

מצות

AN INFUSION OF ENERGY
TO MAINTAIN THE ETERNITY
OF THE SOUL



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AN INFUSION OF ENERGY TO MAINTAIN THE ETERNITY OF THE SOUL



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The Proverbial Yardstick Confirms Delusion

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1. If one observes the “neglected” mitzvos (those “trampled” upon by one’s heel), G-d will uphold the covenant, etc.
2. He will merit unlimited blessings, an exceptional reward. Why?
3. Jews are bound by 613 dictates – both positive and negative.
4. Some only pertain to a certain segment of the Jewish people.
5. Some have relevance to the Kohen, or to the ordinary Jew, but not to a woman.
6. All Jewish Souls are interconnected.
7. When one does a mitzvah all Jews are beneficiaries; if one sins, all Jews are diminished.
8. He who observes the neglected mitzvos infuses the entire Jewish People with the spirituality they were lacking.
9. Therefore he’s the beneficiary of unlimited blessing.
10. Also: Since he/she does not discern between the more and less severe mitzvah, it confirms his interest is solely to fulfill the will of G-d.
11. His intent is not self-serving, so he merits the ultimate– as he is fully attached to the ultimate.
12. One who uses the proverbial mitzvah yardstick will not address the “less important” mitzvos.

Is Acknowledgement of the Source Integral to the Sated or the Hungry?

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1. “And you have eaten, and you are sated, and you will bless G-d.”
2. This is basis one must say Grace after eating: three blessings on a Torah level and a fourth which is rabbinical.
3. Gemara: What is the basis for the pre-blessing?
4. If one acknowledges G-d when sated– definitely when one is hungry?
5. Gemara: One is not permitted to benefit from the world without a blessing.
6. If one did, it is as if he had benefited from something that was consecrated.
7. Psalms: The world in its entirety belongs to G-d.
8. Psalms: The Heaven is G-d’s & the Earth was to mankind.
9. Gemara: Before acknowledging G-d with a blessing the world is all G-d’s; after the blessing the terrestrial is released to mankind.
10. 13 methods of interpretation were given at Sinai.
11. Kal V’chomer is one.
12. The logic that was employed by the Gemara to establish a basis for the pre blessing is the Kal V’chomer.
13. Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk: If the Kal V’chomer is the basis for the pre-blessing; one’s obligation should be biblical, which it is not.
14. He explains that there is a fallacy in the logical Kal V’chomer.
15. When sated and complacent, one is vulnerable to attribute his successes to himself.
16. He must therefore immediately trace the source of satiation to G-d with the Grace after the meal, which is not a concern when one is hungry.

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Eikev



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Contending with Man's Ego

Torah: “You will eat and you will be sated, and bless Hashem, your G-d for the good Land that He gave you.” This is the basis for the positive commandment that one is obligated to acknowledge G-d (through the recitation of the blessing of thanks) after having partaken of any of the grains that are mentioned in the *Torah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: “The obligation for the blessing that one recites after the meal is explicit in the *Torah*, what is the basis for the blessing that one recites before eating?” The *Gemara* responds that it is based on the concept of *Kal V'Chomer* (logical deduction, which is one of the 13 methodologies that were ordained to Moshe at Sinai to interpret the Written Law). Just as the *Torah* obligates one to acknowledge G-d after one is sated, is it not logical to say that one must acknowledge G-d before one eats when he is in a state of hunger?”

Gemara: “The reason one recites a blessing before one partakes of food is based on the principle that one who benefits from this world without a blessing is considered as if he had benefited from something that was consecrated.” The *Gemara* points out that there seems to be a contradiction between two statements of King David in Psalms. King David writes, “The world in its entirety belongs to G-d” (which includes even the terrestrial level). However, in another verse, he writes, “The heaven is for G-d and the earth was given to mankind.” This indicates that the terrestrial plane is considered to be man's domain.

The *Gemara* reconciles the two statements of King David by explaining that the statement “the world in its entirety belongs to G-d” is before the recitation of a blessing. The statement in Psalms “The land was given to mankind” is after one had recited the blessing. When one recites a blessing before one eats, one acknowledges G-d as the Creator and his Benefactor

and thus causes the food item to be released from its consecrated state into the individual's domain.

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk: The blessing that one recites before eating is only of Rabbinic nature while the after blessing (*birchas hamazon*) is a *Torah* obligation. Since the *Gemara* suggests that the basis for the pre-blessing before one eats is based on *Kal'V'Chomer* concept, seemingly the nature of this blessing should assume the force of a *Torah* law. Why is it only Rabbinical?

