

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
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Yisro





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Torah Wellsprings

Yisro

When Do We Receive Reward for the *Mitzvos* That We Perform?

Chazal tell us, שכר מצוה, "Reward for the performance of mitzvos is not received in this world." The reward for the mitzvos that we perform is limitless, and therefore, we will enjoy our reward in the world of eternity. This physical world cannot contain the vast reward.

This teaching might discourage some of us because people want to be rewarded immediately. They are not as inspired to work hard when they know that the reward will come only in the future.

Nevertheless, keep the following thoughts in mind, and you will be inspired to fulfill the mitzvos:

(1) Remember that you are investing for the future, and it is the best investment you can make. For each *prutah* that you give to *tzedakah*, the returns in Olam HaBa will be enormous. Each small, good deed has an endless reward.

(2) Within Torah and mitzvos, you can experience the joy of Gan Eden, the pleasures of the world to come. Therefore, you don't have to think of it as investing for a better future. You are investing in enjoying a better present. All the physical pleasures cannot compare to the happiness we experience when we perform Torah and mitzvos.

There were once two brothers who worked together, composing music. Their compositions were sold and enjoyed around

the world. One time, as they were working on a particular piece, there was a massive explosion in their studio, and both brothers lost their sense of hearing. One of them decided to leave the world of music and go into another field of work. He explained that he anyway couldn't enjoy the music he composes. The other musician continued writing music by heart. Although he could not hear his music, he knew that people around the world were enjoying it.

Years passed, and advances were made in the field of medicine. The brothers underwent an operation, and they got back their sense of hearing. The brother who composed songs all along was now able to listen to and enjoy the beautiful music he created.

The *nimshal* is that if at the moment, you are not yet experiencing the joy and the sweetness of *avodas Hashem*, don't stop

performing good deeds. Continue doing the mitzvos because eventually, you will enjoy everything you are accomplishing - in the next world, and even in this world.

In the present era of Corona, many people temporarily lost their sense of smell and taste, but they forced themselves to eat because they knew that they needed to eat in order to live. Reb Gamliel Rabinowitz *zt'l* said that this hints that those who lost their taste and enjoyment in Torah and *tefillah* should continue performing those good deeds, for eventually they will get their taste back. They will once again experience the pleasure of Torah and mitzvos.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 17.) tells us that when the students of the yeshiva would say goodbye to one another (before returning home, after a prolonged time learning together in yeshiva), one of the blessings they

gave one another was, עולמך תראה בחיך, "May you see your world in your lifetime."¹ The Baal Shem Tov explained that they wished each other, עולמך תראה בחיך, "May you see your future world of Olam HaBa in your lifetime." It is possible to experience a taste of the future world in one's *avodas Hashem*.

That is why the future world is called עולם הבא, which means "the world that comes." When does it come? Sometimes, it is called עולם העתיד, "the future world," but more commonly, it is called עולם הבא, "the world that's coming." What does it mean?

The Meor Einayim (*Yisro*, ר"ה בשעה שהקדימו) writes that it comes when we perform Torah and mitzvos. It doesn't come immediately. One must invest some amount of toil. But if he

does so, he will pick up on the Olam HaBa within his good deeds. As the Meor Einayim writes, "The future world is called עולם הבא, the world that comes. This means that it comes when a person serves Hashem. Therefore, Bnei Yisrael said, נעשה ונשמע, this means 'We will do Hashem's service, we will toil, and then we will come to the world of pleasure.... [Because] when one speaks [Torah] with joy, *hislahavus*, love, and fear, the pleasure will come... Because first, one must toil in his *avodas Hashem*...' and then he will experience in his Torah and mitzvos a taste of Olam HaBa.

(3) Don't feel discouraged when you hear that you will receive reward for your good deeds only in Olam HaBa, because, although Chazal tell us, שכל מצוה בהאי עלמא ליכא, that in this world we aren't rewarded

1. Rashi translates it, כל צרכך תמצא, "May you have all your needs."

for the *mitzvos*, nevertheless, there are exceptions.

Many of the exceptions are stated in the Mishnah that we say each morning after *birchas HaTorah*: אלו הדברים שאדם אוכל פרותיהם בעולם הזה והקרן קיימת לעולם הבא ואלו הן כבוד אב ואם וגמילות חסדים. ובקור חולים... ועיון תפילה והבאת שלום בין אדם לחבירו ובין איש לאשתו ותלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, "These are the mitzvos that we eat the fruits of the good deeds in this world and the primary reward is reserved for Olam HaBa: honoring parents, deeds of kindness, visiting the ill, davening with *kavanah*, increasing peace among people...and learning Torah is greater than all of them."

Let us discuss some of these mitzvos:

Kibud Av v'Em

This week's *parashah* contains the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em* (in the Aseres HaDibros), and the reward is explicitly stated in the *pasuk*. As it states (20:12), כבוד את אביך ואת אמך למען יאריכון ימך, "Honor your father and your mother so you will live long..." Chazal (*Kiddushin* 39:) explain this to mean that you will live long in עולם שבולו ארוך, the eternal world, in Olam HaBa. Nevertheless, as the commentaries explain, the reward also includes a long life in this world.²

2. The Seforno (20:12) teaches that the promise for longevity isn't solely for honoring parents. The words 'למען יאריכון ימך על הארמה אשר ה' אלקך נתן לך, "So you will live long on the land that Hashem will give you" are written at the bottom of the first tablet. And, according to the Seforno, it applies to all five commandments that are written on this tablet, and not solely to the fifth commandment of *kibud av v'em*, where these words are written.

