



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Restless Ascent

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\* The birthday of the Rebbe Rashab in the year 5621.

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## 1.

### TWO VERSIONS

At the end of tractate *Berachos*<sup>1</sup> (and similarly at the end of tractate *Moed Katan*),<sup>2</sup> a statement of our Rabbis is made that has two versions: (a) **Torah scholars** have no rest, not in this world and not in the World to Come...; and, (b) The **righteous** have no rest.... (This version is quoted in various sources.)<sup>3</sup>

We can posit that the difference in the phrasing of the two versions reflects a difference in the import of each: According to the version, “**Torah scholars** have no rest...,” the statement is speaking about the unique virtue achieved only by learning Torah (“Torah scholars”), as will be explained. The version, “The **righteous** have no rest...” is not speaking about the unique virtue of learning Torah, because the term “righteous” also includes<sup>4</sup> those who excel in performing good deeds and who are **not Torah scholars**.

We need to clarify the reason for the difference between these two outlooks.

## 2.

### CHEFTZA VS. GAVRA

The reason “Torah Scholars have no rest...” is explained by Arizal in *Likkutei HaShas*:<sup>5</sup>

In the Afterlife, Torah scholars study Torah, rising from level to level, from yeshiva to yeshiva. Just as Hashem is infinite, so, too, His Torah is infinite.

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<sup>1</sup> {*Berachos* 64a.}

<sup>2</sup> {*Moed Katan* 29a.}

<sup>3</sup> Introduction to *Shelah* (17a); *Emek HaMelech*, “*Shaar HaDikna*,” ch. 8 (61c), **et al.**

<sup>4</sup> See *Niddah* 16b, et al.

<sup>5</sup> {“Tractate *Berachos*,” s.v., “לא בעוה”ז ולא בעוה”ב, ת”ח אין להם מנוחה לא בעוה”ז ולא בעוה”ב”}

According to this, the version that “**Torah scholars** have no rest...” makes sense, because it is specifically the Torah (in the well-known idiom — the *cheftza*<sup>6</sup> of the mitzvah of Torah study) that “has no end.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, there is also no rest (no end) to the elevations of (the *gavra* of the mitzvah of Torah study) the Torah scholars who study Torah. Mitzvos, however, although also commandments of Hashem (Who is infinite), in and of themselves, nevertheless, are finite.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, there must be limitations, both regarding mitzvos, in general, concerning which we were instructed, “Do not add and do not subtract,”<sup>9</sup> and also regarding individual mitzvos. For example, *tefillin* needs to include four Torah passages and not five, etc.<sup>10</sup> (The mitzvah of Torah study, however, is different. It **must** be pursued in a way that increases understanding, etc., as explained in the laws of Torah study.)<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, also regarding (the *gavra* of other mitzvos) those who excel in good deeds, there is an end and rest.

In other words, the two ways (rest and no rest) correspond with the two categories of finite and infinite.

### 3.

#### TORAH VS. MITZVOS

The difference between these two (between Torah and mitzvos) exists similarly in the personal obligation of the person (the *gavra*). The obligation of Torah study has no limitations. In the words of Rambam,<sup>12</sup> “**Every** Jewish man is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, whether his body is healthy and whole or afflicted by difficulties....” Also (regarding time), a person’s

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<sup>6</sup> {“*Gavra*” and “*cheftza*,” lit., “person” and “object” — both negative and positive mitzvos can apply either to the “*gavra*” — the person himself, or to the “*cheftza*” — the object of the negative or positive mitzvah.}

<sup>7</sup> As it says, “Its measure is longer than the earth....” (*Iyov* 11:9)

<sup>8</sup> *Tanya*, “*Igeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 10.

<sup>9</sup> *Devarim* 13:1, 4:2.

<sup>10</sup> See *Sifri* and Rashi on *Devarim* 13:1, and Rashi on *Devarim* 4:2.

<sup>11</sup> Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” ch. 2, par. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 1, par. 8.

obligation is **constant**.<sup>13</sup> It is different with respect to mitzvos, where every mitzvah has its limitations (in a specific time or place, etc.).

#### 4.

FINITE OR INFINITE?

