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

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

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ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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ראה

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וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת־הַמַּרְצֵעַ וְנָתַתָּה בְאָזְנוֹ וּבַדֶּלֶת וְהָיָה לְךָ עֶבֶד עוֹלָם וְאַף לַאֲמָתְךָ תַּעֲשֶׂה־כֵּן -*"Then you shall take the awl and put it through his ear and the door, and he shall be an eternal slave to you; even to your maidservant shall you do the same." (15:17)*

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) explains: When slavery was common, owners would brand their slaves as a sign of their ownership. Indeed, commentaries say that this is one of the reasons for the Mitzvah of Brit Milah–to create a physical reminder that Hashem is our Master.

However, the Torah requires that an Eved Ivri / Jewish slave be treated with love and dignity; therefore, he may not be branded during his initial six years of servitude. But, if he says (verse 16), "'I will not leave you,' for he loves you and your household, for it is good for him with you," then he has willingly forfeited his own dignity, and he is therefore branded. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers." ~ Rabbi Yerucham Milotovsky

עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר אֵת כָּל־תְּבוּאַת זַרְעֶךָ הַיֹּצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה - "***You shall surely tithe the entire crop of your planting, the produce of the field, year by year.***" (14:22)



The Gemara (Shabbat 119a) comments on the opening words of our verse: "Aser bishvil she'titasher" / "Give tithes [charity] so that you will become rich."

R' Yitzchak Shmelkes z"l (rabbi of Lvov, Galicia: died 1905) asks: How can this be reconciled with the mishnah in Pirkei Avot (ch.1), "Do not be like servants who serve their master in order to receive a reward"?

He answers: The verse is teaching that one should give charity in the hope that he will thereby be given more money so that he can give more charity. (Bet Yitzchak)

נָתֹן תִּתֵּן לוֹ וְלֹא־יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתְּךָ לוֹ כִּי בִּגְלַל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל־מַעֲשֶׂךָ וּבְכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ - "***You shall surely give him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, Hashem, your Elokim, will bless you in all your deeds and in your every undertaking.***" (15:10)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l Hy"d (the Reisher Rav; killed in the Holocaust) writes: This verse is teaching that the degree to which one's giving tzedakah is considered a complete mitzvah depends on his attitude when he gives. Do not act haughtily toward the beggar and do not make him feel like you are giving begrudgingly. Rather, as we learn in

Pirkei Avot (ch.1), "Let your house be open wide and let the poor be members of your household."

R' Lewin writes further: We read in Vayikra (25:37), "Do not give him your money for neshech / interest, and do not give your food for marbit / increase." On the peshat level, this is a commandment not to charge interest.

However, R' Lewin quotes **R' Moshe Cheifetz z"l** (Italy; 1664-1711) who writes that the word "neshech" can also be taken literally, meaning "a bite." Says R' Cheifetz: When you give tzedakah, do not accompany your gift with "biting" words. Similarly, R' Lewin writes, the word "marbit" is used in Shmuel I (2:33) to mean, "the greatest people in a household." Thus, the verse in Vayikra can be read, "Do not give him your money with biting words, and do not give your food making the recipient feel as if you are a far greater person than he." (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)

The above-mentioned R' Cheifetz writes further: It is not uncommon that beggars knock on our doors with a sense of entitlement. After all, they say, you have a mitzvah to give me tzedakah! Rather than having the desired effect, however, this causes people to want to withhold charity. And, when an unusually generous person does invite a pauper into his house, the pauper soon acts like he is king of the manor. In the verses quoted above, the Torah exhorts us to pay no attention to any rudeness on the beggars' part. Rather, we are called upon to strengthen ourselves and give tzedakah with a good heart and a shining countenance, for that is Hashem's desire. (Melechet Machshevet: Parashat Behar)

"Don't worry if your only option left is to pray; it just means that you've narrowed down your options to the best one." ~ Rav Dror Moshe Cassouto (as quoted by Emuna Daily)

וְנָתַן אֵלֶיךָ אוֹת אוֹ מוֹפֵת - "***If there should stand up in your midst a prophet or a dreamer of a dream, and he will produce to you an ot / sign or a mofeit / wonder.***" (13:2)

R' Yosef Gikatilla z"l (1210-1348; Spain; author of the kabbalistic work Sha'arei Orah) writes: An "**אוֹת**" is a change in the natural order which causes no harm, while a "**מוֹפֵת**" is a change that does cause harm.

We read in the Pesach Haggadah, "With otot [plural of ot]–this refers to the staff [of Moshe]." R' Gikatilla explains that this refers specifically to the staff turning into a snake, which harmed no one. We also read, "With moftim [plural of mofeit]–this is the [plague of] blood." This, writes R' Gikatilla, is shorthand for all of the plagues, which did cause harm. (Haggadah Shel Pesach Tzofnat Paneach)

An Astonishing Midrash

"**עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר**"/"You shall tithe the entire crop" (Devarim 14:22) – thus it is written (Bereishit 13:9), "If you will go left then I will go right, and if you will go right then I will go left."

The difference in spelling between the Hebrew words "aser"/"you shall tithe" and "osher"/"wealth" is only the small dot which distinguishes the letter "sin" from the letter "shin." The former has the dot on the left and the latter has the dot on the right.

Hashem promises: If you place the dot on the left, i.e., you give tithes faithfully, I will make you rich. If you place the dot on the right, i.e., you horde your wealth, I will see that you are left with only one-tenth of what you had. (Binat Nevonim)

"Miracles happen to us all of the time – we just need to get into the habit of recognizing them." -~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר ה׳ - "Come to the place that Hashem will choose." (12:26)

Why does the Torah not identify the site of the Bet Hamikdash?

R' Chaim Zaitchik z"l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Ukraine; later in Israel) offers three reasons:

1. So that the nations will not fight extra fiercely to hold on to it.

2. So that whoever is occupying it will not destroy and deface it.

3. So that the tribes of Bnei Yisrael will not fight over it.

Also, R' Zaitchik writes, human nature is to long more for the unknown. If we had known all along where the Bet Hamikdash would be, it would have become "old news" by the time it was actually built.

R' Zaitchik adds, Halachah prohibits building structures using the same design as the Temple and making implements (for example, a Menorah) using the design of the Temple implements. If we were permitted to do that, we would forget what we are missing by not having the Bet Hamikdash. (Ohr Chadash: Mo'adim p. 425)

פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ -You shall surely open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your Land." (15:11)

R' Chaim Palagi z"l (Izmir, Turkey; 1788-1868) writes in the name of **R' Yitzchak Luria z"l** ("The Arizal"; 1534-1572): Giving Tzedakah "unifies," so-to-speak, Hashem's Name. The coin that is given parallels the letter "Yud," which, like the coin, is little more than a small dot. The five fingers of the giver's hand parallel the letter "Heh," whose Gematria equals five. The giver's outstretched arm parallels the letter "Vav," which has an elongated shape. Finally, The five fingers of the recipient's hand parallel the second letter "Heh." (Zechirah L'Chaim Al Haggadah Shel Pesach p.88)

וַעֲבַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַיַּרְדֵּן וִישַׁבְתֶּם בָּאָרֶץ - ***"You shall cross the Jordan and settle in the Land."*** *(12:10)*

The Midrash teaches that the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisrael is equivalent to all of the mitzvot.

R' Yitzchak Weiss z"l (rabbi of Verbau, Czechoslovakia; killed in the Holocaust) observes that this is alluded to in our verse. Specifically, the gematria of the final Hebrew letters of the above phrase (40+400+50+40+90) equals 620. This is equivalent to the number of mitzvot in the Torah (613) plus the number of Rabbinic commandments (seven). - (Siach Yitzchak)



בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ וְלֹא־תְשִׂימוּ קָרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לָמֵת - ***"You are children to Hashem, your G-d; do not mutilate yourselves and do not make a bald patch between your eyes for the dead."*** (14:1)

Imagine the waiting line to see the king. Many people of all backgrounds and positions are each waiting for a moment of the king's time. The king's son, crown prince of the country, takes his place at the back of the line. A minister comes over and asks: "What is his royal highness doing at the back of the line? The king is your father! You can go in at any time! Why wait in a line with everybody else?"

This is the meaning of, "You are children to Hashem, your G-d." He is our Heavenly Father, and, as such, we are privileged. We do not wait in line, nor do we require an appointment to meet with Him. Hashem is always available to us. If we do not realize this, it is our

problem. We are lacking in understanding of our relationship with Hashem.

Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, would often inspire his students to realize how deeply obligated a Jew is to understand this verity. The more one realizes his profound relationship with Hashem, the greater is his inspiration to act in a manner becoming his noble "pedigree." Indeed, prior to carrying out any action, we must stop to think and ask ourselves, "Is this something that the king's son would do? Is this the manner in which the king's son would act?"

Furthermore, the concept of being a "son" is singular. A father can have many children, but each one is a ben yachid, singular/individual child. There is a sense of uniqueness and exclusivity to the term "son."

Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl, writes: "The adam ha'maalah, prominent man (a man of virtue who acknowledges his qualities and potential, and who understands his extraordinary uniqueness as compared to the rest of the world), should be amazed by the knowledge that from all the world – everyone – he is unique; there is no other person like him! Indeed, from the beginning of Creation, from Adam HaRishon, Primordial Man, until this very day – never has there been anyone like him – nor will there ever be anyone like him. His talents, qualities, potential, both positive and negative – are unique and exclusive to him alone. (No two children are the same.)

This is the meaning of bishvili nivra ha'olam, "For me (alone) was the world created." Each and every one of us is uniquely endowed with our personal qualities, neither repeated nor emulated.

Horav Moshe Soloveitchik, zl, (Zurich) observes: "If the Torah refers to us as Hashem's children, it becomes incumbent upon us to act as His children. Thus, when a child requires something, or if the child is in pain or in a dire circumstance, he immediately turns to his father for help. Should we be any different?

Things happen in life and we run for help – to doctors, holy men, counselors, social workers, etc. How many take the time to speak to their Father in Heaven? How many take the time to realize that this is what He wants?

Imagine, one's father is a distinguished physician, educator, psychologist, etc. and one has a problem with a member of his family; how would his father feel to discover that his child went all over town to every professional, all of whom do not come close to him in competency – yet did not come to him? - Is this not what we do? We turn to everyone, but only pay lip service to Hashem.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, asks a straightforward question which should be on the mind of anyone who reads this pasuk cogently: How is it that we are referred to by Hashem as His children, yet, in our daily lives, we seldom (if ever) think about or sense this unique connection? We understand and agree that we are unique, but it is not something that plays a significant role in our lives. - Why?

The Mashgiach cites an incident which occurred during the Spanish Inquisition. A Jewish child was forcibly taken from the shelter of his home by rabid members of the religion that preaches love and tolerance. The child was noticeably brilliant and had a potentially bright future.

Raised by Catholics, he went on to become a judge of the High Court which determined the capital punishment fate of the Anussim, Jews who had been forced to abandon their religion, that had either been caught practicing in secret or had refused to convert. In any event, the punishment was execution. -This child-turned-judge was the final signature on the execution papers.

One day, they brought a number of papers for the judge to sign, which he did – except for one. For some reason, he simply could not affix his signature to one of the execution papers. No matter what he did, or how hard he tried – nothing worked. It just did not go! Finally, he asked to interview the prisoner.

When they brought the prisoner to him, his hands and legs manacled, the judge asked to be left alone with the prisoner. He wanted to ask him a few questions. After grilling the prisoner for a short while, the judge discovered what had been bothering him his whole life: He was a Jew, and the prisoner who stood before him was none other than his father! This is why he could not sign the execution decree. His subconscious did not permit him to murder his own father.

Rav Elya commented, "When I heard this story, I understood the meaning of Banim atem l'Hashem, "You are children to Hashem." We have an innate relationship with Hashem. Since our neshamah, soul, is a chelek Elokai miMaal, part of Heaven Above, there is a miniscule component derived from Hashem imbued within each and every one of us. Our physical being and the many nisyanos, trials, which we undergo throughout life, however, take their toll and often override or cloud this relationship to the point that we become disconnected. We just need to take some time to think, to consider who we are, from where we descend, and begin to work on "cleaning up our act," changing our middos, character traits, purifying our desires; in short – acting as a Jew is supposed to act.

The father/son relationship is much more than casual. They are of the same mold. A son is part and parcel, a direct component, of his father. Likewise, our relationship with Hashem is much more than a religious affiliation. We are part of Him. His kedushah, holiness, permeates us. This may come across as sounding elitist, but that is what we are. We are His children. We are suffused with His essence. It is what it is – and we are what we are.

"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but how much or how little you are with what you have." – R' Samson Raphael Hirsch zt"l.

כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן... לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן... פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ - *'If there shall be a destitute person among you… you shall not harden your heart or close your hand… rather you shall open your hand to him… you shall open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your destitute in your land.'* (15:7,8,11)



The Gaon, zl, m'Vilna, posits that this pasuk is intimating the proper guidelines one must maintain with regard to giving tzedakah, charity. There is a marked difference between an open hand and one in which he bends over his fingers, thereby partially closing his hand.

When the hand is open and the fingers spread out/apart, the difference in physical size between each finger is apparent. When the hand is bent, however, all of the fingers are even; they all look the same.

Chazal teach that the mitzvah of tzedakah demands that a person must be reinstated to his original standing. For example, a wealthy man who had been used to riding in a horse drawn wagon should not be deprived of this amenity – despite the fact that many other people are used to getting around by the power of their own two feet. Since this poor man had been used to the lifestyle of the wealthy, we must provide for him what he is lacking.

In other words, there are degrees among the poor. When we support the poor man, we are not to look only at the here and now, but rather, to look back in time, when this man had been able to sustain himself in a lifestyle of which we only dream. This is the pasuk's message.

The tzedakah that we give should be given with an open hand, acknowledging the various backgrounds of the poor who seek our support. Just as an open hand manifests the varied lengths of the fingers, so, should our tzedakah contribution be reflective of the poor man's background. All poor men are not created equal. Some, at one point, have been quite wealthy. This should be taken into consideration.

Rashi notes the spelling of the word עֲנִיֶּךָ, your poor, which in the above pasuk is spelled with one yud. According to the rules of grammar, aniyecha with two yuds refers to at least two poor men, while aniyecha with one yud is singular, denoting one simple poor man. Why does the Torah speak to the solitary poor, when, in fact, the halachos of tzedakah be directed toward the single ani, poor man?

Horav Shmuel David Walkin, zl, gives a practical explanation. We like giving to organizations, to groups, to programs, where it involves a multitude of people, who will benefit from our funds. When our money is going to help a single Jew who is in need; when the tzedakah is not exotic; when we will not receive a plaque or a double spread in the newspaper, we hesitate; we are not as forthcoming with our contribution.

The Torah seeks to circumvent this problem by writing aniyecha with one yud, in the singular, so that we will remember that the single poor man who petitions our support is just as important as the organization which dispatches a talented fundraiser. - We must consider the person in need, regardless of the lack of recognition that accompanies such giving.

"Passing through this world involves walking on a very narrow bridge and the most important thing is not to fear!" ~ R' Nachman of Breslov.

לֹא תֹאכַל כָּל־תּוֹעֵבָה - "***You shall not eat any abomination.***" (14:3)

When the cemetery in Kovno was emptied, the Chevra Kadisha found two bodies that were untouched by time; the bodies of the **Kovno Rav, z.l.**, and that of a Jewish soldier upon whose tombstone was engraved, "Here lies the kosher/proper Jewish soldier." These were the two bodies that had defied the natural process of decomposition. - What merit catalyzed this miracle?

It is told that this soldier, who was conscripted into the Polish army, absolutely refused to eat non-kosher food. He would not eat the army's rations, sustaining himself on vegetables alone. One day a group of anti-Semitic soldiers decided to force the Jewish soldier to eat non- kosher food. They grabbed him and poured hot soup down his throat. The Jewish soldier absolutely refused to swallow the soup and choked to death.

This exceptional act of self-sacrifice for kashrus, to maintain the purity of his soul, earned him the reward that his body, his soul's earthly receptacle, was not affected by nature.

כִּי־פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ וְהַעֲבֵט תַּעֲבִיטֶנּוּ דֵּי מַחְסֹרוֹ אֲשֶׁר יֶחְסַר לוֹ - "***Rather, you shall surely open your hand to him; and you shall grant him enough for his lack which is lacking for him.***" (15:8)

When a poor man comes to the door requesting assistance, he certainly needs a comforting word, some sound advice, even a nice Torah thought. We often forget, however, that he is there for one purpose: to raise sorely needed funds for himself and his family. His time is limited, and his needs are great.

The Dubno Maggid once went on a fundraising mission. He came to the home of a distinguished scholar who was also quite wealthy. The wealthy man was honored to have someone of the Maggid's stature visit him, and he reciprocated this honor. Prior to asking for a contribution, the Maggid began with a scholarly discourse on the

laws of tzedakah, charity. The man was reasonably impressed, adding his own erudite exegesis. This went on for a while. Every time the Maggid gave a Torah thought, the man reciprocated.

The Maggid noted that while they were having a lively scholarly discussion, the purpose of his visit had not been fulfilled. He still had no money. The Maggid looked at his wealthy host and said, "Let me share a story with you. In one of the far-off countries, there is a community where the people had never seen an onion. One day a traveler came to this community and brought with him an onion. The people were very excited with this wonderful find and thanked him profusely. They showered him with gifts and money when he left to continue his travels.

They took the onion and planted it. Soon, they were able to harvest many onions. Word spread that this community had handsomely rewarded the wanderer that had introduced them to onions.

"Afterwards, another traveler looking for funds arrived in this community with poppy seeds. The people were overjoyed with this new gift. They realized that they must offer remuneration for the poppy seeds. What would be the worthiest gift to give the traveler? Nothing less than their most valued commodity: onions! - They decided to pay their new supplier with onions.

He told them, 'I did not come here for onions; I came for money.' - "Likewise, my dear host, while I greatly appreciate the Torah thoughts that you have shared with me, I have come here, however, for something else: money. Does not the Torah say that one must give the poor man 'that which is lacking for him'? - I lack money."

"When a person is feeling joy, he will be able to gain more from one hour of Torah study than from many hours of study while he is sad." R' Chaim Volozhiner zt"l





When is it considered proper for a person to fast a ta'anis yochid [a personal fast day]?

I can't tell you all the things, but sometimes a person did something wrong and in order to make him realize how wrong it was, he should feel obligated to fast a ta'anis. Now I personally would not say to fast a ta'anis. A man did a very big sin and called me up. He wanted me to tell him how to do teshuva. I told him he should learn Mesillas Yesharim ten times from cover to cover. He said, "Ten times?!" I said, "Yes, ten times. And don't be in a hurry, go slowly." - That's what I told him.

Ten times Mesillas Yesharim is better than fasting a ta'anis yochid. But sometimes a person who sinned is not willing to learn Mesillas Yesharim. And he needs something as a k'nas, a fine, to make him feel that he lost something. A day when you're not eating should help you realize you lost something. You lost breakfast, you lost lunch, you lost something. And you're sorry you did this sin that caused you to lose those meals.

The truth is that a sin causes a loss of much more than a meal. But at least a meal is a mashal, so that you should know what you lost by the sin. So a ta'anis for a cheit, chalilah, is worth doing. Although it's better to learn Mesillas Yesharim several times; that's the best.



My husband loves to learn but I want him to take a vacation. But he tells me that his vacation is to be able to sit and learn. What should I do?

You should believe him. When a person is wasting his time making a living and his heart hurts him that he's not able to learn at that time, and now he has a vacation, so let him sit and learn. Why do you have to travel around – to go to the mountains and to get tired and worn out? And you'll be uncomfortable there too. - At home he has his *beis hamedrash* and his *seforim*; he has all his conveniences at home. He wants to sit and learn so let him enjoy his life and sit and learn.

Some people never rest; they waste their lives. I one time had a man in my shul, a wealthy man, so he went for a vacation to the mountains. And in the mountains he decided he needs a vacation from the mountains so he went to Switzerland.

These people are never at rest. They think traveling is a good time. Traveling is nothing but discomfort. If you're home, then *ashrei yoshvei veisecha*, you're happier at home than any place else.

Today wherever you go in the mountains there are ticks in the fields and in the grass. Tick disease; many people are suffering from that today.

And accidents happen *chalilah* every summer; things that wouldn't have happened in the city. Every summer tragedies happen in the country to children and to people; things that wouldn't happen in the city.

So we say, *ashrei yoshvei vei'secha* – you're lucky if you stay home. Now, I know you won't listen to me, but I'm saying it anyhow.



What is Selichos all about?

Selichos means that a man must make some time for *hisbonenus*, for thinking. **שִׂימוּ לְבַבְכֶם עַל דַּרְכֵיכֶם** — Put your minds on your path in life. Are you walking in the right way? When we say *Selichos* in the month of Elul, we're saying every day **נַחְפְּשָׂה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחְקֹרָה** — Let us search out our ways and investigate. All *frum* Jews are saying that. But do you do it? - How many *frum* Jews have stopped and given five minutes to think over the past year? Believe me, very few.

Five minutes of inventory, of bookkeeping, is very little for a whole year of business. It would be a great thing if somebody could boast, "I'm a man! I fulfilled **נַחְפְּשָׂה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחְקֹרָה**. I spent five minutes thinking of the past full year." - It's a very poor little boast, but *halevai v'halevai*!

At least *two* minutes you should spend! Did you spend two minutes? Even on Yom Kippur, do you spend two minutes thinking about your past year?

People are talking, but they don't even know what they're saying. They say **נַחְפְּשָׂה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחְקֹרָה**, and then they forget about doing it. - It's imperative. You must spend some time to think. Unless you want to continue in your blindness until you fall over the precipice — then it's all over and it's too late. At the end of your life, you'll realize your life was wasted because you failed to use your mind.

The golden opportunity of life in this world comes only once in history — you won't come back again. And that's what *Selichos* is for — it's meant to wake you up.

From the River to the Sea – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



There is a fellow whose name is Salah Tamari. He was a founder of Fatah and a high-ranking figure in the PLO. He was actually captured in the 1980's by the Israelis alongside 3000 other terrorists. By 1981, he was languishing in an Israeli prison.

Initially, he was running a successful Mafia type system within the prison walls. They had an underground movement with the aims to 'Free Palestine' one day, but the Israelis got wind of it, and broke up the party. He was lying in his bed totally depressed. He had no hope, no aspirations and no longer had dreams for a… 'Free Palestine', and ever being able to get out of there to re-double his efforts of terrorizing and killing Jews, so that he could have credibility in the world. And get his homeland (which he didn't really care about – just no Jews!) 'From the river to the sea'.

He is lying there in bed and has never been more depressed in his whole life. He's given up any hope of anything ever happening, and all of a sudden, he sees a Jewish security guard walking down the corridors and he's eating a pita bread. - Salah freezes on the spot. He knows that it's Pesach from the different food that he's getting from the prison system, and yet this guard is disrespecting all this, and is eating chametz on Pesach!

He stops the guard, and calls to him, "Yahud, Jew, how could you eat pita bread, it's Pesach, you're not allowed to eat chometz?"

The guard says, "Agh! Pesach, Passover, Yetzias Mitzrayim – that's a thing of the past, we now living in a modern world in which there is no place for all that old fashioned stuff.

Salah went back to his bed, lay down in deep thought, but he couldn't sleep that night. He thought, "You know what? we have hope, we have a future. One day we could have a Palestinian State. One day we could go… 'From the river to the sea'. – If the Jewish people cling to their Torah and their Mitzvos, when they embrace their past, and not think that these things should be consigned to the past, but it's very much part of the present and the future, then we have no chance. But if they themselves don't realize the power of their past, the strength of keeping their Torah, then we have a future."

He started another underground cell which ultimately some of whom became major terrorists in the intifadas that followed, because they realised that if we as Jews don't have what it takes, then they can take!

If we don't realize that Eretz Yisrael is a land that is driven and controlled by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, then He won't be on our side. Salah was strengthened and invigorated, and sadly the carnage and terrorism that he caused, continues to this day!

They realize it. **They** understand it. How many times have we seen in the last year where **they** are saying that so long as **we** keep what **we** are supposed to keep to, and **we** believe in what **we** are meant to believe in, - they know they're not going to be successful. – They know it! ….. We need to know it as well!

"Sadness locks the gates of heaven. Prayer opens locked gates. And happiness has the strength to break through ALL barricades." -~ The Baal Shem Tov.

Holiday Chizuk from Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

Rabboisai – we are all in the middle of a holiday period of bein hazemanim. Firstly, I would like to say that I hope that everybody wherever you are – at home, away, abroad, is spending time well. I hope everyone is feeling well and enjoying themselves, and everything is working out well for you and your families. Everybody should get back safely and happily B'Ezras Hashem.

This period should be a chizuk for everybody.

The Shinover Rav Zt'l asks on the pasuk - **רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה** – '***Behold, I set before you today a blessing <u>and</u> a curse***.' (11:26). It appears that the wording should be **בְּרָכָה או קְלָלָה** – a bracha OR a curse. How can it be both? It should be either or, as the pasukim continue **אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ .. וְהַקְּלָלָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ**. So why does the pasuk intimate that you get both **בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה**?

The Shinover Rav answers that there is no such thing as absolute **בְּרָכָה** or absolute **קְלָלָה**. This means that everything a person has, can be channelled for avodas Hashem, which equals bracha. But if it used to distract a person from his avodah, this can be a klalah.

For example, if a person is matzliach in parnasso, it appears to be a bracha, but it is not necessarily so. If his parnasso brings him to do Torah, mitzvos and chesed etc, then it is a great bracha. But if it distracts him from avodas Hashem, then the parnasso is not a bracha for him.

This is what the pasuk means- **רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה** – everything that a person has, has the potential for being both a bracha and a klalah! If you use it to come close to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, then it is a **בְּרָכָה**, but if you use it for the wrong purposes, then it can be a **קְלָלָה**. This pasuk applies to every life experience of a person. Make what you have into a bracha, and become closer to Hashem. Then everything in your life will be **בְּרָכָה**.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh says:

אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ .. וְהַקְּלָלָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ - Why doesn't the pasuk say אִם תִּשְׁמְעוּ just like it continues וְהַקְּלָלָה אִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ ?

The Ohr Hachaim asks what is the אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה -with the bracha?

He answers that אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה means – 'that which comes with the bracha'. More than the reward that you receive for keeping the Torah in the correct way, is the zechus that you receive for actually carrying out the command itself. The biggest bracha is the fact that you are able to do mitzvos – this in itself is the greatest achievement and feeling elevated and achieved.

– You must hear these words of the Ohr Hachaim and internalise them and absorb them – **את הברכה אשר תשמעון, "The blessing if you will hearken, etc."**

אמרו את, להעיר כי מלבד הברכה המושגת מדרך ה' עוד לו עמה יעוד הטוב, והוא אשר תשמעו כי השמיעה בתורה הוא תענוג מופלא ומחיה הנפש כאומרו (ישעי' נ"ה) שמעו ותחי נפשכם, והמרגיש בטעם התורה תשיחנו נפשו כי עליו לשלם גמול טוב למתן מתנה טובה מופלאת ואין צריך לומר שאין לתבוע שכר עליה:

The word **את** which frequently means "with" means here that in addition to the blessing which is the result of walking in G'd's paths there would be a bonus, i.e. they would hearken to G'd's commandments.

Hearkening to G'd's commandments is perceived as a pleasurable experience by itself. It helps the soul to feel "alive". Whenever someone who studies Torah gains an understanding of what the Torah has in mind, he experiences a physical and spiritual sense of wellbeing. He owes G'd a debt of gratitude for affording him such pleasure. There is no need to add that such a person cannot demand a reward from G'd for having allowed him to experience such joy.

And Takka, we should all feel elevated by doing the mitzvos properly, and we should all be zoche to utilize everything that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives us, and receive only בְּרָכָה from Hashem, and to get closer to Him.





The Red Chevy

Tomer was the type of guy who a lot of people knew, even if they didn't really know him. He drove around town in his bright red Chevrolet, blasting his music so loud that you had to notice him, one way or another. He thought he was happy, or at least he acted as he was happy with all his externalities, but within him was his Jewish *neshamah*, his soul that wasn't getting any recognition or satisfaction.

But then, one day something happened, and as a result he started to think about Hashem and His Torah. He decided to check it out, went to a few lectures, and little by little, the more he learned, the more he loved it, and the more he wanted to live as an observant Jew.

And then the day came when he made his life-altering decision to become a *baal teshuvah*. It was a gradual process, but he was strong and his commitment was deep. Eventually, he became completely Torah observant — *yarmulka*, *tzitzis*, Shabbos, everything! And Tomer felt great; finally, he had found inner joy, peace, and meaning in life.

He began studying in a *baal teshuvah* yeshiva, and it wasn't long before he was set up with Ronit, a wonderful girl from a secular background who had also become a *baalas teshuvah*. They went out several times, and when they saw how right they were for each

other, including the fact that they shared the same goal to grow in Yiddishkeit, they became engaged.

Tomer and Ronit married and were a great couple. He was learning in *Kollel*, and she was working and attending *shiurim* once at least once a week. They were an ideal religious couple.

There was only one thing off. Throughout all Tomer's growth, he still held to his red Chevrolet! Somehow, his flashy car didn't fit with the rest of his image. He was wearing a white shirt and a dark suit and hat, and his wife was dressing modestly, and although he was no longer blasting music all around town, just soft Jewish music audible only to them, the car was still flashy!

One day, Ronit felt that the time had come to address the color of their auto. She brought up the subject as tactfully as she could. "Tomer, you're so refined, you're learning Torah day and night, it's not really…it's, um…I mean…do you feel OK with the car? I mean, it's so bright red. It's a bit…loud, a bit…incongruous with who you are today."

Tomer thought for a minute or two and then, being intelligent and honest, he said: "You're right."

"You don't have to get rid of it," Ronit said. "Maybe you can just have it painted black."

Tomer grimaced and said, "Just have it painted? Painting a car is very costly. It could cost thousands of shekels, which we don't have." And then he said, "Why don't we just sell it? We'll spare ourselves the expense of painting it, and we'll have extra cash as well."

Tomer advertised that he had a Chevrolet of so-and-so year, gave a price and his phone number, and fairly quickly, they got a call from someone who was interested in buying the car. They made an appointment, and the potential buyer, came over to check it out.

Tomer was talking on the phone as the man examined the car. He poked and banged, opened the hood and checked out different

things inside as Tomer continued talking on the phone. "It looks OK so far," said the potential buyer. "Are you willing to go down in price?"

Tomer told his friend that he had to hang up, and then he said to the customer: "Maybe a little."

"OK, but before we even start negotiating, I have to drive it around the block to check it out."

"Yeah, of course," said Tomer. At that moment, Tomer's phone rang again, and he handed the keys to the potential buyer. The potential buyer got into the car, turned it on, and took a spin.

Tomer waited for him to come back — five minutes, ten minutes, half an hour, but the car didn't come back. There was no point in denying it, Tomer realized. He'd been robbed. The non-Jewish man had been a thief. To top all that off, Tomer's car wasn't insured.

After that fruitless half-an-hour, he went upstairs to Ronit and told her what had transpired. She was surprised and commiserated with her husband. "Wow, what a loss. What a disappointment. We thought we'd have that extra money, and now we don't have the money or the car." And then she added: "You should call the police as soon as possible. Maybe they'll find the thief and the car. After all, it's an easy car to spot."

"Nah," Tomer said. "The police are busy with everything else; they won't go out to find it."

"Well, look, everything from Hashem is for the good, but still, we're supposed to do *hishtadlus*, we're supposed to make our effort. So why don't you call anyway?"

"Sure," said Tomer, and he called.

The police didn't even ask him to come down to the station but just took down all the info over the phone. "OK," Tomer said after he got off the phone. "I did my *hishtadlus*."

Ronit smiled and said, "You know, I'm always working on myself, going to classes and reading, and trying to get better as a religious Jew. Well, one of the things I learned recently is how important it is to thank Hashem for everything. For everything! So, let's thank Hashem for what just happened."

Tomer looked at her in disbelief. "You're saying that I should thank Hashem that the uninsured car was stolen?"

"Yes," said Ronit. "That's what I was taught. There's a bigger picture, and we don't see it all; everything from Hashem is for the good. And so, we should thank Him for everything."

Tomer thought for a minute and then said: "OK. If you're certain about that, then I'm willing." - "I'm sure," she confirmed.

This time, it was Tomer who smiled, looked up, and after a moment said: "Hashem, thank You for everything! Thank You for my wife, my home, my food and clothing, thank You for the Torah…thank You for everything…including…" he paused, and then he said: "Thank You Hashem that our car was stolen! Thank You! Thank You! "Then Ronit said basically the same words, thanking Hashem for everything, including the fact that their car was stolen.

"Tomer," she said with a smile, "I learned that when we thank Hashem for everything, amazing and wonderful things happen!" - Tomer smiled at his trusting wife and said: "Great! I'm ready!"

Time went by — days, a week, even longer, and the car was no longer a topic of discussion. Tomer and Ronit got used to the fact of the theft and to their new reality of traveling on buses. Then, one day, they got a phone call from the police to come down to the station. "We have your car!" they told him on the phone.

"What?!!" - "Yes, that's what you heard. We found your car."

"I'll be there within half an hour," said Tomer. As he hung up, he said to Ronit: "Do you believe it? They found the car. Hard to believe,

but I'm going to check it out. I'll let you know what happens. Shalom!" And with that, he left for the police station.

When he arrived at the station, he was greeted cordially and a police officer took him to an area behind the station and said, pointing to a Chevrolet, "There it is. There's your car."

Tomer looked at what they claimed was his car, and his face fell. What a disappointment! He had hoped that they had really found his car, but this Chevrolet was black, clearly not his. "It's not mine," he told the officer. "It's a Chevrolet, but not mine."

"No, it's yours," the officer assured him. "Look at the license plates."

Tomer looked and was amazed to see that it was the exact numbers as his red Chevy. He was confused and said: "How can that be? My car is red."

The officer explained: "One of the first things a car thief does is have the car painted so it will be less recognizable and harder to locate. But you were lucky, and we found it."

Tomer was speechless, and then he started laughing. "What's the joke?" asked the officer.

"Well, first of all, I'm just happy to have my car back. And second, it's just the way I wanted it. My wife and I didn't want a red car anymore, but since painting it is so expensive, we decided to sell it. And then it was stolen. My wife and I thanked Hashem for everything, including the fact that it was stolen, and here I see that it was painted, not on our expense. For free! That's why I'm laughing. I'm laughing from joy and gratitude."

And then Tomer said: "Thank You, Hashem. Thank You for everything, including the fact that my car was stolen, and returned, and is the perfect colour for a couple who loves You so much!"

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Shema and the Holocaust



R' Tzvi Hirsch Meisels (1901-1974) remarked that during the Holocaust he heard Shema recited many times by Jews before being murdered. In fact, when ~~Eichmann~~ ysh"v was being led to his court case in Yerushalayim, he said that he knew how to say the pasuk Shema Yisrael because he heard it many thousands of times during the Holocaust when the Jews screamed it before they were killed *Al Kidush Hashem*.

In a speech in 1946, R' Meisels gave the following interpretation of הֲשָׁמַע עָם קוֹל אלה-ים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ־הָאֵשׁ (Devarim 4:33). "Has a people ever heard the voice of Hashem speaking from the midst of the fire?"-He explained it in reference to the Holocaust as referring to Shema (**השמע**) recited by a nation calling out to Hashem (**עם קול אלה-ים מדבר**) from within the flames (**מתוך האש**).

"The world isn't silent; It's speaking loudly, Proclaiming, 'Look closely and you'll find Hashem in every part of creation.' – The true purpose of life is to notice our creator in everything… always." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky, *zt"l*, was sent to a Siberian prison. One morning, he couldn't bring himself to say *Modeh Ani*. He asked himself, "I can't study Torah or perform mitzvos here. Why should I praise Hashem for returning my *neshamah*?" He felt that life didn't have purpose if he couldn't study Torah and perform mitzvos. Then, he caught his error: He could serve Hashem by believing in Hashem!

That was a great *avodah*, as it meant not questioning Hashem's ways and why he must suffer so much.

When he realized he could serve Hashem in this manner, he joyfully said *Modeh Ani* and thanked Hashem for another day of life — another day to serve Hashem with the one and only thing he had left: his *emunah*.

Years later, Reb Yechezkel Abramsky related this episode to the **Rayatz of Lubavitz**, *zt"l*, who replied: "The entire Siberia was worthwhile so that you should say those words."

Red Light by Rabbi Yosef Weiss z'l

The customs and obligations of Purim create a festive and exciting atmosphere. But there's one side effect to all this activity – the unceasing traffic that fills the streets. As a precaution to this potentially dangerous situation, community activists convene with the local police to detail security and traffic restrictions. Strict measures must be taken to ensure that safe driving and safe streets will safeguard the happiness of the day.

The day before Purim in Lakewood, R' Menashe Miller was scheduled to meet with Sergeant Bill Addison, Badge #31, to review the day's itinerary. Five minutes before the police officer was due to arrive, he called R' Menashe from his cell phone.

"I'm sorry, Rabbi, but I'm going to be a little late. A lady just blew a red light right in front of me. It'll probably take about twenty minutes – I'm going to pull her over and issue a summons."

Sergeant Addison disconnected the call and strode importantly over to the driver's window. She had pulled over to the side and stopped.

"License and registrations, please."

The woman inside handed over the requested items without a word. Sergeant Addison examined the documents, then raised his eyes to the driver. "Ma'am, do you know what you did wrong?

"Yes, sir," she said meekly. "I didn't concentrate on my driving."

"Do you have anything to say in your defense?"

The woman turned away from the officer to look at her five-year-old, who was seated snugly in the back seat, quietly absorbing the scene. Sergeant Addison also noticed a baby strapped into the back, and a bottle clutched in the woman's hand. She must have been trying to give the baby the bottle, he surmised, and she didn't notice that the light had turned red. The woman turned back to him. "No, sir, I don't."

Sergeant Addison was surprised. She hadn't even explained about the bottle.

"You know, ma'am, most drivers try to justify their traffic violation. Was there a reason why you ran that red light? Were you in a hurry to get somewhere? Were you in the middle of doing something?" His eyes strayed to the baby bottle in her hand.

To the puzzlement of Sergeant Addison, the woman turned to meet her son's inquisitive eyes before answering the question. "No, sir. I was wrong. It was the wrong thing to do."

"Ma'am, everyone says something," he said in exasperation. "You can't just take the ticket without trying to excuse yourself."

The woman gave the child one last meaningful glance, and answered with quiet conviction. "My five-year-old is listening to every word I say. If I start making up excuses, what kind of lesson would I be teaching my son?"

Five minutes later there was a knock at Menashe Miller's door.

"Sergeant Addison!?" R' Menashe asked. "How did you get here so quickly?"

"Wait till you hear this one, Rabbi," the sergeant responded, still shaking his head in bemusement.

R' Menashe listened as Sergeant Addison recounted the incident. "I was so impressed, I didn't give her the ticket," the officer concluded, "And here I am."

Sergeant Addison took the seat offered to him, and got down to business. People like that certainly deserved the best safety precautions on their joyous holiday. ("Visions of Greatness VIII")

The Weekly Vort

• **וזכרת כי עבד היית במצרים – *'You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt.'*** (16:12).

Why must we remember the slavery? Shouldn't we rather make the Exodus the prime focus of our remembrance?

R' Shimon Schwab explains that the actual affliction plays an integral role in the efficacy of the mitzvah. The affliction was cast on us by Hashem to pave the way for us to be worthy of participating in a miracle. It is an important component of the miracle. By remembering the affliction, we also recall the miracle of the Exodus. - In fact, the opening of the Haggadah states, "This is the bread of affliction." The bitterness and pain are an essential part of the miracle and should also be recalled. (Peninim on the Torah)

The entire purpose of our existence is to overcome our negative habits. ~ Vilna Gaon



El Al airplanes are the only ones in the world to have anti-missile missile technology built into them, and the only ones that need to.



The world has almost continually had people who wished to wipe out the Jews, and it has not changed despite living in our own country. This is part of Hashem's plan for us, for whatever reason, but in recent years especially, the situation in Israel has caused many people to worry about their safety there.

With terrorism and the intifada going on, people asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson z"l, whether going to Israel was safe for them, or whether it was appropriate for them to send their children to study there.

Over and over, the Rebbe assured them there was no safer place to be than Israel. He quoted a posuk in this week's Parsha, 11:12 s Parsha, 11:12– "always, Hashem's eyes are upon [the land] from the beginning of the year until the end of the year."

How could you be any safer than when you are together with G-d in His capital city?" he would say. "There is nothing to worry about."

Indeed, this Parsha reminds us that the safest place in the world to be, is "with Hashem." - When we really internalize this message, we will see the miraculous salvation that we have been promised for millennia.



Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg

כָּל־צִפּוֹר טְהֹרָה תֹּאכֵלוּ – 'All kosher birds you may eat.' (14:11)

The Torah does not give us the specific signs of a Kosher bird. Rather, the Torah tells us the non-Kosher birds and we are supposed to determine the Kosher birds.

The Gemara in Chulin (59a) does tell us the four signs of a Kosher bird. They are:

1. An added toe -**אצבע יתירה**

2. A crop - **זפק**

3. It does not claw - **דורס אינו**

4. The gizzard can be peeled - **קרקבן נקלף**

The second letter of each Kosher sign mentioned spells out the word **צפור**, bird, which tells us the signs of a Kosher bird. (Chaim Shel Torah)

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם (14:1)

"Just as children rely on their parents to take care of them in the best way, we are Hashem's children, and we should trust that Hashem is leading us with kindness and with compassion. – We don't always understand, but like children, we know that it is always good." ~ Ibn Ezra.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Steipler Gaon, Rav Yaakov Kanievsky, z"tl, is the father of **HaGaon Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**. Once, a man was visiting the Steipler, and asked him at what point one stops Davening for the well-being of a child? "Is there any specific time when the child is 'on his own?' Perhaps when the child gets married or has children of his own?"

The Steipler Gaon responded, "I can't answer this question. My Chaim'l is fifty-four years old and I'm still Davening for him."

The Steipler taught that one never stops Davening for the success and happiness of their children!

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Meilich Biderman related a story. Years ago, in Communist Russia, a Jewish couple was Bentched with a child. The mother wanted her child to have a Bris Milah, but her husband refused because every Jewish ceremony in those days came with a risk of imprisonment.

She wrote a letter to the **Ribnitzer Rebbe, Rav Chaim Zanvil Abramowitz, zt"l**, who was known for his Mesiras Nefesh, to perform a Bris, and she requested that he come and give her son a Bris. The Rebbe agreed, and he arrived together with his friend, **Rav Mendel Futerfass, zt"l**. It was risky to perform the Mitzvah, but they did it with joy. After the Milah, however, there was a complication, and the child began to bleed profusely, and he needed medical care. They couldn't call a doctor because the doctor would report them to the authorities.

The Ribnitzer Rebbe went into a side room for a short time, and when he came out, Rav Mendel Futerfass exclaimed, "You performed a miracle! The child stopped bleeding! What did you do in there?"

The Rebbe replied, "I Davened. I said, 'Ribono Shel Olam! We came here to do a great Mitzvah. Please protect us!' and Hashem heard my Tefilos."

When Rav Mendel would repeat this story, he would express his great admiration for the Ribnitzer Rebbe's Emunah.

He said, "At that time, I was so afraid that I couldn't think straight, but the Ribnitzer Rebbe knew that the solution was Tefilah. With his strong Emunah, he saved the child, and also our lives as well!"

L'Maaseh

A wealthy man once approached **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l** for advice: He had one hundred thousand dollars designated to give to tzedaka and he wanted to know who he should give it to. - R' Moshe instructed him to give the money to Chinuch Atzmai.

A key member of the administration of R' Moshe's yeshiva was present, and he just stood there in disbelief knowing how much a sizable donation like that could have helped the struggling yeshiva.

When the 'should have been donor' left, R' Moshe turned to him and said: 'You don't think I realize that our yeshiva needs the funds? Of course I do, but Chinuch Atzmai needs it more and that organization belongs to all of K'lal Yisroel!'

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Once, a merchant from Warsaw became very wealthy as the result of a Brachah from **Rav Yaakov Aryeh of Radzimin, zt"l**. To show his gratitude, he traveled to the Tzadik every month, and he would always give him five golden rubles.

One day he said to himself, "The Rebbe gives the money I bring him directly to the poor. The Rebbe is so holy that he doesn't even

understand the value of what I am giving him. Why should I waste my money?"

The next time he visited the Rebbe, he gave him five silver rubles. The Rebbe looked at the coins and said, "You usually give me red coins, and these are white."

The merchant asked, "What difference does it make whether the coins are red or white?"

The Rebbe replied, "It makes no difference at all to me, but I see that the poor people are happier when I give them red coins. We both know that it makes no difference, but why not make them happy?"



Something From Nothing

There were two tailors, Meir and Shmuel (names changed), who traveled from village to village in Eastern Europe, offering their services to the villagers, saving a few kopeks here and there until they'd have enough to return home.

When they finally collected enough to go home, the traveling tailors stayed at the inn of a Jew who, as a side job, managed the properties of the local landlord. They noticed that the innkeeper seemed very distraught, and so the two tailors insisted he confide with them his predicament.

"The non-Jewish landlord received some fine cloth as a gift from a prince," he explained. "He got it in his head that the cloth must be made into the finest royal-looking garb, but no tailor I bring him is

adequate. And now he's threatening me that if I do not find him a first-class, Parisian-style tailor who can alter it to his outrageous standards, he's going to throw me and my family into the dungeon!"

Though they yearned to see their families and children, Meir and Shmuel were eager to help a fellow Jew. "We are fine expert tailors," they insisted. "We can do the job!"

Reluctantly, the innkeeper agreed. "What do I have to lose?" he said. "There's no alternative."

Miraculously, the landlord handed them the precious material. Within two weeks, they stood before him with the finest robe. Everybody was then happy: the landlord was on cloud nine with his new garment; the innkeeper was very relieved to hear that the landlord was happy; and Meir and Shmuel were happy with an extra thirty rubles each for the job they completed.

Now, the landlord's wife was also in attendance as her husband gladly paid Meir and Shmuel for their work. She figured that she knew why these two Jews were really happy: they had saved their fellow Jew and his family from the dungeon. With that thought, she turned to her husband and said, "Tell them about the family in the dungeon. Maybe they will pay the ransom."

That's the way they did things in those days: if a family couldn't pay their rent, the landlord put them into the dungeon until it was paid. Ingenious, right?

So the landlord told them about the Jewish family he'd thrown into the dungeon that was waiting to be ransomed.

"How much do they owe?" they asked.

"Forty rubles."

"Sure," said Meir. "We can put that together to save a family from the dungeon, can't we, Shmuel?"

Shmuel wasn't as quick to agree as Meir, though. His share of the forty rubles would be a considerable portion of his savings. He had been traveling almost a year without seeing his family. So while it was certainly sad that this family in the dungeon was suffering, he couldn't come to simply part with all that money on their account.

Meir saw that Shmuel wasn't willing to put up money, he counted out his entire savings, asked Shmuel for just a few more rubles, and came up with exactly forty rubles for the family's release. Next thing he knew, the family was released from the dungeon, pale and sickly, kissing and hugging his feet for saving their lives.

Then Meir and Shmuel returned home. Shmuel's family was happy to see him. He used the money he earned to set up a tailor shop, and since he had merchandise to start out with, he soon became very successful.

Meir's family, on the other hand, was certainly disappointed. He didn't want to tell them how he used all his savings. It was a mitzvah, after all, and you don't brag about mitzvos. And besides, they wouldn't understand. So, they thought what they thought, and the family sank deeper into poverty.

Slowly, Meir started to sink into a depression. He sank deeper and deeper until he could do nothing but stand at a street corner, his open hand stretched out for alms. He stood there through the heat of summer, the autumn rain, and the freezing wind and snow of winter, a hollow and forlorn soul. Whoever dropped a coin in his hand received a brachah, but beyond that, he didn't speak a word to anyone. No one. He believed he was nothing, a nobody.

Then, one day, a merchant walked briskly by Meir, late for an important business meeting. He dropped a coin in Meir's hand as he marched by, barely hearing Meir's brachah as he passed. "May Hashem bentch you in all you do," said Meir.

And He did. The business worked out better than imagined. Maybe, he thought, it had something to do with that beggar's brachah. So, the next time the merchant had a deal to make, he made sure to pass Meir the beggar and hand him a coin. And that time, he waited to hear the brachah and answer "Amen." And once again, the brachah had a miraculous effect.



As you can imagine, this became the merchant's regular practice. Rapidly, he became one of the wealthiest merchants in the district. Knowing that whatever he touched made profit, everyone wanted to partner with him.

The merchant bought a new mansion for his family and held a grand party at which he got rather drunk. That's when he spilled the beans.

"You think I'm rich because I'm smart?" he confided. "Or because of my good deeds? It's none of the above! It's all due to the brachah of a ragged beggar who stands motionless at the corner on the way to the market!"

The next morning, there was line waiting for Meir to arrive at his normal spot. People gave, Meir benched, and miracles happened. Meir was oblivious to it all, so lost was he in his depression. Yet, his fame spread quickly. Soon, barren women were blessed with children, the sick were healed, and the biggest *shlemazels* actually got jobs—all as a consequence of Meir's brachos.

That's when the **Baal Shem Tov** came into the story. He also heard about this beggar-*tzaddik* whose brachos were as effective as the

spring rains bringing seed to sprout. He traveled himself to Meir to see him firsthand. And he took Meir aside and said, "Now tell me your story."

The Baal Shem Tov was that way. He could converse with anybody, and that person would open up as though he was his closest friend. Meir told him the story of his life. But the story of the forty rubles came hard. "You must tell," said the Baal Shem Tov. "You must remember and tell."

And when he did, the Baal Shem Tov hugged and kissed him. He took him back to his town of Medzhibuzh, to his study hall, and made him one of his closest students. Meir studied Talmud and Kabbalah, and became a master of the secret lore. He became a *tzaddik*. He became a real somebody.

Many of us may feel like nobodies. That's OK. The moon must disappear before it becomes full again. The seed must rot before it becomes a great oak. But that isn't everlasting. The light one day will shine. There are better and brighter days waiting. There's a light at the end of the tunnel.

Knowing that Hashem is running a perfect world gives us the serenity and confidence that there's something good waiting us.

Learning from Our Leaders

People asked the **Ateres Yehoshua of Djikov** why he had parnassah, while his father and grandfathers were all poor. The Ateres Yehoshua answered with a mashal: A poor person passed a theatre. There was a long line of people waiting to buy tickets.

"How much does a ticket cost?" he asked one of the people in line.

"A regular seat costs a hundred dollars. There are better seats that can cost up to three hundred dollars."

The poor man was shocked. "One hundred or three hundred dollars just to watch a show?! What's the show about?"

"It's about a poor man collecting money."

Now, the poor person was even more confused. He said, "I'm poor and I collect money all the time, and all I get is a few coins!"

The man explained that people aren't interested in watching this in real life. They want to see an imaginary show, played by actors, and that's why they pay so much.

With this mashal, the Ateres Yehoshua explained to his chassidim, "My father and my grandfathers were true Rebbes, therefore they only received a small amount of money. But I'm an actor, copying what they did, therefore I get more money."

The Ateres Yehoshua said this with immense humility, but we can learn a lesson from it: Why do people pay money to watch actors? It's because the actors show talent, expertise, years of training, and hours of hard work. People value that and are willing to pay money to see it. But when something comes naturally, it loses its value in people's eyes.

Hashem desires to see us doing deeds that require effort, talent, and willpower. That is what makes them precious in Hashem's eyes.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l would say: A man is similar to a baby in its crib. He thinks he can do whatever he wants, but, in truth, he can't do anything on his own.

A suitcase full of rocks is heavy. A suitcase full of diamonds is lightweight. One who treats his Nisyonot like diamonds, as a method to become closer to Hashem, will have an easy time carrying the burden. ~ The Dubno Maggid



הוא היה אומר

R' Yehonason Eibeschutz *zt"l* (Tiferes Yehonason) would say: **לֹא תֹאכְלֶנּוּ לְמַעַן יִיטַב לְךָ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ -12:25**

How do children benefit when their parents avoid eating blood? The character of a person is affected by his diet. Eating spicy foods makes one excitable and temperamental while bland foods are calming and relaxing.

Eating blood makes a person insensitive, even cruel. Children inherit character traits of their parents, so avoiding certain foods not only benefits the parents, but also prevents the children from inheriting undesirable character traits."

משל למה הדבר דומה

נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו ... (טו-י)

One of the first prominent *Chassidishe Rebbes* to come to Montreal was **R' Yochanan Twersky *zt"l***, the **Tolner Rebbe**. During the difficult postwar years his home was always open to visitors, and he and his wife tended to the needs of each individual with loving tender care. But it wasn't only his greatly expanded heart full of love that he showered upon everyone; he went well beyond that.

He realized there were individuals who had a difficult time soliciting clothing and other commodities they so desperately needed but didn't have the heart to ask for them. To that end, he conceived a

novel way to help these destitute refugees, especially before the harsh Montreal winters.

The *Rebbe* would arrive at the *mikvah* with layers of clothing, wearing numerous jackets and sweaters. He would then conveniently "forget" them, announcing that anything left behind was *"hefker"* free for taking. The *Rebbe* thus ensured that while their bodies were warm, their pride was intact.

Once, after "forgetting" most of his clothing at the *mikvah*, the *Rebbe* was walking home, jacketless, only in his white shirt and *tzitzis* and someone reprimanded him that this was unbecoming for a *Rebbe*. - The *Rebbe* laughingly replied, "For someone like me, it's very becoming!"

All One Family



An area that will build our children's inner soul is to help them realize that Am Yisrael are one. We are a family. We are all responsible for one another.

A couple once came to **Rav Shimshon Pincus** for shalom bayis counselling. In the course of the conversation, it emerged that one of the things that bothered the wife was that her husband wouldn't eat all the food she worked hard to cook for him.

When Rav Pincus asked him, in private, why he wouldn't eat her food, he sheepishly explained that he had neglected his teeth for many years, and they had decayed to the point that he simply couldn't chew certain dishes she prepared.

"Why don't you fix your teeth?" Rav Pincus prodded.

"I don't have money," the man replied.

Rav Pincus was not a rich man by any stretch, but he took all the money he had at hand and gave it to this man. "Go get your teeth fixed," he said.

Somebody heard about this and just couldn't understand why Rav Pincus would squander so much money to get this man's teeth fixed.

"Rabbi, you don't even have enough money for your own family, how could you give so much money to a person you barely know?"

"If this man would be my son," Rav Pincus replied, "would you ask me why I'm giving him money to fix his teeth? Of course not! So what's the difference if it's my son or someone else's son — we are all Hashem's children." We are all banim l'Hashem, we are all one family.

The Anonymous Man's Last Act Before He Was Killed by Shmuel Raskin



'4th August 2024 - The second Israeli murdered in yesterday morning's terror attack in central Israel's Holon is named as Avraham Somechi. He is survived by his wife, two children and five grandchildren.'

What have you heard about Avraham Somechi, who was killed this week in the terrible attack here in Holon? Most people didn't know him. In online searches, you'll find very little information—barely even a photograph. Personally, I only recognized him when his picture was published (and even that was a challenge). People around me also started talking about him.

As always, it seems that G-d plucks the most beautiful flowers.

Avraham lived in our neighborhood and prayed regularly at the Ahava Ve'achva synagogue. He rarely raised his voice, and those who sat next to him regularly didn't even know his name. He would arrive early, leave quietly, and that was that. Did anyone imagine that Avraham was a respected lecturer at Tel Aviv University? Did anyone dream that he was a phenomenal Torah genius?

Very few knew his greatness. When the late Rabbi Ezra Yitzhak (who passed away about a month ago) struggled with a Talmud lesson, he would ask Avraham to explain. Sometimes the Torah teacher didn't arrive, and Avraham volunteered to stand in. He chose to teach the section of the Zohar known as "*Patach Eliyahu*," which includes the foundations of Kabbalah. He explained it as a scholar could. The congregation understood, and Avraham returned to his anonymity.

I know several people who can explain *Patach Eliyahu*. I know others who can assist the rabbi with difficulty in a Talmud lesson. And, of course, I'm acquainted with professors and researchers at the university. But someone who could do it all—quietly and simply—that you do not meet every day.

You won't find much written about him anywhere. That's who he was. A great man who walked among us, until, in one moment, he sanctified G-d's name.

But perhaps the last message from Rabbi Avraham was his final act:

On that Sunday morning, his last day, Rabbi Avraham finished his prayers and folded his prayer shawl. He was hurrying to leave the synagogue promptly to take his wife, may she live and be well, somewhere.

Just before he exited the synagogue—unaware that it was the last quarter-hour of his life—he turned to one of his fellow worshippers and made a request: "Every day after prayers, there is a beggar who

comes by. I see you're sticking around. Please take this coin and give it on my behalf."

That was Rabbi Avraham's final act. When he completed the mitzvah of charity, he concluded his mission in this world. Now he resides in a better place, undoubtedly praying for all of us. Quietly. There, in the heavens, they see him differently than we did here.

May his great merit protect our neighborhood and the grieving family, within the entire people of Israel who mourn during these days of prolonged exile. And may we soon merit the true and complete Redemption. Amen!

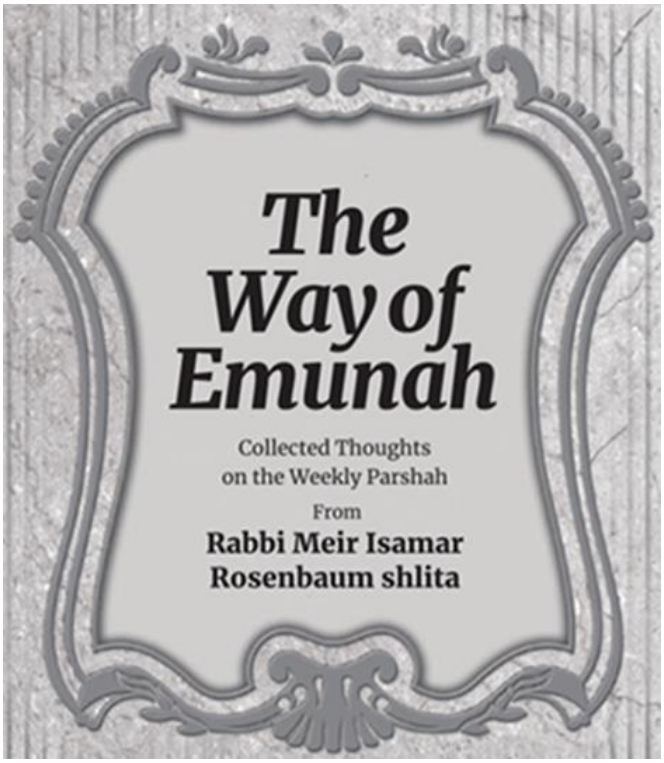
The Unusual Second Siyum of the Talmud



We have noted the importance of studying at fixed times. Of course, this does not mean that one should study only at those times, for as explained above, all times are good for Torah study.

It is told that **R' Zelig Reuven Bengis** (1864-1953), the late Rabbi of Yerushalayim, made a regular "Siyum" - festive meal on the completion of the entire Talmud every six weeks - as he was constantly reviewing that work.

Once, however, he made two "Siyumim" within a span of two weeks, and this surprised his family. He explained, "The present Siyum is for the special study of the Talmud that I undertook while waiting at weddings and doctors' offices."] (Hamaayan)



עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר אֵת כָּל־תְּבוּאַת זַרְעֶךָ הַיֹּצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה שָׁנָה שָׁנָה - '***You shall take off a tenth of all your crops… of the field, every year***…' (14:22)

- **The Benefit of Wealth that Comes From Maaser**

Yalkut Me'am Loaiz explains the statement that one may test Hashem with maaser by citing the various words of Chazal regarding things that create wealth.

One example is that Chazal say (Yalkut Shimoni 848): "One who wants to get rich should work with small animals." In another place, Chazal say that marrying one's son off to a daughter of a kohen causes hone to become wealthy. Since Chazal tell us that there are numerous things one can do to get rich, one may wonder why he should be so careful to give maaser. Why can't he just do one of the easier things?

Such a person should know that wealth that comes through maaser has numerous benefits that wealth generated in other ways does not.

1. Other forms of wealth can be lost during troubling times, and it is possible that one will not derive enjoyment from it. Wealth that comes from giving maaser, however, will have Hashem's blessing upon it and one will definitely enjoy it.

