

תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel Chapter 20

Introduction

This discourse from the *Maharal of Prague* (Rabbi Yehuda Loew ben Bezalel, 1520–1609) explores a foundational question in Jewish thought: Why did the Avos (Patriarchs) observe the commandments of the Torah even before it was given at Sinai? The Maharal was the chief rabbi of Prague and a major figure in Jewish philosophy, Kabbalah, and Halacha. His ideas continue to influence both scholarly and mystical Jewish traditions.

The Maharal offers a deeply philosophical explanation: the Avos were intrinsically connected to the truth and essence of Torah because they represented the perfected human form. Their actions were not motivated by external command but by internal spiritual alignment with Divine wisdom. He contrasts the varying levels of preparedness between Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov in their fulfillment of the Torah, culminating in a nuanced understanding of prophecy, spiritual intuition, and the unique role of Israel in embodying Divine truth even prior to revelation

מְשׁוּם מָה קּיְמוּ הָאָבוֹת אֶת הַתּוֹרָה Why did the Patriarchs fulfill the Torah?		
Already the first question was clarified to you. And what appears to us in the answer to the second question is that there were differences in levels in this matter.	ּכְּבֶר הָתָבָּאֵר לְךְ שְׁאֵלָה רִאשׁוֹנָה. וּמַה שֶׁנִּרְאֶה לָנוּ בִּתְשׁוּבַת שְׁאֵלָה שְׁנִיָּה, כִּי חִלּוּקֵי מַדְרֵגוֹת הָיוּ בְּעִנְיָן זָה.	
For Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah according to the view of the Sages (Yoma 28b), from which we must not deviate, neither from their tradition nor from their wisdom.	כִּי אַבְרָהָם הָיָה מְקַיֵּם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כַּלָּה עַל־פִּי דַּעַת חֲכָמִים (יוֹמָא כ״ח, ב), אֲשֶׁר אֵין לָזוּז מִקַבָּלָתָם וּמַחָּכְמָתָם	
And this is because Avraham was particularly devoted to fulfilling the entire Torah.	וָזֶה כִּי אַבְרָהָם הָיָה מְיָחָד בְּיוֹתֵר לְקַיֵּם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה.	
And this is because the virtue of Avraham was that he cleaved to the supernal wisdom; therefore, Avraham was specifically connected to the Torah, which is the supernal intellect, as is known.	וְזֶה כִּי מַעֲלַת אַבְרָהָם דְּבַקָה בַּחָכְמָה הָעֶלְיוֹנָה, לְכָךְ הָיָה אַבְרָהָם בִּפְרָט מְיַחָד אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁהוּא הַשֶּׁכֶל הָעֶלְיוֹן, כַּאֲשֶׁר יָדוּעַ.	
For it is [taught that] three years [old] Avraham was when he recognized his Creator (Nedarim 32a).	פִּי הֵן שֶׁלשׁ שֶׁנָה הִכִּיר אַבְרָהָם אֶת בּוֹרְאוֹ (נְדָרִים (ל״ב, א).	
And since Avraham was unique in this, and not so Yitzchak and Yaakov, for they only received from Avraham,	וּמֵאַחַר שֶׁהָיָה אַבְרָהָם מִיחָד בָּזֶה, וְלֹא כֵן יִצְחָק וָיַעֲקֹב, רַק כִּי קִבְּלוּ מֵאַבְרָהָם,	

therefore Avraham also fulfilled that which this supernal intellect provides; and therefore Avraham was uniquely devoted to fulfilling the entire Torah.	לְכָךְ הָיָה אַבְרָהָם גַּם־כֵּן מְקַיָּם מֵה שֶׁנּוֹתֵן הַשֵּׁכָל הָעֶלְיוֹן הַזֶּה; וּלְכָךְ הָיָה אַבְרָהָם מְיֵחָד לְקַיֵּם אֶת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה
And further, you may understand with wisdom, that the attribute of Avraham is the attribute of the Torah.	וְעוֹד יֵשׁ לְדָּ לְהָבִין בְּחָכְמֶה, כִּי מִדַּת אַבְרָהָם הִיא מִדַּת הַתּוֹרָה.
For the Torah is called "Torat Chesed" (Torah of kindness), as it is written (Mishlei 31:26): "And the Torah of kindness is on her tongue."	פִּי הַתּוֹרָה תִּקֶּרָא תּוֹרַת חֶסֶד', דְּכְתִיב (מִשְׁלֵי ל״א, "כ״ו): "וְתוֹרַת חֶסֶד עַל לְשׁוֹנָה.
And this is because the Torah's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace (Mishlei 3:17).	וְזֶה מִצֵּד כִּי הַתּוֹרָה "דְּרֶכֶיהָ דַרְכֵי נֹעַם וְכָל (נְתִיבוֹתֶיהָ שָׁלוֹם" (מִשְׁלֵי ג, י״ז).
And even when you find in the Torah death penalties and excisions, the purpose of the Torah is only to establish the good in the world, so that no evil shall be found.	וְאַף כַּאֲשֶׁר תִּמְצָא בַּתּוֹרָה מִיתוֹת וּכְרִיתוֹת, אֵין תַּכְלִית הַתּוֹרָה רַק לְהַעֲמִיד הַטוֹב בָּעוֹלָם, שֶׁלֹא יִהְיֶה נִמְצָא שׁוּם רַע.
And this was hinted by the sages of truth in the first chapter of Sotah (14a): "It was taught: Rabbi Simlai said: The Torah begins with acts of kindness and ends with acts of kindness.	וְדָבֶר זֶה רָמְזוּ חַכְמֵי הָאֱמֶת בְּפֶּרֶק קַמָּא דְּסוֹטָה (י״ד, א): 'תַּנְיָא רַבִּי שִׂמְלַאי אוֹמֵר: הַתּוֹרָה תְּחָלֶּתָה ;גְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים וְסוֹפָה גְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים
It begins with acts of kindness – "And Hashem made for Adam and his wife garments of skin and clothed them" (Bereishis 3:21).	תְּחָלֶתָהּ גְּמִילוּת חֲסָדִים – "וַיַּעֵשׂ ה' לְאָדֶם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ (בָּרֵאשִׁית ג, כ״א).
And it ends with acts of kindness, as it is written (Devarim 34:6): "And He buried him in the valley."	וְסוֹפָהּ גְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, דְּכְתִיב (דְּבָרִים ל״ד, ו): ""וַיִּקְבֵּר אֹתוֹ בַגִּיְא
In this, he described something great—that the entire purpose of the Torah is to establish the good that shall be in the world;	בְּתַאֲרוֹ בָּזֶה דָּבָר גָּדוֹל, כִּי כָּל עִנְיַן הַתּוֹרָה כְּדֵי לָהַעֲמִיד הַטוֹב שֶׁיִּהְיֶה בָּעוֹלָם;
and therefore its beginning is acts of kindness, which is the doing of good for human beings, and the ultimate purpose of the Torah is the complete good.	וּלְפִיכָּךְ הַתְּחָלָתָהּ גְמִילוּת חֲסָדִים, שֶׁהוּא עֲשִׂיַת הַטוֹב לִבְנֵי־אָדָם, וְתַכְלִית הַתּוֹרָה הַטוֹב הַגָּמוּר.
And this is what they said in the Midrash Yerushalmi (Shekalim 6:1): "From His right hand, a fiery law to them' (Devarim 33:2) – the Torah that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Israel is white fire engraved with black fire."	ְוֹזֶהוּ אָמֶרֶם בַּמִּדְרָשׁ יְרוּשַׁלְמִי שְׁקָלִים וּ, א): "מִימִינוֹ אֵשׁ דָּת לָמוֹ" (דְּבָרִים ל״ג, ב), הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁנָּתַן הַקָּדוֹש־בָּרוּדְּ־הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵשׁ לְבָנָה חֲרוּתָה בְּאֵשׁ שְׁחוֹרָה.
The explanation is that fire is something that is not physical, for fire has no physical substance.	בַּאוּר זָה, כִּי הָאֵשׁ דָּבָר שֶׁאֵינוֹ בַּשְׁמִי, כִּי אֵין בָּאֵשׁ גוּף בַּשְׁמִי.

