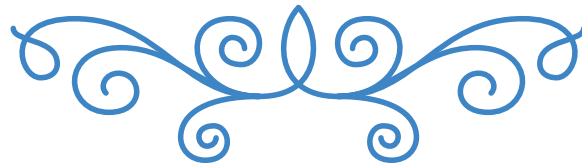


⇒ THE WEISS EDITION ⇐

*The*  
***Twelve***  
***Torah Passages***

י"ב פְּסוּקִים וּמֵאֲמֵרֵי חַז"ל  
Powerful Torah Guidance for Life



DRAFT CONCEPT

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THE TWELVE TORAH  
PASSAGES

*Powerful Torah Guidance for Life*

Illustrations by Spotlight Design



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ISBN:



DRAFT CONCEPT



This sefer is dedicated by  
**Rabbi Moishe & Ruty Weiss**  
*Sherman Oaks, CA*



In loving memory of  
 ר' שלום וצפורה לפידות ע"ה  
**R' Sholom & Tziporah**  
**Lapidus ע"ה**

ר' ישכר דוב ומרים ווייס ע"ה  
**R' Yissochor Dov (Berel)**  
**& Miriam Weiss ע"ה**



And in honor of their dear children  
**Sholom Eliezer, Menachem Mendel,**  
**Yonah Mordechai & Bella, Chana Pearl &**  
**Shmuel Yaakov**

שיחיו

May they be blessed with abundant health and parnasah, to  
 build a binyan adei ad, with healthy children, only simchas, and  
 revealed good.

## Introduction

With profound gratitude to the Almighty for His abundant blessings, we are pleased to present the tenth volume of Living Lessons—a beautiful compendium of commentary and an anthology of the Rebbe's talks on the "Twelve Pesukim and Maamarei Chazal."

The Talmud (Makkos 28) describes how various tzaddikim distilled the Torah into fundamental principles—בא חבוקוק והעמידן על אחת—with Chavakuk ultimately encapsulating it in a single verse.

Fifty years ago, the Lubavitcher Rebbe selected a collection of twelve Torah passages—drawn from Torah Shebiksav, Mishnah, Talmud, and classic Chassidic works—to inspire and guide children from their earliest years. The Rebbe emphasized that these passages should not only be studied and understood, but committed to memory. From that time on, at gatherings with children, a delegation—often representing communities from around the world—would recite these pesukim in the spirit of יונקים יסדת מפני עוללים ויונקים יסדת. Many parents likewise began incorporating their recitation into their children's nightly Shema.

That these specific passages were chosen by the Rebbe—leader of Klal Yisroel with a global vision and boundless concern—underscores their profound significance.

Although originally intended for children, these verses clearly serve as guideposts for every Jew. They offer a simple yet powerful way to keep the most essential and foundational ideas of Torah constantly before us.

Following the tremendous success of our previous volumes on Siddur, Haggadah, Pirkei Avos, Tehillim, Parshah, and Tanya, we felt that a sefer devoted to these foundational passages would be a meaningful addition to the Living Lessons series.



There is another passage the Rebbe spoke about hundreds of times, exploring it from every dimension of Torah and deriving countless lessons: the tefillah of Modeh Ani. It is related that when the Rebbetzin Chana—the Rebbe's mother—was asked which tefillah was the Rebbe's favorite, she inquired directly and later responded that Modeh Ani held that distinction.

For this reason, we have included, as an addendum, an anthology of explanations and life lessons on this fundamental and primal prayer.

The Midrash teaches that at Krias Yam Suf, twelve distinct paths were formed—one for each tribe. The holy Arizal adds that there was a thirteenth path for those who did not know which way to go.

Perhaps these twelve passages—and the thirteenth—correspond to the entirety of Klal Yisroel.



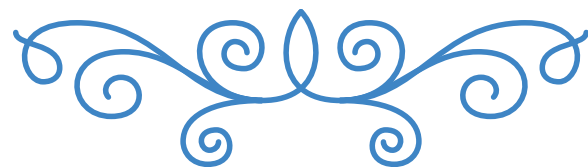
In gratitude for Hashem's boundless kindness to our family, channeled through the Rebbe's blessings, we dedicate this sefer in honor of our children:

Sholom Eliezer, Menachem Mendel, Yonah Mordechai & Bella, Chana Pearl & Shmuel Yaakov.

May they be blessed with abundant health and parnasah, to build a binyan adei ad, with healthy children, only simchas, and revealed good.

It is our heartfelt hope and prayer that just as the twelve (and thirteen) paths led the Jewish people out of Egypt toward Matan Torah, so too—especially in these challenging times—it will be the pure voices of children, learning and reciting these holy words, that will lead us out of this dark exile. May we merit, speedily and in a revealed way, the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

**Rabbi Moishe & Ruty Weiss,**  
*Sherman Oaks, California*  
*Lag B'omer 5786*



1

# תּוֹרַת צֶדֶק לָנוּ מִנְּשֵׂה מוֹרֶשֶׁת קְהֵלֵת יַעֲקֹב

(דברים לג, ד)



*The Torah that Moshe  
commanded us is the heritage of  
the congregation of Yaakov.*

(DEVARIM 33:4)