2. Wealth that comes from giving maaser will bear dividends and increase year by year, as long as one continues to give maaser.

3. If one gets rich by working with small animals, for example, the wealth will only in the individual's flock of sheep. Wealth from maaser, however, will extent to whatever one tries his hand at.

All three benefits are hinted to in the pasuk. It says "aser t'aser", which Chazal understand to mean that one who gives maaser will become rich. It then says "from the crops of the field year by year", meaning that the blessing will manifest itself every year, which is not the case regarding other forms of wealth. It continues to say "and you and your household will rejoice", meaning that you will definitely be able to enjoy your wealth, which is also not true regarding other forms of wealth. Finally, it says "so that Hashem will bless you in all of your handiwork", meaning that everything you try will be successful and will bring wealth.

- **Esav Wanted to Give Maaser so That He Would be Wealthy**

The Medrash (Tanchuma, Toldos 8) says that Esav fooled his father, Yitzchok, into thinking he was pious by asking him if he is obligated to give maaser on salt.

The Satmar Rov zy"a (Divrei Yoel, Parshas Ki Savo) explains why Esav specifically used the mitzvah of maaser to fool his father by saying that Esav knew that maaser creates wealth. - Since he had to act piously in regards to one mitzvah in order to fool his father, he chose the mitzvah that would make him wealthy.

נָתֹן תִּתֵּן לּוֹ וְלֹא־יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתְּךָ לוֹ - '***You shall surely give him, and your heart shall not be bad when you give to him as Hashem your G-d will bless you because of this thing***.' (15:10)

- **Doing Good Every Day**

The Rasha"b of Lubavitch zy"a once told his son, the **Riyat"z of Lubavitch zy"a**, "Getting up every day to learn and daven is all fine and good, but if you don't find a way to help a Jew, it is a 'dry' day. Therefore, you should daven to Hashem to be given the opportunity to do chesed and give tzedakah every day!"

That very day, two men came to the door and asked for a donation for a poor family. The Rasha"b turned to his son and said, "You see! If you really want it, Hashem sends it!"

26 Av – Yahrzeit of the Satmar Rov Zt"l, Rav Yoel ben Rav Chananya Yomtov Teitelbaum Zy"a



- **Guarding His Eyes**

The Satmar Rov was a kadosh who was renowned for his tzidkus and prishus from a very young age. He practiced shemiras einayim to an extreme level.

R' Chaim Yehuda Lowy z"l, a resident of the city of Satmar and a student of the Rov's father, the Kedushas Yomtov zy"a, related that once on an extremely cold day, he saw the Rov, who was a young boy at the time, pacing around outside near his home. He was shaking from the cold, but he was not going inside.

R' Chaim Yehuda asked the boy why he was standing outside in the cold, but he modestly tried to avoid answering the question. He finally realized that two young non-Jewish girls who worked as maids in the house were standing next to the door, and he understood that the boy did not want to walk past them to get in. - He asked the maids to step aside to allow the boy to enter, and only after they moved did he go into the house.

- **Serving Hashem Without sleep or Food**

Rav Hillel Lichtenstein zt"l, Rov of Krasna, once asked the Satmar Rov how he was able to deal with communal issues and help people in so many ways all day with little to no sleep. Most people who miss a night of sleep are unable to function the next day, yet, somehow, the Rov had a clear head and firmly led his flock, despite his lack of sleep. How was this possible?

The Rov answered, "I am used to it. This is how I was raised in my father's house."

One occasion, the Rov said that one needs a lot of zechus avos to be able to serve Hashem properly without much sleep or food.

- **When One Goes to Bed, He Puts Himself at Risk**

It is well known that the Rov did not lay down in a bed for many years. His doctor once asked him why he never slept in a bed – instead dozing off in his chair for short periods of time – telling him that he was harming his health by doing so.

The Rov answered, "Sleep is a thief. It steals a person's time. One could spend his time learning or davening, but he can't do that when is asleep. - If a thief forces a person to give him his valuables against his will, he has to obey; but why would anyone willingly give himself over to a thief if he doesn't have to?

So too, if sleep overcomes a person against his will, he has no choice in the matter. But why would I lie down in bed and give myself to the thief?"

- **Doing a Favor for a Jew**

He once was told that bochurim in his yeshiva had been asked to bring some food to a sick man in the hospital and they didn't want to do it. - He chastised the bochurim and told them, "If the bochurim don't know that one must do a favour for a Jew, what is the entire yeshiva worth?"

In general, this was his way. He would instill in his students the importance of doing chesed whenever they could.

May the memory of the tzadik be blessing for all of Klal Yisroel.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Mordechai Schiff ZT"L lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and was a student par excellence of **Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"L**. Rav Mordechai was a Tzaddik who treasured his family Minhagim dearly. Rav Mordechai got married later in life and married a wonderful woman, but interestingly enough, she was not a fluent English speaker.

Rav Mordechai thought that he told his wife his family Minhag of not eating Gebrochts, but perhaps because of her limited English, she may not have understood him as we will see shortly. Not eating Gebruchts is a custom that some have which entails not eating Matzah on Pesach that came into contact with any form of liquid, out of concern that an uncooked part of the Matzah that comes into contact with the liquid may leaven.

One year, as Pesach was approaching, he observed his wife cooking Gebrochts. Rav Mordechai found himself in a quandary. On the one hand, he did not want to tell his wife that what she was doing was not in-keeping with his Minhag as this would insult her. On the other hand, Rav Mordechai was a meticulous observer of "Midvar Sheker Tirchak" – distancing oneself from falsehood. Accordingly, Rav

Mordechai did not wish to make excuses on why he could not eat the Gebrochts on Pesach when his wife offered it to him (even though it is often permitted to say an untruth so as not to insult someone).

To resolve his quandary, Rav Mordechai went to Rav Moshe for advice on what to do. Rav Moshe was well aware of Rav Mordechai's desire not to make his wife feel bad in any way, and he was also aware of how meticulous Rav Mordechai was to always tell the truth.

Rav Moshe also knew how meticulous Reb Mordechai was in maintaining his family Minhagim. Nevertheless, Rav Moshe instructed him to do Hataras Nedarim (Halachic process to annul a vow or a Minhag which may be considered to be a vow) to release him from his obligation to follow his family Minhag of not eating Gebrochts.

Released from his obligation, Rav Mordechai no longer needed to inform his wife that she was cooking something that he could not eat which would have insulted her. He also no longer needed to be untruthful by making up excuses for why he could not eat the food.

Chabad.ORG

From our Sages

זֹאת הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר תֹּאכְלוּ – 'These are the animals which you may eat . . .' *(14:4)*

The birds and many of the mammals forbidden by the Torah are predators, while the permitted animals are not. We are commanded not to eat those animals possessive of a cruel nature, so that we should not absorb these qualities into ourselves. (Ramban)

The Story of "Oy Vey"

Half Hebrew, half Aramaic, this classic lament is all Jewish.



Oy vey! — also: Oy vavoy! Oy vey iz mir! Oy gevalt! Or quite simply: Oy! — is an iconic Jewish expression that conveys the weariness of a people overly familiar with hardship and oppression, as well as the resilience of a people that finds hope and sometimes even humor in catastrophe. It's both heavy and light. It's tragic and funny. It's so much better with a thick Yiddish accent. But where did it come from?

The word "oy" (**אוי**) goes back thousands of years, all the way to the Hebrew Bible. In that classical biblical mode, there is nothing funny about it — "oy" is simply an expression of anguish and may well be etymologically related to that English word "woe." Of all the biblical authors, the prophet Jeremiah uses it the most, a total of eight times. (Not for nothing has his name become synonymous with lament — giving us the English word "jeremiad.")

A few examples will give a sense of the way this word was originally used. In the Bible, "oy" can be wielded as a curse or at least a poetic barb thrown at one's enemies. For example: **אוֹי לְךָ מוֹאָב אָבַדְתָּ עַם כְּמוֹשׁ נָתַן בָּנָיו פְּלֵיטִם וּבְנֹתָיו בַּשְּׁבִית לְמֶלֶךְ אֱמֹרִי סִיחוֹן** - '*Oy to you, O Moab! You are undone, O people of Chemosh!* '(*Bamidbar 21:29*)

Today we think of "oy" as a Jewish exclamation, but in the Bible it is used by all peoples. Another sworn Israelite enemy, the Philistines, have this to say when they realize that the Ark of the Covenant is back on the battlefield, protecting the armies of Israel: **ספר שמואל א פרק ד (ז) - וַיִּרְאוּ הַפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי אָמְרוּ בָּא אֱלֹ-הִ-ים אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ אוֹי**

אוֹי לָנוּ כִּי לֹא הָיְתָה כָּזֹאת אֶתְמוֹל שִׁלְשֹׁם - *Oy to us! Nothing like this has ever happened before.* (*1 Samuel 4:7*)

As with many onomatopoeic words, oy has variations — including in the Bible itself. Consider this line from Proverbs: **לְמִי אוֹי לְמִי אֲבוֹי**- *Who cries "oy!" and who "avoy!"?* (**משלי** *23:29*)

Here, "oy" and "avoy" sound similar and clearly mean the same thing. Other variations of "oy" appear in Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew that was the lingua franca of Jews for many centuries in antiquity (and is also the language of the Talmud). So, for instance, the Talmud's Aramaic version of "oy" is the word "vay" (**ויי**) — which may well give us the "vey" in "oy vey." As we saw from Proverbs, doubling the expression of woe was common even in biblical times.

Although "oy" seems to have been a nearly universal expression of lament, today the expression "oy vey" comes to us in English through Yiddish, where it feels very much a part of the Jewish character of that language. It is perhaps for this reason that Merriam Webster's dictionary traces "vey" not to the Aramaic "vay" as suggested above, but to the Middle High German wē — which also means "woe."

Yiddish also gives us all the resonant variations of this lament, most notably *oy vey iz mir* ("woe to me!") and *oy gevalt* ("woe! violence!"). This last variant might seem the most disturbing, but it is usually the one used in the most comical way, employed to ruefully bemoan surprise disasters, such as: "He wore that? Oy gevalt!"

"The greatness of Hashem is that He is infinite, and yet He takes an interest in the small details of our lives. He runs the entire universe, and yet listens to the prayer of a single individual." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller (1908-2001).



◣ Never Too Late - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה - "***See, I place before you today, a blessing and a curse…***" (11:26)

The Vilna Goan explained that by using the word **נותן** – 'I place' - in present tense), the Torah is teaching us that no matter where a person is in his life - even if he has already gone down the wrong path - the opportunity to choose to receive Hashem's blessings will always be available to him.

◣ The True Blessing - Rabbi Shamshon Raphael Hirsch

אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם - "***The blessing, if you listen to the commandments of Hashem, your G-d…***" (11:27)

Just the ability to be able to listen to Hashem's commandments is in itself a blessing. Every Jew should merit being able to hear and absorb the words of Hashem and His Torah in his very soul.

"Hashem can seem to be far away, the distance from heaven to earth. However, when a Jew comes to synagogue and prays silently, Hashem listens to their prayers as though they are whispering directly into Hashem's ear. Is there anything closer than that?" ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

◣ Toast To Hashem - Reb Simchah Bunim Of Pshischa

וְנָתַתָּה הַכֶּסֶף בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־תְּאַוֶּה נַפְשְׁךָ בַּבָּקָר וּבַצֹּאן וּבַיַּיִן וּבַשֵּׁכָר וּבְכֹל אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁאָלְךָ נַפְשֶׁךָ וְאָכַלְתָּ שָׁם לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקיךָ וְשָׂמַחְתָּ אַתָּה וּבֵיתֶךָ - "***You may spend the money for whatever your soul desires - for cattle, or for flock, or for wine, or for strong drink… before Hashem, your G-d, and you shall rejoice - you and your household.***" (14:26)

This emphasizes the importance of brotherhood and joy. When Jews assemble and toast each other with l'chaim, it is considered serving Hashem.

◣ Spiritual Riches - Rabbi Shimon Shkop

כִּי לֹא־יֶחְדַּל אֶבְיוֹן מִקֶּרֶב הָאָרֶץ עַל־כֵּן אָנֹכִי מְצַוְּךָ לֵאמֹר פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ - "***Since the poor will never cease to exist from the land, I am commanding you as follows: Open your hand generously to your brother, your poor and your needy who live in your land.***" (15:11)

The Torah promises, "Tithe so that you will become rich." This is not only true of monetary issues, but of spiritual ones as well. A rebbi or anyone who gives of his precious time to teach and instruct others in Torah, will merit "wealth and riches" in his own personal Torah learning.

"Everyone has their own unique melody, their own song, which G-d has placed within them to sing to the world" ~ Based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

"Shabbos is an oasis of tranquillity amid an ocean of confusion." ~ Rabbi Moshe Polter (1938-2005)

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

Daily Dose of Tzedokoh



Rav Moshe Holcer was born in Korets, Ukraine in 1912. After finishing learning in the local *cheder*, he started teaching as a *rebbi* in that very same *cheder*. He taught the little children *aleph-beis* and *Chumash* until the Russians found out, and sent him to Siberia, where he spent many gruelling years.

When the camp was finally liberated after WW2, he met his wife Freida in the DP camps and they got married and had three girls. A few years later, R' Moshe and his family immigrated to America, where they settled in Massachusetts, right near Harvard and MIT. For more than forty years, R' Moshe worked as the *shamas* of the Tremont Street Shul. He was the *baal Korei, baal tefillah, baal Tokei'a* and even gave classes. The people that came in and out of the Shul grew close to Judaism and wrote letters to him years after they left the Shul, telling them about the family they have now because they became religious.

One of the hallmarking qualities of R' Moshe, was that despite not being a man of much financial means, he still found a way to teach his children about the importance of giving Tzedokoh every single day, even if it was just a small amount.

One day, a salesman came to the house; he was selling Columbia Mutual Life Insurance. "For just a quarter a day," he said, "you can save up enough money and have life insurance in case something happens to you or your spouse, CvSh. Your children will benefit from having all this money coming back to them." Before the salesman left, he took out a Columbus Mutual Life Insurance coin bank and gave it to R' Moshe as a gift for listening to him.

It's a box that you put a coin in, and turn the lever, and it counts how much money you have put in. R' Moshe's kids thought it was the cutest thing, and R' Moshe decided that this was going to be his tzedokoh box. Every day he would sit his children down at the table and say, "Who wants to put the quarter in today?" They loved it. This was the highlight of their day. You would put the quarter in and you got to push the lever and see the numbers change as the quarters would go in. It was a treat to come home from school and ask, "Who's doing the tzedokoh box today?"

When the coin bank would fill up, he would take a handkerchief, spread it over the table and open the coin box with a special key. He could then spill out all the coins into the handkerchief, tie it up, put it in his pocket and take it to the bank. He had a special charity account from which he would send money to poor families living in Eretz Yisroel.

Eventually the lever that you pushed around so that the coin would register, broke. From that point on R' Moshe would take a screwdriver and manually operate the coin bank. His family loved watching him do it. He continued putting money into that coin bank every single day, rain or shine, healthy or sick, until the last day of his life. Rav Moshe Holcer passed away at the age of 92.

One of the most important lessons R' Moshe taught his children was about the importance of never missing a day of giving tzedokoh. And indeed, this sensitivity carried over to the next generation.

When his oldest daughter, Paulette, got married and had children of her own, she taught them about the importance of giving tzedokoh every day. Her son, Jonathan, remembers how his mother would make sure to always send him, and his siblings, to school with a penny or nickel to put into the tzedokoh box at school.

By the time Jonathan grew up, the concept and value of giving tzedokoh every day was embedded in his DNA.

Fast forward 30 years.

Jonathan, now Dr Jonathan Donath, had just listened to a shiur about how even a small mitzvoh matters. Literally minutes after he finished the shiur, he went to put a dollar into the tzedokoh box like he always did. There, he had this epiphany that no matter how much tzedokoh he gives, he still gets a mitzvah for this one dollar. He then thought to himself, "How can I guarantee myself the mitzvah of giving tzedokoh, no matter what?" That's the thought that popped into his head. - And that's when DailyGiving.org was born.

He ran home and googled, looking for any organisation doing this sort of thing. But he couldn't find anyone trying to automate daily giving. So he called a website designer, call Shaul, and said, "What do you think of this idea?" Shaul loved it right away. "Can you build me a website, please?" "Absolutely!" was the response.

In less than five years, there are over 15,000 Jews from 39 different countries signed up to dailygiving.org, and they distribute more that $5 million a year to over 75 different organisations across the Jewish global community.

It's a diversified portfolio. For $1 a day, you get to help organisations that help others in poverty, families with children with special needs, substance abuse and mental health, those with cancer, and support for Torah learning. And it's just a dollar. But when we come together, it leaves its massive impact.

When they gave out their tenth million in tzedokoh, Jonathan received a very special gift from his aunt. It was his grandfather's tzedokoh box.

The tiny seeds of tzedokoh that R' Moshe Holcer deposited into his tzedokoh bank every day have now grown into a multimillion-dollar empire of chessed, fuelling dozens and dozens of organisations that are dedicated to bringing *yeshuos* and *refuos* to Jews all over the world.

Good Shabbos



- **Preparing for Elul**

In the ancient times – by ancient, I mean a hundred years ago – when they *bentched Rosh Chodesh Elul* in the synagogues, there was a trembling, a *tzitternish*. That's how it was when the Jewish street was still saturated with *yiras shomayim* – as soon as they mentioned Elul, there was already a *tzitternish* among the people. Elul! The *yom hadin* is coming! The day of judgment is approaching. And the whole month was a month of preparation.

Some of the great men in the not-so-long-ago had the practice of going to certain places even *before* Elul in order to be elevated spiritually and prepare themselves for these important days leading up to the *yom hadin*.

The Alter of Slabodka *zichrono levrachah* used to go to Kelm in the middle of the month of Av to prepare for Elul. Others too; that was the custom of many of the great ones. But great ones or not, by the time Rosh Chodesh Elul came along *everyone* got busy preparing. And so if we see that Elul is right around the corner then we too have to start readying ourselves for the *yom hadin.*

- **Praying and Thanking**

And so the question is what do we do now? Of course, you'll say, we prepare with *teshuva*. People will get busy, I'm sure, learning *seforim* that teach them the way to repentance. People will be thinking of more *mitzvos* now. They'll give more *tzedakah* than they give all year. They'll behave with better character traits. I'm sure the good people are aware of the impending day of judgment and they're all going to utilize Elul to prepare.

But there's something that we're forgetting about. Because before anything else, before we approach that day when we're going to plead with Hakodosh Boruch Hu, "**כָּתְבֵנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים** – Inscribe us into the book of life," the first thing is: *what about thanking Hashem for what He has given to you up until now?*

It's always with the hand stretched out, "Give me! Give me more." What about saying thank you for what He already gave you? Is thanking Hashem such a small thing?

- **The Number One Obligation**

Actually, it's the *biggest* thing! We're in this world for one purpose and that purpose is what Dovid Hamelech teaches us: **טוֹב** – Do you know what's good in this world? Not ***a*** good thing – what is ***the*** good thing in this world? **לְהוֹדוֹת לַהַשֵּׁם** – to give thanks to Hashem. That's what's good in this world. And it's so good, so important, that it's expected from everybody.

Even an Eskimo or a man in Congo can't ignore that obligation. *Shekein chovas kol hayetzurim,* it's the duty of all living

people, *l'hodos u'lihalel* (Tefillas Nishmas). You hear that? It doesn't say *kol haYehudim* – all the Jews. It says *yetzurim*. Everybody. An old Eskimo should call together his wife and his children once in a while into the igloo and tell them, "We're here together now; let's spend an hour or two thanking Hashem."

And so, if a person will go into the new year without having set aside time to thank Hashem for the one that just passed, then he has failed in the most important obligation, not only of a Jew but of a human being. You have to start the career of doing like a good Eskimo is supposed to do – at least that. It's not merely a *midas chassidus*, an act of additional extreme piety. It's the number one obligation.

- **The Seforim Shlepper**

Only because people are not trained — the concept of genuine *hakaras hatov* is so far away from their minds — so they don't even think about such things. Let me tell you a little story that happened recently. I was walking on Kings Highway and I saw a Jew with a nice black hat. It wasn't like mine, bent in the middle; it was round on the top – a real *frum* Jew. And he had a big grey beard and a *kapote* of course.

Now, I saw him looking around like he was lost and so I asked him if I could help him. He tells me that he comes from Eretz Yisrael and he's trying to find the bus to go to Seagate so I told him that I'd walk him to the bus stop and show him the way.

He was carrying a heavy suitcase so I said, "Let me carry it for you."

He told me, "It's *seforim*." He made sure to let me know what he's carrying – "It's *seforim*." Important information for me to know. So I'm walking with him, carrying his *seforim* a couple of blocks.

- **Getting A Ride**

Now, Seagate means the Coney Island bus and then he'll have to transfer to another bus – it's a whole business – so as we're walking,

when I saw a man who I know who has a car, I stopped him and told him, "This man wants to go to Seagate."

"I'll take him with my car," he said.

So the man takes the suitcase from me and leaves me; he gets into the car and finished. He doesn't say thank you. I'm older than he was – I'm older and I was carrying his suitcase two blocks. And then I got him a car to Seagate. He didn't say thank you. Nothing!

- **Before the Seforim**

Now this man, I'm sure, is impressed by Elul and the necessity to prepare for the Day of Judgment. And I'm sure that in certain things he's a *talmid chacham* – he's not an *am ha'aretz* – and he has a certain stereotype of what *teshuva* is. And it could be he'll fulfill that; very good! All forms of *teshuva* are important!

But if he never learned the fundamental principle of saying thank you – if he can't even say thank you to an old man who carried his suitcase – he'll never be able to make genuine *teshuva!* Because the *yesod hayesodos,* the foundation of being a Jew, is to be a person who is grateful for things that are done for him and because Hashem is the One doing everything it means that the most important function of a Jew in this world is to recognize the *chasdei Hashem* to him.

It's such an important statement that I'm going to repeat it. *Of all the things that's expected of us in this world, the foremost is the obligation to thank Hashem!*

Don't misunderstand me – there are many obligations. It's important for people to be ambitious to learn *Bava Kamma*, absolutely; and *Bava Metzia* and *Gittin* and *Kiddushin* and *Kesubos* too. Absolutely you should learn *gemara*. And *bein adam lachaveiro;* of course that's something to think about during Elul — if we have time, we'll talk about that. Be ambitious to be a *midakdeik b'mitzvos;* very good! Many things are important to consider during this month. But on top

of the list is the requirement to give gratitude to Hashem for the past year.

- **A Guaranteed Year**

So when we begin to think about what Elul means for us, our first obligation is to look back on the past year and to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu that last year He inscribed us for a year of life.

Suppose that *motzei Yom Kippur* last year, you walked out of the *beis haknesses* to go home to eat and you would find a telegram on your table sent *min hashamayim* informing you that you were *zocheh badin;* a telegram from Hashem telling you that you're going to get a new year. You'd be overjoyed; you'd be delirious with happiness to know that there's waiting for you a year of life. Because nobody knows; nobody knows. I've seen so many cases where people suddenly left the world, *lo aleinu,* and here you're getting an assurance *min hashamayim* that you are guaranteed a year of life. How happy you would have been!

But you didn't know about it. So therefore you're going to miss that opportunity to be happy? Now you see that there *was* a telegram, only you didn't know about it. So therefore the first thing we'll do is we're going to be happy retroactively, *igla'i milsa lemafreia*, we were happy people. It's a very important point by the way.

- **Breaking Down the Year**

Let's say you're a man of 50 years old, for example. "Oh! *Boruch Hashem*, the 50th year I lived." Now, a year is not just a year – it's many things. Remember how after Yom Kippur, we sat down at the meal at *motzei Yom Kippur*, how good the food tasted. Did you think about that? That's how it started off *motzei Yom Kippur*. Ah! It was a pleasure to eat then. Think of all the good that has happened after that! A whole Tishrei!

And then Cheshvan came and Kislev. Think of all the months that passed by, one after the other, and each month has so many days.

You lived the first day of Kislev and the second day and the third day. Days upon days you lived!

And Hakodosh Boruch Hu says to you: "I gave you more than life. All the needs of your life I gave you. You ate meals almost every day. You slept in a bed almost every night. You didn't sleep on the railroad tracks. And most of them were pleasant nights. You put on garments and shoes every day, and you took baths once in a while. What didn't you do?! You went to the bathroom every day; every day a few times and everything functioned without any mishaps."

You cannot prepare for Rosh Hashana unless you look back to the last Rosh Hashana, what happened from then until now. How many times did you go to the doctor in the past year? Even if you're a hypochondriac who likes to give business to physicians, there are some people like that, but still in between there were days you didn't go. And most of us, sometimes months or years pass without going to a physician. All this has to be considered.

- **Back To Rosh Hashana**

"Look at everything I did for you," says Hashem, "and as a result of thousands of benefits you're still here. Your kidneys were working. Your pancreas was working. Your heart was pounding away every day. Your blood circulation was working. Do you know how many miracles there are in your blood? And it's only because of those miracles that you made it so far in the year.

Every process in the body is miraculous. And it's so deep and profound that if you'd take some time to think about it, it's astounding what Hakodosh Boruch Hu is doing for us all the time. We should be flabbergasted at the constant miracles that have taken place in our daily lives since last Rosh Hashana.

Now all this, if you tell it to others, they'll laugh at it, because they didn't learn these things. They learned, you have to prepare with *shmiras haloshon*. They learned, you have to prepare with

doing *ma'asim tovim*. You have to add more Torah. All that's true, but they never learned the *hakdamah*, the preface to everything. Before everything else, number one is to say, "Thank you, Hashem, for the last year"! That's *teshuva*!

- **Thinking and Thanking**

And so, that's going to be our first *kabbalah* going into Elul; gratitude! People call me up on the phone, "What should I do for Elul?" What's the question?! Our hands are full; there's so much work to do because Hashem is looking at us and saying, "What about the past year? You forgot about all the happiness I gave you?"

So we're not going to forget! That's going to be number one on the list for Elul – we're going to set aside time for thinking and thanking. Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us all kinds of happiness over the past year – more than three hundred days of happiness and miracles – and before we're able to have the *chutzpah* to ask for another year, we're going to get busy during Elul expressing to Hakodosh Boruch Hu our appreciation for all those things.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar - The Court Martial

Rabbi Meir Birnbaum lived in Brooklyn until his final years, when he moved to Yerushalayim to live out the rest of his time in This World in the Holy Land. After moving to Eretz Yisrael, Rabbi Birnbaum liked to daven with vasikin minyan at the Kosel. On the way, he would give the rides to others who also wanted to daven at the Kosel at that hour.

When Rabbi Birnbaum was a younger man, he served in the US Army and was the first Jewish soldier to enter Buchenwald concentration camp during World War II. He was also the one who took that iconic photograph of the child with the suitcase, who turned out to be Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau, the chief rabbi of Israel.



When he was first conscripted into the US Army, Rabbi Birnbaum showed up at breakfast, sat down in the dining room, and found himself some kosher food he could eat. Now he had to make a brachah, but army regulations said that a soldier wasn't allowed to wear a head covering indoors.

He debated what to do: should he put on a head covering or should he not put on the head covering to say a blessing?

My rabbi taught me that one always takes the first step with the right foot to establish how he means to go on, he thought. He decided that he wasn't afraid of anyone. His fear was reserved for Hakadosh Baruch Hu. He took his yarmulke out of his pocket, put it on his head, and made a brachah.

As he ate, a voice behind him said, "Hey, Mike, how'd you get the nerve to put a yarmulke on your head?"

"I don't know where the nerve came from," Rabbi Birnbaum answered honestly. "I just know I had it."

One day, Rabbi Birnbaum's sergeant walked into the dining room and practically burned him with his gaze. Eyeing the yarmulke, the sergeant said, "Tell me, soldier. Don't you know that army protocol forbids you from covering your head inside an enclosed space?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know which ordinance I'm talking about?"

"Yes, sir. Army Regulation 207-1."

The sergeant could barely contain his fury at Rabbi Birnbaum's obvious insubordination.

"See me in my office after breakfast."

After breakfast, Meir Birnbaum stood in front of his commanding officer. The sergeant sat behind his desk, prepared to hand out the appropriate punishment for his violation.

"I have never encountered a soldier as insolent as you," the sergeant said. "It would be one thing if you didn't know the regulation. But you know the exact wording and number of the regulation against wearing a head covering in an enclosed space. You're being court-martialled. I suggest you find a lawyer to represent you. You'd better prepare a good defence, because if you're found guilty, you'll be in prison for a very long time."

Meir Birnbaum emerged from the sergeant's office with a sense of trepidation. The next day he appeared in court. The judge took his seat.

He flipped through Birnbaum's case file and then told the prosecutor to start.

The prosecutor read the charge, and then the judge turned to the defendant's lawyer and said, "Have you prepared your statement?"

The lawyer shrugged and said, "I have no statement of defence."

The judge was flabbergasted. He looked at Meir Birnbaum and said, "You didn't prepare a defence? I don't know if you realize how serious the charge against you is."

Birnbaum kept his silence.

"Well, do you have an explanation for what you did?" the judge asked him.

Suddenly emboldened, Meir Birnbaum stood up and said, "Yes, I do. When I was sworn into the United States Army, the oath I uttered said that I swore to be loyal to G-d and to the United States of America. The Founding Fathers placed G-d before this country. I have done the same."

With that, he sat down, leaving the judge dumbfounded. The judge asked for a copy of the oath that every soldier must swear before joining the army and found that Meir Birnbaum was correct.

The judge stood up and said, "I have never had a soldier stand before the court without a statement and receive a verdict of innocence. You are the first because you put G-d before the US Army, as did the Founding Fathers."

The Ponivicheh Rov said over what caused him to form such a close relationship with the **Chofetz Chaim**.

When the Ponivicheh Rov visited the Chofetz Chaim for first time, the Rebbetzen told him to come inside and wait until the Chofetz Chaim was available. While he was waiting he heard uncontrollable sobbing coming from the room where the Chofetz Chaim was.

The Ponivicheh Rov asked the Rebbetzin if everything was okay. The Rebbetzin told him, "There is a woman who is having a dangerous labor and she needs Heaven's mercy, so the Chofetz Chaim is davening on her behalf."

Immediately the Ponivitcheh Rov came to the conclusion that if a person has the heart to care so much about a "random" woman and to pour his heart out as if it was his own wife or child, then he does not want to leave such a person. - The Chofetz Chaim carried the burden of the Klal Yisroel.

"When we find ourselves in challenging situations, We should look back at how many hills Hashem has helped us climb and that will give us the encouragement to go on and recognize that the salvation will happen" ~ Chofetz Chaim.

Rav Kalman Krohn זצוק״ל said over that he heard about a certain Yid in Lakewood that never ever gets angry. Rav Kalman found him and squeezed out of him if it was true or not. Until finally he admitted that it was true.

After, Rav Kalman asked him what his secret is. The Yid responded that his mehalech is that if something comes his way, he says to himself, "Look, it could be that the other person is right and therefore there is no reason to get angry. And if I am right than I assume that mistama that person nebach has no seichel. If so, he must be just a shliach from Hashem to do what he did and again there is no reason for me to get upset or angry."



The Month of Elul

In this week's parsha Moshe continues to exort the Jewish people to stay strong and retain their commitment to G-d and to the Torah.

Rav Aharon Kotler writes that of all the times of the year, Elul is the most important month for chizuk. Every minute is precious and a person must apply himself as much as he can to get the most out of this sacred time.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz would often compare the month of Elul to going to a spa. When a person goes to a spa often his health is faltering or he just needs to feel refreshed.

Similarly during the year, we often get entangled in all kinds of problems and our neshamos need refreshment and rejuvenation.

Just as a person goes to a spa to detoxify himself from all kinds of physical maladies, so to the month of Elul detoxifies our neshamos from all the spiritual illnesses they contract such as aveiros, bad midos, etc. If a person uses the month of Elul to strengthen and renew his relationship with Hashem, even the elation and freshness a person feels after going to a spa can't compare to the great feeling of spiritual renewal such an individual is capable of reaching after the period of Elul has passed!

The Alter of Slabodka was known to be one who took the month of Elul very seriously. The entire month he would be completely focused on spiritual pursuits to such a point that he wouldn't even verbalize mundane subject matter even if they were his own personal needs. Whenever he would need something, he would either write it down on paper or hint to others what he needed.

He would passionately learn mussar for one hour in the morning and one hour at night. Even when he would learn gemara he would apply its lessons to himself and sometimes burst out crying in the middle of seder.

However, he wouldn't only work on himself. As Rosh Yeshiva, he would encourage the talmidim in the yeshiva to follow his path and even gave special mussar shmuessim twice a week to strengthen everyone in their avodas Hashem. People who saw how hard the Alter worked and pushed himself during Elul, were themselves greatly inspired and many said that just being in Slobodka for Elul gave them all the inspiration and hizuk they needed for the entire year.

May we all be zoche to strengthen ourselves as much as we possibly can in our avodasHashem and fully embrace the month of Elul!!!

"The greatest proof that Hashem loves us is that He gave us each other." ~ Meaningful Minute.



Grabbing The Conductor's Hand

I heard the following story from Rabbi Ephraim Waxman. I don't want the same thing that happened to him to happen to me, so I am relating this story at this time:

Rabbi Waxman once davened for the Amud on Yom Kippur in a certain Yeshiva. Before Neilah, he was asked to speak to the congregation to give them spiritual arousal before the final prayers of Yom Kippur. He related the following parable.

There was once a person who had to travel by train between two cities. He inquired as to the price and was told that there was a sliding scale. A regular seat in "Coach" was a certain amount. First class was quite a bit more. However if he would arrive at the train station 4 hours before departure, he could purchase a first class ticket for the same price as coach. The fellow was not keen on spending four hours at the train station waiting for his train so he decided to forgo the first class ticket.

He was then told that if he would arrive 2 hours before departure, he would be guaranteed his choice of coach seats. After that it would be first come, first served. But again he said to himself "Why do I have to go there 2 hours early, waste my time, and sit around? So I won't get my choice of coach seats!"

He was then told that if he arrives a half hour before departure, all the seats will have been sold. The train will have standing room only available. "But," our passenger figures, "it is a short trip. What do I care if I need to stand? I'll come a half hour early and will buy a standing room only ticket."

As things have it, he does not come 4 hours early. He does not come 2 hours early. He does not even come a half hour early. He comes at the last minute. He comes down to the platform and the train is leaving. He starts running and running after the train and he sees that the conductor on the caboose is holding out his hand. If he can just latch onto the conductor's hand, the conductor will pull him onto the train. He runs and runs and tries to grab that hand.

Rabbi Waxman then quoted the sentence from our liturgy "You send forth your hand to sinners" (Ata nosen yad l'poshim). Rabbi Waxman explained that Neilah represents the idea of Ata nosen yad l'poshim. One who waits until Neilah to do Teshuva is like the passenger running after the train to try to grab the conductor's hand.

Rosh Chodesh Elul is like 4 hours before the train leaves. That is when a person can get first class for the price of coach. Rosh HaShanna is like 2 hours before departure time – when a person can still get his selection of coach seats. The Ten Days of Repentance is first come first serve. The earlier prayers on Yom Kippur are like "standing room only." However Neilah is already "Ata nosen yad l'poshim".

Rabbi Waxman then said to the Yeshiva students "My friends, now is the time for "You stretch forth Your hand to the sinners." He proceeded to daven Neilah from the Amud and felt that the atmosphere throughout the room was highly charged with spiritual emotion.

A young student came to him after Neilah and said, "Rebbe, why did you not tell us this story on Rosh Chodesh Elul?" I don't want anyone to blame me for not telling such a story earlier, so I tell it now.

"Seek out and focus on the good in everyone – including yourself." ~ Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

You Are Children to Hashem Your G-d

The *pasuk* in Parshas Re'eh says, "You are Children to Hashem your G-d, you shall not cut yourselves and you shall not make a bald spot between your eyes for a dead person." (14:1)

In the past, there was a custom among non-Jews for people to cut or somehow mutilate themselves as a sign of mourning when a person's relative died. The Torah prohibits this practice. The commentaries all point out the fact that this is the only mitzvah where a negative prohibition is introduced with the statement "You are Children to Hashem your G-d." We don't find such a preamble by the prohibition to eat pig or to wear *shatnez* or anywhere else! Why do we find this unique introduction to the mitzvah of "*Lo sis'godedu*" about mutilating oneself?

The Seforno gives a beautiful interpretation. **Rashi** gives an interpretation. I heard a different interpretation, also very interesting, from a *talmid chochom* from England, whom I met while touring the Swiss Alps.

The person identified himself as a "Monarchist" meaning he supports and believes in the monarchy of England. The fellow is a *Yeshivishe* fellow, he authored a *sefer* on the Rambam's *Ma'aseh HaKorbonos*, and is a fine *talmid chochom* – but he is into the monarchy.

He mentioned that the year at that time (2017) marked the 20th anniversary of the death of Princess Diana. At the time of her death in 1997, her passing generated headline stories throughout the world for quite a long period of time. He said that at the time when Diana died, her two sons, Prince William and Prince Harry were twelve and ten years old.

In England, the protocol is that the coffin is carried by horse, and the mourners march in back of the coffin as it proceeds to the cemetery. The young boys were instructed to march behind their

mother's coffin, and they were told that they were not allowed to cry. The boys protested, "We don't want to march, and if we want to cry, we'll cry!" They were told that this was not their option. They were the princes and this is what protocol called for: March in back of the coffin and do not show any emotion. *Bnei melachim*, children of kings have special duties. Sons of kings need to act in a certain way.

You and I can disagree, and we can say that telling a ten-year-old that he should not cry at his mother's funeral is ridiculous. We are not here to debate that, but this is the royal protocol in England.

However, this monarchist was making the point that a person who is the son of a king is royalty and needs to act differently than other people. He needs to be in control of his emotions.

Using this background, he offered insight into the *pasuk,* "You are Children of Hashem your G-d, do not cut yourself…" You are the sons of royalty, not figurative royalty but **real** royalty – the King of all kings, the Holy One Bless Be He. We are the children of the *Ribono shel Olam*. The Gemara says many times that "all of Israel are the children of kings" (e.g., Shabbos 67a, 111a, 158a).

I am not suggesting that we don't cry if *chas v'shalom* we face tragedies in life. Just the opposite is true. We believe in "three days for crying " (Moed Katan 27b). But we do believe in controlling our emotions. The Torah says over here – you may be tempted to mutilate yourself. Perhaps you have experienced so much pain that you feel like you need to inflict more pain upon yourself. Do not do that! Ay, your emotions drive you in that direction… But, no! You are Children of Hashem, your G-d, and you must retain control over your emotions. You are princes. Princes cannot act like everyone else. They must act with dignity. That is why the Torah says "Do not cut yourself and do not make a bald spot between your eyes over death."

Chizuk - Inspiration

A student of **Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer ZT"L** recounted a remarkable incident that exemplified his teacher's extraordinary moral sensitivity: "I was accompanying my revered teacher, Rabbi Isser Zalman, on a leisurely stroll through the neighborhood when we encountered a residential courtyard filled with chickens. As we proceeded past the enclosure, our presence inadvertently startled several chickens, causing them to flee in panic into the thoroughfare beyond their designated boundaries.

Witnessing the commotion, Rabbi Isser Zalman became deeply troubled by the possibility that his presence had precipitated the birds' escape and that he may be responsible for inadvertently causing the chickens' owner a loss. What transpired next demonstrated the profound character of this distinguished Rosh Yeshivah. Without hesitation, this elderly and venerated scholar pursued the wayward chickens, and used his walking stick to try and guide them back to the safety of their proper enclosure. He labored diligently for a considerable amount of time until every last bird had been successfully restored to its enclosure."

Another illuminating episode occurred during Rabbi Isser Zalman's tenure as the Chief Rabbi of Slutzk. While walking down the city streets, deeply engrossed in contemplation of scholarly matters, he encountered a construction site where workers were constructing a new building. Absorbed in thought, the rabbi inadvertently stepped into a container of wet plaster that was in his way.

Rather than becoming annoyed at the possibility that his footwear had been ruined, Rabbi Isser Zalman became profoundly distressed by an entirely different matter. He recognized that by stepping into the plaster, he had inadvertently appropriated a minute quantity of plaster that had stuck to his shoes that had belonged to the construction crew - a portion valued at perhaps no more than a penny.

Demonstrating complete disregard for his prestigious position, Rabbi Isser Zalman refused to depart from the construction site until he had successfully located the project supervisor, compensated him for the minimal loss, and humbly requested his forgiveness for the unintentional transgression. This incident powerfully illustrated his unwavering commitment to ethical conduct, even in matters of negligible monetary value.



Think Good And It Will Be Good

While teaching in New York in 1957, a young man from Israel received a letter from home saying his father had suffered a heart attack and was in critical condition. At a time when overseas phone calls were rare, the young man's anxiety was deepened by the thought that his father may have already passed away.

Devastated, the young man wrote a note to the **Lubavitcher Rebbe** explaining the situation, ending with the words, "I don't even know what to think at this point!"

In his response, the Rebbe underlined the man's final sentence and wrote next to it, "Shocking!!! Because the instruction of our Sages in such situations is well known: 'Think good and it will be good.'"

A few tense days passed, and finally the young man reached his mother by phone. "How is Father?" he asked. "He's out of danger!" "When did this happen?" "Thursday night."

After hanging up the phone, the young man went to 770 for Mincha. On his way out, the Rebbe turned to him and asked, "Nu, do you have good news for me?"

"Yes!" he responded. "I just phoned home and was told that my father is out of danger."

"Since when?" asked the Rebbe. "Since Thursday night."

"And when did you begin to 'tracht gut'?"

"When the Rebbe told me to do so," said the young man.

"And when was that?" the Rebbe pressed gently.

"Thursday evening."

Smiling, the Rebbe concluded, "May such things never happen again. But you must always remember to think positively."

The Weekly Vort

◣ **נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו** – ***You shall surely give him and let your heart not feel bad when you give him*** (15:10).

A student of the **Chofetz Chaim** had become very wealthy. He had a hard time parting with his money and came to ask the Chofetz Chaim's advice about this. The Chofetz Chaim told him: **נתון תתן**, you should give and give without thinking, and then **ולא ירע לבבך בתתן לו**, you will not feel bad about giving and be able to overcome parting with your money.

◣ **בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגודדו**... – ***You are children of Hashem, your G-d, you shall not cut yourselves...*** (14:1).

The Torah implies that the fact of our being *children of Hashem* is the reason we must not mutilate ourselves when mourning the dead. The Rosh explains that the *pasuk* is reassuring the family of the deceased that they need not despair. Although they have lost their temporal father, they need not fear, for they are *children of Hashem*. Thus, the *pasuk* states: Let us not mutilate our bodies in despair, for He is our eternal Father. (The Torah Treasury)

"The truest test of Yiras Shamayim is how you treat someone who cannot help you and cannot hurt you." ~ R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.

Tzedakah With Sensitivity

In Parshas Re'ay, we are commanded with the mitzvah of tzedakah. The Rambam states that the highest of the eight levels of giving tzedakah is to give another a loan so that he can become self-sufficient.



R' Shraga Feivel Frank was a learned, wealthy man who lived in Aleksot, Lithuania. He gave *tzedakah* generously, with a warm and caring heart. When some of his poorer tenants could not meet their rent obligations, he would secret money to them in order that they be able to pay him rent!

He merited that all his daughters were wed to Torah giants, two of whom were R' Moshe Mordechai Epstein - Rosh Yeshiva of Slobodka, and R' Isser Zalman Meltzer - Rosh Yeshiva of Slutzk and Eitz Chaim.

One day, R' Shraga Feivel was approached by Moshe, a poor wagon driver, asking for a loan. Moshe had been struggling financially for years, and he had received an offer to become partners with a flour miller. Moshe had to come up with 2000 rubles.

R' Shraga Feivel was receptive to Moshe, telling him that just that day a few businessmen had repaid a loan to him, so he had a large amount of money on hand. One more day, said R' Shraga Feivel, he would have already invested that sum in various places. R' Shraga Feivel made Moshe feel that the money was obviously heaven-sent for him to take a loan.

After searching throughout the house, R' Shraga Feivel could not find the key to the cabinet where the money was kept. He picked up

a heavy iron poker from the kitchen hearth and smashed the lock – and a good portion of the cabinet door with it. He gave the loan to Moshe, who left happily, greatly encouraged by R' Shraga Feivel.

When his wife returned and asked about the damaged cabinet, he told her about the loan he had given to Moshe, adding, "When I could not find the key, I knew that if I told him to come back in a few hours, he would assume it was an easy way of denying him the loan. If I asked him to wait until you returned and found the key, he would have felt very uncomfortable. So, in order to spare him the aggravation, I forced the cabinet open. - Fixing the cabinet door is a small price to pay for avoiding making a poor man feel unpleasant." (People from the Lands of the Living)

R' Shraga Feivel Frank z"l

R' Frank was not a rosh yeshiva or town rabbi but rather was an "ordinary" ba'al ha'bayit / layman. Nevertheless, he was renowned in Lithuania for his righteousness and charity, and many of the leading roshei yeshiva of this century were his descendants. Among the regular guests in his house were R' Yisrael Salanter, R' Yitzchak Blazer and the Chafetz Chaim.

It is said that R' Frank personally supported half of the families in Slobodka, although they did not know it. He used to drive through town after midnight with a wagon full of food, dropping sacks of flour, rice, potatoes and other needs on people's doorsteps.

From time-to-time, R' Frank would approach poor Torah scholars and ask them to guard various amounts of cash that he had on hand. He would explain that the money was not safe in his house because he was so well-known, and that they (the Torah scholars) were free to use the money if they needed. Whenever these individuals would attempt to return the money, R' Frank would say that he still did not

have a safe place to keep it and would prefer to leave it in their houses instead.

R' Frank passed away in 1886 at the age of 43. R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor, the leading posek / halachic authority of the time, personally participated in the taharah / washing and dressing the body. R' Spektor began to eulogize R' Frank with the words, "Look! Our Reb Feivel is gone," but when those words brought the entire assemblage to tears, R' Spektor eulogized no further,

R' Frank left four unmarried daughters, and he asked his wife to ensure that they married Torah scholars. The four sons-in-law she found were:

R' Moshe M.ordechai Epstein (rosh yeshiva in Slobodka and Chevron; father-in-law of R' Yechezkel Sarna and R' Moshe Chevroni);R' Isser Zalman Meltzer (rosh yeshiva in Slutsk and at the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva in Yerushalayim; father-in-law of R' Aharon Kotler);R' Baruch Yehoshua Horowitz (president of the Agudas Harabbanim of Lithuania); and R' Sheftel Kramer (rosh yeshiva in New Haven and Cleveland; father-in-law of R' Yaakov Yitzchak Ruderman and R' Naftali Neuberger).

R' Shraga Feivel's nephew was R' Zvi Pesach Frank, Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim.

R' Shraga Feivel Frank z"l

Reb Shraga Frank was one of the wealthiest men in Kovno, Lithuania. He owned a leather factory, a leather goods store, and a great deal of real estate. He was also a talmid chacham and a tzaddik who was under the influence of the founder of the Mussar Movement, Reb Yisrael Salanter.

In the attic of Reb Shraga's house, Reb Yisrael would meet with his disciples Reb Nosson Tzvi Finkel (known later as the "Alter of Slobodka"), Reb Yitzchak Blazer (known as Reb Itzele Peterburger,

for he later became Rav of Petersburg, capital of Czarist Russia), and other Mussar giants. In that attic, Reb Yisroel and his disciples would spend the entire month of Elul; there he would say shmuessen and elaborate on his new philosophy of Mussar; there, one might say,the nucleus of the Mussar Movement took shape.

Reb Shraga had extended a huge sum of money as a personal loan to a local merchant. His business began to prosper, but he did not repay the loan. The debtor again lost his fortune and approached the Franks for another loan. Golda refused because she did not consider the man trustworthy. Reb Shraga intervened - it was Elul at the time: "Every year at this time we approach the Ribbono Shel Olam, full of promises and verbal assurances, begging Him to grant us a new year. He does, but we renege on our promises. Nonetheless, next Elul, we again plead and promise, and again He grants us our request, and again ... we repeat the routine. Still, He always takes our word. - Shouldn't we do the same?"

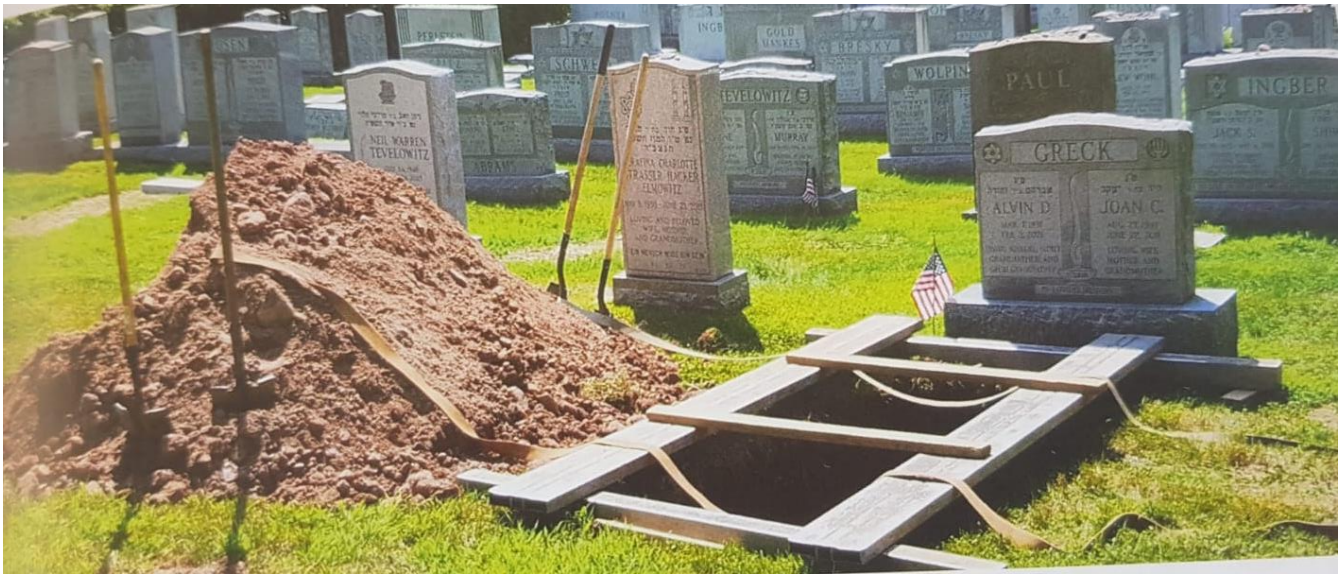
His wife Golda was from a German family, and to her, punctuality was second nature. She simply could not fathom how tenants would fail to pay the rent on time. So Reb Shraga would secretly hand out rent money to his tenants to enable them to make their payment when due.

No wonder, when he died at 42 (1887), Reb Yitzchak Elchhonon Spektor, the Kovno Rav, personally participated in his taharah (ritual preparation of the body for burial). Reb Shraga had specified that no eulogies be said at his funeral. - "Normally I would ignore such a request," the Kovno Rav said, "but I am afraid to violate Reb Shraga's word."

Before his passing, Reb Shraga told his wife that since Heaven did not grant him time to guide his four daughters into marriage, the obligation rested on her, Golda. And he told her that the four men for his four girls must be not only talmidei chachamim, but men of shivti (Shivti is a Mussar term for those who dedicate their life to

Torah study and its propagation, based on the passage from Tehillim: "Shivti b'veis HaShem ... May I dwell in the house of Hashem all the days of my life" (27:4.) Also, that she should spend their every cent on maintaining their children - the shivti sons-in-law, and their subsequent families.

The Moment Compiled by Shmuel Botnick & Yosef Herz



Famed singer Motty Ilowitz holds a longtime passion for visiting Jewish cemeteries. In these silent fields, he finds inspiration, connection, and an oasis of unbridled truth.

This past Tishah B'Av afternoon, a time when many people have the minhag to visit a cemetery, Motty pulled into a large, empty beis hakevaros in South Fallsburg. Scanning his surroundings, he was startled when he noted a large hole. "My first thought was that this was vandalism, that someone had dug up a grave as a form of desecration," he said. "Then I realized that this was a freshly dug grave, for a meis who would be buried that day."

Suddenly, a car pulled up. The driver, a frum Yid, engaged Motty in conversation and it was soon evident that this man was in the wrong place. The kever he sought was not located in this cemetery.

And then a van pulled up and eight chassidim emerged. Their destination? Nowhere really. They just decided to stop because they

saw two cars already there. - And so now, ten frum Jews, none of whom knew each other, stood together in a most random location.

Suddenly, another car pulled up. "Hey!" a man called out, "there's going to be a levayah here soon. Can you stay to make a minyan?"

Sure enough, the funeral procession arrived shortly afterward. There were scores of attendees, all very secular, but for a Chabad rabbi and a few other frum members of the Chabad kehillah. The newly assembled minyan got to work, helping to place the coffin in the grave and cover it with earth, before Kaddish was recited. All the while, a question burned inside Motty. The meis had clearly been largely unaffiliated - as was his extended family. The minyan that was formulated just minutes before his funeral was clearly Divinely orchestrated. What did this man do to merit such an ideal kevuras Yisrael through openly miraculous means?

He turned to the Chabad attendees. "Who was this man?" he asked. "Can you tell me about him?"

He wasn't frum," they said. "He wasn't a regular member of our shul. He knew little about Yiddishkeit. But whenever we needed a minyan, we knew we could knock on his door. At all costs, he would make sure to join so that we didn't lose out on a minyan."

Now it was clear to Motty. The deceased had dedicated himself to helping his neighbors have a minyan, and in return, Hashem made sure that in his hour of need, he would have one, too.

Bringing Us Closer

If you see a friend who is down and in need of encouragement, show your love. Even if he isn't on your list of friends, he's still a Yid. He still deserves unconditional love.

When They Were Young

THE HEART OF A LEADER

RABBI YAAKOV GALINSKY
הרב יעקב גאלינסקי זצ"ל





When Yankel was a teenager, he got an appointment to meet Rabbi Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, the rav of Vilna and the gadol hador. Yankel was overjoyed— he couldn't believe he was going to meet such a great tzaddik! Wanting to make a good impression, he carefully reviewed the Gemara he was learning and prepared chiddushim, convinced that Reb Chaim Ozer would test him.

When he arrived at the house, about thirty people were waiting ahead of him. He waited patiently, reviewing his learning for the "test." Finally, the door opened and he was called in. Yankel sat across from Reb Chaim Ozer, heart pounding in anticipation. But instead of asking about Gemara, Reb Chaim Ozer asked, "When was the last time you got a letter from your parents?"

Yankel, puzzled, answered, "I haven't heard from them in six months."

The next question: "Do you have a blanket?" Then, "Let me see your shoes."

Embarrassed, Yankel showed his worn shoes. Reb Chaim Ozer reached into his pocket, handed him money, and said, "Go buy yourself a new pair. Also, remember that my home is always open to you."

Yankel burst into tears. Since leaving home, no one had asked him such questions. Finally, someone cared—about him, not just his learning. And it was the gadol hador who showed such compassion.

This experience left a lasting impact on Reb Yankel. In his speeches, he often shared this story, urging others to follow Reb Chaim Ozer's example: care deeply for every Jew in every way.

Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky

R' Yaakov (Yankel) Galinsky was born in 1921 in Krinek, Poland. As a teen, he studied at the Novardok Yeshivah in Bialystok. When WWII broke out in 1939, he fled to Vilna and then Birzh in Lithuania.

In 1941, the Soviets exiled him to Siberia for learning Torah. After enduring harsh conditions, he was released and later married Tzivia Brod. In 1949, they moved to Eretz Yisrael, where R' Galinsky helped establish two yeshivos and several kollelim.

A beloved maggid, he traveled extensively to raise funds and inspire audiences of all backgrounds with his heartfelt derashos. He continued speaking and uplifting Yidden until his passing in 2014, becoming one of the most renowned maggidim of his time.

"Just as it's a mitzvah to forgive others, so too is it a mitzvah to forgive yourself." - Based on the teachings of Rabbi Avraham Twerski (1930-2021)



In His Father's Arms by Rabbi Shlomo Landau

For the parents of special needs children in a certain Jewish community, the time that they waited for with anticipation had arrived - the annual respite retreat.

Set in a pastoral setting, this yearly event wines and dines the parents of these special neshamos, who care for them with unending love and dedication. In addition to the amazing cuisine and recreational activities, the retreat provides many chizuk opportunities, such as inspirational speakers and roundtable discussions.

During one of the inspirational sessions, the director of the organization passed by and noticed a mother and her special needs baby outside in the hall. He approached her with a warm smile and asked her why she was not attending the program. She replied that her baby was being a bit fussy and she couldn't bring him inside. "No worries," he replied. "I am happy to hold your baby for the duration of the program."

"Are you sure you are comfortable?" she cautiously replied. "He's a special needs baby."

"You have nothing to worry about; I am very comfortable with special needs kids. Here, I will take him," he said.

The director gently took the baby and the mother quickly hurried inside to catch the rest of the concluded program.

When the program finished, the mother gratefully took her baby back and profusely thanked the director for his kindness.

And while this could have been the end of this story, it certainly is not!

About half an hour later, the mother approached the director, but this time with tears streaming down her face. Somewhat alarmed, the director asked her if everything was okay.

"Yes," she replied, "actually much more than okay!"

"Really?!" the director asked, somewhat puzzled.

"You have no idea what you did by holding my baby. You see, my husband has had a very difficult time accepting the birth of our special needs baby. So much so that sadly, he has never ever held our child... You probably didn't notice that while you were holding the baby my husband walked by. When he saw you lovingly holding his baby in your arms, he froze in his tracks. Here you were, a complete stranger, and you had no qualms about holding our baby with tender love and care, yet he, the baby's father, had never held his own child!

"Very cautiously, he approached me and asked if he could take the baby from my arms. 'Of course,' I replied, fighting back tears as I gently handed the baby to him. And for the very first my time, he held the baby in his arms, slowly drawing the baby closer to his heart!

"Now you may understand why I am so emotional." The mother continued, "My very special child just felt his father's love for the first time in his life, and all because of your selfless kindness!"

"A challenge shared becomes a challenge halved, and a victory doubled." - Based on the teachings of Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa (1765-1827).

Honesty Is The Most Valuable Commodity by Rabbi Shlomo Landau



In the early days of World War II, there was a family who fled Poland and ultimately ended up in Belgium, which at that time, was still a safer option. Even though they were in relative safety, life was extremely challenging, as they did not speak the language and the father was unable to find appropriate employment. Matters went from bad to worse, and to compound their desperation, his wife gave birth to a beautiful new baby. Sadly, the happiness of the baby's birth was marred by the fact that there was no proper food for the expectant mother to eat.

The distraught father, unable to deal with the fact that he could not provide for his wife's most basic needs, left their tiny one-room apartment and wandered aimlessly through the city streets. As he walked, he mumbled words of tefillah, beseeching HaKadosh Baruch Hu for salvation.

Eventually, worn out from his walk and from life in general, he sat down on a park bench. As he sat on the bench, his hand wandered aimlessly under it, and as he did so, he felt something velvet that had somehow gotten caught between the bench's slats and the metal frame. He was able to free what turned out to be a velvet pouch, and as he opened the pouch, his jaw dropped. The bag contained 20-30 diamonds of different sizes and qualities. He had literally stumbled on a treasure. The diamonds had enough value to support him for many months, if not years.

He lifted his eyes Heavenward and gratefully thanked Hashem for answering his tefillos. He could now go and purchase food, fuel, and even warm clothing for mother and child. But just as soon as these thoughts crossed his mind, an inner voice countered, "These diamonds don't belong to you. Somebody clearly lost them and is probably beyond distraught. You can't just keep them." The two voices in his head - joy and concern kept playing a tug of war, but in the end his yetzer tov prevailed, and he set out to find the rightful owner.

Within a few hours, he was able to verify the true owner, and he set out to meet him and return the diamonds. When they met, the wealthy non-Jewish diamond merchant was moved to tears with relief but also by the honesty and integrity of this poor immigrant. He immediately noticed the poor Jew's shabby clothes and inquired where he was from and what he currently did for a living. The poor Yid poured out his sad story and, on the spot, the non-Jewish diamond merchant hired him and began training him as a diamond cutter.

Over the next few months and years, the wealthy non-Jewish diamond dealer always made sure that the Polish Jew had what he needed and showed him exceptional respect and deference.

