



The Community

Boruch Hashem

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Rabbi's Article

A Time to Run

In *Ethics of Our Fathers* (-Chapter 4, Mishna 2) our sages teach, "Ben Azzai would say: Run to a minor mitzvah, and flee from a transgression. For a mitzvah brings another mitzvah, and a transgression brings another transgression. For the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward of transgression is transgression." *Tractate Fathers* is not about obligatory laws, but about, "matters of piety." Hence, Ben Azzai is not speaking of the obligatory performance of *minor* mitzvot, but of a *pious* fashion of, "run to... flee from..." However, even this fashion of doing a mitzvah is not only '*pious*' but *obligatory*, as we find (-Shulchan Oruch, Orach Chaim, 90:13), "It is a mitzvah to run to the synagogue and to any other activity involving a mitzvah, as it is written (-Hosea 6:3), '(And let us know,) Let us run in pursuit of the knowledge of G-d'"?

Other Questions: (i) Why doesn't Ben Azzai conclude¹ with (as in a previous Mishna (-2:1) did), "to a minor mitzvah as with a major one"? Hence, we must say that Ben Azzai is telling us that while (-2:1), "Be as careful with a minor mitzvah as with a major one," nevertheless, "Run to a minor mitzvah," is not "as with a major one." However, if so, why say, "minor," at all, instead of saying nothing, hence, letting us know that we run to each mitzvah comparatively to the mitzvah?

(ii) Ben Azzai gives two reasons, first: "For a mitzvah brings another mitzvah, and a transgression brings another transgression," and second: "For the reward² of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward of transgression is transgression." However, the second reason is the main reason in the running to this mitzvah itself, while the first reason is, if the reason of the "reward of the mitzvah" isn't enough³ to push the person to "run to..." then he has a second reason to run, "for one mitzvah brings to another mitzvah." Hence, why does Ben Azzai list the main reason second?!

There is yet another mention of running in *Ethich of Our Father* (-5:20), which, all though it is in *Tractate Fathers* ("matter of piety"), nevertheless, it is established at the opening of the Code of Jewish Law (obligatory), (-*Tur* and *Alter Rebbe*): "Judah the son of Teima would say: Be... fleeing as a deer... to do the will of your Father in Heaven."

We thus see, that there are three categories of running to a mitzvah:

- (i) The obligatory, "It is a mitzvah to run to the synagogue and to any other activity involving a mitzvah."
- (ii) That which is, "matters of piety," but yet necessary and equal to all, and hence, brought at the opening of the Code of Jewish Law: "Be... fleeing as a deer... to do the will of your Father in Heaven."
- (iii) "Run to a minor mitzvah," of *Tractate Fathers*, only a, "matters of piety," in which the novelty is specifically that it be to a, "minor mitzvah."

The Explanation:

Introduction: Alacrity is the outcome of (-Igeeret Hakodesh, Epistle 21), "His joy and eager desire to fulfill the will of his Master and to bring gratification to his Maker." Running to do a mitzvah is of one's, "joy and eager desire," reaching to above and beyond limitations and boundaries, which therefore drives him to press beyond the *norm*, and run to do the mitzvah!

However, the "joy and eager desire" of above and beyond limitations and boundaries, can only exist when one has absolute humility to the point of self-negation before G-d. When one experiences himself as a "somebody," and how much more so, when he, "holds himself proud, giving himself honor, and is honorable in his eyes," even though he can perform mitzvot with

1. Some commentaries do have these words in the Mishna, however, the *Alter Rebbe* (-[Link](#)), as well as most commentaries do not.
 2. Reward: (i) *Bartenura*: The 'reward and pleasure' that one has in a mitzvah expressing itself in his running to the mitzvah, is a mitzvah in itself. (ii) *Midrash Shmuel* and *Tanya* (chapter 37): The reward of is the 'mitzvah' that it creates a *tzavsa* bond between the person and G-d.
 3. Either because the reward of running, or the thought of *tzavsa* isn't as powerful as the reward of doing yet another mitzvah, or on the contrary, that reward would render his running as, "not for the sake of the mitzvah," but for his own selfish reward.

-cont. on page 3

This Week...

FRIDAY, MAY 5, 2023 ★ יד' אייר תשפ"ג

PESACH SHENI: A second chance at Passover. Custom: Eat Matzah · Theme: *It is never too late!*

Shabbat Candle Lighting: 7:36 PM · **Kabbalat Shabbat:** 7:30 PM

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 2023 ★ טו' אייר תשפ"ג

TORAH READING: **Emor** (Leviticus 21:1-24:23) · HAFTORAH: **Ezekiel** (44:15-31)

Shacharit: 9:30 AM · **Mincha:** 7:15 PM · **Shabbat Ends:** N. Miami: 8:31 PM

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023 ★ יח' אייר תשפ"ג

LAG B'OMER: Yahrtzeit of **Rabbi Shimon Bar Yachai** · Be Happy! · Study of the mystical teachings of Chassidism.

