

## 1. Ethics of the Fathers, Ch. 6, no. 4

This is the way of Torah: bread with salt shall you eat; water in small measure shall you drink; upon the earth shall you sleep; a life of discomfort shall you live; and in the Torah shall you toil. If you do so, 'happy are you, and it is good for you!' (Psalm 128:2): 'happy are you' in this world, 'and it is good for you' for the world to come.

## 2. Rashi's commentary to the above passage: (Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, N. France, 1040 – 1105)

Not to the wealthy man does he say that one should subsist in a life of discomfort in order to study Torah. Rather, this is what is being said: even if a person has nothing but bread and salt, etc., and he has neither mattress nor cushion upon which to sleep, but only the earth, he should not hold back from occupying himself in [Torah]. For in the end he will study [Torah] in a state of wealth.

## 3. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's commentary to the above passage: (Germany, 1808 – 1888)

Verse 3 told of the honor and the happiness which can be won through constant diligent toil in the Torah. This verse is added by way of amendment, lest you should come to believe that the kind of honor and happiness that can be gained upon the path of Torah must always be visible and tangible. The true power inherent in the Torah lies in the very fact that it can teach its true disciples readily and serenely to forego all outward honor and prosperity and that it permits them to find and enjoy in day-to-day living such happiness and bliss which, in the midst of privation and renunciation, can turn life on earth into a wellspring of the purest joy and imbue them with confidence in the future bliss of the world to come.

4. *Tiferet Yisrael* commentary: (Rabbi Israel Lipschitz, Germany – Poland, 1782 – 1860)

'This is the way of Torah' – meaning to say that this is the manner of the beginning of study: although in the end he will inherit all the good things of the world, nevertheless he will not merit those good things if he begins his study from a state of indulgence and laziness. ... 'a life of discomfort shall you live' – meaning to say with psychological discomfort, such as anger, sorrow, and worries' ... 'and in the Torah shall you toil. If you do so' – if, despite all this, you will be attached to the Torah, [then] "'happy are you' in this world, 'and it is good for you' for the world to come" – for then you are that man about whom we spoke above, who, in the end, is crowned with all earthly and heavenly good things.

5. *Derekh Hayyim* commentary: (Maharal, Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague, early 16<sup>th</sup> c. - 1609)

Rashi said: 'Not to the wealthy man does he say that one should subsist in a life of discomfort in order to study Torah. Rather, this is what is being said: even if a person has nothing but bread and salt, etc.' However, the wording 'this is the way of Torah' requires investigation; for it implies: This is its way, and this is appropriate. Rather, it appears that it intends to convey: this is the way of Torah, being identical to what the Sages stated (BT Sabbath 83b), Reish Laqish stated, 'The Torah remains lasting only in one who dies over it, as is written: This is the Torah, when a person dies in a tent (Numbers 19:14).'

The explanation of this is that the Torah is intellectual, whereas the person possesses a material body. There is no doubt that intellect and the body are antithetical, opposed to one another. Therefore, Torah cannot remain lasting in a material body – for how could Torah, which is intellectual, remain lasting in a material body, since they are antithetical, it being the case that opposites cannot remain lasting together? Therefore he said that the Torah remains lasting only in one who dies over the Torah, for when one has himself die over the Torah, to the point that, on account of the Torah, he entirely pushes the body away, we find that his fundament is intellect, not the body. Then the Torah remains lasting, for the material body does not at all get in the way of the

Torah, when one pushes away the material body, as if it does not exist. This is the meaning of the verse, 'This is the Torah, when a person dies in a tent', for a person (Hebrew: Adam), who is made of earth (Hebrew: *adama*), needs to push aside the body, to the point that it is fit to return to the earth. Then the Torah remains lasting – for there is no opposition to the Torah. On this account it states here, 'this is the way of Torah', for this is fitting for the Torah, inasmuch as it is an intellectual Torah, that one is not drawn whatsoever after pleasures, which are the desires of the body. Then the Torah remains lasting.

Nevertheless, this is speaking only of one who is capable and able to bear it, and is not prevented by feebleness of strength. But it makes no difference if he possesses great wealth ...

6. *Midrash Samuel* commentary: (Rabbi Samuel di Uzeda, Safed, c. 1540 – c. 1605)

It is possible that fundamentally this warning applies even to one who is wealthy, who has the means to indulge in worldly pleasures: he should not indulge in them. For, in a state of indulgence and daintiness, he will not be able to study as he should. Secondly, if he habituates himself to them, he will have to desist from study, in order to earn money for his abundant expenses. Therefore he gives a general warning, to rich and poor alike. ... By nature, a person is inclined towards the sensibles (= that which is experienced by means of the five senses) and is drawn after them, but not after the Torah. Indeed, all flee from it – until its passion enters their hearts. Therefore he warns one who comes to study that he must expel all those pleasures and indulgences that we have in common with animals, distancing them in the utmost. Thus will Torah find a wide open housing, without being vexed by its rival, which would say, 'one came to visit, and has begun to pass judgment' (Genesis 19:9). Once the intellectual soul becomes as firmly rooted in the house as is the animal soul, then one can permit both of them to remain, they will not vex one another, and one can return to the middle path, which the Sages declared that one should choose. ... Furthermore, the Sages stated, "This is the Torah, when a person dies in a tent (Numbers 19:14)': the Torah remains lasting only in one who dies over it'. The same holds true for anything that its possessor earned through toil: he will preserve it in the best way possible. ...