LIVING LESSON 1  
*Lesson For Life*

LIVING LESSON 2  
*An Inheritance  
for Everyone*

LIVING LESSON 3  
*Torah from Moshe*

LIVING LESSON 4  
*Special Portion*

Living Lessons  
1

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב.  
 ~~~~~  
 The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.

## Lesson For Life

The word תורה originates from the word הוראה, meaning “to teach.” The Torah is not merely a history book that recounts the stories of our past. Every part of the Torah offers a lesson for our day-to-day lives. Even the stories within the Torah hold a special message about how we should conduct ourselves. Therefore, when we learn the Torah, we should ask ourselves what lesson it is trying to teach us.

This is why the Torah is called תורה אור, the illuminated Torah.<sup>1</sup> The Torah is not a storybook or even an ancient book of wisdom. Rather, the Torah illuminates our lives, guiding us constantly in the right way to behave. When we need guidance in any area of our lives, we should look to the Torah. For every part of a person’s day and at every stage of life, the Torah is there to guide the way and show how to act.

When we lead our lives by the light of the Torah, we can be confident that our lives will be meaningful and exactly as Hashem wants.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

The Torah is described as a “Lesson For Life”. Can you think of a story from the Torah that taught you something important? What was the lesson?

Think of a time when you weren’t sure what to do, and how learning from the Torah might have helped you choose the right course of action.



### Our Sages Say

#### The Main Thing

לא המדרש הוא העקר, אלא המעשה – Learning is not the main thing, but rather action.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of learning Torah is to know what to do. We don’t learn to be smart or impress others. The reason we learn Torah is to follow the mitzvos and understand how to lead our lives.

#### Not a Storybook

ווי ליהויה בר נש דאמר, דהא אורייתא אתא לאחזקה ספורין, בְּעֵלְמָא – Woe to the people who say that the Torah came to tell us stories.<sup>3</sup>

Every story in the Torah is not just a story of the past, but a lesson for our lives today. The Torah is true and everlasting; therefore, every part of it applies to every generation.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Our Sages say that “learning is not the main thing, rather an action.” Why do you think it’s more important to follow the teachings of the Torah than just to learn about them?

The word “Torah” means “guidance,” to show us the way. How is the Torah like a guide that helps us know how to act in our lives?



### Word Power

#### Hora’ah, not Mitzvah

If the point of the Torah is to learn how to keep the mitzvos, why do we call it Torah, which means “guidance,” and not simply name it “Mitzvos”?

The explanation is that the term “mitzvah” refers to a command that one must follow, even if they don’t understand it. However, “Torah” means guidance. When you guide someone, you show them the way in a manner they can understand and appreciate its beauty.

The beauty of Torah lies in understanding the qualities of mitzvos and how they enhance our lives.<sup>5</sup>



### Did You Know?

#### Chumash

Generally, when people refer to the Torah, they mean the Five Books of the Chumash. The reason the Chumash is most often called Torah is that it contains the 613 mitzvos. Since the goal of the Torah is to teach us how to lead our lives, the mitzvos are the primary focus of the Torah.<sup>4</sup>



### Pearls of Wisdom

#### Transformation

Mitzvos are incredibly important because they create a profound change in the world around us, transforming it into something holy. When we only learn Torah, the ideas lack a real-world effect. By fulfilling the mitzvos, we can actually improve the world for the better.



Story

Help!

When R' Mendel Futerfas<sup>6</sup> was five years old, one of the boys in his class forgot to bring his bottle of ink to Cheder. He turned to the boy next to him and asked to borrow some ink.

"No, you should have remembered to bring your own," the other boy said. Reb Mendel's classmate had to ask someone else for ink.

Their Rebbi saw what happened but didn't say anything. A little while later, the Rebbi asked the first boy to show the class the Aleph-Bais. "This is an Aleph, this is a Bais, and this one is a Gimmel," the boy said, pointing to the letters.

"Wrong!" said their teacher.

The boy was very confused. "But Rebbi, this is what you taught us... This is how we have been reading for the past two years."

"You are wrong," said their Rebbi.

"Aleph is when your friend asks you for ink, and you give it to him.

Bais is when your friend asks you for ink, you give it to him.

Gimmel is when your friend asks you for ink, and you give it to him!"

The whole Torah teaches us how to act.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*In the story, the Rebbi taught that helping a friend with ink was like learning the Aleph-Bais. Can you think of something you did for someone else today, and how that action might be like following a teaching of the Torah?*



Living Lessons  
2

תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב.

*The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.*

An Inheritance for Everyone

When older people pass away, they often leave their children an inheritance. This can include money, property, or items of sentimental value. An inheritance is not earned through hard work or effort. Being a child automatically entitles you to your family's inheritance.

The Torah is referred to as the "inheritance of every Jew." We are all like Hashem's children, and as children, we have inherited Hashem's most precious gift—the Torah. We don't need

to do anything to deserve this gift, and no Jew can claim more ownership of the Torah than others. Just by being Jewish, we all have an equal right to the Torah. From a tiny baby to the wisest Rabbi, we all have a portion in the Torah.

This means that each of us can connect with the Torah and study it. It doesn't matter what family or community you belong to— as a Jew, the entire Torah is accessible to you.



**Word Power**

**יעקב**

The passuk Torah Tzivah calls B'nei Yisrael by the name Yaakov. The name יעקב is associated with the word עקב, meaning "heel." None of a person's qualities are noticeable in their heel. The heel of a genius and a simple man looks the same. Likewise, the name Yaakov symbolizes a profound level at which all of B'nei Yisrael are equal. Our bond with the Torah is identical; the simplest Jew shares the same connection to the Torah as the most esteemed talmid chacham.<sup>7</sup>

**קהלת יעקב**

The word קהלה means "congregation." This includes converts who join the congregation of B'nei Yisrael. Everyone has a connection to the Torah.<sup>8</sup>

**Did You Know?**

**The First Lesson**

As soon as children are old enough to speak, their father should teach them this passuk.<sup>9</sup> This passuk teaches children that every Jew, including them, has the right to learn Torah.<sup>10</sup>

**The Second Luchos**

The passuk of Torah Tzivah is read in Shul in the Torah portion of Simchas Torah.

Simchas Torah celebrates the giving of the second set of Luchos. The second Luchos were given after B'nei Yisrael sinned with the golden calf and returned to Hashem. Therefore, as we celebrate the giving of the second Luchos, we read this passuk, emphasizing that even those who have sinned and strayed from the path of the Torah still maintain a connection to it.



**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*The celebration of the second Luchos stresses that our connection to Torah remains even after doing aveiros. How can this idea effect how we view people who don't follow the Torah?*

**Our Sages Say**

**Stealing**

Rav אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: כל המונע הלכה מפי תלמיד כאילו גזלו מנחלת אבותיו Yehuda said in the name of Rav: Anyone who withholds a Halacha from their student, it is as if they stole his inheritance.<sup>11</sup>

Every detail of the Torah is relevant to every single Jew. Therefore, no one has the right to withhold parts of the Torah from you. Withholding the Torah from someone is like stealing what belongs to them.

**A Lost Prince**

Even if someone hasn't studied Torah for many years and then decides to start learning, they have the right to do so. It is like a prince who was kidnapped from his palace as a young child. Even if a hundred years pass, he won't be ashamed to return to his birthplace, for he is coming to reclaim what is rightfully his.<sup>12</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What are some barriers that might prevent you from feeling entitled to learn Torah, and how can they be overcome?*

**Pearls of Wisdom**

**Deepest Connection**

Although many parts of the Torah are deep and difficult to understand, every Jew has a connection. This is because when we learn the Torah, we connect to Hashem. In this connection, we are all equal. Even if there are parts of the Torah we can't understand, when we study it, our connection to Hashem is as strong as anyone's else's.<sup>13</sup>

**Extra Food for Thought**

Withholding Torah knowledge is like stealing an inheritance. In modern contexts, what might be considered "withholding" Torah from others?



**Equal Opportunity**

R' Yannai once saw someone dressed like a Talmid Chochom. "Rebbi, will you come eat by us?" R' Yanni asked.

"Sure!" Replied the man.

R' Yannai gave him food and drink. As they were eating, R' Yannai asked the man to share some Gemarah thoughts.

"I don't know any." The man said.

"Do you know any Mishnayos?" asked R' Yannai.

"No."

"How about a Possuk?"

"Also not."

R' Yannai was very upset that this man joined his meal without sharing any Torah

R' Yannai began, "A dog ate Yannai's bread..."

The man got up and grabbed R' Yannai. "You are stealing my inheritance!" he shouted.

R' Yannai was confused. "I didn't take anything from you."

The guest explained, "Once I was walking past a school and I heard children learning. They didn't say Morasha Kehilas Yannai, they said Kehillas Yaakov. Why would you call me a dog? I, too, have a part in Hashem's Torah.



תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה קהלת יעקב.

*The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.*

## Torah from Moshe

When we learn Torah without guidance, we can easily stray from the truth. It may be tempting to interpret parts of the Torah according to our desires rather than as Hashem intended. People often seek what feels best to them. Therefore, it is possible to distort the Torah for our own gain. We might not even realize it, but our self-interests can influence how we understand the Torah.

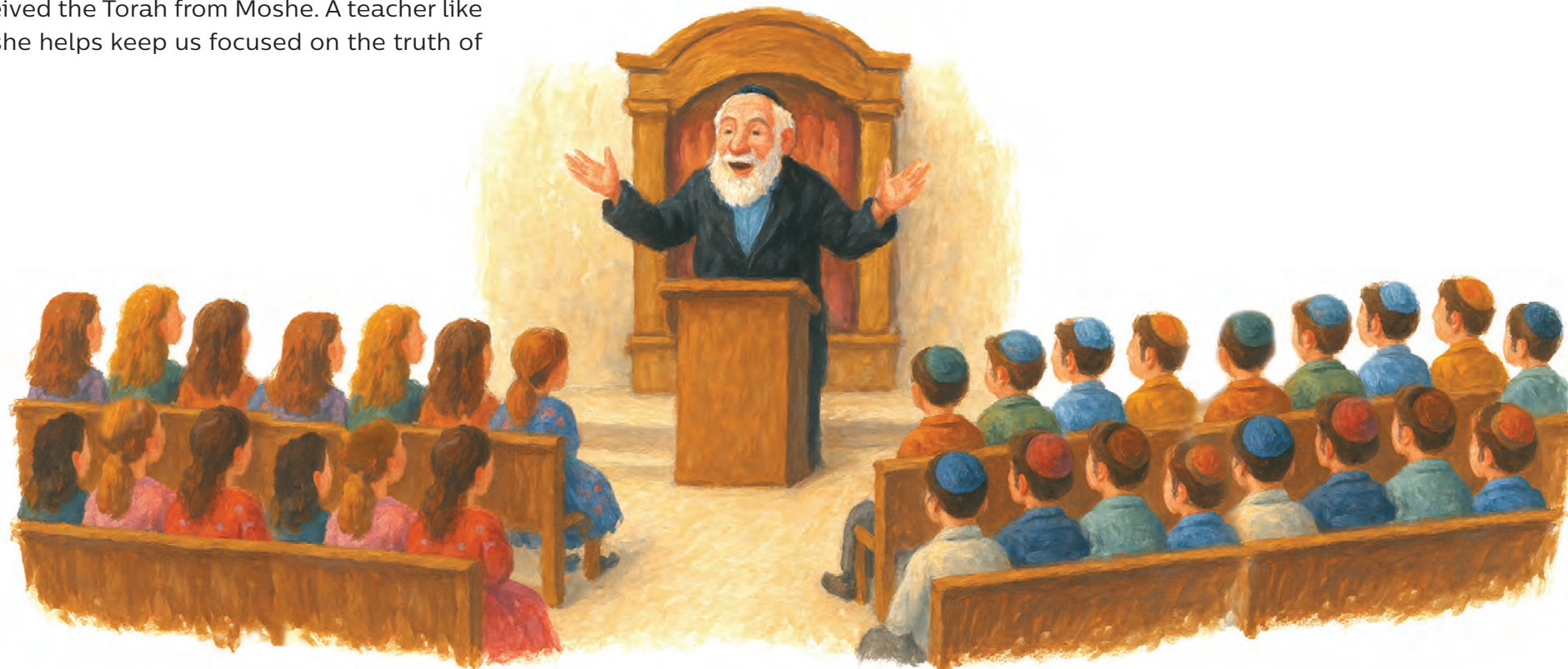
This is why the pasuk emphasizes that we received the Torah from Moshe. A teacher like Moshe helps keep us focused on the truth of

the Torah. When we learn the Torah with the guidance of a holy teacher, we can grasp the truth without our self-interests interfering.

To learn Torah with humility and a genuine desire for truth, one must study under the guidance of the holy teachers and leaders of each generation.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*How can we determine if we truly understand Torah or if our understanding is based on our own desires?*



### Responsibility

When someone knows a part of the Torah, it is their responsibility to share it with others. Everyone can be a teacher of Torah, helping to guide those who are less knowledgeable. Teaching others not only affects them but also impacts all future generations. By setting someone on the path of Torah, we transform not only their lives but also the lives of their descendants.<sup>14</sup>



### 611

The word תורה has a gematria value of 611. This is the number of mitzvos we received through Moshe, as the first two Aseres Hadibros were given by Hashem.



### Chain of Transmission

משה קבל תורה מסיני, ומסרה ליהושע, ויהושע לזקנים, וזקנים לנביאים, ונביאים ליהושע. - Moshe received the Torah from Hashem and gave it to Yehoshua, who in turn gave it to the Zekanim. They passed it to the Nevi'im, and the Nevi'im conveyed it to the Anshei Kneset Hagedola.<sup>15</sup> The first Mishnah in Pirkei Avos teaches the order in which the Torah was passed down through the generations. Understanding the mesorah (chain of tradition) of Torah is crucial. When we trace the chain of how the Torah was transmitted throughout history, we realize that every teacher received the Torah in a lineage leading back to Moshe, who received it directly from Hashem. The manner in which the Torah was taught is as important as the content of the Torah itself.



### Like Shemittah

מה שמטה נאמרו כללותיה ופרטותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני אף כן נאמרו כללותיה ודקדוקיה מסיני. - Just as Shemita was revealed to Moshe by Hashem with all its details, every mitzvah was also given to Moshe with all its details.<sup>16</sup>

Every detail of the mitzvos was given by Hashem to Moshe; we cannot simply create our own rules.

### Tradition

המסורת סג לתורה—The mesorah (chain of tradition) is a fence for the Torah.<sup>17</sup>

The tradition we receive from our teachers in understanding the Torah serves as a fence around it. To grasp the truth of the Torah, free from our self-interests, we must accept the manner in which our Chachamim transmitted it through generations, tracing back to Moshe at Har Sinai.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*What ideas in the Torah does the “fence” of Mesorah protect?*

Did You Know?

Connect to the Divine

The Torah teaches that one should cleave to and connect with Hashem. The Gemarah explains that this connection is achieved through associating with Talmidei Chachamim. By connecting with Talmidei Chachamim, we learn how to serve Hashem and become connected to Him.<sup>18</sup>

Huge Stars

A good teacher is like a star that seems small but is actually massive.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, a good teacher may seem insignificant and unimportant in our lives. However, upon closer examination, we realize the tremendous influence they have on us.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

How does learning from wise teachers help us connect with Hashem?

Extra Food for Thought

Since all Mitzvot details came from Moshe, can we interpret them in our own way?

How can everyone contribute to teaching Torah, even if they lack Torah knowledge?

Can our own desires change how we understand things?

תורה צוה לנו משה מורה קהלת יעקב.

The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the congregation of Yaakov.

Special Portion

The passuk “Torah Tzivah” teaches that the Torah was given to every Jew. When Hashem gave the Torah to each of us, it was a personal gift to every individual. This means that every Jew has a portion of the Torah that Hashem created specifically for them. It is our job to learn Torah and discover the section made for our neshamah.

This is why everyone enjoys different parts of the Torah. One person may feel more connected to the Gemarah, while others may find a deeper connection to the Midrash. Some

might enjoy learning the laws of Shabbos, while others prefer studying the laws of monetary damages.

When a person studies the portion of Torah connected to their neshamah, they can comprehend it on a deeper level than others. In fact, it’s possible to uncover new insights and chiddushim in their segment of Torah that were never previously revealed. Even the greatest Talmidei Chachamim may not be able to discover these ideas, as this part of the Torah was specifically crafted for your neshamah.

Hashem loves each of us so much that He created a piece of Torah with all of us in mind!



The Tzedukim and Baysusim

Antignos was a student of Shimon Hatzadik and became the leader of B’nei Yisroel after Shimon Hatzadik’s death.

He taught that one should not serve Hashem for reward but should serve faithfully for the sake of heaven. Two of Antignos’s students were named Tzadok and Baysus. They felt that this teaching made no sense. Why would someone serve Hashem without expecting a reward? They, therefore, concluded that the Torah tradition of the Rabbis was not valid and broke away. They began a new religion that followed only the written Torah and ignored the oral tradition from Moshe.



Without the oral Torah, understanding the intention of the written Torah is impossible. This led to some extreme interpretations. For example, the Torah states that one should not light a fire on Shabbos. They interpreted this to mean that even fires lit before Shabbos were prohibited. Consequently, they would sit in the dark and eat cold food throughout Shabbos. To challenge this, the Rabbanim instituted the obligation to prepare warm food for Shabbos—commonly known as cholent.

Not believing in the oral tradition of Torah is considered kefirah of the entire Torah. For this reason, the Rabbanim instituted various laws to demonstrate how wrong the Tzedukim and Baysusim were.



## Moshe's Tears

Before Moshe passed away, Hashem revealed to him all the future leaders of the Bnei Yisrael. When he saw Rabbi Akiva, Moshe noticed that Rabbi Akiva was explaining the reasons for the crowns atop the letters in the Sefer Torah. This made Moshe cry.

Hashem asked Moshe, "Why are you crying?" "He is teaching things that I don't know," Moshe replied.

"Don't worry," Hashem responded. "Just keep listening."

Suddenly, one of the students asked Rabbi Akiva, "Rebbi, where do you know all this from?" Rabbi Akiva responded, "I learned it in a tradition passed down from Moshe, who received it at Har Sinai."

Although this part of the Torah was given during the giving of the Torah, it could only be revealed by Rabbi Akiva, as it was the portion of the Torah connected to him.



### Our Sages Say

#### Their Chiddush

אין אדם יכול לחדש דבר בתורה שחבירו מזומן לחדשו כי הכל מוכן לפניו מיום שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה נִבְרָאָת – A person cannot discover a new Torah insight that someone else is meant to uncover. Because that new idea was designated for that individual when the Torah was created.<sup>20</sup>

#### Main Focus

לְלַמֵּד אֶת הַתּוֹרָה בְּמִקּוֹם שֶׁלְבוּ חָפְץ – A person should always learn the section of Torah they enjoy most.<sup>21</sup>

If you find a part of the Torah that is particularly enjoyable to you, it is a sign that this is your section of the Torah, and you should concentrate on studying it.<sup>22</sup>



### Did You Know?

#### In the Womb

Before a baby is born, it is taught the part of the Torah it is most connected to but forgets it before birth.<sup>23</sup> Throughout a person's lifetime, they must discover this part of the Torah. When they do, it will feel familiar because they learned it before birth.

#### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Have you ever experienced a sudden sense of familiarity when learning something? What might that mean?



### Word Power

#### You Will Find It

The Gemarah teaches, תִּגְעַת וְיִמְצְאָתָּה, which translates to, "If you work hard to learn Torah, you will find Torah."<sup>24</sup>

The Gemarah doesn't say, "If you work hard, you will understand Torah," but rather, "You will find Torah." This is because when we discover our part in Torah, we aren't understanding something new; we are simply finding what has belonged to us all along.

#### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

What does "working hard" mean for you when learning something?



### Pearls of Wisdom

#### Lost Forever

If someone doesn't discover their part of the Torah, it will be lost forever. This is because only you can uncover your part in the Torah; no one else has the ability to reveal it. Therefore, it is crucial to learn Torah and find our part to reveal.<sup>25</sup>

#### Torah Journals

One way to discover the part of the Torah that resonates with you is by writing for Torah journals. These journals are dedicated to chiddushim and new ideas in Torah. Even if someone feels they aren't smart enough to participate, they should realize that everyone has a section of the Torah destined for them. It doesn't matter if you feel smart or not; everyone has something to contribute to the Torah.



### Extra Food for Thought

How can one find their portion in Torah?

If new Torah ideas are waiting to be revealed, how can we make it easier for people to discover them?

If Hashem created a Torah piece just for you, what does that say about the importance of each person?

## Endnotes

1. משלי ו, כ"ג
2. אבות א, י"ז
3. זהר ג, קנ"ב א
4. גור אריה בראשית א, א
5. דרשות המצות מהר"ל
6. Chabad Chassid and Mashpia 1907 - 1995
7. ספר המאמרים מלוקט א 201
8. טור על התורה
9. שולחן ערוך יורה דעה
10. בן יהודע סוכה מ"ב עמוד ב'
11. סנהדרין צ"א עמוד ב
12. ילקוט דברים תתקנ"א, ל"ב
13. לקוטי שיחות חלק ד 1156
14. קידושין ל עמוד א'
15. אבות א, א
16. ספרא בהר א
17. אבות ג, י"ג, דרך חיים מהר"ל
18. חינוך מצוה תל"ד
19. בבא בתרא ח עמוד ב, בן יהודע
20. צוואת ר' אליעזר הגדול י'
21. עבודה זרה י"ט עמוד א'
22. מכתבי תורה קי"ט
23. עץ הדעת טוב משפטים
24. מגילה ו עמוד ב'
25. אור החיים דברים כ"ב, ג'

# 2

## שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד

(דברים ו', ד)



*Listen B'nei Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d,  
Hashem is one.*

(DEVARIM 6:4)

LIVING LESSON 1

*Everything is  
From Hashem*

LIVING LESSON 2

*Every Aveirah  
is a Rebellion*

LIVING LESSON 3

*Mesiras Nefesh*

LIVING LESSON 4

*Thoughts Lead  
to Feelings*

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

*Listen B'nei Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.*

## Everything is From Hashem

Everything in the world was created and is constantly run by Hashem. However, when we look at the world, it is difficult to see how Hashem manages everything. To us, it appears that everything is governed by nature. To help us recognize the truth, Hashem gave us a gift called the neshamah. The neshamah of a Jew is a part of Hashem and, therefore, helps us realize how Hashem governs everything.

The neshamah is similar to a pair of 3D glasses. Without them, everything seems flat.

However, as soon as you put a pair on, a whole

new world comes to life. Similarly, without the neshamah, it can be quite challenging to recognize Hashem's presence in everything. When we connect with our neshamah, it becomes easier to do the right thing and listen to Hashem.

This is what the pasuk of Shema teaches: we say Hashem Elokeinu—Hashem is our strength and source of life. Through the words of Shema, we connect with our neshamah and begin to perceive the world accurately, recognizing that Hashem is the source of all life.

When we recognize that everything happening in our lives comes from Hashem, it helps us remain calm and happy at all times. Hashem is always looking out for us, and nothing that occurs is random or accidental.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*The neshamah helps us see Hashem. What are some ways we can use our neshamah to recognize Hashem?*



## The Wine Factory

Reb Yehuda Leib, one of the chassidim of the Yesod Ha'avodah, once passed by the shul when he heard someone crying. When he went inside to investigate, he found Ephraim, the winemaker, saying Tehillim with tears streaming down his face.

Suddenly, Ephraim called out, "Hashem, please don't let them hurt my family!" Reb Yehuda Leib waited for him to calm down and asked what was wrong.

"Less than an hour ago," Ephraim replied, "someone told me that the police were on their way to my house. One of my workers became upset with me and accused me of not filling out my paperwork, claiming that my entire business was illegal. They will use anything as an excuse to throw me in prison."

The first thing I did was run straight to the Yesod Havodah, but the Rebbe was out of town. What was I supposed to do? I came here to the Shul and started davening to Hashem..."

As this was happening, the police arrived at Ephraim's house. His wife, in a panic, took some straw and sprinkled it on the steps that led down to the wine cellar, then shut the door.

Immediately after she finished, the police barged through the door led by the former worker. The police began searching every corner of the house but found nothing.

The worker who brought them there began to lose patience. "The factory is right over there, officer," he said, pointing to the cellar door.

The chief looked at him sharply. "Don't tell us how to do our job." And went right on looking around the house.

Eventually, the police turned to go. "There is obviously nothing here," they decided.

In desperation, the worker threw open the door to the cellar. "Officer, you didn't look here yet; all the wine is down here," he cried.

The chief of police took one look at the steps going down and, seeing them covered in straw, exploded.

"Do you take me for a fool! Everyone knows that straw is bad for wine." With that, he stormed out of the house.

Whenever Reb Yehuda would repeat this story, he would say: "Look how a Yid reacts when he has a problem. Ephraim didn't start looking for a lawyer. He knew that the only place he could get help was with the Rebbe or by davening to Hashem."<sup>1</sup>





**Our Sages Say**

**Doesn't Even Know**

אין בעל הנס מכיר בניסו - Even the person the miracle happened to doesn't realize it was a miracle.<sup>2</sup>

Hashem conceals His constant miracles and involvement under the guise of nature, leading us to believe that they aren't miracles at all. Sometimes, Hashem clearly reveals the miracles to us, but often, we fail to recognize the tremendous miracles that happen continuously in our lives.

**G-d of Gods**

קרר ללי אלקא דאליקייא - The non-Jews call Hashem the G-d of the gods.<sup>3</sup>

Even many people without a neshamah believe that Hashem is powerful and that He created the world. However, many of them think that Hashem then gave His powers to nature and that nature now controls the world, chas v'shalom. As Jews, we know that this isn't true. Nature is merely a tool in Hashem's hand. It is truly Hashem who is behind everything that happens.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why do you think Hashem hides the miracles that are happening around us constantly?*

**Plant with Emunah**

מאמין בחיי העלום זורע - [B'nei Yisrael] plant because they believe in Hashem.<sup>4</sup>

Although everyone uses the same tools and methods to grow crops, as Jews, we recognize that nothing can grow without the help of Hashem. While it may seem to most that fields grow naturally, we understand that it is Hashem who provides.

When we need help in our lives, we know whom to turn to.



**Pearls of Wisdom**

**Make it Make Sense**

Although everything comes from Hashem, we still need to work to create a "kli," or path, for Hashem's blessings to flow. This is why the Torah commands us, "ששת ימים תעבוד," meaning for six days you should work. Ultimately, Hashem desires that our sustenance reaches us in a natural way. Therefore, we must put in the effort to receive Hashem's help.

Nevertheless, we should never lose sight of the fact that Hashem, not our work, is the true source of our livelihoods.<sup>5</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*If Hashem provides everything, why do we still need to work?*



**Did You Know?**

**Daily Prayer**

The Zohar<sup>6</sup> relates that R' Yeisa Savah would ask Hashem to provide him with food every day, even if he already had food in his house. R' Yeisa Savah understood that Hashem provides everything in our lives. Even if we have food in our homes, it is Hashem who ensures we can benefit from it. Nothing can happen without Hashem's help.

**The Purim Miracle**

In the story of Purim, Mordechai and Esther didn't rely on natural means to overturn the decree. Mordechai didn't use his influence as a minister to nullify the decree but instead began fasting and engaging in teshuvah. Likewise, Esther fasted for three days before approaching Achashverosh, even though fasting would diminish her beauty in his eyes. Mordechai and Esther recognized that Hashem is behind everything. Therefore, their immediate reaction to the decree was to turn to Hashem for help.<sup>7</sup>



**Word Power**

**From אין**

In Tehillim, Dovid Hamelech writes, מֵאֵין יָבֵא עֲזָרִי—from where will my help come?

The word אין literally means "nothing." This can serve as a reference to Hashem, whom we cannot see or understand. Therefore, this sentence can be understood as a statement—*from אין, Hashem, my help will come.*

Everything comes from Hashem.<sup>8</sup>



**Extra Food for Thought**

If everything comes from Hashem, why does it sometimes feel like things happen randomly?

In Shema we say that Hashem is one. How does understanding that Hashem is one help us in our daily lives?

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

*Listen B'nei Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.*

## Every Aveirah is a Rebellion

If a king asks one of his servants to do something and the servant doesn't listen, it is considered a form of rebellion. It does not matter if the king requested the servant to do something big or small; if a servant ignores their king, they deny the king's authority.

The same goes for Hashem and the mitzvot.

The words אֶחָד ה' mean that Hashem is one. When we say these words, we acknowledge that Hashem is the only one who controls and governs the world. Therefore, we listen to whatever Hashem commands.

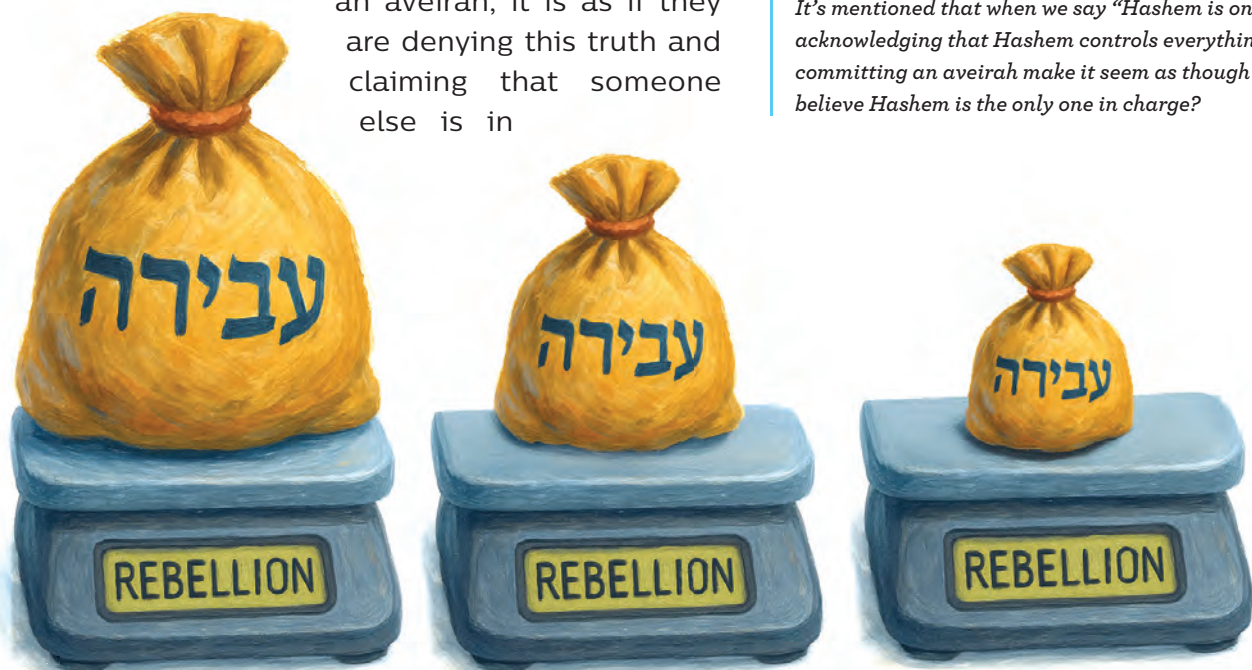
When a person commits an aveirah, it is as if they are denying this truth and claiming that someone else is in

charge. Committing an aveirah is like rebelling against Hashem, implying that what Hashem wants is unimportant and that only personal desires matter.

Sometimes, we may think that only serious aveiros, such as Avodah Zarah, are a denial and rebellion against Hashem's authority. However, in reality, every aveirah is like Avodah Zarah. When we rebel against Hashem and ignore His words, we imply that there is another authority, aside from Hashem, that we choose to follow. That is Avodah Zarah.<sup>9</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*It's mentioned that when we say "Hashem is one," we are acknowledging that Hashem controls everything. How does committing an aveirah make it seem as though we don't believe Hashem is the only one in charge?*



### Our Sages Say

#### Small and Big

וְהָיָה זְהִיר בְּמִצְוָה קְלָה כְּבְחֻמּוֹרָה – Be just as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major mitzvah.<sup>10</sup>

Although some mitzvot may be seen as stricter than others, the foundation of every mitzvah remains the same: recognizing Hashem as our King and listening to His words. Therefore, the size of a mitzvah doesn't matter. Regardless of the mitzvah, we are listening to Hashem and serving Him.<sup>11</sup>

#### Worse than a Mosquito

וְאִם לֹא אֹמְרִים לוֹ זָבוּב קִדְמָךְ יְתוּשׁ קִדְמָךְ שְׁלֹשׁוּל זֶה קִדְמָךְ – If you are not good, they tell you that even the flies were created before you, the mosquitoes come before you, and the worms preceded you.<sup>12</sup>

When a person commits an aveirah, they are worse than the lowest creatures. Even the lowest creatures obey Hashem and act as they were created to. However, a person who commits an aveirah is rebelling against Hashem and acting contrary to how Hashem intended.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*The Sages teach us to be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one. Why do you think the size of the mitzvah doesn't affect its importance in listening to Hashem?*



### Did You Know?

#### The First Two

The first two of the Aseres Hadibros encompass the entire Torah. Every positive mitzvah affirms that Hashem is one, fulfilling the first commandment of believing in Hashem, while every aveirah denies Hashem, similar to the second commandment against Avodah Zarah.<sup>13</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*The first two of the Aseres Hadibros are about believing in Hashem and not worshipping other gods. How does committing any aveirah relate to the idea of believing in other authorities besides Hashem?*



### Story

#### The First Opportunity

A Jewish man was once imprisoned and unable to daven with a minyan or perform many of the mitzvot. However, the guards informed him that he could select one day that year to leave prison and fulfill the mitzvot he desired. This man wrote to the Radvaz,<sup>14</sup> asking which day he should choose to leave. The Radvaz responded that he should request to leave on the earliest day possible because every mitzvah is equally important.<sup>15</sup>



**Only Existence**

On a deeper level, believing in Hashem means acknowledging that He is the only true existence and that everything in the world was created solely to fulfill His will. Every aveirah denies that belief. An aveirah suggests that there is another existence apart from Hashem and that the creations have a separate identity from Him.

If someone doesn't believe that everything is part of Hashem, they are denying the concept that there is nothing besides Him.<sup>17</sup>

**Fool**

The passuk states,<sup>18</sup> כִּי תִשָּׁטָה אִשְׁתּוֹ—If a wife strays and commits an aveirah. The word תִּשָּׁטָה relates to שָׁטוּת, meaning foolishness. This is because engaging in an aveirah can only occur in moments of foolishness. How can one believe that their desires hold more weight than what Hashem wants?<sup>19</sup>



The word for straying (תִּשָּׁטָה) is related to foolishness (שָׁטוּת). Why do you think it's considered foolish to believe our own desires are more important than what Hashem asks of us?

If every aveirah is like saying "no" to Hashem, what is one small "yes" (mitzvah) you could focus on doing today to show that you recognize Hashem as your King?



שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.

*Listen B'nei Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.*

**Mesiras Nefesh**

When we recite Shema every day, we accept Hashem's kingship over ourselves,<sup>20</sup> and arouse a desire to connect with Him. In Shema, it states that we should serve Hashem "with our whole life." This teaches us that we should serve Hashem, even if it means sacrificing our lives.<sup>21</sup>

When we accept Hashem as our authority and wish to remain connected to Him at all times, ignoring His wishes becomes impossible.

This is the meaning of mesiras nefesh—giving up your life for Hashem. In the past, mesiras nefesh was literal. Millions of Jews throughout history sacrificed their lives to remain united with Hashem. Nowadays, our physical lives are not under threat, and mesiras

nefesh doesn't usually involve giving up our lives. Nevertheless, we can practice mesiras nefesh by listening to Hashem even when it's difficult. When we set aside our own desires and instead listen to Hashem, we demonstrate that Hashem is what truly matters, regardless of what we may have to sacrifice to serve Him.<sup>22</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*In Shema, we state that we will serve Hashem with our whole life, even if we must sacrifice our lives. What do you think it means to serve Hashem with your whole life today, when we are not typically forced to give up our physical lives?*

**Deepest Connection**

The neshamah of a Jew originates from the deepest part of Hashem. Since the neshamah is a piece of Hashem, it is impossible for it to be disconnected from Him, even for a moment. Our neshamah is what empowers us with mesiras nefesh. Because we have a piece of Hashem within us, disconnecting ourselves from Him is like separating a part of ourselves.<sup>23</sup>



Living Lessons  
4

Did You Know?

The Big Three

There are three mitzvot for which we are commanded to give up our lives: Avodah Zarah (worshipping other gods), giluy arayot (certain forbidden relationships), and murder.<sup>24</sup> This is known as dying Al Kiddush Hashem—to sanctify Hashem’s name.

Painless Death

When a person is killed Al Kiddush Hashem, their neshamah is revealed, causing them to feel no pain at all!<sup>25</sup>

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

There are three special mitzvot for which we are commanded to give up our lives: Avodah Zarah (worshipping other gods), giluy arayot (certain forbidden relationships), and murder. Why do you think these three actions are so serious that we should choose to die rather than commit them?

Our Sages Say

Proper Intent

The Zohar teaches that if one thinks during Shema that they are willing to give up their lives for Hashem, it is regarded as if they have actually done so. In fact, some say that to fulfill the mitzvah of reciting Shema, one needs to think during Shema that they are sacrificing their lives for Hashem.<sup>26</sup>

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why do you think the Zohar teaches that simply thinking about your willingness to give up your life for Hashem is regarded as if you had actually done it?

שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד.  
~~~~~  
Listen B'nei Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.



