



פרשת ויקרא (Parashat Vayikra), and I want to share with you a beautiful מלבי"ם (Malbim; classic Torah commentator).

### The קרבן Must Be Voluntary — לרצונו

The מלבי"ם (Malbim; commentator) on this week's פרשה (parashah; Torah portion) has a fantastic, beautiful piece.

The פסוק (pasuk; verse) says, right in the beginning, when a person decides they want to bring a קרבן (korban; offering/sacrifice) to השם (Hashem; God)—and we spoke yesterday about the different types of קרבן—one of them is עולה (olah; elevation offering).

The פסוק says:

אם עולה קרבנו (im olah korbano; if his offering is an elevation offering)

מן הבקר זכר תמים יקריבנו (min habakar zachar tamim yakrivenu; he shall bring it from cattle, an unblemished male)

אל פתח אהל מועד יקריב אותו (el petach ohel moed yakriv oto; he shall bring it to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting)

So obviously, the תורה (Torah; divine teaching) says very clearly—it has to be voluntary. It cannot be imposed, it cannot be coerced. It has to be willing. You have to want to be doing this.

And obviously, when you do something that you want to do, you do it the best way. When a person is forced, then they're dragging their feet.

You can tell a lot about a person—if they want to do something—by how they do it.

If you want to know if they want to, just look at how.

### How Reveals Desire — Prayer Example

Take a look at how someone prays, and you can tell if they even want to pray.

If a person is praying, and the whole time they're frowning, they're annoyed, they're antsy, they're looking at their phone, they can't wait to get out—you can tell they don't really want to be there.

Now, it's nice that they're there. It's a good level. It means they're at least there.

But you can tell—they don't really want to be there.

Why are they there?

Maybe they feel coerced.

Maybe they feel, "My wife wants me to come," so I'm praying for my wife so she thinks I'm getting more religious.



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Or I'm praying because השם (Hashem; God) wants me to pray.

If you don't want to bring it—"okay, I'll give you... I have to... fine..."

Whatever reason it is—you don't really want to be here.

So what do you give?

If you want to be somewhere, you're not going to be looking at your phone the whole time.

"I'll give you my scraps. I'll give you my leftover sheep. I'll give you whatever I have left."

You give something blemished.

### The Game Analogy — Want vs Not Want

So much of the מצוה (mitzvah; commandment) depends on willingness—on wanting to.

Right? Look at a person at a game.

And how you do it changes when you want to do it.

When you're at a game—you want to be there.

### Example — פסח, הגדה, and צדקה

So you can tell the difference between whether or not you want to be there—based on how you behave.

Let me give you a simple example.

How you do it reflects whether you want it.

We're coming to פסח (Pesach; Passover), so we have to talk a little bit about the הגדה (Haggadah; Passover text).

### The Child Chore Example — Forced vs Willing

We say the prayer *הא לחמא עניא* (ha lachma anya; this is the bread of affliction).

When I make my kid do a chore—they're annoyed, they're frowning, they're קוועטשינג (kveching; complaining/whining), they're huffing and puffing the whole time.

And the גמרא (Gemara; Talmud) says in בבא בתרא (Bava Batra; tractate of the Talmud) that צדקה (tzedakah; charity)—you get reward for giving charity.

Okay.

But you get even more reward for giving with a smile.

The תורה (Torah; divine teaching) says—make sure you bring a קרבן (korban; offering) לרצונו (lirtzono; willingly).

When I give charity—a lot of it depends on my mood, my attitude.

You should want to bring it.

If I'm in a begrudging, annoyed mood—you get reward. You helped. You gave the guy money.

And when you want to bring it—it's going to end up being the best.

The גמרא (Gemara; Talmud) says—you get six.



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Okay, six מצוות (mitzvot);

Do you give it annoyed?

commandments/merits) for giving.

excited?

But if you give with a smile—you get eleven.

### The חיד"א Insight — 6 vs 11

You did it from your heart.

Look at this.

You wanted to do it.

Says the חיד"א (Chida; Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai), something beautiful on a דרוש (derush; homiletic explanation) level.

You didn't just give it.

