

# Can One Who Learns Torah Not Go To Work?

## In Light of Pirkei Avot 2, 2

### 1. Pirkei Avot, 2, 2:

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda the Prince said: "Torah study is good with a worldly occupation, because the exertion put into both of them makes one forget sin. All Torah without work will in the end result in waste and will cause sinfulness. All who work for the community should work for the sake of Heaven, for the merit of the community's forefathers will help them, and their righteousness endures forever. And as for you, G-d will reward you greatly as if you accomplished it on your own."

### 1. משנה אבות, ב, ב:

רַבֵּן גַּמְלִיאֵל בֶּן־רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הַנְּשִׂיא אָמַר, יִפְּהַ תְּלַמּוּד תּוֹרָה עִם דְּרוֹךְ אֶרֶץ, שְׂיִגִיעַת שְׁנֵיהֶם מְשַׁבַּחַת עוֹן. וְכָל תּוֹרָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה, סוֹפָה בְּטֵלָה וְגוֹרְרַת עוֹן. וְכָל הָעֲמֵלִים עִם הַצְּבוּר, יְהִיו עֲמֵלִים עִמָּהֶם לְשֵׁם שְׁמַיִם, שְׂדוּכוֹת אָבוֹתֶם מְסִיעֶתֶן וְצִדְקָתֶם עוֹמֶדֶת לְעַד. וְאַתֶּם, מַעֲלָה אֲנִי עֲלֵיכֶם שְׁכַר הַרְבֵּה כְּאִלּוּ עָשִׂיתֶם.

### 2. Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura, there:

If you say that you should always be laboring in Torah, and its weariness causes sin to be forgotten, for what is the need for work, therefore, it was necessary to state that any Torah [study] that lacks work [accompanying it] leads to idleness, for it is impossible for him [to exist] without sustenance (i.e., food) so he will attack and rob people and eventually forget his learning.

### 2. רבי עובדיה מברטנורא, שם:

וְכָל תּוֹרָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה. וְאִם תֹּאמַר יְהִי עֲמֵל בְּתוֹרָה תְּמִיד וְיִגִיעַתָּה תִּהְיֶה מְשַׁבַּחַת עוֹן, וְיִמָּה צָרָךְ לְמְלָאכָה, לְכַר הַזֶּקֶק לומר וְכָל תּוֹרָה שְׂאִין עִמָּה מְלָאכָה סוֹפָה בְּטֵלָה, לְפִי שְׂאִי אֶפְשָׁר לוֹ בְּלֹא מְזוֹנוֹת, וּמְלַסְטֵם אֶת הַבְּרִיּוֹת וּמְשַׁבַּחַת תְּלַמּוּדוֹ.

## Historical Background

### 3. Talmud Gittin, 59a:

From the days of Moses and until the days of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi we do not find unparalleled greatness in Torah knowledge and unparalleled greatness in wealth and high political office, in a single individual.

### 3. גיטין נט, ע"א:

מימות משה ועד רבי לא מצונו תורה וגדולה במקום אחד.

### 4. Talmud Brachot, 43a:

One only recites: "Who creates fragrant trees" (Bore Minei Bessamim), over the balsam from the house of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, and over balsam from the house of Caesar.

### 4. ברכות מ"ג, ע"א:

אין מברכין "בורא עצי בשמים" אלא על אפרסמון של בית רבי, ועל אפרסמון של בית קיסר.

### 5. Talmud Baba Batra, 8a:

Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi once opened his storehouses to distribute food during years of drought. He said: Masters of Bible, masters of Mishna, masters of Talmud, masters of *halakha*, masters of *aggada* may enter and receive food from me, but ignoramuses should not enter. Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram, whom Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi did not know, pushed his way in, and entered, and said to him: Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, sustain me. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi said to him: My son, have you read the Bible? Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram said to him, out of modesty: No. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi continued: Have you studied Mishna? Once again, Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram said to him: No. Rabbi

### 5. בבא בתרא, ח ע"א:

רבי פתח אוצרות בשני בצורת אמר יבנסו בעלי מקרא בעלי משנה בעלי תלמוד בעלי הלכה בעלי הגדה אבל עמי הארץ אל יבנסו דחק רבי יונתן בן עמרם ונכנס אמר לו רבי פרנסני אמר לו בני קרית אמר לו לאו שנית אמר לו לאו אם בן במה אפרנסך [אמר לו] פרנסני ככלב ובעורב! פרנסיה.

