

HALACHIC AND HASHKAFIC ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

150 - TORAH AND SECULAR STUDIES

PART 2 - TORAH WITH DERECH ERETZ

OU ISRAEL CENTER - FALL 2019

1. Few matters concern us - both disturb and affect us - more than the relationship between our religious and secular studies. As students committed to Torah and the study of Torah, and yet deeply engaged in the pursuit of a general education, we feel - and should feel - a strong need to understand the respective positions of the two areas in our lives. The need is related to both our outlook and our experience. Philosophically, we recognize the necessity to determine how these varied aspects of our pluralistic culture coalesce within our overall *Weltanschauung*. Practically, we are often confronted with the need to reconcile the demands that these aspects make upon our loyalties and our energies. The formulation of a Torah attitude toward this question thus takes on paramount importance.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein - A Consideration of Synthesis from a Torah Point of View. Leaves of Faith Vol 1 p.89

2. The problems arising from the integration of Torah and secular studies are still pressing. We would be committing the gravest folly were we to regard this controversy (as I am afraid many of us do) as a remotely irrelevant issue, almost as a historical curiosity ... A question *gedolei Yisrael* could discuss with such fervent interest cannot be lightly dismissed.

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein - A Consideration of Synthesis from a Torah Point of View. Leaves of Faith Vol 1 p.95

A] TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ OR TORAH ONLY - CLASSIC SOURCES

3. רבן גמליאל בנו של רבי יהודה הנשיא אומר יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון וכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון

אבות ב:ב

4. רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר אם אין תורה אין דרך ארץ אם אין דרך ארץ אין תורה

אבות ג:ז

Chazal propose a combination of 'Torah with Derech Eretz' - Torah without 'work' will eventually cease and lead to sin.

5. דת"ר: האב חייב בבנו למולו, ולפדותו, וללמדו תורה, ולהשיאו אשה, וללמדו אומנות. וי"א: אף להשיטו במים. רבי יהודה אומר: כל שאינו מלמד את בנו אומנות - מלמדו ליסטות. ליסטות ס"ד? אלא, כאילו מלמדו ליסטות.

קידושין כט.

Chazal rule that if a father does not teach his son a trade, it is as if he taught him to steal. This presumably implies that the child should be also be willing to learn! Hence, there is a halachic imperative to learn a trade.

6. תניא - רבי נהוראי אומר: מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה. שכל אומנות שבעולם אין עומדת לו אלא בימי ילדותו, אבל בימי זקנותו הרי הוא מוטל ברעב. אבל תורה אינה כן, עומדת לו לאדם בעת ילדותו, ונותנת לו אחרית ותקוה בעת זקנותו

קידושין פב.

Yet we also see another 'Torah Only' approach in Chazal, which advocates teaching boys ONLY Torah.

7. ואספת דגנך (דברים יא:יד) - מה תלמוד לומר? - לפי שנאמר: (יהושע א:ח) לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיק, יכול דברים ככתבו? תלמוד לומר: ואספת דגנך - הנהג בהן מנהג דרך ארץ, דברי רבי ישמעאל. רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר: אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ודש בשעת דישה, וזורע בשעת הרוח, תורה מה תהא עליה? אלא: בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום - מלאכתן נעשית על ידי אחרים, שנאמר: (ישעיהו סא:ה) ועמדו זרים ורעו צאנכם וגו'. ובזמן שאין ישראל עושין רצונו של מקום - מלאכתן נעשית על ידי עצמן, שנאמר: ואספת דגנך; ולא עוד, אלא שמלאכת אחרים נעשית על ידן, שנאמר: (דברים כח:מח) ועבדת את אויבך וגו'. אמר אביי הרבה עשו כרבי ישמעאל - ועלתה בידן, כרבי שמעון בן יוחי - ולא עלתה בידן.

ברכות לה:

Every Jew is required to know the whole Torah. Yet without money how can a person live? Chazal discuss the most appropriate mix of Torah and other activities which are needed to make a living. We see two divergent views here. R. Yishmael says that the Torah mandates a combination of Torah and 'Derech Eretz' - here meaning the activities that go into making a living. He does not however seek to define here the balance of Torah and other activities (see below). R. Shimon bar Yochai rejects this and sees the model for a Jewish life as one entirely of Torah. To have to work for a living is a punishment which comes about due to our misdeeds. The gemara does not rule between the two views! It does, however, say that, for the majority of people, Rashbi's model will not work practically.

