

חובות הלבבות • שער חשבון הנפש • פרק שני

Sentence by Sentence • Punctuated Hebrew with Translation and Notes • Navy & Gold Edition

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In this second perek of Shaar Cheshbon HaNefesh, Rabbeinu Bachya begins by addressing a fundamental question: Is the spiritual accounting for every person the same? He explains that each person's obligation in avodas Hashem is unique, depending on their individual level of perception, intelligence, and the specific favors Hashem has bestowed upon them. The perek then delves into the practical application of this principle, guiding us on how to approach our personal cheshbon hanefesh.

Rabbeinu Bachya emphasizes that every Yid is commanded to deeply deliberate with his soul regarding his duties to Hashem. This deliberation must be in proportion to one's recognition of Hashem's kindness, whether those kindnesses are collective miracles or personal blessings. The perek concludes with a powerful warning against complacency and neglecting this vital spiritual accounting.

All introductions, summaries, and contextual notes are the editor's commentary and are not part of the original text.

אָבֵל אִם חֲשׁבוֹן כָּל בְּנֵי אָדָם שׁוֹה אִם לֹא, נֹאמֵר כִּי הַתְּשׁוּבָה בְּזֶה: שֶׁהַשְׁתַּדְּלוּת בְּנֵי אָדָם בְּעֵינֵי תוֹרָתָם וְעוֹלָמָם יִתְחַלֵּף כָּפִי הַתְּחַלְפוֹת הַכָּרָתָם וְשִׂכְלָם וְזִכּוֹת הַבְּנֵתָם.

Regarding whether the spiritual accounting for all people is the same or not, we will say that the answer to this is: the diligence of people in matters of their Torah and their worldly affairs varies according to the differences in their perception, their intellect, and the clarity of their understanding.

וְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מֵהֶם מְצִוָּה לַחֲשֹׁב עִם נַפְשׁוֹ בְּמָה שֶׁהוּא חַיֵּב בּוֹ מֵעֲבוֹדַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְעַלֶּה, כָּפִי הַכָּרָתוֹ בְּטוֹבוֹת הַבּוֹרָא הַכּוֹלָלוֹת וְהַמְיָחָדוֹת.

And each and every one of them is commanded to reckon with his soul what he is obligated in from the avodah of the Creator, may He be exalted, according to his recognition of the Creator's favors, both the general ones and the specific ones.

כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַר הַכָּתוּב (דְּבָרִים י"א:ב'): "וַיִּדְעֶתֶם הַיּוֹם כִּי לֹא אֶת בְּנֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּ וְאֲשֶׁר לֹא רָאוּ וְגו', כִּי עֵינֵיכֶם הָרְאוּ וְגו'".

Just as the pasuk says (Devarim 11:2): "And know this day; for I speak not with your children that have not known, and that have not seen... but your eyes have seen all the great work of Hashem which He did."

רוֹצֶה לֹאמֹר: כִּי טַעַנַּת הַבּוֹרָא עֲלֵיכֶם יוֹתֵר חֲזָקָה וְנִרְאִית מְמָה שֶׁהִיא עַל בְּנֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא רָאוּ אֶת מוֹפְתֵי הַבּוֹרָא כְּרֹאוֹתְכֶם.

This means to say that the Creator's claim upon you is stronger and more evident than it is upon your children, who did not see the Creator's wonders as you did.

מִפְּנֵי שֶׁאַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אוֹתָם בְּעֵינֵיכֶם, וְאַתֶּם הַמִּיֻּחָדִים בְּטוֹבוֹת הַגְּדוֹלוֹת מִבְּלַעֲדֵיהֶם, וְהִנָּצְלִים מִמַּכּוֹת מִצְרַיִם וְקֹרַח, וְלֹא הֵם.

Because you saw them with your own eyes, and you were singled out for these great favors, unlike them, and you were saved from the plagues of Mitzrayim and Korach, and not them.

וְעַל כֵּן חַיְבִים אַתֶּם בְּעֲבוּדָה עֲלֵיהֶם.

Therefore, you are more obligated in avodah than they are.

וְכֵן נֹאמַר בְּשָׂאָר בְּנֵי אָדָם, כִּי מָה שֶׁחַיְבִים בּוֹ יִתְחַלֵּף כְּפִי הַתְּחַלְפוֹת הַכָּרָתָם וְהַתְּחַלְפוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת עֲלֵיהֶם.

And similarly, we can say regarding other individuals, that what they are obligated in varies according to the differences in their perception and the differences in the favors bestowed upon them.

וְעַל הַמֵּאֲמִין לַחֲשֹׁב עִם נַפְשׁוֹ בְּמָה שֶׁהוּא חַיֵּב לֵאלֹהִים ית', וּדְקָדֵק בְּדַבָּר בְּתַכְלִית יְכָלָתוֹ וּכְפִי הַשְּׁגָתוֹ מִמֶּנּוּ.

