



Investing Thought in Performing Mitzvot

"So that they will hear and so that they will learn and they shall fear Hashem, your G-d" (Devarim 31:12)

The Ben Ish Chai zt"l writes: "Gather together the people—the men, the women, and the small children, and your stranger who is in your cities—so that they will hear and so that they will learn, and they shall fear Hashem, your G-d, and be careful to perform all the words of this Torah." The word 'this' comes to teach us that the way to fulfill the Torah commandments and all the details of its laws, is defined by the Sages of the generation who assemble many gatherings, to teach the people the correct path to follow and the correct way to behave. This is why Moshe Rabbeinu a"h, established that the Jewish people must expound on the laws every single year; the laws of each festival for that festival, the laws of Pesach on Pesach, the laws of Atzeret on Atzeret."

The Ben Ish Chai zt"l writes further: "Chazal tell us that it is a mitzvah to eat on Erev Yom Kippur and to increase the amount one would normally consume at a meal. The Mekubalim zt"l write that if a person is able to, he should eat the amount that he would normally consume over two days, that which is required for this day as well as for the next day, the Holy Day of Yom Kippur, in order to rectify this day with eating. In addition, a person should perform all his deeds for the sake of Heaven and Hashem will not withhold goodness from those who walk in perfect innocence. These are the pure words of the Ben Ish Chai.

This matter requires clarification since we find many times that Chazal warn us about abstaining as much as possible from excessive eating. For example, the Ramban writes that the command "You shall be holy", (Vayikra 19:2) means that one should not indulge in permissible things and not fill one's stomach even with that which is permitted. In addition, we also need to understand why on Yom Kippur we are commanded to abstain from five different acts in order to fulfill the command of "you shall afflict yourselves". Would it not suffice just to fast and abstain from eating food?

The answer seems to be that even though we all fulfill mitzvot, the question to be asked is, how do we fulfill them? A person can perform a mitzvah by rote without the mitzvah meaning anything to him, whereas someone else may pay attention to the significance of the mitzvah and fulfill it with thought and intention of the heart. As the Chafetz Chaim said, a person must know that a commandment from Hashem is like a medal that one receives from the King and when performing the mitzvah, he should keep in mind that he is performing a G-dly commandment and he should rejoice when fulfilling the wish of Hashem. However, if a person for example wears tzitzit out of habit without paying attention to the fact that he is performing a mitzvah, he certainly will not enjoy the merit of the tzitzit protecting him.

On Yom Kippur we have been commanded to observe five afflictions. The intention is in order to awaken us to perform this mitzvah with true feeling, instead of observing the affliction by rote. Therefore, Chazal forbade certain things such as anointing oneself and wearing leather shoes etc., so that we should contemplate the commandment of "you shall afflict yourselves" and fulfill it with sincere intention and thought.

We will now explain why the Torah commanded us to eat on the ninth and the Mekubalim teach us that we should eat on this day also for the tenth. Rabbeinu Yonah in Sha'arei Te-

shuva (sh'ar 4), defines three reasons for this eating: Firstly, it is considered as the se'udat mitzvah of Yom Kippur. Secondly, in order that we should have strength to pray the next day and lastly it is a show of our joy on the arrival of the Day of Atonement. The Ari z"l writes that this excessive eating is an affliction for the neshama and just like one afflicts the body so one also afflicts the soul. However, all these reasons do not reconcile the difficulty of why we need to consume an amount of food that we would normally eat over two days. This is excessive eating that doesn't afford us any enjoyment.

