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## *Contents*

.....

***Shiurim in Chovos HaLevavos, Sha'ar HaBitachon Shiur 42 Part 2***

***Bitachon When Poverty Is Ordained for a Person .....5***

### **The Pauper *Can* Have Gan Eden on This World**

Poverty May Be Part of His Life's Mission ❖ All for Your Ultimate Purpose ❖ The Pauper Who's Surrounded by Success ❖ A Blessed Life Despite Poverty ❖ A Good Life ❖ Poverty Doesn't Bother Him ❖ The Twofold Loss of Lacking *Bitachon* ❖ *Tefillah* Cannot Be a War

### **When Poverty Is Ordained, There's No Way Out**

A Story About the Rosh and the Ba'al HaTurim ❖ The Bundle of Money ❖ Closed Eyes ❖ If the Ribbono shel Olam Doesn't Want...

### **The Main Difficulty of Poverty Is When We Fight It**

Not the End of the World ❖ A *Nisayon* Like Any Other ❖ *Emunah* Informs Us of Our Mission and Purpose ❖ Led from Above ❖ Surrounded by Lovingkindness ❖ If Nothing Works, Get to the Root ❖ It Doesn't Matter One Way or the Other

## **הכנה לפסח**

**Connecting to the Essence of the Pesach Preparations15**

### **The Frenzy Robs us of *Yishuv HaDa'as***

The Hassles That Often Precede Exalted Times ❖ The Shabbos

Preparations ❖ The Problem with Hassle ❖ The Nissan Frenzy  
❖ *Bedikas Chametz* with a Scattered Soul ❖ Chodesh Tishrei: A  
Month of Hassles

### **The Great *Avodah* of *Hachanah* for a Mitzvah**

*Hachanah* Prior to a Mitzvah Is Among the Great Teachings of the  
*Ba'al Shem Tov* ❖ Premeditation ❖ Elevating Our *Tefillah* ❖ How  
Do They Work Together? ❖ The Contradiction Between the Two  
*Avodahs*

### **Connecting to the Essence of Our Actions**

The Ribbono shel Olam Wants Your Inner Thought ❖ The *Avodah*  
of Meditation ❖ Having in Mind the Essence Connects Us to  
Hashem ❖ The Greatness of a Commandment ❖ The *Chiyus* We  
Can Draw from the Essence ❖ Fusing the Spiritual *Hachanah* with  
the Technical Preparation ❖ When We Lack *Pnimitiyus*, We Become  
Stressed ❖ Apply Your Heart and Mind ❖ So Many Mitzvos  
While Sitting in Traffic ❖ Great Tzaddikim Engaged in Shabbos  
Preparations ❖ It's the *Thought* That Counts

.....  
***Bitachon* When Poverty  
Is Ordained for a Person**  
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**The Pauper *Can* Have Gan Eden on This World**

**Poverty May Be Part of His Life's Mission**

As we learn the *sugya* of *bitachon* as it relates to *parnassah*, we must emphasize a point that we have not yet touched upon. It is an extremely important point, for if we don't know this, it may cause people to conclude that *bitachon* doesn't work, *chas v'shalom*.

There is a concept that a person may have been born with the *mehalech* and mission that **he will be poor his entire life**. Even if he makes all the effort possible, even if he has tremendous *bitachon*, it may remain his mission in life to be poor—and this is no contradiction at all with the feeling of serenity and good fortune that comes to the *ba'al bitachon*.

**All for Your Ultimate Purpose**

Chazal have already told us in the Mishnah (*Kiddushin* 82b): ... **one should ask for mercy from the One to Whom all wealth and assets belong—for neither wealth nor poverty comes from the trade in which you are engaged**. Thus, even if he's occupied with the finest, most profitable work, it is still possible that a person will remain poor.

If it is ordained for a person to be poor, *R"l*, it doesn't mean that he will die of hunger, *R"l*. And if a person *did* die due to hunger, it means that his time to depart the world had arrived in any case. But in general, the *Chovos HaLevavos* confirms: **We are assured by the Ribbono shel**

**Olam that every person will have everything he needs in order to live.** However, sometimes, when it is ordained for a person to be poor, this *shefa* will come to him with great restriction and lack, which will cause the person incredible difficulty and pain.

All of this is the result of Heavenly calculations. Just as the *Hashgachah Elyonah* ordains that a person should be born to the parents that he has, or with a specific health situation, or with other challenges, so too, **the Hashgachah will sometimes ordain that a person be born with the *ni-sayon* of poverty.** Despite the fact that he is upstanding and pious, and possesses much *bitachon*, this person will be poor. **No matter what he does, he will not succeed in changing this,** because this is his purpose on This World.

