

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

Vaeira



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vaeira

## Acquiring Emunah

The pasuk in this week's parashah states (7:7) ומושה בן שמונים שנה ואהרן בן שלש ושמנים שנה (7:7) "Moshe was eighty years old, and Aharon was eighty-three years old when they spoke to Pharaoh."

Why does the Torah tell us their ages?

Reb Shimon Shwab zt'l explains that mentioning their ages served as a hint to Pharaoh that it is impossible to go against Hashem's will. "Eighty-three years ago, you enslaved the Jewish people to prevent the nation from increasing. But did your decree help? Behold, Aharon is now eighty-three years old. He was born at the time of this gezeirah (see Shemos Rabba 26:1). Your decree couldn't prevent Aharon's birth. And eighty years ago, you decreed that every Jewish male be thrown into the sea. Did that decree help advance your objectives? Behold Moshe Rabbeinu is standing before you, and he was born at the time of this decree."

"So, you see, you can't fight Hashem's plan. What He wants will be."

The words "אני ה'", "I am Hashem," are repeated several times in this week's *parashah* (see 6:6-7, 7:5, 8:18, 9:13-14), and it states וידעתם כי אני ה' "You will know that I am Hashem." This is because the primary message of this parashah is to know that everything happens through Hashem's hand, nothing happens by chance, and no one can change Hashem's plan.<sup>1</sup>

This awareness is acquired through constant review and by bringing the emunah from the mind into the heart.

The Chofetz Chaim told the following *mashal*:

A wealthy person owned an expensive bird that was able to speak. Once, before leaving on a business trip, he gave instructions on how to care for the bird to his butler. "Read the list every morning and evening because the bird is very precious, and I don't want it to get hurt while I am away."

The butler replied, "Don't worry. I will do as you say."

When the wealthy man returned home, the bird was dead. "Why didn't you take care of the bird as I requested?"

"I did exactly as you said," the butler replied. "I read the list twice daily."

The wealthy man got angry and said, "I intended that you should read the note twice daily and *do* as it says. It doesn't help me that you read the note if you didn't put the ideas to practice."

The Chofetz Chaim explains that the Torah tells us to remember *yetzias Mitzrayim* twice every day (Devarim 16:3, למען תזכור את יום צאתך, (מארץ מצרים כל ימי חיך). The purpose isn't just to mumble off the words. The goal is to acquire emunah in Hashem.

The Imrei Emes writes in a letter to his grandson, "Regarding your request that I should write to you about *yiras Shamayim*, behold it states (9:20) הירא את דבר ה' מעבדי פרעה

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1. The Toldos zt'l tells a *mashal* of a woman in labor who runs away in an attempt to escape from her labor pains. The same can be said about those who try to run away from their *yesurim*. The *yesurim* were sent from Hashem for a purpose, and if you escape one kind of *yesurim*, how do you know that you won't get another type of *yesurim* ch"v?

התים, 'He who feared the word of Hashem [that Hashem warned that the plague Barad is coming] drove his servants and livestock into the houses, ואשר לא שם לבו אל דבר ה', But he who didn't take Hashem's word to heart,' he left his servants and livestock in the field. We see from this pasuk that having yiras shamayim is about taking Hashem's word to heart."

The Beis HaLevi's zt'l father-in-law once hosted Reb Moshe Kobriner zt'l. The Beis HaLevi was from a litvishe background, while Rebbe Moshe Kobriner was from the chasidic schools, and the father-in-law wanted them to meet. He was curious what would occur. So he left Rebbe Moshe Kobriner's suitcase in the room where the Beis HaLevi studied.

When Rebbe Moshe was ready to leave, he asked his host where he could find his suitcase. The host directed him to the Beis HaLevi's room.

When they met, the Kobriner asked, "Yungerman, did you learn the first halachah of Shulchan Aruch?"

The Beis HaLevi replied, "I learned it, but I didn't understand it. It is written there, 'When a person thinks that the great King, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, Whose honor fills the world, is standing above him and is watching his deeds, immediately he will have fear and humility before Hashem.' I think these matters, but I can't say that I am overtaken with fear and humility."

The Kobriner replied, "It states כשישים האדם אל לבו שהמלך הגדול הקב"ה... עומד אליו ורואה במעשיו, 'When one puts to his heart that the great King, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is standing above him, watching his deeds...' It isn't sufficient to think about it; you must bring it to your heart."<sup>2</sup>

The Arizal teaches that הערף פרעה spells the neck). The neck is situated between the brain and the heart. This represents Pharaoh's attempt to separate the intellect from the heart.

The Lechovitzer zt'l said that the distance from the brain to the heart is greater than heaven to earth.

The Tzanzer Rav zt'l told his doctor when he asked him what he does for a living, "I build bridges." The doctor appeared bewildered, so the Tzanzer Rav replied, "I am busy building a bridge that will close the gap between my brain and my heart."

That is our avodah, and when one tries, Hashem helps.

### Looking Back

Hashem said to Moshe (Shmos 33:23) וריאת את אחרי ופני לא יראו, "You will see My back, but My face shall not be seen." The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that when we look back, we perceive the hashgachah pratis Hashem in our lives and how everything was planned in the best way. However, ופני לא יראו, when things occur, we don't understand, and we sometimes think that it isn't for our good.

