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וְהַנֶּהַר ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמִלֵּא כָּל
הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמִבֵּיט עָלָיו, וּבֹחֵן
כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אִם עֹבְדוֹ 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

וְהִנֵּה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמֵלֵא 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.

Someone's Watching

Doing what is right can sometimes be challenging. The Yetzer Harah might tell us that it's okay to do a small aveirah if no one sees it. When we are alone and no one will know, we might be tempted to go against Hashem, Chas V'shalom.

The truth is that Hashem is always watching. We are never truly alone because Hashem fills the entire world. Hashem is present everywhere at all times and continually watches over us.

When we remember this, it becomes easier to silence our Yetzer Harah and do the right thing. Who cares if no one is watching us? Hashem, the King of all kings, is standing above

us and observing to see what choice we will make. With Hashem Himself watching us, it isn't difficult to make the right choices.

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why might remembering that Hashem sees everything help us do the right thing?

If no one else sees you do something wrong, does it still matter? Why?





Did You Know?

Fear Hashem

There are many mitzvos associated with feelings we need to have. Whenever the Torah commands us to have such a feeling, it adds, “You should fear Hashem.” Only Hashem really knows what we are feeling inside. Therefore, fearing Hashem helps us fulfill these mitzvos.⁴

Modesty

When you change your clothes, you must remain covered and change modestly, even if you are alone in a dark room. Although no one else is present, Hashem is there, and you need to be modest before Him.⁵

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why is it important to be modest even when alone?



Our Sages Say

Smile: You're on Camera

Pirkei Avos teaches, “מה דע מה, עין רואה ואזן שומעת, וכל מעשיך בספר נכתבין למעלה ממך, pay attention to three things and you will never do an aveirah, know what is above you: an eye that sees, an ear that hears, and all your actions are written in a book.”

When we consider how Hashem sees and records everything we do, we can refrain from committing any aveirah. Even the strongest urges can be silenced when we remember that we are being watched and recorded.



Vehinay
security
camera

Not Embarrassed

כל שלא חס על כבוד קונו - ראוי לו שלא בא לעולם. רב יוסף אומר: זה העובר עבירה בסתר - Whoever doesn't care about Hashem's honor would be better off never having been born. Rabbi Yosef says this refers to someone who does an aveirah in private.

If someone sins in a quiet place because they believe no one is looking, they reveal that they are only afraid of what others will think, but they do not fear Hashem. Such a person disrespects Hashem and should never have been born.²

Peer Pressure

Before R' Yochanan passed away, he told his students, “תהא מורא שמים - עליכם כמורא בשר ודם ודם - You should fear Hashem as much as you fear people.” He explained to them that people are naturally ashamed of acting improperly in front of others. He, therefore, blessed them that they should constantly feel as if someone were watching them.

If we can feel the same shame for Hashem as we do for people, we would never do an aveirah.³

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

Why do you think hiding something wrong from people but not from Hashem is a problem?

How can we learn to feel the same shame for sinning in front of Hashem as we do in front of other people?





The Paper

The Rebbe Maharash⁸ 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.”⁹



Pearls of Wisdom

Awe

Fearing Hashem does not 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.⁶

Think About Hashem

Tehillim says, אשרי אדם לא יחשוב ה' לו עון, fortunate is the one that Hashem doesn't consider to have aveiros.

This passuk can also be read, אשרי אדם לא יחשוב ה' לו עון, fortunate is the one who's only aveirah is not thinking about Hashem.” To stop doing aveiros, one needs to think about Hashem. By addressing this, the person will never sin.⁷

וְהִנֵּה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמֵלֵא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמִבֵּיט עָלָיו, וּבֹחֵן 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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.

The same is true for Hashem and us. Hashem is like a loving mother 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.¹⁴

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.¹

The letters אשב represent:

א - Emunah, ש - Simcha, and

ב - Bitachon. Bitachon - trust in

Hashem - leads to feelings of

Simcha - happiness.¹³ When you

feel happy, even in the darkest

moments, Hashem is your light,

and you have nothing to fear.



Gift of Connection

בשעה שאתה עומד ומתפלל יהא לך שמח כי לאלקים עליון אתה עובד
When you stand up to pray you should be happy because you are serving Hashem.¹⁵

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

ידו נטויה עלינו, שנאמר: "ובצל ידי כסיתך" - His [Hashem's] hand is stretched out over us to guard us. As it says in the Possuk "I will cover you with the shade of My hand"¹⁶

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?

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 keeping the mitzvos is hard.¹⁷



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?

וְהִנֵּה ה' נֹצֵב עָלָיו, וּמִלֵּא כָּל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ, וּמִבֵּיט עָלָיו, וּבֹחֵן כְּלִיּוֹת וְלֵב אִם עֹבְדוֹ 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.¹⁸

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

Pirkei Avos¹⁹ teaches “דע, מה למעלה ממך Know what is above you.”

The Mezritcher Maggid would punctuate this teaching differently: דע, מה למעלה ממך, 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.²⁰

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

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

Did You Know?

Tip the Scale

The Rambam teaches,²¹ “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 Moshiach. With a single mitzvah, the scale can be tipped toward good, bringing Moshiach. 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.”²²

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

שישראל עושין רצונו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מוסיפין כח בגבורה של מעלה When B’nei Yisrael do what Hashem wants they make Hashem stronger.²³

When we do mitzvot, 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?²⁴

CHALLENGE YOURSELF

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





Hashem's Livelihood

Before the Baal Shem Tov revealed himself, 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? Do you want Hashem to Chas V’shalom starve and leave this world?”

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,²⁵ ‘Vi’atta Koddosh – and you Holy One, what livelihood do you rely on? Yoshev Tehillos Yisroel – You rely on the praise that B’nei Yisrael give you for their livelihood.’²⁶

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

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

Endnotes

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