

Dvar Torah Outline — Derech Hashem (Chelek I, Perek 4, Ot 5–7): Mitzvot as Spiritual “Design Specs,” Avodah as Turning to Hashem, and Making the Mundane into Mitzvah

Abstract

This dvar Torah learns Derech Hashem’s framework that mitzvot are not external rules imposed on man, but the very “boundaries and relationships” (גבולים וסדרים) custom-designed for human perfection and דביקות בה'. It then defines the root of all avodah as a constant orientation toward the Creator, expressed through conquering the yetzer and guiding all actions to that goal. Finally, it introduces a second category beyond commanded mitzvot: everyday necessities (eating, sleep, livelihood) that can become mitzvot when done within halachic limits, with genuine health-need, and with the intention of enabling the soul’s service of Hashem.

I. “אך” as a limiter: the big idea gets focused into mitzvot (Ot 5)

A. Framing: until now—broad “systems” that elevate man

- Previously: discussing גבולים (boundaries/definitions) and סדרים (relationships/order—how one thing relates to another).
- These systems are meant to:
 - elevate a person beyond חסרונות (lacks),
 - repair breakages,
 - bring him toward perfection.

B. The reveal: עשה ולא תעשה = גבולים וסדרים

- Core text:
 - “אך הסדרים והגבולים האלה הנה הם כלל המצות עשה ולא תעשה”
- Each mitzvah is aimed at two parallel outcomes:
 - acquiring a מעלה (a true level of elevation),

- removing חושך וחסרון (darkness/lack) through:
 - doing the עשה,
 - abstaining from the לא תעשה.

C. Recasting earlier language: “perfection actions” = mitzvot

- What was earlier described as actions that:
 - add perfection (“positive mushrooms”),
 - avoid damage (“poisonous mushrooms”), now gets labeled:
 - עשה = building/perfecting,
 - לא תעשה = avoiding/removing breakage.

II. Mitzvot are “custom-designed” for man’s nature, not imposed from outside (Ot 5)

A. The claim: mitzvot are rooted in human reality

- Text:
 - “וְאִוְלָם פְּרֻטֵי הַמִּצְוֹת כָּלָם... הִנֵּה הֵם מִיִּסְדִּים עַל אֲמַתַּת מְצִיאֹתוֹ וְעִנְיָנוּ שֶׁל הָאָדָם בְּכֹל בְּחִינּוֹתָיו”
- Not: “Man exists, then he receives rules.”
- Rather: the Creator who built man with potentials for perfection/ruin also built mitzvot as the precise tools to activate perfection.

B. “Diet” analogy: what a being needs follows its design

- Just as each creature has an ideal diet, Israel has an additional “diet”: mitzvot.
- Maharal’s analogy: asking “why this mitzvah?” can be like asking:
 - why a tree needs potassium rather than iron—because that’s how it was designed.

C. Parashat Tazria support (Maharal on Rashi): Torah as completion of creation

- Rashi’s question: why Torah of man comes after Torah of animals.
- Answer: just as man was created after animals, so his Torah comes after.
- Maharal’s point:
 - the “laws of man” (טומאה/טהרה), what elevates/purifies) are part of man’s completion—continuation of מעשה בראשית, not an overlay.

III. Mitzvot are for our good: “obligation” vs “advice” (Ot 5)

A. Hashem’s comprehensive knowledge grounds the system

- Hashem knows:
 - man’s true needs,
 - the nature of all created things (lulav, tefillin, food, etc.),
 - how they are meant to be used.

B. The pasuk: mitzvot themselves are “לטוב לנו”

- Quoted:
 - “וַיִּצְוֵנוּ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה... לְטוֹב לָנוּ” (Hashem commanded us... for our good)
- Not merely: do mitzvot → later reward.
- Rather: the mitzvot are intrinsically the good, because they perfect us toward דביקות.

C. Zohar: mitzvot as “עצות” (advice)

- “Advice” doesn’t mean optional; it means:
 - internal benefit, not external imposition.
- Consequences are natural outcomes:
 - ignoring wise advice harms you; so too ignoring mitzvot harms one’s spiritual functioning.

D. 248/365 as body-model (עשה/לא תעשה)

- .action/building : (limbs) 248 איברים ↔ עשה 248
- holding in place/preventing dislocation—abstention prevents : (sinews) 365 גידים ↔ לא תעשה 365 or heals breakage.

IV. Root principle of avodah: always turning toward the Creator (Ot 6)

A. The 'ה עבודתה כלל: as orientation

- Text:
 - “וְהָיָה שְׂרָשׁ כָּל עֵינֵן הָעֲבוּדָה הוּא הַיּוֹת הָאָדָם פּוֹנֶה תְּמִיד לְבוֹרְאוֹ”
- Practical diagnostic question:
 - Does this draw me closer to Hashem—or not?

