TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry







לעילוי נשמת



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ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz





One of the mitzvot in this week's parashah is the mitzvah of returning a lost object. The Torah instructs us: "You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep or goat cast off and hide yourself from them; you shall surely return them to your brother . . . you may not [literally: 'You will be unable'] to hide yourself." (Devarim 21:22-23)

R' Avraham Shaag z"l (1801-1876; Hungary and Eretz Yisrael) asks why these verses repeat themselves. What is added by the last phrase, "You may not hide yourself"?

He explains: Even a person who was born with negative character traits can acquire good traits in their place. This is done by behaving in a way which is contrary to one's natural tendencies. For example, if one is disposed to hate another person, one can conquer those feelings by going out of one's way to do kindness for that person.

Chazal learn from the phrase, "You shall surely return them to your brother," that you must return a lost object even if its owner has

already lost it, and you have already returned it, 100 times. If you perform this act of kindness repeatedly, says R' Shaag, "You will be unable to hide yourself"; it will become natural to do a kindness for the person that you once hated.

R' Shaag adds: Particularly in this month of Elul, when the shofar is blown to awaken us to return to Hashem, we must remove the hatred of others from our hearts, stop lording over others, eradicate lashon hara, and cease other infractions that we commit against our fellow men. Maybe, just maybe, by the time Yom Kippur has passed, the good behavior that we adopt during Elul will have become second nature. (Derashot Ha'Rash Vol. I, No. 25)

Brit Milah and the Mother Bird



The Midrash Rabbah cites the verse in our parashah, כִּי יִקָּרֵא קַן־צִפּוֹר לְפָנֶיךָ -"***If a bird's nest happens to be before you***," and asks: What is the halachah regarding a boy who is born circumcised? Must he be circumcised?

The midrash answers: Our Sages taught, "If a boy is born circumcised, blood must be let from the place of circumcision because of the covenant with Avraham Avinu."

The midrash continues: Why is a baby circumcised on the eighth day? Because Hashem has compassion on him and waits until the baby has gained some strength. And, just as Hashem has compassion on mankind, so He has compassion on animals, as it is written (Vayikra 22:27), "When an ox or a sheep or a goat is born, it shall remain under its mother for seven days." Further, it is written (Vayikra 22:28), "An ox or a sheep, you may not slaughter it and its offspring

on the same day." And, just as Hashem has compassion on animals, so He has compassion on birds, as we read here, "Send away the mother and take the young for yourself."

Why is a halachah regarding brit milah mentioned here?



R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Yadler z"l (1843-1917; Yerushalayim) explains: Since the midrash is going to expound at length on the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird before taking her offspring, the midrash wanted to open by mentioning Hashem's compassion on humans, i.e., that He instructs us to wait until the baby gains some strength before circumcising him.

Why is the midrash uncertain whether a boy who was born circumcised requires further circumcision?

R' Yadler explains that the inquiry is whether the purpose of brit milah is simply to remove the impurity of the orlah / foreskin–which this child does not have–or to perform an affirmative act to enter the covenant. The midrash answers that the latter is correct. (Tiferet Zion)

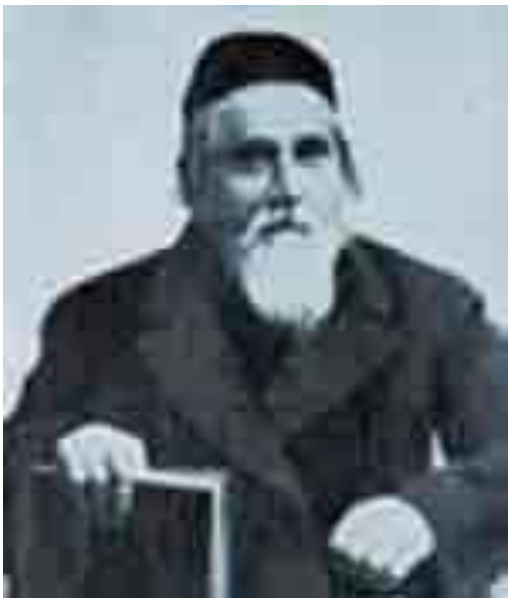
"When a person prays, it is as if they're whispering directly into Hashem's ear." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

"When we trust in Hashem, we are able to find meaning in every moment." ~ Rav Elchonon Wasserman.

לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־חֲמוֹר אָחִיךָ אוֹ שׁוֹרוֹ נֹפְלִים בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְהִתְעַלַּמְתָּ מֵהֶם הָקֵם תָּקִים עִמּוֹ
"Do not observe the donkey of your brother or his ox falling and ignore it; you shall surely help it up." *(22:4)*

In Parashat Mishpatim, this same mitzvah is given, but there the Torah refers to the animal of "your enemy." Why this difference?

With regard to the verse in Mishpatim, the Gemara asks: How does one have an enemy? Is it then permitted to hate another Jew? The Gemara explains that "your enemy" refers to one whom you have witnessed sinning. If he refuses too repent, you are obligated to hate him.



However, writes **R'Meir Simcha Hakohen z"l** (rabbi of Dvinsk, Latvia; died 1926), that was only before the sin of the Golden Calf (which is found in the Torah after Parashat Mishpatim). Before that sin, all Jews were on such an exalted level that they were able to hate someone merely because he had sinned. But today, who can make such a claim?! Rather, we are all brothers. (Meshech Chochmah)

כִּי־יִהְיֶה רִיב בֵּין אֲנָשִׁים וְנִגְּשׁוּ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁפָּט - ***"When there will be a fight between people, and they approach the court . . ."*** *(25:1)*

Rashi comments: **סוֹפָם לִהְיוֹת נִגָּשִׁים אֶל הַמִּשְׁפָּט. אֱמֹר מֵעַתָּה אֵין שָׁלוֹם יוֹצֵא מִתּוֹךְ מְרִיבָה, מִי גָּרַם לְלוֹט לִפְרֹשׁ מִן הַצַּדִּיק? הֱוֵי אוֹמֵר זוֹ מְרִיבָה** - *"[If people fight,] they will inevitably end up in court. Learn from here that peace never comes from animosity. What caused Lot to separate himself from the tzaddik [Avraham]? It was a fight."*

R' Moshe Sternbuch shlita asks: Does Rashi really need to tell us that "peace never comes from animosity"? This seems obvious! Furthermore, what is Rashi proving by mentioning Lot?



R' Sternbuch explains: Often, when people fight, the animosity spreads to the friends and relatives of the respective sides. Even when the fight is over, and peace has been made, a certain bitter taste remains with all of the people who intervened on either side.

Rashi is telling us: Nothing good can come of fighting. Rashi is not referring to the underlying dispute, but rather to the dispute between those who have taken sides. The proof is the story of Lot. Avraham and Lot had no fight between them; the fight was between their respective shepherds. Yet, what was the outcome? That Lot himself could no longer live with Avraham. (Ta'am Va'da'at)

לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־חֲמֹור אָחִיךָ אֹו שֹורֹו נֹפְלִים בַּדֶּרֶךְ וְהִתְעַלַּמְתָּ מֵהֶם הָקֵם תָּקִים עִמֹּו

"You shall not see the ox of your brother or his sheep cast off [i.e., lost] and turn yourself away from them; you shall surely return them to your brother." *(22:4)*

R' Yaakov Yosef Hakohen z"l (One of the primary students of the **Ba'al Shem Tov**) interprets this homiletically: "You shall not see the ox of your brother cast off"–it is better not to see your brother in a state of spiritual decline (becoming like an ox). Rather: "[T]urn yourself away." - But if you do see, "[Y]ou shall surely return [him]." (Toldot Yaakov Yosef)

"To pull a friend out of the mire, don't hesitate to get dirty." ~ Baal Shem Tov.

כִּי תָבֹא בְּכֶרֶם רֵעֶךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ עֲנָבִים כְּנַפְשְׁךָ שָׂבְעֶךָ וְאֶל־כֶּלְיְךָ לֹא תִתֵּן - *"When you come into the vineyard of your fellow, you may eat grapes as is your desire, to your fill, but you may not put [any grapes] into your vessel." (23:25)*

On the level of pshat, this verse is referring to a hired-hand's right to eat from the crops of a field while he is harvesting them; however, he has no right to take produce home.

R' Meir Horowitz z"l (1819-1877; Dzikover Rebbe) offers an allegorical explanation of this pasuk, as follows: This verse is teaching that one should not become depressed when he returns home from visiting a tzaddik and realizes that his behavior is essentially the same as it was before. Indeed, such depression is a scheme of the yetzer hara, intended to destroy whatever gains the person did achieve and to discourage him from visiting tzaddikim in the future. In reality, even the temporary gains that one experiences while he is in the presence of a tzaddik are worthwhile.

Says our verse: A tzaddik is called a "vineyard" (see Yeshayah 5:7). **כִּי כֶרֶם ה' צְבָ-אוֹת בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** – When you come to a tzaddik, says the verse, eat your fill, even if you expect that you will not take anything home, for even that short-term gain is worthwhile. (Imrei Noam)



זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק בַּדָּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם. אֲשֶׁר קָרְךָ בַּדָּרֶךְ וַיְזַנֵּב בְּךָ כָּל־הַנֶּחֱשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עָיֵף וְיָגֵעַ וְלֹא יָרֵא אֱלֹקִים - *"Remember what Amalek did to you, on the way when you were leaving Egypt–that he happened upon you on the way, and he struck those of you who were lagging, all the weaklings at your rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and did not fear Elokim." (25:17-18)*

According to the pshat, the last phrase, "and did not fear Elokim," describes Amalek. However, notes **R' Yissaschar Shlomo Teichtal** (1885-1945; rabbi of Pishtian, Czechoslovakia and author of Eim Ha'banim Semeichah), "Amalek" also is a metaphor for the yetzer hara. Just as one must always remember what Amalek did to us, so must one always be on his guard against the yetzer hara. – If one feels faint and exhausted and unable to continue his vigilance, it is a sign that he doesn't sufficiently fear Elokim. (Mishneh Sachir)

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ - *"If you build a new house, you shall make a railing for your roof . . ."* (22:8)

R' Shalom Noach Brazovsky z"l (the "Slonimer Rebbe") asks: Why is the mitzvah to build a railing given in the context of a new house and a roof? In fact, the mitzvah applies in equal measure to an old house and to any place from which a person could fall and be hurt!

He answers: The Torah wishes to teach us the following practical lesson. We read in Yishayah 55:7 (in the haftarah read on fast days), "Let the wicked one forsake his way."

True and complete repentance does not involve merely "patching" oneself but rather abandoning one's old ways and rebuilding oneself from the ground up. When you do build a new house, build a fence around your roof – "your roof" is your head, and the fence is fear of G-d, which is the only means to protect your senses (which reside in the organs of your head) from "falling." (Nesivos Shalom)

R' Moshe Paler of Kobrin z:l (early 19th century chassidic rebbe) related: **R' Mordechai of Lechovitch z"l** once entered an inn in the late summer, in the waning days of the Polish harvest season and the beginning of Elul. There he saw a group of peasants sitting over their drinks, and he heard one say to his friends, "You know, if you don't work hard this month, you will lack food all year."

R' Mordechai called to his chassidim, "Did you hear what he said?!"

On another occasion, R' Moshe of Kobrin said: The real time to do teshuvah is the month of Elul, for when Rosh Hashanah comes, we are obligated to crown G-d as our King. By then, we must be ready to accept Him totally (without interference from lingering sin). (Quoted in Torat Avot p. 123-124)

אֶבֶן שְׁלֵמָה וָצֶדֶק יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ אֵיפָה שְׁלֵמָה וָצֶדֶק יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ לְמַעַן יַאֲרִיכוּ יָמֶיךָ עַל הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־ה' אֱלֹקיךָ נֹתֵן לָךְ - *"A perfect and honest weight you shall have, a perfect and honest measure you shall have, so that your days shall be lengthened on the Land that Hashem, your Elokim, gives you." (25:15)*



Why is using honest weights and measures a reason that "your days shall be lengthened on the Land"?

R' Elazar Fleckles z"l (1754-1826; rabbi of Prague) explains: Our Sages teach that Hashem's Attribute of Justice does not touch a person until (literally) "his basket is full," until Hashem is "fed-up," so-to-speak. However, if a merchant's weights and measures are dishonest, if he sells baskets that are not "full" as full, then Middah-K'negged-

Middah, Hashem will not wait for his "basket" to fill up. Rather, he is at risk of dying prematurely. - In contrast, one who uses honest weights and measures can merit long life.

R' Fleckles continues: The zodiacal sign of the month of Tishrei, the time of judgment, is scales. "Know!" he writes, "that there are no scales in the Heavens." Rather, every person is judged with scales of his own making. By the standard that he judges, he is judged. (Olat Chodesh: Ma'amar 117)

Letters from Our Sages



This letter was written by **R' Shimshon David Pinkus z"l** (rabbi of Ofakim, Israel; died 2001) in response to a question from a yeshiva student.

To a beloved young man who is unknown to me, shlita:

I read your letter, and although I am not competent to offer advice or tell you what to do, I will write what appears to be correct in my humble opinion. First, I will summarize what you wrote.

It appears that you are striving mightily to grow in Torah study and fear of Heaven. You are doing all you can, and have already done all that is expected of you. Now you are at a stage where you need assistance from the outside. The reason for this is simply that your goals are so lofty and awesome, i.e., you aspire to attain Torah and to develop an inner drive to continue your growth. Attaining these goals is simply above man's capabilities, and although man certainly

is required to make an effort, a time comes when outside assistance must be sought.

Therefore, I will give you a name and address to which you should turn, and there you will find assistance.

His name is "Hashem." He is very powerful, for He created everything. I have inside information that He has a great love for you personally and is pining away for your call.

You will have no trouble finding His address, for He is everywhere – literally. Even this minute, as you are reading this letter, you can turn to Him.

I write this because many people believe that G-d is found only though prayer, mitzvot and special regimens for spiritual growth. Of course, He is in all of those "places," but those are not the primary places to find Him. The main thing to know is that G-d is a real and living being with whom it is possible to form a personal relationship. No one who has tried this has ever been disappointed.

This is so simple and practical and therefore so beneficial. The key is to have a simple personal connection in which you tell Him your problems and ask Him again and again to help you.

If someone gives you different advice, it will be a pity on the effort that you expend following it. Go straight to the One who can really help, grab hold of Him and do not let go. Do not be silent until you have attained whatever you desire.

Signed with great respect for a ben Torah who is truly seeking, but unfortunately does not know where to look, - Shimshon David Pinkus.

"The important part of Torah learning is the effort put in to the learning. It's not the getting there, it's the going." ~ Reb Shlomo Freifeld

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ וְשָׁבִיתָ שִׁבְיוֹ - *"When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your Elokim, will deliver them into your hand, and you will capture its captivity." (21:10)*

R' Yisrael Ba'al Shem Tov z"l (1698-1760; founder of the Chassidic movement) observes: Why does anyone listen to the Yetzer Ha'ra? Instead, a person should learn from the Yetzer Ha'ra to serve Hashem with as much determination and dedication as the Yetzer Ha'ra carries out the mission that Hashem gave it!

He continues: This lesson is alluded to in our verse–"When you will go out to war against your enemy"–the Yetzer Ha'ra–"you shall capture its captivity"–you shall take the Yetzer Ha'ra prisoner and use its own tricks against it. (Ketter Shem Tov 254)

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ . וְרָאִיתָ בַּשִּׁבְיָה אֵשֶׁת יְפַת־תֹּאַר – '*When you will go out to war against your enemies . . . and you will see a beautiful woman among the captives* . . .' (21:10-11)

This parashah teaches us the Torah's attitude toward beauty, says **R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l** (1903-1993). "When you will go out to war against your enemies and you will see a beautiful woman among the captives"–when you fight your enemies–Canaanites, Persians, Greeks, Romans, or Germans–you will undoubtedly see beautiful aspects of their cultures. - Therefore, you should know: You are permitted to bring home everything beautiful that you see, but don't be fooled by external beauty.

This is symbolized by the Torah's demand that the captive woman change out of her foreign clothes. The Torah demands a waiting period after the captive woman is brought into the home–i.e., examine this newfound culture very carefully. Is it really something that you want in your home? (Yemei Zikaron p.125)

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ - *"If you build a new house, you shall make a fence for your roof." (22:8)*



R' Naphtali Zvi Horowitz z"l (1760-1827; Ropshitzer Rebbe) writes: "Building a new house" refers to rebuilding the Bet Hamikdash through the good deeds we do. We pray, "Build it speedily b'yameinu," usually translated, "in our days." However, this also can mean, "Build it speedily with our days," i.e., the good deeds with which we fill our days are the construction materials with which the Third Temple is being built.

The Ropshitzer continues: The verse says that when you do the good deeds that will become the building blocks of the future Bet Hamikdash, "You shall make a fence for your roof." This teaches that your spiritual ascent should not be public; rather, you should conceal your good deeds behind a barrier of humility and discretion. (Zera Kodesh)

אֲשֶׁר קָרְךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ וַיְזַנֵּב בְּךָ כָּל־הַנֶּחְשָׁלִים אַחֲרֶיךָ וְאַתָּה עָיֵף וְיָגֵעַ וְלֹא יָרֵא אֱלֹקִים

"He happened upon you on the way, and he struck the weaklings who were straggling at the rear, when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear G-d." (25:18)

Why do we reserve special hatred for Amalek, more so than for other nations which attacked us without provocation?

R' Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik z"l ("R' Velvel Brisker" or the Brisker Rav; died 1959) explains:

The Gemara (Bava Kama 79) says: Why is a burglar punished more severely than is a robber? Because a robber equates G-d with man [he is afraid of neither], while a burglar places G-d lower than man

[he fears man more than he fears G-d, therefore he steals when man is not looking].

R' Soloveitchik explains: A burglar is a greater sinner than is a robber because a burglar has begun to think through the consequences of his action, but has stopped those thoughts before they can lead him to G-d. This is worse than a robber who has not thought out his actions at all–therefore he fears no one– but at least he has not snubbed G-d.

Similarly, had Amalek attacked Bnei Yisrael head-on, we would not fault him. However, by attacking only the weakest Jews, Amalek acknowledged that there is something to fear. Despite that, he showed that he did not fear G-d. (Chidushei Ha'griz)



One of the more eminent Jewish members of the Communist party was Professor Burchis. Like so many others, he thought that syncopating to reshaim, wicked, evil people, would get them ahead, he fell into disfavor with dictator Stalin, and he was sent to a Siberian prison camp.

Although a prisoner, he was recognized by the prison authorities and guards as a "distinguished" inmate. As such, he was accorded favors, like a lighter work load, and he was permitted food packages from his family in Moscow.

During Burchis' internment, an Orthodox Jew with a long, white beard was brought to the camp. Apparently, his religious activities were considered seditious by the Communist regime. One day, Burchis approached the religious Jew and gave him a jar of prune

butter, which was like gold to a prisoner. The Jew refused to accept it, claiming that it was too valuable a gift to accept without some form of payment – and he had nothing.

Burchis replied, "This is not a gift. It is payment."

"Payment for what?" asked the Jew.

"Do you know my name?" Burchis asked. - "It is Burchis, which is a contraction of the words Baruch Hashem. I am a descendent of the holy **Rav Levi Yitzchak Berditchiver**. Sadly, over the generations, my part of the family assimilated, chasing after the wild promises proffered by the new, exciting movements that took the world by storm. I once believed that Communism was the cure for all of the world's ills. Now, I see it a malignant growth that metastasizes and eats up your very life. I am an old man who must atone for his sins. You must help me 'return' home. The prune butter is my payment for imposing on you."

"I will be honored to help you – and I require no payment. It is a privilege to help a fellow Jew. How can I help you?" the religious Jew asked.

"I am ignorant, "Burchis began. "I cannot daven. I would like to pray in the original text, but I barely know Aleph Bais. I cannot read. Please teach me a short tefillah, prayer, so that in the darkness of my solitude, I can reach out to Hashem in accordance with the traditions of my forebearers. I have no merits of my own, but if I can in some way connect to the merits of my ancestors… To do this, I must be able to speak in their language, to say what they would have said. Please teach me."

For the next few days, the religious Jew with the long, flowing white beard and the professor sat together attempting to learn the Shema – which is the staple of every Jew. Unfortunately, the professor had difficulty forming the words coherently. They were both becoming frustrated.

Finally, the religious Jew asked Burchis, "Do you speak Yiddish?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Then I will teach you a tefillah, prayer, in Yiddish. It is simple, but it touches upon the bare essentials.

Say, 'Ribono Shel Olam, in the merit of Levi Yitzchak ben Sorah Sasha (the Berditchiver), please forgive my sins, and bring the Jewish People out of exile and into Your holy Presence.'"

The professor repeated the prayer a number of times until he had it down flawlessly. Then the professor embraced and kissed his "rebbe."

A few days later, Professor Burchis passed away peacefully in his sleep. His teshuvah was *isarusa d'letata*. He inspired himself to return home when he realized how far he had wandered – and what a waste it had been. His last days on this world earned him a place among the sincere baalei teshuvah who have returned home.

The light is always on, and the door is always open. You do not even have to knock. Just come in and make yourself comfortable. After all – it is your home.

כִּי־יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה אֵינֶנּוּ שֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל אָבִיו וּבְקוֹל אִמּוֹ וְיִסְּרוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם – '***If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother***.' (21:18)

Einenu shomeia, "does not hearken/listen" is the given translation. The word einenu means much more than "does not (listen)." It means he is not a listener; he is unable to listen; his ability to listen is (sadly) impeded. The Torah should have written (simply), eino shomeia: "(he) does not listen."

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh notes this change and derives from here that, when the yetzer hora, evil inclination, reigns over a

person, or, rather, if the yetzer hora becomes part of this person, his ability to hear, listen, to accept, becomes so impeded that he is unable to listen. He does not just "not listen"; he is unable to listen. He becomes hearing-impaired. The yetzer hora stands guard over a person's ability to listen, thus impairing him, impeding his ability to change, to repent, to alter his nefarious ways and activities.



This grants us a new outlook, a deeper understanding of those who – regardless of the number of times we reach out to them to refrain from sin – continue to ignore us. Why? Are their hearts made of stone? Are they hearing-impaired? Are they blind to the disaster they are courting?

Yes! Once the yetzer hora has overwhelmed them, they are unable to think, see or do anything. They have become so enslaved to the yetzer hora that nothing penetrates their physical world. They might hear sound, but the message it conveys is unintelligible.

Perhaps this is why the Torah underscores Yisro's ability to "hear" vayishma Yisro, "And Yisro heard" (everything that had happened to the emerging Jewish nation when they left Egypt). Was he the only one who knew what had taken place? The whole world was aware of what happened to the Egyptians: the Jewish People's exodus and the eventual drowning of the entire Egyptian army. - What makes Yisro different?

He heard the message – they heard nothing but the sounds. Their yetzer hora blocked the message from entering into their hearts, from imbuing their lives with faith in Hashem.

The maidservant at the Red Sea saw such an unprecedented Revelation that her experience was even greater than that of the Navi Yechezkel. Yet, as the venerable **Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl**, would say, *Zi iz altz gebliben a shifcha*. "Nonetheless, she still remained a maidservant." She saw; she heard – but did not change. - Why?

Her yetzer hora prevented the message from being processed. Thus, she remained a shifcha.

I have always wondered about this phenomenon. I have given classes to the most wonderful groups of Jews. They are kind, honest, virtuous, and wholly good. They never miss a class, despite the weather and the infirmity of advanced age. Can I say that my message has penetrated their psyches? Perhaps, but they still have neither made their homes kosher, nor decided to observe Shabbos. Are they deaf? Have I lost my ability to reach people?

No – on both counts. The yetzer hora is working overtime and does not permit my message from getting across.

One day, I hope the yetzer hora will be caught off guard, and then…



לֹא־יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בִּקְהַל ה'. עַל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּלֶּחֶם וּבַמַּיִם בַּדָּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וַאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עָלֶיךָ אֶת־בִּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעוֹר - '***An Amomite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem… because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water… and because he hired against you Bilaam***.' (23:4,5)

Two reasons are given as to why we may not accept converts from the nations of Ammon and Moav: A) They did not come forward to greet us with bread and water as we journeyed through the wilderness following 210 years of slavery; B) They hired Bilaam, the evil pagan prophet, to curse us.

These are two good reasons, which are clearly quite different from one another. The first reason criticizes their lack of etiquette, of

human decency. The second reason excoriates them for attempting to destroy one another. - They are so distant from one another that they hardly belong in the same pasuk.

The Maggid, zl, of Dubno was not only a brilliant Torah scholar, but he was also a prolific speaker who captivated his audiences with his incredible knowledge and ability to employ the power of the mashal, parable, story, to explain the most difficult passages. - He once said that, with regard to any pasuk that was presented to him, he was able to ask a question by using a mashal, and offer a lucid explanation, also using a mashal.

The people had difficulty believing this to be true, so they decided to test him. They selected the above pasuk, prohibiting an Amoni or Moavi from marrying into the Jewish people, as grounds for the test. - The Maggid thought for a moment and began to relate the following story:

"A wealthy man arranged for a shidduch, matrimonial match, for his daughter. Since the boy lived quite a distance from the kallah, bride, it was decided to celebrate the tannaim, engagement, in a hall approximately midway between them. The plan was for the girl's mother to arrive later with the delicacies for the celebration. While the father was sitting in conversation with his future son-in-law and family, his own son, who had left with the mother, came running into the room, disheveled and dirty, "Oy, oy! On our way here we had an accident. The wagon turned over, and all of the food, the fish, the meat and all of the desserts were ruined. The bottles of wine and liquor are smashed and, furthermore, our mother was killed!"

Obviously, this boy's mind was seriously challenged, in that he placed greater significance over the lost food and drink than over the tragic death of his mother.

"This same idea applies with regard to our pasuk," continued the maggid. "First, the Torah recounts Ammon and Moav's lack of decency and then later adds the fact that they hired Bilaam to curse

them. Obviously, someone who is bent on killing you is a greater danger than the one who does not greet you bearing gifts."

A great question was given added meaning through the vehicle of the mashal, parable. The people looked at the Maggid, expecting an answer also with a mashal. The Maggid did not let them down.

"A seemingly well-to-do-farmer visited a yeshivah to speak with its rosh yeshivah," began the Maggid. "I would like the rosh yeshivah to select his finest student for my daughter. I will, of course, treat the young man like royalty and provide for his every need.

"The rosh yeshivah chose one of his 'lions,' an erudite student whose diligence matched his ethical character, indeed, a special young man. The shidduch was finalized, and a date was set for the wedding.

A few months later, the wedding took place amidst great pomp and joy. Wonderful boy, wonderful girl: who could ask for more?

The day after the wedding, the young groom sat down to breakfast at the home of his father-in-law and was served a piece of course, black bread with vinegar to use as a dip (to soften the bread). - The young man almost choked from the bread.

After breakfast, he remained nauseous most of the day from the taste. Lunch and dinner were more of the same. After two weeks of such meals, the delicate young man looked a sad version of his former self. He had deteriorated to skin and bones, and he had no physical strength left. He literally did not have the strength to raise the dreadful slice of bread to his mouth.

"When the father-in-law took note of his prize son-in-law's emaciated appearance, he berated him for not eating. When he saw that his rebuke fell on deaf ears, he hired two ruffians at a substantial rate per hour to stand over his son-in-law and, if necessary, force-feed him. - Every time the young man gagged on the bread; they would shove it down his throat. After all, his father-in-law was paying them a pretty penny to watch over him.

"One night, the son-in-law was lucky enough to escape from the village and return to his yeshivah. He looked and felt like a wreck.

The rosh yeshivah fed him and put him to bed. The next day, his father-in-law arrived with his list of complaints. When questioned why he did not feed his son-in-law, his response was, 'I have no money. I did the best I could with whatever I have.'

When the rosh yeshivah heard this, he raised his voice, 'Mechutzaf! What audacity you have! You claim that you have no money to feed your son-in-law, yet you are able to spend a king's ransom in gold to hire two ruffians to force-feed him!'"

This is what the pasuk teaches us: "Perhaps you think that Ammon and Moav could not afford to supply you with bread and water. Why, then, were they able to hire Bilaam to curse you?" - This is a double standard if there ever was one.

זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק. וְאַתָּה עָיֵף וְיָגֵעַ וְלֹא יָרֵא אֱלֹקִים – '***Remember what Amalek did to you… when you were faint and exhausted, and he did not fear G-d***.' (25:17,19)



Amalek was not the only nation that attacked the Jews. The Canaanites, Sichon and Og also acted in much the same reprehensible manner. Yet, Amalek is the only one about whom the Torah attests was V'lo yarei Elokim, "And he did not fear G-d." Why is Amalek singled out more than any other one of our enemies, in terms of being unafraid of G-d?

The Brisker Rav, zl, explains this, basing his thesis on a statement of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai in the Talmud Bava Kamma 79b. The students of the great Tanna asked him why the Torah is more

stringent concerning the punishment of a ganav, thief, than a gazlan, armed robber.

He explained that a thief steals at night because he fears being caught. Thus, he indicates that he has greater fear of human exposure than of Heaven. He is afraid of getting caught. Yet, he is unconcerned that he is performing a sin. The gazlan fears no one – neither man, nor Hashem. Should it not be the other way around? The gazlan is audacious, showing no fear of anyone. His resolute chutzpah shows that he neither cares what people think, nor is he afraid of what they might do to him. The ganav, on the other hand, shows some humility, an element of shame. He is embarrassed about what he is doing and, therefore, does not want to be caught.

It would make sense that humility should be rewarded and audacity punished.

The Rav explains that the differences lie in their individual attitude toward life. The gazlan is a person who lives life as it comes. He cares about nothing and does not bother with cheshbonos, calculations. When he is in the mood of acting, he acts. When he is in the mood of taking it easy, he takes it easy. Nothing seems to faze him. He lives an unabashed life, totally unflustered by anything that comes his way.

Not so, the ganav. The thief has a plan. He is cunning and deliberate. He knows exactly what he wants and how to get it – without getting caught. He makes all kinds of calculations, so that he can pull off this job smoothly, without too much effort and with no grief in the aftermath. - The ganav is a thinking man who knows what he is doing, because he has it all planned out.

Hashem takes umbrage against such a person. If he is so meticulous in his planning, why did he not concern himself with Hashem's Torah, in which the Almighty commanded that one should not steal? - In this sense, the ganav exhibits greater malevolence than does the gazlan, who demonstrates his lack of aforethought.

This is the idea behind Amalek's being regarded as, "he did not fear G-d." The other nations battled without cheshbon, caring less about what has happened to them and more about inflicting lasting damage on the ranks of Klal Yisrael. Amalek, however, was astute and meticulous. He waited until Klal Yisrael was tired, wasted from the sudden liberation and transformation from persecuted slave to world traveler in a wilderness that was both harsh and unforgiving. He saw also that their recent commitment to Torah had begun to wane. Now was the time to attack. A battle at this point would prove successful.

If Amalek was so thoughtful in his attack on the Jewish People, why did he not consider Hashem, Who was their Redeemer and Protector?

It must be because of one reason: v'lo yarei Elokim. He simply did not care, because he did not fear Hashem. Such a nation had broken all barriers. His blatant disregard for the Almighty warranted the appellation for him and his nefarious descendants, of milchamah l'Hashem b'Amalek midor dor, "A war between Hashem and Amalek throughout the generations."

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ וְשָׁבִיתָ שִׁבְיוֹ - "***When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand, and you will capture its captives***." (21:10)

The pasuk's text is enigmatic. It begins by referring to our enemies in the plural, "your enemies," – but then it changes to the singular, saying, "And Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand."

Horav Mordechai Gifter, z.l., addresses this question and derives a profound lesson from the pasuk. Whether we realize it or not, we enter battle daily against all sorts of enemies or, rather, one enemy in the guise of many different enemies. The yetzer hara, evil-

inclination, man's archenemy is extremely cunning and seeks ways to destroy our spiritual development. He attacks us from all sides, transforming himself into many forms. Indeed, at times it appears that we are waging war with many diverse enemies. This is, however, not the case. As man possesses one yetzer tov, good inclination, so, too, does he possess one yetzer hara.

Evil has many faces, each one seeking a vulnerability in our spiritual armour. Hence, the beginning of the pasuk refers to the yetzer hara's bombardment, in its many guises. We are being challenged by "our enemies." This is not, however, a reason to despair. The battle might seem to be overwhelming, but – in reality – it is not.

We must realize that it is not a multitude of enemies that we must conquer, but actually one solitary enemy: a formidable one, but still only one. The Torah, therefore, closes the pasuk in the singular, to teach us that we can win.

We must arm ourselves with determination to triumph over our enemy. The sooner we see through his many disguises, the sooner we will succeed in prevailing over him.



זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק - '***Remember what Amalek did to you.***' (25:17)

How does one fulfil the imperative to remember Amalek's treachery towards our ancestors? The mitzvah to blot out Amalek's name is hardly applicable in contemporary times, while Am Yisrael is in galus, exile -- even if we were able to identify clearly a member of this contemptible nation.

Horav Moshe Feinstein z.l. infers a profound lesson to be derived from this pasuk: Amalek's dastardly act demonstrated that man can

be aware of Hashem's infinite greatness and unlimited power and still descend to the nadir of depravity. Indeed, Chazal compare Amalek to one who jumps into a tub of scalding water, flaunting complete disregard for the apparent consequences of this foolish act!

Likewise, we must be cogently aware that there is literally no sin that is beyond man's "grasp". One must take care to protect himself from falling into the clutches of the yetzer hora, which can encourage him to perform the most repulsive acts.

This is the mitzvah of "remembering what Amalek did to you." This mitzvah implores us to imbue in ourselves, to the point that it becomes part of our psyche, a recognition of Amalek's act, its meaning and message. Consequently, we will develop an intense hatred for him.

To forget what Amalek did is to justify his act!

לֹא־תַחֲרֹשׁ בְּשׁוֹר־וּבַחֲמֹר יַחְדָּו - "*Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together*." (22:10)



Being sensitive to the feelings of another human being is a requisite for defining mentchlichkeit, humanness. While many of us go out of our way to be kind and thoughtful when it affects the feelings of a prominent individual, we often ignore the sensitivities of a common person.

The Torah provides us with a penetrating insight regarding this inappropriate practice. We are adjured not to plow with an ox and a

donkey together. Although the Torah does not suggest a reason, the **Daas Zekeinim** explains that these two animals have two diverse habits for digesting their food. Because an ox chews its cud, bringing up the food it has already swallowed and chewing it again, the donkey who is harnessed with the ox will feel bad that the ox is eating "once again" while it has nothing to eat.

Even the sensitivities of a simple animal play a role in the Torah. The reason is simple: when we stop caring about animals, similarly, we will soon stop caring about people. A Jew is enjoined to care, to be sensitive to the needs of others, certainly not to hurt another person – even indirectly.

The great gaon, Torah scholar and posek, halachic arbiter, **Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l.**, was a person who exemplified caring for another Jew. Countless stories recount his sterling character and empathy for all people, regardless of their background or station in life. To hurt another person was the farthest thing from his mind. He took great pains to see to it that he never infringed upon another person.

One very beautiful story, which this author recently heard, tells of Rav Moshe's anxiety prior to heart surgery. He was concerned about what he could have done to catalyze this pain. How could he have hurt someone in such a manner that he would be subject to such a consequence? Indeed, his anxiety alone bespeaks his saintliness and virtue.

After much introspection, Rav Moshe concluded that when he was a young boy in cheder, his rebbe asked the class a question to which he immediately responded, before anyone even had a chance to raise their hand. He realized now that the little satisfaction that he enjoyed in surpassing the others to answer first was the origin of his current pain.

Veritably, there is very little one can add to such a story. Imagine, this was the only incident that Rav Moshe could think of in which he

might have encroached upon another person's feelings. - How far are we from this plateau!

Another episode cited by **Rabbi Pesach Krohn**, recalls the sensitivity towards his fellowman exhibited by a quiet, kind, and unassuming Jew, a Holocaust survivor, who came to this country as a teenager. Money did not come easily as he struggled throughout his life to eke out a meager livelihood to support his family. When he was older, retired from his daily endeavor to earn a livelihood, he would always carry a roll of quarters with him. No one knew the reason for this seemingly strange behavior.

It was only after his death that the reason was revealed. Every morning as he davened in shul, he would be approached by poor people seeking alms. Most people gave change in various denominations. This individual felt that if he would take out a dollar bill, intending to ask for change, the poor man might momentarily think that he was being given a dollar instead of his usual change. This fleeting hope would be quickly shattered.

Rather than play with another person's emotions, he made it a point to always carry correct change for his daily contributions.



שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָאֵם וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ– '***You shall surely take away the mother and take the young for yourself***.' (22:7)

The mitzvah of Shiluach Ha'kein implies many lessons. **The Rambam** suggests that this mitzvah teaches us to demonstrate kindness and consideration to animals. If our search for food requires us to kill an animal, we must do it in the most humane and painless manner. The halachah distinguishes between a bird that is presently resting on her nest, protecting her young, and one that was sent away. We are forbidden to touch the mother that rests on her young.

Horav Chaim Ehrentrau, zl, cites the Rambam as the basis for understanding this law. We are not permitted to take advantage of

the mother bird who, because she is protecting her young, will not leave. We are not to make use of our superiority over animals to take undue advantage of her. The mother could have left and saved herself. Instead, she chose to remain to guard her young; she deferred to her natural maternal instincts, which to a certain extent she shares with man. - Halachah takes this into consideration and grants her life.

We derive from this mitzvah the overwhelming importance to be considerate of others: those weaker than we are; those poorer than we are; or those who are just different than we are.

If the Torah cares about a bird who is responding to her natural instinct, how much more so is it important that we be attentive to the needs of our fellow man.

The Torah is not merely teaching us to show pity to animals. Hashem does not need us to protect His creatures. Rather, He wishes to imbue us with a refinement of character and a sensitivity to all mankind. - Is that not exactly what a Jew is supposed to be like?



שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָאֵם וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים – '***You shall surely send away the mother...so that it will be good for you, and you will prolong your days***.' (22:7)

Hashem grants success and longevity in response to the performance of the mitzvah of Shiluach Ha'kein, sending away the mother bird. Only the mitzvah of honoring one's parents effects comparable reward. Why does the Torah single out these two mitzvos for such a significant reward? - Also, what is the relationship between these two seemingly disparate mitzvos? - Honoring one's parents is a difficult mitzvah to perform correctly, while Shiluach Ha'kein is a simple task.

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, zl, comments that actually a strong parallel exists between these mitzvos which accounts for the

similarity of the reward. One must set the mother bird free before taking her eggs or her young. Rather than save only herself when a human being approaches her nest, she risks her life by remaining with her young. Although she is only a bird, her actions provide a lesson for us regarding the virtues we should respect in those around us. - The Torah commands us to respect those who dedicate themselves to their children.

These two mitzvos have a common denominator in that they both demand respect for those parents who are willing to endanger themselves to raise their child in the proper manner.

The disparity that we note between these mitzvos is a result of our superficial perspective on life. If we delve into it, we will observe that Shiluach Ha'kein is actually a more critical mitzvah than honoring one's parents.

In all cases, we owe respect to our parents. We are in debt to them for all of the hardship they have endured to raise us properly. We have a responsibility to repay our parents for all that they have done for us. We understand our obligation because it is a concept to which we can relate. - If the same person, however, who advocates respecting parents were to desire to take the eggs or the baby birds from their nest, he must release the mother, although he has never benefited from it. He must demonstrate "respect" towards this mother bird because she is a mother bird who is devoted to raising her children. He must restrain himself even though he feels no responsibility towards this bird.

The Torah tells us that we should demonstrate singular respect towards the mother as a result of her serious commitment to raising her child.

On the surface, these mitzvos appear to be worlds apart. This is not so in the eyes of our Torah, which sees beyond our limited vision. The Torah demands respect for our parents because they are like

the mother bird, who places herself in danger in order to protect her young.

We might add that while it may be easier and personally more satisfying to show respect towards those parents who exemplify devotion to their children, the mitzvah of honoring one's parents applies equally to all parents, regardless of their relationship to us, or the nature of their religious commitment.

מוֹצָא שְׂפָתֶיךָ תִּשְׁמֹר וְעָשִׂיתָ כַּאֲשֶׁר נָדַרְתָּ לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נְדָבָה אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ בְּפִיךָ

"***You shall observe and carry out what emerges from your lips, just as you vowed a voluntary gift to Hashem, your G-d, whatever you spoke with your mouth***." (23:24)



Upon examining the text, the end of the pasuk seems redundant. Would it not have sufficed to simply write, "You shall observe and carry out whatever emerges from your lips?"

Horav Mordechai Rogov, zl, makes a practical insight which explains the pasuk. When a person is involved in an "eis tzarah," a period of pain or anguish, the neder, vow, which he makes is undoubtedly sincere. He is stressed and motivated by anxiety.

At the time, he truly plans to fulfill every promise that he makes. What happens, however, when it is all over and things have calmed down, when there is no longer a reason to worry? Does he retain the same genuine feelings as he had before, or is he doing what he has to do because he committed himself during his time of need?

The Torah demands that an individual demonstrate the same enthusiasm when fulfilling his promise, as when he had originally made the vow.

David Hamelech says in Tehillim 116:14, **נְדָרַי לַה׳ אֲשַׁלֵּם נֶגְדָה־נָּא לְכָל־עַמּוֹ** - "***My vows to Hashem I will pay, in the presence, now, of His entire People***."

What is so impressive about David's fulfilling his vows? Is that not to be expected?

Horav Rogov suggests that David is saying he will fulfill his vows with the same enthusiasm and emotion that he exhibited when he originally made the vow.

This is the interpretation of the pasuk, "You shall observe and carry out what emerges from your mouth" - fulfill your requirements not out of obligation and complacency, but - "just as you vowed... whatever you spoke with your mouth." With the exact conviction, with the same sentiment with which you made the vow, so should you fulfill its demand.

תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה׳ אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב - "***Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart***." (28:47)

We may infer from the text of the pasuk that the curses to which Klal Yisrael will be subjected are a result of serving Hashem without joy. In other words, regardless of one's actual performance of a mitzvah, if it is not carried out joyfully it is not considered to be a mitzvah. To the contrary, it is a source of curse.

The commentators explore the importance of inherent joy in mitzvah performance.

The Baal Ha'Tanya offers a profound explanation for this. Unhappiness indicates a total breakdown of personality. A true Jew must be happy! He is blessed -- either physically or spiritually -- and should have faith in the Almighty, the Source of all blessing. Such a person, who is content with his lot in life, radiates the joy that permeates his essence. Something is wrong with the spiritual

constitution of a Jew who does not serve Hashem with joy and excitement. Happiness is a critical component of the Jewish psyche.

Joy is central to living a Torah life. We should be imbued with a heightened sense of joy. This feeling should inspire everything we do and refresh our spirits with the knowledge that we are engaged in fulfilling Hashem's mandate.

כִּי יִקָּרֵא קַן־צִפּוֹר לְפָנֶיךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּכָל־עֵץ אוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ בֵיצִים וְהָאֵם רֹבֶצֶת עַל־הָאֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ עַל־הַבֵּיצִים לֹא־תִקַּח הָאֵם עַל־הַבָּנִים - "*If a birds nest by chance be (found) before you . . . and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, do not take the mother with the young*." (22:6)



The halachah of Shiluach Ha'Kain, sending away the mother while keeping the eggs for oneself, is especially striking in that it applies only to birds and not to wild beasts. Throughout halachah, these two are considered the same, i.e. the law of covering blood after shechitah applies likewise to a wild beast and a fowl. Why should one be permitted to take a young deer away from its mother?

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin, z.l., suggests an explanation from which we may derive a profound insight into a parent's relationship with his children. Animals, as well as humans, give birth to offspring which have naturally common physical features and traits. Fowl, on the other hand, lay eggs which do not hatch for a while. During this maturation time, the affinity which is natural in the human and animal world should not logically develop. Nonetheless, an almost unnatural boundless love develops between the mother bird and its

"egg." Although birds are not able to distinguish their features and characteristics, they transcend uncertainty to shower maternal love upon their young. This is manifest by the act of resting on top of the eggs until the baby birds are prepared to fend for themselves. Consequently, the mother bird's pain and anguish at losing her young is far greater than that of her animal counterpart.

What a wonderful lesson for us. How often do we base our relationship with our children solely upon our personal proclivity towards them?

Our love is all too often expressed in consonance with how much of "ourselves" we see in "them." There are even those who, if they do not "see" a promising potential in their children, tend to ignore them.

A parent's love and relationship with his child should not be contingent upon specific characteristics. It should be boundless and unconditional. - Perhaps the mother bird's unrestrained devotion to her young could well serve as a lesson for us all.







The Rav said tonight that we should get busy before Rosh Hashanah remembering all the good that Hashem has given us since last Rosh Hashanah. But don't we have to spend the time we have left thinking about our sins and our behavior over the past year and making resolutions for improving this coming year?

You'll recall that I said the words, "as part of our work." Really, there's so much work to be done that we don't have time in the ensuing period, until tomorrow at sunset, to do what has to be done. But remembering all the good that Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us this past year, and thanking Him for it, is most surely a very important part of our preparation.

So instead of worrying about fitting it all in, I'll tell you what to do. You make sure to think for five minutes about the past year; about all the good that Hashem has given you since exactly one year ago. Do that and you'll be a great man. And then another five minutes spend thinking about resolutions for the coming year. And then you'll be an even greater person. - Those ten minutes will be a great accomplishment.

If after sitting here for an hour and a half, you'll go out and think for five minutes, you should know that you're an exception. You're a

dagul mei'rivavah – you're one out of ten thousand. There's nobody like you. Who thinks for five whole minutes about gratitude to Hashem for the past year?!

And who thinks for five minutes about making resolutions for improving himself in the coming year?! People talk about it but that's all. That's why I said in the beginning of our talk that if you do this on a small scale, then you shoot up and your head is way above everybody else.



What is the pshat in the ma'amar chazal that tells us that we should be careful with poor children because they are the ones who will become talmidei chachomim?

In Mesichta Nedarim (81a) it says: שְׁלַחוּ מִתָּם: הִזָּהֲרוּ בִּבְנֵי עֲנִיִּים, שֶׁמֵּהֶן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה – '***They sent a message from Eretz Yisroel: Be careful with the children of the poor, because from them Torah will come***.'

Torah comes from poor children. So the Ran asks: Why from poor children? Why is it that especially from the poor families will develop talmidei chachomim?

And he says that it's because poor children have nothing else but Torah. Do you hear that? A rich boy has a bike and maybe he has a radio too; an automobile and all kinds of expensive toys he might have. He has a lot of things to keep him busy. Boruch Hashem, when I was a boy, I never had a bike. I was such a poor boy that when I wanted to buy a little hammer – it cost twenty-five cents in those days – I couldn't afford it! It took me a long time but finally I saved up twenty-five cents and I bought the hammer. That was a big thing for me! We didn't have any toys.

Poor children have much less opportunities to waste their lives! Boruch Hashem! So **הזהרו** – be careful with the poor, because Torah will come from them. And the Ran says it's because they have nothing else to do except learn. That's the pshat there. - So now you know that children who have so many good things, it's a very big problem.



Considering what you spoke about tonight, that our acts in this world are eternal, so how can teshuva reverse the deeds of wickedness?

Now, that you have to know is a very big problem. And that's why teshuva is considered one of the great kindliness's of Hashem. It's a great chesed and a great neis. Teshuva means that Hashem is going to step into the process of history and He's going to cause things to disappear from history.

Now that's something that is beyond our ability to explain. That's why when we say –**בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' הָרוֹצֶה בִּתְשׁוּבָה** -We thank You Hashem, the One who wants repentance, we have to understand the full impact of that blessing. That You Hashem are willing to accept teshuva! You are the One who makes teshuva because You erase the stain that we created on our souls.

And it's something that nobody can explain. Only that it's one of the great miracles that Hakodosh Boruch Hu accomplishes and therefore we should appreciate how great is the kindness of teshuva.

"Hashem's love for us is so great, that he created 613 ways to spend time with us." ~ R Zecharia Wallerstein.

The Weekly Vort

• **כי תצא למלחמה על איביך** – ***When you shall go out to war against your enemies...*** (21:10).

Tiferes Shlomo teaches that we often make herculean efforts to do what is right, and Hashem helps us conquer our earthly inclination. But shortly thereafter we are again fighting the same enemy we thought we had defeated. We wonder, "Will our battle ever end?" The *pasuk* states, "When you go out" into this world, you are entering a battlefield where you will wage a non-ending "war against your enemies." Even if you win a battle with the evil inclination, you will certainly be attacked again. We must remember that life is a constant battle in which we can never make peace with the deadly enemy. (The Torah Treasury)

• **והיה מחניך קדוש ולא יראה בך ערות דבר ושב מאחריך** – ***And your camp shall be holy, so that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from behind you*** (23:15).

The Chofetz Chaim explains that Hashem protects us from harm as long as He does not "see a shameful thing among us." This refers to *tznius*, modesty and moral behavior. As long as we dress and act in a chaste, virtuous fashion, Hashem continues His guardianship. If we turn away and follow those around us, dressing and acting in a provocative and immodest fashion, we will lose our protection. *And the Chofetz Chaim said this over 80 years ago.* (Peninim on the Torah)

"A person who trusts in Hashem is like a tree planted by the water. Just as the tree does not fear the heat, nor does it worry about drought, so too, a person who trusts in Hashem does not fear any challenge or obstacle that may come his way." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.



R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern *zt"l* (Kotzker Rebbe) would say:

"Why is a בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה- *rebellious son,* put to death? He is still so young - can't he do *Teshuvah*?

Because not only has he strayed from the true path of *Torah*, he is a מוֹרֶה - teaching others to stray as well. - This crime is greater than that of the one who kills another. For if one kills, his victim loses this world but still has a part of the next world. However, when one causes another to sin, he is causing his victim to lose both this world and the next world, as well."

It is said, that **R' *Aharon* Kotler *zt"l*** would tell over the following story many times as it had a profound effect on him when it occurred. He didn't quite remember if it took place before his marriage or immediately after his marriage, but it seemed to him that it was before.

One day, his future father-in-law, **R' Isser Zalman Meltzer *zt"l***, took him along to visit a certain sick man; a simple *Yid* who lived in Slutsk. On the way, R' Isser Zalman explained to R' Aharon that the doctor told him the man was suffering unimaginable pain. R' Isser Zalman assumed it would probably mean the world to him if he, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, paid him a visit. This was the intention of his visit.

When they got there, the sick man greeted his two distinguished visitors with a smile and seemed to be very content despite his

terrible predicament. Taken aback by the sick man's appearance, R' Isser Zalman asked him how he could be so happy while suffering.

The man replied, "Imagine if I had been sentenced to die but was 'let off' with a beating instead. Wouldn't I be full of joy?"

R' Aharon would constantly repeat this story to numerous people with tremendous emotion.

A Simple Jew's Tooth Offering



A Jew from Russia boarded a bus in Yerushalayim and took a seat next to **Horav Kluft**, a grandson of the **Steipler Gaon, zl**. During the course of their conversation, the Jew mentioned that he had once served in Joseph Stalin's army. (Stalin was the accursed Russian dictator during World War II.)

On his first Erev Yom Kippur, he sought a way to circumvent working on the holiest day of the year. He claimed that he was unable to work due to a toothache. He went to the infirmary where his tooth was extracted without Novocain. He fainted from the extreme pain – but he was permitted to take the day off to rest. Although he was in excruciating pain that entire day, the joy in not having to transgress Yom Kippur more than ameliorated his pain. He was able to spend the day in solemn prayer to Hashem. This overrode any pain.

When Rav Kluft expressed his great admiration for this Yid, the man said, "Do not be impressed. I am a simple Jew!"

The man's stop was called, and he got up to say goodbye to the Rav, who gave him a warm handshake. The man responded in kind and beamingly smiled at him.

Rav Kluft noticed a gaping hole in the man's smile. His upper front teeth were missing. When the man observed Rav Kluft's surprise, he said, "Please forgive my toothless smile; I was in Stalin's army for four years, and I used the same excuse each Yom Kippur."

לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־שׁוֹר אָחִיךָ אוֹ אֶת־שֵׂיוֹ נִדָּחִים וְהִתְעַלַּמְתָּ מֵהֶם הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבֵם לְאָחִיךָ – '***You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep straying, and ignore them. [Rather] you shall return them to your brother***.' 22.1

When it comes to hashavas aveidah, says **Rav Mattisyahu Solomon z'tl**, the Torah is teaching us that the mitzvah is not to merely return a lost object to its owner, but that we should care about the owner of the object as we do for a brother.

The last three words of the parashah of hashavas aveidah are: **לֹא תוּכַל לְהִתְעַלֵּם**, which, translated literally, means, "You cannot look away."

Rav Mattisyahu points out that this expression is atypical. Normally, the Torah would say, "You are not allowed to look away." Why does the Torah say, "You cannot look away?"

The answer is that this goes to the basic root of the mitzvah. The point is not to say, "I would love to walk away, but what can I do, the Torah requires me to take care of my friend's object."

The point is that when you see something that belongs to your friend, you should feel, I CAN'T walk away. I cannot possibly turn a blind eye when my brother is missing something and is suffering from the loss!

"The only thing that can truly make a person happy is the knowledge that there is a Creator Who loves you." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler.

Lessons from our Sages Through the Ages from the Pages

Someone was talking to the **Ponevizher Rav** about David Ben Gurion's virulent enmity toward religion, and the policies and laws he enacted against the Torah community. As he mentioned Ben Gurion, the person added the words, "Yimach shmo," may his name be erased. This is something generally reserved only for the most wicked of people.

Immediately, the Ponevizher Rav got animatedly upset and vehemently responded, "One may never say such a thing about a Jew, no matter what he is!

Short And Sweet Story of The Week by Yoni Schwartz

The way **Rav Dovid Feinstein, ZT"L**, treated his wife was a prime example of how one should respect their spouse. Years ago, when Rav Dovid Feinstein and Rebbetzin Feinstein were at the engagement party of one of their grandchildren. The time was dragging on and on.

A curious person approached Rav Dovid and asked, "Doesn't the Gadol Hador have better things to do with his time than sit here for so long?"

In his gentle voice, Rav Dovid said, "The Rebbetzin is having a nice time. As long as she is enjoying herself, I am going nowhere."

There was another time when one of Rav Dovid Feinstein's children got married, the soon-to-be daughter-in-law visited his house on Friday afternoon to meet her new mother-in-law. After she entered, she heard the sound of a vacuum cleaner emanating from one of the rooms and followed the sound. After turning a couple corners and weaving her way through the halls of the house, she finally found the room where the sound was coming from. As her head peeped the corner, expecting to see Rebbetzin Feinstein, she was surprised when she saw Rav Dovid, the Gadol Hador, vacuuming the floor.

"Doesn't the Rav have more important matters to attend to," she wondered, and Rav Dovid saw a curious look on her face. He explained that on Fridays his wife works, and he wanted to do something nice to help around the house. In fact, Rav Dovid would often make kugels and cakes and give them out to the kids.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

The Great Fan by Avishai Hill



The terrible heat coupled with the intense humidity of Shanghai, made life unbearable for the Mirrer bochrim who had escaped there during the War. The learning in the yeshiva continued unabated, but with great difficulty. - Eventually, the yeshiva had powerful electric fans installed which provided a respite from the stagnant and heavy air in the beis midrash.

The Mashgiach, **R. Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l** ('Reb Chatzkel') was amazed, "What's causing such a powerful current of air here?" he asked.

"Doesn't Rebbe see that the workers installed fans?" came the response.

"Yes I do, but how do they cause such pleasant air to flow through the room?

Now everyone else were amazed: "The rotating blades cause the air to be circulated," they explained patiently.

"Which blades?" The Rav asked, "There's nothing there at all! Just a strange looking piece of metal hanging off the ceiling."

Everyone smiled to themselves and explained that due to their great speed, the spinning blades had become indiscernible.

Now, after getting everyone's attention, Reb Chatzkel was ready to deliver his musser shmuez: "Life can be compared to pleasant air being pushed around a room. The fan is doing the work, but no one can see it working due to its intense speed. Let us not forget that Hashem is ruling and controlling the entire world, but due to His great speed, so to speak, we forget to acknowledge His presence and Almighty ability. - We must always acknowledge the presence of Hashem in our lives!"



You probably knew that doing an act of kindness is a great mitzva. But did you know that even when a person does a very small act of kindness he fulfils a Torah commandment?!

The Peleh Yoetz (section חסד) writes that even opening a door for someone who knocked on it is considered a fulfilment of a Torah commandment! - So next time, and every time, you perform an act of kindness—no matter how big or small it is— have in mind that you are fulfilling a Torah commandment!

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From our Sages

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ- 'When you go out to war on your enemies, the L-rd your G-d shall deliver them into your hands.' (21:10)

עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ, "on your enemies," can also be understood as "on top of your enemies." In every battle, the way to achieve victory is to gain the higher ground. We must never stoop to the level of evil to fight it on its own terms; - "One who wrestles with a filthy person becomes dirtied as well." Rather, we should rise above it, affirming our belief that there is no true existence other than G-d, and that nothing contrary to His truth has any real power. When our going to war is in a manner of "*on* your enemies," we are guaranteed that "G-d shall deliver them into your hands." ~ (The Chassidic Masters)

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ... וְשָׁבִיתָ שִׁבְיוֹ – 'When you go out to war upon your enemies . . . and capture from them captives.' (21:10)

Also from one's spiritual enemies one must "capture captives." Anything negative in man or in the world can be exploited for the good, if one can derive a lesson from it in the service of the Creator. ~ (Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov)

I learned seven things from the thief: 1) What he does, he keeps to himself. 2) He is willing to take risks to attain his goal. 3) He does not distinguish between "major" and "minor" things, but takes equally exacting care of each detail. 4) He invests great effort in what he does. 5) He is swift. 6) He is always optimistic. 7) If at first he fails, he is back time and again for another try. ~ (Rabbi Zusha of Anipoli)

כִּי תִקְצֹר קְצִירְךָ בְשָׂדֶךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ עֹמֶר בַּשָּׂדֶה – *'And you forget a sheaf in the field . . .' (24:19)*

Certain opportunities and potentials are so lofty that they cannot be accessed by the conscious self; they can come about only "by mistake." An example of this is the mitzvah of *shikchah*, which can be fulfilled only by forgetting. ~ (The Chassidic Masters)

Rabbi Aryeh Kerzner - Returning Lost Souls

I want to share with you a profoundly moving story I recently heard with **Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky a"h**. It's a lesson about how helping others can sometimes bring about one's own salvation (*yeshua*).

A woman came to Rebbetzin Batsheva, desperately seeking a *bracha* (blessing) to have children. She had been suffering from infertility for many years, enduring immense pain and heartache. Rebbetzin Batsheva, listening to her plight, offered an insight based on a teaching from the ***Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*** that she believed could help this woman find her *yeshua*.

The Rebbetzin began by explaining a well-known mitzvah, *Hashavas Aveida*—the commandment to return a lost object to its rightful owner. On the surface, this mitzvah involves finding something lost and returning it to the person who owns it. But, as the *Ohr HaChaim* teaches, there is a much deeper meaning hidden within this mitzvah.

He expounds on the Pasuk from the Torah which says, "You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep wandering and ignore them; you must return them" (Devarim 22:1). The *Ohr HaChaim* explains that the "lost ox" or "sheep" symbolizes Jews who have become disconnected from their faith, those who feel spiritually lost and far from Yiddishkeit. Just as an animal without direction can wander aimlessly, so too can a Jew who lacks spiritual guidance. The mitzvah

of *Hashavas Aveida* doesn't only apply to returning physical objects—it's a call to return lost souls to their rightful place, back to Hashem.

Rebbetzin Batsheva emphasized this powerful idea. If you see a fellow Jew who is distant from Torah and mitzvos, it's your responsibility to reach out, offer a kind word, extend an invitation, and gently help them reconnect. The *Ohr HaChaim* teaches that the phrase "you must return them" is a directive to bring such individuals closer to Yiddishkeit, to gather them into your home or community, and offer them the warmth and sanctity of a Jewish environment.

The *Ohr HaChaim* explains further that the Torah's instruction to return the lost "ox" or "sheep" ultimately refers to Hashem's lost children—souls who have strayed from the path. By bringing these individuals closer, by inspiring them to rekindle their connection to Yiddishkeit, we fulfill the deeper essence of the mitzvah of *Hashavas Aveida*.

With this teaching in mind, Rebbetzin Batsheva gave the woman a special *segulah* (merit): "Go and help other Jews who are spiritually lost. Invite them into your home for Shabbos, bring them to your community events, show them love and kindness. If you return Hashem's lost souls to Him, Hashem will, in turn, return your lost souls to you. *Midah k'neged midah*—measure for measure. Just as you help others, Hashem will open the gates for you to receive the blessing you seek."

When we reach out to others in need, whether spiritually or physically, we tap into a tremendous source of Divine compassion and blessing. Just as we help restore Hashem's children to their rightful place, He will bless us by returning the precious things we have been yearning for in our own lives.



Rabbi Shlomo Kluger zt"l

- **What type of war is the Torah discussing?**

(21,10) "***כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ וְשָׁבִיתָ שִׁבְיוֹ When you go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem Your G-d will give him into your hands, and you take him captive. And you see among the captives a beautiful woman…***"

The Yalkut Shimoni comments that this posuk is talking about a voluntary war. It seems to me the Yalkut is basing its comment on the Midrash on our parsha, which says that we learn from our parsha that a sin brings along other sins. We see this from the fact that it says "if you go out to war…and see among the captives a beautiful woman", and this is followed by "if a man has a wayward and rebellious son", which is followed by "if a man commits a sin which is worthy of death". And that a mitzvah brings along a mitzvah we see from that which it writes "if a bird's nest chances before you on the road…you shall send away the mother", which is followed by "when you build a new house, you shall make a parapet…".

According to this the Yalkut had a difficulty - if a mitzvah brings along a mitzvah, how from war could a person come to desire a beautiful woman. Surely the war itself is a mitzvah. Therefore the Yalkut said that the posuk is talking about a voluntary war, and if so, it is not a mitzvah. But if the Torah is discussing a voluntary war, why should it permit "a beautiful woman" because of the evil inclination - don't make war, and then you will not come to this. Therefore the posuk continues that the war is "against your enemies", implying that they started with you, and so you had no choice in the matter.



◣ No Excuses - Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman

עַל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּלֶּחֶם וּבַמַּיִם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם וַאֲשֶׁר שָׂכַר עָלֶיךָ אֶת־בִּלְעָם בֶּן־בְּעוֹר מִפְּתוֹר אֲרַם נַהֲרַיִם לְקַלְלֶךָּ "…***and because they hired against you Bilaam the son of Beor.***" (23:5)

Regarding their failure to greet the Jews with bread and water, the Moabites and the Ammonites could have given the excuse that they were poor nations and couldn't afford such elaborate gestures of hospitality. - Apparently, however, they did have enough money to hire Bilaam to do evil to the Jews. Therefore, their refusal to extend hospitality to the Jews was motivated solely by the desire to do evil to them and was not due to their poverty. Hence, it was sinful conduct, with no extenuating circumstances.

◣ Marital Harmony - Rabbi Dovid Hoffman

כִּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה חֲדָשָׁה. נָקִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵיתוֹ שָׁנָה אֶחָת וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־לָקָח -"***When a man takes a new wife, he shall be free for his home one year and he shall bring joy to the wife he married.***" (24:5)

When a man and woman decide to marry and create a union of kedushah (holiness) and purity within Klal Yisrael, the Torah dictates that the first year of marriage is ultra important, and they must fulfil the precept of, "He shall gladden (the heart of) his wife."

The tzaddik of Yerushalayim, **Rav Aryeh Levine zt'l**, was once asked: What is the most important piece of advice to offer a young couple?

Is there one concept, one phrase or nuance, that can sum up the epitome of a Jewish marriage? R' Aryeh thought for a moment and then answered: "The Shulchan Aruch (Hilchos Mezuzah 289) discusses a controversy regarding how to position a mezuzah on the doorpost. One view is to fasten it upright to the door, whereas the other view is to fasten it sideways. The Rema concludes that we position the mezuzah on a slant in order to satisfy both opinions."

R' Aryeh explained, "When a newly married couple walks into their house or apartment for the very first time, the first mitzvah that they see is the mezuzah hanging on a slant on their doorpost. The mezuzah calls out and teaches them that compromise is the ideal manner with which a husband and wife should conduct their life together. - There may be two opinions in every situation, but if a couple is willing to bend and compromise, they will ultimately succeed."

"If you want to live together and enjoy a wonderful married life, live it in the spirit of the slanted mezuzah, always looking for compromise, and you'll see how wonderful it can be."

The Alter of Slabodka, R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt'l, used to give shiurim in the evenings for young married men who had been his students in the yeshiva. It was a prestigious achievement to be included in this shiur, which the men eagerly looked forward to. One time, the shmuess went beyond its usual time, and the students remained transfixed.

At this point the Alter's wife came in and said that the young men should go home. "They have wives waiting for them at home," she claimed. The Alter apologized and said that he was unaware that so much time had passed. The young men begged him to continue. "Our wives would rather we remain as long as necessary to hear your teachings," they reasoned. The Alter refused to continue. "You have no right to determine what your wives would prefer," he said. "Furthermore, even if they explicitly indicate that they wish you to

maximize your study, you must remember that they have a right to your companionship and may also need your help at home with the chores." - With that he sent the young men home.

The Torah is very firm regarding the duties and responsibilities of a newly married man. He is required, "To bring joy to the (new) wife that he married." He must put his bride's wishes, desires and requests above all else, for only in this manner, will the young couple learn to grow together in a mutual spirit of respect and tender loving care.

◣ In A Blink of An Eye - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לְמִרְיָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם - "*Remember what Hashem, your G-d, did to Miriam on the way when you were going out of Egypt…*" (24:9)

The simple meaning of this pasuk is that we must remember how Miriam contracted tzaraas for speaking badly about Moshe Rabbeinu. However, we know clearly, as the **Rambam** says, Miriam didn't intend to speak badly about Moshe. - If she didn't mean to speak negatively, asks **Reb Leibel Eiger**, why are we commanded to remember this incident?

Reb Leible answers, we must remember one thing: In a single moment, Miriam's body was entirely covered with tzaraas, Moshe Rabbeinu then pleaded with Hashem, "Please Hashem, heal her." And in a single moment, she was healed! - This is what we are told to remember!

Sometimes, in a single moment, Hashem may bring something that seems terrible, but we must always remember that, in a single moment, He also removes it! You may feel like you're drowning in a problem, but in a moment, it can be completely gone. Always stay strong.

◣ Stick Together - Reb Simchah Bunim of Pshischa

זָכֹ֗ור אֵ֚ת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂ֣ה לְךָ֔ עֲמָלֵ֖ק בַּדָּ֑רֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶ֖ם מִמִּצְרָֽיִם - "***Remember what Amalek did to you on the way, when you were leaving Mitzrayim***..." (25:17)

Why does the Torah use the singular when telling Bnei Yisrael to "Remember what Amalek did to you (lecha)"?

Since Amalek wanted to annihilate the entire nation, it should have been written lachem, "to you" in the plural. While it is true that Amalek wanted to destroy the entire nation, the Jews who remained steadfast and united as a people were not harmed. However, the ones that split from the camp and went separately were killed. - Therefore, the Torah tells us to be as one and "remember" what Amalek did to you when you split from the rest of the people.

◣ Eradicating Arrogance - Yid Hakadosh

תִּמְחֶ֗ה אֶת־זֵ֙כֶר֙ עֲמָלֵ֔ק מִתַּ֖חַת הַשָּׁמָ֑יִם לֹ֥א תִּשְׁכָּֽח - "***You shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heaven, you shall not forget***." (25:19)

The intent of the war against Amalek was to destroy the arrogance in oneself. The numerical value of the letters of "Amalek" **עמלק** is equal to the numerical value of the Hebrew word **רם**, which means "haughtiness" (ayin = 70, mem = 40, lamed = 30, and kuf = 100, for a total of 240; resh = 200 and mem = 40, for a total of 240).

