

Shoftim 2017

1.

Diversion of the mind

“It shall be that when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself two copies of this Torah in a book etc. It shall be with him, and he shall read from it all the days of his life, so that he will learn to fear Hashem, his God, to observe all the words of this Torah and these decrees, to perform them, so that his heart does not become haughty over his brethren and not turn from the commandment right or left, so that he will prolong years over his kingdom, he and his sons amid Israel.” (17, 18-20)

"והיה כשבתו על כסא ממלכתו וכתב לו את משנה התורה הזאת על ספר מלפני הכהנים הלויים. והיתה עמו וקרא בו כל ימי חייו למען ילמד ליראה את יקוק אלהיו לשמר את כל דברי התורה הזאת ואת החקים האלה לעשתם לבלתי רום לבבו מאחיו ולבלתי סור מן המצוה ימין ושמאול למען יאריך ימים על ממלכתו הוא ובניו בקרב ישראל."

One who learns Torah will be able to find instruction and the proper way to conduct himself in all areas of his life. The Chasam Sofer explains that every step that one takes is based on Torah. Meaning, the Torah includes all aspects of our lives. It is so important for the king to learn Torah in order that he will be able to properly know how to lead his kingdom. The Daas Chachma U'Mussar (1, 51) explains that we will find proper guidance in all areas of our life by learning Torah. The pasuk says (Mishlay (3, 18)) "it is a tree of life for those that hold onto it." (עץ חיים) "Every tree has roots, a trunk, branches and leaves. Each branch has smaller branches that grow from the original branch. There are then fruits that are produced. Each fruit has seeds which are able to produce a full tree. The same applies to the tree of Torah. There are many different mitzvos. Some are more important/bigger than others. Even though regular leaves wither and detach over time, nevertheless the leaves on the tree of Torah differ in this regard in that they never detach as stated in the pasuk (Tehilim 1) "ועלה לא יבול". The king will be in a much better state of mind to make proper decisions after learning Torah. Even if the Torah doesn't specify the exact case that the king is dealing with. Nevertheless, he will be in a position to make a better choice.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (21b) has a hava amena (entertains the possibility) that there would be a requirement for the king to bring the sefer Torah into the restroom with him when he needs to relieve himself. The Meselas Yesharim (21) derives from this Gemara the problem and concept of diversion of the mind (הסח הדעת). The Torah obligates kings to learn from the Torah throughout their entire lives, to not divert their minds from the Torah. They will then learn to fear Hashem. This is why the Gemara even considered requiring the king to bring his Torah with him when he enters into a restroom. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (Sichos mussar mamer 92) explains that this halacha teaches us that everyone needs to be careful not to divert their minds from the Torah. The Torah just uses the king as an example. The reason why the king is the example is because the king who is so busy needs to be especially careful not to divert his mind from the Torah. The Gemara in Eruvin (54b) relates that Rabbi Prida would consistently teach a talmid who had difficulty understanding, four hundred times. Once Rabbi Prida actually taught him eight hundred times, because his student diverted his mind from the subject that was taught.

Rabbi Prida received great reward for this as specified in the Gemara. The danger of diversion of the mind is that it destroys what one previously learnt. The Gemara in Pesachim (66b) relates that any wise person who becomes haughty or angry will have his wisdom removed from him. Similarly, if he is a prophet his prophecy will be removed from him. What is the explanation of this? Anger or haughtiness interrupts the Torah; it is thus considered a diversion from the Torah.