TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry



בחקתי

לעילוי נשמת



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Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



וְהִתְוַדּוּ אֶת־עֲוֹנָם וְאֶת־עֲוֹן אֲבֹתָם... אַף־אֲנִי אֵלֵךְ עִמָּם בְּקֶרִי וְהֵבֵאתִי אֹתָם בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם - *"Then they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers… I too will behave toward them with casualness, and I will bring them into the land of their enemies."* (26:40-41)

Why, if Bnei Yisrael confess their sins, will Hashem behave toward them with casualness and bring them to the land of their enemies?

R' Moshe Freidiger z"l (communal leader in Pest, Hungary) explains:

Teshuvah means confessing one's sins and not making excuses. Here, Bnei Yisrael will confess, but they will justify their actions by saying that their forefathers acted the same way. Such "teshuvah" will be rejected. (Quoted in Otzrot Tzaddikei U'geonei Ha'dorot)

From the Haftarah . . .

בָּרוּךְ הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בַּה' וְהָיָה ה' מִבְטַחוֹ - *"Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem, then Hashem will be his security."* (Yirmiyah 17:7)

R' Chanoch Zundel ben Yosef z"l (19th century; author of popular commentaries on midrashim) writes: The term used for man – "gever"

– refers to a person in the prime of his strength (gevurah). True bitachon is placing one's trust in Hashem even when one thinks he can succeed on his own.- If one does this, "Hashem will be his security" in old age as well. (Etz Yosef Al Ha'siddur)

וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי חַיָּה רָעָה מִן־הָאָרֶץ וְחֶרֶב לֹא־תַעֲבֹר בְּאַרְצְכֶם - ***"I will provide peace in the land . . . and a sword will not cross your land." (26:6)***

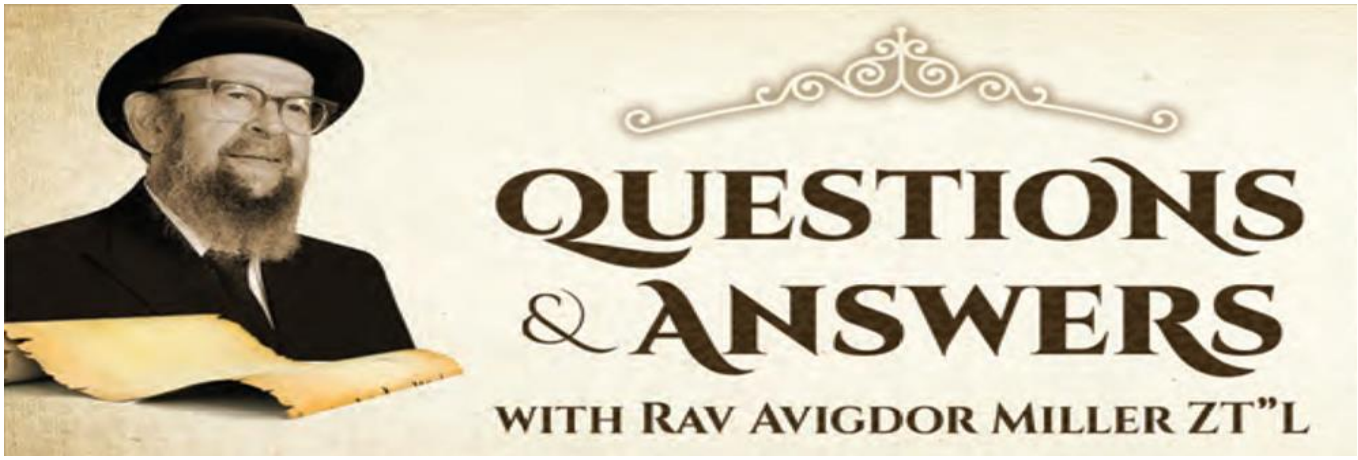


Rashi z"l comments: If there will be peace, then it is unnecessary to say that no army will enter your land to make war. Rather, this means that no army will enter even to pass through your land on its march to wage war with another country. [Until here from Rashi]

R' Yehonatan Eyebschutz z"l (Central Europe; 1690-1764) explains: Even if a transiting army had peaceful intentions, it would scare the populace of Eretz Yisrael, which would realize that this army could attack it some day. This would cause the Jewish People to observe the Torah out of fear, which is not the ideal.

Says the Torah: If you observe the Torah out of love, Hashem will have no need to frighten you into submission, so no army will pass through your land, even peacefully. (*Tiferet Yehonatan*)

"Sincere Ahavat Hashem begins with true Yiras Shamayim." ~ R' Chaim Kanievsky.





Is the study of kabalah, mysticism, an enhancement to the practical application of Torah?

I want to tell you something about this subject. People are always looking for something else, something different than what they have.

What do you need mysticism for? Do you already enjoy and understand all that is nigleh, all that is revealed? Now, if you were a gadol b'Yisroel like Rabbi Akiva, and now you wanted, in addition to all of your Torah knowledge you wanted now to enter into the pardes of secret wisdom, all right. But there's so much to learn before you go to the pardes! There are so many secrets that are lying on the surface of the Torah that you don't even begin to know! - So many open things that are secrets to you!

And therefore, our first job is to spend our lives gaining all of that knowledge and fulfilling all the principles that are on the surface of the Torah. Anybody who calls me up on the phone and asks me if I'm giving any lectures in kabalah, or where can they learn kabalah – it's mostly single girls; single girls living in Manhattan, they call me to say that they're interested in studying kabalah – so the first thing I tell them is, "Learn how to be a Jew." And then you'll see that there are many other things that come before kabalah.



Is the recent rise in antisemitism something to worry about?

Absolutely! How could we not worry about it? But we have to know that there is a fundamental reason why it's happening. It's because Hashem is worried about us. **וַיֵּט יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵעָלָיו**. – *Yisroel has to turn away from Eisav.* We're too much involved in gentile ideas, and it's necessary to erect a wall. And that wall is antisemitism. Always it happens, again and again in history – when Jews start getting lost among Gentiles then it's time for the Gentiles to begin building a wall to prevent that.

And the first reaction to antisemitism has to be *not* to contribute to the Simon Wiesenthal Center or other organizations that combat antisemitism. - No, no! In most cases those organizations cause antisemitism.

The way to combat antisemitism is to build more *yeshivos* where children will be taken in for less *schar limud;* tuition should be be made very low. The *yeshivos* should be so prosperous that they should be able to afford to take in children almost for nothing. That's the ideal. And so, the Jewish child, sitting in the yeshivah, will be the one who is fighting against antisemitism in the most efficient manner.

הוֹדוּ לַה' כִּי־טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חַסְדּוֹ

"When one praises Hashem for the kindness that He performed in the past, this draws down Hashem's kindness for continued kindness in the future." ~ Tiferes Shlomo.



How can one truly believe that everything is gam zu l'tova, that it's all for the good?

We have a Torah and Moshe Rabbeinu is emes, v'soraso emes, and the Torah he gave us is true. And it states there that Hakodosh Boruch Hu does things l'tovah. He made the world for *chesed*. *Oiseh shomayim b'sevunah, ki l'olam chasdo*—everything He made, and everything He made is for *chesed*. *Ki l'olam chasdo,* it's a world of *chesed*. And if at some times it seems to be non-chesed, like a toothache; it's still a *chesed*. If not for the toothache, you wouldn't go to the dentist, and your tooth would rot away. Now you run to the dentist, he puts in a filling and you have a tooth. - Pain is a *chesed*. Without pain people would be sick, and they would never know what's wrong with them.

I once heard this story. In Canada, there was a young woman who didn't have any nerves of feeling in her hands. She was putting her hand over the gas range and she smelled flesh burning. She didn't know it was her own flesh; her hand was burning from the gas range! She didn't have any sensation of pain, and therefore didn't know her flesh was burning till she smelled it.

If you have the sensation of pain, you pull back and you save yourself. Pain is a lifesaver. Pain is a *chesed gadol*. So don't think pain is a harm.

Poverty; for many people poverty is a *yeshua*, a salvation. Wealth? There was a wealthy man, I remember, he moved way out on Long Island. Then he lost all his money. So he moved back to Brownsville; this was in the good old days when Brownsville was a Jewish neighborhood. And he sent his boys to Mesivta Chaim Berlin. I was surprised to see him. "Oh, I said, "What are you doing here?" So he told me that he lost all his money, so now he's back in Brownsville, and he's sending his boys to yeshiva. Out there his boys wouldn't go

to a frum place like Chaim Berlin. Only because he lost his money his family was saved – a true story.

Many people should lose their money and move back to a frum neighborhood. It was a *yeshua*, no question about it! Wealth is a terrible injury, if it is misused.



You said that having money can help a person serve Hashem. So how come it appears that when Jews acquire money, they seem to move from Orthodoxy to Conservative, to Reform?

Why is it that people who become wealthy tend to forsake the principles of their fathers?

Now this is something that's a well-known phenomenon. It's constantly reiterated in the Scriptures, in the Tanach. **וַיִּשְׁמַן יְשֻׁרוּן וַיִּבְעָט** – *The righteous nation became fat and began kicking.* - It's like a cow. A cow, if you don't feed it too much, it's docile. But once you give it too much food, then if you come to milk it, it'll give you a kick in the face.

And that's how children are too, by the way. They're overfed today with too much candy and ice cream. And that's why they're so 'fresh'. If they had to go to work in order to support themselves, then you'd see it would be a much more decent population.

Money is a great test. Now, for good people money is a glorious opportunity. They become more grateful to Hashem and they utilize their wealth for the support of the Torah causes. And they become like Rabbi Akiva or like Raban Gamliel or like Rabbi Tarfon or like Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya, all the great people of our history who knew how to live with money.

But those who are not trained, those who are not prepared for wealth, are ruined by wealth. Like Shlomo HaMelech said: **רֵאשׁ וָעֹשֶׁר אַל תִּתֶּן לִי** – *Don't give me extreme wealth or extreme poverty*, **הַטְרִיפֵנִי לֶחֶם חֻקִּי** – *Give me just enough.*

And therefore, it's a great test and very many people have stumbled and have fallen because of this test.



אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ – '***If you will follow My decrees***.' (26:3)

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, renders this pasuk homiletically by translating the word **אִם** (if) innovatively. **אִם** contains the same Hebrew letters as **אֵם**, mother, which leads the Rosh Yeshivah (Shaar HaShomayim) to transform the message of the pasuk to assert that the mother, the akeres ha'bayis, mainstay of the Jewish home, is the one who catalyzes the spiritual growth of her children. She is the one who initiates the process, who ensures their proper entrance to Torah study and mitzvah observance.

Furthermore, he explains, the Torah alludes to the manner of conveyance that will achieve the greatest results: B'chukosai teileichu; if the mother herself will walk in the mitzvos, if she will set the example by personally representing how a Jew should live, then her children will follow suit.

A mother sets the standard when she demonstrates her personal love and respect for Torah values, Torah study and observance. It is difficult to impart values when one personally does not adhere to them. Children repeat what they hear at home. They communicate their own values by the demeanour they choose to adopt. A mother

projects the image she expects her children to reflect. (Veritably, this applies to both parents, but it is the mother who usually initiates the road map and sets the direction which her children will follow). This establishes the tone in the home and ultimately serves as the lodestar for her children to follow in their journeys through life.

What is acceptable for her in the area of dress will, likewise, be acceptable to her daughter. When her son notes how she fills her time, the demands that she places on her husband to learn, attend a shiur, have a chavrusa, study partner, it will send a powerful message to him: This is how I want you to live.

The role of a mother in shaping the Torah weltanschauung of her children cannot be overemphasized. The Torah characterizes womanhood as predicated upon two defining principles: eizer k'negdo, "A helpmate corresponding to him." i.e., providing the environment for a good marriage and demonstrating the ability to address various issues as they surface; and eim kol chai, "Mother of all living" i.e., raising children in accordance with the hallowed mesorah, tradition, of our ancestors for whom the Torah was the nerve center, their beacon of light which served as their source of inspiration.

These two foci, wife and mother, are the two primary responsibilities of the Jewish woman. Whatever else she may do, be it for self-fulfilling reasons or fringe benefits, the successful woman is one who has navigated and excelled at the first two critical principles of womanhood. The character and atmosphere of a Jewish home are largely determined by the mother. She is referred to as akeres ha'bayis, the mainstay of the home.

A Jewish home should maintain its Jewish character 24/7. Jewish atmosphere is not reserved only for Shabbos. A Jewish household is conducted solely upon the directives of the Torah. Thus, it becomes a place in which Hashem is inclined to rest among the members of the household. In such a home, one can feel G-d's Presence throughout.

Primary among the Jewish mother's role is the education of her children. She does this best by serving as a perfect example of one whose faith and trust is solely in Hashem. One can study about emunah, faith, in Hashem, but no sefer, Torah volume, will be as effective as observing a mother's emunah from the earliest stages of his life.

A child that grows up on a mother's faith, observing his mother's tearful prayers every day, listening to her plead with Hashem as she lights the Shabbos candles, beseeching Him for (spiritually and physically) healthy children, imbues a child with faith in the Almighty and serves as his anchor through life's many challenges and vicissitudes. - A child's earliest memories often continue to inspire him throughout life.

There is a well-known story, a vignette that took place shortly following the cornerstone laying of Yeshivas Ponovezh in 1944, as General Rommel's troops were practically standing at the gates of Eretz Yisrael. It was an emotional scene, with the **Ponovezher Rav** weeping bitterly, his tears mixing with the cement that laid the foundation stone of the yeshivah.

Indeed, Ponovezh was built with tears. It was that night, at the seudah, feast, prepared for the few students that were enrolled in the yeshivah, that the Rav spoke and related the following story:

"You think the laying of the cornerstone took place today? Well, let me inform you that this is not so. The cornerstone laying took place 57 years ago on my mother's back."

When the boys heard this, they were astounded. What did their revered Rebbe mean by this ambiguous statement?

The Ponovezher Rav saw the look in their eyes and (emotionally) proceeded to relate the following narrative which I have summarized in my own words; It was a bitterly cold night, and the frozen ground was covered with five feet of snow. The Kahaneman

family (Ponovezher Rav's last name) – father, mother and five sons – sat around the "dinner" table animatedly discussing their day. They had little food to consume, due to the overwhelming poverty in which they lived; enthusiasm, however, always ran high, fueled by their intense love for one another and their extraordinary joy in being alive to learn Torah.

Each boy related what he had learned in cheder that day. This was despite the deep pall of sadness that permeated the house once their mother had declared that she would not permit her sons to go to cheder without a coat and boots. - The children were acutely aware that their family was the "proud" owner of only one winter jacket and one pair of boots.

Each child begged to be the lucky recipient of the precious winter gear, so that he could attend school the following day. They each had a reason. The oldest boy, who was twelve years old, insisted that he should go, since his class was starting a new sugya, chapter, in the Gemorah. The eleven-year-old insisted that he, too, needed to be in class. The next two brothers clamored to be heard; they, too, had reasons to be in school (how things have changed!) The youngest child, Yossk'ke (Ponovezher Rav), cried out, "What will be with my Mishnayos?"

They decided to drawing lots. Let Heaven decide who was to be the fortunate child that would trudge through five feet of snow to school.

The next moments were like Yom Kippur. The boys bentched with extreme intensity, each praying that he would emerge the winner. They recited their bedtime Shema with great fervor. They all retired to bed, not knowing which one would wake up in the morning as the winner who would attend school.

At 5:30 a.m. the next morning, the mother, knowing that the shamash, sexton, of the shul had already lit the coal stove in the

shul and it was now warm there, woke her oldest son, "Shah! Do not disturb your brothers."

"Mother. Did I win the raffle?"

"No," she replied. "I won."

The mother gave her son food for two meals and wrapped him up in a blanket. She then donned the coat and boots, lifted him up into her arms and carried him to shul (which also served as the community cheder). The cold was unbearable; the usual five-minute walk took twenty minutes (each way). She left him at the shul and said, "I will pick you up at 5:00 this afternoon."

"The mother returned home, blanket in hand, woke her second son, and brought him to shul in the same manner that she had done earlier for his older brother. She repeated this procedure with sons number three and four.

At 7:00 a.m., after she had been on the "road" for an hour and a half, she returned home and woke Yoss'ke, "Do you want to go to cheder?" she asked. He jumped up excitedly, "Yes, of course!"

The mother wrapped him up in the blanket, and they started off for shul/cheder. - He remarked, "Mother did not walk. She danced! She called out joyfully, 'Ribono Shel Olam, I thank You for allowing my four sons to reach cheder today. I am now bringing You the fifth son. Thank You! May they always want to learn Your Torah. May Torah always be sweet to them!'"

Young Yoss'ke was so deeply moved by his mother's words that he called out to her, "Mameh! You carried us in the ice and snow in order to learn Torah. You will see that I will bring my boys to learn Torah – for you, Mameh, for you."

The Ponovezher Rav concluded his story with those parting words: "I have lost so much. Nonetheless, after all that I have lost and suffered, if I still have the strength to start again, to build a yeshivah, it is due to my mother."

Fifty seven years had passed, but he still remembered how his mother had valued Torah. - When a mother demonstrates such extraordinary sacrifice due to her love of Torah, her children see and are inspired. Is it any wonder that her Yoss'ke became the architect of Torah chinuch in post-World War II Eretz Yisrael?



וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פִּרְיוֹ – '***Then I will provide your rains in their time, and the land will give its produce and the tree of the field will give its fruit***.' (26:4)

Interestingly, all of the physical blessings mentioned by the Torah as a reward for mitzvah observance and toiling in Torah are agricultural in nature. Why does the Torah not ensure a person with great wealth, agriculture property or real estate? It seems as if every blessing is: If you observe mitzvos and work hard at studying Torah, you will be blessed with success for all of your hard work in the field. It is almost like saying, if you work hard in the bais hamedrash, then your work in the field will reap great success.

Horav Shimshon Pincus, zl, offers a practical explanation for this. A person who is blessed with great wealth feels secure. Cash, bonds, stocks, investments and real estate: all of these settle the mind, allowing it peace. They do not, however, encourage one to raise his eyes up Heavenward in prayer for continued siyata diShmaya. After all, he is already blessed. For what else should he daven?

Gold and silver do not rust; diamonds retain their value. Real estate may depreciate, but, with enough money, one can always replenish his portfolio. If there is a drought in his country, he has the money to leave and settle elsewhere. Therefore, Hashem provides him with agricultural blessings which are potential wealth if: the rains are frequent and timely; the sun shines when needed; the insects do not infest his crops, etc. Now, his heart is connected with Hashem; his eyes are constantly turned Heavenward in prayer and supplication.

Under normal circumstances, when a person gives a gift to someone, the greater the value of the gift, the greater is the chance of a distance developing between the benefactor and the recipient.

For instance, if one gives a large sum of money to a poor man, the recipient is no longer poor, and he now becomes self-sufficient. The less he receives, the greater his level of dependency on the benefactor.

If Hashem were to bless an individual with a large sum of money, it would, in effect, not be a blessing – but a curse. Now that he is self-sufficient, the recipient no longer feels compelled to turn to Hashem for sustenance. This is a curse, because the person is now distanced from the Source of all blessing – Hashem.

As long as we are in Hashem's proximity in the sense that He is a part of our lives, we will remain committed to Him. Once we move away, there is no telling where the distance will end.

Hashem's blessings are, thus, twofold in nature. There is incredible good fortune in the actual blessing, and the added blessing that we will always have to rely on Hashem accompanies it. This need will preserve our closeness to Him through prayer and supplication.

This is a practical lesson for our daily endeavor. Regardless of how successful we might be, without Hashem, it is nothing. We must always be cognizant of His "input" into our lives. This is certainly better than having to receive a wake-up call from Him.

יְהִי־חַסְדְּךָ ה' עָלֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יִחַלְנוּ לָךְ - '***May Your kindness, Hashem, be upon us, as we hoped for You***.' (Tehilim 33:22)

"The amount of kindness that we receive from Hashem is in direct proportion to the effort we expended in awaiting and hoping for His salvation." ~ Metsudas Dovid.

וַאֲבַדְתֶּם בַּגּוֹיִם - '***And you will become lost among the nations***.' (26:38)

Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl, observes that, when Klal Yisrael is in exile, they are compared to a lost article. As long as a lost item has a siman, recognizable sign, which the owner can use to identify it, then a din *ha'shavah* applies, an obligation for the finder to return it. He may not keep something for which the owner has not yet given up hope. - If an item does not have a recognizable feature by which the owner can identify it, he will be *me'yaeish*, despair of getting it back.

We derive an important lesson from here. The Jew must preserve and retain any identifying features which mark him as a Jew. These signs indicate that we belong to Hashem. His imprint is on us. As long as we show signs of belonging to an Owner, we may aspire that one day – soon – we will be returned to Him, and our long exile will finally come to its conclusion.

וְכָל־מַעְשַׂר בָּקָר וָצֹאן כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲבֹר תַּחַת הַשָּׁבֶט הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה־קֹדֶשׁ לַה' - '***Any tithe of cattle or flock, any that passes under the staff, the tenth of one shall be holy to Hashem***.' (27:32)



Every tenth animal of those born during the current season must be consecrated as an offering to Hashem. This is Maaser beheimah, the tithe of cattle or flock.

All of the animals are put into a large corral and allowed to leave individually. Every tenth animal is marked with a dab of paint to distinguish it from the other animals.

Horav Eliezer Gordon, zl, founding Rosh Yeshivah of Telshe, visited Kiev in order to solicit funds for his growing yeshivah. He came to the home of one of the wealthiest men in Russia and presented his case on behalf of his yeshivah. He asked the man for five hundred rubles. This was an enormous sum of money, and the man pointed this out to him.

"Indeed," he said, "when a fire ravaged Radin, Poland, (home of the Chafetz Chaim), it destroyed the entire Jewish quarter. The Chafetz Chaim made an appeal, and, with great effort, was able to raise two hundred ruble, which was used to rebuild half the community.

Rebbe, you are asking for more than double of that sum – and for only one yeshivah! You must be joking."

The Rosh Yeshivah replied, "No, I am quite serious. I think that you are capable of contributing this amount. "Let me explain" began Rav Leizer.

"I look at everything from two perspectives. This is the way we analyze a sugya, topic, in the Talmud. There are two approaches, and we decide which one to use in order to understand the given issue. The same concept may be applied to charity: how much charity one should give; and why you and I have contrasting viewpoints concerning your ability to contribute five hundred ruble to my yeshivah.

"The Torah teaches us the process for separating Maaser beheimah, whereby each animal must pass through a narrow pathway and every tenth one is marked. What does the wealthy man who has ten thousand head of cattle do? Does he stand there all day – perhaps even a few days – marking off his Maaser? Apparently, he does.

It could have been executed in a much simpler and more convenient manner by separating one thousand animals. Why go through such a prolonged process?

"As I explained earlier, there are two ways to look at a given situation. Imagine, approaching a wealthy landowner and demanding, 'I want one thousand cows to be used as sacrifices for your Maaser beheimah. There is no question that the wealthy man will '*hum and haw*' in an attempt to bargain his way out of such a hefty sum. If, however, he goes down to the corral and begins to count, one for me, two for me, three for me, when he finally reaches the tenth animal, he is no longer troubled about giving away the tenth animal. After all, he retains the other nine. He has been blessed with so much. - The experience might take much longer, but the lesson the wealthy man derives is invaluable.

"Likewise, you and I have discrepant approaches to your contribution to the yeshivah's building fund. Five hundred rubles is no doubt a considerable sum, but why not take a moment to review all of your assets? Is five hundred rubles such an exorbitant amount?"

וְאִם־בְּזֹאת לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וַהֲלַכְתֶּם עִמִּי בְּקֶרִי. וְהָלַכְתִּי עִמָּכֶם בַּחֲמַת־קֶרִי **– '*And you behave toward me with casualness. I will behave toward you with a fury of casualness*.'** (26:27,28)



As Jews, we believe in Hashgacha Pratis, Divine Providence. This means that Hashem observes, is aware of and controls everything that occurs during our lives. Everything is totally inclusive to the point that Chazal teach us that "one does not stub his finger in this world unless it has been predecreed from Above."

To paraphrase **Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl**, there is no concept of coincidence in Jewish theology. It is sinful for one to think or say "it just happened." Things do not "just happen." They are preordained by the Almighty. - This is the meaning of the pasuk.

If one does not reflect on the various punishments that "seem" to happen, if he just continues with business as usual as if nothing had happened -- or whatever did happen has no bearing or message for him -- he will answer to Hashem. Instances in our lives do occur which are clearly "coincidental," even though they affect us directly. These constitute our "coincidences," or rather Hashem's Providence, specifically over us.



It is the little events, like Rus coming to Eretz Yisrael and -- as she was about to go collect grain in one field -- something "happened" that caused her to go to Boaz's field instead. The rest is history. It was not a coincidence that caused her to go to another field; it was the hand of Hashem. The Melech Ha'Moshiach will descend from this "change" in plans!

To the eye of an innocent observer, there appears to be an everyday occurrence affecting a single person - Rus. To the one who believes in Divine Providence, it is clearly Hashem guiding the birth of Moshiach. Moreover, we see that what might seem to affect only one individual, in reality can affect and change a world!

"Sorrow locks the gates of Heaven. Prayer opens locked gates. Joy has the power to tear down the walls." ~ Baal Shem Tov.

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ - *'If you will follow my decrees.'* (26:3)





Chazal tell us that to "follow/walk" in Hashem's decrees is to engage in intensive Torah study, to toil and labor in Torah.

Horav Gedalyah Shorr, zl, explains this in the following manner: The distinction between a man and an angel is found in the fact that the malach, angel, is an omeid, stands still, while man is a mehaleich, moves/walks. The Torah reveals to us that man "moves" through ameilus, by toiling in Torah. He goes higher and higher, from strength to strength by toiling in Torah.

Horav Shorr cites the **Rogatshover Gaon, zl**, who adds that this "halichah," form of movement, is actually the maase ha'kinyan, act of acquisition, through which one acquires his portion in Torah. He cites the **Rambam** in his Pirush Ha'Mishnah, who claims that walking around a field is considered a kinyan. Regarding the acquisition of land, one must make a chazakah, a distinct act of ownership, such as repairing or building on the property. Concerning a field belonging to two partners, however, walking is sufficient, since one is only delineating his portion of the field.

The same concept applies to Torah, which was given to all of Klal Yisrael. The ameilus of one, exerting himself in Torah study, is the halichah, walking, which acquires for him his portion in the Torah.

וְכָשְׁלוּ אִישׁ־בְּאָחִיו - *'They will stumble over one another.'* (26:37)



They will become so demoralized and fearful of the enemy that they will flee without seeing where they are going, stumbling over one another.

Chazal add a new twist to the interpretation of this pasuk. They will stumble over each other's sins. Since all Jews are inherently responsible one for another, one Jew will be held liable for the transgression perpetrated by his fellow Jew. We are all components of a large unit called Klal Yisrael. We cannot ignore one another's shortcomings.

A visitor once came to the Volozhiner Yeshiva and noticed **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl**, delivering a shiur. As usual, the lecture was replete with brilliant themes and incredible logic. This person went over to Rav Chaim at the end of the shiur and said, "It is truly regrettable that you live in Volozhin. Your students will study regardless. Perhaps they might be missing one more pshat, exposition, on the Rambam - nu; it is not really such a terrible thing. If you would live in Paris or in Berlin, you would certainly be able to affect the spiritual lives of many Jews. Indeed, you might succeed in stemming the tide of assimilation.

Rav Chaim looked at the visitor. In a strong, clear voice, he responded, "You are mistaken. In fact, my learning here in Volozhin

prevents the Jews in Paris and Berlin from becoming meshumadim, apostates.



A similar story occurred concerning **Rav Yisrael Salanter, zl** when he heard that in a small town, far from his city of Kovno, home of his famous kollel, an individual Jew committed a blatant act of chillul Shabbos. He immediately convened his kollel fellows, which included some of the greatest Torah luminaries. He delivered a scathing lecture on the topic of Shabbos, its holiness and the gravity of its desecration. After the shiur one of the fellows questioned the reason for the reprovement. He responded that he had heard that Shabbos had been desecrated in a town far from them.

"Rebbe, what does this have to do with us?" was the immediate retort.

Rav Yisrael answered, "If your shemiras Shabbos would be more meticulous, if your observance of the holiness of Shabbos was stronger, there would not have occurred this instance of chillul Shabbos in that town. You must realize that you are responsible for all of Yahadus, Judaism. - If someone in Paris becomes an apostate, it is because our spiritual level has waned somewhat. Every Jew has a direct influence upon all the Jews in the world - for the positive and the negative."

These compelling words should serve for us, not only as a condemnation and demand, but also as a source of encouragement of our awesome responsibility to all of Klal Yisrael.

וְרָדְפוּ מִכֶּם חֲמִשָּׁה מֵאָה וּמֵאָה מִכֶּם רְבָבָה יִרְדֹּפוּ - '***And five of you will pursue one hundred and one hundred will pursue ten thousand***.' (26:8)

Anyone with even a rudimentary knowledge of mathematics understands that the ratio presented above is inconsistent. If five Jews can pursue a hundred enemies, then the ratio of one to twenty should translate into a hundred Jews pursuing two thousand. - The pasuk, however, does not say that. It writes that one hundred Jews will pursue one thousand of the enemy!

Rashi cites the **Sifri** that infers that when people work as a group, when more people are united in serving the Almighty, the consequences of their actions are much more significant. A mitzvah, when performed by a large group, has a greater impact than one which is observed by an individual.

The Chofetz Chaim proves this from the mitzvah of zimun, the introductory blessing recited before Bircas HaMazon, grace after meals. When three men bentch together, they say, "Nevareich," "we will bless". When ten men bentch together, they say "Nevareich le'Elokeinu", "we will bless to our G-d." When one thousand bentch together, the blessing changes to "Nevareich l'Hashem Elokeinu Elokei Yisrael", " we will bless Hashem, Our G-d and the G-d of Yisrael."

The aggregate power of a multitude of Jews is remarkable. There is no fixed ratio for correlating the effect of a few Jews who observe mitzvos to the combined effort of many. Consequently, one should always seek to include himself in the tzibbur, communal effort of mitzvah performance.

There is a story told about a scholarly meshulach, fund-raiser for the Slutzker Yeshivah, who came to the **Chofetz Chaim** regarding his desire to change vocations. It seems that his financial situation at home had improved. Now he wanted to retire and take a position as rav in a smaller community, enabling him to study Torah on a more

consistent basis. He explained to the Chofetz Chaim that while he did find time to study Torah, because his mind was so involved in his overwhelming responsibility to the Yeshivah, he found it difficult to concentrate on his learning and even on his daily tefillos. Instead of concentrating on his prayers, he was thinking of the best manner in which to approach a specific wealthy donor. In a different setting, in a more relaxed atmosphere, he would be able to study Torah and daven to Hashem on a much loftier plane.

The Chofetz Chaim wished the fund-raiser success in his new endeavor and bid him farewell. Just as he reached the door, the Chofetz Chaim called to him, "Would you by chance know the price of a pair of shoes?"



The man, taken aback, responded, "I really have not purchased a pair of shoes in quite some time, but I would venture that they are about ten rubles."

Just before he opened the door to leave, the Chofetz Chaim asked him, "How much profit do you think the shoemaker makes on a pair of shoes?"

Dumbfounded by the Chofetz Chaim's behavior, the meshulach responded, "I really do not know; I never was a shoemaker." It was not over --- yet.

"Let us attempt to calculate the shoemaker's profit." After factoring in the cost of leather, labor and various overhead expenses, they arrived at a handsome profit margin for the shoemaker.

Just as the meshulach was about to leave for the third time, the Chofetz Chaim turned to him and asked, "Are these the only shoes available for the consumer, or are there other types of shoes?"

"Well, there are custom-made shoes and factory-made shoes."

"Which are more expensive?"

"The custom-made shoes are more expensive, since much more meticulous labor is involved in making them."

"If this is the case, the shoemaker must do quite well, even better than the owner of the factory."

"No, rebbe, on the contrary," the fund-raiser responded, "it is the factory owner who is really wealthy. True, his profit margin is reduced in comparison to the shoemaker, but he produces thousands of shoes, many more times the amount made by the shoemaker."

The Chofetz Chaim now turned to the meshulach and said, "You would do well to heed your own words. You would like to retire from what truly is a demanding job, so that you will no longer be distracted from Torah study and tefillah. You are probably right in assuming that your personal growth will be enhanced. Your work on behalf of the Yeshivah benefits hundreds of young men who will be enabled to study and pray as a result of your efforts. Can you compare your personal achievement to the incredible benefit you avail Klal Yisrael?"

While this thesis in no way is meant to encourage one to sacrifice his personal learning for every communal endeavor, it demonstrates the extreme importance of communal work and the overwhelming benefit of koach ho'rabim, the power of a multitude of Jews.

"It is easier to know the entire Talmud than to correct a single bad midah. ~ R' Yisroel Salanter zt"l.

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ... וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם... וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לָי... אַף־אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה־זֹּאת לָכֶם - '***If you follow My decrees... then I will provide your rains in their time... But if you will not listen to Me... then I will do the same to you***.' (26:3,4,14,16)

This parsha is often misunderstood to be dealing with reward and punishment, blessings and curses. This is absolutely not true. - Hashem does not curse. The correct name given to that portion of the parsha in which the reader recites the various "responses" to our iniquitous behavior is the "tochachah," warning, admonishment.

Horav Moshe Swift, zl, remarks that reward and punishment are applicable in the hereafter. In this world, however, we deal with direct consequences. Every action or endeavor promotes a consequence. If we walk in Hashem's path, if we observe His mitzvos, then the consequences are positive. We will receive rain at the most appropriate time, and the land will yield abundant crops. - If we produce that which is expected of us. Hashem's response will be one that is consistent with our actions.

When we do not follow in Hashem's statutes, when our behavior leaves much to be desired as human beings, let alone Jews, His reaction is also commensurate with our demeanour. Hashem does not curse. Rather, we bring upon ourselves the consequences to our actions.

How often do we ask ourselves, "Why?" Why did this happen to us? Why are our children estranged from us and Judaism? Why are we cursed?

Perhaps the answer to this most famous question is to be found in our parsha - if we would only open our eyes and search for it.

"The goal of parenting is not to raise good kids; it is to raise good adults."

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ - "***If in My statutes, you shall walk***." (26:3)

What is the meaning of "walking" in Hashem's statutes?

This idea can be elucidated allegorically with the following parable: A group of people are sitting together around a large table. As long as they sit together, eating and drinking, there are no noticeable characteristics distinguishing any individual among them.

This situation changes at the end of the meal when they rise to go. All but one individual leave and go on their way. Only one person remains sitting in his place, as if paralyzed in his position.

This riddle is solved only after careful inquiry. Due to a serious physical condition this man lacks the ability to walk. As long as everyone remains seated, his condition is not conspicuous. When everyone leaves, however, his unfortunate situation becomes obvious.

Horav Nochum Zev of Kelm Z"l applies this parable as a way of developing an insight into the true character of people. As long as everyone is sitting and studying together in the Yeshiva, it is not always possible to distinguish one student's character development from another's. Only after the students physically "get up" and leave the shelter of the Bais Hamedrash and its refined spiritual environment is each one's personality truly reflected. Only then can one discern between one who is able to stand erect and "walk" in the world equipped with his Torah education and one who is unable to "walk," consequently falling prey to the "winds of secular change" that permeate the air.

This is the meaning of **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ** - If you will "walk" in My statutes and affirm your ability to carry yourself on the path of Torah, despite the opposition which you may face, you will be blessed with great reward.

Facts About the Crusades and the Jews by Yehuda Altein



Massacres of the Jews of Metz during the First Crusade

The Crusades were a series of Christian efforts to wrest Jerusalem from the Muslims. On their way, the frenzied mobs wreaked havoc on numerous Jewish communities in medieval Western Europe. Read on for 11 facts about this horrific era of history, which set the precedent for countless Antisemitic acts carried out since then in the name of religion.

1. The Crusades Were "Holy" Wars

The Crusades were a series of "holy" wars carried out by European Christians primarily in the 11th-13th centuries. Their stated goal was to free Jerusalem from the Muslims, whom they viewed as infidels, and establish a Christian kingdom there. On their way to the Holy Land, the zealous mobs pounced on the opportunity to rid themselves of the "infidels" in their midst—the Jews, viciously decimating many Jewish communities.

2. They Were Initiated by Popes

Far from being a grassroots movement, the Crusades were called for and directed by the Popes themselves. Although they did not openly advocate for the murder of Jews, many church leaders were quick to turn a blind eye when these atrocities did occur.

3. The Crusaders' Motives Were Far From Sacred

Politics played a large role in the papal decision to launch a crusade. For centuries, the Church had been at odds with the monarchs of Western Europe, each side jockeying for power. What greater strategy to undermine royal authority than to call for a religious war, uniting the masses under the Pope's banner? As for the soldiers, they joined the Crusades as an easy way to get rich off plunder—and to obtain the Church's promise of eternal salvation and automatic forgiveness for all their sins.

4. Soldiers Were Joined by Mobs of Peasants

Initially, the plan was for the Crusades to consist of armies of professional soldiers on an organized expedition to the Holy Land. But as religious hysteria spread throughout Europe, more and more peasants and commonfolk joined the Crusaders' ranks. With tens of thousands of people joining the cause, any sense of order and discipline had now disappeared, and the masses, spurred by religious zeal and natural greed, felt free to act as they wished. In many cases, these mobs overwhelmed the forces of local rulers who attempted to protect their Jewish subjects.

5. The First Was the Worst

Jews were pillaged and murdered during each of the first three Crusades. In terms of casualties and mass destruction, the First Crusade surpassed the others. Initiated in 1096 by Pope Urban II, the victims of this crusade included Jewish communities in France, Germany, and Jerusalem.

6. The Rhineland Was Hit Hard

After wreaking havoc on various communities in France, the armies of the First Crusade made their way to Germany. What followed was a bloodbath in the three great Jewish communities of the Rhineland: Speyer, Worms, and Mainz.

Throngs of Crusaders entered Speyer on Shabbat, 8 Iyar, where they proceeded to murder 10 Jews for refusing to embrace Christianity. The rest of the community was saved thanks to the intervention of the local ruler.

The Jews of Worms and Mainz did not fare as well. When news of the onslaught reached the community of Worms, many Jews barricaded themselves in the ruler's castle for protection. The mob arrived there on 23 Iyar, finding easy prey in the Jews who had remained in their homes. Seven days later, the Crusaders penetrated the fortress and murdered the Jews inside. By the time they had left, the bulk of the community—800 souls in all—had been ruthlessly slaughtered, with the rest forcibly baptized.

The Jews of Mainz similarly sought safety in the ruler's castle, only to have the Crusaders storm the walls on 3 Sivan, resulting in the deaths of the 1,300 Jews hiding inside.

These cities were the first of many in Germany attacked by the frenzied mobs, who murdered the Jewish inhabitants, ransacked their homes, and desecrated their Torah scrolls.

7. Many Jews Sacrificed Their Lives Rather Than Convert

In many instances, the Crusaders promised to spare the Jews' lives if they would agree to convert. The vast majority categorically declined the offer and proudly chose death over denouncing their faith.

In some cases, Jews took their own lives and those of their children to prevent them from being forcibly baptized.

8. Rabbeinu Tam Survived the Second Crusade

The Second Crusade, launched in 1146, inflicted further losses on the Jewish communities of France and Germany. In one instance, bloodthirsty crusaders entered the home of Rabbi Yaakov ben Meir, commonly known as Rabbeinu Tam, in the French town of Ramerupt. After pillaging his home, they stabbed him multiple times in the head. Miraculously, at the last moment, he was saved thanks to the intervention of a passing nobleman.

9. English Jews Suffered From the Third Crusade

In 1189, Richard the Lionhearted was crowned king of England and announced his intent to join the Third Crusade. This declaration fanned anti-Jewish sentiment among the populace, who proceeded to target several English Jewish communities. Notable among them was the Jewish community of York, where 150 Jews, under siege at Clifford's Tower, met a tragic death. Although there is no reliable source for the custom, Jews traditionally have not lived in York, or even spent a night there, since the massacre.

10. They Set a Dangerous Precedent

The total number of Jewish casualties from the First Crusade is estimated at about 10,000—a far cry from some of the later tragedies our people underwent (most notably the Holocaust). However, the population of Europe in 1096 was less than 10% of what it is today, and the numbers given above represent entire communities that were decimated.

More importantly, the Crusades marked the first organized massacres of Jews in the Christian world. While medieval Jews had been persecuted before, those events were sporadic and contained. With the advent of the Crusades, anti-Jewish sentiments became popularized among the masses, resulting in innumerable blood libels, incarcerations, murders, and expulsions—including the ugly face of Antisemitism we see rising today.

11. They Are Commemorated in Jewish Life

The Crusade massacres endure in Jewish custom and liturgy until today. Many elegies were written by contemporary scholars, some of which have been incorporated into the Tishah B'Av *kinnot*. One example is *Mi Yiten Roshi Mayim* ("O that my head would be a fountain of tears!"), composed by Rabbi Klonimus ben Yehuda.

The *Av Harachimim* prayer, beseeching G-d to avenge the blood of those killed to sanctify His name, is recited on Shabbat mornings before the Musaf prayer. It is skipped, however, on Shabbat Mevarchim, the last Shabbat of the month, when we "bless" the upcoming month—an occasion more attuned to positive sentiments. However, it is *not* skipped on Shabbat Mevarchim Sivan (and in some communities, Shabbat Mevarchim Iyar), the month(s) in which most of the Jewish victims of the First Crusade met their deaths.

Additionally, the 20th of Sivan is a non-obligatory fast day kept to commemorate the martyrs of the Crusades (among other reasons).

Yesodos m' ha Sedra

LESSONS IN HASHKAFA & HALACHA FROM THE PARSHA

In memory of R' Shmuel Shmelka ben HaRav Moshe Kizelnik z"l

L'Maaseh

Generally, the **Alter of Kelm** had a very pale complexion, but every Shabbos, his face was filled with color and radiated kedusha. One Friday night, the bochurim in yeshiva noticed that he had retained his ordinary weekday pale appearance and finally one of them got up the nerve to ask why this week was different than all others.

He replied that earlier that day, he heard the news that a certain maskil who was constantly trying to invoke the governments wrath

against Jews had passed away. His instant reaction was that of joy as he jumped out of his chair and began to dance, but after a few minutes he thought about the gehinom that this man would suffer for his aveiros and the Alter began to empathize with him and feel his pain.

These thoughts disturbed him so much that he wasn't able to properly prepare himself for the kedusha of Shabbos and so he remained with his weekday appearance.

In the middle of pesukei d'zimra, we proclaim "Hashem melech, Hashem malach, Hashem yimloch l'olam va'ed!". This isn't actually a posuk anywhere. It is really a compilation of three separate pesukim, which really should be problematic. As a rule, we don't invent pesukim. We don't even say parts of pesukim. If we say a posuk as part of tefilah, we say it in its entirety. Yet here, Chazal went against this and instituted that we say three partial pesukim as if they were one. Rav Shimshon Pinkus explains that although it seems that Hashem's rule has its ups and downs; at certain points in history His malchus was recognized by all, and bi'mheira b'yameinu will return to that state as well. However now, He is only revered and honored by relatively very few people—a small minority of the world population. This understanding is also untrue because Hashem's reign is one continuum, past, present and future and so we stress this by proclaiming Hashem Melech Hashem Malach, Hashem Yimloch!

If you harm your fellow in a minor way – consider it major. If you helped him in a major way – consider it minor. ~ If your fellow helped you in a minor way – consider it major. If he harmed you in a major way – consider it minor. ~ Yehudah Ben Teima.

Fascinating INSIGHTS



During the Serbo-Bulgaria war of November 1885, R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger of Yerushalayim addressed a pressing question: if Jewish soldiers find themselves in a conflict where Jews fight on both sides, are they permitted to engage in combat knowing they might kill fellow Jews? This dilemma arose as hundreds of Jews joined the Bulgarian army during the conflict.

R' Schlesinger's response navigates the complexities faced by Jewish soldiers in such scenarios. He explored the consequences of refusing direct orders to fire at the enemy, which could lead to severe punishment such as death by a firing squad. However, blindly shooting across the frontline, risking killing fellow Jews, was deemed unacceptable. - R' Schlesinger said that soldiers must exhaust every possible avenue to avoid such situations, whether through desertion or allowing themselves to be captured by the enemy. Thankfully, the war was short-lived, spanning from November 14-28.



Parshah Thoughts – Ideas and Reflections – Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Immediately following the curses and warnings, should we choose to not follow the Torah (26:15), is the topic of Arachin, donating a financial amount based on the value of a person (27:1).

The Kotzker Rebbe is quoted as explaining that after hearing the admonition, we may begin to lose faith in ourselves and feel that we are worthless. Therefore, Hashem immediately instructs to us the rules of Arachin, reminding us that each of us, just by being alive, is valuable and has intrinsic value.

The Siddur Speaks



Rav Binyomin Radner writes about learning Torah during Chazaras HaShatz, the Chazan's repetition of Shemoneh Esrei.

The Mishnah Brurah (124:17) quotes the Mogen Avraham that one is not allowed to learn during Chazaras HaShatz, since this will cause others to view Chazaras HaShatz lightly, and it will lead people to idle around, talk, or browse instead of paying attention to the

Chazan. - One might have thought that he is using his time wisely during Chazaras HaShatz to learn, but the Mishnah Brurah says that he may actually be causing others to sin.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, writes (Orchos Yosher, pg. 104) that one who does Sh'nayim Mikra V'echad Targum during Chazaras HaShatz, it is a Mitzvah Haba'ah B'Aveira, a Mitzvah that comes through an Aveirah, and he is does not fulfill the Mitzvah, even B'di'eved. He adds that one will not have success from learning that is done during Chazaras HaShatz.

The Sh"lah is also quoted by the Mishnah Brurah (124: 26) as advising one to look into the Siddur during Chazaras HaShatz and following along with the Chazan, in order that he not look around and get distracted, and this way he will concentrate on each word.

The Kaf Hachaim (124:16) writes that one should not look at Seforim during Chazaras HaShatz, but rather, he should pay attention. - He quotes the Sefer Reishis Chachmah, which says that one should not even think in learning during Chazaras HaShatz.

The Ben Ish Chai (Parashas Terumah) cites the Arizal, who says that the real reason for Chazaras HaShatz is based in Sod, mystical Kabalistic concepts, and Chazaras HaShatz can be more effective and can reach higher places in Shamayim than the quiet Shemoneh Esrei can reach.

Another reason mentioned by the Mechaber (Orach Chaim 124:4) is that if there are not at least nine people paying attention to the Chazan, then it could be that the Chazan is making Brachos Levatalah, Brachos said in vain.

The Kaf HaChaim also quotes the Gemara which says, "Praiseworthy is one who learns Torah, praiseworthy is he who beings a Nachas Ruach, pleasure, to Hashem." - We can imply from this is that there are times or ways when a person can learn Torah, but it does not bring a Nachas Ruach to Hashem. This, he says, refers to learning

during Chazaras HaShatz. One may be learning, but he is not bringing pleasure to Hashem, as he should be paying attention to the Chazan during this time.

This is similar to what Rav Chaim Kanievsky wrote in Orchos Yosher, that it is a Mitzvah that comes from doing an Avaeirah.

We can see that Chazaras HaShatz has tremendous importance, and we should use this time to connect to Hashem through Tefilah!

Sterling Character

One should speak only in matters of Divrei Torah or in matters concerning personal needs. And even when discussing one's personal needs, he should not talk about them too much.

Chazal taught (Pirkei Avos 1:17), "Whoever talks excessively brings about Aveirah," and they have also taught, "I have found nothing better for a person than silence." (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 29:5)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

A father once brought his young son to the Brisker Rav, zt"l, with a request that the Rav Bentch his child that he grow to be a true Talmid Chacham and a Yirei Shamayim.

The Brisker Rav responded with some solid advice: "If you learn Torah with your son, he will become a true Talmid Chacham, and if your wife Davens and pleads with Hashem that her son grow up to be a Yirei Shamayim, he will be a Yirei Shamayim!"

The greatest accomplishment is not in never falling, but in rising again after you fall. ~ Rabbi Yisrael Salanter (1809-1883).



Short And Sweet Story of The Week By R'Yoni Schwartz

Many years ago, a certain Gerrer chassid, who was a major donor of the Agudas Yisrael conventions in Europe, found himself in a very tight financial predicament. He was running out of money for himself. He was unsure what to do. Normally, he would consult with the **Gerrer Rebbe, ZT"L**, regarding his personal issues. However, he did not want to inform the Gerrer Rebbe about his situation and make him feel badly that he was experiencing such discomfort. Instead, he spoke with Rav Yitzchak Meir Levin, the Gerrer Rebbe's nephew, who told this chassid that he would soon travel to the **Chofetz Chaim, ZT"L**; so, he suggested the chassid come along and present to the Chofetz Chaim his challenge.

As he was about to enter, he heard the Chofetz Chaim from outside the room preparing to bench, saying *Mizmor L'David* (Chapter 23 of Tehillim). As he reached the words " **אַךְ טוֹב וָחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי - *many only good and kindness pursue me***," the chassid heard the Chofetz Chaim ask, "Don't troubles, worries, and enemies usually chase a person; why is Dovid Hamelech asking that kindness pursue him?"

There was a pause. The chassid then heard the Chofetz Chaim continue, "Everybody is going to have trouble and stress, and sometimes they come from evil sources. May my troubles come from "*ach tov v'chesed* - only goodness and kind deeds."

He never spoke with the Chofetz Chaim about his problem, nor did anybody else speak to him on his behalf yet having received his

answer without even asking his question, he went home happy and motivated to continue his chesed.

Comment: In this week's Parsha, Bechukosai, we learn about the blessings and curses that we experience because of following or forsaking Hashem's commandments. If we must experience negative decrees, is it not better to have our challenges come from kindness than from anxiety and worries? That way, our reward for the kindness is greatly multiplied and we help others in the process. When we help others, the person we help most is actually ourselves.