The Seforno adds that when people keep the five commandments and prohibitions that are written on the second tablet, he is

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh explains that in addition to each mitzvah's reward, the mitzvos also have *segulos*. For honoring parents, the *segulah* is to live a long life. This is in addition to the reward that Hashem will give. As the Or HaChaim writes, "The *pasuk* states, *יארִיבֶן ימֶיךָ*, 'Your days will lengthen'; it doesn't say, *אאריך ימֶיךָ*, 'I will lengthen your days.' Perhaps this implies that longevity is the *segulah* of honoring parents, and this is besides for the reward that Hashem will give us. Because there are mitzvos that have wonderful *segulos*, in addition to the reward that Hashem established for each mitzvah. This time, Hashem revealed that honoring parents is mesugal for long life.

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya teaches that we can see clearly that those who honor their parents live a better life. He writes, "We see clearly that those who honor their parents enjoy a long life, success, and tranquility in all their ways." This is something that can be seen. This is their reward (and *segulah*) in this world. The main reward will be given to them in Olam HaBa.

Rashi (20:12) writes, "[The Torah writes] if you honor your parents, you will live long. In contrast, [we understand that] if you don't honor your parents, your life will be shortened. Because this is how the Torah is studied: From the positive statements, we understand the negative [connotations]."

protected from all harm and damages, בגופו בכבודו ובממונו, "to his body, to his honor, and to his money." He will be protected from all harm, in this world and in the next world.

Why is honoring parents connected with longevity?

The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*, vol.2 p.362:) explains that a Torah scholar might think that it is not appropriate for him to spend much time caring for his parents because he could study Torah at this time, and תלמוד תורה כנגד כולם, learning Torah is the greatest merit. Therefore, the Torah promises longevity for *kibud av ve'em*. The Torah is telling him that the time spent honoring parents will be returned to him. He will live long, and he will have plenty of time to study Torah.

The Lev Simchah of Gur zt'l said that each person is born with a quota of days and years he will live. The time one devotes for *kibud av ve'em* isn't part of the calculation. He will live extra because those times weren't deducted from the days of his life.

Reb Sadyah Gaon z'l explains that *kibud av v'em*

is a difficult mitzvah to keep, as it is time-consuming and hard work. To encourage people to devote themselves to this essential mitzvah, the Torah promises longevity. The reward encourages people to keep this mitzvah, despite the hardships.

Sometimes, for excelling in *kibud av v'em*, you can get all your heart's desires, even before you daven for it. Chazal tell us that Reb Chalafta would always ask himself, "What will my father want? What can I give him that will make him happy?" And he would give it to his father without his father needing to ask for it. His reward was מדה כנגד מדה, and Hashem gave Reb Chalafta all his heart's desires even before he davened for them. As the *pasuk* states (*Yeshayah* 65:24), ויהיה טרם יקראו ואני אענה, "Even before you ask, I will answer you." We can earn a similar reward if we will have this devotion for the mitzvah of *kibud av v'em*.

Reward for *Kibud Av v'Em*

The Seder HaDoros (10) relates that heaven revealed to Reb Yehoshua ben Elam in a dream, "Be happy, rejoice, because you will be in Gan Eden together with the butcher Nanas (ננס הקצב). Your portion and his portion are the same."

Reb Yehoshua ben Elam said, "Woe to me that this will be my portion in Gan Eden! I feared Hashem since my youth. My only occupation was Torah study. I never walked four *amos* without wearing *tzitzis* and tefillin. I have eighty students. Do all my good deeds and Torah equal up only to the butcher Nanas?"

Reb Yehoshua ben Elam and his students immediately set out to find out who this Nanas is and his deeds. After asking many people for directions, they finally arrived at the town where Nanas the butcher lived. Reb Yehoshua asked the people

of the city to direct him to Nanas's home. He was ready to go there himself, to speak with Nanas.

The townspeople said, "It isn't proper for a *talmid chacham* and respected person like yourself to go to Nanas."

Reb Yehoshua said, "Tell him that I want to meet him."

The townspeople repeated this to Nanas. He responded, "Who am I that Reb Yehoshua should inquire about me?"

They replied, "The fact is that he wants to speak to you. You should come immediately."

Nanas didn't believe them. He thought they were teasing him. He replied, "You are just making fun of me. I won't go."

The townspeople told Reb Yehoshua what happened. Reb Yehoshua told them, "So I will go to

him. I won't leave this town before I meet Nanas."

Reb Yehoshua arrived at Nanas's home. Nanas fell before Reb Yehoshua's feet and said, "What is special today that the crown of Yisrael has come to the home of his servant?"

Reb Yehoshua said, "There is something that I have to speak with you about."

"Please speak," Nanas said.

Reb Yehoshua said, "Tell me your deeds. What do you do?"

Nanas replied, "My master, I'm a butcher. My mother and father are old, and they can't stand on their own. Every morning I dress them, feed them, and I wash them up."

Reb Yehoshua stood up and kissed him on his head. He said, "My son, אשריך ואשרי מה טוב ומה נעים fortunate and fortunate is your lot... And I am

fortunate that I will merit being your neighbor in Gan Eden."

We see that for honoring parents, one can earn a reward equal to the reward of a holy *tana*. The reward is enormous.

Reb Moshe Turk davened every morning with the Chazon Ish *zt'l*, and he considered it a *zechus* to receive the Chazon Ish's daily "good morning" blessing. After *shacharis*, Reb Moshe Turk would go off to a cheder in Tel Aviv where he taught. Once, he brought his class to Bnei Brak to daven *shacharis* with the Chazon Ish. After *shacharis*, one of the students wanted to ask a question from his rebbe, Reb Moshe Turk, but Reb Moshe stopped him. He said, "In the presence of the Chazon Ish it is *derech erez* to remain silent."