The answer must be that it is well known that it is impossible for the body to exist without eating and drinking. If a person does not eat or drink he will die of hunger or thirst. Now on the Day of Judgement, we come before Hashem, alive with our souls contained within our bodies, but we must make a reckoning. Did we eat in order to satisfy our physical desires or was it purely for the sake of sustaining ourselves? Therefore, the Torah commands us to eat extra on the ninth day and then when we sit down to the se'uda hamafseket, we will force ourselves to eat without any appetite. This will cause us to contemplate and wonder—is this the way that I ate throughout the year, simply for the sake of sustaining my body without any appetite or desire? And this will be a lesson for him the entire year to know how to eat and for what purpose to eat. This is the reason why Chazal commanded us to increase the amount that we eat on this day, so that this will automatically have an effect on all our meals throughout the year. As the Shulchan Aruch (siman 231) determines, a person must always eat for the sake of heaven. Eating on this day for the sake of heaven will have an effect that his other consumptions will also be for the sake of heaven. In addition, eating large amounts on the ninth and then not eating at all on the tenth, adds affliction to the day of Yom Kippur.

Yom Kippur is the day when we must recite vidui (confession) and accept commitments upon ourselves. Usually, at the start of the night a person feels thirsty and in the morning he suffers from the lack of his normal routine for example if he usually drinks coffee. In the afternoon he starts to feel hungry but later on, towards Mincha, he no longer feels the hunger and if he is asked whether he is hungry he will say no! This is why the Torah gives us five afflictions. The prohibition of eating and drinking helps us to feel at the beginning of this holy day that this day is different and it is time to change one's habits. Once a person 'gets over' this difficulty, the other afflictions serve to remind him of the potency of the day, for example washing one's hands until one's knuckles, and wearing cloth shoes instead of leather footwear.

And even if a person becomes accustomed to these other prohibitions and doesn't feel the importance and significance of the day, Hashem says I forgive and pardon you with kindness and mercy as is written, "For on this day He shall provide atonement for you to cleanse you; from all your sins before Hashem shall you be cleansed". Despite Hashem's kindness, it is certainly correct to strive to be deserving of a good inscription. We should feel enthusiasm when fulfilling the mitzvot, as if it is the first time performing this mitzvah, and invest sacrifice and great effort, so that we not come to fulfill the mitzvot by rote.

May it be His will that we carry out all our actions for the sake of Heaven in order to bring pleasure to our Creator. Amen v'Amen.

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6 - Rabbi Ya'akov Yosef Harofeh

7 - Rabbi Ya'akov Antebi

8 - Rabbi Avner Yisrael Hatarzafati, Av Beit Din Fez

9 - Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Saloveitchik

10 - Rabbi David Knafo, Av Beit Din Mogador (Essaouira)

11 - Rabbi Shlomo Bochbot

12 - Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Zvhill



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Writing Torah Thoughts is Considered Like Offering Sacrifices

I knew someone, an author of many published sefarim, whose outlook on life did not correlate with my own hashkafot, therefore I did not give much credit to his sefarim. When I received them as a gift from him, I put them straight in genizah...

It once happened that I had a difficult question on a certain Chazal, and when I came to the Beit Midrash I noticed a certain sefer. I opened it and to my amazement it posed the very question that I was contending with. I did not look at the author's answer, rather, with Hashem's help, I tried to find a solution on my own. Only once I resolved the difficulty did I check what conclusion the author had come to, and I saw that he answered the question exactly as I had explained it...

Wishing to know the name of the author, I turned to the front of the sefer and to my surprise it was written by that same talmid chacham with the problematic outlook. At that moment, I immediately felt great love for him and removed any objections towards him from my heart. I sat down and wrote him a letter of approval and praised him for his wonderful insights. From then on we became close friends. This is an instructive example of how chiddushei Torah (novel Torah insights) that are published cause an increase in love and brotherhood between man and his friend and foster peace in the world.

Now we can understand the words of the 'Sefer Chassidim' who writes that one who writes down chiddushei Torah is considered as if he has brought a sacrifice, for just as a korban atones for the person who sinned and makes peace between him and Hashem, so one who writes chiddushei Torah merits to unite hearts and increase love and brotherhood between man and his fellow.

