study hall did not allow him to enter. He ascended to the roof, suspended himself, and sat at the edge of the skylight in order to hear the words of the Torah of the living G-d from the mouths of Shemaya and Avtalyon, the spiritual leaders of that generation.

The Sages continued and said: That day was Shabbat eve and it was the winter season of Tevet, and snow fell upon him from the sky. When it was dawn, Shemaya said to Avtalyon: Avtalyon, my brother, every day at this hour the study hall is already bright from the sunlight streaming through the skylight, and today it is dark; is it perhaps a cloudy day? They focused their eyes and saw the image of a man in the skylight. They ascended and found him covered with snow three cubits high. They extricated him from the snow, and they washed him and smeared oil on him, and they sat him opposite the bonfire to warm him. They said: This man is worthy for us to desecrate Shabbat for him.

תנו רבנן: עני ועשיר ורשע באין לדין, לעני אומרים לו, "מפני מה לא עסקת בתורה?" אם אומר, "עני הייתי וטרוד במזונותי", אומרים לו, "כלום עני היית יותר מהלל?"

אמרו עליו על הלל הזקן שפכל יום ויום היה עושה ומשתכר בטרפציק (חצי דינר), קציו היה נותן לשומר בית המדרש, וקציו לפרנסתו ולפרנסת אנשי ביתו. פעם אחת לא מצא להשתכר, ולא הניחו שומר בית המדרש להכנס. עלה ונתלה וישב על פי ארובה כדי שישמע דברי אלקים חיים מפי שמעיה ואבטליון.

אמרו: אותו היום ערב שבת היה, ותקופת טבת היתה, וירד עליו שלג מן השמים. כשעלה עמוד השחר אמר לו שמעיה לאבטליון: אחי, ככל יום הבית מאיר והיום אפל, שפא יום המעונן הוא? קציו עיניהן וראו דמות אדם בארובה. עלו ומצאו עליו רום שלש אמות שלג. פרקוהו, והרחיצוהו וסכוהו, והושיבוהו כנגד המדורה. אמרו: ראוי זה לחלל עליו את השבת.

Even someone with barely a penny to his name exerted himself to learn Torah, and the Talmud cites this story as an example we should learn from!

>> The Rebbe

The Way of The World

Student's
pg. 6

Even during the era of the Temple the Jewish people did not study Torah all day long. They were occupied with agricultural work, which was then the primary form of employment. The strain was so great that Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said, "Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season, sows in the sowing season...what will become of Torah?" Rabbi Shimon was concerned that if people are personally occupied with plowing and planting, "what will become of Torah?"

והרי אפילו בזמן הבית לא למדו תורה כל היום (כמו אוכלי המן) - שהרי היו טרודים בעבודת האדמה, שהיתה אז עיקר הפרנסה, ועד כדי כך גדולה הטירדא, ש"רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר, אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה וזורע בשעת זריעה וכו', תורה מה תהא עליי" (כדברי הגמרא במסכת ברכות¹⁰), והיינו, שאם רק מתעסקים בחרישה וזריעה, ולא באופן ש"מלאכתו נעשית על ידי אחרים", נשאלת השאלה: "תורה מה תהא עליה?"

Source 4 Talmud, Berachot 35b

Student's
pg. 6

The Sages taught: What is the meaning of that which the verse states: "And you shall gather your grain"? Because it is stated: "This Torah shall not depart from your mouths, and you shall contemplate in it day and night" (Joshua 1:8), I might have thought that these matters are to be understood as they are written; one is to literally spend his days immersed exclusively in Torah study. Therefore, the verse states: "And you shall gather your grain, your wine and your oil," assume in their regard, the way of the world; set aside time not only for Torah, but also for work. This is the statement of Rabbi Yishmael.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season, and is constantly busy—what will become of Torah?

תנו רבנן: "ואספת דגנך" מה תלמוד לומר? — לפי שצאמר: "לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפידך" — יכול דברים תלמוד לומר: "ואספת דגנך" — הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ, דברי רבי ישמעאל.

רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר: אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ודש בשעת דישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, ומה תהא עליה?

Rather, one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors. When Israel performs G-d's will, their work is performed by others, as it is stated: "And strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and your vinedressers" (Isaiah 61:5). When Israel does not perform G-d's will, their work is performed by them themselves, as it is stated: "And you shall gather your grain." Moreover, if Israel fails to perform G-d's will, others' work will be performed by them, as it is stated: "You shall serve your enemy whom G-d shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things" (Deuteronomy 28:48).

Summing up this dispute, Abaye said: Although there is room for both opinions, many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael, and combined working for a living and learning Torah. Although they engaged in activities other than the study of Torah, they were successful in their Torah study. Many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, and they were not successful in their Torah study.

אֶלֶּא בְּזִמְנֵי שִׁישְׁרָאֵל
עוֹשִׂין רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל
מְקוֹם – מְלֹאכְתָּן
נַעֲשִׂית עַל יְדֵי
אֲחֵרִים, שְׁנֵאֲמַר:
"וְעַמְדוּ זָרִים וְרָעוּ
צֹאנֵכֶם וְגו'", וּבְזִמְנֵי
שֶׁאִין יִשְׂרָאֵל עוֹשִׂין
רְצוֹנוֹ שֶׁל מְקוֹם –
מְלֹאכְתָּן נַעֲשִׂית עַל
יְדֵי עַצְמָן, שְׁנֵאֲמַר:
"וְאִסְפַּתְּ דָּגָה". וְלֹא
עוֹד אֶלֶּא שְׁמֵלֶאכֶת
אֲחֵרִים נַעֲשִׂית
עַל יָדוֹ, שְׁנֵאֲמַר:
"וְעַבַּדְתָּ אֶת אוֹיְבֶיךָ
וְגו'".

אָמַר אֲבִי: הִרְבֵּה
עָשׂוּ כְּרַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל,
וְעָלְתָה בִּידָן. כְּרַבִּי
שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַי, וְלֹא
עָלְתָה בִּידָן.

The sages of the Mishnah held a unique debate: Should a Jew work for their livelihood or not? Rabbi Yishmael stated that although the Torah commands us to study at all times—"This book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth"—it also says, "You shall gather your grain," implying the need to work and earn a living while using one's free time to study Torah.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai countered, "If a Jew is busy with their livelihood all day, when will they have time to study?" Instead, he argued that if a Jew fulfills G-d's commandments, G-d will arrange things so that others take care of their work, leaving them free to study Torah.

Rabbi Yishmael and Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai remained divided in their opinions.

The Talmud concludes that Rabbi Yishmael's approach applies to the majority of people, while Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai's approach is suited only for individuals of exceptional spiritual caliber.

Thus, the Talmud teaches that the proper path for most Jews is to work for their livelihood and study Torah during their available time. How, then, can it be said that "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna"?

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 7 The question is even more powerful considering the fact that the common version of the Mechilta also attributes the teaching cited above to Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, "from here Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai would say, 'the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna.'"

והקושיא היא עצומה יותר - לפי הגירסא שלפנינו (וכן הוא בכמה גירסאות, וכנראה שזוהי הגירסא המקובלת) גם מאמר המכילתא הנ"ל הוא מאמרו של ר' שמעון בן יוחאי: "מכאן היה רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר לא ניתנה תורה אלא לאוכלי המן!"

When we see that Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai—who said that a person should focus on learning and not work—is also the one who said, "The Torah was only given to those who ate manna," it takes on a different meaning! We can understand from this that it's not just a saying that was made once and left as something to "ponder." Rather, it reflects a systematic worldview: the true and proper way to study Torah is when one is not preoccupied with the worries of earning a livelihood!

Student's pg. 7 As an aside: there are some who wave away such questions, saying that this is only an Aggadic teaching, and we can't ask questions from Aggadah. But first of all, this teaching is from the Mechilta, which includes many halachic rulings. And, more fundamentally, Aggadah is also part of Torah, "the Torah of truth." It cannot be that an Aggadic teaching should be contrary to Jewish law.