The class passed by the Chazon Ish and received his *brachos*. When the child who had a question passed

the Chazon Ish, the Chazon Ish asked him to tell him what he wanted to ask. The child looked up at Reb Moshe Turk, wondering whether it was *derech erez* to speak, and Reb Moshe Turk replied, "If the Chazon Ish asks, you may reply."

The student asked a question that only a child can ask. He said, "How did the Chazon Ish become the Chazon Ish?"

The Chazon Ish replied, "It was because I never wasted a moment of my time, and I was always careful with the mitzvah of *kibud av ve'em*" (*Maaseh Ish* vol.4, p.198).

The Beis Ahron of Stolin *zt'l* said that he attained his spiritual levels from the mitzvah of *kibud av v'eim*.

The Meshech Chachmah teaches that the Beis HaMikdash was built on Binyamin's land because Binyamin was the only brother who did not partake in the selling of

Yosef. He was the only brother that didn't cause his father distress; therefore, the Beis HaMikdash was built on his portion.

(*Succah* 45:) Reb Shimon bar Yochai said he could absolve the entire world from judgment. If he adds on the merits of his son, Reb Eliezer, he can redeem the world from judgment and punishment from the day the world was created until that day. Finally, if he would add the merits of king *יורם בן עוזיהו*, he can redeem the world from judgment and punishment from the day the world was created until the end of time.

What was unique about *יורם בן עוזיהו*? Rashi writes, "He was a humble tzaddik, more than all other kings. And he excelled in honoring his parents. About him it states (*Malachi* 1:6), *בן יכבד אב*, a son that honors his father. As long as his father had *tzaraas*, and Yosef took his place, he didn't don the royal crown, and he passed

all judgments in his father's name."

The Gemara teaches: (*Kiddushin* 30) "Honoring one's parents is equal to honoring Hashem... Fearing one's parents is equal to fearing Hashem. When one honors his parents, HaKadosh Baruch Hu says, "I consider it as though he honored Me."

The Peló Yoetz writes, "Each mitzvah has its *mazal*. People are prepared to spend a lot of money to

have the merit to open the *aron kodesh* or to be a *sandak*, although these aren't actual mitzvos - not from the Torah and not from the *rabbanan*. They are *chibuv mitzvah*, a gesture that shows our love for the mitzvos. *Ashreihem Yisrael* [they are fortunate]! However, each time one obeys his father or his mother, he is doing a mitzvah from the Torah. Only fools transgress this commandment, and they are punished."³

3. The Torah (18:3) tells the names of Moshe Rabbeinu's children: ,שם האחד גרשם... ושם האחד אליעזר, "The name of one was Gershom... and the name of one was Eliezer..." It seems that it will read easier if it stated, "and the name of the other one was Eliezer," or "and the name of the second one was Eliezer." This is how it is written by the *korban tamid*: ,את הכבש האחד תעשה בבוקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הארבעים, "One sheep should be made in the morning and the second sheep should be made in the afternoon." Why does the Torah write about Gershom and Eliezer ,שם האחד... שם האחד, "the name of one... the name of one..."

This is teaching us a lesson in *chinuch*. You should consider each child as though he is your only child. None of your children should be a "second child" or just "another child." Each child is like your one, sole, child.

If you will be devoted like that to your children, one of the benefits is that it will make it easier for them to keep the mitzvah of

Hakaras HaTov

The Sefer HaChinuch (33) writes, "The reason for the mitzvah of honoring parents is that it is proper for one to be *makir tovah* (recognize) and to reciprocate with kindness to those who do kindness to him. He shouldn't act as though he didn't receive anything from his fellow man. That is a bad attitude, which is disgusting before Hashem and before man. His father and mother brought him into the world. From when he was a child, they toiled to raise him. He should always remember this and truly honor them in every way possible."

Hakaras hatov is the foundation of *avodas Hashem*. The *Aseres HaDibros* begins with 'אנכי ה' אלוקיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים, "I am Hashem, your G-d who took you out of Mitzrayim, from the house of slavery." The *pasuk* is commanding us to accept Hashem's reign because of the good He bestowed on us; he freed us from Mitzrayim.⁴

When the Yidden stood on the Yam Suf's shore, helpless and scared Hashem saved them by splitting the sea.

The Yidden had weapons, as it states (13:18), וחמושים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים, "Bnei Yisrael came out of

honoring their parents. As known, a better relationship between parents and children makes it easier for the child to honor his parents.

4. The Rosh writes that the *pasuk* is telling us to believe in Hashem's existence, and in Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* taught us belief in *hashgachah pratis*. The Rosh writes, "Whoever doesn't believe in אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים, he also doesn't believe in אנכי ה' אלוקיך."

Mitzrayim armed with weapons." We also know that they had weapons because they used weapons in their war against Amalek. So why did the sea need to split? They could have raised their weapons and waged war against the Mitzrim.

The Chasam Sofer answers that since Klal Yisrael lived in their land, it wouldn't be right to raise weapons against the people who hosted them.

From here, we can learn the importance and necessity of showing Hakaras Hatov. The Mitzrim enslaved Bnei Yisroel, and they embittered their lives with the hard work. Did they deserve *hakaras hatov*? Apparently, they did.

With this information, we can explain a Rashi at the beginning of the parashah. It states, וישמע יתרו, and Rashi explains, מה שמעוה, שמעו ובא קריעת ים סוף ומלחמת עמלק, "What did Yisro hear and

therefore come? He heard about *kriyas Yam Suf* and the war against Amalek."

The Ksav Sofer explains that from the war with Amalek, Yisro surmised that the Yidden had weapons. Yisro wondered, "If they had weapons, why did the Yidden need the miracle of *kriyas Yam Suf*? They could have waged war against the Egyptians!"