8. אח"כ ילך לעסקיו, דכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן קנ"א

The Shulchan Aruch clearly rules like R. Yishmael - that a person should go out to work since Torah cannot be maintained without money, and a lack of employment will bring a person to sin.

9. כיצד? היה בעל אומנות והיה עוסק במלאכתו שלש שעות ביום ובתורה תשע

רמב"ם הלכות תלמוד תורה פרק א הלכה יב

The Rambam gives guidance as to the daily work/Torah balance - 3 hours of work and 9 hours of Torah!

10. ... ומ"מ לא יעשה מלאכתו עיקר, אלא עראי, ותורתו קבע, וזה וזה יתקיים בידו

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן קנ"ג

The Shulchan Aruch does not mention a specific ratio but states that, however long you learn, the Torah must be 'kevah' - fixed and the parnasa should be 'arai'.

In practice, many people must work long hours and can learn for only short periods. They must therefore achieve an attitude whereby their Torah learning, however short, is regarded as 'kevah' and their work as 'arai' - a means to an end and not an end in itself.

11. יג ולא שבט לוי בלבד, אלא כל איש ואיש מפל באי העולם אשר נדבה רוחו אותו והבינו מדעו להבדל לעמוד לפני ה' לשרתו ולעבדו לדעה את ה', והלך ישר כמו שעשהו האלהים, ופרק מעל צנארו על החשבונות הרבים אשר בקשו בני האדם - הרי זה נתקדש קדוש קדשים ויהיה ה' חלקו ונחלתו לעולם ולעולמי עולמים. ויזכה לו בעולם הזה דבר המספיק לו, כמו שזכה לכהנים וללויים. הרי דויד אומר (תהילים טז:ה) ה' מנת-חלקי וכוסי אתה, תומיך גורלי

רמב"ם הלכות שמיטה ויובל פרק יג הלכה יג

However the Rambam, having described the holy role of the Levi'im and Cohanim as set apart from the rest of the people for a spiritual life, maintains that this role can be taken by on others too. If they wish to dedicate their life to Torah, they can throw off the obligation of making a living and opt to be maintained by others. Such a life is called 'kodesh kedoshim'. But the Rambam is clearly not advocating this for every person.

12. סופה בטלה וגוררת עון - כתבו הספרים שזהו נאמר לכלל העולם שאין כולם יכולים לזכות לעלות למדרגה רמה זו להיות עסקם רק בתורה לזדה אבל אנשים יחידים יוכל להמלא כל עת צאופן זה וזהו שאמרו צרכות ל"ה ע"כ הרבה עשו כרש"י ולא עלתה בידן ר"ל דוקא הרבה. וצפרט אס כבר נמלאו אנשים שרואים להספיק לו לרכיו כדי שיעסקו בתורה צודאי לא שייך זה ויששכר וזלון יוכיח

ביאור הלכה סימן קנ"ג

The Mishna Berura clearly qualifies the general rule of 'Torah and Derech Eretz' proposed by R. Yishmael. This is only for the masses. But there are individuals who are able (and therefore obliged?) to act in accordance with Rashbi, to dedicate their lives to Torah and to avoid involvement in anything else.

13. אבל יחיד לעצמו שאפשר לו להיות אך עסוק כל ימיו בתורתו ובעבודתו ... ודאי שחובה מוטלת עליו שלא יפרוש אף זמן מועט מתורה ועבודה לעסוק פרנסה חז' וכדעת רשב"י

נפש החיים חלק א פרק ח ד'ה ואמרו

*The Nefesh Hachayim writes that a person who can dedicate his life to Torah only, **must** do so!*

14. תניא, רבי יוסי אומר: אפי' סילק את הישנה שחרית וסידר את החדשה ערבית - אין בכך כלום. אלא מה אני מקיים (שמות כה:ט) לְפָנֶיךָ תִמְדָּד? שלא ילין שלחן בלא לחם. א"ר אמי: מדבריו של ר' יוסי נלמוד, אפילו לא שנה אדם אלא פרק אחד שחרית ופרק אחד ערבית, קיים מצות לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיך. אמר רבי יוחנן משום ר"ש בן יוחי: אפי' לא קרא אדם אלא קרית שמע שחרית וערבית - קיים לא ימוש, ודבר זה אסור לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ. ורבא אמר: מצוה לאומרו בפני עמי הארץ; שאל בן דמה בן אחותו של ר' ישמעאל את ר' ישמעאל: כגון אני שלמדתי כל התורה כולה, מהו ללמוד חכמת יוניתי? קרא עליו המקרא הזה: לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיך והגית בו יומם ולילה, צא ובדוק שעה שאינה לא מן היום ולא מן הלילה ולמוד בה חכמת יוניתי. ופליגא דר' שמואל בר נחמני, דאמר ר' שמואל בר נחמני א"ר יונתן: פסוק זה אינו לא חובה ולא מצוה אלא ברכה.

