

Chayus

A Shabbos Stimulus

ערב שבת
פרשת בהר-בחוקתי
כ"א אייר, ה'תשפ"ג
שנת הקהל

THE EDA AND DAVID SCHOTTENSTEIN EDITION

In Loving Memory of Itta bas Yosef Mordechai ז"ל and Tzvi Daniel ben David ז"ל Ainsworth

Dedicated by David & Eda Schottenstein

הקהל

Hakhel

Excerpt from **Hakhel: The Inside Story**

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How to Hakhel

Over the years, the Lubavitcher Rebbe provided numerous applications of *Hakhel* in our times. Here is a general outline of these *Hakhel* practices:

Getting Oneself Together: *Hakhel* has application within the person as an individual. First, the person is meant to reflect on the message of *Hakhel* and increase in their sense of Jewish togetherness, fear of G-d, and commitment to Torah and *mitzvos*. Second, within the person, there are opposing voices or tendencies. *Hakhel* within is defined by creating an inner sense of harmony between the various facets of personality to be unified in expressing the soul's internal submission to G-d Al-mighty.

Sharing *Hakhel*: When one imagines *Hakhel* taking place in the Temple and seeks to envision their own participation, it is only natural to think of oneself as just another person in the crowd. However, the Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that every Jew is also meant to view themselves as a king and envision *Hakhel* with themselves as the leader of the proceedings. One is meant to think: "If I were the king of Israel, and I was in charge of gathering the people and inspiring them, what would I do? What would I say?"

סיפור חסידי

Once Upon a Chasid

By Yanki Tauber

Published by **Kehot Publication Society**

The Prodigy Under The Bed

If a man make a singular vow, to give to G-d the estimated values of persons, then the estimation shall be as follows: For a male from twenty to sixty years old, the estimation shall be fifty shekels of silver (Bechukosai 27:2-3)

Rabbi Hillel of Paritch was one of the many great scholars of his day to join the Chabad chassidic movement. For many years, he was a devoted disciple and follower of the second and third rebbes of Chabad, Rabbi DovBer and Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch.

As a young man, Rabbi Hillel heard of the founder of Chabad chassidism, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi and sought to meet with him. But the opportunity seemed to forever elude the young prodigy: no sooner did he arrive in a town that Rabbi Schneur Zalman was visiting, that he was informed that the Rebbe had just left. Finally, he managed to locate Rabbi Schneur Zalman's lodgings before the Rebbe was due to arrive. In order to ensure that he would not, once again, somehow miss his opportunity, Rabbi Hil-

lel crept into Rabbi Schneur Zalman's appointed room and hid under the bed, determined, at last, to make the acquaintance of the great Rebbe.

In anticipation of his encounter with Rabbi Schneur Zalman, Rabbi Hillel had "armed" himself with some of his achievements in Talmudic study. At that time, the young scholar was studying the tractate Erchin, or "Appraisals," the section of the Talmud which deals with the laws of how to appraise the value of one's pledges to charity. Rabbi Hillel had an insightful question on the subject which he had diligently rehearsed in order to discuss it with the Rebbe.

From his hiding place, Rabbi Hillel heard the Rebbe enter the room. But before he could make a move, he heard Rabbi Schneur Zalman exclaim: "If a young man has a question regarding 'Appraisals,' he had best first evaluate himself."

The prodigy under the bed fainted on the spot. When he came to, Rabbi Schneur Zalman was gone...

Said the Lubavitcher Rebbe: How are we to apply this story to our lives?

The tractate of "Appraisals" discusses the laws presented in chapter 27 of Leviticus: if a person pledges to give to charity, but instead of citing a sum he says "I promise to give the value of this individual," we are to follow a fixed rate table set by the Torah, in which each age and gender group is assigned a certain "value."

But why employ a flat rate which lumps together so many diverse individuals? Should not an accomplished scholar be considered more valuable than a simple laborer? The Torah states that we all stand equally before G-d, "from your heads, the leaders of your tribes, your elders... to your wood choppers and water carriers." But can a person truly view his fellow as his equal when he is so obviously superior to him in talent and achievement?

This is the gist of Rabbi Schneur Zalman's remark: If you have a question regarding "Appraisals," if you find it difficult to relate to the Torah's evaluation of human worth, you had best take a long hard look at yourself. An honest appraisal of your own character and behavior will show how much you can learn from every man, how much there is for you to emulate in those who are supposedly 'inferior' to yourself.

אור תורה

Ohr Torah

Translated by: **Yechiel Krisch**

Adapted from the teachings of the **Mezritcher Maggid**

Exchanging Evil for Good

The Torah forbids reneging on a tithe, even if one wishes to exchange a designated animal for an equivalent offering. "And if he does exchange it, then [both] that one and its replacement are holy; it cannot be redeemed" (Vayikra 27:33).

Crass, evil urges are derived from misplaced love, which is, in turn, derived from the divine love that fell into the depths of impurity during the episode of The Broken Vessels. If we wish to repair this state of being, we must first deeply regret our love of evil things and be disgusted by our love of evil urges. We must then channel whatever love we have toward G-d, serving the Creator with love.

This constitutes an exchange—swapping evil urges for love of G-d and elevating love once clothed in rotten physicality upward toward divine service.

With this introduction, we can now understand the mystical underpinnings of the above verse. If one turns the mundane into holy by "exchanging" alien loves for the love of G-d, then לא יגאל ("it cannot be redeemed")—this act redeems negativity and rearranges the word לא ("cannot") into the divine name ל-א, which is associated with love.

