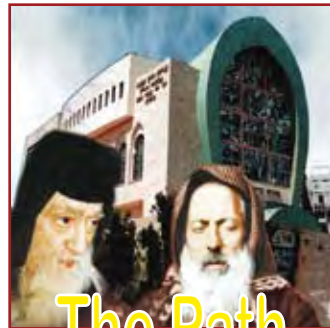


THIS IS THE LAW OF THE BURNT OFFERING – CONSTANT ELEVATION (BY RABBI DAVID HANANIA PINTO SHLITA)



The Path To Follow

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GUARD YOUR TONGUE!

The Mitzvah to Reprove

It is written, "You shall reprove your fellow, and do not sin on account of him" (Leviticus 19:17). This means that we must not shame a person in public, even if reproving him, and even more so if we are not reproving him. In fact a person who shames his fellow commits an intolerable sin, as stated in tractate Bava Metzia: "He who publicly shames his neighbor is as though he has shed blood." The Gemara also states, "Better for a man to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to publicly put his neighbor to shame. From where do we know this? From Tamar, for it is written: 'When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying...' [Genesis 38:25]." Thus it follows that even if a person is culpable, we must be extremely careful not to shame him. One who has a habit of shaming others has no share in the World to Come.

– Shmirat HaLashon

It is written, "Command Aaron and his sons, saying: 'This is the law of the burnt-offering. The burnt-offering shall be on the hearth, upon the altar, all night until morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning on it'" (Leviticus 6:2). Rashi cites the Midrash (Torat Kohanim, Tzav 6:1) in stating, "Scripture especially needs to urge where monetary loss is involved." The commentators (see Siftei Chachamim) explain that the priests derive no benefit from the burnt-offering, which is dedicated entirely to Hashem. Under such circumstances, the Torah was concerned that the priests would become weary of offering sacrifices, which is why it warned them using the word tzav ("command"), a term of encouragement, enjoining them not to show any slack in this regard. This is surprising. Did the priests perform their service in the Temple only to receive a reward, such that Scripture had to encourage them in cases where they would not derive any benefit from a sacrifice? We also need to understand why Scripture mentions the law of the burnt-offering, from which the priests derived no benefit, before the sin-offering, which the priests did benefit from. Normally, when a king of flesh and blood orders his servants to do something, he begins with easier tasks and then proceeds to more difficult ones, so that they have no difficulties obeying his orders. Therefore why did the Holy One, blessed be He, not do the same with the priests? Why did He instead begin with the difficult part, the burnt-offering that they did not benefit from, and only then mention the sacrifices that they would benefit from?

We may explain this according to the words of the Ramban, who wrote about why Hashem commanded the Children of Israel to offer sacrifices to Him: "A person must realize that he has sinned against his G-d with his body and his soul, and that his blood should really be spilled and his body burned, were it not for the lovingkindness of the Creator, Who took from him a substitute and a ransom, namely this offering, so that its blood should be in place of his blood, its life in place of his life" (Ramban on Leviticus 1:9). Today, since the Temple and the altar no longer stand because of our many sins, what can procure atonement for man, a life for his life? The answer is that when a person sanctifies his senses – his deeds, words, and thoughts – Scripture considers him to have brought a burnt-offering in the Temple and considers his blood to have been sprinkled upon the altar. In fact when the Temple stood, that was the goal of the sacrifices: To elevate a person's senses in order to sanctify them, for in this way his sin would be forgiven.

Given that every person who elevates himself in the service of G-d must sanctify himself and his entire body for Hashem, including his notions and thoughts, the Torah says with regards to the burnt-offering: "When a man among you offers an offering to the L-RD, you shall bring your offering of the cattle, of the herd, and of the flock" (Leviticus 1:2). What is the meaning of the expression, "When a man among you offers an offering"? This teaches us that even when there is no Temple, a person can be forgiven for his sins in the same way as the burnt-offering atoned for sin in the Temple. How? Since a person is offering himself entirely to Hashem, he can elevate himself in Torah and the fear of Heaven, and his sins will be forgiven. Since the Torah states, "When a man among you offers" concerning the burnt-offering, and since the burnt-offering atones for the thoughts of the heart (Yerushalmi, Yoma 8:7), it follows that the burnt-offering only procures atonement when it is accompanied by repentance over the thoughts of the heart.

