

מצות

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 the base one must say in Grace after eating: 3 blessings on a Torah level & a 4th 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 and 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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G-d's Special Love for the Patriarchs

Torah: "Moshe said to the Jewish people, '...Because He loved your forefathers, and he chose his offspring after him, and took you out before Himself with His great strength from Egypt; to drive away before you nations that are greater and mightier than you...'" Moshe told the Jewish people that G-d took them out of Egypt and removed the mighty nations from the Land of *Canaan* not because of their own worthiness but because "He loved their forefathers."

G-d could have destroyed the Egyptian nation in an instant, yet He chose to perform many revealed miracles for the Jewish people to witness. He could have also vanquished the nations of *Canaan* before the Jewish people had arrived, yet they needed to witness themselves the destruction of the nations that were mightier than they. Seemingly the verse indicates that G-d wanted the Jewish people to experience the miracles first-hand because "He loved their forefathers." G-d could have redeemed the Jewish people from

Egypt and placed them in the Land without their need to experience any hardships or anguish, rather than witnessing miracles. What is the relationship between G-d loving their forefathers and the need to witness and experience the miracles of their redemption?

Ramban: A central theme, which permeates Judaism, is the continuous remembrance and mention of the redemption from Egypt. Since every generation is not worthy to witness and experience revealed miracles (supernatural acts of great magnitude such as those that occurred in Egypt), one must continuously recall the exodus so as not to forget what had transpired. It is essential for one's belief in Divine Providence to be cognizant of the past supernatural acts in order to understand that nature itself is G-d's Hand in existence.

Ramban: "It is essential for every Jew to believe that nature itself is a concealed miracle." Therefore the continuous remembrance of the redemption from Egypt is central to Judaism.

In order for the Jewish people to understand and appreciate G-d's involvement in the world, He wanted them to be privy to the inner workings of existence. G-d could have remained in concealment and allowed humanity to believe that nature is an ongoing process that evolves on its own, which seems to be convincing because it does not change its course. This would have made it difficult for the Jewish people to maintain their belief in an Omnipotent Being. It was because of G-d's special love for the Patriarchs that He gave their descendants an experience which would facilitate their understanding and belief in Him.

G-d loved the Patriarchs because of their special dimension of spirituality. They dispelled the falsehoods of paganism and personified G-d's existence through their exceptional spiritual development. They lived their lives as living angels. G-d thus chose their children to be His Holy Nation and follow in the path of spirituality. A prerequisite to accomplishing this was to achieve a level of clarity to understand G-d's unlimited ability and dedication to them. The Jewish people witnessed the Ten Plagues of Egypt, the splitting of the Sea, and the destruction of the nations of *Canaan*. It was through these first-hand experiences that they understood that their existence and accomplishment rested solely in the Hand of G-d.

Many of the difficulties and tragedies that the Jewish people have endured throughout history were necessary for their spiritual development. Although at the time of these tragedies it was difficult to comprehend and appreciate their necessity. In retrospect, many of these occurrences were put into perspective – either by the prophets or by the Rabbis of the *Talmud*. They were all necessary only because the Jewish people are G-d's people, whose essence is spiritual. Despite the challenges and lack of clarity that we are continuously confronted with as a Jewish people, we must believe and understand that it is only for the ultimate good. Whatever transpires and affects us is because of G-d's special love for us.

The Concealment of True Reward

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

Midrash Tanchuma citing a verse from Proverbs: "'The way of life may be weighed. The movements of its paces will not be known.'...G-d had removed the reward

for one who performs a *mitzvah* from this world so that he could do so in the most perfect manner."

Eitz Yosef (a commentator on the *Midrash*): "G-d does not reward an individual to any degree in this world for the performance of a *mitzvah*. This is so that he should perform the *mitzvah* with total belief/faith (*emunah*) that G-d will ultimately give him his due reward in the world to come, despite what he does not see in this world. If one would actually experience the exceptional reward of a *mitzvah* in this world, one would not need to have faith that G-d will reward him. However if reward is reserved for the world to come, then he will be doubly rewarded – one for performing the *mitzvah* and another for having faith that G-d will ultimately reward him in the world to come." Therefore when a Jew performs a *mitzvah* he does so completely out of faith in G-d because its reward is not evident in this world.

Second portion of the *Shema*: If one performs the *mitzvos*, then G-d will provide the rains in their time, one will receive G-d's bounty etc. This is reiterated throughout the *Torah*.

Commentators: The blessing that is mentioned in the *Torah* should not be regarded as reward for the *mitzvah* but rather it is to accommodate and facilitate the performance of the *mitzvos*. The blessing that one will experience in this world for adhering to the precepts of the *Torah* is only to provide the amenities of life for one not to be distracted by the mundane issues of this world. One could then fully focus and be attentive to performing the *mitzvos* in the most perfect manner.