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2. One year, on the night of *Nittel*, the Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz zy"a played chess with Reb Dovid Rosenberg z'l. (This is the game that several tzaddikim customarily play on *Nittel*.) They played several rounds, and Reb Dovid won each time. The Ahavas Yisrael remarked, "I also know how to play this game, but you win each time. Do you know why? It is because I just know the rules, but you constantly review them."

When Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin zy"a was in Eretz Yisrael, he visited a winery with a group of his chassidim. One of his chassidim could taste an alcoholic beverage and tell its alcoholic content. His friends tested him, and he was right each time. Rebbe Avraham Elimelech commented, "Do you know the difference between this chassid and the rest of you? You drink, and he reviews."

Expertise in any matter is the product of many reviews. Similarly, *emunah* is acquired through constant review.

We will repeat a couple of stories where initially, things seemed negative, but in retrospect, it became clear that everything was for the best.

In Eretz Yisrael, many batei midrash are built (inexpensively) by attaching two caravans. But a kehillah in Ashdod needed more room than two caravans could provide. So, they hired a contractor to bring them two caravans, and they instructed the contractor to keep the two caravans apart, and in between, he should lay a tiled floor with a covered roof. That way, they will gain extra space.

Either there was a misunderstanding, or the contractor purposely cheated them, but the floor between the caravans was covered with tiles but without any cement.

Everyone in the kehillah was upset. "We hired you to cover the ground with cement!"

The contractor replied, "No. You told me to make a floor. You didn't ask for cement."

Then the miracle occurred.

A missile from Gaza fell on the area between the two caravans. People were davening in the beis medresh at this time. The missile smashed through the tiles and dug itself deep into the ground without exploding. Experts told them that had the floor been cemented, the missile would have exploded.

Reb Binyamin Zev Deutsch z'l would say, "Never say you had a shvartze tug (a bad day) because that day might be the root of your yeshuah."

Reb Binyamin experienced how the worst day of his life became the happiest day of his life. This is what occurred:

Fifty bachurim from his Hungarian town were called up to the military draft. Reb Binyamin's father was wealthy, and another family among the fifty children was wealthy. All the parents contributed whatever they could, but Reb Binyamin and the other wealthy family provided the lion's share.

They sent the money to a doctor, who agreed, for a high price, to write that all fifty children were ill and unfitting to serve in the Hungarian army.

They were all very nervous and worried because the day they had to stand before the army was approaching, and they hadn't yet received the doctor's documents. But the package arrived just in time, a day before they had to stand before the Hungarian officers. The problem was that only forty-eight papers came, and as fate had it, the two bachurim whose parents contributed the most significant part of the bribe were those whose letters didn't arrive.

There was no choice other than to escape. They had to pack and leave the country immediately before the officials came looking for them. Reb Binyamin Zev knew that he might never see his parents and family again (and indeed, he didn't), but in their haste, he hardly had time to think about that.

He boarded a ship and arrived in Eretz Yisrael. He thought that he and his friend had the worst mazal. Their forty-eight friends were exempt from the army, and they could stay with their families, while he and his friend had to escape and fend for themselves in a country where they didn't know anyone. He didn't even have time to say goodbye to his parents and grandparents properly. He considered the day they escaped a shvartze tag, an unfortunate black day.

However, a year later, he heard that everyone in his hometown was murdered. Had they stayed there, they wouldn't be alive. Now he realized that that was the day his life was saved.

The Yidden's food staple in Mitzrayim was fish, as it states (Bamidbar 11:5) זכרנו את הדגה, "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt free of charge." When the Nile turned to blood, and all the fish died, they thought it was a terrible loss. However, Chazal (Shemos Rabba 9:10) tell us, "The Yidden became wealthy from the

plague of *dam*." They sold water to the Mitzrim and became wealthy. The Zera Shimshon (ד"ה מדרש רבה) says that this teaches us that even when something appears to be a tzarah, something good will come from it.

It is easier to look back and recognize the hashgachah pratis. The trick is to believe in the good even before we know what the good will be.

This can be hinted in Rashi in this week's parashah (6:2). Rashi writes, נאמן לשלם שר, להולכים לפני [Hashem says, "I am] faithful to reward those who walk before Me."

We can explain, להולכים לפני, Hashem rewards those who believe in Hashem, לפני, before they know why and how it is for their good.

The avos were on that level, as it states (Bereishis 48:15) האלקים אשר התהלכו אבותי לפניו אברהם ויצחק. They walked לפניו, even before they saw how everything was for the good.

### The Benefits of Living with Emunah

There are many gains when you live with emunah and know that everything comes from Hashem. (a) You are happy with your portion, and even with the hardships, because you believe it is all for your good. (b) You have yishuv hadaas, calmness, and tranquility because you know Hashem always takes care of you. (c) Believing that everything is from Hashem can turn din into rachamim and problems into salvation (d) When you know everything is from Hashem, you will daven to Hashem to help you, but when you think things happen by chance, you won't turn to Hashem in prayer.

We will now elaborate on these four benefits:

#### (a) The Joy of Emunah

When the Yidden were in Mitzrayim, they thought the Mitzrim were the root of their troubles. They didn't realize that the Mitzrim were merely Hashem's messengers.

The Kaliver Rebbe *shlita* (may he have a speedy *refuah sheleimah*) says that this is alluded to in the pasuk (6:5), וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל אשר מצרים מעבידים אותם... "Also, I heard the moans of Bnei Yisrael that the Egyptians are holding in bondage." He explains that the nation thought אשר מצרים מעבידים אותם, that their slavery comes from Mitzrayim. They didn't realize that it was from Hashem.

