



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Ki Seitzei* | Sichah 1

*and Siyum of Tractate Chullin

Rethinking Reward

Translated by Rabbi Eli Block

General Editor: Rabbi Eliezer Robbins | Copy Editor: Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Content Editor: Rabbi Sholom Zirkind

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Considerable effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time maintaining readability. The translation, however, carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

A TRAGIC CLIMB

At the conclusion of tractate *Chullin*, the *Talmud* says:¹

The school of Rabbi Yaakov taught: There is not a single *mitzvah* in the Torah whose reward is stated alongside it, which is not dependent on {a belief in} the resurrection of the dead {i.e., the reward is actually bestowed in the World to Come, after the resurrection of the dead}. With regard to honoring one's father and mother, it says: "So that you will live long, and so that it will be good for you."² Regarding sending the mother bird from the nest, it says: "So that it will be good for you, and you will live long."³ Now suppose there was one whose father said to him: "Climb to the top of the building and bring me fledglings," and he climbed to the top of the building, sent away the mother bird, and took the offspring, but as he returned he fell and died. Where is his {promised} long life? And where is his good? Rather, the verse, "so that you will live long" refers to the world that is entirely long, and, "that it will be good for you" refers to the world where all is good. But perhaps this incident described by Rabbi Ya'akov never occurred? Rabbi Ya'akov himself saw an incident {of this kind}.... Rather {one must conclude that} there is no reward for performance of *mitzvos* in this world.

Simply understood, Rabbi Yaakov disagrees with the preceding unattributed *Mishnah*, which says:

If regarding an easy *mitzvah* {sending away the mother bird}, which entails a loss of no more than an *issar* {a small coin}, the Torah says: "so that it will be good for you, and you will live long," how much more so regarding the Torah's difficult *mitzvos*!⁴

¹ *Chullin* 142a.; *Kiddushin* 39b.

² *Devarim* 5:16.

³ *Devarim* 22:7.

⁴ *Chullin*, *ibid.*

Seemingly, the *Mishnah* understands the promise, “that it will be good for you, and you will live long” to refer to this world.

This position is also explicit in an unattributed *Mishnah* at the beginning of tractate *Peah*:⁵

These are the things for which a person enjoys the fruits in **this world** while the principal remains for him in the World to Come: Honoring one’s father and mother; performing righteous deeds; and bringing peace between a person and his fellow.

Rambam, however, rules in accordance with Rabbi Yaakov {and does not rule like the unattributed *Mishnah*.}⁶

The good that is hidden for the righteous is the life of the World to Come. This is a life not accompanied by death, and good which is not accompanied by evil. The Torah alludes to this by saying, “So that it will be good for you and you will live long.” The oral tradition explains: “So that it will be good for you” — in the world that is entirely good; “and you will live long” — in the world that is entirely long.”

In the next chapter, as well, *Rambam* says:

The reward for the *mitzvos* and the good that we will merit if we observe the path of Hashem as prescribed by the Torah is the life of the World to Come as it says,⁷ “So that it will be good for you and you will live long.”⁸

We need to clarify: {Generally, the *halachah* is in accordance with an unattributed *Mishnah*.} Why did *Rambam* rule in accordance with Rabbi

⁵ 1:1.

⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” 8:1.

⁷ {*Devarim* 22:7.}

⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” 9:1.

Yaakov and not in accordance with the unattributed *Mishnayos* in *Chullin* and *Peah*?

2.

A PUZZLING RAMBAM

Rambam continues:⁹

Since the reward for the *mitzvos*... is life in the World to Come..., what is the meaning of the statements made throughout the entire Torah: “If you observe {the *mitzvos*}, you will acquire such and such”; “If you do not observe {the *mitzvos*}, such and such will happen to you?” All of these are matters concerning this {material} world, for example, satiation and famine, war and peace, {independent} sovereignty and lowliness, settling the land and exile, success in one’s deeds or loss, and all the other points mentioned in the Covenant.

