



Rambam Hilchot Talmud Torah

Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

Part 8

8: Every Jewish man is obligated in TT ; whether poor or rich, whether healthy or afflicted; whether a young man or an old man whose strength is gone; even if he was a poor man taking his sustenance from charity and going door-to-door; even a family man is obligated to establish a time for TT during the day and at night; as it says *vehagita bo yomam valayla* (and you shall meditate upon it [Torah] day and night - Yehoshua [Joshua] 1:8).

Q1: Why the list? Once R states that every man is obligated, we know that that includes the rich, poor etc.

YE: First of all, he could just be accenting that life circumstances are not an exemption from the Mitzva of TT. This fits with the Mishnayot in Avot which warn against saying: "I will learn when I get a chance" and "Anyone who ignores the Torah due to wealth will ultimately ignore it due to poverty"; Second, each of these particular people has a "reasonable" claim: The rich man is too involved with managing his affairs (and may be very involved in community affairs, to boot); while the poor man has to scrounge for a living -and is constantly worrying about tomorrow's meal and tonight's shelter; the healthy one can claim that while he is in the prime of physical condition, it is time to pay attention to the outdoors, health etc.; while the afflicted one can claim the opposite; that he is in too much pain to learn. The young man and the old one who is weak have the same dichotomy. R pays extra attention to the poor man who is going door to door for his own sustenance and the family man. This is probably because these two can claim, unlike the first six, that they are busy taking care of themselves/their family and without their involvement in worldly matters, lives (their own, or family members who depend upon them) could be endangered. The Halakha, nevertheless, places the obligation of *k'viat itim* (establishing times for study) on all of them. The rule of *osek bemitzva patur min hamitzva* - (one who is involved in a Mitzva is exempt from another Mitzva) - which is a complex concept with seemingly inconsistent application - does not exempt these people - or any man - from TT.

Q2: The original intent of the command to Yehoshua seems to be "constant learning" - why then is it important to establish times during the day and night - wouldn't it be better to have one longer, more substantial time, during the evening (or the day, if that works better)?

YE: The text of Shma seems to be the hint - *b'shokhb'kha uv'kumekha* (when you lie down and when you rise up). R will address nighttime learning at the end of Perek 3.