

ALL DEPENDS ON THE EFFORT WE INVEST IN TORAH STUDY

(BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)

On the verse, "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments" (Leviticus 26:3), Rashi cites the Sages in explaining: "What is the meaning of, 'If you walk in My statutes'? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah." We must point out that for Rashi, the question here is why the Torah uses two similar terms ("walk" and "keep"), since laws known as *chukim* ("statutes") are also considered to be *mitzvot* ("commandments") and are contained in them. Why does the Torah state this directive twice? It is apparently because two distinct issues are being addressed here: 1) The study of Torah; and 2) the observance of *mitzvot*. In order to truly observe *mitzvot* in their totality and in every detail, we must study Torah beforehand. Only then can we reach our desired goal, which is the wholehearted observance of *mitzvot* in every detail. We must also ask why, concerning statutes, the Torah uses the expression "walk," whereas for commandments it uses the term "keep." What does each term mean?

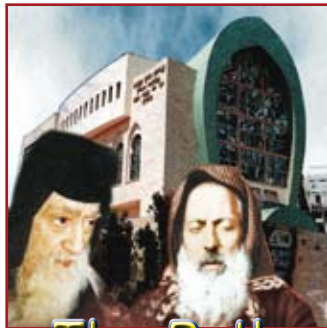
We shall attempt to explain this as best we can, according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water" (Isaiah 55:1). This is difficult to understand, for it is obvious that someone who is thirsty should drink. Therefore what does the prophet mean by this statement? I believe that he is alluding to a profound truth, which is that there are people whose entire lives revolve around quenching their desires and pursuing wealth. However the more they have, the more they want, for "the lover of money will never be satisfied with money" (Ecclesiastes 5:9), and "if he has a hundred, he wants to turn them into two hundred" (Kohelet Rabba 1:32). These people will even abandon their own families for money, despite knowing that they will eventually die and leave all their money behind, as it is written: "At a time of a man's passing from this world, neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, nor pearls accompany him, but only Torah and good deeds" (Perkei Avot 6:9). Nevertheless, such people put great effort into acquiring things in this fleeting world, completely bent on the pursuit of wealth.

It is in this regard that the prophet tells us, "Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water." This refers to people who thirst after money and the pleasures of this world, in effect telling them: You – go to the water – just as a thirsty person drinks water. Yet if he drinks salty water, not only will his thirst not be quenched, he will be thirstier than ever! The same applies to work: If we work solely for money, we will hunger even more for it and never be satisfied. This is why we must invest our efforts into eternal life, not into this fleeting life. That is, we must invest our efforts in Torah. When we invest all our efforts in water – meaning in Torah – we will gain both this world and the World to Come, for by the merit of Torah we will arise at the resurrection of the dead. Thus "go to the water" means "go to the Torah." This is what we must thirst after, and it is where we must place our efforts, for the Torah is man's entire life, both in this world and in the World to Come. This is the sense of the expression, "If you walk in My statutes." It is Hashem's voice proclaiming: "Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water." We must invest our efforts in the right place, in the study of Torah, not in the futile pursuits of this world, for a person's life on earth is fleeting; the wind passes over it and it is gone (Psalms 103:15-16).

A person must realize, however, that when he takes it upon himself to study Torah, he must concentrate his forces on defeating the evil inclination, which constantly fights him and says: "You already perform numerous *mitzvot* and you're an honest man! Why do you also have to study Torah?" To this a person must respond, "The study of Torah is like a law that cannot be understood [a *chuk*]. So

even if I don't understand it, I still must study." By the study of Torah, a person will come to fulfilling *mitzvot*. Yet if he fails to study, the *mitzvot* he does will not be fulfilled as they should be, and he will constantly fall into the traps of the evil inclination. Hence the Torah warns us that it is not enough to study without putting an effort into it. We must elevate ourselves in Torah study, for only then will life take a turn for the good. It is like telling someone, "If you work hard for a few days, both day and night, you will become immensely rich." In that case he will completely change. He will not eat, drink, or sleep as before, and all his time will be spent working. He will work well beyond his normal capabilities, and that which seemed strange to him yesterday will seem normal to him today, and even more so tomorrow, as if he were following an immutable law. The same applies to the effort we invest in the study of Torah. Each day we will feel different than the day before, elevating ourselves more and more. We will walk counter to our nature and destructive habits, which is what constitutes: "If you walk in My statutes." It means elevating ourselves and investing everything into Torah. We will then receive the bliss that awaits us in the World to Come, as it is written: "How abundant is Your good that You have stored away for those who fear You" (Psalms 31:20). Now there is nothing "good" other than Torah (Perkei Avot 6:3), and thus we will merit the reward described by the Sages: "In the future world... the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads feasting on the brightness of the Shechinah" (Berachot 17a). If we fulfill *mitzvot* with the greatest degree of love, we will merit the light of understanding them. From here we see that the second part of the verse, "and keep My commandments" (which means, according to the view of the Torah, the daily observance of *mitzvot*), only happens once we have performed the first part of the verse: "If you walk in My statutes," a reference to the study of Torah. In fact studying Torah can be considered as a prerequisite for performing *mitzvot*.