{In resolution, we must say that} all of these statements are true. They have been realized in the past and will be realized in the future. When we fulfill all the *mitzvos* in the Torah, we will acquire all the benefits of this world. When we transgress them, the negative elements written in the Torah will occur.

Nevertheless, these benefits are not the ultimate reward for the *mitzvos*, nor are those negative elements the ultimate retribution to be exacted from someone who transgresses all of the *mitzvos*.

Rather, the resolution of the matter is as follows: Hashem gave us this Torah which is a tree of life. Whoever fulfills everything that is written in it and comprehends it with complete and proper knowledge will merit the life of the World to Come. A person merits {a portion of

⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 9, par. 1.

the World to Come} according to the magnitude of his deeds and the extent of his knowledge.

{Additionally,} we are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill the Torah with joy and good spirit, and meditate on its wisdom at all times, Hashem will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, for example, sickness, war, famine, and the like.

Similarly, He will grant us all the good which will reinforce our performance of the Torah, such as satiation, peace, and an abundance of silver and gold, in order that we not be involved throughout all our days in matters required by the body, but rather, will sit unburdened and {thus, have the opportunity to} study wisdom and perform *mitzvos* in order that we will merit the life of the World to Come.

Now, since regardless, we must understand all the benefits promised in the Torah as referring to reward in this world, why not interpret the promise, “that it will be good for you and you will live long” in the same {literal} manner?

Maharsha explains:¹⁰

Do not challenge this {Rabbi Yaakov’s stance} based on all the Torah’s promises that can only be explained as referring to this world — that if you obey Hashem, all the blessings and good will come upon you and you will inhabit your land; and conversely, if you disobey Hashem, all the curses will come upon you and you will be driven from the land. For we can say that Rabbi Yaakov agrees that the merit of the multitudes and their good deeds brings upon them all the blessings and good mentioned in the Torah *in this world* as well... Rather, Rabbi Yaakov only stated his position {that there is no reward for *mitzvos* in this world} regarding an individual.

¹⁰ *Chiddushei Aggados, Kiddushin* 39b.

However, *Rambam* does not differentiate between a multitude and an individual.

We also need to clarify: Why does *Rambam* cite only the verse regarding the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird, “so that it will be good for you and you will live long,” but does not also the earlier verse regarding honoring parents as the *Beraisa* (of Rabbi Yaakov) does, “so that you will live long and so that it will be good for you”?

3.

PROBING THE PROOF

This will be understood by prefacing with a question:¹¹ Why does Rabbi Yaakov need to bring a proof that “there is no reward for the performance of *mitzvos* in this world” regarding both the *mitzvos* of honoring parents and sending away the mother bird? Would it not have sufficed for him to have proven his viewpoint using one of these *mitzvos*?

Even though Rabbi Yaakov witnessed an incident of a son fulfilling both these *mitzvos*, we can also question this: Why is it necessary to emphasize in this story that the son fulfilled both *mitzvos*? If the story only mentioned that he fulfilled the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird, it would also serve as evidence that “there is no reward for performance of *mitzvos* in this world.”

Conversely, we can challenge this proof brought from the story of the son fulfilling both *mitzvos*: Perhaps the son did not have the intention to fulfill these *mitzvos* when he performed them, and that is why he did not receive reward.

¹¹ See *Hamakneh, Kiddushin ad loc.*

Even according to those authorities who maintain that “*mitzvos* do not require intent,”¹² this only means that when one performs a *mitzvah* without intent, the *mitzvah* is still valid. However, if a person has the opposite intention — that his action should **not** fulfill the *mitzvah* — then he will not fulfil his obligation.¹³ Now, since it is possible that the son had the opposite intention — he had actively intended not to fulfill the *mitzvos* of honoring parents and sending away a mother bird {even as he performed these *mitzvos*} — there is no definitive proof from this story.

4.

A STRANGE SEGUE

The last *mishnah* in tractate *Chullin* reads:¹⁴

A person may not take a mother bird with the offspring even {if he takes the mother} to purify a *metzora*.¹⁵ And if regarding an easy *mitzvah* {sending away the mother bird}, which entails a loss of no more than an *issar* {a small coin}, the Torah says, “so that it will be good for you, and you will live long,” how much more so is this true regarding fulfillment of the Torah’s difficult *mitzvos*!

