

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
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Behar - Bechukosai



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Behar - Bechukosai

Emunah

Two professional artists partook in a competition to see who could draw the most realistic-looking painting. Both artists displayed their masterpieces, covered in canvas curtains, on a beautiful lawn.

A large crowd had gathered to observe. The judges called upon the first artists, "Remove the curtain from your painting so we can analyze your masterpiece."

It was a stunning painting of grapes on a tray. Birds flying around saw the picture and came and pecked at the grapes.

The judges announced, "This wonderful painting is so true to life, it even tricked birds. They thought the grapes were real."

The judges turned to the second artist, "Now is your turn. Remove the curtain from your painting, so we can see what you created."

"It isn't necessary," the second artist replied. "It is obvious that the other artist won. I can't compete with his true-to-life painting."

"Even so," the judges said. "You are a renowned artist; we want to see your art."

"In my opinion, there is no need, but if you insist, you can remove the curtain yourselves."

A judge went over to the canvas to remove the curtain, he tried, and then he realized that there was no curtain there at all. It was a painting of a curtain!

The judges proclaimed, "The first artist's artwork fooled birds, but the second artist wins the contest because his art can trick humans, too."

It states (Shmuel 1, 2:2) אין צור כאלקינו, and Chazal (Brachos 10.) say, אין צייר כאלקינו, there is no artist like Hashem.

Some artists can trick birds, and some can even trick humans, but no artist can fool humans for long. When they come closer to the canvas, they recognize it is a painting. But Hashem painted a world that fools almost everyone. People look at the world and don't recognize that there was a creator who sculpted it into being. It seems that the world is run on its own, and "the power of my strength grants me my success," with only very few people recognizing that there is a creator and that everything is from Hashem.

There was a person who had trouble with his vision. Everything appeared slanted to him. When he was in a small town, the houses seemed as though they were sloping and about to collapse, but he didn't panic because they were tiny houses. But he panicked when he got to a large city, and the giant skyscrapers appeared to him as though they were about to collapse. He shouted, "Everyone run for your lives! The buildings are falling!" and everyone ran.

One wise person shouted, "Is there an eye doctor? We need an eye doctor!"

People wondered why he needed an eye doctor, precisely when the tall buildings were collapsing. The wise man explained, "The buildings aren't falling. The problem is with the way he sees things. If a doctor would cure his eyesight, he would see that the buildings aren't falling."

We too need to improve our eyesight and recognize the world as it truly is. To know that Hashem created it and leads it with hashgachah pratis.

Chazal tell us that Friday night, by kiddush, one can get back his eyesight. We can explain that the kiddush proclaims our emunah that Hashem created the world, and with that emunah, we correct our eyesight and see things as they indeed are.

The chachamim are called עיני העדה, "The eyes of the community" (see Bamidbar 15:24). Perhaps this is because they teach us how to see things. They teach us how to recognize Hashem and His hashgachah pratis in the world.¹

Many people would send kvitlach and requests for tefillah, salvations, and counsel to Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil,² and he would generally answer them after he immersed himself in a mikvah. His gabbai, Reb Elyah Roth zt'l would read the kvitel to him, and Rebbe Shlomke would tovel and respond.

When the request was for a blessing for a sick person, it was possible to discern from Rebbe Shlomke's response whether that person would recover or not.

Reb Elyah Roth zt'l asked him, "How do you know the future, who will get well and who won't? Are you the *urim vetumim*?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "We live in a generation of *hester panim* - Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* is concealed. This leads to people having questions in *emunah*, creating

a *chilul Hashem*. Therefore, in every generation, Hashem chooses a tzaddik that, for him, the concept of *hester panim* doesn't apply. Through him, awareness of Hashem is revealed in the world." He humbly added, "I am like a hook, on which Hashem placed this mission."³

So, when we speak about *emunah*, it is in place to discuss the miracles that Hashem performs through his tzaddikim because this is one of the ways Hashem reveals His presence in the world. There are many stories. The elderly Yerushalmi Yidden tell many stories that they witnessed on Rebbe Shlomke. I will not elaborate here; just a few stories.

One story I heard thirty-five years ago from the baal hamaaseh (the person to whom the story occurred). Doctors informed his wife that they had to terminate her pregnancy; otherwise, she wouldn't survive. The child won't live, they said, but at least the mother would. If they wait, both will die.

The husband ran to Rebbe Shlomke and told him what the doctors said. Rebbe

1. *Emunah* is the foundation of *avodas Hashem*. Therefore, it isn't sufficient if a person studies Torah and performs mitzvos but doesn't have *emunah*.

A person must (a) study Torah, (b) perform mitzvos, (c) and have *emunah*. To perform one or two of the three isn't enough.

This is hinted in the first pasuk of parashas Bechukosai, as it states (26:3) אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשייתם אתם.

אם stands for אמונה מצוות. He has *emunah* and performs mitzvos, but that isn't enough - he must study Torah too. Therefore, it states אם בחקתי תלכו, together with *emunah* and mitzvos, must be Torah study.

וא"ת is *roshei teivos* תורה אמונה. This refers to those who study Torah and have *emunah* but don't perform mitzvos. This is also insufficient. Therefore, it states וא"ת מצותי תשמרו, together with *emunah* and Torah, must be the mitzvos, too. The correct way is ועשייתם אתם to have all three. אם is *roshei teivos* for אמונה תורה מצות.

2. The *yahrtzeit* of Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil is this week, on the *sefirah* of יסוד שביסוד.

