

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

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Topics discussed

Parashas Va'eschanan: Shabbos Nachamu

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Parashas Va'eschanan: Shabbos Nachamu

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I

Can love be commanded?

וְאַהֲבַת אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ

"You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might" (Devarim 6:5).

In this mitzvah of *Ve'ahavta*, the Torah is commanding us to love Hashem. This mitzvah raises a profound question. Love is an emotion, something that arises from the heart. How can the Torah command a person to feel love? Can a person be obligated to love?

This question has troubled thoughtful people throughout the generations, and I, too, have been asked about it many times over the years. Upon examining this topic, I found that Chazal, the Rishonim, and the Acharonim all addressed the nature of this mitzvah.

Already in the next *pasuk*, the Torah states: וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה "And these words shall be [upon your heart]" (Devarim 6:6).

II

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והיו הדברים האלה. ומהו האהבה? והיו הדברים האלה, שמתוך כך אהבה מכיר בקדושתו ומדבק בקדושתו

Rashi explains: "And what is this love? 'And these words (i.e., words of Torah) shall be [upon your heart]...' For through this, you will come to recognize Hakadosh Baruch Hu and cleave to His ways" (*Sifrei*). Rashi is explaining here, based on Chazal, that the path to attaining love of Hashem is through Torah and mitzvos.

A natural love born of gratitude

Rashi describes an exalted level of love of Hashem that arises from a profound appreciation of the greatness of His ways, which are revealed to us through the Torah. We must study His ways and follow them. Yet there is also a natural love that we should feel toward Hashem. If you believe that Hashem created you, provides you with everything you need and everything you possess in this world, and constantly sustains you, how could you not love your Creator, the source of all blessings, your very life?

There is a natural principle of *hakaras hatov* (gratitude), recognizing and expressing appreciation for kindness one has received. In relationships between people, when someone does you a favor, invites you to a meal, gives you a gift, or supports you in a time of distress, you naturally feel grateful and want to reciprocate. The Gemara contains many discussions about the obligation to repay kindness with kindness. This is self-evident regarding our parents, who nurtured us and made sacrifices on our behalf. It is therefore natural that the Torah commands us **כבוד את אביך ואת אמך** "Honor your father and your mother" (Shemos 20:12; Devarim 5:16) and **איש אמו ואביו תיראו** "Every person shall revere his mother and his father" (Vayikra 19:3).

Yet even the love and reverence that we owe our parents reflect a deeper truth concerning our love for Hashem. Hashem is the One Who created us and gave us our parents themselves. Not for naught have Chazal taught: "There are three partners in the creation of a person: Hakadosh Baruch Hu, his father, and his mother" (*Niddah* 31b). But the matter goes even deeper. Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself created the other two partners, our parents, and we must therefore be grateful to Him for them as well. Perhaps this is also included in

the deeper meaning of Chazal's statement in numerous places that "the honor due to them (one's parents) is compared to the honor due to Hashem" (*Sanhedrin* 50a and elsewhere). Perhaps there is a hint here that when honoring one's parents, a person should also have in mind to honor Hashem, Who created them.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is truly the source of our existence on every level. Every breath, every heartbeat, every moment of sight, sensation, thought, and life is a gift from Him. The heart should therefore be drawn naturally toward appreciation, gratitude, and love for the One Who gives to us and sustains us always.

The *Sfas Emes*: love of Hashem at the root of the soul

The *Sfas Emes* writes in our parashah (5640):

מִי־לִי "You shall love".... וְאֶהְיֶה
 בְּשָׁמַיִם וְעַמּוֹד לֹא־תִפְצֹת בְּאֶרֶץ
 "Whom do I have in Heaven...?" The philosophers ask, how can love be commanded? The truth, however, is that Bnei Yisrael, at their very root, possess a connection and attachment to the one G-d. This is the meaning of מִי־לִי בְּשָׁמַיִם וְעַמּוֹד לֹא־תִפְצֹת בְּאֶרֶץ "Whom do I have in Heaven...and with You, I desire nothing on earth" (*Tehillim* 73:25). "Whom do I have in Heaven?" refers to the [soul's] root. Down below, however, there are other desires. But by accepting the yoke of Heaven each day, a person reaches the state of "And with You, I desire nothing on earth." Through this, one can awaken love for Hashem in this world as

well. As Rashi says: "And what is this love? 'And these words shall be [upon your heart]' through the Torah, [i.e., love of Hashem is attained through Torah]. Likewise, by reciting the words of Krias Shema each day, throughout "all the days of my life," a person ultimately merits attaining love of Hashem, as explained elsewhere."

