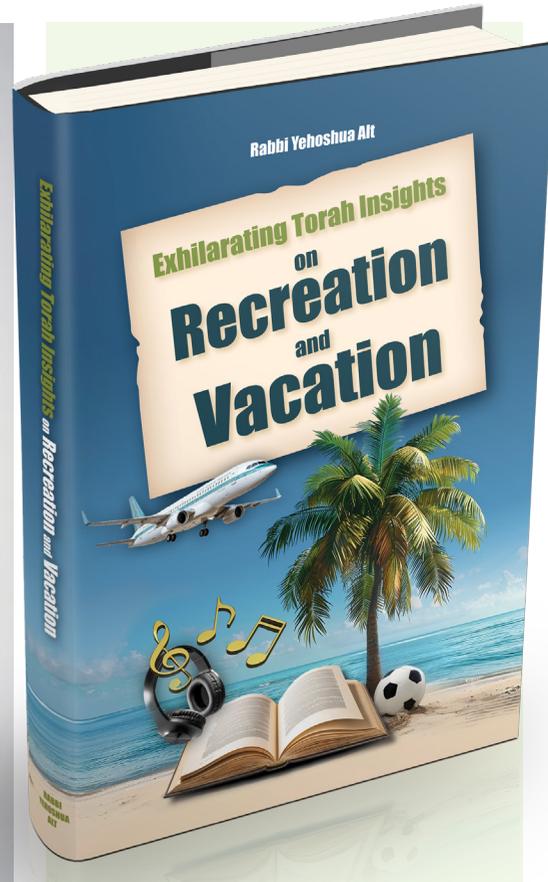




Valiant Value



Man tends to underestimate his own value. The Torah expresses this as “*Lo yada enosh erka*, mankind doesn’t know its worth” (Iyov 28:13).

On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister achieved the unthinkable as he was the first to run a mile in under four minutes (the four-minute mile). It was barely a year later that someone else also accomplished this feat. Soon after, numerous others achieved this feat. So what happened? It was only because people thought it couldn’t be done that no one achieved it. However, once Roger Bannister did it, people believed it could be done as was seen by the number of people who accomplished this feat after him! We can also apply this to the potential that we possess.

The potential man has was brought forth in 1977 when R’ Shach spoke at Aish Hatorah. He said, “If one man can kill six million people (referring to the Nazi leader), then one man (referring to the Rosh Yeshiva of Aish Hatorah, R’ Noach Weinberg, who spiritually saved countless Jews) can save six million.”

We are imbued with a *chelek Elokah mi’maal*, piece of Hashem (Iyov 31:2), giving us enormous potential. Hashem put us here to accomplish, as it says, “*Asher bara Elokim laasos*” (Bereishis 2:3). For this reason, our world is called *olam ha’asiya*, the world of doing and accomplishing. We need not compare our accomplishments to others since the only thing that counts is our own accomplishments according to our capabilities and the potential we were endowed with. As the adage goes, “The truth is that there is nothing noble in being superior to someone else. The only true nobility is being superior to your former self.”

Each of us has our unique tasks to fulfill. Just as everyone has a unique DNA, face, fingerprints and the like, so too, we each have a unique mission. Likewise, Man being created *yechidi*, singly (see Sanhedrin 37a), alludes to the fact that each of our tasks in this world is unique and no one else can take our place.

The Gemara (Taanis 21b) says, “*Lo matzis l’m’evad k’uvdei*, you are not able to perform deeds such as his. This can also be understood that a person cannot do what another does because that is not his purpose (see the Maharsha, Taanis 21b, s.v. *hava*).

R’ Wolbe (Alai Shur, 1, p. 168) put it this way: “Each person is a one-time phenomenon, an occurrence that has never been before and will never be again. We each have a unique blend of character traits and personality. We are each unique in our particular family constellation, born in a specific time in history and in a specific environment.

This uniqueness gives each of us great importance. Only we can accomplish our unique life tasks.”

Words that sound similar have a connection. What is the connection between *shav*, vain, and *shaveh*, same? R’ Samson Rafael Hirsch explains this is because anything that is the same as anything else is vain. Hashem doesn’t create two people alike.

The idea of reincarnation shows us this since if one didn’t accomplish his task he is reincarnated because no one else can do it.

The Piasezna Rebbe (1889–1943) wrote (*Tzav V’ziruz*, 10, s.v. *muchrach*) that a person must individuate himself qualitatively from others. This goes beyond not being bound by the habits, customs, and opinions of others, thinking one’s own thoughts. This is a given. Without this, a person is neither a Jew nor a human being. Rather, a distinct and unique personality must be revealed from within. In learning Torah and serving Hashem, it is not a question of amount or how intelligent one is, but rather an issue of inner quality, which needs to be revealed, a personalized approach to learning and service which rises forth from the depths of the individual. So much so, that when one hears a Torah thought or a spiritual practice, everyone can recognize that it issued forth from the mind of this thinker, from the heart of this servant of Hashem. Take, for example, the work of the Rambam or Ramban. Each is distinct and identifiable as being their work, in the style of wisdom and personal expression revealed. Why is this so visible? Because their essence, their unique, individuated form, was brought forth and expressed in the Torah and wisdom they revealed.

It has been said, “What you track, improves.” So, we must do a constant calculation to see where we are holding. We need to ask ourselves where we are holding just as Adam was asked “*Ayeka*, where are you?” (Bereishis 3:9). This voice should be heard within us constantly. Then we can work at improving ourselves.

This is just like a store owner calculates his gains and losses daily. In this way he can improve his business. For this reason we say in Birchas Hatorah, *laasok b’divre Torah*, as we must approach it like a business. That is, to calculate what is working and what needs improvement.

Let us conclude with the following. A wise man once remarked, “People are accustomed to look at the heavens and to wonder what happens there. It would be better if they would look within themselves, to see what happens there.” In the words of another quote: “Presume not G-d to scan, the proper study of mankind is man.”

RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT

The newly released book “*Exhilarating Torah Insights on Recreation and Vacation*” is now available (as a paperback, hardcover and digitized version) for purchase and delivery on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0DF4ZHPKJ> or by sending a WhatsApp to +972 54 849 5217. Alternatively, you can call 054 849 5217 (Israel) or 917 732 2371 (United States) or send an email to yalt3285@gmail.com.

Some of the questions discussed in this book are the following.

What role does recreation play in our service of Hashem?

What does the Torah teach us about music?

What lessons can we glean from specific types of recreation, such as sports?

Is there a mitzvah to take a vacation?

What does the Torah say about comedy and humour?

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