3. When Rebbe Shlomke first came to Eretz Yisrael, he didn't tell people that he was the Zvhiller Rebbe. He said that he threw the "*rabbistive*" (his role as rebbe) into the ocean on the way to Eretz Yisrael and wanted to remain concealed. Tzaddikim said this might be why Rebbe Shlomke would answer questions after going to the mikvah. Since the *rabbistive* was thrown into the water, he went to the water to get answers to the questions posed to him. When Rebbe Shlomke's identity became known, he didn't want people to call him "Zvhiller Rebbe." The people of Yerushalayim would call him "Reb Shlomke." Once, someone was traveling to Meron and asked Rebbe Shlomke for his mother's name so he could daven for him by Reb Shimon's kever. Rebbe Shlomke replied, "In Meron you can call me "Zvhiller Rebbe."

Shlomke wouldn't answer questions without first going to the mikveh. So, he went to the mikveh and said, "Don't touch the child. The child will live and be well. Just don't make the bris on the eighth day."

The father ran back to the hospital and told the doctors what the rebbe had said. The doctors were angry with his decision and said he was being irrational. "If we don't terminate the pregnancy, no one will survive."

The father returned to Rebbe Shlomke, but Rebbe Shlomke didn't change. (This was Rebbe Shlomke's way after going to the mikvah. His responses were final, unmovable, and there was no debating.)

It was as Rebbe Shlomke had predicted. The child was born naturally, with both the child and mother being healthy and well.

Now the question was when to perform the bris milah. The doctors claimed that the child was healthy, and there was no reason to postpone the bris, but the rebbe had clearly instructed not to do the bris milah on the eighth day. So it was a halachic question. Do they push off the bris because of Rebbe Shlomke's ruach hakodesh?

The question was brought to Reb Tzvi Pesach Frank zt'l. He replied, "You see that Rebbe Shlomke knows. The doctors wanted to remove the child, and Reb Shlomke saw better than them and rescued the child. So, what do you want? Of course, you should listen to him regarding the bris."

They didn't make the bris in the morning. In the afternoon, the child had abdominal problems and needed emergency surgery. Now, they understood why Rebbe Shlomke instructed them not to make the bris on the eighth day.

There was a scholar in Yerushalayim called Reb Moshe Shpiner (Holtzberg). He gave many shiurim. An elderly yid named Reb Yankel would religiously attend the shiurim. He would come even when it was raining and cold. Reb Moshe Shpiner told him, "You are ninety years old. You must take care of your health. Why do you come in such weather?"

Reb Yankel replied, "I am not afraid because I once did Rebbe Shlomke Zviller zt'l a favor, and out of hakaras hatov, he gave me a brachah that I will see Moshiach."

One day, Reb Yankel told Reb Moshe Shpiner, "I saw Rebbe Shlomke in adream last night, and there was another person there, shining brightly. Rebbe Shlomke told me that he is moshiach."

That night, Reb Yankel was niftar. Rebbe Shlomke promised that he would see Moshiach, and indeed, he saw Moshiach before his passing.

Anger vs. Humility

When one has emunah, he won't become angry because he knows that everything is from Hashem and is exactly how it should be.⁴

4. Two people were shouting angrily at each other while Reb Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l was nearby. After they stopped arguing, one of them excused himself to Rebbe Shlomke. "I'm sorry. I got angry."

Rebbe Shlomke admonished him, "Why do you say it so *eidel* (delicately)? Say that you worshipped avodah zarah because Chazal say that anger is like avodah zarah."

"What's the difference how I express it?" the man asked.

Reb Shlomke explained, "If you consider anger to be avodah zarah, you will avoid it. But if you think of it merely as anger, you won't be vigilant to avoid it." Anger is like avodah zarah because the root of anger is the disbelief that everything is from Hashem.

Reb Yidel Poteker zt'l wore coarse sackcloth under his clothes as an affliction. Rebbe Michel of Zlotchev zt'l told him, "If you are careful not to become angry, you don't need the sackcloth. And if you do become angry, the sackcloth won't help you."

There was a person who was struggling with anger. Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l advised him to daven in Stolin-Karlin. If he needs to raise his voice, let him do it in tefillah, not on others.

The Degel Machaneh Efraim (Bichokosei) writes, "I heard in the name of my grandfather zt'l (the Baal Shem Tov zy'a) that the Gemara (Gittin 70.) states, 'Eat a third, drink a third, so if you become angry, you will be full.' But when someone is humble, he certainly won't become angry (because anger comes from gaavah), so he may eat and be full. Therefore, it states (Tehillim 22:27) *יאכלו עניים וישבעו*, 'the humble shall eat and be sated,' because they won't become angry. We can add that this is also the meaning of the pasuk (Mishlei 13:25) *צדיק צדיק אוכל לשובע נפשו*, when someone is a tzaddik (which means he is humble) he can eat until he is satiated, and he doesn't have to be cautious to allow himself to remain a third hungry. However, for the resha'im who have gaavah and they become angry, it states (Mishlei 113:25) *ובטן רשעים תחסר*, they have to eat less.

"We can therefore explain the pasuk [in this week's parashah] (Vayikra 26:5) *ואכלתם* and *לחמכם לשובע*, 'you will eat your food to satiety' Hashem is promising them that they will all be tzaddikim, they will merit to be humble, and this is their reward for Olam HaBa. The Torah says *ואכלתם לחמכם לשובע*, that you can eat and you don't have to leave anything over because you will all be on the level of tzaddikim and of the humble."

The Degel Machaneh Efraim begins his discussion with a question: "The very early *meforshim* have already shouted the question: Why doesn't the Torah mention the reward of Olam HaBa? Why does it only discuss reward in this world, such as *לחמכם לשובע*?

The Degel Machaneh Efraim cleverly answers that the pasuk is referring to the reward of Olam HaBa. It isn't referring to the reward in this world of being allowed to eat a lot of good food. Rather it is telling us that we will all be humble, and we will all be tzaddikim, and therefore, we can eat and not be afraid of anger. The message isn't that we will have a lot to eat, but rather that we will be tzaddikim and humble, and for that we will be rewarded in Olam HaBa.