Hashem says (6:6): לכן אמור לבני ישראל אני ה' "Therefore, tell Bnei Yisrael, 'I am Hashem.'" Tell the nation that everything comes from Me, Hashem.

When we realize that everything we go through is from Hashem, we become happy because we know it is for the best.<sup>3</sup>

Rebbe Isaac of Kamarna *zt'l* writes, "Believe me, my brothers, after everything I endured, people chased me, and I suffered a lot, that if it weren't that I knew that Hashem is with me with everything that occurs, and His hashgachah is over every detail that I go through, I would be dead long ago, due to poverty, distress, galus, disgrace... But Hashem helps me, and I don't feel anything because whatever happens, Hashem gives me the strength not to feel it."

The Kamarna Rebbe *zt'l* went through extremely hard times, but he didn't feel it. He was happy. His chizuk was his belief that it was all from Hashem, with hashgachah pratis.

#### (b) Yishuv Hadaas

Someone once paid a lot of money to buy a handmade, artistically written kesubah, but the artist accidentally left out one line in

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3. People go willingly to doctors and dentists, although they know that the procedure may be painful. But they know it is good for them, and if they don't go through the discomfort, it will become far worse. Similarly, when one believes that everything comes from his compassionate Father in heaven, why should he be upset? It is best for him!

the kesubah. Reb Avraham Pam zt'l was the *mesader kiddushin*, and he caught the error. The couple needed a new kesubah, but the family was so excited with their decorated kesubah, they didn't consider bringing along a spare one. So, someone got a pen and paper and wrote up the kesubah. They copied the written script on the kesubah, and Reb Pam filled them in on the missing line.

The father (who bought this expensive kesubah) was upset that he couldn't use it. He had invested so much money to buy it. Reb Pam whispered something into his ear, and the father calmed down and looked relieved.

Later, people asked the father what Reb Pam had told him. He replied, "He told me that perhaps it was destined that your child should have two kesubos in his lifetime. One at this chasunah, and one later in life, that he will need to remarry, and he will need to make another kesubah. Hashem saved you from this because you wrote two kesubos already at this chasunah. So the couple will live long together and never need another kesubah."

Rav Pam helped him understand that everything is always *bashert* and for the good, and that awareness has a calming effect.

People asked the Chofetz Chaim's son-in-law, "What were you most impressed by from your illustrious father-in-law?"

He answered, "I was impressed by his *yishuv hadaas*. Even during the hardest times - and there were very hard times - the Chofetz Chaim never lost his peace of mind."

The Chofetz Chaim would also teach *yishuv hadaas* to his students. Reb Shmuel Huminer zt'l said that he used to be very anxious and impatient, and the Chofetz Chaim once walked with him around the grounds of the yeshiva. The Chofetz Chaim repeated "Savlanus! Savlanus!" several times. Reb Shmuel worked on himself until he was always calm and patient. Even when there were many things to do, he didn't lose his composure.

Pharaoh wanted the Yidden to work harder, therefore, he decreed that the nation would need to gather the straw for the brick production on their own (see Shmos 5:7).

Rebbe Mendel of Vorke zy"l asks; Pharaoh could have said, "You must produce more bricks." Why did he require them to collect straw on their own?

The answer is that Pharaoh wanted to destroy their peace of mind. If he asked them to produce more bricks, the nation knew the procedure. It would not be easy, but it wouldn't rob their *yishuv hadaas*. But to do a task they never did before takes time to get used to. This is how Pharaoh planned to destroy the *yishuv hadaas* of the Jewish nation. He knew that if they couldn't think clearly, he would be able to rule over them.

Haman HaRasha also wanted to cause the nation to fall into a panic and to lose their peace of mind, as it states (Esther 9:24) *להמם ולאבדם*, "to confuse them and to destroy them." Haman knew that when they lost their *yishuv hadaas*, he could destroy them.

The key to attaining *yishuv hadaas* is to have *emunah* that everything is from Hashem and for our good.<sup>4</sup>

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#### 4. Another method to attain tranquility is through Torah study.

The Divrei Shmuel (of Slonim) zy"l said, "When I am worried about something, I study for an hour, and the worry goes away. If I have a greater concern, I study for two hours, and then my worry disappears. And if I am going through an extremely difficult time, I study for three hours straight, and then nothing can bother me. Nothing can get me down after I study three pages of Gemara. This is the meaning of the Mishnah (Avos 6:6) *ומתיישב לבו בתורה*; one attains *yishuv hadaas* and tranquility through learning Torah.



### (c) Turning Din into Rachamim, and Problems into Salvations.

The Torah (7:28) tells us that one of the places the frogs entered was the ovens of the Mitzrim. But when the *makah* ended, and all the frogs died, the Torah doesn't tell us that the frogs in the ovens died. Instead, it states (8:9) *ויעש ה' כדבר משה וימתו הצפרדעים מן הבתים מן החצרות ומן השדות*, "Hashem did according to Moshe's word, and the frogs died from the houses, from the courtyards, and from the fields," but the pasuk doesn't state that the frogs that were in the ovens died!

The Daas Zekeinim m'Baalei HaTosfos explains, "Those in the ovens didn't die because they trusted in Hashem, and they entered into a hot oven by Hashem's command." We would think that they had the least chance of surviving (because they went into the ovens), but they had *bitachon*, remembered Hashem, and therefore only they survived.