### The Pauper Who's Surrounded by Success

What will happen when this person becomes a *ba'al bitachon*? If it was decreed for him to be poor, no amount of *bitachon* can change that—**but thanks to his *bitachon*, he will live a Gan Eden on This World.**

The pauper who is a *ba'al bitachon* will assent to the *ratzon Hashem* with love and acceptance. He won't argue and fight the decree—because **fighting the express desire of Hashem distances a person from the Ribbono shel Olam, and it causes a person many problems.** The Ribbono shel Olam will give him success in everything in his life, because if he accepts his lot with love, it will mitigate many other *tzaros*.

### A Blessed Life Despite Poverty

We see it often regarding people who are indeed poor, but **they see tremendous blessing in everything else in their lives. They live a life of Gan Eden!** Sometimes, they have special success with their children. Other times, they're blessed to be very well liked. Or they may have other blessings that cause them to have a pleasant life—despite the fact that they have been given the challenge of poverty.

This person didn't fight his ordained lot in life. Thus, he hasn't separated himself from the Ribbono shel Olam. He remained tethered to the

Source of *shefa*, and we can see that he is indeed being showered with *shefa*! He has so much *siyata diShmaya* in so many other areas, despite this *nisayon* of poverty.

### A Good Life

So many tzaddikim were extremely poor, because this was their mission on This World, **but they merited exceptional success and *siyata diShmaya***. They reaped the reward of *bitachon* in This World!

Some people don't understand this entire concept—because we have become so accustomed to thinking that *money is everything*, and therefore we don't see the entire picture. And then people still ask questions: “This person has *bitachon*, yet he still has no money...” **What is the question here?** If we look at the whole picture, we will see clearly that while this person doesn't have money, he *l'maiseh* lives a wonderful life without it. And sometimes, he doesn't even *feel* his poverty because he feels so lucky and fortunate in life!

### Poverty Doesn't Bother Him

Another reason the *ba'al bitachon* is so serene and fortunate, even if it was decreed for him to have the *nisayon* of poverty, is because his poverty doesn't even bother him. **If he works out his *bitachon*, then poverty will be far less of an issue.**

The poor *ba'al bitachon* may have a small home—he doesn't have nice tiles in his kitchen, his children's weddings are hosted at a lower standard—but he knows “this is my mission, to have this life.” **He doesn't become broken by this; in fact, he is filled with joy.** And he has so much success in so many other areas of his life, as we see clearly.

### The Twofold Loss of Lacking *Bitachon*

Conversely, things are just the opposite for one who *doesn't* have *bitachon*, **or one who has told himself that *bitachon* must necessarily make him rich**, as though the meaning of *bitachon* is to become rich, and as long as he doesn't have money, he will go to war in order to attain it: “I don't want to hear stories; I want money!”

Such a person loses out in two ways. One is that he will experience what the *pasuk* says, תוחלת ממושכה מחלה לב, *a drawn-out hope brings sickness to the heart* (Mishlei 13:12)—he will constantly hope for something that will never come. The fact is, if the *nisayon* of poverty has been decreed, nothing will help. Forget about it; you're not going to have it. But **this person continues to work on things that will never reach him, and thus he becomes broken and disappointed.** This brings the person great pain.

But in addition to this, he has lost out because he has distanced himself from the Ribbono shel Olam by arguing with His plan. **He walks around filled with complaints against the Aibishter.** When he davens, he is upset because he performed a *segulah* yesterday and “it didn't work...,” and, because he has gotten into a “disagreement” with the Ribbono shel Olam, **things begin to go sideways, R”l.** More problems come his way, because when we have complaints in our hearts, we become untethered from the Source of *shefa*, the Ribbono shel Olam.

### *Tefillah Cannot Be a War*

This last point is crucial—as we learn from the following Gemara:

The Gemara (*Berachos* 63a) tells us, לעולם יהיו דבריו של אדם מועטין לפני, *המקום*, *one's words before Hashem should always be few.* The Maharsha explains that when a person experiences a *tzarah*, he should minimize his *tefillah*, he shouldn't daven so hard. For often, a person seeks to change his situation through excessive *tefillah*, but **perhaps it has been ordained that he must remain in this state of poverty** and when he sees that his *tefillah* doesn't change things, he will develop complaints in his heart, and *chas v'shalom*, begin to doubt the ways of Hashem. **We must always reflect on whether we're not waging war with the Ribbono shel Olam!** We must think very deeply whether we're not becoming angry with Hashem because we want something very much—even though it is contrary to Hashem's decree.

One may ask: How can I know if it was *bashert* for me to be poor? The answer is, **it doesn't matter so much!** We needn't be so busy with this



question in the first place. The *Chovos HaLevavos* tells us: **Don't seek to attain something that's not in your hands.** Wealth and poverty are not in your hands in any case. Rather choose an *אומנות קלה ונקיה*, *an easy and clean vocation*, and the Ribbono shel Olam will lead you to your ordained destination. **We must only truly submit ourselves to the Ribbono shel Olam** and constantly reflect on whether we're complete in our *bitachon*. Then we will see that everything falls into place.