Chesed

In Parashas Behar, the Torah commands us (25:35) *וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו*, "If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him."

The mitzvah of *והחזקת בו* is to help your fellow man *before* he becomes poor. By lending him money, he can start a business and become self-sufficient. This is better than letting him become poor and only then help him because, at that point, it will be harder to reestablish himself.

Rashi explains, "Do not allow him to fall and collapse altogether, because then it can be difficult to pick him up again [from his dire poverty]. Rather, "support him" while his hand is still faltering [for then it is easier to help him out of his trouble]. To what can this be compared? To a load on a donkey. While it is still on the donkey, one person can grasp it and hold it in place. Once it falls to the ground, however, even five people cannot pick it up."

The Alshich HaKadesh explains this lesson with a mashal:

The street is full of mud, but Reuven is in shape and has no trouble walking. However, he sees someone who is having difficulty keeping his balance. A man calls out to Reuven, "Give the man a hand and help him walk."

Reuven replies, "He is still walking, he didn't fall yet. I will leave him be. If he falls, I will help him."

It does not take long, and the man indeed slips and falls into the mud and becomes covered with dirt from head to toe. He is in pain from the fall, and his clothes will never be spotless again. Reuven lifts him up, and washes him and his clothing, but he doesn't deserve credit for any of this. Instead, he deserves rebuke and a curse because had he cared, this would have been avoided.

This is why the Torah obligates us to support those who are falling *before* they fall.

The Tzror HaMor explains that the mitzvah *והחזקת בו* (to help those having financial troubles) is discussed after the laws of shemittah because, during shemittah, everyone is worried about what they will eat, as the Torah writes (25:20), *וכי תאמרו מה נאכל*, "If you should say, 'What will we eat in the seventh year? We will not sow, and we will not gather in our produce!'" It is easier to help others when you have experienced what they have gone through.

So, after experiencing shemittah and understanding the worries of the poor, the Torah obligates us *והחזקת בו* to support those in need. This is because to truly be able to help others in need, one needs to have experienced the hardships themselves.⁵

Tzaddikim say that although we encourage ourselves with the emunah that "everything is for the good," when other people are in tzaar, we should feel their pain and do whatever we can to help them. If you think that their tzaros are for their good, you won't be motivated to help them.

A hint to this idea is in the pasuk *אשרי אל דל* *משכיל אל דל*, which can be translated that when it comes to the poor (*דל*), it is good to be a *maskil* (a nonbeliever).

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt'l excelled in chesed, helping his fellow man, and often, when situations where most people didn't want to get involved came up, he was there to help his fellow Yid. He helped the poorest and most broken people in Yerushalayim.

Reb Elyah Roth, the gabbai of Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller zt'l, said that there was one story that occurred in Rebbe Shlomke's court that is totally beyond his comprehension:

Reb Shlomke lived in a small apartment in Yerushalayim. There was a room next to it, which Rebbe Shlomke also owned, and a widow moved there. The people who frequented Rebbe Shlomke's house weren't happy that a woman was about, but Rebbe Shlomke insisted that they let her stay there.

At one point, R' Shlomke's apartment needed a bathroom installed right outside the apartment. Surprisingly, the Police came and stopped the construction. It was discovered that the widow didn't want the bathroom there, and she spoke with the neighbors about it until the police were notified and stopped it. About this episode, Rebbe Shlomke replied, "She's right. The bathroom shouldn't be there."

If the story ended here, it would also show Rebbe Shlomke's extraordinary

5. Hashem told Avraham *לך לך* that he should travel, and it would be for his benefit. There's an explanation that Avraham will gain awareness of the difficulties and the needs of travelers and guests. Then he will be able to perform the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim* even better. Because to properly help the needy, one needs to understand their needs.

There's a well-known story of a baal tzedakah who was collecting money to help the poor buy firewood in the winter. When he solicited wealthy people, he insisted on speaking to them outside their homes in the frigid cold because he wanted them to feel the cold and understand the plight of the poor.

The same occurs in this week's parashah. After experiencing the worries that come from shemittah, the Torah says that now you will understand the plight of the poor and those struggling financially.

humility and how he allowed his house to be open to all. But there is more to this story:

When Rebbe Shlomke would immerse in the mikvah, Reb Elyah Roth would read the requests and the questions that people sent him, and the Rebbe would answer. Once, the request came from the widow living on the Rebbe's property. When Reb Elyah read her letter, he almost gagged on the words. She wrote that she is having difficulty renting out the apartments she owns in Tel Aviv.

Reb Elyah couldn't believe his eyes. The widow was wealthy, yet she lived on the Rebbe's property and acted like the owner (not letting them build a bathroom), and Rebbe Shlomke still didn't send her away! Reb Elyah said he was always impressed by Rebbe Shlomke's chesed and ways, but this episode was beyond his comprehension!⁶

Reb Shlomke studied b'chavrusah with tzaddikim of Yerushalayim, such as Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l and Reb Yisrael Grossman zt'l. Reb Dovid Shechter zt'l (father of Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita) asked Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil to learn with him as well, and initially, Rebbe Shlomke declined.

One day, Rebbe Shlomke said to Reb Dovid, "Your face is shining today. It is obvious that you did a great mitzvah. Please tell me what it was?"

Reb Dovid didn't want to say.

Rebbe Shlomke urged him to reveal the good deed that he did, but Reb Dovid Shechter remained silent. He said, "If Hashem didn't reveal to you what I did, it means you don't have to know."

Rebbe Shlomke said, "If you tell me the good deed you did, I will learn with you b'chavrusah." Reb Dovid agreed to tell him. "I heard someone crying bitterly at the kosel. So I asked him what was bothering him, and he told me that he promised furniture for

the upcoming marriage of his child, but he doesn't have money to buy it."

