

Parashas
Va'eschanan

• 54 •

כ"ב אב תשפ"ה
5785

י"ז ע"י

קהילת שבתי בבית ד'
בנשיאות מורנו ורבנו הרה"צ
רבי גמליאל הכהן
רבינוביץ שליט"א

טיב הקהילה

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באנגלית

טיב הפרשה

במעלת המשלים את מצוותיו

טיב המערכת

אם שמוע תשמעו

If you will surely listen

It is told about Rav Bengis zt"l, that he would complete the entire Shas many times, and each time he would make a meal in honor of the completion. And behold, one time, after he had already made a *siyum* of Shas, a short period passed and he again invited his acquaintances and students to a meal for the *siyum* of Shas. This time he made a greater and more splendid meal than before. Everyone wondered—after all, had he not just recently completed Shas? And even more so, why was he now making a larger and more splendid meal than ever?

At the *siyum seudah*, Rav Bengis gave a *drasha*, and this is what he said: "Baruch Hashem, I have my regular study schedules through which I complete the Shas, and that was the completion we celebrated a while ago. But I also have another study schedule of five minutes—whenever I am invited to events such as *siddur kiddushin*, a *bris*, and the like, when I have time that I need to wait, I immediately open the small Gemara that I carry with me. And behold, from those few short minutes, I have now completed the entire Shas once again, and that is the reason for the great joy."

This Shabbos we read the section of "Vehayah," the second section of Kriyas Shema, and regarding it Chazal expound Mechilta): "'And it shall come to pass, if listening you shall listen'—if a person listens to one mitzvah, they announce to him many mitzvos, as it is said, 'If listening you shall listen.' The meaning is that when a person involves himself in one mitzvah, Heaven grants him merit for more and more, as we are familiar with the wording of the Mishnah in Pirkei Avos (4:2), 'One mitzvah brings another mitzvah.' And when Chazal said that the mitzvah 'brings' another mitzvah, they did not limit the ability of the mitzvah. For example, let us imagine a tiny car pulling a huge truck with several trailers—it is not possible. But with a mitzvah, it is possible: one 'small' mitzvah can pull a 'truckload' of mitzvos without any limit.

Did you arrive early to shul? Are there still a few minutes until *davening*? Do not go looking for another minyan! You have five minutes—use them for learning. Even if the *yetzer hara* will tell you that five minutes is nothing, it will tell you to wait for another time, and then you will sit and learn 'properly'—but that is a lie! For if you will now sit to learn for five minutes (or even less), Heaven will already grant you merit to learn more and more.

- Tiv HaTorah - Eikev

The virtue of one who completes his mitzvos

כל המצוה אשר אנכי מצוך היום תשמרון לעשות למען תחיון ורביתם וצאתם וירשתם את הארץ אשר נשבע ה' לאבותיכם: (ח, א)

Every mitzvah that I command you today you shall observe to perform, so that you may live and increase, and come and take possession of the land that Hashem swore to your forefathers. (8:1)

Rashi explains: Every mitzvah – according to its simple meaning. And in Midrash Aggadah, if you have begun to fulfill a mitzvah, complete it, for it is attributed to the one who completes it.

Rashi brings in the name of the Midrash that the Torah's intention in saying "every mitzvah" is to awaken the one engaged in mitzvos that the mitzvos must be fulfilled in their entirety, and only after the mitzvah has been fulfilled in its entirety is it in the category of a mitzvah. Therefore, the mitzvah is called only by the name of the one who completes it, for he is the one who brought it to the status of "*Toras mitzvah*."

The words of the Midrash arouse wonder, for from its content you learn that if a person begins a mitzvah and abandons it in the middle, and another comes and completes it, the entire mitzvah will be attributed to the merit of the one who completed it. The question is asked—why should the portion of the one who began the mitzvah be diminished? It is true that as long as the mitzvah has not been completed by the last one, the mitzvah is not yet properly rectified, and the first one is not yet worthy of his reward. However, once the mitzvah has been completed, there is also a portion in it for the first one, and were it not for his part, the last one would not have come to the point of completion. Why, then, should the mitzvah not also be credited to the one who began it?

Furthermore, there is also room to ask why the beginning of the mitzvah should not be considered a merit even if in the end it did not come to completion. After all, he did engage in a mitzvah, and the fact that he abandoned it in the middle was due to seeing that he was unable to bring it to completion. Why, then, should his reward be withheld and not grant him payment for his work, even though his intention was for the sake of Heaven? Moreover, seemingly the opposite—we have learned

(Berachos 6a): “If one thought to do a mitzvah and was prevented by circumstances beyond his control and did not do it, the Torah accounts it for him as if he had done it.” If so, when he abandoned it due to circumstances beyond his control, it would seem proper that he should merit his reward.

