

CHAPTER 2 - PART 2

by Rabbi David Sykes

Torah study is a commandment imposed on the mind of a person. In order to study Torah, a person has to focus all of the faculties of his soul, to think deeply, sometimes to the point of wearing himself out, and to activate the abilities God has granted him, in order to understand even a small measure of the Light that is hidden in it. It is possible to open a page of Gemara or a Torah portion with Rashi's commentary, and to read it, to recite it, even without understanding it, and there is certainly a reward for this. However, it is hard, even unbearable, to do this; strong faculties of the soul are necessary, or else one will become quickly worn out. The reason for this is simple and easily understood.

The main pleasure and connection of a person to Torah study comes when God gives him the merit to understand, whether a little or a lot, the discussions, the questions, the answers, and the proofs of the Rabbis of the Talmud, the illuminating commentary by Rashi, the words of Tosafos that make one sing with delight, and so on. The same is true of someone who learns the Torah portion and understands its meaning, whether it be the events mentioned or the positive and negative commandments it contains. The more a person understands, and the more active his mind is, the more moving the experience will be, and the greater the pleasure will be that connects him to God's Torah and to the Giver of the Torah, may His Name be blessed.

In contrast to Torah study, the saying of Tehillim is not central to the mind of a person, but to his heart. A person who says Tehillim connects to the Creator, may He be blessed, and to His holy Torah, through the heart. It is the heart that speaks, that reads the Book of Tehillim, and that is involved in the saying of Tehillim.

Both a person who is not a Talmudic scholar and a person who is; both a person who has time and one whose mind is preoccupied, are able to say Tehillim and to give expression to their tumultuous feelings through the simple, sweet, and warm words of this holy book. Many of the Jews who say Tehillim do not even understand the meanings of a lot of the words. This does not diminish their accomplishment. Tehillim is like a prescription for a drug, like the name of a medicine a sick person seeks in a pharmacy. Even though he does not know what it contains, since the doctor mentioned its name, he looks for it and seeks it from the pharmacist.

In just saying the chapters of Tehillim there is hidden a tremendous power to ignite and to arouse, to develop a holy fire, in all people, in the entire nation, in good times and, God forbid, bad. The saying of Tehillim is a conversation from the heart, a direct, unmediated connection with the great good Father in heaven. The saying of Tehillim creates the feeling that "God is near to all who call upon

Him, to all who call upon Him in truth." And the Jew, through the Tehillim, calls to his Father in heaven, reads the words, and his heart tells all of his feelings even if the mind is not a partner to the deep understanding of the exalted songs of King David.