This is the reason why specifically in our generation there is an enormous amount of sefarim being written, since in the period before Mashiach's arrival the satan tries to increase hatred and competition between people and he invests his utmost to sow the seeds of hatred between man and his fellow and to increase division and argument between different sectors. His entire goal is to delay the redemption. But Hashem in His great kindness gave us an outpouring of talmidei chachamim who publish their chiddushei Torah and this becomes an antidote against the yetzer hara, for these chiddushim only increase love and friendship. Every sefer that is published unites the hearts and cools the differences of opinion between people.

The Haftarah

"Return, Israel" (Hoshea 14, followed by Micha 7)



The connection to Shabbat: This haftarah is read between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur since it speaks about the idea of repentance, and these are days of favor and repentance.

Guard Your Tongue

Hashem has Mercy in the Merit of our Fathers

A person must take care not to rejoice in the downfall and disparagement of his friend, as it says: "When your foe falls, be not glad, and when he stumbles, let your heart not be joyous, lest Hashem see and it be displeasing in His eyes" (Mishlei 24:17).

This sin awakens the power of strict judgment on the person. It has the power to destroy just like the sin of idolatry. A person should always consider that according to his own sins and shortcomings, he too is fitting to be disgraced and disparaged, but Hashem has mercy on him in the merit of his fathers.



Words of our Sages

A Selection of Customs from Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l, regarding Yom Kippur

Hagaon Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l would often speak about the great obligation to appreciate and value every minute of this great and Holy Day. He would repeat the reason for saying the 'Kol Nidrei' prayer at the start of Yom Kippur, where we free ourselves of past and future vows, since it serves to cleanse the mouth from the sin of unfulfilled vows, so that our prayers will be fitting to be accepted.

He wrote in his notes, "The main focus of our prayers on this Holy Day should be for spiritual matters. This is in accordance with the Chazal: "'and my salvation (yishi)' – this refers to Yom Kippur', since the word 'salvation' (yeshu'ah) is found in the Torah and in our prayers mostly concerning spiritual salvation. For example, "I called You, save me, and I will keep Your testimonies" (Tehillim 119:146) and "The splendor of greatness and the crown of salvation" in the Shabbat Mincha prayer. However, one should not suffice with prayers for one's own personal (spiritual) requests, but one should also pray for the public and for the exile of the Shechina, according to a broader interpretation of the verse, "Moshe heard the people weeping 'in their family groups'...and the wrath of Hashem flared greatly" (Bamidbar 11:10).

About an hour before beginning the shacharit prayer, he would awaken his grandson who slept in his room and together they recited Tehillim, as it is written "Arise! Call to your G-d!" (Yonah 1:6), since every single moment of this holy day is more precious than pure gold.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman would say: "Throughout the years there have been many people who did not fast on Yom Kippur due to health concerns, and they lived long and good lives". There is a story told about a sick person who was told by his doctor to eat normally on Yom Kippur. Rabbeinu cautioned him to carry out his doctor's instructions without being stringent in the slightest. Right until the end of his life, he made it his practice during the days leading up to Yom Kippur and on Erev Yom Kippur, to personally visit people, whom he knew to be sick or weak, and determine if they were permitted to fast. (He took the trouble to measure the correct size dish for those who had to be particular about eating shiurim.) He invested much thought into the way that he addressed each person, finding the words that would speak to that individual to convince him to obey his doctor's orders.

If he thought that the sick person's difficulty lay in the fact that being allowed to eat was an expression of the grave danger regarding his health situation, he would tell him: "Many people over the years did not fast on Yom Kippur due to health concerns and they lived long and good lives." If he perceived that accepting the fact that they would not fast on Yom Kippur was an emotional difficulty, he would explain with sensitivity that the Torah commandment of "You shall observe My decrees...and by which he shall live" (Vayikra 18:5), is also a very important and precious mitzvah."

He was once told that a famous specialist visited two of the Gedolei Yisrael before Yom Kippur, and after examining each one he expressed his opinion that they must not fast on Yom Kippur. One of them cried out of great distress, whereas the other one reacted calmly and said: "The One who commanded us to fast on Yom Kippur also commanded us not to fast in this situation". Rabbeinu said that the second reaction is the correct and straight way of thinking that a person should choose.