The answer to this is brought in the *sefer Or HaMeir* (Derush for Shabbos Shuvah), and the content of his words is that one who begins a mitzvah and does not complete it shows by his end what was in his beginning—that he did not intend for the sake of Heaven.

These words are difficult to grasp at first thought, so we will expand a little in order to clarify the depth of his intention. Behold, every person, when he takes upon himself some task, has for it a certain goal and benefit, for the sake of which he has placed the load upon his shoulder to bear it. Sometimes it is a material goal, meaning that he wishes through it to benefit himself in the material realm, and sometimes it is a spiritual goal, in which he wishes through it to bring satisfaction to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Now, one who contemplates will understand that there is a great difference between one whose intention is for a material goal and one whose intention is for the sake of Heaven. For one whose intention is for material benefit is not assured that he will come to completion, for if he sees that the execution of the task depends on great difficulties, he will retreat from performing it, saying to himself: “My whole intention was only to improve the quality of life, and not to burden myself excessively” [of course, all depends on the magnitude of the difficulties and the total gain]. But one whose intention is for the sake of Heaven does not at all seek after self-interest—on the contrary, he has already nullified his own desires, and his entire intention is only to fulfill the will of Hashem.

Even if the work becomes extremely burdensome for him, he will desire it. Likewise, he will not come to despair when he sees that success does not shine upon him, for his will to serve his Creator does not depend at all on the results of the work, but rather on the very will of Yisbarach that he serve Him. Therefore, since the very effort to bring the commandment to completion is also the fulfillment of His will, it is also his goal, and he will not abandon it even when he does not see results. And since “the stubborn one succeeds,” he will ultimately merit to see blessing in his toil and bring the mitzvah to completion.

Now, in most cases, one who begins a mitzvah shows by the very beginning that he is capable of bringing the matter to completion, for a person knows his senses and his strengths, and he does not pursue at all something that is beyond his ability. It is true that he also knows that it is possible he will need to exert himself more than he estimated in order to bring it to completion, but in the end it will be within his ability [and he is not in the category of “he thought to do a mitzvah and was prevented,” where he is entirely unable to do it]. And if, in the end, he did not bring the matter to completion, it is a sign that from the outset he did not intend for the sake of Heaven, but rather for some personal benefit. And when it became clear to him that it was a difficult task and that the gain was not worth it to him, he regretted his deed. Therefore, he is not entitled to take his reward, and only the one who came after him and completed the task proved that his intention was for the sake of Heaven, and therefore he ignored all the difficulties that appeared in his path.

In any case, we must know that many difficulties stand before one who desires to do a mitzvah in its entirety, and even regarding every spiritual matter the *yetzer hara* opposes it being done in completion. And it is brought in the holy *seforim* that the

yetzer hara agrees that they should study Torah, provided only that they do not finish an entire sefer until its end. And this is alluded to also in his name *Samael*, which is an acronym for *Siyyum Masechta Ein La’asos* (“Completing a tractate is not to be done”). And whoever overcomes the *yetzer hara* and brings every matter of a mitzvah to completion—he is the one worthy of great reward.

Therefore, there is great importance in making a *seudas mitzvah* when completing a *mesechta*. And not for nothing did Abaye testify about himself (Shabbos 119a) and say: “May it be to my credit, that when I see a Torah scholar who has completed his *mesechta*, I make a festive day for the Rabbanim.” For since the matter depends on an extra measure of overcoming the *yetzer hara*, one must rejoice and make a festive day when meriting such a thing.

And come and see a quote from the continuation of the words of the Midrash (Tanchuma, Eikev 6) in the statement of Rashi, from which you will understand how much Heaven is particular about one who does not complete his mitzvos. And here is its wording: “Rabbi Yannai said: Whoever begins a mitzvah and does not complete it—his wife and two sons will be buried. From whom do you learn this? From Yehudah, as it is said (Bereishis 37:26): ‘וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל - ‘And Yehudah said to his brothers: What profit...,’ they sat to break bread, and he said to them: Will we kill our brother and bless?! As it is said (Tehillim 10:3): וּבֹצֵעַ - ‘And the robber blesses himself that he blasphemes Hashem,’ therefore it is written: ‘What profit... let us sell him to the Ishmaelites,’ and they listened to him, for he was a king. And had he said to them to return him to his father, they would have listened to him, but he began the mitzvah and did not complete it. Therefore, whoever begins a mitzvah should complete all of it.” End of quote.

