One Who Separates from the World Alone and Doesn't Want to Know All of It Remains a Horse | Zohar Pekudei 1 and 2 Re'eh 5786 (Auto Translated)

English

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Shiur Overview

The Secret of Mishneh Torah: Daily Mitzvot and the Form of the Jew

Introduction: Parashat Re'eh and Sefer Mishneh Torah

My teachers and rabbis, today is Erev Shabbat Parashat Re'eh. In this parasha, the Torah arrives, after all the introductions of Moshe Rabbeinu, at the stage where it comes to review and repeat the Torah—and for this reason the entire book of Devarim is called 'Mishneh Torah'. The parasha opens, 'These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall observe to do' (Deuteronomy 12:1), and from here onward begin all the mitzvot and all the laws that Moshe Rabbeinu reviews and repeats, which Israel must fulfill in the Land of Israel. Most of them, or some of them, were already learned once in the book of Shemot, and now they review and repeat the laws of the Torah, the Torah and the mitzvah. And indeed the Torah in the book of Devarim calls itself many times by different names—'mitzvah', 'Torah', 'chukim'—and in general the meaning is one. This is the book of Mishneh Torah that we are beginning this week.

I wish to explain somewhat the secret of Mishneh Torah, the secret of the difference between what Moshe Rabbeinu taught Israel the first time—what is called 'at Mount Sinai', to the first generation, the generation of the Exodus from Egypt—and what he taught Israel in the generation entering the Land.

The Deficiency of Living from Holiday to Holiday

What I wish to do in these weeks, I will explain as follows. We have learned that certainly a holiday is approaching and coming, Rosh Hashanah is approaching and coming, we have already passed Rosh Chodesh Elul, we are already blessing Elul this week. But I feel, and I have also learned from others, that there is a certain deficiency in this. For every year we repeatedly study the matters of the holidays from time to time, but to be a Jew, to be a person, is not a matter of dancing from holiday to holiday. This is good for small children in a certain sense—mitzvot aseh shehazman grama (time-bound positive commandments) arouse excitement in them, a beloved mitzvah that comes from time to time. And certainly we believe there is truth in this, and we always believe that the excitement of children is indeed truth, and there is a real secret in it. But a mature person, a person with understanding, needs to be excited a bit more from within, to be more settled, and to have much more clarity in the daily order, in the daily mitzvot.

And in this matter is connected another great principle strongly connected to the subject of the book of Devarim that we are dealing with and will expand upon further. For a holiday is a time when one goes out a bit from the regular order, goes out a bit from the world. Once there was the matter of pilgrimage, going to the Beit HaMikdash, and even when one doesn't actually do so, there is something like this—going to the beit midrash, traveling to the Rebbe, each person conducts himself in his way. Even a person who has a family—they leave him alone a bit. Usually on a regular day the wife doesn't allow going to the synagogue all day, but on Rosh Hashanah she allows it. This is the great difference because of which one can pray and learn a whole day on Rosh Hashanah, and so on Yom Kippur in an atmosphere of selichot and so forth—for this is how the order is arranged. One who lives in a Jewish neighborhood, in a Jewish family, they leave him alone; the world, reality, gives a bit of space for this.

The Holiday as Pause—Not as the Main Thing

But it follows from this that the excitement from the holidays, the emphasis on the holidays, is always a kind of emphasis on a pause. One puts aside the work a bit, the daily routine in which one must deal with family, with people, with friends, with workers, with the employer, all those matters—and contemplates and becomes excited about this. And certainly this is so: a regular person who is busy, as they say, with livelihood and economics, works, and even if he works less, he still has a family and everything that needs to be taken care of. And indeed that time is a time, 'Holidays were given to Israel only to engage in Torah' (Yerushalmi Shabbat 15). This is a time when one can engage more in Torah and in what is called service of God.

The Daily Mitzvot Require Intention and Clarity

And with all this, this is not correct. For it is impossible for a person to live this way from Shabbat to Shabbat, from holiday to holiday. Every single day there is a day. Therefore I believe it is very important to enter a bit into the order of the daily mitzvot. One can say this exactly so: there is a mitzvah, there are mitzvot that come from time to time—Sefer Zemanim—blowing shofar, and waving lulav, and even Shabbat itself, to say Good Shabbos, to pray on Shabbat, and the like, things that everyone already knows something about, and whoever has a connection has some intention in them. They learn about this in Chassidic and Kabbalistic books, and know the intentions of all these things.

But every day a person does very many mitzvot: he puts on tefillin and tzitzit, prays, learns a bit, does chesed, engages in settling the world and in livelihood, and sets times for Torah—all the things that a person does. And it is much more proper, and much more beneficial for a person, that he should have a certain intention and clarity in these mitzvot.

Sefer Pekudin in the Zohar

And the truth is this, that the Zohar, and likewise all those who composed reasons for the mitzvot—and this is very interesting, there is a book of reasons for mitzvot in the Zohar called 'Pekudin'—in our Zohar it is usually printed scattered among the parshiyot, where in every place where there was a mitzvah

they inserted the section, but in its source, and today it has already been printed also by itself, there was a book called 'Pekudin', which is a beginning on 'pekudei d'mara alma'. This is the book of mitzvot of the Zohar—it is not called 'Sefer HaMitzvot' but a book of reasons for the mitzvot.

And I believe that it is built primarily, not exactly one to one, not every single detail, but it is built on the Rambam. I will prepare a table once to show exactly how much this can be seen, but it is clear to me that it is built, if not exactly on the same order precisely—there may be differences—it is built on the idea that the Rambam says at the end of the positive commandments in Sefer HaMitzvot. At the end, when the Rambam counts all 613 mitzvot, the Rambam says at the end of the positive commandments that there are many types of mitzvot. There is great depth in how to understand this, and the Arizal in Shaarei Mitzvot discusses it with investigations. But I want to say the words of the Rambam, and it seems to me that the Zohar follows this path.

Types of Mitzvot According to the Rambam

There are different types of mitzvot, says the Rambam. There are mitzvot that apply only to the community, such as the mitzvah of building the Beit HaMikdash and the mitzvah of destroying Amalek. There are mitzvot that apply to a person only if a certain event happens to him—if he was a zav he must bring a sacrifice. And it is possible for a person to pass all his days and never have the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of divorce, or the sacrifice of a zav, or nazir, and the like.

There are mitzvot that apply more to certain realities of the world, of commerce—if one buys a Hebrew maidservant he must free her according to the laws of a Hebrew maidservant, and the like. There are mitzvot that apply only in the presence of the Temple, like sacrifices, terumot and ma'asrot and all such things. All these are types of mitzvot that are not among the mitzvot that he calls 'necessary mitzvot', that every Jew is obligated in every day, at all times and in all places—not necessarily every day, but every year, in the regular life cycle of a person, there are certain mitzvot that apply.

And the Rambam makes a list and says there are sixty mitzvot that can be called necessary mitzvot. These are mitzvot that every person—an adult, a male is stated—is obligated in them in every place and at all times, must do them. And he counts them and makes a list of the mitzvot, and in Shevet HaLevi Frankel one can see the list with the headings of the mitzvot. And in this list his intention is not—he says, for example, that mezuzah is part of the list, and even though a person who doesn't live in a house doesn't need a mezuzah, nevertheless in the regular course of life, that a person has a house, marries a woman, these mitzvot he includes in the list. But a mitzvah that applies only if his brother died without children and he must perform yibum or chalitzah—this doesn't enter here, for this is not the way of the regular course of life of a Jew. It comes out to sixty mitzvot, says the Rambam. Sixty mitzvot—these are the frequent mitzvot, and he calls them necessary.

The Form of the Jew: 613 Mitzvot or Sixty Mitzvot

More correctly I would say thus: we always speak that a person needs to have an image, that he can describe how the life of a Jew looks. What is the life of a Jew? Usually they say—613 mitzvot. And it is true, and the Zohar expands and deepens on this, here and in other places. But behold they said in the Gemara that 613 mitzvot—248 positive commandments corresponding to his limbs and 365 corresponding to the days of the solar year (Makkot 23b). It comes out that this is like an image of a person living in time. This is a person living in time, in his year—how do Jewish lives look?

From here they parallel and say that the mitzvot correspond to the limbs. As if just as there is an image of a person in physicality—that he has so and so many limbs, and he lives in so and so much time, every year three hundred sixty-five days—so there is an image of a person, that one can call it in spirituality, that the completeness of the soul of a Jew is in that he fulfills the 613 mitzvot. This is how a Jew looks. What is a Jew? One who fulfills the 613 mitzvot.

The Question of the Arizal

And now, on this immediately arises a question, and I believe it is a good question, and I see that the answer is as I will explain—one can deepen, but I believe the simple answer is this. And the Arizal asks: what will be with all those mitzvot that don't apply? As you say—there is a mitzvah that applies only to a Kohen, there is one that applies only to a king, there is one that applies only in the time of the Temple, there is one that applies only if such a case occurs. If so, how can one say that the form of a Jew is 613 mitzvot? For in practice he doesn't fulfill 613 mitzvot. A person fulfills, according to the words of the Rambam, approximately sixty mitzvot.

