

Essential Effort

Dear Parents,

One of the greatly heralded advancements in the world of Torah learning in the past fifty years has been the proliferation of accurate, sophisticated translations of many *Sefarim*, from *Chumash* to *Gemara* to contemporary works. The translations of our classics has opened up the world of Torah living and Torah learning to tens of thousands of *Baalei Teshuva* and revitalized the study of Talmud among hundreds of thousands of laymen.

With so many avenues to gaining Torah knowledge available nowadays, one may wonder why our children, the *talmidim* and *talmidos* in our *Yeshivos* are put through such rigorous programs with significant demands on mastery of Torah texts in the original Hebrew and Aramaic. One may ask, let them also benefit from the plethora of wonderful works available in their native tongue and focus on amassing more knowledge and information, and less on comprehension and translation skill building, which may not even be essential.

This question belies a misunderstanding and lack of appreciation for what is perhaps the most essential ingredient in Torah learning. This week's *Parasha* starts off with the statement: *Im Bechukosai Teilaichu - If you will follow My laws (Vayikra 26:3)*. *Rashi* comments that this means: *Shetihyu Ameilim BaTorah - that you should be toiling in the Torah*. **Rashi sees fulfillment of being a Torah Jew in *ameilus*, the arduous, rigorous process of learning Torah in depth.**

Rabbi Yitzhok Zilberstein in *Sefer Aleinu L'Shabeiach* (p. 477) suggests a source for this might be in a short, eye-opening comment of the *Tosfos RY"D* (on *Megila 3A*). The *Gemara* relates that in 'reaction' to *Yonasan ben Uziel* having translated the *Sifrei Neviim* (Books of the Prophets) into Aramaic, the Land of Israel shook over a 400x400 *Parsa* area, and Hashem proclaimed: "Who revealed this great secret to my children?" *Yonasan ben Uziel* stated he was the one, and that his intent was purely for the Glory of Heaven.

If it was known and revealed to Hashem that *Yonasan ben Uziel* composed the *Targum* only for the sake of Hashem's glory, why did *Eretz Yisrael* tremble? The *Tosfos RY"D (Mahadura Kama)* explains "since *Yonasan ben Uziel* wrote a translation of the *Pesukim* of *Neviim*, those learning it will not exert themselves (be *Moser Nefesh*) to understand it, to the extent they did formerly.

This shows clearly the value of *ameilus*, of struggling to learn and understand. Reducing the vast depth and brilliance of the *Sifrei Neviim* to a more understandable body of work, while a positive development, carried with it something significantly detrimental! So much so that *Eretz Yisrael*, the land itself, trembled and shook to show this was literally an earth-shattering step away from the optimal manner of Torah learning.

Our children work extremely hard to get the fundamentals of Torah learning because that struggle is an end unto itself. Ultimate success in Torah learning comes in response to the effort. Our late *Rosh HaYeshiva, HaGaon HaRav Henach Leibowitz zt'l*, used to quote his father *HaGaon Harav Dovid Leibowitz zt'l*, who said: "While struggling to understand a complex issue in learning, when I felt the sweat start trickling down my back on a frigid winter night, then I knew I was putting in sufficient effort to truly be considered being *Ameil BaTorah*. Then, I could be confident that the solution that eluded me until now would be revealed."

In a similar vein, *Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz zt'l* once asked, regarding the fact that a baby learns the entire Torah in its mother's womb, why do we not stand up before an expectant woman, considering she is carrying the equivalent of a miniature *Chazon Ish* inside her? He answered that the unborn baby's Torah knowledge is inconsequential, because he acquires it without any effort. **Torah that is handed you on a silver platter is not the type of Torah knowledge to which we are obligated to accord honor.**

The time to begin working strenuously for a goal is when a child is young. While pressure is counterproductive, hard work towards an attainable goal is priceless. Embrace the children's efforts and struggle and appreciate that we are planting the seeds for a lifetime of true success in Torah learning and Torah living.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of *Chizuk*,



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