The Great Shofar

The prophet Yeshayah proclaimed, “*It will occur on that day that He will sound the great shofar.*” Now, what difference does it make if the shofar is large or small? Rather, the shofar will not necessarily be great in physical dimensions, but in its effect.

According to the laws of Yovel, at the sounding on the shofar every Hebrew bondsman is freed and returns to his family, and landowners receives back their hereditary portions in the Holy Land. These actions involve distinct individuals—one is a landowner, the other a servant.

The great shofar of the redemption, by contrast, will secure both achievements for the very same individuals. Thus, the verse of the great shofar continues, “*And those who are lost in the land of Ashur will come, and those who are oppressed in the land of Egypt, to prostrate themselves to G-d on the Holy Mount, in Yerushalayim.*” The entire Jewish nation will be set free from exile and it will simultaneously receive its ancestral homeland.

Tzemach Dovid

לקוטי שיחות A Sicha

By: ProjectLikkuteiSichos.org
Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

The Reward of a Risk

The Mishnah: *Ben Bag Bag would say: “Delve and delve into it, for all is in it....” Ben Hei Hei would say, “according to the suffering is the reward” (Avos 5:21).*

The Question: At first glance, Ben Hei Hei seems to be saying that G-d will repay the strenuous effort expended by a person in their Divine service. But to pay one’s worker is expected and legally mandated. It is not a practice that is “beyond the letter of the law,” the kind of ethically advanced behavior we expect to see in Ethics of our Fathers. Even if a person provided a service that did not reap a profit for the owner or did not reach its objective—such as a doctor who failed to save a patient—still, the hirer must pay for the services rendered. Similarly, even if the Jew toiled to serve G-d but failed to complete the objective, he is still owed reward by the letter of the law.

What, then, is this statement doing in Ethics of our Fathers?

The Explanation: There is a scenario where the owner need not pay the laborer: If the laborer voluntarily takes upon himself a certain task, and in the process causes damage to the owner’s posses-

sion, the owner need not pay him for his effort.

Similarly, when a Jew commits to a lofty form of Divine service that is not mandated by halacha, but then fails to keep his vow and commitment, he has actually caused damage through his well-meaning effort. He expended strenuous effort—pledging to live up to a high standard—but caused damage by violating his oath. In this scenario, perhaps G-d will not reward him for his effort? This is the novelty of Ben Hei Hei’s teaching: G-d will reward the person for their toil, even if there are damaging results.

This is most pronounced in the case of the convert. The convert has no obligations to fulfill all the mitzvos of the Torah. When he or she voluntarily assumes those obligations, the convert is going far beyond the expectations G-d had for them. Yet, in doing so, the convert opens himself up to even more catastrophic failure, for if he sins he is now violating his obligations, while previously he had no such obligation.

This mishnah teaches, however, that G-d cherishes the efforts of the convert and rewards him or her for their dedication, no matter if there is some detriment.

This is why the author of this teaching is Ben Hei Hei, which alludes to his identity as a convert (the two letter “*hei*”s in his name referring to the letter hei that was added to the spiritual parents of all converts both to Avraham and Sarah). It was a convert who could appreciate most that drastic commitment carries risk, and that G-d rewards that commitment nonetheless.

This also explains the continuity from the previous clause, “Ben Bag Bag would say: ‘Delve and delve into it, for all is in it....’” Ben Bag Bag was also a convert, and in his teaching he is highlighting the infinite value in Torah study for its own sake. As a non-Jew, his obligations of Torah study were limited to what was relevant to his responsibilities as a No-ahide. Now that he has joined the Jewish people, he is able to study Torah for its own sake, to plumb its depths not just for the sake of practical knowledge.

Both statements, therefore, emerge from the awareness of the convert.

A Question of Perspective: The entire concept of Ethics of our Fathers, of there being an ethical standard beyond the Torah’s laws, exists only in our human perspective as recipients of the Torah. To us, there is mandated law, and a standard above the law we can strive toward. But from G-d’s perspective, humanity was only created to serve their Divine purpose, and so any behavior that enhances that service is seen as obligatory. This entire discussion of reward for toil in Divine service, then, exists only from our human perspective.

Therefore, the tractate opens with the statement, “Moshe received the Torah from Sinai,” to underscore that this is the tenor of the entire tractate—our human experience as receivers of Torah. This Mishnah, which is towards the end of the tractate, echoes this theme by focusing on reward for Divine service, a concept that only applies in our human reality as receivers of Torah.

Likkutei Sichos vol. 17, p. 387ff.

מורה שיעור לחת"ת ורמב"ם לשבת

Shabbos Chitas / Rambam Guide

| Book | Section |
|---------------------------|---|
| Chumash – Rashi* | Behar-Bechukosai, 7th Aliyah |
| Tehillim* | Chapters 106 – 107 |
| Tanya* | Likutei Amarim Chapter 50. ח"ו. עמ' 140 - עד עמ' 140 |
| Rambam – Sefer Hamitzvos* | Positive Mitzvah #10 and #5 |
| Rambam – One Chapter* | Sefer HaMada – Hilchos Yesodei Hatorah Chapter 9 |
| Rambam – Three Chapters** | Sefer Ahavah – Hilchos Krias Shema Chapter 3 – 4; Hilchos Tefillah U'Birkas Kohanim Chapter 1 |

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