



**“And you shall see it and you shall remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos and perform them”**

## **The Mitzvah of Tzitzis Is the Paradigm of a Mitzvas Asei Stemming from Ahavah as Opposed to Mitzvos Lo Ta’aseh which Stem from Yirah**

This week we read parshas Shelach. Hence, it is fitting that we examine the mitzvah of Tzitzis which possesses a propitious attribute not found in any of the other taryag mitzvos. Merely gazing at them reminds us to observe all of the other mitzvos. Here is the pertinent passuk (Bamidbar 15, 37): **“ויראתם אותו”** וזכרתם את כל מצוות ה' ועשיתם אותם, ולא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם אשר אתם זונים אחריהם, למען תזכרו ועשיתם את כל מצוותי והייתם קדושים. **לאליקים.** **And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos and perform them; and you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvos and be holy to your G-d.**

Now, Yisrael’s preeminent commentary, Rashi, who usually prefers to present the simple meaning of pesukim—the “pshat”—chooses, on this occasion, to provide an interpretation based on “remez”—allusion: **“And you shall remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos.”** For the gematria of the word **זיציית** is 600. Add the eight strings and the five knots, and the result is 613. This, in fact, is consistent with the elucidation in the Gemara (Menachos 43b): **“ויראתם אותו וזכרתם ועשיתם, ראייה”** —**“and you will see it,”** and you will remember, and you will perform; seeing leads to remembering; remembering leads to performing. There Rashi comments: **Seeing the Tzitzis leads to remembering the mitzvos.** We must endeavor to explain the logical connection between the mitzvah of Tzitzis and the observance of all the mitzvos.

Additionally, we will examine an enlightening chiddush from Chazal concerning the juxtaposition of the incident of

“mikosheish”—the man who desecrated the Shabbas in the midbar by gathering wood and the mitzvah of Tzitzis which is recorded immediately afterwards. Here is the pertinent passuk regarding the “mikosheish” (ibid. 15, 32): **“ויהיו בני ישראל—במדבר וימצאו איש מקושש עצים ביום השבת”** **Bnei Yisrael were in the midbar and they found a man gathering wood on the Shabbas day.**

To summarize the passage in the Tanna D’Vei Eliyahu Rabbah (Chapter 26): **HKB”H** asks Moshe, **“Why did he desecrate the Shabbas?”** Moshe replies that he does not know. **HKB”H** explains that on all of the six weekdays, the men of Yisrael don tefillin on their heads and their arms; seeing the tefillin prompts them to correct their ways and actions. **On Shabbas, however, the tefillin are absent from their heads and arms; therefore, this one desecrated the Shabbas.** Precisely at that moment, **HKB”H** instructed Moshe to go and select a single mitzvah for them that they will practice routinely both on Shabbasos and holidays—namely, the mitzvah of Tzitzis. This mitzvah would serve as a reminder for Yisrael in place of tefillin to observe all of the mitzvos, especially the mitzvah of Shabbas, which is equivalent to all of the other mitzvos.

We will endeavor to explain how the mitzvah of Tzitzis reminds us to observe the Shabbasos and the Yamim Tovim. Clearly, **HKB”H** instructed Moshe to find a mitzvah that is practiced daily, including Shabbasos and Yamim Tovim. Nevertheless, what is the deeper connection between the mitzvah of Tzitzis and the observance of Shabbas and Yom Tov?

## See This Mitzvah and Remember Another Mitzvah that Is Dependent on It

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing two explanations elucidated in the Gemara (ibid.) regarding the passuk: **"And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them."** (1) **"תניא, וראיתם אותו (1) זכרתם, ראה מצוה זו, וזכור מצוה אחרת התלויה בו, ואיזו זו, זו קריית שמע, As taught in a Baraisa: It says in the Torah: "And you shall see it and remember." This implies that upon seeing the threads of this mitzvah, it will cause you to remember another mitzvah that is contingent on it. And which mitzvah is this (that is contingent on Tzitzis)? Krias Shema. For we learned in a Mishnah: From when may we recite the Shema in the morning? From the time one can distinguish between "techeiles" and white. In other words, when a person looks at the Tzitzis that he is wearing, which have both white threads and threads of "techeiles," he will recall the mitzvah of Krias Shema of Shacharis, which is recited in the morning once there is enough daylight to distinguish between the two types of threads.**

