AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps
Torah Portion – Va-Etchanan

Study and Practice

רבי יוסי אומר: כל האומר אין לו תורה - אין לו תורה; פשיטא!
אלא כל האומר אין לו אלא תורה - אין לו אלא תורה; הא נמי פשיטא!
.ילו תורה אין לו. מאי טעמא? אמר רב פפא, אמר קרא: "ולמדתם... ועשיתם"
אלא דאפ כל שישנו בעשיה ישנו בלמידה, כל שאינו בעשיה אינו בלמידה

Rabbi Yossi taught: "Anyone who says he has no Torah, has no Torah."

But that's obvious! Rather, Rabbi Yossi must have taught: "Anyone who says he has only Torah, has only Torah."

But that's also obvious! Rather, he must have taught: "[Anyone who says he has only Torah] doesn't even have Torah."

What's the proof?

Rav Pappa said, it comes from the following verse: *That you may learn them...to do them...* (Deut. 5:1)

[This means that] anyone engaged in doing mitzvahs is regarded as also being engaged in learning about them. But anyone who is not engaged in doing mitzvahs is regarded as not being engaged in doing them.

[*Yevamot* 109b]

QUESTION: What is the connection between study and practice, between the things we know and the ways we act on our knowledge? While the Jewish community has always placed a high value on study, this teaching suggests that study without action is not just part of the larger picture, it's none of the picture at all! The teaching says that a person "has Torah" only when they act on it. What does it mean to "have Torah?"

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