The Baal Shem Tov HaKadosh teaches (quoted in Toldos) that when one has *emunah* and *bitachon*, nothing bad can happen to him.

We are discussing this week that we must be aware that everything is from Hashem. We discussed the joy and the *yishuv hadaas* that comes from this awareness, but it is much more than that. When one knows that even the hardships he endures are from Hashem, then Hashem sweetens the *din* and brings salvation.

Rebbe Hershele Liska zt'l (אך פרי תבואה) says that this is the meaning of the pasuk (Tehillim 91:15) *עמו אנכי בצרה* and *ואכבדהו*, "I am with him in distress; I shall rescue him and I shall honor him." -When Hashem is with you, and you know that your tzaros are also with Hashem, *ואכבדהו*, you will be saved from the *tzarah*. The awareness that Hashem is with you and that everything is from Him will free you from your *yesurim*.

Similarly, the Gemara (Taanis 21.) tells us that the tana, Nachum Ish Gam Zu, was

called so because he would always say *גם זו* "This, too, is for the good."

The question is, why is the word, *לטובה* missing from his name?

Rebbe Hershele Liska answers that he would say *גם זו*, this is also from Hashem. He would remember that everything is destined and planned from Above. And with that awareness, automatically, everything becomes good.

Reb Hershele Liska concludes:

At the end of last week's parashah, Moshe said, *למה הרעת לעם הזה*, "Why did you do bad to this nation." Hashem replied that it was up to him to change the reality. If he recognizes that everything is from Hashem, it will become *אני ה'*, Hashem's kindness.

It states (6:2) *וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה'*, "Hashem spoke with Moshe, and He said to him, 'I am Hashem.'"

The Shach al HaTorah teaches us a wonderful lesson. He explains that the word *אלקים* is gematriya 86 and *אני הויה* is gematriya 87. This tells us that when one adds one (the belief in Hashem) to *אלקים*, to the *midas hadin* (strict judgment), it becomes *אני ה'*, Hashem's compassion.

We say, *שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד*. The Meor Einayim (וארא) explains, *ה' אלקינו ה' אחד*, "Both when Hashem acts with you with *הויה* (compassion) or *אלקינו* (strict justice), it is all kindness, *הויה אחד*... As it states *וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה'*, "Elokim spoke with Moshe and said, 'I am Havayah.'" Even the hardships are all part of Hashem's compassion.

The Meor Einayim adds these essential words: "And when one believes it's *chesed*, it becomes so." This is the wonderful *segulah* we are discussing. When one believes that it is from Hashem and for the good, it becomes so.

It states (6:7), *וידעתם כי אני ה' אלקיכם המוציא אתכם*, *מתחת סבלות מצרים*. We can explain, *וידעתם*, when you know *ה' אלקיכם*, that even your troubles stem from Hashem's compassion, *המוציא אתכם*

מִצְרַיִם, מתוך סבלות מצרים, that will save you from your suffering.

גולה, exile, and גאולה are almost the same letters. Add an אֵל into the galus, and it becomes redemption. Recognize that everything is from Hashem, and you are redeemed from your hardships.<sup>5</sup>

#### (d) People Daven when they Know it is from Hashem

We discussed several benefits of believing that everything is from Hashem. Aside from the fact that this is the absolute truth and that we must believe so, this reality also has many benefits in this world. For example, we discussed joy, tranquility, and changing din into rachamim. Yet another advantage is that this awareness will cause you to daven.

When you think that things happen by chance, you won't consider turning to Hashem in prayer. But, when you believe that Hashem is the Source of the issues you are going through, you will turn to Him to help you.

It states (Shemos 2:23) ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבודה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם מן האלקים מן העבודה, "Now it came to pass in those many days that the king of Egypt died, and the Bnei Yisrael sighed from the labor, and they cried out, and their cry ascended to Hashem from the labor."

It seems that they began davening now when the king of Mitzrayim died, but they didn't daven before. Why is that?

It is because throughout the many years they were enslaved in Mitzrayim, they thought, "Our salvation will come when Pharaoh dies. Then we will be freed from all this hard work." They didn't put their trust in Hashem to save them.

But Pharaoh died, and their suffering continued. The new Pharaoh also enslaved them. That is when they realized that only Hashem could save them. Therefore, they davened, and when they davened, they were saved.

### Shovavim

The Arizal teaches that the ten *makos* correspond to the ten *sefiros*, from the bottom up (meaning makas dam is malchus and makas tzefardeia is yesod and so on). We don't intend to discuss kabbalah, only just to bring out that makas tzefardeia was associated with the attribute of yesod, which is the attribute of kedushah. (When the makos occurred, the Jewish nation became pure, and with makas tzefardeia, the nation became pure with their kedushah.)

During this *makah*, the frogs had *mesirus nefesh*; they jumped into heated ovens. This is the only *makah* that discusses *mesirus nefesh*. This hints that when it comes to kedushah, we must be prepared to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem. This means that one must be extremely diligent to guard his thoughts, eyes, etc., that they should remain holy.)<sup>6</sup>

Moshe would daven for the makos to end, and the Torah writes ויעתר משה. But by makas tzefardeia, a stronger expression of

5. Moshe said to Hashem (Shmos 5:22) למה זה שלחתיני, "Why did you send me?"

Moshe said, "The only way we can leave galus is when Yidden have emunah that everything is from Hashem. That turns the galus into geulah. But since the Yidden don't yet believe this, so, למה זה שלחתיני, "Why did you send me?" What benefit will come from it?"