ולהעיר: יש כאלו ש"מבטלים" קושיות כאלו, באמרם, שזוהי אגדתא של תורה, ואין להקשות מאגדה. אבל: לכל לראש - במכילתא ישנם כמה ענינים של פסקי הלכות, והעיקר, שגם אגדה היא חלק מהתורה שנקראת "תורת אמת", ולא יתכן ש"אגדה" תאמר היפך הדין בשולחן ערוך.

Student's pg. 8 We also can't answer that since this is an Aggadic teaching it may have been stated in exaggerated language. This can't be a matter of exaggerated language, as this is something that is contrary to Jewish law.

ואין לתרץ שכיון שזוהי אגדה יכול להיות בזה ענין של גוזמא - כיון שאין זה בגדר של גוזמא, אלא היפך הגמור של פסק דין השולחן ערוך!

B. Whose Torah?

>> The Rebbe

Two Levels of Torah Study

Student's
pg. 9

We can understand this based on a teaching of the Talmud: "Initially the Torah is called by the name of G-d but ultimately it is called by the name of the one who studies it. The verse first states, "his delight is in the Torah of G-d," and then continues, "and in his Torah he meditates day and night." Meaning, during the initial stages of study, when one is still on the superficial level, the Torah is referred to as "G-d's Torah." But after the person studies in depth, with clarity and penetrating insight, the Torah "called by the name of the one who studies it," it becomes "his Torah."

There are two levels of Torah study:

A. When a Jew studies Torah, it is called learning G-d's Torah.

B. After putting effort into the study, delving deeply, and understanding it in a way that unites with their intellect, the Torah becomes "their Torah"—it becomes personal and integrated with their own understanding.

Student's
pg. 9

Based on this we can explain the Mechilta's precise words, "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna." The Mechilta uses the word "given," indicating that it is speaking of Torah that is attributed to the person studying it, not just to G-d.

ויובן בהקדם דברי הגמרא במסכת עבודה זרה¹¹ "בתחילה נקראת (התורה) על שמו של הקב"ה, ולבסוף נקראת על שמו, שנאמר¹² בתורת ה' חפצו (ואחר כך נאמר) ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה", והיינו, שכל זמן שנמצא עדיין בהתחלת הלימוד, שלומד למיגרס, אזי הלימוד הוא באופן ש"בתורת ה' חפצו", שזוהי תורתו של הקב"ה, אבל לאחר ששלמד לעיונא, באופן של הבנה והסברה והעמקה כו', אזי "נקראת (התורה) על שמו", "בתורתו יהגה", שהתורה נעשית שלו.

ועל פי זה יש לבאר את הדיוק במאמר המכילתא "לא ניתנה תורה (לדרוש) אלא לאוכלי המן" - "ניתנה" דייקא, היינו, שאין זה באופן ש"בתורת ה' חפצו", אלא "בתורתו יהגה".

11. יט, א.

12. תהלים א, ב. וראה קידושין לב, ריש ע"ב. ע"ז יט, א.

Student's pg. 9 All Jews are required to study Torah. But this obligation can be fulfilled by "his delight is in the Torah of G-d," a superficial level of study. Torah studied in such a way is termed "not given," it doesn't become "his Torah." It remains "G-d's Torah," and the student is only privileged—and required—to learn from it.

Student's pg. 10 By contrast, "the Torah was only given" refers to Torah that is given to the person and called after their name, "in his Torah he meditates." Regarding this level of Torah study there is a stipulation, "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna."

Of course, everyone is obligated to study Torah, no matter their circumstances—even if they can only study for an hour and even if they are very distracted during their learning. Everyone fulfills the mitzvah of Torah study. However, someone who wants to learn Torah in a way that it becomes "their Torah"—where the Torah unites with them—must live with the mindset of "those who ate manna," meaning that during their study, they should have no worries or other concerns besides the Torah itself.

Student's pg. 10 This point is reflected in the Talmud's teaching "Abaye said, if my stepmother says to me 'pass the *kutach* (a food)' I can no longer study Torah in my usual fashion." Abaye is saying that any outside distraction prevents him from being able to delve deeply into his studies at the level he was accustomed to.