A Good Word

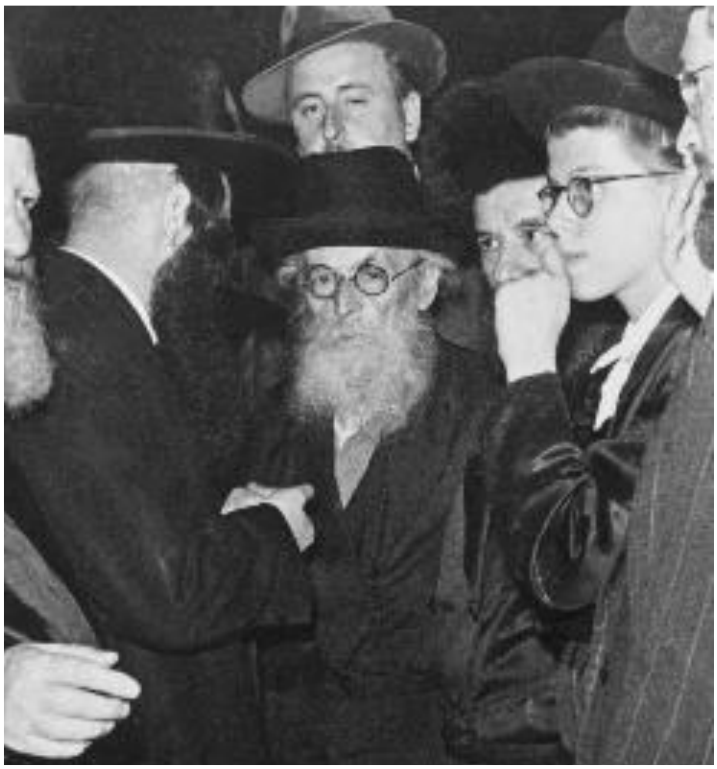
● Building People

Twelve-year-old Shlomo was part of a group of boys who originated from Iran, and were thus called *yoldei Tehran,* children from Iran. Many of these children were pulled away from their parents, while others' parents were cruelly murdered.

When Shlomo arrived in Eretz Yisrael, he attended yeshiva but had a very hard time understanding what they were learning. The yeshiva set up for him special tutors to give him extra assistance. He put in his best efforts, yet his learning just wasn't up to par with the rest of the class.

At the end of the school year, the school planned to bring the boys to be tested by the **Chazon Ish**. Adrenalized, the boys took their extra time to review the material before getting tested. For Shlomo, this was a nightmare. Even with all the time he put in, he

was convinced that he wouldn't be able to answer any of the questions the Chazon Ish might ask him.



Aware of Shlomo's weakness in learning, the *hanhalah* of his yeshiva decided to preempt the Chazon Ish and inform him about Shlomo. When push came to shove, though, they were so busy with all the logistics that they didn't get around to it. Only when the class was already at the Chazon Ish's house did they remember, and by then it was too late. Had they told him then, it would be too obvious and embarrassing for Shlomo.

As the Chazon Ish went from boy to boy, asking them questions from the Gemara they'd been learning, he was stunned at how well they knew the material. Every boy answered well until Shlomo. The Chazon Ish asked Shlomo a question, but he was stumped. Their *rebbi* tried hinting to the Chazon Ish to proceed to the next boy, but before moving on, the Chazon Ish answered the question for him.

Then, the Chazon Ish requested from Shlomo to get a Gemara *Kiddushin*. Embarrassed and humiliated, Shlomo wanted to bury himself alive. He thought his torture would end when the Chazon Ish answered the question, but now he wanted a Gemara! He braced himself for the heavy *mussar* the Chazon Ish would give him for not knowing the material.

The Chazon Ish took the Gemara from him, opened to *daf lamed amud beis*, and started reading: "Torah is compared to *sam*, a medication." The Chazon Ish continued to explain the Gemara with sweetness: "*Bnei, barasi yetzer hara barasi Torah taovlin* – My son,

I've created *yetzer hara*, and I've created the Torah as a medicine. Through learning, you can overcome the *yetzer hara*."



He then asked Shlomo if he understood the Gemara. Shlomo confirmed that he understood it. The Chazon Ish then asked if he could repeat it, and Shlomo repeated the Gemara, with all the details that he heard from the Chazon Ish, to the entire class.

"I see a *gaon olam* growing here," replied the Chazon Ish. "This boy never learned this Gemara before; it's a totally strange *mesechta* to him. Still, after the first time learning it, he's able to teach it to the class. Wow! *Cheilach l'Oraisa* – your power should be used for Torah. We must be careful with this boy, he has special *kochos* – strength! You saw what type of *shiur* he gave after learning this Gemara for the very first time!"

The Chazon Ish went on to *mechazek* Shlomo more, before going on to finish testing the remaining boys.

After they left, R' Rosenstein, the principal of the yeshiva, noted to the other *rabbeim* that beside for getting the boys tested by the Chazon Ish, they also got a good lesson in how to input *geshmak* into the boys, to motivate them to want to learn.

Fast-forward some years…

On Simchas Torah in the Ponovezh Yeshiva, they auction off the honor of *Atah Horeisa*. The boy with the highest bid wins the chance to call out *Atah Horeisa*. One year, R' Rosenstein was there for Simchas Torah. He was shocked at the bidding, which wasn't for money but for *blatt* Gemara that the winner had to complete by the

coming Pesach. The bidding started at one hundred *blatt*, but quickly rose. Two hundred…three hundred… At that point, only the serious *masmidim* are still in the running. As they got to five hundred *blatt*, the auctioneer call out, "five hundred going once… Five hundred going twice… Five-hundred sold! Mazal tov to the *bachur* Shlomo! Mazal tov Shlomo the Masmid!"

R' Rosenstein looked to see who "Shlomo the Masmid" was, and lo and behold, it was none other than the Iranian boy from his very own yeshiva. Overfilled with joy, R' Rosenstein approached Shlomo, wishing him mazal tov on this milestone. Proud of his milestone, Shlomo assured his former principal that the words of the Chazon Ish were the words that ensured him with the power of growth, and B"H his learning was flourishing and producing.

The Chazon Ish knew how to deliver uplifting *chizuk* that would allow a boy with much potential to bring out his best! (Heard from R' Avraham Shutland, *shlita*, as repeated from R' Aharon Toiseg)

We meet many people, every day. Every person that we encounter is another opportunity to give a good word or some encouragement. With the slightest encouragement, we can transform a person's life and give them hope and strength. What a wonderful opportunity we have!

● "You Are Hired!"

A man from Israel, who we'll call Yehuda, works as a tour guide and real-estate agent. Over the past few months, he has gotten very little business and has found himself with a lot of extra time, not to mention a lack of *parnasa*. He therefore wanted to do something beneficial for the sake of Hashem, and so he contemplated going back to working in *chinuch* like he had done in his younger years.

When he had first gotten married, he had been a *rebbi* in a yeshiva, and after that he'd worked in outreach, giving *shiurim* to *baalei*

teshuva. He contacted the Rosh Yeshiva of a yeshiva for *baalei teshuva* in his area, and they arranged a time to meet. When he arrived at the Rosh Yeshiva's office, a pleasant rebbi with a smiling countenance greeted him, and they started talking about his past experience and his current occupation.

When Yehuda was asked about his methods of working with boys, suddenly a flash of lightning seemed to shoot through his head. The same jolt went through the Rosh Yeshiva's head as well. They immediately recognized each other, and the Rosh Yeshiva said, "You will certainly come to work here. You possess keen discernment. You understand *bachurim*. You will be a treasure for us."

What was the story behind their past? When Yehuda was a *rebbi*, he had a nice boy in his class from a respectable family. That boy's older brother, then a teenager, had left yeshiva, all his connection to Yiddishkeit, and was essentially doing whatever he pleased. His parents were horrified and tried everything they could to bring him back. The boy's mother even called Yehuda, asking him to please speak to her son and try to reach him.

For a long time Yehuda sat and thought as to what he would tell this teenager. He remembered a Gemara in *Bava Metzia* about the son of Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon, Yossi, who went off the *derech*. When Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi heard about it, he called Yossi and gave him *semicha* as a rav and then sent him to learn with another rebbi. Yossi had no patience to learn, and every day expressed his desire to leave. His rebbi told him, "You're going to become wise. And they're going to spread a golden canopy over you and call you rebbi." Those words gave him motivation, and indeed he began learning hard and eventually became a *Gadol b'Torah*.

Yehuda decided to use the same tactic for this boy, who we'll call Moshe. He told Moshe, "You're going to be a Rosh Yeshiva one day. You will learn and grow so much that everyone will want to learn in your yeshiva."

Yehuda then designed special stationery for him with his name at the top, calling him HaRav HaGaon HaRosh Yeshiva Rabbi Moshe Meor HaGolah. He played the game down to all the smallest details, and Moshe indeed improved and came back to Torah and mitzvos.

They lost connection over time, and Yehuda never knew what became of Moshe. He was hoping that he was living like a good Jew. Now, thirty-two years later, Yehuda saw with his own eyes the fruits of his labor. Moshe indeed became a Rosh Yeshiva, and was sitting directly opposite him in all his glory.

He was now, successfully, bringing others back to Torah and mitzvos. Rav Moshe told Yehuda, "You were the only one who predicted this type of future for me. You discerned the strengths that Hashem gave me, and you were right. Baruch Hashem, I succeeded."

This meeting gave Yehuda so much satisfaction. Hashem led him to that specific yeshiva not only to bring him back to teach Torah but to show him how far his efforts had gone.

A person never knows what encouragement could do for another. It can change the entire course of someone's life for the better.

Parshah Pearls (Adapted from the Ma'ayanah shel Torah)

● Running Away from One's Own Shadow

וְנַסְתֶּם וְאֵין רֹדֵף אֶתְכֶם - *"And you will flee, but no-one is chasing you"* (26:17).

What difference does it make whether someone is chasing us or not? If anything, it would be more terrifying if somebody was pursuing us.

The answer lies in the Pasuk in Koheles, "and G-d seeks (assists) the chased", from which Chazal derive, that no matter what, Hashem always takes the part of the one who is being pursued.

And that is the punch-line here. If we were running away from our pursuers, then we would find solace in the knowledge that G-d will take our part. So the Torah adds 'and there is no-one pursuing you", in which case, you cannot expect G-d to take your part. That in itself is a curse.

● The Eternal Scapegoats

וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד -***"And I will make peace in the land and you will go to bed without fear"*** (26:6).

When there is peace in the world, you will sleep in peace. But when there are wars, you will not be able to, the **Or ha'Chayim** explains, because in time of war, the Jews, the eternal scapegoats, invariably suffer, whether they are directly involved or not – as we saw in Europe during World War 2 and today in Ukraine.

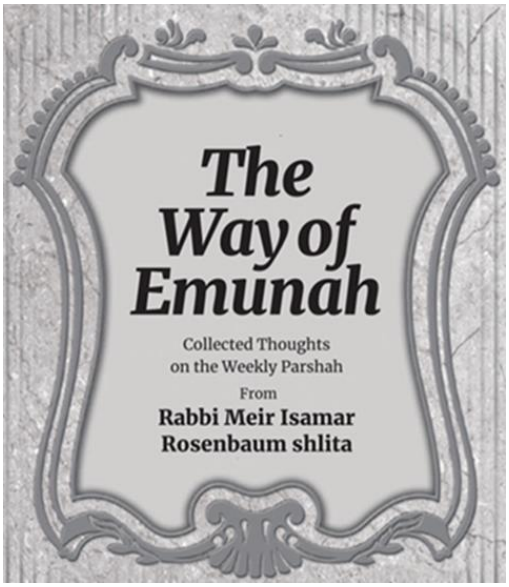
● Happy Dreams



Chazal tell us that David Hamelech never had a pleasant dream. The constant wars that he fought, it seems, stole his peace of mind, even to the point that they affected his sleep.

Hence the Torah writes here that when there is peace in the land, the people will be able to go to bed with peace of mind.

"Bitachon means trusting in every situation that the outcome is entirely in Hashem's hands, and nothing happens randomly." ~ The Chazon Ish.



Brachos on Fields Lead to Connecting to Hashem

וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פִּרְיוֹ – '***And I will give your rain in its times, and the land will give… And the trees of the field will give their fruit.***' (26:4)

Rav Shimshon Pinkus zt"l asks why the blessings for gashmius mentioned in this Parshah are solely for an abundance of crops from one's fields and vineyards. Why doesn't the Torah promise us that we will have much gold, silver, houses and possessions?

A person who has a lot of gold, silver and precious gems may come to rely on his wealth. He may think that he doesn't need to depend on Hashem to help him, as he has enough money put away to last him for a long time, and he will always be able to buy whatever he needs.

Hashem wants to grant wealth to His people, but he doesn't want us to fall to this erroneous mindset. Therefore, he blesses us with an abundance of fields and vineyards, as even one who has such property still needs to turn to Hashem and daven to Him for rain and good crops. Thus, such a person will have wealth but will not become estranged from Hashem. Hashem is actually granting us a double bracha. We will be blessed with wealth and we will also be blessed with an opportunity to always be connected to Him.

Accordingly, the greatest brachos one can have are health, children, and life itself. For these things to last, one needs to turn to Hashem and ask for His help, as one cannot sustain them on his own. And when one recognizes that he constantly needs to turn to Hashem for his livelihood, his health and his family, he will constantly connect with Him, and, in this merit, he will receive more and more blessings.

TORAHANYTIMES NEWSLETTER

Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser - Call of the Soul

Nachman, a nineteen-year-old boy, is one of eleven boys and girls in his family. If you'd sit down and talk to him, you'd discover that his life had been going well, with its relatively quiet peacefulness.

One morning, he awoke, the early morning sun only recently appearing in the sky. He looked aside, registering what time it was, and then his head hit the pillow. Like many other young adults his age, he had a hard time waking up in the morning. Sleeping in was a luxury, he knew, and at times he took to it graciously.

"All right," he told himself. "I'll sleep in a bit more, and later on I'll head over to daven. I'll hear the Torah being read and join in with the community then." But as quickly as that thought soothed him and dipped him back into a quiet slumber, a second thought arose. "Today's a very important day, a special today. There will be a lot of dancing, singing and celebrating at *shul,* and I should be a part of it. If I go back to sleep, I might wake up too late and miss it all. How could I lose the opportunity?"

But the warmth of the blanket and softness of the pillow was just too overwhelming. It called him back into the ecstasy of pure relaxation, the thought of getting up weighing him down. Yet, just as compelling as that voice was, the voice of reason, of rising above the comforts of his body and listening to the calling of his soul, coaxed him to push himself. He could get up, if he only wanted to. It was possible. Very possible.

And he did. That day, the body lost, the soul won. Nachman threw off the covers, and ran to *shul*.

That day was Simchas Torah.

As he sat in shul, he heard his name being called. He was anticipating it, and on cue, he rose and walked to the bima to receive an aliyah.

And then it happened. It wasn't expected, it wasn't welcomed, but it occurred, all at once, and with a riveting shock.

An explosion set off a shockwave of tremor, a moment of terror gripping those in shul. A missile had landed there, in Netivot, its effect making its mark.

A few minutes later, Nachman's sister came racing into the shul, her eyes scanning the crowd for Nachman. Motioning to him, she urged him to run home.

As they neared the house, they both began to feel that unwelcomed pit in their stomach. The smell of smoke and gunpowder surrounded them, as if in a black cloud, and as they inched closer and closer home, the smell only grew more intense. And then it came into full view.

The missile had shattered the roof, falling through the top floor and landing on the bottom. Examining the scene more closely, Nachman and his sister realized that the missile had originally fallen into Nachman's room. The entire room was incinerated.

Yet, amidst all the rubble and ash, Nachman's eyes zeroed in on one corner: where his bed had been situated. Now, all that remained of it was ash. It had been reduced to nothing. The bed in which he had battled the call to remain fast asleep, cocooned in the comfort of its covers, was no longer. He could only imagine what would be of him had he turned on his side, turning a deaf ear to the call of his neshama, and drifted back to sleep.

The merit of his victory over his challenge, the merit of choosing to daven and dance on Simchas Torah, and the merit of being called to the Torah and receiving an Aliyah spared him.

Sometimes, one struggle is all it takes to save a life.

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

I didn't know that!

The Torah portion of Bechukosai is sometimes read together with Behar and sometimes not. Several factors enter into this determination, among them Ezra the Scribe's ordinance that Bechukosai be read at least two weeks before Shavuos.

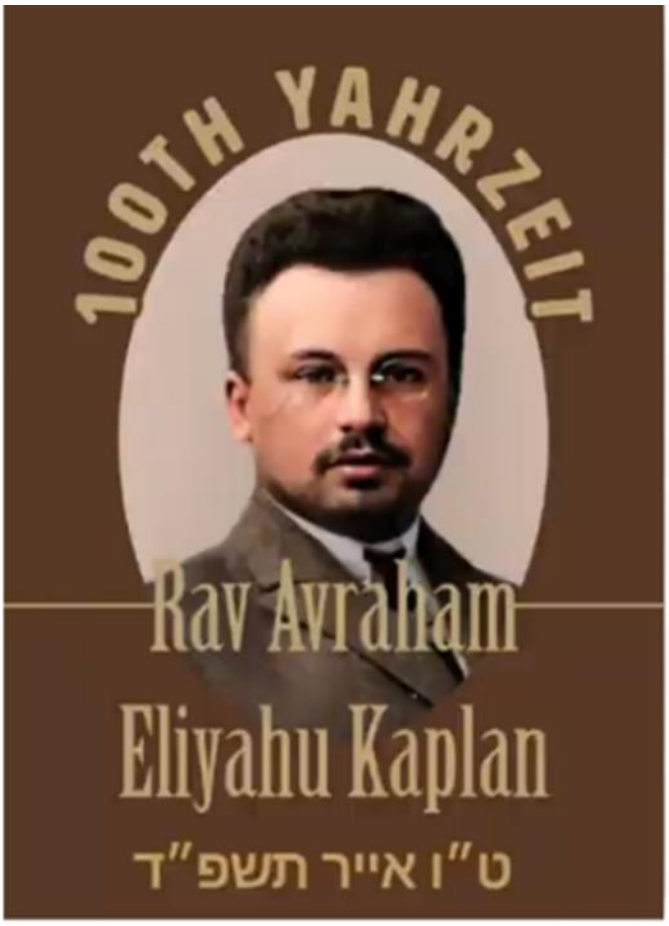
The reason for the two-week hiatus is based on our tradition that Shavuos is considered a New Year, a Day of Judgment for the fruits of the tree. We are careful, therefore, to be finished with Parshas Bechukosai - in which the Tochachah, the Admonition and its curses, occupy a central role -- before this Day of Judgment and New Year begin.

For the same reason, we are careful to read Parashas Ki Savo, where the other portion of the Tochachah is written, at least two weeks before Rosh Hashanah, so that "the old year may be ushered out along with its curses".

In the past, deciding whom to call to the Torah for the reading of the Tochachah was a serious point of contention. Many people felt that being called to the Torah for this portion was a bad omen that would result in tragedy and misfortune. - It got to a point where people would actually fight in shul over who should take the aliyah. Consequently, it has become customary in many shuls for the Torah reader himself to be called upon to read the Tochachah, with varying opinions as to whether he is called by name or not.

"The world is a classroom, and every moment is an opportunity to learn and grow." ~ The Baal Shem Tov.

Rabbi Avrohom Eliyahu Kaplan Zt'l - 100th Yartzeit Visit to Kever by Yehuda Geberer





The Alter of Slabodka Zt'l said that his whole yeshivah in Slabodka was 'kedai' to produce Rav Avrohom Eliyahu Kaplan. He is unknown, as he died suddenly and unexpectedly at the young age of 34.

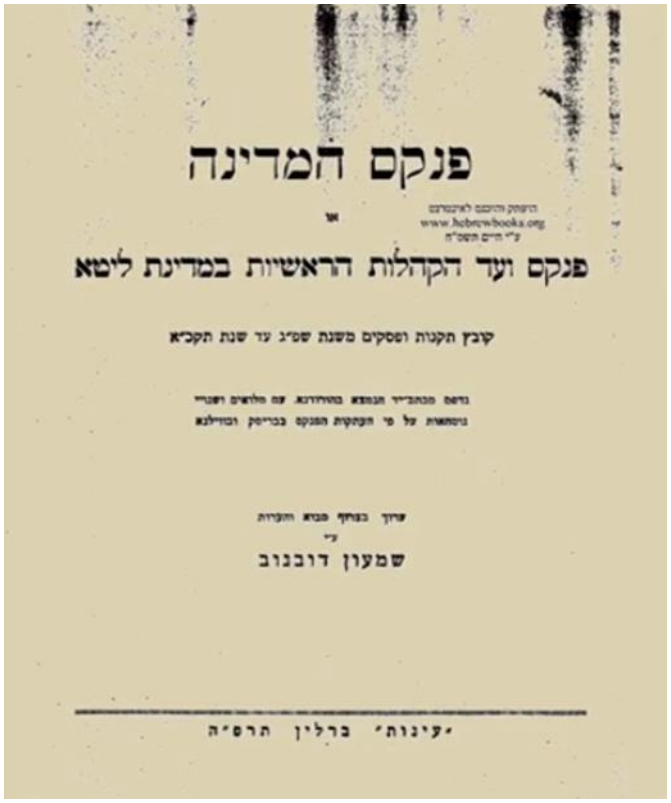


To put it into perspective, he was a year older than **Reb Aharon Kotler and Reb Yaakov Kaminetzki** – which means that he was of their generation and could have been in our world had he lived longer. He died in 1923. He was a shining light of Slabodka. He had a unique Neshama. He would say 'grammen' by his friend's sheva brachos in 1914 (Rabbi Aharon Kotler), where Reb Aharon gave a long pilpul after which he turned it into a grammen and said the whole thing back in song and poetry without losing a single subtle point.



Famously, a bunch of talmidim from Ner Yisrael Baltimore were sceptical and cast doubt about the veracity of this story, as Litvaks tend to do. They asked him about it, and suddenly, Rebbetzen Ruderman (the daughter of Rav Sheftel Kramer) verified that it was true, as she was there.

During Rav Avrohom Eliyahu Kaplan's short lifetime (34), he gave shiurim, wrote sefarim, poetry, music and wrote many articles to the Torah journals of the time. He was hired as a Rav and Rosh Yeshivah in The Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin. He was a rising star in all fields. In the world of Kabalah, he was already becoming well known. In the world of Torah, psak and lomdus, he was already world renowned. He was becoming known in the Berlin circles as this brilliant Slabodkan mind who was willing to engage with the scholarly world.



I was in the library, and I found a 'Pinkus of kehillas Litte'. This pamphlet was edited in Berlin in the 1920's from its original by the famous extremely secular historian by the name of Shimon Dubnov.

In the introduction, it makes mention of Rav Avrohom Eliyahu Kaplan as a young brilliant Talmud chacham from the Rabbinical Seminary of Berlin who came from Slabodka, who helped with editing this pinkus. Although he was a talmid chacham, he had a

brilliant scientific mind. Unfortunately, Reb Avrohom was niftar before the publication.



In 1919 Rav Avrohom Eliyahu gave a hesped for Theodore Herzl [Theodor Herzl was an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist, lawyer, writer, playwright and political activist who was the father of modern political Zionism. Herzl formed the Zionist Organization and promoted Jewish immigration to Palestine in an effort to form a Jewish state.]. The hesped was titled – 'Ivri Anochi'.

"He did not teach us the Torah of Moshe; He did not teach us Halacha and Aggadah; and he did not teach us Jewish Wisdom and Mussar… For he was never taught them. – He taught us two words, which until he arrived, we did not dare and could not speak: 'IVRI ANOCHI- I AM A JEW!'"

In the Footsteps of Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan zt"l by Rabbi Yosef Gavriel Bechhofer

...It is therefore imperative to commemorate him and his lofty thoughts even after epochs.(Rav Kook's remarks ten years after Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan's death)

100 years have passed since Rabbi Avraham Eliyahu Kaplan zt"l's untimely death at the age of 34. He filled his major position as Rosh Yeshiva of the Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin a mere four years. Yet men who were much older than him praised him in extraordinary terms.

Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer zt"l wrote (B'Ikvos HaYir'ah), "We were accustomed to see elderly tzaddikim, or at least middle aged ones. A young gaon and tzaddik is difficult to create, difficult to

find... A great tree with many roots, yet at the same time a brilliant, eye-catching flower. Old age and youth were at once at work within him with amazing strength."

Ten years after his passing, at an Azkara in Yerushalayim, Rav Kook zt"l said : "The greatness of the thoughts and of the project of the deceased should be remembered for generations. Attainments in talent, emotion, refinement of character, order, philosophical perspective, but above all, a deep fear of Heaven and a drive to influence the entire depth of life were gathered and fused in this great man." Who was this remarkable man?



● His Life

Rabbi Avraham Elya Kaplan was named for his father, who had passed away suddenly at the age of 33 several months before his son's birth. The elder Rabbi Avraham Elya was a renowned illui (child prodigy), and a close friend of the **Chofetz Chayim zt"l**.

Rabbi Joseph Baer Soloveitchik zt"l related that his grandfather, **Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik zt"l**, had once said about the elder Reb Avraham Elya: "I do not believe in illuim whose reputations precede them - with one exception - the Illui from Rackov, who mastered the entire Torah."

The younger Rabbi Avraham Elya was born and spent his early years in his maternal grandfather's house in the town of Kaidan, a suburb of Kovno, in Lithuania. At about this time, Reb Avraham Elya's mother remarried a man from Telshe. Reb Avraham Elya studied then for several years in the renowned Yeshiva of Telshe. At the

age of 16, Reb Avraham Elya was drawn to the spirit of the Mussar movement, and went to learn in the "Talmud Torah" in Kelm, the yeshiva founded by **Rabbi Simcha Zisel Ziv zt"l**.

Reb Avraham Elya left Kelm, however, shortly after his arrival. He then went to the famed yeshiva in Slabodka headed by **Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l, the Alter of Slabodka zt"l**, and **Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Epstein zt"l, the Levush Mordechai**.

Reb Avraham Elya studied in Slabodka for seven years, until the outbreak of World War I left him stranded in his mother's home in Telshe. In Slabodka Reb Avraham Elya found the derech that he had sought.

On his twenty first birthday four years later, Reb Avraham Elya wrote in retrospect about his arrival in Slabodka: "Here the wheel turns! Here begins a new life! One evening, when I returned from the home of the Mashgiach [The Alter], after hearing mighty words of reproof which penetrated deep into my heart, I burnt all my poems and writings..."

Reb Avraham Elya's years in Slabodka were filled with growth - and contemplation. In his notes he openly and objectively explores the ideas and ideals of modern Europe on the one hand, and Zionism on the other. He discusses such diverse writers as Bialik and Tolstoy - accepting some concepts, rejecting others. - He frequently examined his own Avodas Hashem, as he constantly considered and reconsidered his purpose and destiny in life. - Although his penetrating self-analysis clearly marks him as a Ba'al Mussar, he often wondered if he was indeed worthy of such a lofty label.

Reb Avraham Elya was the Alter's most beloved student. There was a close personal relationship between the two, and Reb Avraham Elya felt that the Alter was privy to his deepest thoughts. In one conversation in 1913 the Alter referred to Reb Avraham Elya's occasional preoccupation with the prevailing zeitgeists and gave him mussar.

Reb Avraham Elya understood: constant personal growth in Avodas Hashem is the supreme value in life, and it takes precedence over any other inclination, aspiration, or ambition, no matter how significant they might seem.

The Slabodka perspective that became Reb Avraham Elya's outlook is perhaps best expressed in one of the Alter's shmuessen that Reb Avraham Elya himself transcribed:

Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 10:6-7) say that every blade of grass is controlled by a malach that causes it to grow. Man casually walks upon thousands of blades of grass, not thinking of the great wisdom and transcendent purpose of the thousands of malachim upon which he treads. How uplifted should a person, in fact, become when he realizes how many malachim were created to serve him! His heart should fill with both the glory of this kedusha and emotions of gratitude for this gift.

How can one not be ashamed to enter the sanctuary of kedusha that is this world with soiled shoes and dirty clothes? How is he not embarrassed to be engrossed in frivolities while at the same time making use of the malachim created to facilitate Man's destiny?

The entire world - from its most general principles to its finest details - serves as a reminder at each step we take to be cognizant of G-d, and, bechol derachecha da'eihu, "In all your paths you shall know Him."

Reb Avraham Elya's growth in Avoda was accompanied by remarkable talent in learning. When Rabbi Aharon Kotler married Reb Isser Zalman's daughter, Reb Aharon delivered an extraordinarily profound pilpul. None of those present fully comprehended its contents. Up stood Reb Avraham Elya with a smile and repeated the entire pilpul clearly - in rhyme!

Reb Avraham Elya often contemplated leaving Slabodka - and in fact did leave from time to time, feeling that the intensity of the Avoda

there was sometimes too overwhelming. In the final analysis, however, he writes : "One Sinai have we in our generation - Slabodka is its name! Anyone who leaves Sinai cannot hope to find another. More correctly, anyone who leaves the mountain falls into the valley..." Even when he was away from Slabodka, his heart and soul remained there.

Reb Avraham Elya spent the war years in Telshe, immersed in study. He amassed a vast knowledge of Bavli and Yerushalmi at that time. At this time he also developed a close connection to the Rosh Yeshiva and Rav of Telshe, **Rabbi Yosef Leib Bloch zt"l**. Although also affiliated with the Mussar movement, Reb Yosef Leib had a degree of affinity for Kabbala and Machashava based on Kabbala - an approach that was a novelty in Lithuanian yeshivos.

Towards the end of the war Reb Avraham Elya, now in his late twenties, became more involved in communal work and Harbatzas Torah. He was one of the founders of a Torah youth movement "Torah v'Oz," and a parallel educational movement for girls, "Agudas Bnos Yisroel."

After the war's end, in 1919, the Lithuanian government granted its Jewish subjects autonomous status. Reb Avraham Elya's movement then blossomed into a national organization known as "Tzi'irei Yisroel."

Reb Avraham Elya was, however, ambivalent about his involvement in tzorchei tzibbur, and wrote of his yearning to return: "to that broad and illuminating, mighty and lofty discipline known as lomdus..." He felt that perhaps his destiny was rather to be a Rosh Yeshiva.

The final period in Reb Avraham Elya's life began in 1920, when he both married the daughter of a distinguished family from Telshe, and became a Rosh Yeshiva at the Hildesheimer Seminary in Berlin. Reb Avraham Elya's remarkable ability to learn from any person allowed him to absorb the derech of **Rabbi Dovid Zvi Hoffman zt"l**, the Melamed L'Ho'il, Rosh HaYeshiva of the Seminary, and he

became one of the primary Poskim for German Orthodoxy. In 1922, upon Rabbi Hoffman's death, Reb Avraham Elya succeeded him as Rosh HaYeshiva at the Seminary.

As the head of the major Makom Torah in Germany, he became one of the great writers and leaders of that country. Reb Avraham Elya brought hitherto unknown levels of learning to Germany. Two years after his arrival in Berlin he wrote: "When I first came here, I would say to myself that a shiur from Telshe could not be said in Berlin. Now I say that a shiur from Berlin may be said in Telshe. The voice of Lithuania may be heard in the tranquil halls of Germany".

One of his major accomplishments in Germany was his influence over many students to spend years learning in the great Lithuanian yeshivos. Above all, however, Reb Avraham Elya brought Mussar to Western Europe. His pleasant demeanor and refined personality were the foundations, and his discourses the framework that enabled his German students to develop and perfect their spiritual selves.

His personal Avoda was exemplary: "One who has not heard him read the Pesach night Hallel in lofty ecstasy in the unique melody that he wrote yet in his youth - has not seen true Jewish life in our generation. One who has not seen him dance the **Kotzker Rebbe's** dance in the joy of Sukkoth - has not seen true Jewish joy in our generation. He was alive and gave life."

Reb Avraham Elya's role model, **Rabbi Yisroel Salanter zt"l**, is constant presence in Reb Avraham Elya's writings. Reb Avraham Elya viewed Mussar as the scale against which all should be measured.

Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky once remarked that Reb Avraham Elya possessed such remarkable powers that had he lived longer, he would have restructured the entire derech halimud (methodology of study) in the yeshivos with his proposed new commentary on Shas. Already in 1919 Reb Avraham Elya began pondering the derech halimud of Lithuanian yeshivos. He felt it was necessary to put more stress and

expand upon the particular approach developed by the **Vilna Gaon zt"l** and **Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk**. The underlying principle of this approach - the systematic application of which was to be his life's great unfinished work - was simple: a return to the derech of the Rishonim, from pilpul back to understanding.

Reb Avraham Elya left many moving and inspiring writings in the realm of Machashava. Indeed, we have here just scratched the surface of the inspiration one can draw from his essays, diaries and poems. Yet, one masterpiece stands out from among the rest, and is the work by which he is best remembered: "B'Ikvos HaYir'ah" - "In the Footsteps of Fear."

Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna wrote about this essay: "This essay could have been written by one of the fathers of Mussar. I regarded him with great esteem and honor - but I would not have expected this much. In the final analysis, he was yet young. True, he had learned and toiled mightily in Torah - and especially in the realm of Machashava and Mussar, but even all his toil cannot explain the great depth and profound thought which I found in B'Ikvos HaYir'ah. This is not an essay, rather a unique synopsis of immersion in profound thoughts and ideas...".

In a letter written to Reb Avraham Elya (ibid., p. 281), Rabbi Sarna placed special emphasis on the style in which B'Ikvos HaYir'ah was written: "...strong and sweet, clear and deep, penetrating and captivating - robust and passionate, and that is why it makes a Mussar impression."

Reb Avraham Elya died suddenly, on the 15th day of Iyar 1924. On his matzeva was engraved the following epitaph: "An Ish Yehudi, great in knowledge, and great in life, possessed of heart and pure spirit. A master of Torah, mighty in Emuna, powerful in understanding, and a pleasant songwriter. He loved his fellow man as himself and was beloved by all who saw him. To his students he was like a brother, and their souls bonded to his. With the brilliance of

the Heavens he illuminated East and West. The sun set at the heart of its day."

Reb Avraham Elya stood out in a generation in which spiritual giants trod the face of the Earth. Yet from the examples of that vanished world even we can derive inspiration to aspire to spiritual heights. Reb Avraham Elya's model of true yir'ah and his derech can guide us in our quest to be mekadesh shem Shamayim in all aspects of our lives.



Reb Chaim Hersh Schwimmer was a *chassidishe Yied* from Boro Park who was **נפטר** just two weeks ago. Reb Chaim Hersh would wake up at 5am each day and learn **תורה** until 10am. After that, he would proceed to *daven* a 2-hour **שחרית** with incredible intensity.

He was asked the secret behind his **תפילות** and this was his response:

Auschwitz Birkenau, *Erev Simchas Torah*, 1944. Chaim Hersh was a young 14-year old boy, all alone in the world. He was taken with a few hundred other children to the gas chambers for a *selektzia.* The young boy recalled a **גמרא** in **מס' שבת** which recounts how **דוד המלך** was told that he would die on **שבת**, and so each **שבת** he wouldn't stop learning **תורה**, for the **מלאך המות** can't have an effect on someone while he is learning. - Chaim Hersh therefore decided that he wouldn't stop *davening*.

The next morning Chaim Hersh started **מה טובו** at 8am, and said each word slowly with immense **כוונה**. By 1pm, he was up to **הודו** ! In the meantime, the boys were told to undress and were taken to the gas chambers. It seemed as if they were doomed, as they stood at the entrance to the gas chambers, just feet away from impending death.

Hour after hour passed, and nothing seemed to be happening. Chaim Hersh's cousin Hershel Herskowitz was constantly repeating- **אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על צווארו של אדם אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים**

Finally, three soldiers on motorbikes appeared. Hershel turned to his cousin and said, "Chaim Hersh, *di yeshua is shoin doh*"; the salvation has arrived! The soldiers carefully scanned the room and eventually told approximately fifty of the boys to get dressed.

Chaim Hersh and his cousin Hershel were among those that were salvaged from the **גיא צלמות**, when all seemed lost. They both survived the war, and each year Reb Chaim Hersh would make a big **קידוש** on **שמחת תורה** as a **סעודת הודאה**.

So is it any wonder why Reb Chaim Hersh would spend two hours *davening* **שחרית** each day for the rest of his life?! **יהי זכרו ברוך**

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From our Sages

וָאֶשְׁבֹּר מֹטֹת עֻלְּכֶם וָאוֹלֶךְ אֶתְכֶם קוֹמְמִיּוּת – ***'I have broken the bars of your yoke, and made you walk upright.'*** *(26:13)*

An animal walks with its face to the earth, for earthiness and materiality is all that it knows. Man walks upright, for man was born to gaze upon and aspire to the heavens. (**Rabbi DovBer of Mezeritch**)

וְיִסַּרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם אַף־אָנִי – ***'I will punish you, I too.'*** *(26:28)*

When a father punishes his child, the suffering he inflicts on himself is greater than anything experienced by the child. So it is with G-d: His pain is greater than our pain. (**Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov**)

לֹא יְבַקֵּר בֵּין־טֹוב לָרַע וְלֹא יְמִירֶנּוּ - *'He shall not exchange it nor substitute another for it.'* *(27:33)*

Every person was born to a mission in life that is distinctly, uniquely and exclusively their own. No one—not even the greatest of souls—can take his or her place. No person who ever lived or who ever will live can fulfil that particular aspect of G-d's purpose in creation in his stead. (**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**)



◣ On The Go - Reb Simcha Bunim Of Pshischa

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם - *"If you will go in My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them..."* (26:3)

One must never stay stagnant; they must constantly "go" higher and higher, never remaining on one level.

◣ Peace In The World - Ohr Hachaim

וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד - *"I will provide peace in the land, you shall lie down and none shall make you afraid..."* (26:6)

בָּאָרֶץ may be rendered either as "in the land" or as "in the world." Hence, this pasuk may be interpreted to mean that "when there will be peace in the world, you, too, O Israel, will be able to sleep in peace and none shall make you afraid."

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner



There is a Yid, named Yoni Nierenberg, a business man from the Five Towns, New York. One day he was sitting in his office with a client of his, a chassideshe yungerman, and the yungerman tells him, "Yoni, the Yahrtzeit of the Tosfos Yom Tov is coming up and we are travelling to Poland with a group of yungerleit, maybe you'd like to join us."

[The Tosfos Yom Tov was Rabbi Gershon Shaul Yomtov Lipmann ben Nosson Halevi Heller zechuso yogen olenu. (5339 -5414/1579 - 1654).]

Yoni answered, "I never really knew anything about the Tosfos Yom Tov, I didn't know who he really was."

The client replied, "You come with us, we will make sure that you'll have a good time and you'll understand what it's all about."

After some thought, Yoni called his wife and told her, "Listen, I'm sitting with a client and he's telling me to come to the kever of the Tosfos Yom Tov. I don't really know much about the Tosfos Tom Tov, but I want to go."

She asked him, "Who are you going to Poland with?"

"I'm going with a bunch of the chevra from work."

She said, "What is it all about?"

"I don't really know."

"Well, do you speak Yiddish?" she then wanted to know.

"Not really."

"And where are you going to stay?"

"Am not really sure."

"Ok, if you want to go, then *gei gezunterheit,*" was her response.

That's how Yoni embarked on a trip to Krakow.

That week, Yoni found himself in the airport with a group of chassideshe yungerleit. They were all travelling to the kever of the Tosfos Tom Tov. Whilst he was waiting by the gate to board the plane, he received a phone call. Yoni's daughter was on the line. She told her father some challenging news. She has been married now for about two years, she went on and said, "Aba I am going to tell you this, and I haven't even told Mammy yet." She became very emotional; she continued "Aba, I need a brocho. Things are difficult. We have just been told that we can't have children. We have been trying, we went to numerous doctors, and we can't. Mammy told me that you're travelling now to the Tzaddik, the Tosfos Yom Tov. I beg you, please daven for me and my husband, to bring about a Yeshuah for us."

Yoni said "For sure, I will put a kvitel by the kever, and hopefully we will have a good outcome."

The group landed in Poland. Yoni shared a taxi with another Yid to Krakow. They headed out, and on the way the Yid told over to Yoni a personal Yeshuah that he had experienced just a few years back, here, at the kever of the Tosfos Yom Tov. But he added, "Yoni, If you want to be zoche to your own Yeshua you must take upon yourself not to speak during Davening, from beginning to end, not even one word."

"Yes, sure," Yoni replied, with a smirk on his face, because he remembered his Rebbe in high school telling him to stop talking during davening, and he thought, 'nothing has changed!'"

"No, No, I really mean it," he responded. "Its so powerful, you don't understand; not talking during davening has an unbelievable type of

power. The Tosfos Tom Tov was famous for this concept – not to speak during davening, and he even wrote a special Mi Shebeirach prayer for those who are careful about this behaviour. When Yidden accept upon themselves this undertaking, by the kever of the Tosfos Yom Tov – No speaking during Davening with a full commitment, you see Yeshuos, open miracles, far beyond what is normal.

Yoni interjected, "Absolutely. Just this morning I got a phone call from a relative who needs a yeshue, who had heard from my wife that I was going to the kever of the Tosfos Tom Tov, on a trip to Poland, and she started to cry. She said, 'put in a kvittel.'"

They arrived in Krakow, and headed to the Tziyun. Yoni took out his Tehillim, and cried his heart out. And, of course, took upon himself the commitment that he would never talk during davening, bli neder, no matter what. After some time, the group left the Tziyun and toured other places around Krakow, including the kever of the Sanzer Rov. Throughout the remainder of the trip Yoni couldn't get the thought out of his head, his new commitment about not talking during davening.

The group arrived back in America, shortly after. Yoni went back to his day-to-day life – family, work, meetings, etc. Not even a couple of weeks passed, and Yoni received a phone call from his daughter. She says, "Aba I need to talk to you."

Yoni didn't know what she wanted, so she continued, "Why don't you come over,"

When Yoni sat down with his daughter, she said to him: "Remember when I called you, and asked you for ask for a brocho, when you go to the kever of the Tosfos Yom Tov? Well, I want to tell you that the brocho was answered."

"Nine months after my trip, my daughter gave birth to a beautiful little boy, named after my father, Zvi. The connection with the

Tosfos Yom Tov and tephillah and not talking during davening is just incredible and powerful," Yoni relates.

This is the power of this undertaking of the Tosfos Tom Tov of not speaking during Davening. When a Yid is in the Beis Hamedrash, he knows that he is speaking only to his Father in heaven, and the rest of the world doesn't exist. Yidden all over the world take upon themselves this commitment and see Yeshuos, miracles and wonders.

Good Shabbos

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



● Life of Labor

We will begin with the well-known words of Rashi found in the beginning of our *parsha* – but first the *possuk*. It says **אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ... וְנָתַתִּי גִּשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם** – "If you will walk in My statutes and observe My mitzvos… then I will provide for you your rains at their proper times" (Bechukosai 26:3-4). And not only rain; the *pesukim* give a long list of rewards that Hashem promises to those who "walk in My statutes and observe My mitzvos." **וִישַׁבְתֶּם לָבֶטַח בְּאַרְצְכֶם** – "You will dwell securely in your land, **וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ**, and I will provide peace in the land." Take a look inside the *chumash;*

there are a lot of good things that come when you walk in the statutes of Hashem.

Only that we have to know, what does it mean to *walk* in the *mitzvos*, to *walk* in the decrees of Hashem? And that's the question that Rashi asks: What do these words, "Walk in My statutes" refer to? *Yachol zeh kiyum hamitzvos*, "I might have thought that it's referring to fulfilling the commandments, *k'shehu oimer*, but it explicitly says: **וְאֶת מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ** – "And you should observe My commandments." *Those* words are talking about doing the *mitzvos;* so what do the words **אִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ** – "You should walk in My statutes" mean? And so Rashi tells us: It means **שֶׁתְּהֵיוּ עֲמֵלִים בַּתּוֹרָה** – "That you should be *laboring* in the Torah." *Teileichu* – "You should walk; that means you should be moving forward, making progress. You can't just be 'keeping' the Torah – you have to be *ameil* in it. And that means we have our work cut out for us.

Even Americans Must Labor

If you want to serve Hashem it takes *ameilus*, labor. Now, I know that for our American ears, it's something difficult to accept. We don't want to *labor* – maybe to work a little bit, OK, we'll consider it; but to labor, to be *ameil*, that we'll leave for others. So the first thing we have to get into our heads is that we came to this world to labor.

In Iyov (5:7) it states: *Adam l'amal yulad* – "Man was born into this world for *amal*, for toil." Now, the truth is that all of creation must work in this world – birds, plants, reptiles, mammals; they also have to make a certain effort. But that's not their *purpose*. They're not *born* for toil- they're born for utility. The world needs them; there's an ecosystem where they fit in and therefore even an ant must toil to maintain himself, to preserve his existence. Animals must labor to find food, to find shelter, to survive; nevertheless that's not their purpose. But Mankind is different: *adam l'amal yulad*,

his purpose is to *toil*. It's a very important principle you're hearing now. In fact it's the principle of principles.

Ameilus Batorah!

Now, to labor in Torah includes many subdivisions, but the first thing that comes to mind when we read the words of Rashi: **שֶׁתִּהְיוּ עֲמֵלִים בַּתּוֹרָה** is *ameilus* in *limud hatorah*.

Learning Torah is very important! If you have any chance to learn – not just to learn, but to be *ameil* in Torah – there's nothing better than that. Because even when learning Torah, a person can choose the path of avoiding *ameilus;* he could study easier things. He could be *ma'aver sedrah*, and then he could learn *Mishlei*. And after *Mishlei*, he sits and says *Tehillim*. And it's all important, but if you were born to be *ameil*, then you have to labor in learning *gemara* too.

Chazara Is Ameilus

Of course, to labor means that you have to sit by the *gemara* and learn for many hours, no question about that. And it's not only what you learn but how you learn. To review what you're learning, that's *ameilus ba'Torah*. You should say the words of the *gemara* over and over again. If you learn a *perek*, and you review it again and again until you know the *perek*, that's *ameilus*. And if you labor in *Tosfos,* surely good. But even if you just labor in a plain piece of *gemara*, and you can say it like *ashrei*, you're a success. And actually there's nothing sweeter than knowing a whole *perek* inside – even the *gemara* alone. If you can run through the *perek* like you say *ashrei*, it's a *simcha*, a real happiness.

We say it every morning: **וְהַעֲרֶב נָא ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ**, "Make the words of Your Torah sweet in my mouth." How does it become sweet? You know when you keep a piece of bread in your mouth longer it becomes sweeter; every time you chomp down, it becomes sweeter and sweeter. Because the bread is starch and the starch turns into sugar

through the action of the saliva on the starch. The enzymes mix with the starch and it turns to sugar. The longer the bread is in your mouth the more sweet it becomes. And the Torah is no different – the longer the Torah is in your mouth, the sweeter it becomes. So review and review and review; the *ameilus* of *chazara* is wonderful.



אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

This week's Parsha opens with the verse, "If you will walk in my ways, and keep my statutes…" and goes on to say that we will merit in receiving every single blessing on Hashem's green earth. Rashi comments that there is more to "walking in my ways" than meets the eye. He says that this phrase cannot be referring to its apparent meaning of keeping the Mitzvos, because than the verse would be redundant, and is rather referring solely to our commandment to toil in Torah. And the second half of the verse is telling us that our toil in Torah should be strictly in order to know what the commandments are so that we can adequately fulfill them.

The famous Mashgiach, **R' Aryeh Finkel** says that the word Torah comes from the root "Hora'ah", which means, instruction. The Torah is meant to literally guide us in how to live our lives and we are meant to consult it before we take any step, or negotiate any obstacle in life. So it comes out that the first verse in Bechukosai is teaching us that Torah must be studied with this intention, and only this type of study will lead to the great blessings mentioned in the ensuing verses.

In truth, we are preparing now for a great event which took place many years ago, but is celebrated as if it happens every year. At

Mount Sinai, the Jews made a shocking declaration. They accepted the Torah from Hashem without even knowing what was in it. How could they have made such a rash decision?

R' Aryeh explains that their decision was to do exactly what we have discussed. They knew that Hashem would never give them any laws which they couldn't handle, so in essence what they were saying to Hashem was, "Don't tell us what it says in the Torah so that we can *see* if we can handle it, rather just *give* to us so that we know what to do!"

On a practical level, the Rishonim write that after each day of learning, a person should pause for a few minutes and analyze whether anything "Lemayseh" can be applied to his life from his learning.

Around 200 years ago, there was a great Jew named **R' Yisrael Salanter**. At the age of nine, he memorized the Shas with the express intention of being able to study in public places without appearing ostentatious in that he would no longer need the aid of book and no one would know that he was studying.

As R' Yisrael got older, he realized more and more that what his generation was lacking was fear of Heaven. Many of his peers were steeped in Torah, (at least on a surface level), but lacked the deep inner refinement which must be present in a Torah Scholar. So he introduced the concept of dedicating time to learning Mussar each day.

Like all new movements, this one was met with extreme opposition from mainstream orthodox Judaism. They claimed that fear of Heaven could be culled solely from the primary sources. R' Yisrael conceded that this was true for earlier generations but insisted that the current generation was no longer capable of doing so.

With this sentiment, he moved forward with his dream and founded what became referred to as the Mussar movement, which today, has

been accepted by virtually every single Yeshiva, who have incorporated some sort of Mussar session in their curriculum. But regardless of whether one learns like R' Yisrael, or those that disagreed with him, there was one point which everybody agreed upon, and that is the need for a Jew to build up his fear of Heaven through the Torah which will cause him to actively increase his service of Hashem.

The holy Mashgiach, **R' Chazkal Levinstein** agreed enthusiastically with R' Yisrael Salanter and would say that just as the Rishonim quoted earlier said that each Jew must pause at the end of his day, and contemplate what emerged from his learning which is relevant to his life, similarly when one hears a Mussar talk which affects him, he must take some time out to try and determine how those concepts expressed could help him in building himself spiritually, and how he can improve his service of Hashem based on what was said. Only by doing so will the Torah truly penetrate his heart.

For us, the message is clear. We must take the Mussar lessons we learn from the Gemorah and our Rabbeim to a practical level and allow them to strengthen our spiritual resolve so that we have the motivation needed to observe the Torah.

May we all merit to allow the Torah to practically affect our lives in every way!

Ameilus In Torah

In this week's parsha we are told to choose whether we want the Torah's blessings or its curses. If we keep the Torah we merit the grand promises of peace and prosperity. If we fail to do so, we face exile and near annihilation. According to Rashi, the entire focus of our existence and the precondition for our earning Hashem's protection is exertion in Torah study. It is specifically toil in Torah that is the center of Jewish existence, and the actualization of

Hashem's master plan for creation. We must delve into why this is true. What makes *ameilus* in Torah so fundamental? Does *ameilus* in Torah summarize the totality of Jewish existence?

Rav Yechezkel Levinshtein says that when one is fully engaged in Torah it is impossible for bad *midos* to take hold of him. As the gemara in Kiddushin 30b says, "I created the *yetzer hara* and I created Torah as an antidote for it." If one fully engrosses himself in Torah, the *yetzer hara* has no room to enter one's consciousness and a person can escape the onslaught of sins that threaten him every day. Instead of one's negative side influencing his actions, the Torah takes over and acts as one's spiritual engine.

Such a feat can only be accomplished through tremendous exertion. Without effort, the natural whims and inclinations of a person will inevitably overtake him. One must labor in Torah in order to free himself from his natural urges. Only by attaching one's self to the Torah's holiness can one render all the enticements of the world to be meaningless.

This is a constant fight. The challenge of staying committed to Torah, despite our natural desires trying to pull us away, is the main purpose of our existence. **The Gra** says in Mishlei that every moment we are alive there is some personal issue that we have an obligation to deal with. There is no such thing as a person who doesn't have problems. If it were possible for a person to achieve perfection in this world and attain flawless character traits, the Gra asserts, his existence would be futile. To prevail over our challenges and invest more and more of ourselves into Torah is the reason we are alive.

