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Discovering Our Marching Orders

Why doesn't Hashem send us to the world with a note about what our specific mission is? Why all the confusion and mystery?

There are two worlds: Olam Hazeh, this world, and Olam Haba, the next world. Each world has its purpose, and the purpose of the next world is for you — the real you, with all the greatness you have worked to achieve — to sit with Hashem and enjoy closeness to Him, which is *the* most wonderful thing.

The way that you get there is by traversing this world while working hard to build your full self and realize your maximum potential. This world is sort of like the gym. You come here to work out.

When you first land in this world, you aren't really "you." You're a cute bundle of unrealized potential. The whole purpose of this world is for you to bring forth all of your potential and discover who you are, by following the guide that we've been given — the Torah. If you give it your all, then at the end of your life, you'll have brought forth all the amazing potential inside of yourself, and you'll see who you are.

The Gemara (*Niddah* 30b) describes how the entire Torah is taught to the child in the womb, but a moment before birth an angel touches the child, and the child forgets all that Torah. The lesson the Gemara is conveying is that before you enter this gym, where you will develop yourself and bring out your potential, you are taught who you are. Hashem shows you your potential, and

the worldly life you'll need to live to bring forth that potential. "Are you in agreement?" He asks us. We understand the opportunity we are being offered, so we say, "Yes, please create me!" He sends us down, and before we emerge into this world, He makes us forget all the Torah He taught us in the womb. We forget our identity, and our job is to then use the Torah to bring out all of our greatness and see who we really are.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe used to say that your psychological profile is unlike the psychological profile of any other person on the planet. The same is true of your emotional profile, your spiritual profile, and your physical profile. There has never been anyone like you in history, and there will never be anyone like you in the future. You are a one-time event. If so, then Hashem must have sent you here on a very unique mission.

People ask, what's my mission? Am I supposed to be the president of the United States? Or perhaps a world-class violinist? Is my main job to be a parent? What am I supposed to do?

The answer is that your job is to give the world a gift that no one else could give. What is that gift? The gift is you! To achieve your potential, with your *middos* and your dreams and your abilities — that is the gift you must give to the world. The world is desperately waiting for you and the unique impact your presence will make. In the process of bringing out your good *middos*, dreams, and abilities, you will accomplish many astounding things. The world won't look the same after you visit, for the better. And that is also your purpose, to leave the world better than you found it. But your main contribution to history is yourself, your perfected character.

☞ No Note From Hashem

Why doesn't Hashem send us to the world with a note? In many cases, if we knew who we were supposed to be at the end, we would give up immediately, because we would think we are incapable of reaching such high levels. We can't imagine how giant we are in potential.

Sometimes I work with my students in groups. A student who has been working on himself for only five years might be sitting next to a student who has been working on himself for twenty-five years. They can be in the same group because they happen to be working on the same *middah* today, but their levels of development in many other areas are vastly different. In situations like this, my more experienced students know to conceal some of the more advanced aspects of their character development, so as not to make the less experienced students feel inferior or like failures. The more experienced students know that they themselves might have given up if they had seen how high the mountain gets, and they don't want to push their less experienced friends into despair.

Having said all of this, it's not entirely true that we don't get any note from Hashem at all. Imagine that there is a terrible highway accident, and the paramedics struggle to rescue two badly injured victims from their flaming truck. The victims are alive but unconscious, and they undergo multiple surgeries at the hospital to save their lives, but both remain comatose. Months later, when the physician is checking their status, one victim's eyes slowly open, and then the other's do too. They both stare at the physician and ask where they are.

"You were in a car accident," he explains.

At first there is silence, and then one of the victims whispers to the physician, "Who am I?"

"I also can't remember who I am," whispers the other victim.

The physician somberly explains, "Unfortunately, your IDs were destroyed in the car fire. We don't know your identities, either."

Again there is silence. Then the physician walks over to the cabinet on the other side of the room and says, "But maybe this will help." He pulls out two toolboxes. "This plumber's toolbox was next to you in the truck," he explains, placing it on one victim's bed, "and this electrician's toolbox was next to you." He places that box on the second bed. Now the men at least know that

one is a plumber and the other is an electrician.

You *have* been given that much of a note. You have unique talents and character. The more you push yourself, the more you'll see that you are extraordinary in certain ways. If you catalog all these potential strengths, you'll start to get a picture of what someone like you could accomplish in this world, what sort of contributions you could make, and who you could become. So, there is a sort of note we're given, and we just need to get to know ourselves in order to read it.