

## **But you who cling to Hashem, your G-d – you are alive today... you shall safeguard and perform them, for it is your wisdom and discernment... as this is the Torah. (4:4,6,8)**

We have been bequeathed an incredible gift: the Torah. It is the source of our wisdom, understanding, character refinement, religious observance; indeed, it is *chaim kulchem hayom*, our life – today – and every day. Without Torah in its entirety we are lost. We may not accept the Torah piecemeal in accordance with our comfort zone. That is not Torah. It is everything – or else it is simply intellectual knowledge. It is a life source only when it is imbibed, seen, studied, understood and observed. What about someone who has had little opportunity to learn or has started late? What about the fellow whose acumen does not tolerate the Torah's dialectic? Does the person who spends most of his day engrossed in earning a livelihood have less a "life" of Torah, because he has little time to learn?

First, everyone, regardless of his intellectual capacity, should learn. Success is not measured by how much one grasps or by how much one knows. Success is measured by how much effort one expends, how much free time one devotes to Torah study. Everyone should have a set time for studying Torah. Everyone has been gifted with varied intellectual abilities. If Hashem has given one a sharp, analytical mind, he is expected to use his gift to develop a greater and deeper knowledge of Torah. Each person should maximize his potential based upon his ability and time. The working person should devote a set time to learn. The individual who is challenged by the difficulty in grasping Torah should study what comes easier – until he is able to ascend to the next level. No one is excused from studying Torah.

Furthermore, it all depends on what is a person's primary focus: is it the mundane, the secular, or is it Torah? *Chazal* teach that, attached to the walls of the *Bais Hamikdash*, were several small chambers called *lishkos*. Some were built within the parameters of the *Bais Hamikdash*, while others were built facing the outside of the *Bais Hamikdash*. Interestingly, the location of the room did not determine its sanctity (whether it maintained the same level of *kedushah*, holiness, as the *Bais Hamikdash* proper). The determining factor was the placement of the doors. *Chazal* (*Mishnayos Maaser Sheini* 3:8) say that, if the door opened into the *Bais Hamikdash*, the chamber was considered holy on the level of the *Bais Hamikdash*. This was true even if the *lishkah* was built outside the confines of the *Azarah* of the *Bais Hamikdash*. Nonetheless, as long as the door opened to the *Bais Hamikdash*, it was holy. If, however, the door opened to the outside, even if the room was built within the parameters of the *Bais Hamikdash*, it was not holy. The door made the difference.

*Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl*, derives from this *halachah* that the determining factor which decides whether a person is within the confines of *kedushah* is where his thoughts are. One can spend the day in a *bais hamedrash* studying Torah, but his mind is actually elsewhere. He really is not in the *bais hamedrash*. His body may be situated in the study hall, but -- if his thoughts are elsewhere --

he is elsewhere. Conversely, one may spend the majority of his day occupied with the mundane physical reality of earning a living; yet, he makes time early in the morning and late in the evening to study Torah. If these two hours are where his head is focused, if these salvaged hours are the true centerpiece of his day, then this is where he is. After all is said and done, it is not where one is situated that determines whether he is in the sphere of holiness or not – it is where his thoughts, his intentions, his desires are.

Perhaps we might add that, if someone were really situated in the *bais hamedrash*, if his learning were truly absolute, his mind would not wander. One does not entertain thoughts of the mundane unless something is lacking in his learning. Thus, the locus of his holiness is questionable.