According to the *Sfas Emes*, love of Hashem is embedded within the soul because the soul is bound to Hashem. By accepting the yoke of Heaven each day, a person brings the heavenly root of this love into his life in this world.

From accepting the yoke of Heaven to loving Hashem

The mitzvah of *Ve'ahavta* ("You shall love") appears immediately after the first *pasuk* of Krias Shema: שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד "Hear, O Yisrael: Hashem is our G-d; Hashem is One" (*Devarim* 6:4).

This verse is the foundation of accepting the yoke of Heaven. We proclaim that Hashem is the Master of the universe, the one and only G-d, Who rules over Heaven and earth and over every detail of our lives. Such recognition naturally produces *yiras Hashem*, an attitude of fear/awe and vigilance in His presence. When a person stands before a mortal king, he feels fear/awe and conducts himself with caution. How much more so should this be true before the King of kings. Yet the Torah does not want our service of Hashem to remain solely in the realm of fear. Immediately after accepting His sovereignty by proclaiming Shema, Hashem teaches us the nature of the relationship He desires: וְאֶהְיֶה אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ "You shall love Hashem your G-d!"

Appropriate love toward the King

The Torah does not command an ordinary love. It commands us לְבָבְךָ בְּכָל לְבָבְךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ “With all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.” Absolute devotion! It is the love of a servant who recognizes his Master, the love of a child who recognizes his Father, and the love of a soul that yearns to cleave to its source. Regarding the mitzvah to love Hashem, the Rambam writes that this love is awakened by contemplating His commandments, His words, and His wondrous creation, until the soul yearns to know Him (*Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvas Asei* (positive commandment) # 3; *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 2:1-2). At the conclusion of *Hilchos Teshuvah* (chapter 10), the Rambam describes service motivated by love as the highest form of *avodas Hashem*, performed for the sake of truth itself and not merely in pursuit of reward or out of fear of punishment.

The Torah shows us the path to love

The Torah itself reveals how this love is attained. In the second paragraph of Shema, the Torah again speaks about loving Hashem:

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעְתָּ תִּשְׁמָעוּ אֶל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מֵצִוְהָ
אֲתֶכֶם הַיּוֹם לְאַהֲבָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וּלְעֲבֹדוֹ בְּכָל
לְבַבְכֶם וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁכֶם

“And it shall be that if you diligently obey My commandments, which I command you today, to love Hashem your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul”
(Devarim 11:13).

These words teach us that love of Hashem is cultivated through Torah and mitzvos. By obeying His commandments, studying His Torah, fulfilling His will,

and teaching His Torah to our children, the heart becomes bound to Him.

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבַבְכֶּם וְדַבַּרְתֶּם בָּם בְּשִׁבְתְּכֶם בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלִקְחְךָ בְּדֶרֶךְ
וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ

“You shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them when you sit in your home, when you walk on the way, when you lie down, and when you arise”
(Devarim 6:7).

This is the prescription. Love of Hashem does not remain a vague emotion. It is built through a life of Torah, mitzvos, and constant awareness. We “repay,” so to speak, Hashem’s infinite gifts, not because He needs anything from us, but because, in His love, He gives us the opportunity to respond. He provides us with a path through which gratitude is transformed into *avodas Hashem*.

Why issue a command for something that comes so naturally?