As a result, the study of Torah and performance of *mitzvot* require great preparation against the evil inclination. Even before the giving of the Torah, we see that the Children of Israel prepared themselves for 46 days to receive it. In fact they elevated themselves from the 49 gates of impurity towards the 49 gates of purity. Yet in that case, why did they need three extra days of isolation, as Hashem said to Moses: "You shall set boundaries for the people roundabout" (Exodus 19:12), as well as: "Be ready after three days" (v.15)? After all, they had already been prepared for a long time at that point. The answer is that the evil inclination is very powerful when it comes to receiving the Torah, and so a person must prepare himself as much as possible. Thus preparation leads to the goal. This is especially true when the time comes for action, for then the evil inclination is even more powerful and whispers doubts into a person's ears and inflicts terrible hardships upon him. Hence he must prepare himself even more. All this is contained in the words, "If you walk in My statutes," a reference to constantly preparing ourselves, walking against our nature, and progressively growing. How can we do this? By reducing to a minimum the pleasures that we seek in this world. This idea is alluded to in the word *im* ("if"), formed by the letters aleph and mem, and having a numerical value of 41. This means that we should add a little more to the 40 days in which the Torah was given, all while preparing ourselves as the Children of Israel did in the desert. This is what walking means – progressively growing – for then we will arrive at: "If you keep My commandments." We must keep the *mitzvot*; we cannot neglect them. Therein lies the difference between "walking" and "keeping," for the diligent study of Torah is a preparation for the performance of *mitzvot*, resulting in tremendous spiritual growth.



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

Harmonizing Words with Thoughts

The tongue is the agent of the heart, for it says what the heart thinks, and it is the heart that is really speaking. Thus it is written, "Guard your tongue from evil" (Psalms 34:14) – pay attention to your tongue so that it does not utter, as the agent of the heart, an explicit evil. Furthermore, guard your lips. Even if they do not speak evil, but only good, these good words should not just be superficial. They should not be deceptive words – words that are not in accordance with the heart – for then one will cleave to what the lips say.... If a person guards his tongue and his lips, which are the instruments of speech, he can avoid doing evil, only doing good by means of the Torah. However if he renders his tongue impure, even the Torah that he studies will not be pure, and he will not escape sin.

– Bina L'Ittim 2:1

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Greatest Spiritual Investment

Rashi states at the beginning of our parsha: “What is the meaning of, ‘If you walk in My statutes’? It means that you must toil in the study of Torah.” Have we ever stopped to think of all the mitzvot we accomplish by studying Torah? In his book *Ma’alot HaTorah*, Rabbi Avraham (the brother of the Vilna Gaon) presents the following estimate:

[1] It is written, “If you walk in My statutes” (Leviticus 26:3), which Rashi explains as referring to the study of Torah; [2] “You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 6:7); [3] “You shall speak of them” (ibid.); [4] “When you sit in your house” (ibid.); [5] “When you walk on the road” (ibid.); [6] “When you lie down” (ibid.); [7] “When you rise up” (ibid.). This comes to seven mitzvot. They are later repeated: [1] “You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:19); [2] “You shall keep” (ibid. 11:8); [3] “You shall keep My statutes” (Leviticus 18:5); [4] “My ordinances shall you do and My statutes shall you keep, to walk in them” (ibid. 18:4); [5] The Sifra states that transactions should comply with them; [6] “You shall keep My commandments” (Leviticus 22:31); [7] “You shall keep and do” (Deuteronomy 4:6); [8] “That you may learn them” (ibid. 5:1); [9] “You shall keep all My statutes and all My ordinances, and you shall do them” (Leviticus 19:37); [10] Commenting on the expression, “You shall keep” (Deuteronomy 4:6), Rashi states: *Zu mishnah* (“This [refers to] study” – see *Sifrei*); [11] You shall teach them to your children and to your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9); [12] “To keep all His statutes and His commandments” (ibid. 6:2); [13] “Keep to do” (ibid. 5:29); [14] “You shall keep them and you shall do them” (ibid. 7:12); [15] “You shall observe to do” (ibid. 8:1); [16] “Choose life” (ibid. 30:19); [17] “Take heed to yourself” (Exodus 34:12); [18] “Keep His commandments and His statutes that are written” (Deuteronomy 30:10).

