

If you will walk in My laws. (26:3)

Rashi cites *Chazal* who maintain that "*halichah b'mitzvos*," walking in Hashem's *mitzvos*, refers to intensive *Torah* study. One who diligently applies himself to studying *Torah* merits the blessings detailed in the *parsha*. **Horav Chaim Shmulevitz, zl**, cites *Chazal* in the *Talmud Yoma 35b* who suggest a possible scenario of the dialogue that ensues in the Heavenly Court on the Day of Judgment when each human being stands before Hashem. If a poor man is questioned regarding his lack of *Torah* study and he replies, "I was poor and too busy earning a living," he is admonished for not following the example of Hillel who studied *Torah* amidst abject poverty. To the rich man who excuses his lack of *Torah* study due to his overwhelming preoccupation with his business affairs, the rejoinder is, "Were you wealthier than R' Elazar *ben* Charsam who rejected his awesome wealth so that he could study *Torah*?" Finally, to the wicked man who justifies his lack of *Torah* Study and his nefarious behavior, saying, "I was handsome and preoccupied with my evil inclination," the court says, "You were not more handsome than Yosef *ha'tzaddik* who triumphed over his *yetzer hora*." Thus, these three groups of people, the poor, the rich and the wicked are all accountable for their lack of *Torah* study.

We learn a lesson from *Chazal's* words. While we recognize each group's circumstances and position in life, each must still respond to the question, "Why did you not study *Torah*?" Three great *tzaddikim*, each in his own way, stand as the standard by which we measure all people. Is this appropriate? Should we not make some concession to the fact that we are only ordinary people, while they are giants. Their exemplary behavior may have been natural for them, but it is not for us. Why should their level of commitment obligate us all? *Rav* Chaim explains that *Torah* study is different. It represents the very essence of one's eternal existence. In the area of *mitzvos*, we may make concessions and justify our actions. We cannot do this when we are dealing with eternity. Since *Torah* is the source of one's *nitzchiyus*, eternal life, we are all equal in this regard. When it comes to living, no distinction exists between the great *tzaddik* and the simple Jew; they both need life!

When one is seeking a luxury item, it makes sense that each pursue it according to his own refined taste. If an individual lacks bread or water, regardless of his station in life, he will pursue it with resourcefulness and vigor. This is *Torah*! It is indispensable; it is basic; it is an essential prerequisite for life. Every man must realize his individual potential.

Rav Chaim adds one more point. We see from *Chazal* that one is not merely judged for the amount of time he has expended studying *Torah*. He is judged according to how close he has come to

realizing his potential. One can study all day and become a profound *Torah* scholar. If, however, he has not achieved the profound level of erudition of which he is capable, then he must answer for his failure to do so. It only makes sense that when we are dealing with an individual's life, anything short of the total goal is not acceptable.

This *pasuk* declares that regardless of where we are or the nature of our circumstances, Hashem will never reject His people. What is the meaning of "not rejecting"? *Chovas Halevovos* encourages us to look truthfully at our situation among the nations who govern us during our tenure in exile. We will apparently note that while we do not see eye to eye with the governing nations theologically and morally, it is obvious that our circumstances are similar to theirs in the areas of livelihood and sustenance.

Their middle-class labors, however, more strenuously than does ours; their poor and homeless are in a much dire situation than ours. Yet, we are in exile, while they are not. To what do we attribute this "luck"? It is because Hashem has promised not to reject us. **Horav Simcha Zisel Ziv, zl**, comments that after having read the entire *Tochechah*, curses of the *Torah*, one would anticipate that hardly a remnant of *Klal Yisrael* would survive. And yet, after all that, we are here, thriving and growing. Furthermore, the entire *Torah Shebaal Peh*, oral law, was permanently arranged after the *galus* began. The *Mishnah*, *Talmud* and works of the *Rishonim* and *Achronim* all came into being after the destruction. All of this is attributable to the fact that Hashem did not reject us.

Thus, **Horav Avigdor Miller, Shlita**, suggests the remarkable insight inherent in the seemingly innocuous statement, "*I will not reject them*," has a profound meaning - much more than meets the eye. Indeed, this statement includes the last two thousand years of *galus*. These years have been filled with the history of the Jewish communities in Bavel, including their *mesivtos* and countless *talmidei chachamim*. This glorious period of *Torah* learning produced the *halachic* literature of the *Rishonim*, followed by the many *Torah* scholars and *Yeshivos* and Jewish communities, each with its own distinct personality. "*I will not reject them*" is more than a statement of fact; it is a testament that *Torah* will be sustained throughout our history. This modest promise contains within it the major part of *Am Yisrael's* history. Imagine, if our glorious past is the product of Hashem's continued acceptance of us, how much more would he have achieved had we not sinned at all?