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# בְּשִׁיטְיְכָה



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS  
BEHA'ALOSCHA

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## IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE EASY

In the middle of *Parshas Beha'aloscha*, the Torah describes how *Klal Yisrael* knew when to make and when to break camp. When the cloud resting on the *Mishkan* would rise, the Jewish people knew it was time to travel. When the cloud would settle, it was time to make camp. In fact, the Torah is particularly verbose in describing the process — the Torah talks of times when the cloud would settle just for a night, or a night and a day, or for a long time, or for a short time, and so on.<sup>1</sup>

The Ramban<sup>2</sup> (R' Moshe ben Nachman, 1194–1270) explains that each scenario was actually quite a challenge to the *Bnei Yisrael*. Sometimes they had just stopped for the night when they were told to leave. Sometimes they even unpacked when they were told to pack up again. Sometimes they stayed for a long time in an area that was unpalatable, or sometimes they left an area to which they had become quite attached. Nevertheless, they traveled without complaint, despite the difficulties.

R' Eliyahu Dessler<sup>3</sup> (1892–1953) questions the necessity of what simply appears to be mistreatment — what purpose did this manner of travel serve? Rav Dessler points out that the 'desert experience' was the ultimate *yeshiva*; there were no distractions, no need to work, not even the need to mend clothing. The Jewish people were able to sit and study Torah day and night without interruption. On the face of it, this was the perfect environment for Torah study, what could be better?

But, says Rav Dessler, this is not the way of the Torah. Torah, the knowledge of its laws, the depth and intricacies, and the joy and exultation it brings, is not easily attained, and that is by design. To achieve any level of success, one must toil in and work on Torah study. Thus, the difficult travel style was specifically designed to make their studies more challenging. Each family had to learn to grab whatever time they could — just settled in? Learn Torah! Surroundings bother you? Learn Torah!

We sometimes think, "If things were going smoothly in my life, I would be able to learn Torah. But since I don't have the time or focus or desire, I'll just wait until I do!" This is the exact opposite of what Torah study is supposed to be — learning Torah is easy when life is easy. But when life is difficult, that's when the Torah study really comes to life.

1 *Bamidbar* 9:17-23

2 *Bamidbar* 9:19, s.v. וטעם ובהאריך

3 *Michtav M'Eliyahu*, Vol. IV, pg. 230

**"If things were going smoothly in my life, I would be able to learn Torah..."**

### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Though it is important to learn Torah even when it is difficult, one can and should seek ways to make learning Torah easier.

A common challenge people find is the feeling of being unsuccessful. Hours, days, and even years of study, and a person may feel they are not where they want to be. This can make Torah learning feel like pushing a boulder up a hill, a difficult task!

It is important to have a dual perspective on one's relationship to Torah. Yes, the study of Torah takes work, a lot of work, before one may feel a feeling of success.

But, it is also important to temper one's expectations with reality. It may indeed be that a person is quite successful, but they don't even realize it, since they are expecting something different.<sup>1</sup> This is often the case when one is comparing oneself to one's peers instead of assessing one's skill level, and comparing their current abilities to what they were in the past.

By having a better understanding of what success looks like, a person may truly understand that they've been amazing for a long time.

1 *Sheva Yipol Tzaddik*, Chap. 10, Note 5

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**We strive for purity in our actions, but we must also seek to forever purify our Middos as well... and refining our Middos is a mightier task than perfecting our physical behavior.**

- R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato zt"l,  
*Mesillas Yesharim*, Chap. 11

# LEARNING A LESSON THE HARD WAY

Reuven Katz\* always liked learning, and it made sense, since he had a natural talent for it. He came from a smart family, but he was the only one of his siblings to spend years in *yeshiva* after graduating from school. He stayed in *kollel* after he married, but as his family grew, he knew his years in *kollel* were coming to an end.

It was time for him to join the workforce, but he wanted to leave *kollel* on a high, and found the perfect way to do so. There was an organization offering some hefty incentives if one can study a certain amount of material and pass a rigorous test. He decided to use his last months in *kollel* studying, not realizing what he had gotten himself into.

At first, his learning schedule was the same as it had always been. He would study the material, even review it, and then move on to the next section. But after a month or two, he realized he was simply not retaining what he had learned. Sure, he was able to generally recall what he had studied, but when he got down into the specifics, it just wasn't sticking.

As the day of the test came closer, he realized more had to be done. Immediately after dropping off his kids in the morning, he would head to the *beis medrash*, where he stayed until lunchtime. He would leave just to grab a sandwich and a drink, and would head back to learn. He would interrupt for *mincha*, and hours later, *maariv*. Finally, he would head home where he would greet his wife, help the kids get into bed, and then he would go back to learning.

About two weeks before the test, things started to click. Reuven felt that he was finally starting to master the material, and his recall was near perfect. Indeed, the day of the test arrived, and Reuven passed with flying colors. When he arrived home after the nine hour test, his wife had prepared a small celebration in the house, as she knew the efforts it took for him to accomplish what he did.

In Reuven's words, "As I gained clarity in what I was learning, something amazing happened. The stress melted away, not because I was confident in the test, as the test no longer mattered. I just felt this amazing force pulling me in, this desire to know and understand the Torah. The difficulties, the long hours, the lack of a normal meal, or even regular social discourse didn't deter me. I wanted Torah, I wanted all of it, I was addicted!

"I can't say I would be able to keep something like that up for a long period of time. But I'm so happy I did what I did, it was like a lightning flash of clarity, a realization of what I can accomplish, and what the Torah can do to a person."

*\*Based on a true story, name has been changed.*

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Torah study that comes easily also leaves easily. However, Torah study that is acquired through toil and perseverance will remain.<sup>1</sup>
- One should not intentionally distress oneself, but if one can do without extra indulgences, that is best for one's Torah study.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:12*

<sup>2</sup> *Lechem Shomayim on Avos 6:4, s.v. כך היא*

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