

The Path To Follow

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Through Torah, The Jewish People Are Above Nature

It is written, "Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand; and your enemies will fall before you by the sword" (*Vayikra* 26:8). From here we learn that when the Jewish people are connected to Torah and *mitzvot*, they are granted supernatural power, to the point that five of them can pursue a hundred, and a hundred of them can pursue ten thousand. Yet when they are far from Torah and *mitzvot*, a single non-Jew can pursue a hundred Jews. Because of our many sins, this occurred in Nazi Germany and Poland, when a single German guarded a hundred Jews without any fear, and when only two Germans guarded an entire camp of Jews, who were paralyzed and had no strength to even raise their arms or heads.

The same thing occurs today: When I walk along the streets of New York City, I see non-Jews looking at us with scorn in their eyes, which has not always been the case. It's a sign that anti-Semitism is increasing from day to day, even with regards to Israelis. Non-Jews falsely claim that Jews are seizing all the wealth in the United States, and that they control all branches of the financial world.

Yet everyone knows that there are only a few million Jews in the world, whereas there are billions of non-Jews and Jews cannot control the financial world because they comprise an extremely small minority among the wealthy. Therefore why does the entire world accept the lie that Jews are all rich and possess the world's key treasures? Why do they ignore the fact that most of them are really poor and would not have enough to eat if G-d did not have pity on them, that only a small percentage of them are rich, and that those who are rich give generously to *tzeddakah*? How can non-Jews lie like this, fabricating anti-Semitism by such statements?

When Jews follow G-d's ways, the nations of the world view them with the proper degree of respect and consideration, which brings about a sanctification of G-d's Name. The nations of the world recognize that it is by the merit of Israel that the world endures and receives abundance (*Yerushalmi Gittin*, end of ch. 5). Yet when Jews leave the right path, the nations suddenly get the impression that they are numerous. If a single Jew owns a store, they say that a hundred Jews own stores. If two Jews own stores, they claim that there are two hundred, and one hundred Jewish stores become ten thousand. Thus anti-Semitism is born, for Jews seem to number in the thousands in the eyes of non-Jews, who have the impression that they control the financial world. Jews are therefore punished through the intermediary of the nations.

As a result, when Jews cleave to G-d and His *mitzvot*, they are above nature. That is, no one can harm them, and a single Jew can pursue a thousand, while a hundred Jews can pursue ten thousand.

If our understanding of this is correct, we may add that when the Jewish people pursue the right path, G-d introduces a supernatural element into nature and raises Jews above it. In fact it is written, "For even a thousand years in Your eyes are but a bygone yesterday" (*Tehillim* 90:4), a verse that the Sages interpret as meaning that one of G-d's days is equal to a thousand years (*Sanhedrin* 97a). This is surprising: (1) How do things change if G-d's day is equal to one

thousand years or more, be it for Him or for us? (2) If such indeed is the case, why does G-d's day have to be so long? And if it does have to be so long, why is it limited to a thousand years?

This is what we may say on the subject: The Holy One, blessed be He, divided Creation into six days, and on each day He manifested Himself as the ruler of the world (*Otiyot d'Rabbi Akiva* 1). G-d revealed Himself to all of Creation to show that He is One and that there is no other. He demanded that every person recognize Him as the ruler and sovereign of the world, and each day He derived great satisfaction and pleasure from His work. However G-d foresaw that Adam would sin before Shabbat, which is what happened (*Sanhedrin* 38b), and that he would incur death. How could G-d destroy the world that He had created, and to which He had given the Torah, the goal of all Creation (*Pesachim* 68b, *Nedarim* 32a)? What would become of the world and the Torah? Who was going to study it?

Under such circumstances, Hashem saw that it was good to lengthen His day to one thousand years. In reality, time has no meaning to G-d. Therefore when we speak of one of His days, it means that the immense pleasure that he received from Creation was equal to what a man would experience if he could live a thousand years, with all his days being filled with pleasure. It is in that sense that G-d's day is like a thousand years to man, for the expression conveys the magnitude of the pleasure that G-d received from Creation (and particularly from the Torah it contained). Even when a man sins, repentance will earn him pleasure equal to a thousand years.