Yossele the Thief

The Shpolar Zeide<sup>27</sup> used to befriend a group of thieves in his area. No one knew why he cared so much for them. Whenever one of them was caught and had to spend time in jail, the Tzadik would send him food and drink and take care of him.

One of these thieves was named Yossele.

Once, Yossele was caught stealing a large sum of money from the local church. The church decreed his punishment: death by burning.

“We will give you one way out,” the priest informed him, “if you convert to our religion, we will let you live.”

Yossele stubbornly refused. As he was about to be burned, the priest could not contain himself. “You are obviously not a pious person and have committed many sins in your lifetime. Why won’t you just do one more sin and convert?!”

“I may be a thief,” Yossel responded resolutely, “but I am a Jew and I will die a Jew!” and he jumped into the flames.

When it was all over, his body was handed over to the Jewish community for burial, and the simple gravestone in the old cemetery of Shpola records the date of his mesiras nefesh.

“You see,” the Shpolar Zeide would say, “it is not in vain that I speak in praise of my thieves!”<sup>28</sup>

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Yossele, the thief, wasn’t considered religious but still chose to die rather than convert. What do you think pushed Yossele to remain a Jew, even though he didn’t follow the Torah?



Thoughts Lead to Feelings

The second paragraph of Shema begins with את האהבה ה', which means “You shall love Hashem.” The Torah commands us to love Hashem. But how can someone be commanded to love something? Feelings are not something you can choose to have. Either you like something or you don’t. Imagine being told to start liking chocolate ice cream when you only like vanilla; you can’t simply change what you enjoy.

The truth is that it is possible to create new feelings for something. When a person thinks deeply about something, their thoughts can actually create new feelings towards it. For example, when someone learns a great deal about the health benefits of certain foods and how they impact people’s moods, they will naturally begin to crave those foods. Similarly, once they fully understand the harm that certain foods can cause, it becomes much easier to lose interest in them and even start feeling repulsed by them.

The same is true for feelings toward Hashem. When we think deeply about Hashem’s greatness, we can arouse emotions for Him. This is the message of the first line of the Shema—“Listen and understand, B’nei Yisrael, that Hashem is our G-d... therefore, you

should love Hashem.” When we contemplate the greatness of Hashem, how He created the entire world and everything in it, and yet cares specifically for us—He is our G-d—this fills us with profound appreciation and love for Him.

By contemplating Hashem in a manner that fosters love for Him, we fulfill the mitzvah of loving Hashem.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Can you think of an example in your own life where you started to like something more after learning about it?





Did You Know?

Six Constants

There are six mitzvos that every Jew must fulfill at all times. These are known as the שש מצוות תמידיות—the six constant mitzvos. One of these six is to love Hashem.

No Pause

The people of Yericho had the custom of not saying the phrase “baruch shem”; instead, they would start the paragraph “V’ahavta” immediately following “Shema.”<sup>29</sup> This was because they didn’t want anything to separate the conclusion of loving Hashem reached during Shema from the result of V’ahavta—loving Him.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

The “six constant mitzvos” include loving Hashem. Why do you think it’s so important that we should love Hashem all the time?



Pearls of Wisdom

Kiddush Hashem

Part of the mitzvah of loving Hashem is to inspire others to love Him. This can be achieved by consistently treating others with kindness and respect. When people see how well we behave, they will begin to love Hashem, who teaches us to act in this way.<sup>30</sup>

This is one of the meanings of making a Kiddush Hashem.



Our Sages Say

Serve with Love

לית פולחנא כפולחנא דרַחמֵינָא—There is no better way to serve Hashem than by loving Him.<sup>31</sup>

Loving Hashem is considered a service because it doesn’t happen automatically. To love Hashem, one must take the time to reflect on His greatness. Loving Hashem requires a commitment of time to develop.

However, serving Hashem with love is the best way to fulfill His commands, since when we love someone, we are naturally more eager to follow their instructions. When we serve Hashem with love, our mitzvos take on deeper meaning and are filled with passion.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

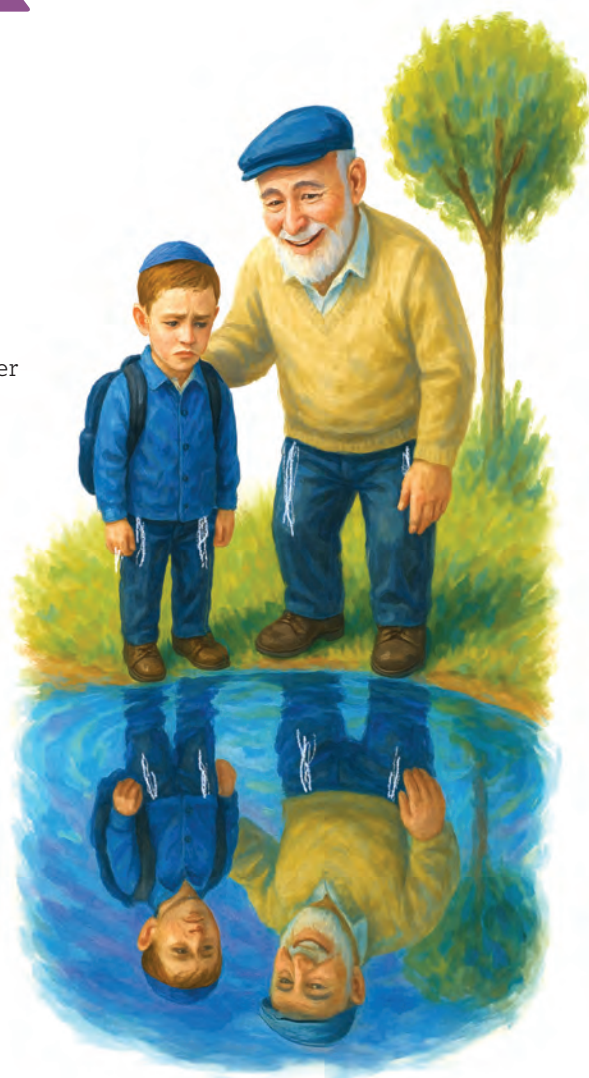
Loving Hashem is referred to as a “service.” Why do you think loving someone can be a way of serving them? How is serving Hashem with love different from just following rules without feeling anything?

Reflective Feelings

מה המים הללו, אדם נוהגן בכלי ומסתפל בהן והו נראין לה, כך לב האדם לאדם - Just as water reflects other things, so too do people’s feelings.<sup>32</sup>

People naturally reflect the emotions of those around them. When we’re in a room full of happy people, our mood lifts. Similarly, when someone is kind to us, we tend to feel kinder towards them in return.

When we contemplate Hashem’s love for us and recognize how much He always helps us, our hearts naturally feel love for Him. By thinking about Hashem’s love, our own love is ignited.



In Complete Control

During the Napoleonic War between France and Russia, the Alter Rebbe asked his chossid, Reb Moshe Meisel, to spy on the French army. One time, Reb Moshe was sitting in a meeting with some French officers when the door burst open, and Napoleon himself stormed into the room.

“Someone here is a spy!” he announced. His eyes scanned the room, and suddenly, they fell on R’ Moshe. “You are the spy,” said Napoleon as he placed his hand on R’ Moshe’s chest, checking to see if it had started beating faster.

R’ Moshe replied calmly, “His Excellency’s commanders have appointed me as their interpreter, your majesty.” Napoleon was satisfied that R’ Moshe was not a spy.

When R’ Moshe’s friends asked him how he was able to remain so calm, he would say, “My Rebbe taught me that the mind controls the heart.” Controlling our thoughts can control the way we feel.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

In the story, the Rebbe taught that “the mind controls the heart.” How did R’ Moshe use his thoughts to control his fear when he was accused of being a spy? Can you think of a time when changing your thoughts helped you feel differently about something?

The Coin Taken by Hashem

The Baal Shem Tov was once shown that a shepherd served Hashem better than he did. Desiring to meet this shepherd and comprehend his service to Hashem, the Baal Shem Tov decided to travel with his students to the shepherd’s town.

When they saw the shepherd, they hid to observe him. The shepherd was tending his flock when he looked up to heaven and said, “Hashem, I want to serve You, but I don’t know how.” I was orphaned and raised by non-Jews, so I don’t know how to serve You. All I have is a shepherd’s horn that I could blow for You.” He began blowing the horn with all his might and kept blowing until he ran out of breath and collapsed.

When he regained his strength, he got up and said, “Hashem, I want to daven to You, but I don’t know how.” All I can sing are shepherd songs.” He began to sing with all his might until he collapsed again. After picking himself back up, he turned again to Hashem and said, “I want to give You a present. The other day, the poretz, who owns these sheep, gave me a silver coin, and I want to give it to You.” He took the coin and threw it up into the air. The Baal Shem Tov, who was watching all of this, saw a hand come from heaven and take the coin.

The Baal Shem Tov turned to his students and said, “This simple shepherd taught me how to truly fulfill the mitzvah to love Hashem.”



Endnotes

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p>22. ייטב פנים הקפות י"ב<br/>                 23. תניא פרק י"ח-י"ט<br/>                 24. סנהדרין ע"ד עמוד א<br/>                 25. תשב"ץ קטן תט"ו<br/>                 26. זהר ג, קצ"ה ב, צעטל קטן ב<br/>                 R' Yehuda Leib of Shpola (c.1725 - 1811). 27<br/>                 Memoirs of Refael Volf of Skulen 28<br/>                 29. פסחים נ"ו עמוד א'<br/>                 30. יומא פ"ו עמוד א'<br/>                 31. זהר ב, נ"ח, ב'<br/>                 32. מדרש משלי כ"ז, י"ט</p> | <p>11. לקוטי שיחות חלק ד עמוד 1191<br/>                 12. בראשית רבה ח, א<br/>                 13. מנורת המאור פרק קמ"ה<br/>                 R' Dovid ibn Zimra 1479-1589 14<br/>                 15. שו"ת רדב"ז 1087<br/>                 16. תוספתא שביעות ג, ה<br/>                 17. תניא פרק כ"ב<br/>                 18. במדבר ה, י"ב<br/>                 19. סוטה ג עמוד א, מהרש"א<br/>                 20. ספרי במדבר קט"ו<br/>                 21. ברכות ס"א עמוד ב</p> | <p>1. שיחות השבוע 615<br/>                 2. נדה ל"ז עמוד א'<br/>                 3. מנחות ק"י עמוד א'<br/>                 3. מנחות ק"י עמוד א'<br/>                 4. מדרש תהלים י"ט<br/>                 5. דרך מצותיך ק"ז א ובכ"מ<br/>                 6. זהר ב, ס"ב ב'<br/>                 7. לקוטי שיחות חלק א עמוד 214<br/>                 8. אור התורה<br/>                 9. תניא פרק כ-כ"ה<br/>                 10. אבות ב, א</p> |
|---|---|--|

# 3

בְּכֹל דּוֹר וָדוֹר  
חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת  
עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יָצָא  
מִמִּצְרַיִם

(פסחים קט"ז, ב)



*In every generation one must look upon  
himself as if he personally had gone out  
of Egypt!*

(PESACHIM 116B)

LIVING LESSON 1  
*Inherently Free*

LIVING LESSON 2  
*Tried and True*

LIVING LESSON 3  
*Make it Personal*

LIVING LESSON 4  
*Powerful Children*

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

*In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt!*

## Inherently Free

The Hebrew word for Egypt is מצרים which comes from the root word מצר—a limiting boundary or border.

The world we live in constrains us. There are so many things that can restrict what we do. Many limiters are external things like friends, location, or possessions. The most restrictive powers though, are the ones inside of us, such as our fears, temptations and inhibitions. These can often discourage us from reaching our full potential and they limit what we achieve. They can trap us and make us feel enslaved to them.