[Many commentators note that the numerical value of the letters of "Amalek" **עמלק** is equal to the numerical value of the Hebrew word **ספק**, which means "doubt." We are being told to eradicate all doubts and worries from our minds.]

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

The Power of Positivity



In this week's Parsha, the Jewish people go out to battle. The Torah says that if one solitary soldier feels fear or anxiety, he must be sent home. Why? Because we are afraid that he will lower the morale of his fellow soldiers. We are afraid that his misgivings and apprehensions will spread to the other troops. The entire battalion may be weakened by this one person's feebleness, nervousness, or negativity.

I would like to share with you a very powerful and inspiring idea that I heard from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer shlita: **The Imrei Emes** says that if that's the case with someone with negativity, if a negative or even nervous person can lower the morale of his fellow soldiers, then how much more so can one impact others when he is full and bursting with positivity.

If there are people who are sad and need encouragement, if there are people who are negative, that can all change. All you need is one positive person. If one buoyant and joyous person comes into the picture, he can save thousands of people. If one person projects and exudes positivity and happiness, he can bring back thousands of people. He can raise their morale, boost their spirits, and make them feel great.

How many times do we underestimate the power of a warm smile, a good deed, or a good word? One encouraging hello or one warm

compliment can be contagious and uplift an entire group! It can transform an entire army! This, says the Imrei Emes is the power of every Yid, the strength of every Jew. We can positively transform our surroundings! The question is who that one person could be. That one person with the positive vibes – the one person with a big smile. That one person who shares joy could be you! You have the power. You can change the world!

In 1938 **Rav Avraham Bender zt"l**, a roving rabbi, who was raising funds for his yeshiva ventured beyond his normal route into a less affluent suburb of east Pittsburgh. Of all the city's Jews, Rabbi Bender trusted the kashrus (kosher certification) of just three Pittsburgh families. One of those families was the Scheiner family, whose teenage son Isadore had just graduated from Peabody High School and was planning on going on to college to study mathematics. Isadore's dream was to become a mathematician.

As Rabbi Bender spent time together with the Scheiner family, he saw the potential in Isadore. One day Rabbi Bender asked his host Mr. Schneier If he would send his son, Isadore to yeshiva. After much thought, the Scheiners agreed to send Isadore – their only son with Rabbi Bender, who accompanied Isadore back to a Yeshiva.

Now, as they say, the rest is history. Isador, the public-school graduate from Pittsburgh who wanted to become a mathematician went on to become the great **Rav Yitzchak Scheiner zt"l** the world-famous Rosh Yeshiva of Kamenitz in Yerushalayim!

We see from here the incredible power of reaching out. We see the power of positivity. One has no idea how far his actions can go. Rav Yitzchok Scheiner went from a public school boy to one of the great Torah leaders! Why? Because someone reached out! Someone took a positive interest in him!

True Greatness!

In this week's Parsha we learn about a very important mitzvah – the law of burial in the earth. The pasuk says that you should bury a person because an unburied corpse is a curse to Hashem. There is a question here. This pasuk that teaches us the very important precept of Judaism, the mitzvah of burial, is speaking about a criminal. The pasuk is talking about a sinner. Even so, the Gemara in Sanhedrin, says that this pasuk is precisely where we derive that there is a mitzvah of burial. The question is why. Why is that? Why do we learn out a mitzvah from a sinner?

I heard a beautiful answer based on the Meforshim from my father, Rav Yitzchok Fingerer: The reason why we learn out the special mitzvah of burial from a bad person is because it's teaching us that no matter what a person has done in his or her life, that's not what defines them. Every person has a divine soul, and every person is worthy of a proper burial.

What an incredible thing! Now, we must ask ourselves, if a criminal, deviant, or sinner must have a proper Jewish burial and be treated with respect, then how much more so should we give dignity and honor to a good person, to a person who lives amongst us? How much more so should we show respect to a brother or sister? To a friend or a neighbor? - Let's try our best to honor everyone in our midst. Let's try to see the potential and greatness in others!

In the 1940s as Nazi rule descended on Germany the Jews began searching for ways to flee the prosecution. A nice Jewish family was desperate to leave before it was too late. One day they heard that a government office in Berlin was issuing visas. Determined to save her family, the young mother traveled to Berlin and made her way to the office. As she got closer, she became despondent and stopped in her tracks. She saw a long line formed. Hundreds of people were waiting for the visas. The mother took her place in the back of the line and waited for hours and hours in the sweltering heat. A few

hours later, an official announced that the workday had ended and that if anyone needed a visa, they should return the next day early in the morning.

The desperate mother didn't give up and she found somewhere to sleep. She was determined to save her family. When she returned the next morning, the lines were already out the door. Once again, she waited and waited, but unfortunately, she didn't get her turn. The office had distributed its quota of visas and could no longer help anyone. Cries came out from the desperate and famished crowd, but there was nothing to do. Slowly the crowd began to disperse but the young mother stayed in place shaken by the thought that her family may be stuck in Germany.

As she stood there, an official emerged from the office. Without much thought, the young mother approached her and said, "I just want to thank you for your tireless and incredible efforts. You are so great!" The official smiled and continued on her way.

The young mother didn't know what to do. She sat on a bench and started to cry. A few minutes later she felt a presence near her. She turned around and saw the official who worked in the office. With a small smile, the official turned to the mother and said, "You were right. It has been a hard and tedious day. It was even more painful to turn others away. However, only one person had the kindness and decency to thank and acknowledge me. That person was you. I think I may be able to get a few more visas for you and your family."

That's exactly what happened. The official brought the shocked mother to the office and issued her the last of the few precious life-saving visas. The family escaped the Nazis. Why? Because of a few kind words. What a story! The incredible power of seeing a tiny spark of greatness in others. (Flashes of Greatness)



Empathy

The Passuk says **לְכָל־אֲבֵדַת אָחִיךָ אֲשֶׁר־תֹּאבַד מִמֶּנּוּ וּמְצָאתָהּ לֹא תוּכַל לְהִתְעַלֵּם** -"If one finds the lost object of his fellow Jew he must return it and not hide himself". (22:3) Rashi explains this passuk to mean, do not make believe that you didn't see it.

"Not hiding oneself" means that a person has to develop feelings for his fellow Jew. If he doesn't develop these feelings, he won't even see the lost object. The Passuk is commanding us to "feel" for our fellow Jew, thereby being sensitive to his loss and noticing it. The Passuk means to teach us that in all aspects of life we must empathize with our friends' problems and issues.

Rav Shach always said that the main mitzvah of Tzedaka and Chessed is to "notice" and feel the lack in your friend.

When it comes to Avrohom Avinu's great Chessed with the 3 Arabs, it says, "**וירא והנה שלושה אנשים ניצבים עליו וירא**" the word "vayar" is used twice. This passuk exemplifies the entire chessed of Avrohom Avinu. When the passuk says that he "saw", it means to say that Avraham "saw" in a global way what their needs were. This word "Vayar", portrays how Avraham preformed chessed his entire life.

R' Simcha Zissel from Kelm said that he was trained himself to have recognition of the need for each and every Jew in Klal Yisroel. He was recognizing that each and every Jew is responsible for something… this one makes my shoes, this one delivers the food… Through this, he would develop kinship with every single Jew.

R' Yochanan ben Zakai says in Brochos **דף י"ז** that nobody preceded him in saying Shalom. Why was he so careful about this? He was

sensitizing himself to the existence and importance of every other human being.

In truth, to develop strong feelings for our fellow man is a very great task. However, we should be aware that this is really in our nature, and this should make it easier for us. Therefore we see that it is in our nature as Jews to empathize with our friends as much as we care about ourselves because in essence we are all one.

We should all be זוכה to מחזק ourselves in this great Mitzvah of being sensitive to our friends' needs and feelings and doing only true kindness towards our fellow Jew.

Rachmanus

This week's parsha includes the mitzva of *shiluach hakein*, in which one who chances upon a bird's nest and sees the mother bird sitting either on its chicks or eggs, has to send the mother bird away before taking the eggs or chicks for himself. Medrash Rabba 10 states that "because the mother bird was engaged in building the world, she deserves to be saved." The Ramban explains that *shiluach hakein* is intended to inculcate in us the trait of *rachmanus*.

In our day and age, where the supermarket frozen poultry section seems light years away from a bird's nest, it's hard to imagine how *shiluach hakein* engenders *rachmanus*. Think back, though, to the pre-industrial age when live chickens were brought to a *shochet*, bird-trapping was a legitimate way of procuring food, and a mother bird unwilling to abandon her nest was an easy target.

Only, we should ask: If the Torah wanted to teach us *rachmanus*, why is this mitzva limited to birds? Why not command us to send away a mother deer or cow? Moreover, in a number of mitzvos, undomesticated animals and fowl (*chaya ve'of)* have the same *din* (such as in*kisui hadam* and the heter of *chelev*). Why here are birds singled out as opposed to other undomesticated animals?

Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, in his sefer Oznayim LaTorah, explains that the mesirus nefesh of the mother bird for its offspring is of a level far beyond that of other animals. Most baby animals look exactly like their mother immediately upon birth, whereas the mother bird lays eggs that have no semblance of their species and exhibit no signs of life whatsoever. Nevertheless, the mother bird sits on its nest, depriving herself of food and drink, loyally guarding and warming her offspring. When a predator approaches, the mother bird represses her natural instinct to flee for her life and holds fast to her young.

This, explains Rav Sorotzkin, is only possible because Hashem imbued the mother bird with an especial love for her offspring, which leads her to be *moser nefesh* for them — even though they don't show any signs of life or similarity to her. *Shiluach hakein* is predicated on a mother's rachmanus for her young, and this is the Torah's lesson to us: we must empathize with that love, respect it and not, *chalila*, exploit it, as the Medrash says: "because the mother bird was engaged in building the world, she deserves to be saved."

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz notes that particularly now, in the month of Elul, we should make it our business to develop the trait of *rachmanus*, as the Gemara (Shabbos 151b) states, that "when one has mercy on others, he is dealt with mercifully from Heaven; but one who is not merciful toward others will not be dealt with mercifully from Heaven."

Many of the tefillos of Rosh Hashana express our desperate need for Hashem's mercy, and the way to bring about a merciful relation from Heaven is for us to act mercifully in our own lives.

Rav Shlomo Wolbe would point out that *rachmanus* is not as easy as it seems. Many of us think we're being considerate to others when in fact we may be doing just the opposite. People are different, and each person needs different things. One person may need a smile and patience, another may need an encouraging nudge; others need

advice while still others are in dire need of material assistance. *Rachmanus* requires that we first understand the needs of those around us.

Rav Avraham Genichovsky, one of the Roshei Yeshivos of Tchebin, was a man who engaged in the *chassadim* that many others were not interested in doing.

One time, as he was walking outside Rav Genichovsky overheard children crying from an apartment on an upper story. He climbed up the stairs to the front door to enquire if everything was alright, and when the children were unable to open the door for him, he understood that the parents were not home and had locked their children inside. Rav Genichovsky went back to his home and returned with a ladder, which he then positioned against the wall of the building and climbed up until he reached a window through which he could talk to the children. He calmed them down and then proceeded to tell them a long, entertaining bed-time story.

May we develop *rachmanus* and merit Hashem's *rachamim* on the *Yom Hadin*!

The Shla HaKadosh related that before going to his *chuppa*, he went to his Rebbi to ask him for a *bracha* and words of guidance as he prepared to embark on a new stage in his life.

The Shla's Rebbi told him, "You need to be very careful about two things. You have to do everything with *kedusha*, particularly when eating and when with your wife. Even if you are engaging in permitted pleasure, you must do so *lesheim shamayim*. If you do so, a great light will come to you and open up your entire *avodas Hashem*!"

The Shla took the counsel of his Rebbi very seriously and later in his life he said that this advice is what helped him become the great man that he was.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Honoring His Presence



In this week's *sedrah* we are introduced to the Jewish soldier who is going out to battle on behalf of his people. **כִּי תֵצֵא מַחֲנֶה עַל אֹיְבֶיךָ** – *When you go out in a camp against your enemies …* (23:10). And we note something queer about the appurtenances that he carries with him. **וְיָתֵד תִּהְיֶה לְךָ עַל אָזְנֶךָ** – *In addition to his weapons of war – his sword and his bow and arrow and his lance – he also had a stick dangling at his side; a shovel of sorts.*

That's how you could recognize a Jewish soldier; he had a small shovel with him. I'm sure there were other things too that made him different from a gentile soldier — many things — but it's this one that our *parsha* points out. He has with him a tool for digging.

A shovel? What for? And so the *possuk* explains as follows: **וְיָד תִּהְיֶה לְךָ מִחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה** – *You should designate a place outside of the army camp* (*ibid.*). Wherever the Jewish soldiers set up camp, a certain

area was designated outside of the camp boundaries, **וְהָיָה בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ חוּץ**– It means when a soldier has to relieve himself, he must walk out of the camp to take care of his needs. You can't make your functions inside the *machaneh*.

And even when you go out, that's not enough; you have to take that shovel with you, **וְחָפַרְתָּה בָהּ** – *and you will use it to dig a hole,* **וְשַׁבְתָּ וְכִסִּיתָ אֶת צֵאָתֶךָ** – *and then you will use it again to cover up the waste* (*ibid.*). That's why it's a Torah law that every Jewish soldier must have with him a shovel.

- **Clean for the Shechina**

That's quite an interesting introduction to the subject of a Jewish army going out to war. We would have thought it would tell us about preparations for battle, war maneuvers or at least about certain prayers that should be said. And I'm sure that was done too. But the first thing the Torah tells us is that you must make sure to keep the camp clean; there shouldn't be any excrement; no dirt or odor.

Now, there's no question that to keep the camp sanitary is a good thing — any army camp would do well to have such a policy — but from the *pessukim* it seems to be a very important thing, one of the *most* important!

And it is! The Torah continues: **כִּי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מִתְהַלֵּךְ בְּקֶרֶב מַחֲנֶךָ** – *You have to follow this procedure because Hashem your G-d is walking amidst your camp,* **לְהַצִּילְךָ וּלְתֵת אֹיְבֶיךָ** – *to rescue you from your enemies.* When Jews go out to battle, the Shechina comes down to help them. That's how it was. A camp of Jewish soldiers going out to war by order of the Sanhedrin was a place where the Shechina was!

Oh! That's already something different! The Shechina is here! That already requires an adjustment in our behavior. **וְלֹא יִרְאֶה בְךָ עֶרְוַת דָּבָר** – *He shouldn't see anything shameful, anything unsightly, in the camp,* **וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ** – *and the Shechina will turn back from you and forsake you.*

- **Exalted Behavior**

That's what it means *k'pshuto*. It doesn't mean He sees any sin, but there's something that's not clean there. And if the camp is not a dignified place, if there are spots here and there where refuse is dropped and flies gather, the camp is not considered worthy of the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu and that's already enough to cause the Shechina to depart.

So here's a soldier. He's not doing anything wrong, he thinks. He can't deny his natural urges, so he goes off someplace and he performs his needs, but he doesn't cover it up. That's all! What's the sin? Is that so wicked?

The answer is that when you know the Shechina is here, then even *that* is a wickedness. When the Shechina is present it requires an entirely different way of behaving; your demeanor changes – the way you speak, the things you say, the things you do. You don't act in front of a king the way you act in front of a nobody. And if *chas v'shalom* you do, if you're disrespectful, then **וְשָׁב מֵאַחֲרֶיךָ**, the Shechina will forsake you. And that means everything! If He won't be there to aid you in battle then all the military maneuvers and all the prayers in the world won't help. All the weapons won't help unless the Jewish soldier has with him a *yased al azeinecha* – in addition to his weapons, a shovel too.

- **Jews or Israelis?**

Before I continue, I'll say one thing that shouldn't have to be said, but because there's so much confusion today, I'll take the time to say it. When we say "Jewish soldier" that has nothing at all to do with the Israeli army. **כִּי תֵצֵא מַחֲנֶה עַל אֹיְבֶךָ** means when you go out to fight a battle that the *chachmei HaTorah* command you to go out and fight; it's a camp where the *aron habris* goes out with you, a place of *kedusha* and *limud torah. That's* an army camp that brings down the Shechina.

The army of the *medina* is the opposite of *kedusha*. The purpose of the army is to make Jews into Israelis. They themselves say that the Israeli army is specifically set up for the purpose of breaking down the morality of the Am Yisroel. A general in the Israeli army wrote that in his book. I won't quote now his exact words because we're in a shul but anyone who knows anything knows that it's a place of *ervas davar*. Of course they fight wars too, they defend Jews, no question about it, and we pray that they should succeed in protecting the *frum yishuv* but it's not a holy camp.

In the ancient times, however, we had an army not of Israelis but of Jews, and so they fulfilled the *possuk* of **וְהָיָה מַחֲנֶיךָ קָדוֹשׁ** – *Your camp should be made holy*. And how do you make the camp a holy place for the Shechina to come? By behaving in a way that shows you're aware of the Shechina. Even something as natural as taking care of your needs is done with the awareness that you're in the presence of the Shechina. That's a *machaneh kadosh!*

- **His Glory Fills The Earth**

That's the great lesson of our *possuk* – we are the ones who bring the Shechina into our lives! It's how we behave, the respect we show for the presence of the Shechina "Walking amidst our camp," that makes it a place that's fitting for Him to come. And the more you put into it, the more you act in a way that befits the Shechina; the more the Shechina comes down. And it's a principle that applies not just to the army camp, but to anywhere the Shechina is.

Now, we know that the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu is everywhere; **מְלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ** – He's in the entire universe. The truth is that there isn't any space that's vacant of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. But we learn from the Torah and from the reiterated statements of our sages that there is such a thing as Shechina, which means the intensification of the presence of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Talking to Hakadosh Baruch Hu

The first time I traveled to America to raise funds for my yeshivah was 35 years ago. I boarded the plane and noticed that **Rav Don Segal** was sitting in first class. I said to myself, I must ask for a brachah. I went over to him and told him that this was the first time I was flying to America on behalf of my yeshivah, and I was hoping he could give me a brachah for success.

He said to me, "When Esther stood before Achashveirosh to seek a pardon on behalf of Klal Yisrael, she took an immense risk. He could have killed her on the spot. They (she, Achashveirosh, and Haman) sat down to the feast that Esther had organized , and Achashveirosh asked, 'Who is this and where is he who dared to do this?' And she answered, 'An adversary and an enemy-this wicked Haman.'

"Rabbi Eliezer said (Megillah 16a) that Esther actually pointed toward Achashveirosh, but an angel came and pushed her hand toward Haman. This raises a huge question. How could Esther consider doing such a thing? With just the pointing of a finger, she was endangering herself and all of Klal Yisrael!

"The Gra explains Esther's puzzling act by pointing out that one's imagination makes a deep impression on a person. Sometimes a person wants to speak to Shimon, but he calls him Reuven because he was thinking about Reuven. So, too, when speaking before a king, the hearts and minds of tzaddikim are attached to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. When Esther was sitting in front of Achashveirosh, she was actually communicating with Hashem, and therefore her thoughts were on Achashveirosh who had issued the terrible decree. Because of this, she erred and pointed toward the king."

Rav Segal told me, "You, too, when you speak to a fellow Jew about the yeshivah's need for funds, have in mind that you are really talking to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: 'Abba, the yeshivah needs funds.

There needs to be Torah in the world.' Don't focus on the person who is sitting in front of you. You're talking to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and He is listening to you."

I carried Rav Segal's advice with me throughout my fundraising trip. Everywhere I went I reminded myself: I'm sitting and talking to Hashem, and this Jew just happens to hear what I am saying to Him.

It was my first fundraising trip, and I had no idea what was considered a successful trip. After I reported to the yeshivah how much I had raised, they told me that I had been amazingly successful. Some of the philanthropists I had asked for contributions gave amounts in four figures, and the lowest donation hadn't been less than a hundred dollars.

Then Hashem sent me the biggest lesson of my life. A relative of mine recounted that one of the richest men in the country where he lived had been hosted at my grandfather's house in Hungary for meals when he was a young man. For a period of time, he even slept there at night and learned with my uncle. He always asked my relative about me and my family to find out how we were doing.

"Let's ask him for a donation," my relative suggested. "He gives a lot of tzedakah."

The philanthropist greeted me warmly. He embraced me, and we sat and talked for two hours, reminiscing about the family. I thought I would surely receive a huge donation at the end of the visit. Rav Don Segal's advice went completely out of my mind. After two hours of conversation, I told the philanthropist why I had come to see him.

"Certainly. It's a privilege for me to participate in such a big mitzvah." And he pulled eighteen dollars from his pocket! No one else had given me such a low sum.

What a shame that I had sat and spoken to the rich man when all the time I could have been speaking with Hashem Himself!



The "Easiest of the Easy" and the "Hardest of the Hard"

This week's Parsha, contains the mitzvah of 'Shiluch HaKen.' The Torah commands us that when one finds a mother bird nesting on her eggs, if he wants to take the small birds he must first send away the mother. Only then is he allowed to take the children for himself [Devorim 22:6-7].

The pasuk concludes that if one keeps this mitzvah it will be good for him and he will have length of days. There is only one other mitzvah in the Torah, which carries this same reward. That is the mitzvah of Kibud Av v'Em.

The Medrash comments on the fact that both the "easiest of the easy" (kal she'bekalos) and the "most difficult of the difficult" (chamur she'bechamuros) have the same reward — length of days. This teaches us, says the Medrash, that we do not really know the reward of the commandments.

Why is the sending away of the mother bird referred to as the easiest of mitzvot and why is honoring one's parents referred to as the most difficult of mitzvot?

The sefer **Shemen HaTov** suggests the following:

The Ramba"n on the Torah tells us that the reason the Torah gave us the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen was to train us in the attribute of mercy. He takes pains to explain that this does not mean that G-d necessarily has mercy on the animals; what it does mean is that G-d is concerned that we should be compassionate people. We should train ourselves in compassion. If one is trained to be compassionate

even to a bird, this will carry over and he will be compassionate to human beings as well.

If that is the case, this mitzvah is called the easiest of the easy because it is consistent with human nature. We can all relate to this mitzvah. We can all relate to the suffering a mother bird would feel if her children were taken away before her very eyes. We can understand its rationale. Therefore, it is an easy mitzvah to fulfill.

If this is correct, it would follow that Kibud Av is spoken of as the most difficult of mitzvos because it goes AGAINST human emotions.

Why does Kibud Av v'Em run against human emotions? Because, the Rishonim tell us that the basis of the mitzvah of Kibud Av v'em is the concept of Hakaras HaTov — showing gratitude. We, as human beings, do not like to show gratitude. Showing gratitude to someone is acknowledging that we needed that person. Our egos do not want to let us believe that.

We want to think that we are independent and can do things ourselves. To show appreciation means that the other person was needed. Even if it is possible to show appreciation to a stranger and say "Thank-you" for an occasional favor, appreciating parents involves dealing with the fact that, in essence, we owe EVERYTHING to our parents. Our very life was dependent on them. That is difficult to admit. It is difficult for us to say, "I owe you everything."

That is why Kibud Av v'Em is "chamur she'bechamuros" — because it goes against everything that we would like to believe, as opposed to Shiluach HaKen which runs in concert with human emotions.

"The greatest joy comes from bringing light to another person's darkness." ~ Rav Aharon of Karlin (1736-1772)

Common Denominator Between Shiluach HaKein and Kibbud Av V'Em

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of 'Shiluach HaKein'. The Torah says if one finds a bird's nest with mother is sitting and watching the eggs or the chicks, the finder is not allowed to take both the mother and the eggs, but must first send away the mother and then take the eggs. The reward for this is "length of days". [Devarim 22:6-7]

There is only one other place where the Torah uses the expression "in order that it be good with you and you will have length of days" and that is concerning the mitzvah of honoring one's parents.

I heard an observation from **Rav Weinberg, zatz"al**, that there must be some kind of common denominator to these two mitzvos which otherwise appear totally dissimilar and unrelated.

Rav Weinberg explained that the common denominator is that the Torah recognizes and grants great reward for mitzvos which involve recognition of mesiras nefesh (self-sacrifice). When the Torah tells us that we must honor our parents, the Torah is telling us that parents exhibit tremendous mesiras nefesh for their children. One is entitled to the reward of "length of days" as a reward for honoring one's parents, in order to cause people to appreciate the mesiras nefesh that parents exhibit for children. In other words the Torah is giving this rewards so that we will be come to appreciate the great mesiras nefesh of our parents — and to act on that appreciation.

This is exactly the same concept we find concerning Shiluach HaKein. Anyone who has ever tried to catch a bird knows that it is a virtually impossible task. So why will a person ever encounter a situation where he about to catch a bird? Won't the bird fly away? The answer is that the bird is being a mother. Like all mothers, she is willing to sacrifice and give over her own freedom in order to remain with her children. For one to grab that bird and take

advantage of the mesiras nefesh of the maternal instinct from mother to offspring is prohibited. By sending away the mother and not taking advantage of this mesiras nefesh, one shows his appreciation for it. Here too, for that recognition and appreciation of the mesiras nefesh of parents towards offspring, one is entitled to "length of days".

The Secret to Eating With Satisfaction

The Torah tells us that a worker is allowed to eat food from the field in which he is picking. The verse says - "You should eat and be satisfied; but you should not put into your vessel" [23:25].

On a simple level, this is teaching us that while it is OK to eat while working, one is not allowed to put the picked fruit in his shopping bag or suitcase for later consumption.

The Mikdash Mordechai says there is a tremendous lesson here: The key to eating and being satisfied is "do not put in your vessel." If one thinks he has to stash it away, because he doesn't know what tomorrow will bring, then he will never be satisfied with what he has.

There is never enough. One who has 100 wants 200. If one doesn't believe that ultimately, G-d will take care of him, then he will never be secure. There is never a big enough field. There are never enough clients. It is never enough.

If one wants to eat and be satisfied and secure, then one has to believe in the philosophy of not putting in one's vessel. One's hoarding and stashing away and certainly one's dishonesty will never make the difference. Therefore Parnossah becomes a matter of belief, not a matter of honesty.

That is why the Parsha of honest weights is next to the parsha of Amalek, who represents lack of faith in G-d (v'lo Yoreh Elokim).

A Message Hidden in Sofei Teivos Rather Than Roshei Teivos

The Torah provides a draft deferment for the newlywed soldier—"He shall be totally devoted to his house for a complete year" (Devorim 24:5).

The Baal HaTurim notes that the last letter of the words in this pasuk נָקִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵיתוֹ שָׁנָה spells out the ineffable Name of Hashem—***Yud, Hay, Vov, Hay***. The Torah is hinting here that the purpose of giving newlyweds an initial year of complete dedication to one another is so that the Divine Presence should reside in their midst.

The question is: Why is this allusion contained in the **last** letter of each word (***Sofei*** *Teivos*)? Why is it not alluded to in the **first** letter of each word (***Roshei*** *Teivos*)?

Perhaps this alludes to the following: Yes, in the early years of one's marriage people get along. Honeymoons are great. At that point, it is rather easy to create an environment of *Shalom Bayis*, where the *Shechina* is *Shruyah Beineihem* (the Divine Presence resides in their midst). The challenge is ***Sofei Teivos***! When people have been married for quite some time—**his** idiosyncrasies drive **her** crazy and **her** idiosyncrasies drive **him** crazy. The respective parties of the marriage are perhaps not so particular that it should be such a loving relationship anymore.

That is why the pasuk emphasizes that the Shechina's presence should be perceived in a marriage through ***Sofei*** *Teivos* and not only through ***Roshei*** *Teivos*. For this reason, the name of *Hashem* is spelled out at the end of the words rather than at the beginning.

"Be proud of yourself for surviving those private battles no one else knows about." ~ Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (1823-1900)

Broad Application of the Prohibition of "Ox & Donkey"

In this week's portion we have the prohibition of Kelaei Behemah — one is not allowed to work with two different animals under the same yoke: "Do not plow with an ox and a donkey together" [25:4].

The Sefer HaChinuch gives a reason for this commandment: The reason is "Tz'ar baalei chayim" (causing pain to animals). He explains that animals don't like to be together with different types of animals, and certainly not to work together under the same yoke.

The Chinuch goes on to say, "…and everyone who is wise in heart will take a lesson from this not to appoint two people of different natures and temperaments to work together on the same project."

If the Torah is concerned about the pain such joint harnessing will cause to animals, certainly we should be concerned about human suffering that can come from inappropriate match-ups. [See The Daas Zekeinim]

Better Let Him Die Now Innocent, Than Die Later Guilty

At the beginning of this week's parsha we have the portion of the wayward and rebellious son. The Gemara in Sanhedrin talks about the various ways in which a child becomes a Ben Sorer u'Moreh. The child steals, eats a certain amount of meat, drinks a certain amount of wine and subsequent to that he has a status of Ben Sorer u'Moreh.

The Talmud asks the obvious question — for these minor infractions he should be deserving of death? The Gemarah answers, he is not put to death for what he has done now, but he is judged based on where this pattern of behavior will end up.

The text of our Gemara [Sanhedrin 72a] is "in the end he will drive his parents bankrupt, and will turn to robbery, and ultimately to murder…"consequently "…he should better die innocent, than die guilty."

The Talmud Yerushalmi [Sanhedrin 8:7] has virtually the same text as the Bavli, except that the Yerushalmi concludes the sequence of bankruptcy, robbery, and murder with "…and finally, he will forget his learning". This Yerushalmi is amazing!

R. Yaakov Ruderman zt"l used to always say that we see from this Yerushalmi a powerful insight: No matter how bad a person gets, as long as he still has a relationship to Limud HaTorah, there is hope. The Yerushalmi is saying that as bad as a person is, all hope is not lost so long as he has a relationship to Torah learning. The power of Torah is so strong that it can still bring him back.

People may have strayed from the correct path in many areas, but as long as they still had a "shaychus" to learning, there was still hope for them. However, once a person does all these things and forgets his learning… then there is no hope. Concerning this the Yerushalmi says, "Let him better die (now) innocent than die (later) guilty".

The Altar Sheds Tears for Those Unable to "Sacrifice"

In this week's portion we have the section of Divorce. The Torah recognizes that perhaps there are two people that are just too different and too distinct to remain together and so it introduces the concept of a Divorce ("Get") to terminate the marriage.

The Gemara says in Tractate Gittin [90b] that a Divorce is a terrible thing. When two people get divorced "even the Altar sheds tears." There is much homiletic comment on why specifically it is the Altar (as opposed, for example, to the Table or the Menorah) that does this weeping.

One of the comments made is that the Altar is the place of Sacrifices. What is a Sacrifice? It is that a person has to realize that sometimes we have to Sacrifice in life. Really I should have to sacrifice myself, except that the Torah gave a parsha of

"Korbonos", that allows for animal sacrifice in lieu of self-sacrifice. The Altar symbolizes the concept of Sacrifice in Jewish life.

Invariably most if not all divorces come about because people are not willing to sacrifice. The root causes of divorce are always because people are selfish; they are into "themselves", and not willing to give. The external causes are just a manifestation of a deeper problem — a sickness of selfishness, an inability to sacrifice and to give up of oneself for someone else.

It is therefore most appropriate that the Altar which represents the concept of Sacrifice sheds tears for those who were unable to sacrifice and as a result had to go through the sad chapter of "Get".

Doing A Mitzvah Is No Excuse For Disregarding Another's Feelings

In the laws regarding the sending away of the mother bird (Shiluach haKen), the verse states "You shall surely send away the mother and the children you shall take for yourselves". Our Sages explain that it would be very painful for the mother bird to see her young chicks being taken away. To avoid causing this mental anguish, we are commanded to first send away the mother bird before taking her chicks. The Talmud [Chulin 141] infers from the tautology (shaleach teshalach) that the law applies even if the birds are needed for a matter involving a mitzvah.

Rav Mordechai Katz observes that there is a tendency sometimes to trample on peoples' feelings when we are on the way to do a mitzvah. We may tend to feel that "the performance of the mitzvah takes priority over people's feelings". We take the approach that the doing of the mitzvah gives us carte blanche to disregard people's feelings. "After all, I'm doing a mitzvah!"

The pasuk therefore emphasizes, "No. You must first send away the mother — even if your purpose is to do a mitzvah." The fact that you

are performing a mitzvah is no license to disregard the pain that you will be inflicting on the mother.

The Chazon Ish always used to recite the afternoon prayers in the early afternoon ("Mincha Gedolah"). One day he could not gather the requisite prayer quorum together. Fifteen minutes passed; twenty minutes passed; they still did not have a minyan. Finally a tenth person arrived. At that point the Chazon Ish's brother-in-law, Rav Shmuel Granerman told the Chazon Ish, "It is now ten to one. I have an appointment at one o'clock. I told someone that I would meet him in a certain location."

The Chazon Ish immediately told him, if you set up an appointment for one o'clock, then you need to be there for the appointment. Just because I need a minyan or these other people need a minyan, does not give you the right to disregard your word and keep somebody else waiting. "Certainly you must leave now. We either will have a minyan without you or we will not have a minyan without you; but your concern is to keep your word and not make the other fellow wait for you."

"You shall surely send away the mother bird" — even if a matter of a mitzvah is involved.

Don't Take Advantage of People's Compassion

This week's parsha contains one of the most fascinating mitzvos in the Torah: "Shiluach HaKen" [Devarim 22:6-7], sending away the mother bird. The Torah says that if a person finds a bird nesting on its flock, he is not allowed to take the mother and the chicks or eggs at the same time. First he must send away the mother and only then can he take the eggs or chicks.

This mitzvah involves both a positive and negative commandment. We are forbidden from taking the eggs without sending away the

mother. On the other hand, we are commanded to take the eggs after first sending away the mother.

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (1849-1932) explains that the problem with taking the eggs without sending away the mother is that one is taking advantage of the natural and instinctive compassion that every mother has for her brood. We are forbidden to misuse this instinct in order to trap the bird.

Birds are normally very difficult to trap. As soon as one approaches a bird it will quickly fly away. But in this situation, when a person approaches a mother bird, it does not fly away. She suppresses her natural inclination and remains, trying to protect her brood.

We would be able to catch the bird - something that is normally almost impossible to do — but the Torah says that we may not do so. The Torah does not want us to take advantage of the mother's natural instinct to protect her children. Doing so would be misusing one of the most basic and fundamental instincts that G-d gave to His creatures and one that the Torah values highly - that of compassion.

The Torah does not tolerate "cashing in" on a mother's feeling of compassion for her children in order to trap the mother. On the contrary, the Halacha insists that one must first send the mother to freedom, before attempting to take the eggs or chicks.

What lesson can be derived from this mitzvah?

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld writes that some people are "soft touches". When approached by a stranger who gives them a story of need or hardship they just cannot say 'no'. The Torah warns us not to take advantage of such people. We are admonished from misusing, abusing, or capitalizing on the instincts and emotions of another human being.

This does not mean that a charity collector is only allowed to collect from the "toughest guys in the shul". No one ever suggested that

nice guys should not give Tzedakah. However, we must be careful not to abuse or take advantage of such a person or situation.

When we are aware of beautiful instincts - whether they exist in a mother bird or in a person - we should not take advantage and abuse those wonderful traits. This is a lesson to be learned from the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKen.

Parents Need To Speak To Their Children With A Unified Voice

This week's parsha contains the laws of the Wayward and Rebellious Son (ben sorer u'moreh). This is one of the most difficult chapters in the Torah to comprehend. The Talmud in the eighth chapter of Sanhedrin explains that this is a very exceptional situation. The parents notice a trend in their young son's spiritual development that will almost inevitably lead to a lifestyle involving robbery and perhaps even murder. Therefore the Torah advises that he should be put to death "at the stage in life when he is still innocent," rather than allowing him to mature to a point where he will actually be fully deserving of death.

There is an opinion in the Talmud [Sanhedrin 71a] that an actual case of ben sorer u'moreh never happened and never will happen. It was, according to this opinion, included in the Torah merely for the lessons of life which it contains. At any rate, the chapter clearly does present lessons regarding how parents should and should not act when raising children.

Rav Dovid Feinstein makes an interesting linguistic inference. When the Torah originally describes the situation of the ben sorer u'moreh, it states "he did not listen to the voice of his father nor to the voice of his mother" [21:18]. However when the Torah describes the testimony of the parents in Beis Din, there is a subtle change of language: "He does not listen to OUR voice" [21:20].

There are no secret formulas to raising good children. Raising children is the most difficult job in the world. However, there are clearly certain things parents should try to avoid. Parents should always present a unified message of their expectations to their children. When a child hears mixed messages – one thing from the father and another thing from the mother – that is a garden in which weeds can grow.

When the child hears mixed messages, he follows whatever he thinks is right. Since one parent says one thing and the other parent says another thing – "let the third pasuk come and reconcile between them." Even if the parents present a unified approach as to what is good and what is not good, what can be done and what cannot be done – there is still no guarantee that the children will come out perfect. But at least the parents have removed one of the greatest reasons why children go astray.

Therefore, the Torah stressed at the outset that the parents were not of one voice and one opinion. The child did not listen to his father's voice and independently he did not listen to his mother's alternate voice. Only subsequently, when the child has already left the tried and true path, do the parents come and, sadly, tell the elders of the court: "Now we are together. We have a unified voice and we know that what our son is doing is wrong." Unfortunately, by then it is too late.

Parents may have disagreements among themselves as to what is the proper course in raising children. But those disagreements need to be decided among themselves. When parents come before their children, they need to articulate a clear, decisive, and uniform position. When they reach the status of "our voice" rather than "the father's voice" and "the mother's voice," their chances for success will be much greater.

One Set of Measures for Yourself and Another Set for Everyone Else

The Torah says "You shall not have in your house a measure and a measure – a large one and a small one. A perfect and honest weight shall you have…" (Devarim 25:14-15). It is prohibited to possess dishonest weights and measures. A person must have the same set of measuring utensils for himself and for his customers; the same set for his "good customers" and for his "bad customers". No cheating is permitted!

Rav Menachem Mendel of Kotzk says that when the Torah insists that a person may only possess one set of measures, the Torah is not only talking about commercial scales and tape measures. A person needs to have one set of standards. It is forbidden to have one set of standards for yourself and another set of standards for someone else. - A person needs to be consistent.

Vilna Gaon (Quoting Zohar): Sending Away Mother Bird Tests – Cruelty with a Purpose

The pasuk teaches in Parshas Ki Seitzei: "You shall surely send away the mother (bird) and the offspring you shall take for yourself, in order that it will be good for you, and your days will be lengthened." [22:7]. This is one of two mitzvos in the Torah regarding which the Torah says the reward for its fulfillment is a long life. The other famous mitzva for which the Torah tells us the reward is *Arichas Yomim* is the mitzvah of *Kibud Av v'Eim* (honoring one's parents).

What is the commonality of the mitzvah of *Shiluach haKen* (sending away the mother bird) and the mitzvah of *Kibud Av v'Eim*? The Yerushalmi in Masechta Peah says that these two *mitzvos* are the polar opposite of one another. The Yerushalmi calls *Kibud Av v'Eim* "*Chamurah she'b'chamuros*" (the hardest of the hard *mitzvos*). It is one of the most difficult *mitzvos* to fulfill. It is very difficult

for a person, at least at some point in his or her lifetime, not to have treated his or her parents improperly. The respect that we owe and should give to our parents is incalculable!

On the other hand, the Yerushalmi categorizes *Shiluach haKen* as "*Kal she'b'kalos*" (the easiest of the easy *mitzvos*). It is a mitzvah that does not cost anything and does not require preparation. This is how the Yerushalmi formulates the "common denominator" between these two *mitzvos*. The Torah specifies the exact same reward for the hardest of*mitzvos* as it does for the simplest of *mitzvos,* to emphasize that we have no way of figuring out the reward for *mitzvos* based on evaluation of the level of difficulty to perform them.

The Vilna Gaon has a different take on this, based on the **Zohar**. The Gaon says that when a person examines both of these *mitzvos*, he assumes that the reason why the Torah gives the exact same reward for each of them is because they are apparently similar in nature. *Shiluach HaKen* appears to be a *mitzvah* teaching compassion: Do not take the baby birds in front of their mother. Have mercy on the mother bird by first sending her away and only then taking her chicks. (As the Ramban emphasizes, this is not a question of compassion for animals in the style of PETA (People for Ethical Treatment of Animals) but rather, the Torah wants to teach **us** compassion: If we need to have compassion even for a bird, *kal v'chomer*, we must have compassion on people!).

Likewise, *Kibud Av v'Eim* is a mitzvah of compassion. People need to take care of their parents and be beholden to them. They need to respect them. Our parents brought us into this world! They educated us. They clothed us. *Kibud Av* and *Shiluach haKen* seem to be the same type of *mitzvah,* and therefore they have the same type of reward.

The Vilna Gaon points out that according to the Zohar, just the **reverse** is true. Rather than being a *mitzvah* of compassion, the

Zohar claims that *Shiluach HaKen* is a *mitzvah* of cruelty (*Achzariyus*). The *mitzvah* of *Shiluach HaKen* is to send away the mother from off of her nest so that the mother bird will suffer! The Zohar explains that the goal is for the mother bird to feel pain and want to kill herself in anguish of losing her chicks!

The Torah is not asking us through this *mitzvah* to be compassionate, but to be cruel! It is not cruelty for cruelty's sake. The goal is to arouse Mercy in the *Ribono shel Olam* so that He will have Mercy on His creatures. But the bottom line is that unlike the comfort we are to provide our parents, *Shiluach HaKen* requires us to cause pain to the mother bird.

If these *mitzvos* are in fact polar opposites of one another, why then do they have the exact same reward? The Gaon explains – it is because that is what the Torah demands of us as human beings: To be in charge of our emotions. Sometimes the *Ribono shel Olam* says "I want you to be compassionate" and sometimes He says "I want you to be an *Achzar*" because there is a purpose in this cruelty. These two *mitzvos* have the same reward because, in combination, they bring a person to *Shleimus* (completion).

For a person who is compassionate by nature, *Kibud Av v'Eim* is an easy *mitzvah* to fulfill. If a person's parents are old or infirm and they need help, a compassionate person reasons, "Listen, my parents fed me when I was a baby and I would spit out my food at them. Now that my parents are older and cannot take care of themselves, I am going to do the same for them that they did for me!"

That same person, who by nature is a compassionate person, finds it very difficult when he is asked to send away the mother bird so she will cry. But that is what the Torah wants from human beings. The Torah wants people to put aside their human emotions and natural inclinations and follow Divine commands that do not necessarily go with their own grain. Do something that is hard! Do something that goes against your personal *middos* and proclivities.

The tenth and final test of Avraham Avinu (according to most Rishonim) was *Akeidas Yitzchak*. "…**Now** I know that you fear Elokim…" [Bereshis 22:12]. What is with this emphasis on "**now** I know"? After the other nine tests, the *Ribono shel Olam* did not see that Avraham was G-d fearing? The answer is that the Almighty said, "I know that Avraham is a *ba'al chessed*. I know that acts of kindness come naturally to him. I know that he is a kind-hearted person. But the true test of how devoted a person is to the *Ribono shel Olam* is to see whether he is capable of doing something that goes against every sinew in his body – when asked to do such by the Almighty."

Therefore, the Ribono shel Olam commanded Avraham: Slaughter you son! "Slaughter my son? Destroy my whole life's work – what I stood for?" That is when Hashem could say "**Now** I know that you fear *Elokim*!" after Avraham did something that did **not** fit with his personality.

That is why the Talmud says [Berochos 33b] "One who praises Hashem by saying 'His Mercy reaches the nest of the bird' must be silenced!" The Gaon explains that *Shiluach haKen*, – at least according to the Zohar – is **not** about *rachmanus*. It is about *achzariyus*, but it is about an *achzariyus* which can have a positive result. And that, explains the Gaon, is the reason for the equation of reward between these two "book-end *mitzvos*." The commonality is that they each, in their own way, create *Shleimus* (completion) in a person who needs to subjugate his own natural *middos* and inclinations to the Will of a Higher Power. At the end of the day, that is what it is all about.

"Always look for the good in others – even if sometimes you need to squint to see it." ~ Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809)

The Reason For The Hatred of The Ammonites and Moabites

The Torah teaches that an Ammonite and a Moabite are not allowed to enter the Congregation of Hashem – even 10 generations after they have converted to Judaism they are not allowed to intermarry with a member of the Jewish nation. [Devorim 23:4]. We are furthermore commanded never to seek their peace or welfare [Devorim 23:7]. They are basically excommunicated from entry into the Jewish people.

Next the Torah teaches, "You shall not hate an Edomite (convert), for he is your brother; you shall not hate an Egyptian (convert) because you were a stranger in his land. Their third-generation offspring (following their conversion) may enter the Congregation of Hashem." [Devroim 23:8-9] Targum Yonasan adds a very interesting explanation on the prohibition to ever marry a descendant of an Ammonite or Moabite: Even if they convert (and profess their loyalty to Judaism), there is still deep-seated hatred in their hearts that lasts forever.

Logically, if we took a poll as to who would have a greater likelihood of hating the Jews eternally – the descendants of Esav (Edom), the descendants of Egypt, or the descendants of Lot (Ammon and Moav) most people would not chose the descendants of Lot. Esav has a long-standing gripe with us. Esav felt that Yaakov stole his right as the first born.

The Egyptians should certainly hate us – we in effect destroyed their entire country. We took the mightiest empire in the world and reduced it to rubble. Every one of their first born were killed. And yet, somehow after a few generations, the Edomite and Egyptian can overcome their perhaps understandable hatred of Jews. But we never really wronged the offspring of Lot, the nephew of Avraham Avinu. On the contrary, Avraham was terribly kind to Lot: he took him in, he set him up in business, and ultimately he saved

Lot's life. Logically speaking, they should owe us a favor and love us. It is specifically those nations which hate us eternally! Why is that?

I once heard the answer to this insight from the Rosh Yeshiva, **Rav Yaakov Ruderman, zt"l**, [1901-1987] who used to quote it in the name of the **Chasam Sofer**. This is a fundamental insight into human behavior. The Chasam Sofer used to say, ***"I don't understand why this person hates me. I've never done him a favor!"*** On the face of it, this does not seem to make any sense. We would expect the concluding statement to be, "I have never done anything wrong to him."

However, that is not what the Chasam Sofer said. When one does a favor for someone, it creates a psychological debt that the recipient owes his benefactor something. Gratitude is expected and people do not like to be indebted to anyone. The greater the favor was, the greater the odds that it will be impossible to properly repay and the greater the chances that this debt which cannot be repaid will cause hatred in the heart of the recipient towards his benefactor.

This is the difference between Ammon and Moab on the one hand and Edom and Egypt on the other. Truly, we destroyed Egypt, but after a few generations, one can get over that. The "offense" toward Edom happened 4000 years ago. Esav did all right for himself. They can get over that. But Lot realized that Avraham saved his life. If not for his uncle, he would not be around. That debt of gratitude, which could never be repaid could psychologically only be dealt with by denying the favor and hating the benefactor instead. That hatred of Lot for Avraham was passed down through his daughters to the nations of Ammon and Moab and it is a hatred which lasts forever.

"The true test of a person's spirituality is how they treat other people." ~ Rabbi Yeruchem Levovitz (1873-1936)

If You've Got It, Don't Flaunt It

The pasuk says [22:10] "Do not plow together with an ox and a donkey". This is one of several forms of the prohibition of Kilayim – mixing of species. This pasuk prohibits the yoking together of different species of animals.

The Daas Zekeinim meBa'alay Tosfos provide an interesting reason for this prohibition. A donkey does not chew its cud. An ox, on the other hand, does chew its cud. The donkey and the ox would be yoked together, and the donkey would see the ox chewing and think that it was eating something. The donkey would become upset: "I missed lunch. When did it happen?" He would become jealous of the ox, because he would think the ox was fed and he was not.

In fact, of course, they both had the same lunch. But the ox chews its cud so it appears to be continuously eating, thus giving the donkey the misimpression that he has been cheated. According to the Daas Zekeinim, the Torah is trying to avoid this psychological pain that the donkey would experience.

Rav Chaim Shmeulivtz says that if the Torah is so worried that we might cause donkeys to be jealous of their yoke-mates, then how must the Torah feel about making another human being jealous? However, it can happen very inadvertently. We might tell our friend about how great things are going, what a wonderful vacation we had, etc. This other person may, perhaps, not be in the same situation. He may experience jealousy and pain. If the Torah is concerned that we should not stir up the jealousy of a donkey over a wrong impression, then how much more so must we be sensitive and careful not to flaunt the goodness with which G-d has perhaps graced us.

Contrary to the American ideal of "If you've got it, flaunt it", the Torah ideal is "If you've got it, DON'T flaunt it!".

The Sefer Moser Derech notes that in the month of Elul, approaching the High Holidays, our merits are being carefully weighed. People therefore try to "pile on" meritorious actions during this time.

He cites the calculation of the **Chofetz Chaim** that the average person speaks 200 words a minute and therefore claims that a person who learns Torah gets 200 mitzvahs per minute! What else can one do that gives him that kind of reward? In a matter of a few minutes a person can credit himself with hundreds and hundreds of mitzvos!



During WW11, BBC was broadcast all over Europe including to all of the countries occupied by Hitler's regime. Each news bulletin by the BBC opened with a live broadcast of 'Big Ben' tolling the hour, amplifying the magical sound of freedom.

But these broadcasts led to an unexpected danger. You see, ingenious German Nazi physicists found a way to determine the weather conditions in London based on tiny differences in the tone of the broadcast 'Ding Dongs'. Temperature, humidity and air-pressure. And by comparing the tone of these live broadcasts, the German scientists collected useful data about the weather conditions in London.

This information was fed to the Luftwaffe – to the air force of Hitler's army, which was used to improve bombing strategies. This was in the dark days when Nazi Germany was bombing London

incessantly. And this information helped them even more effectively.



When the British Secret Service discovered this, they replaced the live broadcasts with a set recording of the famous clock.

The power and impact of a single word. Every word creates physical and spiritual airwaves, which travel and leave their mark. Nobody would have realised that the sounds that were coming from 'Big Ben', actually captured the weather in London in real time and was communicated to Germany.

Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim 51:17 (and we say it three times a day) - **ה' שְׂפָתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יַגִּיד תְּהִלָּתֶךָ** We ask Hashem – '*Open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise.*' – I want You to open the zipper on my mouth and lips, so that my mouth can just become a conduit for infinite love, light, wisdom and compassion.

"Low self-esteem lies to you. It whispers that you have no potential, when in reality, you're sitting on gold you haven't mined yet. Your potential is never absent, it's only undiscovered.

- Instead of measuring yourself by where you are now, measure yourself by the possibilities ahead. Remember, you are not empty – you are simply unfinished." ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)



Inspired by Time - Every Step Counts – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

It was the month of Elul, and the Beis Hamedrash in Sha'arei Chesed was filled with the low hum of learning. The sound of Gemaros turning, chavrusos debating, the occasional blast of the shofar cutting through the air—all of it gave the atmosphere a special weight. For Elul had arrived, and everyone felt it.

One afternoon, a man entered the Beis Hamedrash with heavy steps. His face was pale, his eyes red from sleepless nights. He made his way toward **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l**, the posek hador, who was sitting at his shtender, immersed in learning.

"Rebbe," the man said in a trembling voice, "I have come because my heart is broken. I can't face Elul anymore."

Rav Shlomo Zalman looked up gently. "Why, my dear Yid?"

The man sat down, tears threatening to spill. "Every year, when Elul comes, I am full of inspiration. I take on kabbalos. I make promises to change. On Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur I cry like a child before Hashem. But every time, the same thing happens. By winter, I've slipped back into the same habits, the same averos. It has happened so many times that now I feel like a liar. I'm fooling myself. Maybe even worse—maybe I'm trying to fool Hashem. I feel that my teshuva is worthless, because I've failed so many times before."

The room grew quiet. Rav Shlomo Zalman closed his sefer, his eyes warm and shining with fatherly compassion. After a pause, he asked softly, "Tell me—do you know how a baby learns to walk?"

The man looked surprised. "Of course. A baby takes a step, wobbles, falls down, sometimes even cries… and then tries again."

"And tell me," continued Rav Shlomo Zalman, "when the baby falls, do the parents get angry? Do they shout, 'Why did you fall? You promised us you'd walk straight this time!'?"

The man managed a faint smile. "Of course not. They encourage him. They clap, they cheer, they celebrate every little step. Even if he falls again right after."

Rav Shlomo Zalman leaned forward, his voice filled with warmth. "So why do you think your Father in Heaven is any different? Every step you take toward Him—even if you stumble afterward—is precious in His eyes. Do not measure yourself only by how many times you fell. Measure yourself by the fact that you keep standing back up. Elul is not about never falling. Elul is about never giving up on walking."

The man's tears flowed freely now, but they were no longer tears of despair. They were tears of comfort, of release. For the first time in years, he realized that his repeated failures had not disqualified him. On the contrary—each attempt, each tear, each honest effort had been cherished by Hashem.

When he left the Beis Hamedrash that day, the burden he had carried for so long seemed lighter. The same Elul air that had felt suffocating now felt fresh, alive with possibility. He resolved once again to try— but this time without despair, without the crushing voice of the yetzer hara telling him that it was hopeless. And for the rest of his life, whenever Elul arrived and that familiar voice tried to whisper, "You failed last year, you'll fail again," he would remember Rav Shlomo Zalman's words.

Rav Henach Leibowitz zt"l said when we daven, if we would realize the extent of how much Hashem cares about us and how much Hashem feels our pain, it would inspire us to daven with complete kavana, concentration!

Nesivos Emunah

We are living in days of hester Panim, a time of concealment, when the Ribono Shel Olam hides His face from us. These are the days of Ikvesa D'Meshicha, the period before the coming of Moshiach

To recognize that Hashem is speaking to us. Not through a Navi, but through events. Through Yesurim. Through the reality around us. He wants us to come closer - not through punishment, but through awareness. Through Teshuvah. And the first step is Zechiras HaBorei - remembering the Creator.

But we need to know: **the Gra**, in Divrei Eliyahu on Parshas Vayeilech, revealed an amazing concept. The very essence of Hester Panim is that it stops people from davening. He writes: "It is known that the holy nation, when the hand of Hashem touches them, and the voice the voice of Yaakov - rises in Tefillah, they can break through iron walls that separate them from their Father in Heaven. But they are lazy, lazy to turn to Hashem. They think it's just nature, just happenstance, just part of life. And so, they don't daven."

But the path forward is not anger, not blame, not denial. It's tefillah, introspection, Teshuvah. Because Hashem doesn't want to hit us. He wants us to come home.

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, revealed Even within the darkness of the terrible Hester Panim, there is one force that always remains effective - and that is the power of Tefillah. When "Hakol Kol Yaakov" - when the voice of Yaakov rises in prayer - it has the strength to break even iron barriers that separate Klal Yisrael from their Father in Heaven. And had they only understood this, says the Gaon, they would have annulled the decrees through their Tefillos!

So too, the **Ramban** writes clearly (Shemos 3:13) that we need no other proof for Hashem's presence and Hashgachah in this world. The very fact that "**אֶהְיֶה עִמָּהֶם בְּכָל צָרָתָם יִקְרָאוּנִי וְאֶעֱנֵם**" - "I will be with them in all their troubles; they will call to Me, and I will answer

them" - this is the greatest proof that Hashem is Karov, close to us, whenever we call out to Him.

The Maharsha in Kiddushin (29b) adds even more depth. He explains that the Koach HaTefillah is so profound, so real, that if one were to destroy a harmful force through Tefillah, it would not be considered a miracle - but rather the normal course of nature. It is so powerful, so deeply rooted in the way Hashem runs His world, that no merits are deducted when miracles come about through heartfelt Tefillah.

We find ourselves in the Chodesh HaRachamim, the month of Elul, the days of Ratzon. We are approaching Rosh Hashanah and the Aseres Yemei Teshuvah-days about which the Shaarei Teshuvah (Shaar 3) says: "**וְהָעֵת עֵת רָצוֹן וְהַתְּפִלָּה נִשְׁמַעַת בּוֹ**." – '*this is a time of favor; prayers are heard*.' And the Rambam writes (Teshuvah 2:6): Even though Teshuvah and Tefillah are always precious, during these ten days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they are especially accepted - and accepted immediately. We have within us the strength to cancel every harsh Gzeirah, chas v'shalom.

This is the moment to lift our voices in a heartfelt cry to Avinu Shebashamayim. The situation is indeed frightening. But before anything else, we must internalize this one truth - Leha'amin b'Koach HaTefillah. We must believe that we possess the power to pierce the heavens.

May Hashem grant us the merit to truly tap into the incredible opportunity of these days. May we accept Ohl Malchus Shamayim with Emes, and may we daven I'chayim tovim, and may we merit the final Geulah, bimheirah beyameinu, Amen. as we truly can-with a full heart, with emunah, and with sincerity. And in that zechus, through our Tefillos and our demo'os, may we all be nechtavim venechtamim l'chaim tovim, and may we merit the final geulah, bimheirah beyameinu ,Amein.

The Weekly Vort

כי תצא מחנה על איביך – *When a camp goes out against your enemies* (23:10).

The Sifri states: When the Jewish army goes out to war, they should only go out **במחנה**, as an army camp. ***Maayanah Shel Torah*** explains that the first condition towards winning a war is that the army be a united **מחנה** and not fight as individuals. Only then will the Jewish army be guaranteed victory.

The Cracked Mirror

One Elul, **R' Yerucham Levovitz**, gathered the *talmidim* of the Mir Yeshiva and placed a large, cracked mirror on the *shtender* in front of him. The *bochurim* were puzzled — why would the Mashgiach bring such an object into the *beis midrash*?

R' Yerucham explained: *"A mirror has only one purpose — to show you yourself as you truly are. If a person's mirror is cracked, the image he sees is distorted. He will adjust his clothing, fix his hat, but the image is still crooked, and he never realizes that the problem is in the mirror itself. So too,"* Rav Yerucham said, *"a person can go through life examining himself with a 'cracked mirror' — excuses, self-deception, rationalizations. He thinks he is fixing himself, but in truth he has never seen himself honestly."*

The *beis midrash* was silent. Then R' Yerucham lifted his voice: *"Elul is when Hashem, in His kindness, gives us a new mirror — a true reflection of ourselves. If we dare to look honestly, to see our flaws without excuses, then we can truly change. But if we spend Elul polishing the cracks instead of facing the reality, then nothing changes."*

Reb Itche der Masmid (1880-1941)



Yitzchok Horowitz, more commonly known as **Reb Itche der Masmid**, was a famous Orthodox Rabbi in pre-war Europe. Specifically, he served as a Mashpia, Hasidic mentor of the Chabad movement. He was born to Shlomo Menachem Mendel and Elka Horowitz in the city of Bereznehuvate, in the Kherson Governorate. Jewish agricultural settlement in the Kherson area had been initiated and encouraged by the second Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Dovber Schneuri.

Refinement of character

Reb Itche earned the appellation "*Masmid*" (which refers to a highly assiduous Talmid Chacham, Torah scholar) in his early youth, when he would intensively study until very late at night. He continued this assiduity throughout his life. He struggled to refine himself in a superhuman way that aroused wonder in all who saw him.

It was his custom to pray for many hours, according to the Chabad tradition of prayer. However, he surpassed his colleagues by praying until five in the afternoon!

He despised all the materialistic things and pleasures narcissistic world and it is said that when he visited Manhattan (and its skyscrapers), exclaimed: "*Of ofanim Hoben do gekakt gut*" ("*Angels They have really defecated here*! "- alluding to an idea discussed in Chassidic philosophy that materialism is literally an excrement of the spirit world).

R' Itche would drink a lot of mashke at his farbrengens. One time, at the end of a farbrengen he staggered in his tipsiness and R' Zalman supported him. R' Zalman heard him mumbling again and again, "Ich hub dir lib" (I love you). R' Zalman asked him who he loved and R' Itche said, "HaKadosh Baruch Hu!"

Rav Dessler zt'l said, "The Reb Itche der Masmid leading Lubavitcher Chassidim of Homil opened before me the gates of wisdom, understanding and knowledge."

Public role

He served as an emissary (*shliach*) of the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dov Ber Schneersohn (the *Rebbe Rashab*), and of the sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn (the *Rebbe Rayatz*). He traveled throughout Europe to encourage the Hasidim and other Jews he met to increase in their devotion to Judaism and the Hasidic lifestyle.

Communist persecution

In 1917, the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Russia, and after some time, virtually any kind of formal Jewish education was outlawed by the new Bolshevik regime. Anyone committing this "crime" was in danger of imprisonment and execution, and many young rabbis suffered this fate. Reb Itche continued his work to strengthen Jewish observance despite this danger and survived this period.

Wider Influence

His influence reached outside the ranks of the Chabad hasidic circle as well, most notably to Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler of the Musar movement, leading Dessler to include many ideas from Hasidic philosophy in his writings.

Demise

Reb Itche was murdered by the Nazis when they invaded Riga, on 10 Kislev 5702 (30 November 1941). They brought him and numerous

other Jews into a synagogue, poured gasoline on it, and set it ablaze, burning everyone alive. They forced other Jews to remain outside the synagogue and watch the horrific scene.

Eyewitnesses later related that Reb Itche opened the Torah ark in the synagogue, removed the Torah scroll, and said, "We have the great privilege to fulfill the commandment of self-sacrifice to sanctify Hashem's Name, and we must do it with joy." He placed one hand on the shoulder of Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Althaus and the second on the shoulder of Rabbi Yechezkel Feigin (the devoted and loyal secretary of the Rebbe Rayatz) and together they danced, while singing the Hakafos melody of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Schneerson.

The famous chossid **R' Yitchok Horowitz** known as Reb Itche der Masmid used to stay by my grandparents in Soviet Russia. My grandmother's mother, Bubbe Rochel Leah, was old and frail and she lived with my grandparents too and would lay in bed in her room.

On day while davening, R' Itche realized that everyone left, and he's alone at home with Bubbe Rochel Leah. It was a freezing day with subzero temperatures, and he was sick with a cold. But he didn't hesitate and immediately left the house to daven outside.

When the family returned, they asked R' Itche, Why did you leave? It was only a weak old lady ("*alte yidene*") laying in bed, and you're sick with the cold... what problem could there be? Plus the freezing temperature outside is really dangerous!

R' Itche replied: "The Yetzer Hara is such a Mumche that he could make her young and make me healthy!"

"Elul is the workshop where the entire year is built." ~ R' Chaim Volozhiner (Nefesh HaChaim 4)

When They Were Young

A GADOL IN THE MAKING

RABBI CHAIM KANIEVSKY

הרב שמריהו יוסף חיים קניבסקי זצ"ל





As a young boy, Chaim learned in Yeshivas Tiferes Tzion. Already then, his *middos tovos* and good heart stood out. Not only that, but he also did whatever he could to avoid causing anyone pain or embarrassment.

Rabbi Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, a great Torah leader, was Chaim's rebbi in Tiferes Tzion. Reb Michel Yehudah said that Reb Chaim became a *gadol* because of his good *middos* and his willingness to help others.

One boy in Chaim's class made a lot of trouble. One day, the rebbi decided to punish the troublemaker and really teach him a lesson. He called over Chaim Kanievsky and asked for his help. "You have the best handwriting in the class," said the rebbi. "I want you to take a piece of paper and write 'Bad Boy' on it in clear letters. I am going to put that paper on the troublemaker's head and make him wear it the whole day. Then maybe he will learn how to behave."

Chaim respectfully responded, "I feel bad for the boy. Please forgive me, but I can't do this."

When he came home from school, Chaim asked his father, the **Steipler Gaon**, "Should I have listened to the rebbi without questioning him, or did I do the right thing?"

"You did the right thing," his father assured him.

Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky

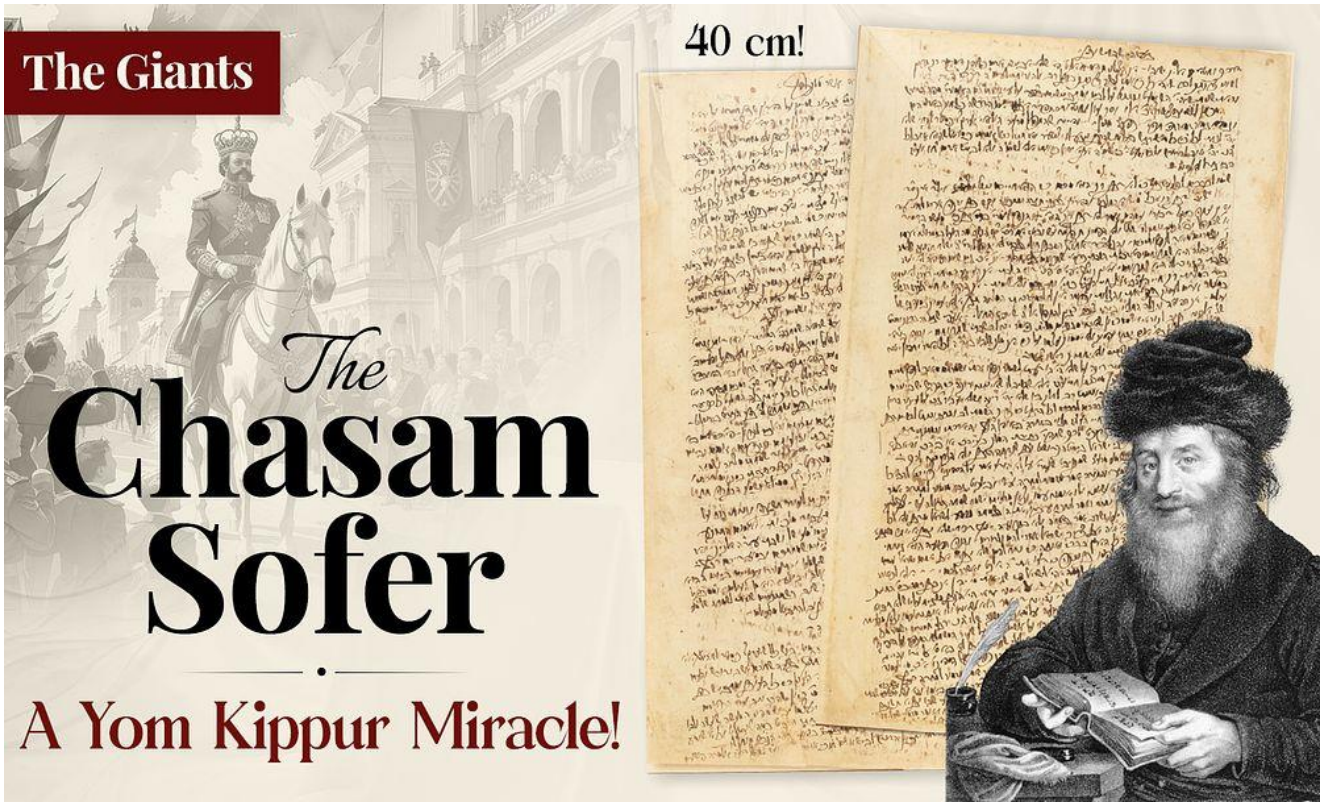
Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Kanievsky was born in Pinsk. He was the son of the Steipler Gaon, R' Yaakov Yisrael Kanievsky, and Rebbetzin Pesha Miriam. His mother was the sister of the Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshayah Karelitz.

When Chaim was six years old, his family moved to Eretz Yisrael. He studied in Yeshiva Tiferes Tzion in Bnei Brak and then in Yeshivas Lomza in Petach Tikvah. He married Batsheva Esther, the daughter of R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv and granddaughter of R' Aryeh Levin.

R' Chaim never held a position as a rav or rebbi or rosh yeshivah. He learned on his own or with *chavrusos*, day and night. He would finish the complete Torah (Chumash, Mishnayos, Bavli, Yerushalmi, halachah, and more) every year. This required him to stay focused and learn a specific amount each and every day.

R' Chaim became known as the *sar haTorah*, the prince of Torah, as he guided and led Yidden throughout the world until his *petirah* in 2022.