Yehuda HaNasi then asked him: If so, by what merit should I sustain you? Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram said to him: Sustain me like a dog and like a raven, who are given food even though they have not learned anything. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi was moved by his words and fed him.

After Rabbi Yonatan left, Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi sat, and was distressed, and said: Woe is me, that I have given my bread to an ignoramus. His son, Rabbi Shimon bar Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, said to him: Perhaps he was your disciple Yonatan ben Amram, who never in his life wanted to materially benefit from the honor shown to the Torah? They investigated the matter and found that such was the case. Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi then said: Let everyone enter, as there may also be others who hide the fact that they are true Torah scholars... Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi says: Suffering comes to the world only due to ignoramuses.

### 6. Talmud Ketuvot, 103b:

My son Shimon should be the halachic authority. My son Gamliel should be the *Nasi (President)*. Hanina bar Hama will sit at the head of the yeshiva.

### 7. Tosefta, Shviit 1,1:

Rabban Gamliel and his court established that it would be permissible to work the land until Rosh Hashanah.

## Practical Discussion

### 8. Talmud Yoma, 35b:

the Sages taught: A poor person, and a wealthy person, and a wicked person come to face judgment before the Heavenly court for their conduct in this world. To the poor person, the members of the court say: Why did you not engage in Torah? If he rationalizes his conduct and says: I was poor and preoccupied with earning enough to pay for my sustenance and that is why I did not engage in Torah study, they say to him: Were you any poorer than Hillel, who was wretchedly poor and nevertheless attempted to study Torah?

They said about Hillel the Elder that each and every day he would work and earn a half-dinar, half of which he would give to the guard of the study hall and half of which he spent for his sustenance and the sustenance of the members of his family. One time he did not find employment to earn a wage, and the guard of the study hall did not allow him to enter. He ascended to the roof, suspended himself, and sat at the edge of the skylight in order to hear the words of the Torah of the living G-d from the mouths of Shemaya and Avtalyon, the spiritual leaders of that generation.

The Sages continued and said: That day was Shabbat eve and it was the winter season of Tevet, and snow fell upon him from the sky. When it was dawn, Shemaya said to Avtalyon: Avtalyon, my brother, every day at this hour the study hall is already bright from the sunlight streaming through the skylight, and today it is dark; is it perhaps a cloudy day? They focused their eyes and saw the image of a man in the skylight. They ascended and found him covered

בְּתַר דְּנִפְקֵי יְתִיב רַבִּי וְקָא מַצְטַעַר  
וְאָמַר אוֹי לִי שְׁנֵיתֵי פְתִי לַעֲמֵם  
הָאֲרָץ אָמַר לְפָנָיו רַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בְּרַ  
רַבִּי שְׁמָא יוֹכְתֵן בְּן עַמְרָם  
תְּלַמִּידָךְ הוּא שְׂאִיבֵנּוּ רוּצָה  
לִיהֲנוֹת מִכְבוֹד תּוֹרָה מִיָּמָיו בְּדָקוּ  
וְאִשְׁכַּח אָמַר רַבִּי יְכֻסֵּהוּ הַכֹּל...  
דְּאָמַר רַבִּי אֵין פּוֹרְעָנוּת בָּא  
לְעוֹלָם אֱלָא בְּשִׁבְלֵי עַמֵּי הָאֲרָץ.

### 6. כתובות ק"ג, ע"ב:

שמעון בני חכם, גמליאל בני –  
נשיא, חנינא בר חמא ישב  
בראש.