According to this explanation, however, it is difficult to understand the version (the opinion) that says, “**the righteous** have no rest...,” which would also include those who excel in performing good deeds (the *avodah*<sup>14</sup> of mitzvos), as explained above. How is it possible that (also) this *avodah* (which is finite) should be such that “they have no rest,” which reflects infinitude?

We must say that mitzvos also possess (and have the advantage of) an aspect of infinitude. On this basis, we can also understand the reason for the version, “The **righteous** have no rest...”

#### 5.

INTERRUPTION

Seemingly, there is room to say that the halachah that “we interrupt our Torah study to do a mitzvah that cannot be done by others”<sup>15</sup> proves that mitzvos also have an aspect of infinitude, because if they were only finite, how could they override Torah study, which is infinite?

The truth is, however, that this halachah does not prove that mitzvos are infinite. The reason that “we interrupt our Torah study to do a mitzvah that cannot be done by others” is not because of the superiority of **mitzvos**, but

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<sup>13</sup> As it says (*Yehoshua* 1:8), “{This book of the Torah} shall not depart {from your mouth}; you should contemplate it day and night...” Note the severe consequences for anyone who can engage {in Torah study, yet does not do so.} (*Sanhedrin* 99a [end]; see *Torah Or*, 43a, 98c).

<sup>14</sup> {Divine service.}

<sup>15</sup> *Moed Katan* 9a ff.; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 3, par. 4; Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 4, sec. 3.

because if we are deficient in fulfilling mitzvos, we would be deficient also in the study of **Torah**, as will be explained.

## 6.

### PURPOSE

The Alter Rebbe says (in offering a reason for the above law),<sup>16</sup> “One should interrupt his studies and do the mitzvah... because this is the entire {purpose of a} person, as our Sages said,<sup>17</sup> “The purpose of {Torah} wisdom is {to promote} repentance and good deeds. If he doesn’t do so, it turns out **that he studied** not for the purpose of doing, and it would have been better for him {not to have been created}.”<sup>18</sup>

After the Alter Rebbe offers the positive reason that obligates (a person to “interrupt his studies to do the mitzvah”) — “because... the entire {purpose} of man” is to fulfill the mitzvah — he adds, “If he doesn't do so, it turns out that he studied not for the purpose of doing.” (Meaning, without fulfilling the mitzvos, the study of Torah is not considered proper.) This implies that the reason — “because this is the entire {purpose of} man” — is not enough reason for the mitzvah to override his Torah study, because although it is true that the fulfillment of mitzvos is “the entire {purpose of} man,” nevertheless, because mitzvos are finite, they cannot override something (Torah) which is infinite. Therefore, the Alter Rebbe adds, “If he doesn’t do so, it turns out **that he studied not for the purpose of doing.**”

Meaning, the fulfillment of mitzvos, which is “the **entire** {purpose of a} person” (the entire person, including his power of intellect, and) as our Sages said, the purpose (“purpose, *tachlis*” also means the perfection) of **wisdom** is {if it promotes} repentance and good deeds. (According to this teaching that the fulfillment of mitzvos is the ultimate purpose and perfection of wisdom [i.e., of

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<sup>16</sup> *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” 4:3.

<sup>17</sup> *Berachos* 17a.

<sup>18</sup> *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Berachos* 1:2; *Babylonian Talmud*, *Berachos* 17a.

Torah]) “if he doesn’t do so, it turns out **that he studied**” (improperly, since it was) “not for the purpose of doing.”

## 7.

### TWO DIMENSIONS

The following is the explanation: Mitzvos have two dimensions, as evidenced by the text of the blessings made over mitzvos. One dimension (and the common denominator) is expressed in the formula of the blessing recited before performing all mitzvos: “...Who **sanctified us with His mitzvos**”; and the second dimension is every mitzvah’s unique (and individualized) nature as expressed in the distinct wording of the latter part of the blessing: “...and commanded us to do such-and-such a mitzvah.” Similarly: (a) Every mitzvah has its own unique parameters that differentiate it from others, and because of these parameters, the mitzvos are finite. (b) There is a common denominator among all mitzvos, and on account of this, they are infinite.

Meaning, the different **details** of each mitzvah that differentiates each mitzvah emphasize the **finitude** of mitzvos. Their common denominator is that each of them is a mitzvah, a *tzivui*, a Divine command. Each mitzvah expresses the will of Hashem, and this is **common** for **each** mitzvah. This is because Hashem’s will {expressed} in mitzvos is higher than their limitation and differentiation. As our Sages say,<sup>19</sup> “Do not sit and weigh the mitzvos in the Torah... {which ones are} the least severe... the most severe...” Regarding this common dimension of mitzvos, that each expresses the will of Hashem, they are all infinite.