"Every act of kindness is another brick in the bridge toward a better tomorrow." - Based on the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005)



The Chasam Sofer and the Cancelled Coronation

In 1831, the Hungarian authorities planned a grand coronation ceremony for the emperor—scheduled, unthinkably, for Yom Kippur.

All efforts by the Jews of Pressburg to postpone it failed. On the eve of Yom Kippur, the Chasam Sofer did something unusual: instead of returning home for the seudah hamafsekes, he remained in the synagogue, praying straight through until midday.

By midday, as he was still in the synagogue in prayer, a sudden storm swept through the city. Torrential rains destroyed the preparations, and the coronation was delayed until after the holiday.

In his drashah for Shabbos Shuvah that year, the Chasam Sofer hinted at this moment, writing:

"The imperial coronation ceremony was planned either for Erev Yom Kippur or on Yom Kippur itself, and it would inevitably have led to disruptions in the customary Jewish practices on these holiest of days. Boruch Hashem, the event was postponed, and we did not have to contend with this issue."



Scaling Up by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

אֶבֶן שְׁלֵמָה וָצֶדֶק יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ - '*you shall have a full and honest weight*.'

The Torah speaks about the prohibition of owning weights or measures that are not adjusted correctly. Notice the emphasis, the Torah not only warns against cheating one's neighbour, but any action that might potentially lead to fraud. The Torah stresses the seriousness of deception with the following words; **כִּי תוֹעֲבַת ה אֱלֹקיךָ כָּל־עֹשֵׂה אֵלֶּה כֹּל עֹשֵׂה עָוֶל** -"For it is an abomination to the L-rd your G-d anybody who acts fraudulently". (25:15,16)



It was one of those small pre-war shtetls where everyone in the Jewish community knew one another. The Jews were far from wealthy, but they were relatively happy with what they had, and they really tried to care for one another.

Yankel was the baker. Each morning he would rise at 4 a.m. to kindle his large baker's oven so that when the townspeople would awake, there would be fresh warm bread for all who needed it. Yankel knew exactly how many one-kilo loaves of bread to bake to accommodate the needs of the shtetl's inhabitants.

One day on his way home from a day at the bakery, Yankel decided to stop at Tuvya the Milchiger's tiny little shop. Tuvya was the town's dairy farmer, and he sold milk, cream, butter, and even

cheese. As Yankel walked into Tuvya's tiny shop at the front of the farm, the deep scent of dairy products tickled his nose.

"Shalom aleichem, R' Tuvya," Yankel bellowed. "Can I trouble you for a kilo of butter?"

"Aleichem shalom," Tuvya replied. "It is an honor, not a bother.' And with that, Tuvya proceeded to deftly wrap the butter in a square of paper and almost simultaneously bind the paper package with twine. Yankel thanked Tuvya, took his butter, and headed home.

As Yankel walked home holding the butter, he thought to himself, Strange, this "kilo" of butter feels rather light, it certainly doesn't feel like a kilo... I wonder if... no, that couldn't be, R' Tuvya is such an honest fellow.

But as the evening and next day progressed, Yankel couldn't shake a nagging feeling that maybe, just maybe, Tuvya was not as honest as he appeared. Even so, never the one to jump to conclusions, Yankel decided to wait until later that week when he was planning a trip to the large city. He planned on taking along the butter and weighing it on one of the "big city scales." Then he would find out the thrust one way or another.

A few days later, Yankel entered one of the large city stores and asked them for a favor, to weigh the butter for him.

"Nine hundred grams," remarked the clerk.

Nine hundred grams... The words swirled around in Yankel's head the entire trip back home. So... Tuvya had cheated him. Who knows how many others had been cheated by Tuvya? It was time for the town to know. Tuvya would face the consequences for his devious behavior.

The very next morning after Shacharis, Yankel approached the rav and shared his findings with him. The ray seemed concerned, but nevertheless he cautioned Yankel to keep his findings to himself and to understand that he first needed to hear Tuvya's side of the

story. Later that day, the ray summoned Yankel and Tuvya to his study and asked Yankel to tell Tuvya what he had discovered. Suppressing his anger, Yankel accused Tuvya of swindling him by only providing 900 grams at the cost of one full kilo.

Shocked at the accusation, Tuvya protested his innocence. "Chas v'shalom, I would never cheat anyone! I always weigh my products faithfully and justly."

Now the rav was confused. It seemed like Tuvya was saying the truth, while at the same time Yankel was claiming that he had actually weighed the butter and it was only 900 grams.

The rav thought for a moment and then asked Tuvya to go to his shop and fetch his scale and bring it back with him to the rav's study.

Tuvya quickly ran to his shop and returned a short while later lugging his scale as well as a small bag. The rav asked him to demonstrate how he weighs his butter. Tuvya reached into the bag, pulled out a slab of butter, and placed it on one side of the scale. The rav pressed, "But where is the counterweight for the other side of the scale?"

"I don't have a counterweight," replied Tuvya.

"So how do you weigh your butter?" asked the rav.

"Simple," said Tuvya. "I use one of Yankel's one-kilo loaves of bread." And he reached into his bag and pulled out a one-kilo loaf of bread, placing it on the other side of the scale and perfectly balancing his "one-kilo" slab of butter!

How often in our own lives do we shift the blame for our personal shortcomings onto others? One's own honesty is indeed a weighty topic. Let's try our hardest to scale up and keep the judging to our own lives!

Burst of Inspiration – Rabbi Jeremy Golker



Parshas Ki Tzeitze contains a whopping 74 mitzvos. Included in that is the mitzvah of Shiluach HaKan (22:7) – A very enigmatic mitzvah which **the Zohar** says is **מעורר רחמים מן השמים** - *causes tremendous mercy in heaven*, and ultimately, Hashem will send the geulah.

I came across the following in the sefer **נועם מגדים** by **Rabbi Eliezer Halevi Horowitz**, Rav of Tarnigrad:

There has been twice in history and please G-d once in the future that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will bring the geulah. And He uses the letters **א** and **מ** as the simonim – the sign as to how He's going to bring the geulah.

The first time was in Mitzrayim - **שַׁלֵּ֣ח תְּשַׁלַּ֔ח אֶת־הָאֵ֖ם** – **אֵ֖ם** - **א** and **מ** stands for **אהרן ומשה**. They were the vehicles through which **הַבָּנִ֑ים תִּקַּ֖ח־לָֽךְ**, that Klal Yisrael could come out.

The second time was the Purim story. The **א** and **מ** there stands for **וְאֶת־הַבָּנִ֑ים תִּקַּ֖ח־לָֽךְ** - **אסתר ומרדכי** – And Klal Yisrael had a yeshuah.

And please G-d **לֶעָתִיד לָבוֹא**, very soon there will be a geulah where the **א** and **מ** stand for **אליהו ומשיח** - **שַׁלֵּ֣ח תְּשַׁלַּ֔ח אֶת־הָאֵ֖ם** – Please Hakadosh Baruch Hu, send **אליהו ומשיח** - **וְאֶת־הַבָּנִ֑ים תִּקַּ֖ח־לָֽךְ** – and there will be a yeshuah and geulah for the Jewish People.

משל למה הדבר דומה

כי יהיה ריב בין אנשים ... (כה-א)

The Vietnam War was a protracted conflict between the years 1964-1975. It pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies in South Vietnam, known as the Viet Cong, against the government of South Vietnam and its principal ally, the United States.



Human cost of the long conflict were harsh for all involved. Not until 1995 did Vietnam release its official estimate of war dead: as many as 2 million civilians on both sides and some 1.1 million North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters!

While the war was raging on in the far-away land, someone asked **R' Moshe Feinstein *zt"l*** in New York City: Should we be *davening* for peace?

R' Moshe answered unequivocally: Yes!

The questioner then pressed: "But the war itself has nothing to do with us per say? Why should we pray for some far-out country?"

R' Moshe's answer was short and concise: "The *Ribono Shel Olam* wants peace in the world! - All over the world!"

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALED HISTORIAN תורת הצבי על הפטרות

In this week's *Haftorah*, *Yeshaya HaNavi* exclaims, **רָנִּי עֲקָרָה לֹא יָלָדָה פִּצְחִי רִנָּה וְצַהֲלִי לֹא־חָלָה כִּי־רַבִּים בְּנֵי־שׁוֹמֵמָה מִבְּנֵי בְעוּלָה** - *"Sing o' barren woman who has not borne; burst out into song and be jubilant." (54:1)*

This prophecy relates *Hashem's* comparison of the holy city of *Yerushalayim* to a barren woman devoid of children. However, the irony is seemingly quite apparent. How could *Klal Yisroel* ever be expected to rejoice over a desolate *Yerushalayim*?

R' Moshe Chaim Ephraim of Sedilkov *zt"l* (Degel Machaneh Ephraim) quotes his grandfather, the holy **Baal Shem Tov *zt"l***, who explains that a tremendous lesson in *Tefillah* could be gleaned from *Yeshaya HaNavi's* seemingly contradictory statement.

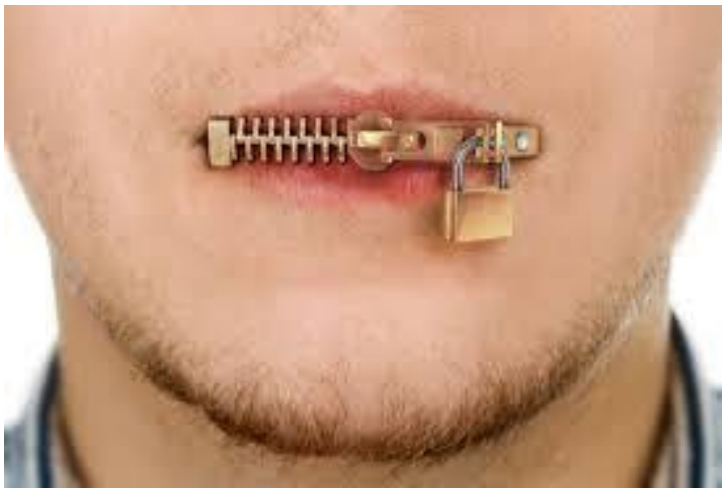
When a person goes through a difficult period in life, he is oftentimes left feeling distant and alone, all the while thinking that his situation seems so far gone that no amount of prayer or charity can ever save him. Unfortunately, this is quite far from the truth, for one must remember that *Hashem* listens to all *Tefillos* and there is no such a thing as an empty prayer.



Thus, the lesson being imparted by *Yeshaya HaNavi* is that even when a person's situation is desperate and his frantic *Tefillah* appears to be akin to those of a barren woman, *Hashem* still says "**רָנִּי**" - sing and rejoice, **כִּי־רַבִּים בְּנֵי־שׁוֹמֵמָה מִבְּנֵי בְעוּלָה** - for his desperate and haphazard prayers, which are likened to those of a desolate woman, are still considered more precious by *Hashem* than many thought-out and settled prayers - like those of a married person with children.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

זָכֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לְמִרְיָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם - *'Remember what Hashem did to Miriam on the way, when you went out of Egypt.'*



Rashi explains that this *posuk* is referring to the prohibition against talking *Lashon Hara*: *"If you wish to take precautions against being stricken with tzara'as, then do not speak Lashon Hara (derogatory remarks). Remember what was done to Miriam, who spoke against her brother (Moshe) and was stricken with plagues (of tzara'as)."*

One day, while discussing with a friend the precarious situation in *Eretz Yisroel*, I mentioned how interesting it is that the stories we hear about the victims of the Arab terrorist murderers have a similar thread running through them: The victims all appear to be very righteous and special, either great in learning or giants in *chessed*. It sends shivers up and down my spine whenever I think about it. My friend, usually very outgoing and gregarious, did not say anything in response.

He got up from the couch and motioned for me to follow him. I was a bit taken aback at the solemn expression on my friend's face and his unusual behavior. He led me into his study and pointed to a picture hanging on the wall above his desk, "Look at that."

I looked and could not understand what he was trying to tell me. I tried to figure out what could be so special about an old red cell phone. After all, it's one thing to want to own a nice red cell phone, but to hang a picture of one in your study above your desk?

"This is a picture of Malka Roth's cell phone," he explained.

"Who is Malka Roth?" I asked, "and why would you have a framed picture of her cell phone hanging in your study? I don't get it."

My friend pulled out his large leather chair, sat down and explained: "Malka was a sweet and good-natured, popular fifteen-year-old girl. She was so full of life and zest. She was especially devoted to her younger sister, Chaya Elisheva, who is blind and has other serious disabilities. She was also a very popular youth leader for nine-year-old girls. Her magnetic personality and propensity to always see the good in people made everyone want to spend time in her company."

"That's beautiful, but I still don't get it. What does that have to do with having a picture of her red cell phone hanging in your study?" I asked him, still completely baffled as to what my friend was leading towards.

"On the twentieth day of *Av* 5761, she was in *Yerushalayim* with some friends, enjoying a slice of pizza in the Sbarro restaurant, when an Arab terrorist murderer entered with a guitar case full of explosives and nails - to ensure maximum destruction. Hundreds of innocent people were seriously injured, many of them for their whole lives. Malka was one of the fifteen innocent people brutally murdered in that senseless terrorist attack. She was less than four months shy of her sixteenth birthday. The red cell phone in the picture is Malka's cell phone. The police found it among the destruction and carnage and gave it to the family after they got up from *shivah*."

I had tears in my eyes. It broke my heart to visualize parents sitting *shivah* for a murdered 15-year-old daughter. But I still didn't understand the significance of the picture of Malka's red cell phone occupying a prominent place on the wall of my friend's study.

In response to the quizzical look on my face, he instructed, "Go and take a closer look at the phone and you'll understand."

I walked over to the picture and took a close look at it. My eyes welled up with tears that I could not contain. Malka had written on the phone in black marker " **אסור לדבר לשון הרע**" - It is forbidden to speak *lashon hara.*

"That picture," explained my friend, "does more than anything else could, to help me realize and internalize how much more there is for me to accomplish in life. It helps inspire me to see how great every day common people - even young fifteen-year-old girls – can become. I hung up that picture to inspire me to grow and constantly strive for greatness." **(Portraits of Prayer, Rabbi Eliezer Abish)**

Rabbi Paysach Krohn - Every Person Is a Mesechta

Years ago, a nephew of mine became engaged, and at the *vort*, he rose to speak. What did he choose to speak about? A complicated pilpul in *Maseches Gittin*.

To be honest, at first, I wondered about the choice of topic. Of all *masechtos*, this is the one to choose at a *vort*? *Maseches Gittin* is filled with discussions of separation and broken relationships. After all, the Gemara famously says, "When a man divorces his wife, even the Mizbeach sheds tears" (*Gittin* 90b). It is hardly the first tractate one associates with celebration. And yet, the more I thought about it, the more I realized something profound.

The saddest narratives in Chazal—the stories of Churban Bayis Sheini, Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, the destruction of Yerushalayim—are also found in *Maseches Gittin*. Why is that? The *mefarshim* explain that Gittin is ultimately about separation, and the greatest separation imaginable was the distancing between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Klal Yisrael at the time of the Churban.

But life itself is exactly that mixture.

No human life is entirely joyous nor entirely tragic. Every life contains moments of celebration and moments of heartbreak,

chapters of clarity and chapters of confusion. And perhaps that is why *Maseches Gittin* is, in its own way, such a deeply human *masechta*.

After completing a *masechta*, a special Kaddish is traditionally recited. Interestingly, there is another occasion on which a nearly identical Kaddish is recited: after the passing of a loved one. Why should the same Kaddish appear both after death and after completing Torah study?

A *dear* friend of mine, Rabbi Yaakov Hopfer of Baltimore, once explained beautifully: every human being is themselves a living *masechta*.

A *masechta* contains many *perakim*. Some are easier, some harder. Some are uplifting, others painful. So too, every person passes through chapters in life: engagement, marriage, waiting for children, building a livelihood, navigating disappointment, celebrating *simchos*, enduring challenges. Each life is its own unfolding *masechta*.

And that is why the Kaddish is so similar. Torah and life mirror one another. Both contain struggle, growth and meaning.

This is precisely what we find throughout *Maseches Gittin* itself. The Gemara teaches that a person should never create excessive fear within the home (*Gittin* 7a). A home built upon intimidation and tension cannot become a place of peace. Families flourish through emotional safety.

The Gemara (ibid.) also says that if a person sees that his finances are strained, he should give *tzedakah*. At first glance, once asked Rabbi Yitzchak Dwek, that seems entirely counterintuitive. If money is tight, why give more away?

Rabbi Yitzchak Dwek shared the *mashal* of a man in Damascus who came to mail a heavy package. The postal clerk told him it was overweight and needed more stamps. The man objected: "But adding stamps will only make it heavier!" "The stamps are not part of the

package," explained the mail carrier. "They are what allow it to reach its destination."

So too with *tzedakah*. Generosity is not what impoverishes a person. It is precisely what grants him Heavenly blessing.

I remember once sitting at the Seder with my father *zt"l* and a distinguished Rav who insisted on fulfilling the mitzvah of *matzah* by stuffing enormous amounts into his mouth all at once. Crumbs were falling everywhere. My father later turned to me and quietly said, "It cannot be that this is how the *mitzvah* is meant to be fulfilled. Fulfilling a *mitzvah* must be done with dignity and refinement. It must look pleasant."

True Torah refines a person. It brings kindness into speech, into relationships, and into behavior.

But perhaps the most powerful lesson of all comes from a *halachah* discussed in Gittin regarding a child acquiring ownership. The Gemara (ibid. 59a) explains that if a child understands that an object given temporarily must eventually be returned, then that child possesses sufficient understanding to affect a *kinyan* (transaction).

Rav Pam *zt"l* would quote this idea every Elul and apply it to life itself. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us many gifts—health, time, family, money, talents, opportunities. But maturity means recognizing that none of these truly belong to us forever. They are entrusted to us temporarily. Life itself is a loan. And therefore we must make the most of every *perek* (chapter) in our personal *masechta*.

That is why a *siyum* is not merely the completion of pages. It is the celebration of the human being as a living *mesechta*. It is a reminder that a meaningful life is built one *daf* at a time, one *perek* at a time, one day at a time.

And just as one cannot properly navigate a *masechta* without a *rebbi*, guidance, and *mesorah*, so too one cannot properly navigate

life without direction, wisdom, and people who illuminate the path before us.

May Hakadosh Baruch Hu grant that all of us should continue writing beautiful chapters in our own *masechtos* of life.

TORAH TAVLIN

STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

בְּיוֹמוֹ תִתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא־תָבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי עָנִי הוּא וְאֵלָיו הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ ***You shall give him his wage on his day and not let the sun set over it, for he is poor, and he risks his life for it. (24:15)***



R' Dovid Yisroel Ber Kaufmann zt"l would say- A labourer must be paid on time for his work. If so, why has Hashem not paid back the Jewish people for all of their Divine service throughout the centuries? One gets paid only when the job is finished. The job of the Jewish people isn't done until we finish the Divinely ordained task of making the world a dwelling place for G-dliness. The task requires the combined efforts of all the Jewish people. When the task is completed, all the Jewish people will then be paid, at that time of the resurrection of the dead."

Our Physical Needs

Let's keep our perspective. Of course, we must meet our physical needs. It is impossible to live without them. - Nevertheless, we do not need to keep talking about them! ~ The Alter of Novardok.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

וְיָתֵד תִּהְיֶה לְךָ עַל־אֲזֵנֶךָ וְהָיָה֙ בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ חֻ֔ץ וְחָפַרְתָּ֖ בָּ֑הּ וְשַׁבְתָּ֙ וְכִסִּ֣יתָ אֶת־צֵאָתֶ֔ךָ׃
23:14 ***And you shall keep a stake in addition to your weapons; and it shall be, when you sit down outside [to relieve yourself], you shall dig with it, and you shall return and cover your excrement.***



In the midbar, a person was required to have a peg and shovel with him at all times to dig and cover his bodily waste because Hashem was constantly with the Yidden in the desert and it wouldn't be respectful for the Shechina, when one needed to relieve himself. I would like to offer three machshavos on this posuk. The Gemara (**כתובות ה.**) says, Bar Kaparah expounded on this posuk figuratively and said: A person should place his fingers, which are shaped like a "**יתד**" (peg) in "**אזניך**" (ears) when he is about to hear something improper. In other words, Hashem created a person with the inborn ability to prevent himself from sin. A person's job is to use these methods correctly.

Perhaps we may suggest another drush on this posuk. **וְהָיָה֙ בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ חֻ֔ץ** - If a person was **חוטא** and finds himself "on the outside," perhaps not in the good graces, he can dig with his shovel, **ושבת** - and "return" through teshuva, "**וְכִסִּ֣יתָ אֶת־צֵאָתֶ֔ךָ**" - and then he will cover his waste, his sins. Why and how? Says the Torah: - *Hashem Himself is within you, - to save you and place your enemy, the yetzer hara, before you.* And then, when you realize that you can never be too far away to do teshuva, and return to Hashem, then, - *you will become purified.*

This machshava is appropriate all year long, but especially in Chodesh Elul and Tishrei. Lastly, the **Baal HaTurim** writes that the gematria for **וְיָתֵד** is **והאבות** each equalling 420. To teach us that in the zechus

of our Avos we have the ability to do teshuva and return to the path that they paved for us with such devotion through adversity.

May we utilize every moment of these propitious days to do teshuva, mitzvos, learn Torah, and bring much nachas to our forebearers.

The Alter of Marinover shlit'a (Ish Echad) would say: כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ



The Baalei Mussar tell us that the enemy we are going out to fight against is the Yetzer Hara. But how can we defeat him? The Yetzer Hara is so powerful, and no human being can defeat him alone! How can a person 'go out' encouraged that he can win? The answer is found at the end of the parsha, where the Torah tells us never to forget how Hashem wiped out Amalek. We are given a mitzvah to remember how Hashem fought for us and saved us from that terrible enemy. Here too, although the Yetzer Hara is strong - too strong for one individual - but once a person understands that the last time the enemy tried to fight us, Hashem came to our rescue and destroyed them, he must 'remember' that if he simply 'goes out' to fight, Hashem will assist him and allow him to win this war as well!"

Take pride in the fact that you were handpicked by the Creator of the world to accomplish a mission that can be fulfilled by no one else but you - with all your uniqueness. ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe. (1914-2005).

R' Moshe Dovid Ashkenazi zt"l (Toldos Adam) would say: כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ 22:8 - Rashi translates the word מַעֲקֶה as a fence surrounding the roof and Targum Onkelos compares it to a 'sheath' which protects what is inside. On an allegorical level, the word מַעֲקֶה can be rearranged into an acronym to spell out the words, **הרהורי עבירה קשים מעבירה** - 'thinking about sin is even worse than the sin itself.'



Since a person's head is his 'roof' - the highest and most lofty limb in his body - he or she must protect it with a 'railing' - a protective fence or sheath to guard the thoughts inside, lest one uses his head for the wrong purposes."

כִּי אֶת־הַבְּכֹר בֶּן־הַשְּׂנוּאָה יַכִּיר לָתֶת לוֹ פִּי שְׁנַיִם 21:17

R' Eliyahu M'Vilna zt"l (Vilna Gaon) would say: - The letters of the word בְּכֹר allude to the firstborn's inheritance of a double portion, as each letter is numerically equivalent to double the one that immediately precedes it in the Hebrew alphabet: Bais (2) is twice Alef (1); Chof (20) is twice Yud (10); and Reish (200) is twice Kuf (100)."

Rabbeinu Chaim ben Rabbeinu Betzalel (brother of the Maharal of Prague), the author of the Sefer Igeres HaTiyul, writes that this is the only word in the Torah with this unique characteristic. This is also the reason why the Torah writes this word – חסר deficiently, without the 'Vav'. (**Chaim Shel Torah**)

וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לַחֲמֹרוֹ וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְשִׂמְלָתוֹ וְכֵן תַּעֲשֶׂה לְכָל־אֲבֵדַת אָחִיךָ אֲשֶׁר־תֹּאבַד מִמֶּנּוּ וּמְצָאתָהּ לֹא תוּכַל לְהִתְעַלֵּם: ***So shall you do with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment, and so shall you do with any lost article of your brother which he has lost and you have found. You shall not ignore [it].*** *22:3*

The Gemara (ב״מ) tells us that if one finds a lost object with no distinguishing characteristics, he can assume that the owner has abandoned hope of ever reclaiming it. However, if the object can be identified as belonging to the owner, one must assume that the owner hopes to reclaim it.



In two different sources, we find this ruling applied as an analogy for Hashem's search for His beloved children, who wander lost among the nations. **The Shem M'Shmuel** writes in the name of his father, the **Avnei Nezer**, that every Jew has two identifying marks, which distinguish him from the other nations. The first sign is the Bris Milah, as the posuk states: ***"You shall circumcise the flesh of your orlah, and that shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you."*** The second is tefillin, as the posuk states: ***"And it shall be for you a sign on your arm."***

On Shabbos, when we do not don tefillin Shabbos itself serves as a sign, as the posuk states: ***"You must observe My Shabbosos, for it is a sign between Me and you."***

Why are two signs necessary? The marks that distinguish us as Hashem's chosen nation are perhaps not as obvious as we might hope. Perhaps we have failed to observe Shabbos properly; we have failed to guard the holiness of the Bris Milah (in the case of females by

abstaining from modesty); we have failed to fulfil the mitzvah of tefillin in all its details.

For this reason, two signs are necessary and required to prove that we are Hashem's own. (**R' Asher Weiss shlit'a**)

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ



As the days of Elul pass us by, we know we should be doing more, doing something to utilize this special time to its fullest. What should we DO? The name of the parsha answers this question: "Ki Seitzai" - when you will go out. When you will go out of your nature and do something that is hard for you, that is how you accomplish the goal of coming closer to Hashem. When a person only does what is within his comfort zone, he is not really going anywhere.

If you walk slowly upward on an escalator that is going downward, you will get nowhere! But if you run, then you will make it to the top. During Elul we have to run! We can't just do what we naturally do the way we naturally do it! We need to go beyond our nature which often means going against our nature. When we go against our nature to do the will of Hashem, then Hashem will change nature and make miracles for us.

This is the deeper understanding of the famous words: **ותשובה ותפילה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה**. These three things stand at the pinnacle of the world because they have the power to change nature! TESHUVAH means to return to Hashem, to turn away from sin, to

do the opposite of what comes naturally. TEFILLAH means to talk to Hashem. It is about releasing control over my life and throwing my burdens upon Him, rather than thinking that the power is in my hands. TZEDAKAH means giving up my money, my time, my energy for someone else, even for a total stranger. It is about changing the focus of my world to include others rather than being self-absorbed.

Chazal tell us that because Rochel went against her nature and gave over the secret signs to Leah, Hashem changed nature and turned her from a woman who naturally could NOT have children and gave her children. This is the power of "Ki Seitzai". When you will GO OUT of your nature, Hashem will change nature for you.

770 Eastern Parkway



A Jewish girl grew up in a non-observant home. She studied in public school and never received a Jewish education. When she heard about the hippie movement, rebelling against the establishment, she made up her mind to leave her home without any prior notice to her parents. She decided to go wherever the wind would carry her.

One morning, instead of going to high school, she stood by the road and waited for a hitch. The teenager had decided to enter the first car to stop and wherever the driver would take her, she would go. A car finally stopped. The driver was a black man going to Harlem. She stepped into his car and went with him. When they arrived and she got out of the car, the locals stared at her in wonder. What was this white girl doing here?

Instantly, a crowd of black people gathered around her, closing in from all sides. Suddenly a new, expensive car pulled up. A well-dressed black man got out and asked what was going on. When he heard that this girl wanted to stay in their neighbourhood, he turned to the Jewish girl and ordered her: "Get into my car!" After riding in the car for a while, the man stopped near a certain building and said to the teenager: "Young lady, go to your own people!" and left the place. She found herself standing in front of 770 Eastern Parkway!

She said, "Well, since I reached this place, this is where I'm going to stay." And that's what she did! This girl was lucky. She returned to her Jewish roots, got married and established a beautiful Jewish home. The Almighty supervises each and every one of us with full and complete providence.

This girl who was just one step from falling into the abyss was saved and reached the true way of life in a wondrous manner. But there are so many others who need our help. We must look out for those who seem to be slipping away and "grab them" before it's too late!

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

The parsha begins with the war against the Yetzer Hara (Rashi) and concludes with the battle against Amalek. We have a special mitzvah to remember what Amalek did to us .

The Pri Tzaddik, R' Tzadok Hakohen zt"l, explains that Amalek stands for "**עם לק**" - a nation that licks (**לקק**)! Amalek licks away the blood of Klal Yisroel by instilling in us despair and doubt - taking away our "lifeblood" which is Emunah in Hashem. He instils in our hearts a feeling that we have NO ONE to turn to. He saps us of our lifeblood and takes away our ability to do Teshuvah.

The idea of going to war - against the Yetzer Hara or Amalek - is the belief in Hashem that He loves us and will always be there to save us. In fact, the **Imrei Emes zt"l** teaches that every single Yid has a spark, a point of connection between him and Hashem that remains forever. This is why we say every day in shemona esrai, "Baruch Ata Hashem Magen Avraham." It is this piece of Avraham Avinu inside us that Hashem is always protecting from our enemies!



Chazal tells us that even if a Jew sins, he remains holy, because that special spark in him is always beloved by Hashem. We must remind ourselves constantly that HASHEM LOVES US! We will always be His precious and beloved Nation.

When the forces of Amalek try to discourage us and put all kinds of doubts in our minds, the way to overcome it is by remembering that Hashem is REAL, Hashem is HERE and He loves us more than we can ever imagine.

When society tells us to act, dress, or speak a certain way that is not befitting, we can fight this enemy by remembering how Hashem loves us and how we are responsible to make Him proud. The battles rage all around us, the way to be successful is by living with the belief that Hashem is right here beside us with love.

Life is not about having more; it is about being more!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

22:7 שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָאֵם וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים



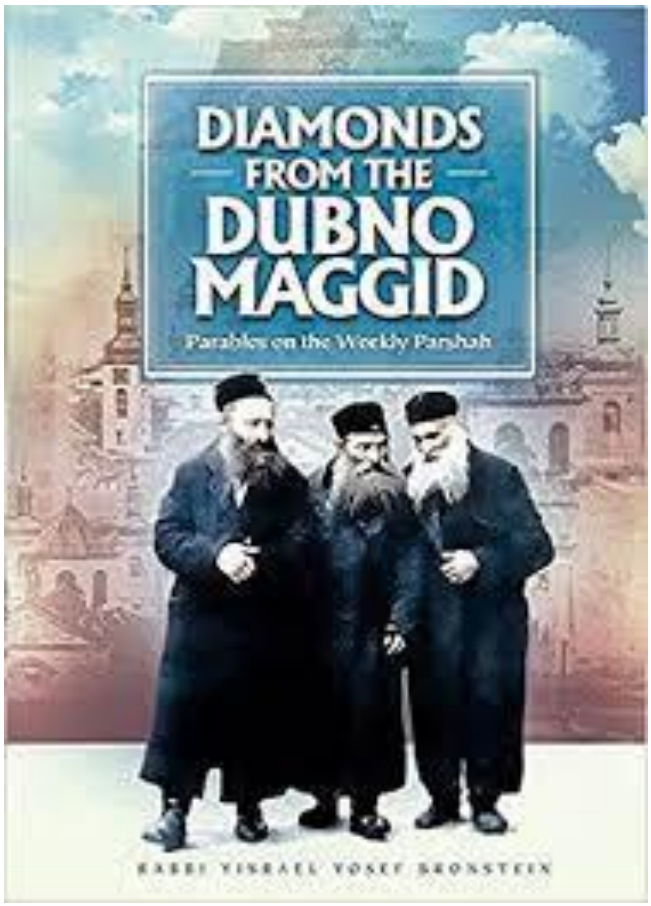
There are two mitzvos for which the Torah promises arichus yamim: kibbud av v'eim and shiluach hakan. In both cases, the reward is not only longevity but also "לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ" - it will be good for you.

The Baal HaTurim and Kli Yakar point out that by kibbud av v'eim, the Torah first cites the beracha of "וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים" and then the beracha of "לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ"; whereas by the mitzvah of shiluach hakan, לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ comes first and then וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים.

My chaver, the Shemen Hatov, posits that any youngster who fulfils the mitzvah of shiluach hakan is likely to receive the beracha of לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ before he experiences the reward of וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים since, in his youth, he is not even thinking of long life, but that his life should be good. However, when one performs the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim, being respectful and caring for his parents as they get older, one might get discouraged or not feel fulfilled.

My machshava here is that when we perform this mitzvah our reward will first be arichus yamim and then we will see that it is good. We can only feel the reward of לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ for the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim once we ourselves reach old age. By then, our children have witnessed our respect and honour for our parents, and we can then be zoche to have our children treat us the same way that they have seen us treat our parents.

לֹא־יָבֹא עַמּוֹנִי וּמוֹאָבִי בִּקְהַל ה' ... עַל־דְּבַר אֲשֶׁר לֹא־קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּלֶּחֶם וּבַמָּיִם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם:23:4/5



The Gaon, R' Yaakov Krantz zt"l, known throughout the world as the **Dubno Maggid**, was a brilliant scholar and an unrivalled orator. Possessed of great eloquence, he illustrated his sermons with unique stories taken from human life. With such parables, he illuminated the most difficult passages in the Torah and Talmud and answered numerous questions in rabbinical law. He was also an eminent rabbinical scholar, and on many occasions was consulted as a halachic authority. Not surprisingly, the Maggid was a very public figure, and his name was known wherever he went. Anonymity was not something he was able to accomplish, although on one occasion, he tried, nevertheless.

Wishing to travel without being recognized, the Maggid once packed his valise and left his hometown of Dubno early one morning without telling a soul. He travelled in this manner for a full day before reaching a small town with a sizable Jewish population.

He immediately headed to the local Jewish inn, where he found the owner and asked him for lodging. The innkeeper was in a rush and told him that he did not have time right now to set him up in a room - he should come back in a few hours. "Why, what is all the rush about?" asked R' Yaakov.

The innkeeper grabbed his hat and coat and ran out the door, calling behind him, "What? Don't you know? The Dubno Maggid is here in

town, and he is speaking right now in shul!" R' Yaakov was stunned. He was so careful that no one should see him or know where he went; how was it possible that this small town already knew he was here - and that he was about to deliver a lecture?

His curiosity piqued, he followed a group of men hurrying in the direction of the main synagogue and entered the packed Beis Medrash. Together with the expectant crowd, R' Yaakov waited for the "Dubno Maggid" to make his appearance. And then, a man with a long white beard walked up to the podium - the Maggid had arrived! R' Yaakov was more amused then dismayed and decided to listen to the "Maggid" as he delivered a sermon.

At first, the man spoke well. He asked and answered questions with logic and a style reminiscent of professional preachers. But after a short time, it became clear to R' Yaakov that this man was a bad actor. He began to ramble on, his points became jumbled, and his parables lacked clarity or any clear message. The more he spoke, R' Yaakov realized, the more he had no idea what he was saying!

At this point, the real Dubno Maggid jumped up from his seat and shouted, "This man is an imposter! He is not from Dubno and he is certainly not a Maggid! If it is the Dubno Maggid you were hoping for, I am that man!"

Well, one can imagine the bedlam and commotion that broke out in that shul! The imposter screamed that he was the real Maggid while R' Yaakov maintained that it was him. People took sides and confusion reigned supreme. It took many minutes for the shouting to be quelled and it was decided that the two men would "compete" for the coveted title: whoever could sway the crowd with his oration, would be deemed the real Maggid of Dubno; the other would have to leave.

The man with the long beard went first and no matter how much he tried; he could not impress the crowd. Then, it was R' Yaakov's turn. He looked over at the sea of faces and began, "In this week's parsha, the Torah tells us that an Amoni or Moavi may not join the Nation

of Israel ever. Why? **שלֹא־קִדְּמוּ אֶתְכֶם בַּלֶּחֶם וּבַמַּיִם** - because they did not offer bread and water to the Jews when they were traveling in the desert.

Now, I ask you: the fact that these very same nations tried to kill us and hired Bilaam the evil prophet to curse and destroy us is not a good enough reason to exclude them from joining our holy people? The posuk even mentions these terrible acts - but in the end, the main reason is because they weren't kind to us?"

The captivated crowd watched the real Dubno Maggid with bated breath. "The answer, my dear brothers, is that killing and murder is a consequence of one who lacks kindness in his heart. A person who is so self-centred and egotistical that he cannot help men, women and children with a bit of food and water in the desert, is one who will eventually come to kill others. The same goes for a person who craves honour and is willing to take the life and livelihood of another person. That person has no business with good, fine, ehrliche people, like yourselves. That man is an imposter who, if not expelled, can cause much more harm, pain and sorrow!"

His words did the trick and the phony Maggid ran away, never to return again.

960 Hours

In these days we have the power to purify ourselves. The 40 days from the beginning of Elul until Yom Kippur are like a Mikva. In each day there are 24 hours. Multiplying 40 (days) by 24 (hours), we arrive at a total of 960. This is the amount of water in Lugin (measurement) that a Mikva contains (40 **סאה** is 960 Lugin). In this way we can grasp **מה מקוה מטהר את הטמאים אף הקב"ה מטהר את ישראל** Just as a Mikva purifies the impure in the 960 Lugin of the Mikva, Hashem purifies us in these 960 hours.

Chacham Rabbeinu Chayim Yosef Dovid Azulai zt"l (Chid'a) would say: כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ 22:8 - During this month of Elul, a Jew takes stock, religious inventory, and recognizes his mistakes. He sees the many 'houses of vanity' he has built up over the course of the year. By doing Teshuvah, he tears down these houses and builds a new, eternal home.



In order to ensure that his new home remains strong and sound, that he will never again return to his sinful ways, he must 'build a fence around the roof' - he should institute guidelines and precautionary measures to prevent him from sinning, and then he can feel confident that he will retain his Teshuvah."

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



When one performs the Mitzvah of Shiluach Ha'ken, sending away the mother bird before taking the eggs or the chicks, they are guaranteed goodness and long life (22:7).

The Sifri comments that if such great reward comes for such a simple act, as there are no expenses to do this Mitzvah, imagine how much greater the reward is for doing Mitzvos where one does spend money on it!

R' Zalman Guttman shlit'a (Darga Yeseira) would say: 22:7 "Very often, we try to 'fix' our children. We see our children as an extension of ourselves, and we are quite adept at finding their faults and pointing them out. Since we love them so much and want them to be perfect, we often criticize and scrutinize everything they do at all times.



Homiletically, the posuk states: **שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָאֵם**- send away your natural 'motherly instinct' to fix and control your child, **וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ** - take your child and bring him close to you! Be mekarev your child! Hug him, kiss him, tell him a good word! Show him how proud you are of him and how lucky you feel to be his parent! Every person (including you) wants to hear a good word! A kind word! So stop trying to fix your child and just bring him close! **לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ**- so it will be good for you, **וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים**- you and your child will live a long and happy life!"

R' Yeshaya Halevi Hurvitz ZT"L (Shelah Hakadosh) would say:

"The Torah is commanding us to return an **אבידה** - something of monetary value to its rightful owner. If we must look after another's possessions and physical objects, how much greater is our duty to help every Jewish soul return to its rightful place in the observance of Torah and its commandments?"

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

שַׁלֵּחַ תְּשַׁלַּח אֶת־הָאֵם וְאֶת־הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ לְמַעַן יֵיטַב לָךְ וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים:22:7



The Rambam tells us that it is forbidden to take the mother bird when she is sitting on her eggs. One must first send the mother away and then take the young birds for himself. Why?

Because the mother bird has a special attachment to her young ones, just like we humans, and will suffer immensely if she sees her young chicks being taken away. The reward for this mitzvah is "**אריכת ימים**", long life.

The Baal HaTurim notes that the words **וְהַאֲרַכְתָּ יָמִים** is the exact gematria (732) of the words "**בעולם שכלו ארוך**", meaning the beracha of long life refers to our life in Olam Haba, not this world.

Rabbeinu Bechaye quotes a Medrash that if a person has not been blessed with children, Hashem tells him, "Do the mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan, and in return **הַבָּנִים תִּקַּח־לָךְ**- I will reward you with children."

The question is obvious. The Torah states that the reward for this mitzvah is **אריכת ימים**; why does the Medrash then say that one will be blessed with children as a reward? This is not the beracha that the Torah explicitly mentions.

My machshava is that after 120 years, when we leave this world, our physical existence ends. But if we leave behind good children who continue a life of Torah and mitzvos, we remain alive through them in the next world. As Chazal tell us (**נדרים סד**): "One who leaves behind children is as if he hasn't died ... just as his children live, so does he live."

I recently went to be menachem avel a family who lost their mother. I told them that just as she gave them life when she was strong enough to rebuild her own broken life after the Holocaust, it is now up to them to be strong and give her life by continuing their Torahdik life of mitzvos and maasim tovim.

Thus, the Medrash is not adding a new blessing as a reward for this mitzvah, but rather explaining that the only way a person can merit **אריכת ימים** and continue living in the next world is if he or she is blessed to leave behind good children in this world. One can then continue living a Torah life in Olam Haba together with the Torah life of his or her children in Olam Hazeh.

May we all be zoche to such a blessing as we continue to yearn for the coming of Moshiach, **במהרה בימינו אמן!**

כִּי־יִהְיֶה לְאִישׁ בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה אֵינֶנּוּ שֹׁמֵעַ בְּקוֹל אָבִיו וּבְקוֹל אִמּוֹ וְיִסְּרוּ אֹתוֹ וְלֹא יִשְׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם׃ ***If a man has a wayward and rebellious son, who does not obey his father or his mother, and they chasten him, and [he still] does not listen to them*** *21:18*



Chazal teach us a most essential principle in the area of Chinuch Habanim: "Always let the left hand push away and the right hand draw close."

R' Simcha Wasserman zt"l explains that the principle for parents is that there must be a perfect balance between the left and right hand. An extreme of one or the other can ruin a child and ruin a family. The left hand represents the side of rigorous discipline, involving strict punishment. The right hand represents the side of

tremendous affection and non-judgmental acceptance - unconditional love.

If both hands are "left hands" and you use only discipline, then you end up simply pushing away. If both your hands are "right hands" and you express only love and affection, then you pull the child towards you, but you don't change him at all. But if the left hand pushes while the right hand pulls, the properly balanced use of the two mechanisms, can change and restore a child's personality. These two aspects are what make a child perfect.

We are all children of Hashem, and that is how he deals with us. He gives us a tremendous outpouring of love but plenty of discipline. We've all experienced that. Of course, even the discipline is a manifestation of love; a central tenet of our emunah as a nation is that when Hashem punishes us or sends us other difficulties, it is only because He loves us.

Likewise, in parenting, the most important thing to remember is that when balancing the love and the discipline, even the discipline has to be with love. We have to understand that whenever we establish discipline or rules or punishment, it is only out of the motivation of love. Thus, the first thing a parent has to understand is that the discipline has to be totally for the sake of improving his child.

Happiness

"You ask, 'How can I be happy if I am not?' True, you can't control the way you feel, but you do have control over your conscious thought, speech and actions. Do something simple: Think good thoughts, speak good things, behave the way a joyful person behaves — even if you don't fully feel it inside. Eventually, the inner joy of the soul will break through." ~ **Bringing Heaven Down to Earth by Tzvi Freeman**

לֹא־יִהְיֶה כְלִי־גֶבֶר עַל־אִשָּׁה וְלֹא־יִלְבַּשׁ גֶּבֶר שִׂמְלַת אִשָּׁה: 22:5



There are two distinct mitzvos in this parsha, one prohibiting men from wearing women's clothes and one prohibiting women from wearing men's clothes. The one for men states: "A man shall not wear a woman's garment." The mitzvah directed at women, however, is more vague. " **לֹא־יִהְיֶה כְלִי־גֶבֶר עַל־אִשָּׁה** " means "a man's utensil shall not be upon a woman." The term "kli" (utensil) includes more than just clothing.

Targum Onkelos understands the term to include weapons, which were exclusively used by men, while Targum Yonason understands it to include Talis and Tefillin. It certainly includes garments that are recognized as exclusively male (as pants were for most of history). The reason for this prohibition is to serve as a barrier to immorality. Without separate men's and women's modes of dress, it would lead to excessive intermingling of the gender, men passing as women and women passing as men.

More recently, in the 1960s, when boys started wearing their hair long, and pantsuits for girls became commonplace, clothing became increasingly unseemly as men and women shopped at the same boutiques for similar items. In many ways, boys became indistinguishable from girls, and this led to a breakdown in moral values and accepted norms that had been in place for hundreds of years.

Thus, the rationale for this mitzvah is relevant in all times and places. (R' Abramowitz) Of course, Tznius is more than a prescription of what is appropriate and what is not, when it comes

to dress. Tznius is a state of mind and the way one carries oneself and how one talks to and around others. It is as much about conduct as it is about dressing. You can be covered from head to toe and still be dressed in a sensuous and inappropriate manner. You can wear long sleeves but still call inappropriate attention to yourself by your body language and how and what you say.

כִּי־יֵשְׁבוּ אַחִים יַחְדָּו וּמֵת אַחַד מֵהֶם וּבֵן אֵין־לוֹ לֹא־תִהְיֶה אֵשֶׁת־הַמֵּת הַחוּצָה לְאִישׁ זָר יְבָמָהּ יָבֹא עָלֶיהָ וּלְקָחָהּ לוֹ־לְאִשָּׁה וְיִבְּמָהּ:

If brothers reside together, and one of them dies having no son, the dead man's wife shall not marry an outsider. [Rather,] her husband's brother shall be intimate with her, making her a wife for himself, thus performing the obligation of a husband's brother with her.



In 1951, there was an exhibition in London, England, to commemorate three hundred years from the readmission of Jews to England under Oliver Cromwell. In 1290, King Edward I issued an edict expelling all Jews from England. This edict lasted three-hundred-and-sixty-one years, until 1651, when the Jews were permitted to return.

At the historic commemoration, a man by name of Jack (Yaakov) Lunzer, who was the custodian of the Valmadonna Trust Library, the finest private library of Hebrew books in the world, noticed that one of the books on display, from the collection of Westminster Abbey,

was a volume of the Bomberg Talmud. This set of Talmud was printed in 1523 and was the first complete set of the Talmud ever printed. Upon further review, Lunzer discovered a complete Bomberg Talmud in pristine condition! How had a complete set of Shas - the Babylonian Talmud - found its way into the United Kingdom's most notable and prestigious church and the traditional place of coronation for British monarchs? Jack Lunzer spent decades working on this dilemma, until in 1980, due to a fortuitous turn of events, he uncovered the story and even managed to procure the set of Talmud from an unwilling and stubborn Catholic church. At a ceremony in the "Jerusalem Chamber" of Westminster Abbey, the nine volumes of Bomberg's Babylonian Talmud were presented to the Valmadonna Trust Library.



What Lunzer found out was truly astounding. It seems that this set of Talmud was commissioned by none other than King Henry VIII, in 1525. Henry had assumed the throne of England in 1509, at the age of 17, and a few months later, married Catherine of Aragon, daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain (the same pair who expelled the Jews of Spain in 1492). Catherine was actually a widow, having been married to Henry's older brother Arthur.

About six months into their marriage, Arthur died childless, and here is where the plot becomes interesting: Henry was a devout Catholic and in order to marry his brother's wife, which is clearly forbidden in the Bible. He required a dispensation from the Pope in Rome himself. Citing the verse in the Bible which commands a man to marry his widowed sister-in-law if his brother died without children,

the Pope agreed that Henry was now fulfilling the biblical requirement of levirate marriage - known as Yibum.

King Henry married his brother's widow. It took over fifteen years, and a handful of lost pregnancies, before Henry realized that he was not going to have a son, an heir to his throne, from Catherine. He had one daughter, but he wanted a son, and as a result, he wished to marry another woman. The problem was, what was he to do with Catherine, his existing wife? Divorce was forbidden for a Catholic King and to ask the Pope to annul the very marriage he had agreed to seemed improbable.

Here is where the Talmud comes in. King Henry was advised that in Venice, Italy, the Jewish rabbis had written a series of books, known as the Talmud, in which they discuss a new method of divorce for a levirate marriage, such as his. The king was desperate and immediately ordered a full set of these books to be delivered to his scholars for examination.

Stokesley, who later became Bishop of London, read through the Jewish tomes and came up with the following argument: The Pope had no authority to override the word of G-d that forbade a man from marrying his brother's wife. As a result, the dispensation the Pope had given years earlier was meaningless, and Henry's marriage was null and void. In this way, Henry was free to marry again. But what did this scholarly Bishop do with the passages that require Yibum? He differentiated between them. The earlier laws, he claimed, were Divinely inspired and based on natural reasoning. Thus, they were moral laws which apply to both Jew and Christian alike. In contrast, the laws found later in Sefer Devarim regarding Yibum, were judicial laws instituted to govern (and punish) the Jews - and the Jews alone. They were never intended to apply to any other people, and so Henry's Christian levirate marriage to Catherine was of no legal standing. There was, therefore, no impediment for Henry to marry a second wife.

The Pope disagreed with this argument and in the end, excommunicated him from the Roman Catholic Church. Henry denounced his Catholic upbringing and embraced the Reformation. He also went on to remarry five more times!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

כִּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה חֲדָשָׁה לֹא יֵצֵא בַּצָּבָא וְלֹא־יַעֲבֹר עָלָיו לְכָל־דָּבָר נָקִי הוּא לְבֵיתוֹ שָׁנָה אֶחָת וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־לָקָח

When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out in the army, nor shall he be subjected to anything associated with it. He shall remain free for his home for one year and delight his wife, whom he has taken. *24:5*



Rashi says the words וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ means "he should make his wife happy," as we see in Targum Onkelus, and anyone who translates it to mean "he should be happy with his wife" is making a mistake because then "**ושמח**" would be spelled with a kamatz.

It is interesting, however, that Targum Yonason explicitly translates these words as "**ויחדי עם אתתה**" - you should be happy with your wife, the complete opposite of Rashi!

The question is glaringly obvious: Yonason ben Uziel was the famous Tanna who is buried in Amuka and is the one people run to daven for a good shidduch! Don't you think he would know about making a wife happy? And did Rashi think that of all people, Yonason ben Uziel was making a mistake?!

My machshava is that if your objective and intention in life is to make sure that your wife is happy, then automatically she will try to make you happy and you will have a wonderful life together!

Therefore, says Targum Yonason, **ויחדי עם אתתה** - you will be happy with your wife, because that is the final outcome of "making your wife happy."

R' Yaakov Kamenetsky ZT"L was once attending a wedding in Brooklyn. I was asked to help find a ride back to Monsey for the Rosh Yeshivah. When I asked the Rosh Yeshivah when he wants to leave, he told me he is ready whenever the Rebbetzin wants to leave. When she was asked when she wants to leave, she said whenever the Rosh Yeshivah wants to leave! Later, when R' Yaakov came outside, he asked to see the car that would be giving them the ride. He opened the back door and sat down for a moment. Upon exiting he said, "This car is fine." He explained that the reason he needed to check the car was to see if it was comfortable enough for his Rebbetzin. THAT is how a Gadol B'Yisroel learns pshat in **וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ**!

May we all take this lesson to heart and live a wonderful life. As they say, ***"Happy wife, happy life!"***

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ

The Chasam Sofer ZT"L tells us that the very first words of this parsha - "When you will go out to war against your enemies, Hashem WILL place them in your hands" - are a promise from Hashem to help us overcome our enemies. Which enemies are we referring to? Our archenemies with whom we are in constant battle - our evil inclination - who forever tries to make us fall. So how do we win? In "**לְדָוִד ה' אוֹרִי**" which we say each day in Elul, it says, **אִם־תַּחֲנֶה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה לֹא־יִירָא לִבִּי אִם־תָּקוּם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בוֹטֵחַ**: - ***"If a war will overtake me ... IN THIS I will place my trust."***

What is Dovid HaMelech referring to? What exactly is our strategy with which Hashem promises to deliver us? Permit me to suggest a

thought I heard from the Baalei Mussar. The answer is the very next words of the very next posuk. **אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי** - ACHAS - ONE!

At this very crucial time of the year, when a Jew must wage war against his powerful foe, the yetzer hara, the trick is to take upon oneself ONE thing, just ONE special mitzvah, middah or hiddur that one will stick with and show Hashem how much he really wishes to change and improve himself! This ONE thing will affect a Jew in such a great way that it will truly uplift him.

Yesterday I received an incredible message from a not (yet) religious taxi driver. As I was sitting in the back seat, he looked into the rear-view mirror and pointedly asked me, "Mah zeh Yahadut?" - What is Judaism? As I prepared to launch into an entire sermon about Torah M'Sinai, he suddenly asked another question which I realized was meant to answer the first.



I listened as he said, "If you spell the word YAHADUT (**יהדות**) backwards what do you get?" As I was thinking, he blurted out, **"TODAH HASHEM!"** That is everything! And so I decided that this will be my ACHAS! I will fight the evil inclination by thanking and thanking and thanking Hashem all day long... and in this way I pray Hashem will let me win!

"When everything seems to be going against you, remember that the airplane takes off against the wind, not with it."

22:12: גְּדִלִים תַּעֲשֶׂה־לָּךְ עַל־אַרְבַּע כַּנְפוֹת כְּסוּתְךָ אֲשֶׁר תְּכַסֶּה־בָּהּ

You shall make yourself twisted threads, on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself.



The Tzaddik, R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg ZT"L was very well known for wearing multiple pairs of Tzitzis - as many as 175 at a time. When asked why he felt such extraordinary dedication to this mitzvah, he would answer simply: "**חכם לב יקח מצות**" - "The wise of heart seize good deeds." (**משלי י:ח**)

In truth, he never wore a specific amount but rather as many pairs as he was physically able to, because he was of the opinion that each Talis Kattan he wore represented another priceless mitzvah.

One day, as R' Scheinberg was in the middle of delivering a Mishna Berura shiur in his yeshivah, he was teaching the halachos of wearing Tzitzis. One student began to argue in favour of wearing cotton Tzitzis in the summer over the heavier woolen Tzitzis, claiming that it is too hot and uncomfortable to wear wool in the summer heat.

R' Scheinberg, who was sitting at his desk, draped in well over one hundred pairs of woolen Tzitzis, responded with a huge smile. "My son," said the Rosh Yeshivah, with a twinkle in his eye, "better to be hot here (on this world) and cool there (in the next), then be cool here and hot there!"

לֹא־אָבָה ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶל־בִּלְעָם וַיַּהֲפֹךְ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַקְּלָלָה לִבְרָכָה כִּי אֲהֵבְךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ: *But the Lord, your G-d, did not want to listen to Balaam. So the Lord, your G-d, transformed the curse into a blessing for you, because the Lord, your G-d, loves you.* *23:6*



When the **Avnei Nezer, R' Avraham Bornstein ZT"L**, moved to the Polish city of Sochatchov and became Rebbe, he was very reluctant to alter his regular schedule of shiurim and he insisted that his learning seder was not to be interrupted. After a while, his chassidim noticed that while he answered each petitioner concisely, he did not spend much time with them.

When questioned about this, the Rebbe responded, "You should know that for every second that I am disrupted in my learning, these people have losses at home. It is to their advantage that I only hold brief audiences with them!" Of course, the saintliness of the Sochatchover Rebbe and the power of his blessings drew people to him on a constant basis.

One of his devout chassidim was a man who had not been blessed with children for many years. On numerous occasions, he entreated the Rebbe to bless him with children but for no reason that was apparent to him, the Sochatchover demurred from granting a blessing.

No matter how often the chasid asked for a blessing, the answer was always no. This continued for quite some time until the chasid came up with a plan. He perceived that on Simchas Torah, the Rebbe would reach a level of spiritual elevation, a time when his sense of joy would be incredibly intense. This was the time to ask - no, to demand - that the Rebbe grant him the blessing of children.

Well, that year, as the Avnei Nezer danced fervently, his face aglow with an otherworldly joy, the chasid made his move! Throwing caution to the wind, he pushed his way to the front of the shul, quickly approached the Sochatchover Rebbe and held onto his hand. Then, he cried, "Rebbe, I am not leaving this place until the Rebbe grants my wish. I need a blessing to have children!"

The Rebbe was in a state of intense meditation, but he stopped for a moment and looked deeply into his chasid's pained eyes. With trepidation, he said, "Do you want me to bless you with a son who will become a priest?" The chasid's face fell and he became ashen. He knew his situation was hopeless. Obviously, the Rebbe had perceived with Divine intuition that any child he was destined to have would not be a proper Jew but would become a priest! This is why he had refused to bless him!

From that moment on, he never again asked the Avnei Nezer for a blessing to have children. Upon R' Avraham's death in 5670 (1910), **R' Shmuel Bornstein ZT"L (Shem M'Shmuel)** succeeded his father as Av Beis Din and the second Sochatchover Rebbe. He was accepted as Rebbe by all his father's chassidim and was widely recognized as one of the greatest Rebbes of his generation. R' Shmuel knew about the chasid's situation and the pain he lived with over his inability to have children. He wished to help the man.

The following year, on Simchas Torah, after the Shem M'Shmuel had finished dancing with great joy, he sent someone to call the chasid. The man approached and the Rebbe said with great enthusiasm and emotion, "I wish to bless you that this year you will become a father!" The chasid stood there speechless. He not only refrained from responding with a resounding Amen, but to avoid affirming the blessing, he actually turned ashen and appeared ready to faint.

The Shem M'Shmuel was shocked at his reaction and asked why he didn't answer Amen to the blessing and why he suddenly turned so pale. The man hesitated before explaining that the Rebbe's father

had once told him that if he would have a son, he would become a priest. From that moment on, he no longer wished to have children and the subject became a closed matter.

R' Shmuel listened quietly. Then, he spoke up with even more enthusiasm. "Nevertheless, I want you to be blessed." This time, the chasid responded, "Amen" and lo and behold, five children were born to the chasid and his wife.

When World War II broke out, this chasid lost four of his children to the flames. One son survived and established a beautiful family of Torah scholars and G-d-fearing children and grandchildren.

How did he survive? Apparently, he was fluent in several languages, and he disguised himself as a Catholic priest. Using his disguise, he was able to elude detection and survived the Holocaust. After the war, he moved to Eretz Yisroel and re-established his Jewish identity.

The Avnei Nezer saw that Heaven had issued a harsh judgment against the chasid, but his son, the Shem M'Shmuel, was able to overturn the curse and turn it into a blessing. The "priest" that his son became was what saved his life!



R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT"L (Kotzker Rebbe) would say: "There is no indication that Bnei Yisroel followed any of the instructions given in an earlier posuk that states: '*And if you will come into war in your land against an enemy that oppresses you, you will blow an alarm with trumpets.*' (**במדבר י:ט**)

Why are no trumpets blown here? The difference in behaviour is indicated in the difference between the terms *'if you will come into'* (**כי תבאו**) and *'when you will go forth.'* (**כי תצא**) If a person initiates the battle against his evil inclination (he 'goes forth'), then his triumph is assured; he will succeed in bringing it to holiness.

If, however, one allows the evil inclination to approach him, to 'come into war in your land' then victory is more difficult to achieve. The battle must then include the sounding of alarms, and he must cry out to Hashem, for only with His extra help can one succeed."

כִּי יִקָּרֵא קַן־צִפּוֹר לְפָנֶיךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּכָל־עֵץ אוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ בֵיצִים וְהָאֵם רֹבֶצֶת עַל־הָאֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ עַל־הַבֵּיצִים לֹא־תִקַּח הָאֵם עַל־הַבָּנִים 22:6:



Many times, in the spring and summer months, pigeons or doves would nest on the air-conditioner box outside the home of **R' Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l**. Since the mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan is brought in the Medrash as a segulah for having children, many childless couples would perform the mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan (sending away the mother bird and taking the chicks) on the air conditioner, as both R' Chaim and his Rebbetzin performed the mitzvah many times.

On the 10th of Tammuz 5754 (1994), Rebbetzin Kanievsky's mother, **Rebbetzin Shaina Chaya Elyashiv A"H**, passed away. Rebbetzin Kanievsky was preparing to be driven to Yerushalayim for the funeral. As she was leaving her house, she noticed a dove's nest on the air conditioner outside her home, with eggs already incubating. The Rebbetzin immediately thought about a young man and his wife, Shlomo and Sigal Marciano, who came every Motzei Shabbos at a designated time to speak with her. The Marcianos had been married for more than ten years and had not yet been blessed with children. The Rebbetzin was eager to offer them the mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan, with the hope that it would be a merit to start a family.

Despite her great sadness at the loss of her mother, and the pressure of rushing to Yerushalayim in time for the funeral, Rebbetzin Kanievsky stopped in her tracks. A mission of chessed lay before her. As if she had forgotten her personal tragedy, she went to the home of a neighbour who had a phone and called the Marcianos.

When no one answered, the Rebbetzin asked one of her grandsons to go to the nearby Kollel where Shlomo Marciano learned. Family members told her that they would find someone else to notify Shlomo about the nest, but she wouldn't hear of it. "I gave him my word that I will notify him if a bird begins nesting on our air-conditioner box, and I must keep my word." Fifteen minutes later, when Shlomo Marciano arrived, the Rebbetzin told him where the nest was located and handed him the key to her house.

"R' Chaim is inside," she informed him, "but since he is always immersed in his learning, please let yourself into the house. Ask R' Chaim and he will explain to you how to do the mitzvah. He will be leaving to the funeral later today, as he first has to finish his learning at home."

A little while after she left, Shlomo Marciano let himself into the Kanievsky home. R' Chaim was sitting in his study engrossed in learning. Shlomo told R' Chaim that the Rebbetzin had sent him to do the mitzvah of Shiluach Hakan. R' Chaim asked him, "Are you the one who is married for more than ten years and hasn't yet been blessed with children?" When Shlomo replied that he was, R' Chaim welcomed him into his home and told him that he should do the mitzvah after sunset as then one can be sure that it is the mother who is nesting. R' Chaim went through the halachos of the mitzvah with Shlomo and gave him his own stick to chase away the mother bird.

R' Chaim was to be driven to Yerushalayim later as the funeral was taking place that evening, and he waited for Shlomo to complete the

mitzvah. After the mitzvah was done, R' Chaim gave him many berachos that he merit the blessing of children right away.

Boruch Hashem, eleven months later, Shlomo and his wife gave birth to their first child, a precious daughter. Following R' Chaim's advice they called her Ayala; the Medrash says that an ayil (ram) gives happy tidings. They had a son two years later. R' Chaim served as sandek at the bris, where the new baby was named Yaakov Yisrael, after the **Steipler Gaon ZT"L**.

Shlomo Marciano relates that it was **Rebbetzin Batsheva Kanievsky A"H** who always helped him and his wife during their long period of childlessness. She cried along with them, encouraged them, and always managed to say the right words. Several times they mentioned how hard it was to eat the Shabbos meals at home alone. After sympathizing with them and offering encouraging words, the Rebbetzin would beg them to join her and R' Chaim for the Shabbos meals, emphasizing that they had an open invitation.

When they shared their wonderful news with her several weeks after her mother's death, even before telling any family members, the Rebbetzin cried tears of joy with them and told them how she would daven for them daily until they are holding a precious baby in their arms. Then she immediately begged the Marcianos to notify their parents.

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ וְלֹא־תָשִׂים דָּמִים בְּבֵיתֶךָ כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנֹּפֵל מִמֶּנּוּ:22:8

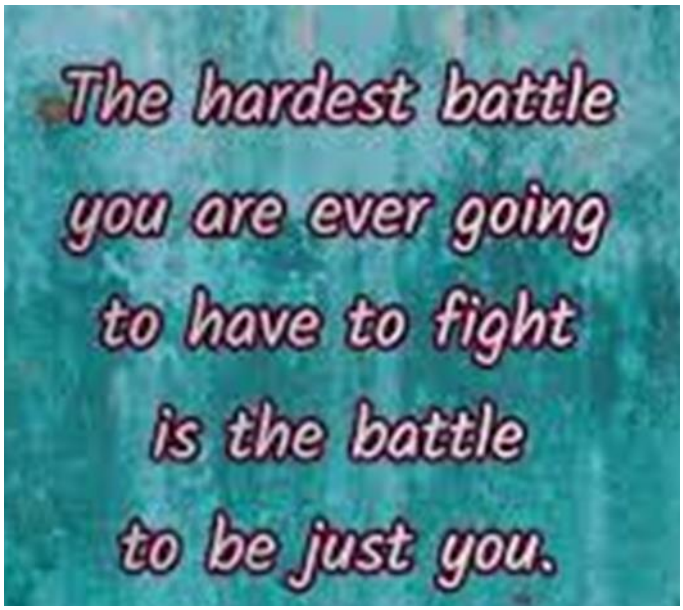
Rabbeinu Azaryah Pigo ZT"L (Binah L'itim) would say: - *'For the one who falls will fall from it (the house).'* The posuk responds to those who are unwilling to construct a fence around their roof, figuring that one who deserves to fall off will fall regardless.

Such an individual thinks, 'What difference does it make if I build a fence? If Hashem decrees that a person is destined to fall, he will

fall even with the fence; and if the decree was for him not to fall than he is safe even without a fence!' (Ed. note: "It's bashert!")

Thus, the Torah tells such a person that he is not to involve himself in such calculations. The person who falls will fall 'from it,' meaning by himself, on his own, and you need not be part of his downfall!"

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ



The best strategy for war is preparation. Before going out to combat an enemy; the more one prepares and researches, the greater his chance will be for success. In order to win the war against our most deadly enemy, our very own evil inclination, we must combat him the way we fight against any evil force that rises to destroy us. So let's research and create a strategy.

When Yaakov Avinu went out to meet his brother Esav, the Torah tells us he prepared for outright WAR. The first thing he did was implement his war strategy. He divided his large family into two camps, so that if one camp would be attacked the other would remain intact. Secondly, Yaakov Avinu used the "Power of Prayer" and davened to Hashem for success. And lastly, Yaakov prepared a gift to appease his enemy. We can see a direct correlation between these three ways that Yaakov Avinu prepared for war, and the three special ways that we are taught will remove from us an evil decree.

Our focus, certainly during this month of Elul, should surely be on ***Teshuva, Tefilla and Tzedaka***. Teshuva means to research the

nature of our enemy. Figure out how he beat us in the past and create an individual strategy to combat his incessant attacks. The more prepared we are, the more likely we can beat him this time around. Tefilla must certainly be on our lips to merit Divine Assistance, as we are powerless without it. Tzedaka means to give charity - money, gifts, time or energy, to our fellow Jews.

By giving willingly and generously to one another, we will arouse heavenly mercy for ourselves. We must learn from our Zaida Yaakov how to fight and beat the enemy. So now that we know... get out there and fight!

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ



Chacham Yaakov Abuchatzeira ZT"L (Abir Yaakov) would say: - *'When you will go out to war against your enemy, and Hashem your G-d will place him in your hands.'*

The 'war' about which the Torah refers to is against the forces of evil who wish to bring down a Jew at all times. Thus, one needs to go out (**תצא**) with the proper equipment: Tefillin (**ת**), Tzitzis (**צ**) and the (**א**) - **אות** of Shabbos.

But lest one think that this is enough to win the battle, he is far from correct. Indeed, he needs much more assistance on his side, like: Tefillah (**ת**), Tzedakah (**צ**) and the (**א**) **אור** - light of Torah study!"

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

23:10 כִּי־תֵצֵא מַחֲנֶה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ מִכֹּל דָּבָר רָע

In a fiery shmuess given by **R' Gamliel Rabinowitz Shlit'a**, he commented on how during Elul everyone is busy looking for segulos and mystical kabbalos to achieve the goal of Teshuva - repentance. That's all great, he exclaimed, but how about learning halacha? How about opening up a Kitzur Shulchan Aruch and learning through the necessary and applicable laws!