כל ישראל מחויבים בלימוד התורה, אבל, חיוב זה יכולים לקיים גם באופן ש"בתורת ה' חפצו", אלא שאז הרי זה באופן ש"לא ניתנה תורה", שלא נעשית "תורתו", אלא נשארת "תורת ה'", ורק חייבו וזיכו אותו ללמוד;

ואילו המעמד ומצב ש"ניתנה תורה", היינו, שהתורה תינתן לו ותהיה "נקראת על שמו", "ובתורתו יהגה", הנה על זה ישנו תנאי: "לא ניתנה תורה (לדרוש) אלא לאוכלי המן".

וענין זה מתאים עם דברי הגמרא במסכת עירובין¹³: "אמר אביי, אי אמרה לי אם קריב כותחא (אפילו ציווי עבודה קלה היתה מבטלת אותי), לא תנאי" (לא הייתי שונה כמו ששניתי), והיינו, שכאשר יש בלבול במחשבה מאיזה ענין צדדי, אי אפשר להתעמק בלימוד התורה כפי שאביי היה רגיל ללמוד.

Abaye, one of the greatest sages of the Talmud, once said that when he is sitting and learning, and someone asks him to do something small, it immediately disrupts his concentration, and the continuation of his study is never the same. This is because the Torah study Abaye is referring to is "his Torah," and for that, one needs full concentration and an elevated mental state, completely devoted to the Torah.

13. סה, א (ובפרש"י).

In order to study Torah to the fullest degree the student must have a "manna eater" mindset. They need to consider that their work and efforts for their livelihood won't make any difference at all. Whether they invest a lot of time in their work or only a little, they will still receive the exact same measure, like the Jews who experimented with the manna, "whoever gathered much did not have more, and whoever gathered little did not have less."

וכדי שיוכל ללמוד תורה כדבעי, צריך להיות בעת הלימוד במצב הנפש של "אוכלי המן" - שידעו שלא תהיה תועלת ביגיעה וטירדא, שלא תשנה מאומה, שכן, הן אם יהיה "המרבה" והן אם יהיה "הממעט", יקבל לא יותר ולא פחות מאשר "עומר", וכפי שראו בפועל ש"לא העדיף המרבה והממעט לא החסיר"¹⁴.

The Rebbe explains what this means in practice, as we do not live in the desert and do not receive manna from heaven. Furthermore, not all of us are teenagers studying in a yeshiva, supported by our parents. So how can an average Jew reach a higher level of study, where the Torah becomes "his Torah"?

The Rebbe explains that in the desert, they had no worries, no burdens, or toil—because no matter what they did or how much they collected, in the end, each person would have exactly one "omer" of manna. They had no distractions.

Similarly, today, if a Jew can live with the awareness that everything comes from G-d—so it doesn't matter if they work overtime or wake up in the middle of the night thinking about new business ventures—because in the end, they will earn exactly what G-d has planned for them. This awareness frees them from being burdened. They, of course, go to work and put in the effort, but it does not trouble them, because they know they will receive exactly what G-d intends for them. This mindset allows them to study at the highest level, just like those who ate manna.

Based on the above, there is no contradiction between the universal obligation of Torah study and the Mechilta's statement, "the Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna." The universal obligation is for the entry level Torah study, referred to as "his delight is in the Torah of G-d." The ultimate level of Torah study, at which the Torah is "given" to us and called by our name, "in his Torah he meditates," can only be achieved with a "manna eater" mindset, without any distractions.

וזוהי ההסברה בפשטות שאין סתירה בדבר, כיון שמדובר אודות שני ענינים: החיוב של כל אחד מישראל בלימוד התורה מתייחס להתחלת קיום מצות תלמוד תורה, באופן ש"בתורת ה' חפצו"; ואילו שלימות המצוה - שיהיה אצלו הענין ש"ניתנה תורה", עד שתהא "נקראת על שמו", "ובתורתו יהגה" - הרי זה בהיותו במעמד ומצב של "אוכלי המן", שאין לו מחשבות המבלבלים כו'.