There are several more prohibitions: [1] “Take heed” (Deuteronomy 4:9); [2] “Guard your soul” (ibid.); [3] “Lest you forget the things your eyes have seen” (ibid.); [4] “Lest they be removed from your heart” (ibid.); [5] “Take heed to yourself, lest you forget” (ibid. 8:11); [6] “Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived” (ibid. 11:16), and it is written: “When a man turns from Torah, he immediately cleaves to idolatry” (*Sifrei*, *Bechukotai*); [7] “Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant” (Deuteronomy 4:23). Wherever it is written “take heed” or “lest,” a prohibition is implied. Furthermore, wherever it is written “guard,” it is forbidden to divert your attention from it, as it is written: “You shall guard the guarding of the L-RD” (Leviticus 8:35). Thus we have, “You shall contemplate it day and night” (Joshua 1:8). This is the total number of positive and negative mitzvot that we observe by studying Torah.

A Pearl From the Rav

Rashi explains the verse, “If you walk in My statutes” (Leviticus 26:3) as a reference to toiling in the study of Torah. In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Pinto Shlita explains this concept according to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water” (Isaiah 55:1). This is difficult to understand, for we all know that a person who is thirsty should drink water. Therefore what is the prophet telling us here? He is pointing us in the right direction, for some people spend their entire lives in the pursuit of material and monetary pleasures, yet are never satisfied with their wealth. Such people always want more, as it is written: “The lover of money will never be satisfied with money” (Ecclesiastes 5:9). In fact they will

even forsake their own family for money, even while knowing that they must die and leave all their money behind, as it is written: “For upon his death he will not take anything; his glory will not descend after him” (Psalms 49:18). Even so, such people will toil for the life of this world. To this the prophet states, “Everyone who is thirsty, go to the water.” Those who are thirsty for water and the pleasures of this world should head towards the water. That is, just as someone who is thirsty will drink even salty water – which not only will not quench his thirst, but will actually intensify it – so too when a person toils only for money, he will thirst for it even more and never be satisfied. Hence he must toil after life in the world of Torah, not in this fleeting world.

When a person decides to toil in the study of Torah, however, he must focus his efforts on defeating the evil inclination. Hence the verse states, “If you walk,” meaning that a person must walk counter to his natural tendencies, in which case he will merit all the good of the World to Come.

Eating to Satiety

It is written, “You will eat your bread to satiety, and you will dwell securely in your land” (Leviticus 26:5).

Our Sages have said, “Eat a third, drink a third, and leave a third for when you get angry, and then you will have had your fill” (*Gittin* 70a). This means that we must not eat too much, but always leave a third of our meal uneaten. In this way we will not endanger ourselves when we become angry, for anger is liable to harm a full stomach. Anger is a typical curse of the exile, as the verse states: “The L-RD will give you a trembling heart” (Deuteronomy 28:65). Here the Sages have said, “[This] refers to Babylon” (*Nedarim* 22a). The Torah therefore states: “You will eat your bread to satiety” – you will eat to satiety without fear of anger – for “you will dwell securely in your land,” and therefore you will never become angry.

– From *Tiferet Yehonatan*

Everything is Taken Into Account

It is written, “I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember, and I will remember the land” (Leviticus 26:42).

The commentators ask what this verse is doing in the middle of a passage containing rebukes. In his book *Darchei Mussar*, Rabbi Yaakov Neiman Zatzal explains: This verse teaches us a great principle regarding how Hashem deals with His creatures. When hardships and great trials come upon an individual or the community, people have the impression that the Holy One, blessed be He, has neglected or abandoned them. Because such beliefs cause people to lose hope, the Torah tells us: When rebukes are administered to an individual or the community through hardship and suffering, I will demonstrate that I am also showing you good. In this way you will know that I have not removed My guiding hand from you, and that I still love you. Even misfortunes originate from My guiding hand, and “Everything that the Merciful One does is for the good.”

