

ספרא בחוקותי פרשה א

(ב) אם בחוקותי תלכו (ויקרא כו, ג),  
יכול אילו המצות,

כשהוא אומר ואת מצוותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם הרי מצות אמורות,  
הא מה אני מקיים אם בחוקותי תלכו להיות עמילים בתורה,  
וכן הוא אומר אם לא תשמעו לי (ויקרא כו, יד) יכול אילו המצוות,  
וכשהוא אומר ולא תעשו את כל המצות האלה (שם) הרי מצות אמורות,  
א"כ למה נאמר אם לא תשמעו לי להיות עמילים בתורה.

Sifra B'hukotai 1:2

"If you follow [lit., go (walk) in] my laws" (Lev. 26:3) – does this mean [performing] the *mitsvot*? When the verse continues ". . . and faithfully observe My commandments" – *mitsvot* are mentioned explicitly. How, then, shall I interpret "If you follow my laws"? – that you shall toil in [the study of] Torah. . . .

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף צט עמוד ב

אמר רבי אלעזר: כל אדם לעמל נברא, שנאמר (איוב ה, ז) כי אדם לעמל יולד,  
איני יודע אם לעמל פה נברא אם לעמל מלאכה נברא,  
כשהוא אומר (משלי טז, כו) [נפש עמל עמלה לו] כי אכף עליו פיהו - הוי אומר לעמל פה נברא.  
ועדיין איני יודע אם לעמל תורה אם לעמל שיחה,  
כשהוא אומר (יהושע א, ח) לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיך - הוי אומר לעמל תורה נברא.  
והיינו דאמר רבא: כולהו גופי דרופתקי נינהו, טובי לדזכי דהוי דרופתקי דאורייתא.

Sanhedrin 99b

R. Elazar said: Every human is created for toil, as it says, "For Man is born for toil" (Job 5:7). I don't know whether he is born for verbal toil or for physical labor – when Scripture says, "[If a person toils, it toils for him,] for he saddles his mouth to it" (Proverbs 16:26) one need say [man is created] for verbal toil. I still do not know whether [man is created] for [verbal] toil of Torah or for toil of social communication. When Scripture says, "This book of the Torah shall not leave your mouth" (Joshua 1:8) one need say [man is created] for toil in Torah. And this accords with that which Rava used to say: All human bodies are carriers, happy are they who merit to be carriers [receptacles] of Torah.

פחד יצחק, שער ירחא תליתאי (שבועות) יז, ח

לפני העיון היה הנידון נראה בפנים אחרים מאשר לאחר העיון. חידוש-פנים זה, הוא הוא ההולדה אשר בכוח השכל. וחידוש-פנים של הנידון הבא על-ידי השתקעות השכל בנידון, - הוא הוא עמילות השכל. וכשאתה אומר "שכל בלי כוח עמילות", הרי זה כאילו היית אומר "אבהות בלי כוח הולדה". עמילות בתורה, פירושה הוא, אפוא, השתקעות השכל בתורה הבאה לשם חידוש-פניו של עניין מענייני התורה. לימוד-של-עמילות כזה, הוא מה שאנחנו קוראים לימוד בבחינת גמרא.

Pachad Yitzhak, Shavuot 17:8

Before the study [investigation] the matter appears differently than after the study. This newness-difference is the giving birth through the power [potential] of the mind. This newness-difference that results from investing the powers of mind in the matter is [what we mean by] "the labor of Torah". If one would say "use of mind without [intellectual] labor" that is as if to say "fatherhood without power of procreation". Labor of Torah *means* the investing of the mind in Torah for the sake of ["procreating"] newness-difference in some matter of Torah. This study-of-labor is what we call study in the aspect of *gemara* (talmud).

### Socratic Way

1. Truth is within man and man is open to that truth.
2. The teacher is incidental to the process of discovering that truth.
3. The moment of the discovery of that truth is accidental. The opportunity is always available.

### Christian Way

1. The truth is not within man; rather, man is in error, closed to the truth.
2. The Teacher is necessary to the process of discovering the truth; he must bring it from without and create the condition for receiving it within man.
3. The moment is decisive for discovering the truth. The Eternal must break into time at a definite point (the fullness of time) and the believer must receive the condition in a moment of contemporaneity with the teacher.

In the classic Talmudic mode of עמל התורה truth is neither within man nor without – truth has a lower case "t": it is the improved attempt at balancing all the conflicting factors and realities that are involved in some problem (including determining what those are) – and coming to a decision.

Necessary for this process are partners – a teacher for instruction in the contents of tradition up to this point and for effective and efficient ways of bringing it to bear on the issue at hand, and a *havruta* to share the spiritual aspirations and mutual commitment to best make them real. A good teacher is also a *havruta*.

### Talmudic Way

1. Truth is always (continuously) in the process of being determined.
2. The teacher/partner is both incidental and necessary. Incidental because an individual could in theory determine the truth; necessary because truth determined in solitude is unlikely to stand the test of Talmudic reconsideration.
3. Truth is not discovered – it is continuously decided.

This comparison of the "Talmudic way" with the Socratic and Christian ways is somewhat misleading, because these differing methods of arriving at the truth are connected to different conceptions of what the truth we're looking for is, what kind of "thing" it is. The Talmudic aspect of our culture, our spiritual tradition, has placed a certain subject matter and a certain sort of discourse about it at its center: the subject matter is "*how to live this detail of life*" and the mode of considering it is Talmudic. The point is that the Talmudic tradition deals with something else and therefore has a different way and conception of "truth" and developed a conception of עמל in consonance with that way.