Therefore, anything that is not physical is called "fire."	וּלְפִיכָךְ כָּל דָּבָר שָׁאֵינוֹ בַּשְׁמִי נִקְרָא אֵשׁ'.
And he meant to say that the commandments of the Torah do not contain a physical subject,	וְרָצָה לוֹמַר כִּי אֵין מִצְוֹת הַתּוֹרָה נוֹשֵׂא שֶׁלָּה עִנְיָן בַּשְׁמִי.
as a person might initially think – that all the matters of Torah are a system and ethics for the maintenance of the physical human being alone.	כַּאֲשֶׁר יִרְאֶה הָאָדָם בִּתְחָלַת הַמַּחֲשָׁבָה, שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה כָּל עָנְיָנִיהָ סֵדֶר וְנִימוּס קִיּוּם הָאָדָם הַגַּשְׁמִי בִּלְבַד.
And for this reason, one might think the Torah's subject is physical – the organization of human society, as some people have thought.	וּבִשְׁבִיל כָּךְ הָיָה נוֹשֵׁא שֶׁל תּוֹרָה גַשְׁמִי, הוּא קִּיּוֹם קבּוּץ בְּנֵי אָדָם, כְּמוֹ שֶׁחָשְׁבוּ מִקְצֶת בְּנֵי אָדָם.
But the matter is not so, for the Torah's subject is not physical.	אֲבָל אֵין הַדָּבָר כָּדְּ, כִּי אֵין הַתּוֹרָה נוֹשֵׁא שֶׁלָּה עִנְיָן בַּשְׁמִי.
Therefore it is written that it is inscribed in white fire – for fire is non-physical,	וּלְבָךְ אָמַר שֶׁהִיא בְּתוּבָה עַל אֵשׁ לְבָנָה, שֶׁהָאֵשׁ אֵינוֹ בַּשְׁמִי.
and white represents purity and goodness.	ַוְהַלְבָן מוֹרָה עַל הַזַפּוּת וְהַטוֹב.
And this is because the entire essence of Torah is to establish divine good.	וָזֶה כִּי כָּל עִנְיַן הַתּוֹרָה הוּא לְקַיָּם הַטוֹב הָאֱלֹקִי.
And this is the foundation upon which everything is built – to establish divine good.	וְזֶהוּ הַיְסוֹד שֶׁעָלָיו נִבְנֶה הַכֹּל, לְהַעֲמִיד הַטוֹב הָאֱלֹהִי.
And since there is [so-called] "good" that lacks true understanding,	וּמִפְּנֵי כִּי יֵשׁ טוֹב, וְאֵין בּוֹ מִשְׂכָּל אֱמֶת.
but the Torah has this level – that its foundation, upon which all is built, is the divine good, and it is true and very clear.	אֲבָל הַתּוֹרָה יֵשׁ לָהּ מַדְרֵגָה זאת, שָׁיְסוֹד שֶׁלָּהּ הַכּּל נִבְנָה עָלָיו הוּא הַטוֹב הָאֱלֹקִי, וְהוּא אֱמֶת וּבָרוּר מְאֹד.
Therefore it says: "written in black fire" – for nothing is more discernible and clarified than black fire, which is entirely distinct.	וּלְפִיכָהְ אָמַר: כְּתוּבָה בְּאֵשׁ שְׁחוֹרָה'. כִּי אֵין דָּבָר יוֹתֵר נָבֶּר וּמְבֹרָר מִן אַשׁ שָׁחוֹר, שֶׁהוּא נָבָּר לְגַמְרֵי.
Therefore, the concept of Torah includes two elements: its foundation is the divine good, yet its words are extremely clarified and discernible.	לָכֵן עִנְיָן הַתּוֹרָה יֵשׁ בָּה שְׁנֵי דְּבָרִים; שֶׁיְסוֹד שֶׁלָּה הַטוֹב הָאֱלֹקִי, וּמְכָּל מָקוֹם דְּבָרֵיהָ מְבֹרָרִין וְנִכָּרִין מָאֹד.
And further explanation will follow.	וּלְקַמֶּן יִתְבָּאֵר עוֹד.
Therefore the Torah has two names: "Torat Chesed" (Mishlei 31:26), because the entire matter of the Torah is to accomplish divine good – and this corresponds to white fire.	וְלָבֵן שְׁתֵּי שֵׁמוֹת יֵשׁ לַתּוֹרָה; "תּוֹרַת חֶסֶד" (מִשְׁלֵי ל״א, כ״ו), מִפְנֵי שֶׁכָּל עִנְיָן הַתּוֹרָה לַעֲשׂוֹת הַטוֹב הָאֱלֹקִי, וּכְנֶגֶד זֶה אֵשׁ לְבָנָה.
And it is also called "Torat Emet" (Malachi 2:6) because of the truth of the matters, which are clarified in the Torah.	וְנָקְרַאת "תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת" (מַלְאָכִי ב, ו) מִפְּנֵי אֲמִתַּת הַדְּבָרִים, שֶׁהֵם בְּרוּרִים בַּתּוֹרָה.

