

TALMUD TORAH 1:10

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

10: Until what point is a person obligated to study Torah? Until the day of his death, as it says: *ufen yasuru milvavkha kol y'mey hayyekha* - (lest these words depart from your heart all the days of your life - Devarim [Devarim] 4:9). And as long as he is not involved in study, he forgets.

Q1: Again, why the need for this Halakha: If you are obligated to establish times during the day and at night, clearly this does not end until you are dead...R does not mention a similar Halakha regarding, for example, the reading of Shema. It seems obvious that any obligation applies throughout lifetime, unless there is a Halakhic exemption (e.g. certain sicknesses for Tefillin; a bridegroom for Shema etc.)

YE: Until this point, R has addressed TT as a vehicle for knowledge; learning and teaching children (where specific verses, quantities are mentioned) and the obligation for everyone to participate in this QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE. R seems to be introducing a new component of TT - as a method of maintaining awareness of Torah - awareness of the theological/historical attitudes and of the halakhic/ethical mores. (see more below) He is not yet dealing with what we refer to as *Torah lishma* - the value of TT for its own inherent worth.

Q2: In the same vein, why does R need to quote a verse - and this particular one? The verse from Yehoshua would have suffice, would it not have? - Q3: Why the add-on - that as long as you are not learning, you forget? What is R adding here?

YE: (Following from A to Q1 above,) the Torah warns us never to forget the stand at Sinai, the exodus, or (by extension) any of the other historical/metahistorical events which shape the tenets of our faith; since, as R points out, forgetting is something that automatically sets in as long as one is not involved in learning about it, discussing it or thinking about it, this verse obligates the "not-to-forget" mode of TT. To summarize; so far, there are two different components of study: 1) to learn in order to know how to live as a Jew and 2) to continue learning in order to not forget these lessons. This does take us beyond the operative learning of how to put on Tefillin, how to return lost items etc. to the more attitudinal approaches and consequences of "being involved" in learning Torah.

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