



Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l
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פרשת נצבים

Five Seconds at Breakfast

לזכר נשמת רחל בת ר' אליהו זיסקינד

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Five Seconds at Breakfast

In this week's parshah, there's a mitzvah that many people don't know about; the mitzvah of **וּבְחַרְתָּ בְּחַיִּים**: "And you should choose life." That's the mitzvah of *bechirah chofshis*, free choice. It means that Hashem wants us to choose to do what's right — and it's a mitzvah! Just like Shabbos and tzitzis, choosing to do what's right is also a mitzvah! And it's no accident that it's in this week's parsha, right before Rosh Hashanah, because it's a very important mitzvah to work on in the coming year.

What does it mean to choose what's right? Most people think it means you have to choose between right and wrong. Should I cheat on the test or not? Should I say something not so nice to the new girl in my class? So you remind yourself that Hashem is watching and that He expects you to choose the right thing, and you decide, "I won't look at my friend's test!" and "I won't open my mouth and make somebody feel bad!"

And that's very true — we always have to choose between right and wrong, and making the right choice is very important.

But now we'll learn a deeper meaning of this mitzvah of "choosing life". The Chovos Halevavos says that every single thing we do falls into one of three categories. Some things, like blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah, are mitzvos. That's an easy category — we all know about the mitzvos that we have to choose to do. The second category is aveiros — things that we have to be careful to choose **not** to do. We're careful **not** to turn on the light on Shabbos, and we choose **not** to say lashon hara even when we want to. Everyone knows that it's a mitzvah to be careful to avoid aveiros.

But then the Chovos Halevavos introduces us to a third category. He says that there are many things that we do that aren't mitzvos or aveiros — like eating breakfast, for example.

Is eating breakfast a mitzvah? No. It's a mitzvah to make a mezonos on pancakes. It's also a mitzvah to say thank you to your mother when she puts the pancakes on the table. But eating the pancakes? That's not a mitzvah. On the other hand, is it an aveirah? It's certainly not an aveirah to eat breakfast! So what is it? It's the third category — it's somewhere in between a mitzvah and an aveirah.

But along comes the Chovos Halvavos and teaches us something very important — that actually there is no such a thing as something that is not a mitzvah or an aveirah. The mitzvah of “choosing life” means that whenever we do anything — ANYTHING! — we have the opportunity to do the mitzvah of bechirah, to choose the right thing.

Through the mitzvah of “choosing life,” we can take all the regular things of life and choose to make them into mitzvos. And now we'll learn about the **real** way to eat breakfast.

Because if we stop and think for a few seconds, we realize that food gives us strength. Food is like gas for a car — if your father doesn't



fill up the car with gas, the car won't run. And if you don't eat breakfast, your body won't run. When we eat a healthy breakfast we have energy, and that means we have the strength we need to do mitzvos.

So if while you're eating you think, "I'm eating so that I will have the strength to serve Hashem," then you're actually doing a big mitzvah by eating breakfast. You're choosing to turn something that isn't a mitzvah into a real mitzvah, no less important than the mitzvah of blowing shofar. And that's the best way to "choose life"! You choose to make all the regular things in life into a way of serving Hashem!

It's not easy to always think about avodas Hashem, but while you're eating is a perfect time to get started. So while you're eating those pancakes or that bowl of cereal, think for just five seconds, "I'm eating this delicious food so my body will have energy, and I'll be able to do mitzvos throughout the day."

And at lunchtime take another five seconds and think, "I'm eating my sandwich so I'll have strength, and when I get home from school I'll be able to play with my little brother and make him happy." And at supper, take another five seconds to think, "I'm eating the chicken and rice so that I will have the strength to chazer over the Gemara with my father when he gets home."

And with these fifteen seconds a day you're doing the big mitzvah of "choosing life." You're turning pancakes into mitzvos, and that means you're turning yourself into a tzaddik! This Rosh Hashanah we'll all be asking Hashem for another year of life. So what better way to go into this new year than by deciding that you're going to take the life that Hashem gives you and choose to make a mitzvah out of one of the regular things in your life.

***Have a wonderful Shabbos
and a kesivah vachasimah tovah!***

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