

The Lubavitcher Rebbe on Women's Torah Study Based on Sichat Parshat Eikev in Likutei Sichot Vol.14 (1970)

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Based on a sheet by Sarah Alevsky

Kiddushin 29b:9-10

From where do we derive that a woman is not obligated to teach her son Torah? As it is written: **“And you shall teach [velimadtem],”** which can be read as: **And you shall study [ulmadtem].** This indicates that **whoever is commanded to study Torah is commanded to teach, and whoever is not commanded to study is not commanded to teach.** Since a woman is not obligated to learn Torah, she is likewise not obligated to teach it. The Gemara asks: **And from where do we derive that she is not obligated to teach herself?** The Gemara answers: **As it is written: “And you shall teach [velimadtem],”** which can be read as: **And you shall study [ulmadtem],** which indicates that **whoever others are commanded to teach is commanded to teach himself, and whoever others are not commanded to teach is not**

קידושין כ"ט ב: טי-י

איהי מנלן דלא מיחייבא דכתיב
ולמדתם ולמדתם כל שמצווה
ללמוד מצווה ללמד וכל שאינו
מצווה ללמוד אינו מצווה ללמד
ואיהי מנלן דלא מיחייבה למילף
נפשה דכתיב ולימדתם ולמדתם כל
שאחרים מצווין ללמדו מצווה
ללמד את עצמו וכל שאין אחרים
מצווין ללמדו אין מצווה ללמד את
עצמו ומנין שאין אחרים מצווין
ללמדה דאמר קרא ולמדתם אותם
את בניכם ולא בנותיכם

commanded to teach himself. And from where is it derived that others are not commanded to teach a woman? As the verse states: “And you shall teach them to your sons” (Deuteronomy 11:19), which emphasizes: **Your sons and not your daughters.**

Berakhot 17a:14

Rav said to Rabbi Ḥiyya: By what virtue do women merit to receive this reward? Rabbi Ḥiyya answered: They merit this reward for bringing their children to read the Torah in the synagogue, and for sending their husbands to study mishna in the study hall, and for waiting for their husbands until they return from the study hall.

Mishnah Sotah 3:4

(4) When a guilty woman drinks **she does not manage to finish drinking before her face turns green and her eyes bulge, and her skin becomes full of protruding veins, and the people standing in the Temple say: Remove her, so that she does not render the Temple courtyard impure** by dying there. The mishna limits the scope of the

ברכות י"ז א:י"ד

א"ל רב לר' חייא נשים במאי זכיין באקרויי בנייהו לבי כנישתא ובאתנויי גברייהו בי רבנן ונטרין לגברייהו עד דאתו מבי רבנן.

משנה סוטה ג:ד'

(ד) אינה מספקת לשותות עד שפניה מוריקות ועיניה בולטות והיא מתמלאת גידין, והם אומרים הוציאוה הוציאוה, שלא תטמא העזרה. אם יש לה זכות, היתה תולה לה. יש זכות תולה שנה אחת, יש זכות תולה שתי שנים, יש זכות תולה שלש שנים. מכאן אומר

previous statement: **If she has merit, it delays punishment for her** and she does not die immediately. **There is a merit** that **delays** punishment for **one year, there is a larger merit** that **delays** punishment for **two years**, and **there is a merit** that **delays** punishment for **three years**. **From here Ben Azzai states: A person is obligated to teach his daughter Torah, so that if she drinks and does not die immediately, she will know that some merit she has delayed punishment for her. Rabbi Eliezer says: Anyone who teaches his daughter Torah is teaching her promiscuity [tiflut]. Rabbi Yehoshua says: A woman desires to receive the amount of a kav of food and a sexual relationship [tiflut] rather than to receive nine kav of food and abstinence. He would say: A foolish man of piety, and a conniving wicked person, and an abstinent woman [perusha], and those who injure themselves out of false abstinence; all these are people who erode the world.**

Mishneh Torah, Torah Study 1:13

(13) A woman who studied the Torah has a reward coming to her

בן עזאי, חיב אדם ללמד את בתו תורה, שאם תשטה, תדע שהזכות תולה לה. רבי אליעזר אומר, כל המלמד את בתו תורה, כאילו מלמדה תפלות. רבי יהושע אומר, רוצה אשה בקב ותפלות מתשעה קבין ופרישות. הוא היה אומר, חסיד שוטה, ורשע ערום, ואשה פרושה, ומכות פרושין, הרי אלו מכלי עולם:

