

# Torah

# Protection

The benefits and powers of the Torah are numerous. The Rambam rules that all things necessary for the protection of a city we collect from the people of the city except not from Torah scholars. They don't need שמירה, protection, as the Torah protects them (Hilchos Shechainim 6:6).

The Gemara (Makkos 10a) teaches that Torah protects from the מלאך המות (See Sota 2a, Rashi). R' Chisda was once learning and the agent of the מלאך המות couldn't approach him, since he wouldn't pause from learning. However, when the cedar by the Beis Midrash split, R' Chisda paused, thereby succumbing to the agent.

A similar story is told of Dovid Hamelech, who was learning the entire day, protecting himself from the מלאך המות. However, when he heard rustling from branches of a tree behind his house, Dovid went out to see what was happening. As he was ascending the stairs, a stair caved in, diverting him from the study of Torah, which led to his death (Shabbos 30b). Parenthetically, this is one reason the seudas melave malka is called the seuda of Dovid, as we say, דא היא סעודתא דדוד מלכא, משחא. Since he was told he would die on Shabbos, for each Shabbos he survived he made a thanksgiving seuda on Motzai Shabbos..

During wartime when bombs were falling, the son of R' Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik, known as the Griz, pleaded with him to leave the bedroom where he was learning. Eventually he conceded. Soon after, that bedroom was bombed, causing heavy damage. Contrary to what his son expected—a big thank you and gratitude—the Griz said that if he had been there, the damage wouldn't have happened, as the Torah would have served as protection.

R' Eliyahu Hakohen Ha'Itamri (1659-1729) once arose in the middle of the night to learn. Since it was dark and he couldn't see, he had to feel for his belt. Thinking he found it, he prepared to put it on. He realized that it was a snake when it began to wrap itself around him. However, as he began to learn anyway, the snake unwrapped itself and went away. For this reason, he titled his sefer אזור אליהו.

A year before the Holocaust, the Chazon Ish closed himself in a room and was heard crying, "Until now the Torah of R' Boruch Ber, R' Chaim Ozer, and R' Shimon Shkop protected our people from the Nazis, but without them, who knows what will be?" Within a year these three gedolim passed away, immediately prior to the Holocaust.

Aside from preventing death, we also know that Torah heals, as Chazal

teach that if one has a pain in his head, throat, stomach, bones, or entire body he should study Torah (Eruvin 54a). This is also symbolized by the fact that at Matan Torah, the blemished were healed (Shemos 20:15, see Bamidbar Rabba 7:1. On a deeper level, we can take to mean the Chazal that teaches a blind person was healed at Har Sinai (19:11, Rashi) as now that we received the Torah, we could see the world with the proper view. Without Torah, one is blind, since he is unable to view reality through the proper lens.)

How is it that the blemished were healed at Har Sinai? The Torah is perfect, as it says תורה ה' תמימה (Tehillim 19:8). Consequently, at Har Sinai, everyone was healed because Torah is perfect and heals any imperfection (See Gur Aryeh 20:15 Shemos).

One last story on the power of Torah. A philanthropist who was donating money to Yeshivos was asked to give money to kiruv. Having the means to give to only one cause, he asked R' Aharon Leib Steinman if he should give the money to kiruv, since those in yeshiva will learn regardless of his money. R' Steinman responded that yeshivos are more important, since it is because of their learning that there are so many baalei teshuva. The less money you give them, the fewer baalei teshuva there will be.

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