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maskil Le'David

The Way to Merit Hashem's Blessing

"And these shall stand for the curse on Mount Eval: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan, and Naftali" (Devarim 27:13).

The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh zy"a, writes that when Bnei Yisrael heard the ninety-eight curses said on Mount Eval, they were filled with great fright for their future. They approached Moshe and asked him what would become of them. Moshe replied, "The fact that you continue living and existing despite rebelling time and again against Hashem's word shows that you will never be lost from the world, as it says, 'The Eternal One of Israel does not lie'" (*Shmuel I*, 15:29). What motivated Bnei Yisrael to ask this question particularly at this point after hearing about the blessings and curses enumerated in this week's *parsha*? This should have already bothered them after hearing the curses in Parshat Bechukotai.

The Holy Ohr HaChaim answers that there is a great difference between one who is cursed personally and one who is cursed as part of a crowd. When an individual is cursed, he perceives the curse as powerfully effective and significant. In contrast, when it is a public curse, individuals tend to believe that it doesn't affect them personally; instead, it is an issue that impacts everyone collectively. In Parshat Ki Tavo when Moshe recounted the blessings and curses, he spoke of curses that may befall each and every individual, and that is why they felt great fear. In contrast, the curses in Parshat Bechukotai were general curses; Bnei Yisrael did not feel this same sense of great fear.

There is a further difficulty. Why did Moshe reassure Bnei Yisrael and calm their fear of the curses which may befall the individual? It would seem more appropriate for Moshe to affirm Bnei Yisrael's fear, telling them that indeed they must be fearful of following the path of evil because it results in the actualization of a great curse. We indeed find that throughout the exile, the curses came to fruition one by one; Bnei Yisrael's fear was justified. So why did Moshe see fit to calm their fears? It is possible to explain that Moshe Rabbeinu was not

trying to remove Bnei Yisrael's fear. Rather, he wished to comfort them and tell them it is possible to repent and achieve atonement. When a Jew repents for his bad deeds, Hashem, Who is Merciful, accepts his repentance and removes His anger. There are ninety-eight curses which is the numerical value of the word "ינ" – arrow. This implies when Bnei Yisrael repent, Hashem shoots the curses as arrows onto the nations. Similarly, ninety-eight is the numerical value of the word "נָשָׂו" (forgive). Hashem forgives and pardons; He nullifies the impact of the curses on Bnei Yisrael through His power of forgiveness. But clearly in order for Hashem to forgive Bnei Yisrael they must repent sincerely. Repentance is the only way for Bnei Yisrael to nullify the curses' impact on their lives and even turn them into something beneficial.

The great *tzaddik* Rabbi Betzael Rakow zt"l, Rav of Gateshead, England, asks the following question in his *sefer Mishkan Betzael*. In Parshat Ki Tavo Bnei Yisrael were told that when they arrive at Mount Eval, they should build a *mizbe'ach* for Hashem and bring offerings upon it to Hashem amid great joy, as it says, "It shall be that when you cross the Jordan, you shall erect these stones, of which I command you today, on Mount Eval...There you shall build an altar for Hashem...You shall slaughter peace-offerings and eat there, and you shall rejoice before Hashem, your G-d" (*Devarim* 27:47). How was it possible for them to offer sacrifices of joy on Mount Eval, the mountain on which the curses were said? Wouldn't it seem more appropriate to bring their offerings on Mount Gerizim, the mountain on which the blessings were given?

One can answer that Bnei Yisrael brought offerings of joy specifically on Mount Eval because they understood that the curses depend on a condition. If they repent, Hashem will atone for their bad deeds and avert the curses. They brought offerings of joy on Mount Eval for the very knowledge that the strength of their repentance could avert these curses!

According to this, one can say the goal of the curses was to quieten the Attribute of Justice which demands that Bnei Yisrael be punished. Every Jewish person is responsible for the other (see *Shavuot* 39a). Ninety-eight curses were written in the Torah to show the Attribute of Justice that if Bnei Yisrael as a nation behaves badly in Hashem's eyes, there is a Judge and Justice and they are liable to be punished for their sins. But as individuals this is not a curse, for if we repent appropriately for our sins, the curse we deserve is transformed into a blessing.

