

Does One Have to Learn Halacha and Mussar?

Rav Chaim Weg

Question: We have stated that the *ikkur* mitzvah of *limud haTorah* is to learn Gemara. What about learning *mussar* and halacha? Is that also part of the mitzvah?

Answer: Part of the mitzvah of *limud haTorah* is that the learning should be “*meivi l’yedei ma’asoh*”, it should have practical applications. In fact, the Shulchan Aruch Harav says that the beginning of one’s learning should be to learn *sugyos* that are relevant to *halacha l’ma’asoh* so that one will know what Hashem wants him to do.

The Mishnah Berurah cites the Shach that working men who only have three or four hours a day to learn should make sure to learn Sifrei Haposkim. Presumably, those who learn all day will be able to discern *halacha l’ma’asoh* from their learning, but if one has less time, he has to make sure to learn the *sefarim* of the Poskim.

The Aruch Hashulchan writes that many people don’t enjoy learning *halacha l’ma’asoh* as much as they enjoy learning Gemara, and they may end up not learning altogether. For such people, he says that it is preferable to learn “*mah shelibo chafetz*” (what his heart desires).

It is said in the name of the Steipler Gaon that one should have a *halacha seder* every day in order to know how to live his life, and this is also a fulfillment of *limud hameivi l’yedei ma’asoh*. So, one should definitely set aside at least a few minutes every day to learn *halacha l’ma’asoh*.

The Mishnah Berurah adds that a person also has an obligation to learn Sifrei Mussar every single day, noting that this is the antidote for the *yeitzer hara*. The Chasam Sofer would start his shiur every day with a few minutes of Chovos Halevavos. Although, as we said, one’s main *seder limud* should be in Gemara and *halacha l’ma’asoh*, one should also make sure to spend time studying *mussar* every day.