

# Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

## BY THE BOOK


In 1971, Refoel Levin (name changed) was in his dorm at Hebrew University when he heard students arguing outside. There were three Arab students, and they were arguing over who has rights to Israel. Refoel was surprised when the group came to his door. "You answer us!" one of the Arab students said.

As one of the only religious students, Refoel was a unique figure on campus. With trepidation, he opened a Chumash to the first *pasuk* in Bereishis and read Rashi: "If the nations of the world tell Bnei Yisrael, 'You are robbers, for you have stolen the land of the seven nations,' they can say, 'The earth belongs to Hashem...He chose to give it to them, and He chose to take it from them and to give it to us.'"

The Arab student gazed at Refoel intently. "Is this a holy book?" he asked. "Is everything in it true?"

"Yes," Refoel said.

"Do you wear *tefillin*? What about *tzitzis*? Kosher? Shabbos?" The Arab student rattled off a list of *mitzvos*. Satisfied, he said, "Since you fulfill all the commandments, I accept this answer from you. You are consistent. But the other Israelis do not observe this book. That means that they do not believe in it. Why should they be entitled to the Land?"

This dialogue points to the importance of maintaining consistency in our behavior. Our mission of *kiddush Hashem* places us in the position of representing the Torah to the rest of the world. It is crucial for us to make sure that all of our actions are in line with our goals. 

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gem

OF THE WEEK

## NO MORE, NO LESS

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

Every mitzvah we were given must be carried out as we received it. We are not allowed to treat *mitzvos* arbitrarily by adding and subtracting from them. Rather, we must fulfill them as they are prescribed: exactly four passages in the *tefillin*, exactly four *minim* on Sukkos, exactly three sentences in *birkas kohanim*. The mitzvos are G-d's Word—whoever adds or subtracts introduces human opinion into the truth of G-d's eternal thoughts, drags Divinely ordained commandments down to the level of human superficiality.

Keeping the *mitzvos* to the standard of "no more and no less" has the effect of fulfilling G-d's commandments in integrity and purity. One who adds to the commandments out of conscientiousness, and concern to fulfill them to perfection, is not in violation of *lo sosifu*; rather, he fulfills the mitzvah of guarding the *mitzvos*.

According to the Rambam, the prohibition here also includes a warning to *chachmei Yisrael*, who enact *takanos* and *gezeiros* in order to safeguard


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powerful  
PRAYER 

U'KESHARTAM L'OS:  
ALMIGHTY KING

The mitzvah of *tefillin* is found in the Shema because *tefillin* is a part of *kabbalas ol malchus shamayim*.

On the *bayis* of the *tefillin shel rosh*, the letter *shin* is found. In the knots of the *tefillin shel rosh*, the shape of the letter *daled* is formed. Similarly, the knot of the *tefillin shel yad* resembles the letter *yud*.

Together, these letters spell one of the names of Hashem, *Shakai*, which means Almighty. 

*Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom*

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## A CHANCE TO CHANGE

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

With Rosh Hashana a mere three weeks away, and no special license needed to do *teshuvah*, it's time to get serious.

The *pasuk* in Bamidbar says “*Al kein yomru hamoshlim bo'u Cheshbon,*” therefore, the prophets who speak in parables say to come to [and capture the city of] Cheshbon. On a simplistic level, this refers to an episode in the *midbar*; Sichon, king of the Emori, had gone to war with Moav and conquered Cheshbon. Although the Jews were forbidden to start wars with Moav, there was no such prohibition on Cheshbon, since it no longer belonged to Moav.

But Chazal read another meaning into this *pasuk*. *Moshlim* can mean “rulers”; these are the *tzaddikim* who have overpowered the *yetzer hara*. They say, “Come and make the *cheshbon*, the calculation of eternity: the loss incurred through a mitzvah versus its reward, the benefit of an *aveirah* versus its punishment.”

The Ramchal writes that the *moshlim*, who rule over their *yetzer hara*, advise others to make the calculation. A person spends most of his time engaged in affairs of this world, which are merely temporary. Why not engage his heart in serious thought, even for just a short while? Who are we, and why have we come to this world? What does the Melech Malchei Hamelachim want from us? What will be our end? This is most potent cure for the *yetzer hara*: to stop and think.

“He shall seek in his heart,” the Ramchal writes. “What did the early ones, the Avos, do that Hashem loved them so much? What did Moshe Rabbeinu do? What did David, the *mashiach Hashem* do, and all the great people who preceded us? Thus it will enter his heart to do what is good for a person to do all of his days, so that it will be good for him.”

The simplest and best method for taking life seriously, for focusing on our mission in this world. No charge. No license needed.

This is the essence of what we need to do in Elul, to prepare for the day of judgment, and hope and pray for a *kesiva v'chasima tova*.

the observance of the *mitzvos*. *Lo sosifu* is a warning not to make their *takanos* and *gezeiros* appear to be integral parts of the Torah itself, as *mitzvos d'oraissa*. They are obligated to make it clear that these safeguards are *d'rabbanan*, that their essence is that of *siyagim*. Our Sages abided by this warning in their explanations, and with meticulous care they distinguished between *d'oraissa* and *d'rabbanan*.

The fact that the prohibitions of *lo sosifu* and *lo tigra'u* are immediately followed by a *pasuk* reminding *klal Yisrael* how *ovdei avodah zara* were annihilated is highly significant. It proclaims the following truth: arbitrariness that denies the inviolable Divinity of the Torah—even for one single mitzvah—and equates human discretion with Hashem's commandment is equivalent to idolatry.

We find this in the Navi, in the case of Shaul HaMelech: his subjective opinions affected the way he carried out the Divine command that had been given to him. Instead of meticulously fulfilling the mitzvah that had been clearly communicated to him, he allowed himself to do both more and less.

Less: he refrained from executing upon Agag and upon the spoils of war the Divine judgment that he had been commanded.

More: he dedicated the best of the spoils as an offering, and imagined that he was doing something even better than what he had been commanded.

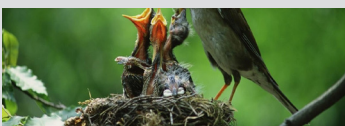
Thus, Shaul violated the prohibition of *lo sosif v'lo tigra*. Hashem immediately sent a message to him through Shmuel: “Does G-d delight in *olos* and *zevachim*?... Obedience is better than sacrifice, to listen is better than the fat of rams” (Shmuel I 15:22–23).

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



## wonder WORLD

### PARENTAL INSTINCTS



#### How do birds protect their young?

In Parshas Ki Seitzei, the Torah tells us: if you find a bird sitting on eggs or chicks, you must first send away the mother before taking the young. This mitzvah shows compassion, but also teaches us about the bond between parents and children, even in animals. Birds spend a lot of time and energy protecting and feeding their babies. A mother bird might sit on her eggs for weeks, keeping them warm and safe. Some birds even pretend to be injured to lure predators away from their nests. The Torah tells us not to take advantage of that love. By sending the mother bird away, we avoid causing her pain—and we learn that kindness matters, even when dealing with creatures much smaller than us.

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