Rav Aryeh Leib Shteinman says that a person has a constant obligation to find new ways of applying himself more fully to Torah. One must contemplate where he is being lax in his learning and work on areas that require strengthening.

There is a story told of the time when a new edition of the gemara was presented to **Rav Shach** in order to receive his *haskama*. This

particular publication was considered to be a very celebrated breakthrough, presenting a clear translation of the text and satisfying explanations encircling the borders of the page. Big *talmidei chachamim* had been involved with the project and many hoped that the work would encourage those disassociated from gemara learning to give it a try. However, Rav Shach emphatically refused to offer any approbation for the book and strongly discouraged others from supporting its publication.

Those close to Rav Shach were puzzled – why was the Rav so opposed to a book that had the potential to *mekarev* thousands of Jewish men to gemara learning?

Rav Shach answered with tremendous resolve, stating, "It's not a mitzvah to *mekarev* the Torah to people! It's a mitzvah to *mekarev* people to the Torah! We have to reveal to others the beauty of the Torah and the great value that it has to offer. If we water down the learning of Torah we are losing the very essence of what the Torah is all about! Where is the *ameilus*???!!!"

May we all be *zoche* to strengthen our *ameilus* in Torah!!!

At the beginning of this week's parsha, Hashem promises great blessing to those who go in His statutes and observe His mitzvos. Rashi explains that the blessings depend on these two things, that we fulfill his mitzvos and "go" in His statutes, which he explains as meaning that we be *ameil* in Torah (toil to understand the Torah). If these conditions are met, the Torah goes on to promise: "I will give you rain in its time, and the land will give forth of its bounty…"

Many commentators ask, we have a principle: "*S'char mitzva behai alma leika.*" Meaning, the mitzvos are eternal and this world is not eternal; therefore, there is no such thing as receiving reward for mitzvos in this world. If so, how can Hashem promise material

blessing to those who go in His ways? This sounds like a contradiction to the above rule!

The Rambam answers (Laws of Teshuva 9) that the bounty Hashem promises here is not reward but rather simply the means by which to do more mitzvos. This is a profound answer with important ramifications, but I would like to focus on a different answer:

The Chasam Sofer states that the material blessings promised in this week's parsha are not reward for the actual mitzvos we do, but rather reward for the "*ameilus*," the extra effort we put into study…. This answer fits well with Rashi's commentary that "going" in Hashem's statutes means being *ameil* in their study.

Only, why should *ameilus* be any different? Why should *ameilus* be rewarded in this world if all other elements of Torah observance are rewarded only in the World to Come?

Let's first understand what *ameilus,* toiling in Torah, really means.

Rav Ahron Yehuda Leib Steinman says that *ameilus* in Torah study is an expression of our love for Hashem. When a person feels love, he is willing to do anything to express it. Diligent, devoted study of Torah is our way of expressing our love for Hashem. Moreover, diligent Torah study is also a way of building our love for Him. The more effort one puts into understanding the Torah, the more love of Torah he instills within himself. A well-accepted truism is that the more one invests in something, the more fondness he feels for it (Rashi, *Bava Metzia* 38).

Ameilus in Torah is expected to instill within us *ahavas Torah.*

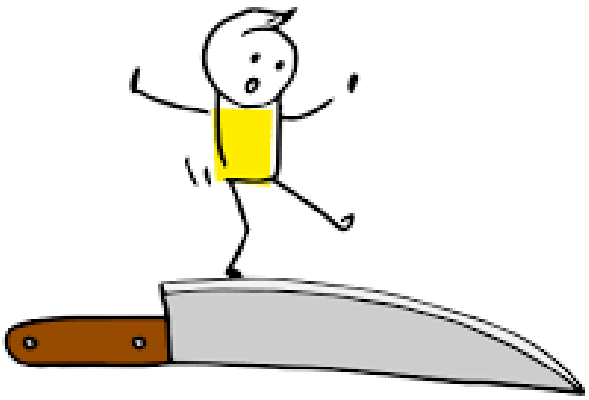
At the end of our lives we will be asked if we were *kove'a itim* for Torah (Shabbos 31). **The Gra** explains (based on an obscure use of the word "*kove'a*" in Malachi 2:8) that the intent of this question is, did we *steal* time for Torah! Meaning, of course one must be strict in allotting time each day and night to Torah study, and utilizing this time in the most rigorous way possible, but the judgment that awaits

us will go further: how much did it hurt? How valuable was Torah study to us that we were literally willing to break away from the current of life to get into a *sugya*, even for a short time? How much time did we pull ourselves away from our social gatherings, newspapers, comfortable beds, emails, etc., for another few minutes of *deveikus* in Hashem's Torah? This, says the Gra, is the extent of the *din* we must give on Torah study — how great was our *ahavas Torah*!

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky would say that as a *bachur*, he only allowed two *chasunos* to take him away from his learning — his sister's and his own!

May we be *zoche* to be *ameil* in Torah!

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – The Strange Blessing



There is a very strange pasuk at the beginning of the sedra: **וְנָתַתִּי מִשְׁכָּנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם, וְלֹא תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם.** – '***I will place My Sanctuary amongst you; and My Spirit will not be disgusted by you.***' (26:11)

Rabbi Frand brings the **Shemen Hatov** and says: This pasuk's placement is in the good part of the parsha, yet the words **וְלֹא תִגְעַל נַפְשִׁי אֶתְכֶם** appear to be harsh. – What does this mean?

The Shemen Tov explains that a husband and wife have potentially the closest relationship, more than any other relationship. – That's the positive aspect. But the downside is that if things don't work out, it can be the most contentious, most difficult and painful relationship.

The gemara says in **סנהדרין ז.** That brings out this very point – '*There was a certain man who was saying about his marriage as he walked:*

When our love was strong, we could have slept on a bed that was the width of a sword. Now that our love is not strong, a bed of sixty cubits is not sufficient for us.'

Hakadosh Baruch Hu is saying, "We are going to have an amazing relationship with each other, and no matter how bad things may get, I am never going to reject you or be disgusted by you."

So this pasuk is actually an amazing bracha! No matter how low we sink, HKBH will not reject us!

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Yisroel Hager ZT"L, the third Rebbe of Vizhnitz, was the son of the saintly Rabbi Baruch of Vizhnitz. He was born on August 20, 1860 and was known as the "Ahavas Yisroel." In 1893, he was appointed as Rebbe in Vyzhnytsia. He invigorated the Vizhnitzer dynasty and attracted many more followers from the surrounding provinces. He established many Talmud Torahs and a Yeshiva which became one of the largest dormitory Yeshivas in Europe.

He was known for being very careful to always tell the truth. He was also a remarkable Ohaiv Yisroel - a man whose love of people knew no bounds. Once he had to write a response to an inquiry from a particular Rabbi. When writing a response to a Rabbi, the custom was to address the Rabbi with certain honorifics (e.g. "Our Master", "The Brilliant One", etc.) However, Rav Hager felt that one of the honorifics that he was expected to use did not apply to this particular Rabbi. What should he do? On the one hand, calling the Rabbi by a title that did not apply was not Emes (truthful). On the other hand, the Rabbi may be insulted if the honorific was not used.

Rav Hager decided not to respond to the Rabbi in a letter through the mail, but rather to respond by telegram. In this manner, the Rabbi would be honored that a response to his inquiry came so quickly

via telegram, and at the same time, the lack of honorifics would not be insulting because the Rabbi would assume that the honorifics were not used, because of the significant expense that would be incurred for each additional word in the telegram. – In this manner, he was able to fulfil both ideals – not hurting another's feelings and always telling the truth.

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Chess, Gemara, and an Army General



Chess, the famous game. Fascinatingly, it is mentioned in the gemara Kesubos 61b, where it says ונדרשיר, one who plays chess. Chess is also mentioned by R' Yehuda Halevi in the Kuzari at the end of the fifth essay: "For this reason, the weak-minded person is unable to beat the strong-minded person in chess. One cannot argue that good or bad luck are factors in the war of chess. This is because all the causes for a victory in chess are within the individual. The wise player will therefore win…"

The son-in-law of R' Yehuda Halevi, R' Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1167), a fervent chess player, wrote several poems about chess. In one of his poems, he describes the rules of the game and the movement options for each piece in the game. Certain rules in modern chess are based on the writings of the Ibn Ezra.

R' Chaim Benveniste (1603-1673) in his Knesses Hagdola writes that he heard that when his rebbe, the Maharit, saw two people playing chess, he would teach them what moves to make. He adds that he also heard that the Mahari Bassan himself also plays chess.

There is a sefer called Maadanei Melech that teaches the rules of chess. This sefer was published in the year 1726 in Frankfurt by the tremendous Torah scholar R' Asher Anshel Worms (1695-1759). In the introduction to the sefer he writes that he published this sefer because he was desperate for money.

What is the origin of the game of chess? R' Dovid Chaim Korinaldi (1700-1770) in his sefer Beis Dovid cites a source stating that the game of chess was discovered in the possession of an army general who lived before the era of the sages of the mishna. He concludes that it is therefore not surprising that chess is mentioned in the gemara.

Higher Havdalah

When the **Ben Ish Chai** was a young child, his father once asked him, just before Havdalah: "Why is the order of the brachos—first on wine, then spices, and finally on fire—set that way?"

The young Ben Ish Chai explained that this progression holds a deeper message. We begin with wine, which we taste with our mouth; then we move to spices, which we smell with our nose; and finally to the flame, which we see with our eyes. - Each moves from a lower part on the face to a higher one, from the mouth to the nose and then the eyes which is placed the highest of these three.

As we transition from the holy Shabbos into the week, this order reminds us that we must not descend spiritually but continue to ascend. Shabbos may be ending, but we still must grow and elevate our lives throughout the coming days.

וְנַסְתֶּם וְאֵין רֹדֵף אֶתְכֶם – ***You will flee with no one pursuing you*** (26:17). Why is this a curse? It should be a blessing that no one is pursuing us!

The Vilna Gaon explains this *pasuk* by citing the *pasuk* in Koheles (3:15), **והאלקים יבקש את נרדף** – *Hashem always seeks (to help) the (one who is) pursued.* The curse therefore is that no one will be chasing us, so we will not have the benefit of being assisted by Hashem. Even the small hope that Hashem will rescue us despite our unworthiness will not materialize, since we are not really being pursued. (Peninim on the Torah)

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

Rabboisai, I would like to point out an important few lines in the **Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh**; Such powerful and meaningful words…

רבינו אור החיים זצ"ל בפרשת בחוקותי, פסוק 'אם לא תשמעו' [כ"ו, י"ד]

The pasuk says **וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ לִי וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֶת כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה** – ***'But if you do not listen to Me and do not perform all these commandments'***… [then the consequences are as the Torah goes on to explain.]

Chazal and the Ohr HaChaim are bothered about the double lashon of '*If you don't listen and you don't do*' – it means the same thing!

The Ohr HaChaim powerfully explains the meaning of the real world.

כי בודאי אם ישיג אדם חלק אחד מערבות ידידות נעימות מתיקות ענף מענפי אור עליון יבז בליבו היות הוא בעולם הזה מלך מלכים בערך קיום מצוה אחת

"For sure, if a person would understand one small part of this overwhelming **pleasantness, affection, friendship, tenderness, sweetness**… from one branch of kedusha, it would be in his heart despisable and worthless to be on this world with all the material things that this world can offer a person, compared to the value of one simple mitzvah!"

… [The Ohr HaChaim is trying to explain with every synonym possible how to explain the beauty and pleasantness of having a connection to kedusha and Hakadosh Baruch Hu.]

He explains that the words **וְאִם־לֹא תִשְׁמְעוּ** mean – if you don't feel it and have no appreciation for this **ערבות ידידות נעימות מתיקות** – then the result is **וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ**.

The Ohr HaChaim is telling us something so meaningful, about the connection that we can have to kedusha. One Amein, one Yehai Shmai Rabah – would be more valuable, and you would have change from everything that this world could give a person materially with all its pleasures.

The best chizuk is to work on that appreciation of how wonderful the life of a person who has a connection to kedusha and Hashem is, compared to other fleeting attractions of this world.

But how do we get there?

If you read this Ohr HaChaim enough times, you will get there!

The Weekly Vort

Rav Meir'l of Premishlan

◣ In the verdant hills of western Ukraine, lived a great *tzaddik* whose holiness transcended the boundaries of time and place. R' Meir of Premishlan, known lovingly as R' Meir'l, was born in 5540 (1780).

◣ R' Meir'l was born into a lineage of light. His grandfather, also named R' Meir of Premishlan, had been a close disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov. His father, Rabbi Aharon Aryeh Leib, was renowned for his righteousness and piety. Meir'l grew up in a home of spiritual wealth, and by the time he was a small boy, he was already recognized as a holy *illuy*. His compassion for the poor emerged

early—he would go door-to-door collecting *tzedakah* as a child, giving away even what little he had for the sake of others.

◣ Upon his father's passing in 1813, R' Meir'l assumed leadership of the chassidic community of Premishlan. R' Meir'l led through simplicity and love. He spoke plainly, often in Yiddish or Polish, making complex spiritual ideas accessible to all. He remained poor his entire life, giving every coin to the needy. And yet, *talmidei chachomim*, peasants and beggars, and even kings, all sought his presence—for his heart was open, and his *tefillos* reached to the Heavenly abode.

◣ R' Meir'l's life is inseparable from the miracles that surrounded him. He was called *Ba'al HaNes*—Master of the Miracle. A merchant once came to him in despair. The price of hides had collapsed, ruining his business. R' Meir'l calmly quoted a *pasuk* from *Megillas Esther*: **ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר** – *The Jews had light and joy and gladness and honor*. He cleverly reinterpreted the Hebrew word for "light" (**אורה**) as if it were spelled with an *ayin*, making it **עורה**, meaning "hides." So, he explained, the *pasuk* meant: "The Jews had hides, joy, and gladness"—and then **ויקר**, "honor," which he interpreted to mean "high value." Shortly thereafter, the market rebounded, and the merchant prospered.

◣ One of the most iconic stories of R' Meir occurred on a snow-covered mountain slope. The *mikveh* in Premishlan was located at the base of a steep hill. In winter, it became perilously slick. The townspeople would go around the mountain to avoid injury. R' Meir'l, however, walked straight down—unflinching, unwavering, never falling. One day, two skeptical young men influenced by the *haskalah* saw him walking the treacherous path and scoffed. Wanting to prove that the feat was not miraculous, they followed him. They slipped, fell, and were badly injured. Later, they confronted the Rebbe: "How can you walk that path when no one else can?" R' Meir'l's timeless

response: "When a person is connected above, he does not fall below."

◣ Once, during a journey, R' Meir'l and his *chassidim* were caught under a dark, threatening sky. A torrential downpour seemed imminent. Calmly, R' Meir'l took out his kerchief and waved it toward the sky. Miraculously, the clouds parted, allowing the group to continue on dry paths. It wasn't just meteorological manipulation—it was a demonstration of the harmony between a *tzaddik* and Heaven.

◣ A brilliant *talmid chochom* once approached R' Meir'l with a difficult question regarding a passage in the Rambam. R' Meir'l asked for a day to respond. The next day, he delivered a profound explanation. The astonished *talmid chochom* asked, "Rebbe, how did you find the answer?" R' Meir'l replied simply: "I studied it last night in the upper worlds—with the Rambam himself."

◣ R' Meir'l's wit also taught deep lessons. When a man complained about a business rival, the Rebbe replied: "You know how a horse behaves at a stream? He paws at the water, thinking his reflection is a competitor. He muddies the water to drive it away. What he doesn't know is that there's enough water for every horse. And there's enough livelihood for every Jew."

◣ Perhaps the most emotionally powerful story from R' Meir'l's life took place during the *Yomim Noraim*. His daughter fell gravely ill, and her condition worsened with each passing holy day. By *Simchas Torah*, she was near death. Still, the Rebbe danced with the Torah with his usual joy. When his *chassidim* burst in to tell him the end was near, he stepped outside and lifted his eyes heavenward: "Master of the Universe! Meir'l blew the *shofar* on Rosh Hashanah, Meir'l fasted on Yom Kippur, Meir'l sat in the *sukkah* on Sukkos, and now Meir'l dances on *Simchas Torah*. And now Meir'l accepts his daughter's illness with joy as well—for it is a *mitzvah* to bless Hashem for the bad as for the good. But You also commanded us not

to mix one joy with another…" At that exact moment, his daughter began to recover. She lived.

◣ On one of his travels, R' Meir'l entered a *shul* that had clearly been neglected. Paint was peeling, windows cracked, and dust covered the *sifrei kodesh*. R' Meir'l looked around and exclaimed, "*Ma nora haMakom hazeh!*" — "How awesome is this place!" His followers were puzzled, thinking he was praising the holiness of the place. But R' Meir'l clarified: "This must be the House of Hashem—because no one else would tolerate such neglect!" His words shamed the community into restoring their *shul* with dignity and reverence.

◣ In his later years, R' Meir'l hinted that his time in this world was nearing its end. On Erev Shabbos, the 28th of Iyar 5610 (1850), he took ill. On Shabbos, the 29th of Iyar, he passed away peacefully. His departure left a void in the hearts of Klal Yisroel—but his light continues to shine.

◣ R' Meir'l left behind not just stories, but a lineage of light. His daughter, Rebbetzin Miriam Chaya of Shotz, inherited his holy cane and became known for miracles of her own. Before her death in 1903, she asked to be buried with the cane—so that it would protect her town. During World War I, when many cities were destroyed, Shotz remained untouched.

◣ R' Meir of Premishlan lived without wealth, without formal writings, and without grand institutions. But he left behind something far greater: a legacy of compassion, humility, joy, *kedushah* and unwavering *bitachon*.

◣ Whether he was learning, calming the suffering, redeeming souls, or walking down a frozen slope without falling, R' Meir'l showed what it means to be truly connected above—and to lift others along the way. *The yahrzeit of R' Meir ben R' Aharon Aryeh Leib of Premishlan zt"l is on 29 Iyar (1850). May his merit protect us.*

Receiving the klalos – What's Next? - ר' יהושע פרנקנהויז

Parshas Bechukosai typically falls before Shavuos. The timing is profoundly relevant—not only in terms of preparing for the upcoming Yom Tov, but also in light of the current challenges facing Klal Yisrael. How deeply do we yearn for the fulfillment of the words "V'nasati shalom b'artzechem—I will bring peace to your land" in an era when scarcely a day passes without ballistic missiles being launched at innocent Yidden in Eretz Yisrael?

How much more do we long for "V'cherev lo sa'avor b'artzechem—A sword shall not pass through your land" when Klal Yisrael across the globe faces increasing dangers, even as those who once were "close to us" now turn away?

The parsha begins with beautiful blessings for those who follow the Torah but swiftly transitions to severe rebukes for those who stray—"Im bechukosai tim'asu." The Torah does not mince its words; it vividly details the devastating klalos that will befall those who abandon the path.

What follows, however, is both striking and seemingly out of place: the laws of erchin, where a person donates his or her value to the Beis Hamikdash.

What is the connection between the terrifying rebuke and the laws of valuation?

The Kotzker Rebbe offers a profound insight — one that serves as a powerful introduction to Shavuos.

In life, we all experience suffering. Hashem sends us yissurim—they might be tests, they might be warnings, and they might even be punishments. But the crucial question is: what happens next?

Often, in the wake of failure or hardship, people feel broken. They feel abandoned by Hashem, unworthy, and devoid of value. But this is precisely the misconception the Torah seeks to correct. Immediately after the klalos, the Torah introduces erchin to remind

us: every Jew possesses inherent, immeasurable worth. Your value is not diminished by your failures.

Just as a loving father may at times discipline his child—sometimes even harshly—yet never stops loving him, never stops wanting him to return, so too does Hashem never withdraw His love for Klal Yisrael.

The message is clear: even after the most painful consequences, Hashem still sees our worth, still invites us back, and still values us deeply.



Make Peace and Greet Moshiach

Parshas Bechukosai contains words of blessing and words of rebuke. The Parsha begins with the message that the world is set up, such that, if the Jewish people keep G-d's mitzvos, blessings will come automatically. Rains will fall at the most convenient of times, …, …, and the Jewish people will be able to rest securely in their land.

The Toras Kohanim on this pasuk asks, "Does this mean we will only dwell securely in Eretz Yisroel, but not in Chutz L'Aretz? What does this mean — we do have food and drink?"

The Toras Kohanim answers that if there is no peace, there is nothing. As long as we are living in exile under a foreign government, there is no Shalom. Without Shalom there is nothing. Shalom is equivalent to everything, the Toras Kohanim continues, as we say in our prayers, "He Makes Shalom and Creates Everything".

As we all know, without Shalom — Shalom in a community or Shalom in a family — Shalom between communities and between

nations, nothing has any worth. This is not just a Toras Kohanim, this is a Mishneh – – the last Mishneh in Shas [Uktzin 3:12]. "The Holy One, Blessed be He, found no vessel to hold Blessing for Israel other than (the vessel of) Peace."

The Kesav Sofer explains, that when there is no peace, it is usually because people are jealous of their neighbors. When people are constantly comparing themselves to the Joneses or the Goldbergs or the Cohens, then they will never be happy. People will never be satisfied, no matter how many blessings, no matter how much food and drink they have. If one is being eaten up by kin'ah [jealousy], then he will never ever have an appreciation for what he possess. Therefore, there is no vessel which can hold the blessings — other than the vessel of peace.

Today, we have in Klal Yisroel a lack of Shalom, even, unfortunately, among our own people. And if we are lacking Shalom, we cannot appreciate our blessings.

In 1980, Rav Yaakov traveled to the Knessiah Gedolah (of Agudath Israel) in Jerusalem. At that particular time in his life, Rav Yaakov felt extremely weak. Rav Yaakov did not feel that he was physically up to making the trip to Eretz Yisroel. But, Rav Yaakov's arm was twisted, he was prevailed upon, and he made the trip. [He was so concerned about his health, that he felt he would not make it back home. He even left word that if he were to die in Eretz Yisroel, he wanted to be buried there, of course.]

Because of his physical condition, Rav Yaakov did not travel around much, nor did he give shiurim, while in Eretz Yisroel. However, Rav Yaakov said, "I want to go to one Yeshiva — I want to go to Yeshivas Kol Yaakov." Rav Yaakov was taken to this Yeshiva and he got up to speak. Rav Yaakov was crying as he told the students, "My entire life I wanted to great Moshiach. I now feel that I won't have this merit; I don't feel that I'll live much longer. But, if I can't greet Moshiach, at least I want to be among a group of people that

I know for sure, will be among those who greet Moshiach. I know that this Yeshiva will be among those that will greet him."

What was so special about this Yeshiva? Did they know Shas by heart? In Kol Yaakov, are all the Bochrim careful to be on time when davening starts? Not necessarily. This Yeshiva was so special because they make peace between Ashkenazic and Sephardic bochrim. It was one Yeshiva that had both students of European-Russian descent and of Spanish-Turkish-North African descent and they made Shalom between these two (sometimes at odds) segments of the Jewish people.

We must take this advice from Rav Yaakov. If we want a Segulah that we will be from those who greet Moshiach, we must take action to make Shalom — between husband and wife; between man and his fellow; between Chassidim and Misnagdim. Make Shalom, and, Rav Yaakov says, be among those who greet Moshiach.

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ

The *parsha* begins (Vayikra 26:3) with the words "**אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ**" (If you go in my decrees). Rashi at the beginning of the *parsha* notes that these words cannot refer to simple mitzvah observance because that is covered by the continuation of the *pasuk* – "*v'es mitzvosai tishmeru*" (and My commandments you shall keep). Rather, Rashi says that the words indicate "**שֶׁתִּהְיוּ עֲמֵלִים בַּתּוֹרָה**" (that you should be laboring in the Torah) – indicating that a person must sweat in his effort to study and master Torah learning.

My first thought focuses on the word ***teleichu***. Why is the verb *teleichu* (you go) associated with intense learning?

Rav Meir Shapiro, the Lubliner Rav, founded the famous Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin. The entrance exam to the *yeshiva* was knowing 300 *blatt* of Gemara by heart. The *smicha* exam at the *yeshiva* was

1000 *blatt* of Gemara by heart. I don't know how many *bochrim* today would be accepted to such a *yeshiva*. Rav Meir Shapiro also founded the now widely-adopted Daf Yomi program. Besides everything else, he was a master *darshan* (a tremendous speaker).

For the building dedication of Yeshivas Chachmei Lublin, Rav Meir Shapiro had a *pasuk* engraved on the walls of the Yeshiva building: "Go my children (*Lechu banim*), listen to me, I will teach you the fear of Hashem." (Tehillim 34:12) The obvious question on that *pasuk* is why does it say ***Lechu*** *banim* – **Go** my children? Shouldn't it say ***Bo'u*** *banim*... **Come** my children?

Rav Meir Shapiro explained that the proof of whether a person has succeeded in learning – whether he became a *talmid chochom* or a *yareh shamayim* or a *ben Torah* – is not while he is **in** a *yeshiva*. The proof is after he has **left** the *yeshiva*. If the *yeshiva* made an impression on him such that he is a *ben Torah*, an honest Jew, and a Jew who fears Heaven – even after he has left the *yeshiva*, that proves that the *yeshiva* has done its job in properly educating him.

As long as a person remains in *yeshiva*, the peer pressure and social pressure may be keeping him in check. People do not like to stand-out, so they toe the line. But when they are out of *yeshiva*, then the proof is in the pudding. That is what the *pasuk* means when it says: **Go** my sons…. "After you leave the *yeshiva*, I want to see if I can in fact recognize the type of person my *yeshiva* is supposed to produce through your behavior."

Rav Meir Shapiro added that this is what *limud haTorah* is all about. *Limud haTorah* is about the impression Torah makes on the person and how it forms him. Does he become a different person? Therefore, "*Lechu banim* (Go out, my children)."

The Tolner Rebbe mentions a beautiful story involving the **Pnei Menachem** (Rav Pinchas Menachem Alter, the seventh Gerer Rebbe, 1926-1996). When the Pnei Menachem was a very little

boy, his father – the **Imrei Emes** (the fourth Gerer Rebbe) – taught him the *siddur*. The Imrei Emes taught him how to daven and the proper sequence of the prayers throughout the *siddur*. This was before the young child was even ready to study Chumash or Mishnayos. When he got to *Krias Shma sh'al hamita*, the Imrei Emes explained to his son that this was the prayer recited before going to bed at night. The little Pnei Menachem asked his father "Why do we say *Krias Shma sh'al hamita* BEFORE we get into bed if it is called *Krias Shma sh'**al** hamitah* (literally — the reading of Shma **upon** the bed)? "***Al** hamitah*" implies, he asked, that a person should say it when he is already **IN** bed!

The Imrei Emes answered his little son: *Krias Shma* represents acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. A person cannot accept the yoke of Heaven while stretched out in bed. That does not work. Therefore, it needs to be said before you actually lie down. The young son persisted: then why is it **CALLED** *Krias Shma sh'**al** hamita* (**upon** the bed), it should be called *Krias Shma sh'lifnei hamita*? The Imrei Emes told him it is because when a person actually lays down in bed is when we see what affect the past day's learning had on him. Even the "*al ha'mita*" – the sleep – should become a different sleep. The sleep itself should be infused with*kedusha*because its purpose is for you to be strong and be well and fortified to serve Hashem properly the next day.

Lechu banim shimu li – Go my children, listen to me: When you are on the way, when you are driving, that is when we see what kind of Jew you really are. *Im bechukosai teleichu* – in the going (*haleecha*) – we recognize what a person's toiling in Torah has accomplished.

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980)

The "Chok" Aspect of Diligent Torah Study

The *pasuk* at the beginning of Parshas Bechukosai says: "If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments, and do them" (Vayikra 26:3). Rashi explains that "*Im b'chukosai teilechu*" (If you walk in my statutes) cannot be referring to Mitzvah observance in general because that is mentioned elsewhere in this *pasuk*. Rashi says that the expression means "*she'ti'heyu ameilim b'Torah*" (that you should be diligent in your study of Torah).

This seems to be a very strange *drasha*. The word *chok* and the phrase "*ameilus b'Torah*" do not seem to be related. *Chukim* are those *mitzvos* which, at first glance, seem to have no rhyme or reason. *Shatnez* is a *chok*. Why can't a garment contain wool and linen together? The *Ribono shel Olam* knows. He has His reasons. We accept that. The ultimate *chok*, the paradigm of all *chukim*, is *Parah Adumah*. The prohibition of eating pig is a *chok*. The laws of Kashrus are *chukim*. On the other hand, *ameilus b'Torah* is diligently pursuing the **understanding** of Torah. It is an intellectual pursuit requiring intense mental effort. Learning and understanding Torah is **not** a *chok*. Why do *Chazal* and Rashi define *b'chukosai teileichu* as *ameilus b'Torah*?

Rav Simcha Zissel gives the following answer in his *sefer* on Chumash: When the Torah refers to *ameilus b'Torah* being a *chok*, it is referring to the transformative properties of Torah. Learning Torah does something to a person. Torah learned properly changes the person. He becomes a different person. There is no other academic discipline that has this property. If a person is "*amel* in Physics" or "*amel* in Economics," it does not change the nature of the person. Even if someone is an "*amel* in Philosophy," it still does not affect his nature. To wit, there were great philosophers, who, on a personal level, left much to be desired.

When Chazal say that "you should be *ameilim b'Torah*" here, they are referring to this mystical power of Torah to change people.

The *pasuk* is referring to that "*chok*." If that is the case, then merely quickly "learning up" a blatt Gemara or merely being *ma'aver sedra* and reading the *Targum* without knowing what you are saying is a fulfillment of the Biblical Mitzvah of learning Torah – I am not denying that – but the power of Torah to transform the person requires a different level of learning. That is *amelus b'Torah*. That is *shvitzing* over a *Daf* of Gemara. That is sweating hard to understand a Tosfos.

That is why, for instance, **Rav Chaim of Volozhin** writes in his sefer Safre De'tzneusa, as follows: "I heard from the mouth of the holy **Gaon of Vilna** that many times *malachim* (angels) came to his doorway to offer to freely transmit to him the secrets of Torah, without any effort or intensive study on his part at all. However, he refused to listen to them." The Gaon said "no thanks" to these *malachim* who were anxious to share Torah secrets with him without his having to expend any effort to acquire this knowledge.

If a *malach* came to me one night and wanted to share "Torah secrets" with me, I would tell him "Be my guest!" But the Gaon, who was the personification of a Torah genius, wanted to have the *ameilus b'Torah*. He refused to accept a "free pass" to the acquisition of Torah knowledge.

The Taz says in Shulchan Aruch that the *bracha* we recite every morning before learning Torah is "*… asher kidishanu b'mitzvosav v'tzivanu **LA'ASOK** b'Divrei Torah*." *La'asok* means to be diligently involved or engrossed. The more common language would be "***LILMOD*** (to learn) Torah." The Taz explains the connotation of the word *La'Asok*. Chazal really want us to put effort – blood, sweat, and tears – into our Torah study endeavors. Only then will the Torah student experience the mystical power of Torah to transform him. This is the interpretation of *Im b'chukosai teleichu – she'ti'heyu AMEILIM b'Torah*.

Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh Endorses Torah Tapes

The first pasuk of Parshas Bechukosai (Vayikra 26:3) begins with the words "If you walk according to my statutes".

The Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh comments that the reason why the pasuk uses this peculiar mix of the verb "walk" with the object "my statues" is to teach us that one must occupy himself with Torah even while walking along the road (i.e. – while one is traveling).

At the risk of engaging in "self-promotion", this is an endorsement for the practice of listening to Torah Tapes while driving in one's car.

Kristallnacht: When the Jews were Stranded



Burning Synagogue Kristallnacht 9 November 1938, 16 Marheshvan 5699

During the summer of 1938, with an urgent situation facing Jews in lands under control of the Nazi regime, thirty-two nations gathered in Evian France, to find a solution to the Jewish refugee crisis. German, Austrian, and Czech Jewry were desperate to leave but few nations would accept them beyond their meager quotas. At Evian, nothing was resolved, as delegate after delegate on behalf of their

respective nations refused to expand their meager quotas. Then representative of the Jewish Agency at the time, Golda Meir (then Meyerson) who attended the conference said that, "nothing was accomplished at Evian except phraseology." At a press conference, she stated, "Before I die, my people should not need expressions of sympathy anymore." The London Jewish Chronicle predicted that the Evian Conference, "will be numbered among the many conferences whose name is failure."



The horrors of Kristallnacht, November 9, 1938, exacerbated the German Jewish refugee crisis as Nazi hordes swept over Jewish communities in Germany inflicting destruction and terror, removing any doubt that the hour of German Jewry's demise was near. Nearly one-hundred-100 Jews were murdered and thirty-thousand-30.000 were sent to concentration camps. Five-hundred-500 synagogues were burnt down and over 7,000 Jewish businesses were destroyed. Over two hundred thousand German Jews had not yet left and 200,000 Jews of Austria were under German occupation, which was seized and occupied by the Nazis after the Anchluss (unification) as of March 15th 1938. In addition, the Jews of the Sudetenland, handed over to Germany in the aftermath of the Munich accords, were then under Nazi control. Exactly, one year later, on March 15, 1939, the Germans seized all of Czechoslovakia.

Just six weeks before Kristallnacht, as British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, triumphantly proclaimed "peace in our time" following the ill-fated Munich deal signed with Hitler, the horrors

of Crystal Night shattered any such illusions of peace. A full page advertisement in the London Jewish Chronicle one week later in an appeal for German Jewry simply stated, "HELP! Before it is too late."

The British did react with a gesture. The Kindertransport presented to the British Parliament on November 15, 1938, allowed for 10,000 German and Austrian Jewish children to be brought into Great Britain. The first train left December 10, 1938 with six-hundred-600 children.

Many Americans realized after Kristallnacht, known then as 'Black Thursday,' that along with the Jews, all Western civilization was in danger. One newspaper noted that "The Jews are not the sole sufferers. This is a pogrom against Christian civilization itself. Decent world opinion and civilized governments cannot remain indifferent or silent."

United States President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt did extend the visas for 12,000-15,000 German Jewish refugees who were already in the US as visitors but would not change US immigration policies. At a White House Press conference, Roosevelt expressed shock at the news of the pogrom, "I myself could scarcely believe that such things could occur in a twentieth century civilization." When asked if immigration restrictions would be relaxed, he responded, "This is not in contemplation. We have a quota system."

Roosevelt's position mirrored the views of most Americans. According to a Fortune Magazine poll after Kristallnacht, 83% of Americans opposed enlarging quotas, 8.3% were undecided, and 8.7% were not opposed. Years of demagoguery and anti-Semitic hate mongering by the likes of Father Coughlin and Gerald K. Smith had its impact. There was revulsion at the violence but a continued unwillingness to respond meaningfully.

President Roosevelt could have nonetheless still taken action. Economic sanctions could have been imposed on Germany. Refugees

could have been permitted to settle temporarily in a U.S. territory such as the Philippines or the Virgin Islands.

Jewish organizations did not protest. There were no rallies, no protests, no significant effort mounted to call for refuge. Influential leader of the American Jewish Committee, Samuel Rosenmann stated that bringing in refugees "would create a Jewish crisis in the USA."

Some members of Congress sought action. The Wagner- Rogers Bill proposed admitting 20,000 German Jewish children under the age of fourteen, but it was rejected by congress in February 1939. It never came to a vote.

According to Laura Delano Houghteling, the wife of the Commissioner of Immigration, and a cousin of FDR, the problem with the Wagner-Rogers Bill was that, "Twenty-thousand charming children would all soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults."

One nation offered sanctuary; the Dominican Republic under Rafael Trujillo. Dominican law agreed to accept one hundred thousand-100.000 Jewish refugees on their Caribbean island nation, but they were pressured by none other than the U.S. State Department to rescind their offer.

What about refuge in the Land of Israel and the promises made by the British Balfour Declaration in 1917 (supported by Western nations) and the League of Nations Conference in 1920 to facilitate the creation of a Jewish State?

On November 16, 1938, less than a week after Kristallnacht, the New York Times expressed its opposition to Jewish statehood in an editorial, entitled, "The Refugees," declaring that Palestine is no answer."

They reasoned; "Even if that small state were capable of supporting a much larger population than its most enthusiastic friends believe, Palestine would serve as a refuge only for a comparatively small

number of Jews, and the problem of the refugee is not limited to any group."

Tragically, the voices in support of Jewish immigration to "Palestine" were not loud enough.

On May 17, 1939, the British Government caving into Arab pressure and Arab terror, issued the MacDonald White paper which limited total Jewish immigration into Palestine for the next five years to 75,000, negating the prior promises of Jewish Statehood. The Jewish Agency responded despondently stating, "It is the darkest hour of Jewish history that the British government proposes to deprive the Jews of their last hope and to close the road back to their Homeland."

During the 1930s, nations of the world were far too tolerant of Nazism and reluctant to take any action to ameliorate the sufferings of Jewry. Not coming to terms with the emerging Nazi threat that would soon endanger them as well.

In today's times, western nations have been far too tolerant of the forces of radical Islam which includes the ruling regime in Iran, Isis, Hizbollah, Hamas, and other terror groups.. They threaten Israel and the West as well.

Those who spoke out against the rise of Nazism in the1930s were often labeled as war mongers. Today, those who cite the threats posed by radical Islam face the same labels and similar criticisms.

After Kristallnacht, some members of the Nazi regime openly called for the genocide of the Jews. In today's times, the Iranian regime and its supporters call for the destruction of Israel. Somehow, then and now, this rhetoric is deemed by too many to be acceptable.

Once again, the Jewish establishment maintains its silence in the face of the current threats, fearing the reaction of the outside world as it did seventy-70 years ago.

The horrors of Kristallnacht shocked the world and signaled the extreme dangers posed by the Nazi regime to the Jews and all humanity.

Kristallnacht Eye Witness - Martin Rosenberg [My fathers 1st cousin]



I was in Chemnitz, a large industrial town near Dresden and incidentally about 20 miles from Colditz on the 9th of November 1938, a date of memorial for the Nazi Movement, when marches, speeches and exaltations were given by their leaders. Jewish people stayed mainly indoors, feeling safer there, in so far as one could feel safe.

At the end of their activities and as we now know, orders were given to burn and destroy Synagogues, smash the frontages of Jewish owned shops and offices, loot whatever they could and arrest Jewish males for what was termed 'Protective Custody'. That was Kristallnacht.

I was working as secretary in Chemnitz for the Zionist organisation of Germany. My work to a great extent was letting the Gestapo know of all shades of Zionist and Jewish activities which entailed visits to their offices two or three times a week.

On the night of the 9th, I stayed indoors until the following morning when I witnessed a friend who was in charge of Maccabi Sports taken away by 2 men not in uniform whom I recognised as Gestapo.

I waited 5 to 10 minutes, left the house through the back stairs and went into the town and saw what had happened on Kristallnacht to Jewish property.

Knowing the methods of the Gestapo and the name of my colleague was Kurt David (killed in the Concentration camp Buchenwald.), I knew that my name, starting with R would hopefully give me a little time to escape from the house. This was early morning. I spent the day in town and then went to a suburban picture hall where I felt safer, the idea being that a tree hidden in a forest is not noticed. After dark I returned to the house where I was told that the Gestapo had been to collect me, had taken away my Tallis and Tefillin and a few less important items and left a message that I was to report to Headquarters.

In the dark I got a few things together and made for one of the suburban railway stations having decided to spend the night of the 10th in a small nearby town in the open until I felt it safe to return to Chemnitz the following morning, when I called upon 2 friends from whom I borrowed money, feeling this was safe to do as they were of Polish nationality and not affected by the roundup of German Jews. Their help enabled me to leave Chemnitz from a small railway station stopping in Leipzig where I was unknown and bought a small suitcase and took the train to Berlin, where I stayed the night in a small hotel and the following morning contacted an aunt there.

That was my experience of Kristallnacht.

'Hashem and I play a constant game of hide-and-seek… I find Him everywhere!' ~ Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740–1809).

No matter who a person is and what he has done, Hashem anxiously awaits his tefillos. ~ The Chafetz Chaim.

KristalNacht (1938).



On November 9–10, 1938, Nazi leaders unleashed a series of pogroms against the Jewish population in Germany and recently incorporated territories. This event came to be called Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass) because of the shattered glass that littered the streets after the vandalism and destruction of Jewish-owned businesses, synagogues, and homes.

During the pogrom, units of the SS and Gestapo (Secret State Police), following Heydrich's instructions, arrested up to 30,000 Jewish males, and transferred most of them from local Prisons to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, and other concentration camps. 1,300 Yidden were murdered. 1,547 Synagogues were burned.

Many synagogues burned throughout the night in full view of the public and of local firefighters, who had received orders to intervene only to prevent flames from spreading to nearby buildings. SA and Hitler Youth members across the country shattered the shop windows of an estimated 10,000 Jewish-owned commercial

establishments and looted their wares. Businesses were destroyed. Jewish cemeteries became a particular object of desecration in many regions.

This was the first time Nazi officials made massive arrests of Jews specifically because they were Jews, without any further cause for arrest.

In the aftermath of *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi regime made an immediate pronouncement that "the Jews" themselves were to blame for the pogrom and ordered the Jewish community to pay a 1 billion Reichsmark "atonement tax" and rapidly enacted many anti-Jewish laws and edicts.

Thus, *Kristallnacht* figures as an essential turning point in Nazi Germany's persecution of Jews, which culminated in the attempt to annihilate the European Jews.



The Letter That Wasn't a Mistake

In a quiet neighborhood in Eretz Yisrael lives a man who works in programming — an unassuming computer expert who one day decided to use his skills for the world he loved most: the world of Torah.

He developed a software system designed especially for yeshivos — a complete administrative tool that could manage applications, registration, tuition, and student records.

One morning, he received a call from a new yeshiva interested in purchasing his software. It was an elite institution, one of those sought-after yeshivos with more applicants than space. The administration invited him to present a demonstration for the Rosh Yeshiva, the registrar, and the office staff.

He arrived with his laptop and asked for a copy of their application spreadsheet. The list was long — dozens of hopeful names, each one representing a boy. To demonstrate how his program worked, he

selected a name at random from the spreadsheet and clicked the "Accept" button. Instantly, a crisp, official-looking letter emerged from the printer:

"We are pleased to inform you that you have been accepted to our yeshiva..."

The room chuckled. One of the rebbeim smiled and said, "It's funny that you chose that name. We actually debated long and hard about that boy and decided not to take him. But impressive demo!" The yeshiva staff were satisfied. They thanked him, paid for the system, and began preparing for the new year.

A few days later, the office staff finalized the official list of accepted and rejected applicants. The secretary began folding and stuffing letters — joyful ones for some families, disappointing ones for others. It was a painstaking job, done late into the night.

Near the end of the pile, she noticed one more acceptance letter sitting on the corner of the desk. Assuming it had somehow come loose from its envelope, she addressed it and sent it out.

Two days later, a certain family opened their mailbox — and their world changed. Inside was an acceptance letter from the prestigious yeshiva they had yearned for. The parents were ecstatic. Tears of relief and gratitude flowed. They immediately phoned the yeshiva office to thank them and to confirm registration details.

But the registrar on the line was confused. "Wait — what's your name again?"

They repeated it. "There must be a mistake," he said. "You weren't accepted."

"What do you mean?" the father replied. "We have the letter right here in our hands!" - A moment later, the truth dawned. It was the same test letter printed during the software demonstration — the name that had been "randomly" selected. - But the letter had already been mailed, and the family had already rejoiced. The Rosh Yeshiva

was consulted, and he ruled unequivocally: a letter of acceptance, once sent, must be honored. And so, the boy was welcomed into the yeshivah.

Half a Year Later

Six months passed. The programmer returned to the same yeshiva to install a system update. While there, the registrar shared the story with him.

"You won't believe what happened," he said. "Remember that test letter from your demo? The boy whose name came up by chance? He turned out to be one of our best talmidim! A metzuyan! We weren't going to take him — but what a mistake that would have been. He's a gem, a true credit to the yeshiva."

The programmer asked for the boy's name. When he heard it, he was taken aback. "I know that family," he said quietly. "The father is an old friend from my own yeshiva days." That evening, curiosity led him to pick up the phone. "I was at your son's yeshiva today," he told his friend. "They were praising him endlessly. You must be so proud."

The father gave a remarkable response: "You have no idea. We wanted him in that yeshiva more than anything. We tried every hishtadlus, every connection. But every time, the answer was no. No, no, and no again. As the days went by, and the acceptance letters were about to go out, we felt broken. "So my wife and I went to the Kosel haMa'aravi. It was late — almost midnight. The plaza was nearly empty. We stood there, she on her side, I on mine, and we cried. Not for prestige, not for pride, but because we believed that was the right place for our son's ruchniyus, for his neshama.

"I stood there and said, 'Ribbono shel Olam, You are the Kol Yachol. You are the true registrar. You decide who gets accepted and who doesn't. Please, Hashem, if it's right, let him in.' - "And the next morning..." — his voice caught — "...that letter was printed."

This story demonstrates the unimaginable koach ha'tefila — the power of a single heart that refuses to give up. Two parents stood in the stillness of the night, broken yet believing, pouring out their souls before the Kosel. No meetings, no strings, no logic — only tears. And those tears opened the Heavens.

A letter that should never have existed was printed. A destiny that was closed was rewritten. That is tefila. It changes decrees, it changes worlds, it changes lives.



One of the *berachos* we say during *Sheva Berachos* is: **שמח תשמח רעים האהובים כשמחך יצירך בגן עדן מקדם** - "Gladden intensely, the companions who are beloved, as You gladdened Your creation in the Garden of Eden from days of old."

The question is: What special joy was there in the first marriage, that we bless every subsequent marriage to be like this?

Some answer: Many people have worries about livelihood after marriage, which involves many expenses, so the marriage brings worries about livelihood. Therefore, we say that if they merit their marriage should be like Adam HaRishon, about who we find in *Sanhedrin* (59b): Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima says, "Adam HaRishon was in the Garden of Eden, and there were ministering angels roasting meat for him and filtering wine for him", we see that he had no worries about livelihood, therefore, we bless the *chosan* and *kallah* that they should have no worries (*Admor* of *Sanz shlita*).

The Chazon Ish once saw a bochur who had reached the age of shidduchim and he saw that the boy wasn't looking. The Chazon Ish asked him why he wasn't busy with it?

The bochur said to him: I am like Ben Azai whose soul yearns for Torah. The Chazon Ish replied: Is it not good enough to be like Abaye and Rava...?! (Neimos HaChaim - Shidduchim, pg. 50)

When the **Satmar Rebbe zt"l** was in a certain yeshiva, he saw many older bochurim who weren't learning like they should be. He said to them: In the Gemara there is a dispute whether one should first get married and then learn, or learn and then get married, but there is no one who believes that he should neither study Torah nor marry a wife... (Neimos HaChaim - Shidduchim, pg. 23)

R' Moshe Feinstein *zt"l* would finish the entire *sefer Tehillim* every day. When R' Amram Blau *zt"l* asked him why he did this? He replied: He does it for two reasons: 1) To atone for the fact that he got married after he turned 20; 2) It serves as a rectification, for all the idle chatter that people talk. (*Ezer Kenegdo* pg. 83)

Once a father came with his son who was a *bochur* to **the Steipler** and the *bochur* told the Steipler that he is currently learning in *yeshiva,* however, he doesn't feel that not being married is disturbing him in any way.

The Steipler shouted at him and said: "Are you a *malach*? Hashem created man with a desire that he wants to get married, therefore, you should get married as soon as you can." (*Me'achorei Hapargud,* pg. 343)

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

The Real Doctor



A couple who didn't have children for twenty years went to a big expert in fertility in Vilna. After the tests, the doctor proclaimed that this couple would be unable to have children. Following this, the wife went home and davened, "Hashem, I don't care what the doctors say. I want to have children and I know You could do it for me."

The Leshem[*The Leshem was R' Shlomo Elyashiv who lived from 1841-1926*] heard her crying and asked if everything was okay? She related what had happened in Vilna with the doctor. She then said, "But I know that Hashem could give me children anyway. Therefore, I was davening with tears." The Leshem told her that if you believe Hashem could do what the doctor said is impossible, then I guarantee you within a year, you will have a baby. **R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv** was born a year later.

The Sefer Toras Avos tells us that when the doctors give up on one's illness and the patient strengthens himself and puts his trust in Hashem, then all the gates of healing and salvation are opened.

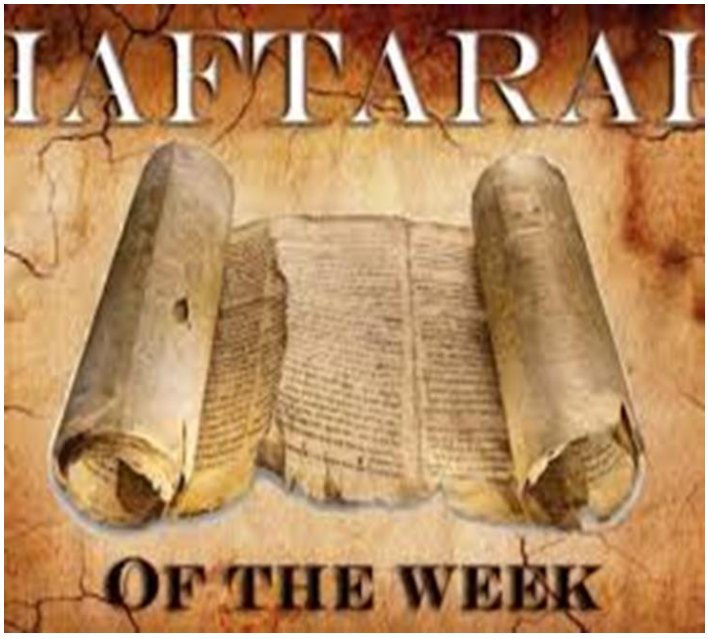
A famous Rebbitzen once said, "We know the doctor has no power nor does the antibiotic. But we are doing it because Hashem put us in a body and sometimes He heals through doctors." One should recite the Tefila before taking medicine that it should be Your will, Hashem, that through this, I should be cured- **יהי רצון... שיהא עסק זה לי לרפואה, כי רופא חנם אתה, ולאחר שהקיז יאמר: ברוך רופא חולים**

R' Nachman of Breslov remarked that Hashem is so great that He could bring a Refua through doctors.

In the 1980s, the wife of a poor family that wanted to feed her children with fresh fruits and vegetables, couldn't afford to. Instead, she would daven before they ate, "Hashem, put all the nourishment they need into this bread: all the vitamins and minerals, carbs, protein and so on."

She related that her children would wake up in the morning with rosy cheeks, happy and energized. At times, they would receive Tzedaka money and she would then buy whole grain rice, salad, chicken and the like. But then she would forget to daven and they would wake up with runny noses, ear infections, and wouldn't feel well. We, of course, need to do our *Hishtadlus;* effort. Hashem wants us to live responsibly but not to anoint anyone king besides Him.