6. *Perek Shirah* lists the *pasuk* each creation says in praise of Hashem. The צפרדע says, ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד. When we say these words in the Shema, we think of *mesirus nefesh*. As the Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah (4:5) writes, "After saying the *pasuk* of Shema, silently say ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד with all your concentration, just as you put all your strength into saying Shema." It is therefore appropriate that the צפרדע says these words because in Mitzrayim, the צפרדע demonstrated *mesirus nefesh*.

prayer is used. It states, ויצעק משה אל ה' על דבר, הצפרדעים, "Moshe shouted to Hashem..." The Be'er Moshe of Ozrov zt'l explains that when it comes to *kedushah*, one has to shout out his *tefillos*. He has to pray with all his heart and soul.

A unique feature of מכת צפרדע which was not seen by most other *makos* was ותבאש הארץ, "The earth had a terrible stench." There were piles of dead frogs all around Mitzrayim, and Mitzrayim had a terrible odor. The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that the Torah teaches us how to overcome the temptation of sins related to *kedushah*. We should consider it smelly and disgusting, and then we won't want it.

It states in this week's parashah (6:7), והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים. The Chiddushei HaRim (quoted in *Sfas Emes* 5631) explains that סבלות can be translated as tolerance. The *pasuk* says, "I will redeem you from tolerating Mitzrayim." We shouldn't tolerate the corruption of Mitzrayim, and we shouldn't tolerate the immoral culture of the *galus* we live in. Their immoral ways should be disgusting to us.

The Sfas Emes adds, "This is the counsel for every Yid: He should train himself to hate corruption with all his might... And this is the beginning of the redemption."

The Sfas Emes (5639) writes, ולא יראה בך ערות, דבר ושב מאחרך, the words לא יראה can be translated סזאל דיר נישט געפעלן, you shouldn't appreciate it. Train yourself to be disgusted by *aveiros* (ערות דבר).

### Everyone can do Teshuvah.

The generation of the *mabul* transgressed severe *aveiros* related to *kedushah*, as it states

(Bereishis 6:7) כי השחית כל בשר את דרכו על הארץ, and Chazal say that this is referring to an *aveirah* related to *kedushah*. Yet, Hashem wanted them to do *teshuvah*. The Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l proves that from Rashi (Bereishis 6:14). Rashi writes, "Hashem has many ways [to save Noach]. Why did he have Noach toil to build the *teivah*? It was so the people of the generation of the *mabul* would see him building the *teivah* for 120 years, and they would ask him why he did so. He will tell them, 'Hakadosh Baruch Hu is bringing a *mabul* to the world.' Perhaps they will do *teshuvah*." We see that Hashem wanted the generation to do *teshuvah*, despite their many sins. The Sanzer Rav said, "If Hashem accepts the *teshuvah* of *resha'im* of the generation of the flood, certainly Hashem will accept the *teshuvah* of a Yid."<sup>7</sup>

### Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l

On Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of Teves, was the *yahrtzeit* of my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, who was one of the respected and holy Rebbes in Eretz Yisrael.

I remember when a bar mitzvah *bachur* (on the Shabbos before his bar mitzvah) came to my grandfather for a *brachah*. My grandfather told him, "You are about to receive a new guest. That is the *yetzer tov*. When you get such a special guest, you should perform the mitzvah of *hachnasas orchim*. When a guest comes to you, you try to give him what the guest enjoys most. This guest, the *yetzer tov*, loves it when we study many pages of Gemara. This is the best way to honor your new guest."

The Rebbe's *hoiz bachur* (personal attendant), Reb Shlomo Weinstock z'l, celebrated his engagement in the Rebbe's home. The Rebbe

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7. Rebbe Moshe Tzvi Savraner zt'l once accidentally caused a candle to be extinguished on Shabbos with his talis. Understandably, Reb Moshe tzvi was very upset. Shabbos morning, he couldn't say *pesukei d'zimrah*. He thought that because of his *aveirah*, he would go to *gehinom*. Then he thought, "Chazal say that *reshaim* in *gehinom* sing *shirah* to Hashem. So, what difference does it make where I am or where I will be? I will always sing to Hashem."

This story reminds us not to think about what was. We can begin now.

added on the bottom of the tenaim [engagement document], "The *chasan* obligates himself to finish *masechtos Brachos, Shabbos, and Kiddushin* before the *chasunah*," and the *chasan* signed on it. The Rebbe wrote this without asking the *chasan* whether he agreed. It was the Rebbe's way of encouraging him to study a lot of Gemara before his *chasunah*. From time to time, the Rebbe would ask the *chasan* where he was holding in the Gemaros and whether he was keeping his word. The Rebbe would add, "Shlomo, if you don't finish these three *masechtos*, you aren't going to the chuppah," because finishing these Gemaros was one of the conditions stipulated in the *tenaim*.

A *chasan*, during the week of *sheva brachos*, was at my grandfather's *tisch*, and my grandfather honored him with leading the *benching*. Before *benching*, my grandfather announced, "The *chasan* accepts on himself to study seventy *blatt* Gemara each month."

The Rebbe loved Torah and sought to encourage people to study a lot of Gemara because he knew how important this is.

My brother *shlita* asked the Rebbe for a *brachah* because he was at risk of being drafted into the army. The Rebbe replied, "I generally tell people to give 138 coins to *tzedakah* because *הצלחה* is *gematriya* 138. But you're a *bachur*. You don't have so much money. So instead, I recommend that you study 138 pages of Gemara."

