



Likkutei Sichos

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Varieties of Religious Enthusiasm

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1.

MINOR AND MAJOR MITZVOS

“Ben Azai says: ‘Run to {perform} a minor mitzvah and flee from sin.’”¹ Ben Azai’s teaching (included among the “words of piety”² comprising tractate *Avos*) is not meant to tell us that, as a **rule**, we should fulfill (even) a minor mitzvah and avoid sin. Obviously, every Jew should fulfill **all** the mitzvos, even a minor one, and distance himself from transgression, G-d forbid (even a slight sin).

Rather, Ben Azai’s teaching tells us **how** to fulfill mitzvos: “**Run** to {perform} a minor mitzvah and **flee** from sin.” Not only should we actually fulfill the mitzvos, but we should **run** to fulfill them, even a minor one. Not only should we refrain from actually sinning, but we should **flee** from it.

However, we need to clarify: This principle of running to perform a mitzvah is (not only a matter of pious conduct, but) a law (explicit in *Shulchan Aruch*):³ “It is a **mitzvah** to run (when going) to synagogue, and **the same applies to any mitzvah activity**.” So, what is the novelty in the teaching “run to a minor mitzvah...” that makes it a matter of piety, considering that it is a requirement of Jewish law (“**a mitzvah**”)?

We also must clarify why Ben Azzai does not conclude, “(run to {perform} a minor mitzvah) like a major one.” Such a conclusion would appear to be contextually appropriate, especially since an earlier mishnah addresses {the importance of} being careful with mitzvos:⁴ “Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one.”

¹ *Avos* 4:2.

² See *Bava Kama* 30a.

³ “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 90, par. 12; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 90, par. 13; *Berachos* 6b (and *Rif*).

⁴ *Avos* 2:1.

[In fact, some versions of the mishnah include (also) this point, “as with a major one,” but the Alter Rebbe (in his Siddur) does not support this version and neither do most commentators.]⁵

We must say that although when it comes to being **meticulous** with mitzvos, a minor mitzvah must be {treated} **exactly** the same as a major mitzvah,⁶ when it comes to **running** to perform a mitzvah, a minor mitzvah is not considered the same as a major one. Therefore, Ben Azai says (only), “run to {perform} a minor mitzvah” — we must run to perform even a minor mitzvah, and we learn from this that we should run with even greater haste to a major mitzvah.

However, we still need to clarify: Why does Ben Azai add the qualification “(to a) minor (mitzvah)” at all? Seemingly, he could have simply said, “run to {perform} a mitzvah” and **nothing more**, which would include **every** type of mitzvah. [Then, it would also be implicitly understood that we should run to every mitzvah commensurate with its stringency, since when worded this way, there is no emphasis on {being as careful with} “a minor one as with a major one.”]

2.

THE MAIN REASON IS THE REWARD

Regarding the reason for the teaching, “run to {perform} a minor mitzvah and flee from sin,” Ben Azai makes two points:⁷ (a) One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah, and one sin leads to another sin; and, (b) the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward for a sin is a sin.

Simply understood, the difference between the two reasons is as follows: The first reason explains that a Jew must **run** to do even a minor mitzvah. This

⁵ See *Tosafos YomTov* and different versions of this mishnah.

⁶ For a lengthy explanation, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 4, p. 1191 ff.

⁷ {*Avos* 4:2.}

will bring about the fulfillment of (many) **more** mitzvos.⁸ The second reason explains that running to do a mitzvah must also be for the sake of **this mitzvah itself**, because “the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah.” [As *Bartenura* explains, the “reward and **benefit**” that a person receives for doing a mitzvah, which is demonstrated by his **running** to do a mitzvah, are also a mitzvah. Alternatively, the reward for a mitzvah is the “mitzvah,”⁹ referring to the bond and connection¹⁰ with Hashem achieved through performing a mitzvah.]

However, from this it turns out that the **primary** reason is “the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah,” indicating that the running should be for the sake of **this** mitzvah itself [especially according to *Bartenura*’s explanation that “the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah” means (not the reward for the mitzvah he is “running” to do, but) the **running itself**.] The reason “that a mitzvah leads to another mitzvah” is supplementary, relevant when the explanation that “a reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah” does not motivate someone to run to do a mitzvah. Under such circumstances, he may {run to} do it since the fulfillment of more mitzvos is contingent on the fulfillment of this mitzvah. [This motive for doing a mitzvah, however, when compared with the motive of “the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah,” can be considered, a subtle form, at least, of (doing **this** mitzvah) “not for its own sake.”]