Reb Meir Simcha: Although the *Gemara* did not refute the *Kal'V'Chomer*, there is a fallacy in its logic. The *Torah* obligates one to recite a blessing after one is sated because when one is complacent and feels secure one has a tendency to forget G-d. As the verse states, "When *Yeshurun* (the Jewish People) become fat (financially secure) they bolt (from G-d)." The *Torah* therefore obligates one when he completes his meal to immediately acknowledge the source of that satiation and complacency. However, when one is in a state of hunger and feels in need, one tends to have greater clarity and recognizes the source of his blessing. He is fully cognizant that G-d is his benefactor. Thus, the *Torah* does not require one to recite the pre-blessing before eating.

There is a positive commandment on *Yom Kippur*, "You must afflict yourself..." In order to fulfill this commandment one must be in an afflicted state regarding the five areas of deprivation. All commentators agree that if one eats or drinks, he is liable for spiritual excision. However, regarding areas of deprivation one may only be in violation of a Rabbinical enactment.

On *Yom Kippur*, the Jew must come to the level of clarity in order to be able to repent and atone for his sins. When fasting, one finds himself in a denied and needy state. This feeling of deprivation enables one to have the clarity and lack of distraction to introspect and atone for his past sins. If one would be in a sated state he would have difficulty internalizing and sensing the wrong of his transgression in order to have sufficient remorse. Therefore, the *Torah* obligates the Jew to be in an afflicted state in order to achieve purity on *Yom Kippur*. As *Rambam* explains, the *mitzvah* of *Yom Kippur* is to repent and achieve spiritual purity.

Revealing the Deficiencies in One's Service of G-d

Torah: "This shall be the reward when you hearken to these ordinances."

Midrash citing a verse from Psalms: King David states, "'Why should I be fearful in the days of evil? The sins of my heel surround me.' G-d has given the Jewish people the *Torah* which contains 613 *mitzvos*. Among them, there are those, which seem to be more severe and those which are less severe. Because there are *mitzvos* that are less severe, people tend to not observe them properly and throw them under their heels (to be trampled upon) as if they are to be taken lightly. It is from this that King David feared on the Day of Judgment.

"King David said to G-d, 'Master of the Universe, I am not concerned about the more severe *mitzvos* (because I performed them properly); however, I am concerned about the less severe *mitzvos*. Perhaps I have violated one of them because I related to them as if they were of lesser importance. You G-d have said, 'One must be as careful in the observance of the lighter *mitzvah* as one must be careful with a more stringent *mitzvah*. Therefore I am concerned that the sins that I have thrown under my heel will come to condemn me (prosecute) on the Day of Judgment.'"

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: If suffering comes upon an individual he should introspect and reflect upon his past behavior in order to understand the cause of his culpability. Tragedies and suffering only come upon an individual as a result of one's transgressing the Will of G-d. It is through experiencing pain that one is motivated to repent. If one introspects and does not come upon the cause for his travails, he should attribute his predicament to insufficient *Torah* study (*betul Torah*).

King David was devoutly pious and continuously introspected throughout his life upon his service of G-d and consequently repented. There was no moment in his life that he did not reflect upon his actions and behavior and strive to improve them to a perfected level. If in fact this was so, why should King David be concerned on the Day of Judgment that he may have failed regarding the less severe commandments that he did not address properly? Presumably, if he had failed, he would have repented as a result of his introspection and thus not be concerned about G-d's prosecution on the Judgment Day.

It is understood that King David performed all of the *mitzvos*, both severe and less severe. His concern was; did he perform the less severe *mitzvos* with the same degree of reverence and dedication as the more severe ones. He understood that if he did not revere the less severe *mitzvah* to the identical degree as the more severe one (even as much as an iota), it would be a claim against him on Judgment Day because G-d said, "One must be as careful in the observance of the lighter *mitzvah* as one is with the more stringent *mitzvah*."

Torah: If one keeps the seemingly less important *mitzvos* that are trampled upon and not valued sufficiently, he deserving of unlimited bounty. Why is this so? If one observes the *mitzvah* only because it is the Will of G-d then one would not differentiate between the more stringent *mitzvah* and the seemingly less important one. This is because the basis for one's motivation to fulfill G-d's Commandment is purely the Will of G-d. More severe or less severe should be irrelevant. However, when one does make a distinction between the two, it is a definite indication that the objective and incentive for the fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is for self-interest rather than being bound by the Will of G-d. When one acts out of self-interest one chooses to sacrifice for the "more stringent" *mitzvah* because of the perceived liability or the greater perceived reward.

