

CHAPTER 2: TORAH STUDY □ PARAGRAPH 6

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

There are two frames of mind we'd have to enter into to reap the full benefit of Torah-study. We'd first need to revere what we're learning, and then we'd have to be committed to bettering ourselves all along (which we'll discuss more next time).

After all, if I don't fully realize that I'm reading G-d's wishes for me said outright and in depth (which Torah study is at bottom on an individual level), and if I'm not so *dumbfounded* by that fact as to be willing to alter my entire being in the process, then I'd almost be better off not studying Torah at all!

The best way to assume those frames of mind we're told is to recall something not usually thought about when Torah is studied, which is the direct input G-d's will and presence has upon what we're delving into. (Along those lines it's reported that a certain exalted soul would always say the following when he'd study practical halacha, "It turns out that G-d wants me to do thus- and-such right now", quite literally taking G-d's role in Torah into consideration). After all, G-d's will informs the entire Torah each and every moment (much the way our will to succeed at an important task, for example, would clearly inform every move we make in the course of it).

We're likewise to recall that G-d has connected the sublime transcendent force that lies behind the Torah to it, as we said (see 4:2:2), thus giving it that much more potency and import. For without all that in mind Torah- study would be no different from any secular academic inquiry, when it's actually far more transcendent than that and has the unique ability to rectify one's entire being -- as well as the world -- as nothing else can.

So we'd need to be acutely aware of that when we study Torah, and to approach it with awe and deference. It would do well for us to say something like the following when we start to study Torah, "I hereby set out to approach G-d Almighty with my studies now and to be a receptacle of His great Light!"; and it would be important to be suddenly struck by our own smallness in G-d's sight just then, yet humbly thrilled by the prospect of the vistas about to be set before us. It goes without saying that we'd also need to do all we could to avoid being frivolous and to not show any sort of disrespect for what's said or the One who's saying it.

Only Torah-study done in such a spirit and frame of mind is capable of being nourished by the sublime transcendent force we cited above, of being infused by G-d's Presence, and of helping to

rectify all of creation. Any other sort would simply be an instance of reading notes someone left behind and ruminating about it; nothing more. In fact if you studied Torah in *that* fashion you'd actually be rudely and audaciously encroaching upon holy ground and chatting frivolously and far too familiarly with the Groundskeeper, which is unforgivable.

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