A well-known question:¹⁶ What is the connection between the *Mishnah*’s two clauses? One is a law concerning sending away the mother bird, the other is a statement concerning the great reward for *mitzvah* observance!

We cannot suggest that the *Mishnah* only includes a statement about reward in order to conclude the tractate with a positive message (and not

¹² *Sdei Chemed, Maareches Mem, Klal 61 ff; Shulchan Aruch Admor Hazaken {Orach Chaim}*, at the conclusion of section 65, “the law follows the first opinion” that biblical *mitzvos* do require intent.

¹³ *Rabbeinu Shmuel and Ri*, as cited in *Beis Yosef, “Orach Chaim,”* end of sec. 589; *Tosfos*, s.v. “over,” *Sukkah* 39a.

¹⁴ *Chullin* 142a.

¹⁵ {A *metzora* is a person afflicted with *tzaraas*, a spiritual affliction with physical symptoms, affecting the skin.

¹⁶ See *Tzlach, Chassam Sofer*, and *Lev Aryeh*, ad loc.

with the phrase, “to purify a *metzora*”). Because if this were the case, it {the second clause} did not need to be included in the same *mishnah*¹⁷ {it could have been recorded as a separate *mishnah*}, and certainly not with a conjunctive “and if...” .

We must also understand: If, according to the *Mishnah*, we deduce the reward of all other *mitzvos* by way of a *kal vachomer*¹⁸ from the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird, why, then, does the Torah need to write the reward, “you will live long,” regarding honoring parents (which is one of the more difficult *mitzvos* in the Torah)?¹⁹

5.

COMPETING COMPASSIONS

The explanation of all this {the connection between the *Mishnah*'s two clauses} is:

The Talmud derives the law that “A person may not take a mother bird with the offspring even {if he takes the mother} to purify a *metzora*,” from the verse’s use of a double verb construct, “you shall surely send away²⁰ (*shalei’ach teshalach*)”:²¹

We have derived that the obligation to send away the mother bird only applies when one wishes to keep it for a discretionary purpose {e.g., to eat it}. From where do we derive {that one must send away the mother even if one needs it} for a *mitzvah* {e.g., the purification of a *metzora*}? The verse states: “surely send — *teshalach*” {to teach that one must send away the mother bird} in every case.

¹⁷ The division of the *mishnayos* is precise and is *halachically* relevant. (See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, p. 1175). Note that *Meiri* says that this {second clause, beginning “and if regarding an easy *mitzvah*”} is an independent *mishnah* — “the sixth *mishnah*.”

¹⁸ {A form of logical argument sometimes referred to by its Latin name, “*a fortiori*.” See fn. 28.}

¹⁹ “The most difficult of all the difficult *mitzvos*,” *Jerusalem Talmud*, “*Pe’ah*,” 1:5; *Devarim Rabbah*, ch. 6, par. 2; *Tanchuma*, “*Eikev*,” sec. 2; *Pesikta Rabbasi*, ch. 23.

²⁰ {*Devarim* 22:7.}

²¹ *Chullin* 141a.

The *Talmud* then establishes that the scenario of the *Mishnah* is one in which:

One took the mother bird in order to send her away {immediately}. In such a case, a negative *mitzvah* has not been violated²² {as one intends to send it away}, but there is still a positive *mitzvah* to send it away.... — It might be thought that since the Master said, “great is peace between a man and his wife...,” and regarding this *metzora*, since as long as he is not purified he is prohibited from engaging in marital relations... perhaps you will say that since he is prohibited from engaging in marital relations, let the positive *mitzvah* of purification come and override the positive *mitzvah* of sending the mother bird from the nest. We are taught otherwise {i.e., the word “*teshalach*” teaches us that even so, one may not take the mother bird}.

Even though this law is derived from a verse, this does not mean that it is one of the minority of *mitzvos* classified as *chukim* — Scriptural decrees {without reason}. Rather, there is reasoning behind this *mitzvah*.

