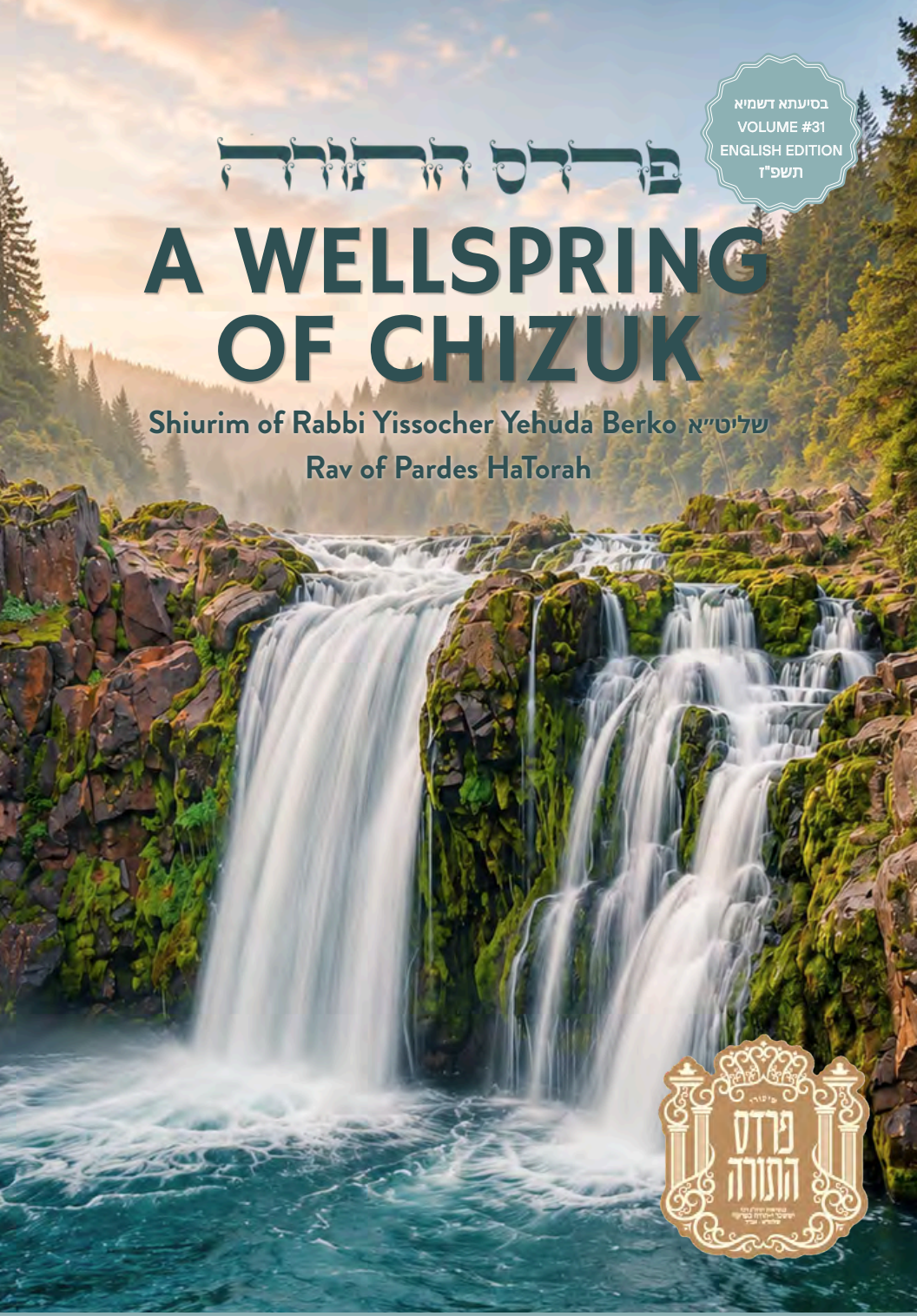
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פרשת וישלח

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פרשת וישלח

The Secret to a Lechtige Home

YAAKOV AVINU REMAINS FAITHFUL TO HASHEM EVEN IN LAVAN'S HOUSE

Yaakov Avinu sent messengers to his brother Esav, instructing them to deliver a message on his behalf. The *posuk* states: כה תאמרון לאדני לעשו – *thus shall you say to my master, to Esav.* כֹּה אָמַר עַבְדְּךָ יַעֲקֹב עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי וָאֵחַר עַד עָתָּה – *so said your servant Yaakov: I have resided with Lavan and stayed until now.*

Rashi reveals the deeper meaning concealed within Yaakov's words. עם לבן הרשע גרתי – *I resided with Lavan for twenty long years, surrounded by his wickedness, yet* ו – ותרי"ג מצות שמרתי *observed the 613 mitzvos.* And even more remarkably, ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים – *I did not learn from his evil deeds.* Despite living in Lavan's home for so many years, Yaakov remained steadfast in his ways, never allowing Lavan's negative *middos* to take root within him.

The *meforshim* raise two thought-provoking questions about *Rashi's* explanation.

First, why does *Rashi* choose the precise expression ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי - emphasizing that Yaakov "guarded" the 613 *mitzvos*, rather than simply stating that he performed them? What deeper significance lies in this choice of words?