If so, why does Ben Azai preface the reason, “a mitzvah leads to another mitzvah” to the reason, “the reward for a mitzvah is the mitzvah”?

⁸ See commentaries on the mishnah; *Avos D’Rav Nasson*, ch. 25, sec. 4; *Devarim Rabbah* ch. 6, sec. 4; see *Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 10, sec. 8, et al.

⁹ Quoted in *Midrash Shmuel*; et al.; see *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 37.

¹⁰ *Likkutei Torah*, “*Bechukosai*,” 45c; 47b; for a lengthy explanation, see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 7, p. 30 ff.

3.

THREE WAYS TO RUN

There is another lesson — found also in tractate *Avos*¹¹ — related to the role of “running” in one’s service of Hashem: “Yehudah ben Teima says, ‘You should... (and) run like a deer... to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.’” The *Tur*, and also the Alter Rebbe in (the second edition of) his *Shulchan Aruch*, present **this** lesson (from tractate *Avos*) as the beginning of, and the overarching and fundamental lesson of, the section “*Orach Chaim*”¹² (indeed, of the entire *Shulchan Aruch*).

It turns out that, concerning a person’s service to his Creator, there are three types and methods of “running”:

- a) Running that is **obligatory** to fulfill a mitzvah — “a mitzvah.” **This** law applies primarily to running to synagogue, but it is later expanded: “And **likewise** for every mitzvah.”
- b) Running “to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven.” This is not a law¹³ but a matter of piety — “**you should...** run.” (Therefore, it is stated in tractate *Avos*.) However, it is an essential matter of piety that applies equally to all individuals. This is the reason this teaching was incorporated into the *Tur* and the *Shulchan Aruch* (of the Alter Rebbe).
- c) The lesson of Ben Azai: “run to a minor mitzvah.” This is a matter of piety that is not the same for each individual, which is why it was stated (only) in tractate *Avos*. The uniqueness of this “running” is emphasized by Ben Azai adding, “run to a **minor** mitzvah.”

¹¹ *Avos* 5:20.

¹² {*Shulchan Aruch* comprises four sections: *Orach Chaim*, *Yoreh Dayah*, *Even HaEzer*, and *Choshen Mishpat*.}

¹³ Note the *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 242; *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 242 (Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 242, par. 6).

4.

RUNNING WITHOUT EGO

The overall eagerness of a Jew when fulfilling Hashem's will reflects a Jew's joy and desire "to fulfill the will of his Master and to bring gratification to his Maker."¹⁴ Eagerness exhibited in a manner of "running" indicates that the individual's joy and energy exceeds his limits and boundaries.¹⁵ He, therefore, **overcomes** his nature and alters his usual pace, in order to perform this mitzvah faster.

Such joy and vigor which transcends one's usual nature to fulfill the will of Hashem, as demonstrated by "running," is possible only for someone who possesses exceptional *bittul*¹⁶ toward Hashem:

When a person is a "somebody," and especially if he "holds himself proud, giving himself honor, and acts haughtily,"¹⁷ he may still perform a mitzvah enthusiastically and joyfully. This joy, however, is dictated by reason, and thus is a limited joy. He doesn't "run"; he doesn't lose self-control.

But when an individual possesses *bittul*, he is capable of stirring within himself boundless joy, which is manifested in his **running** (to do a mitzvah). So much so, the joy might be expressed in a way that may make a person appear to be "lowering himself and thinking lightly of himself."¹⁸ Regarding King David, we find that he "lept¹⁹ and danced (with all his strength) before Hashem."²⁰ To explain {his behavior, King David said}: "I will hold myself even more lightly esteemed than this, and be humble in my own eyes."²¹

¹⁴ Tanya, "Iggeres HaKodesh," epistle 21.

¹⁵ See 5701, 'Moshcheini' (the second), ch. 1; et al.; note *Likkutei Torah*, 'Shir Hashirim,' 15b ff.