The *Mishnah* says: “One who prays, ‘Just as Your mercy is extended to a bird’s nest {so, too, extend Your mercy to us}’ is silenced.”²³ This implies that sending away the mother bird is dictated by human logic and compassion, but we cannot assert that this is the **entire** and primary rationale behind this *mitzvah*. “For doing so would imply”, explains the *Gemara*, “that Hashem’s *mitzvos*²⁴ are {essentially} expressions of mercy, whereas, in fact, they are nothing but decrees.” Indeed, we find many commentaries who explain that the rationale for sending away the mother bird is based on compassion {in some way}.²⁵ Now, purifying a *metzora* is also a *mitzvah* that relates to compassion for people. (“Great is peace

²² {If a negative *mitzvah* had also been violated, a positive *mitzvah* does not supersede both a positive and a negative *mitzvah*.}

²³ *Berachos* 33b.

²⁴ {In the original Hebrew, “*midosov*”; lit. “His attributes.” But Rashi, *ad loc*, interprets this term as denoting His *mitzvos*. See there.}

²⁵ *Moreh Nevuchim* vol. 3, ch. 48. *Ramban, Devarim ad loc. Chinuch, mitzvah* 545.

between a man and his wife, as the Torah said that the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, which is written in sanctity, shall be erased on the waters... and this *metzora*... is prohibited from engaging in marital relations.”) When these two *mitzvos* conflict, the law should prioritize compassion for a human being over compassion for an animal. How much more so when we consider that the laws prohibiting inflicting pain on an animal are waived when there is a human benefit. “And it goes without saying that we are not concerned for an animal’s pain when it conflicts with human dignity; for example, if the person is a wise man or a sage.”²⁶ {We should permit him to use the mother bird to purify a *metzora*} especially considering that he will also fulfill the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird later {in the process²⁷ of the *metzora*’s purification}.)

Thus, the verse emphasizes that we must **immediately** fulfill the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird. And the reason for this is similar the *Talmud*’s reasoning regarding the *mitzvah* of assisting someone struggling with {loading and} unloading their animal:²⁸

*You shall help repeatedly with him*²⁹ — If a friend’s animal collapses and the friend needs assistance unloading its burden, and an antagonist needs assistance to load a burden on his animal, the *mitzvah* is to {first} assist the antagonist, in order to subjugate one’s inclination.”³⁰

Similarly (particularly according to those opinions that an animal of one’s antagonist is prioritized even if one’s ill-will towards the antagonist is mandated by Torah), in our scenario, “in order to subjugate one’s

²⁶ {Since this is beneath the dignity of a sage to unload animals, he is exempt from this obligation, even though the animal is suffering.} *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Ovrei Derachim VeTzaar Baalei Chayim*,” par. 5; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Rotzeach*,” ch. 13, par. 3; *Tur*, “*Choshen Mishpat*,” ch. 272, sec. 3.

²⁷ {Because one of the two birds used in the process of purifying the *metzora* is sent away.}

²⁸ *Bava Metzia* 32b.

²⁹ {*Shemos* 23:5.}

³⁰ Even though that when he is equally close with the two people needing assistance, the *mitzvah* is to first help unload the animal on account of the animal’s suffering, and then afterward, go ahead and help to load the other person’s animal.

inclination,” our trait of compassion {toward human beings} must be suppressed, and the mother bird is sent away immediately.

Accordingly, we can understand the *Mishnah’s kal vachomer*:³¹ The *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird is dictated by human reason and compassion. Therefore, “if regarding an easy *mitzvah* which entails a loss of no more than an *issar* [the “easiness” being not only the financial insignificance,³² but the resonance of the *mitzvah* and its agreeability with the human mind], the Torah says: “so that it will be good for you, and you will live long,” how much more so regarding the Torah’s difficult *mitzvos*” meaning, those *mitzvos* to which human reason and emotion do not impel a person to keep. Surely the reward “that it will be good for you, and you will live long” is given for these *mitzvos*.

6.