Furthermore, after declaring that he had faithfully upheld all 613 *mitzvos*, Yaakov adds, ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים – *that he had not absorbed Lavan's negative middos.* Why was this additional statement necessary?

It seems that even one who faithfully fulfills every *mitzvah* is not necessarily protected from the subtle influence of a negative environment. Observing the *mitzvos* is one accomplishment, but guarding one's heart and character against the ways of those around him is a challenge of its own, requiring additional *siyata dishmaya.*

By adding these words, Yaakov was conveying that he had emerged victorious from this *nisayon* as well. Not only had he preserved his commitment to every *mitzvah*, but he had also remained untouched by the corrupting influence of Lavan's ways.

THE DESIRE FOR OUR GENERATIONS TO BE PROTECTED FROM THE MATERIALISTIC WORLD

As our sacred duty is to follow in the footsteps of the Avos and emulate their ways, we must ask ourselves: What is the secret to remaining untouched by the influence of a *rasha* like Lavan?

Standing beneath the *chuppa*, we *daven* and dream of building a home in which our children, grandchildren, and generations to come will be raised with the wisdom to turn away from evil, and the desire to pursue what is good and right. We hope and *daven* that our children will always be sheltered from the harmful influences of Western civilization, protected from the values and temptations of the world around them.

Yet even when a child is shielded from the secular world, there is a deeper lesson we must strive to instill: The purpose of life is not the pursuit of material possessions.

We want our children to understand that *gashmius*, the physical comforts of this world, is not an end in itself - but rather a means to a far greater purpose. Certainly, a person needs *gashmius* for his well-being. Food, drink, clothing, and a comfortable, spacious home all have their rightful place. As the *Gemara* teaches, בית נאה מרחיבין דעתו של אדם – *a beautiful home expands a person's mind.*

But we must help our children recognize that these comforts are merely tools, not the ultimate goal.

Just as a shoemaker, tailor, or craftsman relies upon his tools to create something meaningful, so too, do we rely upon the physical blessings of this world to help us fulfill our true purpose. The tools may be necessary, but it is the finished product that holds the real value. Our *gashmius* enables us to learn, to *daven*, and to serve Hashem with peace of mind. Yet, the true fruits of our efforts are our Torah learning, our *tefillah*, and the refinement of our *middos*.

We long to raise children who are neither intimidated nor enticed by the values of the world outside, where material success and possessions are so often regarded as the measure of a person's worth. Instead, we want them to recognize where genuine richness lies.

How can we accomplish this? The first step is סור מרע – *turning away from evil.* We must distance ourselves not only from negative influences, but also from the desire to imitate worldly trends or feel diminished by what others possess. We must teach our

children that their happiness and sense of worth need not depend on the standards of the world around them.

But distancing ourselves from negativity is only the beginning. We must then embrace עשה טוב – actively filling our homes with goodness, warmth, and light.

We want our children to experience the extraordinary sweetness of Hashem's *mitzvos*, to feel firsthand how they gladden the heart and bring true fulfillment. The joy of living a life of Torah and *mitzvos* is not fleeting or superficial. It is a deep and lasting contentment, a richness of spirit that no material possession can ever replace.

Our children should not merely know that Torah and *mitzvos* are precious; they should feel their beauty, experience their sweetness, and find genuine happiness in living by them. And this brings us to the heart of the matter:

How do we bring this light into our homes? How do we create a home that is truly *lechtig*, filled with such warmth, joy, and spiritual richness that our children naturally feel contentment and delight in doing *mitzvos*?

THE SECRET OF SHAMARTI: GUARDING VS. PERFORMING

The *Rashi* mentioned above reveals a profound foundation in *avodas Hashem*, one that Yaakov Avinu passed down to future generations.

The *Mabit*, a renowned *gadol* who lived in Tzfas during the time of the *Beis Yosef*, led a large *yeshivah* and authored numerous *sefarim*, including a work on *avodas Hashem* entitled *Kiryas Sefer.* In this *sefer*, he offers a beautiful explanation of Yaakov Avinu's declaration, ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי, addressing the question raised earlier: Why does Yaakov emphasize that he guarded the 613 mitzvos, rather than saying he performed them?

The *Mabit* explains that it is not always possible for a person to physically fulfill every *mitzvah*. Certain *mitzvos* apply only to a *Kohen*, while others can be observed only in Eretz Yisroel. How, then, can one merit fulfilling all 613 *mitzvos*?

He draws our attention to the *Korban Pesach.* When *Klal Yisroel* first heard Moshe convey the *mitzvah*, they were filled with such joy and anticipation that the Torah declares, ויעשו ישראל את הפסח – *Klal Yisroel performed the Karbon Pesach.*

Yet, in reality, they had not performed the *mitzvah* at all; they had merely begun preparing for it! Why, then, does the Torah describe it as though it had already been fulfilled?

The answer reveals the extraordinary power of yearning for a *mitzvah*. When a person is filled with genuine excitement and anticipation, when his thoughts, words, and emotions are devoted to the desire to fulfill Hashem's will, that longing itself is so precious that Hashem considers it as though the *mitzvah* has already been accomplished.

We find a similar idea in Yaakov Avinu's response to Yosef Hatzaddik's dreams. The *posuk* states, ואביו שמר את הדבר – *and his father guarded the matter. Rashi* explains, יושב ומצפה וממתין מתי יתקיים את הדבר – *sitting, anticipating, and waiting for when the matter would be fulfilled.* Yaakov eagerly awaited the day Yosef's dreams would come to fruition.