Studying With Awe

Student's
pg. 11

We are instructed to study Torah with the same feeling our ancestors experienced when it was initially given to them at Sinai, as the Talmud teaches: "Just as the Revelation at Sinai was with reverence, awe, and trembling, so too in every generation, Torah must be studied with a sense of reverence, awe, and trembling."

The Alter Rebbe, the founder of Chabad, asks the question: "this demand for similar feelings doesn't seem to make sense. At Mt. Sinai the entire Jewish nation "saw the sounds" and G-d spoke to them "face to face." None of this is present, however, when an individual sits down on their own to study Torah."

The Alter Rebbe explains: "Whenever a Jew studies Torah they are receiving G-d's word that was given to Moses at Sinai. As the sages teach, 'when any person studies Torah, G-d is studying opposite them'—just like at Mt. Sinai. This generates the feelings of reverence, awe, and trembling as if we received the Torah today at Sinai."

This reminds us that the possibility of Torah study like at Mount Sinai is not limited to the removal of worries alone. We must learn with reverence, awe, and trembling. We must study with the feeling that we are learning the word of G-d. Only then can we reach the level of "his Torah."

Student's
pg. 11

As a result, when we sit down to study Torah we are able to receive it as it was given at Sinai. However, this is contingent on us receiving "manna from heaven," the absence of any external distractions.

וענין זה הוא אצל כל אחד לפי ענינו: כאשר יהודי מתיישב ללמוד תורה, הרי זה כמו שהיה מלכתחילה במתן תורה - כמוזכר לעיל דברי הגמרא במסכת ברכות¹⁵ "מה להלן באימה וביראה וברתת ובזיע, אף כאן באימה וביראה וברתת ובזיע",

ומקשה על זה רבינו הזקן¹⁶: "לכאורה אינו מובן דמיון זה, מה להלן אף כאן כו', שהרי במעמד הר סיני וכל העם רואים את הקולות¹⁷, ופנים בפנים דבר ה'¹⁸, מה שאין כן בעסק התורה של כל אדם כשלומד בפני עצמו",

ומבאר, "אלא הענין הוא... כי גם עסק התורה שבכל אחד ובכל זמן הוא דבר ה' ממש שנאמר למשה מסיני (כיון ש"כל הקורא ושונה הקב"ה קורא ושונה כנגדו"¹⁹, כמו במתן תורה, "נותן התורה" - לשון הוה²⁰), ועל ידי זה תיפול עליו אימה ויראה כאלו קבלה היום מהר סיני".

ולכן, כשמתיישב ללמוד תורה, אזי יכול לקבל את התורה באופן ש"ניתנה (לו) תורה", אבל, במה דברים אמורים - אם ישנו תחילה הענין של "הנני ממטיר לכם לחם מן השמים", שאז אין לו שום דבר המבלבל, כמו "אמרה לי אם קריב כותחא", וכיוצא בזה.

18. ואתחנן ה, ד.

19. תדבאר רפי"ח. יל"ש איכה רמז תתרלד.

20. ראה של"ה כה, א. לקו"ת תזריע כג, א. ובכ"מ.

15. ברכות כב, א.

16. ת"א יתרו סז, ב.

17. יתרו כ, טו.

C. How is This Relevant to Us?

How is all of this relevant to us? Can an average person study with awe and trembling, in the way that was experienced at Mount Sinai?

Can an ordinary Jew live with the consciousness that they have no worries at all, because they receive everything from G-d?

>> The Rebbe

Faith In G-d

Student's
pg. 12

How is it possible for us to free ourselves from all distractions? The Torah instructs us to earn a livelihood. We are required to provide for ourselves, and all the more so to provide for our families.

The solution is that when we sit down to study Torah we need to enter the mindset of "manna eaters" regarding all of our material matters.