When we are instructed to remember that Hashem took us out of Egypt, it is also a message to remember that Hashem has given us the ability to leave the constraints of our world. When Hashem redeemed us from "Mitzrayim" and gave us the Torah, he not only removed us from the physical geographic location, but also freed us from truly being a slave to any limiting elements in our life.

He gave us the power that we do not need to fall victim to our circumstances or yetzer hara. We are inherently free! We do not need to listen to the temptations in our heart, or the distracting thoughts in our mind. We do not need to restrict ourselves because of other people's opinions or expectations.

Although it may not always be easy, with Hashem's help, we have the ability to overcome any obstacle and not be limited by anything.

This freedom also allows us to taste infinity! How? Through doing mitzvos. Every mitzvah we do unites us with Hashem and pulls us out of our limited world. For that moment, we rise above and connect with the infinite G-d who created the universe and who is endlessly greater than the universe. Indeed, while we are just a speck of dust compared to the universe, the entire universe is not even like a speck of dust to Hashem.

Each time we do a mitzvah we are transformed from being just an insignificant blip in the universe, to becoming one with His infinite greatness. When Hashem gave us the Torah, He gave us access to Himself. Through giving us the Torah, Hashem has given each Jew a priceless gift, the key to the exit door of our world, and the key to the entrance of infinity.



### Did You Know?

#### Mini Exodus

Krias Shema discusses yetzias mitzrayim because every Krias Shema is really a mini yetzias mitzrayim. When we accept and recognize Hashem's oneness, our souls leave the constraints of our world and become one with Him, thereby being freed from the worldly limitations.



### Our Sages Say

#### Shortness of Breath

When Moshe came to announce the redemption, the Torah says the Jews couldn't listen because of their "shortness of breath." This wasn't just about being physically tired—it also refers to their "short" and closed mindset in which they couldn't imagine life being any different. Only after witnessing the miracles of the ten plagues did their minds open, and they truly desired to break free—not just from physical captivity, but from spiritual slavery as well.

#### Ultimate Freedom

There is no one as free as someone who learns Torah. When you learn Torah, you are connecting to the infinite and timeless Hashem, and are momentarily freed from all constraints of this world.



### Pearls of Wisdom

#### Constant Freedom

Leaving Mitzrayim isn't a one-time event—it's a constant process. The challenges and limits you broke through yesterday won't be your main struggle forever; once you grow past them, new ones take their place. The work of leaving Mitzrayim is never finished, because every new level brings new obstacles to break through.



### I'm Free!

**I**t was late at night, and the farbrengen was still going strong. The participants were inspired and elevated through the stories, nigunnim, divrei Torah and l'chaims. After a while, the l'chaims ran out and they sent a messenger to try and find some more. But in the dead of the cold Moscow night, where could he get his hands on a bottle of mashke?

While searching for a store that might be open at that late hour, the chossid encountered a drunkard sitting on a bench, clutching a bottle of mashke. The chossid approached him and asked if he can buy it. The drunk stubbornly refused. The chossid offered more and more money, but all his offers were rebuffed.

"You don't understand," said the drunkard. "If you give me even 100 rubles for the bottle, all I will have is that 100 rubles. But with this bottle, I feel like the whole Moscow is mine and I can do whatever I want!"

The chossid returned to the farbrengen empty-handed, but with a fresh lesson that kept the farbrengen going strong for many more hours: when we connect with Hashem, for those few moments we raise ourselves above the limitations of the world, and the whole world is insignificant. We are no longer subject to its pettiness, and are truly free, unbound and infinite for those few precious moments.

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

*In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt!*

## Tried and True

The galus is long and hard. B'nei Yisrael have been persecuted and harassed for so long. Each generation brings new haters with an ancient hatred. It can seem daunting and too much to bear.

When things are tough, remember that Hashem is in charge of the world and orchestrates every single thing that happens. Since Hashem is the Creator, constantly willing everything into existence, nothing and nobody can possibly be more powerful than Hashem.

B'nei Yisrael were captive in the strongest super-power nation of the time. It felt as if there was no way out. Yet, Hashem took us out. Hashem demolished the Egyptians in a way that no one thought possible.

This also applies on a personal level. Life is a battle. Every day, we are given many challenges.

Every day, we must fight to overcome every one of these challenges. Our challenges can be as big as having a serious sickness chas v'shalom, or as small as learning how to tie our shoelaces. But, with the help of Hashem, every single one of our battles, big or small, can be won.

As we get older, our challenges change. They may become even more difficult than the ones we had before. They also may be very different from other people's challenges. Remember, nothing is too big or hard for Hashem.

Reminding ourselves about yetzias Mitzrayim helps to keep this important fact in our mind and heart: No matter how bleak the situation is, Hashem has done bigger and greater things before, so He can certainly help in this situation! With the help of Hashem, we can overcome all our challenges.



### Our Sages Say

#### The Seder Night

Many mitzvos, including most of our holidays and the entire night of the seder, focus on remembering the miracles in Mitzrayim. The Torah emphasizes these miracles again and again because understanding how Hashem took us out of Egypt—and how He runs the world—strengthens our faith in Him.

Remembering these acts also helps us stand strong against anyone who denies Hashem, by recalling the wonders He has performed.

That's why remembering them is such an important and ongoing mitzvah.



### Did You Know?

#### We Can do it Again

The mitzvah not to eat the gid hanasheh (sciatic nerve) of an animal reminds us of Ya'akov's victory over Eisav's malach. The mitzvah of gid hanasheh is like a trophy that we keep as proof of our big win. Each time we remove an animal's gid hanasheh, we are reminded that just as Ya'akov won that battle, so, too, we will win our battles. No matter how often the enemies of B'nei Yisrael try to destroy us, and no matter how bad things seem, Hashem will always help us win.

#### Moshe's Final Address

In his final speech to the Jewish people, Moshe told us not to be afraid to face the nations in Eretz Yisrael. He said we could stay strong by remembering the miracles Hashem did for us in Mitzrayim. Moshe chose his final speech to us to explain a simple truth: when we remember how Hashem helped us in the past, we can face any challenge with courage and confidence.



## The Drunkard's Seder

One year, after R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov finished his Pesach Seder, he was told something shocking from Heaven: "The most beloved Seder this year wasn't yours — it was Moshe'le the water carrier's."

The Rebbe called Moshe'le and asked him what had happened at his Seder. Moshe'le was a poor, simple drunkard. The night before Pesach, he drank too much and passed out. When Seder night came, his wife kept waking him, but he couldn't get up.

Finally, she said, "Every Jewish home is having a Seder except ours. The children are about to fall asleep. They're waiting for you."

That broke him. He gathered his children and told them the Pesach story in his own words — from creation, to the Avos and Imahos, to slavery in Egypt, and how G-d took us out. Then he said, "My sweet children, we are still in exile today. But the same G-d who took us out of Egypt is still alive and present—and very soon He will take us out of this exile too."

He then turned to G-d and whispered, "Father in Heaven, thank You for taking us out of Egypt. Please take us out of this exile very soon."

He ate the matzah, drank the four cups, and fell asleep.

When R' Levi Yitzchak heard the story, he cried and said, "I wish just once in my life I could teach my children—and speak to Hashem—with that kind of pure heart."

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם.

*In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt!*

## Make it Personal

In order to have a strong relationship with Hashem, we must **connect** to the knowledge that we learn about in the Torah. You can know a lot of Torah, but if you view it as abstract information, you will not be moved. In contrast, if you learn even just a little bit, but think about it and make it real and relevant, what you care about will change, what excites you will change, your emotions will change, and most importantly, you, yourself, will change.

This mental process of connecting the concept to your personal life is called Daas. It is how you find ways to make idea relevant and real, using your knowledge to "give birth" to emotion.

Imagine a person who is fascinated by lions. He knows and understands why lions are dangerous, and yet he does not live in a state of constant fear. However, should he one day find out that there is a lion on the loose roaming his neighborhood, he would undoubtedly be terrified. Why? It is possible to know a lot, but as long as your knowledge is theoretical, it will not affect your emotions. Emotions only get involved when your knowledge becomes relevant to your life.

When learning about the things Hashem does for B'nei Yisrael, contemplate the fact that this means you as well.

Imagine a great and powerful king. Now imagine this king leaves his palace together with his royal entourage and travels to the outskirts of town. They finally stop in front of the town's garbage dump. He stoops to the floor and begins to speak to a homeless man who is sitting in the filth. He leads the poor man into his carriage, bringing him inside the royal palace and into his private chamber—a place that no one, not even the highest officials are allowed to enter. There, he kisses and embraces him.

Like a powerful king who lowers himself to embrace a dirty peasant, Hashem lowers Himself to be involved in our lives. He, Himself, descended into Mitzrayim, the lowliest country in the world, and took us out of there. He gave us His Torah and mitzvos so that we can be close to Him. On an individual level, He disregards the garbage we are involved in. He is willing to endure the stench of our pettiness. He lowers Himself to our level and kisses and embraces us.

Hashem took our forefathers out of Egypt but He also takes **us** out!



Our Sages Say

### The Praying Thief

The Gemara<sup>1</sup> talks of the strange phenomenon that a thief might daven to Hashem that his thievery should be successful. How is that possible? If he believes in Hashem, why would he blatantly go against His will?

The thief is missing daas. He knows that Hashem exists and therefore davens to Him. But because he is missing daas; Hashem is not enough of a reality to him to prevent him from sinning.

### New Decree

Torah should be seen as fresh and new every day; like a new decree, which everyone runs to read.<sup>2</sup>

Even though the Torah was given thousands of years ago, we should think of it as if it's being given to us right now. Everything in the Torah can be practical and relevant for our lives today—not just something from the past.<sup>3</sup>



Word Power

### Daas

Daas means taking an idea and making it personal so it actually affects you. You can understand something really well, but if you don't connect to it, it won't change what you do—like knowing soda has tons of sugar but still drinking it. If you actually saw the sugar being poured in, and saw what it does to your body's systems, you'd probably think twice before drinking it.

Daas is when what you know becomes real to you, and that's why remembering Mitzrayim isn't just about knowing the story, but feeling it in a personal, practical way.



**Am I a Circle?**

The story is told about a famous philosopher who taught ethics and morals, who was caught doing something very immoral.

“How can you teach about morals and then do something so immoral?” his students asked him in astonishment.

“I also teach geometry. Does that mean I am a circle?” he responded.

This philosopher understood very well what being moral meant, but he never allowed those ideas to change him. When we learn Torah, by contrast, it is imperative that we not only understand the ideas but allow them to change us as well.

**Just a Drop**

Some chassidim were once hitching a ride in the back of a wagon carrying barrels of mashke (liquor). While traveling in the freezing winter, they pondered the irony of being surrounded by drinks that could easily warm them up, but they still remained freezing cold.

“This teaches us an important lesson,” one of the chassidim realized. “A person can be surrounded by the warm, invigorating ideas of Torah and chassidus. But as long as you don’t actually bring it inside you, you will remain completely cold. Whereas if you would swallow even just a tiny drop, letting it enter deep inside you, you would be warmed to the core!”



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*In every generation one must look upon himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt!*

**Powerful Children**

Chazal teach that we shouldn’t just remember leaving Mitzrayim—we should see ourselves as if we personally walked out. That means paying attention to how the Jews left and what their behavior teaches us about how to live today.

One powerful detail stands out: everyone prepared for Yetzias Mitzrayim, but the children were especially ready. At Krias Yam Suf, it was the children who recognized Hashem first—the children who were born in Mitzrayim recognized Hashem earlier and more clearly than the adults.

Think about that. These children were born into slavery and darkness, yet their simple, pure faith, even in the hardest times, gave them the clarity to see Hashem before the adults did.

This carries a huge message for today. Jewish children have a power adults often don’t. A child can believe deeply, without cynicism or excuses. When a child knows what’s right and lives by it, they don’t get pulled down by their surroundings—instead, they lift others up. Their faith doesn’t just protect them; it influences and inspires everyone around them.

This lesson is more relevant now than ever. When Jewish children stand strong in their Torah values, they don’t just follow the path—they lead it. They can show adults the

right direction and inspire people far older than themselves.

And just like in Mitzrayim, in this final galus and coming geulah, it will be the faith of Jewish children that recognizes Hashem first and helps the adults see Him too. Never underestimate the power you have. Your influence is real—and it’s stronger than you think.

So, the next time you have a chance to show another Jew how to live more Jewishly—even someone much older—remember this: throughout history, Jewish children have been the ones who strengthened everyone else’s faith, and showed the way forward. ♦



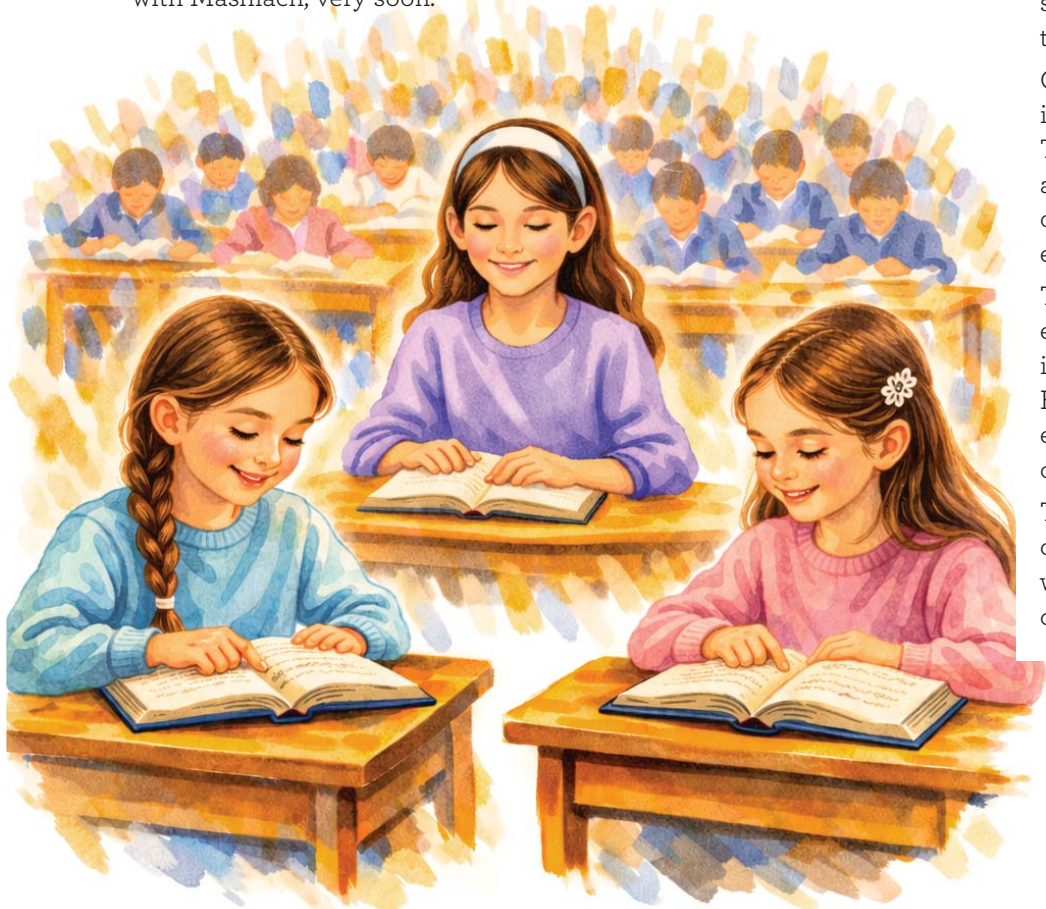
**Did You Know?**

**Power of Innocence**

During Purim, the Jewish people faced a grave threat of destruction from Haman's decree. Mordechai understood that the only way to change the Jews' fate was through sincere prayer and Torah study. He gathered thousands of Jewish children, whose hearts were pure and voices free from doubt, to learn and daven to Hashem. It was the innocence and clarity of their prayers that rose straight to Heaven, and only then did Hashem revoke the decree, replacing it with overwhelming joy. This teaches us that children's faith and purity are not just admirable—they can influence the destiny of an entire nation.

**A Korban for Children**

Before Yetzias Mitzrayim, the main way B'nei Yisrael prepared for geulah was by bringing the Korban Pesach. What's special is that children were included in this mitzvah. They weren't on the sidelines—they were able to join the groups who brought the korban and take part in the mitzvah themselves. Today, we can't bring korbanos, but we can still give something to Hashem. You can give your time, your energy, and whatever you have by using them for Torah and mitzvos, and by helping other Jews do the same. Every time you give something of yourself to Hashem, you're helping move the world closer to the true and complete geulah with Mashiach, very soon.



**Word Power**

נער

The Hebrew word for youth, נער, comes from a root that means "to shake off." This teaches us something remarkable: young people have the power to shake the world. Their energy, passion, and clarity can move things in ways adults often cannot.

**Our Sages Say**

**From the Mouths of Children**

Dovid Hamelech writes in Tehillim, "From the mouths of little children and babies You have established strength, to stop Your enemies and defeat those who hate You." Chazal say that when pure, innocent children daven or learn Torah, their actions produce a power so great that it can overcome even the strongest enemies of the Jewish people. The Gemara emphasizes this even more: "Reish Lakish said in the name of R' Yehudah Hanassi: The world continues to exist only because of the breath of children learning Torah." This teaches us that the youth create a profound impact on the world—far beyond what adults can sometimes achieve!

**Our Sages Say**

**See-Through Womb**

When B'nei Yisrael sang the Shirah after crossing the Yam Suf, even the tiniest children joined in! Babies and infants still nursing "saw" Hashem and joined the song. Amazingly, even those still in their mother's womb were able to see Hashem—their mother's womb became like a clear crystal, allowing the unborn children to recognize and praise Him.

**Change the World**

The most influential person in history was Avraham Avinu—the first to teach the world that there is one G-d. Today, millions of people believe in this idea, all tracing it back to Avraham. What makes this even more amazing is that his discovery of Hashem and his impact on the world began when he was just a child. Chazal teach that starting at only three years old, Avraham started to recognize Hashem and began challenging the beliefs of his time. From such a young age, he started a revolution that changed the world forever! Avraham's story teaches us that you don't have to be old or powerful to make a difference—even a child can influence the entire world more than anyone else in their generation.