Not only that, but a person must even sanctify "the cattle" – meaning the animalistic side of his soul – to Hashem, as it is written: "Sanctify yourself in what is permitted" (Yebamat 20a), something that goes beyond the strict requirements of the law. By acting in this way, a person can devote himself entirely to Hashem; his sins will then be forgiven, and he will no longer commit them. This is because a person only falls into sin if he contemplates it beforehand, as Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair said: "A man should not indulge in [perverse] thoughts by day, which might lead him to uncleanness by

night" (Ketubot 46a). We also read, "Unchaste imagination is more harmful than sin itself" (Yoma 29a). Thus when a person sanctifies his thoughts, he becomes like a burnt-offering and will not fall into sin.

This explains why the Torah mentions the law of the burnt-offering first. It is because one is only saved from sin by sacrificing and devoting himself entirely to Hashem, to the point that he does not turn away from Him in his thoughts. The burnt-offering is therefore more important than the other offerings, because it enables a person to be completely devoted to Hashem. His physical life is also elevated when he sanctifies himself in what is permitted, over and above the requirements of the law per se, and he raises himself to a considerable extent. If he reaches the level of a burnt-offering, he will no longer sin and will not need a sin-offering.

How does a person know if he has managed to sanctify himself and become a burnt-offering that is entirely devoted to Hashem? It is by the fact that he is constantly putting an effort into elevating himself in the service of G-d, without being content on what he did yesterday, but by adding to his service more and more. This is what the Torah alludes to by saying, "This is the law of the burnt-offering. The burnt-offering..." meaning that the whole nature of the sacrifice is a burnt-offering, which is a burnt-offering for Hashem. If a person does not sense a spiritual elevation within himself, and if he does not take the attitude: "Perhaps I failed to serve Hashem properly yesterday, and today I will add to my service" – but instead thinks, "Why do I need to sanctify myself more than necessary? There's no end to this! I pray, I study, and I pay attention to not sinning, which is enough!" – such a person should realize that he has not yet reached the level of a burnt-offering for Hashem. He should know that he has not sacrificed his animalistic side for Heaven. If he had become spiritual, it certainly would not have prevented him from elevating himself in the service of Hashem in areas that go beyond the requirements of the law. Furthermore, by the fact that he neglects the service of Hashem and does not renew it each day, his service will harden and become mere habit, and he will never elevate himself in the fear of Heaven. In fact it is impossible to arrive at an elevated level all at once. Baby steps are required, which is why it is written: "This is the law of the olah [burnt-offering]" – one step after another (aliyah) is needed, until one reaches the highest levels.

The Sages have questioned the meaning of the verse, "Then you will return and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him" (Malachi 3:18). They said, "One who serves Him and one who does not serve Him both refer to those who are perfectly righteous. However one who studies a chapter 100 times cannot be compared to one who studies it 101 times" (Chagigah 9b). One who studies 100 times is only studying to remember what he learned, whereas one who studies it more does so out of a love for Heaven and amal (toiling) in the study of Torah. Now something is only called amal when it is difficult for a person to do, which is why such a person is described as one who fears Hashem. The term mikem ("among you") has a numerical value of 101 (including one for the term itself), telling us that a person can reach the level of being a burnt-offering for Hashem when he studies the Torah through amal. If he does this, he is promised that he will be able to transform the material and animalistic side of his soul into something spiritual. They will ascend before Hashem like a sacrifice, for the Torah is a remedy against the evil inclination (Kiddushin 30b). Even when the altar has been destroyed and there are no longer priests to offer sacrifices, a pleasant fragrance will ascend before Hashem, the fragrance of a person who sanctified his body and all his senses in order to serve the Creator. The Holy One, blessed be He, will be filled with compassion for him, and He will forgive all his sins.

