



Major Makeover

"Im bechukotai teleichu ve'et mitzvotai tishmiru ve'asitem otam - If you follow my laws and keep my mitzvot and perform them..." (Vayikra 26:3) This is the prerequisite to receiving the beautiful rewards of enjoyment and tranquility promised by Hashem. The Midrash notes the redundancy in the verse and comments on the curious choice of the words *"ve'asitem otam"*, drawn from the root word *"asah* – to make". The sages thus said that if one follows the Torah, G-d will consider it as if he himself has "made" the mitzvah. Another interpretation offered by the Midrash is that Hashem will consider one who does the mitzvot to have "made" himself. What is the Midrash trying to teach us with these exegetical comments?

The Tosher Rebbe in *Avodat Avodah* comments on the Midrash - how is it possible for us to deserve any credit for doing mitzvot? Hashem gives us a house, only then can we put up a mezuzah. Hashem gives us a child; only then can we perform a bris. Every opportunity to

do a mitzvah is G-d given, what do we do that is deserving of reward? Thus, says the Tosher Rebbe, the only mitzvot we can take credit for are those that we "initiate." Meaning, that a person takes a non-mitzvah activity and elevates it to serve Hashem. When a person eats with the intention of serving Hashem, he has transformed that moment and created a spiritual connection. We know that when Hashem created the world, He did not send down rain until man was present to work the land. Rain, *geshem*, is a metaphor for *gashmiut*, the physicality of this world. Material matter is only worthy of being in this world if man can transform it into something sublime.

How do we understand that if one keeps Torah and mitzvot, he is considered to have "made himself?" Rav Reiss in *Me'rosh Tzurim* explains that Torah directs our actions and perspectives so we become more spiritual and elevated. Torah laws guide us how to speak, think, and even

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how to feel towards others. When one allows his Divine image to dominate his every activity and response, he becomes a king over his inner world; his self-control “makes” him who he is. Hence, the great variety of mitzvot are not to be viewed as a burden imposed upon us from Above, rather, they serve as repetitive practice to ensure that our spiritual selves govern our decisions and choices.

Consequently, Rav Scheinerman in *Ohel Moshe* explains Dovid Hamelech’s impassioned words, “*tzama lecha nafshi, kama lecha be’sari* - my soul yearns for You, my flesh pines for You” (*Tehillim* 63;3). Clearly, it is not surprising that one’s soul would yearn for Hashem, but for the physical body to yearn for Hashem... that can only come from the transformative nature of living a Torah life. With the focused practice of Torah and mitzvot we indeed can revolutionize ourselves, reaching more exalted, loftier dimensions.

The defining factor, says Rav Weissblum, is feeling a sweetness in learning Torah. When one feels the joy and pleasantness of Torah, he can be assured that Torah’s Divine impact and influence will find its mark. ■

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