The blessing that is experienced in this world is not in any way for the sake of reward. If one would understand the true value of a *mitzvah* through receiving even a semblance of its reward in this world, he would have no difficulty performing it because of its unlimited blessing. One's opportunity to make choices would be undermined and severely limited. In addition, it could also impact upon a person negatively by preventing one to perform the *mitzvah* for its own sake (*l'shmah*). Therefore G-d concealed the reward for *mitzvos*.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: Moshe had asked G-d to explain to him the rationale of "*tzaddik v'raalo/rasha v'tovlo*" and "*rasha v'raalo/tzaddik v'tovlo*" – a righteous person who experiences suffering and an evil person who experiences blessing/bounty, and a righteous

person who experiences blessing/bounty and an evil person who experiences suffering.” G-d did not respond to *Moshe’s* question.

Gemara in Tractate Moed Katan: Great rabbis of the *Talmud (Amoraim)* who were of equal levels of devoutness had experienced completely opposite predicaments in their lives. One had celebrated 60 weddings and the other 60 funerals. One would feed his dog food that the other would not even be able to afford for himself. If they were of equal spiritual status, then why should their situations be so extremely contrary? It is something that is humanly incomprehensible.

G-d’s non-response to *Moshe* reinforces the value of performing a *mitzvah* purely out of faith/belief. The ultimate reward will be received in its proper setting, which is the world to come. Despite the lack of understanding of tragedies and suffering that we experience in this world, we must perform the *mitzvos* only because they are the Dictate of G-d. This is performing a *mitzvah* in the most perfect manner.

In the second blessing of the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer): “(G-d) resurrects the dead with abundant mercy... and maintains faith to those asleep in the dust...Blessed are You, *Hashem*, Who resurrects the dead.” One of the 13 basic tenets of Judaism is that a Jew must believe with complete faith that G-d resurrects the dead. Although we have never actually witnessed the resurrection of the dead, we recite this blessing in the *Amidah* as if we had. This blessing is solely based on our belief (*emunah*) in G-d. The Jew believes that despite what he experiences and witnesses in this world, G-d will ultimately provide the true reward for *mitzvos*, resurrect the dead, and bring *Moshiach* etc. Thus, the fulfillment of a *mitzvah* is also an expression in one’s faith in G-d.

Building a Trust Account for G-d

Torah: Regarding the conquering of the Land of *Canaan*, “*Moshe* said to the Jewish people, ‘Perhaps you will say in your heart: These nations are more numerous than I; how will I be able to drive them out?’ Do not fear them You shall remember what *Hashem*, your G-d, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt...”

Sforno: It was not possible for the nations of *Canaan* to be destroyed without G-d’s intervention. It was important for the Jewish people to ask “How will I be able to drive them out because they are more

numerous than we are?” However, this question should not emanate from fear, but rather, from understanding the reality of their situation.

By appreciating the difficulty of their predicament and thus being confounded with the question, the Jewish people would then appreciate and understand that their ultimate success was totally attributed to the Hand of G-d. This would reinforce their understanding of G-d’s love for them through bringing about what is humanly impossible.

Why should the Jewish people be confident that G-d would perform a miracle and allow them to conquer the Land? The verse states, “...You shall remember what *Hashem*, your G-d, did to Pharaoh and to all of Egypt...” Just as G-d redeemed them from Egypt with wonders and miracles, so too will He vanquish the nations of *Canaan* and allow them to settle the Land as He promised.

It is important to appreciate the difficulty of one’s predicament and grapple with the issue of – how will I be able to deal with this? This question is fundamental to one’s belief; however, it should not emanate from one’s fear. One could believe that G-d is the Creator of the world. He could also believe that there is nothing beyond His ability when He chooses to do so. However, the question one very often asks is– will G-d choose to perform a miracle on my behalf? When the Jewish people were confronted with the Sea and simultaneously pursued by the Egyptian army, they complained to *Moshe* and *Aaron*. They had said, “Are there no graves in Egypt?”

The Jewish people were not questioning G-d’s ability to split the Sea or to save them. They understood from their recent experience, through witnessing the ten plagues that came upon Egypt, that there is nothing beyond G-d’s ability. Rather they questioned if He would perform this needed miracle on their behalf. This doubt was a lack of faith because of what they had recently experienced in Egypt. Why would G-d miraculously take them out of Egypt and then allow them to be destroyed by their previous masters by the Sea? It is evident that G-d would protect them and not allow their destruction.