### Taxes vs Charity — Attitude Matters

הא (ha)—א—spells six.

If I have to—okay, I have to—here are my taxes.

לחמא (lachma; bread)—when you give bread—you get six מצוות.

When I give taxes every year—I'm annoyed.

But עניא (anya)—if you give and you also answer, לענות (la'anot; to speak/respond), if you give words of encouragement—

But it is what it is.

יא (ya)—you get eleven.

You have to give whether you like it or not.

That's the beautiful חיד"א (Chida; sage) at the beginning of the הגדה (Haggadah; Passover text).

You live in the country—you need to pay.

### God Doesn't Need the Offering — He Wants the Heart

I'm not excited to give taxes.

So the פסוק (pasuk; verse) says—make sure you bring a קרבן (korban; offering) to השם (Hashem; God), and it should be זכר תמים (zachar tamim; an unblemished male).

I have to give taxes.

Don't bring it from the scraps.

But צדקה (tzedakah; charity)?

Because then—you're not really interested in bringing it.

When a person realizes—צדקה is the biggest gift.

צדקה is me guaranteeing my future money.

And the truth is—God doesn't need you to bring it.

Whatever it is that you view צדקה as—then I give it בשמחה (besimcha; with joy).

And I smile.

It's not like God is poor and needs your animal.

And I encourage the guy.

And I give him nice words of חיזוק (chizuk; encouragement/strengthening).

So much of צדקה is also how you give it.



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He wants your heart.

If your heart's not there—what's the point?

The whole thing, ironically, with מצוות (mitzvot; commandments)—if your heart is not there—you almost defeat the purpose.

What's the point?

God doesn't need your prayer.

He doesn't need your lip service.

Of course—we still do it.

We need discipline.

We need work ethic.

We need to build habits.

Even if we're not in the mood.

But it's missing so much—if the heart is not there.

### הבל vs קין — The First קרבן and What It Revealed

Who was a person that brought something to השם (Hashem; God) that wasn't the choicest?

Can you think back to a קרבן (korban; offering) that wasn't זכר תמים (zachar tamim; an unblemished male)?

קין (Kayin; Cain). Very good.

קין (Kayin; Cain)—he was doing it just to do it, because he had to.

So what did he bring?

He brought the leftover fruits.

He brought the worst of the fruits.

הבל (Hevel; Abel)

brought the best.

So it wasn't just what you brought.

It wasn't just the quality.

The quality was a reflection of the sincerity.

### The מדרש Problem — Forced or Willing?

Okay, fine.

Now the מדרש (Midrash; rabbinic teaching) comes and says:

לרצונו (lirtzono; willingly)—you have to bring it willingly.

But then the פסוק (pasuk; verse) says:

יקריב אותו (yakriv oto; he shall bring it).

יקריב אותו implies—we force you.

What does it mean we force you?

Says the מדרש (Midrash; teaching) that we force you to bring it—even if you don't want to bring it.

If a guy pledged to bring an animal, and then he changes his mind—we force him.

So the גמרא (Gemara; Talmud) asks:

How do you reconcile the two?

First you tell me I have to.

Then you tell me I should do it willingly.



**The Resolution**

— מכין אותו עד שיאמר רוצה אני

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רצון (ratzon; will) is when I want something intellectually.

Answers the גמרא (Gemara; Talmud):

מכין אותו עד שיאמר רוצה אני (makin oto ad sheyomar rotzeh ani; we compel him until he says "I want to").

We force him until he says, "I want."

Until he says, "I agree."

Until he says, "Okay—I'm in."

So we're forcing him—to want to do it.

When my mind realizes that this is something good for me—that's רצון.

רצון is here—in the head.

הפץ (chefetz; desire) is here—in the heart.

When I feel something emotionally.

When I have a craving.

When I have a lust.

That's הפץ.

**Enter the מלבי"ם — What Is רצון?**

So over here, the מלבי"ם (Malbim; Torah commentator) now goes into a beautiful piece.

I want to share it with you.

The word לרצונו (lirtzono; according to his will)—what does רצון (ratzon; will) mean?

רצון (ratzon; will) means a desire.

