

# TOILING IN TORAH

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שני בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

## THE NEED TO TOIL

When the Rebbe Maharash was Bar-Mitzvah age, he was once called in by his father, the Tzemach Tzeddek, to be tested on *Mesechta Menachos*, which he was then learning. After asking a number of questions, and receiving satisfactory responses, the Tzemach Tzeddek pointed to a specific *sugya* and asked his son if he had toiled to understand it. The Rebbe Maharash, who had a phenomenal mind, answered that he had not toiled at all, for he had understood everything without effort. The Tzemach Tzeddek sighed and countered, "But how can one learn without toiling?"

Hearing this, the Rebbe Maharash decided to begin putting effort in his learning, and did so to an extreme degree, ensuring that he was indeed working hard. As a result, after a short while, blood stains began to appear on his forehead. When the Tzemach Tzeddek found out, he called the Rebbe Maharash and directed him how to continue his learning. Later the Rebbe Maharash recalled, "From then on, I would toil in learning with the precise measure of effort, just as one sets a clock..."

(רשימות היומן ע' שע"ז בשילוב תו"מ ח"ה ע' 49)

Rebbi Yitzchok said: "If someone will say that he toiled in Torah but did not find (was not successful), do not believe him. One who says that he did not work hard but did find, do not believe him either. Believe one who claims to have toiled and found (*Yogati u'matzati taamin*)."

Rava said: "Every physical body was created to work. Praised is the one who merited having his work and effort in Torah."

(מגילה ו' ע"ב, סנהדרין צ"ט ע"ב)

Eliyohu Hanavi related: A Talmid who was not well versed in *halacha* once asked me, "I learn Torah and strongly desire and await that Torah come to me, but it does not." I explained to him that only one who gives up his life for Torah, for the honor of Hashem, merits this.

(תנא דבי אליהו רבה פכ"ב)

Once the Alter Rebbe called the Tzemach Tzeddek and offered to 'give' him an understanding in Torah as a gift. The Tzemach Tzeddek declined the offer, saying that he wants to acquire Torah through toiling. He later regretted this, for whatever levels of Torah he could have received from the Alter Rebbe, there would always be additional levels to toil with.

(לקו"ש חט"ו ע' 81)

Two businessmen traveled to the city of the *gaon* Reb Meshulem Igra to ask that he act as arbitrator regarding a money dispute between them. Hearing their complaints, Reb Meshulem asked that they return in a number of days, during which he will look into the matter.

The businessmen felt they needed an immediate reply, so they

decided to return home and ask the Rov of their city to help them. Hearing their complaint, The Rov stepped into his room, and after a few minutes, came out and gave a response that satisfied both businessmen. Greatly impressed, the two related to all the extent of the Rov's knowledge, that within a few minutes, he had supplied a proper reply to a complicated issue, which even the great *gaon* Reb Meshulem Igra had been unable to do.

Sometime later, the two businessmen found themselves in Reb Meshulem's town, and decided to ask him what he would have paskened regarding their past dilemma. Surprisingly, Reb Meshulem's reply was the same as the one their Rov had given. They told the *gaon* how their Rov had given this verdict after only a few minutes. Amazed, Reb Meshulem said that if there is such a great *gaon* alive, he wants to learn Torah from him.

Arriving at the Rov's home, Reb Meshulem asked that the Rov tell him whether he had reached the conclusion himself or if someone had helped him. The Rov replied, "When the two men came and presented their problem, I realized that I do not know the answer, so I went into my room and cried and davened to Hashem. I asked that He open my eyes and enable me to give a correct reply according to Torah, thus preventing a *chillul Hashem*, (that their Rov cannot resolve their issues). I merited to receive clarity from Hashem and was able to immediately find the correct answer."

Hearing this, Reb Meshulem responded, "I also know how to daven and cry. Yet, one needs to reach conclusions in *halacha* by toiling in Torah..."

(היא שיחת')

## THE EXTENT OF TOILING

Reb Yekusiel, a salt merchant from Liepli, was a great *oved* and *chossid* of the Alter Rebbe, who had a limited understanding in Torah, specifically in Chassidus. Once, one of the young *mashpiim* traveling through Liepli, stopped to stay there for a number of days. Each day he was there, he *chazered* a *maamer* of the Mitteler Rebbe, and because of his sharp mind and articulateness, he left an impression on all those who heard him. However, Reb Yekusiel did not grasp the *maamorim* and was greatly disheartened.

Regarding this, Reb Yekusiel later related, "I was then forty years old, having already spent fifteen years frequently traveling to the Alter Rebbe and learning with all my *kochos*. Yet, when this *yungerman* *chazered* the *maamorim*, I did not grasp them. Every *maamer* I heard, caused me to feel utterly crushed. Because of my burning desire to know the *maamorim* and understand them, I asked the *yungerman* to review them over and over again for me, but despite his many explanations, my mind remained like a block of wood, closed to it all.

"For three weeks I held him back from continuing his journey home, and left my store to the responsibility of my family. Days and nights

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I toiled to understand what he taught me, but it was all to no avail. The *yungerman* eventually left, and I remained like a stranded ship at sea. I fasted and said *Tehillim*, crying many tears, but my mind did not open, so I decided to travel to Lubavitch.