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

The Perpetual Fire is a Spiritual Fire

The Sages state that Moses said to the Holy One, blessed be He: “Master of the universe, You have said to make an altar of shittim wood and to cover it with copper. You have told me that a perpetual fire must burn upon the altar. Will the fire not melt the copper and burn the wood?” The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: “For you fire burns wood, but a spiritual fire does not do the same. See how many angels are before Me, angels that are made of fire, as it is said: ‘The flaming fire His attendants’ [Psalms 104:4]? How many storehouses of snow and fire are mixed with one another, as it is said: ‘Fire and hail, snow and vapor’ [Psalms 148:8]? There is water in the heavens, as it is said: ‘Heavens of heavens, and waters that are above the heavens’ [v.4]. Yet the water does not extinguish the fire, and the fire does not consume the water. Why? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, has made peace among them. Therefore, since I told you that a perpetual fire must burn upon the altar, must you fear that the fire will burn the wood? In the Sanctuary, even inanimate things can come to life, for the staff of Aaron, which was a dry piece of wood when it was brought into the Holy of Holies, produced flowers and buds. Likewise the cedars that Hiram the king of Tyre sent to King Solomon for the construction of the Temple produced a pleasant fragrance. This wood was dampened, and from it emerged fruit, as it is written: ‘Planted in the house of the L-RD, in the courtyards of our G-d, they will flourish’ [Psalms 92:14-15]. They continued to yield fruit, until Manasseh came and brought a statue into the Holy of Holies, at which point the Shechinah departed and the fruit dried up, as it is written: ‘The flower of Lebanon languishes’ [Nachum 1:4]. You as well, Moses, when you entered the place of fire and walked among the angels of fire, should have been burned, especially since you approached Me, as it is written: ‘Moses approached the thick darkness’ [Exodus 20:18], and I am a consuming fire, as it is written: ‘For the L-RD your G-d is consuming fire’ [Deuteronomy 4:24]. Were you burned? Therefore the altar of burnt-offerings will also not be burned, despite the fact that it is written that a perpetual fire will burn upon it. The copper will not melt, nor will the fire consume.”

– Midrash Aggadah, Shemot 27:2

A Pearl From the Rav: Thank-offerings for Hashem

From the fact that Rashi wrote, “Scripture especially needs to urge where monetary loss is involved,” we see that the priests drew their sustenance from the sacrifices. Now it seems that if a person were to constantly pay attention to not sinning, he would not end up offering sacrifices. Therefore what would the priests live on? If we say the voluntary sacrifices and thank-offerings, does a person bring a thank-offering every day? He only brings one when he is saved from misfortune!

However by the fact that a person distances himself from sin, opens up his heart, and infuses himself with great joy because he is living a life of holiness and is far from sin – thanking Hashem for this every day – then in the intensity of his joy he will bring many thank-offerings and voluntary sacrifices to Hashem, Who enabled him to be far from sin. It is from these sacrifices that the priests would draw their sustenance.

King David said, “A psalm of thanksgiving. Call out to the L-RD, all the earth. Serve the L-RD with gladness. Come before Him with joyous song. . . . Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise” (Psalms 100:1-4). What connection is there between serving Hashem and the joy of a thank-offering? Furthermore, what is the significance of the expression, “Enter His gates with thanksgiving, His courts with praise”? The answer is that the term *haru* (“call out”) comes from the word *ra* (“evil”), meaning that when a person sees materiality and physicality as something evil, and therefore distances himself from them, he im-

mediately becomes filled with joy. When he is infused with happiness, he brings a thank-offering to Hashem for having distanced him from sin so he can serve Him with joy.

The Devotion Needed to Preserve Judaism

It is written, “Tzav [Command] Aaron” (Leviticus 6:2).

Rashi states, “The term *tzav* always denotes urging for the present and also for future generations. Rabbi Shimon taught, ‘Scripture especially needs to urge where monetary loss is involved.’”

These words were said with regards to certain periods of time in our history, the most difficult of exiles, when anti-Semites reduced the Children of Israel to penury and prevented them from earning a living. The study of Torah and observance of mitzvot were then accompanied by difficult and extremely bitter trials, for the concerns over making a living and the continual struggle for bread made the observance of Judaism extremely difficult. Hence at such times a person must encourage himself as much as possible, fortifying his soul in order to overcome such hardship.

– Sefat Emet

The Honor of Shabbat

It is written, “He shall remove his garments and wear other garments” (Leviticus 6:4).

Rashi states, “Garments worn when boiling the pot for one’s master, one should not wear when pouring out a glass of wine for him.”

This contains a proof that for Shabbat a person must change his garments for nicer ones. Just as the priest did not wear, while performing his service, the same garments that he wore to remove the ashes, but nicer and cleaner ones, likewise on Shabbat a person must wear nicer and cleaner clothes than the ones he wore on the eve of Shabbat to prepare for Shabbat.

– Shabbat 114a and Maharsha

Acting Only on Hashem’s Command

It is written, “Moses said to the assembly, ‘This is the thing that the L-RD has commanded to be done’” (Leviticus 8:5).