‘הוא ירנסנו בכבוד’

‘He will support us respectfully’

A dear and pleasant man had just now finished davening for the amud on behalf of his father who had passed away. The chazzan had a sweet and pleasant voice so that everyone noticed when he approached the amud. After a month, I saw him again approach the amud and daven with all the Kaddishes—not for a day or two, but for two consecutive weeks.

After davening I could no longer hold back, and I asked what had happened—after all, his father and mother had not been among the living for quite some time, and now he was again going up to the amud?! He looked at me and answered that he was davening for his uncle.

And he told me a wondrous story of Divine providence: “The parents passed away; they left no property to pass on to the children. I thanked Hashem that at least they did not leave debts. My financial situation was very strained, and I asked Hashem to send me salvation in a respectable manner. That very same day, my uncle, my mother’s brother, met me and asked to sit with me privately. We went to a corner, and my uncle asked me: ‘How much do you want as payment in exchange for davening for the amud with all the Kaddishes for a full year for the elevation of my soul [l’ilui nishmasi] when the time comes for me to be summoned to the Heavenly Court?’

I looked at him in embarrassment and said that, with Hashem’s help, he should live until one hundred and twenty, and in any case, I would say Kaddish for him without payment, of course! But my uncle would not agree to hear this answer and said: ‘Look, I thank Hashem that I have seven daughters, but a little “Kaddishel” (male child to say Kaddish) I was not granted. I heard you daven for your parents with a sweet voice and with clarity, according to the pace of the tzibbur, and therefore I request that you daven in exchange for fair payment...’

I did not agree to name a sum; he deposited into my account an amount beyond all imagination, which covered all the debts and left me with surplus profit. Three weeks did not pass, and he returned his soul to his Maker. That is the reason I am approaching the amud—because HaKadosh Baruch Hu arranged for me, against my will, and contrary to my desire, an honorable livelihood! It turned out that this uncle had not a small amount of money and left an additional sum in inheritance after the year, when I would finish the Kaddish...

He was a healthy and strong man and functioned with clarity until his last day; who would have believed that in such a short time he would return his soul to his Creator?”

May this publication be for the elevation of his soul. l.!

Observing the Easy Mitzvos

וְהָיָה עֵקֶב הַשְּׁמִיעוֹן אֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים הָאֵלֶּה, וְשִׁמְרַתֶּם אֹתָם, וְשָׁמַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְךָ אֶת הַבְּרִית וְאֶת הַחֶסֶד (וי"ב)

And it will be, if you listen to these judgments, and you observe and perform them, Hashem your God will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness. (7:12)

Rashi explains: “If you listen to the light [easy] mitzvos that a person tramples underfoot.” The holy Torah opens this week’s portion with a wondrous and assured piece of advice: how to merit good livelihood, strong health, protection from all troubles and suffering, and abundant *berachos* for all heartfelt requests for the good.

If a Jew is careful even with the “light mitzvos” that one might tend to disregard, he is promised all the goodness of this world. The Torah explicitly states the rewards for observing these “light mitzvos,” promising berachos in this world as well, as the pesukim say (13-15): וְאֶהְבֶּךָ וְיִבְרַכְךָ וְהִרְבֶּךָ וַיְבָרֶךְ פְּרִי בִטְנֶךָ וּפְרִי אֲדָמָתְךָ דֶגְנֶךָ וְתִירְשֶׁךָ וַיְצַהֲרֶךָ... בָּרוּךְ תִּהְיֶה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים לֹא יִהְיֶה לְךָ בֶּן עֲקָר וְעַקְרָה וּבְבִמְתֶךָ: וְהִסִּיר יְהוָה מִמֶּךָ כָּל חָלִי... וְאִכְלַתְּ אֶת כָּל הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר הִיא אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ **He will love you, bless you, and multiply you; He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, your grain, your wine, and your oil, etc. You will be blessed above all peoples; there will not be a barren male or female among you or your livestock. Hashem will remove from you all illness, etc. You will consume all the peoples that Hashem your God gives you.**

When a person is scrutinized to determine whether he fears Hashem and is meticulous in His commandments, he is not examined for major deeds—whether he observes Shabbos, puts on tefillin, or fasts on Yom Kippur. Rather, the focus is on the seemingly “light mitzvos” that people often disregard. If he is careful with observing these light mitzvos, it is a clear sign that he is God-fearing.