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Ki Tavo



Hilula

20 Elul
Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian

21 Elul
Rabbi Yehonatan Eibeshitz,
author of *Ya'arot Dvash*

22 Elul
Rabbi Yehuda ben Simchon

23 Elul
Rabbi Uri, the Saraf
of Strelisk

24 Elul
Rabbi Yisrael Meir
Hakohen,
the Chafetz Chaim

25 Elul
Rabbi Binyamin
Yehoshua Zilber

26 Elul
The esteemed Rabbi Chaim
Pinto Hagadol zy"a





FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David
Chananya Pinto, *shlita*

The Mitzvah of Bikurim Teaches us to Remember our Creator's Goodness

I would like to explain the lesson that lies behind the mitzvah of *bikurim* (a Jew's gift of his first fruits to the kohen). As we go about our everyday life, we generally do not stop to contemplate all the great kindnesses Hashem performs for us throughout the day. Hashem is the Power behind each breath we take, the constant rhythm of our heartbeat, and our brain functioning. He is the One who gifts us with family, children, food and drink, with great abundance and compassion. Yet we ignore all this goodness and take it for granted, as if we are deserving of it all.

Let us compare this to the following scenario: A person finds himself in the desert, desperately thirsty, longing for a drop of water. If someone appears and offers him a reviving gulp of water, he will be eternally grateful to him. Yet we tend to forget about our Creator of the World, Who gives us much more than water, and in great abundance.

This is why we were given the mitzvah of *bikurim*. A Jew brings a basketfull of the first of the fruit which Hashem blessed him with, and he himself goes to the trouble of traveling to the far-off Beit Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Along the way, he contemplates why Hashem made him go through this trouble. He will come to the realization of the extent of Hashem's kindness that He bestows on him by giving him this fruit. This will lead him to remember all the good that Hashem continues to do for him throughout his life.

It follows that this person eventually arrives at the Beit Hamikdash with his heart filled to the brim with feelings of gratitude to Hashem. He presents the fruit to the kohen with his entire heart and soul, together with a powerful feeling of gratitude. And when Hashem sees this person's *hakarat hatov*, He is filled with joy. This is why the verse uses the expression "It will be (when you enter the Land)", since the Hebrew word for "it will be" (וְהָיָה) always denotes joy. Since it is very beneficial for us to go through this process of contemplation, a person is specifically required to bring the fruit and not its value in money.

When bringing fruit as *bikurim*, the person must pray with self-effacement before the altar and mention the kindnesses Hashem did with our forefathers by saving them from poverty. The prayer includes a particular reference to Yaakov who was pursued by Lavan who wanted to impoverish him and later annihilate him. The merit of Yaakov Avinu's prayer to Hashem to save him from the deceitful Lavan is what stood for him and his descendants. His descendant now comes to publicly thank the Creator of the World for all the goodness that He bestowed upon him, and for fulfilling His promise to the Avot: to give their children the Holy Land.



PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Benefitting the Poor

"Gaze down from Your holy abode, from the heavens" (*Devarim* 26:15).

Chazal tell us, "Every time the Torah uses the expression 'gaze down' it has a negative connotation, except 'Gaze down from Your holy abode'; the great power of giving gifts to the poor transforms the Attribute of Anger to Mercy."

The holy Rabbi Yisrael of Tshortekov *zy"a*, interprets the Chazal in the following homiletic way:

"Every... 'gaze down' means if Hashem gazes down and examines the worthiness of our deeds, 'it has a negative connotation' — our deeds will always be found lacking and faulty, 'except giving gifts to the poor' — for in this case even if our intentions are not proper, our actions are nevertheless beneficial, because we are supporting the poor."

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov *zy"a* adds that although Torah study and *avodat Hashem* must be performed for Heaven's sake and with the desired intent, concerning acts of kindness intent is of less consequence. Ultimately our act of kindness benefits another Jew, and it does not matter to him whether his benefactor acted with Heavenly intentions or not.