We can now understand why there is a mitzvah to love Hashem even though love of Hashem should arise naturally. First, a person might remain at the level of fear, serving Hashem only because He is King and Master. The Torah therefore teaches us that Hashem desires more. He desires closeness, *dveikus*, devotion, and love. Fear is the beginning, but love is the relationship that Hashem asks us to build and attain.

An additional explanation may be offered based on the principle of “*Gadol hametzueh ve’oseh mimi she’eino metzueh ve’oseh*” (“Greater is one who is commanded and fulfills [the command] than one who fulfills it without being commanded”) (*Kiddushin* 31a; *Bava Kamma* 87a). Hashem wants to grant us the merit of loving Him not merely as a natural response, but as the fulfillment of a

Divine commandment. There is an additional depth to this. The moment something becomes a mitzvah, the *yetzer hara* opposes it. A person might begin to ask, "Why must I be commanded to love? Should love not arise naturally?" Precisely because the commandment can be questioned, fulfilling it becomes that much greater. The struggle itself creates the possibility of a more profound reward. In His love for us, Hashem transformed even our natural gratitude into a mitzvah, so that the love we wish to express toward Him can itself become a source of eternal merit.

Every mitzvah can be infused with love of Hashem

Every mitzvah contains an additional opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of loving Hashem. When a person performs a mitzvah with the awareness that he is doing so out of love for Hashem, that mitzvah becomes bound to the mitzvah of וְאַהֲבָתָה אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ "You shall love Hashem your G-d." The physical act is fulfilled, and within it there is also the inner movement of the heart toward Hashem. In this way, the mitzvah of loving Hashem is fulfilled as well. The reward for the mitzvah, therefore, is not only for the external act. The mitzvah's deepest root lies in the bond it creates. Every mitzvah brings a person closer to Hashem. Every act of Torah and mitzvos becomes a declaration of devotion: "I love You, Hashem, and I want to remain close to You!"

Love, *bitachon*, and *geulah*

This is particularly true regarding Eretz HaKodesh and the mitzvos associated with it, such as *shemittah* (the biblical "sabbatical" year). The mitzvos of the Land require *bitachon*, self-restraint, and *emunah*. They ask a Jew to

demonstrate that he loves Hashem enough to place his trust in Him. When all of Klal Yisrael lives with *emunah* and *bitachon*, that love awakens a corresponding love from Above.

The mitzvah of *Ve'ahavta* thus teaches us the essence of our relationship with Hashem. We begin with Shema Yisrael, accepting His absolute sovereignty. We continue with *Ve'ahavta*, transforming fear and awe into the love that is natural to us and rooted in the soul. We deepen that love through Torah and mitzvos—by heeding the words of the Torah and fulfilling the commandments that build our bond with Hashem. And through this love, we draw closer to Hashem, our source, until He, too, turns toward us and brings the Geulah in love for the sake of His Name, speedily in our days. Amen, may it be His will!



II

"You shall teach them diligently to your children": An awe-inspiring story involving the Chiddushei HaRim, zy" a

In the sefer *Chiddushei HaRim al HaTorah*, Parashas Va'eschanan, an awe-inspiring story is cited in the name of *Meir Einei HaGolah*: "When our Rebbe's last remaining son passed away, he sighed many times and said: "There was one mitzvah that I had the opportunity to fulfill in my home every day, the mitzvah of וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, 'You shall teach them diligently to your children', and it has been taken from me." It is well known that the Chiddushei HaRim, zy" a, lost all his sons during his lifetime. Despite these devastating tragedies, he accepted

Hashem's decrees in silence, displaying astonishing self-control, just as Aharon HaKohen did after the death of his sons: וַיִּדָם אַהֲרֹן "And Aharon was silent."

But when his last son passed away, the pain penetrated so deeply that he could no longer completely conceal his grief. Yet even then, he did not express personal anguish. Instead, he grieved over the loss of the opportunity to transmit Torah, over the severing of the holy chain through which Torah passes from father to son.

This response embodied the essence of the Chiddushei HaRim, the founder of Gerrus Chassidus and its first Rebbe. His entire life revolved around Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and the holy responsibility of transmitting the *mesorah* to the next generation.