With this understanding, the *Mabit* reveals the deeper meaning of ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי.

During the many years Yaakov lived in Lavan's home, far from Eretz Yisroel, there were numerous *mitzvos* he could not fulfill. Yet he kept them alive in his heart and in the hearts of his children, constantly speaking of the sacred opportunities awaiting them upon their return.

He would express with heartfelt longing, "I cannot wait to go to Eretz Yisroel so we can merit taking *terumos* and *ma'asros*." He spoke of *karbanos* and the holiness of these *mitzvos*, and yearned for his children to meet Yitzchok and Rivka, so he could once again merit the precious *mitzvah* of honoring his parents.

This, explains the *Mabit*, is precisely why Yaakov declared *"shamarti."* Although he could not physically perform every *mitzvah* while living in *chutz la'aretz*, he guarded them through his constant longing and anticipation, just as he had awaited the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams.

And most importantly, Yaakov transformed this yearning into the very atmosphere of his home.

The *Shevatim* grew up hearing their father speak with warmth and excitement about the *mitzvos* he longed to fulfill. They witnessed his genuine love for Torah and *mitzvos*, and that inner fire ignited a similar passion within their own hearts.

Through their father's example, they understood that Torah and *mitzvos* were not merely obligations, but life's greatest treasures. This light filled their home and became a powerful shield against the negative influences of the world outside.

When children experience the sweetness and beauty of Torah and *mitzvos* as the true source of happiness, the attractions of secular society naturally begin to lose their appeal.

This is a timeless lesson for every Jewish home.

Children look to their parents and grandparents to discover what truly matters in life. They notice what excites them, what brings them joy, and what they cherish most deeply. When they see that Torah and *mitzvos* are the center and light of their parents' lives, those values become deeply rooted in their own hearts.

For the most powerful way to teach our children to treasure Torah and *mitzvos* is to show them how deeply we treasure them ourselves.

THE ABSENCE OF SIGNS AND DIRECTIONS INSPIRES CONTINUOUS CONVERSATION OF THE BEIS HAMIKDASH

The *Ponevezher Rav* shared a remarkable insight into life during the times of the *Beis Hamikdash.*

Beyond the *Shalosh Regalim*, when *Yidden* were commanded to ascend to Yerushalayim, countless others would travel to the *Beis Hamikdash* throughout the year as well.

Coming from all corners of Eretz Yisroel, these travelers would often knock on the doors of homes along the way, asking for directions. Even the youngest children knew how to guide them, having grown accustomed to hearing these requests several times a day.

Imagine the atmosphere in those homes! At the dinner table, children would excitedly recount how many travelers had stopped by that day, and conversations naturally turned to the wonders of the *Beis Hamikdash*, its miracles, the Kohanim, the Levi'im, the Sanhedrin, and its extraordinary holiness.

During the *yomim tovim,* when millions of *Yidden* made their way toward Yerushalayim, this excitement only intensified. As a result, children grew up with the *Beis Hamikdash* constantly on their minds and in their hearts, developing a deep awareness of its holiness and a yearning to experience it themselves.

The *Ponevezher Rav* then posed a fascinating question: If so many travelers needed directions to Yerushalayim, why weren't signs erected to guide them?

After all, the *Gemara* in *Masechte Makkos* teaches that signs were required along the roads leading to the *Arei Miklat*, guiding those who had accidentally taken a life to their designated cities of refuge.

Why were signs necessary for the *Arei Miklat,* yet not for the *Beis Hamikdash?*

The *Ponevezher Rav* explained that the Torah did not want those fleeing to an *Ir Miklat* to have to knock on doors and publicize their misdeeds. Nor was it desirable for *Yiddishe* homes to be constantly occupied with conversations about those who had committed such acts. Therefore, clear signs were provided to guide them directly to their destination.

But when it came to the *Beis Hamikdash*, the very opposite was true. The absence of signs served a beautiful purpose. By encouraging travelers to knock on doors and ask for directions, the *Beis Hamikdash* became a constant presence in the daily lives and conversations of *Yidden* throughout Eretz Yisroel.

Every knock on the door was another opportunity to speak about its holiness. Every request for directions awakened another thought of the *Beis Hamikdash.* And every conversation planted another seed of longing in the hearts of the children who listened. In this way, the journey to the *Beis Hamikdash* did more than guide travelers toward Yerushalayim. It brought the holiness of the *Beis Hamikdash* into the homes and hearts of *Yidden* everywhere.

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE OF ENTHUSIASM FOR MITZVOS IN THE HOME

Yaakov Avinu taught us a profound lesson, one that holds the secret to building a successful Jewish home.

He declared, ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי, and then added, ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים. Through "*shamarti*," his constant yearning and enthusiasm for *mitzvos*, Yaakov created an atmosphere that naturally led to סור מרע, protecting his family from negative influences, while embracing עשה טוב, filling his home with the radiant light of the *Shechinah*.

How can we bring this same spirit into our own homes?

Imagine a child waking up on Friday morning to the delicious aroma of his mother's freshly baked *challos*. By midday, his father has returned from work and is already preparing for Shabbos - reviewing the *parshah* with *Chumash*, *Rashi*, *Ramban*, and the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh.* The table is beautifully set, and the entire family is eagerly preparing for Shabbos.

