



Bereishis / בְּרֵאשִׁית

Doing in this World



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Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings
of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

"Yitzzy," asked Shimmy, as the two boys headed to cheder. "Why are you bringing a clipboard with you?"

"Oh it's because of something I read in one of Totty's old Toras Avigdor booklets."

"Rabbi Miller said you should bring a clipboard to cheder?" Shimmy asked, confused.

"No," Yitzzy said. "But he brings the possuk from this week's Parsha that we say every week in kiddush. 'בְּיוֹם שְׁבוּת מְכַל מְלֹאכְתּוֹ אֱשֶׁר - בְּרֵאשִׁית הָאֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹת - on that day Hashem rested from all of the work which He created to do'. Rabbi Miller asks what it means 'which He created to do'? And he answers that Hashem put us in this world to do, to create, to kiviyachol take over from the work that Hashem started."

"Okay, I understand that," Shimmy answered. "But what does a clipboard have to do with it?"

"Isn't it obvious?" Yitzzy asked his confused older brother, who clearly did not see what was obvious. "We need to improve the world. And I am going to do that by teaching everyone all of the Taryag Mitzvos - imagine how much better a place the world would be if everyone knew all 613 mitzvos by heart! Isn't that a great idea?"

"I guess so," said Shimmy.

"So what's Mitzvah number 46?" asked Yitzzy, taking out his pen.

"Um I don't know - sefiras ha'omer?"

"Nope," Yitzzy said, making a mark on his clipboard. "Mitzvah 46 is shtei halechem!"

"Oh okay," Shimmy replied not too enthusiastically. "Thanks for teaching that to me."

"Amazing!" Yitzzy exclaimed. "Now remember that and I'll test you on it later today!"



“Um... okay,” Shimmy repeated, as they approached the cheder.

In the courtyard, a bunch of boys were throwing a frisbee around before class started. Yitzzy ran towards them, his clipboard gripped tightly in his hand.

“Pinny! Chezky! Dovy!” he called.

“Good morning Yitzzy!” replied Chezky as he caught the frisbee in mid-air. “Do you want to play with us?”

“No, I’ve got something much better in mind!” Yitzzy said brightly.

The boys stopped playing with their frisbee for a moment. Something better? What game did Yitzzy have in mind?

“What’s that?” asked Dovy with interest.

“Do you know what Mitzvah number 215 is?” Yitzzy asked, looking at his clipboard.

“What?” Dovy said, confused.

“Mitzvas aseï number 215,” Yitzzy repeated. “What is it?”

“Uh... I don’t know, why don’t you ask Rebbe Caplan?”

“No, I know what it is - I’m asking you! It’s *bris milah*!”

“Okay,” Dovy said, while Chezky tossed the frisbee to Pinny, who started running to catch it. “Thanks for telling us.”

“Wait!” called Yitzzy as Dovy turned to rejoin the frisbee game. “I want to teach you more Mitzvos!”

“Okay, that sounds great,” Dovy called. “Maybe during lunch!”

Yitzzy walked away, disappointed that his friends didn’t seem to be as excited as he was about his new project.

“Good morning, Yitzchok. Is everything okay?” asked Rebbe Caplan as Yitzzy walked past him.

“Good morning rebbe,” Yitzzy said. “Yeah, everything is fine. It’s just that my friends aren’t as interested as I thought they’d be in learning all Taryag Mitzvos.”

Yitzzy told Rebbe Caplan what he had read in Toras Avigdor and about his new project to teach everyone all of the Mitzvos. Rebbe Caplan listened patiently as he described what he was trying to do.

“I don’t understand how I’m supposed to make Hashem’s world a better place if nobody will listen to me,” he finished dejectedly.

“Yitzchok,” Rebbe Caplan said. “I actually remember that Toras Avigdor booklet. You didn’t read the whole thing, did you?”

“Well no,” Yitzzy explained. “As soon as I read about how we have to make the world a better place I ran to get a clipboard and I made this chart of all of the Mitzvos.”

“Well, if you would have been a bit more patient you would have seen what Rabbi Miller said next. He says that the most important thing we can improve in this world is ourselves!”

“But I already know all of the 613 mitzvos by heart,” Yitzzy replied.

“That’s *gevaldig*!” Rebbe Caplan said warmly. “But that doesn’t mean that you’re done working on yourself. Self-improvement is a lifetime *avodah*. It’s a job that never ends.”

“So the only thing I’ll ever get to improve in this world is myself?” Yitzzy asked, somewhat disappointed.

“Of course not!” Rebbe Caplan answered. “You will find that there will be many times in your life where you can help improve things - or even other people who are willing to listen to you. But you must remember that first and foremost, YOU are the most important thing that you have to work on. That’s why we have *mussar seforim* like *Chovos Halevavos* and *Mesillas Yesharim*. These teach us how to make ourselves into better people, which in turn makes the world a better place.”

Have a Wonderful Shabbos!

Takeaway: Hashem created us “to do”, to accomplish change within ourselves by becoming better people.

- Let’s Review:
- What is Yitzzy thinking when he asks someone a number?
 - What is the best way to partner with Hashem in creating the world?



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