But there is another word in Hebrew for desire.

Anyone know what it is?

What's another word for "I want something"?

הפץ (chefetz; desire/craving).

**רצון vs הפץ — Two Different Worlds**

הפץ (chefetz; desire) also means desire.

So what is the difference between רצון (ratzon; will) and הפץ (chefetz; desire)?

**You Can Want Something — But Not Desire It**

So it is very possible in life that you רצון something—but you don't הפץ it.

You want something in your head—but not in your heart.

And vice versa.

You can want something emotionally—but not intellectually.

**Example — Smoking**

When a person knows they shouldn't smoke—they know in their head it's bad.

That's רצון (ratzon; will).

But they crave the cigarette.

They want it.

That's הפץ (chefetz; desire).



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Many sins are like this.

Many bad things for us.

A person would only רצון—only will—good things for themselves.

הפץ—if it's ever bad—it could only be הפץ.

It's something that you crave in your heart.

You don't crave bad things in your mind.

The mind doesn't crave bad things.

It's the heart.

It's the emotions.

### **Example — Giving צדקה but Not Wanting To**

So you could know something in your head—you can know that you should help.

That's רצון.

But your heart is not there.

“I know I should give צדקה (tzedakah; charity). It makes sense.”

But emotionally?

“I don't want to give my money.”

“I'm attached to my money.”

“I'm greedy.”

“I'm stingy.”

“I like money.”

So my רצון is there—but my הפץ is not there.

Many מצוות (mitzvot; commandments) fall into this category.

“I know I should wake up for מנין (minyan; communal prayer).”

“I know I should learn.”

“I know I should do X, Y, and Z.”

But I'm not desiring it.

### **The Reverse — Desire Without Intellect**

The opposite is also true.

Sometimes we הפץ—we desire something emotionally—but we don't have the רצון.

### **Example — Forbidden Relationship**

When a person lusts after a woman that is not good for them—

They want it.

They crave her.

That's הפץ (chefetz; emotional desire).

But intellectually—they understand:

“This is very bad for me.”

“This will hurt my status.”

“This will affect how people see me.”

“This will damage me socially, politically, economically, religiously.”



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In no real way is this good for me—

Except for my lust.

**Story — בת יעקב and שכם**

So when שכם (Shechem; biblical figure) lusted after the daughter of יעקב (Yaakov; Jacob)—what did he have?

Did he have רצון (ratzon; will) or חפץ (chefetz; desire)?

Open to chapter 34, פסוק 19.

It says:

ולא אחר הנער לעשות הדבר (velo echer hana'ar la'asot hadavar; the lad did not delay to do the matter)

כי חפץ בבת יעקב (ki chafetz be'vat Yaakov; because he desired the daughter of Jacob)

The word used is חפץ.

Because this was emotional.

He craved her.

But it didn't benefit him.

It didn't benefit his city.

Logically—it was not necessarily a benefit.

**Pattern in רצון — חפץ vs תנ"ך**

So throughout the תנ"ך (Tanach; Hebrew Bible), you will always find:

רצון (ratzon; will) used with something good.

חפץ (chefetz; desire) used when something is not good—when it's driven by craving.

**Example — ישעיהו**

In ישעיהו

(Yeshayahu; Isaiah), the פסוק (verse) says:

Their souls חפץ (chafetz; desired) their loathsome practices.

Because they were abominable practices—the word חפץ is used.

Their רצון חפץ overcame their רצון.

Their emotions beat their intellect.

**Example — יבום (Levirate Marriage)**

Another example—fascinating—is from דברים (Devarim; Deuteronomy).

By the מצוה (mitzvah; commandment) of יבום (yibum; levirate marriage).

What is יבום?

If a man—בר מינן (bar minan; God forbid)—dies and leaves his wife a widow without children,

The תורה (Torah; divine law) says:

The brother should marry the widow to establish the name of his brother.

The פסוק says:

ואם לא יהפוך האיש לקחת את יבמתו (ve'im lo yachpotz ha'ish lakachat et yevimto; if the man does not desire to take his brother's widow)

The word used is יהפוך (yachpotz; desire).