Haftarah History



Tosafos Yom Tov tells us that the Haftarahs were established when the wicked **אנטיוכס** —the king of **יון** — outlawed public reading of the Torah. The *sages* of the time, therefore, established the custom of reading a topic from the *Neviim* (prophets) similar to what was supposed to be read from the Torah. Indeed, the Avudraham tells us the word **הפטרה** is rooted in **פטור** , exempt, as they were now exempt, having fulfilled Krias Hatorah.

So the Haftarah was in place of Krias Hatorah. As a result, there is a minimum of 21 Pesukim in a given Haftarah, corresponding to the

seven Aliyos of Krias Hatorah since each Aliya requires at least three Pesukim (7 multiplied by 3 is 21).

Another allusion is the following: The one who receives the Aliya of Maftir recites seven Brachos—one before and after his Aliya and five on the Haftarah. This hints to the seven Aliyos of Krias Hatorah. Also, the five Brachos on the Haftarah hints to the five books of Chumash.

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

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אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם

"If you will follow My decrees and perform My commandments." (26:3)

The Alter of Slabodka, HaRav Nosson Tzvi Finkel said:

It would have been worthwhile for Hashem to create the whole world and have its existence for 6,000 years just for **one** Jew to respond Baruch Hu U'voruch Shmo **one time**.

Furthermore, 1,000 times Baruch Hu U'voruch Shmo does not equal to one Amen.

1,000 Amens is not equal to one Amen Yhai Shmei Rabbah.

1,000 Amen Yhai Shmei Rabbahs does equal to one word of learning Torah.

That means that one billion Baruch Hu U'voruch Shmos doesn't equal to one word of learning Torah. Remember, it was worthwhile for

Hashem to create the world for 6,000 years just for one Jew to respond Baruch Hu U'voruch Shmo. We see the unbelievable reward one receives for learning Torah.

"Can you cash this cheque for me?" "Let me see the amount," replied the bank teller. When he saw the sum written on the cheque and the signature below, his eyes lit up in amazement`. "I am sorry sir, but I will have to consult the bank manager about cashing such a large cheque." The bank manager looked at the cheque and replied, "There is not enough money in this bank or in all the local banks put together to cash this cheque. Since the king himself wrote such a large cheque the only way you can receive payment for it is to travel to the capital and ask for cash at the royal treasury.

Every mitzvah that we do is so precious, that its true value can only be paid in Hashem's capital, in the World to Come. The reward for just a single word of learning Torah is even greater and more precious than we can imagine. (*A moshel of the Chofetz Chaim recorded in the book Give us Life by Mendel Weinbach*)

The Torah tells us that if we toil in learning Torah and fulfil the mitzvos we will receive many blessings. We will have rain in abundance and at the right times. The land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will yield their fruit. We will be so prosperous that we will be so busy with our wheat and grapes. We will feel full from eating, we will dwell securely in our land, and we will have peace. Many more blessings are listed. What extensive blessings for learning Torah and performing mitzvos!

Yet, many commentaries question why the Torah lists so many physical blessings without mentioning the ultimate reward one receives. The reward for learning Torah and doing mitzvos can't possibly be given to us in this world; the reward is so great that we can only receive it properly in the World to Come.

***Rav Moshe Alshich* answers**, of course it is impossible to be rewarded in this world for our Torah learning and mitzvah

performance. The Torah is listing the reward that Hashem will give us as a "gift", without taking away anything from our ultimate reward. If we perform the mitzvos sincerely, and not only for their great reward, then these numerous physical blessings will be given to us as a bonus.

So many special rewards are just a bonus. Imagine the great reward we will receive in the World to Come for learning Torah and performing the mitzvos.

Communism

In Communist Russia, organized religion was illegal and deemed the "opiate of the masses." In fact, not very many things were organized in the old Soviet Union. People went hungry and provisions were hard to come by. A simple explanation of how Communism operated was provided by **R' Yisroel Zev Gustman zt"l,** as follows: "*Alles iz nisht meiner, und nisht deiner (Everything is not mine and it is not yours).*" In the end, no one ends up with anything.

This social order was applied in Lithuania soon after the Russian occupation in 1939. In the capital of Vilna, hundreds of thousands of Jews were made to feel the unwelcome embrace of Communism. Whatever was needed was either unavailable or in short supply. This was the case with warm boots, which were unavailable as the winter approached. A delegation of citizens approached the Russian Commissar of Vilna with a desperate plea that he somehow obtain boots for the city residents before the bitter cold of the Lithuanian winter was upon them. The Commissar answered them confidently. "Do not worry yourselves about this matter," he said.

"The Soviet Socialist Republic, led by its great and kind father (Stalin), provides for the people!" The Commissar was as good as his word. Within a relatively short period, by Soviet command-and-

control economic standards, a locomotive arrived at the Vilna Central Train Station, pulling boxcars filled with boots.



But as fate would have it, there turned out to be a glitch: Upon unloading the boxcars, it became apparent that the train was filled with left boots only! Somehow the right boots were missing! What was to be done with thousands of left boots? This circumstance was duly explained to the Commissar, who was dumfounded and incredulous. "Impossible!" he said dismissively, "It cannot be!" But it was. No one among the Soviets had any idea what had happened. There were various theories, culminating in one question: Were there other boxcars somewhere out there, filled with right boots? It was thought that this was indeed what had happened. In the vast network of Soviet railway traffic between the loading of the boots and Vilna, somehow the boxcars containing the right boots had been misdirected. But if so, where were the missing boxcars?

At the time, R' Gustman was serving as a dayan on the Vilna Beis Din, and he described the boot problem to an ailing **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzenski zt"l**, Chief Rabbi of Vilna, and the Posek Hador. R' Chaim Ozer was at first amused, but then he began to pore over railway maps in detail, going over the junctions and interchanges in an effort to figure out how the train had travelled. Finally, he pointed to a particular junction on the map and said that the boxcars were there.

He instructed R' Gustman to go to the Commissar and inform him, of the location of the boxcars. R' Gustman was aware of the short fuse of the Soviet authorities, and the possibility he would be treated as

a suspect or saboteur and imprisoned, or worse. But he possessed emunas chachamim in R' Chaim Ozer to trust his statement and he proceeded to the Commissar without hesitation.

The Commissar received him with all the contempt of a Communist for a "superstitious person" from the reactionary class of religious clerics. When R' Gustman told him that the Chief Rabbi of Vilna believes he has located the missing boxcar, the Commissar laughed at what he called the "wild guesses" of an old rabbi who could not possibly know about the complexities of Soviet railway transportation. But R' Gustman stood his ground, and the Commissar eventually listened.

"We will send word there to inquire about the missing boxcars," he said mockingly. "But know this: If you are wrong, you will be taken out and shot for wasting our precious time with mystical nonsense during wartime, and by doing so attempting to make a mockery of Soviet power." Shortly thereafter, the Commissar received a telegram - and wonder of wonders! - the boxcars were exactly where R' Chaim Ozer had indicated they would be, marked with the words, "Destination Vilna." As a result, many of the freezing residents of Vilna received both right and left boots.

From that point on, the Soviet Commissar held R' Chaim Ozer and R' Gustman in high esteem, for the rabbis had divined what even Soviet Power had failed to reveal, and that made them bona fide prophets. This proved to be useful to R' Gustman in the war years to come.

"To truly love someone, you don't need to understand them fully or agree with them fully – you just need to be there for them fully." ~ Based on the teachings of the Lelover Rebbe, Rabbi Dovid Biderman (1746-1814).

בָּרוּךְ הַגֶּבֶר אֲשֶׁר יִבְטַח בַּה' וְהָיָה ה' מִבְטַחוֹ Yirmiyahu 17:7



In the Haftorah, Yirmiyahu addresses many topics including the themes of Shmitta, Berachos (heavenly blessings) and Klalos (divine curses for disobedience). Though Yirmiyahu's prophecy seems harsh on the people, the Navi states, *"Blessed is the man who trusts in Hashem; Hashem shall be his trust."* Even though it is a beautiful sentiment, shouldn't Hashem's trust in mere humans be more dependant on their good deeds than just on their basic trust in him?

R' Yosef Yozel Horowitz (Alter of Novardok) explains that deeds and actions are important, however, the mere fact that we trust in Hashem is already an enormous blessing. The nature of people is to try to control their own environment, thus, when a person abandons his feelings of invincibility and manages to place his complete trust in Hashem, his soul automatically draws closer to Hashem.

Amazingly, Hashem just wants a person to take that very first step – and when he does Hashem will lovingly draw him in. Even when a person davens hard and doesn't receive what he had hoped for, to the undiscerning eye it may seem like he failed completely; still he will draw closer to the Almighty because he has attained a greater level of faith in Hashem.

When one knows that his parnassah comes from Hashem, that awareness alone will increase his parnassah. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

Torah Tavlin

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם



From the time **R' Chaim Kanievsky Z'tl** was a tiny baby in his crib, his father was constantly guiding him in the ways of Torah. Instead of the usual lullabies that parents sing to their children, his father, the **Steipler Gaon zt"l**, used to chant the names of the masechtos of the Talmud. The Steipler would play a game with his children: he would call out names of chapters in the Mishna, and they would have to tell him which masechta it was in.

Once the **Chazon Ish zt"l** happened to hear his young nephew reciting the names of all the masechtos, and he remarked metaphorically, *"Er ken shoin gantz shas!"* (He already knows the whole Talmud!)

When the Steipler would give a shiur, he would bring his young son with him to the Beis Medrash. The bochurim noticed the boy seated at a table, pen in hand, writing earnestly. They watched with curiosity as he wrote page after page. "What could such a small child be writing?" they wondered.

They discovered that he was making a count of how many times the name "Abaye" appeared on each daf of the Gemara, as well as the names of the other sages. At the end of each chapter, he would make an overall count for the whole chapter. His father had given him this homework to keep him occupied after cheder. Already as a small child, R' Chaim finished all six sections of the Mishna and learned

many other subjects as well. It is not surprising that his reputation as a great masmid started at a very young age.

Ameilus (toiling) in Torah is a mitzvah. It applies to each and every Jew. The hasmada put forth from the talmidei chachamim and Torah sages throughout our history is legendary. Hashem creates each person individually. Some are smarter than others. Some are deeper than others. But all have the same commandment to apply themselves to the best of their abilities. Ameilus B'Torah is universal to all Jews.

Chacham Rabbeinu Yitzchok Karo zt"l (Toldos Yitzchok) would say: אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ



The parsha begins with the letter 'Alef' and concludes the portion of the blessings with a 'Tav' (**קוממיות**). This signifies that when the Jews fulfil the Torah and mitzvos from 'Alef to Tav' they will be blessed.

The parsha of the Tochacha begins with the letter 'Vav' (**ואם לא תשמעו**) and concludes with the letter 'Hey' (**משה**), which is half of Hashem's Name, to signify **עמו אנכי בצרה** - Hashem is here with us while we are suffering."

The trip is never too hard if you know you're going home." - The Chofetz Chaim.

וְאִם מִבֶּן־חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וְעַד בֶּן־עֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה וְהָיָה עֶרְכְּךָ הַזָּכָר עֶשְׂרִים שְׁקָלִים וְלַנְּקֵבָה עֲשֶׂרֶת שְׁקָלִים 27:5 *And if [the person is] from one month old until five years old, the value of a male shall be five silver shekels, while the value of a female shall be three silver shekels.*



The Itamar massacre, was an attack on a Jewish family in the Israeli town of Itamar, that took place on March 11, 2011, in which five members of the Fogel family were murdered in cold blood by ruthless Arab teens. The victims were the father Ehud (Udi) Fogel, mother Ruth Fogel, and three of their six children, Yoav, Elad, and Hadas, the youngest, a three-month-old infant. The settlement of Itamar had been the target of several murderous attacks before these killings, but the shock of this massacre was overwhelming.

During the seven days of shivah, the Fogel house was a non-stop sea of humanity as hundreds came to pay their respects. One man, came by every single day but did not go to speak to the mourners; rather, he always seemed to go straight into the kitchen for extended periods of time. For days, nobody noticed, until finally one family member saw the man walking in with bags full of groceries.

Soon it became clear that the man was none other than the rich supermarket magnate, Rami Levy, owner of the Shivuk HaShikma

chain, which has 27 stores and almost 5000 employees. Rami himself personally came daily to stock the cupboards and refrigerator in the Fogel home. When one relative thanked him, he said, "You will get used to my face. I have committed myself that every week I will deliver food and stock your home until the youngest orphan turns 18 years old."

The Torah speaks about Erchin, which is the value of a person in silver coins. And yet, the true value of a person has nothing to do with money whatsoever. One can have all the gold and silver in the world, but his value as a human being lies in how he uses his wealth and contributes to those in need. Whether it's helping out after a tragedy or just simply looking out for the plight of another Jew, the true Erchin of a person is not what he has - but what he gives to others.



The Mitzvah Of Shemittah Is Dependent On Our Level Of Belief.

The Torah states: *"If you will ask, 'What will we eat in the seventh year? Behold! We did not sow nor gather in our crops ... I will ordain My blessing for you in the sixth year, and it will yield a crop sufficient for three years."*

In other words, the Divine blessing that would enrich the soil as a result of the observance of Shemittah would compensate threefold for the perceived loss of revenue while the land was allowed to lie fallow. This takes great faith - not just pious words. Do we put our money where our mouths are? Do we place our trust in Him and follow His word to the fullest? Whether it's keeping Shabbos, honesty in business, or going the extra mile to give Tzedakah, Shemittah reminds us that Har Sinai represents a bridge between theory and practice, faith and action, trust and resolve. Upon that mountain, the Almighty took us in as His partner in the business of creation. He

wants a strong partner. Hashem wants us to succeed; He wants us to pass the test. He's been imploring us ever since: "Don't be a shvacher shutaf."

An international dealer in high-end fabrics once visited the **Lubavitcher Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson zt"l**. As an active member of the Chabad community in London, England, the businessman was quite familiar with how the Rebbe's advice and blessings had impacted many people's lives in virtually every area of human experience.



At one point in their discussion, he put forth a tongue-in-cheek proposal for the Rebbe to partner with him in a business venture. The man was smiling but the Rebbe turned serious. "Fair enough," he said. "Remember, though, that in a partnership, neither partner gets to make a move without the consent of the other. Do we have a deal?"

Though skeptical about the Lubavitcher Rebbe's knowledge of his trade, the man was nevertheless excited about this opportunity to "partner" with the great Jewish leader, and readily took the deal. The Rebbe then advised him to make a large purchase of a certain material that hadn't even been on the man's radar screen. The dealer went home and placed a large order for this unusual fabric.

When he reported back to New York, the Rebbe responded that the purchase was way too conservative. I much larger quantity should have been purchased. On the Rebbe's say-so, the man went out and bought astronomical quantities of the material – to the point of

investing his entire personal fortune to pay for the shipments. To the man's chagrin, shortly after the acquisitions, the value of this material began to plummet. Perhaps, he thought, he should sell at least some portion of it.

As promised, he contacted the Lubavitcher Rebbe for his consent. To his surprise, the Rebbe did not grant consent, and reminded him of their agreement with regard to unilateral moves. As the price of the material continued to sink, so did the man's spirits. Every day, he watched his fortune slipping further and further away. All pleas to the Rebbe were met with the same answer: "Do not sell." Facing financial ruin, the man began to question his entire relationship with the Rebbe and Lubavitch. Perhaps it was all a mistake.

With each day's devaluation of his inventory, his distance from the Chabad community widened. The bleeding continued for several months. One day, the man noticed the price suddenly took a slight tick back up. Excited, the man again consulted the Rebbe. But the Rebbe still withheld consent. When the price rose to where he could break even, the Rebbe still would not greenlight the sell-off. The man's disillusionment turned to bitterness.

Shortly thereafter, a famous Italian fashion designer put out a line that called for extensive use of this unusual material. The man in England had the market cornered. When he reported this to the Rebbe, he was told that the time had come to sell. The inventory went fast. The man made many millions in profit. He excitedly boarded a plane to hand the Rebbe a check for his "share" but the Rebbe declined, requesting that the man give the money to charity instead. The chastened man then asked the Rebbe if they could perhaps pursue another venture together. The Rebbe smiled as he demurred. "I'm sorry," he said to the hopeful businessman, "You're a shvacher shutaf, a weak partner."



בְּשִׁבְרִי לָכֶם מַטֵּה־לָחֶם וְאָפוּ עֶשֶׂר נָשִׁים לַחְמְכֶם בְּתַנּוּר אֶחָד וְהֵשִׁיבוּ לַחְמְכֶם בַּמִּשְׁקָל וַאֲכַלְתֶּם וְלֹא תִשְׂבָּעוּ: *when I break for you the staff of bread, and ten women will bake your bread in one oven, and they will bring back your bread by weight, and you will eat, yet not be satisfied.*



The 1930's in New York; the world was in the grip of the Great Depression. One cold Wintry day, a judge was sitting on the bench, hearing a complaint against a lady who was charged with stealing a loaf of bread. She pleaded that her daughter was sick, and her grandchildren were starving. But the shopkeeper, whose loaf had been stolen, refused to drop the charge. He insisted that an example be made of the poor old woman, as a deterrent to others.

The judge sighed. He was most reluctant to pass judgment on the woman, yet he had no alternative. "I'm sorry," he turned to her, "The law is the law. I sentence you to a fine of ten dollars, and if you can't pay, I must send you to jail."

The woman was heartbroken, but even as he was passing sentence, the judge reached into his pocket for the money to pay off the ten-dollar fine. He took off his hat, tossed the ten dollar bill into it, and then addressed the crowd: "I am also going to impose a fine of fifty cents on every person here present in this courtroom, for living in a town where a person has to steal bread to save her grandchildren from starvation. Please collect the fine, Mr. Bailiff, in this hat, and pass them across to the defendant."

The accused went home that day with $47.50 And as she left the courtroom, the gathering of petty criminals and New York city policemen gave the judge a standing ovation.

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם



R' Yisroel Baal Shem Tov of Mezhibozh zt"l said:

A Jew must never become settled in his habits and fixed in his ways, for the laws of Hashem are meant to be 'walked in' (**תֵּלֵכוּ**). The avodah (service) that one puts into serving Hashem should never be static but should lead us to higher and higher levels of sanctity.

וְתַם לָרִיק כֹּחֲכֶם וְלֹא־תִתֵּן אַרְצְכֶם֙ אֶת־יְבוּלָ֔הּ וְעֵ֥ץ הָאָ֖רֶץ לֹ֣א יִתֵּ֑ן פִּרְיֽוֹ

Your strength will be expended in vain; your land will not yield its produce, neither will the tree of the earth give forth its fruit. 26:16

Every bit of food and drink contains a great deal of holiness. **R' Yaakov Meir Shechter shlit'a** tells a story about a tzaddik from a previous generation, **R' Avraham Chaim Levine zt"l**, also known as the "Malach" (angel) due to his ascetic ways. He was once sitting at his table by Shalosh Seudos surrounded by his disciples, when he suddenly turned to them and announced that he wished to show them an amazing object, something they never saw before in their entire lives, and will never see again.

The students waited with great anticipation, wondering about this wonderful thing they were about to see, when the Rebbe took out an apple from his bag and held it up. "Look at this apple," he said to the students. "This fruit is unique - it is a brand new item that has never been, and never will be in this world.



This specific apple contains its own specific combination of spiritual forces and sparks of holiness. No other apple will have the exact same ingredients!" R' Levine gave off a righteous glow. "Figure it out for yourselves. If someone goes ahead and eats this specific apple without making a blessing, or even with a hurried and improper blessing, look how much he has destroyed, how much kedusha he has caused to be lost for all eternity!"

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

וְנָתַתִּי גִּשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ וְעֵץ הַשָּׂדֶה יִתֵּן פִּרְיוֹ 26:4

The Ramban writes about the many beautiful effects of nature from rain falling in its proper time. The entire world is enhanced! The air is purified, the oceans swell, the trees bear fruit and the flowers blossom. The crops grow and mankind is satiated. These are all direct and indirect blessings that come from GESHEM. In fact, the entire world is truly dependent on the blessing of rain. Just as the world was set into motion, only after Adam Harishon prayed for rain, so too, it is rain that brings **שפע** (bounty) into this world.

It is an awesome gift from Hashem and a blessing will come if we follow the ways of the Torah. With this in mind, I would like to ask you a personal question. The last time you opened your eyes in the

morning and saw dark clouds and rain pouring from the sky, what was your reaction? Did you jump out of bed with great enthusiasm, or did you moan and groan and mutter something about getting wet as you pulled the covers back over your head?

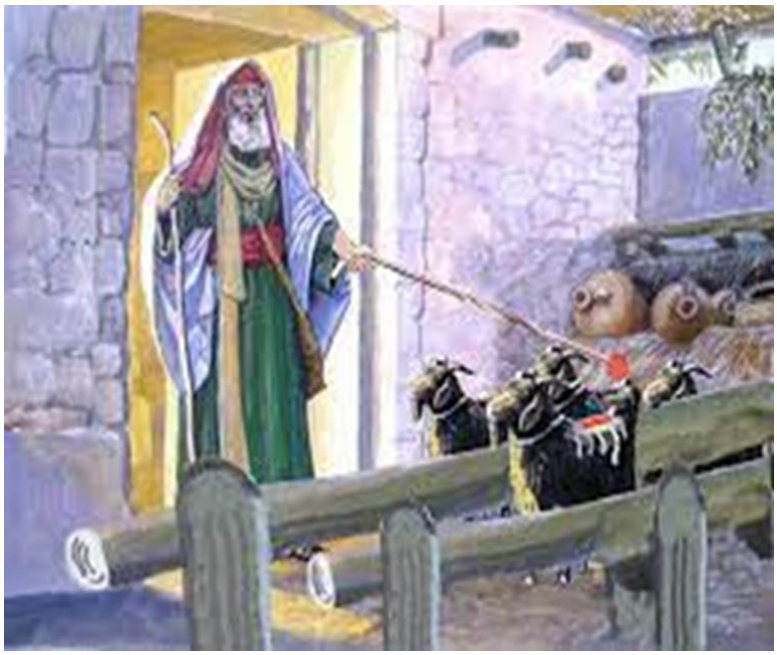
Imagine how you would feel if you bought your children a beautiful and expensive gift and all they did was complain! Instead of a thank you, all you get are grumpy children, completely ignoring your wonderful gift! How terrible would that be?

Well isn't that what we are doing to our Father in Shamayim, who literally "showers" us with His abundant blessings of rain, and instead of seeing it as a blessing, we perceive it as a curse? Sometimes in life, a blessing can be wet, messy, uncomfortable, noisy or in many ways inconvenient! Our job though, is to recognize the blessings in our lives and appreciate them! We must appreciate rain and thank Hashem for the many blessings it brings!



R' Avigdor Miller zt"l was known to say, "The darkest clouds have the most rain!" Our vision is often "clouded" as we tend to complain about the darkness rather than see the light. We complain about our jobs, our spouses and our children! We turn our blessings into curses because we don't focus on the blessing! Let us realize Hashem's berachos and appreciate His kindness to us! Guess what! They are predicting rain for the weekend! Get ready to celebrate!

27:32 וְכָל־מַעְשֵׂר בָּקָר וָצֹאן כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲבֹר תַּחַת הַשָּׁבֶט הָעֲשִׂירִי יִהְיֶה־קֹדֶשׁ לַה׳



The mishna in Bechoros describes the procedure for tithing new-born animals. The entire flock is placed in a closed area and a narrow opening is made so that each animal must pass through individually. Thus, each animal gets counted, one at a time. The owner takes a stick and counts one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine. The tenth animal to walk through gets marked with a red dye, and the owner proclaims, "This one is maaser."

This procedure takes place whether one has ten new animals or ten thousand! The question is, why does one have to count his flock in this very time-consuming manner? If one has 10,000 new sheep to count, it could take him many hours to go through this process! Why not simply count the entire flock, and then deduct 10% of the entire amount?

R' Avraham Pam ZT"L answers this question with a story about the Telzer Rosh Yeshiva, **R' Eliezer Gordon ZT"L** who was once collecting money from a very wealthy man and the man was shocked at the sum that was requested. It seemed like a lot of money to him. R' Gordon told him, "The reason the Torah instructs one to tithe his animals by counting to ten and marking each tenth for maaser is because it makes one realize that one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, and nine animals are for me, and one is for Hashem! When one does this again and again, he focuses on how much he has and may even feel embarrassed that he is giving so little for tzedaka!" This deep psychological insight teaches us that the way to

give to others happily is by realizing how much one has - which is so much more than one's obligation is to give.

R' Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam ZT"L



One of the greatest Chassidic leaders of the previous generation was the Rebbe of Klausenberg, R' Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam ZT"L.

He was a natural leader, mentor, and father figure for thousands of Jews of all ages. In 1944, after the German invasion of Hungary, the Rebbe was taken away from his family and incarcerated under terrible conditions, in a number of concentration camps. His wife, eleven children and most of his followers were murdered by the Nazis ym"s. He managed to survive with great faith and encouraged others to believe throughout the war. Afterwards, he rebuilt Jewish communal life in the displaced persons camps of Western Europe, re-established the Klausenberg dynasty in the United States and Israel, and rebuilt his own family with a second marriage and the birth of seven more children.

Soon after the conclusion of the war, the Klausenberger Rebbe was brought to the United States to speak on behalf of the Shearis Hapleitah, the broken survivors who had lost everything meaningful to them during the war and were barely clinging to their own lives in the D.P. camps of Eastern and Western Europe, physically, emotionally and spiritually. He conducted a minyan in the Beth Moses Hospital in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn.

On one of the Shabbosos when the portion of the Tochacha was read, the Rebbe was unusually emotional. The Tochacha (admonishment) is filled with foreboding warnings of doom and destruction, lest the Jewish nation stray from the will of Hashem and refuse to listen to Him or perform His commandments. The lengthy posukim warn of unimaginable horrors: exile, starvation, robbery, murder and torture - to name just a few.

The custom of Jews all over is to read the posukim of the Tochacha quietly, so as not to (figuratively) rile up enemies - celestial and otherwise - who may wish to bring these very same calamities upon the Jewish Nation in an effort to dismantle, dishearten and ultimately destroy them. But to the Klausenberger Rebbe and the many war-ravaged survivors who were present that day, the warnings and dire predictions of the Tochacha were very real and actual. It was as if they were reliving the horrors of their recent history through the words of the ancient prophecies.

The Baal Koreh began to lain the posukim in a solemn and hushed tone. His tone was quiet and his pace was rushed, as per the custom in many synagogues. Suddenly, the Rebbe banged on his shtender. "Hecher!" (louder) he shouted. The reader continued his pace but raised his voice a notch, thinking that perhaps in his effort to maintain the custom of "low and fast" he had gone a bit too low and now the Rebbe could not hear him. He raised his voice and continued in a louder undertone. But the Rebbe was not satisfied. "Hecher!" he exclaimed, once again, and somewhat of commotion was beginning to brew directly in front of the Rebbe's place at the front of the room.

The reader looked up from the Torah with a puzzled look on his face, but then continued to read with a raised tone. By now, he was laining as loud as his normal recitation, the way he would on any given Shabbos, and yet the Rebbe continued to bang on the lectern. His face red from exertion, the Klausenberger Rebbe practically screamed out, "HECHER!" At this point, the Baal Koreh could not

contain his puzzlement and instead of shouting the words of the Tochacha, he stopped completely and looked to the Rebbe for an explanation.

The Rebbe immediately obliged. "We no longer have to read these miserable curses quietly," the Rebbe exclaimed. "There is no curse we have not experienced. There is no affliction we have not suffered! We saw it all. We lived it all. Let us shout with pride to our Father in Heaven that we have already received all these curses! We have survived these curses, and now it is His turn to bring us the blessings and the redemption!" The Rebbe stopped talking and looked back into his Chumash. And with that the reader continued reading the Tochacha loud and clear as if singing an anthem to his nation's tenacity. (*Parsha Parables, R' M. Kamenetzky Shlit'a*)

R' Benzion Halberstam HY"D (Kedushas Zion) said:



"At the end of the Tochacha, the memory of the Avos are mentioned, however, not in chronological order, but rather in the order of the attributes and eras they personified. After the Torah was given at Sinai, Klal Yisroel entered the era of Torah, personified by Yaakov who was the pillar of Torah. When the Bais HaMikdash was built, they entered the era of avodah, and Yitzchok embodied the attribute of service. And these last generations of the era before Moshiach are connected to Avraham who was the epitome of chessed, lovingkindness. The Baal Shem Tov explained that now, in the final era before Moshiach, emphasis must be placed on deeds of kindness to hasten the redemption."

The Soap Maker



A Rabbi and A Soap Maker Were Having A Discussion One Day About Religion. "If I were you," the manufacturer said, "I'd go into another profession. How can you believe in G-d? If G-d exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If G-d existed, would there be suffering or pain. I can't imagine a loving G-d who would allow all of these things to occur to his people." The rabbi thought for a moment and then said, "Come, let's take a walk in the park, and we'll discuss it further."

It was a bright sunny day, and the park was filled with cyclists, runners, strollers, and children. Soon they passed a sandbox, where a group of toddlers were playing. The rabbi stopped and turned to his friend, "You know, if I were you, I would change my profession."

Taken aback, the man said, "What? Why?"

"Well, look at all those kids. They're dirty and grimy."

"Hey, wait a minute. That's not fair," the man protested. "My soap is a perfect product; but those kids aren't using it."

"Aha!" said the rabbi. "G-d does exist, but people aren't turning to him. That's why there's so much pain in the world!"

The curses found in the Tochacha are terrifying to think about - but we must! Because all these hardships, all these disasters, all the poverty, disease and suffering in the world is an indictment of us who bring this upon ourselves by not conforming to the will of Hashem and the words of His Torah. Let us work to eradicate all the pain in the world by following His laws and going in His ways. It's up to us - we have no one else to blame for our pain than ourselves!

וְאִם־לֹ֥א תִשְׁמְע֖וּ לִ֑י וְלֹ֣א תַעֲשׂ֗וּ אֵ֚ת כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹ֣ת הָאֵ֔לֶּה 26:14



There was once a trail which wound around a dangerous road. It was on a very high and narrow mountain and one could easily trip and fall off the cliff. Besides, there were many wild animals stalking in the area and the whole path had many pitfalls. One person who was aware of the serious dangers involved in traveling on that path was very nervous about it. After thinking the matter over, he came up with an original solution to his fears. He would walk blindfolded!

This way he would not be able to see the great dangers that surrounded him from all sides and he would then be able to remain calm. Anyone with a drop of sense can easily see how this "solution" just adds to the problem without solving anything at all. He is now in even greater danger than before since he will be unaware of his true situation.

Similarly, said the holy **Chofetz Chaim ZT"L**, there are people who are afraid to read the section of the Tochacha, the warning of retribution for failure to keep the Torah. In some shuls the person who reads the Torah in public reads this in a very low voice, and some people even walk out of shul when this is read. But merely avoiding the issue of improper behaviour is not correct. By realizing the consequences of transgressions and the failure to do good, one will watch his behaviour and will gain immensely.

"Chassidishe Shtut" - literally, a Chassidic town.



The town of Khaslavich, Russia, was by definition, a "Chassidishe Shtut" - literally, a Chassidic town. The overwhelming majority of the residents were of chassidic background and character, and the practices of most everyone in town was by and large of chassidic origin.

It was most unusual, then, that dating back to the early part of the nineteenth century, and continuing right up to the second world war, the rabbi of Khaslavich and the undisputed leader of the congregation was a "Litvak" - a person of Lithuanian descent who had very little to do with chassidic practice, and in some cases, was even a "misnaged" - literally an opponent to the ways of chassidim. How did it come about that such a chassidic town would continuously hire a Litvishe Rov, time after time, to be their spiritual leader, and why would they even agree to such a thing in the first place?

An interesting legend is recorded in the annals of history. When Napoleon, the emperor of France, was in the process of overrunning a large swath of the European continent, his intention was to bring an air of "enlightenment" to his conquered subjects.

Many Jews were thrilled with the prospect of being free of tyranny and oppression that was the mainstay of a typical Jewish family in Europe, from as far back as the Middle Ages. They believed that this freedom would create equality for the Jewish People in whatever country they found themselves and as a result, most Jews welcomed Napoleon's conquests. However, the religious Jews and the

Rabbonim, both Chassidish and Litvishe, were able to see past the initial excitement and understood that the "enlightenment" that Napoleon intended for his subjects, was not in conformance with the rules and ways of the Torah and mitzvos. In fact, they were afraid that if Napoleon were victorious, it could tear apart the institution of the religious Jewish home, rendering Torah observance obsolete.

A staunch opponent of Napoleon was the holy **Baal HaTanya, R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi ZT"L**, who railed against the diminutive monarch and exhorted his followers to stymie the advance of the French armies. He even organized a network of spies throughout Russia and the Ukraine to work against Napoleon during his march on the Russian frontier in 5572 (1812).

So involved was the Baal HaTanya, that the French hierarchy took notice of him and his clandestine activities. When French intelligence officers uncovered his spy network, they put out a bulletin informing all citizens that they are seeking the arrest of R' Shneur Zalman and expected him to turn himself in or be turned in immediately. The Rebbe was forced to go underground.

The Baal HaTanya was then in Khaslavich and in a surprise move, he turned to the rabbi of Khaslavich, a staunch misnaged who was strongly antagonistic to Chassidim, and asked for shelter from the authorities. The Rov didn't hesitate and allowed R' Shneur Zalman into his home, where he remained for some time, while the French soldiers conducted extensive searches throughout the town and surrounding areas. A number of gentiles who lived in Khaslavich and were eager to collaborate with the invading armies in order to curry favour, were so sure that the rabbi would not conceal the individual to whom he had such an aversion, that they did not bother searching his home.

At one point, the story goes, the French general conducting the search came to the rabbi's house and asked him whether the fugitive Rebbe was hiding in his house. The Rov acted surprised and

replied with great affectation, "Sir, you have only a political battle with R Shneur Zalman. I have an ideological one. You must understand this; how could I ever hide him?" Satisfied, the general left, the rabbi's house was not searched - and the Rebbe was saved.

The Baal HaTanya died shortly afterwards, in 5573 (1813), after seeing Napoleon's retreat from Russia and his humiliating defeat. But before he did, R' Shneur Zalman issued the following edict: Be it known to the Chassidic population of Khaslavich that from this day on, the rabbinic post of the town shall always be held by a "Lithuanian" scholar. The town faithfully followed the Rebbe's decree and for over one hundred years, to the wonder of many, the ultra-Chassidic town of Khaslavich was led by a Litvak!



וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד 26:6

Parshas Bechukosai begins with the wonderful blessings that await the Jewish people if they follow in the ways of the Torah. They are assured that they will live in their holy land, safe and secure - **וישַׁבְתֶּם לָבֶטַח בְּאַרְצְכֶם** - with no worries and no constraints. Furthermore, Hashem will reign peace on the land and they will rest with no need to fear - **וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד**. Of course, the manner in which a Jew, who spends his time in the pursuit of Torah, rests is quite different than the worldview of "resting." The Torah never rests - and neither does the Torah scholar.

In the early 1970's, **R' Moshe Aharon Stern ZT"L** once spent a summer in Kiryat Sanz, a suburb of the Israeli city of Netanya. He decided to daven one morning in the Sanz Yeshivah where Shacharis was at seven o'clock. The first morning he was there, he came early - at six in the morning - and the bais medrash was totally full. R' Moshe Aharon inquired and was told that the bochurim had a regular learning session from five to seven every morning! "It must be noted," said R' Moshe Aharon later, "that we are talking about chassidishe bochurim who go to the mikvah daily before going to the

bais medrash, meaning that they must get up at four in the morning! Every day!"



At one time, bochurim were trained to elicit the full amount of their potential in learning. When the **Bais Yisroel, R' Yisroel Alter ZT"L**, was the Gerrer Rebbe, all the bochurim in the Gerrer Yeshivah were required to be in the bais medrash at three o'clock every morning, where they learned from three until seven. The Bais Yisroel came to make sure everyone was there - he himself would be awake since two in the morning. The practice in yeshivah was that every morning, a "vecker" (waker) was sent to the dormitory to wake up the bochurim.

Once, in the midst of his duties, a particular bochur refused to get out of bed. When the vecker insisted, the bochur growled at him, "Do not wake me up again! Pretend I am not here. And if you dare wake me up again, I am going to pour my negel vasser (cup of water and basin prepared by the side of the bed) on you!"

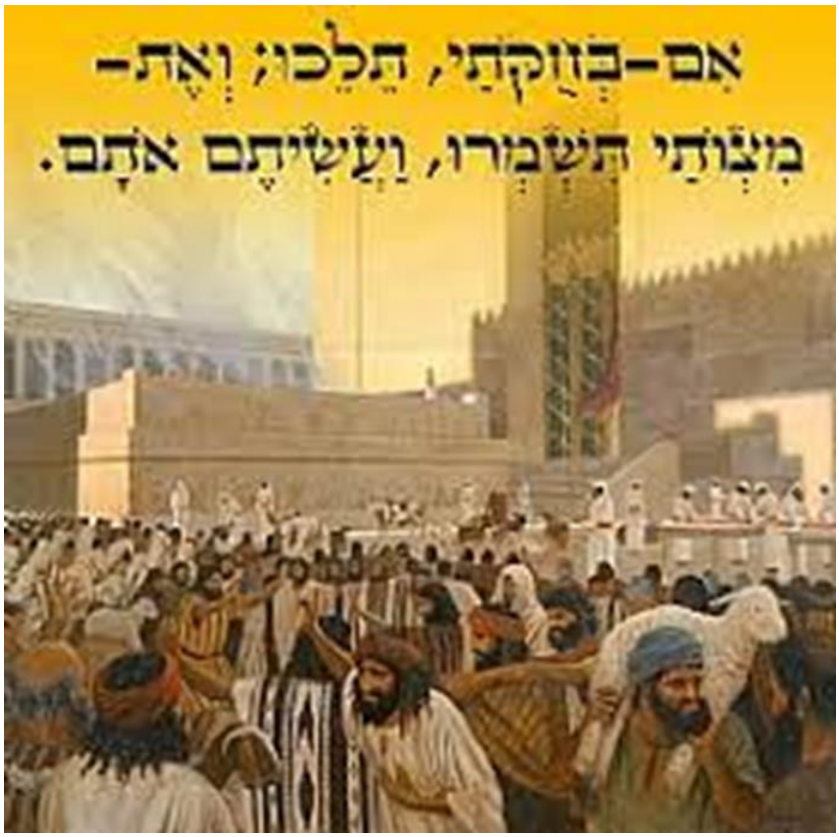
The vecker did not know what to make of this threat so he went to the Rebbe himself, told him what had happened, and asked "What shall I do?"

The Bais Yisroel was quite surprised - and disturbed - by this report and paused for a moment before answering. "Is that what he said?" said the Rebbe, "Tomorrow, I am waking up the bochurim myself!"

The next morning, the Bais Yisroel went around waking up all up the bochurim. Of course, every bochur literally jumped out of bed - all except for this one boy who stayed fast asleep. The Bais Yisroel tried again, but the bochur lay prone in his bed, not budging. After

a few more tries, the bochur called out, "I warned you!" Without even looking, he sat up, grabbed his negel vasser and was about to pour it on his vecker. The Gerrer Rebbe stood his ground and called out to him, "Gis! Nu, gis!" (Pour it!) At that moment, the bochur stopped suddenly. He recognized the voice. When he looked up and saw the Gerrer Rebbe, he nearly fainted from fright! The word spread in all of Ger, and never again did a bochur refuse to wake up on time!

וְהַשְׁמּוֹתִי אֶת־מִקְדְּשֵׁיכֶם וְלֹא אָרִיחַ בְּרֵיחַ נִיחֹחֲכֶם 26:31



Chazal tell us that all of the curses in this parsha are really blessings, but that they are said in a hidden manner, and are not revealed openly to those who read it. We know that nothing bad comes from Hashem, as it says, **ממנו לא יצא רעה** - "From Him does not proceed any evil things." However, to our physical eyes it appears to be curses.

R' Yehoshua of Dzikov ZT"L writes: We cannot possibly understand why Jews are killed **רח"ל** and slaughtered **על קידוש ה'** - To sanctify Hashem. However, we pray to Hashem that we should not be brought into these trials. It should be sufficient for G-d that we are willing to give over our souls to Him when we recite "Shema Yisroel" each day and night. Hashem will have joy with us, and it will take the place of Jewish sacrifices. **וְהַשְׁמּוֹתִי אֶת־מִקְדְּשֵׁיכֶם וְלֹא אָרִיחַ בְּרֵיחַ נִיחֹחֲכֶם** -

"And I will not smell your pleasant aromas" - from the sacrifice of Jewish souls. Hashem will no longer have any desire to accept the sacrifice of those who are physically killed for His Name's sake. ***May we merit that Hashem should no longer desire our physical sacrifices, but rather find joy in those who sacrifice themselves through learning Torah, prayer, and good deeds with their full soul.***

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

אֲנִ֣י ה׳ אֱלֹקֵיכֶ֗ם אֲשֶׁ֤ר הוֹצֵאתִי֙ אֶתְכֶ֔ם מֵאֶ֖רֶץ מִצְרַ֑יִם מֵהְי֥וֹת לָהֶ֛ם עֲבָדִ֖ים וָאֶשְׁבֹּ֣ר מֹטֹ֣ת עֻלְּכֶ֔ם וָאוֹלֵ֖ךְ אֶתְכֶ֥ם קוֹמְמִיּֽוּת 26:13

רבינו אפרים –



This Posuk begins with an **א** and ends with a **ת** – this is to say to us that if we keep the entire Torah from **א** to **ת**, then we will receive all of the Brochos the Torah mentioned. However, if we Chas V'sholom act wilfully against Hakodosh Boruch Hu, even on the smallest of all the Mitzvos, to anger Him, then the Torah considers it as if we transgressed the entire Torah.

"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.

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם ***"If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments . . ."*** (26:3)



Rashi writes that "If you will follow My decrees" refers to toiling in Torah study **שתהיו עמלים בתורה**. If so, writes **R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l** (Hungary and Yerushalayim; died 1922), we can understand why this verse follows immediately after the verse **אֶת־שַׁבְּתֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹרוּ** *"My Sabbaths you shall observe."* Specifically, the Midrash Tanna D'vei Eliyahu states that the primary time for Torah study is on Shabbat, when one is free from work. *(Torat Yechiel)*

Living Jewish

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ ***If you walk in My statutes*** *(Lev. 26:3)*

A yeshiva student once came to the saintly **Chafetz Chaim** and poured out his heart. "Year after year I sit and learn, but I just don't get anywhere in my studies! After all this time I have yet to understand even one page of the Talmud properly!" The Chafetz Chaim replied: "G-d did not command us to be geniuses. He only commanded us to toil in the study of His holy Torah, whether or not we ever become great scholars...!"

Living Jewish

וְכָשְׁלוּ אִישׁ־בְּאָחִיו כְּמִפְנֵי־חֶרֶב וְרֹדֵף אָיִן וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה לָכֶם תְּקוּמָה לִפְנֵי אֹיְבֵיכֶם
And they shall stumble one over the other, as before the sword, without one pursuing (Lev. 26:37) "One will stumble over the sin of another," comments Rashi, "as all Jews are guarantors (arevim) for each other." שכל ישראל ערבין זה לזה



The Hebrew word for guarantor - **ערב** has the same root as the word for sweetness and pleasantness – **עֲרֵבוּת**.

Every Jew must look upon his brother and fellow guarantor with a kindly eye and seek what is good and worthy in his neighbour. The same Hebrew root also implies intermingling one with the other – **להתערבב** . Every Jew is part of the greater whole of the Jewish nation. *(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)*

Chazak Weekly (By R' Dani Staum)

The bar mitzvah took place before dawn on a Monday in March, 1944, inside a barracks at the Bergen Belsen concentration camp. Those men who were strong enough covered the windows and doors with blankets and stood watch to make sure that no SS guards were coming. Four candles, scrounged from somewhere, gave off enough flickering light for Rabbi Samuel Dasberg to unfurl this tiny Sefer Torah, handwritten by a scribe, on a parchment scroll that was just four and a half inches tall.

Thirteen-year-old Joachim Joseph chanted the blessings just as the rabbi had taught him, and then he chanted aloud from the ancient scroll in the singsong Hebrew melody that has been passed down for hundreds of years. "There were people listening in the beds all

around," Joachim Joseph, who is now a 74 year old Israeli physicist, recalls, describing the narrow triple-decker bunks where the Jewish men and boys slept.

"Afterwards everybody congratulated me. Somebody fished out a piece of a chocolate bar that he had been saving and gave it to me. Everybody told me, "Now you are a bar mitzvah, now you are an adult. We are so very proud of you. Mazel tov!" And I felt very good. "And then everything was quickly taken down, and we went out to roll call."

Rabbi Dasberg also gave Joseph a gift that day. He gave him the miniature Torah scroll that they had used, covered in a red velvet wrapper and tucked into a small green box. He said: "This little Sefer Torah is yours to keep now, because I am pretty sure that I will not get out of this place alive, but maybe you will." "And you know how children are,"

Joachim Joseph said when the Washington Post interviewed him by long distance phone. "At first, I didn't want to take it, but he insisted. He convinced me. And the condition was; I had to promise that if I ever got out of there, that I must tell the story, the story of my bar mitzvah."

The story of that Sefer Torah was told to the world in 2003, when Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli astronaut, held the scroll aloft during a live teleconference from aboard the space shuttle Columbia. "This Torah scroll was given by a rabbi to a young, scared, thin, thirteen year old boy in Bergen Belson," Ramon said from inside the space shuttle. "It represents more than anything the ability of the Jewish people to survive. It represents their ability to go from black days, from periods of darkness, to reach periods of hope and faith in the future."

When the shuttle disintegrated as it re-entered Earth's atmosphere 11 days later, Ramon and the six other astronauts were killed, and the Torah was almost definitely destroyed. But the story of the tiny scroll was reborn. It is the story of a generation that

experienced the worst humanity has to offer, a generation that, 60 years later, is rapidly dying off, leaving only its youngest survivors, museum exhibits and history books to give witness… Joseph says he has no regrets about sending the Torah into space. "I'm not sorry that it is gone," he says. "It did what it, perhaps, was destined to do."

Throughout the generations of our persecution in exile. Our enemies have destroyed us and burned numerous Torahs. But it's only the physical scroll, the parchment, that could be burned. The Torah itself however, is indestructible. As the parchment caught fire and began to burn, its letters ascended to heaven, many times returning in new scrolls in new locations.

Klal Yisroel must never forget its exalted status. For along with the great privilege of being G-d's Chosen Nation, comes tremendous responsibility. In its description of the Tochacha, the Torah warns that if we fail to live up to our responsibilities we will suffer dire punishments. The Torah describes the retribution that will befall us in explicitly unbearable detail. We have witnessed the veracity and tragic fruition of every word of those painfully foreboding predictions.

Towards the end of the Torah's account of the Tochacha, G-d promises that despite all the horrors and travails that Klal Yisroel will be forced to endure they will never be destroyed. "But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them – for I am Hashem, their G-d."

Our very existence is the greatest miracle of all. The fact that Torah is still being taught and that we still proudly adhere to its mitzvos and way of life, despite all we have survived and prospered defies logical explanation. Torah scrolls of many communities have been consumed by the nefarious fires of our most heinous and

implacable enemies. The scrolls of Babylonia, Spain, France, Germany, Poland, and Russia have been almost completely consumed. But the fires could not singe even one letter. The letters were transported to new lands and a new generation where it continues to be studied and promulgated in eternally cyclic tradition.

The holiday of Lag Baomer celebrates the cessation of the deaths of Rabbi Akiva's twenty-four thousand disciples. Pri Chodosh questions why that is reason for celebration. The Gemara states that as a result of their deaths, "the world became spiritually desolate". Why should the fact that they ceased to die be reason to celebrate?

He suggests that the real cause for celebration is for what occurred after all of Rabbi Akiva's students had died out. The gemara recounts, "Rabbi Akiva came to our Sages in the south and taught them: Rabbi Meir, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Yosi, Rabbi Shimon [Bar Yochai], and Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua.

There is a tradition that Rabbi Akiva began teaching the five students on Lag Baomer. After Rabbi Akiva's twenty-four thousand students died he was already an old man. Their tragic and untimely deaths surely weighed heavily on him and caused him untold pain and sorrow. A lesser man would have succumbed to despair. Yet Rabbi Akiva plunged ahead. With indomitable heart and spirit he cast aside his personal grief to ensure the continued dissemination of Torah to subsequent generations.

Rabbi Gedalia Schorr zt'l explained, "Lag Baomer is a day on which one should strengthen himself in Torah study. Even if one has not learned properly, and has had periods of failure, on Lag Baomer he should strengthen himself and take a lesson from Rabbi Akiva… Just as Rabbi Akiva did not despair, so too, a Jew should not allow past failures and difficult situations to lead him to despair; rather, he should immerse himself in Torah with renewed strength."



The fires of Lag Baomer symbolize the eternal fire of Torah. In those flames also represents the fact that we are to be the light unto the nations, a guiding light in the morally depraved darkness. The fires of Lag Baomer stands in stark contradistinction with the fires our enemies have ignited to destroy and eradicate every scintilla of our being. Their fires have consumed nothing but parchment while our fires burn heavenward with the eternal light of the letters.

The parchment may be destroyed----but the story will go on. The story will continue. The story will live on. *"Despite all this, I will not annul My covenant with them."* "The blank parchment is burning, but the letters are taking flight."

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

מקרה – coincidence. But we know that there are no coincidences in life. That all is b'yad HaShem – in HaShem's hands. In fact, our rabbis teach that the word mikrah alludes to that very idea. The Hebrew letters of mikrah, mem, kuf, reish, hay, can be rearranged to form the phrase rak m'HaShem – meaning only from G-d. (rak-reish/kuf, mei'Hashem - mem/ hay).

While it may not always be visible to us, there is a reason and purpose for all that transpires. Rak m'HaShem – It's all part of HaShem's master plan.

You Never Lose



You only gain from doing a good deed. No one loses out from keeping the Torah. Yehoshua was interviewed to be the salesman of a large factory in London. The factory manager was impressed by Yehoshua's past history in sales, and said, "As of now, you are hired on trial. If you succeed to make a lot of sales, you will remain with us, and earn a comfortable living. However, if you don't succeed, we will need to fire you." "I understand," Yehoshua replied. "How many sales are you expecting?"

"I figure that in two months, you should make enough deals for us to earn a profit of twenty-five thousand pounds." "I will try my best," Yehoshua said. Before Yehoshua began working, he knew that he first needed to speak things over with his rabbi. Each occupation has its own set of challenges and spiritual hazards, so before he began to work in this new position, he spoke with his rav, and asked for halachic guidance.