Love of Hashem through Torah

In the preceding essay on the verse וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ, "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might," we cited the words of the holy Sfas Emes, the grandson of the Chiddushei HaRim. The Sfas Emes explains that love of Hashem is naturally rooted within every Jew. Through Torah and mitzvos, this hidden love is brought from potential into actuality. This enables us to understand how the Torah can command us to love Hashem. But it is not merely that this mitzvah "can" be fulfilled. The very Torah that commands us to love Hashem provides the counsel and the path through which we can assuredly attain the complete fulfillment of וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ, "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might."

These are the words of the Rambam in *Sefer HaMitzvos, Mitzvas Asei* # 3:

We were commanded to love Him, may He be exalted. This means that we should contemplate and reflect upon His mitzvos, His words, and His actions, until we attain knowledge of Him and experience the greatest possible pleasure in that knowledge. This is the love that is incumbent upon us. The *Sifrei* states: "Since it says, וְאַהֲבַתְּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, 'You shall love Hashem your G-d,' I do not know how one is to love Hashem. The Torah therefore states, וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים, 'These words that I command you today shall be upon your heart.' Through this, you will come to recognize the One Who spoke and brought the world into being." We have thus explained that through contemplation, you will attain knowledge of Him; this knowledge will bring pleasure, and love will inevitably follow."

In light of this, the Chiddushei HaRim's expression of grief takes on even greater depth. He viewed the loss of his son not merely as a personal tragedy, but as the loss of a daily opportunity to connect with Hashem through continuing to fulfill the commandment of וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children," which is the mitzvah of transmitting Torah to future generations. His pain centered on his inability to fulfill וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children," a mitzvah recited every day in Krias Shema.

The Chiddushei HaRim merits to fulfill the mitzvah after all

But the story does not end there. The Chiddushei HaRim's son, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter, passed away when his own son, the future Sfas Emes, was only eight years old. The child, who had been left without either parent, grew up in the home of his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim, who nurtured and educated him as his own son. The world knows the fruits of that education. This was the fullest realization of וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children." The Sfas Emes became one of the greatest Torah leaders of his generation and succeeded his grandfather as the second Rebbe of Gerrer Chassidus. Less well known is that other grandchildren also grew up in the home of the Chiddushei HaRim. Among them was the author of the holy sefer *Sifsei Tzaddik*, Rabbi Pinchas Menachem Justman, zt"l, the Admur (Rebbe) of Pilz. After the passing of his mother, Tzina Pesa, a"h, the daughter of the Chiddushei HaRim, he too was brought to his grandfather's home together with his younger brother, Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Justman, zt"l, who later served as a *dayan* and halachic authority in Lodz. They too were raised under the influence and guidance of the Chiddushei HaRim, together with their cousin, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter, who would grow to become the holy Rebbe, author of the *Sfas Emes*.

וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children," includes not only one's sons, but also one's grandchildren and even one's students. In the words of the Rambam in the first chapter of *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, *halachah* 2:

Just as a person is obligated to teach his son, he is also obligated to teach his grandson, as it says, וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בָנֶיךָ, "You shall make them known to your children and to your children's children." This obligation does not apply only to one's son and grandson. Rather, every Torah scholar among the Jewish people is commanded to teach all students, even if they are not his children, as it says, וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children." The Oral Tradition teaches that "your children" refers to your students, for students are called children, as it says, וַיֵּצְאוּ בְנֵי הַנְּבִיאִים, "The sons of the prophets went out" [and it referring to the disciples of the prophets]. Why, then, was a person specifically commanded concerning his son and grandson? To establish that his son takes precedence over his grandson, and his grandson takes precedence over another person's son.

The Chiddushei HaRim indeed mourned the loss of the opportunity to transmit Torah to his own sons. Heaven, however, had a different plan, and he ended up investing tremendous effort and spiritual energy in educating his grandchildren and students. Through them, his Torah illuminated the world for all generations. Furthermore, thousands of chassidim became his spiritual "children." Through them, the chain of Torah continued without interruption.