### 7. תוספתא שביעית, א, א:

רבן גמליאל ובית דינו התקינו  
שיהו מותרין בעבודת הארץ עד  
ראש השנה.

### 8. יומא, ל"ה, ב:

תְּנוּ רַבְּנָן: עָבִי וְעָשִׂיר וְרָשָׁע בְּאֵין  
לְדִין, לְעֵבִי אוֹמְרִים לוֹ: מַפְּנֵי מַה  
לֹא עָסַקְתָּ בְּתוֹרָה? אִם אוֹמֵר:  
עָבִי הָיִיתִי, וְטָרַד בְּמַזוֹנוֹתֵי,  
אוֹמְרִים לוֹ: כְּלוּם עָבִי הָיִיתָ יוֹתֵר  
מהלל?

אָמְרוּ עָלָיו עַל הַלַּל הַזֶּהן שֶׁבְּכֹל  
יוֹם וְיוֹם הָיָה עוֹשֶׂה וּמְשַׁתְּבֵר  
בְּטָרְפָּעִיק, חֲצִיֹּו הָיָה נוֹתֵן  
לְשׁוֹמֵר בֵּית הַמְּדֻרָּשׁ, וְחֲצִיֹּו  
לְפָרְנָסָתוֹ וּלְפָרְנָסַת אֲנָשֵׁי בֵּיתוֹ.  
פְּעַם אַחַת לֹא מָצָא לְהַשְׁתַּכֵּר,  
וְלֹא הֵיחֹו שׁוֹמֵר בֵּית הַמְּדֻרָּשׁ  
לְהַכְּסֵי. עָלָה וְנִתְּלָה וְיָשַׁב עַל פִּי  
אֲרוֹבָה כְּדִי שִׁישְׁמַע דְּבָרֵי אֱלֹהִים

### חיים מפי שמעיה ואבטליון

אָמְרוּ: אוֹתוֹ הַיּוֹם עָרַב שַׁבָּת  
הָיָה, וְהִתְקַוְּפַת טַבַּת הַיְּתֵה, וַיֵּרַד  
עָלָיו שֶׁלֶג מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם. כְּשֶׁעָלָה  
עַמּוּד הַשַּׁחַר אָמַר לוֹ שְׁמַעִיה  
לאבטליון: אבטליון אַחֵי, בְּכֹל יוֹם  
הַבַּיִת מְאִיר וְהַיּוֹם אָפֵל, שְׁמָא  
יוֹם הַמַּעֲוֵן הוּא? הַצִּיצוֹ עֵינֵיהֶן  
וְרָאוּ דַמּוֹת אָדָם בְּאֲרוֹבָה. עָלוּ

with snow three cubits high. They extricated him from the snow, and they washed him and smeared oil on him, and they sat him opposite the bonfire to warm him. They said: This man is worthy for us to desecrate Shabbat for him.

וּמָצְאוּ עָלָיו רוּם שְׁלֹשׁ אַמּוֹת  
שָׁלֵג. פָּרְקוּהוּ, וְהִרְחִיצוּהוּ  
וְסִבּוּהוּ, וְהוֹשִׁיבוּהוּ בְּנֶגֶד  
הַמְדוּחָה. אָמְרוּ: רָאִי זֶה לְחַלֵּל  
עָלָיו אֶת הַשַּׁבָּת.

### 9. Maimonides, Talmud Torah, 3,10:

Whosoever sets his heart to pursue the study of the Torah but do no secular work at all, and permits himself to be supported by charity, behold him, he blasphemed the Name, and degraded the Torah, and shadowed the light of religion, and caused evil to be brought upon himself, and deprived his own life from its share in the world to come; because it is forbidden to enjoy aught in this world in return of the study of the words of the Torah.