The rav gave him several important tips. Among them, the rav asked, "What will you do if you are speaking with a potential buyer, and you discover that he previously bought from another Jewish supplier? If this occurs, you mustn't convince the storeowner to buy the products from your factory. That would be hasagas gvul, taking away your fellow man's source of income. If you ever come across such a situation, you must forfeit the sale."

Yehoshua began his job and succeeded to make several good connections. He was a talented salesman, and he knew how to get

meetings with potential clients, and how to convince them to buy from him. There was one major franchise that didn't want to speak with him. When he finally got the storeowner on the phone and offered him his service, the storeowner explained, "We already have a supplier, and we are satisfied with how things are. We are not looking for changes." Yehoshua told him that he could probably sell him products of the same quality for less, but this man didn't want to hear of it.

Yehoshua didn't give up. After two weeks of trying, a meeting was arranged between them. After understanding the needs of the store, Yehoshua told the storeowner: "We can sell you a monthly order for two thousand pounds, each month."

The storeowner was very happy with this prospective; it was substantially less than what he was paying until then. "Let me show you what we were paying until now," the storeowner said excitedly and took out an invoice.

Yehoshua was afraid to look at the invoice, because he knew that if he sees a Jewish name on the top of the paper, he will have to back out of this good deal, but his curiosity got the best of him, and he glimpsed at the invoice and saw the name of the supplier on top of the page. The supplier was a yid. According to halachah, he had to back down, and that is what he did.

"I'm sorry," Yehoshua M. said, "but I can't make this arrangement with you. It is against my principles. It is against my religion."

The storeowner was surprised when he heard this. He never heard that religion could stop someone from making a good deal. While Yehoshua was still sitting in front of him, this storeowner called Yehoshua's boss, and shouted over the telephone: "You have a strange salesman here," he said to the factory owner. "He had the opportunity to make a monthly sale for two thousand pounds, but he throws it away for irrational reasons."

The factory owner was upset with Yehoshua. "Why don't you find yourself a new rabbi, someone who is more lenient?" Yehoshua replied: "I'm sorry, but I am loyal to my beliefs, and I will not budge from them."

A few weeks passed, and Yehoshua's two-month probation was almost up. He succeeded, so far, to arrange twenty-three-thousand-pound sales per month. He was still two thousand pounds behind his quota, and time was running out. His yetzer hara was telling him, why did I listen to my rabbi? This might cause me to lose my job. But then his yetzer tov told him that he did the right thing. "Don't worry," he encouraged himself, "in the end, everything will work out. I will not lose out because I followed halachah."

As he was thinking these thoughts, he received a phone call, "You don't know me," the unfamiliar voice said, "but I work in a similar field as you do. I don't have my own factory, and I don't work on commission like you do, but I buy in bulk from one of the large factories, and I sell it to stores for a profit. One of my clients is the store you visited a couple of weeks ago. The storeowner told me that you didn't want to sell him your products, because you didn't want to take away my parnassah. That is very kind of you. You did me a great favour, without even knowing who I am. I am impressed by your integrity. Therefore, I decided that for now on I will only buy products from your factory. If you agree, I will order fifteen thousand pounds worth of household products per month from your company." And this is what they did.

Yehoshua said to his boss, "When I lost the two-thousand-pound monthly sale, you thought that we were losing money. At first, I also thought so. But now we see that one never loses when he keeps the laws of the Torah." This true story reminds us that one doesn't lose out from keeping Torah and mitzvos. The profits are always greater, even in this world.



וַאֲכַלְתֶּם לַחְמְכֶם לָשֹׂבַע וִישַׁבְתֶּם לָבֶטַח בְּאַרְצְכֶם ***And you shall eat your bread to the full, and you shall dwell in safety in your land (26:5)***

Economic hardship causes strife among brothers. Unethical competition in business leads one to snatch a crust of bread from another's mouth. G-d therefore promised that all Jews will have enough to eat, they will "dwell in safety in the land," and peace will reign. *(Arono Shel Yosef)*

Hashgacha Pratis Story By Casriel Silver



Our greatest gift is life itself. We say every morning in **ברכות השחר: אלוקי נשמה שנתת בי אתה יצרתה אתה נפחתה אתה משמרה בקרבי מודה אני לפניך ה' אלוקי כל זמן שהנשמה בקרבי** - so long as a person has a soul inside of him, he should be thanking Hashem. If someone was, Heaven Forbid, diagnosed with a terminal illness, he would pay any amount of money to be healed, because nothing is more important than life. Hashem decides exactly how long a person will live. Nobody can be taken due to "circumstance." If Hashem decides that someone should have life, no matter what happens to him, he will live.

A doctor told the following story. A patient came in with his wife and told him that a few days earlier he went outside during a blizzard to shovel around his car. His wife had protested vehemently, but he went anyway. Thirty minutes later, he still had not returned, so his wife went out to see what happened, but there was no sign of him. At that moment, a man walked by, walking his dog. The dog suddenly started to dig in the snow and uncovered the leg of her husband. It turns out that he went into cardiac arrest while shovelling, and he passes out in the snow. They called 911 and Hatzalah, and Baruch Hashem, they were able to bring him back. After being released from the hospital, he came to his regular doctor for a check-up.

During the visit, his wife kept putting her husband down, saying, "He should have listened to me. He shouldn't have shovelled." The doctor interrupted her and said, "I don't think you realize the miracle that happened to you. someone who is in cardiac arrest for as long as your husband was, even if he survives, will suffer permanent brain damage. However, because your husband fell into the snow, the cold prevented the damage.

Hypothermia, when the body temperature drops abnormally low, is usually a dangerous condition. However, during a heart attack, it can save a person's life. " For whatever reason, that man needed to have a heart attack. However, Hashem did not want him to die, nor suffer side effects. He brought it on exactly at a time when it would be least damaging.

When Hashem wants there to be life, there will be life. He is constantly working behind the scenes. Nobody is ever a victim of circumstance. Hashem is always in control.



"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity."



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



In this week's parashah it says **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם**. According to Rashi's commentary, these words mean, *"If you will toil in Torah and if you will keep the mitzvos…"*

The foundation of yiddishkeit is studying Torah and keeping the mitzvos. One without the other isn't sufficient. But there is an even more fundamental pillar of yiddishkeit. That is emunah. Without emunah, there is nothing. The roshei teivos of the three foundations of yiddishkeit spell **אמת** [**תורה** – **מצוות** – **אמונה**.] . The parashah begins with **אם**, which is roshei teivos for **מצוות** – **אמונה**. But emunah and mitzvos, without Torah study isn't sufficient. Therefore, the Torah immediately corrects those who want to focus solely on these two dictums, and it says **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ**, you must study Torah as well.

The following word is **וְאֶת**, roshei teivos for **תורה אמונה**. Some desire to follow this approach. They believe in Hashem, and they focus on Torah, but they don't have time for mitzvos. This is also not correct. Therefore, the Torah states **וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ**. The passuk concludes **וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם** which is roshei teivos **מצוות** – **תורה** – **אמונה**. This is the correct path doing all three, studying Torah, doing mitzvos and living with emunah. The worst scenario, however, is when one has mitzvos and he studies Torah, only he doesn't have emunah. This is worst, because the roshei teivos of **תורה** – **מצוות** will spell **מת**. Without emunah, one doesn't have anything.

Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil zt"l (his yahrtzeit is the 26th of Iyar) would always say that the primary pillar for a yid is emunah. In his

conversations, and when people came to him for counsel, he would always repeat to them the fundamentals of emunah. Someone came to Rebbe Shlomke with a problem: "I own a store from where I earn my living. But a competitor opened up a store, and he is taking away my parnassah.

I once heard a story," the man continued, "about a certain pauper who came to a tzaddik, crying about his poverty. The rebbe broke off a sliver of wood from his table, put it into water, and gave the man to drink the water. Since then, the man's mazal changed, and he became wealthy."

He told this story to Rebbe Shlomke, to hint that he wants Rebbe Shlomke to perform a miracle for him, to help him with his parnassah.

Rebbe Shlomke told him, "There are things that we must believe in, and there are things that we aren't obligated to believe in. We are not obligated to believe that the story you told me is true. But I see that you believe in it anyway, without doubt. But about your parnassah, we are obligated to believe that Hashem supports everyone, and it is impossible for another person to take away what is destined for you from Rosh Hashanah. Everyone must believe this, but I see that you are having difficulty believing this."

Sha'arei Eliyahu - ~ R' Yosef Akilov

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ ***If you follow My statutes.***

If you follow My Torah **אִם** will protect you. Throughout history we had great protectors against our enemies from Amalek we had Aharon **א** and Moshe **מ**, from Haman we had Esther **א** and Mordechai **מ** and in the future Eliyahu **א** and Moshiach **מ** - will protect us from the entire world. (Also Rav Avraham Rappaport, author of Sefer Minchah Belulah.)

Shabbos



Hashem told Moshe, ***"I have a good gift in My treasury. It's called Shabbos. I want to give it to the Jewish people. Go and let them know."*** (Shabbos 10).

The Chidushei HaRim says that Moshe Rabbeinu is still fulfilling Hashem's decree, today. He didn't tell us only once about the greatness of Shabbos. Each week before the onset of Shabbos, Moshe speaks to every yid's neshamah and says, *"Hashem told me to tell you that Shabbos is coming. Hashem is giving you the great gift of Shabbos."*

Many people feel uplifted on Friday when Shabbos comes. The Chidushei HaRim explains that this is because they are receiving Moshe Rabbeinu's message. The Chidushei HaRim writes, *"Even if a person is alone in a room, he will experience the holiness of Shabbos when it arrives,"* because of Moshe Rabbeinu's weekly announcement.

Shabbos has two parts: there are the halachos of Shabbos, and there is the joy and kedushah of Hashem. Both parts of Shabbos are essential. Some people only keep its laws. They would never consider moving something muktzah, cooking, carrying, etc. They should be praised and admired for this. However, if they don't experience the joy of Shabbos, something essential is missing in their Shabbos observance.

It is essential that we also tap into the spirituality of Shabbos (to the best of our ability). Those who do so, experience Gan Eden every Shabbos! When they daven and study Torah on Shabbos, and as they

conduct the Shabbos meals, they feel inspired and invigorated, as they rejoice with the holy, inner spirit of Shabbos.

Parshah Thoughts By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם



Rashi (26:3) teaches us that blessings are contingent on toiling in Torah study- **מה אני מקיים אם בחקתי תלכו, שתהיו עמלים בתורה**: The Bais Yisroel (quoted by **Rav Meilich Biderman**) explains that toil in Torah study is defined as putting in effort even when we are not in the mood to, or have the focus to learn properly, but we put in the effort to try anyways. That exertion bears fruit as the blessing listed in our Parshah. Rav Biderman notes that it is befitting that we are reading about this in the weeks preceding Shavuos, as this is a requirement of proper Torah growth. When we push ourselves to go to a Shiur— even if we are tired or try to learn the Daf even if it may be confusing, or we are not intrigued by that Daf's topics, we are fulfilling this requirement.

A Wise Man would say: "It's so simple to be wise. Just think of something stupid to say and then, don't say it!"

Tzedakah



The parsha ends with the laws of Arachim. When the different denominations mentioned in these pesukim are 50, 30, 20, 10, 5, and 3, plus a mention of an additional 25 shekalim. The sum of all these numbers is 143. This number is significant in that it equals the amount of curses mentioned in the Torah. There are 45 mentioned in this parsha, and 98 mentioned in Ki Savo.

The Baal Haturim explains the connection: the 143 shekalim of tzedakah money may help offset the possible punishments that might come through the 143 curses.

Shabbos Treasures - The Precious Gift of Shabbos

The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (106a) teaches that when the *pasuk* (*Shemos* 20:8) says, *'zachor es yom haShabbos'*, *'remember the day of Shabbos'*, we learn that when Shabbos begins, we should say *Kiddush* over a cup of wine. *Tosafos* explains that wine has a taste that people remember, and when we say *Kiddush* over wine, we remember Shabbos too.

The *Chinuch* (*Mitzvah* 31) explains that wine is a sign of happiness and joy. We use wine to show how happy we are to have Shabbos and the mitzvah of *Kiddush*.

Torah Toiling - Written by D Fine

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם "If you will follow My decrees and observe My commandments . . ." (26:3)



Rashi writes that "If you will follow My decrees" refers to toiling in Torah study **שתהיו עמלים בתורה**.

A central feature of learning Torah is exerting oneself in studying it.

Interestingly, the **Ba'al HaTurim** here cites the Midrash which comments that the gematria of im bechukosai telechu is the same gematria – [1017] as the words ameilim divrei torah (the intense study of Torah). **אם בחקתי תלכו בגי' עמלים (ב)דברי תורה**

Shabbos Stories for Parshas bechukosai

The Souvenir By Eliezer Shore

The sun rose harshly over the Sinai Desert, casting its crimson rays over the shattered remains of an Egyptian bunker, and waves of heat over the bodies of the young Israeli soldiers who lay sleeping in the sand. An unearthly silence gripped the scene. It was hard to believe that only hours before, this had been the scene of a fierce battle.

Now the Egyptian outpost was taken, its soldiers were all dead, and what was left of an Israeli troop lay sprawled out on ground, their eyes shut tight against the light of the rising sun. The Yom Kippur War raged on every border of the land. This battle, the Israelis had won.



Exhausted and grimy, the soldiers tried to block out the blinding light. Only Ronen Mizrachi was fully awake. He squinted at the blue expanse above and ran his fingers through the sand beneath him. He knew that he was alive, though for the life of him, he didn't know why. This was the toughest battle he'd ever fought, and he had almost given up hope of surviving. But here he was, along with the remains of his platoon.

As he lay there staring up at the firmament, a strange sensation stirred within him and something like a desert breeze began to blow across an empty place in his heart - a growing sense of exultation and the feeling that something, Someone far above had spread forth His hand to protect him during the previous night's battle. This powerful feeling lingered for a moment, as if searching for a suitable place to land, but Ronen, the child of a secular kibbutz and a stranger to even the most basic tenets of the Jewish faith, lacked the words to capture it. He was a foreigner to religious texts and rituals, and so now he just observed the sensation as if from without. Had he only known the words, he would have uttered a prayer.

The soldiers began to stir and, one by one, rose and shuffled toward the charred Egyptian bunker. They were looking for souvenirs. After

such a battle, a soldier can't return home empty-handed. He must have something to show his parents and friends: an Egyptian army knife, an officer's signet ring, or maybe a decorative medal.

But Ronen continued to lie quietly on the sand, watching the feeling of exaltation slowly fade away. Suddenly he rose and strode rapidly toward the bunker, anxious now to find something to fill his surprising inner emptiness, something to show his friends back home, as he told them about the battle they had won.

In the bunker, everything was burnt and bloody. Ronen's eyes scanned the bodies of the Egyptians for a souvenir, but the soldiers before him had already taken everything of value.

Suddenly, he noticed a bulge in the breast pocket of one of the dead soldiers. A pack of cigarettes will have to do, he thought. Unbuttoning the pocket, though, he pulled out a small book written in Arabic. What a great souvenir! he said to himself and rushed back outside to join his friends.

Back at camp, he showed the strange book to his friend, Amir, who read Arabic. Amir laughed, "Don't you know what this is?"

"No,"Ronen replied. "Is it something special?"

"Ronen, it's a *Koran*!" Amir laughed again as he tossed it back to him. "Use it in good health!"

Ronen returned the book to his breast pocket. So what if it was a Koran? he thought. Even better! Now he could tell his friends how he had taken a holy book from the pocket of a dead Egyptian.

Days went by, the war dragged on, and the strange feeling of emptiness remained in Ronen's heart. Night after night, he would lie awake thinking about life, pondering subjects that had never before entered his mind – G-d, fate, the purpose of existence. Ideas for which he didn't even have the words. Sometimes, he would take out the small Koran and flip through it at random. The foreign script meant nothing to him, yet the book had many stories to tell.

He would rub the cracked leather cover, examine the various pages. Here was one more thumb-worn than the rest; there the owner had underlined a word and written something in the margin; there a wet spot marked the page. "That Egyptian believed in something," Ronen would think to himself. "But what do I believe in? Nothing."

The war continued, more battles, more victories. One morning as the convoy crossed a desert plain, they suddenly came under a barrage of enemy gun fire. The soldiers threw themselves to the ground and responded with their rifles in the direction of the shots. There was a moment of silence, and then an Israeli soldier called out, "Cease! We have him."

A lone Egyptian gunman rose from behind a sand-dune. Tall, thin, dusty and exhausted, he raised his hands high above him and walked slowly toward the soldiers in surrender. Amir ran over to him with his pistol drawn. "He's okay, he shouted. "We've got him! Take him to the personnel carrier."

There were about thirty men in the carrier. Ronen was sitting in the far corner when they placed the Egyptian on the floor beside him. The man seemed dazed and confused. Ronen eyed him suspiciously. He opened his canteen and offered the Egyptian a drink. "Take water!" he said. The Egyptian took the canteen with trembling hands and drank its contents in one gulp.

"He's so thirsty," Ronen thought, as he gave him another drink. The man blessed Ronen in Arabic, he blessed his father, his mother, for ten generations back. Ronen gazed at him with a mixture of hatred and pity; the Arab kept his eyes to the floor.

There was something bulging in the Egyptian's breast pocket, a suspicious object. "Take that out," said Ronen with a gesture and a nudge of his rifle-butt. The Arab reached into his pocket and slowly pulled out a small leather-bound book embossed with Hebrew letters - a Jewish *siddur*.



Ronen stared in disbelief. His mind raced wildly. A thousand thoughts flew through his head. Then slowly, instinctively, he reached into his own breast pocket and removed the Koran.

The Arab stared in disbelief as he read the words on the cover. He looked at Ronen, their eyes met - two worlds, two cultures, two enemies - yet at that moment, speaking the same silent language.

Ronen looked at the siddur and understood. He understood how the prayer-book had fallen into Arab hands; just as the Koran had fallen into his. And he understood that Heaven moves in mysterious ways and that G-d has many messengers. And he knew what to do next.

He stretched forth his hand and gave the Arab the Koran, and the Arab gave him the siddur. The Arab put the Koran in his pocket, and Ronen looked down at the prayer-book in his hand. He opened it to the first page and read the words, "I give thanks to You, living and eternal King, for You have returned my soul to me with compassion; Your faithfulness is great."

And at that moment, something opened up inside of him. The heart that had been empty for twenty-one years, that had waited impatiently to leave Israel after the war in search of adventure, that had scorned the religious life but found nothing better in its place - the heart opened up with a cry of longing that sounded across the desert like cannon fire.

That prayer was only the beginning. The siddur gave Ronen the vocabulary he had never had. As the days went by, he turned to it more and more. It spoke to his soul and brought tears to his eyes. He underlined its words and wrote notes in its margins.

Prayer led to understanding, understanding to Torah, and slowly, to a return to the religion of his forefathers. It was a souvenir that held more memories than he could imagine memories of the distant past and hope for the future.

Ronen never did leave Israel. After the war he entered *yeshiva*. Eventually, he married and settled down to build a Jewish home. Today, the siddur sits on the bookshelf in his study, a souvenir of the most important battle he has ever won.

We're Worth It – Rabbi Y Richtman

R' Meyer Shapiro asks, what is the connection between the first part of this parsha and the end of the parsha? He answers, that a person may come to a state of despair and depression from reading this parsha and learning about the terrible lot awaiting a person who doesn't follow the ways of Hashem.

The topic of Arachim (*pledging the value of lives*) is the perfect rebuttal to such thoughts. The laws of Arachim clearly show us that every Yid, even a one-month-old baby, has value. And if, as this parasha states, we have monetary value, then we must understand that we have spiritual value, as well.

Social Distancing

English Police were called to a potentially illegal Jewish wedding. They were told that people are dancing together, but when they arrived, they saw a man dancing with a Gartel and the Kallah held on to the far end of it.

They were amazed at this idea of social distancing, so they're thinking of introducing this method to all English citizens that want to marry in these unprecedented times.

Rav Yaakov and The Alarm Clock



Once, **Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt"l**, was supposed to meet someone at Penn Station in Manhattan at 7:00 AM, to go on a trip together out of town. Rav Yaakov arrived at the station looking exhausted, having been up for the entire night.

He explained to his friend that when he had gone to set his alarm clock before going to sleep the night before, he remembered that his gentile neighbor worked the night shift and would have just gone to sleep at the time that the alarm clock was set to go off.

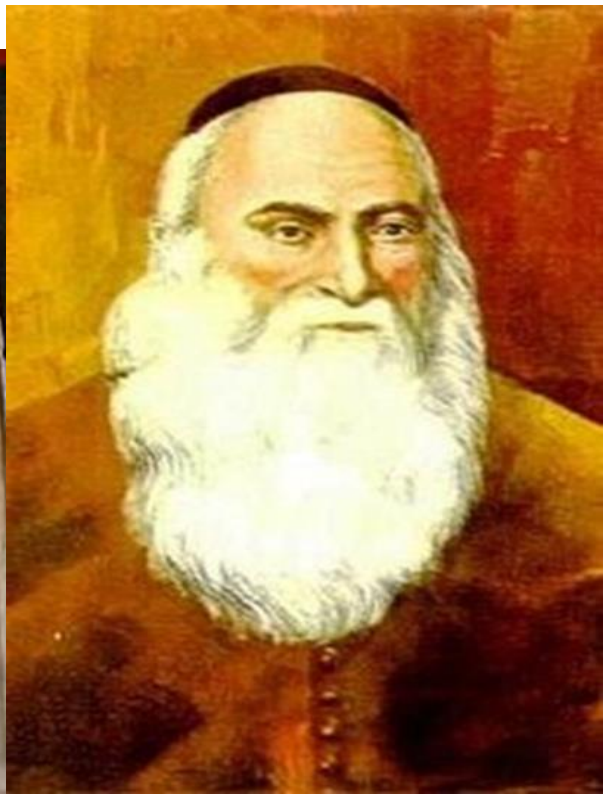
It was a hot summer night when everyone slept with their windows open, and the neighbor would quite possibly be awakened by the alarm. Therefore, in his sensitivity, Rav Yaakov did not set his alarm clock. Instead, he stayed up all night and learned to make sure that he would be on time for his early departure! (adapted from "Five Great Lives.) *("Torah U'Tefilah: A Collection of Inspiring Insights" compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

R' Avigdor Miller ZT"L would say:

"Taking action is not always in man's power to do, whereas listening with the intention to do, certainly is, for this demonstrates his willingness and genuine intention. It is according to man's effort to listen and learn that Hashem measures his acceptance of the Torah and provides him with innumerable blessing.

The Downtrodden People By Rabbi Sholom Klass





Portrait of the Abarbanel and the title page of a 1642 Hebrew and Latin edition of Abarbanel's commentary, *Perush 'al Nevi'im ahronim*.

The great sage **Don Yitzchak Abarbanel** (1437-1508) would never stop lauding the brilliance and sagacity of his fellow Jews to King Alfonso V of Portugal. Abarbanel was the King's treasurer, and he was respected and loved by the monarch.

Once, while riding in the royal chariot, a discussion came up.

"You can never make me believe that every Jew is a genius or at least smarter than his heathen neighbour," said the king.

"Very well," answered Abarbanel. "Let us experiment with the first Jew we encounter on the road." Turning a corner, they encountered a poor Jew with a walking stick wearing tattered clothes. He carried a sack on his shoulders that contained all of his belongings.

"Stop the coach!" commanded the king as he invited the frightened Jew into the royal coach. "Fear not," said the king. "I only want to discuss something with you. Noticing Don Yitzchak in the coach, the Jew felt relieved.'

"Tell me, "Asked the king, "where do you come from and what is your occupation?"

"I live in one of our provinces, Your Highness," he answered. "I am a junk peddler and my wife, children and myself barely eke out a living."

"Listen to what I have to say, Jew," said the king. "You are one of the people who believes himself to be the chosen of G-d and that the world was only created for you. Then why are you so miserably poor wandering from town to town, hounded and chased in every country? You remind me of a poor creature we have in the insane asylum who keeps shouting that he is King Alfonso, although he is beaten every day by the guards. What is your answer to this?"

The peddler suddenly grasped his forehead and exclaimed, "Woe is me. I just reminded myself that I lost my dear heirloom, which is very valuable to me. My mind will not be at ease until I find it."

"Don't worry," said the king, "what could it be worth, two or three talents of gold? I'll give you ten talents of gold, so you can forget about it."

"Not so," said the Jew. "No money in the world can replace its value to me."

"Very well," said the king. "Tell me where you lost it and I'll arrange for my servant to look for it." "It is near a new building that is being built a few kilometers back where I stopped to rest this morning."

The king ordered the coach to turn about, and they rode until they came near a building in the process of being built.

Pointing to the workers, the Jew asked the king, "Your Highness, can you tell me who the proprietor of this building is?"

"Surely," answered the king, "the man who is standing on the bottom watching all the working men climbing over the building."

"I beg to differ," answered the peddler. "I believe the owner of the building is the man who is standing at the top shouting commands to the workers. Also, your man seems to be afraid that something may fall on him and he is now running into the house."

Turning to Abarbanel, the king laughingly said, "This is your smart Jew? Any fool can see that the foreman of the construction is only the temporary boss. "While he and his workingmen are building the house they are on top and the real boss has to keep quiet. But when the house is completed, the real owner will take it over and he will eject the workmen."

"I have just found my lost heirloom," said the Jew to the perplexed king. "I used the word 'heirloom' as an allegory to the intelligence that I had inherited from my ancestors. Momentarily I had lost it when I didn't have the proper answer for you, but now you gave me the answer.

"This world is similar to a newly built house. We are constantly improving it. We Jews, possessing the Holy Torah, are the real owners. But we now stand in the lowest position while the heathen, the workers led by their foremen, the kings, are now on top. When this house will be completed, when G-d will complete the allotted span of this world, then we will enter the true World and we will sit at the top while the heathen will stand at the door."

The king was very impressed with this wise answer and he acknowledged the superior arguments of Abarbanel as he sent the Jewish peddler away richer with many talents of gold.



"Smart people learn from everything and everyone, average people from their experiences, stupid people already have all the answers."



Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid



In this weeks sedra, we see the *klolos*, the worst curses that befall a person that doesn't keep the Torah- that doesn't go and live his life as a Torah Yid - Terrible terrible curses. But then what is interesting to note, is that all of a sudden, we find in Shishi perek כז that the subject matter switches to the parsha of **ערכין** . Where a person values himself and gives his monetary value to the Beis Hamikdash.

Asks the Chozeh of Lublin, why? What is the reason why the Torah spells out the most terrible *klolos* that could ever befall anyone and then switches to the parsha of **ערכין** – valuing a person ?

Says the Chozeh, because a person can read, he can hear the *klolos*, and become depressed and despondent. What is going to be with me? Is my Torah and davening worth anything? Am I worth anything?

And then all of a sudden, the Torah uplifts us, to show that every Yid in Klal Yisrael has such a tremendous worth and value. There is nobody that is not worth something. We don't always realise this, and we sometimes belittle this fact.

The **Ribnitzer Rebbe, Harav Chaim Zanvil Abramovitz *zt"l***, (*a legend in his time. He was renowned for his holiness, his fearless service of Hashem, and for the many incredible miracles he brought about.*) once needed a minyan for *Maariv* late at night. The gaboim

of the Rebbe managed to gather together nine people who hadn't yet davened. They found a tenth man who had already davened, and he decided to daven with them again, but he didn't tell them that he had already davened. He wanted to daven with the Rebbe, so he told them that he hadn't yet davened.

As they gathered together to start davening, the Rebbe looked around and said, "has anybody here already davened? Everyone said, " no". The Rebbe said, "it cant be, there is someone here that has already davened." And they found out that it was him. They asked him, "are you not ashamed and embarrassed?" The Rebbe realised that you had davened already, and you were caught in the act.

He said, "no" and answered with an incredible response. He said, "just the opposite. For thirty years, I never considered my tefilah to be meaningful or if Hashem is listening or cares. If the Ribnitzer Rebbe felt and realised that I had already davened, then it means that my davening was registered in *shamayim*. I am so happy to receive such a testimony that my tefilah is significant".

That is incredible! If this is the case with a regular tefilah, then how much more so with every bracha and mitzva that we do. We don't realise how important and precious they are to the Riboino Shel Olam.

This is the message of this week's parsha. Yes there are *klolos*, yes there are terrible curses for a person that doesn't keep the Torah. But let us always remember that every Yid has an unbelievable intrinsic value. Let us enjoy this value and use it productively.

Have a great Shabbos!

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

The Right Attitude - Rav Yosef Braun



The mitzvah of giving tzedakah should be done in good spirits and besever panim yafot (with a smiling countenance), besimchah (with happiness). Certainly not with an unhappy face, which is a transgression of the mitzvah of "Velo yeira levavcha betitcha lo" (Do not let your heart feel bad when you give him). Moreover, it is a grave prohibition to yell at a poor person. It says that the **Arizal** would give tzedakdah besimchah gedolah (with great joy).

The Midrash tells us that we get a special s'char (reward) for saying kind words to the poor person when we give them tzedakah; "Ki biglal hadavar hazeh yevarechecha Hashem Elokecha" (Because of this Hashem will bless you). The use of the word "hadavar" connotes speaking—Hashem blesses us specifically for our kind words. In fact, if we can't give money, we should be mefayes bidevarim - say kind, comforting words, and show empathy to the poor person by smiling, as well as indicate that we very much regret that we are unable to give them tzedakah this time.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Nochum Partzowitz, *zt"l*, *Rosh Yeshivah* of Mir, Yerushalayim, could not wait to go to *Cheder* in the morning, as his desire to learn Torah was so great. He would often go barefoot, because it took him too long to put on his shoes!

Parsha Pages - Ohr Hachayim



In this week's Parsha we find the famous piece from **Rebbi Chayim ben Attar, the Ohr HaChayim HaKodesh** who brings 42 elucidations on the first verse, אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ ***"If you will walk in My statutes and observe my commandments and do them..."***. (VaYikra 26,3)

The first one is particularly amazing. He brings a drasha from the Medrash Toras Cohanim. What does it mean, the Medrash asks, to "walk in My statutes" If it means to keep the commandments, that is mentioned immediately afterwards. Therefore, the Medrash concludes, walking in My statutes means to exert oneself in Torah study.

The Ohr HaChayim then asks, what is the connection between the idea of statute, (immutable decrees that we follow even without understanding the reason for them) and the exertion of oneself in Torah? He answers that there is a mitzvah to learn Torah even if one has learned something 2 or 3 times before. Moreover, HaShem loves the Torah learning of Israel so much, that he decreed, (made it a statute) that in order that a Jew should continue learning his whole life with enthusiasm, he should learn and then forget!! (*Koheles Raba 3,10*)

This should be a great consolation to anybody who suffers from forgetfulness. Keep on learning!!

Fulfilling the Torah in an automatic way isn't enough- one has to let Judaism permeate one's being, so that spiritual thoughts and topics just naturally occur while doing other things, even just walking along. Religion isn't just a matter of doing a bunch of commanded rituals,

or confined to shul on Shabbat morning, but we should live and breathe it in our lives. Furthermore, notice that we should talk about what we've learned and what we're doing- not taking it for granted or accepting it automatically, but sharing it, processing it, turning it around, getting new ideas and refining old ones all the time.



The Enjoyment of Hashem's Supervision Rabbi David Ashear

There is nothing like experiencing salvation. When a person has been waiting and hoping for so long and then suddenly, out of nowhere, his help arrives, it's exhilarating. And, of course, we know all salvations come from Hashem, but when it's so clear that it was Hashem Who brought the salvation, the joy experienced is much greater.

A woman told me that in the summer of 2016, a beautiful initiative was launched to pair singles with couples who are waiting to have children, so that one could pray for the other. She joined and prayed every day for her couple to have children, while also contributing a small monthly donation towards their fertility expenses. One year later, in August of 2017, she was delighted to find out that her couple was expecting. She continued to pray for them to have a healthy baby and easy delivery. When January came around and she didn't hear any news of a birth, she became concerned and started to pray even harder.

And then, on February 4, her own Yeshua finally arrived. She became engaged to her long-awaited Chatan. When she came home that night from celebrating, she headed straight to her computer to inform the organizers of her prayer program that she was engaged. Their response the next morning read "Mazal Tov and incredibly, we were just notified by Bonei Olam that the couple that you have been praying for just had a healthy baby boy. Within the same twenty-four hour period, both of you received your salvation." The woman said, the feeling of salvation is great, but seeing how intimately Hashem is involved in my life makes it that much greater.

A businessman, who we'll call Isaac, told me that this past year he received a phone call one day from a rabbi asking him if he could help out a struggling man from his congregation who we'll call Yosef. Isaac happily agreed and Yosef drove in from Money to Brooklyn to meet him.



Yosef sat down in his office and told Isaac that his gentile partners just swindled him and ran away with a lot of money and merchandise. The only thing that he has left is a colossal amount of an item that was not selling at all - steering wheel locks. He had 2.1 million locks and no customers for them; he didn't know where to turn.

He asked Isaac, who's a middleman for selling all different kinds of merchandise, if he would be able to find customers for him. Isaac replied that he sells branded items, clothing and the like. He has never dealt with this kind of merchandise and didn't know anyone who would want it. He suggested melting down the locks and selling them as metal, obviously reducing the price heavily, but at least it would cut the losses. At that point, Yosef began to cry, right there in the office. Isaac apologized and said, "I didn't mean to say anything to upset you, please forgive me."

Yosef then got up and said, "Thanks anyway," and he left. Within the next ten seconds, Isaac received a phone call from a business associate in India. The man on the other line was the distributor for Nike there and did a lot of business with Isaac.

He said, "Isaac, I have a strange request. I need steering wheel locks. Do you have access to any?"

Isaac then said, "Please hold on one second." He ran after Yosef and called him back. He said, "I have someone on the other line who might want to buy your merchandise. To give you extra Zechut, I pledge right now to donate my entire commission on this sale to my son's Yeshiva."

He got back on the phone and the man from India said, "My brother-in-law, who sells cars here, is in trouble because there are so many thefts, people don't want to buy cars anymore. He needs steering wheel locks, and a lot of them."

Isaac replied, "I have 2.1 million of them available, if you want."

The man from India said, "Perfect. We'll take all of them." And just like that, Yosef made the biggest sale of his life and was back on his feet. Isaac earned over $500,000 in commission from that sale and gave every penny to the Yeshiva like he said.

The salvation here was amazing. To have a man from across the world call Isaac and ask for the locks at that very moment is mind-boggling. But what made it so special to Isaac and Yosef is that it was so clear that it was Hashem bringing them that salvation.

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld-*Rosh Hayeshiva Yeshivas Beis Dovid* - Our Response to Tragedy - Meron 5781

All the Kedoshim are part of us. They are all Yidden. It feels as if each of them are our own mishpacha. Some of them are familiar names and faces. The lives of the families of the 45 niftarim have changed forever. Hundreds if not thousands of lives will be changed because of this. Children will grow up without a father. The wife will have to continue a life without her husband. Siblings, children seeing a father giving a hesped at his son's levya is something that we should never know of and never see. Many of you have seen horrific images that should not be seen.

The big question is WHY!? Lag Ba'Omer? – Rabbi Shimon Bar Yachoi? It doesn't make any sense. How do we process this? What are we meant to be thinking? What should our avodah be at this time? What is our reaction to such a tragedy?

We are human, and we like to understand how this could happen. there are people apportioning blame and fault in various areas. However, this is just a distraction. This is not what we are meant to be thinking. This is not our job to figure out why it happened.

Our reaction must be of a Yid. How does a Yid react in such a situation?



The Medrash (Shemos Raba) tells us that Moishe Rabeinu requests of the Riboino Shel Olam - הַרְאֵנִי נָא אֶת־כְּבֹדֶךָ ***"Show me, now, Your glory!"***. Moishe Rabeinu wanted to understand why is it that good people have such hard lives.

These are good people. They didn't come for the party. They were tzadikim. They did good things. They were kollel people. These were avreichim. They were talmidei chachomim. These were people sitting

in learning. They came to Reb Shimon to daven, to get a yeshua, to get close to the Riboino Shel olam.

Moishe Rabeinu grappled with this question. And he begged the Riboino Shel Olam - explain this to me, I don't understand the world.

Hashem responded לֹא תוּכַל לִרְאֹת אֶת־פָּנָי כִּי לֹא־יִרְאַנִי הָאָדָם וָחָי ***And He said, "You will not be able to see My face, for man shall not see Me and live."*** It is impossible. A human being cannot comprehend how I run the world. Chazal tell us that by the ***asarei harugei malchus***, that when they wanted to understand how such a cruel, unnatural and gruesome death could happen to Rabbi Akiva and the others, the malachim started crying, "Riboino Shel Olam, what is this? These are talmidei chachamim. It doesn't make sense".

Do you know what the Riboino Shel Olam replied?

There is no way that you can understand this. The only way that you can understand, is, if I take apart the entire world from the beginning of time until now and put it back together again.

This is how a Yid has to live. This is our reaction to tragedy – we don't understand. We don't have to understand.

When **Rav Shimshon Pincus ZT'L** was killed instantly in a car crash (12th Nissan '01) together with his wife and daughter. The Torah world was devastated. How could this be?

Rav Shimshon's father – Reb Avraham, stood up at the levaya and he stunned the crowd with the following words.

When a person is delving into a *sugya,* and trying to figure out *pshat* in a *Toisfos*, what does he do? He goes over it again and again and again. If you still can't figure it out, then you go *vayter* – you move on. Reb Avrohom said, with bitter tears, I don't understand pshat. It is a *shverer* Toisfos. But if we can't understand, we move on.

This is a Yid's response to tragedy. We can't ask Hashem, why this particular thing happened. There is a whole bigger picture that we

are not part of. We have to go on. We have to understand that there is a Borei Olam. There is Hashgacha Pratis. Hashem has a plan, and everything goes according to that plan.



We, as human beings, cannot simply comprehend it. We cannot understand it, and this is our avodah. We have to realise that the Riboino shel olam is running the world. It will be such a shame to let this opportunity pass. The world is a different world now. Lag Ba'omer **תשפ"א** took place and is something that none of us will ever forget and never forget.

The Riboino Shel Olam is shouting. We must take a message from this, to live differently, to do things differently.

I want to end with an incredible story showing how the Riboino Shel Olam runs the world.

There is a city about an hour away from France that was not *zoiche* to have its own mikva. It was very difficult to practice *taharas h'mishpacha.* They had to travel an hour there and an hour back. This was very challenging. There was a Yid called Dov Mizra. He lived in a small community and decided to do something about it. He built a mikva at his own expense on his own land with his own hands. It took him three and a half years. When it was complete, he called Rabbonim in to ensure its kashrus. This was an incredible feat of *mesiras nefesh.* The mikva was private and tzenius. However, he had to ensure that the door was always locked shut as he had children, and he wanted them to be safe. He erected big signs, *"Make sure the door is always locked shut."*

The day came unfortunately when the unthinkable happened. He had a 15-month-old son called Shloime. He was playing in the garden and wandered into the mikva, whose door had obviously been left open. This beautiful child must have tripped on the steps because when they eventually found him, he was at the bottom of the mikva and had drowned and was no longer alive.

Dov and Esther and their other nine sons, were totally devasted and broken. How could this happen? We were *moiser nefesh* for a mikva. We did everything for purity, and this is our reward? How does this make sense? For their son to die in the very mitzva that they built? They couldn't deal with it.

Dov went to Eretz Yisrael with his son's tiny coffin, and after burying his child on Har Menuchos, he travelled back to France for the *Shiva*. They now felt as though they were incomplete, as previously they had a minyan of boys.

A short while after he came home, Dov had a dream. An old man with a white beard appeared to him, and introduced himself as one of the *Baalei Toisfos*. He told Dov that he had given his own life up - *al kiddush Hashem*. I was killed at the time of the Crusades.

As soon as he heard this, Dov woke up in a sweat. What was that horrible dream. He went back to sleep. But the man appeared again and said it's ok don't worry. I am just coming to tell you and to explain to you the recent events.

He said, when I was killed many years ago, I came to *shomayim* and ascended to the highest levels, where no-one else was able to ascend to because of the nature of my death. However, when I reached the penultimate level, they would not let my neshama ascend any higher. The *malochim* informed me that since I had never received a *tahara* after my death, That I could not ascend any higher.

In shomayim, the heavenly court informed me that in order to reach the final level, that I would have to descend one more time into this

world and immerse myself one time in a kosher mikva. The Riboino Shel Olam knew of the *mesiras nefesh* that you put in to build your mikva. It was the purest mikva in the world. Hashem sent me down to your mikva. At the age of 15 months, I received my purification.

The old man said that just so that you know that this dream is true, I promise you that within a year, you will be blessed with a daughter. After eleven months, Dov and Esther were blessed with a beautiful baby girl. Their first daughter after ten boys.



This story was told over by someone that saw the mikva and met the little girl born after the tragedy. Dov told him the entire story and instructed him to publicise it whenever a tragedy befell someone. It doesn't give us any answers, but it tells us one thing. That the Riboino shel Olam runs the world in a perfect manner. We don't understand and we don't need to understand.

"R' Chaim Elazar of Kalish ZT"L would say:

"Some people believe that every business deal requires deception, even to a small degree, and thus feel permitted, in the interest of earning a living, to bend the truth and twist the rules. They should know, however, that the Ten Commandments were written on both sides of the tablets.

This teaches us that no matter how you turn them, they still read, 'You shall not steal'!"

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ *If you walk in My statutes* (Lev. 26:3) **By Rabbi Tzvi Hersh Weinreb**



The parsha begins: "*If you follow My laws and faithfully observe My commandments, I will grant your rains in their season…*" That is the standard translation of this opening verse. But a more literal translation would begin not, "*If you follow My laws,*" but rather, "*If you walk in My laws.*" Most translators understandably choose the word "follow" over the literal "walk" in this context.

But the Midrash takes a different approach. It retains the literal "walk," and links it to the phrase in Psalms 119:59 that reads, "*I have considered my ways, and have turned my steps to Your decrees.*" After linking the verse in our Torah portion with this verse from Psalms, the Midrash continues, putting these words into the mouth of King David: "*Master of the universe, each and every day I would decide to go to such and such a place, or to such and such a dwelling, but my feet would bring me to synagogues and study halls, as it is written: 'I have turned my steps to Your decrees.'*"

Long before this Midrash was composed, but long after the life of King David, the rabbinic sage Hillel is recorded by the Talmud to have said, "*To the place which I love, that is where my feet guide me.*" *(Sukkah 53a)*

The lesson is clear. Our unconscious knows our authentic inner preferences very well. So much so that no matter what our conscious plans are, our feet take us to where we really want to be.

This Midrash understands the opening phrase of our paasha, "*If you walk in my laws,*" as indicating the Torah's desire that we internalize

G-d's laws thoroughly so that they become our major purpose in life. Even if we initially define our life's journey in terms of very different goals, God's laws will hopefully become our ultimate destination.

There are numerous other ways suggested by commentaries throughout the ages to understand the literal phrase, "If you walk in my ways." Indeed, **Rabbi Chaim ibn Atar**, the great 18th-century author of **Ohr HaChaim**, enumerates no less than 42 explanations of the phrase. Several of his explanations, while not identical to that of our Midrash, are consistent with it and help us understand it more deeply. For example, he suggests that by using the verb "walk," the Torah is suggesting to us that it is sometimes important in religious life to leave one's familiar environment. One must "walk," embark on a journey to some distant place, in order to fully realize his or her religious mission. It is hard to be innovative, it is hard to change, in the presence of people who have known us all of our lives.

Ohr HaChaim also leaves us with the following profound insight, which the author bases upon a passage in the sourcebook of the Kabbalah, the Zohar: "Animals do not change their nature. They are not 'walkers.' But humans are 'walkers.' We are always changing our habits, 'walking away' from base conduct to noble conduct, and from lower levels of behaviour to higher ones. 'Walking,' progressing, is our very essence. 'Walking' distinguishes us from the rest of G-d's creatures."

The phrase "to walk" is thus a powerful metaphor for who we are. All of life is a journey, and despite our intentions, we somehow arrive at Bechukotai, "My laws," so that we end our journey with these words:

"These are the commandments that Hashem gave Moshe for the people of Israel on Mount Sinai."

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Moshe Rabeinu asks לָמָּה הֲרֵעֹתָה לָעָם הַזֶּה ***Why have You harmed this people?***

There are some questions that the greatest people don't want to know the answer to and can't answer.



One of the greatest gedoilim of the 20th century was **Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam ZT'L**, the founding Rebbe of the Sanz-Klausenburg Chasidic dynasty. He went through the Holocaust and went through several concentration camps including Auschwitz. During the Holocaust, he lost his wife and eleven children.

The Klausenberger vowed in the concentration camps – in the evil kingdom of death, that if he survived, he would dedicate the rest of his life to life itself – saving lives. He survived and eventually brought his chasidim to Eretz Yisroel. He built the Laniado Hospital , also known as the Sanz Medical Centre in Netanya dedicated to saving lives.

The Klausenberger was once asked, " after all you have been through, after losing your whole family, after surviving the horrors of the concentration camps, do you not have any questions to ask G-d?"

He replied, "yes, I have questions and they are such deep and profound questions that I know for sure that were I ever to ask them, Hashem would invite me up to heaven to give me the answers himself. However, I prefer to be down here with the questions than up there with the answers."

If we found an answer as to why bad things happen to good people, then we would be reconciled with bad things happening to good people. But because we have questions, and we don't yet have the answers, we are not reconciled. And therefore we fight, so that bad things should not occur in the future. This is the Jewish way. Sometimes faith lies in the question and not in the answer.

May *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* comfort the families, for we lack the words to comfort them. Only *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* can comfort. May they be a *meilitz yosher* on behalf of all Klal Yisrael, so that the verse `*kiyemei tzeisecho mei'Eretz Mitzrayim ar'enu niflo'os, ba'agolo uvizman koriv.'*

Vedibarta Bam - *A* Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

QUESTION: Why is it that someone who makes a *chatan* happy is considered as having rebuilt *one* of the destroyed homes of Jerusalem?

ANSWER: The *Gemara* (*Yoma* 9b) says that the *Beit Hamikdash* and Jerusalem were destroyed due to "*sinat chinam*" — unwarranted hatred among the Jewish people.

However, the *Gemara* elsewhere (*Shabbat* 119b) gives many other reasons for Jerusalem's destruction: desecration of *Shabbat*, failure to recite *Kriat Shema* in the designated time, disruption of young children's Torah study, lack of respect for *talmidei chachamim*, etc.

When the sages say that bringing happiness to the *chatan* is like rebuilding one of the destroyed homes of Jerusalem, they do not literally mean one *home*, but rather that *one* of the *causes* — *sinat chinam* — for the destruction of Jerusalem has been removed, thus hastening its rebuilding. (**שמעתי מאחי הרב שמואל פסח שי' באגאמילסקי**)

"וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב"-"*I will remember My covenant with Yaakov.*" (26:42)

QUESTION: Rashi writes, "In five *pesukim* the name Yaakov (**יעקב**) is written with an extra '**ו**' and Eliyahu (**אליהו**) is spelled without its usual '**ו**'. Yaakov took a letter from the name of Eliyahu as a pledge that he will come and announce the redemption of his children — the revelation of *Mashiach*." Why did he specifically take the letter "**ו**" as a pledge and not any other letter?

ANSWER: In Hebrew the word "*vav*" means "a connecting hook," as we find in the Torah: "*vavei ha'amudim*" — "the hooks of the pillars" (*Shemot* 27:10). The curtains were attached by "*vavim*" — "hooks" — to the poles that supported them and in Hebrew a "**ו**" serves the grammatical function of attaching and connecting one word with another. Thus, the "**ו**" symbolizes unity. Our present *galut* was caused by *sinat chinam* unwarranted hatred and dissension — (*Yoma* 9b), and it will be ended when true *ahavat Yisrael* and unity will prevail in the Jewish community.

The last *Mishnah* in *Eduyot* (8:7) says that Eliyahu's purpose is only to make peace in the world, as the prophet Malachi proclaims: "Behold I will send you Eliyahu the prophet, and he shall turn the heart of fathers to the children and the heart of children to the fathers" (3:23-24). Therefore, Yaakov specifically took a "**ו**" from Eliyahu's name as if to symbolize that he should "hook together," that is, speedily *reunite* the Jewish people, and thus they will merit the immediate coming of *Mashiach*. (**קול דודי – הרב דוד שי' פיינשטיין**)

"Emunah is the key that unlocks the door to divine presence – it's the bridge that connects us to Hashem." – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

"איש כי יפלא נדר בערכך נפשת לה" - *"If a man articulates a vow to G-d regarding the valuation of living beings"* (27:2)

QUESTION: Why does the *parshah* of human valuations *(arachin)* follow the *tochachah* — the listing of calamities which will happen to the Jewish people for not observing Torah and *mitzvot*?

ANSWER: One who reads through the *tochachah* may, G-d forbid, become very discouraged. He may conclude that Jews who transgress are indeed worthless. To negate such a thought, the Torah places the *parshah* of *arachin* — valuation of humans — immediately after the *tochachah*, to emphasize that, regardless of a Jew's behaviour, he always has value in Hashem's eyes. (**הרב מאיר זי"ל שאפירא מלובלין**)

Parshah Thoughts *By Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

One of the Brachos listed for following the laws of the Torah is: "And five of you will chase one hundred and one hundred of you will chase ten thousand…" (26:8).

The proportions are not accurate. If five people can chase one hundred enemies, then one hundred people should chase two thousand enemies, not five times that!

The Malbim answers that although mathematically the numbers are off, the reason why a group of one hundred can chase one-hundred times the amount of enemies, and not just twenty times, is because a group unified for one cause is so much more powerful than just a few individuals. Imagine how much we can accomplish when we join together as a cohesive unit to enhance and develop ourselves and our communities, particularly as we approach Shavuos, preparing to celebrate our unified joy and anticipation of receiving the Torah and the Mitzvos.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Binyamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, once came to discuss a matter with **Rav Ovadia Yosef, *zt"l***. He was escorted into the *Rav's* study, along with his entourage and the media crews covering the visit. When he got inside the room, Rav Ovadia was studying a work on *Hilchos Challah*. Each time he reacheda source, he would stop for a moment, search his memory until he was able to recall the exact words of the source, and then continue studying.

Prime Minister Netanyahu was awed by the *Rav's* complete immersion in learning *Torah*, and also shocked that the commotion of the camera crews and reporters hadn't caused him to even lift his eyes from the *Sefer*.

After a few minutes, MK Eli Yishai, who had arranged the visit, told Mr. Netanyahu that he would inform the *Rav* that the prime minister had arrived. However, Mr. Netanyahu said, "No, no. I never get to see anything like this." When the cameramen saw that Mr. Netanyahu was enthralled by the sight, their attention was grabbed by it as well, and they started snapping photos of Rav Ovadia engrossed in his *Sefer*.