We are speaking now about positive commandments, for negative commandments are a somewhat different Torah. But in positive commandments there are approximately sixty mitzvot that a Jew fulfills. And for the Rambam there is no difficulty in this, and the Rambam indeed counts everything: the Torah in its completeness is 248 positive commandments, but in practice, what is the image of the Jew in actuality—it is the sixty mitzvot.

And I see that part of the example, what I draw from the Zohar—for part of the Zohar called Sefer Pekudin, the mitzvot of the Zohar, more or less—indeed the matter is not precise one hundred percent, there are differences that can be discussed in detail when we arrive—but more or less, the Zohar counts in its book of mitzvot approximately the sixty mitzvot. And even less than this, it has only forty-seven mitzvot, and not all of them exactly those mitzvot, but in any case, most of the main mitzvot that everyone would certainly remember are counted in the book of mitzvot, for the book of mitzvot of the Zohar is not on 613 mitzvot but on those proximate mitzvot. And perhaps he didn't finish when he reached forty-seven, and he should have added more, and it's not exactly on the same order, and this is not exactly a difficulty—but it's on the same idea.

The Answer: 248 is a Hint, Sixty in Practice

What do we do with the question that if so, who said it's 248 mitzvot? I believe that simply this is not a great difficulty, rather this is a difficulty that takes a hint too seriously. Indeed, in general 248 mitzvot—this teaches us that the mitzvot are a depiction of the body, a depiction of how a Jew looks—but actual action is sixty. And if a person wants specifically, he will say that this is also so with the limbs of the body. For there are limbs that names don't depend on them, there are limbs that aren't really like human limbs in practice, whose entire function is only if a case occurs. A person has in his body in practice different parts, antibodies, an immune system, made

to serve only if such a case occurs, and not everything in the body itself is done in practice always.

In the body, when they say two hundred forty-eight limbs, one can divide much separation. In general one can see that a person has ten limbs—hand and foot and belly and so forth, if one counts even internal organs. Sefer Yetzirah arrives at twelve. Let's say twenty-two limbs can be counted in a person according to the way of Sefer Yetzirah. Also in a person himself, the enormous number of two hundred forty-eight is a very large number. It's true that that count encompasses, according to whoever makes the list in Masechet Ohalot I believe, exactly all the limbs or bones in a person.

But in any case, it's not correct to say simply that the completeness is 613 mitzvot. This is only like a hint. In actual practice, more or less, these are the sixty mitzvot.

365 Corresponding to Days of the Solar Year—Not Corresponding to Sinews

And as I say, from the sixty mitzvot most of them—and one cannot say that the main thing is the mitzvot that come from time to time. Indeed it's true that 365, and this is very important: part of the depiction of the person is his time. And from here I say—we have become accustomed to hear 248 limbs and 365 sinews, but according to the Gemara, and also in the Zohar, here it seems they go in a different way. This is stated in the Gemara explicitly, the hint of Rabbi Simlai, that 365 corresponding to the days of the solar year (Makkot 23b), not corresponding to sinews.

I don't know what sinews are. Certainly this is a hint for everyone, but no one has a list of sinews. The list of limbs is stated in the Mishnah, but in the list of sinews I don't know what sinews are and why there would be three hundred sixty-five. It seems to me just a hint, sometimes it's written thus in books, but this is not the main thing. The main thing is the hint of the days, and this is very simple: a Jew lives in time, lives in three hundred sixty-five days.

And now, certainly, within the three hundred sixty-five days there are among them, let's say, twenty days that are holidays, and one can add another fifty Shabbatot in every year—fifty-four Shabbatot in every year—let's say, fifty-sixty of them holy days, mikra'ei kodesh, special days. And with all this, in a regular year there are three hundred regular days. Every day there is a day, every day is a holy day, every day is something.

The Regular Daily Mitzvot are the Main Thing

And one needs to hear—and I don't mean only this, but also this: first I say that one needs to speak from the regular day, from the regular order. And even in what I say, I will preface one thing: one should not count from all those mitzvot in which there are sometimes exceptional mitzvot—what is done with a get, what is done with yibum and chalitzah, what a Kohen does—not exactly exceptional, but this is not the regular course of life. And it seems to me that when they say that the mitzvah is the depiction of the Jew, this is not the intention.

And as I see from the Zohar, it doesn't give reasons for every single mitzvah—there are things that are in simple faith, and afterward it tries to give reasons for the mitzvot that are generally applicable. And one needs to discuss this, but in general, the Zohar gives reasons for these—for the regular daily mitzvot. And what is the main form? On this it is said that the sixty mitzvot are the form of the Jew, not 613 mitzvot.

And besides this I say that the mitzvot that one should speak about mainly are the regular daily mitzvot. Most of the sixty mitzvot are the mitzvot done every day—when one prays, learns Torah, puts on tefillin, tzitzit, and so forth until Shabbat, the daily life order. And these are two things.

The Holiday is Not an Escape Route, But to Clarify the Entire Year

Not only this, but let us contemplate this: even what there are holidays—indeed, what they say in practice is very beneficial and very important, that the holidays are the time when there is leisure for this—for the holiday is made such that they won't use it as an escape route. And this is the important thing. Not that they will use the holiday in a way that when a holiday comes a person can escape from the regular order. The month of Elul arrives, and one can say another two psalms after the prayer—and this thing is like a kind of what is not the regular order. A holiday is a time when one can learn better.

For a person needs to learn about tefillin. A Jew puts on tefillin every day, and all week he has no leisure to think about this. For it is written in the verse, 'so that the Torah of Hashem may be in your mouth' (Exodus 13:9). Why does one put on tefillin? Because a person works all week. And therefore on Shabbat one doesn't put on tefillin. I believe this is the simple meaning—that on Shabbat one doesn't need tefillin. They say that Shabbat itself is a sign. What is Shabbat itself a sign? That on Shabbat there is leisure. And what is the sign? The sign is the cessation. The very rest of Shabbat gives leisure to think about the Holy One Blessed be He, leisure to think about the Torah.

All week, when one doesn't rest, one puts on tefillin so that there will be a reminder, that there will be 'the Torah of Hashem in your mouth'. The verse says, says Shema Yisrael, puts Shema Yisrael 'between your eyes' and 'on your hand', actually puts Shema Yisrael in practice. This is a reminder. But what does one do on Shabbat? Not that Shabbat doesn't do the tefillin—this is only if one makes a distinction, that the action of tefillin doesn't do. But the idea of tefillin, of Shema Yisrael, of vehayah im shamo'a, the parasha stated in tefillin, of the Exodus from Egypt—all these things he does. On Shabbat he does this internally.

And now, after he kept Shabbat, understood Shabbat in a clearer way, understood better what is the meaning of 'Shema Yisrael Hashem is one', for all week when he puts on tefillin he strengthens the tefillin more—what is 'the Torah of Hashem in your mouth'? This is Shabbat. And so it is on Rosh Hashanah: when one blows the shofar and fulfills the mitzvah of shofar, this is essentially an explanation and expansion on things he does every day. 'Happy is the people who know the teruah' (Psalms 89:16)—this is a subject of prayer, of accepting the yoke of Heaven; Yom Kippur is teshuvah, and Sukkot is joy—all those values that are spoken about on every holiday are its subject. But it's not done such that because it's a holiday he has no business with time, that they connect to the holiday. The holiday is not for the sake of connecting to the holiday itself. The holiday is in order to find a bit of leisure, in order to clarify more the things done all year—the tefillin, and the mezuzah, and the tzitzit, and honoring father and mother—one needs to make a special holiday for them. And commerce in faith, and chesed, and all those simple things done all year. This in my view is the important thing.

The Exodus from Egypt and Mishneh Torah: The Generation of the Desert Versus the Generation Entering the Land

In honor of this I think to learn a bit—in this shiur I'm not learning so much inside, but to learn a bit the book of mitzvot of the Zohar, and to try to express what can be, the insights that can be understood and clarified on this subject.

Therefore I will return to what I began with from Parashat Re'eh. If so, let's return to this, that everyone will understand—it's simple what I'm saying. And immediately everyone will understand that what I said now is exactly the same thing. For what? That when Israel was in the desert, there was more of an aspect of holiday, more of an aspect of the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt—this is the word of the generation of the desert. They left Egypt, and from this they make Pesach, and from this come all the festivals, and Shabbat is a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. This is the way that Moshe Rabbeinu taught the Torah the first time. Afterward, in the book of Devarim, he taught much more the Torah of daily life.

The Subject of Slaughtering Chulin and the Bamot

And one sees this clearly, and I thought about this this week—there is a good reason for this—and one sees this clearly in the parasha, in the first parasha. And one needs to think about this, and one can think about this from very many aspects, and I believe that we still don't know the simple meaning clearly to this day, and perhaps this is from the secrets of the Torah that still need to be revealed. But what is important is to see that the first thing that Moshe Rabbeinu explains in the parasha—the second thing let's say, that the first thing is to explain idolatry—the second thing, connected to this, is the subject of slaughter, the subject of the bamot, the entire discussion that when they come to the Land of Israel they will live far from the Beit HaMikdash. Moshe Rabbeinu says: you will live far from the Beit HaMikdash, and this is good, 'when Hashem your God enlarges your border as He promised you' (Deuteronomy 12:20)—you will have a large border, you will live far.