The Gemara says (*Sanhedrin* 19b):

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani said in the name of Rabbi Yonasan: "Whoever teaches Torah to another

person's son is regarded by Scripture as though he fathered him. For it says, וְאֵלֶּה תוֹלְדֹת אַהֲרֹן וּמֹשֶׁה, 'These are the children of Aharon and Moshe,' while elsewhere it says, וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי אַהֲרֹן, 'These are the names of the sons of Aharon.' This teaches you that Aharon fathered them, but Moshe taught them, and, therefore, they are attributed [also] to him [as his children].

The Chiddushei HaRim taught Torah to his grandchildren and to thousands of his chassidim, who, according to Chazal, were considered his children. He thus fulfilled וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֶיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children," every day, and his teachings continue to illuminate lives to this very day.

Lessons from the Chiddushei HaRim

From the Chiddushei HaRim, we learn extraordinary lessons about Torah, yiras Shamayim, and devotion to the mitzvos. We learn how a great tzaddik viewed suffering, not only through the lens of personal pain, but also in terms of its effect on his ability to fulfill Hashem's will and perpetuate the *mesorah*. His life was a living lesson in accepting suffering with love, and in understanding the mitzvah of Torah study as his life's mission in general and the transmission of Torah to future generations in particular. The string of *pesukim* now takes on even greater significance:

וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ
 "You shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." This is the mitzvah of loving Hashem, which includes accepting

suffering with love, for בְּכָל מְאֹדְךָ "with all your might" means וּמִדָּה וְשִׁוּא מוֹדֵד "Whatever measure He metes out to you, thank Him" (*Berachos* 54a).

וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם עַל לִבְּךָ
 "These words that I command you today shall be upon your heart" refers to the mitzvah of Torah study, which, as explained above, is the path to loving Hashem.

וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֶיךָ וְדִבַּרְתָּ בָּם
 "You shall teach them diligently to your children and speak of them" refers to expanding Torah study by faithfully transmitting it to one's descendants and students, from generation to generation.

Personal reflections

For me personally, this is an idea that carries special significance. My dear father-in-law, Rabbi Yisrael Binyamin Kutner, zt"l, was a grandson of Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Justman, zt"l, one of the grandchildren of the Chiddushei HaRim who grew up in his home. Our family therefore has a direct connection to this holy legacy of transmitting Torah, a legacy shaped by the Chiddushei HaRim himself. My children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are privileged to be connected to this chain of *mesorah*, which reaches back to the greatest of the *tzaddikim*. Such a legacy cannot be taken for granted. Spiritual greatness is not automatically inherited. Each generation must earn it anew through devotion to Torah, yiras Shamayim, and the faithful transmission of Torah values from father to son and from teacher to student. This is the eternal message of וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֶיךָ, "You shall teach them diligently to your children."

A new generation is born

Just as I finished writing this essay, I received wonderful news: the birth of a great-granddaughter, a daughter born to my oldest granddaughter. I suddenly realized that this was also the birth of another descendant of the Chiddushei HaRim. Becoming a great-grandfather was deeply moving in its own right. But the convergence of this moment with the completion of an essay about *לְבָנֶיךָ*, "You shall teach them diligently to your children," made the experience many times more meaningful. Writing about the role of a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather in transmitting Torah and the mesorah to future generations became a profoundly personal lesson for me.

בָּרוּךְ הַטוֹב וְהַמְטִיב, "Blessed is He Who is good and does good." I offer praise and thanks to Hashem:

הוֹדוּ לָהּ כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ. "Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good; His kindness endures forever."

יְהִי רָצוֹן שְׂפָתֶיךָ בְּלִבֵּנוּ לְגִדּוּלָהּ לְתוֹרָה, לְחֻפָּה וּלְמַעֲשִׂים טוֹבִים "May it be Hashem's will that we all merit to raise her to Torah, chuppah, and good deeds."

