



been over the whole world, from east to west, and I never saw such an object as “hearing,” neither did I see voices. Stop telling me nonsense. These ears have nothing going for them. They are as empty as they are proud. You can’t contradict what the eyes see...

Similarly, the ears think that *they* know it all, and they have their opinion of their neighbors the eyes. They think eyes are no more than holes in the head.

This is how people view one another. Each one disregards his fellow and thinks his shortcomings

are so great and so obvious. But an intelligent person doesn’t talk that way about his neighbor and put him down like that. On the contrary, he says to himself: Although this guy looks to me like an absolute idiot, he must have some role in the world that I can’t comprehend at all. If I treat him with respect, together we can erect the stature of a complete human being, and then, when the body is complete, *Hashem* will breathe into it the *neshamah* of life. ●



## Klal Yisrael is Hashem’s Treasure

וְהֵייתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי לִי כָּל הָאָרֶץ. (שמות יט, ה)

**You will be My treasure from among all the nations, because all the earth is Mine.**  
(*Shemos* 19:5)

Once when I had a trip planned to the US, a friend asked me to bring along for him a big wad of money. Thousands of dollars.

I put the bundle of bills in my pocket, and I sewed up the pocket from all sides. When I was on the flight, every quarter of an hour I put out my hand to feel the pocket and make sure everything is okay... I didn’t forget about it for a moment. When I dozed off for a few minutes, I dreamed that someone came and took the wad of money from me...

*Hashem* says to the Jewish people: וְהֵייתֶם לִי סִגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים – “You will be My treasure from among all the nations.” It doesn’t say “diamond,” “money” or “gold.” It says *segulah*, which Rashi translates as a precious treasure. Unimaginable wealth!

If I watched over a few thousand dollars with

such zealousness, we can understand how *Hashem* watches over us like the apple of His eye.

Now, someone might claim that the reason why *Hashem* loves us so much is because He doesn’t have anyone better. In Yiddish there is an expression, “When a worm sits in horseradish, it thinks there’s nothing sweeter.” The worm in the horseradish never tasted an apple, it knows only the bitter horseradish, so it thinks that horseradish is sweet. Along these lines, someone might claim that *Hashem* had no better people than the Jews, and that’s why He treasures them.

Therefore the *pasuk* goes on to say, “Because all the earth is Mine.” *Hashem* has everything and everyone to choose from. And He found nothing more precious in His eyes than the Jewish people. ●



אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי לְמִצְרַיִם וְאִשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל כַּנְּפֵי נְשָׁרִים וְאָבֵא אֶתְכֶם אֵלַי:  
(שמות יט, ד)

You saw what I did to Egypt, and that I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Me. (*Shemos 19:4*)

*Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l printed this piece in the introduction to his Hebrew sefer called Tiferes Torah Al Hatorah. It elucidates one of his greatest principles, one that was woven into many of his talks, and was highly acclaimed.*

### The Reason You Got into this Business

Every *sefer* has a title page that states the nature of the *sefer*. It says whether it is *chiddushim* on the *Gemara*, or it clarifies a certain area of *Halachah*, or it tells stories, etc. You can't open a book without knowing what it is about.

It goes without saying that the author of a *sefer* cannot forget even for a moment what his *sefer* is about. For instance, someone writing a *sefer* on *Hilchos Shabbos* will not pen a *chiddush* on *Maseches Zevachim* in the middle because he forgot what his book is about.

This applies as well to every business that a person undertakes. First he needs to know what he wants to accomplish, and only afterward he thinks about the best way to do it.

Let's say someone opens a store. It may be assumed that he wants to earn a profit. As time goes on, he might say to himself: I didn't take into account the competition between stores in this area. But he will never say: I made a mistake, I thought that I wanted to give out bread and milk at cost price to my neighbors, and I didn't take into account making a profit.

People never forget the very basis of their activity. So it is when a person gets married. Two

agreements are made between the couple. The first is what we call *Tanna'im*, and the second is the *Kesubah*. The *Tanna'im* state the basic contract between the couple. He is taking her to be his wife, and they will live together in love and affection and *siyata d'Shamaya*. Only after that comes the *Kesubah*, which goes into the details of the obligations that the husband undertakes. He will support her and honor her as befits Jewish society. It is possible that a man could forget some of the details stipulated in the *Kesubah*, but he will never say: I forgot that she is my wife, I thought for a moment that she is my maidservant. A person never forgets the basic nature of the relationship.