Perhaps they will think—as perhaps indeed was the law in the generation of the desert according to one opinion among the Tannaim—perhaps they will think that every time they slaughter they need to make a sacrifice, to make an olah, a zevach. The Torah says: no, this is not the intention, this is the way of the nations. Look and see at the nations, a very interesting thing: look and see at the nations, for it is written, 'You shall not do according to all that we do here today, every man what is right in his own eyes' (Deuteronomy 12:8)—don't see, 'you shall not do so to Hashem your God' (Deuteronomy 12:4), don't do as we do now. And what do we do now? Now every day is like a holiday—not every day exactly, but every time one eats meat one needs to make shelamim, needs to bring a sacrifice to the Mishkan. Whenever one goes, when the day comes that a Jew is hungry and wants to eat an animal, meat, he makes a sacrifice from it. It becomes like a holiday, it becomes like a holy thing. He goes before the Mishkan, before Hashem, and brings a sacrifice.

The Torah says: when you come to the Land of Israel you won't do this. You see that the nations do so, that they have on every 'under every leafy tree' some idol and graven image—don't do like them. You will do completely differently. You will go 'to the place that Hashem will choose', and there you will bring sacrifices. Certainly there are sacrifices. And when will you go there? On the festivals, as it is written at the end of the parasha, 'to the place that Hashem will choose' there you will go three times a year. Very good.

The Permission of Meat of Desire

But all year, if you are hungry—eat. The Torah says, 'with all the desire of your soul you shall slaughter and eat meat' (Deuteronomy 12:15). You have a desire?—we are speaking about desires—you have a desire? Eat! It's permitted, it's permitted! You don't need to go to the Beit HaMikdash. Indeed, blood don't eat. But in general, you have a desire? Eat! Not everything you do at home needs to be made into a mitzvah, needs to be made into a sacrifice. And it is good that you conduct yourself according to the Torah—certainly you will listen to the Torah, even in this itself you will listen to the Torah. 'Guard yourself' (Deuteronomy 12:13)—you will guard to listen to the Torah in that you don't bring a sacrifice. There is at home all year, and this is the main Torah.

And they will ask: indeed, as it is written afterward they will see that they will come every shemittah, or they will make hakhel, they will come to be reminded and to learn the Torah. But regularly, day-to-day, your world won't revolve, your regular day or what you want to eat won't revolve around this that you must make a sacrifice. Not every time you eat needs there to be a sacrifice. There is something called the permission of meat of desire: when a person has a desire, he is hungry, and it comes to his mind to eat meat, he will eat meat calmly and not make a mitzvah from it.

The Deeper Drash: All Year There is Also Chol

What comes out is what I wish to bring up here, and this is very explicit. People speak about this that in the Land of Israel 'a person plows at the time of plowing and sows at the time of sowing', that it is different from the generation of the desert. This is a drash written in many books. But deeper is the drash in this week's parasha, and I am more founded, more connected with the simple meaning. That in the Torah it is written here that there is—one can call this—all year in times, all year in the world. That the times of mikra'ei kodesh that are spoken of at the end of the parasha—there is Shabbat, there are festivals—or in place of the same thing: Jerusalem, even the rest of the Land of Israel, not everything is holy in the same way. One needs to understand this.

If so, it comes out that the Torah innovated here that there is chol as well. No—chol they always knew there is, this is not an innovation. What the Torah innovates here, apparently, is the way—and this is perhaps more correct to say, although I say that nothing of these words is clear, and one needs to deepen greatly to understand what is the meaning of the words we use. But one can say thus: a Jew, the havah amina—and the Torah perhaps would call this havah amina idolatry, and one needs to hear this, this is what the Torah calls the havah amina—idolatry. The havah amina is that if a Jew wants to serve the Holy One Blessed be He, he needs to be excited, needs to make a sacrifice, needs this to be exactly service of God. And if he lives far, he will do here, 'in every place that he desires', 'in every place that desires'—you want to do here? Do here, make here some Beit HaMikdash, make here some bamah. And so indeed they did during the time of permission of bamot, so indeed they did.

The Torah comes and says now: after you have the Beit HaMikdash—the Beit HaMikdash is a great level, a fixed place,

a place that the Holy One Blessed be He chose, rest and inheritance, there the Shechinah remains. This is a great innovation, a great action, not the same level of an individual and a bamah, this is 'in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned' (Exodus 20:21). You have the Beit HaMikdash. And then, the Torah tells you, know that what you sit in your house and you have 'your soul desires to eat meat'—this is exactly as good. There is no need at all to go to the Beit HaMikdash in order to be, as they say afterward, 'for you are a holy people to Hashem your God and Hashem chose you to be His treasured people' (Deuteronomy 14:2). You are very holy, you are very chosen, you are a treasure, you are all those things. And this doesn't say that you must go to make a holiday. This says that you can stay at home and eat meat at home.

Chol is Not Holiness, But it Has Laws

And here great precision is needed. If you say that every place is holy, then no place is holy, for the word has no meaning then. No—say that it is not holy. It is chol, it is chulin, slaughtering of chulin. They learn here Masechet slaughtering of zevachim, slaughtering of kodashim—this is slaughtering of chulin. It has laws, 'and you shall slaughter as I commanded you' (Deuteronomy 12:21)—you will do the slaughter according to the laws of slaughter that exist, don't eat blood, listen to the Torah, fulfill all the laws that apply to you. But the way how to be a good person, the way how to be a Jew—it won't be in that you move to the Beit HaMikdash, not in that you make a sacrifice from everything. A completely different life order, a completely different thing.

Therefore one needs to understand well what this really says, how the thing works, what is the havah amina, what is the conclusion, and what connection this has with the subject of bamot and what connection this has with idolatry. All these are important to understand. But what I say practically is what one sees here, what I want to say for our matter: that there are mitzvot, that there are mitzvot that were made for the rest, 365 days of the solar year, the rest of the year, daily life. Then one fulfills mitzvot, then one does, and one doesn't need to make a sacrifice from everything, one doesn't need to search in everything even for another thing—even ma'aser sheni the Torah innovates this week: once one had to bring everything to the Torah, no—one can redeem it, redeem it for money, and then you will eat ma'aser sheni here. Certainly, if you want a complete eating, you will then take the money and then eat the thing, but there are ways how one can remain in the regular place, what is called the life order of a householder, and one doesn't need to change.

Certainly, he will give charity—there is in this something similar to redemption of ma'aser sheni. With his money he will go once a year to Jerusalem, or when he goes to do 'and you shall rejoice before Hashem', that whole matter. But a regular Sunday is not 'and you shall rejoice before Hashem'. This is a great innovation. In the same place where it is written the innovation that there is 'and you shall rejoice before Hashem', it is also written 'and you shall rejoice before Hashem'. And also on that regular day one can be happy, one can be holy, one can be 'you are a holy people to Hashem your God', by not eating nevelah, by 'you shall not eat any abomination' (Deuteronomy 14:3), all forbidden foods—but not by making from everything directly something in holiness, service, sacrifice. Therefore one needs to understand this much better.

The First Mitzvah in Sefer Pek

The First Mitzvah in Sefer Pekudin: Knowledge of Hashem—General and Particular

What I wish to connect and say following the Zohar. The Zohar doesn't say this regarding this context, but it says in general regarding the subject of Mishneh Torah, regarding what Moshe Rabbeinu taught Israel the second time.

The Zohar says—and this is the Zohar right here at the beginning, the first mitzvah, the first mitzvah of the Pekudin; we once said a shiur about this in Parashat Bo, I remember—the first mitzvah, the Zohar says thus: there is a mitzvah, the first mitzvah is 'I am Hashem your God', the mitzvah of knowledge of Hashem. This is the first mitzvah, the first mitzvah of the Torah.

Now, the Zohar says, the mitzvah is written twice in the Torah. I don't know—it's written how many times, but let's speak about two verses. Once it is written, 'And you shall know that I am Hashem your God who brings you out from the land of Egypt' (Exodus 6:7). This is one verse. It is written that you should know that the Holy One Blessed be He took you out of Egypt. This is written in the book of Shemot. In the book of Devarim it is written differently. Something similar is written, but it is written thus, 'And you shall know today and take to your heart that Hashem is God in heaven above and on the earth below, there is none else' (Deuteronomy 4:39).

A different innovation is written. Before it was written only 'I am Hashem your God', I am the Holy One Blessed be He who took you out of Egypt. It wasn't written 'Hashem is God', and the innovation is 'Hashem is God'. One can add all the detail, 'in heaven above and on the earth below there is none else', all those words that the Torah details in the book of Devarim. Whoever learns the book of Devarim sees that it is full of details, lists, 'this type and this type and this type', very long verses, long lists. This is not written in the book of Shemot.