Each day, in *Birchas HaTorah*, we thank Hashem for the gift of the Torah and pray:

וְהַעֲרֵב נָא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ בְּפִינוּ וּבְפִיּוֹת עַמֶּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

"Please, Hashem our G-d, make the words of Your Torah sweet in our mouths and in the mouths of Your people, the House of Israel."

We then continue with the beautiful prayer:

וְנִהְיֶה אֲנַחְנוּ וְאַחֲרָינוּ וְאַחֲרָינוּ וְאַחֲרָינוּ עַמֶּךָ בֵּית

יִשְׂרָאֵל, *כָּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעֵי שְׁמֶךָ וְלֹמְדֵי תוֹרָתְךָ לְשִׁמָּה* "May we, our descendants, our descendants' descendants, and the descendants of Your people, the House of Israel, all know Your name and study Your Torah for its own sake."

In Nusach Sefard, the words *וְאַחֲרָינוּ*, "and our descendants' descendants," appear occasionally in parentheses, while in Nusach Sefardi they form part of the principal text. I have always included these words in my prayers. They have always moved me deeply, particularly this additional reference to our later descendants, which alludes to our grandchildren's grandchildren. The continuity of Torah depends upon the unbroken chain of generations through which the mesorah of the Jewish people is transmitted.

The circle of mesorah

Looking back, I now realize that this *dvar Torah* began on Shavuot, when I opened the sefer *Chiddushei HaRim* and studied his holy teachings on Parashas Va'eschanan. There is a deep alignment in this connection. Shavuot is the *yom hillula* (anniversary of the passing of) of the Imrei Emes, the father of the three Gerrer Rebbes who led Ger after the Holocaust. The Imrei Emes was the son of the Sfas Emes and a great-grandson of the Chiddushei HaRim. He was named after his grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai, the son of the Chiddushei HaRim. Thus, while studying the teachings of his great-grandfather, I found myself reflecting upon the generations that followed him and the eternal legacy they built.

Concurrently, I had recently written about the teaching of the Sfas Emes concerning *אֱלֹהֶיךָ*, "You shall love Hashem your G-d," and how

love of Hashem is revealed through Torah and mitzvos. The themes of the two essays were thus connected to one another and completed a circle. This essay began with the painful story of the Chiddushei HaRim mourning the loss of his last son and expressing his grief over the loss of his ability to fulfill *וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ* "You shall teach them diligently to your children." And we now conclude with the joyous news of the birth of another descendant of this great tzaddik. This is

the greatness of Klal Yisrael and the eternal power of the Torah. Through emunah, resilience, and unwavering devotion to the mesorah, the chain continues unbroken from generation to generation: *וְשִׁנַּנְתֶּם לְבָנֵיךָ*, "You shall teach them diligently to your children." And so, it will continue... until the coming of the righteous redeemer, speedily in our days, amen. עד ביאת גואל צדק במהרה בימינו אמן.

ב-י-ל-א ואמן Maharaḥ Tzintz

PEARLS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE GAON FROM PLOTZK

Perfection comes only through Jewish unity

וְאֶתְחַנֵּן אֵל ה' "I pleaded with Hashem."

Parashas Va'eschanan begins with Moshe telling Bnei Yisrael that he pleaded with Hashem to permit him to enter Eretz Yisrael. Hakadosh Baruch Hu answered that Moshe would only ascend to the top of the mountain and view the land from afar, but he would not enter it. Instead, he was to command Yehoshua to cross over [the river] before the people and enable them to take possession of the land. Moshe Rabbeinu then immediately continues by warning Bnei Yisrael to observe the Torah (Devarim 4:1): *וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע אֶל הַחֻקִּים וְאֶל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת לִמְעַן תִּחְיִיו*: "And now, Yisrael, listen to the statutes and the ordinances that I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live, and you may come and take possession of the land that Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, is giving you."

We will open with two questions:

- First, what is the connection and continuity between these subjects in the parashah, and why are these holy *pesukim* juxtaposed together—Moshe's being prevented from entering the land and his warning concerning the observance of the mitzvos?
- Why does Moshe Rabbeinu begin the verse in the singular, *וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמַע* "And now, Yisrael, listen," but continue in the plural, *אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם* "which I am teaching you (pl.)"?