מנחות צט:

As we saw in Part 1, here we find a parallel disagreement between R. Yishmael and Rashbi which, apparently, has them taking opposite positions! Rashbi (who above ruled that a person should learn only Torah) says that, actually, one can fulfil one's obligation to learn by a minimal amount at day and at night. R. Yishmael, however (who above ruled that the Torah also sanctions making a living) seems to give the words 'this Torah shall not leave your mouth ...' a strict interpretation and, apparently¹, told his nephew that he could never learn other studies.²

- This opens up the question of learning other wisdoms in addition to Torah, not for the purpose of making a living, but for the broadening of one's mind and understanding of the world.

15. כל איש ישראל חייב בתלמוד תורה ... אפילו בעל אשה ובנים, חייב לקבוע לו זמן לתלמוד תורה ביום ובלילה, שנאמר: והגית בו יומם ולילה. וזשעת הדחק, אפילו לא קרא רק קריאת שמע שחרית וערבית, לא ימוש מפיך קרינת ציה ... ויכול אדם להתנות עס חצירו שהוא יעסוק בתורה והוא ימליא לו פרנסה ויחלוק עמו השכר ...

שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רמו סעיף א

The Rema rules that every man must learn Torah, regardless of his work or life pressures. He adds the halacha of Rashbi as a bare minimum - the obligation to learn Torah can be fulfilled with a minimal learning morning and evening

- On the question of whether it is allowed to take leave Torah to pursue parnasa, the halacha is like R. Yishmael for the masses and like Rashbi for select individuals. As such, whilst a man is obligated to know the whole Torah and should therefore learn as much Torah as possible, it appears legitimate (for most people) to take time from Torah to work in order to make a living and therefore also to study for those purposes.

- On the question of what is the basic obligation of Torah study, the halacha is like Rashbi - that a minimal learning, day and night, will fulfil the basic obligation if absolutely necessary.

16. ... ואין לאדם ללמוד כי אם מקרא משנה וגמרא והפוסקים הנמשכים אחריהם. וזוה יקנה העולם הזה והעולם הבא אבל לא בלמוד שאר חכמות. ומ"מ מותר ללמוד באקראי בשאר חכמות, ובלבד שלא יהיו ספרי מינים. וזוה נקרא צין החכמים 'טיוול צפרדס'. ואין לאדם לטיוול צפרדס רק לאחר שמלא כריסו צער ויין. והוא לידע איסור והיתר ודיני המלכות (רמב"ם סוף מדע ס"פ ד' מהל' יסודי התורה).

רמ"א שולחן ערוך יורה דעה סימן רמו סעיף ד

The Rema goes on to rule that studying 'other wisdoms' is permitted only on a temporary basis. Such study, when permitted, is called 'walking in the Pardes', and may be done only AFTER first studying Torah properly.

This raises a number of questions: (i) What does the Rema include in 'other wisdoms'?; (ii) Is he talking about study only for parnasa or also for other purposes?; (iii) If they are permitted, why only on a temporary basis and if they are forbidden, why is temporary study allowed?; (iv) What does 'temporary' mean?; (v) How much Torah must be learnt before embarking on the study of other secular subjects?

1. We saw in Part 1 that, in fact, Rabbi Yishmael may be permitting the pursuit of secular studies in an 'incidental' manner.

2. The resolution of the two gemarot may be as follows. R. Yishmael rules that the obligation to learn Torah is constant but he does sanction taking off time from Torah to do what is necessary to make a living (sowing, reaping etc). Presumably, this is not only for farmers but would include professions and whatever vocational training and study is required for the job. R. Yishmael does not appear to sanction leaving Torah learning at all for academic interests not related to parnasa. Rashbi's position is that a person is obligated to learn only a minimal amount to fulfil the mitzvah of talmud Torah. However, he should extend this and fill his whole day with Torah if possible and trust to God to give him parnasa.