Furthermore, it is known that<sup>20</sup> “one who is engaged in performing one mitzvah is exempt from performing another mitzvah.”<sup>21</sup> Because all mitzvos are inter-inclusive, when a person is fulfilling one commandment, it is a bit as if he

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<sup>19</sup> *Midrash Tanchuma*, “Eikev,” sec. 2; *Bereishis Rabba*, ch. 6, sec. 2.

<sup>20</sup> “*Hemshech* 5666,” p. 68, p. 622.

<sup>21</sup> *Sukkah* 25a.

is simultaneously fulfilling all the other mitzvos. This is because of Hashem's (essential) desire, which transcends the differentiation of mitzvos.

It turns out that even when the person performs a particular mitzvah (although its details separate and differentiate it from others), by performing this mitzvah, he has a connection to the entire body of mitzvos — the infinite dimension within them.

## 8.

CREATED TO SERVE

Just like this applies regarding the mitzvos themselves (the *cheftza*), the same is true when Jews (the *gavra*) **fulfill** the mitzvos. Although the obligation for each mitzvah is limited in time, etc. (see Section 2), there is, nevertheless, a **constant** obligation for Jews to engage in (the *avodah* of) mitzvos. As our Sages say in Mishnah,<sup>22</sup> “I **was created to serve** my Creator” — every moment of a person's life is given for the sake (the role and purpose) of serving his Creator. We said above, “This is the **entire** {purpose of a} person,” so much so, that the Code of Jewish Law rules that “**all** your actions should be for the sake of Heaven,”<sup>23</sup> and that “in **all** your ways, you shall know Him.”<sup>24</sup>

## 9.

NO REST

Considering all the above, the difference between the two versions and opinions is now clear. From the perspective of the finite details within mitzvos, only “**Torah scholars** have no rest.” However, from the perspective of mitzvos, as a whole, which are infinite, all those who are “**righteous**” (including those who are engaged in performing good deeds) “have no rest....”

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<sup>22</sup> *Kiddushin* 82b.

<sup>23</sup> *Avos* 2:12.

<sup>24</sup> *Mishlei* 3:6; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Deos*,” end of ch. 3; *Tur and Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 231.

## 10.

WHICH “WORLD TO COME”?

However, this matter demands further clarification. As explained (elsewhere),<sup>25</sup> the reason (specifically) “**Torah scholars** have no rest... and not in the World to Come,” is as the Arizal states in *Likkutei HaShas*:<sup>26</sup>

This is the secret of “man departs to his work”<sup>27</sup> — this means {that departs to the World to Come} to engage in Torah study, which is what he worked on in this world, because when a person departs this world, he first departs to his work, meaning, to engage in Torah study, which is what he worked on in this world....”

Therefore, only “**Torah scholars** have no rest... in the World to Come,” because in Gan Eden, the place to which the person “departs” from this world, only the “work” of Torah study is possible<sup>28</sup> and not the work (involvement) of fulfilling mitzvos.<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly, the version, “the righteous...” is unclear: It's true that the idea of infinite ascents also exists in connection to mitzvos, because even mitzvos have an infinite dimension to them, but how can we say that the statement of “**the righteous** have no rest... **in the World to Come**” is predicated on the idea that “a man departs to his work in the World to Come” when there is no “work” of fulfilling mitzvos in Gan Eden?

The explanation: As known, there are two definitions of the term. “the World to Come”: (a) Gan Eden (which is called the World to Come because “a person goes there after his life in this world”);<sup>30</sup> and (b) the Era of the Resurrection.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, p. 174 ff.

<sup>26</sup> {*Likkutei HaShas*, loc. cit.}

<sup>27</sup> *Tehillim* 104:23

<sup>28</sup> See *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 17.

<sup>29</sup> See *Derech Mitzvosecha*, 15b.

<sup>30</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” ch. 8.

<sup>31</sup> As is inferred from Sanhedrin 90a, where the mishnah lists those that have no share in the World to Come, and includes one who states: “there is no resurrection of the dead....” The Gemara there explains, being that “he denied the Resurrection of the Dead, therefore, he will not have a share in the Resurrection of the Dead..., measure for measure.