But that is not at all the end of the story, for you see, ultimately, the Nazis invaded Belgium and deported and exterminated its Jewish population. But miraculously, the wealthy non-Jewish diamond merchant hid this Jewish family until the end of the war. Eventually, they emigrated to the United States where they built a beautiful Jewish family with many descendants, all of them owing a debt of gratitude to the kind Belgian diamond merchant, but even more so to their father and grandfather for his honesty and integrity, which were ultimately the key to their survival.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ וְלֹא־תָשִׂימוּ קָרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לָמֵת 14:1

A non-Jew once asked **R' Yehonasan Eibschutz *zt"l*** about the following observation: "Why do we gentiles have a library-like sense of decorum when we gather to pray in our houses of worship, while you Jews hustle and bustle in your synagogues, talking and schmoozing as if it's your living room? Where's your sense of respect?"

R' Yehonasan responded wisely. "Your people feel like they are like servants standing before their master. Therefore, you tend to stand in awe and trepidation lest you be fired or demoted. We Jews, on the other hand, feel as if we are like children before our Father. In the presence of a father, one tends to be more relaxed. That is how we conduct ourselves.

While this clever reply is accurate, it obviously doesn't justify speaking during *davening* or acting frivolously in *shul*. In fact, the **Sefer Derech Moshe** says that whenever the *Satan* prosecutes against *Yidden*, *Hashem* responds by saying, "Who's to say the gentiles would act any better had they accepted the *Torah*?"

However, when it comes to comparing our behavior in *shul* to theirs, being that they're reserved in their places of worship, there may be cause for concern. We must improve in this area, in order to defuse the *Satan's* case against us.

Furthermore, he quotes from **Harav Kuntslicher *zt"l***, who explains our *posuk* in light of R' Yehonasan Eibschutz's *pshat*.

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה'- you are like children, but you must still ensure **לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ** - do not make "*Agudos, Agudos*" group gatherings in *shul* disturbing the decorum. No matter how comfortable a son feels, he must still show the proper decorum and respect.



Did Benjamin Franklin really want the turkey to be the symbol of the United States of America?

In a letter to his daughter, Ben wrote:

"For my own part I wish the eagle had not been chosen the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly… He is therefore by no means a proper emblem for the brave and honest… The turkey is in comparison a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original native of America… He is… a bird of courage and would not hesitate to attack a grenadier of the British Guards who should presume to invade his farmyard with a red coat."

To reinforce good old Ben's argument, we note that whereas the turkey seems to have all four *simanim* of a kosher bird, the eagle has none (according to Rashi's opinion). The *Ramban* explains that the Torah forbade the non-kosher birds because the Torah wants us to avoid the bad *midos* that they exhibit. One could assume that the kosher species may exhibit admirable traits that the Torah wants us to emulate. Certainly, the courage to observe *mitzvos* in times of adversity is a virtue worth emulating that we should contemplate the next time we eat turkey. (Quote from a write-up written by R' Yirmiyohu Kaganoff)

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם (14:1)

In this week's Parshah we are given a directive, "You are children to Hashem..." **The Ibn Ezra** expounds on the usage of the word 'children'. - We must remember that no matter what happens to us, Hashem is our Father.

Sometimes we may not understand His actions, but He always has our best interest in mind, as a father does for his child.

Learning Yiras Shamayim

לְמַעַן תִּלְמַד לְיִרְאָה אֶת־ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ כָּל־הַיָּמִים – *'so that you may learn to fear Hashem, your G-d, all the days.'* (14:23)

Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch says that just like a medical student cannot learn medicine just by studying medical textbooks without being in the vicinity of doctors, so too fear of Heaven can only be "learned" by being in the vicinity of tzaddikim and witnessing their Yiras Shamayim and Avodas Hashem.

The Weekly Vort

Rav Efraim Zalman Margulies

◣ Few names in the Torah world of pre-modern Galicia command as much enduring respect as that of R' Efraim Zalman Margulies, author of ***Olelos Efraim*** and a towering halachic and communal figure in 18th- and early 19th-century Eastern Europe. Born with a prodigious mind and blessed with a heart deeply attuned to others, R' Efraim Zalman was more than a *gaon*—he was a bridge between the world of *lomdus* and the world of the people, a *Gadol* whose Torah was not only brilliant but also profoundly human.

◣ R' Efraim Zalman Margulies was born in 1762 in Brody, a Galician city renowned for its vibrant Jewish life and intellectual ferment.

His father, R' Aharon, was a noted *talmid chochom* and *dayan*, descendant of a distinguished rabbinic family. From an early age, R' Efraim Zalman's brilliance shone unmistakably.

◣ When he was just six years old, his father took him to the local *beis medrash* one afternoon. The room was full of the *Kol Torah*, gesturing older men bent over large *gemaros*. Little Efraim Zalman sat quietly, observing. After an hour, he walked over to one of the older men and gently pointed to his open *gemara*. "I'm sorry but it should be read differently," he whispered. The man bristled—until the child calmly quoted the Tosafos by heart and explained the *sugya* with astonishing precision. From that day, the elderly men would nod respectfully when he entered. The nickname "Der Kleiner Gaon" (the little genius) stuck.

◣ By age 8, Efraim Zalman was already studying regularly with *bochurim* many years his senior. His father arranged a *chavrusa* for him with a gifted 14-year-old named Avraham Dovid — who later became a Rosh Yeshiva. Their learning sessions were marked by spirited argument and fiery enthusiasm.

◣ During a bitter Galician winter, the stove in their house broke. Yet little Efraim Zalman insisted on learning. Wrapping himself in blankets, he stood on one foot (as his other was wrapped in a rag against frostbite) and learned *Gemara* for hours. His mother begged him to rest. He replied, "When Torah warms the soul, who needs a fire?" This story was retold decades later by his own students as a sign of his burning love for Torah even as a child.

◣ Efraim Zalman's younger brother relayed that as a child, his only toys were old *seforim*. When he was nine, someone gifted him a torn, incomplete volume of *Mordechai* on *Maseches Bava Basra*. The child was ecstatic. He studied every word, then walked to the *beis medrash* and spent days searching for the rest of the volume. Years later, he commented, "That was my first real *sugya* in *Torah she'b'al*

peh — learning how to piece together a Torah that comes in fragments."

◣ When he turned 11, he was asked to give a *derashah* on *Shabbos Hagadol* — a common test of young prodigies. The local Rav initially objected, thinking it would embarrass the boy. But after hearing a sample of the speech, he said, "Let him speak — this child is not being raised in the world of children." The *derashah*, delivered to a packed shul, was on "*Vehi she'amda la'avoseinu*" — and he wove together *halacha*, *aggadah*, and profound *hashkafah*. The audience was stunned not just by the content, but by the sincerity in his voice.

◣ By 13, he was already sought after to resolve *she'eilos* in the community. Local merchants would ask him about *halachos* of *ribbis*, and women would bring him questions about *kashrus*. Though he had no formal title, his father allowed him to answer if he could bring clear sources.

◣ A well-to-do fishmonger brought a question to the city's Rav about a fish with a strange scale. The Rav was unsure and hesitated. Young Efraim Zalman, then just bar mitzvah, asked to examine the fish. After checking several sources, he *paskened* it was kosher based on *simanim* in the *Beis Yosef*. The Rav later called him in privately and said, "You are the first child I've ever seen whose *psak* humbles his elders."

◣ At a young age, R' Efraim Zalman married and settled in Lvov (Lemberg), where he soon became known for his mastery in both *nigleh* and *nistar*. But it was his finely tuned halachic mind that set him apart. He eventually became *Av Beis Din* and Rosh Yeshiva in Brody, returning to his birthplace as one of its most prestigious figures. His *beis din* attracted complex cases from across Galicia, and his *teshuvos* were sought out by both common folk and leading *rabbonim*. His approach was marked by clarity, depth, and an ability to cut through to the essential point of halacha without unnecessary pilpul.

◣ One day in Lvov, a simple shoemaker knocked on the door of the young *dayan* with a peculiar question: he had glued together parchment for shoes but discovered later that the pieces were from discarded *mezuzos*. Was he now required to bury the shoes?

Many would have brushed the man off, but R' Efraim Zalman took the time to hear every detail. He analyzed the halacha with his usual brilliance and concluded leniently — but then paid the man personally for the shoes so they could be buried anyway. When asked why, he said, "Sometimes the law says you *may*, but the heart says you *should*. And if I can afford the leniency, let me absorb the stringency myself."

◣ What set R' Efraim Zalman apart, even among his peers, was his care for the simple Jew. A story is told of a poor water-carrier who once approached him in tears. His donkey had died, and he could no longer earn a living. R' Efraim Zalman did not merely offer words of comfort. He immediately stood up from his desk, put on his coat, and went door to door collecting funds to buy the man a new donkey. "If I can *pasken* a complex *she'eilah* about the laws of *tza'ar ba'alei chayim*," he reportedly said, "how can I not feel the pain of a fellow Jew's livelihood?"

◣ A poor *talmid* in the Brody yeshiva once came to R' Efraim Zalman during the harsh winter wearing a thin coat. The Rav noticed the boy shivering during *shiur*. That night, without a word, he left his own warm fur-lined coat outside the boy's door. The next morning, the boy arrived to return it. R' Efraim shook his head. "You can return it," he said with a smile, "but only when you no longer need a *shiur* — and are giving one instead."

◣ A beggar once came to his door late at night. R' Efraim Zalman offered a warm meal and a coin. The man began crying. "I've asked many people today, and you're the first to smile at me," he said. "More than the coin, I needed that." R' Efraim Zalman later told his

talmidim, "Chazal say, 'Give with a cheerful face.' If you give with a frown, you've given money and taken away dignity."

◣ R' Efraim Zalman's *teshuvos* are known for their clarity and creativity, especially in works such as *Sha'ar Efraim* (on *kriyas haTorah*), *Mateh Efraim* (on the *Yomim Noraim*), and *Teshuvos Beis Efraim*. But what sets them apart is his frequent concern for people's dignity and wellbeing.

◣ A woman appeared before the *beis din* whose husband had vanished years earlier, presumed dead. Without documentation, other *poskim* hesitated to act. R' Efraim Zalman listened carefully and declared, "*Halacha* is not only based on paper — it is based on precedent, testimony, and justice." He labored for weeks, gathering witnesses, even traveling to a neighboring village to question a dying man who might have seen the husband. Ultimately, he permitted the woman to remarry — and was later vindicated when the man's death was independently confirmed. Years later, the woman's grandson became a *dayan* himself and would say, "I exist because one *posek* chose to listen deeply."

◣ His yeshiva in Brody attracted brilliant students, but he was especially known for his gentle treatment of weaker *bochurim*. One *bochur*, humiliated by his constant failure to grasp a *Tosafos*, asked to leave. R' Efraim Zalman invited him for tea that evening. Instead of rebuking him, the Rav opened a well-worn *gemara* and said, "You see this page? It has many folds and tears, because I reviewed it a hundred times until it became mine." He then added with a smile, "The *gemara* doesn't ask how quickly you learn. Only how deeply it enters you." The boy stayed — and eventually became a *maggid shiur*.

◣ R' Efraim Zalman was held in the highest regard by the *gedolim* of his day. R' Chaim of Volozhin once referred to him as "a pillar of *halacha* and a river of kindness." Though geographically distant, the two corresponded about *halachic* and *hashkafic* matters.

◣ He also maintained warm ties with Chassidic leaders, despite his personal alignment with the non-Chassidic approach. There are records of his respectful exchanges with the Chozeh of Lublin and the Maggid of Kozhnitz. While he did not adopt the Chassidic path, he recognized their sincerity and the needs they addressed. He once said, "Any path that leads a Jew to *Ahavas Hashem* and *Yiras Shomayim* is a path worth honoring."

◣ Once, the Chozeh of Lublin visited Brody and stopped to meet R' Efraim Zalman. Their private meeting lasted over two hours. A student asked what the Chozeh said. R' Efraim Zalman answered, "He spoke little — but his silence taught me awe. When people tremble before Hashem, we have more in common than we realize." He opposed divisiveness and urged unity wherever possible, writing in a letter: *"Disagreement in learning is holy. Disagreement in spirit is dangerous."*

◣ During a deadly cholera outbreak, R' Efraim Zalman demonstrated extraordinary leadership. He closed the yeshiva temporarily, instituted citywide hygiene policies, and worked with doctors to educate the public. When some traditionalists objected, claiming his actions were "too modern," he answered, *"The Rambam was a physician. Saving a life is not 'modern'—it is Torah itself."* He organized groups to deliver food and water to the quarantined, often going himself when others were afraid.

◣ R' Efraim Zalman passed away in 1828. The news of his *petirah* spread like a shadow across Galicia. His *levayah* was attended by thousands—Torah giants, tradesmen, women, children. They came to honor a *gadol* who embodied: *"Toras chesed al leshona"—the Torah of kindness was upon his lips.*

◣ His legacy lives on in his writings, in the *halachic teshuvos* still cited today, and in the example he set by his sterling *middos* and sensitivity to every Jew.

◣ R' Efraim Zalman taught many life lessons. He showed that deep *halachic* insight and practical kindness are not separate realms but one integrated *avodah*. His *piskei halacha* were deeply informed by an understanding of real-life people and situations. He taught that a *posek* must not only know *Shas* and *poskim* but also understand the heart of his generation.

Despite his vast knowledge, he walked humbly among the people. This humility made his Torah even more enduring. His *derashos*, even when firm, uplifted. He believed that Torah should inspire the soul, not crush the spirit. He never sought *kavod*. When praised, he would quote the *pasuk*, "*Tochachas chayim la'oseh mussar*" — rebuke is life-giving only when it is given with love.

R' Efraim Zalman embodied what he often repeated: *"Don't merely learn Torah — become the Torah. Don't merely speak wisdom — live it."*

The yahrzeit of R' Efraim Zalman ben R' Aharon Margulies zt"l is on 24 Menachem Av (1828). May his merit protect us.

Bedtime Stories

Like most five-year-olds, little Leah had her routines, and when she woke up in the middle of the night, she always knew where to go – to the comforting embrace of her parents' bedroom. That's where the world felt safe, where she could drift back to sleep, enveloped by their presence.

One night, Leah woke up and ran to her parents' room, only to find it…empty. The lights were off, and the house felt eerily quiet. She called out, "*Mommy! Abba!*" but was answered with silence. A wave of fear gripped her. Where could they be? She began wandering through the house, her small feet padding against the cold floor, her sobs growing louder as she searched each room. Yet her parents weren't anywhere to be found. The house that had always been her

haven now felt unfamiliar and vast. Tears streamed down her cheeks as she whispered to herself, "*I just need someone…someone to help me fall asleep.*"

What Leah didn't know was that her parents stepped out to a wedding in the neighborhood for just a few minutes, deciding to run in, wish a mazel tov, and return just as quickly as they left. They arranged for a neighbor to check in on Leah, but at this late hour, the neighbor wasn't there. Leah was alone. Then her eyes caught sight of a small piece of paper stuck to the fridge. On it was written a phone number. Leah had heard her parents talk about this number once. It was a number they said was only for the direst of emergencies. The kind of number you call when there's no one else to turn to.

With trembling hands, Leah picked up the phone and dialled. The phone rang. And rang. And rang. Each ring felt endless to the frightened little girl. Finally, just as she was about to hang up, someone picked up. A warm, calm voice came through the receiver. "Who is this?" the voice asked gently. "*It's Leah. I'm home alone, and I'm scared. My parents aren't here.*"

There was a pause on the other end. Then the voice spoke again, full of reassurance. "Don't worry, Leah. Your parents will be home soon. You'll be okay." "*But I'm scared,*" Leah countered. "*And when I'm scared, my parents usually tell me stories. That's what helps me fall asleep.*"

The man on the other end of the line, with much sensitivity and warmth, didn't hesitate. "Then I'll tell you a story." He told her a beautiful story, weaving a world of comfort and imagination for the little girl. Her tears slowed; her breathing calmed. And then, as he began the second story, the line grew quiet. Leah was finally falling asleep, clutching the phone, her fears fading away. Now relaxed, she hung up the phone and went back to bed.

The next morning, Leah ran to her parents, her face alight. "*Mommy, Abba*," she exclaimed, "*I was scared, but I called the number on the fridge, and the man told me stories until I fell asleep.*"

Her parents exchanged puzzled glances. "What number?" Leah pointed to the refrigerator, and when they saw the number, their faces went pale. That number served as a direct line to one person: their sagely Rebbe, the **Pnei Menachem**, the leader of the Ger Chassidic dynasty.

They asked Leah to repeat what happened, hoping it was a child's dream. But Leah's details were too vivid. Their little daughter, in her moment of need, had called the illustrious Rebbe himself.

Overcome with a mix of awe and embarrassment, they rushed to the Rebbe's house to apologize. How could they have let such a thing happen? The Rebbe simply smiled, his face radiating joy. "There's no need to apologize. Baruch Hashem, the stories worked. That's what matters."

To the Rebbe, every person mattered, no matter how small. [Reproduced from "One for the Books!" by Rav Yechiel Spero.]



CONGREGATION ISRAEL OF SPRINGFIELD

שְׁמֹר וְשָׁמַעְתָּ אֵת כָּל־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּךָּ לְמַעַן יִיטַב לְךָ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ עַד־עוֹלָם

The Torah states "Keep and hearken to all these words that I command you, that it may benefit you and your children after you, forever. Keep and listen to all these words that I command you, that it may benefit you and your children after you, forever…" (12:28)

It is quite interesting that the Torah first states, to "keep" ("**שְׁמֹר**"), and then to 'listen' ("**וְשָׁמַעְתָּ**") to the mitzvos that Hashem has commanded us. One would initially think that the order should be

reversed. An individual needs to first listen to what the mitzvos are in order for him/her to keep them. How can a person keep mitzvos if he hasn't even heard them??

I would like to share with you a beautiful idea from the **Koznitcher Maggid, Rav Yisroel Hopstien**, a great Chasidic leader from the late 17th century.

The Koznitcher Maggid explains that usually we translate "shemor,"as to keep or to safeguard. In fact, shemor, has a 2nd meaning. Shemor could mean to 'long for something', 'to look forward to something'.

In Sefer Bereishis (37:11), after Yosef comes to tell his brothers and his father about his dreams, the Torah says "**וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדָּבָר**." Shamar in that context means to long for. Yakov longed (**שָׁמַר**) for the day in which Yosef's dreams would come true. So the idea of **שָׁמֹר וְשָׁמַעְתָּ** is not that you should guard and you shall listen to the mitzvos; rather it's you 'should long' - listen to Hashem's commandments.

When we serve Hashem out of fear, we act like a servant, who only responds to his master's commandments. A servant serves his master by fulfilling the wishes and the needs of the master. The servant's desire is that the master will not need anything. He has no interest in going beyond anything other than what the master asks of him.

A person who serves Hashem like a servant to a master, fulfills Hashem's commandments. However, he doesn't long for more mitzvos or more responsibilities. He is content with just fulfilling the mitzvos. However, a person who serves Hashem out of love, like a son to a king, he yearns to do more. He seeks more opportunities to serve the master.

The Torah is teaching us that the ultimate goal is not just to keep the mitzvos, but to ***long to keep*** the mitzvos, to seek out additional

ways in which we can serve Hashem, and not just "respond to his commandments."

As we approach the month of Elul, we should all merit to seek out different opportunities whereby we can serve Hashem, and in that way, demonstrate to Hashem our ultimately desire to serve him out of love.

Good Shabbos and Chodesh tov.

UK for TORAH @gmail
Authentic Hashkofa from Gedolei Yisroel

Insights Into The Torah Perspective From Great Personalities Of The Last Generation & Beyond

These articles were sent out over the last two years in the weekly UK for Torah email updates, each one for the yahrtzeit of the subject of the article and sometimes accompanied by pecies written by him. It goes without saying that each Torah personality warrants full length books detailing his accomplishments and presenting his legacy.

The articles in this collection are simply snippets of insights into hashkofa which were taken to give ourselves chizuk, but do not represent even a fraction of what there is to write.

In general, we do not elaborate on the lives of those Torah luminaries who already have books written about them or who are well-known, and instead limit ourselves to presenting some of their insights. Articles about Torah luminaries who are less well-known (particularly to the English-speaking readership) usually include some historical and biographical information.

28 Av: Rav Yoel Teitelbaum – The Satmar Rebbe

Rav Yoel Teitelbaum, the **Satmar Rebbe**, was one of the most influential Torah leaders of the post-war era. A towering talmid chochom and tzaddik, he rebuilt Torah life with extraordinary mesiras nefesh after the devastation of the Holocaust and established what became the largest Chassidic movement in the world.

Today the Satmar community numbers **well over 100,000 followers**, with large communities in the United States, Eretz Yisroel, and Europe, along with many others who follow his derech and teachings.

Leadership and Influence

Following the war, the Rebbe gathered many Holocaust survivors and painstakingly rebuilt a strong Torah community centered in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Through firm leadership and unwavering commitment to Torah ideals, he established institutions, schools, and kehillos that continue to flourish today.

His greatness was recognized widely across the Torah world—even by leaders who differed with some of his views. Among those who expressed deep respect for him were leading roshei yeshiva such as Rav Aharon Kotler, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, and Rav Avraham Kalmanowitz.

Several major poskim of the generation considered themselves his talmidim, including Rav Shmuel Wosner (author of *Shevet HaLevi*) and Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Weiss (author of *Minchas Yitzchok*).

Testimony of Gedolei Yisroel

Prominent Torah leaders spoke about the Rebbe's exceptional stature.

The Brisker Rav once remarked that while many worried about the state of Yiddishkeit, the Satmar Rebbe was one who **"truly fought with absolute truth,"** disregarding personal honor or material considerations.

In a powerful hesped, Rav Elazar Menachem Shach described him as a rare figure who combined greatness in Torah, yiras Shamayim, and leadership. Rav Shach emphasized that the Rebbe's influence extended across the entire Torah world—even among those who did not fully understand or agree with every aspect of his approach.

Similarly, Rav Yisrael Elya Weintraub wrote that the Satmar Rebbe possessed a clarity of daas Torah belonging to earlier generations, and that such leadership was necessary in order to guide the Jewish people through the spiritual challenges of modern times.

His Legacy

Through immense personal sacrifice and leadership, the Satmar Rebbe established a powerful and enduring path of Torah observance and communal strength. His teachings, institutions, and communities continue to shape the lives of tens of thousands of Jews around the world.

Rav Yoel Teitelbaum passed away on **28 Av 5739 (1979)** at the age of 93, leaving behind a vast Torah legacy and a thriving Chassidic movement that continues to grow.

יהי זכרו ברוך.

Torah Tavlin

פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לְאָחִיךָ לַעֲנִיֶּךָ וּלְאֶבְיֹנְךָ בְּאַרְצֶךָ 15:11



The following is a true story told by Rabbi Yossy Gordon of Miami Beach. "I received a telephone call from a dear friend whose uncle was in his 90's and gravely ill. The doctors thought he only had a slight chance to recover and lead any semblance of a qualitative life. So, the man's son was considering instructing the hospital to refrain from resuscitating his father in case he went into cardiac arrest. In hospital lingo, it is called DNR for Do Not Resuscitate.

"My friend was trying to find a way to convince his cousin to give his father a chance to live. I called an experienced rabbi for some advice, and this is what he told me: 'Tell your friend to go to the man's hospital bed and bring with him a tzedaka box and a coin. Ask him to put the coin into his uncle's hand and help him drop it into the tzedaka box. Once a person's soul leaves the body, he can no longer perform a mitzvah, which have been given only to live people. Life is precious. By helping the man perform a mitzvah, your friend will have done something for his uncle that his uncle will never be able to do once his soul leaves his body.'"

Rabbi Gordon called his friend and impressed upon him the meaning of a mitzvah and the good fortune one has to be alive and able to perform it. "A few days later, he called me back. He went to the hospital with his daughter and did as I suggested. Guess what happened shortly after that? The guy had a turn for the better. Eventually, he was discharged and enjoyed a decent quality of life for another year or so."

R' Meir Dan Plotsky zt"l (Kli Chemdah) would say: וְשָׂמַחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּכָל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ -:12:18

The Rambam writes that on Yom Tov there is an obligation to rejoice, but Hashem is not content with one who celebrates privately with his family. We must invite the needy to our festive meals and make sure that they also rejoice.

The word **מִשְׁלַח** comes from the root **שלח** which means 'to send.' Thus, when one sits down to a festive meal together with his family, his major joy should be **בְּכָל מִשְׁלַח יָדֶךָ** - all the poor that one has 'sent for' to be at his table and all the poor to whom he has 'sent' provisions and made happy."

14:21 לֹא־תֹאכְלוּ כָּל־נְּבֵלָה לַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר־בִּשְׁעָרֶיךָ... כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה

When **R' Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky zt"l**, the Rosh Yeshivah of Ner Yisroel in Baltimore, would travel, he refused to eat the plane food even if it had a proper hechsher and instead, his wife would prepare him the requisite meals for his travels. On one occasion, R' Yaakov was flying to another city for the purpose of meeting an important donor to the Yeshivah. The flight duration was a few hours, and since he wouldn't eat the food being served anyway, his wife had prepared a sandwich for him prior to the flight.



A short time after take-off, when the Rosh Yeshivah saw that the flight attendants began to give out food trays to the other passengers, he took out the package that his wife had prepared for him. The sandwich she had made contained bread and meat, and R' Yaakov rose from his seat in order to wash his hands. On his way to wash, he suddenly remembered that he had left his food unattended on the folding tray in front of his seat - and there was meat there. The people sitting next to him were non-Jews and according to halacha, one is not permitted to eat meat that has been left without supervision. At first, a thought entered his mind: what kind of prohibition could be involved here? Each one of the gentiles was having the food served to him personally, and there was no reason to suspect that anybody would tamper with his food package. Why would they even want his sandwich? However, he knew that he had no right to question the validity of Jewish law in any case.

R' Yaakov returned to his seat and sat down. He left his meal on the tray without touching it since the main part of the sandwich

consisted of meat. The non-Jew sitting next to him ate his meal with great appetite and noticed that the Rosh Yeshivah was not eating anything at all. The non-Jew started to ask him questions about why he did not eat. When the Rosh Yeshivah replied that he was not hungry, the non-Jew said, "But I saw you open your case and take out your personal food package. Obviously, you were preparing to eat your meal. If so, what is the reason why you are not eating now?"

R' Yaakov was unsure how to respond. His non-Jewish neighbour did not want to let the matter go. For some reason, he kept repeating his question time and time again: why isn't the rabbi touching his food? Did he suddenly lose his appetite? Was it because he saw the food that the airline was serving, and it caused him distress? With such a persistent seatmate, the Rosh Yeshivah felt he had no choice but to explain the true reason.

"Well, you see, I am Jewish, and we follow a strict code of law called halacha. The Jewish people are very particular about eating only kosher food. One of the halachos for keeping kosher states that meat that was left unattended cannot be eaten, since somebody might substitute this meat for non-kosher meat. One might think that this law is a bit archaic, however, the nature of halacha is that it still applies even in a situation like this where there is no real reason for such suspicion."

The non-Jew listened intently and responded, "Rabbi, I'm going to tell you the whole truth. When you rose from your seat in order to wash your hands, I smelled the tempting aroma from the meat you had put on the tray. It actually looked much tastier than the food being served to me on the flight. I was unable to resist the temptation, and I exchanged the meat portions, putting my meat in your package, and I ate your meat! I hope that you will forgive me for what I did. It is quite clear that G-d watches over the Jews who fulfil His wishes!"

כָּל־עֹוף טָהֹור תֹּאכֵלוּ...כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה: 14:20-21

The literal definition of "Arichas Yamim" is "length of days" which implies someone who lives to a ripe old age, but in reality, one who uses each and every minute of his day to its fullest has accomplished this very same ideal.

R' Aharon Leib Shteinman zt"l was a Tzaddik who accomplished both the literal and idealistic sense of the words. He was 104 years old when he passed away, but the fullness of his days, indeed his insufferable ability to learn, teach, travel, and dispense advice and wisdom to Klal Yisroel all over the world, made those years seem to stretch out even longer.

In the final year of his life, it finally took a toll on his health, and he was hospitalized a number of times. In December 2016, he contracted pneumonia and was taken to Ma'ayanei Hayeshua Medical Center in Bnei Brak. He recovered, but doctors said at the time that they were concerned that a "general decline" in his physical condition had begun.

In January 2017, at 103 years of age, R' Shteinman was again hospitalized. He was suffering from shortness of breath and an infection-related fever. He was released after two weeks in intensive care but was again hospitalized in October 2017 for fever and weakness and was released after several days in intensive care. Two weeks later, while he was at the hospital for testing, there was an unexpected deterioration of his health.

A few weeks later, he passed away on the 24th of Kislev, 5778, aged 104. Whenever the Rav was being taken in, there was much tumult in the hospital as word got out that R' Shteinman was being hospitalized. The staff was instructed to find an especially comfortable room as is befitting a Gadol of such stature.

On one occasion, the staff nurse looked at the list of rooms and she realized that the most comfortable room in the hospital was already

taken. This room was constantly occupied for as comfortable as it was, that is how sought after it was.

At the moment, an elderly man who could afford it was occupying the room. He was not scheduled to be released anytime soon. The nurse thought about it and felt she could approach the old man and ask him to change rooms. She felt that if the elderly man would hear why she is asking him to change rooms, there was a good chance that he would agree to move.

She knocked on the old man's door and asked him if he would be prepared to switch rooms in deference to the Rosh Yeshivah who was coming in that very day. The old man did not even hesitate. "Certainly, certainly, what's the question? This is a great zechus for me," he said. He was more than happy to move to a different room with the feeling that he was very very privileged to give up his room for the great Gaon and Tzaddik.

R' Aharon Leib was brought in and remained in this comfortable room for the length of his hospitalization stay. After a few days, he was ready to be discharged. On the day he was to leave the hospital, he was informed that there is a certain old man in the hospital on the same floor, who had given up his room for the Rav. The family asked R' Shteinman if he could possibly pass by the old man's room and give him a blessing for a refuah sheleima. "An old man gave up his room for me?" asked R' Shteinman in wonder. They told him about the sought-after room and how the man immediately agreed to give it up for the

Rosh Yeshivah when he was asked. R' Aharon Leib smiled. "Now I understand. Now, a very perplexing thing that happened while I was here makes sense to me. On the windowsill of the room, the entire time I was there, I only saw pure (kosher) birds perched there. It says in the holy seforim that it is the way of pure birds to perch near a holy place. Not so with impure birds.



I did not understand what holiness there was in this room and I could not understand why they were here. But now that you told me about the special act of this old man, the chessed of an individual who had no issue giving up his comfortable room for me, it became clear. It was this special noble act of chessed, of giving by the old man, that brought holiness to this room."

It is interesting to note that not only is the act of giving up for the sake of another person a way to bring holiness to a particular place, but the humility of R' Shteinman in this story is so apparent. It never occurred to him, for even a moment, that he was the source of the holiness for which the kosher birds had come to the room!

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l



רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה 11:26

The parsha opens with the word **רְאֵה** (see) in the singular form but then switches to plural with the word **לִפְנֵיכֶם** (before you). This change must signify some sort of message for us. Also, many Rishonim are puzzled as to why Moshe Rabbeinu prefaces his intention of giving Bnei Yisroel berachos and klalos with the word **רְאֵה**?

I remember speaking to **Maran HaRav Dovid Feinstein**, regarding this posuk and would like to build my machshava on his derech hachaim, as follows. Berachos are not always so obvious. Each person must make an effort **to see** them. Our lives are full of blessings and life itself is actually the greatest beracha we receive from the Ribono Shel Olam! Most of us recite Modeh Ani every morning without realizing how blessed we really are.

Thus, Moshe says **רְאֵה** - singular, to teach us that each individual should look, see and appreciate the berachos he receives daily from Hashem. Then, he must understand that this same beracha is given **לִפְנֵיכֶם**, plural, to so many people. Berachos from Hashem are universal, but the perception of them is always individual! Therefore, the Torah uses the word **רְאֵה** in singular form, but expresses the beracha **לִפְנֵיכֶם**, in plural form.



The Ksav Sofer zt"l writes that Coins are round, circular in shape, and the posuk tells us 15:10 **נָתֹון תִּתֵּן לֹו וְלֹא־יֵרַע לְבָבְךָ בְּתִתְּךָ לֹו כִּי בִּגְלַל הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה-** The word "**בגלל**" comes from the word "**גלגל**" which means a circle!

Money comes and money goes. Chazal call it "**זוזים**" - because it is always moving (**לזוז**)! Rich people become poor and poor people become rich. Money is like a circle that should be used to help others! The reason Hashem made people rich is so that they can give to the poor! And the reason Hashem made people poor is so that the rich have an opportunity to give!

"**ראה**" means to see and the first thing we must do on Rosh Chodesh Elul is open up our eyes and put life into its proper perspective. "**אלול**" stands for **א**יש **ל**רעהו **ו**מתנת **ל**אביונים.

Don't hold on too tight to your money – **נָתֹון תִּתֵּן** - give and give, because money is like a ball that slips out of your fingers if you don't use it well. Now is the time - open your heart and give!

14:21 **לֹא־תֹאכְלוּ כָּל־נְּבֵלָה .. כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ**



In the chaotic days and weeks after the end of the second world war, a group of young men who had survived the ghettos and labour camps, found themselves in the Hungarian capital city of Budapest. At the time, another survivor of the German oppression, **the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Chaim Meir Hager ZT"L**, also happened to be in Budapest, providing solace to the grief-stricken Jews who had persevered and remained alive while most, if not all, of their family and relatives had perished in the Nazi conflagration. A nagging concern persistently bothered this particular group of young men and they felt it was imperative to meet with the Vizhnitzer Rebbe and discuss their problem with him.

The moment the Rebbe laid eyes on them, he knew that their concern was different than what he had been hearing until then. The leader of the group began to speak and as the spokesman, he came directly to the point.

"Rebbe, we need to do Teshuvah! For the past few years, we have been eating non-kosher food from wherever we were able to find it.

Whether it was in the ghetto soup kitchens or it was the meagre rations we received in the camps. To be sure, they never were large rations and the portions we ate were barely enough to stem the tide of our grumbling stomachs. Nevertheless, we feel as if our souls, our very neshamos, have become tainted over time."

The spokesman paused for a moment. "Should we have resisted? Should we have starved ourselves? Perhaps. But the temptation to partake in a steady, hot meal caused us to lower our standards. Rebbe, please tell us what form of penance we must do to remove the vestiges of treifa food and restore our neshamos to their purest form?"

The Vizhnitzer Rebbe listened in stunned silence. Immediately, his face began changing colours. First, he went white; then his cheeks turned varying shades of crimson and pink from emotion. He jumped out of his seat and began pacing the room - practically running from one end to the other. The young men were not prepared for this reaction and did not know what to make of it. Suddenly, the Rebbe stopped and burst into tears. He took the spokesman's two hands in his own and just cried. Minute after long minute went by and the Rebbe could not contain his tears.

Finally, he paused long enough to speak. "What exactly do you want? Teshuvah for eating in that Gehinnom? For not depriving yourselves even more than you already were?"

R' Chaim Meir held onto the man's hands and looked directly into his soul. His eyes burned bright. "Now listen to me good and well, for I am about to tell you something very important. After one-hundred-and-twenty years, when you go up before the Heavenly Tribunal and they check your card to see if you have merit or guilt, a portion of your card will light up as bright as the sun. The portion relating to non-kosher food - and specifically the portion that relates to the past few years when you were forced to eat from soup kitchens, camp kitchens, no kitchens - this portion of your card will suddenly

become illuminated, the words will shine so bright that you will not even be able to gaze at them."

The young men were listening with rapt attention as the Vizhnitzer Rebbe painted them a vivid portrait of what things will be like in the next world. "Tayera neshamos, my dear souls," said the Rebbe looking around at the group of men. "When life is normal and the world is under control, it is so difficult, nearly impossible for a human being to protect himself entirely from forbidden items in his mouth. Even the most careful and cautious individual has a hard time with this and nobody is perfect. Nobody! However, during the days of destruction that we all just went through, not only was it permissible to eat whatever you ate, in fact it was a commandment, a mitzvah of the highest order! It was, without the slightest doubt in my mind, an absolute obligation to eat in order to stay alive. Eating chazer-treif, the flesh of a swine in the ghettos and camps was as holy as eating a k'zayis of the Korbon Pesach in Jerusalem - maybe even greater!"

Once again, the Rebbe broke down in tears. "How I envy you," he said quietly between sobs, "such holy and righteous men like yourselves. Halevai, Halevai! If only my share in Paradise will be like yours, just on account of the reward you will receive for eating the food you ate during the war! Halevai!"

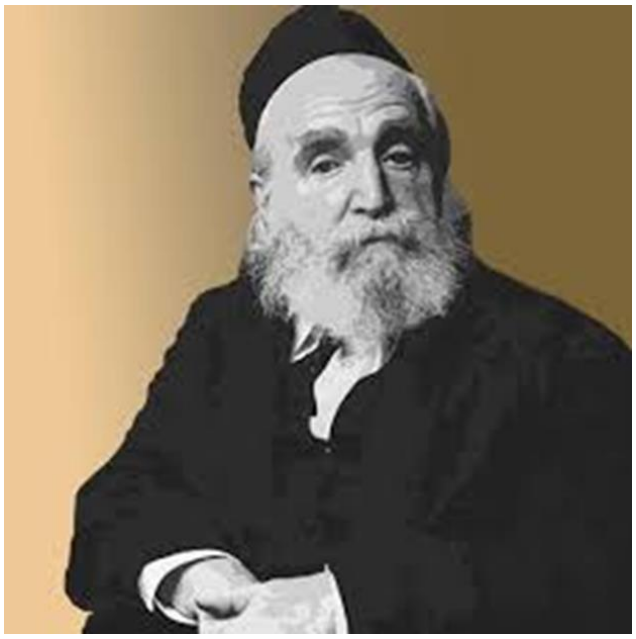


R' Yisroel of Rizhin ZT"L (Rizhiner Rebbe) would say: The first letters of the posuk לֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן -15:7. ***'Do not shut your hand from your needy brother'*** spell out the word '**תהלים**' - 'Psalms.'

Reciting Tehillim on behalf of a poor person is good but it is not enough; one must open his hand and give him material sustenance as well. כִּי־פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ



R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l



Although he was only 21 years old at the time, R' Moshe Feinstein zt"l was already renowned for his genius and talmudic prowess. He was appointed chief rabbi of the Russian city of Luban, and soon afterward, he married Sima, the daughter of **R' Yaakov Moshe Kastanowitz zt"l**, Luban's shochet, mohel, and community leader. R' Yaakov Moshe appreciated the great merit of having R' Moshe as his son-in-law. Recognizing R' Moshe's legendary diligence in Torah study, he did his utmost to ensure that nothing would disturb it.

R' Yaakov Moshe was once present when his daughter was faced with the common dilemma of trying to wash the floor while the children required supervision. Seeing the possibility that R' Moshe would be forced to close his gemara and tend to the children, R' Yaakov Moshe quickly said to his daughter, "His job is to learn; I will wash your floor and you tend to the children."

R' Yaakov Moshe was not only a great communal leader; he was also a righteous man who was well-known for his generosity and kind-heartedness. Any poor or sick person who needed assistance knew that he could find reassurance and support with R' Yaakov Moshe.

In Luban, there were few organizations that assisted downtrodden children. Individual people would look after their needs. One time a boy from town, who had strayed away from the Jewish way of life and became an outcast in the community, was stricken with tuberculosis. The only treatment for the disease was to send the patient away to a location where he was given a lengthy therapy of special medicinal drinks. Since the treatment was quite expensive,

whenever an instance of this disease arose in a particular locale, the entire town would chip in to raise the necessary funds. When it came to this particular renegade boy, however, the people of Luban - who were already severely impoverished - did not show the slightest interest in helping the wayward boy out of his plight.

R' Yaakov Moshe, however, disagreed with them and with great effort and dedication he raised money for the boy, despite the opposition of his acquaintances and townsmen. The boy was able to undertake the prescribed course of treatment. R' Yaakov Moshe was firm in his commitment to the principle that one must go to all ends to save "even one soul in Israel," irrespective of his attitudes and actions.

Many years later, as the effects of the Communist revolution were spreading further and deeper into the outlying areas of the Soviet Union, the Communists decided that they were going to seize all the gold, precious metals and American dollars that were held by private citizens, for use in funding their various projects. This was a measure of the "Communist Utopia."

One day all the shop-owners and businessmen of Luban, where R' Moshe was the rabbi, were arrested and herded into a small prison, in an effort to pressure them into handing over all the currency in their possession, and to reveal where their "tremendous wealth" was hidden. Of course, they didn't have anything to offer, and the questions went unanswered.

After this, the rabbi himself - R' Moshe - was summoned for questioning by the commissar, to determine where his money was hidden. When he arrived for interrogation and was asked to state his name, he responded, "Moses Feinstein." Upon hearing his name, the senior commissar suddenly stood up. He looked at R' Moshe and asked, "Are you the rabbi who married the daughter of Kastanowitz?" R' Moshe nodded in assent.

The commissar turned to the guards and called out angrily, "Why was this man brought in for questioning? He does not belong here!" The assistants responded that as the rabbi of the city, this man was certainly one of the greatest criminals of the bourgeoisie! But to their astonishment the commissar told them, "This man is no bourgeois! He is the son-in-law of one of the greatest true Communists in all of Russia! This man's father-in-law single-handedly and selflessly took care of my brother when he fell ill and enabled him to seek therapy for his disease - all this despite the fact that he did not share the same faith and world outlook that he did. Therefore, I order you to free this man and obey his wishes to the fullest!"

R' Moshe's request was that all the men be freed from incarceration, and this wish was granted. From that time until the day he left Luban in 1926, not a single Jew was ever arrested by authorities in the town.

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

את הברכה אשר תשמעו (יא:כז) ***The brachah that you will listen to…*** (11:27)

What is the *brachah* that the *parshah* is referring to?

It is the Torah! ***Rabbeinu* Ephraim** writes that if you take the last letters of this part of the *Pasuk* **את** הברכה אשר תשמעו , when rearranged spell out the word **תורה** . This hints to us that the *brachah* is the Torah and the Torah is the *brachah*.

This is emphasized later on when the Torah writes **וזאת הברכה לג:א** (33:1)— the Torah is only referring to the Torah as the *brachah*, as the Torah has said previously **וזאת התורה (ד:מד)** (4:44). The terms are thus interchangeable. (***Chaim shel Torah***)

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

כִּי־פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ.. וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן: 15:7-8

The Torah commands us to be compassionate and not close our hand to the poor, but rather open it. This seems redundant. If we are forbidden to close our hand, then obviously it should be open!



My machshava here is homiletically based on the words of the **Vilna Gaon zt"l** who writes that although a person is obligated to give Tzedaka when asked, he does not have to give equally to each person who approaches him.

There are certain halachos of precedence - such as family and "**עניי עירך**" - as well as analysing each situation and realizing that each person should not be given the same amount in the same manner. As we know, when a person's hand is extended, each finger is a different length. When the fist is closed, all the fingers appear to be the same size and equally aligned.

Our posuk warns us: "Don't close your fist when the needs of the poor are being considered, as this can cause insensitivity if you judge each person equally." Look at your hands and notice that just like your fingers are not alike, so too, each individual "**עני**" is not the same. Reach out and respond to each one as a unique individual, according to both his physical and emotional needs. Make him understand that you really feel his pain and empathize with him. This is the meaning of the words: **איש כמתנת ידו כברכת ה' אלקיך** - ***"Each***

man as much as he can afford, like the blessing of Hashem, the L-rd."

Why is there a **כ** before the word "**ברכת**"? The beracha should come as a reward for what you actually give.

The answer is that the beracha comes not just on what you give but how you give! The word "**כמתנת**" means that in the same way you give to a poor person, understanding his physical and emotional needs, that's how the **רבש"ע** will repay you.

We must realize that in the merit of living lives of Tzedaka, Torah and Mitzvos, will cause Hashem to reciprocate with berachos of long life, gezunt and yiddishe nachas.

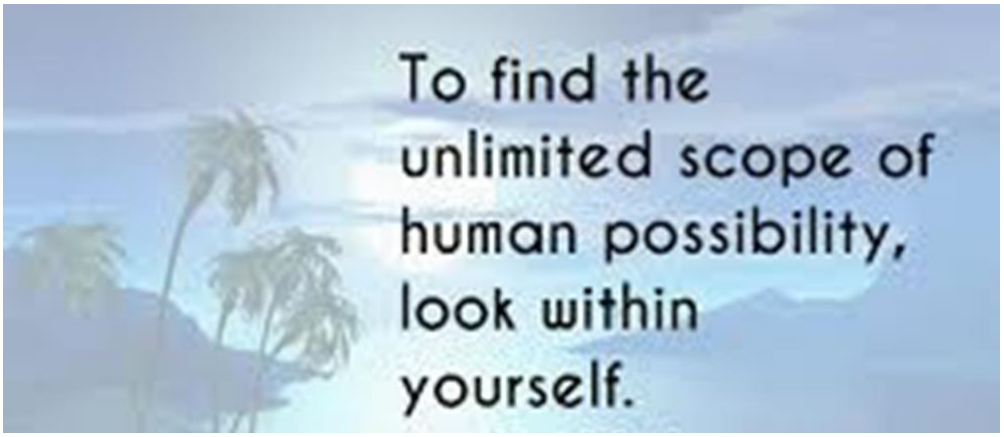
May we all be zoche to see the coming of Moshiach Tzidkeinu.

The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter ZT"L (Sefas Emes) said: רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה -

The word **רְאֵה** does not mean to see but rather to contemplate and understand that Hashem wants us to recognize that in every fibre of this world, there is blessing (**בְּרָכָה**) and curse (**קְלָלָה**).

This means that even the curse is a hidden blessing, and a Jew must work to reveal and enjoy the blessing. How does one do that? **אֶת־ הַבְּרָכָה אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶל־מִצְוֹת ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם** - the blessing will be revealed - even when it comes in the form of a curse - by cleaving to the ways of Hakadosh Boruch Hu; learning His Torah, performing His mitzvos and becoming intimately involved in understanding His ways. This will draw out the blessing that is hidden in the curse."

The Kotzker Rebbe ZT"L makes a fascinating point. He says that the weekly Parsha gives us an insight into what we are meant to accomplish that week. Thus, the week when we auger in the month of Elul is meant for us to "**ראה**"- "Look."



Each Jew must stop and look inside him or herself and see what needs improvement. Grab every opportunity to do mitzvos and good deeds with all your might.

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם... כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ וּבְךָ בָּחַר ה' לִהְיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה: 14:1-2

The words of the Sifri are quite powerful: "Rav Yehudah said, 'If you will behave like sons (of Hashem), then you will be His sons; if not, then you are not His sons.' Rav Meir said, 'No matter what, you (Klal Yisroel) are the sons of Hashem.'

The following story took place at a festive Rosh Chodesh seudah that was held at the home of the great Tzaddik and Mekubal, **Chacham Rabbeinu Yisroel Abuchatzeira ZT"L, the Baba Sali** as he was commonly known, or "Praying Father" because of his ability to work miracles with his prayers. Many petitioners would visit the Chacham and he was instrumental in assisting many Jews in their difficult plights. Yet, he was a guarded individual, and his actions were often not clear to the public. The results that came out from his prayers, however, were miraculous in nature.

There was one time, when he achieved salvation in front of an entire group with nothing more than a simple heartfelt prayer. The Baba Sali's Rosh Chodesh seudah was legendary and many of the people who would attend these monthly feasts can attest to the great salvation that the Tzaddik accomplished there. At this particular Rosh Chodesh meal, there was a large variety of Jews from all walks of life in attendance. It was a festive meal with much singing and

Torah being spoken, but after some time, people became of a man sitting in the back of the room who could not stop weeping the entire time. Individuals went over to him to ask him what was wrong, but he only wished to speak to the Tzaddik. He was escorted up to the front and came before the Baba Sali with tears streaming down his cheeks. The Baba Sali looked at the man and asked him what was wrong. The man began to relate his tale of woe, saying that he had a sick wife and seven daughters whom he could not afford to marry off. He did not know what to do or where to turn, and he begged the Chacham for a blessing that will merit him salvation.

Just then, a side door opened and the Baba Sali's son-in-law, R' Yehudah David Yehudayoff, walked into the room. He walked towards the front table and suddenly, without any warning, the Baba Sali started yelling at him, "Why did you come in? What are you doing here? Who invited you?" Everyone was shocked, especially R' Yehudah David. He quite often attended his father-in-law's gatherings and he knew how much the Baba Sali loved him. He just could not understand what precipitated this outburst. But the Baba Sali was not finished. Once again, he called out loudly, "Tell me now, who told you to come? Who invited you? Why are you here?" A pin drop could be heard in the large room. Everybody sat paralyzed and in shock.

Then, the Tzaddik lowered his voice and said to his son-in-law, ***"I want you to repeat after me: a son-in-law is the same as a son and a son does not have to be invited. A son can come to his father whenever he wants."***

Stunned and at a loss for words of his own, R' David repeated the words that his esteemed father-in-law pronounced. But it was not enough. "Say it louder!" called out the Baba Sali, motioning for him to get on with it. His son-in-law repeated the words: "A son-in-law is like a son. I am like your son, and a son can go to his father whenever he wants." The Baba Sali made him say it again and again.



After R' David repeated the mantra quite a few times, the Baba Sali suddenly rose and walked over to the wall. With hands outstretched, he cried out, "Do You hear this, Father in Heaven? Do You hear what my son-in-law is saying - that a son can go to his father whenever he wants? He can always go home.

So now, I want to return to You, my Father, and ask you to have pity on this poor Jew." The Baba Sali stood for some time in silent tearful prayer. The vast gathering of people held their collective breath and watched in anticipation. Then, the Tzaddik turned around and said out loud, "I prayed ..... and Hashem listened." That person was indeed delivered from his troubles.

A Short Message From Rabbi Paysach Krohn

What in fact is the etymology of the word "shidduch"? The Ran in his commentary to Meseches Shabbos (5b in dapei HaRif), cites the verse in Shoftim (3:11), "**ותשקט הארץ ארבעים שנה**" – ***"And the land was quiet for forty years."***

Targum Yonasan ben Uziel renders the word **ותשקט** as "**ושדוכת**," a word similar to **שידוכים** (shidduchim).

The Ran explains that the word shidduchim relates to the word **ותשקט**, peace and tranquillity, for that is what a woman finds after she gets married. She experiences serenity and contentment with her husband and enjoys a blissful marriage.

כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה.. מִכֹּל הָעַמִּים: לֹא תֹאכַל כָּל־תּוֹעֵבָה 14:2-3

Joe was born in Israel but made his fortune in the U.S. Joe Walis ran a successful aircraft supply business and moved his base of operations to Tel Aviv. He was known to work long hours and one evening as he finished his day at the office, Joe headed for The Elephant's Restaurant known for its "Basar Lavan" (pork) and pita.



It was a hot day, and Joe got in line to order. He was waiting patiently for his turn to come, figuring out exactly how many portions he would need for his entire family. Then, his mind began wandering, to a story he had heard so many times before ..... Joe's maternal grandfather, Reb Shraga Feivel Winkler ZT"L HY"D, was a melamed, a teacher of children, and was known as the most pious man in the town of Feldesh, Hungary. He was respected by all who knew him. In 1944, Reb Shraga Feivel was taken from his home by the Nazi beasts and interned in a slave labour camp outside of Hungary. As the war was coming to an end and the concentration camps were soon to be liberated, those Nazi soldiers who hadn't yet fled, felt the need to humiliate as many Jews as they could before they were freed. They decided to make an example of Reb Shraga Feivel, the one they sneeringly referred to as the "Camp Rabbiner."

The Nazi soldiers assembled all the Jews in the camp and ordered them to form a wide circle. Then, they called for the rabbiner, Reb Shraga Feivel, to step forward. " Soon you will all be free," the Nazi officer began. Then, he pointed to Reb Shraga Feivel and held out his hand which contained a piece of cooked meat. "But before you are free, rabbi, you must first pass this test. This is pork. If you

want to live and see your family again, you must eat it. If you do not eat it, then you will not be freed with everyone else."

Reb Shraga Feivel had starved himself for years, refusing to eat anything that was not kosher. He survived on water, vegetables and little else, and he was not prepared to forgo his principles now. "I will not eat this meat," he announced defiantly, to which the Nazi responded with one thunderous shot from his pistol. Reb Shraga Feivel was killed instantly.

Standing in line in this treifa restaurant, Joe began to contemplate to himself. "My grandfather was willing to die so as not to eat pork," he thought, "and here I am, of my own volition, standing in line to eat it. Either I am not normal, or he is not normal! I cannot believe that my grandfather was not normal. I must find out why he would do something that seems to be crazy!" Joe walked out and bought dinner somewhere else.

After dinner, Joe and his wife had a long talk, speaking of the emptiness gnawing at their souls. A few days later they heard about a seminar called Arachim (Gateways), and they decided to attend. For four days, Joe and his wife listened, questioned, absorbed, discussed, evaluated and reflected, and by the end of the seminar he was convinced that his previous life was over. Yossi Walis, as he became known, was determined to help others understand what he now understood.

Yossi became the General Director of Arachim and today, he is responsible for a budget of almost nine million dollars a year! When Reb Shraga Feivel Winkler decided he would rather die than eat pork, he could not know what impact it would have on his family. In fact, as far as he was concerned his decision cost him to never see his family again. But in the end, that decision was the cause for his grandson to choose to follow in his holy grandfather's footsteps.

The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה 11:26

Moshe is talking to the people, guiding them: ***"See, I place before you all today a blessing and a curse. The blessing is if you follow the ways of Hashem and keep His mitzvos, and the curse, if you go against Hashem and His commandments."***

If Moshe is talking to the entire nation, why does he express himself in a singular term **רְאֵה** - and not the plural **ראו**?

Every individual sees things differently. Two people can experience the exact same event and each one sees and interprets it completely different.

An example of this is Holocaust survivors. Some survivors say, "There is no G-d. How could there be a G-d to allow such terrible things to happen?" However, other survivors respond, "I saw G-d so clearly at every step during the war. I felt him there, miraculously keeping me alive. How could there NOT be a G-d?"



If each person sees things differently, how could Moshe tell the people **רְאֵה** - to see and interpret the Torah and mitzvos individually?

What Moshe is telling the people - and he talks to us today as well - is that every individual, depending on his upbringing, his nature, his personality and, of course, his free choice, has the ability to take any situation and make it a blessing or a curse depending on how he views that

situation. We are not in control of occurrences in our lives. We don't even know what will happen in five minutes from now.

But the one thing that we are in control of is how we REACT to situations and our reaction depends on how we view the situation. Every single person - individually - has the power to turn all situations into a blessing just by the way he views it – or chas v'shalom, to turn everything into a curse by seeing only the negative!

The Belzer Rebbe, R' Shalom Rokeach ZT"L (Sar Shalom) would say:



"When a person opens his hand, his four main fingers are all at different lengths. When he closes his hand into a fist, those four fingers are the same size. Similarly, there are four different levels of charity. - a needy brother or relative; - the poor of your city - extremely destitute; - indigent of Eretz Yisroel.

Thus, the posuk tells us: **וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ** Do not offer to give charity like a closed hand, where all people are exactly equal; rather **פָּתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ**- Give like an open hand; give to each level according to their appropriate needs."

"Every Jew has a candle within him. And every Jew has the power to light another's candle. And when you light another's candle, your own candle burns brighter." — Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

וְהָיָה כִּי יְבִיאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹקיךָ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אַתָּה בָא־שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ וְנָתַתָּה אֶת־הַבְּרָכָה עַל־הַר גְּרִזִים וְאֶת־הַקְּלָלָה עַל־הַר עֵיבָל: 11:29

Har Gerizim and Har Eival are both located in the mountain range of Shevet Ephraim, and the contrast in their appearances can be clearly seen. Mount Gerizim, located to the south of the valley of Shechem, is verdant, lush, with gardens covering the terraces on its slope. Mount Eival, on the north side, is steep, barren and desolate. Mount Eival is approximately 2,900 feet high, a few hundred feet taller than Mount Gerizim, which rises to about 2,700 feet.



Accordingly, writes **R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch ZT"L**, these two mountains, standing side by side, present a striking visualization of blessing and curse. Both of them rise from the same soil; both are watered by the same rain and dew. The same air passes over both of them; the same pollen blows over both of them. Yet, Har Eival remains starkly barren, while Har Gerizim is covered with lush vegetation to its very top. In the same way **בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה** - blessing and curse - are not dependent on external circumstances, but rather on a person's inner receptivity to one or the other; on our attitude towards that which brings about blessing.

When the Yidden crossed the Yarden , those first steps on the soil of a Holy Land sanctified them, the sight of these two mountains taught them that they, by themselves, by their own moral conduct, will decide whether they were headed for Mount Gerizim or Mount Eival - for blessing or for curse.

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה



R' Zelig Pliskin Shlit'a quotes a certain rabbi-friend of his, who has a term he uses to describe the members of his congregation: "Yenemites." Yes, you read it correctly - no typos here and definitely no spelling mistake! This rabbi calls them "Yenemites" because whatever he tells them, they automatically assume that he is referring to "yenem" - someone else!

Rabbosai ..... this is the lesson here in our parsha. The Torah writes the word "**רְאֵה**" in order to teach us that when someone is speaking, giving a mussar shmuess or just doling out good old fashioned advice, we must recognize that he is speaking to us!

What the Rav said at that shiur I went to, was not meant for HIM - it was meant for ME! So, don't ever be a "Yenemite" because the things that you think others - yenem - need to hear, those specific things MUST be heard first and internalized by someone who needs it most: YOU!

Torah U' Tefilah- Shabbos Treasures

In 1930, **Rav Shimon Schwab, zt"l**, spent a Shabbos with the **Chofetz Chaim** in his house in Radin. He said that he was deeply affected by spending time with the Chofetz Chaim and it helped change his life forever.

Over Shabbos the Chofetz Chaim discussed many different Divrei Torah. He asked a question: "Chazal teach us that the mann in the Midbar tasted like anything a person had in mind. What if someone

ate it and didn't have anything in mind? Did it taste like anything or not?"



The Chofetz Chaim answered the question by saying, "If one didn't have a flavour in mind, the mann didn't have any taste at all. It all depended on what the intention was. The same thing applies to mitzvos", the Chofetz Chaim added. "If you don't have kavanah when doing mitzvos, they have no taste at all!"

The Chofetz Chaim added, "A mitzvah is so sweet!" and he kissed his fingers as he said it. "If you want to taste the sweetness of a mitzvah, all it takes is proper kavanah!"



A Rabbi once visited the illustrious Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, the Steipler Gaon, and told him that he was looking for a shidduch for his granddaughter. He asked the Steipler what traits were important to look for in a boy, and the Steipler responded, "Look for one with diligence in Torah learning, common sense, and good character".

The visitor wondered, "If the boy is immersed in Torah learning and has achieved greatness in it, won't he automatically have good character?" The Steipler answered, "Not necessarily. A student leans on his shtender learning Torah diligently in yeshivah for many

years. A shtender is a convenient creation. It never asks for help with anything, for example, like taking out the garbage or buying something at the grocery, and it never gets angry. There was never a shtender in a bad mood, that expected someone to speak kind words of encouragement to it. No shtender has ever gotten sick and required medical treatment. Suddenly, this same student must begin living with another person— a wife to whom all the above conditions can occur. Therefore, the boy you are seeking has to have good character".

The Rabbi asked, "Doesn't the Torah refine a person?" The Steipler responded, "Certainly. There are some people that if they had not learned Torah, they would be predatory beasts, yet by virtue of their diligent Torah study, they have escaped wickedness. Only if someone works on themselves, constantly examining his spiritual condition and breaking down his bad traits and lusts, can he become a person of good character!" (Mevakshei Torah, 5:23)



13:2/4 כִּי־יָקוּם בְּקִרְבְּךָ נָבִיא...לֹא תִשְׁמַע אֶל־דִּבְרֵי הַנָּבִיא הַהוּא

If there will arise among you a prophet…you shall not heed the words of that prophet

In our version of the **Baal Haturim** we find no comment on this posuk. However, writes **R' Akiva Eiger ZT"L**, in his day, there was a version of the Baal Haturim that says that the word "בְּקִרְבְּךָ" - "in your midst" has the same gematria as the words **זו האשה** - ***This woman*** (324).