The Distinction of General and Particular

The Zohar says: this is the distinction that the Zohar calls general and particular. And general and particular has many meanings. General and particular can be, according to Kabbalah, Tiferet and Malchut—Malchut is in general and Tiferet in particular. But it also means the simple thing. General means in general, what we call simple faith, without knowledge, without details.

Or one can call it—the next section in the Zohar explains, and this is also this week's parasha, that there is in prayer a servant and there is a son. Servant—service in general, accepts the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, does what is commanded. And son—one who understands each thing in particular, understands why and what and what is the difference in each thing. And this is again the same thing of general and particular.

Servants in the Book of Vayikra, Sons in the Book of Devarim

And the Zohar says, and very interestingly, 'My firstborn son Israel' (see Exodus 4:22) is already written in the book of Shemot, but that the mitzvot should be connected with 'and you shall take to your heart', and this is the strengthening of Parashat Re'eh. That is, in the book of Vayikra, which is the Torah of Mount Sinai, it is always written 'for they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt' (Leviticus 25:55); they are servants, therefore they must do the

mitzvot of servants. In the book of Devarim something new is written, 'You are children to Hashem your God' (Deuteronomy 14:1); if so they will do the mitzvot of children. This is a completely new feeling and new mitzvot.

And the root of the matter is the distinction in how one understands the first mitzvah. This is the root of everything: the first mitzvah which is knowledge of Hashem, in the book of Shemot it was simple, it was—one can also call it in the aspect of holiday—this is Egypt, this is the aspect of miracles. Miracles go with simple faith—one sees that the Holy One Blessed be He performed miracles, took out of Egypt, believes there is a God, believes in Hashem. Whereas in the book of Devarim it is also written that they left from the Exodus from Egypt, but something new is written: 'And you shall know today that Hashem is God... and you shall take to your heart, that Hashem is God in heaven above and on the earth below there is none else'.

Knowledge in the Way of Particular is Knowledge in the Way of Nature

This is knowledge in the way of particular. And to the way of particular one can also call in the way of nature. That is, not that he knows there is a great miracle in general, some general thing, that a holiday came, that the Exodus from Egypt came—but that he knows in particular. He can understand: the Holy One Blessed be He made the world, what one can call the work of creation, on the first day this, on the second day this, on the third day this. They know all the details, they know the entire order of creation, and from this understands 'that Hashem is God'. Elokim, as they say, Elokim in gematria is nature. Elokim—this is the conduct of the world, that He conducts the world.

And he understands that 'Hashem is Elokim', that the same One who conducts all the details—from the understanding of each detail he understands the same thing. The same thing regarding reasons for the mitzvot, the same thing regarding faith, the same thing regarding prayer. For, as the Zohar says, prayer is always spoken of from 'to serve Him with all your heart' (Deuteronomy 11:13), a type of service. All types, the entire Torah is called service—it is written 'serve Him with His Torah', 'serve Him in His Temple', perhaps 'serve Him with His mitzvot', all kinds of things are called service. But this says in general.

That is, a person can say: I have in general... everyone understands that the distinction between one who knows the intentions, knows the reasons for things, and one who doesn't know—is the distinction of general and particular. There is a simple Jew, prays, doesn't know. The entire siddur becomes the same thing, the entire year becomes the same thing. It is written that one needs to say the siddur, certainly, he does other things, says other things, but the meaning is the same meaning: he is a servant of Hashem, he praises, he prays, he thanks, whatever it may be—I'm only saying that he does, does.

A son has in him also the aspect of servant, but son, in my view, means something else. The request has a different reason from the praise, and the mitzvah of shofar has a different reason from the mitzvah of lulav. Not everything is the same thing, this is more in particularity.

The same thing: just as one doesn't understand only in general the subject of the Exodus from Egypt—that the Holy One Blessed be He conducts everything, 'Hashem your God who brings you out'—but understands and can take to heart in particular. And as we spoke another time, he doesn't take to heart about everything that the Holy One Blessed be He did everything, but he can say how the Holy One Blessed be He did this, and therefore how does he see that the Holy One Blessed be He did this?—through the way, through the precise order of nature, through the precise day. And this is knowledge in the way of particular. And this is the innovation of Sefer Mishneh Torah.

Particular Knowledge and the World: Isolation is Not Completeness

I wish to conclude with a relevant innovation that I understood this week. From here it comes out that particular knowledge has much more business with understanding the entire world. And as we learn, this is the distinction of Mishneh Torah and of the Land of Israel, that one needs to know the Land of Israel. And one needs to hear this, this is very important. And we always speak—this is a very basic question of Judaism, of the essence of man truly, in this time.

For everyone understands that the world is full of all kinds of nonsense, full of all kinds of distractions, full of all kinds of things that are not proper, that are not in order at least. And everyone understands—and I believe this is perhaps like the distinction of Pesach that we speak about in the Exodus from Egypt and in Mishneh Torah—everyone understands that by default, just to remain, as they call it to remain in Egypt, nothing will begin, and one won't even be able to remain. The Zohar says that if Moshe Rabbeinu hadn't told them 'and you shall know that I am Hashem', they would never have known, there couldn't have been any miracle. That is, that simple basic faith that they had, it enabled that there could be all those miracles, all the miracles of the Exodus from Egypt that began in the desert, all those things. And therefore he had to leave Egypt.

I believe that everyone understands that without a certain limitation, without a certain reality of closure, a person will just do what the newspaper tells him to do today, and every day he will be so confused, because the newspaper changes its mind every few weeks. But he won't be able to be a Jew, won't be able to be a person. Everyone can see this, there is no innovation in this.

The Story of the Rizhiner and the Horse

But we need to know that this is not yet the completeness, although it's not far from completeness, and one can see this. I believe the most beautiful story for this is what the Rizhiner said to that Jew with his horse. That is, a Jew came, and said he heard that one who doesn't speak for forty days merits ruach hakodesh. And so he did. They come to the Rebbe to ask why he still doesn't have ruach hakodesh. The Rebbe brought him to his horse and said to him, "Look, the horse also hasn't spoken for forty days already, and where is his ruach hakodesh? It seems one needs to do something else besides not speaking."

The Amish: One Can Remain a Horse

And I believe one can see this also in actual practice. We were this week in Pennsylvania with the Amish community, who have conducted themselves for hundreds of years not to touch the modern world, completely closed off, as much as possible. Travels on a horse, doesn't even drive a car, doesn't have a phone or computer, and so forth. And we grasped this: that

everything is very nice, but the thing doesn't make a person from a horse. He can remain a horse quite well.

We used to imagine to ourselves—and one needs to understand this, and people imagine so in many ways, also there with guarding and doing, the subject of 'and you shall guard and do' (see Deuteronomy 4:6)—a person many times imagines thus, and I see many people, and sometimes I have this mistake: that is, actually I would want to learn the entire Shas, and the entire Zohar, and all the writings of Rav Kook, and the entire Ramak, and all science, everything that's relevant, philosophy, everything one can learn. But what? I get up in the morning, the newspaper comes to me and tells me news, and social media comes, and all kinds of other yetzer haras come, and in honor of this I don't learn. Ah, if only I could be completely closed off, live in the clouds of glory, I wouldn't have internet, I wouldn't have all those things—I would certainly learn day and night and would have finished Shas three times long ago.

Now, it's true, sometimes there are people for whom this is true. But for most people this is not true. And one can look—and I don't need to speak about the gentiles, one can speak even about Jews, and perhaps it's better to speak about the gentiles—but one can look and see that with those people, the more closed off they are, the more disconnected from the world, it's still not true that that person is a greater Torah scholar. That's what you would think, no? Therefore, a more modern person, walks around more in the street, knows more what's happening, reads more news, more politics, and what's happening in the world—takes much time from him, takes much energy, won't be able to be such a Torah scholar. Whereas the one completely closed off, who knows nothing—you would think that certainly among them are full of Torah scholars, full of geniuses, full of innovations, and they know the Torah clearly. And meanwhile one doesn't see this, and one needs to say this, one doesn't see so very strongly.

Certainly one doesn't see that the more closed off the community is, the more upright it is, the more full of Torah scholars, the more full of mitzvot. A bit yes and a bit no. And particularly—let's not speak about practical mitzvot, it's harder to speak about them, for everyone says that what he does is a greater mitzvah—but let's speak about something that can be easily measured, in understanding Torah, in intellect. I say there this past week, that from the innovations that one can know from understanding Torah, from grasping Torah, from grasping wisdom, they are today much better than the Rema. And one can see clearly that even we understand Chumash, simple peshat, in a certain sense, those who have more yetzer haras, those who look more at newspapers, understand better. So I believe, and I believe there is a certain objectivity in this. Certainly, if one doesn't learn at all, one doesn't understand at all, and one needs to know that there is like the way of the mitzvah: if one only watches television, certainly he doesn't learn, and doesn't know. But it's still not clear that one who never watches television understands better. This week's parasha he understands more weakly than one who does watch. Often you've heard from me the opposite.