The Nations will be Afraid to Purchase Yisrael as Slaves

"And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and maidservants, but there will be no buyer" (*Devarim* 28:68).

This verse seems surprising. Why would there be no buyers?

We can explain this through a different question. Rabbi Rachamim Churi of Djerba in his *sefer Kiryat Arba*, questions the following verse: "Thereupon, King Achashverosh exclaimed and said to Queen Esther, 'Who is this? Where is the one who dared to do so?'" (*Esther* 7:5). How could Achashverosh have forgotten what he told Haman: "The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit" (*Esther* 3:12)?

One can reconcile this according to an explanation from the Chida, who writes in his *sefer Devarim Achadim* (112:2) that if one sells Yisrael with the intention of killing them, the seller is punishable with death from Heaven. However, if one sells Yisrael as servants and maidservants, the buyer is punishable with death from Heaven. Therefore, when Achashverosh heard that Haman had bought the Jewish people from him in order to kill them, the implication was that Haman desired that the seller (Achashverosh) should die, and then Haman would take his place as king. This is what Esther was telling the king, "For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain and to be exterminated. Had we been sold as slaves and maidservants, I would have kept quiet" (*Esther* 7:4). Had Haman only bought the Jewish people as slaves and maidservants, "I would have kept quiet," says Esther, since the law is that the buyer (Haman) will die; since his intention was to buy the Jewish people and kill them, this means that the seller will die.

This explanation helps us understand our original question. "And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as slaves and maidservants" — you were sold for slavery, therefore "there will be no buyer," for the buyer is liable and will be punished with death.



WORDS OF THE SAGES

Would We Ask the Household Help to Take a Break?

In the days of Elul, we are all occupied with repentance and preparation for the Day of Judgement. We must keep in mind the penetrating words of the Vilna Gaon, written in the introduction to his sefer *Even Shlomo*: “All *avodat Hashem* is dependent on perfecting one’s *middot*, which are like the clothing for the mitzvot and rules of the Torah; all sins are rooted in (bad) *middot*. The main reason for one’s existence is to continually strengthen himself in perfecting his *middot*. If he does not do so, why does he deserve to live?!”

Rabbi Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz *zt”l*, in his sefer *Imrei Da’at*, imparts a lesson culled from his years of experience in the area of *chinuch*:

“I am telling you, based on solid evidence and many of years of experience, that the true foundation of a person, how he determines his future and sets himself up for life, is not ascertained by his talents or other things, rather it is only his *middot* that determine how he will live his life! If a person has good *middot*, he has a promising future. And if G-d forbid his *middot* are not up to par, he is far from achieving anything. He might give a different impression, but in reality, he is very far from possessing any true qualities.”

Rabbi Michel concludes with an amazing statement: “This is what we heard about and saw in all the *gedolim* of our time and in all the famous leaders of the previous generation too. Their core foundation was good *middot*!”

Rabbi Michel Zilber testifies regarding the conduct of Rabbi Yechezkel Abramski *zt”l*. He witnessed the special treatment which Harav Abramski accorded his household help.

Every so often he would summon her in the middle of her work and tell her to rest for a bit. He also told her that he would be happy if she worked slowly and with ease, rather than exhausting herself by working quickly. This was his wish despite having to paying her extra, since she was paid hourly.

This consideration with which Harav Abramsky treated his domestic help certainly enhanced her view of a Torah way of life; she witnessed its pleasant ways. This approach of treating each person with equal honor, no matter their status, is what brings peace and harmony to the world.

When the Alter of Slabodka, Rabbi Natan Tzvi Finkel *zt”l*, was once asked how he would define his main occupation in life, he replied with a deep and concise sentence: “I tried to educate my *talmidim* that they must be *‘klug un gut’* (clever and good)!”

The Alter of Slabodka’s main educational message that he instilled in his *talmidim* was the need to acquire wisdom and good heartedness. The combination of these two qualities enables one to do good to others!

