



# GUIDED LEARNING



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## והגית בו יומם ולילה

What exactly is our obligation to learn Torah? In this guided learning, we will examine the concept of constancy with regard to the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*

Let us begin this guided learning by examining a section from the first chapter of the book of Yehoshua:

After the death of Moshe, the servant of the L-rd, the L-rd said to Yehoshua son of Nun, Moshe's attendant: My servant Moshe is dead. Prepare to cross the Jordan, together with all this people, into the Land that I am giving to the Israelites... Be strong and resolute, for you shall apportion to this people the Land that I swore to their fathers to assign to them. But you must be very strong and resolute to observe faithfully all the teaching that My servant Moshe enjoined upon you. Do not deviate from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. **Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night**, so that you may observe faithfully all that is written in it. Only then will you prosper in your undertakings and only then will you be successful. I charge you: Be strong and resolute; do not be terrified or dismayed, for the L-rd your G-d is with you wherever you go.

► **What are the main instructions Yehoshua gives Am Yisrael upon entering Eretz Yisrael?**

► **What are the unique dangers they might face? What will protect them?**

Read the verse:

לא ימוש ספר התורה... מפיה והגית בו יומם ולילה

Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night.

► **What questions can be asked on this verse?**

The following commentaries address the above verse. Try to think about what question they are addressing:

Nachlat Yehoshua:

לא ימוש מפיו – this states there is another condition besides the deeds, and that is studying and being busy with the Torah, which is the business of learning and reciting the laws of the Torah and

its commandments.

והגית – you should always think about and study the theoretical part of the Torah. And the purpose of the study will be for the deed, to keep away from transgressions, and to fulfill the commandments.

Radak:

The meaning of וְהִגִּיתָ בוֹ יוֹמָם וּלְיָמָה is ... that one should meditate on it day and night, whenever one finds time from one's livelihood.

Let's try to dig deeper into the understanding of this commandment.

The Gemara (Menachot 99b) describes the level of constancy that obligates a Jew regarding Torah learning:

Rabbi Ami says: From Rabbi Yosei's statement we may learn that even if a person learned only one chapter of the Mishnah in the morning and one chapter of the Mishnah in the evening, he has thereby fulfilled the *mitzvah* of "Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips." Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Even if a person recited only the recitation of *Shema* in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled the *mitzvah* of "Let not this Book of Torah cease from your lips." And it is prohibited to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses [*amei ha'aretz*],

And Rava says: On the contrary, it is a *mitzvah* to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses!

► **What is the implication of this principle to Torah study?**

► **Why the fear of stating this principle in front of *amei ha'aretz*?**

Here are two reasons for hiding the idea:

1. So that one does not absolve himself from studying Torah by reciting *Kriyat Shema*. (Rabbeinu Gershom)

2. So that one will not accustom his sons not to learn Torah. (Rashi)



Here are three reasons for sharing the idea:

1. So that one thinks “if I can fulfill לא ימוש so easily, imagine how much I can gain if I learned even more!” (Rabbeinu Gershom)
2. So that one will accustom his sons to learn Torah. (Rashi)
3. In case one thinks that since it is impossible to study “day and night,” there is no hope in fulfilling the *mitzvah* of Torah learning, and will completely despair of the Torah. Therefore, it is a *mitzvah* to inform him that even by reciting one chapter he fulfills לא ימוש. (Sfat Emet)

► **What could be the relevance of these approaches in our time?**

The Talmud continues:

Rabbi Yonatan says: This verse is neither an obligation nor a *mitzvah*, but a blessing. The Holy One, Blessed be He, saw Yehoshua and observed that the words of Torah were very precious to him, as it is stated: “...and his servant Yehoshua, son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the Tent.” The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Yehoshua: Yehoshua, are the words of Torah so precious to you? I bless you that “this Torah Scroll shall

not depart from your mouth.” The *Tanna* of the school of Rabbi Yishmael teaches: The words of Torah should not be considered as an obligation upon you, but at the same time you are not permitted to exempt yourself from them.

► **What are your thoughts about Torah as an obligation, a *mitzvah*, or a blessing?**

Let’s examine what some of the commentaries have to say on the words “Torah should not be considered as an obligation”:

- A person who has a debt says: “When will I repay it and get rid of it already!” But a person should not say: “I’ll recite one chapter of Torah and be exempt,” since you are not allowed to exempt yourself from Torah. (Rashi)
- “Not an obligation” means that you would **only** engage in Torah, and “you are not permitted to exempt yourself from them” means not to engage with Torah at all. Rather, the proper way is “*Talmud Torah* with *derech erez*.” (Rashi)
- One does not have a duty to study the **whole** Torah, as stated in Avot: “It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it.” (Tosafot)

## CONCLUSION

*Am Yisrael* has been given the gift and duty of וזהגית בו יומם וליילה. It is a multifaceted challenge, combining the necessities of life, being creative and productive, while always being deeply connected to Torah. It is also a wondrous journey, as described by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:

You should know: there are chambers of Torah. When someone who is worthy of them begins to innovate in Torah, he enters these rooms and passes from room to room and from room to room. For in each and every room there are any number of entrances to other rooms; and from these other rooms to other rooms as well. He enters and strolls about in all of them, gathering from there treasures and exceedingly precious and delightful jewels. Fortunate is his lot!

The Torah is infinite and its potential is never ending. Although the exact halachic parameters regarding fulfilling one’s obligation to it can be drawn under the plane of scrutiny, in truth, we can never truly finish learning Torah.