Yisro understood that the reason for not using those weapons was because the Yidden had *hakaras hatov* for the Mitzrim who accepted them into their land.

Initially, Yisro was hesitant to join klal Yisroel, because he thought that perhaps the nation won't accept him. But when he discovered that Yidden possess the middah of *hakaras hatov*, he knew that they would surely welcome him. After all, he had saved their leader, Moshe, when he escaped Mitzrayim.

Therefore, when Yisro heard מלחמה עמלק וקריעת ים סוף, he felt compelled to come to the desert to be with the Jewish nation.

Gemilus Chasadim

We are listing the mitzvos for which one is rewarded, also in this world. We discussed *kibud av v'em*, the first mitzvah listed in the Mishnah (*Peiah* 1:1). We now proceed to the next mitzvah stated in that Mishnah, *gemilus chasadim*, deeds of kindness. For doing *chesed*, one is rewarded in this world.

The Rosh (*ibid.*) explains, כי הקב"ה חפץ יותר במצות שעשה בהם גם רצון הבריות ממצות שבין אדם לקונו "Hakadosh Baruch Hu prefers the mitzvos that are also good for one's fellow man, more than the mitzvos that are בין אדם לקונו, between man and Hashem." Therefore, for doing deeds of kindness one is rewarded in both worlds.

We can even say that by fulfilling *gemilus chasadim*

one is fulfilling the purpose of the Torah. The Gemara (*Sotah* 14.) states, דרש ר' שמלאי תורה תחלתה גמילות חסדים וסופה גמילות חסדים תחילתה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויעש ה' אלקים לאדם ולאשתו כתנות עור וילבישם וסופה גמילות חסדים דכתיב ויקבר אותו, "The Torah begins and ends with *gemilus chasadim*. It begins with *gemilus chasadim* as it states (*Bereishis* 3:21), 'Hashem made clothes for Adam and his wife...' and it ends with *gemilus chasadim* as it states (*Bamidbar* 34:6), 'He buried [Moshe] in Gei...'"

The Vilna Gaon *zt'l* explains that when you want to know what a *sefer* is speaking about, you read the beginning and the end, and you can know the basic theme of the *sefer*. The Torah begins with *chesed* and concludes with *chesed*. We, therefore, know that *chesed* is the primary theme of the Torah.

The Gr'a planned to travel to Eretz Yisrael, so he wrote a departing letter filled with *mussar*, to his family. Towards the end of

the letter, the Gr'a writes, "I request from my wife that she should honor my mother, as the Torah requires. Especially since she is a widow, and it is a great sin to cause her *tzaar*, אפילו בתנועה קלה, even in the slightest way. Also, I request from my mother that there should be peace between you [between the Gra's mother and the Gra's wife]. ואשה אל רעותה תשמח בדברים, ואשה אל רעותה תשמח בדברים, make each other happy with nice, kind words. This is a great mitzvah, that everyone must adhere to... וזוה רוב התורה לשמח האדם, for this is most of the Torah: to make others happy."

We quoted this letter for its final words: "For this is most of the Torah: to make people happy." *Gemilus chasadim*, helping others, is a fundamental, and perhaps the primary, factor in the Torah.

The Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (*Rabba* 28) writes, מזה אני מבקש, מה אני מבקש, רק שתהיו אוהבים זה את זה ותהיו מכבדים זה את זה, מכבדים זה את זה, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to Bnei

Yisrael, 'What do I ask from you? Only that you shall love one another and that you should honor one another...'"

The first לוח (tablet) lists five mitzvos בין אדם למקום, mitzvos that man is obligated to do for Hashem, such as: to believe in Hashem, the prohibition of worshiping *avodah zarah*, and the obligation to keep Shabbos. *Kibud av v'em* is also listed on this לוח, tablet, because it is also considered a mitzvah בין אדם למקום. How? Because from this mitzvah, we understand that just as we must have *hakaras hatov* for our parents and honor them, we must also have *hakaras hatov* and honor Hashem. Therefore, *kibud av ve'em* can be considered a mitzvah בין אדם למקום.

As the Sefer HaChinuch (33) writes, "When one [honors parents and] acquires the attitude of *hakaras hatov*, he will also have *hakaras hatov* for Hashem, because Hashem brought him to life, and

also, Hashem brought all of his forefathers' to life, up to Adam HaRishon. He brought us to the world, and He always supplies us with all our needs. He created all our limbs complete and perfect, and He blew into us a *neshamah*, for otherwise, we would be like a dumb mule. Think about these matters and recognize how devoted we should be to do Hashem's service."

The second לוח discusses mitzvos בין אדם לחברו (between people) such as: the prohibitions of stealing, murdering, and being jealous of others.

The Mabit (*Beis Elokim, Shaar HaYesodos*, ch.12) explains that there are very few

words on the second tablet. To make the two *luchos* symmetric and fill the entire second *luchos* with words, the letters on the second *luchos* had to be written in very large letters.

The *luchos* that discusses the mitzvos בין אדם לחברו, mitzvos between people, was written in large letters. Large letters are usually used to express something important which we don't want people to miss. Thus, the large letters on the second לוח hints to the importance of the mitzvos בין אדם לחברו. We shouldn't think that the Mitzvos of the Torah are primarily בין אדם למקום. On the contrary, the mitzvos of בין אדם לחברו take a more prominent place in the Torah.⁵

5. The mikvah in Teveria was small, and no more than two people could be in the water at once. Once, Reb Mordechai Chaim Slonimer zt'l was waiting his turn to use the mikvah, and a mentally ill person was there, too. This ill person announced, "Make room for the holy rebbe."

