

# Learning Living Torah, Living Torah Work

by Ariel Bar Tzadok

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***“Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi would say: Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the land, for the toil of them both causes sin to be forgotten. Ultimately, all Torah study that is not accompanied with work is destined to cease and to cause sin.” Avot 2:2***

*“Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell in unity,”* (Psalm 133:1). The brothers referenced here can be associated with the individual mind and heart of every human being. Thus we can render this Psalm as saying, behold how good it is when one's mind and one's heart are in union with one another, causing one no inner conflict.

In order for one to be a guide to another, one must first know the path within oneself. Until one knows where the one is going, how can one show another the proper direction?

One cannot know where one is going, unless first one knows where one is at the moment. For every path begins in the here and the now. Thus to know the here and the now is the beginning of every path.

True, it is helpful to also know where one has been. But sometimes where one has been was not a nice place. Indeed, one must walk away from such bad places, but unless one knows where one is going, there is no guarantee that one will not stumble again into another bad place, making matters worse only worse.

Knowing the mistakes of the past, enables us to avoid the same mistakes in the future. Thus to know where one has been is helpful for one to appreciate where one is at. And, to know where one is at is essential to taking the next step along the road of destiny that leads us to where we need be, and where we should be.

We are, after all, being guided along the path. If only we paid attention to the voice of guidance that speaks within us. This is why when one's mind and heart are one, the inner voice comes through into the mind and feelings with great clarity. It is, however, when one is confused and conflicted within that the inner voices becomes muffled in an internal clatter of unnecessary noise.

When one is clear inside, the inner voice is heard. This voice is none other than the voice of Torah, and it speaks to us from everything, everywhere and always. All we need to do is listen. Listening to the voice of Torah as it echoes throughout all creation, this is the study of Torah, this is the work of the Torah.

It is written, *“six days shall you work and perform all your creative activity”* (Exodus 20:9). Torah is the work we do. The work we do is to hear the inner voice echo throughout creation, and then to follow the inner voice as it reveals itself within and throughout creation. When we do this we interact with creation and thus unleash the concealed Torah potential in everything that we touch and influence. This is the work that we are commanded to do.

When we understand that this natural absorption and embrace of Torah is its proper form of study, then we understand the sentiments expressed by Rabban Gamliel as to why Torah study is such a proper match for “the way of the land” (derekh erez). For when Torah and the land are united, this is the external expression of the inner union of mind and heart. One reflects the other, the one echoes the other. The two are essentially one.

It is our human, Divinely ordained purpose in life to work the soil which gives us our life. We are all bound to the Earth in that we are physical creatures. Our bodies are made of and require interaction with all the elemental natural elements, fire, water, air and earth. Without these, our souls would have no form to inhabit, and thus be rendered incapable of fulfilling our Divinely ordained tasks in coming to Earth.

Torah is studied and learned by observing all things in creation. In order to expand and enrich our Torah study we must therefore be involved with the world around us. We must be occupied in its maintenance. We must be occupied with the upkeep of human society. We must create, we must act, we must work, we must do what needs to be done. And the one who does more is praiseworthy!

Work is called Derekh Eretz, the way of the land, for true work is that which supports and nourishes the Earth. When one works, performing manual labors, one is thus closest to Heaven, the partner of the Earth. When one lives Torah and expresses that life with the works of one's hands, one becomes balanced and aligns Heaven and Earth within one's self. In this state of harmony, the temptations to knowing err becomes a thing of the past. Granted, one will still make errors, but they will be errors of inexperience, rather than errors of intent.

When one naturally embraces Torah, one naturally embraces work. The two are as inseparable as are mind and heart, and Heaven and Earth. Together, they create the balance and harmony that is the natural birthright of every human being. One without the other, however, creates terrible imbalances. When imbalances increase, both Heaven and Earth suffer.

The imbalanced individual has neither peace of mind, nor peace of heart. In such a sad state, intentional errors become commonplace, and one's life becomes a living hell. The earth that was meant to be a garden, in the imbalanced soul, is transformed into a jungle. Full of wild beasts, the heart and mind of the imbalanced soul knows no peace. How sorry a state this is.

It is said, know Torah, know peace, no Torah, no peace. Yet, Torah can never be complete anymore than the soul can be complete unless both are in harmony with the Earth.

Shimon, the one who hears, is the son of Yehuda, the one who praises. And he who praises knows from within the power of life and Torah and how the two are one. HaNasi, means “the prince,” but the word Nasi is also related to Nisi, which means, “my miracle.”

Thus, one who hears, will hear the voice of praise, that sings forth knowing how miraculous life and Torah are when they are properly united by the manual labors of one's hands. This is Derekh Eretz, the way of the land. This is also the way of Heaven, and the true meaning of Torah.