And therefore it is engraved in black fire, which is entirely discernible.	וְלָכֵן הִיא חֲרוּתָה בָּאֵשׁ שְׁחוֹרָה, שֶׁהוּא נִכָּר לְגַמְרֵי.
And because of this, Avraham—whose trait was kindness—was fitting in and of himself for the Torah, since the Torah is "Torat Chesed" (a Torah of kindness), and this is the trait of Avraham.	וּמִפְנֵי זָה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁהָיָה מִדְּתוֹ הַחֶּסֶד, רָאוּי מְצַד עַצְמוֹ אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה הִיא "תּוֹרַת חֶסֶד", וְזָהוּ מִדְּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם.
And therefore Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah from himself, because this was his trait intrinsically—goodness and kindness—as is known from his trait of performing acts of kindness. Therefore the Torah is his trait.	וּלְכָךְּ קִיָּם אַבְרָהָם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה מֵעַצְמוֹ, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁזָּה מִדָּתוֹ מֵעַצְמוֹ, הוּא הַטוֹב וְהַחֶּסֶד כַּאֲשֶׁר יָדוּעַ מִמִּדָּתוֹ שָׁהָיָה גּוֹמֵל חֶסֶד, לְכָךְ הַתּוֹרָה הִיא מִדָּתוֹ.
But Yaakov, even though his trait was truth—as it is written (Michah 7:20): "You will give truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham"—	אֲבָל יַצְקֹב, אַף כִּי הָיָה מִדָּתוֹ הָאֱמֶת, וּכְדַכְתִיב (מִיכָה "ז, כ): "תִּתֵּן אֶמֶת לְיַצְקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם.
nevertheless, it is impossible for a human being, insofar as he is a human being, to cleave to that level, because truth is the seal of the Holy One, blessed be He (Shabbos 55a),	הַלֹא אִי אֶפְשָׁר לָאָדָם, בַּמָּה שֶׁהוּא אָדָם, לִהְיוֹת דָּבֵק בְּמַדְרֵגָה זאת, כִּי הָאֱמֶת חוֹתָמוֹ שֶׁל ,(הַקָּדוֹשׁ־בָּרוּדִּ־הוּא (שְׁבָּת נ״ה, א
and this trait—truth—is not the trait of this world, which is a world of falsehood.	ָןאֵין הַמִּדָּה הַזֹּאת – הִיא מִדַּת אֱמֶת בָּעוֹלֶם הַזֶּה, שֶׁהוּא עוֹלַם הַשָּׁקֶר.
Therefore, from the standpoint of the trait of truth, this world is not fitting for the Torah, which is truth.	וּלְכָךְ מִצַד מִדַּת הָאֱמֶת אֵין רָאוּי הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, שֶׁהִיא אֶמֶת.
Only Avraham, whose trait was kindness, is fitting for this world specifically.	רַק אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהָיָה מִדָּתוֹ הַחֶּסֶד, וְהוּא רָאוּי אֶל הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דַּוְקָא.
And therefore, Avraham, from this trait, was fitting to be fully united with the Torah.	וּלְכָךְ אַבְרָהָם מָצַר הַמָּדָּה הַזֹּאת רָאוּי לְהִיוֹת דָּבֵק בַּתוֹרָה לְגַמְרֵי.
And therefore Avraham fulfilled the entire Torah.	וּלְכָךְ קִיָּם אַבְרָהָם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כֻּלָּה.
But in the Midrash they said: "In the merit of Yaakov I gave the Torah to Israel," as we said in Gevuros Hashem.	אֲבֶל בַּמִּדְרָשׁ אָמְרוּ: בִּזְכוּת יַצְקֹב נָתַתִּי תּוֹרָה 'לְיִשְׂרָאֵל', כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמֵרְנוּ בְּחַבּוּר גְבוּרוֹת ה'.
And this is a different matter, and we will not elaborate on it here. However, it will be explained soon.	וְזָהוּ עַנְיָן אַחֵר, וְאֵין לְהַאֲרִיךְ בָּזֶה. אָמְנָם עוֹד יִתְבָּאֵר בְּסָמוּדְ
And regarding Yitzchak, the mitzvah of shechitah (ritual slaughter) is stated, as it says (Bereishis 27:3): "Please take your gear."	וְאֵצֶל יִצְחָק נָאָמְרָה מִצְוַת הַשְׁחִיטָה, שֶׁאָמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ״ז, ג): "שָׂא נָא כֵלֶיךּ".
And it is known that shechitah leans toward the trait of judgment.	וָיָדוּעַ כִּי הַשְּׁחִיטָה הוּא נוֹטֶה אֶל מִדַּת הַדִּין.

And therefore, Yitzchak's trait was to fulfill this mitzvah, just as Avraham's trait was toward the entire Torah – so too was Yitzchak's trait toward the mitzvah of shechitah.	וּלְכָךְ הָוְתָה מִדַּת יִצְחָק לְלַזֵּם הַמִּצְוָה הַוֹּאת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהָיְתָה מִדַּת אַבְרָהָם לְכָל הַתּוֹרָה – כָּךְ הָיְתָה מִדַּת יִצְחָק לְמִצְוַת שְׁחִיטָה.
And the trait of Yaakov was toward the trait of Shabbos, because Shabbos is fitting for his trait,	וּמִדַּת יַעֲקֹב לְמִדַּת הַשַּׁבָּת, כִּי הַשַּׁבָּת הוּא רָאוּי אֶל מָדָתוֹ,
as it is said (Yeshayahu 58:13–14): "If you restrain your foot on Shabbos then I will feed you the heritage of Yaakov your father."	שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר (יְשַׁעְיָה נ״ח, י״ג–י״ד): "אָם תָּשִׁיב מִשַּׁבָּת רַגְלֶּדְּ וְהַאֲכַלְתִּידְ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אָבִידְ.
And our Sages, of blessed memory, said (Shabbos 118a): "Whoever delights in Shabbos is given an inheritance without bounds,"	וְאָמְרוּ זִכְרוֹנָם לִבְרָכָה (שַׁבָּת קי״ח, א): כָּל הַמְעַנֵּג הַשַּׁבָּת נוֹתְנִים לוֹ נַחֲלָה בְּלִי מְצָרִים,
as it is said: "And I will feed you the heritage of Yaakov your father."	שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר: "וְהַאֲכַלְתִּיךּ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב אָבִיךּ".
Not like Avraham, about whom it says (Bereishis 13): "Arise, walk through the land to its length and breadth,"	לֹא כְּאַבְרָהָם שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר בּוֹ (בְּרֵאשִׁית י״ג): "קוּם הָתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ לְאָרְכָּה וּלְרָחְבָּה,
and not like Yitzchak, about whom it says (Bereishis 26:3): "For to you and your seed I will give all these lands,"	וְלֹא כְּיִצְחָק שֶׁנֶּאֱמֵר בּוֹ (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ״ו, ג): "כִּי לְךָּ וּוּלְזַרְעֲךָ אָתַּן אֶת כָּל הָאָרָצֹת הָאֵל.
but by Yaakov it says (Bereishis 28:14): "And you shall burst forth to the west and to the east"	אֶלָּא בְּיַעֲקֹב שֶׁנָּאֶמֵר בּוֹ (בְּרֵאשִׁית כ״ח, י״ד): .'''וּפָּרַצְתָּ יָמָה וְקֶדְמָה'' וְגוֹ
Thus, Shabbos is fitting for the trait of Yaakov, and therefore one who delights in it is given the inheritance of Yaakov.	הָרֵי כִּי הַשַּׁבָּת הוּא רָאוּי אֶל מִדַּת יַעֲקֹב, וּלְכָךְ מִי שֶׁמְעַנֵּג אוֹתוֹ נוֹתְנִים לוֹ נַחֲלַת יַעֲקֹב.
And this matter is clarified to the wise through what was said earlier: "And you shall call the Shabbos a delight and the Holy [One] of Hashem honored."	ְהַדָּבָר הוּא מְבֹאָר לַחֲכָמִים בַּמָּה שֶׁאָמֵר לִפְנֵי זֶה: ""וְקָרָאתָ לַשַּׁבָּת עֹנֶג וּקְדוֹשׁ ה' מְכַבָּד".
And the sanctification [of Hashem] is especially connected to Yaakov, as it says (Yeshayahu 29:23): "And they shall sanctify the Holy One of Yaakov."	ְהַקְדָּשָׁה הִיא בִּפָּרָט לְיַצְקֹב, דְּכְתִיב (יְשַׁעְיָה כ״ט, כ״ג): "וְהָקְדִּישׁוּ אֶת קְדוֹשׁ יַעֲקֹב",
but this matter is not the place for it [to be discussed at length].	וְעִנְיָן זֶה אֵין כָּאן מְקוֹמוֹ.
Therefore, each one fulfilled the mitzvos appropriate to his trait.	וּלְכָךְ כָּל אֶחָד קִיֵּם הַמִּצְוֹת הָרָאוּיִים לְפִי מִדָּתוֹ.
But do not say that Yitzchak fulfilled only the mitzvah of shechitah, and Yaakov the mitzvah of Shabbos – that is not so,	ָןלֹא שֶׁתֹּאמַר כִּי לֹא קִיֵּם יִצְחָק רַק מִצְוַת שְׁחִיטָה, וְיַעֲקֹב מִצְוַת שַׁבָּת – שֶׁזָּה אֵינוֹ,
for certainly they fulfilled other mitzvos as well.	דְוַדָּאי הָיוּ מְקַיְּמִים שְׁאָר מִצְוֹת גַּם־כֵּן.

