

Not by bread alone does man live, rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live. (8:3)

The phrase *yichyeh ha'adam*, does man live, is mentioned twice in the *pasuk*. Interestingly, *Targum Onkeles* uses two variant translations for the word *yichyeh*. With regard to the first part of the *pasuk* – “Not by bread alone does man live,” he writes, *miskayeim enasha* – is a man sustained/preserved. In the second part of the *pasuk* – “rather by everything that emanates from the mouth of G-d does man live,” he writes, *chayei enasha*, man lives. Why does the text change? (The variant translations are to be found in the older *Chumashim*. Many contemporary printings follow the standard corrected translation of *yiskayeim enasha*).

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, distinguishes between the words that precede each of the phrases which accompany the phrase, *yichyeh ha'adam*. The first one addresses the sustaining power of bread. The word, *chai*, refers to life itself – not the sustaining force that maintains it. Therefore, in connecting with bread, *Onkeles* translates *yichyeh ha'adam* as *miskayeim*, is sustained. The second part of the *pasuk* addresses the *motza Pi Hashem*, that which emanates from the mouth of Hashem. While it is true that the *pasuk* is referring to the Heavenly bread, the *Manna*, the vernacular “that which emanates from the mouth of Hashem,” reflects life itself. Torah is life itself; it is the essence of life, without which there is no life. Torah does not simply sustain life; it is life!

This is consistent with an episode that took place in pre-World War II Europe at a conference of leading *Roshei Yeshivah* and *rabbanim* concerning the plight of the *yeshivos*. The *yeshivah* world was coming under attack from the secular government. One of the *rabbanim* arose and declared, “The Torah is the oxygen of life. We must, therefore, safeguard the Torah.” Hearing this, **Horav Boruch Ber Lebowitz, zl**, *Kamenitzer Rosh Yeshivah*, screamed out, “Torah is not the oxygen of life; it is essential life!”

Rav Eliyahu Baruch would often quote a story to accompany the above *dvar Torah*. There was a certain *Rosh Yeshivah* in Yerushalayim who, whenever *Yeshivas Mir* would be studying the same *Meseches*, Tractate of *Talmud*, that his own *yeshivah* was studying, he would ask *Rav Eliyahu Baruch* to send him a student with whom he could learn *b'chavrusa*, as a study partner. The *Rosh Yeshivah* specifically wanted a study partner from a different *yeshivah*. The diverse approaches towards understanding a *sugya*, topic, in the *Talmud* were energizing. Obviously, whomever *Rav Eliyahu Baruch* sent would be a student at the top of the class. This time he sent a bright student who happened to be an American.

Two weeks elapsed and the *bachur*, student, asked *Rav Eliyahu Baruch* if he could give up the *chavrusa*. Apparently, the *Rosh Yeshivah* was advanced in age and would often doze during their learning. They studied at night when many people younger than this *Rosh Yeshivah* had already retired for the evening. *Rav Eliyahu Baruch* replied that it would be a shame to give up such a

chavrusa, given that the *Rosh Yeshivah* was one of the more distinguished students of the *Brisker Rav*. A few more weeks went by, and this time the student was emphatic. He felt he could achieve more during this time.

Rav Eliyahu Baruch remarked that he did whatever he could to avoid meeting the *Rosh Yeshivah*, since he had no simple way of conveying the reason that the student had stopped coming to learn. One day, he was walking through Meah Shearim, and he met the *Rosh Yeshivah*. When the *Rosh Yeshivah* questioned him about why the *bachur* had not been coming to learn, he had to tell the truth diplomatically, “The *bachur* feels that he is a hindrance to the *Rosh Yeshivah*, perhaps causing him to stay awake later at night because of him.”

The *Rosh Yeshivah* was a wise man and understood a lame excuse when he heard it. He replied, “Oy, the American *bachur* thinks that everything is a ‘course.’ They come to *Eretz Yisrael* to study Torah in much the same way they would be attending an American school of higher education.” A minute went by, and then the *Rosh Yeshivah* raised his voice, “Torah is a course?... *Torah iz der leben – nu! Un tzu den inmiten leben shloft men nit ama!* Torah is life! Do we (are we not allowed to) sleep once in a while in the middle of life?”

Rav Eliyahu Baruch added that once a group of students “debated” with *Rosh Yeshivah Horav Nochum Partzovitz, zl*, concerning a student’s dress code during learning. There were those who felt (as is common in *Chassidic yeshivos*) that the students should wear a jacket during learning. Others felt encumbered by the extra garment – especially since they were learning all day and a good part of the night. *Rav* Nochum replied, *Eilu v’eilu divrei Elokim chaim*, “These and those are words of the living G-d.” In other words – both opinions were correct; they both had support. If one views Torah study as *avodas Hashem*, service to the Almighty, he should be dressed in *shemoneh begadim*, all “eight garments” as was the *Kohen Gadol*, High Priest, when he served in the *Bais Hamikdash*. It should be no different than *davening*, when a jacket is worn out of respect. If, however, Torah is essential life – does a person “live” all day wearing his hat and jacket?

Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl, *Rosh Yeshivas Telshe*, exemplified this unique appreciation of the meaning of Torah. Torah was his essence, the substance which galvanized him and animated his life. He lived to learn, and he learned to live. He valued Torah as one values life, because, without Torah, there is no life. While some will “talk the talk,” the *Rosh Yeshivah* “walked the walk,” living life to its fullest by studying Torah to its utmost. To him, Torah study was pure joy, as he embraced the very core of his life source.

I observed this over the years that I learned in Telshe. I experienced it first-hand when, in 1992, I asked the *Rosh Yeshivah* for his *haskamah*, approbation, for my first *Peninim Al HaTorah*. I went to the dormitory, which served as home to the *Rosh Yeshivah* and *Rebbetzin* when they returned from *Eretz Yisrael*. They had a simple apartment composed of three dormitory rooms. They required very little.

I came to the door and was welcomed by the *Rebbetzin*, who immediately led me to the *Rosh Yeshivah*'s study. He was sitting by a simple (school) desk, learning from an open *Gemorah*. He greeted me with his signature smile, and, after I explained the purpose of my visit, he began to peruse the manuscript. Having grown up in Telshe, the *Rosh Yeshivah* had known me for over thirty years. We had often spoken in learning. The process of obtaining his approval was thus accelerated.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* took out his pen, and, with a trembling hand, attempted to write. He could not produce anything legible. The illness that was robbing his body of its vitality was causing his hands to tremble uncontrollably. Suddenly, the *Rosh Yeshivah* began to cry, and, with tears rolling down his face, he cried out to me, "I am miserable that I cannot learn in the same way as I did before. When I learn, I immediately put my *chiddushim*, original thoughts, down on paper. Now, I am no longer able to write. I cannot learn with the same fervor as before!" And then the *Rosh Yeshivah* broke down in heavy weeping.

I will never forget the sight of *Rav Gifter* weeping incessantly because he could no longer learn in the manner in which he was accustomed. For him, writing was an integral part of his learning dialectic. Torah was his life and permeated the recesses of his heart. Now, he was slowly losing his most prized possession, the most important thing in his life, the one thing that gave his life meaning – his ability to engage fully in his learning process of the Torah. This is why he cried.