

And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them. (21:1)

Rashi comments, *lifneihem*, “before them” (*Klal Yisrael*) and not before those who worship the stars and constellations. When Moshe *Rabbeinu* descended from *Har Sinai* and saw the nation’s repulsive behavior, dancing around the Golden Calf that the people had created, he shattered the *Luchos*, Tablets, that he was carrying; thus, the Torah returned to its Heavenly sphere. It no longer had value in this world, because the Jewish People did not appreciate it. *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, distinguishes between secular knowledge/ disciplines – which one can study, and in which he can even achieve proficiency, without adhering to the lessons he acquires – and Torah study. In contrast, Torah study demands that one be *lilmod al menas laasos*, studies for the express purpose of fulfilling its mandates. Otherwise, the Torah (as far as it is concerned) loses its *kedushah*, sanctity, and is no longer Torah. Thus, after the nation made a Golden Calf, the Torah could no longer find a place in this world.

When *Klal Yisrael* proclaimed a resounding *Naase v’Nishma*, they committed to carrying out the *mitzvos* of the Torah even if they did not understand, “hear” the rationale. They were serving Hashem through the lens of viewing every *mitzvah* as an *afkaata d’Malka*, decree from the King. The Jewish people do not question. They simply do what He instructs them to do. We now develop a deeper meaning to *Naase v’Nishma*. We understand that the Torah’s value, our appreciation of its unimaginable worth, is what determines our acceptance of, and concomitantly, Hashem’s acquiescence to give it to us. Our appreciation is based primarily on “doing,” our commitment to carrying out its *mitzvos*. This is why *naase* precedes *nishma*. True, hearing and learning are important mainstays without which we really cannot carry out the Torah’s imperatives, but unless we commit to action, the Torah loses its *kedushah*. By lack of commitment to action, we demonstrate that we only seek a novelty to study as a cultural relic which has no credible impact on present society.

Judaism is a faith that entails action. Thus, the position vis-à-vis Hashem of the individual whose intellectual content might be lacking due to background, is not impacted unless his lack of knowledge causes him to fall short in action. While without learning one can hardly know the “how to’s” and “when’s,” his desire and attempt to do it right will motivate his learning. If it does not, then something is missing concerning his attitude toward *mitzvah* performance.