In those days, in Yerushalayim, people barely had money for food. How should he have money to buy furniture? Reb Dovid had some money saved up for his own child's upcoming chasunah. He took that money and gave it to the poor person.

This was the good deed he did that day, which caused his face to shine with a spiritual glow (which was perceived by Rebbe Shlomke).

Later that day, someone came into the beis midrash to tell Rebbe Shlomke that his wife was in labor and having difficulty giving birth (makshe leiled). Rebbe Shlomke sent him to Reb Dovid Shechter. Reb Dovid said, "Why are you sending him to me? What can I do?"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "You did a great mitzvah today, so today, you have the power to bring salvations."

For those who understand the nuances of lashon hakodesh, look at these words again:

(25:35) וכי ימוך אחיך ומטה ידו עמך והחזקת בו, "If your brother becomes destitute and his hand falters beside you, you shall support him."

It seems that it should say והחזקת אותו, "you shall support him."

The Alshich HaKodosh provides a wonderful answer. בו והחזקת doesn't solely mean that we shall support the poor. It also means that those who help the poor, they themselves receive chizuk. The Torah says that בו והחזקת, when you help the poor, you are helping yourself.

When you help the poor, you are ultimately helping yourself. The following story is an example of this principle:

A newly married yungerman was looking to rent an apartment in Meron for himself

6. People say that the only thing that showed he was the baal habayis, the owner of his apartment, was that when someone came in, he would offer them bread with jam.

and his wife for Shabbos and Lag b'Omer that was on motzei Shabbos. As a bachur, he spent most of the day Lag b'Omer in Meron and hoped to do the same this year.

He called a relative who lives in Or HaGanuz, a village not far from Meron, and asked his relative if he could stay with them for Shabbos.

The relative replied, "I would love to have you, but where can I put you? I have a small house with only two bedrooms and seven children. I have no place for you."

The husband put down the phone. He would have to find another place to be in Meron. But soon, the relative from Or HaGanuz called him back and said, "My children say that I should invite you. They offered to sleep in the hallway and the kitchen..."

So, the young couple arrived in Or HaGanuz on Friday to spend Shabbos and Lag b'Omer with their cousins.

This relative from Or HaGanuz thought he was doing a favor for the new couple, but he soon discovered he was doing himself a favor.

Friday night, the couple walked forty-five minutes from Or HaGanuz to Meron, where there was zemiros at the tzion. When they arrived at Meron, they made up to meet at the gate at 1:30 a.m.

At 1:30, the husband came to the gate, but his wife wasn't there. There was a misunderstanding, and she was waiting at another gate. It took them a half-hour until they found each other. At 2:00 a.m. they headed back to their relative's home in Or HaGanuz. When they got there, they smelled fire. The fire was in the baby carriage, where the baby was sleeping! Had they gotten back earlier, they would have gone to sleep without knowing that a fire was about to begin. The host's child was saved because he had invited guests to his home. This is *והחזקת בו*; when you help others, you are

helping yourself. You will only gain from chesed.

Reb Shlomke once said, "An ayin hara is running after me; I need a guest."

He understood that by doing for others, he would do himself the greatest favor.

The Gemara (Eiruvim 86.) writes, *רבי מנבד עשירים*, that Rebbe would honor the wealthy. The Gemara explains that he honored the wealthy because the world exists on their merit. The tzedakah and chesed that the wealthy perform give existence to the world.

The Maharil says that Rebbe was very wealthy and wanted people to honor him because of his wealth and not for his vast Torah knowledge. He didn't want to benefit from Torah study, so he honored the wealthy, to teach others to honor him because of his wealth.

Rebbe Shlomke zt'l added two reasons why Rebbe honored the wealthy. (1) Hashem gave them wealth, proving they deserved it. (2) Just as the poor need money, the wealthy need honor. When you honor the wealthy, you are giving them what they need.

When Rebbe Shlomke's zt'l child was getting married, many poor people showed up to the Shabbos sheva Brachos wearing ripped, worn-out clothing. They were the type of people that made many look the other way when they saw them.

"Who are these people?" the mechuten asked.

"These are mine." Rebbe Shlomke always helped the poor and downtrodden and wanted them to eat with him at his simchah.

The people who attended Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller's tish were mostly broken, poor souls who hadn't found success in this world. At the tish, these people were all talking with one another about unimportant matters while Rebbe Shlomke Zvhiller zt'l sat there wrapped up in holy thoughts full of deveikus. Someone saw this and asked,

"What is the purpose of this? Why do you make a tish? We don't learn anything here."

Rebbe Shlomke said, "We do learn something. Here, we learn savlanus (patience)."

Reb Shlomke was niftar a week after Lag b'Omer, and on Lag b'Omer, he was in tremendous pain. Fathers brought their three-year-old children to his home because they wanted him to cut their hair and make peyos. The gabaim told the people at the door not to come in because Rebbe Shlomke was in excruciating pain. Rebbe Shlomke heard this and said, "Let them in. Don't stop them from coming. Whoever loves the Father, loves the children."

The Brisker Rav zt'l once gave an envelope filled with money to his son, Reb Dovid Soloveitchik zt'l, and told him to deliver the money to a poor person. Reb Dovid replied, "I am in the midst of a sugyah. When I finish the sugyah, I will bring over the money."

The Brisker Rav told him, "Rabbanim once gathered for a meeting, and my father [Reb Chaim] was present. They began discussing the Lodzer Rav zt'l, and someone said that the Lodzer Rav spent much time doing chesed, which is whu we don't have any sefarim from him. My father [Reb Chaim] told them that he acted correctly. He explained, 'If a Yid must close the Gemara to do chesed, then even when the Gemara is closed, the Gemara is open. If one doesn't do chesed when he should, then even when the Gemara is open, it is closed.'"