The Jewish people in the desert received all of their other needs alongside the manna—water from Miriam's well, clothing from the clouds of glory, etc. But the element that is always highlighted is the manna. The supplying of manna was the primary element because it occurred daily, unlike clothing, housing and the like which don't need to be renewed daily. Despite the daily need, the Jews were not bothered by the fact that they had nothing left over for tomorrow and would again be in need of G-d's kindness. As explained in the Midrash, the Jewish people

כי צד יוכל אדם לפעול על עצמו
ששום דבר לא יבלבל אותו - הרי
על פי תורה צריך לעסוק בפרנסה,
הן לעצמו, ועל אחת כמה וכמה לבני
ביתו!?

הנה העצה לזה - שכאשר מתיישב
ללמוד תורה, צריך לפעול על עצמו,
שבנוגע לפרנסתו וכל עניניו יהיה
במעמד ומצב של "אוכלי המן"²¹.

אוכלי המן קיבלו גם את כל שאר
צרכיהם - מים מבארה של מרים,
ולבושים על ידי ענני הכבוד, ואף על
פי כן מדגישים את הענין של אכילת
המן, שזהו העיקר, כיון שהוצרך להיות
באופן של "דבר יום ביומו"²² (ולא כמו
ענין הלבושים, ועל אחת כמה וכמה
ענין הבית או אוהל, שאינו דבר חדש
בכל יום), ואף על פי כן, לא מבלבלת
אותו העובדה שידוע שלא נשאר לו
מאומה למחר, שאז יצטרך שוב להגיע
לחסדי ה' - כמבואר במדרשי חז"ל²³

21. ראה גם לקו"ש חז"י ע' 307 ובהערה 46 שם.

22. בשלח טז, ד. וראה תו"א בשלח סה, סע"א ואילך. ובכ"מ.

23. ראה יומא עו, רע"א. הנסמן בתו"ש בשלח עה"פ (אות ל).

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weren't given the manna for all of the years in the desert at once, but rather provided with daily portions, so that they should see how G-d provides from them every day and is the source of their livelihood.

The Rebbe makes an interesting distinction here. The reason why the generation of the desert is the one to whom the Torah was given is because all their needs were provided for, and they could sit and learn without interruption. The question arises: why are they called "the eaters of the manna" and not as those who drank from the well of Miriam or wore the clothes that were provided by the clouds of glory? After all, these are also signs that their needs were provided for.

The reason is that the manna was given only for that day. Therefore, while their food came from heaven, they still could have worried every day: "What will happen tomorrow?" Yet, they did not worry and placed their trust in G-d. Because of this, they were able to learn in the best way. From them, we must learn to trust in G-d, and then nothing will worry us.

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Torah study needs to be carried out in the most complete manner possible. We have discussed a number of times that a person who is capable of in-depth study does not fulfill their Torah study obligation with superficial study. This is certainly true quantitatively as well—even if a person studies Torah for several hours a day, if they have additional free time that can be utilized for Torah study but they don't use it, they are neglecting the mitzvah of Torah study.

The same is true in our case. The ultimate form of Torah study is when it is carried out with the "manna eater" mindset, without any distracting thoughts.

בנוגע לענין המן, שלא ניתן פעם אחת עבור כל הארבעים שנה, אלא באופן שבכל יום ויום יראה יהודי שהקב"ה ממלא צרכיו והוא מקור פרנסתו.

וזהו פשטות הענין וגם ההלכה: לימוד התורה צריך להיות באופן שיבוא לתכלית השלימות, וכמדובר כמה פעמים²⁴ שמי שיכול ללמוד בעמקות, ולומד בשטחיות, אינו יוצא ידי חובת לימוד התורה, ועל אחת כמה וכמה בנוגע לכמות, שגם אם לומד כמה וכמה שעות, אבל נשאר לו זמן פנוי שהיה יכול למלא אותו בלימוד התורה, אזי מבטל מצות עשה של תלמוד תורה (כמבואר בארוכה בתניא²⁵).

ועל דרך זה בעניננו: אופן לימוד התורה בשלימות הוא - כאשר האדם הלומד מעמיד את עצמו בדרגת "אוכלי המן", שאין לו מחשבות המבלבלות בשעה שלומד תורה.