This was a reference used by Christians to "prove" that their Messiah was born miraculously from a Jewish mother. This is the basis of their entire religion and they tried to convert Jews based on this "proof."

R' Akiva Eiger writes that the Baal Haturim tried to refute their claims by pointing out that this posuk speaks of a false prophet who encourages people to go after false gods. This is clear from the

words בְּקִרְבְּךָ נָבִיא - ***"A (false) prophet in your midst"*** which has the numerical value of "זו האשה ובנה" - ***"This woman and her son."*** (387) The Christian censors had erased the words "and her son" in order to hide this version but this was the true interpretation.



It is related that in the times of the false Messiah, Shabsai Tzvi,(1626-1676) many people followed him, including some great rabbonim. **The Taz, R' Dovid Halevi ZT"L**, spoke to Shabsai Tzvi's son to try and find out what his father was like. His son told him that all his days he had never seen any blemish or flaw in his father's behaviour, only that when he slept, he lay on his back.

The Taz responded, "He cannot possibly be Moshiach, because Chazal tell us that the real Moshiach will not transgress even the smallest of rabbinical decrees." The end of Shabsai Tzvi proved his true identity: Together with his followers they eventually committed many terrible sins and were imprisoned by the Turks. He converted to Islam to save himself and died in disgrace, all the while still believing that he was Moshiach.

A Short Vort- Rabbi Moshe Kormornick- B. Rose

"עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר" - The Gemara in Taanis learns from this pasuk " עַשֵּׂר בִּשְׁבִיל שֶׁתִּתְעַשֵּׂר" – give Maaser in order that you should become wealthy.

The Vilna Gaon says, it is for this reason that the Trop on the word, "תְּעַשֵּׂר" is a זָקֵף קָטָן- meaning – the קָטָן (the poor man) will be זָקוּף – stand tall and become wealthy through his Maaser.

The Talmidei Chachamim of Brisk would occasionally ask riddles to each other, in order to sharpen their minds for Torah study. Someone once asked the Brisker Rav a riddle. He said, "I have two watches. One of them is broken and it doesn't move at all. The other one works, but it is always slow and off time. Which watch is better?"

The Brisker Rav asked him, "What would you think the answer to this riddle might be?" The man answered, "I think that the watch that never works is better, because it tells the correct time at least twice a day. The other watch is always telling the wrong time."



The Brisker Rav replied, "I think that the watch that moves slowly is a better watch. At least it is moving. A watch that doesn't move isn't a watch at all!"

The Brisker Rav explained that this is an important lesson for us. A person should always be 'moving' in his Avodas Hashem. Even if he is slow and only taking small steps, this is still considered to be serving Hashem. However, if one isn't moving at all, then he isn't serving Hashem at all. We must always be 'on the move' when it comes to our Spiritual growth!

Charity is called "tzedakah" because it is not generosity but justice. The wealth of a person is divided between what he holds and what he is entrusted to distribute; failure to give is not withholding kindness but withholding what was already designated for another. ~ Kli Yakar.

Pardas Yehuda- Rabbi Yehuda Z. Klitnick

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם 14:1 ***You are children of Hashem***

The Torah here refers to Klal Yisroel with the loving designation of "**בָּנִים**" children.

What is the implication of this title? What is more, the Gemarah (Bava Basra 10a) points out that Klal Yisroel is sometimes referred to with the honourable title of **בָּנִים**-children, and at other times the Torah refers to klal yisrael as "**עבדים**", servants (Vayikra 25:55)



The Gemarah resolves the apparent contradiction by observing that when the Jewish People fulfil Hashem's will, by observing His mitzvohs, they are entitled to the affectionate title of "**בָּנִים**". However, when they violate the King of Kings' decree, their designation is degraded to "**עבדים**":

We are children of Hashem, Whose love for us is infinite. Through viewing and conducting ourselves as His beloved children, He grants us the priceless gift of Teshuva, by which we readily and speedily earn and receive forgiveness from Hashem, our Father in Shomayim.

"There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle." — Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

אתם ובתיכם, אשר ברכך ד׳ אלקיך 7:12 – העמק דבר

It will help for Sholom Bayis in the house to be joyous together with the people of your household, regarding the Brocha that Hashem showered upon you.

וַאֲכַלְתֶּם־שָׁם לִפְנֵי ד׳ אלקיכם וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם בְּכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדְכֶם 7:12 - מהרי״א

Those who struggle to make a living will naturally not be joyous. However, when he is in a place of joy, he can delight in it for the place causes the joy. Being in front of Hashem, causes one to be happy.

It is the place that causes the happiness. **בְּכֹל מִשְׁלַח יָדְכֶם** – "no matter what the person has, a lot or a little, **ושמחתם** – "he will be happy because he is, **לִפְנֵי ד׳ אלקיכם** - in front of Hashem.

בן איש חי– 14:22 עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר

One who gives Tzedakah is likened to a nursing mother. As long as she continues to nurse her child, her milk supply is constantly replenished, and even increases. However, as she decreases nursing the child, the supply of milk decreases, until the supply of milk completely dries up.

The same applies with Tzedakah, that giving does not cause it to deplete one's finances, rather it causes it to increase. The more you give, the more you have - and the less you give, the less you have.

"If we are not willing to sacrifice everything for something, then we are not really living. We are just existing." — Rabbi Noach Weinberg (Founder of Aish HaTorah)

Rabbi Y Richtman

We find some very interesting changes when it comes to the mitzvah of tzedakah. By other mitzvos the Torah gives the commandment, and we are there by obligated to fulfil it. However, by the mitzvah of tzedakah the Torah warns us don't be stubborn or tight fisted in the fulfilment of this mitzvah.

We don't find by the mitzvos of Pesach or teffilin that the Torah says don't be stingy when it comes to this mitzvah. **The Dubno Magid** explains that tzedakah is different. We know that the way Hashem decided that the poor man should live is through the rich man providing for him. And the rich man must recognize that he is not giving away something that is his. Rather he is like a teller in a bank, who is just giving the owner of the money his own money.



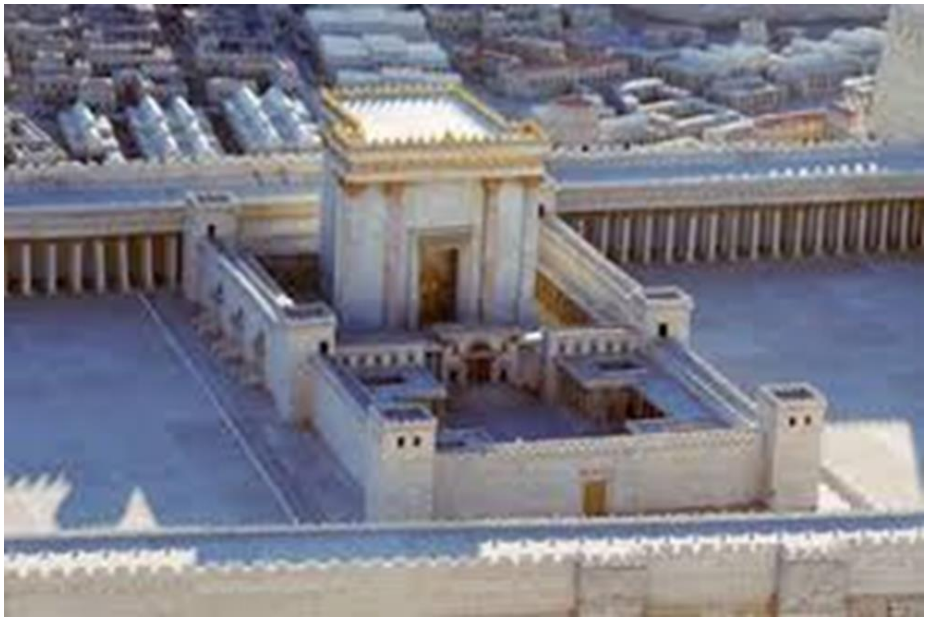
Other mitzvos the person must give up his hard-earned money to fulfil the commandment. Here though you are just passing along what really belongs to him anyway. The Torah tells him don't close your fist or harden your heart and there by stop up the pipeline. Rather open your hand and keep the pipeline unblocked and you will continue to be a pipeline for the poor man.

It is clear that the only difference between the rich and the poor is in the responsibility to give.

I saw a wonderful gematria that brings out this idea . **עני** equals 130 and **עשיר** equals 580. The difference between them is 450 which equals "**תן**" which means to give!

In Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh we say:

מזבח חדש בציון תכין ובעבודת בית המקדש נשמח כולנו ***"A new Mizbei'ach should be built in Tzion and we will all rejoice in the Avodah of the Bais HaMikdash".***



Why do we say we will 'all' rejoice? Of course we will all rejoice when the Bais HaMikdash is rebuilt! **Rav Michel Stern** answers (Iyun Tefilah) that at the dedication of the second Bais HaMikdash the young people rejoiced, while the older Kohanim cried. The young ones were delighted with their Bais HaMikdash but the older ones who remembered the first Bais HaMikdash cried over what this new Bais HaMikdash lacked that the first one had.

In our Tefilah during Mussaf we say that we will all rejoice because the third Bais HaMikdash will not lack anything at all and will bring joy to all of Klal Yisroel, whose celebration and simchah will know no bounds, Bimheirah BiYameinu Amein!!!

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

11:15 – העמק דבר - על כן אנכי

One who gives to the poor will be blessed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu, for one who has Rachamim on Hakodosh Boruch Hu's creations, is shown Rachamim from Shomayim.

Torah U' Tefilah- Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



This week's Parshah begins **רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה** ***"See, today I am placing before you blessing and curse."***

The Sforno defines the concept of 'seeing'. Seeing, in this context, is to focus and define a clear point of focus. There are only two options given in the Pasuk to choose from, blessing or curse. One cannot choose to waver between the two, to waver in the middle. These are two extremes with no middle ground.

Additionally, the Sforno notes (11:29-30) that the points of blessing and curse were expressed on the mountains of Gerizim and Eival, which are located at the entrance to Eretz Yisrael. It is particularly at the beginning of a new stage, when they are about to enter Eretz Yisroel, that it was necessary to remind Bnei Yisroel that life can't be lived in mediocrity. The only options are above and beyond—blessings or falling short.

"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty."

Rabbi Paysach Krohn writes a beautiful story about Rav Zalman Sorotzkin, the Chofetz Chaim, and Shabbos.



R' Asher, a man who had become ill, R"L, was on his way to visit the Chofetz Chaim in order to get a Brachah for a quick recovery. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin became aware of this and made an effort to try and reach the Chofetz Chaim before R' Asher arrived, because he wanted to warn the Chofetz Chaim that R' Asher's children did not observe Shabbos. Rav Zalman thought that perhaps at this opportune time R' Asher would be more willing to accept rebuke from the Chofetz Chaim on the subject and try to help his children.

However, R' Asher managed to arrive at the Chofetz Chaim before Rav Zalman could get there. When R' Asher asked for a Brachah, the Chofetz Chaim said to him, "We say every Shabbos Night in Lechah Dodi that Shabbos is the source of Brachah. If Shabbos is happy with you, then I can be happy too. If your family keeps Shabbos, then Shabbos will Bentch you. If your children desecrate Shabbos, then Shabbos is not happy with you. If so, then what kind of Brachah can I give you?"

Surprised that the Chofetz Chaim knew this, R' Asher accepted upon himself to make sure that his children would observe Shabbos properly, and eventually he soon had a complete recovery!

"Every person has a unique mission. If you don't fulfill yours, it will never be fulfilled." — Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner.



Rabbi Yehoshua Alt [לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדר בן יצחק מאיר ע"ה]

The most well-known initials for **אלול** is **אנִי לדודִי ודודִי לִי**. The letters of end of this phrase are four **י's** which is 40 in Gematria. These refer to the 40 days from **אלול** until **יום כפור**, a time when **תשובה** is especially accepted.



The Torah gives specific signs to distinguish between Kosher and non-kosher animals. However, when discussing birds, there are no specific signs given, rather if it's listed in the Torah as Kosher, we can eat it. Amongst the birds that are listed as prohibited is the "Raha" (14: 11-13). The Gemara in Chullin asks, why this type of bird is called a "Raha" and answers that it has very powerful vision which is what the word Rah means; it can be perched in Bavel and see a carcass in Eretz Yisroel.

The Kotzker Rebbe asked, why an animal which is blessed with such unique vision is not kosher? He answered that an animal that has such a gift and all he can see is dead animals isn't Kosher. This is a good lesson in that if a person has loads of bracha in their lives and yet they only see the bad, this is a sign that he is not acting in a kosher way.

עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר 14:22

The gemara in Tanis (9a) explains, based on this passuk, that if you give a tenth of your income to the poor, ma'aser, then you will become -wealthy, te'asher..



R' Nachum of Chernobol asked that this statement from chazel doesn't seem to be true. As we see, many people who give a tenth of their income are not blessed with monetary wealth. He answered that the words of chazal are 100% true. It is simply that we are misinterpreting what wealth is.

Chazal tell us in Pirkei Avos "who is a wealthy man, someone who is happy with their lot." The bracha of giving ma'aser and becoming an "ashir", with an eiyin," is not in monetary wealth but rather in that you will be blessed with the ability to be happy with what you have.

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

פתח תפתח את ידך לאחיך [טו:יא]

Open, you shall open your hand to your brother (15:11) Why does the Torah use a double expression of 'open'? The Gemara in Brachos (8a) states: A person should always enter into Shul the width of two doors and then Daven.

Rashi explains – one should enter inside the width of two doors so that he does not sit at the door, as this appears as if coming to Shul is a burden to him and he is sitting near the door so that he can leave. That is, it is prohibited to stand by the door and Daven. It also states in Tehillim (17:15): **אני בצדק אחזה פניך** –***I, because of***

righteousness, I shall behold your face" – and we learn from here that one should give Tzedakah before he Davens. Thus, the double expression of "open, you shall open" – these are the two doors (openings) that one must enter - a person should not Daven until he has entered into Shul and given Tzedakah. (Umatok HaOhr)

Many years ago, a young Yeshivah Bachur took a walk with his Rebbe in a park.

It was autumn, and the leaves on the trees around them had started to turn beautiful colours. Some of these colourful leaves had already fallen off the trees, and onto the path they were walking on. The Rebbe said to his Talmid, "You see those leaves on the ground? They think they are free. They think they can fly anywhere they want because they are no longer attached to the tree. The reality is however, these leaves will soon wither and die exactly for the same reason. They have become detached from the tree, and that was their source of life. It was what kept them alive. The leaves that are still attached to the tree, they are still alive. They can still grow and flourish because they are connected to their source of life."



The Rebbe continued, "This is what Shlomo Ha'melech meant when he wrote in Mishlei, **עֵץ־חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ**, the Torah is a tree of life for those who grasp onto it." The Rebbe said, "In your life you will meet people who think they are free because they have detached themselves from the Torah, Rachmana Litzlan, and they think they can do whatever they want, whenever they want to. But

this is not so. It is quite the opposite. People who are not connected to the Torah have cut off their source of life. They are like the leaves that are strewn all over the ground and are withering spiritually. On the other hand, the Torah is our Eitz Chaim. It is a tree of life, giving nourishment to our Neshamos and guides us through life, and as long as we are attached to the tree, we are alive."

That young boy grew up to be **Rav Mattisyahu Salomon**, Mashgiach of the Lakewood Yeshivah, and he says that those words that his Rebbe told him when he was younger have stayed with him his entire life, and they still inspire him!

Likute Mimini Michoel

לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ 1:14 ***You shall not cut yourselves***

The word in loshon hakodesh used here to mean "cut" has the same root as the word for "group". This is commented on by the Medrash, which interprets this possuk to mean that the Jewish people should always maintain unity and not break up into factions.



The Chofetz Chayim was once asked why we need so many different types of Jews: Ashkenazim, Sefardim, Chasidim and Litvishe Yidden, to name but a few. Some emphasise Torah study, others prioritise tefilloh; some promote an ascetic lifestyle, whilst others stress the importance of joy in all one's actions. Basing himself on the aforementioned Medrash, the questioner wondered whether it might not be preferable for all

Jews to serve Hashem through a common and united approach, with, for example, just one text for all the tefillos.

The Chofetz Chayim replied by pointing out that the Czar's army is made up of many different branches: infantry, cavalry, artillery and so on. Should they not be united in their method of battling the enemy? Of course, that is not the case. The skills of each specialty are required in different measure, according to the particular conditions pertaining in any conflict. As a cohesive body of soldiers, they have the power to overcome all types of enemy in all situations.

So it is with the Jewish people. There are many ways to serve Hashem and each person must choose the manner that he feels is most suited to him and which offers him the greatest opportunity for spiritual advancement.

United in Torah, the Jewish people are then a formidable force against all their enemies. A simple message with profound resonance for the time in which we live. If only some of our brethren would take it to heart!

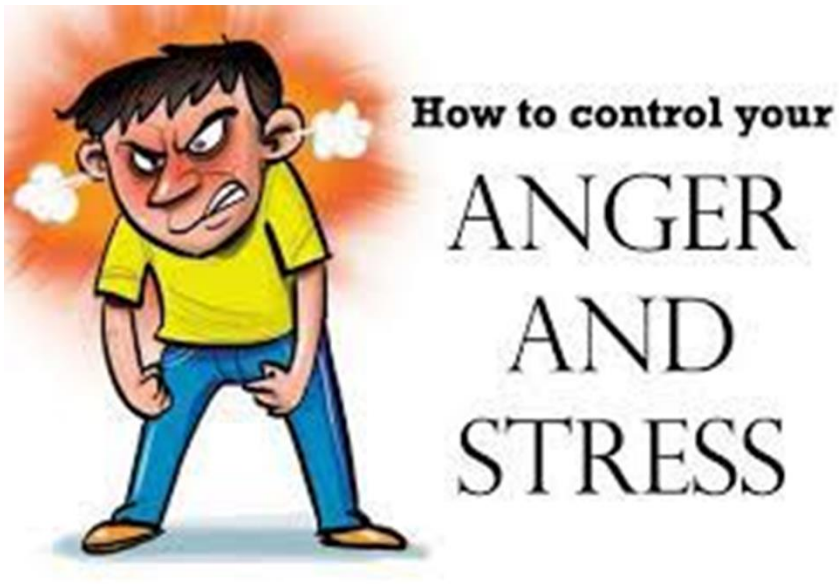
Fellow Yid!

In the month of Rachamim and Selichos in which we all prepare ourselves for the Day of Judgement, with *tefillah* that we merit to be inscribed in the Book of Life, it is exceedingly worthy that we should be strict to answer amen, as it is a great *segulah* to arouse Heavenly Compassion and to bring an abundance of blessing down from Above.

When you come early to shul each morning to recite *Birchos Hashachar bechavrusa*, you will merit many more amens, which will advocate for you on the Day of Judgement. (*Magen Avraham* [Trisker Maggid]

Working Hours, Working Decades -Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l used to write his Torah insights and novella on a special printed stationary, with a fountain pen, which he would refill from an ink well that was next to him. Given that he would write with a fountain pen, he would need to leave the papers to dry for some time after he would write. This would prevent the ink from smudging and making the writing illegible.



On one occasion, he had just finished writing three pages of his Torah thoughts over the course of a few hours, after which he got up and left his paper stationary to dry. Shortly thereafter, three yeshiva boys came by Rav Moshe's table to glance at the work of the gadol hador, though accidently, the ink well somehow spilled over and poured onto the papers, ruining them all. When they saw what had become of Rav Moshe's papers, they couldn't believe their eyes.

They went to Rav Moshe himself to apologize. Standing before Rav Moshe nervously, the three boys expressed regret and their apologies over what had happened. Rav Moshe made nothing of it, and soothed the boys' fears, reiterating that it was not their fault and that he accepted their apology and forgave them.

Some time later, Rav Moshe was asked how he was able to control his disappointment and frustration and not get upset at all? It had taken him hours upon hours to write those papers. Rav Moshe's response is worth remembering for a lifetime.

"I worked for hours on writing those novella, but I worked for decades on not getting angry."

There are those instances in life when we have spent considerable time and effort investing in something, and it doesn't work out the way we wanted. For whatever reason, we are left in a position which could arguably warrant losing our cool. It is in that moment when we could let our rage flare that we ought to remember that while we may have worked for hours on that project, venture or investment, we can be on our way to working for decades at refining our character.

For Rav Moshe, trading in his temper for those papers, which were already ruined and nothing more could have been done anyway, was not worth it. All that remained was showing anger to these boys. But more valuable than that, and an even greater lesson to the boys and triumph for himself, was to remain perceptively poised and calm amidst the frustration. For Rav Moshe, he had spent day in and day out reminding himself of the importance of staying in control of himself, that the value of controlling his temper far outweighed any temporary relief that losing his temper would yield. That hallmarked his character and is a model from which we can all draw inspiration.

Peninim on the Torah – פנינים על התורה

וזה אשר לא תאכלו ... והחסידה

This is what you shall not eat…the chasidah. *(14:12,18).* As the designated *Banim atem la'Hashem Elokeichem*, "Children to Hashem, your G-d" (ibid 14:1), we must act in accordance with our special status. It should serve as a source of pride and obligation. The Torah enjoins us with certain prohibitions which are entirely acceptable to the gentile world, but, to Hashem's children, are an anathema. Among these prohibitions are the Jewish dietary laws which prohibit us from consuming certain animals, fowl and fish. Among the fowl, the

Torah lists specific fowl which are considered non-kosher due to their "character" which, of course, only the Creator Who created them knows.



Among these non-kosher birds is the *chasidah*, translated as the stork. While the stork/*chasidah* may be non-kosher due to a character defect that it possesses, one wonders why it is called *chasidah*. The word *chasidah* is closely related to *chassid*, which means an individual who embodies piety at its apex, or one who performs acts of *chesed*, kindness. Either way, the name *chasidah* for a character defective fowl which is non-kosher seems to be an unlikely name. *Rashi* (commentary to *Vayikra* 11:19) cites the *Talmud* (*Chullin* 63a) that the *chasidah* displays kindness towards others of its own species. It is surprising that a bird that exhibits such compassion should be deemed non-kosher.

The *Sifrei Chassidus* (attributed to the *Rizhiner Rebbe*, or *Chidushei HaRim*) explain that directing one's kindness efforts exclusively to one's own species/fellows, while simultaneously refusing to help others, indicates that its acts of *chesed*/kindness are selfishly motivated and not very kind. The true *baal chesed* is magnanimous and reaches out to all. He is not exclusive, does not limit his *chesed* endeavours to his friends, etc. He does not distinguish between individuals based upon his personal opinions, religious preferences, definitions of good and evil in people. We are all in this together. We should, thus, allow for *chesed* to be all-encompassing and directed toward all. While this explains the reason behind the *chasidah's* name, it does not explain why it was not called by a name that does not focus solely on its deviant acts of *chesed*.

Chesed is a term that focuses on kindness. It is a positive term. To call a fowl of deficient character by a positive term, simply because it distorts it, seems misguided. After all, *chesed* means kindness. Deficient kindness is not kindness.

I think the resolution to this question is to be found in the ***Radak's*** commentary to *Parashas Kedoshim* (*Vayikra* 20:17) where the Torah admonishes us concerning aberrant, immoral relationships. The Torah says, *Chesed hu*, it is a disgrace. Here the word *chesed* is defined as disgrace. Why is this? The *Radak* explains that *chesed* has two meanings: kindness and disgrace. The immediate question is: What is the relationship between kindness and disgrace? *Radak* explains that the disgrace of immorality is the product of overindulgence. One who is too anxious to give pleasure and is reluctant to discipline himself/herself or others is in danger of falling prey to the evil of immorality. In other words, kindness requires discipline. Without some form of due diligence one can lapse into sin. With this idea in mind, we understand why defective kindness can be referred to as *chesed*, not the *chesed* of kindness, but instead, the *chesed* of disgrace. The *chasidah* deforms the act of *chesed* by deviating from the kindness as perceived by the Almighty – kindness to all, under all circumstances.

Selective kindness falls under the rubric of disgrace. We mentioned earlier that *chassid* also means pious, righteous. ***Horav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, zl***, adds that while *chasidah* refers to kindness, it also more importantly alludes to *chassidus*, piety. *Chassidus* means acting piously, going beyond the call of duty, beyond the letter (and, often, the spirit) of the law.

The stork/*chasidah* does perform acts of kindness but makes a big to-do out of its actions. It always feels that it is extending itself and doing more than it needs to do. The *chasidah* (or person who acts this way) thrives on accolades and attention. Heaven forbid should one benefit from the *chasidah* and not properly acknowledge its act

of kindness. The *chasidah* always feels that it has extended itself. Such *chesed* is not focused on the beneficiary, but rather it is self-focused, attention-grabbing *chesed*. Since it is true that the *chasidah* could have chosen other activities to generate accolades for itself, it must be commended for selecting an area of endeavour that benefits others.

The *baal chesed* who intimates by his actions that he/she derives great satisfaction in being referred to as a *baal chesed/chasidah* is still a *baal chesed* and should be acknowledged for his kind work. One must be aware, however, that since his kindness is self-centred, if the accolades stop, so will the *chesed*.

Torah Anytime- Rabbi YY Jacobson -Talk to Yourself



I once had the unique opportunity to sit down and talk with Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hirsch Weinreb, at which point he shared the following poignant story that has stayed with me ever since.

Rabbi Weinreb, as a rav in his early thirties living in Silver Spring, Maryland, experienced a period of uncertainty, both personally and professionally. It was, in one sense, an early mid-life crisis. Unsure how he should proceed in the rabbinate, as a psychologist, and deal with varying questions of faith in G-d, he ultimately felt lost.

As a student of **Rav Soloveitchik zt"l**, he could have simply consulted his rebbe, and gained the much-needed insight and advice he was seeking. Yet, he wished to discuss the matter with someone outside of his circle; someone who could lend a new, fresh perspective to his

dilemma. He called Rabbi Chadakov, secretary of the **Lubavitcher Rebbe**, and anonymously asked if he would be able to arrange for a meeting with the Rebbe. "I am from Maryland," Rabbi Weinreb said, "but would drive to New York whenever the Rebbe is available. I just need a few minutes to gain some advice and direction for my life." Rabbi Chadakov replied that the Rebbe was already booked for the next six months, and didn't see a time he could fit Rabbi Weinreb in. "Please," he said, "it's very important. Could you just ask the Rebbe? I'm a confused Jew from Maryland. Maybe he'll help me."

Rabbi Chadakov agreed. As the Rebbe sat in his office, Rabbi Chadakov relayed the information spoken by Rabbi Weinreb. "There is a Jew from Maryland and he wishes to see the Rebbe and seek advice for his life and his future." The Rebbe began answering Rabbi Chadakov, as I remained on the phone, overhearing the familiar voice of the Rebbe. "Tell him that if he lives in Maryland, there is a Jew there by the name of Weinreb. Let him go discuss his dilemmas with Weinreb."

"Rabbi Jacobson," said Rabbi Weinreb to me, "I thought I was hallucinating. I am Weinreb! I am the man from Maryland who is confused!" I had not disclosed my name, though at this point, I felt compelled to clarify for Rabbi Chadakov that it was none other than me – Weinreb – on the phone. "Tell the Rebbe," I said to Rabbi Chadakov, "that I am Weinreb!" Relaying this vital fact over, the Rebbe took it in, and then replied, ***"If that's the case, he should know that, sometimes, a person needs to speak to himself."***

Rabbi Chadakov was stunned, as was I. Short of breath, Rabbi Chadakov repeated to me, "The Rebbe said that sometimes it's best to talk to yourself. Is your name Weinreb?" "Yes," I reassured. "But maybe the Rebbe means a different Weinreb?" "No," said Rabbi Chadakov, "if the Rebbe says you should talk to Weinreb, you got to talk to Weinreb." I thanked Rabbi Chadakov and hung up the phone, soaking in the words I just heard.

"That was it," Rabbi Weinreb concluded. "That changed my life. Until today, whenever I have a simple question or serious dilemma, I will speak to people, but the person I speak to first and foremost is myself."

In our lives, of course there are times which call for seeking advice from people who can provide the needed guidance. Yet it is extremely important that we, at the same time and more importantly, have a conversation with ourselves, with our inner voice. Before we go and ask this-and-that person for their input, we would do well first talking to ourselves and listening to what we have to say about it. Sometimes that's the best advice.



רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה – *See, I have placed before you this day [both] Blessing and Curse.* (11:26)

The Imrei Aish asks basic question in the grammar – why is the word Re'eh singular, while the word Lifneichem is in the plural form? The answer provides us with a vivid understanding of what receiving Bracha and Klala (Divine blessing and curse) are all about.

The Imrei Aish explains that, as we all know, Hashem is the true source of good for the world, and it is His will to shower the entirety of His creation with that goodness – equally for all. But not all facets of creation are capable of receiving that goodness equally, some prepare themselves more than others, turning themselves into better, more "roomy" receptacles. Similarly, the sun shines equally upon all, but some have more advanced and sophisticated ways to use the sun's energy than others. The degree of usage/benefit is dependent on the degree of preparation

Thus, re'eh- see – observe and understand that Hashem wants to provide His good equally for all. But when that goodness "arrives" lifneichem – before you – then the reception of that goodness depends on the degree of preparation of each individual, which by

its very nature is plural. Indeed, for some, the shower of Hashem's goodness will be a blessing, while for others who lack the proper preparation, it may turn out to be a curse.

In the same way we see that the parsha of Re'eh is in sefer Devorim which is based on all of Moshe Rabbeinu's rebukes to the Bnei Yisroel. The word Devarim (words) is the same word as the word Devorim (bees). Bees make Dvash (honey) but also sting, if we take the rebukes properly in the right way and learn from our mistakes Hashem blesses us with honey, however if we take them in the wrong way then we will be stung!



As it says in Pirkei Avos (4:21), ***"This world is like a corridor to the World to Come."*** We are living our lives walking trying to find our way to Olam Haba trying different doors, always looking for the right path some doors go to the next world, some doors unfortunately are the wrong path and lead us to bad places.

May we all take Hashem's good in the right way and learn from Moshe Rabbeinu's rebuke to lead us down the right path and be blessed with the sweet taste of honey!

"The yetzer hara is not a monster. It is a fire. Fire can destroy a house, or it can warm a home. It can burn a forest, or it can forge steel. The question is not whether you have passion, ambition, or desire. The question is what you do with them. Channel them toward holiness, and they become your greatest strength." ~ Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Jacobson.

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

14:1 בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ וְלֹא־תָשִׂימוּ קָרְחָה בֵּין עֵינֵיכֶם לָמֵת

You are children of the Lord, your G-d. You shall neither cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.



Moshe Rabbeinu makes a profound pronouncement with this posuk: It is quite profound, yet, we must understand: what is the connection between " בָּנִים אַתֶּם " - ***"You are children of Hashem,"*** and the prohibition against defiling and cutting oneself as consolation for the loss of a loved one?

The following machshava was inspired by the words of the **Seforno and the Kli Yakar**. Typically, when a person loses a close relative, he or she naturally feels a void in their life. As a result, they may either scratch themselves or rip out their hair leaving a bald spot. Both are symbols of loss, chisaron. To pre-empt this, says the Torah, you need to recognize who orchestrated this happenstance? Who brought it about? It was "**אבינו שבשמים**" - ***our Father in Heaven***, for you, His child.

Does a father ever wish to harm his child? Most definitely not! So don't become despondent, don't look at it as a misfortune. As the posuk continues " כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה" - ***You are a holy nation*** and understand that there is life after death. You can help elevate the niftar.

For a Jew, loss is not chisaron, rather a Father's reminder, a gentle potch or even embrace. Thus, the posuk states: " בָּנִים אַתֶּם " - you

are all one big happy family, children to the same good Father. It is a father's ultimate dream that his children remain unified.

הטוב כי לא כלו רחמיך והמרחם כי לא תמו חסדיך

The Beneficent One, for Your compassions were never exhausted; and the Compassionate One, for Your kindnesses never ended.



Should it not be the other way around? *Tov*, beneficence, should "partner" with kindness, and compassion should accompany compassionate activities.

Achas Shoalti explains that there are two ways in which an individual can be charitable to one who is in need. A person is compassionate and, as a result, cannot tolerate to see someone suffering the pangs of poverty. In order to quell *his* emotions, he gives charity to the poor. His actions, however, do not necessarily bespeak one who is a *baal chesed*, kind person. Another person gives charity because he loves people and wants to help them. He is kind, but not necessarily compassionate. He gives out of kindness. Thus we say *Hatov*, even though Hashem is *Meracheim*, acts compassionately, but this, too, does not indicate that He is compassionate. Hashem is both: Beneficent and Compassionate. At times, He acts compassionately, and, at times, He acts kindly. He is neither one nor the other; He is both.

"There is no such thing as a Jew who is far from G-d. There are only those who do not yet know how close they truly are." ~ Noam Elimelech, Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk (1717-1787)

A Short Vort- Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל אַתָּה עֹבֵר הַיּוֹם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן Hear Israel, today you cross the Jordan (9:1)

In this verse where Moshe is seemingly telling the Jewish People that they should expect to immediately cross over into Eretz Yisrael. However, the **Ohr Hachaim** explains that Moshe was really trying to hint to the Jewish People that they should pray for him to cross over with them. He explains Moshe's words as follows: **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** – ***"Listen Israel"*** - Moshe was encouraging them to pay attention careful to what he is about to say so that they would be able to understand his implication.



אַתָּה עֹבֵר "You are crossing over" - But *I* am not crossing over. Moshe had been told by Hashem to stop praying that he should enter into Eretz Yisrael, but Moshe knew the power of *tefilla b'tzibbur, communal prayer* and was imploring the Jewish People to pray on his behalf. However, the Jewish People did not understand the full intention behind Moshe's words and failed to pray for him.

Many lessons can be learnt from the *Ohr Hachaim's* words, but perhaps one important message to take is that it is essential to be sensitive to other people's needs, and it is important to read between the lines and listen to what others are really trying to say. Whether it is a friend who is too embarrassed to admit that he needs financial help, or a new mother who feels she is not coping, many times a serious cry for help will masquerade itself as a light conversation with a friend.

As Jews, we are referred to as the merciful nation; So much so, that the Gemora declares regarding "anyone who is compassionate on the creations, that one can be sure that they come from the seed of Avraham Avinu and whoever is not compassionate on the creations, one can be sure that he is not from the seed of Avraham Avinu".

Therefore, as Jews we have within us the natural ability to be compassionate to others – a gift that we must not let go to waste.

Torah Tavlin

Rabbeinu Yitzchak Aramah zt"l (Akeidas Yitzchak) would say:

זאת הבהמה אשר תאכלו

The Rambam and others maintain that forbidden foods are harmful to the body. But if these foods are forbidden purely for health concerns, why did the Torah not mention poisonous plants as forbidden to us? However, the main reason is purely spiritual in nature, because their essential quality corrupts one's character traits, as through them emerges impure blood, which corrupts the soul.

The Midrash explains that forbidden birds are specifically birds of prey. Similarly, all animals of prey are forbidden, as they implant within the soul cruelty and corrupt qualities. Kosher animals are different in terms of their inner qualities. Meticulous observance of Kashrus helps both body and soul!"

"The greatest gift you can give your children is not money, not connections, not even education. The greatest gift is your time. Because time is life. When you give your time, you are giving a piece of your life. And that is something money can never buy." — Rabbi Noach Weinberg

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings- *Emunah*

The *parashah* begins with the words **ראה אנכי**. **The Nesivos Shalom *zt'l*** explains that this means one should heed the first of the Ten Commandments, **אנכי ה' אלקיך**, which is the mitzvah of *Emunah*.

The Nesivos Shalom writes that with his interpretation, we can answer the **Ohr HaChaim's** question: Moshe is telling the nation that they will receive *brachos* for keeping the Torah, and they will receive the opposite for transgressing it. The nation heard Moshe's words; they didn't see anything. So why did Moshe tell them, **ראה** *see*?

The Nesivos Shalom explains that the *pasuk* is hinting to the mitzvah of **אנכי**, the mitzvah of *Emunah*, and *Emunah* needs to be as clear to a person as the matters he sees with his eyes. Therefore, the Torah writes **ראה אנכי**.

It states, **ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה את הברכה אשר תשמעון אל מצות ה'... והקללה אם לא תשמעו**



The Nesivos Shalom explains that the *pasuk* is saying, if you will have *emunah*, you will keep the Torah, and then you will receive the *brachos* and bounty that come from keeping the Torah.

We can also explain that living with *Emunah* is the greatest blessing because when someone lives his life with Emunah, he lives with joy and with tranquillity. He is never worried because he knows that Hashem is taking care of him. He is never upset because he realizes that everything that happens is for the good. When one doesn't have *Emunah*, that itself is a curse. All his days are dark because he doesn't have any thoughts that can console him when he is going through hard times.

The words **אני מאמין** can be read forwards or backward. If you place the first letter (the **א**) at the end of **מאמין** , and then you read these two words backward, you will read it **אני מאמין**. This hints to us that when things are happening in a straight way, and even when everything seems to be going backward (which represents hardships), **אני מאמין**, I believe that it is from Hashem and for the good.

The Yesod Emunah *zt'l* (a student of the **Chozeh of Lublin *zt'l***) explains the pasuk as follows: **ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום**, Hashem gives us the ability of **היום**, to think about today and to not worry about tomorrow. When one focuses on *today,* he lives a tranquil and calm life. He doesn't have any worries. (Even if he understands that he must prepare for the future, he does so without worry, because he trusts in Hashem and knows that Hashem will give him everything he needs.)

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה

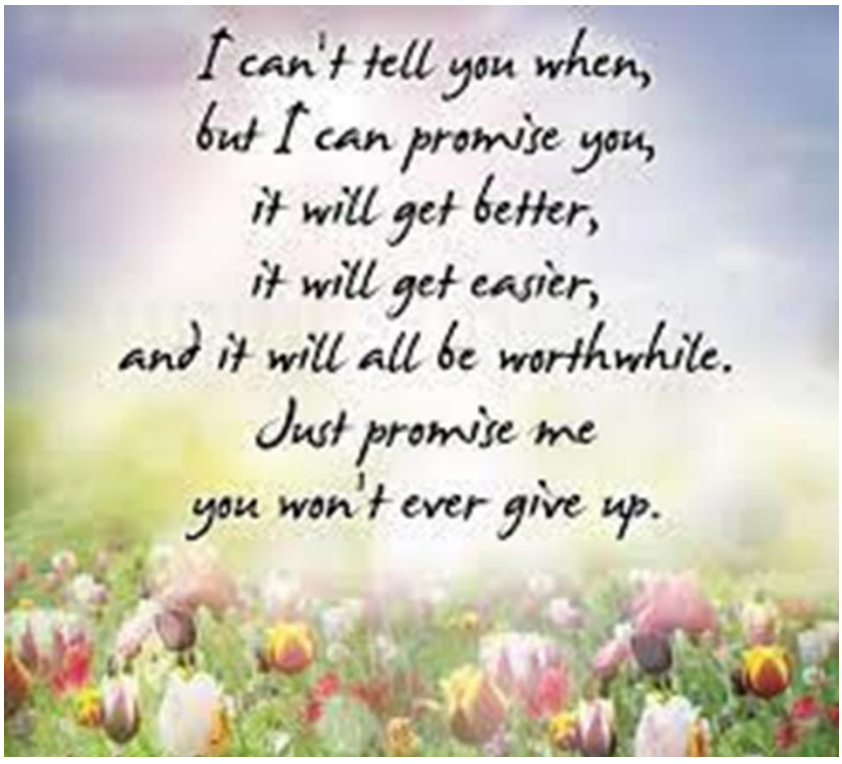
Once on Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Re'ey, **The Rebbe Reb Yitzchok of Vorkey ZY"A**, spent Shabbos by a simple villager. The villager asked The Rebbe to say Torah, but the Rebbe responded that the villager should say Torah. The villager responded that he does not know anything, only on the definition of the Possuk "Re'ey Onochie", he can explain.

He said as follows, Re'ey Onochie, as translated in Polish, ***"Patch sabiyeh – meaning – look into yourself"***. And this Torah the Vorkoh Rebbe would say every year, in the name of the villager. • Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh

What you get by achieving your goals is not as important as what you become by achieving your goals.

Brachos – Challenges

Reb Yisrael Harten tells that when he lived in Warsaw before World War II, he saw an old Yid, a glazier, carrying a very heavy pane of glass. Reb Yisrael offered to help. The old man replied, "Listen young boy: I'm over ninety, but I'm still strong, and I don't need your help. And I'll tell you why I'm so strong. Many years ago, I once did a favour for **Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa *zt'l***. The Rebbe asked me which *brachah* I desire. I requested the standard: to marry off all my children easily. The Rebbe replied, 'My *brachah* to you is that you should never worry, because Hashem doesn't give to those who worry. He gives to those who ask.' That *brachah* has helped me my entire life. I married off all my children with ease, and without worries. And as you see, I also have strength to work. I attribute it to the *brachah* I received."



Someone told the **Tchebiner Rav *zt'l*** that he has older children, and he hasn't yet found a *shidduch* for them. He was worried about that. The Tchebiner Rav told him the following story: "One Erev Yom Kippur, before dawn, a person was walking to do *kaparos*. He held a chicken in one hand, his other hand held the *machzor*, and then his eyeglasses slid off his nose to the ground. What should he do? How could be pick up his eyeglasses? If he puts the chicken down for a moment, it will run away. He certainly can't put the *machzor* on the ground. So, he stood there perplexed, not knowing what to do." "So, what did he do?" the man asked.

"I don't know," the Tchebiner Rav replied. "But one thing I'm certain of; he's not standing there anymore."

With this story, the Tchebiner Rav was telling him that life goes on. There are hurdles, there are challenges, but they pass. The difficulties aren't forever.

Tefillah "In the Place Where Hashem Chooses"

הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ פֶּן־תַּעֲלֶה עֹלֹתֶיךָ בְּכָל־מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר תִּרְאֶה* 12:13 *Beware, lest you offer up your burnt offerings any place you see.

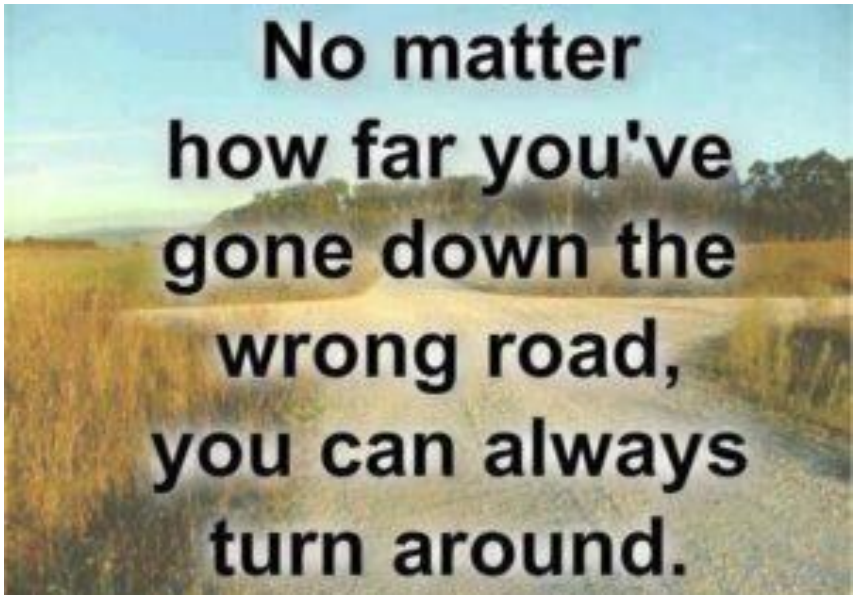


Harav Yitzchak Abuchatzeira, the youngest son of the Abir Yaakov, explained: these words - **השמר לך פן תעלה** are the acronym of tefillah. The passuk alludes to us that just like "olosecha" – the korbanos, cannot be brought anywhere, so too, tefillah cannot be offered randomly at any given place. Rather, the one davening should designate a place for his tefillos, as Chazal say (Brachos 6b): "Anyone who designates a place for his tefillah – the Elokim of Avraham helps him." (*Toldos Yitzchak – Lev Tahor)*

"The measure of a person is not how many things he knows, but how he applies his knowledge to his actions." ~ Rabbi Aharon Kotler (1891-1962).

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Waiting With Open Arms!



אַחֲרֵי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֹתוֹ תִירָאוּ " After the Almighty, your G-D, you shall walk, and Him you shall fear…." (13:5)

A young man from a fine, religious family in Bnei Brak, strayed from religion and became engaged to a non-Jewish woman. His family was unable to convince him to break-off the relationship.

Once, he agreed to visit them for Shabbos, on the condition that they would not force him to observe Shabbos. Surprisingly, he agreed to go to hear **HaRav Aharon Leib Shteinman** zt"l speak. After the class, the young man spoke to HaRav Shteinman. He told the Rav that he hadn't observed Shabbos for two years.

HaRav Shteinman asked, "During that time, did you ever regret the fact that you were profaning Shabbos?" The young man said that he had regretted it four different times. HaRav Shteinman continued, "For how long, each time, did you regret not observing Shabbos?" The young man responded that each time he felt bad for ten minutes.

Harav Shteinman then said something to the young man that reached the depths of his heart. "For 40 minutes, during the past 2 years you were a true *baal teshuvah,* returning closer to Hashem. *Chazal* (our Rabbis) teach that where *baalei teshuvah* stand, even righteous people are unable to stand. One who

returns closer to Hashem, in some ways is considered greater than tzadikim. **It is for that reason that I envy you**." HaRav Shteinman's words entered this young man's heart. Ever so slowly the young man broke his engagement and became religious again. (Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum).

Rabbi Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev zt"l once approached a man who had sinned greatly in his life. He said, "I am envious of you. If you will repent and return to the Almighty, with love and sincerity, all your blemishes will be transformed into a great shining light. **I envy the brilliance of that light**." (quoted in Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin).

The pasuk above (Devarim 13:15) uses the word *"acharei"*, to denote "after". **Rashi** explains (Devarim 11:30) that the Hebrew word *"achar"* means "after", while the word *"acharai"* means "a lot after"; "a distance away". The **Chofetz Chaim** zt"l said that this pasuk is telling us to follow Hashem. The pasuk should use the word *"achar"*, that we should follow closely "after" Hashem. Why does the pasuk say *"acharei"*, that we should follow Hashem from a far distance away? The Chofetz Chaim learns a beautiful lesson from this. **A person should never feel that it is hopeless to come close to Hashem. Even if he feels that he is *"acharei"*, that he has sinned greatly and is currently very far from Hashem, he can still come close** (Biurei Chofetz Chaim Al HaTorah, by Rabbi Yisroel Yosef Braunstein)

There are times that a person has sinned so greatly, that he erroneously feels that he has sunk so low that Hashem is no longer interested in his closeness. Nothing is further from the truth! Hashem is like a loving father. He is waiting with open arms for us to repent our actions, improve ourselves, and return to Him.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Feel Safe in This Pilot's hands!

בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ.. כִּי עַם קָדוֹשׁ אַתָּה לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ "You are children to Hashem your G-D – You shall not cut yourselves… For you are a holy people to Hashem…" (14:1-2)

Every person has difficulties and challenges in life. Many tragedies occur every day. Why do they happen? Doesn't Hashem love us?

The Ibn Ezra gives explains the above pasuk. "Since you know that you are "children to Hashem" and He loves you **more** than a father loves his child, do not cut yourself in anguish over anything that He does – For everything that He does for you is for the best. And this is so even if you do not understand it, just as small children sometimes do not understand the actions of their father but rely on him nevertheless. For you are a holy people, unlike the rest of the nations…".

A small child can't understand why a father hit his hands. Yet, it was a loving hit, to keep his hands from getting burned from touching the hot flame on the stove.

Rabbi Akiva was traveling with his donkey, rooster and a lantern. Towards evening he entered a small town and was refused lodging. He couldn't understand why not, but he kept his faith that **whatever Hashem does is for the best**. As Rabbi Akiva prepared to sleep in the nearby forest, wild animals killed his donkey and rooster. He didn't complain to Hashem, "Why are You doing these terrible things to me?" Rather, his response was, **"Whatever Hashem does is for the best"**. He gave the same response when the wind blew out the flame on his lantern, just as he was learning Torah. The next morning, when Rabbi Akiva re-entered the town it was deserted. Robbers had come in the middle of the night and kidnapped all the townspeople. Now Rabbi Akiva understood that everything that had happened to him had actually saved him from being kidnapped.

The Ramban once made a deal with a dying student. The Ramban agreed to accept the responsibility of marrying – off his student's seven daughters if his student would return to him in a dream (after he died) to explain why Hashem was bringing such terrible pain and anguish on the Jewish People. The student did not appear to The Ramban in a dream until after his seventh daughter was married. He explained that he had not come sooner because from his perspective in heaven, **he didn't see any bad things happening to the Jews!** In heaven, he had a clear understanding that all that was occurring was truly good!!

I remember reading a Midrash, when I was younger, about Eliyahu the prophet. Eliyahu came down to the earth to travel with a specific person. At night they were graciously welcomed into the home of a poor couple. The couple gladly shared their supper with the guests. They gave them their own straw mattresses to sleep on.

The next morning, after opening their home so graciously, their only cow died. The next night Eliyahu and his companion tried to get lodging in the mansion of a very rich man. They were refused. Only after much pleading, did the rich man permit them to sleep in the barn with his animals.

The next morning, Eliyahu showed his appreciation by fixing a stone wall that was about to fall. Eliyahu's traveling companion was dumbfounded. The kind couple was "punished" while the unkind, wealthy person was "rewarded"?

Eliyahu explained that man cannot understand the actions of Hashem, his loving Father. Things are not what they seem. It had been decreed that the poor man's wife was supposed to die that morning. Because of their act of kindness, Hashem killed their cow instead. There was a treasure under the rich man's fence. His unkind actions made him undeserving of the treasure. Eliyahu fixed his wall so well that it would not fall and uncover the treasure.



Rabbi Ashear tells the story of a young girl who was a passenger on the plane. The turbulence was so bad that the other passengers were very afraid. This young girl was totally calm. She explained that her father was the pilot. She felt totally safe in his hands; She knew that he would bring her safely home.

We should always feel the way this young girl did. Hashem, our loving Father, is piloting the plane of life. He is directing everything that that happens to us, <u>to be only good for us</u>. Through the turbulent ride of life, we should feel the same calm confidence that our Father will get us safely to our destination.

Rabbi Yossi Goldberg - – The Timeless Torah

אֵת כָּל־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם אֹתוֹ תִשְׁמְרוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת לֹא־תֹסֵף עָלָיו וְלֹא תִגְרַע מִמֶּנּוּ *The entire word that I command you that you shall observe to do, you shall not add to it and you shall not subtract from it*. 13:1

The Vilna Gaon asks that this Possuk seems to be a repeat of what we have learnt already in Veschanan. **לֹא תֹסִפוּ עַל־הַדָּבָר אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְצַוֶּה אֶתְכֶם וְלֹא תִגְרְעוּ מִמֶּנּוּ** The Possuk writes there. ***"Don't add on to anything that I command you and don't subtract from it."*** 4:2

The Gaon explains that there are two separate commandments. In Parshas Veschanan the Torah tells us not to add a new Mitzvah or to

subtract a Mitzvah from the total of the 613 Mitzvos. Here the Torah means that one should not change the way a Mitzvah is done. For example, to wear 5 corners of Titzis as opposed to the 4 corners that are required. In both Pesukim the message is clear; the Mitzvos of the Torah have been calculated to be exactly right by Hashem. There is no need to change anything or to "edit" any Mitzvah in order to be righteous.

Rav Shimshon Refoel Hirsch takes this point further. He explains how the above Possuk follows the previous Possuk that warns against following the ways of the Goyim in their pursuit of Avodah Zara. "If you're looking to serve Hashem," he writes, "don't look for new ways other than that which is written in the Torah."

If one were to compare this to the law book of the countries of the world, one can easily see how incomplete and unsustainable their laws are. As the world changes each government in power attempts to improve and adapt their laws to the new circumstances. Sometimes that means completely discarding something that was previously thought of to be a good law.

Only Hashem is able to create laws of the world, the holy Torah, which is ensured to be applicable whatever the circumstances are. Those who think that the Torah is outdated or that it is in need of modernisation are making an awful mistake and history has shown how this has only caused an increase in assimilation and intermarriage. The future of Klal Yisroel depends on our commitment not to deviate from the Torah and not to lose faith in its relevance.

Many years ago a Rabbi was invited to preview a Jewish art exhibition, called the Prague exhibition. It was held in Whitworth art gallery in Manchester and there was a large variety of historic Jewish artefacts on display.

One such historic item was a special Gartel that was used in certain communities during a baby's Bris Mila and then continued to be used

to wrap around the Sefer Torah. [Wimpel] (Some Yekeshe communities still have this Minhag today.) Whilst touring around the exhibition, he saw lots of interesting things.

Then he came to an exhibition case that displayed an old Sefer Torah. As he stood there, he overheard two old ladies (clearly not religious) marvelling over the Sefer Torah. "Wow!" they exclaimed as they took in the beauty and the historic relevance of this 'relic' of a Torah scroll. "Excuse me madam," the Rabbi said to them, "Do you know that we still use that today!?"



The Torah is timeless and it is always relevant. If we look to observe the Mitzvos without changing them, we will become truly righteous people. As we begin the month of Elul, let us see how we can improve our own Mitzvah observance. This will surely be a good preparation for the Yom Hadin.

Torah around the clock

The gematria of Emunah and Bitachon is 171, the same gematria as Gan Eden.

The classic understanding is that when a person develops their Emunah and Bitachon, they achieve Gan Eden because they can be b'simcha in every situation.

The Divrei Yisrael teaches another explanation: when a person has Emunah and Bitachon, they create a Gan Eden for Hashem in this world.

Pardas Yehuda - Yehuda Z. Klitnick



בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם You are children to Hashem, your G-d. (14:1) The Torah here refers to Klal Yisroel with the loving designation of **בָּנִים** - children. What is the implication of this title? What is more, the Gemarah (Bava Basra 10a) points out that Klal Yisroel is sometimes referred to with the honourable title of **בָּנִים** – "children" and at other times the Torah refers to klal yisrael as **עבדים**, servants.

The Gemarah resolves the apparent contradiction by observing that when the Jewish People fulfil Hashem's will, by observing His mitzvohs, they are entitled to the affectionate title of **בָּנִים**. However, when they violate the King of Kings' decree, their designation is degraded to **עבדים**:

Contrast the status of a child versus that of a servant: a parent will readily forgive a child almost any misdeed, whereas a slave who transgressed will be punished severely and not forgiven nearly as readily. We are children of Hashem, Whose love for us is infinite. Through viewing and conducting ourselves as His beloved children, He, **ברב חסדו**, grants us the priceless gift of Teshuva, by which we readily and speedily earn and receive forgiveness from Hashem, our Father in Shomayim.

"Don't stop when you are tired. Stop when you are done."

Living Jewish – From Our Sages

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse (Deut. 11:26)

"Behold" is in the singular tense, addressed to each of us as individuals. Whenever a Jew is faced with a decision and must choose the right path to follow, it doesn't matter what other people are doing. In fact, the majority are usually wrong.

וְכִי־יִרְבֶּה מִמְּךָ הַדָּרֶךְ כִּי לֹא תוּכַל שְׂאֵתוֹ כִּי־יִרְחַק מִמְּךָ הַמָּקוֹם And if...you are unable to carry it, because the place is too far from you (Deut. 14:24)

If a Jew perceives his Jewishness as a burden, as a heavy yoke he is forced to bear, it is a sure sign that he has strayed "too far" rom G-d. A believing Jew who fears G-d does not consider his Judaism an encumbrance. (*Alshich*)

וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן: You shall not shut your hand from your needy brother (Deut. 15:7)

The first letters of this verse in Hebrew spell out the word "Tehillim" - Psalms. Reciting Psalms on behalf of a poor person is not enough; one must open his hand and give him material sustenance as well. (*Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin*)

"Even though a person has sinned greatly, the path of teshuvah is always open. Yesterday he was hated before Hashem, despised and distant; today he is beloved, desirable, close, and a friend. How great is the power of teshuvah, that it brings a person close to the Shechinah!" ~ Rambam.

Parsha Pages – Baal HaTurim

הֲלֹא-הֵמָּה בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן Are they on the other side of the Yarden? דברים יא:ל

Baal HaTurim notes that the final letters of these four words spell AHaRoN. This is an allusion to the loss of Aharon. As long as he was still alive bnei Yisroel did not need specific directions, as the Clouds of Glory, which were present in the merit of Aharon, were their GPS. Now that he was gone then bnei Yisroel needed detailed directions.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

A Dead Day

An elderly yid riding in his wagon met the **Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zy'a**, walking along the roadside. "Rebbe!" the elderly yid called out, "Why don't you climb onto the wagon and travel with me? Why should you walk? I'm going in your direction." "I don't mind walking," the Rebbe told him. "Please come on," the elderly yid pleaded. He pleaded some more, and he wouldn't accept no for an answer, so the Yesod HaAvodah obliged and boarded the wagon. The elderly yid was extremely happy that he could do this chessed.



As they were traveling, the Yesod HaAvodah asked him, "Why is it so important for you that I join you?" The elderly yid pointed to his ears, and said, "These ears heard directly from the mouth of **Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zy'a** that a day when one doesn't do chessed, is a dead day."

In honour of the Satmar Rebbe's yahrtzeit, on the 26th of Av, we will tell a few stories about this great tzaddik.

The Satmar Rebbe would go to the cheder from time to time, to test the children. Once, he asked a child a question, but the child stuttered and didn't speak clearly. The Satmar Rebbe repeated his question a second time, and then a third time, but he couldn't understand what the child was saying. That is when the Rebbe finally understood that the child had a speech impediment. (The Rebbe was eighty-six years old at the time, and his hearing was beginning to fail. Therefore, it took some time until he realized that the child had a speech impediment.)



The Rebbe feared that he had embarrassed the child, so for the next half a year, whenever he would see this child, even from the distance, he would go over to him and speak with him a few words.

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An orphan once came to the Satmar Rebbe before his chasunah for a brachah. The Rebbe put his hands over the chassan's head and blessed him, crying copiously. The ordeal lasted around twenty minutes. Afterwards, someone asked the Rebbe, "I understand the importance of being extra kind to this chassan since he is an orphan – but why for so long?" The Rebbe replied, "The success of the chassan and kalah in their marriage is in the merit of the tefillos and the tears of their parents before the chasunah. But this chassan doesn't have anyone to cry for him. Therefore, I needed to be the one to cry for him."
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(Before leading your child to the chuppah. The children's success in their marriage and in their life, is largely dependent on the tefillos and tears of the parents before the chasunah.

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The Satmar Rebbe taught us an important lesson in shalom bayis. He said, "We have a kabalah that in shalom bayis, the winner is the one who is mevatar." Sometimes there are differences of opinion between the husband and wife. He wants one thing, she wants something else and they both want to win. The Satmar Rebbe taught that the one who gives in to the other one is the winner.

The Satmar Rebbe once went to a kiddush in the home of one of his chasidim. This chassid was extremely careful with kashrus and served only homemade food. He proudly offered the Rebbe, "Does the Rebbe want fish? It is heimish. How about some kugel. It's also heimish." The Rebbe pointed to the wine and asked, "Is the wine also heimish? "No." The wine was bought. The rebbe said, "That's because you were supposed to make the wine." Making wine is often the man's domain.

The rebbe was hinting that although it is very good to be careful with kashrus, but when extreme caution causes the wife to work extra hard, one should reconsider.

"Many people think repentance requires grand gestures and dramatic changes. But true repentance begins with a single decision—not to repeat the same mistake. It is not about extreme self-denial, but about recognizing where we have erred, understanding the damage caused, and committing to a different path. The smallest act of repentance, performed with genuine intention, brings a person closer to Hashem than a lifetime of insincere ritual observance. ~Chofetz Chaim
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Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Elul



אני לדודי ודודי לי (Shir HaShirim 6:3). This passuk, whose roshei teivos spell Elul, describes the atmosphere of Elul. It is a month of immense love between Hashem and His nation. ***"I am to my beloved, and my beloved is for me."***

The Hafla'ah calls these days, **ימי הרעות**, days of friendship, because these are days of close relationship between Hashem and the Jewish nation.