However, regarding the less severe *mitzvah*, he will have lesser interest in its fulfillment because the liability and reward seem to be inconsequential. One's mindset will reveal itself through one's enthusiasm and meticulousness in the performance of *mitzvos*. Therefore, when one addresses even the seemingly less important *mitzvos*, that are minimized (trampled upon) he is deserving of unlimited reward because it is clear that he is performing the *mitzvos* for the sake of G-d.

King David was concerned that despite the fact that he was one of the most humble people who ever lived, he may have had a nuance of self-interest in the performance of *mitzvos*. If that were true, then his adherence to G-d's Will, even regarding the severe *mitzvos*, would be deficient and lacking because the underlying motivation for their fulfillment was ultimately himself. This would be a basis for prosecution on the Day of Judgment.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: "You should be as careful with the less stringent *mitzvos* as the more stringent because one does not know the true reward

of a *mitzvah*." The closing statement of the Mishna is not relevant to King David, but rather it is intended for the mere mortal (the average person) whose motivation for the performance of *mitzvos* is self-interest. This individual should know that although he perceives the lesser *mitzvah* as something of inconsequential value it is only because he does not understand the unlimited reward for the less severe dictate.

Humility, the Magnifier of Truth

Torah: "When you hearken to these ordinances... (*V'haya eikev tishmeun eis ha'mishpatim*)."

Chazal: The word "eikev" is derived from the word "aakeiv," which means "heel." The heel of the foot symbolizes humility because it is the lowest part of the body. One is only able to actualize his spiritual potential by perfecting the characteristic of humility. *Moshe*, who was G-d's spokesman and the conduit of *Torah* to the Jewish people, is not referred to as "devoutly righteous" but rather as "My faithful servant." *Moshe* was the most spiritually advanced Jew to ever live because he had negated himself completely to G-d. There was no trace of self in his being that could obscure or interfere with his perception of truth, which was absolute. He was not conflicted and thus hindered by self-interest. As the *Torah* tells us, *Moshe* was the most humble man who ever walked the face of the earth.

Midrash: "G-d desired you not because you were the most numerous of all the nations of the world. It is not because you perform more *mitzvos* than they do. In fact, there are times when the nations of the world glorify My Name to a greater degree than you. As it states, 'From the East to the West, My Name is made great by the nations...' but you, you desecrate My Name. Why then did I choose you? It is because you are few. In the merit of you minimizing and humbling yourselves before Me, I have chosen you. Because of this you are My beloved. As it states, 'I have loved you, but *Esav* I despise.' Despite the fact that the Jewish people are undeserving, G-d nevertheless desires them because they have minimized themselves."

Torah in Haazinu: "I have expended all of My arrows in them (Jewish People)."

Midrash: "G-d said, Although My arrows have been expended upon them, they have not been expended."

Meaning, despite all of the tragedies and travails that have befallen the Jewish people, they have remained intact – unlike the nations of the world who were destroyed through Divine Retribution that had come upon them. The *Midrash* compares the predicament of the Jewish people to a wooden beam that remains intact, although the archer had expended all of his arrows into it, emptying his quiver. The Jewish people remain intact despite all the difficulties they had befallen them throughout history.

Midrash: There is no nation that G-d had begun to punish that was not ultimately destroyed. The Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and the Romans, have long been destroyed and have gone into oblivion as a result of His Wrath. Why have the Jewish people survived, despite the extent of G-d's Retribution, while other nations perished? When G-d's wrath had come upon the nations of the world, they chose to defy and rebel against Him, feeling that they were being unjustly punished.

Rather than recognizing that their punishment was due to their own spiritual failings, they intensified their defiance against G-d. They were therefore ultimately destroyed as a result of their obstinacy. This is because the nations of the world are haughty and arrogant and do not possess the innate characteristic of humility. Conversely, when the Jewish people experience tragedy and suffering, they become introspective and recognize that the cause of their punishment is due to their own failing, thus causing them to repent and return to G-d. The Jew has the capacity to do this only because he possesses the attribute of humility.

The Jewish people possess the attribute of humility because they are the spiritual heirs of the holy Patriarchs. *Avraham* had opposed the entire pagan world in his espousal of monotheism. As *Chazal* explain, he was equivalent of a person who took on the world singlehandedly, despite the overwhelming opposition. If *Avraham* was motivated by self-interest such as being acknowledged and perceived in a positive light by the world, one could not have not what *Avraham*, our Patriarch had done.