Humiliation/Bizyonos

Once, someone humiliated Rebbe Shlomke for going to the mikvah to answer questions. This person didn't think it was right, and he voiced his opinion in a very harsh and angry manner.

Rebbe Shlomke sent his gabbai, Reb Elyah Roth, to bring this person an envelope with money. Reb Elyah returned and reported that the man's face lit up with joy when he received the money. Rebbe Shlomke replied, "I understood that he might need money. I was wondering why he was so upset with me. I never did anything to him, so why was he shouting? I realized he is probably going through hard times, perhaps financial problems, so I sent him money."

At Reb Shlomke's first yahrtzeit, there was a yahrtzeit seudah, and people were reminiscing all the miracles they experienced firsthand from Rebbe Shlomke. This Yid (who had shouted and humiliated Rebbe Shlomke) stood up at the yahrtzeit meal and said, "I also experienced a *mofes* from Rebbe Shlomke. Once, my wife was complaining about the poverty in our home, and she told me, 'Without money, don't come home.' I knew she was serious, and after Shacharis, I came home and found the door locked. I stood outside, wondering what to do, and suddenly, Reb Elyah Roth arrived and gave me an envelope filled with money." (He didn't mention the first half of the story, that he received this gift because he had humiliated Rebbe Shlomke the day before, which helped Rebbe Shlomke understand that he was going through a financially difficult time.)

A man came to Rebbe Shlomke for a salvation, and Rebbe Shlomke told him to return the following day.⁷ The Yid protested, "Yesterday, I saw someone come to you, and you helped him immediately. You didn't tell him to come back some other day!"

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "How can you compare today to yesterday? Yesterday, I received *bizyonos*, so my words took effect in heaven. Today, I wasn't humiliated, so I am not on that level."

7. This was Rebbe Shlomke's way, at times. When he felt that he couldn't help them on the day they came, he told them to return the next day. Sometimes he told them to return when he said kiddush, Friday night, because at kiddush, we become partners with Hashem in creation, as Chazal taught us, and a partner has a right to offer his opinion.

Rebbe Shlomke didn't mind it when people humiliated him. In fact, he embraced it and appreciated it because he said that it saved him from so many other troubles.

Rebbe Shlomke often said, "With *bizyonos*, we are saved from death."

Once, Reb Shlomke's gabbai, Reb Elyah Roth zt'l, sat on the floor of the bus. He learned this from his rebbe, Rebbe Shlomke, who would sit on the ground. Someone stood up for Reb Elyah so that he could sit in his place. Reb Elyah replied, "No, thank you. Reb Shlomke taught me that from the ground, one doesn't fall." When one considers himself humble like the earth, he will not fight for his honor, and nothing can upset him.

Once, Rebbe Shlomke of Zhvill zt'l was at the Kosel, sitting among the poor people, and somebody came by and gave a small coin to each poor man. He also gave a coin to Rebbe Shlomke because he didn't realize it was Rebbe Shlomke. After the man left, Rebbe Shlomke gave the coin to the poor sitting beside him.

"Why didn't you tell him that you aren't poor?" the poor man asked.

"I didn't want to lose out on the opportunity to receive some shame," he replied.

Rebbe Shlomke's granddaughter once told Rebbe Shlomke about the poverty they were suffering in their home. Rebbe Shlomke advised her to daven at the Kosel.

She went to the Kosel plaza, which was much smaller in those days, and she prayed loudly. Her shouts and loud prayers disturbed a woman standing next to her. "Sha!" the woman shouted at her, but Rebbe Shlomke's granddaughter ignored her protests, and she continued crying and praying out loud.

When she left the Kosel, she met the woman who had stood next to her, and the

woman said, "Why can't you daven silently? Do you think the entire Kosel is yours?"

Rebbe Shlomke's granddaughter bore the shame in silence and didn't answer back. On the way home, she found a gold Napoleon coin on the ground, which could support her family for half a year.

She went to her grandfather Rebbe Shlomke to tell him about her salvation. She added, "But why did I have to undergo all that shame?"

Rebbe Shlomke explained, "The shame was the beginning of your salvation because it removes all troubles and hardships. After you were humiliated, you were able to find the money."

The Beis Yisrael would praise the benefits that come from humiliation/*bizyonos*. He explained that when one becomes ill, r'l, the treatment process can be lengthy and costly, but when one receives humiliation, the cure is fast and complete."

It is good to appreciate humiliation, but obviously, you must be very cautious not to harm or humiliate your fellow man with sharp words.

Someone was niftar young, and a son of Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l was asked to give a *hesped*. The son showed the outline of the *drashah* he was planning to say to his father. Reb Shlomo Zalman replied, "It is very good speech; however, this won't stop the malach hamaves (the angel of death). The only way to stop the angel of death is to be cautious not to humiliate your fellow man."

Rebbe Uri of Strelisk zt'l said that when one desires to say something harsh or bad and refrains, it is counted as though he fasted for eighty-four days. The Belzer Rav (Rebbe Aharon) zt'l said, "And I say און נאך און נאך, that it is counted as much more than 84 fasts."

One of Rebbe Shlomke's guests was Reb Yaakov, a tall, very overweight, ignorant Yid, who also gave off a terrible odor. He

wasn't welcome anywhere— he wasn't even permitted to use the local *mikvaos* because of how he smelled. But he was welcome at Rebbe Shlomke's home. Once, while World War II was raging, Rebbe Shlomke said, "If the people of Yerushalayim would permit Reb Yaakov to use the *mikveh*, the Yidden in Europe wouldn't suffer so much. The war would have an entirely different face."