My brother asked, "Should I study these pages with *Tosfos*?"

The Rebbe answered: "Yes. But only those *Tosfos* that directly explain the Gemara."

The day my brother finished the 138 pages, the army informed him that he was exempt from the service.

A *bachur* from Slabodka Yeshiva asked the Rebbe for advice on *shemiras einayim*. The Rebbe replied, "Keep your eyes focused on the Gemara, and your eyes will be safeguarded."

My grandfather told the following to a *talmid chacham* who, due to his humility, would conceal his *hasmadah* from the public:

"When tax collectors come to someone's home, they hide their silver and expensive items, so the tax collectors won't catch on that he is making a lot of money. However, he will not conceal the bread that's on the table. Having bread doesn't show wealth. Everyone needs to eat bread. The same is with concealing your good deeds from others. This is praiseworthy. It is proper to act with humility. But there is never a reason to hide the Gemara. Gemara is like bread – one cannot live without it."

Once, Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman *shlita*, the Rav of Migdal Emek, brought a father and a son from Migdal Emek to my grandfather. The boy needed kidney surgery, and they came for a *brachah* that the operation should be successful.

The Rebbe said to the *bachur*, "If you take on yourself to study Gemara, you won't need surgery."

The father (who wasn't a *chasid*) said to the Rebbe, "All the doctors agree that my son needs an operation. We were only requesting a *brachah* that the operation be successful."

The Rebbe turned to the boy and said once again, "If you make a *kabbalah* to study Gemara, you will not need the operation." Then the Rebbe blessed the *bachur*.

Soon afterwards, the father and son were in the hospital. The doctors made one more routine check-up before the surgery and were astounded to see that the problem had disappeared. The operation was no longer necessary.

This miracle happened because the *bachur* had made a *kabbalah* that he would learn Gemara. Indeed, he kept his promise. When he was seventeen, he finished the entire *Shas* and became a *talmid chacham*.

Reb Yitzchok Dovid Grossman told this story and concluded, "This story has two

miracles: (1) The boy miraculously didn't need an operation (2) He developed into a great scholar. The second miracle is greater than the first because this bachur wasn't a serious learner. The Rebbe's wisdom turned this young man into a great *talmid chacham*.<sup>8</sup>

### The Influence of Friends

The Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz zt'l would say, "One must be good *to* everyone, but not *with* everyone." So be kind *to* all, but don't spend too much time *with* all people. You need to choose your friends carefully.

The Shlah Hakadosh writes that the letters of חבר (friend) rearranged, spells בחר (to choose) and חרב (sword), and ברח (escape). This tells us to choose our friends because from the friends who are bad and harmful like a sword, you should run away.

A father once came to Rebbe Aharon of Belz zy"a, crying. He told Reb Aharon that his son had *yiras shamayim* and used to be diligent in Torah study, but recently, he stopped learning, and his *yiras shamayim* fell severely.

The Belzer Rav replied, "Check and see who his friends are."

The father spoke to his Rebbe in yeshiva. "Who are his friends? Does he hang out with good boys?"

"They are all good boys," the teacher answered.

"The Belzer Rav told me to find out who his friends are, so I am certain that there must be some problem with at least one of his friends."

"I don't know what the Belzer Rav is referring to," the teacher said. "Your son only has good friends."

The father returned to the Belzer Rav and told him what he had heard. The Belzer Rav repeated, "Find out who his friends are."

This time, the father investigated the matter on his own. He was embarrassed that he didn't trust the Belzer Rav the first time. If the Rav told him there was a problem with the friends, it was undoubtedly so.

He found out who his son's best friend was, and then he started making inquiries about this boy. The father discovered that this boy was far from having *yiras shamayim*, to put it mildly. The father immediately separated his son from this friend, and his son began to soar again in Torah and Avodas Hashem.

The father returned to Rebbe Aharon of Belz, this time, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, and he thanked the Rebbe for directing him on the right path. The Belzer Rav replied, "Why are you surprised? A good friend is so important. Twice every morning, in *Birchas HaShachar*, we daven for a good friend. In the *brachah*, המועביר שנה, we say והרחיקנו מאדם רע ומחבר רע, "Distance me from a bad person and a bad friend." Afterwards, we say, שתצילנו היום, ובכל יום... ומחבר רע, "Save me today and every day... from a bad friend...."

When my grandfather, Rebbe Moshe Mordechai, would have a *tish*, he would often say, "My only hope is teshuvah. It is time to do *teshuvah*." And he would repeat this many times. He was speaking to himself, but his words inspired everyone present to do *teshuvah*.

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8. During the great earthquake in the north of Eretz Yisrael (5597), Reb Shmuel Heller zt'l, the rav of Tzfas, was buried under debris and couldn't climb out.

He shouted, "If I am saved, I promise I will become more involved in Torah study." Miraculously, the stones began to fall to the side, enabling him to crawl out.

Because when one accepts upon himself the yoke of the Torah, miracles occur.

After the *tish*, he would shake the *bachurim*'s hands and say, "Learn the holy Torah and be healthy."

One time, the Rebbe took the hand of one of the *bachurim* and said, "Why is your hand so cold? What happened to you?" Then the Rebbe said, "Have good friends, study Gemara, and be healthy."

The *bachur* left the Rebbe's room ashamed and devastated. The *gabaim* tried to calm the *bachur*. "The Rebbe is very weak, and he's sensitive to cold. Apparently, your hands were cold."

