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A GREAT REWARD FOR PERFORMING MITZVOT WITH JOY (BY RABBI DAVID PINTO)

It is written, “And it will be, if you hearken to these ordinances and you observe and perform them, Hashem your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your fathers” (Devarim 7:12). We need to explain how the Holy One, blessed be He, will reward us for mitzvot in this world, since the Sages have explicitly taught: “There is no reward for mitzvot in this world” (Kiddushin 39b)!

On the expression, “And it will be, eikev [if],” the Sages in the Midrash state: “This is the meaning of, ‘Why should I fear in days of evil, when the injunctions akeivai [that I trod upon] will surround me?’ [Tehillim 49:6]. Blessed be the Name of Hashem, Who gave the Torah to Israel! It comprises 613 mitzvot, some easy, others difficult. Yet because they include easy mitzvot that people pay no attention to, but neglect as if they were walking upon them, they are considered insignificant.” David feared the day of judgment, saying: “Master of the universe, I do not fear the difficult mitzvot. What do I fear? The easy mitzvot, lest I transgress them unknowingly because they are easy. Now You have said that we must pay attention to both easy and difficult mitzvot.”

Performing Mitzvot With Joy

When we perform mitzvot with joy, they will not seem old to us, but will constantly appear as new. Such is the nature of man, who rejoices in what is new, not in what is old. Hence the Sages explain that the expression “which I set before you today” (Devarim 4:8) means that they must not seem like an old letter from the king, which nobody cares about, but like a new letter, which everyone wants to read.

The same applies with regards to words of Torah: They should seem as if they have been given today by the King, the King of the universe, for otherwise people become accustomed to mitzvot and perform them out of habit. We will not reach such a point if we fulfill them with joy, for one thing depends on the other.

The Sages tell us that the expression vehaya denotes joy (Bereshith Rabba 42:3). Here we read, “Vehaya [And it will be], if you hearken,”

which teaches us that a person must perform all the mitzvot with joy, as it is written: “Serve Hashem with joy, come before Him with joyous song” (Tehillim 100:2), as well as: “All these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you...because you did not serve Hashem your G-d amid joy” (Devarim 28:45-47).

If a person does not perform mitzvot with joy, he will eventually do them out of habit and ultimately neglect them, in which case he will experience numerous misfortunes. This will happen for two reasons, one of which is because he did not serve Hashem in joy. These are the curses mentioned in the book of Devarim, in addition to one more, since he performed mitzvot out of habit. The prophet Isaiah said, “Since this people has drawn close, with its mouth and with its lips it has honored Me, but it has distanced its heart from Me – their fear of Me is like rote learning of human commands. Therefore behold, I will continue to perform more wonders against this people, wonder upon wonder. The wisdom of its wise men will be lost, and the understanding of its sages will become concealed” (Isaiah 29:13-14).

This is why the Holy One, blessed be He, only rewards the Children of Israel for mitzvot performed with joy, not when they grow accustomed to mitzvot. In such a case, He sends misfortunes upon them, as it is written: “I will continue to perform more wonders against this people, wonder upon wonder.”

The Reward Grows as Our Joy Increases

We can now properly understand the subject. Although the Sages have said, “There is no reward for mitzvot in this world,” what exactly is no reward given for? It is for the mitzvah itself, since the Holy One, blessed be He, does not give a reward in this world for it. For the joy of the mitzvah, however, He gives a great reward.

Thus it is written in Sefer Charedim (conditions for performing mitzvot, fourth condition):

The fourth condition is the great joy of the mitzvah. Each mitzvah that we can perform is a gift from the Holy One, blessed be He, and the reward grows in proportion to our joy. The saintly kabbalist Rabbi Yitzchak Ashkenazi Zatzal revealed to a close friend that everything he had

attained – when the gates of wisdom and the holy spirit were opened before him – was a reward for having greatly rejoiced over the performance of every mitzvah. Along the same lines, the Noam Elimelech states: “There is no reward for mitzvot in this world. A person only eats the fruits of a mitzvah in this world (Peah 1:1), and the fruits of a mitzvah come because he performs it in joy and happiness.”

A Treasure Trove of Gifts

The Patriarch Jacob went back to retrieve some small jars, as we read: “ ‘Jacob was left alone’ [Bereshith 32:25]. Rabbi Eleazar said: He remained behind for the sake of some small jars” (Chullin 91a). Although everyone considers such objects as being of little value, the Sages say: “The Torah has consideration for the money of Israel” (Rosh Hashanah 27a). Thus one who loses small jars transgresses the prohibition against wasting. Jacob therefore returned to look for these small jars, for he fulfilled both the easiest and most difficult mitzvot.