This can be further explained: When a person belittles light mitzvos, it is not merely a disrespect for those mitzvos but also for the One who commanded them—Hashem Himself. However, if one behaves properly and is careful even with mitzvos that are trampled underfoot, he demonstrates respect for the Commander of those mitzvos, thereby proving his sincere *yiras Hashem*.

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In a small village near the city of Horonsteipel lived a Jew who was very distant from Torah and mitzvos. Not only did he turn his back on his people and heritage, flagrantly violating every transgression in the Torah, but he also compounded his sins by persecuting his fellow Jews in the surrounding area, causing them great suffering and hardship.

His friends and acquaintances were all Gentiles, wicked individuals like himself. Meanwhile, his Jewish brethren kept their distance from him, avoiding any interaction or involvement with him.

One day, to the great astonishment of the chassidim at the Beis Midrash Hagadol of the holy Rav Mordechai of Horonsteipel zt”l, the renegade appeared and joined the line of people waiting to enter the Rebbe’s holy chamber.

Despite their great surprise, no one dared to greet him or inquire about his reasons for coming to the Rebbe. Everyone preferred to stay away, as they knew all too well his animosity toward any Jew who approached him.

When his turn came, he entered the Rebbe’s room respectfully and with proper decorum. He recounted to the Rebbe what he had witnessed a few weeks earlier while walking by the river. He described how his non-Jewish friends had found a man who had drowned in the river, his body washed ashore. The local farmers paid little heed to the matter, being entirely unfamiliar with the concept of honoring the dead. They simply took the corpse as it was and buried it in the non-Jewish cemetery, choosing a convenient and empty spot without much thought.

A few days later, it became known that the deceased was a Jew who had gone down to the river and tragically drowned, to the heartbreak of his family. When it was confirmed beyond doubt that this man was buried in the non-Jewish cemetery, his Jewish relatives sought to transfer his body to the Jewish cemetery, where the region’s Jews were traditionally buried. However, they encountered fierce opposition from the local priests, who adamantly refused to allow the grave to be opened. According to their laws, they claimed, “Once someone is buried, he must not be disinterred.”

Prominent Jewish activists tried all kinds of strategies, sparing no expense in their attempts to negotiate with the priests, as was customary with Eisav and his descendants, who are ever pursuant of gain. Yet all efforts proved futile. For some inexplicable reason, the priests

were particularly obstinate in this case and refused under any circumstances to allow the body to be moved.

Weeks passed without any progress, and no solution seemed forthcoming. When the assimilated Jew saw the difficult problem, a spark of Jewish identity was ignited within. He thought to himself, "A Jew must be buried among Jews, not among Gentiles. One does not play games with the deceased!"

He decided to intervene and went with several of his friends to the local bishop. He pleaded with him, arguing that it was inappropriate for a Jew to remain buried among non-Jews and that the non-Jews themselves likely did not want a Jew in their cemetery. He reasoned that it would benefit all parties to transfer the deceased to the Jewish cemetery.

The man spoke to the bishop in his own manner, as a peer among peers. After much persuasion, the cleric relented and gave his consent. The man immediately took charge of transferring the deceased and ensured he was buried with proper respect in the Jewish cemetery, among his fellow Jews.

Afterward, thoughts began to stir in the man's heart: What would become of him after his own allotted years? Surely the *chevrah kaddisha* would not allow him to be buried among Jews, considering how estranged he had been from them and the suffering he had caused them throughout his life.

This concern brought him to the court of the Rebbe of Horonsteipel, where he came to request that, after his death, he be allowed to be buried in the Jewish cemetery, just as he had worked to ensure a Jew's burial among his people. He argued that, after all, he was a Jew by birth, and it was not fitting for a Jew to be buried among Gentiles.

When the Rebbe heard his request, he pondered for a moment and then said, "If you wish for your Jewish brethren to consent to your burial among them, it would be appropriate for you to begin wearing at least a *tallis katan*. Even though all your other clothing makes you appear like a complete non-Jew, when Jews see that you are at least wearing tzitzis, they will recognize that you are indeed one of them. In that case, I can intercede with the *chevrah kaddisha* on your behalf."

The man heeded the Rebbe's wise advice and began wearing a kosher and beautiful *tallis katan* provided by the devoted attendants of the Rebbe.

Not long after, the man was seen attending *shul* on Shabbos. Over time, he began coming on weekdays as well. Eventually, he

returned to the Rebbe and asked to repent fully for all his sins and transgressions.