The Gemara evokes this very same idea concerning the verse, "I am Hashem your G-d" (*Shemot* 20:2): Every word that came from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, split into 70 languages, an unattainable feat for a mere mortal, and something only possible for G-d (*Shabbat* 68b). The same applies to a day of the Holy One, blessed be He, which although unique, is comparable to a thousand years of a person's life spent in happiness caused by Torah study and *mitzvot* observance.

To explain this in more depth, we know that there are two *mitzvot* in the Torah (honoring one's parents and sending a mother bird off before taking her young) about which it is said: "So that it will be good for you and that you may prolong your days" (*Devarim* 22:7). Here the Sages have said, " 'So that it will be good for you' means on the day that is wholly good, and 'that you may prolong your days' [means] on the day that is wholly long" (*Kiddushin* 39b, *Chullin* 142a). Such is not the case for life in this world, which is short and filled with suffering, and where neither days nor years are prolonged.

What does a prolonging of days in the World to Come mean? If a righteous person departs from this world and two days later *Mashiach* arrives, his time in the World to Come will have lasted just two days. Is this the meaning of "prolonging"? Where is the reward, therefore, that G-d has promised a righteous person in terms of prolonging his days in the World to Come?

According to what we have said, we clearly see that a day of the Holy One,

blessed be He, is like a thousand years of experiencing infinite pleasure, like a day that will be extremely long, without limit. Thus when a person is in the World to Come for two days, even if *Mashiach* were to arrive almost right afterwards, he will have experienced pleasure in the World to Come equivalent to having spent two thousand years enjoying infinite pleasure, along the lines of “no eye has seen it, G-d, if not You.” Even if he spends but a few hours in the World of Truth, it will also be satisfying to him and a source of pleasure for many years, for in such a world the feeling of the Holy One’s majesty and holiness is so lasting and real that a person has the impression that he is experiencing a pleasure that is absolutely infinite.

In addition, a person’s reward in the World to Come is proportional to his work in this world multiplied by more than a hundred, so that it becomes as great as possible. For example, when someone lives 60 or 70 years in this world while studying Torah and performing *mitzvot*, it is as if he studied 60 or 70 thousand years, of which the Holy One, blessed be He, rewards him for every instant. Concerning such a reward it is said: “*Mah rav tuvecha* [How abundant is Your

goodness] that You have stored away for those who fear You” (*Tehillim* 31:20).

We may explain that man relates to *mah* (the word *adam* [man] has the same numerical value as *mah* [what], and the Tetragrammaton also has that same numerical value when written with additional *alephs* – *Zohar Ruth* 102b). The Holy One, blessed be He, has reserved a reward for man that can be designated by *mah*, a reward that he can neither imagine nor describe. If he studies Torah, G-d greatly multiplies his reward, and since the day is divided into hours, minutes, and seconds, how many millions and indeed billions of seconds of infinite pleasure will a man receive in the World to Come! The Sages have clearly said, “There is no reward for a *mitzvah* in this world” (*Kiddushin* 39b), for the Holy One, blessed be He, multiplies the reward for performing a *mitzvah* in the World to Come.

Reward is therefore above nature and logic, for the Jewish people are also above nature when they occupy themselves with Torah study, *mitzvot* observance, and walking in the right path. They are then stronger than the nations of the world, and furthermore abundance comes into the world through their merit.

Musar From The Parsha

Father, Where Were You?

It is written, “And if you will not listen to Me, and you will not do all these commandments” (*Vayikra* 26:14).

In the years following World War II, a man who had lost faith because of the Holocaust asked Rabbi Shemuel Goldstein *Zatzal* where G-d was during that time. The Rav replied with a parable: There was a child named Yitzchak, and like all children he sometimes behaved and sometimes he did not. Whenever his detrimental behavior would get the best of him, his father would bring him near the window and say to him: “My dear son, if you start to behave, then all will be good. If not, then look at the forest before you, for a wolf will emerge from there and hurt you because of your deeds.” The child began to tremble, and he stopped misbehaving. However as the days passed, the child forgot his fear and once again started to misbehave. His father then warned him once more about the wolf in the forest, and the child was again afraid. He then started to behave properly for a certain time. This cycle repeated itself over and over.