The *bachur* replied, "The Rebbe knows exactly what he was saying. His words were on target."

I was with this *bachur* when we returned to Yeshivas Ponovizh, where we studied. We were still outside the yeshiva building

when one of his friends came over. The *bachur* said, "Rebbe Moshe Mordechai told me to have good friends. This means we cannot be friends anymore."

It was a mystery to me at the time, but years later, the true nature of that friend was revealed to all. After that, I understood why the Rebbe warned him to be cautious with his friends.

It states (9:20), הִירָא אֶת דְּבַר ה' מֵעֲבָדֵי פִרְעָה הַנִּים אֵת, עֲבָדָיו וְאֵת מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל הַבָּתִּים, "Whoever feared Hashem...chased their livestock into the homes..." The slaves and the livestock were in the field, and those who feared Hashem brought them into a house to protect them. The Imrei Chaim *zt'l* said that the *pasuk* hints that those who fear Hashem keep their children at home to protect them from bad influences.<sup>9</sup>

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9. In the past, negative influences were outside the home, but today we have to be cautious within the home, too, because the internet can bring the bad influences from the street right into your living room.

Sometimes, people say they need internet in their homes for *parnassah* purposes. For them, we tell the following story:

An old lady had a problem that she would touch every bag she saw. She wasn't stealing. It was just to feel the bags and to see what was inside. This caused much embarrassment because people suspected her of stealing.

She was once at a *chasunah*, touching the bags filled with gifts for the *kallah*. The mother of the *kallah* saw this and shouted at her. The old woman ran home ashamed.

That evening, the elderly woman's son, Reb Shimshon, came to visit his elderly mother and was shocked to see her crying.

She told him what had happened earlier at the wedding.

Shimshon replied, "Well, she's right. You shouldn't go around touching other people's bags."

The mother said, "Sit down for a moment, and I will tell you a story I never told you before. I think it's time you know. In front of my eyes, the *resha'im* killed my husband in Poland. Then the Nazis commanded us to leave our homes to enter a ghetto, allowing everyone to take along two bags, nothing more.

"I gathered my silver and precious items into one bag and placed my son, Shimshon, in the other. Then, I ran, together with the throngs of people, towards the ghetto. Suddenly, the *resha'im* changed the rules. Now only one bag was permitted. Obviously, I decided I'd drop the bag filled with precious items so that I could remain with my Shimshon.

But soon I realized that I had dropped the wrong bag. My son was left behind. It was impossible to turn back. Whoever went back was shot...

"Since that time, whenever I see a bag, I check it. I think, 'Perhaps my Shimshon is there.'" She informed

In last week's *parashah*, Pharaoh said (5:7) **לֹא תִאסְפוֹן לָתֵת לָכֶם תֵּבַן**, "We will no longer supply straw." Rebbe Dovid of Lelov zt'l noted that the extra **א"ל"ף** in **תִּאסְפוֹן** changes the word to mean "gather." He explains that Pharaoh forbade the Jewish nation from gathering.

This is because just as a bad friend can cause terrible harm, a good friend is the root of so much good. Therefore, it is very special when Yidden come together to serve Hashem.

Rebbe Dovid of Lelover said, "I'm certain that when I go to heaven, Moshe Rabbeinu will come out to greet me to tell me that I revealed the correct reason why he wrote **תִּאסְפוֹן** with an extra alef."

### Chesed

Reb Levi Yitzchak Greenwald zt'l, the Tzelemer Rav, was visiting someone in an old-age home, and he met a very old Yid, and they spoke a little. The old man said, "Rebbe, daven for me to die. I am 116 years old and healthy, but I can't take watching my ninety-year-old son suffer. He suffers so much."

The Tzelemer Rav said that he wanted to speak with his son.

"Go speak with him," the elderly man said. "He is in this complex, a flight down."

The Tzelemer Rav went to him and saw that it was true. His ninety-year-old son was suffering terribly.

The son said, "The worst part is that I know I have another four years to live, and I can't tolerate living another four years with these yesurim."

The Tzelemer rav asked, "How do you know you have another four years to live?"

The son replied, "I don't have koach to answer. Ask my father."

The Tzelemer Rav went back upstairs to the 116-year-old Yid, and said, "Can you tell me what's going on? How does your son know that he will live another four years?"

The elderly man replied, "When I was young, I worked as a delivery man for a post office. I was very strong, so I would deliver the heavy packages. Erev Succos, a package labeled Reb Hillel Kalamaya zt'l came to the post office. It was probably a package of sefarim. I was very excited to deliver it to this great scholar and tzaddik, so I didn't push it off. It was Erev Succos when I came to Reb Hillel, and I saw that he was sad. 'What's the problem?' I asked him. 'Do you have a succah?' He said that he had. 'Do you need the four minim?' He had that, as well. 'So, what is the problem?'"

Reb Hillel Kolamaya answered that in the middle of the night, drunk goyim take sticks, break down Succos, and hit the people inside. "I am afraid they might do that to me and my succah."

"I said to Reb Hillel Kolamaya, 'Don't worry. I will sleep in your succah throughout Succos and protect you from these hooligans.'

"I slept in the succah with a stick near my bed. Around one o'clock at night, the goyim came to the succah, and I hit them and chased them away. This occurred the second and third nights, but by then, they realized that they shouldn't bother Reb Hillel, and they caused havoc elsewhere.