MORE THAN MERE COMPASSION

{Even though the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird has some element of rationality} in the end, the conclusion that “one may not take the mother bird... to purify a *metzora*” proves that it is not similar to those *mitzvos* between a person and his fellow.³³ ({In our case,} however, the beneficiary would not be one’s “fellow,” but rather, the mother bird. Therefore, it is not exactly analogous to a *mitzvah* regarding a fellow person.) Because when it comes to a *mitzvah* between a person and his fellow, intentions are not important; all that matters is that the person benefits from the action. If the sole purpose of sending away the mother bird was for the benefit of the “mother” {like the interpersonal *mitzvos* that are solely concerned with outcomes}, then the human concern of {compassion for} the *metzora* would outweigh our concern for the mother bird. Bringing peace between a man and his wife overrides our concern for

³¹ {Lit., “light and heavy,” *kal vachomer* is a *talmudic* logical proof, whereby a strict ruling in a lenient case demands a similarly strict ruling in a more stringent case; alternatively, a lenient ruling in stringent case demands a similarly lenient ruling in a lenient case.}

³² Some *mitzvos* cost even less - See *Sifrei* at the conclusion of our *parshah* - or nothing at all.

³³ *Kiddushin* 40a.

the mother bird. {Rather, the reason for the *mitzvah* of sending away the mother bird is more than mere concern for the bird; it is a *mitzvah* between a person and Hashem. Therefore, we send away the mother even if a *metzora* needs the bird.}

In light of this, we can understand why the *Mishnah* placed the *kal vachomer* regarding reward after the law of the *metzora*. By doing so, the *Mishnah* implies that the reward, “it will be good for you and you will live long,” which was said regarding sending away the mother bird, is not the same reward as that recorded in tractate *Pe’ah*, “a person enjoys the fruits in **this world** while the principal remains for him in the World to Come.” The *mitzvos* in this *mishnah* in *Pe’ah* are all between a person and his fellow. Because one’s fellow receives a benefit in this world, the person who performed the *mitzvah* receives a reward in this world.

Sending away the mother bird, however, is not a (purely) utilitarian *mitzvah*, as evidenced by the fact that we do not take the mother bird even to purify a *metzora*. The value of the *mitzvah* is the action itself not its outcome. This qualifies it then as a *mitzvah* between a person and Hashem. Therefore, the reward, “that it will be good for you and so that you will live long,” said regarding this *mitzvah*, means, “in the World to Come.”

Thus, this reward has no relevance to the reward for honoring parents, “so that you will live long and so that it will be good for you,” because honoring parents is a *mitzvah* between a person and his fellow, the fruits of which (i.e., the reward) he enjoys in this world.

7.

CLARIFYING RABBI YAAKOV'S PROOF

In connection with this, the *Talmud* continues with Rabbi Yaakov’s proof that there is no reward for the performance of *mitzvos* in this world from the story of the son who died after fulfilling two *mitzvos* — sending away a mother bird and honoring his parents. The proof here is specifically

from the act of honoring his parents, because this is a *mitzvah* between a person and his fellow {the reward for which should be seen in this world.} The fact that the son died proves that “there is no reward for the performance of *mitzvos* in this world.”

Concerning sending away the mother bird, however, because it is a *mitzvah* between a person and Hashem, what matters primarily is {not the outcome but} the actual performance of the deed {for Hashem’s sake.} If a person has the opposite intention (the intention **not** to do the *mitzvah*), he is not considered to have fulfilled the *mitzvah*. Therefore, the death of the son, while sending away the mother bird, does not (by itself) prove that “there is no reward... in this world,” because it is possible that he had harbored the opposite intention.

Honoring parents, though, is a *mitzvah* between a person and his fellow. The outcome, that the father receives the fledglings, is of (primary) relevance, not the {accompanying} intention when performing the deed. As we find (in *Sifrei* on our *parshah*) regarding the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*:³⁴

If a person loses a coin and a pauper finds and sustains himself from it, Scripture considers this as a merit for him.... Now, a person who did not intend to give *tzedakah* is still considered to have merit; how much more so {does one receive merit} if he intended to give *tzedakah*.