¹⁶ {*Bittul* connotes self-nullification, humility, and the negation of ego.}

¹⁷ *Mishneh Torah*, end of "Hilchos Lulav," regarding serving Hashem with joy.

¹⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*

¹⁹ *Shmuel II* 6:16, quoted in *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*

²⁰ *Shmuel II* 6:14.

²¹ *Shmuel II* 6:22, quoted in *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*

5.

DIFFERENT VERSES

This sheds light on a questionable point in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* concerning the law,²² "It is a mitzvah to run to synagogue, and likewise, to any mitzvah activity." The Alter Rebbe cites the source of this law:²³ "...as it says,²⁴ 'let us run²⁵ to know Hashem....'"²⁶

Although the Alter Rebbe typically elucidates the **rationale** behind laws,²⁷ he does not (as a rule) provide their **sources**. Indeed, with most laws, the Alter Rebbe omits their scriptural sources (even in instances that the *Tur* does cite them). What is different about the law, "there is a mitzvah to run..." that the Alter Rebbe *does* cite its scriptural source?

What is more perplexing is that even the *Tur*²⁸ doesn't cite the proof-text for this law!

What also needs clarification: From the wording in the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, "It is a mitzvah to run to synagogue, and likewise, to any mitzvah activity, as it says 'let us run to know Hashem,'" it turns out that from this verse, we derive the law that "it is a mitzvah to run" both to synagogue and also "to any mitzvah activity." This is perplexing because the Gemara cites this verse only concerning the importance of running to synagogue. However, as far as running to other mitzvah matters (matters of halachah) is concerned, the Gemara cites **a different** verse²⁹ (viz., "They shall follow Hashem, He will roar like a lion...").

²² Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, "Orach Chaim," sec. 90, par. 13.

²³ *Berachos* 6b.

²⁴ *Hoshea* 6:3.

²⁵ {In the original, "נרדפה"; lit., "chase" or "pursue."} In *Bach's* suggested emendations on *Berachos* 6b: "Let us know and let us run...." These words are also quoted in *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Berachos*, ch. 5, sec. 1 and *Rif*, Rosh, *Ein Yaakov* and *Dikdukei Sofrim* (from the manuscripts) on *Berachos* 6b.

²⁶ This is the version of the *Rif* {*Berachos* 6b}; see *Yalkut Shimoni* on *Hoshea* 6:3. However, in *Berachos* 6b, there is no "etc." Further elaboration is beyond our current scope,

²⁷ See "*Hakdamos Bnei HaMechaber*" to the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*.

²⁸ Although the Rambam does cite it.

²⁹ *Hoshea* 11:10.

6.

TWO PERSPECTIVES

The explanation is as follows: By citing the verse, “let us run to know Hashem,” the Alter Rebbe does not mean to cite the **source** of the law, but actually the **reason** for the law. The reason for the **overall** point of running in the service of Hashem (to synagogue or to any mitzvah activity) is “let us run **to know Hashem.**”

We can understand this based on the Tzemach Tzedek’s explanation³⁰ of the above verse, “Let us know and let us run to know Hashem.” Why does the verse repeat the point of “knowing” twice (“let us know” and “to know”)?

The Tzemach Tzedek explains that these two usages hint at two “knowledges” {Divine perspectives} (as it says,³¹ “Hashem is a G-d of knowledges” {plural}³²): “lower knowledge” and “higher knowledge.” And *avodah*³³ performed in a way of “let us run,” and **running**, derives specifically from the higher knowledge³⁴ — “to know Hashem.”

From the lower perspective — the “knowledge” experienced in “the lower” (world) — the world is a reality and existence that is created and energized by the Divine “Nothingness” {*Ayin*}. On this level of divine consciousness, one’s *avodah* is only carried out in a “walking” manner, progressing gradually, “step by step.” From the “higher knowledge” perspective — from where it is clear what the true reality is (Above), and that the world (and even the energy of existence) is “nothing and insignificant” — such {a consciousness} will affect one’s *avodah* to reflect the dynamic alluded to by the term “let us run,” which connotes

³⁰ Or *HaTorah*, ‘*Nach*,’ on this verse (p. 437).

³¹ *Shmuel I* 2:3.

