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A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת בחקתי

אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אתם, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם וכו'. (ויקרא כו, ג-ד)
If you will go in My statutes and observe My mitzvos and perform them; then I will provide your rains in their time ... (Vayikra 26:3-4)

אם בחקתי תלכו. יכול זה קיום המצוות, כשהוא אומר "את מצותי תשמרו" הרי קיום המצוות אמור, הא מה אני מקיים "אם בחקותי תלכו" שיהיו עמלים בתורה.

Rashi: If you will go in My statutes. One might be able to think that this refers to the fulfilment of the mitzvos. Since it says "וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וְעָשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם" fulfilment of mitzvos has been stated. What, then, is meant by "אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּלְכּוּ"? That you should be labouring in Torah.

This week's *parshah* begins with the idyllic blessings that await Klal Yisroel if they live according to Hashem's will and follow the Torah. Rashi explains that the words **אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּלְכּוּ** refer to **עֲמֵלוּת** **בְּתוֹרָה**, *labour in Torah*. He explains that since observance of *mitzvos* has already been stated with the words **וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ**, these words of **אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תִּלְכּוּ** must mean toil in Torah.

The Meforshim question why learning Torah, which is also a *mitzvah*, is not included in **אֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ** which refers to the general fulfilment of *mitzvos*. Why was learning Torah singled out and not included under the broader title of "fulfilling *mitzvos*"?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* suggests that while **תִּלְמוּד תוֹרָה** - *learning Torah* is included in the general heading of *mitzvos*, **עֲמֵלוּת בְּתוֹרָה** - *labour in Torah* is not. The Ohr Someach (*Hil. Talmud Torah 1:2*) introduces the concept that the baseline obligation for all *mitzvos* is the same for every Yid, from the lowest Jew to the greatest like Moshe Rabbeinu. This equal obligation applies to all members of Klal Yisroel with clear parameters to define their standard fulfilment. For example, when it comes to the *mitzvah* of Arbah Minim, simply holding them in your hand fulfils your obligation. Although there are ways to enhance the performance of this *mitzvah*, such as holding the Arbah Minim the entire day as done by the *Anshei Yerushalayim*, the basic duty is the same for everyone.

With regard to Limmud HaTorah, it is important to understand that people have different abilities and circumstances. Many people must spend a lot of time working for their livelihood, and this is not considered a lapse in this *mitzvah*, as the *possuk* clearly states **וְאִסְפֹּת דְּגִנְךָ**. Additionally, not everyone is blessed with the intelligence and stamina needed to devote their entire lives to studying Torah, and they are not held accountable. Therefore, it is not fair to compare one person's obligation to another's and impose a universal demand for constant Torah study. For this reason, Chazal established a minimum requirement for everyone - reciting Shema in the morning and evening - to fulfil the command of **וְהָיִיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה**. Anything beyond this minimum depends on each individual's ability, just like with other *mitzvos*. There is always a basic level that applies to everyone, and anything beyond that varies according to each person's capacity and *madreigah*.

Although Chazal taught this universal measure, it does not absolve the individual from doing all in his power to learn Torah. Torah is the most important and precious commodity, and one must constantly strengthen and boost oneself to increase their learning schedule and toil in Torah to the best of their capability.

With this background, the Rosh Yeshiva explains why עמלות בתורה is singled out with the phrase of אִם בְּחִקְתִּי תִלְכוּ and is not included in the general reference to all *mitzvos*. While fulfilling the basic *mitzvah* of Limmud HaTorah can be achieved by reciting Shema twice daily, this represents only the minimum requirement. Hence, the Torah asserts that the blessings mentioned in the *parshah* are also contingent on a person being עמל בתורה – putting effort and time into learning Torah according to their abilities.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 5a) states that if a person experiences pain and suffering, they should examine their actions to see if they have committed any wrongdoings that could be deserving of punishment. If they find no lapse, they should attribute their suffering as a result of Bitul Torah – neglecting Torah study. The Meforshim question that if indeed this person is guilty of this sin, why did he not discover this earlier when analysing his actions for the source of his troubles?

According to the above concept from the Ohr Sameach, this Gemara can be understood as follows: a decline in dedication to Torah learning is not always obvious as there are no clear parameters for what constitutes a sin in this regard. Each person must strive for a different level of quantity and intensity of Torah study based on their situation and personality. The Gemara is teaching that if someone has examined their deeds and found nothing lacking, they may be mistaken about what is expected of them and should commit themselves to Torah study in a greater manner.

We must realise that although we may fulfil the basic *mitzvah* of Limmud HaTorah by reciting Shema twice daily, we will be held accountable if we are capable of doing more. May we always strive to dedicate more time and effort to learning Torah, and by adhering to the words of אִם בְּחִקְתִּי תִלְכוּ, we will be *zoche* to the limitless blessings and goodness detailed in our *parshah*!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל עה"ת and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.