Reb Shlomke was very involved in davening for the Jewish nation during those dark years. It is known that he, the Husiatiner Rebbe zt'l, and other tzaddikim went to the Or HaChayim's kever to daven that Hitler ym's shouldn't make it to Eretz Yisrael. When they finished the tefillos, Rebbe Shlomke said that they had succeeded. He knows this because they saw Hashem's name written in order on the Or HaChaim's kever. Rebbe Shlomke was niftar on the day the war ended, which indicates that his life was a mission to help the Yidden during the war.

Rebbe Shlomke's Lesson

There aren't many divrei Torah from Rebbe Shlomke, but the foundations of his life's outlook can be derived from what we know about him. One of the foundations is that on Rosh Hashanah, it is decreed how much pleasure and distress a person will have that year; it is up to the person to decide where he wants to take pleasure and where he wants to take *yesurim*. A wise person takes pleasure from Torah and mitzvos, not from saying unkind words to others or looking where he shouldn't. And it is good to appreciate *bizyonos*. One should accept them with joy because they will be instead of far worse *yesurim*, r'l.

Rebbe Shlomke's granddaughter (wife of Reb Elazar Adler zt'l) was diagnosed with the dreaded disease shortly after her wedding, and the doctors said there was nothing they could do and that she would die within two weeks.

Rebbe Shlomke told her that if she takes on three things, she will have a *refuah*

sheleimah. (These three matters she had to take on were especially difficult for a woman):

(1) She shouldn't wear jewelry for two years. (2) She shouldn't kiss her children. (3) She shouldn't go to her children's weddings.

She accepted these things and was immediately cured. Her daughter got married, and her son was bar mitzvah, but she didn't attend these simchos.

The explanation is that she undertook *yesurim*, saving her from worse *yesurim*.

Someone cried that he lost a gold watch. Rebbe Shlomke asked him, "Did you have a great pleasure recently?"

The man replied that he had recently put curtains into his home (which was a luxury in those days in Yerushalayim).

Reb Shlomke explained that he received pleasure from the curtains and therefore lost pleasure in other areas.

It states in Avos (6:8) הנוי והכח והעשר והכבוד והחכמה והזקנה והשיבה והבנים נאה לצדיקים ונאה לעולם, "Beauty, strength, wealth, honor, wisdom, longitude, and children are befitting for tzaddikim and are befitting for the world."

The Mishnah concludes, "These seven traits that are befitting for tzaddikim were the portion of Rebbe and his children."

So, it seems that Rebbe enjoyed wealth and honor. However, Chazal also tell us that at the end of Rebbe's life, he raised his hands and said that he didn't derive pleasure from this world, not even from his smallest finger.

Rebbe Shlomke explained that it isn't a contradiction. In fact, one Chazal explains the other. It was destined that Rebbe should enjoy this world, and this is the reason he had wealth and goodness, but Rebbe refused to enjoy it. He only wanted to enjoy Torah and mitzvos. So, Hashem gave Rebbe more good in this world. When he still wasn't enjoying this world, Hashem gave him even more. This is why Rebbe had so much, but he didn't enjoy any of it.

The Trisker Rav zt'l said, "How nice is the world when we look at it from above, and how disgusting is the world when we see it from inside." This is as the Baal Shem Tov said, "World! World! (Veltele veltele). Fortunate are those who aren't in you. And fortunate are those who are in you and not in you." This refers to making use of the world while maintaining focus on our purpose in life.

Kedushah

Before Rebbe Shlomke was niftar, he suffered immense yesurim. He held onto the sides of the bed while his body trembled from pain. Doctor Cook (one of the greatest doctors in Yerushalayim) told him that with a procedure, he could remove the liquids from his body, and the problem would be solved. When Rebbe Shlomke heard where the procedure would be done, he replied, "Not on this body."

The doctor said, "I will wear gloves," but Rebbe Shlomke refused, and this is how he was niftar.

The Beis Yisrael said that according to halachah, the operation could have been done because it was a matter of pikuach nefesh. However, for Reb Shlomke, it was permissible to be moser nefesh for kedushah, as the Gemara (Nidah 13:) says, "Rather the stomach should burst than to go to Gehinom."

The Beis Yisrael zt'l said, "Rebbe Shlomke was niftar due to his yiras Shamayim, and therefore, his kever is mesugal for yiras Shamayim." Indeed, the Beis Yisrael would go to Rebbe Shlomke's kever.

The Beis Yisrael said it's a mitzvah to speak about the yiras Shamayim of Reb Shlomke. The Mahartiz Dushinsky said the kedushas hayesod of Reb Shlomke was similar to that of the Tana'im and Amoraim.

After the tochachah (the curses and tragedies that can come for transgressing the Torah), the Torah tells us about *eirachin*, when a person says, ערכי עלי, that he will give his worth (or

the worth of someone else) to the Beis HaMikdash. The Chozeh zt'l explains that after hearing the tochachah, one might feel that he has no worth, so the Torah immediately tells us that each Yid has worth before Hashem.

When people (often bachurim) fall and commit aveiros, they feel they lost their value – but it is never so. They remain beloved, precious, and holy to Hashem. This is the lesson of eirachin, to know their self-worth.

There was a bachur who fell and veered from the path of his parents. Many people and many rabbanim tried to bring him back but failed. Rebbe Shlomke said that he also wanted to speak to the bachur. But people told him, "You are wasting your time. There is nothing that can be done."

"I want to speak with him, regardless."

Rebbe Shlomke told the bachur that Chazal call the yetzer hara מלך זקן וכסיל, an old, foolish king. Why is the yetzer hara a king? It is because a king wants people to listen to him immediately, without delay, and the yetzer hara wants the same from us. He urges us to perform an aveirah, and he wants us to act upon our desires right away. But I request that you not make the yetzer hara king. Don't listen to him right away. Push off the aveirah for later. Show him that he isn't your king. It isn't easy to push off the temptations for later, but for each battle, you bring immense joy to Hashem."