As the sun begins to set, his mother lights the Shabbos candles, while the children, dressed in their Shabbos finery, await the arrival of the Shabbos Queen.

In such a home, Shabbos Kodesh is not merely observed; it is eagerly anticipated, lovingly prepared for, and joyfully welcomed. The children absorb their parents' excitement, and that

atmosphere of longing brings the extraordinary radiance of Shabbos into their home, shielding them from the influences of the world outside.

Consider the scene when the father returns home from *shul* on Friday night. He could rush through *Shalom Aleichem*, sing the *zemiros* quietly and without enthusiasm, and recite *kiddush* in a barely audible voice.

Or he could fill the room with joyous singing, inviting his children to join him, and recite *kiddush* with heartfelt passion. After all, *kiddush* is our testimony that the Ribbono Shel Olam created heaven and earth. When children hear their father proclaim these words with genuine feeling, they recognize how deeply meaningful they are to him.

The same is true of the Shabbos *seudah*. The conversations we choose, the warmth around the table, and the joy with which we sing *zemiros* all shape the atmosphere our children carry within them.

And when a father completes a *masechta* in *Gemara*, he can quietly acknowledge the accomplishment and return to his routine. Or the family can transform the occasion into a celebration of Torah. The mother prepares a special meal, music fills the home, and the father dances with his children, singing *"Sisi V'simchi B'simchas HaTorah."*

What a powerful message this sends! Torah is not simply something we learn; it is something we cherish, celebrate, and rejoice in.

This is how we follow in the footsteps of Yaakov Avinu, filling our homes with genuine love, anticipation, and enthusiasm for Torah and *mitzvos*.

And this is how we pass down the protection of ולא למדתי ממעשיו הרעים to our children.

When children grow up surrounded by the beauty and joy of Torah, they develop an inner richness that diminishes the appeal of secular culture and material pursuits. They learn that while *gashmius* has its necessary place, it is merely a tool, never the purpose of life.

The greatest treasure we can give our children is a home where Torah, *mitzvos*, and *ma'asim tovim* are not only our highest priorities, but also our greatest sources of happiness.

Such a home is truly *lechtig*, illuminated by the joy of serving Hashem, and its light becomes a lasting source of strength and protection for generations to come.

Feeling the Spice of Shabbos Kodesh

EXPERIENCING THE NESHAMAH YESEIRAH PHYSICALLY

People often wonder whether an ordinary *Yid* can truly feel and experience the *neshama yeseira.* Perhaps, they assume, such a profound spiritual sensation is reserved for great *tzaddikim*, whose entire week is immersed in Torah study.

Yet the answer is a resounding yes!

As we explained earlier, *Rashi* in *Masechte Beitzah* teaches that the *neshama yeseira* descends upon every single *Yid* on Shabbos. It expands our hearts, allowing us to enjoy our food more fully and experience a deeper sense of rest and tranquility.

These seemingly simple physical pleasures are, in fact, expressions of something far greater: the extraordinary light and holiness of the *neshama yeseira* that illuminates every Jewish soul on Shabbos.

GRASPING THE DEAL-BREAKER OF OUR AVODAS HASHEM

To illustrate this idea, consider someone contemplating a real estate investment. Before committing to a purchase, a wise businessman consults experienced brokers and industry experts, carefully evaluating whether the opportunity is truly worthwhile. As long as he remains uncertain, he hesitates to invest.

But the moment he becomes convinced that he has discovered an extraordinary opportunity, everything changes. Suddenly, he finds the energy to devote himself wholeheartedly to the investment, working day and night, returning home late, and sacrificing precious family time. His newfound clarity fuels his determination, because he recognizes the tremendous value of what lies before him.

The same principle applies to our spiritual lives.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* explains that one of the greatest obstacles to wholehearted *avodas Hashem* is a lack of clarity and recognition. We often fail to appreciate the extraordinary significance of our spiritual accomplishments.

The *Baal Shem Tov,* as well as the *Vilna Gaon* in *Nefesh HaChaim,* teaches a similar idea: When a person does not truly believe in his own potential or recognize the profound impact of his actions, he will naturally struggle to invest his fullest effort. After all, it is human nature to devote ourselves more passionately to something whose value we clearly understand.

Yet there is a fundamental distinction between worldly investments and *avodas Hashem.*

In business, a person may wait until he feels confident in an investment before committing himself. But in our service of Hashem, our commitment cannot depend upon understanding, inspiration, or the promise of a tangible reward.

When we recite *Krias Shema,* we accept the *"ol malchus Shamayim,"* committing ourselves to Torah and *mitzvos* whether or not we understand their significance or feel inspired by their fulfillment.

At Har Sinai, we declared *"Na'aseh v'Nishmah"* – we will do and then we will hear. Our devotion to the Ribbono Shel Olam is unconditional, rooted in our willingness to fulfill His will regardless of our personal feelings.

Nevertheless, the *Chovos HaLevavos,* the *Baal Shem Tov,* and the *Vilna Gaon* teach us that gaining greater clarity and discovering genuine pleasure in our *avodas Hashem* can awaken an entirely new level of enthusiasm and devotion.

