



# Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

פ ר ש ת ב ח ו ק ת י

אם בחוקתי תלכו וכו':

The Torah is very clear that the key to beracha is "to walk in Hashem's chukim". Rashi explains that this means we must toil in limud ha'Torah - exert ourselves in Torah study in order to merit the berachos. The implication of this is that failing to toil in Torah may have the opposite effect. Indeed, the gemara tells us that the Chachamim were not sure what k'lal did wrong to cause Eretz Yisroel to be destroyed. They asked the nevi'im who were also not sure until Hakadosh Boruch Hu Himself told us that because people learned Torah without first reciting the necessary berachos, Eretz Yisroel was destroyed. These words of Chazal however beg explanation. First of all, it cannot be that k'lal Yisroel was faulted for simply omitting berachos. While putting on tefilin without reciting the necessary beracha, for example, might heavily detract from the kedusha of the mitzva, it is unlikely to bring about destruction of the entire land. Furthermore, the navi records that the destruction occurred because "we abandoned the Torah, did not listen to Hashem, and did not follow the Torah's ways". This certainly sounds like more than just neglecting to make berachos! Moreover, if this was true, why were the Chachamim clueless about the situation?

HaRav Shimon Schwab zt"l explains that while people certainly learned Torah, their approach was wrong! Torah is unlike any other study! Although we must learn gemara and halacha to know what to do on a practical level, the



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ultimate purpose of limud ha'Torah goes much further than this. Torah, is vehicle for connecting with Hakadosh Boruch Hu. When we learn, we gain a better grasp in understanding our Creator which enables us to connect to Him. This was what people were missing. They failed to realize this and although they learned Torah, they didn't have the right approach. Even though we recite birachos ha'Torah, we must be careful of this and approach our Torah studies with the right attitude.

Parshas Bechukosai is usually around Lag Ba'Omer, the yartzeit of R' Shimon bar Yochai. Chazal tell us that he rarely davened. While on the surface it seems that this was largely due to the fact that he was completely absorbed in his studies, and was exempt from tefilah like anyone who is completely preoccupied with performing a mitzva. The truth is however, that it is must deeper than this; R' Shimon's talmud Torah accomplished much more than tefilah. Through his limud ha'Torah he clung to the Ribono shel Olam in a way that surpassed the deveikus achieved through tefilah. While our Torah is far from this level and we certainly must daven (and yes, we could do well working on our tefilah as well), it is an important lesson to bear in mind.

אם בחוקתי תלכו וכו':

There are two parshios in the Torah that contain a series of klalos; parshas Bechukosai and parshas Ki-Savo. Often, we read several "double-parshas" just



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to make sure that we pass Bechukosai before Shavuos. Similarly, parshas Ki-Savo is always read before Rosh Hashana. Regarding both instances, Chazal tell us that this is k'dei sheh'tichleh ha"shana v'kileloseha - that at the year's closing, its curses should also come to an end! The commentaries explain that just like Rosh Hashana begins a new year for mitzvos, Shavuos is a new year for limud ha'Torah. Bearing this distinction in mind, we would like to explain the following:

Each of these two parshios has its own unique theme. In parshas Bechukosai, the Torah seems to stress that the k'lalos come because we go "b'keri" - in happenstance. On the other hand, in parshas Ki-Savo, the Torah is very explicit when it tells us that all the curses come for serving Hashem without simcha. Which is it? Does our lack of beracha or bad befall us because we don't serve Hashem with simcha or is it because our entire avodah is lacking seriousness in approach? The difference between them is tremendous.

It seems clear that the Torah is addressing two different parts of our avodah. Mitzvos, by definition, don't just happen. While we may do certain things by rote and this should most definitely be worked on, nevertheless, when a person puts on tefilin, he ultimately knows that he is performing a mitzvah. It is his enthusiasm for putting on the tefilin, or lack thereof, for which he will have to make an accounting. Our main avodah in mitzvos is not just to do them, but to do them with simcha. Torah, however, is not an avodah of simcha. The



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nature of limud ha'Torah is that while it starts out difficult, in the end become sweeter than honey. It really is enjoyable. The challenge here is quite different; how does Torah fit into our lives? Most of us, are very busy people. Between our jobs and families, our waking hours are more or less accounted for. We understand that we must learn - ki heim chayenu v'orech yameinu, but do we make time to learn to Torah, or do we just learn when we "happen" to have time?

אם בחוקתי תלכו וכו':

Beracha, is contingent on our "walking" in Hashem's statutes, which Rashi explains to mean that we should toil in the study of Torah. It is true that Torah study is the lifeline of our nation and one must work hard at understanding it. One cannot sit reclining on the beach with a gemara and expect to fully gain from all that its holy words have to offer. This is certain. Why though, does the Torah choose to express this idea with the word "teileich"? What does ameilus ba'Torah have to do with walking?

HaRav Moshe Schneider zt"l (as quoted by his talmid ybl"ch Rav Moshe Shternbuch shlit"a) explains that sitting down in front of a gemara completely focussed for hours on end, is simply, not enough. Rather, a Jew must take his Torah learning on the road with him when he leaves the beis medrash. Not only



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must he apply its concepts and lessons to his day to day mundane activities, but he must preoccupy himself in thought, constantly thinking Torah thoughts. If he does not do this, he is guilty of abandoning the Torah and leaving it behind in the study halls. However, if he walks with the Torah, taking its study with him, out to the streets, he will merit all the berachos that the Torah promises.

This is an important lesson for everyone of us: We might appreciate the importance of Kvius itim l' Torah - setting aside regular times to study Torah. We might even walk away from a study session while completely reinvigorated in a very tangible way. This is all very great. We might even not be able to wait to get back to the beis medrash, but this too is in sufficient. We shouldn't wait until we return; a true ben-Torah takes the Torah with him everywhere he goes! Torah is a lifelong avodah. If we maintain a constant connection to it, we can merit all of the berachos!