Mr. Netanyahu continued watching in fascination, wondering how long it would take the *Rav* to notice the dozens of people in his room. Finally, after a long while, Rav Moshe Yosef, Rav Ovadia's son, explained that if no one interrupted Rav Ovadia, the Prime Minister would wait all day! Rav Moshe bent down next to his father and said, "*Abba*, the Prime Minister is here." Rav Ovadia looked up in complete surprise and said to Mr. Netanyahu, "*Baruch Haba*! Wecome!"

"In recalling the Exodus, a Jew should remind himself never to despair from spiritual striving, no matter how dismal his situation." ~ R' Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin zt"l.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, the Chief Rabbi of *Yerushalayim*, was once making a *siyum* (completion) on *Shas*, and invited his family to celebrate the occasion. They noticed that the *Rav* was particularly excited about this *siyum* and couldn't understand why. Some of them approached *Rav* Frank and asked, "Why are you so excited? You've finished *Shas* many times! Why is this occasion so special?"

The *Rav* answered, "This *siyum* is special because it wasn't accomplished through a set time for learning. I did it by learning in my spare minutes, here and there. This *siyum* stands out because it shows us how much we can accomplish by treating a spare few minutes as precious opportunities!"

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick



The פָּסוּק says, **אִם תֵּלֵכוּ בְּחֻקֹּתַי** - If you will follow My decrees." Rashi says that this refers to working hard in learning Torah. What does it mean to work hard in learning Torah? It means that someone is not in the mood of learning, or he is having a hard time concentrating, but he still tries his best to learn. Hashem will give him the brochos that are written in this week's parsha.

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

וזכרתי את בריתי יעקוב ואף את בריתי יצחק ואף את בריתי אברהם

I will remember My covenant with Yaakov and also My covenant with Yitzchak, and also My covenant with Avraham (26:42)

The forefathers are mentioned in reverse order to fulfil that which is written (*Avos* 1:2) 'The world depends on three things – on *Torah* study, on the service of *Hashem*, and on kind deeds. Yaakov is mentioned first because he represents *Torah*, as it states: **תתן אמת ליעקב** – *'Grant truth to Yaakov'* (*Michah* 7:20), then Yitzchak who represents *Avodah* – service – as it states: **פחד יצחק** – *'The Dread of Yitzchak'* (*Bereishis* 31:42), and then Avraham who emulated *'Chesed'* – kindness, as it states: **חסד לאברהם** – *'Kindness to Avraham'* (*Michah* 7:20). Why does it say *'Af'* by Yitzchak and Avraham? Because Eisav came from Yitzchak, and Yishmael came from Avraham.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

When **Rav Elya Lopian, *zt"l***, became advanced in his years, a *Bachur* would come to his house to accompany him to the *Yeshivah* for *Davening*. The *Bachur* recounts, "Ordinarily, we would walk to the *Bais Medrash* along the straightest, most direct route.



On one occasion, however, Rav Elya led me on a lengthy, roundabout way. I asked Rav Elya what the purpose of taking such a long route was, and he replied to me, 'Can't you see? There is a long line of ants walking there! We must be careful not to trample on the creations of *Hashem*!'"



The Spiders Web

Reb Mendel Futterfas zt'l was in a jail in Russia for years. He once watched a spider spin a web. A fly got caught in the web, and tried to go free, but it couldn't. It kept struggling in its attempt to leave the web. When it gave up, the spider came and finished the job.



Reb Mendel Futterfas thought to himself, "Everything in the world can be a lesson in *avodas Hashem*. What lesson can I learn from what I just saw?"

He came to the following conclusion. Chazal compare the spider to the *yetzer hara*. As long as one is trying to get free, the *yetzer hara* stands at a distance. The *yetzer hara* knows that he can't accomplish so much, because the person is struggling to get free and to come close to Hashem. But when a person loses hope, then the *yetzer hara* comes and finishes the job, *rachmana litzlan*.

"Before I speak in public, I am very nervous. But not because I am afraid of what I am going to say - I am concerned that I should be wise enough to know what to leave out!" ~ R' Koppel Reich of Budapest ZT"L.

Rebbe Dovid of Tolna zt'l

One day, the owner of a hotel said to a businessman who was staying in his hotel, "You certainly have heard of Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l*. Tonight, this great Rebbe will be coming to our hotel. Do you mind sleeping in a less extravagant room, so I can give the best room to the Rebbe?"

The businessman wasn't a chassid, but he didn't mind doing this favour. He decided he would watch the Rebbe and determine on his own if he is truly a tzaddik.

Later that night, after the Rebbe had already arrived, the businessman overheard the owner of the hotel speaking with his wife. He didn't want to listen in to their conversations, but they were speaking very loudly, almost shouting to one another. He heard them say that the Rebbe asked them to give him two hundred rubles, which was all they owned. They were wondering and debating whether they should acquiesce to the Rebbe's request. The next day they gave two-hundred rubles to the Rebbe. The businessman was upset with the Rebbe. He didn't think it was fair that he should ask them for so much money.

The Rebbe with his *gabbai* were outside the inn, and the Rebbe pointed to one corner of the yard and said, "This is a good place to build a barn." Pointing to another spot he said, "This is a good location to build a new inn..." The businessman thought it was strange that the Rebbe was saying these things.

A few years later, the businessman returned to the inn and he saw that everything was exactly as the Rebbe had said. There was a large barn in the corner, and a new inn built exactly where the Rebbe spoke about.

The businessman immediately travelled to Rebbe Dovid of Tolna *zt'l* and said, "Now I know that you are a holy man. Everything you predicted occurred. But please tell me, why did you take so much

money from that couple? Two hundred rubles was everything they owned. It doesn't seem correct."

The Rebbe replied, "It was destined in heaven that this couple should become wealthy, but it would only occur after they daven. Their two hundred rubles were stopping them from davening. Whenever a financial worry arose, they said to one another, "But we have two hundred ruble. If we need the money, we have from where to take it. Everything will be o.k.' So I took the two hundred rubles away from them. This spurred them to daven to Hashem, and they received the wealth that was destined for them.

Bittul Torah



During a shiur, a bochur noticed that **Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg** זצ"ל's hand was bleeding. He asked the Rosh Yeshiva if he should run and call for help. Rav Scheinberg motioned to him that everything is ok and he should continue to listen to the shiur.

After the shiur, Rav Scheinberg explained what had happened. On the way to yeshiva he had fallen, and his hand started to bleed. He decided to wrap his hand in a handkerchief and continue to go to yeshiva to give the shiur, so that he should not cause any bittul Torah.

"If the plan doesn't work, change the plan, but never the goal."

Orchos Chaim L'HaRosh - אַל תִּתְבַּהֵל לִקְצוֹף מִשּׁוּם דָּבָר. וְהַאֲרֵךְ אַפֶּךָּ, פֶּן תְּאַבֵּד אֶת חָכְמָתֶךָ 60. *Do not be provoked to anger about anything. Be slow to anger, so that you do not lose your wisdom.*

Rav Moshe Sternbuch teaches that we learn this idea from the *Gemara* in *Pesachim* (66b), which states that one who gets angry, his wisdom leaves him. Additionally, Rav Sternbuch points out, at the time when one is angry, he has no control over his common sense and wisdom. The *Gemara* proves this from Moshe *Rabeinu*, that when he got angry, he would forget *Halachos*.

The *Pasuk* describes how Moshe got angry and rebuked the soldiers (*Bamidbar* 31:14), and because Moshe rebuked them out of anger, he forgot the *Halachos* of *Kashering Keilim*, and those *Halachos* were taught instead by Elazar, his nephew. We learn from this that if rebuke is necessary, one must be careful to rebuke out of concern, and not out of anger.

One of the children of **Rav Elya Lopian, *zt"l***, had once misbehaved, and the child was surprised that his father did not mention anything to him about his misbehaviour. Two weeks later, Rav Elya patiently and calmly spoke with his child about his prior misbehaviour, and about the proper way for one to conduct himself. The child asked his father why he hadn't said anything about it for two weeks, and Rav Elya explained to him, "I was upset by your actions, but before I spoke with you about it and punished you, I wanted to make sure that I removed any trace of anger from within me.

If one punishes a child when he is angry, he is simply using his child as an outlet for his anger, and he loses out on teaching his child anything from what had happened. Punishing without anger, will be a constructive punishment, and this will help the child actually learn a valuable lesson from what he did wrong!"

Reb Yoel R. On The Parsha

ואיש כי יקדש את ביתו ***"If a man sanctifies his house…"*** 27:14

When a person is involved in spiritual matters it is relatively easy for him to conduct himself in a sanctified way. True holiness, however, is when a person sanctifies his seemingly ordinary daily activities.

Someone who behaves in an elevated manner in his own home is truly a holy person. Torah values do not only apply to a person in the *beis midrash* or yeshivah, but at all times, wherever he may be. At home, a person has many opportunities to do acts of kindness toward his family.

Behaving properly to those close to us is often more difficult than behaving properly toward strangers. However, the more difficult it is to apply Torah principles, the greater the reward. The more sanctified your behaviour is at home, the greater you become.

Chizuk In Our Lives

Rabbi Lerner was the **רב** of the small Jewish community in Queenstown, Ireland. One day a wealthy member of his Shul asked, "Rabbi, my son David's **בר מצוה** is coming up. Please could you teach him the *leining* and his **דרשה**?" Rabbi Lerner responded that he would love to. The father then said, "Rabbi, we aren't doing the **בר מצוה** in *Shul*. We are taking all our family and friends and doing the **בר מצוה** on a fancy cruise liner".

The next day, Rabbi Lerner sat with David and noticed that he seemed disturbed. After being quizzed, David admitted that he was uncomfortable with having his **בר מצוה** on a boat and wanted it in *Shul* like everyone else. Rabbi Lerner agreed with him but said that he had to respect his father's wishes.



A few days later, David's father met Rabbi Lerner and said, "What did you tell my son?! He refuses to have his **בר מצוה** on the cruise!" Rabbi Lerner calmed him down and even managed to convince him that it was unfair to have an ostentatious affair while all of David's friends were having simple celebrations in *Shul*. David's father agreed to cancel his tickets and hold the **בר מצוה** in the *Shul*.

The day after his beautiful **בר מצוה**, David rode on his bike to the port to see off the beautiful ocean liner preparing to leave. With a happy heart, he waved his white handkerchief amongst the large crowd as the glorious ship departed.

The date was 11th April 1912. And the cruise liner was called the RMS Titanic where over 1500 people perished after it hit an iceberg on its maiden voyage…

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The *Chofetz Chaim* lived the simplest of lives, and he barely had any possessions or furniture. Once, the *Chofetz Chaim's Rebbetzin* said to the *Chofetz Chaim*, "**Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski** has curtains on his windows." She then listed a number of items that Rav Chaim Ozer possessed which the *Chofetz Chaim* considered luxuries, and she asked him why they couldn't have those things also.

The *Chofetz Chaim* replied, "It is different. Rav Chaim Ozer is the *Nasi* of *Klal Yisroel*, the Prince of Israel. With regard to the *Nasi*,

the *Pasuk* says that he must be raised above his brothers. Rav Chaim Ozer is therefore forced to suffer with these luxuries, even though it is really against his will. As for me, *Baruch Hashem*, I am a simple man and I have no need for any of these things!"



Sometimes, the *Chofetz Chaim* would explain his words by saying, "In our times of *Galus*, the honour of *Hashem* is so low and downtrodden. How can we then live our lives in opulence, with richness and possessions?" He would often say that if one uses his mind to think about getting more luxuries, he will not have the peace of mind to properly delve into learning *Torah*.

The *Chofetz Chaim* was extremely careful when it came to spending money on food, clothing, *Sefarim*, and beautifying *Mitzvos*. He lived his entire life according to this rule— money is time, time is life, and life is for *Torah*, *Mitzvos*, and *Maasim Tovim*!

During WWII, the Mirrer Yeshiva travelled by train to escape the Nazis יִמַּח שְׁמָם. Horav Boruch Sorotzkin זצ"ל was travelling with them.

His father-in-law, Horav Avrohom Yitzchok Bloch הי"ד, told him that even on the train, he should make sure to keep his regular learning schedule.

L'Maaseh

Rav Dovid Kaplan writes a story: Naming a baby is sometimes tricky. *Baruch Hashem*, Meir and Ahuva had a baby boy after having a few girls and decided to name him after Ahuva's grandfather.

Ahuva then started having second thoughts about it. She said, "My grandfather was a very nice man and a fine person, but he wasn't a *Talmid Chacham*. He was just a '*Poshuta Yid*', a simple Jew. Maybe it would be better if we name the baby after a *Gadol*."

Meir went to ask his *Rosh Yeshivah* what he thought about it. The *Rebbe* asked, "When did her grandfather live?" Meir answered, "He came to America in the 1930's and worked in the curtain business." The *Rosh Yeshivah* then asked, "And where are his children today?" Meir replied, "All of them are *Frum* and all his grandchildren are *Bnei Torah*."

The *Rosh Yeshivah* gave Meir a serious look and said, "Anyone who lived in America in the 1930's and 40's, and raised a family that produced *Bnei Torah*, is not just a '*Poshuta Yid*.' Name the baby after him.

In fact, I think the same could be said for anyone who lived in America in the 50's, 60's, and 70's, and even through today!"

Two Types of People

It is impossible to pass through this world without troubles. The difference between people is how they accept them. Some people pass through the world laughing, and some pass through the world crying.

It is better to pass through the world with laughter. ~ **The Chazon Ish zt'l**

Know your worth



A father told his daughter, "Congrats on your graduation. I bought you a car a while back. I want you to have it now.

"Before I give it to you, take it to a car dealer in the city and sell it. See how much they offer."

The girl came back to her father and said: "They offered me $10,000 dollars because it looks very old"

Father said: "Ok, now take it to the pawn shop."

The girl returns to her father and said: "The pawn shop offered $1,000 dollars because it's a very old car and a lot of work done".

The father told her to join a passionate car club with experts and show them the car. The girl drove to the passionate car club. She returned to her father after a few hours and told him, "Some people in the club offered me $100,000 dollars because it's a rare car that's in good condition."

Then the father said, "I wanted to let you know that you are not worth anything if you are not in the right place. If you are not appreciated, do not be angry, that means you are in the wrong place. Don't stay in a place where no one sees your value. "Know your worth and know where you are valued. A diamond doesn't shine on the bottom of a cave.

"Days are scrolls: write on them what you want to be remembered." ~ R' Bahya ibn Pakuda in Chovos HaLevavos.

Torah Tavlin - תּוֹכֵחָה שָׁנָה וְקִלְלוֹתֶיהָ



Our Sages tell us that the upcoming holiday of Shavuos represents a "Hischadshus" - a new beginning, a Rosh Hashana of the spiritual realm. Before we accept the Torah anew on Shavuos, we must rid ourselves of the negative aspects of the previous year, and this Shabbos, as we lain Parshas Bechukosai, we usher out the remaining "klalos" of the year and wipe the slate clean!

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

For the Jewish people, a Nation that has been persecuted throughout the millennia, and yet, has survived and often even thrived throughout those millennia, we often require a bit of humour to bring us through the darkness. We even introduce darkness into our humour to remind us to hold onto the blessings we have right now.

Just as the glass we break during joyous wedding ceremonies teaches us that no moment is fully wonderful; we are in Golus without our homeland and Bais HaMikdash, and we must always be thinking about whom we can help next. Likewise, even in those moments that are truly awful, times of death and destruction, we carry our humour with us to remind us of the laughter that will return in time. **עֵת לִבְכּוֹת וְעֵת לִשְׂחוֹק** - there's a time to cry, and a time to laugh (Koheles 3:4). We create relationships through laughter, and we bolster those relationships with our presence for one another during terrible

times of persecution and tears. In teaching, in gratitude, in building relationships, in raising children, in sholom bayis, and in finding the good in others, we often turn to humour for a spark of inspiration. At every moment that we can, we must find opportunities to laugh heartily.

Here is an example of humour that can only be understood in the context of a Jewish backdrop. The meeting in the synagogue was getting heated. The week of Parshas Behar-Bechukosai was quickly approaching, and the curses of the Tochacha (section of reproof) and the gruesome details that are listed therein, are enough to send a shudder up anyone's spine, that being the case, many men are reluctant to be called up to the Torah for that portion. Some shuls have a policy that no one is called up - the reader just begins to read, without an oleh. In other places, the Baal Korei receives that aliyah. But in one particular synagogue, everyone seemed to have had his share of bad luck, and no one wanted the honour. Not even the Baal Korei.

And so, the Wednesday before the fateful Shabbos, a meeting of the Rabbi and Board of Directors was called. "I will not take the Tochacha this year!" shouted the Baal Korei, who was also the Gabbai and a board member. "Two weeks after last year's aliya, when I got the Tochacha, my business went kaput! I lost everything - and even more than that!"

Looking around, he added for the curious and equally eager board members, "I'm not going to elaborate!" The President spoke up. "Well, why don't we give it to the Rabbi? He is the holiest person we have and not likely to be affected by the curses made for sinners." Nodding heads all around the table could be seen.

The Rabbi mopped his brow for a moment and then demurred. "My friends, if you look at my contract, it says I get Shlishi (third aliyah) every week. The Tochacha is in the fifth aliya, so I am exempt" He smiled, knowing he dodged a bullet. The shamash suddenly jumped

out of his chair. "Don't expect me to get called up for the Tochacha! It's not going to happen. My job is to tidy up the shul and put everything in order. I won't stand up there and take the curses of the Tochacha."

The men were in a quandary. Someone went so far as to suggest that they cancel Krias HaTorah for the coming Shabbos since they could not seem to find someone willing to accept the aliya. The rabbi adamantly protested this bizarre idea. Just then, an elderly gentleman spoke up in the back. "Alright, if you pay me fifty dollars, I'll take the Tochacha."



There was silence, and then in unison all heads nodded. The old man, a throwback to the old heyday of the shul, had stepped forward to be their salvation.

They all agreed to the man's price and looked forward to seeing him on Shabbos. Well, Shabbos did indeed come. The davening went on as planned - but the old man did not show up! It came time to take out the Torah, and he was still not there. The Rabbi decided to speak before laining just to stall a little bit. Without a choice, they started reading the Torah - but very slowly.

It was not until the fourth aliya that the old man suddenly burst into the shul, panting. He made it! All the board members breathed a sigh of relief. He got his aliya, but as soon as he stepped off the bimah, the Gabbai cornered him. "Do you know how much you scared us? Where were you?" The old man shrugged and replied, "You think a Jew can make a living today from just one Tochacha?!"

משל למה הדבר דומה

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם 26:3



One of the most famous askanim during the second world war was R' Eliezer Landau z"l, a close confidant of the holy **Belzer Rebbe, Rav Aharon Rokeach zt"l.** He was a well-to-do man who worked tirelessly to help his fellow Jews caught in the clutches of the Nazi beast.

After the war, he arrived in Eretz Yisroel and helped R' Aharon rebuild the Belzer chassidus back to where it was, and even donated the Aron Kodesh in the temporary beis medrash that was set up. Eventually, a proper building came under construction and R' Eliezer wanted to do more.

One day he met **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt"l**, the great Rosh Yeshivah of Kol Torah, and figured this would be a great opportunity to seek his advice and ask the Rav what he thought would be proper to donate in the new building. Without hesitation, R' Shlomo Zalman asked him, "Tell me, was the coffee room donated yet?" R' Eliezer, surprised, replied that it was likely not donated.

"People do not realize what a zechus this is," exclaimed R' Shlomo Zalman. "This one room has in it all three pillars on which the world stands. When a person takes a drink, he gets revived, thereby enabling him to learn Torah and daven better. In addition, you are performing a tremendous act of chessed by giving people the ability to revive themselves in such a capacity!"

The Gemara mentions in a number of places that if someone has an ailment, "He shall busy himself with Torah."

The Maharsha explains, that although Torah study is the best remedy for a person, sometimes a person simply cannot study Torah due to the circumstances of his situation. In that case, the Gemara chose the words to be "busy" instead of "study" with Torah, to teach us, that a person can do something that enhances his or others' Torah study, such as arranging the furniture or coffee room in a beis medrash.

Etz Hachaim – CT Blau - Ameilus B'Torah.

There is incredible reward that Hashem gives for the one who puts effort into the Torah. When a person learns Torah it gives him life itself!



One day, during the last period that **Reb Shach זצ"ל** was giving **שיעור**, he was not feeling well. He asked the doctor to check him out and then told the doctor that he needed to give a shiur shortly. The doctor told Reb Shach that not only would he not be able to deliver the shiur, but based on what he saw, in such a state of weakness, Reb Shach would not even be able to get to the Shiur!

Reb Shach did not agree and asked a relative of his to help him get to **ישיבה**. The doctor knew about this and decided that he had to see what Reb Shach was going to do, since he knew good and well that it was not physically possible for a person in such a weakened state to

go give a **שיעור**. The doctor followed Reb Shach to Ponovitch and stood on the side of the **בית המדרש**.

He watched in sheer amazement as Reb Shach walked up to the shtender and began the Shiur with a difficult question. He watched as everyone got extremely involved in the **תירוץ**. People were firing **סברות** back and forth and the Shiur was given as usual. After the **שיעור** was over the doctor said as follows, "I can throw away all my medical books and equipment since based on the situation that Reb Shach is in, he should not even have been able to utter one word."

Migdal Ohr



In the Yom Kippur War, the Israelis surrounded the Egyptian 3rd Army, capturing thousands of soldiers. Afterwards, an Israeli soldier was chatting with the Egyptian POW he was guarding. The Egyptian asked the soldier: "You claim to have a Biblical right to the land of Israel. You put your life on the line to defend your right to live in it. But that is only one of many commandments your G-d gave you. Why is it that you like that one, if you have no use for the others?"

The soldier realized he had no answer. He began searching for his roots and became a fully observant Jew. The Arab prisoner's incisive question and the soldier's willingness to be honest with himself had made the Jew into a Baal Teshuva.

Limudei Moshe – Moshe Harris

Understanding the Brachah of a Rainy Weekend

In this week's sedra the pasuk says: **בעתם גשמיכם ונתתי** - ***"I will give you your rains in their proper time"*** (Vayikra 26:4). Rashi explains the term "proper time" to mean Friday night (leilei Shabbosos). We can then sit cozily in our houses and say "let it rain".

The question is that in today's society a rainy weekend is a calamity, we can't eat out, we can't go to the park, we have to stay indoors the whole Shabbos. That is terrible! However, the Torah teaches that such rains are a blessing. On Friday night it can pour. We are safe in our homes.

The Beis Av points out a deeper insight into this idea. In an agrarian economy, the farmer can work six days a week, putting in backbreaking hours sowing, fertilizing, ploughing, and harvesting. However, all the farmer's effort will be for naught if he does not have one thing — rain. Without rain, the farmer is powerless. When rain falls on the very day when the farmer does absolutely nothing (Friday night - Shabbos), the farmer is sent a precious message. That which the farmer needs the most, he receives on the very day when he can do the very least. This is the lesson. Ultimately, the farmer needs to depend on Hashem, not on himself. A very similar lesson to the idea of shemittah.

When Hashem orders us to do something, He also gives us the strength and ability to accomplish that mission.

This doesn't mean it will be easy. It will Sometimes require great effort. Yet our Sages teach us that real efforts are always successful. [The Lubavitcher Rebbe zt"l]

The Tochachah



The Kotzker Rebbe explains that after reading the terrifying curses contained earlier in parshas Bechokosai and seeing how they have tragically been fulfilled throughout history, Jews may begin to lose belief in their value and self-worth. As a nation, we have been persecuted more than any other people throughout the ages. Such intense national suffering could easily cause a person to give up hope.

In order to counter this mistaken conclusion, the section outlining the painful times which will befall the Jewish people is immediately followed by the section dealing with the laws of Arachin. This section details how much a person is required to donate if he chooses to dedicate the "value" of himself or another Jew to the Temple.

This juxtaposition comes to remind us that even in the darkest times, after enduring the most inhumane suffering fathomable, although we may not be accorded respect by our oppressors, our intrinsic worth in HaShem's eyes are eternal and unchanging.

"Our holy master Rebbe Nachman says: The greatest gift we can give someone is to give him back his self-confidence."

דרך החיים Hashem Protects Tzaddikim From Stumbling

One day, **R' Chaim** was invited to serve as a sandak at a bris. The driver who came to take him was a baal teshuvah. R' Chaim sat in the car and the driver tried to start the engine – but the engine was silent. The driver tried this way and that, but nothing helped. The car refused to budge.

Having no other option, R' Chaim moved into a different car, and the rest of the trip went smoothly. Later, they learned that the baal teshuva's father had brought the car with money he had made through charging interest. Hashem had helped R' Chaim not to benefit from forbidden money!

Parsha Pages - Ohr Hachayim

In this week's Parsha we find the famous piece from **Rebbi Chayim ben Attar, the Ohr HaChayim HaKodesh** who brings 42 elucidations on the first verse, **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם** "***If you will walk in My statutes and observe my commandments and do them...".*** (VaYikra 26:3)



The first one is particularly amazing. He brings a drasha from the Medrash Toras Cohanim. What does it mean, the Medrash asks, to "walk in My statutes" If it means to keep the commandments, that is mentioned immediately afterwards. Therefore, the Medrash concludes, walking in My statutes means to exert oneself in Torah study.

The Ohr HaChayim then asks, what is the connection between the idea of statute, (immutable decrees that we follow even without understanding the reason for them) and the exertion of oneself in Torah? He answers that there is a mitzvah to learn Torah even if one has learned something 2 or 3 times before. Moreover, HaShem loves the Torah learning of Israel so much, that he decreed, (made it a statute) that in order that a Jew should continue learning his whole life with enthusiasm, he should learn and then forget!! (Koheles Raba 3,10) This should be a great consolation to anybody who suffers from forgetfulness. Keep on learning!!



Circle Time - The Hurricane that Wanted Havdalah וְאִם בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ ***And if you walk in My laws…*** (26:3)

What is meant by "walking" in Torah? **Rav Chaim Ibn Attar – The Ohr HaChaim** presents no fewer than 42 explanations of this phrase. The story behind them is a classic that must be shared.

The Ohr HaChaim lived in Sale, Morocco, before he moved to Eretz Yisrael. He had a custom of giving a special form of tzedakah: he would slaughter an animal before Shabbos and give out the meat to the talmidei chachamim of the town who could not afford to buy any for themselves.

One week, a terrible illness struck all the animals in the area. Everyone's cows and sheep were sick and became halachically treif—except the animal that belonged to the Ohr Hachaim that he was planning to shecht and distribute. His animal was kosher, and he shechted it and proceeded to distribute the meat as usual. A very wealthy man wanted to honour Shabbos with meat, so he hurried to the Ohr Hachaim's home. He offered a fabulous amount of money for a piece of the Ohr Hachaim's meat, but the Ohr Hachaim refused. "All the meat is reserved for the poor talmidei chachamim of the town," he said. "You cannot buy some for any amount of money."

Just then, one of the talmidei chachamim arrived, and the Ohr Hachaim gave him a piece of meat. The rich man became very angry and began to shout. "You call this person a talmid chacham?!" he yelled. "What does he know already? He doesn't deserve the meat!"

The Ohr Hachaim stood by silently and waited until he finished shouting and left. That Friday night, the Ohr Hachaim received a message in a dream. "You did wrong by not speaking up against the rich man," he was told. "You should have defended the honour of Torah." "How can I correct the mistake?" the Ohr Hachaim asked.

"You must go into exile. Wander from town to town, never spending more than a week in one place. This will cause you to have shame and no kavod. When you are forgiven, you may return home." "How will I know when that is?" "You will know."

Immediately after Shabbos, the Ohr Hachaim set off, wandering and living like a beggar for nearly a year. On Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai, as he was walking through the forest toward a town, thinking in Torah (as usual), he asked himself what the meaning of the phrase "walking in My laws" could be. I'm doing one of the meanings right now, he thought. We must always think in Torah, even while we are busy travelling!

Another explanation could be that we must always walk—move forward, onward and upward, growing in Torah! The Ohr Hachaim continued walking and thinking and came up with forty-two explanations! The custom in that town was that the rav spoke words of Torah at each tefillah. On Friday night, the entire kehillah gathered in the shul and the rav said, "This Shabbos, I will tell you forty-two explanations of the first pasuk in the parshah, fourteen at each shiur. All forty-two are being discussed in Shamayim and were composed by the great talmid chacham, Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar."

Upon hearing this title for himself, the Ohr Hachaim, who was running away from kavod, could not contain himself. "Chaim!" he

shouted. "It's just Chaim ben Attar!" No one in the shul knew him and everyone looked at him strangely. What chutzpah!

After Mussaf, the rabbi gave another fourteen explanations. Again, he called the Ohr Hachaim by a very honourable title, and the stranger protested from the back of the shul. The people began to murmur and become upset. After Minchah, the same scene repeated itself. This time, the kehillah had had enough. They grabbed the man, not knowing it was the Ohr Hachaim himself, and locked him in the shul prison!



After Ma'ariv, a storm blew into the town. Like a hurricane, it flipped over wagons, knocked down trees, and smashed houses. The rav understood that this was no simple storm and decided to ask a she'eilas chalom. He wrote a question on a piece of paper, put it under his head, and went to sleep.

In his dream, he received an explanation for the storm. "During Shabbos, Gehinnom is turned off," he was told. "It is not restarted until the tzaddikim say Havdalah. One tzaddik has not said Havdalah, and the sheidim of Gehinnom are angry with the delay. They are causing the hurricane in your city!" "Who did not say Havdalah?" - "The Ohr Hachaim, because he is locked up in your shul!"

The rav awoke with a start, rushed to the shul, freed the Ohr Hachaim, and apologized. Seeing that he could not escape kavod any longer, the Ohr Hachaim understood that his sin had been forgiven, and he went home.

A Jewish Mother by Rabbi Paysach Krohn



Rabbi Yaniv Meirov and Rabbi Ilan Meirov

Chazaq, a New York based organization run by brothers Rabbi Ilan and Rabbi Yaniv Meirov and, amongst a plethora of projects, aimed at developing and deepening public school children's exposure and commitment to a Torah life, has helped and inspired hundreds of thousands of Jews.

I remember hearing from Rabbi Ilan Meirov about his mother, Shoshana, and the type of indelible impact she made on her children. She had grown up in Uzbekistan and, after many years, moved to Israel, where she eventually went on to marry her husband, Moshe.

They were traditional, but not very fluent in Judaism. They later moved to America, where they raised three sons – Shlomo, Ilan and Yaniv. Mrs. Meirov wanted to enroll her children in Jewish schools, so she began looking into one school which she thought might be a good fit. But after vising the school, she just didn't have the feeling that it would suit her boys.

She didn't feel the warmth of Torah and Yiddishkeit that she was looking to imbue her children with. The truth was, she was right. She began then looking around her own close neighborhood for another

school and was told about Ohr Yisrael. When she walked into the school, she was mesmerized by the sound and sight of authentic Yiddishkeit. She then entered the main office and began speaking with the principal, Rabbi Sheya Geltzhaler.

Rabbi Geltzhaler knew that her children didn't have a strong Torah background up to this point, and in the younger grades, the classes were in Yiddish, which certainly would be difficult for the boys to catch on to at this point. Rabbi Geltzhaler, knowing this, began explaining that it would likely not be the best fit for her children.

Realizing this, her heart began breaking and tears streamed down her cheeks. She didn't know what would happen with her kids. How would they make it as Jewish children? Who would guide them?

Rabbi Geltzhaler then looked at Mrs. Meirov and said, without hesitation, "Your boys are accepted." And he did … because she was trying and wanted authentic Yiddishkeit for her children. The boys flourished, and Ilan and Yaniv have developed into marbitzei Torah, those who spread the beauty and breadth of Torah, near and far.

With hundreds of Torah classes and thousands of Jewish children being given a Torah education, they have achieved so much. And where did it all begin? With Rabbi Geltzhaler, and with Mrs. Meirov crying for her children to be given a Torah education.

In the Haggadah, we say, in reference to the last child, the child who doesn't know, "At p'tach lo" – You (in feminine form) initiate the conversation for him."

The Jewish mothers are those who help their children find their way through Jewish life and Torah commitment. The Jewish mothers are the ones who, true to their name of "Em," whose letters of aleph and mem refer to the span of time from Adam to Moshiach, will help their children grow from their youth into paragons of Jewish integrity and Torah commitment.

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -Break Your Limits



With its abundance of retirement homes for the elderly, Miami Beach, Florida is often called with macabre humour, "G-d's Waiting Room." Retirement isn't as notorious as heart disease or cancer, but it's still a major killer. Studies show that people who don't retire but stay involved in their work, at the level that befits their age, have longer life expectancies than those who retire and relax into their golden years.

My father, may he rest in peace, passed away well into his 93rd year. He was a very hard worker and he never retired. Every morning he'd still go to the office and do the post. He went in later and came back earlier, but he kept relevant. Nothing is worse than the feeling that the world has passed us by and we're just cluttering up the wings of life's stage.

My Rebbi, may G-d lengthen his days and years, opened an extremely successful yeshiva for boys when he was well into his eighties. Our Sages teaches that G-d conceals our time of death from us so that we should remain active to the last moment. The Midrash moreover tells the story of the Roman Emperor Hadrian.

He was once passing through the city of Tiberius, in the land of Israel. Hadrian noticed an elderly man exerting himself, tilling the soil around his fig tree. "Saba, Saba!" called out Hadrian. "Old man, why are you working so hard? When you were young, you had to make a living. Now it's time to relax. Anyway, you'll never live to enjoy the

fruits of your neighbours!" The old man retorted, "My task is to accomplish whatever my age allows. The Almighty will do as He sees fit." "Tell me, please. Saba," continued Hadrian, "how old are you?" "I'm 100 years old." "100 years old! And you actually expect to reap what you sow?" The old man had what to answer to that too. "If I merit to eat the fruits of my labour, that will be well and good. And if not, my efforts will benefit my children, just as I have benefited from the toil of my forebears." "If you ever eat those figs that you're planting," Hadrian said, "surely come and let me know."

In due course, the figs ripened and abounded with fruits. The old man filled the basket with figs and travelled up to the palace. "The emperor wishes to see me," he announced to the guards. The guards followed suit and led him before Hadrian's throne. "Who are you?" asked Hadrian.

"Does the Emperor remember how years ago, in Tiberius, you passed by an old man tending his figs. G-d has granted me the pleasure of eating those figs that I planted, and I brought the Emperor a basketful as a gift."

Hadrian turned to his servants and said, "Take the figs from this elderly man and refill his basket with gold dinars."

His courtiers questioned the emperor's generosity. "Why such a lavish gift for an old Jew?"

Hadrian replied, "His Creator honoured him with longevity. Is it not proper that I too should accord him honour?"

G-d has no waiting room. Every moment of our lives is a gift that must be maximized to the limit.

But the limit we may set for ourselves, no matter our age, may in fact be limiting to just how much we can accomplish.

When I was a youngster in the 1950s, the world of sports was shocked when on May 6th, 1954, Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile barrier. His time was 3 minutes, 59.4 seconds, barely

less than 4 minutes. But he changed the whole of distance running in a single afternoon. After that, in the late fifties and the sixties, track records fell like ripe apples.

Bannister's mile remains a touchstone in the history of athletics, but not because Bannister set an unreachable record. Currently, the fastest mile is a good 15 seconds less than Bannister's time. But for generations, 4 minutes was thought of as an intrinsic physiological limit, as if muscles could not be made to move any faster or lungs breathe any deeper.

But Bannister proved was that intrinsic boundaries are mythical. What he broke permanently was not a limit, but the idea of limits.

Rarely are we limited by our limitations; usually we are limited by the limitations we place on our limits. And as true as this is in athletics, it's equally true in our own lives, in the realm of our life ambitions, our relationships with our spouse, our friends, our fellow man, and with Hashem.

If we would but realize that each one of us is capable of reaching not only further than we think, but further than we could possibly dream, we would run our own life four-minute mile in record time.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein zt"l -Your Children, My Children

Years ago, after my parents moved from Washington Heights to Boro Park, a woman by the name of Adele Taub befriended my mother and taught her a lot about life as a Jewish woman and how she could create a warm home atmosphere, filled with love and delicious Jewish food.

Adele was originally from Hungary but had been transported to Auschwitz and survived. She herself had no children, though she quickly developed into a sort of a grandmother to my siblings and me.

One day, my mother approached her and asked a question that had been on her mind for some time. "Adele, I know you are very religious and strong in your faith. But I've always wondered how you cope with having no children of your own. Does it bother you that you've gone through the Holocaust and seen so much atrocity, and yet you don't have children of your own to experience the joys of life with? How do you deal with it?"

"Oh, I have children," Adele replied, casually and without much hesitation. "What do you mean?" my mother prodded further. "I know you've always said that my children are like your children, but I thought you don't have any actual children of your own?" "I have children in Israel," Adele said. My mother wasn't understanding. "Let me tell you," Adele continued.

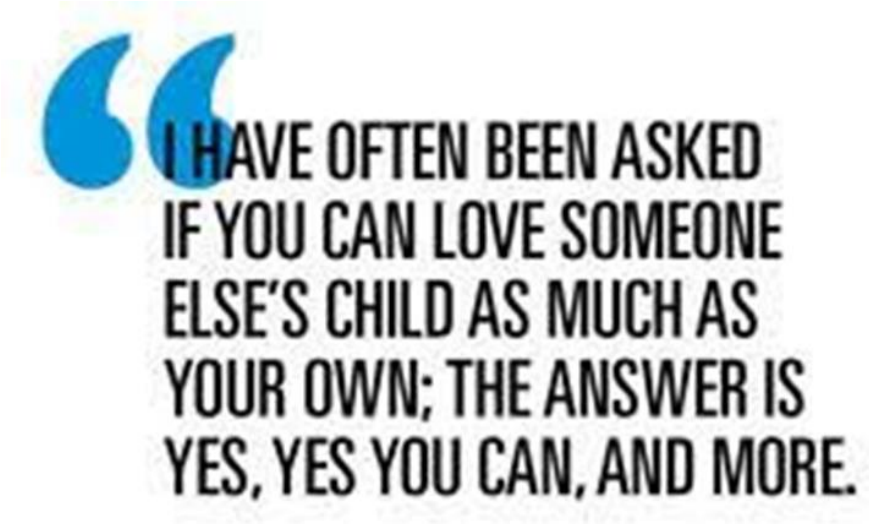
"I was a young girl in Auschwitz, and one of the girls I knew couldn't take it anymore. She had reached her limits. One day, she made a dash for the barbwire surrounding the camp and began climbing. But, as she knew, it wouldn't lead her to freedom, but death. Many others in Auschwitz had attempted the same out of emotional distress, knowing what their end would be if they didn't regret their action soon enough and couldn't make it down from the barbwire. They'd get caught, and the Nazis would leave them hanging in agonizing pain until death.

"One day, my friend went too far and actually got stuck to the point that she couldn't manoeuvre her way down. There was no way for her to change her mind now. Her death was on its way.

"As I realized what she had done, I didn't think twice. I knew that I would be risking my life if I ran out and tried pulling her off the fence. But I didn't hesitate. I raced to her and ripped her off the barbwire. My friend started screaming and kicking, pleading for me to let go of her and let her die. She was done with life. But I didn't give way to her pleas and held her tight as I stumbled my way back to the barracks. A Nazi guard ended up beating me for attempting

to save this girl, but fortunately, I was left with no more than cuts and bruises. He let me live.

"This girl went on to move to Israel after the war, but all the while I stayed in touch with her. When she got married and had children and grandchildren, I became like a second mother to them all. I loved them so dearly and deeply.



"I would always tell my friend," Adele said, "that you were staring death in the face, and I saved you. Your children are my children. She couldn't agree more."

Sometimes, there isn't time in life to contemplate and calculate our every move. We must simply take action and do it. And with it, we can be saving another life, another family, another world.

One action, when the right time calls for it, can mean the difference between life and death and the future of the Jewish nation. Quite literally.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport - Casual With G-d

The Torah makes clear (26:21) that many of the horrifying punishments enumerated in Parshas Bechukosai are punishments for- "behaving casually with G-d." Which sin is explicitly described as an example of acting casually toward G-d?

The Shulchan Aruch rules that it is forbidden to engage in work while one is reciting Birkas HaMazon. The Mishnah Berurah (191:5) writes that this prohibition includes not only a job which requires one's attention and mental energy, but even a trivial task or looking

into a book of Torah. He adds that this prohibition is not limited to the recitation of Grace After Meals, and it applies to any blessing or prayer that a person is saying.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that somebody who engages in other activities while he is blessing G-d is embodying the concept of "behaving casually with G-d," as he is demonstrating a casualness and lack of respect toward mitzvot, for which the consequence is severe.

Grateful Bread, by Rav Mordechai Kamenetzky



The Torah tells us, both B'har and in B'chukosai, that if we deserve blessing then "you shall eat to satisfaction and live securely in your land." (Leviticus 25:19 & Leviticus 26:5) Each time the Torah talks about eating to satisfaction, an agricultural issue, it suffixes a security issue. Now there are verses that deal with the curse of war and the blessing of peace. But why mention tranquillity with eating?

Yankel was a vagabond. Every Friday he would spend the last of his few zloty at the bathhouse and barber and, well groomed, he would present himself in the synagogue as a respected businessperson from out-of-town. Then he would usually get a sumptuous Shabbos meal at the home of the wealthiest Jew in town. One Friday

afternoon he was in the city of Lodz and inquired about the wealthiest Jew. "Velvel, the banker," he was told "is definitely the wealthiest Jew. But he is also the stingiest. You never get a chance to eat the delicious dishes that he serves you!"

"How's that?" asked Yankel.

"Well, as soon as you take you first bite, he engages you in conversation. You begin to speak, and as soon as your eyes leave your plate, a waiter comes and snatches your food away!"

With a game plan in mind Yankel posed as a businessman from Warsaw and got invited to Reb Velvel's magnificent home. The table was set with exquisite china, and the delicious smells wafting from the kitchen made Yankel's hungry mouth water.

After kiddush and challah, the first course was served, a succulent piece of white fish stuffed with gefilte fish. As Yankel speared it with his fork a voice boomed from the head of the table.

"So, Yankel, tell me, how is my cousin Shloime feeling? You must know Shloime, the tailor of Podolska Street in Warsaw?"

Yankel kept his fork embedded in the fish and held tight as he nodded somberly. "He's dead."

"What?" shrieked Reb Velvel, "Shloime is dead? How can that be?" He ran to the kitchen and shouted for his wife, while Yankel managed to finish his fish in comfort. He even got in a few nibbles off an adjoining plate. After the shock wore off, they served the soup. After the first sip, the banker was quick to his old ways. "You don't happen to know my father's brother Reb Dovid the bookbinder, do you?"

With the waiter poised to pounce, Yankel nodded again. "He died too!"

"What?" cried the stunned host. "How can that be? I just got a letter from him last week!"

He ran next door to tell his brother the terrible news — while Yankel calmly finished his soup.

The main course, with chicken, kugel and tzimmes also saw the death of more members of the Warsaw community, each tiding throwing the banker into a tizzy. Meanwhile Yankel ate his portion and all the portions of those who were sickened by the terrible news that they had just heard.

By the time dessert came, the banker got hold of the scheme."What's going on?" he shouted. "Are you trying to tell me that the entire Warsaw has dropped dead?"

"No," answered Yankel, "what I am trying to tell you is that when I eat, the whole world drops dead!"

The blessing of plenty is worthless without serenity. Peace in your land is not only a blessing for military men. It is a blessing that enhances every aspect of life, from breaking ground to breaking bread. What good are storehouses of plenty or a wonderful economy without the peace and harmony in which to enjoy them?

Calm and composure are the greatest blessing. For without them, the bread of plenty can still be bread of affliction. The Torah does not give half-baked blessings. It tells us that we will eat our bread to satisfaction because it guarantees us peace in our land. For we must not only pray for sustenance, but also health, wellbeing, and serenity with which to enjoy it.

The last word A one-liner worth remembering:- "Be ready to give up all your tomorrows for one today, so that you don't end up wasting all your todays on one tomorrow." ~ The Alter of Novaradok.

Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - Forgive

In the 1970s, there was a couple in Brooklyn who were having a hard time having children, so they went to the **Lubavitcher Rebbe** for a blessing. The Rebbe gave them a blessing, but it wasn't for a child.

Time passed and still Hashem did not bless them with a child and their friends were now beginning to marry off their children. The pain grew with every simcha that they went to. Again, they went to the Rebbe for a beracha and he managed to give them a blessing for everything except the one thing they were asking for: a child.

Eventually, they managed to arrange a yechidus, personal meeting, with the Rebbe, and as they came into the room, the wife broke down in tears and begged the Rebbe to know why Hashem was withholding the thing that they most wanted, that was most dear to them. She implored him for a direct way to some way remove this terrible decree.



The Rebbe paused and then said. "Long ago, one of you hurt someone very much, and that person has never forgiven you. You must find this person and beg him for forgiveness." They left the room. Try as they might, they could not think of anyone that they'd hurt so badly. And then the husband suddenly remembered something that had happened when he was a yeshiva student.

One of the students in the yeshiva was getting married in Chicago. The yeshiva had a van, and all the friends went out by bus. On the way back, they travelled overnight. Now, one of the students was careful to always put a basin with water next to his bed as *negel vasser*. And this trip was no exception. He curled up in his seat with water in a bowl on the seat next to him. The husband of this childless couple was a bit wild when he was

young, and he thought that putting negel vasser in the next seat in a bus was a bit extreme. So when the student fell asleep, he took the basin and hid it.

After some hours, the driver turned into a truck stop so everyone could get down from the bus, but the student wouldn't get down because he was careful not to take up 3 steps without washing his hands. He started to bang on the window of the bus so the other boys would hear him and bring back his negel vasser. Everyone began laughing at him until the bus driver said, "Come on, that's not nice. Give it back to him." The bachur was so upset that he said, "I'm not mochel (forgive), not in this world and not in the next."

The husband searched and he found the man who was still living in Brooklyn. He went over to his house and he asked him if he remembered him. "Sure," he said. "And I also remember what you did to me on the bus. You should know I don't forgive you. I'm not mochel." The husband explained that he was childless. "If you cannot have compassion on me, please have compassion on my wife and forgive me for her sake." The man was unmoved. Finally, the husband said to him, "The Rebbe has sent me." "I'll forgive you," he finally said, "because of the Rebbe." - A year later, their first child was born.

We are all so sensitive. We have to be so careful with the feelings of other people. For me, the most difficult prayer of my day is Kriat Shema al Hamitta that is said right before I go to sleep. Sometimes I never make it to the end because I'm so tired. But if washing our hands is the first thing we do in the morning to remove the impurity from our hands, surely the last thing at night that we should do is to remove resentment, grudges and hate from our hearts before we give ourselves to the hand of Hashem in sleep.

In the merit of forgiving others, we will touch the hearts of those we have wounded, and they will forgive.

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Rav Michel Barenbaum was the mashgiach of Mesivta Tifereth Yerushalayim under Rav Moshe Feinstein. After Rav Michel's passing, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren were born to his family, and it came to someone's attention that oddly, none of these babies were being named for Rav Michel.

People began to wonder about this unusual situation, because, in general, family members would be proud and delighted to have their baby carry the name of an illustrious grandfather. At one point, somebody asked one of Rav Michel's children why there were no babies named for his revered father. The answer was an astounding insight into the depths of chessed that can reside in a Jewish heart.

In Rav Michel's will, he noted that while he would of course be honoured to have children named after him, he would prefer that the new-born be named for a grandfather whose widow was still alive.

As Rav Michel's wife had passed away before him, there was no widow to feel the comfort and joy of knowing that her husband's

name had been passed to the next generation. Therefore, he desired that preference be given to a grandfather whose wife was still living.

Eventually, as time elapsed, he knew that he would have offspring named for him, but while widowed grandmothers were still alive, he wanted them to have the comfort of having a baby named for their husband.

What sensitivity and insight this story illustrates! Can we begin to fathom how precious such kindness is in Hashem's eyes?

Rabbi Peysach Krohn- Project Mesorah

The parsha starts אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ – ***If you go in my ways.***



The Alter mi Kelm asks, why does the Pasuk say the word תֵּלֵכוּ -that you go in my ways?

He answers that a person shouldn't just stay in his own *daled amos* and not be interested in going out and helping others. A person has to go out and to see what he can do to teach and inspire others.

I will tell you something fascinating.



If you take a look at a picture of the building of **Rabbi Meir Shapiro**'s Yeshiva in Lublin, you will see the Pasuk in Tehillim 34:12- ***לְכוּ־בָנִים שִׁמְעוּ־לִי יִרְאַת ה' אֲלַמֶּדְכֶם Go, children, hearken to me; I will teach you the fear of Hashem.***

The Chofetz Chaim asks, why does it say ***לְכוּ – Go?*** It should say ***'come'?*** He answers because a person shouldn't stay in his own *daled amos.*

That is why I believe that Rabbi Meir Shapiro had this Pasuk written on the outside of his yeshiva.

"Hashem's love for us is like a parent's love for a child – unconditional and unwavering, guiding and protecting us at all times." – Rabbi Yehuda Halevi.



Significance!

Shmuel* had come to visit his Rebbi, the **Rebbi from Tzinkiv**, and was gazing at the Rebbi in a noticeable manner. Noticing this, the Rebbi asked him why he was staring at him.

The boy responded, "Looking at a tzaddik purifies and refines the neshamah. Therefore, I'm looking at you."

The Rebbi replied, "Amaich kulam tzaddikim, the nation of Hashem is all tzaddikim. You should be looking at yourself."

The Rebbi of Tzinkiv was teaching Shmuel that there is great worth and priceless value within every person. Therefore, you only need to look at yourself to find greatness. By focusing on what's in you, you will bring forth the greatest potential and cause the inner light to come forth and shine.

By looking at others and admiring them, without selfworth, you will be prevented from discovering your own respect and value. Therefore, look at yourself, since you're also a tzaddik, and you'll bring forth the greatest benefit for yourself and for others. The entire world will gain much more from you if you properly treasure and cherish yourself, and your qualities.

Each person has so much that could shine forth, but it will be hidden if you don't attribute yourself with your real value.

Counterfeiters – Swindlers



A group of counterfeiters had a scheme to make money from fake currency. They would come to someone and make a very attractive offer: $15,000 counterfeit for $5,000 real. They even claimed that the money was so real-looking that they even would bring it to an expert who couldn't differentiate the two.

One man fell for their "deal", and a few days later he made the deal. But very soon after, he got a knock on the door from a seemingly looking "policeman", asking him about the money he'd recently exchanged.

"It's counterfeit," the policeman said. "Please come with me."

"But I didn't print the money!" he claimed. "I got it from other people!"

The policeman didn't buy his excuse. "You have to turn over all the counterfeit money or you'll be facing time in jail."

He did so and the policeman left him. As he closed the door, he regretted the entire deal. He later told his friends about the story.

They responded, "If no one was able to differentiate between the two types of money, you should have told the police that the money you possessed was REAL. How do they know whether it's fake or real?"

They advised him to return to the police station, approach the cops, and get back the money. He mustered up the courage to head to the station, to present his case.