## When Poverty Is Ordained, There's No Way Out

### A Story About the Rosh and the Ba'al HaTurim

In relation to this, there's a incident that transpired with the Rosh, who was wealthy, and his son Rabbi Yaakov, the author of the *Tur*, who was extremely poor. (The *Tur* writes in a number of places about his poverty and the halachic questions that arose because of it.)

People would come to the Rosh and complain to him that he isn't helping his son—but he would answer them that **even if Rabbi Yaakov were to have a great job, it wouldn't change his financial state an iota.** But the people persisted, unwilling to accept his answer. And so the Rosh said, "I will prove it to you."

### The Bundle of Money

The Rosh knew that his son would never accept a handout from him, fulfilling the *pasuk* *שונא מתנות יחיה*, *one who abhors gifts shall live*, so he placed a bundle of coins on the steps leading to his son's home. He then summoned his son to him. He assumed that Rabbi Yaakov would find the money, and he would rightfully take it.

But when he arrived, his father asked him, "Did you find anything on your way?" The *Tur* said, "no, I didn't find anything." **But I placed something in your path,** his incredulous father exclaimed. "How can it be that you didn't see it?"

## Closed Eyes

And the Tur explained: “When I heard that my father was calling me, I immediately contemplated the great mitzvah of *kibbud av*, and then I said to myself: What will I do if I will, *chas v’shalom*, lose my eyesight? How will I be able to come to my father and honor him? **Therefore, I closed my eyes as I walked all the way here**, in order to become accustomed to walking here without using my eyes.”

Said the Rosh to his challengers: “Do you see? **This is his mission on earth**. He came down to This World to be poor, and nothing can change that!”

### If the Ribbono shel Olam Doesn’t Want...

A similar story is told by the Sar Shalom of Belz, which really underscores the idea that every person has been ordained a specific mission in life:

Once, a very poor *Yid*, with tattered clothing, came to the Belzer Rav, and upon leaving, the Belzer Rav stood up and escorted him some distance. This aroused great wonder in the court, for the Rebbe didn’t show such honor for just anyone.

Among the bystanders was the Rebbe’s son, Rav Yehoshua, the Miteler Belzer Rav. Later, the Sar Shalom told his son, “Surely, you’re wondering about my behavior towards this *Yid* earlier today. You should know that he is a master in *kol haTorah kulah*—*Talmud Bavli*, *Yerushalmi*, *Tosefta*, *Sifra*, *Sifri*, *Midrashim*, *Zohar*, and all the *sefarim* of the great masters. He could have been a *rav* in any of the great *kehillos*, such as Lemberg and Krakow, but instead he is forced to make the rounds collecting money... **because if the Ribbono shel Olam doesn’t want, He doesn’t want.**

The Sar Shalom continued, “If not a *rav*, he could at least have been a *dayan* in a great *kehillah*. But we must conclude that... **if the Ribbono shel Olam doesn’t want, He doesn’t want.**”

He further continued, “If not a *dayan*, he could have been a *maggid* in

a *Yiddishe* city, but **if the Ribbono shel Olam doesn't want, He doesn't want."**

The Rebbe concluded, "If not a *maggid*, he could at least have been a *melamed* somewhere, and he would not need to collect for himself. It must be that **if the Ribbono shel Olam doesn't want, He doesn't want."**

Years later, when the Mittlerer Belzer Rav would retell this story, he would add, "It always bothered me... my saintly father supported so many '*yoshoim*,' men who would sit in the Beis Medrash completely devoted to Torah and *avodas Hashem*. Knowing the caliber of this *Yid*, couldn't he have offered him a place in his Beis Medrash?! It must be," concluded the Mittlerer Belzer Rav, "that **if the Ribbono shel Olam doesn't want, He doesn't want."**

### The Main Difficulty of Poverty Is When We Fight It

#### Not the End of the World

This is a tremendous *yesod* that we must remember, for if we don't, we may question the entire idea of *bitachon*: "How can it be that this *ba'al bitachon* is so poor...?"

We must therefore remember that poverty, in and of itself, is not the end of the world. Poverty is a *nisayon*, just like every other *nisayon* in life. The reason people are so fearful of it is because **they have seen poor people who have added an entire litany of problems to their lot**—because they have *argued* with their lot and didn't accept their lot with love.

Poverty, in and of itself, does come with that much difficulty; a person must live under strain and suffer from other inconveniences. But **those who "argue" with the decree of the Ribbono shel Olam make things much worse**, because they add other problems on top of their poverty. Sometimes, they have gone into immense debt because they refused to live modestly, in accordance with their means—or they incurred any

number of *tzaros* because they have distanced themselves from the Ribbono shel Olam out of a refusal to accept His plan.