משנה תורה, הלכות תלמוד תורה

א:י"ג

but it is incomparable to the reward of a man because she was not commanded to do so, and whosoever does something which is not mandatory upon him to perform receives not a hire equal to the hire of him who is commanded to perform it but less than he. And, although she has a reward coming the sages commanded that a man shall not instruct his daughter in the Torah, because most women have no set mind to be instructed therein, but, on the contrary, are apt to divert matters of the Torah to nonsensical matters, of course, in proportion to the inferiority of their mind. The sages said: "Whosoever instructs his daughter in Torah does no better than if he instructed her in matters of profanity." (Sotah, 21b). These matters are thus spoken of only concerning the Oral Torah, but respecting Holy Writ it is best not to begin to instruct her therein but if he did instruct her it is not as if he instruct her in profanity.

(יג) אִשָּׁה שֶׁלְמַדָּה תּוֹרָה יֵשׁ לָהּ
 שְׂכָר אֲבָל אֵינוֹ כְּשְׂכָר הָאִישׁ. מִפְּנֵי
 שֶׁלֹּא נִצְטַוִּית. וְכָל הָעוֹשֶׂה דְבַר
 שֶׁאֵינוֹ מִצְוָה עָלָיו לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ אֵין שְׂכָרוֹ
 כְּשְׂכָר הַמִּצְוָה שֶׁעָשָׂה אֲלֵא פְּחוֹת
 מִמֶּנּוּ. וְאִף עַל פִּי שֵׁיִשׁ לָהּ שְׂכָר צְוּוּ
 חֲכָמִים שֶׁלֹּא יִלְמַד אָדָם אֶת בִּתּוֹ
 תּוֹרָה. מִפְּנֵי שֶׁרַב הַנְּשִׂיִם אֵין דַּעְתָּם
 מְכוּנָת לְהִתְלַמֵּד אֲלֵא הֵן מוֹצִיאוֹת
 דְּבָרֵי תּוֹרָה לְדַבְּרֵי הַבְּאִי לְפִי עֲנִיּוֹת
 דַּעְתָּן. אָמְרוּ חֲכָמִים כָּל הַמְלַמֵּד אֶת
 בִּתּוֹ תּוֹרָה כְּאֵלוֹ לְמַדָּה תִּפְלוֹת.
 בְּמָה דְּבָרִים אָמוּרִים בְּתוֹרָה שֶׁבְּעַל
 פֶּה אֲבָל תּוֹרָה שֶׁבְּכֶתֶב לֹא יִלְמַד
 אוֹתָהּ לְכִתְחֻלָּהּ וְאִם לְמַדָּה אֵינוֹ
 כְּמַלְמַדָּה תִּפְלוֹת:

Shluchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchot

Talmud Torah, 1:14

1. Women are not in the Mitzvah of

שולחן ערוך הרב א:יד

אשה אינה במצות ת"ת

Talmud Torah. And because she is not in the Mitzvah of Torah study in of itself, she is not obligated to teach her children and she is not required to pay tuition for them.

2. However, when she assists her son or husband in Torah study or in support of Torah study, she shares the merit with them and the merit is great because they were commanded and they did it through her assistance.

3. In any case, women are obligated to study the Halachot that are related to the Mitzvot they must do and are obligated to know about.

Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Laws pertaining to Reciting the Blessing on the Torah

10 Women should recite the blessings before Torah study, for they are obligated to study [the laws governing] the [positive] *mitzvos* which relate to them so that they will know how to observe them, and [they need to know]

וכשם שאינה במצות ת"ת לעצמה
כך אינה במצות ת"ת לבני" ופטורה
משכר לימוד בני" כו'. ומ" מ אם
היא עוזרת לבנה או לבעלה בגופה
ומאדה שיעסוק בתורה חולקת
שכר עמהם ושכרה גדול מאחר
שהם מצווים ועושים על ידה.

ומכל מקום גם הנשים חייבות
ללמוד הלכות הצריכות להן לידע
אותן.