**Did You Know?**

**Guarantors**

When the Jewish people were about to receive the Torah, Hashem asked them to provide someone to guarantee that it would be faithfully observed for generations to come. They first suggested the Avos, but Hashem declined. Next, they offered the Nevi'im, and again, Hashem refused. Finally, they said, "Let our children be the guarantors." Hashem replied, "Now these are worthy guarantors. Because of them, I will give you the Torah." Children hold extraordinary power. Their purity, faith, and connection to Hashem are so strong that only they can ensure the continuation of Torah and mitzvos!



**Where Leaders Look for Hope**

When Mordechai Hatzaddik learned of Haman's terrible plan to destroy the Jewish people, he felt a heavy weight on his heart. He went to check on the children learning in the school, curious about what they were studying. He approached the first children he saw leaving school and asked them what they learned that day. The first boy recited confidently, "Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes." The second boy added, "You can plan your schemes, but they will fail; your plots will not succeed, for G-d is with us." The third boy said calmly, "From beginning to end, I am with you. I have made you, I will carry you, I will sustain and deliver you."

Hearing these words, Mordechai's face lit up with joy, taking comfort from the lessons of the children. Haman, noticing his smile, asked sharply, "Why are you so happy?" Mordechai answered, "Because of the glad news these children brought me — they remind me that I need not fear your evil plot. G-d is with us, and nothing can stop His plan."



# 4

כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ לָהֶם חֵלֶק  
לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְעַמּוֹת כָּל  
צְדִיקִים, לְעוֹלָם יִירְשׁוּ אֶרֶץ;  
נֵצֶר מִטְעֵי, מִמַּעֲשֵׂה יָדַי לְהִתְפָּאֵר

(סנהדרין צ עמוד א)



*Every Jew has a share in the world-to-come, as it states, “And your people are all tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of my hands, in which I take great pride.*

(SANHEDRIN 90A)

LIVING LESSON 1

*Feel Proud*

LIVING LESSON 2

*Everlasting Connection*

LIVING LESSON 3

*Our Place in Olam Habah*

LIVING LESSON 4

*Teshuvah and Moshiach*

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמך כלם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ; נצח מטעי, מעשה ידי להתפאר.

*Every Jew has a share in the world-to-come, as it states, "And your people are all tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of*

## Feel Proud

When a parent tells their child how happy they are with them, it fills the child with pride; they feel special and know they mean a lot to their parents. Bringing joy to our parents brings us joy.

The same is true for our Father, Hashem. When Hashem looks at B'nei Yisrael, He is filled with pride. Hashem takes tremendous nachas from our actions, feeling proud to call us "the

work of His hands." Just as a parent might look at their successful child with delight, bragging to others about their child's achievements, Hashem is happy to call us His children.

Knowing how happy we make Hashem fills us with joy. Of course, we are proud to be Jews. Even Hashem is proud of us!

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*Why does Hashem want us to feel proud to be Jewish?*



### Did You Know?

#### His People

Hashem refers to B'nei Yisrael as "Am Hashem," the nation of Hashem. You only call someone by your name if you are truly proud of them and wish to be associated with them.<sup>3</sup> Hashem is proud to be associated with us, His nation. We should also be proud to carry His name.

#### Purim Miracle

One reason B'nei Yisrael were saved from Haman during the Purim story was because of Mordechai's Jewish pride. Mordechai and his followers did not bow to Haman or acknowledge anything that contradicted their identity as Jews.

When we take pride in being Jewish and stand strong in our beliefs, nothing can destroy us.<sup>4</sup>



### Pearls of Wisdom

#### Humble Mountain

The Torah was given on Har Sinai because it was the smallest and most humble mountain, teaching that the Torah must be learned with humility.<sup>5</sup>

However, if the message is humility, why deliver the Torah on a mountain at all? Shouldn't it be given in a valley? Isn't that much lower and humbler even than a small mountain?

In reality, when serving Hashem, we need to balance two opposing ideas: we must feel humble about our own accomplishments, while also feeling proud and strong that we are Jews and we represent Hashem. This message is represented by a low mountain—proud yet humble.<sup>6</sup>

#### Encouraging Pride

Our pride in being Hashem's child can inspire us to serve Hashem better. When we reflect on how special we are, being chosen and loved by Hashem, we feel a desire to reciprocate His love by going the extra mile in observing the Torah and performing mitzvos.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*How do we balance feeling proud and humble at the same time?*

*How can we show that we are proud of being part of Hashem's nation?*



### Our Sages Say

#### Bold

הוי עז כנמר—Be bold like a leopard.<sup>1</sup>

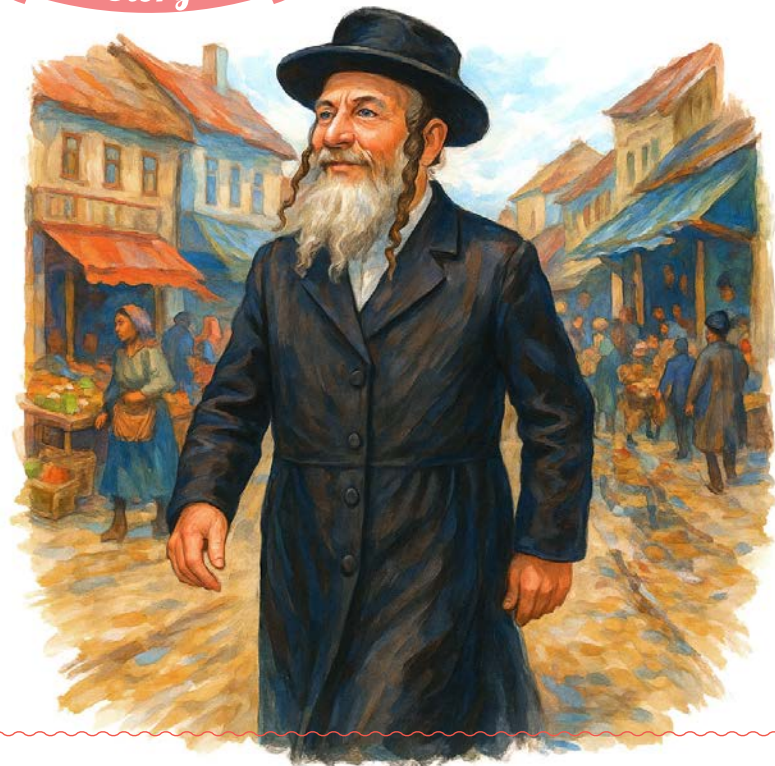
The Mishnah teaches us to serve Hashem with boldness. This means we do things without feeling embarrassed.<sup>2</sup> When we take pride in being Jewish, we will follow Hashem's wishes and remain unconcerned about what other people think.

Story

Useful Pride

Although pride can sometimes be misused, when harnessed to serve Hashem, it can become a powerful tool. R' Mordechai Liepler was a devoted chassid of the Alter Rebbe.

Whenever he felt an urge to commit an aveirah, he would channel his pride to silence the yetzer hara. "Do you really think," he would challenge his yetzer hara, "that such a great chassid of the Alter Rebbe, who is both wealthy and wise, would commit an aveirah? It isn't appropriate for someone of my stature!"<sup>9</sup>



כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמד כלם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ; נצר מטעי, מעשה ידי להתפאר.

Every Jew has a share in the world-to-come, as it states, "And your people are all tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of my hands, in which I take great pride."

Everlasting Connection

The Mishnah teaches that every Jew has a portion in Olam Habah, the World to Come. How can every Jew merit Olam Habah? There are many Jews who do not behave as they should.

In truth, every Jew is full of mitzvos, just as a pomegranate is full of seeds. Even someone who doesn't regularly observe Torah and mitzvos fulfills hundreds of mitzvos in their lifetime. Hashem is beyond time and space and is not limited by anything. When a person connects to Hashem through a mitzvah, they

connect to something that has no limitations. Therefore, the mitzvos they've performed, and the connections they achieved in the past earn them a place in Olam Habah.

The mitzvos we perform are not limited by anything. Since Hashem is unlimited, the mitzvos He commands us are also limitless. Therefore, once the mitzvah is performed and a connection is created with Hashem, to Hashem it remains forever.

The power of mitzvos is tremendous! Even the smallest mitzvah retains its connection with Hashem forever.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why does the Torah say that all B'nai Yisroel are considered righteous? Even if someone makes a mistake after doing a mitzvah, why does the mitzvah still matter?

Word Power

Don't Bow

The words לעג (to make fun) and עגל (calf) consist of the same letters. Just as you would never bow to a golden calf, you should never "bow" or change your ways because of bad people who laugh at you.<sup>7</sup>

Humility at Home

מה תצעק אלי—before the splitting of the sea, Hashem asked Moshe, "Why do you call out to me?"

The word מה is also a way to refer to something small and insignificant. Accordingly, Hashem was telling Moshe, "When they call to me, they can be humble (מה)." However, when going out to accomplish my Mission in the world they have to go with pride and confidence.<sup>8</sup>

Extra Food for Thought

How can Jewish pride help us in our daily lives?

Can you share a story of someone who showed Jewish pride, even when it was difficult?



**Word Power**

**In the Words**

The word אנכי stands for אנא נפשי כתבית יהבית, which can be translated as, “I [Hashem] wrote myself and gave myself [in the Torah].”

This means that Hashem’s essence is found in the words of the Torah and the mitzvos. Just as Hashem is everlasting, so too is even the smallest mitzvah and any bit of Torah that we learn everlasting.<sup>13</sup>

**Principle of Faith**

One of the thirteen principles of faith is, “הַתּוֹרָה לֹא תֵהֵא מְחֻלַּפֶת—The Torah will never change.”

On a basic level, this means that no one can add to the words of the Torah or the number of mitzvos. More deeply, it can be understood that the Torah and mitzvos we perform will never change, because each connection we make lasts forever.<sup>14</sup>

**Did You Know?**

**Four Steps**

Nevuchadnezzar walked four steps in honor of Hashem’s words to the Navi. For this small act of respect, Hashem rewarded him by making his family kings for the next three generations.<sup>15</sup>

If such a small act by such a wicked person can generate such a reward, how great must the reward be for the constant mitzvos B’nei Yisrael perform!<sup>16</sup>

**Pearls of Wisdom**

**One Mitzvah**

Even a single mitzvah creates a connection with Hashem that transcends limitations and lasts forever. Therefore, helping and encouraging a fellow Jew to perform even one mitzvah is immensely powerful. Even if they may never engage in another mitzvah and you may never see them again, that one action is incredibly valuable and connects that person to Hashem forever!<sup>12</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*How does doing a mitzvah connect us to something that lasts forever?*

**Our Sages Say**

**The Best Reward**

ששכר מצוה, מצוה - The reward for a mitzva, is a mitzva.<sup>10</sup>

The reward for doing a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself, because when we perform mitzvos, they become connected to Hashem and unlimited. The power to infuse a small action with the unlimited power of Hashem is a reward in itself.<sup>11</sup>



**Story**

**Seeing the Future**

When R’ Gershon Kitover lived in Tzfas, he became friends with the Sefardi Rov of the city. One Friday, R’ Gershon confided in the Rov that he didn’t have money for Shabbos and needed to borrow some.

Later that day, as they were learning together, R’ Gershon’s wallet fell out of his pocket. The Rov bent down, picked up the wallet, and was about to return it to R’ Gershon when he noticed it was full of coins.

The Rov became very upset. “Why did you lie to me?” he asked R’ Gershon. “You told me that you didn’t have any money.”

“I did not lie to you,” protested R’ Gershon.

“Yes, you did,” retorted the Rov.

As their argument escalated, the Rov went up to the Aron Kodesh and swore that R’ Gershon lied.

When R’ Gershon heard this, he pronounced a Cherem on the Rov. The Rov went home and recounted what had happened. People then came to R’ Gershon, and he showed them that there were coins in his wallet, but they

were Russian coins that were worthless in Eretz Yisrael.

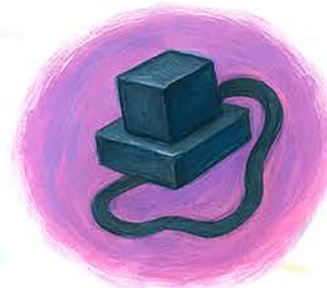
Some time later, R’ Gershon Kitover received a letter from the Baal Shem Tov. “I saw,” it read, “that in a certain Hechal in Shamyim, they were judging you; they wanted to sentence you to death, Chas Veshalom, because of your disrespect to the Rov. I wanted to enter the Hechal to defend you, but they closed the doors, and I wasn’t able to get in. However, they ended up acquitting you, because you were defending Hashem’s honor. Therefore, I’m asking that you don’t be so tough in the future.”

When R’ Gershon looked at the date on the letter, he realized that the Baal Shem Tov wrote it before the story even happened!<sup>17</sup>

R’ Gershon was judged before the story happened because Shamayim, is a limitless place not bound by time.<sup>18</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What does the story of R’ Gershon Kitover teach us about how Hashem sees things, even before they happen?*



## Story

## The Simple Bookbinder

**R**' Elimelech of Lizhensk was once very ill and fell unconscious. After recovering, he held a grand Seudas Hoda'ah.

At the Seudah, one of the older chassidim asked R' Mailich, "Surely while the Rebbe was unconscious his neshamah was in Gan Eden. Can the Rebbe share what he saw there?"

The Rebbe replied that he couldn't share everything, but he would reveal one important thing he had seen. He said:

"I was walking in Gan Eden and guess who I saw? I saw Mottel the book binder. I thought to myself, what is Mottel doing here, so high in Gan Eden? Mottel was most certainly a Yerei Shamaim and an honest Jew, but he was a very simple man and didn't learn a lot of Torah.

I walked up to him and asked, 'R' Mottel how did you end up in such a special place in Gan Eden?'

'Let me tell you what happened,' R' Mottel began. 'When I came up to Heaven, they began to ask me questions.'

"Did you learn Torah?"

"I had to tell them that I never really got a chance to learn, since we were poor, I had to help support my family. Besides, I was not all that smart to begin with. As soon as I was old enough, I learned how to bind books.

"They then began to weigh all of my mitzvos, and the malachim pushed the scale down, saying that this was because I did all the mitzvos with so much kavanah. But then, other malachim began to place all of my aveiros on the other side of the scale. They were not very big; most of them I committed because I didn't know any better. However, they kept bringing more and more until they outweighed the mitzvos. "I became very scared, and two angry malachim came to my side to take me to the place where they wash away a neshamah's aveiros. "Then suddenly, a malach came in leading a line of wagons, and began to speak:

"I am the sheimos malach. I go around to all the shuls and yeshivos to see what the sefarim look like. When I see that a sefer has a crumpled page or

a tattered cover, it makes me happy because I know that the B'nei Yisrael are using the sefarim. However, if I see a sefer that is so worn out that it can't be used anymore, it makes me very sad, because a sefer has to be treated with respect."

"Over the years, I got to know Mottel very well. When Mottel became a bookbinder, not only would he make sure that any sefer brought to him was fixed in the best way, but sometimes he would even go to the shul and fix the sefarim without telling anyone. Therefore, I think it is only right that we put all the sefarim he fixed on the scale."

"The Bais Din agreed and ordered the two malachim to unload the wagons onto the scale. All the sefarim far outweighed the aveiros, and they sent me straight here.

"Believe me, Rebbe,' Reb Mottel concluded, 'I was more surprised than you are that they sent me to such a high place in Gan Eden.'"

"You see," R' Elimelech told the Chassidim, "even the smallest Mitzva, like fixing a Siddur, connects us to Hashem, and He never fails to reward us for it."<sup>19</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What can we learn from the story about the importance of even the seemingly smallest mitzvos?*

כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמך כלם צדיקים, לעולם ירשו ארץ;  
נצור מטעי, מעשה ידי להתפאר.

*Every Jew has a share in the world-to-come, as it states, "And your people are all tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of my hands, in which I take great pride.*

## Our Place in Olam Habah

All neshamos will merit Olam Habah. However, the place in Olam Habah that each neshamah earns depends on the Torah and mitzvos performed by that neshamah in this world. The neshamos of all the greatest tzaddikim, such as the Avos and Moshe Rabeinu, will be present in Olam Habah. A neshamah that dedicates time to serving Hashem will have the privilege of sitting with these tzaddikim. Imagine the incredible opportunity to be near the greatest tzaddikim!

Olam Habah is the ultimate reward for the Torah and mitzvos we perform in this world. It is an eternal reward that never ends. Therefore, let us seize every moment during our time on Earth to serve Hashem. It is only here and now that we can fulfill Torah and mitzvos—after the neshamah passes away, it is too late to make changes. Don't miss this incredible opportunity!





**Our Sages Say**

**Gan Eden Tour**

The midrash teaches that before a neshamah descends to this world, a malach takes it on a tour of the tzaddikim in Gan Eden. The malach shows the neshamah the tzaddikim sitting there with crowns on their heads and explains to the neshamah that these neshamos spent their time on Earth learning Torah and observing the mitzvos. It is for this reason that they received such a reward in Gan Eden.<sup>20</sup>

**Here and Now**

יפה שעה אחת בתשובה ומעשים טובים בעולם הזה, מכל חיי העולם הבא – One moment of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is better than all of Olam Haba.<sup>21</sup>

Only in this world do your actions make a difference and earn you a place in Olam Habah. After the neshamah passes away, no teshuvah or good deed can help improve its reward.<sup>22</sup>

Take full advantage of your chance!

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why is doing good now so important?*

**Extra Food for Thought**

Once our soul leaves, we can't change what we did. How can remembering this help us make better choices in the present?

**Pearls of Wisdom**

**See Hashem**

The reward of tzaddikim in Olam Habah is to “enjoy the light of the Shechinah.”<sup>25</sup> This means that the tzaddikim will be very refined and able to understand the deepest parts of Hashem in the highest way possible.<sup>26</sup> Understanding Hashem is the ultimate pleasure one can experience.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What does “enjoying the light of the Shechinah” mean?*

**Did You Know?**

**Soul Clothes**

After a neshamah leaves the body, the actions it performed while on Earth become its clothing. Mitzvos serve as beautiful garments for the neshamah, allowing it to enter and enjoy the highest levels of Hashem's radiance. Aveiros, however become its dirty and soiled clothes.<sup>23</sup>

**Eisav's Taalis**

When Mashiach comes, Eisav will put on a tallis and try to sit with the tzaddikim in Gan Eden, but Hashem will remove him from there.<sup>24</sup> Only those who truly deserve it will be able to sit with all the Tzaddikim.



