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## פרשת בהעלותך

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**פרק יא פסוק כח**

וַיַּעַן יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן-נֹון מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה מִבְּחָרָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי מֹשֶׁה כְּלָאִם:

**חז"ל**

שְׂמוּשׁ תּוֹרָה יָתֵר מִלְּמֻדָּה, תְּלִמִּידוֹ לְשׁל מֹשֶׁה אֵין כְּתִיב כְּאֵן אֶלָּא מִשְׁרַת מֹשֶׁה (פרק צדקות).

**מושג**

שְׂמוּשׁ תּוֹרָה יָתֵר מִלְּמֻדָּה.

### **Translation:**

Serving Torah (scholars) is greater than learning Torah.

### **Explanation:**

Yehoshua would be the man entrusted with carrying on the מסורה after the death of Moshe. As would be the case with all consequent generations of students, the key to authentic transmission of the Sinai law would be a close and personal relationship with the teachers of the previous generation. This relationship would be based on constant and keen observation of the teachers' every word and every act, and could be achieved only through serving the sages. This initial stage of learning would set the foundation upon which all future Torah scholarship would be built, and is thus considered more important than the scholarship itself<sup>1</sup>.

### **Looking in the Pasuk:**

The Musag is based on the fact that when Yehoshua's relationship to Moshe is mentioned in the Torah, it is only his service to Moshe which is used to describe him<sup>2</sup>.

### **Musag Learning Outcomes:**

Know: Serving Torah scholars is considered greater than learning Torah, for only through close and constant observation of the words and acts of scholars can true knowledge be transmitted and authentic understanding be achieved.

Understand: Transmitting the Mesorah, the laws and values given to Moshe on Har Sinai, cannot be achieved by logic or study alone. It requires an initial period of serving Torah scholars, not simply for the value of service, but because that service allows the student to learn from the teachers how a true Torah life is led.

Think: The descriptions of personalities used by the Torah are not to be taken lightly. These adjectives hold within them significant lessons which help us understand the traits that are valued by the Torah.

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1 See Note #1

2 See Note #2

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## NOTES

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1. Yehoshua is described to us here as being a servant of Moshe. The Midrash wonders why he is not described as the student of Moshe. The answer given is that serving Torah scholars is deemed greater than actually learning Torah. This lesson is taught in the Gemoroh (ברכות ז:) as well, gleaned the same lesson from a Pasuk in Novi:

ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יוחי: גדולה שמושה של תורה יותר מלמודה, שנאמר: (מלכים ב ג:יא) פה אלישע בן שפט אשר יצק מים על ידי אליהו - למד לא נאמר אלא יצק.

There is an additional Midrash which teaches that being Moshe's servant was the reason Yehoshua was chosen to lead the people into ארץ ישראל:

יהושע בן-נון העמד לפניך הוא יבא שמה אתו סגק פיהו ונחלנה את-ישראל: (דברים א:לח) יהושע בן נון העומד לפניך. גרם לו לבוא שמה, לפי שהיה עומד לפניך. מיכן אמרו גדולה שימושה יותר מלימודה (פסיקתא זוטרתא)

Tosafos in (יז) uses our Musag to explain a difficult חז"ל, and by doing so adds further significance to the message our Musag teaches. The Gemoroh there taught that מבטלין תלמוד תורה, one is required to stop their Torah studies to assist in the burial of the dead or to welcome a bride. This, asks Tosafos, seems to contradict a story in (פ"ד) in which מסכת שמחות relates the following:

תחלת תשמישי לפני חכמים, פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ומצאתי מת מצוה ונטפתי בו ד' מילין עד שהבאתיו לבית הקברות וקברתיו, וכשבאתי והרציתי דברי לפני ר"א ור' יהושע אמרו לי על כל פסיעה ופסיעה כאילו שפכת דם נקי!

R' Akiva, while beginning his service before the Sages, was called to task for leaving his learning and accompanying a מת. Why was he severely criticized for doing exactly what the Gemoroh above instructs him to do? Tosafos answers in the name of רב יהודה מקורביל that our Gemoroh only required one who is *leaning* Torah to interrupt their learning to accompany a מת. However, Rabbi Akiva, as he states in the story, was *servicing* the sages, and this may not be interrupted for any reason.

It is indeed difficult to understand why serving Torah scholars should be considered greater than learning Torah itself. Why should we require learning Torah to be interrupted in the above cases, and yet forbid one who is serving the sages? And, finally, the wording of our Musag needs explanation, for the Musag states the importance of שימושה של תורה. Why did it not say שימושה של חכמים, after all one is serving the חכמים not the Torah?

The (רב מנשה קליין זצ"ל) explains the importance behind שימושה של תורה by explaining a curious debate found in (מסכת כתובות קג):

ר' חייא עסוק במצות הוה, ורבי סבר: לא אפגריה. והיינו דכי הווי מנצור ר' חנינא ור' חייא, א"ל ר' חנינא לר' חייא: בהדי דידי מנצת? דאם חס ושלום נשתכחה תורה מישראל, מהדרנא ליה מפלפולי א"ל ר' חייא: אנה עבדי דלא משתכחה תורה מישראל, דאיתנינא כיתנא ושדיינא, ומגדלנא נישבי וציינא טביא, ומאכילנא בישרא ליתמי, ואריכנא מגילתא ממשכי דטביא, וסליקנא למתא דלית בה מקרי דרדקי, וכתבנא חמשי חומשי לחמשי ינוקי, ומתנינא שיתא סידרי לשיתא ינוקי, לכל חד וחד אמרי ליה אתני סידרך לחברך. והיינו דאמר רבי: כמה גדולים מעשה חייא. א"ל ר"ש ב"ר: אפילו ממך? א"ל: אין

R' Chiya was busy with Mitzvos and Rabbi did not want to bother him. And this is the argument between R' Chanina and R' Chiya. For R' Chanina said to R' Chiya, "You are arguing with me? If, G-d forbid, the Torah would be forgotten from Israel I could bring it back with my powers of logic." To which R' Chiya countered, "I am ensuring that Torah will not be forgotten! For I planted flax, from which I made nets to trap deer. I gave the meat to orphans and from the hides I made parchment. I then went to a city with no teachers and wrote the five books of Torah for five children, and taught the six orders of Mishna to six children, and instructed each of the children to teach their section to the others". And, this is why Rabbi said, "How great are the acts of Chiya!" Rabbi Shimon said to Rabbi, "Even greater than you?" To which Rabbi answered, "Yes".