I mily because these mitrios were suited to each one according to	
Only because these mitzvos were suited to each one according to his trait, they are considered as though they had a personal	רַק מִפְּנֵי כִּי אֵלּוּ הַמִּצְוֹת רְאוּיִין לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִצֵּד עַצְמוֹ, דְּהַיְנוּ מִצַד מִדָּתִם, נֶחְשֶׁבֶת הַמִּצְוָה כְּאִלּוּ הָיוּ
obligation in them,	ָקְצָיִּין עָלֶיהָ, קאָצִין עָלֶיהָ,
and their reward is greater.	ָןהַשָּׂכָר יוֹתֵר גָּדוֹל.
For when it is a command from Hashem, may He be blessed, it	שֶׁבַּאֲשֶׁר הִיא מִצְוָה מִן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךּ, דָּבָר זָה יוֹתֵר
is on a higher level—since it is a command from Hashem, who	בְּמַדְרֵגָה, שֶׁהָרֵי הִיא מִצְוָה מִן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְּ אֲשֶׁר
desires and wills that the mitzvah be done.	רוֹצֶה וְחָפֵץ שֶׁיַּצְשֶׂה הַמִּצְוָה.
And this matter is without doubt: the mitzvah is on a higher level	וְדָבָר זָה אֵין סָפֵק, כִּי הַמִּצְוָה הִיא יוֹתֵר בְּמַדְרֵגָה
and in greater esteem when one is obligated in it.	וּבַחֲשִׁיבוּת כַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא מְחֻיָּב בָּה.
And when it is optional, it is not considered as significant.	ּוְכַאֲשֶׁר הִיא רְשׁוּת – אֵינָהּ נָחְשֶׁבֶת כָּל־כָּף.
And this is what they said (Kiddushin 31a): "Greater is one who	וְזֶהוּ אָמְרָם (קִדּוּשִׁין ל״א, א): גָדוֹל הַמְצֵנֶה וְעוֹשֶׂה
is commanded and does than one who is not commanded and	ן נָהוּ טָּלָּיָ בּ (אַרִּישִׁ ךְ אַ, אַ). בָּוּדֹי סַּבְּבֶּיָה וְעוֹשֶׁה. מָמִי שֵׁאֵיבוֹ מַצֵּרָה וְעוֹשֵׂה.
does."	
And its explanation is only what we have said:	וְאֵין פֵּרוּשׁוֹ רַק מַה שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ.
That a matter which is an obligation and necessity is on a higher	כִּי הַדֶּבָר שֶׁהוּא חוֹב וּמַכְרַחַ, הוּא יוֹתֵר בְּמַדְרֵגָה מִמַּה יייביי ביייב
level than that which is optional,	ָּשֶׁהוּא רְשׁוּת,
for if it were not of greater level, it would not be obligatory.	שֶׁאָם לֹא הָיָה יוֹתֵר בְּמַדְרֵגָה, לֹא הָיָה מְחַיֵּב.
And in any case, there is more greatness when the mitzvah	ָוְעַל כָּל פָּנִיִם יוֹתֵר יֵשׁ מַעֲלָה כַּאֲשֶׁר הַמִּצְוָה מְחַיֶּבֶת,
obligates, or is close to obligating.	אוֹ קָרוֹב לְחִיּוּב.
And Yaakov fulfilled Shabbos, for such was fitting to his	וְיַצַקב הָיָה מְקַיֵּם שַׁבָּת שֶבָּך רָאוּי לְפִי מִדָּתוֹ, דָּבָר זָה
trait—this is close to obligation, and the level is greater in this.	הרור כחינור והמדרוה יותר הזה
	ָקרוֹב לְחִיּוּב, וְהַמֵּדְרֵגָה יוֹתֵר בָּזֶה.
And therefore, the mitzvah that was fitting to each one's trait was	וּלְכָךְ נִכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִי
written regarding each one—	וּלְכָךְ נִכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִי מָדָּתוֹ,
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos.	וּלְכָךְ נִכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי מָדָּתוֹ, אַף עַל גַב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת.
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to	וּלְכָךְ נָכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי ,מִדָּתוֹ אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת. הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמֵז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין – הָיוּ
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to obligation, and their level is higher.	וּלְכָךְ נָכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי מָדָּתוֹ אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְּמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת. הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמַז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְּמִין – הָיוּ קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַחִּיּוּב, וּמַדְרֶגֶת אֵלוּ הַמִּצְוֹת יוֹתֵר.
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to obligation, and their level is higher. For according to the trait of Avraham, it was fitting to do the	וּלְכָךְ נִכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי מָדָּתוֹ אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְּמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמַז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין – הָיוּ קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַחִיּוּב, וּמַדְרֶגֶת אֵלוּ הַמִּצְוֹת יוֹתֵר כִּי לְפִי מִדָּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם רָאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to obligation, and their level is higher. For according to the trait of Avraham, it was fitting to do the entire Torah, as was explained.	וּלְכָךְ נָכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי ,מִדְּתוֹ אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת. הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמֵז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין – הָיוּ .קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַחִיּוּב, וּמִדְרֶגֶת אֵלּוּ הַמִּצְוֹת יוֹתֵר כִּי לְפִי מִדְּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם רָאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה .כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִתְבָּאֵר
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to obligation, and their level is higher. For according to the trait of Avraham, it was fitting to do the entire Torah, as was explained. And therefore, his reward was greater than it was for others,	וּלְכָךְ נָכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי ,מִדְּתוֹ .אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְּמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמֵז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין – הָיוּ .קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַחִיּוּב, וּמַדְרֶגֶת אֵלוּ הַמִּצְוֹת יוֹתֵר כִּי לְפִי מִדָּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם רָאוּי לַצְשׁוֹת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה .כְּמוֹ שֶׁהְתָבָּאֵר וּלְכָךְ שְׂכָרוֹ יוֹתֵר מִמַּה שֶׁהָיָה אֵצֶל אֲחֵרִים, אַף שֶׁהָיוּ
written regarding each one— even though they fulfilled all the mitzvos. These mitzvos that the verse hinted they fulfilled—were close to obligation, and their level is higher. For according to the trait of Avraham, it was fitting to do the entire Torah, as was explained.	וּלְכָךְ נָכְתַּב אֵצֶל כָּל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד הַמִּצְוָה הָרְאוּיָה לְפִּי ,מִדְּתוֹ אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת. הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלוּ שֶׁרָמֵז הַכָּתוּב שֶׁהָיוּ מְקַיְמִין – הָיוּ .קְרוֹבִים אֶל הַחִיּוּב, וּמִדְרֶגֶת אֵלּוּ הַמִּצְוֹת יוֹתֵר כִּי לְפִי מִדְּתוֹ שֶׁל אַבְרָהָם רָאוּי לַעֲשׂוֹת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה .כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִתְבָּאֵר