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Furthermore, since Bnei Yisrael are responsible for one another, one Jew could be smitten in place of his friend. Hashem in His great mercy portions out the knocks into small measures so that the one struck is spared the full force of the punishment. Instead of one person being punished with one difficult and painful punishment, all Am Yisrael are punished for him, but the punishment is hardly felt since it is divided up among all of them.

We must take this lesson to heart so that we merit standing before Hashem in worthy and meritorious judgement, and then only goodness, blessings, and kindness will pursue us all the days of our lives. Amen.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v’Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi **David**
Chananya Pinto, shlita

The Required Caution when Relating Information

I was once involved in an incident that taught me a great lesson.

I heard about a certain Jew who publicly desecrated the Shabbat. When the man’s family approached me, I expressed my displeasure about this relative who does not observe the Shabbat. A nephew, seeing how much this matter disturbed me, decided to take matters into his own hands. He told the Shabbat offender that I was angry with him.

The Shabbat desecrator then called me saying, “If you, Rabbi, are so angry with me, then I am not interested in you anymore.” He threw off his *kippah* and totally abandoned every last vestige of Judaism. I tried to calm him down, telling him that I am not angry with him, just greatly pained that he is not particular about Shabbat observance.

Some time passed and I happened to speak to this nephew who had told his relative that I was angry with him. I asked him why he decided to say things to his uncle in my name. He answered that his intentions were good; he had thought it would be an effective method of persuading him to repent.

However, he was deeply troubled that his remarks had been unhelpful and had, in fact, harmed his uncle, prompting him to remove his *kippah*. I told him, “The Torah forbids us to recount things said by someone else, even if these words are true (besides words of Torah, when it is a mitzvah to repeat the source). Now we have both clearly seen how much damage this kind of speech can cause.”

This incident imparted a significant lesson about how crucial it is to be cautious with every word we speak. Although the nephew had good intentions, perhaps he added some of his own words to my words, or maybe repeated them in a more forceful or insulting manner. Regardless, it would have been better had he kept quiet.

The Torah warns us (*Vayikra* 19:17), “You shall reprove your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him.” This means that one must rebuke his friend personally and not behind his back. When rebuking someone behind his back, it may be ineffective. This teaches us the value and importance of man’s speech, and the extent to which one must guard his words and take care not to transgress any form of forbidden speech.

יום הילולא לצדיק המלוב"ן רבי חיים פינטו הגדול זיע"א



The Hilula of the tremendous *tzaddik*, our holy leader, the great Rabbi Chaim Pinto זצ"ל, is approaching. Words cannot describe the magnitude of his righteousness and virtue. Many stories are told about him, although I always try to bring only authoritative stories that have a reliable source. I present here some confirmed incidents which show the extent of holiness which descended to This World. How much he adhered to his Creator until he reached the level of "A *tzaddik* decrees and Hashem fulfills."



Hashem is Close to those who Fear Him, those who Fulfill His Commandments

The following story happened with my holy grandfather, the great *tzaddik* Rabbi Chaim Pinto זצ"ל. It illustrates how close Hashem is to those who fear Him, those who fulfill His mitzvot. This incident occurred when Rabbi Chaim was young, about eighteen years old. Already then he was known as an outstanding *tzaddik*, and he was appointed Av Bet Din in the city of Essaouira. He would regularly walk from place to place delivering Torah classes to the public.

During one of his travels, he began delivering his speech in the local synagogue, when one of the listeners stood up and called out to him while waving his hands in disdain, "*Barakah! Basta!*" (Enough, enough!). Rabbi Chaim, in his greatness and righteousness, did not hold it against this Jew. Although publicly humiliated, he did not retaliate against this man at all; he suppressed his embarrassment and shame.

After he left, Rabbi Chaim turned to Hashem with a *tefilah*. The Gemara (*Shabbat*, 88b) states, "Those who are insulted and do not insult in return, are reproached and do not respond, scripture writes about them (*Shoftim*, 5:31), 'And let those who love Him be like the powerfully rising sun.'" He requested that as a reward for remaining silent, Hashem should help him establish his own small *beit kneset*, a place where he could continue his task of delivering shiurim undisturbed.