The משנה הלכות explains that the argument between R' Chanina and R' Chiya was due to the fact that the Rabbi's had criticized R' Chiya for leaving the בית מדרש and going out to plant flax etc. R' Chanina argued that R' Chiya did not have to fear Torah being forgotten, for through logic alone he could return any lost parts of the Torah. R' Chiya countered that this is not true. For there are parts of Torah that cannot be deduced or inferred, but must be taught directly from teacher to student. Teaching Torah is not simply teaching a way to think but, he claimed, also teaching and

experiencing certain things. Not all Torah can be learned through the debates that take place in the study hall, much must be learned through the direct teaching of the Torah sages. This is known as the Mesorah, the laws given at Har Sinai that govern a Jew's every action, transmitted from generation to generation, and not given to logical inference.

The most effective way to receive this Mesorah is by remaining in close and constant proximity to תלמידי חכמים, hearing their every word and watching their every act. Thus the purpose of serving תלמידי חכמים is not for the חסד involved, but rather for the תלמוד תורה that is gained. Only after one has mastered the basic truths of the Mesorah, through this close and constant observation, can one then apply their intellectual powers to deepen their understanding of Torah and apply their understanding to new situations. This is שימוש חכמים which is, in effect, שימוש תורה. We can now appreciate the Midrash<sup>3</sup> which teaches: קרא ושנה ולא שימש עדיין תלמידי חכמים דומה למי שנעלמו ממנו סתרי תורה, for there are many 'hidden' parts of Torah which would elude one who learns but does not serve תלמידי חכמים.

Rabbi Akiva is thus called to task, because at this early stage of his Torah education<sup>4</sup>, when the very foundation from which he would build all his future learning was being set, nothing could interrupt his service based learning. Any mistake or omission at this stage would have severe consequences in the future, much in the same way a crack in the foundation of a building will endanger any structure built upon it.

We now understand why Yehoshua was chosen precisely because of his status as משרת משה, and why Yehoshua is described only with this title. Yehoshua would be the one to carry over the מסורה from Moshe to all future generations, as the Mishnah in Avos teaches: משה קבל תורה מסיני ומסורה ליהושע ויהושע לזקנים וכו'. The Torah, by focusing on this attribute of Yehoshua, is teaching here that the prerequisite for this task is משרת, to serve. Only through his constant service of Moshe could he fully glean the totality of Torah which Moshe possessed, and thus ensure its complete transmission to future generations.

2. While Yehoshua is never called משה תלמיד, he is called משרת משה in two other places (other than the one time he is called עומד לפניך, as referenced in the Midrash in the note above). The two other Pesukim are found in ספר שמות:

כד: יג וַיִּקַּם מֹשֶׁה וַיְהוֹשֻׁעַ מִשְׁרָתוֹ וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הַר הָאֱלֹהִים:  
לג: יא וַדַּבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה פָּנִים אֶל־פָּנִים כַּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר אִישׁ אֶל־רֵעֵהוּ וְשָׁב אֶל־הַמַּחֲנֶה וּמִשְׁרָתוֹ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן־נֹון נָעַר לֹא יָמִישׁ מִתּוֹךְ הָאֹהֶל:

Both the above Pesukim seem to reinforce the idea, stated in the note above, that the service was unique in that it allowed for a constant and uninterrupted access to Moshe. The second Pasuk mentions this explicitly: לא ימיש מתוך האהל. The first Pasuk also refers to Yehoshua not leaving Moshe even for a moment as Rashi explains:

ויקם משה ויהושע משרתו: לא ידעתי מה טיבו של יהושע פאן, ואומר אני שהיה התלמיד מלנה לרב עד מקום הגבלת תחומי ההר, שאינו רשאי לילך משם והלאה... ויהושע נטה שם אהלו ונתעכב שם כל ארבעים יום.

Yehoshua, according to Rashi, not only accompanies Moshe to the mountain, but remains there for 40 days in order to be on-site the moment Moshe returns. Since upon Moshe's return from Har Sinai the era of Mesorah would begin, it was critical for Yehoshua to not miss a second of service.

3. Questions for further thought:

- When Yehoshua is mentioned by the war with Amalek or by the Meraglim the title משרת does not appear. Why do you think this is so?
- What types of laws do you think require this close Rebbe-Talmid relationship?

3 ויקרא רבה (וילנא) פרשת ויקרא פרשה ג סימן ז

4 As the story with Rabbi Akiva states that he was at לפני חכמים the beginning stages of his Torah career. Interestingly, in our Pasuk in which Yehoshua is called משרת משה the Torah tells us that Yehoshua was מבחריו, one of his young men. And also in another Pasuk in which he is called a משרת (see next note) it is also stressed that this was during his youth יהושע בן־נון נער. All the above seem to confirm our contention that this service took place during the early stages of their learning, as the foundation for all future Torah scholarship.