The Torah Was Given to Man in the World

Besides this, that just so, the Torah was given to the world—for if you weren't in the world, at all, you would need to go to the angels, 'is there any work of Egypt among you', 'is there any jealousy among you', you could eat meat and milk because you would be an angel. For they speak that the Torah was given to man in the world. But even so, perhaps there are deeper reasons for this. I believe the deep reason is what I'm saying here: that it's not enough, that this is a necessary introduction. If a person has no closure, no definition, he will just do every day what the newspaper says. But from this that he doesn't do what the newspaper says, there's still not enough at all. There's still not enough at all in this that he 'you shall know before Hashem', and he is obligated. For the obligation of faith is in obligation in general, and afterward in particular, and afterward in general—just as he is obligated to be a servant, and afterward a son, and afterward also a servant. There needs to be guarding from all sides.

But it's impossible for a person to be exempt from being a son. And if one is already two hundred years that his community hasn't seen anything in the world, hasn't known any sight—I don't know what. But I don't see that from this anything was accomplished in holiness, accomplished in doing good. One doesn't see this, and one must say that one doesn't see this. And its meaning is that at the very least this is not enough, and perhaps it's even harmful. I don't want—I don't need to arrive at saying it's harmful—but perhaps it's harmful. And perhaps it's harmful for the simple reason, for the Holy One Blessed be He made the world. 'Hashem Elokim' means that the Holy One Blessed be He made the world. And to say that one is completely closed off from the world, this is as if the Holy One Blessed be He didn't make the world. There is the Holy One Blessed be He, and there is the world, and they are in dispute, and I am on the side of the Holy One Blessed be He against His world. This is a kind of separation, the thing doesn't go this way. The Holy One Blessed be He made the world, you can't be with the Holy One Blessed be He against His world.

Certainly, the Holy One Blessed be He made the world that they should use it for good, not for evil. As it is written in the verse, 'See, I have set before you today blessing and curse' (Deuteronomy 11:26). You must know clearly the blessing and the curse, and afterward you will choose the blessing, as it is written afterward, 'and you shall choose life so that you may live' (Deuteronomy 30:19). This is very good. But to say that therefore I don't read the curse, I don't read the entire world, I only want the blessing—it doesn't seem to go this way. One can learn more drashot and many matters from this, but it seems to me the thing doesn't go this way.

Two Mitzvot: Servant and Son

And therefore it's very important to remember the two mitzvot. There is a mitzvah of 'they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt' (Leviticus 25:42), and there is also a mitzvah of 'you are children to Hashem your God' (Deuteronomy 14:1).

'You are children to Hashem your God' means, in the language of the Zohar here in Pekudin regarding son, that the son is one who goes around, in its language, 'l'ishtadla l'minda b'ginzei d'avuhi'—he strives to know all the secrets of his father. That is, for a servant it's forbidden to know secrets; if he tries to know secrets he becomes 'who are you?', who are you? Whereas a son is one who wants to go around in every corner, in every hidden place that his father has, wants to understand, wants to know. Like an only son whose father gives him control over all his treasuries, over all his treasures. This is the meaning—son, that he knows, he strives 'b'chochmata l'minda leih ul'Kudsha Brich Hu'. He strives in wisdom, and its

meaning is that he wants to know the entire world of the Holy One Blessed be He.

And when they tell him, "Here it's forbidden to look because..."—what does this mean, how is it possible?—ah, here one needs to look in the correct way, not to look in the way of separation, not to look in the way of sin. But to say that therefore he wants to be only a servant, one who only wants to be closed off, only wants not to know, that he is completely a servant—and one sees in actual practice many times that he remains a horse. Very sad.

The Benefit of Isolation is Only for the Sake of Attainment

And I believe it's not even sad, for I say that I'm sad because I think that all the benefit of isolation is for the sake of the ability to attain the attainment of Torah, for the sake of the ability to know the world truly. For if one goes around and is completely enslaved to the world, one doesn't even know the world—as everyone knows, that one who is completely a slave to the newspaper, doesn't even know the newspaper. But on the other hand, perhaps this is not correct, it's not true that from disconnection from the world one knows who the Holy One Blessed be He is. One needs to add to this more, and this more is also a contradiction: one needs to know the entire world. Certainly there needs to be a certain separation, there must be separation, just as the Name is submission separation sweetening—there must be separation, one mustn't be confused—but there must also be a stage of son, there must also be a mitzvah of son.

And if one does one without the other, one remains—indeed there is in this separation, separation of zachor and shamor. As it is written 'and you shall guard My statutes and do them' (Leviticus 19:19): there needs to be shamor, this is shamor, like shamor of Friday night. But afterward there needs to be zachor, one needs to do something. Zachor means that one needs to speak, needs to learn, needs to look, needs to understand, needs to search 'in the treasuries of his father', needs to search the entire world and the entire Torah, to understand—not to say 'this we don't have permission to learn, this is forbidden to learn, this is forbidden to know'. There is no such thing. One needs to know all things and learn all things, and through this one receives completeness, to the completeness of 'you are children to Hashem your God'.

My Servant You are Israel in Whom I Will Be Glorified

And the Zohar says, the Zohar concludes very beautifully, in this way, that you have the two things; on this the verse says, 'And He said to me, you are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified' (Isaiah 49:3). 'You are My servant'—you are My servant, but you are not only My servant, you are Israel, you are a son, for Israel is the son, 'My firstborn son Israel'. You are 'Israel in whom I will be glorified', and then I am glorified in you.

That is, servant: as every day in prayer, the Zohar says, there are the two things—a person stands to pray and takes the siddur, does in the aspect of servant. And after he is there, he doesn't remain in this: he wants to understand each thing, learns each thing separately, as we said, learns each mitzvah, the mitzvah of every day—not only when they go to the Beit HaMikdash, that then he is a servant, that then miracles—but then 'Israel in whom I will be glorified'.

Full Transcript

The Secret of Mishneh Torah: The Daily Mitzvos and the Form of a Jew

Introduction: Parshas Re'eh and Mishneh Torah

My teachers and rabbis, today is Erev Shabbos Parshas Re'eh. In this portion, the Torah comes, after all the introductions of Moshe Rabbeinu, to clearly review the Torah, which is why the entire book is called Mishneh Torah, as it begins **"Eleh hachukim v'hamishpatim asher tishmerun la'asos"** (Devarim 12:1). All the mitzvos begin, all the laws that Moshe Rabbeinu reviews that the Jews should do in Eretz Yisrael, which he had already essentially taught once, most of them or a portion of them, in Sefer Shemos. Here one reviews the laws of the Torah, which the Torah in Sefer Devarim often calls mitzvah, or Torah, or chukim, which generally means the same thing.

I want to explain a bit the secret of Mishneh Torah, the secret of the difference between what Moshe Rabbeinu taught the Jews the first time—which is called at Har Sinai, to the generation of the Exodus from Egypt—and what he teaches the Jews in the generation entering the Land.

The Deficiency of Living from Holiday to Holiday

The Holiday as a "Pause"—Not as the Main Thing

We have learned that the holiday is coming soon, already Rosh Chodesh Elul, Shabbos Mevarchim Elul this week. But I feel, and I have learned from others too, that there is a certain deficiency: that one always speaks about each holiday, one learns each year again the topics of the holidays. But to be a Jew, to be a person, is not a matter of dancing from holiday to holiday. This is good for small children in a certain sense—a time-bound positive commandment, he gets excited, a beloved mitzvah that comes from time to time. And this is a true secret, it is truly exciting. But a mature person needs to be a bit more grounded, a bit more stable, to have a bit more clarity in the daily order, the daily mitzvos.

A holiday is a time when one goes a bit out of the regular order, a bit out of the world. Once there was the matter of aliyah l'regel, one goes to the Beis HaMikdash; even if one doesn't do it, there is something like this—one goes to the beis midrash, one travels to the Rebbe. Even a person who has a family, one leaves them a bit. Normally a regular day doesn't let the wife go to shul a whole day—on Rosh Hashanah she does. This is the great difference why one can go daven on Rosh Hashanah a whole day and learn, Yom Kippur a bit more with selichos, because that's how the order is set up, and reality gives a bit of space for this.

It comes out that the strength of the holidays is always like putting things on pause. The work, the daily matters that one must deal with—the family, with people, with friends, with the boss—all these things one puts on pause, and one engages in the holiday. And certainly it is so, a normal person is busy with earning a living and supporting his family, he works, and even if he works less he still has a family and everything that needs

to be taken care of. And at this time indeed, **lo nitan yom tov l'Yisrael ela la'asok bo b'Torah** (Yerushalmi Shabbos 15). It is a time when one can be more engaged in Torah and in the service of Hashem.

The Daily Mitzvos Need Intention and Clarity

Nevertheless, it's not right. It can't be that a person should live from Shabbos to Shabbos, from holiday to holiday. Every day is a day. So it is very important to engage a bit in the order of the daily mitzvos.

