

CHAPTER 2: TORAH STUDY □ PARAGRAPH 8

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

Our people have had quite a few sublime souls who worked at purifying and sanctifying themselves before studying Torah. As we said, they'd always concentrate on G-d's presence in their midst, they'd set out to rectify themselves and everyone else by their efforts, they'd study in awe and in deference while fully aware of the Heavenly gates opening before their eyes one after the other, they'd have repented before approaching the holy books for anything untoward they might have done and then afterwards again for anything they might have taken wrong, and they'd be keenly aware of their role as a conduit of G-d's will and wishes.

And each one of them was thus able to transmit a degree of Divine effulgence downward commensurate to their efforts. In many instances, in fact, their success was quite open and above board. We're taught that some notable earlier sages (and far more so than the later sages) were even able to effect undeniable changes in their immediate environment. When Yonatan ben Uziel studied Torah, for example, any birds flying overhead would suddenly catch fire, the Divine Presence was so intensely manifest. And many other sages were likewise able to manifest supernatural phenomena.

Part of our modern cynicism about Torah and our precious heritage, it seems, comes from the fact that those sorts of things don't happen anymore (at least manifestly), since so few of us study Torah in such outright wonderment, veneration, and purity. Would that we ourselves would be moved from now on to strive for that!

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