THIS is a great way to do Teshuvah - to come back to Hashem. By KNOWING the laws and what He wants of you. There are 74 mitzvos in Parshas Ki Seitzai which equals the gematria of "**דע**" - to KNOW! The greatest way to know an author is by studying his book. The greatest way to KNOW Hashem, is by studying the Torah which is Hashem's will. Learning the will of Hashem will actually teach us strategies to overcome the impulses of the heart and give us the tools to deal with difficult people and stressful situations in life.

As **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ZT"L** famously said at his Rebbetzin's funeral, "Usually one asks mechila at a spouse's funeral, but I have nothing to ask my wife forgiveness for, nor she from me. We lived according to the Shulchan Aruch!"

R' Shlomo Zalman was a great man, but he was still human! Anyone who is married knows that even in the best of relationships there may be quarrels and feelings can be hurt, even unintentionally. To live together for 60 years and not have the need to ask forgiveness can only come from a life of pure Torah. The number 74 is also the

numerical value of "עד" which means to bear witness, for only the laws of Torah, and how one keeps them can bear testimony to a person's true level of overcoming his yetzer hara and returning to Hashem.

The Nest

At his daily gemara shiur to laymen and working class men, **Chacham Ezra Attiah ZT"L** was once teaching the topic of Shiluach Hakein, and he mentioned the gemara that asks: "If one found a nest on a man's head, what is the law?" One man in attendance guffawed loudly and called out, "Chacham, how is this possible? Why must the gemara give such a hypothetical and impossible scenario?"



R' Ezra tried to explain to the man that if Chazal discuss such a case, then it cannot be impossible. One must never doubt the sages for they speak the word of G-d! But the man would not accept this and continued to disrupt the shiur. Nothing the Chacham said could sway him and his mocking tone.

Suddenly, the door opened and a regular who hadn't come to the shiur for a few weeks walked in. "Where have you been all this time," asked R' Ezra, happy for the respite.

"I was in a strange land called India," said the man shaking his head. "So many strange people. I saw this one monk who sat cross-legged for three straight days, not moving a muscle. Even when a bird built a nest on his head, he didn't budge the entire time!" The mocking came to an immediate stop!

22:3 וְכֵ֣ן תַּעֲשֶׂ֗ה לְכָל־אֲבֵדַ֤ת אָחִיךָ֙ אֲשֶׁר־תֹּאבַ֣ד מִמֶּ֔נּוּ וּמְצָאתָ֖הּ לֹ֣א תוּכַ֑ל לְהִתְעַלֵּֽם׃

There was once a man who went through all the tribulations of Siberia together with the famed Maggid, **R' Yaakov Galinsky**. After their freedom he found out he was the only survivor of his family, and he was alone in the world. He was broken and saw no reason to live.

R' Yaakov felt that he needed some chizuk to strengthen his resolve and brought him to the home of the **Chazon Ish, R' Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz ZT"L**. The Chazon Ish listened intently as the man poured out his heart and stated how he felt he had no reason to go on living. When the man finished, the Chazon Ish began to speak.



"I want to tell you about a Din Torah that came before the great Posek, **R' Yitzchok Elchanan Spector ZT"L**.

There was a fellow who learned Torah all day and his wife supported the house by going to the big city, buying merchandise, and then selling it at a profit. One day, to her misfortune, she lost her purse containing all her money in the big city. Her world became dark as all her money was in it.

She came to the Rav of the city and requested that he announce that if anyone found a purse, they should bring it to the Rav. "A poor Jew came forward and said that he found a purse. The woman gave all the simanim to indicate it was hers. At this point, the poor Jew said, 'Rebbi, I also learned in cheder that if one finds a lost item in a city that is mostly gentiles, he may keep it because the owners have given up on the item, assuming a gentile will find it and keep it.

I have a child to marry off and I need this money like my body needs air to breathe. When I found it, I was happy that Hashem sent me a present from Heaven. The Rav announced to bring it so I have, but I'm letting the Rav know that if halachically, according to the law, the money can be kept by the finder since this is a city of mostly gentiles, I will not forgo it.'

The Rav was in a quandary about what to do. On the one hand, everyone knew that the money belonged to the woman. It was all she had and her financial situation - her life savings - depended on it. On the other hand, the poor Jew had the halacha on his side. This was a city of mostly gentiles and anyone finding an item here is entitled to keep it.

At this point, the Chazon Ish stopped his story and asked the man what he would decide on the matter. The fellow shrugged his shoulders and said, "Sounds like an unfortunate woman." Apparently, the poor Jew was correct. The Chazon Ish continued that the Rav of the city initially felt this way, but he sent the case to R' Yitzchok Elchanan the Kovno Rav for his decision. He responded that according to the law the poor Jew must return the money to the woman.

The friend of Rav Galinsky interjected, "According to the law? I could understand if he said it was - *above the letter of the law*, and it would be a nice thing to return it. But why is this the actual law?"

The Chazon Ish explained. "The foundation of the halacha why when one finds a lost item in a city that is mostly gentiles, he may keep it is because the owners have likely given up on the item. They assume that a gentile will find it and keep it. However, here the money was the woman's, and we know from the gemara that what a wife acquires belongs to the husband. Her husband had no idea that the money was lost, consequently he (who was the real owner) didn't give up. Therefore, the poor Jew must return the money according to the letter of the law."

The eyes of R' Galinsky's friend shone as he said with awe and astonishment, "Brilliant! What ingenuity!" The Chazon Ish turned towards this fellow and gave him a piercing look, "These words apply to you as well. Who gave you permission to give up? Even when a sharp sword is on your neck, you shouldn't give up! Are you the owner of your situation or your life? We are all agents of Hashem and He allots our mission in life. We have to do what is obligated upon us and to pray for our success! Who gave you the right to give up?"

The man sat quietly; head bowed in submission for quite some time. All the while absorbing this lesson deeply. R' Galinsky later reported that the fellow left the Chazon Ish a different person - a changed man.



At the age of 28, R' Mordechai Eliyahu ZT"L - who would later serve as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel - became the youngest rabbi in the Israeli rabbinate, when he joined the rabbinical court of Be'er Sheva in (1957). He was renowned as a brilliant scholar who was exceptional in his care and personal attentiveness to the needs of all whom he met.

He once noticed a woman sitting outside the offices of the rabbinate reciting Tehillim with tears in her eyes. She recited the words with great intensity. This recurred for a number of days, and she only finished her recital and closed her Book of Psalms as the rabbinate office closed its doors for the day. R' Eliyahu's curiosity and concern was aroused and one day he asked his assistant to call the woman into his office.

"What are you doing here?" R' Eliyahu asked gently once she appeared before him. "Can I help you in any way?" In a thick and distinct Moroccan accent, she said, "I just moved to Israel from Morocco. Back in Morocco my husband was a taxi driver. Ten days after our marriage he was driving from one city to the next and I never heard from him again. They say he died in a crash but were unable to locate his body. All they found was his wrecked car."

Her voice faded away as the sorrow overcame her. "Weeks turned into months, and I was told that I cannot remarry unless someone testifies that he or she actually saw the corpse. No one ever has." She turned to look into the rabbi's face. "In Morocco, nobody could help me. Now that I am in Israel, I thought that perhaps a rabbi could assist me and permit me to remarry. That's why I have been praying here." The rabbi nodded with deep empathy. Then he asked, "But why then have you not entered the office to speak to us?"

"Who are you?" responded the Sephardic woman with an old-world flare. "You, the rabbinate, are but messengers. I am praying to Hashem, the Creator of the world. He will decide if I should remarry, or I should remain an agunah!" R' Eliyahu, admiring the woman's strong faith, travelled to Netivot, to the home of the renowned **Baba Sali, R' Yisroel Abuchatzeirah ZT"L**, who originally hailed from Morocco, to see if he could advise him on where or to whom to turn.

The Baba Sali listened to the story. Then he said, "Go to Ramla and speak with my brother, R' Yitzchok (the "Baba Chaki"). He knows everyone and he will tell you who was in charge of burials in various Moroccan cities."

R' Eliyahu took a taxi from Netivot to Ramla, where the Baba Chaki resided. The sage from Ramla knew the city where the woman had lived and told him that two grave-diggers from that city had both moved to Israel a few months earlier; one lives in Kiryat Ata and one lives in Dimona.

He gave R' Eliyahu the exact address for each. The rabbi continued on his journey to the closer of the two cities, Dimona. Upon arrival at the home of the grave digger, he found a note on the door saying that the man had just passed away. R' Eliyahu arrived just in time for the afternoon Mincha prayer. He stayed awhile, prayed, and then shared some words of comfort with the family. Hoping that someone might be able to give him a clue to aid him in his undertaking, he decided to tell over the woman's story.

As he told the tale with the taxi and mentioned the deceased man's name, an old man dressed in traditional Moroccan clothing, jumped up in the corner of the room. "I am one of the grave-diggers who buried that taxi driver. I remember the story well. No one could identify the driver other than the fact that he was Jewish. We were told to bury him in the Jewish cemetery. The man who passed away today was the other grave-digger and I am here in his home to console his family .

The rabbi immediately gathered two others, creating a mini rabbinical court, and they took this man's testimony. R' Eliyahu delivered a letter to the woman, permitting her to remarry. Relating to his fellow judges in Be'er Sheva's rabbinical court what had happened the previous day, R' Eliyahu exclaimed, "This is the power of a prayer that comes from a sincere heart."



23:5 עַל־דְּבַ֗ר אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־קִדְּמ֙וּ אֶתְכֶ֣ם בַּלֶּ֔חֶם וּבַמַּ֖יִם בַּדֶּ֑רֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶ֖ם מִמִּצְרָ֥יִם

Because they did not greet you with bread and water on the way, when you left Egypt

A poor boy who was peddling rags from door to door, found that he had only one dime left in his pocket, and he was hungry. At the next door, he asked for a drink of water.

The girl who answered the door thought he looked thirsty and instead brought him a tall glass of milk. He drank it slowly, savouring

it, and asked, "How much do I owe you?" "You don't owe me anything," she replied softly. "Mother has taught us never to accept pay for a kindness."

The grateful boy resolved to never forget this kindness. Many years later that same girl became critically ill. She was brought to a renowned hospital where a top specialist, Dr. Howard Kelly, was called in to look at her case. When the doctor went to see the patient, he recognized her as the same girl who had been so kind to him years earlier. Dr. Kelly gave special attention to her case.



After a long struggle, the battle was won. Dr. Kelly asked to see the final bill and then scribbled something on the edge of the paper, before it was sent to her room. She feared opening it, sure it would take the rest of her life to pay it all up.

Finally she did look, and she read these words on the side of the bill: ***"Paid in full with one glass of milk, (signed) Dr. Howard Kelly."***

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

I once heard a beautiful moshol in the name of **R' Chaim Shmuelevitz ZT"L**.

Picture a woman holding a sleeping baby in her arms, standing at the bus stop in Yerushalayim. Finally, the bus arrives, and she alights, sits down and watches the scenery on the trip to Bnei Brak. After many twists and turns, she finally arrives at her destination and descends from the bus with her baby still sleeping in her arms.



Did that baby travel the same distance she did? Of course, he did. Is that baby aware of the journey that transpired? Of course not. As far as the baby is concerned, he has not moved at all. He is still in the loving embrace of his mother. It makes no difference where he started or how long he travelled. He expended no worries or fears on the entire journey, for all he felt was the love and security of his mother.

This is how we must feel, so closely connected to Hashem, that no matter what would transpire in our lives we would feel safe and secure as a baby in his mother's arms. This is one explanation of "**אני לדודי ודודי לי**" - ***"I am to my Beloved and my Beloved is to me."***

The closer we bring ourselves to Hashem, the closer He will come to us. Isn't that the true goal and yearning of a Jew? Isn't that the purpose of all our tefillos, no matter what it is that we are asking for? There is no greater joy than the feeling of being close to Hashem.

The feeling of security and love, of being carried in the arms of the "Kol Yachol." After I heard this vort, I was so inspired. I would actually close my eyes and imagine myself as a baby being carried by Hashem without worry or fear.

This Elul, may we achieve **אני לדודי** so that we will merit the ultimate goal of **ודודי לי** .

"The whole purpose of life is to recognize Hashem in all things."
~ Rabbi Elimelech of Lishenzk.

The Laniado Hospital in Netanya

The Hospital was built at the behest and under the auspices of the **Klausenberger Rebbe, R' Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam ZT"L.** Not only did the Rebbe conceive of the idea and see it through to its fruition, he was very involved in every aspect of the decision-making process, and would even attend board meetings.



At one of the meetings, a question arose regarding the type of needle to use for medical procedures in the hospital. The standard needle that was prevalent at that time in most facilities was one shekel cheaper than the better quality, more updated instrument, and buying the cheaper needles in a large-scale amount that was necessary for the hospital would have resulted in huge savings. The Rebbe asked why the newer needles were more expensive and was told that they had a more delicate edge which would make it easier and less painful for the patient.

At once, the Rebbe stood up and decided, "We will use the better needles, even if it costs more!" Every doctor in the room marvelled at his sensitivity. A person, who would lessen another Jew's pain - at any cost!

"When you put Hashem first, everything else follows." ~ Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan.

R' Simcha Shustal



An Orthodox family from New Jersey, was blessed with a son who was so bright that he outgrew his class, then his teachers, then his entire school. His parents were at a loss as to what to do with their brilliant son until they heard about a program for gifted children in a nearby public school. It sounded like a good option, although they understood the risk to his religious observance as well as the lack of Jewish resources available.

Not surprisingly, once in the new school, the boy's spiritual affiliation took a nosedive. As the only Orthodox boy in the entire school, it wasn't long before he felt alienated from Judaism, religious observance and even from G-d. In order to fit into his new school, the young boy went as far as to call himself an "agnostic" - one who does not believe in G-d. His parents were understandably distressed.

A young Talmudic scholar was hired to study with the genius for an hour a day but just after one session, when the boy asked a question which stumped his tutor, it was apparent that this study-partnership was not going to work out. A second scholar was hired but after a short time, the same result occurred for much the same reason. The boy's father now turned to a former rabbi and close family friend for advice. What should he do with his gifted son, who considers himself an agnostic and was losing any spiritual connection with Judaism at a rapid pace?

The rabbi considered the problem and then offered a unique solution. He would try to arrange a study partnership for the man's

son with a cousin of his; none other than the Rosh Kollel of B.M. Elyon in Monsey, **R' Simcha Shustal Shlit'a**. The father would have to drive his son out to Monsey twice a week and drop him off at R' Shustal's home, said the rabbi, but it was well worth it. The father agreed, and even convinced his son to go along with it. The arrangement lasted for well over two years during which the young boy did an about-face in his religious perspective. No longer did he consider himself an agnostic but rather an Orthodox Jew, who over the course of a few short years became quite a Talmid Chacham as well.

It was only due to advent of the Vietnam War, when all able-bodied young men were being drafted into the U.S. Army, and the young man was forced to enrol in MTJ in the Lower East Side in order to avoid the draft, that the study partnership with R' Shustal was halted.

Some time later, the young man was reminiscing to a well-known educator about the days when he would drive out to Monsey to learn. The Menahel asked him what it was like to learn personally with a great Rosh Yeshivah like R' Simcha.



"I finally found someone who understood me," exclaimed the young man, of R' Simcha. "Before we even sat down to learn, the Rebbetzin would come into the room and bring me a heaping bowl of ice cream! Every day, I couldn't wait for my bowl of ice cream, and I practically licked the bowl clean! Then, R' Simcha would sit down with me, and we would schmooze for a few minutes. Not learn - schmooze! You want to know what we schmoozed about? About baseball!"

The Menahel was shocked. R' Simcha Shustal discussing baseball was a hard image to conjure up. Most likely the Rosh Yeshivah sat there and pretended to be interested in the conversation, letting the boy speak about his sports heroes, right?

"Are you kidding?" said the young man. "R' Simcha not only knew every score, but he also knew every play-by-play that happened in the game! He knew who got a big hit, the turning point of each game and he knew each player by name! There was no way he was faking it! He clearly knew the game inside and out!"

The educator marvelled at the unique insight of the Rosh Yeshivah. He knew that before studying Torah, he needed to establish a connection with this American boy. A way to open up his heart and make him receptive to Torah. And if it meant finding out the intricate details of a silly baseball game and knowing the ins and outs of every play - so be it!

Today, the young man is a Rosh Kollel in Eretz Yisroel and a Mechaber Seforim.

Torah Tavlin - From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ



Chazal tell us the "enemy" the posuk refers to is the Yezter Hara . The Toras Moshe comments that the Yetzer Hara is so powerful that a man could never be victorious if not that Hashem is helping him. But before Hashem helps, one must show that he is making the effort.

Hashem tells us: ***"Open up for me a tiny opening, the size of an eye of a needle and I will open up that whole so large until it is the size of a banquet hall!"*** The eye of a needle is so tiny - yet it

is so complete. It is an opening through and through. Our efforts to come close to Hashem may come about through small and seemingly insignificant actions, but they must be 100 percent sincere and genuine.

A young boy stood on a beach looking out at the ocean for a very long time. Finally, a man approached and asked him what he was looking at? The boy replied that he was waiting for a ship to pass so he can wave to the captain who will then wave back at him. The man laughed. "Silly boy. The ship will be so far out at sea, you will never see the captain and he will never see you!" The boy smiled, "I know for sure that he will wave back at me - because the captain is my father!" It's up to us. If we wave first, Hashem always waves back!!

The Needle

A kallah went to the dentist a day before her wedding and accidentally swallowed a needle which the dentist put in her mouth. She was rushed to a hospital where doctors were worried that she would need surgery. While the doctors were deciding what to do, a query was sent to the **Chazon Ish ZT"L** to ask if the wedding should be postponed. The Chazon Ish responded, "Do not postpone: the needle will come out before the wedding."

The next day a four word telegram arrived at the Chazon Ish's door. It read: **מזל טוב המחט יצאה** - ***"Mazal Tov, the needle came out!"*** The news of this miracle caused a big stir. The Chazon Ish tried to make light of it. "What miracle?" he asked those people who were amazed. "When I was a young child and I would get a small scratch and bleed a bit, my mother would calm me down by saying don't worry it will heal by the time your wedding day arrives. So you see, all I was doing was following what my mother taught me."

הכנסת אורחים

23:5 עַל־דְּבַ֗ר אֲשֶׁ֤ר לֹא־קִדְּמ֙וּ אֶתְכֶ֣ם בַּלֶּ֔חֶם וּבַמַּ֖יִם בַּדֶּ֣רֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶ֑ם מִמִּצְרָ֔יִם

..they did not greet you with bread and water on the way, when you left Egypt.



R' Shneur Kotler ZT"L in discussing the mitzvah of **הכנסת אורחים** - hospitality to guests, explains the greater importance attributed to escorting guests over feeding or providing lodging for them. Many times, a guest overstays his welcome. At other times, the host is gracious to a guest but prays for the moment when the guest departs so that tranquillity and privacy may once again prevail in his home. Accordingly, when this guest leaves, the host is privately overjoyed at his departure.

Thus, to escort a guest out of one's home, and even remain with him until the very last moment, is a positive sign that his departure is not welcomed but rather engenders a bit of sadness. This is indicative that his previous hospitality - the feeding, the clothing and lodging - were sincere acts of wisdom and joy.



R' Tzadok HaKohen zt"l (Pri Tzaddik) writes that wheat represents the growth and elevation of a person. Just as a small wheat kernel can become a loaf of bread, so too a person has the inner ability to become great even if he is presently small in character.

The Traffic Ticket



Many people have gotten out of receiving a traffic ticket using all sorts of excuses. But no one ever had a better excuse than the woman from Crown Heights who was pulled over by a N.Y.C. traffic cop. Standing outside her open car window and watching her fumble for her license, the police officer caught sight of a picture of the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson ZT"L**, in her open purse. "Excuse me, Ma'am," he asked, "are you one of the followers of this Rabbi?" She replied that she was. "Well, in that case I'm not giving you a ticket." He closed his ticket book.

She looked up at him surprised. The policeman smiled and said, "Okay, I'll tell you why. It's my favourite story, but I haven't told it to many Jewish people, in fact, I think that you are the first." He raised his voice over the din of passing cars.

"I used to be in the police escort that once a week escorted the Rabbi to the Montefiore Cemetery (where he and his predecessor, **R' Yosef Yitzchok Schneersohn ZT"L**, are interred). I got to know some of the young men who accompanied the Rabbi, and I learned a thing or two about Hasidim. They are very friendly people, and we talked a lot while the Rabbi was inside praying. They used to tell us all about the greatness of the Rabbi and how he tries to help people all the time.

I was standing there with some of my buddies and I half-jokingly asked if the Rabbi helps non-Jews also. "'Sure,' they said, 'The Rebbe helps anyone who asks. Why? Do you need something?'

"Later, in private, I told one of the young men, that my wife and I had been married for nine years with no children, and one week ago the doctors told us that we had no chance. We had spent a lot of money on treatments, seen all sorts of big professors, we were running around like crazy for the last six or seven years, and now they told us that they tried everything and there is no more hope. You can't imagine how broken we were. My wife cried all the time and I started crying myself.

"So this young man tells me, 'Listen, the next time that you escort the Rebbe to the cemetery, stand near the door of his car and when he gets out, ask him for a blessing.' And you know, that's just what I did! The next time I was in the escort, I stood by his door and when he got out, I said to him, 'Excuse me, Rabbi, do you only bless Jewish people or non-Jews too?' "I'll never forget how the Rabbi looked at me - like I was a good friend! He said that if he can, he tries to help anyone who asks.

So I told him what the doctors said, and he told me to write down on a piece of paper my name and my father's name together with my wife's name and her father's name, so he can pray for us. I did it, although I did think it was funny writing down my father and father-in-law's names - real heavy-duty Irish names. But I did it and you know what? In a short time, my wife was expecting and nine months later she gave birth to a baby boy!

The doctors went crazy, they couldn't figure it out, and when I told them that the only difference was a Rabbi's blessing, they just scratched their heads. Wow! It was unbelievable!"

The cop's face was truly glowing at this point. "But here comes the best part. Do you know what we called him? What name we gave our baby boy? We called him 'Mendel' after the Rabbi. Can you imagine? The only Irish 'Mendel' in the neighbourhood - probably in the world!

At first my wife didn't like the name because it didn't sound American. Hey, it doesn't even sound Irish! But I said, No! We're

calling him Mendel! "Of course, our parents objected when they heard the name. They said, 'With a name like that, all the kids will be cruel to him. Why make the kid suffer for no reason?' But they're missing the point. When he comes home and says that the other kids called him names and beat him up because he has a Jewish name, I'll tell him that I want him to learn from those other kids how not to behave. They hate the Jews for no reason, but you should love the Jews, you should help the Jews. You just tell them that without that Jewish Rabbi called Mendel you wouldn't be here at all, and then maybe they'll start thinking differently too!"



כְּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה חֲדָשָׁה... וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר־לָקָח:24:5

When a man takes a new wife, … and delight his wife, whom he has taken.



When a man and woman decide to marry and create a union of kedushah and purity within Klal Yisroel, the Torah dictates that the **שנה ראשונה** - First Year, of their marriage is ultra-important, in that they must fulfil the precept of **וְשִׂמַּח אֶת־אִשְׁתּוֹ**- "He shall gladden her (heart)."

The tzaddik of Yerushalayim, **R' Aryeh Levine ZT"L**, was once asked: what is the most important bit of advice to offer a young couple? Is there one concept, one phrase or nuance - one magical word that can sum up the epitome of a Jewish marriage?

R' Aryeh thought for a moment and then answered. "The Shulchan Aruch discusses a controversy regarding how to position a mezuzah

on the doorpost. One view is to stand it upright before making the berachah and fastening it to the post, whereas the other view is to place it lying side-ways and attach it that way. In the end, though, the **Rema** rules that in order to satisfy both opinions, we position the mezuzah **באלכסון**- slanted, and in this way, we fulfil the mitzvah."

Explained R' Aryeh, "When a newly married couple enters into their house/apartment for the very first time, the first mitzvah that they see is the mezuzah hanging on a slant on their doorpost. The mezuzah calls out and teaches them that - **פשרה**- compromise - is the ideal manner with which a husband and wife should conduct their life together.

There may be two opinions in every situation, but if a couple is willing to bend and compromise, they will ultimately succeed."

Concluded R' Aryeh, "If you want to live together and enjoy a wonderful married life, place it **באלכסון** and you'll see how wonderful it can be."

Lecha Dodi

A Young, dark-looking man sat in the corner of the shul, glancing around furtively but not uttering a word during the Friday night davening. After shul was over, one of the regulars approached him and asked if he was looking for a place to eat the Shabbos meal. Without more than a slight hesitation, the young man - who introduced himself as only "Machi" - smiled and accepted the invitation.

As the family sat around the warm Shabbos table, eating home-cooked delicacies and singing timeless tunes both slow and fast, Machi buried his nose in a bencher but not a word came out of his mouth. He seemed to be searching for something particular and when the host asked him what he was looking for, he replied, "The song that was sung in the synagogue, something that sounded like

'Dodi' or something." "You want to sing Lecha Dodi?" asked the host. "Well, it's not usually sung at the meal, but I'm sure we can make an exception," he smiled warmly. After it was sung, Machi was quiet again and ate with his head down. The host noticed his discomfort and asked if there was anything else he wanted to sing.

Blushing slightly, Machi said, "Is it possible if we sang 'Lecha Dodi' again?" They did - not once, but eight or nine times more, each time with visible pleasure enshrined on Machi's face. After the meal, the host asked Machi, "So tell me, where are you from?" A pause and shuffling of his feet before Machi responded in a half tone, "Ramallah." Unsure of what he heard and thinking of the Israeli resort town of Ramleh, the host quickly intoned, "Oh, Ramleh. I have a cousin living in Ramleh." "Ramallah," said Machi, this time a bit louder, "The Arab city of Ramallah."

The silence was deafening. Machi knew that an explanation was imperative at this point and told over his story. "My real name is Machmud ibn Esh Sharif and I was born and grew up in Ramallah. I was taught to hate my Jewish oppressors, and to think that killing them was heroism. But I always had my doubts. I mean, the Sunna, the tradition, says, 'No one is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.' I used to wonder, weren't the Yahud (Jews) people, too? Didn't they have the right to live the same as us? If we're supposed to be good to everyone, why not to Jews?

I asked these questions to my father, and he threw me out of the house. Just like that, with nothing but the clothes on my back. By now my mind was made up: I would run away and live with the Yahud, until I could find out what they were really like.

"That night, I snuck back into my house to retrieve my stuff and ran into my mother. I told her that I planned on living with the Yahud and possibly even to convert to their religion. She paled noticeably and told me, ***'You don't have to convert, you're already a Jew.'***

Then in her semi-poetic way, she declared, 'I made a mistake marrying an Arab man. In you, my mistake will be redeemed.' She gave me an old photo of her grandparents when they were visiting the gravesite of their ancestors and I have it here with me."



He pulled out an old, worn picture depicting an elderly Sefardic couple standing over a grave. The host took one look at the inscription on the grave - and almost fainted in shock. There was no doubt; the grave was that of the great Kabbalist and tzaddik **R' Shlomo Alkabetz ZT"L** - author of "Lecha Dodi!"

Eventually, Machmud changed his name, went to study in a Yeshiva and became a true Baal Teshuva. He was later forced to leave Israel fearing for his life from his Arab relatives.

Heard A Good Shiur?

"After learning torah, the main thing is to ask yourself: 'What can I do to apply this in real life?'

Don't think you've fulfilled your obligation just by hearing good ideas. Look for something practical to improve in your tefillah, learning, middos, and beyond." ~ R' Eliyahu Lopian Zt"L.

"Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn."

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדר בן יצחק מאיר ע״ה

Full Conviction in the Mitzva of Hashavas Avaida, returning a lost object, it says **לא תוכל להתעלם** [Devarim 22:3]. Literally this means, "You shouldn't hide yourself."] You shouldn't be capable of ignoring it. This is the person we need to make ourselves into. One needs to be sensitive. He must recognize that someone lost an object and is likely anxious to recover it. Our conviction should be so strong that we wouldn't walk past it.

We must make ourselves incapable of violating whatever it says in the Torah. One's conviction must be so strong that it wouldn't enter his mind, as it would violate his very being.

Divinely Directed

Amalek believes that all is coincidence. If we think this way, then we erase Hashem's name- It was in a Petach Tikva shul located on R' Chaim Ozer street that an 83-year-old Russian immigrant found himself davening. After receiving an Aliya, he burst into tears as he explained that at his Bar Mitzva, a Rav told his father that if he sent his son to a secular school instead of Cheder, it would be 70 years until his next Aliya. This was his first Aliya in 70 years. The Rav was **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzensky**.

All that happens is **השגחה פרטית**; Divine Providence, as it says **מה' מצעדי גבר כוננו**; *by Hashem are a man's footsteps established*. There is no such thing as coincidence. In fact, if we rearrange the letters of **מקרה**; coincidence, we get **רק מה'**; only from Hashem, meaning that which seems like an accident is in essence Divine Providence.

Indeed, **מקרה** can be translated as prepare as in **והקריתם לכם** since every situation is prepared by Hashem. Hashem has it all planned out as in **תכין לך הדרך**; our path is prepared for us by Hashem.

Build Fences



We are instructed to have protective fences—cautionary rules—for the Torah— **סיג לתורה** This is so that we don't come to transgress and as the Mishna says **כדי להרחיק אדם מן העבירה**, to distance oneself from sin. A hint to this is found in **והגבלת את העם סביב** you shall set boundaries for the people, which is written in the context of Matan Torah.

A wealthy man named R' Issurel had a big store with all types of silk which he would close on Erev Shabbos at Chatzos. The Yetzer Hara once came to test him in this area in which he appeared in the guise of a big officer. Appearing as such, he entered the store and took lots of the expensive merchandise and measured it.

Chatzos arrived while he was in the middle of his shopping. However, this didn't deter the wealthy store owner as he began to close up like he always did. This officer pleaded with him to give him the merchandise but R' Issurel objected thereby losing an abundance of money. Due to this, he was honoured with such a holy son—**the Rema** (1530-1572)!

It is written **הגבל את ההר וקדשתו**, make a boundary around the mountain, and sanctify it—since Hashem didn't want the nation ascending Har Sinai at Matan Torah. This also teaches us about setting limitations to avoid sin, as this is one of the preparations for receiving Torah. **הגבל את ההר** can also be translated to take the letters that are on the boundaries of **הר**. That is to say, the letters prior and that come after **ה (ד,ו)** and **ר (ק,ש)**. These four letters spell **קדוש** because when one sets protective fences for Torah, he makes himself holy as the Pasuk continues **וקדשתו**.

ועשית מעקה לגגך ולא תשים דמים בביתך כי יפל הנפל ממנו , if you build a new house, you shall make a fence for your roof so that you will not place blood in your house if a fallen one falls from it. The word **גגך** is Gematria of 26, the same sum as **י-ה-ו-ה**. Consequently, it refers to actual Torah laws. On this we should make fences—**מעקה**. Then, even if we fall (**יפל הנפל**), it will only be from the fence **ממנו** and not the actual Torah law.

Pardas Yehuda- Rabbi Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Only tzaddik-soldiers allowed to fight

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ When you go out to war against your enemies...(21:10).

The literal context is that of an optional, voluntary campaign proclaimed by the Nation's leaders. But the previous Perek (from Parshas Shoftim) lays out detailed military preparations which are pertinent to our posuk, notably a ¨ **וְיָסְפוּ הַשֹּׁטְרִים לְדַבֵּר אֶל־הָעָם וְאָמְרוּ מִי־הָאִישׁ הַיָּרֵא וְרַךְ הַלֵּבָב יֵלֵךְ וְיָשָׁב לְבֵיתוֹ** And the officers shall ... speak to the people and say, "*What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house... (20:8)*

Rashi explains from Chazal that this would-be soldier is fearful of the sins for which he is accountable, and which could cause his death in battle. Those who remained from this screening process must, therefore, have been righteous men with no fear of punishment for their sins -- in other words, tzaddikim. The word **תֵּצֵא** alludes to this directly if we view its letters as an acronym for **אִיש צַדִיק תַמִים** -- only a pure tzaddik was qualified to fight in the war.

"Hashem is not found in the heavens, but in the details of everyday life." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

It says in Shir HaShirim (6:3), אני לדודי ודודי לי, which means that I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me.



The first letters of the words of this Pasuk, spell the word 'Elul', and it describes the characteristic of the month of Elul. It is a month of immense love between Hashem and His nation.

The Baal Ha'fla'ah calls these days, 'days of friendship', because these are the days of a close relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people.

Rav Chaim Brim, zt"l, once asked one of his students, "How are you, my cousin?" The student didn't understand, since they were not related to each other. Rav Chaim Brim explained, "In the month of Elul, Hashem is like a caring Uncle, as it says in the Pasuk Ani L'Dodi, and Dod is an uncle. Since we each have the same caring Uncle, that makes us cousins!"

Rav Elimelech Biderman writes that we know that Hashem is leading the world and directs all events. Most of this takes place 'behind the scenes', where we aren't even aware of what is happening, but sometimes Hashem gives us a glimpse to let us see how he is involved and 'pulling all the strings. Even when matters aren't the way we would want them to be, if we look closely, we will see how everything is being run by Hashem, and everything is for the good.

Levi was a Yeshivah Bachur learning in Eretz Yisroel, and he had a slight problem. An 'off Shabbos' was coming up for his Yeshivah and his parents were not going to be home for that Shabbos. It wasn't

an option to stay in Yeshivah for Shabbos, and he needed a place to go. Levi asked his friend Shimon if he would like to go to Tzfas for Shabbos, and Shimon agreed.

That Friday, they boarded the last bus to Tzfas, but the bus got stuck in traffic several times along the way. As the sun was starting to set and they saw it would soon be Shabbos, they realized they could not be on the bus anymore. They were only near Teveria, and they had at least a half hour ride to go until they would reach Tzfas.

Levi and Shimon realized that they must get off the bus quickly, because it was only a few moments before Shabbos. The bus driver opened the door for them, and they began their trek to Teveria.

Levi and Shimon were very disappointed. They had planned to be in Tzfas for Shabbos and now they will be in Teveria, and they had no idea of where they could stay. As they walked, they blamed everything they could. Levi wondered, "Why couldn't he have just gone home for Shabbos? Why did the Yeshivah have an 'off Shabbos' specifically this week? Why couldn't he at least have stayed in Yeshivah?" Shimon was also filled with anxiety. He said to Levi, "Why did you convince me to go with you? I could have gone home, peacefully."

When they reached Teveria, it was already dark. They were hungry, tired, and depressed. They walked up to the first house they saw with a Mezuzah, and decided to try their luck.

The first thing they noticed when they reached the front door was a child's sign hanging which said, 'The Cohen's Practice Hachnosas Orchim', but Levi and Shimon were still anxious and thought, 'Maybe they won't let us in, despite the generous sign that one of their children apparently made in kindergarten? Furthermore, how can we know that we can trust their level of Kashrus? Also, maybe there won't be enough food for us, since they certainly weren't expecting us to come for Shabbos?' But they knew they didn't have a choice because they had nowhere else to go.



They lightly knocked on the door. Mr. Cohen opened the door and greeted them. He was noticeably overjoyed to see the two boys, and he graciously invited them in to be his guests for Shabbos. Shimon and Levi were happy to discover that Mr. Cohen was a Ben Torah, and they knew that they could trust his level of Kashrus. Shimon and Levi Davened in the house since all the Shuls had finished Davening by that time, and then they came to the table, to join Mr. and Mrs. Cohen's Shabbos Seudah.

It seemed that somehow the Cohen's expected some sort of company because there was plenty of food. Mr. Cohen noticed that the boys were surprised by the abundance of food, so he explained that he and his wife had just returned earlier that Friday morning from a trip to Europe, and neighbours prepared the Shabbos food for them. "They thought that our children would be home, so they prepared for the children as well, however, we sent our children to their grandparents in Bnei Brak for Shabbos. So it seems that all the food was prepared especially just for you!"

Levi and Shimon enjoyed a very uplifting Shabbos. They sang Zemiros for hours, and Levi, a young Talmid Chacham, offered many beautiful and clever Divrei Torah. The Cohen's were very impressed by Levi's Middos, his Yiras Shamayim, and the Divrei Torah that he said over, and they thought that he would be a good match for their daughter. Immediately after Shabbos they called a Shadchan to arrange the Shidduch, and soon afterwards, they started dating and eventually they became engaged!

Levi and Shimon thought that being stranded in Teveria was a problem, but it proved to be that Hashem did it for their great benefit!

The Yetev Lev

When the Yetev Lev became a Zakein (old man), he had a Mikveh constructed in his house. The common belief was that it was simply more convenient for him, at his age, to have easier access to a Mikveh for his daily ablutions. However, **the Satmar Rebbe ZT"L** explained that his grandfather had a different motivation entirely. The Yetev Lev was concerned that he may die someday soon, late in the day, and that as a result, the Chevra Kadisha would have to perform his Taharah in the town Mikveh. This would close down the Mikveh to its regular business and bring about inconvenience for those who had planned to immerse that night.

Since the Yetev Lev did not wish this to occur, he went through the expense and difficulties of having to construct a Mikveh for his own Taharah, in preparation for his eventual Petirah.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

Rashi writes (25:18) **ויזנב בך : מכת זנב, חותך מילות וזורק כלפי מעלה** that the Amalekites took the foreskins of the male Jews and derisively threw them in the air to mock the mitzvah of circumcision. Why were they specifically opposed to this mitzvah more than to any other? (LaBris Habeit)

Rav Eliezer Ginsburg cites the Gemora in Chagigah (9b), which teaches that there is a significant difference between somebody who reviews his studies 101 times and somebody who only reviews 100 times. He notes that the name **עמלק** can be read as **עמל ק**, meaning somebody who is only willing to work and study 100 times,

not 101. In other words, they are unwilling to put in the necessary toil and hard work to improve and perfect themselves, preferring instead to relax and enjoy the pleasures of this world.

The mitzvah of circumcision symbolizes that Jews are never content to accept themselves as they were created; we are constantly striving to change and to grow in order to actualize our potentials. Because this mitzvah runs counter to their very essence, the Amalekites opposed it with tremendous disdain.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein- The Red Light כי תדר נדר לד׳ אלקיך *When you make a vow to Hashem, your G-d…*



When one of our beloved teachers at Ohr Naava was in seminary, she was invited out one Shabbat with a friend to a family living in Me'ah Shearim. Arriving there together as Shabbat was about to begin, they met the husband of the house, a sweet chassidish man. Wishing them a good Shabbat, the husband then continued on to shul for davening.

A few minutes later, the wife of the house appeared. She looked American and was strangely dressed in a wedding gown. Unsure what to make of everything, the two girls quietly lit their candles and then waited for the wife to finish lighting her own candles. And then they waited some more. And then some more. It appeared as if she was davening for everyone she knew. This one needed a refuah

sheleimah, this one a child, this one a shidduch. The list went on and on and on.

Several minutes later, the wife removed her hands from her face and glowingly looked at her two special guests. Turning to the girls, she welcomed them and introduced herself as Miriam. And then she asked the question the girls were waiting to hear. "Do you want to know why I am wearing a wedding gown? Let me tell you my story:

"I grew up in the south side of Chicago. As a young 9-year-old girl in fourth grade, my family was irreligious and far from any strong affiliation with Judaism. However, my parents still felt that I should be familiar with my Jewish heritage and know something about my roots. They therefore decided to send me to Hebrew school on Sundays.

The school was staffed with religious teachers who, for the most part, emphasized Jewish history when teaching the classes. Yet despite everything else, one hard-and-fast rule the school stood by was that the religious teachers were not allowed to invite any students to their homes for Shabbat.

However, one particular teacher took a liking to me. Deeply wishing she could expose me to the beauty of Shabbat, she went on to call my parents. "Would it be okay if I invited Miriam to stay at my house for Shabbat? I would love to have her." "Sure," said my parents. And with that, my teacher invited me over despite knowing that she would likely be out of a job on Sunday for violating school regulations.

As I arrived at my teacher's house Friday afternoon, I quickly settled in and got myself ready. With Shabbat just minutes away, I observed my teacher arrange the candles. I had never before seen Shabbat candles lit as my mother had never done so. Standing there amazed, I turned to my teacher and asked, "Can I also light candles?" "It's okay, Miriam, I can light for you." But I wanted to light candles

myself. "I do not know if I will ever get another chance to light Shabbat candles," I said. "Would it be okay if I do so myself?"

With my teacher kindly granting me my request, she carefully prepared two little candles for me to light. The rest of Shabbat was a beautiful experience. Immensely enjoying it, I went home afterwards uplifted and inspired. The next day, not wishing to hide any facts from the administration, my teacher informed them what she had done. And yet, to her surprising delight, she was not let go from her position. She was simply told not to do it again.

Years later… I was by now attending public school with Hebrew school on the side. Finally, though, my parents decided to send me to a private Catholic school. Although I was not forced to pray with everyone else, I slowly began making non-Jewish friends and identifying myself more and more with my surroundings.

By eleventh grade, I was no longer Miriam, but Mary. And by then, I was even praying with my friends. Sadly, I had become heavily identified with the Catholic way of life.

Matters didn't improve. After graduating high school, I enrolled in a private Catholic college. And then life changed. I fell in love with Vinney and decided to get married. Setting the wedding date on Shabbat in a church with a priest, Vinney and I were soon to be husband and wife. When the fateful day arrived, I entered the limo that was to take me and my bridesmaids to the church.

While in the car, the bridesmaids had something to tell me. "We bought you a present; close your eyes." Following instructions, I closed my eyes as my friends took out a necklace with a cross and placed it around my neck. When I moments later opened up my eyes and saw what they had given me, I graciously thanked them. A few minutes later, we arrived at a red light. Standing at the corner were four girls from Brooklyn affiliated with JEP). They looked lost and desperately in need for directions.

Rolling down my window from the back seat, I called out, "Can I help you?" "Yes," they said. "We are trying to find the Orthodox synagogue around here. Do you happen to know where it is?" "Sure I do. Hop in the limo and I'll take you there." But then I realized the problem. These girls would be unable to come into the car considering it was Shabbat. And so, I quickly changed plans. "If you cannot do that, then just follow alongside the car and I will lead you to the synagogue."

As I was talking to them, though, one of the JEP girls noticed my necklace. It clearly was inconsistent with my familiarity of Judaism and synagogues. "How do you know anything about a synagogue?" the girl asked. "What do you mean?" I said, "I am Jewish!" Looking back at me and subtlety hinting to the cross hanging around my neck, the girl found it hard to believe. "I am really Jewish," I repeated. "It's just that I am now on my way to marry Vinney." "Oh," said the girl. "What's your name?" "They call me Mary, but my name is really Miriam." "Really?" said the JEP girl. "My name is also Miriam."

With the limo proceeding ahead, the girls and I finally arrived at the shul. Now, the girls needed to figure out what to do with me. Time was of the essence. Without delay, Miriam, the JEP girl, turned to me and said, "Miriam, you know what? Why don't you come inside the synagogue and get a blessing from the rabbi?" "A blessing from the rabbi?" I said. "Yeah, they are in the middle of Shabbat services. Come inside and you can ask the Rabbi that he bless you to have a future successful marriage."

After thinking for a second, I agreed. Looking back at my friends in the limo, I told them, "Just wait two minutes. I'm going inside and I'll be right back." And with that, I entered the shul together with Miriam. As we began heading towards the Ezrat Nashim, the women's section in the shul, Miriam, the JEP girl, paused.

Turning to me, she softly said, "I don't think you should wear that cross around your neck in the synagogue. It might shock everyone."

Realizing that I was still wearing the necklace, I profusely apologized. I immediately slipped it off from around my neck and placed it on a nearby chair.

Upon entering the women's section, everyone's attention turned towards me. Here I was walking into shul on an ordinary Shabbat in Chicago wearing a wedding gown. They likely assumed that I was from out of town and had taken the term "Shabbat Kallah" quite literally.

Sitting there was the Rebbetzin, the wife of the rabbi of the shul. Immediately seeing me, the Rebbetzin got up and gave me a big hug. "Welcome," she said. "What's going on?" She was clearly referring to my unexpected entry with a wedding gown. Shyly, I told the Rebbetzin, "I'm wearing this because I'm getting married to Vinney today." "Is he Jewish?" she asked. "No," I said. "And where are you getting married?" "In a church," I replied. Catching on to my story, the Rebbetzin said, "We are almost finished praying. My husband is the rabbi of the synagogue. Wait here just a little while longer and perhaps he will give you a blessing." And so, I stood there waiting.

Of course, I later realized that the Rebbetzin and the other Miriam were well aware that the rabbi would certainly have something else in mind for me than a blessing to marry out of the faith. But, at the time, I just patiently stood there. While I could hear from a distance the sounds of my friends persistently beeping the horn and screaming, "Mary, where are you?" I ignored their yelling and remained standing in the shul.

A few minutes later, the rabbi walked in. Being told of my situation, he said, "Listen, I will not tell you if you should or should not marry Vinney. However, for your own sake, before you marry him, come and spend a Shabbat or two with us. Then, if you still want, you can marry him. But if you marry him right now, you will never again experience a Shabbat. Push off the wedding for a few weeks and look into Judaism a little bit."

Taking the rabbi's words to heart and not wishing to make an impulsive decision which would throw away my Jewish heritage forever, I headed back outside. There I saw my friends continuing to frustratingly beep and call for me. Slowly walking up to the car, the girls only persisted to scream, "Where have you been?" Telling them what had occurred and informing them of my decision to call off the wedding, they were not surprised. "We knew it! We knew that the minute you started talking to those Jewish girls, that was the end of it. You Jews can never make up your mind!"

Turning to the girl sitting in the front, I said, "Susie, for a long while, I suspected that you wanted to marry Vinney. Now you can do so. The hall is waiting for you and is already paid for." Sorely aggravated by my antics, the girls drove away.

Now left alone before the shul, I stood in my wedding dress I had put on to marry Vinney. But now that was all going to change. The rabbi took me into his house, taught me about my rich Jewish heritage and showed me the beauty of Shabbat and Yiddishkeit. Eventually, he raised enough money to send me to the Neve Seminary in Israel.

Incredibly enough, I continued learning in seminary for not only one, but two years. After doing so, I became engaged to a wonderful chassidish boy. It was no longer "Vinney and Mary;" it was now me and my chassidish husband. And here I am today with a beautiful family living in Me'ah Shearim.

"Now," concluded Miriam looking back at her two guests, "you might be able to understand why I am wearing a wedding gown. It is because I was rewarded on Shabbat. It all began with my teacher inviting me over as a little girl and allowing me to light the Shabbat candles. Shabbat saved my neshama. And because I found Hashem on Shabbat wearing this wedding dress, I made a neder (vow) that for the rest of my life, I would always light my Shabbat candles in this dress."

Here is a story of a moment which all began at a red light. At a red light which lasts for seconds, a girl went from the lowest point to the highest point.

We all experience sometime in our lives red lights. The only question is what we will do with them. For Miriam, she stopped at the red light and offered her help. She could have said, "I am sorry, but I am off to my wedding." Had she done so, the light would have eventually turned green and Miriam's life never would have been the same. Quite likely, she would have forever remained Mary.

But she didn't. She looked outside of herself and helped another. And little did Miriam know that the person she would be helping most was none other than herself.

Rabbi Mordechai Becher - The Moment of Truth



As I once entered a taxi in Israel, I requested of the driver to take me to a yeshiva called Mishkan HaTorah in Unsdorf. Turning to me, the driver said, "You study there?" "Yes, I do," I replied. "Whose class do you attend?" Considering that he did not seem to be religious, I was surprised that he would be familiar with the names of the rabbis in the yeshiva. But I nevertheless answered his question. "Rabbi Moshe Shapiro." "You should know," said the taxi driver, "that because of him I keep Shabbat."

Intrigued by his response, I asked him to tell me his story. "Not long after I moved into an apartment building on Rechov Uziel, Rav Shapiro also moved there. One morning at eight o'clock, I noticed him heading outside. Besides the fact that it was pouring rain, he

looked very harried. And so, I figured I would help him and offer him a ride. "Rabbi," I called out, "come into the taxi; I'll take you where you need to go." Happily accepting my invitation, he thanked me and sat down in the front seat.

"While I proceeded to take out the car key and put it into the ignition, Rav Shapiro placed his hand on my hand. I looked at him and he looked at me. And then he said, "Do you drive this taxi on Shabbat?" As he said those words, I was faced with a major dilemma. The truth was that I did drive on Shabbat, but I could not summon the audacity to look him straight in the face and say yes. On the other hand, I was not going to lie and say that I did not drive. And so, there I was, the key was in the ignition and I could not say yes and I could not say no. I was stuck.

"At that moment of truth, I summarily decided that I would no longer drive on Shabbat. And with that, I said, 'No, I do not drive on Shabbat.'

After the taxi driver finished this story, he looked at me and said, "Rabbi Becher, I did not lie because ever since then I have not once driven on Shabbat. My life from that point on drastically changed. The Shapiros invited me and my family to their home for Shabbat, and afterwards Rebbetzin Shapiro even arranged for my children to attend Jewish schools. "Now you know," the taxi driver concluded, "what I mean when I say, 'I keep Shabbat because of Rav Moshe Shapiro.'"

"There are two major components in bringing a Jew back to his or her roots. First and foremost, you must believe in them. He or she is Jewish and has a neshama. Secondly, no matter how far a person is from Yiddishkeit and no matter what they have done in the past, that does not take away from their pristine standing as a Jew one iota." Every Jew is precious and welcome to return home. Our Father in Heaven is waiting with open arms.

נפלאות הבורא - Hashems Amazing World - Kangaroo Milk



After birth, the baby kangaroo called a joey, journeys to its mother's pouch and begins nursing. After about 9 months it will start climbing out of its mother's pouch and begin feeding. But, at times, it will jump back in and continue taking milk. Then, at 10 months it no longer jumps in, but remains with its mother and reaches in from time to time to take more milk, until it is 18 months old.

There are two striking facts about this: (1) The mother frequently has already given birth to another tiny baby which is also in the pouch nursing, so she will have a baby and an adolescent nursing at the same time. (2) The teat giving milk to the infant produces different milk than the one which the older one drinks from! It matters not which teat it is; the older one will always receive a different composition of milk than the baby kangaroo is given. The tiny infant has very different nutritional needs. But the question is how can the mother vary the type of milk which is given, at the same time, to both an adolescent and an infant kangaroo?

An example of this is the red kangaroo, which provides milk both to a tiny joey attached in the pouch to a teat, and also to a large joey which has left the pouch. The older one is given milk with a 33 percent higher proportion of protein and a 400 percent higher proportion of fat.

I guess this is where the inventor of the fountain soda machines got the idea from... Hashem beat him to it!

Stories of Gedolim



Rav Reuven Elbaz shlit"a was unsure of how to proceed. His student was engaged and as the wedding was drawing nearer, the **חתן** was becoming more nervous. Finally on the day of the wedding itself, he simply refused to go forth with the wedding. No amount of persuasion could sway him and as the **כלה** and her family were getting ready the man decided he was not going to go through with it.

R' Elbaz couldn't simply go to the hall and tell the **כלה** there would be no wedding. She would be crushed!! He decided to consult with the great **Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky zt"l**, the Steipler Gaon, who lived in Bnei Brak. R' Elbaz informed the **כלה** that the wedding would be delayed a couple of hours and flew from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak to consult with the gaon.

The Steipler asked R' Elbaz if he had any other talmidim who had similar personalities to the **חתן**. Indeed, one boy came to mind. The Steipler advised R' Elbaz to get that boy and tell him if he would marry this girl, he would be promised a beautiful life with children who were talmidei chochomim.

R' Elbaz could not believe what he was hearing. It was already the night of the wedding and the boy had not even met the girl! How was he to get married tonight? But to embarrass the **כלה** was not an option.

The Steipler told R' Elbaz to go seek **Harav Yosef Sholom Elyashiv's zt"l** opinion as well, in Yerushalayim. R' Elbaz hurried back to the

helicopter that brought him to Bnei Brak and made his way back to Yerushalayim. R' Elyahsiv agreed with the Steiplers psak and he too blessed that they would have a wonderful life together full of brocho.

The hour was now very late (it was about 11:30 p.m. at this point!) , the talmid was wakend and told of the **כלה** and the guarantee made by both the Steipler and R'Elyashiv. As per Halocho, the talmid met his **כלה** and agreed to marry the girl that very night (the wedding took place around 1:30 a.m).

The couple is now happily married with a beautiful family of Bnei Torah and Marbitzei Torah. A **כלה** was saved from sure embarrassment and a beautiful shidduch took root all because of the foresight and care of the Steipler and R' Elyashiv.

גט vs ביחד

We are should all be aware that we have a tremendous zechus to live in the same generation as **R' Chaim Kienevsky Zt'l**. The following thought will show his vast knowledge throughout all areas of the Torah which acts as a protection for our generation.

The Vilna Goan explained the document used for a divorce is called a "Get" spelled Gimel Tes because those two letters are never next to each other throughout the whole Torah. It is therefore fitting that the document which is creating a separation is called by letters that are always separate.

R'Chaim asked that this is not 100% correct because the letters gimel - kuf, zayin-tes, zayin-end of tzadi, and samech-end of tzadi also never appear next to each other throughout Tanach. Then why do we call the document a "Get"?

R'Chaim offered a possible answer that since gimel and tes are the first two letters that are never together it was called after those two letters. Also when people get married they are beyachad (beis,

yud, cheis, daled) the letter that separates the beis and daled is gimel and the letter that separates the cheis and yud is tes.

He also cites Tosefos (Gittin 2a), who explain that a divorce document contains 12 lines which is the numerical value of the word **גט**, something which isn't true of any of the other letter combinations.



Pardas Yehuda- Rabbi Yehuda Z. Klitnick

The Baal Shem Tov and the Doctor

The 18th of Elul -- is a most significant date on the Chassidic calendar. The founder of Chassidism, Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, was born on this date, in 1698. It is also the day, 36 years later, on which the Baal Shem Tov began to publicly disseminate his teachings, after many years as a member of the society of "hidden tzaddikim" during which he lived disguised as a simple innkeeper and clay-digger, his greatness known only to a very small circle of fellow mystics and disciples.

Once, a famous doctor met one of his patients on the street. Without a word of greeting, the doctor said, "I told you not to walk on that leg until it heals!" "But I assure you that it is healed," said the man. "Impossible! I saw the wound in that leg. It will take months to heal!"

"I went to another kind of healer, doctor. I went to a Holy Rabbi, the Baal Shem Tov." The doctor shrugged his shoulders, then simply walked away.

A week later, the doctor knocked on the Baal Shem Tov's door. When the door opened, he said, "I hear you claim to be a healer!" The Baal Shem Tov looked at his visitor. "G-d is the healer, my friend. Please come in!" "Let us examine each other," he said.

"Whoever best diagnoses the sickness of the other will be proved the better doctor."

The Baal Shem Tov smiled. "As you wish. But please do me the favour of coming in!" Once inside, the doctor began his examination of the Baal Shem Tov. The doctor poked him, pinched him, gazed in his ears etc. After an hour, the doctor said, "You have no sickness that I can find." "I am not surprised that you could not find it," said the Baal Shem Tov. "I so desire the presence of G-d, that my heart cries out in pain when I can not feel it. . My sickness is this constant yearning for G-d."

The Baal Shem Tov looked at the doctor a long while. "Let me now examine you. "The Baal Shem Tov took the doctor's hands and gazed into his eyes. At last, the rabbi said, "Have you ever lost something very valuable?" As a matter of fact," said the doctor, "I once had a large jewel, but it was stolen from me." "Ah! That is your sickness!" said the Baal Shem Tov. "What? Missing my diamond? "No. My sickness is yearning after G-d. Your sickness is that you have forgotten that you ever had that desire."

The doctor took a deep breath. In a moment, a tear flowed down his cheek. One tear turned to many. Still holding the hands of the Baal Shem Tov, he began to sob. "Please," he said. "Teach me how to yearn!" "With Hashem's help," said the Baal Shem Tov, "your healing has already begun." The doctor returned to his Yiddishe roots.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Banish and Vanish

The more we say no to the Yetzer Hara, the more we become one with Hashem. This is hinted to in the name of our month, **אלול**, as it forms two words—**לא לו**. The more we say **לא**, no, the more we become **לו**, part of Hashem.

The Chofetz Chayim once asked a Jewish man if he learns Torah on Shabbos.



The man replied that he learns a little. The Chofetz Chayim pointed out that when the man will be asked in Heaven, after 120 years, why he did not learn Torah throughout the week, he will surely reply that it was due to his being busy with his livelihood.

He advised the man, "If you learn Torah on Shabbos it will prove to the Heavenly Court that when you had time, you did indeed learn. Yet, if you do not learn Torah on Shabbos, the Court will see that even when you had spare time available, you did not spend it in learning. Then, you will have no answer for your failure to learn during the week". *HaShabbos Betifarto.*

Torah Anytime - Rabbi Mashiach Kelaty

כי ישבו אחים יחדו - When brothers dwell together... (Devarim 25:5)

It was following the difficult years of the Holocaust that Jerry, who had been living in America all the while, decided to make the move to Israel. Wishing to join the many Jews who were building a new life for themselves in a new country, Jerry sailed across the ocean in anticipation of beginning a new life for himself as well.

It wasn't long before Jerry found a kibbutz to settle in and met a man who had also just moved there, named Yehuda. Yehuda had come from Europe and was considerably quiet and reserved, something

which was understandably the result of having personally undergone the pangs of the Holocaust. Yet Jerry was friendly and warm to Yehuda, hoping that perhaps some friendship would spark between them, and Yehuda would open up.

One day, Jerry noticed something about Yehuda that he hadn't noted before. Tattooed on his arm were numbers. Recognizing them to be the numbers he was given in the concentration camp, Jerry began thinking how tender and uncomforting Yehuda's past memories must be. And then Jerry realized something strange. The last four numbers on Yehuda's arm – 7146 – were the same as the last four digits of his social security number. Wishing to break the ice and seize the moment to converse with Yehuda, Jerry turned aside and said, "Yehuda, it must be terrible for you, but I noticed the numbers on your arm and I'm not sure it's coincidence that the last four numbers are the same as the last four numbers of my social security."

Jerry wasn't sure how Yehuda would react to this comment, though all he wished was to befriend him and start conversation. Before he could do that, though, he first needed to find a topic which would be of some meaning and relevance to Yehuda.

Jerry hit the mark. Yehuda had something to tell Jerry. "My friend," Yehuda began, "when my family was taken to the camps, they lined up my father, my brothers and me. As we stood next to each other, we received consecutive serial numbers tattooed on our arms. Following that, my father and brothers were selected to go one way, and I was selected to go another way.

Ever since then, I have never seen any of my family. I don't know what happened to them. So here I am, alone, trying to make the best of everything. Life is very difficult, but I have no other choice than to move forward." As Jerry heard Yehuda speak for the first time and relate his past experiences, he was visibly moved.

From that day on, Jerry and Yehuda slowly developed a close friendship, sharing in each other's daily activities and routines. Eventually, Jerry moved away from the kibbutz and became a tour guide. His job was to drive groups of tourists around the country and show them various historical and contemporary sites. He made a nice living and enjoyed meeting new people and sharing in their excitement and amazement in seeing the Holy Land.



Yet one day, as Jerry drove one older gentleman, he was in for a little surprise. The man appeared to be extremely irritable and kept on snapping and shouting at Jerry and nearby bystanders.

Something was visibly bothering this tourist. Jerry, by nature, was a very patient and calm person, though this man's unruly behaviour was getting a bit out of hand. "Is something wrong?" asked Jerry. "Pull over!" screamed the man. Jerry was startled. "Pull over!" he repeated. Not wishing to further upset the passenger, Jerry looked over his shoulder and slowly pulled over to the curbside.

"What would you like to tell me?" Jerry politely asked. The man paused for a moment, catching his thoughts and breath. "You probably think I am very arrogant and nasty," the man said. "The truth is that I am really not. I have just had a very hard life. I went through the Holocaust and lost my entire family. Every night, I cry myself to sleep. My life is miserable." Jerry was speechless. He now understood that the man was not merely having an unexplained fit but was living a troubled life.

Rolling up his sleeve, the man turned to Jerry. "You see this?" Jerry looked at the numbers. And then he turned white. The last four digits… 7147. "Sir," said Jerry, trying not to choke on his own words,

"you are not alone. Those last four digits of your number… they have a match…" Jerry took the man to the kibbutz and called for Yehuda. "Yehuda… your brother is here."

And there, on a kibbutz in Israel, two brothers, with the consecutive numbers 7146 and 7147, reunited. Two brothers, who each believed they were alone and had no family to turn to, found one other.

Jerry probably never considered that his small gesture of conversing with Yehuda would lead to a remarkable result, but it is often times when we are expecting the least in return, that we receive the most in return. Just do your small part, and Hashem will take care of the rest. And trust Hashem, He knows what He's doing.

Torah Anytime - Rabbi Chaim Dahan

Just about every afternoon, the great **Rav Avraham Pam zt"l** made a point of speaking over the phone to a sick woman who spent her days and nights in the hospital. He would give her hope and encouragement, and simply listen to whatever she had on her mind. On one occasion, Rav Pam's grandson was visiting his grandfather when the phone rang. Picking it up, he listened closely to the voice on the other end of the line, trying to make out who it was. But the voice was faint and didn't seem to carry with it much strength.

"Zaidy," the grandson said, "I'm not sure who it is and I don't know what to say." It didn't take long before Rav Pam realized that it must be the woman calling from the hospital, yet she was too weak and frail to speak. As Rav Pam picked up the phone and confirmed that it was indeed the woman from the hospital, he realized that this time around, the course of the conversation would need to be a little different. It would not be a two-way conversation, but a one-way conversation. And that is exactly what Rav Pam did.

For the next thirty-five minutes, Rav Pam carried on speaking all by himself, conveying uplifting and reassuring words, despite hearing no

response. But it made no difference. He knew that she was listening, and that was all that mattered. With sensitivity and care, he spent his precious time talking to someone who could hear, but not speak. Such is a mark of true greatness.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

כי יקח איש אשה...כד:א

HaGaon HaMekubel the Reshash would get up every night for Tikkun Chatzos [a special prayer recited in the merit of our mothers Rachel and Leah mourning for the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, at midnight] and his wife would get up with him a prepare a cup of coffee for him so that he could learn calmly. It once happened that she brought a tray with two cups of coffee on it to the table. When her husband asked her why the extra cup, she innocently replied that one was for him, and one was for his Chavrusah [learning partner] who was learning with him.

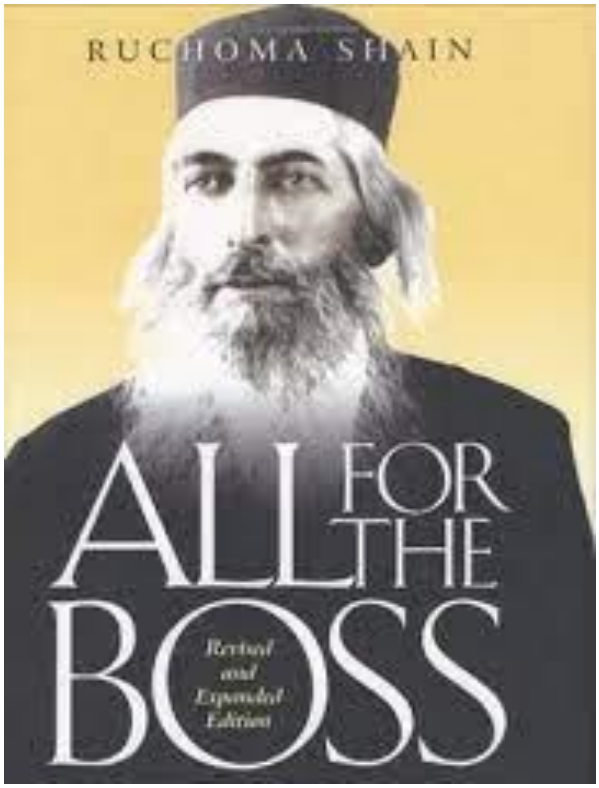
He said to her: "If you merited seeing my Chavrusah with your own eyes, and that it is Eliyahu HaNavi, then you have also merited to sit with me in the hall of Rebbe Shimon ben Yochai in the Celestial Mesivta!"

Our Gedolim recognized that their greatness was due to the efforts of their wives as seen for example with Rebbe Akiva and the Vilna Gaon. (*Lehisadein B'Ahavascha*)

I once saw a sign in a hallway of a beis medresh, "Don't be upset if you made a mess. You aren't a malach. But if you don't clean up, then you aren't even a mentch."

This is our avodah in Elul. To clean up the mess we created with our aveiros.

Stories of Gedolim



Little Yaakov Yosef sat alone on a bench in New York City. He hadn't even reached his bar mitzvah and here he was, all alone with no one to turn to. His relatives had forsaken him, and Yaakov Yosef chose to rely instead on his Father, Hashem. His family had remained in Europe, but he would remain loyal to the Torah ideals they had instilled in him, regardless of the cost. But of one thing he was certain- when he grew up he would welcome all lonely people into his home and no one would have to remain alone on a New York bench.

The years passed, and **Horav Yaakov Yosef Herman** found a wife who shared his ideals. Together, they welcomed many into their home and continued to uphold the mitzvos and preserve the sanctity of Shabbos. One day, their eldest daughter took ill and the situation was grave. Determined to remain happy throughout, the father refused to receive any updates of the girl's wellbeing on Shabbos. One relative could not contain herself and intercepted a message that arrived from the hospital: The young girl had unfortunately succumbed to the disease. R' Yaakov Yosef remained oblivious to the situation as he was unaware that the message had even been sent. And after Shabbos, he received the very welcome news that his daughter was alive and well and the previous message had been sent in error.

On another occasion, R' Yaakov Yosef was told on Shabbos that his store was burning down, and he should come immediately. He refused and did not go to the site until after Shabbos, where he was pleased

to discover that his store was still in fact standing and all was well- the store next door had burnt! But perhaps his greatest nisayon in this particular area happened towards the end of his life when he finally arrived in Eretz Yisroel. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the ship docked very late at the port, close to the onset of Shabbos. R' Yaakov Yosef hurried through security asking that he be permitted to pass quickly as the heiligeh Shabbos was fast approaching.

He was told that if he did not take his luggage it would remain at the port and everything would be stolen, but there was simply not enough time. He abandoned all his worldly possessions and hurried with his wife arriving to their destination right before Shabbos began. R' Yaakov Yosef was ecstatic throughout the day, having merited sacrificing all of his possessions in honour of the heiligeh Shabbos.

After havdola, he was encouraged to go to the port and perhaps salvage some of his belongings. R' Yaakov Yosef was surprised to be greeted by an exhausted British guard, who had been commanded by his supervisor to guard every last item for the Rov with such strong convictions, willing to sacrifice everything for the holy Shabbos.

Parsha Points to Ponder

Parshas Ki Seitzei begins by discussing the יְפַת־תֹּאַר (woman of beautiful form). Who is the only woman in the Torah who is actually described as a יְפַת־תֹּאַר?

In Parshas Vayeitzei (Bereishis 29:17), the Torah describes Rochel as יְפַת־תֹּאַר וִיפַת מַרְאֶה – beautiful of form and beautiful of appearance, the only place in the Torah where the expression יְפַת־תֹּאַר is applied to a specific woman.

Rabbi David Ashear -The Prayers for a Baby Brother



The Midrash says that some Tefilot are answered after forty days; some after twenty days; some after three days, and some are answered immediately. When we come to pray, we should strengthen our Emunah that the Tefila can be answered right away. We don't have to wait. We can have what we want instantly. If we'd have that belief, our Tefilot would be so powerful. We would pray with all our strength and focus, knowing, "This is the one that could bring my salvation!"

Rabbi Lugassi told a story that happened to Yosef. Yosef is a Ba'al Teshuva who has spent many years learning and growing in Avodat Hashem. He has been taking the rabbinical tests in Israel, necessary to receive Semicha. He studied for months preparing for it. Because of the difficulty, he reviewed the material repeatedly. One day, he received a severe blow to his head, which caused amnesia. He didn't only forget his Torah learning, he forgot some of the basic details about his life identity.

