

Rabbi David Wolpe's

Off The Pulpit

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The Story of Rabbi Hiyya

Judaism may seem abstract, but the things that keep it alive are very concrete. If you cannot pay for food and clothes, for the lights and the rooms, the desks and the books, the ideas have nowhere to take root. This deep truth is expressed in a powerful story about Rabbi Hiyya.

The Talmud relates that once in frustration Rabbi Hanina said to Rabbi Hiyya, "How can you argue with me? If the Torah were ever forgotten from Israel, I could reconstruct it with my logic." Rabbi Hiyya's reply? "Perhaps, but I ensure it will not be lost. I cultivate flax, spin thread, twist ropes, and prepare traps by means of which I catch

deer. The flesh of these I distribute among poor orphans, and I use the hides to make parchment, on which I write the Torah. Provided with this I go to places where there are no teachers, and instruct the children" (Ket. 103b).

Rabbi Hiyya reminds us that Torah requires a practical bent. Synagogues and schools depend upon contributions. Ideas need homes just as people do. We can understand why the author of the Mishna, Rabbi Judah the Prince, exclaimed "How great are the works of Rabbi Hiyya!"

Two-Statement Solution

Watch Rabbi Wolpe speak at AIPAC's General Session.

Rabbi Wolpe's new book *David: The Divided Heart* is available now.