This conversation turned the bachur around, and he did teshuvah.

Reb Shlomo Karliner zt'l said that the primary yetzer hara is that he causes people to forget that they are a ben melech, a son of the King. He makes them forget their holiness, specialness, and qualities; they think they are regular (or lowly) people, resulting in them acting inappropriately.

Chazal say that when the yetzer hara comes to you, the first solution is to learn Torah. Learning Torah tames and tames down the yetzer hara. But if that doesn't

work, the Gemara says to say kriyas Shema and the final solution is to remember the day he will die.

We can explain (b'derech tzachus) that on the day of his death, there will be hespedim, and they will be talking about all his qualities. The Gemara tells him to remember that time and to think about the praises they will say. When he thinks about this, he receives a better view of himself and develops the willpower to overcome the yetzer hara and to do good.

It states (26:44) ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם, "But despite all this, while they are in the land of their enemies, I will not despise them nor will I reject them to annihilate them."

The Zohar (p.115:) translates לכלתם as kalah. Despite our many aveiros, Hashem says He loves us as a chasan loves his kallah. We quote, "It can be compared to someone who loves a woman living in the borsky (tannery) marketplace. If she weren't there, he would never go there [because of the bad smell], but since she lives there, he considers it like a perfume market, where all the good smells of the world are present. Similarly, ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ אויביהם, even when you are in the land of their enemies, which is like a borsky market, nevertheless, לא מאסתים ולא געלתים, Hashem is not disgusted with us. The reason is לכלתם, because the kallah, whom I love, the beloved of My soul, resides there, and therefore, I imagine all the best scents to be there. Reb Yosi said, 'If I came here only to hear this thought, it would be enough.'"

Reb Naftali of Ropshitz zt'l translated it, לא מאסתים, Hashem isn't disgusted with us, לכלתם, because we yearn and pine to be close to Him (from the words כלתה נפשי.⁸)

Sefer Vayikra discusses the korbanos, and it begins with a small alef (in the word ויקרא). Rebbe Shlomke says that this alludes to Hashem, Who makes himself small and humble to receive the korbanos from us and dwell among us. No matter what level we are on, Hashem wants to be with us.

Parnassah

It states (26:3-4) אם בחקתי תלכו... ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם. "If you follow My laws...I will give your rains in their time..."

Rashi writes that אם בחקתי תלכו means to study Torah (שתהיו עמלים בתורה).

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l says that בחקתי also hints at parnassah (see Beitzah 15.). Parnassah and Torah study are mentioned in one word to imply that when one works for a living, he should set time for Torah study. When one does so, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם, Hashem will give him parnassah, בעתם, for those times that he devoted himself to Torah and tefillah.

At the end of Behar it states ומקדשי תיראו, (fear My Mikdash), and then it states אם בחקתי תלכו. The explanation is that even when you are working, you should be seen in the beis medresh (ומקדשי תיראו). For those who don't work, they will obviously be in the beis medresh, but even those who have to work every day, ומקדשי תיראו, make sure to be seen in the beis medresh.

8. He writes, "Therefore, a person shouldn't lose hope. He shouldn't say I am disconnected from kedushah... He can make a tefillah from this, to daven that he was so distant that he can't daven to Hashem properly, and he should ask for rachmanus that he should be able to daven, and Hashem will certainly help him."

In Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (Rabba 22), Eliyahu HaNavi says, "My Father in heaven, may Your great name be blessed forever, and may You have pleasure from Your servant Yisrael, wherever they live. You say that you accept the sinners of Yisrael when they do teshuvah. This means that even if a person has a hundred aveiros, one worse than the other, and does teshuvah, [Hashem says] 'I am compassionate with him, and I accept his teshuvah.' And even if a person stands up and blasphemes Heaven, and then he does teshuvah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, You will forgive him for everything."

It states (Shemos 34:24) ולא יחמוד איש את ארצך בעלותך לראות, "No one will covet your land when you go up, to appear before Hashem." When the Yidden were *oleh l'regel* (they went to the Beis HaMikdash on the *yomim tovim*), Hashem promises that they won't lose money because of it, and no one will steal their property. The *Divrei Yisrael* writes, "This promise is applicable every day and for every person when he goes to the *beis medresh* to study Torah and to *daven* in *beis midrash* because, in our times, this is instead of the *mitzvah* of *aliyah l'regel*." We can't go to the Beis HaMikdash, so we go to the *beis medresh* and are promised that we won't lose out during these times. On the contrary, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם, your *parnassah* will come from these times you set for Torah and *tefillah*.

Parnassah is called *חוק* (as in *הטריפני לחם חוקי*, *Mishlei* 30:8). A *chok* is generally translated as a rule of the Torah that we don't know its reason and explanation. *Parnassah* is called *חוק* because we don't understand how we support ourselves. It isn't because of our *hishtadlus*, as the *sefarim* tell us. Rather, it is a *חוק*, a rule, a decision that Hashem has to give this person this amount of money, and to that person, that amount of money.

The *parashah* begins *אם בחקתי תלכו*. This means you should live with this *emunah* that *parnassah* is a *chok*, and then, in the merit of your *emunah*, ונתתי גשמיכם בעתם, you will have rain, *parnassah*, and all your needs.

Once a man stole one hundred dollars. (He didn't sneak in and take the money like a lowly thief, rather, with sly ways, in business, and with a *din Torah*, he managed to get money that wasn't rightfully his.) Soon afterward, he broke his foot and had to pay a hundred dollars for the cast. He said, "It is a good thing I stole the money. That way, I can pay for the cast." He didn't understand that if he hadn't stolen the money, he probably wouldn't have to spend it on medical costs. This is because

when one takes what isn't his, it won't remain with him.

