

# אור פני משה

שיחות מוסר על התורה  
מאת הרה"ג ר' משה אליעזר  
רבינוביץ זצ"ל

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*Shmuessen from  
Harav Moshe  
Rabinowitz Zt"l*

## פרשת בחוקתי

*Volume 6 Issue # 31*

**Sponsored by a Talmid  
of Ner Yisrael Toronto**

**In honor of his Rebbe  
Rav Moshe Eliezer Rabinowitz zt"l**

## פרשת בחוקתי

אם בְּחֻקֵי תִלְכוּ וְאֵת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעַשִּׂיתֶם אֹתָם: (ויקרא כ"ו ג')

*If you will follow My decrees and you will guard My commandments and perform them*

### אם בחקתי תלכו – שתהיו עמלים בתורה

What is the meaning of 'If you follow my decrees'? Rashi explains: One could think it means 'If you perform the *Mitzvos*', but since the end of the *possuk* clearly says 'If you perform my commandments' this phrase must mean something else. Rashi therefore concludes that it means 'If you will toil in Torah'. The Torah promises blessings to those who toil in Torah.

Let us learn more about the nature of this *עמלות/toil*, and why it is such a crucial aspect of *Limud Hatorah*.

We find in the words of *Chazal* different descriptions of learning Torah.

1. למוד התורה / *learning the Torah*,
2. עסק התורה / *involvement in Torah*,
3. עמל התורה / *toiling in Torah*.

### למוד

*Limud*, which is the first level, refers to the bare minimum of learning Torah. Any learning which a person does, whether or not he incorporates all of his *kochos* is considered *limud*.

### עסק

The next level is *Eisek* which refers to *involvement* in learning. It means that the Torah is totally occupying the person's mind with the exclusion of anything else.

*A person is preparing for a business deal through which he could profit \$100,000. His mind is totally focused on how to properly execute the deal, and he barely notices anything else that is going on around him. He is so preoccupied that he doesn't see, he doesn't hear, and he doesn't think of anything other than this deal.*

This level of engrossment is called *eisek*, and when someone learns with this level of concentration and focus it is called *eisek hatorah*. The

*bracha* which we make on the Torah is לעסוק בדברי תורה which demonstrates that this level of learning is an obligation. We must become *involved* with Torah. Our learning should be so important to us that we become totally engrossed in it. We shouldn't hear the phone ringing, and we shouldn't notice any other things that are going on. We need to focus and become preoccupied as though we are preparing for a great business deal.

### עמלות

There is a level of learning which is even higher than *eisek* and that is *ameilus* in Torah. *Ameilus* means to work hard and to use the full capacity of our *kochos*. It is also referred to as יגיעה which literally means to tire oneself out. When one exerts himself and he incorporates all of his strength into his learning, to the point where he completely washes himself out, that is called *ameilus* in Torah. This the level *Chazal* refer to when they say ומצאתי תאמין *תאמין*, *if one says he toiled and he found he is believed*. When one labors and sweats to understand the Torah, he is assured that his efforts will bear fruit and that he will be granted *Siyata Dishmaya* to arrive at the correct conclusions.

When the Torah promises *bracha* on condition that we follow the dictum of תלכו בחקתי, אם, it is exhorting us to reach the level of *ameilus* in Torah.

*We shouldn't learn in a relaxed sort of way with our feet up and a can of soda, taking a nap every half hour. Rather, our learning should send up sparks! We should be on fire! That is ameilus batorah!*

### A Vort From the Chofetz Chaim

The Chofetz Chaim asked a question: In the *tefillah* which we say when we leave the *Beis Medrash*, and when we finish a *masechta* we say, 'אנו עמלים והם עמלים אנו עמלים ומקבלים שכר והם עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר', *We toil and they toil. We toil and receive payment, and they toil and they don't receive payment.* We thank Hashem for giving us the opportunity to toil in Torah and to reap its great benefits, and we contrast that with the toil of the *goyim* which brings no such reward. However, objects the Chofetz Chaim, how can we say 'they toil and they don't receive payment'? After all, they do receive payment for their efforts. It may not be such valuable payment in comparison to the infinite reward of those that toil in Torah, but it is a payment, nonetheless. What is the meaning of this statement?

The Chofetz Chaim answered that although it is true that the *goyim* receive payment for their labor, this is only when they deliver results. They do not get paid for toil alone.