G-d promised the Jewish people that if they adhere to His *Torah*, He would bring upon them unlimited blessing. He would protect them from all the illness and disease that He had brought upon Egypt. If this

is so, then why does one not fully invest his life in the spiritual pursuit of *Torah*? It is only because of a lack of faith/trust that G-d will in fact provide (as promised) that one does not devote himself to the development of his own spirituality. If one truly trusted G-d, one would invest his ability in this endeavor.

The basis for growth and strength in any relationship is trust. Trust is developed through a consistent cognizance of one's being the beneficiary of another's kindness. Every day we rise and have many experiences throughout the day. Without G-d's continuous blessing touching upon every aspect of our existence, we could not continue. However, to be appreciative and truly sense that reality, one must be cognizant of G-d's beneficence on an ongoing basis.

Although G-d is factually the ongoing Provider (which is a fact that is not disputed), if one does not take notice of this reality, one does not develop a sense of trust. If one recognizes, on an ongoing basis, that everything he experiences and that occurs in his life is only because G-d Wills it so, then he will build a strong base of trust for G-d. Consequently, one would no longer need answers to many questions.

Gemara in Tractate Chulin: "One does not stub his finger below (in this world) unless it has been announced (decreed) from above (by G-d)." Nothing is happenstance. The concept of "*Gamzu la'tova* – it is all for the best" is rooted in one's degree of trust in G-d. The only way one could truly experience the reality of "*Gamzu la'tova*" is by being continuously cognizant of G-d's involvement. It is through this cognizance that one builds a greater trust for Him.

Establishing a Sensitivity to Spirituality

Gemara in Tractate *Pesachim*: There is a positive commandment of "*Bo Tidbok* – to Him you shall attach yourself." How can one attach himself to G-d, since He is a consuming fire? The way a Jew becomes attached to G-d is by providing financial opportunities to a *Torah Sage*, eating and drinking with him, or offering one's daughter to him in marriage. Through this level of association and attachment to the *Torah Sage*, it is considered as if he is attaching himself to G-d.

Gemara in Tractate *Yomah*: A true *Torah Sage* is one whose outer demeanor is consistent with his inner self– which is that of a *Torah Sage*. This individual is a

representation of G-d's Presence in this world. Thus, by associating and attaching oneself to a true *Torah Sage*, it is the equivalent of attaching oneself to G-d. The *Torah* tells us that it is only when one is attached to G-d that he will have life – in this world and the world to come.

Reb Shach z'tl: The wealthiest individual in the world did not experience his level of pleasure in the physical world. When he encountered a challenging *Rambam* and toiled over it and ultimately resolved his difficulty– the level of joy and elation surpassed any physical experience that could be had. When one is attached to G-d through *Torah*, he perceives and understands the unlimited value of every moment because he understands to what degree he is able to invest every moment of his existence.

The *Vilna Gaon z'tl* wept amid his students before he passed away. They had asked him, "Why are you crying? You should be confident in your passing because of your life's achievement and your level of *Torah*. You have achieved a level of greatness of one of the earlier commentators!" The *Vilna Gaon* responded, "While I am in this world I am able to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzitzis* (fringes) for a mere few pennies. However, when I will no longer be in this world, I will be denied any spiritual opportunity or growth. Thus, every moment in this existence has infinite value – although it may cost only a few pennies." The only one who could have such a level of understanding and appreciation for life is the one who is attached to G-d. Because of his understanding of spirituality, he will utilize every moment to its fullest.

Torah: "*Vatem HaDevakim Ba'Shem Elokeichem Chayim Kulchem HaYom* (But you who cling to *Hashem*, your G-d- you are all alive today.)"

Baal HaTurim: On the word "*HaDevakim*" there is a crown on the letter "*kuf*." This crown on the letter "*kuf*" (which numerically equals 100) alludes to the 100 *Berachos* (blessings) that one should recite each day.

Chazal: G-d wants every Jew to recite 100 blessings each day. Thus, the way one attaches himself to G-d is through the 100 blessings of the day. What is the value of a *beracha* (blessing)? The Rabbis enacted blessings to be recited in numerous circumstances throughout one's daily activities, to acknowledge G-d as the Omnipotent Being responsible for existence. It is through the recitation of *Berachos* that one is continuously cognizant of G-d's involvement in every aspect of one's life.

Gemara: If one recites a hundred blessings in a day he will realize and appreciate to what degree he is a beneficiary of G-d Kindness. If one recites a blessing without identifying G-d as “the King” the *beracha* has no value. Thus all of the hundred blessings must mention the Name of G-d and identify Him as the King of the Universe. It is only through this that one can truly appreciate being the beneficiary of His Kindness – thus becoming attached to G-d.