However, all this is in positive commandments, because a mitzvas aseh is for acquiring spiritual level and completion,	אָמְנָם כָּל זֶה הוּא בְּמִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה', לְפִי שֶׁמִּצְוַת עֲשֵׂה הִיא לְקִנְיַן מַצֲלָה וְהַשְׁלָמָה,
and they did not withhold themselves from acquiring perfection.	ָןלֹא הָיוּ מְחַסְּרִים עַצְמָם מִן קִנְיַן הַשְׁלֵמוּת.
But negative commandments (lo saaseh), which do not contain acquisition of spiritual level at all,	אָבָל מִצְוֹת לֹא הַּעֲשֵׂה', שֶׁאֵין בָּהֶן קִנְיַן מַעֲלָה כְּלָל,
rather, one is obligated not to do this thing—there is no acquisition of level in them.	רַק שֶׁהוּא מְחַיֵּב שֶׁלֹא יַצְשֶׂה דָּבָר זָה – אֵין בָּזָה קִנְיַן מַאֲלָה
Only if the transgression came to his hand and he was saved from it, he receives reward, as stated in Kiddushin 39b.	רַק אָם בָּאָה עֲבַרָה לְיָדוֹ וְנִאָּל – מְקַבֵּל עַל זֶה שָׂכָר, בְּדְאִיתָא בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְּקִדּוּשִׁין (ל״ט, ב).
Nonetheless, in essence, there is no reward for mitzvos lo saaseh.	מָכָּל מָקוֹם בְּעֶצֶם מִצְוֹת לֹא תַּעֲשֵׂה – אֵין בָּהֶן שָׂכָר.
And if one is not obligated at all, why should he observe it for no reason?	וְאָם לֹא הָיָה מְחַיָּב כְּלָל, אָם־כֵּן לָמָה יְקַיֵּם שֶׁלֹא ?לְצֹרֶךְ
Since it was said (Kiddushin ibid) that one does not receive reward for lo saaseh unless the sin came to his hand.	בֵּיוָן דְּאָמְרִינַן בְּפֶּרֶק קַמָּא דְּקִדּוּשִׁין (שָׁם), שֶׁאֵין מְקַבְּלִין עַל לֹא תַּעֲשֵׂה שָׁכָר בְּעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה, רַק אָם בָּאָה עֲבַרָה לְיָדוֹ.
And nowhere do we find that there is reward for fulfilling a lo saaseh.	וּרָשׁוּם מָקוֹם לֹא מָצִינוּ שֶׁיֵשׁ שָׂכָר כַּאֲשֶׁר מְקַיֵם מִצְוַת לֹא תַּעֲשֵׂה.
And proof to this: women are exempt from time-bound positive commandments (Kiddushin 29a),	וּרְאִיָּה לָזֶה: נָשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת מִמִּצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה שֶׁהַזְּמַן גְּרָמָא ((קִדּוּשִׁין כ״ט, א,
and if they fulfill the mitzvah, they receive reward like one who is not commanded and does.	וְאָם מְקַיְּמוֹת הַמִּצְוָה – יֵשׁ לָהֶן שָׂכָר עַל זָה כְּמִי שָׁאֵינוֹ מְצֵוָּה וְעוֹשֶׂה.
But regarding lo saaseh mitzvos from which women are exempt, if they fulfill the mitzvah, there is no reward at all.	וְאֵצֶל מִצְוֹת לֹא תַּעֲשֵׂה שֶׁהַנָּשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת – אָם מָקַיְּמוֹת הַמִּצְוָה – אֵין בָּזֶה שָׂכָר כְּלָל.
For women are exempt from becoming impure to the dead and from "do not round off the corners" (Kiddushin 29a),	פִּי הַנָּשִׁים פְּטוּרוֹת מִלְטַמֵּא לְמֵתִים וּמִבֵּל תָּקִיף ,((קִדּוּשִׁין כ״ט, א
and if they fulfill these mitzvos, there is no reward at all.	וְאָם מְקַיְמוֹת הַמִּצְוֹת – אֵין כָּאן שָׂכָר כְּלָל.
Only as we said: in the fulfillment of lo saaseh mitzvos, there is no reward.	– אֶלָּא כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ: כִּי אֵין בְּקִיוּם מִצְוֹת לֹא תַּעֲשֵׂה שׁוּם שָׂכָר.
And so it is in that passage in Kiddushin (ibid):	(וְכָדְ אִיתָא בְּהַהִיא בְּפֶרֶק קַמָּא דְקִדוּשִׁין (שָׁם).
And that which it says: "He sat and did not transgress – they give him reward as one who fulfilled a mitzvah,"	וָהָא דְּאָמְרִינַן: יָשַׁב וְלֹא עָבַר אֲבֵרָה – נוֹתְנִים לוֹ שָׁכָר כְּעוֹשֶׂה מִצְוָה,
that applies when the sin came to his hand and he was saved.	מוֹקֵי לַה כְּשֶׁבָּאָה עֲבַרָה לְיָדוֹ וְנִצּוֹל.