³² {In the original, “דעות”; lit., “knowledges,” plural, although the simple translation is singular.}

³³ {Divine service.}

³⁴ This also clarifies why the Alter Rebbe doesn’t quote in his *Shulchan Aruch* the words “let us know” from the verse (although most commentators agree with this version of the Gemara, as mentioned above in fn. 25) — because the **reason** {and source} for the law of “let us run” {running} is specifically “to know Hashem” — the higher knowledge.

“*ratzo*.” This entails running and escaping from the limitations and the boundaries of one’s own existence.

7.

RUNNING IS FOR EVERYONE

Although *avodah* executed in a way that is analogous to “running” (“let us run”), beyond limitation, comes through a person’s *bittul*, {and this *avodah* continues} until he reaches a *bittul* derived from the “higher knowledge” (“to know Hashem”), *Shulchan Aruch*, nevertheless, rules that everyone has the same “mitzvah to run to synagogue, and likewise, to any mitzvah activity.”

Even someone who has not attained the higher consciousness of Hashem, and his joy and vitality when performing a mitzvah is limited and bounded, is obliged, nevertheless, to **literally** “run” **with his feet** “to any mitzvah activity.” After all, **every** Jew is obligated to fulfill the tangible expression of the *avodah* of “running,” {i.e., to run, in fact, to do a mitzvah} even someone who has not attained even the lower level of divine consciousness.³⁵

Similarly, we see with many mitzvos that the way the mitzvah is set out to be observed aligns with the inner meaning of the mitzvah. And everyone, even those who are not on the level of relating to the inner meaning of the mitzvah — and possibly, who are not even aware of the mitzvah’s inner meaning — must still act specifically in **that** established manner.

[The mitzvah of *Krias Shema*, for example, was established to follow the recitation of *Pesukei DeZimra* and the blessings of *Shema*. In order to develop the feeling appropriate during the reading of *Shema*, one befitting the declaration, “*Hashem Echad*” — meaning, you have proclaimed His monarchy over the seven heavens, the earth, and all four directions of the world,³⁶ and to love Hashem “with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might” — a

³⁵ {Lit., “*daas tachtone*”; the lower level knowledge of Hashem and His dynamic relationship with Creation.}

³⁶ *Berachos* 13b and halachic codifiers.

person first needs to meditate on the passages of praise and the blessings preceding *Shema*. Nevertheless, **this** order {in the liturgy} was established for everyone to follow, even those who are not yet on this level.]

8.

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

The reason that every Jew is obligated to actually “run” to any mitzvah activity, even if he does not fully appreciate its deeper significance, is because conditioning oneself to run “for any mitzvah activity” joyfully and enthusiastically ultimately leads a person to quickly and more easily reach the level of true “running” — to experiencing a boundless joy and enthusiasm in the service of Hashem.³⁷

This also explains the verse, “let us run to know Hashem.” The straightforward meaning (not that “let us run” is a result and an outcome of “to know Hashem,” but rather, the opposite —) that “let us run” **leads** a person “to know Hashem.”³⁸ For **actually** running (“let us run”) ultimately leads to the self-abnegation engendered by the higher level of divine consciousness.

It is now clear why the obligation (to run to any mitzvah activity) is stated primarily within the context of synagogue (as discussed above in Section 3) — prayer. Prayer is considered “service of the heart”³⁹ and its aim is for a Jew to foster a deep attachment to Hashem,⁴⁰ enabling him to ascend to higher levels in his {overall} divine service. Therefore, the *avodah* of “let us run (which leads to) to know Hashem” (the higher knowledge) begins with the act of running towards prayer service. It is **this** unique form of *avodah* that enables a person to attain a higher level of “knowing Hashem.” [From (and through) the *avodah* of prayer,

³⁷ See also *Sefer HaChinuch* (mitzvah 16) regarding mitzvos in general.

³⁸ See also *Rabbeinu Yonah on Rif*, “*Berachos*” (6b).

³⁹ Beg. of *Taanis*; *Mishneh Torah*, beg. of *Hilchos Tefillah*; *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 98.

⁴⁰ See *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch*, (and Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*) “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 98; Alter Rebbe’s “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” sec. 4, par. 5-6.

one will accomplish the *avodah* of “let us run” and running for “all mitzvah activity.”]⁴¹

9.