Reb Chaim Brim zt'l asked one of his students, "How are you, cousin?" The bachur didn't understand, since they weren't at all cousins. Reb Chaim Brim explained, "In this month, Hashem is like a caring uncle, as it says, **אני לדודי ודודי לי**, (and a **דוד** is an uncle). We have the same caring uncle. That makes us cousins."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Reb Moshe Feinstein zy'a teaches that Torah scholars should also give maasar from their time. They should donate one-tenth of their learning hours to teaching Torah to people who aren't able to learn well on their own. After the Holocaust, a survivor, who didn't have the opportunity to learn Torah during the war years, came to a yeshiva in London to study Torah. All the students were far more advanced in Torah than this bachur was, and they didn't have time to help him. He relates that no one helped him, other than "Tuvya and Moshe."



He was referring to the two gedolei Yerushalayim, **Reb Tuvya Weiss Shlita and Reb Moshe Shternbuch Shlita.** They tithed their time to help others learn Torah. Their devotion didn't hold them back from becoming exceptional Torah scholars. Because when one is generous with his money or with his time, and he gives it to others, he will only gain.



Only Brachos

The parsha opens with a simple equation. If we keep the mitzvos that Hashem has placed in front of then we will receive blessings. However, if we don't listen to the commandments of Hashem, then we will have to deal with the consequences of klalos.

I recently heard from **R'Ovadia Yosef, zt"l**, that, in reality, there are no klalos in life. We say every day the Mishna in Peah that the reward that we receive in this world is only a small part of our true reward. The principal reward for our mitzvos is reserved for us to enjoy in Olam Ha'ba as the

Mishna writes **וְהקרן קַיימת לַו לַעולם הַבא**. The first letters of those words make up the word Vklala (the last word in the first pasuk of this week's parsha) which mean curses. He explains that what looks like a curse to us is actually a savings plan to ensure we only have good in the next world.

Guaranteed Investment



The Torah commands us to give tzedakah with an open heart. The Torah addresses the natural feelings that come with giving away your hard-earned money. To those feelings, Hashem says 'don't worry about giving away your money, because with that very act you will merit blessing from Hashem'. The merit of tzedakah is never lost and it is always at the side of the giver.

The sefer Penine Kedem finds an allusion to this idea within the word tzedakah. There is a rule called 'at bash' which allows one to swap certain letters in the aleph beis. For example you can change an aleph for a taf, a beis for shin, a gimmel for a reish and so on. If you take the letters that make up the word tzedakah (tzadi, daled, kuf, hei) and you follow the 'at bash' rule you will end up with the same letters, albeit in a different order.

This hint just further proves the power of tzedakah that its merit stays, and it isn't lost over time.

Tefillah

In reference to Elul, the Tur (581) writes, **כל המוסיף לבקש רחמים זכות הוא לו** ***"the more one prays and requests for rachamim [during this month] it will be to his credit…"*** because the many tefillos will help him have a good judgment.



Reb Yohonoson Eibeshitz (Yaaras Dash 1:1) teaches the intentions one should have when saying Shemonah Esrei. He writes, "In the brachah of Shema Koleinu a person should…pray for all his needs; for the minor matters and for the major issues; nothing should be left out. If he needs a shidduch for himself or for his sons or daughters, he should pray to Hashem. For business, pray that Hashem give you success and lead you in the right way. Pray for everything you want to do today.

There should be nothing that you don't request from Hashem. Pray that He lead you in the right way. Certainly, if there is some problem at home, chas veshalom, one should pray. Also, if there's a simchah [such as a chasunah], one should pray that he doesn't sin, chas veshalom, so that the simchah shouldn't turn into a misfortune.

Pray in your own words for every matter. Although your language is poor and you don't know lashon hakadosh well, it is beloved to Hashem as if you prayed with many words, in a rich, clear and beautiful language. In the merit of this tefillah, Hashem will listen to our voices. Such tefillos will be answered, because they are said with kavanah. They are not said by rote, since he will pray each day for something else – for the things he needs that day.

Prayers said, using your own words, will surely be with kavanah… And this is a perfect tefillah, because the primary tefillah is when it emanates from the depths of one's heart. As it states **ממעמקים קראתיך** 'I call to You from the depths…' from the depths of the heart." Another benefit is that he is reminded that success in all matters comes from Hashem.

Reb Yohonoson Eibeshitz writes, "Another primary benefit is that he will know in his heart that nothing happens by chance… [And it's not like those who say] that one doesn't need tefillah, only good mazal, hard work, and to be cautious. Rather…Hashem does everything. One doesn't bang his finger below, until it was decreed above (Chulin 7)."

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Rebbe Avraham Yaakov of Sadigura zt'l taught: **ראה** is roshei teivos for **ראש אלול היום**, today is the beginning of Elul, since Shabbos before Elul is also the start of Elul.

אני לדודי ודודי לי "*I am to my Friend and my Friend is to me*" is roshei teivos **אלול**.

The Arizal explains, **כי אז נהפך הקב"ה לידיד ואוהב אל האדם השב בתשובה** "Because on these days, Hakadosh Baruch Hu becomes ***a friend***…to the person who does teshuvah."

Tehillim

Another form of tefillah, which is customarily said and increased in the month of Elul, is to say Tehillim. People would come to **Reb Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld zt'l** (the rav of Yerushalayim) for all types of matters. Shalom bayis issues also arrived at his doorstep, and he had a record of helping many couples. He attributed his siyata dishmaya to his recital of the entire seferTehillim each day.

The Brisker Rav zt'l asked him why he says so much Tehillim. Reb Yosef Chaim replied, " there is nothing that purifies the neshamah more than Tehillim…"

The Rebbe of Gostanin zy'a was called by many 'the Tehillim Rebbe' because of his strong attachment to Tehillim. When people came to him with their difficulties, he would prescribe a regimen of Tehillim for them to say every day. To some he advised saying the entire Tehillim; to others he advised saying a portion. People followed his 'prescriptions' and were healed and saved from their hardships. Tzaddikim of Poland asked the Rebbe, "Rebbe of Gostanin, have you become a miracle worker?" "Not at all" he replied. "But I heard from the **Rebbe of Kotzk zy'a** that if Dovid HaMelech would have arranged the Tehillim in the order that he said them, they would have the power to resurrect the dead. However, since Dovid HaMelech compiled the chapters in a different order, it doesn't have that power to resurrect the dead, ***but all other yeshuous can be attained by saying Tehillim."***

The Pele Yoetz writes, "Saying a lot of Tehillim, banishes all castigations and afflictions from himself…from his household, and from his entire generation, and it bestows …abundance, brachos, goodness and success… There is a tradition from tzaddikim: If one is going through some form of hardship… he should read the entire Tehillim without interruption, with kavanah and humility, and he will see wonders. This is baduk and menusah, tried and proven. All of these benefits and many more will come to the one who reads Tehillim word for word, pleading joyously… Because they are terrific prayers… wondrous praises… Even those who don't know what they are saying, their words are affective and accomplish much…"

The Beis Aharon (Chanukah) writes, "One must believe that with Tehillim, one can be saved… from all troubles…"

The Noam Elimelech writes that there's a world called Tehillah. This world has only mercy, compassion, and kindness. Saying Tehillim

brings us to that world, and therefore it arouses so much compassion upon us. The Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah, Shiru) writes, "Sometimes tefillah doesn't help, chalilah, because there is a kitrug on him. Then he needs to become attached to the great world called **תהילה** … That world is solely compassion, and [when one becomes bound there] everything is rectified. This is the reason the songs of Dovid HaMelech are called **תהילים** [as it arouses and connects the person to this world of compassion called **תהילה**. One can accomplish everything with Tehillim. There is no Satan [to stop those tefillos]…"

Emunah

Moments before the **Satmar Rebbe's** chasunah, his father, the **Kedushas Yom Tov zt'l**, told him, "Why is the chuppah performed outdoors, under the open sky. It's to remind the chosson and kallah to look up to heaven, and to trust in Hashem for all their needs.

There are chasanim who go to the chuppah thinking that their father or their father-in-law will support him. But that isn't a true thought. The chuppah, under the sky, is a reminder that parnassah comes from Hashem, and only Hashem. Therefore, don't rely on anyone; only trust in Hashem." Right after the week of sheva brachos, the Satmar Rebbe's father, the Kedushas Yom Tov, was niftar. He certainly couldn't rely on his father anymore, only on his Father in heaven.

"A person must know that every word he speaks is written in a book. If he understood how precious each moment is, he would guard his tongue more than all his treasures. For a single word can build worlds—or destroy them." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

Gam Zeh Yaavor

A person shouldn't worry about the future, but what should one think when he's presently going through a hard time? One counsel is to think גם זה יעבור, this too will pass. This circumstance won't be forever.

The Tchebiner Rav says, life goes on. There are hurdles, there are challenges, but they pass. Difficulties aren't forever.

Dovid Hamelech asked a smith to engrave onto a piece of metal words that carry a message that would make him happy when he was down, and would make him sober, when he was too happy. The smith didn't know which words to inscribe. How could the same words make a person joyful at times and sombre at other times? The smith asked the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin didn't know. They advised him to ask Dovid HaMelech's wise son, Shlomo. Shlomo replied, "Write three letters: gimel, zayin, yud. " The smith did that and brought the finished product to Dovid HaMelech. "What do these letters mean?" Dovid HaMelech asked. The smith replied, "I don't know, but your son, Shlomo, advised me to write it."

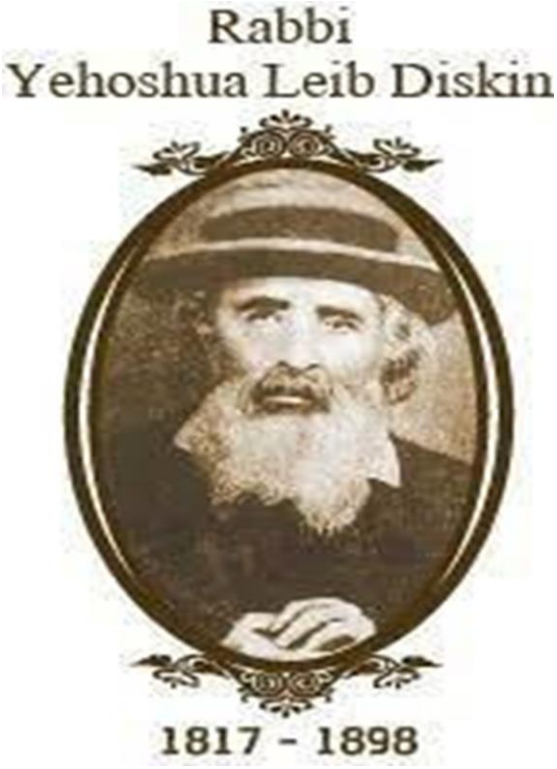
When asked, Shlomo told his father, "These letters are roshei teivos for gam zeh yaavor, this too shall pass. Thinking about this will make a sad person happy, because he knows that the situation will pass. It will also make a happy person sombre, because he is reminded that the good times will not last forever."

Stories Of Our Gedolim

There was a big raffle for a Menorah in Horodna. After the winning raffle was drawn by the Shamash, R' Eliyahu Meir Zoldan, and the menorah awarded to the winner, some children started playing with the raffles that were not drawn. One of the kids discovered that one of the names in the raffle was mistakenly written twice although neither was chosen.

R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin zt"l, who was then a child, declared that the raffle was void and should be done again. A big argument ensued among the children who disagreed with him. When the adults came to Shul and heard the commotion they all had their own opinions on the matter.

When R' Yehoshua Leib's father, R' Binyomin Diskin zt"l walked in he heard everybody claiming the raffle should still be valid while R' Yehoshua Leib insisted that it was void. His father, (who happened to be the Rov at the time), asked him why he thought so if that man was not the winner anyway. R' Yehoshua Leib said that had the man with the duplicate ticket won, surely it would have been voided when the mistake was revealed. Therefore, that man had no chance to win. If so, it was as if his raffle ticket was not in the drawing, and since a ticket was missing the raffle was void.



This answer from the young boy amazed his father and R' Yehoshua Leib's genius spread quickly throughout the town. Years later when R' Yehoshua Leib was already the Rov of Yerushalayim, R' Eliyahu Meir Zoldan the Shamash, who was by then over a hundred years old, also lived there, and R' Yehoshua Leib sent someone to call him over. R' Yehoshua Leib reminded him of the story from many long years ago. He said that surely he caused him grief by causing him to have to go to the winner to take back the menorah in order to hold another raffle. And therefore, now he wanted to ask him Mechila. Such was the amazing gadlus coupled with supreme humility of the great Seraph of Brisk Rab Yehoshua Leib Diskin.

Some points to focus on as we make the Brachot:

- **רוקע הארץ על המים**– focus on the blessing of feeling grounded and secure on the solid ground beneath us.
- **שעשה לי כל צרכי**– focus on the fact that Hashem gives us all of the exact strengths, talents, physical needs and circumstances necessary for each of us to achieve our specific mission in this world
- **המכין מצעדי גבר**– focus on the specific Hashgacha that Hashem assigns to each and every one of us, counting every step that we take, and leading us to where we need to go in life.
- **זוקף כפופים**– focus on the ability to stand up straight without physical ailments, without stress, and without guilt

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לא תאכלנו למען ייטב לך ולבניך אחריך כי תעשה הישר בעיני ה׳

***"You shall not eat it, in order that it be well with you and your children after you, when you do what is right in the eyes of G-d."* (12:25)**

How do the children benefit when the parents avoid eating blood?

There is a popular adage, "Man is what he eats." The character of a person is affected and ultimately moulded by his diet. For instance, eating spicy foods makes one excitable and temperamental while bland foods are calming and relaxing. Eating blood makes a person insensitive and even cruel.

Children inherit the character traits of their parents, so avoiding certain foods not only benefits the parents, but also prevents the children from inheriting undesirable character traits. (**ר׳ יהונתן זצ״ל אייבישיץ**)

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ואכלתם שם לפני ה׳ אלקיכם ושמחתם בכל משלח ידכם אתם ובתיכם אשר ברכך ה׳ אלקיך "***You and your families shall eat there before G-d, your G-d, and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to, as G-d, your G-d has blessed you.***" **(12:7)**

Why, when eating of the sacrifices, should a person also rejoice in "*bechol mishlach yedechem*" — "all that you put your hand to"?

The Rambam (*Yom Tov* 6:17) writes that on *Yom Tov* there is an obligation to rejoice, but Hashem is not content with one who celebrates privately with his family. We must invite the needy to our festive meals and make sure that they also rejoice. Consequently, one must "send for the poor" — either invite them to rejoice together with him or send food to them so that they may rejoice in their own homes.

The word "*mishlach*" comes from the root word of "*shalach,*" which means "sending." The *pasuk* is teaching us that when one sits down to a festive meal together with his family, his major joy should be "*bechol mishlach yedechem*" — all the poor that he "sent for" to be at his table and all the poor to whom he "sent" provisions and made happy. (**כלי חמדה**)

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כי יקום בקרבך נביא...והנביא ההוא...יומת "If there should stand up in your midst a prophet...and that prophet...shall be put to death." **(13:2-6) The *Ba'al Haturim*,** in old editions of the *Chumash*, writes: "*bekirbecha* (**בקרבך**) — "in your midst" — has the numerical value of 324, which is also the numerical value of '*zu ha'ishah*' (**זו האשה**) — 'this is the woman.' "

To which woman is the *Ba'al Haturim* referring?

Many years ago in Europe all books on Torah subjects were carefully scrutinized by a censor. He was a representative of the church who would delete or make changes if the content of the *sefer* was derogatory to Christianity.

Originally, the *Ba'al Haturim* wrote: "*bekirbecha navi — zu ha'ishah **ubenah***" — The words "*bekirbecha navi*" (**בקרבך נביא**) have the numerical value of 387, the same as the numerical value of the words "*zu ha'ishah ubnah*" (**זו האשה ובנה**) — this is the woman and her son — referring to the infamous mother who brought to the world a son ("*oto ha'ish*" — "*Yeshu hanotzri*") who became founder of Christianity. He tried to impress upon the world that he was a prophet sent by G-d as *Mashiach*. Ultimately, he was put to death.

The censor was unhappy with the *Ba'al Haturim's* comment that there is a hint in the Torah that *Yeshu* was a false prophet and should be put to death. Thus, he deleted the words "*navi*" — "prophet" and "*ubenah*" — "her son." Hence, the censor's amended version seems difficult to comprehend.

"Accustom yourself always to speak gently. Through humility, anger departs from the heart, and the soul becomes ready to receive the light of Torah." ~ Ramban

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***והראה ואת האיה והדיה למינה "And the ra'ah and the ayah, and the dayah according to its kind."* (14:13)**

Rashi explains that these are not three different birds, but one bird with three different names. What is the significance of these three names?



The word ***"ra'ah"*** connotes eyesight. We are told that the *ra'ah* "can stand in Babylon (which is a valley) and see a carcass in the Land of Israel" (*Chulin* 63b). This bird is unclean because it uses its excellent vision to view things negatively and find deficiencies.

Many people have keen vision in detecting the faults of others but fail to see their own shortcomings. A housewife once complained to her maid that the house was not cleaned and dusted properly. The maid blushed in astonishment, for all looked immaculate. Finally, she turned to the housewife and said, "Madam, I think the dust you see is on your own glasses." The woman removed her glasses and, sure enough, the lenses were covered with dust.

The second name of the bird is ***"ayah,"*** which means "where." This bird is very clever in its ability to evade capture, jumping from one hideout to another. The hunter finds himself muttering, "*ayah* — where is it, and how can it be taken?"

There are people adept at this game of escape. When their help is urgently needed in a worthwhile community project, they cannot be located. This slippery "bird" refuses to join a communal endeavour lest his whereabouts become known to other institutions. Even when they express interest in helping the *minyan* or participating in

a *shiur*, they do not appear, and people wonder "*ayah* — where are they?" The Torah condemns the policy of evasion and escape and calls it "unclean."

"Dayah" is the third name. Its croak sounds like the word "*dayah*" — "enough," the cry of those who feel they have given more than necessary. They cry, "*dayah*! There are far too many appeals, functions, and campaigns these days. Enough!"

"Purity" for a Jew lies in

1) seeing things with a "good eye,"

2) being involved in communal Torah endeavours and activities,

3) always giving with a grateful and generous heart.

(הרב דוב ארי' ז"ל בערזאן)





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והחסידה והאנפה למינה
***"The chasidah, and the anafah according to its kind."* (14:18)**

The bird is called "*chasidah*" because it does *chesed* — kindness — and shares its food with its friends. The Jerusalem Talmud(*Bava Metzia* 3:5) states that a mouse is wicked because when it sees a pile of grain it calls its friends to eat from it.

Why is the bird's act considered *chesed* — kindness — and the mouse's considered *rishut* — wickedness?

The *chasidah* shares the food it gathered for herself, with friends. To share one's *own* property with others is praiseworthy. The mouse,

however, calls its friends to enjoy someone else's pile of grain. Being generous with what belongs to someone else is not kindness at all, but the reverse. (**מעינה של תורה**)

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עשר תעשר את כל תבואת זרעך ***"You shall tithe the entire crop of your planting."*** **(14:22)**



There is a Midrash peliah — wondrous Midrash — which links this pasuk to the pasuk, "Im hasemol ve'eiminah ve'im hayamin ve'asme'ilah" — "If you go left then I will go right, and if you go right then I will go left" (*Bereishis* 13:8).

What is the connection between these two *pesukim*?

In the *alef-beit*, the *shin* (שׁ) and the *sin* (שׂ) are identical except for the position of the dot on the top. If the dot is placed on the right side, it is read as a "*shin*" and if the dot is placed on the left it is read as a "*sin.*" Thus, when the letter **"ש"** is placed between the letters **"ע"** and **"ר"** if the dot on top is on the right, it spells the word **"עַשִׁר"** *(asheir)* "rich" and if the dot is placed above on the left, it spells the word **"עַשְׂר"** *(aseir)* "a tithe."

In a play on the words "*aseir te'aseir*" (**עשר תעשר**) — "you shall tithe" — the *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 9a) says, "*Aseir bishevil shetitasheir*" (**עשר בשביל שתתעשר**) — "Give *'ma'aseir'* — 'a tithe' and Hashem will reciprocate by making you *'asheir'* — 'rich.' "

The wondrous *Midrash,* in quoting the *pasuk "Im hasemol ve'eiminah ve'im hayamin ve'asme'ilah,"* is alluding to this thought. It is telling us that, *"im hasemol"* — if a person will read the word with the dot on the left side — *"asseir"* — "give a tithe" — then *"ve'eiminah"* — Hashem will put the dot on the right side and the person will merit *"te'asheir"* — "to become rich." However, *"ve'im hayamin"* — if one puts the dot on the right side and thinks that *"asheir"* — one becomes richer by keeping it all for oneself and not giving *tzedakah* to the needy, then, G-d forbid, *"ve'asme'ilah"* — Hashem will put the dot on the left side and decree that *"te'aseir"* — the formerly rich person will remain with only a tithe of his wealth. (**בינת נבונים**)

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***נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו "You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you to give him."* (15:10)**

Why does the *pasuk* repeat *"naton titein lo"* — which literally means, "give, you shall give to him"? The pasuk could have just said, *"tein lo"* — "give to him."

Some people experience a deep inner struggle when it comes to giving *tzedakah*. In their hearts they rationalize, "I worked very hard to earn this money; why should I give it away?"

The way to overcome this hesitancy is through *"naton titein"* — "continuous giving." Thus, besides instructing us to give *tzedakah*, the Torah is also suggesting a method to facilitate our fulfilling the *mitzvah*. By continually practicing *tzedakah*, one will become accustomed to it, and not only will the heart not grieve when he gives, but he will enjoy giving and be pleased to put his resources to good use.(**כלי חמדה**)

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לא תאמץ את לבבך ולא תקפץ את ידך מאחיך האביון
***"You shall not harden your heart or close your hand against your destitute brother."* (15:7)**

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 29b) equates a miser to a mouse lying on a pile of coins. What is the meaning of this comparison?



When a mouse lies upon flour it feels comfortable and has food to nibble on. When it lies on loaves of bread or stalks of wheat, although it is not comfortable, at least it enjoys eating. A mouse lying upon coins is both uncomfortable and hungry. Thus, our sages are telling us that a miser, like a mouse lying on a pile of coins, renders his wealth useless since it benefits neither himself nor anyone else. (**וידבר משה**)

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נתון תתן לו...כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך
***"You shall surely give him...for in return for this matter, G-d, your G-d, will bless you."* (15:10)**

The *Gemara (Bava Batra* 11a) tells us a story about Binyamin *HaTzaddik,* who was a supervisor of the charity fund. One day a woman came to him in a year of scarcity, and said to him: 'Rabbi, assist me.'

He replied, "I swear, there is not a penny in the charity fund.'

She said, 'Rabbi, if you do not assist me, a woman and her seven children will perish.' He then assisted her out of his own pocket. Sometime afterwards he became dangerously ill. The angels

addressed Hashem saying: "Sovereign of the Universe, You had said that he who preserves one soul of Israel is considered as if he had preserved the whole world; shall then Binyamin *HaTzaddik* who had preserved a woman and her seven children die at so early an age? Immediately his sentence was torn up. It has been taught that twenty-two years were added to his life.

Why was he granted *twenty-two* additional years of life?

The*Gemara* (ibid. 9b) says that for giving *tzedakah* to a poor man one receives six blessings and for saying a comforting word which helps him endure his unfortunate situation, one receives an additional five blessings (see *Tosafot* ibid.). A blessing from Heaven is a *zechut* — a source of merit — which is chalked up on one's account.

Consequently, Binyamin *HaTzaddik,* who helped the unfortunate woman and her seven children financially, and undoubtedly offered words of encouragement, earned eighty eight *berachot,* which is eighty eight *zechutim* — merits.

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 20b) says that a*zechut* can extend a person's life for three months. Thus, for the eighty-eight merits he acquired by helping this unfortunate family, he gained two hundred and sixty-four months of life, which add up to exactly twenty-two years. (**קול אליהו**)

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***והעבט תעביטנו די מחסרו אשר יחסר לו "You shall lend him his requirement, whatever is lacking to him."* (15:8)**

Rashi comments that if the poor man was accustomed to riding a chariot and having servants, it is your duty to help him maintain this lifestyle.

How does Rashi reach this conclusion?



In Hebrew the word for "rich man" is "*ashir*" (**עשיר**) and the word for "poor man" is "*ani*" (**עני**). If the letters of the word "**עשיר**" are spelled out fully — עַיִן שִׁין יוּד רֵישׁ— the middle letters of each word together add up to 36. If the letters of the word "**עני**" are spelled out fully — עַיִן נוּן יוּד — the middle letters of each word together add up to 22. Consequently, the difference between "*ashir*" and "*ani*" amounts to 14, which is the numerical value of the word "*dei*" (**די**) — "enough."

The Torah instructs us to give the poor "***dei*** *machsoro*" — "whatever is lacking" — i.e. the equivalent of 14 — "*asher yechsar*" — which he is currently missing due to his decline from "*ashir*" — "rich" — to the status of "*ani*" — "poor" — so that he may be able to return to the level of "*lo*" (**לו**) — "*him*" [self] — which is equal to 36, i.e., live according to ***his*** accustomed standard of affluence.

(בית יעקב ר' יעקב הכהן ז"ל טראב – מסלתון ראב"ד ביירות)

"Peace is the vessel that holds all blessing. Without peace, even the greatest treasures spill away. Therefore, the pursuit of peace is the foundation upon which all spiritual growth depends." ~ Maharal of Prague.

על כן אנכי– העמק דבר 15:11 ***One who gives to the poor will be blessed by Hakodosh Boruch Hu, for one who has Rachamim on Hakodosh Boruch Hu's creations, is shown Rachamim from Shomayim.***

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נתון תתן לו "You shall surely give him." (15:10)

Why is the money given to the poor called "*tzedakah*" (**צדקה**)?



Tzedakah is one of the noblest *mitzvot* of our Torah, and everyone should make an effort to set aside at least ten percent of his earnings for charitable causes. The *Gemara* (*Ketubot* 67b) says that even one who wants to be extravagant in his giving, however, should still not give away more than one-fifth (twenty percent).

This is hinted to in the word "*tzedakah*" (**צדקה**): The numerical value of "**ק**" is one hundred, and "**צ**" is ninety. The numerical value of "**ה**" is five, and "**ד**" is four. If one has "**ק**" — one hundred — one should give away ten percent of it, leaving for himself "**צ**" — ninety. One who wants to be extravagant may give one portion from each "**ה**" — five — with "**ד**" — four — remaining, which amounts to giving twenty percent.

Alternatively, the *Mishnah* (*Pei'ah* 8:8) says that one who has two hundred *zuz* should not take any charity. However, one with only one hundred and ninety-nine *zuz* who is given one thousand *zuz* at one time may take it.

The word "*tzedakah*" (**צדקה**) has the numerical value of one hundred and ninety-nine, which teaches us that as long as one has no more than one hundred and ninety-nine, one may be a recipient. (**מהר"ל**)

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"נתון תתן לו...כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך"



***"You shall surely give him...for in return for this matter, G-d, your G-d, will bless you."* (15:10)**

What is "*hadavar*" — "the thing" — for which Hashem will bless you?

The *Gemara* (*Bava Batra* 9b) says that for giving *tzedakah* to the poor one receives six blessings, and for also saying comforting and encouraging words to the poor, one receives an additional eleven blessings. Unfortunately, many people give *tzedakah* grudgingly, and instead of saying comforting things to the poor, they make snide remarks which cause pain to the needy or they merely give without saying anything.

The Torah, therefore, instructs us that in addition to "*naton titein*" — "giving generously" — "*lo yeira levavecha*" — "let your heart not feel bad" — and cause you to say insensitive things or refrain from speaking at all when giving, "*ki biglal*" — "for in return for" — "*hadaver hazeh*" — "this [good] word" — which you will say to the poor, while giving them *tzedakah* — "*yevarechecha Hashem*" — Hashem will bless you with even more blessings than you receive for the actual giving. (See *Bereishit* 44:18, "*yedaber na avdecha* — may your servant speak — *davar* — a word.")

"Bitachon does not mean believing that everything will turn out as we wish. It means clarity that nothing happens by chance, and that Hashem's guidance is constant and exact. With this awareness, the heart finds deep and enduring peace." ~ Chazon Ish.

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נתון תתן לו ולא ירע לבבך בתתך לו כי בגלל הדבר הזה יברכך ה' אלקיך "*You shall surely give to him, and let your heart not feel bad when you give him, for in return for this matter, G-d, your G-d, will bless you.*" (15:10)

The words "*velo yeira levavecha betitecha lo*" — "and let your heart not feel bad when you give to him" — appear unnecessary. It could have said, "give to him, for in return for this matter G-d will bless you"?

The wheel of fortune once took a turn on an affluent person. Poverty and illness struck him and his family. When he visited a wealthy man in the community and poured out his bitter heart, the wealthy man was greatly moved by his situation and gave him a generous donation. After the poor man left his home, the wealthy man ran after him, and gave him an additional amount. In amazement, the unfortunate person asked, "You have just given me your generous support; why are you now giving me another donation?" The wealthy man responded "one should give *tzedakah*, happily and benevolently. After all, the money a person gives is not his own, but something which Hashem entrusted with him. The first time I helped you because your plight affected me emotionally and I felt very bad for you. Thus, in reality the *tzedakah* was not entirely for the sake of the *mitzvah*, but to alleviate *my* pain. Now I am giving you a second gift simply for the *mitzvah* of giving *tzedakah*."

The Torah is commending this approach to *tzedakah* by declaring, "*Velo yeira levavecha betitecha lo*" — "Your giving should not be because of the pangs in your heart aroused by the poor man's story. If this is what provoked your giving, then '*naton titein*' — give

a second time — and the second gift will be purely for the sake of the *mitzvah* and not because your heart grieved. For this exalted way of giving *tzedakah*, Hashem will bless you in all your work." (**פנינים יקרים**)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Reb Eliezer, the father of the great ***Baal Shem Tov***, loved performing the mitzvah of *Hachnasas Orchim*, welcoming guests. He used to send people out to look for anyone who needed a place to eat, so they could come to his house and have a warm meal. Before sending guests on their way, he would give them a package of food so they wouldn't get hungry on the road before they got to their destination, and he would also give them gifts, so they had everything they needed.

Hashem saw how exceptionally Reb Eliezer did the mitzvah, and decided to test him so he could earn a great reward. The *Satan* jumped at the chance, and said, "I'll go test him!" But Eliyahu *HaNavi* said, "Perhaps it is better if I go." Hashem allowed Eliyahu *HaNavi* to go test Reb Eliezer.

It was Shabbos afternoon when Eliyahu *HaNavi* appeared at Reb Eliezer's door. Eliyahu *HaNavi* was disguised as a very poor man. He was holding a walking stick and wearing a backpack, and he gave the impression that he was being *mechalel Shabbos*, desecrating Shabbos, by carrying in a place without an *eiruv*! Eliyahu *HaNavi* knocked at the door, and after he was welcomed, said "*Gut Shabbos*" and entered Reb Eliezer's house. Reb Eliezer was very careful not to embarrass his guests, and always tried to make them comfortable. He controlled himself and didn't say anything about his guest being

mechalel Shabbos. Instead, he made a great effort to serve *Shalosh Seudos* with happiness, and after Shabbos, he served the *Melaveh Malkah seudah* to his guest. Reb Eliezer wouldn't hear of letting his guest leave at night, and insisted that he remain overnight.

The next morning, Reb Eliezer gave the poor man a large package of food and a nice amount of *tzedakah*, so he could buy himself some new clothes. He didn't say a word about how the man was *mechalel Shabbos*, and wished him farewell. It was then that the man revealed to Reb Eliezer that he was really Eliyahu *HaNavi*! "Hashem sent me to test you on the great mitzvah of *Hachnasas Orchim*," he said. "Because you passed the test so well, and didn't embarrass me when I came to your door, Hashem will *bentch* you with a special child who will shine brightly in *Klal Yisroel*!" Soon after, the benevolent Reb Eliezer had a child who grew up to be the famous ***Baal Shem Tov***!

Shabbos Treasures -The Precious Gift of Shabbos



Once there was a *chassid*, a righteous person, who went out for a walk in his vineyard on Shabbos. He only wanted to see how things were doing there, and if anything needed to be done.

While he was walking through it, he saw that one of his fences had fallen down, leaving it wide open and unprotected. The *chassid* thought to himself that right after Shabbos he would get to work and fix the fence.

However, immediately after having these thoughts, he felt terrible. "How could I have even thought about work on *Shabbos Kodesh*!" He

decided right then that since he thought about fixing the fence on Shabbos, he would *not* fix it on *Motzaei Shabbos*. "In fact," he said, "I won't ever fix the fence! I'll only rely on *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* to guard and protect the grapes, like I should have relied on Him to begin with!"

When Hashem saw how serious the *chassid* was about honouring Shabbos, He made a special fruit tree grow at the exact spot where the hole in the fence was. It closed up the opening and protected the vineyard! Not only that, but this special fruit tree was called a *tzelaf* tree, which is a tree that grows three types of fruit at once! The *chassid* was able to live off the fruits of the *tzelaf* tree all the days of his life. (*Otzar HaMidrashim*, *Yisro* 20:10)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



Rabbi Avigdor Miller, *zt"l*, constantly taught to be thankful to Hashem for every aspect of life. When it rained, he would encourage people to thank Hashem for the bountiful fruits and vegetables which were, in potential, pouring down from the Heavens. He would explain the beauty in countless creations of Hashem, pointing out how their very shape, colour, or size was uniquely suited to the purpose of the Creation.

"If we truly think, Hashem's wisdom can be seen everywhere. Simply study the apple, the peach, your eye, your hand, and you will surely find a wisdom that can only be Hashem's. For this we must give thanks; that is what life is all about."

He would point out that rather than create a world of black and white, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* filled the world with colour and beauty to make it more attractive and pleasurable for people.

A grandchild once watched him sit down to eat an apple. Before making the *brachah*, he examined the apple and exclaimed, "*Ribbono Shel Olam*, look at this magnificent apple that You created! The wisdom in its waterproof enclosure, the beauty of

the deep, tantalizing red colour, and the temptingly delicious aroma with which it is perfumed! How can I even begin to thank You for the tree it grew on? And to think that You made it all for me!!" With that said, he enunciated the *brachah* clearly and distinctly, as if Hashem Himself were sitting there before him.

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

(יב:כט) וירשת אתם וישבת בארצם ***And you will take possession from them and settle in their land*** (12:29)



The *Admor* Rebbe Shaul Yedidiah Elazar of Moditz used to say: We learn in the *Medrash Sifrei* that settling in the Land of Israel is equivalent to all the *mitzvos* in the Torah. Just as *Chazal* have said (*Pesachim* 50b) "A person should always involve himself in Torah and *mitzvos* even though it is not for its own sake, because from learning Torah and performing a mitzvah not for its own sake he will eventually come to learn Torah or perform a mitzvah for its own sake." So too it is

fitting to say about settling in the Land of Israel, a person should engage in it even if not for its own sake.

When we fulfil this mitzvah with our own bodies and we walk on the Holy Land, we feel the sanctity of the Land and its spiritual elevation, and the end will be that we will come to fulfil this mitzvah for its sake as well. (*Parperaos LaTorah*)

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

והסיר ה' ממך כל חלי ז:טו ***Hashem will remove from you every illness*** (7:15)



HaRav HaKadosh Rebbe Fishel of Satrikov, zy"a, was in the habit of taking a little whisky every night before going to sleep. He would recite a *brachah*, taste a little, and say: "*L'Chaim, Ribono Shel Olam*! To life, Master of the Universe! Source of life! Good night to You, Master of the Universe!"

One time he explained his intentions with this. He intended with this that it should be a merit that all the sick of Israel should be healed speedily, and this was his *kavanah*. He reasoned that most of the time an ill person feels worse at night, as his illness overpowers him. Also, the sick are in great pain. And since it states (*Yeshaya* 63:9): *'In all their troubles, He was troubled'*, therefore, if the sick would have a good night then surely this will be pleasant and satisfying for *Hashem Yisbarach*! (*Sipurei Tzadikkim*)

"The greatest act of kindness is to help someone feel that they matter." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.

V'halachtah B'drachav - The Ways of Hashem



Rav Zundel Kroizer, *zt"l*, would rarely talks about himself, but sometimes people could get a glimpse of how special he was. One time, when Rav Zundel was already older and learned by himself at home, people would regularly come by to check on him and make sure that the Rav was okay and had everything he needed.

One day, Rav Yaakov Trietsky arrived at Rav Zundel's apartment and found him lying in his bed, badly bruised and unable to move. Alarmed, Rav Trietsky asked Rav Zundel what happened. Rav Zundel told him that he had collapsed and fallen on the floor. Rav Trietsky then asked, "But how did you get up on to the bed?" Rav Zundel replied, my *chavrusah* picked me up and put me on my bed. Rav Trietsky was astounded and said, "But you don't have a *chavrusah*!" Rav Zundel simply answered, "That's all I'm telling you. Please don't ask any questions."

Everyone was certain that Rav Zundel was secretly learning with *Eliyahu HaNavi* as a *chavrusah*, and Eliyahu had picked Rav Zundel off the floor and put him on his bed!

The Siddur Speaks

In the *Brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, why do we repeat the words *Nekavim*, openings, and *Chalulim*, cavities?

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, *zt"l*, says in his *Sefer*, *Alei Shur*, that the reason we say *Asher Yatzar* is to thank *Hashem* for our bodies working properly, and because of that, we can properly serve



Him, as this was the purpose that *Hashem* created us. We are formed with a physical body, and a *Neshamah*. These are two separate entities in 'one box', so to speak. Our job is to bring the holiness from the *Neshamah* and use it to benefit the body. We say these words twice because we realize that just as the body has openings and cavities, so too does the *Neshamah*, and just like if one's body was not working perfectly, he would not be able to serve *Hashem*— even for just one moment, how much more so is one not able to serve *Hashem* if their *Neshamah* was not working properly.

That is why we thank *Hashem* twice with these words, once for the body, and once for the *Neshamah*!

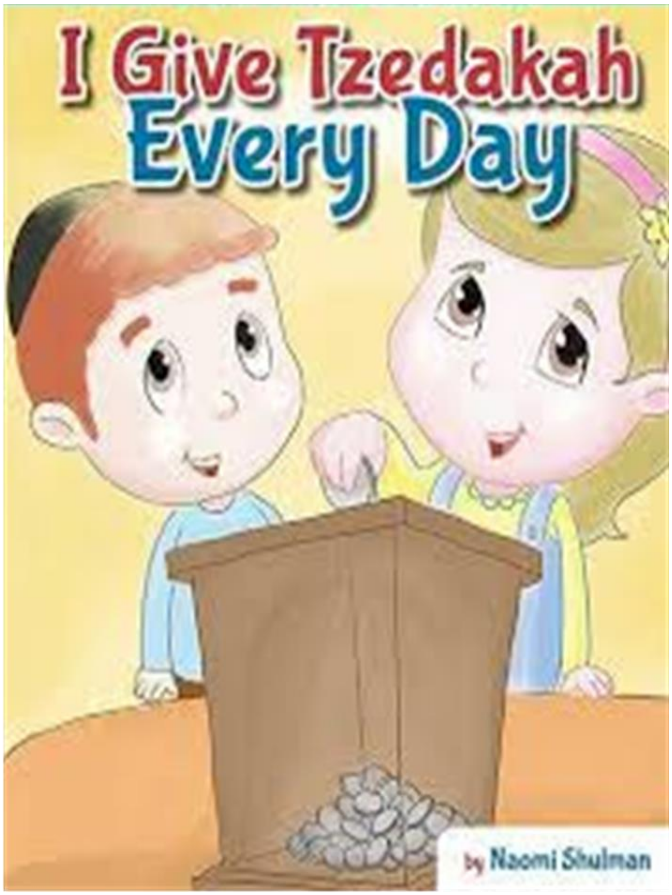
"Torah is the life-force of the soul. Just as the body cannot live without food, the soul cannot live without Torah." ~ Maharal of Prague.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Fascinating Insights

Don't Wait To Donate

Money belongs to Hashem, as it says, **לי הכסף ולי הזהב** , the silver and gold are Hashem's, and **כי ממך הכל** , everything is from You.

This can be compared to someone driving an armored truck, transporting money. No one would think that the driver of the truck is wealthy since the money isn't his. It is just under his authority temporarily. Likewise, this is how we should view our money and possessions.



Hashem is the one who makes one wealthy or poor, as it states, **ה' מוריש ומעשיר** Hashem ***impoverishes and makes rich***. One may mistakenly think that it was his own idea to amass wealth by acquiring some real estate or making a good investment. We must internalize the fact that Hashem is the one who gives us ideas. As Targum Onkolos writes, **הוא יהב לך עצה למקני נכסין**, Hashem is the one who gives advice to buy property!

Just because one is smart, it doesn't mean he will become wealthy, as we are taught **לא לחכמים לחם וגם לא לנבנים עשר** , bread doesn't come to the wise or riches to the intelligent.

Some people neglect their family in their pursuit of money. It has been said that the best way to make your spouse and children feel secure is not with big deposits in bank accounts, but with little

deposits of thoughtfulness and affection in the "love account." Others neglect their health in their quest for wealth.

Someone once commented, "People lose their health trying to store up money, and then they lose the money trying to restore their health."

A wise man remarked, "Money can buy you a house but not a home. It can buy you a companion but not a friend. It can buy you a bed, but not a good night's sleep." We must have the proper priorities.

What does Hashem want us to do with the money in our possession?

The pasuk states, **לי הכסף ולי הזהב** . This can be interpreted as giving the money to Me, Hashem, through tzedaka and the like.

When one gives his money to the poor, Hashem gives him wealth, as in , **עשר בשביל שתתעשר** give maaser so that you become wealthy.

This idea is hinted to in the following: if we take the letters prior to those that comprise the word **כסף** , money, we get the word **עני** , pauper. That is, **י** comes before **כ** , **נ** before **ס** and **ע** before **פ**.

What does this allude to? That when one gives money to the poor, Hashem will give him wealth.

Torah U' Tefilah- R' Shmuel Winzelberg

כל צפור טהורה תאכלו ***All kosher birds you may eat.*** (14:11)

The Torah does not give us the specific signs of a kosher bird. Rather, the Torah tells us the non-kosher birds and we are supposed to determine the kosher birds.

The *Gemara* in *Chulin* (59a) does tell us the four signs of a kosher bird. They are:

1. An added toe -אצבע יתירה .

2. A crop -זפק .

3. It does not claw -דוֹרס אינו .

4. The gizzard can be peeled -קוֹקבן נקלף .

The second letter of each kosher sign mentioned spell out the word **צפור**, bird, which tells us the signs of a kosher bird.



Parshah Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה ***"See, that today I am placing before you blessing and curse"*** (11:26).

A deeper understanding of this *pasuk* is offered by **Rabbi Zvi Teitelbaum**. With these words, Hashem is informing us that there is always good in front of us, and all around us as well. In order to appreciate this, we just have to open our eyes and look around. It is our mission to look and see the good that Hashem provides us with, and with which He constantly surrounds us.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, *zt"l* ,the *Ponevezher Rav*, never personally benefited from the *Yeshivah's* assets. Once, while on a fundraising mission in Konigsberg, he wrote to his wife on *Yeshivah* stationery and apologized that he could only relate "*Yeshivah* business", so that he would not to be guilty of benefitting from *Tzedakah* funds from the *Yeshivah*, which are holy.

He was once in a certain town when a friend informed him that he would be traveling to *Eretz Yisroel*, and would be delighted to deliver something to the *Rav's* mother, who lived in Tel Aviv. Rav Yosef Shlomo was eager to take advantage of this offer, but first asked if he could borrow a pen in order to write a letter. The pen in his pocket, he explained, belonged to the *Yeshivah*, and he said that it could not be used for any personal matters!



Rabbi *Avi Wiesenfeld Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid*

A Yid comes to the Babi Sali to receive a bracha. He is a broken man. He has no parnossoh, has children to marry off and times are very difficult. He tells the Babi Sali about his situation, what he is going through and what he needs.

The Babi Sali puts his head down for a moment in thought, and just then, one of his children peeked into the room. The Babi Sali looks up, and shouts to his son, "how could you enter my room just like that, who gave you permission, I am in the middle of a meeting with someone?"

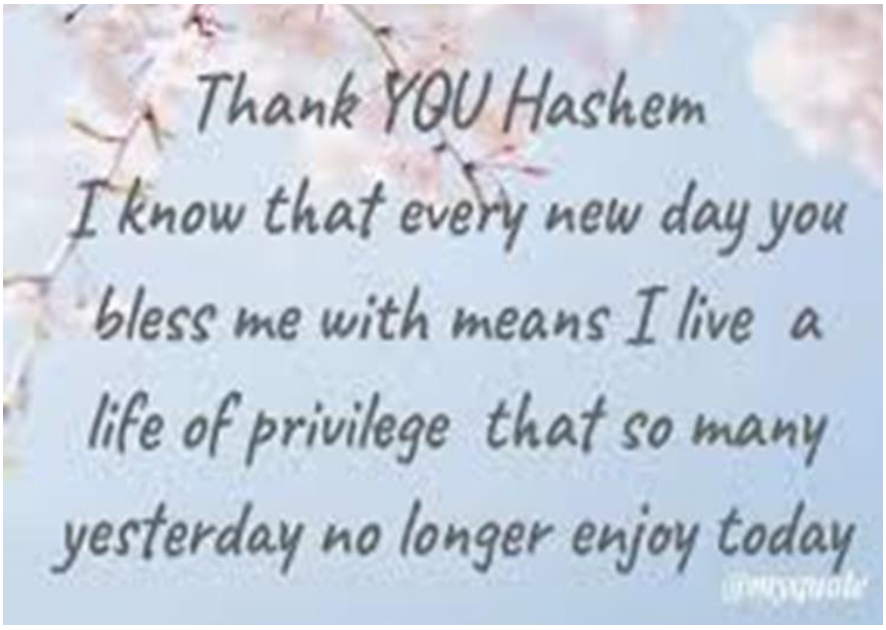
This behaviour was so unlike the Babi Sali to get annoyed and even raise his voice. His son didn't know where to put himself. He just hung his head down in shame. He had never heard his father speak like this before.

The Babi Sali then said, "ahh!, I understand why you just walked in – because you are my child, and a child can always walk in to see his father."

The Babi Sali looked at his visitor, and he said to him," you are a son of the Riboino Shel Olam, go to Him, talk to Him, explain to Him your needs."

This week's parhas Re'ei tells us בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם לֹא תִתְגֹּדְדוּ 14:1 You are the children of Hashem and don't make scratches or wounds on your body because someone died.(R'l)

Chazal explain, that if you take your own flesh to wound and hurt yourself, because someone else has left this world, than it shows that there is nothing else for you. But the Torah is telling us that – no- **בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם** Hakodosh Baruch Hu is your father. You are a child of Hashem.



We all have situations in life. We all have difficult times. We have situations that are problematic. We have hurdles to overcome.

It is specifically at these times, that we need to be mechazeik ourselves in exactly this point- **בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם.** Who are we? We must realise our potential and who created us, and that Hashem is looking after us as His child . If We need something, just ask our father- The Riboino Shel Olam.

Have a wonderful Shabbos!

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Hashem's Children

We have a lot to be happy about, as this week's *parashah* (14:1) proclaims, **בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם** , ***"You are children of Hashem, your G-d."***

Think about that for a moment. It is the greatest happiness in the world. Hashem's love to us surpasses the love a parent has for his children. As it states (*Avos 3*) **חביבין ישראל שנקראים בנים למקום**.

Hashem loves the Jewish nation, and He calls us His children. Hashem's love to His nation is even greater than that, because He told them, ' **בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם**, that they are Hashem's children, and there's a rule: **מקצת שבחו בפניו**, you only tell someone part of his praise. So, as we were told that Hashem loves us like His children, we understand that Hashem's love for us is even greater. That we are His children is solely **מקצת שבחו**, part of our praise.

Perhaps you will say that you sinned, and you lost the status of **בנים**, but it isn't so. As it states, **בנים אתם** , and **Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l*** explains that **אתם** means that we are Hashem's children even if we sin. For the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 25.) says, **אתם אפילו שוגגין אתם אפילו מזידין אתם אפילו מוטעין** , that the word **אתם** implies that even if you sin by accident, intentionally, or when you make mistakes, you remain **בנים אתם** , Hashem's children.

There's a *machlokes* in the Gemara (*Kiddushin* 36.) whether we are called Hashem's children even when we sin. According to Reb Yehudah, we are only Hashem's children when we act righteously.

Reb Meir says, **בין כך ובין כך קרוין בנים** regardless of whether we perform mitzvos or chalilah, aveiros, we are always **בנים** - Hashem's beloved children. The Rashba (*teshuvah 194*) writes that although we generally accept Reb Yehudah's view over Reb Meir's, in this instance, the halachah is according to Reb Meir. At all times, regardless of our behaviour, we are Hashem's children.

בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם לא תתגדדו ולא תשימו קרחה בין עיניכם למת

"You are Hashem's children. Don't inflict yourselves with wounds, and don't pull the hair from your head when someone dies." Since we are Hashem's children, it isn't proper to inflict ourselves or pull out hair when a tragedy occurs.

The Ibn Ezra explains, "Now that you know you are Hashem's children and He loves you more than a father loves his son, do not injure yourself when something distressful occurs because everything is for the good. It can be compared to a child who doesn't

understand the ways of his parent, but he relies on his parents. That's how you should be with your *emunah* in Hashem."

The Siforno writes, "It is improper to show extreme grief for a relative who died if there remained a closer relative who is more capable of caring for you. So too, you are Hashem's children, and He is your eternal father. Therefore, it isn't proper to worry and to mourn extensively for the dead."

The Or HaChaim HaKadosh (*Rishon L'Tzion*) writes on the *pasuk* (*Yirmiyahu* 31:19) **הבן יקיר לי אפרים** that when someone has a foul odour, people keep their distance from him. However, when your baby needs a nappy change, the parents have no problem holding the child and playing with him. They hug and kiss him, almost as if they don't sense the bad odour because of their love for the child.



We are Hashem's children, and Hashem says that even if we smell foul from our sins, we remain **הבן יקיר לי אפרים** , Hashem's beloved children **אם ילד שעשועים** , Hashem plays with us and enjoys us, as a parent plays with his child, even when the child has a foul odour **כי מדי דברי בו זכור אזכרנו עוד**, in any situation, **רחם ארחמנו נאם ה'** , Hashem says that He loves us, and He will always have mercy on us.

"The light of holiness is hidden within every Jew. When a person performs a mitzvah with sincerity, that inner light is awakened and spreads to the world. The avodah of life is to uncover the spark that is already within." ~ Sfas Emes.

Rabbi Yom Tov Glaser - The Perfect Forest

***והיה כי יביאך ד׳ אלקיך אל הארץ And it will be when Hashem, your G-d, brings you to the Land…* (*Devarim* 11:29)**

After my wife and I had finalized our engagement, we both were beyond excited. However, for certain reasons, my Rosh Yeshiva in Aish HaTorah shortly thereafter recommended that our engagement be broken off. Respecting his opinion and understanding where he was coming from, I knew that I should listen to him.

When I later approached my *kallah* in Tzfat and broke the news, her reply was, "Baruch Hashem." "What do you mean 'Baruch Hashem'?" I said. "I thought you wanted to marry me?" "I want what Hashem wants," she said. "I thought that Hashem wanted me to marry you and I was very happy. Now that you are telling me that the engagement is off, it seems that Hashem does not want us to get married. Were we to do so, it may be a mistake. That is why I say, 'Baruch Hashem.'"

As soon as she finished explaining what she meant, all I could think of was how I now needed to marry her. "She is so special," I said to myself. "That is the kind of wife I am looking for." But it didn't seem like those dreams were going to materialize.

A week later, I found myself davening at the Kotel. On my way out, I stopped off by the water fountain to take a quick drink. Making the requisite blessing of Shehakol, I pressed down the button and began drinking. And then I heard a voice behind me. "How did you know it was going to work? Maybe when you pushed the button, no water would have come out, and you could have said G-d's name in vain!"

Looking back behind me, there she was. Aside from never having considered the possibility of water not actually flowing out, I was taken aback by the beautiful commitment and connection my

previous *kallah* had to Torah and mitzvot. And there I was thinking again, "I need to marry her; she is so special."

As the days passed, my *kallah* eventually learned that I had grown especially depressed due to the breakup. Possessing a Breslov flair, she was accustomed to entering the forest and praying. At this point, she was staying in Har Nof, next to the Jerusalem Forest. And so, one day, when she went into the forest for her usual *hitbodedut* (meditation), she davened that I be able to cope with what happened and happily move on in life.

But, as Divine Providence had it, it was clear that we were supposed to get married. We shared much in common, and my Rosh Yeshiva agreed that we should get reengaged. And so, we did. We went on to choose a wedding hall, after which my now renewed *kallah* proceeded to fly to America.



Sometime later, she called me and said, "I have been thinking about it, and I want to get married on Eretz Yisrael." Wondering what she meant by this, I asked, "What do you mean 'on' Eretz Yisrael?" "I don't want to get married in a wedding hall," she explained, "I want to get married on the land of Israel itself. I want to feel the earth underneath my feet." While the idea sounded nice, I wasn't sure how the logistics would work out. Asking her what she had in mind, she said, "It's simple. Go and grab your mountain bike and ride around until you find a nice spot." Being that I am an athletic mountain biker, I happily embraced the challenge.

Although I knew that it wouldn't be too easy to find the perfect area, I ambitiously headed out on the excursion. I was looking for a large area which had extra space to accommodate parking and provide the convenient amenities for elderly people, including my Rebbe, the **Pinsk-Karliner Rebbe zt"l**, and the Rosh Yeshiva of Aish HaTorah. After five hours of manoeuvring just about through all of the Jerusalem Forest, I finally came across a site I felt fit the criteria.

Calling my *kallah* later that night, I related what I had done and described to her the exact location I had found. When she heard what I had to say, she couldn't believe it. "That spot in the forest is the exact same place I davened for you when you were feeling down." And indeed, that is where we got married.

Every year, my wife and I along with our children revisit that same spot in the forest. My wife puts on her wedding veil and walks around me seven times just like a *kallah* does to her *chattan*, and all our children stand there laughing. With tears of joy filling our eyes, we daven together for our children and Am Yisrael. And let me tell you, it is beautiful.

Many times throughout life we face situations which leave us depressed and despondent. Feelings of hopelessness set in and we slowly lose our inner tranquillity and peace of mind. But then, matters improve, and we see a brighter future beckoning on the horizon. Life returns to normal, and we regain our inner composure. It is then that we come to realize that even during those gloomy moments we were being supported. We were being carried by a loving hand and listened to by an attentive ear. At the very moment we felt things could get no worse, our greatest salvation was conceived. Hashem never abandoned us; He was only clearing the way amid the forest for our most beautiful future.

The Torah Any Times Newsletter

Rabbi Yossi Mizrachi - The Monkey Trap



Have you ever wondered how to catch a monkey? Whether you have or you haven't, there is what to learn from the way it is done in Far East counties, such as China and Malaysia.

It has been discovered that monkeys are particularly fond of rice. In line with this, a coconut filled with rice is placed in the centre of a large, open area. A flat slit is cut into the coconut, from where the monkey can insert its hand and grab hold of the rice. However, once the monkey has the rice in its hand, any attempt to remove his hand will fail, because the slit is too narrow for the monkey to pull back a fistful of rice.

What must occur if the monkey wishes to free its hand and its life, for that matter, is let go of the rice. But all too often, by the time the monkey realizes that it cannot have both the rice and its life, it is too late. He has wished for too long for the best of both worlds and he has little chance for escaping now.

This has become known as the "Old South Indian Monkey Trap." But what most aptly describes this trap is not its genius physical construct, but its idea. The monkey becomes ensnared in its own trap of holding onto what it has and failing to realize that it must think outside the box, or outside the coconut, to retain its life. The

challenge for the monkey lies in escaping its old idea that "when you see rice, hold onto it!" Its mind is its own prison.

What does this have to do with anything? It has to do with everything. It goes back to the very beginning of our nationhood in transitioning from slavery to freedom. While in Egypt, the Jewish people were not merely enslaved physically; they were enslaved psychologically. Even after physically leaving the prison of Egypt, they needed to extricate themselves from the psychological prison of enslavement, which took seven weeks and culminated in the Giving of the Torah.

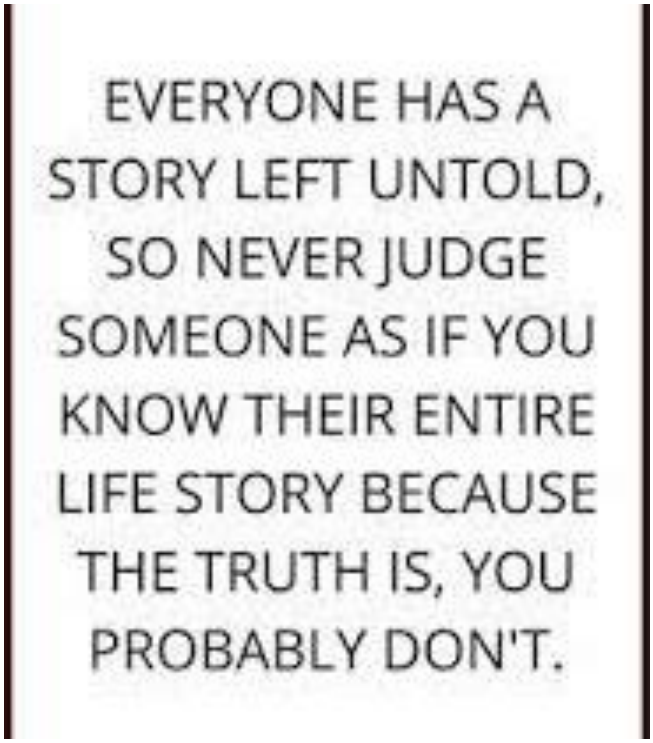
In our very own lives, we are in many ways entrapped in our own minds. We may be physically free in every which way, but we are prisoners of our minds, which limit and detain us from fulfilling our potential. True freedom is freedom of the body and soul. It occurs when we realize that sometimes we cannot even have our rice, let alone eat it. For the monkey, wishing it had something that it couldn't brought its downfall. This is what our Sages allude to when stating, "A person does not leave this world with even half his desires fulfilled." Once we relinquish our desire for what is not our lot in life and accept ourselves as we are with what we have, we will begin the road to a free life.

Judge Everybody By R' Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro

Did you ever notice that in Pirkei Avos, 1:6 it says **וֶהֱוֵי דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת** – ***judge everybody favourably.*** If it means judge everybody favourably, what's with the addition of the ה telling us? What does it mean **כָּל הָאָדָם**?

The Sefas Emess ZY'A says that with the addition of the ה it has a new meaning. It means, look at the entirety of the person. Look at the entirety of the situation. Don't just focus on the specifics. They may be going through things that I know nothing about. Maybe in

their past, there was a family situation that was emotionally or financially difficult. Maybe they are going through a medical hardship that I know nothing about.



So, the new definition of **בצדק תשפוט עמיתך**– means, that I see somebody do something. I know that it is wrong. I have no doubt that it is an Aveiro. But I still judge them favourably - **הוי דן את חברך לכף זכות**, because there is so much that I don't know. I can't possibly know the entirety of the situation. There could be thousands of contributing factors.

And with this, when you treat somebody favourably, that is the same way that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will judge us! We all make mistakes. We are not perfect. But here is the good news – If we will judge people favourably: meaning to take <u>everything</u> into account, then The Riboino Shel Olam will do the same with us even though He knows that we sin!

Rabbi Frand on Re'eh - Positive First

"But this shall you not eat from among those that bring up their cud or have completely separated split hooves: the camel, the hare, and the hyrax, for they bring up their cud, but their hooves are not split — they are unclean to you; and the pig, for it has a split hoof, but not the cud — it is unclean to you" (14:7)

The Torah's listing of kosher and non-kosher animals, which seems somewhat technical, contains many lessons beyond the mere details of what we may and may not eat.



Rav Noach Weinberg, Rosh Yeshivah of Aish HaTorah, who was directly responsible for bringing tens of thousands back to Yiddishkeit and an exponentially larger number through his students, would point out (based on a Gemara in Chullin 60b) that there is proof that an all-knowing G-d wrote the Torah from the verses listing the animals that chew their cud but do not have split hooves, and the animal that has split hooves and does not chew its cud. Would a human put his credibility on the line by predicting that at no point in the future would a single animal that is not on that list be found somewhere in the world?

