

Va'eschanan 2013

1.

Loving Hashem with heart, soul and monetarily

Nachlas Tzvi pages 453-454

"You shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources." (6, 5)

"ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך."

Why is the pasuk instructing us to first love Hashem with our heart, then our soul and then our resources? The Mishna in Berachos (54a) explains that loving God with 'all your heart' is referring to loving God with your good and evil inclinations. Meaning, your good inclination should turn your evil inclination into good. Loving God with 'all your soul' refers to a person willing to sacrifice his life to sanctify God's name. (בכל לבבך בשני יצריך, ביצר טוב וביצר הרע. ובכל) The Gemara in Berachos (61b) relates the story of Rabbi Akiva who died while sanctifying God's name. The Romans decreed that the Jews were not allowed to learn Torah. Papas found Rebbe Akiva gathering Jews and teaching them Torah. He asked Rebbe Akiva 'aren't you afraid of teaching Torah?' Rebbe Akiva responded by means of a mashal (parable). Rebbe Akiva said that this is comparable to a fox that was walking by a river. He saw fish that were gathering together from place to place. The fox asked the fish 'from whom are you swimming away?' The fish responded 'from the fishermen who are trying to catch us.' The fox invited them ashore. He assured the fish that they would be safe. The fish questioned this 'welcoming invitation and offer'. They said **'if in the place where we get our life from, aka under water, we are in trouble, then surely out of our habitat, aka on land, we will be in severe danger.'** The same applies to our current situation. **If we are in danger when we are learning, then surely we will be in trouble when we aren't learning.** (תנו רבנן) פעם אחת גזרה מלכות הרשעה שלא יעסקו ישראל בתורה, בא פפוס בן יהודה ומצאו לרבי עקיבא שהיה מקהיל קהלות ברבים ועוסק בתורה. אמר ליה עקיבא, אי אתה מתירא מפני מלכות? אמר לו אמשול לך משל, למה הדבר דומה? לשועל שהיה מהלך על גב הנהר, וראה דגים שהיו מתקבצים ממקום למקום, אמר להם מפני מה אתם בורחים? אמרו לו מפני רשתות שמביאין עלינו בני אדם. אמר להם רצונכם שתעלו ליבשה, ונדור אני ואתם כשם שדרו אבותי עם אבותיכם? אמרו לו אתה הוא שאומרים עליך פקח שבחיות? לא פקח אתה, אלא טפש אתה! ומה במקום חיותנו אנו מתיראין, במקום מיתתנו על אחת כמה וכמה! אף אנחנו, עכשיו שאנו יושבים ועוסקים בתורה, שכתוב בה "כי הוא The Maharsha explains that the fox, an impure animal, represents the goyim (non-Jews). The fish represents the Jews. The fox, aka goyim, tried to get the fish, aka the Jews, out of the water of Torah. Water represents Torah as stated in Tanis (7a). The fish going and gathering symbolizes the Jews trying to go to a safe location in order to learn. The fisherman's nets refer to the decrees that the goyim decreed upon the Jews. פירוש המשל ונמשל השועל הם העובדי כוכבים שנמשלו לחיות טמאות. וראה דגים הם כלל ישראל) שנמשלו לדגים. ושהיו מתקבצים ממקום למקום היינו מקהיל קהלות ברבים. והרשתות הם הגזירות והשמדות שהיו The (מביאין עלינו בני אדם. ורצונכם שתעלו ליבשה דהיינו מתוך המים שהם משל לתורה ורצונכם לבטל תורת משה. The Gemara continues and says that they imprisoned Rebbe Akiva. They took Rebbe Akiva out of jail in order to kill him. It was the time of kriyas shema. They combed his flesh with metal combs. This was excruciatingly painful. Rebbe Akiva began to accept upon himself the yoke of heaven

by reciting shema. The talmidim (students) of Rabbi Akiva asked 'until here?' Rabbi Akiva responded 'my entire life I was pained over this pasuk. I thought to myself, when would I ever be able to fulfill this pasuk? Now that I am finally able to fulfill this pasuk, should I not fulfill it?' Rabbi Akiva intently recited the first pasuk of shema and then died. A heavenly voice yelled out 'you will merit heaven.' (אמרו לא היו ימים מועטים עד שתפסוהו לרבי עקיבא וחבשוהו בבית האסורים, ותפסו) (לפפוס בן יהודה וחבשוהו אצלו. אמר לו פפוס! מי הביאך לכאן? אמר ליה אשריך רבי עקיבא שנתפסת על דברי תורה, אוי לו לפפוס שנתפס על דברים בטלים. בשעה שהוציאו את רבי עקיבא להריגה זמן קריאת שמע היה, והיו סורקים את בשרו במסרקות של ברזל, והיה מקבל עליו עול מלכות שמים. אמרו לו תלמידיו רבינו, עד כאן? אמר להם כל ימי הייתי מצטער על פסוק זה "בכל נפשך" אפילו נוטל את נשמתך, אמרתי מתי יבא לידי ואקיימנו, ועכשיו שבא לידי לא אקיימנו? היה מאריך באחד עד שיצתה נשמתו באחד. יצתה בת קול ואמרה אשריך רבי עקיבא שיצאה נשמתך באחד. אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא זו תורה וזו שכרה? ממתים ידך ה' ממתים וגו'! אמר להם חלקם בחיים. (יצתה בת קול ואמרה אשריך רבי עקיבא שאתה מזומן לחיי העולם הבא.)