Because of his position of belief and dedication to G-d, *Avraham* was considered to be a pariah who was despised by his community and consequently became a fugitive. It was only because of his exceptional quality of humility that he had the capacity to ignore the opposition of the world for the sake of G-d. *Avraham*

was considered to be one of the most humble people to ever live. As it states, "*Avraham* said, 'I am but ash and dust.'" Meaning, *Avraham* believed that he was undeserving. The innate characteristic of humility is part of the spiritual gene pool of the Jewish people because of *Avraham*.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: "I (G-d) created the evil inclination and the *Torah* as its antidote." It is because the Jew has the innate characteristic of humility that *Torah* is able to provide him with the clarity to perceive truth and not be ensnared by the evil inclination. However, the nations of the world, who do not possess this special innate characteristic of humility, have no relevance to *Torah* because it is only a mechanism to come upon truth to the one who is unhindered by ego.

Spiritual Contentment

Torah: "When you hearken to these ordinances... (*V'haya eikev tishmeun eis ha'mishpatim*)."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh in his commentary: The word "*V'haya*" in the verse is seemingly superfluous. The *Torah* could have omitted it and not changed the connotation of the verse. Why then does the *Torah* use this term?

Chazal: Whenever the word "*V'haya*" is mentioned it is an expression of joy. *Chazal* tell us that that the word "*eikev*" is derived from the word "*aakeiv*," which means "heel." The heel is the lowest part of the body and thus connotes something that is the end. Therefore, in the context of this verse the expression "*V'haya eikev*" is coming to communicate, "only in the end can you rejoice." One has the right to rejoice only at the end of one's life because it is only then that he can reflect back upon his spiritual accomplishments. However, before that time, not knowing what the future will bring, there is not basis to rejoice. One may not fulfill one's spiritual objective before he passes on.

Although a Jew must be in a continuous state joy because he has been chosen by the Creator to be given His *Torah* and fulfill it; nevertheless, the joy that is being addressed in the verse is one's sense of accomplishment as a Jew. This sense of joy for one's spiritual accomplishments is relevant only at the end of one's life.

Chazal: Regarding the accumulation of the material, "if one has only one measure of something he desires two

measures of it. If he has two measures of it, he desires four ..." There is no end to one's pursuit of material because it continuously increases exponentially. However, regarding the spiritual, a small amount is sufficient. Why is this so?

Chavos Lavavos: The only reason an individual desires and pursues more material is because he focuses on what he does not have, rather than recognizing and appreciating the gifts that G-d with which he has been endowed. As we find in the *Torah* regarding the discussion between *Yaakov* and his brother *Esav*. *Esav* had said regarding the gift that *Yaakov* had sent him (not wanting to accept it), "I have much" while *Yaakov* response to that was, "I have everything." Meaning, *Yaakov* was fully focused on what G-d had bestowed upon him and therefore anything beyond that was seen as excess. *Esav*, on the other hand, whose essence personified hedonism and evil, had an insatiable need for the material that was endless and unattainable. *Yaakov* understood that the only thing of value in existence was one's spiritual development. The material is only for the sake of facilitating a spiritual end. In contrast, *Esav* believed that the material was an end unto itself.

Chofetz Chaim: When a child is born, his fist is always clasped. This is an indication that man comes into existence believing that all material has relevance to him to pursue and amass. As the *Torah* states, "The inclination of man is evil from the moment he is cast from his mother's womb."

Chazal: When one passes away one has not come upon fifty percent of his aspirations/desires. When the average person dies he does so with his hands open, indicating that he never attained his pursuit of the material. In contrast, when the *Chofetz Chaim* passed away he did so with his hands clasped, indicating that he succeeded in the acquisition of the spiritual.

Man does not naturally crave spirituality because his essence is physical. This is the reason one naturally feels content with whatever amount of spirituality he has. However, there is a built-in mechanism within each *mitzvah* that allows the human being to be motivated and compelled to advance his spirituality. This is based on the principle that the performance of one *mitzvah* will bring about the fulfillment of another. This spiritual dynamic only comes to being when one's fulfillment of the *mitzvah* is not done by rote or reflexively. We must supplicate G-d to give us the focus

to appreciate the value of His service to actualize this spiritual momentum.

