



[Midrash] Song of Songs Rabbah 1:2

Words of Torah are likened to waters: “All who are thirsty, come all to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1). As waters reach from one end of the world to the other, so Torah reaches from one end of the world to the other. As waters give life to the world, so Torah gives life to the world. As waters are given without cost to the world, so is Torah given without cost to the world. As waters are given from heaven, so is Torah given from heaven. As waters are given to the accompaniment of powerful thundering, so was Torah given to the accompaniment of powerful thundering. As waters restore one's spirit, so Torah restores one's spirit. As waters cleanse one from uncleanness, so Torah cleanses an unclean person from their uncleanness. As waters come down in myriads of drops and become a multitude of brooks, so are words of Torah; today a person learns two Halakhot [laws], tomorrow two more, [and so on], until they become like a bubbling brook. As waters leave a high place and flow to a low place, so Torah leaves one whose opinion of himself is high and cleaves to one whose spirit is lowly. As water is not kept in vessels of silver or gold, but in humble earthenware vessels, so Torah abides only in one who regards himself as part of the earth, not above it. When thirsty, an adult is not ashamed to say to a child, “Let me have a drink of water,” so in studying Torah an [unlearned] adult should not be ashamed to say to a child, “Teach me a chapter,” “Teach me a verse,” “Teach me a word,” even “Teach me a single letter.” As with water, if one does not know how to swim in water, they will end by drowning, so with words of Torah: if one does not know how to swim in them and teach them, they will drown in the end.

Thought Questions:

1. Do you think water is a good metaphor for Torah?
2. Water is essential to life; do you feel that way about Torah?
3. Why do you think Torah is traditionally read on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays? How long can you go without water? How long can you go without Torah?
4. Can you think of other metaphors for Torah?

[Talmud] Pirkei Avot 6:1

Rabbi Meir said: One who occupies themselves with Torah for its own sake acquires many benefits. More: the entire world is under obligation to them. They are called [God's] companion, [God's] beloved, one who loves God who is everywhere, one who loves their fellows, one who gladdens God who is everywhere, one who gladdens their fellows. The Torah clothes them with humility and awe of God, and fits them to be virtuous and devout, upright and faithful. It keeps one far from sin and draws them near to the doing of good deeds. People are aided by their counsel, wisdom, understanding, and strength. It gives them a regal appearance, a manner that commands respect, and the capacity to be searching in judgment. Secret meanings of the Torah are revealed to them, and they become a fountain that never ceases and a stream that gathers strength. With it, they are modest, long suffering, and forgiving of personal slight. The Torah makes them great and exalts them above all of God's works.

Thought Questions:

1. What are your thoughts or reactions about being blessed because of your relationship with Torah?
2. Are some benefits self-fulfilling?
3. Are these benefits attainable without Torah? How might Torah help or expedite acquiring these benefits?
4. Which of these benefits are most important or appealing to you?

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