

leaves a group of people who are speaking words of gossip. Before doing either of these, one should think:

הריני מכונן לקיים מצוות לא תעשה שלא לדבר
לשון הרע כאשר צוה השם.

I intend to fulfill the negative mitzvah of not speaking lashon hara, as Hashem commanded.

אונאת דברים — HURTFUL WORDS

It is forbidden to insult, tease, ridicule, or offend another Jew. This is the *mitzvas lo sa'asei* of עמיתו לא תוננו איש את עמיתו — *And you should not cause pain to one another*.⁸⁴² When a person refrains from saying hurtful words, they should have in mind:

הריני מכונן לקיים מצוות לא תוננו איש את עמיתו
כאשר צוה השם.

I intend to fulfill the mitzvah of not speaking hurtful words, as Hashem commanded.

ובחרת בחיים — CHOOSING LIFE

Whenever a person overcomes a temptation to sin — refraining, for example, from speaking *lashon hara*, looking at forbidden sights, or doing something that *might* be forbidden — they also fulfill the Torah mitzvah of ובחרת בחיים — *And you shall choose life*.⁸⁴³ Even choosing to good, for example choosing to get up for Shachris, is included in this mitzvah.

This mitzvah also includes the mere desire to live in order to serve Hashem. (This may be particularly relevant to one who is seriously ill).⁸⁴⁴ When fulfilling this mitzvah, one should remember to say or think:

842. *Vayikra* 25:17. The *Sefer Charedim* (24:25) writes that this is the prohibition of speaking harshly to another Yid.

843. *Devarim* 30:19.

844. See *MiPinkaso shel Eved HaMelech* (about *HaTzaddik* Rav Shmuel Huminer), page 25.

הריני מכונן לקיים מצוות "ובחרת בחיים" כאשר צוה השם.

I have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of *And you shall choose life*, as Hashem commanded.

LIVING FOR THE MITZVAH

When *HaGaon* Rav Shmuel Berenbaum *ztz"l* was diagnosed with an illness, he explored every possible avenue of treatment — despite being told that his chances for survival were slim.

R' Shmuel viewed his actions as a fulfillment of "*v'chai bahem*," the mitzvah to stay alive, and when it came to doing a mitzvah, nothing would stand in his way! For this reason, R' Shmuel heeded the doctor's orders scrupulously, at all times.

Once, R' Shmuel's son, R' Asher, overheard his father saying, "*l'shem mitzvas v'chai bahem*" before taking his medication.⁸⁴⁵

לזעק אל השם — CRYING OUT TO HASHEM

It is mitzvah for a person to cry out and daven to Hashem in a time of distress. When one does so, they fulfill the mitzvah of לזעק אל השם בעת צרה.⁸⁴⁶ Before davening, one should think:

הריני מכונן לקיים מצוות לזעק אל השם כאשר צוה השם.

I have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of crying out to Hashem, as Hashem commanded.

REMAINING FOCUSED UNDER ATTACK

Once, when Eretz Yisrael was under attack, with Arabs shooting hundreds of rockets a day into the country, constant sirens sounded throughout many parts of the country. At that time, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein *shlit"l* sent instructions to the inhabitants living in those areas. Rav Zilberstein advised them to use the

845. Rabbi Elchonon Jacobovitz, *Rav Shmuel* (Feldheim), adapted.

846. See footnote 682 on page 321.

alarms as opportunities to fulfill many mitzvos:

- We should remind ourselves that there is nothing but Hashem: “*Ein Od Milvado*.” Every rocket has its address. We must put our trust in Hashem because everything is under His control and nothing occurs if He does not will it. Rabbeinu Yonah writes that a time of distress is an opportunity to trust in Hashem, remembering that He can save us whenever He wills it.
- We should daven when we hear the siren. Doing so fulfills the Torah mitzvah to pray to Hashem to be saved from troubles when they occur.
- The *Rambam* teaches that when a person experiences hardship, they must think about repentance. Therefore, when hearing the sirens, one should think about ways to repent from their misdeeds. This obligation is even greater when the troubles are being experienced by the entire congregation. It is appropriate to say the *passuk* from *Nechemiah*⁸⁴⁷ וְאַתָּה צַדִּיק — *But You (Hashem) are just in all that happens to us, for You have acted correctly, and it is us who have sinned.* (Saying this is also a *segulah* to nullify harsh decrees.)
- When a person hears that a rocket has fallen and no one was harmed, there is a Torah mitzvah to think about this and praise Hashem. We find that *Klal Yisrael* sang *shirah* to Hashem after He brought them from slavery to freedom; surely, then, when we are spared from death, we must definitely sing praise to Hashem! And this is an absolute *mitzvah d’Oraysa*.⁸⁴⁸
- This is also an opportunity to open your homes/shelters to Jews on the street who are far from their own residences. If you can, you should invite families who are living in more dangerous places to stay with you until the danger dies down. This is a fulfillment of the commandment לֹא תַעֲמֹד עַל דַּם רֵעֶךָ — *You shall not stand by while your friend’s blood is being spilled,* as well as the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*.

847. *Nechemiah* 9:33.

848. Chasam Sofer (Responso, Orach Chaim §208).

הַרְחָקָה מִן הַשָּׁקֶר — DISTANCING ONESELF FROM FALSEHOOD

When a person is careful to only speak the truth, they fulfill the mitzvah of תִּרְחַק שָׁקֶר תִּרְחַק — *Distance yourself from falsehood*.⁸⁴⁹

Before doing this mitzvah, one should have in mind the kavanah:

הָרִינִי מִכּוֹן לְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת “מִדְּבַר שָׁקֶר תִּרְחַק” כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה הַשֵּׁם.

I have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of *Distance yourself from falsehood*, as Hashem commanded.

מְנִיעָה מִדְּבָרִים שֶׁבְּקֹדֶשׁ בְּמְקוֹמוֹת הָאֲסוּרִים — REFRAINING FROM HOLY WORDS IN FORBIDDEN PLACES

When a person passes through a foul-smelling area where it is forbidden to pray or learn Torah (whether verbally or mentally), and they are careful to follow this halachah, they fulfill the mitzvah of וְהָיָה מַחֲנֶיךָ קְדוֹשׁ — *And your camp shall be holy*.⁸⁵⁰

Before entering the area, one should think:

הָרִינִי מִכּוֹן לְקַיֵּם מִצְוֹת “וְהָיָה מַחֲנֶיךָ קְדוֹשׁ” כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה הַשֵּׁם.

I have in mind to fulfill the mitzvah of *And your camp shall be holy*, as Hashem commanded.

849. The *passuk* says (*Vayikra* 23:7) מִדְּבַר שָׁקֶר תִּרְחַק — *Distance yourself from falsehood*. The *Sefer Charedim* (12:26) writes that it is a positive mitzvah to speak the truth even in mundane matters, and even when one is not gaining financially by lying. *Chazal* (*Sanhedrin* 92a) say that a person who lies is comparable to one who worships idols. Examples of this mitzvah may include: a child refraining from telling a lie to a parent or teacher to get out of trouble; not lying to the dentist when he asks if you brush and floss; and not lying to get onto a government program, or when filing taxes.

This author knows someone who was always careful to lock his car doors so that if his car were to be stolen, he would not be tempted to lie to the insurance company and claim that his doors were locked!

850. *Devarim* 23:15.