One day the father, seeing that his son was no longer afraid of the wolf, realized that he had no further option. He therefore went and found a hunter and purchased a wolf skin and a mask from him. The father put these on and headed back home. The boy was sitting alone, when suddenly the door opened and a “wolf” entered the house. The boy was terrified, scared senseless. The wolf approached with its claws out, and scratched the boy a little with its claws here and there, injuring him ever so slightly, and then departed. The father had barely left the house when the boy began to cry, screaming loudly and licking his scratches. Little by little, the boy began to understand that all of this had happened because of his behavior, by having done things that his father had warned him about. When the boy’s father was outside, he took off his wolf disguise, waited for a moment, and then came back in. As soon as his son saw him, he fell into his arms, all while crying and moaning: “Father, it was just like you told me – that’s what happened – the wolf came and almost killed me! Look at the marks he left on me! I promise you father, starting today I’ll behave. Please...where were you when the wolf attacked me?” Is there any reason to ask where the Holy One, blessed be He, was during the Holocaust? The book *Pe’er HaDor* (Part III) recounts the story of a person who went to see the Chazon Ish to ask him about divine providence during the Holocaust, when the Jewish people were decimated in Europe. The Chazon Ish replied, “When a person does not know how a tailor works, and he sees him cutting fabric into pieces, he will think that he is destroying a garment. In reality, the tailor is simply creating a new one.”

In the Eyes of the Nations

It is written, “Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand” (*Vayikra* 26:8).

In his book *Pahad David*, Rabbi David Hanania Pinto *Shlita* explains: “We see from this verse that when the Jewish people cleave to Torah and *mitzvot*, they become capable of supernatural deeds, to the point that one Jew can pursue a hundred non-Jews. Yet when they are far from Torah and *mitzvot*, a single non-Jew can pursue one hundred Jews, as we have unfortunately seen in Nazi Germany and Poland. A single German guarded one hundred Jews without any fear, and two Germans guarded an entire camp of Jews, who were paralyzed and could raise neither their hands nor their heads. Thus anti-Semitism increases from day to day, for non-Jews falsely claim that Jews control all areas of finance around the world. However everyone knows the truth: Jews do not control the world’s finances! How can anyone accept such lies? To explain this, we must say that when the Jewish people follow Hashem’s ways, the nations of the world view them with the proper degree of respect and consideration, and the Name of Heaven is sanctified. The other peoples recognize that it is by the merit of Israel that the world endures and that abundance comes to it. Yet when they do not follow the right path, they seem numerous in the eyes of the nations. If a single Jew owns a store, they say that a hundred Jews own stores. Thus anti-Semitism is born, for Jews seem to number in the thousands in the eyes of non-Jews, and they seem to control the world of finance. The nations then punish them.”

Stop and Start Again

It is written, “If you walk in My statutes and you will keep My *mitzvot* and you will do them” (*Vayikra* 26:3).

Rashi states that the expression, “If you walk in My statutes” means that we must toil in the study of Torah. The commentators explain that this tells us that it is not enough to study simply to understand. In addition, once we have studied and we understand, there remains a *mitzvah* to start over and over again. Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin once went to the Vilna Gaon and told him that he had already finished *Seder Moed* 18 times, but he did not feel that he fully understood it. The Vilna Gaon replied, “Only 18 times? That’s not enough.” Rav Chaim asked how many times he should learn it, to which the Vilna Gaon replied: “There is no limit. Every day of your life, stop and start again.”

Preparing for the Operation

In our time as well, the story is told of a Jew who lived in the Mea Shearim district of Jerusalem. This Jew had problems with his eyes, and his doctor told him that he required an emergency operation. He explained that the operation might be successful, although there was a possibility that he could go blind. This Jew wanted to think about it, and so he stayed home and decided to learn two tractates by heart before undergoing the operation, since there was a chance that he could go blind. He therefore learned tractates *Rosh Hashanah* and *Chagigah* by heart, and then

he returned to his doctor and told him that he was ready for the operation. When the doctor examined him, however, he said that it was too late for the operation, which was now impossible to perform. Little by little, the man went blind, and he would sit in his wife's shop and repeat the tractates that he had learned by heart. At his request, engraved upon his gravestone was the number of times he had studied both tractates by heart, so that it might encourage people to learn even more.