It doesn't say:

ואם לא ירצה (ve'im lo yirtzeh; if he does not will).



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Why?

Because really—who wouldn't want to do this?

Intellectually—you should want this.

It's your brother.

It's a מצוה.

Why would someone decline?

It must be because—לא יהפוך.

Emotionally—he's not there.

He's not attracted.

His desire is blocking the מצוה.

### **The Tug of War — Life Itself**

So these are just a few examples to clarify the difference between רצון (ratzon; will) and חפץ (chefetz; desire).

Now obviously—we understand that in our personal lives—

The trick of life is taking something from רצון to חפץ.

To take what I know—and bring it into what I feel.

Life is a tug of war—

Between רצון and חפץ.

And whichever one wins—

Determines whether a person becomes a צדיק (tzaddik; righteous person) or a רשע (rasha; wicked person).

### **רשע vs צדיק — Who Wins the**

#### **Battle?**

So it comes out that the רשע (rasha; wicked person)—they are in the hands of their חפץ (chefetz; desire).

They allow their emotions to win.

The צדיק (tzaddik; righteous person) allows his רצון (ratzon; will) to win.

There is a tug of war.

A constant tug of war.

All the time.

“I know this is bad for me—but I חפץ it (chafetz it; I desire it).”

“I want it.”

So which one will prevail?

Ultimately—what drives our actions in life?

Our emotions.

Our emotions are what drive us.

Our emotions are very, very strong.

### **פסח סדר — Speak to Emotion, Not Just Intellect**

That's why, for example, on the פסח (Pesach; Passover) סדר (seder; ritual meal), your job is not to speak to your child's רצון (ratzon; intellect/will) so much.

It's to speak to his soul.



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To his emotions.

To his חפץ (chefetz; desire).

You have to get emotional.

Because people respond to emotions.

### Example — The Toxic Relationship

A lot of times, a girl is dating a guy—

And she knows—

Everyone is convincing her, telling her, proving to her, showing her—

“This guy is bad for you.”

“Are you out of your mind?”

“What are you doing?”

“He’s toxic.”

“He’s controlling.”

They show her black-and-white proof.

Behavior that the guy is messed up.

And the girl will even say:

“I know it.”

“I agree.”

“I see it.”

“But I just can’t.”

“I don’t know—I just can’t stop seeing him.”

What does that mean?

That means her רצון (ratzon; intellect) understands.

But her חפץ (chefetz; emotional desire)—is still attached.

### The עבודה — Bringing the Head Into the Heart

Part of a person’s עבודה (avodah; spiritual work) in this world—

Is to take what they know up here—

Their רצון (ratzon; will/intellect)—

And allow it to penetrate their חפץ (chefetz; desire).

To bring it into their emotions.

Into their heart.

Into their actions.

### עשו — A Mind That Didn’t Connect

Some people—they have a great רצון (ratzon; will/intellect).

They’re very smart up here.

But there’s a disconnect.

עשו (Esav; Esau) had a great רצון.

עשו was very smart.

But he couldn’t connect it down.

They say—the longest highway is from the head to the body.

It’s the hardest journey.

### Addiction — Knowing but Not Letting Go



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How many of us know?

Or to use another expression—

We know what we're doing.

He has חכמה (chochmah; wisdom/knowledge)—

We know how we should be living.

But he doesn't have דעת (da'at; internalized connection).

We know that certain things are ruining us.

He has the understanding—

They're noise.

But he doesn't have דעת.

They're distraction.

דעת means to connect—

They're killing my life.

To connect here—to here.

They're killing my performance at work.

He doesn't have that connection.

This drug.

**פרעה — Knowing the Truth, Still Failing**

This gambling.

פרעה (Pharaoh; ruler of Egypt)—the stubborn one—

This addiction.

He knew he was hurting his country.

This distraction.

He knew it made sense to let the Jewish people go.

This game.

And ultimately, when he was cornered, he said:

This escape.

“משה (Moshe; Moses), go.”

It's horrible for me.

“You're free.”

I know it.

“You and your people—go.”

I know it here.

He knew it here.

I just can't let go.