Baruch Hashem, through miracles, his memory returned one month later. But his big test was being given only two weeks after the blow. Nevertheless, he showed up for the test, hoping to recall some of the material. When the exams were distributed, and he saw the questions, he didn't remember anything. He was seated in a somewhat private corner of the room, and he put his hands over his face and cried like a baby to Hashem. He prayed in his own words, a most heartfelt Tefila, begging Hashem to give him back his memory, so that he could complete his Semicha.

Afterwards, he wiped away his tears and looked at the questions again. This time, he remembered everything. He filled out all the answers and turned in his test. He received a very high mark. His

memory did not come back for another two weeks, but for that test, he remembered all his learning. His Tefila was answered on the spot. Hashem gave him exactly what he asked for immediately.

Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro told a story, which took place a number of years ago. **Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein** was about to give a Shiur on medical Halacha to a group of doctors, when one of the doctors approached him and showed him a children's Siddur.

The rabbi asked him what the significance of it was. The doctor explained that he was married for eighteen years and not yet blessed with children. He and his wife went from doctor to doctor, until they were eventually told that it was medically impossible for them to ever have children. Finally, after twelve years of marriage, they adopted a newborn baby boy.

The doctor continued, "Last year, when my son turned five, he had a Siddur party in school, and he came home holding his first Siddur. When he showed it to me, I saw that he was beaming with excitement. He said, 'Daddy! Now I can pray for something I want so badly-a baby brother.' I didn't know what to tell him. I didn't want to say it was impossible, so I told him, 'Yes, go pray. Hashem loves the prayers of little children.'"

The man then looked at Rabbi Zilberstein and said, "Nine months later, to the day, my wife gave birth to a healthy baby boy. His Tefila was answered immediately."

Prayer is wondrous. Sometimes it takes a while for us to see the results that we desire, but we should never lose the Emunah that any prayer can always be answered on the spot.

"When we focus on Hashem, we become Hashem-centered. And when we are Hashem-centered, all our fears and anxieties disappear." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.

Rabbi Tuvia Bolton

150 years ago in Hungary there lived a Chassid who was a successful businessman. He was rich, influential and had many gentile friends in high places. But early one morning he discovered that anti-Semitism is higher. He received a subpoena to appear for a pre-trial hearing on charges of withholding taxes, cheating the government and more.

The charges were transparently false. He had never transgressed the law, and everyone knew it. But he obviously had many enemies. The witnesses had been bribed. But it really didn't make any difference. After all he also had friends. Or so he thought.

In the course of a few days it was revealed to him that absolutely no one was willing to help him. He ran from office to office and got the same empty sympathetic statements and excuses, but no one really cared what happened to a Jew. Finally, he got himself a lawyer, prayed to G-d for a miracle, and went to the police station. The pre-trial hearing took a less than an hour. He was ordered to stand trial, to be incarcerated until the trial with a million-dollar bail and if found guilty he could face life imprisonment and lose all his belongings.

The Chassid was desperate. He posted bail for himself and began searching for a better lawyer, but now no lawyer wanted to take his case. If he lost all his money, how could he pay?

Escape was out of the question; they would imprison his family till he returned. He made desperate inquiries and learned that the Judge who was to preside over his trial lived in Budapest. He therefore decided to travel there and try to see him. Maybe, against all odds, he could convince him of his innocence even if it meant bribery. Hastily he packed a bag, took a large sum of money and caught the next train out.But in Budapest he was in for a bitter surprise. When he asked the Jews there for directions, he discovered that this particular judge was a rabid, outspoken Jew

hater. There was no chance that he would even look at, no less talk to, and certainly not have mercy on any Jew in the world.

But our Chassid did not lose heart; 'Everything G-d does is for the best' he said to himself, 'and nothing good will come from getting depressed'.



So, he went around the city talking to people trying to find something about this judge until he struck gold. He found out that the Judge's wife, also no small anti-Semite, had a weakness for embroidered things, especially tablecloths. He decided to buy the most expensive tablecloth he could find and appear at her doorstep as a salesman. Then, if he could get her interested, he would offer it to her as a gift and beg her to try to influence her husband for him.

It was a dangerous plan, even a bit foolish. She could easily just take the tablecloth to herself and then report him to the police for attempted bribery. She would then have the tablecloth and he probably would not live out the night in the jail. But he had no other solution.

He spent the entire next morning looking for the most expensive embroidery in Budapest and finally ended up spending a small fortune on a truly elegant masterpiece with matching napkins. He walked quickly to the Judge's home trying to keep as calm as possible. A cold sweat covered his body as he finally reached his destination, walked up the stairs to the door, closed his eyes, said a prayer and knocked.

It opened. It was the Judge's wife, she looked at him strangely. He tried his best to smile as he held out the tablecloth and tried to

begin his sales pitch but the words simply didn't come out. He was trembling, frozen with fear.

Suddenly her eyes widened, her face turned white as she pointed at him, let out a piercing scream, fainted and fell unconscious on the floor! His first impulse was to run! If he just stood there, they would certainly accuse him of something. But then if he ran and they caught him it would certainly be worse. They would kill him on the spot! On the other hand, if he tried to help her up it might be interpreted that was attacking her!

Meanwhile her husband, the Judge, heard the commotion, came running and when he saw his wife on the floor and the Chassid standing there it was hard to tell who was more astounded.

Miraculously he sensed that the Jew was no threat and asked "What happened? are you all right Greta? "She finally pointed at the Jew. 'Yorik, Yorik!' She said kept repeating her husband's name as she rose to her feet

" Look!"Do you remember that I told you fifteen years ago that I lost my tickets and money at the train station in Niridihous and an angel came and saved me? "Well, this is the angel!! It's him!! Suddenly our hero remembered.

Fifteen years ago he was traveling with the great Chassidic Leader **Rabbi Mordechi of Nadvorna**, on a long train trip together with many other pupils. The train had a stopover in the city of Niridihous where they had to disembark, wait an hour and then change trains for their intended destination. They had been waiting for almost the hour when suddenly, a young gentile woman who was also waiting for the train, began screaming and moaning uncontrollably.

A large crowd gathered around and Police rushed to see what was wrong. It seems that someone had stolen her wallet from her purse and now she was left stranded without money or tickets. When

everyone heard her tragic story they turned back to their places, left her to her woes and got ready for the train which was now approaching in the distance.

It was usually always best for Jews to keep out of gentile affairs, especially here when the police were looking for a suspect. So it was strange when Rabbi Mordechi turned to one of his younger Chassidim and ordered him to run to the ticket office, buy a ticket for the woman with his own funds and give her some traveling money as well.

The Chassid did as he was told and was afraid that he would miss the train. He ran, bought the ticket and gave it and some money to the bewildered woman who was literally speechless with gratitude. And he miraculously made the train.

15 years passed. The Chassid had since married and had children. The holy Rebbe had passed away and the incident was completely forgotten. But now he remembered. - That Chassid had been him! And this was the woman he saved. Now she was saving him!

The Rebbe had seen into the future. The Judge offered him a reward. But the Chassid rather told him the reason for his visit. The Judge promised him not only a fair trial but, if he really was innocent, that his attitude toward the Jews would be completely different from now on. And so it was; the Chassid was acquitted, and the Judge was transformed and was no longer an anti-Semite.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman – Torah Wellsprings

The word **אלול** is an acronym of **לַעבעדיג אַון ווייטער לַעבעדיג** ~ ***'Lively and lively again.'*** Because teshuvah should be performed with happiness. Be happy, and keep trying – In the end, you will succeed.

The Chasam Sofer writes, "When one begins to do teshuvah, it is a severe sin to be sad."

The Mother Who Refused to Defend Herself in Bergen-Belson

Rabbi Yonah Emanuel once related: "On Tisha B'Av 1944, in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, there was a decree issued that no one would receive any food that day— not even the very young children, the sick, or the elderly. Despite this cruel decree, my mother managed to cook some cereal for my young sister Batya, who was three and a half years old. My mother was eventually caught and was brought to trial. The court was convened on Friday night of Shabbos Nachamu, the first Shabbos after Tisha B'Av.

In Bergen-Belsen, special trials were held where the defendant was entitled to an advocate, or they could speak in their own defense. My mother decided to waive her right to have an advocate and refused to say anything on her own behalf. Despite being offered a chance to defend herself, she insisted on keeping quiet and wouldn't say anything, and she wouldn't search for someone else who would either.

My mother was sentenced to have a loss of food rations for two days. I asked her why she did not argue for herself and say that she was concerned that her young daughter would starve, and that was why she had fed her child. I told her that this might have gotten her a lighter sentence. My mother answered, 'It was already Shabbos when my trial started, and I saw that every word was being written down by the court reporter, who was a Jew. I therefore decided to remain silent. It is better to go hungry than to cause another Jew to be Mechalel Shabbos!'"

"Don't worry about your failures, worry about the chances you miss when you don't even try."



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The Imrei Elimelech explained, **כי תצא למלחמה על איבך** if you will not wait until Rosh Hashanah, but begin to wage a war against the yetzer hara already in Elul, then, **ונתנו ה' אלקיך בידך**, Hashem will deliver the yetzer hara into your hands."

There was a businessman who would often take business counsel from his rebbe, **the Sfas Emes**. Once, this businessman arrived during Elul, to ask his questions. The Sfas Emes told him, "If you want to make the best investment, I recommend investing in teshuvah, because right now that earns the highest dividends — both spiritual and material.

The kabbalah

Before Rosh Hashanah, **Reb Eliyah Lopian zt'l** once asked **Reb Aryeh Leib Chasman zt'l**, "What should I accept upon myself for the upcoming year? Which kabbalah should I make?" Reb Leib Chasman replied, "I want you to decide. Think it over and decide which kabbalah you want to take on. But make sure it is something you can keep." After some time, Reb Elyah Lopian returned and told Reb Leib Chasman what he chose.

"Are you certain that you can keep this? "I'm certain," Reb Elyah Lopian replied. "Can you keep it an entire year?" "I can," Reb Elyah Lopian confirmed. "Then I want you to do only half of it." This is because a kabbalah doesn't necessarily need to be something

extremely hard to do. It can be relatively small. The main thing is that we should stick to it without fail, throughout the year.

A small nail on the wall can hold up a large picture. Similarly, every tiny kabbalah accomplishes much more than we can imagine. We will look back, and see how much we gained from each small, good kabbalah we took on.



The kabbalah

A man from Uzbekistan asked his son to bury him in the local cemetery, "and when you have the opportunity, bring my bones to Eretz Yisrael." His son eventually moved to Eretz Yisrael. When he was about eighty years old, he knew that it was now or never, so he hired Reb Mendel Eckstein to bring his father's remains to Eretz Yisrael.

Reb Mendel travelled to Uzbekistan, and opened the grave. He fainted, when he saw that the tallis covering the body had remained fresh, after all these years. The tallis is usually first to disintegrate, but miraculously this Turkish tallis remained intact. Reb Mendel never saw anything like this before. He took the tallis off to see the body. The skeleton was as he'd expect it to be. The tachrichim were totally disintegrated, just the tallis remained untouched.

He brought the bones and the miraculous tallis to Eretz Yisrael. In Eretz Yisrael, the custom is to bury people without a tallis. Reb Mendel asked a shaalah and a rav told him that because of the unusual circumstance, the niftar should be buried with the tallis. Who was this man? Was he a tzaddik nistar?

When asked about this, the eighty-year-old son replied, "The tallis? That's easy to explain. On the day my father began wearing a tallis, which was the day after his chasunah, he made a kabbalah that he

would never speak while wearing it. He kept this kabbalah his entire life. Apparently, in this merit, the tallis remained intact."

We derive from this story the power of a kabbalah. We must recognize and value its potential.

The passuk says, דְּאָגָה בִּלְבַב־אִישׁ יַשְׁחֶנָּה *"If a person has a worry, he should make it small"* (Mishlei 12:25).



This means that when one is worried about some issue, he should consider it minor. Minimize the severity of the problems, and then you will be able to deal with them rationally and serenely.

The commentaries on this passuk explain that if one is upset about something that has already happened, there is certainly no purpose. Why should he think about the past? What was was. And if he is worried about the future, it is also wise to trust in Hashem and not make a big deal out of it. He should do whatever hishtadlus is necessary, but there is no room for worry. Instead of worry, one should distract his thoughts and think about happier matters.

"During Elul, the gates of repentance are open wide, and every sincere prayer and effort is accepted." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Elul: The Month of No Visitors -Rav Yerachmiel Tilles



The Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk would not accept visitors during the month of Elul. Throughout the year, his door was open, and people would go to him for salvations, but during the month of Elul he required time for himself.

People understood this, and they respected the rebbe's stated boundaries. One year, however, a wealthy person who felt desperate decided that he would travel to speak privately with the rebbe even during Elul. His problem was indeed serious; his son had become insane!As he and his son were traveling to the rebbe, they met a pauper, collecting money. The boy said to his father: "Give this man a generous donation."

The father was startled; this was the first sane sentence he heard from his son in a long time. Since he was so pleased with his son's improvement, he gave a half-golden coin, to the pauper. The pauper asked them, "Where are you headed?"

The father told him that his son had become insane, so they were going to the Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk for a blessing. The pauper replied, "But don't you see that your son is healed? Why should you bother the *tzadik*? You probably heard that he asked not to be disturbed during Elul."

Nevertheless, the father decided that since he had already traveled a long way, he would continue. When he arrived at Lizhensk he went directly with his son to speak with the Rebbe Elimelech, and as soon as he was admitted into the rebbe's room, he gave him twelve golden coins. Said the Rebbe Elimelech: "Am I more special than Eliyahu Hanavi? To Eliyahu you only gave a half-golden coin." Only then

did the father understand that the pauper he met was Elijah the Prophet.

* * *

Notice how precious Rebbe Elimelech's Elul was to The One Above. From heaven they sent Eliyahu Hanavi to heal the wealthy man's insane son, solely to prevent him from disturbing Rebbe Elimelech's holy prayers and meditations during Elul."

The Difference in the Brocha on a Beautiful Apple



Once, a man brought his ten-year-old son to visit **Rav Aharon Karlin, zt"l**. As they were sitting and talking, Rav Aharon asked for a bowl of apples to be brought in. Rav Aharon and his guests each took an apple, and with great Kavanah Rav Aharon said the Brachah of Borei Pri HaEitz, and he began to eat.

The boy thought to himself, 'What is the difference between me and the Rebbe? He eats apples and also I eat apples. He says a Brachah, and so do I. Even I could be the Rebbe someday!'

Rav Aharon, almost as if he were aware of the boy's thoughts, turned to the child and said, "You know, my son, there is a big difference between the two of us. When you wake up in the morning and look out the window, you can see that there is a beautiful apple tree in your yard. You can see the juicy, red apples growing on it and all you can think of is when you can eat those apples.

You run to wash your hands, get dressed as quickly as possible, and run out to the apple tree. You quickly decide which apple is going to be for your breakfast, and you open your mouth for that first delicious bite. You almost take that bite of the apple until you

remember, just in time, that you must say a Brachah before eating an apple. So you say the Brachah in order to eat."

The boy and his father listened, captivated to the words of the great Rebbe. Rav Aharon continued, "However, my son, when I wake up in the morning, it is different. When I look out the window, I also see a beautiful apple tree, and it makes me think about the wonder of Hashem's creation. I contemplate how this apple tree began as a small seed in the ground, and how it slowly grew year by year until one day blossoms began to flower and then apples appeared.

I run to wash my hands before I quickly go outside to take a closer look at this amazing creation. In awe of Hashem and His Creation, the apple tree, I want to say a Brachah on the apple tree and its fruits. I begin to say the Brachah of Borei Pri HaEitz, but then I remember, in order to say a Brachah, I need an apple!"

Rav Aharon took the young boy's hand. "The Gemara in Bava Kamma (30b) teaches us, 'One who wants to be a true Chassid, a pious Jew, must fulfill the Halachos of Brachos.' Saying Brachos the proper way and with the proper Kavanah is the correct way to become righteous. Every Brachah we say represents one more step forward in growing closer to Hashem!" - *(Torah U' Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*



"כִּי תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה"- The battle spoken of in the parsha is not only against external enemies, but against the inner yetzer hara. During the weekdays a person must actively wage war to uncover Hashem's presence hidden within the world, while Shabbos gives the strength to reclaim the holiness that was "taken captive" during the struggles of the week.

A person's Shabbos, is built from the effort and avodah invested during the ordinary days. ~ Sfas Emes.



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Reb Refael of Barshid zt'l was once in the home of **Reb Shmuel of Kaminka zt'l**. Reb Shmuel's daughter, who was barren, requested for a brachah for children from Reb Refael. Reb Refael told her that simchah is a segulah for bearing children. Reb Shmuel asked his daughter what the tzaddik, Reb Refael, said, and she told him. Reb Shmuel replied that this can be proven from Torah, Nevi'im, and Kesuvim.

In the Torah, it states **ותצחק שרה בקרבה** – "Sarah laughed…" (Bereishis 18:12) and then she had Yitzchak. In Navi it states **מושיבי עקרת הבית אם הבנים שמחה** and in Kesuvim it states **רני עקרה לא ילדה** -These pesukim imply that joy is a segulah for bearing children.

Going out to War

Someone complained to the **Tiferes Shlomo zy'a** that he has many ups and downs in his battle with the yetzer hara. "Just yesterday, I won the battle against the yetzer hara, but today, I failed again."

The Tiferes Shlomo explained to him that fighting the yetzer hara is like going to war. In war, one doesn't win every battle. Sometimes the enemy wins. The main thing is to continue fighting, and even after a loss.

He said that this is alluded in this week's parashah by the words **כִּי־ תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה**, *when you go out to war*," and this passuk alludes to the war against the yetzer hara. The passuk doesn't say **כי תצא לנצחון** "*When you go out to win and conquer the yetzer hara*." The goal is to battle, and when you lose a fight, to try again.

The Chofetz Chaim told the following mashal:

A soldier's finger was wounded. In agony, he threw down his gun. A fellow soldier told him, "Don't throw away the gun. Keep fighting the enemy or you may be hurt even more."

Similarly, even if we lose a battle, we must continue fighting. We mustn't give up, or we will be harmed even more. In Shacharis we say ***"המה כרעו ונפלו ואנחנו קמנו ונתעודד" They stooped down and fell, while we got up and were encouraged"*** (Tehillim 20).

Notice, that the passuk doesn't say that we don't fall. It states that we get up again, because the goal isn't never to fall, rather that we should get up after the fall, and try again.

The Yesod HaAvodah (of Slonim) zt'l asked one of his chassidim at his tish, "You live far away. How did you come here?" "By horseback." "If you would have fallen off your horse, what would you do?" "I would get back on and continue on my way." "And what would you do if you fell off a second time?" "I would get back on the horse again and try again." "And what would you do if you fell off a third time?"



"Rebbe! What should I do? Sit on the ground and mope? I have no other choice. I would mount the horse and try again." The Rebbe said to his chassidim, "Learn from this man that no matter how many times you fall, just lift yourselves up and try again. There's no other way."

Hischazkus

Rebbe Gedalyah Moshe of Zvhil zt'l asked someone why he wasn't going to listen to a certain mussar drashah. The man replied, "I know myself; even if the speech inspires me to do teshuvah, it won't last for long. Soon afterwards, I will be myself again." The Rebbe told him, "If someone's drowning in the sea, and someone swims up to him and says, 'I can save you for a half hour, but then you will fall back into the sea again,' would he accept the offer? Of course he would. So why shouldn't you also seek to do teshuvah? Even if it only lasts for a short while, it is also worthwhile." And there is always the possibility that this time he will maintain the teshuvah.

The Chazon Ish zt'l taught, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves hischazkus (when one strengthens himself to do Hashem's will) even if it lasts only for a moment."

To Drink the Milk or Offend the King

There is a famous incident that happened in the time of the **Chassam Sofer**, that a harsh decree was issued on the Jews, and they had to appeal to the government to nullify it. As a result, the Jewish communities in the province of the government held a vote and decided to send a delegation of respected individuals to go before the king in order to appease him and request of him to nullify the decree.

And so, they were forced to send several respected men. Amongst those chosen for the delegation was one man hand-picked by the Chassam Sofer himself who served him as his attendant. This was in the category of the messenger literally taking the place of one sending, as he was not able to go himself. This messenger saw how the Chassam Sofer conducted himself, and he was not of the common folk, rather, he was steeped in awe.

When the honorable delegation arrived at the palace of the king, they were offered a drink of milk, which according to Halacha one is prohibited to drink as long as a Jew has not seen the gentile milk the cow.



The members of the delegation were concerned that if they refused the offered beverage this would anger the king, and all their effort would be for nothing. Therefore, they allowed themselves to drink it as they thought that since the whole prohibition was only a gezeira [a Rabbinical preventive barrier] they felt that it would be permissible at a time like this. Additionally, they were also inclined to say that they would surely not be made to stumble by drinking something prohibited when the purpose of the meeting with the king was a matter of a mitzvah and they were fulfilling (Pesachim 8a). Messengers involved in a mitzvah are not harmed.

However, the messenger of the Chassam Sofer thought differently, he refused this heter – permissiveness, and he did not drink with them. The king saw what was taking place and was interested in finding out the reason why he abstained from the milk, and even now did not try to avoid the issue with false pretexts, and he answered that the truth of the matter is that according to the Shulchan Aruch it is prohibited to drink milk of a gentile, unless a Jew saw how he milked the cow.

As they were speaking, the attendant of the king entered. The king turned to him and said: "Today I sense that the milk tastes better

than usual. Why is today different?" The attendant did not hesitate and immediately responded that today he was able to obtain special milk – milk of a camel.

When the king saw how this Jew was spared from a prohibition in the Torah by the power of his devotion to fulfilling the Torah, he decided to appoint him as the officer in charge of all Jewish affairs in all the provinces of his kingdom for he knew that he would always stand by the truth until the end without compromising at all.

We derive from here that a person cannot make calculations as to what is good for him or not. Just the opposite! It is precisely this that in the beginning seemed to turn off their hope and this ultimately brought them salvation, apart from when the Jews let themselves down regarding their religious beliefs because of the government.

Therefore, a person should always see to fulfill mitzvos by way of – 'You shall be wholehearted with Hashem, your G-d' (18:13) and fulfill what is incumbent upon him without making any calculations, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu, with His guidance, will guard him with a merciful eye. - *(Tiv HaKehlla, the parsha sheet of Rav Gamliel Rabinowitz)*

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

והכהו לפניו כדי רשעתו ***…and he shall strike him, before him, according to his wickedness*** (25:2)

It is well known that the word **ונתנו** –'and he shall give', can be read forward and backward, meaning that if one gives charity it will come back to him. So too is the word **והכהו** – 'and he shall strike him' can be read forward and backward, to teach us that if someone strikes someone else, you should know, that surely some time in the future he will be struck. (*Nimletzu Lechki*)

Sholom Bayis

An old man was standing outside his home one day and saw a traveller passing by. They struck up a friendly conversation and the old man learned that the traveller needed a place to stay. He graciously invited the man into his home to dine and spend the night. Of course, the fellow eagerly accepted the hospitality and came inside.

The host helped him with his bags and then went to the kitchen to find him something to eat. However, as the old man was preparing a delectable meal, the conversation turned to politics and the old man realized that this traveller had opposing views on politics and religion than he did.

The two began to argue and neither man would concede to the other. This infuriated the old man, and he asked the traveller to leave without giving him so much as bread to eat.

That night, the old man's wife heard what happened and was shocked. She asked him, "Why did you treat your guest so poorly?" The old man replied, "Because he obstinately opposed my views on politics and religion." The wife sighed and said, "But, my husband, I have put up with your differences in opinion for sixty years. Couldn't you have endured him for one night?"

Marriage is a solemn bond between man and woman and when there is peace and joy in the household, Hashem adds His Shechina to the mix and the home is complete. But even in such a perfect union, not always will the two sides see perfectly, eye to eye.

Different strokes for different folks. But simply having a difference of opinion is no reason for intolerance, or worse, an opportunity to cause strife in the home. A husband and wife can have separate opinions but their love and respect for one another is what keeps them strong.

The Scarf



Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, once related a story that happened with the Ksav Sofer.

A Jew in the city of Pressburg became gravely ill and it became clear that there was not much time left for him. The most prominent physicians were consulted, and various drugs were administered, but it was to no avail, and his condition did not get better.

The members of the family were G-d-fearing Jews who understood that one does not give up hope, but rather he places his trust in Hashem, the Healer of all flesh. The children of this sick individual went to the Rav of the city, the venerable Ksav Sofer, and after relating the patient's history and the present situation, they implored him for a Brachah, a blessing that would intercede in the Heavenly Tribunal, so that their father would live.

The Ksav Sofer listened, and suddenly took off the scarf that was wrapped around his neck, and handed it to the family members. He said, "Here, take this scarf and place it on the forehead of the patient, and with the help of Hashem, he will arise from his illness!" The family did as the Ksav Sofer advised them, and soon enough, with the help of Hashem, the patient was completely cured! It was a miracle!

The students who were always present in the Ksav Sofer's home questioned him concerning the "holy" scarf. Did he perhaps "treat" it with the holy Names of Hashem? Was it immersed in Kabbalah, Mysticism?

The Ksav Sofer shook his head and said, "I have been wearing this scarf for a long time. It rests on my shoulders, as I constantly study

Torah. It is a part of my ritual of Torah study, and Torah is the greatest healer of all ills. I felt that the scarf contained within it enough Kedushah to provide the medicinal and therapeutic qualities that were necessary to heal the patient. It has soaked up and absorbed so much Torah that it can heal someone who is sick!"

Yesoidos M'Hasedra



The Torah bids us to remember what Hashem did to Miriam when the Jewish people left Mitzrayim. Rashi explains that by recalling the fact that Miriam was struck with tzaraas after speaking lashon hara about her brother Moshe, we will be discouraged from speaking ill of others.

On the surface, it seems that it serves as somewhat of a scare tactic functioning as a deterrent, which also needs to be understood. However, accordingly, the posuk could have simply read 'remember what happened to Miriam' instead of 'what Hashem did to Miriam', but moreover, why does the posuk stress 'as they left Mitzrayim'. This incident didn't happen when they left and not immediately thereafter either. Most likely, it occurred right before Moshe sent meraglim to scout out the land, which was just as they were about to enter Eretz Yisroel. Why then, mention 'as they left Mitzrayim'?

Most of us assume that when the Torah warns us to remember what happened to Miriam, we are supposed to think, 'she sinned and was therefore punished and so we should be more careful', but the

Chasam Sofer takes an entirely different approach in understanding what lesson we are supposed to glean from Miriam's mistake. The fact that K'lal Yisroel waited an entire week for Miriam to heal before continuing on their journey was a reward for the fact that after depositing her baby brother's basket in the Nile, she waited a few minutes to see what would happen.

Most of us take these words at face value and think that her chesed was repaid with chesed. The truth is however, it doesn't really make sense to say that Miriam waited to see what would happen to her brother. After all, parents naturally have more compassion on their children than an older sibling should. Yet Yocheved and Amram didn't hide by the side with their daughter Miriam. This is because, explains the Chasam Sofer, Miriam was a prophetess and knew that Moshe would grow up to be the leader and saviour of the Jewish people, and so, she waited to see what happened, out of respect for Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

The reward for this should have been infinite, and certainly far more that waiting for her to recover from tzara'as. The reason why Miriam received such a lesser reward was in fact a measure for measure reward for having misjudged Moshe's actions in separating from his wife, Tzipora. Since she misjudged Moshe, the Ribono shel Olam arranged that the Jewish people should misjudge her motivation in waiting by the side of the river. Really, she had waited for the honour of the Shechina, but now the entire Jewish people, judge her less favourably and think that she waited for Moshe, just because, she misjudged Moshe, even though she meant well.

All of this is supposed to be a lesson, that if we remember what Hashem did to Miriam, by making us not realize the greatness of her actions, just because she didn't judge Moshe favourably, perhaps we will start judging others favourably, which would pre-empt much of the loshon hara that people speak.

Amalek in Us All

"… You shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!" Devarim 25:17-19



The word Amalek – **עמלק** has a gematria (numerical value) of 240, Similarly the word Safek – **ספק** Also has a gematria of 240. The word Safek means doubt or uncertainty. Within us we all have doubts and uncertainties, whether it be in our Emunah (faith) or trust in HaKadosh BaruchHu. Amelek put in us these doubts. They attacked us and spiritually held us back – standing as a barrier between us reaching Sinai (G-d).

Within us we have a Yatzer Hara, which in effect does the same thing as Amelek, it places within us doubts about spiritual pursuits, "why daven your prayers will never be answered anyway?" The Yatzer hara may say. So with the commandment to blot out the memory of Amelek so should we Blot out the memory of our Yatzer Hara and our own Safekim and have complete faith and trust in Hashem! Hope for the L-rd, be strong and He will give your heart courage, and hope for the L-rd. Tehillim 27:14.

With the above passage we should defeat our yetzer Hara and Hashem will give us the courage to challenge our doubts and uncertainties.

May the name of Amelek be wiped out from all of us!! AMEN.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ When you go out to war against your enemies.

Rashi says that this is a **מלחמת הרשות** - an optional war. [i.e., non-obligatory]

וְרָאִיתָ בַּשִּׁבְיָה אֵשֶׁת יְפַת־תֹּאַר וְחָשַׁקְתָּ בָּהּ וְלָקַחְתָּ לְךָ לְאִשָּׁה and you see among the captives a beautiful woman and you desire her, you may take [her] for yourself as a wife.

Rashi asks, what is going on? **לא דברה תורה אלא כנגד יצר הרע.** This is an amazing Rashi. The Torah over here is speaking directly to our yetzer horah. There is a little voice inside us that tells us to do the things that we shouldn't really be doing.**שאם אין הקב"ה מתירה** - because if Hakodosh Baruch Hu would not have permitted this, **ישאנה באיסור** - He would not have allowed it and would have married her forbiddingly. And therefore, the Torah permitted it.

It is an absolutely unbelievable concept. The fact that we would have done it anyway, therefore Hashem says fine,if you cant hold yourself back, do it! But do it b'heter- with permission.

There are many things that we can all think about that we would also like to be permissible to us, yet they are forbidden. So what is going on here?

Says the **Chidushei Halev** an amazing chidush which appears simplistic but is so important.

It shows us right over here that yes, there are so many things that are hard for us to keep, e.g not speaking loshon hora, or to do a chesed for someone when it is not convenient. We sometime think to ourselves, that we can't do this. But the Torah says specifically over here that if you can't manage your impulses, then we are going to permit it.

That means to say that everywhere else in a similar situation, then we can and are able to overcome our impulses, even though it is difficult. This is an amazing thing.

Rav Dessler says over a wonderful mashul. Somebody was walking in the streets of Manhattan for the very first time. He never saw anything like it before in his life. He saw huge skyscrapers and an awesome skyline- unbelievable views. He walks into the tallest building that he sees, and wonders how to get to the very top of the building. He asks the porter, and is told to go to the small room over there called an elevator (lift), and that will take you to the top of the building.



So, he walks in as the door slides open, he is the only one inside, the door slides closed, and he waits for it to take him to the top. But nothing happens. Not only does nothing happen, but the lights switch off by themselves. He is left enclosed and enveloped in darkness. He gets scared, nervous and starts banging on the walls, shouting, "get me out of here". The guards come, open the doors and say , "what's the matter, what happened?" He explained to them what happened. They said, "did you press the button?" He said, "what button?" They replied, "If you don't press the button, then nothing happens.."

This teaches us an amazing lesson. Sometimes, we need to get to the top, we need to try to get higher, we need to get closer to Hashem. But it appears to be a long way off. But all we need to do, is press one small button to reach our destination.

This week's parsha teaches us that sometimes, we do encounter hard times and situations that are difficult to overcome. But we can do it

with a bit of self-sacrifice! All we have to do is press the small button.

This is something to think about as we get closer to Rosh Hashonoh. A time to think about how we have to act and improve ourselves. ***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

Why Honouring Your Wife Will Make You Wealthy

Rava said to the people of Mechuza, "Honour your wives, and you will become wealthy" (Bava Metzia 59). What is the connection between honoring one's wife and becoming wealthy?

After the sin of eitz hadaas [Tree of Knowledge] both were cursed, **בזעת אפיך לחם תאכל** *,By the sweat of your face, you will eat bread" (Bereishis 3:19).* He must work hard for his parnassah. One of the woman's curses is, **והוא ימשל בך**, *The husband will rule over his wife" (3:16).* When the husband honours his wife, he frees her from her curse [since he isn't ruling over her].

Heaven will say, "If you are lenient with your wife's curse, we will be lenient with your curse too, and you can earn your parnassah easily." This is the reason Rava said, "Honour your wife, and you will become wealthy."

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that the many mitzvos in Parshas Ki Seitzei — from returning lost objects to paying workers on time and protecting the dignity of others — reveal that holiness in Judaism is not confined to the beis midrash. The Torah demands sensitivity and morality in the smallest details of everyday life, because true kedushah is measured by how a person treats other human beings in ordinary situations.

R' Shimshon Pincus zt"l says, by the Akeidah, Hashem tells Avraham, "Take your son," and Avraham asks, "Which one?" Hashem says "Your only son," He says, "I have two sons." Hashem says, "The one you love" and Avraham Avinu says, "I love them both." Finally, Hashem clearly tells him Yitzchok!

The obvious question is: Does Avraham not know who Hashem is talking about? Could it be that he didn't know Hashem was referring to Yitzchok? The answer is that Avraham did NOT know! He saw the potential of Yitzchok and he saw the potential of Yishmael. He truly loved both of his sons the same because he only chose to focus on their strengths, on their positive attributes and on their great potential! And in the end, Yishmael did teshuva - of course he did teshuva!

When you have a parent that only sees the good in you and believes in you, you will surely come home. We read this on Rosh Hashana to remind us how much Hashem truly loves us and sees our great potential. This is a great impetus for us to return to Him.

A Short Vort- - Avoiding argument; message of shatnez (D Fine)

The majority of the sedra ki tetze deals with things that should not be mixed/put together eg kilaim, shatnez, etc.
The Torah tells us not to wear shatnez (22;11)- this means wearing something which has a combination of wool and linen in.

What is the message of this law? The midrash says that this is based on the following…When the two sons of Adam; Kayin and Hevel argued and ultimately brought the first murder to the world, it was because one brought wool as part of their sacrifice to HaShem, and the other brought linen. Thus, as a reminder not to cause machlokes, we are told never to mix these two materials – wool and linen; so we live with this message.

We see here the devastating effects of machlokes and the extent that the Torah goes to try and rid us of any vestige of meaningless machlokes and breaking down of interpersonal relationships. After all, if HaShem is to be our Father, then we must agree to get on together as His sons.(from **Rav P Krohn**).

Sympathy For Mistaken Jealousy (B.A. Rose)



The pasuk says in Devorim 22:10 "Do not plow together with an ox and a donkey". This is one of several forms of the prohibition of Kilayim – mixing of species. There is a form of this prohibition relating to garments (Kilaei Begadim or Shatnez). Finally, this pasuk prohibits the yoking together of different species of animals.

The Daas Zekeinim provides an interesting reason for this Issur. A donkey does not chew its cud. An ox, on the other hand, does chew its cud. The donkey and the ox would be walking along, yoked together, and the donkey would see the ox chewing and think that it was eating something. The donkey would become upset: "I missed my feeding. When did it happen?" He would become jealous of the ox, because he would think the ox was fed and he was not.

In fact, of course, they both had the same feeding. But the ox chews its cud so it appears to be continuously eating, thus giving the donkey the misimpression that he has been cheated. According to the Daas Zekeinim, the Torah is trying to avoid this psychological pain that the donkey would experience.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz Zt"l explains, we see from here that the Torah was worried about the feelings of an animal… all the more so for a human being!

We should all be very careful not to boast about our accomplishments or possessions if others might feel envious. Do not praise someone in the presence of a person who might feel envious of that person.

Torah Tavlin



Chacham Rabbi Yosef Chayim of Baghdad zt"l (Ben Ish Chai) would say: כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ וְלֹא־תָשִׂים דָּמִים בְּבֵיתֶךָ כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנֹּפֵל מִמֶּנּוּ:22:8 - The word בַּיִת (house) has the numerical value of 412. The words מַעֲקֶה גַגֶּךָ (fence of your roof) is 241. By subtracting the latter from the former, we are left with 171, which is the gematria of **הנופל** (a faller.)

The Torah is cautioning us that one who builds a new house should put a fence on the roof; otherwise, if he subtracts it from the house, i.e. does not put a fence on the roof, there will be "hanofeil" a "faller," and this is evident **ממנו** (from it) - from the gematria of the word 'bayit' less 'ma'akeh gagecha.'

A Short Vort- Sending away the mother bird and its implications for us (B.A. Rose)



The Torah commands us in the mitzvah called 'shiluach haken' that we must send away the mother bird before taking away its eggs. There is a fundamental machlokes between the **Ramban** and the **Rambam** as to this law. see the Ramban 22;6 .What is the reason for sending away the mother bird?

The Rambam says it's so we don't harm the mother bird – we are avoiding the pain the bird would go through if she were to see her eggs being taken.

The Ramban, however, disagrees and says that the reason is not out of care directly for the mother bird, but rather so we improve our personal middos via acting with care for others' feelings.

Seudas Shabbos

The Chofetz Chaim states that if one has a poor guest to his home for the Shabbos meal, one is obligated to eat immediately upon returning from shul to avoid bal te'acher. One should not delay by saying Shalom Aleichem or singing since the meal given to the poor is Tzedakah. Thus, one cannot tarry or stall at all.

The Chofetz Chaim himself was accustomed when he had poor guests, to say Shalom Aleichem during the meal. Further, he would not stay longer in shul, even to engage in Divrei Torah.

One Hundred Brachos Overturn the "Klalah"

ולא אבה ה' אלקיך לשמע אל בלעם ויהפך ה' אלקיך לך
את הקללה לברכה כי אהבך ה' אלקיך (כג ו)

Harav Moshe Kahana of Gibitsch explained: The word **קללה** written backwards makes **הלל ק** – an allusion to the mitzvah of meah brachos, in which we were commanded to praise Hashem one hundred times each day. The Torah promises: "And Hashem will overturn the klalah, the curse for you." If you transform the klalah into a brachah, by making sure to praise Hashem 100 times a day, then Hashem will act measure for measure, and will turn your klalah into a brachah.

Dovid Hamelech alludes to this by saying (Tehillim 109:17): "Vaye'ehav klalah vatevoeihu velo chafetz bibrachah vatirchak mimenu, and he loved a curse, and it came upon him; and he did not desire a blessing, and it distanced itself from him." Someone who loves the klalah – written in this form, then vatevo'ehu, because if he would want brachah, then he would be careful about 100 brachos, and thus he would transform the klalah into **הלל ק**.

Pachad David- Why are You Paying Him?

בְּיוֹמוֹ תִתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא־תָבֹוא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ "On that day shall you pay his hire; the sun shall not set upon him" (Devarim 24:15)

The son-in-law of the **Chafetz Chaim** once travelled with a wagon driver to a certain destination. On arrival, he took out money from his pocket and paid the wagon driver his fee, as per their agreement. The Chafetz Chaim asked him, "Tell me, why did you pay the wagon driver?" His son-in-law replied, "What do you mean? I paid him because he brought me to my destination."

Again, the tzaddik asked, "But why did you pay him?" "Because he deserves it…he completed his job", replied the son-in-law. The Chafetz Chaim did not let up. "Tell me why you paid him!" The son-

in-law could not understand what the tzaddik wanted. "We made an agreement that I would pay him. He fulfilled his part of the deal so I must fulfil my part."

Then the Chafetz Chaim animatedly said, "Say that you paid him because there is a mitzvah of "on that day shall you pay his hire". That is why you paid him!" With the Chafetz Chaim, there was no such thing as merely paying someone because 'he deserved it'. Who said that he deserves it? The Torah!

The Torah commands us to pay a person for his service, therefore we pay because this is what the Torah commanded us to do. This is how the Chafetz Chaim conducted himself in all his ways and deeds. He had only one deliberation when considering how to act. What is Hashem's will?!

Due to this, when he wrote his significant masterpiece, the 'Chafetz Chaim', he did not assign his name to the sefer initially. What difference does it make who authored this sefer? He quoted the source for every ruling, therefore anyone studying the laws could explore the source and realize that indeed all his words were true and just and that he did not fabricate anything. If so, the Chafetz Chaim was of the opinion, why would it be necessary to know the name of the author?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe taught that Ki Seitzei repeatedly emphasizes responsibility for another person — returning lost objects, helping with burdens, building a fence around a roof, caring for the vulnerable.

The parsha shows that Judaism does not permit a person to say, "It is not my problem." Spiritual greatness begins when one notices another Jew's difficulty and accepts responsibility to help.

לשון עירוב. ורבותינו פירשו שוע טווי שעטנז: – Rashi 22:11 **תורה תמימה** ונוז a mixture: Heb. שַׁעַטְנֵז An expression denoting a mixture. *Our Rabbis explained [this term to be an acronym of the terms]:* שׁוּעַ, combed, טָווּי, spun, and נוז, woven.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

I Accept All Challenges!

"And you will see amongst the captives a woman who is of beautiful form and you will desire her, you may take her to yourself as a wife" (Devarim 21:11)



The Torah says, if a Jewish soldier desires a non-Jewish woman who was captured during war, he is permitted to take her as a wife. Before marrying her, the Jewish soldier had to bring her into his house where she had to mourn the separation from her parents for thirty days. He also had to cut off her hair and give her ugly clothes to wear. The purpose of that was to try to dissuade the soldier from marrying her. However, if he still wanted to marry her, then it was permitted.

Why does the Torah permit a Jew to marry a non-Jewish woman in this circumstance? [Obviously, she would first have to convert to Judaism. However, this was not the typical marriage of a Jew marrying a precious convert.] The **Talmud** (Kiddushin 21B) explains that the Torah understands the powerful *yetzer hara*, especially in time of war. The Torah gives special permission to marry this captive in a permissible way, to prevent the Jewish solder from sinning, and acting in an improper way.

When you stop to think about this special dispensation, it is truly astounding. Earlier (Devarim 20:8) the Torah tells us what type of person the Jewish soldier was. The pasuk says that if the soldier was "fearful", he did not have to serve on the front lines. According to one explanation (quoted in **Rashi**), that means if the soldier was afraid that his own sins would cause him to be unsuccessful in battle, then he would not have to fight on the front lines. The **Talmud** (Menachos 36A) gives an example of the type of sin that the Torah is referring to. Even if the soldier had spoken between putting on his *tefillin shel yad* and his *tefillin shel rosh*, that would be considered enough of a sin to hold this soldier back from combat.

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank zt"l says we see from this that the Jewish soldiers were truly righteous individuals. Would such a person be interested in marrying a gentile woman? Why does the Torah have to give this special dispensation for such a righteous individual? **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank** points out that **even totally righteous individuals can be tempted to sin**, especially during a war.

Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky zt"l learns **an important life lesson** from here. **There are times that mitzvos can be very challenging for us.** In the 1930's it was exceedingly challenging to observe Shabbos in America. Many Jews were told that they had to work on Shabbos or lose their jobs. Without jobs, they would not have money to buy food for their family. Yet, the Torah does **NOT** give a special dispensation allowing one to work on Shabbos even if one would have to go hungry for a while.

Berel left his family behind, in the Ukraine, and boarded a boat to America. Upon his arrival in New York, he got a job pressing shirts. A few months passed. Berel realized that he would now need to leave work earlier on Friday afternoon, since sundown was getting earlier. On Friday, Berel told his boss that he would need to leave early. The boss threw Berel's ironing board into the street and told him never to come back. Berel hurried into the street and retrieved his board.

It was almost Shabbat. He had no time to take his ironing board to his boarding house before the onset of Shabbat. "I stood there in middle of the street staring at my only possible means to support my family, and wondered what I would do with it," he would later tell. In desperation, he dashed into the nearest store and asked if he could please leave his ironing board there. When Shabbat ended, Berel retrieved his ironing board. As he was walking home, a man noticed him holding his ironing board and offered him a job, pressing clothing. The job paid more money than Berel's old job and did not require him to work on Shabbat. Apparently, his old boss had been taking advantage of him by paying him less than the going rate.

"At that moment it struck me," he would later tell his children. "If I would have kept my old job and worked on Shabbat, I would have lost not only my share in the World to Come, but my rightful portion of this world as well!" Berel passed his challenge and now his grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren keep Shabbat. (story Saved by Shabbat by Menachem Posner)

Rabbi Abramsky said that the only dispensation that the Torah gives is when a Jewish soldier sees a gentile woman during war. Clearly, the Torah acknowledges that this is the only time that it may be too difficult to withstand the temptation of the yetzer hara. However, any other challenge we can handle successfully. We CAN overcome the challenge to do any other mitzvah, no matter how difficult it may be! (by Rabbi Yissocher Frand)

Sometimes we feel that a mitzvah is too challenging for us to do. That is 100% false! While it may be difficult or challenging, it is not too difficult! Hashem does NOT present us with a situation that is impossible for us!

Hashem only gives us challenges that we are able to pass. We must strengthen ourselves and work hard, knowing that we can do it!

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

It's Not Fair! Why is He Getting Food and Not Me?

לֹא־תַחֲרֹשׁ בְּשׁוֹר־וּבַחֲמֹר יַחְדָּו "You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey together." (Devarim 22:10)

You are forbidden to harness an ox and a donkey (or any two different types of animals) together to plough a field.



The Ibn Ezra gives one explanation. An ox is stronger than a donkey. Perhaps, this would enable the ox to go at a faster pace than the donkey and cause the donkey discomfort." Hashem is merciful to all of His creatures and therefore, He would not allow this.

The Sefer HaChinuch gives another explanation. Animals are more comfortable working with their own species. Therefore, the Torah says that two different species should not be placed together in the same yoke.

The Da'as Zekainim gives a third explanation. An ox chews its cud and a donkey doesn't. If they would work side-by-side, the donkey would hear the ox "eating". The donkey would feel jealous of the ox. "Why is the ox getting food while I am not?" The donkey will feel bad. To prevent the donkey's pain, the Torah forbids putting an ox together with a donkey to work the field.

All three explanations show the Torah's sensitivity to the donkey. If we think for a moment about the explanation of the Da'as Zekainim, we can get an even deeper understanding of the Torah's sensitivity to the donkey.

The ox really does not get any more food than the donkey. The ox merely rechews the food it already swallowed. **Yet the donkey mistakenly thinks that the ox did get extra**. Even though the donkey is mistaken and has no actual basis for his envy and pain, the Torah still says to BE SENSITIVE to his feelings. The Torah expects us to learn from here the depth of compassion and sensitivity we certainly must have for other **people** who are created in the image of Hashem.

Rabbi Chayim Shmuelevitz points out that this is also a lesson in how sensitive we must be in order not to make others feel jealous or envious of us. The way we act, or dress could cause another person to feel jealous. The type of car we drive or the type of house we live in may also cause jealousy.

We always must be aware of others and be sensitive to their feelings.

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" כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה איננו שמע בקול אביו ובקול אמו"
***"If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son, who does not hearken to the voice of his father and the voice of his mother."* (21:18)**

Why is the word *"bekol"* — "to the voice" — repeated? It could have simply said, "He does not hearken to the voice of his father and mother"?

When a man and woman enter into marriage, it is extremely important that they have similar views and mutual goals for the family they hope to raise. Unfortunately, the husband and wife

sometimes do not see eye to eye in their aspirations for their children. The Torah is telling us that when a child is exposed to a *"kol aviv"* — "a father's voice" — and a *"kol imo"* — "a mother's voice" — each one telling the child different things, it is possible that the child, receiving mixed signals, may end up being wayward and rebellious.

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על דבר אשר לא קדמו אתכם בלחם ובמים בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים ואשר שכר עליך את בלעם...לקללך *"Because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt, and because he hired against you Bilaam...to curse you."* (23:5)

The hiring of Bilaam to curse the Jews was a far greater crime than not offering bread and water to the Jews, why is it listed as the second reason to not accept an Amonite and Moabite into the Jewish community?

Their failure to offer bread and water to the Jews can be justified by arguing that perhaps they were a poor nation with barely enough for their own people. However, since they *hired* Bilaam to curse the Jews, they must have had an ample supply of money. Consequently, there is no justification for their failure to offer the bare necessities of bread and water, and thus, they do not deserve to marry into the Jewish community.

(הרב שמואל פסח ז"ל באגאמילסקי בשם המגיד מדובנא)

"Challenges are what make life interesting and overcoming them is what makes life meaningful."

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"ולא יראה בך ערות דבר ושב מאחריך" *"So that He will not see a shameful thing among you and turn away from you."* (23:15)

Instead of *"mei'acharecha"* which literally means "from behind you," it should have said *"veshav mimecha"* — "He will turn away from you"?

When prominent guests or dignitaries are led into a ballroom, it is customary that the host walk in front of them escorting them to their designated seats. On the other hand, when a prisoner is led to a trial or to his cell, the guards walk behind him. Analogously, when the Jewish people conduct themselves properly, Hashem treats them royally and His glory goes before them leading the way. However, when they misbehave, G-d forbid, He goes behind them.

The Torah is warning us to be careful and make sure that there not be a shameful thing seen among us, which will, G-d forbid, cause that *"veshav"* — "He will turn" — from his position in front, and go *"mei'acharecha"* — "from behind you."

(ר' יוסף שאול ז"ל נתנזון)

Chabad.org **"לנכרי תשיך ולאחיך לא תשיך" *"To a gentile you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you may not lend upon interest."* (23:21)**

A priest once asked a Rabbi, "Doesn't this Biblical statement justify the gentile world's hatred for the Jews?

The Rabbi responded, "On the contrary. The Torah is fair in all its rulings. According to *halachah* it is forbidden for a Jewish borrower to pay interest, and it is forbidden for the lender to collect interest. However the Torah never prohibited a gentile from charging interest to a Jewish borrower, and thus it is only fair that a Jew can charge interest when he lends money to a gentile." **(אונזער אלטען אוצר)**

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"כי יקח איש אשה" *"If a man marries a woman."* (24:1)



Regarding the appropriate marriage our sages (*Pesachim* 49a) comment, "*Invei hagefen be'invei hagefen davar na'ah umitkabeil*" — "The mingling of the grapes of the vine with the grapes of the vine is beautiful and acceptable."

Why the analogy to grapes and not another fruit?

Before eating a fruit that grows on a tree, one must recite the berachah, "Borei peri ha'eitz." On the juice of the fruit one recites the berachah, "Shehakol niheyah bidevaro," which is lower in the ranking of berachot. The only exception to this rule is in the case of grapes. While the fruit itself has the berachah, "Borei peri ha'eitz," the juice is kovei'a berachah le'atzmo — acquires a berachah for itself — "Borei peri hagafen" — which is considered higher in the hierarchy of berachot than "Borei peri ha'eitz."

The originators of a family are the parents, who are compared to the vine, and the offspring are compared to the grapes. Our sages are telling us that a marriage in which there is a "mingling of grapes" and which produces wine, i.e. children accomplishing even more than their parents— is "*davar na'ah umitkabeil*" — something beautiful and acceptable.

The only possible journey is the one you never begin. Take the first step, and Hashem will hold your hand.

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"כי יקח איש אשה" *"If a man marries a woman."* (24:1)



According to the *Gemara* (*Kiddushin* 2a) "A woman may be acquired through money or an item worth money or through a document [of betrothal]." Why are all our *kiddushin* — betrothals — always done with a ring?

The round ring customarily used has the appearance of the Hebrew letter *samech*. When the letter is written out in full it is spelled **ס-מ-ך** and has the numerical value of 120.

Originally, man was to live forever. After Adam sinned Hashem said, "His days shall be a hundred and twenty years" (*Bereishit* 6:3). By putting the round ring which looks like the *samech* on the finger of the *Kallah*, the *Chatan* is alluding that he wants her to be his wife for 120 years, please G-d.

Alternatively, by putting the round ring around her finger he is expressing the wish that she will always be "around" him as a true *ezer kenegdo* — support and companion — in all material and spiritual matters. (**הרב שמואל פסח שי' באגאמילסקי**)

Kli Yakar explains that the Torah places laws of compassion and restraint specifically in a parsha dealing with war to teach that even in moments of strength and triumph, a Jew may not lose his humanity. The Torah fears not only physical failure, but the coarsening of the heart that can come through power, conflict, and habit.

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Why is it customary for wedding guests to eat from the *challah* over which the*chatan* makes the blessing *Hamotzi*?

The*Gemara* (*Berachot* 8a) says that in *Eretz Yisrael* when a man got married, people would ask him "*matza or motze*" — i.e. "is she a good woman or a bitter one?" In order to wish the *chatan* well, the participants eat up the "*motze,*" leaving the *chatan* only "*matza*" — "a good wife." - **(אמרי צדיקים בשם ר׳ עקיבא ז״ל איגר)**

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"זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק" *"Remember what Amalek did to you."* (25:17)

What is the significance of the name "Amalek?"

The name Amalek (**עמלק**) is an acronym for the *tzaddikim* **עַמרם, מֹשה, לֵוי, קָהת**. Amalek thought that since all negative powers (*kelipot* and *sitra achara*) have some form of attachment to holiness, with the strength he derived from these great *tzaddikim*, he would destroy the Jewish people. Little did he realize, however, that these four actually counteracted his strength and applied their merit in favour of the Jewish people and not to him.

Before Bilaam parted with Balak, he prophetically saw the punishment of Amalek and declaimed, "*Reishit goyim Amalek ve'acharito adei oveid*" — "Amalek is the first among nations, but its end will be eternal destruction" (*Bamidbar* 24:20). In light of the above, it can be explained that with this Bilaam meant that Amalek attacked the Jewish people relying on "*reishit*" — the first — that is, the fact that his name was the acronym for the *first* letters of the names of four great people. He failed to realize however, that "*acharito adei oveid*" — his end will be total destruction,

since "*achrito*" — the last (*final*) letters of the names **עמרם, משה, לוי, קהת** spell the word "*mitah*" (**מיתה**) — "death" — which is an allusion to the total annihilation that he will ultimately suffer. (**מגלה עמוקות**)

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem



The *Mishnah Brurah* teaches (581:2) that during the month of Elul, *perek* 27 of *Tehilim*, *L'Dovid*, should be said twice a day.

The *Chida* comments that it would be beneficial to say this *perek* all year long after every *tefilah*, or at least after *Shacharis*, because doing so will cause a person to find life. It is with this in mind that we say *L'Dovid* during Elul, which precedes Rosh HaShanah, when everyone's lives hang in the balance. We are looking for the extra merits to tip the scales in our favour towards life, and a new year replete with Hashem's *brachos*.

הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבֵם לְאָחִיךָ *"You shall surely return them to your brother"* (Deut. 22:1)

In this verse we are commanded to return a lost article. If we are instructed to be so careful not to ignore our neighbour's monetary loss, how much more the loss of his soul.

We surely have a double duty to attend to the welfare of a Jew who has wandered from the path of Torah and return him to his Creator. (**Shaloh**)

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

Erev Shabbos is a busy and hectic day, with many chores to do. Because of all the rush, it is generally a day of neglected Torah study. **Rav Chaim Palagi** therefore says that we must make sure to learn Torah on *Erev Shabbos*.

Even though we are busy, there is still an obligation to learn, and this is one way that we can bring in Shabbos with *simchah*, because learning Torah makes us happy. (*Devarim Niflaim al Shabbos Kodsheinu* p. 115).

In fact, there are *Gedolim* who have said about themselves that they only became a *Gadol* because they had set aside time to learn on *Erev Shabbos*!

Pearls of Wisdom …*A Word for the Ages*

Rav Noach Weinberg, *zt"l*, used to say: If you put an envelope full of a million dollars in a poor man's pocket, but he doesn't realize that it's there, is he rich or poor?

If you have thousands of gifts in your life that you are too distracted or depressed to see, do you really have those gifts at all? Technically, the person with the million-dollar envelope is rich. And each of us do have thousands of gifts in our lives, even if we don't notice them. But if the poor man doesn't look inside the envelope, he can't use what he has. And if we don't realize all the blessings Hashem has given us, we can't appreciate them.

This may be where one can begin to get close to Hashem, and it is perhaps the greatest secret to creating a change in our lives, and that is to have gratitude to Hashem for all He has given us.



R' Shmuel Winzelberg-

כי יהיה לאיש בן סורר ומורה כא:יח ***If a man will have a wayward and rebellious son*** (21:18)

ואמרו אל זקני עירו בננו זה סורר ומרה כא:כ ***They shall say to the elders of his city, "This son of ours is wayward and rebellious"*** (21:20)

Why is the word **מרה** spelled without a *'Vuv'* in the second *Posuk* while it is spelled with a *'Vuv'* in the first *Posuk*?

It is the way of parents to minimize the sin of their children and to try to seek merit for them in every situation, therefore, the second *Posuk* when the parents are speaking, the word is spelled without a *'Vuv'* to minimize the severity of his sin. (*Siach HaParshah as brought in Nimletzu Lechki*)

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

כי יקח איש אשה חדשה... נקי יהיה לביתו שנה כד:ה ***When a man marries a new wife… he shall be free for his house for one year*** *(24:5)*

The *Baal HaTurim* wrote that the last letters of **נקי יהיה לביתו שנה** spell out the Name *Havaya* of *Hashem*. **The holy *Gaon* of Simleu** (Romania) adds that the first letters **נקי יהיה לביתו שנה** have the *Gematria* [numerical value] of **-שמים Heaven**.

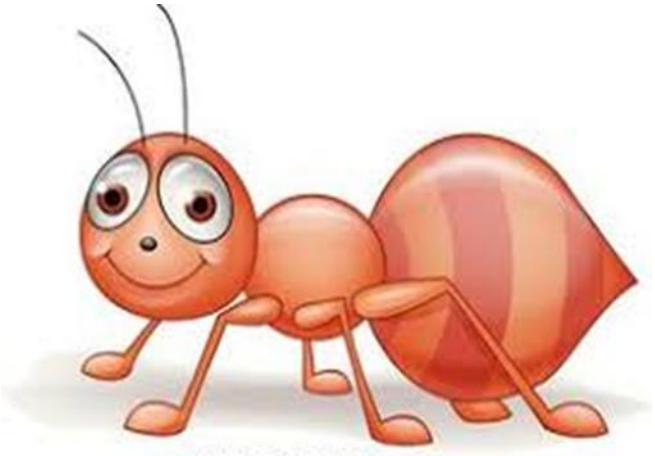
This is what *Chazal* have said (*Sotah* 17a): "If a husband and wife are worthy, the *Shechinah* rests between them". This happens if there is love and peace between them. But if *Chas V'Shalom* there is division between them, then the *Shechinah* departs. (*Peninim*)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



The *Pele Yo'eitz* notes (241) that the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* teaches that if one is not careful in regard to washing his hands for *Netilas Yadayim*, it can cause one to become poor. This is so, because the letters of the word *Ani* (**עני**), poor person, stand for *Al Netilas Yadayim* (**עַל נְטילת יָדים**). Therefore, one should be very careful with this *Mitzvah*!

L'Maaseh



Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, *zt"l*, had a love for even the smallest of *Hashem's* creatures. One time, Rav Yitzchak Kessock walked into Rav Scheinberg's apartment and he noticed that Rav Scheinberg was holding his *Tzitzis* close to his face.

Rav Scheinberg asked Rav Yitzchak to see if there was an ant crawling on one of the *Tzitzis* he was wearing, since it was hard for him to tell. Rav Yitzchak looked and indeed found a tiny ant climbing up one of Rav Scheinberg's *Tzitzis*. Rav Yitzchak offered to get a tissue to get rid of the ant, but Rav Scheinberg asked for a paper cup instead.

After Rav Yitzchak brought the cup to Rav Scheinberg, Rav Scheinberg asked him to knock the ant into the cup and bring it outside, where he told Rav Yitzchak that he should gently set the ant free in the garden, just outside the apartment building.

This small, almost insignificant act of *Chesed* to a tiny bug, displayed Rav Scheinberg's sensitivity to all of *Hashem's* creations.

As the *Psuk says*, "*V'Rachamav al Kol Ma'asav*", *Hashem* shows mercy to all His creations. Rav Scheinberg had compassion in a way that many others would never think of, but it left an everlasting impression on the heart of Rav Yitzchak his *Talmid*!

Parshah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Why do we emphasize and remember the fact that Miriam was punished on the road for speaking *Lashon Hara*? What is the significance of where she was punished?

The *Chofetz Chaim* (*Shmiras Halashon*, *Sha'ar HaTevunah*, end of Ch. 12) explains that this emphasizes the severity of *Lashon Hara*. Although a parent will generally not punish their child in public, they will do so when it becomes an issue of danger for the child. Therefore, the fact that Miriam was punished publicly— and we recount this, is a constant reminder of how dangerous speaking *Lashon Hara* is.

When one begins on his path of teshuvah, Hashem sends a light of holiness that inspires him, and makes his return easy and enjoyable. Then, Hashem takes away the light and the tests begin. Now he must stand strong by himself.

At this phase, a person is tempted to give up. But if he remains strong in his resolve, avodas Hashem will eventually become easy and sweet for him once again. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR KI SEITZEI

New/Old Security Technology From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Four years ago, Rabbi Dov and Sarah Henig, the emissaries of the Lubavitcher Rebbe in Chengdu China since 2012, returned there with their three small daughters from a visit to Israel.

After a very long flight and with lots of suitcases in tow, we headed towards the complex where our house is. But the security guards wouldn't let us in. They told us that they need to call the police.

What was the reason? While we were away there were many robberies in the area, so they were sure that during the three weeks we had been out of the country the robbers had also "visited" our house.

The police officers arrived with devices to check fingerprints and walked with us towards our home. We opened the doors with a heavy heart. When burglars break in, they also leave a big mess. We were also worried to see what they took.

We all went inside and thank G-d, everything was in its place, looking exactly as we left it. Nothing was stolen from us; all was well.

Two weeks later I received a phone call from the commanding police officer in the area. He said "Rabbi, please come. I want to meet with you!"

I arrived at the police station and immediately was shown into his office. He says to me, "Remember what happened when you arrived,

and we told you about the burglars? Well, we caught them! And can you guess what our first question to them was? It was: 'Why didn't you break into the house of the foreigners, the home of the Rabbi?'

"In reply, the burglars took out their phones and showed us photos of the doorways of your home, and that thing attached on the right side of the doorframe of each of your external entrances. They said, 'We know how to deal with and control many different security cameras, alarms, remote programs, wireless and WiFi systems, but this is a technology that is completely unknown to us. That's why we took photos of it, so we can investigate it and know how to deal with it in the future.'"

The commander turned to me and asked, "Rabbi, maybe this is special technology from Israel? Perhaps you can bring it here as well!"

Rabbi Henig's conclusion: I explained to the Chengdu police what a mezuzah is all about. For those Jews who are unfamiliar with this mitzvah, know that we are commanded in the Torah to put a mezuzah parchment scroll on the entrances to our home.

This mitzvah is first of all a protection for us and for our home. On the outside of the rolled scroll is written the Hebrew letters shin-dalet-yud, which, in addition to spelling one of G-D's holy names, is an acronym for "Shomer Deletot Yisrael" -- "He who watches over the doors of the Israelites." [Indeed, an excellent security device!]

Too, it reminds us that we have to be proud Jews also when we are at home and no one is watching us as well as when we are outside on the streets. So if you want this special 'security technology' and you don't have it yet, order it from the Chabad House nearest to you [or from a reliable authorized Jewish scribe]. If you already have a mezuzah but haven't had it checked in a while, and especially if it has been years, it's worthwhile to have it checked now.

The Lesson of a Horrifying Car Crash -Jack Rahmey



Rabbi Ashear tells the very real story of a man he met that two years ago was in a major car accident, **לא עלינו**. His car was totaled except for the exact part of the car that he was sitting in. He walked out without a scratch.

He was very shaken up and couldn't take his mind off it. At that time, he was not observant. He didn't keep Shabbat; he didn't eat kosher; he never went to shul. That Shabbat he decided to go to shul. He randomly picked a shul that he never attended before.

He didn't know what time the prayers started, and he walked in a few minutes before nine. Someone in the hallway told him that the main minyan started almost an hour ago, but there is a minyan starting in the back.

That day, the Rabbi of that minyan made a speech about Hashem talking to us through life's occurrences and how He sends us messages, wanting us to come closer to Him. The man said,"*I felt like I was in the room alone with that Rabbi and that he knew everything that happened to me".* The man accepted upon himself to improve, and now he is fully observant and couldn't be happier.

It looked like Hashem was abandoning him. He got into a terrible car accident. Nevertheless, Hashem was with him every step of the way. He protected him and guided him to the place he needed to become inspired. Hashem is always helping us, whether we realize it or not. Moreover, He cares about all of our needs-not just the big ones, even the needs that seem insignificant. He sends us these little

messages to show that He truly cares about each and every one of us no matter how unreligious or less observant we may have become.

May we all have the strength to open our eyes and see all the Berachot that Hashem has given us to this day and use these Berachot to learn more and follow the ways of the Torah. May we also turn away from outside influences so that we may grow in our observance of Torah and Mitzvot, and so that we may have families that are committed to a true Torah life.

Also, may we learn from the story that every day is a gift and that Hashem is always watching over us which should ultimately lead us to take advantage of the opportunity of Teshuvah that's coming upon us in the days ahead! Amen!

A Father's Love by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser

וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם – "***I will shower pure water upon you and you will become cleansed …"*** *(Yechezkel 36:25)*

Rav Schwadron explains this verse with the following illustration. A father wants to present his son with a special gift, but the son runs away. Disappointed, the father tosses the gift after him.

Like a wayward child who does not appreciate the kindness his father is offering him, says Rav Schwadron, we all -- at one time or another -- turn away from our Father in Heaven and do not welcome Hashem's intention to purify us. What does Hashem do? He showers us with the purifying water. The establishment of that connection with Hashem results in **וטהרתם** – we ourselves set in motion the purification process and seek to return to Hashem.

A fellow Jew once called me to consult on a pressing parenting issue. The man begged me to make time for him at my earliest opportunity, because the matter was very urgent and needed immediate attention. I agreed to meet with him first thing in the morning.

The man who came into my office the next morning was deeply crushed and heartbroken. He sighed and tearfully began to tell his story.



"I was always very dedicated to my children's upbringing," he said. "I learned with them, paid for the best tutors, did everything possible to ensure that they would grow up to be G-d Fearing Jews. But my 17 year old son … " he groaned, and put his face into his hands.

"You know, - with children, you need a lot of *mazel*. My son is completely off the path of the Torah. Shabbos means nothing to him. Yom Tov means nothing to him. I don't even know where or with whom he spends his day."

The man went on. - "He comes home late at night, and sleeps till noon. He doesn't talk to us or to his sisters and brothers. I don't think he does anything Jewish at all. My wife and I have no more joy in life," he said. "Even our family occasions are marred - how can we rejoice when our son has nothing to do with Judaism or with us?"

"You know," he continued, "I always wondered why Yaakov Avinu mourned Yosef for 22 years. Why couldn't he accept the situation, and go on with life? Now I don't wonder anymore. I can't make peace with the situation. My own son -- my own flesh and blood, whom I raised with such love -- is going against everything I live for."

Tears streaming down his face, the man told me that his Rabbi had advised him to speak to me.

"Rav Goldwasser," he cried. "What should I do? What can I tell him? What can I tell my wife and other children?"

I spent a long time with him, offering encouragement and guidance, and mapping out a plan he could follow. I suggested positive steps he could take, things he could say, things he could do. I also told him what not to say and do. He asked me *halachic* questions, and listened carefully to everything I said.

Finally, the man arose, thanked me, and turned to go. He was at the door when he turned back. - "Can I ask the *Rav* one more question?" he asked.

"Of course," I said.