9. רמב"ם, הלכות תלמוד תורה,  
ג, י:

כָּל הַמְשִׁיחַ עַל לְבוּ שְׁיַעֲסֵק  
בְּתוֹרָה וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה מְלָאכָה,  
וְיִתְפָּרֵס מִן הַצְּדָקָה - הָרִי זֶה  
חָלַל אֶת הַשֵּׁם, וּבָזָה אֶת הַתּוֹרָה,  
וְכַבֵּה מְאֹד הַדָּת, וְגָרַם רָעָה  
לְעַצְמוֹ, וְנִטַּל חֵייו מִן הָעוֹלָם  
הַבָּא, לְפִי שְׂאִסוּר לְהַנּוֹת בְּדַבְרֵי  
תּוֹרָה בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה.

### 10. Kessef Mishne, there:

All the sages, before and after the Rambam, were earning money from the public and the community. And even if we say that all authorities agree with the Rambam, we live in a generation where we must accept money from the public, so the students could continue with their learning. If not, they will not sit and learn and the torah will be forgotten from Israel.

10. כסף משנה, שם:

וראינו כל חכמי ישראל קודם זמן  
רבינו ואחריו נוהגים ליטול שכרם  
מן הצבור וגם כי נודה שהלכה  
כדברי רבינו בפירוש המשנה  
אפשר שהסכימו כן כל חכמי  
הדורות משום עת לעשות לה'  
הפרו תורתך שאילו לא היתה  
פרנסת הלומדים והמלמדים  
מצויה לא היו יכולים לטרוח  
בתורה כראוי והיתה התורה  
משתכחת ח"ו ובהיותה מצויה  
יוכלו לעסוק ויגדיל תורה ויאדיה.

### 11. Pninei Halacha, Limud Torah, 3, 7:

According to all the sages that agree for the student to be paid from the public, this approval applies only if the student is returning back to the community. He can do so by teaching torah to kids or adults, serving as rabbis of shuls, engaging in communal events etc. However, if one is not engaged in communal needs and only learns torah for his own sake and knowledge- this student should not be paid by the community and should be working along his studies.

11. פניני הלכה, ליקוטים א,

קיום התורה והחינוך, ג, ז:

לפי הנראה מדברי הפוסקים  
שנזכרו, אין בזה היתר כללי לכל  
תלמידי הישיבות ללמוד תורה  
ולהתפרנס מקופת הציבור.  
משום שכל ההיתר הוא אך ורק  
כדי להצמיח תלמידי חכמים  
ומורים, אבל מי שלומד שלא על  
מנת ללמד, עדיף שיתפרנס  
מעמל כפיו ולא מלימוד התורה.

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## Liberman cancels daycare subsidies for kids of full-time yeshiva students

New finance minister announces only families in which both parents work part-time are eligible for NIS 1,000 monthly benefit; Haredi MKs slam 'destructive and wicked' move

By TOI STAFF

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[/https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-cancels-daycare-subsidies-for-kids-of-full-time-yeshiva-students](https://www.timesofisrael.com/liberman-cancels-daycare-subsidies-for-kids-of-full-time-yeshiva-students)

Finance Minister Avigdor Liberman on Wednesday announced plans to introduce new conditions for receiving daycare subsidies for kids up to age 3, effectively ending them for some 21,000 children whose fathers are full-time yeshiva students.

Liberman said the subsidies will be granted only if both the child's parents work at least 24 hours a week. Currently, only mothers must meet this requirement for a family to receive the monthly subsidy of NIS 1,000 (\$305), with fathers exempt if they are involved in studies.

The change is expected to end the subsidies for around 18,000 households in which the fathers study Torah full-time and will take effect at the start of the new school year in September.

Families in which the father does not work at least 24 hours a week but is involved in academic or vocational studies will still be eligible for the subsidies, which will end for yeshiva students only.

In total, the daycare subsidies are estimated to cost the state a yearly NIS 1.2 billion, of which about a third goes to families in which the father studies at a religious seminary.

### Employment rates 1995–2018

Gainful employment of men aged 25 to 64  
Percentage figures