When a person loses a coin, not only does he not intend to give *tzedakah*, he is actually pained by the loss. All the same, he fulfills a *mitzvah* because the purpose of the *mitzvah* — that the pauper receives support — is achieved.³⁵

Similarly regarding honoring parents: Because the father wanted the fledglings, the son’s intention was irrelevant, as long as the fledglings were brought.

³⁴ *Sifrei* 24:19.

³⁵ See *Kli Chemda, Devarim* 25:26, sec. 5; *Asvan DeOraisa, klal* 23.

It is thus understood that the son's death while fulfilling the *mitzvah* of honoring his parents is the primary proof that “there is no reward for the performance of *mitzvos* in this world.” Therefore, we must say that this is true not only regarding *mitzvos* between a person and Hashem, but also regarding *mitzvos* between a person and his fellow.

8.

CLARIFYING RAMBAM'S POSITION

Based on the above, we can suggest that Rambam *does* rule in accordance with the *Mishnah* in *Chullin* and the unattributed *Mishnah* in *Pe'ah* concerning *mitzvos* between a person and his fellow. Reward for these *mitzvos* is indeed seen in this world. But regarding other *mitzvos*, *Rambam* maintains that “so that it will be good for you” {will be fulfilled} – in the world that is entirely good; “and you will live long” – in the world that is entirely long.”

This is why he does not cite the verse detailing the reward for honoring parents, “so that you will live long and so that it will be good for you.” Because this is a *mitzvah* between a person and his fellow, and even *Rambam* maintains that reward **is** given for such *mitzvos* in this world.³⁶

This does not contradict his assertion that “the reward for the *mitzvos* and the good that we will merit if we observe the path of Hashem as prescribed by the Torah is the life of the World to Come.” For the essential reward is in the World to Come (“the principal remains {for him} in the World to Come”). *Rambam* and the *Mishnah* can thus agree with the statement, “There is no reward for the performance of *mitzvos* in this world,” because the true, essential reward awaits a person only in the World to Come. The disagreement concerns only the “fruit” of the reward which grows from the principal reward in the World to Come. According to the

³⁶ Even though *Rambam* does not cite this *Mishnah* in the form of a prescribed law, he does include it in the liturgical sections in his {legal} work, the *Mishneh Torah*.

Mishnah and *Rambam*, the “fruits” of the *mitzvos* between a person and his fellow are present in this world.

[This is also the position of the *Alter Rebbe*, as he writes in *chassidic* vernacular:

This is the meaning of the teaching of our Sages, “There is no reward for *mitzvos* in this world.” For in this world, which is physical and limited... it is impossible that any reflection of the *Ein Sof* {infinite} *light* should become invested... {nonetheless,} through the practice of *tzedakah* and deeds of kindness, whose fruits man enjoys in this world, there appear, metaphorically speaking, gaps in the supernal garment... Through these {gaps}, light and abundance are irradiated and diffused, so that from {the *sefirah* of} “*chesed* {which is} the right arm” comes longevity in this physical world....^{37]}

According to Rabbi Yaakov {however}, there is no reward in this world even for *mitzvos* between a person and his fellow.

9.

PAYMENT AND PREREQUISITES

The above discussion only applies to **reward** for *mitzvos* — reward (an ancillary outcome) **due to** a person because of his *mitzvah* performance. The promises the Torah makes {regarding prosperity} in this world, however, are not a distinct reward or payment. Rather, they are interrelated with the very command to perform *mitzvos*. For example, when a person acquires a servant, the master must provide the servant with all his needs so that he can carry out the work expected of him.³⁸

³⁷ *Tanya*, “*Iggeres Hakodesh*,” ch. 3.

³⁸ See *Abarbanel*, beginning of *Parshas Bechukosai*, “The first answer”; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 29, p. 140 ff.

And when the servant wants to become more productive, his master gives the servant more and more so that he can complete the additional work.

None of this constitutes **reward** (given **afterward**) for his work. It is more of a preparation, a **prerequisite** enabling his work.