17. ... אזל לא ראו את הפרדס לא הוא ולא הרמב"ם! ... ואמת שאין לאדם לטייל בו' כמ"ש בחגיגה (יג.) אין מוסרין סתרי תורה כו':

ביאור הגר"א יורה דעה סימן רמ"ח

The Gra rejects the idea that the 'walk in the Pardes' has anything to do with learning secular studies³! In fact, this relates to studying kabbala and, in his view, neither the Rema nor the Rambam ever walked into the real Pardes!

18. תחילה אענה מה שהרעיש אדוני את העולם עלי בהציאי במכתבי הראשון דבר חכמת היונים וראש הפילוסופים. ועל זה כתב אדוני שהתורה חוגרת שק כו'. אומר שזו מחלוקת ישנה בין החכמים ולא אלטרך להשיב עליה ... והוא הנשר ויין שכתב הרמב"ם בספר המדע פ"ד מהלכות יסודי התורה. ומי לנו גדול מהרמב"ם ז"ל שטעה ספר המורה שכולו אינו אלא מזה המין!

שו"ת הרמ"א סימן ז

The Rema describes the disagreement of 'Torah With ...' or 'Torah Only' as an ancient debate between the Rabbis.

B] TORAH IM DERECH ERETZ OR TORAH ONLY - MODERN REVIVALS

- This debate has continued through the centuries.
- In the times of the Rishonim it divided roughly between Ashkenazim and Sefardim, with the Ashkenazim favoring 'Torah Only' and the Sefardim promoting the learning of Torah with secular studies - astronomy, grammar, poetry, medicine, philosophy and others.
- In times of the early Acharonim, we saw this disagreement on the pages of the Rema's teshuvot above - with the Rema, Maharal and others advocating for 'Torah With ...' and the Maharshah and others promoting 'Torah Only'.
- As the ghetto walls in Central Europe crumbled in the late 18C and the emancipated Jews flooded into the universities and professions of Western Europe throughout the 19C, this question became highly relevant once again.
- We will briefly examine some of the key voices in this over the last 150 years, including:
 - Rabbi Shimshon Refael Hirsch (mid 19C) on Torah Im Derech Eretz.
 - Rabbi Shimon Schwab (mid 20C) on Torah Im Derech Eretz vs Torah Only.
 - Rabbi Norman Lamm (late 20C) and the Yeshiva University expression of Torah U'Mada.
 - Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein (late 20C) on Torah U'Chochma.
- We will also try to look (in Part 3) at how these ideas translate into the new reality of the 21st Century.

B1] RAV HIRSCH

19. דא"ר ישמעאל בר רב נחמן עשרים וששה דורות קדמה דרך ארץ את התורה ה"ד (בראשית ג:כד) לשמור את דרך עץ החיים. דרך - זו דרך ארץ. ואח"כ עץ החיים - זו תורה

ויקרא רבה פרשה ט ד"ה ג ד"א ושם

Chazal point out that 'Derech Eretz' preceded the Torah by 26 generations (from Creation to Matan Torah). This is associated with the 'derech' in Bereishit 3:24 which leads to the Tree of Life i.e. Torah

20. "In Vayikra Rabba 9 the Sages designate the road that leads to the Tree of Life ... as 'Derech Eretz', as the the way of culture - the way of that social refinement which results from people living together in the world, as being the first tutor and educator to morals, manners and order. ... 'Culture' starts the work of educating the generations of Mankind and Torah completes it; for the Torah is the most finished education of Mankind. ... For us Jews, 'Derech Eretz' and 'Torah' are one ... But in the general development of mankind, culture comes earlier. ... That is why the Jew rejoices whenever and wherever culture elevates people to a perception of true values and to nurture goodness. But, of course, where culture and civilisation are used in the service of sensuality, the degeneration only gets all the greater. But still, such misuse of culture does not do away with the intrinsic value and blessing of Derech Eretz for אם אין דרך ארץ אין תורה. Therefore, Jews too are to attach themselves to and love all good and true culture and by the ways and manner of their behaviour and demeanor appear as educated people, and show that being a Jew is only a higher stage of being a man. And, of course, on the other side too, אם אין תורה אין דרך, if culture and education, instead of leading to Torah, take the place of it, then it is not the way that leads to the Tree of Life, but is the way that leads to degeneration.

Rav S.R. Hirsch - Commentary on Bereishit 3:24

Rav Hirsch defines 'Derech Eretz' here as culture and education which create an 'educated person' by building a person's morals and manners as a preparation for Torah. Similarly, on the Mishna in Avot 2:2, Rav Hirsch defines Derech Eretz as 'anything related to the general wisdom of mankind, society and civilisation'. Where is the source for validating a system of chochma outside Torah?