When we recognize the immense value of our spiritual efforts, our hearts naturally yearn to invest more deeply. This understanding becomes a powerful source of motivation, inspiring us to grow in our service of Hashem.

The same is true of Shabbos Kodesh. We are obligated to observe Shabbos whether or not we understand the *neshama yeseira,* and whether or not we consciously feel its presence. We do so because we are servants of Hashem, devoted to fulfilling His will.

But when we do recognize that the *neshama yeseira* is a precious gift bestowed upon every *Yid*, and that its holiness can truly be experienced, an entirely new dimension of Shabbos opens before us.

This awareness allows us to approach Shabbos with greater anticipation, appreciate its gifts more deeply, and experience the extraordinary sweetness of serving Hashem with renewed joy and devotion.

THE SPICE OF SHABBOS

The *Gemara* in *Masechte Shabbos* shares an incredible story about Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, who was very close to the Roman emperor.

One Shabbos, he visited Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya and walked in in midst of the Shabbos meal. He smelled the wonderful aroma of the Shabbos food and witnessed the family sitting around and eating the delicious food. The emperor became completely overwhelmed. He felt as though he was getting a whiff of *Gan Eden*, having never experienced such a delightful scent or delicious food in his life.

This was a Roman emperor, the dictator with billions of dollars and access to the best chefs in the world. He could have anything he desired; he had experienced everything out there. Yet, when he entered the home of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya and smelled the Shabbos food, he was completely mesmerized.

Realizing that this food must be something out of this world - it was probably impossible to find elsewhere, the emperor asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya to divulge the special spice he used for his food. He wished to acquire the same so he could replicate the delicious-smelling food.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya replied, "There is a hidden seasoning named Shabbos. To acquire these specific ingredients of Shabbos, one could traverse the entire globe, from one horizon to the other, yet never encounter them. There is but a single location where it is found: with a *Yid* who keeps Shabbos."

The emperor understood that he would never in his lifetime merit such a meal, with such delicious food and heavenly aromas.

THE NESHAMAH YESEIRAH – A SENSE OF GAN EDEN

The *Shlah Hakadosh* raises a fascinating question: What exactly is this mysterious spice called Shabbos? After all, no such physical seasoning exists.

He explains that this extraordinary spice is none other than the *neshama yeseira itself*.

When the *neshama yeseira* descends from Heaven, its holiness permeates the food prepared in honor of Shabbos. This is especially true when we declare *"L'kavod Shabbos"* while shopping, cooking, or even enjoying our meals. With these words, an exquisite fragrance and sweetness from *Gan Eden* infuse the food, elevating its flavor beyond anything an earthly chef or seasoning could ever reproduce.

Thus, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya's words were indeed true. There is a special spice called Shabbos, and according to the *Shlah*, it is bestowed upon those who observe Shabbos Kodesh.

This *Gemara* reveals something truly remarkable: The holiness of Shabbos is

not an abstract concept reserved for great *tzaddikim*. It is something that can genuinely be sensed and experienced.

Consider the Roman emperor. Despite his immense wealth and access to the finest delicacies in the world, he was overwhelmed by the aroma of a simple Shabbos meal. Even without possessing the *neshama yeseira* himself, he could recognize that something extraordinary filled the home of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya.

If even a Roman emperor could perceive the sweetness of Shabbos, how much more should we, as *Yidden*, be able to appreciate this precious gift!

And herein lies the first step toward connecting with our *neshama yeseira:* recognizing the extraordinary holiness already present in our Shabbos experience.

When we understand that the food on our tables carries a sweetness from *Gan Eden,* we begin to approach Shabbos with greater awareness and anticipation. Every aroma, every taste, and every moment of delight becomes an opportunity to appreciate the remarkable gift Hashem has bestowed upon us.

For if the fragrance of Shabbos could captivate even a mighty emperor, surely we, who are privileged to welcome the *neshama yeseira* into our very souls, can learn to recognize and experience the delightful aroma of *Gan Eden.*



Introduction to Tefillah

PART THREE

ADDRESSING THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PURPOSE OF TEFILLAH

Having *bitachon* and believing that כל מה דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד – *whatever Hashem does is for the best* – is a fundamental obligation. We also recognize that a person's fate and destiny for the coming year are decreed on Rosh Hashanah.

This raises a profound question: If everything has already been decreed, and all that Hashem does is ultimately for our benefit, why must we *daven*?

Who are we to ask that something be changed when the *Ribbono Shel Olam,* in His infinite wisdom, has already determined what is best for us?

Furthermore, what is the purpose of our three daily *tefillos* – *Shacharis, Minchah,* and *Maariv*? Even the *Ramban*, who considers the daily obligation of *davening* to be *d'rabbanan*, maintains that in times of distress, *tefillah* becomes a *d'oraisa* obligation.

Yet the question remains: Why do we turn to Hashem in *tefillah* if everything is already in His hands?

When a *Yid* faces difficulty, his natural response is to reach for his *tehillim*, pour out his heart, and plead for Hashem's help. Wherever he may be, he whispers his *tefillos* or cries out in his own words, *"Ribbono Shel Olam,* I need Your help. I am struggling, and I have nowhere else to turn."

But if his circumstances were already decreed on Rosh Hashanah, and he firmly believes that everything Hashem does is for his ultimate good, what is he truly asking for? What purpose does his *tefillah* serve?