We find the same approach taken with Joseph, for it is written: “They raised their eyes and looked, and behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites... their camels were bearing spices, balm, and lotus” (Genesis 37:25). Rashi states, “Why did Scripture publicize their burden? To let you know the reward of the righteous, for it is customary for Arabs to carry only naphtha and tar, whose odor is foul. Yet for this one [Joseph], it was arranged [that they should be carrying] spices, so that he should not be afflicted by a foul odor.” The Alter of Kelm, Rabbi Simcha Zissel Zatzal, said that from here we see just how

hardships are sent in a precisely calculated way. Although Joseph was suffering from his trials and humiliations, he nevertheless did not deserve to suffer on account of a foul odor. Since he did not deserve this, the Holy One, blessed be He, arranged for some Arabs to be transporting goods that had a fragrant smell. Thus Joseph would not be bothered by a foul odor. If a person is not meant to suffer, then he will not suffer in any way.

In Parsha Beha'alotcha it is stated that the Children of Israel asked for meat. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow" (Numbers 11:18). Rashi interprets this to mean: "Prepare yourselves for punishment." The Torah later states, "The anger of the L-RD was kindled against the people, and the L-RD struck the people with a very great plague" (v.33). Meat was prepared for the people, and we are told that the quail "were two cubits above the ground" (v.31). Rashi explains the significance of this statement: "They flew at a height that they reached a person's heart, so that it would not be difficult for them to gather them, so that they need neither rise up nor bend down." In other words, even though Hashem had issued a severe decree against the people, He ensured that they did not suffer more than had been decreed, to the point that they would not even have to make an effort to gather the quail. From here it follows that even when a person is assailed by trials, Hashem does not remove His guiding hand from him. Even then He cares for a person in the slightest detail, ensuring that he shouldn't, for example, have to be exposed to a foul odor or bend down to gather his food.

Everything Depends on Rain

It is written, "I will give your rains in their season" (Leviticus 26:4).

The Ramban writes, "He mentioned the matter of rains first because if they come in their proper season, the air is pure and good, and the springs and rivers are good, and thus it is a cause of physical health, and all produce will increase and be blessed by it... Thus because of this, people do not become sick, and 'none shall miscarry, nor be barren' [Exodus 23:26], even among their cattle, and they will live out their days. For when the material frame is large and healthy, they can continue as in the days of Adam. This is therefore the greatest of all blessings."

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Bechukotai ends the book of Leviticus, with the text specifying that its contents were given on Mount Sinai. The first part of the parsha deals with the effects of obeying and disobeying the covenant that was given on Mount Sinai. The second part deals with the holiness that a person draws to himself by bringing voluntarily offerings to the Sanctuary. At the end of each part, it is stressed that these things were said on Mount Sinai. At the beginning of the parsha the covenant at Horev is described, along with a promise of reward and a threat of punishment. After summarizing things, the parsha adds the mitzvot pertaining to man's place in the Sanctuary through vows, the monetary evaluation of people, and the offering of a portion of his possessions, some of which can be redeemed while others cannot.

Giving Tzeddakah

The Rambam writes, "There are eight levels of tzeddakah, each greater than the next. The greatest level, above which there is no other, is to strengthen the name of another Jew by giving him a gift or loan, by making a partnership with him, or by finding him a job in order to strengthen his hand until he no longer needs [to beg from] people. For it is said, 'You shall strengthen him – proselyte or resident – so that he can live with you' [Leviticus 25:35]. That is to say, strengthen him until he no longer needs to fall [upon the mercy of the community] or be in need" (Yad Chazakah: Hilchot Matnot Aniyim 10:7). On this the Chafetz Chaim writes: Due to the greatness of this mitzvah, throughout the Diaspora the Children of Israel usually establish agencies to lend money to needy people. The power of these sacred agencies is immense, beyond the simple mitzvot of kindness that people perform on their own. ... In fact a small number of people performing a mitzvah cannot be compared to a large number of people performing it. The Holy One, blessed be He, considers each person as if he had been alone in doing this act of kindness, for without the little money that he contributed, the poor would not have been able to acquire what they needed.... This mitzvah can even be accomplished when a person is dealing with his own affairs, or even when he is sleeping.