A Time to Run -Cont. from page 1

Joy, nevertheless, such a person can not "step out of himself" and run to a mitzvah. (-Maimonides, Laws of Lulav,8:15), "Anyone who lowers himself and thinks lightly of his person in," he can arouse within himself a limitless joy, which drives him to run to a mitzvah. "Thus, David, King of Israel, declared (-Samuel II 6:22), 'I will hold myself even more lightly esteemed than this and be humble in my eyes,' because there is no greatness or honor other than celebrating before G-d, as (-Samuel II 6:16), states: 'King David was dancing wildly and whistling before G-d.'"

With this we can understand the Alter Rebbe's bringing the verse (-Hosea 6:3), "(And let us know) *Let us run in pursuit of the knowledge of G-d,*" for his ruling of, "It is a mitzvah to run to the synagogue and to any other activity involving a mitzvah" :

- (i) The Alter Rebbe, even though he brings the reason, isn't oft to bring the scriptural source, for his ruling, and especially in this case, when his predecessor codifier, the Tur, doesn't?
- (ii) The Talmud (-Brochos 6b) brings as a source for, "And to any other activity involving a mitzvah," the verse⁴ (-Hosea 11:10), "They shall walk after G-d, Who will roar like a lion (In other words, one should rush as though he were chased by a lion)." The Alter Rebbe brings verse 6:3 for running to a synagogue and all other mitzvot?
- (iii) The Alter Rebbe omits the opening word of the verse, "v'naidah - וְנִדְעָה: And let us know"?

The Answer: In the Alter Rebbe's quoting the verse, he doesn't mean to bring the source, but the reason for the law! The reason one runs to a mitzvah is, "Let us run in pursuit of the knowledge of G-d."

The Tzemach Tzedek (-Link) explains the double terminology of the verse's, "And let us know... the knowledge of G-d," to be speaking of (-Samuel I 2:3), "For the L-rd is a G-d of knowledges (plural: דְּעוֹת)," the two paradigms of Knowledge: Superior Knowledge⁵ and Inferior Knowledge⁶. The, "Let us run," comes from the, "in pursuit of the (Superior) Knowledge of G-d," in which we are, "And be humble in my eyes," and "Nothing" before G-d. While, "And let us know," is the Inferior Knowledge, which, while it is the necessary introduction to the Superior Knowledge, nevertheless, in itself, it leaves us with, "holds himself proud, giving himself honor, and is honorable in his eyes," as a "Something," and hence, will not drive one to, "Let us run."

Concerning the first category of running to a mitzvah, it is powerful to understand that even though the internal drive to running to a mitzvah is from a total self-abnegation of Superior Knowledge, nevertheless, Code of Jewish Law rules equally for everyone, including those who have not reached Superior Knowledge (or even Inferior Knowledge), to physically run to synagogue to pray, and to all mitzvot! (So is the way of Jewish Law, that even though the laws are aligned with the higher mystical interior dimension of the mitzvah, nevertheless, the law applies to every Jew⁷.) Why? Because the action leads to the interior feeling! Hence the verse states, "Let us run," through which we will then reach, "in pursuit of the knowledge of G-d," including the self-abnegation of Superior Knowledge to G-d! And this explains why the law is stated specifically in the law of running to a synagogue to pray, for (-Taanis 2a), "Which is the service that is in the heart? You must say this is prayer." Hence, it is through the, "Let us run in pursuit of the knowledge of G-d," to prayer ("Service of the heart") that the heart evolves into the Superior Knowledge, through which we can now run to all mitzvot.

Now, let us see the novelty of the second category of running to a mitzvah: "Judah the son of Teima would say: Be... fleeing as a deer... to do the will of your Father in Heaven." Here we are speaking of, "matters of piety" stated in Tractate fathers, being that it speaks of the Interior Dimension of the mitzvah: "To do the will of your Father in Heaven." However, being that we are speaking of the general, "To do the will of your Father in Heaven," which isn't speaking of the action of a mitzvah, but rather, of the equal experience, necessary to all, at the very start of the day, before one even recites the Modeh Ani (-Link) --the essential non-defilable purity of a Jew acknowledging and expressing gratefulness to G-d, therefore, this "matter of piety," is established as an obligatory law at the very beginning of the Code of Jewish Law, "immediately upon waking from sleep"!

Then there is the third category of, "Ben Azzai would say: Run to a minor mitzvah." Ben Azzai is teaching us a total, "matters of piety," that even when we are not speaking of the general, "Do the will of your Father in Heaven," and the general, "Who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us," but rather, we are speaking of one experiencing one specific individual mitzvah (hence, he sees it as a minor mitzvah, meaning one specific action of service to G-d), here too, one is to work diligently to reach the experience of limitless joy and desire to, "run"! And Ben Azzai is the one to teach this, since (-Yevomot 63b), "Ben Azzai says... 'And you, be fruitful and multiply,'...What shall I do, as my soul yearns for Torah (and I do not wish to deal with anything else)." Hence, Ben Azzi was in such a state of yearning ("run") to the point of (-Chagiga 14b), "Four entered the orchard (deepest bliss of Torah secrets)... Ben Azzai glimpsed (at the Divine Presence) and died," from an intense yearning, just as did Aharon's two sons, Nadav and Avihu (-Link) in the Tabernacle!