There is much to discuss regarding this fundamental, memorable, historic and inspiring event. **The question arises; why are the Jews compared to fish out of water as opposed to a peacock or hyena without air? Rabbi Mordechai Gifter ingeniously explains that while a fish is in water, it doesn't look so alive, even though the reality is that it is completely alive. Many times fish casually and slowly glide. Dissimilarly, when fish are removed from water they tend to shake around and move a lot, it looks like it's vibrant and completely alive, even though the reality is that it is dying. The same applies to people. Many people who are out of the water, aka the Torah, look alive. They go to prohibited places and are energetic. The reality is that they're dying.** This is precisely what the Gemara in Berachos (18) refers to when it says that wicked people are called dead even when they are alive and righteous people are called alive even when they are dead. (רשעים שבחייהן קרויין מתים). The Mishna in Avos (perek beis) states the more Torah one learned, the more life he has. (מרבה) Some people say 'take a break from learning, it's the summer. Get a life.' The response to these people is 'this is life. Torah is life!' The pasuk states 'it is a tree of life for those who grasp it. Similarly, we say in the second beracha before shema during maariv 'it is our life'. **Other animals differ in this regard. Meaning, when they have air they look alive and when they don't have air then they look like they're dying. This is true, when they have air they are actually living and when they don't have air then they are actually dying. The fish that look dead while they are in the water symbolize righteous people. Many times they look tired and dead so to say. This is only because they exert, utilize and save all of their energy to learn and perform mitzvos. The reality is that they are more alive than anyone else.** כתב באהל משה (רבי משה שיינערמאן) פרשת שמיני דף רמח, איתא בזבחים יג., הפורש ממך כפורש מן) החיים. כתב בהערה 99, רבי מרדכי גיפטר זצ"ל אמר נמשלו ישראל לדגים שבים מה דגים שבים כל חיותם במים כך ישראל כל חיותם הוא מכוח התורה. ללא תורה הם מתים. עומד אחד מן הצד ומביט בדגים הם שטים בניחותא במים, אך אם רק תוציא את הדג מן המים הוא קופץ ומשתולל הוא מנפנף בסנפיריו ובזנבו נראה שהוא מתחיל לחיות! אך באמת אין אלו סימני חיות אלא פרפורי הגסיסה שלו. אלו הלומדים בישיבה בעמל יום אחר יום לעתים נדמה להם ששם ברחוב יש חיים! שם משתוללים וחיים ונעים וזוים, והכל כל כך תוסס... אין אלו חיים, אלו פרפורי גסיסה שלהם... כדג המשתולל מחוץ למים. צריך לגלות את השקר להסיר את המכסה המטעה. Additionally, explains the Chafetz Chaim, water is a complete necessity for fish. So too, we need our water, aka the Torah. The Tana D'bei Eliyahu Zuta says that just as a one cannot survive without water after a certain period of time, such as a week, so too Jews cannot survive without Torah after a certain period of time.

The Eitz Yosef relates the true depth of the discussion between Rebbi Akiva and his talmidim. The talmidim witnessed how much Rebbi Akiva was attached to Hashem. Rebbi Akiva was so attached to Hashem that he didn't even feel any of the afflictions that befell him. They therefore asked him 'until here?' Meaning, please teach us, how did you get to such a lofty spiritual level? How could we get to such a level? Rebbi Akiva responded that he only merited attaining such a level by contemplating the pasuk of "You shall love Hashem, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your resources" his entire life. However, the contemplation of this pasuk was only a mere thought. He always anticipated when he would be able to apply this pasuk and put the ideals of this pasuk into action. Therefore, it isn't so difficult to attain the level he reached. Conversely, someone who suddenly wants to attain such a level without proper and seasoned contemplation will be unable to do so.