**"ותניא אידך, וראיתם אותו וזכרתם, ראה מצוה זו וזכור מצוה אחרת (2) הסמוכה לה, ואיזו זו, זו מצות כלאים, דכתיב (דברים כב-יא) לא תלבש שעטנז צמר ופשתים יחדיו גדילים תעשה לך. And it was taught in another Baraisa: "And you shall see it and remember." See the threads of this mitzvah and remember another mitzvah that is juxtaposed to it. Which mitzvah is that? It is the mitzvah of "kilayim." For it is written (Devarim 22, 11): "You shall not wear 'shaatnez,' wool and linen together. Twisted threads you shall make for yourselves on the four corners of your garment." In other words, when a person sees the Tzitzis referred to in the passuk: **"Twisted threads you shall make for yourselves,"** he recalls the mitzvah of "kilayim" mentioned in the previous passuk, prohibiting one from wearing certain combined fibers.**

The Maharsha in Chiddushei Aggados finds both explanations puzzling. After all, the passuk states explicitly that upon seeing the Tzitzis **"you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them."** So, how can the Gemara assert that the sight of the Tzitzis will cause you to remember only a single, specific mitzvah—Krias Shema or "kilayim"?

With regards to the Gemara's first explanation, the Maharsha answers that the first two passages of Krias Shema encompass all of the mitzvos. In the first passage, one accepts upon

oneself the yoke of the sovereignty of Heaven—"ol malchus Shamayim"—and in the second passage one accepts upon oneself the yoke of mitzvos. This fact is taught in the following Mishnah (Berachos 13a): **למה קדמה פרשת שמע לזהיה אם שמוע, כדי שיקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים תחילה ואחר כך מקבל עליו עול מצוות.** **Why does the passage of "shema" precede the passage of "v'haya im shamo"? So that a person will accept upon himself the yoke of Heaven's sovereignty first, and then accept upon himself the yoke of mitzvos.**

We have also learned in the Gemara (Makkos 24a): **שש מאות ושלוש עשרה מצוות נאמרו לו למשה... בא חבקוק והעמידן על אחת 613 mitzvos were given to Moshe. . . Chabakuk came along and incorporated them into one, as it says (Chabakuk 2, 4), "But the righteous person shall live through his faith."** Now, with the mitzvah of Krias Shema one accepts upon oneself "ol malchus Shamayim" and the belief in the oneness of Hashem. So, when a person gazes upon his Tzitzis and remembers the mitzvah of Krias Shema, it is as if he remembers all of the taryag (613) mitzvos encompassed by Krias Shema.

The Maharsha has more difficulty reconciling the Gemara's second explanation—that the Tzitzis cause one to remember the mitzvah of "kilayim." How does remembering this single mitzvah concur with the passuk's statement that seeing the Tzitzis will cause one to remember all of Hashem's mitzvos? He refers to the Gemara (Yevamos 3b). There we learn from the juxtaposition of the mitzvah of Tzitzis and the mitzvah of "kilayim" that throughout the Torah a mitzvas asei overrides a mitzvah lo ta'aseh: **"עשה דוחה לא תעשה"**. Even though the Torah prohibits wearing a garment with a combination of wool and linen threads; nevertheless, this does not apply to the mitzvah of Tzitzis. With regards to the mitzvah of Tzitzis, if a person has a (four-cornered) linen garment, he is obliged to place Tzitzis on it containing a woolen thread of "techeiles." In other words, the positive commandment—mitzvas asei—of **"twisted threads you shall make for yourselves"** overrides the prohibition—mitzvas lo ta'aseh—of **"you shall not wear 'shaatnez.'"**

Based on this teaching, the Maharsha explains that when the passuk says: **"And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos"**—it does not really mean that seeing the Tzitzis will cause a person to remember all of the mitzvos. What it really means is that upon seeing the Tzitzis, one will remember the juxtaposition of the mitzvos of "kilayim" ("shaatnez") and Tzitzis—from which we derive the principle

that a mitzvas asei overrides a mitzvas lo ta'aseh. This then is the implication of **"all of Hashem's mitzvos."** The word **"all"** comes to include all garments; so, even a linen garment must be adorned with Tzitzis.