After all these examples, we will clarify the nature of the Torah and of Judaism. All the *mitzvos* of the Torah are the details of the "contract" between *Hashem* and the Jewish people. They are comparable to a *Kesubah*. What we want to understand here is the basic nature of this contract. It is important for every Jew to know, it is the most important thing, and we can't forget it even for a moment.

There is a special passage in the Torah about this. It is the introduction to *Matan Torah*. It says:

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on this day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai... Moshe ascended

to G-d, and *Hashem* called to him from the mountain, saying, “So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, and tell the men of Yisrael: ‘You saw what I did to Egypt, and that I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to Me. Now, if you will surely obey Me and keep My covenant, you will be a treasure for Me from all the nations, for all the earth belongs to Me. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites.”

Here *Hashem* describes the basic nature of the contract between Him and us. This passage is extremely important and we cannot lose sight of it even for a moment.

### It’s Not a Work Contract

The nature of Judaism is a covenant, a *bris*, with *Hashem*. When a man marries a woman, their relationship is that of a covenant. It is not a work contract, that she brings in her income and he supports her, she cleans the house and he gives her jewelry. It is quite obvious that this is not the nature of the marital relationship at all.

And so it is with *Matan Torah*. It is a total mistake to think that it constitutes a work contract between *Hashem* and us, that we do the *mitzvos*, and *Hashem* gives us life and supplies all our needs. On the contrary, this outlook is the opposite of the whole nature of *Yiddishkeit*.

This applies not just to the nature of *Yiddishkeit* but also to life itself, to the purpose and goal of a Jew’s life.

Some people think that a person is in this world in order to live here. Furthermore, everyone wants a good life, everyone seeks happiness, and it is impossible to attain this without *Hashem*, since He is the Master and Ruler over all. So in order to attain a good life, we need to learn Torah and keep *mitzvos*.

This approach to life is the diametric opposite of Judaism. Some people may think they are here to eat and drink and be healthy, to marry off children with great Jewish *nachas*, to do *mitzvos* so they will have all of this and continue to have it in the future. But they are like someone sitting in his store, buying and selling, and thinking that he is sitting there only in order to buy and sell. He forgot that the reason he is there is to make a profit. He forgot what business is all about.

*Yiddishkeit* is all about a covenant of love with *Hashem*. To live life together with Him in love and affection and *siyata d’Shmaya*. Similarly, life in this world is all about living our lives in partnership with *Hashem* and being close to Him. Because here is where we attain the greatest closeness. This is the essential nature of a Jew and his life.

### We were Only Promised One Thing

It is amazing that out of all the promises that *Hashem* made to the *Avos*, they were all about the same thing: *Eretz Yisrael*. There is no promise anywhere about giving them Torah and *mitzvos*.

In the first covenant, *Bris Bein Habesarim*, it says:

On that day, *Hashem* made a covenant with Avram, saying, “To your offspring I have given this land.”

Also when *Hashem* made with Avraham the covenant of *milah*, it says:

I have established My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for the generations, as an eternal covenant, to be G-d for you and your descendants after you. I have given to you and your descendants after you the land in which you reside, all the land of Canaan, as an eternal estate, and I will be their G-d.

*Hashem* promised to Yitzchak:

Dwell in this land and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands, and I have established the oath that I swore to Avraham your father.

*Hashem* promised to Yaakov:

Behold, *Hashem* was standing over him and said, "I am *Hashem*, the G-d of Avraham your father and the G-d of Yitzchak. I will give the land that you are lying on to you and your descendants.

*Hashem* promised Moshe at the burning bush:

I will descend to save them from Egypt and to bring them up from that land to a good and expansive land, to a land flowing with milk and honey.

This seems very surprising. How could *Hashem* not have mentioned the main thing, which is Torah? Is the main thing really to have a homeland? We have been attached to *Hashem* for nearly two thousand years now without the land of Israel. But obviously it would all fall apart if we would be without Torah. So why did *Hashem* make such a big point out of promising *Eretz Yisrael*?

One thing is clear. Our relationship with *Hashem* is built on Torah, and on nothing else. *Eretz Yisrael* is not a goal on its own. If having a homeland was the main thing, it would be like a groom saying to his bride: Let's build a house together. Then they go and build a house. He sits in the house and stares at one wall, and she sits and stares at another wall. That's not a relationship. If we would be in *Eretz Yisrael* without Torah, that's what it would be like.

