

Pirkei Avot 1:4

Translation

Yosi ben Yo'ezer, a man of Tz'reidah, and Yosi ben Yochanan, a man of Jerusalem, received from them. Yosi ben Yo'ezer a man of Tz'reidah, says: **Let your house be a meeting place for the wise, and sit on the ground in the dust at their feet, and drink their words with thirst.**

A step beyond making one's home a meeting place for the wise is the covering of oneself *with the dust of their feet*. The desire to learn should not be relegated to places which are comfortable or pleasant. Even when dust will cover the learner the educational process should not cease.

Maimonides

A meeting place: a house of assembly. He wanted to say that you should make your home always ready to collect together sages, just like in synagogues and in houses of study—so that when a person says to his/her friend: "Where shall I join together with you, where shall I meet with you?" The one will say to him/her: "In the home of so and so."

יוסי בן יועזר איש צרדה
ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים
קבלו מהם. יוסי בן יועזר
איש צרדה אומר, יהי ביתך
בית ועד לחכמים, והוי
מתאבק בעפר רגליהם, והוי
שותה בצמא את דבריהם:

If *Let your house be a meeting place for the wise* speaks of education as beyond institutions and permeating all of life, and *cover yourself with the dust of their feet* urges the educational process even in discomfort, *drink their words thirstily* speaks of the knowledge-seeker.

Just as water is a basic need for sustaining life, so is proper knowledge the water of human existence. Water is not an option, nor is education. The seeker of knowledge should approach learning with the seriousness of the desert-hiker in search of water. It is not a nice title before the name or a few letters after it, it is existence itself.

The emphasis on drinking thirstily suggests that in education, the acquisition of knowledge is not even the prime value. Instead, it is the subjective condition of seeking, desiring, wanting to learn, which is fundamental. From the right desire and orientation knowledge will come, but the key is the desire itself. The right desire guarantees the continuousness of education. Studies can never be completed, as the need for water is never completely suspended.

As a Tree by the Waters

Reuven Bulka

One of the three main foundations of the world, the learning and living of Torah, is here more fully explored in its educational aspect. Education is usually seen as an institutionalized aspect of life. Schools and other public-oriented facilities provide a variety of programs to satisfy all ages.

Essentially, however, education is not an institution as much as a way of life. The learning process cannot be localized in times and space. Instead, the life of each family should be an education. The doors of knowledge should never be closed, and every house should inspire the ambience of wisdom by being *a meeting place for the wise*.