### An Asei Overrides a Lo Ta'aseh because Ahavah Is Greater than Yirah

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, I would like to propose an intriguing explanation regarding the Gemara's second explanation—to clarify how the juxtaposition of the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis to the mitzvas lo ta'aseh of "kilayim" justifies the Torah's statement that seeing the Tzitzis causes a person to remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them. First, however, I would like to explain why HKB"H chose to teach us the principle that a mitzvas asei overrides a mitzvas lo ta'aseh throughout the Torah specifically via the mitzvah of Tzitzis.

To begin with, we will refer to the commentary of the Ramban in parshas Yisro on the passuk (Shemos 20, 8): **"זכור את יום השבת לקדשו—remember the Shabbas day to sanctify it."** He notes that on the first luchos, the term **"זכור"—"remember"**—is employed; this connotes a mitzvas asei. On the second luchos (Devarim 5, 12), the term **"שמור"—"safeguard"**—is employed; this connotes a mitzvas lo ta'aseh. Then the Ramban explains why HKB"H saw fit to give us the Shabbas both as a mitzvas asei--**"זכור"**—and as a mitzvas lo ta'aseh--**"שמור"**. He explains that a mitzvas asei is related to "Ahavas Hashem"; whereas a mitzvas lo ta'aseh is related to "yiras Hashem." For this reason, **"an asei overrides a lo ta'aseh,"** because "Ahavas Hashem" is superior to "yiras Hashem."

He explains that a person who fulfills the command of his Master does so out of love; as a result, his Master shows him mercy. Conversely, a person who abstains from doing something that is negative and bad in the eyes of his Master does so out of fear. Therefore, a mitzvas asei is superior to a mitzvas lo ta'aseh just like ahavah is superior to yirah.

Now, we have learned that the purpose of mitzvas Tzitzis is to **"remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them."** Furthermore, we learn in the Gemara (Menachos 43b) that it is equivalent to all of the mitzvos: **"תניא איך וראיתם אותו וזכרתם את כל מצוות ה', שקולה מצוה זו כנגד כל המצוות כולן—it was taught in another Baraisa: "And you shall see it and remember all the mitzvos of Hashem." This teaches that the observance of this**

**mitzvah is equivalent to the observance of all the mitzvos combined.** Therefore, it was fitting for HKB"H to employ the mitzvah of Tzitzis specifically to establish the principle that an asei overrides a lo ta'aseh in all Torah matters. Thus, we learn that mitzvos asei are superior to mitzvos lo ta'aseh because they stem from ahavah rather than from yirah.

It is precisely for this reason that in the passage pertaining to Tzitzis, HKB"H introduced the mitzvas asei of: **"And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them"**—prior to the mitzvas lo ta'aseh of: **"And you shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray"**—which is the key to safeguarding and avoiding transgressing all the mitzvos lo ta'aseh. As Rashi explains: **The heart and the eyes are the spies of the body, procuring aveiros for it. The eye sees, the heart desires, and the body commits the aveirah.** Hence, HKB"H presented that which stems from ahavah ahead of that which stems from yirah.

Let us now return to the second explanation of the Gemara: **"And you shall see it and remember." See the threads of this mitzvah and remember another mitzvah that is juxtaposed to it. Which mitzvah is that? It is the mitzvah of "kilayim." For it is written: "You shall not wear 'shaatnez,' wool and linen together. Twisted threads you shall make for yourselves."** The Gemara is instructing us to remember that the prohibition of "kilayim" is juxtaposed to the mitzvah of Tzitzis. Thus, we learn that the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis overrides the mitzvas lo ta'aseh of "shaatnez." It is evident from this principle that observing an asei from ahavah is superior to observing a lo ta'aseh from yirah.

This then is the message of the passuk: **"You shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos and perform them."** We are being encouraged specifically to learn from the mitzvah of Tzitzis to strive to perform all the mitzvos asei which stem from ahavah. Nevertheless: **"You shall not follow after your heart and after your eyes, after which you stray"**—we are admonished not to transgress the 365 mitzvos lo ta'aseh by safeguarding the kedushah of our eyes.