Pearls of the Parshah

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



What Does the Creator Regret?

"Hashem, your G-d, He will cross over before you" (Devarim 31:3)

The holy Ohr Hachaim zya"a explains these words to mean that Hashem, your G-d, He will cross over your sins (in the sense of pass over).

The sefer 'Harei Besamim' quotes the verse "I made [you] and I will bear [you]" (Yeshaya 46:4) and brings the interpretation of the Midrash: "I made the yetzer hara and I will bear the sin". This is in line with what it says "and whomever I have harmed" (Micha 4:6), meaning that Hashem regrets creating the yetzer hara.

This clarifies the Chazal on the verse "ויעבור ה'" - Hashem passed before him and proclaimed". Chazal say that the words 'passed before him' teaches that Hashem wrapped Himself like a shaliach tzibbur (chazan). (Vaya'avov is a reference to the expression vaya'avov lifnei hateivo, referring to the chazan). What does 'like a shaliach tzibbur' mean? Like a shaliach tzibbur who fulfills the obligation of the congregation.

The law is that one who is not obligated in a certain matter cannot fulfil the obligation of other people. If so, how can Hashem be a shaliach tzibbur to bear the sins of Am Yisrael when He has no obligation to repent? But since Hashem, as if, regrets creating the yetzer hara, and regret is one of the conditions of repentance, He can fulfil the obligation of His people.

This is the meaning of "Hashem, your G-d, He will cross over before you". He passes before the congregation, to bear the sins of Bnei Yisrael.

Concealed Within the Concealment

"But I will surely have concealed My face on that day" (Devarim 31:18)

Why does the verse use a double expression of 'haster aster' – I will surely have concealed?

The holy Ba'al Shem Tov writes that sometimes a person feels distant from Hashem, therefore he makes an effort to come closer to Him. But a much worse tribulation is when Hashem conceals from the person even the feeling that He is distant from him and so he is convinced that he is close to Him, when in reality he is very far away...

This is the implication of the repetition 'haster aster'. Hashem will hide the actual concealment from Am Yisrael and they will have no idea that they are far from Him. This punishment is much worse, since there is no way to repair the distance for the person sees no reason to invest effort in coming closer to his Creator.

Why Is the Yetzer Hara Considered a Fool?

"For I know its inclination" (Devarim 31:21)

The wisest of all men calls the evil inclination "an old and foolish king" (Kohelet 4:13). The intention is not, as the Chafetz Chaim explains, that the yetzer hara is actually a fool, on the contrary we see that he has the power to trap even the cleverest person in his net and there is no such thing in this world as a righteous person who does only good and does not sin.

Rather, the intention is that the yetzer hara is called after his profession. Just like a shoemaker is one who makes and repairs shoes and one who sews clothes is called a tailor, the yetzer hara is called a fool. Why? Because his main profession is to make people foolish, he makes them into fools. Once he has achieved this, it is much easier to persuade a fool to sin.

Feeling the Imprint Throughout the Year

Every year on Yom Kippur as the mincha prayer approaches, I suddenly start shuddering, since the shadows of the evening can already be felt and who knows what has been decided and sealed for us? At the time of neilah a person must realize that there are two kinds of neilot- closures. One is the closure of Hashem who seals the judgement of the person, and the second type concerns the person himself who knows how he is concluding with Hashem, either in a position of descent or in a position of growth and commitment to come closer to his Creator.

It is important to realize that one must feel 'Rosh Hashana' the entire year. The same fear of judgement that one experiences on Rosh Hashana should remain with a person throughout the year, as Chazal say (Rosh Hashana 15b): According to the opinion of Rabbi Yosi, every day is like Rosh Hashana since a person is judged every day as it says, "that you inspect him every morning and observe him every moment?" (Iyov 7:18). And they said, according to which opinion do we pray every day for sick people? According to Rabbi Yosi. The Rishonim write that the halacha is determined according to Rabbi Yosi. Therefore, a person must take the fear of judgment that he feels on Rosh Hashana and divide it up throughout the year, apportioning a bit for every day.