סימן מז דיני ברכת התורה
י נשים מברכות ברכות
התורה, שהרי חייבות ללמד מצוות
שלהן, לידע היאך לעשותן והיאך
לזהר מכל לא תעשה שהן מזהרות
בהן כאנשים

how to avoid violating all of the prohibitive commandments, which devolve upon them as upon men.

The Rebbe's Initial Questions:

1. How can the Alter Rebbe seemingly contradict the Talmud's statement that women are not obligated, nor do they get a reward, for Torah study?
2. Why does the Alter Rebbe not put the Torah study that all Jewish women must engage in - to know the Halachot of the Mitzvot they are responsible for - first? Helping your husband or son is optional, and you may not have a husband or sons, but all women are responsible for the Mitzvot that apply to them, as seen in the Halachot of Birchat HaTorah. So why this order?
3. If women are only obligated to know the laws that pertain to them, why would they make one daily Bracha on learning Torah, since they do not have a continuous Mitzvah of Talmud Torah like men do? And is there a point for them to continue to learn, once they know the Halachot that pertain to them?

The process in which the goal is met becomes a valuable entity onto itself if the entity cannot be achieved without it.

Sanhedrin 59a:4

The Gemara **raises an objection** to Rabbi Yohanan's statement from a *baraita*: **Rabbi Meir would say:**

סנהדרין נ"ט א"ד'

מיתבי היה ר"מ אומר מניין
שאפילו עובד כוכבים ועוסק

From where is it derived **that even a gentile who engages in Torah study is considered like a High Priest?** It is derived from **that** which **is stated:** “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My ordinances, **which if a man does he shall live by them**” (Leviticus 18:5). The phrase: Which if **priests, Levites, and Israelites** do they shall live by them, **is not stated**, but **rather: “A man,”** which indicates mankind in general. **You have therefore learned that even a gentile who engages in Torah study is considered like a High Priest.**

בתורה שהוא ככהן גדול שנאמר (ויקרא יח, ה) אשר יעשה אותם האדם וחי בהם כהנים לויים וישראלים לא נאמר אלא האדם הא למדת שאפילו עובד כוכבים ועוסק בתורה הרי הוא ככהן גדול

Zevachim 13a:7-9

For a sacrifice can be disqualified at [any one of] the four services: slaughtering, receiving, carrying and sprinkling.... R. Eliezer said: if one goes where he needs to go, an [illegitimate] intention disqualifies it; where he need not go, an illegitimate intention does not disqualify it.

זבחים י"ג א: י"ג-י"ט

שהזבח נפסל בארבעה דברים בשחיטה ובקבול ובהילוך ובזריקה... רבי אליעזר אומר המהלך במקום שהוא צריך להלך מחשבה פוסלת במקום שאינו צריך להלך אין מחשבה פוסלת:

When a person gives charity, and the beneficiary does a Mitzvah, he doesn't get credit for the Mitzvah that the man did with the money he received, because it has no relationship to him. Once he gave Tzedakah, there is no connection to the mitzvah.

On the other hand, in the Mitzvah of פרו ורבו, (be fruitful and multiply) the woman does not have the obligation, only her husband does. When she gives birth, she takes part in the Mitzvah because it couldn't have been done without her, and she shares the reward for that Mitzvah with him.

Similarly, when a woman helps her husband or her child learn Torah, **she shares the reward of one who is commanded to study Torah and did it**, because she is actively participating by facilitating the learning.

There are two ways for Jewish women to fulfill the Mitzvah of Torah study:

1. A Jewish woman has the obligation to study Torah in order to fulfill her obligations of keeping Mitzvot and therefore her study to attain her goal of knowledge has value in of itself. The Torah she studies connects her to G-d and refines her spiritually. She "revealed" this pathway for herself, and because it has value in of itself, she can learn even if she "knows" all the halachot that pertain to her. She makes a Bracha because she is doing the Mitzvah of learning Torah NOT for the mitzvah of Limud Torah but for the Mitzvot she will do. She does not receive a direct reward for the Mitzvah of Torah study for this process, however.

2. When she assists her husband or son in the process of Torah study, she directly receives a portion of their reward for sharing in their Mitzvah of Torah study.