One can say it exactly like this: There are mitzvos from time to time—blowing shofar, shaking lulav, and even saying Good Shabbos and davening Shabbos—which everyone who has some connection has some intention in it. One learns about this in Chassidic books and Kabbalah, and one knows the intentions of all things. But every day one does very many mitzvos: one puts on tefillin and tzitzis, one davens, one learns, one does chesed, one is engaged in settling the world, earning a living, setting fixed times for Torah. It would be much more important and useful for a person to have a certain intention and clarity in the daily mitzvos.

The Sefer Pekudin of the Zohar

And the truth is like this: The Zohar, and so all who have made ta'amei hamitzvos—there is a book Ta'amei HaMitzvos from the Zohar which is called Pekudin. In our Zohar it is usually printed mixed among the parshiyos, each time there was a mitzvah they inserted that piece, but originally, and it is already printed today also separately, there was the Sefer Pekudin, a section on the pekudei d'mara alma. It's not a Sefer HaMitzvos, it's a book of ta'amei hamitzvos.

I think it is mainly built—not exactly one-to-one, but on the idea—on the Rambam. I will sometime make a chart to show precisely, but it's clear to me that it's built on the idea that the Rambam says at the end of the positive commandments, in Sefer HaMitzvos. When the Rambam counts all 613 mitzvos, he says that there are many types of mitzvos. There is a deep discussion how one understands this, and the Arizal in Sha'arei Mitzvos has investigations about this. But I want to say what the Rambam says, and it seems to me that the Zohar goes with this approach.

The Different Types of Mitzvos According to the Rambam

There are different types of mitzvos. There are mitzvos that are only relevant for a community, for example building the Beis HaMikdash, destroying Amalek. There are mitzvos that are only relevant if something happens to a person—if he is a zav he must bring a korban; an entire lifetime can pass for a person that he should never do a mitzvah of divorce, of a korban of a zav, of a nazir. There are mitzvos that are relevant only in certain situations of business dealings—if one makes an amah ivriyah one must free him according to the laws. There are mitzvos that are only relevant in the presence of the Temple, like korbanos, terumos and ma'asros.

These are all types of mitzvos that are not the essential mitzvos, which every Jew is obligated in at all times and in all places—not necessarily every day, but in a normal cycle of a person. The Rambam makes a list, he says there are sixty essential mitzvos, which every adult male is obligated in at all places and at all times. In Shevet HaLevi Frankel one can see the list with the sections of the mitzvos. He says for example that mezuzah is part of the list—although a person who doesn't live in a house doesn't need a mezuzah, but in the normal order of life when a person has a house, gets married, he puts it in. But the mitzvah that only happens if his brother dies without children, yibum and chalitzah, doesn't come in here. It comes out to sixty regular mitzvos, which he calls essential.

The Form of a Jew: 613 Mitzvos or Sixty Mitzvos

We always speak that one must be able to describe what the life of a Jew looks like. Usually one says that the life of a Jew is 613 mitzvos. And it's true, and the Zohar expands on this. It says in the Gemara that 248 positive commandments correspond to the limbs of a person, and 365 correspond to the days of the solar year (Makkos 23b). It comes out that this is a picture of a person who lives in time. Just as there is a picture of a person physically with so many limbs and so much time, so there is a picture of a person spiritually: the spiritual perfection of a Jew is that he does the 613 mitzvos. This is what a Jew looks like.

The Question of the Arizal

On this, however, there is immediately a question, and the Arizal asks: What about all the mitzvos that are not relevant—only for a kohen, only for a king, only in the time of the Temple, only if such a case should occur? How can one say that the picture of a Jew is 613 mitzvos, when in practice he doesn't do 613 mitzvos? A person does, as the Rambam says, approximately sixty positive commandments. (Negative commandments are a bit of a different Torah.) The Torah in its completeness is the 248 positive commandments, but in practice, what is the image of a Jew—is it the sixty mitzvos?

And I see that the Zohar section, Sefer Pekudin, counts its Sefer HaMitzvos more or less on the sixty mitzvos—even less, there are only forty-seven mitzvos, and not all the same exact ones. But the main majority that everyone would remember is certainly counted, because the Zohar's Sefer HaMitzvos is not on the 613, it's on the regular mitzvos. Perhaps he didn't finish, one had to add more, it doesn't go exactly in the same order, but it's on the same idea.

The Answer: 248 is a Hint, Sixty is in Practice

What will one do with the question? I think that simply it's not such a question—one takes a hint a bit too seriously. Generally there are 248 mitzvos, this shows us the picture of what a Jew looks like, but actual practice is sixty. If one wants specifically, he will say that also in the limbs of the body there are limbs that names are not dependent on them—a person has in his parts of the body different antibodies, an immune system, which is made if there will be such a case; not every thing of the body itself does one do.

When one says two hundred and forty-eight limbs one can make a great division. In general in Israel one can see that a person has ten limbs—a hand and foot and a belly. Sefer Yetzirah comes to twelve; one can make twenty-two limbs according to the division of Sefer Yetzirah. The huge number of two hundred and forty-eight is a very large number—whoever lays out the list from Maseches Ohalos sees that it's literally everything as limbs or bones of the person. But in any case, it's not correct to say simply that the completeness is the 613 mitzvos; this is only like a hint. In actual practice it is more or less the sixty mitzvos.

365 Corresponding to the Days of the Solar Year—Not Corresponding to Sinews

Of the sixty mitzvos, most of them, one cannot make that the main thing is the mitzvos that come from time to time. There are indeed 365, and this is very important: the part of the picture of the person is his time. We are accustomed to hear 248 limbs and 365 sinews. But in the Gemara, and also in the Zohar, it states explicitly the hint of Rabbi Simlai that **365 is corresponding to the days of the solar year** (Makkos 23b), not corresponding to sinews.

I don't know what sinews are—it's certainly a hint, but no one has any list of sinews. The list of limbs is in the Mishnah, but by sinews I don't know why there should be three hundred and sixty-five. The main thing is the hint of the days, and this is very simple: a Jew lives in time, he lives in three hundred and sixty-five days. Certainly, in the three hundred and sixty-five days there are, let's say, twenty days of holidays, and fifty-four Shabbosos each year—of them are holy days, mikra'ei kodesh, special days. Nevertheless, a normal year has three hundred days. Every day is a day, every day is a holy day.

The Normal Daily Mitzvos are the Main Thing

First I say that one must speak of the normal order. One must not count all the mitzvos that are sometimes a rare mitzvah—what does one do with a get, with yibum, with chalitzah, what does a kohen do. This is not the normal order of life. When one says that the mitzvah is the picture of a Jew, one doesn't mean this.

And so I see from the Zohar, that he doesn't say reasons for every mitzvah. Generally the Zohar says reasons for the normal daily mitzvos. What is the main form? On this it was said that the sixty mitzvos are the form of a Jew, not the 613. And besides this: most of the sixty mitzvos are the mitzvos that one does every day—when one davens, one learns Torah, one puts on tefillin, tzitzis, until Shabbos, the daily order of life.

The Holiday is Not an Escape, But to Clarify the Entire Year

Let's think that even what there are holidays—which is very very useful, it's the time when one has time for this—is made that one should not use the holiday as an escape. This is the important thing: not that Chodesh Elul comes, one can turn away from the normal order, one says two more chapters of Tehillim after davening. A holiday is a time when one can learn better.

A person must learn about tefillin. A Jew puts on tefillin every day, a whole week he has no time to think about this. It says in the verse **"l'ma'an tihyeh toras Hashem b'ficha"** (Shemos 13:9). Why does one put on tefillin? Because a person works a whole week. On Shabbos one doesn't put on tefillin—I think that this is the simple meaning, because on Shabbos one doesn't need it. One says Shabbos itself is an os. What does it mean Shabbos itself is an os? The os is the rest: that which one rests on Shabbos one has time to think about the Almighty, about the Torah. A whole week when one works, one puts on tefillin so that it should be a remembrance, it should be toras Hashem b'ficha—he puts literally in practice the Shema Yisrael on bein einecha and al yadecha. But the idea of tefillin, of Shema Yisrael, of the portions of the Exodus from Egypt that are in the tefillin, are all things that he does also on Shabbos. And after he has kept Shabbos and better understood what Shema Yisrael Hashem echad means, a whole week when he puts on tefillin he strengthens the tefillin more.

The same thing: Rosh Hashanah, when he blows shofar, is essentially an expansion on something he does every day—**ashrei ha'am yod'ei seru'ah** (Tehillim 89:16), a theme of prayer, accepting the yoke of Heaven. Yom Kippur is teshuvah, Sukkos is simchah—all these values that one speaks about each holiday are its theme. But it's not made that one should connect with the holiday; the holiday is to find a bit of time, to make clearer the things that one does a whole year—the tefillin, the mezuzah, the tzitzis, the honoring father and mother, the honest business dealings, the chesed, all the simple things that one does a whole year. This seems to me the important matter.

The Exodus from Egypt and Mishneh Torah: The Desert Generation Versus the Generation Entering the Land

In honor of this I think to learn a bit the Sefer HaMitzvos of the Zohar, and try to bring out the insights that one can understand in the subject.