### The Six Weekdays Prepare Us for Shabbas Kodesh

With this understanding, we will now revisit the passage in the Tanna D'Vei Eliyahu Rabbah. There we learned that HKB"H gave us the mitzvah of Tzitzis as a "segulah"—a propitious aid—for Shabbas observance. Now, we learn from the incredible words



of the Noam Elimelech that a Jew's service of Hashem during the weekdays is considered service stemming from yirah, whereas on Shabbas Kodesh, it considered service stemming from ahavah. Nevertheless, it behooves us to mention and have Shabbas in mind on all six weekdays to extend the ahavah of Hashem from Shabbas to the weekdays as well. Here are his sacred words:

"ונראה כי השבת הוא רק אהבה, והאדם צריך לקשר ימי החול בשבת כי ימי החול הם יראה, וכתבנו שהיראה צריכה להיות מתוך אהבה, ולכן מטעם זה אנו מונים ימי החול על ידי השבת, היום יום ראשון בשבת, וכן כל יום ויום, כדי לקשר השבת בימי החול, שגם בימי החול יהיה אהבה ויהיה יראה מתוך אהבה, וכשהיראה היא מתוך אהבה אזי גם ימי החול נקראים שבת, כי הם גם כן מדרגות אהבה, אבל אינם כמו השבת עצמו, כי השבת הוא רק אהבה לבד, אבל ימי החול הם יראה מחמת אהבה."

Shabbas is exclusively "ahavah" (love and adoration). Man must connect the weekdays with Shabbas, because they are characterized by "yirah"; we have explained that the "yirah" must emanate from love. Therefore, for this reason, we count the weekdays based on their relationship to the Shabbas—"today is the first day of the Shabbas," and so on and so forth for each day of the week—in order to connect the Shabbas with the weekdays. Thus, there will be "ahavah" and "yirah" emanating from "ahavah" during the weekdays, as well. When the weekday service achieves this level, they, too, are called "Shabbas" to some degree. For, they are also characterized by a level of "ahavah," albeit not to the same degree as Shabbas itself. After all, Shabbas is exclusively "ahavah," whereas the weekdays are "yirah" based on "ahavah."

This fundamental idea is repeated in the writings of his pupil, the great Chozeh of Lublin, zy"a, in his sefer Divrei Emes (Yisro). He interprets the passuk (Shemos 34,21): "ששת ימים תעבוד"—you shall work for six days and on the seventh day you shall rest—based on the formula recited at the conclusion of the Shabbas (in the berachah of Chonen HaDa'as): "אבינו מלכנו החל עלינו הימים הבאים לקראתנו לשלום, חשוכים מכל חטא ומנוקים מכל עון ומדובקים ביראתך". We pray that our Father, our King, will allow us to begin the days of the upcoming week free of sin and imbued with "yirah"—fear and reverence of the Almighty.

This clearly indicates that the service during the six weekdays is characterized by "yirah"; whereas the service on Shabbas is characterized by "ahavah." Thus, when the passuk states: "ששת ימים תעבוד"—you shall work for six days—it is

referring to work and service out of "yirah." After all, the term "תעבוד" connotes servitude, and a slave serves his master out of fear, as it is written (Malachi 1, 6): "ואם אדונים אני איה מוראי"—and if I am a Master, where is My fear? Nevertheless, as the continuation of the passuk indicates: "וביום השביעי תשבות"—and on the seventh day you shall rest—on Shabbas, one should cease and rest from one's service of "yirah" and advance to the level of service of Hashem out of "ahavah."

This explains very nicely the beautiful allusion presented by the Bnei Yissaschar (Shabbasos 1, 9) in the name of his father-in-law, the holy Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy"a. He points out that the numerical value of the words: "אהב"ה בכ"ל, אהב"ה בכ"ל" (meaning "love with all of your heart, love with all of your soul and love with all of your resources") equals "שבת". This indicates that on Shabbas, the three types of love mentioned in the passuk (Devarim 6, 1) are revealed: "ואהבת את ה' אלקיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאודך"—You shall love Hashem, your G-d, with all of your heart, with all of your soul and with all of your resources. Thus, it was passed down from the Noam Elimelech to the Chozeh of Lublin to the Rabbi of Zidichov that the service of Hashem on Shabbas is an expression of all three aspects of ahavah.