משיחת מוצאי שבת קודש פרשת בשלח
יו"ד שבט, ה'תשכ"ז
תורת מנחם כרך מ"ט עמוד 40

24. ראה תו"מ חמ"ח ע' 133. וש"נ.
25. פ"א.

The Rebbe presents an incredible novel insight. Just as we say about someone who is capable of deeper learning—that they cannot fulfill their obligation with superficial study, and we encourage them to learn with depth—so too, a person who can learn with the mindset of "those who ate manna," free of distracting thoughts, should not settle for regular learning. They must strive to reach and learn with such an elevated consciousness.

Do Not Answer The Phone

In another gathering, on Lag B'Omer 5738, the Rebbe spoke about the way of learning of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai, which was in the form of "his Torah" being his occupation. On that occasion, the Rebbe continued and provided a practical example of where this concept can be found in the life of an ordinary person, who works during the day and learns Torah lessons as much as they are able.

Student's We need to engage in our Torah study sessions
pg. 13 as if Torah is our full-time occupation. While we are studying there should be nothing else on our mind other than Torah.

If the phone rings we don't answer, because we consider the study time like Shabbat. When the phone rings on Shabbat it certainly doesn't distract us from Shabbat, G-d forbid! Similarly when we study Torah, at this time we aren't living in the mundane world, it is like Shabbat for us.

Student's The same applies when our family members
pg. 14 approach us during our study time and wish to discuss all kinds of positive and desirable matters. We need to answer them—of course, in a pleasant and peaceful way—that we are studying Torah now. When this is said honestly and sincerely, as words coming from the heart, it will enter the hearts of our family members as well.

"לימוד השעורים בתורה של יהודי צריך להיות באופן של "תורתו אומנותו" - שבזמן שהוא עסוק בלימוד התורה, אין אצלו שום דבר אחר מלבד התורה.

באם הטלפון מצלצל - הוא אינו עונה, שכן אצלו, זמן הלימוד הוא כמו שבת. כאשר הטלפון מצלצל בשבת, חלילה וחס שהטלפון יבלבל אותו מהשבת! וכך כאשר הוא לומד תורה, הוא אינו נמצא בעולם החולין, לגביו כעת זה שבת!

ועל דרך זה כשמגיעים אליו בני ביתו, ורוצים לדבר איתו על עניינים טובים ורצויים, הוא צריך לענות להם - אמנם בדרכי נועם ובדרכי שלום, ובכבוד הראוי - אך התוכן של התשובה צריך להיות שעכשיו הוא לומד תורה. וכשהוא יאמר זאת באופן של דברים היוצאים מן הלב, ברצינות ותמימות, ויושר וצדק, זה גם יכנס אל הלב."

משיחת ל"ג בעומר, ה'תשל"ח
שיחות קודש תשל"ח ח"ב, ע' 310.

Key Points:

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- The Midrash says, "The Torah was only given to the eaters of the manna." The optimal conditions for Torah study are when a person has no financial concerns or worries, like those who ate the manna.
- The Rebbe asks: since the obligation to study Torah applies in every situation, whether in poverty or wealth, how then can the Midrash state that the Torah was given only to "to the eaters of the manna"?
- The Rebbe explains: there are two levels of Torah study: ordinary study, which is called studying the Torah of G-d, and a higher level, where a person learns deeply until they become united with the Torah, and then the Torah is called by their name—"his Torah."
- The Midrash speaks about the higher level of learning, where the Torah is called "his Torah." To reach this level, a Jew must live with the mindset of "the eaters of the manna," free from financial or other worries, and devote themselves completely to Torah study.
- How can an ordinary person live with such a mindset? After all, most people need to work for their livelihood! People must train themselves to disconnect completely from the outside world during their study, reaching a mental state similar to "the eaters of the manna." They understand that, no matter how hard they work, they will receive exactly what has been decreed from above, and therefore, they can study Torah with peace of mind and full concentration.

Takeaway:

We must value our study hours above all. Turn off the phone, try to put aside all the worries of life, and immerse ourselves in Torah study with complete concentration.