

**"After the doings of the land of Egypt... you shall not do...
and after the doings of the land of Canaan... you shall not do,
and in their statutes you shall not walk. My ordinances you
shall do and My statutes you shall keep to walk therein."
(18:3,4)**

Rashi cites the *Sifra* which derives from the words "*to walk therein*" that one should not think that he can exempt himself from *mitzvos*. In other words, one shall not say, "I have learned the wisdom of *Yisrael*, I shall now go and learn the wisdom of other nations." To act in such a manner is equivalent to exempting himself from *Torah* and *mitzvos*. This seems vexing. Why should studying the culture of other nations be viewed as being diametrically opposed to a *Torah* way of life?

Horav Boruch Sorotzkin z.l. suggests the following explanation. *Limud ha'Torah* is not merely an exercise in mental gymnastics or *Talmudic* jurisprudence. It is a way of life. *Torah* study guides the person's life, while it challenges his mind. The words "*to walk in them*" alludes to this concept. The *Torah* teaches a Jew and guides him in "walking" in the path of life. Likewise, the "*wisdom of the nations*" is not a metaphor for describing intellectual knowledge. Rather, it refers to culture and a perspective on living in society.

When the *Torah* states, "*in their statutes you shall not walk,*" it is referring to adapting the lifestyle of alien nations. Consequently, one may never say "I have learned the wisdom of *Yisrael*, I shall now go study the wisdom of other nations." "Study" suggests a way of life. The way of life of other nations is totally incompatible with a *Torah* orientation. An attempt to "enhance" the *Torah* way of life by assimilating "*chochmas ha'goyim*," wisdom of the nations, will only result in confusion and eventual distortion of *Torah* values.

Horav Sorotzkin suggests another approach for interpreting the message of *Chazal*. The frame of reference of "*halicha*," walking, in regard to *Torah* study is defined in *Parashas Bechukosai* as "toiling in *Torah*." The *Torah* states, *ufk, h,ejc ot*, "*if in My statutes you shall walk.*" *Rashi* cites the *Sifra* which interprets "*you shall walk,*" as "*that you shall toil in the area of Torah study.*" Accordingly, in order for one to attain true achievement in *Torah* erudition, serious exertion is an essential prerequisite. Thus, it is impossible to say "I have studied enough *Torah*, now I will study the wisdom of others."

The goal of *Torah* study is constant. One should study with diligence and intellectual exertion. One never completes his *Torah* study. On the contrary, the greater the level of one's profundity, all the more is demanded of him to delve deeper into the wellsprings of *Torah* thought.