This man reviewed these tractates four thousand times. It is said that he wrote his will long before he died, and that he had long surpassed this number upon his death. From here we learn what it means to properly use our time.

A Vision of the End Time

It is written, "You will eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters you will eat" (*Vayikra* 26:29).

Some say that in the future, all these curses will be turned into blessings. One may ask how the curse, "You will eat the flesh of your sons" can be changed. Does it mean that sons will eat the flesh of their fathers? The answer is that there are parents who, unfortunately, can only eat in the homes of their children if they use disposable cutlery, and only if they eat uncooked foods. It will therefore be a great blessing when a father will be able to eat meat in the home of his son.

The Ten Martyrs

It is written, "Every tithe of cattle or flock, all that pass under the staff, the tenth shall be holy to Hashem" (*Vayikra* 27:32).

Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropola taught: The Sages say that the ten martyrs (of the Roman era) corresponded to the ten tribal fathers who sold Joseph. Yet in reality, there were only nine who sold Joseph, for Joseph did not sell himself. Likewise Benjamin did not take part in the sale, nor did Reuven, who was against it. Another question arises in this regard: Why did Rabbi Akiva have to die for the ten tribal fathers, since he was the son of a convert? How could he atone for something that his ancestors did not commit? The answer is that since Hashem joined the brothers in the agreement that no one should speak of the sale, we must say that it was in order to atone, so to speak, for Hashem. Who would atone for Hashem? It was Rabbi Akiva, the son of a convert. This concept is well-expressed in the verse, "Every tithe of cattle or flock, all that pass under the staff, the tenth shall be holy to Hashem." True, the verse is speaking about the tithe of animals, but beneath the direct meaning hides a layer of initials: *vechi lama met Akiva shehaya roeh baker vatzon* ("why then did Akiva die, who was a keeper of cattle and flock"?). The answer is: *kol asher ya'avur* ("all that pass" – i.e., "all that pass away from this world"). This means that the ten martyrs corresponded to one of the tribes, and the tenth, Rabbi Akiva, was "holy to Hashem"!

– Aish Dat

Overview of the Parsha

From the sanctity of the Jewish people and the Sanctuary in the previous *parshiot*, we proceed in *Parsha Behar* to the sanctity of Eretz Israel and the life of the Children of Israel in the land. True, the arrangement of the people around the Sanctuary is described in *Sefer Bamidbar*, after the passage on Mount Sinai in the desert of Sinai, and instructions on what must be done in Eretz Israel appear in *Sefer Devarim* on the plains of Moab. However the sanctity of the land itself appears in *Sefer Vayikra*, which speaks of the sanctity of Israel. At the beginning of *Parsha Behar*, we are told that it too given on Mount Sinai, just like all of *Sefer Vayikra*. *Parsha Behar* begins with the *Shmita* year, when the land is to rest for Hashem, and with the Jubilee, when the people return to their original place in the land, each to his inheritance and family. A person can also return to his heritage before the Jubilee if he is redeemed by a family member, as mentioned in the passage: "If your brother becomes impoverished and sells part of his ancestral heritage" (*Vayikra* 25:25). A family member supports him "if your brother becomes impoverished" (v.35), and a family member redeems him "if your brother...is sold to you" (v.39).

Parsha Bechukotai ends *Sefer Vayikra*, which explicitly states 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 sanctity 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. The *parsha* adds the *mitzvot* pertaining to man's place in the Sanctuary through vows, the monetary evaluation of people, and tithes from among a person's possessions, some of which can be redeemed while others cannot.

Reasons for the Mitzvot

It is written, "Every tithe of cattle or flock, all that pass under the staff, the tenth shall be holy to Hashem" (*Vayikra* 27:32).