3. Of course, this disagreement on the meaning of the 'Pardes' does not mean that the Gra is opposed to the study of secular subjects per se.

21. וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַלְיָד וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשַׁבָּתְכֶם בְּבֵיתְכֶם וּבְלִכְתֹּתְכֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ וּבְשַׂכְבְּכֶם וּבְקוּמְכֶם

דברים ו:ז

The Torah includes a mitzva to learn Torah and be involved in it.

22. **ודברת בם:** עשם עיקר ואל תעשם טפלה, שלא יהא משאך ומתנך אלא בהם, שלא תערב בהם דברים אחרים כפלוגי, שמא תאמר למדתי חכמת ישראל אלך ואלמד חכמות האומות. תלמוד לומר (ויקרא יח ד) **ללכת בהם**, ולא ליפטר מתוכם

ספרי דברים פסקא לד"ה ודברת בם

Chazal are apparently saying that one's sole enterprise should be Torah and not secular studies. However, Rav Hirsch read this source in a different manner

23. If we understand these sentences ... aright, then the sentence which stands at their head *'make them the primary [focus] and not subsidiary'* forewarns one not to take the following sentences to mean that one is completely to ignore and remain in ignorance of all knowledge and science which has been gained and nurtured by non-Jewish sources or which have no direct bearing on the knowledge to be gained by the study of the Torah. Inasmuch as what is commanded is *'make them the primary [focus] and not subsidiary'* the permission to occupy oneself also with other spheres of knowledge is assumed. Only, the knowledge of Torah and the understanding we derive from it is to be our principle concern and to be regarded as having been given to us as the absolute and firmly established Truth. Only as accessory knowledge and in so far as they serve to truly help the study of the Torah and are subordinated as the 'tofel' to the 'ikar', are they to be studied. But the Torah and all its teachings must ... be the yardstick by which we measure the results obtained by other spheres of learning. Only that which is in accordance with the truths of the Torah can remain true for us. All that we accept intellectually must always be considered from the point of view of the Torah and must be within the lines of the doctrines it teaches so that we do not adulterate the knowledge we draw out of the Torah with ideas which have developed from other and strange premises. We are not to consider Torah as being the same as other knowledge, so that the Torah is for us only *another* branch of all other knowledge.

Rav S.R. Hirsch - Commentary on Vayikra 18:4

Rav Hirsch understands that secular subjects are not forbidden per se. But they must always be seen as subordinate. This is what the Rema means by 'akrai'. The emphasis is upon making a qualitative as well as quantitative distinction between Torah and other studies. If that is done, other wisdoms may be studied, provided that they are not objectively prohibited.

It thus seems, according to Rav Hirsch, that there is a place in Judaism for the study of external wisdoms, as long as they are kept 'akrai'. Some authorities (such as the Rogachover) understood this to mean that they could not be taught publicly. Thus setting up schools for secular studies would be prohibited. Others (Rav Baruch Ber Leibovitz) extended this to teaching parnasa too, so that there could not be Jewish schools for learning a trade either. The view of many others (Rav Hirsch and R. Elchonon Wasserman) was that the critical issue was to see Torah as superior to non-Torah activity.

- We will iy'H in Part 3 look, through the writings of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein at the difficult questions of which areas of secular learning should be included in this concept. Will it be restricted to the natural sciences, or expand into the social sciences, humanities, music, fine arts, theatre, film etc?

24. The sphere for human research is limited both in time **לְמַן-הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶדָם עַל-הָאָרֶץ** - to after the creation and in space **וּלְמַקְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד-קְצֵה הַשָּׁמַיִם** - from one end of the heaven to the other end of the heaven. We are denied knowledge of and it is useless to try and probe to find out what was before the creation or what lies beyond the created material world ... But to obtain knowledge of Nature and History which is open to our research within these limits is not only something permitted but something which is eminently desirable to the fullest possible extent, for only a mind armed with such a wide panoramic view on all matters can draw the right conclusions of the Jewish position in the world ...

Rav S.R. Hirsch - Commentary on Devarim 4:32

- In Part 3, we will look at the mid-20th Century perspective of Rav Shimon Schwab and late 20th Century perspective of Rav Lichtenstein to see how the concept evolved into our times. We will also try and draw some conclusions about the best direction of travel into the mid-21st Century!