Expressing One's Love for G-d *(from Va'eschanan)*

We find in *Va'eschanan*, the positive commandment of declaring one's belief in the unity of G-d through the recitation of the *Shema*. In addition to accepting the yoke of heaven there is a positive commandment to love G-d. As it states, "You shall love *Hashem*, your G-d, with all your heart (*levavecha*), with all your soul, and with all your resources."

Rashi citing the *Gemara*: "Why does the *Torah* choose the word '*levavecha*' for 'heart which has a double '*beis*' rather than the word '*libcha*' which has only one '*beis*' and is more grammatically correct? It is to teach us that one should love G-d with both his good and evil inclinations. Meaning, one should suppress his evil inclination despite its difficulty, because of his love for G-d.

"The double '*beis*' in the word '*levavecha*' alludes to a person who possesses the equivalent of two hearts—the positive and negative. Another interpretation is that when one performs a *mitzvah*, his inner feeling and intention should reflect his outward behavior. There should not be a discrepancy between his action and what is in his heart."

One is obligated to love G-d with all of one's soul and all of one's resources.

Chazal: One must love G-d to the degree that he is willing to give his life for His sake.

Gemara: One is obligated give his life if faced with the choice of violating the three cardinal sins or dying. If it is a time when the underpinnings of Judaism are being threatened and uprooted, one must give his life even when given the choice to violate a custom. If one is given an ultimatum to either violate a negative commandment, such as eating a *kezayis* (size of a large olive) of non-Kosher meat, or forfeit all of one's material holdings, one must choose the latter. This is the degree that one must demonstrate his love for G-d.

Chazal: "With all your heart" means that one must perform a *mitzvah* wholeheartedly without any self-

interest. One must be fully dedicated to G-d and act only for His sake.

Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: Regarding demonstrating one's dedication to G-d, "You should not be like servants who serve their Master for the sake of receiving reward, but rather be like servants who serve their Master without the intent of receiving any reward..." One's love for G-d must be unconditional and not contingent upon anything. The moment there is any prerequisite for one's love of G-d it is not considered to be selfless love. The fact that one becomes the beneficiary of eternal reward that is brought about through one's *mitzvah* performance it should be unrelated to one's motivation to do the *mitzvah*. One must be dedicated to His Will because of one's recognition of Who He Is, which is the ultimate.

Rambam in *The Fundamentals of Torah (Yisodei HaTorah)*: "How is one able to come to love G-d if he does not?" Meaning, it is understandable that the *Torah* legislates many commandments, such as the observance of the *Shabbos*, dietary laws, charity, etc. because observing these mitzvos is a matter of doing. However, love is an emotion, how could the *Torah* command one to feel love for G-d if one does not?

Rambam: One can come to love G-d by observing His Greatness as manifested in creation. When one gazes upon the universe and understands how unfathomable and awesome Creation is, he will become awestruck, overwhelmed, and taken aback with reverence for G-d. This sense of G-d's majesty will cause him to be negated and thus evoke a love for G-d. He will want to be associated with Him and dedicated to His Will. This individual will love G-d unconditionally, although he has not been a beneficiary of His reward.

The heart unfortunately lusts for many things; some are in accordance with the *Torah* while others are inappropriate. We supplicate G-d in the blessing preceding the *Shema (Ahavah Rabah)* to "Designate our hearts exclusively to love and fear Your Name."

Chofetz Chaim: We can explain this request with an allegory. A diamond merchant who had precious stones in his possession had asked a third party to safeguard his most special diamonds for him while he was away. The diamond merchant explained that the stones that were being given to him were extremely valuable. The perspective custodian, before assuming responsibility to care for these diamonds, asked the merchant if he could gaze upon them while he was away. The merchant agreed.

The custodian, with great trepidation, opened the wooden box and unwrapped the silk cloth in which the diamonds was contained. As he was unwrapping the silk, he was taken aback because he found intermingled with the precious stones, particles of putrid and decaying food. He could not understand how a man, who has an understanding of the value of diamonds, allows something that is so precious to be contained together with something so detestable and unclean.

Chofetz Chaim: The heart of a human being contains within it all of the feelings of love. The love of a Jew contains his love for G-d in addition to his belief and faith in Him. However, simultaneously in that same location, he possesses other feelings, interests, and desires that are inappropriate and are not in conformance with the Will of G-d. Within the same heart there is something that is infinitely precious that is contained in a location with something that is of a mundane nature. Therefore, we pray to G-d to "Designate our hearts" exclusively to love and fear Him and to be devoid of any impurity that is contrary to that.



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