

## If you will follow My decrees. (26:3)

A clear difference exists between a Jewish child reared in a lifestyle replete with Torah values and one who is not. Is there a cure –to all of society’s ills, to American family crisis, to the troubles that haunt our youth and plague our adults? Yes, there is, and it is to be found in the words of the *Midrash’s* commentary to the opening *pasuk* of our *Parshah*. *Im bechukosai teileichu*, “If you will follow My decrees.” The *Midrash* quotes David *Hamelech*, *Bechol yom veyom ha’yisee mechashev lemakom peloni, u’l’vais dirah pelonis ani holeich, v’hayah raglai molichos osi l’batei kneisios u’lbatei medrashos*, “Every day I had planned on going to a specific place, to a certain house etc. Yet, my legs (made me/guided me) walked me to the *shul* or to the *bais hamedrash*” (free translation).

David *Hamelech* remarks that he had many choices concerning where to go, places to visit, people to see. Clearly, David *Hamelech* was not talking about places that were inappropriate for an individual of his stature. He was simply stating the fact that he did not necessarily plan on going to the *bais hamedrash*. His legs had taken him there. This means (I think) that his entire body, his psyche, was attuned and focused toward the *shul* and house of study. It was how he was raised; his education and upbringing so influenced him that to go anywhere other than the *bais hamedrash* was to veer off course. His Jewish instinct always emerged victorious.

Every day we are pulled in many directions by the *yetzer hara*, evil inclination. At times, the places are not bad, but they are of a dubious nature – certainly not the type of place where a *ben Torah* or a *bas Yisrael* should frequent. When we raise our children in a Torah milieu, with values, ethics and morals dictated by the Torah, we are ensuring that their legs will guide them to the *bais hamedrash*. When we choose the Torah center as destination, we, by example, impart to our children what it is that we value. Our GPS is homing toward the *makom Torah* – which is where a Jew belongs.

I write this after reading an article written fifty years ago, decrying the troubles that haunt our youth, from delinquency, to intoxication, and other forms of addiction, rebelliousness toward parental authority and disrespect of the law and, for that matter, any form of authority. Parents are blamed; teachers are considered inept, schools are labeled insensitive. The problem, however, is that there is no religious component to their learning. When there is no Torah study, there is nothing; the education is deficient. Even when Torah is studied, but it is not studied from the perspective that it is *heilig*, holy, *Toras Moshe*, authored by *Hashem Yisborach*, then it is not Torah study! We cannot prevent the lawlessness and rebelliousness of our youth with an educational diet founded in secularism, with Torah viewed as nothing more than another form of intellectual discipline. If it is not *Toras Moshe* – it is *chachmah*, wisdom – which is no different than any other form of educational discipline that does not inspire the heart and soul of the student. Without inspiration, there can be no lasting influence.

There used to be a time when idealism for Torah was a matter of pride: when parents were more

concerned about how much their children knew – than how much they would earn; when the standard of excellence was erudition, not bank account; when *harbotzas Torah* was measured by personal outreach, not by how many institutions one supports. If we are to impart the proper Torah values to our children, we must first be sure to make those values a part of our own lives.

We are so concerned about depriving our children of the “important” things in life. One cannot promote Orlando and expect his son’s legs to walk him to the *bais hamedrash*. Vacations are important, and, for those who have the ability, why not? Nonetheless, it cannot be at the expense of the *shul*, the *bais hamedrash*, and standards of *kashrus* and moral/ethical behavior that are officially the parents’ standard when they are home. In other words, if one seeks to raise a “David *Hamelech*,” he must provide his child with the education and spiritual backdrop to enhance his upbringing. *Nachas* is a gift that keeps on giving, but only if one keeps working on it.