

If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments. (26:3)

Rashi comments: One might be able to think that this (*teilechu*, you will go) refers to the fulfillment of *mitzvos*. Then, when it follows with “And (you will) observe My commandments,” that the fulfillment of *mitzvos* has been stated. (There is no reason to reiterate the enjoinder of *mitzvah* observance). There is no interpretation for *Im b’chukosai teilechu*, other than *shetiheyu ameilim baTorah*, that you should be laboring in Torah. Much has been written concerning *Rashi’s* well-known commentary; if one values Torah study, then he is more than happy to exert himself to master it. Torah achievement is granted by Divine favor from its Author – Hashem. One who does not labor demonstrates an uncaring, dispassionate attitude toward Torah study. Why should he be granted this Divine favor? One who is brilliant and is blessed with the uncanny ability to grasp the most difficult Torah passages with the greatest of ease should delve deeper, until he reaches a point in his learning that demands greater toil on his part.

Those who toil in Torah will become the beneficiaries of the many Heaven-sent blessings detailed in the Torah. The *Bais Yisrael, zl*, explains why this is so. He quotes the *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, who comments concerning the well-known *Chazal (Megillah 6b)*, *Yagaati v’lo matzasi – al taamin*, “One who claims to have labored in Torah to no avail – he was not successful - do not believe him.” One who truly labors is guaranteed success. Apparently, he did not work as hard as he asserted. The *Kotzker* asked: Are *Chazal* talking about people who lie, who say they learned, when they did not? If a person claims to have studied diligently, we have no reason to suggest otherwise. The *Rebbe* explains that *al taamin*, do not believe him, does not refer to his study habits, but rather, to his lack of success. One who expends time and effort will succeed. He may not realize it at first, but he will surely achieve success. The effort in and of itself defines success. Every minute exerted in Torah study is success. *Ameilus* is success and, thus, catalyzes blessing.

Someone complained to the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, that he toils in Torah, but has yet to see any sign of success. The *Chafetz Chaim* countered, “Where is it written that one must be erudite (successful)? One must learn. *V’higissa bo yamim v’laylah*, “‘You shall delve in it (Torah) day and night.’ That is what is demanded of us.” Nothing is mentioned concerning acquiring knowledge. Understandably, success is a gift from Hashem, who will surely reward one who toils in His Torah. Success is eventual and inevitable. Indeed, a Holocaust survivor cried to the *Bais Yisrael* that he expends extreme effort in the pursuit of Torah knowledge, but he is unable to grasp and retain what he learns. The *Rebbe* told him not to despair, but rather, to recite *Tehillim*, then study *Mishnayos*. If he would follow this procedure, he would merit to master *Shas* and *poskim*, the *Talmud* and its *Halachic* commentators and arbiters.

A young *yeshivah bachur*, student, of the *Pnei Menachem, zl*, complained bitterly to the *Rebbe* that he finds learning *Gemorah* extremely difficult. He toils and toils, but for all of his effort, he sees no fruits of labor. He is still not proficient in many areas of his learning. The *Rebbe* (who was a brilliant

scholar of note, comfortable in any area of Torah) said, "I envy you. I, too, would love to be able to toil in Torah. I am blessed with the ability to easily grasp the material that I study; thus, I do not have the opportunity to really exert myself. How fortunate are you to be able to really apply yourself to Hashem's Torah. If you will continue your *ameilus*, toil, in Torah, you will merit to achieve success." The *Rebbe's* blessing was actualized.

Ameilus baTorah is not simply a way to learn Torah, but rather, it defines *limud haTorah*. Torah study without *ameilus* is missing the essence of Torah learning. One who loves something enjoys toiling for it. Yaakov *Avinu* toiled for seven years for Rachel *Imeinu* – seven years which meant nothing to him, because of his desire to build *Klal Yisrael* with her. He saw in her the perfect complement, the consummate partner, with whom he would establish the foundation upon which *Klal Yisrael* would grow. Toil meant nothing to him. He had a goal to achieve. Likewise, the *ben Torah's* love for the Torah overrides whatever toil might be involved in achieving his goal of Torah knowledge.

Toil is necessary for understanding; toil is necessary for diligence. Some spend hours trying to understand a passage in the Torah; others spend hours covering as much Torah as they can physically acquire. Both are diligent in their studies. *Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates the following vignette to underscore the positive impact diligence in Torah study had on a non-practicing Jew, ultimately serving as the final catalyst to return him home to *shemiras ha'mitzvos*.

A young *avreich*, married man, who made his home in Ramat Elchanan (Bnei Brak) had a sick child whom he brought to the emergency room of the Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikvah. Near his child was another child in critical condition, whose secular parents were not dealing well with his grave condition. These parents were desperate for words of encouragement to bolster their hope for a positive outcome. They turned to the observant couple for answers. The answer they received was *bitchu b'Hashem*, trust in the Almighty, because only He has the answers. The observant couple attempted to use this opportunity to somehow assuage the secular couple's feelings concerning observance. Who knows if a positive change on the part of the parents would not elicit a favorable Heavenly response for their child?

After hours of discussion between the two fathers, the secular father expressed an interest in pursuing a religious lifestyle. The subject turned to Torah study, whereby Shmuel (the *avreich*) described the beauty and satisfaction one derives from learning Torah. He went on to laud those whose lives are centered around Torah, who spend night and day engrossed in Torah study. In fact, young men spend their complete days and most of their nights delving into the Torah. At this point, the other father put his foot down, "I do not believe that men who have other things to do lock themselves up in their *bais hamedrash* and just learn. They have to have a life. (He did not realize that learning Torah is their definition of life.) Can you tell me one *yeshivah* where young men are studying way into the wee hours of the morning? If you take me to a *yeshivah* when a *minyan* of students are learning – I will become observant."

Shmuel looked at the clock and saw that it was 2:00 am. He was not certain that he would be successful, but it was worth a try. The closest *yeshivah* was Ponovezh in Bnei Brak. By the time they would arrive, it would be 2:30 am. He himself had been a *talmid* of Ponovezh. What did he have to lose? He hoped that he would find a handful of *bachurim* sitting and learning. They arrived at the *yeshivah* and, with a pounding heart, Shmuel nervously opened the *bais hamedrash* doors. How astonished they both were to be greeted by not ten – but fifty *bonei Torah* all involved in *rischa d'oraisa*, the heat of the Torah, arguing back and forth to understand its secrets. The secular Jew stood there, mesmerized by the scene. He had never seen *yeshivah* students learning – and certainly not at 2:30am. Fifty students! “*Ani chozeir b'teshuvah*, I will change my life and become observant,” he declared. If this is what Torah can do to a person, he wanted in. He wanted his son to be like these young men.

The man stuck to his word and became a full *shomer Torah u'mitzvos*. His son? Hashem sent him a *refuah sheleimah*. The entire family transformed as a result of witnessing *ameilus ba'Torah*.