This is why the verse in question states, “And it will be, eikev [if],” for G-d wanted to tell the Children of Israel that if they observed the mitzvot as Jacob did – paying attention to the easy as well as the difficult ones, including those which people tend to walk upon with their heel (eikev) – He would give them a generous reward. In fact Jacob asked Hashem for a gift, without appealing to his own merit, as we read: “I am too small for all the mercies and all the truth” (Bereshith 32:11), and He granted it to him. If the Jewish people act as Jacob did, Hashem will open His treasure trove of gifts to them as well.

Jacob was given his name on account of the heel (eikev), as it is written: “After that, his brother emerged with his hands grasping the heel [eikev] of Esau, so he called his name Jacob” (Bereshith 25:26). G-d told them by allusion how they could fulfill mitzvot without falling into the trap of habit, namely by fulfilling them with joy, as well as by fulfilling the easy mitzvot. In that case they would reign over habit, which takes hold of people in the performance of mitzvot.

CONCERNING THE PARSHA ONE HUNDRED BLESSINGS A DAY

It is written, “Now, O Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you?” (Devarim 10:12).

The Gemara cites Rabbi Meir in teaching, “A man is bound to say 100 blessings each day, as it is written: ‘Now, O Israel, mah [what] does Hashem your G-d ask of you?’” (Menachot 43b). Rashi explains: “Do not read mah [what], but meia [100].” In other words, the Holy One, blessed be He, asks us to recite 100 blessings each day, the term mah alluding to meia.

In another commentary found in Tosaphot, Rabbeinu Tam notes that there are 100 letters in the verse, “Now, O Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you?” These correspond to the 100 blessings that we must recite each day.

The Tur (Orach Chaim 46) cites the Geonim in explaining this decree: During the time of King David, 100 people would die each day, yet no one knew why. Finally, David understood the reason through Ruach HaKodesh, and he instituted the custom of reciting 100 blessings each day. As a result, King David said: “The words of the man who was established al [on high]” (II Samuel 23:1), for the term al has a numerical value of 100.

May the Curses be Annulled by the Blessings

In his book Devash le-Fi, the Chida cites the Rokeach in explaining another reason for this practice: The Children of Israel heard 98 curses from Moshe: “If you do not hearken to the voice of Hashem your G-d, to observe, to perform all His commandments and all His decrees that I command you today...” (Devarim 28:15). When they heard 100 less 2 curses, they turned green. To diminish the severity and annul the 98 curses mentioned in the Torah, a person must recite 99 blessings each day, in which case the curses will be cancelled by the blessings. This is why, says the gaon Rabbi Zalman Sorotzkin Zatzal, there are 99 letters in the verse, “Now, O Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you,” an allusion to the fact that we must recite 99 blessings in order to annul the 98 curses. Yet because there is still one more curse – “Also every sickness and every plague that is not written in the book of this Torah” (Devarim 28:61) – and it too must be annulled, we recite 100 blessings each day.

In regards to the Halachah, the Shulchan Aruch states: “We must recite at least 100 blessings each day” (Orach Chaim 46:3). Counting the morning blessings and those recited during Shacharit, Mincha, and Arvit (18 in each prayer), in addition to the blessings recited for meals and

asher yatzar, we come to exactly 100 blessings. Since several of these blessings are missing on Shabbat (for there are less than 18 blessings recited in each prayer), the poskim have said that we must complete them by eating fruits and delicacies, as the Gemara states: “On Sabbaths and festivals, Rabbi Chiya the son of Rabbi Ivya endeavored to make up this number by the use of spices and delicacies” (Menachot 43b).

The Aruch Shulchan cites an anonymous view which holds that, if necessary, we fulfill our duty by having the intention of listening to the blessings of the Torah and the maftir (and the repetition of the prayer), and by responding “Amen.”

Two Hundred Gold Coins

The Chida notes a marvelous allusion in the words of the Gemara, which states that in order to recite 100 blessings on Shabbat, which is lacking some blessings, we eat more fruit and delicacies. The Gemara explains (Chullin 87a) that each blessing we recite is worth 10 gold coins, and a person who takes the mitzvah of another must pay him that amount, the price of a blessing. According to this 10-gold-coin per blessing equivalence, 100 blessings are worth 1,000 gold coins, and for Shabbat (which lacks about 20 blessings) this comes to 200 gold coins, which we complete by eating fruit and delicacies. This is alluded to in the verse, “You, O Solomon, can have your 1,000, and 200 to the tenders of its fruit” (Shir HaShirim 8:12). In other words: “You, O Solomon, can have your 1,000” – he who recites 100 blessings each day will merit 1,000 gold coins; “and 200” – the amount lacking on Shabbat (due to the 20 missing blessings); “to the tenders of its fruit” – they will go to those who complete the blessings by eating fruits and delicacies.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

It is Still Lashon Harah

Know that even if we do not cause someone harm by making disparaging remarks about him (as would be the case if our listeners do not believe our words, or in similar cases), it is still considered Lashon Harah and we must make amends for it. Furthermore, even if we say that in general nobody will be harmed by our story, it is still forbidden to recount it.