But when he was tested—

It's very hard to let go.

When the plague went away—

So the guy has the רצון (ratzon; will/intellect)—

When there was no more coercion—

But he doesn't have the חפץ (chefetz; desire).

His חפץ (chefetz; desire) came back.

**דעת vs חכמה — Knowledge vs Connection**



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He wanted to hold on to the Jewish people.

He was addicted.

He couldn't let go.

He said:

"No—you're not going."

"I changed my mind."

### **This Is the Game of Life**

So this is the game of life.

This is the challenge.

All of life is this עבודה (avodah; spiritual work):

רצון (ratzon; will) versus חפץ (chefetz; desire).

### **You Can Command רצון — Not חפץ**

So it comes out—

חפץ (chefetz; desire)—which is emotional—

You cannot command it.

I cannot command you to love someone.

I cannot command you to emotionally feel something.

But I can command רצון (ratzon; will).

I can influence your mind.

I can explain.

I can show you.

I can help you develop a will.

I can convince you—

"This is good for

you."

It may take a minute.

An hour.

A week.

A month.

A year.

But I can convince your רצון.

### **But You Cannot Force Desire**

I cannot convince your חפץ (chefetz; emotional desire).

I cannot force you to feel something.

And even with רצון—

I can only convince you.

I cannot force you.

### **תפילה — יהי רצון**

So we never find in תנ"ך (Tanach; Hebrew Bible) a command to develop חפץ.

You cannot command desire.

You cannot even pray for חפץ.

You could pray for רצון.

As an example:

דוד המלך (David HaMelech; King David) says:



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יהי רצון (yehi ratzon;  
may it be Your will).

Let it be Your will.

We pray about רצון.

Because רצון is something that can be shaped.

### **Returning to the מדרש — What Does It Mean to Force?**

So this is the introduction, says the מלבי"ם (Malbim; commentator).

Now we can understand what it means that we force him—

Until he says:

רוצה אני (rotzeh ani; I want).

Because when something is intrinsically good—

When something is logically good—

When something is beneficial—

When something is intellectually, inherently good—

I can convince you:

“This is something you want.”

I can talk you into it.

I can show you it makes sense.

I can convince your רצון.

I can force your רצון.

מכין אותו עד שיאמר רוצה אני (makin oto ad sheyomar rotzeh ani; we compel him until he says “I want”).

I can force you—

To realize—

That this is something that you want.

### **The רמב"ם — The Case of Divorce (גט)**

The רמב"ם (Rambam; Maimonides), in the laws of גט (get; religious divorce), chapter two, הלכה twenty, writes something very famous.

מי שהדין נותן שכופין אותו לגרש את אשתו (mi shehadin noten shekofin oto legaresh et ishto; one whom the law requires to be compelled to divorce his wife)

If you have a man who is obligated to divorce his wife—

And he doesn't want to—

בית דין של ישראל (beit din shel Yisrael; Jewish court), in any place, at any time—

מכין אותו (makin oto; they compel him)—

Until he says:

רוצה אני (rotzeh ani; I want).

### **But Isn't That Coercion?**

And also—even if non-Jews hit him and say:

“Do what the Jews told you”—

It's still valid.

The רמב"ם (Rambam; Maimonides) says:

You can force a man to give a גט (get; divorce)—

As long as it's a case where he is obligated.

So you may ask:



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“One second—what about the fact that he’s אנוס (anus; coerced)?”

If you coerce me to do a מצוה (mitzvah; commandment)—it doesn’t count.

So if I’m coerced to give a גט—it shouldn’t count.

### **The Deep Answer — What Is Real Coercion?**

The רמב"ם (Rambam; Maimonides) says:

You only say אנוס (anus; coerced)—

When I’m forced to do something that I am not obligated to do.

Like if you force me to sell my property—

I can later say:

“I was forced.”

And undo it.

But here—it’s different.

### **The Yetzer Hara Is the Real Coercion**

אבל מי שתקפו יצרו הרע (aval mi shetakfo yitzro hara; but one whose evil inclination overpowers him)

If your יצר הרע (yetzer hara; evil inclination) is convincing you to do wrong—

And now you are being forced to do what you are obligated to do—

That’s not coercion.