B. Human purpose: דביקות

- Text:
 - "והוא שידע ויבין שהוא לא נברא אלא להיות מתדבק בבוראו"
- "Understand" = apply across scenarios; not only know abstractly.

C. Why this world? Conquering the yetzer through the mind

- Text:
 - "ולא הושם בזה העולם אלא להיות כובש את יצרו"
 - "ומשעבד עצמו לבוראו בכח השכל"
- The mind/soul is the primary tool to govern:
 - the body's desires,
 - emotional/physical drift.

D. Goal-driven living

- Text:
 - "ויהיה מנהיג את כל פעולותיו להשגת התכלית הזו ולא יטה ממנו"
 - First explicitly prescriptive move in the perek:
 - aim every action at the ultimate תכלית.
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V. Two categories of mitzvah: commanded acts and necessary worldly use (Ot 7)

A. The split: two "camps" of proper conduct

- Text:
 - "אך ההנהגה זאת מתחלקת לשני חלקים"
- 1. "האחד הוא במה שיעשה מפני שצוה בו"
- 2. "והשני במה שיעשה מפני שהוא מכרח בו וצריך"

B. Category #1: classic mitzvot (the familiar 613)

- Text:
 - "פרוש האחד הוא כלל מעשה מצות"
- Defined as doing Hashem's command and will.

C. Two “tracks” of fulfillment within one mitzvah

- Text:

- “וְהָיָה הוּא מְקַיֵּם חֻצְפוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ בְּזֶה בְּשֵׁנֵי דְרָכַיִם נִמְשָׁכִים זֶה מִזְּהָ”

1. Particular: Hashem commanded the act → you did it.

2. General: the act perfects you → fulfilling Hashem’s broader will that man reach perfection and receive His good.

- Analogy: eating healthy food from a mother

- benefits your body,
- and makes her happy—two goods in one action.

- Summary phrase from the shiur:

- “double connection”: particular mitzvah + general purpose.
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VI. Category #2: turning necessities into mitzvot—three conditions (Ot 7)

A. The new category: using the world for needs

- Text:

- “וְהִשְׁנִי כָּלֵל מֵהַשְּׂהָאָדָם מִשְׁתַּמֵּשׂ מִן הָעוֹלָם לְצָרוֹ”

- Examples raised:

- food, sleep, shelter, clothing, פרנסה.

B. Condition 1: must be within Hashem’s גבול (halachic permissibility)

- Text:

- “הִנֵּה צָרִיךְ תַּחֲלָה שִׁיְהִיָּה מְגֻבֵּל בְּגִבּוֹל רְצוֹנוֹ יִתְבַּרְךָ”

- “דִּהְיִינוּ שְׂלֵא יְהִיָּה בּוֹ דְּבַר מִמָּה שֶׁמִּנְעוּ וְאִסְרוּ הָאֵל יִתְבַּרְךָ”

- Example: eating is needed—but not non-kosher, not prohibited mixtures, etc.

- Logic: “spiritual poison” cannot be reframed as serving Hashem.

C. Condition 2: must be genuinely needed for health and life in the best way

- Text:

- “שְׂלֵא יְהִיָּה אֶלָּא הָרְאוּי לְבְרִיאוֹת הַגּוּף וְקִיּוּם חַיּוּתוֹ עַל צַד הַיּוֹתֵר טוֹב”

- Not indulgence masked as “necessity”:
 - late-night greasy excess ≠ avodah.
- Personalized nuance:
 - what’s “needed” can vary with medical/individual realities.

D. Condition 3: intention—do it to enable the soul’s avodah

- Text:
 - “ועקר הכונה בו... להיות הגוף מוכן ומזמן לשתמש ממנו הנשמה לצורך עבודת בוראו”
 - “שלא תמצא לה עכוב בהעדר הכנתו וחלשתו”
- The “huge” practical takeaway:
 - many actions meet (1) and (2), but we lose mitzvot by lacking (3).
- Striking example:
 - sleep is permissible and necessary; adding intention can turn hours of sleep into avodah —“seven hours of mitzvah.”

VII. In Summary

- **גבולים וסדרים** are concretized as **עשה ולא תעשה**—tools to build perfection and remove חסרון.
- Mitzvot are **custom-designed** to human reality; Torah is a continuation/completion of creation, not an external overlay.
- Root of all avodah: “היות האדם פונה תמיד לבוראו” —orient all actions toward דביקות.
- Beyond commanded mitzvot, **necessities can become mitzvot** when they are (1) permissible, (2) truly health-necessary, and (3) done with intention to enable the soul’s service of Hashem.