The Rebbe received him warmly and guided him on the proper path of repentance. Soon, the man abandoned his previous life of vanity, joined those in the Beis Midrash Hagadol, became a complete *baal teshuvah*, and merited to establish upright and blessed generations. Naturally, in his later years, he was buried with honor in the proper place among his people.

It was only then that everyone realized the depth of the Rebbe's wisdom. He had initially asked the man to begin with the seemingly simple mitzvah of tzitzis alone. But the nature of mitzvos is such that one leads to another, as Chazal taught (*Avos* 4:2), "One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah." Thus, from observing this "light mitzvah," the man was drawn closer, climbing step by step, until his heart was transformed, and he became a complete penitent.

This illustrates the power of "light mitzvos that a person tramples underfoot." Although they may seem insignificant, their merit is capable of bringing even an assimilated Jew back to Hashem with love.

A Jewish traveler passed through the small town of Radin in Lithuania. By the time he arrived, it was late at night. He began searching for a place to stay, but all the houses were dark, as it appeared that the townspeople had long since gone to bed.

After searching for some time, he noticed a faint light emanating from a window. He approached the house, knocked gently on the door, and was greeted by a Jewish man who welcomed him warmly. This man was Rav Tzvi Levinson, the son-in-law of the illustrious Chafetz Chaim *zt"l*. Rav Levinson received the traveler graciously, provided him with a satisfying meal, and prepared a bed for him to rest.

The guest thanked his host profusely and asked if he could arrange for him to meet the Chafetz Chaim the following day to receive his *berachah*. Rav Levinson agreed to try.

Exhausted from his journey, the traveler immediately went to the comfortable bed prepared for him, covered himself with a warm blanket, and stretched out. As he lay there, half-asleep, he suddenly remembered that he had not yet prayed *Maariv*! Due to the pressures of the evening—his hurried arrival in town and the search for lodging—he had completely forgotten about the evening prayer. Now, moments before falling asleep, the thought struck him suddenly:

he still needed to pray *Maariv*!

A few more minutes, the man thought, heeding the advice of his evil inclination... He wrapped himself snugly in his wool blanket. "It's cold now... I'll warm up here just a little... and then I'll get up to pray *Maariv*."

Those few minutes stretched into several hours of deep and sweet sleep. When the man finally awoke the next morning, it was already several hours after sunrise—just as Chazal predicted in the first chapter of *Berachos* (4a): "Let a person not return from the field in the evening and say, 'I'll go home, eat a little, drink a little, sleep a little, and then recite the Shema and pray,' for sleep may overtake him, and he will end up sleeping all night."

After *Shacharis*, his gracious host, the son-in-law of the Chafetz Chaim, brought him into the holy presence of the *tzaddik*. The Chafetz Chaim gazed at him with a piercing eye and said:

"Listen carefully, dear *Yid*, to what I wish to share with you. When I was a child in Russia, there were many wealthy people, and wealth was abundant. This was before the communist era, which equalized all citizens and confiscated the riches of the wealthy.

"In those days," the Chafetz Chaim continued, "if people saw copper coins lying in the streets, they would not bother to pick them up, as they were small coins of little value, insignificant in the eyes of society.

"However, after the great revolution in Russia, when great poverty descended upon the world, people rejoiced over every small coin they found discarded in the streets. In their great destitution, even such small coins were considered a treasure.

"In our current times," the Chafetz Chaim concluded his sharp parable, "we are extremely impoverished in Torah and mitzvos. Therefore, even the 'light mitzvos that a person tramples underfoot' are exceedingly precious and lofty. In Heaven, every effort a Jew makes in serving his Creator is valued, and it is forbidden to belittle any mitzvah, *chas veshalom*.

"Sometimes," the Chafetz Chaim added with fervor, "a Jew may arrive in a town very late at night. Due to the many burdens of the day, he might forget to daven *Maariv*, *chas veshalom*. When he finally remembers, he may lack the strength to get up and pray. Therefore, one must understand not to belittle even the simple and regular *Maariv tefillah*, which is immensely valuable, significant, and exalted!" In the face of this clear and evident *ruach hakodesh*, which shone like flashes of fire from the pure and holy mouth of the Chafetz Chaim, the man was filled with repentance and regret. His heart broke within him, and he resolved with complete commitment never again to neglect any mitzvah, even the "light mitzvos," as it is said (*Pirkei Avos* 2:1), "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one."