7. *Liqqute Torah, Bakaq, 68b / Torah Or, Vayaqhel 89*: (Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyadi, 1745 - 1813) 'Dust' refers to 'let my soul be as dust in relation to everyone' (liturgy), by means of which: 'open my heart to Your Torah' (ibid.) ... as the Rabbis say: 'This is the way of Torah ... on the earth shall you sleep'. ...

... This drawing down from the level of divine transcendence so that there becomes a level of divine external relation (lit. 'majesty'), divine immanence (= engagement on our terms) occurs by means of the people of Israel. ... This ability in the soul – that through it divine transcendence is drawn down so that there becomes a level of divine external relation – occurs by means of ... one's self-transformation. However, it is impossible to attain 'self-transformation' without first prefacing the level of 'inner struggle', which is the level of self-nullification, 'nullify your will' (Ethics of the Fathers, ch. 2). Indeed, it is known that it is impossible to bring one entity into existence from another entity, as, for example, the seed that is planted in the earth: first it rots, entering a state of 'non-entity'; and then it can grow, even attaining an abundance that is in excess (of what was there before), by means of the power for growth that is in the earth. ... Likewise, it is impossible that from a love for that which is [misdirected] one should come to a love for G-d, unless one first undergoes self-nullification. ... This is why they were commanded to eat unleavened bread, ... the bread of affliction, prior to receiving the Torah, as is stated 'let my soul be as dust in relation to everyone' (liturgy), and afterwards 'open my heart to Your Torah' (ibid.): for by means of 'my soul being as dust' there can be a subsequent self-transformation, and there can be a 'face to face' (encounter with G-d, = the receiving of the Torah).

## 8. Noam Elimelech on Numbers ch. 6 (the Nazirite): (Rabbi Elimelech of Leżajsk, 1717 – 1786)

When a person wishes to return from his bad way and his perverse ways, and he wishes to repent and to afflict himself with self-mortifications and fasts, this requires wisdom and intellect, to act intelligently with his self-mortifications. \* This is the meaning of, 'A man or a woman who does a wondrous thing, making a vow ...' (Numbers 6:2). The meaning of 'wondrous' is that it refers to the level of 'wisdom'. That is to say that one must proceed with great wisdom when he wishes to make a vow to carry out any self-mortification. \* '... as a Nazirite, to be a Nazirite for G-d' (ibid.). The explanation of 'Nazirite' is that it is a term indicating *nezer*, a diadem and crown. The explanation is that he wishes to make 'a crown (*nezer*) for G-d; from wine and strong drink shall he make a crown (*yazzir*) ...' (ibid. verses 2 & 3). This means that he shall see to it that even from the drinking of wine he should make a crown for G-d; that is: he should do it with great sanctity. '... but wine-turned-vinegar and strong drink-turned-vinegar he shall not drink' (ibid. verse 3). This means that if his drinking is not done in sanctity, then this drinking is like strong, hard vinegar, and its end will be bad. He should not engage in this sort of drinking. \* ...

## 9. Liqqute Torah, Shemini, Two types of saints (excerpts): (Rabbi Shneur Zalman [see no. 7])

It is explained in the Lurianic writings that by means of the Torah and the Commandments a union of divine emotions and speech is effected [this is a lower, outer-directed union]; but in order to draw forth a union of divine Wisdom and Understanding, which is a drawing forth of a new light from the blessed Infinite One, self-sacrifice is required. This is the theme of the recitation of the Shema: to give one's self away in [reciting] 'one'. This is accomplished by means of spiritual worship, of the 'leviathan' type, the joining of the self to 'nothingness' ... similar to what is stated in the *Shulhan Arukh Orakh Hayyim* (98:1), that becoming abstracted from physicality is close to the level of prophecy. ... However, since this world is physical, there is a need for saintly people whose mode of worship is in the physical, to fulfil the action-oriented Commandments, as the Rabbis state: there is a single pillar, called 'saint', upon which the world stands. ... Indeed, both are necessary. For the progression of saintly people of the [spiritual] (lit.: 'fish-of-the-sea') type is very wondrous and lofty ..., far surpassing the worship of saints in the physical, experiencing [holiday] joy by means of [eating] meat, etc., all of which lower in level. This is not the case with the [spiritual] type ..., whose worship is devoid of excitement and heating up of the blood, which is present in the worship of the physically-oriented saints: joy via meat, joy via wine, being enflamed and excited. On the contrary, [the spiritual type worships] with cool blood and tranquillity, with a single swoop ascending to the greatest heights. The 'how' and 'what' of this cannot be described verbally. ... Now, the worship of the [physical] sort of saint, 'to rejoice on your festival', for which 'rejoicing cannot take place without meat', etc., is not to be taken at face value – that he would eat the meat of a bull to fill his stomach, G-d forbid, and rejoice in this. Rather, it is an elevation, similar to Temple sacrifices of rejoicing that came from physical meat, which is verily a 'pleasing odour to the L-rd' ... as is stated, 'may they rejoice *in Thee*'. ... Nevertheless, since this comes from a finite, physical item, it is small in comparison to the wondrous progression of the [spiritual] saints.

## 10. Liqqute Torah, Matot, 82b: Celibacy and the level of Moses: (Rabbi Shneur Zalman [see above])

The inner will of the heart draws down that which is beyond the worlds. ... That was the level of the prophecy of Moses, who was on the level of the Upper Sanctity, beyond the level of the worlds. This is why the Rabbis stated that he became celibate, which was not the case with other prophets, as elaborated upon in Zohar I, 152b, and in *Miqdash Melekh* on the passage.