### *A Nisayon Like Any Other*

It is just like the parents who were given a gift from Heaven, a child who is unwell. **They know that they can't change this, the child was born with this *nisayon***, and the parents can continue to live a sweet life, strengthening themselves with *emunah*.

The same applies to any *Yid* who submits to the plan of the Ribbono shel Olam. He says, "I know one thing; **if I will be connected to the Ribbono shel Olam, it will be good**—and not the type of good that we, with our human comprehension can think of, but *far better good*, the likes of which only the Ribbono shel Olam can fathom. But **only on the condition that I will be connected to the Ribbono shel Olam**, for He is good and He does good, and He wants it to be good for every person, not only in the Next World but also in This World!

This *Yid* knows that he must do everything required of him in the way of the world. He takes on an *אומנות קלה ונקיה*, he doesn't waste his time at work—but he doesn't seek to escape what has been ordained for him by looking for harder work or undertaking risky investments. **He doesn't quarrel with the Ribbono shel Olam's decree.**

### *Emunah Informs Us of Our Mission and Purpose*

This is also the *peshat* in the Gemara (*Berachos* 5a): *הרואה יסורים באין עליו יפשפש במעשיו*, *one who sees that suffering comes upon him, he should make a reckoning of his deeds*. That is, if a person sees that he is poor, **he should reflect and see whether he's preoccupied with quarreling about his situation** or looking for more difficult work, or if he is connected to the Aibishter and accepts his situation with love.

And when a person lives this way, with a closeness to the Ribbono she Olam, **he will, with time, attain the clarity to know whether he is one of those people for whom poverty has been ordained**. Just as with any other *nisayon*, it is clear to a person that this was sent to him, and

this is what he must rectify; this is his issue; he was born with it, and it's not because of some sin that he committed—so too, he will know with clarity that poverty is his mission and purpose on This World.

### Led from Above

The clearest path that one can possibly follow is to listen to the *Chovos HaLevavos*, who instructs us to take an *אומנות קלה ונקיה*, which will leave enough room in our heart for Torah and *avodas Hashem*. When a *Yid* will strengthen his *emunah* and *bitachon*, he will daven to the Ribbono shel Olam to lead him in the right way, he will not pursue *עצות ותחבולות*, *schemes and tactics*, then **he will slowly but surely come to recognize his mission and purpose.**

He will know whether he must now engage in other *parnassah* pursuits in order to supplement his livelihood, or whether to simply strengthen his *bitachon* in Hashem in order to obtain more *parnassah*, or that **nothing at all can change his lot but his mission is to be poor**, and he accepts this decree with love and joy.

### Surrounded by Lovingkindness

This is one of the reasons we can't ask why some *ba'alei bitachon* remain poor—because **we never know the entire cheshbon and the entire picture.**

The *Chovos HaLevavos* establishes a *yesod*: You should know that “neither poverty nor wealth stems from any specific work that a person engages in.” **It may be that this person is indeed a ba'al bitachon, but it has been ordained that for his avodas Hashem he must be poor.** When he says the *berachah* of *העושה לי כל צרכי*, *He Who provides me all my needs*, this means that the Ribbono shel Olam provides 100 percent of what he needs. And **if he needs poverty for his שורש נשמה**, **then this is his mission and need.** He gives thanks every day for the poverty that he has been given, and he asks no questions.

The reality is that the *ba'al bitachon* for whom it was ordained that he should be poor **will feel that** *הבוטח בה' חסד יסובבנו*, *one who trusts in Hash-*

*em will be surrounded by lovingkindness, just as much as the next person, and he will see success and blessing in so many other areas of his life.* He will see that poverty itself doesn't destroy him. He will feel the *siyata diShmaya* accompany him, and he will experience clear *chesed* and *Hashgachah* in all his affairs.

### If Nothing Works, Get to the Root

If a person sees that in addition to his poverty, many other areas of his life went sideways, **it is generally a sign that he has severed his connection with the Ribbono shel Olam.** And the first thing he must do is to see how he can repair that connection.

When a person sees that an electronic appliance in the home doesn't work, and then another appliance, and then the lights in the house aren't functioning... **he understands that he must go to the source; the main fuse popped, and it must be turned back on.**

It may be that it was decreed for this person to live in poverty. But if *nothing* works, if the person is bitter and unhappy, **it is generally a sign that he must work on his bitachon.** The fuse must be replaced and then everything will become illuminated.

### It Doesn't Matter One Way or the Other

To conclude: A *Yid* must always live with the feeling of humility and submissiveness to Hashem: **He doesn't know the whole picture.** The only thing he must do is to **throw himself onto the Ribbono shel Olam—secure in the knowledge that He will help in every matzav.** A *Yid* must work to attain a level where **it doesn't matter to him whether poverty or wealth has been ordained for him.** He will always be calm and serene because he is in the Hands of the Ribbono shel Olam.