The Anaf Yosef asks a slew of questions. The words 'until here' could also be interpreted as the talmidim questioning the practice of Rebbi Akiva. Meaning, they were questioning the decision of Rebbi Akiva to die by sanctifying Hashem's name. Why were they questioning his decision to die and sanctify Hashem's name? Why is such a bizarre language of 'until here' being used? What is the explanation of the response of Rebbi Akiva? Many people would die and sanctify Hashem's name even without properly contemplating the depth of the pasuk? Since the Gemara says that he died after reciting the first pasuk of shema that implies that the entire conversation of Rebbi Akiva and his talmidim happened when he was in the middle of the first pasuk of shema. It is very weird that his talmidim were speaking with him during the first pasuk of shema. Furthermore, why is Rebbi Akiva interrupting in the middle of shema? The afflictions that they afflicted Rebbi Akiva with were even worse than death itself. Rebbi Akiva prayed that he will die specifically during shema in order that he would properly fulfill 'with all of your soul.' Even though the hardships would give him more reward in the next world based on the Mishna in Avos (end of fifth perek) which states according to the exertion will be the reward (לפום צערא אגרא), and therefore seemingly it would be more logical to suffer more and die later. Nevertheless Rebbi Akiva prayed that he would die when he would be in the midst of reciting shema, in order to properly fulfill 'with all of your soul.' The talmidim incorrectly concluded that Rebbi Akiva was weak and therefore unable to withstand the hardships. They didn't understand why Rebbi Akiva didn't want the afflictions. In response to that inaccurate thought process, Rebbi Akiva responded that he wanted to fulfill 'with all of your soul' properly, even at the expense of greater reward.

Loving God with "all your resources" refers to monetarily. **The pasuk is in this order to teach us the process of how we should love and serve Hashem. First one must conquer his evil inclination by loving God with 'all your heart' which will enable one to love God with 'all your soul' allowing us to sacrifice our life as Rabbi Akiva did. These two elements will motivate us to love God financially with 'all your resources'.** The order of the three aspects of this pasuk are absolutely necessary because if one would first love with your 'soul' or with your 'resources' then the evil inclination will try to entice and prevent him from loving God with 'all your heart' by convincing him that it is unwise to sacrifice one's life or give away money for the sake of Hashem. Therefore, loving God with 'all your heart' must precede, because it will neutralize and eliminate the evil inclination.

According to this why can't one fulfill 'with all of your soul' first? One will only truly and sincerely fulfill 'with all of your soul' if ones yeitzer tov (good inclination) conquers ones yeitzer

hara (bad inclination). One can give up his life, but if it's for the wrong reason then it's unproductive.

2.

Hashem and Torah vs parent, who wins?

Meiyna shel Torah page 37

“Honor your father and mother, as Hashem, your God commanded you.” (5, 16)

Why does the pasuk add and say “as Hashem, your God commanded you?” When the Ten Commandments were enumerated in parshas Yisro, the pasuk doesn't state “as Hashem, your God commanded you.” Why the difference? The Gemara (Yevamos 5a) says that a child shouldn't listen to his parents who tell him to violate Shabbos. The reason for this is; everyone is obligated to respect Hashem (כולכם חייבים בכבודי). A child is only obligated to respect his/her parents “like Hashem commanded you”, meaning, if it's in accordance to how Hashem commanded. This is why specifically here, explains the Kedushas Levi, the pasuk states “like Hashem commanded you.” Meaning, originally, in parshas Yisro, the entire Torah wasn't given yet. Conversely, now, in parshas Va'eschanan, when the entire Torah was given, the pasuk could say “like Hashem commanded you”, meaning, if it's according to proper Halacha.

Let's relate a less known, but yet fundamental case where this would apply. The Shulchan Aruch (yora daya siman 240 sif 25) states that one who wants to attend a certain Yeshiva where he knows he will have success because of a Rabbi there or another reason, but his father doesn't want him to attend that Yeshiva because they are afraid that that area is physically dangerous, the son does not need to listen to his parent. (תלמיד שרוצה ללכת למקום אחר, שהוא בוטח שיראה סימן ברכה, בתלמודו לפני הרב ששם, ואביו מוחה בו לפי שדואג שבאותה העיר העובדי כוכבים מעלילים, אינו צריך לשמוע לאביו בזה.) (The source of this Halacha is a Terumas Hadeshen siman 40. He explains that a good Rabbi/teacher is irreplaceable (שלא מן כל אדם זיכה ללמוד).)

Meaning, one could in fact listen and fulfill his parent's concern/instruction and not attend that Yeshiva. However, he doesn't need to listen to his parent. **He can halachically attend whatever Yeshiva he wants even against the will of his parent.** This is not considered a violation of kivud av v'eim (respecting one's parents). (As a side point; many people incorrectly think that kivud av v'eim necessitates children to do everything that their parents ask for. This is very far from true. For example if a parent instructs a child to jump off a fifty story building without a parachute; this child obviously shouldn't listen.)

The Pischay Teshuva (sif katan 22) quotes the Chamude Daniel who says that even if the son is doubtful whether he will have more spiritual success in this new Yeshiva or not, nevertheless it is permissible for him to attend.