4. Some explain that the Talmud is using that verse not as a source for running to a mitzvah, in general, but specifically, to permit running even on Shabbat.

5. Superior Knowledge: "G-d is Something and we are Nothing," hence, creation was in essence "creation nihil ex".

6. Inferior Knowledge: "G-d is Nothing (defies any properties for a Something) and we are Something," hence, creation was in "creation ex nihilo".

7. i. e. The reason for reciting the Verses of Praise (-Link) and Blessings of Shema (-Link) before Shema (-Link) is because it is necessary to concentrate on the nullifications and praise of creations (Verses of Praise) and angels (Blessings of Shema) before we can experience our own "Proclaiming G-d as King of the Seven Heavens and Earth," and "Love G-d your G-d with all your heart, ...soul, and with all your might." Nevertheless, everyone, even those who cannot concentrate upon all this, needs to first recite the Verses of Praise and Blessings of Shema before Shema.

The Parsha

The Portion of Emor

The kohanim (priests) were instructed to maintain an added measure of purity. They were forbidden to attend a funeral unless it was immediate family. Physical contact with the dead would defile them. They could not marry an unchaste woman. They could not marry a divorcee. The kohain gadol (High Priest) was to assume an even greater measure of holiness.

Kohanim with a physical disorder were unfit to serve in the Sanctuary, still they could partake from all sacrifices. However if he was in a state of impurity he could not eat from the sacrifices, to do so was punishable with (metaphysical) detachment (Karet).

Animals that were offered as sacrifices had to be free of physical defects and at least eight days old.

This week's reading details the festivals, beginning with Passover. On the second day of Passover the Jews were to bring the Omer offering. From that day they are to count seven weeks and on the fiftieth day (Shavout) bring a meal offering.

The first day of the seventh month is a festival when the Shofar is sounded. The tenth day of the month shall be a day of forgiveness, when we are to fast. The fifteenth of the month shall usher in the seven-day festival of Sukkot. On this festival you are to dwell in a thatched hut and take a fruit of the citron tree, a palm branch, myrtle branches, and willows. Shmini Atzeret followed this.

The Jews were instructed to use pure olive oil for the Temple candelabra. Sufficient oil was to be provided so that the Menorah remained lit throughout the night.

Inspiration

Acharei-Kedoshim Lessons

G-d isn't shy about
discussing with us
infidelity and incest
That's what caring
fathers do

Rabbi Avrohom Lipszyc
The Jewish Mind

A Time to Run -cont. from page 3

Hence, Ben Azzai was the one to appreciate the, "Run to a minor mitzvah," being able to feel the infinite sweetness within each and every single ("minor") mitzvah!

In closing, let us return to the order of the two reasons that Ben Azzai gives. In a Jew's feeling the sweetness within each individual mitzvah there can be one of two ways:

- (i) The Jew feels the preciousness within the mitzvah itself, "G-d's nearness is good."
- (ii) The Jew feels what he (his G-dly Soul) benefits (-Psalms 73:28), "G-d's nearness is my good."

Hence, Ben Azzai brings two reasons, in which the main reason is, "Mitzvah (commandment) leads to Mitzvah (tzavsa; connection with G-d)," not about one's self ("reward"), but about the preciousness of the mitzvah itself, "G-d's nearness is good." However, being that Ben Azzai is speaking to one who may not yet be at this stage⁸ of, "G-d's nearness is good," in itself, without focusing on his experience of this, hence, Ben Azzai also brings a second reason, "For the reward of a mitzvah (commandment) is a Mitzvah (tzavsa; connection with G-d)," pointing out to the person, that even for one who can just focus on his own reward, he too, can reach the level of a limitless joy and yearning ("run"), being that the reward of a (single individual: "minor") mitzvah is infinite, to the point of (-Kedushin 39b), "There is no reward for a mitzvah in this world," for the world is finite, and the reward is infinite, hence, the reward is only in the World to Come. Hence, even just for the reward of a mitzvah, one can experience, "Run to a minor mitzvah!"

8. For even within those who fulfill all the obligations, and are occupied with, "matters of piety," there are different levels in their, "joy and yearning," of mitzvot.

Occasions

Birthdays

14 Iyar	Eitan Marks
15 Iyar	Alita Neiman
16 Iyar	Ella Licht
16 Iyar	Ariel Marks
16 Iyar	Hadarah Owen
19 Iyar	Brett Rudman
20 Iyar	Nicole Faur

Anniversary

18 Iyar	Paul & Rachel Zuckerman
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Yahrzeit

15 Iyar	Eliyahu Faur Father of Alberto Faur
16 Iyar	Eliyahou Faur Father of Alberto Faur
17 Iyar	Hirschel Owen Father of Hadarah Owen
17 Iyar	Abraham Nothmann Father of Irene Slochowski