"I've been preparing the *negel vasser in* my house for years," he said. "Every night, I fill the basins and put them at the foot of every bed, and every morning, I spill out the used water. It's my special *mitzvah*, my special *zechus*. But lately, when I collect my son's *negel vasser*, I see that the water isn't used. He isn't washing *negel vasser* anymore. I feel like a fool preparing it every night -- it's just a waste of time. Should I continue preparing the water, or can I just skip it?"

The question hit me for a moment, and then I said, "If you're asking me, I would continue to fill the *negel vasser* every evening."

I could see that my answer surprised him. He seemed taken aback as he had not expected that answer.

Three weeks later, the man called to let me know what was going on. Things were pretty much the same, he said, and he was getting discouraged. I gave him encouragement, and some new suggestions. Just before he hung up, he asked, "About the *negel vasser* -- do you think that I still need to bring it to his bed? I feel like such a fool every day." Again, I urged him to continue.

Three weeks later, he called me again. This time, he could barely speak. He seemed to be crying; he was literally choking over his words.

"I listened to you, Rav Goldwasser," he said. "I listened to you! I filled my son's *negel vasser* every day, and emptied it, even though he wasn't using it." The man paused.

"This morning, I went to his room to collect the basin, and *he was wearing his tefillin and* praying!"

Overcome with emotion, he paused to catch his breath. Then he said, "I ran to him, and hugged and kissed him. It was the first time in months! I couldn't bring myself to hug him while he was 'gone.' And then I asked him, 'Tell me, my dear child, what made you put on *tefillin* today?'

"And my son said, 'I'll tell you, Dad. It was the *negel vasser*. You knew I wasn't using it and, still, you refilled it every day. I saw that you never lost your faith in me. You made me feel that I shouldn't lose my faith in Hashem, either.'"

During these holy days of the year, Hashem showers each and every one of us with purifying waters, even those who have become alienated or estranged. It is up to us to take advantage of this exceptional kindness during these auspicious days and to come forward to purify ourselves. *V'tihartem!*

Torah Temimah

Sending away the mother bird before taking her eggs or offspring is a relatively easy mitzva, and the cost is very minimal. Yet, the Torah promises tremendous reward including longevity.

Certainly then, when it comes to mitzvos which aren't so easy and especially those which we have to spend our hard-earned money to fulfil, we stand to gain so much more reward!

How Many Apples?



Baron Rothschild had purchased five apples from a grocer and as he walked down the street with his young grandson, a beggar asked for some food. Mr. Rothschild handed the man two apples then asked his grandson, "How many apples do we have?"

The boy, proud to show off the math he was learning, said, "We had five apples and gave away two, so we have three."

His grandfather corrected him. "We have two apples," he said. "The apples we will eat will be gone in a few moments, but the apples we gave to that poor man will live on as a merit forever."

He paused for emphasis as he looked into the boy's eyes: "We only have what we've given away."

On the Run By Rabbi Yechiel Spero

It was World War II... grabbing their tefillin, the two young brothers then darted into the forest, dodging the gunfire from the German troops that had stormed and stampeded through their small village.

They knew that many of their family and friends had been killed, and revenge was foremost on their minds, but now was not the time. Right now they needed to create as much distance as they could between themselves and the enemy.

Moshe and Chaim Lechovitch, the "fugitive" brothers, ran away as fast and as far as they could. After running for over five miles they finally stopped to catch their breath. They had barely had enough time to take their most cherished possession, their tefillin, but they

had brought no food or drink, nor pictures of their loved ones. All they had now was their memories — their tefillin — and each other.

For the first time since they had fled, they looked each other in the eye. Their emotions overcame them, and they held each other close, fearful of what the future held in store.

Suddenly they heard a noise. They listened for a few moments, trying to remain completely silent. It sounded like a group of men, there was some gunfire, and it seemed very, very close. The brothers were terrified. They had obviously run from one regiment directly into another.

Moshe peeked through the overgrown marsh weeds and noticed that the men appeared quite different than German soldiers. He had heard that a growing number of partisan groups were roaming the area and assumed that this must be one. With no place to run, Moshe led his brother with their hands raised above their heads, toward the group.

As soon as the brothers were spotted, the soldiers raised their guns and took aim, but then realized that these two young teenagers were not the enemy. The brothers' lives had been saved.

Moshe and Chaim surveyed the group of scraggly men, whose numbers kept increasing as others joined, one at a time. They were not the finest class of men, neither very well armed nor trained, but Moshe and Chaim were grateful that these partisans had found them. After a brief training session in using weapons, the brothers became members of the troop.

Every morning they would wake up a few moments before the others and don their tefillin. The other members of the group, though mostly indifferent, thought that it was strange to practice religion in a world which to them was so obviously void of a G-d. But as long

as it did not interfere with their movements and did not endanger the rest of the group's lives, it was fine.

One morning, as Moshe and Chaim were about to put on their tefillin, they heard some bushes rustling in the distance. Immediately they



awoke the others, and it was quickly decided that everyone move out. Moshe and Chaim ran with the Partisans through swamp and forest for nearly three miles until they reached a safe area and were able to stop.

When they unloaded their backpacks and placed their guns by their sides, Chaim and Moshe realized they had left behind their tefillin. They were absolutely devastated. Their one and only connection to their Yiddishkeit were those tefillin; without them, how would they differentiate themselves from their fellow soldiers, who were so bad mannered and boorish?

They could not help but wonder why the Hashem had allowed them to forget their tefillin. They had shown such mesiras nefesh in order to put them on, and had done so solely to maintain a closeness to Him — and now they were gone.

Moshe and Chaim looked at each other and knew what they had to do. They were going back. They knew that they were risking their lives, but who knew when they would next find another pair? Who knew when this war would end, and if they would be victorious?

They informed their comrades; the crude men laughed and dismissed their religious friends as fanatics, warning them that if the need came to move on, the troop would not wait for them. But the brothers remained steadfast, committed to retrieve their treasured tefillin. And so they set out on their dangerous mission.

The three-mile hike was filled with moments of fear and apprehension. With each step that they took the battle within themselves raged on. Thoughts of second-guessing themselves for their foolish decision conflicted with the proud feeling of sacrifice for Hashem and His Torah.

Finally, they reached their destination and there, untouched, were the two pairs of tefillin. But their mission was only half over; they still had to return to the troop. Frightened and wary, they began the return trek.

Just over the hill was where they had last seen the Partisan troop. They hoped with desperation that the men were still there. They trudged to the top of the hill and could not believe what they saw. The entire troop was dead.

They immediately realized what had happened. The Germans had deceived the partisans into thinking that they were approaching from one angle while they were really preparing an ambush from the opposite side.

The brothers did not say a word to each other. They were hit hard by the magnitude of what had transpired. They stared at the scene of wanton slaughter that lay before them and then looked at the tefillin they held in their hands. It all made sense now. But they could not waste time. After all, it was almost sunset, and they had not yet donned their tefillin.



From Lubavitch To Warsaw From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Once, a very distraught woman showed up in the town of Lubavitch. Religious women usually did not wander about all alone one hundred years ago, but this poor woman had made an arduous one-week journey because someone told her that the Lubavitcher Rebbe could help her.

"Is this where **Rebbe Shalom Dov Ber [Shneersohn]** is? I must see him. She pleaded to one of the Rebbes secretaries. I've come from so far away, and your Rebbe is my only hope. Please, I must see him! Only he can help me."

But her cries were to no avail; the Rebbe wasn't receiving anyone at that time.

"If you write your request on a paper, I promise that I will give it to the Rebbe and the Rebbe will see it, but I can't promise more than that. I'm sorry," he said apologetically.

With no other choice the poor woman found a quiet place to sit and wrote her request. She was an aguna, an unofficial widow. Her husband strayed from Judaism about two years ago and then upped and left her. She had no source of income, three hungry children to feed and she could not remarry without receiving a get from her husband. But it was impossible to track him down, and no one even knew where to begin.

The woman was at wits end; she had no money, no husband, no experience and now her last hope; the Rebbe, was vanishing before

her eyes. The Rebbe probably won't even pay attention to my letter. She said to herself. But she handed it in and hoped for the best.

To her surprise, the answer was fast in coming. Less than an hour later the Rebbe's secretary stood facing her with good news.

The Rebbe says that you should travel to Warsaw.

She was overjoyed! But her smile faded as she realized that there was no more to the message. "But where in Warsaw? What should I do there?"

"That is all the Rebbe answered," shrugged the secretary. "I'm sorry, there was no more."

She wrote in another letter asking for some details, but received no answer.

When the Chassidim heard the story, they took up a collection and bought her a round-trip train ticket with enough money to live for a month. A few days later after a two-day journey, there she was standing bewildered in the Warsaw train station with her old suitcase and no idea where to go or what to do next.

People were rushing by her, occasionally someone would almost knock her over, but she just stood there. She had the address of a hotel on a crumpled piece of paper in her hand. She took it out of her pocket, but she didn't want to walk anymore. She was tired and she just wanted to give up.

At least the children are in good hands, she tried to comfort herself. She was alone and confused and she wanted to cry. Maybe I'll just go back home -- the thought was still in the corner of her mind when she heard someone say, "Excuse me."

She snapped out of her reverie and saw standing before her a neatly dressed Jew with a reddish beard. "Excuse me," he said in Yiddish, I notice that you are standing for a long time. Are you feeling all right? Perhaps I can be of some help? Are you waiting for someone?"

"I'm here because the Lubavitcher Rebbe said" and she mechanically repeated her entire story.

"Tell me, said the man when she had finished, what was your husband's name and how did he look?"

"Ehh, well" she mumbled, still in a semi-daze; "his name was Feivel but I'm sure he changed it. And he was heavyset. He walked with a sort of a limp, and he had a thick black beard, but Im sure he's shaved the beard off, and I think he has a sort of mark on his forehead. It's been two years, who knows how he looks now."

She almost began to weep again when he interrupted.

"I think I know where he is. Please follow me. It's not far from here." He escorted her out of the station down the street to a large busy intersection and gave her directions how to go from there to a certain tavern. "I think that your husband is sitting in the back of that bar drinking."

After everything shed been through, she asked no questions. She just nodded to the stranger and began walking according to his directions. And after an hour she found it! She took a deep breath and entered the dimly lit tavern, dragging her suitcase and feeling terribly out of place.

She made her way through the smoke and noise to the back of the room and stared blankly at the figures sitting there, waiting for her eyes to adjust to the dark.

Suddenly one of the men turned, looked at her and let out a cry of horror. "Yow! Sarah! How did you know I was here? And how did you get here!"

She could see clearly now, and the man who was speaking looked something like her husband. He was thinner with no beard, but, it was him! When she explained how the Rebbe had sent her and how some Jew gave her directions from the station he began pacing back and forth like a madman, running his fingers through his hair, waving

his arms and repeating to himself, "I don't know any Jews, I don't know any Rebbe! How could anyone know? How? How!"

He was so affected by the miracle that he began weeping, and then fell to his knees begging her forgiveness. One thing led to another and one month later, he shamefacedly returned home with her and repented completely of his evil ways.

The next year she traveled again to Lubavitch, but this time to thank the Rebbe. The Rebbe's secretary arranged that she would stand outside the Rebbe's door and when the Rebbe would come out, she could thank him personally and give him a letter of gratitude.

She took her place and stood there, holding her letter and waiting nervously, as this was the first time she would actually see the Rebbe. Then the big moment arrived, the door opened and the Rebbe emerged. She took one look at him went into a swoon, and fainted unconscious to the floor!

When she came to, the doctor was kneeling over her. "You were so excited that you passed out. He explained, as she began to sit up."

"Was that the Rebbe?" she asked, "Was that him?"

"Why certainly," the doctor answered, "Why do you ask? Didn't you know that that was the Rebbe?"

"Because." she looked the doctor in the eyes, "that was the man whom I saw. He was the one who helped me in the Warsaw train station!"

Later the Rebbe's secretary made some calculations and figured out that the day she was speaking of was the same day that he had entered the Rebbe's room and found him sitting motionless for a long time, oblivious to his surroundings as though he was somewhere else.

A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt"l

A Question About Teshuva

How does one repent for certain sins, that he knows he will repeat?



That's a question that is being always asked. And the answer is as follows. If a man smokes forty cigarettes every Shabbos, and he decides he's going to smoke only thirty nine, that's a fortunate man. That's called a Miktzas Teshuva.

A little bit of Teshuva, which is the easiest thing to do, is the biggest obligation. To stop all forty, not so easy for him, but to stop the fortieth, YES. And therefore, if you can stop even a little bit of your sin, then you must do it, and it's the biggest obligation, that's the easiest thing to do.

And so any sinner, even though he's a confirmed Chotai, if he's able to make a resolve, at least one little bit of that sin he won't do anymore. Let's say, he does a sin ten times a week, now he'll do it nine times a week; he makes up his mind no more then nine times, he is a LUCKY man. If he neglects that opportunity, he's in great sakona; Hashem is very angry at him. The tenth time was easy to avoid. And so everybody can do a Miktzas Teshuva.

That's why we say Hashivainu Avinu Lesorasecho, Hashem bring us back to your Torah, that's Teshuva we are asking for, Teshuva, for repentance. Then we say, V'Hachzirainu B'sehuva Shelaima, then we're asking for a perfect repentance. First we are asking for a little bit of repentance, any kind of repentance, a little bit at least. Then once you ask for a finger, you ask for the whole hand, too! Then we say give us a full repentance.

Thought From R' Miller ZT"L



Why is Shiluach Hakan/chasing the mother bird limited to birds?

If you chase away the mother deer, cow, duck, chicken...there is no mitzvah from Hashem.

Since birds bring joy to humanity through their singing (which is spiritual and touches the soul), even only through instinct and not free choice, Hashem still give the birds reward by designating them for this mitzvah in the Torah, whereby we get long life. (what a reward!)

Hakarat Hatov/appreciation is shown by Hashem to birds, even though He programmed them to sing. How much more will Hashem give us when we bring happiness to people with our free will!!

Introspections

Many people are afraid of introspections because they don't want to discover their faults. Therefore, they always seek to be busy, never to be alone with their thoughts. One of the modern trends in traffic control is the traffic roundabout. Instead of idling at a red light, traffic moves slowly around the roundabout, each vehicle turning off where it wants to go.

Someone explained that this is because people are afraid to sit and wait at a traffic light without anything to do, lest they have a moment for self-reflection. They therefore keep moving, so they don't have a moment to think.

Torah Anytime- Rabbi Shlomo Horwitz -Uzi and Rav Ovadiah



One of my highlights of my recent trips was meeting one of my old campers from when I ran day camps in Tel Aviv. His name is Uzi Mishan, and I worked with him when he was eleven years old. Forty years have gone by, and we now have rekindled our friendship. Uzi had an incredible miracle happen to him and wants to share this story with you:

"My name is Uzi Mishan. I was an outstanding athlete and wrestled in the Israeli army. I became a professional wrestler after that. I was in amazing shape and worked out constantly in the gym. When I was twenty-nine years old, I got hurt in the gym and I went to get examined. The doctor said that I had very poor electroconductivity in my hands and feet and that I had an advanced stage of muscular atrophy known as CMT (Charcot-Marie-Tooth), a degenerative nerve disease. I had difficulty with walking, climbing stairs, opening bottles and it was difficult for me to lift things.

My neurologist and orthopaedist told me to stop working out, so I left the gym. The doctors forbade me to work out or train, and I started falling all the time since I did not have stability.

So, I stopped working. I went to the Assaf Harofei hospital and the doctor, the head of the department, also served on the panel for Bituach Le'Umi (National Insurance), and he said, 'From today, you are no longer allowed to work. I'm going to arrange for you to stay home and not work anymore.' This was a process that took months of

meeting different committees, and finally they gave me one hundred percent disability approval. At that time, I said to myself, you know, I'm a really active person. I'm married with two kids… and to have this disability at such a young age! I'm on 100 percent disability getting insurance. It was hard for me to function and hard for me to move. What's going to be? I had free time since I couldn't work, and so, I started going to a Kollel in Rishon L'Tzion to study Gemara in the mornings.

My rabbi, Rabbi Malichi, said to me after a few years of learning with the group in the mornings that he had an idea. By the way, I was the only Chiloni, the only secular Jew in this group at that time. He said to me, 'Uzi, you're not working anyway; why don't you come with me to Rechov Hakablan, in Jerusalem, and visit the Gaon, HaRav Ovadia Yosef and daven with him? I said, 'Are you kidding me? He is the Gadol HaDor! Of course I'll go!' So we went.

On the way there, we had to stop frequently because I was driving and my muscles got so tired that I wasn't able to continue without stopping. We got to the shul of Rav Ovadiah Yosef, we davened there and saw him briefly from a distance.

The next day we went back again to do the same thing. Rav Malichi had been a student of the son of Rav Ovadia, and so he asked Rav Ovadia's son if we could go meet with the Rav himself, tell him my story and receive a blessing. That day, Rabbi Ovadia wasn't available, so we came a couple of days later. The rabbi was already quite elderly and was only seeing dire cases of need. My Rav explained to the gabbai that this was indeed a dire case, and fortunately, we were able to go in and meet with the Rav.

I got very emotional and broke down. The Rabbi gave me an affectionate tap on my face, which was how he greeted people, and he blessed me. When he put his hands on my head for the blessing, I felt electricity pulsing through my whole body. I told him about the issues I was having, in a nutshell, and I told him I had a

neurological problem with my body. He told me to continue doing good things.

When I walked out of his office, I was extremely emotional because I was also feeling closer to our faith, especially after all the learning I had been doing. We then walked to my car. When we drove in, I had to stop many times because of my exhaustion. When we walked from my car to the shul originally, I had to stop four or five times because I was so tired.

But now, walking back from the shul to the car, I was fine. I walked normally to the car and my Rav noticed. I didn't even notice because we were talking the whole way about what had just happened. Anyway, I started the car and we started heading back toward Be'er Yaakov and Rishon L'Tzion and I just kept going without the need to stop. When my Rabbi got out of the car, he said, 'Did you notice you didn't have to stop?' 'Wow, you're right, 'I said. I thought I was just all fired up because I had just seen the Rabbi. But the next day I was already walking much better. It still hurt, but a lot less. Within two or three weeks, I was already able to start working out again. When I was sick, I could not even lift a can or a bottle, and now I started working out again.

Slowly. I went back to my neurologist, and he sent me for more tests. I still have the underlying problem, but when he sent me for motor skill testing, he said that this makes no sense. My strength came back, and I had to get off disability. I had to prove that I was better so I could go back to work. If I wasn't truly disabled, I didn't want to have the country recognize me as disabled. Anyway, I started working out again and competing in arm wrestling, powerlifting deadlift, squat lifts, and the Shfela newspaper came to interview me as the strongest man in the Shfela region. At the end of the day, I'm turning fifty next month. I'm still working out and I'm still lifting. And this is thanks to the blessing of Rav Ovadia, who did great things for me and miracles.

I don't have any other words to say. I tell this to everybody. I am an open miracle and there's no other way to understand me. As a result of this story, I see, and I know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu exists and is with us every second. Open miracles happen all the time. The only question is if our eyes are open enough to see these miracles, to be able to say this is a miracle. It didn't just happen. I always try to do good deeds and I've devoted my life to try to help children with special needs in school. I'm in the catering business and only buy food that's kosher, and I don't work on Shabbat. I don't even rent out my equipment. If I have any suspicion that it's going to be used on Shabbat, I don't rent it out. That's what I can do. Hashem is very kind to me. I have a wonderful life and I thank Hashem every day. He's a part of my life, He always surrounds me, and I know that He is always helping me. He's standing by my right side.

Every Friday night we make Kiddush and our family talks about how good Hashem is in our lives. And on Friday night, when I make Hamotzi, I think of the Manna that fell for the Jewish people right outside their house. And that's how I feel. He is giving me Parnassa without me having to run after it. I thank Hashem every day of my life for everything He's blessed me with.



The Chasam Sofer says Elul is an excellent time to daven for Moshiach. Elul is called **ירח ימים**, which is the same gematriya as **שי"ח**, prayer, hinting that, this month, one should pour out his heart in prayers before Hashem, and Hashem will accept him.

There are forty days from rosh chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur. **מ** is gematriya 40. If you add the **מ** to **שי"ח** it becomes **משי"ח**, because this brings the redemption near.



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings - Smile



Chesed doesn't necessarily need to cost you money. You can do chesed simply by smiling. As it states (Avos 1:15),

והוי מקבל את כל האדם בסבר פנים יפות

"Greet everyone with a smile." And, as it states (Avos 3:12), **והוי מקבל את כל אדם בשמחה**

"Greet everyone with happiness." That is a great mitzvah, as there are people who carry heavy loads of worries on their shoulders, they are sad and distressed, and when you greet them with happiness, you blow into them a breath of joy and happiness.

The Rav Bartunera explains that **מקבל** means "in front of" or "before." (As it states [Shemos 19:2] **נגד ההר** and Unkelos explains, **לקבל טורא**, that the nation stood "in front of the mountain.") Thus, when the Mishnah states

והוי מקבל את כל אדם בשמחה, it can be translated, "Stand before every person with joy." This means people should see that you are happy. This is a great benefit, as it will train others to be happy, as well. However, if you will be sour and down, this will influence others to have such bad sentiments regarding life's challenges.

Reb Yisrael Salanter zy'a taught that someone who goes around with a sour face is like a pit in the middle of the street **בור ברה"ר**, because he is causing people to be sad together with him. In contrast, those who go around with a happy countenance make others happy, which is a great zechus.

The tzaddikim of Ziditchov zy'a said that a **שמייכל** (smile) is roshei teivos, **כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבודתו יתברך שמו**, everyone will be devoted to serving Hashem.

Happiness is essential in Elul because **אלול** is roshei teivos, **לַעבעדיג אַון וַוייטער לַעבעדיג** happy and happy again.

A Shabbat Favorite – The Crock-Pot By D. Katz



Cholent on Shabbat in winter is a staple offered in many Jewish homes. It is often cooked on a slow temperature in an electrical cook-wear appliance known as a Crock-Pot that was invented by a Jewish American, Irving Naxon (born Irving Nachumsohn).

Irving's mother immigrated from Russia to the U.S. He was born in 1902 in New Jersey. After her husband's death, Irving's mother moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Nachumsohn studied electrical engineering through a correspondence course and later returned to Chicago where he started his own company, Naxon Utilities Corp. He worked on inventions such as the electric fry pan and the lava lamp.

The slow-cooker, initially called the Naxon Beanery All-Purpose Cooker, was manufactured in Chicago and designed to produce a bean dish. The cooker was a self-contained ceramic pot that was non-removable. It did not have control switches and was surrounded by a heating element that would simmer the food slowly for hours.

The idea behind this invention came from Naxon's mother, Tamara Kaslovski Nachumsohn, who used to tell him stories about how cholent was produced in her town of Vilna, Lithuania. There, Jewish families prepared a stew of meat and beans in a pot that they took to the ovens of the towns' bakery every Friday evening.

At the commencement of Shabbat, the baker's ovens would be turned off and the stew would simmer slowly overnight in the residual heat. The following day the family would return to the bakery to pick up their pots and take them home for lunch.



Irving Naxon and an early version of the Rival Crock-Pot.

In 1936, Naxon based his invention on this theory. But his patent for the Naxon Beanery – a portable food heating device used as a cooking vessel encased in a heating element – was only granted on January 23, 1940. The appliance was first sold to the public in the 1950s.

In the early 1970s Naxon retired and sold his business to Rival Manufacturing Company from Sedalia, Missouri. Rival rebranded the Beanery, calling it a Crock-Pot. Not only was the name changed but the electrical appliance was also modified to appear in an array of colors and to cook an entire meal for a family. It now had a removable stoneware insert to make cleaning easier. The kitchenware product was marketed towards the working woman in assisting her to prepare a home cooked meal for the family while still being at work the whole day. All the mother had to do prior to leaving the house was to place the food into the pot and turn it on.

After the Crock-Pot was launched on the market in 1971, it hit $2 million in sales. By 1975 the figure grew to $93 million.

Over the years a variety of sizes and models have been produced. According to Consumer Reports, 80 percent of families in the U.S. own a Crock-Pot.

Torah Tavlin

וְיָתֵד תִּהְיֶה לְךָ עַל־אַזְנֶךָ וְהָיָה בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ חוּץ וְחָפַרְתָּה בָּהּ וְשַׁבְתָּ וְכִסִּיתָ אֶת־צֵאָתֶךָ

"And you shall keep a stake in addition to your weapons; and it shall be, when you sit down outside [to relieve yourself], you shall dig with it, and you shall return and cover your waste."



Dr. Kenneth Prager is a Professor of Clinical Medicine Ethics at Columbia University Medical Center. A proud Orthodox Jew, Dr. Prager held clandestine medical clinics in the Soviet Union during a visit to Jewish Refuseniks in 1986, and later set up the first U.S. - Soviet medical student exchange program between Columbia P&S and the First Moscow Medical Academy.

He is heavily involved in teaching pulmonology and medical ethics to medical students, house officers and nurses. His writings on medicine and medical ethics have appeared in medical journals and textbooks as well as on the Op-Ed pages of The NY Times and Wall Street Journal. Dr. Prager is a regular guest lecturer in Israel on International Health and Medicine and has received honours for his teaching, clinical expertise, contributions to organ donation, and medical humanism.

When Dr. Prager was an elementary school student in yeshivah, he and his classmates used to find a sign amusing that was posted just outside the bathroom. It was an ancient Jewish blessing, commonly referred to as "Asher Yatzar" which was supposed to be recited

after one relieved oneself. For children, there could be nothing stranger than to link the act of going to the restroom with holy words mentioning Hashem's Name. Blessings were reserved for prayers, he thought, for holy days, or thanking Hashem for food or an act of deliverance, but surely not for a bodily function evoking smirks and giggles.

It was not until his second year of medical school that he began to understand the appropriateness of this short prayer. Pathophysiology brought home the terrible consequences of even minor aberrations in the structure and function of the human body. He no longer took for granted the normalcy of trips to the bathroom. He started to realize how many things had to operate just right for these minor interruptions of his daily routine to run smoothly.

After seeing patients whose lives revolved around dialysis machines, and others with colostomies and catheters, he realized how important this prayer was. He began to say Asher Yatzar religiously. It became an opportunity for him to offer thanks for his overall good health. The text, after all, refers to catastrophic consequences of the rupture or obstruction of any bodily structure.

Could Abayei, the prayer's author, have foreseen that "blockage" of the "cavity" of the coronary artery would lead to the commonest cause of death in industrialized countries some 16 centuries later?

In his own words, Dr. Prager recalls one unforgettable patient whose story reinforced the truth and beauty of the Asher Yatzar prayer for him forever. "Josh was a 20-year-old student who sustained an unstable fracture of his third and fourth cervical vertebrae in a motor vehicle crash. He nearly died from his injury and required emergency intubation and ventilatory support. He was initially totally quadriplegic but for a weak flexion of his right biceps. A long and difficult period of stabilization and rehabilitation followed.

There were promising signs of neurological recovery over the first few months that came suddenly and unexpectedly: movement of a

finger here, flexion of a toe there, return of sensation here, adduction of a muscle group there. With incredible courage, hard work, and an excellent physical therapist, Josh improved day by day.

"In time, and after what seemed like a miracle, he was able to walk slowly with a leg brace and a cane. But Josh continued to require intermittent catheterization. I know only too well the problems and perils this young man would face for the rest of his life because of a neurogenic bladder. The urologists were very pessimistic about his chances for not requiring catheterization. They had not seen this occur after a spinal cord injury of this severity.

I reminded Josh of the Asher Yatzar prayer. Pointing out that I could not imagine a more meaningful scenario for its recitation, I suggested to Josh, who was also a yeshivah graduate, that he carefully say the prayer. He did and he memorized the words and would recite them frequently. "Then the impossible happened. I was there the day Josh no longer required a urinary catheter. It was a milestone of huge proportions. As he recited the ancient beracha of Asher Yatzar, tears welled in my eyes. You see, Josh is my son."

Divrei Torah Ba'er Heitev

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ "When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-D, will deliver them into your hand, and you will capture his captivity." Devorim 21:10

The **Baal Shem Tov** says, a person is obliged to learn from the Yetzer Hora, just as he is swift in his work to cause a person to stumble in his Avodoh, in order to do his assignment of Hashem.

So too, every Yid must learn from him to be swift in his work to do the command of Hashem. (**Sefer Chidushei Harim**)

Vechol Maaminim - Double Reward for 100 Brachos

שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים (כב ז)

Rabi Yitzchak Majaled, one of the sages of Baghdad, explained from this passuk an allusion to the reward of one who is careful to make 100 brachos every day: **האם** are the same letters as **מאה** . "Shaleach teshalach es ha'eim" – each day, a person must dispatch one hundred brachos to his Father in heaven.



By doing so, he will gain a double benefit: "Lema'an yitav lach" in the reward on this world, as Chazal say (Chulin 87a) that the reward of every brachah is ten gold coins, "veha'arachta yamim," the segulah of brachos is that they prevent a person from getting ill, as Chazal say (Bamidbar Rabbah 18:21) that by instituting the 100 brachos, Dovid Hamelech stopped the plague that had erupted in his times. (Tzelach Rechav)

Rabbi Binny Freedman

You see, in life there is no such thing as standing still; we are either moving forwards or moving backwards, and the critical question is where we are, and where we want to be headed.

Too often it seems easiest to stand still, to take no risks, and to let life take charge. But that is not what life is meant to be. It takes a lot of work to grow, and challenge, to seek change and even, often, to start again. But the ability to do this is one of the greatest secrets of life.

Too often, we prefer the simple path of the matzevah: the monument that signifies we have arrived and would like to sit still

where we are. But to stand still in reality is to regress and lose any gains we might have achieved. And the issue is not just the realization that we are not meant to be standing still, but as much, the belief that we can change, and grow.

Take, as an example, one of the essential ingredients in any loving relationship: the question of compatibility. Sometimes couples experiencing difficulties in marriage or dating, think they are just "not compatible, and that they are "too different".

But one person's "too different" is another's 'complimenting'. And the real issue is whether people choose to be stuck in where they are at or decide to grow together and learn from each other. If two people were exactly the same, what would they have to offer each other? How would they help each other to grow?

Chizuk – Inspiration

My father had very little knowledge about anything Jewish. He was completely non-observant. In fact, it fell to my mother to prepare my brothers for their bar mitzvahs.

We lived in a small mining town, where my father had his store. He was an impeccably honest man. When the poor and illiterate would come to sell their wares, my father always paid an honest price. His scales were scrupulously accurate. Other merchants in town would take advantage of the poor and illiterate by using inaccurate scales, but my father never cheated anyone.

My father died many years ago and was buried in South Africa. My mother lived for 20 more years. She left instructions that when she died, she was to be buried in Eretz Yisrael and that my father's body was also to be brought to Israel and buried next to her. She also asked that my son-in-law, who lives in Eretz Yisrael, should attend to the body. In accordance with her wishes, my father's casket was to be exhumed and sent to Eretz Yisrael for reburial. With my son-

in-law looking on, the chevra kadisha in Eretz Yisrael donned masks over their mouths and noses before they opened the casket. My father had been dead for many years, and the stench of death would probably be overpowering.



And then they opened the casket. 'Shalem! Tzaddik!' the man from the chevra kadisha shouted. Shalem. Intact. The body was perfectly intact. My son-in-law peeked into the casket himself and he confirms it. The body looked exactly like the picture of my father that sits on this mantelpiece."

The woman paused for a moment to gather her thoughts. "Rabbi, believe me," she said. "My father was no tzaddik. He was no righteous man. Believe me, I know. He was a good man, but not righteous. So what does this mean? How could his body still be intact after 20 years?"

I was as baffled as she was. How would I know the answer to such a question? All of a sudden, like a bolt of lightning, it hit me. "Believe it or not," I said, "I think I may have an answer for you. There is a passuk in the Torah (Devarim 25:15) which states, אֶבֶן שְׁלֵמָה וָצֶדֶק יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ – ***'You shall keep scales that are whole and righteous.'***

What did you tell me about your father? That he was honest, that he kept honest weights? Well, that was your father's reward. Since he kept scales that were shalem, he was shalem, intact. Since he kept scales that were tzedek, the chevra kadisha recognized him as a tzaddik. Hashem loves honest people. **("Listen to Your Messages" by Rabbi Yissocher Frand)**

R' Duvi Bensoussan – The Sweetness of Torah

In high school, the 10th grade was very challenging for me. I found it very difficult to get into learning. There were many distractions, and I thought that I wanted to excel in areas other than the Torah. It was not as yet a passion for me. The light bulb hadn't yet turned on.

I remember that I was sitting in class, and my Rebbe gave us a test on 5 blatt of Gemarah. I knew that I didn't know it at all. I put my name on the paper, and after the test, I handed my Rebbe a blank piece of paper!

My Rebbe said to me, "Bensoussan, what is this? You didn't fill out one answer?"

I said, "Yeah Rebbe, I know. I didn't really have time to study for this test. What's the big deal?"

He got so upset as I walked out of the class.



A week later, the great tzaddik – **Rav Don Segal** came to America. My Rebbe decided that he's going to take the entire class out to Rav Don to get a bracha one at a time.

Just looking at Rav Don you could see that he had the appearance of a Malach Hashem. My Rebbe knew that this would make an impression on us.

The first boy goes in to see Rav Don with my Rebbe. The boy stays in for 5 or 10 minutes. Finally, after 15 minutes, the door

opened, and the boy comes out with a white face! We all looked at him and thought, "Oh no, we've got to go in next!"

Another boy went in, and he also came out as white as a ghost. I thought to myself, "Oh boy, what's going on, what is he telling them? This is not going to be good, I'm not going in."

However, when it came to my turn, I said, "Ok, I'm going to do this."

I went in and there sat Rav Don Segal Shlita with a shining face. My Rebbe sat next to him, and with a smile he said, "Rav Don, this is Duvy Bensoussan."

I walked up to Rav Don and I kissed his hand. He said, "Sholom Aleichem." When I looked at the tzadik's face, my knees started to buckle and knock together. I started to shake.

I don't know what hit me at that moment, but it was a moment that would *mamash* change my life.

Rav Don stuck his hand out which I took, and he gave me a bracha. 'Bracha v'hatzlacha, you should be matzliach.'

It was a very generic bracha. My Rebbe smiled at me and said, "You can go out now."

I don't know what possessed me. I turned round and I said,"No! I'm not going out."

My Rebbe looked at me and said, "Please Bensoussan, not here, not now, not in front of Rav Don – please!"

I looked at Rav Don, and I said, "Rebbe, I don't want any old bracha, I want a real bracha, I want a bracha that I should taste the unbelievable sweetness of Torah! – I want it to be sweet. I don't want it to be bitter to me. I want to learn it and I want to love it. I want to become something in Torah."

Rav Don's eyes opened wide. My Rebbe – he practically fainted!

When Rav Don heard those words, Rav Don grabbed my hands and started to shake back and forth with his eyes closed, and he gave me a zar bracha for the sweetness and love of learning Torah!



I was crying such an emotional cry. I thanked him, and I walked out of that room knowing that I had grabbed the opportunity at that moment. I walked out a different person.

From that day on, my learning was completely different. My whole feeling and fulfilment for learning was different.

Seven years later, I was in Eretz Yisrael in Yeshiva. I saw a notice on the board that said, "Today, the Tzaddik Ha'Gaon Rav Don Segal is coming to the yeshiva to give a schmooze."

I thought that it would be amazing to get to see the Tzaddik once again.

Rav Don enters, and everybody stands up. He goes to the front and delivers a schmooze that only Rav Don could deliver. When he had finished and was walking out of the beis hamedresh, all the bachurim ran up to shake his hand. I stood at the side quietly, and as he walked past me he stopped. He turned to me and smiled, and he said to me, "Sholom Aleichem Bensoussan. Nu, *Vie azoi gait* the learning?"

I couldn't believe it. It was eight years after our first encounter. Ah! Gedoilim!

That was a moment that doubly changed my life and my love for learning!

This is the gift of Matan Torah. Don't make your kabbalah generic. Don't say, "Yes, it's beautiful, I'll get to it soon, I'm almost there, don't push me."

No, that type of commitment is not going to make talmidei chachamim or gedolim. The commitment of Torah and gadlus is a commitment of NOW!

We should be *zoche* to enjoy the sweetness of our wonderful Torah Hakedoshe – the greatest fulfilment in life.**ותן חלקנו בתורתך**

Debt Collecting In Elul



Hagaon Rav Moshe Chadash once told over an incident when he was a bochur in Yerushalayim, and he ate a meal by a family during Elul. While he was in the house, he overheard a conversation between the husband and wife, who were the parents of many children. The wife was complaining to her husband that they had finished all the food in the house, and there was no money to purchase additional food. She reminded her husband that there were several people who owed them money, and since the situation in the house was becoming dire, she asked him to approach these people and request their money.

The husband answered, "I'm sure you remember that it is now Chodesh Elul, and we will soon stand by the Yom Hadin. We will request from Hakadosh Boruch Hu that He will grant us a good and blessed year. And with what zechus will we dare to request a good year from Hakadosh Boruch Hu? In Shamayim, they will present all our debts from the past year! And if the debts of the past year are not enough, they will also remind us of old debts from past years. And what will we answer?"

The husband said,"The only advice I have is that we also will not demand from our debtors that they return the money to us, and we will struggle to continue to live with what we have. Maybe doing this will serve as a defender for us and will act for us as midah keneged midah. We won't demand what we are owed, despite the great difficulty it will cause us, and maybe there will be hope that in Shamayim they will also have mercy on us and agree to grant us a good year, and not mention our debts."

Rav Moshe Chadash said, "These were the husband's words, and I was awed by the fact that his wife listened to his words and agreed with them! Despite the fact that she had many small children in the house and had no food left to feed them, she was convinced by her husband's words. These were the type of Jews of yesteryear, with their Emunah Peshutah!" (Aleinu Leshabeach)

Zera Shimshon

שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך למען ייטב לך והארכת ימים



You shall surely send away the mother bird **(כב ז)**

The Zohar says (Chodosh Rus 77a) that when one sends away the mother bird, she is in such terrible pain that she wants to kill herself and the angel that governs over the birds asks Hashem to have mercy on her. When Hashem hears this request, He Himself feels mercy for the Jewish people, as He destroyed the Bais HaMikdash and sent the Jewish people into exile. This is how the mitzvah of Shiluach Haken brings Moshiach closer.

Rabbi Shimon Kaplin - The big battle

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ - ***When you will go out to war against your enemies, and Hashem, your G-d, will deliver him into your hand…. (21:10)***

Many **מפרשים** – including the **חיים חפץ**, find within these words an allusion to the battle against the **יצר הרע** - the **מלחמה** /battle we are constantly involved with.

Says the Pasuk - **כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ** – If you will just go out to war against the enemy, [The **יצר הרע**] then **וּנְתָנוֹ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ** - **הקב"ה** will help you and give you **סייעתא דשמיא**, to the extent that He will deliver the **יצר הרע** into your hands.

ר' צדוק הכהן זצ"ל brings the same explanation in the name of the Rebbe **ר' בונם מפרשיסחא זצ"ל**, and he adds, "This **פשט** is not **דרוש**, but rather **פשוטו של מקרא**, this is also the simple meaning in the **פסוק**.

חובת הלבבות שער היחוד המעשה פרק ה' writes about a Chasid who met a victorious army after they had won a major battle. (Some **ספרים** write that he is referring to Alexandra The Great when he won his major battle, conquering most of the civilised world.)

The king is returning victorious from his battle – very proud of his tremendous achievements, and he meets with this **חסיד**. The **חסיד** exclaimed, "You've just returned from a victorious battle, but you should know that this was only a small battle, it's a tiny battle, it's nothing major."

"So, what do you call a big battle?!" the king asked. "The big battle," said the **חסיד**," is the battle against the **יצר הרע** and his armies, that's the big battle."

This is the big battle – this is life's battle; this is what life is all about.

'And Then They Hit The Eidim': Documenting An Unusual Wedding Custom

Journalist Yisrael Shapira attended a recent Jerusalem wedding and rubbed his eyes in disbelief as he saw people hitting the Eidim, the witnesses to the betrothal, just moments before the wedding ceremony took place. Before calling the police, Yisrael asked the family if everything was in order. They responded that indeed there were no issues but it is an ancient custom to hit the Eidim before the Chupah.



Yisrael's interest was piqued and he searched for a source for this unusual custom. He found a source for this in an article by Rabbi Yisrael Dendrowitz who writes that the minhag is to rouse the Eidim to repent before the Chupah takes place.

The reason for this is so that they should not have any unrepented sins which might disqualify their testimony. Just as prior to Yom Kippur there are those who are accustomed to giving Malkos (lashes) in order to facilitate repentance before the holy day, the Eidim also receive lashes.

An early source for the custom is the rare book Kushyos l'Echad Min Ha'Rishonim (Questions by one of the early authorities) written in the 13th century by a student of Maharam Rottenburg (and republished in a new edition in 2007). The author suggests that since a wedding must always have some strife (as the gemara in Shabbos

130a says), we wish to prevent the strife from the happy couple and their families. Therefore the Eidim are hit by the assembled and this is considered as if the "strife" has been removed from the couple.

מנהג הכאת העדים בשעת הקידושין \ מנהג שאשה מעוברת לא תהיה שושבינית

(כב,יג) **כִּי יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבָא אֵלֶיהָ וּשְׂנֵאָהּ.**

בספר קושיות לאחד מן הראשונים (אות יא) מביא שנהגו העולם להכות העדים בשעת הקידושין, וביאר שהרי בחז"ל לומדים קיחה קיחה משדה עפרון, ו"קיחה" בגימטריא "קטטה", ואין כתובה שאין בה תיגרא (שבת קל.) לכן אנו מכים העדים כדי שיכלה הקטטה בזה.

וראה בקובץ אור ישראל (נב עמ' קנה) במאמר נפלא של ידידי הגאון רבי ישראל דנדרוביץ שליט"א שביאר מנהג זה, שמטרת ההכאה היא כדי לעורר את העדים לתשובה קודם מעמד החופה, התעוררות זו היתה נעשית כמנהג ההתעוררות שבערב יום כיפור על ידי מלקות שמתוך כך יתן אל לבו לשוב מעבירות שבידו, ולא יחשב כעד רשע הפסול לעדות.

The Kozhnitzer Maggid explained that Parshas Ki Seitzei contains more mitzvos than almost any other parsha because a person "going out" into the world encounters endless spiritual tests. In the beis medrash, holiness is easier to maintain; but when one enters the marketplace, the street, and daily life, every step requires Torah guidance. Therefore, the Torah fills this parsha with mitzvos to show that no area of life is outside the service of Hashem.



לֹא־יִהְיֶה לְךָ֥ בְּבֵיתְךָ֖ אֵיפָ֣ה וְאֵיפָ֑ה גְּדוֹלָ֖ה וּקְטַנָּֽה
אֶ֥בֶן שְׁלֵמָ֛ה וָצֶ֖דֶק יִֽהְיֶה־לָּ֑ךְ

25:15

זָכ֔וֹר אֵ֥ת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂ֖ה לְךָ֣ עֲמָלֵ֑ק בַּדָּ֖רֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶ֥ם מִמִּצְרָֽיִם

The Torah says (Devarim 25) ***"You must use accurate and honest weights and measures."*** There used to be a system of cheating which entailed soaking weights used in commerce in salt, to make them heavier. To do so, is a transgression of this prohibition.

Directly following the Parsha of honest weights, is the Parsha of Amalek attacking Klal Yisrael. We know that subject matter placed next to each other in the Torah signifies that there is connection between the two subject matters. What is the connection between Amalek's attack on Klal Yisrael and using honest weights in commerce?

Rashi explains the connection: "If you have used dishonest weights, then you have to be afraid of Amalek." This means that you become exposed to the dangers of Amalek, Hashem's whip, so to speak. Whenever Hashem is unhappy with Klal Yisrael, he has used the merciless and inhuman Amalek to punish us with suffering.

If someone were to say that our suffering at the hands of Amalek in the Holocaust was because we were not honest in business, we would consider that to be a gross exaggeration. The Torah is telling us that it is not an exaggeration and that this could be the reason for our suffering in the Holocaust.

Bringing suffering through Amalek is the way Hashem deals with Klal Yisrael when they are dishonest in business. (**Rav Mattisyahu Salomon**)

The 300 Year Old Sefer Torah - Rabbi Shimon Brook



Twenty years ago, **Rav Elyashiv Zt'l** called me to come to his house. He had a group of Rabbonim from America and was looking for somebody to be the Rav in the famous shtetl of Berditchev in Ukraine.

I took on the position.

In one nearby village, I heard that there was only one Jewish family residing there. I went to visit them. As I stepped into the house, the grandmother who was about 90 years old, started screaming. I was surprised.

She said that she wants to talk to me. She came closer to me and grasped my hands. She called out, "**דו רעדסט ייִדיש?**"

I answered, "**יאָ, איך רעד ייִדיש.**" She started to cry and kissed my hands. She said, "It has been 75 years since I spoke Yiddish to another Yid!"

She called her son and told him to take me down into the cellar. We went down into the basement and brought up a rolled up carpet. We put it on a table and unrolled the carpet. Inside was a Sefer Torah!

With tears in my eyes, I started to *lein* from the Sefer Torah. I start shaking and wondered how this Sefer Torah ended up in this woman's basement. I said, "Babitchke, please tell me the story of this Torah."

She started to cry, and said, "Rabbi, 70 years ago we were all in shul on Yom Kippur. My father was standing at the *bimah, leining* from this Sefer Torah. The goyim, the reshaim, burst into the shul and set gas cannisters alight, and set fire to the shul with everyone inside."

"My father swiftly took the Sefer Torah and ran out of the shul. They chased him while shooting a gun at him. He gave it one last hug and threw the Sefer Torah to me, and said, 'Take it, hide it and if you meet a Yid like me with a beard and who speaks Yiddish, then you should give it to him.'"

"Thank G-d I am still alive. For 70 years I have been waiting to honour my father's last wishes, and hand it over to that Yid! Please take it with you."

I brought it to Eretz Yisrael. I went straight to Rav Elyashiv's house. He *leined* from the Sefer Torah and kissed it. He said, "Reb Shimon, there is so much trouble in the Jewish world. Take this Sefer Torah and its story and show everybody that **משה אמת ותורתו אמת כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו.** This Sefer has been lying in a cellar for over 70 years, but in the end, The Torah endures! **כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלם**

We had an expert check the Sefer Torah which was found to be around 300 years old!

Rav Dessler explained that the many interpersonal mitzvos in Ki Seitzei show that spirituality is measured not only in prayer, but in sensitivity to people.

Chizuk – Inspiration



When **Reb Aharon Kotler ZT'L** established the yeshivah in Lakewood, he purchased a small house which was to serve as the yeshiva. The sidewalk leading up to the door of the yeshiva house was lined with trees. There were two trees on one side of the sidewalk and three on the other. Receipt books were ordered for the yeshivah, and it was decided that a picture of the yeshivah building should be printed on top of the receipts.

The graphic artist who designed the receipts felt that the picture would look better if, for uniformity's sake, another tree were added to the sidewalk so that there would be three trees on each side of the sidewalk. Taking the artistic license, the graphic artist drew an extra tree into the picture. When the receipts were delivered and shown to Reb Aharon, he was very disappointed with them and exclaimed "There are too many trees! This is not a true likeness of the yeshivah building!" He ordered that the receipt books be discarded, and new ones prepared.

"I am building a yeshivah based upon the foundation of the principle of truth," Reb Aharon explained. "I do not want even a small trace of misrepresentation or dishonesty to be involved in the foundation of this yeshivah!" (**Rabbi Asher Bergman**)

Rabbi Menachem Lomner

כִּי תִבְנֶה בַּיִת חָדָשׁ וְעָשִׂיתָ מַעֲקֶה לְגַגֶּךָ וְלֹא־תָשִׂים דָּמִים בְּבֵיתֶךָ כִּי־יִפֹּל הַנֹּפֵל מִמֶּנּוּ
"Even though it is all preordained, you should not be the vehicle and the means to transmit bad things."



The Pasuk (Devarim 22:8) teaches that one should install a fence on his roof so that the "fallen doesn't fall." Why the apparently strange terminology?

Rashi (ibid.) explains that the man in question is called "fallen" because he truly deserves to fall. Nevertheless, the Pasuk is still instructing us to put up a fence. This comes to teach us that a guilty person will have bad things come from his actions. We, on the other hand, must conduct our lives in a way that only good things develop from our actions.

Olam Haba

R'Aryeh Leib Shteinman ztl was once asked what should be done with students that continuously interrupt the classroom on a daily basis should such students be thrown out of school?

The gadol responded with the following: ***"The outstanding students in the class, are your bonus. It is a pleasure to teach them. The average students are the reason why you are getting paid to teach, the challenging students however, are your Olam Haba!"***

For those of us who are not teachers, this lesson applies to us as well, never forget that the way we treat the challenging friends and people in our lives, is what is building our Olam Haba!

Parshah Pearls *(Adapted from the Da'as Zekeinim mi'Ba'alei Tosfos)*

One Mitzvah Leads to Another, Too!

כִּי יִקָּרֵא קַן־צִפּוֹר – *"When you come across a bird's nest* (22:6).

From the juxtaposition of the various Pesukim we can learn that just as one sin leads to another, so too, does one Mitzvah lead to another.

That explains why the Mitzvah of Shilu'ach ha'Kan is followed by that of long life, a new house (together with the Mitzvah of building a Ma'akeh [a parapet]) …a vineyard (together with the Mitzvah of not planting Kil'ayim) … oxen and donkeys (and the opportunity of not ploughing with them together) … new clothes (and the Mitzvos of Sha'atnez and Tzitzis [which is equivalent to all the Mitzvos]).

Peninim on The Torah

כי תצא למלחמה על איביך... ושבית שביו *When you go out to war against your enemies… And you will capture its captivity.*



Every Jew fights a war, a battle for his spiritual future. The enemy is the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, who is cunning and tireless. He will not give up until he wins or is taken captive under the control of the person whom he has attempted to ensnare in his web of deceit.



Parashas Ki Seitzei is replete with lessons and ideas on how to live appropriately, the values we should maintain, the ethical imperatives which should guide our lives and the moral compass to which we should adhere.

In short, the *parshah* teaches us how to be an observant Jew.

The primary period of introspection for the observant Jew is the month of *Elul*, leading up to *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. During this forty-day period, we *daven* differently, learn differently, act toward our fellow man differently and carry out *mitzvos* differently.

Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, was wont to say, "The entire year it is necessary to serve Hashem as we do during Elul, and, during Elul, our service to Hashem should manifest greater energy and vigour."

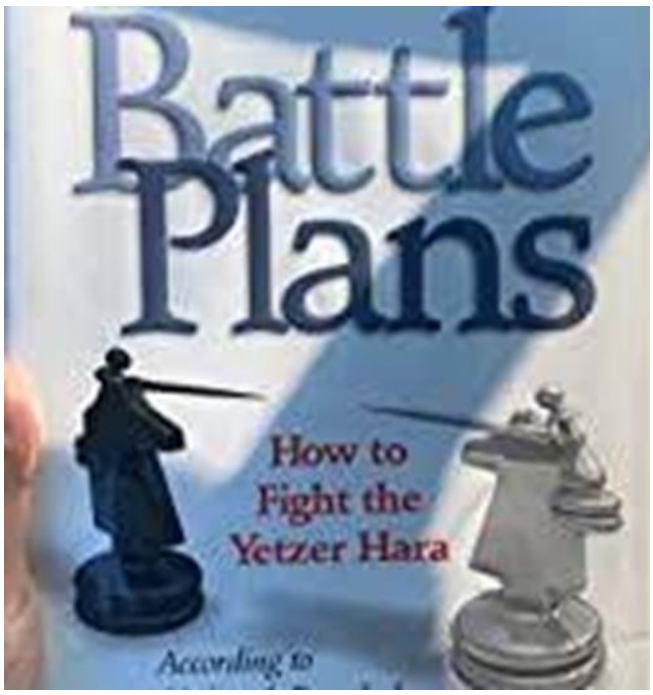
Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, embellished this statement with a deeper explanation of its meaning. He related: "The way we stand during the entire year is established during the month of *Elul*. Even if during the year it is difficult (challenging) to maintain the *Elul* plateau, nonetheless, we are able to assess our level during the year based upon the benchmark of *Elul*.

Indeed, during the year, whenever a question, an opportunity, a situation, arises, we should ask ourselves: How would we act if it were *Elul*?"

The plateau upon which one stands during *Elul* is his real identity.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Battling the Yetzer Hara כי תצא למלחמה על איבך



We are now in Chodesh Elul, blowing the shofar and waging war against the yetzer hara. Like every war, we require strategies that will help us win this great battle.

Let's begin with understanding that the nature of this war is unlike any other war you know. The goal of a war fought between countries is to conquer the enemy. When the opposing army is defeated, the war is over.

But it isn't so with the war against the yetzer hara. When we win one battle, we are confronted with yet another war. It is a never ending fight. Chazal (*Brachos* 61.) there call the yetzer hara "a fly" because, like a fly, after you banish it, it comes back again.

The beginning of this week's *parashah* (21:10) states, **כי תצא למלחמה**, "If you go out to war against your enemies…" and the *Pasuk* alludes to the war we wage against the *yetzer hara*.

Take note that the *Pasuk* doesn't state, **כי תצא לנצחון** "When you go out to *win*," rather, the *pasuk* says when "you go out *to war*."

In *Shacharis* we say, **המה כרעו ונפלו ואנחנו קמנו ונתעודד** , "They kneel and fall, but we rise and gain strength" (*Tehillim* 20). The *pasuk* implies that we also fall, but then we get up again.

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that this is because even when we win a battle, the war goes on. There is always another battle.

We quote the Tiferes Shlomo (beginning of this week's parasha):

"There are righteous people who battle against their yetzer hara and win, and a few days later, the yetzer hara returns, and they must wage war with the yetzer hara once again!

This confuses them, and they ask, 'What is this all about? I already had this war with the yetzer hara, and I succeeded!'

They think they were finished with the yetzer hara, but the yetzer hara returns. They wonder what will be with them.

The Torah discusses this situation and explains, **כי תצא** , the reason you came down to this world, **למלחמה** is for war. This is your life's mission. For this, you were created."

You cannot win the war once and for all and be at peace with the yetzer hara because then life wouldn't have a purpose. There are always new battles to be combated.

Although we try our best to win all wars, the nature of war is to lose sometimes. You win some, and you lose some. It is unrealistic to expect to be victorious every time.

Reb Yitzchok Hutner *zt'l* writes in a letter, "When we discuss the greatness of *tzaddikim*, we have a bad habit to begin at the end [of their lives] and discuss the great levels the tzaddikim reached. We skip the many years they struggled with their yetzer hara, and we think they were born tzaddikim. [For example], everyone praises the **Chofetz Chaim**'s *shemiras halashon*, but who speaks about his struggles and ups and downs he encountered until he reached this level?

This is just one example among a thousand. Leaving out this chapter of their lives creates a problem because when a *bachur* has a strong desire to grow in *avodas Hashem* and is confronted with a challenge or a downfall, he thinks he will never reach the levels of the tzaddikim who he wishes to emulate. He thinks that if he faces challenges, there is no hope for him. But that is ridiculous.

Know, my friend, you will fall time and again, and there will be battles that you will lose. But in the end, you will emerge victorious and wear the crown of success on your head.

Hide and Seek



Rebbe Mendel of Vorker *zt'l* said: Children play high-and-seek, and when a child hides, he shouts, "Ready."

The child doesn't realize it, but by calling out "Ready," he helps the other children find him. They hear his voice and run to find him.

Hashem does the same. It states, **ואנכי הסתר אסתיר**, ***"I will hide Myself."***

This is when one is goes through a hard time. When one is in such a situation it is like Hashem is shouting, "I'm hiding. Find me." And we know exactly where to find Him. He is there, in that situation.

The Way of Emuna – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

Hashem Performs Hashavas Aveidah Lifnim Mishuras Hadin

לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־שׁוֹר אָחִיךָ אוֹ אֶת־שֵׂיוֹ נִדָּחִים וְהִתְעַלַּמְתָּ מֵהֶם הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבֵם לְאָחִיךָ
- You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep straying, and ignore them. You shall return them to your brother. (22:1)

The Pupa Rov zy"a (Sefer Vayaged Yaakov) quotes **Rav Yissochor Dov of Belz zy"a** as asking: We know that Hashem keeps every

mitzvah in the Torah. How does he fulfil the mitzvah of hashavas aveidah?



He answers that Hashem fulfils this mitzvah by returning our kedushah to us. When we fall and become impure, He helps us find our purity again. However, Chazal say (Bava Metziah 30A) that "an old man for whom it is not according to do his dignity is exempt from hashavas aveidah."

When a Jew sins, his soul becomes filthy from the aveiros. It is not fitting for Hashem's dignity, so to speak, to touch such a dirty aveidah. It would thus seem that He is exempt from the mitzvah. However, the **Rambam** (Hilchos Aveidah 11:7) says that a person who wants to do the right thing will go beyond the letter of the law and will return a lost object even if it is not dignified for him to do so.

In this vein, an explanation is said in the name of **Rav Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy"a** to explain the words we say in the piyyut of Yedid Nefesh: חוּסָה נָא וְאַל תִּתְעַלָּם – "***Care for us, please, and do not ignore us.***" If we ask Hashem to care for us, we obviously mean that He should not ignore us. Why are those words necessary?

He answers that, as we stated, the halacha is that one may sometimes ignore a lost object – if it is beneath his dignity to pick it up. We ask Hashem that even when it is beneath His dignity to care for us and He is exempt from the mitzvah, we still ask Him not to ignore us.

Every "lost object" in the parsha hints to hidden sparks of holiness waiting to be rediscovered. ~ Sfas Emes.

Don't Cause Pain to a Father by Showing Compassion to His Son

כִּי יִקָּרֵא קַן־צִפּוֹר לְפָנֶיךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּכָל־עֵץ אוֹ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ בֵיצִים וְהָאֵם רֹבֶצֶת עַל־הָאֶפְרֹחִים אוֹ עַל־הַבֵּיצִים לֹא־תִקַּח הָאֵם עַל־הַבָּנִים

If a bird's nest chances before you on the road, on any tree…and the mother is sitting upon the fledglings or upon the eggs, you shall not take the mother upon the young. 22:6



In the holy city of Yerushalaim, there lived a great talmid chochom and upstanding Jew who, unfortunately, had a son who left the path of Torah. The father drew his son close and showed him much love.There were people who disagreed with him and felt that he was wrong for being nice to the son who had abandoned the Torah.

When **Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zy"a**, Rov of Yerushalaim, heard about this, he said, "It is hard to understand the mitzvah of shiluach hakan. How is it possible for a person to grab hold of a bird, which is much faster than him and can easily fly away? However, when a mother bird is sitting in her nest with her babies, she will never abandon them. That's how a trapper is able to grab her. Thus, a person can take advantage of a mother bird's self-sacrifice for her children.

This is considered to be an act of great cruelty. Therefore, the Torah commands us to 'send away the mother'. In other words, we have no right to take advantage of the mother's compassion for her young in order to trap her."

With these words, he hinted that the father should not be criticized because of his compassion for his son and for attempting to bring him back to the fold.

When One Does Business Honestly It is Like He Did Every Mitzvah

אֶבֶן שְׁלֵמָה וָצֶדֶק יִהְיֶה־לָּךְ

You shall have a full and honest weight, and a full and honest ephah measure, in order that your days will be prolonged on the land which Hashem, your G-d, gives you. (25:15)



The Gemara (Shabbos 31A) states: "When a person is brought to be judged, the first question they ask him is: Did you do business honestly?"

Chavakuk established all 613 mitzvos on one pasuk (Chavakuk 2:4): "A tzadik lives with his emunah (honesty)." **Sefer Reishis Chochmah** says that we see from this that if someone does business with honesty, it is like he kept all 613 mitzvos of the Torah. We see an amazing thing.

A person can fulfil all 613 mitzvos, even if he doesn't sit and learn all day. He can sit in his store for most of the day and do business, and if he is honest and has integrity, it is as if he did every mitzvah.

Parsha Potpourri - Rav Ozer Alport

וְיָתֵד תִּהְיֶה לְךָ עַל־אָזְנֶךָ וְהָיָה֙ בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ֣ חֻ֔ץ וְחָפַרְתָּ֖ בָּ֑הּ וְשַׁבְתָּ֗ וְכִסִּיתָ֙ אֶת־צֵאָתֶ֔ךָ 23:14

The Jewish people are commanded to designate a place outside their camp to serve as a bathroom and to place a shovel there to enable a person to cover his waste in order to preserve the sanctity of the camp.

The Gemora in Yoma (75b) questions the need for this, as the Manna they ate was completely absorbed in their bodies without producing any waste. The Gemora explains that it was required due to the food items that they purchased from travelling merchants.

However, the gemarah continues and explains that even these additional foods took on the miraculous properties similar to the manna, and was also totally absorbed into the body, negating the need to relieve themselves.

So the question returns as to why they needed a peg and shovel?

The gemarah answers that once the Yidden started complaining about the manna, that's when the miraculous properties were removed, and they had to use the toilet as per normal. That is why everyone had with them a peg and shovel.

In his commentary on Pirkei Avos (3:3), **Rav Chaim Volozhiner** questions why the Gemora needed to assume that they purchased and consumed food from passing merchants. Couldn't the Gemora have answered more directly, that this procedure was necessary due to their consumption of korbanos, which is explicitly discussed in the Torah?

Rav Chaim Volozhiner explains that since the sin of Adam, all food items have contained within them both valuable nutrients and unnecessary components, which humans must excrete as waste. However, food that comes from heaven, such as Manna, is purely

spiritual and contains no wasteful parts, allowing it to be directly and completely absorbed into the body.

From the fact that the Gemora chose not to attribute the need for bathroom facilities to the consumption of the sacrifices, we may conclude that the heavenly fire on the Altar removed the superfluous components of the animals burned thereon, leaving the remaining meat with the status of Divine food that was completely absorbed in the body.

whY I Matter by Yedidye Hirtenfeld

כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ -***When you will go out to war against your enemies...*** (21:10)

This week's portion begins with various laws concerning warfare. Our sages tell us that the opening verse is hinting at going out to war against our most fearsome enemy - the evil inclination. As the **Chovos Halevavos** writes: Your greatest enemy in the world is your evil inclination. He gives you (bad) advice every step of the way. While you sleep, he is awake plotting against you. He appears to you as a friend, and he becomes one of your most trusted advisors... His greatest weapons against you are confusion and false arguments, which make you forget your true interests and doubt your confirmed goals and beliefs... (Shaar Yichud Hamaaseh).

The evil inclination always has something up his sleeve and never gives up. **The Rebbe from Peshische** said that a person should imagine the evil inclination as one who is standing over his head with an axe, waiting for the perfect moment to chop off his head.

Rabban Gamliel was once traveling in a boat when he saw that another boat was sinking. He noticed that Rabbi Akiva was one of the passengers on board. Mourning over the great loss, he got to shore and walked into a nearby shul.



He was shocked to see that the one giving the lecture was none other than Rabbi Akiva! Astonished, he cried out, "Akiva, how did you get here? I saw you drowning!"

Rabbi Akiva replied, "As I was drowning a wooden plank from the boat was floating right by me. I quickly stuck out my hand and grabbed on to it. It kept me above water. As each wave came, I put my head under the water until it passed, and then I kept on going." (Yevamos 121a)

The Maharal explains that the waves were an allusion to the evil inclination. Rabban Gamliel saw that Rabbi Akiva was getting swept away by the evil inclination and was drowning in the sea of life. Rabbi Akiva replied that he grabbed on to the wooden plank - he grabbed on to the Torah which is referred to as the tree of life, and that saved him from drowning!

The gemara (Kedushin 30b.) says that the only sure way to beat the evil inclination is by studying Torah. As the Talmud states: Hashem created the evil inclination and created the Torah as its antidote.

Rav Moshe Feinstein observed that the mitzvah of making a fence around one's roof reflects a broader obligation to prevent harm before it occurs. The Torah does not wait for tragedy and then demand responsibility afterward; it obligates a Jew to think ahead, to anticipate danger, and to protect others proactively. True responsibility means caring even about problems that have not yet happened.

Rabbi Peysach Krohn - Project Mesorah

All of us know that as we prepare for Rosh Hashana, we all want to find ways that we can improve ourselves.

There is a remarkable **Ramban** in this week's sedra. **זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה** 24:9 **ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לְמִרְיָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם *Remember what Hashem did to Miriam..***

The Ramban says that this is referring to the Aveiro of lashon hora that Miriam spoke against Moshe.

Who did she speak about? Her brother whom she loved. So obviously, there was no ill intent. And who did she speak to? Only to Aaron. It was not said publicly. And yet she was still punished, and she got tzoraas.

The Ramban believes that it is a mitzva d'oiraisso to say this Pasuk. You should remember to not speak lashon hara.

In every siddur after aleinu in shacharis there are six pesukim to say to remember. This is one of them. And this will remind us to be very careful to not speak lashon hara, and not to say anything hurtful about somebody else.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The following story happened to a Yid from Golders Green in London: It was 2am in the morning, when he was awoken by the telephone ringing in his home. The ringing would not stop, so he picked up the phone.

"Who is it?"

"It's the police."

"The police at 2 am? What do you want? What's the matter?"

The police replied, "You're asking what's the matter? You took a taxi earlier, and you didn't pay! You said that you were going up to get

some money, but you didn't return! Your driver is waiting downstairs, so he called the police."

The man responded, "I don't know what you are talking about, this never happened. I've been sleeping for hours now, and I didn't even take a taxi today."

The police asked him, "Do you live on '*The Drive*'?" "Yes."

"And is this your address?" "Yes."

"And on this and this floor?" "Yes."

"So, it must be you – the taxi driver is waiting downstairs for you to pay him!"

"I already told you; I don't know what you are talking about, this never happened. I've been sleeping for hours now, and I didn't even take a taxi today..!"

And so, the argument went back and forth, until they realised that there was another address in different neighbourhood in London called 'The Drive'! That's where the taxi was waiting!

This Yid tells me, "What would an ordinary person do after such a phone call? – Put down the phone and go back to sleep. But I said to myself, 'This is not the police calling me at 2am in the morning – It is Hashem calling!' No person can do anything by himself – everything is orchestrated by Hashem. And if Hashem woke me up now, then I must get up out of bed."

Both he and his wife got up out of bed. It was now 2.30 in the morning, but what could they do? They sat downstairs to say Tehillim. They sat there praying until dawn.

In the morning, he got a call from his son. "Mazel Tov tatte, we had a boy!"

He then told his father, "We left for the hospital at 2am, however, there many complications, and we needed great mercy from Hashem. But I didn't want to wake you up and worry you at that early hour."

"Someone else woke me up", replied the father.

"Who?"

"Hashem woke me, and I said Tehillim all night!"

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld *Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*



In this week's sedra, the Torah describes to us the **בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה** - the rebellious son who steals and takes meat and wine and eats it in a gluttonous fashion. (21:18) Ultimately, we must put him to death – Why? Because of what he is eventually going to do. His parents may bring him before the elders of the city and testify to his bad behaviour; after which the elders can sentence him to death by stoning.

In the Talmud's view, this punishment is justified because it prevents this child from growing into an adult who will commit truly heinous crimes; if executed now, "he will die innocent rather than die guilty." The talmudic sages then go on to impose restrictions on who qualifies for this punishment.

What an incredible idea.

The Gemara (Sanhedren 71a) tells us that a **בֵּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה** never happened – and never will happen! **בן סורר ומורה לא היה ולא עתיד להיות** – '***No wayward and rebellious son ever existed in the past, and none will ever exist in the future***.'

But if that is so, then why did Hashem put this law in the Torah in the first place? "Why was it written?"