The policemen at the station didn't know anything about a seizure of counterfeit money. They showed him pictures of the local cops, but none of them looked like the "policeman" who came to his door.

"These are all the officers on the force?" he asked. "Yes. This is everybody who works in our precinct."

"Then who was the "policeman" who came to my door?" he asked. As he stood there, he realized that he was approached by the counterfeiters, what had transpired was: The "counterfeiters" hadn't given him fake money rather GENUINE, real dollars. The expert had been right; there was nothing to distinguish between the monies because they were all real. However, part of their plan was to stage an arrest as a "policeman."

Knowing that he would assume his "counterfeit" money to be essentially worthless, of course he would relinquish it if it saved him from jail. Hence, they got his money and their money back as well.

This is a remarkable story, but we can take a valuable lesson from it: The yetzer hara wants us to not value our mitzvos, causing us to give them up easily. If we really knew their inherent worth, we would not be so quick to give them up.

Had the buyer in the story valued his money properly, he wouldn't have given it up either. So too, through cherishing our mitzvos, we won't give them up and will be very happy people.

One Minute

"In your current situation, you may not be able to learn (Torah) six hours straight in depth, or even superficially – but can you learn for one minute? So, learn for a minute.

What's that worth? It's worth everlasting life." ~ Sod Hahischazkus.

Jews and Diamonds: 6 Facts by Dr. Y Alt Miller



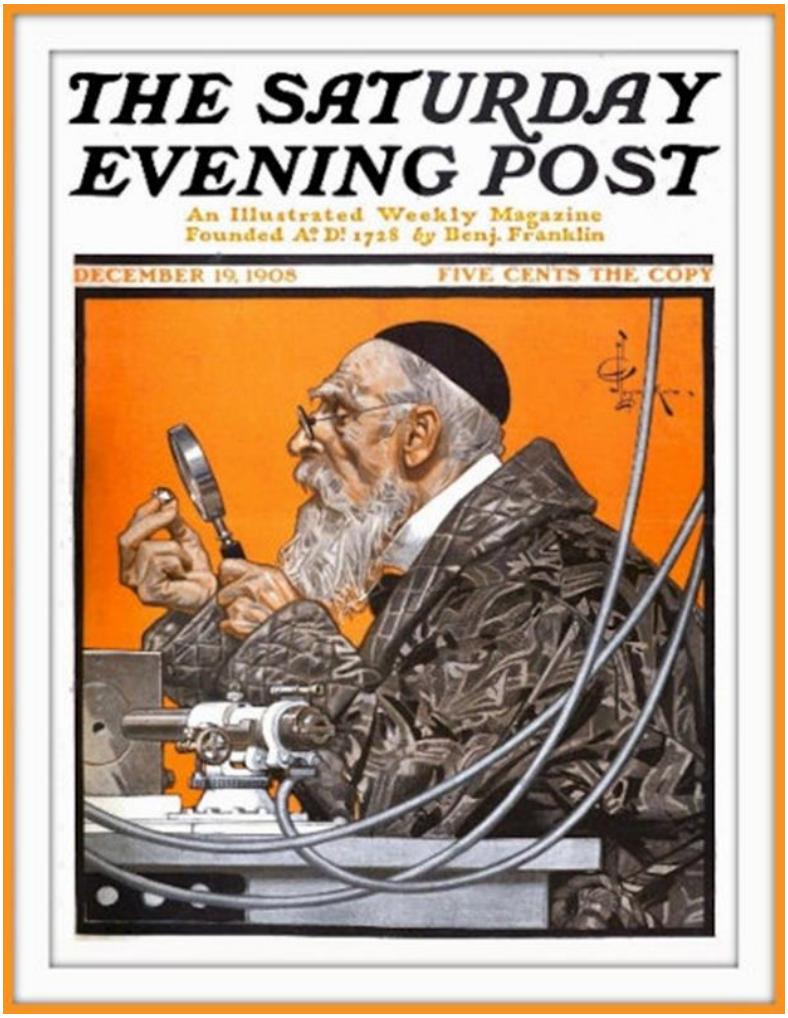
The world's diamond industry has been considered an intensely Jewish field. Here are six little-known facts about Jews and the diamond industry.

1. Jews Represented by a Diamond

The Torah describes a beautiful decoration that the High Priest, the *Kohen Gadol* who served in Jerusalem's ancient Jewish Temple, used to wear. Before he performed his holy duties, he would don a beautiful gold breastplate inlaid with 12 precious stones, each one representing a one of the 12 tribes of Israel. The diamond – *yahalom* in Hebrew – represented the tribe of Zevulun (Shemos 28:18).

In more modern times, the **Baal Shem Tov** (1704-1772), who founded the Hasidic branch of Judaism, compared Jewish people to a diamond. The parallels are many: Just as a diamond is rugged and unyielding, so too are the Jewish people, clinging to their faith and way of life despite all odds. And just as a diamond needs to be polished before it shines, each person needs to work hard to bring out their inner diamond and let it shine.

2. Early Diamond Traders



The earliest mentions of trading diamonds are found in 4th century BCE Sanskrit works. Diamonds were first discovered near the Golconda River in India, and for hundreds of years they were traded locally as a highly prized commodity.

Two of the earliest recorded diamond merchants outside of India were the Jewish brothers Abraham ben Yashar and Abu Nasr Chesed. Also known by their Arabic names Abu Sa'D Al-Tustari and Abu Nasr Fadl, they seemingly hailed from the large Jewish community in Persia. In the 11th century they're recorded as working in Egypt, supplying the royal family with luxury goods, including diamonds.

In Europe during the Middle Ages, Jews were well placed to become diamond traders. Restricted to money-lending in many areas, Jews became de facto bankers and pawn brokers to the rich, often receiving gems and other precious objects as payment when debts came due. Some Jews began to focus on gem polishing and trading.

Jewelry-making equipment is relatively small and portable, making it easy for Jews to pack up and move when local authorities crack down on local Jewish communities. Jewish traders also benefited from family connections across Europe and the Middle East, making it easier to conduct business in numerous countries.

The cities of Venice in modern-day Italy and Bruges in modern-day Belgium emerged as Europe's early diamond trading centers. Both towns boasted large Jewish communities, and Jews became major players in the Medieval diamond-trading industry.

3. Inventing the World's First Polished Diamonds

Polished diamonds as we know them only became possible in the 1400s, thanks to an invention by a Jewish diamond merchant named Lodewyk van Berken. Born in the Belgian town of Bruges, he moved to the nearby city of Antwerp.

Diamonds are the toughest gemstone and are extremely difficult to cut. van Berken invented a polishing wheel coated with a diamond dust mixed with olive oil. Called a *scaif*, this polishing wheel completely transformed the diamond industry.

Instead of rough, dull stones, diamonds suddenly became brilliantly shiny objects. Diamonds became much more popular and Antwerp's Jewish diamond trading companies – which kept his diamond-polishing technology a tightly-held trade secret – became even more central to the growing diamond industry.

4. Largest Diamond Mine in the World

Diamonds were discovered in Brazil in the 1730s, adding to the world's supply of this increasingly popular gem. However, the world's diamond trade changed irrevocably in 1867 with a major discovery in present-day South Africa.

Dutch Boers had recently settled the Kaapvaal Craton, near the confluence of the Orange and Vaal Rivers. Displacing the native Griqua people there, the Boers began farming and noticed that their soil was studded with whitish-grey rocks.

In 1867 a farmer named Schalk Niekerk picked up a pretty rock that his young son was playing with and scratched it across a windowpane. It left a mark, a sure sign that the stone was a diamond.

The rock turned out to be a 21.25 carat diamond, later named the Eureka, and it helped spark a huge diamond rush in the area, near the present-day town of Kimberly.



The Eureka

Amidst the frenzy of thousands of diamond prospectors, diamond syndicates began to form. One prominent miner was a formerly penniless Jew from the Yiddish-speaking East End of London who sailed to South Africa to try his luck.

Born Barnett Isaacs, he used to perform as a juggling clown in London's music halls and was introduced with the tagline "And Barney too!" – he soon changed his name to Barnato, which sounded like his signature introduction.

In South Africa, Barnato began working with German Jews Alfred Beit and Ernest Oppenheimer to consolidate their mining work. In 1888, they eventually formed a partnership with Cecil John Rhodes, a wealthy Englishman who later became prime minister of the Cape Colony, called De Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd.

No longer owned by its founding families, De Beers remains the world's largest diamond trading company today by far. A majority of diamonds mined today continue to come from southern Africa, including Botswana, South Africa, and Namibia. Jewish-owned firms continue to play an important role in running mining in the area and

exporting stones to Europe, Israel, India, and elsewhere for polishing and re-export.

5. Death and Rebirth

During the Renaissance, the major centers of the diamond trade coincided with the large Jewish population centers. Diamonds were sent first to London, then to Antwerp and Amsterdam for polishing. Jews controlled much of this trade. Throughout the 1800s, Antwerp steadily eclipsed Amsterdam as the hub of diamond polishing and trading, eventually becoming the world's diamond capital. Jewish life flourished there.

With the rise of Nazism in the 1930s, many of Belgium's leading diamond traders fled, bringing their expertise and business connections with them. Cuba, New York, and the land of Israel emerged as major centers of the global diamond trade.

In May 1940, when Germany invaded Belgium, about 50,000 Jews lived in Antwerp, the diamond hub. Nazis imprisoned non-Belgian Jews who'd tried to flee to safety in Antwerp, but for months they largely left Belgian passport-holders alone in the city. Jewish diamond traders were even encouraged to continue working under Nazi control.

The situation deteriorated further on April 10, 1941, when local Belgians – whipped up by Nazi propaganda – launched a vicious pogrom in Antwerp's Jewish quarter. By 1943, the Nazis in charge of Antwerp had decided that all Jews were to be deported to death camps.

Zionist youth groups managed to smuggle some Jews to safety in Spain and Switzerland. Approximately 3,000 Jews were hidden in Antwerp during the Holocaust. 60% of Antwerp's Jews perished. Altogether, 28,000 Belgian Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.

From the ashes, Belgian's Jews began to rebuild their shattered communities. Today, approximately 20,000 Jews call Antwerp home, many of them Hasidic. Antwerp has been called the last remaining *shtetle* (Yiddish-speaking town) in Europe.

There are many real challenges facing the Jewish community there today, including declining revenue from the diamond trade. Yet this centuries-old slice of Jewish life continues, with Jewish diamond merchants importing rough stones, then polishing diamonds in local workshops before exporting them, just as they have for generations.

6. Diamond Centers in Israel and New York

Indian diamond traders and polishers have largely eclipsed Jews, and India is by far the world's largest exporter of polished diamonds.

In 2021, India exported $24.7 billion worth of polished diamonds. The United States ranked second, exporting $14.8 billion worth of diamonds. Belgium exported $12.5 billion worth of polished diamonds and Israel, also a major player in the industry, exported $8.8 billion worth of polished diamonds. (The next-largest diamond exporter, Russia, exported only half as much.).

In many nations, the diamond industry remains an intensely Jewish one. A recent *New York Times* article describes the diamond district in New York, the destination of 90% of all diamond imports into the United States:

The jewelry district in New York emerged in the 1800s as a cluster of shops in Lower Manhattan. Later on, Jewish diamond merchants fleeing Europe before World War II began setting up on 47th Street. Much of the industry's roots in Orthodox Jewish parts of Eastern Europe is reflected in the block's own vocabulary, largely Yiddish. A "strop" is a second-rate stone that won't sell; it's "*khazeray*" or "*shlok*" – garbage….

This secret world is revealed on the upper floors above the showrooms in a honeycomb of cramped workshops, retail stalls and

anonymous office suites. Here, the polishers, sorters, appraisers, graders and bench jewelers toil… High-end pieces that end up for sale at Tiffany and Harry Winston often begin their lives here as raw material…

For generations, Jewish diamond merchants and artisans have defined the industry, creating beautiful jewelry. As the industry shifts to new workers in new countries, it's worth taking a moment to learn about the rich history of Jewish diamond workers, and to take a look at the Jewish family businesses that continue to work in the diamond trade today.

Who Is Afraid Of The Dark?



In **R' Shlomo Freifeld's** yeshiva, there was a boy that was caught smoking on Shabbos. The boy was summoned to R' Freifeld's office whereupon R' Freifeld began to cry.

The boy thought that R' Freifeld was distraught because now it would give the yeshiva a bad name.

R' Freifeld told the boy, "I am crying because what you did was my fault. How was I unable to bring out your greatness? Where did I mess up that I could not let you see who you really are?"

There is a saying, "***We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark. The real tragedy of life are men that are afraid of the light.***"

Working on our Middos



Rav A. Leib Scheinbaum writes that one's friends have a powerful effect on a person. However, we must make sure that this is a positive effect, and not one that will take him away from Hashem, Chas V'Shalom.

Rav Scheinbaum relates a story that defines true friendship: Two men were employed by the same firm for many years. They appeared to be very close with each other, and that is what people thought.

After many years, one of them was transferred to another city. People came over to commiserate with the remaining man, as he was apparently losing his friend.

The man told them, "He was not my friend. He was nothing more than an acquaintance."

The others were surprised and said, "But you laughed together on many occasions, and you shared so many good times together!"

The man thought for a moment, and replied, "But we never cried together! A good friend is available through thick and thin. He is a tower of support and respect. He would never violate his friend's trust, and he would never do anything that might cause him harm of any kind, even if they do not share all the same perspectives. That is true friendship. Someone who is there not only in the good times, but even in the bad times!"

"Impossible is not a fact. It's an opinion."

The Importance of Escorting Guests



In Parshat Vayera, Avraham Avinu performs many acts of chesed, loving kindness. As soon as he sees three strangers (who are really angels) passing by, he rushes to greet them, feed them and make them feel comfortable.

One act of chesed that we may overlook is that when Avraham sends off his guests, he personally escorts them out.

The Rambam in Hilchot Evel (Laws of Mourning) 14:1 teaches:

The reward for escorting a stranger is greater than any reward. It is a practice introduced by our father Abraham, a way of kindness which was habitual with him. He served food and drink to wayfarers and escorted them. Hospitality to wayfarers is greater than welcoming the Divine Presence.

What is the reason for this extra layer of hospitality?

When guests see that the host is going out of his or her way to escort them, even after their visit is over, they are made to feel that the host was sincerely happy to have them over.

Radak explains that Avraham walked to see them off, to keep them company for a while, to accompany them.

The Torah teaches good manners, that one should not dismiss a guest abruptly, but by walking with him indicates that one regrets the time had come to part from one another.

The Talmud, Sotah 46b explains the importance of the mitzvah of providing an escort: A Braita stated: Rabbi Meir would say: We

compel a person to escort his fellow from the city. For the reward for fulfilling the mitzvah of escort is without limit.

Rabbi Aryeh Levin z"l whose life story is documented in the book "A Tzadik in Our Time" was especially known for escorting people in the streets of Jerusalem.

Rabbi Zeidel Epstein and Horav Moshe Feinstein זצ"ל spent a summer up in the Catskills. When it was the end of the summer, Rabbi Zeidel Epstein prepared to go home a few days before Rav Moshe.

When Rav Moshe saw that Reb Epstein was leaving, he ran after him. Reb Epstein asked Rav Moshe if everything was ok, and Rav Moshe answered that he was running after him because he wanted to perform the mitzvah of escorting someone as they leave!

May the time come soon when we can once again safely host and be hosted, giving us the opportunity to perform the extra layer of chesed to respectfully escort our guests at the end of their visit. (Covid)

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

A man once complained to the **Gerrer Rebbe** that his son was not learning Torah very well. He said, "I've tried everything. I've tried encouragement, I've tried incentives, I've tried punishment, and I've tried taking things away. Nothing works. What should I do? I want my son to learn Torah!"

The Gerrer Rebbe asked the man just one question, "Do you learn Torah yourself? If not, all the speeches in the world will not make any difference. Children learn by example, and if he sees his father learning Torah, he will learn Torah as well!"

Reb Shmuel Donn - Remez

① פרשת בחקתי - תשע"ו

"אם בחקתי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם." (כו,ג)

"If you will follow My decrees and keep My mitzvos and you will perform them ..."

The Torah guarantees, that if we properly adhere to the mitzvos, we will receive Bracha in our lives.

Of course we must observe the Torah with **Love**, and not as if it is a burden on us. The Torah is truth, and it is our way of life.

The "אורח חיים" notes, that the last two words in our pasuk provide us with a רמז to stress this idea ...

"ועשיתם אותם"

מ-ה א-הבתי ת-ורתך

The Torah and mitzvos should always be performed out of love.

And it's not by chance, that the word "אותם" share the very same letters as - אמת!

Torah is the only truth, and we embrace it every day by living it with love. All the brachos from Hashem will follow. Parnassah, peace, success, and best of all - The Shechina will rest among us.



Chizuk – Inspiration

There is perhaps no greater example of dishonesty in the business world than the Ford Pinto. During production, the Ford Motor Company discovered that the design of the car's fuel tank had a critical error in it that left the fuel tank vulnerable to ruptures in the event of an accident. This could cause deadly fires.

Ford could have chosen to admit the design flaw, recall the affected vehicles and fix the fuel tank. This would have been an honest and ethical thing to do. Instead, Ford chose not to disclose the design flaw and fix the problem because they felt it would be too expensive to remedy.

In the end, Ford's course of action was more expensive than doing the right thing to begin with. Engine fires led to many pay-outs due to deaths and injuries caused by the design flaw. Ford had to recall almost two million vehicles and had to settle very costly lawsuits out of court.

This exemplifies the words of Chazal (See Rashi Mishlei 12:19) – "**שהשקר אין לו רגלים**" – dishonesty has no legs to stand on. It will eventually be found out and lead to grave consequences.

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger



"What is Torah Sheb'al Peh? - Torah from those who were masters (baalim) over their mouths (al peh)!"

Parshah Pearls (*Ma'ayanah shel Torah*)

The Eternal Scapegoats

וְנָתַתִּי שָׁלוֹם בָּאָרֶץ וּשְׁכַבְתֶּם וְאֵין מַחֲרִיד"And I will make peace in the land and you will go to bed without fear" (26:6).

When there is peace in the world, you will sleep in peace. But when there are wars, you will not be able to.

The Or Ha'Chayim explains, because in time of war, the Jews, the eternal scapegoats, invariably suffer, whether they are directly involved or not – as we saw in Europe during World War 2 and today in Ukraine.

Happy Dreams

Chazal tell us that Dovid Hamelech never had a pleasant dream. The constant wars that he fought, it seems, stole his peace of mind, even to the point that they affected his sleep.

Hence the Torah writes here that when there is peace in the land, the people will be able to go to bed with peace of mind.



The Coronation and Advice from Rav Elyashiv zatzal's Grandfather By Rabbi Yair Hoffman

In the aftermath of King Charles coronation, some of the press had actually hired lip readers to see what King Charles was saying just before the coronation. The king was caught on camera speaking in, "what appeared to be a frustrated fashion" according to the papers, while waiting for his coronation to

commence. This was while he was seated alongside Camilla waiting for permission to begin the coronation ceremony.

Apparently, William and Kate, the Prince and Princess of Wales arrived late to the ceremony and were forced to join the procession behind King Charles rather than before him, along with the rest of the royals and hundreds of guests. Some of the papers even hinted that the King should seek instruction anger management.



In secular circles it is thought that anger management programs first originated in the 1970's by clinical psychologist Dr. Raymond Novaco, a professor at UC Irvine.

Interestingly enough, Rav Elyashiv zatzal's grandfather, **Rav Moshe Levinson zt"l** developed an anger management program well before that. In 1910, Rav Levinson printed his highly developed anger management program in a sefer entitled, "M'aneh Rach." It was published in Piotrków Trybunalski, in Congress Poland – then a puppet state of the Czarist Russian Empire. It was Rav Levinson's third sefer.

Background To the Sefer

The sefer had a haskamah from the **Ridbaz**, the Av Beis Din of Slutzk. The Ridbaz, however, left to America and then to Eretz Yisroel in 1900 – so Rav Levinson must have been working on it for a while and probably finished it well before 1900.

The M'aneh Rach was carefully analyzed in a remarkable book entitled "Fundamentals of Jewish Conflict Resolution by Dr. Howard Kaminsky. Rav Levinson states that there is nothing particularly new in his program – rather he gathered together all of the Rabbinic

statements that pertain to anger, and he explains them. He also, however, organizes and arranges them in such a manner that they constitute a genuine program. In addition, Rav Levinson provides advice, strategies, and suggestions.

Rav Levinson writes that if someone reviews his work two or three times, he should be able to conquer anger. He writes that the fact that they are all gathered together and explained will provide the person with much greater clarity as to the matter and will thus be able to overcome the impediments to overcoming an anger problem.

Rav Levinson writes that if one combines both strategies in cognition and as well as behaviour – he will succeed in overcoming anger. One must also engage in introspection and develop self-awareness. Rav Levinson provides strategies to gain this self-awareness.

A source that Rav Levinson used in his M'aneh Rach, is the Reishis Chochma by Rav Eliyahu de Vidas. He lived in the 1500's some 400 years before Rav Levinson.

So what does Rav Levinson advise to do?

- Avoid people and situations that are sources of stress.
- When you feel that you are getting angry – don't respond.
- When it is necessary to, in fact, respond – let it percolate overnight. This suggestion is also found in the sefer Chassidim – siman 83 and Siman 655, Dr. Kaminsky points out.
- When it is necessary to respond it should be done in a gentle and soft tone.
- One should give the other person the benefit of the doubt.
- One should try to take the other person's perspective rather than blast them.
- Time should be spent thinking about how bad it is to lose one's temper.
- Time should also be spent thinking about how great the merit is to control one's anger.

- One should be aware at the tip of one's tongue, both the short term and long-term implications of losing one's temper.
- One should put into perspective the comment that caused him or her to get upset in the first place.
- One should be aware of the notion of mida k'neged mida – that what goes around comes around. If you are quick to forgive and overlook – then that is how Hashem will deal with you in the future. If, however, you jump on every possible interpretation of a slip up of another person – then that is how Hashem will react to your foibles, slip ups and issues.
- One should also be aware that everything that Hashem does is for a reason – including what had just happened that caused you to become angry. You, however, have the capability of controlling your response.

Rav Levinson places an extraordinary emphasis on the notion of metinus – deliberation. It is a theme that he stresses time and again. In his view the idea of slowing down of our reactions to provocations.

In the period of Sefira, especially after the period of BaHaB sets in – it is very worthwhile for us to strive to develop our character traits. The very best middah to start with is kaas – anger. This is because it can affect so many other people. Our anger can destroy marriages, our children's lives, our work atmosphere, and so many other areas of life.

One must realize that Chazal compare anger to Avodah Zarah – idol – worship for a reason. For those who will find the Hebrew in M'aneh Rach too difficult, a fascinating overview of this work as well as other similar ones can be found in Dr. Kaminsky's Fundamentals of Jewish Conflict Resolution – chapter nine – entitled Jewish Anger Management.

למודי משה

בהר / בחוקתי - גליון קע"א

Why Rabbeinu Tam Was Called So

Rabbeinu Tam, a grandson of Rashi who lived in the 12th century, is one of the greatest and most well-known *Rishonim*, whose legal opinions and explanations of the Gemara are still widely quoted and debated today. It is interesting to note that the name given to him at birth was actually Yaakov. How did he come to be called by the peculiar appellation "Rabbeinu Tam?"

The *sefer K'Motzei Shalal Rav* relates that someone once had a dream in which he received a fascinating explanation for this historical curiosity. When a married woman dies, her husband inherits her belongings.

The *Toras Kohanim* explains that the curse: **וְתַם לָרִיק כֹּחֲכֶם** – "***your strength will be spent in vain***" (*Vayikra* 26:33) – refers to a man giving a large dowry to his daughter for her marriage, only for her to die shortly thereafter, thereby causing the possessions and money for which her father worked so hard to be transferred out of his family.

One of the Rabbinical decrees that Rabbeinu Tam enacted was that the estate of a woman who dies during the first year of marriage will be inherited by her father (or his next-of-kin) rather than her husband (*Sefer HaYashar* 579).

Because his actions brought an end to the curse of *v'tam larik kochachem*, he became universally known as Rabbeinu Tam.

"Courage is not having the strength to go on. It is going on when you don't have the strength."

Tzedokah Consistency

וְכָל־עֶרְכְּךָ יִהְיֶה בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ "Every valuation shall be made according to the holy shekel". (Vayikra 27:25)

Sometimes wealthy people excuse themselves from their *tzedokah* obligations by claiming that their business is going through a difficult period. To determine whether such a claim is legitimate and they are being consistent, they have to examine whether they have made cutbacks to their own private expenses, or whether they are still living a life of luxury. If the latter is the case, they have no reason to cut back on their charitable donations.

This *pasuk* may be taken as hinting at this idea. If a person wants to cut back on the "holy shekel" (*tzedokah*) he should only do so if he simultaneously cuts back "every valuation", meaning all his other needs. (**R' Moshe Sternbuch**)

Going Out to Work

לֹא יְבַקֵּר בֵּין־טוֹב לָרָע וְלֹא יְמִירֶנּוּ וְאִם־הָמֵר יְמִירֶנּוּ וְהָיָה־הוּא וּתְמוּרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה־קֹדֶשׁ "He shall not inspect [a tithed animal] for a good or a bad one, nor shall he offer a substitute for it. And if he does replace it, then [both] that one and its replacement are holy". (Vayikra 27:33)

Rav Moshe Feinstein expounded this as follows. Ideally, a person in full-time learning should not leave his holy occupation for the workplace, but if he nevertheless does so, for some legitimate reason, he must make sure that this "replacement", his new situation, remains holy, by continuing to set aside fixed times for learning and conducting himself in the workplace in a way that befits a *ben* Torah.

"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do."



R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l (T' D'kra) would say: **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ**- Why does the Torah mention in the berachos here that we will have what to eat, our trees will bear fruit, and the like? Why not state like in Parshas Ki Savo that we will be blessed with all sorts of riches?

Over there, the Torah was talking to all of Klal Yisroel, therefore, Moshe blessed everyone with wealth and riches. However, here, the Torah is talking to Talmidei Chachamim, as it says 'Im Bechukosai Talaichu' - shetiyu ameilim baTorah! Torah scholars don't look for wealth and riches - they are not blessings to them but curses. However, they do wish to have food to eat and fruit bearing trees."

We Receive Goodness in Accordance With Our Mitzvos

וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם וְנָתְנָה הָאָרֶץ יְבוּלָהּ ***And I will give your rains in their time and the land will yield its crops***. (26:4)

The Ahavas Shalom explains that it is well-known that we receive goodness from Hashem in accordance with the level of our Torah and tefillah.

The rains are, therefore, called '***our rain***" because the amount of blessed rain we receive is determined by how much Torah we learn and how many mitzvos we do.

"Just as your hand, held before the eye, can hide the tallest mountain, so this small earthly life keeps us from seeing the vast radiance that fills the core of the universe." ~ Rebbe Nachman Of Breslov.

L'Maaseh

It has been said that **Rav Moshe Feinstein's** greatness was not so much the quantity of Torah he knew or to the depth he understood it, but to the level of ameilus (toil) he invested in it.

Indeed, learning 49 daf of gemara every Friday night, 18 perakim of mishnayos every single day, and a myriad of other commitments certainly attests to R' Moshe's toil in Torah study, and it was because of this, that he achieved so much.

Once, someone asked him for a beracha to succeed in his Torah study and R' Moshe replied that Hashem already gave the beracha in parshas Bechukosai, that if you toil, you will gain much beracha.

Once, in the middle of a shiur, a thunderstorm broke out and the bochurim started making berachos on the thunder and lightning, but R' Moshe didn't stop and only said the beracha after concluding the shiur.

When asked why, the expected answer was that it was bitul Torah, but R' Moshe insisted that he hadn't noticed the storm until he had stopped learning!

The Siddur Speaks

The Baal Shem Tov, zt"l, was once asked to speak to a group of people in a certain Shul in order to give them Chizuk, as they seemed to be having difficulty with concentrating during Davening, and they would sometimes talk during the Tefilos.

He arrived at the Shul, walked in, and looked around. He said, "It is difficult for me to sit down in this Shul, because of all the Tefilos that are accumulated here."

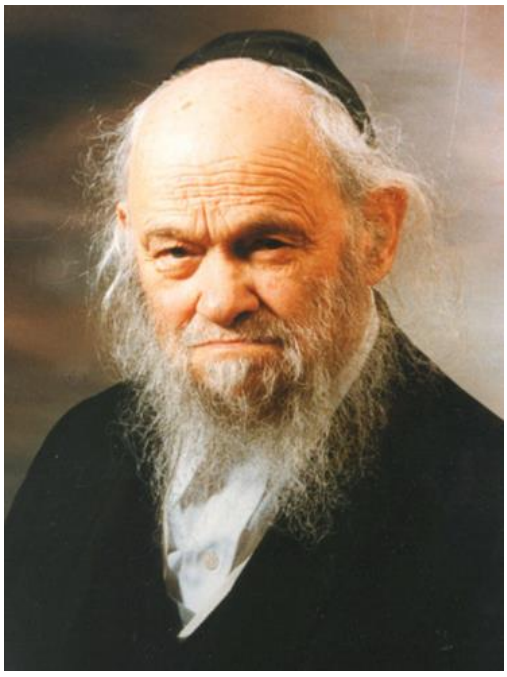
The people thought that the Baal Shem Tov was praising them and the manner they Davened in. However, the Baal Shem Tov said, "If only you would Daven L'Sheim Shamayim, for the sake of Hashem,

then your Tefilos would rise up to Shamayim. Sadly, your Tefilos are centred around yourselves, and you Daven with passion and Kavanah only when you are in a difficult situation. That is why your Tefilos are stuck in here, because there is no Kavanah in them. Your Tefilos have nowhere to go, and they just float around within the Shul. This building is full of empty Tefilos, and I have nowhere to sit down!"

Would You Give Away Your Bread in a Concentration Camp? By Rabbi Dovid Campbell



Life in the concentration camps was inherently dehumanizing. The work was crippling, the hunger was unimaginable, and the threat of death was constant. Under these conditions, it was difficult to focus on anything but survival. The young **Rabbi Gershon Liebman**, who would eventually become a powerful force for Jewish education in postwar Europe, quickly recognized the great need to preserve his sense of humanity.



Throughout his time in the camps, he maintained the practice of never eating his entire meal at once, always leaving some food on the plate. This simple action reminded him that he could still behave with refinement and moderation, even here. In a place where people swallowed whatever food they could find, as quickly as they could find it, it

seemed absurd to bother with something like this. But Rabbi Liebman refused to be dragged down by external circumstances, no matter how hellish they were.

A similar story is told by **Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky**, who survived the Soviet labor camps in Siberia. Early one morning before the other prisoners were awake, Rabbi Galinsky awoke to a strange sight – an older Lithuanian prisoner was quietly donning a military uniform that he had hidden in a work satchel.

Complete with impressive ribbons and medals, it was the full-dress uniform of a Lithuanian general. He began to quietly bark orders and salute the air. He returned the uniform to his satchel when the other prisoners began to wake.

Rabbi Galinsky couldn't contain his curiosity. The Lithuanian was initially embarrassed to have been seen, but he eventually explained: He had been a general in the Lithuanian army, a decorated military hero with tens of thousands of soldiers under his command. Then the Soviets came, and it had all disappeared in an instant.

"They sent me here into exile, to this miserable hole, and they're doing everything they can to turn me into a wretched prisoner so that I'll forget my former glory. But I don't intend to forget!"

Rabbi Galinsky absorbed a powerful lesson from these words – the same one Rabbi Liebman embodied with his small plate. Circumstances might rob us of our comfort, our glory, or even our basic human necessities, but no circumstance defines our self-worth. We can always remind ourselves of who we are, using the mirror of our own proper conduct.

Pass the Bread

Rabbi Liebman would often share his bread with other prisoners, nursing them back to health from the brink of starvation. It's difficult for us to understand what an enormous sacrifice this was. Imagine a patient suffering from pneumonia, struggling to fill his

lungs with air, who nevertheless chooses to share his oxygen tank with others. The small daily ration of bread was their tenuous link to life.





Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks, recounts an unlikely encounter he had with Rabbi Noson Tzvi Finkel, the head of the Mir Yeshiva seminary. Rabbi Finkel wanted to convey the Holocaust's enduring lesson for our times, and he did so by portraying the Jewish prisoners' first night in the camps:

"As they went into the area to sleep, only one person was given a blanket for every six. The person who received the blanket, when he went to bed, had to decide, 'Am I going to push the blanket to the five other people who did not get one, or am I going to pull it toward myself to stay warm?' It was during this defining moment that we learned the power of the human spirit, because we pushed the blanket to five others."

As Rabbi Finkel concluded his meeting with Mr. Schultz, he told him, "Take your blanket. Take it back to America and push it to five other people."

In the midst of unimaginable hardship, when we would expect individuals to be at their most selfish and cruel, we discover what we are truly made of. Rabbi Liebman took himself out of the picture and focused on the needs of others.

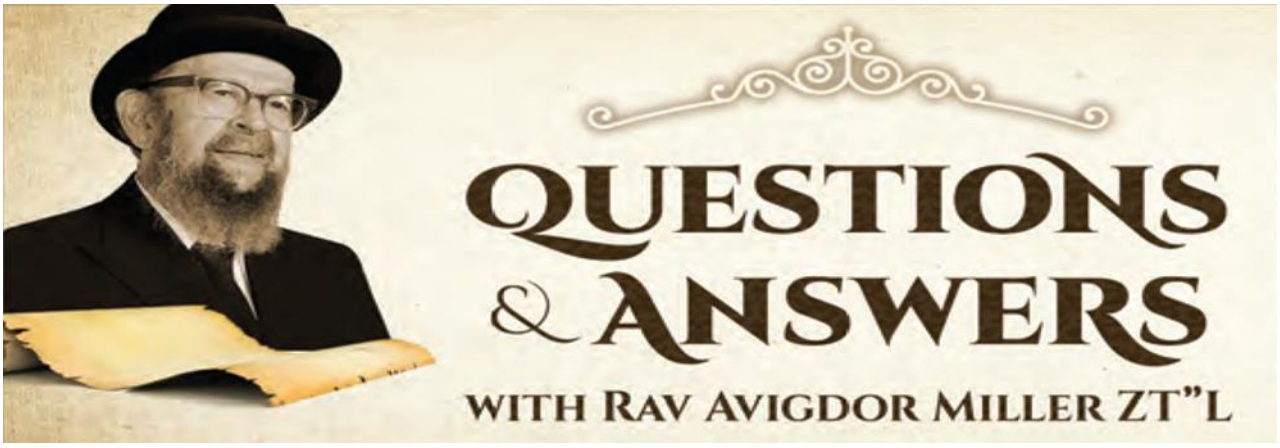
In the Buchenwald concentration camp, it was not unusual for the prisoners to succumb to starvation and exhaustion. The Nazis would place their bodies in a designated room until they could be buried the next day. But Rabbi Liebman suspected that some of these poor souls were not actually dead. Risking his life, he crept into the pitch-black room at night and, crawling among the bodies, searched for signs of life.

Sometimes he would feel warmth in a body, awaken the man, and help him back to his barracks. On one occasion, a body seemed totally dead, but Rabbi Liebman felt a small tremble in the man's lip. Not knowing the man's barracks, he brought him back to his own, where he massaged the man back to consciousness. But he was still too sick to be moved and this created a terrifying problem.

Officially the man would be listed as dead, and there were now the wrong number of prisoners in the barracks. Additionally, he would no longer receive food rations. Rabbi Liebman and the other prisoners chose to hide him and feed him from their own meager rations. The man survived and was eventually reunited with his wife after the war.

There were so many reasons *not* to attempt these nightly rescue missions, but Rabbi Liebman was looking for the opposite: He wanted an excuse to try, and he found it in even the smallest tremble of life.

Whether saving a single soul or pioneering Jewish education after the Holocaust, Rabbi Gershon Liebman embodied the beautiful words of Anne Frank: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."





How does one keep from being depressed during times of trouble?

Now that's a general question and it's like somebody who comes to a physician and says, "How can I be well?" You have to tell him first what you're suffering from, and you have to tell him in detail. And after he thinks of the symptoms and he studies your case, he may be able to help you.

But since it's a general question we'll give a general answer.

There are so many positive things in life that a depressed person should consider, thoughts that if you concentrate on them you'll begin to see how fortunate you are.

But we'll just give one suggestion. The first thing to do if you're depressed is to go to a cemetery. And stand outside and think who is better off. Or take a walk on Coney Island Avenue and you'll pass three funeral parlors within a half hour. They call them funeral homes so you might think that inside, their customers are going to remain there for the next fifty years. It's a home so maybe they will serve them meals, and their children will visit them there. No, no, it's not that kind of home. So, as you pass by think, who is better off?

Look at the blue sky. You know they're all low buildings, the funeral homes on Coney Island Avenue, and you can look at the blue sky over them. And so, you look at the funeral home and then you look at the

beautiful sky. If you walk by or you drive by, take a look at the big blue expanse of sky overhead. You can look at it and see it and enjoy it. What are you depressed about? The ones in the home, they should be depressed. They can't enjoy the blue sky anymore.

The Man in a Wheelchair

If you wish, I'll give you the address of a man who comes out of his house every morning; somebody wheels him out in a wheelchair. And he has a blanket over his lap. Sometimes the blanket is raised up and you see there are no feet. He doesn't have any feet at all. And then look at your two legs. Let's say you have arthritic legs, okay. But you want to exchange your arthritic legs for his?

And therefore, depressed people should undertake a course of study and see those who don't have what they have, and you'll see that your depression is actually nothing. It's a minor matter, and it's really silly. In fact, you should be so happy that you should dance for joy.

This Shabbos I was saying in the shul that for those who are depressed we should invite twenty of these people into the shul to testify. One of them is the man without legs. Roll him in with his wheelchair and let him give a speech to you depressed people and let's see who should be depressed.

Roll in another man; he'll walk in tapping his way with a white cane. And let's see who is depressed, you or he?

And you'll summon twenty such witnesses and after that treatment if you're still depressed then you're not depressed – you're insane!

And the truth is depression is a form of insanity. There are people who are perfectly healthy. They have no serious troubles in life, and they're depressed. And you try to discover what it is and they themselves don't know.

So, it's insanity. That's already a different problem, insanity. But those people who still are reasonable and they're depressed anyhow, they're able to treat themselves with this method. Like the Chovos

Halevavos says, always look at those who are beneath you in good fortune. And there are plenty of them.

But for first aid, for quick aid, as I said, you should go to the cemetery and stand there and think about it.

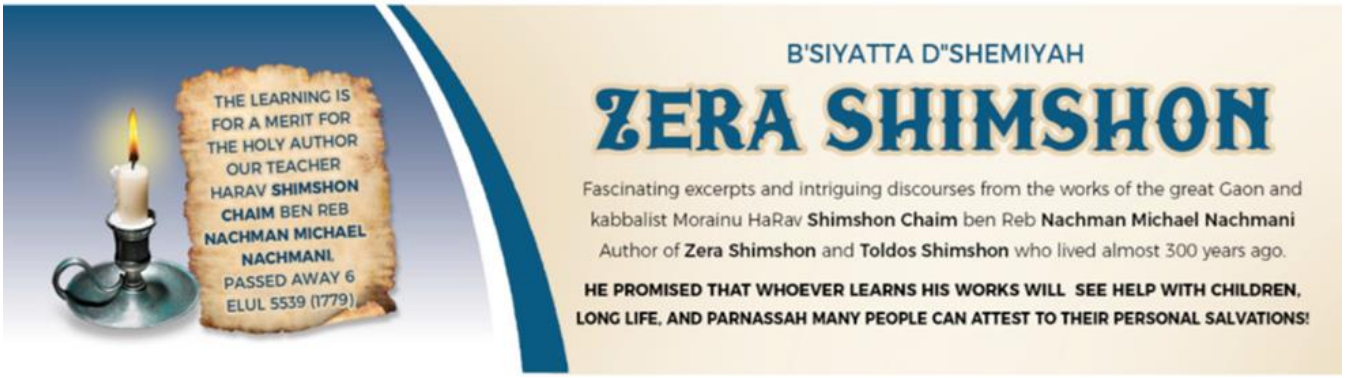
I Work in the Yeshiva *[At the ArtScroll Shabbos Table.]*



This story took place many years ago, on the first day of the new zeman at Ponovezh Yeshivah. A new student was walking toward the yeshivah, carrying some heavy luggage. He stood and looked around in all directions. Where was the yeshivah building? Where was the dorm?

Then he saw a man walking. He must live around here, the bachur thought. He went to the man and asked, "Where is the yeshivah?" The answer was quick to come. "I am also walking to the yeshivah. Come with me. I work in the yeshivah. Maybe I can take one of your suitcases to make it easier for you?"

The boy was happy to agree. The two of them continued walking until they reached the yeshivah, each of them carrying one heavy bag. Imagine that bachur's shock the next day, when he discovered that the man who "worked in the yeshivah," and who had carried his heavy suitcase, was none other than the Rosh Yeshivah, **Rav Gershon Edelstein** himself… !



אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם ***If you go in my laws and keep my commandments and perform them.*** (26:3)

The Zera Shimshon asks - why does the Torah have to say the same thing in three different ways? Seemingly, going in the way of Hashem's law, keeping His commandments and performing them is all one and the same. If so why did the Torah reiterate this in three ways?

The Zera Shimshon explains than in order for a person to properly do Hashem's will, he must both love good and hate evil. For if a person lacks love of the mitzvos, even if he is careful not to sin, he will fall short in his positive fulfilment of Hashem's commandments.

The same is true the other way. Even if a person has a love for mitzvos, still if he doesn't learn to hate sin, he will eventually fall into sin. Based on this, the Zera Shimshon relearns the aforementioned passuk.

The only way that one can come to 'perform them', which is mentioned at the end of the passuk, is if he first learns how to hate anything that deviates from Hashem's will - go in my laws (only) and develop a love for the mitzvos - keep my commandments, then indeed - you will perform them. Thus, the passuk is not repeating the same idea thrice, rather it is teaching one the correct disposition to be able to properly keep the Torah.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

וְזָכַרְתִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יַעֲקֹוב וְאַף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי יִצְחָק וְאַף אֶת־בְּרִיתִי אַבְרָהָם אֶזְכֹּר וְהָאָרֶץ אֶזְכֹּר ***And I will recall my covenant with Yaakov*** (26:42)

Interestingly, Yaakov Avinu's name is spelled here with an additional Vav. Rashi writes that there are five places which Yaakov Avinu's name is spelled like this and five places where Eliyahu Hanavi's name - **אליהו** is missing a Vav - **אליה**.

Rashi explains these Vav's that appears in Yaakov Aviun's name are the ones that are missing from Eliyahu Hanavi's name. Yaakov Avinu 'took' these Vav's as collateral to ensure that Eliyahu Hanavi would come to notify the Jewish people that the redemption is imminent.

The Zera Shimshon asks - why is it so important to Yaakov Avinu that the Jewish people are notified before the coming of Moshiach?

He explains that the Yalkut (Malachi §595) says that the redemption will not happen if the Jewish people do not repent, and they will only repent when Eliyahu Hanavi comes. Thus, it is very understandable why Yaakov Avinu is so insistent on Eliyahu Hanavi coming to let the Jewish people know that the redemption is imminent since only then will they repent and the Geula will finally come.

The Zera Shimshon also explains why Yaakov Avinu took specifically five Vav's.

He writes that since the Gemara (Eruvin 43b) says that Moshiach cannot come on Erev Shabbos and Shabbos, thus, he can only come on five days of the week. Therefore, he took one Vav for each day that Moshiach can come.

"Strive to be who Hashem wants you to be, not what others want to see." ~ R Zecharia Wallerstein.

The Zera Shimshon – The Limud that Brings Yeshuos

וְהָאָ֖רֶץ תֵּעָזֵ֣ב מֵהֶ֑ם ***And the land will be bereft of them.*** (26:43)

The Mishna says (Avos 5:7), that the Jews are punished with exile on account of the sins of idol worship, adultery, murder and for not keeping Shemita.

The Zera Shimshon asks why the sin of not resting the land during Shemita is so severe that it is grouped together with the three cardinal sins that one must give up his life rather than transgress them?

The Zera Shimshon answers based on the following halacha. The Gemara says (Baba Basra 54a), that the rules issued by the king must be followed. The Shulchan Aruch rules (Choshen Mishpat §369:8), that this is particularly true with taxes that the kings demand must be paid for owning land in his country.

The Sma explains that since the land is his, he has the absolute right to demand that taxes are paid. In fact, everyone understands that even a private person who owns land can charge others who wish to benefit from his land. By not keeping Shemita, one is in essence declaring that Hashem is not the owner of the land and therefore does not have the jurisdiction to command us not to work it during Shemita. This is equivalent to denying Hashem's sovereignty on the world.

It is now very well understood why this sin is grouped together with the three cardinal sins, one of which is idol worship which denies Hashem's sovereignty.

Torah U'Tefilah by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg

The Better Book and the Master of Forgiveness



Rav Eliyahu Chaim Meisel, zt"l, was the Rav of Lodz and one of the Gedolei HaDor. In addition to his greatness in Torah, he was also great in performing acts of Chesed, as he spent much effort trying to ease the troubles of those who were less fortunate.

It was common at the time that poor Jewish children were taken away and forced to join the Russian army, but this never happened while Rav Eliyahu Chaim was the Rav. Once, Rav Meisel met with **Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, zt"l**, and Rav Meisel praised the Sefer Achiezer which Rav Chaim Ozer had recently published.

Rav Chaim Ozer asked Rav Meisel, "When will we see a Sefer from you?"

Rav Meisel responded by emptying his pockets of little folded pieces of paper. They were promissory notes from loans he had signed to enable him to help widows and orphans. He piled them together and held them up and said, "This is my Sefer. I am so busy with matters of this nature that I don't have the time to complete a Sefer."

With tears in his eyes, Rav Chaim Ozer responded, "My Sefer doesn't even come close to your Sefer!"

Rav Chaim's Gemach



Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, ran a Gemach (interest free loan fund) in his home for many years. In recent years, Rav Chaim asked his son to take over running it. As Rav Chaim handed over all the documents and information, Rav Chaim shared an important piece of information with his son.

He said, "The Arizal tells us that if someone lends another person money and the money is not paid back, then both of them, the borrower and the lender, are forced to return to this world so that the borrower can repay his loan. The reason the lender has to return," explained Rav Chaim, "is because he is also responsible since he did not forgive the debt."

Rav Chaim handed his son a list of names and said, "These names are the people who borrowed money from the Gemach and have never repaid the loan. They haven't paid until now, and chances are that it may never be repaid. I would like to forgive their debts, but this money belongs to Tzedakah, and I'm not able to do that.

"Therefore, I am giving you money from my own savings," and he handed him a nice amount of money. He told him, "Please take this money and pay off their debts to the Gemach, so that neither I, nor they, have to return to this world to deal with this matter again in the future!"

There is no greater illness than discouragement! ~ R' Yisrael Salanter.

Parsha Potpourri by R' Ozer Alport

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתַי תִּשְׁמְרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֹתָם: וְנָתַתִּי גִשְׁמֵיכֶם בְּעִתָּם ***If you follow My statutes and observe My commandments and perform them, I will give your rains in their time.*** (26:3-4)

Unfortunately, in our generation, there is no shortage of families suffering from serious financial, medical, and marital distress. However, **Rav Yaakov Galinsky** suggests that for all the pain and suffering that they are compelled to endure, the even greater tragedy for many of them is that in their pursuit of segulos (supernatural cures) and other easy solutions, they remain oblivious to the only true Source of merits and blessings: **Torah study and mitzvah observance**.

Rav Galinsky offers an insightful parable to depict the folly in doing so. In the middle of the desert, a group of Bedouins dwelled peacefully and simply in their tents. However, they were only able to attain their greatest need - water - by traveling long distances to draw it from wells and transporting back to their tents in pails carried by donkeys, which was certainly an arduous process.



One day, some of the Bedouins travelled to visit a large city, where they were astounded by the sight of a most remarkable invention: the faucet, which supplied cold, fresh, clean water to every home and building that they encountered. The Bedouins quickly realized that the faucet had the ability to revolutionize their lives, so they quickly hurried to a hardware store and purchased faucets for all of the tents in their village. Excited by their good fortune, the Bedouins hurried home and installed the faucets on the walls of their tents and tried to turn them on, but they were shocked when not a single drop of water emerged.

They contacted the store to report that the faucets they had purchased were all defective. The store sent a representative to examine the situation, and when he arrived at the village to inspect the faucets, he began to laugh uncontrollably.

The Bedouins demanded an explanation for his amusement over their suffering. He replied by explaining to them that the faucet itself is a simple piece of metal with no water inside; it only has the ability to produce water if it is attached to a series of pipes which connect it to a source of water. In the absence of any semblance of plumbing, installing the faucets on the walls of their tents was an exercise in futility.

Similarly, Parshas Bechukosai clearly and explicitly lays out a long list of wonderful blessings awaiting those who toil in Torah study and scrupulously perform the mitzvos. The Torah, which is compared to water, is the source of all blessing and good in the world, but only to those wise enough to invest the time and energy connecting themselves to it through Torah study and mitzvah observance.

Unfortunately, those who spend their time seeking shortcuts and segulos are bound to be left with useless faucets and no water to drink.

Rabbi Tzvi Sytner - Small Miracles

There is no such thing as a small miracle. A miracle is a miracle, period. Indiscriminate of its magnitude, if something happened beyond the realm of the ordinary, extended above the sphere of the expected, it is miraculous.

Who's to say that you should have woken up today able to see with your eyes, hear with your ears or walk with your feet? No one. If you are, G-d handed you a present. He handed you a miracle. Is it the size of the Splitting of Sea? You might say that it isn't. But think of it differently. A miracle is a miracle, no matter the shape or size.

If you have a family, a job or a home, it's not because that's how life is meant to be. You could have exactly the opposite – no family, no job and no home, and just the same, it can be said, "That's how life is meant to be." It's not nature that's organically running your life. It's a symphony of people and places being set up for you, an orchestrated harmony of parts and pieces being designed for you. By G-d to you and for you.

That's what we call a miracle.

Human tendency is to notice the outliers, to be in awe of the colourful supernatural. But that tendency is born out of desensitization to what we see any day, every day. And we do see people breathing, walking and talking every day. That daily scene grows on us and dulls our sensitivity to the ordinary.

But that doesn't take away from the miracle that we call life.

Big or small, it's the same G-d, giving you the same result – a miracle, a blessing. It's His love, and it knows no bounds.

That's all there is to it. A bona fide miracle.