Amazingly, on that very day, Rabbi Chaim found a small plot of land that was up for sale. He wanted to purchase it for the construction of a synagogue. He made inquiries from the owner about its price. Although he was poor, he was not deterred by the amount the owner requested, and agreed to transfer the necessary money to the owner that very day. Several Jews who were present asked him how he had so much money, since he did not have a penny in his pocket. However, Rabbi Chaim did not say much,

but raised his eyes and hands to Heaven and said, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu will be with me and help me." This was the extent of his trust in HaKadosh Baruch Hu; he felt He was standing by his side at all times.

Nearby lived a Moroccan Arab, a righteous gentile, who heard Rabbi Chaim. He was amazed by Rabbi Chaim's complete faith in the Creator of the World, and decided to share a secret with him. "I am leaving the city for four years. I have a large sum of money in my possession and I am looking for a place to keep it. May I entrust it to you? I have seen your great faith in the Creator of the World, Who grants your requests. I believe you will never touch money that is not yours; the safest place to keep it is with you." The Arab told Rabbi Chaim to use his money for buying the land and building the synagogue, and after four years Rabbi Chaim would return the money to him. He even gave him the option of paying back the money in installments.

Rabbi Chaim and the Arab signed an agreement. Rabbi Chaim in his honesty added a clause: in the event that the Arab returned and Rabbi Chaim would no longer be alive, the Arab could demand the money from his sons. The Arab thanked him with all his heart; he was clearly grateful to Rabbi Chaim for agreeing to use his money until his return, he did not know of a safer place to keep it.

Many years have passed since that incident. Until this day, about two hundred and fifty years since this story took place, neither the Arab nor any of his descendants have claimed the money back.

The *tzaddik* Rabbi Chaim Pinto wrote in his will that the synagogue built on that plot must never be sold but should remain in the possession of the Pinto family, since this house was not bought with his own money but with the money of a foreign Arab. The Arab or his heirs may come to claim their money, and if the Pinto family cannot afford to return such a large sum, the plot and the house on it should be given to the gentile family in place of money.

That synagogue was the start of a wonderful community which surrounded the *tzaddik* until the end of his life, honoring Hashem's name.



A Spiritual Leap

The *tzaddik* and *Gaon* Rabbi Rafael Encaoua, Av Beit Din in Morocco, confirmed the following family legend to members of our family. Rabbi Chaim Pinto had an excellent student named Rabbi Eliyahu ben Amuzag, a brother of Rabbi Avraham Koriati who authored the *sefer Brit Avot*. Rabbi Eliyahu traveled to Mogador to study under Rabbi Chaim Pinto, eventually receiving ordination as a *dayan*. Rabbi Eliyahu left Mogador and returned to Livorno, Italy, where he served as a *dayan*.

About a week before Rabbi Chaim's passing, on 19 Elul 5705, two Jews arrived at the Beit Din in Livorno for a Din Torah. The *chachamim* and *dayanim* ruled according to their understanding of the matter, but Rabbi Eliyahu ben Amuzag thought differently. He explained that his opinion was based on the teachings of his mentor, Rabbi Chaim Pinto. Upon hearing the name of Rabbi Chaim, whose reputation was renowned, the two *dayanim* negated their ruling in favor of Rabbi Eliyahu's, even though strictly speaking they did not have to do so.

The following night, 20 Elul 5705, Rabbi Eliyahu was learning Gemara at home when suddenly he heard a knock at the door. Despite the late hour, he opened the door. To his great surprise he found Rabbi Chaim Pinto standing there, along with his faithful *shamash*. He was very excited about this surprise visit! He awakened his wife, requesting she serve some refreshments to his valued teacher. Afterwards, the two of them sat down and spoke about all the recent halachic queries in Livorno.