*If one brings a watch to a watchmaker for repairs but the watchmaker is unable to repair it, he will receive no payment at all. It doesn't matter how much effort he expended trying to fix it, he will not be paid unless his efforts bear fruit.*

However, the toil in Torah is different. Even if one's efforts bear no fruit at all he will still be rewarded for the toil. If one spends three hours trying to understand a Tosafos, but he fails to arrive at an understanding he will still be rewarded.

### **Workers Do not Get Rewarded for their Toil?**

We can ask a question on this *vort* of the Chofetz Chaim based on a Gemara in *Bava Metziah* (ב.מ.).

*The Gemara tells a story that transpired with Rabbah bar bar Chana. He had hired porters to transfer a barrel of wine from one place to another, and they were negligent, and they broke it on the way. Rabbah bar bar Chana agreed not to charge them for their negligence, and he did not demand that they pay for damaging the barrel of wine.*

*The porters then said to Rabbah bar bar Chana: "We are poor workers who toiled all day, we are hungry, and we have nothing."*

*Upon hearing this, Rav told Rabbah bar bar Chana to pay them for their efforts.*

*"Is that the law?" asked Rabbah bar bar Chana incredulously.*

*Rav answered that while it may be true that according to the letter of the law, he was not obligated to pay them since they did not deliver the goods, still he should pay them because the possuk says: למען תלך בדרך טובים וארחות צדיקים תשמור. You should go in the way of the good ones, and you should guard the paths of tzadikim.*

This Gemara tells us that we really should pay workers for their efforts even if they bear no fruit. Although according to the letter of the law we are not obligated to do so, paying them is still considered the proper and upright thing to do. It is the *Derech Tovim*. If so, how could the Chofetz Chaim say that *goyim* are not rewarded for their toil alone? According to this Gemara they really should be paid for their toil.

### **Toil in Material Endeavors is of No Objective Value**

Perhaps we can answer that even when *goyim* get paid for their efforts it is for their time but not for their toil. We will explain.

In the business world there are times when business runs smooth and easy and the money just seems to flow in, and there are other times when everything seems to go wrong.

*Berel was making a delivery to a furniture store. When he got to the store, he immediately found a great parking spot and he parked his truck right in front. When he walked into the store it was empty and the proprietor was readily available to attend to this delivery. Within fifteen minutes of arriving at the store Berel walked out with a nice sum of money in his pocket.*

*The next day Berel wanted to make a delivery to a different store. This time he could not find any parking on the block and he was forced to park two blocks away. When he walked into the store it was full of customers.*

*The owner, who was very busy, told Berel, "I'm sorry but you'll have to wait until all my customers leave."*

*Berel waited there for an hour until finally the owner of the store got to him. In the end the owner decided that the goods were not needed and Berel left empty handed. To top it off, when Berel got back to his truck he realized that he had parked in an illegal spot, and he now had to pay a \$50 parking ticket! In stark contrast to the day before when Berel had earned a few hundred dollars in a short time and with relative ease, today Berel spent over an hour, he worked extra hard, and all he had to show for it was a fifty-dollar ticket!*

This contrast demonstrates that when it comes to material gains, our efforts and our toil are not what measure our success. A person can expend little effort and reap much reward, while another may labor arduously and receive much less. As such, the preferred road would always be the one which requires the least effort and brings the most gain. In other words, our efforts are of no objective value and are worthwhile only inasmuch as they are a vehicle which brings us toward our projected goals. However, if the goals could be realized without the effort, then the effort is useless.

### **Torah Without Ameilus is of Lesser Value**

It is not so regarding learning Torah. When it comes to learning Torah, it is our efforts which make our learning worthwhile. If one could learn Torah with minimal effort, it would not be as valuable as someone who learned that same Torah but expended more effort.