We can now begin to comprehend to some small degree the esoteric dialogue that ensued between HKB"H and Moshe Rabeinu after the "mikosheish" violated the command of the Almighty by desecrating the Shabbas: HKB"H asks Moshe, "Why did he desecrate the Shabbas?" Moshe replies that he does not know. HKB"H explains that on all of the six weekdays, the men of Yisrael don tefillin on their heads and their arms; seeing the tefillin prompts them to correct their ways and actions. On Shabbas, however, the tefillin are absent from their heads and arms; therefore, this one desecrated the Shabbas.

Clearly, HKB"H is communicating to Moshe that during the six weekdays a Jew serves Hashem primarily with the midah of yirah, like a servant. In contrast, on Shabbas, a Jew must rest from the service of yirah and serve Hashem with ahavah, like a son. But a Jew needs someone or something to remind him to step up his game and elevate his service of Hashem on Shabbas. Since the "mikosheish" was not accustomed to do so, he ended up desecrating the Shabbas. Therefore, HKB"H instructed Moshe to find a way to remind a Jew to serve Hashem on Shabbas with ahavah.

**At that moment, HKB"H instructed Moshe to go and select for them a single mitzvah that they would practice both on Shabbasos and holidays—namely, the mitzvah of Tzitzis. Thus, it says: "Speak to Bnei Yisrael . . . they shall make themselves Tzitzis on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations . . . they shall see it and remember all of Hashem's mitzvos . . ."**

Let us explain based on what we have discussed. We learned a fundamental principle from the mitzvah of Tzitzis that applies to all of the mitzvos: **An asei overrides a lo ta'aseh.** The Ramban explained that this is because ahavah is superior to yirah. Thus, it is ever so apparent how important the service of Hashem is on Shabbas as compared to the weekdays, seeing as the former stems from ahavah and the latter stems from yirah. Hence, the mitzvah of Tzitzis on Shabbas is a wonderful reinforcement for the service of Hashem on Shabbas Kodesh characterized by ahavah.

### The Incredible Explanation of the Chamudei Tzvi

It is with great pleasure that we will now present a royal treat to our esteemed audience from the brilliant Rabbi Tzvi Yair, ztz"l, in the wonderful sefer Chamudei Tzvi on this week's parsha based on in-depth analysis and dialectic. We learned in the Gemara above: **"And you shall see it and remember." See the threads of this mitzvah and remember another mitzvah that is juxtaposed to it. Which mitzvah is that? It is the mitzvah of "kilayim."** Recall that the Maharsha posed a very legitimate question. The passuk states explicitly: **"And you shall remember all of Hashem's mitzvos."** So, how can the Gemara answer that the passuk is speaking about remembering only the mitzvah of "kilayim"?

We find a dispute in the Talmud Yerushalmi (Kiddushin 33b) concerning a man who betroths a woman on the condition that he will arrive on a certain date to complete the "nisuin" (marriage): **"אירע לו אונס רבי יוחנן אמר אונסא כמאן דלא עבד רבי שמעון בן לקיש אמר אונסא כמאן דעבד."** **Something unintentional happened to him**—an accident—and he did not arrive on the designated date. **Rabbi Yochanan said: In the event of circumstances beyond one's control, it is considered as if one did not complete the act** and, hence, she is not married to him. **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: In the event of circumstances beyond one's control, it is considered as if one completed the act.**

All of the poskim in the Shulchan Aruch (C.M. 21) rule like Rabbi Yochanan that in the event of an accident, it is considered as if he did not fulfill his part of the bargain. Now, in truth, the Gemara states (A.Z. 54a): **"אונסא רחמנא פטריה"**—**the Merciful One exempts from liability someone who is coerced** (i.e., a victim of circumstances beyond his control). The source for the general ruling that one is not held accountable for actions that were unavoidable is the passuk discussing a betrothed girl who was coerced (Devarim 22, 26): **"ולנערה לא תעשה דבר"**—**but you shall do nothing to the young woman.** This ruling, however, only applies to a situation where a person was coerced to do something. The act is annulled and considered as if he did not do it. If, however, he was prevented from doing something due to circumstances beyond his control, we do not say that it is as if he did complete the act.