Rashi states that Moses said to Israel, “The things that you will see me doing before you, G-d commanded me to do. Do not say that I am doing them for my own honor or for my brother’s honor!”

This seems surprising, for could anyone have possibly suspected Moses of having done this for his own honor? After all, this task required him to do things such as washing and clothing the priests, which was more fitting for a servant rather than a teacher of Israel, one who had the standing of a king.

In the Sanctuary, however, even if the work needed to erect it was done mainly by the Levites, Moses himself had to have a hand in it. Otherwise it would not have been sanctified. Likewise during the entire course of the inauguration, Hashem ordered Moses alone to serve the priests, even if they were his students while he was a king and prophet, for otherwise Aaron and his sons would not have been sanctified for the priesthood.

We now understand that since the entire preparation of the priests and their sanctification depended exclusively on Moses, there was no greater honor than this. Nevertheless, there was a chance that people might mistakenly believe that Moses did this out of pride or personal honor. Hence Moses said that he did this only through necessity, for Hashem had commanded him to do so, not because he sought personal glory.

– Rabbi Moshe Feinstein

Required for the Presence of the Shechinah

It is written, “He slaughtered it, and Moses took the blood and put it upon the horns of the altar around with his finger. He purified the altar

and poured the blood upon the base of the altar, and he sanctified it to make atonement for it” (Leviticus 8:15).

Targum Yonatan explains that Moses purified the altar from all suspicion of theft and violence, lest the officers of Israel had taken something by force to offer for the work of the Sanctuary, or lest there be someone among the Children of Israel who had heard the voice proclaiming and brought an offering out of fear, not willingly, despite the Torah having said, “from every man whose heart motivates him.”

Such was the point to which everything destined for the Sanctuary was to be offered with pure intentions, for the sake of Heaven. In his work, Betzalel had to assemble the letters by which the heavens and the earth were created, and he had to know all the secrets that were alluded to in the making of the Sanctuary. All that was done in the Sanctuary is described as being carried out “as the L-RD commanded,” meaning with completely pure intentions. Concerning the material with which the Sanctuary was constructed, we also find that it had to be brought with pure intentions, with a willing heart. Even after all this, when Moses inaugurated the altar, he still had to purify it of all suspicion of theft and violence. What theft or violence was this? It was even if someone “brought out of fear, not willingly,” meaning not with his entire heart. In fact if the Shechinah was to openly dwell upon the Sanctuary, then its construction had to be carried out to complete perfection from the very outset. This also applies to the deeds of man, because a good deed that is carried out with the proper intention and is done to perfection can bring about tremendous results for the generations to come and in the loftiest of ways. All depends on the purity of the intentions from the start, from the very foundations.

– Mishnat Rabbi Aharon

Remembering the Day of Death

It is written, “Keep the charge of the L-RD, so that you do not die” (Leviticus 8:35).

The thought of death and the fear of Divine judgment is a proven method given to us by the Sages in order to constantly keep Hashem’s charge and distance ourselves from sin. For example, the Sages have said: “Remember three things and you will not come to sin...where you are going” (Pirkei Avot 3:1).

That gaon Rabbi Yosef Shlomo of Ponevezh asks, “That being said, why is it so difficult for a person to sense the day of death and firmly realize that his life must one day end?” He replies by saying, “It is because the soul within the body is eternal. It will live forever, and it has no way to sense the reality that life will one day stop. Hence we find that the Rosh wrote in his Orchot Chaim: ‘Always recall the day of death, and make provisions for the way,’ because the soul does not sense the passage of time. The soul is above it, and only through constant reflection can a person understand and internalize this idea.”

Overview of the Parsha

Parsha Tzav continues with the subject of the sacrifices. Yet contrary to Parsha Vayikra, which deals primarily with how the sacrifices are to be offered, Parsha Tzav examines its details and the sanctity of the sacrifices. We also read about the sacrifices made for the inauguration in order to sanctify the Sanctuary and altar before the eighth day. The parsha begins with the law of the burnt-offering and the perpetual flame upon the altar, known as the altar of burnt-offerings, where continual burnt-offerings and meal-offerings are brought, especially those of the priests. The parsha continues with the most holy offerings, the laws concerning the sin-offering and the sanctity of everything that touches it, as well as the details pertaining to the guilt-offering. The parsha then deals with the parts of the most holy offerings that

are given to the one who brings it, namely the officiating priest. Next come the laws pertaining to the peace and thank-offerings, which have a lesser degree of holiness and may be eaten by those who offer it, who are warned not to leave anything that will become impure, nor to eat blood or fat. They must also give the breast and thigh portions to the priests. The consecration of the priests occurs during the inauguration.