After Reb Mordechai Chaim came out of the mikvah he said, "This yid is insane, everyone knows. Nevertheless, the drop of honor

There are 613 letters in the Aseres HaDibros, excluding the final two words, אשר לרעך. The Sma"g (Mitzvah 1) explains that each of the 613 letters represents another mitzvah. The last two words, אשר לרעך have seven letters, and they allude to the seven mitzvos that the rabbanan instituted (Chanukah *lecht*, reading the megillah on Purim, fasting on Tisha b'Av, *netilas yadayim*, *eirvun*, etc.).⁶

We can also explain that אשר לרעך means "of your fellow man." Before these words are 613 letters. This hints to us that the purpose of the 613 mitzvos is, אשר לרעך, to help your fellow man.

Once, Rebbe Mordechai Kozmir *zt'l* was leading a *tish*, and it was time for the chassidim to drink a *lechayim*. Someone took out a bottle of wine, poured himself a cup, set it aside so he could drink it when he was ready, and then poured wine for the other chassidim. Rebbe Mordechai was displeased that this chassid thought about himself first. Why didn't he pour wine for the others first?

The Rebbe commented that the word פסל has opposite meanings in the Torah. In this week's *parashah* (20:4) it states, לא תעשה לך פסל, you should not make an *avodah zarah*. In *parashas Ki Sisa*, it states

that he gave me warmed my heart. I enjoyed it, immensely. This is because Hashem made it that people enjoy honor." Therefore, it is important to say a kind word to your fellow man; it means so much to people.

6. There are many *gezeiros d'Rabbanan*, which safeguard us to keep the 613 mitzvos of the Torah. Additionally, there are seven brand-new *mitzvos d'Rabbanan*, which aren't related to one of the 613 mitzvos.

(Shemos 34:1), ויאמר ה' אל משה פסל, Hashem told Moshe to carve out two *luchos*. The word פסל is used in the Torah to refer to *avodah zarah*, the greatest *tumah*, and to the *luchos*, the greatest *kedushah*. How can the same word have opposite implications?

The answer is where the word לך, "for you" is placed. If לך is placed before the word פסל, as in פסל לך פסל, לא תעשה לך פסל, it means *avodah zarah*. If לך is after פסל, as in פסל לך שני לוחות אבנים, it refers to the *luchos*. If לך, you take care of your own needs first, that is *tumah*. However, if לך comes later, you take care of others first; that is holiness.

Don't Disgrace or Hurt Your Fellow Man

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 31.) tells a story of a person who wanted to convert to Judaism on the condition that he be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Hillel told him, דעלך סני להכריך לא תעביד, זו היא כל

התורה כולה ואיך פירושה הוא זיל גמור, "What you don't want to be done to you, don't do to your fellow man. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go study it." Rashi writes, כגון גזילה גניבה, ניאוף ורוב המצוות. Rashi is showing that, indeed, most mitzvos are about refraining from harming your fellow man.

When Yisro was approaching the Jewish camp in the desert, he sent the following message to Moshe Rabbeinu, (18:6) אני חתנך יתרו בא אליך ואשתך ושני בניה עמה, "I, your father-in-law Yisro, am coming to you; also, your wife and her two daughters are coming."

Rashi explains that Yisro was asking Moshe to honor him. Yisro said, "If you won't come out for my sake, come out for your wife's honor. And if you won't come out for your wife's honor, come out for your children's honor."

The Maharal writes, "People ask, Yisro was very

great. Could it be that Yisro was chasing after honor? Why did he request that Moshe honor him? But this isn't a question because Yisro wasn't seeking honor. He was seeking not to be embarrassed. Because every person, even tzaddikim and chassidim, are upset when they are disgraced. The custom of the world is that people honor their guests, especially a father-in-law. If Moshe wouldn't come out to honor him, it would be a disgrace for Yisro. This isn't called רדיפת הכבוד, chasing honor."

This means we must be sensitive to other people's needs. You may think that you are just not giving extra respect, but the other person may translate this as a disgrace and humiliation.

Consider this example: Someone is visiting a new beis medresh, and no one comes over to greet him. It isn't merely a lack of honor. They disgraced him. He

feels humiliated and ashamed.

At the end of the *parashah*, it states (20:23), ולא תעלה במעלות על זיבחי אשר לא תגלה ערותך עליו. The *pasuk* says that to get up to the top of the *mizbeaich*, there must be a ramp. There can't be stairs because the stairs will be disgraced if the *kohanim* spread their feet as they walk over them.

Rashi writes, ואתה נוהג בהן, "מנהג ביוון [If you walk up the stairs] you are behaving with the stairs in a degrading manner. We now have a *kal v'chomer*: Stones do not have feelings; they don't know to be upset when disgraced. Yet the Torah says that since they are used for a purpose, לא תנהג בהם מנהג ביוון, don't act with them in a degrading manner. Your fellow man who was created in the form of your Creator and is מקפיד על ביונו, upset when people disgrace him, even more so must you be careful never to disgrace him."

Twenty four thousand of Reb Akiva's students were *niftar* because they didn't respect one another. Reb Yechezkel Levenstein *zt"l* (Or *Yechezkel, Middos*, p.23) explains that in their hearts they honored their fellow scholars, but they didn't express it to protect their fellow man from becoming *נכשל בגאות*, haughty. Their intentions were good, but they erred. Their obligation was to honor their fellow man. Hopefully, their colleagues would refrain from becoming haughty, but that should not be their concern. Their job is to honor their fellow man.

It states (*Brachos* 19:), גדול כבוד הבריות שדוחה לא תעשה שבתורה, "The honor of human beings is very important; it even comes before a *lo saaseh*, a prohibition, of the Torah." Sometimes one is permitted to transgress an *aveirah* rather than to cause

shame to another Yid. For our discussion, we can explain this phrase as follows: "Honoring your fellow man is so important, even if by honoring your fellow man it might have him transgress the *aveirah* of *gaavah*. Giving honor *דוחה לא תעשה שבתורה*, is more important."

