

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

Rashi interprets “following” in Hashem’s decree as, *Shetiheyu ameilim baTorah*, “You will toil in Torah; engage in intensive Torah study.” If one studies Torah in a lackadaisical manner, it undermines the importance of Torah. One does not take chances; his mind will not wander when he is holding dynamite. He will be very careful. Likewise, one who lacks the respect for the Torah as manifest by his lack of intensity, will ultimately reject the Torah and everything for which it stands. *Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, zl*, was a *gadol*, Torah giant, whose *ameilus*, toil, was evident when he gave *shiur*, rendered his Torah lecture. He would sit on an old, rickety wooden chair and refuse to rest his arms on its armrests. When he reached the age of eighty, his students noticed that this was his practice even when not teaching. Wherever he sat, he refused to rest his arms on the armrest.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* once explained to his *talmidim*, students, the reason for his refusal to “enjoy” such a simple pleasure as resting his arms. One of the Torah giants of the previous generation met another distinguished Torah scholar and presented to him a difficulty which he had regarding a passage in the *Talmud*. In no time, the other Torah scholar explained the difficulty in such a manner that it left the presenter dumbfounded. He had slaved over this *Chazal*, while his friend took one look and immediately illuminated the entire passage. Needless to say, he was troubled. He wondered: “Is there something wrong with my Torah study?”

Apparently, his anxiety showed, because the other scholar immediately said, “Why are you surprised that I had an answer, while you kept struggling with the passage? The reason is quite simple. You are a wealthy man, thus allowing for you to learn amid luxury: i.e. leather chairs, sturdy desks, warm, carpeted study. I, on the other hand, am poor, and, thus, compelled to sit on a shaky chair, writing on a broken table, in a cold, drafty room. When one studies Torah *mitoch ha’dchak*, amid strenuous, formidable circumstances, one merits to achieve a loftier level in Torah understanding and erudition.” The *talmidim* now understood why their revered *Rebbe* pushed himself so much. It was all about attaining greater heights in Torah achievement.