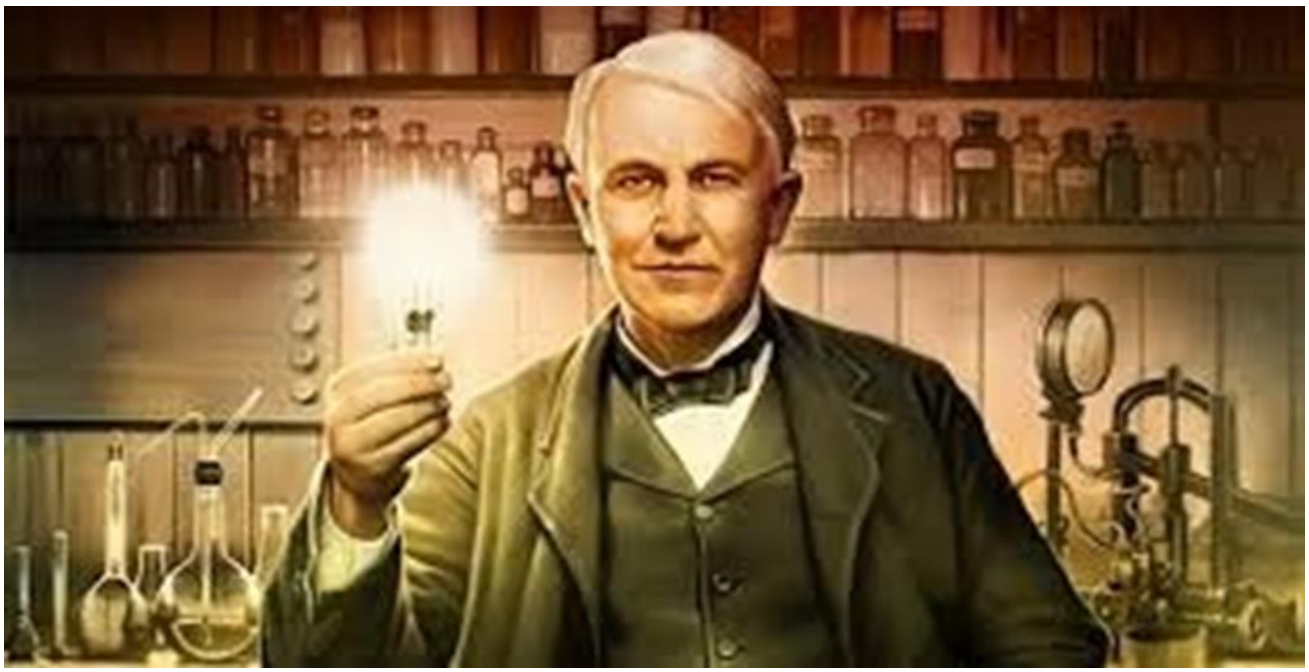


The Torah is teaching us an unbelievable idea, and that is: A person for whom there is no hope – will never exist!

If you were created – if you exist, it means that you can accomplish. It means that you can do something. The problem is that we often fall and stumble. And in these last few weeks in the year, we look at the past year and see just how many times we have tripped up.

We must realise that stumbling is not a sign of failure, rather it is an opportunity for greatness. Each time that you fall, you must know that you are one step closer to becoming great!

Thomas Edison, considered one of the greatest inventors of all time, invented over 1000 innovations, and in fact he failed to refine the electric light bulb until his 1000th attempt. [There are various different number of attempts abound, ranging from 200 to 10,000!]



Asked how he felt literally failing hundreds/thousands of times before he perfected the lightbulb, He answered that as long as he didn't give up, he hadn't failed, and he just discovered multiple ways how not to do it. He responded that he didn't fail once. And, rather

than accepting his 9,999 attempts as failures, he is quoted as saying, "It was a 1000-step process!"

In his mind, these failed attempts were simply another steppingstone on the road to success.

This week's sedra which talks about the בֶּן סוֹרֵר וּמוֹרֶה teaches us that such a person never did, and never will exist. Because every single one of us who was created, has potential for tremendous greatness – We just have to unlock it!

Have a beautiful Shabbos!

Rabbi *Avi Wiesenfeld Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

זָכֹור אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק בַּדָּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם (25:17) We are told in this week's parsha to remember the actions of Amalek – How they came to wage war against Klal Yisrael.

Rashi asks, "Why specifically Amalek? Why is Amalek singled out from all the many nations that attacked Klal Yisrael?"



Rashi answers and compares it to a huge pool of boiling water. As soon as someone takes the first step and plunges into the pool, he cools it down for everybody else to follow. **מָשָׁל לְאַמְבָּטִי רוֹתַחַת שֶׁאֵין כָּל בְּרִיָּה יְכוֹלָה לֵירֵד בְּתוֹכָהּ, בָּא בֶן בְּלִיַּעַל אֶחָד קָפַץ וְיָרַד לְתוֹכָהּ, אַף עַל פִּי שֶׁנִּכְוָה הֵקֵרָהּ אוֹתָהּ בִּפְנֵי אֲחֵרִים (תנחומא)**

Says Rashi, "Amalek was the first nation to attack the Yidden, and hence this was the invitation for other nations to follow."

Now, if that's how it is that one can be negatively affected by his surroundings, let's flip the coin in a positive way.

A person can affect his surroundings positively even from the little that he does.

A person could concentrate a little bit more in davening. A person can smile or greet somebody else. A person can be careful with what words he speaks. – Other people take note and will be positively affected.

Imagine if you have a huge swimming pool, and you pour into the water a bottle of (even cheap) wine, the entire pool of water will change colour. A tiny amount of red wine can change the colour of a vast amount of water.

The small amount that we work on ourselves, and improve ourselves, and we display this to others – We can affect our surroundings and ultimately the entire world! - ***Have a wonderful Shabbos!***

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

הֲשָׁבַת אֲבֵדָה

לֹא־תִרְאֶה אֶת־שׁוֹר אָחִיךָ אוֹ אֶת־שֵׂיוֹ נִדָּחִים וְהִתְעַלַּמְתָּ מֵהֶם הָשֵׁב תְּשִׁיבֵם לְאָחִיךָ
- You shall not see your brother's ox or sheep straying, and ignore them. [Rather,] you shall return them to your brother. (22:1)

The Ohr Hachaim says that the mitzvah of הֲשָׁבַת אֲבֵדָה is not referring to livestock or other items, but Toichacha. The reference to 'lost sheep' is referring to 'lost people'!

If a person has strayed and is lost – it is incumbent on us to ensure that we return him to Hashem!

Someone who violates G'd's commandments is considered as having gone astray. The Torah commands that we must not ignore such people but bring them back to one's "brother" i.e. to G'd. The reason

the Torah repeats the instruction **השב תשיבם**, *"you shall surely restore them" is that if you will make the first move in setting such people on the right path, they will complete the journey back to G'd under their own steam.*

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה



כִּי־תֵצֵא לַמִּלְחָמָה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וּנְתָנוֹ ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ בְּיָדֶךָ וְשָׁבִיתָ שִׁבְיוֹ

'***If you go out to war against your enemies, and the L-rd, your G-d, will deliver him into your hands, and you take his captives,***.' (21:10)

The Shem MiShmuel makes a beautiful observation in the difference in the language used here, as opposed to the language used in parshas Bahalosecha. In our sedra, the pesukim are all speaking in the singular form, whereas in Bahalosechah, it is all written in the plural tense. - **וְכִי־תָבֹאוּ מִלְחָמָה בְּאַרְצְכֶם עַל־הַצַר הַצֹרֵר אֶתְכֶם וַהֲרֵעֹתֶם בַּחֲצֹצְרֹת וְנִזְכַּרְתֶּם לִפְנֵי ה׳ אֱלֹקיכֶם וְנוֹשַׁעְתֶּם מֵאֹיְבֵיכֶם** (10:9)

What's the difference?

The Shem MiShmuel says that the answer to this lies in a Medrash Rabbah in Vayikra 26 - "*We found that children in the days of David, before they tasted the taste of sin, knew how to expound the Torah with 49 impure aspects and 49 pure aspects. David would pray for them, as David says (Psalms 12:8): Hashem keep them, and guard their Torah in their hearts, preserve them from this generation forever, from that generation which is deserving of destruction.'- After all this praise, they would go out to war and fall.*

Why? Because **אֶלָּא עַל יְדֵי שֶׁהָיוּ בָּהֶם דֵּילָטוֹרִין הָיוּ נוֹפְלִין** - *However, because there were informers among them, they would fall.*

Lashan Harah is a direct product of Sinas Chinam and lack of unity. Therefore, when they would go out to war, they would fall in battle!

A guarantee to be successful and victorious when waging war, is not just to study all the strategies, but to ensure that all 613 mitzvos are being kept. We know that it is impossible for any one person to accomplish this on his own and relies on others to do this. The only way of doing this, is by being unified!

This is why our Pasuk is written in the singular tense – **כִּי־תֵצֵא** –when you go out as one in unity and with Emunah – then you will be guaranteed success!!

Exaggeration

Rav Meir Shapiro ZY"A travelled to America to raise money for his Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin. A crowd came to greet him upon his arrival. The next day the newspaper reported that 5,000 people came to greet the European Rosh Yeshiva.

Rav Meir Shapiro was shocked to see this blatant lie being reported. In fact, there were only about 500 people in attendance.

When the reporter was asked why he exaggerated tenfold he replied, "I thought there were only 50 people there. Had I known there were 500, I would have written 50,000!

The Be'er Mayim Chaim writes that "כי תצא" hints that growth begins specifically when a person leaves his comfort zone. As long as one remains spiritually stationary, little changes. But when a Jew pushes himself beyond routine — in Torah, tefillah, kindness, or self-control — he enters the arena where Hashem grants true victory.

Rabbi Yossel of Slutzk



Photo of a Jewish synagogue in Slutzk in the early 20th Century

Rabbi Yossef Peimer, better known as Rabbi Yossel of Slutzk, was born to Rabbi Meir in Skudy, Lithuania in 5556 (1796).



At a young age, Rabbi Yossel went to study at the famous Volozhin yeshiva. The Rosh Yeshiva, the Gaon Rabbi Chaim (the disciple of the Gra), became attached to the boy and showed great affection for him. Rabbi Yossel finished by becoming his main student, affirming that "everything I say, I have heard from my teacher Rabbi Chaim." Not long afterwards, his fame spread throughout the country, and he was known in his own right as a Gaon and Tzaddik, humble and pious.

When the rabbinical position in the city of Slutzk opened up, its inhabitants sought out a brilliant Rav. They heard of a certain avrech from the Volozhin yeshiva named Rabbi Yossel, a man who had all the characteristics of a Talmid Chacham. They went to see him with an offer to come and be the Rav of their city.

Rabbi Yossel was 32 years old when he became the Rav of Slutzk. It was a pious community whose Rabbis had been Torah giants for many generations.

A Humbling Incident in the Tiny Town of Kapulie

During one conversation, someone made an astute comment in the name of Rabbi Lipman, the Rav of Kapulie and author of Kedushat Yom Tov. Hearing this, Rabbi Yossef exclaimed in astonishment, "If in the tiny town of Kapulie there lives a Gaon like him, it is he who merits taking the rabbinical position of Slutzk, not I!" When he was told that Rabbi Lipman had already passed away, he accepted to become the Rav of Slutzk.

Rabbi Yossel's arrival in Slutzk was very impressive. He was large of stature and had the head of a lion. His forehead was high and large, and his eyes looked like glowing coals, charming and alluring. He was well-built and exuded charm, drawing looks from people passing in the streets. His good looks became so famous that the government sent an artist to draw his portrait, and today we know what he looked like because of that.

A Challenging Question on a Particular Tosfos

During his first Shabbat in Slutzk, Rabbi Yossel went to pray at its great Beit Midrash. There an old teacher, eminent in Torah, approached the new Rav and said to him, "Rabbi, here you are appointed as our Rav. I would like to ask you a question concerning Tosfos on Tractate Eruvin."

The old man then posed his question, and the young Rav briefly consulted some books and presented his response. The old man was surprised and said, "Now I know that you are a great sage of Israel and worthy of being the Rav of a great city like Slutzk. May you succeed in your task!"

Rabbi Yossef always evoked people's surprise by recounting how he had been given Heavenly assistance to answer that particular question, for afterwards he worked hard to recall his reply, but could never remember it.

He was received as the Rav of Slutzk during the winter of 5589 (1829), and he immediately began to draw his focus on education. He had all the teachers in town come to the Beit Midrash, and there he explained to them how to instill a love for Torah in children. He warned them against corporal punishment, believing that it was better to verbally reprimand students and show them signs of affection.

When a teacher asked him what to do in the event that words proved useless, he replied, "I order you to do the following: When you find yourself obliged to strike a student, do not do so with your hand. Rather, use a towel or strap, or something similar."

When he was asked the reason for this decree, he quite simply replied: "A teacher's hands are always at his disposition, and when he becomes angry he may use them to strike a student. Now, however, I have ordered teachers not to use their hands. Rather, they are to use something else, which they will not always have with them. Thus, during the time that they will look for these things, their anger will subside."

Rabbi Yossef despised ill-gotten gain. He earned little and lived in tremendous poverty, and he detested gifts and never complained. After some years in Slutzk, the community leaders of Minsk asked him to be their Rav, and after incessant supplications, he sent them a letter expressing his acceptance.

When the inhabitants of Slutzk learned of that, they came to him and begged him not to abandon them. The Rav agreed to stay, but only on condition that they intercept the letter that he had sent to Minsk, and that they not increase his salary. This he requested so that nobody could say that he had remained in Slutzk because of a salary increase. They did what the Rav asked, except that they repaired the roof of his house, for whenever it rained water leaked inside and ruined his books.

Rabbi Yossef passed away on Friday, the first day of Iyar 5724 (1864). Rabbi Avraham Esofski, an elderly man who was the Gabbai of the Slutzk Beit Midrash in New York (whose Rav is Rabbi Moshe Shurin), recounted the following about Rabbi Yossef's funeral:

"I was a young boy when I attended the funeral of that Gaon and Tzaddik. Thousands of people followed his casket, and on that same day a great amount of snow fell, covering the streets of the city and forcing the funeral procession to move very slowly. The people of Slutzk had never seen so much snow in winter, and they viewed it as a sign that even nature was mourning the loss of the Gaon. In accordance with the wishes of the departed, the epitaph on his tombstone read, 'Here lies Rabbi Yossef the son of Rabbi Meir.' He had ordered that no tributes be engraved on it."

Not Yet! By Rabbi Yechiel Spero



The young man appointed to walk **Rav Yehoshua Leib Diskin**, the Rav of Yerushalayim, to shul waited patiently outside the Rav's home. After a few moments, the door opened and the Rav emerged, carrying his tallis and tefillin. But instead of heading down the street toward the shul, he began to climb the stairs outside his home, one step at a time until he reached the top. The Rav was already an elderly man; it would take much effort for him just to walk to shul. Why, then, was he climbing the stairs outside his home?

The scenario grew even stranger, for when Rav Yehoshua Leib reached the top of the steps, he seemed to be looking for

something. No longer able to control his curiosity, the young man waited for the venerated sage to come back down and then asked him what he was looking for.

Rav Yehoshua Leib looked directly into the young man's impressionable eyes. "You know, the first two Batei Mikdash, which were man made, had to be built during the day. But the third one will descend in a heavenly blaze - and that can happen even at night. I was just looking to see if it came down last night." And then the Rav added plaintively, "It didn't."

The stunned talmid did not move. He just stared in disbelief at his disappointed Rebbe who was already on his way to shul. He still had much for which to pray.

May it be rebuilt speedily in our days, Amen.

Rabbi Yechiel Spero - Holy Garments

Rav Naftali HaGadol, author of the *Semichas Chachamim*, was a *tzaddik* who lived in the 1600s. He was very well-respected by the government, and one time, the king invited him to his palace. He was a very impressive-looking individual and handsome. As such, when he walked into the king's palace, the king's daughter set her eyes on him. Without missing a beat, her mind had been made up that she needed to marry Rav Naftali.

Rav Naftali tried to avoid her, but at one point, she entered a room where he was alone, and she closed the door. She was wearing a most exquisite dress and looked her finest. Rav Naftali, quickly understanding the troubling circumstances he was in, boldly let her know his decision. "I'm not for you." Somehow, he withstood the tempting test and managed to exit the room.

When the king's advisors were appraised of what had occurred, they were terribly embarrassed. "We are very sorry. What took place is very inappropriate. Is there anything we can do to appease you from

the king's treasury?" Rav Naftali replied that he wanted nothing, except the dress that the king's daughter had been wearing.

Rav Naftali HaGadol took this dress and wove it into the fabric of his *tachrichin,* burial shrouds. He was buried in that garment because, in his words, that garment attests to his having overcome an extraordinary temptation and exhibit courage against his *yetzer hara*. And that very garment would serve as a protection both in this world and the Next World from all those who seek to harm him.

We are in power when we overcome our challenges in life. They become our medals. They forge us into spiritual champions and serve as fortresses of protection in this world and the Next.

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein - Uncompromising Truth

The Kotzker Rebbe (1787-1859), a student of the **Chozeh of Lublin** and teacher of the **Chuddishei HaRim**, did not tolerate any form of falsehood. He spoke strongly and did not tolerate inaccuracies or inauthenticity.

Bilaam, remarked the Kotzker, stated to the messengers of Balak, "If Balak would give me all the money in the world, I still couldn't violate the word of Hashem," and yet the next thing he did was attempt to cause harm to the Jewish people. Bilaam epitomized a lack of keeping true to his word and his integrity.

In contrast, Yaakov Avinu said, "Give me my wife and I will beget children from her." How could Yaakov Avinu have spoken this way, despite its implication of family life, which is not something which should have been disclosed openly?

He spoke this way, explained the Kotzker, so that his children would follow his attitude and approach to life of not "speaking one way with his mouth and another way in his heart." Yaakov Avinu represented the epitome of honesty and truth.

The Kotzker Rebbe himself adhered to these unbending principles of truth and authenticity. One of his axiomatic, penetrating statements were, "***If I am I, because you are you, and you are you, because I am I, then I am not I, and you are not you. But if I am I because I am I, and you are you because you are you, then I am I and you are you, and we can talk***."

The Kotzker strongly advocated against mimicking what others do. We are meant to have our own personality and identity, he promulgated. The Kotzker was not intimated by others nor impressed by his own behaviour. And in our generation, this quality of uncompromising truth is so-ever important.

SEFAS TAMIM
FOUNDATION • Emphasizing Everyday Emes

A Mashgiach (rabbi who is responsible for the performance and wellbeing of yeshivah students) in a Lakewood yeshiva, who is the author of the Sefer Nachal Avrohom, has a parenting practice that he uses with his children. He tells his children that if they have made a mistake and have done something wrong, they will not be punished assuming they do one thing: They must always be honest about what they have (or have not) done.

The results of this approach have yielded remarkable results. There is a closeness between the children and their parents that is very palpable – and they are also very honest.

One time a Rebbe accused one of the Mashgiach's children of doing something wrong. The Mashgiach said, "There is an easy way to find out if he did it. Let us just ask him." The Rebbe was not expecting to just ask the child and then believe his response. However, the Mashgiach reassured the Rebbi that his children are 100% honest.

When questioned, the child denied doing what he was accused of. Upon further investigation, it turned out that the child had not done anything wrong – he was being completely honest, just as the Mashgiach said that he would be.

The Baal Tefillah with The "Grating" Voice



A great Jewish chazzan once visited Amsterdam and davened in a certain shul on Shabbos morning. He heard the baal tefillah davening very loud, skipping words, and singing in a grating voice that was completely off tune.

The chazzan was upset, as he assumed that this baal tefillah probably paid his way to receiving the honor of serving as baal tefillah. Maybe the shul let him have his way and serve as baal tefillah, only because he gave a few dollars to the shul's coffers.

The chazzan was so infuriated that the davening was sold to the highest bidder, that he went into a side room and preferred to daven alone. However, he returned to hear kri'as haTorah. As the chazzan went over to kiss the Torah, he saw that the baal tefillah was walking, holding the Torah, and two people were supporting his arms.

The chazzan asked someone why he needed help. The person told the chazzan that this baal tefillah used to be the one who led the davening in the great shul in Lodz, Poland, prior to WWII. This man used to lead a choir of 40 children in Lodz. When the war broke out, this baal tefillah and the 40 children in his choir were taken

together to Auschwitz, where he remained with them until the children were murdered in the gas chambers.

This baal tefillah of Lodz was kept alive, and was forced to entertain the Nazis y"s with his powerful and melodious voice. He was tortured, blinded and his vocal cords suffered damage. After the war, he settled in Amsterdam. When the people in the shul realized who he was, they begged him to serve as baal tefillah.

He kept refusing, saying that his vocal cords were damaged, and besides, he was too broken and dispirited to lead the davening. He finally acquiesced, and this Shabbos – when the chazzan was visiting the shul – was the first time the baal tefillah agreed to lead the tefillos.

The visiting chazzan felt deeply ashamed. His entire perspective took a paradigm shift. The chazzan went over to kiss the Torah, and to kiss the chazzan as well.

One Amein or Beracha by Rabbi Dov Keilson

A person related that at the age of eighty-six, his mother's health began to decline; her sight and hearing diminished greatly, and she suffered many yissurim. She fell into a depression and lost the will to live.

This person went to his rebbi, **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky**, and asked him what to say to try to strengthen his mother. Rav Yaakov replied that when Yaakov Avinu was fighting the malach, the malach told Yaakov to release him, for it was his time to sing to Hashem (Bereishis 32:25- 27).

Rav Yaakov explained that we do not know exactly what is needed to sustain a malach, yet we know that the angels were formed during the six days of creation. And thus, for this one day that the malach would sing to Hashem, it was worthwhile for Hashem to sustain him for 2,000 years!

Said Rav Yaakov, "You must therefore share with your mother that when she says one Amein, or one kappitel of Tehillim, or one berachah, it is worthwhile for Hashem to sustain her for 2,000 years!" We have no idea of the indescribable value that one moment of tefillah has to Hashem, and even one single Amein!

The talmid relates that his mother thought about these words repeatedly until she truly absorbed them; and the chizuk from Rav Yaakov sustained her for another ten years!

Rabbi YY Jacobson – Agree to Disagree

Very often, we Jews become judgmental. I go into my little cocoon – If you look like me, if you dress like me, if you daven my nusach, if you believe everything that I believe – I love you.

But the moment I see that you deviate from my path, I'm already uncomfortable with you – Narrowness is not the name of the game anymore. We need expansive Jews, not tunnel vision Jews.

I once read about the **Ponovitcher Rav – Rav Kahanaman**: He was a Lithuanian Jew – A real Litvisher Yid. He lost his wife and children during the holocaust back in Ponovitch. He himself survived as he was away on a fundraising trip. He re-married, had more children, and built many new institutions of Torah in B'nei B'rak.

He once came to a chanukas habayis for a Gerer Shteible. He was so excited, and he called out, "*Today I want to be a Gerer chasid*."

Then he went to a chanukas habayis for a Viznitz Shteible. He was so excited, and he called out, "*Today I want to be a Viznitzer chasid*."

He had the ability to be able to celebrate with every single Jew. He had the ability to make himself colour blind and to see that which connects us is far more important and vital than what divides us. – There are no distinctions - A Jew is a Jew is a Jew. The judgmentalism, the separation, the segregation.

We have disagreements – So what!

When true Jews meet, I say, 'Shalom Aleichem, and you say, 'Aleichem Shalom.' Why don't you also say 'Shalom Aleichem?'

Because when two Jews meet, they have to disagree! But now that we agree to disagree, maybe we can now have a peaceful conversation!

If there is one lesson that we must learn from our history, my dearest friends, it is this - "***We don't have to agree with each other – But we have to be here for each other***!"



The Importance of Elul

The month of *Elul* is part of *kedushas hazemanim*. It is part of the yearly cycle of holy times. It is by nature an *eis ratzon*, a time of Divine favour, and a time of *rachamim*, ivine mercy.



Many people think that *Elul* is just a time when it is a good idea to get ready for *Yamim Nora'im*. But this is a mistake, as we will explain.

The *Yamim Nora'im* themselves are full-fledged *Yamim Tovim*, and are part and parcel of the essential nature of the world. Over them we bless **המבדיל בין קודש לחול, בין אור לחושך וגו**. Just as the difference between light and darkness is a basic aspect of the world, and is an objective fact – it is not a matter of personal feeling – so is the difference between the holy and the mundane.

The holy days of the year are fundamentally and objectively different from the regular weekdays. What a person can build on the days of *kedushah,* he absolutely cannot build on mundane weekdays.

This applies to *Elul* as well. Although the days of *Elul* are not *Yamim Tovim,* they are indeed days of Divine *rachamim.* This is their essential and objective nature. We can see this from what the Ramban wrote about *Elul.* He says that the Zodiacal sign associated with this month is **בתולה** (Virgo, "maiden") and it shows *Hashem's* special love for the Jewish people at this time.

This reflects the essential nature of the world, because the Zodiacal signs represent the constellations that are seen in the skies above and that are dominant in that month. It's not a spiritual sensitivity that you develop; it is an objective phenomenon based on astronomical facts. It's part of the world's nature as *Hashem* created it.

The fact that *Elul* is a time of *teshuvah* is not something that someone cooked up a couple hundred years ago. The source for it is in *Chazal*, in *Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer,* where we see that it is actually a tradition handed down from the time that the Jewish people were in the *Midbar,* after leaving Egypt. They did *teshuvah* during the forty-day period that *Moshe Rabbeinu* ascended to Heaven to bring them atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. Then *Chazal* enacted that the *shofar* should be blown for *Elul.*

All this shows that *Elul* is a time of *rachamim* by its very nature. It has a great and tremendous *siyata d'Shmaya* and this is baked into the essential nature of the world.

We can build and rectify and turn darkness into light during *Elul* in a way we cannot during the rest of the year, no matter what.

Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev באר היטב

The Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk ZY"A once said that every Jew could claim his share in the World to Come if only he answered the questions put to him by the Heavenly Court properly.

When his disciples asked him to explain, he said: "When they ask me: "Elimelech, did you study as much as you should have?", I will reply: "No." "Elimelech, did you pray as fervently as you could have?" Again, the answer will be "No." "Did you serve Hashem as well as you could have?" Once again, I shall answer "No". However, they will then be forced to admit me to Gan Eden (Paradise), because I will have been honest enough to see my failures and to tell the truth!"

From this episode we can see the truth of the Rebbe Reb Elimelech's service and devotion to Hashem.

Similarly, we find a saying from The Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk's brother, **Reb Ziesha of Anipoli ZY"A**, who said when he comes to Shomayim they will not ask of him why he was not as great as earlier generations, but they will ask him whether he was Reb Ziesha!



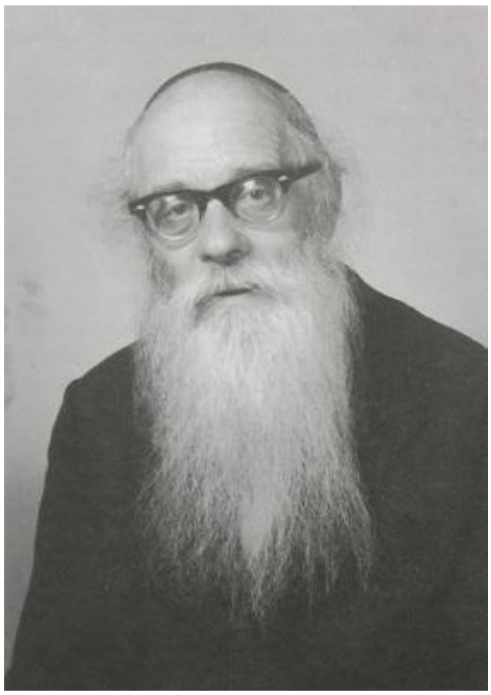
After the passing of his Rebbe the **Chofetz Chaim**, **Reb Elchonon Wasserman HY"D**, inherited the mantle of being Daas Torah for his generation. He would defend Torah against attack from the outside and mercilessly fought those seeking to destroy it from within.

Because of this effort Reb Elchonon felt the need to keep up with the goings on in the world and would read the newspaper daily. It

was placed on his Shtender, and each morning he would spend three minutes going through it and digesting it with his incisive mind.

When asked why he would read the newspaper on his Shtender out of all places, he said, "If I must read the paper then it is because it is a Mitzva and I can read in right here on my Shtender. If there is an issue with reading the paper, then I cannot even do it behind closed doors".

One Word - Generation to Generation by Rabbi Nosson Muller



Rav Gad Eisner was a well-known and pious Gerrer chassid who endured excruciating suffering through the war years. Nonetheless, he became one of the greatest mashpi'im in Ger, infusing emunah and bitachon into yeshivah bachurim with much vigour and dynamism.

Once, when talking to mechanchim about his war experiences, he related the following anecdote: "I recall trudging together with a group of my friends on one of the infamous death marches. After a few days of walking, I simply could not continue and felt my body giving way to all the torture and exhaustion it had endured. I realized that this was it; my time had come. I lay down on the road surface and began reciting my last prayers, knowing that even if I didn't pass out on my own, I would be shot by one of the German guards.

Suddenly, I heard one of my friends tenderly call out to me, "Gade'le! Get up and *loif*, get up and run! You can do it!" And I did. And here I am to tell the tale.

"I want to tell you something," Rav Gad continued telling the group of mechanchim. "You know what gave me the strength and courage to stand up again? Not what he told me to do and not why he told me to do it...but **how** he told me! He didn't say, 'Gad, stand up.' He said, 'Gade'le, stand up!' He used the name that my beloved parents had affectionately called me when I was a young boy.

It was that one extra syllable that he added to my name – not even consciously – that stirred in me a voice of the past, a voice of courage, which enabled me to somehow, somewhere, find the strength I didn't have to get up and try again."

One letter isn't just simply a letter. Sometimes it can be life itself. Literally.

Do I Really Care? *Beis HaLevi on Ahavas Yisroel With commentary and insights by Rabbi David Sutton*

How does one know if he is really being *nosei b'ol*? Does he truly care? Perhaps he is just letting out a sigh, as many do when they hear of someone's pain.

A story is told about the ***Chofetz Chaim*** when he was elderly. During the First World War, he did not sleep in his bed. He said that while Jewish soldiers were in danger at the front, he could not sleep in comfort.

That is the mark of someone who is truly carrying the burden. Someone who feels his friend's pain as if it were his own is not able to enjoy himself.

This is not something that only the *Chofetz Chaim* can do. Everyone on his own level can achieve this. Perhaps we are not on the level of sleeping on the floor, but there is always something we can do. We can be like Rebbetzin Chana Perel Kotler, **Rav Aharon Kotler's** *rebbetzin*, who during World War Il did not put sugar in her tea.

Rav Moshe Twersky *Hy"d* was embarking with his family on a trip. As they were getting ready to leave, a tragedy took place in Israel. It didn't happen to anyone they knew personally, but Rav Moshe cancelled the trip, turned to his children, and said, "Now is not the right time to enjoy ourselves, while someone else is suffering." That is greatness.



Reb Elimelech (Mike) Tress was famous for living a life filled with acts of genuine *chessed*. He was a powerhouse of goodness and kindness. He was a great activist during World War II, and he did everything possible to save Jews. He was empathetic to the point that he gave away all his money to save them. It is said that he didn't even have enough money to pay for his medications. He felt that every dollar could help save another Jew.

After the war, Mr. Tress travelled to Europe to see how the survivors in the Displaced Persons camps were faring. One night, his companions became very concerned when he wasn't with them at the hotel. When they finally found him in the morning, they asked him where he had been, and he said he had slept in a DP camp. They asked him why, and he answered, "How could I go to sleep in the lap of luxury in a hotel and then come back to them? I slept together with them."

That is a sign of Jewish greatness and leadership. We empathize, not just sympathize.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

A Dying Solution

The following fascinating account is related in the Darkei Teshuva. There was a Rav whose half of the hair on his head, half of his beard and one of his payos turned white, while the other half of these three remained black. Understandably, he was embarrassed in the presence of those who saw him as they would stare at him in astonishment.



This rav asked the Shaul Umaishiv if it was permitted for him to dye his white hairs black or if it was prohibited because of the prohibition of **לא ילבש גבר שמלת אשה** - *a man shall not wear a woman's garment*. He replied that it was permitted to dye them for several reasons. The main foundation for this *heter* was due to the fact that the prohibition according to most authorities is rabbinical, and as such one can be lenient.

R' Yoel Ashkenazi was also asked this, and he cites the words of the Shaul Umashiv who permitted dying the white hairs black. However, R' Ashkenazi rejects this and says that **לא ילבש** is a biblical prohibition and as such one cannot be lenient. He suggests dyeing the black hairs white so that this way it will all be white, and he will be saved from any embarrassment.

Let us conclude with a similar question that was asked to the **Divrei Chaim**. A person had half of his beard turn white as well as one of his eyebrows. The other half of his beard and other eyebrow remained black. The question posed was if the man can dye the hairs black.

The Divrei Chaim responded that it is biblically prohibited to dye it because of **לא ילבש** and therefore one cannot be lenient. He advises to dye the black hairs white because with that there would be no prohibition.

Mosquerade

Many Rishonim are of the opinion that the *Yishmieilim* are not classified as idol worshippers since they believe in Hashem and pray to one G-d. Therefore the Rambam writes that their wine is not considered *yayin nesech* and although it is prohibited to drink, it is *mutar b'hanaah*.

Even though it is forbidden to enter the houses of worship of the nations but the *Yishmieilim's* place of worship (i.e., a mosque) is different. Many Achronim write that it is permitted to make a shul in a mosque like **R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spector** writes, among other Achronim.

Based on their words, today we daven at the Me'aras Hamachpeila, Kever Shmuel Hanavi and other places where the *Yishmieilim* have established a mosque. However, the **Klausenberger Rebbe** as well as the **Tzitz Eliezer** oppose davening in a mosque.

Va'ani Tefillah – עלינו לשבח לאדון הכל - *It is our duty to praise the Master of All.*

We take *davening* to Hashem for granted. We are raised from earliest childhood to *daven and* continue to do so throughout our lives. It really should not be viewed in such a manner. Rather, we should be overwhelmingly grateful that as the *Am Ha'nivchar*, chosen people, Hashem permits – even encourages us – to speak to Him.

The *Mareh Yechezkel* (*Desher Rebbe*) explains that this is why *Chazal* saw fit to incorporate *Tefillas Aleinu*, a prayer originally

instituted by Yehoshua, following our *Tefillos/Shacharis, Minchah, Maariv*. When one is worthy of being selected to serve the king, he should be awestruck and filled with boundless adulation and gratitude.

Indeed, the *Rosh* explains the words *al she'anu modim lach, baruch Keil ha'hodo'os*, "For that we (are able to) pay gratitude to you." The mere fact that we are able to praise You (Hashem) is for us an awesome gift. Thus, we recited *Aleinu* as a culmination of our prayers.

Horav Yitzchak Vanah, zl (one of the *gedolei Yemen*), writes that Hashem is angered when the gentiles bow down and pray to the sun at sunrise and sunset. We, however, offer our praise to Hashem to underscore that we are not like them. (We pray only to Hashem – not to His creations.) He adds that he who recites *Aleinu* properly is spared Hashem's anger at that time.

This is alluded to by the *gematria*, numerical equivalent, of *af*, anger – 81, which coincides with the eighty-one words of *Tefillas Aleinu*.



Teshuvah

The Noem Eliezer of Skulen zt'l compared teshuvah to a person sinking in quicksand. He throws his hands about, hoping to find something to grab onto. He throws his hands to the right, then to the left, and to all directions, and finally, someone grabs his hand and pulls him out of the quagmire.

This is a mashal of teshuvah. We often don't know exactly what we must do to improve our ways. We know there is much to do, but

where do we begin, how, and with what techniques? We try this sefer, we go to that drashah, we make one kabbalah, and then we try another kabbalah tovah. We say Tehillim. We seek the path that will pull us out of the quicksand of our destructive ways. We try, but we don't seem to find the path.

But when we keep trying, Hashem will stretch out His right hand and pull us up to Him. This is alluded to in the words, **כי ימינך פשוטה לקבל פושעים** – '***Hashem's right hand stretches out to receive the sinners***.'

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman – Torah Wellsprings

וַיַּהֲפֹךְ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ לְךָ אֶת־הַקְּלָלָה לִבְרָכָה – '***So Hashem transformed the curse into a blessing for you***.' (23:6)

The word **הַקְּלָלָה** (***the curse***) when spelt in reverse can be read – **הלל קה** –**"Praise Hashem!"**

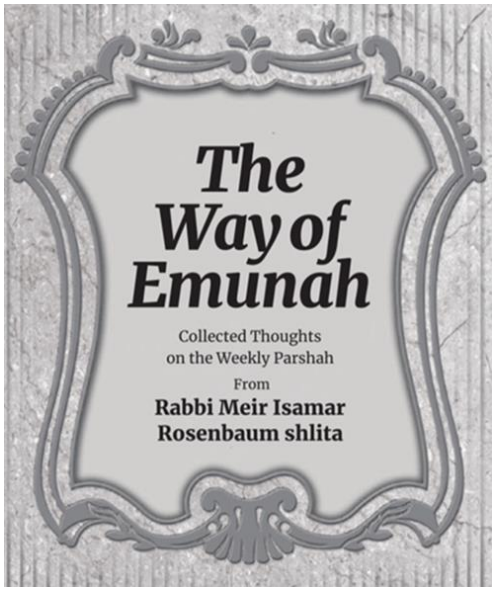
If you praise Hashem for what you have, you will transform any curses into blessings! Thank Hashem – YES! Thank Him for what you do have and thank Him for what you don't have! Thank Him for everything and transform any curses into blessings.

When R' Leibele Kovner, great-grandfather of the **Brisker Rov**, assumed the prestigious position as Rov of Kovna, one of the Maskilim there asked him if he can prove that Hashem exists.

"Sure" said R' Leibele. He opened a **Rambam** to Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah and read the words of the Rambam aloud, "***The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a Hashem that preceded all and created all***." R' Leibele said, "there is your indisputable proof, right here in the words of the Rambam." "Not only that" said R' Leibele, "but even the **Raavad**, who argues on every disputable point in the Rambam, remains silent in agreement.

All the commentaries who always ask questions on the Rambam like the **Magid Mishneh, Kesef Mishneh, Lechem Mishneh, and Mishneh LaMelech** don't utter a single doubt on the words of the Rambam in this instance.

Is there any greater proof than this, that there is a Hashem who runs the world?!"



The Protection of the Ohel Hatorah

Sefer Agra D'Kallah asks why it says that we will "go out" ("*seitzei*") to war. Why doesn't it simply say that we will go ("*seilech*") to war?

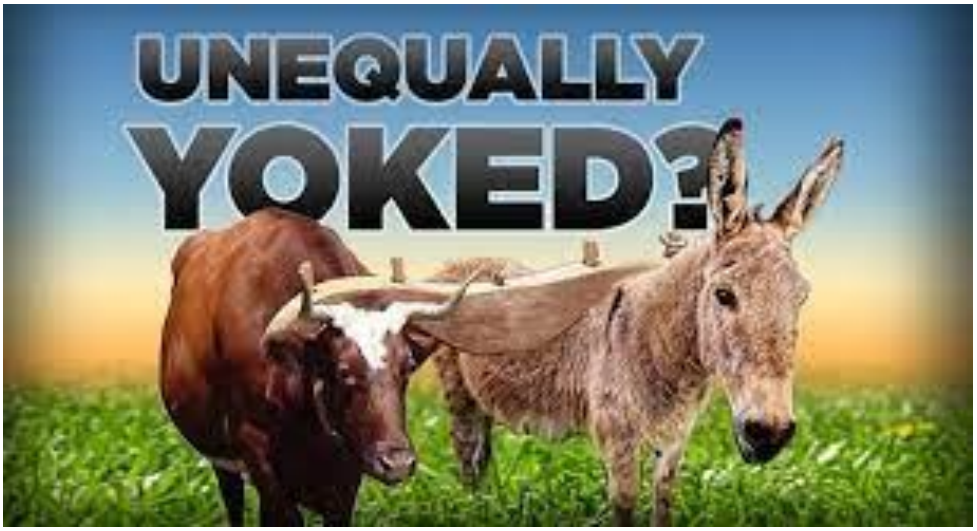
He answers that the Torah is hinting to a person who goes out from the tents of Torah, as the last letters of the words "*seitzei l'milchama al*" spell the word "*ohel*".

The *pasuk* is saying that when one leaves the tents of Torah, he is in danger of being attacked by his enemies, i.e., the damaging angels and evil forces. As long as one is in the bais medrash, however, these forces have no power over him.

Rav Dessler explained that the mitzvah of שילוח הקן teaches a profound lesson about attachment and sacrifice. A person naturally wishes to take everything for himself immediately, yet the Torah trains the soul to pause, to show compassion even toward a bird, and to recognize that the world was not created solely for human desire. Spiritual greatness begins when instinct is restrained by awareness of Hashem's will.

Never Cause Pain to Others

לֹא־תַחֲרֹשׁ בְּשׁוֹר־וּבַחֲמֹר יַחְדָּו – (22:10). **The Daas Zekeinim of the Baalei Tosafos** states" : *One should not plough with a cow and donkey together because the cow chews its cud and when the donkey hears the cow chewing, it will be pained*".



The donkey will think that the cow was given more food than it was, which will cause it pain.

Rav Gad'l Eisner *zt"l* (quoted in Sefer B'Mesilos Gad, page 159) discerned from these words that the Torah is extremely worried about the pain of any living creature. We can certainly take the lesson that one should never cause any pain or anguish to a fellow Yid.

Amalek Only Harms One Who is Alone

זָכֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם ***Remember what Amalek did to you on the way…*** (25:17)

Rav Isaac Humeler *zt"l* (Rav Yitzchok Isaac Halevi Epstein, a leading *chasid* of Lubavitch and Rov of the city of Humel, quoted in Sefer Toldos Yitzchok Isaac, page 121) explains that Amalek can only harm a person who is separated from the general public. He can only hurt someone who is "*lecha*", i.e., living solely for himself. - However, if one is connected to other *chasidim*, Amaleik cannot harm him.

The Greatness of Elul



Rebbe Shmelke of Nickelsberg zt'l said he doesn't want to go to heaven because there is no Elul in heaven!

Reb Chaim Vital zt'l writes, "In Elul, HaKodosh Baruch Hu becomes a **ידיד ואהוב** - a friend and beloved to the person who does teshuvah."

The Panim Yafos (Hafla'ah) zt'l said about Elul, "Every hour is like a day."

The Ben Ish Chai writes, "I wrote this letter to you in Elul, which in my eyes each minute is like a month in the rest of the year."

The Fear of Elul

Someone asked **Reb Yisrael Salanter zt'l**, "Why do you make Elul into a bear?" He replied, "You're right; Elul isn't a bear. Elul is more frightening than a bear.

Dovid Hamelech wasn't afraid of a bear, as it states **גַּם אֶת־הָאַרְיֵ גַּם־הַדֹּוב הִכָּה עַבְדֶּךָ** (Shmuel 1, 17:36) - "***Your slave has slain even the lion and the bear***..." He wasn't afraid of a bear, but he was afraid of the days of judgment.

He said (Tehillim 119:120) **סָמַר מִפַּחְדְּךָ בְשָׂרִי וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יָרֵאתִי** - "***My flesh bristles from fear of You, and I fear Your judgments***." - So, Elul isn't a bear. It is far more frightening.

The gematriya of **סָמַר מִפַּחְדְּךָ בְשָׂרִי וּמִמִּשְׁפָּטֶיךָ יָרֵאתִי** is 2090.

This is the exact same gematriya as **אלול, ראש השנה, יום כפור, נעילה, הושענא רבא** -(2090)!

Rabbi Yissachar Frand - A Message Hidden in Sofei Teivos Rather Than Roshei Teivos

I wish to share a comment from the **Baal HaTurim**. If you have to speak at a 40th or 50th wedding anniversary – this is a perfect vort.

The Torah provides a draft deferment for the newlywed soldier—נָקִי יִהְיֶה לְבֵיתוֹ שָׁנָה [אַחַת] ***"He shall be totally devoted to his house for a [complete] year."*** (Devorim 24:5). The Baal HaTurim notes that the last letter of the words in this pasuk spells out the ineffable Name of Hashem—Yud, Hay, Vov, Hay.

The Torah is hinting here that the purpose of giving newlyweds an initial year of complete dedication to one another is so that the Shechina should reside in their midst.

The question is: Why is this allusion contained in the last letter of each word (Sofei Teivos)? Why is it not alluded to in the first letter of each word (Roshei Teivos)? Perhaps this alludes to the following: Yes, in the early years of one's marriage people get along. Honeymoons are great. At that point, it is rather easy to create an environment of Shalom Bayis, where the Shechina is Shruyah Beineihem.

The challenge is Sofei Teivos! When people have been married for quite some time—his idiosyncrasies drive her crazy and her idiosyncrasies drive him crazy. The respective parties of the marriage are perhaps not so particular that it should be such a loving relationship anymore.

That is why the pasuk emphasizes that the Shechina's presence should be perceived in a marriage through Sofei Teivos and not only through Roshei Teivos. For this reason, the name of Hashem is spelled out at the end of the words rather than at the beginning.

Yesodos m' ha Sedra
LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA
In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l

Lessons From The Birds



The Torah tells us that if one chances upon a bird's nest, he should send away the mother bird before taking its young chicks or unhatched eggs. The poskim debate if this mitzva applies only if one actually wants to take the birds or eggs for use, or even he has no need or intention to used them. Some even go so far as encouraging us to seek out this mitzva as a segulah for all kinds of yeshuos, although this seems to fly in the face of the simple reading of the posuk which clearly reads "if one happens upon a nest…".

All agree, however, that the mitzva only applies to birds. Although one may not slaughter a cow and its calf on the same die, the Torah does not prohibit slaughtering the offspring in front of its mother, or even leading it away. Yet, in most areas of halacha, birds and animals are equal, and if anything, any leniencies apply to birds over the rest of the animal kingdom. It seems strange then, that the Torah shouldn't require us to send away the mother cow, goat or lamb, before leading its children away.

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin zt"l explains that if you think about it, the dedication of a bird to its offspring surpasses that of any other creature. While most of the animal kingdom protects its young from the time they are born, birds do so before the eggs even hatch, and while an expectant mother (of the human kind) might identify with

this as well, birds do so even though their babies are not contained within their bodies.

This is unique, and in some ways, their dedication, devotion, and mercy surpass that of mankind. He explains that the purpose of the mitzva is to draw our attention to this phenomenon so that we should also have more compassion on all of Creation, especially on our fellow Jews. Although the gemara says that one should not stress this reason for the mitzva during shemoneh esrei by saying Hashem has mercy on the birds, the poskim explain that this does not mean that it is untrue.

This explanation would also help us understand something else, as the same sources which advocate going out of the way to do the mitzva of shiluach ha'kein, also describe it as an act of cruelty which arouses Hashem's mercy on His people, which seems like somewhat of a paradox.

The answer though, is that we should approach the mitzva so that we come face to face with the birds who can teach us about true mesiras nefesh for other people who are outside of our immediate selves.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Our Parsha ends with what is known as "Parshas Zachor," urging us to recall what Amalek did to us when we left Egypt. We read it now, before Rosh HaShana, and also the week before Purim. What is the connection, and what do we want to remember?

The Ohr HaChaim says Amalek was singled out because they alone sought out the Jews, though they didn't know where they were. They travelled great distances in the desert to find and destroy them.

If this is what they did to hurt us, searching so long with no benefit, then shouldn't we follow their example and seek out Hashem, which is good for us?

That's why we read this at two times of the year when Teshuva is appropriate, at Purim, and Yom KiPurim. Don't forget what they did for hate, and what we can do for love.

L'Maaseh



After the war, a group of orphaned boys made their way to America and were enrolled to learn in Mesivta Tiferes Yerushalayim, **Rav Moshe Feinstein's** yeshiva. These boys came without money, and really without too much clothing either. A friend and supporter of the yeshiva, Mr. L. Friedman, generously sponsored the cost of suits for each of these boys.

A short while later, Mr. Friedman was honoured at the yeshiva's dinner and in the course of the evening, one of the speakers mentioned Mr. Friedman's generous donation of suits and asked for all of these boys to stand up as a way of thanking Mr. Friedman.

As soon as R' Moshe heard this, he jumped up from his seat and stood straight, knowing that everyone else would stand in order to honour him as Rosh Yeshiva, and thereby, preventing undue embarrassment to these few boys who received these suits!



כִּי־תֵצֵא מַחֲנֶה עַל־אֹיְבֶיךָ וְנִשְׁמַרְתָּ מִכֹּל דָּבָר רָע – *'When a camp goes out against your enemies, you shall beware of everything evil.'*

In a fiery *shmuess* delivered by **R' Gamliel Rabinowitz *shlita*** a number of years ago, he commented on an interesting phenomenon: How during *Elul* everyone is busy looking for *segulos* and mystical *kabbalos* to achieve the goal of *Teshuva* - repentance. Everyone is looking for the "easy way" out! That's all great, he exclaimed, but how about learning *halacha*?

How about opening up a *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* and learning through the necessary and applicable laws? This is a great way to do *Teshuvah* - to come back to *Hashem*. By knowing the *halachos* and what He wants of you.

There are 74 *mitzvos* in *Parshas Ki Seitzai* which equals the *gematria* of "**דע**" - to KNOW! The greatest way to know an author is by studying his book. The greatest way to KNOW *Hashem*, is by studying the *Torah* which is *Hashem's* will.

Learning the will of *Hashem* will actually teach us strategies to overcome the impulses of the heart and give us the tools to deal with difficult people and stressful situations in life.

The number 74 - the amount of *mitzvos* in this week's *parsha* - is also the numerical value of "**עד**" which means to bear witness, for only the laws of *Torah*, and how one keeps them properly and correctly, can bear testimony to a person's true level of overcoming his *yetzer hara* and returning to *Hashem*.

May we all be *zoche* to be such a witness.



The great sage Rav once said that the **יצר הרע** is similar to a fly. **ברכות סא**.



What is a fly? A fly is a tiny pest that is very good at annoying you. Chazal say that **לעתיד לבא**, the **רשעים** will see the **שטן** is tiny and they will cry about how foolish they were that they did not realize how tiny the **שטן** really was.

The Maharsha points out that the **שטן** being compared to a fly shows that the **שטן** is not really a big scary monster, rather, like a fly that is a little tiny weak creature. A fly knows exactly the right buttons to push. As soon as we think we pushed him away, he comes back from a new direction. The battle continues, but we can win over the fly.

I once heard **בשם** an **אדם גדול** a great vort, he said that flies are naturally attracted to dead meat, even more than live meat. For example: if one will see a dead animal in the street, there will be tens of flies on it.

We know that Torah is a protection against the **יצר הרע**. Therefore, the way it works is that since Torah is life, as long as a person learns, he is alive, so the "fly" is not as attracted to him. Whereas, when a person is not *liggin* in learning, he is like dead meat, and the "flies" are right there. That is, the **יצר הרע** gets much more intense.

That is why it is so important on Friday, Shabbosim and especially **בין הזמנים** not to leave your **שייכות** to learning a certain amount every day in order that you should have the "OFF" spray to keep away the flies, that is, to keep away the **יצר הרע** from attacking from all directions.

The Marvelous Segulah in Auschwitz



We often find ourselves in difficult situations, confronted by one adversity after another and in constant conflict with other people's desires. **R. Chaim Volozhin** (*Nefesh HaChaim*, part 3, ch. 12) writes that there is a very powerful *segulah* to overcome all this: When you find yourself in trying circumstances, remember that nothing can affect you when you firmly decide in your heart to believe that Hashem is the true G-d, and that there is no independent power anywhere in the universe besides Him. Everything is His will, and His will alone.

Clear your heart of all other thoughts and ignore everything else. Subjugate yourself to the Master of all, and cling to Him with your entire being. Then the Almighty will cause all powers and alien desires in the world to disappear, leaving behind no effect whatsoever.

R' Chaim continues: "A person must implant within his heart the knowledge that 'G-d is the only true power and there is no force in the universe besides Him.' He must make himself completely dependent upon G-d, paying no heed to any other power or will in the world... When he does this – making his mind entirely subservient to Hashem and totally focusing his thoughts on the One G-d, blessed be He – then the Almighty will cause all forces and desires in the world to be null and void against him, and nothing will have any effect

upon him whatsoever... Whatever he declares — will take place, and he will be able to perform many wondrous acts and miracles that are in opposition to the natural forces of the cosmos..."

The Belzer Maggid, Rav Menashe Yisroel Reizman, related that his wife's grandfather, R' Eliezer Dovid Ganzfried, was a survivor of Auschwitz. Every survivor of the camps had a number burned into their arm by the Nazis. However, R' Ganzfried had a second number engraved on his arm. But this number was stricken out, it had a line going through it, indicating it was void. There is a very moving story behind this.

When he arrived at Auschwitz he was a mere 12 years old. At the entrance to the camp stood the monster Mengele, (may his name be blotted out). Mengele was doing the "selektzia" on the poor Jews: Right, Left. There was no way to avoid him or escape. He would evaluate each inmate by his height and appearance of health and decide: "Left" meant to die with a Kiddush Hashem. Right meant to be enslaved in the work camps.

Miraculously, in spite of the fact that he was a mere 12-year-old, he was sent to the right to the work camps. However, that cursed villain would come again every several weeks to "re-inspect" his charges and do a new "selektzia." In one of these "selektzias", the *rosha* looked at him and sent him to the "left".

Everyone understood very well what "left" meant. They could see the smoke rising from the chimneys of the Death Camp. When he was sent to the left the young boy made a quick calculation. "If I go to the left it's my death. It's worth it for me to take a chance and sneak off to the right. The worst thing that could happen is that they'll kill me on the spot. I'm going to die anyway."

Mengele had his back towards him, so he grabbed the opportunity and walked to the right. To his *mazal* Mengele's aid spotted him. He ran over to the boy and grabbed him and brought him back to Mengele and told him that he went to the right.

As he was being dragged back to the *rosha* the boy said to himself, "I am now in the hands of Hakodosh Boruch Hu alone." He remembered being taught in *cheider* the marvelous *segulah* of the *Nefesh HaChaim*, so he immediately concentrated on it with all his might.

אין עוד מלבדו – "Nobody can help me now. Only Hashem."

He concentrated on this as he stood in front of the cursed *rosha*. "Life and death are only in Hashem's hand."

Then the miracle occurred. Mengele looked at him and told his aid, "This child belongs to the right."

The Germans were exceedingly well organized, so when he was instructed to go left, his number had been immediately stricken through with a line to void it since he was already considered a dead man. So, they had to burn a new number on his arm. "The first Eliezer Dovid was burnt in the crematorium, but the second was still alive!"

The struggle was to live with **אין עוד מלבדו** even when our *neshamos* were seemingly in the hands of the cursed Nazis, even when we saw Mengele deciding who goes right and who goes left. Our job is to concentrate with all our might on true *emunah* and say with all of our soul, everything is in the hands of the Ribbono Shel Olam. **אין עוד מלבדו** - this is what Dovid HaMelech is telling us.

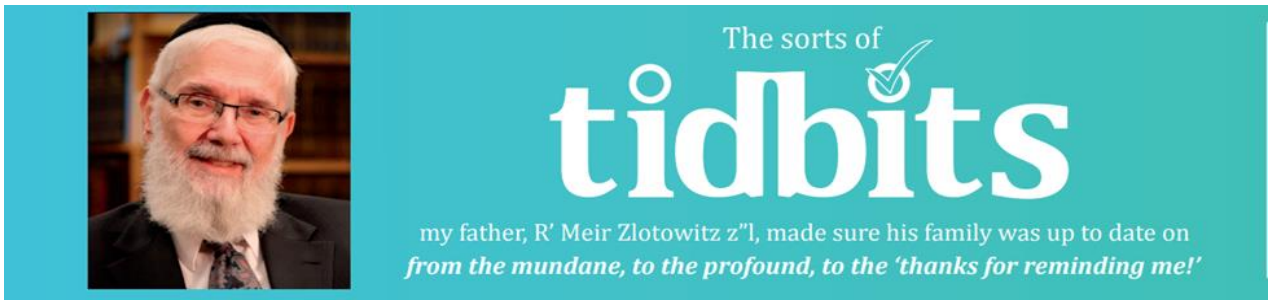
'*Even when I was passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and survival was totally impossible there because death was all around me. And yet I did survive. That is the biggest proof that You are there with me! You weren't over there, distant. You were right here next to me*!'

When everything is bright and rosy, then the natural tendency of the person is that this is the time to see the *siyata d'shmaya*. Hashem has a part in my success. The *Hashgacha Elyona* is not distant; it's right here.

The opposite is the truth. When everything is black, when there's absolutely no chance to survive; only when every avenue of escape is blocked, then we can see the *Hashgacha Elyona* that Hashem is right here with me, guiding me, taking care of me, caring for me. Only then is His presence so crystal clear.

This is the *avodah* set out for us during these days of Elul in preparation for the Days of Judgment. Hashem now comes close to us and wants us to find Him.

אֲנִי לְדוֹדִי וְדוֹדִי לִי = אלול – "*I am for my beloved, and my beloved is for me*" (R' Eliezer Parkoff)



For the Shabbos Table

זָכֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה לְךָ עֲמָלֵק בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם "*Remember that which Amalek did to you*" (Devarim 25:17)

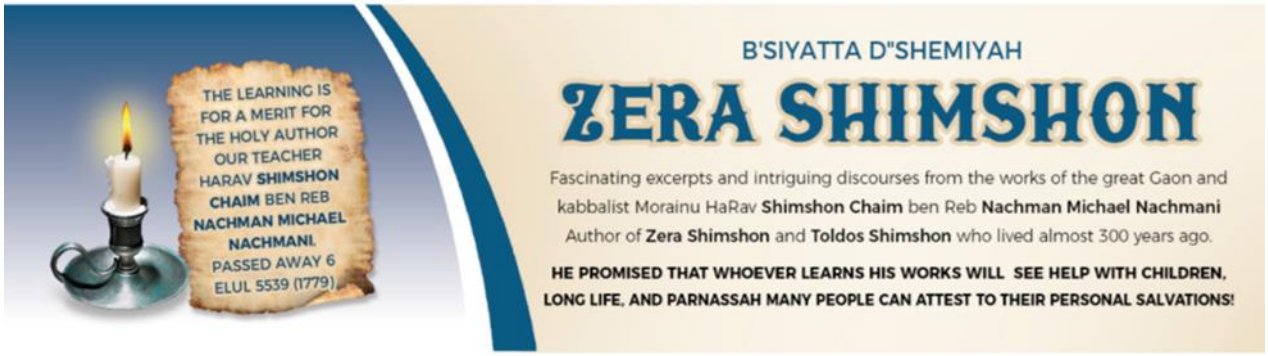


This Mitzvah to remember the attack of Amalek follows immediately after the prohibition of utilizing inaccurate weights and measurements to cheat a customer.

Rashi explains that this teaches us that being dishonest in business results in the punishment of being attacked by enemies.

Rashi in Parashas Beha'aloscha however, implies that the cause of Amalek's attack was a lack of Emunah in Hashem. How does this align with Rashi's explanation in our Parasha?

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l explains that one who succumbs to the sin of theft once or twice has allowed his desires to get a hold of him. However, a person who operates his entire business using inaccurate scales and measurements is far worse. Aside from the thievery, he is displaying a complete lack of faith in Hashem's ability to provide for him through honest means. The use of dishonest weights is thus a symptom of the root problem of an absence of Emunah, which is the reason for Amalek's attack as stated by Rashi in Parashas Beha'aloscha.



You shall not have in your pouch a (faulty) weight. You shall not have in your house etc. A perfect and honest weight / measure you shall have etc. (25:13-15)

The Mishna says (Avos 4:13), that a person who does a Mitzva acquires a **פרקליט**, a defending angel. The Zera Shimshon offers an interesting insight into why a defending angel is called a **פרקליט**.

The Yalkut (Shimoni §938) makes the following drasha on the passuk mentioned above. Blessings continue to bless the one's that make themselves deserving of them and curses continue to curse those that make themselves susceptible to them. The Yalkut reads this into these pessukim by punctuating the pessukim in a completely new way.

You shall not have (meaning you will not have success, blessing, the means to do business etc.). Period. The reason is because of the faulty weights that you have in your pouch, house etc. You shall have

(success, blessing, the means to do business etc.). Period. The reason being - due to your honest weights in your house, pouch etc.

The Gemara says (Sotah 21a), that according to Rava, the Mitzva that a person does protects him both at the time that he is actually performing the Mitzva and continues to be a source of protection even after he is no longer performing the Mitzva. However, when a person does a Mitzva and also does an Aveira, then technically the blessing generated by the Mitzva should be negated by the curse generated by the Aveira.

The Zera Shimshon writes that this is not the case. In such a scenario, the Mitzva would still protect in the face of the Aveira. And this is hinted to in the general name of the angel created by the Mitzva - **פרקליט**. - The word is actually made up of two words, **פרק**, to save, **ליט**, curse. In other words, the angels created by one's Mitzva saves him from curses. Meaning that on top of the blessing which come as a result of the Mitzva that he did, the angel also saves him from curses that could be coming from his sins, hence that appropriate name - **פרקליט**.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

HaRav Yizchok Zilberstein, Shlita, once related a remarkable incident that occurred a number of years ago. A poor widow had approached **HaRav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, zt"l**, with a heavy heart. She had several children at home who were of marriageable age, but she had no means to marry them off. Her situation was well known in her neighbourhood: a home filled with good children, each one waiting for their turn to get married and build a Jewish home, and a mother who, simply, did not have the resources to help them towards that step. Seeing her distress, HaRav Michel Yehuda took up the cause. He wrote a heartfelt letter of recommendation on her behalf, describing her situation and urging generous Jews to assist her.

Once the letter was written, he handed it to a *meshulach* he knew who would travel abroad to collect funds for worthy causes. This emissary took the letter with him on his next trip. When he arrived in Jewish communities overseas, he presented the letter, and the response was overwhelming. Jews opened their hearts and gave generously. Through the funds collected with that letter, the widow succeeded, with Hashem's help, in marrying off one child after another. In time, five children were married – each wedding made possible through the power of that single letter written by Harav Michel Yehuda.

Years passed, and HaRav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz eventually left this world. After his passing, a dispute suddenly arose between the widow and the *meshulach* regarding the ownership of the letter. The *meshulach* claimed that since the letter had been entrusted to him for the purpose of fundraising, it belonged to him. The widow argued that since the letter had been written for her benefit, it was rightfully hers. Each one insisted the letter 'is mine'!

Ordinarily, such a disagreement might have been resolved through standard halachic principles. But this case had a unique complication. Although the letter had already completed its function – the widow had married off all her children – it now possessed a new kind of value. HaRav Michel Yehuda's handwriting, after his passing, had become extremely valuable as Judaica. Collectors would pay significant sums for even a small handwritten note from such a revered Torah sage. The letter, therefore, was no longer merely a fundraising tool; it had become a valuable item in its own right.

Faced with this unusual situation, HaRav Zilberstein turned to his father-in-law, the great posek, **HaRav Yosef Sholem Elyashiv, zt"l**. He presented the question: two people were holding the letter, each claiming full ownership. How should the matter be ruled?

HaRav Elyashiv's response was immediate and unequivocal. "There is no question here," he said. "The letter does not belong to either this one or that one. It is forbidden to leave it with either the *meshulach* or the widow. Rather, it must be burned."

HaRav Elyashiv explained his reasoning. Although the letter had already fulfilled its purpose, its continued existence posed a danger. Because Reb Michel Yehuda's handwriting was now worth a fortune, the letter could easily become an obstacle in the future. Someone might use it to collect money unlawfully, presenting it as a legitimate fundraising document even though its purpose had long since ended. The temptation would be too great, the opportunity too inviting. By destroying the letter, they would fulfil the Torah's command, '*U'biarta hara mikirbecha*' – remove the potential for wrongdoing from your midst. Like the *Levi'im* needed to be protected from the holiness of the *Keilim* whilst transporting them in the *Midbar*, lest they be harmed so, too, do we need to be protected from items that could be misused and cause us harm.

In HaRav Elyashiv's view, the letter had the capacity to become a stumbling block. Eliminating it was the only way to ensure that no one could ever misuse it. The letter that had once brought blessing to a struggling widow and her children was respectfully destroyed out of deep concern for the integrity of the community and the avoidance of future sin.

Good Shabbos

Aaron Leitner

"Elul reveals the hidden spark within every Jew. When that spark is stirred, even a small act becomes a great light." ~ Sfas Emes.



שלח תשלח את האם ואת הבנים תקח לך למען ייטב לך וכו' (כב-ז)

The Mitzvah of sending away the mother bird in order to take the young birds can be explained as follows: Can a man capture in his hand a bird in mid-flight, that is much quicker and able to fly away faster than a person can grab it? Probably not. But the minute that the mother bird is sitting on her young and the hunter comes near, the mother is anxious about the welfare of her young and she will not leave them.

Consequently, explains **R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld ZT"L**, the Rov of Yerushalayim, the hunter takes advantage of the mother's dedication and compassion for her young. The Torah tells us therefore, **שלח תשלח את האם** - Send away the mother. A person has no right to take advantage of a mother's compassion for her young.

As a result, Chazal tell us that if one fulfills the commandment of **שילוח הקן**, and has the proper compassion for a mother protecting her children, he is worthy himself and will merit having children of his own. As the Posuk states Send you shall send the mother away and take the children for yourself. The meaning of this is that through performance of this Mitzvah, you too, shall have children.

R' Yeshaya Halevi Hurvitz, the Shla"h Hakodosh would say:

"If you have risen to a high degree, fulfill the Mitzvah ועשית מעקה לגגך - make a guardrail for your roof. Fence in and barricade your arrogance and haughtiness, for if not - you will fail!"

Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

Learning Menachos Before a Bris



Who used his time as well as Rav Chaim? He never wasted a moment!

"Over thirty years ago, Rav Chaim came to be sandek at a bris in my yeshivah," says one of his talmidim. "He came into the beis midrash after a long trip — he'd been traveling more than an hour — and went right to the bookshelves. He took a Gemara Menachos and began to learn the halachos at the end of the Gemara. One hundred yeshivah bachurim and all our teachers waited for the bris to begin, while Rav Chaim focused on his Gemara. It was as if no one else was in the room with him.

"We waited around for more than twenty minutes, until the person who'd come with Rav Chaim asked the baby's father, 'Why isn't the bris starting?'"

"'We're waiting for Rav Chaim to finish learning so he can be sandek,' he said.

"The man who'd come with Rav Chaim smiled. 'If that's what you're waiting for, you'll be here until tonight,' he said. 'He can learn like this for hours. Start the bris. Say "Rav Chaim is to be sandek" loudly, and he'll come.'"

Rags

Shlomo HaMelech says about Torah, "It's worth more than pearls, and all you have is not worth as much as it." Rav Chaim lives by those words.

By looking, you can tell what Rav Chaim loves. His house is full of floor-to-ceiling bookshelves.

"Why don't you ever paint the house?" someone asks his rebbetzin.

"What would we paint?" she asks with a smile. "There's no wall space. It's all covered in bookshelves."

When Rav Chaim visited a grandchild, he saw the display case in the living room. He looked at the silver on its shelves and asked, "What are all these rags?"

"That's our silver!"

"When you run out of room for *sefarim*, you'll take this junk out and use the shelves for more *sefarim*."

That is how the rebbetzin feels about silver too. None of it is worth anything to her. There is always room for *sefarim*, but where would she find place to put rags?

Opening a Bottle of Wine

Rav Elazar Tzadok Turchin was Rav Chaim's neighbor. Together they wrote the *sefer Shoneh Halachos*.

One Shabbos, Rav Elazar Tzadok couldn't open his bottle of wine. He had to make Kiddush on his challos.

After the meal, he told Rav Chaim, who was surprised. 'Don't you know that if you can't open a bottle, you knock your knife on the top of the cork? Then it comes out easily!' Rav Chaim showed him how, and the bottle opened easily.

Rav Turchin asked Rav Chaim how he knew that.