Bikur Cholim

Following the Mishnah's order (*Peiah* 1:1) of the mitzvos that are rewarded in this world, we are up to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, visiting the ill.

Bikur cholim is discussed in this week's *parashah*, as it states (18:20), והודעת להם את הדרך, "Teach them the way that they should go..." and the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 30:) explains that this refers to visiting the sick.⁷

7. Apparently, *bikur cholim* is called, *ילכו*, 'to go,' because one goes to the home of the sick.

illness becomes unbearable, and then he dies, and that would be considered murder."

The Gemara (*Nedarim* 40.) tells, "One of Reb Akiva's students was ill, and the scholars weren't visiting him. Reb Akiva visited him. He swept and washed the floor, and this revived the spirits of the ill student. He said, 'Rebbe, you granted me life.'

"Reb Akiva went out and taught his students, 'Whoever doesn't visit the sick, it is like murder. Whoever visits the sick causes him to live.'"

The Seder HaYom writes, "*Bikur cholim* is the highest form of *gemilus chasadim*. As Chazal (*Nedarim* 39:) write, '*Bikur cholim* אין לו שיעור, there's no limit.'... Because sometimes with his clever, encouraging, and kind words, he can revive the ill person, and enable him to live... We saw this many times. A person visits a sick fellow

for an hour or two and the ill person says 'I feel like a new person. My *neshamah* came back to me,' and we see that the illness became lighter."

A fundamental part of *bikur cholim* is bringing joy to the ill person. We know that positive spirits and hope play a significant role in a person's ability to fight off his disease. Therefore, the Rambam (in his *sefer* on health) writes, "Tell an ill person happy stories that will gladden his heart. Tell him interesting news that will take his mind off his illness and make him laugh (and it will make the people who are taking care of him laugh, too). When you choose someone to spend time with an ill person, choose a person who can make him happy because that will be the most beneficial for an ill person."

Sodi Razyah (attributed to the Rokeach) writes, "When one visits a sick person he should speak words of solace to his heart."

Bikur cholim is discussed in *Tehillim* (41), אשרי משכיל אל, "Fortunate is the person who takes care of the poor..." The Gemara (*Nedarim* 40.) explains, אין דל, "the translation of דל is ill..." Thus, the chapter is referring to the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, and the chapter discusses his rewards:

'He will be saved from a bad day." The Gemara explains: He will be saved from Gehinom.

ה' ישמרהו ויחיהו ואושר בארץ ואל "Hashem will protect him, grant him life, happiness in this world, and he won't be delivered into the hands of his enemies."

The Gemara explains:

ישמרהו: Hashem will protect him from the *yetzer hara*.

ויחיהו: Hashem will save him from afflictions.

ואושר בארץ: Everyone will honor him.

ואל תתנהו בנפש אויביו: He will have good friends who will help him by giving him good advice, and he will be protected from bad friends who would harm him with their bad influences.

The *meforshim* explain that these rewards are based on the concept of מדה במדה, כנגד מדה, measure per measure. For example, the Gemara says, יחיהו means that by visiting the sick one is saved from afflictions. This reward is מדה כנגד מדה, measure per measure. He saved the ill person from afflictions; therefore, his reward is that he won't be afflicted. As well, he will be protected from the type of illness the sick person had. Just as he helped the sick person overcome that illness, Hashem will help him, and he won't become afflicted with that same illness.

Increasing Peace

The Mishnah (*Peiah* 1:1) states that if someone

increases shalom (peace), he will receive his reward in this world.

It states (19:2), ויחנו במדבר ויחן, "The nation camped opposite the mountain [Har Sinai]." Rashi notes that it states ויחן, in the singular, and not ויחנו. This is to tell us that the nation was united. As Rashi writes, באיש אחד בלב אחד, "Like one person, with one united heart, אבל שאר כל החנויות, בתרעומות ומחלוקת, but in all other camps they were complaining and fighting with one another." By *matan Torah* they stood before the mountain, united.

The Or HaChaim explains that unity is needed to succeed in learning Torah. He writes, "Chazal (*Brachos* 63) tell us that [Torah scholars] should be united, with a whole heart, and they shouldn't learn Torah, alone, by themselves.... אלא יתוערו יחד ויחדרו זה לזה ויסבירו פנים זה לזה, rather, they should get together, sharpen one

another's intellect, and smile to one another. Therefore, it states ויחן שם ישראל in the singular tense, they became like one person, and only then did they deserve to receive the Torah."

Reb Akiva Eiger *zt'l* adds that הר, mountain, represents the *yetzer hara* (see *Succah* 52.). The *pasuk* is saying ויחן שם ישראל כנגד ההר, when Yidden are united, that is their strength against the *yetzer hara*.

Chassidim relate a story of a chassid who wanted to commit a grave *aveirah*. The chassid thought to himself, "If I do this *aveirah*, I won't be able to go to my Rebbe anymore. My Rebbe will know, with his *ruach hakodesh*, that I committed the *aveirah*, and it will be very embarrassing for me to be there in front of him."

But on second thought, he decided, "So, I won't go to the Rebbe anymore."

But then he thought, "If I don't go to the Rebbe, I won't meet all my friends who go to the Rebbe. How can I survive without all my friends?" With that thought in mind, he didn't commit the *aveirah*.