Every single day a person should remember that there is Yom Kippur and he should be careful not to stumble. Just like if on Rosh Hashana a person commits an aveirah and when someone brings this to his attention by saying, "What are you doing? It is Rosh Hashana today!" he is immediately taken aback. So too throughout the year a person should remain with some small feeling of Rosh Hashana or Yom Kippur so that this will remind him and prevent him from stumbling.

This is the reason why Chazal 'extended' Yom Kippur and said that also the day before should be a day of affliction, in the form of additional eating. In this way, these two days will have a sufficient amount to distribute throughout the year, each day the portion that it requires to remind a person what his goal is in this world, as it says, "Take words with you and return to Hashem".



"LET HER BE PRAISED"

Portrayal of the True 'Eshet Chayil'
In memory of Rabbanit Mazal Madeleine Pinto

שְׂקֵר הַחֵן וְהַבֵּל הַיְפִי אִשָּׁה יֵרָאֵת ה' הִיא תִתְהַלָּל

"Grace is false, and beauty vain; a woman who fears Hashem, she should be praised"

The famous Maggid, Rabbi Shalom Shwadron zt"l, heard this story from Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian zt"l, who told over:

The Rav of Eliska, who was a great tzaddik, told me that in his youth he looked through the community records of the town of Lisa, where Rabbi Ya'akov, the author of the 'Netivot Hamishpat' was Rav, and read of a terrible story that took place with the daughter of the Netivot.

This daughter was a widow who was about to marry off her daughter, the granddaughter of the Rav. They hired a wagon in order to travel to the nearby town to buy clothes and wedding necessities for the kallah. The non-Jewish wagon driver who knew the purpose of their trip, understood that they were carrying a nice sum of money. What did he do? Instead of driving them to their destination, he changed directions and instead travelled to his home on the outskirts of Lissa. Once they arrived, he hurried to call his friends and together they robbed the passengers of all the money that they had saved. Since the group of wicked men were afraid that the two women would report them to the authorities, they tied them up with ropes, and then went to bring wood to build up the fireplace, intending to throw them to the flames. In this way no trace of their remains will be found, leaving them free of any possible claim against them.

The mother and daughter lay trembling on the ground, bound up in ropes. Waiting for the fire to build up, the robbers meanwhile sat down by the table and started discussing how to divide out the money. Who deserves more and who less... The wagon driver demanded to receive a double portion, since he was the one who instigated the whole idea, whereas his

friends on the other hand claimed that he must divide out the money equally between all of them.

Time passed and the argument grew more heated. Suddenly the door opened and there stood a German officer whose attention had been attracted by the vulgar shouts. As soon as they noticed his presence, the goyim stood up and fled.

Realizing that something strange was going on and this was no innocent argument, the officer looked around and was astonished to find two women bound up with ropes, crying on the ground. They were tremendously relieved to explain the story and begged him to help them.

The officer took a knife, cut the ropes and returned the money which had been left on the table. They were free to return home...

That night, the Netivot appeared to his daughter in a dream and told her:

"You should know that when I found out about this calamity, I went up to a high place and begged for mercy for you, but I wasn't answered. Why not? Since you transgressed the prohibition of yichud (seclusion) with the goy. I went up to an even higher place, and again begged for mercy for my daughter and granddaughter and asked that the merit of the Torah that I proliferated through my sefer 'Netivot Hamishpat' should stand in your stead. After detailing your righteousness and how much you despise external and superficial beauty, my request was accepted and you were saved. From now on be extra careful with the prohibition of yichud."

The story was told by the daughter to the head of the community in Lisa, who recorded it in their community records as an eternal remembrance, so that people should understand who is considered a true G-d fearing person. One who despises the fleeting vanities of this world, she is the one who is fitting to be praised.