

The Transformative Power of Limud Hatorah

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

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In Tehillim (18:4) the Pasuk states, "I will call out praises of Hashem, and from my enemies I will be saved." The Seforno comments, "I will proclaim His greatness to people, and with this I will be saved from my enemies. Like our sages say (Sanhedrin 49a), if not for Dovid learning Torah, Yoav would not have succeeded in war."

The Gemara in Sanhedrin says, "Rebbi Abba Bar Kahana says, if not for Dovid, Yoav would not have succeeded in war, and if not for Yoav, Dovid would not have been engaged in Torah. As it is written, 'and Dovid did justice and charity to the whole nation'. The Maharsha asks, the Gemara's support from this Pasuk does not seem to line up with what the Gemara says. The Pasuk is referring to Dovid doing משפט וצדקה, and the Gemara is referring to Dovid learning Torah. How do these two points intersect? The Maharsha answers that the Gemara derived this from the words 'the whole nation'. Someone who did not learn the laws with great clarity cannot do משפט וצדקה for everyone without making a mistake. However, Dovid said that he learned Torah and learned the laws with great depth, and with that he was able to do משפט וצדקה to the whole nation."

What comes out from here is the following. Really, it was the Zechus of Torah that allowed Yoav to be successful in war. However, it was only because that Limud HaTorah led to משפט וצדקה for everyone. In other words, in order for the Torah to generate the Zechus necessary to win the war, the Torah needs to be learned with a depth and clarity that will lead to משפט וצדקה for everyone.

Now that we have clarity in the Gemara, we can return to the Seforno for further analysis. The Seforno equates praising Hashem and Limud Hatorah. How do these two ideas express the same concept? It must be that since the Torah leads to משפט וצדקה for everyone, this is the ultimate praise of Hashem. When people see how transformative the Torah is and what it accomplishes, that is a reflection of the Torah's greatness.

This idea can help us combat the cheapening of Torah that is currently going on in Eretz Yisrael. Currently, the Lomdei Torah are being drafted in the army, and the Gedolim in Eretz Yisrael are being ignored. Perhaps if we were able to articulate this concept that the Torah leads to משפט וצדקה for everyone, and if people were able to see that someone who learns Torah is more refined, moral, kind, and honest, their value for Torah would be increased. Accomplishing this is the ultimate praise of Hashem. In these trying times we need to review this idea both for the purposes of conveying it to others as well as for ourselves.

Sometimes we see the power of Torah through the lofty behavior of a Ben Torah, however sometimes we can also see the power of Torah when he acts in a way unbecoming of a Ben Torah. Once there were two Chasidim who were involved in an intense fight. One of them got so heated to the point where he cut off the beard of the other one. This story went viral and one individual was afraid to go to work as he could not face his gentile co-workers. He mustered up his strength to go, and was shocked to find his co-worker saying, "What? All he did was cut off his beard? If it was me I would have killed him." Clearly, even when we fall and fight, the extent with which we fall is couched by the Torah.