## Connecting to the Essence of the Pesach Preparations

### The Frenzy Robs us of *Yishuv HaDa'as*

#### The Hassles That Often Precede Exalted Times

When we analyze it, we will see that very often, prior to the onset of a holy and exalted time (such as Shabbos and Yom Tov), many preparations must be made, and things are very hectic right before the arrival of these important moments. This tension tends to throw a person into turmoil, and it robs him of his peace of mind. It takes away the presence of mind he needs so that he can derive from that occasion what a *Yid* must take from of the elevated moments of the year.

Afterward, when the Yom Tov departs, people often say, “**It was nice, but *halevi* I would have been more present.... I had so many distractions, so many things to do... so many things that caused me not to be there 100 percent.**

#### The Shabbos Preparations

This really plays out every Shabbos. We know that the *kedushah* of Shabbos is even greater than that of the Yamim Tovim. But Shabbos so often comes with so many hassles. Beginning on Friday, there are so many things that must be prepared; shopping, *schlepping*, cleaning, etc., until the home is ready for the arrival of Shabbos.

But in general, there's a concept of *מי שטרח בערב שבת*... there is hassle and frenzy on Erev Shabbos. We find that even the Amoraim busied

themselves with Shabbos preparations. So important are these preparations that, according to *halachah*, it is permitted to shop for Shabbos even before davening Shacharis on Friday morning, if you think that item may not be available afterward. In short, Shabbos brings with it hecticness and feverish preparations.

### The Problem with Hassle

Ideally, it should be the precise opposite. Shabbos is a time of rest and tranquility. Shouldn't Shabbos, and the time that surrounds it, be the epitome of serenity and tranquility?! The concept of hassle would appear to be diametrically opposed to *menuchas hanefesh*.

In fact, some people will tell you that their lives are more organized and even more *ehrich* during the weekday than on Shabbos. During the weekday, he has a set schedule... the time he wakes up, the times he davens, the time he devotes to learning.... But when Friday and Shabbos arrive, his entire schedule is thrown off. **In addition to the frantic activity and the myriads of tasks to be done, there's a "scattering of the soul" that comes with a different schedule and different foods, etc.** One may sometimes think that it's more difficult to serve Hashem on Shabbos than during the weekday.

### The Nissan Frenzy

The same takes place during the days of Nissan, as we approach the exalted days of Pesach.

We're talking about Rosh Chodesh Nissan, which is the beginning of the year. Chodesh Nissan is the start of Creation: the entire year is built from these days. The Chozeh of Lublin, and other tzaddikim, taught us that **each day of the first twelve days of Nissan corresponds to another month of the forthcoming year. Everything is established during those days.** The entire year is an outgrowth of these days in Nissan.

But, *l'maiseh*, when it comes down to it, people are hectic, preoccupied, and frenzied precisely during those days. The Ribbono shel Olam specifically designed the calendar in such a way that we're preoccupied



with many technical things during these days; this is how it works. We can always draw solace from the fact that *this* is how the Ribbono shel Olam wants it. But the question remains: **Why, indeed, is it this way?**

So many people, when Erev Pesach comes, don't even know if they have a brain... they run to bake matzos and there is an entire stack of things they would have wanted to accomplish but didn't get to... they nearly forget their own names.

### *Bedikas Chametz with a Scattered Soul*

Let's take the evening of *bedikas chametz*. It's a holy and exalted time when we fulfill the *mitzvah d'Oraisa* of תשביתו, of ridding our homes of *chametz*, and the Rabbinic institution of בדיקה. It's the one time in the year that we merit to fulfill this mitzvah. There's a great *inyan* of drawing מים שלנו, and Erev Pesach is a day of מחיית עמלק, *obliterating Amalek*.

But this person barely knows what's happening with him—especially if he's at the stage of life when it is, *baruch Hashem*, filled with responsibilities. He's no longer a young *bachur* who has nothing on his mind. **This person feels that he's barely here....**

### **Chodesh Tishrei: A Month of Hassles**

When we think about it, we will see that it continues this way throughout the year; it's so often this way. The *Yamim Nora'im* and the rest of Tishrei are similarly so. These are days of such greatness and awe.... Indeed, there are *kehillos* where even working *yungeleit* sit in shul learning from morning till night and don't even go to work.... Formerly, there were *Yidden* who sojourned in Miron from Elul until Yom Kippur, sitting and toiling in Torah and *avodah*.

But the usual way that the Ribbono shel Olam designed the world, with families, with hassles, is that precisely the days of Tishrei bring with them tremendous irritations and busyness. Here, one must purchase an *esrog*... then there are other myriads of preparations for Yom Tov—and this is how we go into Yom Tov. **What is the *peshat* in this?**

Why, indeed, did the Ribbono shel Olam design it this way—and more importantly, what does He therefore expect of us?