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

A Perpetual Fire Shall Burn Upon the Altar

The study of Torah is a perpetual fire that does not go out, for the desire and flame of Torah cannot be extinguished. The tzaddikim constantly yearn to study Torah, and therefore in the World to Come they return here to study Torah, as the Zohar states (Zohar III:202). They desire to study Torah, and they are happy to do good for others and help them improve, more than all the life of the World to Come. It is impossible to say that a person has studied enough, and even if he lives to be as old as the sand and studies day and night, he will not have attained a drop in the ocean of the Torah, for its measure is greater than that of the earth. We need to understand what power lies in teaching Torah to others, to the point that the souls of the great tzaddikim, who are resting in eternal life and experiencing true perfection, still yearn to give what is good and teach Torah to others. They possess a middah of the Creator, for the creation of the entire world served no purpose for Him, since what does Hashem need of the world? It is only because He is absolutely good – the nature of the good being to bestow goodness upon others, even if they are much less important – that He spread His goodness upon His creation. Hence it is proper for every person who fears G-d in his heart to strengthen himself in Hashem’s battle in order to raise the banner of the Torah, which because of our many sins has been left in the dust (Ya’arot Devash II:7). I have found a manuscript from our teacher Rabbi Moshe Cordovera, and in it he writes: “An old man taught me a way of removing my negative thoughts. One must repeat this verse over and over again: ‘A perpetual fire shall burn upon the altar. It will never go out.’” In my opinion, it is obvious that that this old man was Eliyahu HaNavi, but because of Rabbi Moshe Cordovera’s great humility, he did not want to reveal it. Hence a person who is depressed by thoughts of sin or by futile ideas should make sure to repeat this verse numerous times!

– The Shelah HaKadosh, Sha’ar HaOtiot, Ot Lamed Lev Tov

ESHET HAYIL

In the Tent

The angels asked Abraham, “Where is Sarah your wife?” He replied, “Behold, she is in the tent.” The Midrash explains that Abraham’s answer not only indicates where she was, but highlights everything included in the concept of being “in the tent.” It is an extremely lofty spiritual trait, one that applies to all the Matriarchs and underlines their greatness. Thus the Midrash says in the name of Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachman: These women are “in the tent,” modest and great – Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah, each of them being concealed within the tent. Sarah, as it is written: “He replied, ‘Behold, she is in the tent,’” for in their great modesty, sanctity, and devotion they produced Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes, bringing life into the world.

– Nashot Am Olam

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia

Credit must go to the gaon Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia Zatzal for the rebuilding and restructuring of the Jewish community of Tiberias. Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia was born in Hebron in 1660, and he rendered his soul to G-d on Nissan 6, 1744.

In his youth, Hebron's Jewish community sent him on a mission to Turkey, where his knowledge and wisdom enabled him to be named Chief Rabbi of Izmir. In addition, upon returning to the Holy Land he was named Chief Rabbi of Sefat and later of Tiberias.

He was the friend and study partner of two of the greatest sages of his generation: The author of Pri Hadash and the author of Ohr HaChaim. He himself wrote several important works on Torah, in particular Etz Chaim, Mikraei Kodesh (a commentary on the laws of Passover and the holidays), Yosef Lekah, Shevuot Yaakov, and Yashrei Yaakov.

Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia committed himself to the spiritual resurrection of Tiberias' Jewish community by building yeshivot and synagogues. He also devoted himself to the development of the city by improving numerous homes for the community. However he did not stop there, as the members of the community were indebted to him, some for their jobs, others for their livelihoods. In fact Rabbi Chaim, whose name had become synonymous with chesed (kindness), was responsible for reviving the famous Rabbi Meir Ba'al HaNess fund, a communal fund devoted to the city's poor. He did not hesitate to send messages and messengers to the Diaspora in order to call upon Jews around the world to help their brothers in Tiberias.

During that era, the Holy Land's Jewish community was weak, and the country's roads were fraught with danger. An Arab sheik, who had rebelled against the central authorities, marched on Tiberias and took control of the town and its surroundings. This sheik wanted to develop the region under his control, and he knew that he could only achieve this with the help of the Jewish community. He hoped that Jews would settle in Tiberias, create jobs by investing in the city, and give it a much-needed boost. In doing so, the sheik also sought to increase his power base and political standing against the Pasha, who ruled in Damascus.