*R' Baruch Ber z"l was once struggling immensely to solve a kasha on a certain Tosafos. He tried many different options, but they all failed. Finally, after many hours of intense toil he came up with an answer which satisfied him, and this brought him great joy. Just then a bochur knocked on the door. R' Boruch Ber opened the door and asked the bochur the kasha that had been bothering him on the Tosafos. The bochur immediately gave the exact same solution which R' Boruch Ber had just worked so hard to come up with. R' Boruch Ber heard what the bochur said but he did not seem pleased.*

*The bochur asked, "Is that not a good answer?"*

*R' Boruch Ber replied, "On the contrary, it is wonderful answer; I just feel bad that it came to you without any work! Torah which is learned without toil will not stick with you. It's easy come, easy go. I, on the other hand, just spent hours in intense concentration. I came up with this answer as a result of my vigorous laboring. Because of that this question and answer will stay with me forever!"*

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*I once spoke with a Rosh Yeshiva who had a phenomenal mind and a photographic memory. He sighed and told me: "I am not complaining, and I am grateful to Hashem for giving me a good head, but I envy those who reached the same place as me through their intense efforts!"*

With regard to Torah the toil and exertion we expend in our quest to understand it are an end unto themselves. The benefits of toiling are not just due to the fruits they bear, but rather the toil itself is of great value. Regarding worldly endeavors however, our efforts are merely a vehicle toward our goals, but they are of no objective value in and of themselves.

We now understand the words of the Chofetz Chaim. Although it may be true that it is proper to pay a worker for his efforts even if he does not deliver results, this does not mean he is being paid for toiling. The proof is because we would also pay him if he did deliver the results even

had he not toiled so much. The reason we would pay a worker even if he does not deliver our desired results is because he gave us of his time. More so, even when he does deliver the results he is not paid for his labor, rather he is paid for the *fruits* of his labor. The labor itself has no objective value.

Thus, the *goyim* truly are עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר, they toil but do not receive any reward for this toil because objectively it has no value, whereas we who learn Torah are עמלים ומקבלים שכר, we receive reward for the toil alone.

### **Ameilus Creates a Deep Bond with the Torah**

Why is it so important to learn with *ameilus*? The answer is that the more effort we put into something the more it becomes a part of us.

*Rav Dessler z"l gave a mashal of someone who bought a plant for ten dollars. He was careful to place it just in the right spot where it would receive adequate sunlight but not too much that it would get damaged. He watered it carefully with measured amounts at specific times. When he needed to travel, he would leave the plant with a 'plant sitter'. One day the plant fell down from its perch, the pot shattered all over the floor, and the plant was completely destroyed. This brought the man terrible grief and he needed to be comforted.*

How do we understand this? It is just a cheap plant! Why would a rational man become grief-stricken when a simple plant is ruined? The answer is that all the effort he put into properly caring for the plant created within him a personal attachment to the plant. A part of him was in the plant!

This is why parents feel so connected to their children and their love is so deep. The efforts which parents put into raising their children properly cannot be overstated. Parents literally put all their *kochos*, and their entire beings into their children. Because of this parents feel that their children are an extension of themselves, and this is the source of the deep love from a parent to a child.

This is the connection we need to feel to Torah. We need to be totally attached to the Torah. We need to love the Torah to the point of *mesirus nefesh*. This love is only cultivated when we invest ourselves and we spare no *kochos* in our quest to understand the Torah. If we learn Torah with *ameilus* and *yegiah* we will create a bond with the Torah which cannot be broken. It will become a part of us.

*R' Shach z"l would stay up the whole Friday night reviewing the Torah which he had learned during the week. One week he noticed that there were two bochurim who also stayed up that whole Shabbos learning. On Sunday morning he approached these two bochurim and asked them why they had done that. They replied that they knew the Rosh Hayeshiva did it and they wanted to imitate him. Rav Shach told these bochurim that he did not feel that they were doing the right thing. It was unhealthy and it would be good for them to use Shabbos to catch up on some sleep. The bochurim then asked Rav Shach why he doesn't sleep on Shabbos. Rav Shach replied, "If I don't review on Friday night the Torah that I learned during the week, I feel as if I am dying! Rather than die I give up on a night of sleep. It is pikuach nefesh! But if you don't feel that way you should not do it. If you don't feel that it is pikuach nefesh not to stay up learning, then you should watch your health and go to bed."*

This is the level which need to strive for. We need to feel an attachment to the Torah to the point that we feel it is our very life. Without Torah we should feel dead! This feeling is developed through *ameilus* in Torah. By expending all our *kochos* and by being *moser nefesh* for learning Torah we make it a part of ourselves. If we do so we will be *gebentsched* with the *brachos* which the Torah promises to those who are *ameilim batorah*.

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