



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

Published by OHR SOMAYACH INTERNATIONAL • Jerusalem, Israel 25 Adar 5759 • March 13, 1999 • Parshat Vayakel - Pekudei • No. 31

## Light Insight

### No Previous

### Experience Required

*“And every man came whose heart was lifted up” (Exodus 35:21)*

Imagine turning up at a spotless hi-tech computer plant and offering your services to build computer chips.

They say to you: “Fine. What experience do you have?”

You say “None. But I know in my heart that I can build all the chips you need.”

“Yeah, look there’s a food factory down the block. Why don’t you try over there? Maybe you’d be better off frying their chips than ours...”

When the Jewish People left Egypt, they had been slaves for so many years. The only skills that they had developed in those years of apprenticeship were how to stir mortar and *shlep* stones. Not exactly an ideal training ground for the extremely high degree of artistry necessary for the

building of the Holy Tabernacle.

Where was their training as carpenters, embroiders, metal-smiths, sculptors, weavers?

And yet they came to Moses and said, “Whatever my lord commands, I will do it.” And they did it.

Because the Tabernacle was a spiritual building, all it needed was the desire of its builders to serve G-d; then G-d, as it were, filled in the rest of their resumes.

When we want to serve G-d, to be good Jews and good people, we should remember that no previous experience is required, just a heart that’s uplifted to serve.

### Room At The Bottom

*“The keruvim (cherubim)...with their faces toward one another” (Exodus 37:9)*

The Tabernacle and later the Temple represented the “marriage” of the Jewish People and G-d. The *keruvim* (cherubim) that were carved from the top of the cover

of the holy ark were like a barometer which showed the state of this marriage.

When there was *shalom bayis* — “marital harmony” — between the Creator and His people, the *keruvim* faced each other, but when the Jewish People strayed and were unfaithful, the faces of the *keruvim* turned in opposite directions.

In Ethics of Our Fathers the Sages tell us that on Yom Kippur when everyone stood in the courtyard of the Temple, it was jam-packed. You could hardly move an inch. But when time came to prostrate themselves before G-d, there was plenty of room for all.

The same can be said about marriage: If a person “stands,” if he stands on his dignity, if he stands only for himself, if he stands proud with his head high, then matrimony can be very crowding. You can’t move an inch.

But if a person lowers himself, prostrating his own interests beneath those of his spouse, then there is plenty of room for everyone.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### Bnei Brak

Mentioned as one of the cities in the portion of the Tribe of Dan (*Joshua 19:45*), Bnei Brak is known in the Talmud as the seat of Rabbi Akiva’s

leagues.

The city had an agricultural dimension as well, as appears from the account of the Sage Rami bar Yechezkel who declared that he understood the meaning of the

court, and in the Passover Haggada as the site of the all-night Passover Seder of Rabbi Akiva and his distinguished col-

Torah’s description of the Land of Israel as a “land flowing with milk and honey” after witnessing a scene during a visit to Bnei Brak. He observed goats grazing beneath fig trees. The honey oozing from the very ripe figs merged with the milk dripping from the goats and formed a stream of milk and honey.

The Bnei Brak of today was established in 1924 by Jews from Poland, and is famed for its many *yeshivos* and Chassidic communities.

## Response Line

Daniel Rabchinsky wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

*Hello, first let me extend my gratitude for sharing your wisdom in this way. The life that we have been given for the 80 or so years that we are here; as I have been taught, it is like a passage for the world to come. But why did G-d give us this life instead of giving us our direct existence in the world to come, where we will experience pleasure multiplied by the millions? The reason is so that we will appreciate it since we have "earned" it in this world. The thing is, why don't we appreciate things if they did not cost us anything? I'd say that it is because G-d made us that way; He can do it all. So the question is: Why didn't G-d make us in a way that we would appreciate everything even if we did not work for it, so that we could be "born" from the beginning in the world to come? Shalom.*

Dear Daniel,

Your question is asked by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto in *The Way of G-d*, and is also addressed by Rabbi Yosef Karo in *Maggid Meisharim*. The gist of what they say is as follows: The purpose of Creation is *chesed*, kindness. G-d wants to bestow the greatest possible good upon his created beings. The ultimate and greatest good is G-d Himself. Therefore, the ultimate good available to created beings is closeness to G-d. Closeness to G-d requires compatibility with and *similarity* to G-d.

In order for created beings to be similar to G-d, they must have free will. A robot-like being without free will would be dissimilar to G-d, since G-d acts

## The Other SIDE of the Story

GIVING PEOPLE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

*If you don't exercise your ability to judge favorably, you may find yourself...*

### *Huffing and Puffing*

I got into a cab the other day. "Do you mind not smoking?" I asked the cab driver. "No, I don't mind," he said, but he made no motion to extinguish the cigarette which dangled between his lips.

"Well then," I said, "Is it possible to put out your cigarette?"

"It's possible," he said, again taking no action.

"Look," I said, "I can't ride with you if you're smoking."

"Fine," he said.

"Fine!" I shouted. "I'm taking another cab!" I opened the door and got out in a huff.

"Look," said the driver, holding up his *un-started* cigarette. "It wasn't even lit!"

Sheepishly, I got back into the cab.

because He *chooses* to do so, not because He is coerced. Therefore humans must be in a world in which there is choice and opportunity to be as "G-dlike" as possible.

To emulate G-d, we must develop and perfect ourselves internally, not externally, just as G-d is intrinsically good. The only way for us to internalize our self-improvement and be intrinsically good is through challenge and free will, and we were put in this world for that purpose. A successful life in this world, in which one uses one's opportunities and challenges to develop themselves and emulate their creator, brings them and the world to its ultimate purpose, admission to the world to come and closeness to G-d.