**Word Power**

**להנחיל אהבי יש ואצרתיהם אמלא – I have what to give those who love Me, and I will fill their storehouses.**<sup>27</sup>

The gematria of the word יש is 310. The passuk can be understood as, “I will give those who love Me a reward 310 times greater than all the pleasures of the world.”<sup>28</sup>

**שובע שמחות את פניך – I am satisfied with happiness in Your presence.**<sup>29</sup>

The word שובע (satisfied) can also be interpreted as שבע, meaning seven. Therefore, the passuk can be translated as, “There are seven groups in your presence.”<sup>30</sup> Based on the actions of the neshamah in this world, it earns a place in one of the seven groups before Hashem.





## The Tailor's Gan Eden

Once, the Chozeh of Lublin needed funds to marry off a poor orphan. He promised that anyone who contributed could request any brachah they desired. A humble tailor immediately reached into his wallet and gave the Chozeh all the money he had.

“What do you want to ask for?” the Chozeh asked him.

The man replied, “I want to be next to you in Gan Eden.”

The Chozeh was surprised. “I didn’t mean something so great,” he said.

“But you promised anything I want,” the man protested. “This is what I want.”

The Chozeh responded, “You are right; I will grant your request, but on the condition that you go into galus for ten years and then return to me.”

As the years of wandering took their toll, the man became weaker and weaker. By the end of ten years, he found himself unable to walk. He sat down by the side of the road and begged people for a ride to Lublin. Finally, the Sar Sholom, the first Rebbe of Belz, who was on his way to the Chozeh, brought him into his wagon and took him to Lublin. When they arrived, R’ Sholom informed the Chozeh of who had come with him. The Chozeh gave the Sar Sholom a sefer written in his holy handwriting and told him to learn it with the simple Jew.

The Sar Sholom began to study with the simple man, starting from the basics. He made significant progress in his learning, becoming proficient not only in the revealed parts of the Torah but also in Kabbalah.

When the tailor passed away, the Chevrah Kaddisha brought him to the Chozeh’s house. The Chozeh came out, placed his hands on the aron, and said: “Don’t worry, you’re my partner, and you’ll be in my part of Gan Eden.”<sup>31</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

What does the story of the tailor teach us about the value of hard work?



כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר: ועמדו כלם צדיקים, לעולם יירשו ארץ; נצור מטעי, מעשה ידי להתפאר

Every Jew has a share in the world-to-come, as it states, “And your people are all tzadikim, they shall inherit the land forever. They are the branch of My planting, the work of my hands, in which I take great pride.”

## Teshuvah and Moshiach

Olam Habah in this context refers to the world of tehiyas hameisim—the resurrection of the dead when Mashiach comes. At that time, the world will be entirely elevated and holy, and Hashem’s presence will be revealed everywhere.

Every Jew will merit tehiyas hameisim and will be able to experience the world of Mashiach. This is because every Jew has a neshamah, which is a part of Hashem that lasts forever. Furthermore, we are מעשי ידי, Hashem’s handiwork. Everything Hashem creates lasts forever.

Even individuals who commit the gravest aveiros cannot change or ruin their neshamah. The neshamah remains pure, regardless of the circumstances. Occasionally, a person’s aveiros may cover the purity of the neshamah, but the neshamah itself cannot be destroyed. When Mashiach arrives and the neshamah is unveiled, the neshamah of every Jew will be instantly revealed, freeing everyone from aveiros. Therefore, every Jew will merit the reward of tehiyas hameisim.

Even today, we can reveal our neshamah through the process of teshuvah. Teshuvah is the return of the neshamah to Hashem, as it was before the aveirah, by uncovering the neshamah and removing the layers of aveiros that conceal it.

When we recognize how holy and pure every Jew is, we will regard all of B’nei Yisrael with love and respect, helping everyone uncover this special connection they have with Hashem.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**  
How do aveiros cover up our neshamah?  
How does doing teshuvah help our neshamah shine?



**Word Power**

**Return Hashem**

The word תשובה can be read as ה תשוב, meaning “to return the letter Hay of Hashem’s name to Him.” The neshamah is a part of Hashem. Therefore, whenever a person commits an aveirah, they pull a part of Hashem down with them. Teshuvah not only helps fix the individual who committed the aveirah but also “fixes” Hashem by freeing the neshamah from its captivity in the kelipos of the world.<sup>34</sup>

**Never Too Late**

נְדָח מִקְּנֵי נֶדָח לִבְלֹתֵי יְדָח מִקְּנֵי נֶדָח—this means that the banished one shouldn’t be pushed away from Hashem. This passuk conveys a message to those who have committed aveiros: no one is pushed away from Hashem, regardless of how far they may have strayed from Him. Anyone, at any time, can return to Hashem by revealing their neshamah.<sup>35</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Even if we make mistakes, why does Hashem never push us away?*



**Our Sages Say**

**Good Smelling**

אֱלוֹ וְאֱלוֹ עֲתִידִין שְׂתִתְּנוּ רִיחַ – Both [Tzadikim and Reshaim] will give off a nice smell [when Mashiach comes].<sup>37</sup>

When Mashiach comes, even those who were once reshaim will become holy and good like tzaddikim. This is because, when Mashiach arrives, everyone’s pure connection with Hashem will be revealed.

**Teshuvah Brings Geulah**

גְּדוּלָה תְּשׁוּבָה שְׂמַקְרֶבֶת אֶת הַגְּאוּלָּה – Great is teshuvah, which brings the geulah closer.<sup>38</sup>

Helping someone do teshuvah brings Mashiach closer. When we assist another Jew in connecting to Hashem, we are not only helping them but also every Jew, as this act hastens the arrival of Mashiach.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What does it mean that in the future, everyone will be holy and good?*

**Did You Know?**

**In One Moment**

Teshuvah is the act of revealing the neshamah by choosing to do only what Hashem desires. This decision can happen in an instant. Teshuvah doesn’t have to be challenging; it can be accomplished in a single moment and is possible for everyone.<sup>36</sup>



**Pearls of Wisdom**

**Hashem’s Promise**

Hashem guarantees that before Mashiach comes, every Jew will do teshuvah.<sup>32</sup> This is possible because a neshamah is eternal and always remains pure. This aspect of the neshamah can be accessed by every Jew, motivating them to do teshuvah.

Because Hashem promises that every Jew will do teshuvah, we are encouraged to perform mitzvos even if our intentions aren’t entirely pure. Although the mitzvah may not be perfect at the moment, when we eventually do teshuvah, the mitzvos we’ve previously performed will be elevated as if we had done them correctly.<sup>33</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why is it important to do mitzvos even if we don’t feel perfect?*



**Instant Portion**

**E**lazar Ben Durdaya engaged in every aveirah he could possibly commit. One day, feeling overwhelmed by how far he had fallen, he experienced a deep urge to return to Hashem.

Elazar Ben Durdaya sat and cried out, “Mountains and hills, plead for mercy on my behalf.”

The mountains replied, “Plead for mercy on your behalf? We must plead for ourselves.”

Elazar then pleaded, “Heaven and earth, beg for mercy on my behalf.”

Heaven and Earth responded, “Plead for mercy on your behalf? We must plead for ourselves.”

Elazar then asked, “Sun and moon, plead for mercy on my behalf.”

To this, they replied, “Plead for mercy on your behalf? We must plead for ourselves.”

Finally, Elazar Ben Durdaya realized that he was the only one who could do teshuvah for himself. He placed his head between his knees and cried until his neshamah departed from his body, and he passed away.

A voice emerged from Heaven and declared, ‘Rabbi Elazar Ben Durdaya is destined for life in the World to Come.’

When Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi heard the story of Elazar Ben Durdaya, he wept and said, ‘Some only acquire their share in the World to Come after many years of hard work. Others, however, can obtain a portion in the World to Come in a single moment.’ Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi further remarked: Not only are ba’alei teshuvah accepted in Heaven, but they are even referred to as “Rabbi.”



## Endnotes

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 25 ברכות י"ז עמוד א                            | 13 שבת ק"ה עמוד א' עפ"י מהרש"א,        | 1 אבות ה', כ'  |
| 26 זהר א, קל"ח, ב'                             | דגל מחנה אפרים כי תשא, לקותי           | 2 טור אורח חיים א, א   |
| 27 משלי ח, כ"א                                 | תורה שלח מ"ח, ד'                       | 3 רד"ק ישעיה ס', כ"א   |
| 28 עוקצין ג, י"ב, ברטנורא                      | 14 נוסח התפילה נוסח אשכנז וספרד        | 4 English letter of the Rebbe<br>Adar II 5744                      |
| 29 תהלים ט"ז, י"א                              | 15 סנהדרין צ"ו עמוד א'                 | 5 תרגום יונתן בן עוזיאל שופטים                                     |
| 30 ירושלמי חולין ב, א                          | 16 תורה אור ל"א, ג'                    | ה', ה'   |
| 31 Hachozeh Milublin<br>(Klapholtz) p. 161-162 | 17 Shivchai Baal Shem 49 (5777<br>(.ed | 6 לקותי תורה במדבר ט"ו, ב'   |
| 32 משנה תורה הלכות תשובה ז, ה                  | 18 Derech Mitzviosecha 59:a            | 7 פרושי ר' חיים פלטיאל על התורה<br>(מתלמידי המהר"ם מרוטנבורג), קרח |
| 33 הלכות תלמוד תורה ד, ג                       | 19 Based on Talks and Tales<br>#572    | 8 שארית מנחם (ויזניץ) בשלח   |
| 34 זהר ג, קכ"ב, א'                             | 20 מדרש תנחומא פקודי ג'                | 9 התועדות שבת פרשת ויקרא   |
| 35 שמואל ב', י"ד, י"ד                          | 21 אבות ד, י"ז                         | תשמ"ג ובכ"מ  |
| 36 זהר א, קכ"ט, א'                             | 22 ברטנורא                             | 10 אבות ד', ב'   |
| 37 עירובין כ"א עמוד ב'                         | 23 של"ה תענית תורה אור ד'              | 11 קדושת לוי עקב   |
| 38 יומא פ"ו עמוד ב'                            | 24 ירושלמי נדרים ג, ח                  | 12 אגרות קודש חלק ז' עמוד 323<br>ובכ"מ                             |

# 5

כִּי קָרוֹב אֵלַיִךְ הַדָּבָר  
מֵאֵד, בְּפִיִּךְ וּבְלִבְּךָ  
לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

(דברים ל, י"ד)



*It is within your close reach to follow the  
Torah in speech, feeling, and deed.*

(DEVORIM 30,14)

LIVING LESSON 1  
*Feel Hashem*

LIVING LESSON 2  
*In Complete Control*

LIVING LESSON 3  
*Within our Reach*

כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדְּבָר מְאֹד, בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

*It is within your close reach to follow the Torah in speech, feeling, and deed.*

## Feel Hashem

Serving Hashem doesn't always come easily. Sometimes we want to do what's right, while at other times we don't. However, we can usually motivate ourselves to do the right thing, even if we don't feel enthusiastic about it.

The passuk Ki Karov teaches that serving Hashem with proper excitement is also easy and attainable for every Jew.

How is this possible? What if one day the feeling simply isn't there?

The truth is that feeling excited about doing the right thing is inherent in every Jew from birth. The neshamah that Hashem gives each of us is always excited and eager to do what He desires. However, when we get distracted by the world around us, our neshamah can become covered, making it feel difficult to do what's right.

To feel excited to serve Hashem, all that is necessary is to remember the neshamah. By reminding ourselves of the special nature of Torah and mitzvos, and about Hashem's greatness and love for each of us, we awaken our neshamah. This, in turn, arouses enthusiasm and love to fulfill what Hashem desires.

Feeling love and excitement for Hashem comes naturally to every Jew. However, we sometimes need to reflect on Hashem's greatness to arouse these feelings within us.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

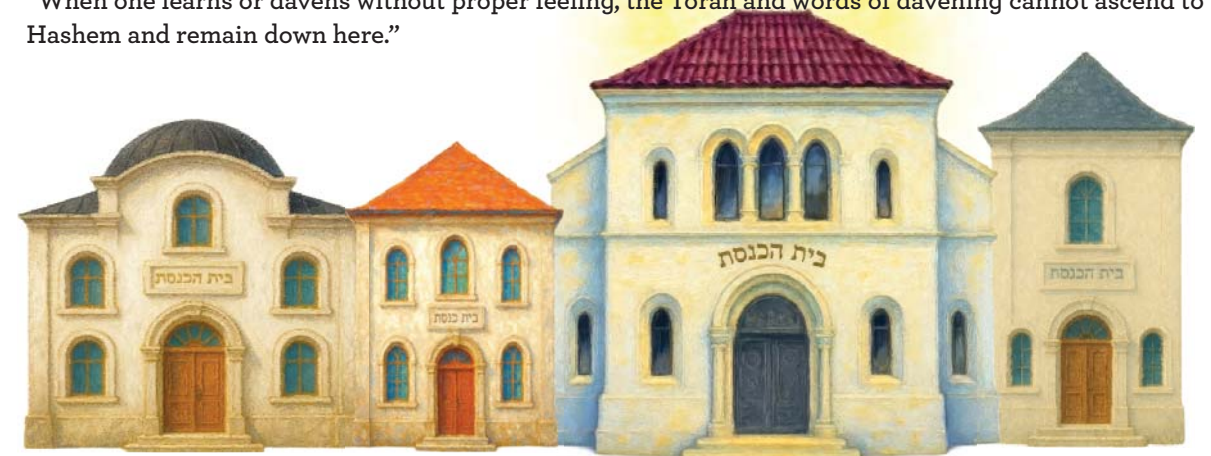
*In what ways do worldly distractions hide the neshamah, and what practical steps can be taken to reveal the neshamah*



## Packed Shul

Once, the Baal Shem Tov was traveling with some of his Chassidim. During their journey, they stopped at a shul for minchah. As the Baal Shem Tov was about to enter, he paused and refused to go inside. "There is no room for me here; the space is filled with Torah and words of davening," he said.

The Chassidim were puzzled. "Isn't that a good thing?" they asked. The Baal Shem Tov explained: "When one learns or davens without proper feeling, the Torah and words of davening cannot ascend to Hashem and remain down here."



### Word Power

#### Connected

מְחַשְׁבָה טוֹבָה הַקב"ה מְצַרְפָּה לַמַּעֲשֵׂה  
- Hashem connects a good thought to action.

One way to explain this statement is that sometimes we can't generate genuine feelings of love for Hashem. Still, as long as we understand in our minds that we should love Him, Hashem regards it as if we have the appropriate feelings. Hashem "connects" our good thoughts to our actions and counts them as though we performed the action with real emotions and excitement.<sup>1</sup>



### Our Sages Say

#### In Our Control

הַכֹּל בְּיַדֵי שָׁמַיִם, חוּץ מִירֵאת שָׁמַיִם - Everything is in Hashem's hands besides for fear of Hashem.<sup>2</sup>

Hashem controls the world and manages it with perfection. However, how we feel about Him is left to us. Hashem doesn't force us to feel excitement for Him. Love and fear of Heaven are entirely within our grasp.

#### Little Moshe

וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל מָה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׂאֵל מֵעַמּוֹךְ כִּי אִם לִירְאָה...<sup>3</sup> אָטוּ יִרְאת שָׁמַיִם מִלְתָּא זּוֹרְתָא  
- היא? אין, לגבי משה מילתא זּוֹרְתָא היא - Moshe said, "Listen B'nei Yisrael, all Hashem wants from you is to fear Him." The gemarah asks, "Is fearing Hashem so easy?" It answers, "Yes, for Moshe it is easy."<sup>4</sup>

For Moshe, loving Hashem was easy, but for the rest of B'nei Yisrael, it was very hard. If so, why, when addressing B'nei Yisrael, did Moshe make it sound like loving Hashem is easy for everyone?<sup>5</sup>

Every Jew has a spark of Moshe—their neshamah—inside them. This spark makes it easy for every Jew to love Hashem. When we reveal the little Moshe within us, having strong feelings for Hashem becomes accessible to all.<sup>6</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*How does the understanding that love and fear of Hashem are in our control help us serve Hashem?*



## Fake It till You Make It

Real feelings for something don't always come naturally and sometimes require thoughts or words for them to be felt.

A shopkeeper once approached R' Moshe of Kobrin<sup>9</sup> and complained that he was barely making ends meet, while his neighbor, who sold the same merchandise, was quite wealthy and often came to the Rebbe with a generous amount of tzedakah.

"I guarantee you, you too will be rich," responded the Rebbe, "if, when you see your friend, you say, 'Thank you Hashem for giving my friend abundance.' Even if you don't mean it the first time, the more you say it, the more you will mean it."<sup>10</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Can you think of a personal experience where "faking it till you make it" led to genuine feelings of connection or gratitude?



### Did You Know?

#### Standing Over Us

Arousing feelings for Hashem is so important that the Shulchan Aruch states<sup>7</sup> that as soon as one wakes up, they should think thoughts that awaken love for Hashem.

When we open our eyes in the morning, we should recognize that Hashem stands over us, waiting for us to begin our day. This thought inspires awe and motivates us to leap out of bed to serve Hashem. Reflecting on this concept enough will certainly yield results—if a regular king were standing watch over us, would we continue lying in bed? Absolutely not! How much more so for Hashem, the King of kings?