This sheik therefore wrote letters to the leaders of the Jewish communities in Turkey, proposing that they encourage their brothers to settle in Tiberias. He promised to grant them protection and rights.

Thus Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia, who was then Chief Rabbi of Izmir in Turkey, found an opportunity to return to the Holy Land, which he did as quickly as possible with his family and a dozen of his students. Yet before doing so, he went through the entire city collecting funds aimed at strengthening the community of Tiberias. The Sultan was in town on that particular day, and when he came across Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia, he saw a column of fire above the head of the tzaddik.

The Sultan hastened to summon Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia, and he showed him so much respect that the Sultan's counselors were astonished.

"If you had seen the column of fire over his head as I did, you would have also showed him respect," he replied.

The Sultan was not content on simply honoring Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia. When he learned that the great Rabbi was gathering funds for his sacred cause, he hurried to give him a sizeable donation.

Because of this, as soon as Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia arrived in Tiberias, he began to renovate a synagogue located in the very same spot where the Arizal prayed. The community did not stop growing and developing with every new wave of immigrants from the surrounding countries. It was in this way that Rabbi Chaim, after having built a magnificent synagogue, went on to establish shops, public markets, and local industries.

Rabbi Chaim Aboulafia's Hilloula is Nissan 6.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE HAFTORAH

Kings Will Be Your Nurturers

It is written, "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of the L-RD" (Malachi 3:23).

When the Final Redemption will occur, the entire Jewish people will learn Torah and everyone will be immersed in its study. However if everyone will be occupied with the Torah, the question arises as to where people will go to fix their shoes, mend their clothes, repair their household items, and so on.

The prophets answer this question by promising us, "Kings will be your nurturers and their princesses your wet nurses" (Isaiah 49:23). Not far is the day when we shall see the kings of nations waxing the shoes of the inhabitants of Israel, nor will it be long before we witness a queen doing the work of modest and upright women by helping them do whatever they ask. The Holy One, blessed be He, will reveal Himself to us, and inevitably all the nations of the world will acknowledge Israel's greatness, which is why they will want to serve us at all costs. It will then be considered a great honor to be connected to the descendants of Abraham.

Of the time of Mashiach, it is written: "For but a brief moment I have forsaken you, but with abundant mercy will I gather you in" (Isaiah 54:7). Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna asked, "How can all these things – the entire weight of the Jewish people's suffering, the terrible pogroms, massacres, horrors, the Holocaust, and everything else that we have suffered up to now – be called 'a brief moment'?" Instead of providing a direct answer to this question, however, Rabbi Yechezkel replied: "If this is called 'a brief moment,' imagine what the promise, 'With abundant mercy will I gather you in' will be like!"

A TRUE STORY

We Must Not Rely on Miracles

During the time of Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin, there were many apostates among the Jewish people, as the Maskilim raised their heads, and concepts that were foreign to Judaism began to appear in the Jewish street. Faced with this danger, Rabbi Yitzchak was prompted to try various means to protect the community from harm. At that point, however, people who were fanatically opposed to change, those who swore only by faith in G-d, began to attack him!

Filled with bitterness, Rabbi Yitzchak gave the following discourse: "At the end of tractate Sotah, the Mishnah states: 'Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair says: When the Temple was destroyed, scholars...were ashamed and covered their head, men of action were disregarded.... Nobody inquires, nobody prays, and nobody asks. Upon Whom can we rely? Upon our Father in Heaven.' This is surprising, for why does the Mishnah return to the same phrase several times: 'Upon Whom can we rely? Upon our Father in Heaven?' It should have mentioned it once at the end of the entire passage. The reason is that the phrase itself seems to be one of the negative manifestations of the generation, for instead of taking active measures against the deterioration of spiritual life, people say: Better to fold our hands and do nothing, for upon Whom can we rely? Upon our father in Heaven!"

What Man Has More

One of the great figures of Jerusalem noticed his luck changing for the worse, and he was struck by many misfortunes. Life became bitter for him, for there was almost nothing wrong that did not happen to him. Nevertheless, he was always smiling and his face was radiant, as if he was living the happiest life in the world. When asked to explain his good mood, he answered with a smile: "It is written in the Torah, 'A donkey bends under its burden,' but man does not bend under his."

– Chad VeChalak