



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת שמיני תשס"ה 5768

NATION OF TYCOONS

Many of us feel so harried by our day-to-day lives that we never have time to think.

The truth of the matter is that this perpetual state of busy-ness is a crying shame. If we would only take a minute to catch our breaths, we could recognize and appreciate the myriad blessings in our lives.

The *Yetzer Hara* is well aware of this fact, and does everything in his power to keep our lives incredibly hectic (*Mesilas Yesarim, ch. 2*). The *Yetzer Hara* despises when people engage in *hisbonenus* (reflection), because it always leads to a heightened awareness of Hashem and an increased commitment to His service. Consequently, the *Yetzer Hara* loads us down with chores and pressures to prevent us from thinking too much about the really important things in life.

Our job, in turn, is to attempt from time to time to temporarily shut out the drudgery, and to try to direct our thoughts to Hashem and His *mitzvos*.

This week's *parshah* affords us the opportunity to reflect for a moment on the obvious (but all too often overlooked) fact that Hashem is such a *gutter Tatte* (generous Father) to all of us.

The stark reality is that each one of us is a multi-trillionaire many times over, as is evidenced from the well-known Mishnah at the end of *Makkos* (3:16):

רבי חנניא בן עקשיא אומר, רצה הקדוש ברוך הוא לזכות את ישראל, לפיכך הרבה להם

תורה ומצוות, שנקאמר (ישעיה מב) ה' חפץ למען צדקו וגדיל תורה ונאדיר:

“R” Chananya ben Akashya says: Hashem desired to provide Yisrael with a lot of merit. Therefore, he supplied them with an abundance of Torah and *mitzvos*, as it states, ‘Hashem yearned for Yisrael to be righteous, so He granted them a voluminous and glorious Torah.’ (*Yeshayah 42:21*)”

NO, THANKS; I THINK I’LL PASS

As an example of the sentiment expressed by the Mishnah, the Rivan (*ibid. 23b*) refers to the section of our *parshah* which lists the foods forbidden as non-kosher (*Vayikra 11*). Amongst them we find such ‘delicacies’ as snakes, earthworms, and centipedes. Most people find this type of cuisine to be naturally repulsive. Why would the Torah need to go out of its way to expressly forbid such loathsome creatures?

The Rivan explains that that is precisely the point. True, people would naturally abstain from eating these things. Hashem, in His infinite goodness, attached Torah prohibitions to the consumption of these items. Now, when a Yid refrains from eating an aardvark--which is not too difficult--he receives infinite reward.

Let us keep in mind that *Chazal* tell us (*Avos 4:17*) that even the most miniscule ‘slice’ of reward in the Afterlife is infinitely more valuable and enjoyable than all of the pleasures of this world put together. This means that one accrues reward more valuable than all of the gold in Fort Knox multiplied by infinity for merely refraining from the consumption of

Dedicated in loving memory of
ישראל צבי בן חיים יהושע פאלק ע"ה
by his children, Marc and Debbi Frankel, Bala Cynwyd, PA

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
יענטא בלומא בת יעקב ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with no
relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her Neshamah.

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bats; and then all over again for hippos, gorillas, horned toads, etc. We haven't even touched upon the numerous *mitzvos* we fulfill on a regular basis such as *Tefillin*, *davening*, *chessed*, *tzedaka*, etc.!

THE BENEFITS OF LEARNING TORAH

Along similar lines, we can marvel at the astronomical reward opportunities that exist within the *mitzvah* of learning Torah. Fulfilling this *mitzvah* is equivalent to fulfilling all of the 613 *mitzvos* (*Mishnah Peah 1:1*). The Vilna Gaon (*Shenos Eliyahu, ibid.*) states that one can fulfill the *mitzvah* by learning even one word. Consequently, through each word of Torah one speaks, he fulfills another *mitzvah*; and each one of these *mitzvos* is commensurate to all of the *mitzvos* put together. The Chofetz Chaim (*Toras Habayis ch.2*) testifies that through deliberate experimentation using a timepiece, he was able to determine that the average individual speaks approximately 200 words per minute.

The mathematics speaks for itself. Let us say, for example, that a person sits down to learn for 1 hour. That's 60 minutes x 200 wpm, or 12,000 words, which is 12,000 *mitzvos*. Since every one of these *mitzvos* is equal to all of the commandments, he has fulfilled the equivalent of 12,000 x 613 *mitzvos*, which is 7,356,000 *mitzvos*. If he keeps at it for an entire year, that would amount to 365 x 7,356,000 = 2,684,940,000 *mitzvos*. Imagine how much he would earn if he learned many hours per day, for many years! That's a nice amount of *s'char*.

(Of course, a higher level of performing *mitzvos* is to serve Hashem *lishmah*— for purely altruistic reasons, without thought to the reward. However, attaining such a level requires years of intense toil [cf. *Rambam Hilchos Teshuvah ch. 10*]. In the meantime,

Chazal counsel us to learn Torah and engage in *mitzvos* even without purely *lishmah* intentions, since doing so will eventually lead a person to the ultimate *madreigah* of *lishmah* [referenced in *Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 246:20*].

By studying these examples for a few moments, we can be almost overwhelmed by Hashem's goodness to His people and His desire to bestow blessing upon them. With little or even close to zero effort, every Yid is practically assured of immense eternal bliss beyond his wildest dreams.

One word of caution: there does exist a possibility of forfeiting all of one's accrued *s'char* in a mere instant. Next week, *Im Yirtzeh Hashem*, we will identify this potential pitfall, and discuss ways to prevent its occurrence and protect one's eternal investment.

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