It is excellent to follow the practice I saw being done in some small towns among the Jewish people, sacred towns in which an agency has been established to deal with these things. It is called Somech Noflim ("Supporting the Fallen"), for it is designed to support and help those who fall, saving them from complete collapse. They would be lent money for a certain, predefined time, and repaying would be facilitated through very small weekly amounts. A special person, either paid or not, was designated to collect these payments every week, and in this way the agency's treasury was almost never lacking. Let us now look at how many advantages there are to this approach: Other than the fact that at the time of the loan we perform the mitzvah of "you shall strengthen" (which, as we mentioned, is the first level among the mitzvot of tzeddakah), we also demonstrate kindness in terms of being repaid. We know what Rabbi Eleazar said in the Gemara, namely that "the reward of charity depends entirely upon the extent of the kindness in it" (Sukkah 49b).

– Shmirat HaLashon, ch. 7

EISHET CHAYIL

How Fortunate Am I!

It is written in the Zohar (Parsha Shelach), "There is a palace above that is reserved for Bitya the daughter of Pharaoh and the myriads upon myriads of righteous women with her. Each has a special place, and there they experience tremendous happiness. Three times a day it is proclaimed, 'The silhouette of Moses, the faithful prophet, is arriving,' and Bitya goes to another place where a curtain is hanging, and through it she sees the appearance of Moses and says: 'How fortunate am I to see this light!' She then turns toward the women who are with her, all attired in beautiful clothes, as they were in this world, clothes that shine with great light. They are called nashim sha'anot [serene women]."

– Sefer Kav HaYashar, ch. 54

THE DEEDS OF THE GREAT

The Accounts of Rabbi Yehudah HaChassid

There was a man who enjoyed success with his children and his possessions. A pious individual came and stayed in his home, and from that day on he began to lose money. Indeed, a curse reigned in his home, and the man observed: "Since the day that this pious fellow has been staying here, I've experienced nothing but losses! I hoped for good, but all I got was evil! Potiphar received blessings because of Joseph, and Laban received them because of Jacob. Yet for me the opposite has happened." A wise man asked him, "Perhaps you are doing something wrong?" When he said that he wasn't, the wise man replied: "Perhaps you committed a dishonest deed that a pious man reprimanded you about, but you failed to heed his words? Even if you committed such deeds in the past, you succeeded all the same because they were done unintentionally. Yet since he reprimanded you, you are committing them deliberately, which is why you are no longer successful. Blessings come to one who heeds the righteous."

There was a man who studied Torah only on Shabbat, for during the week he was occupied with his business. He went and asked a wise man what was the most important thing for attaining life in the World to Come. The wise man said, "You who are immersed in your own affairs, be on good terms with people, do business with a friendly face, and be extremely honest. Don't hold a grudge against anyone. Don't trust anyone, lest you have to make him swear an oath later on. Similarly, don't take anything for granted. Don't keep anything with you that belongs to someone else, for what you earn, he too can earn. Hence all your gains will be considered theft. If you pay attention to all these things, may my reward be the same as yours!"

There was a man who went from town to town collecting charity, for he was poor. He was filled with Torah and good deeds, but he refused to admit it, and he concealed his Torah knowledge. He pretended to know nothing, and he was given little charity. One time he was given a donation while studying Torah with the town's talmidei chachamim. When they saw this, people wanted to give him more, but he refused. He said: "You have given me a certain amount because I am poor, and I will not accept more because of my Torah." – Sefer Chassidim, ch. 215 (HaTorah)

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Those Who Trust in Hashem

It is written, "Blessed is the man who trusts in the L-RD; the L-RD will be his security" (Jeremiah 17:7).

The Chafetz Chaim wrote that when a person increases his level of trust in Hashem, blessings are sure to come his way, as it is written: "Blessed is the man who trusts in the L-RD; the L-RD will be his security." This is why today, when misfortunes are multiplying in the world to such an extent that there remains almost no natural source of sustenance, all we can do is to take shelter in the Name of Hashem. Nothing is too difficult for Him, and by the fact that we take shelter in His shadow, He will certainly send us His blessing from His holy abode. The prophet tells us by allusion that this is what will happen in the final days of our exile, as it is written: "I will leave in your midst a poor and destitute people [which can also be understood as a persecuted people], and they will take shelter in the Name of the L-RD" (Zephaniah 3:12). Here the prophet does not explain what will happen when we take shelter in Hashem's Name.