'The *Shulchan Aruch* says that if you can't open a barrel of wine that you need on Shabbos, you can hit it. Hitting the barrel with a bit of metal makes it easy to open.' He didn't use strength or logic; he knew what was written in the *Shulchan Aruch*.

Above All, Talmud Torah

Where should I live? Which of the two apartments should I buy? When buying an apartment, most people think about how many rooms it has, what floor it's on, how big it is, and how much it costs. But this time, the details are halachic. If it's a matter of halachah, it's best to ask Rav Chaim.

"I can choose one of two apartments," the man says. "One is on the third floor, and the other is on the fourth floor. If I buy the one on the third floor, I'll be able to light my menorah in the best way; the third floor is less than twenty amos from the ground. The fourth floor is higher than that, but there I'll be able to perform the mitzvah of building a fence around the roof, which is d'Oraisa. Which should I buy?"

Rav Chaim's answer surprises him. "Buy the apartment on the third floor," he says. "It takes less time to go up the stairs to the third floor, so there will be less bitul Torah."

There is a difference between improving in spirituality and changing. It is possible to find people who elevate themselves, who improve and become better, greater, loftier, and more pleasant individuals. But to find a person who has changed – that is a truly precious thing.~ R' Nosson Wachtfogel.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - Everything a Person Does— He Does for Himself

Rav Amram Binnet shared this personal account, which he heard directly from the person whom it happened to.

"Over twenty years ago, I was a young and ambitious man, and I decided to go into business. I began importing goods from abroad, exporting other products from Eretz Yisrael, moving around a lot of money, and baruch Hashem, I was very successful.

"Still, I was careful to keep my learning seder. Every evening, I'd drive to a regular shiur in a shul in another neighborhood. The maggid shiur there had an amazing style of explanation, and I connected deeply with his way of teaching.

"There was another man who attended that shiur who lived near me. Every night, he would ask me for a ride. He wasn't the most interesting conversationalist, but why not do chessed for a fellow Yid?

"Every night, I'd drive him happily. Sometimes I'd think, 'Why is he always tagging along? What did I do to deserve this?' But I'd push the thought away, telling myself, 'Hashem gave you a car. Share that bruchah with another Yid. Don't keep everything for yourself. Hashem can take it away in an instant!'

"This went on for years—until things turned around for me. One loss led to another, and I found myself in fifty thousand dollars' worth of debt. That's a massive sum even today, and back then, it was worth three times the current value. I was in terrible financial distress. I knew that if I didn't immediately secure a fifty-thousand-dollar loan, I'd have to declare bankruptcy and that would be the end. But who would lend me money when I was already so deeply in debt?

"I became more and more anxious. I felt like the sand in the hourglass was running out, and that I was about to become a

pauper. No house, no car—nothing. Things got worse and worse, but even amid the pressure, I kept my commitment to limud haTorah.

"Every evening, I still went to my shiur. And afterward, I drove the same man home. He would ask questions that I had no patience to answer.

"One night, as I felt the noose tightening around my neck, I went to the shiur but couldn't concentrate. I knew he'd wait for me after, but I decided to escape. Ten minutes before the shiur was about to end, I slipped out quietly and headed to my car.

"But who came running after me? My neighbor. He saw me leave and ran to catch up. I felt like I would explode.

"He came up to me breathlessly, and asked, 'Can I come with you?'

"I thought of saying no. Of coming up with some excuse like, 'I have to stop at my mother-in-law's to pick up dips for Shabbos,' or something similar, but I stopped myself.

'It's not his fault that I'm under pressure,' I thought. 'I want Hashem to treat me *lifnim mishuras hadin*, even when it's not exactly pleasant— so how can I treat another Yid this way?'

"Of course you can come,' I told him, and we started driving. "The man looked at me and asked, 'Tell me, what's going on with you? You've been off for days. What's the story?'

"I couldn't contain myself and almost exploded, but then I reigned in on my emotions and managed to 'explode' only halfway.

"Why do you care?' I snapped. 'Why are you asking? If I tell you I'm in debt and need fifty thousand dollars, can you help me? No! So what does it matter why I'm upset? I'm upset because my entire life is falling apart!'

"His response stunned me. 'Who says I can't help you?' he asked. 'Maybe I can.'

"I slammed the brakes right there in the middle of the road. 'Are you playing games with me?' I said. 'I owe fifty thousand dollars—do you understand?'

"He pointed at the road. 'You're blocking traffic. Keep driving. This time, take me all the way to my house so I can bring you fifty thousand dollars.'



"I didn't know what to think. I drove him home. He told me to wait a few minutes. Then, he went inside and came back out with a thick envelope full of fifty thousand dollars in fresh bills.

"Not only that, he gave it to me as a loan repayable in fifty $1000 instalments. He said that if repaying the loan would be hard some months, I could delay payment by a month or two. The money wasn't urgent to him. All he asked was that I try to repay it all within six years, if it wouldn't be too difficult for me.

"The man saved my life! Because of him, I was able to get back on my feet. I may not be as wealthy as I was in my days of tremendous abundance, but I'm doing very well. *Baruch Hashem*, I lack nothing. I thought I was doing him a favor... but in the end, I saw that I was really doing a tremendous favor for myself."

The Secret To A Good Life

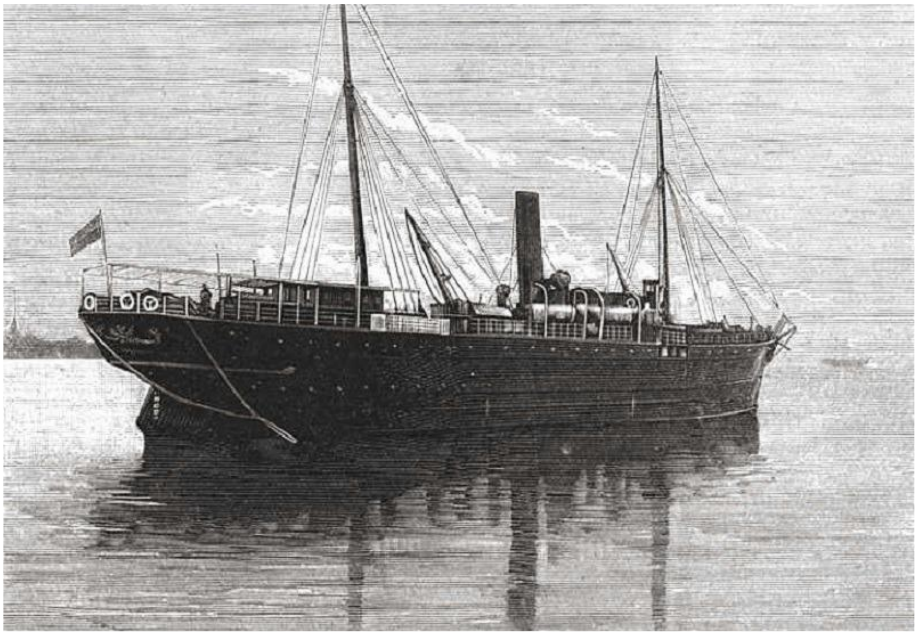
Every step a person takes for another—he saves himself a thousand steps! ~ Rav Shlomo of Zvhil.

WEEKLY TESHUVAH INSIGHTS FROM THE MAHARSHAM OF BREZHAN

THE MAHARSHAM PROJECT



שו"ת מהרש"ם



A period engraving of the steamer Vladimir, which went down in the Black Sea on the night of 26 June 1894 with more than seventy souls lost.

A soldier takes a few days' leave and boards the steamer Vladimir to sail home to see his wife. The ship goes down in the Black Sea. Now only the accounts of survivors, an officer's words from a hospital bed, and a photograph stand between Chana Feiga and a lifetime of iggun.

On a June night in 1894, the passenger steamer Vladimir went down in the Black Sea with many aboard. Among them was Yeshaya, a Jewish soldier who had taken a short leave to sail home to Odessa and see his wife. He never arrived, and no body was ever recovered. His wife, Chana Feiga, could not remarry unless a beis din could establish that her husband had truly died.

With no body, could the accounts of fellow passengers, a rescued officer, and a photograph free her from iggun?

The she'eilah reached the Maharsham in the summer of 1898, four years after the sinking, from the Rav of Odessa, HaRav Avraham Yoel Abelson. A woman of his city, Chana Feiga, had been left an

agunah. Her husband, Yeshaya ben Ovadia Abramovsky, was a soldier who had taken a shtar chufsha, a short military leave, to travel home and see his wife. He sailed from Batum on the steamer Vladimir, and the ship went down in the sea on the night of 26 June 1894, together with a number of other passengers.

The beis din had gathered what testimony it could. Two Jewish passengers who had sailed with Yeshaya, and knew him by name, told the same story: as the ship began to founder, each of them leapt into the sea, and each looked back to see Yeshaya still aboard among the others, and then watched the ship go under. Neither could say he saw the man actually drown. Later, each was shown a photograph of Yeshaya at his wife's request, and each recognized him at once.

One of the two also met a surviving officer, a non-Jew who had been Yeshaya's own commanding officer, and the officer said plainly that Yeshaya had drowned.

Chana Feiga herself added the last piece. She had gone to that officer while he lay in the hospital, still ill from his own near drowning. He recognized her, saying that her husband had given him her photograph, and he described Yeshaya's final moments in the water.

The question the Maharsham had to weigh was whether all of this, eyewitness accounts that stop just short of the death itself, an officer's report reaching beis din second-hand, and a photograph used to fix the man's identity, was enough to lift a woman out of iggun. And because Yeshaya had left no children and had a brother, she was also a yevamah, who would need chalitzah before she could marry again.

His answer weighs four strands: what it means that the man was seen on a sinking ship but not seen to die, the officer's account of the water in his throat, the photograph used to confirm his

identity, and the delicate question of testimony that first passed through the mouth of a non-Jew.

1. Seen on a Sinking Ship, Not Seen to Die

This is the classic difficulty of the agunah. The witnesses saw Yeshaya on the deck as the ship went under, then turned and swam for their own lives and saw no more. No one watched him die.

The Maharsham therefore looks for the indicators that press the case from likely to certain. The leave document itself is one: Yeshaya had taken a short furlough with a heavy penalty hanging over him if he did not return on time, so his failure ever to come back is itself evidence that he did not survive.

Another is the place he was last seen. He went down with the ship, in the whirlpool that opens when a vessel sinks, from which, as everyone knew, no swimmer escapes. These are the raglayim la'davar, the feet the matter stands on, and the Maharsham gathers them carefully.

2. The Water in His Throat

The officer had described how, as he jumped, the water was already gurgling in Yeshaya's throat. The Rav of Odessa wished to treat this as the state of a goses, one in his final moments, from whom the halacha does not expect survival.

The Maharsham examines the idea with care rather than seizing it. He traces it through the Panim Meiros, cited in the Pischei Teshuvah, and through a well-known tension in Tosafos between what they write in Yevamos and in Sanhedrin about whether a goses at the hands of man may yet live. He notes that the Bircas Yosef had raised strong reservations about leaning on this at all. In the end he does not rest the heter on it. He keeps it as one strand among several, honest about how much weight it can bear.

3. A Photograph to Fix the Man

Here the case turns on something the older sefarim never had. Twice the identity of the drowned man is settled by a photograph. The two passengers each recognized Yeshaya from the picture the wife produced, and the officer, in the hospital, recognized her from a photograph her own husband had carried and handed him. In a world where a soldier could travel far from home among strangers, the photograph becomes the siman that ties the man they sailed with to the woman's husband.

The Maharsham treats it as the world had begun to treat it, as a means of identification the beis din can use, folding a brand-new thing into the old law of establishing who a man was.

4. Testimony Heard from a Non-Jew

The officer's account is the most delicate strand, because it enters beis din through a non-Jew. Halacha will accept what a non-Jew lets slip when he is speaking mesiach lefi tumo, with no notion that his words carry any weight, and the Maharsham works the sugya through the Taz, who is lenient where a Jew relays such a report, against the Mabit, who is strict. He leans toward the lenient authorities, the Shaar Efraim and others, but he is scrupulous about a snag: the wife's own account seemed to contradict itself, for she first said the officer knew her as Yeshaya's wife from the photograph, and later said she never told him who she was. Where the officer may have been answering her questions rather than speaking freely, the Maharsham does not treat his words as standing on their own. He joins them to the case only as a tziruf, one more support among the indicators already gathered, and no further.

A husband last seen on a deck the sea was swallowing whole, and a wife who would stay chained for life unless the law could be at once exacting and merciful.

The details belong to a world that was changing under the Maharsham's pen. A Jew is a conscript in the Tsar's army, far

from home, traveling by a steamer across the Black Sea, carrying a photograph of his wife while she keeps one of him. A generation earlier none of this would have reached a she'eilah at all. The Vladimir was a Black Sea passenger steamer of the Russian shipping company, sailing the mail route from Batum to Odessa when it collided with the Italian steamer Columbia and went down, with more than seventy of its passengers and crew lost.

What makes the teshuvah remarkable is not the tragedy, which was all too common, but the calm with which the Maharsham receives its modern evidence. He does not wave the photograph away as something the Shulchan Aruch never names, nor lean on it more than it can hold. He measures it, the officer's words, and the survivors' accounts against the settled law of the agunah, and does what the poskim of his stature always did for a woman left chained: he finds every honest reason to free her, and then binds himself to the agreement of others before he will.

Don't Wait Until It's Gone by Rabbi Nachum Scheiner

There was a man who lived on the outskirts of Cincinnati on a large property with plenty of open land. He had an unusual hobby. He loved to fly. But this wasn't someone who occasionally rented a plane for the afternoon. He actually owned his own small airplane. His property was large enough that he had his own area for taking off and landing. The plane sat right there in his backyard.

The way most people walk outside, get into the car and pull out of the driveway, this man could walk into his backyard, climb into his plane and take off. And he did. For years. In fact, he had been flying for an incredible 53 years. Flying was simply part of his life.

Until one day, everything changed. The man suffered a heart attack. Baruch Hashem, he experienced a remarkable recovery. Eventually, he felt completely back to normal. He underwent the

necessary medical examinations, including the required tests to determine whether it was safe for him to fly again. He passed. His doctors considered him healthy enough to return to the cockpit. There was only one problem. He needed the FAA to recertify his pilot's license.

He submitted the medical documentation. He filled out the paperwork. And then the problems began. One letter arrived asking for something. He provided it. Then another issue arose. He addressed that one. Then came another hurdle. And another. No matter what he did, he simply could not get his license back. Meanwhile, his airplane remained exactly where it had always been. In his backyard. He could look out the window and see it. The plane was there. He was healthy. He knew how to fly. But he couldn't get into the cockpit and take off.

Days became months. Months became years. For three years, the man who had spent more than half a century flying was grounded. Eventually, someone suggested that he attend a convention for private pilots. It was an opportunity for people who flew recreationally to meet one another, network and discuss aviation. Representatives of the FAA would also be there. Perhaps, someone suggested, he could finally find a way through the bureaucracy that had kept him grounded.

So he went. And at the convention, something remarkable happened. He met the very person who had been involved with the letters concerning his case. He explained the entire situation. They reviewed what had happened. And by the time the convention was over, the seemingly endless process finally came to an end. He had his certification. After three years, he could fly again.

Imagine his excitement. The next day, he walked into his backyard. His plane was waiting. After three long years, he was finally about to climb inside and return to the sky. But then he stopped. He had waited three years for this moment. He could have jumped into

the cockpit immediately. Instead, he paused. And he asked himself a question. Why? Why had Hashem made him wait three years? He had been flying for 53 years. Then suddenly, this privilege had been taken away. Why? What was he supposed to learn from those three years?

And as he stood beside the airplane, an answer came to him. It was painful in its simplicity. "I never said thank You." For 53 years, Hashem had given him the ability to fly. He had the health to do it. The eyesight. The strength. The knowledge. The financial ability to own an airplane. The property on which to keep it. The freedom to walk into his backyard and soar into the sky. And somewhere along the way, something extraordinary had become ordinary. He had simply expected it to be there. He hadn't stopped to appreciate it. He hadn't stopped to say: "Hashem, thank You."

Now, after three years of looking at a plane he couldn't fly, he finally understood what a gift those 53 years had been. And before getting back into the cockpit - he said thank You.

Don't Wait Until It's Gone

Rabbi Nachum Scheiner points out that there is a powerful lesson here. So often, we recognize Hashem's gifts only when something goes wrong. A person goes through life without giving much thought to the fact that his body functions properly. Then, chas v'shalom, something as basic as going to the bathroom becomes difficult.

Suddenly, Asher Yatzar takes on an entirely different meaning. A person realizes: What an unbelievable gift it is when the body simply works. But why should we have to lose something before appreciating it? Why wait until we cannot see properly to thank Hashem for our eyes? Why wait until walking becomes difficult to appreciate our legs? Why wait until we're weak to appreciate our

strength? Why wait until something we love is taken away before realizing how fortunate we were to have it?

We are surrounded by gifts. The ability to wake up. To breathe. To see. To hear. To walk. To think. To speak. To learn. To daven. To spend time with the people we love. So many miracles happen every day with such regularity that we stop calling them miracles.

Perhaps the lesson of this story is very simple. Stop. Before something is missing. Before something changes. Before we are forced to recognize what we once had. Look around at what Hashem has already given us. Think about one thing that has become so normal that we barely notice it anymore. And say: "Hashem, thank You."

That pilot had flown for 53 years. It took three years on the ground for him to understand the gift he had possessed all along. We don't have to wait three years. We don't have to wait until something is taken away. We can recognize the gifts while we still have them. We can appreciate the miracles while they're still happening. And we can thank Hashem - ***before we're reminded how precious they really are.***

Sage Sayings

Source: Heard from R' Shmuel Waldman, שליט"א

R' Akiva Eiger, זצ"ל, had a very unusual close relationship with all of his תַּלְמִידִים. He loved each one of them dearly and he treated every one of them with the utmost respect and concern. In the many letters to his students, he never once addressed any one of them as תַּלְמִידִי (my students). He would say, "וועֶר וויֵס וועֶר האָט געֶלעֶרנט מעֶר פון וועֶמעֶן? — Who knows which of us learned more from whom?"



TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

Rav Avigdor Miller zt"l – Ellul -Ten Easy Steps to Greatness

Rav Miller begins with the words of Mishlei:

חֲכַם־לֵב יִקַּח מִצְוֹת, וֶאֱוִיל שְׂפָתַיִם יִלָּבֵט— the wise person *takes hold of mitzvos*, while the "fool of lips" talks about great ideals but never acts.

Many of us want to become better people, but the road to perfection seems so long that we postpone it. Rav Miller's answer is: **don't wait to become great. Start small — but start immediately.** Even one small daily action can change a person.

He therefore gives ten simple practices. The important thing is not merely to hear them, but to actually do them.

1. Olam Haba — 30 seconds a day

Every day, spend 30 seconds thinking about Olam Haba.

We spend our lives thinking about Olam Hazeh, while forgetting that this world is only a פְּרוֹזְדוֹר— a corridor leading to the World to Come: הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה דּוֹמֶה לִפְרוֹזְדוֹר בִּפְנֵי הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא.

Our homes, businesses, streets and daily activities are all part of the preparation. Thirty seconds a day thinking about Olam Haba helps put everything else into perspective and brings simchah because we remember where we are ultimately headed.

2. Ahavas Hashem — say four words

Once a day, privately say: **"I love You, Hashem."**

We say וְאָהַבְתָּ אֵת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ every day, but Rav Miller asks: *When do we actually express that love?*

Even a small amount of genuine ahavah is precious. The words themselves can awaken the feeling. As the Chovos Halevavos says: הַמַּחְשָׁבָה אַחַר הַדִּבּוּר— thoughts follow words.

When you enjoy something — good food, warmth, health, a beautiful day — use it as an opportunity to think, **"I love You, Hashem, for giving me this."**

3. Secret Chessed

Every day, perform one act of chessed that nobody knows about. It could be putting away sefarim, cleaning something, helping someone, removing something dangerous from the sidewalk, or quietly doing something for your family.

The key is the **intention**: do it specifically because you want to perform a chessed **לשם שמים**, not because anyone expects it or will notice. - **One secret chessed every day.**

4. Encouragement

Every day, give someone a word of encouragement.

A husband can encourage his wife; a wife her husband; parents their children; a rebbi his talmid; a person can encourage a friend or even a stranger.

People carry burdens that we don't see. A few sincere words can give someone tremendous strength.

Rav Miller relates that an encouraging word said to him when he was a child remained in his memory for almost seventy years. **That is the power of encouragement.**

5. Cheshbon Hanefesh — one minute

Spend **one minute every day** reviewing the previous day.

Ask yourself:

- What did I do well?

- Where did I fail?
- Did I use my time properly?
- Did I daven properly?
- How did I speak to my spouse?
- Did I help my children?
- Did I behave properly toward others?

נַחְפְּשָׂה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחְקֹרָה— "Let us search out and examine our ways."

Even one minute of honest reflection is enormously valuable. A person who learns to stop and think about where he is going becomes a different person.

6. Eating L'shem Shamayim

Before one meal a day, say: **"I am eating l'shem Shamayim."**

We need food to have strength to serve Hashem — to work, learn Torah, raise children and do mitzvos.

The Rambam teaches that eating can even be a means of coming closer to knowledge of Hashem.

You don't have to pretend that you don't enjoy the food. Simply **add the intention** that you're eating in order to have the strength to serve Hashem.

Even eating a piece of bread can become an opportunity to recognize the miracles of Hashem.

7. Tzelem Elokim

Every day, look at another person's face and think: **"I am looking at a Tzelem Elokim." -** The Torah says: בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ.

Every Jew possesses a neshamah created by Hashem. We have to train ourselves to see the dignity and greatness of another person rather than merely seeing a physical face.

The Gemara teaches that striking another person's face is considered as though one struck the Shechinah.

Even when you look in the mirror, remember: **Tzelem Elokim.**

8. Smile

Once a day, deliberately **smile at another person**.

The Tomer Devorah teaches us to emulate Hashem. We ask: **יָאֵר ה׳ פָּנָיו אֵלֶיךָ** - Hashem shines His countenance upon us; we should likewise shine our countenance upon others.

Rav Miller brings the Gemara:

טוֹבָה מַרְאֵה שִׂנַּיִם לַחֲבֵרוֹ יוֹתֵר מִמַּשְׁקֵהוּ חָלָב— showing someone a pleasant countenance is even better than giving him milk. - A smile can change somebody's entire day.

9. My Clothing, My Glory

When getting dressed, spend 30 seconds thinking about your clothing.

Clothing isn't merely about covering the body. It reminds us of the **dignity and uniqueness of a human being** — a person with a neshamah and **Tzelem Elokim**.

Rav Miller suggests thinking about the tremendous kindness and miracles involved in something as simple as our clothing: cotton, wool, buttons, shoelaces and all the conveniences we take for granted.

Say: **מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרוּמִים** and spend half a minute appreciating what Hashem has given us.

10. Remember Yerushalayim

Every day, privately spend a moment remembering Yerushalayim and the Churban. - We say: **אִם אֶשְׁכָּחֵךְ יְרוּשָׁלָיִם תִּשְׁכַּח יְמִינִי... אִם לֹא אַעֲלֶה אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם עַל רֹאשׁ שִׂמְחָתִי.**

Even at a wedding, at the height of our happiness, we break a glass to remember Yerushalayim.

Rav Miller suggests that once a day, when nobody is looking, sit down for a moment and think about the Yerushalayim we once had — the Beis Hamikdash, the Shechinah, and the greatness we lost.

We shouldn't wait until Tisha B'Av to remember. **Yerushalayim should remain in our consciousness all year.**

The main message

The entire program comes back to one idea:

Don't just talk about becoming great — do something.

Hashem says: **פִּתְחוּ לִי פֶּתַח כְּחוּטוֹ שֶׁל מַחַט, וַאֲנִי אֶפְתַּח לָכֶם כְּפִתְחוֹ שֶׁל הֵיכָל.** Open even a tiny opening, and Hashem will help you enormously. Rav Miller emphasizes that these ideas only work if we **actually practice them**, repeatedly.

And if you fail? **Start again tomorrow.** Rav Nachman is brought as an example of someone who fell repeatedly but kept getting back up. The goal isn't perfection on day one; it is to keep moving forward.

Reb Eliyahu Dessler zt'l said, 'I am not a 'himmel mentch' (a person who has ruach hakodesh). I don't know what was decreed on Rosh Hashanah. But when the year passes by, I know exactly what was decreed on the last Rosh Hashanah.

And the key to being found worthy in the judgment is to prepare for the judgment in Elul.

As the Tur writes, 'The more a person invests in tefillah in this month, it will be for his benefit.'

Rabbi Yossi Chazan



Some people have a hobby, they collect stamps. Other people collect coins, I collect stories, that's my hobby.

But I saw a story this week, I was shaken. I thought it's **הַמּוֹסָר וְהַהַשְׁקָפָה שֶׁל אוֹי וַנְבוּאֵם**.

There was a **בחור**, a **פרומער בן תורה** in **בני ברק, עיר התורה**. He was walking in the street when he saw a notice about someone who was **קריטיש קראנק, רחמנא ליצלן**, suffering from a serious illness. For this type of disease, they needed a bone marrow transplant.

The **בחור**, a **פרומער, ערליכער בחור**, saw the notice and thought: **פיקוח נפש**. He went to the donor drive, and they discovered that this **בחור'ל**, this **פרומער חרדי ישיבה בחור**, was a perfect match— **ממש** spot on, an extremely rare, exact match.

The **בחור** said, "Before I donate, I would like to see the patient."

They took him to the hospital, to the room of the **חולה, רחמנא ליצלן**. The patient was a **פרייער**—or, as they say in certain circles, someone who was **נאָך נישט פרום**.

But he was desperately ill. And **פלאי פלאות, נורא נוראות**—this **ישיבה בחור** immediately hit it off with this **פרייער בחור'ל**. They had a **געוואלדיקע** conversation. The patient was incredibly **מכיר טובה**, and they began to **שמועסן**. They sat and **שמועס'ן** for hours.

בקיצור, that night the **בחור** came home and told his father everything that had happened.

The father asked, "Who is this boy? What is the family name?"

He told him.

The father suddenly became very serious. "Who is his father?"

"I met his father by the bed. His name is so-and-so."

The father started shaking.

"**בשום אופן!** I am **גוזר עליך בגזירת כיבוד אב**: you are not to donate bone marrow to this person!"

The **בחור** was completely bewildered. He didn't know where to turn. On the one hand, there was **פיקוח נפש**. On the other hand, there was **כיבוד אב**. And his father was an extremely **ערליכער** person.

ער איז אזוי אפגעטראָגט—he simply didn't know how to deal with the situation. He called his **רב**. The Rav heard that this was a case of **פיקוח נפש**, and he came racing over to the house.

He asked the father, "What's the story? Why don't you want your son to donate?"

The father said, "I'll tell you what happened."

During the war, during the Holocaust years, there was a group of **ייִדעלעך** hiding together. I had only recently gotten married, and I had a baby. The **פרומע אידן** were hiding together in a room, trying to escape the Nazis.

But my baby was obviously not permitted to be there. So they made a hole in the ceiling and during the daytime they hid the baby up there, in the space beneath the roof. At night, when the Nazi guards were less vigilant, we would take him down, cuddle him and look after him.

ויהי היום—there was a Jewish man in the ghetto who, unlike all the other **ייִדעלעך** who were persecuted, beaten and starved, was given full rations. He was treated almost like a **מלך**.

Why? Because he knew how to make bombs. The Nazis, **ימח שמם**, needed his services. So he walked around well-fed, getting whatever he wanted, with two German guards constantly standing beside him. Everyone knew who this man was.

ויהי היום, these three people—the Jewish bomb-maker and the two Germans—came into our hiding place. They had a cane, and they began hacking on the ceiling.

Someone must have **מסר'ט**. Somehow, they had discovered that there was a baby hidden there—which was completely against the Nazi law.

They **האַקן**, and they kept **האַקן**, until they found the loose section. They gave one big **קלאפ**, and suddenly a whole pile of rubbish came down—and with it, the baby.

The Jewish man immediately grabbed the baby and said to the Germans, 'I'll take care of it. Leave it to me.

They took the baby and left the room—the bunker, whatever it was—and closed the door.

Suddenly, I heard two shots.

And that was the end of my son. My **בכור**.

I knew that Jewish man. I knew his name. And now I discover that this man is the father of this **חולה אנוש**, who needs a bone marrow transplant.

There is no way I can find it in my heart to allow the son of the man who murdered my beloved son to be saved by my son. After he killed my child, you're asking me to savethe life of his child?!"

The Rav heard this, and he understood. He understood where this father was coming from. He understood his rage and fury.

אבל מצד שני, he told him: "First of all, why should the son be **חייב** because of what his father did?

לא יומתו אבות על בנים ובנים לא יומתו על אבות. Why should this boy have to die because his father was a **רשע**? "Number one.

"Number two, think about it **מצד שני**. Imagine the **קידוש השם** you could create. After this man supposedly killed your son, instead of

taking **נקמה**, you do the opposite—you're **מחיה** his son. "You could create **קידוש השם** on a tremendous scale."

There was a long **שקלא וטריא**, but eventually they agreed. The Rav, together with the father and the **בחור**, would go and meet the father of the **חולה**—the **פרייער** man, the bomb-maker.

They found the address and went to the house.

You can imagine the scene. These two men had not seen each other since the Holocaust. Their eyes met. The tension in the room was **אפשר ממש לחתוך בסכין**. And before the **חרדי** man could get a word in, the other man said: "I've been looking for you since the war. Let me tell you the real story of what happened that day in the bunker.

"The Nazis discovered that there was a whole group of Jews hiding there with a baby. They wanted to kill everyone in the room. I managed to convince them not to kill everybody. I told them: 'The only one here who is actually illegal is the baby. Kill the baby.' - And I volunteered to do it. 'I'll kill him. I'm a Jew. Let me do it.'

So they found the baby and took him out. And you heard the shots.

But the Nazi gave me his pistol—and I couldn't find it in my heart to kill the baby. So instead, I shot the **two Germans**.

I took the baby and ran to a monastery. I gave him to the nuns and begged them to take care of him.

The Germans knew what I had done, but I was essential to their war effort because of my work with the bombs. So they let me live. They simply turned a blind eye.

After the war was over, I went back to the monastery. "And **פלא ונס**—they gave me back the baby I had left with them. I brought him to **ארץ ישראל**, and I raised him as my own son.

And now that **בכור** has become critically ill, and he needs a bone marrow transplant."

And then came the **פלא ההשגחה**.

The **בחור** who had volunteered to donate was a perfect match because these two boys were actually biological brothers. Two brothers who had grown up in completely different worlds, with completely different backgrounds, had somehow been brought together by **השגחה פרטית**.

And the son of the man who had supposedly murdered the first man's child was now the one who could **להחיות** his other son.

And when I saw this story, I thought about what we're talking about: the concept of **צדקה**, of **אחריות**, of **המרחם על הבריות מרחמים עליו מן השמים**.

You see a Yid who is a **נצרך**, and you think you're doing a favour for a stranger, for another person. But the reality is that every time you're doing **חסד** for another Yid, you're doing a **חסד** for yourself.

Because **אח שלך הוא כמו הבן שלך**.

That's the attitude a Yid has to have: when you see another person in need, you don't think, "Why should I help him? You should think: **He's my brother**.

Rav Yechiel Spero

Reb Yosef Nachman left Hungary for America in the 1880s as a very young man, hoping, as many others did at the time, to make money to send back to his family. However, with no skills and no education – and unwilling to work on Shabbos – he did not get too far. In those days, as is well known, if someone refused to work on Shabbos, by Monday he was jobless.

Finally, after five financially unproductive years, yet spiritually filled with tremendous merits of devotion for Shabbos, Reb Yosef Nachman returned to Europe. For some reason, he brought along his citizenship papers from the United States.

Fast forward to 1944, the height of World War II in Hungary. Young Yosef Nachman Rottenberg, grandson of the earlier Reb Yosef Nachman, was staying with his mother in a large apartment building in Budapest, and his father was hiding elsewhere; they were all disguised as non-Jews. Yet despite all their efforts, the Nazis were becoming aware of the ruse.

One day, the Hungarian Nazis began going from apartment to apartment and pulling all the undercover Jews downstairs to the courtyard.

When Mrs. Rottenberg opened the door for the Hungarian soldiers, a miracle occurred. With extraordinary presence of mind, she took her father's citizenship papers from sixty years earlier and handed them to the soldier.

At that point, the Germans and Hungarians knew that their efforts were futile, and that they would soon lose the war. However, they were trying to kill as many Jews as they could in the meantime. That is not so say, though, that they were not petrified of the Americans and what they were going to do to them when the war was over.

It was obvious that the Hungarian at the door could not read English, but he recognized the papers as American documents – the American flag gave that fact away – and he was not sure what to do. Perhaps this woman was really an American diplomat?

He told her and her son Yosef not to go down. Their lives were spared.

Yosef went on to become Rav Yosef Rottenberg, the beloved Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Chofetz Chaim - Talmudical Academy of Baltimore, a sage of great renown, distinguished Posek, established expert on gittin, and most popular educator, who has influenced hundreds of students with his erudition, warmth, love, and humor.

Rav Rottenberg's grandfather came to America and endured five challenging years replete with unshakeable steadfastness for Shabbos, all so he could leave Hungary with citizenship papers that would save his family sixty years later."



Rav Tzadok Rabinowitz Pri Tzaddik (Elul 9 5660 / 1900 - 126th Yahrzeit)

Never Give Up

A Jew should never give up, neither on material things nor in regard to spiritual matters. Even if you are mired in a morass of immorality, don't be despondent, thinking that you'll never be able to extricate yourself. For a Jew there exists no such thing as despair. Hashem has countless ways of helping you.

As a matter of fact, the entire Jewish nation was founded on a seemingly hopeless situation. Avrohom and Sora were well on in years, and no one would have believed that they would still have children. Sora – who certainly believed that everything is within Hashem's power – doubted the malach who announced the birth of a child to her.

Indeed, Hashem could have given them a son at an earlier age. Why did He perform a seemingly unnecessary miracle?

It was Hashem's design that the Jewish nation should be established on the notion of "believing in the impossible", that a Jew should never despair but believe that Hashem can always help, that nothing is too difficult for Him. (*Divrei Sofrim* 16)

May the merit of the *Tzaddik*, Rav Tzodok HaKohen of Lublin, protect us all, *Amen*.

A Delayed Last Goodbye to Their Rebbe - Rabbi Hillel Eisenberg



Rabbi Hillel Eisenberg shares an astounding story about the tremendous knowledge our religious leaders have. In December, 1988 a group of 33 *chassidim* traveled from Brooklyn to London for the wedding of their Rebbe's son. After several days of learning and celebrating with their Rebbe at Stanford Hill they packed their bags to return home to their families and businesses. On the last day, although short on time, the *chassidim* decided to say one last goodbye to their Rebbe and get *berachot* before their flight.

They arrived at the Rebbe's house and asked the secretary if the Rebbe had a minute or two to give them a blessing. The secretary said, "Of course. The Rebbe has nothing scheduled for this morning. Let me tell him you're here." The secretary returned a minute later and said, "The Rebbe is free now, but he would like you to wait a few minutes before he sees you." The *chassidim* said that that was not an issue and they sat down and waited.

A couple of minutes later they asked the secretary if he could ask the Rebbe again, because they were they had a flight soon. The secretary returned a minute later and said, "The Rebbe said you should wait a couple of more minutes, and there is no need to worry about missing the plane."

Ten minutes passed, and the *chassidim* were getting nervous. Should they leave despite the Rebbe telling them to wait? They had families and jobs to get back to. How could they miss their flight? They decided to listen to the Rebbe, and ten nerve-racking minutes later they were called in.

The Rebbe apologized for making them wait and assured them it would all work out. He shook their hands and gave them warm *berachot*. He walked them slowly to their bus. Meanwhile, each *chassid* wanted to rush on their bus and speed to the airport, but the Rebbe would not allow it. He slowly, almost deliberately, gave each person another lengthy and time-consuming beracha.

When the Rebbe was finally finished, they hopped on the bus and sped to the airport. They dashed through the terminal and at the gate they discovered that the plane had left without them. The men were flustered and aggravated. They sat down in the airport to figure out a plan.

A few minutes later there was a commotion in the airport. Everyone rushed to tiny TV screens that broadcast horrific news. A Pan Am flight from Heathrow Airport had just blown up over Scotland killing all the passengers and crew members on board as well as numerous people in the crash. The *chassidim's* hearts stopped beating as they saw the flight number on the screen.

Flight number 103, the exact flight they were supposed to be on. A terrorist had placed a bomb on the plane, and all 243 passengers had died. In the back of that plane there were thirty-three empty seats. Empty because their occupants chose to listen to their Rebbe.

Rabbi Eisenberg share that the words, "Rebbe" "Rabbi" "Rav"… these all have the same root word "Rav—to make great." Each Rabbi has a special power to take what they learned and share it with their congregants and followers to make them great.

Let us respect and follow in the ways of our great leaders because they possess deep insight and knowledge of Hashem's ways that we will gain from.



Dayan Gershon Lopian was a very big *Halachic* authority, a *Posek* in London. He recently passed away and he was once walking with his wife in the city of London and suddenly across the street and he goes over to a married woman and he says to her, "Wow, your wig is gorgeous! It's so beautiful! It looks so good on you!"

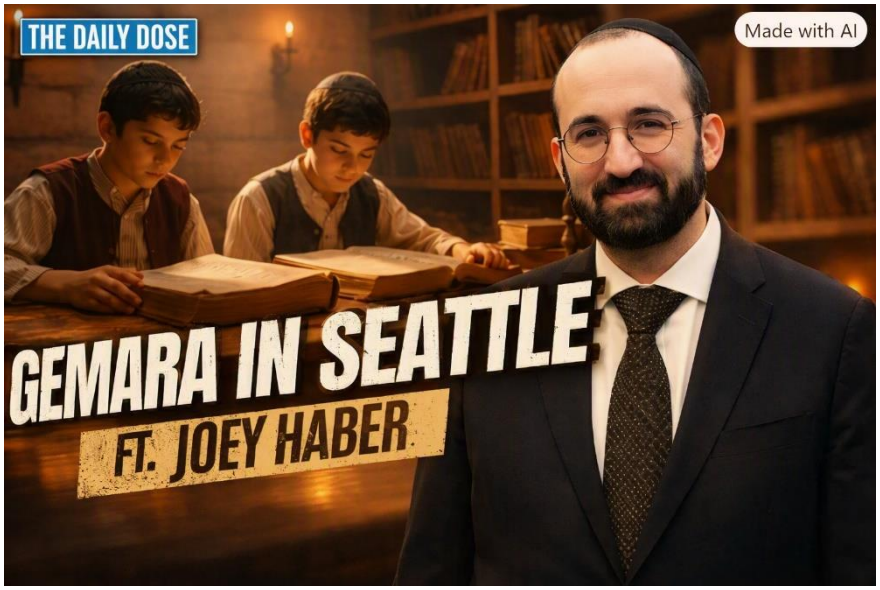
Have you people heard it? And they thought it's a major breach in modesty. What is it? You're speaking to a married woman in the street, you telling her how beautiful she looks with this wig? What is that?

There was a very important Rabbi there who heard it, and he felt very, very upset and he came over to Rabbi Gershon Lopian, he says to him, "What are you doing? You don't do that. In the middle of the street talking to a married lady and you telling her how beautiful her wig looks? Why are you talking to a woman, and by the way your wife was right here, what is this?"

Rabbi Gershon says to him, "Do you know? It's been twenty years that I've been working on this lady to start covering her hair and she finally did last week, and this is the first time that I'm seeing her since.

I just had to go over and compliment her how beautiful her wig looks."

Who asked us to judge? We don't need to judge people but if we do then we judge favorably, but we don't need to judge anyone.



Everyone here heard of *Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky*? He's the *Rosh Yeshiva* of the Philadelphia *Yeshiva*. He's a *Gadol Hador*. One day, a man named *Reb Michoel* walked in. *Reb Michoel Lipinsky* walks into the room, regular Rabbi, and *Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky* stands up for the man.

He says, *Reb Michoel Lipinsky* says, "Rabbi, you're the *Gadol Hador*, why you standing up for me?"

He says, "Because you saved my life. You saved my life."

"I saved your life? How'd I save your life?"

He says, "You saved my life."

He says, "Rabbi, can you explain?" He asks *Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky* to explain.

He says, "Yeah, I'll explain."

He says, "Years ago, my father *Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky* in the 1930s came to America. He became, he was a temporary Rabbi in Seattle, Seattle, Washington. And while he was the Rabbi in Seattle, Washington, these two boys, these two *Lipinsky* boys walked into the room, and they were learning *Masechet Bava Kamma*."

He says, "And my father *Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky* tested you and your brother, and you knew it very well, very nice."

After that, *Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky* eventually went to Toronto, and in Toronto, Canada, he became a permanent Rabbi for a while.

While he was in Toronto, now that he was settled, he called his brother-in-law in Europe and said, "I'm here alone without my children. Now it's time to send my children, to send my daughters, send my sons, send them here to I guess Canada at the time, to Toronto. I'm ready for them to come here."

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky's brother-in-law was a great Rabbi, *Rav Gezentsvey*, he said, "I'll send your daughters, but I'm not sending your sons. I'll send your daughters because I'm sure you could raise them well in North America, but I'm not sending your sons because there's no *Torah* in North America. And I'm not sending your boys."

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky sent a message back to his brother-in-law. He said, "Send my sons also, because you could learn *Torah* in North America. You know how I know? The *Lipinsky* brothers know *Gemara Bava Kamma*.

If they can know *Gemara Bava Kamma*, my *Binyomin* and my *Shmuel* will know *Gemara* here too."

And so says *Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky*, "Because of you, my father had me and my brother *Binyomin* sent to North America, sent to Toronto." And then World War II broke out, and the Holocaust happened and millions of Jews were killed. "

The only reason why I was in safety was because you, your *Gemara Bava Kamma* gave my father the confidence to believe that I could be like you too.

Me, *Shmuel Kamenetsky*, and my brother *Binyomin Kamenetsky*, the two of us are here alive and well because of your *Gemara Bava Kamma!*"

When that kid is learning *Gemara Bava Kamma* in Seattle, Washington in the 1930s, you think he's doing anything? You think he's doing, impacting anybody? Yet he would bring two tremendous Rabbis to this country. *Rav Shmuel Kamenetsky's* older brother

Rav Binyomin Kamenetsky's a tremendous Rabbi, opened schools, I suppose, beautiful *Sefarim*, these are two tremendous people that had tremendous impact on Jewry in the whole United States of America because one boy, one average boy learned *Bava Kamma* in 1930!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, once related a story that happened with the **Ksav Sofer**.



A Jew in the city of Pressburg became gravely ill and it became clear that there was not much time left for him. The most prominent physicians were consulted and various drugs were administered, but it was to no avail, and his condition did not get better. The members of the family were G-d-fearing Jews who understood that one does not give up hope, but rather he places his trust in Hashem, the Healer of all flesh.

The children of this sick individual went to the Rav of the city, the holy Ksav Sofer, and after relating the patient's history and the present situation, they implored him for a Brachah, a blessing that would intercede in the Heavenly Court, so that their father would live.

The Ksav Sofer listened, and suddenly took off the scarf that was wrapped around his neck, and handed it to the family members. He said, "Here, take this scarf and place it on the forehead of the patient, and with the help of Hashem, he will arise from his illness!"

The family did as the Ksav Sofer advised them, and soon enough, with the help of Hashem, the patient was completely cured! It was a miracle!

The students who were always present in the Ksav Sofer's home questioned him concerning the "holy" scarf. Did he perhaps "treat" it with the holy Names of Hashem? Was it immersed in Kabbalah?

The Ksav Sofer shook his head and said, "I have been wearing this scarf for a long time. It rests on my shoulders, as I constantly learn Torah. It is a part of my routine of Torah study, and Torah is the greatest healer of all ills. I felt that the scarf contained within it enough Kedushah to provide the medicinal and therapeutic qualities that were necessary to heal the patient. It has soaked up and absorbed so much Torah that it can heal someone who is sick!"

Timely Payment - R' Moshe Oelbaum shlita

You order a taxi, you take a haircut, you call a repair guy to fix your appliance. Of course, you pay them for their services. Are you aware that you just fulfilled a *mitzvas asei*? Or do you just do it because that's what everyone does? You may as well have in mind the mitzvah and get added *sechar* for your intentions.

There is a mitzva in this week's *parsha* of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**" - to pay a worker on time. If someone works for you by day and finishes at night, you have an entire night to pay him for his work. If he was hired to work for you by night, then you have an entire day to pay him. If he was hired for a couple of hours then you have the rest of the day to pay him his wages. Let's say someone goes to the barber - when the barber finishes cutting your hair there is a mitzvah to pay him on time, just like you have a mitzvah to put on *tefillin*.

Someone once gave the Biale Rebbe a haircut and the Rebbe told the barber, "I want to pay you". The barber was taken aback. How could he take money from a Rebbe? "It's a *zechus*, it's a privilege to give a haircut to a Rebbe", he said, "and furthermore, I don't need the money." The Rebbe told him, "I understand that you don't

need money, but do you want to take away my mitzvah of **בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**? Take a lira and I will have fulfilled the mitzvah". We have to think about this whenever we pay a hired worker; we are fulfilling the mitzvah of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**".

The *Chinuch* in Mitzvah 588 says that if one hires a worker on *erev* Shabbos to work on Friday and he is not able to pay because of Shabbos, there is a reason to say that he might no longer violate the mitzvah of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**" because once the obligation was postponed due to Shabbos, it gets postponed altogether. There is still a rabbinic obligation to make a timely payment. Other *Rishonim* argue with the *Chinuch* (*Tur Choshen Mishpat siman* 331) and they say that one has to pay before Shabbos begins. Since he knows that he won't be able to pay at the usual time (which is the night after) he has to pay before Shabbos. Some say that paying the worker before Shabbos is not considered paying early; it's actually considered paying on time because the halachah is that the employer has to give the worker enough time to go home and get ready for Shabbos. If that's the case, he has to stop working while it's still light outside and therefore there is a mitzvah *de'O'raisa* of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**" to pay before nightfall (before Shabbos).

The *sefer Zevach HaShelamim* brings down from the *sefer Sdei Chemed* from the *Arizal*, and says that this halachah that one has to pay a hired worker before Shabbos is alluded in the words "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**". The first letters of these three words are *beis*, *taf*, and *sin*, which spell out Shabbos.

The *Arizal* says that if one is careful in fulfilling this mitzvah, he will merit to receive a *neshama yeseirah* that comes from Shabbos. What is the connection between the *neshama yeseira* and paying your worker on time? Says the *Zevach HaShelamim*, Adam HaRishon was the first person to receive a *neshama yeseira*. Adam was placed in Gan Eden with the commandment of "*le'avda*

uli'shomra" – to work it and guard it. That was Friday, and when Shabbos came Hashem gave Adam a spiritual gift - the *neshama yeseira*. That was Adam's payment for working and guarding the garden of Eden. It was a fulfillment of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**". The *neshama yeseira* was given to him on Friday afternoon, and since then each one of us also receives a *neshama yeseira* if we follow the ways of Hashem and pay our workers on time.

Rav Bentzion Yadler didn't have any money. Once, he had someone working for him and he didn't have money to pay his worker. Yet, he wanted to fulfill the mitzvah of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**". What was he to do? He came up with a brilliant idea. Let's say he owed the worker a hundred dollars for the job. So he went to his worker and asked him if he can lend him a hundred dollars. Of course, the worker was happy to lend it to him and R' Bentzion happily gave it back to the worker, fulfilling the mitzvah of "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**". A loan can always be paid back later, but a hired worker must be paid that very day.

A story is also told about the *Chofetz Chaim*. He printed his *seforim* in Warsaw, and one *erev* Shabbos someone saw him running through the streets. This person questioned the *Chofetz Chaim* – why was the *gadol hador* running through the streets of Warsaw on *erev* Shabbos? The *Chofetz Chaim* explained that he had just found out the address of the printer and wanted to pay him before Shabbos to fulfill "**בְּיוֹמוֹ תִּתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ**".

It's quite interesting to note that there are some *mitzvos* that get so much of our attention, and some *mitzvos* that just don't. The Mishnah cautions us to be vigilant in these "small" *mitzvos*, since we do not know what Hashem considers small or large. Paying our workers on time seems to be a mitzvah that is small in the eyes of people; we simply don't accord it top priority. Our *gedolim* did – and we should, too. No mitzvah should be small in our eyes; each is a priceless gem, a precious commandment from Hashem that is an

opportunity to earn eternity. So the next time you pay your electrician, your plumber, or your playgroup *Morah*, have in mind what you are really doing – you are fulfilling a precious Torah obligation.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Pele Yo'eitz notes (241) that the Gemara in Shabbos teaches that if one is not careful in regard to washing his hands for Netilas Yadayim, it can cause one to become poor.

This is so, because the letters of the word Ani (**עני**), poor person, stand for Al Netilas Yadayim (**על נטילת ידים**). Therefore, one should be very careful with this Mitzvah!

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

זָכוֹר אֵת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹקיִךְ לְמִרְיָם בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם - The simple meaning of the verse, *"Remember what Hashem your G-d did to Miriam on the way, when you left Egypt,"* (24:9) is familiar to all of us from Chazal, the Gemara, and the Rishonim: we are commanded to remember the **tzaraas** that Miriam suffered after speaking about Moshe Rabbeinu.

But, as the **Rambam** explains, Miriam had no intention whatsoever of denigrating Moshe. On the contrary, she certainly meant well. So what exactly are we being commanded to remember? Why does the Torah say "Zachor — remember"?

R' Leibele Eiger explains that we are meant to remember something much deeper. Miriam became a metzora in an instant, from head to toe. Moshe Rabbeinu cried out, **"קל נָא רְפָא נָא לָהּ** — ***Please, Hashem, please heal her!"*** And, as the **Or HaChaim HaKadosh** explains, she was healed immediately.

That is the lesson the Torah wants us to remember: just as the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** can bring a person into a situation of tzaraas in an instant, He can also remove it in an instant and restore a person completely to health and strength.

A person can suddenly find himself facing a tremendous difficulty, from "head to toe," and yet, in one moment, it can all disappear.

Zachor — remember this. Never give up hope. Always strengthen yourself and never become despondent. Turn to the Eibershter and cry out to Him. Just as Moshe cried, **"קֵל נָא רְפָא נָא לָהּ,"** so too, we must always remember that with one sincere cry to Hashem, everything can change, and we can be helped in an instant.





For one beautiful Jewish family, life was amazing, but it got even more amazing with the birth of a little boy. They hadn't had children for a bunch of years. Their children were older, and having a baby just filled the entire house with *simcha*. Everything went really well until he went to school.

And when he started school, things just didn't come together. He couldn't learn. He had difficulty comprehending. He had challenges reading.

And his parents did everything within their ability to help him. They hired specialists and tutors and therapists, but nothing really helped him learn the way that he needed to. The family was beside themselves. They didn't know what to do.

When the boy was about nine years old, he had a particular *Rebbi*. And the *Rebbi* was one hundred percent dedicated to helping him succeed. The *Rebbi* did everything. He was a seasoned veteran *Rebbi*.

He pulled out all the stops. The boy just couldn't learn. And then randomly, one week, all of a sudden, the little boy raised his hand in class and asked a really good question. And a day later, he shared a beautiful insight.

And the *Rebbi* didn't know what was going on. This was a boy that couldn't learn. He couldn't understand. And all of a sudden, he's starting to learn.

He called the mother up and he said, I need to share with you the most beautiful news. Your son, he's getting it together. He's starting to learn and I see the light in his eyes. Is it a new tutor? Is it a type of therapy?

And there was silence on the other end of the line.

And the mother shared the most beautiful thing. She said, I'm going to tell you the truth. A few weeks ago, I just had it. I couldn't anymore.

I tried everything and my child, who I love so much, just wasn't succeeding. And I figured I have to do something that's next level. And I decided that the most precious moment in the entire world for me is when I light *Shabbos* candles. And usually I *daven* for the *hatzlacha* of my entire family.

But you know what? I'm going to start dedicating that time just for my son, for his success in learning. And I called him over and I told him about that. And I said, 'this week, when I light *Shabbos*

candles, please stand next to me and I'm going to *daven*. I want you to be there so I could really feel it.'

That *Shabbos*, I lit the candles and instead of *davening* for everyone, I just *davened* for him. And as the tears dripped out of my eyes, I glanced at my son. He too was *davening*. And together, collectively, we asked *Hashem*: וְהָאֵר עֵינֵינוּ בְּתוֹרָתֶךָ. - *Open our eyes in learning.*

Rebbi, the mother said, I think the *tefillos* are starting to work.

You know, lighting *Shabbos* candles is a precious moment, and it is a special time. Every once in a while, we need to take a step back and realize how precious that moment is.

So maybe this week, just this week, before you light your *Shabbos* candles, take a second and understand the power of that moment. You have no idea where your *tefillos* can end up. *Kavodo, Kavodo Malei Olam, Kavodo Malei Olam, Kavodo Malei Olam.*

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

A wealthy man asks someone for an upmarket hotel to stay in.

He says, "Absolutely, you could find some hotel somewhere that costs $6,000 an hour.

Six thousand dollars an hour! That's an unbelievable amount of money — $44,000 a day. Who could possibly stay in a place like that? Only some incredibly wealthy person."

"Absolutely," he says. "A very wealthy man could stay there for a day or two."

One day, while this wealthy man was staying at the hotel, someone came to visit him. He asked the man, "How long have you been here?"

The wealthy man replied, "I can't stay here even for one day! How long have **you** been here?"

The man answered, "Me? I've been here for several years."

"Several years?! I can't afford to stay here for even two days. How have you been here for years?"

He replied, "I'm the manager of this hotel."

"The manager?!"

"Yes. I'm the manager. So not only do I get to stay here for free — they actually pay me a salary as well! I have a very good position here."

The speaker then said a remarkable thought:

We are approaching Rosh Hashanah, when we stand before the Sefer HaChaim, the Book of Life. Every day of a person's life is incredibly precious. Life itself is priceless.

But there is a difference between an ordinary person and someone who is a manager, someone whom others need. The manager not only gets to stay in the hotel for free; he is actually paid for being there. His entire situation is different.

So too, when we come before Hashem on Rosh Hashanah, every person should try to make sure that things will be different for him — that he should become a person who is a **"רבים צריכים לו,"** someone whom many people need.

Why?

Because when a person is judged, the judgment does not affect him alone. Even if, Heaven forbid, he deserves punishment, perhaps there are other people who desperately need him.

Therefore, one of the greatest pieces of advice as we approach the Yom HaKadosh is: become a **"רבים צריכים לו."** Become someone whom other people need. Then, when you are judged, all the people

who depend upon you are taken into consideration, and that can bring you a favorable judgment.

And this doesn't mean that everyone needs to become the manager of some hotel!

There is a beautiful thought from **R' Gedaliah Eisner**. He said that he had "studied" something very carefully: **the human being**.

And he discovered that with **one good word**, you can accomplish something extraordinary. You can get through walls — even **חומות בצורות**, fortified walls — that seem impossible to penetrate.

Sometimes one kind word can break through a person's defences.

So perhaps one of the greatest zechuyos for Rosh Hashanah is simply this:

Say a good word to another person.

A genuine compliment. A word of encouragement. A little warmth. Make someone feel that he matters.

That one good word may be worth far more than we realize.



Two Wives by Michael Winner

As we all know, when a father dies and has a first-born son, that son gets double the inheritance over the other children. So, for example, if he has five sons, the inheritance is split into six, and the first born gets two, and the rest get one. However, there are some exceptions to this rule. If the first born leaves the Torah world, he also loses his right to receiving double.

The Torah describes another situation, where one might think that the first-born loses his right. When the man has two wives, one whom he loves and one whom he hates. If his first-born is through the one whom he hates, the first-born does not lose any rights. Even if his mother is the hated wife, he is still the first-born and still has the right to receive double.

The Pele Yoetz writes something very powerful on this concept.

The word "Nashim" (wives) shares the same root as the word "noseh," a person who has debt or obligation. The Pele Yoetz did not mention the obvious connection, which every man reading this immediately made, but he did mention another, less obvious, connection.

A person has two "nashim," two types of obligations. One obligation is through mitzvos that he loves. For example, eating on Shabbos! Who doesn't enjoy that? Going to a wedding? Okay, well, most men don't enjoy going to those … but if there is food, then we DO enjoy going … what a mitzvah! Going to learn Torah! Who doesn't enjoy getting out of the house when the kids are screaming to go learn Torah! You see, there are plenty of mitzvos that we get enjoyment from.

On the other hand, there are some mitzvos that we don't enjoy. Who enjoys fasting? Who enjoys not listening to music for three weeks? Who enjoys the mitzvah of changing diapers?

So, each one of us has two "nashim." The one we love and the one we don't.

And the Torah continues to tell us that the first-born of the wife who is not loved, receives double.

Being those mitzvos that we find difficult to do, but we do so anyway, are twice as loved in the eyes of Hashem, then those that we get pleasure from.

In a few weeks, most of us will be getting up even earlier to say selichos before davening. It's not an easy thing to do. We're not talking about ten minutes earlier. However, one should recognize that these mitzvos that come from the "hated wife" are worth double than those from the "loved" one.

Keeping that calculation in mind, will help us do those mitzvos properly and fully.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!



Rav Chaim Volozhiner in Nefesh HaChaim says that it is impossible to conquer the yetzer hara if you view yourself as lowly or defeated.

The first thing is: Recognize the greatness of your Yiddishe neshamah. Feel good about yourself. You're a Yiddishe neshamah. Then you're going to be able to defeat the yetzer hara very easily.



The Panim Yafos teaches that the days of Elul are so potent that, if used properly, we can rectify the entire past year before Rosh Hashanah even arrives.

It is truly an extraordinary treasure.



R' Tzadok HaKohen zt"l (Pri Tzadik) says that Hashem takes pride in every Jew's accomplishments - whether it is large or small. In Hashem's eyes, an unlearned shopkeeper can achieve the same level of greatness that a highly learned talmid chacham can, if his intentions are right.



Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff shlita

רבותי we're moving on in the month of **אלול**, and we need to hold on tight, remind ourselves the opportunity of **אלול**. The **חיי אדם** brings in terms of **הלכה**, not just **מוסר**, that the **תשובה** in **אלול** is easy to achieve.

If a person does **תשובה** in **תמוז**, it's always valuable, applicable, but it's not as easy to get as much **כפרה**, to be **מעורר** oneself to the same degree as other times of the year as **אלול**. And so we need to remind ourselves and avail ourselves of the opportunities that there are to be able to be **מתחזק**, to be **נתקרב**. There's a long year ahead of us until we'll have the opportunity again. And the main thing is at this still relatively initial stages of **אלול** we really need to internalize what is it that we're going to gain from this **אלול**.

In terms of the **רמזים**, we've spoken a little bit the most famous **אלול: אני לדודי ודודי לי**, which again, we need to remind ourselves. It's a **פסוק**. Where is **אני לדודי ודודי לי** found? One might imagine it's in **ירמיהו**, maybe in **ישעיהו** when the **נביאים** talk about the importance of doing **תשובה** and the consequences of not doing **תשובה**, maybe in **איוב**.

למעשה it's a **פסוק** in **נ"ך**, which is the **ספר** in **נ"ך** which talks about the greatest **אהבה** of the **רבונו של עולם** to **כלל ישראל** and that's in **שיר השירים** (6:3).

אני לדודי ודודי לי talks about **אהבה**, talks about **התקרבות**, and this is the way we need to feel, this needs to pump us through the **אלול** in the basic of all messages. That's the first **חלק**. Another I'd just like to mention **בקיצור** for us to pick up on this journey.

A famous one which is from the **ארי הקדוש** in **פרשת משפטים** talks about the **עניין** of an **עיר מקלט**. - **וְהָאֱלֹקִים אִנָּה לְיָדוֹ וְשַׂמְתִּי לְךָ מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יָנוּס שָׁמָּה** (21:12) - **אנה לידו ושמתי לך** is **אותיות א-ל-ו-ל**, it's **אלול**, which gives us a **רמז** that **אלול** is a refuge, it's a city where a

person can find himself a **מקום** to protect himself from his **עבירות**. But I'd just like to suggest one slant on this **רמז**.

It's not good enough just for a person to happen to find himself in a city of refuge. The **משנה מכות** says: what happens if somebody does a **רוצח בשוגג** in an **עיר מקלט**, he's there already? So **לכאורה** he doesn't need to go anywhere because he finds himself in the city which protects him. But the **משנה** says: no, he has to go **ממקום למקום, משכונה לשכונה**, he has to move from the place where he is to a different vicinity even within the **עיר מקלט** and then he's protected. Which tells us a very important message.

אלול is not an automatic protection. You can be in **אלול** and yet not do anything for you. It only does something for you if you actually move your location from one place to the next. If a person has changed something about himself, if there's something different about himself, different **מידות**, a different **חיזוק** in **עבודה**, a different set of priorities in life, then he's somebody who **אלול** will provide protection for and it'll give him all that we're looking for in terms of his exiting his situation of his **עבירות**.

But if a person doesn't move **בכלל**, he may be in **אלול** but it won't do anything for him. That's the **רמז** of the **ארי הקדוש**. It's a tremendous opportunity for a person to free himself from his **עבירות**, but he has to move **ממקום למקום**.

And finally, I'd like to share with you another one of the **רמזים** I saw in the **קדמונים**, a **פסוק** in **וישלח** where it talks about **עשו** and **יעקב** after their encounter.

And **עשו** suggests to **יעקב** that we should move forward together, hand in hand, **נסעה ונלכה**. And **יעקב** turned around to **עשו** and he said, no, you go ahead on your own, **ואני אתנהלה לאטי לרגל**.

ו-א-ל-ל, again the **אותיות** of **אלול**. And I must mention, you find lots of the **מפרשים קדמונים** find us different **פסוקים** and combinations where **אלול** is found in **פרשיות** in **תורה**.

And we need to understand that it's not just that we happen to find **פסוקים** or we make ourselves some kind of a **רמז**. The **תורה** was written with a lot of **דקדוק** and accuracy, and it's not just coincidental. If there is a **פסוקים** which put **אלול** together, there's something to do with **אלול** to be found in these **פסוקים**. And this is one of them.

יעקב says to **עשו**, and no, you go, **ואני אתנהלה לאטי לרגל המלאכה**, that is **אותיות אלול**. What has it got to do with **אלול**? And perhaps this is the basis, one of the basic messages directly from the **פסוקים**. What is **אלול** all about?

עשו turns to **יעקב** as he does throughout the year and he says, "I go along with you." The **יצר הרע**, the **יצר הטוב, עשו** and **יעקב**, he wants to join us and he wants to have share our lives with all the things that **עשו** wants to influence us to do.

Comes **אלול** , Yaakov turns around to **עשו**, our **יצר הטוב** turns around to **עשו** and say, "No, you go aside. I go myself. I'm going my own journey and it's the journey step by step where the **יצר הטוב** distances itself from the **יצר הרע**. That's what the journey of **אלול** is all about."

And if I can add, **ואני אתנהלה לאטי לרגל** means I go my pace. I'm not galloping ahead of you. I'm not just running in a space which I can't maintain. But I go step by step. I take forward, meaningful, purposeful steps even if they are small ones to the **דרך החיים** of the **יצר הטוב**, and that's where I'm **מקיים ענין פון אלול**.

The **רבונו של עולם** should help that we should be able to **מקיים** the wonderful opportunities that there are in **חודש אלול** of being **מזדבק באהבה** to **רבונו של עולם** and find ourselves a new, happy, **געבענטשטע** way forward for everyone. **כל טוב, גוט שבת**.

במצוותיו חפץ מאד



R' Tzvi Rotberg *shlita* who was a close *talmid* of **R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l*** for many years, related the following:

He had a special affection for fulfilling "rare *mitzvos.*" (Once he told me that a Jew should, at least once in his life, fulfill every mitzvah that he is able to.)

Once, we went together up to the roof of the **Steipler's** house to fulfill *shiluach hakein*. As we climbed up, a noise was made near the nest and the dove flew away. He succeeded in taking the eggs and said to me: "I have fulfilled the mitzvah. Now I will declare them ownerless, and when the dove returns, you will fulfill it." (He held that one can fulfill the mitzvah multiple times; there is discussion about this, and he proved it from the wording of *Chazal*.)

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Winning the Match

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת כי תצא**. There's a collection of first-hand stories from **תלמידים** of the **חפץ חיים** called **מאיר עיני ישראל**. In there, **רב שלמה בלוך**, a close **תלמיד**, tells us what he heard from the **חפץ חיים** about the **חפץ חיים**'s first marriage, the **שידוך** that led to his first marriage.

The **חפץ חיים** was 16 years old. He was learning in **וילנא** with a group of **עילויים**, very talented young **למדנים**, and his mother had remarried. His father passed away. His father had been a **תלמיד** of **רב חיים מוואלוז'ין**, a **תלמיד חכם**. His mother married someone very different in her second marriage.

He was a very simple Jew in terms of his learning. He was very poor financially. And when the **חפץ חיים** visited, the stepfather was very interested in him because he had a 26-year-old daughter, and he told the **חפץ חיים**'s mother, "I've decided that I want your son," who was then 16, "to be my son-in-law." And he even told her that if she didn't manage to make this happen, he would divorce her. The **חפץ חיים**'s mother came to him in tears, and the **חפץ חיים**, who knew that the girl had sterling character and had **יראת שמים**, he said, "I agree I'll marry her."

When this became known that they were engaged, different family members were aghast and tried to fight against it. And the **חפץ חיים**'s **חברותא**, when he went back to **וילנא**, told him that he made a very bad decision. He appealed to the **חפץ חיים** about the future of his learning. He says, "Becoming engaged to someone this poor? The boys in our group are desired by very wealthy men who want their daughter to marry a **תלמיד חכם**.

They will support them for years so that their head can be clear to learn without any worries of **פרנסה**. How can you marry someone who's so poor when you have such potential to become a **תלמיד חכם**?"

The **חפץ חיים** told **רב דוד לייבאוויטש**, who was a family member of his, **רב דוד לייבאוויטש**, the first **ראש ישיבה** of **חפץ חיים**, previously in **תורה ודעת**, shared this. He said, "I agreed. Eventually, I gave in, and I thought my **חברותא** was right, and I headed to the train station to take a train to **ראדין** to try and ask the young woman to please forgive me, but I wanted to break off the engagement.

On my way, I saw a group of people gathered around in some kind of consternation in the street. I went over to see what happened. There was a man who had fallen in the street. Seems he suffered from epilepsy, and he had an attack and he fell in the street into the mud, and he just picked himself up, and he was covered with

mud, and people all around were looking at him with such pity, and the man looked so embarrassed."

The **חפץ חיים** said, "How can I be the instrument to cause embarrassment to this young woman, that people will say that her engagement was broken cuz she's so poor? I won't do it."

He says, "I went on with the marriage, and **ברוך השם**, because she came from such a poor family," and he pointed out, she was so poor that the night before the wedding, she and the **חפץ חיים**'s mother were going through wheat kernels of a bag that they bought for cut price because rodents had been nibbling on the wheat in the bag, sorting out the grains that were still whole and healthy in order to cook up something that would be the smorgasbord meal and Viennese table for that wedding, some dish that was made out of those wheat grains.

He said, "Because of that, I was able to keep learning far longer than my **חברותא**. He married a very wealthy girl whose father supported him for a few years and then told him that he expected him to go into business and become a big businessman. Whereas me and my wife, we lived our simple life, and I was able to learn and write my **ספרים**, and we all benefit from that."

פרשת כי תצא speaks a lot about marriages, divorces, second marriages, but it also speaks in that first **פסוק** about a great battle, **כי תצא למלחמה על אויביך**, which **מפרשים** say refers not only to battle against physical enemies, but the battle against the **יצר הרע**.

The **חפץ חיים** had a very difficult battle when he was heading to that train station, but he won, and as a result, we're all winners.

Wishing everyone a wonderful **שבת**. **כל טוב**.