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Shimshon that he was an adopted son, named after her lost son.

This story was publicized a few years ago.

For our topic, the *nimshal* of this story is that there is a limit to how much we can take. We can't have everything. One must choose: Should he choose his children or his parnassah and technology? One is often at the expense of the other.

"Motzei Succos, Reb Hillel Kolamaya said, 'I give you a brachah that you should live until 120 gezunterheit, and none of your children shall die in your lifetime.'

"My son knows I will live another four years, and he won't die in my lifetime. That's how he knows he has another four years to live. He wants to die because he can't take the yesurim, and I also want to die because as long as I am alive, my son must live, and he has so much yesurim."

The Tzelemer Rav requested from the secretary of the old-age home that they should contact him if anything happens to these two people.

Four years later, the secretary told the Tzelemer Rav that the father was niftar. An hour later, they called again to say that the son was just niftar.

(This story was told by Reb Nota Freund zt'l, who heard it from the Tzelemer Rav zt'l.) The story tells us the reward one can get for doing chesed. He helped Reb Hillel Kalamaya and merited a very long, healthy life.

Reb Yaakov Eidelstein zt'l had a special koach of tefillah. His brachos and his tefillos bore fruit. Reb Shmuel Wosner zt'l once asked Reb Yaakov Eidelstein zt'l in which merit he has the koach hatefillah.

Reb Yaakov humbly replied, "I don't know that I have the power of tefillah. What people say isn't true."

But Reb Shmuel Wosner insisted it was true, and he wanted to know how.

Reb Yaakov Eidelstein replied, "Many people come to me, tell me their troubles, and I listen to them patiently. I listen until they are certain that I understand what they are going through. Perhaps Heaven rewarded me *midah kneged midah*. Just as I listen to everything they say, Hashem listens to everything I say."

In this week's *parashah*, Hashem says (6:5), וגם אני שמעתי את נאקת בני ישראל, "I also heard Bnei Yisrael's shouts." The word גם, "also," seems extra.

Hashem was saying to the Jewish nation, "Just as you care about your fellow man and you listen to his shouts, גם אני שמעתי, I will also listen to your shouts."<sup>10</sup>

About *makas barad*, the Torah writes (9:31-32). והפשתה והשעורה נכתה כי השערה אביב והפשתה גבעל, "Though the flax and the barley have been broken, [because they were at their full height]... However, the wheat and the spelt have not been broken because they ripen late." Rashi explains that at the time of מכת ברד, flax and barley were fully grown. Therefore, they were stiff and rigid and broke when the hail hit them. Whereas wheat and spelt only reach their full growth later in the season. When the hail fell, they were still flexible, so they didn't break.

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**10.** The Baal HaTurim (*Bereishis* 41:34) states that the words, ויפקד פקידים, "Appoint officials..." is written twice in Tanach. Once in *parashas Mikeitz* (41:34) when Yosef told Pharaoh, ועשה פרעה ויפקד ויפקד פקידים, that he should appoint officials to oversee the process of storing the crops for the years of famine. It also states, ויפקד פקידים in *Megillas Esther*, as it states (2:3), ויפקד המלך פקידים לקבץ לו נשים, that Achashverosh should appoint officials to gather all women so Achashverosh can choose a wife.

The Baal HaTurim writes that Yosef's counsel to appoint officials to oversee the storing of the crops brought immense wealth. However, Achashverosh's plan resulted in poverty, as it states (*Esther* 10:1), וישם המלך אחשוורוש, "Achashverosh placed a tax on the land and the islands in the sea."

The difference lies in the intention. Yosef wanted to help the country; he wanted people to have food and *parnassah*. His intention was *chessed*. Achashverosh's plan was self-serving. The lesson is: Striving to help others is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. Being solely interested in yourself brings poverty.



The message is: It is better to be soft, to let the other person have his way, to be *mevater*, etc. When you are tough and stiff, and everything must be your way, you break.<sup>11</sup>

Approximately fifty years after the churban of the Second Beis HaMikdash, the city of Beitar was destroyed by the Roman emperor Adrianus. Cruelly, he didn't permit anyone to bury the bodies in Beitar. Years later, the ruler who reigned after Adrianus permitted the burial, and miraculously, they

discovered that the bodies hadn't become rotten.

For this miracle, the chachamim established the fourth brachah of birkas hamazon called הטוב והמטיב. Chazal explain, הטוב Hashem is good because the bodies didn't rot. והמטיב, and Hashem does kindness, as He enabled the bodies to be buried.

ביתר has the same letters as ברית. Hinted here is that the rectification for *pgam habris* is הטוב והמטיב, to do kindness with others. So one of the rectifications of Shovavim is to do kindness to others.

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**11.** On Tisha b'Av, a yungerman stood at the side of the road, trying to catch a ride to the hospital to be with his son. At last, a car stopped, and the driver showed him to get inside. "Where do you need to go?"

He told him he was going to the hospital, and the driver drove him there. The yungerman asked, "Why are you being so kind to me to go out of your way to drive me to the hospital? I was expecting that you would drive me closer to the hospital, but not all the way there."

The man replied that on the day before a fast day, people eat a lot to have an easier fast, but experts say this doesn't help much. One would have to eat more for several days before the fast, which would help him fast. "Yom Kippur is soon approaching," the driver continued, "and it will be too late to prepare for Yom Kippur at the last moment. It needs preparation beforehand. So, I am preparing now for Yom Kippur by performing good deeds."