

[Index to Current Issue](#)
[Search All Issues](#)
[Community Directory](#)
[Visitors' Guide](#)
[Links](#)
[Free Trial Subscription](#)
[Subscribe Now](#)
[Newsstand Copy](#)
[Write the Editor](#)
[Advertise](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Write the Webmaster](#)

JEWISH NEWS

of Greater Phoenix



May 27, 2005/Iyar 18 5765, Volume 57, No. 39

Torah not for tourists

Torah study

RABBI ZVI HOLLAND

Parsha Bechukotai, Leviticus 26:1-27:34

The extensive rebuke found in Bechukotai generally attracts the most attention in sermons and articles on the weekly portion. The portion's opening verses are really much more compelling: "If you follow My laws and are careful to keep My commandments ... I will grant peace in the land so that you will sleep without fear. I will rid the land of dangerous animals, and the sword will not pass through your land" (Leviticus 26:3,6).

Let's explore the eternal question: What does it mean to follow the Torah's laws and observe God's commandments?

Humankind's elusive goals of peace and tranquility are promised with the simple provision of, "if you follow My laws and are careful to keep My commandments." What a concept - a simple formula for the world's greatest problem.

We must wonder what the Torah means when it says, "Follow the laws and carefully keep the commandments." Is that not redundant? If one follows the law, the commandments must have been observed carefully.

Rashi was concerned with this problem and asked if "follow My laws" refers to the fulfillment of the mitzvot. "When the verse says, 'Keep My commandments and you will fulfill them,' behold, the fulfillment of the mitzvot is already mentioned. How do I interpret the clause, 'if you follow My statutes?' That you should labor in studying Torah. Labor in Torah in order to keep and fulfill, as it is said: 'And you shall teach them and take care to fulfill them.'" Rashi was concerned with this problem and asked if "follow My laws" refers to the fulfillment of the mitzvot. "When the verse says, 'Keep My commandments and you will fulfill them,' behold, the fulfillment of the mitzvot is already mentioned. How do I interpret the clause, 'if you follow My statutes?' That you should labor in studying Torah. Labor in Torah in order to keep and fulfill, as it is said: 'And you shall teach them and take care to fulfill them.'"

Rashi expounds on an amazing idea. The fulfillment of Torah depends directly on academic rigor. Why isn't it enough to accomplish the mitzvot? How and why does study translate into action? And besides, didn't it say "follow My laws?" Where did Rashi find studying in the verse?

The answer lies in the Hebrew word used, "taylaychu" - "you shall walk."

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

[Shalom, l'hitraot](#)

[Local pair rallies for Pollard](#)

COMMUNITY

[Memorial withdrawn from heritage center](#)

[Stem-cell legislation, judges hot topics for Jewish groups](#)

[AJHS director resigns](#)

PROFILE

[Former Pardes head ordained as rabbi](#)

FAMILIES

[Ask Bonnie - Dad wants daughter to date within faith](#)

HEALTH

['Subway dude' arms kids in fight against](#)

obesity
NATION
Nazi hearing loss 'science' debunked
On 75th anniversary, Yeshiva embraces challenges
AIPAC offers strong backing for withdrawal plan
Delegates rally to the cause
ISRAEL
Israel unprepared for new Ethiopian immigration
Herzl museum opens
OPINION
Editorial - Not-so-merry olde England
Commentary - People of the law
Your Voice - Healing trip to Israel
In the Mail - Letters to the Editor
ARTS
Young Jewish authors release hot new titles
BUSINESS
People on the move
COMING UP
This Week
MILESTONES
Births
B'nai Mitzvah
Engagements
Weddings
Obituaries
YOUTH
A teen who makes a difference
EDUCATION
Day School Roundup - Israel celebrations, graduation ceremonies
TORAH STUDY
Torah not for tourists

Walking implies going from one place to another. Spiritually. Only with serious intellectual effort does information have an impact. One must delve deeply into the Torah to uncover its true meaning, to discover God, who is the soul of the Torah. Without effort and toil, one gains at best a superficial understanding of Torah, which, in turn, leads to a superficial and shallow observance of its mitzvot. Only with deep understanding can the mitzvot be carried out in completeness.

We are exhorted to literally walk after God, to walk in His footsteps. Toiling in Torah is discovering the footsteps of God, the immutable laws of spiritual nature that contain the essence of God's attributes. By subjugating his or her mind to the demands of the Torah, and rejecting all that is superficial and simplistic, the student of Torah finds God in the Torah and is able to emulate Him.

We cannot approach Torah as tourists browsing the thoroughfares of Jewish culture. We must look to Torah like heirs of a magnificent estate with castles, garden, objects of art and wondrous secret passageways to explore. We can never feel satisfied until we have conquered our new possession. Only after we have explored can we begin to identify with our new role as the master of the estate.

As the holiday of Shavuot approaches and we celebrate receiving the Torah at Sinai, let's open our eyes to the wonders of this world that is ours, the world of Torah. Let's take a serious look at the Torah and see it as the fountainhead that it really is. Let's strive to be excited inspired humans and Jews loving each other, the Torah and the world God gave us.

Rabbi Zvi Holland is the dean of the Phoenix Community Kollel. Contact him at rabbiholland@aztorah.com.



[Home](#)