

SEFER
ALIYOS REFOEL ZEV
ON THE PARSHA

Parshas Ki Savo

THE POWER OF TORAH

The *Medrash* compares one who learns Torah and does not keep the *mitzvos* to a sharecropper who plants trees and cuts them down. Simply, the comparison can be understood as follows: in the *mashal*, the planted tree has the potential to grow fruits, and when it is cut down that potential is destroyed. So, too, in the *nimshal*, one who studies Torah has the potential to fulfill the *mitzvos*, and if he fails to do so, that potential is wasted.

However, a closer look brings what seems to be an inconsistency to light. The *Medrash*, in describing the planter in the *mashal*, says היה נוטע אילנות ומקצץ – the planter is actively destroying – he takes an ax and chops down the tree. Can we compare this to the Torah scholar? Is he striking an ax against *mitzvah* observance? He is not actively destroying potential but passively ignoring his responsibilities. His inaction is allowing potential to go to waste. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to compare him to one who plants a tree and allows it to die by merely neglecting to care for it?

The *Medrash* is teaching us an insight into the strength and power of Torah. The famous *Braiysa* of *Rebbe Pinchas Ben Yair* states that "Torah study brings one to the careful observance of the commandments." Ramchal, in *Mesilas Yesharim*, explains that Torah is not only a prerequisite to the acquisition of *Zehirus* but is also the force that brings one to *Zehirus*. It seems that the *Medrash* views this force to be so powerful that passivity alone cannot curb it. Proper study of Torah will automatically propel a person to perform the *Mitzvos*. The power of Torah is a tidal wave sweeping one toward *mitzvah* observance; one who resists its influence is actively swimming against the tide. The *Medrash* therefore says that one who

studies Torah and does not fulfill the *mitzvos* is guilty of actively allowing his potential to be destroyed, and is aptly compared to one who cuts down a tree.

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דברים רבה פרשה ז

(ד) לשמור ולעשות את כל מצותי אמר רבי שמעון בן חלפתא כל מי שלמד דברי תורה ואינו מקיים עונשו חמור ממי שלא למד כל עיקר למה"ד למלך שהיה לו פרדס הכניס לתוכו שני אריסים אחד היה נוטע אילנות ומקצץ ואחד לא היה נוטע כל עיקר ולא מקצץ על מי המלך כועס לא על אותו שהיה נוטע ומקצץ כך כל מי שלמד דברי תורה ואינו מקיים אותה עונשו חמור ממי שלא למד כל עיקר מנין שנאמר (ישעיה כו) יוחן רשע בל למד צדק אבל אם למד ולא קיים אינו נחנן הוי לשמור ולעשות את כל מצותי.