This verse speaks of the *mitzvah* of the livestock *ma'asser*, in which one out of every ten animals born in a person's herd or flock during the year must be given to Hashem. How is this *mitzvah* performed? All the calves and lambs are brought into a sheep-pen that has a narrow gateway through which only one animal can pass at any given time. The mothers are placed outside the sheep-pen, and the young animals try to leave in order to reach their mothers. The owner of these young animals must count them as they leave the sheep-pen through the narrow gateway, and he must mark every tenth with a red-colored stick and say, "This is the *ma'asser*."

The livestock *ma'asser* was brought to the Temple as an offering, and its owners ate it as they ate the Passover offering. For the purpose of the livestock *ma'asser*, the year begins on the first day of Tishri. All animals born after this date belong to the following year, and all those born before the first of Tishri belong to the previous year. According to Torah law, the duty to bring the *ma'asser* applies even outside Eretz Israel and even in our time. However the Sages prohibited it in our time because of the risk of offering something sacred outside the Temple.

The Rav of the town of Keib, Rabbi Shlomo Aharonsohn, once received a substantial donation from the Brodsky brothers, who were known for their wealth and generosity. Three days later, however, he came back to ask them for yet another donation. They asked the Rav why he needed additional funds so quickly, and he replied by explaining the *mitzvah* of the livestock *ma'asser*: "Here it is difficult to understand why the Torah obligates us to take the *ma'asser* according to an elaborate procedure. Why is it not enough to designate the total number of animals needed for the *ma'asser* in one step? This is because the Torah understands people very well, knowing that if they see that their *ma'asser* comprises a large number of animals, it would be difficult for them to give it. Hence the Torah enjoins us to bring our livestock into a sheep-pen and begin counting them there, with the first belonging to us, the second belonging to us, the third also belonging to us, and so on until the ninth, all of them belonging to us. Then when the tenth comes along, we are commanded to take that solitary one for the *ma'asser*. Thus as all the livestock pass beneath the rod, we realize that we really have more than enough for ourselves." The Rav then turned to the donors and said to them, "If you count the money that you made for yourselves in the last three days, it will be easy for you to give again." They were pleased with the Rav's explanation, and they added to their previous donation.

Wealth Obtained Through Deception

It is written, "As a partridge broods over eggs that she did not lay, so is one who amasses wealth unjustly. It will leave him in the midst of his days, and at his end he will be considered a fool" (Jeremiah 17:11).

The partridge is a bird whose calls can be heard from a great distance, which is why in Hebrew it is called *korei* (literally "that which calls"). Partridges commonly take the chicks of other birds by chasing the mother away and covering her eggs.

The prophet Jeremiah is saying that just as chicks that a partridge covers eventually leave her when they see that she is not their mother, likewise money will leave a man who becomes rich through deceitful means. Thus the verse states, "It will leave him in the midst of his days." This will occur in one of two ways: Either his money will leave him, or he will leave his money because he will die in the midst of his days and not enjoy all this wealth. It is written in Midrash *Shocheh Tov* that deception wanted to enter Noah's Ark. Noah said to it, "You cannot enter unless you have a partner." Deception then encountered loss (the angel that brings harm) and said to it, "I wanted to enter the Ark, but Noah did not allow me because I do not have a partner. Do you want to be my partner?" It replied, "What will you give me in return?" Deception replied, "Everything that I obtain, you can take away." Thus both of them entered the Ark. When they emerged, deception would amass wealth, and loss would take it. Deception said to loss, "Where is all the money that I amassed?" It replied, "We agreed that whatever you would get, I would take." Deception did not reply. The agreement is still in force to this day, meaning that everything obtained through deception is taken away by loss.

Your Eyes Shall Behold Your Teacher

Rabbi Yaakov of Lisa – Author of *Netivot HaMishpat*

Rabbi Yaakov *Zatzal* was born to the *gaon* Rabbi Yaakov Moshe of Zborov, the son of the *gaon* Rabbi Nathan Mordechai, the son of the Chacham Tzvi. He studied Torah with the *gaon* Rabbi Meshulam Igra of Tismenitz, and people could see that he was born for greatness. He possessed a keen mind, and his reasoning was righteous and fair. He was among the later *poskim* who arose in Israel in recent generations. The *tzaddikim* of his generation said that he truly studied Torah with complete selflessness, just like our teacher Moshe, which is why Rabbi Yaakov merited having every Jewish community adopt his *halachic* decisions as if they had come from Moshe on Mount Sinai, without any possibility of questioning them. He discussed Torah with the greatest men of his generation, including the *gaon* Rabbi Akiva Eiger, as well as the *gaon* and author of *Chemdat Shlomo*, the Rav of Warsaw, a very great figure whose every word was true and upright, for he had learned Torah in tremendous holiness and purity.

