



# The Community

Boruch Hashem

12550 Biscayne Boulevard · Suite 310 · North Miami, Florida 33181

(305) 892-1234 · Chabadniami@gmail.com

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Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc

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## Rabbi's Article

*Torah for Torah's Sake and its Merits!*

Chapter Six of *Ethics of our Fathers* begins with, "Rabbi Meir would say: *Whoever occupies himself with (Torah-study for) Torah's sake alone, merits many things,*" after which Rabbi Meir lists the *many things*. Hence, a fundamental question: *Who is Rabbi Meir speaking to?!* If it is to the person who is already learning for "Torah's sake," then of what value is telling him of the reward of, "Many Things," and if it is to influence the one who is not yet studying for, "Torah's Sake," influencing him through the rewards doesn't lead to studying only for the, "Torah's sake"?!  
*One might consider answering this in line with Maimonides' teaching (-Laws of Teshuvah 9:1), "We are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill it with joy... [G-d] will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it... Similarly, He will grant us all the good which will reinforce our performance of the Torah..." And so too, is Rabbi Meir doing. However, this will only answer for the part of the list of, "many things," to which this reason can apply. Not so, with the part of the list in which this reason does not apply.*

Additionally, among the "many things" there are those which don't match at all to being a reward for studying Torah for Torah's sake? Such as:

- (a) "Lover of G-d, lover of humanity," when these are direct commandments from the Torah (-Deuteronomy 6:8), "And you shall love G-d your G-d," and (-Leviticus 19:18), "Love your fellow as your self"?
- (b) "Distances him from sin," for this we need a reward for studying Torah for, "Torah's Sake"? For this suffices the feeling of, "Fear of Punishment," and, "Fear of Sin (itself)"?! Even earlier in 2:1 and 3:1, we find *Tractate Ethics* teaching us, "Contemplate three things, and you will (not only not actually sin, but even) not come to the hands of transgression"?!
- (c) "Forgiving of insults," is seemingly not the appropriate enough reward for studying Torah for, "Torah's Sake," when "forgiving," denotes that he feels the insults, and yet forgives, while the truest experience is to not feel the insult in the first place"?!  
*Lastly, some terminology used in the "many things" needs to be understood:*

- (i) "Enclothes him with humility and awe," when the usual language is either, "becomes," or, "brings him to," "humility and awe"?
- (ii) "From him, people enjoy counsel and wisdom," rather than, "request of him," or, "receive from him," "counsel and wisdom"?
- (iii) The closing of, "The Torah uplifts him and makes him greater than all creations," in which we need to understand the difference between the two?

*The Explanation:* Rabbi Meir's precise wording is, "Whoever occupies himself with (Torah-study for) Torah's sake." The definition of, "for her sake," means that one is not searching for anything through his Torah-study, not even *holy pursuits*<sup>1</sup>, but for the Torah itself; understanding Torah; for the study of Torah itself. "Occupies himself," means through hard and strenuous effort and work. Like a businessman (the word used *-oisek-* is also the word used for a businessman *-ba'al esek*), who never stops thinking about his business, day and night, to the point that this is his *life*, it becomes his entire *being* and *essence*.

Now, this leads us to a question: Our sages teach us (-Yevomos 109b), "He who says that I have nothing but Torah (-Study)... *Even Torah(-Study) he does not have,*" but rather, one must also perform acts of kindness, for which one must have contact with those around him, work on himself to care for others, not be egocentric, etc., which all this takes hard work, in quantity and in quality!? Even the good deeds between man and G-d takes time and effort, such as to love G-d and to fear G-d, upon which Maimonides writes (-Laws of Fundamentals of Torah 2:2),

1. We find the meaning to also refer to (-Tanya, Chapter 5, in the name of the *Pri Etz Chaim*), "In order to bind his soul to G-d through understanding Torah," and (-Alter Rebbe's, *Laws of Talmud Torah* 4:3), "For its sake, to learn on the condition to heed and to do." This is because there are many levels to, "For its sake." The, "For its sake," here in *Ethics of our Fathers*, "Matters of Piety," and, "Beyond the Letter of the Law," speaks of a high level: (-R"n, *Nedarim* 81a), "For the preciousness of the Torah," (-Chidushei Chassam Sofer, *ibid*), "For the sake of understanding the Torah itself, and not just to know what to do," and (-Maimonides, *Laws of Teshuvah* 10:5), "For its sake, 'is the service of Love."  
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FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2023 ★ כח אייר תשפ"ג  
[Shabbat Candle Lighting](#): 7:44 PM · [Kabbalat Shabbat](#): 7:30 PM

**This Week...**

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023 ★ כט אייר תשפ"ג  
TORAH READING: [Bamidbar](#) (Number 1:1-4:20) · HAFTORAH: [Samuels I](#) (20:18-42)

[Blessing of new month](#) · [Shacharit](#): 9:30 AM · [Mincha](#): 7:15 PM · [Shabbat Ends](#): N. Miami: 8:40 PM

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2023 ★ א' סיון תשפ"ג

[ROSH CHODESH](#) (SIVAN): Recite *hallel* · Resolve to add this month in Torah-study, prayer, and charity.