If so, why should one fulfill mitzvos for no reason?	אָם־כֵּן לָמָה יְקַיְמוּ הַמִּצְוֹת בְּחִנָּם?
And this is not the case with positive commandments, for in the mitzvah there is acquisition of spiritual level.	וְזֶה אֵינוֹ בְּקִיּוּם מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה, שֶׁיֵשׁ בַּמִּצְוָה קִנְיַן מַעֲלָה.
And therefore, Avraham—to whom the entire Torah was fitting, as explained—would fulfill both positive and negative commandments,	וּלְפִּיכָךְ אַבְרָהָם שֶׁאֵלָיו רָאוּיָה כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כַּלָּה, כְּמוֹ שָׁהִתְבָּאֵר הָיָה מְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה וּמִצְוֹת לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה.
for the matter by him was close to being an obligation.	פִּי הָיָה הַדָּבָר אֶצְלוֹ קָרוֹב לְהִיוֹת חִיוּב.
But the other Patriarchs fulfilled positive commandments, but not negative commandments—	אֲבָל שְׁאָר אָבוֹת – מִצְוֹת עֲשֵׂה הָיוּ מְקַיְמִים, אֲבָל מָצְוֹת לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה לֹא הָיוּ מְקַיְמִים,
since they were not obligated in the matter—why should they fulfill it?	אַחַר שֶׁלֹא הָיוּ מְחֲיָבִים בַּדָּבָר – לָמָה לָהֶם לְקַיֵּם.
And therefore, Yaakov married two sisters, and Amram [married] his aunt,	וּלְכָךְ יַעַקֹב נָשָׂא שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת, וְעַמְרָם דּוֹדָתוֹ,
for these are negative commandments, and since they were not obligated, they did not fulfill.	כִּי אֵלוּ דְּבָרִים הֵם לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה, וְכֵיוָן שֶׁלֹא הָיוּ מְחַיָּבִים ה לֹא הָיוּ מְקַיְּמִים – לֹא
And that which was said in Pesachim (119b) that Yaakov did not want to bless because he had married two sisters—	וּמֵה שֶׁאָמְרוּ בְּעַרְבֵי פְּסָחִים (דַּף קי״ט, ב) כִּי יַעֲקֹב ה'א הָיָה רוֹצֶה לְבָרֵךְ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנָשָׂא שְׁמֵּי אֲחָיוֹת – לֹא הָיָה רוֹצֶה לְבָרֵךְ מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנָשָׂא
this is another matter, because Yaakov, who married two sisters, knew that he was fitting to marry two sisters.	זָהוּ עִנְיָן אַחֵר, כִּי יַעֲקֹב שֶׁנָּשָׂא שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת – יָדַע כִּי הָיָה רָאוּי שֶׁיִּשָּׂא שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת.
And there is no doubt that all the matches of the Patriarchs were not by chance, but from Hashem it was.	וְאֵין סָפַק כִּי כָּל זִוּוּג הָאָבוֹת לֹא הָיָה בְּמִקְרֶה, רַק מֵאֵת ה' הָיָה זֶה.
And because Yaakov was fitting to marry specifically sisters—and this matter would later be prohibited—	וּבִשְׁבִיל שֶׁהָיָה רָאוּי יַצְקֹב שֶׁיִשָּׂא דַּוְקָא אֲחָיוֹת, וְדָבָר זָה יִהְיָה אָסוּר בַּפּוֹף,
this was somewhat a deficiency, that he was predisposed and prepared for such a thing.	דָּבָר זָה קָצָת חָפָּרוֹן מַה שֶׁהָיָה מְסַגָּל וּמוּכָן לְדָבָר בָּזָה.
But Yitzchak, even though it was also permitted for him to marry two sisters,	אַבָּל יִצְחָק, אַף שֶׁהָיָה מֻתָּר גַּם־כֵּן לְשָׂא שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת,
still he was not predisposed to marry two sisters—something that would later become prohibited—	ָמְכָּל מָקוֹם לֹא הָיָה מוּכָן לָזֶה שֶׁיִּשָּׂא שְׁתִּי אֲחָיוֹת, דָּבָר שֶׁיָהֵא אָסוּר בַּסּוֹף,
as opposed to Yaakov, who was predisposed to a matter that would later become prohibited.	רַבּּסוֹף אָסוּר בַּסּוֹף לְדָבָר שֶׁיִּהְיֶה אָסוּר בַּּסּוֹף,
And for this reason, he did not want to bless.	ּוּבִשְׁבִיל פָּךְ לֹא הָיָה רוֹצֶה לְבָרֵךְ.

And now, you can resolve what was said (Chullin 91a): "And slaughter a slaughter' (Bereishis 43:16) – prepare for them a slaughterhouse; 'and prepare' – that he should remove the sciatic nerve in their presence,"	וּמֵעַתָּה יִתְרָץ לָךְ הָא דְּקָאָמַר (חוּלִין צ״א, א): "וּטְבֹחַ טֶבַח' (בְּרֵאשִׁית מ״ג, ט״ז) – פְּרַע לָהֶם בֵּית "הַשְׁחִיטָה'; 'וְהָבֵן' – שֶׁיִּטוֹל גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה בִּפְנֵיהֶם,
like the one who says: Yaakov was commanded about the sciatic nerve.	ּכְּמֵאן דְּאָמֵר נִצְטַוָּה יַעֲקֹב עַל גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה.
And Tosafos (ibid s.v. "b'maan") asked: perhaps even according to the one who says he was not commanded—maybe they fulfilled it on their own, like shechitah.	וְהָקְשׁוּ בַּתּוֹסָפוֹת (שָׁם ד״ה 'בְּמַאן'): שֶׁמָּא אַף עַל מַאן דְּאָמֵר לֹא נִצְטַוּוּ – שֶׁמָּא מֵעַצְמָם הָיוּ מְקַיְּמִים, כְּמוֹ שְׁחִיטָה.
For according to this, there is no difficulty, because there is a great difference and distinction in this:	בּוֹ לְפִי זֶה אֵין קַשְׁיָא, כִּי חִלּוּק וְהֶפְרֵשׁ גָּדוֹל יֵשׁ בּוֹ;
because the sciatic nerve is a negative commandment, and if they were not obligated—they would not fulfill.	כִּי גִּיד הַנָּשֶׁה מִצְוַת לֹא תַּצֲשֶׂה הוּא, וְאָם לֹא הָיוּ מְחַיָּבִים – לֹא הָיוּ מְקַיְּמִים.
But shechitah is a positive commandment—they certainly would fulfill, even though they had not yet been commanded,	אֲבָל שְׁחִיטָה מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה, בְּוַדַּאי הָיוּ מְקַיְּמִים – אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁעֲדִיִן לֹא נִצְטַוּוּ,
as was explained above, and there is no doubt in this explanation.	ָּבְמוֹ שֶׁהָתְבָּאֵר לְמַעְלָה, וְאֵין סָפֵק בְּפֵרוּשׁ זֶה.
And further, this resolves the great difficulty in the chapter <i>Kol Shaah</i> (Pesachim 40b) regarding garments of kilayim (forbidden mixtures), that it is permitted to make from them a shroud for the dead.	וְעוֹד וְתֹרֵץ בָּזֶה קַשְּׁיָא גְדוֹלָה בְּפֶּרֶק כָּל שָׁעָה (פְּסָחִים מ, ב) אֵצֶל בִּגְדֵי כִּלְאַיִם, שֶׁמֵּתָּר לַעֲשׁוֹת מֵהֶן תַּכְרִיךְּ לָמֵת.
And Tosafos there (Rosh Hashanah <i>Achal</i>) asked: this should be <i>loeg larash</i> (mocking the poor), for it is forbidden to enter a cemetery wearing a garment with tzitzis, because of <i>loeg larash</i> (Berachos 18a).	ְוָהָקְשׁוּ שָׁם בַּתּוֹסָפּוֹת (ר"ה אֲכַל) דְּזֶה הָנֵי לוֹעֵג לָרָשׁ, דְּהָא אָסוּר לִכְנֹס בְּטַלִּית שֶׁיֵשׁ בּוֹ צִיצִית לְבֵית הַקְּבָרוֹת, מִשׁוּם דְּהָנֵי לוֹעֵג לָרָשׁ (בְּרָכוֹת י״ח, א).
So too here, wearing kilayim [after death] should also be <i>loeg larash</i> .	וְהָכִי נָמֵי הָנֵי לוֹעֵג לָרָשׁ, לְבִישַׁת כִּלְאַיִם.
But according to our explanation, there is no difficulty at all—since the dead is exempt from mitzvos, if he does not fulfill a negative commandment,	וּלְפִי דְּבָרֵינוּ לֹא קַשְׁיָא כְּלָל, כֵּיוָן שֶׁמֵּת פָּטוּר מִן הַמִּצְוֹת, אָם לֹא יְקַיֵּם מִצְוַת לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה – הַמִּצְוֹת, אָם לֹא יְקַיֵּם מִצְוַת לֹא
there is no disgrace toward the dead. For one who is obligated in mitzvos and fulfills a lo saaseh,	אֵין כָּאן הַלְעָנָה עַל הַמֵּת, כִּי מִי שֶׁמְּחַיָּב בְּמִצְוֹת וּמְקַיֵּם מִצְוַת לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה,
and one who is not obligated in mitzvos—like this case where there's no need to fulfill the mitzvah of kilayim—they are equal.	וּמִי שֶׁאֵינוֹ מְחַיָּב בְּמִצְוֹת – כְּגוֹן זֶה שֶׁאֵין צָרִיךְ לְקַיֵּם מִצְוַת כִּלְאַיִם, וְאֵינוֹ מְקַיֵּם מִצְוַת לֹא תַּעֲשֶׂה – שְׁנֵיהֶם הֵם שָׁוִים.