Rabbi Chaim told his student, "I want you to know that in your last ruling you were wrong. You mistakenly ruled positively in my name; really the other judges were correct and I agree with their ruling. You need to correct the mistake as soon as possible." Rabbi Chaim went on to explain Rabbi Eliyahu's mistake, warning him again to go back and correct his ruling.

By dawn Rabbi Chaim left. He needed to return to his lodgings to prepare for the morning prayers, and said there was no need for anyone to accompany him. When morning came, Rabbi Eliyahu ben Amuzag told of Rabbi Chaim Pinto's visit to his house that night. All the people of the city wanted to see him and receive a greeting from him, but they searched for him throughout the city in vain. Rabbi Chaim was not in any of the inns in the city.

A few days later the bitter news of Rabbi Chaim's passing reached Livorno. Everyone understood it was impossible for Rabbi Chaim to have been in Livorno on the night of the 20th of Elul. Rabbi Chaim was already lying on his deathbed during those days, but he had experienced a spiritual leap and miraculously reached distant Livorno safe and sound, using his mighty powers before leaving the world to correct the mistake made in his name.



Singing Praises Together

Rabbi Refael the *tzaddik* told another story displaying the great powers of Rabbi Chaim.

Legend has it in the family of the *tzaddik*, the poet Rabbi David Hassin of Meknes, that late one Shabbat night, the holy Rabbi Chaim Pinto appeared in his home asking him to come sing "prayerful songs of requests" together in Mogador.

Rabbi David Hassin told him, "Mogador is about a thousand kilometers away from Meknes; how will I get there in the middle of Shabbat?" The elderly rabbi assured him that he would take care of it, and would even return him to his house after a few hours to avoid worrying Rabbi David's wife.

And so it was, they miraculously experienced a shortcut. They sang and praised Hashem all night long in Mogador, as Rabbi Chaim requested, and towards morning, Rabbi David Hassin returned to his home in the blink of an eye... It was miraculous.

My father, Rabbi Moshe Ahron *zt"l*, was questioned regarding the incident: did Rabbi Chaim Pinto not violate the prohibition of *Techumin* (traveling beyond a certain distance on Shabbat) with this trip? Although he utilized Kabbalistic powers, was it not forbidden?

Father replied, "Every Jew has a 'spiritual duplicate' which fulfills everything it is commanded to, but one has to be on a very high spiritual level to connect to that spiritual being. We learn this from the duplication in the Torah when HaKadosh Baruch Hu calls out, 'Avraham! Avraham!' and 'Moshe! Moshe!' *Tzaddikim*, who are connected to holiness and purity with each and every limb in their body, are also connected to their 'spiritual doubles' and can send them anywhere at any time and command them to act according to their demand. Do you think the physical body of the righteous Rabbi Chaim Pinto traveled on the holy Shabbat? Of course not! They performed their spiritual desires through their 'doubles' in some spiritual way."

My father was asked whether such righteous people still exist in our generation. He responded that anyone who has reached perfection in mind, spirit, and soul can do so, and become attached to his spiritual double.

Father added, "It is easy to achieve this if one prioritizes spirituality over materialism, because then one becomes a spiritual being. On the other hand, one who prioritizes materialism over spirituality remains a materialistic being."

How fitting these ideas are to the one who shared them.

**As the New Year approaches,
I would like to bless all the readers
and supporters of our institutions named
after the holy tzaddikim, Rabbi Chaim Pinto
and Rabbi Moshe Aharon Pinto.**

***Ketiva vechatima tova,*
may you be inscribed in the books of life.
Wishing you a happy and blessed year with
all good things, abundant livelihood,
good health, and countless blessings
and success in all that you do.**

**Signed,
David Chanania Pinto**

David Chanania Pinto

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Serving Hashem with Joy



The Torah clarifies that the ninety-eight curses listed in the *parsha* will transpire, G-d forbid, due to a lack of joy in *avodat Hashem*, as it says, “Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart” (*Devarim* 28:47).