These questions were already addressed by the *Rishonim*, but we must approach them with great care and humility.

We do not ask these questions to challenge Hashem's ways, but rather because we yearn to serve Him with greater understanding and sincerity.

Unresolved doubts can become barriers that prevent our hearts from opening fully in *tefillah*. But when we gain clarity, those barriers begin to fall away, allowing us to *daven* with deeper *kavanah*, greater devotion, and genuine feeling.

The *Sifrei* teaches that the obligation to *daven* is derived from the *posuk*, ולעבדו בכל לבבכם – *to serve Him with all your heart.*

The *Sifrei* asks, איזהו עבודה שבלב – *what is service of the heart?*

We understand how to serve Hashem through physical actions. We eat *matzah*, recite *kiddush*, and partake in the Shabbos meals, fulfilling His *mitzvos* through tangible deeds.

But how does one serve Hashem with the heart itself?

The *Sifrei* answers, זו תפילה – this is *tefillah*. The essence of *davening* is the heart. It is not merely the words we recite, but the inner connection, sincerity, and devotion with which we turn to Hashem.

And this brings us to the heart of our question: How can we remove the doubts that cloud our understanding, open our hearts completely, and approach Hashem in *tefillah* with genuine *bitachon*, heartfelt *kavanah*, and unwavering faith?

TEFILLAH IS A MITZVAH – WE FULFILL HASHEM'S WILL

The *sefer Hamaspik L'Ovdei Hashem*, authored by *Reb Avraham*, the son of the *Rambam* and a great *tzaddik* in his own right, is an extraordinary treasure gifted to *Klal Yisroel* by the *Ribbono Shel Olam.*

This remarkable work of the *Rishonim* offers profound guidance on many aspects of life and *avodas Hashem. Reb Avraham* addresses questions that often trouble our minds, providing explanations of such clarity and depth that even those who are not great *talmidei chachamim* can appreciate and understand them.

Among the questions he addresses is the very one we raised earlier: If everything is decreed by Hashem, and all that He does is for our ultimate good, why must we *daven*?

Reb Avraham ben HaRambam offers several explanations, beginning with a simple yet fundamental truth: *Davening* is a *mitzvah*, an obligation commanded by Hashem, just like every other *mitzvah* in the Torah.

Consider our preparations for Pesach. In the days leading up to *yom tov*, we devote countless hours to thoroughly cleaning our homes, searching every corner and crevice to remove all traces of *chametz*.

We do so to commemorate *yetzias Mitzrayim*, when the *Yidden* left Egypt in such haste that their dough had no time to rise, resulting in *matzah*.

One might argue: If the purpose is to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim,* why must we go to such extraordinary lengths? Surely, we are capable of remembering how Pharaoh hurried the *Yidden* out of Egypt and how their dough remained unleavened, without spending days scrubbing our homes.

Yet no one questions the obligation to remove *chametz*. We understand that remembering *yetzias Mitzrayim* is not enough. Hashem commanded us to express that remembrance through specific actions, and we faithfully fulfill His will.

The same principle applies to the *mitzvah* of eating *matzah*. Long before Pesach arrives, the *matzah* bakeries begin their meticulous preparations, harvesting wheat and overseeing every stage of production under strict *hashgachah*. On the night of the *seder*, we joyfully fulfill the precious *mitzvah* of eating *matzah*, commemorating the haste with which our ancestors left *Mitzrayim*.

Rabban Gamliel teaches in the *Haggadah* that one who fails to mention Pesach, *matzah*, *marror* has not fulfilled his obligation as required. We must explain the significance of these *mitzvos* and recall the events they represent.

But if the essential purpose is remembrance, and we already express that remembrance through words, why must we physically eat the *matzah*? The answer is obvious to every *Yid*: We eat *matzah* because the *Ribbono She Olam* commanded us to do so.

Our understanding of the *mitzvah* deepens its meaning, but it is Hashem's command that obligates us to fulfill it. *Reb Avraham ben HaRambam* explains that *tefillah* follows this very same principle.

We are commanded to have *emunah* and *bitachon*, to believe that everything Hashem does is for our ultimate good, and to recognize that our destiny is decreed on Rosh Hashanah.

Yet alongside these obligations stands another *mitzvah*: to turn to Hashem in *tefillah*.

Just as we eat *matzah*, wear *tzitzis* and *tefillin*, observe Shabbos, and sit in a *sukkah* because Hashem commanded us, we *daven* because the *Ribbono Shel Olam* wants us to daven.

Even though we can remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* without physically entering a *sukkah*, we nevertheless fulfill the *mitzvah* exactly as Hashem instructed. Similarly, our belief in His perfect judgment does not diminish our obligation to pray.

Hashem wants us to turn to Him three times each day, and whenever we find ourselves in need.

The *Satmar Rav* adds a powerful observation: In our times, *davening* can no longer be regarded as merely a *d'rabbanan* obligation. For who among us is truly without need? Living in *gallus*, surrounded by challenges and difficulties, every *Yid* requires Hashem's help. Therefore, every *tefillah* carries the obligation of a *d'oraisa*.

This understanding transforms our entire approach to *davening*. Just as we approach eating *matzah*, drinking the *arba kosos,* or putting on *tefillin* with the knowledge that we are fulfilling Hashem's will, so too must we approach every *tefillah*.

