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# בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS  
BECHUKOSAI

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT  
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## LEARN TORAH, LIVE TORAH

It is well known that the driving force behind the Jewish nation is the Torah that we received at *Har Sinai*. Nearly two months after leaving *Mitzrayim*, we received this greatest gift from Hashem. Far greater than simply a set of laws, the Torah teaches us how to live, how to think, and most importantly, how to connect to Hashem.

What is our attitude towards the Torah? Do we use it as reference, consulting the Torah when we feel we are at a crossroads? Perhaps it is something to be read at our leisure, filled as it is with fascinating stories?

The reality, of course, is something much deeper. The Seforno<sup>1</sup> explains that the word 'chukos' — often translated as 'laws' — refers to the idea of something that one works towards one's entire life. In other words, we relate to the Torah as our entire purpose and objective in this world. As Rabbi Akiva aptly pointed out,<sup>2</sup> a Jewish person without Torah is like a fish without water. Truly, our very purpose on this planet hinges on our understanding and relationship to the Torah.

It is not enough for us to intellectually understand that we need the Torah. If we don't *feel* that we need the Torah to live, that the only way to survive is through the Torah, and without it, we are nothing, we may come to view learning Torah, and keeping the Torah as a burden. We may come to do *mitzvos* out of habit, abandoning the amazing opportunity to forge a meaningful and deep relationship with our Creator.

On the other hand, by creating a passion for the Torah, we create excitement and interest in everything the Torah has to offer. The Torah becomes more than our authority, more than our guide. The Torah becomes our very essence, it's what we speak about, and it's what we think about. Indeed, it becomes our life.

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### Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

We may get inspired about Torah, we may dance and sing about Torah, but then, when we sit down to learn Torah, we suddenly find that we aren't filled with excitement and joy. To the contrary, the areas that we are learning may seem to be unengaging, or perhaps even tedious.

Yes, it is one thing to talk about the importance of Torah, but it is much more difficult to feel the joy of Torah. How can one bring oneself to feeling an attachment to Torah?

Here are three strategies one may employ. Sometimes its important to find your 'niche,' an area of Torah that you know you will enjoy. By spending extra time in these areas, perhaps *halacha*, *navi*, etc., and finding interest and even excitement, one can later expand these feelings to other areas.

Another idea is to remember what it is what we are studying. Yes, the subject matter may seem mundane, but we are learning the words of the Master of the Universe! If He thinks it's important, it probably is.

Lastly, clarity on a subject can bring satisfaction. It may take time and effort, but the feeling that you know something well is well worth it.

1 *Vayikra* 26:3 s.v. אם בחקותי

2 *Berachos* 61b

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**What is so profoundly lacking today, in our times, is "Toras R' Yisrael" - the Mussar teachings and legacy of R' Yisrael Salanter. Its absence is deafening.**

- Rav Avraham Pam, *Rosh Yeshiva Torah Vodaas*, cited at *Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim Alumni Convention*, late 90's

# THE GREATEST JEWEL

Mrs. Schultz\* was surprised to see her son home in the middle of the day. He had walked in from school a couple of blocks away, and handed his mother a note. Tears formed in her eyes as she read, "Mrs. Schultz, we understand that you are facing difficult financial constraints. Nevertheless, as an institution that must pay its teachers, we must insist that Chaim stay home until an acceptable tuition payment plan is worked out. We apologize for the inconvenience."

Things had been difficult ever since her husband had passed away, and this was yet another reminder of their struggle. Mrs. Schultz nodded, and told her son not to worry. After heading into the bedroom, and then the kitchen, she handed her son a brown paper bag. "Bring this in," she said. "They'll understand."

Chaim went back to school, and made his way into his classroom. Now it was the rebbi's turn to be surprised. Surprised, and a little upset. Chaim was not supposed to be here, it was already one interruption to send him home. Now the principal will show up again, asking him to leave. Instead, the rebbi decided to gently remind Chaim that he's not to return to school until further notice.

The rebbi made his way down the aisle to Chaim's desk. However, when he reached the desk, he accidentally knocked over the lunch bag that Chaim had brought. Everything spilled out - a diamond bracelet, a plain gold wedding band, and a note. Recovering from his initial shock, the rebbi bent down to pick up the note. Reading it, he saw a single sentence written by Chaim's mother. "Better to me is the Torah of your mouth than thousands in gold and silver."<sup>1</sup>

Needless to say, the school allowed her son to remain.

*\*Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

**"Better to me  
is the Torah of  
your mouth than  
thousands in  
gold and silver!"**

1 *Tehillim* 119:72

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Much like one must dig deep to find precious gems, one must learn Torah with great diligence to plumb its depths.<sup>1</sup>
- Yes, a person can indeed have excuses why he cannot learn Torah. Nevertheless, these excuses will not make him a great Torah scholar.<sup>2</sup>
- One must seek out the Torah as one would seek silver. Despite Torah being compared to silver, one must safeguard it as one would safeguard glass.<sup>3</sup>

1 *Malbim* on *Mishlei* 2:4 s.v. אם תבקשנה

2 *Pele Yoetz*, אונס

3 *Sifri Devarim* 48:1