Back to Parshas Re'eh: One understands immediately that what I have said is exactly the same thing. When the Jews were in the desert it was more such an aspect of a holiday, of the Exodus from Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt is the word of the desert generation—they went out from Egypt, from this one makes Pesach, from this come all the festivals, Shabbos is a remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt. This is what Moshe Rabbeinu taught the first time. Later in Sefer Devarim he taught much more the Torah of daily life.

The Topic of Slaughtering Non-Sacred Animals and Private Altars

One sees it very clearly in the first portion. One can think about this from very many aspects, and I believe that we still don't know clearly the simple meaning to this day—it is perhaps one of the secrets of the Torah that must still be revealed. The first thing that Moshe Rabbeinu explains in the portion is idolatry, and the second thing, which is connected to this, is the topic of slaughter and private altars: that when one will go to Eretz Yisrael one will live far from the Beis HaMikdash. **"Ki yarchiv Hashem Elokecha es gevulcha ka'asher diber lach"** (Devarim 12:20)—you will have a large border, you will live far.

Perhaps one will think, as it was perhaps the law in the desert generation according to one opinion among the Tannaim, that every time one slaughters one must make a korban, an olah, a sacrifice. The verse says no, one doesn't mean so, this is like the gentiles do. **"Lo sa'asun k'chol asher anachnu osim po hayom ish kol hayashar b'einav"** (Devarim 12:8), **"lo sa'asun kein l'Hashem Elokeichem"** (Devarim 12:4). What do we do now? Now every time one eats meat one must make a shelamim, bring a korban in the Mishkan. The day becomes that when a Jew wants to eat meat it's like a holiday, like a holy thing—he goes before the Mishkan, before Hashem, and brings a korban.

The Torah says: when you will come to Eretz Yisrael you will not do so. The gentiles have under every tree running some idol—don't do like them. You will go to the place that Hashem will choose, there you will bring korbanos, on the festivals, three times a year, as it says at the end of the portion.

The Permission of Meat of Desire

But a whole year, if you will be hungry you will eat. **"B'chol avos nafshecha tizbech v'achalta basar"** (Devarim

12:15). You have a desire? Eat! You don't need to go to the Beis HaMikdash. Only blood you shall not eat. Not every thing that you do at home needs to become from this a mitzvah, a korban. Also with this itself you will follow the Torah —**"hishamer lecha"** (Devarim 12:13), you will be careful with that which you don't bring a korban. The main Torah is at home a whole year.

Every Shemittah, we will make Hakhel, we will come together to remember and learn the Torah. But normally, day-to-day, your daily routine won't revolve around the fact that you need to bring a korban. There is something called heter basar ta'avah: if a person is hungry and feels like eating meat, he will eat it calmly, and not make it into a mitzvah.

The Deeper Drush: The Whole Year Also Has Chol

People say that in Eretz Yisrael there is "adam choresh b'she'at charishah v'zorei'a b'she'at zeri'ah", it's different from dor hamidbar. It's a drush that appears in many sefarim. But deeper is the drush that appears in this week's parsha, more fundamental, more connected to the pshat: that there is a distinction of times — Shabbat, festivals versus the whole year — and of place — Jerusalem versus the rest of Eretz Yisrael, where not everywhere is holy in the same way.

It comes out that the Torah was mechadesh here that there is also chol. Chol we always knew exists, it's not a chiddush. What the Torah is mechadesh is that the hava amina would have been that the Torah would call it avodah zarah: that if a Jew wants to serve Hashem he needs to slaughter, bring a korban, it must be literally an avodat Hashem; and if he lives farther away he will do "b'chol makom asher ta'aveh", make some kind of bamah here. They actually did this during the time of heter habamot.

The Torah comes and says: After you have a Beit Hamikdash — a fixed place that Hashem has chosen, menuchah v'nachalah, where the Shechinah remains, not the same level of yachid and bamah that **"b'chol makom asher azkir et shemi"** (Shemot 20:21) — then you should know that when you sit at home and you have an "avat nafshecha le'echol basar", that's perfectly fine. You don't need to go to the Beit Hamikdash at all. **"Ki am kadosh atah l'Hashem Elokecha u'vecha bachar Hashem lihyot lo l'am segulah"** (Devarim 14:2) — you are completely holy, completely special, and that doesn't mean you need to go make Yom Tov, but rather that you can stay home and eat meat.

Chol Is Not Kedushah, But It Has Halachot

We need to be very careful here. If you say that every place is holy, then no place is holy — the word means nothing then. No, it's chol, it's shechitat chulin. We're not learning Masechet Zevachim here, shechitat kodashim, but shechitat chulin. It has halachot — **"v'zavachta ka'asher tzivitecha"** (Devarim 12:21) — you will perform the slaughter according to the laws of shechitah, not eat blood, follow all these laws. But the way to be a good person, a Jew, won't be going to the Beit Hamikdash and bringing a korban from everything; a completely different seder hachaim.

We need to understand this very well: what is the hava amina, what is the maskana, what does this have to do with the topic of bamot and with avodah zarah. But halachah l'ma'aseh l'inyaneinu: there are mitzvot that are made for the rest, 365 days of the year, the day-to-day life, when you don't need to make a korban out of everything. Even ma'aser sheni the Torah is mechadesh this week: once you had to bring everything, no, you can redeem it for money, and eat ma'aser sheni here. There are ways how you can remain in the normal baal habayit's seder hachaim, you don't need to change.

Certainly, he will give tzedakah — something similar to pidyon ma'aser sheni — with his money he will once a year go to Jerusalem, make his v'samachta lifnei Hashem. But most days are not v'samachta lifnei Hashem. It's a great chiddush: in that one you can also be joyful, can also be holy, can also be am kadosh atah l'Hashem Elokecha — through not eating nevelah, not **"lo tochal kol to'evah"** (Devarim 14:3), all forbidden foods, but not through making everything directly into a davar shebekedushah, a korban.

The First Mitzvah in Sefer Pekudin: Yediat Hashem — Klal and Prat

What I want to repeat is what the Zohar says generally regarding the topic of Mishneh Torah, what Moshe Rabbeinu taught the Jews the second time.

The first mitzvah of the pekudin — we once gave a shiur on this in Parashat Bo — the Zohar says is Anochi Hashem Elokecha, the mitzvah of yediat Hashem, the first mitzvah of the Torah. The mitzvah appears several times in the Torah, but let's talk about two pesukim. In Sefer Shemot it says **"vidatem ki ani Hashem Elokeichem hamotzi etchem me'eretz Mitzrayim"** (Shemot 6:7) — you know that Hashem took you out of Egypt. In Sefer Devarim it says differently: **"v'yadata hayom vahasheivota el levavecha ki Hashem hu haElokim bashamayim mima'al v'al ha'aretz mitachat ein od"** (Devarim 4:39).

Earlier it only said "ani Hashem Elokeichem hamotzi etchem"; here it says "Hashem hu haElokim", with the whole detail "bashamayim mima'al v'al ha'aretz mitachat ein od". Whoever learns Sefer Devarim sees it full of details, with lists, with long long pesukim — this doesn't appear in Sefer Shemot.

The Distinction of Klal and Prat

The Zohar says, this is the distinction of klal and prat. Klal and prat has many meanings: according to Kabbalah it means Tiferet and Malchut — Malchut is called bichlal, Tiferet is called bifrat. But it also means the simple thing: klal means in a general way, what we call emunah peshutah, without any knowledge, without any details.

The next piece of Zohar explains that there is in tefillah — this is also this week's parsha — eved and ben. Eved means avodah bichlalut: he accepts ol malchut shamayim, he does what he's told. Ben is one who understands each thing in a detailed way — why and when and what is the difference of each thing. This is further the same thing of klal and prat.

Avadim in Sefer Vayikra, Banim in Sefer Devarim

The Zohar says: In Sefer Vayikra, which is the Torah from Har Sinai, it says **ki avadai hem asher hotzeiti otam me'eretz Mitzrayim** (Vayikra 25:55) — since they are slaves, they need to do the mitzvot of slaves. In Sefer Devarim it says a new thing, **banim atem l'Hashem Elokeichem** (Devarim 14:1) — so they will do the mitzvot of children. It's a completely new understanding of mitzvot. And the root of this is the distinction of how we understand the first mitzvah, yediat Hashem.

In Sefer Shemot it was simple, in the aspect of Yom Tov as well: it's Egypt, it's in the aspect of miracles. Miracles go with

emunah peshutah — you see that Hashem did miracles, He took them out of Egypt, you believe that there is a God. Whereas in Sefer Devarim it also says that they came out from yetziat Mitzrayim, but it says a new thing: ki Hashem hu haElokim bashamayim mima'al v'al ha'aretz mitachat ein od.

Knowledge Through Prat Is Knowledge Through Teva

This means knowledge through prat, which can also be called through teva. Not that he knows in a general way that there's a big bang, there comes a Yom Tov, a yetziat Mitzrayim; rather he knows in a detailed way. He can understand ma'aseh bereishit — the first day this, the second day that, the third day the other — he knows the whole seder habri'ah, and from this he understands ki Hashem hu haElokim. Elokim is gematria hateva, this is the hanhagat ha'olam that He conducts the world. Whoever understands that the One who conducts all these details through the understanding of each detail, has the same knowledge.