### The Great Avodah of Hachanah for a Mitzvah

#### *Hachanah* Prior to a Mitzvah Is Among the Great Teachings of the *Ba'al Shem Tov*

But we know that there's a great concept of *hachanah*, preparation—and this **concept of preparation can enable us to be present during the mitzvah**. This is one of the great *yesodos* of *chassidus* that the holy Ba'al Shem Tov transmitted to his followers: the greatness of investing in the preparations for a mitzvah.

The rule is that if we're lacking in the *preparation* for a mitzvah, we're lacking in the *kavannah*, the meditation and thought of the mitzvah. One cannot be properly present when performing a mitzvah if he hasn't properly prepared for the mitzvah. This is something we have heard over and over from the tzaddikim: A *Yid* must make a proper *hachanah* before going into a Yom Tov or before performing a mitzvah.

#### Premeditation

Now, how does *hachanah* indeed work? Preparation takes a person out of all surrounding elements, and places in him in the mode of the mitzvah!

Let us take the preparation for Shacharis as an example. A *Yid* wakes up early and begins getting ready for davening. People are often mistaken about this. **Sometimes, even if a person has a *chavrusa* to learn with before davening, he doesn't grasp what *hachanah* means.** For the true essence of *hachanah* is the aspect of *hisbonenus*, meditation before the mitzvah. The Mishnah in *Berachos* (2:1) tells us, ״אֵלֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֶת הַתְּפִלָּה וְאֶת הַמִּצְוָה״, *early chassidim would pause for an hour and only then daven*.

One who isn't on the *madreigah* of הראשונים can still get into the

mode and the spirit of davening by learning a *blatt* Gemara. **Torah has the ability to bring a person to such a place, since the Torah emanates from the Ribbono shel Olam Himself.** This is the best possible *hachanah*—however, a person must concentrate on the fact that he is preparing for davening. He should constantly bear in mind that he is about to begin davening.

### Elevating Our *Tefillah*

*Hachanah* breeds *kavannah*. *Hachanah* causes a person to be present. When a person comes to a mitzvah unprepared, his mind will be in a million places. Therefore, a person must sit down and meditate on what he is about to do. **One should take five minutes before davening Minchah** to meditate on what he is about to do **and to daven for success in this.**

In fact, the tzaddikim arranged the words of the Mishnah thus: Early *chassidim* would pause for an hour before they would begin to daven, שוהין שעה אחת ומתפללים! **They would utilize their meditation time to daven for success in the mitzvah they were about to carry out!** *Tefillah* is very much a part of this preparation.

### How Do They Work Together?

Thus, we have a seeming contradiction here. On the one hand, we have *tirdos* and hassles that often precede a mitzvah or an otherwise exalted time—which seemingly rob a person of the presence of mind he needs to absorb the aura and the essence of the mitzvah.

On the other hand, these very hassles and preparations constitute our *hachanah* for the mitzvah! They're meant to assist the person in getting into the mode of the mitzvah—for his heart and mind to be present during the mitzvah.

Of course, it would theoretically be wonderful if we could prepare for Yom Tov *solely* by learning *chassidische sefarim*. In fact, among *chassidim* of yore (who were largely poor and didn't have much to make Yom Tov with in any case), they would ask each other, "So where are you hold-

ing with your Yom Tov preparation?" To which the second *Yid* would answer, "**In Kedushas Levi, I'm holding at this page, and in Shulchan Aruch, I'm up to this siman.**"

But, practically speaking, if we were all to approach Yom Tov this way, we'd be left without matzos for Pesach, and we would enter into serious questions of having *chametz* on Pesach. **The Ribbono shel Olam has clearly commanded us to prepare for Yom Tov by doing practical and material things.**

### The Contradiction Between the Two *Avodahs*

Thus, we are left with a very interesting situation. We have the concept that a *hachanah* for a mitzvah prepares a person to be present when doing the mitzvah, while at the same time we see that these very preparations tend to rob a person of the *yishuv hada'as* that he needs for that very presence.

How can we reconcile this reality? **How can we ensure that we will enjoy the upcoming Yom Tov in practice?** We're about to welcome the Yom Tov Pesach. We waited an entire year for this. It would be a terrible shame to lose out on the spirituality of the Yom Tov. Let us ensure that we will be there to enjoy it for everything that it offers us.

### Connecting to the Essence of Our Actions

#### The Ribbono shel Olam Wants Your Inner Thought

The simple answer to this question pertains not only to the *sugya* of pre-Yom Tov hassles; **it is one of the greatest principles and *yesodos* in Yiddishkeit in general!**

The answer is that the Ribbono shel Olam commanded us that when we learn Torah or perform mitzvos, **we should connect to the inner essence of what we are learning and doing.** In everything—in the Torah learning or in the mitzvos that we do—we are commanded connect to its essence, and not to follow the *yetzer hara*, who wishes for him to be involved in it only on a superficial level.