### Pearly Wisdom

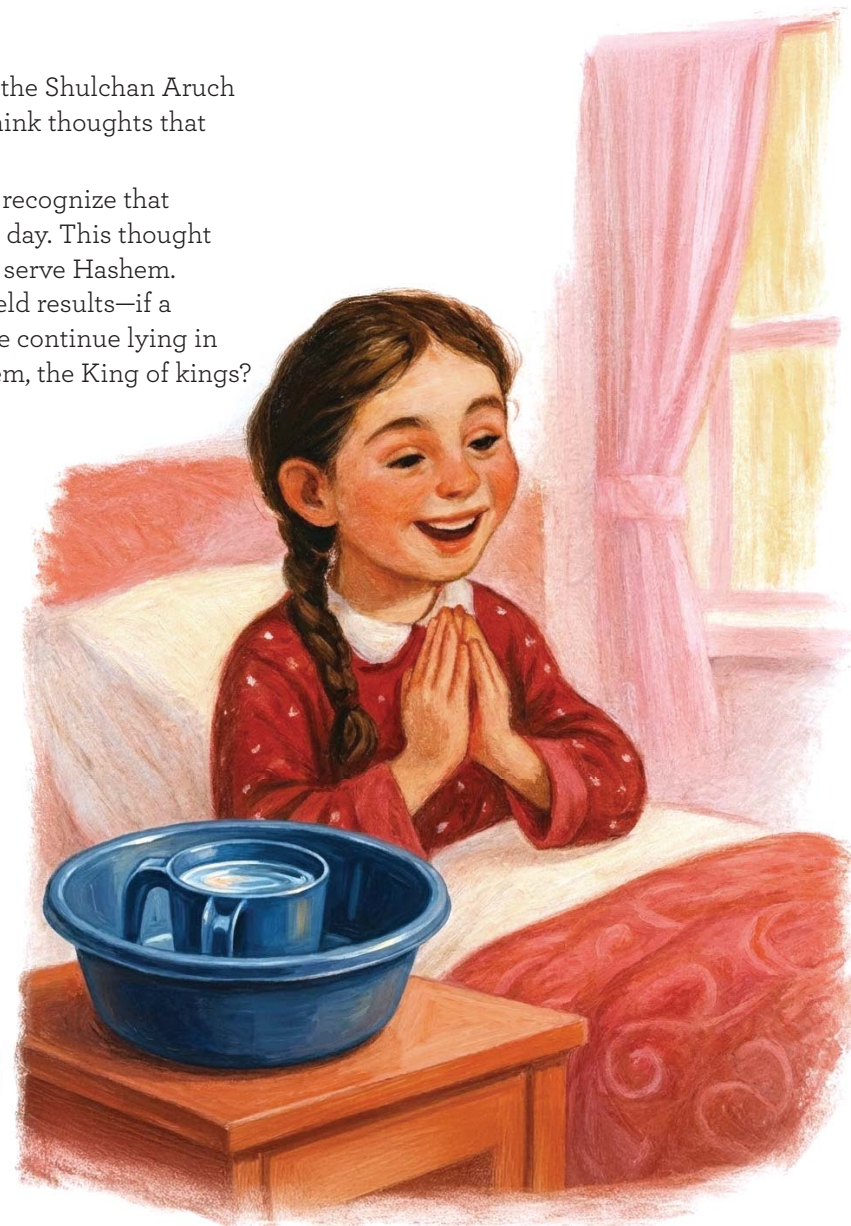
#### Flying High

Love and fear of Hashem are described as the wings of mitzvos. This is because the excitement and feelings we experience when performing mitzvos enable them to ascend to Hashem.<sup>8</sup>

For mitzvos to rise up to Hashem, it is essential to perform them with warmth and excitement rather than out of cold habit.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

In what specific ways can we infuse warmth and excitement into our performance of mitzvos, making them "fly to Hashem"?



כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדְּבָר מְאֹד, בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

*It is within your close reach to follow the Torah in speech, feeling, and deed.*

## In Complete Control

Following the Torah and mitzvos is achievable and accessible for every Jew. If Hashem commanded it to us, He knows we can do it. Hashem wouldn't ask us to do anything beyond our abilities.

In general, mitzvos can be divided into three categories: speech-related mitzvot (such as making brochos and not speaking lashon hara), those associated with thoughts (such as believing in Hashem), and those carried out through actions (such as wrapping tefillin and lighting Shabbos candles).

The passuk refers to these three categories as פִּיךָ (speech), לְבָבְךָ (emotions), and לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ

(actions), teaching that all mitzvos are achievable for everyone.

The words we say, the thoughts we willingly think, and what we do are all things we can control. We can choose to speak kindly, think positive thoughts, and perform good actions instead of bad ones.

Because we can control our words, thoughts, and actions, it is our job to always choose the right path. We have the power to decide which direction to take; it is our obligation to make the right choice.<sup>11</sup>





**Our Sages Say**

**Good Choices**

The Medrash teaches: “Our mouths, hands, and feet are within our control. If you wish, you can speak words of Torah, or you can engage in lashon harah or cursing. With your hands, you can either perform a mitzvah or commit theft or murder. With your feet, you can go to the theater or the circus, or you can attend the Bais Knesses or Bais Medrash.<sup>17</sup>”

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*In what ways can we better recognize and resist the temptations that lead us away from positive choices?*



**Word Power**

**מאד**

How can we ensure that we actually do what we’re supposed to do? In the passuk Ki Karov, there is a hint: “מאד,” which stands for מ – Moshe, א – Avraham, and ד – Dovid. The defining quality of each of these tzadikim was their humility. To follow in their ways and consistently choose the right path in serving Hashem, we must strive to be humble.<sup>16</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*How does humility, as indicated by the acronym “מאד,” help us in choosing the right path?*



**Did You Know?**

**Free Will**

The belief that our choices are within our control is a fundamental principle of the Torah known as free will. If our actions were not under our control and were forced by Hashem, how could we be rewarded or punished for them? We didn’t choose to do the mitzvah or aveirah; we were compelled by someone else. Rather, every person has a choice whether to do the right thing and be rewarded or to sin and face the consequences.<sup>12</sup>

**Change of Clothing**

Thought, speech, and action are referred to as “the garments” of the neshamah.<sup>13</sup> One reason for this is that, just as it is easy to change one’s clothing, our thoughts, speech, and actions can also be changed with ease.<sup>14</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*How does the concept of “garments of the neshamah” influence our understanding of personal change and growth?*



**Extra Food for Thought**

What specific techniques can be used to strengthen our control over our thoughts, speech, and actions?

Can you share a personal experience where choosing the right words, emotions, or actions made a significant difference in your life or someone else’s life?



**Pearls of Wisdom**

**Self-encouragement**

Sometimes, choosing the right feelings, words, and actions can be challenging. When it’s difficult to make the right choice, we can tell ourselves, “I really don’t want to do something wrong because I never want to be a rasha, even for a second! I know that aveiros will separate me from Hashem, and I don’t want to be separated from Him at all.” Reminding ourselves of this can help us resist the temptation to do something bad and reinforce what we truly believe.<sup>15</sup>



**Don’t Let Them In**

A chassid once came to the Maggid of Mezeritch. “Rebbe,” he said, “I don’t understand how the Torah can command us what to think. For example, when the Torah tells us not to even entertain a thought that is destructive and wrong. What should one do when such thoughts enter his mind involuntarily? Can a person control his thoughts?”

Instead of answering the chassid’s question, Rabbi Dovber sent him to the town of Zhitomir. “Go visit my disciple, R’ Zev,” he said. “Only he can answer your question.”

Although it was the middle of winter, the chassid immediately set out.

By the time he arrived, it was long past midnight. To his happy surprise, the windows of R’ Zev’s study were lit up. Through a small crack in the shutters, the visitor could see R’ Zev studying. However, when he tried knocking, R’ Zev ignored him. After waiting a while, he tried again, knocking harder. Still, he was completely ignored. He began to feel cold. As the night wore on, the visitor, with nowhere else to turn, continued to knock, while R’ Zev, a few steps away, kept studying by his fireside, seemingly oblivious to the persistent knocks.

Finally, in the morning, R’ Zev rose from his seat, opened the door, and warmly greeted his visitor. After the chassid had warmed himself, he asked R’ Zev, “Didn’t you hear me knocking all night? Why didn’t you open the door?” R’ Zev replied, “You see, in my home, I’m the one in charge. Whoever I choose to let in—I allow in; whoever I don’t want to let in—I don’t.”

The chassid realized the message: we are the masters of our thoughts and can shut out the negative ones. He now understood why the Maggid had sent him to R’ Zev.<sup>18</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*How can we apply the lesson from the story of Rabbi Zev to our daily lives when dealing with unwanted thoughts?*



כִּי־קָרוֹב אֵלֶיךָ הַדְּבָר מְאֹד, בְּפִיךָ וּבִלְבָבְךָ לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ.

*It is within your close reach to follow the Torah in speech, feeling, and deed.*

## Within our Reach

Connecting with Hashem can sometimes feel like a challenging task. After all, Hashem is unlimited, and we are so small. Even learning Torah and performing mitzvos can seem out of reach; there are hundreds of mitzvos and endless depths in the Torah. How could we ever connect to Hashem?

The Torah teaches us that connecting to Hashem does not require ascending to the heavens or descending to the sea.<sup>19</sup> Following the Torah is right here within our reach. Every moment of the day has a mitzvah we can do. From the moment we wake up in the morning until we go to sleep at night, we have countless opportunities to connect with Hashem.

In Shulchan Aruch, we discover halachos related to what foods to eat, how to dress, and even how to walk! Hashem wants us to connect with Him easily and consistently in everything we do.

When we reflect on our day, we can easily discover ways to connect with Hashem at every moment. We are lucky to have such a constant and personal connection with Hashem!

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*Why do you think Hashem wants us to connect with Him so often?*

*What is your favorite mitzvah, and why does it make you feel connected?*

*If Hashem only makes requests that He knows are within our abilities, how does that make you feel about doing mitzvos?*



## Permanent Mitzvos

**D**avid Hamelech was once in the bathhouse and felt sad because he wasn't performing any mitzvos. Then, he remembered his bris milah and felt relief knowing he was never without a mitzvah. After finishing his bath, he was overwhelmed with joy at his constant connection with Hashem. This inspired him to compose the twelfth chapter of Tehillim.



### Our Sages Say

#### All Around

חֲבִיבֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁסָבְבוּ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בְּמִצְוֹת: תַּפְלִין בְּרָאשֵׁיהֶן, וְתַפְלִין בְּזְרוּעוֹתֵיהֶן, וְיִצִּיצִית בְּבִגְדֵיהֶן, וּמְזוּזָה לַפֶּתַחֵיהֶן— B'nei Yisrael are precious, so Hashem surrounded them with mitzvos: tefillin on their heads and arms, tzitzis on their clothes, and mezuzos on their doorways.<sup>20</sup>

Mitzvos are present all around us; it's up to us to grab them.

#### Perfectly Coordinated

בְּגִין דְּאִית בְּרַ נְשׁ רַמ"ח שְׁיַפִּין לְקַבֵּל רַמ"ח פְּקוּדֵין דְּאוּרִייתָא—People have 248 limbs to correspond with the 248 positive mitzvos of the Torah.<sup>21</sup>

You were built for this!

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*How does knowing that mitzvos are always within reach change the way you see your day?*



### Did You Know?

#### The Promise

Before a neshamah enters the world, it swears to be a tzaddik.<sup>23</sup> This promise fosters a strong bond with Hashem, empowering the neshamah to choose the right path.<sup>24</sup>

Even before our birth, we were given the power to choose good.

#### Constant Connection

Our connection to Hashem isn't limited to the holy parts of our day, like when we're learning Torah and davening. At every moment, we can connect to Hashem. Everything in our lives can be done l'shem shamayim—for Hashem's sake. When we maintain this attitude, every moment of our lives, even the most mundane, becomes an opportunity for connection.<sup>25</sup>

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

*Can you think of a time when you turned an ordinary activity into a mitzvah?*



### Word Power

#### Inseparable

It [Torah] is not far from you. - לא נִפְלְאָת הִיא

The word פלא means separate. The passuk teaches that Torah and mitzvos are not separate from us but blend into every moment of our lives, making us complete.<sup>22</sup>



Endnotes

17 בראשית רבה ס"ז, ג'  
 18 Once upon a chossid  
 19 דברים י"ב-י"ג  
 20 מנחות מ"ג עמוד ב'  
 21 זהר א: ק"ע, ב'  
 22 לקותי תורה נצבים מ"ו, א  
 23 נדה ל' עמוד ב'  
 24 באר הגולה שבת שובה  
 25 משלי ג, ו עפ"י מצודת דוד, אבות  
 ב, י"ב

9 R' Moshe Pallier of Kobrin  
 [1784 - 1858], the first Rebbe of  
 Kobrin  
 10 סיפורי חסידים זוין נצבים  
 11 תניא פרק י"ד  
 12 רמב"ם משנה תורה, תשובה ה, ג  
 13 תניא פרק ד'  
 14 מאמר ד"ה ונחה תשי"ד  
 15 תניא פרק י"ד  
 16 חומת אנך דברים ל, י"ד

Endnotes

1 תניא פרק ט"ז  
 2 ברכות ל"ג עמוד ב'  
 3 דברים י', י"ב  
 4 ברכות שם  
 5 מהרש"א, דרשות הר"ן י'  
 6 פרק מ"ב  
 7 שולחן ערוך הרב מהדו"ק א, א,  
 קיצור שולחן ערוך א, ד  
 8 תקוני זהר כ"ה

# 6

וְהַנֶּהַר ה' נֹצֵב עַלְיוֹ, וּמִלֵּא כָּל  
הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמִבֵּיט עַלְיוֹ, וּבֹחֵן  
כָּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אִם עוֹבְדוֹ כְּרָאוּי.

(תניא פרק מ"א)



*Hashem stands over each person, and the whole world is full of His glory, and He searches each mind and heart [to see] if the person is serving Him properly.*

(TANYA, PEREK 41)

LIVING LESSON 1

*Someone's Watching*

LIVING LESSON 2

*Serve Hashem With Joy*

LIVING LESSON 3

*!You Matter*

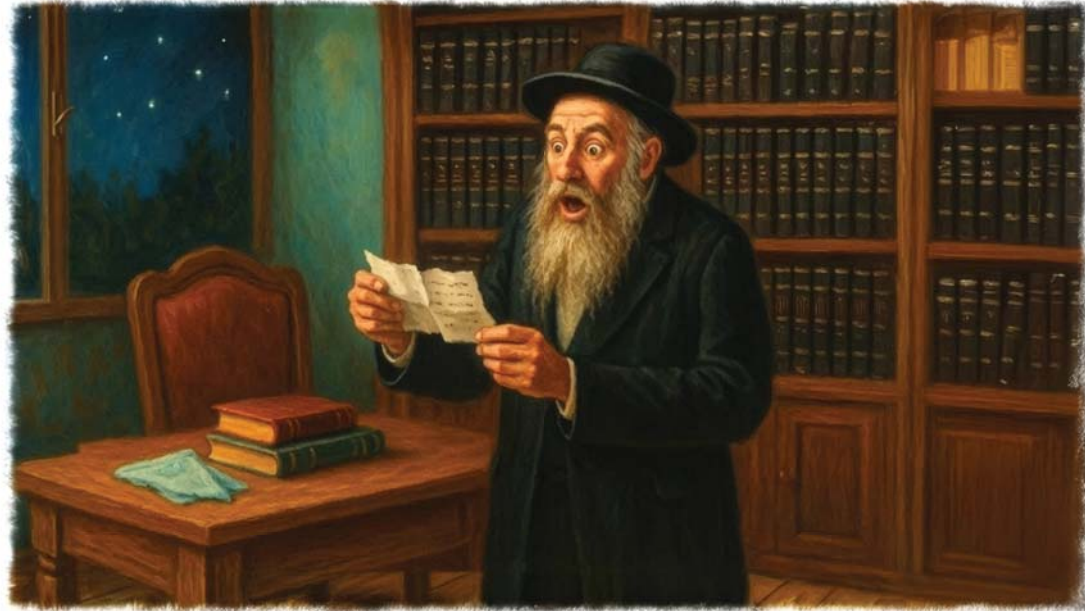




## The Paper

The Rebbe Maharash<sup>8</sup> always kept a handkerchief on his table. Before anyone would enter his room, he would use it to cover something.

One of his Chassidim was curious about what the Rebbe kept hiding under the handkerchief. Once, when the Rebbe left the room, he sneaked in to investigate. Imagine his surprise when he picked up the handkerchief and saw that it was covering a paper that had written, “Shivisi Hashem Lenegdi Samid – I constantly have Hashem in front of me.”<sup>9</sup>



### Pearls of Wisdom

#### Awe

Fearing Hashem does not only mean that we are afraid He will punish us. Rather, it is a sense of awe that fills us because of Hashem’s greatness. This is similar to the awe and respect one feels towards a great tzaddik. You would never want to commit an aveirah in front of a tzaddik; how much more so when in front of Hashem.

#### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

What does it mean to fear Hashem, and how is it like respecting a great person?

### Word Power

#### וידוי

When we say Vidui (confession) we say, “על חטא שחטאנו לפניך, for the sin we’ve done before you,” before listing each aveirah.

The worst part of the aveirah is that it occurred in front of Hashem. Our lack of fear of Hashem is what led us to sin in the first place.<sup>6</sup>

#### Think About Hashem

Tehillim says, אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחְשַׁב יְהוָה ה' לוֹ עוֹן, fortunate is the one that Hashem doesn’t consider to have aveiros.

This passuk can also be read, אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם לֹא יִחְשַׁב יְהוָה ה', לוֹ עוֹן—fortunate is the one who’s only aveirah is not thinking about Hashem.” To stop doing aveiros, one only needs to think about Hashem. By addressing this, the person will never sin.<sup>7</sup>

וְהִנֵּה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמְלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמְבִיט עָלָיו, וּבוֹחֵן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אִם עוֹבְדוֹ כְּרָאוּי.

Hashem stands over each person, and the whole world is full of His glory, and He searches each mind and heart [to see] if the person is serving Him properly.

## Serve Hashem With Joy

Serving Hashem with joy is a very important mitzvah, but how can we ensure that we are always happy?

Imagine a great king who decided to stay in the home of a simple servant. This servant would be overcome with joy that the king chose to stay with him. Every day, he would happily serve the king and tend to all his needs.<sup>10</sup>

Hashem is the King of all kings and has unlimited power. Nevertheless, He sets aside everything and focuses His attention on each individual Jew. Hashem stands over each and every one of us, caring for our personal needs.

Understanding how lucky we are that Hashem personally takes care of us will fill us with joy and a sense of calm throughout the day. No matter what happens, we know that Hashem will take care of us.<sup>11</sup>

#### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why might feeling happy make it easier to do things that are hard for us?