The *Vorke Rebbe zt'l* was saving up money to buy new boots for his *gabbai*. The *gabbai's* boots were torn, and his feet would get wet from the rain and snow.

The *gabbai* saw the money in the room. He didn't know it was intended for him, and he took it for himself. When the *Vorker Rebbe* found out, he said, "You are a fool because why did you have to take it in forbidden ways? If you would have waited, what is destined for you will come in permitted ways."

This week's *parashah* discusses the prohibition of *ribis* (see 25:36), to lend or borrow money with interest. Why is it forbidden?

The *Chinuch* says that *ribis* causes a person to lose all his money. Perhaps this is *Rashi's* explanation as well because *Rashi* (Shemos 22:24) writes that *ribis* is called *נשך*, snakebite, because "A snake makes a small wound, and the person doesn't feel it. And then, suddenly, it swells and goes up to his brain. *Ribis* is the same. One doesn't feel it at first until the *ribis* goes up and causes him to lose a lot of money."

The *Kli Yakar* (25:36), however, says that this isn't the primary reason for the prohibition of *ribis*. If it were, the prohibition would only be for poor people because they have difficulty paying back their debt. Why is it also forbidden for the wealthy to borrow money with *ribis*? Rather, he writes, "The primary reason for the prohibition of *ribis* is because it causes people to lose their *bitachon*. With all other businesses, a person's eyes are turned to Hashem because he isn't sure whether he will earn money or not. But when one lends money with *ribis*, the profit is set and fixed... and he turns his heart away from Hashem."⁹

9. We brought the *Kli Yakar's* explanation on why it is forbidden to lend money with interest, but why is

Rebbe Shlomke of Zhvill zt'l got married when he was fourteen years old, and every day his *rebbetzin* would go to the home of her father-in-law, Rebbe Mordechai of Zhvill, and he would give her some money to buy whatever they needed.

One day, Rebbe Shlomke told his wife, "We believe that our *parnassah* doesn't come from my father but from Hashem. So, I decided that we shouldn't go to my father anymore for *parnassah*. We will trust in Hashem, and Hashem will support us."

But soon afterward, there was no food in their home, and his wife complained that maybe they should have taken money from her father-in-law.

Rebbe Shlomke agreed with his wife, "Hashem chooses how to give *parnassah*, and He chose to support us through my father. Perhaps I was wrong to demand that my *parnassah* should come another way."

So, Rebbe Shlomke's *rebbetzin* went to her father-in-law's home to pick up her daily allowance. Rebbe Mordechai said, "You weren't here for a while, so I will give you more money this time," and he gave her a silver ruble.

Later that day, two wealthy *chassidim* came to visit Rebbe Mordechai. Afterwards they went to Rebbe Shlomke's home to wish

him *mazal tov* on his recent *chasunah*. As they spoke, one of them took out a silver ruble. Rebbe Shlomke understood that he planned to give him the ruble as a *chasunah* gift. But when they finished their conversation, the man forgot about the gift and returned the silver ruble to his pocket.

Rebbe Shlomke thought about this matter and understood that the wealthy person forgot to give him the silver coin because he had received a silver coin from his father. If they had trusted in Hashem and hadn't taken money from his father, Hashem would have given them a silver coin through the wealthy *chasid*. Because *parnassah* comes from Hashem, and Hashem has many ways to support us.

There was a storeowner who was very concerned because someone opened up another store right next to his, and he was selling the very same items. (One doesn't need to worry about this because Hashem has enough *parnassah* for everyone, but he was worried), and he came to Rebbe Shlomke of Zhvill zt'l, hoping that the rebbe would perform a miracle for him.

Rebbe Shlomke heard the person's cries and worries but remained silent.

The man told Rebbe Shlomke a story of one of the great *tzaddikim* who took a splinter of wood off his desk, put it into the

it also forbidden to borrow with *ribis*? And why is it permitted to lend money to *goyim* with interest?

The *Kli Yakar* adds, "It is forbidden to borrow money with *ribis* because the borrower causes the lender to sin. He is causing the lender to lose his *bitachon*. It is known that those who lend money for *ribis* have weak *emunah*; they rarely give *tzedakah* because they don't have *bitachon*. It is permitted to lend money with *ribis* to *goyim* because a *goy* is generally hard to deal with and is a thief...and it is his way to find ways to avoid paying. Even when one has collateral for the loan, he cannot be sure he will collect it and knows that he might even end up losing. Therefore, his eyes will always be turned to Hashem to help him."

Chazal say that whoever borrows money with *ribis* is a *kofer b'Elokei Yisrael*, a nonbeliever. The *Chazon Ish* zt'l explains that this is because he thinks he must transgress this *aveirah* to earn *parnassah*. He doesn't believe he can earn *parnassah* in other permitted ways.

The same applies to people who don't make time to daven properly or to study Torah because they are consumed with earning *parnassah*. It is essentially the same *kefirah* because they don't believe that Hashem can support them if they work less and devote more time to Torah and *tefillah*.

water, and the splinter grew and blossomed and produced fruit. This was done as a sign for someone that was destined to become wealthy.

He was hinting to Rebbe Shlomke that he should do this miracle for him.

Rebbe Shlomke replied, "There are things that a Yid must believe in, and there are

things that a Yid isn't obligated to believe in. For example, we must believe that parnassah is bashert and that no one can take your parnassah away. But regarding your story, maybe it happened, maybe it didn't, but if one doesn't believe the story, he isn't an apikoris. But I see it is easier for you to believe what we don't have to believe than what we must believe."