And indeed, some three millennia after the Torah was given, and with all the searching science has done for unknown species, not a single such animal has been found!

Aside from strengthening our faith, however, these verses also teach us a lesson in how to view, and relate to, other people.

The point of the verses listing the animals that have only one kosher sign is to teach us that they are not kosher. It would seem appropriate, then, to list the sign that causes them to be non-kosher first. Yet we see that the Torah lists them as the camel, the rabbit, and the hyrax, which chew their cud but do not have split hooves, and the pig, which has split hooves, but does not chew its cud.

Why does the Torah list the kosher signs of these animals first if the non-existent signs are the only ones we really need in order to label these animals nonkosher?

A Midrash explains that the Torah is teaching us that even when something is not kosher, we should find a way to mention something praiseworthy about it first. Even something as treif as chazir deserves to have its positive trait pointed out.

If the Torah does so for non-kosher animals, how much more do we have to learn to have this consideration with regard to people?

Bosses, employees, children, students, coworkers, and neighbors will invariably have some negative traits. It might be our job, from time to time, to deliver a negative message.

This Midrash is teaching us that even when we must deliver a negative message to others — to tell them that they are "nonkosher" in some way — we should always find a way to point out their positive attributes or qualities first.

Rabbi Chaim Rosenfeld - For You, My Sister



One Rosh Hashanah morning, a 21-year-old girl entered shul with her 20-year-old sister. Looking forward to a beautiful day of davening and connection with Hashem, they were soon to realize that there was one small problem: they forgot to bring two Machzorim.

Now, had it been a weekday or Shabbat, the problem may have been mitigated as many of the prayers over the course of time become memorized. But on Rosh Hashanah, saying the many *tefillot* by heart is almost out of the question. And so, left with only one Machzor which included all the prayers recited throughout Rosh Hashanah,

they decided that they would sit next to each other and share the prayer book. After all, that was the best they could do.

Two hours into the davening, the girls received a tap on the shoulder. It was the woman sitting behind them. She was frustrated. Loud enough for those nearby to hear, she said, "For the past two hours, you both have been talking to each other while everyone is trying to daven! It is very disrespectful!" Little was this woman aware that in fact these sisters were not talking to each other, but to Hashem. Sitting there now were two sisters who were just publicly humiliated. Davening continued as the girls got through the prayers without attracting much attention.

Shortly after davening, the 21-year-old girl turned to her sister and said, "You know what? *Chazal* say that when a person is humiliated and does not respond, it is a favourable time. Let us use this opportunity to daven for each other. I will daven for you that you find a *shidduch* this year and you daven for me that I find a *shidduch* this year." And so, the two sisters poured their hearts out to Hashem on behalf of one another.

Seven months later, one of the girls got engaged. And as expected, the *simcha* in the house of these girls and their family was genuinely palpable. Reminding themselves of what had happened months ago on Rosh Hashanah, they were both thrilled.

And sure enough, the very next night, the other sister got engaged.

We must never underestimate the inner strength we possess within ourselves. Both at our ability to remain calm when matters don't go our way as well as the efficacy of our prayers, each and every one of us can certainly overcome the challenges we face. And we never know, sometimes to our tremendous delight, such an event will not only build us as a person but will find us a wonderful spouse.

SHABBOS STORIES FOR PARSHAS RE'EH

The Arab Cookie Eater

There was once an angry Arab official. His wife always left his palace in a terrible mess. All she did was read the paper all day. One day, the fellow declared, "My wife, I am about to eat this cookie. If you do not get up and do something by the time I finish this cookie, I swear that I will throw you out of the palace!"

The Arab finished the cookie, yet she had not budged. Immediately, his servants sent her away. The next day, the fellow was sad, as he wanted his wife back.

He called an emergency meeting with all his advisors, but no one was able to help him with his oath, until he heard about a wise Rabbi.

The Rabbi asked him, "Tell me, was your cookie a hard cookie or a soft cookie?"



The fellow thought to himself, "This Rabbi must be quite foolish. What difference does it make if it was hard or soft?" He then answered that it was a hard and crunchy cookie.

The Rabbi told him, "Dear fellow, if it was a hard cookie, then there must have been some crumbs. If there were crumbs, you never finished the cookie. You can take your wife back into your palace."

It is the "little" crumbs that made the "big" difference.

Dreamers - Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser



Dreams are often a time when the hidden is revealed. The Sages in fact tell us that dreams have a power equivalent to one-sixtieth of prophecy. In the following incredible true story, Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser talks about one amazing dream in which a little bit of the hidden was revealed…

It was well past midnight on a particularly warm June night. Having had a busy week, I was intent on making sure that my sleep would be uninterrupted. As I drifted off, I became oblivious to the conscious world.

A few hours later I began dreaming, but the dream was frighteningly real.

I dreamt that I was riding in the passenger side of a car with a man whom I had never met. As he barreled down the highway, I noticed that his eyes had closed, and he had fallen asleep. To make matters worse, we were quickly approaching a sharp curve in the highway. With the speeding oncoming traffic approaching from the other side of the median, I immediately shouted, "Wake up! Wake up!" However, the driver, whoever he was, lowered his head slightly and seemed to descend into an even deeper sleep. Desperately, I shouted the first thing I could think of-"Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!"

With those words, I woke up in a cold sweat. Somewhat relieved that I had been dreaming and was not actually in the car, I calmed myself with the words, "It's only a dream!" I looked at the clock on my night table. It was exactly three a.m. Needless to say; the dream was a horrific experience. I decided to give tzedakah and thank the Almighty that this event had not really happened.

The next morning, I bumped into one of my closest friends. He startled me by saying. "You will never believe what happened last night. My brother called me shortly after three a.m. He was driving his car on the Long Island Expressway, returning from North Carolina. I guess the trip was too much for him and he fell asleep at the wheel.

All of a sudden, he heard a voice screaming, 'Wake up! For G-d's sake, wake up!' Thank G-d he did!

Boruch Hashem, he tricked the Angel of Death by executing a harrowing maneuver, steering his car around a dangerous curve on the highway. My brother-who as you know is not a religious man-instantly became a believer. He called me to ask if there was anything special that he should do to thank G-d for sparing him. I explained to him that it would be appropriate for him to donate money to charity."

I was stunned by my friend's story. I still vividly remembered my dream and was a little shaken up because of it. I related my dream of the previous night to my dear friend; we both were astounded.

Everything is real: the soul, Hashem, Torah and mitzvahs.

Trust in Hashem and Just Send One Appeal Letter

A father called the mashgiach of one of the prominent yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael, and asked information about one of the bachurim. The mashgiach, said in Hebrew, "Lo kol hatov/Nothing is good" about this bachur", but the shidduch was finalized anyway.

At the vort, the mashgiach warmly shook the father's hand, and wished him a joyous mazal tov, and out of curiosity, he asked the father why he decided to go further with this shidduch, even after what he had told him. My daughter said that it doesn't bother her if he doesn't have a good voice." The father misunderstood the

mashgiach because Hashem wanted the shidduch to transpire. "Lo Kol hatov" could also mean the boy doesn't have a good voice.

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Rebbe Mordechai of Zvhil zy"a (before he became rebbe) needed twenty-six thousand dollars for an upcoming chasunah. He went to the office of the Eitz Chaim Yeshiva, where he studied, and asked the director of the yeshiva to give him the addresses of wealthy donors in America, because he wanted to send them letters, asking for money for the chasunah.

The director didn't want to give him the addresses (because he wanted their support for the yeshiva) so he gave Rebbe Mordechai Zvhiller some old addresses from people who used to support the yeshiva, but hadn't given a donation for a long time.

When Rebbe Mordechai returned home with the list, his wife rebuked him, "Do you really think that these are going to help you? The director certainly gave you the addresses of people who don't have money anymore."

Rebbe Mordechai explained to her that he was doing hishtadlus.

"If your goal is hishtadlus, why do you have to send letters to all of them? Just send one letter, and that will be your hishtadlus..." she chided.

Rebbe Mordechai replied, "You're right. I'll send only one letter."

He sent off one letter and soon received an envelope in return with a check for twenty-six thousand dollars inside. Rebbe Mordechai went to the director to thank him for the addresses.

The manager was shocked. "You mean your letters were answered?"

"Not the letters, I only sent one letter, and I received twenty-six thousand dollars." And he told him the name of this baal tzedakah.

The manager called up this baal tzedakah and asked, "I see that you have money, because you just gave one of our students twenty-six thousand dollars for hachnasas kallah, so why did you stop sending money to the yeshiva?"

The man replied, "I don't have money anymore. The money was from my daughter, who is a kallah. After her engagement we discovered that she has an illness. We went to Reb Moshe Feinstein, and asked him whether we must tell the chassan and the mechutanim about it. Reb Moshe inquired about the nature of the illness, and then ruled that we don't need to say anything.

'However,' Reb Moshe advised, 'if your daughter has some money of her own, it is a good idea for her to give it for hachnasas kallah. In the merit that she helps another kallah go to the chuppah, she will also merit going to her chuppah.' Just then, we received Rebbe Mordechai's letter, and his request for hachnasas kallah. My daughter works, so she had some money saved up. She emptied her account, and immediately sent it to Rebbe Mordechai, for his daughter's wedding."

Rebbe Mordechai had bitachon, and received all the money he needed with one letter. This story is an example of hashgachah pratis. Immediately after Reb Moshe advised them to donate money for hachnasas kallah, Reb Mordechai's letter arrived in the mail.

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Reb Eliyahu Shamni and his wife were childless for twenty years, before they decided to adopt. Adoption is a long process. The first step is to fill out forms at the adoption agency, then, the agency tries to determine whether the couple applying is capable of raising a child (according to their criteria).

The first question on one of the documents was: "State, in order of preference, the five things you love the most." Reb Eliyahu Shamni wrote, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu" first and then he filled out the other four.

The agency reviewed his answers and asked him, "If you will have an adopted child, will you love the child more than the five items you listed here?" This is the agency's method to determine whether the couple will love the adopted child.

Reb Eliyahu Shamni answered, "I will never love anyone or anything more than HaKadosh Baruch Hu!"

There was another religious couple in the agency at this time who was also applying for adoption. They said to Reb Eliyahu Shamni, "Just tell them what they want to hear. It's just a procedure. You don't have to tell them the truth. Otherwise, they will not accept you."

But Reb Eliyahu Shamni was unyielding, "I love Hashem more than everything in the world," he said emphatically, "and I refuse to say differently." The Shamni's were disqualified, and the adoption agency removed them from the waiting list. Nine months later exactly, the Shamnis had twins. The other religious couple who was with them in the agency was still waiting for their adopted child. The adoption process can take a lot of time, but Reb Eliyahu and his wife were blessed with their own set of children. Reb Eliyahu wisely told me, "When one doesn't give up on the One, he ends off with two."

(Torah Wellsprings: Rabbi Elimelech Biderman)

"True giving is not measured by the object given, but by the heart that expands toward another. Giving creates love, for love is born from giving." ~ Rav Dessler.

Concerned About the Wives

Rav Aharon Leib Steinman, ZT"L, was known to be meticulous in the observance of many Talmudic prohibitions, even when the reasoning for the prohibition no longer applied. For example, the decree against drinking liquid that was kept uncovered. The Gemara was concerned about snake venom in the water. Or, the decree against eating food that was under the bed because of the spiritual impurity there. Although these no longer may be a concern, there are Kabbalistic reasons for preserving the prohibitions, and it is still proper to observe them.



A young scholar authored a book delving into the reasons for some of the Gemara's prohibitions and he asked Rav Shteiman for a haskamah (letter of approbation). Rav Shteiman read the book and praised the author, but he refused to write a letter. He explained, "Although I am personally stringent to follow these prohibitions, most authorities permit them. I am concerned that if I attach my name to this book, some well-meaning men might accept these stringencies, causing unnecessary hardship for their wives' food preparation. I don't want to be the cause of any marital strife. (*Story from More Power Points, by Rabbi Ephraim Nussbaum*)

"A man who has committed a mistake and doesn't correct it is committing another mistake."

The Thief and Kriyas Shema



A thief in the forest captured a Jew, and the thief offered to grant him his last wish [before executing him]. He said that he wanted to say Shema, and permission was granted. The Jew said Shema with immense concentration. When he reached the words, **ה' אלקיכם אמת** he opened his eyes and saw that the thief wasn't there anymore. He ran out of the forest with joy. He went to his rebbe, Reb Yehudah Asad zt'l, and told him what happened. The student asked, "But what does this story mean? Why did it happen? What was Heaven showing me?" Reb Yehudah Asad asked him, "Did you ever say kriyas Shema like that before?" The student admitted that he hadn't. "Then that's your answer. Heaven was showing you how kriyas Shema should be said. Now say it that way every day. (Torah Wellsprings)

On The Bright Side

"And you shall rejoice before Hashem, you and your son and your daughter, and your servant and your maid and the Levite who is in your gates, and the convert and the orphan and the widow...And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt" (Debarim 16:11-12)

The Ksav Sofer explains the continuity of these two verses: There are some people who might find it hard to give financial assistance to a convert, orphan and widow because they are not satisfied with what they themselves have. They always seek to acquire more money for themselves, so how can they give what they have to others? All the more so on the holidays, since it is forbidden to work on the holidays, and they do not have any new income. Even if such a person

does give to the poor as he is really obligated to do, he will not feel joy when he gives charity. Therefore, the Torah tells him to remember his previous situation when he was a slave in Egypt, doing forced labour the entire day and subsisting on just the barest minimum of food. When a person realizes how much better off he is now, he will feel happy with what he has and in his present joyous state will readily give generously to those in need.

The way we react to our present situation is always dependent on how we view it, and how we view a situation is dependent on what factors we consider in the entire context of things.



An American lawyer who studied in Yeshivah Aish Hatorah was once in Kennedy airport waiting for his plane to leave for Israel, when the plane was greatly delayed. Every hour or so, they announced another delay. After ten hours, he was very nervous and irritated. The other people who were also planning to go on that plane were all complaining about the long delay. Then he noticed a couple who were calmly sitting down and appeared to be very relaxed. He approached them and asked, "How is it possible to remain calm when the plane is delayed for so long?"

Their reply shook him up, "Well, in the Second World War we were in a concentration camp and so waiting a number of hours in Kennedy airport does not really bother us at all."

This vividly illustrates how our reaction towards what we do and do not have is relative. Keep in mind how your situation is better than it could be, and you will live a pleasurable life.

Waiting for the Bus



A minor issue that often rouses people's anger is arriving at a bus stop a moment too late, just in time to watch the bus leaving. But if one will remember that everything is planned by Hashem, and this is how it must be, he won't be angry.

Reb Yitzchak Dovid Gutfarb zt'l of Yerushalayim said, "I never missed a bus, though sometimes I came early for the next bus." For if it was destined for him to take the next bus; he didn't miss the bus that was meant for him.

(Torah Wellsprings: Rabbi Elimelech Biderman)

The Dedicated Searcher of a Lost Child



Rabbi Yissocher Frand tells a story about a couple, who after a long wait, were finally blessed with twin girls. As the babies grew into mischievous toddlers, their parents took them on vacation to a hotel, where the mother stayed with the girls during the week, while the husband stayed at home in the city so he could go to work and would join them for the weekend.

One day in the dining room at lunch, the mother took one twin to the sink to wash her off, leaving her other daughter at the table for

just a moment, and the second twin wandered off. Frantic, she asked everyone for help to find her daughter, and came across a group of Bais Yaakov girls. The girls agreed to help search for the missing toddler. One girl took charge and organized the search, dividing everyone up to go search a different area. One by one they returned, without finding the little girl, until, finally, the girl who organized the search returned with the missing child in her arms! Everyone wanted to know how and where she managed to find her, because they had searched the entire premises.

She said she found her in one of the classrooms. One of the girls said, "But we checked all the classrooms and we didn't see her!"

The organizer asked, "Did you look under each desk?" and they quietly shook their heads no.

As she returned the little girl to her grateful mother, who simply had no words to thank her, the mother felt compelled to ask how it was that this one teenage girl had shown so much energy, had been able to take charge, and was so devoted to finding the toddler? The girl seemed reluctant to answer but finally told the mother, "Because I am Leiby Kletzky's sister."

Rabbi Frand explained that sometimes it is our life experiences that make us into who we are, but the notion of caring deeply for our fellow Jew is one that should motivate us daily. We should each instill within ourselves the sensitivity to feel someone else's pain. Whether it is davening for someone who is sick, out of work, or needs help finding their Shidduch, each of us should take upon ourselves to think beyond our own needs, and to think of others as well. (Torah U'Tefilah: by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)

"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

How to Kill Your Wife

A Jew came to the rabbi of his town with a problem. "I don't know what to do. I really hate my wife. It seems like she is always doing things to aggravate me." In shame, the man continued, "Sometimes I even think of killing her!"

The wise rabbi looked at the man pensively. "How long have you felt this way?"

"Almost since the time we married," replied the man. "It wasn't so bad at first. But when she irritated me, I found it impossible to behave nicely or civilly toward her. And now, I dream of being rid of her forever."



The rabbi stroked his beard and then said, "You know, there is a way you can kill her without even being held responsible!"

The man's eyes opened wide. Never had he expected the rabbi to be an accomplice, but he needed all the help he could get. "Tell me, rabbi, what can I do?"

"Well," explained the rabbi to the simple man, "the Midrash tells us that if a man pledges a large sum of money to charity and doesn't pay it, his punishment will be that his wife will die. All you need to do is pledge a large sum of money to the shul and not pay it! Within a year, I assure you, your wife will be dead."

The man was overjoyed with his good fortune of having such an understanding and wise rabbi.

"But," added the rabbi, "You wouldn't want anyone to think that you are not paying the pledge intentionally to kill your wife. You wouldn't want G-d to think that either, would you?"

The man nodded his head. "What should I do, rabbi?"

"Well," began the rabbi. "For starters, you must treat your wife exceptionally well for the next few months."

The man was horrified. "Rabbi, I don't even treat my wife a little bit nicely because, as I told you, I can't stand her. And now, you want me to behave exceptionally kindly toward her?"

"It's the least you can do so that people don't think you're killing her intentionally, isn't it?"

The man nodded and the rabbi continued. "First, buy her a new dress. How long has it been since she's gotten a new dress?"

The man acknowledged that his wife hadn't gotten a new dress since they were married seven years previously. "And also," the rabbi continued, "make sure to give her a little spending money."

The man rolled his eyes. "She always complains that she doesn't have enough money to make good meals. But I know it's just an excuse to upset me!"

The rabbi smiled and added, "Say something nice to her once in a while. Even compliment her in public, just so that people will think you really like her, of course," the rabbi added conspiratorially.

The man left the rabbi's study beaming. He immediately made a large pledge to a charitable organization and began counting the hours until he'd be rid of his wife. He did follow the rabbi's advice, though, and went out to buy his wife a new dress.

She, of course, could not understand her husband's change of heart. When he also gave her some "pocket money," she went to the market and purchased some nice fruits and vegetables, even a bit of meat. She prepared a delicious meal to show her appreciation.

Weeks passed, with the man marking off the days on his calendar and simultaneously behaving decently, for once, toward his wife.

At the end of two months, the man stopped marking his calendar. He and his wife were happier than they had ever been during their entire marriage. The more pleasant the husband was, the more he complimented his wife and tried to help her, the more she tried to please him in every way.

After a half year had passed, the husband had totally forgotten about his little conversation and "arrangement" with the rabbi. It wasn't until the year was nearly up, when he remembered about the pledge and the repercussions if it wasn't paid. He immediately ran to the rabbi.

"Rabbi, the year is nearly up and I still haven't paid the pledge," the man said frantically.

"Nu," said the rabbi. "Soon you will have peace and quiet. What are you worried about?"

"You don't understand, rabbi. I love my wife. She is the most wonderful person in the world. She can never do enough to please me and I get such pleasure from doing things that make her happy. I don't want her to die!"

"Oh my, that is a problem," replied the rabbi. "Your only choice then, is to pay the pledge."

"But Rabbi, I pledged a huge sum, something I could never possibly pay!"

"You must borrow the money then and pay it out little by little. I will even give you a note of recommendation to some free-loan funds," offered the rabbi. "After all, it is a matter of life and death!"

"I don't know how I can ever thank you," the relieved husband told the rabbi. "Certainly, that my wife should remain alive is worth all the money in the world!"

The man borrowed the money to pay the pledge. Every month he paid back a little of the money and they lived happily ever after. (*L'Chaim Weekly, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY.)*

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin, Insights on Reeh

Saved By the Knock

"You shall surely give him...for in return for this matter Hashem, your G-d, will bless you" (Debarim 15:10)

Our parhah commands us to give charity. A true story: In Jerusalem there dwelled a poor family of fourteen souls. A poor woman knocked



on the door and asked for some chicken to eat. The family was barely making it. They ate bread and water. The father tried to explain to the lady that there were two chickens in the refrigerator due to the fact that the holidays were close at hand, and they were saving the chickens for the holiday. If he would give the poor woman, he wouldn't have enough for the family. After all this explanation the woman remained in her place begging for some sustenance. He gave the situation some thought. He realized, if she came to our door asking like she did, it must be that she was desperate.

So, what will happen if they don't have meat for the holiday? Hashem will help. He apologized for the delay and quickly went to the refrigerator to get a chicken. He rushed with happiness to perform the mitzvah. He came to his old fashion refrigerator, the kind that can't be opened from the inside, and opened it up. His mouth dropped open. Who did he find in the refrigerator? His three-year-old son, who was trapped in the refrigerator! He was already blue and not breathing. He called Hatzalah and they miraculously restored his breathing. The doctors said, another half a minute in the refrigerator and he would have been gone.

Upon analyzing his household, he realized there would have been no need to go to the refrigerator in the next few minutes, and it was only because he decided to do the kindness to the woman that his son was saved.

You see, my friends, the words of our Sages, "Charity saves from death," do not need to be proven to be true. However, we can learn an additional lesson, that one never suffers a loss from a mitzvah.

He gave a chicken and got back a healthy child as a gift. - *Rabbi Reuven Semah*

Etz Hachaim – R'C T Blau

I once heard a tale of a Rebbe who was Nifter and left behind two sons Reb Chaim'l* and Reb Shmelke*. Reb Chaim'l became Rebbe in his father's hometown while Reb Shmelke became a Rebbe in a different town.

Reb Chaim'l had very few Chasidim, whereas his brother had a thriving Chassidus and was very Mazliach. This bothered Reb Chaim'l tremendously. He said to himself, "Why is it that my brother is so successful, whereas I am not." He decided that he would visit his brother for a Shabbos and observe him, and perhaps he would learn the secret to his brother's success.

When Reb Chaim'l came to Reb Shmelke's city the people greeted him warmly, with great honour, and gave him the most prestigious accommodations for the holy Shabbos. Reb Chaim'l paid attention during the entire Shabbos to all that his brother the Rebbe did.

When Shabbos was over, he told his brother the following, "My dear brother, I will tell you why I came for Shabbos. I see that you are so Matzliach while I am not. Therefore, I made a decision to come for a visit to see what your secret is, and to watch what you do that causes you to be so successful. But mein tayere breeder, I watched you the entire Shabbos and I saw nothing extra ordinary that you do that I do not. So tell me, why is it that you are so Matzliach?"



Reb Shmelke replied, "My dear brother, watch me do a Moifes. I will tell you what you are thinking about right now." "Tell me" Reb Chaim'l said. Reb Shmelke continued, "You are thinking **שויתי ה'** – that Hashem is constantly together with you and in front of you every second of the day."

"No I am not thinking that!" Reb Chaim'l replied. "Uhh!" said Reb Shmelke. That is the reason you are not being Matzliach. If you too will live with the mindset that Hashem is constantly together with you and in front of you every second of the day and night, I promise that you will be Matzliach just like I am."

"Every morning a Jew must strengthen himself like a lion, for the yetzer hara seeks to weaken him from the very start. If he overcomes the first moments of the day, he gains strength for all that follows, and Heaven assists him in his avodah." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

The Almost Certain Death Sentence in Tiberias From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles



Rabbi Yaakov-Shimshon of Shepetovka lived the last eight years of his life in the Holy Land. When he first arrived in 1794, after docking at the port in Acco, he travelled due east, making a point of visiting all the known burial places of *tzadikim* in the *Meron-Tsfat* ('Safed') *-Tiverya* ('Tiberias') area of northern Israel.

At the end of his journey he settled in Tiverya, where he was immediately appointed to be the chief rabbi of the Ashkenazic Jewish community, so great was his reputation that preceded him of being a leading authority in Jewish Law.

In Tiberias itself, when he prayed at the grave site of the great Rabbi Akiva, an eyewitness reported that the Rabbi quoted by heart all of the statements of Rabbi Akiva in both the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

One time, a local Jew quarreled seriously with one of his Arab neighbors. The Arab summoned him to court, where according to Muslim law it seemed virtually certain that a death sentence would be decreed upon him. The terrified Jew didn't know what to do. He hurried to the home of the new Rabbi of the city and poured out his heart to him.

Rabbi Yaakov-Shimshon advised him to give a *pidyon nefesh* (soul-redemption donation) to a fellow-Jew in need. The man did so

wholeheartedly, praying that this good deed would somehow lead to his salvation.

On the day of his trial, the Jew walked with trembling steps to the courthouse which was located in the lower section of Tiverya, on the west bank of Lake Kinneret ('Sea of Galilee').

When he was near the entrance, he spotted his Arab neighbor ascending the steps to the courtroom, accompanied by his lawyer who was carrying a packet of papers, which the quaking Jew assumed to be incriminating documents.

Suddenly, there was a loud rumbling sound, followed by panicky screams and a loud splash! The Jew rubbed his eyes in disbelief. Where a broad staircase had stood a moment earlier, there was now a chaotic pile of rubble.

The structure had collapsed, throwing the two accusers into the water together with all their papers for the court. [It is unlikely that the two Arabs suffered serious injury. The Kinneret waters are calm, and near the bank they are shallow. But all the papers were certainly destroyed by the immersion.]



Later that day, the grateful man went with joy to thank Rabbi Yaakov-Shimshon ,and to tell him all about the miracle that had taken place. The Rabbi was not surprised. "It is not a miracle at all," he said dismissively. "It is a clear verse in the Torah (Deut. 15:8): '*Ki Paso'ach tiftach es yodecho lo*' -- 'For open, you must open your hand to him [the needy fellow-Jew]...'."

He went on to explain to his puzzled but still smiling guest. "The intonation on the first two words is determined by the trope (cantilation note), `*Darga Tavir*' under the '*sof*' in '*paso'ach*' (the middle letter in the second (left) word). [The Aramaic name of this tune marker,] `Darga Tavir' literally means `broken steps.' So

there you are. By opening your hand and giving *tzedakah* ('charity'), you merited that the steps should break, thereby saving your life!"

Biographical note: **Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Shepetovka** [? - 3 Sivan 5561 (? - May 1801)], a descendant of Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropole, was a student of the Maggid of Mezritch and Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz (two of the three main followers of the *Baal Shem Tov*) and a close friend of Rabbi Baruch of Mezibuz (the grandson of the *Besht*). As a great authority in Jewish Law, he earned considerable respect also in rabbinic circles. In 1794 he moved to Israel and settled in Tiberias, where he is buried.

25 Hours to Unite by R' Eliyahu Maksumov





At the start of Shabbos, we light candles. The candles stand seperately from one another. However, at the end of Shabbos when we make havdalah, the candle that we use is multi-wicked, and are touching each other, while the regular candle has one wick.

Why do the wicks touch each other by havdalah, but are seperate at the start of Shabbos?

When we enter Shabbos, we are all seperate from one another, we are so distant. We are too busy for each other, we are too busy for our family. We are too busy, that we can't connect to Hashem in the same way like we can on Shabbos.

When Shabbos enters, we daven, then we sit down to a meal and we get an opportunity to spend quality time with Hashem and to get to know and have time for our family. We discuss things, sing zemiros

and say divrei Torah. We connect with others and ultimately we create a relationship and bond with Hashem Himself.

By the end of Shabbos, everybody is at peace and united. So what do we do? We put the wicks together to display this unity.

This is the purpose of Shabbos – to bring us closer together. Take this opportunity – don't blow it! Shabbos is a time to connect to your family. Shabbos is a time to connect to Hashem. Say some Tehilim. Learn some Torah. This is an incredible opportunity. Don't squander it by sleeping all day. You're missing the boat.

The purpose of Shabbos, is to elevate yourself to a whole new realm and bring yorself higher.

בס"ד

TIDBIT

For the day

AS WATER REFLECTS...

"כמים, הפנים לפנים כן לב האדם, לאדם"

(משלי כז, יט)

"As water reflects the face, so the heart of one person to another."

Why does the possuk speak of seeing a reflection in water and not in a mirror? Because when we look at a mirror we remain upright. But when we look at our reflection in the water we need to bend down. When we bend ourselves down and humble ourselves before others, it will ultimately create a feeling of unity between the hearts.

~ R' Sholom Rokeach ZT"L – Sar Sholom of Belz ~

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

Igniting Inspiration

A man named Avi who was in prison once complained **to R' Avraham Twerski** upon his visit there how low he had sunk since he was in jail for many years for stealing even small amounts. R' Twerski told him that before a diamond is made beautiful, it is covered in dirt. With some work removing the dirt, the hidden exquisite diamond within the mud is revealed.



Likewise, we say **נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא** – the soul you placed within me is pure. For many, this precious diamond is covered in the dirt of sin. This analogy invigorated Avi as he then went for therapy and later to a halfway house.

When he was released, he joined the moving business. One day he was asked to move furniture to the halfway house since an elderly woman had left an inheritance for them. As he began to move the couch, an envelope containing 10,000 Shekel fell out. Although he was alone, he didn't take the money.

R' Twerski later told Avi upon hearing what happened 'I know many respectable people that were never in prison, who would have pocketed the money in such a situation. Didn't I tell you that we would find a diamond?!'

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Emuna is not living with all the answers, but rather knowing that Hashem is in charge with all our questions.

A mother whose son died aged 45, related the following to his 5th grade teacher. The teacher once told his students to write a positive trait of each of the 25 boys in the class. The teacher organized the list of traits of each child written about him. He then proceeded to give it to each child. The mother said that since the day he received this paper, her son carried it around with him and looked at it countless times to inspire him.

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An old tzadik once told R' Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) that in his younger years he was all alone with no one taking an interest in him. He said, "Had someone encouraged me during those years, I would have been a different person. I could have accomplished ten times more in my lifetime."

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After the Holocaust, the **Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum** started a gemara shiur for Holocaust survivors. At the onset of the shiur, the Rebbe inquired about each of their lives. By the time he was finished, there was no time left to learn.

The next week, the same thing took place. At the beginning of the shiur, the Rebbe asked each person, "How are you doing? Have you found a job? Is your apartment comfortable?" Again, no time for learning remained by the time he was done.

This continued for a third week and then a fourth. Finally, an attendee said, "Rebbe, with all due respect, we came here to learn. When can we start learning?"

The Rebbe replied that the gemara begins on Daf Beis. That was Daf Alef. That is, Daf Alef is happiness. The survivors were depressed and broken. The Satmar Rebbe's Daf Alef was to ensure that the attendees felt like someone cared about them."

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood Brooklyn

The Legendary Righteous Sulika of Tangiers, Morocco

Beside the graves of all the righteous rabbis buried in Fez, Morocco, is the grave of Sulika Hatzadeket Righteous Sulika,", a young woman who was killed by the Muslim authorities.



Who is Sulika, and why did she earn an eternal resting place among the Hachamim? Around the year 1830, a Jewish family by the name Hachuel lived in the Moroccan town of Tangiers. Sulika, the daughter of Chaim and Simcha, was very beautiful and remarkably modest.

She became well known among the Jews of Tangiers for her chesed, kind heart and goodwill. Chaim was a merchant by trade but was also very knowledgeable in Torah, even conducting Talmudic study groups in his home.

One day, a boy from one of the wealthiest neighboring Muslim families saw Sulika and desired to marry her. The young man's father threatened Sulika's family that if they would not allow Sulika to convert to Islam and marry his son, they would suffer bitterly.

Overcome with fear, the family instructed Sulika to hide in the home of a close friend. A short while later, soldiers came to the Hachuel home to arrest Sulika. When they did not find the girl there, they arrested the mother, instead, and kept her in confinement until Sulika would be found.

Upon hearing what happened to her mother, Sulika immediately surrendered to the authorities, who brought her before a Muslim judge. The rich neighbour accused her of having converted to Islam and wanting to return to Judaism, a crime punishable by death under Islamic law.

The court ordered Sulika to return to Islam or face execution. But Sulika remained defiant, "A Jewess I was born and a Jewess I wish to die," she proudly proclaimed, prepared to die Al Kiddush Hashem.

The judge was furious and threatened Sulika with torture. Sulika replied, "I will patiently bear the weight of your chains, I will give my limbs to be torn piece-meal by wild beasts . . . but I will smile at your indignation and the anger of your prophet. Since neither he nor you have been able to overcome a weak female!"

They placed Sulika in a lightless dungeon with an iron collar around her neck and chains on both her hands and feet. They then decided to send her to the Sultan to decide her fate.

The Chachamim of Fez were inspired by Sulika's dedication. But they were ordered by the Sultan's judge to extract a confession from the girl that she had previously converted to Islam. The Chachamim went to Sulika and explained that the Jews of Morocco could be endangered if the authorities didn't get what they want.

Sulika responded with firm resolve that she would maintain her untainted commitment to Judaism until the very end, and the hachamim rejoiced in their hearts.

At the final stages of the trial, one of the sons of the Sultan saw Sulika and, similarly taken by her beauty, made her a lavish offer. If she agreed to convert to Islam and marry him, the prince promised, her life would not only be saved, but she would live in wealth and honor.

Without hesitation, Sulika rebuffed the offer and announced that she could not betray G-d. In spite of his embarrassment by her

initial rejection, the prince tried to convince her once more, but Sulika stood firm in her decision. Her tragic fate was sealed, and the prince ordered her immediate execution.

Just before she was killed, the executioner offered her one last chance to convert. Sulika remained firm: "Do not make me linger—behead me at once—for dying as I do, innocent of any crime, the G-d of Abraham will avenge my death!"



In the morning Brochos we say, **הנותן לשכוי בינה להבחין בין יום ובין לילה.** We thank hashem who gives the rooster the understanding to distinguish between day and night. But doesn't the fox understand this too? Is it only the rooster which has this insight? Don't other animals also know the difference between day and night?



Chazal explain that the rooster crows while it is still dark. Already while it is still dark, it has the insight to realise that dawn is near. Already then, it knows to stay strong!

This is the significance of the rooster's insight. It knows to keep going even in the dark, because day is almost here!

In Perek Shira we list the pesukim that every animal says. Which Pasuk does the rooster say? **לישועתך קויתי ה'** - ***"For Your salvation, I hope, Hashem."*** - Even in dark times, the rooster reminds us not to lose faith in Hashem!

Don't Worry

Rabbi Yisrael Alten, an elderly Yid from Poland related:



Before the war, he met a very old Yid in Warsaw. The old man was a glassblower, and he was carrying heavy glass on his back. This Yid was over ninety years old, healthy and strong as a lion!

Reb Yisrael approached him and offered his assistance. The glassblower said, "I don't need your help. I may be over ninety, but I have strength and I don't need your help."

"And", he added, "I will tell you why I merited this."

"When I was young, I did a big favour for **Reb Bunim of Peshischa**." Reb Bunim asked me, "What can I wish you in return?"

So I asked the Rebbe to bless me, that I can marry off all my children comfortably, and always have some money in my pocket. Reb Bunim replied with these exact words: ***' I bless you, that you should never worry. For one who worries, Hashem does not provide for. But for one who asks of Him, He gives.'***

The glassblower continued, "The blessing was fulfilled, I married off my children prosperously, and I always had money. The blessing was not to worry, which would automatically bring about all the other blessings."

This is a general rule for all matters in life. Shidduchim, parnasa, health, children. Everything should be handled without worry. Yes, you must do your hishtadlus, but leave out the worrying!

What Time Is It? By R' Ephraim Eliyahu Shapiro



My father Zatz'l was in Eretz Yisrael 1951-1953. During that time, he got close to many gedoilei Yisrael.

On one of the first Shabbosos that my father was in Eretz Yisrael, he went to visit the **Chazon Ish Zt'l**. At some point, The Chazon Ish turned to **Reb Shloimke Berman** (son-in-law of the **Steipler**) who was also present and asked him , "What time is it?"

My father knew that the Chazon Ish did not use the eirev on Shabbos in B'nei B'rak. And he understood that by extension, his nephew would not use it either. So, he is not wearing a watch, so why ask him the time?

My father remembered that in America, he was told that since he would be meeting the Chazon Ish, he should know that the Chazon Ish had the most beautiful way in giving mussar.

So, my father understood, that by asking Reb Shloimke, he really meant him! My father looked at his own wrist, and realised that he was wearing a watch, and the question was really directed at him, and he shouldn't be wearing one.

So, my father took off his watch. The Chazon Ish broke out into a big smile, realising that my father chapped the subtle mussar. He handed over his watch to the Chazon Ish, who put it on the seforim shelf behind him, and said these words:

"Now that I have something that belongs to you, I know that you are going to visit me again! You have to come and visit me again, because I have your watch!"

That beautiful way of the Chazon Ish speaking, led to over 100 private visits between my father and the Chazon Ish! And where did that stem from? That way of speaking. That way of giving mussar. That way of showing love. That way of relating to people to make them feel cherished.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein zt"l Don't Stop, Don't Drop

I'd like to share with you a story that moved me deeply, and which you will be able to implement it with your own students and children and help make a profound difference in their lives.

Donna was a fourth-grade teacher at a small school in Michigan. One day, she assigned her class the following project.



They were to fill a piece of paper with thoughts and ideas and place it in their notebook or binder. In specific, these thoughts were to be about things each student believed they could not do. With these instructions in place, the students got to work.

Sometime later, the students' papers had been filled. One student wrote, "I can't kick the soccer ball past second base. I can't do long division with more than three numerals. I can't get Debbie to like me." Another student had put down, "I can't do ten push-ups. I can't hit the ball over the left-field fence. I can't eat only one cookie."

The teacher too was completing this assignment herself. She had written, "I can't get John's mother to come in for a PTA meeting. I

can't get my daughter to put gas in her car. I can't get my son Allen to use words instead of fists."

At this point, all the students had finished. Donna then continued with her instructions. "Fold your papers, bring them up to the front and place them in this empty shoe box." All the students followed along. And then Donna headed to the classroom's door. "Now follow me," she said. Out into the hallway she went, where she and her students made their way straight to the janitor's closet.

Halfway down the hall, she opened the closet, rummaged around, and there she found it. A shovel. With now a shovel in one hand and a shoe box in the other, she marched outside to the farthest corner of the playground, alongside her students. And there, the students began to dig.

They were to bury their papers stating everything they couldn't do. It took quite a few minutes, as all the fourth graders wanted a turn, until a nice sized hole had been made. The box, stuffed with all the papers written by the students, was then placed at the bottom of the ditch and covered with dirt. Thirty-one fourth graders stood around the gravesite, each of them having at least one page of "I can'ts" now buried underground.

Donna then spoke up. "Boys and girls, gather around in a circle and stand with your heads bowed. The students followed along, positioning themselves close to one another, the gravesite situated in the centre. And then they lowered their heads, as Donna began the eulogy.

"Friends, we have gathered today to honour the memory of 'I can't. While he was with us on earth, he touched the lives of everyone, some more than others. His name had been mentioned in every public building, every school, and throughout the state halls, city capitals, and homes and rooms in our country. Now, we have provided "I can't" with a final resting place and a headstone.

"He is survived by his brother and sister – 'I can' and 'I will. But they are not as known as their famous relative, 'I can't.' Perhaps one day, with your help, they will make an even bigger mark on the world. May 'I can't' rest in peace and may everyone present pick up their lives and move forward in his absence. Amen."

These students would never forget this day. The activity was symbolic of life. Writing "I can't," burying it and delivering a eulogy drove a powerful message into the hearts and minds of every student.

But Donna wasn't done yet.

As the eulogy concluded, she led the students back to the classroom. And there, they held a celebration with cookies, popcorn and fruit juices. As part of the celebration, the teacher cut out a large tombstone, wrote the words "I can't" at the top, added "Rest in Peace" in the middle, and included a date at the bottom.

The paper tombstone hung on the teacher's classroom's wall for the rest of the year. On that few occasions when a student forgot and said that they can't, Donna simply pointed to the tombstone. The student then remembered that "I can't" was dead and chose to rephrase themselves.

Years later, whenever these students heard those words "I can't," they'd see images of that funeral and remember that "I can't" is dead.

There is no such thing as "I can't." There is "I won't" or "I don't," but not "I can't." I remember this growing up.

My father was in the marines, and in the home, he raised our family, the message of the above story rang true. There was no such thing as "I can't."

My father's first real experience as a solider in the U.S. Army was in Savannah, Georgia. In the scorching heat and surrounded by murky swamps, my father needed to carry an eighty-pound backpack for

twenty-six miles. My father was very slender and didn't have a strong frame that would make it easy to carry something heavy so far. Lifting it and remaining at a standstill was a feat. To carry it for miles and miles was something else.

"There's something else I should tell you," added the General. "As you make your way through the swamps to your destination, remember the deadly crocodiles and venomous snakes. You might meet one of them. So we have a saying: 'Where you drop is where you stop.' Be mindful of this. We will not pick you up and we will not carry you. Where you give up and drop to your knees, that will be where you stay.

"It was my first time carrying eighty pounds," my father recounted. "I completed the twenty-six miles, through moments I was wide awake and half asleep. At any point I felt like giving up, I reminded myself, 'Where you drop is where you stop.' I thought that for sure there is no way I could do it. But I was wrong. There was no such thing as 'I can't.'"

Such is true of our physical life and its challenges. But he same can be said of our spiritual struggles too. Sometimes, we must carry an eighty-pound backpack, despite us feeling way too overwhelmed and fatigued. "I can't!" you'll shout. "I just can't do it!" When you say that, remember the above. Where you drop is where you stop.

We must bury the "I can't" in our lives and believe that whatever we set our minds to, we can make it. Every *neshama* is part of G-d, and He's blown that into our bodies to give us life. We are therefore part of G-d. And there's one thing about G-d that we must always remember: He doesn't have the words "I can't" in His vocabulary. He buried that a while ago. There is nothing in the world that G-d says "I can't" to. And that part of G-d exists in all of us individually and as a nation.

We are a people that is stiff-necked. But with that, the first words we ever said to G-d as a nation were, "*Naaseh v'nishma* – We will do,

and we will hear." *Naaseh* is an affirmative. I can. I will do it. That is who we are as a people. Relentless, unstoppable, always moving. G-d saw in us a nation who all said, "We can."

Even if your backpack is bigger than you, put it on and march onward. You'll make it. There isn't "I can't."

You will.

The Siddur Speaks

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, related: **Rav Chaim Kreiswirth, zt"l**, was once very sick and came to visit the **Steipler Gaon, zt"l**. My father the Steipler said to him, "The Mishnah we say in Birchas HaTorah by Shacharis says **אֵלּוּ דְבָרִים שֶׁאֵין לָהֶם שִׁעוּר... בִּקּוּר חוֹלִים וְהַכְנָסַת כַּלָּה וּלְוָיַת הַמֵּת** 'These are the things that have no limit,' and it goes on to specify, Bikur Cholim, Hachnasas Kallah, and Lavayas HaMeis, visiting the sick, raising funds to help marry off a Kallah, and escorting the deceased at a Levayah.



Why is Hachnasas Kallah, helping a Kallah, placed in between Bikur Cholim and Levayas HaMeis, visiting the sick and escorting the deceased?

Apparently, Hachnasas Kallah acts as a barrier between the patient and the funeral. My advice to you is to involve yourself in Hachnasas Kallah."

Rav Chaim Kreiswirth followed his advice, and Baruch Hashem he was healed and went on to live for many more years!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yechiel Spero writes about the power of a compliment.

A compliment has the power to change people's lives in an instant. It can give them a boost and transform the way they look at themselves, and the way they look at life.



Rav Spero said, "I once took a young man to **Rav Shalom Kamenetsky**, a Rosh Yeshivah in the Yeshivah of Philadelphia. The boy needed a little pick-me-up. Rav Shalom cited the Pasuk in Mishlei (27:2), יְהַלֶּלְךָ זָר וְלֹא־פִיךָ נָכְרִי וְאַל־שְׂפָתֶיךָ — ***Let another praise you, not your own mouth.'*** Simply understood, this means that a person should not praise himself, but leave the compliments to others.

The Vilna Gaon has a different explanation to this. 'Yehalelcha Zar — Let another praise you.' However, 'V'Lo — if not,' then, 'Ficha — you should praise yourself.'

A person must be able to look in the mirror and feel good about himself. He must know his talents and his abilities!"

"The one who trusts in Hashem does not measure success by outcomes, but by the clarity that every moment is guided from Above. This awareness frees him from fear and fills his life with quiet strength." ~ Chazon Ish.

Peninim on the Torah

אחרי ד' אלקיכם תלכו ***Hashem, your G-d, shall you follow.*** *(13:5)*

Horav Yaakov Galinsky, zt'l relates that when the **Chazon Ish zt'l** moved to Bnei Brak, nothing much was there. He wanted to build a Torah community. Someone had to be the first candidate. He accepted it upon himself to be that someone.

After a short while, the Chazon Ish said to Rav Galinsky, "Did you see what the rosh ha'ir, mayor, of the 'city' (Rav Gershtenkorn) did for me? He placed a streetlight near my house to illuminate the street.



I derived a powerful lesson as a result of this light. When I walk outside at night, I notice my shadow. When I move away from the light, my shadow looms larger in size. The farther I move away, the larger and taller my shadow becomes. This taught me that the closer one is to the light, the smaller he is. Indeed, if he stands beneath the light, he projects no shadow. The further he moves away, the larger he becomes."

The lesson is: One who is connected to Hashem, to His light and the light of Torah, does not see himself, because one cannot perceive self-hood in the presence of such light. When he sees more of himself, it is a sign that he is distant from the Torah.

"Speak gently, and you will avoid anger." ~ Ramban. [Iggeres HaRamban].

Peninim on the Torah

כי יהיה בך ... כי פתח תפתח את ידך לו והעבט תעביטנו ה' מחסרו אשר יחסר לו - ***If there shall be a destitute person among you… You shall surely open your hand and lend him money, as much as he needs, whatever he is lacking.*** *(15:7,8)*

"Whatever he is lacking" is a tall order. In other words, someone who has been quite wealthy and lives a far from frugal lifestyle is suddenly confronted with a reversal of his fortunes. Instead of being on top of the mountain, he is suddenly thrust down to the cellar, with no support. Rather than give him sufficient funds in order to make ends meet and live a lower or middle-class lifestyle, the Torah instructs us to provide for him, "whatever he is lacking."

Should we have the ability, we would be obligated to provide this formerly affluent man with the luxuries that had heretofore been a part of his life.

We all know wonderful baalei tzedakah, charitable, generous people, who easily part with cheques, but refuse to visit or come face-to-face with the poor man, or the individual who is in need. Empathising with the indigent provokes feelings of guilt. Some well-meaning people just do not want to come face-to-face with the fellow who is in need. Giving the cheque does not exonerate a person from empathising with his friend's plight. He must be nosei b'ol im chaveiro, carrying the yoke with his friend. See it, feel it, get into it, and then help him. Let him know that someone cares. For some, receiving a cheque without meeting/speaking to the benefactor is for some an experience they would rather forgo.

In order to appreciate the following story, one must first have somewhat of an idea concerning the personality of **Reb Chaim Gelb, zl**. Those readers from New York, who go back over fifty years, will remember Reb Chaim as a permanent fixture at weddings and in shuls all over Williamsburg. Reb Chaim was an immigrant who came to the shores of the United States in 1901. From a spiritual vantage

point, America was a disaster. Kashrus and Shabbos had been left in Europe. The handful of observant Jews was the exception to the rule. The prospects of a young man growing up observant were bleak. Poverty was rampant, especially for one who insisted on observing Shabbos. The job market was open only to one who was willing to work six days a week, with the sixth day being Shabbos kodesh.

Some remained strongly committed to the religious lifestyle they had experienced in their European hometown. Reb Chaim Gelb was one of them. He was a man whose love of Hashem and His people superseded all else. His entire life was devoted to helping his brothers and sisters, but it was not only Jews whom he helped. He is vividly remembered as dashing through the snow in sub-zero weather numerous times to bring fresh cake and hot coffee to shivering firefighters battling a blaze.



Others remember him purchasing hot knishes for young yeshivah students whose parents could not afford even basic staples, let alone delicacies. He felt, and obviously so, that just because a boy was poor, he should not be deprived of some of the delicacies enjoyed during holidays by his wealthier friends.

I remember him going from wedding to wedding, collecting bills and coins in his outstretched yamulka. He then covertly transferred the collected funds to those in great need.

Reb Chaim Gelb's life was the living embodiment of lovingkindness. He left this world imparting this legacy to all those who seek an exemplar of how the mitzvah of chesed should be executed. He

taught that empathy can best be realised when one has a ringside seat to observe the poverty and pain of those whom he benefits. Veritably, the beneficiary benefits regardless, but true chesed is performed with empathy, which can only be felt first hand. When the benefactor personally observes the abject poverty to which some are subjected, he will give with feeling. He will be helping someone whom he knows, someone who is now family.

A family on the Lower East Side (Manhattan) was in dire need of assistance. When Reb Chaim heard of their plight, he immediately went to one of his wealthy supporters and solicited his help. When he apprised him of the abject poverty that reigned in their home, the man took out his cheque book and immediately made a handsome donation. He added, "If this is insufficient, you know my address. I am always willing to help."

Reb Chaim did not settle for the cheque alone, "I insist that you come with me to their house. I want you to see first-hand how they are suffering."

The man gave all kinds of excuses but when Reb Chaim refused to budge, he went with him. They travelled by car, the businessman's car, which probably cost as much as most homes.

They arrived at the rundown block of flats which this family called home. The smell that permeated the corridors was overpowering; occupants of various nationalities lived here, and the odours of their cooking wafted through the air. The man remarked that the stench was so bad, they should have brought along a gas mask.

They walked up a number of flights of stairs, since the building was not equipped with a lift. They knocked on the door of the flat and a young woman, attired in a housecoat that had seen better days, greeted them. Reb Chaim introduced his friend to the woman, who asked them to take a seat. The chairs were ancient and remnants of different sets of furniture. No two chairs matched. They creaked

under the guests' weight, and they felt like they would give out at any moment.

The hostess opened her cool-box (prior to refrigerators, and furthermore, most people couldn't afford them) to offer them some fruit. Nothing was in it. The cool-box was empty. The woman apologised, "I have not gone shopping yet today." The truth was that she could not shop without money. Thus, the family simply starved until they could raise the money for food.

When the man whispered to Reb Chaim that he needed to use the facilities, the woman said that the lavatory was in the corridor and shared by all the occupants of that floor. He decided that he would wait.

The children burst through the door, having just come from school, "Mummy, mummy, we are starving!" Their mother replied, "You had breakfast this morning. Why are you hungry?" As soon as our guests leave, I will go to the store and buy you some goodies."

The children, aged two to seven, three boys and one girl, said that they would wait patiently. From the way they expressed themselves, the guests deduced that this was a nightly interchange. They had no food, because they had no money.

The woman asked Reb Chaim, "What brings you here today?" He explained that he just wanted to check up on their welfare. "Everything is fine," she replied. "Only my husband is having great difficulty finding a job."

The man looked at Reb Chaim and declared, "Fine, I have seen enough. I do not know how these people live." He told the woman, "Here is my card. Have your husband call me, and I will give him a job." She replied, "I am sorry, but we have no phone." "Fine, have your husband come see me. I will take care of him."

The man located a decent, furnished apartment for the family. The father was a hard worker and did very well.

The visit changed the trajectory of their lives, all because Reb Chaim understood that seeing a situation up close makes a powerful impression. By seeing the poverty with his own two eyes, he realised that dismissing them with a cheque would never do.

Before we give, we must see!

Peninim on the Torah – On Time

This vignette demonstrates the extraordinary middos, character refinement, that the **Mashgiach of Yeshivas Ohr HaChaim in Slabodka** manifest. For some people, life is all about being present on time. Anything that gets in the way that will delay him is simply not acceptable. All one has to do is watch people push and shove to get on a train, go through the doors of an event, so that he may procure the seat of his choice. If, for some reason, a person is in his way, he is pushed aside.

Some people act with refinement, never fighting over a piece of bread or a slice of pizza. They do not have to be the first ones to get bagels or pizza motzei Pesach. Some rare individuals believe in thinking of others and moving aside, so that the individual who is in a rush -- or obsessed with being first -- can pass.

The Mashgiach left his home accompanied by his student, **Horav Meir Rubman, zl** (Rosh Yeshivah of Tiferes Yisrael/Haifa). Their destination was the yeshivah, a twenty-minute walk away. Suddenly, the Mashgiach slowed his pace and began walking very slowly. Rav Rubman became concerned, lest his Rebbe was not well.

The Mashgiach motioned to him to look in front of them, where an elderly Jew was trudging along ever so slowly. He explained, "If we continue with our pace, we will soon overtake him. Let us wait until he is unable to see us, and then we will catch up. If we pass him, it will cause him to remember his youth when he, too, could walk briskly.

He has aged, and now his walking is painful. I refuse to cause a Jew pain." - It took them an hour and a half to reach their destination!

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

Long Life in The Merit of Charity

Sefer Chasidim (186) writes that there are people that do not really have the right to live in this world. They have no merits and do not deserve to live. The only reason they are alive is because others depend on them. In this lone merit, they are given a long life.

This is the meaning of the verse (Mishlei 10:2): **וּצְדָקָה תַּצִּיל מִמָּוֶת** "Tzedakah saves from death." In essence, he is saying that tzedakah is "an insurance policy." If other people depend on you to take care of them, you must be granted life in order to continue helping them, even if you do not deserve it.

The Chasam Sofer says a similar thing to explain the pasuk (Devarim 28:11): **וְהוֹתִרְךָ ה' לְטוֹבָה בִּפְרִי בִטְנְךָ** "And Hashem will grant you goodness with the fruit of your womb."

The Rambam writes in a letter to his son that a man is fortunate if he finishes his life's work quickly. If this is true, one may ask why we see many good people who live to a ripe old age while remaining productive. Didn't they finish their life's work when they were young? Why are they still around at an old age?

The answer must be that Hashem keeps them alive for the benefit of their children and students. They are granted a good and long life on this earth to be "with the fruit of their womb" – in order to raise and educate the next generations. It is certain that the same is true regarding tzedakah. If one supports others, they are dependent on him. Therefore, his life will be lengthened so that he can continue helping others and supporting the poor and needy.

Buried Next to The Miser

Sefer Otzros Hatorah relates the following wonderful story:

The Tosafos Yomtov served as the Rov of the city of Krakow. He is buried in the corner of the cemetery, right next to the fence. It is related that the reason for this is because there was a wealthy man in the city name Shimon who was known as "Shimon the Miser." He was given this nickname because he never would give a dime to a poor person.



At that time, there were two men in town - the butcher and the baker - who were known for distributing lots of money to the poor. One day, Shimon the Miser died. Since no one liked him, he was buried at the far end of the cemetery next to the fence.

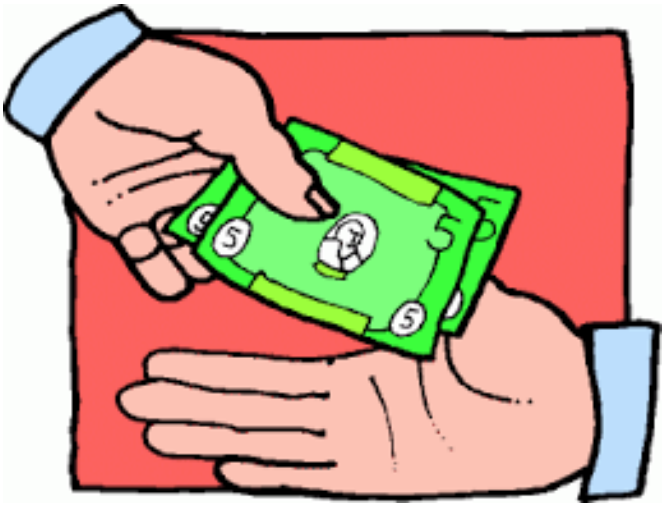
After he died, however, something strange happened. Suddenly, the butcher and baker stopped giving money to the poor. This caused a big uproar, and the poor people were greatly upset.

The Tosafos Yomtov called the two men to come see him and explain what was going on. They then revealed to the Rov that the money they were giving to tzedakah was not their own. The truth was that Shimon the Mister had been giving them money to give to the needy, and he had made them promise not to reveal that the funds were coming from him. He was a very humble person, and he didn't want anyone to know about his good deeds. Now that he had died, they no longer had any money to give away.

The Tosafos Yomtov was amazed by the story. After he died, it was discovered that he had written in his will that he wanted to be buried right next to Shimon the Miser. And so it was.

Heaven Tested Him To See If He Would Give "100 Times"

Sefer Otzar Yisroel relates that one of the children of the **Chacham Tzvi zt"l** married a child of a moneychanger. The Chacham Tzvi wondered what zechus this moneychanger had to become his mechutin.



At the wedding, he asked the man to tell him something about himself. The man related that a poor man had once approached him and asked for charity. His assistant handed the man a small coin, but the pauper refused to accept it. He said that he would only accept a "rendel" (a more valuable coin). The assistant looked at the moneychanger, who handed the poor man what he asked for. The poor man then left and changed his clothes. He returned and asked for another donation, and he received it. He did this over and over again until he had done it 100 times!

Finally, he asked the moneychanger, "Do you recognize me?" The moneychanger told him, "Yes. I know that you have been here 100 times." The man asked, "If you knew it was me, why did you keep giving me more money every time I came back?"

The moneychanger said, "On the verse: **נָתֹון תִּתֵּן לֹו** 'You shall surely give him', Rashi says: **אפילו מאה פעמים** -'Even 100 times.' I never really understood this. Why would someone have to give 100 times? Would any poor person be so brazen as to ask him for money so many

times? You helped me answer my question because I now see that it is possible to fulfil this commandment." The poor man then revealed that he had been sent from Shomayim to test him and he returned all of the money.

The Chacham Tzvi now understood why this man merited to become his mechutin.



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Never Too Late to Change

It states in this week's parashah (13:5) - **אחרי ה' תלכו... ובו תדבקון אלקיכם** , ***"You shall follow Hashem, your G-d… and cleave yourself to Him."***

Whenever the Torah writes the word **אחר** it means nearby, and when it states **אחרי** it means further away (Rashi, Ber 15:1).

The Chofetz Chaim and the Imrei Emes travelled together by train to the Knesiyah HaGedolah **תרפ"ג** The Chofetz Chaim asked, "Why does the Torah tell us to follow Hashem **אחרי**, from far behind?"

The Chofetz Chaim answered his own question. Even if you are far from Hashem because of your sins, do what you can and follow after Hashem. Never say that you are too far away to follow Hashem."

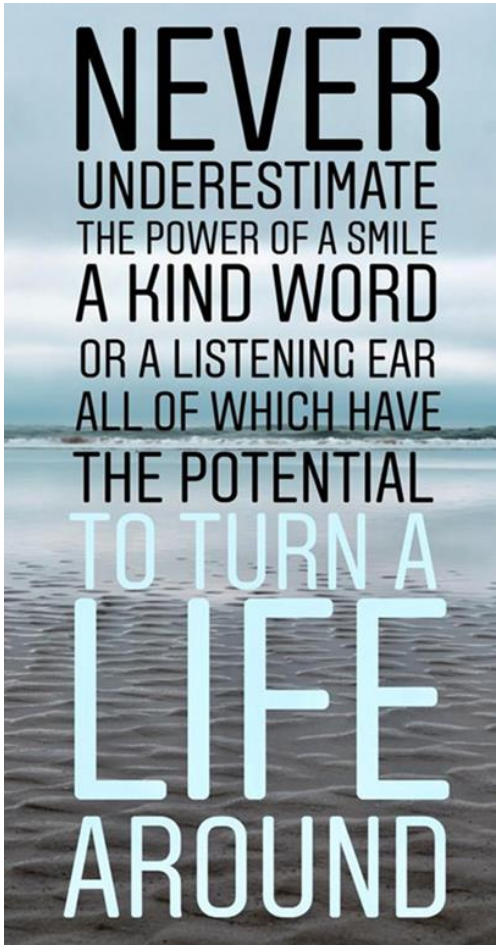
The Imrei Emes added that the end of the Pasuk states **ובו תדבקון**, ***"cleave yourself to Him"*** telling us that if we follow Hashem even when we feel distant from Him, it will elevate us to very high levels and then we will be attached to Hashem.

