

If you will not listen to Me and will not perform all of these commandments. (26:14)

Rashi explains that "not listening" to Hashem refers to an individual who studies *Torah* without *ameilus*, toil. One who does not labor in *Torah*, but rather takes a complacent, back-seat attitude, will eventually refrain from performing Hashem's *mitzvos*. *Rashi* adds that this is just the first step in a seven step chain-reaction of sin, in which one regresses from a lack of intensity in *Torah* study to the point that he denies the very existence of Hashem. This is a remarkable statement. To think that a lack of intensity, a weakening of one's resolve to toil in *Torah* study, leads to such a devastating end is amazing. Yet, it is unfortunately true.

Horav Gedalyah Shorr, zl, cites *Sforno* who predicts that one who does not "walk" in Hashem's statutes, who does not study *Torah b'ameilus*, will eventually fail to perform all the *mitzvos*; rather, he will become selective in his *mitzvah* performance. This will lead to his total rejection of *mitzvos*. This attitude prevailed in Europe during the *Haskalah* movement following the Emancipation. At first, people contended that one could be a good Jew even if he did not study all the time. One should supplement his intellectual development by studying secular pursuits, such as the arts and sciences. The next step was selective *mitzvah* observance. There were some *mitzvos* that should be observed, while others were labeled as archaic, not in vogue with progressive Judaism. The degeneration continued, as less observant Jews began to ridicule and deride those Jews who did observe *Torah*. The *talmidei chachamim*, *Torah* scholars, became their next target of abuse. Shortly thereafter, their assimilation was completed as they apostatized themselves and intermarried with the gentiles.

This regression did not take long, beginning with a simple slowing down, a cooling off of their passion for *Torah* study. Children were not permitted to attend the "antiquated" *yeshivos* that taught only *Torah*. It was necessary that they be inculcated with the secular culture that was prevalent at the time. To be accepted in society, it was necessary to be like "them". The rest is history that has been coming back to haunt us generation after generation. People who refuse to learn from the past are relegated to relive it.