So, too, regarding the Jewish people. Because “Hashem gave us this Torah which is a tree of life...,” “we are promised by the Torah that if we fulfill the Torah with joy and good spirit, and meditate on its wisdom at all times, Hashem will remove all the obstacles which prevent us from fulfilling it, for example, sickness, war, famine, and the like. Similarly, He will grant us all the good... and we will sit unburdened and **study** wisdom **and perform** *mitzvos*.” And the opposite is true as well.

This is not ancillary to our work; it is a necessity, so to speak, stemming from the obligation to study Torah and observe *mitzvos*. And this is equally true of **all** *mitzvos*, for the same rationale applies to all of them.

This is also the practical difference between reward for *mitzvos* and the Torah's promises of material good: The promises in the Torah are regarding the necessities that allow us to perform the *mitzvos* — such as removing famine, ensuring peace, self-governance,³⁹ settlement in the land, and success.

The reward that Hashem gives, however, is incomparable; it is above and beyond our needs.

³⁹ {In the original Hebrew, “*malchus*.”}

10.

A COMPLETED LIFE

Based on the above, it is also understood that the story of the son who “fell and died” does not contradict the promises of material good in the Torah.

As long as a Jew lives and is obligated to study Torah and perform *mitzvos*, Hashem is, so to speak, required to provide him with every material benefit so that he will be free to “study wisdom and perform *mitzvos*.”

When his Divinely allotted time to live and perform *mitzvos* comes to an end, however, the promise of material good need not extend the person’s life {because those guarantees only pertain to one living in the world.}

The son’s death does not contradict the promise of material good because his lifetime of service had concluded.

His death does prove, however, that **reward** (an ancillary outcome) of a *mitzvah* (and even for the “fruit” of a *mitzvah*) does not exist in this world. According to Rabbi Yaakov, this means there is no reward for the performance of **any** *mitzvos* in this world; according to Rambam, there is no reward in this world for *mitzvos* between a person and Hashem.

11.

ELEVATING THE ANIMAL

A homiletic explanation: Tractate *Chullin* {which means “mundane” and which discusses the laws of slaughtering animals and birds for consumption} is part of *Seder Kodashim* — the Order of Sacred Items. The lesson from this linkage is, as we have often explained, that even the “mundane” elements of a Jew’s life are “sacred” (in comparison with the rest of the world).

The way in which this is expressed is alluded to at the beginning and at the conclusion of this tractate.

The tractate begins by saying, “Everyone is fit to slaughter.” (Indeed, the tractate is often called, “Slaughtering of Non-Consecrated Animals.”⁴⁰) The Talmud says,⁴¹ “‘slaughter’ means nothing other than ‘drawing’ {the knife across the animal’s neck}.” This explains on a deeper level why slaughtering is permitted.

After all, how can we slaughter an animal and cause it pain, a prohibition which, according to some, is biblical?

The idea of slaughter, however, is to “draw” something from one domain to another domain, to a higher level than it was previously. Therefore, slaughtering is permitted.

The “drawing” {upwards} of slaughter makes animal life suitable to become the flesh and blood of a human life.

It is not enough, however, to only have the animal become part of a human being. Since the obligation of kosher slaughter {including the deeper meaning of “drawing”} applies only to Jews, the true “drawing up” of the animal occurs when it fuses with a Jew who is called “Adam” — “*adameh laElyon*, similar to the Divine.”⁴²

This is explained at the conclusion of the tractate: When a Jew fulfills *mitzvos* because of Hashem’s command and thereby “subjugates his {evil} inclination,” he causes the “slaughter — drawing up” of even his own **animalistic** soul. His own mundane (relative to the rank of the Jewish people) self is elevated to holiness; it is transformed into being part of his

⁴⁰ *Rashi’s* commentary on *Bereishis* 1:12; *Rashi’s* commentary on *Berachos* 6a. Et al.

⁴¹ *Chullin* 30b.