And it is incumbent upon the believer to reckon with his soul what he owes to Hashem, may He be blessed, and to be meticulous in this matter to the utmost of his ability and according to his grasp of it.

וּמָה שֶׁיָּגִיעַ אֵלָיו בְּמַעֲשֶׂה, יִשְׁתַּדֵּל בּוֹ וְיִטְרַח.

And whatever he can achieve in practice, he should strive and toil in it.

וּמָה שֶׁלֹּא יוֹכֵל לְהַשְׁגִּיגוֹ בְּמַעֲשֶׂה, יִשְׁיָגְהוּ בִּידְעָה וְיִתְאַוְהוּ.

And what he cannot achieve in practice, he should achieve through knowledge and desire it.

כַּמִּשְׁדָּוד ע"ה (תהלים קיט): "אַחֲלִי יִכְנֹו דְרָכַי לְשִׁמּוֹר חֻקֶּיךָ", וְאָמַר (שם יט): "הִנָּחֲמִידִים מְזֻהָב וּמִפָּז רָב וְגו'".

As Dovid HaMelech, alav hashalom, said (Tehillim 119): "Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" and he also said (Tehillim 19): "More to be desired are they than gold, than fine gold."

וְהַבּוֹרָא יִדְיָנְהוּ לְזִכּוֹת, וְהוּא חַיֵּב לְצַפּוֹת לַעֲתוֹת אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁיֵג יָדוֹ וְיֻכַּל בְּהֵן לְשַׁלֵּם מָה שֶׁיִּתְכַּן לוֹ מִחוֹבוֹת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ.

And the Creator will judge him favorably, and he is obligated to await times when he will be able to fulfill what is possible for him of his debts to the blessed Creator.

וְאַל יִרְחִיב עַל עַצְמוֹ הָאֲמִתְּלוֹת בּוֹ, וְיִזְלֹזֵל בּוֹ, וְיִנְיַחְהוּ, וְיִתְעַלֵּם מִמֶּנּוּ, פֶּן יִהְיֶה נֶעְכָּר בְּיוֹם הַחֲשׁוֹן הַגָּדוֹל, כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב (משלי יג): "כִּי לְדַבָּר יִחָבֵל לוֹ".

And let him not make excuses for himself regarding it, nor treat it lightly, nor abandon it, nor ignore it, lest he be distressed on the great Day of Accounting, as it is written (Mishlei 13): "Whoever despises the word shall be destroyed by it."

WHAT TO TAKE FROM IT

Rabbeinu Bachya teaches us that the spiritual accounting for each person is not equal; rather, it varies based on their individual understanding and the specific good Hashem has granted them. He explains that we are all commanded to

meticulously examine our duties to Hashem, striving to fulfill what is within our ability and to desire and understand what is beyond our current reach. The perek concludes with a stern warning against neglecting this cheshbon hanefesh, lest one face despair on the great day of judgment.

למעשה WHAT TO TAKE HOME

The Chovos HaLevavos is teaching us a fundamental principle here: our avodas Hashem is not a one-size-fits-all package. It's deeply personal, tailored to each one of us. The Gemara is bothered by the idea that everyone's cheshbon is the same, and the teretz is that it depends on our individual recognition of Hashem's kindness and our level of understanding. Just like the Dor De'ah who saw Yetzias Mitzrayim had a greater chiyuv than their children, so too, our personal experiences and the hashpa'ah we receive from Hashem create a unique set of obligations for each of us. This means we can't compare ourselves to others, saying, "Look how much more so-and-so does!" or "I'm doing enough because others do less." Our cheshbon is with Hashem, based on what He has given *us*.

This is a powerful chiddush. It means that every single Yid, no matter their background or level, has a unique path in avodas Hashem. What is expected of one person might be different from another, because their understanding, their opportunities, and the specific kindnesses Hashem has shown them are different. The key is to honestly assess *our own* situation. What has Hashem given *me*? What understanding have *I* gained? What opportunities for growth and mitzvos has *He* placed in *my* path? This isn't about finding excuses, chas v'shalom, but about taking a real, honest inventory of our personal spiritual capital.

So, what does this mean for our daily avodah? It means we need to sit down and truly think about our relationship with Hashem. What are *my* specific "debts" to Him, based on *my* life, *my* understanding, *my* blessings? And then, whatever we *can* do, we must do with diligence and effort. And for those things we can't yet do, we should at least desire them, yearn for them, and look for opportunities to grow into them. Dovid HaMelech said, "O that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!" This isn't just a nice thought; it's a recognition that even the desire itself is a form of avodah, and Hashem judges us favorably for it.

Today, take five minutes to reflect on one specific kindness Hashem has shown you recently, and consider what that kindness obligates you to do in return.