The same thing is regarding tefillah. Tefillah we always speak of **"l'avdo b'chol levavchem"** (Devarim 11:13), a type of avodah — the whole Torah is called avodah: "avdeha b'Torato", "avdeha b'Mikdasho". But this means in a general way. Everyone understands the difference between someone who knows the kavvanot and reasons for things, and someone who doesn't: a simple Jew davens, he doesn't know; the whole siddur becomes the same thing. He is an eved Hashem, he praises, prays, gives thanks — he does. A ben also has an aspect of eved, but by a ben the request has a different reason than the praise, and the mitzvah of shofar has a different reason from the mitzvah of lulav. Not everything is the same thing, it's more bifratiyut. Just as we understand not only in a general way the topic of yetziat Mitzrayim, but in a detailed way — not only that Hashem made everything, but how He made it, through the specific seder hateva. This is called knowledge through prat, and this is the chiddush of Sefer Mishneh Torah.

Detailed Knowledge and the World: Separation Is Not Perfection

I want to conclude with a relevant chiddush. From this it comes out that detailed knowledge has much more to do with understanding the whole world. This is the distinction of Mishneh Torah and of Eretz Yisrael, that you need to know Eretz Yisrael. It's a very basic question of Judaism, of humanity truly, in our time.

Everyone understands that the world is full of all kinds of foolishness, distractions, things that are not in order. And I think this is like the distinction between yetziat Mitzrayim and Mishneh Torah: everyone understands that by default, just to remain in Egypt, nothing will start. The Zohar says that if not that Moshe Rabbeinu told them "vidatem ki ani Hashem", they would never have been able to have any miracles. The basic emunah peshutah made possible that there could be all these miracles of yetziat Mitzrayim. Before that he had to leave Egypt.

Everyone understands that without a certain tzimtzum, a certain reality of closedness, a person will just do what the newspaper tells him today, and he'll be confused because the newspaper changes its mind every few weeks — he won't be able to be a Jew, a person. This is not a chiddush.

The Story of Rizhin with the Horse

But we need to know that this is still not the perfection. I think the most beautiful story for this is what the Rizhiner said to that Jew with his horse. A Jew came who heard that if you don't speak for forty days you get ruach hakodesh, so he did so. He comes to the Rebbe asking why he still doesn't have ruach hakodesh. The Rebbe brought him to his horse and said: "Look, the horse also hasn't spoken for forty days, where is his ruach hakodesh? It seems you need to do something besides not speaking."

The Amish: You Can Remain a Horse

You can see it also in actual practice. We were this week in Pennsylvania by the Amish, who have been conducting themselves for a few hundred years not to touch the modern world, completely separated. He rides on a horse, he doesn't go in a car, he doesn't have a phone or computer. And we realized that it's all very nice, but it still doesn't make a person out of a horse. He can very well remain a horse.

One can imagine — and people have it in many ways, there with shemirah v'asiyah, the topic of **"v'nishmartem va'asitem"** (see Devarim 4:6) — I often have this mistake: I would want to learn all of Shas, all of Zohar, all of Kitvei HaRe'iyah, Ramak, science, philosophy, everything. But what? I get up early, the newspaper comes to me with news, social media comes and all other yetzer haras, and in honor of this I don't learn. If only I could be completely separated, lived in ananei hakavod, without internet, I would certainly learn day and night and would have long ago finished Shas three times.

Sometimes there are people for whom it's true. For most people it's not true. You can look and see that the more one is separated and closed off from the world, it's still not true that that person is some greater talmid chacham. You would think: a person who is more modern, reads more news and politics, it takes him a lot of time and energy, he can't be such a talmid chacham; the one who is completely closed off and knows nothing, you would think they are full of talmidei chachamim, full of geonim, full of chiddushim. Meanwhile we don't see it so strongly. We don't see that the more closed the community is, the more ehrlich it is, more talmidei chachamim.

Let's talk about something that can be easily measured — about understanding Torah, about intellect. From the chiddushim that one can know from comprehending Torah, from comprehending wisdom, there is much better today than before. You can clearly see that even we understand Chumash, simple pshat, better — in a certain sense, those who have more yetzer haras, those who look at the newspapers more, understand better. I think this is a bit objective. Certainly, if you don't learn anything, you understand nothing — if he only watches television, he doesn't learn. But it's still not clear that the one who never watches television understands the parsha of the week better; often it seems the opposite.

The Torah Is Given for a Person in the World

Besides this, the Torah is given for a world. If not you would have to go to the angels — "klum ma'aseh yesh bachem, klum kin'ah yesh beineichem" — you could eat basar b'chalav because you're an angel. The Torah is given to a person in the world. The deeper reason is what I'm saying here: if someone has absolutely no closedness at all, no boundaries at all, he will just do every day what the newspaper says. But from not doing what the newspaper says is still not at all enough like da'at pnei Hashem; it's required in a general way, then in a detailed

way, and then again in a general way — just as required to be an eved, then a ben, and then an eved also. There must be protection from all sides. But one is not exempt from being a ben.

If someone is already two hundred years that his community no one has seen anything in the world — I don't see that from this he has accomplished anything in kedushah, in aseh tov. We don't see it, we must say this. It means that at least it's not enough, and it could be that it even harms — for simple reasons, because Hashem did make the world. "Hashem Elokim" means that Hashem made the world. To say that you are completely separated from the world, is as if Hashem didn't make the world; as if there is Hashem and there is the world and they are in a dispute, and I'm on the side of Hashem against His world. It's a kind of separation this, it doesn't work that way. Hashem made the world, you can't be with Hashem against His world.

Certainly, one should use it for good, not for bad, as it says **"re'eh anochi notein lifneichem hayom berachah u'klalah"** (Devarim 11:26) — you need to know clearly the blessing and curse, and then you will choose the blessing, **"u'vacharta bachaim lema'an tichyeh"** (Devarim 30:19). But to say that automatically I'm not learning the curse, not learning the whole world, I only want the blessing — it doesn't seem it works that way.

Two Mitzvot: Eved and Ben

Therefore it's very important to remember the two mitzvot: **"avadai hem asher hotzeiti otam me'eretz Mitzrayim"** (Vayikra 25:42), and also **"banim atem l'Hashem Elokeichem"** (Devarim 14:1).

"Banim atem l'Hashem Elokeichem" means, as the Zohar says the language in Pekudin, that the ben strives **"limnada b'ginzei d'avuhi"** — to know all the secrets of his father. An eved may not know any secrets; if he tries, "mi yismacheni, who are you?" A ben is one who wants to turn in every room, every hidden place of his father, like an only son whose father gives him control over all his treasures. **"B'chochmeta limnada lei u'l'Kudsha Brich Hu"** — he wants to know the whole world of Hashem. When you tell him "here you may not look" — here you need to look in the right way, not in a way of separation, not in a way of sin. But to say that automatically he only wants to be an eved, only closed, only not to know — he remains in actual practice a horse.

The Benefit of Separation Is Only For Comprehension

I think it's not even sad, because the whole benefit of being separated is to be able to have comprehension of Torah, to be able to know the world truly — because if you are completely enslaved to the world, you don't know the world either, just as someone who is completely enslaved to the newspaper doesn't know the newspaper either. But on the other hand, it's not true that from being fenced off from the world you know who Hashem is; you need to add more, and this is even a contradiction — you need to know the whole world. Certainly you need a certain havdalah — just as the Name is hachna'ah, havdalah, hamtakah — you may not become mixed up, but there must also be a stage of ben.

If you do one without the other, you remain. It's actually a separation, the separation of zachor and shamor, as **"u'shemartem et chukotai va'asitem otam"** (Vayikra 19:19) — you need to be guarded, this is shamor, like Friday night. But then there must be zachor: you need to speak, learn, look, understand, search b'ginzei aviv, seek the whole world and the whole Torah. Not say "we don't have this, we may not learn this, we may not know this" — there's no such thing. You need to know and learn all things, and through this you receive the perfection of "banim atem l'Hashem Elokeichem".

Avdi Atah Yisrael Asher Becha Etpa'ar

And the Zohar concludes beautifully: when you have both things, on this the pasuk says **"vayomer li avdi atah Yisrael asher becha etpa'ar"** (Yeshayahu 49:3). Avdi atah — you are My servant, but you are not only My servant, you are Yisrael, a son. You are Yisrael asher becha etpa'ar, then I take pride in you.

That means, just as every day during prayer the Zohar says that there are these two things: a person stands to pray and opens the siddur (prayer book) — he acts in the aspect of an eved (servant). And afterwards he doesn't remain at that: he wants to understand each thing, he learns each mitzvah (commandment) separately, the mitzvah shebechol yom (the daily mitzvah) — not only when you go to the Beis HaMikdash (Holy Temple), then it's an eved, nissim (miracles), and then "Yisrael asher becha espa'ar" (Israel in whom I take pride).