However this is explained elsewhere, as it is written: "Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the L-RD; we bless you from the house of the L-RD" (Psalms 118:26). This means that because a person comes in the Name of Hashem, blessings will come to him from Hashem's house, which is the source of all blessings. We must realize that confidence in Hashem does not depend on a person's merits, for an unscrupulous individual who places his complete trust in Hashem will be shown mercy by Him. This is what the Vilna Gaon wrote (contrary to the view of the Chovot HaLevavot), and I heard that the Midrash says the same on the verse: "Many are the agonies of the wicked, but as for one who trusts in the L-RD, kindness surrounds him" (Psalms 32:10). This also follows from the verse, "The eye of the L-RD is upon those who fear Him, upon those who hope in His kindness. To save their soul from death, and to sustain them in famine" (Psalms 33:18-19). Because this passage does not state, "those who fear Him and hope in His kindness," it means that these are two different things. Hence even if we are not yet among those who fear Hashem, yet we place our hope solely in His goodness, Hashem will look upon us and sustain us in famine. – Shem Olam 8:2

A TRUE STORY

Why the Elaborate Ceremony?

It is written, "Any tithe of cattle or of the flock, any that passes under the staff, the tenth shall be holy to the L-RD" (Leviticus 27:32).

The Rav of Keib, Rabbi Shlomo Hachohen Aharonsohn, once asked for a large donation from the Brodsky brothers, who were known for their wealth and generosity. Three days later he returned and asked them for yet another donation, a request at which they couldn't hide their astonishment. When they asked the Rav why he needed an extra donation so quickly, he explained using the above verse.

"It is difficult to understand why the Torah obligates us to take the ma'asser of animals in such an elaborate ceremony. It should have been enough to put aside the total number of animals needed for the ma'asser in one step! However the Torah understands the human heart very well, knowing that if a person were to see how many animals his ma'asser actually comprised, it would be difficult for him to give. This is why the Torah enjoins a person to bring his livestock into a sheepfold and begin counting them there, with the first belonging to him, the second belonging to him, the third also belonging to him, and so on until the ninth, all belonging to him. Then when the tenth comes along, he is commanded to set aside that solitary animal for his ma'asser. Thus as all the animals pass beneath his rod, a person will realize that he really has more than enough for himself."

Rav Aharonsohn then turned to his noble donors and said, "If you count the money that you made for yourselves in the last three days, it will be easy for you to reply to my request once again." Delighted with the Rav's explanation, the Brodsky brothers gave him an even greater donation than before.

– Peninim MiShulchan Gavoha

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbeinu Bachya

Rabbeinu Bachya, the author of the holy book Chovot HaLevavot, was born around the year 4810. Anyone who reads his book and its introduction will notice the power of his holiness and the life-giving words that guide us. The Reshith Chochma assembled these pearls of wisdom, and the Tzeida LaDerech gathered his remarks into ten chapters, adding a few so it can be read during the Ten Days of Repentance. In the introduction to Chovot HaLevavot, Rabbeinu Bachya described the hesitation that seized him when he wanted to write his book. His words serve as a great lesson in humility and the fear of Heaven. He stated: "When I set out to write this book, I realized that a man such as myself was not worthy of this task. I felt that I did not possess the strength or the intelligence, nor did I understand the issues well enough. I was afraid of going too far, of investing my efforts into something where my deficiencies would be so evident. In fact I even began to question whether it wasn't better to change my mind. Yet when I envisioned freeing myself from the burden of this work by not writing the book, I suspected what I really sought was rest, relaxation, and tranquility. I was afraid that it was really the attraction to pleasure that put these thoughts into my mind and pushed me to seek out tranquility and serenity, to pursue rest and relaxation. I then remembered the words of the one who said, 'It is only prudent not to be too prudent.'"

There is another Rabbeinu Bachya who wrote the famous Torah commentary entitled Sefer Rabbeinu Bachya. This is Rabbeinu Bachya bar Asher of Saragossa, the disciple of the Rashba. At the end of Parsha Chukat, Rabbeinu Bachya bar Asher concludes with: "My great teacher, Rabbi Shlomo, in his commentary on the Aggadot." Who wrote a commentary on the Aggadot? The Rashba [Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet]!

– Sefer Shem HaGedolim 2:1