– Chafetz Chaim

AT THE SOURCE

A Taste Test

It is written, "So as to afflict you, to test you, to know what is in your heart" (Devarim 8:2).

What connection is there between this verse and the one that follows: "He afflicted you and let you know hunger, then He fed you the manna"?

The book *Kehilat Moshe* gives a beautiful explanation for this juxtaposition, according to a teaching found in the Mishnah: "This is the way of Torah: Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground, live a life of deprivation, and toil in Torah" (Pirkei Avoth 6:4). As we know, the Children of Israel could taste the finest foods in the manna.

This is what constituted the test mentioned in the verse: "So as to afflict you, to test you." That is, it was in order to see if the Children of Israel would be content with tasting only bread and salt in the manna, so as to merit Torah. Thus it is written, "to know what is in your heart," a reference to what their intentions would be in eating the manna: To taste the finest foods in the world, or to taste only bread with salt.

Angels of Destruction

It is written, "Your sin that you committed – the calf – I took and burned it in fire" (Devarim 9:21).

Here we must ask how one can take an actual sin, which is not tangible, and burn it in fire. If the verse is really speaking about the calf, it should read: "I took the calf that you made and burned it in fire." The Ohr HaChaim answers this question by saying, "We know that for every mitzvah that a person does, he creates a holy angel. Likewise he creates an angel of destruction for every sin. When a person repents of his sins, he must also erase the destroying angel that was created by that sin."

Thus automatically, when the Children of Israel sinned with the calf, they automatically created an angel of destruction. It too, Moshe said before the Children of Israel, "I took and burned it in fire."

Compassion

It is written, "You shall love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Devarim 10:19).

The author of *Sefer HaChinuch* states that from this precious mitzvah, we learn to have compassion on whoever finds himself in a city that is not his home or that of his forefathers. We must also not continue on our way when we see such a person alone and in need of help. As we see, the Torah enjoins us to have compassion on whoever is in need. By doing so, Hashem will have compassion on us and Heaven's blessings will rest upon us.

The Torah reminds us that we have already experienced such sadness, namely that of a person who finds himself alone in a strange land, and enjoins us to remember all the heartache that such an experience entails. As Hashem in His goodness had compassion on us, likewise we must have compassion on whoever finds himself in such a situation.

A Rare Mitzvah

It is written, "You shall love the stranger [the convert], for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Devarim 10:19).

In the latter years of the gaon Rabbi Raphael Baruch Toledano Zatzal (the Rosh Av Din of Meknes), a female convert from Jerusalem presented herself before him. She was the wife of Rabbi Amram Blau Zatzal, but Rabbi Raphael was not told of her identity until after she left.

Rabbi Raphael was very moved when he learned that she was a convert, and he greatly regretted having missed the rare mitzvah of loving a convert. He said that had he known she was a convert, he would have shown her much greater honor, as the Torah commands.

Reducing Expenses

It is written, "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates" (Devarim 11:20).

In the following verse we read, "So that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged."

It is said that from time to time, the gaon Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin Zatzal, the founder of the Diskin orphanage located at the entrance of modern Jerusalem, would send people from home to home verifying mezuzot. These people received a salary from the orphanage.

When Rabbi Yehoshua was asked about this, he replied: "It may seem that this is an extra expense for the orphanage, but it is really a gain. In regards to mezuzot we read, 'So that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged.' Thus if mezuzot protect the lives of fathers, there will be less orphans, and the expenses of the orphanage will be reduced as a result. Is that not a gain?"

IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARSHA FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE TSADDIK RABBI DAVID PINTO SHLITA

Attaining the Fear of Heaven

It is written, "You will eat and be satisfied, and you shall bless Hashem your G-d for the good land that He has given you" (Devarim 8:10).

From here the Sages learn that reciting Birkat Hamazon is a Torah mitzvah (Berachot 21a).

We need to understand why the Torah gave the law on Birkat Hamazon next to the warning against self-assurance ("Take care lest you forget Hashem... and say in your heart, 'My strength and the might of my hand have made me all this wealth'" [Devarim 8:11-17]).

We may explain this according to the remarks of the Rambam on the laws of blessings. He states: "The Sages have instituted numerous blessings as praise and thanks, as well as requests in order for us to always remember the Creator, even if we have not rejoiced in anything or performed a mitzvah. It therefore seems that the Sages have instituted the blessings mainly in order for man to remember his Creator. This is why the mitzvah of reciting Birkat Hamazon is among them, for when the Children of Israel would enter Eretz Israel and find great abundance there, the Holy One, blessed be, He, was concerned that they would forget Him. Thus it is written, 'A lion does not roar over a basket of straw, but over a basket of meat' [Berachot 32a]. By reciting a blessing each time that we eat something, as well as after eating, we will not forget the Creator, nor will we make the mistake of thinking, 'My strength and the might of my hand have made me all this wealth'" (Laws of Blessings 1:3).