Many people feel it is too late to change their ways. They say, "Do you know how old I am? Do you have any idea how many times I tried to change my ways and failed? Change, unfortunately, isn't for me."

But this isn't true. Teshuvah is for everyone, change is possible at every stage of life, and all aveiros will be forgiven.

The Baal HaTurim notes that the final letters of (11:27) **אתַ הברכהַ אשרַ תשמעוַ** spell **תורה** This indicates that if you want to do teshuvah, begin by studying Torah.

Be Happy, It's Elul Today!



Every year, we read parashas Re'eh either on rosh chodesh Elul or during the week of rosh chodesh Elul. Therefore, the roshei teivos of **ראש אלול היום**, is ראי"ה - ***"Today is the beginning of Elul."*** This means it is a time of immense joy when we begin to purify ourselves before Hashem.

Just see how many times the word **שמחה** is mentioned in this week's parashah!

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l said that a person could earn parnassah and even become wealthy if he works with simchah. What he does doesn't matter as much as his happy disposition. If he is happy, he can sell sawdust and splinters and become incredibly wealthy!

The hint is from this week's parashah (16:15) **יברכך ה' אלקיך... ובכל כי מעשה ידיך והיית אך שמח** ***"Hashem will bless…all the work of your hands, and you will only be happy."***

Hashem will bless your deeds, regardless of what you do. The condition is that you must be happy.

Therefore, ideally, one should work in a field that he enjoys and finds pleasure in because when he does this, it will be easier for him to be happy with his work, and simchah is mesugal for parnassah in abundance.

The Targum Yonoson translates (16:15) **והיית אך שמח** like this: **וְתֶהֱוֵוֹן בְּרַם חַדְוָן בְּאַצְלָחוּתָא**, "You will always be happy with your success." This means that **הצלחה** is synonymous with **שמחה**.

In a letter to his son, the **Beis Aharon** writes, "A person must work on simchah more than all other good middos."

Once, the Beis Aharon rebuked his son for not being happy. His son asked, " I have other faults, and you don't speak to me about them? So why do you rebuke me specifically about happiness?"

The Beis Aharon replied, "You have Yiras Shamayim, and when you do something wrong, I know you will regret it, even if I don't tell you. So, there is no reason for me to rebuke you in those areas. But you think that being sad isn't so severe. Therefore, I have to train you in the importance of always being happy."

Giving Tzedakah

This week's parashah discusses the great mitzvah of giving tzedakah. There is a type of tzedakah that everyone can do. One doesn't need money to perform it.

The Chinuch writes, "Give tzedakah with a good heart and give chizuk (support/encouragement) in any way you can. And now, my son, don't think tzedakah is solely for the poor, those who lack bread and clothing. The Torah wants us to do gemilus chasadim and that we should help people in any way that we can.

Whoever helps his friend with money, or in any other way, and with kind words, it is considered tzedakah, and his reward is great. "

This is a great revelation. Tzedakah isn't only with money and isn't only for the poor. It means giving of yourself to help others. You can do that with kind words, even a smile, and many other ways.

One form of tzedakah is teaching Torah to others.

Reb Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe vol.7) writes, "I paskened that every talmid chacham is obligated to study with others. The proof is from Reb Preida, who taught his student a sugyah 400 times, although, at this time, he could have studied himself. He was rewarded for this and lived until he was four hundred years old!

Be aware that when you say a kind word to someone or when you smile at someone. You don't know what you are accomplishing. Perhaps your smile or encouraging words saved someone's shalom bayis. Perhaps you saved someone's spirituality.

All the good deeds that will come from your good deed will be attributed to your merits.

The Shevet Mussar encourages everyone to be generous with their words and to give chizuk to those who are broken-hearted. He calls it "tzedakah that doesn't cost money." We can literally save a Yiddishe neshamah with words.

Reb Gad'l Eisner said, that with one kind word everything can be fixed." How true this is. How powerful one kind word can be.

Some people suffer from loneliness, and that loneliness can be very painful. There are many lonely people, and with a smile and a kind word you can make their day and much more than that!

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l said that a day you don't do a chesed is a dead day.

The Shlah HaKadosh says something similar from the pasuk (Tehillim **52:3**) **חסד א״ל כל היום** , which he translates that every day you should do chesed. **כל היום**, every day, do a chesed. Don't let a day pass without chesed.

"Teshuvah is found in the smallest turn of the heart." ~ Rabbeinu Yonah.

למודי משה – R' Moshe Harris - The Mitzvah Of Giving Tzedokah



The mitzvah of giving tzedokah, is among the mitzvos that define Jewish communal life. Rather than taking an individualistic and distant approach from one another, the Torah urges us to be attentive to the needs of the other, and to come to the assistance of those who require it.

The mitzvah of tzedokah is so important, Chazal teach us: **שקולה צדקה כנגד כל המצות** – the mitzvah of tzedokah is equal to all other mitzvos of the Torah" (Bava Basra 9a).

Chazal also say: **גדולה צדקה שמקרבת את הגאולה**– "the mitzvah of tzedokah is of tremendous importance, as it brings closer the redemption" (Bava Basra 10a).

Chazal quantify the minimum obligation of giving tzedokah as one third of a (Torah) shekel—an amount that even a poor person, himself dependent on tzedokah, must give (Bava Basra 9a; see Aruch HaShulchan, Yoreh De'ah 248:4; Derech Emunah, Matnos Aniyim 7:68). This is a very small sum. However, people who can afford it are required to give one tenth of their income to tzedokah, which can reach a respectable amount.

The simple understanding in the above Gemara is as we said, that one who his careful with tzedokah will become wealthy, however, **Rav Shimon Schwab** suggests an alternative interpretation. The Gemara in Nedorim (38a) lists four prerequisites for prophecy – strength, wealth, wisdom, and humility.

As there were many prophets who were not rich in the traditional sense, the Rambam explains the requirement of wealth as an obligation to be happy with one's lot in life, based on the teaching of the Mishnah in Avos (4:1): **איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו** – the true definition of wealth is being content with one's portion".

Along these lines, Rav Schwab notes that when a person gives tzedokah, he naturally becomes happier. This does not take place through miraculous means, but rather because human psychology is such that a person who gives to others appreciates his blessings and becomes content with his lot.

When the Gemara promises that somebody who separates ma'aser his possessions will become wealthy, it is this form of wealth to which Chazal were referring.

למודי משה – R' Moshe Harris – Four Cookies



The Holocaust was an unprecedented, cataclysmic tragedy of epic proportion. Probably it was the greatest kelalah [curse] since the destruction of the Botei Mikdosh. Yet, as we all know, there were instances in which the horrors catalysed great blessing, at times being realised only many decades later.

The following story is both heart-warming and inspiring. A young boy arose to face another day of hunger and privation in the ghetto. There was no food. Perhaps his mother had something for him to drink. His mother replied that they had nothing. He might try knocking on their next-door neighbour's door. Maybe he would be luckier there. The ghetto in which they

lived still maintained a viable cheder. He said that on his way to cheder he would stop by their neighbour and ask for a drink.

The boy soon left for cheder. He knocked on his neighbour's door, and he was greeted by a kindly woman. He related to her that he was famished, his throat was parched. Could she please give him a drink of anything?

The woman looked at him as he stood there, tears streaming down his cheeks. "I will not be able to learn today in cheder if I do not have a drink," he pleaded. The woman went to her kitchen and brought out a cup of coffee. She said to him, "If you are thirsty, it means that you probably have had nothing to eat either. Here, take this with you. It is all I have, but you are welcome to it."

She proceeded to give him four cookies. The boy munched those cookies, savouring every crumb. Coffee and cookies constituted a dream come true. Today he would really be able to learn. Fast forward fifty years. The kind woman survived the war and moved to America, where she raised a frum, observant family. She was not aging gracefully, having to deal with a number of physical ailments. It was suggested that she see a surgeon to determine what course of treatment to take.

After meeting with one of the premier surgeons in the tri-state area, it was decided she was to undergo five different procedures in one surgical session. It would take time, but this surgeon was able to work with various teams under his direction. The problem was the price, which was in the vicinity of one million dollars. For whatever reason, insurance was not an option.

The family decided that their mother required the procedures in order to live. They would all pool their assets and pay for the surgery. The day of the surgery arrived. It took hours, but, at the end of the day, the surgeon came out and gave them the good news: the surgeries had been successful. After some recuperation, their mother would be fine.

The surgeon went through the billing process with the family, adding up each surgery, and, as earlier proposed, the total came to about one million dollars. The family read through the list of procedures and expenses. They were shocked when they came to the total, not because the price had changed, but because what was stamped next to the total: **Paid!**

The surgeon explained that the surgeries had been paid for by their mother some fifty years earlier. Four cookies! He then shared his life story, heralding back to the day when, as a starving cheder student, he had knocked on their mother's door and asked for a drink. The cup of coffee and four cookies that she so "generously" gave him saved him that day and encouraged him to continue.

Her kindness remained an inspiration to him throughout his youth and adult life. Ever since the war had ended, he had searched for her – to meet her once again, to repay her favour. For fifty years, he had never despaired of one day finding her. When she entered his office and told her story, he recognised her. The four cookies had come full circle. The curse of hunger catalysed their mother's kindness, transferring a curse into a blessing. (Peninim on the Torah)

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, once met a man and asked him, "What do you do?" The man responded by telling him what his job was. Rav Yisroel once again asked him, "What do you do?" The individual once again responded with the type of business he worked in.

This did not faze Rav Yisroel, and he once again asked the man, "What do you do?" Again, the man responded, somewhat impatiently, with the type of business with which he was involved.

Finally, Rav Yisroel told the man, "I am asking you what you do, and you keep telling me what Hashem does!"

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

How Big Are Your Ears?



There is a short story about a poor wagon driver who was broken-hearted after his young son had tragically died of pneumonia. Because of his extreme poverty, he had no choice but to go back to work immediately after the funeral. He was hired to drive a group of wealthy businessmen to another city.

In the middle of the trip, the wagon driver started mumbling about his son. "He was such a good boy... it was only a cough…." The passengers were annoyed by the sounds of the wagon driver's moans and groans. They shouted at him to stop bothering them. The wagon driver became silent.

A few hours later, he started moaning and groaning again. As before, the passengers screamed at him to stop bothering them. This happened a few times, until they reached an inn. The passengers went inside to get something to eat and drink. The wagon driver remained outside to feed his horse. As he was feeding his horse, he repeated the story about his son's death. The horse nodded its head from time to time. It seemed to the wagon driver that the horse was listening to him. He finally had found a sympathetic ear to listen to his sad story. (**Rav Pam on Chumash by Rabbi Sholom Smith**)

A number-of-years ago, a man walking the streets of New York City was stopped by a man holding a gun. At gunpoint, the stranger told the sad story of what he was going through. With great emotion, he poured-out his many problems. After an hour, he was finished speaking and put away his gun. He apologized to his victim for frightening him. He explained that he had been trying for weeks to

find a sympathetic ear to listen to his problems. He was unable to find anyone, so he had to try desperate means. (Love Your Neighbour by **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin**, as heard from Rabbi Chayim Zaitchik)

When the Torah discusses the topics of giving tzedakah and doing chesed it says, כִּי־פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ "You shall open up your hand…and provide whatever is lacking to him." (Devarim 15:8) The words, "to him" seem to be extra. In actuality, those words teach us the importance of dealing with every needy person as a unique individual. There is no concept of "one size fits all" when it comes to giving tzedakah or doing acts of chesed.

The Ba'al Haturim, quoting the Sifri, says that if the poor man is used to eating bread, give him bread. If he is used to eating delicacies, give him delicacies. Rashi says that you should even give him a horse to ride on and a servant to run in front of him, if that is what he was used to. Even if you are unable to give the poor man the money that he needs, you can still fulfil the mitzvah of doing chesed to him.

Rav Pam zt"l says that doing an act of chesed does not necessarily require much money, time, or effort. It can be as simple a chesed as listening to someone unburden his problems. Every human being needs someone to listen to him. When you do so, that shows that you care.

A tzedakah collector once remarked that the best donation that he received each year came from a man who lived on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. After a few questions, the listener realized that the collector was speaking about the Gadol Hador, **Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l**.

Although Rav Moshe's donation was not a substantial one, he made the tzedakah collector feel valued. He took the tzedakah collector's hands in his own, gave him brachos and listened to him unburden himself of his problems.

The Talmud (Bava Basra 9B) says whoever consoles a poor person with words of comfort and encouragement receives eleven blessings, almost double the blessings received for giving him money.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l (in Chovas HaShmirah, as quoted by Rabbi Pliskin) says that we have a moral obligation to boost the spirits of someone who is dejected, by speaking with him at length.

A student once saw **Rabbi Yisroel Salanter zt"l** standing on a street corner, talking and joking with a stranger. The student was surprised since Rabbi Salanter zt"l usually had a very serious demeanour. He questioned his rebbe's actions. Rabbi Salanter zt"l explained that the stranger had problems that were weighing very heavily on him, and he wanted to alleviate his depression (Ohr Yisroel, as quoted by Rabbi Pliskin).

We all have challenges in life. We all need someone to listen to us, at times. We all need a sympathetic ear to hear us as we unburden ourselves. Even if we have no solutions to others' problems, simply listening to them can help make a difference in their lives.

Parshah Pearls - No Middle Way *(Ma'ayanah shel Torah)*

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה "See, I have placed before you today blessings and curses" (11:26).

A Jew must know that when it comes to serving G-d and performing Mitzvos, there is no middle road, says the **Seforno**. Whatever he does is either right or wrong. If it is right, he will earn himself a blessing; if it is wrong, he will receive a curse.

This should not be confused with Midos, where the exact opposite is true. There, the middle path is known as the golden medium, because it is the ideal; but that is not the case in the realm of Torah and Mitzvos.

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

כִּי־יִהְיֶה בְךָ אֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחַד אַחֶיךָ ... לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן



A beggar once came to the door of a young Jewish couple, who were recently married. Just minutes before, the husband and wife had sat down to their noonday meal. The husband, a wealthy merchant, closed his business every day at noon and returned home for a sumptuous lunch. Prepared with love and care, his wife always tried to make his lunch break as pleasant as possible before he returned to work. The couple had not been married long, and in truth, they did not know much about each other's past. The husband hadn't been born into a wealthy home, but he was a modest and kindly man. All the wife knew for sure was that her husband had once been a poor man, but the wheel of fortune had turned and he was now the proprietor of a successful business. Yet despite his newfound riches, the husband had continued to lead a simple life. Generous and giving, the memory of his own misfortune drove him to dispense Tzedakah liberally to anyone who asked for help.

The knock on the door that day had been nothing out of the ordinary. Poor people were always coming to ask for a donation, and those collecting money for a good cause knew they would be well received. But this time, the voice on the other side of the door had been especially pitiful. "Please, please have pity on a poor Jew," the pauper had pleaded desperately. "It's been days since I've had anything to eat. Please give me a crust of bread. I ask for nothing more."

The sound of that tormented voice had immediately reminded the husband of his own past suffering, and his appetite had fled.

Without hesitation, he told his wife to invite the beggar in and give him his entire plate of food. Happily surprised, the beggar ran straight to the table and quickly devoured the meal, the whole time thanking and blessing his benefactors.

After the man had left their home, the husband was surprised to see how agitated his wife had become. But why was she so upset? He knew she was a generous soul, so it couldn't be the food that he had given away.

In response to his gentle questioning the wife broke down. "I'm sorry," she apologized, "but I was suddenly reminded of my former life in Cairo, Egypt, before I was married to you. Like you, my first husband was a very rich man, and I also used to cook for him the most delicious meals. He, too, would close his store and come home for lunch.

"Hashem blessed my husband with great wealth, and his business dealings were very successful. Unfortunately, my husband had one bad character trait that ruined his life: he was extremely stingy. He was so unwilling to help the poor that he forbade me to give them food or drink if they came to the door. It bothered me very much, but I wanted to preserve peace in the home and obeyed his wishes. Eventually we earned a reputation for being miserly. Beggars would cross the street rather than knock on our door. It pained me greatly, but what could I do? I was trying to please my husband." She stifled a cry. "

One day at lunchtime there was a knock on the door. I can still see my husband, having just taken his first bite of bread. 'Who's there?' he called out. 'I am a poor Jew,' was the answer. 'Please help me. I haven't eaten in many days, and I am about to expire from hunger.' This did not soften his heart. My husband had only become angry. 'Go away!' he shouted at the intruder who dared to interrupt his meal. 'These impudent beggars won't even let a person eat in peace...' He then slammed the door in the poor man's face. I burst into tears."

The wife looked stricken as she recalled the incident. "From that day on my husband's business began to falter. One loss followed another until all the money was gone. Even the house was lost to creditors, and we were left with nothing. At that point my husband insisted that we divorce, and we each went our separate ways."

The husband rushed to console his wife. But she insisted on finishing her story and explaining why she became so agitated. "It was rumored that he had become a pauper and a beggar. I never saw my first husband again. That is, until today," the woman said. "Do you know who that poor man was who just left our house? It was my first husband!"

The husband's eyes filled with tears. He too was moved to the depths of his soul. "As a matter of fact, my dear," he replied, "I recognized him. And I myself was the beggar he turned away from the door that fateful day..."(Adapted from L'Chayim Weekly Publication)

Torah Tavlin - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman zt"l

אֶת־זֶ֖ה תֹּאכְל֑וּ מִכֹּל֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר בַּמַּ֔יִם כֹּ֚ל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ֙ סְנַפִּ֣יר וְקַשְׂקֶ֔שֶׂת תֹּאכֵֽלוּ - *These you may eat of all that are in the waters; all that have fins and scales, you may eat.* 14:9

I saw a beautiful vort in the name of **Hagaon Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv zt"l**. The Gemara (Kiddushin 29a) says that a father is obligated to teach his son Torah, as well as a profession, and some say he must also teach him how to swim.

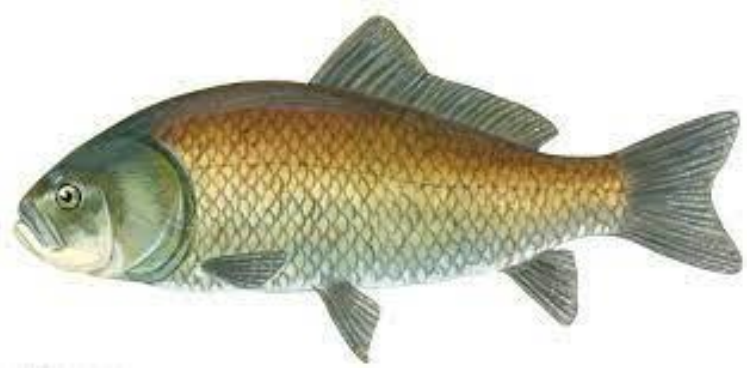


The question arises: why is it imperative to teach one's son aquatic skills more than teaching him to defend himself against attackers and

bandits who may roam the streets? Isn't this lesson just as important as knowing how to swim?

Rav Elyashiv explained that the term "swimming" connotes more than just floating. Even a log can stay afloat. Yet, it will still get swept away by the current and tossed to and fro. Swimming, on the other hand, entails going against the tide.

The Gemara is teaching us a deeper meaning in a father's obligations to his child. A father must instil in his child the keilim, the tools, needed not to just merely exist in life going, with the flow. Children must also be imbued with confidence and the perseverance needed, not to succumb to peer pressure, but rather to swim against the current towards his correct and proper destination in life, even if it means "swimming" against the popular and pervasive societal norms.



Klal Yisroel is likened to fish. וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ - Kosher fish must have both fins and scales. Scales are its outer protection, like the Torah is a protection to us and it is always protecting us. Fins are the limbs needed to enable a fish to swim in any direction it chooses, even it must do so against the current. Whereas a fish that has no fins and scales and just exists, floating along with no clear direction, moves to wherever the current sends it. That fish is deemed non-kosher.

May we all internalize this lesson, ensuring that our "fins and scales" are secure and intact, so that both we and our children can, b'siyata d'shmaya, safely navigate today's tidal waves at sea that are constantly threatening to engulf us.

Rabbi Yaakov Rahimi – Rav Ovadia Yosef's Dream on Moshiach



Horav Ovadia Yosef Toledano's, (a grandson) younger brother got married. Chacham Ovadia Yosef Zt'l got up to speak at the sheva brachos. Instead of speaking, he started crying!

Usually when one celebrates sheva brachos, you say divrei Torah, jokes etc. It is a joyous occasion, not a time for crying. But Rav Ovadia was just standing there crying!

Rav Ovadia apologised for crying and ruining the mood, and said, "There is something weighing heavily upon me that I must share with you at this time.

This past Leil Shabbos, I had a dream, and in this dream, I was in the Shaarei Yerushalayim. I saw an old man, and I asked him who are you? He told me that he is Mashiach Ben David, and I am supposed to be coming!

Chacham told him, 'Please come already, there is so much Tzaros and pain in the world. So many people are suffering. So many people have broken families and don't have any money. There are so many deaths and tragedies.'

Mashiach answered him, "I was already sent back to redeem the Yidden out of galus, but I don't have permission to carry out this mission right now, because there are still one million Yiddishe kinder out there in the world that don't know how to say **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹקינוּ ה' אֶחָד**". – Since I heard those words, I haven't stopped crying. I'm really sorry, but the message has to get out there. We have to make it a priority to bring as many Jews as possible back to Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

Nefesh Shimshon – From The Teachings Of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L



Do Chesed Right

When there will be a pauper among you, from one of your brethren… do not harden your heart and do not close your hand… for you shall surely open your hand to him. And you shall lend him, on pledge, as much as he lacks. (*Devarim* 15:7-8)

This passage contains the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah.* We learn many important and wondrous *halachos* from these verses, as the Rambam details. However, *Chazal* tell us that there is a *mitzvah* even greater than *tzedakah.*

Said R. Elazar: Doing *chesed* is greater than giving *tzedakah.* The Rabbis taught: In three ways, doing *chesed* is greater than

tzedakah. Tzedakah is with one's money, and *chesed* is both with one's self and with one's money. *Tzedakah* is for the poor, and *chesed* is both for the poor and the rich. *Tzedakah* is for the living, and *chesed* is both for the living and for the departed.

Many of the *halachos* of *tzedakah* apply also to doing *chesed,* and they are very important *halachos.*

לֹא תְאַמֵּץ אֶת־לְבָבְךָ וְלֹא תִקְפֹּץ אֶת־יָדְךָ מֵאָחִיךָ הָאֶבְיוֹן 16:7

Before we come before **הקב"ה** in prayer, to see His face, so to speak, we need to take a few coins out of our pocket and put them in the *pushka.* We need to give some money, which is the thing most precious to a person. *Tzedakah* for the poor. Otherwise, there is no value to all the songs and praises that we sang to *Hashem* until now.

Tzedakah is a practical expression. It's not the few coins we give that will make us into *tzaddikim.* But it expresses something

practically and actually. It shows that we have a real connection to *tzidkus*. We express this connection by giving what is hard for us to part with, and that is money. ***"Through tzedakah, I will see Your face."***

When we take a coin or a bill and stretch out our hand to a poor person, this is *yichud Havayah*. We connect to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The giver's hand has five fingers. This corresponds to the *gematriya* of the letter *heh* of *Hashem's* Name.

The five fingers of the poor person's hand represent another *heh*, as *Hashem's* Name has the letter *heh* twice.

The outstretched arm of the giver represents the shape of the letter *vav*, and the little coin represents the small letter *yud*. This makes up the four letters of *Hashem's* Name.

When we perform this *mitzvah* we form a connection to the upper worlds, we bind ourselves to worlds of *kedushah* and *taharah*.

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -The Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum Zt'l – True Love

The Rebbe was known to be a fierce defender of Jewish Values. What is probably less well known is that he had a heart of gold. He was an easy touch- as they say. People would pour out their hearts to him, and he would give them unstintingly.

One day a conman managed to wheedle his way in and get a yechidus with the rebbe. This conman poured his heart out to the rebbe with a fabricated tale of terrible tzarros. His wife was in a mental hospital. He had a son who had no money and had been evicted from his apartment. He was ill and had no income etc.

Rav Yoel was sitting there with tears pouring out of his eyes. He put his hands into his pockets. And pulled out all the money that he had

and gave it to the man. He also gave him many brochos for all his problems.

As this conman was making his way out, in walked the Rebbetzen who caught sight of him leaving. She asked her husband what had transpired, as she knew him to be a conman.

He said, "My dear wife, you have no idea of the tale of tzarros that I have just heard from this poor man." He went on to repeat the whole tale of woe.

"You must be joking, this man doesn't even have a wife or son, his whole story is a sham, it is a complete lie, none of it is true!"

Reb Yoel said, "Ah! Boruch Hashem, none of it's true!" - That is real **אַהֲבַת יִשְׂרָאֵל.**

Harav S F Zimmerman

רְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה ***-Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse.***

The question is, what is there to see? What are we supposed to look at? Furthermore, it says that it is a blessing **and** a curse. Shouldn't it say a blessing **or** a curse?

The Ohr Hachaim says that we are referring to the end of last week's parsha where Klal Yisrael was promised Eretz Yisrael. And there is an age old question, "Is Eretz Yisrael a blessing or a curse?"

The answer is that it is both a blessing **and** a curse! It all depends on how you use it. If you use it properly for avoidas Hashem, then it is a blessing. But if you don't use it properly, then it can be a curse.

This is not only about Eretz Yisrael, but in every circumstance and every situation in life, is a bracha and a klalla. It all depends on how you use it.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah

In the beginning of the parsha, Moshe Rabeinu tells us that he is giving us the choice of bracha or klalla.

The Dass Zekainim Baalei Toisfos brings a very interesting mashol:



An old man was standing at a crossroads, and when people came to the crossroad, he said, "You have got two choices, the first way initially might look smooth and easy but later it is difficult and thorny. You don't want to take this way."

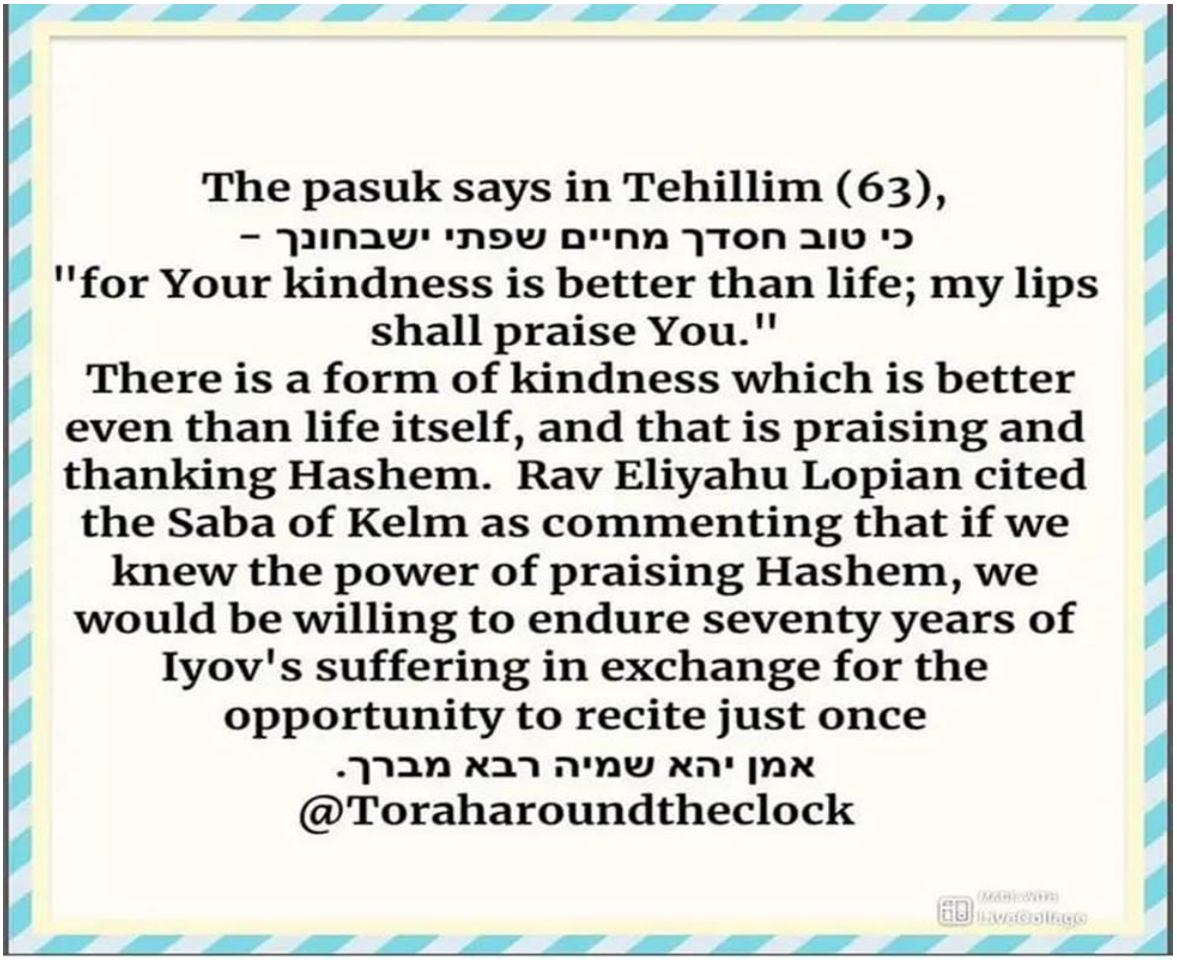
"However the other way is initially difficult and thorny but later the way will become easy and smooth. This is the route you should take."

I once heard that this is pshat in the Pasuk **רַבּוֹת מַחֲשָׁבוֹת בְּלֶב אִישׁ וַעֲצַת ה' הִיא תָקוּם** (Mishlei 19:21) - ***There are many thoughts in a man's heart, but Hashem's plan-that shall stand.***

תָקוּם stands for **תַחלתו קָוצים וַסופו מַישור** In other words, now that we come to Elul and we face a new year coming up, we must be able to make the decision to do the hard work first, even though it might be difficult, and we will see that it will become easier later.

Let us not shirk from the responsibility of putting in the hard work, and we will IYH be zoche to have a great year.

Shortly before Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l, passed away, he advised a young family member, "Learn well. Eat well. Sleep well. And always smile!"



A Tea Party with The Viznitzer Rebbe - Rav Yossie



There was a tzaddik called **Reb Mendel from Viznitz** (the future Tzemach Tzaddik) who in his younger years, went into galus and travelled from shtetle to shtetle. There was one particular village that he used to go to. But most people ignored him as being a simple peasant. There was only one person who took notice of him and was willing to do him chesed, speak kindly and bring him food etc. This was a little girl called Rivkele.

She befriended him and called her friend Mendele, and he called her Rivkele. She was a young girl at the time, and what she would do was play with him. She would bring out her

toy table and chairs and serve him pretend tea from a children's tea set! This was the regular minhag that they had when he visited this village.

Even at such a young age, she could tell that this was not just a simple person, and he eventually revealed to her who he really was. The last time he was there before ending his galus, he told Rivkele that this would be the last time he would be visiting her. He promised her that he would always remember her for the kindness that she had shown to him and playing together and having 'tea'.

Rivkele said, "Are you sure that you will remember me?"

Reb Mendel says, "For sure, 100%"

Many years go by, and little Rivkele grows up to be a cripple R'l. She contracts an illness and loses her ability to walk, and is confined to a wheelchair.

She asked her parents to take her to the Tzemach Tzadik for a bracha, to Reb Mendel of Viznitz, who I know is the same Mendele that used to visit me. Her parents said, "you were a little girl then, it can't be the same person."

She said, "No, for sure it's the same Mendele, and he will remember me."

So they decided to make the trip anyway, as they had nothing to lose in trying to get a bracha for her.

The Tzemach Tzaddik senses through *ruach hakodesh* that the family are on their way to visit him. The Rebbe instructs his gabboim with a very strange request. "I want you to find for me a toy table and chairs, and also a toy tea set and set it up in the beis hamedrash!"

An hour or two later, the family arrive together with their daughter. The Rebbe looks at the girl in the wheelchair, and says, "Rivkele" and the girl answers back, " ah, Mendele!"

All the chasidim are shocked at this exchange with a girl calling the Rebbe by his first name!

The Tzaddik says, "Rivkele, do you remember that when I came many years ago when we were both younger to visit you, that you were the only person who took notice of me and acted kindly towards me? And do you remember that when I left, I told you that I would remember you?"

So, the Rebbe asked Rivkele what she wanted. She was crying that she was a cripple and couldn't walk, could the Rebbe please give a bracha.



The Rebbe said, "Rivkele, I have this table, chairs and tea set, maybe just like we used to do a long time ago, let's play. Come and sit on a chair and serve me some of your amazing tea!"

Everybody was crying as she couldn't get up. She said, "Rebbe, I can't, I'm a cripple confined to this wheelchair."

"Yes you Can."

"I can't."

"Yes you Can."

So she forces herself and slowly but surely she is able to stand and pours the Rebbe the tea!

Everybody there witnessed a Neis Niglah!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"Why did your family business thrive under your father, yet is faltering under you?"

When your father had no customers in his store, he took advantage and opened a sefer to learn.

The yetzer hara was jolted and immediately sent customers to distract him.



You however, read a newspaper when the store is empty. The yetzer hara has no problem with that, and so your business remains quiet..!" (**Harav Yechiel of Ostrovtza**)

There was a man in Manchester called Reb **Faivish Feingold Zt'l**. He was not a Rav nor a Rosh Yeshiva but was one of those special unassuming people that would learn and live his life totally for kovad Shamayim, and undoubtedly upheld the world with his gadlus.

He had a textile shop and made a decent living. He had many Jewish competitors in the same line of business. One day one of these competitors came and asked him what his secret was?

He said, "When there are no customers, I take a sefer, and sit and learn. The *satan* obviously doesn't like this, so he sends customers to disturb my learning. I don't have much choice but to go and serve them."

The competitor was very happy and said that he would also try this plan of action. When there were no customers, he took out some seforim and started learning. However, after one, two three hours, there were still no customers.

The next day the same result- no customers. He went back to Reb Faivish and said, "I tried to do the same as you, and have been learning for hours, but I am not getting any customers. What's going on?"

Reb Faivish explained, "When I sit and learn, I genuinely don't want to be disturbed. I really want to learn all day. But you are learning with the intent that customers will disturb you, - that's not how it works!"



Rabbi Uri Lati - Hashem's Promise

Let's take the work עַשֵּׂר תְּעַשֵּׂר (Devarim 14:22), a word used in reference to tzedakah, specially giving away maa'ser, or a tenth of your earnings. Te'aser is spelled taf, ayin, sin and reish.

If we take ten percent of each of these four letters, we will discover something incredible. Taf is equal in gematria (Hebrew numerical value) to 400. Ten percent of 400 is 40. The letter mem is the gematria of 40.

The next letter is ayin, which equals 70. Ten percent of 70 is 7. The letter zayin is the gematria of 7.

The following letter is sin, which equals 300. Ten percent of 300 is 30. The letter lamed is the gematria of 30.

The final letter is reish, which equals 200. Ten percent of 200 is 20. The letter chaf is the gematria of 20.

If you put these letters together, each of which is ten percent of the letters comprising the word te'aser, we arrive at a new word: מזלך - Mazal'cha, spelled mem, zayin, lamed, chaf. Mazal'cha means, "Your mazal." Mazal refers to your lot in life, to how Hashem infuses into your life goodness and blessings, as when we wish another person upon a joyous occasion, "Mazel Tov."

When you give maa'ser, your mazal will be filled with Heavenly blessing and goodness from Hashem. Hashem has good credit to believe that when He tells us that if we give maa'ser, our mazal will change. This assurance comes from Hashem, letting us know that if we give generously of our own resources to others, He will pay us back in ways that we'd never imagine.

Our Name is our Mission by Harav Moshe Wolfson

Many siddurim cite a custom from the writings of the **Shela Hakadosh** ; At the conclusion of Shemonah Esrei, before taking three steps back, one should recite a passuk in which the opening letter is the first letter of his name and the concluding letter is the final letter of his name.

This is because when a person departs this world and stands before the Beis Din shel Maalah, he is asked to state his name. If he is wicked, he might forget his name and will be punished for this. To ensure that we will not forget our name, we recite a passuk that will help us remember it.

Every Jew is sent down to this world to accomplish a mission that only he can accomplish. In a Yid's Jewish name – the one given to him at birth, lies hidden his life's mission. It identifies the uniqueness of each particular neshamah. Moreover, the name itself charges us with the spiritual energy to accomplish that mission.

If we had the ability to analyze a name according to its combination of letters, numerical value, etc., we would be able to see how it fits perfectly with that individual's mission.

That a *rasha* forgets his name upon coming to the next world indicates that he lived his life without contemplating the mission inherent in his name – the mission with which he had been entrusted.

The Unfinished Symphony of the Lubliner Rav – Harav Hagaon Yehuda Meir Shapiro Zt'l by Rabbi Dovid Avraham Mandelbaum

Rabbi Meir Shapiro lays the cornerstone of Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin 22nd May 1924.



The Greatness of Harav Meir Shapiro Zt'l, Rosh Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, covered every facet of avodas Hashem, and his contributions are still pertinent to every single Jew. One overriding aspect of his gigantic personality was his ebullient optimism, expressed through the songs that he composed with his great natural talent.

He raised and calmed people's spirits through song, enabling them to forget their hardships and troubles. Rav Meir himself used song for that very purpose, confiding to his students that he used song to overcome despair when he faced the most difficult situations, so that he could continue his holy work.

One talmid, noted author Reb Yisrael Dov itzinger of Lodz H'yd, wrote the following for Dos Yiddishe Blatt on the occasion of the Rav's sheloshim: "The Lubliner Rav's tune, or to be more correct, the tune named 'The Lubliner Rav', is the most wonderful Jewish musical innovation of this generation. Music was the Rav's plaything. In a life filled with suffering, setbacks, obstacles and opposition, he was always able to find relief through song. His entire being was a song – or better put, he was song!"

Reb Shmuel Eichenbaum, H'yd, one of Poland's wealthiest and most famous philanthropists and a leader of Lublin's Jewish community, donated a parcel of land for the construction of a new yeshivah. Rav Meir was dumfounded at Reb Shmuel's generosity, and he asked his host to see the empty plot. When they arrived, Rav Meir began dancing with excitement, with his emotions soaring to the Heavens.

At one point, Rav Meir bent down and placed his ear to the ground as if he was listening to something. Then, he stood up and proclaimed in a loud voice, "Can you hear the sound of Torah learning that is already echoing from this sacred location?!"

This plot of land opened the door and enabled the Rav to erect the Torah fortress that was Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin.

The Imrei Chaim of Vizhnitz Zy'a exclaimed, "Harav Meir Shapiro built Torah with genuine mesiras nefesh. It is no wonder that his Daf Yomi programme has become part and parcel of Jewish life all over the world, with tens of thousands of people learning. – All to his credit."

The life of Harav Meir Shapiro was filled with joy and song, and he saw to it that his passing from this world would be no different.

He was once in Warsaw with several close friends, and he began describing the manner in which tzaddikim pass away. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "Ribbono shel Olam! All I ask of You is that I die through a *misas neshikah* – Only through simcha! I want every aspect of life to be with simcha – even my coming to my Day of Judgment. When that day comes, I will tell everyone to drink a l'chaim and to dance!"

Who would have dreamed that this is exactly what would take place, and so soon afterward.

As Reb Yisrael Dov Itzinger put it – "The Lubliner Rav was himself a symphony, but it was silenced mid-movement. We stood waiting for it to continue, but they told us that the show was over. Just as we

felt the rhythm of his life, we now feel that unbearable silence and void."

The Rav's 'choir' – the talmidim of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, kept his music going for as long as they could. Now, it's up to us.



Before the Holocaust, there was a big Rebbe called the **Husiatyna Rebbe** whose founder was a scion of the **Ruzhiner** dynasty.

Husiatyn is in present-day Ukraine. During the 1930s, Reb Yisroel made plans to make aliyah. The Husiatyn Rebbe was very pro yishuv ha'aretz, settling the land with frum Jews, in order to have influence over secular Jews settling the land. He wanted to exert a more Torah and Jewish influence to a very secular Zionism. He travelled around Europe to bid farewell to his followers and warn them of the impending danger. He urged them to make aliyah and leave Europe.

As a result of the increased anti-Semitism he had witnessed, himself being a victim of stone throwers in a Viennese street, he had visions of what was to befall the Jewish people in the years to come. In Cracow he was reported to have instructed: "Whoever has some sense should flee while he can - even in his slippers!"

To the Jews who came to the train station in Lvov to greet him he said: "Whoever can sell his property should do so, and those who are unable to sell should leave everything and flee from here, even if only with a sack on his back!"

He had Ruach Hakodesh and was a well-known Tzaddik. Once, His gabbai passed him a kvittel from one of his Chasidim from far away, who requested that the Rebbe *bentch* his children.

The Rebbe took the kvittel, looked at it, and said, "There is a mistake with this kvittel – it is incomplete. One of his children's names is missing!"

The Gabbai sent a message back to the chasid and relayed the message. The man replied, "It is true, we had a daughter who was a professional violinist, but unfortunately, she has gone off the derech. She is mechalel Shabbos, she keeps nothing – She is lost, we've sat shiva for her, she is not our child anymore. Please explain to the Rebbe, that's why I omitted her name – she is not my child anymore – she's dead to me."

The gabbai went back to the Rebbe and explained the situation. The Rebbe said the following words: " **מיר קיינמאל נישט אראפנעמען א קינד פון די חשבון** – You never deduct a child from the reckoning."

The Rebbe said, "I'm not accepting this kvittel, go back to the chasid and ensure that he adds this girls name."

He went back, and the chasid added the girls name as the Rebbe requested.

And then the holocaust came. This man survived the holocaust, but unfortunately, his wife and all his children were murdered al kiddush Hashem – they all perished.

After the war, one Friday night, he waited after davening to get invited out for the Shabbos meal. A young frum guy came over to him and invited him to eat with his family. He gratefully accepted the invitation.

When he came inside the house, and met this man's wife, he fainted on the spot! – It was his daughter! The daughter that he gave up on.

She survived the holocaust, met her husband and returned to Yiddishkeit.

All this man's descendants are only alive due to this one daughter! All of them frum and learning Torah! His future came from this one child. Why? Because the Rebbe taught us - **מיר קיינמאל נישט אראפנעמען א קינד פון די חשבון** – ***You never deduct a child from the reckoning***. There is no such thing as deleting and giving up on a child.

Show Off Your Mitzvot 🤦‍♀️ By R' Eliyahu Maksumov

Unfortunately, there are a lot of parents who do a lot of mitzvos and chesed, but they do them inconspicuously. Nobody is even aware that they are involved in these mitzvos. If you are doing mitzvos, do it next to your children – let them see and learn from you the excitement and beauty of a mitzva.

When you give tzeddakah, don't just do it privately – let your children see and be inspired from it. When they grow up, they will say, "This is common practice in our house. This is the way my father always did it."

When you learn Torah, make sure that your kids see you. When you say Tehillim, do it next to your kids. Don't be a hidden tzaddik when it comes to your children. Teach by example.

Keep showing up, keep getting up, and keep looking up. One day you'll thank yourself for never giving up. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810).

"A person is shaped by his surroundings. Therefore, he must seek the company of the righteous." ~ Rambam.

"Masmid Of Ponevezh" Writes Chiddushei Torah While Preparing Coffee




HaGaon HaRav Chaim Berman, known as the "masmid of Yeshivas Ponevezh" goes to the yeshivah kitchen once a day to prepare himself a cup of coffee, *B'Chadrei Chareidim* reported.

But even on his coffee break, HaRav Chaim, 84, carries a pen and notebook in order not to miss any chiddushei Torah that may come to mind as he's preparing his coffee.

Additionally, he fills his cup only halfway with hot water and the other half with cold water. Why? In order to drink it quickly and get back to learning as soon as possible.

"Guarding the tongue protects all other mitzvos. Neglecting it endangers them." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

"The main battle of life is conquering one's middos. Everything else is secondary." ~ Vilna Gaon.

Fruitful and Tall – By Harav Moshe Wolfson

צַדִּיק כַּתָּמָר יִפְרָח כְּאֶרֶז בַּלְּבָנוֹן יִשְׂגֶּה ***'The righteous one flourishes like the palm; as a cedar in Lebanon he grows.'*** (Tehilim 92:13)



The Baal Haflaah offers an insight into the comparison of a Tzadik to both a date palm and a cedar tree.

A date palm does not grow tall, because much of its inner strength is used to produce its fruit. A cedar tree does not bear fruit, which allows it to grow tall.

A Tzadik gives of his time and energy to be *mashpia* on others. He would much prefer to closet himself in his room and devote his days and nights to learn Torah and other aspects of avodas Hashem, but he knows that it is Hashem's desire that he 'produce fruit' and influence his generation to grow in their avodas Hashem. For this, he is willing to sacrifice his personal growth.

In truth, it's not a sacrifice at all. As he is mashpia on others, and produces fruit, he will personally grow tall like a cedar tree.

The Chasam Sofer writes that when a talmid chacham gives of his time to teach others *l'shem Shamayim*, his efforts in his own avodas Hashem will be blessed with *siyatta diShmaya*, and he will 'grow tall', achieving that which he may have thought was unattainable.

"Teshuvah is always open to those who seek it. The gates of mercy never close." ~ Rabbeinu Yonah.

Maasei Emunim - A Story About Amen and Tefillah

The Secret of the Second Will

This story was related by one of the leading poskim in our generation, **Harav Moshe Shaul Klein, shlita**, and it contains a piercing lesson of chizuk for every Yid about one of the three pillars that sustain the world- tefillah.

News of the passing of Reb Tzvi Hirsch shocked his family and all who knew him. Despite his advanced age, Reb Tzvi Hirsch was an active person and full of life; people benefitted from his sage counsel and guidance, and his sudden passing was like a storm on a clear day. Many people attended his levayah, as he knew and was loved by so many.

Reb Tzvi Hirsch was the driving force on all matters of kedushah. His thoughts were always focused on how he could strengthen spiritual matters that were necessary at that time. He would constantly come up with new idea to galvanize people and to increase their adherence to these matters. He was beloved by all who knew him. His unique personality was a combination of determination and clear-minded hashkafah, together with a pleasant demeanour. As such, his proactive efforts, even when relating to painful subjects, was accepted without generating objection.

Reb Tzvi Hirsch was gifted with rhetorical skills and rich language; in his conversation with young people, he knew how to select the right words that would draw their hearts in the positive direction. In contrast, when he spoke to adults, he would use words of Chazal that he was fluent in, through which he would awaken latent emotions for the sake of the issue he was trying to strengthen.

The subject of tefillah is one that was very close to Reb Tzvi's Hirsch's heart. Wherever he was, he tried to raise awareness about how important this mitzvah is, and his efforts bore fruit. Upon his passing, there was lots of discussion about his unique will. Yes, there

was the poignant will that was read out in part at the levayah, but the one that generated interest was the one that was not read.

Well-founded rumours claimed that Reb Tzvi Hirsch had written another will, which he had hidden away in a place known only to one person, the one he trusted most, and he firmly instructed that it only be opened one year after his passing.

His children, who were very curious to know what their father had instructed them in his will, had to wait patiently for the first year to pass. That was when they were supposed to get the will from the loyal person, and finally, the mystery about the will that had been on their minds for a year would be solved.

There were lots of rumours and assumptions regarding the contents of the will. They ranged from a story about an unknown asset that yielded profits that the father had purchased decades ago, and now the time had come to cash in on it, and it would grant his heirs significant profits. There was also a rumour relating to the history of the family. Some claimed firmly that it was possible that the father wanted to arouse his children to chizuk on one of the many subjects close to his heart that he had worked to strengthen all his life.

Whatever the case, everyone had to wait patiently until the moment would come when the will would be opened, and the mystery would be solved.

A year passed, during which the children upheld all the minhagim of mourning, and did everything they could to benefit their father's soul. They davened from the amud three tefillos a day, and they habituated themselves to come early to davening so that they could get to the amud in time. They learned Mishnayos throughout the year of mourning, and the brothers concluded the entire Shas Mishnayos in memory of their father.

At the conclusion of the year, after the family visited their father's kever, a large siyum was held for all the descendants and relatives of Reb Tzvi Hirsch. The excitement was at a fever pitch, both because of the event, where their father's memory was very prominent, and because they knew that the mysterious will would finally be revealed.

At the appointed time everyone gathered for the seudas mitzvah, held in a nice hall. The Yid who Reb Tzvi Hirsch trusted was summoned to the stage after he'd guarded the will this past year. The man held a small envelope, which only intensified the mystery, and everyone fixed their gaze on him as they waited to hear what he had to say.



With awe, the man opened the envelope, and to everyone's surprise, a small, colourful memo paper dropped out. They all wanted to hear what it said, and the man began to read. The long awaited-for will had just two sentences, and they said:

"***Dear Children, after a year of davening from the amud, you have merited to experience the special feeling of tefillah said in a complete way, from Mah Tovu until after Aleinu. I ask you, please, continue to do this even after the end of the year, and until the end of your lives, make sure to come to davening on time, and to remain in shul until it is over.***"

The man finished reading the will and a heavy silence descended on the hall. Yes, apparently their revered father indeed had asked, in his wisdom, to use these solemn moments to give them chizuk on things of major importance, and to ask them to continue strengthening this matter even after the time when they were obligated to.

The event came to an end, but its impression remained etched in the hearts and minds of all who were there. The message that the niftar wanted to convey will not be forgotten by participants for the rest of their lives.

As one of the sons of Reb Tzvi Hirsch said: "***Tefillah has a beginning and end. When you come late or leave early, it is an incomplete tefillah, plain and simple***."

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages



When **Rav Hirsh Leib of Alik, zt"l,** was a young man, he lived in his father-in-law's house for a while. One Erev Shabbos, a government agent arrived in town. The purpose of his visit was to investigate Rav Hirsh Leib's father-in-law, to see if he was paying sufficient taxes on the liquor he imported and sold.

Rav Hirsh Leib's father-in-law was very concerned about this, because he knew that government officials were often antisemitic, and once they launched an investigation, they would often make up charges, even if everything was in order. In his distress, Rav Hirsh Leib's father-in-law asked his son-in-law what to do.

Rav Hirsh Leib asked his father-in-law whether the fish in honour of the approaching Shabbos had already been cooked. His father-in-law replied that indeed it had. Rav Hirsh Leib took the pot of fish and placed it behind the door that led to the liquor cellar.

When the tax agent came and opened the door to the cellar, he stopped short. He asked, "What is that delicious fragrance I smell?"

The father-in-law replied, "It must be the fish we cooked to honour the holy Shabbos."

The tax agent was skeptical. He said that he had never before smelled anything quite so heavenly, and exclaimed, "It can't be that the source of such a wonderful fragrance was a pot of fish!"

Reb Hirsh Leib offered the tax agent a piece of fish to eat. The tax agent accepted, and he was served a plate of fish. After tasting the fish, the agent was overcome with ecstasy. He had never in his life tasted anything so delicious.

He declared, "A Jew whose Shabbos fish tastes like this cannot possibly be cheating with his taxes!" He left the house without bothering to conduct an investigation!

Accept the Favour

"It is forbidden for a day to go by without doing some kindness for another. A day without doing a favour for a fellow Jew is not considered a day of living. The favour need not be a big one. It may be a simple loan of a household utensil to a neighbour, making a small monetary loan, preparing a cup of tea for someone (even if he could do it himself) – it doesn't matter whether it is big or small.

Sometimes someone offers us something and we say "no thank you" because we do not want to inconvenience them or we do not need the favour or we are begrudging and do not want to feel like we are in someone else's debt. Overcome! Accept the favour joyously. Say "thank you" and bless the other party. In this way, the kindness that you receive becomes a kindness on your part as well – often the highest manner of kindness. ~ **Rav Menachem Azolai.**

"The fool turns a friend into an enemy, while the wise man turns an enemy into a friend." ~ R' Dov Katz zt"l

Cast Your Burden Upon Hashem



"It is written, **הַשְׁלֵךְ עַל־ה' יְהָבְךָ וְהוּא יְכַלְכְּלֶךָּ** - "***Cast your burden upon Hashem, and He will sustain you.***" (Tehilim 55:23)

If a human being has a patron and goes to him once, he is received. The second time he is also received, but the third time, he is refused an audience. By the fourth time, no attention is paid to him at all.

This is not true by Hashem. No matter how many times you bother Him, He receives you." ~ Midrash Tehillim 55:6 as quote by **R' Aryeh Kaplan zt"l** in *A Call to the Infinite.*



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld – Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid

כִּי אִם־אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם מִכָּל־שִׁבְטֵיכֶם לָשׂוּם אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שָׁם לִשְׁכְּנוֹ תִדְרְשׁוּ וּבָאתָ שָּׁמָּה '***But only to the place which Hashem shall choose from all your tribes, to set His Name there; you shall inquire after His dwelling and come there.*** (12:5)

Says the heilige **Chasam Sofer** an extremely valuable lesson - **כִּי תִדְרְשׁוּ** - If you seek out where Hashem resides. If you try and strive to attach yourself to make that connection to The Ribboino Shel Olam, to include Hashem in your life – then and only then, **וּבָאתָ שָּׁמָּה** will you get there.

Says the Chasam Sofer, that only a person who tries to elevate himself spiritually, and attempts to build a connection to Hashem, will receive סִיַּעְתָּא דְשְׁמַיָּא - Divine Providence.



Hashem is waiting for us to search for Him. In Elul, '*Hashem is roaming the streets*' awaiting that connection.

The Chasam Sofer says that this is the lesson that we learn from this week's sedra – Only the person who looks for and searches for Hashem, will receive that special סִיַּעְתָּא דְשְׁמַיָּא to include Hashem in everything that he does.

Have a beautiful Shabbos!

Horav Shmuel Birnbaum, zl, *Mirrer Rosh Yeshivah*, was well-known for his all-consuming love of Torah. At one point, he was gravely ill and had absolutely no strength. When it came time for his daily *shiur*, lecture, however, he rose from his sick bed and prepared to go to the *yeshivah*.

His son, who was at his side to assist him, looked at his father incredulously and declared, "*Abba*! The doctor was very clear with his instructions that you not exert yourself during these days of recuperation. For you to go out and teach would be a demanding exertion."

Rav Shmuel replied, "You are correct. The doctor did say that I should not exert myself. He did not, however, say that I may not attempt to heal myself. If I am to be relaxed and feel alive, I must give my *shiur*. This will strengthen me."



Kind Words

Many phrases that discuss tzedakah are written in double. For example, **נתן תתן**, **עשר תעשר**, **פתוח תפתח**, and the reward is also doubled as it states (15:4) **כי ברך יברכך ה' אלקיך**

The Kli Yakar (14:22) writes, "All phrases about tzedakah are doubled because one can give charity with one's hand and say kind words with one's mouth.

This is the meaning of **פתוח תפתח** - open your hand and open your heart. For both aspects of tzedakah, he will be rewarded.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

A Bloody Good Question



I hope our British readers won't be offended by this phrase, but as an American, the word means "very." And the question here is why the Torah tells us (12:23), **רַק חֲזַק לְבִלְתִּי אֲכֹל הַדָּם** "***Just be strong and don't eat the blood of an animal that you slaughter***"? Do we need to be strong not to eat blood? Does the Torah imply that we're vampires?

Rabbi Yehuda says that indeed, at one time it was prevalent to eat blood (some considered it to imbue the consumer with the strength

and life force of the animal.) Rabbi Shimon ben Azai says this is to teach us a great lesson.

If blood, which is disgusting to most of us, and therefore an easy prohibition to avoid, requires us to strengthen ourselves, then how much more so do we need to strengthen ourselves for other mitzvos.

There is a recurring theme in the Torah that is summed up by the words of Isaiah, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways." While we feel we have an innate ability to identify what is important or not and what is holy or not, this is untrue. Rather, only by studying the Torah and coming to an understanding of what Hashem considers important and holy, can we begin to see the world through His perspective and start to become better judges of reality.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

כִּי־פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת־יָדְךָ לוֹ (15:8).

The Talmud (Bava Basra 10a) records that a wicked Roman nobleman named Turnus Rufus asked Rebbe Akiva, "If your G-d cares for poor people so much, why doesn't He provide for them?" Rebbe Akiva answered that G-d allows them to remain poor to provide us the merit of giving them charity.

The Alter of Kelm questions Rebbe Akiva's explanation. Although the mitzvah of giving tzedakah is certainly a great one, aren't there enough other commandments that we can do? What is so unique and special about giving charity, and why must the poor suffer to enable us to specifically perform this mitzvah?

The Alter explains that the mitzvah of tzedakah serves an irreplaceable function. Although one fulfils the technical letter of the law by distributing charity to those in need, in order to perform this mitzvah at its highest level a person must do more than this. It isn't sufficient to give charity simply because G-d commanded us to

do so and we want to perform His will. A person dispersing tzedakah should feel the pain and plight of the poor as if it were his very own. Just as a person who feels his own hunger naturally responds by feeding himself, so too should we strive to identify with the pauper's anguish to the point that we would be moved to assist him even if we weren't obligated to do so.

Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Meisels, the Rav of Lodz in Poland, was renowned for his concern for the poor and downtrodden. On one fierce winter day, he knocked on the door of a wealthy, but stingy, man in his town to solicit a donation. After exchanging greetings, the man gestured that Rabbi Meisels should enter, but he remained outside and began his appeal. The rich man was puzzled by the rabbi's behaviour, but he attempted to listen out of respect. After a few minutes he grew so cold that he was unable to continue. He interrupted the rabbi and begged him to come inside.

The sagacious rabbi explained, "I am here to collect money for a family which can't even afford to build a fire on a day like today. If we enter your warm home, you won't be able to relate to their suffering. Only by discussing their plight here at your door are you able to understand the magnitude of their pain." Appreciating both the rabbi's wisdom as well as the extent of the family's anguish, the miser gave a generous donation.

It is difficult for most of us to relate to the daily suffering that many unfortunately know. Now that we understand that empathizing with their plights is an integral part of giving tzedakah, we should try our utmost, whether by volunteering at a soup kitchen or by walking through the park on a bitter winter night, to work on personally experiencing and feeling their pain. Our desire to generously assist them will naturally follow, and in so doing, we will be helping not only the poor but also ourselves.





When the **חפץ חיים** was older and not so well he visited a different city, and they asked the **ח"ח** to speak. It was **שבת** and they had just been singing **כל מקדש שביעי**.

The **חפץ חיים** said, "There are two types of people- one type is **כל מקדש שביעי כראוי לו** – he honours the **שבת** the proper way. The second type is **כל שומר שבת כדת מחללו** – he is **שומר שבת** by not being **מחלל** the **שבת**. The **זמר** continues – **שכרו הרבה מאד** - the reward is great for both these people." The **חפץ חיים** continued and said, "But **איש על מחנהו ואיש על דגלו**. There is a big difference between these two people in the next world. The one who honours **שבת** and gives it as much **חשיבות** as he could, and the one who just refrains from desecrating the **שבת** – their **מחנה**'s will be two totally different **מחנות** one from the other.

They both kept the same **שבת**, yet it's not just doing the **מצוה** (keeping **שבת**) it's how you do the **מצוה** (honour **שבת**) that makes all the difference.

What Did HaRav Edelstein, Zt'l, Say About Bein HaZemanim Tragedies?

The tragic petirah of a father of ten this week is only one of many tragedies in this week alone, the first week of Bein Hazemanim. Sadly, in recent years, every Bein Hazemanim seems to be marked by a rise in terrible tragedies.

Last year, HaGaon HaRav Gershon Edelstein, z'tl addressed the issue by saying that "the Torah is humiliated during Bein Hazemanim."

"There were several tragedies, rachmana litzlan after Tisha B'Av, during Bein Hazemanim," HaRav Edelstein, z'tl said last Bein

Hazemanim. "[The tragedies] were in a strange way, not usual tragedies. It's incomprehensible. Many people lost their lives."

"What is this that Hashem Elokeinu is doing to us? Why this? Apparently, during Bein Hazemanin, the zechus of Torah is lacking. There's a mishnah that every day a bas kol goes out from Har Chorev and says: 'Oiy to the briyos from the humiliation of the Torah.' The Torah is humiliated, there's no kavod haTorah, we're not being oisek b'Torah."