The Sfat Emet explains that the Torah points out the reason for our exile so we should be aware of it and know where to improve and how to rectify our sins. This rectification will bring about our redemption. If our exile was caused by a lack of joy when performing mitzvot, then the Jewish people must prove that they serve Hashem with joy despite our exile and terrible suffering we experience. A positive attribute is always more powerful than the attribute of punishment. Serving Hashem with joy will be the cause of our physical and spiritual redemption. When a Jew, who is the son of the King of Kings, is about to serve his Creator and fulfill His mitzvot, he must feel just like the individual who is prepared to pay a huge sum of money for the merit of a once in a lifetime opportunity of having his picture taken together with the President of America. When this longed-for moment arrives, his joy reaches a climax.

If at that opportunity the president asks him for a favor, he will feel doubly proud. “Do you understand the significance of the president turning to me personally?”

All the more so when Hashem Yitbarach turns to us and asks us to put on *tefillin*, sit in the succah, observe Shabbat, and keep all the mitzvot; how much joy should this bring us! The heart of each Jew should overflow with happiness when he merits performing a mitzvah and reciting the blessing “Who has sanctified us with His commandments and has commanded us...”

In the *sefer Aleinu Leshabe’ach* there is a story that took place many years ago in a new neighborhood that was constructed in Yerushalayim. Although many of the residents

had already moved into their new homes, telephone lines had not yet been installed; the homes in that neighborhood had no means of telecommunication. There was one person who had previously lived in a nearby area and was connected to a different switchboard; only he had the luxury of having a phone in his home.

In those days cellphones were non-existent; this resulted in many residents knocking on this person’s door asking to use his phone. The requests grew from day to day, particularly Erev Shabbat, giving him no rest.

The next stage was that the residents’ relatives began calling his home, asking him to go and find “so and so” and inform them that they have a phone call. The situation soon became difficult to tolerate.

Any other person would have put a stop to this “service” for the residents, hanging up a note worded to the effect of “it is no longer possible to make calls from this house.”

But this was a *talmid chacham* and G-d-fearing Jew. Since his home was the only one in the entire area that had a working phone, a large share of the phone calls that the residents placed involved serious matters. The owner therefore felt a great responsibility to the public and did not want to shut his house to the callers.

On the other hand, the inconvenience grew from day to day. The people using his phone seemed to be unaware of rest times. They turned up at his door both in the middle of the afternoon and late at night. They seemed to think the family’s private phone was public property.

He decided to approach one of the Gedolim in Yerushalayim and ask for advice. This was the Gadol’s answer:

“Imagine that before every phone call placed from your home, you would receive a phone call from the President of American, or, since

you are a *talmid chacham*, a phone call from one of the Gedolim, requesting that you allow this Jew to use your phone. Would you not delight in granting his request?!”

The Gadol continued, “How much more so must you rejoice in the knowledge that Hashem, the King of Kings, whose Greatness is incomparably superior to all the American and European presidents together, is the One asking you to perform this kindness for His children. By permitting them to use your phone you are fulfilling His will. And this is not all,” the Gadol added. “We have not taken into account the reward one receives for each mitzvah.

“Think for a moment, how would you feel if you would be told that for every phone call you will receive one thousand dollars. With every knock on the door you would rejoice, as if being handed a great treasure. Even more than this, you would sit and wait and hope that more people turn up. The late hour would be of no concern to you, nor would you be distressed by someone disturbing your afternoon rest, since with every phone call you earn another thousand dollars. Ten notes of one hundred dollars are enough to revoke any feelings of discomfort that you and your family suffer.

“Am I not correct?” asked the Gadol. The man could only nod his head in agreement.

“If this is the truth, it is all the more true when we refer to a mitzvah whose reward is infinite! When a mitzvah is difficult for you to fulfill because it involves hardship, the reward that awaits you for each phone call is far greater!”

And so it is with each mitzvah opportunity that comes our way. If it involves a certain amount of hardship and bother, one should stop for a moment to contemplate the reward which awaits him. In an instant, the entire matter will be transformed into the most beloved of tasks!



“Contemplate and see that Hashem is good”

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