When he came to his Rebbe, his Rebbe said, "Good friends can accomplish more than what a Rebbe can accomplish." The thought of being separated from his friends stopped him from committing the *aveirah*, but the thought of leaving the Rebbe didn't stop him. This is as Reb Akiva Eiger taught; with unity one can overcome the *yetzer hara*.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner *zt'l* (*Toras Avos*) also teaches that הָר in this *pasuk* (*ibid.* 19:2) alludes to the *yetzer hara*. He explains וַיְהִי שֶׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְהִי כַּנֶּגֶד הָרֶר means that the

Yidden's unity and *achdus* was נגד הָרֶר, opposite and contrary to the will of the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* wants division; and likes when Yidden are divided.

Emunah

As we list the mitzvos that are rewarded in this world, we shouldn't forget to add to the list the mitzvah of having *emunah*. We are rewarded for having *emunah* in this world, as the Rebbe Reb Hershele *zt'l* (Chanukas HaTorah) explains:

The Torah teaches (*Devarim* 24:15), בְּיוֹמוֹ הָתֵן שָׂכָרוֹ, that when one hires workers, he must pay his workers the same day they worked. He can't push off their payment for a later date.⁸

8. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat* 339:3) "When must he pay his workers? If the worker worked in the daytime, he can pay him the entire night. If he doesn't pay him before daybreak, he has transgressed... If the worker worked at night, he can pay

However, if the workers were hired through a broker or contractor, this halachah doesn't apply (see *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 339:6).

Chazal tell us that Hashem keeps the Torah with all its halachos, so we understand that Hashem keeps the halachah of *ביומו שברו*, תתן שכרו, to pay workers on the same day. So why do we receive reward in Olam HaBa? We should be rewarded the very same day we perform the mitzvos, in this world!

Rebbe Hershele explains that Hashem gave us the Torah through Moshe Rabbeinu. He was the middleman in this contract, and therefore the obligation of paying the same day doesn't apply. However, we heard the first two commandments of the *Aseres HaDibros* (אנכי ולא יהיה)

לך) directly from Hashem's mouth. Therefore, when one fulfills these two commandments, Hashem performs the mitzvah of *ביומו שברו*, תתן שכרו, and we are rewarded in this world. Thus, for *emunah* (which is discussed in the first two commandments), we are rewarded in this world.

Review *Emunah*

Reb Itche Efron z'l was a chassid of Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l and the father-in-law of the Beis HaLevi zt'l. Once, Rebbe Moshe Kobriner visited Reb Itche's home, and Reb Itche wanted the Korbriner to meet with the Beis HaLevi. Therefore, he put the Kobriner's bags in the room where his father-in-law, the Beis HaLevi, studied. That way, when Reb Moshe Kobriner would go get his bag, he would come to the room where the Beis

him the entire following day. If he doesn't pay before nighttime, he has transgressed..."

HaLevi is learning, and they would get to know one another.

Indeed, before leaving, Reb Moshe Kobriner came to the room to pick up his bag, and he saw the Beis HaLevi immersed in his studies. Reb Moshe Kobriner asked him what he was studying. The Beis HaLevi replied that he was learning *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim*. The Kobriner asked, "Did you study the first *se'if*?"

The Beis HaLevi replied, "I did, but I didn't understand it."

"What is your question?"

"The Rema writes that a person should always remember that Hashem is watching him. The Rema continues that when one thinks about this, *מיד יגיע עליו*, *היראה*, 'He will immediately attain *yiras Shamayim*.' I remind myself that Hashem is watching over me, and I can't say that I am

immediately grasped with fear."

Reb Moshe Kobriner replied, "*Shulchan Aruch* doesn't state that when one *thinks* about this, he will immediately be grasped with fear. *Shulchan Aruch* states *כשישים האדם אל לבו... 'When a person places this awareness on his heart.'* It isn't enough to just think about the fact that Hashem is watching us. One has to place this awareness in his heart. One has to think about it enough times until it makes an impression on him."

Parashas Bo begins, *בא אל פרעה כי אני הכבדתי את לבו*, "Come to Pharaoh because I hardened his heart..." The Noam Elimelech says that *בא* means to come repeatedly. Unlike *לך* which means to go once. Hashem was telling Moshe that he should go often to Pharaoh.

Why?

The Noam Elimelech writes, "When a tzaddik

witnesses Hashem's wonders, or when a tzaddik hears holy *divrei Torah* from his friend who is a tzaddik, he will be *mislahev* (become very motivated) in *avodas Hashem*. But when a *rasha* sees Hashem's wonders one time, or when a tzaddik speaks to him only one time, he will do *teshuvah* for a moment, but it won't last for long... Nevertheless, if a tzaddik speaks to him every day, or when he sees Hashem's wonders day after day, it can make a long-lasting impression. Therefore, it states, **בא אל פרעה**, 'Come to Pharaoh', this means he should go to Pharaoh every day. It doesn't state, **לך אל פרעה**, 'Go to Pharaoh' which sounds like to go once to Pharaoh. The Torah writes the reason, **כי אני הכבדתי את לבו**, 'I hardened his heart'" and speaking to him just once won't make an impression.

For the past year, Klal Yisrael (and *l'havdil*, the entire world) has been dealing with the serious epidemic,

which took the lives of many good Yidden and tzaddikim. We mustn't think that it happened by accident. Everything is by *hashgachah pratis*, and Hashem is asking us to return to Him. Hopefully, this message, which has been playing on our hearts for almost a year, will finally penetrate, and we will do what Hashem is asking from us.

This can be compared to someone careful that his tefillin should be in the right place on his head. But he has OCD, and he keeps asking people, "Is the tefillin in the right place? Perhaps it isn't in its exact place? Perhaps it is slightly off to the the side?"