Rabbi Yaakov's greatness in Kabbalah was just as great, if not more, than his greatness in the revealed Torah. He wrote various works of Kabbalah, but he hid some because he felt that the world was not ready for them. He was very well-known because of his various books, and even today they are studied in every Jewish community. Such books include *Netivot HaMishpat* on the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Choshen Mishpat*), *Responsa Chavat Da'at*, *Torat Gittin*, and also his famous book *Nachalat Yaakov*. His last will and testament appears at the end of *Nachalat Yaakov*, and it is filled with holiness, purity, and the fear of Heaven.

On Iyar 25, 5592, Rabbi Yaakov's soul ascended to Heaven and basked in the hidden light reserved for the *tzaddikim*. May the memory of the righteous be blessed.

A Miracle and its Lesson

It is written, "Ten miracles were performed for our forefathers in the Temple: ... No fly was ever seen in the slaughterhouse. ... The rains did not extinguish the fire on the woodpile of the altar" (*Pirkei Avoth* 5:5).

In his book *Hasdei Avoth*, Rabbeinu Yosef Haim (the Ben Ish Hai) explains that the miracles described in the Mishnah were meant to teach us how to act with regards to Torah and *mitzvot*. According to him, there were two miracles that comprise their own lessons:

"No fly was ever seen in the slaughterhouse"

From here we learn that we must silence the evil inclination when it tells us: "Look at where you come from. You're nothing but the dust of the earth! That's why you're destined to sin in any case, and you'll have no accounting to give for your sins." A person should silence the evil inclination upon realizing that there were no flies in the Temple's slaughterhouse. Even though it would have been natural for flies to be there, they were far removed because that place was called holy. How much more is a Jew, who in addition to being called holy – as it is written, "Israel is holy to Hashem" (Jeremiah 2:3) and "You shall be holy" (*Vayikra* 19:2) – is also sanctified by Torah and *mitzvot*. Although a person is attracted to the forces of impurity by his natural instincts, and although he seems destined to sin, this tendency is nevertheless repelled by the sanctity that clings to him. This is like the flies that were repelled from the slaughterhouse, even though it was natural for them to have been there.

"The rains did not extinguish the fire on the woodpile of the altar"

It may sometimes happen that a person is motivated with real enthusiasm and a burning desire to study Torah, but in the middle of his learning a material concern grabs his attention and chokes off his heartfelt enthusiasm. He then becomes ice-cold in his learning. The fact that a material concern can overcome a sanctified spiritual endeavor is a tremendous shortcoming. However we see that with regards to the Temple, the rains never succeeded in extinguishing the woodpile of the altar.

A True Story

Riddle for Riddle

It is written, "I also will do this to you: I will appoint over you terror, swelling lesions, and the fever" (*Vayikra* 26:16).

The Ponevezher Rav went to see a wealthy miser in order to ask him for a donation. It took a great deal of time until the man consented to take out his pocketbook, but when the time finally came, he said to the Rav: "Hold on. I have a riddle for you. If you can answer it, I'll give you a donation: What word in the Torah is vowelized four consecutive times with a *kamatz*?"

The Rav immediately replied, "The word *harachama*" (*Devarim* 14:17), and the man was forced to give him a donation. However he asked the Rav to keep this riddle to himself and not reveal it to others, for he wanted to continue using it to avoid giving donations. The Rav turned to the wealthy miser and said to him, "I also have a riddle for you: What word is vowelized four consecutive times with a *patach*?" The man could not answer the question, and the Rav told him: "It is written in the curses: *hakadachat*, 'the fever' [*Vayikra* 26:16], and you can keep that for yourself as well."