

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
BEHAR-BECHUKOSAI

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS

בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK

Wetend to judge ourselves based on our accomplishments. Did we achieve what we set out to do, or not? We relate to the effort as a means to an end, but not the purpose itself. However, we find something in this week's *Parshah* that paints a very different picture.

The opening *Pasuk*¹ of this week's *Parshah* states "If you follow my laws, and observe my commandments..." which *Rashi*² explains to mean, "If you put effort into learning Torah in order to properly keep the *Mitzvos*, etc." highlighting the idea that learning Torah is not just information gathering, but should take a certain amount of exertion. In fact, the *Taz*³ points out that the word the Torah uses, "*Tailchu*," - literally 'to go' includes the idea of even moving away from home in order to go learn Torah. (And certainly includes the idea of moving out of one's comfort zone to do so!) The *Torah Temimah*⁴ adds that Hashem is essentially urging *Klal Yisrael* to do this - "Please! Exert yourself! Toil in Torah!"

It is clear that expending effort is an integral to learning Torah. One may ask, "Why is it important to spend this effort? As long as I'm getting the information about how to serve Hashem, and what is required of me, why do I need to do anything more? Why can't I just sit back, with a cold drink, and listen to words of Torah?"

The *Medrash*⁵ sheds some light on this, by focusing on another question. Why, when referring to laws, does the Torah use the term "*Chukim*" instead of any other term (*Mishpatim*, etc.) The *Medrash* explains that the *Yetzer Horah*, who attempts to ensnare us in insidious ways, has access to the recesses of our heart. The term *Chukim* is related to 'engraved' - the *Yetzar Horah's* ways are engraved on our hearts. How does one do battle with such a foe? Only by engraving a positive counterbalance, which is the Torah. By investing time, effort, sweat, blood, and tears, you will engrave the Torah on your hearts, it will become a part of you, and you will have the weapons you need to do battle with the *Yetzar Horah*.

Yes, we have a goal to 'get it' when we learn. But we should not think that understanding the material is the end. There is another indispensable goal - working. Even if we don't understand what we are learning, our very toil makes the Torah a part of us, and fortifies us against the onslaught of the *Yetzar Horah*.

1 *Vayikra* 26:2

2 *ibid.* s.v. ואת מצותי

3 *Maskil L'Dovid ibid.* s.v. אם בחקתי

4 *ibid.* note 7

5 *Vayikra Rabbah* 35:5, *Maharzu ibid.*

"Please! Exert yourself! Toil in Torah!"

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It seems that we're up against two factors that make it difficult for us to feel accomplished in our learning. ¹Our world is accomplishment oriented, and ²putting effort into anything, especially something that we may not see a payoff, goes against our natural desire to relax. How do we deal with these two elements?

One idea is to focus on the accomplishment, but not just the accomplishment of understanding the Torah. A good strategy for growth in any area is to give ourselves small challenges, and pat ourselves on the back when we accomplish them. For example, challenge yourself to spend a certain amount of time in uninterrupted learning (even just five minutes). If that's too easy, raise the amount of time. When you finish the challenge, it is important to recognize the accomplishment, and not take it for granted.

Success breeds success. If we feel happy with what we've done, we're going to want to do more of it. The key is to find enjoyment in the process of learning Torah, not just the end product. It may take trial and error to find what motivates you, but it is vital to find that motivation. Doing so will change your entire relationship to Torah learning for the better.

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REB AHARON'S TEARS

Rav Yitzchak Hutner, zt"l, previous *Rosh Yeshivah* of Mesivta Rabbi Chaim Berlin, once related the following to Rav Aharon Kotler, zt"l:

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, a Lithuanian Jew sought a match for his daughter. Someone suggested a certain young man studying in a Lithuanian yeshiva. The young man was known to be G-d-fearing and an exceptionally diligent student. However, his intellectual abilities were below average and his ranking among his fellow students was, academically, low.

Should this young man be considered, the man wondered? He decided to seek the advice of the famed Rav of Brisk, Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin.

The Rav's response was unequivocal. "Our Sages have taught that whoever fulfills the Torah despite poverty, will ultimately fulfill it in wealth.¹ The commentators make it clear that, in this context, 'poverty' also refers to intellectual deficiency. One whose inborn intellectual abilities are deficient, but who studies Torah with diligence for the sake of Heaven, will ultimately be granted a new capacity for learning that is far beyond his natural abilities. He will then study in 'wealth,' and grow great in his knowledge of Torah."

The *shidduch* was made and the wedding took place shortly thereafter. True to Rav Yehoshua Leib's words, the young man eventually attained greatness in Torah. He was Rav Yosef Zundel, the famed Rav of Aishishok, author of *Chedrei Deah* to *Shulchan Aruch* and a number of other works.

As soon as Rav Hutner had completed relating the above, Rav Aharon hurried out of the room. When a few minutes had passed and he had still not returned, Rav Hutner went to see if something was wrong. He found Rav Aharon crying profusely. Rav Hutner asked what was the matter. Rav Aharon, barely able to speak as he wept, responded, "This sort of wealth I did not merit."

As Rav Hutner explained years later, Rav Aharon was a born genius and could not possibly "study despite poverty"; he had never known such poverty. However, through his own diligence and toil, Rav Aharon merited a tangible delight in Torah study that radiated from within him - literally. In his love for Torah, he wept over his inability to merit the aspect of wealth in Torah study that grows forth from study that is accomplished in "poverty".

** Rewritten from "For Love of Torah" by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman*

1 Avos 4:11

DID YOU KNOW?

- Learning a specific area in depth removes the *Yetzar Horah* for that issue.¹
- Through putting much effort into learning one can determine Hashem's will in various contemporary situations.²
- The ultimate spiritual influence that we receive comes from learning Torah in depth.³

1 *Ohr Yisrael, Iggeres HaMussar*

2 *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:14, *Eitz Yosef* s.v. רבי תנחומה

3 *Derech Hashem Sha'ar* 4, *Perek* 2, Par. 2-3

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