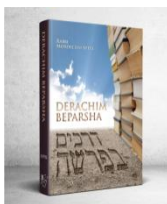


## דרכים בפרשה כי תבוא

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**ככל מצותך אשר צויתני לא עברתי ממצותיך ולא שכחתי**  
*“According to all of Your mitzvos that You commanded me;  
I did not transgress any of Your commandments, nor did I  
forget.”*

The possuk seems superfluous. If one has done everything, then obviously nothing was forgotten. Rashi explains that this refers specifically to not forgetting to make the bracha on the mitzvah.

But one can still ask: making a bracha before performing a mitzvah is so ingrained in us, seemingly second nature—so why the big pat on the back for not forgetting?

Rav Shalom Schwadron zt”l once told a story of a man who was standing quietly, minding his own business, when suddenly—*wham!*—he was struck with two strong blows to his chest. He spun around in shock, ready to confront whoever had just attacked him. But there was no one there. A moment later it dawned on him: he was in the middle of Shemoneh Esrei, and the “assailant” was none other than himself. The punches were his own fists, banging with geshmak during **סלח לנו**.

Rav Shalom would get everyone laughing—but then he would pause and say: that’s the point. A person can go through all the motions, even bang on the chest with geshmak, and yet be so absent-minded that he doesn’t even realize he’s davening. It is not enough to simply do everything we are supposed to do. We must also remember to think about what it is that we are doing.

The Torah is not just a checklist where we mark off boxes each time a mitzvah is performed. **ולא שכחתי** means: I did not forget that I was performing a mitzvah while actually engaged in it. If I recited a bracha, I took those few seconds to focus on the words. When I said **שהכל נהיה בדברו**, I stopped and thought, “Yes—Hashem created *mamash* everything with His words.”

A Rav once related that a member of his kehillah was considering leaving yeshiva earlier than he should have. But when he saw his Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Mordechai Gifter zt”l, kissing his Gemara the way one kisses an only child after a long separation, he realized that this was not just a routine gesture—every movement, every expression was heartfelt and real. He had a change of heart, deeply moved by the Rosh Yeshiva’s authenticity.

The Rokeach already mentions the minhag to recite a possuk at the end of Shemoneh Esrei whose first and last letters match one’s name, as a *shemira* so a person will not forget his name in the next world. The Rema (O.C. 122:2) records this as well. I will never forget how the Rosh Yeshiva zt”l would movingly say his possuk, **מה אהבתי תורתך כל היום**, *היא שיחתי*, as though these were the most important words he would ever utter.

There are many more peshatim in **ולא שכחתי**. But perhaps, as we stand now on the threshold of a new year, we can add one more thought: Hashem, You have given me mitzvos to fulfill and the strength to fulfill them. How can I not remember to say “thank You”? Thank You for giving me the tools, the opportunities, and the belief that I can succeed.

Even in daily life, there are countless opportunities to practice **ולא שכחתי**. We often hear suggestions to stop once a day for a week or a month and think of something we are grateful for. But why wait? We already say **ברכות השחר** every day—why not take a moment to truly think about the words we are saying? When we say **נתן לשכני בינה**, and so on, we can pause and reflect: “Yes, this is real. I woke up this morning; I can see; I have clothing; I can walk; My needs are all covered! I am noticing, I am grateful, I am remembering.” In this simple act, we transform routine into awareness, and awareness into true connection with Hashem.

We have family, health, parnassah, a home to live in, chavrusos, nachas—the list goes on. We try to do what we are supposed to, and for the most part we succeed. But above all, **ולא שכחתי**: we must never forget to Whom we owe it all.

And perhaps there is another layer. Chazal teach that when one expresses gratitude to Hashem, it becomes a vessel for receiving even more *bracha*. The Shulchan Aruch HaRav notes that acknowledging Hashem’s goodness draws additional *bracha*, and the Zohar emphasizes that joy and gratitude can transform *din* into *rachamim*. When we truly say *thank You*, we open ourselves to greater measures of Hashem’s kindness.

As we approach Rosh Hashanah, we look back at the countless gifts Hashem has already given us. And we look forward, knowing that the best way to enter the new year is with a heart full of *hakaras hatov*. To live with **ולא שכחתי**—never forgetting the Source of all goodness—is to open ourselves to even greater *bracha* in the year to come.

**מרדכי אפפל, Good Shabbos,**