Furthermore, by reciting each blessing with concentration, we fulfill the verse: "I have set Hashem before me always" (Tehillim 16:8). From here we attain the fear of Heaven, for the Sages have said: "A man is bound to say 100 blessings each day, as it is written: 'Now, O Israel, mah [what] does Hashem your G-d ask of you?' " (Menachot 43b). Rashi explains: "Do not read mah [what], but meia [100]." By reciting the blessings, we attain the fear of Heaven.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER - RABBI YOSEF PINTO

Taking place this week is the Hilloula of the tzaddik and gaon Rabbi Daniel Pinto Zatzal.

Rabbi Daniel Pinto was the son of the great tzaddik Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, the author of Maor Einayim on Ein Yaakov, a famous work on the Aggadot of the Talmud, which thousands of Jews study each day.

The leading Torah figures in the generation of the Rif, Rabbi Yoshiyahu Pinto, greatly praised his profound sanctity. Included among these figures was the Chida, who described his Torah personality as well as his great work Maor Einayim. As the Chida said, "His praises are heard throughout the land."

Rabbi Daniel Pinto was among the rabbis of Syria. In his time, the Jewish community in Syria was comprised of tens of thousands of families. Indeed, great Torah figures such as the gaon Rabbi Yaakov Aboulafia Zatzal, the grandson of Rabbi Yaakov bei Rav Zatzal (who reinstated the custom of bestowing Smicha in Sefat), the gaon Rabbi Chaim Vital Zatzal, his father the gaon Rabbi Yoshiyahu Zatzal and others could be found in the Syrian city of Aleppo.

Rabbi Daniel Pinto, who was known as an extraordinary Torah genius, wrote the book Lechem Chamudot, which unfortunately has not survived to the present day. Rabbi Daniel Pinto left this world on Av 17, 5441. May his merit protect us all.

The Torah Will Never Cease

On the verse, "My words...shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your children, nor from the mouth of your children's children, says Hashem, from now and forever" (Isaiah 59:21), the Sages explain: "Whoever is a Torah scholar, if his son is a Torah scholar and the son of his son is a Torah scholar, the Torah will never cease from among his descendants." We see this teaching concretely fulfilled in the Pinto dynasty, in which the Torah has passed from father to son in every generation.

The son of Rabbi Daniel Pinto was the gaon and kabbalist Rabbi Shemuel Pinto, who like his forefathers was devoted to Torah and the service of Hashem in holiness and sanctity. Rabbi Shemuel also became, like his fathers before him, the Rav of Damascus. We have not been fortunate enough to see his Torah commentaries or halachic decisions, for his responsa and numerous Torah teachings were never published.

THE PARABLE AND ITS MEANING ANGELS DO NOT SLEEP

It is written, "Bread I did not eat, and water I did not drink" (Devarim 9:9).

How did Moshe know that angels do not eat or drink? Perhaps the angels ate while he was sleeping?

As we know, the Maggid of Dubno Zatzal exiled himself to countless villages, bringing the hearts of Jews closer to their Father in Heaven by means of his captivating words. One night he came to an inn located in a far-off village. When he entered, he asked the innkeeper if he had something that he could eat. The innkeeper said no, but pointed to a corner of the inn where the Maggid could rest from his exhausting journey and sleep for the night.

The Maggid immediately went to complete his daily studies, and then he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. However hunger gnawed at him, and he was unable to sleep.

In fact the Maggid noticed the innkeeper preparing a beautiful table that contained all kinds of food, and he sat down to eat a delicious meal that could have satisfied many guests.

On the following day, as the Maggid was preparing to leave, the innkeeper asked him to say a few words of Torah.

He replied, "The Gemara in Bava Metzia [86b] states, 'One should never break away from custom, for behold: Moshe ascended on high and ate no bread.'

"This is surprising, for why does the Torah not say that Moshe did not sleep? In general, angels do not sleep either! Is sleeping even greater than eating?"

The Maggid explained: "From the fact that Moshe did not eat, we may suppose that he did not sleep as well. How did Moshe know that angels do not eat or drink? Perhaps they ate while he was sleeping?"

"We learn from this, however, that Moshe did not sleep as well, since he realized that angels do not eat. When he returned to the Children of Israel, he could tell them with confidence: 'I did not eat bread, just like the angels.' This is on account of what the Sages have taught: 'One should never break away from custom.' "