**This is the great commandment that lies at the heart of every aspect of *avodas Hashem*! And it is especially pertinent when it comes to the *avodah* of preparing for Yom Tov or for a mitzvah.**

### **The *Avodah* of Meditation**

When a person learns *sefarim hakedoshim* before a Yom Tov, he thereby connects with the essence of what the Ribbono shel Olam wants him to derive from this Yom Tov. He has prepared his heart and mind for the upcoming Yom Tov: **A Yom Tov of Pesach is coming up—a time when the Ribbono shel Olam took us out of Mitzrayim and demonstrated that He runs the world.** Then, when the Yom Tov finally arrives, the heart and mind are open to receiving that *aura* of *emunah*, a *clarity* in *emunah*, and a *strengthening* in *emunah*. He has connected to the essence of the Yom Tov.

When this person consumes the matzah, he will have in mind the essence of the mitzvah of matzah—**beyond the technicalities of the size of the matzah and the speed with which it must be eaten.** These things are crucial, of course; a *Yid* must fulfill every aspect as stated in the *Shulchan Aruch*. But this *Yid* is primarily consumed with connecting to the essence of the mitzvah that he's doing.

### **Having in Mind the Essence Connects Us to Hashem**

There are many levels to the *pnimiyus* of a mitzvah. But we're referring to **the simple meaning behind a mitzvah that the Ribbono shel Olam writes explicitly in the Torah—as this is what He wants us to think about this as we execute the mitzvah:** "I took you out of Mitzrayim, and I saved your soul. Now you have been instilled with incredible *kochos* because you're no longer under the *kelipah*. Even right now, you have the power of freedom! When you carry out these practical mitzvos, I want you to think about the depth behind these mitzvos."

Indeed, having in mind the reason for a mitzvah isn't *îdëá* by most mitzvos. The Bach tells us that only regarding three mitzvos is the *ka-vannah* of the reason *îdëá*; because the Torah tells us they are *in order that*

*you should remember (tzitzis) or in order than you should know (Sukkah). And thus, one is obligated to know the reason for the mitzvah.*

However, when a *Yid* thinks about the reason for a mitzvah and the meaning behind it, he attains an incredible connection to the Ribbono shel Olam: **The Ribbono shel Olam commanded me to do this, and I am now carrying out His command.** If one *doesn't* do so, he hinders his growth in the *kirvas Elokim* that he could attain through Torah and mitzvos. **The more we insist on thought and meditation in mitzvos, the closer we will thereby become to the Aibishter.**

### The Greatness of a Commandment

The *Sfas Emes* says in the name of his grandfather, the Chiddushei Harim, regarding the children of Aharon HaKohen who lost their lives as they brought *ketores* in the Mishkan: The *pasuk* says, ויקריבו לפני ה' *אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם*, and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them (Vayikra 10:1). Explained the Chiddushei Harim, in every mitzvah that we're commanded to do lies a *chiyus*, an animating force, from the commandment of Hashem. When we carry out the command of the Ribbono shel Olam, we become His emissaries to fulfill His wishes. This gives a *Yid* the *chiyus* to carry out the mitzvah.

The problem of Nadav and Avihu, explains the Gerrer Rebbe, was that they lacked the command of Hashem. It was *אשר לא צוה אותם*, and this is why they were consumed and were taken from This World. The actual act that they did was great and holy—they brought *ketores*, which is a tremendous *avodah*—but **they were unable to connect to the essence of the mitzvah, to the ratzon Hashem**, because there was no command for them to bring it.

### The *Chiyus* We Can Draw from the Essence

On a practical level, connecting with the essence of a mitzvah entails having in mind the following: “What am I about to do?! I am going to do something now—not because I have the desire to do it, but because I want to be a loyal servant to the Ribbono shel Olam and His Torah.

**The Aibishter commanded me, and therefore I will do it.” Nadav and Avihu lacked this, as we have noted.**

Concludes the Sfas Emes: We see from here that when a *Yid* fulfills a mitzvah that the Ribbono shel Olam commanded him to do, **he can attain tremendous *chiyus* from the command of Hashem.**

**If people can be taken from the world because there was *no command*, then we can surely be given life and *kirvas Elokim* when we meditate upon the fact that we’re carrying out the *ratzon Hashem*. This alone can give us the primary *chiyus*, as we think about the essence of the mitzvah.**

### **Fusing the Spiritual *Hachanah* with the Technical Preparation**

Now let us return to the *hachanos* of Yom Tov. It’s clear that when a person works to connect with the essence of the Yom Tov... he learns *sifrei Maharal* for Pesach... he meditates on the concepts and ideas of the Yom Tov... he learns the halachos of Pesach and the *mesechtos* about Pesach—this brings him into a *matzav* of Pesach. There is no question about it.