Someone told him, "The tefillin is on the right place on your head. But your head isn't in the right place. Now it's time for you to put your head to the tefillin." He meant, "It isn't enough to have the tefillin on the right place on the head; the head must learn

the messages that the tefillin teach us." Every day we put on tefillin, and we remind ourselves, again and again, that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim, and that Hashem can do anything and everything. We must instill these lessons in our heads.⁹

The Entire Picture

The *parashah* begins, וישמע יתרו, "Yisro heard" the miracles that happened to the Jewish nation, and therefore, Yisro came to convert.

The entire world also heard about the miracles, but only Yisro came. As Rebbe Dovid Lelover *zt'l* explained, אלע האבן געהערט אין ער

האט דערהערט, "Everyone heard, but he understood."

What did Yisro hear that others missed? Why was Yisro inspired to join the Jewish nation while others weren't? The *pasuk* clarifies that this is because, וישמע יתרו... את כל אשר עשה אלקים למשה ולישראל, "Yisro heard... everything Hashem did for Moshe and Bnei Yisrael." The keyword is אה כל, *everything*. Because when one sees a wonder, he might tell himself, "Perhaps it was an accident; perhaps it was by chance." But when many miracles occur, he is convinced that this is from Hashem.

The uniqueness of Yisro is that he saw את כל אשר עשה

9. Once, *erev Shabbos* וואר, when the Chofetz Chaim was being *maavir sidrah*, he suddenly broke out in a hearty laughter. The surprised *shamesh* wondered what was so funny. The Chofetz Chaim explained that he was thinking about the *Rashi* (*Shemos* 8:2) that says that one large frog came to Mitzrayim, the Mitzrim hit it many times, and each time someone hit the frog, many frogs came out of it. As *Rashi* writes, צפרדע אחת היתה, והיו מכין אותה והיא מתות נחלים, נחלים. The Chofetz Chaim, with his clear *emunah*, imagined how it appeared, and this made him laugh.

אלקים, *everything* Hashem performed. He didn't think of each miracle and *makah* (plague) separately, as most of the world did. One miracle wouldn't convince him. But when he took into account the entire picture: *kriyas Yam Suf*, *milchemes Amalek*, and all the other miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish nation, he knew without a doubt that it was all from Hashem, and he came to join the Jewish people.

Pharaoh had the exact opposite approach. His country was smitten with *barad*. All people and animals in the fields were killed. The barley crops and the flax crops were destroyed. However, two species, *החטה והכוסמת*, the wheat, and the spelt, weren't affected. As the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 9:32) tells us, they weren't fully grown and stiff yet, so the *barad* didn't damage them.

The salvation of those two crops caused Pharaoh to think that the entire

makah was a natural fluke. He said to himself, "If it was from Hashem, as Moshe is telling me, why didn't it destroy all the crops?"

Three weeks later came *makas arbeh*, locusts. The Torah (*Shemos* 10:15) states, ויאכל את כל עשב הארץ ואת כל פרי העץ אשר הותיר הברד, the locust ate everything the *barad* left over. Now the wheat and spelt crops were also destroyed.

If Pharaoh had looked at *כל אשר עשה אלקים*, everything Hashem performed, he would know that it is from Hashem. Yisro took in the entire picture, and he recognized Hashem.

Torah and Mitzvos Bring to *Emunah*

In *mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah we say, ובתורתך כתוב לאמר שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד. Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* said that this could be translated, ובתורתך כתוב, everything written in the Torah, the purpose is, לאמר,

so Yidden will be able to say, שמע ישראל... אחד, that Hashem is One."

Similarly, the *Aseres HaDibros* begins with the words (20:1-2): וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר אנכי ה' אלקך, "Hashem said all the following, to say, 'I am Hashem your G-d.'"

The Noam Elimelech (לקוטי שושנים ד"ה ויש נוחלין) explains these *pesukim* as follows:

וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה, Hashem taught us the Torah, with all its details. Torah, with all its details. לאמר, so Yidden will be able to say, אנכי ה' אלקך. Torah brings *emunah* into our hearts.

Therefore, the *Zohar* calls the mitzvos, תרי"ג עיטין, 613 ideas/ advice, because the mitzvos are 613 guides to attaining *emunah*.

One of the mitzvos of the Torah is to be attached to *talmidei chachamim*. As the Rambam (*Hilchos Deios* 6:2) writes, "מצוה עשה, positive command, to be *davuk*, close and attached,

to *talmidei chachamim* and to be close to their students so that you can learn from their ways. As it states in the Torah, ובו תדבק, 'Be attached to Him.' Is it possible to become attached to the *Shechinah*? Therefore, the *chachamim* explain that the mitzvah is to be *davuk*, attached, to the scholars and their students. A person must try to marry the daughter of a *talmid chacham*, and he should marry off his daughter to a *talmid chacham*. He should eat and drink with Torah scholars, do business with them, and connect with them in every way possible, as it states ולדבקה בו. Chazal (*Avos* 1:4) say, הוי מתאבק בעפר, רגליהם ושותה בצמא את דבריהם, you should sit before their feet and drink thirstily from their lessons."

The Meor V'Shemesh (*Ki Savo*) writes, "The Rebbe of Neschiz *zt'l* taught that people go to tzaddikim for various reasons. Some want to learn how they can daven to Hashem with love

and fear. Some want to learn how they can learn Torah *lishmah*. Some go to tzaddikim, so that they can attain very high *madreigos*. But these aren't the main reasons we should go to tzaddikim. One should go to tzaddikim to get to know Hashem and gain awareness of His presence."

All mitzvos grant us awareness of Hashem, and

the mitzvah of being close to tzaddikim, in particular, will help us attain awareness of Hashem.

The Maor v'Shemesh concludes, "There is no limit to how much one can be aware of Hashem. The more one knows, the more he realizes that he doesn't know anything. Every day he will seek to increase his awareness."