RUNNING AS COMMITMENT

This is the novel accomplishment that a person is meant to attain with the lessons of “run...” in tractate *Avos*, over-and-above the law mentioned previously in *Shulchan Aruch*: These lessons are speaking about the deeper significance of the idea of “running” — the alacrity, enthusiasm, and boundless joy in the service of Hashem, which is a “great *avodah*”⁴² (a matter of piety).

However, in this itself, there are two ways: (a) “You should... run... to carry out the **will of your Father in Heaven.**” This running applies to everyone (and therefore, it is also cited in *Tur* and in the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, as mentioned earlier); (b) the lesson of Ben Azai, “Run to a minor mitzvah” is not equally relevant to everyone.

The explanation: “Yehudah ben Teima” is not referring (primarily) to the running to mitzvos and the joy felt **while performing mitzvos**. Rather, he is referring to “running” {enthusiasm} in the **overall** dedication and devotion a Jew exhibits towards serving Hashem at the **start** of the day, even before engaging in any particular act of worship. This is akin to reciting *Modeh Ani* “immediately upon waking up **from his sleep.**”⁴³ Thus, it represents the general acknowledgement and selfless commitment to Hashem at the beginning of the day.

[Therefore: (a) Yehudah ben Teima does not use the expression “run **to a mitzvah,**” but rather, “to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven,” which is the **encompassing** goal of **all** aspects of a person’s daily *avodah*. (b) This dictum was placed at the **beginning** of the entire *Shulchan Aruch*, even

⁴¹ See *Likkutei Torah*, “Balak” (70d): prayer “is the main foundation and support for the 248 positive *mitzvos*... likened to the spinal cord, which supports and maintains the limbs”; see there.

⁴² *Mishneh Torah*, end of “*Hilchos Lulav.*”

⁴³ Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim,*” later ed., sec. 1, par. 6; first ed., sec. 1, par. 5.

preceding the practice of saying *Modeh Ani*, because the selfless commitment to serving Hashem that Yehudah ben Teima conveys is a more comprehensive form of “acknowledgement” and selfless devotion, which surpasses even the acknowledgment of *Modeh Ani*.]

This **all-encompassing**, inspirational lesson as to how to serve Hashem is germane to **every** Jew, regardless of his current spiritual state. As well known, the deeper reason that we say *Modeh Ani* prior to washing our hands, even while our hands are impure, is because “all the impurities of the world cannot defile the *Modeh Ani* of a Jew. A Jew may be lacking, in one way or the other, but the *Modeh Ani* remains intact.”⁴⁴

10.

TWO PURPOSES

To this, Ben Azai adds another lesson (as a matter of piety): “Run **to** {perform} **a minor mitzvah**, and flee from sin”:

A person may be engrossed in performing a **particular** mitzvah. At that moment, he may not be thinking about the **all-encompassing** reason for this mitzvah (which is the same for all mitzvos): “Who sanctified us with his mitzvos **and commanded us**”⁴⁵ (to carry out the will of your Father in Heaven). Instead, he is focused on the composition (and benefit) of that particular mitzvah [which is why he feels as though it is a “**minor** mitzvah”]. Even so, it is still incumbent upon the Jew to spur himself to perform the mitzvah in a manner of “running” — with a sense of unbridled joy and enthusiasm.

How can Ben Azai demand of a Jew that a **particular** mitzvah (which seemingly is limited and measured)⁴⁶ should stir a sense of “running,” surpassing all limitations and boundaries?

⁴⁴ *Hayom Yom*, p. 19; for a lengthy explanation, see *Kuntres Inyanah Shel Toras HaChassidus*, sec. 11 and fns.

⁴⁵ As is the language of blessings for **all** mitzvos.

⁴⁶ For a lengthy explanation see *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, p. 181; *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 15, p. 140.

This is because in Ben Azai's mode of conduct,⁴⁷ there was always an emphasis placed on "running" — escaping from the world. Therefore, he did not concern himself with procreation, as he said,⁴⁸ "What am I to do, my soul thirsts for Torah?" [In fact, ultimately, he did "escape," since when entered into *Pardes*, "he glimpsed {at the Divine Presence} and died.⁴⁹ He exhibited a "*ratzoh*"⁵⁰ without a "*shov*"⁵¹ (like what led to the death of Aharon's two sons.)]

