



# Ohr Somayach Light Lines

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## Light Insight

### *Born Grounded*

From his early youth, sitting by the window watching the planes cross the sky, David had always dreamed of flying a plane. The first summer after he graduated college, the first week of the summer, he enrolled in a pilot's training course. He stroked off a check just slightly less than the total savings in his account, and spent the rest on the required text books for flight school.

That summer, David could hardly be separated from his flight manuals. He poured over them day in and day out, staying up late at night studying the diagrams and lessons. When the classes started, he was glued to the blackboard. He asked good questions, and even stayed afterwards to chat about flying with the instructor. Every aspect of piloting a plane, he made sure to know backwards and forwards.

The course was made up of two parts, classroom study and real flight experience. To be licensed, each student needed to log one hundred hours of flight time with the instructor. David was scheduled for Thursday morning flight times. Every Thursday morning was his slot.

It just so happened that this particular summer, it rained every

Thursday morning, like clockwork. No matter what the weatherman reported Wednesday evening, the next morning, thunder and lightning. Since beginning students can't fly in the rain, David's hours were postponed every week. Thursday would come, he would go eagerly out to the small field-school behind the airport, and it would pour. He tried to move his slot to another time, to trade with other students, anything he could think of, but to no avail. By the end of the summer-long course, he had not logged a single hour of flight time.

When the final exams were finished and being handed in at the end of the course, David approached the instructor to hand in his exam. His face was downcast. Both he and the instructor knew that he had passed the test with flying colors; his was likely the best exam in the class. They also knew that he had not flown even once, and had never actually put into practice anything that he had learned so well.

"David," said the instructor to his dismayed student, "This is flight school. To graduate you have to be able to fly. Not once this summer have you flown a plane, albeit through no fault of your own. How can I give you a license to be a pilot?"

In this world, studying about

something doesn't add up to actually doing it, no matter how hard you try to learn about it. In the realm of Divine service, however, it may.

Since the destruction of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem almost two thousand years ago, we are unable to perform a large portion of the Mitzvot. Some of them we could not perform even if the Temple were already rebuilt. Some are just for men, some for women. Some are just for Cohanim, some just for non-Cohanim. No one arrives in the World to Come with more than a fraction of G-d's commandments fulfilled.

"... but David, since you have poured your heart and soul into studying every last detail of flight, I am going to consider it as if you have really flown the required hours. Congratulations!"

To the relief of regular airline passengers, the above scenario isn't likely to come true. On the other hand, to our great relief, there is another scenario that may come true — the scene of G-d rewarding those who poured their hearts and souls into the study of His commandments. For G-d counts Torah study, when there is no way to actually perform His commandments, as if we had really flown. A person who struggles with all his might to study and understand the Mitzvot, will be considered as if he had fulfilled the Mitzvot, although he never once had the chance.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving people the benefit of the doubt

*A person who fixes cars is called a mechanic. In Hebrew, a person who educates is called a mechanech. In the following story, an auto mechanic unwittingly educates one of our readers about judging favorably. So, let's call him in this story...*

### The Mechanech-Mechanic

I had an appointment for my car to have a routine service, but had to cancel the appointment. Later that day my car broke down and required expensive work.

I later thought about the number of times in the past that I had spoken ill of auto mechanics for cheating and being untrustworthy. I realized that if I had taken my car in for the routine service, I would have incorrectly blamed it on the mechanic when it later broke down. I never would have believed that the car broke down on its own, I would have suspected foul play.

## LOVE of the LAND

*Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and the Land of Israel*

### Gofnit

In this ancient city there were 80 sets of twin brothers of Cohanite families married to 80 sets of twin sisters of Cohanite families.

The Maharsha suggests that the name of this community was derived from the word *gefen* (grapevine), as in the verse: "Your wife shall be like a *gefen poriah*, a fruitful grapevine." The union of two partners who are both of Cohanite families is compared to the blending of grapes with grapes, as opposed to a less distinguished union which is like combining grapes with thorns.

## Response Line

### Courage & Cowardice

*From: Sam Levine*

*In the Torah, where can I find a definition of courage?*

Dear Sam,

The best place to go to get an answer to this question is the Mishna in Ethics of our Fathers: Ben Zoma said: "Who is a strong person? Someone who subdues his evil inclination, as we find expressed in the verse: 'Someone who doesn't lose his temper is better than a strong man, and someone who controls his spirit is better than someone who conquers a city.'"

The Mishna is describing a trait that applies only to people: Courage. Animals exhibit physical strength. But courage, spiritual strength, only applies to people.

Physical talent can be developed, but the potential is basically inborn. Either you have the potential to play professional basketball or you don't. The basic talent must be there.

When it comes to spiritual strength, everyone has the same opportunity to excel. Wherever you stand spiritually, there is a challenge. Though some people, due to place of birth, education, etc., would seem to have it easier, in actuality each person has his own tests which are perfect for him.

An amazing story is recorded about the Arizal (Rabbi Yitzchak Luria) and Rabbi Chaim Vital (16th century). The Arizal was the greatest teacher of Kabbala in modern times. Rabbi Chaim Vital was his primary student, who recorded almost all of the Arizal's teachings. Once Rabbi Vital asked the Arizal the following question: "If the Talmudic Sages with all their greatness and levels of holiness weren't able to bring the *mashiach* (messianic era), then how are we going to be able to?"

The Arizal's answer is even more understandable today that it was then. He answered: "In the time before the *mashiach* it will be so challenging to correctly observe mitzvot that the mitzvot done in those times will have more power than they did in the earlier times. Even though those mitzvot may not be done as completely, but because they will be so difficult they will have the power to bring the *mashiach*."