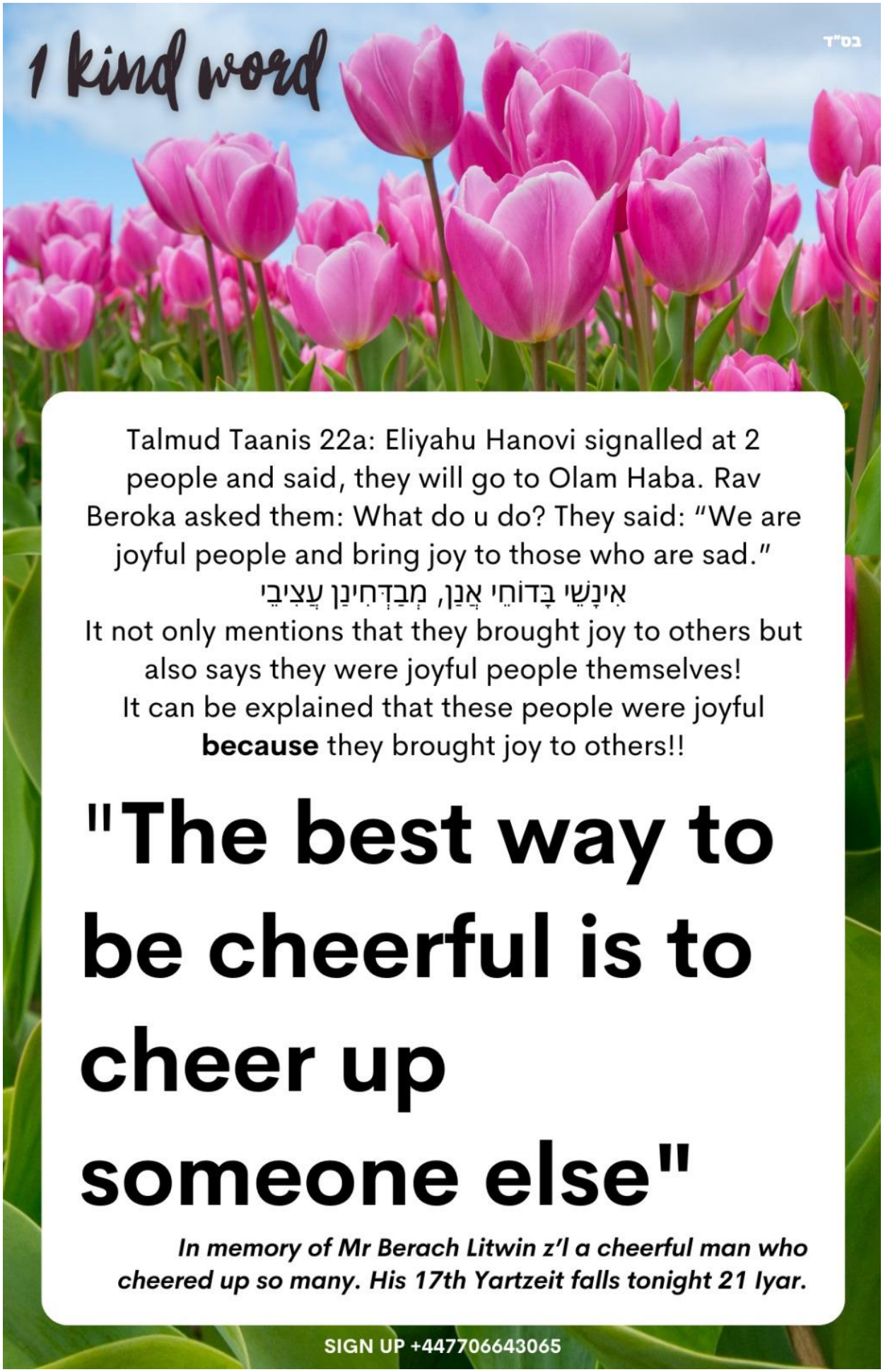
Emuna & Bitachon

Whoever trusts in Hashem, believes in Hashem. But not all that believe in Hashem, trust Him.

Emuna is like a tree and Bitachon is like the fruit. (Many trees don't bear fruit, but all fruit come from a tree). ~ **Ramban**

Emuna is a concept, a belief in Hashem. Hopefully, we all have this.

Bitachon is the reality of Emuna, living a certain way and applying that belief.


1 kind word
בס"ד
Talmud Taanis 22a: Eliyahu Hanovi signalled at 2 people and said, they will go to Olam Haba. Rav Beroka asked them: What do u do? They said: "We are joyful people and bring joy to those who are sad."
אִינָשֵׁי בָּדוֹחֵי אֲנַן, מְבַדְּחִינַן עֲצִיבֵי
It not only mentions that they brought joy to others but also says they were joyful people themselves!
It can be explained that these people were joyful **because** they brought joy to others!!
"The best way to be cheerful is to cheer up someone else"
In memory of Mr Berach Litwin z'l a cheerful man who cheered up so many. His 17th Yartzeit falls tonight 21 Iyar.
SIGN UP +447706643065

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Parsha Pearls

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ ויקרא כו:ג ***If you will walk in my statues…***

Based on a Midrash, Rashi comments that due to the fact that the last part of the verse mentions performance of the mitzvos, then it must be that the first part of the verse - **אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ** - means "if you will toil in learning My Torah".

The question arises why does this Midrash uses the phrase "if you will toil in learning Torah", instead of just saying "if you will learn Torah"?

The Maharal [Gur Arye, Bechukosai] explains that this drasha is based on the word **תֵּלֵכוּ** (will walk) in our verse. Just like when a person walks, he goes from one place to another, so too, when a Jew learns Torah, he should continually go from one level of learning to a deeper one. That is called "toiling in learning Torah".

Finding Merits for Every Jew

The following amazing words were related by **Rav Shmuel Salant zt"l, Rov of Yerushalaim**:

When an animal has lesions on its lungs or other problems that could potentially render it unkosher, we look for all types of halachic leniencies to be able to declare it kosher.

When we look at a fellow Jew, we definitely should not declare him to be treif so easily. We certainly should look for ways to say that he is kosher and to find merits for him.



The Soul Healer - The Maggid on Tefillah by Rabbi Paysach Krohn

In the spring of 2007, a dear friend, Dr. Chaim Abittan, an internist, lost his father, R' Asher H. Abittan, a former talmid of the Ponevezh Yeshivah in Bnei Brak. R' Abittan had served as a Sephardic rav in Long Beach, New York, for more than three decades.

Chaim wished to memorialize his father in a meaningful way, and he brainstormed for weeks about various ideas. One day, while driving, he recalled an incident that had occurred with a patient, my late sister-in-law, Mrs. Adel Krohn a"h.

Chaim was in her hospital room when she was preparing to take certain medications. He noticed that she was softly saying something before swallowing the pills. "What are you saying?" he asked.

"It's a din (law) in Shulchan Aruch that before one takes medication, one should recite a certain prayer. That's what I'm saying."

Chaim was surprised. He had never heard of such a law. He looked up the halachah and found it in Orach Chaim 230:4 and Mishnah Berurah, note 6. Now, years later, he reflected on the fact that very few people know that they should say this tefillah before taking medicine, being given an injection, or undergoing a medical procedure. Chaim called me and together we designed a Refuah card, the size of a credit card; it is available at no charge.

Following are the prayer and translation, which is said before the procedure or taking the medication: **יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ ה' אֱלֹקֵי שֶׁיִּהְיֶה עֵסֶק זֶה לִי לִרְפוּאָה, כִּי רוֹפֵא חִנָּם אָתָּה** - *'May it be Your will, Hashem,*

that this endeavor cure me, for You are a free Healer'. - Afterward, one adds, **בָּרוּךְ רוֹפֵא חוֹלִים** - '*Blessed is He Who heals the sick*'.



Doctors are privileged to be agents of Hashem, so it behooves us to pray to the Ultimate Healer. May all who are sick be worthy to receive Hashem's blessing for a complete recovery. **The Birkei Yosef** (Yoreh Deah 336) reinforces this awareness. He writes that the gematria **רוֹפֵא חִנָּם** (free Healer) is 385, the same as the gematria of the word שְׁכִינָה (Divine Presence).

Dr. Abittan keeps these Refuah cards on his desk and gives them to his patients to recite the prayer before a procedure. I asked if he does so with his non-Jewish patients as well, and he told me that he had asked **R' Shmuel Kamenetsky** about that. R' Shmuel had replied, "Of course, you should show it to them. They, too, should know that you are only an emissary, and that Hashem is the sole Healer."

"Life is a gift from Hashem, and it is up to us to make the most of it. We should strive to live with purpose and meaning, and to use our time on earth to do good and make a difference in the world. – Rabbi Yitzchak Kaduri.

"Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time."

Shaaleh of the Week



Q "Hi, do disposable foil tins that are going to be reused (without a hechsher) have to be toiveled if they are lined with baking paper, that I reuse normally about 10 times for a few months, before throwing them out?"

A - The chiyuv of Tevilas Keilim is on a proper utensil, not a throw away item, which is not called a 'utensil' halachically.

- Using a tin foil container one or two times (even 3) is still considered a throw away item, and does not need tevila (Reb Moishe Feinstien, Rav Falk).

- Once you decide to use more than this, it becomes like you've bought a NON throw away utensil, and therefore needs toiveling (without a brocha) even before first usage, like any other pot (Reb Moishe Feinstien Zt"l (only allows few times), Rav Vozner Zt"l, Rav Padva Zt"l, Rav Belski Zt"l - Head of OU, Rav Falk Zt"l, Reb Moishe Sternbuch Shlit"a and others).

- The fact one uses 'bakewell paper' or silver foil in-between Chalah and tinfoil container, is not considered a barrier due to it being so thin and wouldn't be able to hold your Chalah mold by itself, so Halachicly considered as if it's not there.

- On these lines, the made up halocha or myth of - "I'm allowed to use a normal utensil without tevila, just once", which was "themed" around not needing to toivel a THROW AWAY keili, has NO mekoir in Halocha or any Poskim, and cannot be used. As we explained, a throw away container doesn't need tevila because it's not considered a "utensil" halachically, but a normal utensil that is halachically a utensil, may not be used even once before tevila (Sh"O YD 120).

Wishing you a most beautiful Shabbos with continued thanks & gratitude for all the brochas you're zoicha to.

R' Chanoich Bleir



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Many Yidden were drafted to fight the war during World War One. At that time, when communication was difficult and limited, some women didn't know whether their husbands were alive or dead for many years.

A group of women once came to the **Chofetz Chaim zt'l**, crying and pleading that he pray for them. The Chofetz Chaim cried with them, blessed them, and told them they should also daven. He said, "Go to the beis medresh, open the aron kodesh, and pour out your heart before Hashem. Hashem wants you to daven, as it states (Yeshayah 62:6-7) **אל דמי לכם ואל תתנו דמי לו אל תחרישו** , "Be not silent. Give Him no rest..."

The women asked the Chofetz Chaim, "What should we say?" - These women were accustomed to saying the tefillos printed in Yiddish in siddurim, such as the *techinos* said after lighting the Shabbos lecht and the *techinos* for motzei Shabbos. They didn't know how to articulate their own tefillah.

The Chofetz Chaim told them, "Tell Hashem what is lying on your heart. When a child is hungry, he doesn't look for *techinos*. He cries in his own words. Do the same. Pour out your heart before your compassionate Father" (Sichos Chofetz Chaim vol.2, p.21).



"The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot."



Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

One Motzei Shabbos, after **Reb Avraham Genichovsky zt'l** returned home from shul, a neighbor, who didn't cover her hair, came to ask him advice about some important matter. This woman was an almanah, so after taking counsel, she asked Reb Avraham if she could stay to hear havdalah.

Reb Avraham (who had sterling middos, and especially after hearing that she was a widow) immediately replied, "Of course, you can stay for havdalah."

The family wondered how Reb Avraham would say havdalah. The neighbor didn't cover her hair, so it was forbidden to say havdalah in front of her. The family thought, "Perhaps he will turn his face away from her? But that might embarrass her."

When the rav was about to pick up his *becher* for havdalah, he said out loud, "Now, everyone, let's face towards the Kosel Maaravi."

This solved the problem because now he wasn't facing her when he said havdalah. The woman wasn't embarrassed because she thought the rav always says havdalah in the manner people say Shemonah Esrei, facing the place of the Beis HaMikdash.

SHABBOS STORIES - Good Answer

R' Zalman Estolin spent many years as a slave laborer in the frozen desolation of Siberia, completely cut off from any Jewish community. He certainly never had the opportunity to pray with a minyan - something we take for granted. He never even had a chance to answer Amen to a fellow Jew's berachah.

When R' Estolin finally managed to leave the Soviet Union, he made aliyah to Eretz Yisrael. It was late at night when R' Estolin arrived in Eretz Yisrael. He headed straight to the home of his esteemed

brother-in-law, R' Yaakov Galinsky, in Bnei Brak. How thrilled he was to reunite with his family! They, too, were delighted to see him, and did everything they could to assure his comfort.



In the morning, R' Galinsky showed his brother-in-law the way to a large shul close to his home. Though R' Estolin needed the assistance of crutches to walk, his face was aglow as he slowly advanced down the block. After all those years, he would finally be able to pray with a minyan - and in a shul, no less!

The Galinskys assumed that their esteemed guest would have no trouble finding the way home on his own. An hour passed, and then another quarter of an hour, and then even more. There was still no sign of R' Estolin. They began to worry.

R' Galinsky decided to investigate. He went all the way to shul without coming across any sign of his brother-in-law. Once inside, he looked upstairs and downstairs, checking every room. Finally, he found R' Estolin, obviously very weary, but still standing up - supported by his crutches, his face radiating joy.

"What happened? Why are you still here in shul?" R' Galinsky asked his brother-in-law with concern. "You must have finished Shaharit long ago; come home and eat breakfast. It's not Yom Kippur today!"

"I know, but I just can't leave," answered his brother-in-law. "I finished praying some time ago, but then another minyan started, and then another. Each one offers me the chance to say Amen and Yehei Shemei Rabba and Kedushah again and again.

"Do you know how many years I've been waiting for this precious opportunity? Now that Hashem has given it to me, I can't bear to

give it up just to go home and eat breakfast!" (Excerpted from the Feldheim book – "Just One Word")

When a Business "Disaster" Became a $70,000 Bracha by Rabbi Yehuda Zev Klein

Someone recently sent me an incredible story that illustrates, in the clearest way, how emunah and bitachon change how a Jew experiences life.

The story involves a young man living in Lakewood. He supports his family by selling products on the Amazon marketplace—this is his parnassah.

For some background: Amazon allows sellers to operate in one of two ways. One option is to fulfil orders themselves, shipping products directly from their own warehouse. The second option is called FBA — Fulfillment by Amazon. With FBA, sellers send their inventory to Amazon's warehouses, and Amazon handles storage, packing, and shipping. Amazon strongly encourages sellers to use FBA. Their algorithm favors it, giving FBA listings faster delivery, greater visibility, and more sales. Naturally, this young man relied heavily on FBA for his business.

Before sending inventory to Amazon, sellers must complete detailed forms listing the exact weight and dimensions of each product. Accuracy is critical.

During the month of December, the busiest time of the year—when many online businesses generate 30–40% of their annual revenue—a serious problem occurred. The non-Jewish employee responsible for entering the product information made a major mistake. In fact, this employee had already made similar errors twice before, and Amazon

had warned the company that continued mistakes would result in suspension of their FBA privileges.

On Motzaei Shabbos, the owner opened his computer and saw the message no business owner ever wants to see: "Your FBA account has been suspended due to submitting incorrect product dimensions." He was crushed. In an instant, he realized that he had just lost nearly 90% of his projected sales for the coming months—right in the heart of the holiday season.

His first instinct was to grab his phone, call the employee, and fire him on the spot. But then something stopped him. He is a Yid. He lives with emunah and bitachon. He took a breath and said to himself: This didn't happen by accident. If this hadn't occurred now, the account might have been closed later for an even worse reason. This, too, was min HaShamayim.

The very next morning, he opened his computer again—and could not believe what he saw. An order had just come in for 4,500 units of one of his products. Under normal circumstances, this would have been fulfilled by Amazon. But because his FBA account was suspended, the order now had to be shipped directly from his own warehouse.

And here's where the hidden bracha revealed itself. By fulfilling the order himself, he earned an additional $15 profit per unit. Since the delivery was local, he also saved significantly on shipping by hiring a local trucker instead of using Amazon's fulfillment system. When he ran the numbers, the result was astonishing. That single order generated an extra $70,000 in profit—money he would never have earned had the FBA account remained open. - What initially appeared to be a devastating business disaster turned out to be one of the greatest financial brachos his company had ever experienced.

Sometimes we see the Yad Hashem immediately. Sometimes His presence is hidden behind frustration, loss, or disappointment. But whatever challenge we face, we must remember: Hashem is right

there with us—aware, compassionate, and guiding every detail. And sometimes, just a day later, we're privileged to see it with our own eyes.



Reflecting His Middos Is The Key To All Goodness

Dayan Dunner recently shared the following remarkable story.

A Yid happened to be in England on Erev Pesach and needed to pay seven hundred pounds for matzos. He went to the bank to withdraw the money. By mistake, the clerk entered the transaction incorrectly. Instead of recording that the man had withdrawn seven hundred pounds, the system showed that he had deposited seven hundred pounds. In other words, the bank's records reflected a fourteen hundred pound error. They failed to register the withdrawal and also credited his account with an additional seven hundred pounds.

When the man came home and reviewed his statement, he immediately realized something was wrong. A few weeks later, he returned to the bank and told the clerk, "There is a mistake in my account."

The clerk looked at him and said, "Don't be silly. Keep the money. There is nothing we can do about it."

He answered firmly, "I am not taking money that does not belong to me."

The clerk called the manager. The manager tried to dismiss it. "We cannot fix this. Leave us alone."

After a great deal of back and forth, they finally corrected the account. He left without one penny more than he was entitled to.

Two or three years later, that same man needed to borrow eighty six thousand pounds. He returned to the same bank and asked for a loan. The clerk asked, "What collateral do you have?"

He said, "None."

"A house?"

"No."

"A guarantor?"

"No."

The clerk said, "Then it is impossible."

He replied, "I need the money."

They called the manager. When the manager came in, he looked at the man and said, "You? You are the only person in the history of this bank who ever came back to return money that we mistakenly gave him. You can have the eighty-six thousand pounds. No collateral, no guarantor, nothing." - They even lowered the interest rate.

The man said, "But I will only be able to repay very slowly. It may take many years."

The manager answered, "No problem at all."

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah 74) explains that since emes is Hashem's primary middah (His chosam seal), every person has a built-in sensitivity and attraction to truth. It's embedded in the neshama, a reflection of the Divine spark within.

The Chinuch adds that anyone who connects himself to Hashem's middah of emes connects himself to Hashem's brachah, the source of all goodness.

"Believe in yourself and in Hashem's belief in you. With these two powers, you can conquer the world." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

אם-בחקתי תלכו... (כו/ג) שתהיו עמלים בתורה (רש"י)



The **חפץ חיים** explains that the effort one invests in **תורה** is not just the method by which to get to the **פשט**. Rather, the effort itself is a **מצוה** of **לימוד התורה**!

In worldly matters one can spend many years trying to invent something but if at the end it is unsuccessful, all the effort and energy were worthless. He has nothing to show for himself and he can not expect to be paid for his labours.

If a person asks a tailor to sew a suit for him and after two weeks the tailor shows him some scraps of cut up material saying, "I have spent the last two weeks trying to make a suit for you but have been unsuccessful," the client will not pay a penny for the tailor's efforts.

תורה is not like that. If one spends a long time trying to work out **פשט** and does not manage to find the **פשט**, he still receives full **שכר** for his **לימוד התורה**. This is because **עמל** is an intrinsic part of **לימוד התורה**.

With this we can understand **פשט** in the **תפלה** which we say after learning: " **אני עמל והם עמלים, אני עמל ומקבל שכר, והם עמלים ואינם מקבלים שכר**."

The **גוים** don't receive payment for effort but only for the results. But by **תורה** a person receives **שכר** for the **עמל** even if because of the efforts he has not achieved clarity in the **סוגיא**.

"One small deed of kindness can change the entire world. You never know when one act of chesed will tip the scales and bring redemption." ~ The Lubavitcher Rebbe - Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Once a **בחור** in **ישיבה** came to the **חפץ חיים** and bemoaned, I am toiling in **תורה** and working hard in learning, but I don't see myself becoming a **גדול בתורה**. The **חפץ חיים** replied, 'we don't find anywhere in the **תורה** that one must become a **גדול בתורה**! We only find that the **תורה** writes, '**אם-בחקתי תלכו**' which means **שתהיו עמלים בתורה**.

Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz זצ"ל was once asked, why do we not have to stand up for a pregnant woman, out of honour for the unborn child who is a massive **תלמיד חכם**, after all the **מלאך** has taught him the whole **תורה**?

He replied, 'The unborn child obtained his **תורה** without any effort. Such **תורה** knowledge one does not have to honour.' (**עלינו לשבח/חלקו**)

Only through **עמל התורה** can one be **זוכה** to understand. **Reb Boruch Ber** had a very good head. Nevertheless, any **חידוש** which did not come to him through **עמל** he felt was not such a good **חידוש**. As **חז"ל** say: '**יגעתי ומצאתי תאמין**'. The **חז"ל** are telling us that only through **עמל** is one **זוכה** to **תורה**.

When **רבי משה מייזליש זצ"ל** was in his later years, he found it very difficult to walk up the stairs in the **ישיבה** to give his **שיעור** and he found it necessary to stop half way in order to catch his breath. However, he once commented on his way up the stairs that he feels a great **שמחה** as all this effort is for **תורה**. And that is how one is **זוכה** to **שטייג** in **תורה**.

רבי משה would never let anyone fetch a **ספר** for him. Rather, he would go and fetch it himself saying, "It is good to toil in **תורה** with the body and **מחשבה**. When one works hard that's how he is **מצליח**.

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ - if you will walk in (follow) my decrees: Rashi says, it means to be **עָמֵל בַּתּוֹרָה** - to toil in intense limud Torah. What does it mean to be *amel b'Torah*?

The Maharal in Gur Aryeh says that the emphasis is on **תֵּלֵכוּ** - ***to walk in***. - It takes effort to keep going, to continue to learn more. To keep learning and advancing with deeper and deeper understanding each time. Don't continue to learn as an adult the way you did as a child!

Rabbi Elazar Meisels - Be A Chiddush

For an athlete, there are moments that define everything. For a basketball player, it's the feeling of hitting the game-winning three-pointer as the clock winds down. For a baseball player, it's the grand slam in the bottom of the ninth. For a football player, it's that perfect touchdown in the end zone. Those are the peaks. The moments of exhilaration, accomplishment, and triumph.

What is the equivalent for a ben Torah?

We know the classic answer. It's when you say a *geshmake chiddush* (novel idea). You uncover a new insight, a well-grounded *svara*, perhaps even one previously said by Reb Chaim or the Rashba. That moment, when something clicks, when Torah opens up, is electrifying. There is a joy that radiates outward. You can see it on a person's face when he walks in smiling and uplifted. Without saying a word, you know: "He said a *chiddush* today."

But what if a person is no longer a yeshiva bachur? What is now he is busy with his family, burdened with work, and left with limited time? Is he excluded from that joy?

In a powerful letter written in 1936, **Rabbi Chatzkel Levenstein *zt"l*** challenges the very definition of a *chiddush*. People assume that a *chiddush* exists only in learning a *sugya*. But that is a mistake. A true chiddush can be created in *avodas Hashem*.

Every single day, a person is presented with opportunities. The *yetzer hara* places an obstacle in front of him and says: "Go ahead." And the person responds: *No*. That moment, says Rav Chatzkel, is a *chiddush*. In that moment, the person did something new and something rare. Something that not everyone does. And in Heaven, that is a *chiddush*.

Every day, a person has the opportunity to reach greatness. Not only through what he learns, but through how he lives.

So every day, say a *chiddush*. And every day, be a *chiddush*.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz ZT"L, the "Chazon Ish" (1878-1953) was born in Europe and eventually moved to Bnei Brak in Israel. When he first moved there, he rented an apartment on the corner of HaRav Sher and Ben Pesachya street. After some time, however, he informed the owner of the apartment that he had heard that the price of apartment rentals in the area had gone up. Due to the price increase, he felt that he had to move because he did not have enough money to pay for the higher rent.

The landlord was confused, "I have not raised your rent! It would be an honor to have the Rav continue living here as long as the Rav would want."

The Chazon Ish responded, "I do not wish to deprive you and your family of the additional rent that you are rightfully entitled to now that prices in the area have gone up. I cannot pay you the additional rent, so I will move so you can receive the higher rent from someone else."



Stories of גדולים

The חזון איש was so poor when he wrote his ספר that he didn't even own a table. Instead, he placed a beam across two empty barrels. In the winter he had no heating. His house was so cold that he would sit under a blanket so that the ink should not freeze and it was in this manner that he wrote the קצות החושן.

The קצות החושן was not his only ספר. He also wrote the אבני מלואים. Once, someone asked him how come that the קצות became more famous than the אבני מלואים? The חזון איש replied that when he wrote the קצות he was living in dire poverty but when he wrote the אבני מלואים he was living comfortably.

The חזון איש once said that the שאגת אריה lived in such poverty that he could not afford paper to write his חידושים on. Without any other choice he would write his חידושים on the wall.

At times the שאגת אריה could be seen standing on a chair and writing high up on the wall. When all the walls were covered, his wife would buy plaster which was very cheap, she would first peel off the old layer with her husbands תורה חידושים and then re-plaster the walls so her husbands could write more חידושים - (א"ה /שבועות/ רכ)

The Steipler once said, "You should know that I had a difficult life. I was orphaned at the age of seven. There were hard times when there was simply no food in the house. After I married, there were times when we ate black bread for the שבת meal."

He also said, "Believe me, during my life, I had many reasons to take this world to heart and remain a complete עם הארץ. But 'ה had pity on me and helped me not to take this world too seriously.

Once Reb Aryeh Leib, the son of the **חפץ חיים**, went to visit **רב' חיים** of Brisk at his home in the summertime, but couldn't find Reb Chaim in any of the rooms. After a long search, he discovered Reb Chaim's head and shoulders protruding from inside the brick oven that was used to heat the house in the winter.

Reb Chaim emerged, covered with soot, apologizing that he needed to concentrate on a difficult sugyah, but could not find any appropriate, distraction free, place where he could focus his thoughts without any disturbances. The close quarters of the oven, he decided, gave him the best solution to his dilemma.

On every **שבת שובה** and **שבת הגדול** **Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** **זצ"ל** would honour **Reb Yitzchak Kulitz**, the Rov of **ירושלים**, by going to hear his **דרשה**. The first year that the **דרשה** was given **ר' שלמה זלמן** arrived shortly before the scheduled time and found the shul full to capacity. As soon as he entered, everyone rose with respect. From then on, he made sure to arrive at least fifteen minutes early, when the shul was relatively empty.

Reb Leizer Yudel Finkel **זצ"ל**, the **ראש ישיבה** of Mir, had such **אהבת התורה** that he would pay anyone who came to tell him a **חידוש**. It made no difference who told him the **חידוש**. It could be a **בחור** 40 years younger than him, or even a **בחור** from a different **ישיבה**!

Reb Ovadia Yosef recalls that many times after his marriage, his wife would ask him, "how do you expect me to prepare **שבת** for our growing family without any money?"

Reb Ovadia would reply, "**אל תדאג** - Don't worry! I will go and share a **חידוש** with the Mirrer Rosh Yeshivah and we will have money for **שבת**."

Fascinating INSIGHTS

An Angelic Warning



R' Nosson Nota Hanover (d. 1683) related about his rebbe, **R' Shimshon of Ostropoli**, that a malach would come to R' Shimshon daily to learn with him the secrets of Torah. R' Shimshon of Ostropoli also merited many revelations of secrets of Torah in dreams.

In one place, he writes how R' Nosson Nota of Krakow, also known as the Megaleh Amukos, appeared to him in a dream and explained to him a difficult piece of liturgy.

Before the decrees of the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648-1649, this malach warned him that a great decree was impending and urged that a massive teshuvah movement be undertaken to avert it. R' Shimshon publicly repeated this message many times, passionately calling upon the people to repent so that the decree might be nullified.

The people indeed responded and did teshuvah sincerely. Nevertheless, it did not avail, as the harsh decree had already been sealed. R' Shimshon of Ostropoli was one of the many who were killed in the Chmielnicki massacres.



Inspired by Time - The Double Birth – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis

This week is Shabbos Chazak – a Shabbos of chizzuk and completion. We are completing Sefer Vayikra, a sefer that centers around the Mishkan, the dwelling place of Hashem, and the korbanos brought within it. At its core, it reflects the inner avodah of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh* – the lifelong task of building a place for Hashem within ourselves, a space of closeness, connection, and sincere sacrifice.

As we close this sefer, we begin a transition into a new stage. We move into Sefer Bamidbar – a sefer not of stillness, but of movement, of journey. It is the story of **כְּלַל יִשְׂרָאֵל** travelling through the desert, facing challenges, uncertainty, and constant tests.

Naturally, a person is drawn to the avodah of *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*. There is something beautiful and comforting about building an inner world of connection with Hashem in a setting that feels stable and protected. But then comes the next step – *lechtech acharai bamidbar* – to follow Hashem into the wilderness, into rough terrain and difficult nisyonos, where clarity and comfort are replaced by difficulty and challenge.

And yet, it is precisely there, in the midbar, that real growth takes place. It is there that a person is tested, refined, and elevated. It is there that we demonstrate not just our inspiration, but our commitment; not just our feelings, but our unwavering dedication to Hashem.

Sefiras HaOmer

We are currently five weeks into Sefiras HaOmer, with just two weeks remaining until the holy and precious day of Matan Torah,

when we receive the Torah. And this is exactly what these days are all about.

Sefiras HaOmer is not simply a countdown – it is a process. We began at Pesach, a time of awakening, when we were lifted out and given clarity, emunah, and a sense of closeness as a gift. But a gift alone is not enough.

These weeks are about internalizing that gift, about transforming inspiration into acquisition, and turning a moment of light into something lasting and real within us.

Each day of the Omer is another step in that journey – a refinement, a building, a quiet but steady climb. We are shaping ourselves into vessels capable of receiving the Torah, not just as something we hear, but as something we live.

And now, as we stand five weeks in, the avodah deepens. The initial excitement may have faded, the path may feel longer, and the effort more demanding. But this is the stage where the work becomes real. This is our own midbar – the place of persistence, consistency, and continuing even when it is not easy.

The Double Birth of an Egg

The holy rebbe, **Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner – the rebbe of Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin** – explains this idea further.

The reason we eat an egg on Leil HaSeder is to teach us a very powerful lesson.

We know that Leil HaSeder is a time of birth for the Jewish people. It is the moment when we are born as a nation, when we emerge as something entirely new. It is a tremendous time, a moment where everything begins again, where a person can feel uplifted, renewed, and filled with faith and connection to Hashem.

A person might be tempted to think: "I have experienced Pesach, I have felt that connection, I have absorbed emunah and trust in

Hashem – everything is complete. I have arrived." But we are shown very clearly that this is not the case. Pesach is not the end. It is the beginning. - It is like an egg.

When a chicken lays an egg, something real and meaningful has taken place. There is already life inside. It is not empty. But at the same time, it is clearly not the end of the process. There is no chick yet. The life has not yet emerged. In many ways, this is only the beginning of the journey.

The egg must be nurtured. It must be kept warm. It must be protected and sustained over time. This stage is slower. It is more demanding. It requires patience, consistency, and care. And only after this process, after time and effort, does the chick finally break through and emerge fully into the world.

So too, Leil HaSeder is the initial birth. - Something incredible has begun. A person feels awakened, inspired, connected. But it is still only an "egg." It is still potential. It has not yet become a fully developed reality.

There is still a second stage. That second stage is the days of counting the Omer. These are the days where we "keep the egg warm." Each day is an opportunity to take what we received on Pesach and develop it further. Each day is another step of inner work, refining ourselves, distancing ourselves from the impurity of Egypt, and preparing to become vessels for something greater.

It is not always easy. The excitement of Pesach begins to settle. The clarity is not always as strong. But this is exactly where the real work lies – in the steady, day-by-day effort to grow.

We move step by step, building ourselves, shaping ourselves, and preparing for the second birth.

That second birth takes place on Shavuos with Matan Torah.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Chazal (Brachos 21a) states, **ולואי שיתפלל אדם כל היום כולו**, "***Halavai a person would daven all day long***."

The Ben Ish Chai (Benayahu, Brachos 6b) asks how it is possible to daven all day long? When will he study Torah? When will he work for parnassah?

The Ben Ish Chai answers that the Gemara means that he should daven in his heart. He won't be able to daven with words all day long, but he can daven in his thoughts, in his heart. His heart will always be saying silent tefillos to Hashem.

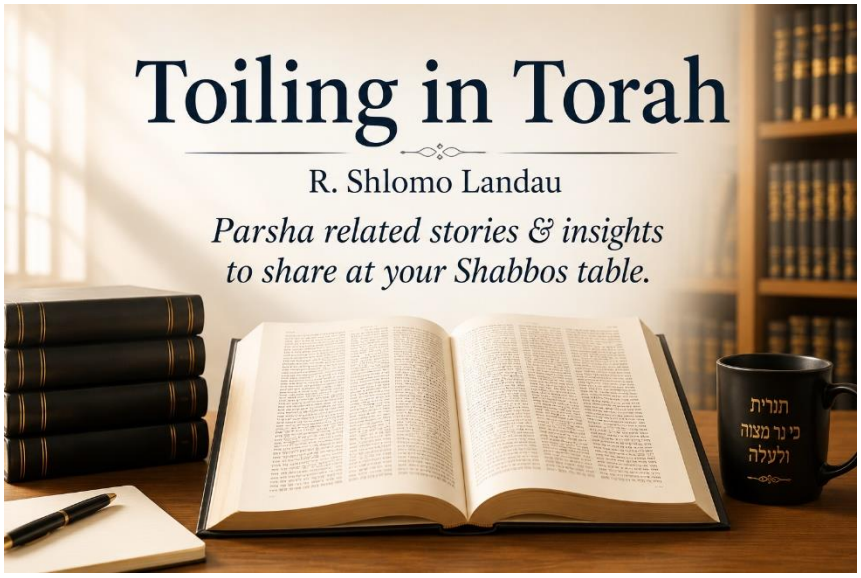
On the Parsha

אִם־בְּחֻקֹּתַי תֵּלֵכוּ - if you walk in my statutes – Rashi explains this to mean, **שֶׁתְּהֵיוּ עֲמֵלִים בַּתּוֹרָה** -"That you shall strive with great effort in studying Torah."

Rav Henach Leibowitz ZT'L explained that striving with great effort in the study of Torah means that one must use all of one's powers of reasoning to ensure that each and every piece of Torah that is said is both textually and logically compelling. The truth of a Sugya (Talmudic passage) must emerge organically, and not by, for example, randomly inserting complex structures and explanations without sufficient justification. Also, a Sugya must not be studied once – it must be learned and re-learned for days and sometimes weeks.

This is the study of Torah that Rashi references above – Torah study with an absolute dedication to truth.

"You get out of Yiddishkeit what you put into it!"



In 1994, in a **שול** in **כרמיאל** in the **בית כנסת המרכזי**, the central synagogue in **כרמיאל**, it's Friday night, it's **קבלת שבת**, and the **רב** gets up to speak between **קבלת שבת** and between **מעריב כדרכם בקודש**. This **ייד** walks into **שול** and he walks in late. He looks a little disoriented, he doesn't look like one of the locals, and the **רב** is speaking and he finds a seat near the front of the **שול**. It's a little bit of a scene; he's not trying to make a scene, he's just out of place.

And they notice that he's scanning the bookshelves. The **רב** is middle of the **דרשה**. All of a sudden he jumps out of his seat, runs over to the **תלמוד בבלי** to the **שס** and he's scanning it and he's scanning it.

אה, מסכת יומא. - He pulls a **יומא** off the shelf. He's in front of everybody, he starts leafing through the **יומא**. He gets to the **דף** that he's looking for, he looks at it. Filled with **שמחה**, he begins to cry, and he goes back to his seat.

After **דאוועהנינג** was over, he went over to the **רב** and he said to him in a beautiful Russian **יידיש**, he says, **איך בעט דיר מחילה**, I'm asking you for forgiveness, he says, **איך ווייס**, I understand that I was **מפסיק** your **שיעור**, but **איך דארף דיר זאגן**, I have to tell you what was happening.

He says, I just arrived today in **כרמיאל** from **וויטבסק** , 65 years ago, the man said, 65 years ago I was learning, I had a **רבי** who taught us **תורה** clandestinely, it was illegal to teach **תורה**. And I'm learning there with my **רבי**, I loved my **רבי**, he was an old man.

He says, I'm going to tell you the truth, I was a good **תלמיד**, the **רבי** loved me too, I was that **תלמיד** that always asked a **קשיא**, that gave

a good **תירוץ**. We're in the middle of learning a difficult **סוגיה** and all of a sudden I asked a **קשיא** and the **רבי**'s face lit up. What a **קשיא**, a 'doozer'. And at that moment, there was a strong banging on the door and the NKVD **ימח שמם וזכרם**, the secret police came, they raided our little **שיעור** and they took my **רבי** away.

And I was broken. And as they're taking the **רבי** away, the **רבי** says, **יומא דף פ״ו עמוד א** - that's where your **תירוץ** is. And they took him off and we never heard from him again. He says, for 65 years I never had an opportunity to open a **גמרא מסכת יומא** and that **קשיא**'s been sitting inside of me and percolating.

I arrived today from **וויטבסק**, I came to the **שול**, this is where I found it, this is the **שול** I found. I walked in there, I said, **מסכת יומא**, how could I forget it? I walked over to the bookshelf, I pulled out a **גמרא מסכת יומא** and after 65 years I finally got an answer to my **שאלה**. That's **שתהיו עמלים בתורה** 65 years the **קשיא** gave him no rest.

I can only imagine the **שמחה** that filled him after 65 years of yearning to learn **פשט**.

אם בחוקותי תלכו שתהיו עמלים בתורה.

Pearls of Wisdom…*A Word for the Ages*

The Chazon Ish, zt"l, said about himself, "I never met a person who is more naturally lazy than I am."

Rav Ephraim Wachsman, Shlit"a, taught from this statement that if we look at how much the Chazon Ish accomplished despite the fact that he was lazy, anyone can overcome their natural inclination to be lazy and accomplish vast amounts more than one thinks he can accomplish!





Horav Yisroel Friedman Shlita - Letters Of Chizzuk During The Coronavirus Pandemic

רב ישראל פרידמן רב קלויז טשארטקוב מנשסתר

מכתב התחזקות

כ' אייר ל"ה למסב"י תש"פ

We can take a chizuk from the first possuk in this weeks parsha, Parshas Bechukosei where the Torah promises us a great reward, "If you will go in the path of the Torah and you will observe the mitzvos and you keep them". "**אם בחוקותי תלכו ואת מצותי תשמרו ועשיתם אותם**". The meforshim ask, why is this possuk written in the future tense, "If you will go in the path of the Torah and you will observe the mitzvos", and not in the present tense?

Answers the Ohr HaChaim that the possuk is referring to a situation where a person is an Oi'nes and at present is unable to learn or keep the mitzvos as he would like to. About such a person Chazal have told us (**שבת סג**.) "A person who desired and wanted to perform a mitzva but due to an oi'nes was unable to do so, the Torah considers it as if he had performed the mitzvah" **חשב אדם לעשות מצוה ונאנס ולא עשאה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאלו עשאה**.

Therefore the Torah writes the possuk in the future tense. A person who at present is being prevented from learning and keeping the mitzvos properly, but as soon as he can, "**he will go** in the path of the Torah and he **will** observe the mitzvos", the Torah considers his yearning as if he has kept them, and he will also receive the full reward mentioned in the parsha.

Rav Yonoson Eibeshitz (**יערות דבש ח"ב דרוש ב**) and the Apta Rov, added on a further chizuk to this concept. When a person performs

a mitzva, the amount of reward is relative to the actual performance of the mitzva. A person who does the mitzva lishmo and puts in more concentration and does the mitzva in a more beautiful and mehudar way, will receive more reward than someone who does the same mitzva without proper care and devotion.

When a person is yearning to do a mitzva but was prevented from doing so, the Torah considers it as if he had performed the mitzva, it is self-understood that it is considered as if he had performed the mitzva in the way that the Torah requires the mitzva to be performed. It is as if he had done the mitzvah lishmo, with all its inyonim and all its hiddurim!

This is a chizuk for our present situation, although we are unable to learn and daven in shul, and we cannot perform many of the mitzvos in the way we are used to, Hashem looks at our intentions, and regards it as if we kept all these mitzvos properly, in the best and holiest way.

Thus the famed Rebbe Reb Mendel of Rimnov zt"l, once went to immerse himself, and when he arrived, he discovered the mikva was broken and not useable. Said Reb Mendel Rimnover: "Today I merited a mikva with all the kavonos! Normally, it is never possible for a human being to have in mind all the different meanings and kavonos of a mitzva, but today that I was an oi'nes, the Torah considered it as if I have performed the mitzva properly and the Torah knows all the kavonos!"

With this in mind we can perhaps understand the following comment of the Rebbe of Rizhin zt"l. One of his chassidim suffered from many ailments and this Yid once moaned to the Rebbe that he was very distressed that his ailments prevented him from davening and learning in the way he would have liked. The Rizhiner answered this person: **"How do you know what is more precious to Hashem, your davening and learning, or your yearning!"**

Indeed the sefer Shem MiShmuel writes: "The words of Chazal that the Torah counts the good intentions of a person who was an oi'nes as if he had performed the mitzvah, **is a lesson to every person who wants to ascend higher, that he should not feel upset or depressed that he was unable to carry out his good intentions.**

These good intentions are themselves regarded as a mitzva which in turn will cause and be the catalyst to bring the person more mitzvos **מצוה גוררת מצוה** and will give the person new and higher strengths that he did not know of previously. Through this new strength, he will climb even higher. Chazal mention (**מדרש רבה רות, ג, ה**) this concept regarding Rus. 'As soon as Rus made the decision to become a giyoires, the possuk puts her on an equal status with Naomi'. A person who changes their mindset is no longer the same person and is no longer on the same level they were on beforehand"!

This concept is also the underlying explanation of Tikkun Leil Shavous. It is an ancient custom to recite the beginning and end pesukim of every sedra and all the twenty four seforim of Neveim and Kesuvim.

Writes the Bnei Yissocher as follows: There is a tradition amongst Gedolei Yisroel, that if a person is prevented from being able to learn a particular sefer, he should at least learn the beginning and the end of the sefer, and this will be accepted by Hashem as if he has learnt the entire sefer. Therefore it is the minhag on the night of Kabbolas HaTorah to learn the beginning and the end of all parts of Tenach and Shisho Sidrei Mishna, in order that that this be regarded by Hashem as if he has learnt the entire Torah.

These words are a big comfort for us in our current situation. At the moment we are unable to learn and daven in the way we are accustomed, and despite all the heroic efforts to maintain a seder hayom and daily shiurim, many feel they are missing the intensity of their learning. However, when a Yid tries his best, we have been

promised "**מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאה**" and Hashem regards it as if we have davened and learnt on the highest level!

This tradition is also mentioned by the She'loh Hakodosh (**הגהות לתולדות אדם , בית אחרון**) "Someone who is very ignorant of Torah, and is upset about his lack of Torah knowledge and his inability to understand the Torah, should read with all his heart the names of the various sedras and seforim of Nach. Afterwards he should read the names of the various mesechtos of Shas and their chapters, and then the names of the various Medroshim, Medrash Rabbah, Tanchumo, Sifro, Sifrei, Mechilta etc. and all the various Kabbalistic midroshim, Zohar Tikunei Zohar etc. If he reads these names with great enthusiasm and is very upset that he has been unable to master them, and he also helps those who do understand them, his actions will be accepted by Hashem and in the next world he will merit to understand them.

Therefore every person – even someone who is not ignorant - should record for himself a list with all the various names of the seforim and he should read it regularly until he is fluent in it, and the reading of the list will be as if he has learnt them all. This is on condition he tries his hardest to do his best".

The Mishna Berura (**סי' קנ"ה**) and the Shulchan Aruch HaRav (**הל' ת"ת פ"ב ס' יג**) both tell us that a person who tried his best, whatever he did not understand in this world, he will merit to understand in the next World and he will be granted a seat amongst the Chachomim.

There is a most amazing medrash (**אגדה בראשית פד**.) which is not well known. "In the future, all are going to wonder about so and so, who never learnt anything in his lifetime, and yet he is sitting and talking with the Ovos. Hashem says to them: "Why are you amazed, they only merited this because they listened to me during their lifetime!""

This medrash seems to be a mystery. How can someone who has never learnt anything possibly be referred to as listening to

Hashem? I once asked the Gateshead Rosh Yeshiva Hagaon Rav Avrohom Gurwicz shlita, and Hagaon Rav Chaim Kanievski shlita, for an explanation to this medrash. They both answered that the medrash must be referring to a person who wanted and tried to learn, but despite his best efforts, was never able to do so. This person will still merit a high place in Gan Eden as mentioned above.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l was once asked to explain the words of the Zohar Hakodosh who writes "Torah that is learnt without true fear and love of Hashem, is not accepted in Heaven". If this is so, who can be confident that Hashem is happy with their learning? Who can truly say about themselves that they conduct themselves with true fear and love of Hashem?

The Chofetz Chaim replied that he once met an old acquaintance of his, whom he hadn't seen for many years. The Chofetz Chaim stopped to ask him how he was managing. The Yid moaned bitterly how difficult life was for him. He was a baker by profession, and every day he had to chop wood for his oven and then carry the heavy logs to his bakery. Every morning he got up very early to bake the bread, rolls and cakes, but despite all his efforts, he was unable to sell much of his merchandise.

Before the days of thermostatic ovens, it was difficult to accurately control the temperature in the oven. Somedays the bread was a bit overdone and burnt, on other days they weren't fully baked. The shape of the cakes also didn't always come out as they should have. People would come into his shop and they would look at his bread and cakes but weren't tempted to buy them. So although he worked so hard, much of his work was rejected.

Some years passed and the First World War broke out. Again the Chofetz Chaim happened to meet this person and he stopped to enquire after his welfare. The Yid told the Chofetz Chaim how his business was booming, and he had never had it so good. The Chofetz Chaim was taken aback, and asked how this could be? He was barely

managing in the relatively good times before the war, so how could it be that now when even the wealthy people were struggling, he was doing so well?

Answered the Yid to the Chofetz Chaim: "Before the war people could afford to be fussy, and if my bread and cakes weren't exactly to their liking, they rejected them and refused to buy them. Now however, there is a war going on and there is a shortage of food. No one can afford to be fussy, whatever I make is bought right away, no matter its appearance or taste.

Explained the Chofetz Chaim, the same concept applies to Torah learning. Those words of the Zohar Hakodosh that you quoted, were written by Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai almost two thousand years ago. In his times, there were many great and holy Tenoim, if one's learning was not up to scratch, it was rejected. Nowadays however, there is a spiritual war going on, and the generations are much weaker than previous generations. In our times Hashem gratefully accepts every bit of Torah that we learn, as long as we try our best and our hardest, even if it isn't perfect and up to the highest standard!

These words echo the words of the Holy Arizal, as recorded by Rebbi Chaim Vital: "A person's greatness is not measured merely by his actions, but also according to the time and the generation in which he lives. The small accomplishments of the later generations, is equal in Shomayim, like the great achievements of the earlier generations".

If this is so all year round, all the more so at the moment, Hashem receives gratefully and with great love, all our efforts, no matter how small they appear to us.

ידידכם ישראל פרידמן

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Body & Soul - Rav Shlomo Wolbe zt'l reveveals a surprising aspect of 'toiling in Torah'

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a short but important story for this week's **פרשה, פרשת בחוקותי**.

רב שלמה הופמן, who was a fascinating **תלמיד חכם**, therapist, educator, had many projects that he did to help the **כלל**, to help **עם ישראל** in **ארץ ישראל**. Once, for one of these projects, he really wanted the participation of **רב שלמה וולבה זצ"ל**, the famous **בעל מוסר**, who had learned in the **מיר ישיבה** in Europe, and at the time was the **משגיח** of the **ישיבה** in **באר יעקב**. It was called the **ישיבה באר יעקב** in the **מושב באר יעקב**.

The **ראש ישיבה** was **רב משה שמואל שפירא זצ"ל**. So, for whatever reason, he came, **רב הופמן** came late at night to look for **רב וולבה**, and he couldn't find him anywhere. Now, it's quite possible that at that point **רב וולבה**'s family wasn't staying over in **באר יעקב** during the week at that time, and he couldn't find him in the **בית מדרש**, he couldn't find him anywhere. Eventually he gave up.

A few days later, he came back again. It was even much later at night, and they looked, they couldn't find him. Now, **באר יעקב** was a fairly small **מושב** at that point. It was extremely quiet at that hour of the evening, and suddenly they heard some noises coming, and it was coming from the **מקוה**, the **מקוה טהרה** of the **ישוב**.

So they came, and they knocked on the door, and **רב וולבה** answered. And they saw that **רב וולבה** was in the middle of cleaning the **מקוה**, a fairly intense job that has to be done at late hours of the night after the **מקוה** is closed. So they asked him why he was doing that. As the **משגיח** of the **ישיבה**, it doesn't seem to be the job.

It wasn't necessarily done for extra income. Why was he cleaning the **מקוה**? So, **רב הופמן** told his **תלמידים** that, "I'm not going to tell you the exact words that **רב וולבה** said at the time"—it could be he

didn't remember them at that point. He said, "but the message was the following.

These were his reasons: Number one, the **ישוב** was quite poor at that point. **באר יעקב** was a very poor settlement, and to hire a cleaner at late hours of night would be expensive. Also, **רב וולבה** felt that he wanted to pitch in, to participate, to be **עוסק בצרכי ציבור**, to do something for the general **ציבור** of the **מושב**."

But the most fascinating reason that he gave over was that he felt it was important and healthy for him to find a way to release the energy that builds up in a person through physical hard labor.

This week's **פרשה** is **בחוקותי**, which starts with the words **אם בחוקותי תלכו**, the famous **פירוש** brought by **רש"י: שתהיו עמלים בתורה**. To walk in **השם**'s laws means to work hard in **תורה**.

Many people simply limit that to the mental exertion, perhaps the idea of staying awake for a lot of hours that's involved in learning **תורה**.

רב וולבה took a much bigger picture of this, meaning there are many aspects to our mental, physical, psychological health. He realized that hard physical work was very important for his all-about, all-around **עמלות בתורה**. That's something that we all have to do: to have the awareness of ourselves as individuals, and to take all the different steps that are available to us to make us people who can truly bring our most to the table when we're learning **תורה**—mentally, physically, psychologically, and spiritually.

So wishing everyone a wonderful, healthy week, wishing **בשורות טובות** to **עם ישראל**, and wishing everyone a very good **שבת**.

When the Chofetz Chaim would talk about Mitzvos, he would kiss his fingers and say, "It's so delicious! It's so sweet!"


חזק חזק
ונתחזק!