If Hashem is always watching us, how should that make us act?





Did You Know?

**Like a Baby**

If Hashem is always taking care of us, why do bad things sometimes happen? Hashem's care for us can be compared to a baby in its mother's arms. The mother bathes, feeds, and changes the baby, looking out for all its needs. Although the baby might cry during feeding or changing, it is for the baby's benefit. Right now, the baby is too young to appreciate it, but with time, it will become clear how everything its mother did was for the baby's sake. Hashem is like a loving parent who cares for us. When things seem painful, it is only because we are like a baby who cannot understand how these experiences are for our benefit.<sup>14</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*If Hashem is like a loving parent, why do we sometimes face tough times?*



Word Power

**Light in the Dark**

כי אשב בחשך ה' אור לי—When I sit in darkness, Hashem is my light.<sup>12</sup>

The letters אשב represent:

- א - אמונה
- ש - שמחה
- ב - בטחון

Eemunah and Bitachon—belief and trust in Hashem lead to feelings of Simchah—happiness.<sup>13</sup> When you feel happy, even in the darkest moments, Hashem is your light, and you have nothing to fear.



Our Sages Say

**Gift of Connection**

בְּשִׂעָה שְׂאֵתָה עוֹמֵד וּמִתְפַּלֵּל יֵהָא לְבָרָךְ שְׂמַח כִּי לְאַלְקִים עָלִיוֹן אַתָּה עוֹבֵד—When you stand to pray you should be happy because you are serving Hashem.<sup>15</sup> Hashem's power and greatness are limitless. Every moment, He recreates the world and cares for each creation. Nevertheless, Hashem grants each of us an opportunity to connect with Him personally through davening. When we understand this, we will appreciate our time for tefillah, and our tefillos will be filled with energy and joy.

**Our Protector**

יְדוּ נְטוּיָה עָלֵינוּ, שְׁנֹאֲמֵר: "וּבְצֵל יָדִי כִסִּיתִיךָ"—His [Hashem's] hand is stretched out over us to guard us. As it says in the passuk "I will cover you with the shade of My hand"<sup>16</sup>

Hashem continuously looks out for each of us and provides us all with protection from our enemies.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why does the unit say we should be happy when we daven?*



Pearls of Wisdom

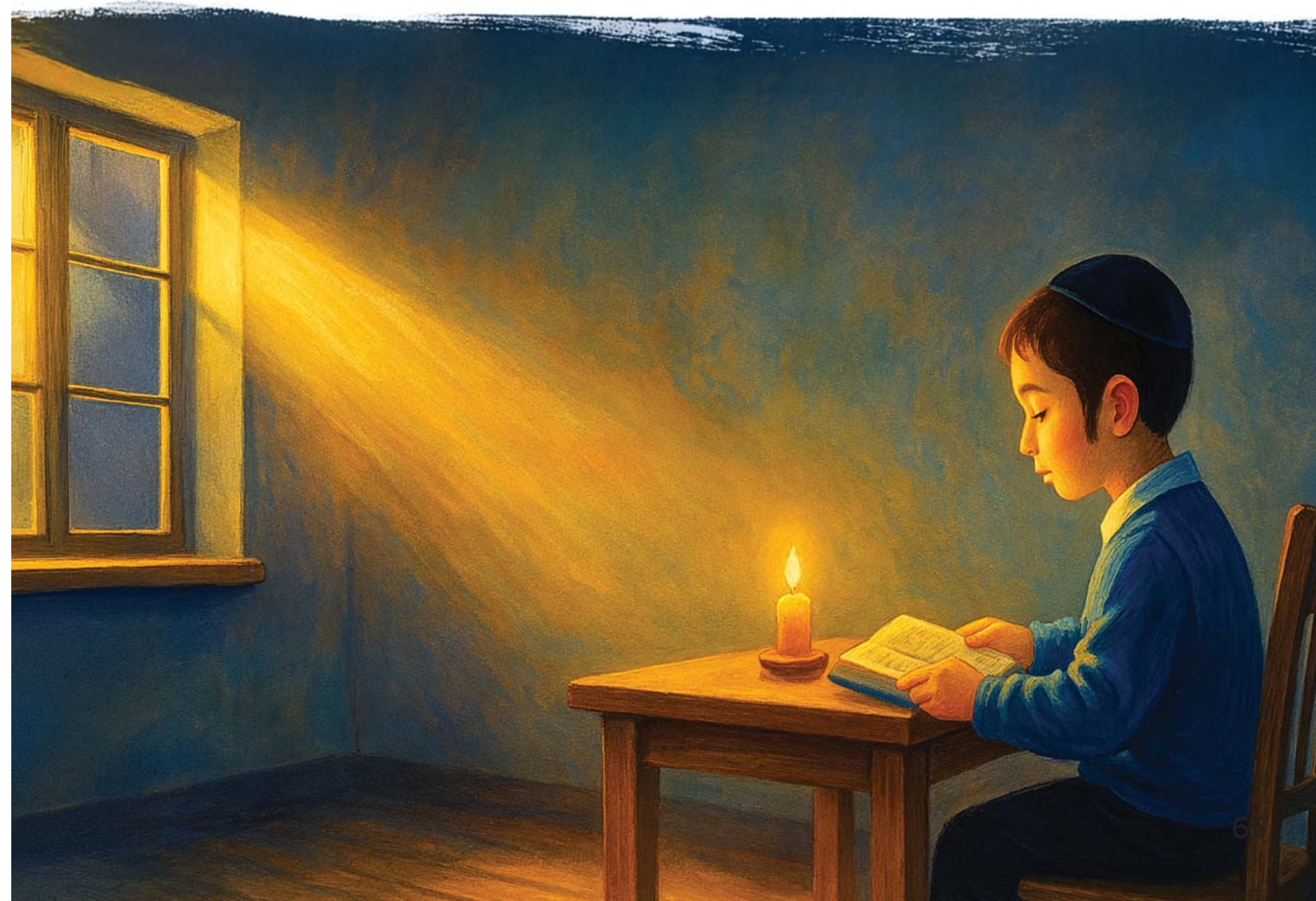
**Make it Easy**

When we are happy, it is much easier to do things we might find difficult. This is why it is so important to serve Hashem with joy. When we feel happy, we can push ourselves to serve Hashem even when it is hard.<sup>17</sup>



Extra Food for Thought

How can thinking about Hashem caring for us change how we feel each day?





## Matter of Perspective

In Mezebush, there was an old water carrier. Whenever he passed by the Bais Medrash, the Baal Shem Tov would ask him, “Berel, how are you doing today?” The water carrier would usually reply, “Baruch Hashem, thank G-d!” and continue with his water deliveries.

One day, the water carrier looked sad. “Rebbe,” he asked the Baal Shem Tov, “how should I feel? Day in and day out, I carry these heavy pails. My back hurts, and I am getting older. My boots have holes, but I have no money for new ones. My children need food, shoes, and clothes... And those new houses at the end of the town keep wanting more water; they are built on top of the hill, and I have to schlep the water all the way up to them.” With a sigh, he picked up his pails and walked away.



A few days later, the water carrier passed by again. “Berel, good to see you! How are you today?” the Baal Shem Tov greeted him.

“Baruch Hashem, Rebbe, I am doing wonderful,” Berel replied. “I have work, so I earn money to feed my family. I am blessed because I have a large family, and I am happy that I can buy them food and pay their teachers to teach them Torah. And those new houses on the top of the hill need a lot of water; that’s extra money for me. Baruch Hashem! Hashem is good to me!”

The Baal Shem Tov’s students were confused. What changed to make the water carrier so happy?

The Baal Shem Tov looked at his students and, sensing their puzzlement, explained, “Did you hear what Berel just said? He said ‘Baruch Hashem’ because he knows that everything comes from Hashem. Last time, he didn’t remember that, so he didn’t thank Hashem. This made him sad about his state. Even when things are difficult, there is so much to be thankful for. When you thank Hashem, you acknowledge that Hashem is always with you and that everything is from Him. This perspective makes you feel better.”

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

What can we learn from the story of the water carrier about being thankful?

וְהָנָה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמָלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמִבֵּיט עָלָיו, וּבוֹחֵן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אִם עוֹבְדוֹ כְּרָאוּי

*Hashem stands over each person, and the whole world is full of His glory, and He searches each mind and heart [to see] if the person is serving Him properly.*

## You Matter!

Hashem takes care of the entire world and everything within it. Nevertheless, He sets aside all else to observe how you are serving Him. Hashem watches over each of us and examines our actions.

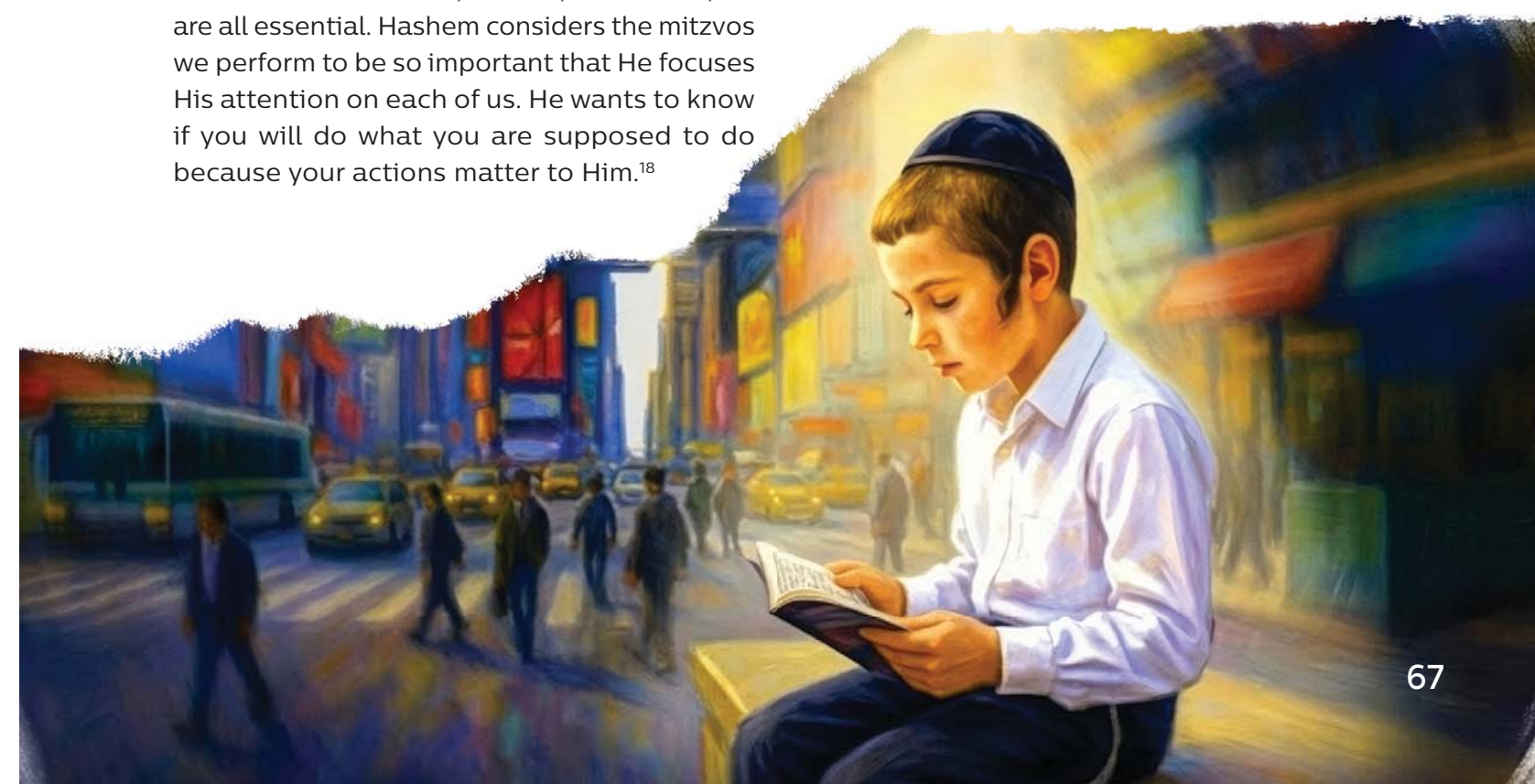
When we look at the vast world around us, with all its billions of creations and events, it’s easy to feel very insignificant. It’s natural to think, “Does my small mitzvah really make such a difference?” However, in truth, to Hashem, we are all essential. Hashem considers the mitzvos we perform to be so important that He focuses His attention on each of us. He wants to know if you will do what you are supposed to do because your actions matter to Him.<sup>18</sup>

The world may seem vast, but the impact of our mitzvos is immeasurable. We may appear small in our eyes, but to Hashem, we matter tremendously. Even the smallest mitzvah we perform has the power to change the world.

### CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why is it important to remember that Hashem is always watching us?

If our actions matter to Hashem, how should that make us feel about what we do?



**Word Power**

**In Your Hands**

דע מה למעלה ממך—Know what is above you.<sup>19</sup>

The Mezritcher Maggid would punctuate this teaching differently: know that what is above, comes from you. Based on this, he would teach that everything that happens in the Heavens is a result of our actions below.<sup>20</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*What does it mean that what is above comes from us?*

**Did You Know?**

**Tip the Scale**

The Rambam teaches,<sup>21</sup> “Every person must view the world as an equal scale of good and bad. If he does one good action, he can tip the scale to good and bring salvation to the entire world.”

For over 2,000 years, we’ve been waiting for Mashiach. With a single mitzvah, the scale can be tipped toward good, bringing Mashiach. Your one action can transform the entire world!

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*If one good deed can change the whole world, why do we sometimes think our actions don't matter?*

**Our Sages Say**

**For My Sake**

כל אחד ואחד חייב לומר, בשבילי נברא העולם, Every person must say, “The world was created for my sake.”<sup>22</sup>

Hashem is counting on our actions to change the world for the better. We shouldn’t rely on others to do good but should see ourselves as if the entire world were created for us to fulfill our specific mission.

**Weighty Mitzvos**

בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מוסיפין כח בגבורה של מעלה—When B’nei Yisrael do what Hashem wants, they make Hashem stronger.<sup>23</sup>

When we do mitzvos, we make Hashem’s presence more tangibly felt in the world. Every mitzvah we do makes the world a more spiritual place where Hashem is more revealed. When Hashem becomes more revealed in the world, it’s as if He becomes stronger.

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why do the Chachamim say the world was created for each of us? What does that mean?*

**Pearls of Wisdom**

**Atom Bomb**

The idea that one small action can change the world is better understood through modern technology. During World War Two, a bomb was developed that used the chain reaction of tiny atoms to create destruction equal to thousands of regular bombs. This was called the Atom Bomb, and it possessed the power to annihilate entire cities.

This demonstrates the power of a single good action. If something so small can cause such immense destruction, can you imagine the positive chain reaction that could result from one mitzvah?<sup>24</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*How is doing one good thing like the idea of an atom bomb?*



**Story**

**Hashem’s Livelihood**

Before the Baal Shem Tov was revealed as a great tzaddik, he wandered from town to town, asking people how they were doing and giving them the opportunity to respond, “Baruch Hashem,” and praise Hashem.

Once, he arrived in a town and began his holy work. In this town, there was an old Talmid Chacham who had studied Torah for fifty years without leaving the Bais Medrash. He fasted every day, eating only a little after Maariv.

When the Baal Shem Tov entered the Bais Medrash, he asked the Talmid Chacham how he was doing, hoping to encourage him to praise Hashem. The man looked at the simply dressed Baal Shem Tov and completely ignored him.

When the Baal Shem Tov continued asking him how things were going, the Talmid Chacham signaled for the Baal Shem Tov to leave. The Baal Shem Tov asked him, “Rebbe, why aren’t you giving Hashem his livelihood?”

Hearing these words, the Talmid Chacham looked up in shock. “What is this simple man saying? We provide Hashem’s livelihood, and otherwise, He is hungry!?” he thought.

The Baal Shem Tov explained, “The Jewish people rely on the livelihood that Hashem gives them, but who does Hashem rely on for livelihood? Dovid Hamelech tells us in Tehillim,<sup>25</sup> וְאֵתָהּ קְדוֹשׁ – and you Holy One, what livelihood do you rely on? יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל – You support yourself on the praise that B’nei Yisrael give you for their livelihood.”<sup>26</sup>

**CHALLENGE YOURSELF**

*Why did the Baal Shem Tov say that the Talmid Chochom wasn't giving Hashem his livelihood? What did he mean by that?*



## Endnotes

- |                                       |                                  |  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 18 בראשית רבה ס"ט, ג                  | Lubavitch                        | 1 אבות ב, א  |
| 19 אבות ב, א                          | Rishimos Devarim Vol. 1, Modur 9 | 2 קידושין מ' עמוד א'   |
| 20 מגיד דבריו ליעקב קצ"ח              | .Chak Admur Maharash, 14         | 3 ברכות כ"ח עמוד ב   |
| 21 הלכות תשובה ג, ד, קידושין מ עמוד ב | 10 תניא פרק ל"ג                  | 4 בבא מציעא נ"ח עמוד ב, רש"י ויקרא י"ט, י"ד                      |
| 22 סנהדרין ל"ז עמוד א                 | 11 אגרות קודש י"ז, 227, י"ח 127  | 5 שולחן ערוך הרב, מהדו"ב, ב, א                                   |
| 23 איכה רבה א, ל"ג                    | 12 מיכה ז, ח                     | 6 לקוטי בתר ליקוטי אבות ב, א                                     |
| 24 אגרות קודש י"א 422                 | 13 פרדס המלך ק"ח                 | 7 תהלים ל"ב, ב, יוסף תהילות בשם ר' מענדל מוויטבסק                |
| 25 כ"ב, ד                             | 14 חובת הלבבות שער הביטחון הקדמה | 8 R' Shmuel Schneersohn, 1834 - 1882 The fourth Rebbe of Chabad- |
| 26 ספר המאמרים אידיש 138              | 15 מדרש תהלים ק, ב               |  |
|                                       | 16 חגיגה ה עמוד ב                |  |
|                                       | 17 ספר המאמרים תרנ"ז 223         |  |