HaRav Edelstein, z'tl, said similar statements in 2020.

Last year, HaMashgiach **HaRav Don Segal** also addressed the issue of Bein Hazemanim tragedies, emphasizing that according to sources in Chazal, we must davka increase our Torah learning during Bein HaZemanim.

HaRav Segal also recounted how the **Steipler, z'tl**, once asked him to go to **HaRav Shach, zt'l**, and ask him to cancel Bein HaZemanim. HaRav Shach agreed but said that it will work only if it's canceled in all yeshivos – not just Ponevezh. He asked HaRav Segal to go to **HaGaon HaRav Abramsky, z'tl** to pass a resolution for a kinus of the Vaad HaYeshivos to make a decision on the matter.

HaRav Abramsky agreed with the idea but was too weak to address the issue and instead asked HaRav Segal to return to the Steipler and ask him to daven for him. *(YWN Israel Desk)*







Should a yeshiva bachur wear his hat while eating in the yeshiva dining room?

This depends on the minhag hamedina; it depends on the accepted custom. I want to explain something. My shver, zichrono livracha, never ate without a hat in his house. Always with a hat. Lunch, breakfast, supper, whatever, it was always with a hat. Because he was a Slabodka talmid and he learned the dignity of being a Jew. A Jew is like a Kohen Gadol and it says by Aharon **וְעָשִׂיתָ בִגְדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אָחִיךָ לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרֶת** the Kohen Gadol must be dressed with honour and with beauty. And so a Jew is a Kohen Gadol, and the table is not a feeding trough where horses are led to feed on oats. A table is a mizbeyach and it's a place of avodas Hashem. That's how Jews who learn Torah understand it.

When you approach a table, there is salt on the table. **על כל קרבנך תקריב מלח** – *on all your offerings there should be salt*. Even though you don't like salt, put on a little bit of salt. Dip your bread three times in salt. One, two, three, just to show that you're doing it for a purpose, not just for taste. One, two, three. That's a korban to Hashem. And also, it's not a bad idea that you should think, like it says in Shulchan Aruch, in Chayei Adam, **שכל כונותיו יהיה לשם שמים**. You should think, "I'm eating now this meal to serve You Hashem."

Isn't that a beautiful way to eat? It won't detract from your gusto, from your appetite. You can eat with appetite. You can relish your

food but say it beforehand; eat with this thought in mind, "*I'm approaching the table to serve you, Hashem. I want to get the strength in order to fulfil Your commandments*." And also, when you approach the table, you realize that Hakodosh Boruch Hu is your host and you're only a little orphaned boy or orphaned girl being fed at Hashem's table. **תערך לפני שולחן** – You set the table before me, Hashem. And therefore when you approach the table, you approach it with the greatest derech eretz.

A man once told me he had an old European mother. When he was a little boy, he used to run and play and sometimes he would sit on the table; and his mother drove him off the table. "*A Yiddishe tish is kadosh*! A Jewish table is holy," she said. An old European mother. "You can't sit on the table!" You hear that? She drove him off the table. He became a professor later in life; a very cultured, successful man. He never forgot his mother's teaching, "You can't sit on a table."

A Jewish table is kadosh. And so when you approach the table to eat in the yeshiva dining room, if you want to wear a hat with this kavanah, because you're serving Hakodosh Boruch Hu just like you wear a hat in shmoneh esrei – you shouldn't stand and say shmoneh esrei with just a yarmulkeh; a yarmulkeh is too informal when you're standing before a king. If you have no hat, well, it can't be helped. If you have a hat, it's better to wear a hat during shmonah esrei.

So if you want to sit at the table in the yeshiva dining room with a hat, why not? However, I said this with a modification at the beginning. If nobody wears a hat in your dining room, so maybe you shouldn't be different from the minhag. But if you have a choice, it's always a sign of nobility when you approach a Jewish table with a head covering.

Even in the hottest weather, my father-in-law, alav hashalom, never took off his jacket at the table. He sat with a jacket and a hat at the table always. It was a principle. He learned from Slabodka, you

have to be a man who exemplifies the teachings of the Torah. Be dignified! A Jew has to be dignified - **בָּנִים אַתֶּם לַה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם** – ***You are My children said Hashem***,(14:1). So Rashi brings, "***You're My children***, **לְפִי שֶׁאַתֶּם בָּנָיו שֶׁל מָקוֹם וְאַתֶּם רְאוּיִין לִהְיוֹת נָאִים**, ***and you have to be beautiful at all times***, (even not at the table).

A Jew must look dignified. A Jew must be well dressed and dignified. And therefore, there is something in the principle of approaching the table wearing a hat.

כִּי פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח אֶת יָדְךָ לוֹ



Rabbi Chaim Kaufman says, if one closes their hand, they will see that they will not be able to tell the difference between the length of each finger, since they all end at the same point when they are folded inward. However, once one is - **פָתֹחַ תִּפְתַּח** – he opens up his hand, he can see the difference in size between all the different fingers.

Rav Eliezer Kahn wanted to bring out that there is a remez over here, by the mitzvah of giving **צדקה**, when the Torah tells us "open you hand"!

The remez is that when it comes to giving **צדקה** there is no such thing as saying "I give an $18 check to all causes! [or whatever amount you give]" No! Rather, just like when you open your hand you see different sized fingers, so too, you have to approach each cause on a personal and individual level and give each cause the proper attention and money according to each situation.

הוא היה אומר

R' Yehoshua Leib Diskin ZT"L would say:

"Any Rov whom the congregants do not want to oust is no Rov!" (כתובות קה) A Rov, who is the leader of his community, has the responsibility to make many difficult - and sometimes unpopular decisions. The fact that he lacks universal popularity is an indication of his greatness! The supreme level of his position makes it impossible to be beloved by all equally!"

R' Akiva Eiger ZT"L once said:

"I am amazed that so many people come to see me. You would think that the Jews of Warsaw had never seen a short, hunched and bent over man before!

R' Avrohom Ben HaRambam ZT"L would say:

"Do not yearn for any other situation in the world besides the one you actually find yourself in!"

R' Zev Wolf of Zhitomir ZT''L would say:

"Rather than worrying about what to do tomorrow, rectify that which you did today!"

The R"osh, Rabbeinu Asher ZT"L would say:

" בנים אתם לה' אלקיכם (יד-א)- The Torah wishes Bnei Yisroel to understand that even if their mortal fathers die, they will never be orphans because Hashem, the Father of all Yisroel, is eternal."

A philanthropist was a big donor to a particular Yeshiva. In fact, he covered more than half its budget - and he knew it. He had some ideas about a certain aspect of chinuch he wished to share with the Rosh Yeshiva, so he made an appointment to meet.

The day came. Understanding that the man was about to share his opinions about how the Yeshiva should run, the Rosh Yeshiva began, "Mr. So-and-so, you are welcome to come visit me anytime to speak in learning or ask advice. You are also welcome to come learn in the Bais Midrash whenever you want. But when it comes to your ideas on chinuch, my door is closed."

The words hit home and the man could not take this response sitting down. From that point on, ***he increased his donations to the Yeshiva***.



Precious Moments With Rav Chaim - Artscroll

A Moment Before

Every moment of Rav Chaim's time was worth a fortune. When asked how he had the time to give so many people advice and berachos, Rav Chaim said, "Do you know how many minutes there are in an hour? Sixty! Do you know how many seconds there are in each minute? Sixty! There are 3,600 seconds in an hour. Do you know what you can do with 3,600 seconds?"

That was how he saw time. He knew he could use every second of it properly.

He lived to be ninety-four years old. That's a lot of seconds, and he used each of them, for learning Torah, for writing sefarim, for leading Klal Yisrael, and for helping people. And he used every moment in between to learn more Torah. He even used the seconds it took for one person, who'd come to ask his advice, to leave, and

the next person, coming for a berachah, to enter. In those seconds, he'd turn to learn from his beloved Gemara.

The Shas Is Getting Wet

This story happened over seventy years ago. There weren't many cars in Eretz Yisrael, and almost none owned by bnei Torah in Bnei Brak. But Rav Tuvia Schechter had one, and he loved to do whatever he could for talmidei chachamim. Sometimes he was able to give a talmid chacham a ride.

Rav Tuvia said, "One day, the winter weather was especially bitter. Pouring rain fell nonstop all day, so the Chazon Ish agreed to let me give him a ride. He sat in the back, lost in thought, until he spotted an eigh-teen-year-old bachur standing under the shelter of a bus stop, lost in his sefer. He immediately recognized his sister's son, Chaim Kanievsky.

"The Chazon Ish told me, 'Stop! The Shas is getting wet!' I stopped, and this living Sefer Torah got into the car. I got to drive two great talmidei chachamim at the same time!"

The Tzaddik as a Barber

Hundreds of people want Rav Chaim to take the first snip of their three-year-old's hair, so he does, and gives each child a candy too. Many three-year-olds come to him on Lag BaOmer. He sits and learns, keeping the scissors in his hand so that he won't have to spend time picking them up.

Each time a child comes to him, he stops learning for a moment and clips a lock of hair. Then he returns to his sefer for another precious second or two of Torah study.

As You Walk



Outings? Travel? Vacations? These ideas are very far from Rav Chaim's thoughts. Every day is a gift from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, a gift that can be used for Torah study. Every moment is dedicated to that cause.

Vacation days, when many look for places and experiences they enjoy, are days of unending Torah study for Rav Chaim. It is a waste of time to ask him if one should take a vacation or not, where, for how long, and how… Someone asks if there is any point in leaving Bnei Brak for a vacation. "You can go to Har Shalom (a high hill in Bnei Brak with a park at the top), or to Yeshivas Slabodka," Rav Chaim says.

This does not mean that a ben Torah should never take a vacation. It does mean that there are mitzvos to do every day. And it means that taking more time than you need is bitul Torah (time spent not learning Torah).

For health reasons, Rav Chaim would take walks. He walks on a quiet side street at the edge of Bnei Brak. He learns while he walks, and takes a Gemara to use while he rests. He is often seen sitting on a park bench, learning. One day, he met Rav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, whose doctor also recommended that he walk for his health. They began talking in Torah as if they were standing in the beis midrash.

In His Doorway



Rav Chaim learning Torah in the doorway of his home on a hot day.

Visitors are welcomed on the porch of his home, where he sits on the hottest days. He doesn't even use a fan. His family wants to make him more comfortable, but Rav Chaim refuses. "People come here with their troubles, and I want to feel their pain. When Klal Yisrael is in pain, I am in pain with them."

It is a scene that those who merited to see it will always remember: The sweat streaming down the face of the Sar HaTorah, as he sits learning on the porch of his home during the hottest days of summer. He doesn't notice. He's learning. What does he care about heat?

Years later, when Rav Chaim grew old, an air conditioner was installed in his home, giving him more energy and strength to learn. But this story takes place before that.

The day is sweltering. Rav Avraham Kahaneman's grandson knocks on the door. Rav Kahaneman is working on a shiur he is going to give, but he can't find a source that he needs. He is sure Rav Chaim knows where it is, so he sends his grandson to ask him.

The rebbetzin opens the door and tells Rav Kahaneman's grandson, "The rav isn't home. It was so hot that he couldn't learn, so he went to Rav Epstein's house, where there's air-conditioning. But he won't hear you knocking because he's learning. What you have to do is to

turn off the Epsteins' electricity in the electric box outside the apartment. That will stop the air conditioner from working. When it gets hot enough, Rav Chaim will be a little distracted, and then maybe he'll hear you knocking."

The Legacy of Rabbi Mendel Futerfas zt"l



When Reb Mendel came to Siberia he went up to the officer and said, "I want you to know that I am not going to work on Shabbos. If you think because I am lazy, I am willing to work all Motzaei Shabbos and Sunday."

When the officer saw that he was so determined and sincere he was allowed off from working Shabbos.

When asked about his time in Siberia, he replied, "they were the most inspiring days of my life." He continued to explain "throughout my life, I always felt a battle between the material and the spiritual. In the labor camps, there was no battle. My life was all spiritual. All I had to do was learn Torah and daven. Of course we had to work!

"In one camp, my job was to care for a herd of pigs. I had to begin at 4:00 am and did not finish until 6:00 pm. In the winter, it was so cold that once the straps of my Tefillin froze. When I began to unwind them, they cracked. It was hard and crushing work, but only physically. My soul was free. There was nothing holding me back. All my energy could be focused on prayer and study."

He was asked if he had any Seforim?

"Seforim?! The Russians would allow us Jewish books to study from? So how did I study? I would picture the cheder I attended when I was a child. I would sit in the third row. I remembered the table at which I would sit, the Seforim that were placed on it. To my right

sat my friend Berel, and to my left my friend Zalman. Yossel sat in front of me.

"I remembered their faces, the games we would play, the secrets we would tell each other. I remembered the Rebbi, tall, with stern eyes, but with a warm and loving smile. I would picture him and the classroom in my mind. The scene was so vivid that I could actually hear the melamed speaking, "Shnayim ochazin betallis... If two people are holding on to a garment, and one of them says it is entirely mine and the other says it is entirely mine..." (Bava Metzia 2.).

"I would listen, and concentrate to record his words in my mind. Soon he had taught me a page of Talmud. I then shut off the picture of the cheder and began to review the page that I had just learned. After a time, it was committed to memory. Then I returned to the Cheder to learn another page of Gemarah. In this way, I learned many chapters of Gemarah and a good part of Tanya.

Looking for a Minyan on the Battlefield



Cantor Louis J. Herman grew up in Toronto, Canada. His father, Rev. Samuel Herman, had been a well-known Cantor in Montreal and Toronto. A boy soprano, Cantor Louis Herman was a protégé of the world-famous Chazan, Yossele Rosenblatt. During the 1920's and 1930's he sang professionally in Canada and throughout the American middle west and northeast.

When Canada entered World War II on the side of the allies, Louis Herman enlisted in the Canadian Army and ultimately saw combat duty. When he finished his training, young Louis was transferred to Italy. He was promoted to the rank of sergeant and

by war's end, he was assigned to the front, in the midst of heavy fighting.

Throughout the difficult months of the war, Louis kept as many mitzvos as he possibly could. On the day of his mother's Yahrzeit, despite being many miles away from any shul, Louis wanted to say Kaddish for her. This prayer, however, would require a minyan, and finding ten Jews in the middle of a battlefield in Italy was not going to be easy.

Louis knew of only five other Jewish soldiers in his unit. Louis approached the army chaplain, who was a priest, and explained his predicament. Louis asked the chaplain if he knew of any other Jewish soldiers in the area. To Louis's surprise. the chaplain not only knew where he could find other Jewish soldiers, but he also understood the meaning of a minyan. He was happy to be of assistance.

"See that area over there?" The chaplain pointed to a tall observation tower. "That is where our soldiers guard our unit and watch for advancing German soldiers. When they see any activity, they radio the information back to the artillery unit to help us aim our bombs more precisely. There are four Jews who occupy positions in the observation tower. If you'd like, I can put in a call to them and ask that they come over to our area for your minyan."

Louis was overjoyed. He would have exactly the ten men required to make up a minyan. The kind chaplain called over and asked if the unit could spare the four Jewish soldiers for a few short minutes. To his great relief, the soldiers were happy to oblige. Louis was able to say Kaddish on his mother's Yahrzeit with a minyan.

After they finished davening. Louis thanked everyone for joining him and enabling him to fulfill this meaningful personal obligation. The entire group lingered for an extra minute, enjoying the opportunity to pray altogether, even for a short time. As the four soldiers turned to walk back to the observation tower, they suddenly heard a loud explosion and saw a most startling sight.



The entire tower and its contents had been blown up by German saboteurs who had managed to plant explosives at the base of the tower and successfully exploded their charges. Only the four Jewish soldiers, who had just "happened" to be busy doing a very important mitzvah, had escaped annihilation.

Chazal tell us (Pesachim 8b) that "שְׁלוּחֵי מִצְוָה אֵינָן נִיזּוֹקִין" - messengers who go to do a mitzvah are saved from harm. Not only do acts of chessed help others, but those very acts can also save us from harm.

The Unread Email - R' Akiva Rutenberg

I want to tell you a story. And I think you can extrapolate from the story a lot of wisdom for your marriage, for your children, for everything else. And the story was like this: It was a teenage girl, she was, I think about twelve, thirteen years old, in a religious home, and she started dressing differently than the family. And she was rebelling, which is very normal in teenage years to do that.

And the father specifically was getting unnerved by this. And it created tension between the father and the daughter. And this tension spiraled. And it wasn't going in a good direction.

She didn't feel heard, he didn't feel heard, and it got to a point where they weren't talking to each other. They were saying hi, bye, but there was no communication. And the father decided, he said, I

want to send my daughter a message, stop this negative spiral. And he writes her a beautiful email.

And in this email, he writes to her how much he loves her, how much he's always going to love her, and how this is just a temporary phase. And he writes this beautiful message. And he sends it to her. And lo and behold, literally within twenty-four forty-eight hours, he sees a difference.

And she starts being more open. And it makes him more open. And the relationship starts cycling in a different direction. And within two weeks, they're talking to each other more than they did before the fight.

And by two and a half weeks later, before *Shabbos*, on *Shabbos*, she walks over to him and she says, can I sit next to you by the table? So he turns to her in a quiet moment and he asks her, he says, I feel so much better that we're communicating with each other now. What was it in my email that really got you? What did I say? What did I say that really got you? And she turns to her father and she says, what email? Dad, you know I don't look at email. Email, that's for the old people. I don't look at emails.

And the father realizes that she didn't change, he changed. He became open to her seeing him differently, and he was looking at her with a different eyes. True story. He was looking at her with a different eyes, which made her look at him with a different eyes, and this to me is probably in a nutshell the secret to relationships.

If we can get out of our head, if we can get out of our assumptions, and get out of oh, if you really wanted to respect me, you wouldn't do this, you would do this, you would do this, and all these assumptions. The *pasuk* says **אדם ידע את חוה**. That when the *Torah* talks about intimacy, it refers to knowledge. And if you take the word intimacy, you break it up, it says – 'Into-me-see'. - A person wants to be seen. And the greatest way we're seen is when somebody wants to know us, when somebody's curious about us, when they're

interested in us. But when we make those assumptions, we go into a negative spiral. And what is the prerequisite for all knowledge? I think Aristotle said this, but it's very true from a *Torah* perspective as well.

The prerequisite for all knowledge is humility, recognizing that you don't know.



I give a **שיעור** every Wednesday night locally in Hendon, for the last 15 I think maybe 16 years. One Wednesday night approximately 5 to 10 years ago a **יונגער מאן** who's a regular attendee at the **שיעור** comes over to me and says: Can I talk to you in your house after **שיעור**? I said: Of course. He comes round to my house. He's not looking good.

He sits down at my table opposite me and he bursts into tears. I didn't know what he wanted. After a few minutes he looks up, his face is covered in tears and he says: I'm in massive trouble. I said: What's the matter? He explained he'd got himself involved in some business with the bank and he'd borrowed money and he'd paid it back and I didn't fully understand what had happened, but it was the tunes of tens of thousands of pounds which he said he'd paid back and the bank couldn't find.

He says: While going to try and sort out their mess with the bank he got involved in a car crash as well and was now being chased by the bank and the police. And he sat in my house and cried. He looked up at me and said: What does the **רבונו של עולם** want from me? What

could I answer him? I don't know. But I had a vision, a memory some 35-40 years ago.

I went to meet the **מרא דאתרא זצ״ל** the famous **רב יהודה זאב סגל** of Manchester. I was a **בחור ישיבה** at the time and he said to me: **בחור** he said to me: Do you learn **הלכות חפץ חיים** every day?

Being a **בחור** at the time and I knew everything I said: No. And I'm telling you he said: You'll only see **הצלחה** from learning **הלכות חפץ חיים** every day. So I turned to my friend from **שיעור** I said: You know what? Let's learn it every day on the phone for a few minutes.

Every day he said to me?

I said: Yes.

I can't commit.

I said: Come on, we're guaranteed **הצלחה**.

I can't.

So he left. The following Wednesday night in **שיעור** he didn't look good either. I said: What's going on? He says: I'm in trouble. I said: **נו הלכות חפץ חיים**.

I can't.

By the third Wednesday he relented, he gave in, he said: **רבי** said you win, let's start.

As a postscript I'll tell you now we're still learning **הלכות חפץ חיים** on the phone or in person, holidays, **בר מצוות, שמחות** we continue throughout.

רבותי let me tell you, five days after we started, five days, he sent me a message: The bank had found the money, he was let off tens of thousands of pounds. Less than a week later the police dropped the case as well. We're still learning **הלכות חפץ חיים** on the phone regularly.

רב יהודה זאב סגל promised us when a person learns **הלכות חפץ חיים** they will bring **ברכה** into their homes into their lives. I am personally witness to that.

This **יונגער מאן** came to me in a desperate way and we committed to learn every single day and we've both seen **ברכה** in our homes in our lives every single day.

רבותי it's so simple, so easy, so quick and nice to do but you bring **ברכה** into your homes. I've seen it, you can all see it too.

When the **תורה** discusses friends the **תורה** says: **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**.

The word for friend **רע** is an interesting word. **רע** sort of has a connotation of the word **רע**, bad or low or not great. Why does the **תורה** say **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**? Why the word **רע**?

החיד״א says: To befriend somebody who's having a nice easy great time when they're top of the pile, when the wheels turning well for them, that's not a friendship.

ואהבת לרעך: Be kind to the person who's having it hard, having it tough, having it difficult. You're nice to him, that's true friendship.

When we learn **הלכות חפץ חיים** we're saying: I won't speak bad not about the great person but even the **רעך** the one who's having a hard time. I'm kind to them, I guard my mouth, I guard my thought, I guard my process against people who are not having it easy. That's the command of the **תורה** says **ואהבת לרעך**: **החיד״א**.

That's true **אהבת חברים**. That's **נצור לשונך מרע**.

R' Chaim Soloveitchik ZT"L (R' Chaim Brisker) would say:

"The Russian government passed a resolution that every Jewish rabbi must know Russian. If it would be up to me, I would propose a resolution that every rabbi must know Shas and Poskim!"

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Binah l'ittim (Drush 61) writes, 'The segulah of tefillah is wonderful... With tefillah, a person can attain all his needs, regardless of whether he is righteous and deserves that his tefillos be answered or not. His tefillos will never be returned emptyhanded. Even if a person is a sinner, if he davens to Hashem, his tefillos won't return empty.'

Teshuvah in Elul

The Zohar calls Rosh Hashanah **היום**. This week's parashah begins with (11:26) **ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום**, which can be translated as, "See that I am giving you **לפניכם היום**, days before Rosh Hashanah so that you can prepare yourselves for the judgment of Rosh Hashanah. This alludes to the month of Elul when we prepare ourselves with teshuvah and tefillah to merit good judgment for the new year.

The Baal HaTurim points out that the final letters of (11:27) **את הברכה אשר תשמעו** spell **תורה**, indicating that if you want to do teshuvah, begin by studying Torah.

When doing teshuvah, remember to be happy. **The Chasam Sofer zt'l** says that when one does teshuvah, it is a grave aveirah for him to be sad.

R' Nachman of Breslov ZT"L would say:

"One must rejoice in the performance of a Mitzvah until he desires nothing more than the opportunity to perform another Mitzvah."

Three Days of Tears by Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klein

Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klein shared the following remarkable story about the power of heartfelt tefillah. One day, **Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler** received a letter from an older bachur who was in the midst of shidduchim.

The letter read: "I have been dating a wonderful young woman, and, baruch Hashem, things are progressing very nicely. However, I have a medical condition that I have never disclosed to anyone. Am I obligated to tell her before we continue?"

The young man carefully described his condition and asked Rabbi Dessler for guidance.

Rabbi Dessler realized that this was not a question he could answer on his own. He replied, "This is a question for the Gadol HaDor. I will present it to the **Chazon Ish**."

The Chazon Ish was generally reluctant to publicize rulings of this nature. He understood that people often treat one ruling as a precedent for every future case, when in reality each shailah has its own unique circumstances, details, and sensitivities. Every situation must be evaluated individually.

Rabbi Dessler brought the letter to the Chazon Ish. The Chazon Ish carefully listened and then asked several questions. "What is the young man's name?" He asked for additional details about the case before finally saying, "Come back in three days. Then I will give you my answer."

Three days later, Rabbi Dessler returned.

The Chazon Ish said, "Tell the young man that he does not have to disclose his condition." Then he added an important warning. "Do not use this ruling as a precedent for future cases."

The following week, the young man returned to his doctor for a routine examination. The doctor performed new scans. Then he

stared at the screen in disbelief. The chronic condition that had troubled the young man for years had completely disappeared. The doctor could hardly believe what he was seeing. It was as though the illness had never existed.

Sometime later, the Chazon Ish explained why he had insisted that his ruling never be used as a precedent.

"This was an extremely difficult decision for me," he said. "For three days I davened and cried before Hashem that this young man should be healed from his illness."

The ruling had been given only after pouring out his heart in tefillah on the young man's behalf. That was why no one could apply the same ruling to another case. The circumstances had changed. Hashem had answered the tefillos.

What an incredible reminder of the power of prayer. A condition that had plagued this young man for years disappeared after three days of sincere tefillah.

And Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klein concluded with a beautiful message. It does not have to be the tefillos of the Chazon Ish. The Gemara teaches: "**כִּי אַתָּה שׁוֹמֵעַ תְּפִלַּת כָּל פֶּה**." Hashem listens to the sincere prayers of every single person. - A heartfelt tefillah has the power to change a person's life, overturn a decree, and bring yeshuos that seem impossible.

We should never underestimate the extraordinary power of one sincere tefillah.

The greatest miracles often begin long before we recognize them as miracles. ~ Inspired by the teachings of the Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707-1746)

The Closed Door by Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan

Rabbi Duvi Bensoussan shared the following powerful story about perseverance, determination, and refusing to give up when a door appears to be closed.

About twenty-five years ago, a young American traveled to Eretz Yisrael with one goal firmly planted in his heart: he wanted to learn in the famed Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. He was a serious and capable learner. But being capable was not enough. Ponevezh was known for accepting only the very best of the best, and in those days the yeshiva was not especially eager to accept American students.

That did not discourage him. He arrived at the yeshiva without an appointment, without advance notice, and without having arranged an interview. He simply walked into the office and announced: "I am here to learn. I would like an entrance exam."

The staff members looked at him in surprise. "You did not call. You did not write. You did not ask permission to come. You simply walked in?"

"I came from the United States because I am serious," he replied. "I got off a plane and came here to learn. Please give me an entrance exam."

His confidence and sincerity made an impression. One of the rabbanim was brought in to test him. The young man sat for the examination, answered the questions, and performed very well. When the exam was over, the staff told him the truth. "You did well. Under normal circumstances, we would accept you. But there is no room in the dormitory. We have no bed for you. Come back next year."

The young man stared at them in disbelief. "Come back next year? I just landed! I traveled all the way from America. What do you mean, come back next year?"

"There is simply nowhere to put you," they explained.

"That is the entire problem? A bed?" he asked. "Then I will find somewhere to sleep. If I have to sleep in the street, I do not care. I am staying here, and I am learning in Ponevezh."

The staff could see that he would not be dissuaded. "You may learn in the yeshiva," they finally told him. "But understand clearly: we are not giving you a room, and we are not giving you a bed."

That was enough for him. He entered the beis midrash and began to learn with extraordinary intensity. He learned during the day and deep into the night - yomam valailah, day and night. When the other students returned to the dormitory to sleep, he quietly borrowed an extra pillow from one of the boys. Then he went into the bathroom and climbed into the empty bathtub.



That cold, hard bathtub became his bed. He could never sleep comfortably. After only a few hours, the discomfort would force him awake. He would pull himself out of the tub, straighten himself up, and return to the beis midrash to continue learning.

Night after night, this was his routine. He learned until he could no longer keep his eyes open, slept for a few hours in the bathtub, and then returned to his Gemara.

The story is not a legend or a parable. Rabbi Duvi related that he heard it from the young man's own brother.

Then, one night at approximately two o'clock in the morning, there was a knock on the dormitory door. One of the students climbed out of bed in his pajamas and opened the door. Standing there was none

other than **Rav Elazar Menachem Man Shach**, the revered Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh.

"Is there someone here who is sleeping in the ambatya - in the bathtub?" Rav Shach asked. "I heard that a student has been sleeping there."

The student did not know what to say. He did not want to expose his friend, but he could not deny the truth to the Rosh Yeshiva. Rav Shach entered the dormitory and walked toward the bathroom. He did not step inside. Instead, he stood near the doorway and called the young man by name.

The boy awoke with a start. He sat up, saw Rav Shach standing at the bathroom door, and immediately climbed out of the bathtub. Mortified, he began apologizing. "I am sorry, Rebbe. I am so sorry. Please forgive me."

"No, no," Rav Shach interrupted. "Do not apologize." "You have been sleeping in this bathtub for weeks because you wanted so badly to learn in this yeshiva. They closed the door on you, and you refused to take no for an answer. You wanted to learn Torah, and you were willing to sacrifice your comfort in order to remain here."

"From now on, you have a place in the yeshiva. But you are not sleeping here anymore. You are coming home with me. You will be a ben bayis in my home."

Rav Shach personally took the young man home. He gave him a room in his own house and welcomed him as a member of the family.

For years, that determined American student lived as a ben bayis in the home of Rav Shach.

The Avodah of the Closed Door

Rabbi Duvi explained that this story contains a lesson for every person who feels that life has pushed him away. We often discover our greatest strength only after we meet resistance. But that

strength is revealed only when we carry within us the determination to stand our ground and cry out: "Abba, I am not giving up on You. No matter how difficult this becomes, I am staying."

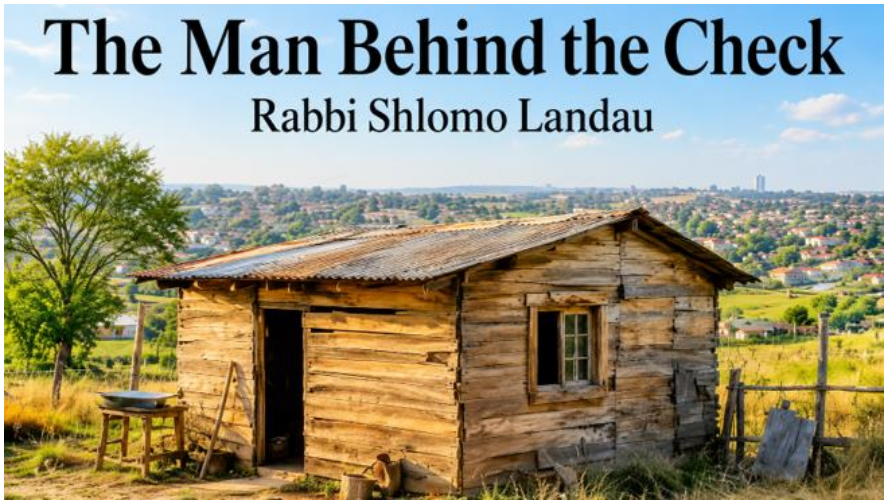
This is part of the avodah of the generation of ikvesa d'Meshicha - the spiritual work of a generation that so often encounters a closed door. Every person is carrying something. There is always a reason to become discouraged. There is always a moment when the situation appears too painful, too complicated, or too far gone.

A person may be in his or her thirties and still waiting for a shidduch. Each new possibility may seem more disappointing than the last. The person may begin to think, "Perhaps I will never get married. Perhaps there is no way out."

Someone else may be struggling with parnassah, with children, with health, with loneliness, with spiritual growth, or with a tefillah that seems to remain unanswered. - The closed door whispers, "Stop trying. Walk away. It is not going to happen." But the avodah is not to throw in the towel. Sometimes the very door that appears to reject us is giving us an opportunity to show Hashem how deeply we desire Him, how firmly we believe, and how unwilling we are to abandon the path.

The young man in Ponevezh did not know that his weeks in the bathtub would eventually bring him into the private home of the Rosh Yeshiva. He saw only a locked dormitory and an unavailable bed. He could not yet see the room that was being prepared for him in the home of Rav Shach.

We also rarely see what stands behind the closed door. Our responsibility is to keep learning, keep praying, keep hoping, and keep showing up. Do not give up because the door is closed. Keep knocking. Sometimes Hashem is not turning you away. He is preparing to bring you closer than you ever imagined.



Many years ago **the *Ponevezher* Rav** traveled to Johannesburg, South Africa for a fundraising dinner on behalf of the *Yeshiva*. The next afternoon he started opening all the donation envelopes. When he opened one of the envelopes, he was shocked. Inside was an unbelievably large check.

You know nowadays that wouldn't be much of a mystery, you'd just look at the name on the check. But back then, checks didn't always have the account holder's name printed on the check. Nobody there recognized the signature. The *Ponevezher Rav* said, 'I have to meet this person, I need to thank him in person.'

A few days later the bank tracked down the donor's name and gave the *Ponevezher Rav* the address. The address was shocking. The donor lived eight hours away by train. But undeterred, the *Ponevezher Rav* got on a train, arrived at that city, hired a driver and gave him the address.

The driver started heading out of town. He kept driving and driving. At some point the *Ponevezher Rav* said to him, 'are you sure you have the right address? A person who can write a check of that size doesn't live all the way out here in the boondocks.' The driver just said, 'Rabbi, that's the address'.

A few minutes later they pulled into a neighborhood full of little tiny wooden shacks. The driver stopped in front of one of them. The *Ponevezher Rav* walked out, knocked on the door. It was opened by a short *Litvishe* Lithuanian Jew.

Before the *Ponevezher Rav* could even say anything, the man smiled and said, 'I knew you would come'.

How did he know? And why would someone who had just given away a fortune live in a tiny wooden shack? The fellow invited the *Ponevezher Rav* in and said, 'I'll explain.'

'I grew up in Lithuania with eight brothers and sisters. My father passed away when I was very young and my mother raised all nine of us by herself.

We were unbelievably poor. The only thing we owned was a little calf. My mother made sure that the calf always ate even if we didn't because she believed that one day the calf would grow, produce milk, and we'd be able to sell the milk to pay a *melamed* to teach us *Torah*. But the calf wasn't old enough yet.

But my mother hired a *melamed* anyways and she said to him, as soon as the calf gives milk, you'll be the first one to get paid. A month went by, no milk. Another, no milk. Then one day the *melamed* came to my mother and said, 'I'm so sorry. Another family offered me a job and they'll pay me cash. I have children to feed as well. I can't keep teaching for promises.'

My mother, she started crying.

She looked at the *melamed* and said something I'll never forget for the rest of my life.

'Just take the calf. It's yours as long as you can keep on teaching my children *Torah*. Me, *Hashem* will help me.'

She gave away the only thing we owned. She preferred to lose everything rather than let her children lose one more day of *limud haTorah*. That's how my mother raised us.

Years passed and after the Holocaust, I heard that you were rebuilding the *Torah* world in *Eretz Yisrael* and I remembered my mother. I remembered what *Torah* was worth to her. So I sold everything I owned. I wrote the entire amount on that check and I moved here with whatever little I had left. I figured a check that large would bring you here.

But you should know, that was my last donation.'

The *Ponevezher Rav* thought he had traveled all the way to thank the man who wrote the check. Instead he discovered that the check was simply the final chapter of a story this fellow's mother had begun writing so many years earlier.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Mishnah in Avos (4:13) teaches us that by performing just one Mitzvah, it creates a defending Malach.

The Gra, zt"l, explains (Lev Eliyahu) that this is true for all Mitzvos. However, when it comes to the Mitzvah of learning Torah it is different. This is because Torah study encompasses two separate Mitzvos (V'Dibarta Bam and V'Shinantam). Therefore, for each word of Torah that one learns, he creates TWO Malachim, one for each Mitzvah that he has done. - This is why the Mitzvah of learning Torah out-weighs all other Mitzvos, as we learn in the first Mishnah in Masechta Pei'ah!

The Klausenberger Rebbe zt"l asked: a Yid has to live with Mesiras Nefesh. Why isn't it called Mesiras Haguf?

He explained, pushing away our physical comforts is pashut, and is less of a sacrifice. But closing a Gemara to help a Yid, surrendering your Olam Haba when the Torah says so, that is a true challenge!

'The essence of trust in Hashem is to live without anxiety, as we are certain that he will guide us to where we need to be'. ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner.

Chizuk - Inspiration

A Measure of Truth

In the 14th century of Seville, Spain, there was a famous Sephardic commentator named **Rabbeinu Dovid Abudraham**, who wrote a classic commentary on the Siddur and Jewish liturgy. How did he come to be called Abudraham? The name is unusual, even among Sephardic Jews, and there is a story behind it.



Rabbeinu Dovid was a merchant. Whatever he sold, customers would pay him, and he would measure out the merchandise by weight. In those days, scales were much less precise than they are today, and people did not use pounds, ounces, kilos, or grams. In his country, the unit of weight was called a dram. When a customer ordered 10 drams, Rabbeinu Dovid would not weigh all 10 at once. Instead, he weighed one dram at a time, adding a little extra with each measure to ensure that he never came close to taking what was not his. He repeated this added measure for every dram he sold.

One day, a Gentile came into the store and ordered 9 drams of merchandise. Rabbeinu Dovid followed his usual practice: he weighed out one dram nine separate times, wrapped each portion, and gave the package to the customer.

After the customer left, however, Rabbeinu Dovid began to worry: perhaps he had wrapped only eight portions instead of nine and had shortchanged the customer. He immediately ran out of the store to catch him and explain that he might not have received his full order.

In truth, because Rabbeinu Dovid always added slightly more than the exact measure, the customer likely received 9 drams even if there had been only eight packages, and most likely he had received all nine packages as well.

The customer was so moved by Rabbeinu Dovid's honesty that he converted to Judaism.

In Arabic, the prefix "Abu" means "father of," similar to the Hebrew word Aba. Thus, the name "Abudraham" means "Father of the Dram," because Rabbeinu Dovid was so meticulous in business that he measured every order, dram by dram.

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Rav Avrohom Yaakov Pam Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas (1913-2001) (Av 28 *5761/2001 -25th Yahrzeit*)

Harav Avraham Yaakov Hakohen Pam was born in *Tammuz* 5673 to



Harav Meir, a noted *talmid chacham*, who was a former *talmid* of Slabodka and Radin, and was a *chavrusa* of HaRav Elchonon Wassermann.

He was a *Gaon* in Torah whose entire life evolved around *limud HaTorah*. Rav Meir never stopped learning in order to go to sleep. He would concentrate on either a *Ketzos* or Reb Akiva Eiger until finally dozing off to the strains of their *svaros*, often waking up in the middle of the night to find the *seforim* still lying open beside him.

Another potent force in molding Rav Pam's fervent *hashkafa* was that of his mother, Rebbetzin Rachel Leah, a *melumedes* extraordinaire and a pillar of *chesed* who constantly set aside money for the impoverished.

Rav Pam grew up Lithuania. It was, therefore in a Torah-steeped home that Rav Pam's unique personality was fashioned.

Young Avraham Yaakov constantly sought to grow in Torah and *ruchniyus*, and his diligence, refinement and purity of thought were evident even in his youth.

As a child, he studied in Kovna. At the age of nine, he left his town to enter a *yeshiva* in Kovno. He was younger than the other *bochurim* so that the *rosh yeshiva* asked his father jokingly, "Where is his crib?"

He received a letter from his former rebbi that said, "Someday this young *bochur* will be a *godol beYisroel."* (The family still has the letter.) He was accepted and learned with complete devotion.

Rav Pam would eat Shabbosim at the home of HaRav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt'l,* who was learning at the time in the famed *Kovno Kollel.* They would cross paths again later in life when they were both on the hanhalla of Yeshiva Torah Vodaas. - Rav Yaakov would affectionately refer to Rav Pam as the *"Kohen Godol."*

In 1927 as conditions in Lithuania deteriorated, Rav Meir Pam immigrated to America, when his son was 11 years old; the rest of the family came two years later.

Rav Pam began his career at Yeshiva Mesivta Torah Voda'ath in 1937. Rav Pam was renowned for his fiery *pilpul chaveirim*, and the *Torah* friendships he forged that impacted his life and that of his talmidim. And for the next 64 years he said *shiurim* to thousands of *talmidim* who went through Torah Vodaas. One of the great *marbitzei Torah* in the United States, he produced tens of thousands of students.

With the passing of Rav Eliyahu Chazan, Rav Pam was appointed *Rosh HaYeshiva* the position he held until the end of his life.

Rav Pam shunned the limelight. He preferred to devote his days and nights to his life's passion; the study and teaching of Torah. He worked tirelessly on behalf of Jewish educational causes both in the United States and in Israel.

Tens of thousands of Jews considered Rav Pam a "*godol*"," a spiritual giant. They regarded his words as gems to be gathered, even when his message consisted of criticism. For his listeners knew - from his reputation, his demeanour and the unmistakable pain on his face - that Rav Pam's exclusive motivations were fear of G-d and love for fellow Jews.

Anyone who ever met Rav Pam could not help but recognize his modesty. Although he was a great person, one of the *gedolei hador*, his humility was striking, his simplicity remarkable, and his honesty and integrity impeccable. He displayed remarkable sensitivity for other human beings, and the *ahavah* that he transmitted could be touched with your hands.

He cautioned against being judgmental of others His sense of halacha and its practical application was impeccable.

Honesty and integrity were also recurrent themes of Rav Pam's. Meticulous honesty, he said is the mandate of every Jew, and must be the hallmark of everyone claiming to be observant.

"*Emunah*," he went on to explain, also means "faith," alluding to the fact that faith in our Creator as the source of our daily bread is antithetical to acting dishonestly.

Perhaps above all, he was powerfully dedicated to making authentic Jewish education available to all Jewish children - the "jewels in the crown" of the Almighty, as he once wrote. He personally founded, Shuvu. It provides young immigrants to Israel, largely from the former Soviet Union, with a comprehensive Jewish education in an

open and loving environment, helping both the children and their parents reconnect with the Jewish religious heritage.

Rav Pam had a special affinity for the *sefer Mishna Berurah*. He knew every *se'if* with the *Mishna Berurah* and *Biyur Halacha*. When it was hard for him to see and people would learn with him, he would correct them if they read the *Biyur Halacha* improperly. His set of *Mishna Berurah* was buried with him as a testament to his love for those *seforim*.

He married Sarah Balmuth who was from a Galician family. HaRav Hutner *zt'l* was the *shadchan;* he told the girl's father that "he was going to be a *godol beYisroel,*" echoing the sentiments of Rav Pam's youth rebbi.

A Rebbi to Talmidim

His *shiur* was known for its emphasis on clarity. He would say that a *bochur* has to know the *gemora, Rashi,* and *Tosafos* clearly before he goes deeper into the *sugya*. He didn't like to use the *gemora* as a springboard to delve into the *sugya* without a clear understanding of the basic facts first.

His love for his *talmidim* was boundless. He was available to them anytime they needed something from him -- an answer in *halacha,* a *hashkofoh* question, or advice about life.

They reciprocated his love by helping him out as much as possible. They took up his causes as their own and always assisted him when he was ill. In fact, when he was *niftar* at 1:15 Friday morning, 35 *talmidim* were at his bedside; some having been there for days.

Sterling Middos

Rav Pam personified the *middoh* of *pashtus*. He looked and dressed like a simple person; He wore a short jacket, not a rabbinical frock: a model of humility, modesty and simplicity. He never sat on the *mizrach* in Torah Vodaas. It was no mistake that he merited to be called, "the *Chofetz Chaim* of America."

Rav Pam visited Eretz Yisroel 35 years ago with his wife. They went to Bnei Brak to see the Ponevezh Yeshiva, which was hosting its *Yarchei Kallah* at the time. The *beis medrash* was alive with the *kol Torah* of the participants. He told his Rebbetzin that he would like

to join them on one condition: the minute someone starts referring to him as a *rosh yeshiva* in Torah Vodaas, he is leaving.

They moved into the dormitory and stayed together with the other members of the *Yarchei Kallah.* Rav Pam learned in total anonymity for two weeks.

One day there was a *pidyon haben* in the *Yeshiva.* Someone came over to him and suggested that since he is a *rosh yeshiva,* he should sit at the head table for the *seuda.* His anonymity breached, he left that very day back to Yerushalayim, where he was originally staying.

He measured his words carefully. Everything he said was thought out and was said for a reason. He would mention the *Sheloh* that says two *mal'ochim* accompany a person and write down everything he says. "They don't write shorthand.

If a person would see this personally, how careful he would be when he utters a word!" he said emotionally.

He lived with this *Sheloh* as his guide in watching what to say. Whenever he spoke, he would speak about *emes* because his lived with that *middoh.*

He demanded from *bnei Torah* a certain extra sensitivity in *middos* and interpersonal relationships as befitting a *talmid chochom.* He would say that the *Rambam* writes that a *talmid chochom* should not walk around with even a stain on his shirt; so surely he should speak and act as befitting a *ben Torah.*

A grandson related that his grandmother offered a *bochur* some watermelon and the *bochur* responded "Yes." Rav Pam was so agitated that the *bochur* did not say, "Yes, please," as a courtesy, that he had to go to his room to rest afterwards!

Concern for Others

His *ahavas Yisroel* was legendary; he hated *machlokes* with a passion. He once remarked at an Agudah Convention that if a married couple feel they must divorce, why must they put themselves through such strife and turmoil by fighting with each other?

The evil of speaking *loshon hora* was something he emphasized his whole life. He once mentioned in a *shmuess* that his mother did not know what it meant to speak negatively of a fellow man. This was the environment in which he was raised. He would say that the underlying cause for *loshon hora* is a lack of *ahavas Yisroel.*

He suggested many times that people should learn the *Chofetz Chaim's sefer Ahavas Chesed* as a way of increasing their concern for their fellow man.

A bochur was once caught stealing from his roommate. The roommate, who was very sensitive, was afraid to stay in the dorm. Rav Pam invited him to sleep in his home. His wife thought the *bochur* moved in because the heat in the *yeshiva* wasn't working properly and needed extra care, so her husband was being nice to him. She never found out the real reason why he brought the *bochur* home!

His address was a place for every individual who needed wise counsel and a listening ear. Many people came just to cry their hearts out to him. He would listen to them, and they would leave feeling relieved without him giving advice on how to resolve their issues!

They felt as if they unloaded their "weight" on him and he relieved them of their burden just by giving them the time of day to vent their pain and anguish. They felt someone – a real caring person -- was listening to them.

He refused to have a *gabbai* or a secretary assisting him with the many requests for his time. At one point, the family decided he should take one day off from seeing people just so he could have a break. He replied that they are right, but what happens to the

person who needs him today and cannot wait until tomorrow? He will have lost his chance. - "I cannot do that to a person."

Leader of the Klal

The last years he was involved in all major decisions facing *Klal Yisroel.* He was a member of the *Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah* of Agudas Yisroel of America. HaRav Shach asked him to become chairman of Chinuch Atzmai, which he served with total devotion.

For the last ten years HaRav Pam was the backbone of the Shuvu organization, which has educated some 10,000 Russian children in *Torah* and *Yahadus.* He spoke at the Agudah Convention one year and said, "We are not doing enough for the Russian children in Eretz Yisroel, we must do more."

These simple, heartfelt words penetrated the hearts of the assembled guests. Immediately after he finished speaking, people came over to him asking "What could we do?" - They had a meeting that night and Shuvu was born.

He was selflessly devoted to that cause. He was in constant contact with those running the organization in Eretz Yisroel. He attended every function -- parlour meetings, dinners even when it required a considerable amount of *mesiras nefesh.*

Just a few weeks ago, the annual Shuvu parlor meeting took place. HaRav Pam was extremely weak yet he insisted he must go. The doctors spent the entire day taking him off the machines he was on and hooking him up to portable ones. Three doctors went with him to ensure everything was all right. He spoke a few heartfelt words about Shuvu but really nothing had to be said: Just to see how Rav Pam came and how much effort he exerted to come, conveyed to everyone his strong and deep feelings about the organization.

At that, his final public appearance, he conveyed the message that every Jew, under all circumstances, is obligated to do his maximum for the sake of the *chinuch* of Jewish children.

He was *niftar* early Friday morning. When people went to *Shacharis* they were greeted with signs that informed them of the sad news. The *levaya* was at the *Torah Vodaas beis medrash*, a *mokom* that meant so much to him as a *bochur* and later, as part of the *hanhala.*



As per his explicit wishes, there were no *hespedim*. He mentioned this request numerous times to his family and was very passionate about it. His oldest son, HaRav Aaron Pam, said a few words in the name of the family. The thousands who attended then accompanied HaRav Pam on his final journey.

The family members relate that Rav Pam would get very emotional when he would *duchen* on *yomim tovim*. It was as if he felt the generation resting on his shoulders and wanted to give the *bircas kohen* to all of them. Now that he is at the *Kisei Hakovod*, he should be a *meilitz yosher* for his family, his talmidim, and all of Klal Yisroel for he truly knows what they all need.

On Friday 28 *Av*, tens of thousands of bereft Torah-loyal Jews, headed by *maronan verabonan,* the *gedolei haTorah vehaChassidus,* accompanied HaRav Yaakov HaKohen Pam, *zt"l,* on his last earthly journey. He was buried at Mount Judah Cemetery in Queens, N.Y. *Yehi zichro baruch.*

He is survived by an illustrious family: sons that are *gedolei haTorah* and grandchildren and great- grandchildren, all of whom are pursuing the path he charted for them.

Tzedakah With Sensitivity

When R' Yona Susna would give tzedakah, he'd place the money in a prearranged sefer in the Beis Medrash, so that the recipient would not have to shamefully face him, nor have to thank him.

R' Yona once discovered that a wealthy man had become penniless. He arranged for the man to come to his house at 2 a.m. every Sunday morning to receive money discreetly, without his family's knowledge. R' Yona would awaken at 1 a.m. to be ready for the man's arrival.

One week, R' Yona was bedridden with a bad case of the flu. When the man knocked at 2 a.m., it woke him up. Gathering his strength, R' Yona jumped out of bed and raced down the stairs with the money in hand. Due to his weakness, he fell and broke a few ribs. The noise woke up the family, who immediately called Hatzolah.

R' Yona motioned for one of his children to come closer. He gave the money to him and said, "Quickly, give this to the man at the door before Hatzolah gets here so he can leave before they see him."

Even in his pain, R' Yona was concerned about the shame of the man at the door. (Visions of Greatness, Vol. 4)



Dolphins have been known to support injured members of their pod, helping them stay above water so they can breathe. Many people have been hurt and feel like they're drowning in a sea of emotions, being pulled under by waves of confusion and doubt. While we can't always remove their burden, we can be there to support them and help keep their head above water until they can catch their breath. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (1948-2020)

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah)

No Middle Way

וְרְאֵה אָנֹכִי נֹתֵן לִפְנֵיכֶם הַיּוֹם בְּרָכָה וּקְלָלָה -*"See, I have placed before you today blessings and curses"* (11:26).

A Jew must know that when it comes to serving Hashem and performing Mitzvos, there is no middle road, says the **Seforno**.

Whatever he does is either right or wrong. If it is right, he will earn himself a blessing; if it is wrong, he will receive a curse.

This should not be confused with Midos, where the exact opposite is true. There, the middle path is known as the golden medium, because it is the ideal; but that is not the case in the realm of Torah and Mitzvos.

Rabbi Shlomo Hoff Shlita

רבותי, this week is **פרשת ראה**, in the middle of the **בין הזמנים תקופה**. Wherever anybody is, **בעזרת השם**, everything should work out well. Everybody should enjoy the time in a beneficial way, **ברוחניות ובגשמיות**.

I'd like to remind ourselves of the way the **תורה** presents the **חיוב** of **קיום תורה ומצוות**. The **פסוק** says: "**ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום**."

The **תורה** calls upon us to choose the **דרך** of **ברכה**, the **דרך ה'**. But why does it emphasize **היום**? **תורה ומצוות** are an ongoing obligation—yesterday, today and tomorrow. What is the significance of **היום**?

Throughout **ספר דברים** the **תורה** repeatedly uses this expression. In **ואתחנן**: "**אשר אנכי מצוך היום**." In **עקב**: "**מצוה אתכם היום**." Here in **ראה**: "**ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום**." In **שופטים** as well, the **תורה** constantly returns to this idea.

There are several explanations, but I'd like to mention just two.

The first is based on **רש״י**, who explains that **היום** teaches us that **מצוות** should always feel new. They shouldn't become **מלומדה**. Every day a person should perform them with fresh **חיות** and **חידוש**, as though they had never been done before.

The **חפץ חיים** adds another **יסוד**. One of the greatest obstacles in **עבודת ה׳** is that we think too much about tomorrow. We worry about the future, and that weakens today's **עבודה**.

If someone knew this was the only opportunity in his life to perform an act of **חסד**, he would do it with tremendous **חשק**. But he thinks, "Tomorrow there'll be another opportunity," and today's enthusiasm fades.

The same applies to **לימוד התורה**. If a person imagined he had only one day to learn, he would learn with all his strength. Sometimes we weaken only because we're already thinking about tomorrow.

I sometimes tell the **בחורים**: on the first day of a long winter **זמן**, they wonder how they'll get through six months. But what does today's **עבודה** have to do with six months from now? We only live in today's **עבודה**.

Perhaps that's one of the messages of **היום**. Treat today as though it were your only opportunity. Learn today. Daven today. Do **חסד** today. Don't let tomorrow weaken what you can accomplish now.

A second **יסוד** comes from the **אור החיים הקדוש** on **ויקרבו ימי יעקב למות**. He explains that life isn't simply one long stretch of years. It's made up of individual days. Every day has its own **נשמה**, its own **תיקון**, and its own purpose.

Every evening there is a **דין וחשבון**, and every morning we begin again with "**נשמה שנתת בי טהורה היא**." Each day stands on its own.

Even the **שולחן ערוך** says that if a person couldn't complete his regular **לימוד** during the day, he should do so at night—but he shouldn't leave a day empty. Tomorrow cannot replace today's **תיקון**.

Every day should contain something of the **ג' עמודי עולם**: **תורה**, **עבודה**, and **גמילות חסדים**. Every evening a person should ask himself: What did I learn? How did I daven? Whom did I help today?

Perhaps that's why the **תורה** repeatedly says "**מצוך היום**" and **נותן לפניכם היום**. Every day is a complete unit of **עבודת ה'**, with its own **נשמה** and its own **תיקון**.

During **בין הזמנים**, every day looks different. We may not learn or daven exactly as we do during **זמן**, but every day still needs its **תיקון**.

תורה, עבודה and **חסד** should all be part of that day in whatever way is appropriate.

The **חפץ חיים** teaches: don't let tomorrow distract you from today's opportunities. Treat today as though it were your only day.

Just to conclude with a beautiful **וואַרט** from the **שינאווא רב**.

The **פסוק** says: "**ראה אנכי נותן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה**."

Why **ברכה וקללה** and not **ברכה או קללה**?

He explains that everything the **רבונו של עולם** gives a person has the potential to become either a **ברכה** or a **קללה**—it all depends on how it's used.

Wealth, talents—every gift can elevate a person if it's used for **תורה** and **עבודת ה'**. The very same gift, if misused, can become the opposite.

That's the meaning of "**את הברכה אשר תשמעון**." Whatever Hashem gives us becomes a **ברכה** when it is used for His **רצון**.

דער אייבערשטער זאל העלפן that everything we possess should be used only for **ברכה**, and everybody should enjoy a meaningful and uplifting **בין הזמנים**, returning **לחיים ולשלום**, with renewed **רוח טובה** and **חיזוק**, **בעזרת השם**.

כל טוב.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld - Not Forgotten

In this week's Parsha, the Torah promises, "Hashem will bless you in all your deeds and in all your undertakings" (*Devarim* 15:10). How does one merit such a blessing? What must we do to receive it?

Give *tzedakah* with joy.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 9b) teaches that one who gives a *perutah* to a poor person receives six blessings. R' Yitzchak adds that one who also speaks kindly and compassionately to the recipient earns a total of eleven blessings. At first glance, this seems surprising. Of course it is proper to be pleasant when giving *tzedakah*, but why should a few warm words be worth almost twice as many blessings as the gift itself?

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, in his *sefer Sifsei Chaim*, explains that every human being longs for something deeper than material assistance. More than money, people yearn to know that they matter; that someone genuinely notices them and cares about them. A gift addresses a person's need. Kindness addresses the person. The money may relieve a burden, but a warm smile, sincere eye contact, and a few thoughtful words restore dignity. They remind someone that they have value.

There is a beautiful story that illustrates this truth.

A school bus driver drove the same route for many years. Every morning, dozens of children climbed aboard. Most kept their heads down, found their seats, put on their headphones, and the ride continued in silence. But there was one boy named Daniel.

Every morning, as Daniel stepped onto the bus, the driver would look him in the eye, smile, and say, "Good morning, Daniel. It's great to see you. How are you today?" It took no more than five seconds. Years passed. Daniel graduated, the bus driver retired, and life moved on.

Then one afternoon, there was a knock at the driver's front door. Standing there was a young man holding a chocolate cake. "Do you remember me?" he asked. The driver studied his face but couldn't place him. "I'm Daniel," he replied. "I rode your bus every morning." His eyes began to fill with tears. "You probably have no idea what those few words meant to me. My parents were going through a painful divorce. Home was cold and school was lonely. Most days I felt invisible.

"But every morning, before anyone else spoke to me, you looked at me as though I mattered. For those few moments, I felt seen and I felt important. I felt like someone was genuinely happy that I existed."

The bus driver had long forgotten those brief conversations. Daniel never did.

This week's Parsha does not simply command us to open our hands. It first teaches us to open our hearts. Because sometimes the greatest gift we can give another person is not what is in our hand, but the feeling that they are truly seen.

And that has the power to change a life forever.

רבי פסח קראהן

ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה. את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות ה'...והקללה אם לא תשמעו אל מצות ה' 11:26-28

"*Behold! I place before you today a blessing and a curse. A blessing if you listen to the commandments of Hashem…and a curse if you do not listen to the commandments of Hashem…*"

Every one of us makes hundreds of choices every day. We decide what to eat and what to wear, where to go, how to speak, and so on. *Moshe Rabbeinu* forewarned *Klal Yisrael* about the spiritual road that lay ahead as they were about to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.

The *Da'as Zekeinim* explains this spiritual fork in the road with a *mashal*:

Once, there was an old man who sat at a busy crossroads. As each person approached he advised them which road to take.

"The left road may look smooth," he would warn, "but it eventually gets bumpy and is filled with thorn bushes. On the other hand, the right road starts off bumpy and thorny, but it quickly becomes smooth and will take you to your destination."

The *Da'as Zekeinim* teaches us a valuable lesson. Often, we choose the path of least resistance, a way that starts out seemingly easy and simple with no hardships involved. More often than not it is the foolish choice because the result is that we are confronted with strong resistance that prevents us from attaining our goals. This ultimately leads to feelings of frustration and disappointment. It is better to take the road that leads to success, despite the thorns that appear at the start. Hard work and consistent effort do pay off, because at the end, the road is smooth and the goals are accomplished. This leads to joy and satisfaction.



The Torah says: **וְנָתַן־לְךָ֥ רַחֲמִ֖ים וְרִחֲמְךָ֑** *"... and He will give you mercy and be merciful to you..."* (Devarim 13:18)

The Gemara (Yevamos 79a) cites this verse to show that being merciful is one of the basic traits of the Jewish people. (Hashem deals with us in the way that we deal with others. Therefore, if He is merciful with us, it is because we are merciful with others.)

The essence of compassion is being able to imagine yourself in someone else's situation. It is the resulting softness of the heart that makes one sensitive to the suffering of others - and allows one to strengthen his free-will to help others, though there might be a cost in personal welfare or comfort.

The last time Rabbi Yitzchok Elchonon Specter went to Petersburg for an important meeting, he was aged and weak. He had to leave his home very early in the morning to catch the only available train. There was not sufficient time to eat breakfast, so his family prepared for him a warm drink.

Precisely at that moment a poor man knocked on the door. Rabbi Specter's assistant opened the door and informed the man that the Rabbi was extremely busy and couldn't attend to him. The man at the door pleaded, "I am going penniless to Koeningsburg to see some doctors and I have come to ask Rabbi Specter for a letter of introduction to the rabbis of the city."

"I'm sorry, but you're too late," said the assistant. "Rabbi Specter is already late for his train."

Overhearing the conversation, Rav Yitzchok Elchonon called out, "Mercy! Mercy!" He then motioned to the man to enter his home and calmly wrote him a warm letter of introduction.

Immediately after giving the letter to the poor man, Rabbi Specter rushed out of the house to catch the train, leaving his warm drink untouched.