So why didn't *Hashem* promise us Torah and *mitzvos*, if that is what our relationship with Him depends on? Because then it would seem as if the *bris* with *Hashem* is all about the learning itself and the *mitzvah* observance itself. Either because of the reward and punishment associated with them

or because of their intrinsic wisdom. So *Hashem* made it clear that the main goal is closeness and attachment. When He promised *Eretz Yisrael* to the *Avos*, the message was that we will live together with Him in *deveikus* and closeness there.

This is why the basic format of Jewish life is *davening* three *tefilos* a day and reciting a hundred *berachos*. Not every Jew sits and learns Torah all day long. But every Jew goes to *shul* and *davens* and recites *berachos* over his food. This is just like a couple sharing a home. They don't necessarily sit with one another all day long, but they regularly talk to one another and maintain communication.

It is amazing that out of all the *mitzvos* we do, *tefilos* and *berachos* are not Biblical obligations. They were instituted by the *Avos* and enacted as Rabbinical obligations. We will explain this point.

Returning to the metaphor of the *Kesubah*, which stipulates the husband's obligations toward his wife according to *din Torah*, why doesn't it also say there that they should talk to one another? Because this is not an obligation stemming from the marriage relationship. It is the relationship itself. If the husband would speak to his wife because he is so obligated, it would have no value. It needs to come naturally, out of closeness.

So it with the *tefilos* and *berachos*. They were enacted by the Jewish people themselves, because they wanted to keep up a solid relationship with *Hashem* throughout the day.

## Get to the Point

*Sefer Mesilas Yesbarim* begins as follows:

The foundation of piety and the root of perfected Divine service is that a person clarifies for himself and recognizes the truth of his obligation in life, and knows the goal he should strive for in all his labors throughout life. *Chazal* taught us that human beings were created only to take delight in *Hashem* and take pleasure in the radiance of His Presence.... And

the true place of this delight is in the Next World.

And *Sefer Mesilas Yesharim* goes on to quote the famous saying of *Chazal* that this world is but a corridor leading to *Olam Haba*.

This seemingly implies that *Olam Hazev* is nothing more than a means to get to the next world and has no intrinsic purpose.

But in truth, there are two points here: the nature of life and the purpose of life. The purpose of life is *Olam Haba*. Temporal matters that are here today and gone tomorrow surely cannot be life's purpose. The nature of life, on the other hand, is a relationship of love with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. We achieve life's purpose mainly by means of this relationship. And this relationship may be established only here in this world.

The reader might wonder why I employ the metaphor of marriage so often. However, this is the metaphor that *Hashem* Himself gave us. There is no more fitting metaphor than this. We say in the blessings of *eurusin*: *מקדש עמו ישראל על ידי חופה וקידושין* – “*Hashem* sanctifies His people Yisrael by *chuppah* and *kiddushin*.” Some early Torah authorities explain this as a reference to *Har Sinai*, which *Hashem* held over our heads like a *chuppah*. And *Matan Torah* was the *kiddushin*. This sheds light on our topic.

The act of marriage is not a purpose unto itself. The goal is the generations that will result from it. However, getting married is a time of affection and attachment. It is not just a means to assure future generations.

Let's say a *chasan* would go into the *cheder*

*yichud*, take out a newspaper and read the news. When he sees that the *kallah* is astonished by his behavior, he explains: It's okay, it's nothing to get upset about. The main *simchah* will be in the future, when *b'ezras Hashem* we will make a *bris* for our future son!

The *chasan's* explanation is obviously wrong. It's true that the goal is far in the future, but the nature of the marriage itself is relationship.

If the *chasan* and *kallah* don't speak to each other, if they don't relate to one another, what's missing is not the goal of marriage. What's missing is marriage itself. Because the nature of marriage is relationship.

The same is true with life in this world. The goal is the next world, but this world is the *chuppah*. A hundred and twenty years of affection, love and attachment to *Hashem*.

*Chazal* say about marriage:

A woman makes a marriage covenant only with he who made her receptive.<sup>1</sup>

The affection between the couple for the rest of their lives is built upon the affection they had at the beginning. So it is with our *deveikus* and relationship with *Hashem*. According to the *deveikus* we have in this world, so will it continue for eternity.

Here, in this world, we need to build our relationship with *Hashem*.

This world is not a place to acquire the future. It is rather the very purpose itself: to live here with *deveikus* to *Hashem*, by virtue of which we will continue to be attached to *Hashem* forever. ●

1 *Sanhedrin* 22b.