That’s correction.

That’s removing the false pressure.

### **Your True רצון — Deep Down**

Because deep

down—

You want to be a good Jew.

You want to do the right thing.

You don’t want to hurt people.

You don’t want to leave a woman an עגונה (agunah; chained woman unable to remarry).

You don’t want to destroy your reputation.

You don’t want to damage your children.

You don’t want this.

That’s your true רצון (ratzon; will).

### **The Resolution — It Becomes Willing**

So when the guy finally says:

“You’re right.”

“I agree.”

“I want it.”

Once he says:

רוצה אני (rotzeh ani; I want)—

Now when he gives the גט—

It is no longer forced.

Because now—

It makes sense to him.

Now it is his רצון.



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## Back to קרבן — And the Lesson

And therefore, this is what the פסוק (pasuk; verse) is saying with a קרבן (korban; offering).

You may not have wanted to do it.

But really—

Your desire got in the way.

Your חפץ (chefetz; desire) blocked you.

But once I convince you—

And you realize intellectually—

“This is right.”

“This is good.”

“I want this.”

That is enough.

## The Final Teaching — רצון Is Enough

And I think that’s what the מלביי"ם (Malbim; commentator) is trying to say.

In life—we have a רצון (ratzon; will)—

And we have a חפץ (chefetz; desire).

And it’s okay—

If your חפץ is not there.

It’s okay—

If you don’t feel like it.

As long as intellectually—

You want to do it—

That is enough.

## The Reality of Life

Everyone wants to learn תורה (Torah; divine teaching).

Everyone wants to give צדקה (tzedakah; charity).

But desire—

For money—

For pleasure—

For rest—

For comfort—

Gets in the way.

## The Closing תפילה

So we pray:

יהי רצון (yehi ratzon; may it be Your will)—

That we should align ourselves—

With רצון ה' (Hashem’s ratzon; God’s will).

That we should always want the right things.

And that even when our חפץ (chefetz; desire) is not aligned—

We should have the discipline—

To live based on what we know is true.

To allow our חכמה (chochmah; intellect)—

To guide our decisions.



## Takeaway from the Lecture

The תורה (Torah; divine teaching) teaches that what truly defines a person is not only what they do, but **how and from where within themselves it comes.**

There are two forces operating within every person:

- רצון (ratzon; will/intellectual understanding)
- חפץ (chefetz; emotional desire/craving)

A person can know exactly what is right—clearly, logically, even convincingly—yet still feel pulled in the opposite direction. This tension is not a flaw; it is the very structure of human life.

The expectation is not that a person will always feel aligned. The expectation is that a person will **act based on their רצון**, even when their חפץ is not yet there.

That is why the תורה says:

לרצונו לפני השם (lirtzono lifnei Hashem; according to his will before God)

The קרבן (korban; offering) must come from רצון—not necessarily from חפץ.

Because:

- רצון reflects truth
- חפץ reflects pull

And the עבודה (avodah; spiritual work) of a lifetime is to slowly bring the two together—to allow what we know to eventually shape what we feel.

Until then, acting on רצון alone is already considered authentic.

Even when it must be forced—

מכין אותו עד שיאמר (makin oto ad sheyomar rotzeh ani; we compel him

until he says “I want”)

Because deep down, the רצון of a person is already aligned with what is right.

The struggle is not discovering truth—

It is **allowing that truth to penetrate the heart.**

## Five Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. If a person consistently does the right thing but doesn't feel it emotionally, how should they view their actions? Is that considered complete, or incomplete?
2. Can you think of an area in your life where your רצון (ratzon; will) and your חפץ (chefetz; desire) are not aligned? What is the tension?
3. Why do you think the תורה emphasizes רצון over חפץ in the context of עבודת השם (avodat Hashem; serving God)?
4. Is it possible—or even necessary—for a person to eventually transform their חפץ to match their רצון? Or is acting on רצון alone enough?
5. In the story of פרעה (Pharaoh), what exactly caused him to revert after acknowledging the truth? What does that teach about the power of desire over intellect?