In this context, we could say that the definition of “the World to Come” in **this** adage of our Sages depends on which of the two versions is under discussion. According to the version, “**Torah scholars** have no rest...,” which is because of the virtue of their **Torah** study, “the World to Come” can (also) refer to Gan Eden (where only the “work” of Torah study is possible and not mitzvos). According to the version, “**the righteous** have no rest...,” which also includes the *avodah* of mitzvos, the term “the World to Come” used in this adage would mean the Era of the Resurrection. Because in that era, a time will come again for “working” with mitzvos, as well.

## 11.

### TWO STAGES

Seemingly, we could ask: (a) Our Sages say that “mitzvos will be *battel*<sup>32</sup> in the Future Era,”<sup>33</sup> and the Alter Rebbe<sup>34</sup> interprets it “to mean the Era of the Resurrection”! (b) In many places in Chassidus,<sup>35</sup> it is explained that when our Sages say, “The righteous have no rest...” (and the righteous are constantly rising from one level to the next), our Sages are referring to the levels within Gan Eden. The **Future Era**, however, will be a time akin to *Shabbos* and a time of repose and rest, even from spiritual elevations. So how does this fit with the previous explanation, i.e., the statement that “**the righteous** have no rest... in the World to Come” refers (not to Gan Eden, but) to the Era of the Resurrection?

The explanation is that the Era of the Resurrection has two stages.<sup>36</sup> When he says: “And there, we will do, before You... according to the command of Your will,”<sup>37</sup> **every** Jew refers to the first stage. Jews will fulfill mitzvos, and consequently, they will experience {spiritual} ascents through them. In the second stage, the mitzvos will become *battel*.

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<sup>32</sup> {Lit., “nullified.” This is understood to mean that relative to the great revelations of the Future Era, *mitzvos* will be insignificant.}

<sup>33</sup> *Niddah* 61b.

<sup>34</sup> Tanya, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 26, 145a.

<sup>35</sup> *Or HaTorah*, “*Va’eschanan*,” p. 67; *Hemshech* 5666, p. 12.

<sup>36</sup> See *Hemshech* 5666, p. 97 ff.

<sup>37</sup> *Siddur*, *Musaf* prayer.

Among the proofs for this: As known, our Sages say that in the Future Era, “Moshe and Aharon will be with us,”<sup>38</sup> and we will offer animal sacrifices — the fulfillment of mitzvos. (This is especially so since the underlying point of animal sacrifices is the idea of spiritual ascent — elevation of the life-force of animals from below to Above, as explained in several sources.) This shows that even after the Resurrection of the Dead, mitzvos will be observed along with their ensuing spiritual ascents, etc.

## 12.

### WITHOUT INTERRUPTION

However, it is still unclear: “They have no rest” means that the ascents of the righteous occur continuously without interruption. But according to the first interpretation — that “the righteous have no rest in the World to Come” refers to (the stage of) the Era of the Resurrection — they take a break, a “rest,” in Gan Eden (where the “work” of mitzvos is absent), which is the period between This World and the Era of the Resurrection.

The explanation: We have mentioned previously that doing mitzvos is only possible in This World when the soul is vested in a body. But when the soul is in Gan Eden, without a body, the *avodah* of mitzvos is not possible.

Therefore, within the framework of (and relative to) the *avodah* of those who excel in performing good deeds (the righteous) — an *avodah* that can only be exemplified when the soul is **together** with a body — the time span when the soul is not joined with a body, when it is in Gan Eden, does not exist.<sup>39</sup> Simply put, the fulfillment of mitzvos is connected to, and naturally requires, a living body. And when the body does not exist (as a body for its soul), it’s also not possible to say regarding it {i.e., the disembodied soul} that time exists. So, when the souls {of the righteous} of those who excel in performing good deeds are in

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<sup>38</sup> *Tosafos* on *Pesachim* 114b, s.v., “*echad*.”

<sup>39</sup> {In the Yiddish original, “*nit kein mitzius*.”}

Gan Eden, this is not regarded as an interruption of their ascents {since no time is passing for them}.