We do not *daven* because we question Hashem's decisions, nor because we doubt that everything He does is for the best. We *daven* because He has commanded us to turn to Him.

This is the first and most essential foundation of *tefillah*: recognizing that each time we stand before Hashem and open our hearts, we are fulfilling His precious *mitzvah* and carrying out His will.

THE INTERNAL CONFLICT: MATERIAL NATURE VS. SPIRITUAL INTELLECT

Reb Avraham ben HaRambam offers another profound insight: The very act of *davening* strengthens our *emunah* and *bitachon*.

In his introduction to *Sha'ar Avodas Elokim,* the *Chovos HaLevavos* describes the constant inner struggle between two opposing forces within every person.

On one side is our physical nature, drawn toward the material world and its pleasures. It seeks fulfillment through food, drink, possessions, and worldly success, convincing us that the more we acquire and accomplish, the happier we will become.

On the other side is our intellect and inner *neshamah*, which recognizes the *Ribbono Shel Olam* as the true source of all blessings. It understands that success does not come through human effort alone, and that genuine happiness is found in spiritual growth, gratitude, and closeness to Hashem. Material pleasures may offer temporary satisfaction, but they cannot provide lasting fulfillment.

The *Chovos HaLevavos* explains that these two forces are engaged in a continuous battle, one that becomes especially intense when it comes to *emunah* and *bitachon*.

Our physical nature urges us to work harder, pursue greater opportunities, and take control of our success. It

insists that our accomplishments depend entirely upon our own efforts. Meanwhile, our spiritual side reminds us that the ultimate source of every achievement is Hashem, and that strengthening our *emunah* and reliance upon Him is far more valuable than placing our trust in physical effort alone.

Yet this struggle is far from equal. The *Chovos HaLevavos* explains that our physical nature has a tremendous advantage: It begins shaping us from the moment we are born.

From infancy, our lives revolve around physical needs. We seek food, comfort, and satisfaction, gradually becoming accustomed to viewing the material world as the source of our well-being. As we grow older, this mindset becomes deeply ingrained, teaching us to associate success with personal effort and worldly accomplishment.

Our *yetzer tov*, however, begins to exert its influence only at the age of thirteen, when we develop a greater awareness of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and our spiritual responsibilities.

Thus, what might appear to be an equal struggle between two opposing forces is, in reality, heavily weighted toward our physical nature. Rather than a balanced fifty-fifty division, it resembles a battle of ninety against ten.

The material side has enjoyed years of influence, becoming almost second nature, while our spiritual awareness must work to overcome habits and instincts established long before it emerged.

This is why developing genuine *emunah* and *bitachon* requires such tremendous effort. We are not merely learning to believe in Hashem; we are striving to reshape an entire way of thinking that has accompanied us since childhood.

FOCUS ON THE WORDS OF THE SIDDUR TO GAIN ENCOURAGEMENT

Reb Avraham ben HaRambam reveals how we can overcome this inner struggle and strengthen our *emunah* and *bitachon*.

Deep within, every *Yid* yearns to feel close to the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and place his complete trust in Him. Yet worries and anxieties often cloud that desire. We long for the peace and happiness that come from genuine *emunah*, but struggle to free ourselves from the fears that weigh upon our hearts.

To help us overcome this challenge, the *Ribbono Shel Olam* bestowed upon us an extraordinary gift: the gift of *tefillah*.

Through the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah,* the formal wording of our daily *tefillos* was established, with every passage carefully designed to deepen our awareness of Hashem and strengthen our *emunah* and *bitachon*.

From the moment we begin with *Modeh Ani* until the concluding *tehillim*, the words of our *davening* guide our hearts toward greater trust in the *Ribbono Shel Olam.*

We begin each morning with *Modeh Ani,* expressing gratitude to Hashem for restoring our souls. Through the *brachos* that follow, we acknowledge His countless kindnesses and recognize that every blessing in our lives comes from Him. Gradually, these words awaken our spiritual awareness, teaching us to see His goodness in even the simplest aspects of daily life.

Reb Avraham ben HaRambam explains that while *davening* is itself a *mitzvah*, it also serves as a powerful source of *chizuk*, nurturing the very *emunah* and *bitachon* we so deeply wish to attain.

Tefillah is the means through which we educate our hearts to recognize what our *neshamah* already knows: that everything comes from Hashem.

Our physical nature has spent years convincing us that success and happiness depend upon worldly accomplishments. Through *davening*, we gradually reshape that perspective, replacing our instinctive reliance upon material efforts with a deeper awareness of Hashem's constant presence and care.

As our *emunah* grows stronger, the worries that once consumed us can begin to loosen their hold, making room for greater peace, contentment, and genuine happiness.

But how can we bring this understanding into our daily lives?

The answer is both simple and practical. Choose a *siddur* that offers clear explanations of the *tefillos*, and dedicate even five to fifteen minutes each day to studying the meaning of the words we recite.

When we begin to understand what we are saying, our *davening* takes on an entirely new depth. The words are no longer merely familiar passages repeated from memory, but powerful expressions of faith that speak directly to our hearts.

By paying attention to the *posukim* of *Pesukei D'Zimrah* and the *brachos* preceding *Shema*, we gradually awaken a deeper appreciation of Hashem's greatness and kindness. Our hearts open, our *kavanah* grows, and our *tefillos* become filled with greater warmth and sincerity.