⁴² {The word “Adam” is etymologically similar to “*adameh*,” “similar.”} *Shelah*, 20b, 301b. *Asara Maamaros*, *Maamer* Aim Kol Chai, sec. 2, ch. 33.

divine soul. Therefore, a Jew is called “Adam” because he is similar (*adameh*) to Hashem.

This, in turn, causes the mundane reality of the world, the “animalistic” aspect of the world, to become absorbed in the sanctity of a Jew’s Divine soul.

The conclusion of the tractate corresponds to this: The ultimate ascent is expressed in the verse, “so that it will be good for you” in a world where all is good, and in the verse, “so that you will live long” in a world that is entirely long. In the future Messianic era, a Jew will be openly connected to Hashem, to the point that his physical body and animalistic soul will themselves be holy and receive their sustenance from G-dliness.⁴³

12.

BLESSINGS FOR EVERY JEW

“Your entire nation are righteous”⁴⁴ and all Jews are filled with *mitzvos*⁴⁵ — especially in the month of Elul, when every Jew is engaged in the *avodah*⁴⁶ of Elul {אלול} in all three of its paths, as alluded to in its acronyms:

a) “אנה לידו ושמתי לך”

“{Hashem had} caused it to come to his hand; I {Hashem} shall provide you a place {to which he shall flee},⁴⁷” which (generally refers

⁴³ According to *Rambam (Hilchos Teshuva, 8:1)*, the “world that is entirely long” is the life of World to Come, i.e. {the afterlife, in} the Garden of Eden, where disembodied souls exist (ibid, 8:2). According to *Ramban (Shaar Hagmul, cited in the commentaries to Rambam, ibid)* however, the Talmud is to be understood literally, “{There is not a single mitzvah in the Torah...} which is not dependent on the resurrection of the dead.” That is, the “world that is entirely long” refers to life after the resurrection, when souls will reside in bodies. This is the consensus of *Chassidic* teaching as well (*Likkutei Torah, Tzav 15c. Sefer Hamitzvos of the Tzemach Tzedek, “Mitzvas Tzitzis”*). See *Lechem Mishneh on Rambam, ad loc; Chidushei Agados Maharsha on the conclusion of Chullin.*

⁴⁴ *Yeshayahu 60:21.*

⁴⁵ End of *Chagigah.*

⁴⁶ {Divine service.}

⁴⁷ {*Shemos 21:13.*}

to the month of Elul, a time of repentance, nonetheless, it) refers specifically to Torah study which “protects” a person.⁴⁸

b) “אני לדודי ודודי לי”

“I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me,⁴⁹” which refers to the service of prayer.⁵⁰

c) “איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים”

“{Sending portions} a person to his friend and gifts to the poor,⁵¹” which refers to acts of kindness.

Therefore, Hashem fulfils his promise and gives every Jew not only the material comforts of “satiation, peace, and an abundance of silver and gold” he requires to “study Torah and perform *mitzvos*,” but also reward for *mitzvos*, whose principal is preserved in the World to Come but whose fruits are enjoyed in this world (for included among all the *mitzvos* are Torah study and charitable acts, both of whose “fruits are enjoyed in this world”) – namely, long life and good years in actuality in this world.

And any and every Jew will be written and inscribed for a good, sweet new year, with revealed, tangible good in our world.

-From talks delivered on the 20th and 28th of Menachem Av, 5736 (1976)

⁴⁸ *Likkutei Torah* and *Shaar Hapesukim* (Arizal), *Parshas Mishpatim. Pri Etz Chaim, Shaar Rosh Hashanah*, ch. 1. This footnote is the source for the above mentioned verse being the acronym for Elul. However the source for the fact that words of Torah offer protection (which this footnote is referencing) is in *Makkos* 10a.

⁴⁹ {*Shir Hashirim* 6:3.}

⁵⁰ *Abudraham*, Order of Rosh Hashanah Liturgy. *Pri Etz Chaim*, *ibid.* {Here too, the footnote in the main text is addressing the fact that this verse refers to prayer, and the footnote itself is referencing the sources that this verse spells the acronym of Elul.}

⁵¹ {*Esther* 9:22.}