Rabbeinu, the Maharaḥ Tzintz, now begins explaining the parashah like a string of diamonds and sapphires.

Rabbeinu presents us with a well-known question. Every Jew is required to fulfill all

613 mitzvos (in order to bring his entire spiritual profile – his 248 spiritual limbs and 365 spiritual sinews – to perfection. But how is this possible? No individual Jew is personally obligated in all 613 mitzvos. Some mitzvos apply only to a Kohen, while others apply only to an ordinary Jew; some apply only to a king, while others apply only to a particular individual, and so forth. How, then, can one merit to merit to fulfill all 613 mitzvos?

Rabbeinu explains that this question can be answered in two ways. The first answer is that one can achieve this through intent. If a person intends to perform a mitzvah should the opportunity arise, and he eagerly awaits the opportunity to fulfill it, then *הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא מְצַרְפָּה לְמַעֲשֵׂה*, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu joins a good intention to an action.” When a person sincerely desires and intends to perform all the mitzvos, he is regarded as though he has fulfilled all 613. But this applies only to someone who genuinely desires to fulfill all the mitzvos. The second answer is that this is accomplished through the mutual responsibility of all Jews for one another. The Jewish people are all considered a single soul, as Rashi states in Parashas Vayigash (46:26): “Yaakov had seventy [descendants], yet Scripture refers to them as one soul, because they worshipped one G-d.” Consequently, every mitzvah performed by one Jew is credited to Klal Yisrael as a whole. In this way, they are all considered to have fulfilled all 613 mitzvos.

Rabbeinu explains that this is why the Torah was not given to Bnei Yisrael until they were entirely united *כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד* “like one person with one heart”: only through absolute unity could Bnei Yisrael fulfill the entire Torah.

Rabbeinu explains that Moshe Rabbeinu’s words to Bnei Yisrael revolve around this idea. Every individual is charged with fulfilling all 613 mitzvos. Moshe therefore opens with the matter of his not entering the land. He says [to Hakadosh Baruch Hu]: “Bnei Yisrael were commanded to perform many mitzvos that can only be fulfilled in Eretz Yisrael. Let me enter the land so that they may all be fulfilled through me.” Hakadosh Baruch Hu replied: “Is it not reward alone that you seek? I will consider you to have had performed them (i.e., the mitzvos)” (*Sotah* 14a). Since Moshe did not merit to enter the Land, Hakadosh Baruch Hu regarded him as though he had performed those mitzvos. How could he be considered to have fulfilled them? The answer lies in the first approach explained above: Hakadosh Baruch Hu joins a good intention to an action.

Notice, however, that the second answer, the mutual responsibility of all the Jewish people, could not apply to Moshe Rabbeinu. By the time the Bnei Yisrael fulfilled these mitzvos in Eretz Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu was no longer alive, and mitzvos cannot be performed after death. Moshe himself was therefore considered to have fulfilled all 613 mitzvos only because his intention was joined to the deed.

Moshe continued and said: *וְעַתָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל* “And now, Yisrael.” *You, Bnei Yisrael, who will*

enter and take possession of the land, can merit fulfilling all 613 mitzvos through mutual responsibility as well. He therefore begins his words in the singular, יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמַע "Yisrael, listen!" Since you are all united as one, you are all considered to have fulfilled all the mitzvos. In addition, you can fulfill the entire body of mitzvos through good intentions, by studying the mitzvos and desiring to perform them. This is what is meant by אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְלַמֵּד אֶתְכֶם "which I am teaching you." By meriting to fulfill the entire Torah, the promise of לִמְעַן תִּחְיֶיךָ, "so that you may live," will be fulfilled in you. All your spiritual limbs and sinews will possess perfect vitality.

How can someone who is not connected to Klal Yisrael possibly attain perfection? Only a person who is connected to and united with all the Jewish people can be complete!



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