For the obligated person, when he fulfills the mitzvah and does not transgress, has not sinned—but also has not gained perfection.	כִּי הַמְּחֲיָב כַּאֲשֶׁר קִיֵּם הַמִּצְוָה וְלֹא עָבַר – לֹא עָשָׂה חַטְא וְלֹא קָנָה שָׁלֵמוּת.
So too the exempt one—though he did not fulfill the mitzvah, since he is exempt, he did not sin and did not acquire any perfection.	אַף הַפָּטוּר כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא קִיֵם הַמִּצְוָה, כֵּיוָן שֶׁהוּא פָּטוּר ה לֹא עָשָׂה חֵטְא וְלֹא קָנָה שׁוּם שְׁלֵמוּת.
Therefore, this is not <i>loeg larash</i> .	וּלְפִיכָךְ אֵין כָּאן לוֹעֵג לָרָשׁ.
But when one does not fulfill a positive commandment—even though he is exempt—it is not the same as one who is obligated and fulfills it.	אֲבֶל כַּאֲשֶׁר לֹא קַיֵּם מִצְוַת עֲשֵׂה, אַף עַל גַּב שֶׁהוּא פָּטוּר, אֵינוֹ דּוֹמֶה פָּטוּר לְמִי שֶׁהוּא חַיָּב בְּדָבָר וְקִיֵּם הַמִּצְוָה.
For this one acquired perfection, and the other—even though exempt—acquired no perfection at all.	שֶׁזֶּה קָנָה שְׁלֵמוּת, וְזֶה – אַף שֶׁהוּא פָּטוּר – לֹא קָנָה שָׁלֵמוּת כְּלָל.
And because he did not acquire perfection, this is <i>loeg larash</i> .	וּבָזֶה שֶׁלֹא קָנָה שְׁלֵמוּת – דָּבָר זֶה הָוֵי לוֹעֵג לָרָשׁ.
And this matter is clear, and there is no doubt in this explanation.	וַהֲרֵי הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה בָּרוּר, וְאֵין סָפֵק בְּפֵרוּשׁ זֶה.
It is found in the Midrash that Yaakov said to Esav: "With Lavan I sojourned" (Bereishis 32:5), "and yet I kept the 613 mitzvos."	ֵישׁ בַּמִּדְרָשׁ שֶׁיַעֲקֹב אָמֵר לְעֵשָׂו: "עִם לָבָן גַּרְתִּי" (בְּרֵאשִׁית ל״ב, ה), "אַף־עַל־פִּי־כֵן תַּרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת "שָׁמַרְתִּי".
If so, it is proven that Yaakov observed the entire Torah like Avraham.	אָם־כֵּן מוּכָח שֶׁיַעֲקֹב שָׁמַר כָּל הַתּוֹרָה כְּמוֹ אַבְרָהָם.
And according to this, we must say that Yaakov too was prepared for the entire Torah like Avraham.	וּלְפִי זֶה צָרִיךְ לוֹמַר כִּי יַעֲקֹב הָיָה מוּכָן גַּם־כֵּן לְכָל הַתּוֹרָה כְּמוֹ אַבְרָהָם.
And the reason is as we have said: the Torah is called "Torah of Chesed," as it says (Mishlei 31:26): "And the Torah of kindness is on her tongue."	ְוָהַטַּעַם כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ: שֶׁהַתּוֹרָה תִּקָּרֵא – "תּוֹרַת הֶסֶד", דְּכְתִיב (מִשְׁלֵי ל״א, כ״ו): "וְתוֹרַת הֶסֶד עַל ;"לְשׁוֹנָה
And because of this, Avraham—whose trait was chesed—merited the Torah, as was explained.	וּבִשְׁבִיל כָּדְ זָכָה אַבְרָהָם, שֶׁמִּדָתוֹ הַחֶּסֶד, אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁהִתְּבָּאֵר.
So too, the Torah is called "Torat Emes" (Malachi 2:6), because it contains the clarified truth.	וְכָךְ תִּקָרֵא הַתּוֹרָה – "תּוֹרַת אֱמֶת" (מַלְאָכִי ב, ו), עַל שֵׁם שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּהּ הָאֱמֶת הַבָּרוּר.
And therefore, Yaakov—whose trait was truth—merited the Torah, as it is written (Michah 7:20): "You will give truth to Yaakov, kindness to Avraham"	וּלְכָךְ זָכָה יַצֲקֹב, שֶׁמִּדָתוֹ הָאֱמֶת, אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, כְּדְכְתִיב (מִיכָה ז, כ): "תִּתֵּן אֱמֶת לְיַצְקֹב חֶסֶד לְאַבְרָהָם" וְגוֹ:
Therefore, each one—Avraham and Yaakov—were fitting for the entire Torah: Avraham for the kindness and goodness in the Torah, and Yaakov for the truth in the Torah.	לְכָךְ הָיָה כָּל אָחָד, הֵן אַבְרָהָם, הֵן יַעֲקֹב – רְאוּיִים אֶל כָּל הַתּוֹרָה; אַבְרָהָם מִצִּד הַחֶּסֶד וְהַטוֹב שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה, וְיַעֲקֹב מִצַּד הָאֱמֶת שֶׁבַּתּוֹרָה.

תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel Chapter 20

And according to this, what he said: "I fulfilled all 613 mitzvos," even though he married two sisters—he meant that these two sisters he married through Divine inspiration. Just as they fulfilled the entire Torah through ruach hakodesh, so too certain prohibitions were permitted to them through ruach hakodesh. And because Yaakov did not marry any two sisters except these two, he fulfilled the commandment "You shall not take a woman in addition to her sister" (Vayikra 18:18). Only these two sisters, whom he married through Divine inspiration, are the exception, because there is no doubt that the marriages of the Avos were ordained by Hashem through ruach hakodesh.

And according to this, it is proper to say that Yitzchak Avinu also, who was one of the Patriarchs and who possessed the lofty level and was close to the level of the Torah, also fulfilled the entire Torah.

However, in any case, there is a difference and distinction between them: for Avraham, who was fully prepared for the Torah—as if he had been commanded—and therefore it is written about him (Bereishis 26:5): "Because Avraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

But Yaakov was not as fully suited to the Torah as to be considered as if he had been commanded by Hashem. And Yitzchak was not even as prepared for the Torah as Yaakov, as we said. Nevertheless, they all fulfilled the Torah of their own initiative. And now everything has been explained properly, and there is no doubt in the truth of these words. And we have already expanded upon this in Parshas Vayigash in the commentary Gur Aryeh.

וּלְפִי זֶה מַה שֶׁאָמַר: 'תַּרְיַ"ג מִצְוֹת קִּיֶּמְתִּי', וַהֲרֵי נָשָׂא שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת. רָצָה לוֹמַר כִּי אֵלוּ שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת נָשָׂא עַל־יְדֵי רוּחַ הַקֹּנֶשׁ, דִּכְמוֹ שֻׁקִיֶּמוּ כָּל הַתּוֹרָה עַל־יְדֵי רוּחַ הַקֹּנֶשׁ, כָּדְ הַתְּרוּ לָהֶם גַּם־כֵּן אֵיזֶה מִצְוֹת עַל־יְדֵי רוּחַ הַקְּנֶשׁ. וּבָזֶה שָׁלֹא נָשָׂא יַצְקֹב שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת זוּלַת אֵלוּ שְׁתִּים, קִיָּם "אִשָּׁה אֶל אֲחֹתָה לֹא תִקְח" (וַיִּקְרָא יח, יח). רַק אֵלוּ שְׁתֵּי אֲחָיוֹת שֶׁהָיָה עַל־יְדֵי רוּחַ הַקֹּנֶשׁ, כִּי אֵין סָפֵּק כִּי זִוּוּג שֶׁל אָבוֹת מִן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ עַל־יְדֵי רוּחַ הַקֹּנֶשׁ

ולפי זֶה רָאוּי לוֹמַר כִּי גַּם יִצְחָק אָבִינוּ, שֶׁהָיָה אֶחָד מִן הָאָבוֹת, שֶׁהָיָה לָהֶם הַמַּעֲלָה הָעֶלְיוֹנָה, וְהָיוּ קְרוֹבִים אָל מַעֲלַת הַתּוֹרָה, לְכָךְ גַּם־כֵּן הָיָה מְקַיֵּם כָּל הַתּוֹרָה.

רַק שֶׁעַל כָּל פָּנִים יֵשׁ חִלּוּק וְהֶפְּרֵשׁ בֵּינֵיהֶם; כִּי אַבְרָהָם שֶׁהָיָה מוּכָן לְגַמְרֵי אֶל הַתּוֹרָה, וּכְאִלּוּ הָיָה מְצַוָּה, וּלְפִיכָךְ כְּתִיב אֶצְלוֹ (בְּרֵאשִׁית כו, ה): "עֵקֶב אֲשֶׁר שָׁמֵע אַבְרָהָם בְּקֹלִי וַיִּשְׁמֹר מִשְׁמַרְתִּי חֶקּוֹתַי "וְתוֹרֹתָי

אָבָל יַצְקֹב לֹא הָיָה כָּל־כָּךְ מְסְגֶל אֶל הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁיִּהְיֶה נֶחְשָׁב כְּאִלּוּ הָיָה מְצַנָּה מִן הַשֵּׁם יִתְּבָּרַךְ. וְיִצְחָק לֹא הָיָה מוּכָן גַּם־כֵּן אֶל הַתּוֹרָה שֶׁיִּהְיֶה כְּמוֹ יַצְקֹב, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאָמַרְנוּ. וּמִכָּל מָקוֹם הִיוּ מְקַיָּמִים הַתּוֹרָה מֵעַצְמָם. וַהְבֵי הִתְבָּאֵר לְךְ הַכֹּל עַל נָכוֹו, וְאֵין סָכֵּק בַּאֲמִתַּ אֵלוּ הַדְּבָרִים. וּכְבָר הָאֱרַכְנוּ בָּזֶה בְּפָרָשַׁת וַיִּגַשׁ בְּחָבּוּר גּוּר אַרִיה.

NOTE Summary

The Maharal begins by addressing the Talmudic claim that the Patriarchs kept the entire Torah before it was given, posing the central question: Why would they observe a system of commandments that had not yet been revealed or commanded?

תפארת ישראל The Splendor of Israel Chapter 20

He explains that the Avos were spiritually attuned to the Divine order; their actions stemmed from an inner clarity that aligned with the Torah's objective truths. Just as someone might naturally respond with reverence before a king, the Avos naturally gravitated toward the behaviors that later became formalized as mitzvos. This was not due to external obligation but because of their inner holiness and readiness for spiritual truth.

The Maharal then explores the concept of spiritual preparation: Avraham was entirely predisposed to Torah, and therefore his observance was as if he had been commanded. Yitzchak and Yaakov, while also spiritually great, were not on the same level of complete readiness, and their Torah observance reflected different degrees of intuitive alignment rather than full prophetic equivalence.

A key insight follows from this: While all three Avos fulfilled the Torah voluntarily, their motivations and spiritual capabilities varied. This explains seeming contradictions, such as Yaakov marrying two sisters—a practice prohibited by Torah law. The Maharal explains that this was permitted through *ruach hakodesh* (Divine spirit), showing that their fulfillment of Torah operated within a different framework than the Sinai covenant.

He concludes that despite these distinctions, the observance of the Torah by the Avos was real, valid, and deeply aligned with its essence. Their actions were rooted in a metaphysical harmony with Divine will, which was later formalized at Sinai for all of Israel.

Practical Takeaway

Spiritual greatness is not only about obeying explicit rules but about internalizing Divine truth so deeply that our actions naturally reflect it. We can aspire to align ourselves with Hashem's will not just through obedience, but through inner refinement that allows us to sense what is right even before being told.

Chassidic Story

The Maharal once traveled to Vienna to plead for the safety of his community during a time of danger.

On his journey, he stayed in a small town where he insisted on davening alone in his room rather than joining the synagogue. When asked why, he replied: "Sometimes, prayer from the lips is enough. But sometimes one must reach directly from the soul to Heaven, and that path cannot be shared." Years later, it was revealed that during that solitary prayer, the Maharal had foreseen the decrees against the Jews and nullified them through spiritual channels. His alignment with Divine will was so complete that his silent pleas echoed louder than the world's proclamations.

(Source: Maasei Maharal, Prague traditions)

END NOTE