Now, consider a situation where a person is confronted by a mitzvas asei and a mitzvas lo ta'aseh that contradict each other. For instance, say he possesses a four-cornered linen garment. If he complies with the positive commandment—mitzvas asei—to place Tzitzis on it containing a woolen thread of "techeiles," then he is inadvertently violating the prohibition—mitzvas lo ta'aseh—not to wear "shaatnez"—wool and linen together. On the other hand, if he observes the prohibition of not wearing "shaatnez," he will be forced to neglect the mitzvas asei of placing Tzitzis on his garment containing a woolen thread of "techeiles." Thus, we have a dilemma; which option is preferable? Should he not fulfill the mitzvas asei or ignore the mitzvas lo ta'aseh due to these irreconcilable circumstances?

### The Asei Overrides the Lo Ta'aseh because It Is Considered as if He Fulfilled Them Both

Now, as mentioned, the halachah accords with the viewpoint of Rabbi Yochanan; we do not say **"אונסא כמאן דעביד"**—that if a person is prevented from completing an act due to unavoidable circumstances, it is as if he completed the act. We can suggest that this is why we say that **"an asei overrides a lo ta'aseh."** For, it is preferable that he actually perform the mitzvas asei of placing Tzitzis with a thread of "techeiles" on his garment and inadvertently transgress the lo ta'aseh of wearing a garment containing "kilayim." For, if he chooses to observe the lo ta'aseh of not wearing "shaatnez," he will be forced to neglect the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis. Now, since we do not say **"אונסא כמאן דעביד"**, in essence, he failed to comply with the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis.

Conversely, if he performs the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis with the thread of “techeiles,” he will be forced to transgress the prohibition of wearing “shaatnez.” Now, since all opinions concur that “אונסא כמאן דלא עבד”—failure to perform an act due to circumstances beyond one’s control is considered as if he did not perform the act; it turns out that he observed both the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis and the mitzvas lo ta’aseh of not wearing “shaatnez.” On the one hand, he fulfilled the mitzvas asei by performing the actual deed. On the other hand, he observed the mitzvas lo ta’aseh by default. Therefore, we hold that an asei overrides a lo ta’aseh.

Based on this analysis, the Chamudei Tzvi explains the meaning of the Gemara as follows: **“And you shall see it and remember.” See the threads of this mitzvah and remember another mitzvah that is juxtaposed to it. Which mitzvah is that? It is the mitzvah of “kilayim.”** From the juxtaposition of these two mitzvos, we learn the principle of **“עשה דוחה לא”—an asei overrides a lo ta’aseh**; seeing as the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis overrides the lo ta’aseh prohibiting the wearing of “kilayim.” For, if he neglects to perform the mitzvas asei of Tzitzis because of the prohibition which he has no control over, it will not be viewed as if he fulfilled the mitzvah—because we do not say **“אונסא כמאן דעבד”**.

For this reason, the Torah admonishes us: **“And you shall see it, and you shall remember all of Hashem’s mitzvos and perform them.”** It is encouraging us to make every effort to actually perform every mitzvas asei. If we fail to do so due to circumstances beyond our control, it will not be viewed as if we did actually perform the mitzvah. Thus, we have answered the Maharsha’s question. By recalling that the mitzvos of Tzitzis and “shaatnez” are juxtaposed, we will remember to perform every mitzvas asei. These are his eloquent words.

This coincides very nicely with a statement attributed to the esteemed “mashgiach,” Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein, ztz”l, the “mashgiach” of the Mir Yeshivah. A student argued that he was unable to study Torah due to circumstances beyond his control. Rabbi Yechezkel responded: Know that there is an “ahm ha’aretz” (boor, ignoramus) without an excuse, and there is an “ahm ha’aretz” with an excuse. Apparently, you belong to the second category. Perhaps your excuses will be accepted, and you will not be punished. In any event, you will remain an **“ahm ha’aretz.”** In keeping with our current discussion, according to halachah, we do not say **“אונסא כמאן דעבד”**—failure to perform an act due to inadvertent circumstances remains a failure to act. Thus, the “mashgiach” was telling the student that his excuse would be to no avail—he would remain an **“ahm ha’aretz.”** Therefore, one must make every effort to study Torah!

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