An example of this: The Rogatchover<sup>40</sup> says that it is impossible for time to continue for the soul Above. In other words, when the soul's connection with the body is sundered, and the soul rises to Gan Eden, then in its "world" — the whole notion of time — doesn't exist regarding Torah **laws**. (However, the construct of time *does* exist regarding the **reward** for mitzvos, the study of Torah, etc., as is known regarding midnight in Gan Eden, etc.)

### 13.

MITZVOS IN GAN EDEN?!

We can posit further: The Rebbe Rashab, whose birthday it is today,<sup>41</sup> wrote (in his will):<sup>42</sup>

On a deeper level, we can say, based on what I heard in the name of my revered father, the Rebbe Maharash, that for consummately righteous, the infinite light of *sovev kol almin*<sup>43</sup> shines in Gan Eden, as well.... Accordingly, we can say that {in Gan Eden} there is something somewhat similar to the performance of mitzvos, resembling and analogous to the mitzvos that will exist in the Future Era.... This is the meaning of honoring your parents — a person can help his parents enter Gan Eden.<sup>44</sup>

[We can posit that this is the deeper meaning of Rambam's teaching:<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Tzafnas Paneach* on *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Teshuvah," ch. 8, par. 5.

<sup>41</sup> {This talk was delivered on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Mar Cheshvan, the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab.}

<sup>42</sup> Printed in *Kuntres Chanoch LaNaar*, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> {The light of Hashem which "encompasses" all worlds and is not usually experienced on a conscious level. Usually, it is only the lower level of light, called *memaleh kol almin*, that is said to be revealed in Gan Eden.}

<sup>44</sup> {The Rebbe Rashab quotes *Reishis Chochmah*, which says that when a son is particular about honoring his parents, it can help his parents in the Afterlife. For example, if a son deserves a share in the World to Come, and his father does not, his son partaking of the World to Come without his father would be an embarrassment to the father. And since the son was particular in honoring his father in this world, Hashem wouldn't let this son be a source of embarrassment to his father in the World to Come. Consequently, Hashem takes the father out of purgatory and gives him a share in the World to Come.}

<sup>45</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Teshuvah," ch. 8, par. 2.

So said<sup>46</sup> our early Sages: In the World to Come..., the righteous sit with their crowns upon their heads, enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence. Clearly, there are no physical bodies...

(This is because Rambam<sup>47</sup> translates the World to Come, in the quoted adage of our Rabbis, to mean Gan Eden.)

Similarly, when it says they wear “their crowns upon their heads,” it means that they will possess the knowledge that they grasped... and this is their crown. This is similar to {what is said of} Shlomo,<sup>48</sup> “The crown with which his mother crowned him”... Similarly, the term “crown” used by the Sages connotes knowledge. What is meant by the expression, “enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence”? They will know and comprehend the truth of G-dliness which they cannot grasp while in a dark and lowly body.

The Rambam’s point is that there are two dimensions to Gan Eden: “Their crowns upon their heads” — a crown being **on** (and higher than) the head, encircling it — refers to knowledge derived from the light of *sovev kol almin*, which envelops a person.<sup>49</sup> The statement, “**enjoying** the radiance of the Divine Presence... that they will know and **comprehend**,” refers to the advancement from level to level in **grasping** Torah, with an internalized, profound, understanding.]

On this basis, also in Gan Eden, it is possible (at least) to experience something “somewhat similar to the performance of mitzvos.” It turns out that, at any rate, the consummately righteous have no rest — even concerning “the work” of **mitzvos** — even in Gan Eden.

— Based on a talk delivered on the 20th of Menachem Av, 5735 (1975)

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<sup>46</sup> *Berachos* 17a {Rav was wont to say: The World to Come is not like this world. In the World to Come there is no eating, no drinking, no procreation, no business negotiations, no jealousy, no hatred, and no competition. **Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns upon their heads, enjoying the radiance of the Divine Presence**, as it says: “And they beheld Hashem, and they ate and drank” (*Shemos* 24:11), implying that beholding Hashem’s Countenance is comparable to eating and drinking.}

<sup>47</sup> Unlike Ramban (in *Shaar HaGemul*) who explains it to refer to the Era of the Resurrection.

<sup>48</sup> *Shir Hashirim* 3:11.

<sup>49</sup> *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 17: “Their crowns upon their heads....” A crown encompasses and encircles.”