But, at the same time, we must know that **the Ribbono shel Olam commanded us to engage in practical preparations as a *hachanah* to Shabbos and Yom Tov.** And it is here that the *yetzer hara* catches a person... robbing him of his presence of mind as he goes about these preparations. The *Ba’al Davar* will do everything to ensure that a person doesn’t remember that **“I am now preparing for Yom Tov! I am now fulfilling a mitzvah d’Oraisa of ridding my home of chametz! I am now fulfilling the *ratzon Hashem*!”**

### **When We Lack *Pnimiyyus*, We Become Stressed**

If a person doesn’t meditate this way, he not only remains dry, he also becomes stressed and upset—as we see often that people become upset during these times. **The reason for this is that these people are connected only to the external aspects of the mitzvah.** They are now disconnected from the Ribbono shel Olam.

It's lamentable that some people think of this time of Pesach preparation as spring cleaning. The home must be organized once a year in any case, they say. **But with this way of thinking they lose the entire "neshamah" of the mitzvah**, and they can thus become nervous and stressed—because they left the Ribbono shel Olam out of their *hachanah*.

It's ironic that as we're engaged in a mitzvah, we would abandon the Ribbono shel Olam. But this is what sadly happens so often.

### Apply Your Heart and Mind

Sometimes, people think about the clothing that they purchased for Yom Tov, whether they got it for a good price, etc.—**their minds are 100 percent occupied with things that have nothing to do with the Ribbono shel Olam**. And it is all ostensibly "*l'kavod Yom Tov*." Such a person hasn't departed from the *Shulchan Aruch*, which exhorts us to purchase new clothing for ourselves and our family for Yom Tov. He did what he was supposed to! But **he is lacking the neshamah, and it's truly a shame!**

It's a shame, because there's so much enjoyment to be derived from a Yom Tov—and sometimes we deprive ourselves of this enjoyment when we go through the motions without thinking about the *pnimiyus*, the essence.

A *Yid* must constantly be present in what he's doing and remember that he's making a *hachanah* for the holy Yom Tov. This *Yid* does everything his wife asks him to do, he goes and he comes, he brings and he takes, and he takes care of everything he has to—but at the same time, he constantly remembers that **he's now preparing for Yom Tov**. He knows that this is the *ratzon Hashem*.

### So Many Mitzvos While Sitting in Traffic

Just as we know that by eating one tiny insect, *R"l*, one transgresses five or six *aveiros*, on the positive side, one can fulfill numerous great mitzvos by making his Yom Tov preparations!



As a person sits in heavy traffic in the lead-up to Yom Tov to make Yom Tov purchases and help his wife for Yom Tov, **he may be fulfilling three or four *mitzvos d'Oraisa*!** The first is that he is מקבל יסורים באהבה. He is also engaged in *chessed*! He is engaged in making a *hachanah* for a mitzvah! He is exhibiting *rachmanus*! **This person has a list of mitzvos that he's fulfilling**, but if he isn't connected to the essence, he becomes frazzled, nervous, and stressed.

As one goes about his Yom Tov preparations, a *Yid* should always remember two things: **Which** mitzvah I am doing, and **why** I am doing it. If we work to keep our mind about us, focused on these thoughts, then when Yom Tov arrives, **we will feel so elevated and warmed—*davka* due to our *hachanah* that we have engaged in.**

### Great Tzaddikim Engaged in Shabbos Preparations

The Gemara teaches us that the great Amoraim invested in Shabbos preparations. **Of course, they were *davuk* in Hashem with a great *deveikus* all the while.**

The tzaddikim of later generations were the same. The Rebbe Reb Elimelech, and others, would come into the kitchen on Erev Shabbos to salt the fish and engage in other preparations. As they did so, they had special *kavannos*, meditating on the *pnimiyus* of the great *avodah* in which they were engaged.

### It's the *Thought* That Counts

When a *Yid* is involved in all the practical *hachanos*, and he is present thereby, he can accomplish even more than learning *Maharal* for Pesach. Because he has taken the Maharal's holy and proper thoughts, and he has invested them into actions. This spiritually cleanses a person! **He arrives at the mitzvah purified and cleansed!** He doesn't simply fall into the Yom Tov.

This *Yid* hasn't changed anything in his actions themselves. He did everything that he needed to. **He only changed his thoughts. He understands that these preparations are an *avodah*—and he treats them as such.**

People prepare the Shabbos *licht*... they help in the kitchen... they run to and fro... and then they fall into Shabbos completely drained, because they were so preoccupied and scattered.

How bright and illuminated will our Shabbos and Yom Tov be if we only elevated our thoughts as we go about preparing for the mitzvos. They will surely be elevated to levels we could never have imagined—purely as a result of the *hachanah* that we make.