For this reason, Ben Azai's divine service even in matters of "*tikkun*" — performing mitzvos — was also carried out with "*ratzo*." He experienced the great "pleasantness, agreeableness... sweetness" (the wording of the *Or HaChaim HaKadosh*⁵² regarding the *ratzo* of the two sons of Aharon) which exists in mitzvos. This inspired him to run joyfully to fulfill mitzvos, in a boundless and limitless manner,⁵³ exceeding even the **limitations** of his own divine soul.

Now we can explain why the wording, "run to {perform} a minor mitzvah as a major one," is inappropriate. After all, the "pleasantness" of mitzvos (which stirs a person to run to perform mitzvos) is engendered by the **particular** composition of each mitzvah. Therefore, the "pleasantness" of a minor mitzvah is not the same as the "pleasantness" of a major mitzvah.

On the contrary, the novelty of his teaching is expressed in the clause, "run for a **minor** mitzvah." Meaning, even a **minor** mitzvah holds **boundless** "pleasantness," and therefore, one should run also for such a mitzvah.

⁴⁷ See *Maamar "VeChol HaLevavos"* (*Or HaTorah*, "Acharei," p. 540); *Maamar "Acharei Mos,"* 5649, ch. 13.

⁴⁸ *Yevamos* 63b.

⁴⁹ *Chagigah* 14b.

⁵⁰ {Lit., "running" — escaping all bonds to cleave to Hashem; *ratzo* and *shov* are terms found in *Yechezkel* 1:14. }

⁵¹ {Lit., "returning" — returning to temporal pursuits to fulfill the Divine will that we do *avodah* within the world rather than escape the world.}

⁵² *Or HaChaim*, beg. of *Acharei*; this is cited in *maamarim* of the *Alter Rebbe*, "*Es'haleich Liozna*," sec. "*Kasuv BeOr HaChaim*"; *Derech Chaim*, ch. 33; "*V'chol HaLevavos*," (*Or HaTorah*, "Acharei") beg.; *Maamar "Acharei Mos 5649*," ch. 12; note also *Tanya*, "*Iggeres HaKodesh*," epistle 29 (149a).

⁵³ Note also *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 14, p. 52.

11.

RUNNING EQUALS REWARD

The dearness — the “pleasantness” of mitzvos — can be sensed in two ways: (a) A person senses the great pleasantness in **mitzvos themselves** — “closeness with Hashem is good”; (b) he senses that **he**, his divine soul, will experience that “closeness with Hashem is good **for me**.”⁵⁴

This explains the two reasons that Ben Azai gave as to why one must “run to a mitzvah...”: (a) One mitzvah leads to another mitzvah; and, (b) the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah:

The main reason: Regarding the **inherent** “pleasantness” of a mitzvah — “one mitzvah leads to another mitzvah,” the great pleasantness of a mitzvah is because it “leads to a mitzvah” — it creates the connection and bond⁵⁵ between a Jew and Hashem.

However, Ben Azai taught this lesson also for those who have not yet reached the level of “being close to Hashem is good.” Furthermore, he taught this lesson even for a person still at the initial stage of his *avodah*, and who, therefore, only does *avodah* when he feels it concerns **him**. Therefore, Ben Azai adds, “the **reward** for a mitzvah is a mitzvah.”

Even the **reward** for performing mitzvos, something that a person may feel **he** has earned, is itself a “mitzvah.” In other words, he is connected with Hashem in a way that he feels a **boundless** pleasantness. (As commonly understood, there can be no reward in This World⁵⁶ because the reward for mitzvos is limitless, and this “world” does not have the capacity to contain this great reward.)

Therefore, in order to receive **reward** for a mitzvah, it is necessary to be in a state of running — surpassing all boundaries and limitations.

— Based on talks delivered on Shabbos *parshas Emor* and Shabbos *parshas Behar*
Bechukosai, 5724 (1964)

⁵⁴ *Tehillim* 73:28.

⁵⁵ This is the way the *Maggid* explains it in *Likkutei Amarim*, sec. 259 (67a); *Or HaTorah*, 93d.

⁵⁶ *Kiddushin* 39b; *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 3; epistle 23.