During the time of King David there was a plague that had devastated the Jewish people. King David, being a prophet, understood that the reason for the plague was because the Jewish people were not sufficiently cognizant of G-d’s involvement in their lives. He therefore enacted the recitation of a 100 blessings each day – thus ending the plague.

The Barometer for Loving G-d

The Portion of *Va’eschanan* contains the first portion of the *Shema*. The Positive Commandment of the *Shema* is referred to as “*Yichud Hashem* – the Unity of G-d.” When one recites the *Shema* one declares his belief that G-d is One. However, this concept extends beyond being simply a declaration of monotheism. When one states the first verse of the *Shema* (which concludes with *Echad* (He is One)), one is asserting that there is nothing in existence that does not emanate from G-d Himself. All existence – past, present, and future – is an expression of G-d Willing it on a continuous basis. The *Gemara* refers to the recitation of the *Shema* as “accepting upon oneself the yoke of heaven.”

Reb Chaim of Volozhin z’tl in Nefesh HaChaim: The concept of a “yoke” communicates to what degree must one be committed to the Will of G-d. When a yoke was put on an ox, it was placed on his shoulders to secure his head from being able to move in either direction. It was essential that the ox, when being used for plowing, should have its eyes focused in a straight line of vision – not to be able to look to the right or to the left.

The ancient plow was a long blade inserted in the ground and was pulled by the ox to turn the soil. If the ox were to veer even slightly to the right or to the left, the blade would break in the ground. The ox needed to walk a straight line and not deviate from its path as much as an iota. When one accepts the yoke of heaven upon himself, through the recitation of the *Shema*, one is accepting upon himself a level of commitment not

to deviate to any degree from the path of *Torah* and *mitzvos* – despite his own interests and needs.

First verse of the *Shema*: “You shall love *Hashem* your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources...” One is obliged to love G-d to such a degree that he should be willing to give his life for the sake of G-d.

Sforno: “The *mitzvah* of loving G-d (*Ahavas Hashem*) is to rejoice when one does something that finds favor in the eyes of G-d. When one understands that there is nothing that is more great/honorable than doing something that finds favor in the eyes of G-d, it is an expression of his love for G-d.”

When one loves another, he is preoccupied with devising ways to please and find favor with that individual. When he succeeds in doing so, he experiences great joy. This can be experienced when one performs any of the *mitzvos*. For example, when one wears *tefillin*, one should experience great joy because he is identifying as G-d’s subject and doing His Will.

Ramban: The concept of a Positive Commandment (*Mitzvas Asei*) is an expression of one’s love for G-d (*Ahavas Hashem*). In order for one to perform an action/be proactive (Positive Commandment) one needs to be motivated. This is facilitated by one’s love for G-d. On the other hand, a Negative Commandment is the refrain from transgressing. Refraining from transgression is an expression of one’s fear of G-d. This is the reason that when there is a conflict between a Positive and Negative Commandment (that cannot be reconciled), the Positive Commandment supersedes the Negative because the *mitzvah* of loving G-d is greater than that of fearing Him.

Midrash: If one prays within the context of a *minyan* (quorum of ten men), one begins the *Shema* with “*Shema Yisroel...*” However, if one prays in a private setting, the *Shema* is introduced with the phrase “*Kail Melech Ne’eman* – G-d Trustworthy King.”

Rabbeinu Asher and Daas Zikainim Baali Tosfos: The reason for this is that it is important that the number of words that are recited in the context of *Shema* should total “*RAMACH* – which is numerically 248.” This corresponds to every part of the human body. It is to indicate that one accepts the yoke of heaven upon every aspect of his being. How is it possible

for one to dedicate every aspect of his existence to G-d? How could one accept the yoke of heaven to such a degree that all of his own interests and needs become secondary? It is only through the love of G-d that one is able to achieve this level of dedication. If one understands and feels privileged that through his performance of *mitzvos* he brings satisfaction to G-d, then he will have no difficulty in dedicating himself at this special level. He will see it as the ultimate opportunity and privilege – not as a burden.

Torah: “Blessed is the one who upholds the *Torah* and cursed is the one who does not uphold the *Torah*.”

Rabbeinu Yonah: The one who is “cursed” is not the one who transgresses any of the precepts of the *Torah*; but rather, it is the individual who chooses to observe all of the *mitzvos* with the exception of one. Although this

individual has committed himself to the vast majority of the *Torah*, he deserves to be cursed because when a subject selects which commandments of his Master are to his liking (and which are not) it is an expression of defiance and insolence.

The ultimate goal for one to achieve is to feel privileged in the performance of *mitzvos*. How does one achieve this level of appreciation? The only way one can relate and understand the true value of *mitzvos* and *Torah* is through *Torah* study itself. It is only through dedicated *Torah* study that one can come to truly love G-d.



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