"Upon arriving, I noticed that over the past nine months that I had not been there, a new atmosphere had begun to permeate. About fifty, sixty *yungerleit* sat for many hours, learning Chassidus diligently. On my first Shabbos there, the Mittlerer Rebbe recited a *maamor*, and though I understood the *maamor* itself, I could not comprehend the additional explanation of the Rebbe, unlike the *yungerleit*. This caused me intense pain, and I cried the entire night, as well as fasted the following day.

"When I went into *yechidus* with the Rebbe, I told him all that had transpired. The Rebbe told me that there is nothing which stands in the way of one's will, and that a strong desire can affect a change in one's capabilities. When I heard that it all depended on my desire, I decided to remain in Lubavitch until I would begin understanding, and sent a message to my family telling them to continue running the store on their own. I spent about four months working intensely, both physically, in training myself to think about an *inyan* for hours at a time, as well as emotionally, reviewing one *inyan* tens of times.

"That Tishrei, I felt like a new creation, as if I had 'washed out the pot' and become a proper recipient for receiving what I truly desired to receive, and so I traveled home."

(אג"ק אדהרי"צ ח"ג ע' שס"ד)

When the Mittlerer Rebbe would say *chassidus*, he would wear a "kolok", a type of *shtrielmel* with a pointed center. Unlike his father the Alter Rebbe, he would sit in one place when saying the *maamer* and not move about, yet even so, he would sweat immensely from great concentration, to the point that sweat would drip from the point of his *shtrielmel*.

(שיח"ק תשמ"א ח"א ע' 98)

## THE VALUE OF YEGIAH

Based on the Zohar, the Alter Rebbe explains that just as the Yidden toiled physically and then went out to receive the Torah, so too we must toil in learning to bring the final *Geulah*. The Rebbe adds that even the laziest person would choose such work over the labor in Mitzrayim.

(תורה אור פ' וארא, שיח"ק תשמ"מ ש"פ מטו"מ סכ"ה)

The Alter Rebbe writes that since Hashem demands of us to serve him "with all our *nefesh*," each person is required to learn using his skills to the utmost. One who is capable of learning something difficult cannot excuse himself with learning something easy.

The Frierdiker Rebbe instructed that everyone must have an in depth shiur in Gemara (*L'iyun*) and not suffice with just learning Mishnayos, despite its importance. The Rebbe explained that learning which is done without effort, is essentially lacking, since it does not involve the entire person.

(מאמרי אדה"ז ענינים א' ע' קנח, לקו"ש ח"ב ע' 566)

At the Rebbe's chassunah, the Frierdiker Rebbe went around greeting the guests and pouring L'chaim. Approaching the standing area of the *bochurim*, he said: "*Temimim!* Torah can only succeed through great effort. One who toils will understand the learning more than another who has better qualities than him. You must dedicate yourselves to learn with effort!"

(סה"ש תרפ"ט ע' 53)

The Rebbe spoke of the need for every person to become a *Talmid Chacham*. The Rebbe explained that there is no shortcut to this, and it is only attainable through hard effort. One who thinks of excuses why he is unable to do so, is really only fooling himself, and unfortunately he will remain ignorant (an *am ha'aretz*)...

(שיח"ק שם סכ"ב)

Although the Arizal had a phenomenal mind and no worldly worries, for his father-in-law supported him, he would toil intensely when learning Torah, even when it was not a deep concept. His *talmid*, Reb Chaim Vital, described, "I saw my Rebbe, when involved with *halacha*, strengthen himself like a lion, to the point of sweating. I asked him why he puts in so much effort, and he told me that the purpose of learning something in depth, is to break the *kelipos*, which are the difficulties that come up regarding the *halachos* being learned."

The Rebbe noted: "It is obvious that the *kelipos* which the Arizal dealt with were not very strong; nevertheless, in order to break them, he toiled greatly when learning Torah. From this we can understand the importance for all Yidden, who are not on the level of the Arizal, to toil in Torah."

(שער המצוות פ' ואתחנן, התוועדויות תשמ"ג ח"ב ע' 869)

When the Mezritcher Maggid first traveled to the Baal Shem Tov, he was already a great *gaon* in Torah and advanced in *avodah*, and only lacked the new *avodah* of Chassidus. Upon entering the *tzaddik's* room, the Baal Shem Tov asked him to explain a section in *Eitz Chaim* of the Arizal, one of the deepest *seforim* in Torah. The Maggid explained the meaning, but the Baal Shem Tov was not satisfied. Looking again, the Maggid insisted that this was indeed the *pshtat*, and asked that if the Baal Shem Tov thought otherwise, he kindly explain it to him.

The Baal Shem Tov then began learning the words of the *Eitz Chaim* with much diligence effort and *hislahavus*. When he mentioned the names of *malochim*, they were actually seen in the room, and the entire house became illuminated. Upon concluding, the Baal Shem Tov explained that although the Maggid knew the simple meaning of the words, because he had not learned it with all of his capacity, his learning had been lacking.

(תו"מ חכ"ה ע' 243)

When the Alter Rebbe was five years old, the gates of Torah opened for him, and he easily grasped even the most difficult matters. He later related to his grandson, the Tzemach Tzedek, "This caused me great distress, since I was unable to toil in Torah. Only at the age of fifteen, when my purpose in this world was revealed to me, was I calmed."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 131)

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