This is the extraordinary power of

tefillah: It does not merely express the *emunah* we already possess; it helps us develop the *emunah* we are still striving to attain.

We may believe that our *bitachon* is already strong, that we truly accept everything Hashem does as being for our ultimate good. Yet the worries and uncertainties that accompany us reveal how much room remains for growth.

For this very reason, Hashem commands us to *daven* each day, providing us with a constant opportunity to strengthen our connection to Him. And through the sacred *nusach* established by the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, we are given the words and guidance to accomplish this.

May Hashem grant us the merit to open our hearts in genuine *tefillah*, to deepen our *emunah* and *bitachon*, and to experience the serenity that comes from placing our trust entirely in Him.

And through the power of heartfelt *tefillah* and strengthened *emunah*, may we merit to transform even that which was decreed for us at the beginning of the year, bringing greater blessing, goodness, and *yeshuos* into our lives.



The More You Invest, The More Geshmak

THE IMPORTANCE OF INVESTING EFFORT INTO TORAH AND MITZVOS

From time to time, the *yetzer hara* whispers that perhaps we are exerting ourselves unnecessarily. Why invest so much energy in *davening* with proper *kavanah*? Why strive so intensely in Torah learning and the fulfillment of *mitzvos*? Would it not be enough to simply observe what *halachah* requires, without going to such extraordinary lengths?

Yet there are powerful answers to this temptation. First, we must recognize that serving Hashem with minimal effort is not necessarily the fulfillment of *halachah* that we imagine it to be. The Torah calls upon us to invest our hearts and souls into our *avodas Hashem*. To assume that wholehearted devotion is merely an optional stringency reflects a misunderstanding of what Hashem truly asks of us.

Regarding *tefillah*, the *posuk* declares, ולעבדו בכל לבבכם – *to serve Him with all your heart*. But who among us can honestly claim to have reached the fullness of this obligation?

Can we truly say that we serve the *Ribbono Shel Olam* with every fiber of our being, with the same instinctive love and devotion that a child feels toward his parents?

The very words בכל לבבכם remind us that *avodas Hashem* is not merely about fulfilling an obligation and moving on. It is about giving Hashem our hearts, continually striving for greater sincerity, love, and connection. When the goal is to serve Hashem with our entire heart, no sincere effort toward that ideal is wasted, and there is always another level of devotion to aspire to.

THE TREASURE WITHIN THE MITZVAH

What we often fail to recognize is that by seeking to take it easy in our *avodas Hashem*, we deprive ourselves of the extraordinary treasures hidden within every *mitzvah*.

Consider someone building a successful business. He does not approach his work halfheartedly, doing only what is absolutely necessary. Rather, he invests his time, energy, and resources, constantly searching for opportunities to grow and succeed. His business occupies his thoughts because he

recognizes its tremendous value. When something is truly precious to us, we naturally want to invest ourselves in it.

The same is true of a delicious meal. When savoring a favorite dish, we do not rush through it without a second thought. We slow down, appreciating each bite and allowing ourselves to enjoy its full flavor. The more we savor it, the greater our pleasure.

The same principle lies at the heart of Torah and *mitzvos*. The *Taz* offers a beautiful insight into the wording of *Birchas HaTorah*, in which we recite לעסוק בדברי תורה – *to occupy ourselves with words of Torah.*

The word לעסוק is closely associated with the concept of engaging in business. Just as a devoted businessman pours his energy into his livelihood, constantly striving to develop and expand it, so too must we approach our Torah learning.

When Torah becomes our most treasured pursuit, something worthy of our deepest attention and greatest effort, we begin to discover its extraordinary light and sweetness. And this applies not only to Torah learning, but to every *mitzvah* we perform.

The more we invest our hearts and efforts into our *avodas Hashem*, the more we uncover the beauty, sweetness, and spiritual treasures waiting within it.

Rather than viewing greater effort as a burden, we begin to recognize it as a privilege: an opportunity to experience the immeasurable richness of Torah and *mitzvos*.







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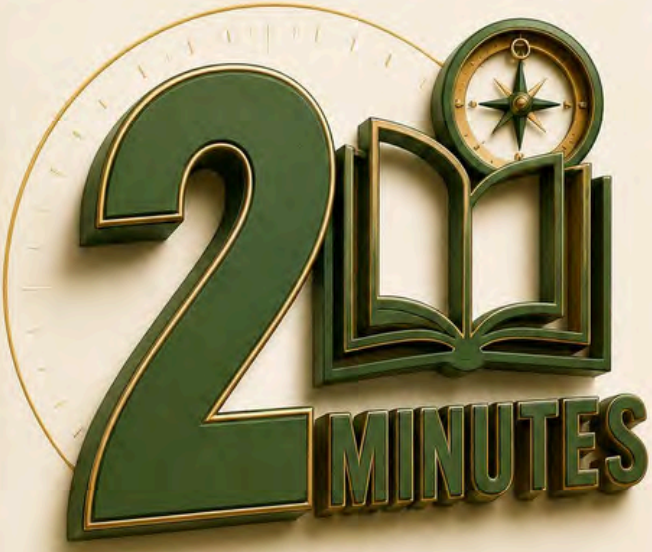

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