"What is the path [to attain] love and fear of Him? When a person contemplates His wondrous and great deeds and creations and appreciates His infinite wisdom that surpasses all comparison, he will immediately love... When he [continues] to reflect on these same matters, he will immediately recoil in awe and fear, appreciating how he is a tiny..." Hence, the question of how can, "Whoever occupies himself with (Torah-study for) Torah's sake," do and succeed in all of this? He will be missing in all of this?! If he would at least be studying Torah for the purpose of knowing how to serve G-d, then the "study" and the "action" wouldn't be antithetical, but rather a, "Learning which brings to action," and service to G-d. However, when his study is, "For her (Torah's) sake," without ever thinking about himself or of his status in Serving G-d, and how much less so involving himself with those around him, hence, what will be of him concerning his Service to G-d?!

This is what Rabbi Meir is coming to deal with, innovating that, "Whoever occupies himself with (Torah-study for) Torah's sake alone, merits many things." "Merits," and not rewarded! The innovation here is, that even though concerning the reward of a mitzvah, the reward is in comparison of the mitzvah --Even according to the opinion that the reward of a mitzvah is not the natural outcome of performing the mitzvah, nevertheless, this opinion too agrees that the mere fact that every mitzvah has its own reward proves that the specific reward is related to the specific mitzvah!. Hence, the reward for, "Torah-study for its sake," should be only of its nature, which, being that (-Tanya, Chapter 23), "The Torah and G-d is one," therefore, the reward would be that of the bond between the soul and G-d. Thus, meaning that the, "many things," listed by Rabbi Meir cannot be of a reward! Hence, Rabbi Meir's innovation is that in addition to the reward, he also merits "many things," which in themselves are lower (or higher) of his, "Torah-study for its sake," through which he is helped with the rest of his, "Service to G-d."

When going through Rabbi Meir's list of, "many things," we find two categories: (i) Things that he merits automatically in their entirety, and (ii) things that he receives only in part, and whilst they become easier for him to attain in their entirety, but nevertheless, this takes work from his side. And this is why we find terminologies within the, "many things," such as, "enclothes him with humility and awe; makes him fit to be righteous, pious, correct and faithful; distances him from sin and brings him close to merit," which allude to these things of merit not being giving automatically in their entirety, but rather, they still demand some work from his part. "Torah-study for its sake," "enclothes him with humility and awe," as a garment externally, while in order for him to make this one with his emotions, that he become humble and G-d-fearing, he must put in work. So too with, "makes him fit to be righteous... distances him from sin... brings him close to merit," of which, for him to actually become righteous, far from sin, and have merits, for this he must work. And this is also why it states only, "Forgiving of insults," for, "Torah-study for its sake," refines the person only enough to forgive, while to not feel insult in the first place takes work.

Being that he receives automatically in its entirety things as, "lover of G-d, lover of humanity, rejoicer of G-d, rejoicer of humanity... from him, people enjoy counsel and wisdom, understanding and power... grants him sovereignty, dominion, and jurisprudence," therefore, most definitely he does not lack in good deeds between him and his fellow man. Even more so, because he, "occupies himself with (Torah-study for) Torah's sake," hence, he merits to a general elevation of intellect, even in worldly matters, so that he can give "counsel" in worldly matters, to the point that, "from him, people enjoy counsel," which has him be a, "rejoicer of humanity."

The Lesson: Even though the one who occupies himself with Torah-study for the sake of Torah has to isolate himself from worldly matters, and therefore he or the other may think that from such an individual one cannot receive advice in worldly matters, nevertheless, Rabbi Meir is teaching us that such a form of Torah-study merits a complete understanding of the world. Simply speaking, if he does not know this specific matter, then he will refrain from answering. However, if he does answer, then we can rest assured that his elevated form of Torah-study grants him the knowledge, even in worldly matters that it be, "from him, people enjoy counsel."

With this we now understand the two terminologies used: "The Torah uplifts him and makes him greater than all creations." For on the one hand, one who occupies himself with Torah-study for the sake of Torah is, "uplifted," and exalted to the point of being separated from all worldliness, while on the other hand, precisely he merits to be, "greater than all creations," in his having a greater and complete understanding of worldliness.

Lastly, this teaching of Rabbi Meir, --being the chapter learnt the Shabbat before Shavout, the holiday of Receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, in order for us to whet our appetite for Torah-study, hence,-- is a teaching for each and everyone of us. Meaning, that albeit the, "one who occupies --continuously-- himself," with Torah-study for its sake, is beyond the capacity of everyone, nevertheless, Tanya (-Chapter 41, 58b) states that each and every person must, at least in the onset of his studying, set the intention of studying Torah, "for her sake". The explanation for this "must set the intention" is, being that G-d's Torah is infinite, therefore, its 'infinity' allows it to spread itself even to the realm of the finite human mind, to be understood there as well, contingent upon the person being humble and self-nullified. This being just as we find by our receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, which was contingent upon our responding first with, "We shall do," obediently (humility; self-negation), and only after this with, "And we shall hear," understand (study). So too, in our Torah-study, we must first set ourselves with self-negation, letting go of any desire for worldly matters or even spiritual benefits, but to study Torah, "for her sake."

This is the reason why this chapter, known as, "Acquisitioning Torah," begins --not with the necessity of studying Torah, but-- with the necessity to humbly and with self-negation set our Torah-study that it be, "for her sake." For only through this can we receive and acquisition G-d's Torah. After which, we can then immerse ourselves in the studying of the Torah.